...And All That Jazz

by WANMWAD

Summary

The year is 1927. Prohibition is in full swing and notorious gangster Mr. Big is behind bars for tax evasion. When his rivals start turning up dead, it seems his gang may still be bootlegging. Desperate to prove herself and put an end to the violence, rookie agent Judy Hopps pulls Nicholas Wilde out of the Witness Protection Program. Can she trust the fox who put Mr. Big away?
Someone to Watch Over Me

Isabel Antilopini looked in the mirror and forced herself to smile. To the gazelle, it looked more like a grimace, and she tried again with no greater luck. Today had been the fifth rejection, but what had made it all the worse was that it hadn't been an outright rejection. The agent, an oily-looking ibex, had sat with about no sign of interest as her trio worked its way through their own material. Once they moved into a cover of "Someone to Watch Over Me" he had perked up noticeably, and they had thrown their all into it.

She thought it was the best performance that they had ever given of the song, the playful way that her piano danced a counterpoint to the improvisations to the theme that Frank worked on his bass and the way that Bill kept the time on the drums without making it rigid. Her voice had soared, filling the unglamorous performance stage, with its cigarette smoke stained walls and heaps of instruments piled carelessly in the corners, as though it had been the grandest theater in all of Zootopia. When the last note had faded, all three of them had looked to the agent expectantly.

He had made them wait, scribbling something on a pad of paper, before the ibex had beckoned her forward; Bill and Frank stayed at their instruments. It was an unspoken agreement of the members of Gazelle and the Tigers that she was the face of the group, an arrangement that they all knew the reason for but never discussed. Once she had approached the agent, he had stood up and walked with her to the far side of the room, as far away from the little stage as it was possible to get.

"Listen," he had said, throwing an overly familiar arm over her shoulder, "You've got a great voice and you can tickle those keys like no one's business. Why are you wasting your time with this..."

As the agent trailed off, he had glanced over Isabel's shoulder to make sure that the other members of her trio were out of earshot, and dropped his voice. "This pred music. You could be a star in New Yak, you know, doing musicals."

"Nuts to that," she had said, shaking the ibex's arm off her shoulder.

"We," she had said, emphasizing the word as firmly as she could, "Play jazz."

He had merely shrugged and pointed to the exit that they were standing next to. "Say hello to the revenuers, then. The door's that way."

That had been only a few hours ago, and as she touched up her lipstick she wondered if it had been the right choice. Principles were wonderful in theory, but they didn't pay the bills. Then again, neither did jazz. Her day job in the steno pool did that, and that barely kept the lights on. The dress she was wearing, with its countless silver sequins, had cost almost a month's wages, but performers at the Tundra Lanes bowling alley had to look the part. Or rather, performers at the speakeasy under Tundra Lanes had to look the part. She had to be Gazelle, the jazz pianist and singer who could capture an entire room with her song, not Isabel, the plain and unremarkable gazelle (with a very distinct lower case G) who neither stood above or below her fellow secretaries. A significant part of it was the clothes; Gazelle's dress was heavy and uncomfortable, but the way the sequins caught the light and emphasized the curves that they did as little as possible to cover would have turned any male's head, prey or predator. Most of it, though, the part that really made a difference, was the attitude. Gazelle was bold, a force of nature that didn't back down any more than the sun could be asked not to shine, and she reached down deep to find that high wattage energy. "Come on, fellas," she said, trying to make her voice bright, and her smile in the mirror looked almost real, "Let's give them a show they won't forget."
Frank looked up from his bass; his crummy little apartment was in the Rain Forest District and the trip into Tundra Town always put the instrument out of tune. He gave her a wry grin. "How many this time? Five?"

Isabel was nobody's fool. Everyone, even the police, knew what it meant when the little sign that said "Closed for Private Engagement" appeared on the door of Tundra Lanes. No one, not even the most foolish drunk, would try to gatecrash mafia business. The fancy cars parked out back despite the bowling alley having closed hours ago would be ignored. The various mammals, all dressed in their best, would be likewise ignored by any passing police officer as they made their way to the back entrance of the bowling alley and disappeared down a set of stairs hidden in what looked like a janitor's closet. It wasn't the first time that her trio had been scheduled to play for one of those little meetings; usually it would be four or five mammals, sitting at the table furthest from the stage as they drank and smoked and discussed whatever it was that they were up to. It was a far cry from how the speakeasy normally ran, when dozens of mammals would fill the basement with their energy as they drank and laughed and danced the night away. Still, the polar bear who owned the place, Mr. Koslov, always paid better on the nights he conducted his meetings, and the subtext to those transactions was that they were being paid for their discretion as much as they were for their performance. Isabel, Bill, and Frank consciously made sure that they stayed as far away as possible, and Koslov would slip an extra five into the envelope he paid them with at the end of the night.

"Probably," she agreed.

Bill sighed from where he stood in front of the other mirror in what could only charitably be called the green room; it was little bigger than a closet and smelled strongly of potatoes. The tiger was fussing with his tie; unlike Frank, who refused to play any instrument other than his own, Bill was quite happy to use the drum set that the speakeasy kept onstage rather than lugging his own around town. It left him plenty of time to fuss over his appearance, and if there were a vainer tiger in all the city Isabel had yet to meet him. "Maybe we should have taken the gig at the Blind Tiger tonight," he said.

"You only like playing there 'cause Ethel gives you free shots of that swill you like," Frank shot back, not looking up from his bass.

"At least we'd have an audience besides tables and chairs," Bill said.

"Uh huh," Frank replied, sounding as skeptical as he possibly could, "You know she only likes you 'cause she can't see that ugly mug of yours."

Isabel shook her head. "Come on, fellas," she said, interrupting the tigers before Bill could respond. They could, and sometimes would, spend hours bickering; they never meant anything by it, but even if it was for an audience that could be counted on one hoof, a gig was a gig. "I'll check if they're ready for us."

She left the little green room, squeezing past Frank and his bass, but she was interrupted on her way to the stage by Mr. Koslov. As was typical for the polar bear, he was dressed in a somber suit all of black over a white dress shirt. The overall effect between the suit and his natural coloration was to make him appear entirely monochromatic, like a photograph come to life. She gave him a respectful little nod, but he surprised her by speaking. "Is hot, no?" Koslov asked.

She thought a moment before responding. It was not in Koslov's nature to make small talk and even though it was anything but warm in the speakeasy, she knew the massive polar bear wouldn't say it for no reason. "A little," she allowed cautiously.
"You and your tigers get some air. Cigarette break, maybe. Ten, fifteen minutes," the polar bear replied.

She could smell the sharp tang of alcohol on his breath, which was again unusual. Isabel didn't think she could remember ever having encountered any evidence that the bear drank, but the smell of whisky, the real stuff that came across the border, was unmistakable, and that made the decision for her.

"Sure, Mr. Koslov," she said.

He gave her a smile that struck her as somehow being sad. "I enjoy your singing, very much. I want you should know this," he said.

Isabel's heart had begun to pound in her chest, and she gave him a nod. "It's been a pleasure, Mr. Koslov," she said as calmly as she could manage, and it struck her that one way or another she would almost certainly never speak to him again.

She power walked back to the green room, kicking off her heels as she did so; she had never cared for them very much and it seemed as though she might have to run. "Frank. Bill. We're leaving. Now." she said, and to her great relief the two tigers understood the urgency in her voice and didn't give any kind of protest. With none of the usual care that Frank gave his precious bass he tossed it into its case and slammed the lid shut, and they made their way out of the green room, up the stairs, and outside the bowling alley.

The streets of Tundra Town were cold, as they always were no matter the time of year; the massive climate wall was easily visible from the bowling alley. It was one of the buildings relatively close to the wall and it was easily in the best shape out of any of its neighbors. Most of the buildings nearest the wall were shabby and decrepit, as anyone who had money and any sense stayed as far away from the wall as possible; only last year one of the tanks of refrigerant had sprung a leak and killed a dozen mammals in an apartment building built so close to the wall that they hadn't even bothered to put windows on the side of the building facing it. There were rumors, though, that the mafia either completely controlled or at least had access to the maintenance tunnels that ran under the wall, which made Isabel suspect that Mr. Koslov had bought the bowling alley because of where it was positioned relative the wall, not despite it.

Isabel repressed a shiver as she led Frank and Bill away from the bowling alley; she was neither made nor dressed for such cold weather, but she thought it wise to be as far away as possible. When she spared a glance back towards the building, she could see, by the dim light of the few flickering streetlights that worked in this part of town, a car pull up to the main entrance. It was difficult to see, as its headlights weren't on, but she thought it was a Camellac from how long it was and the rumble of the engine, which was nothing like the pathetic little flivver that Frank drove when he could keep it running. The car dipped as the doors along the side facing the bowling alley opened and mammals stepped out, but it was too dark and too far away for Isabel to so much as identify their species. "Is there a call box around here?" she asked, and it was only after she spoke that she realized she had been whispering, despite being at least half a block from the bowling alley.

Bill pointed up ahead. "Around the corner," he said, just as quietly, and Isabel ran for it, Bill and Frank following suit.

Isabel had unlatched the little box on its post and had pulled the phone out when she heard the sound that she knew she would never forget, no matter how long she lived. The speakeasy under Tundra Lanes had been built well, with thick concrete walls and layers of insulation that kept the sound of music and patrons alike from being too audible at the street level. Despite that, despite being hundreds of feet away from the building, the sharp crack of gunfire and the screams of mammals
were audible enough, and Isabel turned to face the tigers wide eyed. A bored sounding voice came faint and tinny from the receiver, barely audible over the electric hum of the line. "Zootopia Police. What's your emergency?"

Isabel licked her lips, which suddenly seemed incredibly dry. "Zootopia Police. What's your emergency?" the voice repeated, and she thought she heard a note of irritation in the voice.

"There's been a shooting," she managed at last, and her voice did not sound like her own to her ears; it was weak and trembling.

She took a breath and pulled her Gazelle voice from somewhere in her chest. "There's been a shooting," she repeated, her voice strong and firm, "Tundra Town Lanes, on Ivvavik Street."

**Author's Notes:** This story draws pretty heavily from what I consider to be one of the most interesting times in the history of the US: the era of Prohibition. In my last story, the version of Zootopia presented was very heavily based on London of the 19th century, while in this one it's based off of 1920s Chicago. As in my last story, I'll use these author's notes to provide some additional flavor and explanation to things that highlight the difference between the modern era and the past, particularly in regards to technology, social customs, and slang. These notes will never be necessary to understand the story, however, so feel free to skip them.

The 1920s were a time of incredible technological development, economic prosperity in the cities (until the stock market crash of 1929, at least), and social changes within the US. I'm trying to do my best to capture the spirit of the time. This story is set in 1927, which was firmly within the period of Prohibition, when the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution made the production, transport, and sale of alcohol illegal. The Volstead Act, which went into effect on January 20, 1920, served as the means of putting this into law and remained in effect until the adoption of the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933. By most measures, Prohibition was a disaster; organized crime flourished, particularly within cities like Chicago, and enforcement of the ban on alcohol was ineffectual at best. Speakeasies, illegal drinking establishments, were quite common particularly within large cities.

Isabel Antilopini is my interpretation of Gazelle as a jazz musician at the head of a trio with two tigers on the other instruments. Frank is named in reference to Frank R. Stockton, author of "The Lady or the Tiger?" and Bill is named in reference to William Blake, author of "The Tyger." Isabel is one of Shakira's middle names and Antilopini is the taxonomical tribe of gazelles. Steno pools don't really exist anymore, but in the time before word processors and desktop printing, most companies who processed a lot of correspondences employed large numbers of secretaries to take dictation and type up memos, letters, and proposals. It's not a job that paid particularly well, but it is the sort of job that a musician burning the candle at both ends could hold down during the day while practicing and performing at night.

Sequins were a popular decoration for dresses in the 1920s, but they weren't made out of plastic at that time. Instead, they were tiny metal discs, which made them expensive and heavy. In the 1930s, sequins made out of gelatin were invented, which were significantly lighter and cheaper, but they had a tendency to dissolve if they got too wet or too warm. A dance partner could therefore ruin a dress if he kept his hand in one place too long, which would also reveal how fresh he got. It wasn't until the 1950s that sequins would take their more or less modern form as being durable, light, and cheap.

Revenuers were what the government agents charged with enforcing the ban on alcohol were commonly called, so the agent is not so subtly telling Gazelle that he knows that her jazz group plays in the sort of establishments that could be raided.
Jazz music was to the 1920s much as rock and roll was to the 1950s. Particularly among older people, it was seen as immoral and not being "real" music. Jazz was frequently associated with speakeasies, giving it an extra edge of excitement. Gazelle's jazz trio is a classic jazz ensemble, as the combination of piano, bass (meaning a double bass, not a bass guitar), and drums was pretty typical. "Someone to Watch Over Me" is a real song, written in 1926 as part of a musical. It was originally written as a jazz number, but first performed as a ballad. It quickly became a jazz standard, and has been covered countless times since. It's a beautiful song, and I recommend that you give it a listen if you've never heard it before.

One of the things that I think Zootopia did well is that the relationship between predator and prey is not a one to one reflection of our world in terms of relations between a majority and a minority group. It's more nuanced, and while some people have claimed that this makes the movie racist or muddles its message, I would say that it provides a more thoughtful look at the divisions between different groups of people across many lines. That being said, one of the aspects of jazz that contributed to the moral panic around it was that it was historically black music. There were a number of white jazz musicians in the US, and some groups with black and white members, but that really only became common in the 1930s.

Bowling saw a surge of popularity in the 1920s; bowling alleys had frequently been part of saloons before Prohibition and when alcohol became illegal they started aggressively promoting themselves as wholesome, family-friendly entertainment to stay in business. In the US, at least, it's common now for bowling alleys to have bars, which means that they've more or less come full circle.

Referring to another speakeasy called the Blind Tiger is a bit of a joke, since a blind tiger was another slang term for a speakeasy. In this case, it's apparently run by an actual blind tiger.

Air conditioning and refrigeration started becoming more widely available in the 1920s, but the refrigerants used were typically toxic, flammable, or both. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which are relatively nontoxic and nonflammable, started being used after Thomas Midgley Jr. and his research team figured out how to make them in the necessary quantities in 1928. Unfortunately, CFCs massively contributed to the formation of the hole in the ozone layer, which is why they have been phased out. Interestingly enough, Thomas Midgley Jr. was also responsible for inventing leaded gasoline as a means to allow higher engine compression ratios without knocking, which drastically improved the performance of cars. Unfortunately, the lead in the gas was released along with the car's exhaust, where the lead could be absorbed by people and animals and cause neurological damage. The poor guy didn't set out to be an ecological menace, but his two biggest successes did not help. Back to the original point, in 1927 the Zootopia climate wall would be possible, but would require a massive amount of power and would use large quantities of something dangerous like ammonia or propane as the refrigerant. Therefore, in this story I think it's understandable why no one really wants to have a business or home next to the wall unless they have an ulterior motive.

Camellac is an awful pun on Cadillac, an American luxury car brand that has been operating since 1902. The car described is based on a 1927 Cadillac Series 314 Imperial Sedan, which had seating for 7. Its name came from its 314 cubic inch (5.15 liter) V8 engine delivering an amazing (for the time) 70 horsepower. That's kind of underwhelming now, but keep in mind that the Ford Model T, the car that most people would have been able to afford, only made 20 horsepower out of a 177 cubic inch (2.9 liter) 4 cylinder engine. Speaking of the Model T Ford, "flivver" was a slang term for them at the time, along with "Tin Lizzy."

While police call boxes are now commonly associated with the TARDIS from Doctor Who, they were quite real, particularly in the time before telephones were common in households and businesses. Chicago had police call boxes from about 1880, and in the 1920s they'd be more or less just a small box on a post, not something the size of a small shed like the British style police boxes.
Ivvavik Street is named in reference to a Canadian national park that is in fact part of the tundra.

Well, these notes ended up being rather lengthy. If you're still reading at this point, I'd appreciate any feedback that you have, positive or negative. This chapter was more or less the prologue; next week I'll be back with one from the perspective of one of the main characters. Until then, thanks for reading!
Judy Hopps had pinned the letter from the police academy above her bed in her shoe box of an apartment so that it was the first thing that she saw every morning and the last thing she saw every night. She had it memorized, of course, but more than just the few lines that it ran she could picture every detail of it: the little stray ink marks across the page, the way that the second "e" in meet was slightly lower than the first, and the way the "a" in admission had its center completely filled in. The letter was never far away from her thoughts; every time she was running and felt as though she could not go another lap, she would remember the letter and it would give her a second wind. Every time she was studying books of law late at night after everyone else in the drafty old apartment building had gone to sleep and thought that her eyes could not take in another word, she would remember the letter and force herself to go on.

Her entire life other mammals had told her that she could never become a police officer, that no bunny had ever been one before and that no bunny ever would. She had ignored them all, devoting herself entirely to her dream. Even her parents didn't understand her drive, and while being cautiously supportive they had joined the other mammals in Bunnyburrows warning her that she might not even be accepted to the police academy. Her parents had tried to convince her, if not to give up her dream, then to at least plan for what happened if she did fail. To Judy, however, failure had never been an option, and she had told them so.

She could vividly remember the day that the letter had arrived. It had been a fine summer day in the country, the planting over and the crops already starting to thrive under the June sun. It had been dazzlingly clear, and Judy had seen the dust cloud in the distance that accompanied the mail carrier as he made his route along the rutted dirt road that wound its way through Bunnyburrows long before she could hear the sound of his hooves or make out the little cart that he pulled. The letter hadn't been the only piece of mail that day; it had been accompanied by a Steers Roebuck catalog that had an image of a smiling deer doe pulling a pitcher of lemonade out of a little gleaming white refrigerator to serve her appreciative-looking family. Normally, the arrival of the Steers catalog would mean a fight between her younger siblings over who got to read it first that ended only when the catalog had been ripped apart into its different sections, but the letter from the police academy completely overshadowed the catalog, which had sat forgotten on the rough wooden table closest to the front door.

Other than the postmark with the return address of the police academy the letter was entirely unremarkable, just a plain envelope a little weathered by its journey through the postal system. One of Judy's youngest sisters had run off from her game of jacks to the fields, shrieking for everyone on the farm to hear that what she had called the police letter had arrived. Bunnies had poured into the kitchen, filling the cool underground room with their bodies and their voices, some demanding that she open the letter immediately and others calling for her to wait until everyone was present. Her mother and father had been two of the last to arrive, her father puffing and panting, the knees of his overalls stained with dirt from the weeding he had been in the middle of. Her mother's arms, Judy recalled, had been wet and covered with suds, bringing the harsh scent of soap flakes into the kitchen with her.

Judy had opened the envelope with trembling paws and when she managed to make her eyes focus on the words of the letter, she saw that all of those other mammals had been right. It was a rejection, and she would never forget the way her stomach had sank at reading the words:

Dear applicant,
We regret to inform you that you do not meet the standards for admission to the Zootopia Police Department Training Academy at this time. You are welcome to review the standards and re-apply next year. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Captain Joseph S. Ruminante

Her parents and some of her siblings had crowded closer around her as she opened it, and while she was taller than any of them it must have been entirely obvious what the letter said from the way that her ears had drooped and her face had fallen. "Jude..." her father had said hesitantly, one paw awkwardly outstretched for her shoulder but not making contact.

It was clear that he didn't know what to say, and neither did she. The kitchen had gone entirely silent, her audience looking around at each other wide-eyed. Judy had devoted her entire life to her dream, and there it was, in plain black and white, that she had been denied. "Well," she had said, plastering a smile on her face that felt phony as a three dollar bill, "I guess I'll be applying again next year."

She couldn't recall if anyone had tried to offer her words of comfort as she left the kitchen; all she remembered was the awful feeling of having failed that consumed her as she made her way to her bedroom and shut the door.

As Judy sat at her desk in her tiny bedroom, one of many that her father and grandfather had dug out of the very earth of Bunnyburrows itself, she had stared at the letter numbly. Her eyes had traced the words over and over again in the light that came through the small window at the top of one wall as though she could will them to change. It was obviously a form letter, since it didn't even include her name; they hadn't specified what standard she had failed to meet. Judy knew, however, that it was almost certainly not a standard that was written anywhere, just that whoever was in charge of admissions was just like every other mammal and didn't think that a bunny could be a police officer. As she sat looking at the letter she had heard, every now and then, the sound of footsteps going past her door and the muffled murmur of whispers too low to make out. Doubtlessly her family had been trying to determine what to do, if she should be left alone or not. She had never allowed herself to dwell on what would happen if the police academy had rejected her, but it had surprised even her that she wasn't sad. Even as she had read over the hateful words of the blandly written letter, which acted as though her scholastic achievements somehow fell short, her eyes were entirely dry. She had scowled down at the letter. She had been angry, angrier than she could ever remember feeling in her life, and her heart had burned with a passion at the injustice. If the academy thought that she wasn't good enough, she would show them that she was twice the mammal of any of the applicants that they had accepted. She would make them see that they had made a mistake and leave them no choice but to accept her when the applications opened again in '28. It had felt good, to be righteously angry, and she had suddenly seen the path before her that would lead her to her goal of becoming a police officer. She had picked up the letter and delicately folded it, putting it back in its envelope before tucking it away in one of her pockets. She had taken a deep breath and stood up, and when she had opened the door to her bedroom she had been unsurprised to see her parents waiting in the narrow and twisting hallway that ran through the home. They had been alone, and she had supposed that they had probably chased her siblings off.

"What are you going to do now, dear?" her mother had asked delicately once Judy was in the hallway with them.

It was a fair question. A year was a long time, and while Judy had known that her family would be happy to have her stay on the farm and work the fields with them, she had not been ready to give up on her dream. If the police academy had rejected her immediately after graduating college, she hadn't
thought that they would be any more likely to accept her the following year if the only change was that she had spent a year farming. "I'll apply to the Bureau of Prohibition," she had said, trying to sound firmly decisive.

Her father, and to a lesser extent her mother, had reacted as though she had announced her plans to jump into the old quarry. "The Bureau of Prohibition?" her father had asked, "Are... Are you serious? That's awful dangerous you know. All those gangs! And they're predators too! There's that terrible lion and—"

A small, petty part of Judy had wondered if his concern was motivated more by his weekly bridge games, where she was fairly sure that her father and his friends drank something a fair amount stronger than water, than it was from concern for her own well-being. That one of the mammals her father played bridge with had, about four or five years ago, abruptly switched from growing radishes, lettuce, and peas to corn and soon after had a brand new tractor was one of those things that everyone in Bunnyburrows knew but no one discussed. As quickly as the thought had come, though, she had squashed it. It had been uncharitable and her father deserved better; he didn't understand her dream, and he probably never would, but she knew that he was motivated by love even if she thought his concern was entirely misplaced. "Mr. Big was a shrew," she pointed out, cutting him off, "It's not all predators."

Even in Bunnyburrows, the conviction of the notorious mob boss and bootlegger had been a constant topic of discussion when it had happened back in '25. All of the papers from the city had carried the news, and even the Triburrows paper, which was little more than classified ads and local events, had included the latest updates. The farmers of Bunnyburrows had been split on the news; plenty of the more pious members of the community saw his conviction as the wages of his sins and the proper punishment for distributing alcohol, while others thought that bootlegging was a more or less victimless crime.

Even if bootlegging was a victimless crime, the shrew had been guilty of plenty of other crimes that weren't. Despite all of those crimes, which ran the gamut from extortion to conspiracy to commit murder, the only charge that had stuck was tax evasion. The little shrew had gotten careless and in his greed neglected to pay the taxes he owed for his legitimate businesses. Considering the way that the farmers grumbled about the taxes the revenuers collected from them, there was a fair amount of sympathy for the mob boss in the farming community, especially considering his well-documented philanthropy. So what if he ran a little alcohol and skipped some of his taxes? In some mammals' minds, he more than made up for it with his generous donations to worthy causes like orphanages and soup kitchens. "Well, there's plenty of others," her father had protested.

"I'm not going to try and make a career out of it," Judy had said, "I'll just do it until applications for the police academy open again. It'll be good experience, and I'll be fine."

The Bureau of Prohibition was always hiring, and their standards were significantly lower than the police academy. Her mother and father had exchanged a glance after she spoke, one of those wordless moments of communication that only two mammals who had spent so much time together could have. Her father had sighed, and then broke into tears. "If that's what you want," he had sobbed hopelessly, pulling her into a hug, "Just be safe, Jude. Be safe."

Her mother had joined the embrace, and the three bunnies had stood for a long moment in the hallway. "We love you, Judy," her mother had murmured.

Judy had taken the news of her rejection from the police without a single tear, but the simple and raw power of her parents' love had brought a lump to her throat and her view of the hallway had become somewhat blurry. "I love you too," she had whispered back, her voice hoarse.
When Judy's alarm clock went off and she woke up to the sight of the letter above her bed, she actually smiled. *Today will be different,* she thought. It had been exactly a month to the day since she had started at the Bureau, and she would, at long last, get a real case. Her boss had promised it, that after a month's time she would be assigned a field case so long as her work in the interim was exemplary. Judy didn't think she had to worry about that despite how tedious the tasks that she had been assigned were. For the most part, she spent her time listening to wire recordings of phone taps, carefully transcribing the conversations. Even with her excellent hearing she had to strain at the words, which had a tendency to be faint and tinny, losing most of the cues that would let her know which mammal on the call was speaking. Otherwise, she spent her time cross-referencing reports, which, while equally tedious, actually helped her learn more about the major players in Zootopia's thriving bootlegging scene and didn't leave her with a headache at the end of the day. After a month of doing all of her work from the unimpressive Bureau office, she was desperate for something more than glorified secretarial work, and knowing that she would have that chance put an extra spring in her step as she went about her morning routine.

Old Mrs. Potter, Judy's teacher for the entire time she had spent in school in Bunnyburrows, had once tactfully assessed Judy as more than making up with enthusiasm for what she lacked in talent at singing. It had been true when she was six, and it was still true almost two decades later. As Judy got dressed in her sensible blouse and skirt (which, coming as it did to just below her knees was perfectly modest by the standards of the city but would have been rather daring by the standards of Bunnyburrows), a bit of song ran through her head, and she at first hummed it before breaking into song somewhat off-key.

"*He made a change and said I would not do,*

*So now I'm going to make some changes, too.*

*Why, there's a change in the weather, there's a change in the sea,*

*So from now on there'll be a change in me.*

*My walk—"*

She was interrupted by a furious banging on the paperboard-thin wall that separated her apartment from the one next to it. "*Dry up, rabbit!*" came the somewhat groggy voice of her neighbor, "*Mammals are trying to sleep!*"

"Sorry!" she said back, her ears curling and flushing in embarrassment.

She hadn't realized just how loudly she had been singing, and it was quite early in the morning. "*Don't be sorry, be quiet!*" shouted her neighbor's roommate.

"*Now you're being rude!*" the other replied.

"*You started it!"* the first one shouted back.

Judy had never quite been able to tell which of them was speaking when their voices carried through the wall, which was a problem that arose with an unfortunate frequency. She had heard one of her other neighbors refer to the pair as a matched set of confirmed bachelors, and she wondered sometimes why neither one of them moved out and saved everyone on the floor from their constant arguments. The building was cheap, it was true, but surely there had to be somewhere else one of them could move. Then again, considering her own finances, perhaps they couldn't. Judy tuned out the squabbling of the kudu and the oryx as she set to her breakfast of a slightly stale bagel, eaten at room temperature with a meager dollop of margarine as white as the fine plates her mother only
brought out for Christmas and Easter. A toaster and a refrigerator would have been nice to have, but they simply weren't possible on her salary; she'd have to be grateful for the lone light bulb in her apartment and the fact that the communal showers had hot water that was more or less reliable. Judy finished her breakfast and then brushed her teeth while carefully checking her appearance in one of the few mirrors in the communal bathroom that was at the right height for her. Once she was satisfied that she was ready she made her way down the rickety staircase and left the building.

Nature, or what little of it was apparent in the city, seemed to be agreeing with her mood; the sun was still rising through a few puffy clouds and she could tell that the day would be pleasantly cool. Even the wind was blowing the right direction, moving across the lake rather than off of it, so that it didn't bring the horrible stench of the not-too-distant slaughterhouses where hundreds, maybe thousands, of chickens were butchered every day. The first time that the wind had been blowing the wrong way had been an unpleasant reminder of one of the reasons her apartment was so cheap, and she pushed down the memory of her revulsion. She couldn't smell it at the moment, and besides, predators had to eat too; if anything she should be thanking them for driving down the prices of apartments in the area. If nothing else, her apartment was only two stops by train away from the Zootopia office of the Bureau of Prohibition, and Judy joined the throngs of mammals making their way to the nearest station.

Judy always left herself plenty of time to get to work, and was typically one of the first to arrive and one of the last to leave every night. Just like every other day she managed to squeeze onto the train, and even managed to get a seat. She sat and watched the city stream past the window, her mind already going forward to the office. Her work ethic had already won her the praise of the chief, and she hoped to demonstrate in the field that her talents weren't limited to the tasks at which she had previously been assigned. After all, a letter of recommendation from Dawn Bellwether, chief of the Zootopia office of the Bureau of Prohibition, would surely carry some weight with the police academy. All she had to do was earn it, and there was no doubt in her mind that she was up to the task.

**Author's Notes:** Continuing what I started with the first chapter, each chapter of this story will be titled with the name of a period appropriate song that's relevant either by its title or lyrics, although I have cheated a little with some of them in terms of the year that they were released. This chapter is named after the song "There'll Be Some Changes Made," which was a major hit for singer Ethel Waters in 1921, and is the song that Judy sings a snippet of before being interrupted. Give it a listen! I've completely fallen in love with the music of the 1920s myself in the course of my research for this story.

Steers Roebuck is a very mild pun on Sears, Roebuck, and Company, which ran a massive mail order business at the time that was essentially the equivalent of Amazon today; it was possible to buy just about anything, including houses, out of the catalog. Consumer refrigerators were available for sale in 1927, but were extremely expensive and most rural areas in the US didn't have electricity anyway. Still, considering the limited media available to most people in rural locations, Sears catalogs sometimes served as a form of escapism and it shouldn't be too surprising that a large family would fight over who got to look at them first.

The description of Judy's rejection letter is accurate to what a mimeographed letter would likely look like if it wasn't one of the first copies printed. Mimeographs were in common use by the 1920s, and the way they worked is pretty simple. A stencil is created by loading a specially prepared sheet (typically waxed paper or more expensive but more durable metal foil) into a typewriter and typing the message to be duplicated. The strikes of the typewriter against the stencil create holes in the stencil, and the stencil is then wrapped around an ink-filled drum. Blank pieces of paper are put between that ink-filled drum and a pressure roller, which forces ink through the holes in the stencil.
and creates a copy of the original. Of course, the stencil doesn't last forever, and as it degrades lines of the text may start sagging and letters that contain a closed loop on the stencil break so that the loop is entirely filled with ink when it's printed.

From the movie, I got the impression that the Mammal Inclusion Initiative is something relatively recent, and I don't think Judy would have been admitted to the police academy without it. In the US, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned employers from discriminating against applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. In 1927, however, employers were perfectly free to discriminate however they wished, so I think it makes sense that in that time period she would have been rejected out of hand for being a bunny.

The Bureau of Prohibition was pretty sharply criticized by the public for what was perceived as its lax standards in hiring agents, and the tendency of those agents to be blatantly corrupt, excessively violent, or both. Judy's plan, as outlined in this chapter, to serve as a Prohibition agent for a time before reapplying to the police academy in the hopes of the experience proving she has what it takes is therefore pretty optimistic. The Bureau of Prohibition itself started in 1920 as the Prohibition Unit under the Bureau of Internal Revenue, now the Internal Revenue Service. In April of 1927, a few months before this story starts, the Prohibition Unit was renamed the Bureau of Prohibition and made a part of the Department of the Treasury. Major cities would have their own bureau offices as described in this chapter.

"Dry up" is 1920s slang for "shut up," although unlike some other 1920s slang that one's fairly obvious from context. "Confirmed bachelor" is a phrase that has historically been used for a man who never married, sometimes with the implication being that the reason for it is that the man in question is gay.

Judy's financial woes are pretty true to what a real Prohibition Agent would have encountered; they were not paid very well, which significantly contributed to the tendency of some agents to extort speakeasies or accept bribes to look the other way. Her breakfast of a bagel and margarine would probably be about all she could afford. Margarine was significantly cheaper than butter in the 1920s, but farmers and their lobbies fought bitterly against what they correctly viewed as a competitor. For a brief period of time in the late 19th century, some states actually required that margarine be colored pink, which the dairy industry lobbyists thought would make it appear unappetizing. That was struck down in court in 1898, but laws against coloring margarine yellow to make it look like butter stayed on the books significantly longer; it wasn't until 1967 that the last state (Wisconsin, not surprising considering their dairy industry) ended their ban. The solution margarine manufacturers came up with in the interim was to include a yellow dye packet that consumers could mix in themselves to turn the naturally white margarine a buttery yellow. Since the coloring didn't affect the flavor at all, some people simply didn't bother to mix it in. Somewhat amusingly, though, butter manufacturers then and to this day add dyes to make it a more appealing shade of yellow, so it was a pretty clear bit of hypocrisy.

One of the other issues that the general public had with Prohibition Agents was their use of wiretapping of telephone lines to get information. The case of Olmstead v. United States, in 1928, upheld the authority of the government to wiretap private telephone lines without a warrant and use the information gathered that way, a decision that would stand until Katz v. United States, in 1967, after which wiretapping required a warrant. The modern debate over warrantless wiretapping and government surveillance is, therefore, not anything new; many of the arguments, on both sides, came up almost a hundred years ago.

In terms of the actual technology used in the 1920s, the term wiretap was entirely literal, using an electrical tap on the wires of a phone line. Conversations could be listened in on and transcribed in real time, or they could be recorded. There were three main recording technologies available:
phonographic techniques, which recorded sound by using a stylus to create grooves in the recording medium; sound on film, which converted the audio signal to a light intensity signal and recorded that on film, where the process could be reversed for playback; and wire recording, which ran a metal wire across a magnetic head to the electrical signal of an audio input, creating a magnetic pattern that could be read for playback. All of these methods were entirely analog, and they all had their advantages and drawbacks. Phonographic recordings had good sound quality, but were limited by the size of the disc or cylinder that the sound was recorded onto, and could typically only be a few minutes long. Sound on film had decent sound quality (it quickly became the dominant method for motion pictures with sound, superseding the cumbersome synchronization of film with a phonographic disc), but the film itself was expensive. Wire recordings, at least in the 1920s, didn't have very good sound quality and relied on expensive recording and playback devices, but the storage medium of metal wire was extremely cheap and could easily record hours of content. Wire recordings are therefore what I picked as the technology used; it's a reasonable choice as despite the high upfront cost the cost of actually making a recording is much lower than the others. Still, transcribing hours of scratchy audio would be a terrible job that I think most people would very quickly get fed up with.

In the 1920s, Chicago was the location of a large number of slaughterhouses; the title "Hog butcher to the world" that Carl Sandburg gave it in his 1914 poem "Chicago" was very well earned. Naturally, in this universe slaughterhouses would not be killing pigs and cows, but even with only 10% of the population being predators I think that there would still be sufficient demand for chicken or other poultry to mean that there would be a lot of slaughterhouses. Indeed, when you consider that in the real world large predators like tigers can eat up to 25 pounds (about 11 kilograms) of flesh per day, there would probably be a massive demand for it.
Judy took the same route that she always did once the train arrived at her stop, but she paused at one of the newsstands near the exit of the station. The headline of the *Times* screamed for attention; there, in massive letters across the many copies on display it read: "Six Dead in Tundra Town Speakeasy Shooting."

She bought a copy of the paper and leaned against the wall of the station, flipping through the article briefly, safely out of the path of the many mammals hustling about their business. There wasn't much to accompany the lurid headline; at least at the time that the paper had been printed, the police had refused to comment, leaving the reporter to spin a weak story out of details that all seemed to have come second-hand or from unnamed anonymous sources. The only detail of any worth, to her mind, was that one of the six mammals killed had been Antonin Koslov. She recognized the name from an affidavit she had read from a former gangster attempting a plea deal; it had claimed that Koslov had been one of Mr. Big's most trusted lieutenants. Judy frowned as she folded the paper back up, tucking it under her arm and resuming her walk to the Bureau office. As she recalled, no charges had been brought against Koslov following the series of arrests and convictions that brought down Mr. Big's criminal empire, but the polar bear had remained under Bureau surveillance. Judy hadn't read any of those reports, but she thought it suspicious that, in the two years that had passed, no action had been taken. It didn't seem likely that he would simply happen to be in a nearly empty speakeasy that happened to be attacked by what could only have been a gang, and she made a mental note to dig further into the records once she was in the office.

It was a short walk from the train station to the Bureau office, and Judy was too consumed by her thoughts to notice any of the sights that had amazed her when she had first arrived in the city. After a month, dodging the streetcars and automobiles that choked the wide streets was simply second nature, and she didn't pause to look into any of the storefront windows where a dazzling variety of goods were sold. Her destination, unfortunately, was not one of the many amazingly tall buildings with their simple yet elegant designs, the windows orange in the light of the rising sun.

The James Buchanan Federal Building was squat and ugly, three stories of drab brick with crumbling marble decorations that had yellowed in the air of the city. On that morning, however, not even the gloomy building, with its oppressively narrow windows and generally dingy atmosphere, could bring Judy down. The open office space, with the desks all neatly arranged in a massive grid, was completely empty; she had arrived a couple hours before the daily morning meeting, before anyone else was at their desks. Judy spent the time at her desk sorting files and looking for anything she could link back to Koslov. Although she was typically only asked to cross-reference a few given files against each other, she refused to allow herself the limitation that would have vastly simplified her work and instead considered all of the files that she had read. By the official reckoning, there were four major bootlegging operations left in Zootopia after Mr. Big's racket had been crushed and countless smaller operations. The allegiances and rivalries between the small time players and the larger operations were ever-shifting and about impossible to understand where they stood at any given moment; the best that could be done was to see where they had been. Koslov appeared to exist in something of a blind spot in the documentation, which was again concerning. What was clear to her, however, even after only a month on the job, was that the situation was escalating. The shooting at Tundra Town Lanes was the second shooting that week following one in Sahara Square, and there had been nearly a dozen more over the previous month that it seemed could only be related to gangsters.

Judy realized that she had been absentmindedly chewing on her pencil as she read and pulled it out of her mouth. It was a bad habit that had ruined countless pencils, and her instinctive desire to gnaw
to prevent her teeth from growing too long was no excuse. Besides, she had the feeling that her coworkers saw it as unprofessional. She had never gotten the feeling that she was being deliberately excluded—they were, for the most part, friendly enough—but there was still a sense of distance between her and them, as though they didn’t fully trust her. The other Bureau agents were mostly sheep, which might have explained part of her feeling outside their clique, but she felt that being completely untested out in the real world was the larger part of it. That would hopefully change soon, though, and Judy's thoughts turned to what Bellwether might assign her before she pushed them down and returned to her review of reports.

About twenty minutes after Judy had sat down at her desk the sheep who had the desk next to her arrived, and Judy greeted him brightly. He simply grunted a response and went immediately to flipping through his inbox; Judy hadn't expected much more from him, as she didn't think that Douglas Ramses had ever spoken to her without a reason. From some of her more talkative coworkers, she knew that the taciturn sheep was a veteran of the Great War, which she supposed probably explained his missing left arm. It wasn't the sort of thing that she would have asked him about even if he had been friendlier. Although Judy didn't know anyone from Bunnyburrows who had served on the front lines since bunnies had been excluded from the draft, it didn't take much tact to imagine that it might be a sensitive topic.

Although Douglas had been the first agent to arrive after Judy, he certainly wasn't the last, and the office gradually filled with agents until it was time for the morning meeting. Promptly at nine o'clock, Bellwether emerged from her office; Judy wasn't sure exactly how early the ewe arrived every day, but she had never been early enough to beat her. As she always was, Dawn Bellwether was conservatively dressed, this time in an austere gray dress, the wool atop her head pulled back into a tight bun. The little ewe held in her hooves a packet of files, and Judy leaned forward eagerly. There were times when Bellwether reminded her of a schoolteacher; there was just something about the bright tone she typically took that called to mind a teacher explaining something to a class. Indeed, the way that Bellwether asked for status updates from the agents in the middle of assignments reminded her of nothing less than a teacher asking a student to report on their homework. Judy had to force her leg to stop bouncing with impatience as she waited for Bellwether to begin distributing new assignments. She gave them out to the more experienced agents first, assignments that ran from tailing suspects to coordinating with the police to raid a warehouse operated by bootleggers. At long last, though, Bellwether had only a single file in her hooves, and she turned her attention to Judy. "Agent Hopps," she said, "For your first field assignment, there's a club in Tundra Town I want you to investigate."

Judy's heart leaped into her throat. Surely Bellwether could only mean the speakeasy that the shooting of six mammals had occurred at the previous day; she could not have hoped for a better first assignment to demonstrate what she was capable of. When she opened the folder, though, Judy had a moment of puzzlement before her heart sank. The assignment named a jazz club called the Thief of the Night as the target, while the speakeasy the shooting had occurred at had not been named other than being under a bowling alley called Tundra Lanes. The outline of the assignment was blandly stated and perfectly clear; she was simply to determine if the Thief of the Night served alcohol in violation of the law without calling any attention to herself and report back with her findings.

Bellwether was already making her way back to her office, but Judy could not stop herself from calling after her. "Ma'am, what about the shooting at the speakeasy in Tundra Town yesterday? You didn't assign anyone to that."

Everyone, even the mammals on their way out of the office area, stopped and turned to look at Judy, including Bellwether herself. "We'll get involved when we get called in," Bellwether said, sounding unperturbed, "Agent Hopps, why don't you come into my office for a quick minute?"
"You know, Judy, we have a lot in common," Bellwether said once she had taken a seat and the office door was closed, "We both came from farms... Both were the first mammals in our families to go to college... Both the first to move to the big city."

Bellwether raised her arms and swept them around like a queen taking in her lands, "This could all be yours, in a decade or so."

The sheep wore a wry smile as she said it, but Judy couldn't blame her. Bellwether's office was easily the nicest in the building, but that wasn't saying much. It was a tiny room with sagging wooden floors and thick water pipes running from floor to ceiling in one corner. The large but plain desk, unadorned except for a framed photograph of Bellwether and her family but otherwise covered with paperwork, took up so much of the limited floor space that the rickety chair Judy sat in was just barely out of the path of the door's arc. The room's lone window had been bricked up when an addition to the building had been made, tumor-like, and the only light came from a dim green-shaded lamp. The cheerless walls of rough red brick were only marginally livened up by a cross-stitch of Ephesians 5:18 with a floral border that hung where the window had once been. "I don't want to see you making the same mistakes I did," Bellwether continued, her tone sympathetic.

Judy was not quite sure how to respond, but Bellwether took the burden off of her by abruptly asking what seemed like a total non sequitur. "Did your family raise chickens?"

"No, we didn't," Judy responded, puzzled as to what possible relevance the question could have.

"Mine did," Bellwether said, "For the eggs, of course. Grew wheat, too."

Bellwether got an almost faraway look in her eyes and wasn't looking directly at Judy as she continued. "We used to have a farmhand. About the biggest wolf you ever saw, back about the size of a kitchen table. Jim, he was called. Not too much going on upstairs, bless his heart, but that's a pred for you. He did alright at planting and harvesting; that pup could work all day. No complaints there."

As Bellwether spoke, it seemed to Judy that a bit of the country drawl that the sheep must have once had crept back into her voice. "One day, though, my sister took ill. She was the one who usually minded the chickens, you see. She couldn't even get out of bed, the poor dear, so Jim said he'd take care of them. He'd never done it before, but there's not much to it, is there? Even a wolf ought to be able to get it right."

Bellwether chuckled and shook her head. "Wasn't even half an hour later we all heard the commotion from the coops. When I got there, Jim was holding a chicken in one paw and all the other chickens were squawking and flapping like it was Judgement Day."

She paused, and shifted her gaze to face Judy. "Jim had picked up that chicken like he might have picked up a hoe. He broke its neck and he didn't even realize it. He was doing as best he knew and didn't understand why the chickens got all riled. The chickens knew, though. They could tell one of their own was dead, and they panicked. That's what chickens do, you know."

Bellwether allowed a long moment of silence to pass, and when she spoke again, her tone was kindly. "Look at it from where I sit. You're good at seeing things in reports. Your transcriptions of phone calls are right on the money, I hear. But neither one of those is like field work, and when you think about what might happen if something goes wrong... Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?"

Judy nodded. The folksy story hadn't been necessary to get the point across, but even while she wished Bellwether would give her more meaningful work that would really make a difference, she
understood. "You want me to start with something simple, to see how I do."

Bellwether positively beamed. "See, that's why I like you, Judy. Now, make sure you dress the part tonight. You'll stick out like a sore thumb, going into a jazz club looking like that."

The sheep stood up, and Judy took it as her cue to do the same. Before she could so much as get one paw on the doorknob, however, Bellwether spoke again. "There's just one more little thing," she said, her tone almost apologetic.

Judy turned back to face the ewe. "You can question my judgement all you like in your reports," Bellwether said, "Gosh, so long as that door's closed, you can question it all you like in here. But out there?"

Bellwether pointed one hoof towards the main office area. When she continued, all traces of the country warmth and the schoolteacher-like brightness had vanished from the sheep's voice, and her eyes were steely. "You never question my judgement out there. Not in front of the other agents. Not in front of anyone. Understand?"

"I... Yes ma'am," Judy replied, trying to keep her face from showing her emotions while internally she reevaluated her opinion of her boss.

It had seemed to her before that the ewe was a passionate believer in Prohibition, one who took the limited power of her office seriously in the pursuit of what she considered to be right. Now, however, she wondered whether Bellwether cared more about saving face or doing her job. Any further thoughts were cut off by the ewe, who smiled as though nothing had happened. "I'm glad to hear it, Agent Hopps," she said sweetly, "Would you mind sending Agent Ramses in? He owes me a toxicology report."

"Three dollars?" Judy asked, somewhat incredulously.

It had been several hours since Bellwether had called Judy into her office, and she had found it difficult to focus on the meager file she had been given to prepare with. Her assignment was as simple as Bellwether had made it out to be; she was to go to the jazz club and surreptitiously determine whether or not they were serving alcohol. It was perfectly clear, both from those instructions and from her conversation with Bellwether, that she was to attempt nothing else, which was why she found herself standing in front of the Thief of the Night hoping that the Bureau would reimburse her expenses.

The mammal at the door, a thickly built badger, nodded. "A dollar cover and a two drink minimum," he said, sounding bored, "You paying or what?"

At the very least, the badger didn't think she stood out. Judy had taken Bellwether's advice and borrowed some of the clothing that the Bureau of Prohibition maintained for the purpose of disguises (and, she suspected, because some of the agents used the Bureau to pay for clothes they intended to wear only once in their personal lives). She felt absolutely ridiculous, though, dressed as a flapper. Her ears were forced down her back under a little white cloche hat, which matched the rather sheer fabric of her dress. The dress itself contributed the most to her discomfort, as it had a plunging neckline that left her arms completely bare and the hem was only just below her knees. The rest of her discomfort came from the silk stockings, which looped around the arches of her feet so that she wouldn't have to wear shoes with them. The stockings itched abominably, and the thought of having to wobble along in heels would have been a step too far for her. The only part of her clothing that she actually liked was the purple silk sash she had tied around her waist; it matched her eyes and probably cost far more than she made in a month.
Altogether, though, while it might have been the appropriate look for a jazz club, it was completely wrong for Tundra Town. She had been freezing her tail off even on the relatively short walk from the train station to the club, and she wished that she had thought to bring her galoshes. They might not have gone with the dress, but at least it would have kept her toes from making contact with the frozen ground. She was grateful that the file she had been given had contained excellent directions to where the club was located, as she doubted that she would have found it otherwise; the part of Tundra Town that she was in didn't seem to maintain its street lights very well, and in the darkness of night the small sign that read "The Thief of the Night" over a stairwell down into the basement of an otherwise unremarkable building was almost completely invisible.

Judy was eager to get out of the cold and reluctantly pulled a two-dollar bill and four quarters from her purse and paid the badger. Before opening the door, he gave her two wooden tokens, each about the size of a nickel but more than twice as thick. "Your drink vouchers," he said, sounding completely disinterested that she had chosen to pay, "You can buy more inside."

The tokens had the name of the club branded onto one side, while on the other they had five digit numbers; one of them read 69042 and the other 50198. The numbers meant nothing to her, and she kept the tokens loosely grasped in her palm as she made her way into the club. The interior of the Thief of the Night was dimly lit, the low light from a number of shaded lamps filtered through the bluish haze of cigarette smoke that hung in the air. The night, it seemed, was just getting started, for the club was still largely empty; she could easily see from one side of the basement to the other. A long and low bar ran along one of the walls, opposite which, on the far side of the room, was a stage. In between there were a number of small tables and chairs, although the center of the room had been left empty, presumably as a dance floor. The brick walls of the basement had been covered with photographs of what must have been jazz musicians, and Judy noted that a few folding wooden screens had been set up around some of the tables along the walls to provide a little more privacy. The pillars supporting the low ceiling were mostly hidden behind ornamental plants in large copper pots polished to a mirror shine.

Onstage, there was a drum set and a number of other instruments off in the left corner, barely visible in the dim lighting. In the other corner, there was a piano, harshly illuminated by a brilliantly white spotlight. The mammal behind the piano was the only musician onstage at the moment, and though his audience couldn't have been more than about thirty mammals, most of which seemed to be predators more interested in their own low conversations than the live music, he was pouring his heart into his playing. The pianist was a raccoon, somewhat short for his species and oddly pale. It might have been a trick of the light, considering the glare from the spotlight, but she didn't think so; he appeared almost cream colored, and the coloration around his eyes was a pale brown rather than the black typical for his species. The pianist's suit jacket sat crumpled on the piano bench next to him, and the straps of his suspenders hung loosely from the waist of his pants only inches from the ground, his dress shirt open at the throat with an undone green bow tie looped around his neck. His fingers danced across the keys with the surety of experience, calling forth something lively and playful that Judy thought she vaguely recognized as Purrshwin.

If nothing else, Judy thought she would at least enjoy the music while she went about her task, which she saw no reason to delay at. It didn't feel all that much warmer inside the club than it had been outside, and the sooner she finished her assignment the sooner she could leave. Judy sidled up to the bar, which was actually at exactly the right height for her. It was one of the things that she hadn't given much thought to until after leaving Bunnyburrows; there everything had been perfectly sized for bunnies, but in the city most everything was at least a little too short or more commonly a little too tall. She hated having her eye level under the top of a counter as it made her feel like a kit, so she was grateful that, no matter what else she thought of her assignment, it was at least somewhere she was the average height. The bartender was a slim opossum, smartly dressed in a black suit with a matching bow tie. Judy caught his attention and asked what the bar served.
He jerked one thumb over his shoulder, indicating a tin sign on the wall behind the bar. It showed the words "Neighi Served Here" superimposed over an image of a seated horse mare, her skirt provocatively raised to show one stocking to the knee. "Any flavor Neighi you want," he said.

"Is that all?" she asked, doing her best to give her words a coy air.

"Neighi or ice water," the opossum replied, "So what'll it be?"

Judy bit back a sigh. Certainly, she hadn't expected it to be as easy as the opossum willingly offering her alcohol, although that would have made her job a lot easier.

"Ginger ale," she said, giving over one of her drink vouchers.

The opossum efficiently filled a glass with ice and poured the bottle of ginger ale over it, adding a straw with a mild flourish. Judy accepted the glass and positioned herself at one of the small high top tables near to the bar so that she could keep an eye on it without standing out. She was sure that, if the club did serve alcohol, it had something to do with the drink vouchers, and she ran her fingers over the one she had left. Even on closer inspection, nothing about the token stood out. She could see where the wood had been burned by the brand and could feel the slight impression it had left. The numbers on the back, she noted, were not quite even, some a bit high and some a bit low, and the spacing between the numbers wasn't quite regular either. It made her think that they had been added one digit at a time, unlike the logo on the front which must have been branded by a single custom made piece. The wood itself was also unremarkable, a piece of pine that had gone somewhat gray with age and handling.

Since no one had gone to the bar to order a drink after she had, she sipped at her ginger ale and looked around the club, trying to catch anything else that might be a tip off. Perhaps there was a hidden room where alcohol was served or the tokens were intended to be used as signals to the wait staff. She looked around the room as casually as possible, trying to seem like she was just enjoying her drink and the music. The other mammals in the club seemed to be doing the same, but as she scoped out the room her attention was suddenly caught by one of the tables that had a wooden screen part of the way around it. The screen had been set up so that it would not block the view of the stage from the table, and it was only because her own table was closer to the stage than the other that she was able to see the mammal in it. There was no question in her mind, though, that the wolverine, nattily dressed except for the somewhat battered felt hat on the table in front of him, was Thomas "Crazy" Carajou. He looked exactly like the photograph she had seen, enormous and shaggy with a chunk missing from his right ear and a scar on the same side of his muzzle that twisted his mouth upwards into a hideous parody of a smirk. From what she had read, Judy knew that he had once been an enforcer for Mr. Big with a fearsome reputation for the violence he was capable of when his boss demanded it or when the wolverine simply felt like it. After the collapse of Mr. Big's empire, Carajou was suspected to have found work for the gang that ran most of the rackets on the South Side of the city, but there had never been anything positively linking him to having continued a life of crime.

A thrill of excitement ran through Judy, even as Carajou simply sat alone at his table, occasionally sipping at his own drink. Perhaps the wolverine was simply a fan of jazz, but she doubted it. More likely he was at the Thief of the Night on business of some sort, and she imagined what the possibilities could be. Perhaps he was meeting a contact to receive a job, or was waiting for payment for one already completed. It was true that Judy had been told only to determine whether or not the club served alcohol, but any information that she could gather on the wolverine would surely be incredibly valuable, and she could watch him in addition to watching the bar.

As the minutes went past, however, there was no meaningful activity from either. A quarter of an
hour passed without anything more exciting than a ferret ordering an orange Neighi from the bar after complaining bitterly about the cost and Carajou sneezing, but Judy maintained her vigil. She was so split between trying to keep an eye and ear on both the opossum tending bar and the wolverine sitting alone that she completely missed the buck who had approached her until he gave a little cough to catch her attention. He was probably about her age, perhaps somewhat younger, dressed in a luxurious coat of turkey feathers that went down so far that his legs couldn't be seen and only the tips of his red and white spectator shoes were visible under the hem. From what she could see of his face and paws, his fur was mostly gray, speckled with red, and he brought with him the vaguely spicy scent of the pomade he had used to slick back the tuft of fur between his long and floppy ears. "Hey there," he said, "You here by yourself?"

The attention was somewhat flattering, even if the buck did strike her as being something of a jelly-bean. He seemed to have a slender build under his enormous coat, and looked like the sort of buck who had never done an honest day's work with his paws in his entire life. Judy's pursuit of her dream to become a police officer had completely precluded her from considering any kind of serious romance; even if she had managed to find a buck who didn't think her dream job was ridiculous (which she hadn't), there were far too many does she had gone to school with who had ended up pregnant by high school or college sweethearts for her to risk it. "I'm waiting for a friend," she said coolly.

"Another doe?" the buck asked hopefully, with what he must have thought a charming smile, "I'm sure she can't be as pretty as you."

"Applesauce," she replied dismissively, although she gave him a small smile of her own in return as her mind raced furiously, "She's no chunk of lead, if you like squirrels."

It had occurred to her that a college age bunny in a jazz club was probably looking for drinks at least as much as he was looking for companionship, and he might be exactly what she needed. The buck seemed blissfully unaware of her thoughts, because he just gave an appreciative little chuckle. "Just bunnies for me," he said, and she saw his eyes dip down the front of her dress before going back up to meet her eyes, as though he had somehow mastered something no other male ever had and could leer at does without them noticing.

"You come here often?" she asked, taking a small sip of her ginger ale through the straw.

The buck laughed. "That's supposed to be my line, I think. I haven't seen you here before."

"Marion Lapis," Judy invented on the spot.

"Charles Redrock," he said, "But folks just call me Red."

"Well, Red," Judy leaned in, "Do you know how a bunny could get something a little... stronger here?"

She held up her glass of ginger ale and gave it a little shake, sending beads of condensation flying off and making the ice cubes inside tinkle musically. Red grinned widely, and leaned in himself, reducing the distance between them to mere inches. "I don't know from nothing," he said playfully, sliding his eyes over her body in a way that made her have to repress a shudder, "But my memory might get a bit better after a dance."

That was something of a problem for Judy. Her trip to the Thief of the Night was the first time she had ever gone to a jazz club and she had no idea how to dance to jazz. Besides, from the way that Red had looked at her she didn't trust the eager buck to keep his paws to himself. That gave her a different idea, though, and she looked up at him. "I didn't come here to dance," she said, and then
lowered her voice to a whisper, "My friend won't mind if I leave without her. Did you come here alone?"

The buck's eyes widened and he gave an involuntary glance backwards. Over his shoulder, on the other side of the room, she saw three other mammals who must have been his friends, similarly dressed in flashy coats of turkey feathers. Red swallowed hard, and Judy got the idea that he might not be the cake-eater he was clearly trying to project himself to be. "Nah, my chums won't mind," he said, and she heard a quiver of excitement and anxiety in his voice, "A drink before we blow this place?"

Judy nodded, and Red was practically babbling in his haste to explain how to get one. "You still got one of those tokens? It's real easy like. Those numbers on the back, you just add 'em up, and keep adding until you got one number."

Judy opened her paw to expose her remaining token, and he eagerly grabbed it with clammy fingers and fumbled with it before showing her the side with the numbers. "This one, see? 69042, you just do the math and, um..."

Red trailed off, apparently too occupied with other thoughts to do the mental math before he said, somewhat too loud, "Three!"

In a lower but still excited voice, he continued, "So you just give it over to the bartender with the numbers up and order the ice water and you just say something with the number three in it like, I dunno, 'Did the Sox have three runs today' and you get moonshine on the rocks."

He paused and took a deep breath after his rather extensive run-on sentence, apparently quite eager to get on with it. Judy was rather impressed; it was a reasonably clever way to discreetly serve alcohol. The club could, and probably would, claim that the numbers on the back of the tokens were to prevent mammals from making their own, and it seemed all but impossible for someone to get the code right without knowing it. She wanted to confirm it herself, though, after which it would simply be a matter of figuring out how to lose Red. She was sure that he wouldn't be much of a match for her if push came to shove, but she did want to do her best to follow Bellwether's implied order and not make a scene. "Let's get a drink, then," she said.

As they made their way to the bar, she pretended not to notice the gestures that Red made towards his friends that she caught out of the corner of her eye, although she would have had to have been half-blind not to have noticed the reactions that they gave. At the bar, she followed his instructions exactly (noting, with some amusement, that he hadn't even offered to pay for her drink), even using the same example that the buck had given. The opossum had looked back and forth with a somewhat shifty air, and after he added ice to a new glass he brought it under the bar to fill it from an unlabeled bottle of clear liquid hidden away in a sliding compartment. Even as the bartender set to work to fulfill the order that Red had made after hers, Judy knew he had succeeded; the sharp scent of alcohol coming from her glass was unmistakable. Judy had no intention of drinking it, though, as that would have been extremely hypocritical for a Prohibition Agent; she figured that she could pretend to take a sip and then allow Red to finish it. Considering how large the glasses were and how strong the moonshine smelled, two glasses of hard liquor were probably enough to incapacitate the buck entirely and allow her to leave without him making a scene.

Once they were back at the small table where her glass of ginger ale still sat, though, her plans completely ran out of her mind. Red had said something, but she didn't catch it, as her attention had been captured by what she saw across the room at the table where Carajou had been quietly sitting alone. The wolverine's hat was covering his face and his body and arms were slumped forward across the table. She bolted for his table, as fast as she could, but even before Judy reached the
wolverine she knew she was too late. Beneath the other scents that filled the club—the cigarette smoke, the musk of predators, the cheap cologne and perfume—there was something hot and metallic. There was a dark puddle, barely visible in the light of the club, spreading beneath the wolverine's chair, and once she was at his side she saw the source. There were two holes in his shirt, just above where it tucked into his pants. The white fabric was stained crimson and Judy knew what it all meant, but she grabbed his wrist perfunctorily. There was no pulse, and she knew Carajou was dead.

Author's Notes: Before I get to any of the (many) other comments that I have for this chapter, I'm happy to show off the piece of cover art for this story that SR made for me:

http://imgur.com/a/EWPAe

As with my other stories, I am quite grateful to the talented SR for making this for me, as well as accepting payment in the form of baked goods since I'm really not capable of providing monetary compensation. The design is true to what a record might have looked like in 1927; that was long before the invention of Long Play (LP) records, and records of the 1920s were typically 10 or 12 inches in diameter, capable of storing about 3 to 5 minutes of content when played at 78 RPM. Interestingly, no one knows why 78 RPM was chosen; the best guess is that an early phonograph's regulator happened to be able to keep the speed constant at 78 RPM and it was just accepted as the standard. The major advancement in phonographic recording technology in the 1920s was to electrically amplify the signal using vacuum tubes prior to sending it to the stylus that cut the groove into the disc; the earlier recording method relied solely on the sound waves to move a diaphragm connected to the stylus. Electrical recordings therefore offered significantly better sound quality since they could pick up more than just the loudest parts of what was being recorded, and it was common in the time period for records to advertise that they had used the technique. DrummerMax64 came up with George Purrshwin, a pun on George Gershwin, the actual composer of "Someone to Watch Over Me." Gertrude Roarence is a pun on Gertrude Lawrence, a singer who did have a major hit with her recording of the song in 1927. Her version was indeed two minutes and forty-five seconds long, so that part of the label is accurate. Records of the 1920s were essentially limited to one song a side by their short run time, so an actual collection of all the songs that I used as chapter titles in this story would cover a lot of records and would have been ridiculously expensive.

The title of this chapter, "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground," comes from a blues song by Blind Willie Johnson, recorded in 1927. The song also has the distinction of having been picked as one of the 27 songs put on the copies of the Voyager Golden Record that the twin space probes Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 are carrying with them into interstellar space.

The James Buckanan Federal Building, where the Zootopia Bureau of Prohibition is located, is named as a pun on James Buchanan, the immediate predecessor of Abraham Lincoln. He's widely considered one of the worst Presidents of the United States for his failure to address the divide over slavery or take action upon the secession of the first seven states that would form the Confederate States of America. While the description of the building itself also indicates the low regard for the Bureau of Prohibition in this story, the name is another sign of it.

Open plan offices were quite common in the 1920s; workplace cubicles didn't come into being until the (rather poorly named) Action Office I was marketed in 1964, and even in the 1920s it would be unreasonable to expect a private office for anyone below a management position in most fields.

Rabbit's teeth really do never stop growing, which is why it's important that pet rabbits have something that they can gnaw on to prevent them from getting too long.
The Great War is what WWI was commonly called prior to WWII. Although the war started in 1914, America did not enter the war until 1917. Between 1917 and the end of the war in 1918, a bit less than 5 million Americans served, so an American who served in the war would likely only be in their thirties or forties in 1927. I imagine that the complete exclusion of bunnies from the draft that I mention in the chapter to be analogous to the real world exclusion of women from the draft; my interpretation of the society in this universe is that it's somewhat less sexist than our world but somewhat more divided by species than ours is by race.

Ephesians 5:18 is a real Biblical verse; religious and moral opposition to the drinking of alcohol was the prime driver of Prohibition, and considering the background that I created for this version of Bellwether a cross-stitch of it makes sense as the sort of thing she would have in her office. As with any Biblical verse, different versions provide different translations. Hers would run like the one in the New International Version, which reads, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit," as compared to, say, the King James Bible version, which goes, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

The description of what Judy wears to go to the jazz club is a mostly accurate description of what would be fairly typical for a flapper to wear; I think she'd look adorable. She does also have the short and slim build that was in fashion for flappers at the time as well. Really the only tweak that I made that deviates from flapper fashion is that her stockings are designed to be worn without shoes, which seem pretty uncommon in the world of Zootopia. Considering how uncommon shoes are, in addition to her background, I think it makes sense that she wouldn't consider heels. Judy wishing she had worn galoshes is a little joke; one of the commonly, though incorrectly, suggested origins of the word "flapper" was that it started in reference to a trend for teenage girls to wear their galoshes unbuckled so that the straps flapped.

The jazz club is called the Thief of the Night in reference to the fact that all of the mammals who work there are nocturnal, and in the somewhat metaphorical sense of losing a night to the club. It's an example of the spectrum that establishments fell on during Prohibition. There were, of course, plenty of places that didn't serve alcohol whatsoever while it was illegal, and there were speakeasies where alcohol was served openly once you were inside. There were also places like the Thief of the Night, however, that clandestinely served alcohol only to those in the know, which could help them avoid the suspicion of Prohibition Agents. The system of drink tokens that they use is a moderately secure way of ordering alcohol; the term for the kind of math involved is finding the digital root of a number, which I can thank 999 for teaching me. As described, the digital root of a number is a single digit number that you find by continually adding all of the digits of a number together until you arrive at that single digit. Thus, $69042 = 6+9+0+4+2 = 21 = 2+1 = 3$. This method has the added bonus of helping to keep mammals from drinking too much, as once you're too drunk to do simple mental math you're cut off.

Neighi is an awful pun on Nehi, a popular American brand of soft drink in the 1920s. Nehi, and thus Neighi, is pronounced "knee high;" the real Nehi really did advertise themselves with images of women lifting their skirt to show one stocking up to the knee. In the Midwestern US, their advertisements also went further, to the extent of having images that consisted of a disembodied woman's leg to the mid-thigh. If that sounds like the famous leg lamp from *A Christmas Story*, there's a good reason for that; the lamp was inspired by those advertisements. Incidentally, the price that the club charges per drink really is a rip off for non-alcoholic drinks; in the 1920s a bottle of Coca-Cola cost 5 cents.

The weird coats that the college age mammals wear are based off of a real fashion trend in the mid to late 1920s. Coats made out of raccoon fur were all the rage for college students at the time. There was even a song from 1928 called "Doin' the Raccoon" that is in reference to this trend, with tongue in cheek lyrics about the differences in the fad in different parts of the US, including Chicagoans.
lining theirs with steel on account of all the shootings.

As I've commented several other times for different animal based products, fur coats would obviously not fly for the setting. I figured that a coat of turkey feathers would occupy a similar niche; since only mammals have fur, feathers would be the only practical equivalent for a raccoon fur coat.

Speaking of raccoons, the jazz pianist is a small cameo by Max Thrash, a character created by DrummerMax64. He's a Torch Key Raccoon, a real sub-species of raccoon that really is smaller and paler than other raccoons. Considering that there are currently about 5,000 known species of mammal, I figure that particularly for relatively rare ones most other mammals wouldn't be able to perfectly identify them. The piano piece, incidentally, is "Rhapsody in Blue," so Judy does at least have the artist right.

Carajou is another name for a wolverine, and it was pretty common for gangsters to have nicknames that were sometimes pretty colorful. I don't think I'd want to have any dealings with someone nicknamed Crazy, though. The somewhat boorish Charles Redrock is also named for his species, the Natal Red Rock Hare, and his coloration matches up with what's typical for the species.

"Applesauce," as an exclamation both sounds like something Judy could have used in the movie and was actual 20s slang for "nonsense" particularly in response to flattery. "Jelly-bean" was slang for a guy who dressed sharply to pick up women but was otherwise worthless, which I think describes Redrock perfectly. "Chunk of lead" was slang for an unattractive woman, particularly a student. A "cake-eater" is a ladies man.

As always, I'd love to know what you think, positively or negatively. Thanks for reading!
In the Jailhouse Now

Judy was no stranger to death. Her parents had buried kits before, from ones too young to have been named to her older brother Robert, who had fallen through the ice one winter and drowned when he was twelve. Robert was the only one she had seen in death, and in his coffin he had looked more asleep than anything else, as though at any moment he would spring up and declare it all to be some horrible joke. There was no question, however, that Carajou was dead; when Judy had grabbed his wrist to check for a pulse, his hat had fallen away, exposing a head twisted to an impossible angle. Carajou's features were set in a terrible rictus of surprise and agony, as though his own death had come unexpectedly with just enough time for the wolverine to realize what was happening.

Most of Judy's knowledge had come from books; she had utterly devoted herself to her education as part of her preparations for becoming a police officer. She recalled having read, in a book about military service, that there was no telling how a mammal would react to war until they experienced it themselves. The author had gone on to claim that while the naturally violent nature of predators might give them some small advantage in the heat of the moment, prey and predators alike had the capacity for cowardice or bravery within them. Mammals who seemed confident and self-assured in normal civilian life might fall to pieces when confronted with real fighting, the sort that ended in death, and no amount of training could ever truly prepare them. There had been mammals in Judy's life, even other bunnies, who had claimed that bunnies would never be able to handle the stress of war or violence of any kind. While encountering a corpse was nothing like fighting in a war, Judy was not panicking. She could feel her heart pounding, but she was alert and felt focused as she started to look at the wolverine more closely. "Marion!" Red said, having walked after Judy much more slowly, his drink already half-empty and a puzzled expression on his face, "What's w—"

The words died on the buck's lips as he saw the wolverine, and the glass of moonshine fell out of his paw, shattering on the worn wooden planks of the floor. The sharp sound of breaking glass was barely audible over the sound of the music and none of the other patrons of the club even turned to look for the source. Red's nose started twitching, his eyes saucer-wide as he stumbled backwards, tripping over his own feet. "He's dead," Red stuttered weakly, pointing at the wolverine with one trembling paw.

"He's dead," the buck repeated somewhat more loudly.

"Red—" Judy began, attempting to sound as soothing as possible; she could not have had her eye off of Carajou for more than five minutes as she went to the bar to get a drink with Red, and it was likely that the murderer was still in the club.

The last thing that she wanted was a panic, but Red seemed to be beyond reason. "He's dead!" the buck was shrieking, his pupils contracted to pinpricks and his face loose with his terror.

"He's dead! He's dead! He's dead!" Red yelled, his voice getting higher and shriller as he continued staggering backwards, and even when he tripped and fell he did not stop his mantra even as he curled into a ball and covered his ears with his paws, although the words started to be interspersed with choked sobs.

The buck's screams had caught the attention of the other mammals in the club, and even the music had stopped. A number of curious mammals had started creeping closer to the scene of the crime, some of them laughing and murmuring as they apparently thought Red was just a mammal who had gotten a little too drunk and would provide an amusing spectacle. As they got close enough to see the dead wolverine, though, the conversations stopped. Judy saw the opportunity she had and seized it, speaking up to be heard over Red, who was still repeating the same two words over and over again.
"Your attention, please!" she called out, trying to do her best to sound authoritative.

Judy stepped away from the table, towards the crowd, and they all took a half-step backwards. "I need everyone to stay calm and stay where they are. You, the bartender—"

She pointed at the opossum behind the bar, who was watching the proceedings with a keen eye, "Call the police and tell them that there's been a murder."

Judy had seen a telephone tucked away behind the bar, and knew that every second that was wasted was a second that the murderer could use to their advantage. She had been instructed to perform surveillance only, but the thought of ignoring the murder hadn't even crossed her mind. Given the choice between doing what she had been ordered to do and doing what was right, doing what was right would always win. "Now!" she barked, when she saw that the opossum hadn't made any move towards picking up the receiver.

At her command, the opossum jumped a little, but he did pick up the phone. The mammals watching had fallen silent, and for a brief moment Judy thought that she might have the situation in paw. All she would have to do was keep an eye on things while waiting for the police to show up, and then provide her statement. It seemed to her that the only mammals, besides herself, that were completely free of suspicion were the bartender, Red, and the pianist. Otherwise, any one of the forty or so mammals in the club might have been the murderer, assuming that they hadn't fled the club the moment after they had done the deed. Her train of thought was interrupted by a portly little goat, who had moved away from the semi-circle of other mammals with the overly precise walk of a drunk and called out in a booming voice, "Cheese it!"

He immediately took his own advice and waddled towards the door as quickly as he could, falling down on all fours. There was hardly any delay before the other mammals in the club joined him in fleeing. Two of Red's friends, a capybara and a platypus, hauled him bodily to his feet and pulled him with them, feathers flying from their coats as they rubbed against each other and banged off other mammals and furniture on their way out of the club. "Wait!" Judy called out desperately, torn between trying to stop them and staying on the scene.

In the end, she stayed. She had no idea who the murderer was, and it was quite possible that they had associates who would interfere with the crime scene if she left. Considering that it was down to just the bartender and the pianist in the club, both of whom looked somewhat unsure as to what to do, she doubted that they would have encountered much difficulty.

Judy had taken the opportunity as she waited for the police to arrive to question the pianist, but while the little raccoon had done his best to be helpful he hadn't seen anything. When she stood on the stage, the reason was obvious; although in theory he should have been able to see into the club from over the top of the gleaming black Swineway grand piano, the spotlight directed onto the piano made it impossible to see anything in the crowd. It was only about ten minutes after Judy had asked the opossum to call the police that two officers had shown up, an enormous female rhinoceros and a male hippopotamus, neither one of which could stand up straight in the low basement.

"Hello, officers," Judy said, trying to sound respectful, "The body's over here."

The rhinoceros grunted an acknowledgement. "Name?" she asked, in a bored tone, pulling a little notepad from her belt.

"Judy Hopps. Listen, the—"

"You find the body?" the hippopotamus interrupted.
"Yes, it's—"

"Tony! Angela! What's going on here?" a new voice interrupted.

The speaker was a pudgy little hedgehog, dressed in a dark suit that strained to contain his belly. He was standing at the entrance to the club and puffing, apparently exhausted from the short trip down the stairs. The two police officers, evidently Tony and Angela, turned to face him. "Mr. Quill," the hippopotamus said respectfully.

"I'm losing money every minute that this club is empty," he snapped, "Take care of this."

"Sir," Judy protested, "There's been a murder. The police need to—"

"The police need to do what they're paid to do," he cut her off, "And take care of problems."

He spoke his words with a meaningful look at the two officers, who seemed to understand exactly what he meant. The rhinoceros approached Judy and squatted further down, leaning forward with her paws on her knees. "How many drinks have you had tonight, Ms. Hopps?"

"What?" Judy asked, "I haven't had anything to drink!"

"Right," the officer replied skeptically, looking at Judy's paw.

Unlike Red, Judy hadn't dropped her drink, and had actually completely forgotten that she was still holding it, as she had been so focused on the murder of Carajou. When she had run over to his body, she must have spilled quite a bit of it, because her glass was mostly empty and she realized that she smelled strongly of alcohol.

Judy drew herself up to her full height, as pathetic as that was against the massive bulk of the rhinoceros officer. "I'm a Prohibition Agent!" she said firmly, locking eyes with the cop, "I was investigating this club."

The rhinoceros laughed. "Sure," she said cheerfully, "And I'm Norma Sheared. You got a badge, agent?"

"I―" Judy started responding, but then paused as the realization struck her.

Judy did have a badge, a brass shield with an eagle in the center and navy blue enamel around the lettering that too large for her to comfortably hold in the palm of one paw. While she saw her position as a Prohibition Agent as a waypoint on her path to the job she actually wanted, she kept meticulous care of the badge and almost always had it in her possession. However, the clutch purse that she had taken from the Bureau to go along with the clothes that she had borrowed had been somewhat too small for the badge to fit, and she had left it behind. At the time, she had thought that she wouldn't need it, as it had been made quite clear to her that her assignment was surveillance only, but she mentally kicked herself for not bringing it. Judy vowed that, in the future, she'd never leave it behind again, even if she had to wear it on a garter.

"No, not on me," Judy finished.

"That's what I thought, bunny," the rhinoceros said as she saw Judy's realization play itself out across her face.

"Now, there's absolutely no alcohol served in this club, isn't that right Mr. Quill?" the rhino asked, turning her attention to the club owner.
The hedgehog gave a pretentious little nod. "Absolutely right, Officer Zweihorn."

"I'll get her out of here," Zweihorn said to the hedgehog, then turned her attention to Judy, "Next time try coming up with something a little more believable. Come on, Tipsy."

Judy was left dumbfounded by the blatant lies and before she could voice any protest, the rhinoceros grabbed Judy's entire arm in one massive paw and pulled her out of the club.

Being arrested was the single most humiliating moment of Judy's life. Although she had told every single officer that was involved in the process that she was a Prohibition Agent and begged them to check with the Bureau, none of them had seemed inclined to lift so much as a finger to help her. More than one of them had laughed, apparently finding the idea of a bunny as a Prohibition Agent incredibly funny. At last, she had been left for the night in a cell in the Precinct One police station. The single largest cell had been occupied by a giraffe that she was absolutely certain was passed out drunk, but the cells to the side of the giraffe, which became smaller and smaller, first stacked two high, then three, and then working their way down to a column of sixteen cells that wouldn't have been able to hold any mammal larger than a rat, were mostly empty except for a pig in one of the mid-sized cells and a sullen-looking dormouse in one of the smallest. If there was some silver lining to the whole debacle, it was that she would at least not have to spend the night sharing a cell with an actual criminal like the somewhat unpleasant-smelling pig. The worst of it, though, was how blatantly corrupt the two police officers had been. It was incredibly obvious that they were being paid off by Mr. Quill, the owner of the club, and she almost couldn't believe that they seemed not to care at all about a murder.

Judy sat on the hard cot that was the single piece of furniture in the cell except for a combination sink and toilet, thinking about the murder. She hadn't had the chance to examine the body closely, but she thought she had some information to go off of. From the angle that Carajou's head had been twisted at, his neck must have been broken, which seemed to her the likely cause of death. There were the two small wounds to his torso, which were obviously the source of the puddle of blood on the club's floor, but they seemed too low to be fatal in the few minutes she hadn't been watching him. Besides, it seemed unlikely for the murderer to also go to the effort of breaking his neck if it hadn't been necessary.

Judy frowned and scratched at her nose. Her first thought was that the two wounds to Carajou's chest were bullet wounds, but she didn't think that the music had been loud enough to cover the sound of gun shots, and she would have noticed the acrid scent of gunpowder considering that the basement didn't have any windows or other ventilation to carry the smell away. Possibly an air gun, then, something that would have been almost entirely silent and wouldn't leave a distinct scent. If it had been a knife, it would have had to have been something with a very narrow blade, something like a stiletto, and she thought about how the tables in the club were set up. The table tops were relatively small, but any mammal capable of stabbing Carajou in the torso while sitting across from him would have had to have had a long blade, long arms, or both.

That seemed like the likely chain of events, though. Someone must have sat across from Carajou, someone that he probably knew considering the wolverine's reputation for violent, unpredictable behavior. They had inflicted the wounds to his chest to incapacitate him, and then broke his neck to finish him off. What did that imply about the murderer? They would have to be someone who either didn't think they could beat the wolverine in a fair fight, or simply someone coldly calculating enough to not take any chances. Breaking Carajou's neck would have taken a fair amount of strength and knowledge to be able to do it so quickly, which made her think that it was likely a mammal at least around the same size as the wolverine and almost certainly an experienced murderer.
Her thoughts of the murder were interrupted by the rounds of the officer on the night patrol. Although Judy could not say that she had seen very many cheetahs, he was easily the largest member of his species that she had ever seen; although he was quite tall, it was his width that was truly remarkable. The cheetah was easily the fattest mammal she had ever seen, and when he had reached her cell and saw that she was awake, he had greeted her cheerfully, commenting on how adorable she looked. Judy had forced herself to bite back a response to that, as the last thing she wanted to do was antagonize him.

"So what are you in here for, Judy?" he asked after he had introduced herself and he had responded in kind.

"It's a mistake," she insisted, "I'm a Prohibition Agent. I just didn't have my badge on me."

The cheetah—Ben, he had introduced himself as—looked at her thoughtfully. "I've never heard of a bunny being a Prohibition Agent," he said.

Judy sighed and let her head fall against the bars of the cell. "I'm the first," she said.

"Do you want me to try ringing the Bureau office?" Ben asked.

Judy had been so inured to her failures with all of the other officers in the station that she hadn't even tried asking Ben for help. "Please," she said, grabbing the bars of the cell, "Could you do that for me?"

"Sure!" the cheetah replied, smiling broadly, "It's kind of boring, watching the cells. This isn't what I had in mind when I became a cop."

Judy found it difficult to be sympathetic to the cheetah. Certainly, she wouldn't want to guard cells herself, but at least he had been able to become an officer in the first place. Considering the way that events were going, though, she was desperate for his help. "What did you have in mind?" she asked, hoping to build a rapport with the friendly officer.

The big cheetah looked down bashfully, and kicked one foot. "I... Well, I wanted to help mammals, you know? Be the cop that helps lost kittens and all that. Brighten up their day."

Judy paused, and realized that she had misjudged him. "I understand completely," she said sincerely, because she did understand.

Ben wanted to make the world a better place in his own way, and it was heartening that there was one officer, at least, who had the same goal that she did. He positively beamed. "I'll see what I can do," he promised.

He had left the row of cells after that, leaving Judy alone with her thoughts and the snores of the giraffe in the largest cell. The cot in Judy's cell was incredibly uncomfortable, but suddenly she felt rather tired. Perhaps it was just the stress and excitement taking their toll, but she slumped down against the hard, thin mattress and its scratchy sheets. There wasn't even a pillow, but at that moment she didn't care. All she could do, at the moment, was to wait for Ben to get back, and she fell into a dreamless sleep.

**Author's Notes:** The title of this chapter, "In the Jailhouse Now," comes from a blues song originally written in 1915 but covered a number of times since, including a jazz cover by Boyd Senter in 1929 and Gene Kardos in 1932. It's probably most familiar in the modern era due to its inclusion in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*
Since this story is set in 1927, that means that this version of Judy would have been born around 1903. At the turn of the 20th century the infant mortality rate in the US was about 10% and in some cities hit almost 30% as a result of malnutrition, disease, and a number of other factors mostly linked to poverty. As such, the grim math is that the odds are heavily stacked against the Hopps family of this era in terms of having such a large family without losing any kits. There were a lot of things about the early 20th century that were great, and plenty more that definitely weren't, like medical care. I'm trying to present a somewhat balanced depiction of what a Zootopia version of the 1920s would have been like, rather than an idealization of how our 1920s went.

"Cheese it" was a slang term in use in the US in the beginning of the 20th century as a command to stop whatever you were doing and run away, usually with the implication that it was because the cops would be arriving.

Swineway is a pun on Steinway, a real manufacturer of grand pianos that was in fact in business in the 1920s.

Norma Sheared is a pun on Norma Shearer, a Hollywood actress who had a career spanning from 1925 through 1942. In 1927, she was reasonably popular, although it was in the 1930s that she was nominated for the Academy Award for best actress five times. Zweihorn is German for "two horns," appropriate for a rhinoceros. That there were corrupt police officers at the heights of organized criminal activity should not be a surprise; they were just as susceptible as Prohibition Agents.

Prohibition Agents did in fact have badges, which look pretty similar to police badges of the same era. The description that I provide in this chapter is accurate to how the badges looked after the Prohibition Bureau became a part of the Department of the Treasury; since Judy became an agent only a few months after the transition, she'd definitely have a badge in that style. It's actually somewhat surprising how many government agencies do give their agents badges; even FDA inspectors and Federal Reserve agents have them.

It's taken a while to get through all of the necessary setup, but next chapter will be the first appearance of Nick in this story. These author's notes are rather short by my standards, but there's some things that I'll not comment on at this time to avoid giving any spoilers. As always, I'd love to know what you thought!
Judy woke up to the sounds of hooves clicking against linoleum and the voices of two mammals, one quite a bit lower than the other. As they approached, she was able to identify one of the voices as Bellwether, but she couldn't identify the other mammal as anything other than male.

"—ridiculous," Bellwether was saying, "Arresting one of my agents?"

"An agent without a badge," the other voice countered dryly, "If we contacted the Bureau every time someone caught drinking said they were one of your agents we'd never get anything done."

As the two mammals spoke, they crossed into the field of view that Judy had from her cell. Bellwether looked much as she always did, wearing a plain gray dress that Judy had seen the ewe wearing a few times before. The mammal she was speaking to absolutely dwarfed both Bellwether and Judy; he was a powerfully built middle-aged buffalo, the dull blue serge of his police uniform straining at his massive shoulders. Judy had never seen him before, but from the brass decorations on his uniform and the fact that he was a buffalo, she knew that he had to Chief Bogo of Precinct One. "Ms. Hopps," he said, addressing Judy through the bars of her cell, "I apologize for the inconvenience. I assure you, I will look into this matter."

He gestured towards the door of the cell, and the cheetah who had been guarding the cells the previous night rushed forward, fumbling with the keys to the cells. Judy hadn't heard the click of his claws or the soft tread of his paws over the much louder noises of the two hooved mammals he had apparently been following, but she felt a surge of gratitude that Ben had apparently been true to his word, although she guessed that it had to be about five in the morning. She felt rather disheveled and more than a little embarrassed, but she was more relieved than anything else when the cheetah got the cell door unlocked and let her out. "The Bureau appreciates that, Chief Bogo," Bellwether replied and began walking away, gesturing for Judy to follow.

Judy didn't move from where she stood outside the cell, though, and looked up at Chief Bogo. "Why did two officers from Precinct One respond to the call?" she asked.

"Agent Hopps," Bellwether said, a note of warning in her voice.

"Tundra Town isn't in Precinct One," Judy continued, "The bartender must have called them directly rather than dialing the operator. Those officers knew that club served alcohol."

The police chief looked down at Judy, a small frown on his muzzle. "You're the bunny that applied to the police academy, aren't you?"

Judy was surprised that the chief knew about that, but she supposed that her application was unusual enough that it had been mentioned to him; after all, Precinct One was supposed to get the best of the best, so it only made sense that the chief would be in contact with the mammal that ran the academy. "Yes sir," she replied eagerly, "I've always wanted to be a police officer."

"And are you a police officer?" Bogo asked.

"No sir," Judy replied, her heart sinking as she realized the direction that the conversation was taking.

"Then leave the police work to the police," he said shortly, but after he turned to leave she couldn't help but speak up again.
"The officers who were first on the scene were paid off by the club owner. You have to know that, sir."

Bogo stopped and stood still, even as Bellwether was looking at Judy with more anger than the bunny had ever seen the ewe express. She didn't care, though. Perhaps Bellwether and Bogo were happy with a little song and dance to gloss over that a mammal had been murdered and the officers who would likely have responsibility for the matter were only interested in making it disappear as quickly as possible, but she wasn't. Carajou was almost certainly a murderer himself, and if even half the reports about him were true the city was better off with him dead. But no matter the victim, murder was murder and Judy refused to stand by and let the matter be ignored. "I was in that club when the murder happened. Let me investigate it," she said.

Bogo turned and looked down at her, his expression unreadable. "One week," he said, holding up a single massive finger.

"If you can solve the murder in one week I'll write a letter of recommendation to Captain Ruminante myself. If you can't, I'll still be writing a letter to Captain Ruminante."

Judy instantly grasped the implication. A letter of recommendation from the Precinct One Chief of Police would almost certainly get her a position in the academy, but if he wrote a letter recommending that she not be accepted then there would be no point in applying the next year. "I won't let you down, sir," Judy replied, drawing herself up to her full height.

The massive buffalo gave her a brusque nod, and then turned to the cheetah, who had been watching the proceedings with a look of amazement on his round face. "Officer Clawhauser, see them out."

For her part, Bellwether looked as though she had been stunned into silence, and none of the three spoke on the way to the door.

Once Bellwether and Judy were outside the police station, Judy opened her mouth to speak, not having wanted to say anything to her boss in front of the cheetah. Before she could get so much as a syllable out, Bellwether snapped "Not a word."

The ewe had a taxi waiting, a cheerful little brougham that was yellow below its beltline and black above. It was early enough in the morning that it was still fairly dark outside, and the taxi's electric headlights, oddly mounted on the cowl below the windshield, dimly lit the pre-dawn gloom. The driver, a slim young goat, tipped a hat as yellow as his taxi and opened the rear door closest to the curb as they approached.

Judy kept her mouth shut as the ewe ordered the taxi to the Bureau office and then opened up a newspaper and began reading it. From the corner of her eye, Judy could see that the headline was about a steelworker strike in Gaury; apparently the news of the murder in the Thief of the Night hadn't made the early edition as a front page article. The taxi ride was relatively short, and after Bellwether paid the driver Judy had followed her into the office.

"Agent Hopps," Bellwether said, finally breaking her silence as she folded up her newspaper, "That was rather embarrassing."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but I couldn't—" Judy began apologizing, but the sheep cut her off with the wave of one hoof.

"Not for you, Agent Hopps, although I'm sure it was. For the Bureau. For me. Let me make myself very clear," the ewe said, a tight and entirely fake looking smile on her face, "If you don't meet
Bogo's deadline, you'll be finding a new job."

With that, the ewe turned and walked away from Judy's desk, entering her office and closing the door. Judy looked down at her desk in quiet horror, wondering what she had gotten herself into. Suddenly it wasn't just her dream job on the line; she was sure that Bellwether was absolutely serious when she had made her threat to fire her. *If I fail—*, she thought, before banishing it. *I won't fail*, she thought, *because I can't*. She would prove to everyone that she had what it took, and she thought about what she needed. It was clear to her, at least, that someone was targeting mammals who had some kind of connection to Mr. Big. There was Carajou and Koslov, both former associates of the shrew. Of the dozen other gang murders that had occurred recently, all had been rivals from the organizations that had sprung up to seize the vacuum left by the collapse of Mr. Big's Zootopia Outfit. There had been three mammals highly placed in the Black Paw who had been killed, and while none of them had ever worked for Mr. Big, so far as the records showed, they had been bitter rivals. Another four from the North Side Pride, one of whom had once been a low level extortionist for Mr. Big, had also died. The remaining five mammals had been from the various other gangs that had carved up the city, and the pattern was obvious. The mammal responsible must either be some former member of Mr. Big's gang, setting the path for the Zootopia Outfit to rise again by killing traitors and the organization's rivals, or someone who had an intimate knowledge of how the organization worked.

Suddenly, all the pieces fit together. What she needed, Judy realized, was someone with that same sort of intimate knowledge, someone who could name every rival and lieutenant and describe every grudge. Someone who could themselves not be involved in the recent wave of murders even if they were otherwise completely untrustworthy. Someone who would know things that even the police with all their informants wouldn't be able to learn.

Judy dug frantically through the files on her desk until she came across the report she was looking for. It was a blandly written account by one of her fellow agents of a perfunctory check conducted over the telephone with local law enforcement hundreds of miles away in Podunk for a mammal who had received government protection. There were only two items of any interest in the report itself: first, that the mammal had been a highly trusted accountant for Mr. Big who had given up his boss to escape prosecution himself, and second, the mammal's name.

Judy smiled to herself as she copied the name down onto a piece of paper. He was exactly the mammal she was looking for, someone who would know everything about the Zootopia Outfit that had never made it into an official report and could help her identify where to look. Judy stood up, taking the note with her. *It's time*, she thought, *to pay Nicholas P. Wilde a visit.*

Podunk didn't have so much as a single traffic light, let alone street signs, and the badly rutted dirt roads sprawled in all directions as they wove their way around the farms. It reminded Judy a bit of Bunnyburrows, although Podunk was both larger and seemed shabbier. The sheriff, an aging boar with a generous gut, had met her as she got off the train and had given her identification only a perfunctory check; prior to getting on the train in Zootopia she had called ahead to make arrangements. The sheriff had made small talk on the extremely short trip from the train station to his office, but once they were inside the cheerless, dusty office he finally got down to business. "You want this fox back in the city? Throw him in prison, maybe?" he asked, sounding hopeful.

Judy got the feeling that being sheriff of Podunk wasn't exactly a job that made many demands on his time; his desk was almost completely bare except for some rather well-worn playing cards set out in a game of Solitaire and an unlit gas lamp, and the single cell in the attached jail was empty. The sheriff's office was the single building on what could generously be called Podunk's main street that was built out of brick. The train station and the grain elevator looked fairly well-kept but the general
store and the church both had badly peeling paint over warped clapboard siding. Still, the sheriff had agreed to let her borrow his car, a Furd Model T pickup truck even older and more battered than the one on her parents' farm, so Judy did her best to swallow her impatience and humor the old boar. "We'll see," she said noncommittally, "Bureau business, you know."

The sheriff scratched at the bristles on his chin and gave a nervous glance towards the bottom drawer of his desk. "Of course, of course. What did this Wilcox do, anyway? Why'd they stick him here?"

The government had had the foresight to create a new identity for Nicholas Wilde when he had been put in Podunk, and as far as the sheriff knew, the fox was named Nathaniel Wilcox. Judy realized that she probably knew more about Wilde than the sheriff did, although she herself knew precious little. The train ride from Zootopia to Podunk had taken almost six hours, and while she had spent all of them reviewing the material she had brought along in a briefcase, the Bureau's files were rather lacking about Wilde considering that the information he had provided had been vital to taking Mr. Big down.

From the thin file she had read, Judy knew that Wilde had been drafted in 1917 and served in the war, but there weren't any details about his service. He must have been a mediocre soldier at best, though, because he had received a general discharge for reasons not specified in the file in 1918 shortly after the armistice was signed. Wilde's file indicated that he had lived in Purris until 1920, though it had no details on what he had done for those two years, before returning to the country and Zootopia. Most frustrating of all, though, was that the entire period of time between his return to the city and when Wilde had turned on Mr. Big was summarized in a single sentence: Nicholas Wilde served as Alphonse Biggliani's top accountant. It was as though whoever had written the file was trying to make it as useless as possible; if that had been their goal they had done remarkably well. Judy supposed that at least part of it was that Wilde's new identity had been arranged by the Bureau of Investigation. They might have been reluctant to share details that were actually relevant with the Bureau of Prohibition even if they were quite happy to leave the tedious business of following up with local law enforcement to ensure that the fox wasn't getting in trouble to another Bureau.

"There's other predators in Podunk," Judy replied, choosing to ignore his first question, "I suppose they thought he'd blend in."

The sheriff snorted. "Too many of them already, you ask me. Sticks to their part of town, though."

Judy was eager to get the conversation over with. "Where's his house?"

"His house?" the sheriff replied, "Just go down Main Street and take a right at the dead oak tree what was struck by lightning in '09. Keep going 'til you're past the pred school—they got that Wilcox teaching math of all things, like a pred could understand it—and take a left at Johnson's barn. Can't miss it, the old fool painted it blue for some reason or t'other. Wilcox's place is on the right."

When Judy pulled off the road, her first thought was that crime really didn't pay. If nothing else, she could be sure that Wilde wasn't living the high life as part of his new identity; his home was a tar paper shack about the size of one of the woodsheds on her parents' farm. The ground around the shack was bare dirt, with weeds and a few feeble brown tufts of grass poking up here and there through cracks in the earth. In front of the shack, near a scratched and peeling door that hung crookedly, was a rough chair with a fox sitting in it, dressed in a pair of well-worn overalls with a straw hat pulled low over his face. At his side was a windup record player; the disc was spinning, but the record must have reached the end of its groove because the only sound it was making was a series of faint pops and hisses. Judy at first thought that the fox was asleep because he was leaning back and entirely still except for the occasional twitch of his tail, but when she crossed his little yard he sat up suddenly and addressed her. "Hey there, li'l bunneh," he drawled in about the thickest
country accent she had ever heard, "That truck o' yers strand ya heah? Don' got no gas-o-line meself, but ah got some ker-o-sene that'll do ya fine, if'n ya need fuel. Got a jack, too, if'n you be needin' to change a tire."

"I'm here for Nicholas Wilde," Judy replied, not fooled at all by his little act as a country fox with its ridiculous parody of an accent.

Even if she hadn't been able to identify him from the photograph that had been in his file, the record album that sat next to his record player was titled *Le Bœuf sur le toit* in neatly embossed letters. The title was meaningless to her, but it didn't seem like the sort of thing that a simple country fox would listen to. The fox shook his head. "Ain't no one heah by that name, sorry t' say."

Judy pulled out her badge and showed it to him. "Agent Judy Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition. Care to try again?" she asked sweetly.

Judy couldn't put a finger on precisely what it was, but Wilde's entire appearance seemed to change. It could have just been that he sat up straighter, no longer lounging casually in his chair, but there also seemed to be something in his eyes that hadn't been there before, a sort of cunning gleam that had been entirely absent. Even though he was still dressed like someone's idea of a country bumpkin, it suddenly looked like a bad Halloween costume rather than who he was. "Well now," he said smoothly, with absolutely no trace of a country accent as he inspected her badge, "They really will let anyone be a Prohi, won't they?"

Judy ignored the jibe as she put the badge away. "Someone's murdering Mr. Big's former associates and his rivals. I need your help."

"You must be the low mammal on the totem pole," Wilde remarked as he stretched widely, "Who sent you out to a place like this?"

"That's not important. I need you to come back to Zootopia with me."

Wilde laughed, although it sounded rather insincere. "Not much of a joke, Agent Carrots."

Judy did her best to maintain control of the situation. "It's not a joke, and you won't call me that. Mammals are dying, Mr. Wilde. Innocent mammals are getting caught in the cross-fire."

Wilde leaned forward. "And I'll be one of them, if I go back to the city."

He inspected the claws on one paw casually, seeming to ignore her. "I didn't exactly leave on good terms, you know. I'd rather everyone keep thinking that I'm already dead."

Judy hadn't expected the fox to exactly jump at the opportunity to help, but it was appalling how self-centered and cowardly he was. "I just need your help for a week," she pleaded, "Just a week."

Wilde smiled thinly. "You can't make me."

"I—" Judy started.

"Find someone who cares," he cut her off.

With that, he stood up, stepping past her as he gathered up his record player and the album and walked into his shack. Before shutting the door behind himself, he added brightly, "Like the police. Or a real Prohibition Agent."
Judy sat in the cab of the battered old pickup truck, which smelled powerfully of the sheriff's body odor. She looked down at the steering wheel; she hadn't cranked the engine yet, and the truck was silent and still. It had taken her six hours to get out to Podunk, and she would lose another six on her way back to Zootopia. That was half a day right there, and she refused to return to the city with nothing to show for it. She squeezed the steering wheel tightly, trying to figure out how to get the hatefully smug fox to help, and suddenly inspiration struck.

Judy got out of the truck and walked past the crank without a thought. She marched up to Wilde's door and pounded on it, her firm knocks making the entire little shack shake. She had been knocking for at least a minute before Wilde opened the door, an expression of pure annoyance on his face. "What are you still doing here?" he asked.

"You're right," Judy admitted, "I can't force you to help me."

Wilde left his shack and got back into his chair. "Glad to hear you say it, Fluff," he said, sounding quite smug as he settled down, "Now hop along."

He made a little shooping motion that Judy ignored. "Mr. Big's rivals are being killed, you know," she said, "He might come after you next, seeing as how you betrayed him."

Judy thought that there was at least a chance that Mr. Big was orchestrating events from his cell, and she suspected that the fox was probably at least a little afraid of the shrew. If nothing else, she thought her words gave the impression that she knew much more than she actually did. "Well, it's a good thing that I've got the government to keep me safe," Wilde replied, crossing his legs casually. Judy repressed a smile. He was already in her trap; he just didn't know it yet. "That's true," she said, "We do want to keep you safe, we really do. But that might not be possible here in Podunk."

He glanced up at her, and she seemed to finally have his full attention. "What do you mean by that?" he asked, and while his tone was carefully neutral Judy thought she saw a hint of something like worry in his eyes.

"You've been here, what, two years now? That's a long time. Long enough for rumors to start spreading. Why, if they got back to Zootopia I don't think the sheriff here could keep you safe."

Her words positively oozed false sincerity and Wilde frowned at her. "Is that a threat?"

"Certainly not!" Judy said, doing her best to appear appalled, "A real Prohibition Agent like me doesn't make threats. I think we could find something for you in a little mining town in the Appaloosas, though. You'll be working twelve hours a day, six days a week, breaking coal half a mile underground. It'll be backbreaking work and you'll probably forget what the sun looks like, but you'll be safe. That's what important, you know, that you stay safe, no matter what else happens."

"You can't do that," Wilde protested, but he no longer seemed quite as self-assured, his tail flicking back and forth in apparent agitation.

Judy put her paws on either arm of Wilde's chair and leaned in until their noses were only inches apart; with the fox sitting down they were more or less the same height. "I can," she said with absolute unblinking confidence, "And I will, if you make me."

"You're getting in the truck either way," she continued, "So what'll it be: a week in the city or the rest of your life in the mines?"

Wilde scowled at her, his ears flat against his head. "The city," he said grudgingly.
Judy clapped her paws together and gave him her own smug smile that she thought was at least the equal of his own. "You've got ten minutes to pack," she said.

**Author's Notes:** The title of this chapter, "Ain't She Sweet?" comes from a Milton Ager and Jack Yellen song first released in 1927 that quickly became a jazz standard. It's been covered by a large number of artists, including a pop version by the Beatles in 1969. In this chapter, I figure that the title applies equally well to both Bellwether and Judy, although obviously somewhat sarcastically in both cases.

911 only became the emergency phone number in the US in 1968. In the 1920s, people would have had to request that the telephone operator connect them with the police, and Judy is quite right that it doesn't make sense for police from a different precinct to show up; an operator would have connected the call to the police station closest to the emergency. 1927 is also too early for police cars to be equipped with radios; squad cars in the US didn't start to be equipped with two-way radios until the 1930s, and police cars with radio receivers (thus being able to receive radio communication but not respond) debuted in 1928.

The taxi that Bellwether and Judy take is based on a Yellow Cab Model A-2; in the 1920s the Yellow Cab Company was essentially fully integrated in the sense that they manufactured their own cars for use as taxis. A brougham is a style of car that is no longer made; the passenger compartment is completely enclosed and separated from the driver's compartment, which is not fully enclosed. In the case of the A-2, the driver's compartment did not have side windows.

Gaury is a pun on the gaur, the world's largest species of wild cattle, and Gary, a city in Indiana that was a massive player in the US steel industry in the 1920s.

A commenter, who commented only as a guest, correctly guessed that in this story Nick would have served in WWI. As in the movie, he's 32, which means he was born in 1895 and was 22 in 1917, right in the age range that American soldiers were pulled from. As to how he served, well, I'm not going to give any spoilers. As to how he left the service, general discharges do exist. In between honorable and dishonorable discharges from the military, there are also general discharges, which are typically given for medical reasons or misconduct when it doesn't warrant a dishonorable discharge. A general discharge also disqualifies a veteran from certain benefits and definitely does not help when the veteran tries to find a civilian job; nowadays people who receive a general discharge have to sign an acknowledgement that they may experience prejudice in civilian life. I suppose it does say something about Judy, though, that her immediate thought is misconduct rather than a medical reason. Purris is a pun on Paris, and there were a fair number of American service members who remained in France after WWI ended.

The Bureau of Investigation, the BOI, was founded in 1908 and would eventually become the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI, in 1935. In 1933, the Bureau of Prohibition was rolled into the BOI, which was renamed the Division of Investigation. As such, the departmental squabbling that seems to keep the BOI from sharing information with the Bureau of Prohibition is not too far off from being completely pointless.

I imagine that Mr. Big's name isn't actually Mr. Big; Alphonse Biggliani is something of a nod to Al Capone, the notorious Chicago gangster. The description of this story indicates that Nick was put into the Witness Protection Program, which isn't quite accurate but was the best I could do to meet the character limit for story descriptions on FF. The modern US Witness Protection Program didn't start until 1970, long after this story is set. However, as far back as 1871, the US government did provide specific protection for witnesses, and in the early 20th century the BOI did occasionally create new identities to protect witnesses. In this story, it can be assumed that Nick was able to cut a
deal to give up Mr. Big in exchange for a new identity.

Podunk in this chapter is a literal Podunk town in this case, and is true to many rural communities in the US in the 1920s. In 1927, not even 5% of all farms in the US had electricity, which makes Podunk completely typical. The description of Nick's home as a tar paper shack is accurate to what a lot of poorer people would have lived in during the time period; considering that he doesn't own any land and would have been forced to leave behind his illicit earnings, it's probably the best that he could get.

*Le Bœuf sur le toit* is a French avant-garde surrealist ballet that premiered in 1920. The English title for the piece is *The Ox on the Roof: the Nothing-Doing Bar*. France, like the US, had a thriving music scene in the 1920s, and the piece gave its name to a cabaret that opened in 1921 and became the best-known French jazz club. Record albums of the 1920s weren't the same as later record albums; early record albums were bound like books, hence why the title is embossed into the cover. As described, Podunk isn't the sort of town that would have a record store, and even if it did, there's really no way that it would carry a song like *Le Bœuf sur le toit*.

Although by modern standards the Ford Model T is severely underpowered, making only 20 horsepower, the engine was solidly designed with the low quality fuels of the era in mind. Unlike a modern car, the Model T can run on gasoline, kerosene, or even pure ethanol without modification, although obviously during Prohibition it'd be rare for someone to use ethanol. Still, it does mean that Nick's offer of kerosene is a fuel that the truck could use. The Model T was in continuous production from 1908 to 1927; production stopped on May 26, shortly before this story starts. Although Ford did also sell the Model TT, a heavier duty version of the Model T made from 1917 onwards, it was also quite common for owners of the Model T to customize the car to suit their needs. Conversions to trucks and tractors were quite common, and wrecked Model Ts were frequently scavenged for spare parts or had the motor salvaged for use in a stationary installation. Thus, it's entirely possible that the sheriff's truck could be almost 20 years old in 1927. Model Ts only started offering electric starters in 1919, so the truck is at least 8 years old considering that it required manual cranking to start.

"Prohi" was 1920s slang for a Prohibition Agent. The Appaloosas is a pun on the breed of horse and the Appalachians, a range of mountains in the Eastern US that have large deposits of coal in them. Coal mining in the 1920s was a terrible job, considering the lack of modern safety equipment and tools. Judy does not, of course, have the ability to carry out her threat, but she's pretty good at bluffing.

Now that the two main characters are (grudgingly) together, it's time for some investigative work, starting with the next chapter. Thanks for reading, and as always I'd love to know what you thought of this chapter!
Judy had expected the fox to drag his heels, but through the thin walls of the shack she could hear him packing. If she hadn't been able to see that the only door and windows that the shack had were on the front, she might have expected him to try to give her the slip, but at nearly the ten minute mark Wilde had re-emerged, a bulging carpet bag slung over his arm. Judy couldn't help but stare at him, though, because the transformation that had begun when he dropped his fake accent was complete.

Wilde was wearing a slim gray suit, buttoned high with narrow lapels. His striped red and blue tie matched the red hatband of his straw boater, which he put on his head as he left the shack. Wilde gave the hat a flick with a single finger to set it at a jaunty angle and then looked down at her, a small smile playing across his muzzle, and Judy saw him as how he must have been when he had still been Mr. Big's accountant—insufferably smug and polished, as though he somehow had the advantage. He must have noticed her surprise at the change in his appearance, because his smile widened a degree. "Sorry, Carrots," he said, "Bank's closed."

Judy resisted the urge to roll her eyes—as though she would ever kiss a fox—and replied incredulously, "You wasted time changing?"

Nick fussed with the knot of his tie as he followed her to the truck. "I wouldn't say I wasted it," he said, "I can't go back to the city looking like a rube."

He paused, and then looked her up and down with a clinical air. "One of us has to dress the part."

"There's nothing wrong with how I dress," she said, and she was certain that Nick was simply trying to goad her.

Judy had made a brief stop at her apartment to wash the scent of alcohol out of her fur and freshen up before catching the train, and had used the opportunity to change into a plain white blouse and tartan skirt, which was miles more practical than the sheer dress she had worn to the club and still went with the cloche hat. She may not have looked like a society lady but all things considered she didn't think he had any grounds to criticize her. "For a little country bunny, maybe," he replied, smirking, "Aren't Prohis supposed to wear suits?"

"If I looked like a Prohibition Agent I wouldn't be a very good agent," Judy replied.

He seemed to accept that answer and followed her the rest of the way to the borrowed truck.

"I'm not sure I can trust you to take me for a ride," Wilde remarked as he gingerly placed his carpet bag in the bed of the truck.

Considering that the owner of the truck was the sheriff, Judy wasn't sure what it was usually used for, but the bed was filthy and caked with dirt.

"Get in," Judy said firmly, pointing to the passenger side door of the cab. "If you do what I say, I promise I'll keep you safe."

"Well, that puts my mind at ease," Nick said, but he did get in and sit down.

Nick watched with a somewhat bemused air as Judy went about the preparations to start the truck. Her paws went through the process of pulling the choke, retarding the ignition timing, and setting the throttle with the ease of long practice. When she went to the crank, she could hear in her head, as she always could, the warning one of her older sisters had given her about how to hold the handle so that
it wouldn't break any bones if the engine backfired. Mercifully, despite how battered and rusty the truck was, the engine must have been in fine order because it started with a single turn of the crank. Wilde was quiet for the entire drive from his shack back to the sheriff's office to drop off the truck; Judy might have enjoyed the silence if she hadn't gotten the distinct feeling that the fox was taking the opportunity to size her up in a frankly predatory manner. She wondered what thoughts were going through his head, and was rather glad when they had dropped the truck off and walked to the train station.

The stationmaster at the Podunk train station was, like most of the residents of the town, a pig. The fat of his round face nearly forced his eyes shut, and his rumpled velvet uniform, which looked rather threadbare at its seams, had a brownish stain down the front. He was reading a newspaper and appeared rather put out when Judy distracted him to buy tickets, which took almost all of the money she had left to her name. Once again, Judy hoped that the Bureau would reimburse her expenses, or things would be extremely lean until her next payday. The stationmaster had accepted her money with a considerable lack of enthusiasm, and had only grunted in response to her cheerful greeting. He hadn't spoken any words at all throughout the transaction, in fact, although after he had given her two one-way tickets to Zootopia and picked his newspaper back up she could have sworn that he muttered, "Good riddance," under his breath.

If Nick had heard it, as she was sure that if the pig had said something it was directed at the fox, he didn't seem to react. Judy planned to spend the time until the train arrived reviewing the information that she did have with her reluctant partner, but before she could pull him to a bench far away from the other mammals waiting for the train his attention was caught by something else.

"Mr. Wilcox!" a high voice called from one of the corners of the station, "Mr. Wilcox!"

The mammal speaking was a wolf cub who couldn't have been much more than seven or eight years old, although he was only about a head shorter than Judy. Over his mottled brown and gray fur he wore a pair of overalls that were much too short, and he didn't have a shirt. The cub was sitting on the floor of the station, with a small wooden box and a cup to his left and a cardboard sign to his right. The sign had three lines in a cramped and somewhat childish scrawl, the middle line far larger than the other two:

Hooves•Claws•Shoes

SHINED

-5¢-

"Milton," Nick replied warmly as he walked over to the cub, Judy following curiously, "How's business?"

"Not so good," Milton replied, his ears drooping despondently.

Judy wasn't particularly surprised; the train station was, as it had been when she arrived, almost completely deserted. The only other mammals she could see besides the stationmaster still thumbing through a newspaper and a porter loitering by the tracks smoking a cigarette were a traveling salesmammal, his sample case on the bench next to him, and a mother and her six piglets all dressed in Sunday best that looked as though the mother had sewn the clothes herself. The station had been designed, perhaps optimistically, for many more mammals, and there were nearly a dozen unoccupied benches. "Say," the wolf asked, tilting his head to one side as he looked up at Wilde and took in his clothes and carpet bag with a puzzled look on his face, "What're you doing here, Mr. Wilcox? Are you taking a trip?"
Wilde gave Judy a brief glance, "Oh, I've got some business in Zootopia with Ms. Carrots here," he said vaguely.

The wolf gave Judy a curious look; she guessed he probably hadn't seen many, if any, bunnies before. Perhaps the wolf had caught some of the annoyance that must have shown at Wilde's continued refusal to use her name, or perhaps he had caught something from Wilde's tone that she had missed, because his lip started trembling and he ran forward, wrapping his arms around Nick's leg.

"You'll come back though, right?" the little wolf asked, and Judy could hear the quaver of tears in his voice as he hugged Nick's leg tightly, "You're the best teacher I ever had."

"I sure hope so, pal," Nick said, bending over to soothingly pat the wolf's back while looking over his head and into Judy's eyes.

She blinked. A knot of guilt had formed in her stomach that she didn't seem to be able to shake, no matter how much she told herself not to feel sympathy for him.  

Because he's a fox? a voice that sounded like her father's asked inside her head. She dismissed it; Wilde was a criminal, after all, it had nothing to do with his species. He had worked for Zootopia's most notorious gangster for five years, and in those five years every crime that Mr. Big had carried out or ordered—every robbery, every murder, every beating—was because the fox hadn't given up the shrew sooner. She also had no doubt that Wilde had only turned on his boss to save his own miserable tail, and as far as she was concerned it didn't matter if he had become an upstanding citizen while under government protection, it was his duty to help stop the wave of gang murders. Judy had meant it when she said that she would protect him, and she had been lying when she had threatened to send him to a mining town, which she didn't have the authority or ability to do any more than she could have sent him to the moon. Still, the uneasy feeling that she was doing something wrong refused to dissipate, and she was relieved for the distraction that Nick provided when he pulled himself out of the sobbing wolf cub's embrace.

Once his paws were free, Nick took out a dime. "What do you say you give me a shine while I wait?"

Milton's teary eyes widened. "You sure, Mr. Wilcox?"

"Pos-i-lutely," the fox drawled, giving the wolf the coin, "Just don't spend it all in one place."

The wolf gave a watery laugh, his tail starting to wag as he opened his wooden box and pulled out his tools of the trade to shine the claws of Wilde's feet. "No chance, Mr. Wilcox," he said, "I've got to save up."

"What are you saving up for?" Judy asked.

"I'm gonna go to flight school and be an even better pilot than Lindboargh!" the cub said proudly, drawing himself up to his full height and puffing out his narrow chest, "I'm gonna fly around the world, just me!"

Judy beamed at the cub's words. "I'm sure you will," she said, "You can do anything you set your mind to."

It was the belief that she held most fervently, that anyone really could become anything that they wanted. It was something that she had to believe, because to admit otherwise would be to give in to everyone who said it was impossible for a bunny to become a police officer. She didn't consider herself to have failed at her dream; it was just taking longer than she had thought it would. The deal
that Bogo had offered burned bright in her mind; becoming a police officer was almost within her grasp and she would not let anything, not even an uncooperative fox, stop her.

Nick gave Judy a thoughtful look, but he addressed his remark to Milton. "Just remember," he advised, "Pilots aren't the only ones who need math."

The wolf laughed, but did not look up from his work. "You say everyone needs math."

Nick nodded sagely. "It's true."

Judy didn't want to speak about the case in front of the little wolf, so she pulled files out of her briefcase and started reviewing them herself while waiting for Milton to finish. Unfortunately, the cub seemed dedicated to giving Wilde's claws the greatest shine that a fox had ever experienced. She couldn't guess if it was because he wanted to feel as though he had earned the five cent tip that Wilde had provided or if the wolf simply wanted to drag out his conversation with the fox, but they spent nearly half an hour chatting. Milton was enthusiastically updating Nick on all of the goings-on around town, which Judy suspected that he already knew; Nick kept his responses short and frequently asked Milton to elaborate, all while giving Judy the occasional smug look. Milton took so long doing Wilde's claws, which she had to admit he really had shined to a mirror gloss, that the train pulled into the station only moments after he finished.

The train was mostly empty, which wasn't too surprising considering the time of day and how empty the Podunk train station had been. Although Judy had paid for third-class tickets, she was still able to find a completely empty compartment that, while lacking any sort of glamour, would do perfectly for getting down to business.

"Did you know Thomas Carajou?" she asked Nick directly.

The fox, who had turned to look out the window to watch as Podunk vanished from view, turned to look at her, his gaze half-lidded. "I knew him well enough to avoid him," he said without enthusiasm, "They called him Crazy for a reason."

Judy pulled a notepad and a pencil out of her briefcase. "Who would want him dead?"

"You mean, besides everyone who ever spoke to him?"

The fox seemed to be getting some kind of perverse pleasure out of being as unhelpful as possible. "That's—" Judy started, before cutting herself off.

She looked down at her notepad, over the notes made in her meticulously neat writing, before starting over. "Look, the sooner you start helping me, the sooner you can go back to Podunk."

Wilde gave her a withering look. "Is that so?" he asked, "The government promised that if I gave up Big and kept my nose clean, they'd never bother me again. Look where that got me."

He waved his paws to capture the train car. It was built to a scale slightly larger than either bunny or fox, but room was about the only comfort it had. The wooden body of the car creaked and groaned with the train's motion, and the seats weren't even upholstered. "On a suicide mission to the city."

Judy swallowed another pang of guilt and chose her next words carefully. "Mr. Big might still be running things from his cell."

It was the truth, as far as she knew. It did seem at least possible that the little shrew was still in contact with his old gang, but Wilde seemed unimpressed. "I suppose I need to get him in, what,
double prison? When does this end, rabbit?"

"One week," she said, "I promise you, whether we catch Carajou's murderer in a week or not, I'll—
I'll take you back to Podunk myself."

She said it with all the sincerity that she could muster, meaning every word. Wilde sighed, but
seemed to grudgingly accept her promise. "Carajou didn't have any friends. Just a list of enemies as
long as your ears. What else do you have?"

Judy could work with grudging help, and her own enthusiasm kindled, spent the next three hours
going over all the details that she did have, starting with all of the murders she had been able to pull
files for and the murder of Carajou, although she left out the details of her own arrest, noting only the
names of the officers who had shown up and gone along with Mr. Quill's interests. Heavens only
knew what Nick would have gotten out of that one, but once she was finished going over the details
he had stroked his muzzle thoughtfully, leaning against the hard and scratched back of the seat.

She waited impatiently as he seemed to consider something, her foot tapping out a rhythm that might
have made the train car shake, although it was impossible to tell with the train already in motion. At
last, he spoke. "What were they serving in the Thief of the Night?"

"I don't know," she admitted.

Judy's only experience with alcohol, before it had been made illegal, was knowing what beer and
wine looked and smelled like. "It was clear."

Nick rolled his eyes. "Don't they teach you Prohis anything?" he asked, apparently rhetorically
because he continued, "No one bothers to run gin or vodka across the border, so it must have been
made by moonshiners. That's the way Quill was running the club when he was paying protection
money to the Zootopia Outfit."

Judy realized where he was going with his train of thought. "So he might be using the same source
still," she said.

She frowned. "How does that help?"

Nick gave her a wide smile. "It means that it's business as usual for Mr. Quill," he said, "The Thief
of the Night isn't the only club that he owns. It's not even his favorite; he barely goes there."

Judy's heart leaped in excitement. The prickly club owner hadn't seemed surprised by the murder.
Perhaps his reaction really had been annoyance at the impact that the murder had on the club's
business, but perhaps he knew more than he let on. Certainly he was worth talking to, even if the
police thought that he wasn't. "So where does he like to spend his time?"

"La Porte Verte," Nick said, the syllables flowing off his tongue with a grace that Judy supposed
was due to his time in Purris, "I'll take you there tomorrow."

"No," Judy said, doing the mental math.

The train would arrive back in Zootopia around nine in the evening, which would probably give
them plenty of time to visit the club. "You'll take me there tonight."

La Porte Verte was located in the single nicest neighborhood that Judy had ever visited in Zootopia's
city center. The buildings were mostly tall and proud, but even the shorter ones were immaculately
kept. There was no garbage on the sidewalks and the few mammals that they passed were all well-
dressed. The streets were mostly quiet, but the few cars that passed were all high-end luxury models, including two Camellacs and a brand new LaSow. The restaurants and storefronts all looked like they were far and away outside what Judy could afford, and La Porte Verte looked like it belonged in that company.

The club was set in a magnificent stone building with ivy tastefully climbing up the walls, and the narrow strip of land between the sidewalk and the building had been artfully cultivated with spectacularly blooming plants. The door of the club was absolutely massive; four bunnies abreast would have been able to walk through it without their elbows touching, and it was at least twice as tall as Judy was. The door was evenly painted a brilliant green that showed no signs of drips or cracks, and the thick planks that made it up were interrupted only by a sliding peephole and an enormous brass knocker set in the middle of the door; there was no doorknob or keyhole visible. Next to the door, illuminated by a small electric light, was a metal plaque that had turned verdigris, on which were neatly inscribed the following words:

LA PORTE VERTE CLUB

MEMBERS ONLY

Nick seized the knocker, having to stretch a little to reach it, and rapped out a single long knock, two short knocks, another long knock, one short knock, and after a brief pause two more short knocks. The pattern sounded vaguely familiar to Judy's ear, but before she had the chance to think about where she might have heard it before, the peephole slid open, and a pair of furious brown eyes glared out from inside the club. "Members only," the mammal on the other side of the door snapped, in a deep and raspy voice, "Scram."

"Is that any way to greet an old friend?" Nick asked, taking off his hat and holding it beseechingly in his paws as he looked up into the eyes of the mammal on the other side of the door.

The eyes, which were the only visible part of the mammal through the peephole, widened in surprise. "Wilde? I heard you was dead!"

Nick gave a little sniff and rolled his hat back onto his head in a single smooth motion. "The reports of my death, so on and so forth," he said, spinning a paw in a vague gesture, "Can you let us in, Leroy?"

Leroy's eyes narrowed suspiciously down at Judy. "Hold up, Wilde. Who's the bunny?"

Nick turned and looked down at Judy, favoring her with a grin that struck her as uncomfortably toothy. "Oh, her?" he said, jerking a thumb in Judy's direction as he turned back to face Leroy, "She's a Prohi."

Author's Notes: The title of this chapter, "Waiting for a Train," comes from a Jimmie Rodgers country song from 1928, in what is the first (but not last) instance of me picking a song from after 1927. It's got a very distinctive yodeling bridge that I love the sound of. Give it a listen!

The clothes that Nick is described as wearing are true to 1920s fashion, but would be somewhat out of date by 1927. He would have been at the height of fashion in 1925, but he wouldn't have had the ability or a reason to keep his wardrobe up to date for the two years he spent in Podunk. As this story takes place in the summer of 1927, a straw boater was the kind of hat that would be appropriate for the season; felt hats were a winter fashion, and in many parts of the US there was a certain date at which men were supposed to switch hats. In 1922, there was actually an eight day riot in Manhattan called the Straw Hat Riot that started with men having their straw hats removed and stomped because
they were wearing them after they were supposed to have switched to felt hats and escalated into roaming gangs administering beatings on the basis of hats.

"Bank's closed," is 1920s slang that means that there won't be any kissing or making out; it would be more typically said by a woman, but Nick is very clearly teasing Judy by choosing to interpret her surprise as admiration for his looks.

Taking someone for a ride is used as a euphemism today to mean to cheat them, but in the 1920s it was a euphemism for taking someone someplace remote to kill them, which is the second meaning that Nick's going for.

"Posilutely" is a portmanteau of "positive" and "absolutely" and was real 1920s slang. I figure that, while shoes are relatively uncommon in the world of Zootopia, mammals are probably still vain enough to get their hooves or claws shined, which I suppose would be rather like a pedicure.

Lindboargh is a pun on Charles Lindbergh, the American aviator who became the first person to fly from North American to mainland Europe non-stop on May 21, 1927. Lindbergh was pretty much completely unknown prior to making his crossing, but his success catapulted him to international fame and fortune; he was a household name and anyone who had any dream of being a pilot would certainly be familiar with him. Incidentally, the first pilot to fly around the world solo (albeit with many stops) was Wiley Post in 1933. It wouldn't be until 1949 that an airplane (Lucky Lady II, a B-50 Superfortress) circled the world nonstop, albeit with in-air refueling. The Rutan Voyager in 1986 became the first airplane to circle the world nonstop without in-air refueling.

The steps that Judy takes to start the truck are true to a real Model T. Unlike modern cars, where you can simply turn a key in the ignition (or just hit a button if you've got push button start), the procedure for starting a Model T requires setting the ignition timing and throttle, engaging the choke to set a rich fuel/air mixture, and manually cranking the engine. When cranking the engine, it is important to hold the handle properly, with your thumb under the handle instead of over it as feels natural; it means that your hand will be thrown away from the crank instead of getting caught by it if it backfires, which could easily break bones. Driving a Model T is also quite a bit different from driving a modern car, but I won't get into that now; it's enough that Judy's experience with a farm truck is sufficient to allow her to drive any Model T.

"La Porte Verte" is French for "the Green Door," which is why the door to the club is green. Considering that Nick spent three years abroad, his ability to pronounce it properly shouldn't be a surprise.

As previously mentioned, Camellac is a pun on Cadillac. New for this chapter is LaSow, a pun on the luxury carmaker LaSalle, which no longer exists. LaSalle was new to the market in 1927, and the cars were under the General Motors umbrella, the same as Cadillac. The Great Depression killed the brand's ability to build prestige, and with buyers greatly preferring the cachet of Cadillac, GM shuttered the division in 1940.

The pattern that Nick knocks on the door to the club is "Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits." The musical flourish was used since at least 1899, and has been used as an identifying knock as well as in a number of songs as the last notes. Nick starts, but does not finish, the quote attributed to Mark Twain, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

As always, I appreciate all feedback, positive or negative. Thanks for reading!
There was a moment of silence just long enough for Judy to feel a flash of fury at the fox. She hadn't gone over the details of how to enter the club on their walk from the train station, but that was also his fault; he had spent the entire time complaining about having to walk while carrying his bag. Before she could say a word, however, Leroy burst into laughter, which was surprisingly high-pitched for a mammal with such a deep voice.

"Seriously, though," Leroy said, "You goin' steady or somethin'? Never thought you was a prey chaser."

"No manacle yet," Nick said cheerfully, holding up his left paw and waggling his fingers to show that he had no ring, "But you could call her my ball and chain. Isn't that right, sweetheart?"

He said his last bit turning to look down into Judy's face. She favored the fox with the severest glare she could muster, which didn't seem to faze him at all. "I don't let him out of my sight," she said, turning to face the peephole, then turning back to shoot Nick a meaningful look.

Leroy laughed again, but there was the sound of a number of locks being undone and the door swung open. He was a brown bear with the stocky build typical of his species, but his dark suit fit him perfectly. The apparent lack of intelligence in his voice carried over to his appearance; his brow was oddly protruding, making his eyes appear like dull pits underneath. The bear gave a chuckle that sounded like a kit's giggle. "'s true what they say 'bout bunnies and adding?" he asked in a loud stage whisper, tipping Nick with a slow wink as he ushered them in.

The bear apparently couldn't even get his speciest stereotypes straight—it was multiplying, not adding—but Nick gave a playful jab to the bear's midsection that Leroy gave absolutely no reaction to; Nick might as well have poked the wall. "A gentlemammal never tells," he said, giving Leroy a wink and a smirk in return, "Is my usual table free?"

"Sure thing," Leroy said, "You two enjoy yourselves, you hear?"

"Will do," Nick called over his shoulder.

"You shouldn't have done that," Judy hissed as she chased Nick down the hallway that connected the entrance to the dining area.

She was trying to keep her voice down so that Leroy wouldn't overhear, but she didn't need to bother; a quick glance over her shoulder showed that the bear was absentmindedly filing his claws while humming tunelessly. "Surely you're not asking me to lie, are you?" Nick asked solemnly, though there was a wicked gleam to his eyes, "I didn't think a Prohi would go for that."

"Don't feed me that line," she snapped, "You're trying to ruin my investigation."

Nick shrugged nonchalantly. "That's a very serious allegation, Agent Carrots," he said, putting a paw over his heart, "It wounds me to hear that you think I'd try to ruin your little case, it really does."

Judy's retort died on her lips as they passed through the curtain that separated the hallway from the dining area. She had to keep her jaw from dropping; even when she had stepped off the train in Zootopia for the first time and seen the buildings soaring into the sky around her she hadn't felt like such a country yokel. The interior of La Porte Verte was luxurious beyond anything she could have imagined. The floor was tiled in white marble shot through with threads of pink, and the walls were paneled entirely in mahogany with elegantly carved trim pieces in abstract floral patterns. The ceiling
soared overhead far higher than what she had expected from outside the building, and a magnificent chandelier of cut crystal with what must have been hundreds of electric lights illuminated the club. The floor of the room had been built as a series of terraces so that even though there were at least two or three dozen tables in the main dining area of varying sizes they all came to the same height; even a table sized for an elephant and one sized for a mouse would put the mammals at each other's eye level. Around the edges of the room were private booths with luxurious velvet curtains of a rich maroon, some of which were closed to hide the mammals dining behind them. At one end of the dining room was the largest piano Judy had ever seen, behind which was a giraffe calling forth something classical that didn't threaten to overwhelm the low murmur of conversation from the various tables.

What caught Judy's attention, though, was what she could see the mammals at each and every one of the tables doing. To a mammal, they were all drinking; there was a goat holding a martini in one hoof and pontificating to a bored looking date with the other, a rhinoceros delicately sipping wine from a glass that would have been a wash basin for Judy, and a table of grizzled old squirrels toasting a much younger squirrel with champagne flutes. Even as all the mammals drank there were waiters and waitresses making their way around the room with a quiet efficiency, their trays loaded with even more bottles of alcohol in a staggering variety of shapes and sizes.

"Don't get too excited," Nick murmured; he was leaning down which made his words a warm tickle against one ear, "It's all legal."

"Legal?" Judy whispered back at him, "How is this legal?"

Nick's smile didn't change, but something about his eyes made him appear even snicker than usual. "They bought all the booze before Prohibition started. The club just stores it."

Judy frowned, but if what he said was true than he was right that it was all perfectly legal. "Brought some of it over myself, after the war," Nick continued.

Judy's frown deepened a degree. "Didn't you come back in 1920?"

Nick gave her a look of mock surprise. "My, you'll have to show me the file that you have on me," he said.

"I must have misspoke," he went on, entirely insincerely, "I meant that I arranged for it to be sent over in 1919—when it was perfectly legal and entirely above board—before I came back myself."

He looked as though butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, but Judy was not fooled at all. She wondered if bootlegging alcohol across the ocean had been the start of his employment with Mr. Big, or if he had been working for the shrew long before then. She dismissed the thought; her concern was supposed to be talking to Mr. Quill, not digging into the skeletons in her reluctant partner's past. He looked as thought butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, but Judy was not fooled at all. She wondered if bootlegging alcohol across the ocean had been the start of his employment with Mr. Big, or if he had been working for the shrew long before then. She dismissed the thought; her concern was supposed to be talking to Mr. Quill, not digging into the skeletons in her reluctant partner's past. Nick had led her to one of the private booths, which was sized perfectly for the fox and consequently somewhat too large for Judy; her chin barely cleared the top of the table. The instant that they sat down, before Judy had the chance to get a word in edgewise, a waiter appeared as though by magic, putting a glass of what looked and smelled like ice water in front of Nick. "A bottle for the lady, Mr. Wilde?" the deer asked, his muzzle held high and acting both as though he knew the fox and yet was completely unsurprised that a supposedly dead mammal had suddenly shown up at the club with a bunny in tow.

Before Nick could respond, Judy said, "Water is fine."

The deer gave an efficient nod and left them a pair of menus. "Very good," he said, and then closed the privacy curtain and glided off with a remarkable lack of noise considering he had hooves and
was walking on marble.

"You try to get all your 'dates' drunk?" Judy asked; certainly she wouldn't put it past him to try to incapacitate her and she had noticed that the waiter hadn't even asked Nick what he wanted to drink before serving him water but had seemed quite willing to serve her alcohol.

Judy thought she saw a flash of something genuine in Nick's face—hurt, perhaps, or maybe contempt—before his infuriating smile reasserted itself. "Certainly not," he said, "Everyone here knows I don't drink, that's all."

"You don't drink?" Judy asked, somewhat amazed.

It seemed inconceivable that a mammal who had once been highly placed in the largest and most powerful bootlegging organization the world had ever known wouldn't partake himself. Nick nodded, and then his face vanished behind his menu. "I have the palate of a sommelier, but the tolerance of a gerbil."

"Tragic," she replied, completely deadpan.

"So you do understand," he said, apparently missing the sarcasm as he perused the menu.

Judy left hers on the table. "You know that the Bureau isn't going to pay for this," she said, "You order anything, and it's on you."

Nick looked up over his menu. "Then I suppose that it's a good thing that I don't pay here either."

Before her protest could leave her lips, he continued, "Eating for free here was one of my perks."

Judy shook her head. She supposed that it meant Mr. Quill must have been in rather deep if he had to give gangsters free meals at what had to be an expensive restaurant. She couldn't tell exactly how expensive, though, because when she glanced down at her menu none of the items had any prices listed next to them. Judy frowned. The fox had a real talent for distraction, and she turned her focus back to her goal for the evening. "We came here so I could speak to Mr. Quill, not so that you could stuff yourself," she said, "Where is he?"

Nick continued flipping through his menu. "Oh, he'll be around," he said vaguely.

"He'll be around?" Judy repeated, "That's not good enough."

The edge to her voice must have finally been enough, because Nick finally put his menu down and sighed. "Look," he said, "Leroy or Byron will tell Quill that I'm here, and he'll come around."

Judy assumed that Byron had to be the waiter, but his answer didn't satisfy her. "How long will that take?"

"Long enough for us to eat," Nick said brightly, "Do you like escargot or would I have to eat it all myself?"

At her blank look, he clarified, "Snails."

Although she didn't say anything, the look on her face must have been enough, and Nick shrugged. "Coq au vin it is."

She looked down at her own menu and considered. She did have to eat, after all, and besides a quick breakfast at her apartment before taking the train to Podunk she hadn't had anything all day.
Grudgingly, Judy decided to give the fox a chance; if nothing else she'd get a free dinner out of it and have a better idea of exactly how closely she needed to watch him. When she actually read the menu, though, she had no idea what any of the items were; she saw that the escargot was listed under a section titled "Apéritifs," but she couldn't read anything else.

Nick must have caught her lack of understanding, because he leaned across the table, the candle that illuminated it throwing his features into sharp contrast. "You can't read it, can you?"

"No," she admitted.

He chuckled and settled back on his side of the table. "Salade Lyonnaise or le tourin d'ail doux, then. You do eat eggs, right?"

She would be loath to admit it to him, but the tourin, which turned out to be a creamy garlic soup, had been excellent. Nick's eyes had rolled back into his head in apparent ecstasy at the first bite of his own meal, which seemed to consist mostly of chicken. Although the service had been incredibly quick, the fox had been an aggravating dinner partner. His table manners had been surprisingly fastidious, but he had a way of sidestepping every attempt she made to press him for more detail on the Zootopia Organization in general or Thomas Carajou in particular. She wondered if he had really even been paying attention when she had spent the train ride back to the city going over the details with him; he seemed to delight in spinning drawn out stories that went nowhere and meant nothing.

Her sharp ears caught the click of nails against marble, and she hoped that it was Mr. Quill at long last. A moment later, Nick's ears swiveled towards the curtain, having apparently caught the same sound. "Why don't you let me do the talking?" he asked.

"Absolutely not," she said flatly.

Nick mimed pulling a zipper tab across his lips and then held up his paws in a gesture of surrender a moment before the curtain was swept aside, revealing a hedgehog that Judy recognized from the Thief of the Night. Mr. Quill was wearing a different, though equally dark, suit, with a pair of golden pince-nez hanging from a chain, but it was unmistakably him. He completely ignored her, turning his attention to her dining companion. "So you really are here," he said, a scowl darkening his chubby features.

Nick shrugged. "I'm just along for the ride," he said, and gestured towards Judy.

Mr. Quill turned his attention to her, and his scowl lightened into a confused expression. "You're that bunny," he said, "From the Thief."

Judy pulled her badge out and flashed it. "Yes, I am. Agent Judy Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition."

Mr. Quill sighed and pinched the bridge of his muzzle. "I've got a stack of receipts taller than I am showing it's all legal. Go ahead, take a look."

"I'm not here about this club," Judy said.

"And I already told you, the Thief doesn't serve alcohol," he said irritably, "Stop wasting both our time and beat it."

Judy turned briefly towards Nick, only to see that he was holding his head in both paws, his elbows resting on the table as he watched her talk to the hedgehog with obvious enjoyment. He raised his eyebrows in apparent bemusement, and Judy turned back towards the hedgehog. "I'm here about the murder of Thomas Carajou. Did you know him?"
Now Mr. Quill turned to look at Nick. "Where'd you find this rabbit?" he asked, but Nick just shrugged.

"Thomas Carajou," Judy repeated to get his attention again, "The wolverine murdered in the Thief of the Night. Did you know him?"

Mr. Quill shook his head. "Never even met Crazy," he said shortly.

"But you know his nickname?" Judy pressed.

"Everyone knows that!" Quill snapped, but Judy thought there was a tinge of desperation to his voice as he fussily polished his pince-nez.

"Look, a mammal like Crazy, he goes wherever he wants, right? I avoided him, he never tried to find me, and everything was copacetic. You got any more questions, talk to my lawyer," Quill said, calming himself with some apparent effort.

"And you never let gangsters make deals in your clubs, isn't that right?" Nick spoke up for the first time in the conversation.

The color drained out of the hedgehog's ears and he briefly fumbled his pince-nez before catching the chain. "That's right," Quill said, and Judy thought that there was a note of warning to his tone.

Nick shrugged and leaned back. "Well that's settled, then," he said.

Quill gave him a brusque nod. "That's not all that's settled," he said, "I don't know where you were or why you came back, but I don't care. I don't ever want to see you at one of my clubs again. Understand?"

Nick did not look surprised, and just raised his half-empty glass of water to the hedgehog in a mock salute. "Thanks for the last supper, then."

"Go chase yourself," Quill said, "Or do I need to get Leroy?"

"We were just leaving, weren't we?" Nick said to Judy.

She wasn't sure if she should be more frustrated with the hedgehog or the fox. The way that Mr. Quill had reacted to Nick's question made her think that he really did know more than he was letting on, but she wouldn't be surprised if Nick had deliberately antagonized the hedgehog to get them thrown out. "That's right," she agreed reluctantly.

She didn't have the authority to force Mr. Quill to let Nick stay in the club, and she frankly didn't trust the fox to stick around if she asked him to wait outside.

Quill strode off without a further word, his vast belly jiggling as it tried to escape the confines of his waistcoat. Nick delicately patted his muzzle with his napkin before carelessly dropping it on top of his plate, empty except for a bit of the sauce. "Better luck next time," he said as he stood up to leave.

Judy sprang up after him. "What did you mean, when you were asking him about making deals?"

Nick surveyed the dining room briefly before turning back to her. "Nothing, really," he said with a shrug, and he began to walk away from the booth.

"I know you're lying," she protested.

She was about to say something else, but her attention was suddenly caught by a booming laugh
from one of the other private booths. The curtain was wide open, allowing everyone to see who was inside; she got the feeling that it was an entirely deliberate choice. Almost unthinkingly, she reached up and grabbed Nick's tie, forcing him to a stop as he made an undignified choking noise. "That's King Lionheart, isn't it?" she hissed in his ear, having pulled Nick's head far enough down to be able to do so and pointing across the room.

Nick firmly grasped her paw in his own much larger one and peeled her fingers away. "This is a silk tie, you know," he said as he stood up straight again and tried to get the wrinkles out, "But yes, yes it is. So let's leave."

Leodore Lionheart was an imposing figure. His vast bulk, which seemed to be all muscle, was encased in a suit that looked like it cost more than most cars. His fingers, which seemed practically bigger around than Judy's thighs, were covered with thick golden rings that probably worked just as well as knuckledusters if his wicked claws weren't enough. On his own, he took up nearly an entire side of his dining table, holding a bottle of wine that looked smaller than a beer bottle in one massive fist while a lioness dressed just above the edge of impropriety delicately fed him bites from a massive slab of seared fish in some kind of white sauce.

Lionheart might have passed for a wealthy businessmammal, albeit one with somewhat gaudy tastes, if it weren't for his face. It wasn't because he looked stupid or cruel; far from it, he seemed charmingly avuncular. It was the scars. Unlike Carajou, the scars on Lionheart's face didn't dominate his features or twist his mouth, but they were unmistakable, thin furless lines under his eyes and across his nose. They marked him as a mammal with a violent past, no matter how much he tried to drape himself in the trappings of luxury. They gave him the nickname that he reportedly hated above all else, the ones that only members of rival gangs dared to use: Scarface.

Lionheart much preferred to be called King Lionheart, and he was said to rule the North Side Pride with an iron paw. His temper, it was said, could only rise so far before explosively giving way. Judy knew his face and his reputation well from the files that the Bureau maintained; if even half of them were true, he was just as bad as Mr. Big, though a fair sight better at avoiding charges.

Nick moved to keep walking, but Judy grabbed him by the paw. "Didn't you say that Mr. Quill paid protection money to the Zootopia Organization?"

"Yes," Nick said, seeming to find her grip surprisingly strong, "Can we go now?"

"So what's King Lionheart doing here?"

"A mystery for the ages," Nick said, trying to pull her along.

When she wouldn't yield, he sighed and then leaned down to look her in the eyes with what seemed like a rather condescending air. "Look, I know you're just a dumb little bunny, but—"

She had had entirely enough of his attitude and she cut him off. "I am not a dumb bunny," she said, "And I am not going to let you do whatever you like."

Nick held up his paws in apparent frustration. "And I am trying to keep you from getting me killed!" he said, "Trust me, that's not a hornet's nest you want to poke."

"I'll poke it if I have to," she said firmly.

"Then I am going to——" Nick stopped and looked back at Lionheart's table, "Wait, where'd he go?"

Lionheart and the lioness who had been hanging on him were both gone from the table, and Judy realized that she had been so caught up in her argument with Nick that she hadn't seen them leave.
Unlike Nick, however, she knew exactly where they were. "Nicky!" Lionheart boomed from behind the fox, dropping a paw the size of a platter on his shoulder with such force that Nick visibly staggered, "Having a little lover's spat?"

Lionheart's face contorted into an expression of sympathy and the lioness, hanging onto his other paw, gave a coquettish little laugh. Judy saw Nick's pupils narrow to pinpricks before he turned around, with some difficulty, to face Lionheart. "Oh, you know, just showing her around the city," he said, and his voice was somewhat shaky.

"And who is this charming little bunny?" he asked, removing his paw from Nick's shoulder and looking Judy up and down.

"No one," Nick said hastily, "Just a little country bunny here to take in—"

"Don't lie to me, Nicky," Lionheart said, a note of sadness in his voice, "You know I don't like lying."

He turned his attention to Judy. "So what is your name, my dear?"

Judy reached back into her purse for her badge even as she saw Nick's eyes bulge. The fox mouthed, "Don't," but she wouldn't let the opportunity pass.

"Agent Judy Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition," she said, showing her badge, "Mr. Lionheart, do you know anything about the murder of Thomas Carajou?"

There was a moment of stunned silence—Nick's ears drooped and his face fell, Lionheart's eyes widened a fraction, and even his moll looked surprised. Suddenly, though, Lionheart burst into a booming laugh, and he slapped Nick across the back in what might have been a playful swat for another lion but sent the fox sprawling to the floor. "Oh, a Prohibition Agent, is she?" he said, still chuckling, "You work out some kind of deal, Nicky?"

Any vestiges of smugness or self-assuredness had vanished from the fox. The look that he was giving Lionheart was full of panic, and for the first time Judy realized what she had done by bringing him back to the city. Nick hadn't even worked for Lionheart; he had worked for Lionheart's most bitter rival, and Lionheart seemed more interested in his act of betrayal than he did in that old conflict. Judy had read reports of what gangs had done to mammals who had betrayed them, and it was seldom pretty. She swallowed and stepped forward. She had promised to protect him, and she meant to do just that. "That doesn't answer my question," she said.

Lionheart shook his massive head bemusedly, and then reached into an interior pocket of his suit jacket. Nick, still on the ground, visibly tensed, but when Lionheart's paw emerged it held only a business card. "My lawyer," he said, giving Judy the card, "He'll answer any questions you have."

Lionheart stepped over Nick, and the lioness gave a delicate little jump to do the same, shooting a scornful look at the fox as she did so. Lionheart turned and looked down at Nick. "It was nice to see you again," he said, and then he grabbed Nick's paw in one of his own and pulled the fox to his feet, but he did not let go.

Nick's teeth were gritted and Judy could only imagine how tightly the lion was squeezing. "Let's not run into each other again, what do you say?"

Before Nick could respond, the lion's grip visibly tightened and he continued, his rich voice a low growl, "We can agree to that, can't we?"

"And... how..." Nick managed.
"Wonderful," Lionheart said.

He released his grip and pulled the lioness close to him, pointedly ignoring both Nick and Judy as he made his way back to their table. "Are you alright?" Judy asked, giving Nick a worried look.

"Just ducky," he drawled, fussing with his tie and apparently doing his best to collect himself, "Let's ankle."

Just before they made it to the hallway that connected the dining area to the entrance, Leroy appeared from behind the curtain. "We're leaving, Leroy," Nick said, holding up a paw, "You don't have to give us the bum's rush."

The bear smiled, and he grabbed Nick by the nape of his neck and effortlessly lifted him. "Boss insisted," he said apologetically, then turned to Judy.

"Said you could walk, though."

"Fantastic," Nick muttered.

Author's Notes: The title of this chapter, "You're Driving Me Crazy! (What Did I Do?)," comes from a Gene Austen song from 1930. Although originally recorded as a swing number, it's been covered as a big band song and there have been several jazz versions. As is hopefully clear, I think the title works equally well from the perspective of either Judy or Nick as they continue to irritate each other.

In an earlier chapter, I alluded to the fact that one of the issues the general public had with Prohibition was uneven enforcement, and La Porte Verte is one example of that. It's an important point that Prohibition made it illegal to manufacture, distribute, or sell alcohol, but did not actually ban the consumption of alcohol and didn't say anything about alcohol purchased before the ban went into effect. Thus, the rich stockpiled alcohol for their own consumption in the year between Prohibition being passed and becoming law. If Nick brought alcohol over in 1920, he would be breaking the law, but either bringing it over directly or just arranging for it to be shipped in 1919 would be perfectly legal.

This does mean that in 1927 La Porte Verte couldn't be selling alcohol, but if they're merely storing it for their members or otherwise not directly charging for it, they're in the clear. Of course, with a large stockpile of alcohol, who's to say if something of a somewhat more modern vintage slips in? Falsifying records to make newer alcohol appear to have been purchased legally before the start of Prohibition certainly happened among the upper class, but it was extremely rare for them to suffer any kinds of consequences for that.

Apéritifs is French for appetizers; following through with the name, La Porte Verte is a French restaurant, though I never did come up with a good animal pun for French. Furench seems a bit too on the nose.

Coq au vin is a traditional French dish of chicken in a wine sauce with mushrooms and lardons, although in the world of Zootopia the lardons (strips of pork fat) are presumably either omitted or something else is substituted. Salade Lyonnaise is a salad made with a poached egg and usually bacon, but again I'm assuming that pork is out. Tourin is a French garlic soup, and while it is traditionally made with chicken broth (which I'm assuming Judy would not eat) water can be substituted. French cooking in general tends to have meat in most dishes, but considering that La Porte Verte seems to have a varied clientele I figure that the Zootopian version of French cooking is somewhat more herbivore friendly.
The "zip it" gesture that Nick makes to indicate that he won't question Mr. Quill would have been fairly new in 1927. Although the first true modern zipper was invented in 1913, the name zipper actually comes from a pair of boots first manufactured in 1923. The boots were called zippers, and the name ended up sticking for the fastener used to close them rather than the boots themselves.

Copacetic is a word not really in common use now, but as an expression to mean that everything was fine it dates to 1919 and was in common use in the late 1920s.

"Go chase yourself" is a bit of 1920s slang that means "get lost" and seemed particularly appropriate to be said in a derogatory fashion towards a fox. Foxes, in a very similar manner to dogs, do sometimes chase their own tails, and it's adorable.

I first made reference to Lionheart in chapter 2, when Stu refers to a gang led by a terrible lion, and Lionheart's gang, the North Side Pride, is first referenced in chapter 5.

While Scarface is probably now most closely associated with the 1983 Al Pacino film (which was a remake of a 1932 film), the nickname Scarface actually was used for Al Capone, who reportedly hated to be called that. While I applied a lot of elements of Al Capone to Mr. Big, some of them did make their way elsewhere.

Moll is a term that means a gangster's girlfriend. "And how" is a piece of 1920s slang that means strong agreement. "Ducky" means fine and "ankle" was slang for walking or leaving. "The bum's rush" means to be forcibly ejected.

As always, I'd love to hear what you thought of this chapter.
Why Can't You?

Although Leroy had carried Nick the entire way out to the main entrance, he had the decency to set the fox and his carpet bag gently down outside the door rather than throwing them bodily. "Quill says you can't ever come back," Leroy said, and remarkably he actually sounded somewhat sad.

Nick shrugged and tipped his hat at the bear before putting it back on his head. "Nothing personal, Leroy," he said.

Leroy nodded slowly. "Nothing personal, Wilde."

The door closed and there was the sound of locks being engaged, and then Judy found herself alone with the fox. "What were you thinking, waving your badge around like that?" he demanded, his ears flat back against his head.

"I had to question them," she protested as they started to walk away from the restaurant.

"Question them?" he asked incredulously, "What did you think would happen?"

He deepened his voice into a poor imitation of Lionheart and said, rather mockingly, "Why yes, Agent Hopps, I did order the hit on Carajou. Please, arrest me."

He laced his fingers together and brought them underneath his muzzle as he rolled his head to the side and raised the pitch of his voice into what was presumably supposed to be an imitation of her. "Gee, thanks Mr. Lionheart!"

She chose to ignore the sarcasm and focused on the implied point of his crude bit of theater. "So you think Lionheart did it?"

Nick scowled down at her. "It's been two years since I set foot in the city. How would I know?"

She was undeterred. "Then what was Quill hiding? What was that about gangs making deals in his clubs?"

The hedgehog had almost completely lost his composure when Nick had made his comment, and Judy was sure that there was something to it. Nick sighed, and then said, as though he were speaking to a particularly stupid kit, "It means that you, fearless agent that you are, aren't asking the right questions."

"So what's the right question?" she pressed.

"One that doesn't involve parading me around a bunch of gangsters," he replied shortly, not even bothering to look down at her, "You want to get yourself killed, that's your business, but these aren't nice mammals you're dealing with. You really think Lionheart is going to let me be?"

"I'm not going to let anyone kill you," Judy said, drawing herself up.

She found his complete lack of confidence in her abilities incredibly insulting, and while she supposed that he might have a point in terms of how she was conducting her investigation he wasn't making matters any easier for her. His continued refusal to answer even the simplest of questions made her wonder if he actually really did know more than he was telling her, or if he was simply acting as though he did to annoy her. "Mm-hmm," Nick said, looking down at her skeptically, before looking at his watch and then clapping his paws together.
"Well, it's been a gas, but it's getting awful late," he said, "Why don't I head back to my place?"

Judy quickly positioned herself in front of him. "Not a—" she began, but then was cut off by the buzzing klaxon of a car horn.

"Stay outta the lane, lady!" a shrill voice cried from somewhere near Judy's ankle.

She looked down to see a little Barker electric car that had dodged around her leg, the taillights glowing like cigarette ends as the chipmunk driving it shook one minuscule paw up at her.

Nick looked down at her, seeming to have positively enjoyed what he had watched. "Not a chance," she finished, "You're coming to my place."

As Judy opened the door to her apartment, she saw it as she imagined that Nick must. Her apartment was small even for a bunny, and for a fox it must have been positively cramped. The wallpaper was stained and peeling and the few pieces of furniture were all scratched and battered. The lone window looked out on the building across the small alley, filling the window frame with an unspectacular view of crumbling bricks stained with years of grime. The lone electric light, when she turned it on as they entered, filled the apartment with gloomy shadows under its feeble yellow light, revealing a room that could be considered a home only with a generous stretch of the imagination. She had no artwork on the walls or knick-knacks on the small desk that doubled as her table. There were only her battered books of law, the spines falling apart from how often she had read through them, and six letters from the family farm, written mostly in her mother's neat script but with crudely done post scripts by her younger siblings.

Nick's eyes looked around the apartment with what she imagined was a critical eye until he spotted something she hadn't even considered. To Judy, the rejection letter from the police academy pinned above her bed simply was, something that would always be there in much the same way that the sun rose every day. She hadn't even thought about the letter, let alone taking it down, and from the way that the fox was looking at it she knew it was too late.

"Ah," Nick said, as he effortlessly reached up to the low ceiling and pulled Judy's rejection letter free, "The last piece of the puzzle."

Judy jumped and snatched the letter away from him, but he had evidently already read it, because he shook his head in mock despair. "So you wanted to be a cop, is that it?"

She didn't respond, but he continued. "Only, whoopsy, the academy doesn't take bunnies, does it? So you settle for being a Prohi. And this little murder case is what, you proving yourself? You solve this, you get to be a cop?"

"So what if it is?" she asked heatedly, "There are innocent mammals dying because of these gangsters. Someone has to do something."

"And whoopsy number two, you think that'll mean anything. You really think anyone will care if you figure out who killed a hitmammal?"

Judy recalled Bogo's promise. "I know someone will."

Nick shook his head again. "You really are a dumb bunny, aren't you? Let's say you do the impossible and solve this without getting the both of us killed. You know where this ends? You get a nice attagirl, maybe a pat on the back from Bellwether herself, but there's always going to be something. There's always an excuse, Carrots. You keep jumping through hoops and they'll just keep raising them until you can't."
Judy raised an eyebrow. "Is that experience talking?"

She suddenly wondered what gave his words such a bitter tinge, but Nick just gave a snort and sat down on her bed. "You tell me," he said, "Are you really going to take me back to Podunk after a week, whether or not you solve this?"

"Of course I will," she said, stung by the implied accusation that she would go back on her word.

She folded up the letter carefully and put it in her purse as Nick stretched out on her bed. "Try to keep your expectations low," he said.

"I know I am," he added, and his expression was difficult to read.

She couldn't tell what was going on in his head, and his look was hard to bear, as though he was seeing through her. "That's a sad way of living," she said at last.

He grinned at that, his eyes sparkling with delight. "It's a realistic way of living," he said, "And the sooner you learn that, the sooner you can—"

She cut him off. "Be more like you?"

Nick either didn't catch or chose to ignore the emphasis she had put on the last word. "You could do far worse," he said, smiling, "After all..."

He pointed at her. "Dumb bunny."

He gestured back at himself. "Sly fox."

Judy folded her arms behind her back and strolled towards the bed, refusing to take the bait. He was just trying to get a rise out of her; she had buckled once, back at La Porte Verte, when he had called her a dumb bunny, but she refused to give him the satisfaction of reacting to it again. "And which one of us has a criminal record?" she asked sweetly.

Before Nick even had the chance to react, she had cuffed his arm to one of the posts of her bed's headboard. The mattress was lumpy and starting to pull apart, but the bed frame itself was solid metal and quite secure. Nick blinked, apparently surprised by the speed with which she had cuffed him as he looked down at the chain. "Really?" he asked, gesturing with his free paw to the shackle connecting him to the bed, "What am I supposed to do if I have to use the W.C.?"

"You're a sly fox, aren't you?" she asked, throwing his own words back at him, "Figure something out. Hold it 'til morning. Take the bed with you. Wet the bed, for all I care."

"There's something wrong with you, rabbit."

She ignored him as she grabbed her alarm clock from off her dresser and gathered up her spare set of sheets. Judy tried to make the patch of floor as far away from her bed—and consequently out of Nick's limited reach for as long as he was cuffed to it—as comfortable as she could. There wasn't much she could do, though, and she turned the lone light in her apartment off. "We'll start at six in the morning."

Judy could hear the fox shifting around on her bed. "My suit is going to get wrinkled," he complained.

She rolled her eyes. It really always was something with him. "Deal with it."
Judy had expected Nick to stay up and continue complaining, if only to prevent her from sleeping, but within a few minutes the sounds of his breathing gradually slowed. Perhaps it was because of his military service, but he had fallen asleep almost instantly, while she wasn't sure than even without him distracting her she'd be able to manage the same. A few more minutes passed, and the fox began making a peculiar noise that it took Judy a moment to place. Nick was snoring.

"Nick?" she whispered.

Nick gave no response, his gentle snoring continuing. Satisfied that he really was asleep, Judy crept to her bed, moving with agonizing slowness to avoid making noise. When at last she had reached her bed, she pulled a small box from underneath it and flipped the box open.

In the dim light coming through her apartment's lone window, the little snub-nosed revolver gleamed next to a small cardboard box of ammunition. When she had been on desk duty, there had been no reason to carry the gun, but now that she was in the field... Judy looked from the revolver to the fox sleeping on her bed. He had curled himself into a tight ball, his tail resting beneath his muzzle, which was slightly open. A single pearly fang glittered in the moonlight, but the fox appeared completely at peace, sleep having drained his features of their normally sly cast.

Judy closed the box and started to put it back under her bed before she hesitated.

I'm not afraid of him, she thought, opening the box and removing the revolver, I'm just being prepared.

There was no telling what the morning would bring, after all, and she wouldn't let herself be caught off guard. If he had been telling the truth about the mob, she might need it. Judy took the gun and the box of ammunition and put them in her purse, satisfied by the way they fit neatly next to her badge and the rejection letter. With that accomplished, she tried to make herself comfortable with no greater success than she had the first time, tossing and turning on the hard wooden floor that was only slightly softened by the sheet. She fell into a fitful sleep, her dreams consumed by vague impressions of the Thief of the Night. She saw, over and over again, a shadowy figure emerging from the oblivious crowd, as they danced and drank and laughed, to murder Carajou, a figure with a smile like a drawer full of knives and eyes that burned a savage green.

By Judy's alarm clock, it was 4:37 in the morning when she awoke with a start to an unfamiliar sound. She was a light sleeper by bunny standards, where sleeping in the same room as dozens of other bunnies was the norm; she had in the past been woken up on several occasions by her next-door neighbors banging around their apartment, and at first she thought that they were disturbing her sleep yet again. The noise was a sort of crackling, like someone was wrinkling a massive piece of paper, and her apartment seemed to be uncomfortably warm even by the standards of August in the city. Before she could figure out what the noise was, the cause became apparent when the ceiling of her apartment collapsed in a spray of plaster dust and debris, the crackling became the raging of a fire as it sucked in air through her room's lone window, which had been left open a crack.

It seemed as though the air itself was on fire; the heat had gone beyond oppressive and each breath felt as though she were trying to inhale boiling water. The cheap floral wallpaper that covered the walls was starting to peel away, the glue catching fire and filling the apartment with smoke that burned at her eyes. When the ceiling had fallen, it had made her apartment nearly unrecognizable, the burned remnants of the apartment above hers filling the small space, and she looked for her bed, almost completely disoriented. Just barely audible above the crackling of the flames were low, whimpering cries of pain, and she spotted Nick.

The ceiling had brought with it a large support beam, which had landed on her bed and pinned the fox's left leg down. He was desperately trying to lift it off, but with his right paw cuffed to the bed's headboard he could only use a single arm and didn't have the strength to move the massive piece of
burning wood. His eyes were bright with terror, and the sheets and mattress around him had caught fire in a few places that he was trying to avoid but could not. Unthinkingly, heedless of the smoldering debris that cut and burned her feet, Judy rushed to the bed, fumbling for the key to the cuffs in her skirt pocket as she did so.

Nick was flailing as he tried to avoid the flames, seemingly completely unaware of her presence, and she unlocked the cuff connecting the one around his wrist to the headboard even as the rapidly heating metal seared her fingers. When his arm was free, he pulled it towards the beam he was trapped under so quickly that he caught her across the face with his paw. Nick was so focused on trying to free himself that he didn't even seem to consider why he could suddenly use his arm; he just tried to lift the beam with all of his strength. It budged the merest fraction of an inch, and fell again. Judy jumped onto the bed, and called for his attention. "At the same time!" she said, getting her own fingers underneath the beam.

She pulled as hard as she could, to the point that something in her back felt like it was going to snap, but even the combined strength of a fox and a bunny wasn't enough for Nick to get his leg out. The fire had continued consuming her apartment, everything around them starting to burn as she looked down at the beam. Nick kept futilely trying to lift it, his lips pulled back from his teeth in an agonized grimace as he exerted his full strength, but there was simply no moving it. Wildly, Judy looked around her apartment as though a solution might present itself, and suddenly she had an idea. "I'll be right back!" she yelled, but Nick gave no indication that he had heard her, his attention entirely focused on trying to save himself.

Her apartment's closet didn't have a door; it was just a small alcove with a metal rod running across it just ever so slightly too high for her so that she had to stand on tip-toes or jump to put clothes away or take them out. She had asked the building superintendent to lower it right after she had moved in, and even more than a month later he still hadn't done anything. She brushed the thought aside as she ran to the closet, scrambling across the burning bits of wood and plaster that had covered her floor.

Her clothes and the hangers that they were on were all burning, but it wasn't her belongings that she cared about. She jumped and hit the closet rod as hard as she could, her fist going momentarily numb as the metal bar ripped its way free of the screws holding it to the walls of the closet. When she tried picking up the bar she almost immediately dropped it; the metal was far too hot to hold, and she fumbled for one of the blouses that had fallen to the floor and wrapped it around her paw. It was barely enough, and she could feel the heat burning at her palm as she carried the rod back to her bed, where Nick was still struggling to free himself, his movements increasingly frenetic.

Judy stood at the foot of the bed and forced one end of the rod underneath the beam. "Push!" she called, hoping that Nick would listen.

As he scrabbled at the beam again, she threw all of her weight at the other end of the rod, and the bed's frame screamed in protest as she used the foot of the bed as a fulcrum. The metal of the footboard started buckling even as the beam began to budge. Judy gritted her teeth. "Push!" she repeated, as she strained herself, pressing so hard that the muscles in her arms felt as though they were tearing. With a wordless cry of exertion, Nick pushed against the beam again, and their combined efforts raised it perhaps a half inch off his leg.

It was enough, though, and Judy nearly lost her balance as Nick pulled his leg free and let go of the beam. She staggered forward against the foot of the bed, and then looked over to Nick. He had shakily made his way to his feet, and she dropped the rod, her arms aching fiercely. Judy put her shoulder under his arm and led Nick to the window; the doorway to her apartment was blocked by burning rubble, and Judy was feeling increasingly light-headed, desperate for air. She strained at the window, but the heat must have warped it in its frame because the window wouldn't budge. Judy
shrugged Nick off and then groped on the floor, trying to find something she could use even as she wished she hadn't dropped the rod. The apartment was almost completely filled with smoke, and it was all but impossible to see anything, but at last her fingers caught what she recognized by touch as the strap of her purse. She grabbed the purse and swung it as hard as she could at the window, and was rewarded when it instantly shattered, leaving a few shards of glass protruding around the edges. Judy swept the bottom of the frame with her purse to clear as many of the shards as she could, and then motioned for Nick to go through the window.

The fox needed no further urging and leaped through the opening, a piece of glass catching his suit, already covered with gashes and burns, and tearing it further. Once he was on the fire escape he reached back into the apartment and pulled her out. The choking black smoke streamed through the broken window after them and, unable to see anything, Judy slipped down the fire escape's ladder, catching herself with a jerk that felt as though her arms would be pulled from their sockets. Nick was a moment behind her; he didn't seem to be climbing down the ladder so much as he was falling at a controlled rate as he scrambled for the rusty rungs. Judy managed to hit the ground more or less gently, but Nick fell the last three feet, wobbling and catching the ladder too late. Judy grabbed at the fox and he leaned on her as they moved away from the building; the fox was incredibly heavy, and she could barely support his weight as they made their way to the building across the street. They both turned and watched Judy's apartment building burn.

Even the air of the city, smelling nearly as awful as it always did, seemed far sweeter than the air of the countryside ever had, and Judy breathed greedily for a few moments before turning her full attention back to her building. Someone must have used an alarm box to summon the fire department, because there was a fire engine already on the scene, its red bodywork gleaming in the flickering light of the fire. Even as some of the firefighters, solidly built horses to a mammal, jumped off the back as they buttoned up their heavy overcoats and grabbed their fire axes to enter the building, there was a flurry of activity as others connected the fire truck to the nearest hydrant. From across the street, Judy could hear them cursing as they wrestled with the balky hydrant before getting it connected, and then a great spray of water was directed at the flames licking their way out from the windows of the second story.

Some of the other residents of the building, who Judy recognized by sight though not by name, were watching the destruction of their homes with a stunned air from the street. There was an old goat that Judy recognized as living on the floor above her who had fallen to her knees, weeping as she clutched an old and yellowing framed photograph of a handsome young goat to her chest. There was the family of pigs who lived just down the hall from her, the normally energetic piglets tightly grasping each other and their father's leg in total silence, all of them black with soot. This is my fault, Judy thought in quiet horror as she watched the fire.

She had no doubt that the fire was the result of arson, and she was absolutely sure that the intended target had been Nick. She turned to look at the fox, who was still panting, trying to catch his breath as he leaned against the building behind them. "I didn't think that..." Judy started to talk to him but trailed off.

She had no idea how to end her sentence. Anything she said would be an excuse. She didn't think that Nick would be in any real danger? She should have known that the mob would consider him a loose end to tidy up. She didn't think that the mob would resort to such imprecise and dangerous methods? She had read dozens of reports detailing the casual and unfocused violence that gangsters used, everything from bombs that ended up catching innocent pedestrians in their blasts to shootings that were more dangerous to passersby than to their intended victims. She didn't think that they would have tried anything while a Prohibition Agent was with him? She had no reason to think that; she was a rookie who had made foolish mistake after foolish mistake.
"I didn't think," she said finally, and she could hardly bear to look him in the face. There were tears running down her face that had nothing to do with smoke irritating her eyes. She had very nearly gotten Nick killed, to say nothing of her neighbors. Even if everyone had gotten out of the apartment building, she had left them homeless, and there was no telling what they had lost. Irreplaceable photographs, treasured family heirlooms, beloved toys—all of them gone, consumed by a fire that had been started because she had been too blinded by her own ambition to do things the right way. Judy wanted to become a police officer to make the world a better place and she felt sick to her stomach by what she had done. She hadn't made the world better for anyone; all she had managed to accomplish was to paint a target on a fox who, no matter his other faults or previous sins, had been honoring the agreement he had made with the government for protection from prosecution in exchange for information on Mr. Big.

"I'm sorry," she said, the words a choked sob, "It's my fault they went after you."

She wasn't sure how comprehensible she was, but she wouldn't have been able to stop even if she had wanted to; the words seemed to flow out of her mouth just as the tears continued to flow from her eyes. "I'll... I'll do what it takes to make you safe. To try to— To try to make this right. I'll get you on the first train back to Podunk. If you have to leave Podunk, I'll make sure it's someplace better. I promise," she said, forcing herself to look up into his face.

She swallowed hard. "I promise."

Judy expected Nick to come back with some biting retort to break her down further. She thought she would have deserved it, but he didn't say anything for a long moment. He didn't seem angry; he seemed tired, as though he could barely stand. The plaster dust had turned his red fur a dingy gray, making him look impossibly old. Nick sighed, and slid down the wall until he was crouching wearily, looking her straight in the eyes. They were only inches apart, and she could see that his eyes were bloodshot and puffy from the smoke, and he had a shallow cut clotted with soot under one ear. "You ought to buy yourself a ticket someplace far away," he said, his voice a harsh croak, "This? The fire, the beam, and—"

He broke into a coughing jag, tears cleaning streaks down his face as his body was wracked by the spasms, but he quickly got himself under control and kept talking, his voice marginally more normal than before, "...and all that jazz? This wasn't to kill me."

Judy's eyes widened, and Nick continued, his voice and expression uncharacteristically solemn, "This was to kill you."

Author's Notes:

Hey! That's the name of the story!

In all seriousness, though, this is an extremely important chapter in terms of the story that I'm trying to present, and not just because it has the title drop. I've been getting some great feedback on Judy's behavior leading up to this chapter (I especially want to thank Errinyes, MassGains, Jack_Kellar, DrummerMax64, and chaucer345 for their comments in this regard). I was somewhat circumspect in terms of how I responded to earlier comments because I knew this chapter was coming and I didn't want to spoil anything.

I fully intended for Judy's actions in regards to shanghaiing Nick to be questionable at best, and this chapter is when the consequences of her decision start to come out. Certainly, it's not the end of things either; saving someone's life after you endanger it in no way makes up what you owe them. It
is a beginning, though, and I'll avoid any further commentary on that for now so that I don't give away any future plot developments. In the meantime, I always appreciate hearing what people think about my stories; I was trying to do a lot in this chapter and I really would like to know what you thought of it.

With that said, onward to my exhaustive (and hopefully not exhausting) author's notes on the historical context of this story!

The title of this chapter, "Why Can't You?" comes from a 1929 Al Jolson song. The lyrics are about trying, even when things seem impossible, and seemed appropriate to me for this chapter in particular and Judy's character in general.

Referring to something as a gas or a gasser was 1920s slang for something that was fun, so it's obviously being used sarcastically in this case.

The Barker car that the chipmunk drives is a pun on Baker, a company that really did make electric cars in the beginning of the 20th century. Electric cars may seem like a fairly recent invention, but electric cars date far longer back than the Tesla Model S or even GM's late-nineties half-hearted attempt with the EV-1 (incidentally, there's a great documentary about the EV-1 called Who Killed the Electric Car? that I recommend watching). In fact, the dominant position of piston-powered cars was not the case when cars were a relatively new invention. Early cars powered by internal combustion engines were unreliable, difficult to drive, expensive, and noisy. Electric cars, then as now, were far simpler and quieter, and the advantage of direct drives was even greater in the days before automatic transmissions or even synchronized manual transmissions. One of the major selling points for early electric cars was that they were advertised as being so simple that even a woman could operate them. Hooray, misogyny!

It was true, though, that early gas powered cars had to be manually cranked to start them, as referenced in chapter 6. Depending on the car that could take a significant amount of strength, involved getting down close to the ground, and ran the risk of breaking an arm if not done properly and the car backfired. Starting an electric car, in contrast, was as easy as pressing a button. However, even as internal combustion engines became far better, cheaper, and more reliable, there were no corresponding advances in battery or charging technology. The electric cars of the early 20th century used either lead-acid batteries (invented in 1881) or nickel-iron batteries (invented in 1901), since a key requirement for an electric car is for the batteries to be rechargeable. Neither one of these battery types is particularly energy dense; the lithium-ion batteries used in current electric cars weren't commercially available until 1991. Since gas was dirt cheap, electric cars continually lost market share until they eventually became curiosities, with brief surges of interest whenever a new rechargeable battery type (such as nickel-cadmium batteries in the 1960s) came out or an existing one became cheaper, when gas prices surged, and when environmental concerns over fossil fuels became more widespread.

I imagine, however, that in the world of Zootopia, electric cars would probably dominate the niche of small vehicles and wouldn't lose that position, since internal combustion engines don't scale down very well. A car sized for a mouse, a chipmunk, or a similar animal would be much easier to make as an electric car than as one powered by an engine and would also give a much smoother and quieter ride. I could easily see the Zootopia equivalent of Baker staying in business into the present day, either as an independent company or remaining as a marque under a larger brand after an acquisition. I think there would probably also be the land equivalent of ferries, where rodent-scale cars could drive into a much larger truck and transverse relatively long distances between parts of the city safe for them to drive in.

Handcuffs of the 1920s really don't look too much different from the image that probably springs to
mind if you imagine handcuffs. Modern handcuffs do have better locking mechanisms and are made out of higher quality materials, but otherwise the basic design hasn't really changed in the US. In other countries, there's more widespread use of more modern designs, such as handcuffs with a rigid central connection rather than a chain; this design makes it easier to cuff someone who's struggling.

W.C. stands for Water Closet, which is what toilets were commonly called in the 1920s. Bathrooms of the 1920s tended to be rather different than they are now; the average person from the period would probably find it baffling if they learned that you had a toilet in your bathroom, since a bathroom in their mind would just have a bathtub (hence the name bathroom) and perhaps a sink. The W.C. would essentially be an indoor outhouse, if you'll pardon the contradiction in terms, with plumbing to flush waste rather than just a pit. W.C. has fallen out of use in American English, but one of the other slang terms for a toilet—a john—does date to the 1920s.

Judy's revolver is intended to be a Colt Detective Special, a gun chambered for .38 Special cartridges that was available in 1927. The Detective Special is a snub-nosed revolver that sacrifices accuracy for compactness; considering her size, she'd probably have difficulty with anything larger.

In chapter 1, I had made reference to police call boxes; similar boxes also existed for summoning the fire department. The fire truck in this chapter is based off of a 1925 Stutz fire truck, which was totally open to the elements. The Stutz Fire Engine Company went out of business in 1929, but in the 1920s they did have a fair share of the US market. Fire trucks, and fire hydrants, were fairly well established in 1927; fire hydrants had reached their more or less modern form in the late 19th century, and a hydrant in 1927 wouldn't look too different from a modern one. Fire trucks were the logical continuation of a series of developments in firefighting technology. Steam-powered pumps, which were so heavy that they needed to be pulled by horses, date to the 19th century, and while there were attempts at making fire engines that propelled themselves using the same source of steam power used for pumping water, by the early 20th century the advantages of internal combustion engines were apparent. The procedure used for fighting fires in the 1920s wasn't too dissimilar from modern firefighting, although the technology was obviously much cruder. As described, the fire truck would connect to a water source (typically a fire hydrant in the city, but it was also possible to run an intake hose to any sufficiently large source of water like a river or a bay), and then pump it to a nozzle that the firefighters could direct to extinguish the flames.

Considering the history of fire engines as having been pulled by horses, I figured that it would make sense that in the world of Zootopia that firefighters would pull double duty, hauling their equipment to the fire and then putting it out. Even once the technology reached the point where it was no longer necessary to pull the engine, I figure that tradition would be enough to keep firefighters as being mostly horses, at least in the 1920s. Presumably later on the advantages of a more varied force would be obvious enough to have more diversity, but in 1927 I could see them being pretty homogeneous still.

As always, thanks for reading!
Together, We Two

Judy looked up at Nick in disbelief. "What?" she asked, her mind reeling.

"Listen," he said, "If Lionheart tried killing me, it'd be public. Something that would leave no doubt he was responsible, but no evidence that could link him to it. Something that would send a message."

Judy had to admit that, of what she knew about gangsters, Nick was right. It was incredibly rare for one to simply vanish; their deaths tended to be spectacularly violent.

"But prohis and cops? You lot tend to have an awful lot of 'accidents.'"

Nick grinned, but there was no humor or cheer in it. "The public doesn't like prohis or cops, but they like it even less when gangsters kill them."

Although there had been no deaths in the Bureau of Prohibition during the time Judy had been a part of the office, the Bureau's past had had a fair number of agents who had died under circumstances that were only innocuous if taken in isolation. Mammals got into car accidents, drowned, or died in fires all the time, after all, and Prohibition Agents were just as vulnerable as the general population. However, when over the course of seven years there had been nearly a dozen agents who had died in tragic accidents, it seemed more than a little unlikely that they all could have been accidents. "That means that there's someone who wants all of this to go away," Judy said, "Someone powerful."

Nick sighed. "You're not going to give this up, are you?"

Judy set her chin, looking across the street at her apartment building. The firefighters had succeeded in extinguishing the flames, but the building was a burnt husk with mammals huddled around it. She had made a terrible error of judgement, pulling Nick into this mess, but she had meant what she told him. She'd get him out of danger, and then she'd devote herself to solving Carajou's murder alone. Maybe she wouldn't be able to get anywhere on her own in a week, but if she couldn't solve a case without endangering others she didn't feel like deserved to be a police officer. "No," she said simply.

"Let's get you to the train station," she said, and started walking towards the nearest station, the one that she used to catch her train to work every day.

Nick nodded, but started walking in the opposite direction, limping slightly. His leg apparently wasn't broken or sprained, but she was sure that if nothing else he would end up with a nasty bruise. "Come on," he called over his shoulder, "My place is this way."

"Why?" Judy asked, stopping suddenly.

Nick looked back at her, and there was a ghost of his grin on his face. "Why?" he echoed, "I said I would help, didn't I?"

There was suddenly a warm lump in Judy's throat and she stammered through a response. "But—I forced... I said I— You could go back to..."

He waved it off. "We're probably safer together. For now, at least."

He smiled, and it seemed to light up his entire face. "The moment that changes, I make like a banana and split."

Judy laughed, and wiped at the tears on her face with one filthy paw. She wasn't sure she entirely
believed him, and for once it made her glad.

It had taken some time, and the last of the money in Judy's purse, to get a taxi willing to take the filthy pair to the neighborhood that Nick's house was in. The driver, a cheerful lynx, had been the first driver out of the five taxis that Judy tried flagging down to stop, and after spotting their sooty appearances he had spent the entire trip yammering on about other fires he had seen in the city, not letting either Nick or Judy get a word in edgewise.

Nick's home was a greystone showing curious signs of neglect; though the small plot of grass in front of it was neatly trimmed, the stonework was discolored and the windows were nearly opaque with grime. The house was two stories tall, rather narrow, and surrounded on both sides by similar (though better kept) houses. The facade of the house was simple, all large and rough-hewn blocks of dull limestone with chunky arches over the narrow windows and door. The curtains were drawn and no lights were on, the small house giving every indication that it had been years since anyone had set foot inside. Overall, the impression that Judy got was that exactly enough—and no more—effort had been taken to keep the neighbors from complaining in the fox's absence. While she wondered at how and why Nick had bothered to keep the place maintained, he fumbled for a key on a ring he pulled from an interior pocket of his suit jacket.

He unlocked the door with some difficulty, the lock seeming almost frozen from disuse, but eventually he forced the door open and Judy followed him inside. As she entered, she couldn't help but notice that the door was unusually thick, and through the haze of dirt coating the outsides of the windows she saw that there were solid metal bars hidden behind the curtains. Inside, the air of neglect continued, though it was clear that some pains had been taken before the house had been abandoned. All of the furniture was covered with canvas tarps, and while a thin layer of dust had settled over everything in the house it seemed the place had been spotless before the door had been closed for the last time. The air was musty, faint traces of the sickly-sweet odor of moth balls competing with the stale scent of Nick's musk to take dominance over the general smell of decay.

There were spider webs with long-ago desiccated flies in the corners of the parlor, which Judy took in while Nick closed and locked the door behind them, leaving a thin clean arc in the dust coating the floor. He clicked a switch on the wall and a dim electric light turned on, weakly illuminating the room and filling it with hazy shadows. "You can use the shower first while I get everything uncovered," he said, gesturing at a bathroom down a narrow hallway past the stairs, "Hold on."

He rummaged through a linen closet and pulled out a faintly musty but clean towel and put it in her arms, then vanished into a bedroom. He reemerged moments later holding a green silk bathrobe and a plain button-up shirt of fine white cotton. "Doubt anything else I have is going to fit you," he said, somewhat apologetically.

Judy accepted the clothes gratefully, eager to clean herself off, and went into the bathroom. Despite the small size of the house, it was surprisingly large, richly tiled with a black and white geometric pattern that covered the floors and went halfway up the walls. The bathtub and the basin of the sink were both enormous and somewhat too high for her, but she was able to find some dusty glass bottles of shampoo in a large standing cabinet that seemed to be full of unused toiletries. After she stripped off her burnt and sooty clothes, Judy took one look in the full-length mirror that ran along one wall. She was absolutely filthy, and quite a bit grayer than normal, but she forced her attention away from the mirror; she was more concerned with getting the reek of the fire out of her fur than with how she looked.

Nothing happened at first when Judy turned on the shower head, but after a moment the long-dormant pipes gave up their water, initially brownish-red with rust. She let the water run for a few
minutes until it became clear; the stinging cool water was pleasant in comparison to the horrible heat of the fire. The water that sluiced through her fur and down the drain turned an unpleasant gray from the combination of soot and plaster dust, and it took her longer than she would have thought to scrub the last of it out with the pleasantly clean and vaguely floral scent of the shampoo. She would have liked nothing more than to stay under the soothing spray of water, but she had a job to do, and she reluctantly shut off the water, which had just started to warm up. After toweling herself dry, Judy allowed herself to look in the mirror, and tried not to be surprised at how terrible she looked.

As she had cleaned herself, she had seen the patches where the fire had burned her fur, turning it black and making the brittle strands break away as she touched them, but being able to see her entire body had revealed how many of those patches there were. The exposed skin was reddish and hot, and she had blisters forming on her fingers where she had touched the closet rod. There were bruises she hadn't even felt and a number of small cuts that had already clotted. What drew her attention, though, were four parallel slashes on her cheek that she hadn't even noticed before getting in the shower as her face had been too dirty to see them.

The wounds were shallow, and as Judy touched one paw to the lines she realized that she must have gotten them when Nick had accidentally hit her in the face after she un-cuffed him. She winced, but it wasn't from the pain of touching the cuts. If anything had happened to her, Nick would have burned alive, shackled to a bed and trapped under a beam. It was hard to imagine a worse way to die, and she mussed up the fur on her face to ensure the claw marks couldn't be seen. Judy didn't know whether or not Nick would feel guilty if he saw what he had done, but she didn't want to give him the opportunity. It had been her fault for not being careful enough with another mammal's life, and she vowed that she'd never make the same mistake again.

When Judy emerged from the bathroom, she felt like a kit wearing adult clothes. Nick's shirt fit her like a nightgown, the hem almost touching the floor, and the sleeves were so long that even after rolling them up they still touched her fingertips when her arms were at her sides. She hadn't bothered with the bathrobe, which would have dragged on the ground anyway, but she had taken the fine silk belt from the robe and tied it around her waist in a mostly futile attempt to make the baggy shirt fit better. In her absence, Nick had pulled the tarps off of his furniture and seemed to have made at least a cursory attempt at clearing up some of the dust. He found him at work in the kitchen, finishing up a sweep of the floor. He took in her appearance with a bemused expression; while the borrowed shirt preserved her modesty better than most dresses, it must have looked ridiculous to his eye. He let it pass without comment, though, and picked up a bundle of neatly folded clothes topped with a towel that he had waiting on the kitchen table. He made his way to the bathroom and, before he closed the door after himself, promised, "I'll just be a minute."

Patience was not one of Judy's strong suits, but she forced herself to wait as Nick showered, the sound of him humming something she didn't recognize coming through the closed bathroom door over the sound of running water. Judy's briefcase full of files had been lost in the fire, so lacking any material to review she poked around the home, curious as to what it would say about Nick. Perhaps it was because everything had been put away in anticipation of a long absence, but as she moved from room to room the place seemed sterile. His kitchen was thoroughly modern; the appliances, including an empty refrigerator, were of gleaming white enamel with no sign of use and the cabinets were full of spotless copper pots and pans. There was no art on the walls of his dining room, no doilies or statuettes on the tables or cabinets; except for the furniture, there was no indication that the rooms had ever been occupied. No indication, at least, until she entered what looked like it had been a bedroom but had been entirely converted.

There was no bed in the little room, not that there would have been space for it with the other furniture. All of the walls were covered by shelves that ran from floor to ceiling. On the shelves was
the largest collection of records that Judy had ever seen; there must have been hundreds, all neatly on display. One shelf even had a few dozen cylinder records, organized like wine bottles. In the center of the cramped room were a large overstuffed chair and a small table dominated by a couple of record players. What caught Judy's eye, though, was something that did far more to personalize the room than the collection.

Next to the cylinder phonograph was a framed photograph showing a middle-aged vixen sitting next to a young fox in the uniform of a private, her arm wrapped around his shoulder and her face beaming with pride. It took Judy a moment to realize that the fox in uniform was Nick, because while time had not done much to change his features she found it difficult to imagine the expression that the fox in the photograph wore on the face of the fox that she knew. In the photograph, Nick's face was expressive and open, his smile seeming completely genuine, touching his eyes in a way that the smiles she had seen never did. As she looked from Nick to what could only be his mother, she wondered what had happened during his service to change him so much.

"I'm handsome as ever, wouldn't you say?" Nick's voice suddenly came from behind her.

Judy gave a little start of surprise; she hadn't heard his approach. The fox's thick red coat shined again, free of the soot and dust that had made him dully gray. He was immaculately dressed in a slim black suit with subtle gray pin-stripping, the muted colors offset by an almost shockingly green tie. Judy had to admit that he seemed to have weathered the fire better than she had, as the only sign of the ordeal visible on the parts of his body that she could see was the thin cut under one ear and the slight limp that he walked with. She hadn't been snooping, exactly, but he didn't seem particularly displeased to find her in what must have been his sanctum. "This was before you shipped out?" she asked, gesturing at the photograph.

Nick picked it up, glancing at the image. "Ten years ago," he nodded, "1917."

He set it back down gently, then clapped his paws together and rubbed them briskly. "But enough ancient history," he said, and Judy took it as an opportunity to change subjects.

"I've got to report in to the Bureau," she said.

It was almost seven in the morning, and while the office would still be largely empty she was completely certain that Bellwether would be in. Whether or not the sheep would be interested in the fire was another matter altogether, but Judy thought that her boss was too smart to see it as a coincidence. Nick sighed. "I'm sure Bellwether will love to see me again."

Judy looked up at him questioningly. She hadn't given it any thought when Nick had mentioned Bellwether's name earlier, figuring that it made sense for the former member of the Zootopia Outfit to know about the long-time head of the Bureau of Prohibition. It hadn't occurred to her, though, that he might actually know her boss. "She was..." Nick trailed off, rotating one paw as he was apparently searching for the right word, "...unenthusiastic about the deal I cut."

Knowing Bellwether, that was probably the politest way of putting it. "Well, you're helping me now," Judy said firmly, "I'll make sure she knows that."

"I wouldn't be much help from a jail cell," Nick agreed, "Speaking of which, you probably shouldn't mention this place to her."

It seemed a small enough stretch, all things considered, and Judy nodded her agreement. "I won't."

"What kind of budget are you working with?" Nick asked with a guarded look.
Judy hesitated to respond. In truth, she had no budget; everything she had spent so far had come right out of her own pocket with the hopes of later reimbursement. Nick apparently caught the meaning behind her hesitation, and asked with a carefully neutral expression, "What if I had a solution to that problem?"

Judy knew instantly what the fox was implying. Presumably part of the deal he had cut had been to leave behind his ill-gotten gains, which he had apparently done so only as much as literally leaving them behind in the city. Clearly, he had put some thought into ensuring that his belongings would remain safe, though she couldn't guess if he had planned on covertly coming back for them, getting someone to retrieve them for him, or if he had simply thought ahead to the unlikely possibility of being able to take back the trappings of his old life unchallenged. "If it's for the investigation..." she said hesitantly.

It didn't seem such a large line to cross, especially in comparison to what she had already done by dragging Nick into her investigation. Besides, refusing to use the money wouldn't undo whatever illicit deeds had been performed to earn it. "But only what we need," she said firmly.

"I can work with that," Nick replied.

Nick pulled a battered wooden cigar box out from a drawer hidden in the table. The cigar box looked identical to the one that Judy's grandmother used to store orphaned buttons and other little sewing odds and ends, though as far as Judy knew no one in the family, not even her grandfather, had smoked cigars. When Nick opened his cigar box, however, it didn't contain sewing supplies or cigars. It was full of tight little rolls of paper money, held together with bits of twine and standing upright. Nick pulled one of the rolls out and undid the knot, and as he uncurled the bills and flipped through them, she saw that the wad started at hundred-dollar bills on the outside, moving through fifties and twenties before coming to five-dollar bills at the center. She couldn't help but gape; if all the other wads in the box were similarly arranged, there had to be at least ten thousand dollars. It was more money than she had ever seen in her entire life, maybe even more money than she could earn in her entire life. Nick peeled off about five hundred dollars, mostly in smaller notes, and put them into a pale green wallet of a rough-looking natural material. "Why don't we get my car first?" he asked brightly.

Nick looked down at her, and then added, with a slight frown, "And maybe something that fits you better than a potato sack."

Judy pinched one baggy sleeve of the shirt. "It's your shirt, Slick."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Together, We Two," comes from a 1927 Irving Berlin song popularized as an up-tempo foxtrot by Isham Jones, not the bubblegum pop Archies song from 1971. I guess it's not too surprising that a title like that got used by more than one song, though. In any event, Nick and Judy are (sort of) working together now, so it seemed appropriate. This chapter is admittedly a bit of a breather, but I think that it's important that there are character moments in between the action.

Banana splits, an ice cream sundae consisting of scoops of ice cream in between a banana split lengthwise (hence the name) and topped with whipped cream, were created in 1904, so Nick's use of the idiom works historically.

Public opinion really did turn against Al Capone as the result of the violent means by which his gang operated, and certainly there were plenty of cops and Prohis who died under rather suspicious circumstances.
The description of Nick's house as a greystone is accurate to real Chicago architecture; such buildings were common from the 1890s through the 1930s. As described, they were made of gray limestone, typically quarried from Indiana, and are largely equivalent to the brownstone townhouses that are common in New York City.

Mothballs were in use in the 1920s, and were particularly more useful in the time before synthetic fabrics were common; moths will happily eat a variety of natural fibers but don't have any interest in nylon. The chemical that would have been in common use in the 1920s, naphthalene, is rather flammable, but the chemical that replaced it, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, is carcinogenic. Both do have a distinctive sickly-sweet smell, however.

Shampoo did exist in the 1920s and would have come in glass bottles as a matter of course, as that was in the days before plastic bottles.

Records did indeed come in cylinders as well as discs; the very first records, manufactured by the Edison Company in 1888, were cylinders. Cylinders had a number of advantages over discs, including (at least at first) better audio quality, less degradation after repeated playbacks, and the ability of the record players to easily record as well as play back audio. However, their disadvantages, particularly the higher manufacturing costs, saw them lose one of the very first media format wars. It was somewhat similar to the format war between VHS and Betamax or Blu-Ray and HD-DVD, down to unhappy consumers stuck with a player that can't play the winning format. Production of cylinder records stopped in 1929, but through the 1920s production was pretty minimal anyway, cylinder records having peaked in the 1910s.

Like the vast majority of draftees from the US in WWI, Nick was not an officer, as indicated by being dressed in the uniform of a private in the old photograph.

$10,000 in 1927 would be worth a bit over $140,000 today, so that is a rather significant amount of money that Nick had stashed away. Granted, considering his house (which would be worth a fortune in any modern city) and his record collection, it's pretty safe to assume that he was doing quite well for himself as a mob accountant.

Nick obviously would not have a wallet made out of the leather of any mammal, but the wallet matches the description of one made from shagreen, a type of rawhide made out of sharkskin. In the 1920s, shagreen was very much in fashion, and it makes sense for him to have a wallet of this sort.

Thanks for reading! If you're so inclined, I'd love to hear what you thought.
"We need to talk," Judy said.

"Isn't that what we're doing now?" Nick asked, and she could hear the gentle teasing in his voice even without looking at his face.

Nick had said that it was only a few blocks from his house to the garage where his car had been stashed away, and it made sense to simply walk there. Nick was still limping slightly, making it easy for her to keep up with his strides. The streets seemed oddly deserted, considering it was still the early morning; Judy's own neighborhood would have been a bustle of activity, mammals streaming out of their homes to catch the trains or to sell goods on the streets themselves. Then again, the neighborhood where Nick's house was located was quite a bit nicer than hers; perhaps the well-heeled residents didn't need to bother themselves with anything as mundane as a day job. Although the sun had risen, the day was overcast with clouds that threatened rain, and the normal hum of the city sounded far off. It made it seem as though they were the only mammals for miles around, alone in the massive urban sprawl beneath a gloomy gray sky.

"Why are you really helping me?" Judy asked.

She had expected the fox to turn tail and run the moment she had promised to let him go, and while she was incredibly grateful that he was choosing to stick around, she had no idea why.

"You did save my life. I'm much obliged for that, by the way," Nick said.

"Only after I dragged you into this mess," Judy said heatedly, refusing to let it go.

Nick gave an exaggerated sigh, shaking his head. "There really is no pleasing you, is there, Agent Carrots?" he asked, "You complain when I don't want to help, and you complain when I do."

Despite his words, his tone was still mild, and Judy struggled to articulate her thoughts. "I just... I don't want you to feel obligated."

Nick didn't respond for a long moment, and when he did his question seemed entirely unrelated. "Do you know why I helped bring Mr. Big down?"

Judy thought for a moment. She had gotten the impression, from reading reports, that Nick had turned on the gangster only because the nets had been closing in around him, that he had been scrambling to save himself no matter the cost to his employer. Thinking it over again, though, she wondered if that impression had just been an attempt by the mammals who wrote those reports to make themselves look better, to make it seem as though Nick's betrayal had merely sped things along a little rather than being the crucial piece in taking apart the Zootopia Organization. It would have been embarrassing for the Bureau of Prohibition to admit that nearly five years of effort had yielded absolutely no useful results, that they had simply gotten lucky. "No," she admitted.

Nick was silent for a moment, continuing to walk forward, before he spoke again. "I was a lot like you, once," he said, "I was young and dumb and had a head full of ideas about duty and doing the right thing."

There was still no rancor in his voice, even with the entirely unveiled insult. When he didn't continue, Judy prodded him on. "What happened?"

She studied his face in profile as they kept walking, and she saw his lip twitch in a bittersweet smile.
at the memory. "They sent me overseas. My mother was so proud that her little kit was going to make the world safe for democracy, you know. You saw the picture."

Judy remembered the vixen's beaming face, and then thought of her own colleague at the Bureau. Douglas Ramses had come back from the war missing his left arm, and while Nick didn't seem to have lost any parts of his body it seemed equally clear that he had lost some part of himself, maybe the best part of himself, overseas. She could only imagine the horrors that the fox might have seen, which made it even more puzzling how he continued. "The army didn't trust predators to serve on the front lines, you see."

His ears twitched briefly backwards as he seemed to dredge up some bitter memory. "They were afraid we might not be able to control ourselves."

Nick turned his head and looked down at her, his mouth open deliberately wide to show off a glittering array of sharp teeth. "Afraid we might not be able to stop."

Judy had to force herself not to recoil from the display. If he wanted to, there was no telling the sort of injuries he could inflict, even without a weapon. She dimly recalled, from before the draft began, the debate over whether or not predators should be included. The war hadn't touched Bunnyburrows; since bunnies had been excluded from the draft the war had seemed distant and abstract, much like the far-off government that decided it was necessary. The farmers hadn't given much thought to the inclusion of predators, being far more concerned with the government's price-fixing that eroded their profits, but many of them had fully agreed with Senator Vaardvark. The fiery senator had made dire predictions of what would happen, should they allow predators to be trained for military service, and he found a willing audience. Judy remembered her mother scolding her father for his own fear of what predators could do, pointing out that there weren't even any predators in Bunnyburrows to rebel. Judy herself had thought it equally ridiculous; predators were no longer mindless savages any more than prey were meek victims.

Apparently oblivious to her thoughts, Nick continued. "I got assigned to work in a warehouse. But if that was how the army wanted me to help the war effort, I was going to do the absolute best I could. Why, you wouldn't believe how hard I worked. Even the captain noticed, and all she wanted to do was wait out the war as far away from the trenches as possible."

Nick's look became brooding as he described his former commander. "Captain Capricorn's family had enough pull for that, I suppose, but not much else. She was about the laziest goat you ever saw, though—her uniform barely fit, and it wasn't because she was tall. So she handed off more and more of her duties to me, and she promised me the world."

Nick shook his head in apparent disgust at his former naïveté. He briefly imitated a nasal coastal accent, "You help me, and I'll help you make sergeant, Private Wilde. This warehouse wouldn't run without you."

He dropped the accent and continued. "But I started noticing numbers that didn't add up. Little things, at first. A few cartons of cigarettes, ten pounds of sugar... Nothing that couldn't be overlooked as an error. It got to a point, though, where I knew that someone had to be stealing from the warehouse. And like a fool, I went to Captain Capricorn. She said it was probably the locals, but she promised me she'd look into it herself. That was that, for a day or two."

Judy felt as though she knew where Nick's story was going, but she couldn't interrupt. The fox's aloof mask was gone, and he made no attempt at hiding his loathing for what had occurred. One of his paws clenched into a fist, apparently unconsciously, and he kept talking, his voice low. "Then she asked me to take inventory one night. She told me that she had evidence it was a couple of young calves sneaking in, and all she wanted was for me to catch them and tell them to stop. I had
picked up a little of the language, you see."

Nick swallowed hard, and they continued walking in silence as the fox apparently struggled with how to continue. Judy didn't know whether she should prod him to continue or allow him to gather his thoughts, but before she could make a decision he resumed his story.

"She locked me in that warehouse and set it on fire," Nick said, and while his tone was bland Judy could feel the undercurrent of emotions in his words.

She looked up at him in quiet horror. Judy remembered his panic when her apartment had been burning down around them; she had no idea how it would have felt to be trapped in a burning warehouse alone. Still, she could picture in her mind's eye how it must have happened, seeing Nick in his uniform dutifully counting cans and crates on shelves that stretched far around him when suddenly everything burst into flames.

"Somehow, I got out," Nick said.

A thin smile touched his lips, and he added, "Obviously," but it dissolved again as he continued.

"But Captain Capricorn had been working harder than I think she ever had before. She framed me and set it up so that she won either way: either I'd escape the fire that I set to hide my crime, or I'd be a victim of my own arson. She'd never written me a single commendation, either. She had a stack of paperwork going back months that all said I was a lousy soldier. I was still covered with ashes from the fire when the MPs cuffed me, muzzled me, and hauled me off to the stockade."

Nick's eyes appeared haunted, but he forced himself to go on. "I'd probably still be in a stockade if she hadn't gotten greedy. She got caught trying to sell goods stolen from the warehouse about a month later."

Judy was appalled at what his commanding officer had done and couldn't imagine the toll that his imprisonment must have taken on him, knowing he was completely innocent of the crime he was accused of. As she thought through the story, though, something occurred to her and she interrupted for the first time. "But if they caught her, why did you get a general discharge?"

The file that the Bureau had on the fox hadn't provided any real details on his military service, but she knew that general discharges were just a step short of a dishonorable discharge. Nick laughed, but there was no humor in it. "You think I'd get an apology? The war was all but over and the brass just wanted it to go away. I got kicked out and last I heard Capricorn's family pulled some strings to get her a medical discharge. Moved to Miaouseilles and started a family of her own."

"That's terrible!" Judy said, and her heart burned at the injustice of it all.

"That's what happened," Nick replied with a shrug that didn't seem as carefree as he probably meant it to be, "I ended up in Purris. There was nothing left for me here, anyway."

"No one?" Judy asked, remembering the photograph.

"No one," Nick agreed quietly.

Although Judy felt like asking what had happened to his mother, Nick continued. "I made up my mind then and there, once they let me out of the stockade. No one cared what I said in my defense. It was my word against Capricorn's and the word of a fox meant nothing."

He spat the word as though it was a curse, and maybe for him it was. "If all anyone was going to see was a liar and a criminal, I was going to be better at it than anyone. And you know what? I was."
Nick seemed more ashamed than pleased at his boast, but he didn't seem to be able to stop. "I could get anything, if the price was right. I learned all the laws, greased all the right palms... everything was Jake until I met Mr. Big. Back then, he was just Al Biggliani, a small-time importer, but he was betting big on Prohibition. He thought he could make a fortune, become powerful beyond his wildest dreams, but he needed someone with my skill-set."

Having seen how smoothly Nick was capable of handling other mammals, when he chose to, Judy had no doubts that he had been an incredible asset to the mob boss.

"We had a couple good years, at first. I ran the numbers and made some introductions and he took care of everything else. Mammals wanted alcohol, and all we were doing was supplying it. But as he built up the Zootopia Outfit, as he got more powerful, Mr. Big started getting paranoid. He was terrified that someone would betray him and bring it all crashing down around his head."

Considering that Nick had done exactly that, the shrew's fears didn't sound unfounded. "He had been reasonable, once, but he became crueler. He came up with elaborate tests of loyalty to see how far mammals would go for him, and he'd ice them if they failed."

From the reports she had read, Judy knew that one of Biggliani's favorite punishments had been to throw mammals into freezing water, only pulling them out once they had turned hard as rock. "He asked me to make him a skunk rug."

"A rug?" Judy asked, unsure if she had heard him right.

"A rug," Nick said, "Made out of a skunk who wasn't paying his protection money. A skunk who was very much still alive."

Judy felt sick at his words. Asking someone to do such a thing went beyond mere cruelty and into a realm she wasn't sure she could describe. Sadism didn't seem to cover it.

Nick looked into her eyes, and when he spoke he seemed entirely sincere. "I couldn't do that. I wouldn't do that. I couldn't lie to myself anymore. The stories I heard about what Mr. Big would order weren't exaggerations. They were the truth, and I couldn't be a part of it anymore."

"What did you do?" Judy asked.

"I went to the police, and they brought the Bureau in."

He smiled, and it almost seemed to have a measure of his normal cocksure charm. "I am pretty good at making deals, after all. Well, besides ending up in Podunk."

Judy could hardly believe what he had done. He had taken a terrible risk, thrown away what was clearly a life of luxury, all because there was a line that he refused to cross. If Mr. Big, or someone else at the top of his organization, really was behind the rash of murders, then she had exposed him to almost unimaginable danger. He had no reason to trust the government; the military had turned its back to him when it had been the path of least resistance, and even after he had handed the most notorious gang leader in history to the authorities on a platter, they had rewarded him by stranding him in the middle of nowhere. Then, after all of that, she had barged in, pulling him away from a life that had likely been dull but was at least safe.

"I'm sorry," Judy said.

It seemed woefully insufficient, but she meant it, as sincerely as possible. Nick looked down at her. "You weren't there," he said, "You didn't do anything."
She reached out one paw and touched his tentatively, trying to give him some of the comfort that he seemed to desperately need, even if he wouldn't say it. "I'm sorry it happened. I'm sorry I misjudged you."

He accepted the brief touch, and nodded slowly. "Me too," he said quietly, and neither one spoke another word until they reached the garage.

Author's notes:

The title of this chapter, "Rememb'ring," comes from a 1924 number by the Duncan Sisters. Given that this chapter consists mostly of Nick reminiscing, it seemed entirely appropriate.

There are a lot of little historical details to comment on in this chapter, as well as how I chose to have certain things play out. In the real world, the US army remained segregated until the signing of Executive Order 9981 by Truman in 1948, and it wasn't until 1954 that the last fully segregated unit was disbanded. During WWI, therefore, there were divisions that consisted entirely of African-Americans, most of which had white officers. While there were some African-American officers, they were extremely rare—less than 700 officers total out of about 350,000 African-Americans who served—and they weren't put in a position to be able to command white soldiers. While some of the segregated units did fight on the front lines of the war (including the Harlem Hellfighters, who fought as part of the French 16th Division and earned their nickname for never losing so much as a foot of ground or a single man to capture by the enemy), most of them were relegated to support roles like working in warehouses, unloading ships, and the like.

When Nick refers to "making the world safe for democracy," that's a direct quote of Woodrow Wilson, the US president who oversaw the American entry into the war.

While I've drawn on real world history for the participation of predator and prey in the war, the motivations are slightly different; as I've mentioned before, it's not a simple matter of prey being equivalent to white people and predators to black people. In the real world, the racism that motivated the US to keep its forces segregated was fueled largely by white supremacist views, concerns that mixed units would not be able to maintain their effectiveness, and the expectation that white soldiers wouldn't accept even the possibility of having to follow orders from black soldiers. While the equivalent of all of these factors would motivate the segregation of predator and prey, I thought it make sense for one of the bigoted ideas to be the fear that predators would be too good at fighting, that they would be so prone to bloodlust that they might lose control and start killing indiscriminately heedless of orders. Another difference between this version of events and the real world is the presence of a female officer, which would be unheard of in the US military in WWI. However, as I've previously noted, I figure that the division between predator and prey has far more weight than the division between male and female, particularly in a population so much more diverse than our own. Captain Capricorn, a goat, is named after the zodiac sign, which is a fish-goat hybrid.

Based on the years provided, Judy would have been 14 in 1917 when the draft started, while Nick would have been 22. Her recollection of a Senator Vaardvark is a reference to real world Senator James Vardaman, who was one of only six senators to oppose the US's entry into WWI and strongly opposed military training of African-Americans. Vardaman was an all-around terrible person who was a staunch believer in white supremacy; the following is a direct quote from him: "If it is necessary every Negro in the state will be lynched; it will be done to maintain white supremacy."

While WWI started in 1914, one of the reasons for the US not getting involved until 1917 was a strong isolationist streak in the American public. The sinking of the RMS Lusitania in 1915 by the German Navy did result in some calls to war due to the deaths of 128 Americans aboard the ship, but
even that wasn't enough to fully turn public opinion. It was the German effort to recruit Mexico as an ally against the US and the German use of unrestricted submarine warfare that sank seven American merchant vessels that finally led to the US declaration of war.

The US government really did fix the prices of certain goods using the Food and Fuel Control Act of 1917, also called the Lever Act. It faced strong opposition from farmers out of the belief that it had set the price at which they could sell wheat too low, and cost Woodrow Wilson's party, the Democrats, dearly in the 1918 elections after he vetoed an attempt by Congress to raise that price.

While in the movie Bunnyburrows obviously has predator residents, I'm imagining the 1920s version to be more like Nebraska of the same time period—not much besides farmland and extremely homogenous.

Also, a tip of the hat to TrekkerTim for correctly intuiting that this version of Nick would have a reason to react so strongly to being caught in a fire. I was deliberately a little obtuse in my response to avoid giving anything away, but I'm glad that I was able to successfully convey the emotion of it.

MP stands for Military Police; although the current Military Police Corps started its existence in 1941, the US did have military police in WWI. The timing of Nick's story would put it around October of 1918 since the armistice was signed on November 11 of that same year, and as previously mentioned in chapter 5 he was discharged from the service shortly thereafter.

Miaouseilles is an awful French language pun on miaou, the French equivalent of meow, and Marseilles, the second largest city in France.

I think one of the defining aspects of Nick's character in the movie is that deep down he does want to be good, a motivation that I've tried to keep. This story has a somewhat grim take on the skunk butt rug, but I think murder would definitely be a line that Nick would not cross.

"Everything's Jake" was 1920s slang to indicate that things were going well.

One of my self-imposed limitations for this story is that, except for the first chapter, the narration is entirely from Judy's perspective. Considering that he was summarizing the events of his life from 1917 to 1925, there are certainly plenty of details that Nick glossed over as he told it, but I think that it works pretty well. This chapter does basically consists of two characters walking a few blocks while one of them does most of the talking, but I thought it important that this be its own chapter; the next chapter will see things start to pick up again. As always, though, I'd love to hear what you have to think.
Take Me for a Buggy Ride

The garage that they finally stopped at was rather unassuming. The brick building was low and squat, only a single story tall, and surrounded by other similar buildings. The doors to let cars in or out were enormous and sturdily built of wooden planks, painted a dull brown with "Finnick's Automobile Repair and Service" written across them in neat white letters, slightly offset where the doors met in the middle.

There was a significantly smaller, and much more normal looking, door to the side of the ones meant for cars, and it was this one that Nick started knocking on. After a moment's silence, Judy could hear the shuffling sounds of movement inside the shop before an incredibly deep and gruff voice shouted out, "We ain't open yet!"

Nick smiled at the response and leaned up against the door casually. "Good morning to you too, Finnick," he called through it.

From inside the shop, Judy heard what sounded like something heavy being dropped. "Nick? That you?"

"Of course," he replied.

Judy heard the rattling of the door being unlocked before it swung open. From the voice, Judy had expected the owner of the garage to be enormous, maybe a bear like Leroy, and she had instinctively craned her neck up. When she saw nothing but the ceiling of the shop, she blinked and looked down at the tiniest fox she had ever seen; he was at least a full head shorter than she was. She might have thought that he was a kit, except for the scowl that hardened his features and the unlit cigarette dangling from his lower lip. He had a dark streak of grease that stood out against his sandy yellow fur on the top of his head between his enormous ears. The fox, who could only be Finnick, was wearing a set of stained gray coveralls and holding a wrench that looked nearly as long as he was tall. "Nick," he said, his voice just as gravelly as it had been before the door opened, "You look terrible."

Considering that the only outward signs of their brush with death that Judy could see on Nick were a small cut and a limp, she thought that was somewhat excessive, but while Finnick's tone was entirely serious, Nick just smiled in response. He looked over the smaller fox's head into the garage. "Business is doing well, I see," he said, "But how have you been?"

"Agent Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition," Nick said, gesturing at her with a careless wave. "A prohi, huh? You in it now, ain't you?"

Finnick's scowl reasserted itself, coming back deeper than before. "A prohi, huh? You in it now, ain't you?" he said, looking up at Nick and shaking his head.
Still, he lowered his wrench and gestured for Nick to enter. "Oh, that's not the half of it," Nick muttered as he walked into the shop.

Before Judy could follow, Finnick planted himself back in the doorway, blocking her path. "Maybe you can talk to your buddies on the force," Finnick growled, seeming to size Judy up again in light of learning that she was a Prohibition Agent, "Damn idiots about tore my garage apart yesterday."

Judy's ears perked at that. She didn't exactly have any friends on the police force—although Officer Clawhauser had been friendly enough, considering that he had been guarding her—but she was curious about what Finnick meant. "I'm sorry to hear that. What were they looking for?" she asked, still outside the shop as Finnick hadn't moved out of the doorway for her to pass as he had for Nick. Finnick snorted. "A Camellac Imperial Sedan," he said, "Like I could hide that."

Judy wasn't familiar with Camellac's lineup of cars, considering that she didn't know anyone rich enough to afford one, but from the way Finnick spoke, she guessed that it must have been very large. "Did they say why they were looking for it?" she asked.

It didn't seem to have any obvious connection to the murder in the Thief of the Night, but she had to admit that she was curious about the mammal who was apparently either Nick's friend or at least knew him well enough to joke about him not having any friends. Finnick rolled his eyes at her and shook his head dismissively. "You think they tell preds what they looking for?" he asked scornfully, "How green are you?"

He turned around before she could answer, and then walked into his garage, which Judy took as an implied invitation and followed. The interior of the garage, which smelled powerfully of grease and gasoline, was a single large space except for a small office off in one corner. Considering Finnick's claim that the police had torn the place apart, it seemed pretty well organized, all of the tools either hanging neatly on the walls or organized on benches or carts. The floor of the garage was stained here and there with oil but looked otherwise clean enough to eat off of and seemed almost entirely covered by cars of a truly staggering variety, although they were mostly high-end luxury models. There was an enormous Camellac that was presumably not an Imperial Sedan, its glossy midnight blue bodywork opened up with the engine removed. Packards and Marecedes were scattered here and there, in various states of repair, and a workbench that ran along one wall had a number of rodent-sized electric cars all in pieces surrounded by magnifying lenses and tools that would have looked more at home in a watchmaker's shop. The floor space was dominated, though, by a hulking Roars-Royce that would easily fit a hippo, the body work a creamy yellow offset by what seemed like yards of bright nickel trim that flowed over the sinuous lines of the car. Crammed into the corners of the shop were a number of unidentifiable vehicles, all hidden away under canvas tarps.

Nick had been looking around, apparently with some curiosity as he waited for Judy and Finnick to go into the garage, and once they were in he turned to the little fox. "You got rid of my Moosenburg," he said.

Finnick shrugged. "You gave it to me. What, you thought I'd keep it?"

"I sold it to you," Nick corrected, "Do you still have the Buchatti?"

Finnick scoffed, and it seemed it was his turn to appear wounded. "I said I'd keep it running, didn't I?" he asked.

"You also said you'd keep my house clean," Nick countered, "The windows are filthy."

Finnick shrugged, already walking off towards one of the tarp covered vehicles. "You didn't leave a
Knowing that it was apparently Finnick who had been keeping the outside of Nick's house at least somewhat maintained was one mystery solved, and Judy supposed that Nick might have given him the Moosenburg in exchange for the maintenance on his house and his other car. She had never heard of a Buchatti and as a result was totally unprepared for what she saw when Finnick pulled the tarp off a low shape.

Judy had never cared much about driving one way or the other. Living on a farm, driving was simply a chore like any other, and any enjoyment that she might have gotten out of it had been completely destroyed by the tedious nature of the work of driving her father's balky and beat up truck. In comparison, though, Nick's car seemed to demand to be driven. It was sleek and low, with a tiny cabin barely large enough for two mammals her size to sit side by side, and it had neither a roof nor any apparent means of putting up a convertible top. The windshield was a tiny rectangle that was only in front of the steering wheel, which was on the wrong side of the car. The bodywork was a gleaming vivid blue that complemented the silvery wheels and the black straps that kept the hood closed. The only other color was the logo mounted on the horseshoe-shaped radiator, a red oval with the word "BUCHATTI" in white letters.

"I been turning it over at least once a month," Finnick said, "Rolling it, too, so the tires don't get flat."

Nick looked at the car appreciatively. "It looks good," he said approvingly, "Where's the key?"

Finnick reached into the car's cabin and pulled a key off the seat. He surprised Judy by tossing it to her; before Nick could protest, the small fox fixed him with a glare, pointing one tiny finger up at him. "You think you can work a clutch, limping like that?"

"Maybe," Nick said, but Finnick didn't stop glaring until Nick finally admitted, "No."

"That's what I thought," Finnick said, but before he went to open the garage doors so that they could leave, he turned to face Judy.

"You look after him," he said gruffly, then stomped off without a look back, not even acknowledging it when she said that she would.

She supposed that, no matter what he said, Finnick really did care about Nick, and she thought that she saw a glimmer of warmth in Nick's eyes as he looked at Finnick's retreating back. Judy got behind the wheel of the car, and then looked down at the controls, utterly lost. The steering wheel was just on the column with nothing coming off of it, and while guessed that it had an electric starter she had no idea how to make it move. Nick apparently noticed her confusion and sighed. "This isn't a Furd, you know," he said.

"Look," he said, pointing down into the foot well of the car and pointing at the pedals one by one, from left to right, "Clutch, brake, gas."

He reached his right arm over her shoulder and grabbed her paw in his own much larger one. She could feel the roughness of the pad on his palm as he moved her paw over to the lever on the right that was closest to her. "Push in the clutch with your left foot," he said.

When she did, he moved her paw with exaggerated slowness. "First gear is here," he said, "Second is forward, third is to the left and forward. We won't get into fourth."

She let him start the car, watching as he fiddled with a pump mounted near him and adjusted the timing, and then listened as he instructed her on how to get it moving, speaking up to be heard over
the engine. "Let out the clutch as you give it a little gas."

When she had tried them before Nick started the car, none of the pedals seemed to have all that much travel. She pushed the gas pedal about halfway in as she released the clutch. For a moment, nothing happened, the rear wheels just spinning up clouds of foul smelling burning rubber before the car caught traction and it shot forward fast enough to slam her and Nick back in their seats. Judy cranked the steering wheel as far right as it could go, and the tail end of the car swung around, squealing in protest as it just barely missed one of the other cars in the garage. At throttle, the din of the engine and the whine of the transmission were nearly deafening in the enclosed space, but even as she eased up on the gas and steered into the skid they were out of the garage, flying down the street.

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Judy thought that she had done pretty well, all things considered, but it wasn't until she came to a complete stop in front of the Bureau office that Nick released his grip on the car's dashboard. "Well," he said after a moment to gather his composure, "At least you didn't stall it."

She smiled sweetly up at him. "I'm a great driver," she said.

Nick was still smoothing down the fur of his tail, which had gone rather frizzy, but he nodded. "Save it for a Grand Prix, Carrots," he said, "I'm pretty sure the cops still ticket prohis. Or is that one of the perks of the job?"

"Afraid not," she said, and Nick followed her into the building.

She had wanted to discuss the case in more detail with Nick while driving to the office, but even outdoors the Buchatti was so loud that it was difficult to hold a conversation, and the unfamiliar controls had taken a fair amount of her attention at first. She had ground the gears on a few poorly timed shifts, but overall thought she had picked up the skill for driving it and would be able to hold a conversation at the same time. Every time she tried, though, Nick had yelled at her to pay attention to the road and the other cars, all of which seemed almost to be moving in slow motion in comparison to the Buchatti.

She resolved that she'd take the opportunity after she was done talking to Bellwether, but Nick had slowed down as they entered the lobby, looking around at the drab interior with its faded carpets and outdated furniture. "You know, I never thought I'd come back here," he said thoughtfully.

He frowned. "It actually doesn't look any different from how it was two years ago."

"Director Bellwether must like it how it is," Judy replied with a shrug, and Nick followed her into the Bureau's main office area.

It was late enough in the morning that there were a fair number of other mammals at their desks, some of them chatting and drinking coffee as they prepared to start the day. When they spotted Nick, however, all conversation stopped and all eyes turned towards them. It occurred to Judy that Nick was the first predator that she had seen in the office, and she guessed that even if the other agents didn't know who Nick was they were probably having the same realization. The door to Bellwether's office was open, and the ewe must have sensed the change in the atmosphere because she poked her head out, her eyes widening as she caught sight of Judy and Nick. She rushed out and grasped Judy by the waist with what almost seemed like a maternal air, and then pulled herself back an arm's length. "Goodness!" she said, "Agent Hopps, what happened to you? You look like you walked through a furnace!"

Judy was suddenly painfully aware that she had a fair amount of fur singed away and was wearing a male's button up shirt like a dress, belted with a length of silk from a bathrobe. She had seen for
herself how terrible she looked, but Bellwether was the first mammal to really react to it. It occurred to her that Finnick hadn't reacted to her appearance at all, and she wondered why. Maybe he had been more concerned about Nick, or perhaps he simply didn't care. Before she could think on it any more, Bellwether had turned to Nick, and any motherly qualities she had possessed were entirely gone. "Nicholas Wilde," she said, and it seemed to be taking her a fair amount of effort to say his name without spitting.

"Dawn," Nick replied mildly, looking down at the little ewe, and Judy saw her jaw clench and then relax at his use of her first name.

Judy hardly expected Nick to like her boss, considering what little he had said of their previous encounter, and it seemed the feeling was entirely mutual, though Nick was doing a far better job of disguising it. "What is he doing here?" Bellwether demanded of Judy, jabbing in Nick's direction with one hoof.

"I brought him in to help me with the Carajou murder," Judy said, before Nick could goad Bellwether on any further.

Bellwether seemed about to respond, but then looked around, apparently noticing that all of the agents were watching the conversation intently. "We'll talk in my office," she said abruptly, and when Nick started to follow, she added, "The fox can wait outside."

Judy thought about protesting. Nick was probably better at laying out the details than she was, and she could hardly believe how dismissive her boss was being. Before she could say anything, however, she saw Nick subtly shake his head, and she swallowed her words and followed Bellwether into her office. The sheep closed the door behind them, and then rummaged in her desk for a pen and paper before inviting Judy to speak.

Bellwether listened to Judy's story attentively and without interruption, all the while taking notes. When Judy came to the end, which was as accurate as possible though she skipped over how she had persuaded Nick to help and Nick's explanation of his past, Bellwether continued writing for a moment before sitting back with an expression of deep thought on her face. "I'm sure that you're right about it being arson," she said, "I can pull a few strings to make sure they investigate it properly."

The ewe's expression momentarily darkened, and Judy had little doubt that she was thinking of the police with no small amount of contempt. Then her furrowed brow smoothed and she sighed. "I'm afraid I can't offer you more than that," she said apologetically, "You know how we're funded."

Judy nodded. She was glad that her boss understood and believed her, but she hadn't been holding out any kind of hope for much more. "I'll just ask you to be careful," Bellwether said, "It never gets easier, losing agents."

"I'm going to see this through," Judy said firmly.

Bellwether smiled at that. "I thought you would," she said.

"Just watch out for that fox. I'm sure he has a certain... charm," she said, her muzzle wrinkling in distaste as she spoke the word, "But don't forget that the only mammal he looks out for is himself. He turned on Biggliani to save himself, after all, and I'm sure he'd do the same to you."

Judy wasn't sure she agreed with her boss, but she kept her thoughts to herself as the sheep continued. "I don't know how you convinced him to help or what his angle is in this, but it could be a wonderful opportunity."
"An opportunity, ma'am?" she asked, unsure of where Bellwether was going with her line of thinking.

"Oh, yes," Bellwether said, "He may have escaped justice before, but this is our opportunity to put him away for good."

Bellwether kept speaking, enunciating her words carefully and deliberately as though she was making sure Judy could not misunderstand. "Once this is over, I expect you to arrest him for any charge we can make stick. You'll do that, won't you?"

Judy felt a sinking feeling in her chest. The agreement that Nick had made for turning Mr. Big in prevented him from being prosecuted for any of the crimes he had committed or abetted under the shrew's employ, and Nick's evaluation about Bellwether being unenthusiastic about that agreement was apparently underselling her feelings significantly. Bellwether's opinion of Nick was uncomfortably close to how Judy had felt about him, before pulling him into the investigation, but she was no longer so sure that arresting him would be a case of justice served. Bellwether's eyes were hard and unyielding as she waited for Judy to respond, and she knew that she couldn't drag out the silence any longer.

Judy took a deep breath and did something that she had never done before. "Yes, ma'am," she lied to her boss.

Author's Notes:

Before I get into the notes for this chapter, I'd like to thank DrummerMax64 again for his wonderful write up of this story for its feature on the Zootopia News Network this past week. If you haven't checked out the site before, I do strongly encourage you to do so; it's got a great variety of features, everything from stories to art to videos and music. It's an incredible honor to have my story featured, and I really do appreciate it. You can check out the site here:

Zootopia News Network

DrummerMax64 is almost certainly the single most voracious reader of Zootopia fanfiction and is definitely one of the most thoughtful commenters on what he reads, but he's also an author. You can check out his story, a nice little post-movie slice of life style work called "Fluffy and Scruffy" here:

"Fluffy and Scruffy" by DrummerMax64

Thank you again, and I'm looking forward to your next chapter!

The title of this chapter, "Take Me for a Buggy Ride," comes from a song by Bessie Smith, arguably the greatest female blues singer of the 1920s and 1930s. A buggy is an open-topped vehicle; the term originated from a small, lightweight carriage pulled by a horse and was later applied to motor vehicles, such as dune buggies or the lunar rovers known as moon buggies.

The cars in the garage are all, naturally, pretty punny, except Packard, which didn't need to be changed. Marecedes is a pretty obvious Mercedes pun; Mercedes didn't become Mercedes-Benz until 1926, so in 1927 there were still plenty of Mercedes running around. In addition to being a pun on Rolls-Royce, the Roars-Royce is a reference to the Great Gatsby, as it matches the description of the one that Jay Gatsby (Catsby, perhaps?) owned. The Camellac is, as before, a pun on Cadillac; the model that I imagine Finnick having is a 1923 Type 53 Town Car, which doesn't resemble an Imperial Sedan at all. The wheelbase alone of the Imperial Sedan was 11.5 feet (about 3.5 meters), so that really isn't something that you could exactly hide. Moosenburg is a pun on Duesenburg, an
American car company that went out of business in 1937.

Nick's car is based on a 1924 Bugatti Type 35; Buchatti is a French language pun, "chat" being French for "cat." It occurs to me in retrospect that most of the French language puns I came up with are cat related. Anyway, the car, more so than his house or his record collection, indicates how wealthy he is (or at least was); today Type 35s sell for millions of dollars, and even when new they were extremely expensive. The description of the car is as accurate as I could make it, although Judy's note that the steering wheel is on the wrong side is simply her American bias showing. The steering wheel of the Type 35 is only on the wrong side inasmuch as it's on the right side, whereas if it were on the left side it'd be on the right side. That last sentence was pretty deliberately confusing, though accurate; the Type 35 was manufactured as a right hand drive car but the US road system and traffic laws are designed for left hand drive cars.

The Type 35 was basically a racecar that could also be driven on the street, and while its top speed of 118 MPH (about 190 KPH) sounds a bit underwhelming today, by the standards of the day it had incredible performance. A 1925 Ford Model T had a top speed of 45 MPH (about 72 KPH); the Type 35 could blow the doors off just about any other production vehicle in its day. It had aluminum alloy wheels at a time when most cars still had wooden wheels and a four speed gearbox in an era when two speed gearboxes were common. It used the engine as a structural element and had a number of other innovative design features, including a hollow axle to reduce weight. It's also low and sleek like a proper racecar when most of its contemporaries were tall and awkward, and I only wish that it were possible for me to drive one. There is an Argentinian company called Pur Sang that makes extremely faithful reproductions, but even those cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Still, if you're writing a modern day Zootopia story, the obvious pun is right there for you.

Even today, Bugatti is a brand without much of a presence; unless you live near millionaires and billionaires, you're unlikely to see one, so if you're not into cars it makes sense to be unfamiliar with the brand. For reference, Bugatti's current model, the Chiron, has a base price of almost three million dollars and performs just as well compared to modern economy cars as the Type 35 did in its day. I'd argue that the modern Ford vehicle closest to the Model T is the Fiesta, which in base trim has a top speed of 115 MPH, actually a little slower than what the Type 35 tops out at. The Chiron, by comparison, has a top speed of 261 MPH (420 KPH). Considering that you can drive it on normal roads, that's ridiculous, but thinking of how crazy that is also gives a better idea of how ridiculous the Type 35 was in its day.

For several chapters, when I've mentioned driving, I've threatened to go into the process in the 1920s, and it's time for me to make good on that threat. We pretty much take it for granted today that the major controls on a car are all going to be in the same places. Sure, the controls for the radio or the climate system will vary a lot from car to car, but the basic controls are all the same. In any car with a manual transmission, the pedal box will have three pedals, and the order is always the same. Clutch on the left, brake in the middle, gas on the right. The gear selector is in the middle of the cabin somewhere between the front seats, and shift patterns are pretty standard.

In the 1920s, however, cars were still fairly new and the controls were not standardized yet. The Type 35 has two minor examples of this; despite being a right hand drive car, the gear selector is also on the right side of the car, actually outside of the cabin, instead of inside the cabin to the left of the driver. Additionally, the shift pattern is upside down to our modern sensibilities; first gear is to the right and down instead of to the left and forward. The rest of the gears follow, with second being where most drivers would expect third to be, third where second should be, and fourth where first should be.

The odd shift pattern might take some getting used to, but for someone comfortable driving a left hand drive car, all of the controls are where they should be. That is definitely not the case for the
Model T Ford. Compared to a modern car, the controls are more alien than they first appear.

The Model T does have three pedals, but they don't do what you'd expect them to if you've only driven a modern car. The brake pedal is on the right, the middle pedal is exclusively for engaging reverse, and the left pedal is a clutch, but it doesn't work the same as a modern car. You may notice that none of those is a gas pedal; the throttle is controlled with a little hand lever on the steering column (hence Judy's confusion that the Type 35 doesn't have any controls on the steering column or wheel). The clutch is also quite a bit different from a modern car.

In a modern manual transmission car, the basic way of shifting gears is to take your right foot off the gas pedal, push the clutch all the way in with your left foot, select the gear you want to go into with the gear selector, and then let the clutch all the way out with your left foot while applying gas with your right foot. The clutch in the Model T does not operate like that at all. There are only two forward speeds, and the way that the clutch pedal is used is actually pretty simple. If the clutch is pressed all the way, you're in first gear. While the clutch pedal is in the middle of its travel, the car is in neutral, and with the clutch all the way out, you're in second gear. Note that there isn't even a gear selector lever; it's entirely based on the position of the clutch pedal. When shifting from first to second, you need to ease off the gas with the hand control, let the pedal out, and then give it enough gas to prevent the engine from stalling. As a result, once you're in second gear, you have your feet entirely off the pedals unless you need to slow down or stop.

I really like cars, as you might have been able to guess from earlier chapters and from this one (and my notes for it) especially. Hopefully you were still able to enjoy the chapter even if you're not into cars, and thanks for reading these author's notes especially, which were probably about as self-indulgent as I've ever gone. Any other comments that I'd have for this story would veer into spoiler territory, so I'll leave it at this. Thanks for reading, and I'd love to hear your thoughts!
A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich and You

Judy was so focused on trying to not give away that she had no intention of following Bellwether's order that she couldn't remember how the rest of the conversation went. The ewe seemed pleased, though, and entirely ignorant of the thoughts that were going through Judy's head. When at last Judy left the office, she was entirely preoccupied with trying to figure out what to do. She knew that she absolutely could not go back on her word to Nick, but she had no idea of how to get him out safely.

Judy was so distracted with her own thoughts that she wasn't prepared for what she saw when she left Bellwether's office. Nick was sitting on the corner of her desk, his tail wagging slowly from side to side as he took a sip from a coffee mug. In front of him, four of her fellow agents were cajoling him, but he seemed content to make them wait as he slowly drank. "I don't know, why?" said Agent Woolsey, a middle-aged ram who Judy didn't think had ever spoken more than ten words in a row to her, "Come on, you gotta tell us. Why?"

At the same time Woolsey was speaking, Agent Asinus was asking the same question. "I don't know, why?"

Having finally finished drinking, Nick looked up at his audience, his eyes twinkling in apparent delight as he finally spoke. "To hold their pants up."

There was a moment's silence, and then Asinus clapped one hoof to Nick's back before breaking out into his obnoxious braying laugh. "To hold their pants up!" the donkey repeated, wheezing between his laughs, "Oh, that's too funny by half!"

Even Woolsey and the other agents gathered around Nick were laughing, though none of them nearly so loudly as Asinus, who had pulled out a handkerchief and was wiping at his eyes. Nick grinned as he looked up from the agents to see Judy's approach and jumped off her desk, landing with a surprising grace considering his injured leg. He set the empty coffee mug down. "It's been a gas, fellas, but you know how it is. Can't let George do it."

The agents nodded and made noises of agreement cheerfully, and they actually seemed disappointed that he was leaving. "You look after Nick, Hopps!" Asinus called after them, "He's a real swell fella for a fox!"

Nick tipped his hat, still in one paw, to the donkey. Once they had left the office area, Nick turned down to look at Judy. "Bad news, I suppose?" he asked.

Judy thought a moment about how to phrase it before simply saying it outright. "Bellwether wants me to arrest you. After this case is over, she said."

"Ah," Nick said, not looking at all surprised, "Are you going to?"

He appeared completely unperturbed, but Judy thought that she could hear something in his voice, no matter how hard he must be trying to keep his tone light. "Of course not," she said, and she was surprised at how much it hurt that he had to ask.

She knew that she deserved his suspicion; she deserved far worse than his scorn for dragging him into her mess. But she could only imagine how his first meeting with Bellwether must have gone for him to be completely unsurprised by the ewe's apparent grudge. Nick nodded slowly. Before he could say anything, Judy hastily added, "We can still get you out of town now if you want."

Nick grinned at that. "You're stuck with me now," he said, "Besides, how could I pass up a chance
to tweak Bellwether's nose?"

"But—" Judy protested.

Nick waved a paw dismissively. "We can figure something out," he said, and then gestured grandly with one arm as though taking in a crowd.

"I'm thinking a press conference. Can you imagine Bellwether being forced to thank a fox in front of reporters?"

Judy wasn't sure her boss would be able to get the words out, and she laughed at the mental image. "We have to solve the case first," she said, "Besides, why wouldn't it be me speaking to the reporters?"

Nick looked down at her and shook his head. "Bellwether doesn't want an Izzy and Mole to compete with her for attention," he said, "She couldn't let her agents get too popular."

Judy thought that he had a point; she had certainly gotten the feeling that Bellwether desperately wanted to rise much further in the government than her current position, and she wondered if Nick was right about her. She had assumed that Bellwether's policy of forbidding agents to speak with the press was for their own anonymity and safety, but maybe she really did just want to have the credit for every success the Bureau had to go through her. "Izzy and Mole, huh?" she said with mock thoughtfulness, though she had to admit she enjoyed the implied comparison.

She wouldn't have any complaints if she could partner up with Nick as successfully as the pair of New Yak City agents who had set records for speakeasy busts, but they needed to start investigating again. "You're definitely Mole," Nick teased.

Judy rolled her eyes. "Well then, Izzy, where to next?" she asked, as they were almost back to where she had parked the car.

"Some breakfast first," Nick said thoughtfully, "But I've got an idea."

Judy eased the Buchatti to a stop across the street from a restaurant that was only about a block away from the Bureau office and jumped out, Nick following her as they crossed the road. The Little Spoon had a sunny yellow awning with the name of the restaurant written in large black letters that had faded somewhat over a couple of large windows around the door. Before Judy had gotten close enough to grab the doorknob, Nick spoke up. "Why don't you just grab something to go?" Nick asked suddenly.

"We can take ten minutes to eat," Judy said, somewhat surprised by his eagerness to get to work, considering it had been his idea to get food.

"Maybe you can," Nick said with a significant look at the front of the restaurant.

"What's that supposed to—" Judy started to say before she realized what he meant.

Judy had only been to the Little Spoon once before, shortly after she started at the Bureau when her coworkers had invited her out to lunch with what seemed like a purely perfunctory air. They had not asked again, and Judy had not gone on her own, but she did walk past it every day on her way to and from the Bureau office. She had thought that she remembered it perfectly well as an inexpensive little diner that was nonetheless neatly kept. Somehow, though, she had failed to notice, either on her first visit or on any of the many occasions she had passed the storefront since then, the neatly lettered sign in one corner of the window by the door. It read, quite simply, "WE SERVE PREY ONLY."
"Oh," she said, "I didn't... I never..."

Judy struggled to think of something to say. "We can go someplace else," she managed at last.

Nick simply shrugged. "We're already here," he said, "See if they have an egg salad sandwich, would you? Some coffee, too."

With that, he turned around and headed back towards the car, giving her a mock salute before crossing the street again. Judy looked at the little sign again. It was the sort of thing she had only ever seen in the city; there hadn't been any predators in Bunnyburrows to single out, although they would have probably gotten a similar reception. She had never even noticed the sign before, which made it all the worse. Nick had given every impression that it didn't bother him, but she thought that it did, that so many doors, both literally and figuratively, were closed in his face simply because he was a fox. Suddenly she no longer felt like anything that the Little Spoon might have, and she looked across the street at Nick. He was sitting in the Buchatti as though he didn't have a care in the world, idly watching mammals as they walked past. Judy swallowed and opened the door, making the little bell above it jingle.

The Buchatti wasn't the ideal place to eat a meal, as it didn't have trays or anywhere else to put things other than on the floor of the car. It was rather cramped, too, with the two of them sitting in it, but Judy was determined to make do. Nick sipped at his little paper cup of coffee and took fastidious bites from his sandwich, and Judy struggled to do the same, having lost her appetite at the realization of the kind of mammal the owner of the Little Spoon was. "How do you do it?" she asked suddenly.

Nick paused to finish chewing and swallowing a bite before he answered. "Do what?" he asked.

"Deal with that," she said, gesturing across the street at the storefront of the Little Spoon with its hateful sign.

"That?" Nick asked casually, "That's just the way things are."

"It shouldn't be that way," she said.

"How do you deal with mammals who say a bunny can't be a cop?" Nick asked.

He seemed genuinely curious, and Judy thought about it before answering, tracing the delicate blue illustration of an angel that decorated the cup. She didn't think it was nearly the same thing; no matter what anyone said about bunnies and what they could do, she had never been kicked out of a restaurant before. "They're wrong," she said, "And I'm going to show them that they're wrong."

"What if you can't?" Nick asked, and he was looking at her intently, his eyes seeming almost to burn holes in her.

"I'm never going to stop trying," she said as firmly as she could.

Nick sighed. "So say you do become a cop. What then?"

"What then?" she repeated, unsure of his point.

"Sure," he said, "What then? What comes next for the first bunny cop?"

"Well," she said, "I'd do my best to be the best police officer that I could be."

She looked down as she gathered her thoughts and realized that she had squeezed the watercress out
of her sandwich. "I've already met some officers who aren't good."

She had already told Nick about her experience with the rhinoceros and hippopotamus officers at the Thief of the Night, and she saw his mouth quirk into a smile. "Sure Zweihorn and River are good," he said, "Good and bought."

She nodded to acknowledge his point. "I want to be better than that. I want all officers to be better than that."

Nick leaned back. "Leading by example, or something like that?"

"I suppose so."

Nick shook his head. "You really are an idealistic one, aren't you?"

He didn't sound as though he was trying to be condescending; if anything he sounded commiserating, as though he thought she was well on the way to becoming as cynical and jaded as he was. "That's not so bad, is it?" she said, "The world needs some idealism."

"See how you feel in a few years," he said glibly, and she wondered if any of his own idealism had survived his past.

He had finished the last of his sandwich and clapped his paws together, apparently ready to change topics. "You had asked me about Quill."

She pushed aside her other thoughts and focused on what he was saying. "About him letting gangsters make deals in his clubs."

Nick nodded. "Ol' Quill doesn't just own one or two clubs, you know. Last I heard, he had nine, all across Zootopia."

Judy asked the obvious question. "But... That means he has clubs in areas different gangs control, doesn't it? You said he paid protection money to the Zootopia Outfit."

Nick actually appeared impressed. "That's right. And he wasn't just paying protection money to the Zootopia Outfit. He was paying off the Black Paw, the Syndicate, and a few of the small fries, just to keep the peace."

"They all went for that?" she asked, amazed that the irritable little hedgehog was brave enough to try.

"Quill paid them all a cut and they agreed not to conduct any business in his clubs," Nick said, although from his tone she guessed that it wasn't quite so simple.

Judy frowned. "He didn't actually enforce that, did he?"

Nick laughed. "Now you're getting it, Carrots! Maybe he did, once, but you saw how he looked in La Porte Verte."

She remembered how poorly Quill had reacted to Nick's mild implication that he allowed gangs to make deals in his club and thought that Nick was on to something. "So what's your idea?" she asked eagerly.

Nick settled back in his seat. "Well," he said casually, "We can't go to any of Quill's clubs, but I know a fella who's done some work for Mr. Big."

"What kind of work?" Judy asked hesitantly, wondering if he was planning on bringing in an
Nick’s smile spread across his face slowly. "Would you believe flower arrangement?"

It had been a short drive to the address that Nick had provided for Emmitt Otterton, an otter who was apparently florist to the stars when it came to the world of gangsters. Nick had explained, over the din of the Buchatti as she drove, that the otter had done the floral arrangements for the wedding of Mr. Big’s daughter Francesca among a number of other events. She had been somewhat skeptical that it meant that Otterton would know anything, but Nick had explained that he had likely overheard quite a bit despite never being part of the Zootopia Outfit himself.

When they arrived, though, it seemed as though the address was a dead end as a lead. It was clear that there had been a building on the plot once, but that must have been at least a year ago. The shadowy outline of a foundation was still visible on the small dirt plot but all that was left were weeds, broken bottles, and a few stray bricks. Nick looked up from the garbage and shrugged apologetically. "It has been two years," he said.

Judy supposed that he had a point. Nick had been totally cut off from the goings-on in the city long enough that it wasn't reasonable to expect all of his leads to be up to date. Still, her heart sank, thinking of the time that they had wasted on the trip. "Is there anywhere else he might be? Do you know where he lives?" she asked.

"Above the shop, as a matter of fact," Nick said, looking around the vacant lot that had apparently once been a flower shop.

Judy sighed. Since there was no longer a building, let alone a second floor, it was obvious that Otterton no longer lived there. There were a thousand reasons why that might be the case, but there was no sign of what had happened or where he might have gone. Judy was about to ask Nick if he had any other leads worth following when he spoke up again. "There is one other place he spent a lot of time," he said thoughtfully, "Someone there might know where he is now, but you're not going to like it."

"What makes you say that?" she asked, frowning.

"It just doesn't seem like it'd be your kind of place, that's all," he replied, "I could go there alone."

Judy crossed her arms over her chest and looked up at him. "Look," she said firmly, "I'm not some helpless bunny, you know. I don't care what kind of place this is, we're going there together."

She had no idea what kind of place it must be for him to seem so reluctant to take her there. Maybe it was the opposite of the Little Spoon and only served predators or maybe it was a den of gangsters he thought would be too dangerous for her. Whatever it was, she absolutely refused to give up on a lead. Nick was clever and observant, she had to admit, but that didn't mean that he could spot everything. Considering the way that her apartment had been burned down, it might not be safe for Nick to be alone, and she took her promise to keep him safe entirely seriously.

"It's a club called the Mystic Springs Oasis. You haven't heard of it, have you?"

Judy shook her head, and Nick chuckled. She wasn't sure she trusted the slow grin that spread across his face. "Oh, you are in for a treat."

Author's Notes:
The title of this chapter, "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich and You," comes from a 1925 song by Joseph Meyer. If you've watched old Warner Brothers cartoons, you might recognize it, since an instrumental version was frequently used in scenes about food or eating. I'm using the title pretty literally, but it's also just a nice little up tempo number on the pleasures of sharing even a simple meal with someone you care about.

The joke that goes along with Nick's orphaned punch line is "Why do police officers wear belts?" It's not a particularly funny joke, but I like it because it's kind of an anti-joke; the humor comes out of it being a statement of the obvious. It struck me as the kind of joke that Nick might pull out, considering the one he tells Flash in the movie.

As a sheep, Woolsey's name has a pretty obvious source, and Asinus is named after the scientific name for the donkey, *Equus africanus asinus*.

This chapter shows some of the ugliness of the bigotry of the 1920s that was common in the wider world outside the more inclusive realm of illegal clubs, and there are unfortunately plenty more examples to come.

"Let George do it," was an expression common in the 1920s to mean that something else could take care of a problem and is not a reference to a particular person named George, although that could be confusing if there was an actual George around.

Izzy and Mole is a punny reference to Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith, a pair of Prohibition agents active in New York City from 1920 to 1925 who quickly became famous for busting speakeasies, frequently using elaborate disguises. One of the keys to their fame was their understanding of the media and building a rapport with reporters. When they learned that newspapers had the most room to fill on Mondays, they staged an elaborate raid of 71 speakeasies in a row with reporters in tow on a Sunday, ensuring massive amounts of media coverage. They were fired in 1925; it seemed as though their bosses were jealous of the positive attention and fame that they achieved and used a department reorganization as an excuse to get rid of them. Considering Bellwether's apparent lust for power, Nick's assessment of her as not wanting her agents to similarly become popular is a logical conclusion, though perhaps not the correct one.

The rhinoceros and hippopotamus officers at the Thief of the Night showed up in chapter 4. Officers Angela Zweihorn and Tony River are kind of the antithesis of Judy's values, being obviously corrupt.

The Zootopia Outfit as the name of Mr. Big's criminal enterprise is a reference to Al Capone's Chicago Outfit, which was somewhat blandly named as far as criminal empires go. The Black Paw is a natural take off of the Black Hand, an extortion scheme that flourished in the early 20th century in Chicago. The North Side Pride has no obvious historical reference for the name; I think it's just something that a gangster might think sounds cool. The Syndicate is simple a common term for a criminal enterprise. There were an awful lot of gangsters in 1920s Chicago; the book *Chicago Mobs of the Twenties* would be a great reference if it could be found.

In the 1920s, paper cups had really just started catching on, but they were somewhat different from modern cups. The forerunner to modern paper cups dates to about 1907, and they were intended as a more hygienic replacement for the practice of sharing a common cup that was in place on railroads at the time, which easily spread germs. Indeed, the Dixie Cup, one of the most common disposable paper cups in modern times, was called the Health Kup from its invention in 1908 until it was rebranded after a popular line of dolls in 1919. The danger of spreading infections was made painfully clear by the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918 to 1920, which killed somewhere between 50 and 100 million people, with a significant fraction of them healthy adults. A greater public awareness
of the importance of hygiene, combined with advances in production techniques and aggressive advertising, made paper cups extraordinarily popular, and the cups described match those that would have been common in 1927. The famous Anthora New York City coffee cup with the blue Greek design and the text reading "WE ARE HAPPY TO SERVE YOU" wasn't created until 1963, so this story is a bit too early to feature those.

The ubiquitous coffee cup sleeves of modern coffee chains weren't actually invented until 1991, so hot drinks in paper cups could be painful to hold in the 1920s. The cups also didn't have lids, making them easier to spill, but even these downsides didn't deter people who wanted coffee on the go.

The Bugatti Type 35 definitely did not have cup holders; cup holders in cars really didn't start becoming common until the 1980s, and a street legal race car really doesn't have any reason to have them or any kind of tray for convenience, as some cars of the 1920s did.

Francesca is, of course, Fru Fru; I would certainly hope that Fru Fru is a nickname and Francesca seemed a logical extrapolation of what her real name could be since it is an actual Italian name.

We're back into the swing of things when it comes to the investigation, and the next chapter will continue to build from here. As always, I'd enjoy hearing what you thought. Thanks for reading!
"What does that mean?" Judy asked.

Nick paused a moment, seeming to think his answer over carefully. "The Mystic Springs Oasis is a health club, of sorts, and the mammal who runs it is, well, a bit of an odd bird."

Judy thought that there was a lot implied by "of sorts" but she focused on the more pressing part of Nick's answer. "Odd how?" Judy asked.

"He does all his business in the sauna, so—"

Judy cut him off. "Is that all?" she asked, feeling relieved, "You thought I wouldn't be comfortable in a sauna? One of the other farms had a sauna and they'd invite us over all the time in the winter."

The Jänisinen family had moved from the old country, as they called it, generations ago, but they hadn't forgotten their love of saunas even though Bunnyburrows never got cold enough for the arctic hares to feel it. Judy had always enjoyed it when the Jänisinens had invited them over—sitting in the heat and humidity of the sauna wrapped in a scratchy towel had always felt cleansing in a way that normal baths never did.

Nick looked at her closely. "Family and neighbors is one thing," he said, "Being in there with a bunch of strangers won't bother you?"

"They can't be any worse than a fifteen year old buck," she said.

Nick shrugged. "Alright, then," he said, "But what happened to that buck? For your sake, I hope he was a neighbor and not family."

As she recalled, Old Jan Jänisinen had boxed his grandson John's ears when he caught the young buck staring at where the does' towels ended and their fur began, and then forced him to apologize and banned him from the sauna for the rest of the winter. The memory made her uncomfortably aware of how revealing those towels had been, only covering from just under the armpits to a few inches short of the knees. Perhaps some of the mammals would leer like John, but she could deal with that if she had to. Judy rolled her eyes. "Just because I'm from the country doesn't mean I'm some kind of... of inbred hick," she said, "He was a neighbor."

"Can he still see?" Nick asked as he went about the business of getting the Buchatti started again.

Judy wasn't sure if Nick was suggesting that she might have put out John's eyes as revenge or that John had been struck blind by seeing a few inches of her thighs, but she didn't dignify his question with a response. "So where is this place?" she asked, yelling to be heard above the roar of the car's engine.

Nick called out directions as she drove, and she wasn't sure where in the city they were until the wall dividing Sahara Square from the rest of the city loomed in front of them. Sirocco Street wasn't one of the main entrances into the artificial desert, and rather than the bold decorations that those had, somewhere between floral patterns and geometric designs, the archway was simply a smooth break in the otherwise unembellished stainless steel surface of the wall. Compared to the featureless exterior of the wall, the interior of the wall was a dizzying array of coils running behind massive grates, broken here and there by enormous banks of transformers. The wall was barely running, the heating elements a dull red rather than the white-orange they would turn at full power, but it was still enough to bring the temperature up from a pleasant summer day to almost oppressively hot as they
passed through the narrow archway through the massive wall. Nick said something, but Judy couldn't hear him over the combined noise of the Buchatti and the massive dehumidifiers that lined the archway. She pulled at one ear to show she hadn't heard and he repeated himself once they were through, tapping one claw against a gage on the dashboard. The needle was positioned about halfway through its range of motion, and the face of the gage was labeled "Huile," which meant nothing to her. "We have to watch this," he said, "If it overheats, we're walking."

Judy nodded, but she barely paid half her attention to the gage as she kept driving. She had only ever passed through Sahara Square once, and that had been not even a week ago on her first field assignment. When she had gone to the Thief of the Night, though, she had been too focused on her assignment to pay much attention to the parts of the city she passed through, and it had been nighttime anyway. In the light of day, though, Sahara Square was something else.

There was far more open space than the other parts of the city; the buildings were widely spaced apart from each other, as though the district had been built too large and didn't have enough residents to fill it. There wasn't much in the way of vegetation; there were a few shrubs, but what at first glance appeared to be palm trees were actually streetlamps disguised as trees. The artificial wind generated by the blowers that circulated the hot air throughout the district brought with them the bitter alkali scent of the dust and sand that took the place of the grasses and weeds that claimed the few patches of open dirt in the rest of the city. The gritty wind made her wish that she had a pair of goggles; from the way that Nick had narrowed his eyes besides her, she thought he might be thinking the same thing.

Although the day was still overcast, the glare from lamps intended to simulate the sun made the buildings seem to float like mirages on the sands in the heat haze that rose from the ground. Compared to the part of the city that Judy lived in, most of the buildings seemed a more natural part of the environment; the squat and somewhat irregularly shaped buildings made of adobe looked more like little hills than anything mammals had made. There were a few taller buildings, but they were far more graceful than the tenements of the more heavily urbanized parts of the city, with elegant spires of white granite and narrow windows like elongated keyholes. As Nick continued to call off turns, Judy couldn't help but notice that there were very few mammals out and about, and she wondered if there simply weren't many mammals living in the district or if those who did tended towards being nocturnal. At last, though, Nick had her pull to a stop in front of a building that didn't look too much different from the others around it. "This is it?" she asked, taking it in as they got out of the car.

"No, the Mystic Springs Oasis is about three blocks that way," Nick said, pointing even as he began walking in the direction he had indicated.

"You're still limping," Judy said, "Why park so far away?"

Nick scratched at the back of his neck. "We're a fox and a bunny in a bright blue Buchatti. We stick out a little."

Judy realized what he meant. "Have you seen anyone following us?"

Nick looked at her somewhat apologetically. "Well, I haven't. Isn't that what they train you prohis to notice?"

Judy sighed. "Isn't that what bootleggers are supposed to notice?"

As they kept walking, Nick held up two fingers and counted off his points. "One, I was never a bootlegger, thank you very much. I just made the deals and I was only running the books, not the merchandise. Two, there's no better way of making mammals suspicious than acting like someone's looking for you."
Judy realized he had been pointedly remarking on how she was glancing about, her ears swiveling in all directions as she tried to notice anyone paying attention to them, and she tried to act more naturally. Unfortunately, acting natural was the sort of thing that got harder the more she tried to concentrate on it, and she eventually gave up. If mammals saw a bunny and a fox walking together, they’d probably remember it no matter what they were doing. When they did at last come to the Mystic Springs Oasis, Judy thought that she wouldn't be able to mistake it for anything else. Over the top of a wall of polished granite bricks she saw a building that was a study in contrasts between sharp right angles and curving domes. The main gate through the wall was a latticework of finely wrought iron that formed elaborate knots and stretched at least twelve feet high and six feet wide. The space between the wall and the main building really was an oasis; there were palm trees, real ones unlike those in the parts of the district they had passed through, arranged around shimmering pools swimming with fish. The grounds were a riot of color, delicate flowers arranged around meandering stone paths that circled a massive fountain that seemed to have been carved out of a single solid piece of marble and filled the space with the soothing sound of flowing water.

Inside, the architecture continued to impress. The ceiling in the lobby was the inside of a dome, and the stone had been divided into trapezoids and diamonds with slight bulging curves to their lines, the insides of the segments all elaborately carved. The floor was an incredible mosaic of tiny stones, each no bigger than the nail of Judy's smallest finger, in colors that ran from beiges and browns to blues and greens, forming an abstract pattern something like a circle of flowers around a series of interlocking pentagons. The grandeur of the place made its emptiness all the more noticeable; there was no one behind the smooth sweep of a marble reception desk, and the low benches spaced around the perimeter of the room were likewise empty. Judy looked at Nick uncertainly. "Are you sure it's open?" she asked, instinctively lowering her voice to a low whisper.

"The gate and door were open," Nick said cheerfully; at regular volume his voice echoed throughout the room.

"I'll meet you in the baths," he said, and then made a beeline for a doorway that had been labeled "Male - Predators."

Judy split off towards the other side of the lobby, and went through the doorway labeled "Female - Prey." Inside, the locker room was surprisingly mundane considering the lobby. The walls were simple blocks of stone, with wooden benches and metal lockers. It actually reminded Judy rather strongly of the jail she had spent a night in; the lockers were similarly arranged so that they got smaller and smaller as they moved down the wall, with the very smallest serviced by a tiny little elevator no bigger than a soup can. Opposite the lockers was a list of rules, which Judy quickly scanned. They didn't seem like they'd be out of place in a far shabbier location, covering topics like not leaving dirty towels around and requiring all mammals to shower before entering the baths. There was a bank of showers further inside the locker room, none of them in use, and Judy debated internally about what to do. At last, she decided to obey the sign; there was no one to see her and there were stacks and stacks of luxuriously soft looking towels near the shower area. Before locking the locker and claiming the key, she grabbed her badge from her purse, choosing to ignore both the revolver and the rejection letter still nestled in it.

The shower was even better than the one in Nick's home, and Judy only reluctantly turned it off and dried herself with a towel that was longer than she was tall but was even softer than it had looked. She grabbed a more appropriately sized towel to wrap around herself for the sauna, and was pleased that it was even less revealing than the ones she had used in the Jänisinen's sauna; it actually covered her knees, making the overall effect something like a strange sleeveless dress. She brought the edges of the towel over each other near her armpit and used her Prohibition Agent badge like a brooch to keep it together, placing the badge itself against her fur so it wouldn't be visible.
Satisfied that her towel wasn't going anywhere and she still had access to her badge, Judy made her way to the exit of the locker room, which had signs on either side helpfully indicating where the facilities where. Ignoring the sign on the left, which pointed out, among a staggering array of other areas, the dust baths, the smoking lounge, and the central courtyard, she followed the sign on the right that listed the sauna.

"There you are," Nick said as Judy left the locker room, "I was starting to think you got lost."

When Judy turned to look at him, she immediately froze. Like Judy, the only scrap of fabric that Nick had was his towel. Unlike her, however, he was holding it in one paw and not wearing it. His entire body was completely bare, and she could see that the patch of cream colored fur on the underside of his muzzle ran all the way down to his—"Why are you naked?" she shrieked.

Judy grabbed her ears, which felt like they were burning under her fur, and pulled them over her eyes as she turned away. "See, this is the reaction I was expecting when I said we had to meet him in a sauna," Nick said, sounding puzzled, "No one wears anything into a sauna."

Judy still had her eyes firmly shut, but she felt as though the image had been burned into them. Freshly showered and without any clothes on Nick was thinner than she would have guessed a predator would be, but he still had a fair amount of muscle on his lean frame. He wasn't built anything like a bunny; his torso seemed disproportionately long and he was full of sharp angles where a bunny, even a buck, would be softer and curved. His arms and legs were thicker and seemed more powerful, and his paws were enormous. Judy had never seen a buck naked to be able to make the comparison, but even Nick's—she forced the thought out of her mind and tried to focus on regaining her composure. "Are you alright?" Nick asked.

She was still facing the wall with her eyes shut, but she felt as though the image had been burned into them. Freshly showered and without any clothes on Nick was thinner than she would have guessed a predator would be, but he still had a fair amount of muscle on his lean frame. He wasn't built anything like a bunny; his torso seemed disproportionately long and he was full of sharp angles where a bunny, even a buck, would be softer and curved. His arms and legs were thicker and seemed more powerful, and his paws were enormous. Judy had never seen a buck naked to be able to make the comparison, but even Nick's—she forced the thought out of her mind and tried to focus on regaining her composure. "Are you alright?" Nick asked.

"I don't know how they do it in Hicksville, but in the city you don't wear anything into a sauna."

Judy forced a laugh. "You spent two years in Podunk," she said, "Shouldn't you know how Hicksville works?"

"Lots of mud baths out in Podunk," Nick said dryly, "Not so many saunas. Look, do you need to leave? I'm a big fox; I'm sure I can handle this."

Judy responded almost instantly. "No, I'm fine," Judy said, "But... Could you wrap your towel around your waist?"

"It'll be a major faux pas," Nick said, with a weary resigned air that sounded very much affected, "But if it'll get you to turn around, fine."

She could hear the rustling of Nick adjusting his towel before he said she could look. When she turned around and opened her eyes, Nick looked more amused than anything else, but he had covered the lower half of his body entirely. "I thought you knew what you were in for," he said, and while he seemed to be attempting to stifle a laugh he sounded sincere.

"I should have let you finish," she said, "That's what you were going to save before we drove over here, wasn't it?"

Nick nodded. "When you were talking about a sauna and that buck, I figured you meant he was
peeping at you in a place like this. Well, like this but smaller and down-homier. You know," he said, gesturing vaguely to take in the building, "I can't do anything about the other mammals in here."

Judy wasn't sure she could articulate why, but it seemed as though it'd be easier to deal with the nudity of other mammals than with that of Nick. Maybe it was because she was starting to get to know him, and it was simply embarrassing in the way that seeing her father naked would be. She wasn't sure what else it could be, but she didn't think she was ready to see him unclothed again. "I'll manage," she said firmly, and looked around the room that the locker room had led to for the first time.

The architecture was largely the same as the lobby, although the wide open space had a number of stone lattices that subdivided it but didn't go up to the ceiling, which was vaulted but not nearly as grand. Like the rest of the building so far, though, she couldn't see any other mammals, which was a small favor; she didn't want to know what someone else would have thought if they had overheard her screaming. "This place is awful empty," Judy said as she followed Nick.

"It is a weekday," Nick said, "Some mammals have to work, you know."

He paused once they were in front of a sturdy wooden door. "Not these mammals, though," he said, and Judy could hear muffled voices coming from inside the room, and could feel the heat radiating outwards.

Nick paused with his paw on the handle. "Just remember that I told you Yax is a bit odd."

**Author's Notes:**

I'm going to be out of town traveling on Sunday, so I'm posting this chapter early. I won't be able to respond to any messages or comments until at least the middle of next week, so I hope you have a safe and happy Labor Day!

The title of this chapter, "I Know That You Know," comes from a 1927 Nat Shilkret song, although the Nat "King" Cole cover is probably much better known. I chose it because in this chapter both Nick and Judy are guilty of a mistake that I think everyone runs into—assuming that your own experiences are representative although they may not be. Finnish saunas are normally done in the nude and Turkish baths are typically done wearing a *peştemal*, a traditional type of towel, and the genders don't mix, each having their own section. Thus, neither of their experiences is typical, and they each mistakenly assume that the other knows what they're talking about.

A sirocco is a hot, dusty wind that blows from northern Africa across the Mediterranean, which seemed like an appropriate name for a street that divides a desert from the rest of the city. The description of the main gates, which Nick and Judy don't use, are intended to invoke the Art Deco aesthetic, which was all the rage in the 1920s. I imagine that Tundra Town is comparatively small compared to Sahara Square, and while all of Tundra Town shares a border with Sahara Square the opposite is not true. "Huile" is French for "Oil" and is how the oil pressure gage in a Bugatti Type 35 is labeled. Type 35s were somewhat prone to overheating, and driving in a desert, real or not, certainly would not help.

"Jänis" is the Finnish word for hare, and a lot of common Finnish last names end with "nen," hence the Jänisinen family name. Saunas are indeed quite popular in Finland, and in parts of the US with significant Finnish heritage, they're pretty common. Although in Finland it is in fact common to go into the sauna nude, it can be assumed that the Jänisinen family have started to follow American social norms in much the same way that they've apparently started adopting American names.
In contrast, the architecture of the Mystic Springs Oasis, as described here, is based on Turkish baths, which were quite popular in the Western world at the beginning of the 20th century. The RMS Titanic, as befitting what was supposed to be the most luxurious passenger vessel ever built, actually had a set of elaborate Turkish baths aboard, although their use was restricted to first class passengers only.

Some mammals, such as chinchillas, do indeed take dust baths, which is why the facilities include such an area. Mud baths are also a real thing, formed when hot springs contain volcanic ash or they are artificially created to have a similar composition. That's quite a bit different from plain mud, which is what pigs and some other animals wallow in. As previously mentioned, Podunk in this story is mostly pigs, explaining Nick's comment. In the case of real life pigs, it's because pigs aren't very good at regulating their body temperature, as they can't sweat and can't really cool themselves by panting.

This was a fun chapter to write, although I may have been pushing that T rating a little. Hopefully you found it entertaining, but as always I'd love to know what you thought!
A wave of hot air billowed out of the sauna as Nick pulled the door open before Judy could get out so much as a word. Through the foggy haze, Judy could see a number of mammals in the room. The sauna was a far cry from the one that the Jänisinens had, which was perhaps twice the size of an outhouse. The sauna in the Mystic Springs Oasis was enormous, a cube that had to be at least thirty feet on each side if it was an inch. The pleasant and fragrant smell of cedar came from the planks that made up the walls and benches of the sauna, glistening with a slight reddish color in the moisture of the air that filled the room. In the center of the sauna was a little square island of rough stone, the inside of which was divided in half on the diagonal, one side filled with smooth and polished rocks and the other a copper basin filled with water. Two matching copper spigots, covered with little droplets of condensation, trickled water over both sides, making the rocks hiss on one side and conjuring dense fog from the other. It was difficult to tell how many mammals were in the sauna, but they seemed to range in size from a bull elephant whose gray hide was nearly invisible in the dense and thick air down to a little brown ferret. Other mammals were visible only as vague shapes, but Judy thought that she could see the distinctive orange and black stripes of a tiger even if she couldn't make out anything else.

As Judy followed Nick into the sauna, she was actually grateful that the visibility was so poor, since it made it much easier to imagine that the mammals were fully clothed instead of completely naked. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to do the same for the mammal at one end of the room who was leading the others through some odd sort of calisthenics in a low and mellow voice. The yak wasn't just naked; he was entirely hairless, or at least the parts of his body that Judy could see were as she refused to allow her gaze to dip below his waist level. It was a peculiar look that had made it difficult to identify his species, as without the long coat typical of a yak it made his pale flesh look both oddly thin and strangely lumpy; his head seemed almost comically undersized without fur, although it made his curving horns seem especially long. His large liquid brown eyes had lit up in recognition as Nick entered, and he stopped his odd movements and instructions to run over and embrace the fox.

If Nick was bothered by being hugged by a shaved, naked yak, he didn't show it, and simply clapped the other mammal on the back as they greeted each other. The other mammals in the room broke their silence as they murmured to each other in confused-sounding tones until Nick called out, "I just need to borrow Yax for a minute," and guided the yak out of the sauna.

Judy gratefully followed them out; while she had always enjoyed saunas, her fur was too dense to be able to spend very long in them without overheating. It was one of the reasons that the Jänisinens had only used their sauna in the winter months, as being able to escape the heat by jumping out into the snow made the sauna much safer for bunnies than using it at warmer times of the year. She suddenly realized that the yak might have shaved himself to be better able to withstand the sauna, which was still strange but at least made some kind of sense. "Nick!" Yax had beamed, "It's been a real long time."

Judy kept her focus firmly centered on Yax's face, as outside the sauna there was absolutely nothing to hide the yak's shame. Nick, however, continued to seem completely unperturbed, and nodded his agreement. "Since '25," Nick said.

Yax brightened. "May 24th," he said, "It was Tuesday, and you were wearing that blue tie, the nice one with the white stripes that Edna said she liked."

Judy wondered if he really could remember those details so accurately, but Nick didn't seem surprised. "It's nice to hear Edna liked it," he said, smiling, "She never told me that. How's she
"Oh, you know," Yax said, gesturing vaguely, "She married Tommy last year. Great wedding, they had those little tuna sandwiches, you know, the little bite-sized ones with the celery mixed in you like? Tommy gave her the real absent treatment though, which was a shame, 'cause she's a real floorflusher and he's always been a heeler. He stepped on her toes three times when they were dancing to 'It Had to Be You.' Then her mother went all blooey and his father got all blotto. Real blow, you know? You should've been there."

"I'll wait for her declaration of independence," Nick said casually, "I'm sure that'll be an even better party."

Yax's expression suddenly shifted, and a puzzled frown darkened his features. "They said you weren't there 'cause you were dead and all. But you're here now."

Nick, who must have sensed Judy's growing impatience with the rambling about a wedding involving mammals she had never heard of and doubted had any relevance to the case, gave a delicate cough and gestured towards her, causing Yax to notice her for what seemed to be the first time. "About that," he said, "I'm sort of helping the Bureau of Prohibition now."

Yax looked down at Judy fearfully and waved his arms frantically. "This isn't a gin mill, agent lady," he said, the words tumbling out of his mouth, "The Mystic Springs Oasis is about peace and... and understanding and tearing down the barriers between, you know, mammal and nature. I follow all the laws, I swear I do."

"She's not here to arrest you," Nick said, and then shot Judy a sidelong glance, "I think."

"Agent Judy Hopps," she introduced herself, offering Yax a paw that he tentatively took and shook with his hoof, "And I'm not here to arrest you."

"Oh," Yax said, seeming relieved, then his expression became concerned. "Are you alright, Agent Judy? You're not looking so spiffy. You know you've got some burns?"

He gestured vaguely around his body to where the parts of Judy's body visible at the moment had burned fur or blistered skin. Judy repressed a grimace, both thinking of how bad she must look for him to point it out, and trying to avoid noticing what the motion of his limbs was doing to the rest of his body. "I'm fine, thank you," she said, trying to sound official.

He shot Nick a glance of her own. "Nick said you might be able to help me find someone."

"I'll try to help, but my memory's not that great," Yax replied.

From the way that he said it, Judy didn't think he meant it as a joke, but she didn't know how he could possibly think that he didn't have a good memory. After a moment of silence that started getting awkward, she asked, "Do you know where we could find Emmitt Otterton?"

"That's a real easy one," Yax said, beaming, "Emmitt's been working here since he closed his shop. He should be in the courtyard."

Judy enthusiastically thanked Yax and then grabbed Nick by the paw and pulled him after her before Yax could engage either one of them in conversation again. "Well, that was easier than I thought it would be," Nick admitted as they hurried down the corridor away from the sauna, which Yax had cheerfully returned to.

Judy just hoped that Nick's lead would be worthwhile. Emmitt Otterton had been, in Nick's
estimation, the best candidate for getting somewhat more up to date information about Mr. Big's
gang. The unspoken undertone that Judy guessed at was that Otterton was unlikely to either want
Nick dead or spitefully turn him over to those who did, and might be some help in guiding them
towards other mammals more likely to help than hurt their investigation. "It's perfect!" Judy said
brightly, "I just hope that he knows something."

Before they got to the door to the courtyard, Nick warned her, "Just so you know, he's probably
going to be naked too."

Judy froze in her steps and pointed in the direction that the signs on the way said led to the courtyard.
"You said that they didn't wear anything in the sauna. You didn't say anything about anywhere else."

"I didn't think we'd be going anywhere else here," Nick admitted, scratching at the cut beneath his
ear, "They're naturalists. That's what Yax meant about barriers between mammal and nature."

"But..." Judy struggled to wrap her head around it, "Outside?"

"That tends to be where nature is," Nick said dryly, "Besides, there's a wall."

Judy swallowed hard. It was going to be much brighter outside than in the sauna, and there wouldn't
be any obscuring steam. Keeping focused on Yax's face had been hard enough, but she wasn't going
to stop when they were so close. "Then let's go," she said, probably not as firmly as she would have
liked.

They found Otterton exactly where Yax had said he would be, at work in the courtyard of the club.
The grounds between the building and the wall that surrounded it had been beautiful, but the
courtyard was something else. The stonework of the walls was covered with climbing vines, delicate
flowers adding brilliant bursts of color. There was a contrast maintained between portions of the
grounds; carefully raked white sand, fine as flour, had been artfully arranged around interestingly-
shaped rocks and hardy desert plants, which stood out against the beautiful shrubs and flowers in
riotous colors that covered the rest of the ground. There wasn't any sort of pattern that Judy could
discrimin, but the courtyard seemed to invite the eye to linger over each element in turn, and it was
obvious that an extraordinary amount of care went into maintaining the plants. Although her eye,
which she considered a critical judge of the health of plants thanks to a lifetime spent on a farm,
didn't see anything needing care, the bucket of clipped twigs and flowers next to Otterton's side
showed that he clearly did. As Nick had warned might be the case, the little otter was entirely naked,
and Judy shifted awkwardly as he rose from his knees, trying desperately not to catch a sight of
anything and painfully aware that she herself was wearing nothing but a towel held up with the pin
of her badge.

Emmitt Otterton looked somewhat pudgy to Judy's eye, but perhaps it was just because he was an
otter. His brown fur, at least on the parts of his body that Judy was willing to look at, didn't have any
gray in it, except around a thick scar on his left shoulder. Judy thought that he was probably around
Nick's age, maybe a little older. Otterton's broad face seemed open and honest, and despite the pair
of horn-rimmed glasses perched atop his short muzzle he still squinted at their approach. "Nick?" he
asked, "Is that you?"

Nick grinned. "It is. How've you been, Emmitt?"

Otterton brushed the dirt off his knees and switched his garden shears from his right to his left paw.
"I can't complain too much," he said cheerfully, shaking Nick's paw. "How about you? I heard you
were dead."
"Things went south with Mr. Big," Nick said, by way of explanation, "I had to lay low."

Otterton nodded sympathetically, but didn't seem surprised. "Who's you friend?" he asked, turning to Judy.

"Agent Judy Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition," she said, deciding against unpinning her badge to show it to him.

"I only did flowers for Mr. Big," Otterton said mildly, with none of the fear that Yax had shown, "I'm not sure I'll be much help, whatever it is you want to know."

"What happened to your shop?" Nick asked.

Otterton shifted from foot to foot, appearing somewhat hesitant to say it in front of Judy, before giving his answer. "After Mr. Big got arrested, the shop didn't have as much, ah, protection as it used to," he said at last.

Judy thought that she knew exactly what he meant. The florist's shop had been in one of the parts of Zootopia that Mr. Big had laid claim to, and the shrew had almost certainly been extorting money from the businesses in that territory. The charge hadn't stuck in court, but she thought Otterton's carefully chosen words meant that had been a failure of the prosecutors. "After the third brick through the window of the shop, I knew I had to move someplace safer for my family."

"That's terrible!" Judy said, "The police didn't catch whoever was doing it?"

The look that both Otterton and Nick gave her was pitying, and she felt horribly naïve for asking. Of course the police hadn't caught the mammal responsible, if they had even bothered investigating. All of the other businesses that Judy had seen around what had been Otterton's shop were run by prey, and she would be willing to bet that no one had tried to scare them out of the neighborhood after they stopped paying Mr. Big. "Not yet," was all Otterton said, and then he continued with a remarkable levity, "I like working here, though. Mr. Yax pays me just as well as his other employees, and he doesn't care what I plant as long as it looks good. Plus...

Otterton gestured downwards at his naked form, and Judy could feel her cheeks heating up as the result of instinctively following his paw downwards.

Judy coughed to cover her embarrassment. "The flowers are beautiful," Judy said, hastily but sincerely, looking around to take in the otter's work again to avoid looking him in the face.

Closer to the flowers, she was able to identify them. There were great masses of hydrangeas, ranging in color from white through light blues and into dark purples, but a surprising amount of the ground had been given over to violets. Bumblebees buzzed lazily from flower to flower, and the air was full of the sweet smell of the flowers. Nick looked down at the flowers. "It's time for violets," he said, and it was a statement, not a question.

Otterton nodded. "This time every year," he said quietly.

Judy was curious as to what their exchange meant, but after already having put her foot in her mouth she didn't want to risk offending him. She explained, with Nick's help, what they were looking for, and Otterton willingly provided a number of names, although he noted that a few of the mammals Nick had suggested were dead. All of the names, she couldn't help but note, were ones that had come up in the Bureau's files, but reducing the number of options from dozens to a mere half dozen of likely leads was a huge help. Otterton had even provided a scrap of paper and a stub of a pencil that Judy used to write the name down, and right when it seemed as though they had exhausted his
knowledge Nick asked after another name. "You wouldn't happen to know where Fru Fru lives now, would you?" he asked, "It can't be in the Biggliani estate anymore."

Otterton scratched his head. "No, she's Mrs. Petruccio now; they've got a beautiful house in Little Rodentia. I did the flowers for her second daughter's christening. Hold on, I think I've got the address somewhere."

He murmured the last of it somewhat distractedly, and vanished into a little shed cleverly disguised by vines so that it hardly stood out at all. He returned with a piece of paper no bigger than a postage stamp and, holding it close to one eye, carefully copied the minuscule script on it into his own much larger writing on a scrap of an envelope. As he was performing this delicate task, Judy realized the piece of paper he was copying was a tiny engraved invitation, presumably for the christening Otterton had mentioned. Once he was done and had given her the address, Judy thanked him gratefully and was itching to leave as Nick made his goodbyes.

"Do you mind if I take some of these violets?" Nick asked suddenly, gesturing towards a few flowers in Otterton's bucket of clippings.

Otterton instead made a few snips from the plants still in the ground, and pushed a little bouquet into Nick's paws over the fox's protests. "Mr. Yax won't mind, and I don't, either," he said, "Not for another soldier."

Nick thanked him again and then let Judy drag him off, the flowers in one of his paws.

"Did the two of you serve together?" Judy asked curiously, once they were out of earshot as they walked out of the courtyard and back towards the locker rooms.

"Me and Otterton?" Nick said, "No, he served on the front. Did you see that scar on his shoulder?"

Judy nodded, and Nick continued. "He charged a machine gun nest. Alone. He got hit once, but he still took it out."

She could hardly imagine the friendly little otter doing something like that; the only other veteran of the Great War she knew who had seen combat was her coworker Douglas Ramses, but the sheep was about as far from Otterton in his personality as seemed possible. It didn't seem right, that Otterton had fought and suffered for his country and had come back only able to make a living for his family with the generous patronage of a mob boss. "I wouldn't have guessed it," she said.

"Don't underestimate him," Nick said quietly.

Judy nodded. "Do you think Mr. Big's daughter will be able to help?" she asked, wondering why Nick had wanted her address.

Nick shrugged. "Maybe. He made sure Fru Fru didn't know where their money was coming from, but she knew all of his friends."

"And she likes you?" Judy asked.

Considering that Nick had been largely responsible for putting her father behind bars, it seemed like a valid concern, especially if she knew he was responsible. "Oh, Carrots," Nick said, shaking his head while wearing a broad smile, "Everyone likes me. And if they don't now, they just haven't figured it out yet."

Judy thought that was a ridiculous display of egotism, but it was that thought that he left her with as they split off to change in the appropriate locker rooms.
After they had both changed back into their clothes and left the Mystic Springs Oasis, Nick surprised Judy by pulling the violets he had gotten from Otterton out from inside his jacket and offering them to her. "They match your eyes," he said.

None of the bucks in Bunnyburrows had ever offered her flowers or really made any kind of romantic overture to her before, but she automatically grabbed the flowers. The flowers really were beautiful, each petal a perfectly even shade of purple, and their perfume actually reminded her somewhat of Nick's own smell beneath the shampoo he used. Nick must have seen her surprise, because the sides of his mouth quirked up into a small smile. "Don't read anything into it," he said, "You'll need them for your hat."

"What hat?" Judy asked, confused since all of her clothes were almost certainly ashes.

Nick paused. "Well, I suppose you could just keep wearing one of my best shirts and the belt of my bathrobe," he said, looking her over with a critical eye.

Judy looked down at her clothes; she had been in far too much of a hurry to continue their investigation to think to pick up some of the clothes that the Bureau maintained for disguises, and while she didn't care too much about the way she looked it would have been nice to get to wear something that stood out less. "But if you show up on Fru Fru's doorstep looking like that, she's going to insist on dressing you like a doll for, oh, at least two hours or so before letting you get a word in edgewise."

At Judy's frown, Nick continued, "You should've seen what she'd do to the 'servants.'"

His mocking tone made the air quotes he put the word in entirely unnecessary, and Judy supposed that Mr. Big's goons must have been particularly patient or afraid of their boss to submit to that kind of treatment. Probably both, actually, but she pushed the thought aside. Nick frowned thoughtfully himself and tugged at the lapel of his suit, which was somehow still crisp despite having been put in a locker. "I'll need a new jacket, too," he said with a sigh.

"We're not going to waste time shopping for clothes," Judy insisted.

She didn't think Nick was deliberately trying to waste time, but his concern seemed ridiculous, particularly with regards to his own clothes, which looked perfectly fine to her. Still, he persisted. "That's right," he said, "We're not wasting time. We're investing it."

"Fifteen minutes," Judy said firmly, "That's it, to get in and out. And it has to be on the way to her house."

"I can work with that," Nick said agreeably, cocking his head to the side in apparent thought.

As they approached the Buchatti, its brilliant blue bodywork standing out against the drab browns of their surroundings, Judy asked, "Why do you need a new jacket?"

"Not that I'd expect you to know, Agent Carrots, but this is two years out of style," Nick said, sounding more surprised than anything else that she hadn't realized something that was obvious to him.

"Does that mean that Fru Fru dressed you—" Judy started to ask, wondering if she had come across the reason the fox seemed to care about clothes so much.

"Oh look, we're at the car," Nick cut her off, quickly getting into it.
Judy couldn't help but smile to herself as she got in herself and watched Nick make the preparations
to start the Buchatti. *That*, she thought, *is definitely a "yes."*

**Author's Notes:**

I published the very first chapter of my very first story, "Black and White, Red and Blue," on September 4th, 2016. In the past year, I've published 57 chapters across three stories, totaling a bit over 200,000 words if my (frequently lengthy) author's notes are counted. I'm unfortunately a little past the anniversary as I didn't have internet access on September 4th of this year, but as my thanks to you, the reader, I'm posting this as a bonus chapter.

The response that I've gotten to my stories has been incredible, and it really means a lot to me that so many people have read and enjoyed my work. I've received a lot of wonderful feedback; I always like knowing what people did or didn't like about a particular chapter or a story in general, and I'm always trying to become a better writer. I like to think that my skill as a writer has increased over the past year, and I hope that I'll be able to say the same thing next year too.

My next story up will be the sequel to "A Study in Gold," but I've also got some other projects in the works. I'm working on a fantasy AU that is, I think, a very unique take on the possibilities of that kind of setting and I'm helping another writer with an AU set in the 1970s which will be my first ever collaboration. I'm still working on the sequel to "Black and White, Red and Blue" and I've got a few other stories that fit in with the movie's canon that I'm currently fleshing out, including some one shot works. I've been working on getting to the point where I can have more than one story running at a time, but I can't promise anything just yet. I will, however, stick to at least a chapter a week for as long as I can. It's a pleasure to write, and I want to thank you again for reading!

With that, I'll move on to my notes for this chapter. The title, "Where the Shy Little Violets Grow" comes from a 1928 song by Guy Lombardo, and was chosen simply in reference to Otterton's garden. The violets being in remembrance is in reference to Violet Day. The tradition started in Australia in 1915 (while WWI was still in progress) with bouquets of violets being sold to raise funds for returning soldiers. Violet Day was originally held in July, and then later August, until 1970, and served to memorialize and commemorate those who had served. Although Violet Day was never observed by the US, there were a significant number of Australian troops who served in WWI, and it's not unreasonable to assume that an American who served could have heard about the holiday from one of them and remembered it. The use of remembrance poppies, in reference to the poem "In Flanders Fields," dates to 1921, and was quickly adopted in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US. The use of poppies would have been a much more familiar memorial in 1927, but as noted Judy wanted to avoid asking to avoid being tactless. The natural smell of a fox, particularly a male fox, is indeed somewhat similar to violets, although with the addition of something a lot like a skunk. Hydrangeas would be blooming in the summer, when this story is set, and violets can bloom year round with proper care.

May 24, 1925 was indeed a Tuesday; in the movie Yax seems to have an incredible memory for trivial details, which I've included here. The absent treatment is 1920s slang to mean a timid dancer, while a floorflusher was slang for an enthusiastic one and a heeler is a poor dancer. Blooey means to emotionally fall apart, and blotto means to be extremely drunk. A blow is a crazy party, and declaration of independence was slang for a divorce. "It Had to Be You" is a real song that would have been reasonably popular in 1926, although since it's about the singer admitting their love for someone despite their many flaws, it is perhaps not the best song to play at a wedding. It's a fair sight better than playing "Every Breath You Take," at a wedding though, so that's something.

Horn-rimmed glasses were popular in the 1920s, although their popularity waned during the 1930s
when more durable metal frames became desirable during the Great Depression.

Mr. Big's protection racket, as described, is an example of one of the reasons why mobs were able to flourish. While in many cases gangs simply extort money from businesses in exchange for not attacking them, some gangs did in fact provide protection to those businesses that paid them. This worked reasonably well for both parties, as the gangs got money and the businesses got a defender that may have been more liable to take action than the police.

The last name of Fru Fru's husband, which she apparently took for her own, is Petruccio in reference to Petruchio, the male lead of the Shakespeare play *The Taming of the Shrew*. I thought it was an appropriate name for an actual shrew. As to whether or not the relationship between Petruccio and Fru Fru is like the one between Petruchio and Kate, well, that'll come up when they show up.

Thank you again for reading, and I'd love to know what you thought!
Nick had guided Judy, with his seemingly unerring sense of direction, to stop the Buchatti at the Marshall Fallow and Company Building. Judy had passed by the building on occasion, and had sometimes even seen lovers meet and hug each other beneath the enormous clocks that hung off the corners of the building, but she had never been inside. She hadn't been any more immune than her siblings, when she had been a kit, to poring over the pages of the Steers Roebuck catalog and dreaming of what she might have bought, if only she had the money, but that was quite a bit different from going into a store staffed by mammals as likely as not to turn up their noses at her once it became clear that she had neither the money nor the inclination to buy anything. Besides, she had spent what spare time she had studying and exercising to better be able to apply to the police academy when admissions opened again, and hadn't had the opportunity to indulge in window shopping.

When they entered the building, though, Judy had to keep from gawking, open-jawed; she had never imagined that a store could be so large and she had to keep craning her neck upwards to see the ceiling high above the floor of the atrium. The ceiling itself was a magnificent mosaic of pieces of colored glass almost too small to make out from the floor that made the decorations of the Mystic Springs Oasis seem plain by comparison. There were great swirling floral patterns in white picked out among a delicate blue background, contrasted with bolder knots of greens, yellows, and reds that formed around circles of deep blue that shimmered in the light of the chandeliers that hung from them. There were thirteen floors, all of the ones above street level with balconies in a starburst pattern boarded by columns richly topped with curving decorations.

It was as though everything that was for sale in the Steers catalog, and even more besides, was for sale, and despite herself Judy wished they had more time to look around. It occurred to her that despite living in the city for a bit more than a month she hadn't done any of the touristy things that her family members had said they would do themselves, if they had the chance to visit. Nick quickly picked out a pawful of new suit jackets and slacks with a mildly distasteful air, commenting that he was lucky that they would more or less fit off the rack without modification. "It's just as well, though," he sighed as he helped Judy look through the racks of dresses for something to replace her own wardrobe, "Fru Fru drove Big crazy; she always liked shopping at department stores. He couldn't get her to go to a tailor on his life."

Judy supposed that he meant Fru Fru was more likely to approve of clothes also purchased from a department store; despite Nick's apparent snobbery, she could understand the appeal of clothes that were ready to be worn right away without having to wait for them to be put together. "How about this one?" she asked, holding up a dress that looked like it would fit.

Judy had never paid much attention to how clothes were sized, and the numbers didn't mean much to her. Nick sized up the dress with a critical eye; it was entirely white, but it had a sort of paisley pattern worked into the skirt with little beads that she thought was pretty. "It'll do," he said, throwing the dress over one arm where he was keeping his other picks.

After quickly picking out a few other items so that she'd have at least half a dozen outfits, they made their way down the escalator to the ground floor. That on its own was something of a marvel; though her father would likely have dismissed it as one of the pointless excesses of the city, there was something to be said for the ingenuity of the interlocking wooden steps as they made their endless loop, creaking and groaning only a little. Nick had insisted on carrying everything, so she was glad on his behalf that he hadn't had to carry everything down flights of stairs, but she hadn't understood his insistence until they reached the register. It wasn't that she thought he wasn't a gentlemammal, but...
as she had two perfectly good arms his politeness only made sense once the perky little deer running
the register had finished boxing up the items and addressed her directly in a seemingly affected tone.  
"I can have someone carry these out to your car, ma'am, if only you should like your servant to pull it
around."

The deer hadn't even looked at Nick as he made this statement, and suddenly the lack of concern that
the store's staff had exhibited over Nick's presence was exposed in a different light. It wasn't that they
were open minded enough to not be immediately and unreasonably suspicious of a predator; it was
because they thought that Nick was her employee, an impression that Nick had in retrospect carefully
cultivated with his actions in the store. She had thought his lack of much commentary on her choices
had been because he had understood her urgency in getting to their next lead, but it could have been
interpreted as the care a servant would give their master. "Oh, that shan't be necessary, shall it
ma'am?" Nick asked in an equally stuffy tone, looking down his nose at the deer, which was a
remarkable feat considering that the deer had at least two feet of height on him.

"Ah... No, no that's fine," Judy said hastily.

The deer gave her a stiff nod, but after announcing the total he had appeared somewhat surprised
when the payment came out of Nick's wallet, exposing a small fortune in cash as the fox carelessly
peeled off the appropriate number of bills. "Would we be able to change before leaving?" Judy
asked, and the deer quickly recovered to be able to reply.

"Certainly, ma'am," he said, with a somewhat superior air.

She wondered what he had thought of her appearance, still dressed in one of Nick's shirts with the
belt from a bathrobe to make it fit somewhat better. Probably that she was some new kind of flapper,
perhaps, some wealthy dilettante who had tried and then given up on a peculiar new fashion. In any
event, she had carelessly grabbed the boxes for one of the dresses and the hat that Nick had told her
matched it and made her way to one of the changing rooms, offering Nick an apology at the same
time. "I didn't realize that they would have thought—" she started, but Nick had waved it off.

"That's the best I've ever been treated here, really," he said, "I'll have to bring you the next time I feel
like overpaying for a suit."

After Judy had hastily changed, and then put the shirt and belt together into the box the dress had
come in without much effort at folding them neatly, she saw that Nick had already changed out of his
suit and into one of the ones that he had just purchased. To her eye, the suit didn't look all that
different from the one he had been wearing, although it was perhaps somewhat looser. She couldn't
tell if that was because it hadn't been tailored exactly to him or if that was simply the style, but he
wore it with a remarkable ease. Still, she had grabbed her fair share of the remaining boxes before he
could say anything and carried them out to the Buchatti, which turned out to be completely
impractical when it came to carrying luggage—there was absolutely no compartment for it, the space
behind the seats being completely consumed by the fuel tank. Instead, Nick had pulled forth some
straps and somewhat awkwardly lashed the boxes to the smooth boat tail of the car. "That should
hold," he said cheerfully, admiring his own work.

Judy nodded, although the effort it had taken made her take another wary glance at the sky, which
was still overcast. If it rained, there was no getting around it; they would get wet. Still, it was quite a
bit faster for getting around the city than walking, so she resigned herself not to complain about it and
once Nick had arranged a sprig of the violets on her hat to his satisfaction, she drove off to Little
Rodentia.

After Judy had parked the car about as close to Little Rodentia as possible, they walked right past the
main entrance. Judy, at least, might have been able to get through the archway, which was grandly sized for a mouse but less so for a bunny, if she was willing to crawl, but Nick wouldn't have had any chance of squeezing through. The main entrance was set in a carved piece of granite, with little decorations so small as to be difficult to see, and the clock that was set in the pediment over the archway was about the size of a pocket watch from Judy's perspective. In comparison to the tiny grandeur of the entrance, the wrought iron fence around Little Rodentia was surprisingly mundane; it wouldn't have looked out of place in a nice garden. The gate had a clever little arrangement of springs along the hinges so that it would shut itself after it was opened, and the brass handle of the latch was polished to a high sheen from use. A number of signs had been posted on the gate; there was a stern warning to "MIND YOUR TAIL" accompanied by an illustration of some vaguely generic animal knocking over a building that hardly came up to their knee with a careless swing of their tail, and another that read "NO MAMMALS UNDER SIX YEARS OF AGE PERMITTED THRU THIS GATE." But while both of the signs were somewhat worn with time and age, there was also a much newer looking one that had hardly begun to fade. It read "ABSOLUTELY NO PREDATORS," and while Nick didn't directly acknowledge it or show any outward sign of having noticed, he had turned to Judy and said, "I'll wait with the car."

"Absolutely not," Judy said firmly, grabbing him by the paw before he could walk away, "You're coming with me."

"I don't know if you've noticed, Agent, but it seems my kind isn't welcome here," he replied, straightening his tie with his free paw in what he probably wanted to come across as an unconcerned air.

"Forget the sign," she replied dismissively, "I'm a prohibition agent—"

"Oh, are you?" Nick interrupted in an apparent attempt at light-hearted humor, "I think you might have missed a chance or two to remind me about that."

"—and if I say I need you, they can't keep you out," she finished, ignoring his interruption.

"You need me?" Nick asked, quirkling his eyebrows in surprise.

"Of course I do," Judy said, not ashamed at all to admit it.

Nick was many things, but above them all he had been faithfully honoring his promise, even though she had extorted him into it at first. The stark words of the sign on the gate to Little Rodentia were only the latest in the series of insults and slights that the city directed at predators. Judy felt almost as ashamed of extorting Nick as she did of how little notice she had paid to those insults and slights before joining his company. For his part, Nick's expression softened somewhat and he chuckled, shaking his head. "You'll be a bad influence on me," he said, but he made no further protests and followed her through the gate.

Little Rodentia, to Judy's eye, looked like one of the city's blocks recreated in miniature, although there were some details that seemed off. The impression of looking at the city from a fair distance was ruined by the parts that weren't scaled appropriately; although the grass of the park areas was neatly trimmed, the individual blades were still far too large. The streets were also disproportionately wide, compared to the rest of the city, but there were far too many little electric cars and pedestrians using them to walk on them without risking crushing someone. The neat sidewalks that ran between the buildings and the streets, which were all paved unlike the wooden sidewalks still in place in some parts of the city, were perhaps two inches wide and consequently useless. However, much like Sahara Square, the buildings were widely spaced; although Little Rodentia was at least the size of a city block, easily two-thirds of it was simply undeveloped parkland, and the built up portions had a gravel path, appropriately wide for a mammal even larger than either Judy herself or Nick, that ran...
behind the buildings. The overall effect was that Little Rodentia was a model city, with paths to allow larger mammals to come and go without stepping on the delicate work of the modelers, but Judy couldn't complain. Nick, she noticed, had actually grabbed the tip of his tail in one paw to be sure that it would not brush up against anything. Conveniently, they did not have to rely on the minuscule signs that were on the streets themselves; they were far too small to read without bending over to look at them, and the city had wisely put far larger street signs at the intersections of the gravel paths that wound around the streets themselves.

Despite the care that they both took to avoid disrupting the tiny inhabitants, Judy could still occasionally hear little squeaks of fear and cries of alarm as they were sighted, and she glumly thought that it was likely because of Nick. At least, if they were terrified of him, no one made any move to try stopping them, and soon enough they came to what really was, as Otterton had said, a beautiful house.

It looked like an extremely elaborate dollhouse, the sort that Judy's sisters had coveted when they saw similar ones in the Steers catalog. Fru Fru's house must have been a mansion by the standards of a shrew; the house was three stories tall with elaborate Victorian ornamentation, including a tower that came to a little conical peak and a porch with a tiny little railing chased out in slate gray against the gleaming white of the building itself. For Judy, though, the top of that tower didn't even come to the bottom of her chin, and she had awkwardly bent over the neat little lawn in front of it, taking care not to mash croquet wickets, barely the size of staples, into the lichen that served in place of grass. Taking extraordinary care, she gingerly grasped the brass knocker of the door between her thumb and forefinger. After a few fumbling attempts at knocking, she instead let it go and simply tapped a nail against the door, which was soon rewarded by the sound of scurrying feet.

"Nicky!" a shrill voice called, when the door was flung open, Judy springing back to prevent the door from smacking her in the nose, "You're alive!"

"It's good to see you too, Fru Fru," Nick said, smiling as he bent carefully over to bring his head to the level of the front door.

The shrew that waddled out ignored Judy entirely to look up at Nick; the shrew was, to Judy's eye, visibly pregnant, but still dressed like a flapper with a short little black dress and her hair bobbed. A moment later, another shrew left the house, a pudgy little male dressed in a suit that appeared rather similar to the one that Nick was wearing, although obviously on a much smaller scale. His ample little frame also meant that his suit didn't fit him nearly as well, which was not helped any by the three little shrews he was awkwardly holding, wrinkling the shoulders of his suit and covering it with stains. The smallest of the shrews was wearing a white dress with pink accents—Fru Fru's first son, perhaps—while the other two, who looked quite a bit larger, both wore blue dresses; presumably one of them was the daughter that Otterton had done a floral arrangement for at her christening. "Ey Fru Fru, who is dis fella?" the shrew, who must have been Mr. Petruccio, asked, his words thick with a coastal accent.

"I've told ya about Nicky a million times, haven't I?" Fru Fru asked, waving a paw dismissively, "It's good to see ya, Nicky, ain't it, Angelo?"

She directed this last at her husband with a harsh little look. "Real good, right," he said quickly, "Pleasure meetin' ya, Nicky."

Regardless of the infants that her husband held, Fru Fru elbowed her husband sharply and harshly whispered something into his ear which even Judy's sensitive ears could barely pick up—telling him to offer Nick something, but she thought she must have misheard the word, an impression that wasn't helped when Angelo Petruccio repeated the offer. "Ya want some gabagool, Nicky?" he said, "Got
some made outta some real primo night crawlers. Be a real pleasure, breakin' bread wit' ya."

"It's been a long time since I've had gabagool," Nick replied, and he seemed to take some kind of relish in eating it again even as he gave no indication of what it actually was, "But I'm here on business."

Fru Fru and Angelo exchanged a brief glance. "What kinda business?" Fru Fru asked, but she sounded more curious than angry or afraid.

"Allow me to introduce Agent Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition," Nick said, gesturing at Judy.

Under other circumstances, it might have struck Judy as funny how the two shrews looked at her as they realized that she was present; considering that she was a giant to them, she thought she might have been more noticeable. Angelo's reaction, however, went somewhat beyond surprise as he took her in. He muttered something that she had no trouble understanding. "Aw, shit."

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Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "The Little White House (At the End of Honeymoon Lane)" comes from a 1927 Irving Kaufman song and is in reference to the house of Fru Fru and her husband, which may not exactly be the perfect image of domestic bliss. They do, however, have a little white house, at least from the perspective of the two main characters.

Marshall Fallow and Company is a takeoff of Marshall Fields and Company, which was a major department store brand in the Chicago area from the late 19th century until their acquisition and rebranding by Macy's in 2005. Fallow deer prefer living in mixed forest and grasslands, so I thought it appropriately complemented my use of Steers Roebuck as another massive chain apparently run by deer.

The real Marshall Field and Company Building is a Chicago landmark, and for a long time was the largest store in the world. Even now, it's the world's third largest store, and much of its somewhat ostentatious ornamentation remains, including a beautiful vaulted mosaic ceiling of Tiffany glass and a pair of outdoor clocks that are frequently singled out as meeting places (although sometimes leading to missed meetings, as one is at the intersection of State and Washington and the other at the intersection of State and Randolph). If you're ever in Chicago, it's certainly worth checking out among the other wonderful architecture of the city.

I would imagine that in the world of Zootopia, clothing sizes would be even more complicated than they are in ours due to the enormous variation in the size of mammals and their features. A mammal like a beaver, with a proportionally wide tail, would need a much larger hole for it than a bunny, and I'd guess mammals with horns or antlers might not be able to wear shirts or dresses that pull over their heads. The 1920s is before the era of vanity sizing really started, though, so at that time the numbers would actually translate into meaningful measurements; there would just need to a lot of them for mammals that wanted to shop at stores that don't specialize in their species.

Escalators did exist in the 1920s, and would definitely be something of a novelty. As described, they would be made mostly out of wood, not metal, and certainly are not the sort of thing that you would expect to find in the countryside. They are rather convenient for shopping, though.

Once again, the Buchatti shows itself to be a ridiculously impractical car for doing anything other than driving fast; the Bugatti Type 35 was indeed completely lacking in any kind of spot for storing cargo.
I think that it makes logical sense that Little Rodentia would have a larger gate besides the one that Judy slid through in the movie; if nothing else it would make getting goods in and out a lot more convenient. I think it's pretty obvious why they would have a warning about tails, and the banning of small children from entering through the gate makes sense if you've seen how some toddlers play. An elephant toddler, for example, would be an unholy terror from the perspective of residents who top out at six inches, and even if they didn't directly injure anyone playing, they could easily wreck buildings.

Banning predators is a bit less understandable, but this story is set in the 1920s which makes it unfortunately understandable in its own way.

In the 1920s, pink was considered a masculine color, appropriate for baby boys, and blue an appropriately delicate color for baby girls. It's anyone's guess why this switched, but the 1940s is when it happened, and it seems pretty firmly entrenched today if you look down any toy aisle. It was also pretty common, simply as a practical matter, to dress babies in dresses no matter their gender. Skirts can be pretty easily lengthened as the baby grows by altering the hem and don't need to be replaced as often, plus it makes it easier to change diapers.

"Gabagool" is actually "capocollo" through a thick New York or New Jersey Italian accent. Capocollo is a type of cured pork, although since pork is right out in this universe, it's apparently made out of earthworms. Real arctic shrews do indeed eat invertebrates, and for a family that's obviously intended as something of a parody of east coast Italian Americans, I thought it an appropriate reference to make.

As always, thanks for reading, and I'd love to know what you think!
Fru Fru's response was immediate. She whirled to face her husband, her long snout nearly touching his. "Language!" she squeaked shrilly, her accent thickening, "An' in front of the children! Ya want 'em talking like that? Ya wan' everyone should think we raise 'em in a gutter?"

Angelo cowered from his wife's fury, and Judy couldn't help but notice that he seemed to be positioning those children, still awkwardly held in his arms, between himself and his wife like some sort of shield. "No, Fru Fru, no," he said, his tone soothing, "I just ain't forgot how they hassled ya, after your fadder got arrested."

He turned and looked up at Judy, seeming to draw himself up to his minuscule height. "Fru Fru ain't never had nothin' to do wid her fadder's business," he said, "I ain't gonna let ya hassle her over nothin'."

Judy couldn't help but be somewhat bemused by this, as there wasn't much Angelo could do to physically stop her. She could probably knock their charming little house over with one paw, if she wanted to, but she understood what Angelo meant behind his bluster. Considering how badly Bellwether wanted to see Nick punished, she was willing to bet that her boss had been just as tenacious in going after Mr. Big's daughter; Bellwether had probably only given up after dragging the shrew through the most thorough investigation she could possibly manage. That Fru Fru wasn't behind bars was a pretty good sign, so far as Judy could tell, that Mr. Big had sheltered her completely from his life of crime as Nick had said. Still, how long had the interviews lasted, when Mr. Big had been arrested and the Bureau had circled his associates like hungry sharks? When Fru Fru had been dealing with the complete upheaval of her life, had the Bureau shown her any compassion, any benefit of the doubt? Judy suspected that Bellwether, or whoever had been entrusted with the job, had been merciless, and in that moment realized how much Angelo had to love his wife, no matter how futile his gesture of defiance was.

She paused a moment before responding, trying to sound as sympathetic as she could. "I'm sorry to bother you," she said, "But I was hoping you—the two of you—could answer some questions about Alphonse Biggliani."

"Sure," Angelo said, his skepticism flatly evident in his body language and in the way he said the word, but it was Fru Fru's turn to soothe her spouse.

"We'll answer any questions ya got," she said to Judy, her accent receding back with as her anger evaporated to something that was only a faint hint, "Ain't that right, Angelo?"

As she spoke, she stroked his arm, and he nodded, looking up at Judy with a somewhat abashed expression on his round little face. Before Judy could draw in a breath to ask her first question, Fru Fru's attention turned suddenly back to Nick, who had been watching the entire proceedings with an expression on his face that was difficult to read. Nostalgia, perhaps; surely it wasn't the first time he had seen Fru Fru's temper flare and die out like a match that had burned itself out. It was looking up at Nick that Fru Fru spoke, sounding puzzled, "But why ain'tcha dead, Nicky? I heard that fella—whassisname, Randall Steervens?—set you an' Daddy up."

Her expression turned brooding, and Judy suddenly realized why Nick had been so unconcerned about going to Fru Fru. The simple fact of the matter, she supposed, was that he had lied. From reading the Bureau's files, she knew that there was no such mammal as Randall Steervens; he was a phantom, created by Nick, to provide plausible deniability to the money laundering arranged for Mr. Big. If Nick hadn't provided copies of the accounting ledgers he had falsified under the assumed
identity of Mr. Steervens, it might have taken years to untangle the web of financial crimes that had
turned the large illegitimate fortune in the profits from bootlegging into one nearly as large but
seemingly completely above board.

Then again, maybe it wouldn't have taken years without Nick's help; maybe it would have been
completely impossible to pin Mr. Big down, the charges of tax fraud fizzling in court like a wet
firecracker. Either way, Judy had to admit that it had been particularly clever, on the fox's part, as to
how he must have arranged his departure from a life of crime. It was almost as though he had been
planning to leave it all along, and the thought startled Judy when it came into her head. It occurred to
her that she was taking the most charitable possible interpretation of his actions, and she wondered at
what had changed, in her head and her heart, to do so. Before she could puzzle over it, Nick
responded, nearly flat on his belly to get his eyes more or less level with Fru Fru's head. "The police
already had the books when they arrested your father," Nick said, "I got out of town before I could
get pinched too."

It was a lie of omission, Judy supposed; it was all technically true, but he had completely neglected to
mention his own role in the arrest. Still, when Nick spoke again after a brief pause, she thought the
statement that followed was completely sincere. "I'm just sorry I couldn't do anything for you first," he
said, still looking into Fru Fru's face.

"Ah, Nicky," Fru Fru said fondly, stepping forward to pat at his muzzle with one tiny paw, "You
was always good enough to me, don'tcha ever doubt it. I just wish I had known you was OK all
these years. Maybe I coulda done something for you."

There was a brief moment of silence broken by Angelo clearing his throat. "Why don'tcha go 'round
back?" he suggested, gesturing at Nick and Judy, somewhat awkwardly due to the precious bundle
of his children, "There's a picnic table ya can sit at. I'll get that gabagool an' we can all talk more
comfortable like."

It was somewhat awkward, crouching down to talk to the shrews, and Judy agreed. The picnic table
absolutely dominated a stretch of undeveloped parkland behind the Petruccio's house; it was taller
than any of the homes, a comparatively massive edifice of rough-hewn pieces of timber that had been
arranged into a hexagonal table with benches on all sides. Despite the apparent crudeness of the
wood, the pieces all fit together perfectly to define the table top itself; it was only the edges of the
table that really appeared rough and natural. In the center of the table there was a hole where, in a
different community, an umbrella might have gone to provide shade. In the heart of Little Rodentia,
however, just off the gravel path for larger mammals that wound through the district, it hosted a little
wrought-iron elevator, the metal worked to appear like tangled branches. The top of the elevator
shaft made a protrusion about six or seven inches above the surface of the table topped with a little
hexagonal gazebo that perfectly matched the style of the table providing and provided some coverage
for the mammals small enough to use it.

Nick and Judy had only been sitting at the picnic table for a few minutes before Angelo and Fru Fru
exited their house through the back door, Angelo still holding their children and Fru Fru holding a
platter before Nick. It was smaller even than one of the buttons on his suit jacket, but he
regarded the plate, and the minuscule portion of what Fru Fru served onto it, with exquisite care.
Angelo said that it was made out of night crawlers, and while the circular slices were no bigger
around than the eraser at the end of a pencil and consequently difficult to see, they didn't look like
they had been made out of worms. Still, Judy politely declined even as Nick enthusiastically took his
plate, delicately gripping the fork he had been offered between two of his claws.
When the three other mammals had been served, Fru Fru looked up at Judy even as she cut apart her own slice and shoveled pieces into her mouth. "So whaddaya want to know, Agent Hopps?" she asked.

As Judy had waited with Nick for Fru Fru and Angelo to arrive at the table, she had thought on how best to phrase her questions, and she started with the first one. "There's been a series of murders," she began carefully, "They look like someone from your father's gang might be responsible. I was—"

Before she could get another word out, Angelo had snorted, a tiny delicate sound that nonetheless interrupted her train of thought. "It ain't her fadder," he said, and his words were both dismissive and firm.

He gave a start and looked at his wife as though he had said something he shouldn't have out of fear of upsetting her. "At leastwise... Ever since, you know..." his words trailed off awkwardly, but Fru Fru patted his arm, and then spoke.

"'s OK," she said gently, and then looked up at Judy, "Daddy had an apoplexy, 'bout a month after they locked 'im up. He..."

Judy could see Fru Fru's throat bob as the shrew swallowed before continuing, her voice wavering, "He don't talk no more. Can't talk no more, can't so much as lift a spoon."

That was an entirely new piece of information for Judy, and from the way that Nick sharply turned his full attention to Fru Fru she saw that it was just as new to him, too. She supposed that, if she had needed any confirmation that he hadn't had any contact with the gang, that was it. Nick was a good actor, she had seen, but she didn't think even he could summon up that flicker of emotion that had run across his face at will, a look that somehow blended surprise and horror with regret and pleasure before it vanished again nearly as quickly as it had come. "I'm sorry," Nick said, his voice low.

Fru Fru had missed the look digging a handkerchief out of a pocket of her little dress and dabbing at her eyes. "Look at me, bawlin'. It's the baby," she said, rubbing her swollen belly with the other paw before Angelo interlaced his fingers into it.

Perhaps Fru Fru was right—Judy's own mother had born all of the pregnancies that Judy could recall acting no differently from how she normally did, at least until the kits were almost due. Bonnie Hopps had sometimes burst into tears at the slightest thing, from a jigsaw puzzle that was missing a piece to a dropped and broken plate. But those had been minor things, and Judy thought that Fru Fru's father becoming incapacitated was reason enough. She couldn't imagine how she would react, if it was her father who had been reduced to a shell of his normal blustery cheer, and she suddenly wished that the letters from her parents had survived the fire at her apartment. She still had the rejection letter, tucked away in her purse, but that was worthless compared to those little expressions of familial love.

Judy swallowed herself, a lump having developed in her own throat. "You don't have to apologize," she said, "I can't imagine how difficult this must be for you."

Fru Fru had put away her handkerchief and gave one final sniff. "It's his own fault," she said, "'Puttin' himself in an early grave, runnin' that awful gang. I never knew nothin' about it, not 'til the police took him away."

Somehow, Judy didn't think that Fru Fru believed her own rationalization. Perhaps Mr. Big never would have had an apoplexy if he had never formed the Zootopia Outfit, but perhaps it had only been a matter of time before something in his brain had burst like an old balloon, a ticking bomb no one had known was there. Fru Fru apparently wasn't done talking, and she continued. "He always
said he was still in the import business. Guess *that* was the truth."

Her smile was ghastly, a bitter grimace, but she plunged onward. "I shoulda known sooner. All those business partners lookin’ like street thugs and bimbos, the whole awful lot of ‘em."

She paused briefly and quickly turned to Nick. "'Cept you, Nicky."

Nick briefly inclined his head, but he didn't seem to have a smart remark about his own toughness. "It's not your fault," he said quietly, "He... We hid it from you. He wanted it that way."

Fru Fru waved an arm dismissively. "But I'm just ramblin'," Fru Fru said, looking at Judy again, "What'd ya want to ask?"

"Do you remember Thomas Carajou?" Judy asked.

"Carajou?" Fru Fru asked, seeming to think at the name, "Wolverine, ain't he? Real ugly fella—face like someone tried to cut it off once?"

"That's him," Nick said, smiling a little at the frank, but certainly accurate, description.

"Daddy said he was a driver," Fru Fru said with a shrug, "Never saw 'im much."

Judy supposed that Carajou might have been a driver, at least in the sense that he had driven mammals out to the middle of nowhere to make them dig their own shallow graves, but she couldn't help but be a little disappointed at Fru Fru's answer. "You wouldn't happen to remember where he lives, would you?" she asked, not holding out much hope for a positive response.

It was something of a long shot; although the Bureau had tried to keep tabs on Thomas Carajou, he didn't have anything like a permanent address. He had bounced from hotel to hotel, sometimes staying for as long as a week, sometimes for less than a day. There didn't appear to be any rhyme or reason to it either—he might stay at the same hotel that oil barons and railroad tycoons favored one day, then move on to the worst flophouse in the city near the slaughterhouses. Although he was a wolverine, he hadn't seemed to have any preference for Tundra Town either, and he moved freely between the city's various districts without care or any kind of obvious pattern. If he did have a permanent address, the Bureau had never learned where it was. Perhaps it was what had kept him alive for so long until his luck had at last run out, some sort of low brutal cunning and intuition to avoid routine or complacency.

As a result, Judy was unsurprised when Fru Fru shook her head no. "We've taken up enough of your time," Judy said, repressing a sigh, "Thank you for the help, though."

"And the gabagool," Nick added cheerfully, his plate completely empty.

"Any time ya drop by the ol' neighborhood, feel free to call," Angelo said.

Considering the sign that was posted on the gate to their little community, Judy doubted very much that Nick would ever drop by again, but whether Angelo was being sincere or it was simply a polite fiction, she couldn't tell. Certainly neither one of the shrews seemed to have any qualms about a predator in their district, but from the cries of panic she had heard on the way to their house, she doubted that the same was true of their neighbors. Judy supposed Nick was thinking along the same lines, but he didn't show any sign of it, simply dropping a wink in Angelo's direction. "Certainly," he said, "You take good care of Fru Fru now, you hear?"

"Oh, he does," Fru Fru said fondly, placing an arm across her husband's shoulder in a sort of sideways hug.
"Angelo's a defense attorney," she added proudly, "Best one in the whole city."

Nick smiled at that. "I'll keep that in mind," he said.

"You take care yourself, Nicky," Fru Fru said, seeming to worry that his words were something more than a joke.

The little shrew then turned to look up at Judy. "You too, Judy. Keep an eye on this fella for me."

"I will," Judy promised, and she made her way back to the gravel path with Nick in tow.

"So what now, Carrots?" Nick asked once they had started walking towards the gate out of the district.

Judy had been considering their next move, and while she was disappointed that Fru Fru hadn't been able to provide much information, she by no means considered it a wasted trip. It didn't seem likely that Mr. Big could have been plotting from his jail cell, if what Fru Fru said was true, but then again maybe he was only pretending to be incapacitated. There were a thousand reasons why he might do that—maybe he was ashamed of his daughter seeing him locked up, maybe he was angling for an early release, maybe it was a trick to get the police to relax their guard. She pushed the thoughts away, thinking that there was no point on dwelling on it at the moment. She thought it might still be worth it to visit Mr. Big, but she thought maybe that should be a solo trip. If there was any chance that the shrew did retain his mental faculties, she thought she owed it to Nick to keep him out of his sight. Besides, she thought it was odd that none of the official records she had read said anything about Mr. Big's disability, and she wondered why that was.

There were still several names on the list that Mr. Otterton had provided, but she thought that she wanted to be careful about approaching any of them, too. She recognized the names, and all of them had been involved with Mr. Big's bootlegging operation quite deeply. What we—and Judy was briefly surprised that she had started thinking of the investigation in that sense, we instead of I—What we need are more details about how Carajou was murdered. The solution was obvious, and she turned to Nick as he unlatched the gate out of Little Rodentia, a question she was sure she already knew the answer to on her lips. "Do you know how to get to the coroner's office?"

"Absolutely," Nick said, as she had hoped, "Time to visit Mr. Carajou?"

Judy nodded. "Time to visit Mr. Carajou."

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "Just a Memory," comes from a 1927 song by Paul Whiteman. It seemed appropriate to me for Fru Fru's reminiscing.

Adirondack style architecture and furniture was fairly popular for the well-to-do in the early 20th century; it was supposed to look rustic and old-fashioned, but it was actually fairly expensive. The description of the picnic table is accurate to this, as the table is clearly well-made despite the attempt to make it look rough.

Randall Steervens is a reference to Randall Stephens, a similar phantom referenced in the *Shawshank Redemption*, which is an excellent movie and an excellent novella under the longer title of *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*. I definitely recommend both reading and watching it; while there are a number of differences between the two (as a minor one, Randall Stephens is called Peter Stephens in the novella), I think both do a great job of taking advantage of their respective
mediums to tell the story.

Apoplexy is a now somewhat outdated expression for a stroke. Strokes, which occur when there's not enough blood flowing to the brain, can vary quite widely in their effect. In the modern era, prompt treatment significantly improves the chances of recovery, but strokes can be fatal or cause permanent impairment, such as paralysis or the loss of mental functions. In the real world, Al Capone died in 1947 of a heart attack following a stroke, but he spent the years prior to his death with significantly reduced mental capacity as the result of neurosyphilis and the long term effects of his drug addiction. At the time, syphilis was completely untreatable, as antibiotics weren't discovered until 1929 and while they first saw widespread use in 1942, it wasn't until 1945 that they became widely available outside the Allied military forces. Worse, while penicillin can cure neurosyphilis, it can't reverse the brain damage caused by the disease, and by 1945 it was already far too late for Al Capone.

Bimbo is a word that has definitely changed in meaning since the 1920s. Then, it was a slang term for an unintelligent but tough man, as compared to its modern meaning of an attractive but stupid woman. It seems that the change in usage started in the late 1920s, going through a period where it could refer to stupid men or women, before it started being used exclusively to refer to women and picked up the additional part of being attractive as well as stupid. Under either definition, though, Fru Fru is right that it doesn't describe Nick.

As wolverines are native to the northern reaches of the world, it makes sense to assume that one might prefer to stay in the artificially cold district of Tundra Town, but that apparently was not the case for Carajou. The word flophouse as a term for an extremely cheap hotel dates to the beginning of the 20th century, and in the 1920s you could find some pretty dire ones.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to hear what you thought if you're inclined to comment.
The streets of the city had started to fill with the lunchtime traffic, pedestrians walking at a rapid pace with their heads down, jockeying and elbowing each other to keep moving forward and cars filling the air with the drone of their engines. It made even the wider streets seem cramped, and Judy had to keep an eye out to avoid hitting anyone darting for a gap between the cars. The Buchatti protested the low speed at which they crawled forward, too, and Judy found herself constantly on and off the clutch to keep it from stalling. It did mean, though, that it was actually possible to hold a conversation, as the normal roar of the Buchatti’s engine wasn’t more than a sullen grumble as she eased the car forward. Turning to Nick, Judy asked, "Do you think Mr. Big really is, you know...

Nick had been silent ever since she had asked him if he knew how to get to the coroner's office, except for the few times he'd had to call out directions. Even as she asked him the question, his attention seemed to have been caught by a shouting match in the street between the driver of a brand new Model A and a pushcart merchant. The gleaming chrome of the Furd's front bumper was dented, and the pushcart was overturned, scattering cabbages across the dirty street where most had been run over by cars or stepped on by careless pedestrians. The pushcart merchant, a stocky little goat, was pointing a hoof and screaming at the driver of the Furd, a well-to-do looking beaver who appeared equally upset as he gesticulated at his car, while a horse in the uniform of a beat cop with a look of long suffering on his face kept them apart. "Hmm?" Nick said distractedly, before tearing himself away from watching the spectacle to turn and look at Judy, "She must think so, at least. It'd be easy enough to check."

Judy nodded, but didn't say anything more. She had the feeling that, having caught his attention, he'd keep talking if she let him, and after a brief pause he continued. "It's hard to picture him as an invalid, you know," Nick said thoughtfully, "It didn't matter that he was about three inches tall, he just had this sort of... presence."

Judy wondered what the diminutive crime boss had been like at his peak and Nick seemed to gather his thoughts a moment before he continued. "I don't think he ever read a book all the way through in his life, but he was smart in his own way. He told me, once, 'Why should I know what compound interest is? You know that, and you know it for me.'"

Consciously or not, Nick had gone into what must have been an imitation of Mr. Big's voice, which was deeper than his own but thicker somehow, almost nasal. "That was before he started jumping at shadows, though."

Judy had intended to let him keep speaking, but a question sprang to mind that suddenly seemed important in light of what Nick had just said. "And he never knew that you made Randall Steervens up?"

Nick smiled a little at that. "Not a chance, Agent Carrots. You're talking to a master of the craft, remember?"

The smile flew away as quickly as it had arrived. "Of course, had I tried a few years later, he probably would have. He was a lot more trusting, back when we first met. By '25, he was going a bit crazy with the tests of loyalty."

Judy remembered her own horror at learning that Mr. Big had asked Nick to turn a skunk into a rug for failing to pay protection money as proof that Nick was loyal to the Zootopia Outfit, and had to repress a shudder. There was no telling what other acts the shrew had demanded of those mammals at the heart of his organization, and Judy fumbled to change the topic when she saw the brooding
look going across Nick's face. "And you're sure that Fru Fru never knew about what her father did?"

Nick shrugged at the question. "Why should she have? He did love her, you know, and he wanted to
keep his little princess in her little fairy-tale fantasy. She had everything she could have ever wanted.
She shopped at the best stores, ate at the best restaurants... If it ever occurred to her to wonder where
it all really came from, I'm sure the thought didn't last long. It'd surprise you what mammals can
avoid thinking about."

Judy got the feeling that Nick wasn't just talking about Fru Fru; what thoughts had he squashed
while in service to Mr. Big? Before Mr. Big had asked Nick to cross a line that the fox refused to,
what had Nick chosen to ignore? With a start, Judy realized she had been guilty of something not too
much different. She had never hated predators, or feared them the way that her father did, but how
many instances of prejudice or bigotry had simply escaped her notice because she was more
concerned about her own struggle to become a cop despite being a bunny? Even putting it like that,
though, was a lot nobler than the simple truth of it, though. She had been more concerned with
herself, to the point of completely ignoring the danger she was pulling Nick into, and once again she
felt a creeping sense of shame. "It might not, you know," she said quietly, and Nick nodded.

"I suppose not," he said, and that was the last that either of them spoke, aside from Nick calling out
directions, until they reached the coroner's office.

The coroner's office was in an incongruously nice building, particularly in comparison to the
Bureau's office. It was two stories tall, with simple decorations of granite surrounding the many large
frosted windows that broke up its sides. A thick slab of marble set in the ground near the wide front
doors had "Zootopia Medical Examiner" engraved on it, framed on one side by a brass plaque with
the city's seal and on the other with a brass plaque showing a caduceus.

Inside, the building was entirely modern, and almost sterile in how clean it was. The linoleum floor,
which bore a checkered white and green pattern, didn't have so much as a single smudge or scuff that
Judy could see, and even the air had a slight antiseptic smell to it. There were a few wooden benches
of various heights arranged along one wall, but there weren't any mammals waiting at the moment.
Even the reception desk, which was set into the opposite wall with a glass partition between it and
the main waiting area, was empty. A small type-written sign on the glass read, "Please ring bell,"
next to another larger sign that read "SMOKING IN SMOKING ROOM ONLY," with the word
"ONLY" underlined twice and an arrow drawn to point down the hall. Judy was glad that Nick had
come along; the desk was too tall for her to easily reach over, and she would have had to jump to hit
the button. He gave it two quick presses, and Judy could hear an electric buzz coming from
somewhere further in the building.

As they waited for someone to show up, Nick looked around as he stepped back from the desk. "I
never liked this place," he said, distaste obvious in his voice.

"You've been here before?" Judy asked, the words out of her mouth before she realized how stupid a
question it was in response to what he had said.

He gave her a sidelong look instead of pointing that out, though, and said, "Once. It might have been
twice, if it wasn't for the war."

Judy was thankfully spared having to come up to a response by the arrival of the receptionist, whose
appearance completely matched everything else she had seen so far in the office. There must have
been a series of steps behind the reception desk, because Judy first saw only the top of her head
before the rest of her head and part of her torso became visible as she slid open a piece of glass in the
partition that ran along the top of the desk. The receptionist was a woodchuck somewhere in her late
middle age, her brown fur gone mostly gray. However, her dress was so white that it almost seemed
to glow with its own inner light, and the nurse's watch that was pinned to it reflected brilliant spots
from the harsh glare of the overhead lights. A little paper hat sat primly atop her head, and she looked
down at Judy with a bored expression. "How may I help you?" she asked, her voice utterly bland.

"I'd like to speak with the coroner about a mammal who should have come in the other day. His
name was Thomas Carajou."

"One moment," the receptionist said, and reaching down pulled up a thickly bound book that she
flipped through.

When she reached the page she was looking for, her expression at last changed. She frowned,
making the little lines in her lips stand out against the dull red of her lipstick. "You're not related to
him," she said, having apparently read in whatever file she had been looking at that Carajou was a
wolverine and drawing the obvious conclusion, "You can't see him if you're not family."

"Actually," Judy said, drawing herself up as she reached into her purse and dug out her badge to
show it to the receptionist, "I'm a prohibition agent. Could you—"

"No you're not," the woodchuck cut her off, then waved her paw dismissively, "Go make your little
jokes somewhere else."

"Excuse me," Judy replied, not moving from where she stood, her badge still outstretched before her,
"But this is an official investigation and—"

"Beat it before I call the police," the woodchuck said with a scowl, and moved to shut the sliding
piece of glass dividing her desk from the rest of the room.

Judy crossed her arms. "Go ahead," she said, trying to keep her expression neutral, "But it won't be
us that they arrest, will it Nick?"

The woodchuck apparently hadn't paid the fox any attention, as she gave a little start of surprise as he
leaned over the desk, his muzzle less than an inch from the sliding partition. He seemed to
effortlessly fall into the role that Judy had set him up for, nodding with a sympathetic expression on
his face. "That's right, Agent Hopps. It's a crime to interfere with a Bureau of Prohibition
investigation, you know. Obstruction of justice and all that."

"If she's a prohi, what's that make you, fox? The district attorney?"

"No, that's still good ol' Bobby Cowe, isn't it?"

"He is," Judy nodded, "He's looking for another win, too."

"Oh, maybe it doesn't matter that's someone's killing off gangsters. Good riddance, right?" Nick said,
continuing before the woodchuck had the chance to answer, "But it does matter who's killing them,
doesn't it?"

"Absolutely," Judy said, "So let's make sure that we've got it straight, Mrs...?"

Judy deliberately trailed off, and the woodchuck grudgingly answered, "Monax."

"Mrs. Monax," Judy said, "All we want is to talk to the coroner and get some more information
about Carajou. That won't be a problem, will it?"
Mrs. Monax hesitated, her eyes flickering back and forth between Nick and Judy, before Nick spoke again. "You could also think about the kind of fox a prohi might take with her," he said, and while he said it blandly enough and with his expression perfectly neutral, the woodchuck swallowed heavily and shook her head.

"No problem, Agent," she said, and her tone was quite a bit more respectful, "Down the stairs at the end of the hall. I'll let Dr. Tolmie know you're on your way."

"Thank you," Judy said, and then started walking in the direction that the woodchuck had indicated, Nick just a moment behind her.

They found Dr. Tolmie's office easily enough; it was the first door they came across in the basement, and it had his name and the title of Chief Medical Examiner painted onto the glass of the door. His office was a sort of barely controlled chaos, with stacks of paperwork overflowing his sturdy desk to pile across the floor, and he had an odd assortment of items that he used as paperweights to keep a decrepit little fan from blowing everything around. A plaster cast of the lower jaw of some unidentified predator grinned atop one stack, while a rusty hammer and a brick topped others. The walls of the small office were covered with medical illustrations, some of which had notes or numbers scribbled on them in pencil, and half-visible behind an illustration of a ruminant's digestive system that hung crookedly from two tacks and blew back and forth in the stuttering breeze of the fan was a cross-stitch which read, "The squirrel that you kill in jest dies in earnest," above the initials HDT.

Dr. Tolmie himself was a wombat somewhere in his mid-fifties, although he seemed to have the energy of a much younger mammal. After Judy had introduced herself and Nick (referring to him as a consultant after a moment's hesitation as to how to describe him) and explained their reason for coming, Tolmie had rubbed his paws together briskly. "Thomas Carajou, you say?" he said.

Tolmie's beady brown eyes were magnified nearly to the size of saucers behind his thick glasses, and the fur atop his head stuck out in all directions. The reason for it became apparent as he ran one paw between his widely spaced ears, mussing it up even further. "Yes, I've done the autopsy. Peculiar, you know, very peculiar. Please, come along, you can see for yourself."

Without waiting for a response he was already waddling out of the room as fast as his little legs could take him, and they hurried after him further down the hall before he opened a door labeled "Autopsy Room #3." The basement, and Tolmie's office, had both been somewhat cool, but the autopsy room was positively cold; Judy thought that if the temperature had been even a degree lower, she would have been able to see her breath. It didn't seem to bother Tolmie, who was wearing a cable-knit sweater over a patched pair of slacks, and he quickly moved to a series of what looked like enormous metal cabinets set into one of the walls before pulling one open. There was a sudden blast of cold air as the drawer opened, revealing Thomas Carajou's body under a cloth on a metal slab. Judy noticed Nick becoming conspicuously interested in the rest of the room, turning around to take in the other furnishings, which were all centered on a massive table with a scale built into it and a massive arc lamp on a telescoping arm built into the ceiling, as Tolmie enthusiastically explained his findings to her.

"The cause of death was the broken neck; there's absolutely no doubt of that," Tolmie said, pointing out the neck as he pulled the cloth back down to Carajou's waist.

Judy had seen the scars on Carajou's head, particularly the missing part of his ear and the enormous scar that twisted one side of his mouth up. However, what hadn't been visible under his natty suit were the other scars that covered his body. It was clear that the wolverine had lived a hard life, as he must have had dozens of scars of all different types. There was a massive jagged scar that ran up his
left arm, and his chest was covered with burn scars where the fur had never grown back. There were puckered scars that looked like he had been hit by buckshot, and countless others that looked like they had been inflicted by slashes with knives. Tolmie had cut Carajou's chest open with an enormous Y-shaped incision, but even that hardly looked out of place among the other older wounds. "What about where he was hit in the chest?" Judy asked.

"Stabbed," Tolmie replied, "He was stabbed twice before his neck was broken. These wounds would have killed him on their own, I'm sure, and they're what's the most peculiar. Look at this one."

Judy looked at the wound that the wombat was pointing out, which didn't look too unusual to her admittedly untrained eye, until Tolmie hustled off and returned with a slim dowel, which he inserted into the wound. It sank in quite a bit further than Judy would have guessed, and when Tolmie pulled it out he was beaming. "Nearly twenty inches deep, and quite slim, I should say, no more than an inch and a half around at the thickest. Somewhat tapered, I think."

"Like a bayonet?" Judy suggested.

"Possible, possible," Tolmie said agreeably, "But not one from the Great War, no. Those wouldn't be nearly the right shape, to say nothing of the length. This was something like a stiletto, or perhaps a very large ice pick. And did you notice the angle? Whoever did this to him stabbed up into his torso, with quite a bit of strength. Why, this other wound here goes all the way through his back."

"So what kind of mammal are we looking for?" Judy asked.

She had her own thoughts, but wondered what Tolmie would say. The doctor ran a paw across the top of his head again, humming to himself and bouncing a little on the pads of his feet as he considered the question. "I would guess they were no shorter than Carajou himself to be able to stab him like this and break his neck. They must have been terrifically strong, too, and whatever they stabbed him with was sharper than a needle, if you see how cleanly it punctured the skin."

Judy mulled it over thoughtfully. "Is there anything else you think is important?"

Tolmie shrugged. "Hmm, important, important... Nothing that I can think of in the body itself. His last meal was rotgut moonshine, if that matters. I suppose you'd be interested in his personal effects?"

"Yes, please," Judy said.

It was only after Tolmie had slid Carajou's body back into cold storage and retrieved his personal effects that Nick finally turned around and seemed to start paying attention again. Judy got the strong feeling that he hadn't particularly wanted to look at the corpse, although she couldn't guess if that was because it was a corpse in general or if it was specifically because it was Carajou.

Carajou's personal effects didn't even come close to filling the scratched and dented metal bin that they had been put into, which Tolmie left with them saying he'd be in his office if they needed him again. A little cardboard box of Den-Den gave off a licorice aroma that didn't even come close to overpowering the powerful antiseptic scent of the autopsy room, but instead just made the two smells mingle unpleasantly. Carajou had owned a cheap switchblade; the nickel plating was almost completely worn off and the blade was wobbly and spotted with rust. There was also a plain white matchbook, a cheap key on a ring with a tarnished brass disc that had the number 114 engraved on it, and an envelope stained rusty brown with Carajou's blood that had three thousand dollars in crisp hundred-dollar bills in it.

Judy picked up the key and examined it closely, but while it seemed pretty clear to her that it had come from a hotel, there was nothing that indicated what hotel. Other than what Judy assumed was
the room number engraved on one side of the brass disc connected to the key ring, there was nothing on the disc; the other side of it was completely blank. If 114 was the room number, that didn't do much to limit the hotels that it could have come from. Judy supposed that it meant the hotel probably had at least two floors, assuming the first 1 was the floor number, but there had to be dozens of hotels either in the city or on its outskirts that fit that description. As she carefully set the key aside, she thought all that she could guess for sure was that it hadn't come from a ritzy hotel, given how cheap the key felt.

While she had been examining the key, Nick had been rifling through the envelope full of cash, which he did with a slight frown on his muzzle. "The serial numbers are sequential," he said, "These are fresh from a bank."

He gave the envelope to Judy, and she saw that he was right. Aside from the blood stains on some of the outer bills, they looked immaculate, as if they had been freshly printed, and the serial numbers were indeed sequential. Judy thought about what that implied. "So whoever gave it to Carajou just withdrew three thousand dollars and gave it to him?"

Nick nodded. "Or he took it out of the bank himself, but I'd guess someone paid him, don't you think?"

As Judy recalled, when she had seen Carajou in the Thief of the Night, her first thought was that he was probably there to either get an assignment or get paid for one, and it looked like she had been right. Judy tried to imagine what must have led up to the murder, and the club filled her imagination. She could hear the sounds of Purrschwin that the pale little raccoon on the piano had filled the room with, and smell the mixture of cigarettes and cheap perfume and cologne in the air. Carajou stood out in sharp relief in her imagination, the other mammals in the club receding into an indistinct haze, as she pictured him across the room from where she sat.

Judy pictured a mammal approaching him, a mammal whose size and species shifted and jumbled as she went through the possibilities in her mind. Carajou had been waiting for someone in the Thief of the Night, sipping at his drink. He had received an envelope full of money, and then what? Had the murderer been the same mammal who paid him, taking advantage of Carajou's brief vulnerability while he tucked the envelope into the inside of his suit jacket? She imagined it playing out, Carajou's guard briefly relaxed before the indistinct assailant pulled something long and sharp from their coat and thrust it upwards into Carajou's chest, pulling it out and stabbing him once more before grabbing his neck and snapping it.

Judy frowned. Had they dropped the weapon first? Had they put it away before breaking his neck? Why hadn't Carajou called out? The music in the club hadn't been too loud, and surely someone would have heard him if he screamed even if it had been too late to save his life. They'd have to go back to the crime scene to look at it again or perhaps to the police station to question the officers who had been on the scene.

While she had been thinking, Judy had idly picked up the matchbook and rolled it through her fingers before opening it. There was absolutely nothing printed on the outside of the matchbook, but when she opened it Judy noticed that only a single match was missing and there was something scrawled in pencil on the inside flap: "Blind Tiger 47 8th St." "What do you make of this?" she asked, showing Nick the matchbook, "Is that Carajou's writing?"

The writing still looked sharp, without any smudges, and whoever wrote it must have done so recently. "I think so," Nick replied, "Looks like an address, doesn't it?"

It did. It could have been where Carajou had been before his death, or it might have been for an appointment he had never been able to make. Judy nodded. "Have you ever heard of the Blind
Tiger?"

Nick shrugged, and then grinned. "It'll be new for the both of us, Carrots."

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "Matchbox Blues," comes from a 1927 song by Blind Lemon Jefferson, and was chosen in reference to the matchbook that appears in this chapter.

The Model A Ford was new to the market for 1927, and while it never sold as many cars as the Model T, it was still a definite success that helped define the look of Ford cars for years to come. Vendors selling produce off of pushcarts were relatively common in the early part of the twentieth century before the rise of supermarkets, and the choice of cabbages is a deliberate nod to *Avatar.*

A nurse's watch is a style of watch that typically hangs from a short chain and pins or clips to the front of a shirt, and is designed so that the face is right-side up if you look down at it. They were much more common in the past for nurses to use daily than they are now, but they are still sometimes given to new nurses as a graduation gift. The presence of the watch, and the way the receptionist is dressed, is intended to imply that she is a nurse; it was very common in the early 20th century for nurses to have to work extremely long hours and do just about any task requested of them. Mrs. Monax's name comes from a Native American word for the groundhog meaning "digger" which is also part of its scientific name, *Marmota monax.* Whether or not Judy could actually have Mrs. Monax arrested for obstruction of justice, I think it is worth remembering that, while Nick has it worse as a predator, Judy's really not getting taken seriously by some of the mammals in official positions that they run across. Besides, I think this scene shows that they really are starting to work together pretty well.

In real life, Chicago is located in Cook County, Illinois, and the Cook County State's Attorney functions as the District Attorney for the city. In the 1920s, Robert Crowe held this office, hence the mild pun I used in this chapter. Robert Crowe made a name for himself by successfully prosecuting Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, two wealthy university students who committed increasingly serious crimes until they kidnapped and murdered a 14 year old because they thought that they were intellectually superior to most other people and were trying to commit the perfect crime to show that they couldn't be caught. Despite a defense by Clarence Darrow, the lawyer probably best known for his role in defending teacher John Scopes in the Scopes "Monkey" Trial, the pair received life sentences, although they did escape the death penalty.

Any kind of deal like the one that Nick arranged in the backstory of this story would have required the input of the state's attorney, so it is quite plausible that Nick could know him, although certainly not with the familiarity that he implies.

Dr. Tolmie's name is a reference to the Australian town of Tolmie, which was originally called Wombat before it was renamed in 1879. The quote "The squirrel that you kill in jest dies in earnest," is by Henry David Thoreau, the American author and philosopher, and seems like the sort of thing that's a good sign as far as a medical examiner goes. Certainly you'd hope that anyone who likes the quote enough to frame it also cares about doing their job thoroughly and to the best of their ability for every corpse that comes their way.

The office of the medical examiner is as true to actual early 20th century ones as I could make it; the tools available now are much more advanced, but autopsies haven't changed too much over the past hundred years. Fluorescent lamps, which are now more or less ubiquitous in offices, weren't commercially viable until the 1930s, so the use of carbon arc lamps is period appropriate for the 1920s. Arc lamps produce a high intensity white light, and were commonly used to light movie sets.
and as searchlights. It's been suggested that one of the reasons sunglasses started becoming popular in the 1920s is because actors wore them on set when not filming to protect their eyes against the harsh light of arc lamps and to hide the redness of their eyes that the light caused. People then followed the trend, and sunglasses exploded in popularity.

Den-Den is a weak pun on Sen-Sen, a licorice-scented breath freshener, and den as in an animal's den. Sen-Sen was quite popular during Prohibition as a way of covering up the scent of alcohol on a person's breath, as well as covering up the scent of cigarettes, but it's no longer made. Sen-Sen is also referenced in my favorite song from the musical *The Music Man*, "Y'a Got Trouble," when the con artist Harold Hill claims, in musical verse, that the children of River City will brag to each other about using Sen-Sen to cover the scent of cigarettes if the terrible trouble posed to River City by a pool table isn't addressed. As an aside, Nick would make a great Harold Hill; I could see him traveling around and selling instruments and uniforms to unsuspecting parents. Or, maybe, monorails if you go with the episode of the Simpsons inspired by *The Music Man*. Someone had to sell Zootopia their monorail, right?

Switchblades have existed since the 19th century, and were relatively common in the 1920s. In the 1950s the knives started being seen as a symbol of gangs and the corruption of youths, which in the US led to the Switchblade Knife Act of 1958 that effectively banned them, although there's enough wiggle room that they remain legal in some states depending on state law.

Noting that a hotel wasn't ritzy is a period appropriate use of slang, and the term actually comes from a hotel; the Ritz Hotel was extremely high class, and ritzy is derived from that name.

Thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought if you'd like to leave a comment.
Dirty Hands! Dirty Face!

Judy desperately wanted to immediately set off for the address on the matchbook, but she forced herself to return everything but the key to Dr. Tolmie. Although the wombat had been surprisingly nonchalant about leaving her with a small fortune in blood-stained cash, she wanted to be sure that everything went through the proper channels.

As Tolmie had promised, he was in his office, poring over a thick file full of glossy black and white photographs while he took notes on a small steno pad. Tolmie paused from his work to rifle through the contents of the battered metal bin. "Well, I suppose that key'll do more good out there," the doctor remarked as he laboriously cataloged the other items.

While trying to force herself not to tap her foot in impatience at how slowly he went about it, Judy looked around the office at the medical illustrations on the walls. There was an impressive variety to them, covering everything from the teeth of a mouse to the organs of a grizzly bear. There was one poster, though, that caught her eye, and she stared at it, frowning. It showed, in a number of separate illustrations, the growth of a male deer's antlers from when the buds began forming in spring through their development of tines throughout the summer, and it was as though something unlocked in her mind. The word was past her lips before she was even consciously aware of it. "Horns."

Dr. Tolmie and Nick both cocked their heads curiously at her, the gesture oddly mirrored across the wombat and the fox. "Horns!" Judy repeated, the thought suddenly clear, "What if Carajou wasn't stabbed? What if he was gored?"

A look of realization spread across Nick's face, and Judy saw that he had realized what she had. The wounds to Carajou's torso were bizarre, and an ice pick or a stiletto didn't make as much sense as a pair of horns, which could have inflicted the wounds simultaneously. "Well," Dr. Tolmie said, pulling off his glasses to polish the lenses fussily, "It's possible, I suppose, certainly possible, but in this situation I hardly think it likely."

He put his glasses back on and took on an almost lecturing tone. "You were at the club when Carajou was murdered, were you not, Agent Hopps?"

"I was," Judy said, trying to control her excitement.

"And did you see anyone whose head was covered with blood?"

"I... No," Judy admitted, realizing what he was getting at.

She had seen the bloodstain beneath Carajou's chair, which had been quite large even after what couldn't have been more than a few minutes. If some horned mammal really had gored Carajou, there was no way they could have avoided getting absolutely covered in blood, which would have made it a bit difficult for them to slip away unnoticed. "They could have toweled off, or covered their head," Nick offered.

"Again, possible, but look at the angle of the wound. Carajou was sitting when he was stabbed. Every mammal I know of—and I would say I know most—with horns long enough to inflict these wounds would be entirely too tall to catch him in the torso."

"They could have been on all fours," Judy said slowly, thinking it through.

She had to agree with Dr. Tolmie that every mammal she could think of with horns was much too tall to able to gore Carajou if he was sitting and they were standing, but if they were on all fours it
made perfect sense. The horns of an ibex, and every other mammal with long horns that Judy could think of, had horns that swept backwards from their head, which meant that to gore someone they would have had to have lowered their head to bring the horns forward. It would have been awkward standing, but on all fours it might have been possible.

Dr. Tolmie's smile was kindly. "I have been a medical examiner for, let me think, almost twenty years now, and in all that time I've never seen wounds like this from a mammal being gored. I have seen wounds inflicted by horns, certainly so, but I've never seen one deeper than perhaps six inches. I think it is far more likely that you are looking for a mammal with a weapon beyond what nature gave them."

The wombat shrugged. "Of course, should you find a mammal you suspect, I would happily measure the distance between their horns. If you are right, I think their guilt could be proven quite neatly."

Judy could tell that the medical examiner was still skeptical of her theory, but if she was right there would be a way to prove the guilt of the murderer. They might be able to wash their horns off and eliminate all traces of blood, but they couldn't change how far apart their horns were, which would match up perfectly with the wounds in Carajou's torso. "It'd certainly be one for the papers," he added, with a cheerfulness that was almost unseemly, "Anything else I can help you with, before you go?"

Judy thanked Dr. Tolmie and made her way back up the stairs, Nick a step behind her. "Even if Tolmie is right, all that changes is where the blood would be," Nick said thoughtfully, "If the murderer didn't get blood on their head, they must have gotten it on their paws. Or hooves, whatever they have."

Judy frowned, not that Nick could see it. "It'd be a lot easier to hide bloody paws—"

"Or hooves," Nick interjected, and she nodded to concede the point.

Whatever was at the end of the murderer's arms, they could have easily hidden the bloodstains by stuffing them into the pockets of their coat. The club had been cold enough that just about every male mammal there, except the ones adapted to low temperatures, had left their coats on, and for quite a few of the female mammals practicality had won out over the desire to show off their dresses. "But how did they stab Carajou twice and then break his neck before he could say anything?"

They had made their way out of the lobby, and were walking side by side when Nick offered a suggestion. "Maybe it was an elephant. They could have had an ice pick in each paw and then broken Carajou's neck with their trunk."

Judy shook her head. "I would have remembered an elephant in the room," she said.

Most of the mammals in the Thief of the Night had been around her size; the bar and ceiling would have both been awkwardly low for an elephant, and one would have certainly stuck out trying to fit in. The two officers who had shown up to the scene of the crime, a rhinoceros and a hippopotamus, hadn't been able to stand up straight, and as tall as they were they were still shorter than any elephant Judy had ever seen. "Then maybe there were two mammals," Nick said.

Judy thought about it. It did make a certain amount of sense, no matter whether her theory or Dr. Tolmie's was correct. One mammal could have either stabbed Carajou with something sharp or gored him with their horns, while an accomplice snapped the wolverine's neck. It would certainly explain how all three injuries could have been inflicted too quickly for Carajou to cry out, but it would mean that they were looking for two mammals, not one. "Maybe," she said, as they got into the Buchatti, "Do you know how to get to 8th Street from here?"
Instead of answering her immediately, Nick turned to look her in the eye. "You know I've been trying to help you, right?"

Judy had no idea where the question had come from, but she couldn't deny that, ever since her apartment building had been set on fire, the fox had certainly seemed to be doing his level best to help her investigation rather than hinder it. Nick's tone as he asked the question was entirely solemn, and there was none of his usual playfulness in either his voice or on his face. "Yes, of course I do," she said, and the words were completely honest.

Nick paused a moment, seeming to consider her response, and Judy plunged onward. "You know, we made a pretty good team back there, with that awful receptionist."

A half-smile made the corner of Nick's mouth twitch upwards. "She was the worst, wasn't she?" he said.

Judy could tell, though, that it wasn't the receptionist that had been on his mind. "But why did you ask? I know you're trying to help."

Hesitantly at first, Judy reached over and put one paw on top of his. Compared to hers, his paw was massive, and she could feel the warmth of his skin underneath the softness of the fur that covered it. Nick turned and looked down at the gesture, but he didn't move his paw out from underneath hers. "I want you to know..." he started, and then paused as he seemed to consider the words, "I want you to know I'm not trying to trick you."

Judy wasn't quite sure what he meant. "About what?"

Nick sighed, and looked out across the long hood of the Buchatti rather than at her. "That address isn't in a very nice neighborhood. Not for predators, and especially not for prey."

"Oh," Judy said quietly, "Are you saying it's too dangerous?"

At that, he turned and gave her a wry grin. "Dangerous' is flashing a badge at Lionheart. The Yards are, well, a roll of the dice. You have a gun in that purse, don't you?"

Judy wasn't sure what had tipped him off; perhaps he had seen it on one of the occasions on which she had opened her purse. "I do," she said.

"Will you use it, if you have to?" he asked, and his focus was intense, his eyes locked directly on hers.

"Only if I have to," Judy replied firmly.

At that, Nick smiled, and pulled his paw out from underneath hers. "Good," he said, "If you act like no one should hassle you, everyone likes to mind their own beeswax."

When Nick broke the contact between them, it felt as though there was something in the air that had faded, and Judy cleared her throat awkwardly. "So how do we drive there?"

"We don't," Nick said, and his usual humor had crept back into his voice, "At least, not unless we want the car to be gone when we get back to it. There's a parking garage near enough, though. We can ankle the rest of it."

"Speaking of which," Judy said, looking down at Nick's injured leg; they had already done a fair amount of walking, and he was still noticeably limping.
He waved a paw airily. "I'll be fine," he said, "Just have to walk it off."

"If you're sure," Judy said doubtfully as she started the car.

Above the fury of the engine as it turned over, she could barely hear his response. "Sure hoping so."

The garage that they had parked the Buchatti in was on the outskirts of the financial district, and the space around it was dominated by the offices of a number of different banks and the turnarounds for the elevated train. It was, for the city at least, relatively clean, and the mammals who bustled about were all well-dressed. As they headed south from the garage, though, that began to change in short order. The buildings got shorter and looked less prestigious; rather than monuments of the city's architecture meant to impress the viewer with the power and wealth of the company that owned it, they were strictly practical and cheap looking. The number of mammals they saw started to drop off, and the normal vague but persistent smell of the city started to become more powerful. Judy's apartment was relatively near the slaughterhouses in the meatpacking district, and she had thought that the smell was bad enough in her neighborhood. As they kept walking into the area that Nick had called the Yards, though, Judy began to realize that what she had dealt with when the wind blew the wrong way was nothing.

The stench became overpowering, and Judy had to breathe through her mouth not to gag on it; it was visceral, and seemed almost as though it should have been visible hanging in the air. The tenements that they passed must have been built within the last twenty or so years, but they were already falling apart, the mortar crumbling and cracked bricks poking out here and there from sagging walls. Some of the buildings had more windows covered with boards than they did filled with glass, and Judy felt as though she was being watched by countless eyes.

There weren't very many mammals out and about, but every single one Judy saw was a predator. There was a thin, tired-looking coyote in a patched dress hanging laundry to dry from a clothesline that ran from the window of her apartment to the railing of a rusting fire escape tilted at a dangerous angle. There was a grimy panther working on a Model T that looked like it could have been one of the first to roll off the assembly line in Deertroit, his cub solemnly giving him the tools that he called for in a raspy voice. As they continued walking, Judy had to repress a gasp at a wolf walking the other way. She couldn't tell how old he was; although he was stooped, as if with age, his fur seemed to be mostly brown. His roughly made clothes were stained and splattered with what Judy assumed to be chicken blood, since he reeked of an awful combination of the harsh ammonia scent of chicken droppings and the iron tang of blood. He did, however, have a bandage wrapped around his right paw that was also bloodstained, and Judy couldn't tell whether or not it was his own blood.

The wolf looked only briefly in her direction, and his eyes seemed dead to her, without even the slightest hint of interest or involvement in the world. He dropped his gaze and continued on, and once he was past them Judy turned and looked at Nick. "Everyone minding their own beeswax includes us, Carrots," he said quietly, but he sighed and continued.

"There aren't too many prey willing to kill and butcher chickens, you know." he asked, "Every morning, there's a line of predators a block long trying to get work at the slaughterhouses. You've never been inside one, have you?"

Judy shook her head. "You wouldn't believe how fast they go," Nick said, "That wolf probably lost a finger—or a thumb, if he's really unlucky—and they fired him."

"Fired him?" Judy repeated, incredulously, "But— Isn't it their fault if he got hurt?"

Nick laughed at that. "You're too pure for this world, aren't you?" he asked.
Judy tried imagining what it would be like, living on the razor's edge of poverty. Back on the family farm, anyone who couldn't work would still have a roof over their head and three square meals a day, whether or not they ever recovered and could keep working. The city suddenly felt impossibly cruel, and it seemed strange that it wasn't the brutal murder she had seen the aftermath of or the attempt on her own life in an arson attempt that triggered the reaction. The idea that a hard-working mammal could be brought so low went against everything she had ever learned and against her own sense of justice.

When Nick saw her ears drooping, he added, "You didn't know."

Remembering what Nick had told her about needing to appear like a mammal that shouldn't be bothered, Judy straightened herself and tried to will her ears to do the same. "I do now, though."

Nick nodded, and they walked the rest of the way in silence, Judy consumed by her own thoughts and sure that Nick was similarly introspective.

The sign outside the club had the words "The Blind Tiger" over an illustration of a tiger's head. The eyes were represented simply as Xs, which to Judy made it look more like the tiger was dead rather than blind, but the stripes on the tiger's forehead came together to form what looked like another X. Judy was perfectly willing to bet that the "XXX" that consequently formed was entirely deliberate.

The building itself looked about as poorly made as the other buildings Judy had seen in the Yard, and the large plate glass window, set behind iron bars, had an ancient-looking crack running through it. The window itself had been soaped up to the extent that Judy couldn't see inside, but she could read the little sign that was tacked to the outside of the splintering door, which indicated that the hours of the club were from 5 PM to 3 AM. "Ah," Nick said dryly, as he looked over her head at the sign, "I guess it's a nightclub."

Judy knocked on the door anyway, but while the cheap door flexed a little under her fist, there was no response from inside the building. There were still several hours to go before the club opened, and she thought of how best to continue the investigation. "We can come back later," she said reluctantly. She hated the idea of making a wasted trip, but loitering in front of the club for several hours didn't seem likely to pay off. "The Thief of the Night is open now, isn't it?"

Nick thoughtfully scratched at his muzzle. "I think so," he said, "Mr. Quill would have that place open for breakfast, if he thought it could make him money."

Judy nodded decisively. "We'll go to the police station first, then back to the Thief of the Night."

She thought that it would be the best way to spend the time until the Blind Tiger opened, and Nick didn't seem to have any objections. "You're the boss," he said cheerfully.

"No," Judy said suddenly, and she offered him her paw, "We're partners in this."

Nick eyed her outstretched paw, one eyebrow quirked questioningly, and Judy kept her paw out. "Partners?" he asked.

"Partners," she repeated, and then couldn't help but add, "I hear just about anyone can be a prohi."

Nick laughed, but he did take her paw and shake it firmly but with a surprising delicacy. "Well, I'm sure it's not official, but whoever you heard that from sounds very clever."

"He has his moments," Judy replied.
Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Dirty Hands! Dirty Face!" comes from a 1928 Al Jolson song. The song is about a mischievous boy who is nonetheless the light of the father's life, but I'm using it in reference to the two possibilities discussed in this chapter about where the mammal who inflicted the wounds to Carajou's torso might get covered with blood. Granted, I've avoided the use of the word "hand" in the story itself, but I figured it was OK for a chapter title.

This chapter has a fair amount of speculation about how the murder was done, which I won't spoil in terms of whom (if anyone) is correct. As Tolmie's dialog indicates, though, my intent is that cases of mammals being gored are relatively rare, which I think makes logical sense for the setting. It seems like all mammals walk upright, and as Judy notes, pretty much all mammals with horns have them swept backwards rather directly pointing forwards. Under those limitations, either lowering the head and charging American football style while on two legs or lowering the head while on all fours strike me as the only two practical ways for a mammal to gore another.

The name of the slum that the nightclub is located in being the Yards is in reference to the Back of the Yards, the common name for the part of Chicago that is now part of the New City community district. In the 1920s, it was dominated by the meatpacking industry of the city, the buildings of which were surrounded by the closely packed slums of the workers. The fire codes of Chicago, put in place after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, didn't do much to get rid of the densely packed and crudely made wooden buildings in some of the poorer parts of the city, but the Back of the Yards had a high enough demand for housing that it was mostly shoddily made brick tenements, since the property owners could squeeze more money out of high-capacity dwellings.

The first parking garage in the United States was in fact built in Chicago in 1918, so the appearance of one here is historically appropriate. The parking garage's location on the outskirts of the city's financial district means that, mapped to Chicago, it would be just beyond the area of the Loop, which got its name in the 19th century from the ring of elevated railways that ran around it. I've kept the geography of Chicago kind of intact, although with a fair number of liberties, and the New City community district and the Loop are relatively close to each other. You definitely couldn't use this story to help guide you through the real city, both because of the changes that I've made and because Chicago has changed a lot in the past 90 years, but I did have a map out when I was plotting things.

Deertroit is a pun on Detroit, which was indeed where the very first Ford Model Ts were built in 1908. The Ford Motor Company is now based in Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit. The original factory, the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant, is actually still standing, and is now a museum. I think it's worth a visit, if you ever find yourself in the area; it's really fascinating to see the material that they have, and the front façade of the building has been restored to how it looked when it was built in 1904. I know personally that I love seeing historical artifacts and knowing that someone who lived decades ago or hundreds of years ago saw the exact same thing that I'm seeing, and the museum definitely evoked that feeling for me. It's one of the reasons I'd love to be able to visit Europe someday, where there are much older buildings than we have in the US.

In the real world, a slaughterhouse wasn't a great place to work in the 1920s, and the vision of one that Nick describes is completely plausible for one of the workers, who had terrible working conditions and nothing in the way of job security.

The not-so-hidden triple X in the sign of the club is probably familiar from a lot of depictions of jugs of moonshine having "XXX" on the side. It's popularly believed to come from the marks that the
moonshiners made to indicate how many times their product had gone through a still; three Xs would indicate that it had been distilled three times and was more than 80% alcohol by volume.

Nick was, of course, the mammal who commented to Judy that it seemed like just about anyone could become a prohi back when they first met in chapter 5, where he very clearly meant it as an insult. This chapter doesn't really have much in the way of new information for the case, just some additional details about what the characters are speculating, but I think the character moments are important too.

I also do love to see people trying to figure things out on their own; both TrekkerTim and DrummerMax64 made some very thoughtful deductions after reading the last chapter. I won't confirm or deny any theory, but it's interesting to me to see.

As always, thanks for reading! If you're inclined to comment, I'd love to know what you think!
Nick and Judy had been walking back to the Buchatti for a few minutes when Nick suddenly asked a question. "So how long have you been in the city, anyway?"

Judy almost stopped, surprised that he would ask. "A little over a month now," she said, "I moved as soon as I got accepted by the Bureau."

Nick nodded thoughtfully, even as he stepped around a puddle of something brown and brackish that gave off an awful smell. "And?" he asked.

"And what?" Judy said.

At the look of confusion on her face, he added, "And what makes that little bunny brain of yours tick?"

Judy thought the question over. Nick had seen the rejection letter from the police academy and had correctly guessed that she had only applied to become a prohibition agent because of that rejection and that the murder investigation was her chance to prove herself. In that moment, he had given off an air of knowing everything about her, but she supposed that he didn't. Considering that he had told her about his experience in the war it seemed only fair to answer, particularly because she had just told him she would treat him like a partner in the investigation. "I've always wanted to be a police officer. As far back as I can remember, I've always had that dream."

Nick allowed her to continue, and seemed to be scrutinizing her even as they kept walking through the dismal streets of the Yards. "I thought I'd move to the city and it'd be, well..."

She trailed off, trying to find the right word. "Exciting," she finally decided, "Exciting and lively and just really let me help mammals."

"Is that why you want to be a cop?" he asked.

"Absolutely," she said, "But I'm not doing a very good job, am I?"

If it wasn't for the hat that was keeping her ears down, Judy was sure that they would have drooped. "And the city is just... disappointing."

Judy hadn't wanted to use the word, but it was the only one that seemed to fit. Growing up on a farm, hundreds of miles away, Zootopia had always seemed so glamorous. She had never thought it was perfect; there had been plenty of news out of the city about the various gangs and what happened when they fought each other or the police. But it had seemed better, a place where she wouldn't have to be a farmer just because she was a bunny, a place where she really could make a difference. But the mammals of the city didn't seem to be any more open-minded, when it came to what they thought bunnies could do, and if anything they were worse about how they treated predators. Then again, maybe that was only because there were predators in the city. She had seen for herself what the sheriff of Podunk had thought of Nick, the obvious contempt he held for a mammal that he didn't know anything about.

Would Nick have had a better reception in Bunnyburrows? It wasn't too long ago that she would have thought that the answer would be yes, that even though plenty of bunnies might be afraid of him at first they would at least give him a chance. But she somehow thought that it might actually be worse than the city, where at least they didn't hide how predators were treated behind any kind of veil of politeness.
Judy couldn't even claim the high ground on that, either. She had coerced Nick into going along on what was shaping up to be an incredibly dangerous investigation, completely ignoring what it meant for him and his safety. Somewhere along the way she had lost sight of why she had wanted to be a police officer until the goal had meant more to her than the means of achieving it, but she couldn't quite put a finger on when that had been. Maybe it had been the same for Nick, getting gradually drawn in until suddenly realizing where he had ended up seemingly too late to change anything. Unlike Nick, though, she had gotten a second chance, one that she felt as though she hadn't earned.

Nick had continued watching her, but seemingly oblivious to her internal conflict he simply shrugged. "I never met a cop who cared much about anything other than the dollars in their pocket. So you spent your whole life trying to be a cop? Study hard in college?"

"At least twice as hard as anyone else who wanted to be a cop?"

"Maybe," she said, but Nick shook his head.

"Don't be modest," he said, his tone light.

Judy sighed. "There were plenty of bucks who thought all I wanted was an MRS degree."

Nick laughed, not unkindly. "So you spent your entire life with your nose to the grindstone. Tell me, in all that month and a little you've been in the city, have you ever done anything fun?"

Judy didn't have to think about the question very long, as the answer was unquestionably no. She had spent all her time in an endless loop of work, studying, and sleeping, and she realized that she hardly knew where anything was that wasn't on her route to work. It was a little absurd to realize that after more than a month of living in the city she barely knew it better than she had when she had first arrived. "No," she admitted, and Nick smiled at that.

"Zootopia is disappointing," Nick said, "It's dirty and noisy and no one cares about anyone else. But just because it's disappointing doesn't mean it isn't also terrific—it doesn't have to be one or the other, you know."

Judy nodded, and she thought that maybe Nick wasn't just talking about the city.

"I'll show you sometime," Nick promised, "We'll paint the town red. Responsibly, of course."

"I'll hold you to that," Judy said, and was surprised to realize that they were already back at the parking garage where they had left the Buchatti.

The walk back to the car had seemed much shorter than the walk to the Blind Tiger, and there was a lightness in Judy's chest that hadn't been there before. "Thanks," she added.

Nick simply nodded, climbing into the passenger seat of the car. The Precinct One police station was one of those few locations in the city that Judy didn't need guidance to, and in short order they were off.

The mammal behind the main desk in the station's lobby was a middle-aged moose who had peered down at Judy nearsightedly from behind a pair of glasses with oddly small and thick lenses. He had regarded her badge—and Nick—with what seemed like a fair degree of skepticism, but when Judy asked if officer Angela Zweihorn was in, he had pointed her in the direction of the offices readily
enough. "Sure," he said, "Her patrol doesn't start for a bit yet."

"And is her partner in too?" Judy asked, "Tony...?"

"Tony River?" the moose asked, "Yeah, the both of them should be in. Don't think you can miss either one, small as you are."

Despite the mild slight, Judy thanked him and walked in the direction he had indicated into the office area of the police station, which both was and was not like the one in the Bureau of Prohibition. Although the set up was virtually identical, with desks arranged in a grid across a large open area, the atmosphere was somewhat different. Perhaps it was because the police officers seemed, on average, much larger than any of the members of the Bureau, and the furniture was consequently also much larger, but that alone didn't seem to explain it. The officers seemed looser, somehow, freely leaning across desks and talking to each other, some of them all leaning around one desk with cups of coffee in their paws. There were a fair number of desks with dangerously precarious-looking piles of paper that wouldn't have met Bellwether's exacting standards, and even the lighting seemed brighter, although that was perhaps simply a function of the office having windows running along one of the walls.

As the moose had said, Zweihorn and River were easy to find. Even among the other large mammals who made up Precinct One's force, they stood out as easily being two of the largest. River was sitting at what must have been his desk, his feet up on it as he flipped through a newspaper and chatted with Zweihorn, who was leaning on the corner of his desk. "Three losses in a row to those bastards in New Yak," he said gloomily, shaking his massive head, "This ain't the year of the Cubbies, I can tell you that."

Even as Nick and Judy approached them, neither officer seemed to notice. "My sister's getting tickets when they play the Robins," Zweihorn said, and her tone was equally depressed, "I only hope they don't give her a reason to gloat."

"Oh, that's right, she moved to New Yak, what was it, four years ago? Five?"

"Eight."

"Christ, the time flies," River said, and at last seemed to catch sight of Judy.

He didn't straighten up, but he did fold up his newspaper, shooting his partner a significant look before turning his attention to Judy. "Agent Hopps, was it?" he said.

"That's right," Judy said, "I was—"

"Hope there ain't no hard feelings about the other night," River said, cutting her off, "We were only doing our jobs, and you didn't have no badge on you or nothing."

"No, I understand," Judy said, trying to do her best to sound sympathetic.

Frankly, she thought that River and Zweihorn were both crooked at best, maybe criminally complicit at worst, but they had information that she wanted. "If you're looking for an apology, I'm sorry," Zweihorn said, not sounding the least bit sorry, "Why don't you go do whatever it is the Bureau does when they're not mucking up arrests?"

"Actually, I'm working on the murder of Thomas Carajou and I was—"

"The Bureau's taking charge of a murder? First time I ever heard of a prohi doing that," River interrupted, "What'd Captain Keeshan think of that? She was pretty steamed, right?"
"I'm sorry, who?" Judy asked, suddenly lost.

"What, didn't you know?" Zweihorn asked, "Tundra Town's in Precinct Five's area. We turned everything over to Keeshan."

The rhinoceros clicked her tongue, and the sharp sound filled the enormous open space of the precinct's office. "I thought Bellwether ran a tighter ship."

River shot his partner a look and then turned to Judy. "You can square it away with the big cheese, I guess, but even Keeshan should be able to solve this one. We found the murder weapon in a garbage can near the club."

"You did?" Judy asked, and she had the sudden sense of being lost, of having events move on without her.

"Sure, no doubt about it. Big old lightning rod, covered in blood and wrapped in a rag," River said with a shrug, as if to ask what else it could be.

Judy supposed that a lightning rod would be the right size and shape for the stab wounds to Carajou's torso, but that realization barely seemed to sink in as her mind whirled. If what the hippopotamus said was right, and she had no reason to think that he was lying, then everything that she had been doing was completely pointless. "I... Thank you," she managed at last, "I'll talk to Chief Bogo."

"You do that. Whatever you dragged out of the gutter is stinking up the joint," Zweihorn said, giving Nick a dismissive look.

Nick, Judy realized, had been watching the conversation with his eyes half-lidded as usual, paying attention but not saying anything. "Of course," he said mildly, and he started walking in the direction of the frosted glass door at the front of the office that had Bogo's name written on it in gold letters, "It'd be a shame if any of my stench ended up on you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Zweihorn asked, her enormous paws suddenly balled up into fists.

Nick looked up at her and gave her a lopsided smile. "Only that I'll get out of your fur."

The fox gave an exaggerated reaction of surprise as he looked up and down at the rhinoceros; except for the fringes of her ears and the tuft at the end of her tail, Judy didn't see so much as a single hair on Zweihorn's leathery skin. "Well, away from your partner's desk, at least."

"Watch yourself, fox," Zweihorn spat, and the look that she gave Nick was almost murderous, "It might be your number coming up next."

Nick looked up at her and gave her a lopsided smile. "Only that I'll get out of your fur."

The fox gave an exaggerated reaction of surprise as he looked up and down at the rhinoceros; except for the fringes of her ears and the tuft at the end of her tail, Judy didn't see so much as a single hair on Zweihorn's leathery skin. "Well, away from your partner's desk, at least."

"Watch yourself, fox," Zweihorn spat, and the look that she gave Nick was almost murderous, "It might be your number coming up next."

Nick held up both paws in a gesture of surrender as he carefully navigated a path around the officer without turning away from her. "Well, it's all a numbers game in the end, isn't that right?"

There was a sudden ripping sound, and Judy turned her attention away from Zweihorn to see that River had torn his newspaper apart between two massive, suddenly trembling paws. "You ought to go," he said, looking at Nick, but his voice was suddenly unsteady.

Nick didn't seem to need any further prodding, and he kept edging his way around, Judy following him and keeping an eye on both Zweihorn and River. "What was that about?" she hissed when she caught up to him, completely puzzled as to what Nick had said that had made River lose his composure to such an extent.

Nick looked around briefly. "I'll tell you later," he said, his voice low, and Judy realized that every
eye was on them, the other police officers not even pretending to be focused on something else.

Judy nodded slightly, willing to let the matter rest for the moment. She knocked on the door to Bogo's office, and after a moment a voice called out from inside. "Enter."

Bogo's office was definitely a reflection of the buffalo. It was large and spacious, with a window that overlooked the street below, but all of the furniture was strictly functional and immaculately clean. There were a few piles of paperwork on his massive desk, rigidly ordered with a seemingly geometric precision, and the only personal touch that Judy could see was a small picture in a silver frame, showing Bogo on what must have been his wedding day. Even there, standing beside his beaming bride in her lacy dress in the stark black and white image, he wasn't smiling. He looked more like a mammal resigned to do something intensely unpleasant, the only visible sign of any sort of affection being his fingers interlaced with hers.

"Something on your mind, Agent Hopps?" he asked mildly, not turning his attention away from a piece of paperwork before him, "Have a seat."

Perhaps it wasn't intentional, but the chairs in front of his desk were so low that, while neither Judy nor Nick had to climb up into them, both had to crane their necks to look up at the chief. "You assigned the Carajou murder to another precinct," Judy said.

Bogo looked up from his paperwork at last, although he had to look down at Judy to see her face. The tips of her ears were about all that cleared the top of his desk. "You didn't honestly believe that I'd assign a murder case to a rookie prohibition agent, did you?" he asked.

"I guess your word's not worth anything then," Nick said coldly, looking up at the chief of police.

Bogo's nostrils flared. "I will not be lectured about honesty by a fox," he said, and his voice had a warning grumble to it, "It's none of my business how Bellwether runs the Bureau, but I will not take officers away from a case so that you can play cop."

"I'm not trying to play cop," Judy said, and her own words seemed to be coming from very far away. She suddenly remembered what Nick had said, when he had figured out what the investigation meant to her. He had told her that there would always be another hoop to jump through, that she would never actually be given a chance. Now it looked like he was right. Even worse, it seemed as though she hadn't even managed to accomplish anything other than endangering Nick and herself; the investigation had continued to move along with absolutely no need for any contribution from her.

"Then you're doing a very poor job of being one," Bogo said, "You wait two days before turning to the police, pull a known gangster into an active investigation... If you were one of my officers I would have already demanded your badge."

"No, you wouldn't have," Nick said firmly.

"Excuse me?" Bogo asked, "Is that drawing on your vast experience as a police chief?"

"Just my experience as a gangster," Nick said, throwing the word back at Bogo, "At least half the officers out there are crooked enough to go to jail for life, and you're going to lecture her about trying to solve a murder?"

Bogo seemed at a sudden loss for words. "I work with what I get," he finally said gruffly, "I can't stamp out corruption."
"You haven't even tried, have you?" Nick asked, "The kind of mammal you should want as an officer is sitting in front of you and you don't care."

Bogo's breathing slowed as the buffalo seemed to force himself to calm down. "I am a mammal of my word, Agent Hopps," he said at last, "If you can solve the murder, I will write your recommendation. But I will not make Keeshan pull any officers off the case, and I will not tolerate any interference in police business."

He said the last of it with a stern gaze at Nick. "That's all we ask. Isn't that right, Agent Hopps?" Nick said, turning to look at her.

"That's right," Judy said quietly, and the faraway sensation left her.

"That's right," she repeated, more loudly, and she fixed her eyes unflinchingly into Bogo's.

"Then you ought to get a move on," he said, and gestured towards his door, turning his attention back down to his paperwork.

Judy stood up, somewhat stiffly, but the feeling seemed as though it started returning to her limbs as they walked out of the buffalo's office and through the large open office area, where all of the police officers were gaping at them silently. She idly wondered how much of their conversation had been audible through the door of Bogo's office, and then dismissed the thought. Judy waited until they were outside the police station, away from any prying ears, before she spoke again. "Thank you," Judy said, aware that the words seemed woefully inadequate to express what she was feeling.

Nick shrugged, but Judy persisted. "Did you mean it? What you said in Bogo's office, I mean?"

He grinned. "I sure wasn't talking about myself, Carrots. Come on, let's go to Precinct Five."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Did You Mean It?" comes from a 1928 Marion Harris song, and is one of the rare instances in this story of me directly using a line or the title of a song. My reason for using it should be obvious from the last paragraph of this chapter.

Going for an MRS degree is a pretty common, and pretty old, expression to mean a woman who only goes to college to find a husband, and I think it's pretty understandable why Judy would resent that being assumed about her.

"Painting the town red" is an expression that goes back at least to the 19th century, and means to have a wild good time.

Officers Angela Zweihorn and Tony River were first mentioned in chapter 4 as the officers who were first on the scene to the scene of the murder at the Thief of the Night, and also as the ones who arrested Judy in that same chapter. At the time of her arrest, though, Judy only caught Zweihorn's full name, which is why she needed the receptionist to give River's last name. As Judy noted in chapter 5, Tundra Town isn't in Precinct One, which explains why responsibility for the investigation has been transferred to the Precinct Five station. It should also be possible to guess Captain Keeshan's species on the basis of her name and my predilection for names that are either punny or a reference to something. I'll offer meaningless internet points (and a nod in the next chapter's author's notes) to anyone who guesses it right!

I've been pretty vague in previous chapters in terms of when this story takes place, only identifying it as August of 1927. However, the baseball scores that River is reviewing do allow the date to be
definitively determined to be, as of this chapter, August 31, 1927. The Chicago Cubs played a three
game series in New York against the Giants, with a double header on the 29th and the final game on
the 30th. They did, in fact, lose all three games, and ended the 1927 baseball season in fourth place
in the National League at a time when there were only eight teams in the league. In those days, there
were no playoffs; once the regular season ended the team at the top of the National League played
the team at the top of the American League in the best of seven World Series.

The Robins was a name in common use for the team that is now the Los Angeles Dodgers; they
didn't formally take the Dodgers name until the 1932 season, and until 1958 they were based out of
Brooklyn, New York City, not Los Angeles. Prior to taking the Dodgers name, they were officially
the Brooklyn Base Ball Club, and the Dodger name originated as a derisive nickname in reference to
the fans being trolley dodgers—that is, Brooklyn had a lot of street cars in operation that were widely
regarded as dangerous to pedestrians.

As anyone familiar with Chicago baseball knows, not only was 1927 not the year of the Cubs but
their time wouldn't come again for quite a while; after two consecutive World Series wins in 1907
and 1908, the Cubs wouldn't win the World Series again until 2016, a championship drought of 108
years that was the single longest in any American professional sport. Sometimes it's really tough to
be a Cubs fan.

How sports would work in Zootopia is an interesting question. We do see evidence that at least two
real sports are played; there's the hilariously lopsided game of volleyball in the Naturalist Club, and
there are the kits playing with a soccer ball at the end of the movie. I suppose that they might have
leagues based on size, similarly to how boxing has different weight classes, but as far as how public
interest goes, I'd imagine that would vary depending on the audience, with most mammals being fans
of the leagues for mammals of their own size. Alternatively, some size brackets might be seen as the
most competitive and therefore the most interesting to watch, even for mammals much bigger or
smaller. The fundamentals of some games might be very different in different size brackets. For
example, elephants literally can't jump, so if basketball hoops for elephant players were
proportionally as tall as they are for human basketball players, you'd see a very different game with
no dunking or jump shots, which might make it boring compared to a game played by bunnies on a
proportional court with incredible leaping action. I kept the description of baseball vague enough that
I suppose any interpretation is valid, but sports are a big part of culture.

Although both Zweihorn and River are prejudiced and quite possibly crooked, I thought that it was
an interesting parallel to show that they get along with each other pretty well, and they don't just exist
in a vacuum to be mean to Judy.

The big cheese as a term for the person in charge was a slang expression in use at the time in the
1920s, although it is perhaps not something that any of the officers would call Bogo to his face.

As always, thanks for reading, and I'd love to know what you thought!
As they kept walking to the Buchatti, Judy asked, "Do you know Zweihorn and River? They didn't seem to know you."

She remembered that Nick had commented that the pair were good and bought, and he certainly seemed quite capable of getting a rise out of both. "I never met them, myself," he said, "But I heard they're awfully fond of getting their beaks wet."

"Oh," Judy said, "So they're in on a numbers game?"

The significance of Nick's word choice, and River's reaction, made perfect sense if that was the case, which was why Judy was surprised when Nick gave her a sheepish grin. "That was a lucky guess," he admitted, "It didn't seem like much of a stretch, though."

"Zweihorn threatened you," Judy said, her brow furrowing in worry, "And now they think that you know about—"

Nick cut off her words with a breezy wave of his paw as they climbed into the Buchatti. "Oh, I'm not too worried about that," he said dismissively, "I bet the whole precinct heard her, and I seem to remember a certain bunny promising to keep me safe."

"You could make it a little easier for me," Judy said, but she couldn't help but smile at his words as she tried to push her own concern away.

Nick, at least, genuinely seemed completely unconcerned about what Zweihorn and River had said, and she supposed that he had a point. There were enough witnesses that if anything did happen to him, it'd be difficult for them to avoid suspicion. Of course, there were so many other mammals who might have it out for Nick that Judy couldn't help but feel worried again. Her gloomy thoughts were broken when Nick spoke again. "Easier?" Nick said, a crooked smile on his face.

He snorted dismissively. "If you go up against a rhino, my money's on you, ten times out of ten."

The Precinct Five police station was in the very heart of Tundra Town, and the drive was all the more miserable for having to pass through Sahara Square again to get there. The gate that divided the two districts looked much the same as the one that divided Sahara Square from the rest of the city, but with a thick layer of frost that had formed around the opening and made the dull steel surface of the wall erupt into an irregular maze of crystals that sparkled in the flash of the Buchatti's headlights. The transition between the warmth of the artificial desert and the chill of the artificial tundra made the change in temperature seem even more sudden, and Judy had to resist a shiver as she drove underneath the cold blast from the fans mounted at the top of the gate pushing air downwards.

In the light of day, even a day as overcast as it was, Tundra Town looked far different than it had the night Judy had walked from a train station in the district to the Thief of the Night. The buildings which had seemed oppressive in the gloom of the night appeared far less imposing in the light; most of them were low and solidly constructed of concrete. Like Sahara Square, they tended towards being more widely spaced than they were in the main part of the city, and the corners of the streets were wider too. The reason for this became evident on the first turn Judy made within Tundra Town itself, when the rear end of the Buchatti did its best to swing around to the front. While she had managed to get the car back under control by steering firmly into the direction it was skidding, Nick had given a yelp of surprise that she could hear even over the roar of the car's engine and she had to
admit that her heart had started beating rapidly for that brief moment it seemed like they’d spin out into a fire hydrant.

When Judy pulled to a stop in front of the Precinct Five police station without further incident, she thought that she had at last found a government office even worse than the Bureau of Prohibition. The building looked cheap and shabby; it was only a single story tall, its walls of crumbling cinder blocks topped with a roof of corrugated steel that might have been painted white once but had faded to a dingy gray. The monotony of the cinder block walls was broken only rarely with tall, narrow windows that had all frosted over. There was a concrete block perhaps four feet on a side in front of the building that might have had the ZPD logo set into it; it was difficult to tell because the block had cracked nearly in half and the side facing the street was badly chipped and covered with patchy bits of ice.

There was no question that it was the police station, though, because on the wall above the large front door tarnished brass letters spelled out "PRECINCT FIVE POLICE STATION." Much like the Thief of the Night, the station was barely any warmer inside than the district was outside, although the officer at the front desk, an enormous and shaggy musk ox, didn't seem to need anything other than a duty uniform identical to the ones that the officers of Precinct One wore to be comfortable. The ox was, at least, much friendlier than the moose running the desk at that station; after welcoming Judy to Precinct Five she had launched into a cheerful and rapid monologue about the weather in Tundra Town that lasted nearly five minutes, ignoring every attempt that both Nick and Judy made at interrupting, before finally asking the purpose of their visit. "We're here to see Captain Keeshan," Judy said, responding before the ox had the chance to say anything else.

"Oh, her office is just down the hall that way, past the other desks," the ox said, "But there's a funny story about that. I'm not one to beat my gums, you know, but the Captain's office used to—"

"Thank-you-we-really-appreciate-your-help," Judy said, speaking so quickly that the words all ran together, and she grabbed Nick and pulled him in the direction that the receptionist had indicated.

"That was rude," Nick said as she hurried them along.

"She wasn't going to stop talking," Judy protested.

"Well, I doubt she gets many mammals worth chatting with," Nick said as they entered the main office area.

Judy thought that his remark might apply equally well to the officers of the station as it did to the mammals that they arrested. Somehow they didn't exactly seem like the ZPD's best—there were officers with frayed cuffs or tarnished brass buttons on their uniform jackets, and the looks that they gave her and Nick seemed insolent. Also unlike the Precinct One station, which had a few wolves and at least one cheetah, every single officer was a prey mammal, although most of them didn't seem particularly well-suited to the cold and some of them had wrapped themselves in their ZPD cold weather jackets even as they completed paperwork at their desks. Unlike the precise grid of both the Bureau office and the Precinct One office, the desks in the Precinct Five station were irregularly scattered around the room, although it seemed like there was plenty of unused space.

The door to Captain Keeshan's office was plain wood, the words "CAPT. JANE KEESHAN" painted on it in neat black letters. When Judy knocked on it, there was a brief moment of silence before Judy heard shuffling from inside the office, and then the door was unlocked and Captain Keeshan pulled it open.

Judy had expected the head of Precinct Five to be a mammal adapted to the perpetual chill of Tundra Town, like a reindeer. When the door to Keeshan's office swung open, Judy's initial thought was that
she had been exactly right. Captain Keeshan was enormous, nearly seven feet tall, with a long, blunt muzzle full of flat teeth that were exposed when she looked down at Judy to give her a sardonic smile. What little fur was visible, as Keeshan's body was mostly hidden underneath a ZPD standard issue cold weather trench coat of thick blue wool paired with puttees of the same material wrapped around the parts of her legs that were visible, was bluish-gray except for a patch of white around her mouth broken up on either side by small black stripes, and the captain's ears were oval and almost rabbit-like.

As Judy got a better look, though, she realized that she was wrong about Keeshan being a reindeer. Judy couldn't remember whether or not female reindeer had antlers, but Keeshan didn't, and her body was entirely the wrong shape; she was almost triangular, her body flaring dramatically at the hips, and what little Judy could see of her legs looked far more powerfully built than any reindeer she had ever seen. It wasn't until Judy saw Keeshan's long and thick tail, also wrapped in a puttee, that the pieces came together; Keeshan was a kangaroo. A kangaroo that didn't look particularly pleased to see her, at that. "Well," Keeshan drawled as she sized up her visitors and not moving from the doorway, "When I left the farm I thought that'd be the end of rabbits squeezing me out."

She gestured at Judy, "Tell me, are you in the city because your kind finally overpopulated the countryside?"

Judy repressed a wince. Although it had been covered somewhat casually in her schooldays in Bunnyburrows, she did know that the area that became her hometown hadn't always been quite so homogeneous. Given how large bunny families tended to be, and how rapidly they grew ever larger, bunnies had a significant advantage over other mammals when it came to farm work because there was never any shortage of willing paws who didn't need to be paid in anything other than food. Her teacher had claimed that other mammals simply weren't willing to work as hard as bunnies to tend to the land, but she supposed that those other mammals probably didn't view it the same way. Judy had never met a kangaroo herself, but Keeshan was apparently all too familiar with bunnies, given the obvious contempt in her eyes.

"No," Judy said, "I'm here to—"

"Bogo rang ahead," Keeshan said, cutting her off, "I know why you're here. Come in, take a seat."

As Judy walked into the office, Nick went to follow her, but before he had a chance to cross the threshold the kangaroo abruptly added, "Not you," and shut the door in his face.

Keeshan apparently mistook the surprise on Judy's face for something else, because the smile that she favored the bunny with seemed knowing. "Foxes," she chuckled, shaking her head as she locked the door, "For how clever they're supposed to be, you sure have to show them their place a lot."

"You shouldn't have done that," Judy said, and the anger that was bubbling up in the pit of her stomach made the words come out tightly, "He's—"

"What, helping you?" Keeshan asked as she took a seat behind her desk, "Don't you see he's feeding you a line?"

"You don't know anything about him," Judy said, and she realized that the reason Precinct Five had no predator officers was probably sitting in front of her.

The kangaroo shrugged. "None of my business anyway. Tell him whatever you want, but I'm not going to have my office reeking like a fox."

Judy took a deep breath, looking around Keeshan's office as she tried to calm herself down.
Compared to Bogo's office, it came off rather poorly. The walls were made out of unadorned rough cinder blocks, and the floor was cheap linoleum that was peeling at the corners of the room. The windows were tall, narrow, and thick, but Judy could still feel the occasional draft creeping in from around the glass even though yellowing old newspapers had been stuffed in the gaps. A cast iron radiator in the corner, the paint chipping away, did little to warm the room as it wheezed and burbled. Judy supposed that also explained why Keeshan was wearing full winter gear indoors the way some of her officers did, although her uniform was immaculately clean, the brass buttons gleaming under the electric lights.

"I heard from Chief Bogo that you've made progress on the murder of Thomas Carajou," Judy said at last, trying her best to be diplomatic.

"That's one way of putting it," Keeshan said.

"Frankly, you're wasting your time, and right now you're wasting mine," Keeshan said, pushing a manila folder across her desk at Judy, "We've got the murder weapon, we've got the murderer, we —"

"You have the murderer?" Judy interrupted.

Rather than appearing upset at the interruption, Keeshan simply gave her a thin smile. "Zoya Olegovna Medvedeva. That file has her record, if you don't know who she is."

It was a name that Judy had known even before joining the Bureau, as the polar bear had made headlines about fifteen years ago when she murdered her husband on their wedding night. The papers had dubbed her the White Widow, and the breathless reports from her trial had been a source of scandalized discussion in Bunnyburrows as the farmers shook their heads and clucked their tongues at the depravity Zoya had claimed her husband was guilty of and her own flatly emotionless statement that he had deserved to die.

Zoya Medvedeva had faded from the public consciousness afterwards, but from the Bureau's files Judy knew that after her release from prison in 1921 the polar bear's name had shown up from time to time in reports about the Black Paw. She was suspected of acting as an enforcer for the gang, but Medvedeva was apparently quite good at keeping her head down, as there had never been anything to link her to another crime.

Keeshan apparently saw the recognition that dawned on Judy, and she nodded in a self-satisfied manner. "The White Widow herself. We've got everything but a confession, but..."

The kangaroo shrugged. "Won't make too much of a difference, with all the evidence we have."

Judy flipped the folder open and started quickly scanning the contents, which certainly explained Keeshan's confidence. There was a picture of the lightning rod recovered from the garbage can, which by the ruler that had been positioned next to it must have been at least three feet long. The lightning rod, and the cloth it was resting on in the image, were both spotted with dark stains that could only be blood, although the black and white image made it far less grisly than it would have been seeing it in real life. According to the file, a number of hairs had been discovered on the cloth that the lightning rod had been wrapped in, which microscopic examination had positively identified as coming from a polar bear due to the tell-tale hollow structure.

Zoya Medvedeva had been arrested the morning after Carajou's murder at a club called the Blue Glacier that Judy guessed was a speakeasy, when the owner had been unable to wake her up to kick her out at closing time. By the time the police had arrived, the polar bear had been, in the words of the report, "drunken and belligerent" and after taking a swing at the responding officer she had been
arrested. While Medvedeva was being processed at the Precinct Five station, it had been noted that she had blood splattered on her blouse and underneath the claws of her right paw, which hadn't meant anything at the time. However, a sample had been taken, and it must have only been a few hours ago that the blood had been positively matched to that of Carajou.

The story that the report told was one of efficient, clever police work outwitting a murderer who had gotten sloppy. It was also a story that Judy didn't think that she believed, as she couldn't remember having seen a polar bear in the Thief of the Night. Besides, as Judy flipped through the details of Medvedeva's arrest, there was something else that struck her. "There wasn't much blood on Medvedeva's clothes, was there?" Judy asked.

She had seen the puddle underneath Carajou's chair, and it didn't seem possible to her that he could have been stabbed without whoever did it getting themselves covered in blood. The murderer couldn't even have avoided getting blood on themselves by standing behind Carajou and pulling the weapon, unless the murderer also had a stab wound that aligned with the hole that went all the way through Carajou's torso. The only possibility that made sense was that the murderer had been facing Carajou, but Medvedeva had to be at least a foot and a half taller than the wolverine. That was a significant advantage in terms of her reach, but it still didn't seem like enough to avoid getting bloody, especially considering that whoever had killed Carajou must have gotten close enough to him to immediately break his neck before he could cry out.

All in all, it just didn't seem to fit, but Keeshan obviously disagreed. "So she was careful," the kangaroo said, a scowl on her face, "I don't go into the Bureau and tell you busybodies how to do your jobs, and I certainly don't appreciate you coming here to criticize how I do mine."

The kangaroo pointed one thick finger at Judy's face. "They don't exactly send me the cream of the crop when I go begging for officers, hat in hand, and you're crazier than Carajou if you think I'm letting this one slip out of my fingers."

Keeshan obviously had a chip on her shoulder about her assignment, and she seemed to have found a target for her frustration in Judy. Judy wondered, though, if Keeshan would accept the worst prey officer on the force before she would accept the best predator, and thought that the answer was almost certainly yes. Considering that Mr. Big's empire had been at the center of the ground that Precinct Five covered, she supposed that it might have been difficult to keep even good officers honest in the face of what the Zootopia Organization had been capable of offering, but that only made it more appalling that such a petty, small-minded bigot was in charge. "If you've arrested Carajou's murderer—"

"Which I have," Keeshan interrupted.

"Then all the Bureau is interested in is what he was doing in the Thief of the Night," Judy finished.

It wasn't exactly true, considering her original assignment had only been to determine whether or not the club sold alcohol, but she didn't think she was stretching the truth that far. Bellwether's attempts at surveillance on the various gangs in the city sometimes seemed to verge on being obsessive, and Judy thought that the ewe would certainly be interested in learning why Carajou had been in a club with three thousand dollars in cash in his pocket. It was convenient that it was also something Keeshan's current working theory couldn't explain, and the kangaroo leaned back in her chair, her scowl lessening by a degree.

"You can ask her yourself, then," Keeshan said, and stood up.

She opened the door to her office and barked, "Heude!"
The officer in question, a male boar with dark fur that made the white stripe that ran across his muzzle stand out, quickly jogged over to the captain's office. "Yes ma'am?" he asked, touching one hoof to his forehead right below the shock of grayish fur he had slicked back with so much pomade that it glistened greasily.

"Take them to see Zoya Medvedeva," she commanded.

"Yes ma'am," Heude replied, "Come along, then."

He gestured at Judy, and she saw that Nick had apparently been casually leaning up against the wall by Keeshan's door. Judy wondered how much, if any, of their conversation he had been able to hear through the door, as she wasn't quite sure how good a fox's sense of hearing was. Pushing the thought aside, Judy closed the folder Keeshan had given her and took it with her as she followed Heude down through a maze of corridors to a metal door labeled "INTERROGATION ROOM A."
"Just close the door when you're done," he said.

Without another word, and without looking back, the boar turned and left them. Judy waited for the boar to be out of earshot, but she didn't open the door. "I'm sorry Keeshan treated you like that," she said.

Nick simply shrugged. "She's just mad I didn't go to her," he said, "Can you blame me, though?"

Considering what Judy had seen of the kangaroo, it made perfect sense to her that Nick hadn't approached her about cutting a deal. She thought he'd probably be in a cell somewhere at best, and she shook her head. "No, but she shouldn't be a captain."

"Say what you will about Keeshan, but Mr. Big never could convince her to look the other way," Nick said, "He never asked me to negotiate—for obvious reasons—but she was a real thorn in his side."

"That's not enough," Judy said, and she meant it.

Nick smiled at that. "Well, maybe when you're police chief you can change that. But if you do become a cop, it might be working for her."

That was a frightening thought, and she didn't know how to respond to it. Nick spared her having to say anything by opening the door. "Come on Carrots, we have a murder to solve," he said, and she followed him inside.

"I have heard of good cop, and of bad cop," Zoya remarked as Judy entered the interrogation room, "But never have I heard of bunny cop and fox cop."

The polar bear regarded the pair with remarkable good humor, considering that at the moment she was sitting shackled to an enormous steel table and was being charged with murder. Despite her nickname, Zoya wasn't exactly white—her fur was somewhat yellowish, and so thick that the sleeves of her gray shirt and the hems of her matching pants compressed it down more than an inch where they ended without touching skin. At five and a half feet tall, Zoya Medvedeva was short for a polar bear, even a female polar bear, but sitting down she still towered over Judy and while Nick was more or less on her eye level the powerfully built bear seemed at least three times as wide as the fox.
"We're not cops," Judy said, jumping up onto one of the chairs opposite Zoya.

The interrogation room was fairly spacious, but even grimmer than Keeshan's office. While it had the same cinder block walls and linoleum flooring, there were no windows, and the lighting was harsh under a number of fixtures set into the ceiling behind steel mesh. The furniture was heavy steel
bolted to the floor and painted an industrial white, but the dents and scratches in the surface of the table exposed shiny metal and a few rusty patches. The room was cold, too, even more so than Keeshan's office, not that it seemed to bother the polar bear. "Oh?" said Zoya, leaning towards Judy.

The polar bear's neck was surprisingly long, and even with her massive paws locked in place to the table she was able to lean nearly all the way across the table. "Then who are you, little bunny?"

Judy forced herself not to flinch as the bear stared her in the eyes from less than a foot away. Zoya spoke with the faintest hint of an accent, her voice deep and somewhat raspy with a faint undertone of curiosity. "I'm Agent Judy Hopps, from the Bureau of Prohibition," Judy said, showing her badge.

"And you, fox?" Zoya asked, swiveling her head to stare at Nick in turn.

He flashed her a brief grin. "Nick Wilde," he said.

Zoya's eyes widened briefly at that. "I had heard you were dead," she said.

Nick turned to Judy. "I've been getting that a lot, don't you think?"

Before Judy could respond, Zoya turned her attention back to Judy and asked, "So what is it that you are wanting, Agent Hopps?"

"I'm investigating the murder of Thomas Carajou," she said, "You didn't kill him, did you?"

Zoya settled back in her chair and regarded Judy for a long moment. "I did not," she said at last.

"Then what did happen, the night of the twenty-ninth?"

Zoya shifted in her seat, and then nodded at the folder Judy was holding. "I explained, many times, already."

"I want to hear for myself," Judy said.

Zoya regarded her coolly, and then nodded slowly. "For the Bureau of Prohibition, then," she said.

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "I'm Sitting Pretty in a Pretty, Little City," comes from a 1922 Irving Kaufman song, although I'm using the title entirely ironically here, as none of the characters in this chapter are in a particularly good position except perhaps for Keeshan.

Nick did comment on Zweihorn and River as being good and bought back in chapter 12, where he clearly knew River's last name even though Judy didn't until chapter 19. Numbers games were a pretty typical gang activity in the 1920s, and are an illegal form of gambling not really all that different in how they run compared to normal lotteries. Bettors pay in to select numbers, and the people running the game randomly select them, paying out to the winner while they keep a portion of the money collected for themselves. Of course, unlike an officially sanctioned lottery, no one involved is paying taxes.

Wetting your beak is an expression meaning to take a piece of the action—that is, to get a cut of the proceeds of an illegal activity. This would imply that Zweihorn and River are getting paid off to ignore a numbers game that they're clearly aware of, considering how River reacted in the last chapter.
As I mentioned in my author’s notes for chapter 13, in this version of Zootopia Tundra Town is surrounded by Sahara Square, which to me makes logical sense as cooling off one part of the city would generate a lot of waste heat that could be used to warm up another section of it.

Beating your gums is a bit of 1920s slang to mean idle chatter, which clearly shows that the musk ox running the reception desk at the Precinct Five station is somewhat lacking in self-awareness. Musk ox are well-adapted to the cold, though, explaining her comfort in the apparently mostly unheated station.

Unlike every other species of deer, where only the males grow antlers, female reindeer do grow antlers. Judy mistaking Keeshan for a reindeer is somewhat understandable, as the head of a deer and the head of a kangaroo are actually pretty similar looking, although they obviously have entirely different body types.

Captain Keeshan is a red kangaroo, and her description is accurate for a female red kangaroo; male red kangaroos are actually ginger-colored, while female red kangaroos are mostly gray. Her name is in reference to Bob Keeshan, the actor who played the character Captain Kangaroo, although her personality is certainly not even close to his. I picked a kangaroo because I wanted an herbivorous mammal that it seemed natural for it to have a dislike for both rabbits and foxes, and given the history of Australia it seemed like a good fit. Rabbits and foxes are both invasive species in Australia; rabbits eat the same food that kangaroos do, and foxes will prey on young kangaroos and smaller kangaroos if they get the chance. This chapter also implies some degree of bunny Manifest Destiny in outcompeting kangaroos for the best farming land, and the way that Judy recalls learning about it is unfortunately accurate to how such things were (and still are, in some cases) taught. I also wanted a mammal that would be uncomfortable at low temperatures, and a kangaroo certainly fit the bill there.

Keeshan's clothing reflects what would be typical for the time period, and puttees are a type of clothing that have fallen out of use since about the 1930s. Puttees consist of long strips of cloth that are wound around the lower leg to provide protection and warmth to the calves and ankles. You can frequently see pictures of soldiers during WWI wearing them, and they were in use at the start of WWII, but they fell out of favor due to being difficult to put on or take off quickly as well as concerns over hygiene.

As TrekkerTim was the first to correctly guess Captain Keeshan's species down to my choice of her being a red kangaroo, and even touched on part of the reason I chose a kangaroo in the first place, I'm giving him a nod here and the promised worthless internet points, which in honor of his username will take the form of fifty quatloos. Honorable mention goes to Dragones and DrummerMax64 for being next in.

Although Keeshan is, as Judy notes, a petty and small-minded bigot, her frustrations aren't entirely unfounded. The Precinct Five station clearly isn't very well-funded, and her accusation of the Bureau of Prohibition being composed of busybodies is very much in line with how public perception of the Bureau went. Considering that Prohibition really only made organized crime worse, a police officer's distaste for them is quite understandable.

Medvedeva is an actual Russian family name, derived from the Russian word medved', meaning bear. In this case, Medvedeva is the female form of the name (Medvedev being the male form), since Slavic surnames are gendered. It's typical for Russians to have a first name, a patronymic name derived from their father's first name, and a surname. In Zoya's case, Olegovna indicates that her father's first name was Oleg, so his name could be something like Oleg Ivanovich Medvedev, which would in turn indicate that his father's name was Ivan. Further complicating things, in Russian there are also many possible diminutives for names, some of which are only appropriate in certain company and don't seem at all related to the actual name if you don't speak Russian. It's why as a native English speaker it can sometimes be difficult to keep up with the names of characters in certain
works of Russian literature like *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Polar bears do indeed have hollow guard hairs, which are actually transparent but appear white, and even with the technology available in the 1920s it would be possible to positively identify a hair as coming from a polar bear if it was subjected to examination under a microscope. DNA profiling wasn't invented until 1984, and while DNA itself was discovered in 1869 it wasn't until 1953 that the structure of the molecule was accurately described. While it would therefore be impossible in 1927 to match a blood sample to a person with the same accuracy we have today, they were aware of the major blood groups and could test for them. There were some attempts at using this in paternity disputes in the 1920s when scientists realized that blood types were inherited, but as there are four possible blood groups (A, B, AB, and O) and people with type A or B blood can still carry the gene for type O, it wasn't useful very often.

Polar bears exhibit significantly more sexual dimorphism than most other mammals, which is why there's the qualifier that Zoya's short even for a female polar bear. On average, female polar bears weigh about half as much as male polar bears, and they tend to be about two feet (approximately sixty centimeters) shorter in length. Still, even being less than six feet tall means that she's still much taller than either Nick or Judy and could easily weigh four times as much as Nick does.

The fur of polar bears does tend to yellow with age, and Zoya is likely somewhere in her mid-thirties based on being married sometime around 1912.

Officer Heude is named after his species, Heude's pig, a species of wild boar native to Laos and Vietnam. They can have rather long fur atop their head, and slicking it back with pomade would be in style for the 1920s.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
"Tuesdays are my day off," Zoya began slowly, "I work for the Hebridean bottling plant, the one on Walnut. Do you know it?"

Judy shook her head as Nick nodded. Judy thought it somewhat strange that a mammal who supposedly worked as a gang enforcer needed a day job, but before she could pursue the thought any further, the polar bear continued. "I drive a truck. Deliveries. Many deliveries, and Mondays are the worst because I have to go to Sahara Square. I unload the truck as well as drive it, and Sahara Square is always too hot."

Judy could understand why the polar bear would dislike Sahara Square; it had been uncomfortably warm for her, and she didn't have a thick layer of fat under her skin or a coat of fur nearly so long or dense. She nodded sympathetically and asked, "When did your shift end?"

"Around five," Zoya replied.

"And what did you do between leaving work and getting arrested?" Judy asked.

Zoya shrugged. "I went home. I have a place, a little one, here in Tundra Town where I live alone. I took an ice bath and I ate supper. I caught up on my reading—nothing revolutionary, of course."

She added that last part hastily, and Nick leaned in. "So what were you reading?"

Zoya's massive paws fidgeted nervously. "The Big Four," she said.

"Ah," Nick said, "Agatha Christapir. Is it any good?"

Zoya nodded, apparently relieved that he wasn't prying any further into what that might imply. "Absolutely, yes. I didn't want to put it down, so I took it with me to the Blue Glacier. That was around ten. I go there every Monday, you see."

That was a period of five hours, then, that Zoya didn't have an alibi for. That was certainly enough time for her to have murdered Carajou prior to passing out and being arrested, and the polar bear must have seen that realization in Judy's eyes. "I have no one to back it up, but it is the truth. This I swear."

"The Blue Glacier?" Nick asked, and then he turned to Judy. "I didn't hear that," he said, and Judy supposed that foxes must have pretty good hearing.

She wondered if he had heard the entire conversation she had with Keeshan; he hadn't said anything while they were being escorted to the interrogation room, but he may have not wanted the pig to overhear them. "Does Monarch still run it?" he asked.

Zoya's smile was warm and unguarded, somehow, which seemed at odds with the police report that the owner had called for help kicking her out. "You know Roger?" she asked.

"Oh, we made a deal or two," Nick said, waving one paw in a vague gesture.

Judy cut in. "What happened at the Blue Glacier?" she asked.

"I have a table I always sit at. Every Monday, Roger has my order ready when I walk in at ten. A glass of orange juice and a lemon Neighi."
Judy blinked. "Orange juice and Neighi?" she repeated before she was even aware she was speaking.

Zoya looked positively amused by her response, and the polar bear nodded. "Yes, juice and a soft drink. Roger is a respectable businessmammal, of course, who would not sell anything with so much as a drop of alcohol in it. It is not worth the trouble, he says."

"Of course," Judy said, somewhat skeptically; considering that Zoya had been drunk when she had been pulled out of the Blue Glacier, she must have done some serious drinking.

The polar bear had to weigh at least three hundred and fifty pounds, and while there was a certain softness to her body that spoke of her insulating layer of fat, the vast majority of it seemed to be pure muscle. If Zoya was telling the truth, she must have downed quite a bit of alcohol before hitting the Blue Glacier or—the logical alternative came to Judy in a flash. "Does Mr. Monarch mind if mammals bring drinks into the bar?" Judy asked.

Zoya laughed. "It is a free country, is it not? Roger is not so much a busybody as to worry about all that."

Judy thought that it was as good as a confirmation that she had been right. Zoya must have brought her own alcohol into the bar with her, something that she had planned on having along with the drinks she had purchased. "I brought a... little water with me, myself, to mix in. Juice and Neighi are too sweet on their own and I prefer the taste of what I bring," Zoya continued.

Judy thought that whatever Zoya had brought likely only contained water by virtue of it being impossible to make pure alcohol, but it didn't seem worth it to push the point. Zoya had paused, apparently expecting an interruption, but when it didn't come she continued. "This Monday, my table and my drinks were ready as always. I remember saying hello to Roger, but..."

The polar bear shrugged her massive shoulders. "That is all I remember, until Tuesday."

"You don't remember anything that happened?" Judy pressed.

Zoya shook her head slowly. "I woke up Tuesday with a terrific headache. Roger was standing next to my table, arguing with a police officer. He said..."

Zoya trailed off, and her massive brow furrowed in concentration. "He said I needed a doctor, that I wasn't a rummy. The officer said Roger had a soft heart and that he had to arrest me. I tried to stand up and say I was alright, but I was very dizzy."

Zoya looked down, abashed. "I fell on the cop."

Judy leaned in closer. It was the first part of Zoya's story that didn't match up with what had been recorded in the police report, which had claimed that Zoya had deliberately tried attacking the responding officer. "What happened then?" Judy asked.

"The officer was screaming bloody murder, is what happened next," Zoya said, "His partner came in and arrested me, and I've been in a little cell or this room ever since."

"Do you know how the blood got on your clothes or beneath your claws?" Judy asked.

Zoya shook her head firmly. "It was not there when I entered the Blue Glacier, I swear it."

"Have you ever passed out in the Blue Glacier before?" Nick asked suddenly.
Zoya turned to look at the fox. "On occasion, yes," she admitted, "Sometimes I am very tired, on Mondays. Summer is the worst, you know. It makes me very thirsty."

"And Monarch lets you sleep it off?" Nick asked.

Zoya nodded. "Until he goes to close the bar, yes."

Nick leaned back into his chair, stroking his muzzle thoughtfully. Zoya turned back to Judy. "Was that all, Agent Hopps?"

"Have you ever worked for the Black Paw, or any other gang?" Judy asked.

Judy had no idea why someone employed as an enforcer for a gang would also work what seemed like an unpleasant and menial job, but perhaps the rumors weren't true. Zoya didn't give any apparent reaction to the question, and simply looked down at Judy for a moment before answering. "My only job is making deliveries," Zoya replied blandly.

That was neither an admission nor a denial and Judy repressed a sigh. "Of course. Thank you for your time, Ms. Medvedeva," she said, and reached across the table to shake the bear's paw.

Her fingers could barely wrap around one of Zoya's, but the polar bear seemed amazed at the contact, and accepted the gesture by giving her own paw a delicate pump. "Time is all I have now," Zoya said, "I have not missed a single day's work in almost three years, not until now. I suppose they'll have fired me, don't you think?"

Judy met Zoya's stare unflinchingly. "It's not over yet," she said firmly.

Nick and Judy had left the interrogation room, and as requested had allowed the door to swing shut after them. "You heard everything Captain Keeshan and I said, didn't you?" Judy asked.

Nick nodded casually, and then ran a paw up to the sharp tip of one of his triangular ears. "Yours might be better, but these aren't for show."

Nick was silent a moment as they walked down the halls of the police station, trying to find their way back to the main entrance, and then he spoke again. "You probably shouldn't have gotten on Keeshan's bad side, you know."

Judy's response was instantaneous. "She's a bigot and a bully. Someone has to stand up to her."

"And that someone has to be you?" Nick asked, "And it had to be right then?"

Judy paused a moment, looking down the nearest intersection. The Precinct Five station was like a maze, all long corridors with cinder block walls and scuffed linoleum floors, low pipes wrapped in insulation with cryptic acronyms painted on them running along the ceiling. The hallway was poorly lit by only a few bare incandescent bulbs that were dim with age, but Judy looked up into Nick's face anyway, wanting to look him in the eye. "I was there," she said firmly, and then she had to look away.

She had stood up to Keeshan, but it felt as though it hadn't been enough, that she had been too willing to play along with the kangaroo's prejudice. "I could have done more."

Nick brushed one paw against hers until she turned and looked back at him. "I think you did enough," he said quietly.
They lapsed into silence again, walking towards the next intersection, when Judy decided to break the silence. "Zoya wasn't anything like what I expected."

"From a convicted murderer, you mean?" Nick asked.

"Well... Yes," Judy said.

"You can't always tell," Nick said.

Whether or not the polar bear had killed Carajou, she had undeniably killed her husband. Judy had thought that Zoya might be frighteningly cold and emotionless, someone who was capable of killing without regret, or else superficially charming, the way that Lionheart had been, with something dangerous barely hidden away underneath. But Zoya's normalcy had been surprising, the way that she seemed like a regular mammal working a difficult job and taking the few pleasures that she could. Nick simply shrugged in response, and Judy wondered how many mammals he had encountered, in the military and in the mafia, who were like that.

"Do you think she was telling the truth?" Nick asked, changing the subject.

"It wouldn't be a very good lie, would it?" Judy said.

Nick nodded; it really wasn't much of a story. Zoya had no verifiable alibi for the time frame the murder must have occurred in, and her excuse was weak. "I don't think she was lying about the cop, though."

It might not make too much of a difference whether Zoya had deliberately attacked an officer or if she had stumbled and fallen on one, but from what Judy had seen of Precinct Five it wouldn't surprise her if the officer had exaggerated the encounter to make the arrest cleaner. Judy nodded. "I think you're right about that," she said, "We can ask Mr. Monarch, though."

"He might not be the most reliable witness," Nick said, and Judy looked up at him in surprise.

"Why's that?" Judy asked.

Nick had said that he had dealt with the owner of the Blue Glacier before, and she wondered what their encounters had been like in order to get that response.

" Couldn't you tell?" Nick asked, shaking his head in exaggerated dismay before clasping his paws up under his muzzle, "She's sweet on him. He's probably sweet on her, too."

"Oh," Judy said.

She had to admit that it certainly seemed like a possibility if Mr. Monarch was also a polar bear, which seemed likely from the name of his bar and its location in Tundra Town. If Zoya was being honest, she was a loyal customer and Mr. Monarch had been more concerned that she might be sick than that she was keeping him from closing his bar. Judy couldn't be sure, though, so she asked. "And Mr. Monarch is a polar bear?"

"Bear: yes. Polar: no. He's a grizzly bear," Nick said, "Biggest one you'll ever see."

"Oh!" Judy said, more loudly than before.

Relationships between different species were extremely rare, after all, but she supposed that Monarch and Medvedeva were both predators, and bears at that. They probably wouldn't be able to have cubs if they were in a relationship, but maybe neither one of them wanted children in the first place. There
were some mammals like that, after all; Judy herself had no interest in starting her own brood of kits and maybe the same was true of Zoya. A polar bear and a grizzly bear would certainly raise a few eyebrows, though, and maybe one or both of them didn't have the courage to stand up to that kind of public scrutiny. Of course, their relationship (if either of them wanted one) wasn't anywhere near as publicly questionable as some others might be. It wasn't as though, say, only one of them was a predator and the other was—"Agent Carrots?" Nick asked, interrupting her train of thought, "You still there?"

Judy could feel herself flushing with embarrassment at having been caught not paying attention, and hoped that it wasn't obvious in the dimly lit corridor. From the amused half-smile that Nick wore, she got the feeling that he had noticed the color flooding into the delicate inner surfaces of her ears. Judy cleared her throat. "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"I asked if you want to go to the Blue Glacier next," Nick said, "See if we can check out Zoya's story for ourselves."

"After we go back to the Thief of the Night," Judy replied.

She supposed that talking to Mr. Monarch might reveal something that indicated how Zoya had been framed, but it seemed unlikely to tell them anything about how the murder had been conducted. If Zoya had been slipped a mickey, Monarch or one of his employees might have seen something. Unless, of course, they had been the ones to do it or if Zoya had been lying. The polar bear hadn't corrected Nick when he had suggested that she had something to sleep off on the previous occasions she had fallen asleep at her table, so it might not be out of the question that the bear had simply gotten incredibly drunk either before arriving at the Blue Glacier or while she was there.

If either was the case, the bear might be lying to protect whoever had sold her the alcohol, or she was simply being cautious around a member of the Bureau of Prohibition. It was also possible that she really did murder Carajou, and she really had just been sloppy and hadn't had the time to think up a better excuse.

Judy shook her head as they came to the intersection that finally led back to the lobby. She was hoping that revisiting the crime scene might make things more clear, but thinking about it in endless circles wasn't going to accomplish anything. "To the Thief of the Night," Nick said as they walked back out into the artificial chill of Tundra Town.

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Russian Lullaby," comes from a 1927 Irving Berlin song, which Ella Fitzgerald did an amazing version of. Considering that this chapter consisted of Zoya telling a story that involved passing out, it seemed appropriate.

The Hebridean bottling plant is named in reference to the real W.H. Hutchinson bottling plant that was located in Chicago during the 1920s, and it was indeed on Walnut. Hutchinson is a Scottish surname, and Hebridean is one of the other names of the now-extinct grice, a species of pig that was native to Scotland until going extinct in the late 19th century. Zoya's day job as a truck driver to deliver soft drinks is something of a reference to those Coca-Cola commercials they air every winter, using polar bears to shill their drinks.

As addressed in the notes from the last chapter, as well as the choice of title for this chapter, Zoya is pretty clearly Russian. Based on the dates provided, it can be assumed that her family left the country prior to WWI, likely as a result of the Russian Revolution of 1905 when she would have been a preteen. While that revolution failed, the two Russian Revolutions of 1917 led to the end of the
Russian Empire and the birth of the Soviet Union in 1922. Zoya's comment about not reading anything revolutionary therefore suggests that her family was loyal to the tsar, or that she simply doesn't want to be accused of being an anarchist. Although the Red Scare is typically associated with the McCarthyism of the post-WWII time period when American fears of communist plots and infiltrators led to many people being blacklisted on suspicion of being communist sympathizers, there was an earlier Red Scare in the WWI time period. Fears of anarchists and Bolsheviks abounded in the period leading up to WWI, when many union organizers strongly opposed the US's entry into the war, and those fears only built after the war following a series of major strikes. By 1920, though, when grim predictors of mass assassinations, bombings, and attempts to overthrow the US government didn't come to pass, things started winding down. Still, it wouldn't exactly help your case to be seen as an anarchist when you've already been accused of murder, something Zoya may have learned first-hand after being arrested for murdering her husband.

_The Big Four_ is an Agatha Christie novel that was first published in January of 1927; in this universe Christie is apparently a tapir. _The Big Four_ received somewhat mixed reviews, being a significant departure from Christie's usual work. As the plot involves an international conspiracy by a shadowy cabal, Zoya's embarrassment at having to name the story after denying reading anything revolutionary makes sense. Personally, although I'm more of a fan of Sherlock Holmes than Hercule Poirot, I think it's worth a read.

Neighi was previously mentioned in chapter 3 as a pun on Nehi, a popular brand of soft drink in the 1920s. One of the interesting outcomes of Prohibition was the increased popularity of mixed drinks. While the wealthy could still get their hands on professionally made alcohol from other countries, it could be out of the price range of most people. Homemade distilled alcohol, which could vary wildly in quality, tended to be harsh and not particularly good tasting, and cocktails helped both cover the taste and make the alcohol last longer. Gin was particularly popular prior to Prohibition, and while the gin and tonic cocktail significantly predates Prohibition (and was actually created the reverse way; gin was added to tonic water containing quinine to make the bitter anti-malarial medicine taken by British soldiers in India more enjoyable), some other gin cocktails came from this time period, including the Bee's Knees, the Damn the Weather, and the Last Word.

Particularly due to the stereotype of Russians and vodka, Zoya's order of orange juice and lemon soda may suggest her intent to drink Screwdrivers. The first known reference to the Screwdriver cocktail is from the late 1930s, although the drink may have existed earlier as it's not exactly a unique idea to mix vodka into juice. Additionally, referring to what she brought with her as a "little water" pretty much confirms it, since that's what "vodka" literally means in Russian; "vodka" is the diminutive form of "voda" which means "water."

It is indeed impossible to make pure alcohol by distillation; without adding an entraining agent it can't get beyond 95.6% alcohol by weight. Benzene is a common entraining agent for uses requiring exceptional purity, but you really don't want to drink something with benzene in it.

A "rummy" in 1920s slang was someone who was habitually drunk and homeless.

Roger Monarch's name is in reference to Monarch, a taxidermied California grizzly bear that the California Academy of Sciences has on display. Interestingly, Judy is wrong about Monarch and Zoya, assuming that Nick is right about the two of them having an interest in the other. Polar bears and grizzly bears are capable of producing hybrids, and there is one known instance of such a hybrid being capable of reproducing; in 2010 a bear was found that had a hybrid mother and a grizzly bear father.

Referring to Zoya's normalcy brings to mind an interesting facet of the word. US President Warren G. Harding made a speech in 1920 urging a return to normalcy, but normalcy was not a word in
common usage at the time. Normality was the word that he really should have used, and normalcy was unusual enough that some people at the time claimed he invented the word by misspeaking. However, normalcy could be found in some dictionaries at least as far back as 1857, and Harding's use of the word led to it becoming largely interchangeable with normality.

Slipping someone a mickey means to give them a drink with something to incapacitate them in it; supposedly the name comes from a Chicago bartender named Mickey Finn who was notorious for doing so in order to rob his patrons. Considering that alcohol was illegal to sell during Prohibition, it certainly wasn't uncommon for patrons to be robbed, as the criminals knew the victims would have to admit to breaking the law themselves in order to seek justice.

As always, thanks for reading! If you're so inclined, I'd love to know what you thought!
Nobody's Using It Now

The Buchatti started, but only with great protest, the starter clicking several times as the engine groaned and coughed before spinning to life. Before Judy could put it into gear to drive off, Nick reached over her shoulder and grabbed her paw. "Let it warm up," he said, speaking up to be heard over the engine as he tapped on a gauge to show that the needle was pegged all the way to the left.

Nick pulled his paw away from hers and they sat in silence for a moment. Judy felt a new appreciation for Nick's thick fur; sitting in one spot seemed to make the cold even worse, and the part of her body that was squeezed up against him in the narrow cabin was easily the warmest. It was difficult not to be envious of his tail, too, as he had pulled it across his lap and buried his paws beneath it. Her own little cotton ball of a tail was useless for that purpose, but his looked incredibly soft and warm.

Judy looked away and back at the looming Precinct Five station. " Didn't Mr. Big run most of his rackets in Tundra Town?" she asked at last, seizing on a topic that she had found puzzling when she had first seen the station, "Why's the station here so...?"

"Lousy?" Nick suggested, and she nodded.

"He had plenty of pull on the city council," Nick said, "Besides, Keeshan's been in charge here since about '19 or so. Do you really think she's good at winning mammals over?"

Judy had to admit that it didn't seem likely that the kangaroo had any talent at building relationships with the mammals in charge of her funding, and she said as much. "No."

"Well, there you go," Nick said, "If you're cold we can go back in and see if she'll let you crawl into her pouch, or we can get going."

He tapped on the gauge as he spoke, and Judy saw that the needle had risen to the middle of its range. The mental image of how Keeshan would react if Judy asked what Nick had suggested made her shake her head, and she eagerly put the car in gear and pulled away.

Outside the Thief of the Night, two bored-looking officers were regarding a very familiar figure with thinly-veiled contempt. The pair, a bison and a horse, both positively towered over Mr. Quill, but that didn't seem to bother the fat little hedgehog, who looked almost on the verge of apoplexy as he raved at them. "Do you have any idea who I am?" he demanded, his voice shrill with anger, "I'll have your badges for this, I swear I will!"

The bison and the horse exchanged a glance, and then the horse knelt until he was on Quill's eye level, which meant that the horse was all but sitting on the ground. "Mr. Quill," he said patiently, "Do you know who I am?"

Quill froze, apparently surprised that he wasn't getting his way. "I report to Captain Keeshan," the horse said, "And I'm not letting you in."

"Keeshan?" Quill sputtered, "Why—"

"Why's the Captain in charge of Precinct Five saying how a murder in Precinct Five gets investigated? That's the real mystery, ain't it Woodsley?"

The horse directed the last part at the bison, who snorted and shook his massive shaggy head. "Don't
razz him, Ajax," he said, and his voice was slow and deep with a mild note of warning in it.

Unlike his partner, the bison didn't kneel to look Quill in the eye, instead simply looking down at him. "Club's off limits 'til we get say-so from Keeshan herself," he said firmly. "You can stand there wasting your breath or you can beat it. Don't make much of a difference to me."

Woodsley gave a ponderous shrug, apparently to emphasize how little he cared, but didn't move from his position in front of the stairwell. Quill seemed ready to launch into a further indignant tirade before Nick cheerfully called out to him as he approached with Judy. "Quill! What's eating you, ol' fella?"

Quill turned away from the bison and the horse and looked at Nick, apparently stunned. "Wilde?" he gaped, "How on earth are you—I thought—"

Quill snapped his mouth shut suddenly and pulled fussily at his waistcoat, then fiddled with his pince-nez for a moment before speaking again with the same haughty tone he had used in La Porte Verte. "I told you I never wanted to see you at one of my clubs again. You'll have to leave at once."

Nick turned to Judy; she could see the obvious delight the fox took in antagonizing the hedgehog, and she was glad to see it directed at a mammal who really deserved it. "I don't think he gets to make that call, does he Agent Hopps?"

Judy pulled out her prohibition agent badge and flashed it at Woodsley and Ajax before looking at Quill, a little smile of her own across her face. "That's right. Agent Judy Hopps, Bureau of Pr—"

"I remember who you are," Quill snapped, "And I've had enough of your ridiculous theories."

He turned to the two police officers, and took on a wheedling tone. "You can't possibly take a bunny prohi and a fox seriously, can you?" he said.

Ajax stood up to his full height and exchanged a glance with Woodsley. Although Judy didn't know either of the officers, she had the feeling that the hedgehog was about to be sorely disappointed if he expected them to take his side. "Well, the Bureau of Prohibition and the ZPD have always worked well together, isn't that right?" Ajax asked.

Woodsley looked briefly puzzled, but then seemed to realize what his partner was doing. "Sure is," he grunted.

"So what brings you to Tundra Town, Agent Hopps?" Ajax asked.

"We're here to——"

"This is outrageous!" Quill interrupted, "You cannot——"

"Interrupt again and you're taking a ride to the Precinct Five station," Woodsley said, fixing Quill with a glare that made the hedgehog take a step back.

"We're here to investigate the murder of Thomas Carajou," Judy said.

"Well, the more the merrier, that's what my ma always said," Ajax said, "Go on in."

As Quill drew in a breath, almost certainly to begin pleading and threatening the two police officers again, Ajax shot Judy a wink and gestured towards the flight of stairs that led down to the Thief of the Night. Perhaps following Bogo's conversation with Keeshan the kangaroo had made the officers aware that Judy might be by later, but Judy somehow doubted it. She got the feeling that Ajax was
cooperating more because goading Quill into a frenzy was more entertaining than simply standing guard outside in the cold, but she couldn't argue with the results. She hurried down the stairs, Nick a step behind her, and as her paw touched the doorknob she could hear Quill start to speak again.

Once the door was closed behind them, Quill's ravings immediately became almost inaudible even to her ears, the thick metal door blocking out most of the sounds from street level. The Thief of the Night seemed larger, somehow, when it was completely empty of mammals. Unlike when Judy had been there before and the only illumination had come from a small number of shaded lamps distributed throughout the cavernous space, additional lights on the ceiling had been turned on and made the club seem incredibly shabby. The ceiling was stained a dingy yellow-brown from cigarette smoke, and the wooden planks of the floor were dirty, covered with countless stains and scuffs that hadn't been visible before. The only part of the floor that actually looked clean was the large dance floor, the wood of which had been polished to a high gloss by countless paws and hooves; otherwise it looked as though no one had ever bothered to do any cleaning.

None of the tables or chairs seemed to have been moved since Judy had left, and even if where Carajou sat hadn't been burned into Judy's memory, it was immediately obvious, since the bloodstain on the floor had simply been allowed to dry. The stain appeared far more innocuous than it had when it was fresh, as though it had been molasses or oil that had spilled on the floor and not a mammal's blood. The awful coppery scent of fresh blood was gone too, although the smell of cigarette smoke and cheap perfume lingered; those scents would probably never come out.

Nick gave a low whistle as he looked at the chair Carajou had been sitting in, and Judy remembered how he had steadfastly refused to so much as look in the direction of Carajou's body when they had visited the medical examiner. If he had been squeamish about looking at a corpse, he had no apparent reservations about looking at the aftermath of the murder, as grisly as it was. "It looks like someone cut the heads off about a dozen chickens," Nick said, and Judy thought that was a fair way of putting it.

There was a stain about the size of a baseball, its bottom border an irregular mess of drips, on the back of the chair, and the blood running down the front legs of the chair stood out in sharp relief against the pale wood. The top of the chair's back had a small chunk missing; it looked like a piece had splintered off and the exposed wood was a bright white where it wasn't bloodstained. Judy moved to examine the wall behind the chair, the bricks of which were splattered with more brownish stains, when Nick followed up with a question before she could look more closely. "Do you smell that?"

"The blood?" Judy asked, running one finger across the bricks without turning to face him, "Not really, no."

She was grateful for that much, at least, and supposed that he must have a much better sense of smell than she did. "No, not the blood," she could hear Nick saying, "Alcohol."

"Someone dropped a drink when they saw the body," Judy said with a shrug, "It must be that."

Red probably hadn't been the only mammal to drop a drink in the history of the club, if the other older stains on the floor were any sign, but Judy was barely paying any attention to what Nick was saying, focused more on the wall. There was a slight divot in one of the bricks, where it looked as though something sharp had chipped away some of the material. The lightning rod that the officers had found, perhaps, but she frowned as she considered it. Carajou's chair was fairly close to the wall behind it, but it just didn't seem possible that someone could have pulled out the lightning rod and stabbed him without anyone noticing, even with the privacy screen around the table. "You said they were serving something clear, right?" Nick asked.
"That's right," Judy said distractedly.

It also didn't seem possible that someone standing in front of Carajou could have stabbed through and leave such a small mark in the wall. She was puzzling it over when Nick spoke again, his tone thoughtful. "It smells like single malt scotch," Nick said, and then he was quiet for a moment.

Judy was alone with her own thoughts until her concentration was interrupted by a peculiar snuffling noise, and when she turned around she wasn't prepared for the sight that met her. Nick had dropped to all fours and had his nose less than an inch off the floor, moving his head back and forth while his tail whipped back and forth in an unsynchronized manner. His nostrils flared as he sniffed at the floor, moving forward making the noise she had heard, and Judy could only stare. "What are you doing?" she asked.

Nick didn't respond at first, and he continued what he was doing, feeling around with the very tips of his claws until he paused on one of the boards that made up the floor underneath the table that Carajou had sat at. He gave it an experimental poke and the board wobbled. When he looked up at her, his eyes and his triumphant smile were the only parts of his face visible in the shadow cast by the table. "Breaking your case wide open, Carrots," he said smugly, and then pulled up hard on the floor board that had moved.

A section of the floor perhaps eight inches long and a foot wide separated from the rest of the boards, and Nick tossed it aside carelessly to reveal a shadowy hole. Nick looked down into the hole he had created and Judy could see his eyes widening even as she rushed to see what he was looking at. At first she couldn't see anything; it was just a gloomy pit until she heard the strike of a match and smelled sulfur as a point of light flared into being. Nick reached down into the hole holding the lit match and Judy saw what he had.

She couldn't tell just how large the space that had been revealed was, as the feeble light of the match didn't illuminate much of it, but she could see dirt about two and a half or three feet under the Thief of the Night's floor. The part of the crawlspace that had caught her attention, though, was what filled most of it. The light of the match bounced off dozens of bottles stacked in rough wooden shelves, but they didn't all look like they were full of the cheap moonshine the Thief of the Night had sold when she had been there. While some of the bottles were full of clear liquid with no indicator of what the liquid was, most of the bottles had printed labels, and while she couldn't identify them she would have bet anything that they had been smuggled into the country. There were exquisitely shaped bottles full of amber and brown liquids that must have been outrageously expensive even where they had been distilled, to say nothing of the premium they probably commanded in Zootopia. There were a few bottles full of something green that glowed in the light, and on the dirt down below near the edge of the circle of illumination that the match provided Judy could see the glittering shards of a broken bottle. About a third of the bottle was still intact, a small amount of some brown liquid—presumably the single malt scotch that Nick had smelled—still in it.

The light suddenly vanished as the match burned out, but Judy didn't wait for Nick to light another one before carefully squeezing herself through the hole that he had revealed, falling gently to the frozen dirt of the ground below. "That looks like a bit of a tight fit for me. Sorry, Carrots, but you're on your own," Nick remarked, and he passed the matchbook down to her.

Judy lit another match and took a more careful look around, her breath visible in front of her. Even holding the lit match in the crawlspace, it was impossible to tell how large it was, the shadows consuming her little light. However, from the support beams she could see holding up the floor above her, she thought it might be at least the size of the entire basement that formed the club. Judy had noticed before that the ceiling of the Thief of the Night seemed a little low, and thought that now she understood why; the floor had been raised almost three feet.
She turned her focus to the part of the crawlspace immediately under the table. There were a few blotchy stains on the dirt that formed the ground, which must have come from blood dripping through the gaps in the floorboards above, and when she looked up her match showed that there were blood splatters on the underside of the table that Carajou had been sitting at. "He was stabbed from down here!" Judy said, realizing what it meant, "That's why no one saw it!"

It perfectly explained what she had observed on the brick wall, too. It would have been extremely awkward for someone standing on the floor above her to stab through Carajou and hit the wall, but from underneath it was simply an upwards thrust. But that meant—"So there was someone standing up here to break his neck?" Nick asked.

"There must have been," Judy said slowly, trying to imagine how it must have happened.

Whoever had stabbed Carajou must have been standing about where she was, and must have been either quite a bit taller than she was or standing on top of something. They had pried the piece of the floor loose, waiting for their opportunity; maybe they had some pre-arranged signal with their partner standing next to Carajou, something that they could have said to let the mammal in the crawlspace know it was time to stab him. While Judy was thinking, the match burned down to her fingertips and she shook it out.

Before lighting another match, she looked up through the hole. It was dim, but she thought that even with the lights in the club as low as they had been when it was in business a mammal wouldn't need particularly good eyesight to aim for Carajou. Judy pulled another match out of the matchbook and prepared to light it before something caught her eye; there was a faint light coming from the direction of one of the walls. "I can see a light down here," Judy called up through the hole, "I'm going to take a look."

"Wait a minute," Nick said, and then the light from the hole in the floorboards all but vanished as he poked his head through it.

"I see it too," he said, "Watch out for the broken glass."

"I will," Judy promised.

She carefully positioned herself until the light was directly in front of her, and then lit the next match. She made her way forward carefully, skirting the shelves full of bottles of liquor, and paused only to look at the broken bottle she had seen. It had been fairly large, and there was a noticeable gap on a nearby shelf that she guessed it had fallen off of. Perhaps the mammal who had stabbed Carajou had accidentally knocked it off the shelf in their hurry to leave, as it was on the path towards the light. There were little circular bloodstains on the floor and some of the shelves, too; the mammal must have gotten themselves absolutely covered with blood.

When Judy reached the light, she saw that it was coming from a metal hatch, about three feet across and two feet tall. A thin mesh grating ran across the top third of the hatch, which had "ZOOTOPIA CLIMATE WORKS" embossed into it. Peering through the grate, Judy couldn't see much, just what looked like a concrete tunnel poorly lit by an electric light at least a dozen yards away. She seized the handle of the hatch and tried to open it, but it didn't give at all, and a closer examination through the grate showed the reason why: there was a layer of ice, at least a foot thick, that had formed on the other side of the hatch, which opened outwards. It'd be impossible to open the hatch without chipping away the ice.

Judy wondered if the mammal who had stabbed Carajou had been able to use the hatch; she wasn't sure how long it would have taken for the ice to build up in what could only be a tunnel that was part of the climate control system that kept Tundra Town frozen. She examined the wall around the hatch
more closely, and there were fresh-looking scrapes in the metal that made her think that someone, at least, had used it fairly recently. Her examination also uncovered a switch, which she pushed without hesitation.

Instantly, a number of bare bulbs strung up on the undersides of the floorboard came to life, and Judy saw that she had been right about how large the crawlspace was. It was exactly as large as the space above, since it had been formed by creating a false floor. She could even see the bottom few steps of the staircase that led down into the basement, which had been re-purposed as more shelving when they had been hidden away. There had to be dozens of shelves and hundreds of bottles of alcohol, and as she looked out into the space, something else caught her eye.

In addition to the staircase that led into the basement, there were another small set of steps, near one of the walls, that looked like they were actually used as stairs since there wasn't anything stacked on them. Judy walked over to them and looked up, and could see the outline of what could only be a trapdoor, which easily swung open at her touch. She climbed the stairs and found herself behind the bar, which she supposed made sense; in addition to storing expensive alcohol, the Thief of the Night stored the cheap stuff that its patrons got to drink and the crawlspace easily hid it. "I found a way out," Judy called over to Nick, who was still sitting beside the hole in the floor he had revealed.

"That's a clever trick," Nick said, looking over to where Judy had re-appeared, "What's down there? Besides the booze, I mean."

"You can see for yourself," Judy said, gesturing down at the trapdoor.

Nick made his way over and once he was in the crawlspace Judy followed him down. It wasn't nearly tall enough for him to stand upright, and he hunched over, trying his best to avoid the cobwebs underneath the floorboards, looking at the hatch she had found. "So this is why Quill's so eager to get back into the club," Nick said, "Not very spiffy, but I'd bet he uses the maintenance tunnels for the climate wall to move his product around."

He actually sounded somewhat impressed, and Judy had to admit that credit was due to the hedgehog. She couldn't guess how much the alcohol in the crawlspace was worth, and there was no telling how much had been stored in the club since it had first opened however many years ago. "That's not a bet I'd take," Judy agreed, "It's just too bad the hatch is frozen shut."

Nick gave her a sidelong glance. "You really don't want to go into those maintenance tunnels," he said, "Even if your little bunny burrowing instincts kick in, you're not going to do anything but get lost without a map. We're at least a mile away from the wall, you know."

Judy had to repress a shiver at the thought of getting lost in the endless tunnels and corridors that formed the hidden portion of the climate control mechanisms. She wasn't afraid of the dark, but getting lost and slowly dying of hunger or thirst would be a terrible way to die. "So whoever stabbed Carajou must have known the tunnels?" Judy asked.

"Maybe," Nick said with a shrug, "Or maybe they just hid down here. If that hatch was frozen shut when Carajou was killed, they could have come down the same way we just did."

Nick had a point there, but it was difficult to tell. There was a trail of little droplets of blood that led towards the hatch, but it ended about two-thirds of the way there. "I think we can be pretty sure that Zoya didn't do it, though," Judy said.

Nick had a hard enough time fitting in the crawlspace, and the polar bear might be too big to even fit through either the trapdoor or the hatch. Nick looked around and nodded. "Pretty sure," he said agreeably, and then clapped his paws together, "So can we arrest Quill for all of this?"
Judy paused a moment before responding, thinking it through. There was no doubt that the hedgehog was in flagrant violation of Prohibition, and he might have been in on the murder. It seemed somewhat convenient that there was a hole in the floorboards perfectly positioned to stab up at Carajou, and Quill might have been the one to arrange it. Perhaps being arrested for one of his crimes would be enough to make him spill on another. "You know what?" Judy said, a slow smile spreading across her face, "We can."

Nick and Judy made their way up out of the Thief of the Night, where Quill was still talking with Ajax and Woodsley. Or, perhaps more accurately, he was talking at them, as neither the horse nor the bison seemed able or inclined to get a word in edgewise. When Quill caught sight of Judy coming up the stairs, he immediately turned his attention to her, but she spoke before he could. "Mr. Quill," Judy said, pulling her cuffs out of her purse, "You're under arrest."

A flicker of panic crossed the hedgehog's face before his bluster reasserted itself. "You're delusional, rabbit," he said, "I already told you the Thief of the Night doesn't serve alcohol, and it's certainly not my fault if some lowlife pred got—"

"We found the crawlspace," Judy interrupted.

"And the liquor," Nick added brightly, fixing Quill with a toothy grin, "Top shelf stuff, by the way. You've got good taste."

Judy moved forward to cuff the hedgehog, but before she could take a second step towards him Quill collapsed to his knees, his entire body suddenly limp as he only just managed to catch himself with his paws before his muzzle hit the pavement. The knees of his expensive suit were instantly dirty and his pince-nez swung on their chain and the lenses shattered against the ground, but he didn't seem to notice. His eyes were fixed firmly on his paws, which twitched convulsively. The two police officers from Precinct Five moved forward so that, together with Nick and Judy, Quill was completely surrounded, but the hedgehog didn't seem inclined to try running. Quill looked up at Judy, and his eyes were wide with horror, tears streaming freely down his face. "He'll kill me," he said, his voice suddenly hoarse and pleading, "Please, you can't. He'll kill me."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Nobody's Using It Now," comes from a 1929 Maurice Chevalier song. I chose it both because it works as a reference to the crawlspace and because the lyrics refer to the singer not being taken seriously, which continues to be the case for Judy. Quill is probably deeply regretting that after this chapter, though.

A couple of weeks ago, OnceNeverTwiceAlways recommended the book "The Age of Edison" to me. I've had a chance to read it now, and I'll second that recommendation; it's an excellent history of electric lighting and early efforts at electrification, and it's a very engaging read. I don't think it's any secret that I love doing research, and I've gotten a few comments asking about the sort of preparation I've done. I thought I'd take this chance to recommend a few of my favorite books I came across in the course of researching this story.

I highly recommend "The Devil in the White City," which intertwines the story of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and that of H.H. Holmes, a serial killer who was active during that period. That's obviously set quite a bit earlier than this story, but the Chicago World's Fair did a lot to define the spirit of Chicago, and I thought it was important to get a sense of that.

Elliot Ness's autobiography "The Untouchables" should pretty much be required reading for anyone
with an interest in learning about Prohibition. Elliot Ness was given the task, in 1929, of assembling a team of incorruptible agents (nicknamed the Untouchables for their integrity) specifically to take down Al Capone. Although credit for Capone's downfall belongs more accurately to the work done by the IRS and US Attorney George Johnson, it's definitely an interesting read.

"Capone: The Life and World of Al Capone" is one of the definitive biographies of Al Capone, the most obvious point of reference for how I modeled Mr. Big in this story, and it does a great job of showing how Capone ended up as the king of Chicago's organized crime.

There are many others, but those three are some of my favorites. Now, onto the notes for this chapter itself.

There's quite a bit of debate as to whether or not it's a good idea to let a car warm up to its operating temperature in the winter before starting to drive it, but that debate really applies to modern cars with engines made using modern metallurgy techniques. For a car like a Bugatti Type 35, it would have been a good idea to let it warm up if the outside temperature is low to allow the oil to circulate and prevent a sudden change in temperature from cracking the engine block. As previously established, when Nick and Judy are in the Buchatti, Nick sits on the left side as a passenger, Judy sits on the right side as the driver, and the gear selector is to her right, hence why he has to reach over her.

The bison officer Woodsley is named after his species, the wood bison, a subspecies of the American bison with a native range in the northern parts of North America. The horse officer, Ajax, is named after an undefeated French racehorse that won the Grand Prix de Paris in 1904. To razz someone in 1920s slang was to make fun of them; Ajax is clearly the more sarcastic of the pair.

There's some continuity in this chapter back to chapter 7, when Quill told Nick he never wanted to see him in one of his clubs again, chapter 6, when Judy told Nick that whatever kind of alcohol they served in the Thief of the Night was clear, and to chapter 4, when the lecherous hare Red dropped his glass of alcohol. Although foxes don't have nearly as good a sense of smell as wolves, alcohol does have a pretty distinct scent. It's not directly noted in the story by Judy's narration, but Nick's superior night vision also comes into play, as his reaction to looking into the crawlspace clearly shows that he can see what's down there before lighting a match for Judy so that she can see.

Judy only being able to identify a bottle of alcohol as being green isn't a deliberate reference to the classic Star Trek episode "By Any Other Name" when Scotty similarly can't identify an alcohol beyond its color (although he was extremely drunk at the time) or the Star Trek: the Next Generation episode "Relics" where Data's inexperience with intoxicating beverages limits his ability to identify Aldebaran whiskey to simply noting that it is green. It's indicative instead that the bottle contains absinthe, which in the 1920s was illegal even in many countries that didn't completely ban the manufacture of distilled alcohol as the US did. The mixture of herbs that goes into absinthe was blamed for the drink's supposed properties that made it even worse than other alcohols; absinthe was thought to cause hallucinations, epilepsy, and even tuberculosis, and after a supposed absinthe fiend murdered his family and then himself in 1905 the drink was banned in Switzerland, with similar bans going into effect in France, the Netherlands, and even the US before full Prohibition began. Absinthe should really be stored in an opaque or brown bottle to prevent it from reacting with light and changing color, but as the color is part of the appeal it was and is sometimes bottled in clear glass.

Although Chicago doesn't have the vast series of catacombs that a much older city like Paris does, the city does still have plenty of utility tunnels. In 1992, portions of Chicago actually flooded when bridge work allowed water into a disused set of tunnels that had been used to transport coal and other goods about a century earlier. I imagine that the Zootopia climate wall is only the most visible portion of the mechanisms that keep Tundra Town cold and Sahara Square hot, and there's got to be a massive web of utility tunnels which would likely also do nicely for a bootlegger.
As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
Judy heard the shrill rise and fall of the police cars' sirens before anyone else in the club did, and had to force herself not to react as the noise got ever louder at their approach. Neither Woodsley nor Ajax seemed particularly put out by the noise, although Nick winced several seconds after Judy first started hearing the noise, his features twisted into a grimace of distaste. "I do hate that sound," he said, and his conversational tone was marred only by the volume at which he spoke to be heard over the sirens.

Ajax chuckled at that. "Lot of experience with the police, I'd bet," he said, looking down at the much smaller mammal.

Nick looked the officer up and down before responding. "More than you, I'd bet," he said.

Ajax laughed again and nodded to concede the point; Nick was certainly older than Ajax was. Judy guessed that the horse had probably only graduated the ZPD academy in '24 or '25, and his short chestnut-colored fur still had the glossiness of youth. Woodsley looked significantly older, the first streaks of gray going through his shaggy fur, and his generous gut made Judy think his academy days were long behind him. "You're alright, fox," he said, "Ain't many mammals that can make him shut his trap."

"Hey!" Ajax said, taking on a wounded expression that Judy doubted was sincere, "Aren't you supposed to be on my side?"

Woodsley simply shot the horse a bemused look. "Anything that makes you shut your yap ain't bad in my book."

The bison then turned and looked down at Quill. "But if anyone should be talking, it's you. Last chance before you go to jail, pal."

The hedgehog gave a keening moan of distress but didn't say anything else. Even though Judy had brought him into the club so that she could use the telephone—being sure to speak loudly enough to ensure that he would overhear—and call both Precinct Five and the Bureau of Prohibition, he had maintained his silence ever since his outburst. Woodsley and Ajax had happily accompanied her down into the club, as while it was only marginally warmer inside than it was outside, there wasn't any wind. Ajax, at least, had seemed visibly impressed when he heard about the stockpile of alcohol they were standing on top of, but Woodsley hadn't done more than look done at Quill.

By the time the cars parked out front, the sound of the sirens was like ice picks through Judy's ears, and she had to resist the urge to clap her paws over them. Mercifully, the police shut their sirens off, and then the brief silence was broken by the officers trudging down the stairs, Captain Keeshan in the lead. "Agent Hopps," she said by way of greeting, "You certainly do work fast. You better have something good for me."

Judy gestured at where Quill was sullenly sitting on the floor, his paws cuffed behind him. "Mr. Quill here has at least a few thousand dollars' worth of bootleg alcohol hidden under the floor," she said, "And I think he might know something about the murder of Thomas Carajou."

Judy was sure that there had been at least two mammals involved in the murder, one standing next to the wolverine to break his neck and the other hidden beneath the floor to stab him. Whoever had been beneath the floor must have known about the crawlspace in order to be able to use it, and it didn't seem like much of a stretch to guess that Quill had been the mammal to tell them about it. "I
"don't!" Quill suddenly blurted, "I don't know anything about any murders, I swear!"

He broke down into blubbering tears. "I swear," he repeated weakly, "I don't know anything."

"Tell it to Sweeney," Keeshan said, barely deigning to look in his direction before turning her attention back to Judy, "I think you ought to tell me what you found."

It didn't take Judy very long to summarize how she had found the hidden crawlspace with Nick's assistance, although Keeshan had simply grunted when she heard about his contribution. Judy showed Keeshan the trapdoor, which was hidden amazingly well; even standing behind the bar the seams were completely invisible from how expertly worked they were. Even the way to open the trapdoor from above had been cunningly hidden, as what simply looked like a knothole in one of the planks could be pushed down to release the latch and provide a place to pull.

The kangaroo hadn't bothered to go down into the crawlspace, being tall enough that she couldn't have even come close to standing up straight down there, but the view of the bottles had been enough for her. After pulling her head back up, the kangaroo gestured at the officers who had followed her down into the club and then waited patiently by the staircase. "Pull him up," she said, and the expression on her face appeared entirely satisfied as the officers, a burly mountain goat in a standard ZPD uniform and a capybara bundled up in nearly as much cold weather gear as Keeshan, grabbed the portly hedgehog by his armpits and pulled him upright.

"Please, you can't!" he said, "You can't! I'll be killed for this! Don't you understand? You can't do this! Please!"

Keeshan appeared entirely unaffected by Quill's pleas for mercy, and she motioned for the officers to hold him still rather than drag him out. "I understand perfectly, Mr. Quill. Bootlegging alcohol, aiding and abetting a murder... I'm sure you've got some powerful friends who aren't going to be too friendly anymore when they hear about this."

She grinned, and there was no humor in it. "But I'll give you a chance to play nice."

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She turned to one of the officers. "Throw him in solitary. Make sure he doesn't have any... accidents before he makes bail."

Keeshan turned back to face Quill, leaning in until she was only inches away from his face. "What happens after that is all up to you. So think about it, would you?"

Keeshan turned around. "Take him away," she said, and she appeared completely untouched by Quill's continued pleas as he was dragged up the stairs.

"I've been wanting to put him away for years," she told Judy, sounding entirely satisfied, "But for a bad egg, he's not very hard-boiled, is he?"

She laughed at her own little joke, and the sound of it seemed strangely out of character to Judy; from what she had seen of the kangaroo, what little humor she had was entirely mean-spirited, but hearing an apparently genuine laugh was disturbing. "Now we just have to tie him to Lionheart," Keeshan said.

Judy was willing to bet that Keeshan was right and Quill had been talking about Lionheart; it would explain why the lion had been at La Porte Verte. From the way Lionheart had treated Nick, he certainly seemed ruthless enough that Quill would be afraid of retribution. Quill had also seemed rather surprised to see Nick alive when they had briefly talked outside the Thief of the Night less than an hour ago, and if Lionheart had started planning to eliminate Nick shortly after their encounter.
at La Porte Verte it would certainly explain why Quill had known about it. Quill's choice of words when he had been arrested was suspicious, too; he had claimed to not know anything about murders rather than a single murder. It was possible he had slipped over his words in his haste, or maybe it hinted at a connection to the rash of other gangsters dying untimely deaths.

The last piece, then, would be figuring out why Lionheart had ordered the murder of Carajou. Perhaps the wolverine had stumbled across the operation that Quill and Lionheart were running and had to be silenced, or perhaps it had been done to keep Quill in line; if he was an accessory to murder he would have a lot to lose by going to the police. "Who knows, maybe hearing that Quill was arrested is what it'll take to loosen the White Widow's tongue," Keeshan continued, interrupting Judy's train of thought.

Judy exchanged a glance with Nick. He had, probably wisely, stayed off to the side once Keeshan and her backup officers showed up, and he hadn't made so much as a single comment. Considering how Keeshan had treated him before, she was unlikely to listen to anything he had to say anyway, and Judy guessed that it was only the success of arresting Quill that had warmed the kangaroo's attitude towards Judy herself. "I'm not sure Zoya could have done it," Judy began, but Keeshan cut her off.

"Lay off, Hopps," she said dismissively, "She must have had an accomplice to break his neck, sure, but she could have squeezed down into that crawlspace if she really wanted to. She's pretty short for a polar bear."

Keeshan might have been right about that, but it still seemed incredibly convenient to Judy that the officers who had arrested Zoya had managed to find the apparent murder weapon in a garbage can not even inside the club but hadn't managed to find so much as a trace of the hidden crawlspace. "I still want to check her alibi," Judy said.

The kangaroo shrugged. "It's your time to waste," she said.

"I do apologize for being late," Bellwether interrupted, "But I'm afraid the Bureau doesn't get to have an office in every precinct. I hope you're getting along well with Agent Hopps, Captain Keeshan."

Judy had been so caught up in her argument with Keeshan that she hadn't even heard her boss arriving, but her attention immediately turned to the stairs. Bellwether was accompanied by at least half a dozen prohibition agents, most of them sheep. "Director Bellwether," Keeshan said, giving the ewe a stiff little nod, "The alcohol is all yours. Murders are the responsibility of the ZPD."

Bellwether took her time to reach the bottom of the stairs and delicately stepped onto the planks of the floor before she spoke again. "So long as we can all cooperate," Bellwether said cheerfully, "I'm sure none of your officers will get in the way of any of my agents? It'd be a shame if any alcohol went missing before we could destroy it."

Her words were sweet enough, but Keeshan's eyes narrowed at the thinly-veiled accusation and her posture somehow became even straighter. "I don't tolerate any of my officers breaking the law," Keeshan replied.

"I'm sure you're very careful about that now," Bellwether said, emphasizing the last word, "But why don't we make sure there aren't any, ah, misunderstandings?"

"Agent Ramses," Bellwether said as she raised a finger and gestured forward, "Oversee the disposal of the alcohol, would you? Once the officers of Precinct Five take their pictures, of course."

The one-armed sheep gave her a nod and then turned to his fellow agents. "You heard the director,"
he said.

The other agents immediately followed him to the trapdoor, which Judy had left open, and climbed down into the crawlspace. It left the main area of the club occupied only by Nick, Judy, Keeshan, and Bellwether. Keeshan hadn't moved from her spot, simply staring down at the little sheep. "We're always happy to cooperate," Keeshan said, sounding anything but, "But you'll understand if I have my own officers watching the disposal."

"By all means," Bellwether replied, and then she turned to head back up the stairs.

"Walk with me, Agent Hopps," Bellwether said, and then added, after glancing briefly at Nick, "Alone."

The ewe immediately turned and started walking up the stairs without seeing whether or not Judy was following. Nick looked down at Judy and simply shrugged. "Somehow I think I'll manage," he said.

Judy quickly caught up with Bellwether and followed as she walked away from the Thief of the Night. Judy struggled as to whether or not she should break the silence first before Bellwether finally did so herself when they were a good half a block away from the club. Bellwether stopped suddenly, and then turned around to look back at the commotion. The cars that the Bureau of Prohibition agents had shown up in looked particularly shabby in comparison to the police cars. Although both had arrived in Model Ts, the ones that the Bureau drove were showing their age to a much greater extent; even the black paint on the Bureau's cars looked duller. The club was positively swarming with police and prohibition agents though, the latter taking the laborious task of hauling the many bottles of alcohol out of the Thief of the Night and pouring it into the gutter.

Even from half a block away, Judy could smell the faintest whiff of alcohol, and she thought that the smell would probably linger for a long time. "Well, Agent Hopps," Bellwether said, "I suppose congratulations are in order."

Judy turned and looked down at her boss. "Thank you, ma'am," she said.

"It's not a complete success, of course," Bellwether added, taking off her glasses and polishing the lenses with her lacy handkerchief, "I knew that Quill was up to something—why would I have sent you to the Thief of the Night otherwise if I didn't?—but I had so hoped that I could catch Lionheart too and you've completely ruined that."

The ewe shrugged philosophically as she put her glasses back on. "But Quill is a decent catch, for your first attempt. I can't imagine it'll take much to get him to talk."

"Actually, he said that someone would kill him," Judy said, "He wouldn't say anything else."

Bellwether regarded Judy, her expression difficult to read. "Why, you're only a rookie, don't forget," she said, "You did the best you could, bless your heart, but you'd better believe I have ways of making mammals talk."

"But—" Judy began before Bellwether waggled a hoof at her, clucking her tongue.

"Ah, ah, ah," she said in an irritatingly sing-song manner, "It's time for you to listen, understand?"

Judy began to say that she did before seeing the look on Bellwether's face. Any trace of warmth was completely gone, her features hard and cold. Judy simply nodded, and Bellwether relaxed a degree. "That's good," she said, "Now, let's face the facts. Before I sent you into the Thief of the Night, I said that all I wanted you to do was see whether or not they were selling alcohol. The murder must
have been something of a shock, I'm sure, but you just couldn't leave it alone, could you? Keeshan can't be trusted any more than, why, a fox in a hen house—"

At this, Bellwether paused to give a significant look at Nick; even from a distance in the poor lighting his red fur stood out from the other mammals, particularly because unlike the prohibition agents busy at work hauling alcohol out of the crawlspace he was simply leaning against the wall of the club. "—but she had a suspect. All we had to do was let Quill re-open his vulgar little club and try moving his product in a panic. I'm sure it would be to Lionheart. He's been getting sloppy ever since Biggliani's arrest. Poor thing just doesn't have any brains behind that bluster, and I was so close to getting him."

"Medvedeva has to be innocent," Judy protested, "She couldn't—"

"Innocent? The White Widow?" Bellwether interrupted with a little chuckle, "Gosh, when you get married I'm going to feel sorry for your husband."

Judy tried changing tactics. "She could have stabbed Carajou or broken his neck, but she couldn't have done both."

Bellwether regarded her coolly. "So you see? She doesn't have to be innocent. All she needed was an accomplice."

Before Judy could voice a word of protest, Bellwether put a hoof on top of her paw briefly before taking it away. "I know you try to see the best in mammals, and that's wonderful, really it is. But these are predators, Judy. You can't trust them to act civilized."

"But—"

"Now, now," Bellwether said soothingly, "Maybe I was a bit harsh. Sometimes I care a little too much too. Why, if I had my way, there wouldn't be all these awful gangs, but the best we can do is make sure we come down hard. Medvedeva, Carajou, Wilde... Predators are all the same. They see kindness as a weakness, and as one of my agents you can't be weak."

"I wouldn't have found the crawlspace without N—without Wilde's help," Judy said. It wasn't necessarily true, but Judy thought that Nick deserved his fair share of the credit. She might have eventually noticed the trapdoor or the loose floorboard on her own, but she hadn't been able to smell the broken bottle of scotch until she had been down in the crawlspace. In her haste to give credit where it was due, she worried that Bellwether might have caught her slip up, referring to her partner in a way the sheep would likely consider overly familiar, but if Bellwether noticed she didn't mention it. "You're modest, too. I like that," Bellwether said, "But if you built a cabinet, should the hammer take credit? Of course not; it's just a tool, and what matters is the skill behind the tool. It looks like you've been doing a wonderful job so far getting your tool to do what you want it to do, but you ought to be careful. If you miss a nail with a hammer and hit your thumb, that's not the hammer's fault."

The intended meaning was completely obvious, but Judy felt as though Nick had become significantly more helpful once she had apologized for the very thing that Bellwether seemed to be suggesting she do—to treat him as a disposable tool—and started treating him as an equal. She forced herself to swallow the words she wanted to say and nodded. "I like to think I can admit when I'm wrong," Bellwether continued, "And I was a little hasty right after your unfortunate arrest. I think you've shown you've got some real talent for the work, even if you do still need some training."

Bellwether reached out to touch Judy's paw again, and the ewe's expression looked completely
sincere. "I think you've still got the makings of an excellent prohibition agent," she said, "After this whole mess gets put to bed, I'd be honored to have you stay on. If you do decide to become an officer, I think you'd be exactly the kind of officer the Bureau needs supporting it."

Judy was momentarily dumbfounded. It was not at all the direction she had expected the conversation to go, and it took her a moment to respond. "Thank you, ma'am," she said.

"You're earning it," Bellwether said, smiling, and then she started walking back towards the Thief of the Night.

"How's the other part of your assignment going?" Bellwether asked, "Have you found anything we can use to throw the book at the fox?"

Judy felt her stomach fall. Bellwether apparently remembered rather keenly her request to find something to arrest Nick for. "He's... very careful," Judy said, which was the truth, although she neglected to mention that she hadn't taken any effort to honor her promise.

Bellwether nodded sympathetically. "I'm sure," she said, "But he's bound to slip up. He's not as clever as he thinks he is, you know."

Bellwether apparently took Judy's silence for assent, and she continued, "But when you arrest Wilde, you can forget about Bogo's offer."

"Ma'am?" Judy asked, unsure of what her boss was implying.

"Bogo's not the only one who has some pull with the police academy, you know," Bellwether said, "I'd prefer to have you stay with the Bureau, of course, but if you can give me Wilde I can guarantee you a place."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "That's My Weakness Now," comes from a 1928 Helen Kane song. The lyrics are about how loving someone can make traits you never found attractive before suddenly become attractive because the person you love has those traits. I'm using it more for the title, as this chapter involves several characters having their personal weaknesses either discussed or exploited, particularly Bellwether's Faustian bargain she sweetens at the end of the chapter.

Police cars of the 1920s were sometimes equipped with pneumatic sirens, which use a perforated rotating disc to periodically cut off the flow of air through a tube to produce the distinctive sound. These sirens were typically either cranked by hand or ran off an accessory belt of the engine of the vehicle they were attached to, with electrically powered models coming later. These sirens could be incredibly loud—the city of New York actually eventually banned the Q2B siren, an early electromechanical siren, because of noise complaints. That'd probably be an even larger issue in the world of Zootopia, considering that there are many animals with much better hearing than humans.

Police cars of the 1920s did not, however, have police lights. A police car in 1927 might have a beacon or a searchlight, but wouldn't have the distinctive red "gumball" light that American police first started using in the 1940s, which were in turn later replaced by the blue and red lightbars that most American jurisdictions still use. This explains why the police cars aren't particularly visible at a distance; it was also quite common for early police cars to simply be painted black. By the 1950s, it was very common for American police cars to be black with white doors (since it meant that there was no special painting needed), but of course other countries have different paint schemes, many of them designed for higher visibility than just plain black and white.
"Tell it to Sweeney" is a bit of 1920s slang that's about equivalent to the modern expression "Find someone who cares." That is, you're not going to get any sympathy.

Keeshan's use of "aiding and abetting" to refer to what she suspects Quill to be guilty of is consistent with the legal use of the phrase; she doesn't think that he actually committed the murder, but assisted in planning or carrying it out. As Quill is being arrested, he wouldn't be going to prison immediately, but would instead be incarcerated in a short-term detention facility, probably quite similar to the jail that Judy ended up in.

It's not unheard of, particularly when it comes to organized crime, for certain people to die in custody; Quill is probably safer being held in solitary confinement, although that on its own can be a pretty severe punishment.

"Hard-boiled" was slang for "tough," which Quill certainly wasn't. Although "bad egg" does survive as a term for someone who is no good, there's an extra layer to it; in the 1920s an "egg" was slang for a person who lived a luxurious lifestyle.

"Lay off" was 1920s slang that was used as a request for someone to stop talking nonsense.

Bellwether telling Judy that predators see kindness as weakness is actually based off of an Al Capone quote: "Don't mistake my kindness for weakness. I am kind to everyone, but when someone is unkind to me, weak is not what you are going to remember about me."

I thought that was a somewhat amusing use of the phrase to parallel Bellwether's own failings with those of the infamous gangster; she certainly has a very wide streak of ruthlessness, and she may know just what buttons to push to get mammals to do what she wants them to.

Thanks for reading! As always, I'd love to know what you thought.
"That's—" Judy began, struggling to control her face.

"Very generous, I know," Bellwether said, apparently mistaking Judy's apprehension for raw gratitude, "But I want you to remember something, Judy. I expect loyalty because I reward loyalty."

The little ewe smiled and patted Judy's paw. "Keep that in mind, dear."

They were nearly back to the Thief of the Night, and Bellwether broke off to go talk to Ramses, who was overseeing two other agents pouring enormous bottles of champagne into the gutter. It left Judy alone with her thoughts, and the enormity of what she was risking with Nick came into an even sharper focus than before. Even if Bellwether had offered her Bogo's job, she wouldn't have betrayed Nick, but she hadn't fully realized the extent to which Bellwether wanted to see Nick punished.

The worst of it was that Bellwether probably wasn't lying, either. The ewe didn't seem to have many, if any, friends on the police force, but if she wasn't liked than she was at least respected. What kind of power did she hold, that even Keeshan didn't dare show her true feelings? What would Bellwether do if Judy didn't give Nick up?

Nick, unfortunately, was perceptive enough to realize that something was wrong when she walked over to where he was leaning against the wall, watching the work of the prohibition agents. "Why so grumpy, Carrots?" he asked, as he pushed himself off the wall, "Did Mrs. Grundy there read you the riot act?"

He gestured over at where Bellwether stood a fair distance away, engaged in a low conversation with the agents under Ramses' supervision. "Not really," Judy admitted, although she had to smile a little at his description of Bellwether, despite her mood, "She offered me a spot at the police academy."

"Hmm," Nick said, looking down at her with one eyebrow quirked critically, "What's the catch?"

Judy sighed and let her ears droop, not bothering to try keeping them upright. "She still wants you arrested."

"It's nice to be wanted," Nick replied, "Tempting offer though, don't you think?"

If Nick knew her well enough to tell that she had been left out of sorts by her conversation with Bellwether, she certainly knew him well enough to know that the casualness with which he asked the question was completely forced. Judy couldn't have said exactly what it was, but she could tell that he was far more interested in her response than he was letting on. "I'm not going to give you up," she said, with a forcefulness that surprised her, "Never."

"Never?" Nick asked, his ears perking up, "I could make you regret that, agent."

He wore a slight grin, and Judy laughed. "I know you won't," she said, looking up into his eyes.

Nick held her gaze a moment before he turned away towards the Buchatti. "Come on, then," Nick said, "Let's see what Monarch has to say."

They walked in silence to the Buchatti, and Judy was surprised at how much her mood had improved from her brief conversation with Nick. If he was worried about what Bellwether might do
when Judy refused to arrest him, he gave absolutely no sign of it. It would probably be the end of any hopes she had of being a police officer, as even if Bogo followed through and wrote a recommendation, Bellwether seemed like she might have the pull to have Judy's application rejected again. The thought should have been horrifying, and yet somehow it wasn't. Maybe it was because refusing to give Nick up was the right thing to do, but the thought was actually liberating. Perhaps she could never become a ZPD officer, but it wasn't as though there weren't other cities, or even as though there weren't other ways that she could be a force for good. It might be a setback, but what was one more of those? She had spent her entire life overcoming every obstacle that had appeared between her and her dream, and a small-minded sheep wasn't going to be the one that finally stopped her. Judy was going to see the case through, and if Bellwether thought that she would be a meek little bunny and turn Nick over for doing the right thing the ewe was in for the surprise of her life.

"What's Monarch like?" Judy asked as she climbed into the car, turning her thoughts back to the immediate matter.

Nick had claimed to have made a deal or two with the bear, and she thought that any insight he had could be useful. It wasn't what she expected, then, when he simply shrugged. "I've never met him, myself."

When he saw the expression on her face, he quickly added, sounding somewhat defensive, "I never said we made those deals directly. I just thought Zoya would be more open if she thought I knew him."

Judy repressed a sigh as Nick got the Buchatti started. Even when he was helping he never made things easy, and yet somehow she couldn't imagine having anyone else as a partner.

The Blue Glacier was even colder inside than the Thief of the Night had been, but that was about all that the two clubs had in common. Where the Thief of the Night had been seedy and cheap, the Blue Glacier was spectacularly impressive. Fitting the name, all of the walls and the ceiling had been painted in various shades of blue, from the pale shade of a robin's egg to a blue so dark it was almost black. The abstract blue patterns gave off something of the feel of being inside an enormous glacier, and the decorations only continued that impression. There were enormous, irregularly shaped blocks of ice scattered throughout the club with no kind of pattern that Judy could discern, but the blocks all shone with their own internal light from blue-shaded electric bulbs that had been frozen within the ice. The resulting low glow was somewhat unearthly, as the only other source of lighting came from dim green bulbs set into an abstract swirling pattern on the ceiling that cycled on and off in a way that almost seemed to make the pattern move.

The Blue Glacier was also built to a significantly larger scale than the Thief of the Night; Nick and Judy were easily the two shortest mammals compared to the club's patrons, and while the Blue Glacier had perhaps one-and-a-half times as much floor space, there was far less seating available. About half of the tall tables and stools had large mammals sitting at them, a significant portion of them predators. None of them seemed inclined to pay either one of them much attention, though, as they seemed more focused on their drinks. Although there was a narrow stage squeezed into one corner of the room, where an arctic fox vixen and two wolves, one male and one female, worked their way through something lively and up-tempo, the portion of the club set aside as a dance floor was mostly empty, the mammals in the club seeming mostly not to care one way or the other for the musicians.

The bar was set in the middle of the club and was an enormous ring, painted to match the rest of the club, and studded with green electric lights that shifted in time with the ones on the ceiling. Although the bar had at least twenty enormous bar stools spaced at regular intervals around it, the chrome
When Nick had described Mr. Monarch as the largest grizzly bear Judy would ever see, he hadn't been joking. The bear polishing the bar with a rag was not simply tall; he was enormous, easily more than eight feet tall and powerfully built. He looked to be in his mid-thirties or early forties, his shaggy brown hair neatly groomed and free of tangles. He was dressed in a simple blue suit, albeit one that looked apt to tear at the shoulders if he stretched too far, set off by a jaunty red bow tie so large that Nick could have worn it as a belt and still had enough material left to make a tie of his own. The reason for the lack of mammals at the bar might have been explained by the bear's expression; he was cleaning the bar as though it owed him money, and the scowl set into his thick features was so fierce that he seemed apt to start growling.

Judy tried not to let Monarch's fierce demeanor intimidate her, and she jumped up onto the stool in front of him and cleared her throat. "Excuse me? Mr. Monarch?"

The bear grunted and then slowly turned his attention to her in complete silence. His glare did not ease even when he had what could be, for all he knew, a customer in front of him, and Judy continued. She pulled her badge out of her purse and showed it to him. "I'm Agent Judy Hopps, with the Bureau of Prohibition. I'd like to ask you a few questions about Zoya Medvedeva."

Monarch's polishing of his bar slowed to a stop. "De bu-row?" he asked, his words so thickly accented that it took Judy a moment to realize that he had said "The Bureau."

"I em not spee-king your tongue, boot a beet," he continued, "Sorry. No 'elp."

Monarch shrugged his massive shoulders and moved to turn away when Nick jumped up onto the bar stool to Judy's right and asked Monarch a question of his own.

"You're Canardian, aren't you?" Nick asked.

Monarch simply looked at him blankly. "Canardia?" Nick repeated, emphasizing the syllables.

"Canardia, yes," Monarch said slowly, the words thickened by his accent.

He regarded Nick with a somewhat puzzled expression before Nick spoke again. "J'en ai marre. Si vous êtes canardien, vous me comprendrez," Nick said.

"Tabarnak!" Monarch said loudly, his eyes wide with what could have been recognition or surprise.

Judy had no idea what he meant but she didn't think it was very polite. "Es-tu Wilde?" he asked, apparently recovering.

"Oui," Nick replied, smiling, "Si vous ne nous aidez pas, Zoya vous posera un lapin."

He briefly turned to look at Judy as he said the last word, a flicker of amusement passing over his features. The only word that Judy understood was Zoya's name, but it seemed to have the deserved effect. The intimidating air drained out of the bear, his shoulders sagging. Monarch leaned on the bar, so heavily that Judy could hear the wood groaning at his weight, and looked Nick in the eyes. "Chialez pas—"

"If you wouldn't mind speaking so that she can understand," Nick interrupted, gesturing at Judy.

Monarch nodded, and then started again. "Don't complain if I can't help much," he said.

His accent was still present, but not nearly as thick as it had been. "Anything you tell us would be
very helpful," Judy said.

"The police, they say that too," Monarch said, his words tinged with bitterness, "What makes you different, Agent Hopps?"

Judy regarded Monarch levelly. "I don't think Zoya is guilty of murder."

"Of course Zed is not a killer!" he said forcefully, "Except her horrible husband, who deserved ever so much worse."

His accent gave the words, despite their somewhat grim nature, an almost musical air, the word "husband" coming out as though it were missing the h and the d. "I tell the police the same, but they are not caring what a bear has to say."

"I care," Judy replied.

Monarch regarded her for a long moment. "She was always here, Monday nights. It is a very difficult job she has, but Zed is not a complainer. Always two drinks, I set up for her, an orange juice and a lemon Neighi. At that table."

As he spoke, he pointed at a table that was as far away from the stage as seemed possible, nestled partly behind one of the enormous lit up blocks of ice scattered throughout the club. The lighting in that part of the club was dimmer than in the rest of the area, and at the moment there weren't any mammals sitting in the section. "She come around nine thirty, ten, every time."

So far, everything that Monarch had said matched up with what Zoya had said, but none of it seemed particularly useful. "Did you notice anything different about her, this Monday? Did you see anything unusual?"

Monarch shook his head. "The club was very busy. We talk, but not this Monday. Sometimes Zed is, how you say, tired and sleeps at her table. She has a difficult job, as I have said."

Judy thought that, like Zoya, Monarch was glossing over something of a tendency of the polar bear to drink until she passed out, but she let it go without comment. "What do you talk about?" Nick asked, leaning in with apparent interest.

"Books, mostly," Monarch said, although he seemed puzzled by the question, "She lets me borrow her little mysteries, when she finishes them, and then we talk about them."

He smiled, and it made him look like a much younger mammal. "Sometimes we read the same book, chapter by chapter, and make our guesses as to how the mystery is solved. We never get it right, of course, but Zed is very smart. Much too smart to drive a truck, if you ask me."

Judy thought about how to phrase her follow up question delicately so that the bear wouldn't take offense, but Nick beat her too it. "Did she ever talk about a second job, to help make ends meet?"

The smile fled Monarch's face as quickly as it had arrived. "Never," he said firmly, and there was a warning glint to his eye.

Between Zoya's own denial and Monarch's, Judy thought that it was all but confirmed that the rumors about the polar bear working with one of the city's gangs were true; it would certainly explain the rapid shift in Monarch's mood. "What happened when you couldn't wake her up when you were closing the bar?" she asked, trying to get the conversation back onto safer ground.
Monarch lowered his head, his ears flat. "I was worried. Very worried. She wouldn't move."

He took a deep breath before continuing, and when he looked up from the bar his eyes were glistening. "I don't have a telephone, so I ran outside, crying for help. There were two officers on patrol. One of them, a goat, he come in and he shake Zed too."

He paused again, and wiped at his eyes with his rag. "She was confused. She fell off her chair onto that stupid little goat. He starts bleating like she's killing him, and then the other officer came in. So they arrest her."

Monarch squeezed the rag in one massive paw, his enormous claws on full display. "She did nothing wrong. Is my fault, for panicking."

Judy stood up on her stool and reached across the bar. Even as stretching as far as she could, she could barely reach the bear's other paw, which was resting limply on the bar. Her own paw was almost comically small in comparison to his, but she patted it anyway. "You care about her," she said soothingly, "You were trying to help."

"She is a good customer. A good friend," Monarch said, but he didn't flinch away from her touch, "Intentions don't matter. Results do."

Judy didn't know what to say to that. She understood what he meant, which was the worst of it. "Thank you," Judy said at last, "You've been a big help."

Monarch smiled, but it seemed sad, as she jumped off her stool. Judy was more inclined to believe Zoya's versions of events rather than the version in the police report, since Monarch's statement had aligned so well with hers. It was possible, she supposed, that they could have colluded to come up with a story, but that didn't make any sense—since Monarch had called the police, they could have easily avoided the need for a story by simply having him not call for help. Once he had called for help, they wouldn't have had the time to align their stories. Judy frowned, thinking it over. She was surer that Zoya was innocent, but it was unfortunate that Monarch hadn't seen anything useful. "Come on, Nick," Judy said, "Let's go to—"

She stopped once she realized that Nick was no longer immediately behind her, and turned in place to see where he had gone. He was only a few steps away from the bar, and the arctic fox vixen who had been singing on the stage when they had arrived in the club was looking up at him with an almost nauseatingly fawning expression. Judy quickly walked back to Nick, taking the vixen in as she did so. She was about a head shorter than Nick was, and even slimmer than he was. She was wearing a rather sheer blue dress that matched her eyes and exposed quite a bit of her fur. That fur was a rather dingy gray that looked somewhat sickly under the green and blue lights of the club; Judy thought it didn't have nearly the warmth or depth of color that her own fur did, and anyway it didn't look nearly so soft. The vixen fluttered her eyelashes at Nick, eyelashes that had been caked with far too much mascara for any decent mammal to consider proper; she must have been a real flour lover. The singer cooed at him insipidly. "You're a real hotsy-totsey foxy, ain'tcha?" she asked in a sickly-sweet voice, running a finger along his chest, "Why don't we get a drink before my next set?"

"I am, aren't I?" Nick replied, but he grabbed the paw she was touching him with and delicately spun around her until he was standing next to Judy again, "But look at that, my alarm clock's here."

He grabbed Judy's paw and started pulling her forward at a rapid pace, not looking back even when the vixen called after him. "You think you can give me the icy mitt?" she demanded, "For a little bunny? You don't know what you're missing!"
Once they were outside the club, Nick looked down at Judy. "She seemed to have the entirely wrong idea, didn't she?" he said, sounding amused.

Judy folded her arms across her chest. "Someone you know?"

Nick laughed. "My, I thought I was the one with green eyes. You wound me, Carrots. Is it so hard to believe that the vixens love this?"

He gestured up and down to take in his body as he spoke. "There weren't any in Podunk, you know."

Judy couldn't claim to be any kind of authority on what a vixen might find attractive, but she had to admit that—"Of course, it couldn't have gone anywhere," Nick said, interrupting her train of thought.

"What?" Judy asked, "Why not?"

She wouldn't exactly be happy about him pursuing romance—the case was far too important for either of them to waste time, of course—but certainly afterwards there would be time. Nick rolled his eyes. "If someone put something in Zoya's drink at this club, it wouldn't be a very good idea to have a drink there, would it?"

"Oh," Judy said, and what he said certainly made sense.

From what both Zoya and Monarch had described, it certainly seemed a plausible theory, although Judy doubted that the vixen would have been the one to tamper with Zoya's drink. Still, she wasn't sure why else Nick would have rejected the vixen's advances, especially since he had been rather alone for two years. "I'm sure all she wanted was my wallet," he said, "It really is nice to feel wanted, though."

It was Judy's turn to roll her eyes. Considering the motives of Bellwether and the vixen in wanting Nick, neither one could exactly be looked at positively. "Fine," she said, "I want you to give me directions back to that parking garage."

Going back to the Blind Tiger seemed to be the next logical step, and Nick nodded agreeably as they got back into the Buchatti. "Is that all you want?" he asked, and the roar of the car's engine spinning to life gave Judy a moment to consider her answer as he waited, smiling brightly.

Judy looked up at Nick. "For now," she said.

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "The Blue Room," comes from a 1926 show tune from the musical *The Girl Friend* by Rodgers and Hart. From the singer's perspective, it's about a room in the home he'll have when he marries his sweetheart that will be the perfect retreat for the two of them. Considering Monarch's obvious feelings for Zoya, as well as the setup of his club, it seemed an appropriate choice to me.

"Grummy" was 1920s slang for "depressed." "Mrs. Grundy" was slang for someone who was uptight and priggish, and while it's fallen out of common use it far predates the 1920s, referencing a character from 1798. The term did enjoy a fair amount of popularity in the 1920s, and is a pretty good description of Bellwether.

The ceiling lights in the Blue Glacier are intended to invoke the Northern Lights, although Judy wouldn't be familiar with them. The décor of the Blue Glacier would be somewhat tacky and gaudy.
by modern standards, but in the 1920s they were still cheerfully pushing the envelope on what could be done with electric lighting. It would certainly be impressive for the time period, though, and it isn't as though there aren't clubs in the modern era that don't go way overboard on the lighting.

Canarda as a pun on Canada uses the word "canard," which is French for "duck," and I simply used the same endings that English and French do for a resident of the country—"ian" in English and "ien" in French. However, nationalities are not capitalized in French, hence why that's the case in the French dialog I wrote.

I did my best to add to the story through my use of untranslated French; Nick uses some idiomatic phrases that don't translate exactly into English, but I'm providing the meaning here in these notes. Although my mother is a first generation immigrant who speaks French as her native tongue, she's not from France, so I never learned formal, proper French. I did put some effort into getting the language right, but any errors are entirely my own.

Nick's first statement in French translates to "I've had it. If you're Canardian, you can understand me," with "j'en ai marre" being a phrase about equivalent to "I've had it up to here."

Monarch's swear, "tabarnak," pretty clearly identifies him as being French-Canadian. In English, it's simply a vulgar form of the word "tabernacle," the locked box that churches store the Eucharist in. French-Canadian swearing relies mainly on blasphemous terms, of which "tabarnak" is the strongest.

After Monarch realizes that he can't pretend not to understand Nick, his question is simply "Are you Wilde?" Nick's following remark translates to "Yes. If you don't help us, Zoya will stand you up." However, he uses another colloquial expression; what he says would literally translate to "Yes. If you don't help us, Zoya will put a rabbit to you," since "poser un lapin" or literally "to put a rabbit" is a French expression that has the same meaning as the English expression "standing someone up."

The intended meaning, of course, is that Zoya will be in jail the next time that she would visit Monarch's bar if he doesn't help them, but Nick's little turn of phrase explains why he looks at Judy as he comes to the end of his statement.

Monarch gives another sign of being French-Canadian when he starts to say "Don't complain" using the verb "chialer," since it has a different meaning in the French they speak in France, where what he says would mean "Don't cry." His nickname of "Zed" for Zoya is another indicator of his heritage, as the United States is pretty much the only English-speaking country that says the letter Z as "Zee" instead of "Zed." Canada is among those countries where they say "Zed," and the Rush song YYZ (named after the airport code for Toronto's airport), for instance, is correctly pronounced "Why Why Zed."

I don't think it's necessary to understand exactly what they're saying to get the gist of it, but it was kind of fun to switch briefly to another language and use some of the nuances of it.

Arctic foxes aren't always white; while most arctic foxes do have a pure white winter coat, their summer coat is gray or slate blue. Since this story is set in the fall, an arctic fox's winter coat wouldn't necessarily be in yet. They're also smaller than red foxes on average, hence the height difference. A "flour lover" is 1920s slang for a woman who wears too much makeup, although perhaps Judy isn't being fair to the poor vixen."Hotsy-totsy" was slang for pleasing, an "alarm clock" was slang for a chaperone, and "icy mitt" was slang for rejection.

Nick referring to the color of his eyes is in reference to the green-eyed monster being an expression for jealousy, which dates back at least to Shakespeare's use of the phrase in *The Merchant of Venice*, although he may not have been the one to coin it.
Thanks for reading! As always, I'd love to know what you thought.
Once they had parked in the same garage as before, it didn't take very long to retrace their steps back to the Blind Tiger. This time, though, there was no question that the club was open. The soaped up window of the Blind Tiger glowed feebly with the club's internal lighting, and Judy could hear the faint sound of music as they approached the building.

Inside, the club didn't look too much different from how Judy thought it would, judging from the rough exterior. The lights were low, even on the stage where she could just make out a gazelle and two tigers playing something fast and lively. A haze of cigarette smoke made the interior of the club even dimmer, the cherry-red embers of lit cigarettes standing out like fireflies in summer from tables that were barely visible. The floors were roughly-finished wooden planks and the walls had been sloppily plastered, the unevenness of the surface and cracks visible even in the gloom except where the walls were covered with an assortment of advertisements for soft drinks and jazz records. None of the chairs in the club looked like they matched, running the gamut from straight-backed chairs that could have been stolen from the dining room of any middle-class family to rattan chairs that were falling apart. They were all different sizes, too, but no effort had been made to put either the chairs or the tables at the same level, although they had been ordered so that the shortest and smallest tables were closest to the stage and the biggest and tallest ones were furthest away.

Perhaps three or four dozen mammals were squeezed into the space, the open area for dancing a crush of bodies where mammals of all different sizes jostled each other. A pair of rhinos madly doing the Snarlston, the floor shaking with each syncopated kick, dominated the center of the dance floor, while smaller couples spun in their orbit, quick stepping as they avoided squashing even smaller couples or being squashed themselves.

On the other side of the room, separated from the stage by the dance floor and the broad swath of tables and chairs, was the bar, which looked completely out of place. In dramatic contrast to the rough surroundings it was a massive piece of polished mahogany, fine floral engravings covering the side of it facing the room. Behind the bar was an array of cheap shelves covered with empty bottles of all different sizes and colors, from a delicate little bottle of blue glass not much larger than an acorn to one made out of green glass that Judy could have fit inside if the mouth had been larger.

The bartender was a tigress who looked to be in her mid-thirties, and while she seemed unusually lean and no more than the average height for a tiger, she still absolutely towered over Judy and was far more powerfully built. The tigress wore a simple black dress that exactly matched the color of her stripes and made the white and tawny parts of her fur stand out in sharp relief. Despite the low lighting in the club, she wore a pair of sunglasses with perfectly circular lenses of glass so dark a green that they were nearly black surrounded by tortoiseshell frames. Although Judy knew that many felines had excellent night vision, it still seemed like an odd affection until she saw the edge of a thick scar protruding just beyond the edge of the left lens of the tigress's sunglasses and made the connection to the name of the club. The only possible conclusion was that it was called the Blind Tiger because it was run by a blind tiger, and when Judy jumped up on a bar stool and tried to catch her attention by saying "Excuse me," the tigress's reaction confirmed it.

The bartender's ears had shifted in Judy's direction before she swiveled her massive head, but while she was facing in Judy's direction her gaze would have been at least a foot or two too high to look her in the eye. "What'll it be?" the tigress asked; her voice was almost masculine, quite deep with a rumbling undertone that it seemed as though Judy could feel more than she could hear.

"I'm not here for a drink," Judy replied, and pulled her badge out of her purse and pointed it in the
bartender's direction before realizing how pointless the gesture was.

The tigress hadn't reacted at all, as she obviously couldn't see the badge, and Judy hastily continued, "I'm Agent Hopps, with the Bureau of Prohibition. I'd like to ask you a few questions about someone who might have come here in the past few days."

The tigress leaned down on the bar, bringing her head closer to Judy's. Up close, Judy could see that the edge of the scar she had seen wasn't the only one on the bartender's face; although the lighting in the club was too dim to actually see through the dark lenses of her sunglasses, Judy thought that the bartender might not have eyes at all, as there were several other thinner scars that were only mostly hidden by the sunglasses. "I can assure you, Agent Hopps," the tiger said solemnly, "I've never seen anything illegal going on in this club."

Although Nick didn't actually laugh, instead making a sound somewhere between a chuckle and a cough, Judy could see the beginning of a wicked smile that matched the one on the tigress's face. The tigress continued, her tone far lighter than before, "But I don't see anything these days, legal or not. Name's Ethel, by the way."

Ethel offered Judy a massive paw to shake, and when Judy accepted the tigress gave it a single delicate pump. "No pads," she observed, "Guess I'm right about you being some kind of bunny."

She turned her sightless gaze in Nick's direction. "So what's a fox doing with a bunny prohi?" she asked.

Judy was impressed that Ethel had been able to identify her species as well as Nick's, and especially in Nick's case without even touching him. If Nick was similarly impressed, he gave no sign of it. "I'm helping," Nick said with a winning smile that was presumably entirely wasted on the tiger. "Uh huh," Ethel replied, crossing her arms across her chest, "What's she got over your head?"

Judy looked down, her heart sinking. She couldn't blame the tiger for her assumption, because she was right. She had blackmailed Nick, and it didn't matter that she never would have been able to follow through on her threat. He had thought she could, and that was all that mattered. Nick briefly glanced in her direction before turning back to face Ethel. "Nothing, if you can believe that," he said.

Ethel leaned over the bar even further than she had when Judy introduced herself, bringing her nose within an inch of Nick's, her breath visibly moving the fur of his face. "Are you sure?" she asked, her upper lip peeling back from her massive fangs in a grimace that she probably meant to be intimidating.

Nick didn't flinch from her proximity, and simply said a single word. "Yes."

"I'll answer your questions," Ethel said abruptly, straightening herself up and turning her attention back to Judy, "Who are you looking for?"

Judy wasn't sure what it was about Nick's response that had convinced the bartender to cooperate, but she wasn't going to question it. "His name was Thomas Carajou. He was a wolverine, about forty years old, with part of his right ear missing and a big scar on the same side of his face," Judy said.

"It doesn't do me any good, you describing what he looked like," Ethel replied, her voice full of good humor.

"Carajou usually smelled like cheap cologne and he had breath like he ate a box of Den-Den a day."

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"Carajou usually smelled like cheap cologne and he had breath like he ate a box of Den-Den a day."
Slurred his words a little on account of that big scar and he was pretty touchy about it, when he felt like talking," Nick said.

"Oh, him?" Ethel asked, and Judy felt a sudden surge of optimism, "Yeah, I know who you mean. He came in here last week. Wednesday or Thursday, I think."

"Did he meet someone here?" Judy asked.

Considering that Carajou had been carrying a matchbook with the address of the Blind Tiger written on it at the time of his death, it seemed likely.

Ethel nodded. "He did. I would have tossed the pair of them out if they didn't leave."

"What happened?" Nick asked, and then he turned to Judy to add, "Crazy did always have something of a temper."

Surprisingly, Ethel shook her head. "Wasn't him who was the problem. It was that pal of his. He was hassling Isabel."

Judy exchanged a blank look with Nick, who simply shrugged, apparently unfamiliar with anyone named Isabel. Ethel jerked her chin in the direction of the stage, adding, "She's the one playing the piano and singing. Pretty good, don't you think?"

Judy hadn't paid much attention to the singer when she had entered the club, but she turned her attention to the stage. The gazelle was playing a scuffed upright piano, her dress of silver sequins reflecting what little light there was in the club as she moved. Judy had never heard the song that she was singing, a brightly optimistic piece about trying even in the face of adversity, but she had to agree with Ethel's assessment. "Anyway, I only caught the end of the whole mess," Ethel continued with a shrug, "Your Carajou's friend was a... pretty nasty fella."

"Nasty how?" Judy asked.

"Ask Isabel," Ethel said, and then she pulled a pocket watch from underneath the counter of the bar.

When she flipped it open, Judy saw that it didn't have any glass protecting the face, and Ethel delicately touched the hands. "They should be taking a break in about five or ten minutes," she said, and then flipped the watch closed and put it back under the counter.

"Any other questions?" Ethel asked.

"No thank you, you've been very helpful," Judy said as she jumped off the bar stool.

"Mmm," the tigress replied, "You watch yourself. Wouldn't want to be stepped on, would you?"

Somehow, Judy thought that she wasn't just talking about the dance floor, but she nodded. "We'll be careful," she said, and she grabbed Nick's paw and pulled him away.

"Well," Nick said once they were away from the bar and standing by an empty table, "You could go up on stage, pull out your badge, and demand that they answer your questions right now. I'm sure they'd be real cooperative and none of the mammals here would mind."

His tone was light, but the sarcasm was plain; although Judy had no idea how the musicians would react to being interrupted, she doubted that the rough-looking audience would be very understanding. "Or we could wait for them to finish their set here, with that little bunny foot tapping impatiently," Nick continued.
He glanced down at Judy's feet as he said it, giving her a wry smile. "Or..." Nick said, trailing off.

"Or?" Judy prompted him.

"Or I could teach you how to dance while we wait."

Judy did her best to imitate Nick's own customary look of smug aloofness, cocking her head to the side as she looked up at him with her eyes half-lidded. "What makes you think I don't know how to dance?" Judy asked.

Nick smiled, seeming delighted that she was playing along with him. "I didn't think you knew how to have fun, Carrots," he said, "I saw your apartment, you know."

Judy didn't have a ready response to that. When she had been living in her apartment, she had always told herself that the sacrifices she had made for the sake of her dream were worth it, that she would have time to enjoy herself in the city later. She realized, though, that she had nothing to show for the time she had spent in the city. She hadn't gone to any museums or movies or even just explored the city; she hadn't bought anything but food and law books. "I'll have you know my roommate in college took me along to a dance, once or twice," Judy managed at last.

"I'd put more money on 'once' than 'twice,'" Nick said dryly, and he was right.

Although Judy's roommate her first year of college had also been a bunny from the countryside, she couldn't have been more different than Judy. Rachel's primary goal in college had been to find a buck to marry her, and to that end had devoted far more time to parties and dressing up than she did to any of her classes. It had only taken her until the middle of their second year to succeed in her goal, and she had then dropped out when she had been pregnant for four months and married for two. Rachel had indeed succeeded in getting Judy to go to one party, but the experience had left much to be desired and Judy had flatly refused to attend any others. She was too concerned with her grades, and Judy realized that it wasn't just her time in the city that had left her with little to show for it; she had earned her degree, it was true, but that was about it. "And you're a floorflusher and not a four-flusher?" Judy said.

"Me?" Nick asked, putting a paw to his chest and giving her a half-smile, "Why do you think they call it the foxtrot?"

With that, Judy had allowed him to pull her onto the dance floor when the band went into their next song, which unlike the previous one Judy actually recognized. "Someone to Watch Over Me" was also, thankfully, a much slower song, which seemed like it would lessen her chances of embarrassing herself in front of Nick.

She told herself that no matter how badly she danced, it wouldn't be embarrassing. Nick was right that she could be impatient, and it didn't mean anything, after all—it was just a way to kill a few minutes. "How's your foot?" she asked abruptly.

"Getting better. You're not getting out of this that easily," Nick said, and she thought it was the truth; it had seemed as though his limp had slowly improved somewhat as the day went on.

Standing in front of him only emphasized how much taller he was; he could have easily put his chin on the top of her head if he had wanted to, and probably would have had to stoop a little to do so. "Come on," he said, "It's simple. Just follow my steps. Look: slow slow quick quick."

As he spoke, he grasped her right paw with his left, holding it straight out, and then positioned his right paw so that he was lightly touching her back right below her shoulder blade. Although Judy
had never danced a foxtrot before, as Nick started going through the steps she realized that she knew them from that one singular party she had attended in college when an overenthusiastic buck had taught her the dance as a rather flimsy pretense to get closer to her. "This is just the bunny hug!" she blurted.

Nick looked down at her, one eyebrow raised. "The bunny hug? Really?"

They slowly drifted across the dance floor, Nick seeming to effortlessly avoid the other couples who had also switched to slow dances. His touch was warm, and she could feel the slight roughness of the pads of his paws in her own and on her back. Though his paws were much bigger than hers, his grip was gentle, seemingly without pressure, and it barely seemed as though he was the one leading. "That's what we called it," Judy replied, trying not to sound overly defensive.

She tried not to look down at her feet, which slowly seemed to start feeling as though they knew what they were doing as she went through the simple pattern of the steps. Instead, she looked up into Nick's face, and found that he seemed completely at ease. "Is that right?" he asked, "No foxes to show you how to really dance?"

"No," Judy said, not pressing the point that so far as she could tell, there was no difference between the bunny hug and the foxtrot, "You're the first fox I've ever really known."

"And you're the first bunny I've ever really known," Nick replied, "There aren't a lot in the city."

Before Judy could respond, Nick led them into a sudden side-step, his tail curling around her as he avoided having it stepped on as an awkwardly dancing couple of beavers lost their balance and clumsily stomped as they tried to regain it. He pulled her about three inches closer, the already small gap between them narrowing until it seemed as though his presence filled all her senses. His faint musk seemed to be all that Judy could smell, and the sudden press of his tail and his body made the fur on her arms stand on end. She stumbled half a step herself, and Nick's grip grew marginally tighter as he helped her keep herself upright and then pulled himself away back to the proper distance.

"Sorry about that," Nick said, "But you're stiff as a board. Can't you relax a little?"

Judy swallowed and tried to force herself to loosen up. "I'm not much of a dancer," she said.

"Oh, don't sell yourself short," he said, "You're not stepping on my feet, which is more than I can say for some of the other partners I've had."

He gave an amused chuckle and shook his head, and Judy could only imagine what kind of dance partners he was remembering, and how long ago it must have been. She doubted he had done any dancing in Podunk, but maybe there had been someone he had left behind when he had left Zootopia. He hadn't mentioned anyone, and the slim file that the Bureau of Prohibition had on him certainly hadn't referenced any sort of girlfriend, but Judy suddenly wondered just what that file was missing.

"You're really something special, you know that?" Nick asked.

Judy looked up into his face, but he didn't seem to be teasing. "You have your own moments," she said.

"Is that right?" Nick asked, a slow smile spreading across his face as he leaned in, his nose almost touching hers. Judy could feel his breath against her as he carefully pulled his left paw free of her grip and slowly brought it up until it brushed the side of her face.
The touch of Nick's claws against Judy's face was feather-light, but his expression changed in an instant as he made contact, any trace of playfulness evaporating. "I did this, didn't I?" he asked.

It took Judy a moment to realize that he must have seen or felt the claw marks he had left on her face when he had been blindly panicking, trying to free himself while her apartment burned around them. "Nick—" Judy began, but he pulled himself away entirely, standing up straight and taking a step backwards.

"I'm sorry," he said, standing completely still except for his tail, which lashed back and forth in apparent agitation, "But why didn't you say anything?"

It was impossible to read anything in his face but hurt, and Judy realized just how guilty he felt about knowing that he had hurt her.

"It wasn't your fault," Judy protested, "You couldn't help yourself. Besides, I'm the one who got you into this whole mess."

"I couldn't help myself?" he repeated slowly, and Judy fumbled for words.

"You were panicking, right? I mean, I'm sure it was just..."

She trailed off, unsure of how to finish the thought. "I know you didn't mean to do it. I... I didn't want you to feel bad."

Nick sighed. "You have a real way with words, don't you?" he asked, shaking his head, "You're not going to keep me safe by lying."

Judy looked at the ground. It hadn't even occurred to her until he said it that there was absolutely something that Bellwether could get Nick for without Judy's help if the ewe had noticed the scratches across Judy's face. Bellwether probably dreamed of pinning something major on Nick, but she would probably be happy if she could get him for assaulting a Prohibition agent. She'd have no qualms about pressing for the harshest punishment the law allowed, and the courts weren't likely to be lenient. "I'm sorry," Judy said, "I should have told you."

There was a pause that seemed to stretch into eternity as the last notes of the song played, Nick regarding her in silence.

"Song's over," Nick said, glancing up at the stage, his ears flat against his skull, "Come on."

The audience burst into polite applause as the musicians made their way down the short staircase off the stage. In that instant, surrounded by mammals all joined by their appreciation of the music, with Nick just a few feet away, Judy had never felt more terribly alone.

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "There's Yes! Yes! In Your Eyes" comes from a 1924 Henry Burr song. The lyrics are about what the singer's love interest says not matching up with what he sees in her eyes.

Ethel was briefly mentioned in chapter 1 and now finally shows up in the story. Her sunglasses are true to what would have been available in the 1920s. Glasses of any sort at the time would have been made out of glass, and the technology available for tinting lenses meant sunglasses were typically a dark gray or green. Tortoiseshell frames were also quite popular in the 1920s.
Rabbits and hares don't have pads on their paws the way that cats and dogs do, hence Ethel's observation following her shaking Judy's paw. In real life, tigers don't rely on their sense of smell very much for hunting, but their sense of smell is still much better than a human's. Considering that Ethel is blind, she'd have to rely mainly on her sense of smell and her hearing when it comes to identifying mammals; as previously mentioned, real foxes do have a pretty distinct scent so it makes logical sense that she'd be able to tell that Nick's a fox by smell alone. When she leans in close to Nick and peels her lip back, she's exhibiting the Flehmen response, which many mammals exhibit to transfer pheromones to the vomeronasal organ, a sensitive olfactory organ that appears to be either entirely missing or nonfunctional in humans. Ethel's not trying to intimidate Nick, but rather is trying to get a better sense of how he smells and draw conclusions from that.

The song that Gazelle and her band are playing when Judy and Nick are talking to Ethel is, of course, supposed to be "Try Everything," which is presumably also the original song that they played for the record label agent in the first chapter of this story. I think the song could work pretty well as a jazz song, and there's really nothing in the lyrics that explicitly ties it to the 21st century. "Someone to Watch Over Me" also appeared in the first chapter as the song that the agent actually enjoyed, and it seemed thematically appropriate here as well.

Ethel's pocket watch is actually a real design that has been used for blind people. Since a blind person can't see the hands of a watch, designing the watch in such a way that the hands can be touched allows them to read the time. The downside of this design is that it leaves the delicate hands of the watch exposed, so most watches of this style will have a flip-up cover to protect them.

"Four-flusher" is a bit of slang that comes from poker, referring to a hand of cards that's one short of a flush, and means someone who makes an idle boast or bluff. "Floor-flusher" is 1920s slang derived from that term, and means someone who loves dancing.

I could hardly have a story set in the Jazz Age with so many stops at clubs without having some dancing, now could I? The foxtrot is a real dancing style and was quite popular in the 1920s, although it hit its peak popularity around the 1930s. Vernon and Irene Castle, a married couple who were professional dancers who were popular on Broadway and in silent films, are generally credited with popularizing the style with their appearance in Irving Berlin's first Broadway musical, *Watch Your Step*, in 1914.

The way the dance is described in the story is, to the best of my ability, accurate to the way the dance is really performed, and the "slow slow quick quick" description is frequently how the fundamentals are introduced. In one of those coincidences that was simply too perfect not to reference, the style was indeed originally called the bunny hug.

Dancing in general was quite popular in the 1920s, and the foxtrot at its core is a very simple dance, which probably helped contribute to its popularity. The Snarlston is my bad pun on the Charleston, which was a real dance also popular at the time. The dance could be much faster and more demanding than the foxtrot, with flashy kicks and flourishes. Importantly, though, the Charleston can be danced in place, which means it's also fairly considerate for the rhinos to be dancing it rather than something that would take them across the dance floor where they could be a danger to smaller mammals.

Nick accidentally scratched Judy all the way back in chapter 8, and in this chapter he appears to be the first to actually notice it. Prohibition agents were, in actuality and for legal purposes, considered federal officers, and the penalties for assaulting such an officer can be quite severe.

This chapter has something of a downer ending, but I think it's an important piece of the overall story. As always, though, I'd love to know what you thought.
"Nick," Judy said, almost running to keep up with his longer strides.

She grabbed his paw and he came to a stop, and when he turned down to look at her his face seemed to change in much that it had when she had first met him and he had dropped the country bumpkin act. His ears went back up and the tension smoothed itself out of his face, his eyes back to being half-lidded and the ghost of a smirk playing across his muzzle.

"I'm touched that you care, Carrots," he said, and if his smile had somewhat less than its usual cockiness it was impossible to tell in the club's low light. He looked normal, and even sounded normal, but there was something that Judy couldn't quite put a finger on that seemed off.

"But a bunny like you... A fox like me..." Nick continued, "We wouldn't want any misunderstandings, would we?"

His tone was mild, but Judy could still feel herself wincing. He was absolutely right, and she should have known better. If anyone else noticed the claw marks on her face, they'd almost certainly jump to the wrong conclusion and it probably wouldn't end well for Nick. Judy ran her free paw along the side of her face, mussing up the fur again, and she looked up into Nick's face. "I should have known," Judy said, "I didn't mean to—"

"I let myself get carried away," Nick interrupted, airily dismissing her concern with one paw.

There was a brief pause, during which Judy struggled to think of a way to reassure him that panicking in the heat of the moment wasn't his fault and he certainly hadn't gotten carried away, before Nick spoke again.

"Also, you can let go now," he added.

Judy let go of his paw with a start. "Sorry," she said, and then turned back to find the musicians and hide the sudden flush in her ears.

The musicians were making a beeline for an unoccupied table, the two tigers on either side of the gazelle who had been playing the piano and singing. Nick inclined his head briefly, accepting her apology wordlessly although she could have sworn that his smile widened a degree at what must have been her obvious embarrassment. "Shall we go, then?" Nick asked, and Judy found herself incredibly grateful that he hadn't let the moment get too awkward.

"Yes," she said too quickly, "Right."

By the time Nick and Judy had made their way over to the table, Ethel was already there, setting a brown bottle that had been all but invisible in one of her paws in front of one of the tigers.

"This is a Beevo," the tiger who had the bottle placed in front of him said.

Judy couldn't quite tell the two tiger musicians apart; they were dressed in identical tuxedos and were so close in height and build that they could have been twins. The tiger who had spoken was right about his drink, though. Judy had never cared for the flavor herself, but she still recognized the shape of the bottle, with its distinctive long neck and bulging barrel-like body, and the illustration on the
label was unmistakable even in the poor lighting. Judy had just enough time to wonder what Nick thought of that mascot—an exaggeratedly feral-looking fox wearing red trousers and a jaunty green hat with a feather in it, covered in angry welts and fleeing from a cloud of bees, a bottle in one paw and a fish skeleton in the other—before the bartender spoke again.


The blind tiger gave the word a heavy and unnatural emphasis, and inclined her head a fraction of a degree in Judy's direction.

All three of the musicians turned and looked first at Judy, and then at Nick, and then back at Judy. The degree of synchronization was almost comical, and it continued when their heads went in Ethel's direction as she spoke again, gesturing vaguely in Judy's direction. "Agent Hopps here is a prohi. Said she had a few questions for you."

While the musicians looked back at Judy, Ethel added, "I'll come back around once the agent here is done," and then left.

Nick casually sidled up to one of the free chairs and set a five-dollar bill in the center of the table. "I understand you might be thirsty when we're done talking and the two of us leave," he said as he put the bill down, "It's not drinks that we're worried about. But where are my manners? I'm Nick, by the way."

"So what are you worried about?" the tiger who hadn't gotten the bottle of Beevo asked, his tone somewhat skeptical.

Although Nick had proffered his paw to all three of the musicians as he introduced himself, only the gazelle had shaken it at once, the two tigers only doing so somewhat grudgingly. "A murder," Judy said, taking a seat in the chair next to Nick's.

Before she could say anything else, the tiger who had received the drink visibly relaxed and plucked the five-dollar bill off the table, briefly inspecting it before it vanished into one pocket. "Is this about what happened in Tundra Town?" he asked, "We talked to the police, but they weren't this generous."

Judy exchanged a glance with Nick. He seemed equally puzzled at how the tiger knew that they were investigating Carajou's murder, but the tiger forged on, introducing himself and his fellow musicians. "I'm Bill. That's Frank. Isabel's the one who called it in, you know."

As he spoke, he gestured at them, not that Judy couldn’t have guessed which one was Frank and which one was Isabel. Bill's introduction did make Judy realize, though, that he obviously wasn't talking about the murder at the Thief of the Night. "You were at Tundra Town Lanes?" Judy asked, making the connection.

The report she had read on the shooting at the bowling alley that had a speakeasy hidden in a basement hadn't had much more detail than the article she had read in the newspaper the day that Bellwether had assigned her to her first field action, determining whether or not the Thief of the Night served alcohol. Although that had only been a few days ago, it felt as though months had passed, and Judy felt a flurry of excitement. It still seemed likely to her that the murders of gangsters over the past few months were all connected somehow, and now she might have witnesses for the murder that had immediately preceded Carajou's.

Frank frowned. "That's not what you were going to ask about?" he asked, obviously having seen her excitement.
"I want to hear about that, too," Judy said quickly, "Please, what happened?"

Bill turned to Isabel. "I think that's your story to tell," he said.

The gazelle had been so quiet to that point that Judy might have thought she was mute if she hadn't just heard her singing. Isabel took a deep breath, and when she spoke, her voice was soft, with an almost musical quality to it. "We were playing for Mr. Koslov," she began, "Sometimes he wanted live music, even when he was just talking business."

Judy did her best to contain her excitement. "Do you know who he was going to meet that night?"

Isabel shook her head, and the tuft of platinum-blonde fur atop her head ended up in front of one of her eyes. Offstage, she didn't look quite as glamorous as she did on. Her magnificent dress had a few spots where it was obvious that some of the countless silver sequins had fallen off, and her body language seemed entirely different. Isabel seemed more real, more vulnerable; somehow it was obvious that the strength and confidence she had as a performer didn't mean that she was always like that. In the moment, she was a mammal who knew that something terrible had happened to someone she knew, maybe even someone she thought of as a friend. "No," Isabel said, "No, when we left it was just Mr. Koslov and his usual pals. But he was acting funny."

"Funny how?" Nick asked, leaning in.

Isabel paused for a moment, seeming to gather her thoughts before she answered. "It was... It was like he knew something was going to happen," she said at last, "He asked me..."

She trailed off, apparently trying to remember the exact words the polar bear had used. "He asked me if it was hot in the spea—in there."

"Never was, not there," Bill cut in, apparently to cover her near use of the word "speakeasy."

"Always put my bass out of tune," Frank chimed in.

If the musicians wanted to maintain the polite fiction that they hadn't been playing in a speakeasy, Judy wasn't going to call attention to it as long as they kept telling the story. Isabel nodded her agreement. "He told me 'You and your tigers get some air. A cigarette break, for ten or fifteen minutes.'"

Judy frowned. The way that the gazelle had explained it, she had to agree that it seemed as though the polar bear had known that something was going to happen. But if he had the foresight to keep the musicians away, why hadn't he made any apparent effort to escape himself? Judy made a note to discuss it with Nick once they were finished, and she prompted Isabel to continue. "What happened then?"

"We scrammed," Isabel said, "As we were walking away, a car pulled up to the bowling alley. Something real big."

"A Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedan," Frank added, "Brand spanking new one."

Judy made a note of it, remembering that the fennec fox who had stored Nick's Buchatti for him had mentioned that the police had been looking for a Camellac Imperial Sedan. The report she had read on the Tundra Town Lanes shooting hadn't mentioned the model, but she guessed that it had to be the reason the police were looking for one. "Are you sure?" Judy asked.

Frank nodded. "This ain't my only job, you know," he said, gesturing towards the stage, "I'm a porter at a Chevolet dealership. The one in the Rain Forest District, I mean. Anyways, if the General
makes it, I know it."

Isabel shrugged. "If he says it was a Camellac Series whatever, that's what it was. It had its lights off, though."

"Did you see any of the mammals who got out of it?" Judy asked hopefully, but all three musicians shook their heads.

"It was too dark," Isabel said, "And once the shooting started..."

She swallowed, trembling a little, and Frank put one of his massive arms around her shoulder. The gazelle turned to him, patting his arm thankfully. "You fellas didn't see them either, did you?" she asked, and her voice at least was even.

Both tigers shook their heads. Judy had the idea that what they had said might be useful, somehow; if nothing else it showed just how poorly written police reports could be, although she couldn't guess as to why information had been left out. The report hadn't even referenced the musicians or the Camellac, although it had run to a fairly tedious length on the details of how many times Koslov and his associates had been shot. "Is there anything else you remember?" Judy asked, "Anything you think might help?"

The three musicians exchanged a wordless glance, and then Isabel shook her head. "So what were you planning on asking us about?" the gazelle asked.

"We're looking into the murder of a wolverine named Thomas Carajou," Judy said, "We heard he was here last week sometime."

"I remember him," Frank said, his lip curled into a snarl of obvious distaste, "Him and that friend of his."

"What happened?" Nick asked.

"It was last Thursday. We were taking our break, like we are now, and they were at that table."

Frank pointed at the table that was closest to the one that they were sitting at, and then continued. "I remember thinking he looked like the meanest son of a bi—"

Frank coughed, glancing quickly in Judy's direction before continuing, "He didn't look real friendly-like. Big ol' scar on his face, missing that ear... But that pal of his..."

When the tiger trailed off, Isabel picked up the story. "He was a gazelle. In his early forties, I think, a bit short. He had these giant silver sheaths on his horns, all engraved with little loops and swirls."

Judy glanced at Nick, who gave her a subtle shrug in response, apparently not knowing any gazelles who matched that description. "Acted like he owned the place. Real fancy suit, but he wasn't any kind of gentlemammal. He came up to me, put his hoof here," Isabel continued.

She turned in her chair and put one of her own hooves on the curve of her generous hip at the point where her tail met her back. "Said I was the most beautiful cow he ever saw. Said we ought to find a dark corner to make love in."

Isabel's disgust with the male gazelle was plainly written across her face, but she continued. "I told him not to touch me and I grabbed his hoof, but he was just laughing. He asked... He asked how much it was for a night."
Clearly the bull gazelle hadn't meant for a night of music, and the faces of Isabel's fellow musicians had darkened at the memory. "I stood up and told him Isabel ain't that kind of lady and he oughta leave before I made him," Frank said.

He said it simply enough, but Judy imagined how intimidating the tiger must have been in that moment; even if the male gazelle had been powerfully built, Frank would probably have been at least twice as big. "So then he asks if we know who he is, and I thought there was gonna be trouble. You know how mammals get before a fight? It was like he wanted one," Frank continued.

"Then that wolverine came over," Isabel said, "He took one look me and then he turned to that gazelle and he said, 'Eddie, she's not worth it.'"

"By then, Ethel had come over. She grabs this Eddie fella by the arm and she tells him he oughta leave and never come back. I think maybe he was going mouth off to her, but that wolverine, he says something like 'I ain't gonna lift a finger. You wanna pick a fight you can pick up your own teeth when it's done.' Then Eddie said fine and they left."

"You didn't hear them say anything else?" Judy asked, and the musicians all shook their heads.

"I'm sorry it happened," Judy said, "But thank you. You've been a lot of help."

Isabel shrugged and stretched across the table to pat Judy's paw. "Thank you," she said, "When you find the good in the world, you've got to grab onto it and never let it go."

Isabel pulled her dainty hoof back and rested it briefly on Frank's paw. She smiled, and for the briefest of moments it was with the same energy she had showed onstage. "But you already know that, don't you?"

Once they were outside the Blind Tiger, Judy turned to Nick, trying to put her thoughts in order. She felt as though they were on the verge of a breakthrough, and she wanted to be sure they didn't overlook anything. "Do you think this Eddie might be the one who stabbed Carajou?"

It made a certain amount of sense. A gazelle who had sheathed his horns with metal might have been able to stab through the wolverine's chest, especially if the tips had been sharpened. Eddie might have even had a grudge against Carajou for not being willing to fight with him, leaving aside any other reason he might have.

"It's certainly possible," Nick said thoughtfully, "But..."

Judy waited a moment as they walked back towards the parking garage. The streets were mostly empty except for the occasional car, and the dim streetlights didn't do much to fight the fading light of day. "Teddie," Nick said suddenly, "Not Eddie, Teddie. Carajou slurred his words because of that scar of his and they must not have heard him right. Teddie Scursly probably got tired of being called Littlehorns."

"What?" Judy asked, but Nick's growing excitement was obvious.

"Teddie Scursly. When I knew about him, everyone called him Littlehorns. His right horn was about this big, and his left one wasn't half that."

Nick briefly held his paws about four inches apart to indicate how small Teddie's horns were. "He hated it. There's a reason I never complained about everyone calling me Nicky, you know."
Judy laughed. She couldn't help herself, suddenly they had their first solid name they could connect to the murder and it seemed as though all of the pieces were falling into place. "I've never heard of Teddie Scursly," she said, "I want you to tell me everything you know about him."

Nick gave her a sidelong glance. "That might take a while," he said, "He was real small-time, but he must have hit it once Big went down."

"It's a long walk back to the car," Judy countered, and Nick nodded agreeably.

Before he could launch into his explanation, Judy thought about what Isabel had said before they had left. She wondered if the gazelle had been talking about Nick, but as she looked up at him, eager to help use what he had learned as part of Mr. Big's outfit to help solve a crime, she thought that maybe she understood.

Author's Notes:
The title of this chapter, “She Knows Her Onions” comes from a 1926 song by the Happiness Boys. Although the title seems somewhat nonsensical now, in 1920s slang someone who knew their onions knew what they were talking about. In this case, Gazelle has quite a bit of useful knowledge relevant to the case, and her last bit of dialog implies she might know something else entirely unrelated to the case.

"Beevo" is a pun on "Bevo," which was a real near beer that was most popular during Prohibition, although production stopped in 1929 when competition from actual beer smuggled into the US or illegally brewed in the US killed demand. As it turns out, most Americans at the time preferred to drink something that tasted like beer and contained alcohol. Bevo's mascot was Renard the Fox, the trickster of European fables. The fictional drink Beevo has a nod to this in its mascot, which I would imagine Nick is somewhat less than fond of.

Gazelle does a decent job of summarizing what happened all the way back in the first chapter, and it was nice to make this portion of the story loop back into the main narrative.

“Chevolet” is an awful pun on “Chevrolet,” the American car manufacturer. They were formed in 1911, and competed with Ford and Plymouth in the 1920s for the large market for reasonably priced cars. “The General” is a nickname for Chevrolet’s parent company, General Motors, which also owns the Cadillac brand. If Chevolet’s are sized for voles, Frank’s job as a porter is probably really easy for him, since the cars would be smaller than his paws.

“Making love” in the 1920s had an entirely different meaning than it does nowadays. Back then, it meant to have a private, romantic conversation, so it’s understandable how it became a euphemism for having sex. It can be a bit jarring to see in older works, though; probably the best example of this comes from the musical Singin’ in the Rain, set in late 1920s Hollywood as a film is hastily being converted from a silent film to a “talkie.” In the movie, the character of Lina, instructed to deliver her lines of dialog to her love interest so that a microphone hidden in a plant can pick them up, protests that she can’t make love to a bush.

Teddie Scursly’s behavior is still creepy and unacceptable, of course. His name is completely fitting for the physical aspect of his character, as the word scur means an incompletely developed or deformed horn. I don’t think it requires much explanation as to why he would be particularly touchy about having unusually short horns; in the real world male gazelles use their horns for fighting and to attract mates, so I imagine they would be something of a sign of masculinity in the world of
Zootopia. Horn sheaths seem like the sort of thing that might appeal to the vanity of horned mammals, both for the decorative aspect and to add length.

There was a lot going on in this chapter; as always thank you for reading. I’d love to know what you thought!
Let's Have Another Cup of Coffee

As Nick described what he knew about Teddie Scursly, Judy quickly realized why the gazelle hadn't immediately come to mind for him at hearing Isabel's description. Scursly had never been a member of Mr. Big's organization, so far as Nick knew, and had never been much more than a messenger who kept numbers games running smoothly and occasionally helped collect unpaid debts. "He wasn't anything special," Nick said with a shrug, "He wasn't particularly strong, or smart, or even loyal, from what I hear. If he's turned himself into a real billboard, covering those little horns of his in silver, he must have made good somehow. Could be that he made it as a hit mammal."

As they kept walking to the parking garage, Judy considered what Isabel had told them about Scursly compared to what Nick knew. "Do you think Scursly could have fit in the crawlspace under the Thief of the Night?" Judy asked.

Isabel had described him as being on the short side, but the gazelle's perspective was probably a bit different than either Judy's or Nick's; she herself would tower over Nick standing up straight, and the crawlspace hadn't even been tall enough for him. Nick stroked his muzzle thoughtfully as he considered the question. "Not standing," he said at last, "He had to have been at least six feet tall. On all fours, though..."

He trailed off and Judy considered the image his words conjured of a gazelle on all fours. Perhaps he had made a running start, knocking over the bottle of single-malt scotch that had led Nick to discover the hidden crawlspace, and then once he had reached the hole made in the floorboards raised his head and gored Carajou. "Those horn sheaths would have had to have been awfully long to reach Carajou," Nick continued.

Judy had been thinking the same thing and she nodded. "Do you have any idea where we could find Scursly?" she asked, and she tried not to be disappointed when Nick just shook his head.

"That might be one for the police," he said, "I don't know anyone who ran in his circles."

Judy nodded. "I guess we can head to the Precinct One station," Judy said as they approached the Buchatti.

"As long as we can stop for something to eat afterwards," Nick said as he climbed in.

Although Judy was feeling too excited to feel hungry herself, the last time they had eaten suddenly seemed as though it had been months ago. "Fine," she said as Nick started the car, "But it has to be something fast."

Nick nodded, anything he might have said swallowed by the roar of the Buchatti turning over, and they were off.

The moose who had been at the reception desk in the Precinct One station the last time they had visited must have had his shift end, because his position had been filled by a stocky ewe. The sheep was about twice Bellwether's size, the wool atop her head permed into little ringlets that splayed around her face with an unnatural rigidity that made her vaguely resemble Norma Sheared, although she probably couldn't have fit into any of the actress's dresses. Still, although she had looked at Nick with some obvious curiosity, she didn't say anything until after Judy introduced herself and showed her badge. "Oh my!" the ewe said, and her voice was gratingly breathy even though she had to have been almost forty, "A prohi, comin' in on my shift! Gosh! An' you, you a
She directed her question at Nick, who looked down at Judy with a somewhat bemused expression. "Not quite," he said solemnly, and then leaned over the top of the desk to whisper in the ewe's ear, a paw cupped around it in a conspiratorial fashion, "Real hush-hush stuff, you know."

Although his voice hadn't been above a whisper, Judy heard him clearly and had to resist the urge to roll her eyes as Nick tipped the ewe a wink and then stopped leaning on her desk. "Golly!" the ewe said, her hooves up by her mouth in amazement, "Whatcha need, Agent Hopps?"

"Is Chief Bogo in?" Judy asked, trying to maintain a straight face and a serious tone.

Sometimes the most frustrating thing about Nick was that he could still get the results he wanted even—or perhaps especially—when he didn't seem to be serious, but the more time that Judy spent with him the more she realized that the charisma he all but oozed only appeared effortless. "No, he went home 'bout an hour or three ago," the ewe said, her ears drooping in apparent disappointment at not being more helpful before they shot back up as she snapped her fingers.

"Ya can leave a message," she said brightly, and then started digging through the little cupboards on her side of the desk, "Here, we got this whole departmental memo thing. I'll give ya a red envelope. Extra urgent, ya know. It'll be the first thing he reads in the mornin'."

Judy exchanged a glance with Nick, who simply shrugged. She supposed that telling the chief about Teddie Scursly could wait until morning; even if they had wanted to go into the Zootopia City Hall records themselves, the building had already closed for the night. When the sheep finally produced a manila envelope with a bright red strip running across the flap and down its side, a piece of ZPD stationary, and a pen, Judy accepted the items gratefully and jotted down a quick note to the chief before putting it into the envelope and completing the address field that had been stamped onto it. She tied the envelope shut and gave it over to the ewe, who handled it as though it were made out of glass.

"I'll make sure Chief Bogo gets this the second—the very second—he walks through those doors," the ewe said, clutching the envelope delicately, "He'll about cast a kitten, he hears he missed this!"

Judy coughed delicately. "I'm sure he'll appreciate your help," she said, "Thank you."

The ewe waved them out of the station. "Ya can count on me," she beamed.

Once they were outside, Nick turned and looked down at Judy. "She seemed nice," he said, "Now how about some food?"

"I've had better pie," Nick remarked as he pushed the remains of his slice around his plate, "But you wouldn't believe how long it's been since I've had blueberries."

They were sitting in an automat that Nick had pointed out on the drive from the Precinct One station back to his house, and Judy had been willing enough to try it. The automat was all gleaming white linoleum and polished chrome under bright electric lights. The main cafeteria area that they were sitting in was mostly empty, and the few other mammals eating didn't seem to pay them any mind. The rows of vending machines that lined three of the four walls except the glass storefront offered up an incredible variety of foods—except, it seemed, for meats of any kind. The doors of the vending machines, each with a coin slot next to them to pay with nickels, were sized for mammals no smaller than Judy was, although they did increase in size until the doors along one of the walls were about as large as Judy herself was.
Judy couldn't complain much about the food herself, and the automat was a good place to talk while they might as well have been alone for all that the other diners spread out across the large cafeteria seemed to care. The furniture, matching the vending machines and the general decor, was all of a gleaming chrome Art Deco style, with circular tables with four stools bolted to them.

She was down to the remains of a turnip pie and half of a cup of coffee (decaffeinated, as Nick had said he didn't want her little bunny heart to explode) herself, having chosen not to take any kind of desert. Nick had polished off his own dinner, which consisted of some slightly wilted-looking mushrooms in a sauce she suspected had come out of a can, in short order along with two cups of decaf of his own. Judy hadn't realized how hungry she had been until after they had made their purchases from the vending machines and had sat down to eat; they had ended up eating in complete silence until Nick made his remark on the quality of the pie. "There weren't any blueberries in Podunk?" she asked.

Nick shook his head as he delicately wiped at his muzzle with a paper napkin. When he spoke again, she saw that his tongue was stained purple from his pie. "Afraid not," he said, "Plenty of apples, but not a single blueberry tree."

Judy looked at him. "Blueberry trees?" she asked.

"What?" Nick said, with an innocent look on his face that made it difficult to tell if he was teasing or simply trying to cover up for something he genuinely hadn't known, "I grew up in the city. I don't know all your fancy farming words."

He took a sip of his coffee and Judy changed the subject. "So what now?" she asked.

Nick set his cup down and leaned back. "There's not much more we can do tonight, is there?"

Judy had to reluctantly agree that he had a point. They had spent so much time running around the city that the night had seemed to evaporate; the few other mammals in the automat looked like they were all either naturally nocturnal or had chosen to work night shifts. She thought out loud, hoping to find their next move by talking it out. "We know Carajou and Scursly were together a few days before Carajou was murdered. If we can find Scursly, Dr. Tolmie could tell us whether or not he killed Carajou by goring him."

Nick nodded, seeming to remember as she did that the medical examiner had said that if they found a mammal with horns that he could prove by way of measurements whether or not they had used those horns to stab Carajou. A frown crossed Nick's face suddenly and he held up one finger in objection. "But even if Scursly gored Carajou, he didn't kill him. Someone else broke his neck."

Judy frowned herself. "There's an accomplice. Maybe someone who links the two of them together somehow."

Nick shrugged. "I don't know anyone who got along with the both of them. They didn't even work for the same outfits."

Judy thought about it from a different angle. "We still have a hotel room key," she said, "If we could find the hotel, maybe we can find something there."

The key that had been among Carajou's effects seemed almost as though it was taunting them; Judy felt sure that Carajou's room would be a treasure trove of clues, if only they could figure out where it was, impossible as it seemed at the moment.

"Find it how?" Nick asked, seeming to think along similar lines, "There are too many hotels it could
go to and it'd take forever to check them all. And that's assuming some hotel clerk didn't throw everything out after Carajou stopped paying after up and dying."

They lapsed back into silence for a moment. "What about the Camellac?" Judy asked at last.

"What about the Camellac?" Nick repeated.

"Your friend Finnick said the police tore apart his shop looking for a Camellac Imperial Sedan," Judy said, "It might be connected to the murders at the Tundra Town Lanes, but the police report didn't mention the car by model. What if it wasn't police officers who were looking, or what if—"

"Or what if there's a dirty cop trying to cover things up?" Nick interrupted.

"Not bad," he continued approvingly as Judy eagerly nodded in response, "Are you sure you didn't miss your calling for a life of crime?"

"I guess upholding the law takes a lot of the same skills as breaking it," Judy replied, "You know, you could always switch jobs again if you get tired of being a teacher."

Nick smiled briefly. "I'll make sure I consider my career opportunities," he said, and although his words had a teasing tone it wasn't a straight rejection.

"If all these gang murders are related, if we can solve one of them we can solve all of them," Nick continued thoughtfully, "It's a big maybe, but it makes sense to check on this car until we find Scursly or Carajou's hotel room."

Judy felt her ears fall as she realized that they were trading one difficult problem for another. If finding a hotel off just a key wasn't easy, finding a single car with nothing but the make and model didn't seem like it'd be any more doable. In contrast, Nick didn't seem fazed. "Ears up, Carrots," he said, "I think I know how to get to this one. Camellacs aren't exactly Model Ts, you know."

"Really?" Judy asked.

"Sure," Nick said, "I know a fella down at the DMV. We can head there tomorrow when they open."

"That's—" Judy started to say, but even with her sudden burst of excitement she had to stifle a yawn, "That's perfect!"

"Don't thank me yet," Nick warned, "But why don't we head back to my place before I have to carry you out to the car?"

Nick's house had a narrow garage hidden behind it, and he got out of the Buchatti and opened the large wooden door, making the rusty hinges squeal shrilly. While the Buchatti wasn't particularly large there were still barely two feet of space to spare once Judy had pulled it in, and even less on either side. The only dimension that it had easily fit in was height; the Buchatti was still by far the lowest car for a mammal of her size Judy had ever seen, and even if she had put her paws up while pulling it in she wouldn't have been able to touch the bottom of the door's lintel.

Nick gathered up the packages from their shopping trip, which were looking a little worse for the wear after having been strapped to the outside of a car for the better part of a day as they drove it around, wordlessly dismissing Judy's offer of assistance with carrying them, even when he was awkwardly balancing them against the side of the house as he dug through his pocket for the key.
Once he managed to get the door unlocked without dropping any of the packages he turned to face Judy and then to her surprise tossed her the key. "Put it on the ring with the Buchatti's, would you?" he said.

When he saw her expression, he added, "I've got a spare," but Judy was looking down at the cold piece of metal in her palm.

She felt as though she had been rooted to the doorstep, even as Nick easily slid past her on the way in, neatly stooping over to drop the boxes off by the inside of the door.

"You trust me with the key to your house?" she asked, before hastening to follow him inside.

Nick didn't immediately answer, turning on the lights and then collapsing into an overstuffed armchair. He gave an exaggerated yawn, his lips peeling away to show off just how many sharp teeth his mouth was full of, and then gestured to take in his parlor. The room was almost entirely empty, except for the armchair he was sitting in and a sofa. Both were upholstered in matching neutral gray fabric and stood on clawed feet of wood so dark they were almost black. The walls were completely bare, although there was a rectangular faded spot on the wallpaper (an almost Impressionist pattern of miniature tropical islands, complete with palm trees, in muted watercolors) that made Judy think that something had hung above the sofa at one time. "It's not like I have much worth stealing," Nick said.

Judy's eyes flicked involuntarily upwards in response. "But what about—" she began, thinking of his collection of records in the little room on the second floor, but he cut her off with a wave of his paw.

"As far as I know, you can't bust me for some records," he said, a slight smile playing across his face, "Or has that changed since '25?"

Judy shook her head as she put the key on the same ring as the one to his car. "Not yet," she said, and Nick chuckled.

The silence that followed was somehow companionable as Judy leaned against the sofa and Nick kept his position in the chair. Even lounging, he still seemed alert, and Judy broke the silence only reluctantly, watching as his ears pricked up at her words.

"We can make an early start tomorrow," Judy said, "See if we can follow up on that Camellac Imperial Sedan with this friend of yours at the DMV."

There still wasn't any evidence proving that the murder of Thomas Carajou was connected to any of the previous ones, but she couldn't shake the feeling that they were close to figuring everything out.

"He's on Otterton's list, too," Nick said.

"And that means he's trustworthy?" Judy asked after yawning.

She felt somehow tired and wired at the same time, and Nick's earlier yawn seemed to be pushing her further towards tired. Nick waggled a paw back and forth. "More or less," he said, and then stifled a yawn of his own.

"You can have the bed," Nick said, "I'm afraid I've only got just the one."

"Oh, no, I couldn't," Judy protested immediately.

Her parents had always drilled the rules of common courtesy into her and her siblings, and while sharing a house with a fox while investigating a murder fell far outside anything they had ever
provided guidance for, it still didn't seem right to take his bed and it wasn't as though it would be appropriate to share it. "Wonderful," Nick said, clapping his paws together, as he gave in with no resistance, "I'll get the spare sheets out of the closet. You can have the sofa."

He got up to do just that, and then, seemingly as though he had read her thoughts, he added, "Unless you wanted to share..."

He had thankfully been reaching into the closet as he said it and couldn't see her ears flush in reaction. By the time he had brought the sheets over to the sofa she had fully recovered and was ready to tease him right back. "And I thought you were a gentlemammal," she said, "But you're making me sleep on your sofa? Even after I let you sleep on my bed?"

Nick raised his paws, smiling. "I offered," he said, "You can't say I didn't."

He ambled off to get ready for bed himself and Judy set about making the sofa into her bed. It was more than large enough for her, and was actually more comfortable than her bed had been. By the time she was done, Nick had finished in the bathroom and had emerged changed into what looked like the same bathrobe he had taken the belt from when she had worn one of his shirts as a dress. "Night, Carrots," he said as he made his way up the stairs.

"Good night, Nick," she said, and watched as he vanished into the gloom of the unlit second floor, apparently having no need for the lights.

Once she had finished in the bathroom herself and climbed up onto the sofa and beneath the sheets, it seemed to take much longer than usual for Judy to stop her mind from racing as she tried to fall asleep. She felt powerless to stop herself from tossing and turning, theories and ideas about the case turning themselves over in a senseless flow, until she could hear, faintly coming from the upstairs bedroom, the sound of Nick's gentle snoring. She focused on the rhythm and her own thoughts fell away. It was almost as though Nick were right next to her, and at last she drifted off.

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter "Let's Have Another Cup of Coffee," comes from a 1932 Irving Berlin song written for the musical comedy *Face the Music* and was chosen in reference to the title of chapter 12, "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich and You."

Calling someone a billboard was 1920s slang for saying that they had a flashy appearance; I think massive and elaborately engraved horn sheaths made out of silver would qualify.

The sheep at the reception desk's hairstyle being a perm is somewhat fashionable for the 1920s, as shorter hairstyles for women were coming into fashion in the 1920s. Perming is a method of setting hair into waves or curls using heat, chemicals, or both together, and gets its name from being permanent—it affects the structure of the hair and will last until the hair grows out. The perming process was first developed in the 1870s, and advancements in electricity that made electrical heating elements cheap and practical quickly superseded the old method of heating tongs over a fire.

Norma Sheared, as mentioned back in chapter 4, is a pun on Norma Shearer, a real Hollywood actress somewhat popular at the time. As both Sheared and the unnamed officer are sheep, it made sense that the latter might imitate the style of the former.

To say that someone cast a kitten is to say that they had a fit; it's somewhat similar to the more modern usage of saying that someone is having kittens to mean that they're worrying.
I know I say this about just about everything, but fast food is an interesting topic from a historical perspective. In the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, advancements in transportation and refrigeration made it practical to ship fresh food long distances, and advancements in mechanization drove down the cost of producing many foods even as synthetic fertilizers increased yields. These factors together made access to a huge variety of cheap foods possible especially in urban areas, and it shouldn't be surprising that the concept of fast food began to develop modeled after the techniques that factories used.

White Castle, for example, was arguably America's first fast food chain, and it was founded in 1921. It was really the start of treating restaurants like a sort of industrial, assembly-line process that could take advantage of relatively unskilled labor to turn out a consistent product in much the same way that Ford could churn out cars. The proliferation of fast food restaurants would accelerate throughout the 1920s, and McDonald's would kick that development into overdrive in the 1950s. I recommend watching *The Founder*, a drama about the franchising of McDonald's that's a fascinating insight into the company's growth into a juggernaut.

However, the sort of assembly-line restaurant that's still common today wasn't the first attempt at fast food. The automat that appears in this chapter is a real kind of restaurant that really did exist in the 1920s; the first automat opened in 1895. As described in this chapter, automats were essentially cafeterias with a large number of vending machines that pre-made and ready to eat meals could be bought from. In the US, automats were most popular on the east coast and never really caught on in Chicago; Nick's wry observation on the quality of the food is one of the reasons that was blamed for their inability to get a foothold in Chicago, although the restaurant business is a rather difficult one even with high quality food. Automats in the US eventually fell out of favor due to completion from fast food restaurants such as McDonald's and due to inflation making it inconvenient to pay for food that required ever increasing amounts of small change; unlike McDonald's, automats didn't have cashiers who could break a bill.

Decaffeinated coffee did exist in the 1920s, as a decaffeination technique was discovered in 1903. Sanka, which derives its name from sans caféine (which is French for "without caffeine"), was on the market in Europe in 1903 and reached the US in 1923.

Blueberries do, of course, not grow on trees; they grow on bushes.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to hear what you thought.
Song of the Flame

Everything was burning. Even the sheet Judy was lying under was on fire, little tongues of flame licking hungrily upwards, and she tossed it away. Her eyes widened in horror as she took in the inferno that had once been the parlor of Nick's house.

Judy was surrounded by flames and clouds of choking black smoke so thick that she couldn't see the walls of the room around her. The fire roared, consuming what little there was in Nick's parlor with a furious intensity. The armchair was a smoldering ruin, a blackened heap of burning fabric and stuffing that had exposed the wooden frame beneath. Judy stumbled to her feet, looking around desperately, trying futilely to orient herself. Her nose twitched as she felt waves of panic going up her body, but no matter how she turned in place, looking desperately, her eyes couldn't pierce the gloom of the smoke backlit by the ever-growing flames. The windows, the door, and the stairs to the second floor could have been anywhere, and no matter how she tried to search her memory she couldn't remember where they had been in relation to the sofa she had abandoned, which was already charring into a shapeless lump.

Before she could pick a direction, she heard a piercing scream of agony coming from the right, a noise that didn't seem to have any right to have come from the mouth of any mammal. Judy almost clapped her paws to her ears as she shouted back. "Nick!"

There was no response, the scream continuing unabated, and Judy ran towards it, plunging through a cloud of smoke. The fire had made the parlor seem impossibly large; Judy was completely blind as she forced herself forward long past the point where she should have hit the wall, shouting Nick's name all the while. There were no thoughts in her mind; she was consumed entirely by trying to get to Nick, running as fast as she could through the haze.

It felt as though it could have been hours, but it surely couldn't have been more than a few seconds before she reached the wall that the staircase was set into. The wallpaper with its watercolor tropical islands was peeling away from the walls, the islands burning and twisting as the fire consumed them. The stairs themselves were warping, splintering apart as gouts of fire burst between the gaps in the boards, the flames nearly reaching the ceiling. As Judy had approached the stairs, the screaming had only grown louder and Judy didn't even hesitate as she threw herself up the stairs. "Nick!" she shouted, "Nick, I'm coming! Nick!"

There was still no response, and Judy took the stairs two at a time, ignoring their groans of protest as the weakened boards took her weight. The stairs were as endless as the parlor had been, and there was still no respite from the flames. The instant that she reached the top of the staircase, the stairs collapsed behind her, but the noise of their fall was barely audible over Nick's continued screams, which only got louder and louder the closer she got to his bedroom.

The upstairs hall had been painted instead of wallpapered, but the walls burned all the same, blackening and falling apart. Judy raced down the hall as quickly as she could, ignoring the flames creeping up the walls. The door to Nick's room of records had been left open and she spared a glance on her way past, seeing that the shelves had all been consumed by the endless flames. The records had melted onto the floor into a boiling black puddle that burned on the surface, an oozing tendril stretching out of the room.

When at last Judy reached the door that led to Nick's bedroom she flung it open and a wave of fire and choking black smoke instantly billowed out. Nick's screams drowned out any other noise that Judy might have heard and she unthinkingly leaped through the fire. Once Judy was clear of the smoke, her frantic cries of Nick's name died in her throat as she stumbled to a stop less than a foot
from the bed and what was in it. That can't be Nick, she thought, It can't be Nick.

The screams of agony were coming from the thing in the bed, which had only the barest possible resemblance to a fox. It was the same brilliant red-orange that Nick's fur was, but it didn't seem to have so much as a single hair on its body. The thing was burning, little wisps of fire glowing in a hideous mockery of fur over a horrible mass of blackened bones and lumpy seared flesh. Its arms, which were unnaturally long and thin and terminated in claws that took the place entirely of its fingers, were bound to the headboard of the bed with cuffs.

Judy stood, rooted in place, as the thing turned its head to her, and if its body had been bad its face was impossibly worse. There was no skin attached to the skull, which glowed at the center of a writhing mass of red-orange flame the same as the rest of its body. There were two spots atop the skull where the fire burned higher in crude imitation of ears, and the empty sockets of its eyes sparkled and danced with brilliantly green flames the size and shapes of coins above a yawning jaw full of yellowing fangs.

The thing stopped its horrible shrieks as it saw her, and its right arm reached forward, the chain of the cuff binding it to the bed glowing a dull orange as the links first stretched like taffy and then broke, sending splattering drabs of metal to the floor. The droplets hissed as they vanished into the flames filling the room, and the fires burned higher as the creature's arm kept moving inexorably forward until it could grasp Judy's forearm in its twisted claws. "Nick," Judy moaned in a bare squeak, all rational thought leaving her as she realized that the thing was Nick, reduced to little more than a skeleton by the fire.

Nick's voice was like a shovel being hit against a concrete floor, a harsh and metallic buzz devoid of any emotion. "This is your fault," he said, and his grip on her arm tightened as he pulled himself forward, the other cuff beginning to stretch and distort as he brought his other arm to bear.

"This is your fault," he repeated in the same empty tone, and then his other arm was gripping at her as he pulled himself off the bed until he was standing upright, looming impossibly tall over her as those horrible green flames in his empty eye sockets burned into her eyes.

"You did this!" he snarled, and at last there was emotion in his voice, terrible anger that seemed as though it couldn't be constrained by his body.

The little flesh left atop his chest sloughed away to the floor, the flames burning around his body sending his bare ribs into sharp relief as he looked downwards. "Nick, please," Judy begged as she finally found her voice, but he seemed to be beyond all reason.

Nick's grip grew tighter and tighter. "It's all your fault," he said, and his jaw stretched wide, the flames flickering around the fangs as he leaned in. His tongue was a curling horror of charred flesh that lashed out, incredibly long, nearly touching her face.

"Nick!" Judy cried as she struggled against the grip he had on her arm, but it was useless.

Her paw had gone completely numb in his inescapable grip and his jaw was nearly around her neck. "Nick!" she screamed.

"Carrots?" Nick asked.

Judy's eyes snapped open as her perspective entirely changed. She was still lying on the sofa and she threw the sheets aside as she flopped into a sitting position. Her head had been resting on her right paw, and the sudden painful tingle of pins and needles in it told her that it had gone to sleep beneath the weight. Nick was standing in front of her, his eyes glowing faintly in the dim pre-dawn light that
filled the parlor—the parlor that didn't have any fire whatsoever in it, not even so much as a candle—from the streetlights and the moon. Judy thought that she could read concern in his eyes as he began to say something. "What's wrong? You were screa—"

Nick didn't get any further before Judy tightly hugged him, and suddenly there were tears flowing down her cheeks, her words coming out in ragged sobs. "I-I d-dreamed... I dreamed..."

Judy couldn't see Nick's expression with her face buried in his torso, but she didn't care. His body was wonderfully solid against hers, wonderfully real and warm, and he awkwardly patted her back. "It was the fire, wasn't it?" he asked, and his tone was gentle.

She nodded miserably, completely beyond the ability to find words as she sniffl ed, trying to bring her tears under control. Her heart was still racing and she could feel her limbs trembling as Nick gently disentangled himself and sat beside her on the sofa, one arm still wrapped around her. "I-I'm s-sorry," Judy said, "Y-you m-must... Y-you must t-think I-I'm a d-dumb little coward now."

She gave a weak chuckle that she didn't feel at all, but Nick just shook his head. "I think you're about the bravest mammal I've ever met," he said, and Judy looked up at him, tears still swimming in her eyes.

"R-really?" she asked.

"Really," he said, "The way you stood up to Lionheart? I've never even heard of anyone ever doing that to him before."

He was silent a moment as he pulled a plain white handkerchief from a pocket of his blue silk pajamas and gave it to Judy. "Of course, maybe that wasn't the smartest thing to do..."

He trailed off, a wry smile playing across his muzzle, and Judy laughed a little despite herself. "But you're a step ahead of any cop or prohi I've ever met before."

Judy wiped at her eyes, and she felt her breathing start to become regular again even as her heart continued to pound away in her chest. She sat there, feeling the companionable warmth and weight of Nick's arm around her shoulder, and she waited a long moment before she spoke. "Thank you," she said quietly, "But..."

He looked her in the eyes, apparently content to wait patiently as she pulled the words together. "Do they ever stop? The dreams, I mean."

Nick sighed, but he seemed to grasp her meaning perfectly. "I still dream about the warehouse, sometimes. Not often. But enough," he said.

Judy nodded slowly. She had expected about as much, but Nick continued. "You know, I probably would have screamed myself, the first few times I dreamed about that fire, if they hadn't kept me muzzled in the stockade."

His words had a lightness to them that she doubted he truly felt. Judy looked at Nick, wondering at what that must have been like. She imagined him, on a cot in a cell barely longer than he was tall, suddenly springing awake, his cries choked to muffled nothingness by a series of straps and twisted wires fixed around his muzzle. He must have seen her expression, and he gave her a lopsided smile that seemed to have a touch of humor to it. "Try to stay out of military prison, Carrots," he said, "That's my number one life tip right there."

"How did you handle it?" Judy asked.
"Alone," Nick replied, "As best I could. But you're not alone."

Judy was silent as she took in his response, but suddenly she didn't feel as though she deserved him. "In my dream you were..." she began, and then had to swallow a lump of shame in her throat before continuing, "In my dream you were burning. You said it was all my fault."

She seemed powerless to stop the words, but she felt as though she had to admit to the awful truth. It was her fault that he had nearly died when her apartment had burned down. Her own shortsightedness, her belief in herself that had tipped into arrogance and her thirst to prove herself were all to blame, and although he had waved off an apology before, she still didn't feel as though she deserved either his forgiveness or his support.

"That was your dream," Nick said, "Not reality. Not me. You're trying to be better. It..."

He paused, and looked down, scratching at his muzzle with his free paw in seeming embarrassment. "It makes me want to be better too."

Judy could feel warmth flushing her ears as she decided that she had been right. She didn't deserve him, but if he was going to follow the investigation through, she owed it to him to do no less. The resulting silence was awkward, and Judy found herself suddenly fully conscious of the weight of Nick's arm across her and the press of his body against her side. Nick broke the silence suddenly, apparently changing the topic. "I was the only kit my parents had, you know. Our apartment wasn't too large, but I had a bedroom to myself."

Judy looked at him, wondering where he was going with his train of thought. Although her parents' home in Bunnyburrows had individual rooms for all the kits, that had been out in the countryside, where more land than anyone could ever need for a family was freely available for the taking. In the city, it must have been different, because Nick had spoken of his bedroom as though it were an unimaginable luxury. "When I had a bad dream, and I woke up all alone in that bedroom, do you know what my mother would do?"

Judy shook her head even as she studied Nick's face. Even in the dim lighting, it seemed as though some of his natural cynicism had washed away as he called up what seemed to be a pleasant memory. "She'd brush my tail and sing to me until I could fall asleep again."

Nick shrugged. "But you don't have much of a tail and I don't have much of a singing voice," he said, turning to favor her with his typical smile under his half-lidded eyes. "You could stroke my ears," Judy suddenly blurted, the words falling out of her mouth seemingly beyond her control, "And you could hum."

Judy immediately regretted the words as soon as she had said them, and she could feel her ears flushing again, this time with embarrassment. Touching a bunny's ears wasn't an overly intimate gesture, but it was a personal one, and surely a fox's tail was the same way. She expected him to say no, she expected him to tease her, but before she could say that she hadn't really meant it Nick spoke. "I could," he said thoughtfully, and his expression seemed as serious as he ever got, "If that's what you want."

"It is," Judy said, and her voice sounded much more natural than she felt.

She didn't expect Nick to follow through. She thought that he would draw away, the same way he had when he had noticed the scratches he had caused, or say that her joke had gone on long enough. But he reached out with his left paw, not moving his right one from where it was across her shoulder, and brought it to her ears with a surprising delicacy. She felt the fur of her ears stand on end, but she
didn't flinch.

The touch of his claws against the sensitive skin of her ears was feather-light, less than even pinpricks. He stroked her left ear gently, and Judy could feel the roughness of the pads of his paws—so unlike the furry softness of a bunny's—as he worked his way from the base of her ear to its black tip. Judy didn't think that any touch she had ever felt had been nearly as good, not even when her own mother had stroked her ears when she was a kit, and she shivered. Nick paused, hesitating with his paw suspended in midair. "That's not too hard, is it?"

"It's perfect," Judy said, and without even thinking about it she lowered herself against him until her head was laying in his lap.

She heard Nick take in a sudden sharp breath, but he stroked her ear again, and started humming something. Before, she had heard him humming through the door of the bathroom as he showered, but it was completely different so close to him. It seemed to resonate in his chest, and Judy could feel it as much as she could hear it. Her breathing started to even out and she recognized that he was humming the same song that they had danced to, but as she started drifting off to sleep the name of the song danced just outside her ability to remember it.

As Nick continued stroking Judy's ears, his humming stopped as he started singing, so quietly that she could barely hear him.

"There's someone... I long to see..."

She thought he had been selling himself a little short; he'd never sell out a concert hall, but his voice, even at a whisper, was rich and sweet. "I'm hoping that she... Turns out to be..."

Judy could feel the pleasant beginning of sleep starting to claim her, her limbs growing heavy as her brain slowly gave up consciousness. Judy couldn't remember a time, not even on the rare occasions she had held the entirety of her parents' love alone, that she had ever felt so secure. Her last thought was to remember the name of the song, and the words seemed to linger in her head. She could feel a smile work its way across her face as she thought the words just as Nick came to them.

"Someone to watch over me."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Song of the Flame," comes from the title song of a 1925 Gershwin stage musical. Considering that this chapter features (a dream) of fire and singing it seemed appropriate to me, although I had debated about whether I should name the first chapter something different so that I could use "Someone to Watch Over Me" as the title of this chapter.

Writing Judy's nightmare was an interesting challenge for me, because I tried to make it seem like an actual nightmare; hopefully it works. Granted, the only real frame of reference I have for dreams of any kind are my own, and the experience may not be exactly universal. One of the things that I was careful with is that, despite dreaming of being in a fire, at no point does Judy have any sensation of heat, which was a deliberate choice to make it more dreamlike, as well as the apparent distortion of the physical dimensions of the parlor and the impossibility of Nick's screaming, to say nothing of his appearance.

This chapter marks the third appearance of the song "Someone to Watch Over Me," and this is the chapter where my reason for choosing it should become apparent based on the lyrics. I will note that Nick didn't get the lyrics of the song exactly right, but there are a few reasons for that. The first, and
most obvious one, is that the song was originally performed from the perspective of a woman about a man and Nick swapped the gender of the pronouns. This isn't too unusual; Frank Sinatra performed a pretty good cover of it that I recommend listening to. Second, Nick would have only heard the song for the first time when he and Judy danced to it—the song was first released in 1926 and he wouldn't have exactly had access to the latest hits in Podunk at the time—so it should be understandable if he didn't remember it perfectly. The third reason is a somewhat meta-reason; the song isn't in the public domain, so I couldn't simply reproduce the lyrics.

Judy heard Nick hum back in chapter 9, through the door of the bathroom while he showered as described, and the resonating quality that she notes in this chapter would seem to imply that he's more or less purring when he hums.

As a side note, Nick's voice actor, Jason Bateman, actually has a decent singing voice. He's not going to win a Grammy any time soon, but you can hear that he's surprisingly good singing "Eternal Flame" in the 2002 romantic comedy "The Sweetest Thing."

Due to how this chapter occurred without any change in setting or advancements in the case from the last chapter, I really don't have too much to add in terms of historical notes, except about the quality of mental health care in the early part of the 20th century. During WWI, shell shock was recognized as a symptom that some soldiers suffered from, but the medical science of the day couldn't make any determination as to the cause. What we now recognize as post-traumatic stress disorder was attributed to everything from natural cowardice to brain trauma caused by the shockwaves of exploding shells to carbon monoxide poisoning. Soldiers were occasionally, although rarely, executed for exhibiting shell shock under the guise of punishment for desertion.

Military commanders of the time tended to try to avoid medical recognition for shell shock due to the common view that it represented a lack of character on the afflicted soldiers' part. This view was not uncommon even into WWII, when the terminology of combat stress reaction began to see use; in 1943 General Patton infamously struck soldiers who had been hospitalized for combat stress reaction, telling them that they should go back to the front line. Patton later wrote in his diary his belief that such soldiers should be tried for shirking their duty and shot.

Considering this background, and the fact that Nick's discharge from the military was barely a step above a dishonorable discharge, it shouldn't be too surprising that he's had to deal with the psychological repercussions of his near-death experience alone. Granted, even if he had been offered help I'm not sure that it'd be in his character to accept it. Still, I think this chapter shows the evolving nature of his relationship with Judy, particularly in his willingness to be there for her as no one was for him.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought.
Linger Awhile

Judy woke up to the distant shrill ringing of an alarm clock somewhere far away above her. As her ears immediately perked upwards at the sound, they brushed past something warm and fuzzy, and she twisted her head around. She had a moment of disorientation before remembering where and how she had fallen asleep what could have only been a few hours ago. She was still partially on Nick’s lap, his arm still loosely draped around her shoulder and his tail curled around almost touching her chest.

However, at some point he had sprawled against the sofa in an impressively boneless manner; the way his spine curled with the back of the sofa made it seem as though he was made of rubber. It had been Nick's chin that Judy’s ears had brushed against as they stood up, and his head was tilted back, his jaw partially open and his tongue lolling out one side to a truly surprising length, a thin ribbon of drool running past his gleaming teeth and down his neck. His eyes were still closed, but Judy could see his eyelids flicker as he groggily reacted to the alarm clock, his brow moving slowly up and down as his ears twitched.

It was about the single most undignified pose Judy had ever seen, and she could feel a small smile spread across her face as he muttered something that might have been, "Five more minutes."

Judy jumped off the sofa, watching as Nick's tail swished back and forth slowly at her sudden absence. "I'll get the alarm, OK?" she said.

Nick nodded, but otherwise gave no outwards sign of consciousness as she made her way up the stairs to his bedroom. Judy was somewhat surprised that Nick had set an alarm, and while she was grateful that he had apparently heeded her desire to get an early start it was just another one of the pieces that made up the puzzle that was her partner. Judy couldn't help but turn the thought over in her mind as she made her way closer to his room, the house lit up in the soft golden light of dawn. Nick cared about helping her solve the murder of Thomas Carajou; of that she no longer had any doubt. She wasn't nearly as confident about how he felt about her, though.

He had showed her a kindness that was truly remarkable in retrospect after her nightmare, but the question of why was one that she just couldn't answer. Only hours before comforting her, Nick had pulled away suddenly while they had been dancing. He had been very close then, so close that she had felt his warm breath against her face and his peculiarly musky scent had filled her nose. As Judy opened the door to Nick's bedroom, she suddenly lost her train of thought, the question of what he had meant to say before noticing the scratches on her face suddenly irrelevant.

Unlike the other rooms of the house, Nick's bedroom actually still showed the signs that someone had lived there. The scent of Nick was far stronger in the bedroom than it was anywhere else in the house, almost as strong as it was on his own body, but Judy was only dimly aware of the smell as she took in the room. The walls, it was clear, had been absolutely covered in photographs at one point in time, and they still were, to a large extent. The gaps where frames had hung stood out like missing teeth. The same island-themed wallpaper that lined Nick's parlor showed a similar distinct difference in the intensity of the colors where it hadn't faded as much where the pictures had once been displayed.

The master bedroom wasn't too much larger than Nick's room of records, and the bed that was tucked into one corner of the room, near a window covered with dusty curtains that let only a little light in, wasn't as large as she would have guessed. Although Nick had left the bed unmade when he had made his way down the stairs to see why she had cried out, Judy could see that it was covered with a crazy quilt that clashed spectacularly with the wallpaper. The quilt was made out of a stunning
variety of fabrics of all different colors and materials, everything from pink silk to midnight blue corduroy, and while there was no discernible pattern or logic to how it had been sewn the craftsmanship on display was incredible. Although Judy's own mother and many of her relatives and the other bunnies in Bunnyburrows quilted, Judy had never seen one so well-made. The quilt was covered with delicate embroidery of birds and flowers done in a variety of colors, each stitch impossibly neat, and Judy found herself wondering if Nick's mother had been the one to make it.

In the opposite corner of the room from the bed, near the door to a large closet, was an armchair that looked identical to the one in the parlor, although somewhat more well-worn. There was a beautiful standing lamp on one side of the chair with an elaborately made shade of iridescent glass, and on the other side was a short table covered with a neat stack of thick books on accounting with brightly colored ribbons of silk serving as bookmarks sticking out here and there. The closet along the wall near the chair exuded the powerful smell of mothballs, and behind the partially-closed door Judy could see the sleeve of a darkly colored suit jacket. Next to the bed was a small, plain nightstand with a hexagonal and vaguely snowflake-shaped doily on top of it. A glass of water, a wallet, a lone key on a ring, and a dusty alarm clock were on top of the doily, the alarm clock ringing so insistently that it was shaking the water in the glass.

Judy quickly shut the alarm clock off, seeing that it was 5:30 in the morning, and then took a closer look at some of the pictures on the walls before leaving the room. Although she obviously couldn't see the pictures that had been taken down, the ones remaining on the walls seemed to say something about Nick. She thought that they might have been taken in Purris, as she didn't recognize any of the buildings and the architecture somehow didn't look like Zootopia. It did look as though the buildings had been the focus of the photographs, not the mammals going about their business in the foreground of the shots. The buildings seemed to be clubs or cafes, tucked between taller and grander buildings, and Judy wondered what photographs Nick had considered important enough to take with him to Podunk and what it said about the ones that had been left behind.

With the alarm silenced, she could hear Nick shifting around downstairs and she pushed her thoughts aside and made her way back down the stairs. Nick was sitting upright on the sofa, stretching his arms wide as he yawned, which exposed every pearly tooth in his mouth. When he saw her, he seemed perfectly alert, although his bright green eyes were half-lidded as usual. "Good morning, Carrots," he said as he finished his yawn, "No more bad dreams?"

"No," Judy said quickly, and it was the truth.

Her sleep had been dreamless, and she felt as though she had to show him her appreciation. "Thank you," she said, looking him in the eye, "I really—"

Nick waved her thanks away, quickly cutting her off. "Don't get soft on me now, Carrots. I thought you prohis had a reputation to maintain."

He smiled, clearly teasing, and Judy thought that he might have been a little embarrassed at her gratitude, although there wasn't anything in his expression that she could have pointed out to support the idea. Maybe it was just what she wanted to see—or what she expected to see—but if he was going to tease, she could give it right back to him. "We do," Judy said, "But what about singers?"

"Singers?" Nick asked, arching one eyebrow in apparent confusion, "I'm afraid I don't know what you mean."

Judy approached until she was standing right next to him. Since Nick was sitting on the sofa, they were very nearly on each other's eye level, and she looked him dead in the eye. "I mean," she said, "That if teaching doesn't work out, maybe you can try a career in singing."
"Ah," Nick said, nodding slowly, "You must have been dreaming. A good one, I'm sure, if I was in it and fire wasn't."

He sounded entirely self-satisfied, his tone full of its usual smugness, but Judy again thought that perhaps he was covering embarrassment, and she pushed again before even realizing that the words were coming out. "I'll drag you up on stage when this is all done, if that's what it takes to hear you sing again," she said.

Nick's smile widened. "Only if it's a duet," he said, "When we paint the town red, of course. I have a very nice tux I can dig out. You'll have to get a dress covered in sequins, I think. Something..."

He moved his paws through the air in a vague hourglass shape that left no doubt as to what he was imagining, and Judy could feel her ears flushing at the idea of squeezing into something like the dress that Isabel had worn when they met her. The idea of standing on a stage next to a tuxedo-wearing Nick under the harsh glare of a spotlight in front of a crowd filled her mind, and Judy could feel her heart rate pick up a little at the thought. Nick's smile seemed to widen another degree at his victory, and he stood up briskly. "You can have the shower first," he said, "I'll see if I can scrounge a breakfast out of what I have here. Just try not to use all the hot water. Or..."

He let the word hang in the air for a moment, looking her up and down slowly before continuing. "Or maybe that won't be a problem, hmm?"

Judy blinked, unsure of what he was trying to imply, but let the point go, and went to the boxes of clothes that they had purchased the previous day, digging out something that would be appropriate to wear while Nick sauntered off to the kitchen, cheerfully humming something that Judy didn't recognize.

Judy stepped out of the bathroom after a quick shower, having changed into a plain outfit not unlike the ones she had typically worn into the Bureau office although it had been significantly more expensive. The neckline of Judy's white blouse plunged a bit more than she would have liked, and the skirt had a boldly geometric pattern of white and black lines and shapes rather than the tartan that she had favored, but the ensemble was comfortable enough and hid the worst of the damage to her fur from the fire. Judy had taken especial care to ensure that the scratches on her cheek in particular weren't visible before she left the bathroom, and she made her way to the kitchen.

An odd but not unpleasant smell filled the air, and Nick was standing at the stove top, wearing a plain white apron over his pajamas, cooking something. His ears flicked in Judy's direction as she entered the room, and he turned. "Perfect timing," he said, "This is just about done."

"What is it?" Judy asked, looking at the counter that was next to the stove as she tried to figure it out.

She knew that anything perishable would have long-since gone bad in Nick's house, which meant that the only things he could possibly be cooking with—unless he wanted to give them ptomaine poisoning—were canned goods. Sure enough, there were several empty cans lined up on the counter, but he had peeled the labels off and Judy couldn't tell what had gone into the dish, even when he turned around with the frying pan so she could see his work in progress. It was a strangely grayish and brown mass of ingredients that had been coarsely chopped. "Hash," Nick said simply, turning to continue cooking it, "Potatoes, onions, and carrots."

He shrugged, his back still to her. "I was a bit limited by what I had in cans."

Judy found herself glad that he couldn't see her skeptical expression, as the appearance of the dish didn't exactly inspire confidence. When he deemed it complete a few minutes later, serving it up onto
plates alongside mugs of instant coffee, the hash had turned a more even brown. The canned carrots had apparently been old enough to lose most of their natural orange coloration, and the vegetables were crisp on the outside and somewhat mealy on the inside, but the flavor—at least, the flavor that Judy could taste under the salt and whatever else Nick had used for seasoning—wasn't exactly bad. It wasn't exactly good, either, and Judy found herself taking frequent sips at her coffee.

Nick had opened a can of sardines to go along with his portion, and he ate the little salted fish with much more apparent enthusiasm than he did his hash. "If this investigation goes on much longer, I'm going to have to get some groceries," he said, pushing the remains of his cooking around.

Judy was relieved that he was under no illusions as to the quality of his cooking, and she nodded her agreement. "I can take care of the dishes while you get ready," Judy offered.

Nick wiped at his mouth with a napkin before setting it down. "Can you even reach the sink? I don't think I've got a stool," he asked.

Judy glanced over, realizing that he was correct as she looked at the sink in the kitchen. The counters had all been sized for a fox, not a bunny, and were awkwardly tall for her. His dining room table and the chairs around it, at least, weren't overly high, and Judy stood up and gestured at her chair. "I can use this," she said, and Nick shrugged his acceptance.

"Thank you, then," he said, "Much obliged."

With that, he left her to the dishes. Nick, she noted, went upstairs to his room for clothes rather than the boxes of clothes that they had purchased; his apparent disdain for department store clothes was seemingly genuine, and she supposed that since he didn't have to impress Fru-Fru he preferred what he had left behind. There wasn't much to clean up, and in short order Judy was done and left with nothing more to do than sit back down at the table, contemplating her coffee. They had eaten breakfast mostly in silence, and yet she had still enjoyed it. She almost regretted that, as soon as Nick finished cleaning up and getting dressed that they would be out the door, and she remembered suddenly what Nick had asked her right before promising to show her the city once the case was done.

He had asked her if she had ever done anything fun in the city, and at the time she had said that the answer was no. Now, though, as she sat at the dining room table, her coffee going cold in her paws, she realized that she hadn't been right. She had enjoyed something in the city—she had enjoyed her time with Nick.

When Nick emerged from the bathroom, impeccably dressed in a dark, slim suit he had paired with a green silk tie different from the one she had seen him wearing before, Judy thought to ask him about the mammal he knew in the DMV as they made their way to the garage. Nick sighed, fidgeting with his tie. "Look," he said, "You have to keep in mind how many cars the DMV has to keep track of, OK? Gordon's good, but this might not be very fast."

It was the first time Nick had mentioned the name of the mammal that he knew, and Judy dug out the list that they had received from Mr. Otterton, scanning it before finding the only Gordon on the list. "Gordon Acedia?" she asked.

Nick nodded, already opening the garage door. "That's him. He used to be a bootlegger, you know. A real demon on wheels, from what I hear."

Judy paused as she climbed into the Buchatti. "And he works at the DMV?" she asked, somewhat incredulously.
Nick shrugged. "Don't you government employees have good pensions?" he asked, "Maybe he's just hedging his bets."

Judy shook her head. "The pension's not that good," she said, thinking of her own pitiful pay.

With that, she started the car, and any further conversation would have to wait. It didn't take long for Nick to guide her to the DMV, which was in an unassuming building that still managed to put the Bureau of Prohibition office to shame. The Department of Mammal Vehicles was a relatively narrow, but extremely long, building that was an entire city block long in one direction but not even a third of that in the other. There were a number of shops perpendicular to it, from a notary public to a bodega that seemed to specialize in various kinds of leaves. The DMV itself, though, was rather plain and mostly windowless, simply built of brick and two stories tall. After Judy found the nearest street parking and they walked in, Judy was pleased to see that they were early enough that there weren't any lines, although it probably also helped that it was a weekday and most mammals would be either already at their jobs or getting ready to go.

The interior of the building was as bland as the exterior. The lighting was neither bright nor dim, and that middling quality extended to seemingly every aspect of the place. There was a relatively small waiting area with a number of scuffed wooden benches of all different sizes, and a long counter set up like the world's most lackluster bank divided the employees from the waiting area. The DMV employees could stand, like bank tellers, at spaces along the counter with cheaply set up dividers of plain wood just as battered as the benches. The floor was white linoleum, turning gray and dull near the counter where countless feet had walked or stood over the years. At one end of the counter, next to a series of steps so that mammals of just about any height would be able to reach it, there was a machine that had a slip of paper protruding from it under a sign that read "Please take a number and wait for it to be called."

Since there weren't any customers waiting, Judy ignored the ticket dispensing machine and directly approached the lone employee currently at the counter. The bored-looking llama towered over her and Nick. His wool was tangled and somewhat yellowed, which Judy guessed was cigarette smoke due to the powerful smell that seemed to linger around him and his cheap suit. "Excuse me," Judy began politely, "Could we—"

"Do you have a number?" the llama interrupted in a monotone.

Judy looked up at him, not entirely sure if he was being serious. There wasn't a single other mammal waiting their turn, and the llama clearly hadn't been doing anything before they went up to the counter. "I'm sorry," Judy began, "But—"

"Can't help you without a number," the llama interrupted.

Judy looked down at the ticket taker machine, then back at the llama. She sincerely hoped that he wasn't Gordon Acedia, but he had showed absolutely no sign of recognition at Nick's presence. Judy ran to the ticket taker, grabbed a number, and ran back to the llama, slapping the number down on the counter. "Yes, I have a number," Judy said in as even a tone as she could manage. The llama looked down at the slip of paper, and then back up at Judy. "This number hasn't been called yet," he said, "You're going to have to wait."

Although Nick seemed particularly amused by the llama's obstruction, Judy had enough, and pulled her badge out. "Look," she said, "I'm Agent Hopps, Bureau of Prohibition. I'm here on official Bureau business. Is—"

The llama's expression suddenly changed. He tugged at the collar of his suit, and any trace of
boredom was suddenly gone from his voice and expression, and he interrupted Judy yet again. "I
don't know anything about any booze, OK? Anyone tell you I got blotto last Friday is a liar, that's
God's honest truth."

The llama's voice had gained a whining quality, and the pitch of his voice and the speed at which he
spoke only increased. "I really need this job, Miss—I mean, Agent Hopps. I can't get Edisoned, I
can't."

His eyes were starting to tear up, and Nick reached over the counter, pulling the llama's own
handkerchief from where it had been messily stuffed into the pocket of his suit and offered it to him.
The llama took it wordlessly, taking in a deep shuddering breath as he dabbed at his eyes. "We're not
here about you," Judy said, trying to muster up some sympathy in her voice for the previously
maliciously bureaucratic mammal.

"Really?" the llama asked.

"Really," Nick said.

"Is Gordon Acedia in?"

The llama's face twisted in confusion. "Gordon Acedia?" he asked, "There's no Gordon who works
here. Do you mean Priscilla Acedia?"

"Good for Gordon," Nick said quietly, smiling to himself, and then spoke more loudly, "Sure, that's
who we meant."

The llama's relief was almost palpable, and he almost stumbled and fell as he opened the gate
dividing the area for customers from the area for employees. "She works in the archive room," he
said, pointing at a door behind the counter labeled "UNIT RECORD EQUIPMENT ROOM."

"She's definitely in today," the llama said, his words coming out in a babbling rush, "I know she did.
Come in, I mean. I saw her come in. Anything else you need you just ask, OK?"

"We just need to talk to her," Nick said, offering the llama his most charming smile.

"Thank you," the llama said, and he looked about ready to collapse in gratitude that they were
apparently done with him, "Thank you. I'm really sorry but we've got rules and I've got to—"

Judy looked up at him, and while she made no effort to intimidate him, he instantly fell silent,
nervously fumbling with his fingers. "Sorry," he murmured.

"Something to keep in mind for the next mammals who show up. Isn't that right, pal?" Nick asked
pleasantly.

The llama nodded so vigorously that his head seemed liable to fall off, and despite herself Judy had
to repress a smile as she followed Nick through the door.

The inside of the Unit Record Equipment Room turned out to be what consumed the vast majority of
the DMV's footprint. The walls were lined, floor to ceiling, with massive banks of filing cabinets,
although the individual drawers were quite a bit narrower than what Judy was used to. The center of
the room wasn't empty, either; there were still more filing cabinets, with perhaps two feet of
 clearance between each one, that stretched off into the distance. Towards the back of the room, there
was a small area free of filing cabinets, but the space was taken up by a staircase to the second floor
and a machine that Judy couldn't identify. It looked as though it had been built into a massive
wooden desk, and it was connected by tangled masses of wires to what looked like tables covered with metal boxes. The desk had an array of dozens of identically-sized dials on a large wooden segment that stood atop the desk's surface, which was mostly empty except for what looked like a complicated press and several small rectangular pieces of paper.

Near the mass of equipment was a much more ordinary-looking desk, which had a typewriter and a mass of paperwork on top of it, along with a few framed photographs and a name plate that identified the sloth behind the desk as Priscilla Acedia. She was typing with both incredible slowness and apparently incredible concentration, because it took a long moment after Judy said, "Excuse me?" for the sloth to look up.

Priscilla's eyes were magnified behind thick tortoiseshell glasses, and the fur atop her head had been sharply styled into a modern bob. She wore a sensible blouse and skirt, and the only ornamentation she wore was a plain gold wedding band. "Yes?" she said slowly as she looked at Judy.

"Hello, Priscilla," Nick said brightly, "It's good to see you again."

Priscilla's head turned so slowly that it was almost agonizing, and her eyes widened in recognition when she saw Nick with equal slowness. "Nick!" she said, "It's... good... to... see... you... too."

Nick leaned over on her desk. "This is Agent Hopps with the Bureau of Prohibition," he said, gesturing at Judy.

As Priscilla's face started working its way into an expression of concern, Nick hastily added, "It's nothing about Gordon. We're trying to find out who owns a car."

Priscilla's face relaxed again. "Certainly..." she said, "I'd... be... glad... to... help... you..."

"It's a 1927 Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedan," Judy jumped in quickly.

"Find... a... car," Priscilla finished her sentence placidly.

"It's a 1927 Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedan," Judy repeated.

Priscilla nodded with an agonizing slowness, and then wrote down the words, one painful letter at a time in a neat Palmer script, on a scrap of paper.

"This... will... just... take... a... minute," Priscilla said, standing up slowly and shuffling off towards the banks of filing cabinets.

There were a couple of chairs in front of Priscilla's desk, and Nick sat down, gesturing for Judy to do the same. "Like I said, this might take a while," he said.

Judy reluctantly took a seat and watched as Nick picked up one of the picture frames on the sloth's desk. It was three frames, hinged together, and he showed her the pictures. "Would you look at that," Nick said, gesturing at the banks
of equipment, "But it looks like ol' Gordon's a racecar driver now and a married mammal."

Nick shook his head and chuckled. "I never thought he'd settle down. Or that he'd quit the DMV."

Judy chanced a glance and saw that Priscilla was slowly shuffling back towards them, a box with a bunch of cards with holes punched in them seemingly at random sticking out of it firmly grasped in her claws. "Do you know what all this does?" Judy asked Nick, trying to distract herself.

Nick shrugged. "Some kind of index of everything the DMV has on file," he said, "That machine can read the holes in those cards somehow."

Judy watched as Priscilla carefully—or perhaps she was simply so slow that everything she did was careful—fed the stack of cards into one of the metal boxes sitting atop a table connected to the main desk, and then read the resulting values off the dials. It meant nothing to Judy, but it apparently told Priscilla something, because the sloth trundled off again. "It's faster than looking through all of these ourselves," Nick offered, taking in the rows of filing cabinets with his paws extended.

Judy tried to see the bright side of things, but her foot was already tapping with impatience. Nick noticed her leg bouncing, and turned to Judy. "Just don't make conversation and we'll be fine," he said with a smile, "They are pretty good at this."

Judy sighed. "I hate waiting," she said.

"Really?" Nick asked, "I hadn't noticed."

Judy rolled her eyes at him. "Ha ha," she said with all the sarcasm she could muster.

"Any dream worth having is worth waiting for," Nick said, "Or do you disagree?"

Judy considered her response. The only reason she had become a prohibition agent in the first place was because she was willing to keep working on her dream, despite the additional time it would take, rather than giving up on it. "I can wait," she said at last, "Just... Not forever."

Nick nodded agreeably. "So when would you give up?" he asked.

The automatic response—"I won't"—was nearly out of her mouth before Judy bit it down, considering the question. If she still hadn't been able to join the Police Academy when she was thirty, would she still keep working towards her dream? What about forty? Or fifty? At what point would she throw in the towel? "I don't know," Judy said.

The vague idea had already started to take shape in her head that maybe, if the police force didn't want her, there were still plenty of other ways she could make the world a better place. The idea was frightening, in its own way, and perhaps Nick saw some of her thoughts on her face, because he gave her a gentle smile. "Well, with luck you'll never have to find out."

Judy was still mulling that thought over when Priscilla finally returned, a slip of paper in her fingers. "There... are... two... 1927... Camellac... Series... 314... Imperial... Sedans... registered... in... the... city."

Judy had spent most of Priscilla's statement desperately wishing that the car model had a shorter name, and she eagerly took the sheet when Priscilla offered it.

Priscilla had given her a piece of paper with two names and addresses recorded on it, underneath a carefully-written header reading "Owners, 1927 Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedans." Judy recognized the family name of the first name on the paper; Henry Vanderbeaver had to be a member
of the wealthy and powerful family of shipping magnates, but the name meant nothing else to her. The second name, though, she immediately knew. There, in Priscilla's neat writing, were the words "Leodore Lionheart."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Linger Awhile," comes from a 1923 Paul Whiteman song. I chose it since it works for two different parts of this chapter—Judy's desire to continue to spending time with Nick, and their forced waiting at the DMV.

Crazy quilts are a sort of American folk art, inspired by exhibitions that took place in the late 1800s of English embroidery and Japanese silk-screening and pottery. The embroidery obviously owes its existence to the English inspiration, and the use of irregular pieces of fabric reflects the cracked glaze seen in Japanese pottery. A well-made quilt can last a very long time, and Nick's could easily be more than a decade old.

Nick's bedroom lamp being made out of iridescent glass is a piece that would have been very much in style in the 1920s. Tiffany lamps—lamps manufactured by Louis Comfort Tiffany's design studio with shades handmade out of leaded glass in a variety of patterns, from geometric designs to flowers—were extremely popular among the wealthy at the time, and advancements in glass working techniques meant that beautiful lamps could be made that were reasonably affordable for those who couldn't get a Tiffany lamp. Nick's lamp could actually be a Tiffany lamp, considering his previous wealth, although I think it's understandable that Judy wouldn't recognize this.

Judy's clothes are pretty stylish for the 1920s, when bold geometric prints started seeing increasing use in a variety of facets of life, including clothes. Plunging necklines, of course, have to be thought of in the context of the day; a blouse from 1927 would not be even close to risqué today.

Ptomaine poisoning is an old-fashioned way of referring to food poisoning that's largely fallen out of favor. The word "ptomaine" refers to alkaloids, which were believed to be the method of action by which bacteria in spoiled food caused illness. It's now known that the symptoms of food poisoning are largely caused by the bacteria themselves, not by the alkaloids that they produce as they break food down, which explains why the term has fallen out of scientific usage and is becoming increasingly rare in conversational use.

Canned foods will generally last two to five years before spoiling, although some foods (particularly tomatoes and other foods high in acid) will eat away at the can over time. Hash is probably most popularly known in the form of corned beef hash, a breakfast dish made of canned corned beef, potatoes, onions, and seasoning, which became popular in the years following WWII in the UK due to continued rationing. Indeed, the war had such an impact on the UK's economy that it wasn't until 1954, 9 years after the war ended, that rationing also ended.

However, hash has been made since at least the 18th century, and doesn't necessarily have to include meat, as is the case here. Although I'm a fan of corned beef hash myself, I'm not entirely sure that what Nick cooked up would be particularly palatable even if the ingredients had been fresher.

Nick asked Judy if she had ever done anything for fun in Zootopia back in chapter 19, when the answer was clearly no. That was also when he said that they'd paint the town red once solving the case, which in this chapter he's expanded to require her to wear something slinky and covered in sequins while he wears a tux, possibly with some singing involved.

Flash's name being Gordon Acedia has two references in it. Gordon is a reference to Flash Gordon, a science fiction action hero created in 1934, and "acedia" is a word meaning a state of listlessness,
carelessness, or torpor, and is the word that was translated as "sloth" for the deadly sin. Presumably, Flash would pick up his nickname in a few years once the character of Flash Gordon is created. It seems like an appropriate nickname for a racecar driver, too. Although it's not clear what kind of races he participates in from the photo, the history of NASCAR does have a linkage to Prohibition.

Although NASCAR is very much an American phenomenon, and is a form of racing that garners very little interest from other countries, its history is actually pretty fascinating. Its roots come from bootleggers who would modify their cars so that they could dodge the authorities and make deliveries, and they eventually started competing with each other in informal races. NASCAR was formally organized in 1948, and has only grown in popularity since then.

"Edisoned" was 1920s slang for being questioned.

The Palmer Method was a style of handwriting, intended for speed of writing and legibility, that was taught from the 19th through the middle of the 20th century before falling out of favor in the 1950s. It's a particularly nice and simple form of cursive, which can be beautiful in its own right if done well.

Although we think of computers as a pretty modern invention, there were indeed electromechanical computers in the early 20th century, and punch cards were actually invented and used on looms as early as 1725. Unit record machines first saw widespread use in the US following a problem that was realized during the 1880 census. One of the less well-known requirements of the US Constitution is for a census to be performed every 10 years. The census is used, among other things, to apportion how many representatives each state gets in the House of Representatives, so it's very important to get right. Unfortunately, the 1880 census was running against the limits of what could reasonably done by hand; it took eight years to tabulate the results. As the country's population was continuously growing, this presented a real problem for the 1890 census, as it was conceivable that the census could very well take so long to tabulate that the 1900 census would have already occurred before they finished.

The solution was to build unit record machines, and take the census data on punch cards that could be read by a machine, allowing a computer to tabulate the results. The 1890 census thus had its results ready much faster, and interest in unit record machines grew as other governments and private companies saw their value. Following a series of mergers and acquisitions, the Tabulating Machine Company of 1896 became the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company of 1911, which then became International Business Machines in 1924, a company that still exists as IBM.

Punch cards like the ones described in this chapter could be used to index information, and the cards manipulated by the machine to query the location of a particular file. This has a tremendous advantage over manual search methods, since rather than being limited to how the data is physically arranged, conceivably any attribute can be searched for as though the files were organized that way. Electromechanical computers are tremendously interesting to me, particularly because they show that information technology is much older than the Internet, integrated circuits, or even vacuum tubes.

Henry Vanderbeaver's name is a pun on the Vanderbilts, who were a wealthy family of shipping magnates still powerful in the 1920s.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought.
Judy barely remembered the sequence of events between reading the words on the slip of paper Priscilla had given her and being back in the Buchatti. Her excitement was so all-consuming that it had been little more than a blur of thanking the sloth and then grabbing Nick by the paw and pulling him as fast as she could go, past the rows and rows of cabinets full of punched cards, through the door to the lobby, and past the llama at the counter. She had spun past him, catching only the briefest glimpse of his startled expression as Nick nearly collided with him as they flew out the main door.

"Don't you see?" Judy said as she took the driver's seat, gesturing at the piece of paper forcefully before tucking it away into her purse, her paw suddenly clumsy as she dug the car key out, "This is it! Lionheart must have been involved. The police can get a search warrant and..."

Judy trailed off, as Nick had put his paw over the ignition right before she could get the key even halfway there. For the first time since receiving the piece of paper, she really looked at Nick. He didn't seem to share her excitement; in fact, he looked as though he was on the cusp of saying something but was struggling for the right words. None of his usual confidence was on display, his ears tipped back but not flat against his skull and his mouth set in a straight line. "Nick," Judy began cautiously, "What's wrong?"

Nick took his paw away from the ignition and let out a long sigh. "Just don't get too excited," he said at last.

Judy bit back her natural inclination to ask what he could possibly mean. They had, currently tucked away in her purse, evidence that proved that Lionheart had been involved in the Tundra Town Lanes shootings, and from there it logically followed that he was almost certainly behind the other murders, including that of Thomas Carajou. Instead, she waited for Nick to continue his thought, which he did with an incredible amount of delicacy. "Lionheart didn't get where he is by being stupid," Nick began, and when he saw what must have been the continued puzzlement on Judy's face he continued.

"He's got enough money to hire a great lawyer—a team of great lawyers—and if he is guilty—"

Nick cut himself off as he saw Judy's expression change, hastily adding, "Which he probably is," and continuing.

"He's not going to make this easy. The police are going to have one chance at making it stick and if they don't get it right..."

Nick was looking Judy straight in the eyes, and she could tell that he was being completely sincere. There was no guile in his expression, no sense of teasing or fun. As he grabbed her paw, gently squeezing it so that she could feel the cold metal of the car key in her palm and the warmness of his fingers around hers, she thought she saw concern in his eyes. "If he burned down your apartment because he thought you might pin this on him, what'll he do if you do and he walks?"

Suddenly no words seemed as though they would work. It was a chilling thought, made all the worse because Judy hadn't even considered it before Nick said it. Although she wasn't a police officer, Judy had read every book she could get her paws on when it came to the law, and Nick was right. It really was possible that if any kind of mistake was made arresting and charging Lionheart, he could somehow wriggle out of it. Even if the police didn't make any mistakes, there was no telling the lengths that the vicious gangster would go to in order to stay free. He might try his paw at tampering with juries or threatening witnesses or bribing judges; he could even try a jailbreak. However he did
it, it definitely seemed possible that he could walk free, and if he did it seemed laughably naive to think he wouldn't be out for revenge.

"I don't know," Judy admitted, and Nick sighed again, letting go of her paw.

She made no move to start the car, though, even with her paw free. Judy looked at Nick carefully, trying to figure out what he was thinking, but he seemed to have closed himself off, his expression carefully neutral as he looked ahead through the windscreen. "What do you think we should do?"

Nick looked over at her, and she was relieved to see that a small smile was playing across his face. "I think there's no way that you're letting this go. Am I right?"

Judy nodded, and for a brief moment Nick's smile lit up his features before he continued. "So we do this the smart way. Maybe Bogo will listen. Maybe he won't. But we don't go poking the hornet's nest if you don't like his answer."

Judy had a sudden mental image of the Beevo logo, with Nick in the place of the poor fox in his brilliantly red pants and green Alpine hat, running away from a ferociously stinging swarm. She almost laughed, despite the seriousness of the situation, and felt a pang of guilt for it. Although Nick hadn't mentioned the danger that he would be in from a vengeful Lionheart, he would almost certainly be in equally dire straits with the lion. "Of course," Judy said, nodding, "We do this the smart way."

"That's what I like to hear, Carrots," Nick said, leaning back in his seat, "You know, you're lucky to have me along for the ride."

His tone was teasing again, and Judy supposed that she could have taken it as an insult about her intelligence and come back with a clever remark of her own, but she answered sincerely instead. "I know I am," she said, and as she started the Buchatti she was rewarded by seeing Nick shifting in his seat a fraction of a degree, perhaps touched by the remark.

When they arrived at the Precinct One police station, the sheep who had been behind the reception desk the previous night was gone, her shift apparently over. In the ewe's place was the same moose who had been somewhat aloof and condescending the very first time that Judy had visited the station with Nick, but his demeanor was entirely different. Although the moose had been glancing at the contents of a folder that Judy strongly suspected had a magazine hidden inside of it when they arrived, seeming not to have a care for anything going on around him in the station, he had dropped his folder the instant Judy cleared her throat to catch his attention and his expression had rapidly gone from mild irritation to something that was either respect or a decent imitation thereof. "Agent Hopps," he said, and even his voice sounded warmer than it had before, "Chief Bogo is waiting to see you."

Judy exchanged a brief puzzled glance with Nick that the moose caught, and he coughed delicately. "He had a message sent to the Bureau of Prohibition. I'll... I'll let him know you're here."

Considering that Judy hadn't returned to the Bureau office in some time, she supposed that a message she hadn't seen made perfect sense and she waited while the moose used the intercom to buzz Bogo's office. While she waited for the chief to respond, she looked around the lobby of the building she had always dreamed of working in. On her previous visits, first after being arrested and then with Nick, she hadn't taken the time to appreciate it, and she tried to do so. Even though it was relatively early in the morning, the Precinct One station was a hub of activity, with some uniformed mammals obviously leaving to go on duty as others came off. The cacophony of noise filled the space without
embedding, and Judy could only catch snatches of conversations rising above the dull roar of voices. The lobby was well-lit by both electric lights and by skylights set high in the vaulted ceiling that let in natural sunlight that formed golden pillars dancing with particles of dust. Although the ZPD obviously saw an incredible amount of foot traffic, everything was clean and well-kept; the dark wood of the reception desk had a few scratches but it had been polished to a mirror shine, and the doors spread out around the lobby all looked study and secure with gleaming brass plaques identifying what was behind them. Judy caught a glimpse of the very same booking room that she had been to as a pair of pigs marched a scrawny female wolf through one of those doors, her paws cuffed and a muzzle fitted over her head.

Nick had been looking in the same direction and turned away when he saw the wolf, an expression of obvious distaste on his face, but Bogo answered the intercom before Judy could say anything. "Bogo," came the tinny voice; it was remarkable just how much power the buffalo's voice retained even when it came over a speaker.

"Agent Hopps is here," the moose responded, and Bogo's answer was almost immediate.

"Send her in," he said, and then the line clicked off.

The moose helpfully, although unnecessarily, pointed them in the right direction; Judy remembered exactly where Bogo's office was but thanked him all the same. To be polite, Judy knocked on the chief's door, waiting for his answer before opening it, and what she saw looked much the same as it had been before.

Bogo's office was still a model of efficiency and organization, and the buffalo was once again poring over paperwork when she entered, a little pair of half-moon reading glasses perched atop his blunt and massive snout. At Judy's approach to his desk, he removed his reading glasses and delicately folded the thin wires of their legs before putting them atop his desk. "Agent Hopps," he said by way of greeting.

Judy didn't think his tone sounded exactly warm, but there was something to it that she didn't think had been there before, and it stood out all the more by the way he greeted Nick. "Mr. Wilde," he said blandly, his voice gravelly, "Have a seat."

"I received your message," Bogo continued, and he held up the envelope that Judy had left with the ewe the previous night.

The string keeping the envelope shut had been broken, and Bogo obviously must have read it if he wanted to speak with her. Although she desperately wanted to explain the progress that she had made with Nick only that morning, she was curious as to what Bogo had to say and waited for him to go on. She took one of the chairs in front of his desk, despairing again at how short it was, and Nick took the other, his paws on his knees and his legs primly crossed while his tail moved slowly back and forth behind him through the space in the chair.

Bogo allowed the envelope to fall to his desk. "I am very interested in hearing how, or from whom, you learned about Theodore Scursly," he said.

Bogo's tone was even, without so much as a hint of emotion to it, although he had very deliberately looked from Judy to Nick on the word "whom." Judy thought back to what she had written in her note, which had been fairly general. "We," she began, emphasizing the word, "Went to the address on the matchbook that was in Carajou's pocket. There were witnesses who reported seeing Carajou with another mammal, a gazelle with silver-plated horns. From their description, Nick thought the gazelle might Scursly."
"You know, like real investigators would," Nick added; he had obviously noticed the slight at his expense from the chief of police.

"That's a remarkable story," Bogo said, and Judy couldn't tell whether or not he was being sarcastic, "Did you know Scursly well?"

The full force of the buffalo's gaze was focused on Nick now, and while Bogo seemed calm enough Judy thought that he might be moments from snapping at the fox. "Not particularly," Nick said, appearing unintimidated; he was casually inspecting the claws of one paw rather than looking directly at Bogo, "But I've got a good memory."

"I've seen how good your memory is when it serves you, fox," Bogo said, and at last there was real heat in his voice; he had nearly spat the last word.

He stood up to his full height and leaned across his desk, one massive finger pointing at the dead center of Nick's chest. "I have no patience for your little games," Bogo continued, and he started getting louder and louder, until he was nearly shouting, "What do you—"

Before Bogo could continue, Judy jumped out of her chair and positioned herself between his finger and Nick's chest. "He hasn't left Podunk for two years," she interrupted, "You can't think that he's involved."

Bogo glared down at her, his chest and nostrils heaving, but she forced herself not to flinch. "He's helping me," Judy said, more quietly, and Bogo slowly eased himself back into his chair, not taking his eyes off of her as his breathing slowed.

"Helping," Bogo repeated, and the word seemed to hang in the air.

Mercifully, Nick chose not to say anything, although since Judy was standing right in front of him she had no idea how he was reacting. "Yes," Judy said, and then hastily added, "Sir."

"You don't report to me yet, Agent Hopps," Bogo said wearily, rubbing one massive hoof across the bridge of his muzzle.

There was a long silence as Judy retook her seat, and Bogo took in a deep breath. "I might be able to use that," he continued, "Your… partner was right about something the last time you were here. At least half of my officers are corrupt in some way or another. I can't trust that these investigations will go anywhere if the culprit knows what we're doing. Mr. Quill's refused to talk and it seems my officers refuse to do their jobs properly."

Suddenly it seemed as though the weight of the world was on Bogo's shoulders, and despite his outburst at Nick Judy found herself pitying him. Although it had clearly been the wrong point to prod, Nick had been right when he had commented that the two of them had acted like real investigators. Someone from the police should have followed the same lead that they had, and even if they hadn't been able to make the connection to Scursly like Nick had, they would have had something. Instead, it seemed as though they hadn't bothered to look beyond Zoya Medvedeva.

Nick shot a look at Judy, rolling a paw in mute encouragement for her to respond. "We're going to see this through," Judy said, as firmly as she could.

Bogo inclined his head. "I'll tell the coroner to expect you," he said, and put his reading glasses back on as he turned back to his paperwork.

"The coroner?" Judy asked, her stomach falling as she realized what it almost certainly implied.
"Theodore Scursly was found dead in a stolen car alongside a Mr. Richard Bauson. The car was pulled out of the river this morning," Bogo said, looking at Judy over the top of his glasses.

That probably explained why Bogo had been so suspicious of Nick; leaving aside their earlier involvement when Nick had arranged to betray Mr. Big, she supposed that it must have seemed improbably convenient to Bogo that within hours of leaving a note for him about a potential suspect, that suspect had been found dead. Then again, there was no telling how many police officers could have read that note before it made its way to Bogo. Or, of course, it could be a coincidence that Scursly had been found so soon afterwards; until she knew when and how he had died speculation wasn't going to be much help. Judy knew what the answer to her question was going to be, but she asked anyway. "Was it a 1927 Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedan registered to Henry Vanderbeaver?"

Bogo simply stared at her a moment, appearing stunned. "How," he managed at last, "How could you possibly know that?"

Nick answered, although he ignored the question. "Vanderbeaver reported it stolen a couple of days ago, didn't he? That's why there were cops looking for one."

Before Bogo could respond, Nick added, "Lionheart also owns a 1927 Camellac Series 314 Imperial Sedan, you know. The only other one in the whole city."

"There was a witness who saw that exact model at the Tundra Town Lanes shooting," Judy added to Bogo by way of explanation, "We went to the DMV and Nick's right. There are only two in Zootopia."

She pulled the piece of paper from her purse and set it atop Bogo's desk, rotating it so that it was facing the right way up for him. Bogo regarded the piece of paper thoughtfully, and then pushed it back across his desk at Judy. "Hold onto that, Agent Hopps," he said, and then he turned to Nick.

"Mr. Vanderbeaver reported his car stolen three days ago," Bogo said, "He was very insistent it be found as soon as possible."

Judy did the math in her head; that was the day after the shooting at Tundra Town Lanes. She frowned thoughtfully, considering the implications. "Maybe Lionheart's car was used in Tundra Town and Vanderbeaver's car was stolen to make it look like it wasn't."

"Or maybe Vanderbeaver's an inept criminal mastermind," Nick replied dryly, but he seemed to be considering Judy's suggestion.

Bogo motioned at his door. "You can see yourselves out," he said.

With that, he turned back to his paperwork, without so much as a threat or a promise or even an apology. Maybe, Judy thought as she followed Nick out the door, That's how Bogo shows trust.

**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "Stealin', Stealin'," comes from an American folk song of indeterminate age, although it was first recorded in its current form in 1928 by the Memphis Jug Band and it's probably best known now for a cover by the Grateful Dead. As this chapter involves a brief discussion of the theft of a car, and because the chorus involves the singer going back into old habits (which reflects Bogo's suspicion of Nick), I thought it appropriate.

I received an anonymous question on the last chapter about the plausibility of there being any kind of
racing scene around in Chicago of the 1920s, and I figured that I'd include some more historical context as part of the notes for this chapter as I don't have any other way to respond.

It's true that Chicago isn't exactly a hub of motor sports today, but it was a pioneer in the fledging automotive scene. In fact, the very first automobile race in the United States took place in Chicago in 1895. This was so early in the adoption of cars that the word for them hadn't been agreed upon yet, so after a fair amount of debate the race was called a Moto Cycle Race in *Chicago Times-Herald* articles. The *Chicago Times-Herald* was also the sponsor of the race, putting up $5,000 in prize money.

Leaving Chicago aside, one of the longest-running automotive races in the world, the Indianapolis 500, started in 1911 and runs in nearby Indianapolis. In the 1920s, the Indianapolis 500 was part of F1's precursor, the AIACR World Manufacturers' Championship. In the early days of automobiles, there were a large number of races that eventually fell by the wayside, sometimes because of how dangerous they were. As an aside, one of my favorite movies, which I highly recommend, is *Rush*. It's based on the real life rivalry between two F1 drivers: the charismatic, handsome, and brash James Hunt and the introverted, rat-faced, and highly technical Niki Lauda. Set in the 1976 F1 season, it shows the incredible lengths that both men will go to in order to win. Even if you aren't a fan of racing, I think it's a really well-done drama, and the dangers of racing are very apparent. For a little context, in the 1970s a total of 12 F1 drivers died during races, which means that it was expected for there to be about a fatality a year. In fact, in 1970 Jochen Rindt became the first and currently only driver to win the F1 World Championship posthumously, dying in the Italian Grand Prix after having scored enough points that season to win after no one was able to catch up in the final three races. Although the details of the 1976 F1 season are a matter of historical fact (which the movie takes a few liberties with), I won't say anything more to avoid spoilers.

I also got a question from Cimar of Turalis WildeHops about how much time has elapsed in this story, and thought I'd provide a brief timeline. The shooting at Tundra Town Lanes occurred on Sunday, August 28, 1927. The murder of Thomas Carajou at the Thief of the Night occurred on Monday, August 29, 1927. Judy accepted the case, with a deadline of one week, on Tuesday, August 30, 1927. As of this chapter, the date is Thursday, September 01, 1927, meaning Judy is three days into the seven she has.

Intercoms are basically as old as telephones are, and some early intercoms were essentially just hard-wired telephones on an isolated circuit. More modern intercom systems are commonly integrated into desktop telephones so that they can also do everything any other landline can do.

There really isn't anything else for me to comment on from a historical perspective in this chapter. The pieces are all starting to come together, both minor and major. I figured that this was the point where Bogo's dislike of Nick and frustration with the case would boil over, and things probably wouldn't have gone nearly as well without Judy. I won't comment on anything else that might be a spoiler, but I hope that you enjoy how things come together. I will, though, once again offer a fabulous no-prize to anyone who can name the species of a character who has been named but not described yet. If you can correctly identify Richard Bauson's species, I'll give you a nod in the author's notes of the chapter in which his corpse appears.

Thanks for reading and, if you celebrate it, Merry Christmas! I hope you enjoy your holidays, and I'd love to know what you thought of this chapter.
"Someone's trying to cover this up," Judy said to Nick as they walked out of the Precinct One station.

Nick nodded. "Somehow I doubt Scursly decided it was a nice day to take a dip in the river."

Judy couldn't imagine that there very many of those days to begin with, and she tried to fit the new piece of information in with what they already knew. "Let's say Scursly killed Carajou and Zoya was framed for it," she began slowly.

"You can say that because it's probably true," Nick interjected lightly, but there was a slight frown on his face that Judy took as a sign that he was seriously considering what she was saying.

"Then whoever killed Scursly and this Bauson—you don't know who Bauson is, do you?" Judy said, interrupting her own train of thought.

Nick hadn't reacted at all to Bogo saying the name, but she couldn't be sure whether that meant that the name meant nothing to him or that he hadn't wanted to give anything away considering the buffalo's suspicious mood. Nick shook his head briefly. "Never heard of the fella," he said with a slight shrug.

"Then whoever killed Scursly and Bauson was, what? What were they trying to do? Keep them silent?" Judy asked, returning to her original point.

Nick considered it for a long moment as he climbed into the Buchatti. "Maybe," he said at last, "Scursly had a big mouth even when I knew him as a small timer. Not exactly a quality you want in a hit mammal, you know. But some mammals change. Others don't."

Judy looked up at Nick as she took her own position behind the wheel of the car. He was looking ahead over the long and brilliantly blue hood of the Buchatti, and there seemed to be something melancholy in his expression. She thought back on how Bogo had treated him, the distrust over barely concealed contempt that Nick had borne without complaint. The buffalo, at least, seemed to believe that all Nick was or would ever be was a gangster and all of his efforts to help Judy were at best something self-serving and at worst some kind of elaborate ruse. Judy paused, the key to the Buchatti in her paw, and rather than using it she put her paw on Nick's. His ears perked suddenly upwards at the touch, and he slowly turned his head, looking down at her. "I'm sorry about Bogo," she said quietly, "He just doesn't know how you've changed."

A half-smile quirked one side of Nick's muzzle, and he removed his paw from underneath Judy's and gestured broadly at himself, from the tips of his upright ears to the bottoms of his feet. "Ah, Carrots," he said, and his smile widened, "You say that as though I haven't always been this perfect."

Judy laughed, and Nick continued. "Now are we going to sit here running our gums, or do you want to go back to Dr. Tolmie?"

Judy started the car, willing to let Nick play it all off as something of a joke. She couldn't help but notice, though, that on the entire drive from the police station back to the medical examiner's office, the somewhat downcast expression he had been wearing as he looked forward out of the car never returned.

Mrs. Monax, the woodchuck who had been behind the reception desk the last time they had visited,
was there again. She was dressed just as primly as before, her white dress spotlessly clean, and her mood didn't seem any better. Judy had barely walked into the lobby, Nick a step behind her, before Monax slid the glass partition that separated the reception desk from the main part of the lobby and barked, "Dr. Tolmie's waiting for you. Autopsy Room #2, down the stairs and to the right."

Before Judy even had the chance to thank the woodchuck, she had slid the partition shut again and turned her focus to a massive stack of paperwork that she was filling out. There was a deep crease in Monax's forehead as she frowned down at her paperwork, muttering something so quietly about ZPD's Precinct Three that even Judy's ears could barely catch it from behind the glass. It didn't sound like Monax was complaining about her or Nick, at least, and when Judy called her thanks as they walked past the desk the woodchuck didn't even look up.

The basement of the medical examiner's building was just as it had been before, cold and brightly lit with floors of gleaming linoleum and walls of equally shiny white tile. The door to Tolmie's office was closed and the light was off as they passed it on their way to Autopsy Room #2. The door was propped open, and while they were still a far distance away from the room, Nick suddenly made a grimace of distaste that Judy didn't understand until they were inside the autopsy room. She suddenly understood why the door was open and a powerful fan was running; the room was easily one of the worst things that she had ever smelled.

Judy had thought that it had been bad in her apartment when the winds would shift and blow the smell of the slaughterhouses where countless chickens were butchered every day in her direction, but that stench would have been preferable to what filled the autopsy room. It was the awful smell of raw and somehow rancid sewage mixed with that terrible slaughterhouse smell, and the sharp chemical scent of what must have been a powerful disinfectant somehow only made it worse.

The interior of Autopsy Room #2 didn't look too different from the room that they had viewed Carajou's body in, although Judy thought that the autopsy table and the metal drawers set into one of the walls were larger than the other room. Dr. Tolmie was standing at a counter and writing in a notebook, apparently oblivious to the smell, while a young and unfortunate-looking pig who must have been an assistant was scrubbing down the autopsy table, which was splattered with brilliantly red droplets of blood.

The pig saw them walking in and looked over to Dr. Tolmie. "The prohi and her fox are here, sir," he said.

His voice had a peculiar breathy quality that made Judy think he was trying to only breathe through his mouth. Nick shot Judy a somewhat amused look, wordlessly mouthing, "Her fox," as they waited for Tolmie to respond.

Judy shot him a wordless gesture of apology in return that the pig didn't seem to notice, having already returned to his cleaning with his mouth set in a grim line. A second later, Tolmie jerked his head up from his notebook, his thick glasses sliding down his nose and almost off his face before he caught them with the paw holding his pen. He ended up leaving a black ink mark on the side of his head, just under his ear, that he didn't seem to notice as he fussily adjusted his glasses and peered back at the pig. "Hmm? What was—" he began, and then he caught sight of Judy and Nick.

"Ah!" he cried happily, dropping his pen as he clapped his paws together, "Agent Hopps! How very good to see you again, yes, very good. And you as well, Mr. Wilde."

He snapped his notebook shut and tucked it under his arm as he waddled over to where they were standing in the doorway. "Come in, come in," he said, apparently missing their reluctance to enter the room.
"Jimmy, I can finish up here," Tolmie said to the pig, "Why don't you see to those death certificates Agatha was nagging us about, hmm? Captain DuPoitou is not a patient donkey, I'm afraid."

Jimmy apparently didn't need to be told twice. He dropped his rag and made a beeline for the door, not even bothering to remove his stained white lab coat. "I'll have them done in a jiffy," he said over his shoulder.

He was almost a quarter of the way down the hall before Tolmie called after him, "And do give her my apologies for the delay."

Judy saw Jimmy's retreating figure nod, and then turned her attention back to the little wombat standing before her. Dr. Tolmie was wearing a wrinkled lab coat with fewer questionable stains than the one that the pig had been wearing. Underneath it he wore a sweater only a little different from the one he had been wearing the last time Judy saw him, although he was wearing a somewhat nicer pair of slacks. "I do apologize," Tolmie told Judy, "We've been ever so busy lately. I don't know how the city expects me to manage, I really don't."

Judy could feel her expression fall, wondering if he didn't have anything to tell them, but the wombat hastily added, "But the matter you're here on is very interesting, very interesting indeed. Come, come, look at this."

Dr. Tolmie was positively bouncing with energy, and he beckoned for Judy and Nick to follow him to one of the metal drawers, which he pulled open with a grunt of effort. The smell in the room somehow got even worse, and Nick turned away. Tolmie slid the drawer only about a foot out, but when he pulled back the sheet draped over the corpse it was far enough. Seeing the head was all Judy needed to see that the corpse was a gazelle, but he didn't match Nick's description of a gazelle with unusually short horns or Isabel's description of one with long silver horn sheaths. The gazelle on the cold metal slab didn't have horns, just two small nubs not even an inch long where they had clearly been sawed off. "Remarkable, isn't it?" Dr. Tolmie said, beaming, "I thought of that theory of yours as soon as I saw this body. What if Carajou was gored with horns indeed!"

Judy looked away from the waterlogged corpse and at the doctor. "Was Scursly the one who stabbed Carajou?" she asked, and she couldn't help the note of excitement that crept into her voice.

Dr. Tolmie's enthusiasm momentarily dipped. "Ah, maybe," he said, "There's not enough of the horns left for me to be certain. But I measured the distance between them. It's possible. Likely, even, I would say. I would need his horns to be sure, though."

At Tolmie's words, Nick had glanced over at the corpse and then quickly looked away. "That's Scursly alright," he said.

Judy looked up at Nick. She had gotten the idea, when they had last visited the medical examiner, that he was somewhat squeamish around dead bodies, and the addition of the awful smell the body was producing could have only made it worse for him. "Could we see the other body?" Judy asked, "And then finish talking about this in your office?"

Dr. Tolmie's eyes, enormous behind his glasses, blinked at her. "It's the smell, isn't it? My, it must be rather awful, but I've gotten quite used to it. It's actually quite interesting, you see. The river—"

Nick cut him off with a polite little cough, and Tolmie hastily finished. "Certainly, certainly, if that's what you'd like."

He quickly covered Scursly's head and closed the drawer, and then opened the one next to it. It smelled just as bad as Scursly's body, but the badger looked surprisingly peaceful. In fact, he
practically looked as though he was just sleeping. He was probably about the same age as Scursly, although even from just seeing his head and shoulders it was obvious he had a much thicker, bulkier build. "Do you recognize him?" Judy asked, nudging Nick.

Nick looked at the body for a moment, his tail sweeping from side to side. "No," he said at last.

Dr. Tolmie shrugged as he put the corpse back away. "To my office, then?"

A few moments later they were in Tolmie's office again, which if anything looked as though the paperwork had multiplied since they had last been there. "Could you tell when Scursly's horns were cut off?" Judy asked.

Dr. Tolmie didn't hesitate before answering. "After he died," he said, "It's quite obvious. There's no sign that the wounds bled while he was alive. Rather fortunate for the poor fellow, I'd say. Removing horns is a messy business, you know. That's not personal experience speaking, of course."

He brushed one paw against the mussed up fur atop his head, where he quite obviously had no horns, before he continued. "Quite painful, I hear. They were rather crudely removed, too, with a hacksaw, I think. The left horn was only cut about two-thirds of the way through before being snapped off."

As Dr. Tolmie paused in his recitation, Judy thought about what that implied. She didn't know exactly how strong horns were, but it seemed to her that to break one off even if it had been cut part of the way through would take a decent amount of strength. Then again, whoever had done the sawing might have stopped sawing and broken the horn off because they had been too tired to after cutting one horn completely off and the other most of the way off to continue, or they might have been in a hurry.

"So they were both already dead when the car went into the river?" Nick asked.

Judy thought she understood his train of thought. If Scursly's horns had been removed after his death, the logical conclusion was that they had been removed prior to the Camellac going into the river, and it wasn't much of a leap to assume that Bauson had been dead too. Dr. Tolmie rubbed his paws together. "An excellent question, Mr. Wilde! Very astute of you, yes. Neither one of them drowned. No water in the lungs makes that quite clear, I can assure you. And their blood!"

The wombat shook his head. "It couldn't possibly be more obvious. Wait here, I'll show you."

Tolmie bustled out of his office, and Nick looked over at Judy. "This whole thing stinks, and I don't just mean because they went into the river."

Judy nodded. The smell had needed no explanation; the car must have gone into the Zootopia River at one of its more polluted points, probably in either the industrial or meatpacking areas, and the foul smell had soaked into the bodies. Nick was also right that things didn't quite seem to add up. If the murders of Scursly and Bauson had been a cover up, it didn't seem like a particularly well-executed one. Then again, perhaps the point hadn't been to cover anything up but merely to kill them. Maybe Scursly's silver horns had just been taken as a grisly trophy. Tolmie had only said that it was likely that Scursly was the one who had stabbed Carajou, not that it was definite. Maybe it was a coincidence, but Judy thought there had to be some kind of connection beyond what they had learned about Carajou and Scursly spending time together shortly before Carajou's death.

"And how," Judy agreed, tapping her foot against the floor thoughtfully.

"We'll have to see what Tolmie has to say about the cause of death," she continued.
Nick nodded, and they lapsed back into silence until Tolmie returned with three small glass vials clutched awkwardly in his paws. Two of them were vividly red while the third was duller and blackish. From what Tolmie had said before leaving the room the vials were obviously blood, and when he spoke he confirmed it. "These two," he said, holding aloft the vials full of bright red blood, "Are the samples I took from Scursly and Bauson. You see the color? How beautifully red they are?"

Although Judy didn't think there was anything beautiful about blood (an opinion she suspected Nick strongly agreed with), she nodded, and elbowed Nick until he did the same. "This one," Tolmie said, holding the vial full of the darker blood out towards them, "Came from a goat who was smothered. You see how dark it is?"

Judy felt a horrible fascination at the little bit of evidence of murder, and Tolmie gave her a grim little smile. "Her husband will see the electric chair, I think. He tried to make it look like a gas leak, but the blood doesn't lie. Carbon monoxide is what killed Scursly and Bauson, but not this poor goat. The color the blood turns is unmistakable."

Judy thought through the sequence of events. Scursly and Bauson had been murdered, perhaps in the car that they were found in. Judy's parents had repeatedly drilled into her head, and the heads of all her siblings, the dangers of gas lamps and automobile exhaust in enclosed spaces; she knew carbon monoxide could kill quickly. Once Scursly was dead, his horns had been removed, and then his body and Bauson's had been pushed into the river in a stolen Camellac identical to one that Lionheart owned. "Could you tell when they died?" Judy asked.

Tolmie ran a paw through the fur atop his head before answering. "Not with any certainty, I'm afraid. The vehicle was pulled out of the river near at about one thirty in the morning. I'd say the time of death was within the twelve preceding hours, but I can't narrow it down more than that."

Judy frowned. That helped somewhat, but it was still a wide range. Scursly and Bauson might have been dead before she had even learned about Scursly. Before she could continue any further down that line of thought, Nick asked Tolmie a question. "Where's the Camellac now, anyway?"

The wombat seemed surprised at the question. "Certainly not here!" he said with a little chuckle, "Goodness, where would we put something like that? The police have an impound lot, I think."

Nick nodded and stroked his muzzle, but didn't say anything else. "Do you have their personal effects?" Judy asked, and Tolmie nodded.

"Certainly," he said, "But before I get them, is there anything else?"

Judy looked at Nick, who simply shrugged, and then back at the doctor. "Is there anything else you noticed? Anything at all unusual?"

Tolmie paused a moment, seeming to consider the question. "Yes and no," he said, "There were no signs of struggle, which isn't unusual in carbon monoxide poisoning. In this case, though, it seems—to me, at least—to quite obviously be murder, which makes it somewhat unusual indeed. It's possible, I think, that they were incapacitated somehow, but I haven't found anything in their blood yet."

He shrugged, and gave Judy a self-deprecating smile. "But I'm certainly not a cop."

"How long will it take you to finish testing?" Judy asked.

"Oh, I should be done around noon for the most common ones," Tolmie said, "I'll stop there, unless
you have reason to believe something, ah, more exotic was used."

"That'd be wonderful," Judy said, "You've been a huge help."

Tolmie swelled at the praise, and Judy continued. "Could you have a courier send your results to me at the Bureau of Prohibition?"

When he frowned slightly, she quickly added, "It's just... um, it'd be... more convenient for me than having to go back to the police station."

"Midday traffic," Nick jumped in smoothly, "You know how it is."

Tolmie chuckled. "I do indeed. Certainly, I'll send everything to your office once I'm done. I imagine you'll want to take their personal effects with you?"

Judy nodded, and Nick asked, "Would you happen to have an airtight box?"

"I think I can arrange that," Tolmie said before waddling out of his office, "Just a moment."

Once the wombat's footsteps had receded down the hallway, Nick turned and looked at Judy. "You don't quite trust the police, do you?" he asked, his tone conversational.

She was glad that he had so quickly picked up on what she had been thinking and even jumped in to bolster her justification, and she nodded. "If Bogo can't trust his officers, why should I?" she asked, and Nick nodded approvingly.

"I really must be brushing off on you," he said, his comfortably sly smile on his face.

Judy gave him her own knowing smile. "Only your best qualities."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Deep River," comes from a 1927 Paul Robeson song; considering how Nick and Judy ended up with a water-logged car and two corpses to investigate, it seemed appropriate.

The Zootopia River, which Scursly, Bauson, and the Camellac were fished out of, is based on the Chicago River. The real life Chicago River has the interesting distinction of having had its flow reversed; it originally flowed into Lake Michigan from the Mississippi River watershed, but in the year 1900 a massive civil works project reversed this. The reason for doing so was pretty straightforward: Lake Michigan served, and still serves, as the source of fresh water for Chicago and the surrounding areas. Sewage and industrial waste was dumped into the Chicago River, which was consequently so polluted that it didn't flow very fast and had the well-earned nickname of the "stinking river." This was a health concern on its own, but since that polluted water went into the city's drinking water supply, it became a health crisis—typhoid fever was a serious concern. Reversing the flow solved the problem of contaminating the drinking water and with Lake Michigan as a source the speed of the river also increased. However, since sewage and industrial waste was still dumped into the river, this just meant that the problem had been moved elsewhere. There's a part of the Chicago River that was called Bubbly Creek because all of the runoff from Chicago's slaughterhouses gathered and slowly decomposed there, causing large bubbles of gas to form and pop on the surface of the water. Although that's long since been cleaned up, pollution of rivers in the US by industrial runoff remained a serious concern even decades after the 1920s. The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland was so polluted that between 1868 and 1969 it caught fire at least 13 times. The 1969 fire caused public outcry demanding better control of pollution and was one of the major
pushes that led to the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 by the executive order of President Richard Nixon.

Suffice it to say, I think, that anything pulled out of the river in the 1920s probably wouldn't smell very good.

One of the things I find particularly fascinating about the past is the development of science and medicine. In this chapter, I've tried to be true to the actual methods available in the 1920s for determining the cause of death, which I'll explain here.

To begin, I'll start with an explanation of carbon monoxide poisoning. It's important to note that carbon monoxide really does kill by poisoning; it's possible to die of it even if the oxygen concentration in the air is normal. Normal air is about 21% oxygen by volume, with about 78% by volume composed of nitrogen and the remaining volume composed of argon, carbon dioxide, and a few other trace gases. Carbon monoxide can kill at concentrations as low as 0.16%, which generally takes a couple hours, and higher concentrations kill much more quickly. Anything above 1.28% is about as close as you can get to instantly fatal, with death occurring after a few breaths. The question, then, is why carbon monoxide is a poison; if there's still a normal volume of oxygen available in the air to breathe, why does carbon monoxide kill? The answer comes down to how our blood works.

Virtually all animals with blood (and even some without blood) use hemoglobin as the means by which oxygen is transported. Although there are some slight variations from species to species in the precise structure, the basics in all mammals are the same: hemoglobin is a large molecule made out of four globular proteins, each of which can carry one oxygen molecule. Hemoglobin can also transport up to four carbon dioxide molecule, but it doesn't carry them in the same place that it does oxygen, which will be important to explaining carbon monoxide poisoning.

You can think of hemoglobin as being a bit like a large conversion van that's being used for passengers. It's got four seats that only oxygen can use and four seats that only carbon dioxide can use. Imagining your circulatory system to be a city and your lungs an airport, you have trillions of these vans running around, picking up oxygen at the airport when it arrives and dropping it off where it's needed and picking up carbon dioxide and taking it back to the airport so it can leave. As your body's metabolism uses oxygen and generates carbon dioxide, this process works quite well for keeping things moving.

Where carbon monoxide comes in, to continue the metaphor, is that it steals oxygen's seats. When those vans arrive at the airport to pick oxygen up, carbon monoxide will push it out of the way and claim the seat. Worse, carbon monoxide doesn't want to get out of the seat, and will just keep riding around. Even if there isn't much carbon monoxide coming in, it'll still beat the oxygen to the hemoglobin, and eventually there won't be enough oxygen where it's needed to keep your body running. That's a somewhat simplified explanation of the mechanism, but hopefully it's enough to understand the basics. But how can you tell if someone died of carbon monoxide poisoning?

In the process of binding to hemoglobin, carbon monoxide also alters the shape of it, which results in it becoming a vivid red color. The change in color has been known long before we knew what carbon monoxide was; there are writings from thousands of years ago of dead bodies that practically look alive due to having the rosy color of life. As carbon monoxide is generated by wood-burning fires, it was not and still isn't an uncommon form of death, so it's been known to happen for quite some time.

Since carbon monoxide will stay bound to hemoglobin even after death, blood samples from someone who died of it will remain that vivid red color. Carbon monoxide was first identified in
By 1846 its properties as a poison had been well-documented in scientific literature. A good forensic examiner in the 1920s would definitely be able to make the correct diagnosis, although in the 1920s there were certainly plenty of bad ones.

Hopefully that explanation made sense, but if nothing else, please take away the idea that carbon monoxide is very dangerous. Having a fire burning without sufficient ventilation or running a car in an enclosed space are two of the most common ways for people to die of carbon monoxide poisoning, and they're very much preventable. The initial symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning tend to include confusion and drowsiness and they set in very quickly, which means that it doesn't take much before it's too late for someone to save themselves.

For one of the other bit of medical deduction in this chapter, I'll have to explain the structure of horns. Horns and antlers are different, and a gazelle like Scursly would have horns. Horns have a core of living bone, surrounded by a layer of keratin (the same material fingernails and hair are made of) and other proteins, and are a permanent structure. Antlers begin as live bone, surrounded by a thin layer of skin called velvet that provides nutrients to the bone as it grows, but once the antler reaches its full size the bone dies and the velvet falls away. This is also why antlers can be shed without injury to the animal; the antler itself isn't composed of living tissue at that point. Horns can be, and sometimes are, removed from livestock, although it is generally done when the animals are very young by removing by cauterization the bud that would eventually grow into a horn. Removing fully grown horns is a much more dangerous process for the animal due to the greater chance of infection.

The fact that horns are a living part of the animal means that, much like any other wound, it would be possible to see if it was caused before or after death by seeing if it bled. In this case, since Scursly's horns were sawed off after he died, there would be no indication of the same sort of bleeding that would have occurred if he was still alive when it happened.

Richard Bauson's name is derived from an archaic word for badger, bauson, that means "striped" and comes from the Old French word bausant. Dragones was the first to get his species right, so this is the promised shout out in my notes. Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps was next in, followed by DrummerMax64 and then ChaoticRhymer. Enjoy the fabulous no-prize!

Pigs actually have a very good sense of smell (they can be trained to find truffles, for example), which explains why Dr. Tolmie's assistant is having such a hard time of it cleaning up.

Captain DuPoitou's name is a reference to the breed of donkey from the Poitou region of France; as the breed is called the Baudet du Poitou in French, I simply styled it in the fashion of similar French family names like DuBois.

Using a jiffy to mean a short amount of time is a bit of slang that far predates the 1920s; its first recorded use was in 1785, and while its origins are unknown it might have originally been in reference to lightning, which would indeed be very fast.

Before electric lighting was widespread, gas lamps were quite common, both in homes and on streets, and they burned illuminating gas, which could pose a significant danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. Since the infrastructure for gas was widespread, illuminating gas also saw widespread use in powering appliances like stoves, heaters, and even refrigerators. Deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning were fairly common in this time period due to leaks, and there are definitely examples of attempts at covering up murders by blaming a gas leak.

This chapter marks the last update I'll make in 2017, which was the first full year of me posting chapters. As always, I'm incredibly grateful to you, the reader. I never could have imagined the sort of response that I would get when I first started posting back in 2016, and I've even made a few
friends in the process. I hope that, no matter what challenges lie ahead, you have a wonderful 2018, and I look forward to posting again in the New Year!
Dr. Tolmie soon returned carrying two battered rectangular tins that looked as though they might have begun their lives as elephant-sized pencil cases. Each was labeled with a strip of masking tape with a name written in an untidy scrawl, one reading "SCURSLY, THEODORE M." and the other "BAUSON, RICHARD S."

As Tolmie gave the tins to Judy, which weren't particularly heavy, he fumbled to remove a sheaf of papers from where he had held it clenched in his armpit and place it on a relatively clear portion of his desk. "Not much there, I'm afraid," he said, nodding at the two tins now in Judy's paws, "If you wouldn't mind, ah, checking the contents?"

The wombat pulled out a pen and held it over his documentation. "For Mr. Bauson, I see... a wallet... five Chesterfieldmouse cigarettes in a silver cigarette case... a book of matches, and... a penknife," he read off with an almost painful amount of deliberation.

Judy opened the tin labeled with Bauson's name as briefly as possible, but the horrible smell of the Zootopia River filled Tolmie's office anyway. Fortunately enough, the tin was so close to empty that a quick look was all it took for her to verify what Tolmie had written down. Bauson's wallet looked as though it was made of snakeskin; the shiny scales of the material looked damp and had been tightly stretched as the contents of the wallet had swollen from absorbed moisture. The cigarette case, being made of silver, looked as though it had survived its trip into the river water without incident, although Judy didn't bother opening it to see if Tolmie was right about either the count or the brand of cigarettes inside it. The matchbook was little more than a wet piece of white cardboard with no label that Judy could see, and the penknife looked surprisingly cheap considering how expensive the cigarette case seemed by way of contrast. While the silver of the cigarette case had been finely engraved with Bauson's monogram, the penknife had a scratched handle of black Baelklite held together with two rusting rivets and the part of the blade visible with it folded into the handle looked nearly as rust-spotted.

"All here," Judy said, closing the tin again.

She noticed Nick suddenly take in a deep breath and realized he had been holding it the entire time she had the tin open. Tolmie paid him no mind and scrawled something on his paperwork and then shuffled another page to the top. "For Mr. Scursly... Let's see... A money clip with forty-five dollars in bills... a wristwatch... an empty hip flask... a key ring with two keys... a lighter... and a ruby ring," he read, just as slowly as before.

Judy verified the contents, which once again were exactly as the doctor had said. From his personal effects, Scursly seemed to have expensive tastes and the means to satisfy them; his money clip was made of gold, as was his wristwatch and the band of his ring. The face of the watch was shattered and the hands were missing, but it had obviously been expensive. The ruby ring was almost vulgar, the band was so thick and the stone was so large, and Judy couldn't even begin to guess at how much it had cost. The keys on the key ring were unremarkable and could have gone to just about anything, but there was also a golden heart-shaped charm with a minuscule diamond set into it dangling from the ring. His lighter had been plated in gold, although brass was visible in a few spots where the gold had worn away. Compared to the other items the hip flask was somewhat more pedestrian since it completely lacked gold, but it was made out of silver and had the scuffs and scratches of long and likely heavy use.

"Everything's here," Judy said and closed the tin as fast as she could.
Tolmie took a moment to scribble something on his papers and then looked up. "That takes care of that," he said cheerfully, "I'll let you know once I finish my other blood tests. This really has been quite interesting, you know."

"I'm sure," Nick said, completely deadpan.

"Thank you again," Judy jumped in as she stood up to leave, Nick mirroring her action.

"Oh certainly, you're welcome of course," Tolmie replied, "I do hope I see the both of you again soon."

Although the wombat had frequently struck Judy as being somewhat oblivious to anything unrelated to his job, he did apparently have enough self-awareness to realize how that could be interpreted, and he hastily added, "In a professional capacity, of course. Ah, your professional capacity, I mean, as investigators, that is to say, not my—"

He broke off into a nervous sounding chuckle, running his paws through the fur atop his head.

"Well, I'd rather neither of you end up on my slab."

Nick gave the doctor a winning smile. "Neither would we," he said, gesturing from himself to Judy, and then started for the door as Judy finished saying goodbye.

Once they were outside the building on their way back to the car, Nick turned to Judy. "So what'll it be first?" he asked, and then nodded in the direction of the tins Judy was carrying, "Looking through those or looking at the Camellac?"

Judy thought about it a moment. "Maybe we can do both at the same time," she said, "Do you know where the impound lot is?"

Nick took the passenger seat of the Buchatti and grabbed the tins from Judy, placing them on his lap. 

"Sure," he said, "I had to go there when my Moosenburg got towed."

"You parked it illegally?" Judy asked, and she was about to add, "After everything you've said about my driving?" before Nick replied.

"No," he said simply.

His expression hadn't changed from its usual look, and he had said the word blandly enough, but Judy's teasing retort instantly died in her throat. Perhaps Nick saw the way her expression had changed, because he offered her a crooked smile. "They didn't think a fox could own such a nice car," he said, "I had to talk Mr. Big out of trying to make it right in his own way, but he did insist on buying me this."

As Nick spoke, he gestured to take in the Buchatti and then continued, "He didn't think there could be any more misunderstandings in something like this."

Judy hadn't missed the dark implication about the way in which Mr. Big had wanted to make up for the inconvenience to Nick, and she wondered if the experience had been one of the tipping points for him to realize the brutal lengths to which his employer was willing to go. Nick didn't seem inclined to reflect on the incident any further in the present, because he clapped his paws together briskly. "Come on, let's go," he said, and Judy reluctantly started the Buchatti, the roar of the engine killing any further possibility of conversation.

As Nick called off the first turn after Judy got the sleek blue car into motion, she found herself wishing that it wasn't so.
The impound lot wasn't much to look at. It was on the outskirts of the city, where the buildings tended to be lower and more spread out, and it was far uglier than any of its neighbors. The compound was at least the size of a city block, surrounded by a wooden plank fence that had to be at least ten feet tall. The fence was in pretty sorry shape, with a number of boards missing or rotting away, exposing a rusty chain-link fence that was immediately behind the warping wood. A number of advertisements had been haphazardly attached to the fence at a variety of heights, and none of them looked as though they had the approval of the city; as they approached the main gate Judy caught a glimpse of a yellowing poster for a jazz cabaret and a flier for a tonic promising to restore the glossy sheen of youth to fur. The only official looking sign was simply a large board that had been painted white with black text in three lines positioned near the gate. The words "POLICE IMPOUND" were immediately above "TRESPASSING ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED," which were in turn above the last line, which read "NO PRIVATE VEHICLES ALLOWED."

The main gate was currently open, and was built the same way that the rest of the fence was, with wooden planks on the outside of a core of chain-link. There were grooves carved into the gravel that formed the surface of the lot where the gate swung through its arc. There was no guard house at the gate, but there was a small building that wasn't much more than a shack at the center of the gravel lot. It was clear that some effort had been taken to organize the cars by size, with the largest in one corner and the smallest in the one diagonally opposite it, but there were so many vehicles filling the lot that it was clear some shortcuts were being taken. There were rodent-sized cars pushed underneath larger ones or stacked atop each other like building blocks, and a car that was clearly sized for a giraffe had had its windshield removed so that it wouldn't take up as much room. The windshield, an enormous and heavy-looking arrangement of glass panels set into a metal frame, was wedged between the fence and the side of the car.

Judy walked towards the building at the center of the lot, Nick following in her wake. As they got closer to the building, Judy saw that it looked just as ill-kept as the rest of the facility. There were weeds sprouting here and there between the gravel of the lot, and the building's walls were made of wooden planks painted a white that might have been bright years ago, but had faded almost to gray and was peeling away. There was only a single filthy window set into the building, facing the gate, and behind it Judy could barely make out the distinctive black and white features of a skunk who looked like the building's lone occupant. The skunk had clearly noticed their approach, and had opened the door before Judy even had the chance to knock.

The skunk was about halfway between her height and Nick's, with a bulky build just short of being chubby. His blue police uniform clashed with the sleek black fur that covered most of the visible parts of his body, and while the fur covering his head was relatively short, his tail seemed almost comically out-sized due to how long the black and white fur covering it was. Neither he nor the shack he appeared to be in charge of smelled particularly good; the smell was something like Nick's natural musk but at least twice as strong. He looked more interested by the fact that Nick and Judy had arrived at his impound lot than angry at the disturbance, and Judy took the opportunity to introduce herself, pulling out her badge to show him. "Good morning," she said brightly, "I'm Agent Judy Hopps with the Bureau of Prohibition, and this is Nick Wilde."

"I'm a consultant," Nick interjected with what Judy thought might be his best imitation of her tone; he had seemed amused at being introduced as a consultant when they had first met Dr. Tolmie, and she supposed that he was going to see how long he could ride it out.

The interested expression on the skunk's face sharpened; clearly they were a break from his routine. "Hugh Zorillo," he said, offering Judy his paw to shake, "Come on in."

The interior of the shack was packed so tight that it was difficult to move around. There was a desk
with two stools in front of it and a chair behind it, and the furniture all looked as though it was the least expensive items that money could buy. The desk was sloppily piled high with paperwork, which spilled over a telephone that was nearly invisible beneath the veritable avalanche. On the desk's lone relatively clear spot was a thick ledger that matched dozens more that filled the shelf opposite the room's lone window nearly to bursting. The floor, covered with cheap and rough gray carpeting, was clear, as were the walls, which were empty except for a calendar that looked as though it showed the shifts for the impound lot; if Judy was reading it correctly it looked as though the responsibility was divided between Zorillo and three other officers who rotated through day and night shifts and the different days of the week. "So what brings you here, Agent Hopps?" Zorillo asked as he took a seat in the chair behind the desk, gesturing at the stools in front of it.

"We'd like to take a look at a car you have here," Judy said, "A Camellac Series 314."

"Oh, that?" Zorillo asked, leaning back in his chair, "Sure, sure."

He flipped his ledger open and began thumbing through it until he found the page he was looking for, and then trailed a finger down it. "Northeast corner of the lot," he said, "Doubt you can miss it; that hayburner stinks to high heaven. Such a shame it'll be a total loss, though. I'd buy one for myself, if I could."

Nick seemed moderately amused by the skunk describing something as smelling bad, although he didn't say anything. Before Judy could begin thanking him, the skunk leaned over his desk and asked, "So what's all this about, anyway? Some kind of Bureau operation?"

Zorillo sounded eager, his eyes bright with interest, and Judy imagined that there was very little excitement in the course of his normal job. While she thought she could understand his interest—certainly if she had been in his position, she would have been desperate for anything to break up the boredom—she had only just confided in Nick her concerns about the police, concerns he seemed to share. Zorillo seemed to be pretty low in the pecking order of the police, but she wasn't going to risk saying too much. "Something like that," Nick said before she could come up with something, making a vague gesture with one paw.

It didn't seem to be the answer the skunk was looking for, and he turned his attention to Nick. "Is that so?" he asked, and then he frowned, seeming to really look at the fox for the first time.

"It is," Judy said, and while she regained Zorillo's attention he had the look of a mammal with something on the tip of his tongue.

Zorillo turned back to Nick. "Do I know you from somewhere?" he asked, "You look awful familiar. What'd she say your name was?"

"Nick Wilde," he replied, "But I can't say I know you."

"Hmm," Zorillo said, and then he shook his head as if to clear it.

"Ah, maybe I'm thinking of Mickey Skulker. You do look like him a little. Anyone ever tell you that? I'm big into boxing, see. You like boxing?"

"You're the first to say that," Nick said, what seemed to be his most disarming smile fixed across his face, "And I've caught a match or two."

"You ever see the Wild Bull?" Zorillo asked eagerly, "He had a head like a pred, that one. Just wouldn't go down! I just can't believe he retired. You think he'll come back?"

The skunk seemed eager to draw Nick into a conversation, but Nick gave Judy a quick glance,
noting her growing impatience no matter how she tried to hide it. "I'm afraid not," Nick said, "But we better get going."

"Oh," Zorillo replied, disappointment evident in his voice, "Oh, sure."

After Judy had thanked Zorillo and they had made their escape from his little office, Judy turned to Nick as they walked towards the Northeast corner of the lot, their feet making the gravel crunch. "Did you know him?" she asked, wondering if Nick did have some kind of past with the officer.

"No," Nick replied, although he stroked his muzzle thoughtfully, "I bet he's just lonely in there. It's not like I'd expect him to be able to tell foxes apart anyway."

Judy spared a glance back at the little office, and then turned back to Nick. "Was the skunk you saved—" she began slowly, remembering the story Nick had told her of how the absolute final straw for him when it came to Mr. Big had been when the shrew ordered him to skin a skunk alive as proof of his loyalty.

"Different skunk, Carrots," Nick cut her off before she had a chance to finish the thought, "Different family. Maybe word got around, though."

"Maybe," Judy said, and she reached up and gave his paw a brief squeeze, "You deserve a lot of credit for that."

Nick took a moment before he replied, "I hope you'll keep that in mind the next time you see Bellwether."

He was smiling, at least, and to Judy it appeared genuine. "I won't let her get her hooves on you," she said, and Nick actually took a step away from her tone.

"My," he said, his smile broadening, "You—"

Nick suddenly stopped, his expression turning in an instant as he gagged at something, his muzzle wrinkling in disgust and his ears flat against his skull. He paused, and then took in a breath through his mouth. "That's bad," he said, his tone almost conversational, "That's worse than the bodies."

Although they had gotten close enough to the Camellac for Nick's more sensitive nose to pick up its stench, it wasn't until they were much closer that Judy was able to catch a whiff of it. As Zorillo had said, there was no mistaking the car, and not only because it was one of only two Series 314 Imperial Sedans in the city. While most of the other cars in the impound lot looked as though they were in the lot for mundane reasons (although they had passed a beat-up Model T with what looked like bullet holes in the side), the Camellac had unquestionably taken a dip into the river. The front of the car was caved in, the headlights smashed and the front driver's side wheel missing. The car was caked in a film of something that was an unpleasant brown-gray with a number of lumps and even some filthy looking feathers in it. Judy tried to avoid thinking about what the filth was made of, focusing instead on the rest of the vehicle. The way that the car had gone into the water was perfectly preserved; the Camellac had clearly gone in nose-first up to about halfway along the rear doors, as the coating of muck ended almost perfectly at that point. There were a few scratches on the back of the car that Judy guessed were from it being pulled out of the water; she certainly couldn't blame whoever had done it for not wanting to get too close.

"Could I borrow your handkerchief?" Judy asked, and Nick immediately gave it to her.

"You can have my handkerchief. We're burning these clothes when we're done," Nick said, and he didn't seem to be joking.
Judy nodded, and used the handkerchief to pull the driver's side door open. The interior of the car didn't look much better than the outside; the windshield was completely opaque, although she could see a large crack running through it. The dashboard was completely coated, and when Judy wiped the horrible smelling ooze away she didn't see anything out of the ordinary. The interior had clearly been nice at one point, with rich wood trim and chrome accents, but aside from the layer of filth covering everything nothing seemed to be broken. Judy thought back to what Dr. Tolmie had said about carbon monoxide poisoning and the lack of any wounds that would indicate self-defense on the bodies of Scursly and Bauson. Judy carefully examined the interior of the car, front and back, but it didn't seem as though there were any signs of struggle in the Camellac, either, and she was about to extricate herself from the car when she caught a glimpse of something glittering in the foot well of the front passenger side of the car. "Do you see that?" she asked, and turned her head to look at Nick.

Nick had stood near the door and leaned his head in, but he hadn't climbed into the car the way that Judy had. He leaned in further, delicately keeping his body from touching the car, and nodded. "It looks like gold," he said, and Judy carefully reached over and picked up the object with Nick's handkerchief.

She stepped outside the car and set it gently on the ground next to the two tins of personal effects from Scursly and Bauson. Once Judy had the object outside the Camellac, she saw why she had spotted it; the thin layer of muck coating the object had dried and cracked, exposing part of the shiny golden surface. The disgusting coating came off easily enough as she brushed at it with the increasingly filthy handkerchief, exposing a golden cigarette case.

Nick opened the tin that had Scursly's name on it. "Scursly had a lighter, but not a pipe or cigarettes," Nick said, looking from the golden contents of the tin to the equally golden cigarette case, "Do you think..."

Judy flipped the cigarette case over and wiped the other side clean; since it had been in contact with the floor of the car and hadn't dried, the filth came off in thick congealing clumps. Neither side had any identifying marks on it, and after Judy wiped her paws more or less clean against the gravel on the ground she opened the cigarette case. Inside there were nineteen cigarettes, ten filling one side and the other side one short of being full. The cigarettes were held in place with golden clips, and on the side with ten cigarettes a scrap of paper had also been tucked under the clip. The cigarette case had closed tightly, and neither the cigarettes nor the piece of paper was damp. Judy delicately pulled the slip of paper free and unfolded it, revealing what seemed to be a hastily scrawled note that read "Canopy Hotel" with an address written beneath it: "300 W. Grand Ave."

"This might be Carajou's address!" Judy said, and unable to contain her excitement she pulled Nick into a hug, "We might have it!"

Nick laughed, patting her briefly on the back before pulling away. "It's a good thing I was already planning on burning this suit," he said, and Judy saw the spots on his torso where some of the muck had transferred onto him.

"I'm sorry," Judy said, and she was, but it was nothing compared to how her heart was pumping. "But come on, let's go!"

"Just a minute," Nick said.

Nick had pulled the money clip out of the tin and then rifled through the bills before coming to a driver's license that had been folded in half at the center. Scursly's signature had turned into an illegible smudge when the license had gotten wet, but his address was still readable, and it definitely wasn't 300 West Grand Avenue. Nick then opened the tin for Bauson's effects and with some
difficulty freed his driver's license from the swollen wallet, which again showed a different address. "I think we're onto something," he said, "Do you still have that hotel key?"

Judy nodded, barely able to contain herself as Nick repacked the tins, her foot tapping a rhythm against the ground. At last he stood up, the tins tucked under one arm. "Let's—" he began, but the word was barely out of his mouth before Judy grabbed him by the paw and started pulling until they were running for the Buchatti.

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Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Muddy Water," comes from a 1926 song by Ben Bernie. It seemed appropriate, considering the filth coating the Camellac, although it's more sewage and industrial runoff than mud.

Masking tape, which Dr. Tolmie used to label the tins that he put Scursly's and Bauson's personal effects in, was invented in 1925, so it's period-accurate to have it available in 1927.

Chesterfieldmouse cigarettes are an obvious reference to the real-life brand Chesterfield, which was at its most popular in the beginning of the 20th century, and the field mouse.

Baelklite is a pun on Bakelite, an early plastic invented in 1907 by the chemist Leo Baekeland, hence the name. As the first synthetic plastic, there were a huge number of products made out of Bakelite due to its various attractive properties: it's cheap to manufacture, is a good electrical insulator, is relatively strong and hard wearing, and it can easily be cast into complex shapes. Everything from telephone parts to buttons to pipes to billiard balls was made out of Bakelite, and a penknife made from it would be pretty common in the 1920s and quite cheap.

Wristwatches used to be seen as feminine, with men preferring pocket watches, until World War I. The practicality of wristwatches, combined with an increasing military requirement for precisely-timed maneuvers, saw to the widespread issuance of wristwatches to soldiers, who continued to wear them after the war ended. By 1927, wearing a pocket watch was already old-fashioned, the victim of how rapidly fashions shifted. Thus, Scursly's wristwatch is what a modern man of the time would wear.

Although Zippo lighters weren't invented until 1932 and disposable Bic lighters didn't come out until 1976, lighters did exist in the 1920s. There were a number of different styles available, but it would be possible to own something that looked very similar to a modern Zippo and operated in more or less the same fashion. Some soldiers in WWI even crafted their own lighters out of used cartridges; the fact that Scursly's lighter is brass under a thin layer of gold suggests that this may be the case for him.

Nick mentioned owning a Moosenburg back in chapter 11. In that same chapter, I mentioned in the author's notes that the Buchatti is based on a 1924 model, which means he really hadn't owned it all that long before leaving the city.

Tow trucks were invented in 1916, which makes it perfectly possible for Nick's car to have been towed at some point in the early to middle 1920s. Early tow trucks tended to simply be trucks with a series of pulleys built into the bed to get leverage, with hydraulic or pneumatic assists coming later as the technology was refined.

Chain-link fencing was invented in 1844, and was actually a clever application of a principle that was already being applied to weaving fabric. Even in the 1920s chain-link fencing was inexpensive, although at that time it would have been unfashionable for more domestic uses; houses were
idealized to have white picket fences as a sort of cliché of the middle class. However, it's difficult to beat the cost of a chain-link fence, and chain-link fences tend to be both easy to put up and have minimal upkeep required, unlike a wooden white picket fence that needs to be periodically repainted.

As previously mentioned, the musk of foxes is somewhat skunk-like, which means that the opposite is also true. A skunk in Zootopia would probably smell better than a skunk in the wild, since they'd probably take great care to avoid spraying except in self-defense, but their natural scent seems like it would likely still be notable. Officer Zorillo's name comes from his species of skunk, also known as the Western Spotted Skunk. "Zorillo" is actually Spanish for "little fox," which kind of makes me wonder if the person who named it that had ever seen a fox.

A hayburner was a car that used a lot of gas in 1920s slang; as a large and heavy sedan with an eight cylinder engine, a Cadillac Series 314 Imperial Sedan would definitely qualify.

Mickey Skulker is a reference to real-life boxer Mickey Walker, who enjoyed a fair amount of popularity in the 1920s. Skulker is derived from the word "skulk" to mean a group of foxes. Luis Firpo was another boxer of the 1920s, nicknamed the Wild Bull of the Pampas, and he had retired from the sport in 1926 before making a return in 1936. He was widely regarded as one of the best boxers of the time, after Jack Dempsey, and their fight for the heavyweight title in 1923 is still regarded as one of the greatest boxing matches ever. For someone following the sport, it'd definitely be a topic of interest in 1927 as to whether or not Firpo would ever return to boxing.

That Scursly would have his driver's license folded in half probably sounds a bit strange in modern times, as at least in the US driver's licenses are printed on plastic that would likely snap if you tried. However, in the 1920s driver's licenses were simply pieces of paper pre-printed with the proper fields and the information added by typewriter and then signed. They also didn't have photographs on them, although they were still frequently used as an ID.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
Just before Judy could reach the Buchatti, Nick suddenly pulled her back with the paw she was still tightly holding onto. "Ease up a minute, Carrots," he said, sounding slightly out-of-breath from their sprint across the impound lot.

Nick pulled his paw free and then shrugged his suit jacket off, turning it inside out to reveal a lining mostly made of pale blue silk. Before Judy could ask what he was doing, he was rubbing what had previously been the exterior of his jacket against her head. "Nick!" Judy protested, her voice shrill in surprise as she moved against his vigorous scrubbing, but he cut her off.

"Stop squirming," he said, "Do you have any idea how much of that river muck you have on you?"

"Nick—" Judy began again in a more normal tone.

"Ah ah ah," he cut her off again, and while she couldn't see his face with the jacket covering her head, she thought that he might be smiling, "This is your fault for ruining my handkerchief."

Judy offered no further protestations, and she could feel the wool of Nick's suit taking away clumps of filth she didn't want to think too closely about as his large paws massaged the fabric. Once she had gotten past the surprise of how suddenly he had done it, the feeling was almost pleasant, like when he had stroked her ears. Eventually, though, Nick seemed to decide that he was done and he draped the suit jacket across her shoulders. In much the same fashion as the shirt of his that she had borrowed, the suit jacket was far too long for her, and Nick stepped back and looked at her with a critical eye.

"That'll keep the interior of the car clean," he said, nodding his approval.

Judy looked down at herself and saw that what was visible of her own clothes looked entirely ruined. Nick chuckled as her ears drooped. Her outfit had come from the department store on the shopping trip that Nick had paid for, and it hadn't been cheap; she felt terrible about ruining it. "Besides, I can't have you dying of dysentery after you marinated yourself in that—"

"Thank you," Judy said quickly, cutting him off.

Nick gestured dismissively. "I mean it," Judy said, "For everything."

Nick climbed into the Buchatti. "Don't thank me yet," he warned, "You might still get sick."

Despite his warning, there was still a smile on his face, and it didn't fade even as Judy started the car and they headed for the address that had been inside Scursly's cigarette case.

Judy had never been to the Rainforest District before, but she knew enough about how Zootopia was laid out to anticipate that the address would be there. She was looking forward to seeing it, as she had of course never seen a real rainforest before either, and as they approached the wall that separated the district from the rest of the city didn't look too different from the one at the border of Sahara Square. As they got closer, though, Judy saw that many of the gleaming steel panels had been removed, exposing an absolute maze of pipes that looked about as tangled as a plate of spaghetti. Her first thought as they entered the Rainforest District was that there was maintenance ongoing, as there was absolutely no difference in temperature or humidity as they crossed the threshold of the gate, and the part of the city on the other side looked nothing like what she had expected.

From reading about the Rainforest District, Judy had expected it to be almost unbearably hot and
humid, full of lush green vegetation and beautiful flowers kept blooming by an elaborate series of heaters and sprinklers hidden throughout. However, all of the vegetation that she could see was either dead or dying. There was a massive grid of pipes, designed so that they almost looked like tree branches, suspended about forty feet above street level. Clearly, the pipes were where the water was supposed to come from, but the ground was totally dry and covered with a thin layer of wilted brown leaves that had fallen from dying vines that ran along buildings or had been wrapped around the pipes overhead. Dying streamers of vegetation peeled away from buildings, and the moss that covered everything made of wood, which included a fair number of the buildings and railings that ran along the sidewalks, was a sickly brown color rather than a lush green.

Some of the buildings had been designed so that they looked like trees, with sides textured like bark, but the lack of healthy vegetation made them look not just obviously fake but somehow pathetic. There was a billboard (dying tendrils wrapped around the pole supporting it) that immediately explained why the Rainforest District looked so terrible. In large white letters against a vivid red background it read "POLIO OUTBREAK!"

In smaller, though equally legible letters, there was the note, "TAKE EXTREME PRECAUTIONS WITH CHILDREN."

As they continued driving towards their destination, there were other signs of the polio outbreak. Some apartment buildings they passed had red quarantine placards on their front doors, and there were signs with admonishments like "SPITTING PROHIBITED BY PUBLIC ORDINANCE" and "CHECK YOUR PIPES! BOIL ALL WATER FOR DRINKING!"

Judy remembered having read in the newspaper about an ongoing polio outbreak in the Rainforest District about a week or two ago, but she had never imagined the effect that it would have. The control system to make it an artificial rainforest had clearly been shut off to help stop the spread of the disease, and it must have been off for more than a month for the vegetation to be so dead. The district seemed eerily empty, too, with almost no mammals on the streets and lots of buildings that looked as though they had been all but abandoned. Considering the risk that polio posed to mammals, and particularly young ones, Judy couldn't blame anyone who had left.

Still, even by the depressing standards of the Rainforest District in its current state, the Canopy Hotel looked run-down and seedy. The Canopy Hotel's closest neighbors included an equally seedy-looking pawn shop and a gas station so dirty that it looked as though it had never been cleaned. The hotel was a long, squat building only two stories tall, with a rotting veranda wrapped around it and outer walls covered in dying moss and lichen. A rusty sign affixed to the side of the building had the hotel's name above a painting of a rainforest in far better health than the district was, but even if the vegetation was alive Judy doubted the view from the Canopy Hotel would even come close to the image.

Judy parked the Buchatti near the entrance and got out of the car and turned to Nick. "I had no idea the polio outbreak had gotten this bad," she said.

Nick simply shrugged. "The mammals who can afford to leave, leave. Everyone else stays and rolls the dice," he said, and from his tone Judy was certain that he had been one of the mammals who had had to stay when he had been a kit.

"It's not fair," she said quietly, and Nick nodded.

"What is?" he asked, and Judy didn't have an answer.

The interior of the hotel looked just as bad as the outside. The hotel rooms themselves all had doors
leading to the veranda wrapped around the building, so the interior was simply a cramped lobby, a couple of bathrooms, and a door that led to what was probably a kitchenette. The grout between the tiles of the lobby's floor had gone a disgusting greenish-brown with mold, and the cheap wood paneling along the walls had warped, probably from when the district's climate control had been active and the humidity had been high. The only furniture in the lobby was a desk made out of panels of wood identical to the ones lining the walls and equally warped, and behind it sat a fat tapir reading a newspaper.

"Excuse me?" Judy said, pulling out her badge and trying to catch the attention of the clerk at the hotel's front desk.

The tapir, who looked to be about middle-aged and was positively squeezed into his uniform of faded and stained blue velvet, heaved a sigh and just barely lowered the paper. He didn't seem to notice her Prohibition Agent badge, his eyes instead darting from her to Nick. "Ten cents an hour or fifty cents a night," he said, "You or that goof of yours break anything you pay for it, ya understand?"

He had said the word with a deliberate and obvious sneer, and Judy could feel her ears flushing as the tapir leered at them. "I'm not— We're not—" she sputtered, and then remembered that she had her badge out.

"I'm a Prohibition Agent," she managed at last, raising her badge a bit more.

The tapir folded his paper and set it down. "A bunny prohi?" he said, and the skepticism in his voice was obvious, "With a fox? Dressed like that? Look, lady, keep me outta whatever kind of game the two of yous is playin'. You wanna room or not?"

Nick stepped forward. "That's a real badge, you know," he said in a conspiratorial tone, leaning against the desk, "And this is a real investigation."

The tapir snorted hard enough to send his jowls and sizable snout wiggling. "An' I ain't touched a drop in my life," he said, rolling his eyes, "'Investigate' all ya like, but don't do it in here. Beat it, pal."

Judy had no idea what she could possibly say to convince the tapir that she really was a prohi, short of trying to arrest him, but Nick stood back up and gently grabbed Judy by the elbow. "Come on, Sweetheart," he said, tipping her a wink as they made their way out of the lobby.

As they left, Judy could hear the tapir muttering something that sounded like, "Goddamn freaks."

Once they were outside, Judy crossed her arms across her chest, hating how childish she felt wearing Nick's oversized suit jacket. "There'll still be mammals like him even if you're wearing a police uniform," Nick said, and Judy sighed, her frustration evaporating.

Judy had seen for herself how poorly Nick got treated simply because he was a fox, and by comparison it seemed selfish to complain about mammals not taking her seriously because she was a bunny. Still, Nick was looking at her sympathetically, and she said, "I know."

Nick was silent a moment before he spoke again. "You know," Nick said, "Since I'm a sly fox, I might have read the hotel's ledger when I was leaning across that desk. And I might have seen that there was a Thomas Logan in room 14 on the first floor paid up from August twenty-fifth through the end of September. And if you were a sly bunny..."

Judy's ears perked. The hotel room key was numbered 114, and it seemed like Thomas Logan could
easily be an alias for Thomas Carajou. It wasn't as though they really needed to confirm from the hotel clerk that the mammal who had checked in was Carajou, as if they were in the right spot they had the room key. "And if I was a sly bunny, I'd remember that the clerk said to investigate all we wanted, as long as it wasn't in the lobby," Judy finished.

A broad smile crossed Nick's face. "Sounds like we have permission to me," he said.

Judy took a deep breath as she inserted the key into the lock, noting that the wood of the door around the keyhole was covered with old-looking scratches where mammals had missed in the past. She exhaled as the key turned smoothly in the lock, although it took her a fair amount of effort to get the door to open; it didn't quite fit properly in its frame, as it was ever-so-slightly lopsided with a gap that was about half-an-inch wide at its tallest where the door didn't meet the floor. The curtains of the room's lone window had been drawn and it was too dark for Judy to see anything until she reached in and found a light switch that turned on a feeble overhead bulb. "Fifty cents a day sure doesn't buy you much, does it?" Nick asked, and Judy nodded in agreement.

About the only thing Carajou's hotel room had going for it, compared to Judy's apartment, was that it hadn't burned down. It wasn't any larger, and since it didn't have a closet what little furniture there was made it seem all the more cramped. The veneer on the headboard of the narrow bed was peeling away, and the brownish color of the bedspread was speckled with plaster dust that had fallen from a large crack in the ceiling that had been inexpertly repaired. The only other furniture was a battered desk, a wobbly looking chair missing a spindle in the back, and a small set of drawers that closed crookedly. The walls had been sloppily painted white, with splashes here and there on the dark baseboard that ran along a scratched and scuffed floor of wooden planks that creaked and groaned under even Judy's weight. There wasn't a bathroom or a kitchen attached; the only door the hotel room had was the one that connected to the veranda that ran along the outside of the hotel.

Carajou didn't seem to have much of a concern about housekeeping or many possessions. The bed hadn't been made and was a rumpled mess with dirty clothes in a crumpled heap to the side, and there were empty cans of fish and vegetables in a pile near the desk. At the foot of the bed there was a suitcase and what looked like an over-sized (from a bunny perspective, at least) violin case. The desk had a few crumpled up wads of paper, a pen, and a hinged picture frame atop it, so Judy started there while Nick started going through Carajou's drawers.

Although Judy had intended to start with the pieces of paper, once she got to the desk she couldn't help herself; the pictures in the frame had caught her attention and she picked up the delicate hinged frame. There were two of them, one on each side. The one on the left showed a female wolverine, probably in her early twenties, wearing an elegant gown and playing a viola. Her eyes were closed and her lips were set in a kind of half-smile of concentration. The background of the picture was dim and out of focus, which made Judy think that the wolverine had been playing on a stage under a spotlight.

The other picture showed the same female wolverine seated at a table with a male wolverine who was only barely recognizable as Carajou. Judy had seen Carajou, both from across the room in the Thief of the Night and also his corpse in the medical examiner's storage drawer, to say nothing of the photographs she had seen as part of the Bureau of Prohibition's files. That Carajou was younger and didn't have any scars in the picture she was holding explained only a part of why she found him difficult to recognize. It was because he was smiling. Even that wasn't quite accurate; he had been caught in the photograph in the middle of what was obviously a roar of laughter, and while the image was somewhat grainy Judy thought that she saw tears in the corner of his eyes, he was laughing so hard. He was holding the female wolverine's paw in his, and she was clearly laughing too; although she had put her free paw somewhat demurely across her mouth it was obvious from her eyes that she...
found whatever was making Carajou laugh nearly as funny as he did.

The pair of wolverines were seated at a table covered in a white tablecloth that from the background looked as though it was in a mid-range restaurant. Neither Carajou nor the female wolverine were especially well dressed, as his suit looked somewhat poorly fitted and the female wolverine's dress looked as though it was missing a few of the beads that made up the pattern around the neckline. Still, they looked so incredibly happy together that it was hard for Judy to reconcile the image with the one she had formed of Carajou from what was in the Bureau files and what Nick had told her. The Carajou in the photograph didn't look dangerous or moody, and Judy held out the picture frame in Nick's direction. "Was Carajou married?" she asked.

Nick paused in the middle of his examination of the contents of Carajou's drawers, which from what the fox was currently holding in his paws looked as though they consisted mostly of unremarkable suits. "He was," Nick said, looking across the room at the little photograph, "She died years ago. TB, I think."

Judy nodded, glancing at the photograph again before setting it down. Nick had told her that he avoided talking to Carajou, and she couldn't imagine that the wolverine was inclined either to talk about his dead wife or appreciate mammals who did. Judy turned next to unfolding the wads of paper on the desk, but they didn't seem to have any particular value to the case. One of them was a grocery list that made it look as though Carajou mostly lived off of canned goods (which was believable considering the pile of cans next to the desk) and the other two seemed to be nothing more than scribbles or doodles without anything that looked like writing. Still, Judy carefully flattened the sheets and took them with her when she moved onto the suitcase and what must have been a viola case. The viola case was black, covered with scuffs and scratches, and was surprisingly heavy. When Judy flipped it over to look at the backside, she saw that a name had been neatly stenciled onto it. Faded white letters read "AMELIA CARAJOU," and Judy noticed that while the text seemed fairly old, the letters of the last name looked fresher. Examining it more closely, she saw that the part of the case under the word "CARAJOU" had been painted black, and the paint was starting to chip away.

In an instant, Judy thought that between the pictures and the viola case she understood Carajou's marriage. When he had met his wife, she had been a viola player. Maybe it had been in a club or a vaudeville show, but somehow they had connected and eventually married. Amelia had kept playing the viola, painting over her maiden name on her instrument's case and then adding her new last name. At some point—maybe ten years ago, maybe fifteen—she had died of tuberculosis, and whatever light there was in Carajou's life had been extinguished and he had spiraled downwards, becoming ever more violent and cruel, until his eventual death.

Maybe Carajou had always been a dangerous mammal and he had either hidden that side of himself from his wife, or maybe she knew but didn't care. Somewhere, though, Judy didn't think so, which made it all the worse that he had died alone, unlived and un-mourned, with nothing to show for his life. Judy thought that there might be more mementos of Amelia in the viola case, but when she undid the latches and opened it what she found couldn't have been further from that.

The viola case's contents were the work Carajou had dedicated himself to, pure and simple. The reason the case had been so heavy became immediately apparent—there was a Gazelle submachine gun, broken down into its component parts with two drum magazines, a compact pistol, and a few boxes of ammunition. The interior of the case was covered with red velvet that had started to lose its fuzziness that had somehow been molded to fit everything perfectly to keep the items from moving.

At some time between when Judy had gone to the viola case and when she had opened it, Nick had searched the dirty laundry by the side of Carajou's bed with no apparent success as he stood up and
gave a low whistle at the guns and ammo. "A Zootopia typewriter," Nick said, and then walked over to take a closer look, "That certainly fits Crazy's style."

"This might have been what Carajou used in the Tundra Town shooting!" Judy said, as the possibilities ran through her mind.

Nick nodded slowly, his tail waving from side to side as he thought it over. "So maybe Carajou, Scursly, and Bauson steal a Camellac from poor rich Mr. Vanderbeaver," Nick said slowly, "They do the job at Tundra Town Lanes, and then Lionheart starts cleaning up. Maybe he decides he doesn't need any of them anymore, so he has Scursly and Bauson kill Carajou and frame Medvedeva, and then he has Scursly and Bauson killed."

Nick had put into words what Judy had been thinking, and she nodded her agreement. "So how do we prove that?" Nick asked, spreading his paws apart.

"The police can compare bullets at the scene to one fired out of this gun," Judy said, remembering a brief article she had read on the forensics of bullets, "They could prove that this is the gun!"

Nick nodded, seeming impressed. "That's a good start," he said, "Now how about that suitcase?"

Although Judy could feel her heart beginning to race in excitement, she paused before opening it, looking down at the still somewhat crumpled pieces of paper she had left on the floor when she opened the viola case. "Do these look like anything to you?" she asked, giving him the papers.

Nick took the pages and looked at the top one thoughtfully for a long moment. "It... appears to be a grocery list," he said at last, "Was this a trick question?"

"Not that one," Judy said, gesturing to indicate that he should look at the next page.

He shuffled the pages and looked at the next one, frowning in concentration. He rotated the page first clockwise, and then counterclockwise, and then stopped. "This is Tundra Town, isn't it?" he said, and then he put the page down, "It's missing some roads and it's not drawn very well, but I think this is Tundra Town."

Judy looked at the page from the same perspective that Nick was, and while it still appeared to be nothing more than a random series of squiggles, she saw how it could be a poorly drawn map. "This one is too," Nick said, rotating the third page to show that the two series of lines were in more or less the same pattern.

"If you say so," Judy said, and her lack of confidence in her ability to see the map he had must have been evident in her tone, because Nick clucked his tongue and shook his head.

"We'll make a Zootopia native out of you yet," he said, a slight smile touching his features, "In no time you'll be complaining about taxes and how much better the city used to be."

"Maybe you can help me with those taxes," Judy said as she put her paws on the suitcase's latches.

Nick shrugged with an almost certainly feigned modesty. "I do have a bit of a talent with numbers," he said, "Now are you going to open that or what?"

The suitcase was made out of emu skin and was somewhat scuffed and battered, particularly where the lid met the rest of the case. It popped open without resistance, though, the spring-loaded latches coming clear. The suitcase itself was mostly empty except for a beat-up binder with a cardboard cover and some clothes that had been wrapped around it. Judy carefully lifted the binder out; it was more than an inch thick and fairly heavy. The cover wasn't labeled, so Judy flipped it open to the first
page, which was a piece of paper blank except for a single typewritten word in the center: "CONTRACTS."

Judy looked up at Nick, who simply shrugged and motioned her to turn the page in a perfect mimicry of how she had gestured for him to flip through the pages that had been crumpled up on Carajou’s desk. The next page was blank, but on the back of the page when Judy kept turning pages she saw what Carajou had written:

_DATE: 04/06/24_

JOB: _Get vendors on Kugluktuk Street to leave or pay Big a cut._

CLIENT: _Mr. Big_

CONTRACT TYPE: _Verbal_

PAYMENT: _$25_

Nick looked up from the page and Judy, an expression of amazement across his face. "Carajou kept records?" he asked incredulously, "Crazy kept records?"

Judy was momentarily as dumbfounded as Nick was, and then kept flipping through the pages until reaching the second to last one. As she had flipped through the binder, Judy had noticed that in contrast to the format that Carajou had used, which didn't seem to change at all, he had occasionally included notes, seemingly on the occasions when a job had been given to him in writing. Some of those jobs had been written on envelopes or napkins or scrawled into the margins of yellowing newspapers, but she paid them barely any mind until she had flipped through the years to the last entry. The final entry was opposite a note written on a piece of bond paper in an elegant and perfectly legible script. The note was a single unsigned line: "Inquire about renting Tundra Town Lanes for a party of six to eight at 5PM."

Carajou's entry opposite the note read:

_DATE: 09/28/27_

JOB: _Kill Koslov and his associates at Tundra Town Lanes tonight. 6 to 8 mammals expected present._

CLIENT: _King Lionheart_

CONTRACT TYPE: _Written_

PAYMENT: _$5000_

Judy looked at Nick, her eyes wide. "This is it, isn't it?" she asked, unable to keep the wonder out of her voice, and it seemed all Nick could do was nod.

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**Author's Notes:**

Before any of my usual notes, I found something pretty cool that I think is worth sharing. The artist yelnatsdraws over on DeviantArt independently came up with the idea of doing Prohibition-era Zootopia characters and she made some amazing pieces worth checking out:

[Gangster Nick](https://www.deviantart.com/yelnatsdraws)
Zootopia Bureau of Prohibition - Nick and Judy

As they say, a picture’s worth a thousand words, and no matter how well I try to describe something I don’t think I could match how well yelnatsdraws has captured the spirit of 1920s fashion and applied it to Nick and Judy. I figured that if you like this story, you’d probably like her artwork too! And now, onto my regular notes.

After the Beatles broke up, George Harrison recorded a song in 1970 called "My Sweet Lord." It's a great song, but there was one slight problem with it—it used the same melody as song by the Chiffons from 1963 called "He's So Fine." In the inevitable lawsuit, it was decided that, while Harrison had not consciously copied the melody, since he was aware of "He's So Fine" it still counted as copyright infringement. This is probably one of the best know stories of cryptomnesia, or someone thinking that they’ve come up with something new and original because they've lost conscious awareness of what inspired their idea.

The reason that I bring this up is because I did not deliberately make Carajou a wolverine so that I could use the chapter title of "Wolverine Blues." With a couple exceptions, I determined chapter titles after the fact, trying to find something that worked. I did, however, research quite a bit of music from the 1920s before writing this story, and the title of the 1923 Jelly Roll Morton song must have stuck in my head somewhere. In any case, I think that the title works well for the insight that examining Carajou's hotel room gives into the sort of mammal that he was.

Polio has been known to occur for thousands of years, but it wasn't until the 20th century that there started to be epidemics of it. The reason for this is pretty counter-intuitive—in cities, the sanitation had gotten too good. It seems as though improved public sanitation should lessen the spread of diseases, and this is true overall. For polio, better sanitation meant that people were generally not exposed to it at a young age and did not develop immunity to the virus; this meant that when outbreaks did occur, people were at a greater risk of developing the paralyzing form.

Polio is extremely virulent, spreading most frequently from water contaminated with infected feces, but it can also spread orally. Paralysis from polio is actually pretty rare—only about 0.5% of all cases, with up to 70% of cases showing no symptoms—but from how contagious it is there were thousands of victims in the early part of the 20th century.

Although the polio vaccine wasn't developed until 1950, even in the earlier part of the 20th century scientists had a fair understanding of how the disease spread. For this reason, it was very common in areas with active outbreaks to shut down public swimming pools and is one of the reasons why many places in the US have a ban on spitting in public. It was also not unheard of for health departments to label buildings with quarantine placards when occupants had active polio infections and not allow anyone in or out.

I thought that it made sense that the Rainforest District, as an artificially warm and humid environment, would be at likely the greatest risk for polio outbreaks of any of Zootopia's districts. Indeed, while polio outbreaks tended to be the worst in the summer in places with temperate climates, there were essentially no seasonal differences in areas with tropical climates. I think it also makes thematic sense as an example of Zootopia failing to live up to Judy's expectations as what should be a lush and vivid area is instead full of withering and dying plants as a result of shutting down the climate control systems.

Of course, polio is really only a danger to humans, but for the purposes of this story I've made the assumption that it has the ability to jump species.
Fifty cents a night for a hotel room is relatively cheap by 1920s standards, although as Nick observed the hotel really didn't offer much. It was actually somewhat common in the 1920s for people to live in hotels, even poor people, as prices were effectively lower than they are now even when adjusted for inflation.

"Goof" was 1920s slang that could refer to either someone who was foolish or a boyfriend. Considering that the tapir started by quoting an hourly price for a hotel room, it was being used somewhat sarcastically.

Thomas Carajou's alias of Thomas Logan is naturally a reference to the famous Marvel Comics character of Wolverine, whose real name is Logan.

TB was a common name for tuberculosis in the 1920s, as by that time calling it consumption was somewhat old-fashioned. A vaccine for tuberculosis was first widely available in 1921, but it wasn't curable until the development of the antibiotic streptomycin in 1946. In either case, the pictures that Carajou has would be from between about 1900 and 1910, before those developments.

The Gazelle submachine gun found in Carajou's apartment is a reference to the Thompson submachine gun, the gun that probably immediately springs to mind when people think about gangsters in the 1920s. Calling it a Gazelle submachine gun is a reference to the species known as Thomson's gazelle, and is of no relation to the character Gazelle in this story. The Thompson submachine gun was invented in 1918 and didn't have much demand at first, as it was quite expensive, had very poor accuracy, and was heavy. However, its high rate of fire made it an effective weapon at close range, so for gangsters who could afford it the Thompson submachine gun became a weapon of choice. It also saw use in WWII, where it was prized for clearing trenches and for close street battles. The drum magazine is kind of iconic for the weapon, although a more standard-looking (though lower capacity) box magazine was also available. The Thompson submachine gun had many nicknames; beyond the common "Tommy Gun" it was also called a "Chicago Typewriter," hence the use of "Zootopia Typewriter."

Matching a bullet to a gun is possible with weapons that have rifled barrels (which is most modern firearms), as in the process of passing through the barrel the grooves carved into the barrel create a pattern of striations on the bullet that are unique to the gun that fired it. The use of this method was first documented in 1915, when microscopic examination of a bullet found at a crime scene was compared to one fired from the suspect's gun demonstrated that it could not have been used in the crime. The technique was refined with the invention of the comparison microscope in 1925, as it made the examination much easier. The inventor of the comparison microscope, Calvin Goddard, also played an instrumental role in the investigation of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929. The members of Al Capone's gang who committed the murders had disguised themselves as police officers while they committed the crime, and Goddard was able to use his microscope to conclusively prove that their weapons had been used and the police had not been involved. This also contributed to it becoming widely known that such a comparison was possible.

Obviously, 1929 is after this story is set, but I think that it's reasonable that as an aspiring police officer Judy would at least try to learn about forensic techniques, and it makes sense she would be aware that bullet comparison could be done in 1927.

Ring binders were invented in 1886, so they could definitely show up in the 1920s.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
I'm Sitting on Top of the World

After Judy had a moment to recover, she lifted the binder as though it were made of glass and delicately placed it back in the briefcase and added the three sheets of paper that had been crumpled atop Carajou's desk, adding the clothes that had been wrapped around the binder as padding and then closed the briefcase. As Judy clicked the latches shut, she turned to Nick. "We have to show this to Bogo," she said, and she was surprised by how calm she sounded.

Judy's heart was starting to pound in excitement, but it was as though she suddenly had too much energy to stand up or run for the car. The enormity of what she had found—what they had found—was consuming all of her attention, her thoughts running at dizzying speeds in unfocused bursts. It was as though she could see the connections linking every piece of evidence behind all the murders back to Lionheart and she realized how cleverly he must have managed it. What if all of the gang murders, even the ones before the shooting at Tundra Town Lanes, had been conducted in the same manner? She could picture Lionheart's paw behind events, first arranging one murder and then having the killer murdered in turn, all the while arranging clues so that they would point in any direction but back towards him. It was brilliant, in a sickeningly evil sort of way, that he must have arranged for some of the members of his own gang to be killed when the string of murders began, sacrificial pawns that would help keep the attention away from him. Lionheart must have been consolidating power with every murder, and if none of the other gangs knew that he was behind them they were probably starting to eye each other, which might be where framing Medvedeva for Carajou's murder fit in. The polar bear was almost certainly a member of the Black Paw and had no connection whatsoever to Lionheart's outfit, the North Side Pride. If the other gangs blamed the Black Paw, Lionheart might be able to rally them behind himself, absorbing the remaining gangs even as he continued to pick off any members who might threaten his leadership, until at last he controlled all of Zootopia's criminal underworld.

"He really does want to be king," Judy said, unconsciously speaking the words before realizing that Nick had been saying something while she had been distracted by her own thoughts.

Nick cocked his head to the side and gave her an odd look, which probably meant that what she had just said made just enough sense to be a possible response to what Nick had said but not enough sense for it to be an appropriate one. "I wouldn't say that about Bogo myself," Nick began, but Judy cut him off.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I was thinking about Lionheart. What did you say?"

"I said we might not want to bring all this into the police station since this briefcase and that viola case might look awfully familiar to a dirty cop. Then I asked you how much you trusted Bogo and, well..."

Nick trailed off, rolling his paw and Judy realized he must have thought what she had said was an answer to that question. Her heart started to slow down as she considered the question and what it meant for the rest of the ZPD. "You're right," Judy said, "I think we can trust Bogo but we need to make sure no one else sees this."

The chief of police had all but told her that some of the officers on the force passed information on to gangsters, and the last thing that Judy wanted was for word to get back to Lionheart as to how close they were to catching him. "No one?" Nick repeated, "Not even the other prohis?"

He rotated his wrist towards Judy so that she could see his wristwatch, and Judy was surprised to see that it was about eleven; the morning was almost over, and Dr. Tolmie had promised that he would
be completely done examining the bodies of Scursly and Bauson by noon. As Judy had also asked
the wombat to send the results over to her office at the Bureau of Prohibition, she understood the
point that Nick was making. "Not even the other prohis," Judy said, "This'll be between the two of
us."

"Hmm," Nick said as he hefted the viola case; although he was obviously stronger than Judy was, he
obviously still found it heavy.

"Are you sure you trust me to lug this chopper around?" Nick asked.

His tone was light and his eyes sparkled with good-humored amusement as he teased, but Judy
answered the question as though it had been sincere. "Of course I do," she said, and was rewarded
by a brief change in his expression.

Before his features reset themselves into their usual position somewhere between mild friendly
interest and open self-satisfaction, Judy thought that she might have seen something like gratitude or
maybe even appreciation. "Come on," Judy said as she lifted Carajou's briefcase, "Let's go."

Just in case, Judy locked the door to Carajou's hotel room before they left and made their way back
to the Buchatti. When Judy took the driver's seat, giving the briefcase to Nick so that he could hold it
and the viola case on his lap as they drove, the memory of the dance they had shared suddenly
jumped into her mind as she looked over at Nick in profile. What was he going to say before he
noticed the scratches?

Judy absent-mindedly stroked at the fur on her cheek over the marks and then shook her head, trying
to turn her focus back to the case. "Let's get a box we can put everything in before we go anywhere
else."

Nick smiled, turning to look at her over his lap of cases, and his fur glowed red-orange in the light of
the sun. "This fox just so happens to be an expert on boxes," he said with mock solemnity, placing
one paw on his chest, "I know just the place. If you're on the owner's good side, anyway."

The water in the shower turned brown as it ran through Judy's fur, taking away the river filth that had
coated the Camellac as she scrubbed at herself. Stopping at Nick's house had been his idea, and she
had eagerly agreed when she realized that she could take a shower while he found a suitable box in
his attic. It wasn't just a matter of wanting to look good before presenting the evidence to Bogo that
made Judy want to take a shower. It wasn't even a matter of wanting to get whatever might be
lurking in the river water out of her fur. Not that Judy wanted to appear before the buffalo wearing
Nick's comically oversized suit jacket inside-out and stinking like the Zootopia River, but the shower
was also an opportunity to think, and she felt as though she needed it.

Judy's excitement had seemingly dripped away with every second that had passed after they had
found Carajou's guns and record book, and she had no idea why. She had never been good at
waiting; when she had been a kit she had been the one awake at three in the morning on Christmas
Day ready to start celebrating no matter how late her parents or siblings might have wanted to sleep.
Nick had been right when he had said that she was impatient, and remembering that conversation
brought back the memory of dancing with him in the Blind Tiger. She could almost feel him again,
the warmth of the water becoming the warmth of his body and the faint stale scent of his musk that
lingered in every room of his house becoming the rich and full scent of it she had smelled so close to
him.

Judy tried to think of something else, but the memory refused to go away, the details suddenly
exquisite. She could remember exactly how Isabel and her band played "Someone to Watch Over
Me,” every little flourish they had added to make the song their own, even how the song had sounded as the music filled the cheap little club. She could remember the way they had glided across the dance floor, and if her memory was embellishing the grace that they had danced with, what of it? It was a perfect moment, Judy thought, and then the answer to why her excitement had ebbed seemed to crystallize before her into perfect clarity. It was obvious.

It was Nick.

Once the case was solved, she would almost certainly never see him again. He would go back into hiding, hopefully somewhere nicer than Podunk, and she wouldn't even know where that was. Once she left the Bureau, she wouldn't even be able to check his file to see where he was placed. But wherever he ended up, no matter how nice it was, it wouldn't be Zootopia. She was the one who was going to end up in Zootopia with everything she had wanted since she was a kit. Judy had no doubt that Bogo would be as good as his word and she'd have a spot in the police academy once Lionheart got arrested, and from there she knew she had what it took to become a police officer. It would be the culmination of the dream she'd had for as long as she could remember, and with it suddenly so close it somehow didn't feel as appealing as it had when she had first arrived in Zootopia.

Judy had seen for herself how little care some of the police officers had for their jobs or the citizens they were sworn to protect. She still wanted to make the world a better place, and there was no doubt in her mind that toppling Lionheart and his gang with him would do that, but what would come next? It had taken Nick nearly getting killed by her own recklessness for her to realize how careless she had been with his life, but what would happen when Nick was no longer around to pull her back when she started to go too far? Judy was sure that she'd get a partner, and that partner might very well be a fine mammal; for all the bigoted and self-interested officers she had seen, she had also seen that there were some who seemed genuinely dedicated to their jobs. And maybe that partner wouldn't be sarcastic and wouldn't tease her. Maybe that partner would be another prey mammal who could go into any store or restaurant they wanted and wouldn't have to let society's scorn roll off their back. Maybe that partner would be more like Judy.

But they wouldn't be Nick.

The water had long since started running clear and was starting to get cold, and Judy turned off the tap. She stood there in the bathtub for a long moment, dripping water and not bothering to reach for her towel. Maybe... Maybe Nick could stay in Zootopia, Judy thought. Maybe he could stay.

The longer Judy turned the thought over in her mind, the less ridiculous it seemed. Mr. Big was in no shape to order a hit against the fox, and what remained of his former top mammals had been mostly picked off by Lionheart's machinations. It wasn't as though there wouldn't be any danger once Lionheart was behind bars, but maybe...

Judy had promised Nick that she would keep him safe and she had no intention of breaking that promise. But as she slowly towed herself dry, she realized that she wanted him to be happy, too. He deserved it after everything he had done for her, whatever it was he wanted. She didn't think Nick would be happy going back to a quiet life of teaching math in a town where he was the only fox, but that was a decision only he could make. Maybe he'd want to leave the country entirely by going back to Purris and the life of cafes and jazz clubs she had seen in pictures on the walls of his bedroom.

As Judy got dressed in another one of the outfits that Nick had paid for on their trip to Marshall Fallow, she made up her mind. After Lionheart was arrested and there were no more distractions, she would simply ask Nick what it was that he wanted. He had promised that they would go out to celebrate after the case was solved, and it would be the perfect opportunity. Whatever it was that he
wanted, wherever it was he wanted to go, Judy promised herself that she would see to it with the same determination she had pursued her dream of becoming a police officer.

Making the promise seemed to help because as Judy carefully styled her fur in the mirror so that the scratches on her cheek wouldn't be visible, she could feel something in the pit of her stomach that could only be her excitement returning. They really were so close to being done, and who knew? Maybe she could have everything she wanted and not just the job as a police officer.

By the time that they got to the Bureau's decrepit office it was almost half past noon, and the office was completely empty, all of the other agents apparently working in the field or taking a lunch break. That suited Judy just fine, as that meant that there wasn't anyone around to ask why Nick was carrying around the fairly large and somewhat dusty cardboard box he had found in his attic and then put the viola case and briefcase into. It was, unfortunately, somewhat flimsy, and he had to support the bottom to prevent the contents from falling out, but he had made it out of the car and into the Bureau's main office area without any complaints, although he had commented, "I'm afraid chivalry is dead," when they had approached the door.

Considering that he had to use both paws to keep the box together, Judy certainly didn't mind holding the door for him, not that she would have minded opening it even if he hadn't been carrying anything. Once they were at Judy's desk, Nick had carefully set the box down on Agent Ramses's desk and then leaned against Judy's desk as she sat down.

Judy's inbox at the Bureau of Prohibition had never had anything besides inter-office memos in it before, but that had changed. Besides a manila envelope that was labeled with the coroner's office's address, there was also a newspaper clipping. Judy set the envelope aside and read the article, which was only a few lines long. Underneath the headline "Tenement Fire Exposes Code Violations" it read:

A fire last night at the Grand Pangolin Apartments, located near the meat-packing district, shows again the need for the stricter enforcement of fire codes. The blaze resulted in the hospitalization of three mammals but no loss of life, though it was only the rapid response and action of the Zootopia Fire Department that prevented tragedy. Per Captain William Farrier, who led the effort to extinguish the fire, the Grand Pangolin Apartments had "unquestionably been illegally subdivided..." "...without proper care for ensuring the use of approved building materials or sufficient access to fire escapes."

The owner of the building refused to comment, requesting that all questions be directed to his lawyer. Investigation into the cause of the fire is ongoing and arson has not been ruled out at the time of publishing. This fire, as well as the

The article ended abruptly as the entire piece had not been clipped, but the last complete sentence had been underlined in pencil and a note had been written in the margin of the article in what Judy recognized as Bellwether's even script. Bellwether's comment on the article, which gave Judy little doubt that her boss had been the one to leave it in her inbox, read "The police know how important my agents' safety is to me."

Judy felt a sudden puff of breath on her neck and realized that Nick had been read the article over her shoulder. "It's touching how much she cares," he said, "Or at least, how much she cares about making sure you know how much she cares."

The sarcasm in Nick's words was obvious, but Judy didn't think she could say much in Bellwether's defense without lying. Judy simply nodded and grabbed the manila envelope, fully intending on leaving the Bureau office in order to review the results of Dr. Tolmie's examination somewhere else.
Before she could so much as stand up, though, the door to Bellwether's office opened and the ewe stuck her head out. "Agent Hopps!" she said cheerfully, "I thought I heard someone."

"Director," Judy said as respectfully as she could, nodding her acknowledgement of her boss even as she started to stand up to leave, "I was just—"

"I'd like a quick word," Bellwether interrupted, and her cheerful tone didn't change even as she glanced over at Nick and added, "Alone."

She beckoned Judy towards her, studiously avoiding even looking in Nick's direction again. Nick, at least, seemed perfectly content to ignore Bellwether in turn, and Judy walked towards Bellwether's office. Inside, Bellwether's office didn't look much different from the last time she had been in it, although there was a large glass jar on the corner of the ewe's desk that was about a third of the way full with coins and even a few dollar bills that hadn't been there before. Bellwether evidently noticed Judy looking at the jar because she smiled as she took her own seat behind the desk, gesturing for Judy to take the one in front of the desk. "Did you see that article I left you?" she asked, and she didn't even wait for a response before continuing, "The whole office was willing to pitch in once they heard your apartment burned down so I started a collection. Isn't that wonderful?"

Judy stared at the jar. She had never won the contest to guess how many jelly beans were in a jar at the Harvest Festivals she had gone to as a kit, but she thought that there had to be at least fifteen dollars in the jar. "That's... That's really great," Judy said.

She had never gotten the impression that her coworkers particularly liked her, but the evidence to the contrary was right in front of her. She thought it was a sign of the kindness mammals were capable of until Bellwether spoke again. "I'll keep the collection going for another few days. I would have given you what's been collected so far but you seem to be doing alright, aren't you dear?"

The little ewe's voice was sickly sweet even as she looked Judy up and down, apparently noting the clothes that she wore. It was true that the outfit she wore, a shimmering pale green and tan frock with a matching pleated skirt of a fabric that looked and felt like silk but wasn't, was one of the brand-new ones that Nick had purchased, but it had been among the least expensive of the clothes he had paid for. "I'm getting by," Judy said with her best attempt at keeping her voice neutral and her foot from tapping in irritation.

"Of course," Bellwether said, and then she leaned across her desk.

"How's your investigation going, Agent Hopps?" she asked, "Has that fox been any trouble?"

"There's still plenty to do," Judy said, which wasn't exactly a lie, "And Nick is... he hasn't been any trouble."

She had almost said that Nick had been terrific, but if Bellwether noticed her fumbling over her words she didn't comment on it. "That's good," Bellwether said, "It takes a firm hoof—or a paw in your case, I suppose—to manage a predator. You can't give them an inch, you know."

Judy made a noncommittal noise that could have been interpreted as agreement, and Bellwether continued. "I'll let you get back to the case, but I do one more tiny little question."

The ewe gave her a little smile and gestured with one of her hooves to indicate just how small a question it was, although Judy thought she knew what Bellwether was going to ask and certainly didn't consider it small herself. "Have you found anything we can use to throw the book at Wilde?"

Bellwether was looking Judy right in the eye, and it was all she could do to try to keep her dislike for
her boss off her face as she answered. "No, no," Judy said hastily, and her words sounded horribly unconvincing to her own ears, so she kept going. "Nothing yet but, well, there's still plenty of investigating to do."

Judy flashed Bellwether a smile so forced and awkward that Nick probably would have been embarrassed on her behalf if he had seen it. "As long as you find something before you solve the case," Bellwether replied, "But you are still working on it?"

"Of course," Judy replied instantly, and she thought her words must have sounded at least halfway convincing, because Bellwether nodded her approval.

"Wonderful. Remember, he's only a fox," Bellwether said, and then she got up from her desk and started walking towards the door.

"He's only a fox," Judy repeated.

Judy didn't believe the words. She was amazed that Bellwether could even think that way, that her boss could be so callous simply because Nick was a predator, and she found herself looking forward to leaving the Bureau of Prohibition for good. Bellwether didn't seem to hear anything out of the ordinary in Judy's words, though, and she simply opened the door. "I do hope you solve this case soon," she said as Judy left her office, "Good luck, Agent Hopps."

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "I'm Sitting on Top of the World," comes from a 1925 Ray Henderson song. The usage here is somewhat ironic, as Judy is just about to achieve everything she wants only to start questioning if she really does want it.

To be honest, this chapter largely exists to link events together, but I tried to give it an emotional core that is hopefully satisfying even as it goes about its business of being a transition. There are a lot of links in this chapter to events of previous chapters, which for your convenience I'm noting here among everything else.

A chopper was another nickname for the Thompson submachine gun, supposedly derived from its ability to inflict horrible injuries.

Nick and Judy danced to "Someone to Watch Over Me" in chapter 25 after Nick noted that she's not very good at waiting, and Nick did abruptly stop in the middle of something when he noticed the scratches he caused during the events of Judy's apartment fire in chapter 8.

As the story description alludes to and as was established in chapter 5, Nick was put in Podunk by the Bureau of Investigation to keep him safe from retribution for turning on Mr. Big, although he did also fake his own death as an added precaution. Judy did promise to take Nick back to Podunk in chapter 6 after they either solve Carajou's murder or a week elapses, and she seems to have largely avoided thinking about the implications of that beyond Nick's safety until this chapter. The modern Witness Protection Program does need the people in the program to abide by their rules, which includes no contact with people from their former life, in order to ensure their safety. In Nick's case, Judy would now be one of those people.

The time Nick spent abroad in Purris after his discharge from the military and before returning to Zootopia was first mentioned in chapter 5, and Judy spotted his pictures of the city on the walls of his bedroom in chapter 29.
Nick bankrolled a shopping trip for Judy to buy some clothes after her wardrobe was destroyed by her apartment burning down in chapter 15, at which time it was noted that he had paid for several outfits, so the fact that she ruined the clothes she wore while searching the Camellac doesn't mean she doesn't have anything that fits anymore.

Judy promised to keep Nick safe in chapter 6; for his part Nick promised that they'd go out on the town to celebrate once they solved the case when he and Judy talked about it in chapter 19.

The expression "chivalry is dead" was used at least as early as 1901, where it appears in the book From the Heart of the Rose: Letters on Things Natural, Things Serious, Things Frivolous by Helen Rose Anne Milman Crofton, so it's use here isn't anachronistic.

There were fire code regulations in Chicago in the 1920s; the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 had spurred much stricter requirements being put into place. Unfortunately, enforcement did remain something of a problem, and the owners of tenements were known more for cutting every possible corner in the pursuit of profit than in caring about the well-being of their renters. That Judy's cheap apartment was also something of a fire trap really shouldn't be too surprising.

Bellwether did in fact promise to pressure the police into investigating the fire at Judy's apartment when they spoke about it in chapter 11, and the newspaper clipping she left Judy certainly supports her actually doing so.

A farrier is someone who makes horseshoes, which would imply that Captain Farrier of the ZFD is probably a horse. In chapter 8 all of the firefighters that Judy saw were horses, and I noted in my comments that I thought it was logical based on the history of firefighting equipment for this to be the case.

Jelly beans were invented around 1861, and by the 1920s they were a common candy that could be purchased in bulk, although it's thought that they weren't associated with Easter until sometime in the 1930s. Guessing how many jelly beans are in a jar for the chance to win the jar or another prize is exactly the sort of game you'd expect a farming community in the early 1900s to have as part of their Harvest Festival. If you ever have the chance to enter a similar contest, remember that you don't have to guess—you can try to calculate how many jelly beans would fit in the jar by figuring out how many jelly beans tall and wide the container is and using the appropriate formula for volume of the container's shape.

In any event, if Judy's guess is right, $15 in 1927 is worth about $210 now. That's not a huge sum of money now, but it did have a decent amount of buying power in the 1920s, when a pound of bread cost about $0.10 compared to today's average of about $2.50.

Judy's dress would have been in style in 1927, although it's more conservative than flapper. The trade name Rayon for the artificial fabric made out of cellulose was first used in 1924, and a dress made out of the material would actually be relatively inexpensive. Therefore, Bellwether is being more than a little petty.

Also, since I posted the last chapter, yelnatsdraws on DeviantArt has posted some more 1920s Zootopia pieces. She's apparently considering doing a comic, which would be very cool. In the meantime, I recommend taking a look at her new 1920s Zootopia pieces:

Finnick as a bootlegger

1920s Zootopia characters

1920s Nick and Judy
As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
"I'm guessing that didn't go well," Nick said, looking at Judy over the box he had in his lap.

She was sitting behind the wheel of the Buchatti, the manila envelope from the coroner's office clenched in her paws unopened. Neither one of them had spoken on the way out of the Bureau of Prohibition's office, which was something of a mercy as far as Judy was concerned. Her conversation with Bellwether had done nothing to ease her worries about what would happen after Carajou's murder was solved; if anything it had done the complete opposite. Nick, by contrast, seemed completely unruffled, and he leaned back in his seat even as Judy shook her head. "She still wants me to arrest you," Judy said, and to her surprise Nick laughed.

"Is that all?" he asked, his words positively light and airy.

"But—" Judy began, but Nick cut her off.

"We both know you're not going to do it," Nick said, "So I can't say that I'm too worried. Who cares what the ol' killjoy thinks? If you don't give her anything she doesn't have anything."

He shrugged, and a small smile spread across his face. "I wouldn't mind seeing her face when you tell her, you know."

Judy thought about it, trying to see things from Nick's perspective. He did have something of a point—to the best of her understanding, the deal he had made that had landed him in Podunk meant that he couldn't be prosecuted for any of the financial crimes he had committed on Mr. Big's behalf. If Judy didn't give Bellwether anything new, there simply wasn't anything that the ewe could use against him. Still, Nick hadn't been present to see the hardness in Bellwether's eyes when she spoke about him or the obvious pleasure she would take in his arrest. His words seemed careless, dangerously so to Judy, and she couldn't bear the thought of his confidence coming to nothing.

Nick patted Judy on the paw, apparently getting something of a sense of the thoughts running through her head. His touch was warm, the softness of his fur a contrast to the roughness of his pads. "I didn't say I wasn't worried," he said quietly, looking her in the eyes, "Just that I'm not too worried."

There was suddenly a warm lump in Judy's throat that prevented her from talking. In the moment that Nick had looked at her, she had seen his own anxiety for what the future would bring. There was the slightest strain at the corners of his muzzle that kept his smile from seeming entirely worry-free, but that wasn't what she had focused on. It was the trust she could feel all but radiating off of him, something simple and unspoken that she couldn't trace to any single part of his expression. It was suddenly obvious to her that the reason he wasn't overly concerned about Bellwether was because he absolutely believed that Judy wouldn't let the ewe do anything.

Judy wasn't sure how long the resulting silence lasted, him looking at her and her looking at him. But before Judy could find the right words—or any words—it was over, Nick clapping his paws together and rubbing them briskly. "So why don't we have a look at what Dr. Tolmie sent?" he said, nodding in the direction of the envelope Judy was still holding.

"Right," Judy croaked.

Her voice barely sounded like her own; her throat felt incredibly dry as she swallowed before repeating herself. "Right," she said in a much more normal tone.
If Nick noticed that her fingers were perhaps trembling a little as she undid the loop of string keeping the flap of the envelope shut, he didn't say anything, and Judy leaned towards him, holding the bundle of papers so that he could look at them too. It was a somewhat awkward position to hold in the narrow car, particularly since Nick had to lean over himself against the box on his lap, and their heads ended up nearly touching as they looked over the page.

In contrast with the way that Dr. Tolmie spoke, the sentences in the summary section of his report were clear and short, although the main body of the document was filled with medical jargon that Judy didn't understand. Still, while it meant nothing to her that Bauson and Scursly had both scored a ++ on Goatler's Scale, Dr. Tolmie's summary was blunt and understandable: he had found no evidence of any kind of drug in their systems besides alcohol, and they hadn't had enough alcohol to be incapacitated. The conclusion Tolmie had drawn was that prior to their deaths of carbon monoxide poisoning they would have been completely capable of fighting back and the lack of wounds inflicted in self-defense suggested that they hadn't known they were being poisoned.

It was, in other words, nothing that they hadn't either already known or couldn't have guessed at; if nothing else their inebriation likely explained why Scursly's hip flask had been empty. Judy hesitated before flipping to the next page, looking up at Nick. He nodded for her to continue through the papers, which she did, but the rest of the packet seemed to be composed of the raw data, numbers and notes written in what Judy recognized as Tolmie's script, that had been used to draw his conclusions, and Nick motioned her to keep flipping through the pages until they reached the last page.

The final page was a carbon copy of a police report, the text somewhat blurry and the page covered here and there with spots of ink. The report was brief, covering the discovery of the Camellac in the Zootopia River, and Judy was about to put the packet of papers back into the manila envelope they had come in when Nick tapped a claw against the page. "Look at that," he said, pointing out the part of the report noting the address where the car had been spotted.

The address—35th Street and Roecine Avenue—meant nothing to Judy, although she had the vague idea that it would be near the city's largest meat packing operations, which would certainly go a long way towards explaining why the Camellac had been so coated in filth and smelled so terrible. "What about it?" Judy asked, wondering what significance Nick saw in it.

Nick gave her a sidelong glance. "Lionheart owns a sausage factory on 34th Street. Well, he did in '25 anyway."

Judy certainly didn't need Nick to connect any more dots for her. If Lionheart owned a building only a block away from where the Camellac had been pulled out of the river, it seemed likely that it was where Scursly and Bauson had been murdered. In the dead of the night it would have been easy enough to push the car into the river without being noticed. "It's not a nice part of town," Nick continued, "Doesn't smell very good either, no matter how dull that little bunny nose of yours is."

He winked and made his own nose twitch in what Judy thought was supposed to be an imitation of a bunny, but as a fox Nick simply wasn't equipped to get it right. Judy smiled at his gentle teasing, but the more she thought about it the less she liked the idea of going. When she had forced Nick to take her to La Porte Verte, Lionheart had threatened him with only the barest possible attempt at subtlety. Deliberately going to a business that the lion owned, even if it was completely legitimate, seemed like a terrible idea. There was no telling what might happen to Nick if they tried, and while the scenarios that her mind spun out were outlandish—she didn't think a sausage factory would actually have an enormous grinder that a mammal could be pushed into—there was no denying that something very bad could happen to Nick.
"No," Judy said, and the vehemence in her voice surprised even her, "We need to get all of this to Bogo."

She stuffed the packet of paper from the coroner's office back into its envelope, using the little loop of string to close the flap, and then gave it to Nick to add to the box on his lap. He accepted it willingly enough, tucking the envelope away, and shrugged. "Let's get a wiggle on, then," he said, shimmying a little in his seat.

When Judy had asked Dr. Tolmie to send his test results to the Bureau of Prohibition, Nick had stepped in to explain that it would prevent them from having to drive across town during the lunchtime rush. Unfortunately enough, it seemed as though the wombat had bought the explanation because it was entirely believable; they were moving at a crawl to cover the distance from the Bureau's office to the Precinct One station, the streets absolutely packed with other cars and pedestrians.

Despite Nick's reassurances about how little he cared about the threat that Bellwether posed to his continued life as a free mammal, Judy found that the constant stopping and starting gave her plenty of time to think about what else could possibly go wrong. What if the sky, which was full of puffy white clouds, suddenly turned dark and rain ruined the contents of Carajou's binder? What if Lionheart had an assassin positioned at a street corner just waiting to gun Nick down? What if —"Hey lady!" a voice suddenly interrupted her thoughts a moment after the honking of a car horn, "Keep moving!"

With a start, Judy realized that the path to the turn she was trying to make had opened up without her noticing it and she maneuvered the Buchatti around the corner as quickly as she could. The driver of the car behind her, a pig in a Model T that was rusting away at the bottom, jeered, "Bunny drivers!" as he kept going straight.

Nick turned to Judy, an amused look across his face, but rather than saying anything he simply turned back to face forward without as much as a change in expression. Judy slumped across the steering wheel, her ears falling backwards, as she looked at the line of cars in front of them. "We'll get there eventually," Nick said cheerfully; since they weren't moving he didn't have to shout.

It took until almost half-past one for him to be proven right, and once she had parked the Buchatti Judy got out and looked up at the police station. The Precinct One station, in her opinion, looked exactly the way that a police station should. Compared to the crumbling Precinct Five station or the dreary Bureau of Prohibition office building, the Precinct One station was meticulously cared for. There wasn't much in the way of greenery around the building, but there were no dead spots in the grass or discarded trash in the gutters of the sidewalk. The building itself looked impressively solid, the brickwork free of cracks, but a number of large windows kept it from appearing oppressive. There was a large copper police shield covered in a delicate verdigris patina mounted on a brickwork sign near the door, around which were the words "ZOOTOPIA PRECINCT ONE POLICE STATION."

Nick was a moment behind Judy, taking somewhat longer to get out of the car while balancing the heavy and flimsy box he held, and he followed her gaze. "It's a lot nicer than the Bureau of Prohibition office," he observed.

Judy nodded as she started walking towards the door. "I used to think it was perfect," she said, and even as they got closer there were no apparent flaws in the building's façade.

"Used to?" Nick asked, "What changed that?"
She considered the question, but it didn't seem as though there was any single answer that she could give. Her arrest at the paws of Zweihorn and River was the obvious choice, but that wasn't the only thing she had seen that had shaken her faith in the police. "Maybe nothing's perfect," she said at last.

Nick nodded sagely, or at least as much as he could when he was using the underside of his muzzle to help manage the box he was carrying. "Need I remind you who you're standing next to?" he asked, and Judy laughed.

She almost elbowed him in the side before she caught herself; she didn't want to make him drop the box. Instead she shook her head, and in response Nick took on a mock wounded expression as he carefully made his way up the short flight of stairs to the main entrance, which Judy pulled open for him. She didn't fight the smile across the space as they crossed the bustling lobby to the reception desk. Judy didn't recognize the mammal behind the desk, a slim deer who looked meticulously put together. His uniform was sharply pressed and his badge caught and reflected rays of light; even his fur didn't seem to have so much as a single strand out of place. The tines of his antlers had been covered with blunt caps of plain and unadorned steel that had nevertheless been polished to just as much of a mirror shine as his badge, and Judy was forcibly reminded of Scursly although the two mammals couldn't have been more different. "Good afternoon," the deer said as they approached, his posture in his chair stiffly upright as he looked down at the two much shorter mammals.

"I'm Agent Hopps with the Bureau of Prohibition," Judy said by way of introduction, pulling her badge out of her purse to show the deer, "Could we get in to see Chief Bogo?"

The buck looked from her badge down to something in a book on the desk, and then back up from the book to first her and then Nick. Judy wasn't tall enough to see what it said, but he gave her a crisp nod. "He left instructions to send you in," he said, "Do you know how to get to his office?"

"Sure do," Nick said before Judy could respond, "Come on, Carrots, this is getting heavy."

He jerked his head in the right direction and made an exaggerated gesture of how heavy the box was. "Thank you," Judy said to the deer, but before she could start off towards Bogo's office, he asked a question.

"What's all this about, if you don't mind me asking?" the deer asked, and the stuffy formality had left his voice.

He was young, probably around the same age that Judy herself was, and she could plainly hear the interest in his words. She could understand it; it wasn't every day that a bunny prohibition agent accompanied by a fox had a free pass to speak with the chief of police. "Just bringing the chief a dinner set," Nick said, hefting the box and then starting to walk away.

Judy hadn't paid it much mind before, but scrawled on one side of the box were the words "CUTLERY AND PLATES," which was apparently what the fox had been storing in it before emptying the box from his attic for use carrying evidence. The deer blinked, apparently unable to tell whether or not Nick was joking. The deer was still wearing a puzzled expression as Judy caught up with Nick before hastily going for the intercom.

Bogo's desk had significantly more paperwork spread across it, but otherwise his office looked the same as it had the last time they had been inside it. "Agent Hopps, Mr. Wilde," he said by way of greeting, "I assume you're not here for a dinner party."

He had apparently caught sight of how the box Nick was carrying had been labeled, and Judy couldn't help but stare at the buffalo. It was the first sign that she had ever seen that Bogo had a sense
of humor, albeit an apparently incredibly dry one. Judy brushed aside her surprise and closed the door behind Nick before answering. "We found Carajou's hotel room," she said.

Bogo's full attention was suddenly on her, the intense focus of his eyes seeming to burn into hers as he gestured towards the chairs in front of his desk. "What did you find?" he asked, looking at the box, which Nick had gently set on his desk before sitting down.

"Carajou kept a log of his jobs," Judy said, and Bogo instantly sprung to his feet and pulled the box open.

"Also, a couple of guns," Nick added helpfully, "Including one that might have been used to kill Koslov and his mammals."

If Bogo heard the fox, he gave absolutely no indication of it. He had pulled Carajou's binder out of the box and was flipping through it before he fell into his chair heavily and set the binder down open to the last page. He was silent for a long moment, and then he turned back to Judy. He looked tired but somehow still alert, and when he spoke he had her full attention. "Scursly's house and Bauson's apartment burned down sometime last night," he said.

Judy exchanged a glance with Nick. She didn't think it was possible that it was a coincidence that the two homes—or three, if her own apartment was counted—had caught fire, and she said as much.

"Someone's trying to destroy evidence," she said, and Bogo pushed a folder across his desk towards Judy.

"I agree," Bogo said, "But they didn't get it all. That was found in the ashes of Scursly's home."

Judy wasn't sure what she had been expecting when she opened the folder, but what was in it didn't appear too remarkable. It was a scrap of bond paper, the edges somewhat charred where it had almost but not quite ignited. "It was in his safe, which he had left closed but unlocked along with a few thousand dollars in gold coins."

Judy looked down at the piece of paper, which had the cryptic words "Payment to be provided for loyal service" written on it. Nick leaned over to look at it himself and frowned, apparently no more able to make sense of it than she was. Despite the fact that the words meant nothing to her, her eyes widened and her ears stood straight up as she realized that the writing looked familiar. She jumped out of her chair to look at the binder, which confirmed her suspicion. The neat, even writing on the burned scrap of paper looked to her to be a perfect match for the writing on the piece of paper that Carajou had saved and noted as having been from Lionheart. It even looked like the same kind of paper, and Judy staggered backwards herself before falling into her own chair.

"Lionheart wrote both notes," she said, and Bogo nodded.

"This binder you found makes it enough for a warrant," he said, "I've been looking forward to tearing down Lionheart's gate and going through his mansion. I imagine that there will be quite a bit to find."

There was an almost predatory gleam in the buffalo's eyes, and Judy had no doubt that he meant every word he had said. "Excellent work, Agent Hopps," Bogo said, and then he stood up and offered her his hoof.

Judy hesitated a moment before taking it. "We did it together," she said, gesturing to Nick before shaking Bogo's hoof.

The chief of police's grasp was surprisingly gentle and delicate as he apparently took care not to
Nick didn't seem particularly perturbed, and simply leaned back in his chair, offering the chief of police a smile that exposed all of his teeth. "I'm batting a thousand right now. You're welcome," he said with more than a hint of smugness, and Judy saw Bogo's massive hooves flex in irritation before the buffalo recovered from his minor loss of composure.

"Forensics can analyze the gun," Bogo said as he seemed to force the conversation back into the direction he wanted it to go, "But I have a problem."

Nick, Judy noticed, suddenly sat up straighter, his expression instantly becoming far more guarded. "What kind of problem?" Judy asked cautiously.

"I can get a warrant and I can get enough officers I trust to raid Lionheart's mansion," Bogo said, "But that takes time and he absolutely cannot be tipped off. Does anyone else know you found this?"

The buffalo gestured at the binder and the viola case with the guns in it. "No one," Judy said, shaking her head.

Bogo nodded in satisfaction. "I'll plan on leading the raid early in the morning tomorrow."

He smiled, and the expression didn't seem to fit his features. It was more of a grim smirk than a broad grin, but it still seemed oddly out of place to Judy. "You're welcome to come and watch Lionheart be walked into the station."

"Both of you," he added, "Plan on being here at three."

Nick looked somewhat less cheerful at the idea of returning to the police station at three in the morning, but he nodded. Judy couldn't help herself from beaming. They had successfully delivered the evidence to Bogo and he was taking it completely seriously. The case was just about over and Judy would actually get to see Lionheart's arrest herself, which brought her no small amount of satisfaction. "You'll have your recommendation for the police academy, of course," Bogo said, "But I do want you to know that I am quite sorry for what I need to do now."

"Sir?" Judy asked.

Nick had gotten out of his chair and was pulling at Judy's arm when Bogo suddenly laughed, which seemed even more out of place than his smile had. "I'm not going to kill you, Mr. Wilde," he said, and while Nick's posture relaxed slightly he didn't let go of Judy's arm and he seemed ready to make a break for the door at any second.

"I know which officers I can trust completely," Bogo continued, his expression serious again, "And I know which ones I can't trust at all. But there are some in the middle—too many, I'm afraid—and I can't risk word of this making its way back to Lionheart. No one out there can know what you brought me. I need you to act like you're still investigating, but not in any way that might make someone think you're close to solving it."

"Oh," Nick said, and he offered Bogo a winning smile that gave no sign of any sort of panic, "We can do that."

"Next time do not waste my time with half-baked theories!" Bogo roared as he swung the door to his office open and pointed down the hall.
There was a terrifying expression on his face only a hair underneath what Judy would have classified as murderous rage, and Bogo's voice was so loud it made her ears hurt. "This is a police station, not a kindergarten! My time is much too valuable to waste listening to every insipid thought that goes through your head!" Bogo continued, and if anything he was getting even louder, "Now get out before I call Bellwether myself to tell her to collect her agent out of a cell again!"

He slammed his door shut with such force that it seemed as though the entire building shook as Nick and Judy fled, and there was a stunned silence in the lobby as they ran past the officers and out the doors. Once they were back to the Buchatti, Judy turned to Nick at the same time he turned to look at her, and she couldn't help but laugh. "That was really something, wasn't it?" Nick said; he wasn't laughing but the corners of his muzzle were definitely turned up more so than usual.

"It was," Judy agreed as she got herself back under control, leaning against the side of the car for support.

She just couldn't help it; they really were so close to success and her stomach hurt from laughing as she got behind the wheel. "So what now?" Nick asked, and then he rubbed at his stomach, "After lunch, that is."

It was almost two in the afternoon, and Judy certainly couldn't blame him for being hungry; she suddenly felt starved herself. "I don't know," she admitted, "Do you have any ideas?"

She was having a hard time thinking of anything that they could do that would look like investigation but wouldn't look like they knew what they were doing. After a moment, Nick spoke, and his words were surprisingly solemn. "Do you think we could go see Mr. Big?" he asked, "It'd be, well..."

He trailed off, apparently unable to find the right word, but Judy thought she knew what he meant. Maybe it would be closure for Nick, seeing that his once terrifying boss had been reduced to a shell of himself. Maybe it would be a way for Nick to see how far he had come since leaving that part of his life behind. "Of course we can," Judy said, and she patted his paw.

Her own paw was tiny compared to his, but he seemed to appreciate the gesture all the same. "Thank you," he said softly, and he surprised her by turning his paw over and squeezing hers.

Nick pulled his paw away and looked over the hood of the Buchatti. "Now before we drive to Jerboliet, what do you feel like for lunch?"

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "The Letter Edged in Black," comes from a song written in 1897 by Hattie Nevada, which has had a number of covers including by Vernon Dalhart in 1925 and much more recently by Johnny Cash in 2006. The lyrics of the song are about receiving bad news, so it's perhaps somewhat ironic that I'm using the title simply in reference to the note that the police found that has somewhat charred edges and actually represents good news for the investigation.

The use of the word "jargon" to refer to portions of Dr. Tolmie's report is historically appropriate, as the word has been used since at least the 19th century to refer to a type of language that is used in a particular context and isn't easily understandable outside of it. Since neither Judy nor Nick has a medical degree and likely would have had fairly little exposure to medical terminology, it made sense to me that there would be parts of the report neither would be able to make any sense of.

The example provided, Goatler's Scale, is a pun off of Gettler's Scale, which is a real numeric scale that quantified the level of alcohol intoxication in a person by making a measurement from their brain.
tissue. Gettler's Scale was a four point system; a rating of ++ indicated a 0.1 to 0.25 percent alcohol content, which is associated with mild inebriation. Gettler's paper, "Alcohol Content in Human Brains" was published in early 1927, which suggests that Dr. Tolmie is keeping up with the literature in his field.

One of the obvious disadvantages of Gettler's method was that it used brain tissue samples, meaning it was really only usable on people who were already dead. In 1931 a toxicologist named Rolla Harger invented what he called a "Drunk-o-Meter," which worked by having a person blow into a balloon and then analyzed the breath for the presence of alcohol vapors with a chemical solution that changed colors depending on alcohol content. Although it wasn't the first attempt at scientifically determining whether or not a person was drunk, it was the first practical method and it saw widespread use until the development of the more advanced and compact breathalyzer in 1954, which has undergone continuous improvements and refinements.

Carbon paper was invented in 1801 and was in widespread use by the 1920s. Carbon paper predates carbonless copy paper, which is still sometimes seen as paperwork with a white page that is directly written on with a purple sheet underneath it and a yellow sheet underneath that. The way that carbon paper works is that a sheet of it is inserted between two pages. When pressure is applied to the top page by using a typewriter or a ballpoint pen, it causes dry ink to come off the back of the sheet of carbon paper and adhere to the front of the bottom sheet, effectively making a copy.

The disadvantage of this method is that it doesn't work for making a copy of an existing document; you need to make the copy at the same time as the original. Additionally, the first practical ballpoint pens weren't available until the late 1930s, so in the 1920s a typewriter was the only practical way to use carbon paper. Still, creating a copy at the same time as a type-written original was quite useful, saving time compared to having to type up a copy.

Roecine is a pun on Racine and the roe deer; there really is an intersection of 35th Street and Racine Avenue in Chicago, which is in fact near what was the city's meat packing district in the 1920s. Just before it intersects with Racine, 35th Street is a bridge that crosses the Chicago River, which as previously described was pretty badly polluted at the time.

Getting a wiggle on was 1920s slang meaning to get going, although that was probably one of the more obvious ones from context.

Model T Fords did have car horns; they actually made the stereotypical "ahooga" sound.

The US was still minting gold coins in the 1920s before production stopped in 1933. Scursly's collection would likely include eagle and double eagle coins, which had face values of $10 and $20 respectively. Judging from his personal effects, he certainly seems to have had a taste for precious metals.

"Batting a thousand" is a common American idiom related to baseball, where batting averages are commonly expressed to three points past the decimal, although annoyingly without a leading zero. Thus, an average of .366 means that out of a thousand appearances at bat, the player averages a hit three hundred and sixty-six times. For context, anything over .300 is considered excellent in baseball's modern era, and batting a thousand, or 1.000, is impossibly good. Nick does kind of have a point, though, with his current track record for gang lords with Mr. Big and Lionheart.

In real life, Al Capone was imprisoned in Alcatraz, which is off the coast of San Francisco and is literally halfway across the US from Chicago. Of course, Mr. Big isn't Al Capone, and to make it practical for Nick and Judy to pay him a visit I decided to have him be imprisoned a bit closer. Jerboliet is a pun on the Jerboa, a tiny desert rodent that moves by hopping like a kangaroo (although it's unrelated to the similar looking Muad'Dib, or kangaroo mouse) and Joliet, a city in Illinois that
was home to the Joliet Correctional Facility from 1858 to 2002. Joliet also has a minor league baseball team named the Joliet Slammers (their mascot is a jailbird) named after the prison. Joliet is about thirty miles away from Chicago, so it's certainly a round trip that could reasonably be made in a single day.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
Jailhouse Blues

After Nick and Judy had left the police station and grabbed a few sandwiches to go, Nick had tapped on the gauge labeled “Essence” on the Buchatti’s dashboard that was nearing its left-most extreme before Judy had the chance to so much as unwrap her sandwich. “We’re going to need to fuel up if we want to make it to Jerboliet,” he said, “We’ll need a map, too.”

“You mean there’s actually somewhere you don’t know how to get to?” Judy asked, and Nick smiled at her gentle teasing as he delicately peeled the waxed paper away from his sandwich.

They had stopped at a deli called Donowitz’s for the sandwiches, and while it had been built to such a significantly larger scale that not even Nick could see over the counter that the wizened old proprietor stood behind, there hadn’t been a sign banning predators like the last place Judy had gone into for sandwiches. In fact, the bear making the sandwiches had even tried to pull them into a discussion about the Cubs; there was a radio tuned into a game that the bear seemed to be only half listening to, preferring instead to speak fondly of the 1908 World Series. The bear, who Judy guessed was Donowitz himself, had launched into the story of how he had watched the second game of the series through a gap in the fence with the ease of long practice, and there might not have been a way to politely extricate themselves from the conversation if the team the Cubs were playing hadn’t scored another run and sent the bear into a fit of despair. The breathless voice of the announcer, tinny over the radio, had continued on as the bear finished the sandwiches and shook his head in silent disgust.

Nick had clearly noticed Judy’s growing impatience and had taken the opportunity to pay, and they had hurried out the door, sandwiches and bottles of soda in paw, as Nick had called out a cheery, “There’s always next year!”

Despite the turn of the bear’s mood while he had been making it, Judy had to admit that the sandwich was delicious, and she savored the taste of timothy grass and mushrooms in some kind of sauce that brought out the flavors of both as Nick wagged his own sandwich of pickled salmon at her. “And here I thought it’d be a point in my favor I’ve never been to the lockup in Jerboliet,” he said, “Not much work for an accountant in prison.”

Judy nodded. “Did Mr. Big have mammals in Jerboliet?” she asked.

Nick took a moment to respond, as he had just taken a bite of his sandwich and had to finish chewing and swallowing it first. “I suppose he must have had a mammal or two get sent there,” he said, “But most of them would have ended up at the county jail. Why do you ask?”

It took Judy a moment to try and figure out what to say, which she tried to cover by making her next bite of her sandwich last as long as possible. “What if someone recognizes you?” she asked.

“Ah,” Nick said, “I wouldn’t worry too much about that. It’s not like they’re going to be able to jump out of their cells and shank me, you know.”

He shot Judy a smile, but he must have been able to read her expression, because he continued, in a more serious tone. “Look, by now I’m sure everyone knows I’m back in town.”

Judy could feel a shameful blush creeping into her ears; although Nick hadn’t been specific she had no doubt that he was thinking of their encounter with Lionheart in La Porte Verte, an exchange that kept returning to the front of her mind over and over again. Nick must have seen the insides of her ears changing color, because he quickly added, “I haven’t exactly been trying to hide it,” before he
continued.

“This is probably the lowest risk we’ve taken this entire investigation,” he finished, and Judy thought about it as she kept eating her sandwich.

He had a point, but Judy found that she was still uneasy, which was an almost frighteningly unfamiliar feeling. She didn’t think that she was given to cowering in fear or panicking the way that everyone thought rabbits did, and she had spent her entire life proving that she wasn’t afraid to take the risks a police officer had to be willing to accept just to do their job. Even in the Thief of the Night, when she had seen a corpse as the result of violence for the first time, she hadn’t been afraid, but now that it was Nick who might be in danger she found it difficult not to be afraid for him.

“Besides,” Nick continued, “I seem to remember a certain bunny saying she wouldn’t let anything happen to me.”

Nick smiled, and Judy was struck again by the simple trust it showed, a trust that took any trace of cynicism out of his features. Judy swallowed her own unease, doing her best to return his smile, and they lapsed into silence until they had both finished eating.

Judy had pulled into the first gas station that she had seen after they had finished their sandwiches, which was built in an eye-catching way as a hexagonal pagoda of brick with a squat pyramid-shaped roof festooned with electric lights that spelled out the words “LEPUS GASOLINE” on the side facing the street. There were gas pumps set near the walls along five sides of the central building, which was a little office with the cash register and a variety of goods for sale advertised with words written in soap on the large windows on each wall. The gas station itself looked practically brand new and was scrupulously clean; the roof, which overhung each pump by such a margin that even a car three times as wide as the Buchatti would have been completely covered, was metal painted a brilliant white that didn’t have so much as a speck of dirt or a streak of rust discoloring it. All of the electric lights set on the underside of the roof were burning brilliantly, despite it being early afternoon and quite sunny outside, and the overall effect made the gas station seem quite open.

The hare kit who had run up to the Buchatti seemingly the instant that Judy had pulled into the station was dressed in a pale blue set of coveralls that were just as clean as the gas station itself, and despite the fact that he couldn’t have been more than eight or ten years old he was at most a head shorter than Judy was. “Are you a movie star or somethin’? I ain’t never seen a car like this.”

Nick exchanged a wordless glance with Judy, and she could see his obvious amusement at the star-struck kit. “Something,” Nick said, answering the kit’s question without really answering it, although he did continue, “She’s a prohi.”

“Banana oil,” the kit said contemptuously, “Everyone knows bunnies can’t be prohis.”

It would have been easy enough to let it go, but Judy was struck by the way that the young hare had said it. He wasn’t a rabbit, but he was just as much a bunny as she was, and she wondered if he was repeating something that someone had told him. Judy pulled her badge out of her purse and showed it to him, and if he had seemed impressed before at the Buchatti his eyes all but bugged out of his head at the sight of the brass shield with its blue enameled center. “Wow,” he said so softly that he was all but breathing the word, and he reached out a hesitant paw before catching himself and freezing with his fingers a few inches from it.

“Can I touch it?” he asked, and when Judy nodded, the hare brushed the pad of one finger against it with a slowness that was almost reverential.

“Wow!” he repeated much more loudly as he drew his paw back, and a broad smile split his face,
“Are you gonna chase some bootleggers with this?”

He gestured eagerly at the Buchatti and then continued without even taking a breath, “Have you ever fought gangsters? Do you know Izzy? Or Mole? Is it true—”

Nick cut off the hare’s increasingly high-pitched and breathless series of questions with one of his own. “What’s your name, pal?”

The hare took a great gulp of breath before replying, “Sammy Lepus,” as he gestured at the embroidered patch on his coveralls that read “Sammy” in a cursive script.

“Well, Sammy,” Nick said, “I’m going to go grab a map, but why don’t you fill up the tank while Agent Hopps tells you about being a Prohi?”

Nick jerked his thumb in the direction of the little store at the center of the gas station, and eased himself out of the car and ambled towards the door. Sammy nodded eagerly as he set about his preparations to fill the Buchatti’s tank. The giant chromed lever of the gas pump seemed to take all of his strength to operate, and he barely managed to talk as he huffed and puffed with the effort it took to fill the clear cylinder at the top of the pump with gasoline. “Is that fox a prohi too?” he asked.

Despite Sammy’s earlier enthusiasm, he managed to wait somewhat patiently as Judy considered the best way to respond in a way that a kit would understand, watching as the level of gasoline in the pump dropped as the tank of the Buchatti filled. “Nick’s not a prohibition agent,” Judy said, “But he’s my partner.”

“My mama says all foxes is liars an’ cheaters,” Sammy replied.

“Nick isn’t,” Judy replied, trying to keep her words from being too forceful, but Sammy took half a step back at her tone.

“Listen,” she said more gently, “Any mammal can be a liar or a cheater. Being a fox doesn’t make Nick bad and being bunnies doesn’t make us good. I bet you get in trouble with your mother sometimes, right?”

After a moment to consider the question, Sammy nodded. “But you’re not a bad mammal, right?” she asked.

Sammy shook his head vigorously. “No ma’am, Miss Agent,” he said solemnly, and Judy had to stifle a smile at his awkward attempt to be polite.

“Every mammal gets to choose whether they want to be bad or good,” Judy said, “I want you to remember that, OK?”

A frown crossed the young hare’s face, but he nodded slowly. “Very wise, Agent Hopps,” Nick said, having returned with a folded up map in his paws, “So what do we owe you, Mr. Lepus?”

Sammy giggled, the tension instantly gone from his face. “My daddy is Mr. Lepus,” he said, but with his tongue poked out of his mouth in grim concentration he worked out the math in an untidy scrawl to figure out the total for the gas and the map in a grubby little notebook he pulled from a pocket of his coveralls.

Although Judy got the feeling that Sammy would have continued asking questions if he had had the chance, another car had pulled up as Nick pulled out enough cash to cover their total, and the driver honked impatiently. As though he had been slapped, Sammy scurried back to the register in the little store at the center of the gas station and rapidly made change before running back and dumping it
into Nick’s paws and then jogged over to his next customer. Nick took his seat in the car and only briefly unfolded the map and looked at it before folding it back up and stashing it under his chair. “It’s easy enough to get to Jerboliet,” he said, “It’ll be a right out of here to start with.”

Judy nodded, but before she could start the car, Nick added, “You’re pretty good with kits, you know.”

“I did have a few dozen younger brothers and sisters,” Judy said, and Nick laughed.

“Are you planning on keeping that going?” Nick asked, and when he saw that Judy wasn’t exactly sure what he was getting at he added, “Having a few dozen of your own, I mean.”

“I—I really haven’t thought about it,” Judy stammered, startled at the question, “I’ve always been so focused on becoming a cop and…”

She trailed off and shrugged. “I haven’t thought about it,” she said, and Nick nodded. “Daylight’s burning,” he said, apparently content to end the conversation, and Judy started the Buchatti.

She couldn’t help but feel, though, that there had been some kind of hidden meaning that Nick had been looking for—and that he had found it. The faintest hint of a smile played across his muzzle, and Judy pulled out of the gas station.

The drive to the Jerboliet Correctional Center made Judy realize how much she had missed some parts of living in the country. She didn’t want to permanently leave Zootopia, but it was nice to say goodbye to the frequently bleak, gray, and angular buildings of the city and be surrounded by nothing but meadows and cornfields. Except for the road itself, and the line of telegraph and telephone poles and wires that ran alongside it, there was hardly anything mammal-made that could be seen. There would be a barn, painted a cheery red with white trim, next to a carefully cultivated cornfield, and then there might be nothing but grass and wildflowers for miles at a time. The sight of so much greenery made Judy realize just what she had left behind, and although the Buchatti was as ever too loud to hold a conversation in, she made a mental note to herself to ask Nick what he thought of the countryside. She was sure that he had badly missed the city while he was in Podunk, but maybe he could still be happy somewhere a bit more friendly to foxes. Maybe he wanted somewhere he could meet a pretty vixen and settle down.

With a start, Judy realized that after Nick had asked her if she wanted any kits she hadn’t asked him the same. The realization cost her enough of her focus that she nearly missed the next turn that Nick called out, and she shook her head and tried to focus on the road in front of her again.

The Jerboliet Correctional Facility itself looked something like a castle. The central building actually had turrets, and everything was built of sandy stone. The windows in the part of the prison that must have been for the prisoners were gloomily small and the walls relatively thick. Guard towers loomed over the central courtyard and Judy got the impression that the prisoners themselves were always under watch. The prison might have actually been imposing if not for the fact that it was, at most, three-and-a-half feet tall.

The wall that surrounded the prison was significantly taller than the prison itself, which had obviously been built to the scale of its prisoners. There was perhaps fifty yards of open space between the prison and the massive outer wall, which was almost as thick as the prison was wide, and had to be at least fifteen feet high. The mammals patrolling the outer wall each could have easily knocked a hole in the prison themselves, and Judy realized that it was for precisely that reason that they were there—it wouldn’t do if a prison break could be as easy as any mammal more than about
two feet tall simply ripping into the walls.

The captain of the guard for the outer wall, a goat who was probably nearing retirement age but had the build of a much younger mammal, had looked at Judy’s badge with curiosity when she presented it to him. Whatever doubts he might have had about her—or Nick, judging by how he kept glancing at the fox—he had retreated to the guardhouse, which occupied a footprint outside the main wall nearly the same size as the prison inside, and made a hushed call to the warden. “The warden will see you,” the goat announced stiffly, “This way, please.”

Judy had expected the goat to let them in through the wrought iron gate set into the wall, but instead he brought Nick and Judy into the guardhouse and down a long circular flight of stairs that led to a tunnel brightly illuminated by electric lights at regular intervals that banished any shadows. The goat walked off down the tunnel, which Judy realized must run underneath the wall and to the prison itself, and she hurried to catch up to his rapid strides. They reached a door and the goat pulled out a ring of keys, selecting the correct one with the obvious ease of long practice, and brought them into a room that didn’t look anything like what Judy would have expected to see.

Like the tunnel leading to it, the room was brightly illuminated. It was perhaps twenty feet on a side, and the air was constantly rumbling with an odd hissing noise, almost like a snake, that came from a thick bank of metal tubes that dominated the center of the room and ran up into the ceiling. There were four squares formed by four tubes, spaced about two feet away from each block of four, and there was a square counter about three feet off the ground set into the grid of tubes. A little railing ran alongside the outside of the counter, and in the empty space between the tubes there were a number of small glass boxes with holes about the size of nickels in the top, which were covered with fine mesh screens. There was also what was unmistakably a tiny office, with a minuscule desk and set of office furniture set up and divided from the boxes by a privacy screen about six inches tall.

At the desk sat a kangaroo mouse dressed in a crisp dress the color of cornflowers that was a bit lighter than her vividly blue eyes, which stood out from her sandy fur. The warden was, Judy thought, nearly the same color as the prison above them, and at their approach she stood up from her desk and walked to the railing nearest to them and offered her paw. “Agent Hopps,” the warden said, her voice high-pitched but not squeaky, “I’m Warden Pauline Dancer. I’m told you want to see Alphonse Biggliani?”

Judy delicately grasped the warden’s paw, which felt as fragile as a piece of straw and was so small that she could barely make out the fingers, and gave it a single gently pump. “Yes ma’am,” she said respectfully, and the warden nodded at the goat who had brought them to her.

“That’ll be all, Henry,” she said, and the goat nodded and left.

On his way out, Judy realized that there were two guards stationed on either side of the inside of the door, one of them a goat who couldn’t be even half as old as Henry and the other a capybara with a bit of a gut. “I must admit, I’m surprised to see you,” the warden continued, and she was looking up at Judy with an expression that, difficult to read as it was due to her small size, seemed to be appraising, “Biggliani doesn’t get very many visitors. In fact, when Captain Boer said there was a prohi here to see him, I thought you might be Director Bellwether herself before he gave your name.”

“Bellwether has visited Mr. Big?” Judy blurted before she could stop herself.

Warden Dancer pursed her lips, a frown darkening her features. “Yes,” she said, “To gloat. I can’t say that I approve. I respect the… position she holds enough to allow it, but with you I’ll be blunt.”

The warden’s eyes narrowed, the brilliant blue of her irises barely visible, “If you’re here for the
same reason, you can leave now.”

“No, no, that’s not it at all,” Judy said, even as she felt what little respect she had left for Bellwether dissolving.

If Mr. Big really was a shell of his former self, it seemed particularly cruel for Bellwether to want to taunt him with her victory over him. “We’re here as part of a murder investigation. We thought he might talk.”

“You’re wasting your time,” the warden replied sharply, and her expression didn’t relax at all, “Who’s the fox?”

“A former associate of his,” Nick said, simply enough.

The warden’s face actually got even more severe, which Judy wouldn’t have guessed was possible. “If he can’t speak to his daughter, I doubt he’ll speak to you. But you can try.”

The warden turned around and stalked back to her desk. She hit a button that seemed almost comically oversized and spoke into an intercom grill nearly as large as she was, telling the unseen mammal on the other side to send Alphonse Biggliani down. It was about ten minutes of awkward silence later, the warden pointedly ignoring both Judy and Nick as she focused on her paperwork, before there was a sudden whooshing sound and a tiny door set into one of the metal tubes that ran up to the ceiling opened. A metal cylinder inside the tube opened, and out of it stepped a mouse wearing a uniform identical to the other guards Judy had seen so far pushing a wheelchair with a shrew in it.

It took Judy a moment to recognize the shrew as Mr. Big because of how different he looked from the pictures Judy had seen. Mr. Big in his prime had been plump, with great black bushy eyebrows that all but hid his eyes under his beetling brow, and in every picture Judy had seen was always sharply dressed in expensive suits. The shrew in the wheelchair, though, was at most a ghost of that mammal. He was gaunt, almost skeletally thin, and dressed in a rough black-and-white striped shirt with matching pants. His eyebrows were as bushy as ever, but had gone completely white, as had most of the fur that Judy could see. The biggest difference, though, was in the expression he wore. Mr. Big had always seemed to exude an aura of confidence and control, an almost expressionless mask that hid away whatever he might be feeling. There was none of that in his face at the moment, though. His mouth was twisted open into a sneering and unnatural rictus, his jowls hanging loosely. A fine thread of drool ran from the open corner of his mouth and he seemed completely unable to do anything about it, his paws limply in his lap and his fingers curled uselessly.

As the mouse pushed the wheelchair closer to the railing, Mr. Big gave absolutely no indication that he understood what was going on; he didn’t move or react in any way, even when Nick carefully and gently lowered himself until it was impossible for the shrew not to see him. “Hello again,” Nick said, and to Judy’s ears the cheer in the words sounded false and unnatural, “I bet you thought you’d never see me again, isn’t that right?”

As before, Mr. Big didn’t react. His head hung loosely over his emaciated chest, and the mouse who had pushed the wheelchair looked up at Nick, a pitying expression on his face. “You’re probably wondering why I’m here, aren’t you?” Nick continued, “I’m helping a prohi. Imagine that, huh?”

He jerked a thumb in Judy’s direction, but Mr. Big remained motionless. “Do you know anything about what happened to Koslov? You remember Koslov, don’t you? The gloomy polar bear who never smiled? Or Carajou? I always told you he was about to crack, you know,” Nick said, and there was an edge to his voice that almost sounded desperate to Judy.
The mouse guard finally spoke up, his voice a surprisingly sweet tenor. “Biggliani can’t do anything for himself anymore,” he said, “Nothing. He can’t feed himself. Can’t… you know, when he has to make water. He’s been like a baby ever since he had that apoplexy.”

“I see,” Nick said quietly, and then his features seemed to close over into an expressionless mask.

“I’m sorry,” the guard said simply, and when he carefully maneuvered the wheelchair back around to the waiting capsule in the tube neither Nick nor Judy made any effort to stop him.

Once the guard had left, Warden Dancer approached them again. “I told you it’d be a waste of time,” she said with a sigh, and her expression had softened somewhat.

“The guards will see you out,” she said.

Nick hadn’t spoken again on the walk down the tunnel or up the cold metal staircase, and even once they were back to the car he still seemed lost in his own thoughts. He climbed into the Buchatti mechanically, and before she started the car Judy gave his paw a brief squeeze. “Are you OK?” she asked, and as the words left her mouth she wished she had thought of something more meaningful to say.

Seeing Mr. Big so reduced had obviously had an impact on him, but Judy could barely guess at what he was feeling. Nick had been loyal to the shrew for many years, after all, until he had finally been asked to cross a line he refused to. How had he come to see Mr. Big in that time? Had Mr. Big only ever been Nick’s boss, or had he in some way become the family that Nick had lost? Nick gave Judy a small and sad smile, and squeezed her paw back. “I’ll manage,” he said, and then he turned forward, his posture stiffening as his expression smoothed out.

The drive back to Zootopia somehow didn’t feel nearly as pleasant as the drive out to Jerboliet. It was dark by the time they stopped for dinner, but Nick was no more talkative than he had been on the way out of the prison. When they finally pulled back into his garage and Judy had turned the car off, she couldn’t handle it anymore.

During dinner, Nick had been like a pale imitation of himself. He had answered Judy’s questions, and sometimes his expressions had even almost looked genuine, but he hadn’t been himself. He hadn’t teased her even once, or asked any questions, and when the silence grew too long he had seemed brooding.

Judy grabbed Nick’s paw before he could get out of the car. “I’ll listen, if you want to talk about it,” she said, “I’ll always listen.”

She didn’t expect him to respond, but he did. “You told that bunny that mammals can choose to be good or bad. You believe that, don’t you?”

“I do,” Judy said.

She was surprised at the direction Nick was going in, but if it was how he wanted to open up she would take it. “I…” Nick began, and then he swallowed hard before continuing.

“Do you know why I stayed with Mr. Big so long?” he asked.

Judy shook her head, and she could feel Nick’s grip on her paw tightening a degree. “He was the first mammal, ever since my mother…”

Nick swallowed hard again, but his words were steady when he continued. “Ever since my mother to be proud of me and what I could do. He’s never going to get the chance to change, is he?”
“Oh,” Judy said, and she suddenly realized what Nick meant.

Mr. Big was guilty of terrible crimes, but he’d never get the chance to atone for them. He’d almost certainly spend the rest of his life trapped in his own body. Maybe that was justice, but it had an inescapable finality to it. Mr. Big would never have the chance to become a better mammal, and he’d never be able to see what Nick had become. It was incredibly idealistic to think that the vicious gang lord would change, or even be capable of changing, but Judy thought that Nick’s cynicism didn’t run as deeply as he liked to act like it did. “Probably not,” she said, “But you know what?”

Nick shook his head slowly, and Judy reached over and pulled him into a hug. It was awkward, with them sitting next to each other in the car, but Judy managed it nonetheless, her head against his chest and tucked under his muzzle. She could feel the fur of it against her ears, and when she spoke into Nick’s chest she felt a sudden wetness against them. “I’m very proud of you,” she said, “I never could have done this without you.”

They sat like that for a long moment, and Judy could feel the beat of Nick’s heart against her and the warmth of his body. It lasted long, but not nearly long enough, and then Judy felt one of Nick’s paws wipe his muzzle, delicately brushing past her ears. “Come on,” Nick said, and for the first time since before they had seen Mr. Big the good-humor in his voice sounded genuine, “We’ve got a big day tomorrow. An early one, too, and I don’t know about you but I need my sleep.”

It was only reluctantly that Judy disentangled herself from him, and he smiled lopsidedly at her as they walked the short distance from the garage to his house. It was difficult to tell at night, with only the faint illumination of the streetlights on the other side of the house, but Nick’s eyes were somewhat red and puffy. She didn’t mention it, though, and while they didn’t speak again as they took turns using the bathroom to go about getting ready for bed, the silence had seemed companionable again. Before Nick had gone upstairs to his own bed, he had paused on the stairs, almost entirely engulfed by the shadows. “Thank you,” he said quietly, and then he was gone and Judy was left alone on the sofa for what felt like an eternity, her mind racing endlessly.

Tomorrow, she thought, it would all end. Lionheart would be behind bars, a position in the police academy would be hers, and she’d have the chance to ask Nick what he wanted. Her last thought before sleep finally claimed her was an odd one. It occurred to her, as she thought about Nick and where he would want to go after the case ended, that she never had asked Nick how he felt about having kits of his own.

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**Author’s Notes:**

The title of this chapter, “Jailhouse Blues,” comes from a 1923 Bessie Smith song. The lyrics are mostly about how terribly lonely it is to be in jail, but I chose to use it more for the title, since it’s not exactly a pleasant trip.

“Essence” is French for “gasoline” and is in fact how a real Bugatti Type 35’s fuel gauge is labeled. That it had a fuel gauge at all put it a leg up on several other cars; the Ford Model T, for example, didn’t have a fuel gauge. Instead, if you wanted to know how much fuel you had left, you had to insert a dipstick into the fuel tank, which you obviously couldn’t do while the car was running. It meant that you had to be a bit careful about how frequently you fueled up to avoid running out. Due to the popularity of Model Ts fuel dipsticks were commonly given away at garages, gas stations, and other businesses.

It’s at least plausible that the owner of the deli could have watched the second game of the 1908
World Series through a gap in the fence, as the game was played in Chicago. It’s also something of a little joke that he’s a bear and a fan of the Cubs. The name of the deli itself is also a little joke, as the character known as the “Bear Jew” in *Inglorious Basterds* was named Donny Donowitz. Nick’s sandwich being pickled salmon implies that it’s lox, a staple of Jewish-American delicatessens.

Back in chapter 30 I had noted that the date was Thursday, September 01, 1927, and it’s still that same day as of this chapter. The Cubs played the Pittsburgh Pirates in an early afternoon game, which would have been ongoing at the time that Judy and Nick stopped by the deli.

Interestingly enough, the very first baseball game aired over the radio was a Pirates game in 1923, although the commentary wasn’t aired live. Instead, updates were received by telegraph and the announcers described things on air based on those updates. This was still pretty typical even up through the 1930s; Ronald Reagan’s career in radio started in 1932 as just such an announcer. Somewhat depressingly, just like when I mentioned the outcome of a Cubs game in chapter 19, the Cubs lost their game on September 01, 1927. Based on the timing of the Pirates getting a third run, it indicates that the game was in the fourth inning at the time that Nick and Judy visited the deli; the Cubs went scoreless until the fifth inning, when they began to rally, but the final score was 4-3 in the Pirates’ favor. Really, the phrase, “there’s always next year” might as well be the motto of the Cubs.

Timothy grass is commonly recommended as a foodstuff for pet rabbits, as it is high in the fiber that they need to stay healthy, so I thought it’d make sense for Judy to enjoy it on a sandwich. The gas station being called Lepus Gasoline is after the constellation Lepus, the hare. It’s a reference to the real-world brand of White Star Gasoline, which was popular in the 1920s. Gas stations started really proliferating in the early part of the 20th century as cars became more popular, and the design of the gas station that Nick and Judy visit is loosely based off of a real design. The very first gas stations in cities tended to be street side, which meant that you had to pull over on the shoulder to fill up. This blocked traffic, though, so it wasn’t long before the first drive in gas station opened in 1913. The design of the pumps themselves is also accurate to the 1920s, where the attendant would operate a manual pump to fill a visible reservoir with gasoline with markings in descending order. The reason for the reservoir to be visible, besides being a convenient way to see how much gas was dispensed into the car, was to help assure customers that they were receiving quality fuel without sediment and other contaminants in it. Because the pumps weren’t automatic, it was also standard in the 1920s for the attendants to pump gas for customers, since they had to note how much gas was dispensed and then charge appropriately.

There are several differences between rabbits and hares (most obviously, hares are larger and have paw pads), but I think it makes sense that both groups would be considered bunnies. “Banana oil” was a slang expression the 1920s that’s about equivalent to “baloney” as an expression to mean that something is nonsense. “Wow” as an exclamation of surprise is much older than you might think, with the first recorded usage dating to 16th century Scotland. Izzy and Mole were first referenced back in chapter 12 as a pun on Izzy and Moe, a real-life team of prohis who were quite popular in the 1920s.

The Jerboliet Correctional Center, as mentioned in the last chapter’s notes, is based on the real-life Joliet Correctional Center, albeit at a much smaller scale. The way I see it, it makes the most sense for the primary guards of small prisoners to also be small, particularly when a mammal the size of a mouse also has human intelligence; they’d be pretty hard for an elephant to catch. The larger outer wall and the larger guards are more to manage the flow of larger visitors and also to make sure no one tries a prison break by driving a car larger than the prison into one of its walls.

Pneumatic tube systems, such as are commonly seen nowadays in the drive-thrus at banks, were first
used practically in 1836 to transport telegrams within buildings. I thought that they’d also work pretty well as a transport system for a rodent-scale prison, since the tubes can be maintained at a vacuum so that it’s not practical to try escaping through the tube, and rodents would easily be light enough to use the capsules for transport.

The warden of the prison is named in reference to *Dune*; the protagonist Paul Atreides goes by the name “Muad’Dib” after a fictional species of kangaroo mouse, and the novel is set on the planet Arrakis, which is derived from the Arabic word for Dancer. Pauline Dancer’s vividly blue eyes are as atypical for a kangaroo mouse as purple eyes are for a rabbit, but in the universe of *Dune* people who take the geriatric spice Melange, found only on Arrakis, have their eyes turn completely blue as one of the side effects. *Dune* is one of my favorite books, and I highly recommend it.

Captain Henry Boer takes his name from the Boer goat. Although the Boer goat was purposefully bred as a livestock breed, and consequently presumably wouldn’t exist in the world of Zootopia which lacked artificial human selection, the word “Boer” is Dutch for “farmer” and is a real surname.

Mr. Big has been tagged in this story ever since I first published it, and while his influence has hopefully been felt throughout, this was his first actual appearance. His non-responsiveness is consistent with a massive stroke; there’d be very little that the medical science of the 1920s could do for such a case other than to try to keep him fed and clean.

Well, this is it before the raid on Lionheart next chapter. This chapter tried to accomplish a lot, and I hope it succeeded. As always, I’d love to hear what you thought!
Judy woke up to the muffled sound of music coming from somewhere upstairs. She sat up on the sofa, blinking, almost instantly awake. Her watch had been lost in the fire that burned her apartment down, and if Nick had ever had a clock in his parlor he had removed it sometime before first abandoning his house. It had to be early in the morning, though, because the sun hadn't even started to rise yet and Nick's parlor was so dark that Judy could hardly see anything.

Judy jumped off the sofa and groped her way along the wall, feeling the slick texture of the wallpaper as she carefully found the stairs and made her way up to the second floor. There was a narrow beam of light coming out of the room full of Nick's records from the gap at the bottom of the door, and she knocked on the door softly. "Nick?" she called, and a moment later she could hear him standing up.

She heard the floorboards creak beneath his weight, still audible even under the sound of the music, and a moment later the door opened. Nick was illuminated from behind, wearing a pair of pajamas almost identical to the ones he had worn the previous night. "I didn't think bunny ears were that good," he said apologetically, and he started walking over to the little table where a record was spinning on a player that had something—a handkerchief, perhaps—stuffed into the horn to muffle the music.

He reached for the tone arm, but before he could stop the playback Judy spoke. "It's fine," she said, and Nick nodded.

"Do you mind?" he asked, gesturing at the wad of fabric in the horn of the record player.

When Judy shook her head, he pulled it out and the sound was instantly louder and the music clearer, although still somewhat tinny. It was something orchestral that Judy didn't recognize, and the title of the album to the side of the player—"La création du monde"—didn't help. It was sweet, somehow almost mournful and spritely at the same time, and Judy wondered how he had chosen it out of the hundreds of records that lined the walls of the room in neatly organized shelves.

Nick sat in the room's lone chair and pushed the ottoman away from it with one foot, gesturing towards it in a wordless invitation. "Couldn't sleep?" Judy asked as she took a seat on the ottoman facing Nick.

His eyes were somewhat puffy but his gaze was still alert and sharp. The parts of his fur Judy could see beneath his pajamas, including the tuft of creamy white that stuck out at the neckline of the top, was as disheveled as her own probably was. The fur of his cheeks was matted, and under the warm illumination of the electric lights in his music room the half-healed cut under one ear that was his memento of the apartment fire stood out in sharp relief. "Oh, I slept like a kit," Nick replied, leaning back into his overstuffed chair, "And then I woke up."

He wore a little smile as he said it, but Judy could understand. Having woken up herself, she wasn't sure that she'd be able to go back to sleep either. It couldn't have been more than a couple hours before they had to be to the police station to witness Lionheart's arrest, and she felt wide awake and full of energy. "I was thinking," Nick continued, and when he didn't continue to speak Judy prompted him.

"About what?" she asked.

"Purris in the fall," he said simply, and Judy felt her heart sink.
The music suddenly seemed dissonant, a messy doubling of themes that didn't quite fit together. Of course Nick would want to go back to Purris; by her own paw Judy had ensured that Zootopia wasn't safe for him anymore, and no matter what Nick had said the previous night it was no longer any kind of secret that he was still alive. And while Zootopia might be dangerous because of vengeful gangsters, Podunk wasn't likely to be any safer. Judy doubted that Bellwether would give up so easily on her desire to have Nick arrested, so it seemed to her as though fleeing the country might be the only good option for Nick to take. "Oh," Judy said, and she couldn't prevent her ears from drooping.

Nick, though, couldn't see her as he had closed his eyes, seeming lost in the memory. "It doesn't get cold, exactly, but you can feel the chill. It's like every breath is a bite that you have to take. The trees in the parks all turn colors, and it's like you're looking at a watercolor."

He sighed, and Judy could see his eyes moving behind his eyelids as he kept describing the city. "I can remember all of the streets, you know. I can remember where all of the cabarets and restaurants were and the way they looked at night when they really came alive. The way the lights sparkled... The way the music sounded when it was a live band playing... I can walk down every one of those streets in my memory, but when I try to imagine turning around and looking back I can't see anything."

Nick's eyes suddenly opened and he leaned forward and looked directly into Judy's. She had known even before she met him that his eyes were green; it was one of the facts about him blandly recorded in the file that the Bureau of Prohibition had. But neither the words nor the little black-and-white photograph of him, perhaps an inch-and-a-half on a side, that were part of that file could capture just how vividly green they were, or how they absolutely shined when he turned his attention to something and really looked at it. "Why do you think that is?" he asked.

"I— I don't know," Judy stammered, caught completely off guard by the question.

It wasn't fair to Nick, no matter how much she wanted him to stay in the city, to ask him to do so, and she forced her own disappointment down, swallowing an icy lump as thick as tar to force the words out. There was a long moment, the only sound the record as it played on. Nick slumped back into his chair, and the fire was gone from his eyes as suddenly as it had appeared. "I don't regret it," he said at last, speaking each word so slowly that it was as though he was speaking a revelation that he was coming to.

"I don't regret it," he repeated, and Judy was sure that he was talking about his betrayal of Mr. Big.

She had once thought that Nick was a mammal of the very worst sort, one who had only sided against his boss the gang lord out of his own selfish desire to stay out of jail himself. Now, though, she wondered if she would have had the strength to do it, if she had lived the life that he had. In his own way, she was sure that Mr. Big had cared about Nick, and it was obvious that the opposite was true in some way. Seeing Mr. Big unresponsive had clearly been devastating for the fox and Judy wondered if Nick had been hoping that Mr. Big would be undiminished so that he could explain himself. From what Judy had read, and from what Nick had told her, she doubted very much that Mr. Big would have been particularly understanding or forgiving, but maybe that wasn't what Nick had needed. "You did the right thing," Judy offered, but the words sounded hollow even to her own ears.

"I suppose," Nick said, "But what do I do now?"

Once again, Judy was caught off guard by a question, but she couldn't even manage a response. The warring impulses in her mind—asking him to stay, telling him to leave—made it impossible, and her mouth was suddenly dry, her tongue thick and useless.
He was waiting for a response, Judy was sure of it, and if his face was all but expressionless in its usual default she thought she could see just how badly he wanted an answer. She licked her lips, trying to will words to come to them, but before she could even try starting a sentence she was saved by the sudden shrill ringing of an alarm clock.

It was as though a spell had been broken; at the same moment that Judy jerked upright Nick did the same, and he shot her a wry smile. "I guess it's time to get ready," he said as he stood up, and it was all that Judy could do to nod her agreement.

Judy's morning preparations seemed almost dreamlike, as though time were continuously jumping forward whenever she wasn't paying attention, and after she had showered and dressed in another one of the new outfits that Nick had purchased on their shopping trip she found she had no appetite for breakfast. Nick must have felt the same way, as while he had offered to make something for her he didn't make anything for himself when she declined. It seemed to be happening all too soon when they got into the Buchatti, Nick still fussing with the knot of his tie, and Judy took a deep breath and turned to him. "Are you ready?" she asked.

"Are you?" he replied.

Judy flexed her fingers around the steering wheel, considering the question. "No," she admitted, and Nick laughed, not unkindly.

"Chin up, Carrots," he said, "How many police officers do you think could have done this?"

"Well," Judy began, but he cut her off with a waggle of his finger.

"None of them could have done this, even with the help of a certain cunning fox," he said, placing one paw on his chest as he raised his nose in gesture of mock nobility, "So try to enjoy it, would you?"

Judy smiled, and it felt as though her chest might burst. "Thanks, Nick," she said, and he tapped the face of his watch with one claw.

"Speaking of which, we're going to be late if we keep lollygagging. You wouldn't want to miss it, would you?"

"Not for anything," Judy said, and as she turned the car over she realized that it might not be entirely true.

Sitting there, with Nick at her side, it seemed as though there was something she would have gladly traded away the opportunity to see Lionheart being walked into the station for.

The trip to the Precinct One station in the eerie gloom of pre-dawn went by quickly. It was, depending on the perspective, either very late at night or very early in the morning, and there were hardly any other cars on the road lighting up the pavement with their headlights. Virtually all of the stores, and even the restaurants and clubs, were shuttered, their lights off. If it hadn't been for the streetlights, which illuminated the streets but left most of the buildings to disappear into the dark, there would have been almost no light at all, the sky still a rich and empty purple-blue.

At last, though, Judy pulled up to the station and parked the Buchatti. The station, she saw, had a light set up to shine on the verdigris shield set onto the sign out front, and while the patina kept the badge from shining the light made all the details stand out in such sharp relief that it was almost unreal-looking. Nick gently elbowed Judy as he put his hat back on and cocked it at a jaunty angle. "Come on," he said, and when he climbed out of the car Judy hastened to follow.
Inside, the police station was nowhere near as busy as it had been during the day when most mammals were awake and about. Their footsteps echoed in the lobby, which was very nearly empty. The mammal at the front desk, a female warthog with chipped and yellowing tusks, sat up straighter as they approached, but the eyes set into her bumpy face still looked tired. "Good morning," she said, and while she didn't exactly sound chipper her tone was at least respectful, "You must be Agent Hopps and..."

As her massive head turned from Judy to Nick the warthog blinked, looked down at something on her desk, and then back at Nick. "Ah, Mr. Wilde," she finished.

"That's us, darlin'," Nick drawled, seeming completely unconcerned with the warthog's obvious surprise at seeing him.

He leaned against the desk, his tail wagging slowly from side to side, and he gave the receptionist what seemed to Judy like his highest wattage smile. "Oh, yes," the warthog replied, shuffling the papers on her desk; Judy thought she seemed somewhat unnerved, but her tone didn't change, "Chief Bogo told me to expect the two of you. He said you can wait in conference room five."

Nick nodded. "And where would that be?" he asked.

"Just through that door," the warthog said, pointing, "Then up the stairs and down the hall on the right. You can't miss it."

"I'm sure we won't," Nick replied, and pushed himself away from the desk, "Thank you very much."

"Thank you," Judy added, and the warthog nodded.

The conference room was, as the receptionist had said, impossible to miss. All of the rooms in the second floor hallway had brass plaques identifying them centered on the wooden doors, and the conference room had been left unlocked. Inside, it was entirely unremarkable; the room was dominated by a large wooden table, covered with scuffs and rings from mugs of coffee, and it was surrounded by a dozen or so chairs of various heights, the tallest of which looked barely high enough for Judy to be able to comfortably sit at and see over the top of the table. There was a chalkboard that looked as though it had been recently cleaned at one end of the room, although chalk dust looked as though it had become permanently ground into the cheap carpeting underneath it. There were half-a-dozen metal ashtrays spread across the table, and while they were all empty the stale smell of cigarette smoke clung to the room and the ceiling had slightly yellowed to a dingy off-white color from what had to have been years of smoking. Otherwise, the room was completely empty, but what commanded attention were the windows that ran along one entire wall, which overlooked the front entrance of the police station.

Nick claimed one of the chairs and leaned back, resting his feet on the table with his hat in his lap. "You wanted to go on the raid, didn't you?" he asked.

His tone was casual, but he seemed obviously interested in Judy's response. "I did," she admitted, "I hate waiting."

"Hmm," he said, a slow smile spreading across his muzzle, "I wouldn't have guessed it."

Judy looked out the window, which was just high enough off the floor for it to be somewhat awkward for her to see out of, and then back at him. "There's a lot that could go wrong," she said, "What if Lionheart doesn't go quietly? Or what if he was more careful about not holding onto anything incriminating himself? What if the officers—"
"What if you were there?" Nick interrupted, "Would it change any of those things?"

"It..." Judy said, "No, it wouldn't."

She saw the point he was getting at. What Lionheart did was, at this point, entirely out of their control, but that didn't make it any easier to stand by and do nothing. "But it doesn't make waiting easier," Judy said with a sigh.

Nick nodded, and then smoothly eased himself out of his chair to stand next to her by the window. "I can tell," he said, "Your foot's tapping."

Judy hadn't even realized she had been doing it, and forced herself to stop. "Sorry," she said.

"It's not me you should apologize to," Nick said solemnly, "Think about whoever's underneath us."

Judy laughed, and then tried sneaking a glance at Nick's watch. "You could just ask," he said, giving her a sidelong glance, "It's..."

He pushed the sleeve of his suit jacket back with a theatrical flourish. "Not quite three yet," Nick said.

Judy stifled a groan and tried to take her mind off the wait. Compared to when she had been getting ready at Nick's house, the minutes seemed to be ticking past with exceptional slowness, such that she would have sworn that Nick's watch had stopped if she couldn't see the second hand sweeping around its sub-dial. When at first it was fifteen minutes past three, and then half-an-hour past, she was unable to contain her restless energy and paced the conference room, while Nick continued watching from the window. Except for the slow movement of his tail back and forth he could have almost been a statue, and Judy envied his apparent patience. Finally, at nearly a quarter to four, Judy's ears pricked up at the far off sound of a siren and she sprinted to the window and jumped up on the part of the sill that protruded into the conference room.

The sun still hadn't risen, so the view of the city was still mostly dark except for the pools of light around the streetlights. Judy ignored what she could see, though, straining her ears at the sound of the siren, which was unmistakably getting closer. "Do you hear that?" she asked Nick eagerly; he had looked at her with obvious amusement when she had jumped onto the sill, and he shook his head.

"Bunny ears?" he asked, and Judy nodded eagerly.

"I can hear a siren," Judy said.

A few seconds later, Nick nodded. "I hear it too. Look."

He pointed at something that Judy couldn't quite make out, but a moment later she caught sight of a black police van followed by an escort of two police cars with their sirens wailing. "You could really see that?" Judy asked; although as far as she knew she had excellent vision she hadn't been able to distinguish the darkly colored police vehicles or their headlights from the dimly illuminated streets and buildings until they were only a couple blocks away.

"Fox eyes," Nick said with what sounded like no small measure of smugness.

Judy's breath seemed to catch in her throat as all three vehicles stopped in front of the station. From where she was standing on the sill and looking out the view was excellent, the lights around the station making it bright enough for her to see what was going on. Judy saw a kangaroo wearing a blue serge uniform marked with the unmistakable decorations of a police captain step out of one of
the two police cars, and even without being able to see the kangaroo's face knew that it had to be Keeshan. The sour captain of Precinct Five was joined by a donkey with shaggy gray fur that Judy didn't recognize, but when he stepped out of the other car Judy saw that his uniform had the same rank markings as Keeshan's.

The two captains opened the thick metal doors at the back of the police van, and the mammal who stepped out after a moment was unmistakable. Leodore Lionheart was wearing a set of brilliantly crimson silk pajamas, his massive paws cuffed behind his back. Bogo stepped out of the van a moment later and began marching the lion towards the station, the two police captains at Lionheart's sides. Lionheart wasn't much taller than Keeshan was, but as powerfully built as the kangaroo was he was still far stronger looking, his enormous shoulders at least three times as wide as hers. The gang lord was icily silent, his features set into a tremendous scowl, and he seemed to be ignoring his escorts as they led him into the station and out of the view of the window.

A powerful sense of relief washed over Judy; the raid had clearly been a success and if there was any justice in the world Lionheart would never walk the streets of Zootopia as a free mammal ever again. "So that's that," Nick said, wonder evident in his voice, "We did it."

Judy looked down at him; standing on the window sill made her taller than him, which was an unusual feeling in and of itself, but as she looked at him, his pride plainly written across his face, her heart leaped in her chest and she acted before she could even think.

Judy kissed Nick.

Almost instantly she pulled back, realizing what she had done, and barely managed to stay standing as she fell off the window sill and back onto the floor of the conference room. "I'm sorry," she said, feeling her ears flush with heat.

"Come again?" Nick said, his voice almost completely empty of emotion.

His surprise was written across his features, his pupils narrowed to mere pinpricks and his tail straight back and bushier than Judy had ever seen it. The words came out of Judy's mouth in an uncontrollable flow, and she couldn't stop herself from crying. She had realized, in the moment after she kissed him, that it wasn't simply a matter of caring about Nick. She loved him, and loved him enough to realize why she couldn't. Why she shouldn't. "I— I shouldn't have done that," she sobbed, "I know you— you're going to go back to P-Purris but I w-want you to s-stay but that's so s-selfish of me b-because it's not safe and, and, and I j-just want y-you to be h-ha—"

Judy hadn't been able to control the words herself, but she stopped when Nick leaned over and put a single finger against her lips. "Judy," he said softly, "Do you know what I want?"

She shook her head miserably, the tears rolling down her cheeks as her entire body shook. "I want you," he said, and before she could react he kissed her.

When she had kissed him, it had barely been more than a peck, just her lips brushing against his. When he returned the kiss, Judy didn't have the words to describe it. She could feel him as he wrapped his arms around her, wiping at her tears even as he kissed her as she had never been kissed. His lips were warm, almost hungry, his nose a cold and wet pressure against her cheek as he tilted his head to make their mismatched muzzles fit together. The taste of him was somehow primal, and Judy could feel her nose filling with the scent of him, that somehow wonderful and almost floral musk, as her own hunger awoke and sent shocks down her body. It was like grabbing a live wire but with pleasure instead of pain, as from the tips of her ears to her toes her entire world shrunk down to just the fox. Her fox, whose every movement, every bit of contact between them, made her want more as a growing heat formed in her belly.
He broke it off first, pulling his head back as he caught a breath and then simply looked her in the eye. They were so close, their noses almost touching, that Judy had never before seen Nick so well. She had never seen him happier; she had somehow ended up with her paws wrapped around him, and she could feel his tail wagging against them as it moved faster than it ever had before. "You really mean it?" she said, and Nick didn't say anything.

He didn't have to. They had each other, and for the moment nothing else mattered. Everything that would stand before them could wait; there was only the singularly perfect moment in which Judy realized that she had never been happier. Her smile was so wide that it hurt. She nuzzled against his chest, wishing that there weren't the layers of fabric of his suit to separate her from his fur, and squeezed her arms around him tighter.

Time, unfortunately, seemed to have returned to its normal speed, and while Judy wished they could have stayed standing there forever she could hear the heavy tread of hooves approaching the conference room. "Bogo's coming," she said as she gently untangled herself from Nick.

"Petting party's over," he said with a sigh, but he was still smiling as he took one of the seats.

"We're not done yet," Judy promised, and his smile widened a degree.

"How do I look?" Judy asked as she tried to smooth her dress; considering that she had first cried and then been necking with him, she had the sudden worry that she might look completely disheveled in front of the police chief.

"Beautiful," he said simply and with complete sincerity.

Before she could say anything else, the door swung open and Bogo filled the frame. "Agent Hopps, Mr. Wilde," he said, and Judy had never heard him more cheerful.

He actually looked as though he was almost smiling, and his good-humor continued. "I see you didn't sleep well. I understand, of course," he said, and Judy let the remark slide.

Maybe it was his attempt at a joke, or maybe her eyes were still puffy from crying and he had misinterpreted it as tiredness, but Judy didn't mind. In fact, she wished that he would finish whatever it was he was going to say so that she could get back to what she had been doing. The warmth in her midsection had lessened but not gone away, and Judy forced herself not to fidget as she looked at the police chief. "The raid went well?" she asked, surprised her voice sounded as even as it did.

Bogo nodded. "It hardly could have gone better," he said with obvious satisfaction, "I do apologize for making you wait. There will be quite a bit of evidence to go through—it might take weeks to assemble all of the charges against Lionheart."

The buffalo shrugged his massive shoulders. "Your work, however, is done. You have my sincere thanks," he said, and after a moment he turned to Nick, "Both of you."

"What about Medvedeva?" Nick asked suddenly.

All of the evidence that they had collected pointed to the polar bear being framed, and Judy felt herself smile at the obvious show of compassion from Nick. No matter what he might claim or how he might act, she knew his heart was far from hard.

"The charges against Ms. Medvedeva should be dropped shortly," Bogo said, "It should be quite fast."

Nick nodded, and another question popped into Judy's head. "And Quill?" she asked.
"As for Mr. Quill..." Bogo said.

The chief paused a moment. "Now that we have Lionheart, he might be more cooperative. I'll be disappointed if we miss a single charge against the self-proclaimed king of Zootopia."

Bogo started to say something else, but stopped when there was suddenly a knock at the door. The mammal on the other side, a gangly camel, opened it hesitantly. "Chief Bogo, sir?" he said, "There's something— You're needed out here."

The buffalo sighed and pinched the bridge of his muzzle, but he walked out of the room, turning before he closed the door. "I'll be back to discuss your letter of recommendation, Agent Hopps," he said, and then he was gone.

Judy turned to Nick. "What do you think that's about?" she asked.

"You can't hear them?" he teased.

Judy shook her head. "They walked away from the door," she said, and Nick shrugged.

"I guess we wait, then," he said, and he sidled back up to her, "Now, I believe we were in the middle of something. If these lovely ears of yours can give us an early warning, that is."

He stroked one of her ears delicately, and Judy smiled up at him and reluctantly brushed his paw away. "We'll have to wait. I can hear other mammals walking around this floor now," she said, which was the truth; Lionheart's arrest had seemed to coincide with the start of a shift, and the previously quiet second floor was beginning to fill with sound.

"I see," he said, "You know, suddenly I understand why you hate waiting."

Judy laughed. "I'll bet you do," she said, and they lapsed into silence.

There was so much she wanted to talk to him about, so much that they needed to talk about, but it didn't seem like the right time to do so when they could be interrupted at any moment. It couldn't have been more than ten minutes before Bogo returned, but his mood had changed entirely, his chin grimly set and his eyes hard. He was followed by three uniformed officers, including the camel who had summoned him, and an anxious-looking koala lugging a wooden case. "Ms. Hopps," Bogo said sharply, "Do you have your revolver?"

"I— Yes," Judy said, "It's in my purse."

Bogo nodded to the camel, who grabbed Judy's purse before she could protest and opened it. He took a clean white handkerchief and pulled the little snub-nosed revolver out. "Get your sample," Bogo said to the koala, who delicately set his case on the table and flipped it open.

The koala took a cotton swab and ran it along the muzzle and handle of the revolver, and then carefully set it aside. "What's this about?" Judy asked, completely confused at the sudden shift in the chief's behavior and his sudden interest in her gun.

Bogo ignored her completely. "Take the revolver to ballistics," he snapped at the camel, "I want a bullet comparison yesterday."

The camel hastily folded the handkerchief around the revolver and sprinted out of the room. "Stockwell," Bogo said to the koala. "Test their paws, too."

Judy was too stunned to protest when the koala ran a fresh swab across both of her paws, but when
he set it aside and moved to do the same to Nick, the fox pulled his paws away from the table. "What are you doing?" Nick asked, and there was a note of fear to his words.

Bogo again didn't respond, and he looked to the two officers left in the room, a female bison nearly as tall as Bogo and a male gaur easily larger than both of them. They began moving forward, their faces as grim as the chief's, and for the first time since re-entering the room Bogo addressed Nick directly. "Make this difficult," he seethed, and there was a raw fury in his voice and such obvious hatred in his eyes directed at Nick that Judy could feel her blood chill even just being next to him.

Nick dropped his paws back to the table, and Stockwell took his samples. "Do the test now," Bogo told the koala, his eyes not leaving Nick for a second.

The koala awkwardly climbed up onto a chair and fumbled a number of beakers and little glass bowls out of the case and set them on the table a fair distance away from Nick and Judy. Once he had his tools out, though, he manipulated them with obvious ease, quickly setting up six clear glass bowls. He prepared his three swabs by adding them to test tubes filled halfway with something clear and sharp-smelling, and then split the contents of the test tubes, for each one pouring half into one empty bowl and half into another until all six were full. Stockwell moved from bowl to bowl and added more liquids. The contents of two of the bowls, ones which had the samples from Judy's revolver and Nick's paws, almost instantly turned pink, while both bowls that had the sample from Judy's paws remained clear. "The gun and the fox are both positive for nitrites," the koala said, "You've got your fox."

"What are you talking about?" Nick demanded, but instead of answering Bogo turned to the two grim officers by the door.

"Arrest him," Bogo said, and Judy's confusion refused to resolve itself.

It didn't seem possible that Nick could be arrested, not even when the bison pulled out a pair of fox-sized cuffs and the gaur produced a similarly-sized muzzle. "No," Nick said, and there was no mistaking the panic in his voice, "No, you can't do this! Judy, you can't let them do this!"

Judy tried lunging for him but suddenly couldn't, one of Bogo's massive hooves on her shoulder in an iron grip. Nick tried to squirm away from the two massive officers, begging and pleading all the while, and even when the bison had forced his paws behind his back and cuffed them together he didn't stop fighting as the gaur tried to wrestle the muzzle onto him. "What are you doing?" Judy asked, "Why are you arresting him? Stop!"

Tears were flowing down her cheeks freely again as reality refused to resolve itself into anything other than Nick's arrest. The gaur, in apparent frustration at the fox's continued struggles to escape the muzzle, hit him in the chest hard enough to knock the wind out of him, and Nick wheezed wordlessly, doubled over, until the straps were secured around his muzzle and he was dragged out of the room.

Judy was left alone with Bogo, his grip still punishingly hard as she tried to turn around and face him. "Why did you do that?" she demanded, her voice cracking, "Why?"

Bogo's scowl, if anything, deepened. "I knew Zweihorn and River were crooked," he said harshly, "After they arrested you, Ms. Hopps, I started having them followed when I had officers free."

"What?" Judy asked, still completely lost, "What does that have to do with Nick?"

"They were both murdered late yesterday night," Bogo continued, "I had one officer keeping watch on Zweihorn's house. They saw your fox enter her house."
"No, that couldn't have been Nick," Judy said, "It must have been a different fox. Or... or they were lying. It's Lionheart trying to frame him, it has to be."

She was speaking wildly, just saying whatever came to mind, but Bogo's pitiless gaze and vice-like grip didn't change. "Then explain this," he said, and dropped a folder from his free hoof onto the table.

The folder opened as it hit the table, revealing a glossy photograph. The picture was grainy, the shot poorly illuminated by a streetlight, but it was of a modest looking home with a fox standing on the doorstep, a revolver in one paw. The fox was, unquestionably, Nick, his features grimly set. Judy's protests died in her mouth.

"I'll be very interested in hearing why Wilde killed two officers," Bogo said, and in a single smooth gesture he cuffed Judy's paws behind her back.
"Did you ask Nicholas Wilde to murder Zweihorn and River?" the elephant said.

Judy didn't know how much time had passed after Nick had been arrested and she herself had been cuffed. It must have been hours, but it could have just as easily have been days for all that she could tell. She couldn't remember what she had said to the officers as she had been dragged out of the conference room and into an interrogation room, but whatever it had been had clearly done nothing to convince them of either Nick's innocence or her complete lack of knowledge about the crime that he had been arrested for.

Judy had been left alone then, her paws re-cuffed to connect to a ring in the plain metal table that dominated the interrogation room, with only her own thoughts for company. The sounds of life in the police station had seemed far off, just the unintelligible murmur of voices and the tread of distant feet, and it had almost seemed as though she had been forgotten. Her mind had leaped from thought to thought, torn between trying to logically demonstrate why Nick had to be innocent and a deep wordless well of helpless despair. Eventually, when it seemed as though she had cried every tear she had, the jumbled mess of her thoughts had cleared for a brief moment and a voice spoke in her head in Nick's voice. "They want you to panic," the voice had said, the cadence and intonation a perfect match for the fox.

Judy had tried to imagine Nick sitting in the chair that the elephant interrogator now occupied, trying to picture the way that he would look at her or what he would say. She felt about half-crazy doing it, but the world itself seemed to have gone crazy without her. The reality of Nick's arrest after their perfect kiss had seemed impossible in the moment, but it had refused to go away no matter how long she was forced to wait. Nick couldn't have possibly murdered anyone, let alone Zweihorn or River. Judy felt it in the core of her being, an immutable truth that she had clung to as she forced herself to calm down and listen to the words her subconscious had fed her. She had looked at the empty chair and the phantom Nick in her mind had winked as he nodded approvingly, sprawling back and kicking his feet up onto the table as though he didn't have a care in the world. "I know how they do interrogations," Judy had said as she straightened herself up, speaking into the empty room in a voice that crying had turned into little more than a rough croak.

"Attagirl, Carrots. You're not going to let them see you going all blooey, are you?" her imaginary fox had said, and Judy had shook her head despite herself.

Maybe it wasn't what Nick would have said if he had actually been there, but it was true. Judy had spent her entire life studying everything she could get her paws on in order to get closer to her dream of becoming a police officer. She did know how police conducted interrogations, and she absolutely would not allow herself to fall apart when they finally decided to send someone in. Her goal had to be to get as much out of them as possible and—"You've got to save yourself first," Nick's voice interrupted her thoughts as the natural conclusion came out in his words, "You can't do anything for either of us in here."

Judy had swallowed a bitter lump at the thought; although she had imagined the Nick figment shooting her a wry grin, gesturing at the chain that connected her to the table, it felt horribly similar to abandoning Nick to set his plight aside and focus on getting herself free. Judy had nodded to herself, wiping at her swollen eyes, and as though a spell had been broken she was alone with her thoughts again. By the time that the elephant had entered the interrogation room, she was ready to face him, and her answer to his first question was almost instantaneous. "I absolutely did not ask him to kill anyone," she said firmly, "And I know he didn't kill either of them."
The elephant, sitting in the same chair that Judy had imagined Nick in, regarded her evenly, seeming to evaluate her as she did the same to him. He had, she was sure, been trying to keep her off-balance, first by letting her sit alone for hours and then abruptly entering and asking a question without so much as an introduction. He was perhaps middle-aged, and while his gray skin was rough and loosely wrinkled in the way typical for an elephant he didn't look fat underneath his enormous conservative suit. When he gave Judy a wide smile his curving tusks gleamed a pearly white that contrasted sharply with his yellowing teeth and one shining gold crown on a molar. His beady brown eyes set beneath an enormous sloping brow seemed to shine jewel-bright as he spoke in a voice so deep that Judy felt it as much as she heard it. "Where are my manners? Detective George Moulmein," he said, shaking his head in apparent embarrassment in such a way that his ears, larger than pillowcases, wobbled sympathetically.

He stood up and offered Judy one enormous paw, stretching across the table to accommodate her lack of reach from both her significantly shorter arms and the chain connecting her paws to the table that prevented her from leaning too far forward. His grip was delicate, although he likely had the strength in a single paw to completely crush all of the bones in Judy's body, and he shook with two gentle pumps before settling back into his chair, which gave a mild groan of protest at his bulk. "Judy Hopps," she replied, although if he didn't already know that he wasn't much of an interrogator or a detective.

Moulmein sat silent a moment, filling his side of the interrogation room simply by existing in a space hardly large enough for an elephant. It wasn't nearly as gloomy as the one in which Judy had herself interrogated Zoya Medvedeva, but it was a near thing. The cinder block walls had been painted a cheerless shade of white the color of maggots, and the floor was wavy black linoleum that dully reflected the glare of the brilliant overhead lights. Judy could practically see the gears in Moulmein's massive head turning, the different pathways he was considering bringing the interrogation down at his realization that, no matter how puffy or bloodshot her eyes might be from crying or how frail she seemed in comparison to him, she was not some weak little bunny who would fold at questioning. "Things aren't looking very good for Mr. Wilde, Judy. Do you mind if I call you Judy?" Moulmein said, and his voice had a note of sympathy in it that Judy doubted was anything close to genuine.

"If you'd like," Judy said, although it was taking all of her focus to stay nonchalant.

She had had to force her foot to stop tapping, digging her blunt nails into her palms as she didn't ask the questions that she wanted to. In the moment, Judy wanted nothing more than to ask how Nick was doing, to ask for the charges against him to be explained in some kind of way that made sense, but she thought if she started she might not be able to stop. "They're not looking good, Judy. Killing three mammals—"

"Three?" Judy interrupted before she could stop herself, and she thought she saw a brief smile of triumph cross Moulmein's face before his features reset themselves into a kind of mournful sympathy.

She bit her tongue to clamp down on any further words as Moulmein used his trunk to reach into his suit jacket and fish out two tins, one of rolling papers and the other of loose tobacco. Still using his trunk, he opened one of the tins and pulled out a sheet of paper, setting it down on the scuffed metal surface of the table. With equal care, he opened the tin of tobacco and pinched off a generous helping, delicately sprinkling it along the center of the paper. His trunk briefly left his business on the table to dab at his tongue, and then he used it to dexterously roll a cigarette larger than a rabbit-sized cigar and place it in his mouth. Moulmein pulled a pack of matches, any one of which was practically the size of a torch to Judy, out of his left pants pocket with one paw, but used his trunk to pull out a match and strike it against the surface of the table and light his cigarette.

Moulmein took a deep drag of his cigarette as he used his trunk to shake out the match, and it was
only after he blew a plume of blue-gray smoke at the ceiling that he spoke again. "My wife hates these," he said, pulling the cigarette out of his mouth with his trunk and holding it in front of his face, "Couldn't stand the smell, even before we got married."

Judy was sure that the elephant was deliberately trying to bait her into saying something else, or was simply trying to make her wait as long as possible before explaining himself. She wouldn't have admitted it to him, but it was working; she had to resist the urge to try jumping across the table and demanding that he explain himself even as she tried to figure out what he meant by three mammals. "I can't count how many times I tried quitting for her," Moulmein said with a bemused chuckle, "It never stuck, though."

He ground his cigarette out against a metal ashtray set on the table out of Judy's reach and sighed. "But we've got a son now. A great big strapping lad already and he's only five."

Moulmein paused in his recitation, looking at Judy through the remaining haze of cigarette smoke. She could feel a numb kind of horror at what he seemed to be implying. Murdering two police officers, even crooked ones, was not the sort of crime that society tended to forgive. Murdering a child, though, was the sort of crime that even hardened convicts would want to see punishment for, and Judy's thoughts instantly jumped to Nick's safety, her heart hammering in her throat. "He's got weak lungs, though. Asthma, the doctors call it. The smoke makes it worse, so I'm trying to quit for his sake. For both of them. Do you understand?"

Judy nodded mutely. "There are some mammals you'd do anything for, they mean that much to you," Moulmein said, his tone thoughtful, "Angela Zweihorn was married, you know. She had a daughter, not even two years old yet."

Moulmein leaned across the table, and his eyes were hard as he looked into Judy's. "Mr. Wilde didn't just murder Tony River and Angela Zweihorn. When he crept into the Zweihorn house he murdered little Elly Zweihorn's father, too, and left her an orphan. Elly's only family in the whole world is Angela's sister now. Imagine the call Chief Bogo has to make. Imagine that little calf growing up without her mother or father, with nothing but a few fading photographs to remember them by."

Judy's first thought, which she found shameful enough, was that no matter what else Nick had been charged with it didn't include the murder of a child. Whether Moulmein had meant to do so or not, though, he had given away a valuable detail. The photograph she had seen, which supposedly showed Nick at the front door of the Zweihorn house, didn't seem to match up with the details of what Moulmein had described. It hadn't made any kind of sense to her that whoever had taken the picture hadn't intervened to stop Nick, and the story made even less sense if Nick was accused of murdering two rhinos. Her revolver might have the stopping power to kill a single rhino, if it was aimed carefully and used at point blank range, but it didn't seem very likely that anyone, especially a fox, would be able to do so on a second rhino before getting torn apart. She tried to focus on the details, to pick anything else that would prove that Nick couldn't be the murderer, and her answer to Moulmein was as firm as she could make it. "Nick didn't kill anyone. I didn't kill anyone," she said, "I want a lawyer and I want one for him too."

Moulmein sat back and chuckled, the solemnity with which he had spoken about Elly Zweihorn vanishing as he switched tactics. "You're the bunny who wants to be a cop, aren't you?" he said, and he continued without waiting for an answer, "Maybe it's not too late for that to happen, but think about what's happening right now."

"I want a lawyer," Judy repeated, "I want to hear everything about the crimes Nick's been arrested for and I want to know what you're charging me with."

"Nick," Moulmein said, shaking his massive head, "You keep calling him that. He really got to you,
"He's a good mammal and he has the right to a lawyer," Judy said, doing her best to stare the elephant down.

Moulmein, to her satisfaction, was the first to blink. "If you want a lawyer, fine, you can get a lawyer. But I want you to think about what's happening with Mr. Wilde right now," the elephant said, putting a special emphasis on Nick's name, "He's not in this station. He's in the county jail, probably in a room a lot like this one with someone from the D.A.'s office laying his options out for him."

Judy started to say something but the elephant plowed on. "His very limited options. A pred killing two police officers and a third innocent mammal isn't going to find a sympathetic jury. Any halfway competent prosecutor could send him to Old Sparky to fry. The D.A. has plenty to choose from and an election coming up next year. Mr. Wilde's best hope is to get a life sentence by giving you up."

The horror Judy felt at the idea of Nick being executed for a crime he didn't commit fell away only at her indignation that Moulmein thought so little of Nick. "There's nothing to give me up for!" Judy said, just short of shouting, "He didn't kill anyone and I never asked him to! I never would!"

"Sure," Moulmein said, "Sure, let's say that's true. Do you really think that matters to the D.A.? There's an awful lot Chief Bogo won't tolerate in this station but he doesn't run the county jail."

"What are you saying?"

The smile Moulmein gave her was the most cynical Judy had ever seen, beyond anything she had ever seen across Nick's face. "Maybe Wilde falls down a staircase or two on the way to the interrogation room. It happens. Plenty of witnesses to say he was fighting the whole time he got dragged out of the station, so who's to say he might not take a tumble?"

Judy couldn't keep her mouth from falling open, and Moulmein pressed his advantage, leaning in and lowering his voice until it was barely above a rumbling whisper. "He only needs one working paw to sign a confession. There's no telling what he might go through... Or what he might say. With all the evidence against him, it's basically a formality anyway."

Moulmein reached one paw over to the ashtray and started grinding the butt of his cigarette into it until the cigarette was all but pulverized. Judy couldn't take her eyes off the cigarette or the way that it fell apart under the elephant's grasp. "So save yourself, would you? Maybe you didn't ask Wilde to kill River and Zweihorn, but who's going to believe that? They arrested you. Embarrassed you. Humiliated you, I'd bet, until you'd give anything to make them pay."

"I'd never... I'd never do that," Judy protested.

She was more stunned by hearing the very words her mind had put into Nick's voice than by hearing the unfortunately plausible motive that Moulmein had laid out for why she might want River and Zweihorn dead. But while she knew that she had to get free herself first she absolutely refused to do it by lying. "Then maybe this Nick of yours gets it into his head that you want it done. Maybe an innocent little bunny says something in the heat of the moment that the fox who cares enough to help her decides to act on as a favor. He's already got a grudge against Zweihorn and River anyway after some kind of argument at the police station that we have a number of witnesses for, so maybe he thinks it's a matter of killing two birds with one stone."

Judy could vividly remember when she and Nick had confronted Zweihorn and River, and the way
that Nick had seemingly effortlessly broken River's composure with just a few words. "That's not what happened," Judy said, but her voice wasn't nearly as steady as she would have liked.

"Judy, please," Moulmein said, and she couldn't tell if his apparent desperation was real or not, "Don't you understand? If you don't give me anything Wilde's going to sell you down the river to save his own worthless skin. He tricked you, but it's not too late to make sure he doesn't get away with it."

"That's not the kind of mammal Nick is and that's not the kind of mammal I am," Judy said.

"He's already done it before when he gave up Mr. Big," Moulmein replied, "You're nothing to him, not when his neck is on the line."

"You don't know him," Judy said, and while it took real effort to keep her voice steady, she believed what she was saying with every fiber of her being, "I do."

The elephant sighed. "You'll regret it," he said, "You can't trust a fox."

Moulmein stood up and tugged at his suit jacket to straighten it. "You haven't been charged with anything yet and I know you know what that means. I'll give you some time to think."

Judy did. Without formal charges against her, the clock was ticking on how long the police could detain her; if she could resist breaking, and as long as Nick didn't say anything to incriminate her, then all she had to do was to wait. Wait, and keep her faith in Nick. When she looked at it that way, she really only had to do two things, and while she was terrible at one of them she knew she could do the other. Moulmein had meant to prod her into betraying Nick, but he had instead given her the means to save him. For the very first time since Nick's arrest Judy could feel an ember of hope, small and feeble but nonetheless burning, glowing in her heart.

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Author's Notes:

I skipped the author's notes in the last chapter because I felt that it kind of undercut the moment to switch from the chapter's end to my explanation of things. I did, however, write author's notes, so I'll begin with everything for the last chapter before moving on to the notes for this chapter, which means that these notes are particularly long.

The title of chapter 37, "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise," comes from a song written by Sigmund Romberg and Oscar Hammerstein II in 1928 for the Operetta New Moon. Although it was originally written as a tango, there have been many jazz versions that change the tempo. Although the title itself worked as a reference to the events of chapter 37 taking place in early morning, I chose it because the lyrics are about yearning for a lost lover, which seemed particularly appropriate. In fact, starting with chapter 34 I've had some ulterior motives in choosing chapter titles, as while that's the point where things seem to be resolving themselves the end wasn't quite reached.

For chapter 34, the lyrics to "I'm Sitting on Top of the World" indicate that the singer is like Humpty-Dumpty and about to fall from their excellent spot, which worked well with how events proceeded in chapter 37. For chapter 35, as I had briefly mentioned in the notes for the chapter itself, the lyrics to "The Letter Edged in Black" are about receiving bad news, and for chapter 36 the lyrics to "Jailhouse Blues" are about being lonesome in jail, which was a minor bit of foreshadowing.

Sunrise on Friday, September 02, 1927 was at 6:18 AM, and considering that Nick and Judy planned on being to the Precinct One station for 3 in the morning that is indeed a while before sunrise.
Electrically amplified phonographs didn't become commercially available until 1926; since Nick had to leave his house before then, his phonograph would be acoustic only and thus lack any kind of volume control, which is why he can't simply turn it down but instead stuffed a handkerchief in it.

The piece of music that Nick listens to on the morning of the raid is "La création du monde," a 1923 work by Darius Milhaud, who was also the composer of "Le bœuf sur le toit," the piece that Nick was listening to when Judy first met him. "La création du monde" is French for "the creation of the world" and tells the story of the world's creation based on African folklore. Darius Milhaud was inspired by a visit to New York in 1922 and incorporated jazz elements into the work, which makes it an interesting sort of compositional piece considering that it is played by an orchestra. The segment that Judy thinks sounds atonal isn't just her emotions; it's from movement IV, "Le Désir," or as it's called in English "The desire of man and woman."

Nick imagining walking down the streets of Purris but being unable to imagine turning around and walking back is probably the most obscure reference I've ever used. The protagonist of *Look at the Harlequins!* by Vladimir Nabokov suffers from this as a psychological condition, compared to my use here as something of a fear of the past. *Look at the Harlequins!* is an interesting work, as it is in many ways Nabokov's response to the fame and notoriety that his most popular work, *Lolita*, brought him. *Lolita* was made into a very popular (and at the time polarizing and controversial) film by Stanley Kubrick in 1962, gets a nod in the song "Don't Stand so Close to Me," by the Police, and is the namesake for a particular fashion.

The natural assumption many people made is that the author of a story like *Lolita* must be some kind of sexual deviant. Nabokov himself, however, was strictly monogamous and totally devoted to his wife, and *Look at the Harlequins!* contains what can be read as an exaggerated caricature of the sort of person Nabokov was falsely assumed to be. I'd definitely recommend giving it a read.

Incidentally, my favorite book by Nabokov is *Pale Fire*, which stands as arguably the first example of hypertext poetry. The book consists of an unfinished poem 999 lines long, followed by a metafictional literary commentary by a neighbor of the supposed author. As *Blade Runner* is one of my favorite movies, I was incredibly happy to see a passage from *Pale Fire* used as part of the baseline test for Replicants in *Blade Runner 2049*, which was in turn one of my favorite movies of 2017.

Nick's watch having its second hand on a smaller dial inset into the main one is fairly normal for a watch made in the 1910s; as previously mentioned wrist watches only started becoming popular as a result of military needs in WWI.

"Petting party" was 1920s slang for a make out session, particularly one that happened in a car or a room away from others. "Necking" was slang for kissing.

The Griess test is a test for nitrite ions that dates back to 1858, and was historically used to test for gunshot residue (GSR) prior to the more modern development of X-ray spectrometry. As described, a sample is prepared and then added to the Griess reagent, which will turn pink in the presence of nitrites.

The koala who performs the test, Stockwell, is named after the *Stockwellia* genus of trees that includes eucalyptus, the natural foodstuff of koalas.

As for this chapter, the title "After You've Gone" comes from a 1918 song first recorded by Marion Harris and subsequently covered by dozens of different artists. As the first chapter after Nick's arrest, it seemed appropriate since Judy is the viewpoint character and we only see what she does.

The idea of the subconscious came from the French psychologist Pierre Janet and the term
subconscious itself was first used by Sigmund Freud in 1893. Its usage here is therefore not an anachronism, although it does suggest that Judy might have taken at least some kind of introductory course on psychology in college. This is the first chapter since chapter 4 to not have Nick in it at all, as I'm not going to count Judy's imagined version of him. In any case, Head Nick, to use the terminology of *Battlstar Galactica*, was definitely intended to be Judy's own thoughts as she thinks Nick might express them rather than an accurate representation of what Nick would do if he was actually there.

As mentioned in chapter 14, "blooey" was 1920s slang for falling apart emotionally.

George Moulmein, the elephant detective, takes his name from the George Orwell short essay *Shooting an Elephant*, which is set in Moulmein, Burma during the British occupation. The story, which may or may not be autobiographical, describes a British police officer who receives word of a rampaging elephant and goes about killing it in such a way that makes clear Orwell's contempt for imperialism. It's a great story worth reading and quite short; I definitely recommend it.

Strike anywhere matches predate matches that need to be struck on a strip on the matchbox itself, which was a safety development to help prevent the matches from spontaneously combusting from being jostled in their box. Strike anywhere matches were first created in their most basic form around 1816 and continuously improved, and they remain pretty common today in the US particularly for use in survival kits or camping gear.

Asthma has been known since antiquity, but it wasn't until the end of the 19th century that effective medicines started to be developed to treat it. Smoke can indeed trigger asthma, so Moulmein's efforts to give up cigarettes do show his concern for his son. Although packs of cigarettes were available in the 1920s, as have been referenced earlier in this story, then as now some people preferred to roll their own.

Angela Zweihorn did mention having a sister in the last chapter she appeared in, chapter 19, which is also when the confrontation with Nick that Moulmein references occurred.

Generally speaking, under US state law, you cannot be detained by the police for more than 72 hours without having charges filed against you. The requirement to have your Miranda rights explained only came about after a Supreme Court decision in 1966, decades after this story is set, hence its absence before Judy's interrogation begins.

Another major part of your Miranda rights, beyond explaining your right to remain silent, is to explain that you have the right to legal counsel during questioning. Before the requirement for this disclaimer went into law, it was quite common for police in the US to take advantage of people's lack of understanding about the law, particularly by coercively questioning them when they didn't even know they could have an attorney present. As an aspiring police officer who has focused basically her entire life on that goal, Judy would be well-aware of her legal rights, and she is making a smart play by trying to get a lawyer.

However, particularly in the 1920s, there were plenty of dirty tricks that the police could and did use to prevent a suspect knowledgeable about their rights from taking advantage of them. Forced confessions were unfortunately somewhat common although they obviously violate the rule of law that police should ideally uphold. Moulmein does at least imply that Bogo won't allow the dirtiest of tricks to be done by his officers, which is a point in Bogo's favor for a police chief of the time period. Although Judy is an idealist, she's not stupid and is well-aware of what is being implied, which I think makes her emotional decision to talk anyway understandable. Moulmein, for his part, really should stop once Judy says she wants a lawyer, but after successfully goading her on he keeps going.

"Old Sparky" was a nickname in common use in Illinois for the electric chair, a method of execution
that was popular in the US in the early part of the 20th century prior to the widespread adoption of execution by lethal injection. The Cook County State's Attorney, the office which has the function of District Attorney as described in chapter 17, is elected every four years, and 1928 would have been an election year.

River and Zweihorn were the officers who arrested Judy after the murder of Thomas Carajou occurred while she was scoping out the Thief of the Night for illegal alcohol and ended up splashed in alcohol herself but didn't have her badge. As Moulmein describes, Judy wanting revenge is certainly a plausible motive for someone on the outside looking in.

To sell someone down the river is to betray them, and it's an American idiom that is likely in reference to the literal practice of selling slaves transported along the Mississippi River prior to the American Civil War. Mark Twain used it in *Huckleberry Finn*, so it was certainly in use by the 1920s.

As always, thank you for reading, particularly after a cliffhanger like last week's chapter! This chapter is somewhat unique in that it's one scene without a single break, but my general philosophy has always been that chapters should be as long as they need to be, and in this case it seemed appropriate to end the chapter here rather than including the next scene. I'd love to know what you thought!
Left alone in the interrogation room, Judy’s thoughts immediately went to trying to figure out how Nick had been framed. She felt strangely detached from her body, the sensation of the cold metal cuffs around her wrists and the uncomfortable chair she sat on receding as she tried to focus on anything other than on how badly she had failed him.

The Nick that only lived in her head hadn’t returned after Moulmein’s departure, not to offer up any further words of encouragement or to condemn her. It was comforting to imagine that the real Nick would understand, that he might even forgive her for failing to keep her promise. *If you do what I say, I promise I’ll keep you safe.*

It seemed as though it had been a lifetime ago when she had made that vow. It had been before she really knew Nick, before she had given him any reason to trust her or risk his own life by leaving Podunk. She had meant the words, though, even when she had thought that Nick was nothing more than a self-serving criminal who had talked his way out of the punishment he deserved, even before…

Unbidden, Judy’s paw went to her lips. She barely felt her fingers, the memory of the way that Nick’s lips had felt against hers rising in her mind. She remembered the way he had looked, when all of the barriers he placed between himself and the world had fallen away and she had been the only thing that mattered to him. Judy blinked, but her eyes were dry and she pushed the memory aside. She had already cried her tears, and while Nick’s absence ate at her heart like nothing she had ever experienced, there was a job that only she could do. Moulmein was right about one thing: Nick was almost certainly sitting in a room in the county jail very similar to the one that she was in, but he wasn’t likely to be alone.

She was, though, and with nothing but time she tried to put the details she knew into some semblance of order. The chain of events that Nick was accused of had to have a weak link somewhere; it was just a matter of finding it. Judy thought about what the case against Nick must entail. The police must have believed that Nick had visited two addresses late the previous night, addresses that he had no logical reason to know. Judy distinctly remembered Nick telling her that he had never met either Zweihorn or River before running into them at the Precinct One police station, and while it wasn’t anything rock solid it did seem like something of a useful foothold because of what it implied. For it to even be physically possible for Nick to murder the officers and Zweihorn’s husband he would have had to know where their homes were, go to them and commit the murders, and then get back to his own house before Judy had woken up. That, in turn, meant that he would have had to steal her gun out of her purse and sneak out of the house without waking her up. Neither seemed possible; she had slept with her purse next to the sofa, and she doubted that he could have opened the garage door, let alone turned the Buchatti’s noisy engine over, without waking her up. Besides, while the limp that Nick had walked with ever since the beam had fallen on his leg during the fire at her apartment had been gradually getting better, it wasn’t gone yet. Judy wasn’t sure that he could have driven the car even if he had wanted to, and without a car it didn’t seem likely that he could have gotten around quickly enough to commit two murders and get back.

The next link in the chain was the photograph that showed Nick on Zweihorn’s doorstep, a revolver identical to her own clearly visible in his paws. How did the police think Nick had gotten into the house? Judy didn’t know where the bodies had been found, but she couldn’t imagine that either officer would have just opened their door for a fox holding a gun. Even if they had, both were so much taller than Nick that he wouldn’t have been able to do much—Judy’s revolver was too low of a caliber to hurt a rhinoceros or a hippopotamus unless it was perfectly aimed at extremely close
That brought her to the next part of the problem; if Nick had stood on an officer’s doorstop and shot them in plain view of whoever had taken the picture of him standing there, why hadn’t they done anything when they saw it happen? Bogo had said that it was an officer who had been watching Zweihorn’s house, an officer who could have at least tried to arrest Nick. Even if Zweihorn had answered the door and been immediately shot, her husband had ended up dead too, which suggested that the murderer would have had to have gone into the house.

Somehow, though, Nick’s paws had ended up covered in nitrites, as had her gun, which she hadn’t fired in weeks. Judy had visited a gun range once, almost immediately after getting her revolver, but the Bureau of Prohibition (or at least Director Bellwether) was too cheap to pay for any ammunition unless it was to replace bullets used in the course of a prohibition agent’s duty. On Judy’s meager pay, it hadn’t seemed worth it to practice much. Judy didn’t know how long the residue of firing a gun could stay on a gun, or on the paws of the mammal who fired it, but it was another potential weakness in the official story.

The conclusion that Judy kept coming to, though, was that Lionheart had even more influence in the ZPD than Bogo suspected. The photograph and the test for gunshot residue must have been faked somehow, and Judy suspected that when a comparison was done of a bullet fired from her gun to the ones recovered from the bodies of River and the Zweihorns it would be a perfect match. How many mammals would have to be involved to tamper with so much evidence? Judy knew, both from River and Zweihorn and from what Bogo himself had said, that there were corrupt officers within the ZPD, but to her it seemed as though each different source must have had at least one officer involved to frame Nick. At least three, then, or possibly more.

Judy frowned as she looked down at the surface of the table she was connected to, which despite being made of unpainted stainless steel was far too scratched for her reflection to show up as anything other than a vaguely bunny-shaped blob. The mammal (Stockwell, Judy thought) who had performed the gunshot residue test on Nick had seemed particularly nervous. Had he been coerced into doctoring the results? Judy made a mental note to herself to follow up with him as soon as she could, trying to think of her release as something that simply had to happen.

Judy was so lost in her thoughts that she missed the squeal of the hinges of the door to the interrogation room open, and it wasn’t until she heard an incredibly deep cough coming from behind her that she realized she was no longer alone. She turned her head around as much as she could; there wasn’t quite enough slack in the chain connecting her paws to the table for her to turn around and look without twisting her neck at an awkward angle. Detective Moulmein stood there, nearly filling the frame of the door, and standing in front of him was a significantly smaller mammal.

“Judy,” Moulmein said, “Allow me to introduce Mrs. Darnielle.”

There was something different about Moulmein, although Judy couldn’t quite put a finger on it. There seemed to be more tension in the way he held himself, his expression carefully neutral and his words unnaturally flat. Maybe Bogo hadn’t liked the way that the elephant had conducted his initial interrogation and had had words with him, or maybe Moulmein was trying to conceal dislike for the mammal standing in front of him. Judy certainly couldn’t tell, but she filed the detail away nonetheless, wondering what had resulted in the change.

If Moulmein did dislike Mrs. Darnielle, Judy didn’t see an obvious reason why; Darnielle was a mountain goat, her thick white fur trimmed short in what was likely a concession to the temperature outside of the coldest parts of the city. She was middle-aged and dressed in a way that almost reminded Judy of a schoolteacher—a conservative and plain dress that didn’t do anything to flatter her somewhat pudgy figure and a pair of wire-rimmed glasses perched near the end of her broad
black nose. The one touch that set Darnielle apart from any teacher Judy had ever had were the earrings she wore, which glittered and sparkled too much even in the harsh light of the interrogation room to be anything but diamonds.

“She’s an attorney who works pro bono for, ah, indigent clients,” Moulmein continued, and in his brief moment of hesitation Judy thought he had substituted a different word than the one he intended to use.

His face remained carefully neutral, though, and the mountain goat simply beamed up at him.

“Thank you, Detective Moulmein,” Darnielle said, and her voice made her seem even more like a teacher; she spoke in the same slow and carefully enunciated tones as someone who spent most of their time with young mammals, and she sounded almost painfully cheerful, “It’s very important that everyone gets a lawyer, isn’t it?”

Moulmein didn’t look away, but he didn’t look at her either. “As you say,” he said finally, and then stepped back and shut the door.

Judy found herself liking Darnielle already, and the mountain goat was all smiles as she walked over to where Judy sat, her hooves clicking against the cheap linoleum of the floor, and introduced herself directly. “Jane Darnielle,” she said, “I heard from Chief Bogo that you wanted to speak to a lawyer.”

“Judy Hopps,” Judy introduced herself, and offered a paw to shake.

From the introduction, Judy guessed that perhaps she had been right about Bogo taking exception to how Moulmein had interrogated her, and suspected that the chief might have pulled some strings to get the mountain goat to show up. Judy wouldn’t have ever thought of herself as indigent, but as she had perhaps ten dollars left to her name (and that in the bank) after her apartment had burned down, she found herself suddenly grateful for the lawyer’s appearance.

Darnielle gave her paw a single brisk pump and then made her way around to the chair that Moulmein had sat in, setting a manila folder onto the table. “I hear that you’re a prohi,” Darnielle continued, “I’ve never heard of a bunny becoming one. Your parents must be very proud.”

Darnielle’s enthusiasm didn’t seem to have an off switch, her words coming out in the same bright tone as everything else she had said so far. Judy struggled for a moment to come up with the proper response, as “proud” certainly wasn’t the word that she would have picked for her parents’ feelings about her job, and she settled on making a polite noise of agreement before starting her own line of questioning. “Can you find out if Nick is alright? Can you get me a copy of all of the police reports about his arrest? Can you—”

“Judy, Judy, Judy,” Darnielle interrupted, a laugh audible in her voice as she held up her hooves as though she was trying to block Judy’s words, “Hold on just a minute, please. “

“But Nick—” Judy began desperately, and Darnielle held up her hooves again.

“Judy,” she said, and there was that slight laugh in the word again, “I’m here as your legal counsel, OK? I can help you, but you have to listen first, OK?”

Judy took a deep breath and nodded, not trusting herself to speak without asking more questions. “That’s it,” Darnielle said, “Now, you know you don’t have to answer any questions the police ask without me being there, right?”

“Yes, yes,” Judy said impatiently, “But—”
“Now, Chief Bogo doesn’t think you had any kind of involvement in the murders, which is a wonderful start, it really is,” Darnielle plowed on as though Judy hadn’t spoken, “I’m sure this can all be wrapped up and you can put all this behind you.”

Darnielle waved her arms vaguely to take in the interrogation room. “But what about Nick?” Judy asked.

Darnielle’s smile faded a degree. “I’m very sorry, Judy, but he looks guilty.”

“That doesn’t mean that it’s true,” Judy replied instantly, but an awful sort of sympathy had taken hold of Darnielle’s features.

“Of course not,” Darnielle said soothingly, “But you really ought to take a look through these files.”

She slid the manila folder over to Judy and then stood up, pulling at the front of her dress to smooth out the creases. “I’ll have someone check on Mr. Wilde, I promise,” the lawyer said, “I don’t think the police will have any more questions for you, though, so just keep your chin up, OK? I’m sure this is all very frightening for you, but it’ll be over soon.”

“I’m not frightened,” Judy said.

Her frustration with the way the mountain goat spoke to her had reached a boiling point and Judy had nearly spat out the words. It was as though the lawyer thought she was a helpless kit who needed to be guided and prodded and not a fully grown bunny. “I’m worried about Nick.”

“Of course you are,” Darnielle said, “Just remember, I’ll be here if you need me.”

The mountain goat had given absolutely no indication that she had noticed Judy’s outburst, and she simply nodded in Judy’s direction. “It was nice to meet you,” she said, and then she was gone.

Moulmein entered the room an instant later, but Judy’s focus had turned to the manila folder that Darnielle had left her, and she was barely paying any attention to the elephant as he undid the chain connecting her to the table and escorted her out of the interrogation room.

Judy had ended up in the exact same cell that she had spent the night in after River and Zweihorn had arrested her. She had wondered briefly if it had been deliberate on the part of the officers who had escorted her from the interrogation room to the holding cells, or if it was simply coincidence, but the thought had been an idle one and she set it aside to examine the papers that Darnielle had left her.

There was no question in her mind that the files were incomplete, with certain details excluded, but from what was present Judy understood the lawyer's lack of faith in Nick's innocence. As Judy had feared, the ballistic comparison of a bullet from her gun had been a perfect match for the ones at the crime scenes. Although there were no autopsy results included in the file, there was a brief summary indicating that all three mammals had been shot through the eye, with the Zweihorns found at their dining room table and River found in his bed. Whatever else Nick might be accused of, Judy doubted anyone would seriously suggest that he had been able to move the corpses; the lightest of the three had to weigh about a hundred times more than the fox did.

There wasn't any information on the officer who had taken the picture of Nick at the Zweihorn's doorstep, or even a copy of the picture itself, but there was a brief extract from what had to have been the report that the officer wrote. Judy had puzzled over the simple sentences, trying to tease out what they implied. The fox was let into the house by Angela Zweihorn at approximately 11:30 PM and was still in the house when surveillance ended at 12:30 AM. No disturbances were noted.

Was it important that Nick was referred to only as "the fox?" It might mean that the officer hadn't
been able to identify Nick by themselves, or it might simply mean that they had been unaware of who Nick was. Judy found it awfully convenient, though, that the officer hadn't heard any gunshots or bothered to keep the house under surveillance until "the fox" had left.

The piece of evidence referenced in the slim file that made Judy understand why Bogo didn't suspect her of having any involvement wasn't included, only described, but Judy wished that she could have seen it herself. It had been part of the listing of items Nick had had on his body at the time of his arrest, and beyond the items Judy had known would be included, like his hat and his wallet, was what had been included on the list as a typewritten memo. The text of the memo had been included on a subsequent page: There can still be a seat at the table for you. The rabbit has a tool you’ll need to borrow.

Underneath the sentences had been the addresses for Zweihorn and River, but while Judy knew that the memo had to be the major reason the police thought she wasn’t involved she couldn’t understand why they had fallen for it. It did have some similarities to the notes that she and Nick had found, which Lionheart himself had written and given to the mammals in his employ. However, the memo supposedly found in Nick’s pocket had been typewritten, which made Judy suspect that Lionheart had intended to make it look like one of his rivals had hired Nick to kill the two crooked cops after they had outlived their usefulness.

It didn’t make any kind of sense to her, though, that someone could believe that Nick would simultaneously work to arrest Lionheart and do a job for him, or that he could be so sloppy as to not dispose of the incriminating memo.

Judy wasn’t sure how much time she had spent, reading through the files over and over again until she felt as though she almost had them memorized, until a voice interrupted her concentration. “Excuse me?” the voice, which was vaguely familiar, said, “Were you not hungry?”

Judy tore her eyes away and looked up from where she sat on the thin cot to look out to the cell’s entrance. There was a small opening set into the thick iron bars that formed one wall of the cell, an opening too small for even a bunny to squeeze through, but just inside her cell was a metal tray with a metal cup and bowl on it. The cup was full of water and the bowl with what could generously be described as a salad, as the leaves and vegetables that made it up were wilted and browning at their edges.

Judy realized, with a quick glance over her shoulder at the one window in the cell that had a view outside, that it was already nighttime and she had missed that dinner had been served. The mammal who had spoken, a fat cheetah in a police uniform, had his paws on a small cart that had the remains of a few other meals on it and Judy realized that he must have been cleaning up. It took her a moment to place the cheetah’s name, and she still wasn’t sure if she had remembered it right until she spoke. “It’s Ben, right?” she asked, “You called the Bureau of Prohibition for me.”

The cheetah’s chubby face, which had been set into an expression of polite inquiry, suddenly brightened. “It’s you! The bunny prohi!” he just about squealed, his voice nearly girlish in his excitement.

His face suddenly took on an expression of almost comical puzzlement. “What are you doing back in one of these cells?”

Judy sighed. “It’s a long story,” she said.

“I’ve got the time, if you want to tell it,” Ben replied.

Judy considered the offer for a moment. Mrs. Darnielle had told her she didn’t have to talk to the
police, but talking to a bored jail guard wasn’t quite the same. She pushed herself off the cot and started walking towards the bars that separated her from Ben and the tray of food. “Do you mind?” Judy asked, pointing at the tray.

She hadn’t eaten anything all day, and despite herself, the bowl of wilted greens suddenly looked like a meal fit for a king. Ben waved her concern away, taking a seat on the floor of the corridor and propping his head up on both paws. “Be my guest,” he said cheerfully, and Judy took a seat herself, pulling the tray into her lap.

“There was a lot that happened after I got out of jail last time,” Judy began, and she saw that she had the guard’s complete attention.

Ben turned out to be an excellent listener, and while Judy didn’t think that she was much of a storyteller he had reacted as though she was. Even with all the details she had left out (most of all, what she and Nick had done only moments before his arrest) and her tendency to jump around, he had still listened, wide-eyed, occasionally gasping or making little noises of sympathy. By the time she had finished both her story and the salad, the cheetah’s eyes were visibly wet. “That poor fox!” he said.

“And you, too,” he hastily added.

It didn’t feel better, exactly, to have told someone else everything that had happened, but it was almost as though a load that Judy hadn’t realized she had been carrying had been removed. “It’s just not right,” Ben continued, and his indignation on her behalf filled her with a sort of warmth that made her blink her eyes.

“That’s a matter for the courts, I think,” Bellwether interrupted and Ben shot to his feet so quickly it was as though someone had dropped a red-hot poker in his lap.

Judy hadn’t heard the ewe approach, she had been so focused on recalling the details of the investigation and trying to put them into a way that made some sort of sense, and it was clear that Ben hadn’t been aware of Bellwether’s presence either. She had just enough time to wonder how long her boss had been standing near her cell, listening, before Ben starting speaking in a rapid burst of words. “Director Bellwether! What a surprise it is to see you here again! I didn’t think—”

“Obviously not,” Bellwether interrupted, a small and placid smile on her face, “Would you give us a moment?”

She spoke slowly, gesturing at Judy in an exaggerated way, and Ben’s head bobbed up and down with such an intensity that Judy thought it would about come off, his chubby cheeks and belly jiggling like gelatin. “Of course, of course,” Ben said, and then he was off with a speed that was surprising for a cheetah, even a fat one, leaving behind his cart.

“Such a simple, sweet little mind,” Bellwether observed, seemingly idly, “You really must be careful about what you say to a predator.”

Judy stood up slowly, looking through the bars at her boss. Judy didn’t know what time it was, but Bellwether certainly didn’t look tired. In fact, the sheep looked more cheerful than Judy had ever seen her before. “Director Bellwether,” Judy said, doing her best for a level tone.

“You lied to me, Agen —Ms. Hopps,” Bellwether said, with a deliberately and exaggeratedly fake slip of the tongue, “I did have to fire you, of course.”

“Of course,” Judy replied.
Somehow, Judy had known that it was coming, but she had expected to feel something more than a mild annoyance at the little game Bellwether was feeling. “You could have avoided all of this if you had just been honest with me,” Bellwether continued, and Judy thought she saw a flicker of disappointment cross the sheep’s face that her carefully careless firing hadn’t produced a reaction, “You really were quite far along in your investigation, weren’t you? Can you imagine how I felt when I got the call from Bogo that they had arrested Lionheart? The surprise I felt?”

Bellwether’s tone was light, but her eyes behind her glasses were hard. Judy shook her head. “I can’t.”

“But when I heard that Wilde had been arrested for murder…” Bellwether said, trailing off the words deliberately, “That wasn’t a surprise. It was inevitable, really. Don’t you see why I wanted you to arrest him before he could do something like that?”

Bellwether’s words sounded almost plaintive, as though she was frustrated that Judy couldn’t see what she did. “Nick didn’t kill anyone,” Judy replied, and Bellwether shook her head.

“Judy, you need to think with your head,” she said, “It’s what makes us better than predators, you know. All the evidence says that he’s guilty. I’ve looked at it myself. I’ve spoken to Bogo.”

Bellwether leaned in, her face inches from the bars that separated them. “I’ve spoken to Wilde,” she said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Judy all but threw herself at the bars, but Bellwether simply took a step back. “He’s not nearly as smug as he used to be,” Bellwether said, “He’s guilty as sin.”

“What did you tell him?” Judy asked, and her voice had a furious intensity that surprised even herself.

“That’s really none of your concern now,” Bellwether said, “Now listen to me, Judy. You really did do a wonderful job catching Lionheart. But you lied to me. You bent the rules and kept a dangerous fox on the streets, and when he did what predators are built to do, those deaths are your responsibility in everything but the legal sense.”

Bellwether sighed. “If I had my way, you’d never work for the government ever again. But now that Bogo’s had the chance to calm down a little and think, he’s still willing to uphold his end of the deal he made with you.”

“The deal?” Judy replied numbly.

She had been too busy thinking of what Bellwether might have said or done to Nick to really follow the thread of her words any further. “To admit you to the police academy, of course,” Bellwether said, smiling slightly, “He’s much more forgiving than I am, I admit. He seems to think that you couldn’t have seen Wilde’s betrayal coming.”

Bellwether spread her hooves. “Of course, if you had known about what Wilde was doing, it would throw everything related to Lionheart’s arrest into question, wouldn’t it? I can’t say that I enjoy it, but for the good of the case I had no choice but to take responsibility for the investigation.”

Judy suddenly realized the point that Bellwether had been driving at all along and her reason for visiting. “Do you mean credit?” Judy asked, and was rewarded by a hurt look that almost appeared genuine.

“They’re close enough, I think. Still, everyone wins. Lionheart has been arrested, you’ll get to become a police officer, and J. Edgar Hooves himself is coming to meet me next week.”
Bellwether seemed particularly pleased with herself as she name-dropped the head of the Bureau of Investigation, and in that instant Judy didn’t think she had ever hated a mammal more than she did Bellwether. “Nick doesn’t win,” Judy said, and Bellwether laughed.

“He’s getting exactly what he deserves,” she said, “Why would you give up your own victory for him?”

“I wouldn’t,” Judy said, and Bellwether nodded approvingly.

“Then you’ll be out of this cell tomorrow morning,” Bellwether said, and she walked away without so much as a goodbye.

It wasn’t the first time that Judy had lied to Bellwether, but as she sat back down on her cot and started flipping through the case file again, she thought that it might end up being the most satisfying.

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, “Without You, Sweetheart,” comes from a 1927 Vincent Lopez song. I probably don’t even need to explain this one, do I? It seemed appropriate for Judy without Nick.

If you’ve ever watched an episode of any of the many, many police procedurals set in the US, you’re probably familiar with the part of the Miranda rights that goes along the lines of “You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.” If you’re an American, that’s a crucial part of the current understanding of your Sixth Amendment rights, but it wasn’t always the case.

In 1932 the Supreme Court determined, in their ruling on *Powell v. Alabama*, that defendants in cases in which the death penalty could be applied were entitled to free legal counsel, although it wasn’t until the Supreme Court’s decision in the 1963 case of *Gideon v. Wainwright* that defendants in any case always had the right to legal counsel regardless of their ability to pay for it. What this means, in practical terms, is that in 1927 Nick and Judy would both have the right to an attorney but only if they could pay for it. Of course, even before the ruling on *Gideon v. Wainwright* there were lawyers who worked pro bono as a public service to the poor, but the police had no legal obligation to provide information on this.

This probably sounds horribly unfair, and it was. Competent legal counsel makes an enormous difference in the outcome of cases, and things used to be even worse for poor people accused of crimes.

Nick did tell Judy, in chapter 20, that he had never met either River or Zweihorn prior to their encounter at the police station, although he did know them by reputation. Judy made her promise to Nick all the way back in chapter 6, and in this chapter she did remember the wording exactly right.

The mountain goat lawyer, Mrs. Darnielle, takes her last name from the lead singer of the American band the Mountain Goats.

This is the second appearance that Clawhauser makes in this story, having first appeared as a night guard for the cells in the station back in chapter 4.

Gelatin desserts were actually pretty popular in the 1920s, as more advanced production techniques
converted it from being a food that only the rich could afford to something anyone could. The idea that gelatin was once expensive may seem somewhat odd, considering that Jell-O can be purchased extremely cheaply, but prior to the 19th century it was time-consuming and difficult to make. With the development of a method for making powdered gelatin and an aggressive advertising push that used the pioneering technique of distributing free cookbooks, Jell-O quickly became popular in the early 20th century. Although gelatin is typically thought to be made out of hooves (which are certainly a viable source of the necessary collagen), it can also be made out of the bones of fish and chickens, thus making it viable as something that could exist in the world of Zootopia. J. Edgar Hooves is a reference to J. Edgar Hoover, the first head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In 1927 he was in charge of the Bureau of Investigation, the bureau that would eventually become the FBI, and was certainly a powerful player in US law enforcement.

As always, thanks for reading! As always, I’d love to know what you thought!
Judy woke up stifling a scream, which came out as a wavering moan as she covered her mouth with her paws and clenched her jaw. She had dreamed of the fire again, of Nick being trapped and not being able to free him. This time, Nick hadn't screamed the blame she deserved as he turned into something monstrous that was as much fire as it was fox. This time, he couldn't have. He had been muzzled, exactly as how he had been when the officers had pulled him out of the conference room, and his face had been full of confused panic rather than anger, and as he caught fire he had simply burned.

It hadn't seemed as though her nightmare could have gotten worse, and yet somehow it was. It had been more vivid, more real, and when Judy finally woke up she was alone in her cell. Her heart was racing and she could feel her body shaking with something, a powerful mix of regret and anger and despair that there wasn't a word for, something that made her vision throb as her eyes became wet but didn't shed any tears. Judy took in an uneven breath, trying to force her body back under her control, and to her ears it sounded almost like a sob.

"Hey!" a voice called out from a few cells over, gruff and groggy with tiredness and drunkenness, "Have the screaming meemies somewhere else, huh? For cripes sake, mammals are tryin' to sleep!"

Judy looked at the wall that defined the boundary of her cell in the direction the voice had come from. The holding cells of the Precinct One station had been built to be strong, not pretty; they were unpainted and rough cinder blocks, but there weren't any gaps into the next cell over that she could see. "Sorry," she said, and her voice was oddly thick.

The only response was a grunt from that same masculine voice, and then a few minutes later the sounds of deep snoring. Judy didn't think that she'd be able to fall asleep again and couldn't even remember when she had fallen asleep. After Bellwether's visit, she had been left mostly alone. The lawyer—Darnielle, that was her name—had been by only long enough to tell Judy that Nick was being held in solitary confinement. "For his own safety," the mountain goat had said apologetically.

Judy had wondered who he was being kept safe from; was it mobsters upset he had betrayed them or cops who thought that he had killed two of their own? It was probably both, and the thought had made it difficult to stay focused as she kept reading the file she had over and over. Even before her most recent nightmare, it had been too easy to imagine Nick being held completely alone, still muzzled for no other reason than to make him a little more miserable than he would have been otherwise. Afterwards, though, as Judy straightened out the pages that had crumpled when she had fallen asleep in the middle of her reading and dropped the folder, she couldn't help but wonder if Nick had suffered the same kind of nightmare. Or maybe, for him, the warehouse fire from his military service ran into her apartment fire, made worse by the combination. If he did, he wouldn't have someone there to comfort him the way that he had been there for her; he wouldn't even have an irritable mammal sleeping off his night off to say something to him and prove that he wasn't all alone.

Judy tried to force the thought aside as she finished straightening up the file, setting it on her lap as she glanced out the window. The view through the barred window wasn't very impressive—just a bit of a plain brick building and a slice of the street. She could see mammals moving about their business though, maneuvering around the cars starting to take to the street, and everything was bathed in the gold-orange light of early morning. That meant that, if Bellwether had been telling the truth, she would be released soon, and for what felt like the hundredth time Judy went back to the file.

It might have been an hour, or maybe two, but Judy heard the jingling of keys and the gentle tread of paw pads against linoleum before she saw the officer who had come to release her. The officer, a
massive wolf whose shaggy black fur stood in sharp contrast to her immaculately pressed uniform, looked vaguely familiar to Judy, and she thought that she might have seen her in the Precinct One office before. She gave Judy a brief nod and unlocked the cell door. "You're free to go, Ms. Hopps," she said, and despite her thick and powerful build her voice was surprisingly high-pitched and as smooth as crushed velvet.

Judy had, to some degree, been anticipating her release ever since Bellwether's visit, but now that the cell door was open it felt like all she could do was stare at the mammal who had released her. The wolf's glittering yellow eyes considered her impassively, her face set in what was probably the gentlest expression she was capable of making. "You can have your purse back," she added, and thrust it into the cell, holding it in one massive outstretched paw.

Maybe it was because Judy had spent the previous day racking her brain, trying to stave off her worry for Nick even as she tried to figure out how to prove his innocence, or maybe it was because she had slept poorly, but it all seemed strangely dream-like, as though it might still be possible to wake up and have it still be the day of the raid on Lionheart. Her body seemed to rise automatically, tucking the precious file under her arm, and she crossed the few steps to the entrance of the cell and took her purse back. "Thank you," she said, and the wolf nodded.

"They're holding onto your gun and the bullets as evidence, Ms. Hopps," the wolf said, her tone politely apologetic, "And Director Bellwether, ah, insisted on getting your badge."

A shadow had passed over the wolf's face at the mention of the ewe's name, and Judy wondered if she had been the one who had been forced to fulfill Bellwether's last little act of spite as Judy's boss. "That's fine," Judy said, "I'm not a prohib— I'm not a prohi anymore."

She had never shortened her title the way that Nick had insisted on doing, but it felt right somehow to say it that way. The wolf nodded and gestured towards the hallway that led away from the cells. As she walked down the hall, the wolf following after her, Judy asked, "Can I see Chief Bogo?"

"If he's not busy," the wolf said, and even without being able to see her Judy could hear the whisper of fabric that meant she had shrugged.

"It's about Nick Wilde," Judy said, plowing ahead at the opening she had, "I know he's innocent."

A single longer than usual stride on the wolf's part was enough to get her in front of Judy, where she stood and looked down at her impassively. The wolf had to be at least six-and-a-half feet tall and was so broad across the shoulders that Judy felt scrawny by comparison, but the wolf didn't look like she was trying to be intimidating. She cocked her head to one side, her tail waving slowly back and forth behind her. "Why?" she asked, and all Judy could hear in the word was curiosity.

There were so many things that Judy could have said that would have answered the question. There were all the little things she had seen in the file that didn't seem to quite add up to her no matter how obvious it seemed that Nick was guilty, but Judy thought that the wolf was asking a slightly different question. Why would a bunny stick out her neck for a fox accused of three murders? Maybe that was the question the wolf really wanted to know the answer to, and it was the question that Judy answered. "He's a good mammal," Judy said simply.

Judy had told Detective Moulmein the same thing, and the elephant had seemed particularly skeptical. The wolf, though, had straightened out her neck so that her head was upright again and nodded slowly, her tail still moving side-to-side. There was something about the gesture that reminded Judy powerfully of Nick, and her heart ached as the wolf turned around and started walking down the hallway again. "Then you'll see Chief Bogo," the wolf said.
Bogo's office was even more cluttered than it had been the last time that Judy had seen him, stacks of paperwork taking up every available surface. The wolf officer, after leading Judy to the door to Bogo's office, had simply opened it without knocking, said "Ms. Hopps to see you, sir," and then had gently nudged Judy into the office and shut the door again before Bogo had a chance to react.

His concentration on his paperwork broken, Bogo looked over his glasses at Judy, a scowl darkening his features. "I thought you might stop by," he said, and then he put his elbows on his desk and sighed, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Chief Bogo, I—" Judy began, but he interrupted her before she could continue.

"Officer Wolfsburg has to work twice as hard as any other beat cop because she's a predator," he said, nodding in the direction of his door to indicate that he meant the wolf officer who had brought Judy to him, "How much harder do you think you'd have to work to be a bunny cop? Three times? Four times?"

Judy blinked, puzzled by the buffalo's sudden conversational opening. "As hard as I'd have to," she said firmly, "But—"

"Any mistake you make is going to be blamed on you being a bunny," Bogo interrupted again, "Such as if you're too soft-hearted."

Judy suddenly realized what he was implying and couldn't help but bristle at the implication. "I'm not being soft-hearted!" she said, her voice shriller than she would have liked, "Nick is—"

"Listen very carefully, Ms. Hopps," Bogo interrupted again, and his voice had a dangerous edge to it.

Judy swallowed her words, but she didn't move from where she was standing in front of his desk, her eyes locked on his. "You're not a prohibition agent anymore. You're not a police officer, not yet. It's my duty to tell you to stop," he said, his voice gravelly.

Before Judy could say a word in response, he held up one massive finger in warning. "I see two possibilities: either all the evidence is right and Wilde is guilty, or there's a conspiracy involving half-a-dozen of my most trustworthy officers. Think about what that implies."

Judy had spent the previous night thinking about little else, but she forced herself to nod. "This is a matter for the courts," Bogo continued, "Lionheart is behind bars and he'll stay there until his trial. The judge saw fit to heed my warning and deny him bail. As for Mr. Wilde, I did what I could, but..."

The buffalo spread his hooves wide. "Mr. Wilde could be free on the streets if anyone could raise ten thousand dollars in bail," Bogo said, and there was significance in the look that he gave Judy that she couldn't help but catch.

She realized that there was another conversation that Bogo was having with her, some meaning buried beneath the words he was saying. The implication he was making was clear: somehow he had pulled the right strings to make sure that Nick could be bailed out of jail, if only she had the money, but why would he do that? Judy had to resist gasping in surprise when the reason struck her. Bogo might not believe in a vast conspiracy against Nick, but he also might not believe that the fox was guilty. "Now, I agree with Director Bellwether that it'd be best for the case against Lionheart if your involvement stays unknown. As she may have mentioned, I will honor our agreement to endorse your application to the police academy," Bogo continued, and his voice had mellowed, the words almost soothing.
"You might make a fine officer someday, if you can learn to listen to your superiors," he said.

Judy wasn't sure if she had imagined it or not, but Bogo seemed to have put a subtle emphasis on the word "listen" and she was reminded of how he had pretended to angrily send Nick and her out of his office. It made sense to think that he was afraid of being overheard, but Judy still wasn't entirely sure she knew what he was getting at. Did he actually want her to investigate the case against Nick, or was that just wishful thinking? She found herself wishing that Nick had been there to puzzle Bogo's intentions out; he'd always been better at seeing into mammals than she was. "Thank you, sir," Judy said, and Bogo nodded approvingly.

"I've prepared some material you might find useful in preparing for the academy," he said, and he pulled a thick folder from underneath a stack of papers, "I suggest you review it."

When Bogo gave the folder to her, he did something she never would have expected. He winked, although his features otherwise remained as stern as ever. Judy opened the folder briefly, and saw that the top page was the full version of the report that the officer who had supposedly taken a photograph of Nick on Zweihorn's doorstep had written, even including the pictures. On top of all of that, and other documents that Judy could only guess at, was a single scrap of paper with a single word written in large block letters: "WHY?"

It was the same question that Officer Wolfsburg had asked Judy, but she knew that Bogo meant something else entirely. Why had someone gone to the effort of framing Nick? Why had the officers Bogo claimed to be the most trustworthy betrayed him? Why had Zweihorn and River been killed? "I'll make sure I read everything," Judy said, closing the folder.

"Excellent," Bogo said, "I hope you enjoy your time in the city before the police academy starts."

"I'm sure I will," Judy said, clutching the folder to her chest.

"You can let yourself out," Bogo replied, his head already back down to his paperwork.

The small ember of hope that had starting burning in Judy's heart had grown a little, and she had to stop herself from running out of the police station. She forced herself to walk, maneuvering around the mammals in the lobby and out the door and walking down the street. As she approached the spot where she had parked the Buchatti what felt like a lifetime ago, though, she couldn't see a sign of the distinctive blue car, and then she was right where it had been.

The spot where Judy had parked the Buchatti was empty. It might have been stolen, but it was probably more likely that it had been impounded, and as Judy looked at the empty space, the key ring that had the key to the car and the one to Nick's house clutched in her paw, she could hear Nick's voice in her head as clearly as if he had been standing next to her. "Well, of course it's gone," his voice said, "Why would any of this be easy?"

Judy couldn't help it. She felt as though she had to laugh or cry and she had already done enough crying. She collapsed to her knees, laughing so hard that her stomach hurt. She tried to imagine how she must look, a disheveled bunny who needed a shower clutching a couple of folders and a purse and laughing like a maniac, and the mental image only made her laugh harder until the thought crossed her mind of what Nick would have thought. Her laughter died slowly and she forced herself back up to her feet. Not having the car was a complication, but that was alright. A vague plan had been forming in her head ever since she had left Bogo's office, and not having the Buchatti didn't change it much. Judy straightened her shoulders, wiped at her eyes, and walked to the edge of the street, her arm outstretched. "Taxi!" she shouted, "Taxi!"
A few hours after leaving the police station, Judy was at the county jail. The first stop she had made had been to Nick's house, which had been thankfully untouched. She had felt like an intruder, like a thief, as she crept through the house without Nick there, and when she walked into his room of records she had had to force herself not to look at the picture of Nick and his mother on the table as she groped for the hidden compartment. She dropped the cigar box when it popped out of its hiding place, the lid coming off and spilling tight rolls of cash across the floor.

Judy remembered thinking, when she had first seen it, that there had to have been at least ten thousand dollars hidden in the box, and she had been right. She had counted the money three times, making sure that there was enough, and there was, if only just. With however much Nick had already taken as spending money gone, there was ten thousand four hundred and fifty dollars left. Considering that Judy had grown up on a farm and then taken a job that didn't pay particularly well, it felt strange to consider four hundred and fifty dollars as almost nothing, but she had no idea of how long it would have to last.

She had carefully bundled the cash together, organizing the bills by denomination, and stuffed it into her purse, keeping a ten-dollar bill out to give the taxi driver. She hadn't had nearly enough money left in her purse to pay for a taxi ride from the police station to Nick's house, but the driver, a middle-aged goat who seemed to be about half-deaf, had allowed himself to be sweet-talked into letting her run in and get payment with the promise of a generous tip.

From Nick's house, the ten-dollar bill vanishing so quickly into the driver's pocket that it was like a magic trick while his other paw made the taxi meter click off, the goat had happily driven her to the courthouse and waited with the engine running while she paid Nick's bail to a bored-looking ram who hadn't even blinked when she had pulled ten thousand dollars out of her purse. It seemed as though the closer Judy got to seeing Nick again the less she was able to remember the events that were getting her to that point. She wouldn't have been able to describe the courthouse if she had been asked; the entire visit had passed in a blur with her building excitement, and even though the goat driving the cab had spent most of the drive holding a rambling monologue at a high volume she wouldn't have been to name any of the topics he had held forth on.

After she had made it to the front desk of the county jail, the approval form for Nick's bail in her paw, she had no memory of what she had said to the mammal at the desk, or even of what kind of mammal he—or was it she?—had been, only the knowledge of where she had been told to wait. Her heart felt as though it would burst out of her chest and she couldn't keep a thought straight in her head, she needed to see Nick that desperately.

It wasn't until Judy saw Nick again that she realized that she had been holding onto a fear of how he might look; if Moulmein's dire predictions about what the guards in the county jail might do to him had been right, he probably wouldn't have been able to walk under his own power. Nick was walking, though, although that didn't seem quite the right word for it. Normally, the fox had something of a swagger, a sort of unconscious confidence that touched everything he did to the point that he even moved with it no matter how much the world might try to beat him down. Maybe it was his way of showing that he was above it all, that no matter how much anyone might dislike him for what he was it didn't bother him.

But as Judy waited by the end of the hallway, Nick shuffled into view. His head and ears were both down, his tail limply dragging against the floor. His suit, which had been pressed so crisply that the folds had looked knife-sharp, was rumpled, and his matted fur had an unpleasantly greasy sheen. He looked, quite simply, broken, although as far as Judy could tell he didn't have so much as a single extra cut or bruise compared to the last time she had seen him. "Nick?" Judy asked, her voice tentative.
The guard who had been a step behind Nick didn't stay, turning around with a jangle of his keys and heading back the way he had come. It left Judy and Nick alone in the lobby of the county jail except for the mammal at the reception desk, and the sound of the guard's hooves echoed as he disappeared. "Oh," Nick replied, "It's you. I thought it might have been Lionheart's goons stopping by to make my day worse."

The words themselves were right; Judy would have had no problem believing that Nick would say them if they had been quoted to her. But his voice was flat and completely emotionless, with none of his usual playfulness. It was somehow worse than it would have been if he had been angry and Judy's paws fell to her sides.

Judy had wanted to run to him but he seemed as fragile as glass and she found herself seemingly rooted in place. When he looked up from the floor to look at her, Judy saw that his eyes were half-lidded as usual. Normally, it made him look as though he knew a joke that no one else was in on, but now he just looked tired and rundown. There was no amusement dancing in his eyes or across his muzzle, just a blandly neutral expression of exhaustion. "Bellwether came to see me, you know," Nick said, and while Judy thought he was trying to say the words as though they didn't matter, she thought she could hear a quaver in his voice and see a slight twitch of an ear.

Judy swallowed hard. Nick had every right to blame her for what had happened to him but the words were out of her mouth before she could stop them, although they sounded pathetic even to her. "I heard," she said, "I—"

"She said you had a deal," Nick continued, cutting her off as though she hadn't spoken, "Your dream job and your freedom for mine."

It was technically true, which was the worst of it; whatever Bellwether had told Nick Judy doubted that it had included any lies except by omission. Nick had managed to keep his voice flat but the look in his eyes had changed somewhat. It appeared more calculating, as though he were sizing her up, trying to see if the bunny she had been, the one who had been willing to blackmail him into helping, was still the one standing before him now, or if she was the bunny who had kissed him back. "I didn't," Judy said, "I wouldn't."

Without even quite realizing what she was about to do, whatever had kept her rooted in place broke and Judy ran for Nick, her arms spread. Before she could reach him, before she could wrap her arms around his waist, his arms were around her, lifting her up as effortlessly as she might pick up a kit. Nick buried his head in the space between her head and her shoulder, his muzzle fitting as perfectly as if they had been designed to go together. His arms around her were strong and warm, and the sensation of his body against hers was electric. The smell of him, that unique musk with its strangely floral undertone, filled her nose and Judy couldn't tell if the wetness on her cheek was because she was crying or because he was. "I knew you wouldn't," Nick said, practically breathing the words into her neck in a way that made her fur tickle and let her feel his voice in her chest, "But I was afraid you would."

Nick's voice nearly broke on the words and he didn't have to say anything else; Judy thought she was beginning to understand what he had gone through, how he had retreated into himself to avoid giving up on his sliver of hope. On her. "I'm sorry," Judy said, her words somewhere between a whisper and a sob, "I'm so sorry."

The words were like a mantra, and Judy wasn't sure how many times she repeated them before Nick shifted her in his arms so that they were looking at each other, his nose only inches from hers. He still looked worn out, but there was a ghost of his old self she could see somewhere in his eyes and the quirk of his mouth. "I couldn't keep my promise," Judy said, and she could feel her ears droop and
flush in shame, "I couldn't keep you safe."

"You tried," Nick replied simply, as though it were enough.

It wasn't, and it never would be, so Judy said, "So I want you to know I'll never, ever give up on you. No matter what happens."

Nick cocked an eyebrow, and his expression of amused interest filled Judy's heart with a fierce joy. "Is that a promise, Carrots?"

Judy couldn't help but laugh, not so much at his words or his expression but in response to the feeling that things were finally starting to go right again. "It is," she said, and her cheeks hurt from her smile.

"Alright, then," Nick said.

He kissed her on the nose, so lightly and so quickly that Judy felt it more in her belly than she did on her face, and said, "It's a promise."

Nick gently set her back down on the floor, apparently oblivious to her reaction. "So what's next?"

"Bellwether and Bogo both told me to stop investigating," Judy said, doing her best to match his business-like tone.

"Ah," Nick replied, "But we're going to keep going, aren't we?"

Judy smiled up at him, and entwined her fingers into his. "Of course we are," she said, and Nick nodded approvingly as they began to walk out of the jail, his larger paw engulfing her smaller one.

She didn't have her badge or her gun. Nick's money was almost all gone and they didn't even have the Buchatti anymore. It should have felt impossible, walking back out into the city to try and clear Nick's name with a mountain of evidence stacked against him, but it didn't. No matter what she didn't have, she did have what mattered most. She had Nick.

Author's Notes:

Before I get to anything else, I'd like to apologize again for the delay in this chapter. I do my best to keep to my schedule, and while I was able to post something, it wasn't this chapter. I have fixed my computer (the hard drive died and I had to go about the tedious business of replacing it and restoring my system), which led to the delay. On the bright side, though, the first chapter of my next story is up now as a sort of advance preview a few weeks before I had planned on posting it, which you can check out here:

The Unlikely Heir

It's a sequel to my Sherlock Holmes AU "A Study in Gold" and is the first sequel that I've written that I've thought was worth posting. If you enjoy my copious author's notes about historical settings and the mysteries I come up with, you might enjoy it.

Now, on to this chapter. The title of this chapter, "Let's Misbehave," comes from a 1927 Cole Porter song. Considering that Judy no longer has any law enforcement authority and has been (sort of) warned against continuing the investigation, it seemed appropriate.
The screaming meemies was 1920s slang for a fit of anxiety, panic, or the shakes. The mild oath "for cripes sake" was first used around 1910, and is a kind of minced oath to avoid using the much stronger "for Christ's sake."

Chapter 20 did mention that the Precinct One station had at least a couple of wolves, and in this chapter one of them shows up as the officer releasing Judy from the holding cell. Although her surname of Wolfsburg is pretty obviously related to her species, it's also a nod to the city of Wolfsburg in Germany, famous as the location where the very first Volkswagen Beetles were built.

Mechanical taxi meters were invented in 1891, and a cab in 1927 would certainly be equipped with one. $10 in 1927 is equivalent to about $140 today, and would have been an extremely generous tip for a taxi ride at the time.

$10,000 in 1927 is equivalent to about $140,000 today, which is a significant amount of money. As Nick stands accused of three capital crimes, he's fortunate that Bogo was able to bend the ear of the judge a little to not make him ineligible for bail. People accused of capital crimes can be denied bail; in Lionheart's case he's probably considered a significant flight risk.

Parking meters weren't invented until 1928, and weren't really usable until 1935; the version from 1928 needed to be connected to the car's battery for a power source, which was pretty impractical. Judy is right to assume that the Buchatti was either stolen or impounded, but it wouldn't be for not being around to feed a parking meter. It would mean that, if she was a cop, it'd be impossible for her to be a meter maid at this point in history, which I suppose is something.

Nick took about $500 out of the cigar box hidden in the table of his music room back in chapter 9, which he did in full view of Judy. He gave her a key to his house in chapter 27, and as Judy's been the one driving the Buchatti this entire story she's also held onto the key to the car.

Of course, the real news of this chapter is that Nick and Judy are back together again. Hopefully you find it satisfying; I'd love to know what you thought!
You're the Cream in My Coffee

Nick blinked and squinted as they stepped out of the county jail and Judy wondered if it had been the first time he had seen natural light since his arrest. The sun was almost directly overhead, their shadows so short they were hardly visible. A gust of wind ruffled Judy's fur and Nick sighed. "That feels nice," he said, and he gave Judy's paw a brief squeeze before he untangled his fingers from hers.

Judy understood what he meant. Standing outside the brooding walls of the county jail the view was hardly any less dismal, but the context made all the difference. The buildings near the jail were squat and ugly, made of crumbling bricks with a somewhat crooked array of advertisements on their sides that seemed perfectly chosen for their location. There were at least a dozen billboards advertising lawyers, some of them with the painted likeness of whatever smarmy mammal had paid for them. There were almost as many advertisements for bail bondsmammals, some of them proudly announcing in faded letters that they were open twenty-four hours a day. The asphalt of the street was coming apart at the edges into coarse black gravel, and the same wind that had moved Judy's fur sent a newspaper tumbling past and brought with it an unpleasant smell like a car's exhaust mixed with a gutter.

Despite all of it, though, Nick was outside the jail wall, and that was enough of a victory for the moment. When Judy started walking towards the cab she had taken to get there, which was still roughly idling as the driver flipped through a yellowing magazine, Nick raised an eyebrow in an unspoken question. "I think your car was impounded," Judy said, somewhat reluctantly, "Or maybe stolen."

Nick laughed, and there was no bitterness to it. Judy couldn't put a finger on exactly what it was, but Nick looked better than he had when she had first seen him again in the jail. He still looked tired. His clothes were still rumpled and his fur was still matted. But even if he didn't look exactly the way he had before his arrest, there was enough of his old self there that the difference was obvious. Maybe he was standing a little straighter or walking a bit more casually, but whatever had changed Judy was glad to see it. "Of course," Nick said as he pulled open the door to the cab with one paw and gestured inside with the other, "Why would this be easy?"

It was an almost-perfect echo of what Judy had imagined Nick saying when she had realized that the Buchatti was gone, and she couldn't help but smile as she climbed into the back of the cab. As Nick got in after her and shut the door, she tapped the driver on the shoulder until she got his attention and gave him the address of Nick's house again. If the half-deaf goat had any problem with predators in general or foxes in particular, he didn't say anything, although he seemed to be clutching the steering wheel rather tightly and when he changed gears for the first time he did it so sloppily that a terrible grinding noise came from somewhere near the front of the car and Judy might have fallen off of the overstuffed bench in the back of the car and onto its floor if she hadn't braced herself against the door.

The goat's driving did improve after that, to the level that Judy expected of a taxi driver in the city, but even as he seemingly carelessly maneuvered the car around and through traffic he didn't continue his previous loud monologue. That suited Judy just fine, and she turned to Nick. There was some part of her, maybe a part that would always be there, that almost couldn't believe that they were actually sitting next to each other again. Nick, for his part, seemed to be studying her, and Judy wondered if the same thought was going through his head. He eased back, rocking back and forth as he settled into the seat. "So how'd you get me out, anyway?" he asked, "Last I checked prohis didn't get paid that well."
If the taxi had one advantage over the Buchatti, it was that it was actually possible to hold a conversation in it, and Judy had no trouble hearing his words above the almost sewing machine-like sound of the car's little engine. He had asked his question almost casually, but while Judy thought that there was real curiosity behind his words she wondered if it was Nick's way of trying to push aside whatever had happened to him since his arrest. "I borrowed the money from you," she said, gamely enough.

"Borrowed?" Nick said, drawing out the word and shaking his head in mock despair, "Are you turning to a life of crime now? What would the Bureau think?"

His words were gently teasing and Judy smiled. "I promise you'll get it back. Besides, I'm not a prohi anymore. Bellw— I was fired."

Nick didn't react to her verbal misstep; it didn't feel right to say Bellwether's name in his presence and she could only imagine what the ewe had said to him. Nick simply said, "Oh," and the ensuing silence was just starting to feel uncomfortable when he added, more quietly, "Thank you."

Judy sidled over to him until her hip was brushing against his. "I don't care about being a prohi," she said, "I care about you."

Nick leaned against Judy and she was struck, not for the first time, by how warm he was. She reached her arm out, pulling him into a sideways kind of hug, and anything else either one of them wanted to say didn't matter.

Judy sat at Nick's dining room table, the file Bogo had given her spread out across the table. Nick was showering first, and she could hear the patter of water droplets and the sound of him humming something as she tried to absorb the material. There was quite a bit more than had been in the file that Darnielle had given her, and the folder full of those documents sat forgotten on a chair. It had turned out that there were actually two photographs that had been taken outside of Zweihorn's home, although only the one that she had already seen had a fox recognizable as Nick in it. Judy had only looked briefly at the other photograph, which was so badly overexposed by the light coming out of Zweihorn's open door that the mammal on the doorstep was almost completely washed out. About the only recognizable parts were a pair of legs and what was distinctly a fox tail, which made it worthless without the other.

Judy had a vague idea that it was possible to manipulate a photograph, but she wasn't sure what the tell-tale signs would be. Despite how grainy the image was, it was definitely Nick's face in the photograph; she could even see the cut under one of his ears he had gotten in the apartment fire, although it wasn't much more than a smudge in the image. She tried looking at the other parts of the photograph, trying to see if there was anything out of place, but there wasn't anything that seemed obvious. The fox in the picture (she refused to think it was Nick) had an oddly clumsy-looking grip on the revolver he carried, but nothing else stood out. Then again, that a revolver was visible at all seemed strange to her. If the gun was visible in the picture, it would have been visible to Zweihorn, too, and it didn't seem likely that she would have cheerfully let a mammal into her home who clearly intended on killing her.

Frowning, Judy set the pictures aside and turned to the report from Zweihorn's house. There weren't any photographs, but she doubted that they would have added much. For the most part, the report did little more than clarify the broad strokes she already knew. Both Zweihorns had been found in their dining room, probably at a table not too different from the one she was sitting at but much larger in scale. Both of them had only been shot once, through the eye. Although copies of the autopsy reports wasn't included, they were referenced, noting that both rhinoceroses had powder burns on their faces that indicated they had been shot at extremely close range. Just as she had when she had read about
their deaths the first time, Judy felt a sense of wrongness about them. It just didn't make any kind of sense to her; it was like a jigsaw puzzle missing half its pieces that just couldn't be put into any kind of order. The chain of events simply seemed absurd; after first letting a fox into their home, the Zweihorns would have had to sit down at their table, their daughter asleep in her bedroom on the floor above them, and let him shoot them both.

Other than confirming the bizarre details of their deaths, there was a new piece of information that seemed as though it might be important; Angela Zweihorn had nearly eight hundred dollars hidden in her dresser. That a crooked cop had money she shouldn't wasn't too surprising in itself, but it was more than Judy would have guessed.

Judy was about to switch focus and take a look at the police report around River's death when Nick walked into the dining room; she had become so focused on the files that she hadn't even noticed that the water had stopped running. Nick was wearing a suit that Judy recognized as one of the ones he had bought at the department store; the style of it was a little different from what he usually wore and it didn't fit him quite as well. "Find anything?" he asked.

Judy sighed and set the report aside. "Just things to check up on," she said, "I want to talk to Dr. Tolmie again. Maybe there's something he found in the autopsies."

"Maybe," Nick said, agreeably enough, and he spun one of the chairs at the table around and sat straddling it, his arms folded across the top of the chair's back.

"There's something we really ought to talk about first, though," he began, and Judy could feel her heart begin to pick up speed.

They had spent most of the taxi ride back to Nick's house in silence. Once they had arrived the taxi driver had barely waited for the door to the car to close before peeling out, and Nick had let it pass unremarked, saying only that he needed a shower. Now, as he spoke, his voice uncharacteristically serious, Judy had the sinking feeling that she knew exactly what he'd say. He's going to pull back.

It was easy to imagine. Judy knew he would be lying when he said that the kisses hadn't meant anything, that the simple gestures of physical contact were just her misunderstanding his intentions. She was so sure that Nick was going to wrap himself back up in his mask of aloof disinterest that when he did speak, the words didn't make sense at first. "We need to plan for what happens if we can't prove my innocence."

Judy gaped at Nick for a moment as the words sank in, and a flicker of concern crossed Nick's face; she was apparently taking too long to respond. "I already told you, I'm not giving up on you," Judy said, the words flowing out of her mouth seemingly without input from her brain.

Nick sighed, and she wasn't sure if the terrible melancholy she saw on his face was actually there or just a reflection of her own feelings. He stood up and walked over to where she was sitting, resting his head on her shoulder as he stood behind her. "I know you won't," he said, and there was a smile in his words as much as on his face, "I love that you won't. But it won't hurt to get a lawyer, will it? A good one, I mean."

Judy's initial reaction was to say that they wouldn't need a lawyer, but she swallowed the words. As much as she hated to admit it, Nick did have a point. Whether Nick was being framed by Lionheart, some vast conspiracy within the ZPD, or some combination of the two, they had gone to quite a bit of effort to make it stick. She felt confident that working with Nick she'd be able to find the clues that they had unwittingly left behind and prove his innocence, but the memory of Nick being dragged away came up in her head and there was suddenly a lump in her throat. "I guess not," she said, "Do
you have someone in mind? We can go now."

If Nick wanted a lawyer, she would happily go with him to hire one, even as every instinct cried out that it was a waste of the time they had to investigate. Nick chuckled as he stood up and crossed the dining room to rummage through the cabinets in the kitchen before he came back with a dust-covered copy of the yellow pages. "As a matter of fact, I do," he said, "Fru Fru said her husband was the best defense attorney in the whole city."

Nick set the book on the dining room table, being careful not to touch any of the documents Judy had spread out over the table's surface, and flipped to the section for lawyers and scanned the pages, running one claw down the columns until stopping on one. "Petruccio and Associates," Nick said, nodding in satisfaction, "That'll be the one."

"Terrific!" Judy said, springing to her feet, "We can go hire a taxi and—"

"Carrots," Nick interrupted, bending his knees until they were at eye level, "We're not going anywhere until you take a shower and change."

There had been so many other things on Judy's mind that she had completely forgotten that she hadn't cleaned up for a few days. "Oh," Judy said, looking down at her wrinkled clothes, "Is it that bad?"

"I didn't want to mention it, but you smell like a jail cell," Nick said, lightening his words with a wink.

When Judy got out of the bathroom, freshly scrubbed and wearing a clean dress, she saw Nick sitting in the same chair she had been in, poring over the files himself. "Find anything?" she asked.

"Where'd you get all of this?" Nick said rather than answering her question directly, "I'm not any kind of expert, but these look like police files."

"Bogo gave me a folder," Judy replied, "He told me to stop investigating but I think he wants me to keep going."

Nick turned and looked at Judy carefully; she could practically see the gears spinning inside his head as he considered her response. "So he thinks some of his officers might have been in on framing me. Is that about right?"

Judy nodded and Nick chuckled. "It really is never easy," he said, shaking his head, and then he reached over and grabbed something on the table top.

Nick held up the photograph of the fox standing on Zweihorn's doorstep. "This isn't me," he said.

"I know it's not," Judy replied, "But how do you fake a photograph?"

Nick shrugged. "I have no idea," he admitted, "It's not the sort of thing Mr. Big ever had much use for, back in my day. I think he preferred extortion over blackmail."

"Still, you wouldn't catch me dead wearing that suit," he added, pointing at what the fox in the image was wearing.

To Judy, the suit didn't look too much different from the one he was wearing, but she simply nodded. "If we're getting you a lawyer, we're doing this right," she said, and picked up the folder that Darnielle had given her.
She hadn't even flipped it open since Bogo had given her a more complete set of files; there didn't seem to be anything in it that Bogo's file didn't have. Bogo had been more than a little circumspect in how he had given her his files, though, and the last thing Judy wanted was to pass those files along to someone else and give the prosecution another angle of attack against Nick. "Fine by me," Nick said, and then he glanced at his watch before continuing, "We've got about fifteen minutes before the dimbox shows up. How about a cup of coffee and some hash?"

Judy hadn't seen the food when she had walked into the dining room, but he did have two plates of the same questionable hash he had made for breakfast what felt like weeks ago and a couple cups of instant coffee gently steaming sitting on a corner of the table. He must have caught the way she looked at the food because he quickly added, "We really should have picked up some groceries. I swear I'm a pretty good cook when I've got something to work with that didn't come out of cans."

"Mm-hmm," Judy replied, imbuing the wordless sounds with all the skepticism she could.

Still, despite the oddly grayish brown color of the mess of food on the plates, she actually was hungry, and she took one of the chairs. As she scooped up a forkful of the steaming mix of onions, potatoes, and carrots she paused as she remembered something and pointed at Nick with her free paw. "Don't think that I've forgotten your promise, by the way."

Nick laughed. "I've got my tuxedo all ready to go, Carrots. All we'll need is your dress."

Judy smiled. It was nice, sitting down and eating with Nick, even with the burden of the investigation and Nick's backup plan hanging over them. And, when Nick leaned over to brush a stray piece of onion off her face and turned it into a kiss, it was even better.

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "You're the Cream in My Coffee," comes from a 1928 song by Ray Henderson. It allows me to continue my theme of songs with titles that reference coffee when Nick and Judy drink it and the lyrics are actually quite sweet; they're from the perspective of a man describing his sweetheart, who he couldn't do without.

Advertising for lawyers and bail bonds mammals near a jail is really just good business sense, and in the 1920s it wasn't uncommon to see advertisements plastered just about everywhere.

The word "smarmy" in its modern context was actually fairly recent in 1927. The earliest known usage of the word to mean someone who is insincerely ingratiating dates to 1924. The word "smarm" did appear earlier, around 1847, to mean to daub or smear, and is thought to be derived from a blend of "smear" and "balm" in reference to someone adding pomade to their hair. If this etymology is right, it would imply that it was a short jump from associating salesmen with oily hair to their insincere charm.

A bail bonds mammal would be the Zootopia equivalent of a bail bondsman, someone who puts up money for bail on someone else's behalf. Naturally, they don't do this out of the goodness of their own hearts, but charge a non-refundable fee that is a fraction of the total value required to bail someone out of jail. This is usually around 10% of the total; if you had your bail set at $1000, you could pay $100 and they would put up the $1000 to get you out of jail. Since bail money is returned to whoever paid it after the person who was in jail makes their court appearances, this means that bail bond companies have a very much vested interest in ensuring that anyone they pay the bail for makes those appearances.

An interesting consequence of this system is that bounty hunting is a perfectly legal profession in the
US; bail bond companies will pay bounty hunters to track down people who skipped out on their court appearances after their bail was paid and force them to appear.

Judy could theoretically have saved a decent chunk of Nick's money for their immediate use at the cost of spending a portion of it by using a bail bond company, although there's definitely a chance that no one would be willing to put up $10,000 for a predator accused of killing three mammals, two of them cops. Besides, I think it's understandable that she wouldn't have considered it in her frame of mind.

In any car with a manual transmission, the smoothness of gear changes is entirely dependent on the driver. In older cars especially, such as what would be available in 1927, non-synchronesh transmissions will loudly complain if you don't shift properly. Seatbelts definitely were not standard equipment in 1927, hence why Judy nearly fell out of her seat on a bad gear change.

Nick and Judy went clothes shopping back in chapter 15, where Nick expressed his dislike for clothes purchased off the rack. Since the suits in his closets are implied to be tailored to him, it makes sense that the ones he just bought at the department store don't fit quite as well.

The yellow pages, perhaps known better nowadays as that worthless book that gets dumped on your doorstep every year, actually date back to the 19th century. Then, as now, they consisted of listings for businesses, and the reason that they're printed on yellow paper was a quirk of printing; in 1883 a printer putting together a telephone directory ran out of white paper and used yellow because they happened to have it.

As Nick implies, there is a difference between extortion and blackmail. If you're extorting someone, you're getting them to do what you want under the threat of violence or damage to property. If you're blackmailing someone, you're getting them to do what you want by revealing information they don't want known.

Angelo Petruccio, Fru Fru's husband, showed up way back in chapter 15, and Fru Fru did describe him as the city's best defense attorney.

A dimbox was 1920s slang for a taxi, and Nick's house, having as it does a modern (by 1920s standards) set of appliances would definitely include a telephone.

Nick previously cooked hash in chapter 29 because all he had was canned goods, and they haven't gone grocery shopping since. I'll leave it up to you to figure out how truthful he's being about his cooking skills. Also in chapter 29, Nick did promise to take Judy out on the town once the investigation ended, specifically promising that he'd wear a tuxedo and suggesting that she get something slinky and covered in sequins.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
When Nick broke off the kiss, what Judy saw in his eyes was unmistakable as anything other than sadness. "I wish we could have this out there, too," he said, and he gestured vaguely in the direction of his front door and the broader world beyond it.

"We can," Judy said, but the words sounded hollow even to her own ears.

"What do we have?" he asked, but he didn't sound angry.

A small voice in the back of Judy's head whispered, "This is when he's going to pull away," and it was hard to ignore.

"If I hadn't been arrested, where would we be?" Nick continued, and she felt increasingly sure that this time the voice would be right.

An answer to his question, or the unspoken one of why they shouldn't give up on what they had together, didn't immediately come to mind. When Judy had kissed him for the first time, it had been pure impulse, an action with no conscious thought behind it. It had, though, crystallized what she now suspected had been growing without her realizing it for some time. Nick had been the very first mammal to truly support her dream to become a police officer, and had kept helping her even when he had had the opportunity to quit. He had taken on terrible risks that Judy was responsible for, and Judy had seen what she thought no one else had for many years. Despite everything that the world had done to him, despite every door that was closed to him because of what he was, Judy had seen the mammal who wanted to do the right thing no matter the risk. He had made her realize just how selfish she had been as she treated him like a tool for her to use and inspired her to want to be better, to live up to what she had wanted as a kit when she decided that she wanted to be a police officer to make the world a better place.

No matter how Judy tried, though, she couldn't come up with how to put it all in words, and she simply said, "Dating would be a good start."

Nick looked at her for a moment, and then they both burst into laughter. Judy couldn't say exactly what it was that was so funny; maybe it was the absurdity of it all. Nick was accused of murder and what they were sitting around and talking about was what they meant to each other. Judy knew that she loved Nick even as she knew that she barely knew anything about him. But it didn't matter that, unlike the bucks back home, she didn't know every detail about him and his family in exhausting detail; that could all come later. She knew him, in the sense of what he stood for, better than she knew just about anyone else, including her parents and siblings. She suspected that the same was true for Nick of her, too.

"Well," Nick said at last, "I guess we're dating, then. But we need to be careful out there."

He was smiling his perpetual half-smile again, and Judy nodded. It wasn't a compromise that she liked, but she'd make it for his sake. He might not be ready to go out into the world as a couple, as she felt she was, or it might simply be that he was again seeing a danger that she wasn't. But even if she could only have Nick within the small confines of his house, it would be enough until he was ready too. "Then we'll be careful out there," Judy agreed, and Nick squeezed her paw.

Angelo Petruccio's office was much larger than Judy had expected it to be, although considering that the address that Nick had found in the yellow pages wasn't in Little Rodentia that shouldn't have
been a surprise. The building it was housed in was in one of the nicer parts of the city, near the city hall, and was twelve stories of professional offices that Petruccio shared with a CPA, an architectural firm, a jeweler, a travel agency, and a few others that Judy couldn't guess at based on the names. The house that Angelo and Fru Fru lived in could have been put in a corner of the atrium and forgotten; a massive ceiling of iron and glass was suspended two stories over a floor of polished white marble. A balcony wrapped around the second floor, the railing continuing unbroken from up around a massive marble staircase that gracefully rose up out of the floor. Although Judy could see the metal supports that kept the building up, they had been so well-integrated into the design that they almost looked purely ornamental; they had been painted a clean white and included elaborate geometric designs with golden accents, and the spots where the massive support beams came together served the secondary purpose of suspension points for electric chandeliers. Rather than trying to hide the chandeliers whoever had designed the atrium had deliberately, Judy was sure, left them to contrast with the white and gold of the rest of the design. They were large, darkly metallic squares broken up by geometric patterns, at the center of which were large half-globes with smaller globes suspended from each corner. Between the natural light that the massive amounts of glass let in and the electric lighting, the atrium wasn't just bright; it felt bright, too.

A number of mammals were bustling around the interior space, most of them dressed in fine suits and dresses, and the soft murmur of dozens of conversations filled the room. It was a very reassuring building for a lawyer to set up shop in, Judy felt, and even the elevator that they took to the offices of Petruccio and Associates on the eighth floor was beautiful. The doors looked as though they had been made of gold and were polished to a high shine, and images of birds worked into something of a ziggurat pattern of stepped triangles interlocked with straight lines had been etched into them. Although the law office wasn't nearly as impressive, it had been decorated in a clean, modern style. Nick's mouth had quirked into a smile as they stepped in, and in answer to Judy's unspoken question he had said, "I'd bet you Fru Fru designed this."

If she had, Judy couldn't fault the shrew's tastes. Clean white wainscoting rose about halfway up each wall and a bold carpet of hexagonal patterns in red and gold complemented the design of the building's atrium even if it didn't quite match. The waiting area was spacious, to the point where it almost seemed like a waste of space in a building that had to cost a fortune to rent in, but perhaps that casual display of the law firm's resources was part of the point. The layout of the chairs wasn't like anything that Judy had ever seen before, but it made sense in a way that many other offices Judy had been in didn't. Although it did have matching upright chairs in a variety of sizes to accommodate mammals as short as Judy to ones taller and wider even than Chief Bogo, the very smallest of mammals hadn't been left out. There was a tiny little waiting area with its own array of chairs to comfortably sit mammals as short as shrews or as tall as rats built into the front of the reception desk, and there was even a small elevator for them to use to ride up to the top of the desk. A small lip had been built atop the desk so that they would have a counter space of their own, and Judy suspected that it also did double-duty by allowing the receptionist to be of just about any size.

At the moment, though, the receptionist on duty was a brightly-smiling squirrel wearing a dress that didn't look too different from one of the ones that Nick had purchased for Judy, although the squirrel had accessorized more than Judy ever did with a set of pearl earrings and a matching necklace. Other than the squirrel, whose greeting was just as chipper as her smile, the waiting room was almost empty except for a pig in a business suit with a briefcase on his lap and a dormouse reading a newspaper too small for Judy to make out the headline. He had broken his concentration on his paper when the squirrel had welcomed Nick and Judy, looking up at them before giving a squeak of alarm and moving to the part of the miniature reception area farthest away from them.

Nick, as it seemed he always did, simply ignored the reaction; Judy couldn't even guess at how often mammals were afraid of him or hated him just because he was a fox, but every reminder was a bitter pill to swallow. She wished that things could always be the way they had been when it was just Nick
and her. In those moments they weren't a bunny and a fox or even a prey mammal and a predator. They were just two mammals, and everything else didn't matter.

But those things did matter in the wider world, and Judy pushed her own desire to give the poor frightened dormouse a piece of her mind down as Nick made his own introduction to the receptionist. "I'd like to talk to Angelo if he's in," Nick said, and the squirrel gave a little laugh.

"Mr. Petruccio almost lives here on the weekends," she said, beaming, "He says it's when his clients need him the most."

"I'm sure," Nick said, leaning casually against the reception desk and favoring the receptionist with a smile of his own, "I could use him, at least."

"I'll see if he's available, Mister...?" the squirrel replied, turning it into a question.

"Wilde," Nick replied, "Nick Wilde."

"Just a moment," she said, and after hitting a button built into the surface of her desk she spoke slowly and clearly into the microphone grille, "Mr. Nick Wilde to see Mr. Petruccio. Mr. Nick Wilde to see Mr. Petruccio."

Judy thought she could hear a faint echo of the words coming from somewhere further inside the offices, and after a moment a speaker on the receptionist's desk buzzed twice. "Wonderful, that means that he's available to see you, Mr. Wilde," the squirrel said, "Just go down this hallway all the way to the end, OK?"

Nick nodded agreeably. "Thanks," he said, and although he had taken his hat off the moment that they had entered the building he put it up to his head and tipped it the squirrel with a wink, "I'm much obliged."

The squirrel's giggling was as high-pitched as Judy would have expected it to be from her almost cloyingly sweet voice, and Judy had to bite down an irrational stab of envy. It was, after all, simply Nick being himself, and it certainly didn't mean anything. Still, it was a comfort when, halfway down the hallway, Nick had spoken so low that Judy could barely hear him to say, "I've only got eyes for you, Carrots."

Judy wasn't sure if she had reacted to the squirrel in some way, however subtle, that Nick had picked up on or if he simply knew her well enough that he could guess at what she was feeling, but it was almost as comforting as the feeling of his arms around her. She had seen relationships between her sisters go from that of the best of friends to the bitterest of rivals, and sometimes the trigger was something as mundane as one of them simply saying hello to a buck that the other was interested in. Judy had never quite understood it and had always told herself that if there ever was a buck she was interested in she wouldn't fly into a rage if someone else simply interacted with him.

Nick was many things, and while being a buck wasn't among them she found she had a new sympathy for her sisters. Thinking of Nick as hers and hers alone was so simple that it seemed to happen without her trying to do it, but it wasn't fair to him. Judy limited herself to just nodding slightly, but when they reached the door to Angelo's office she let her paw brush up against Nick's as she reached out to knock. At her first knock, a small voice called out from inside the room. "C'mon in!" Angelo said.

Judy opened the door, noticing as she did so that there was a much smaller door built into the bottom of it that looked as though it would be perfectly sized for the shrew. He certainly wouldn't have been able to open the entire door on his own, and once Judy did it revealed a beautiful corner office. It
was spacious, perhaps fifteen feet on a side, with two of the walls dominated by windows that gave an impressive view onto the streets that formed the beating heart of Zootopia's financial district. The wall that the door was in had a number of pictures on it, all of them showing Angelo, Fru Fru, and their children at significantly more than life size; in one of them the image of Fru Fru was taller than Judy was. It was very clear to Judy that Angelo loved his family deeply and openly; everyone in all of the photographs was smiling or laughing but the images didn't look posed. There was one of Angelo reading a storybook with his children on his lap, one of them pointing at the page with an expression of open wonder across her face. There were several pictures that must have been taken at Angelo's wedding to Fru Fru, her in an elaborate wedding gown and him in a suit, dancing what looked like the Snarlston as they both laughed.

The other wall looked like a law library; it was completely covered with a bookshelf. Although the lower shelves were covered with books of a size that Judy would have been comfortably able to read, the higher shelves had, in turn, smaller bookshelves set on them with books about the size of postage stamps. An elevator was set into the side of the bookcase alongside a wrought-iron spiral staircase, both of them shrew-sized.

At the center of the room was a large and elaborately carved desk, but there wasn't a chair behind it; there was just a pair of chairs in front of it. In much the same way that the warden of the Jerboliet Prison had a desk to her scale set atop a work space, Angelo had a miniature replica of the large desk on top of the smaller desk, and there were a number of bookshelves and filing cabinets built to his size around the desk. "Nicky!" Angelo said as they entered, "And, uh, Agent Jumps, was it?"

Nick leaned delicately over the desk and gave Angelo's paw a gentle shake. "Judy Hopps," Judy introduced herself; she certainly couldn't blame Angelo for not quite remembering her name, but she didn't correct him about her title.

"Oh, Hopps, sure, sure," Angelo said, bobbing his head, "Real sorry 'bout that. I ain't got the best memory for names. What brings the two a ya here, anyhow? Sit, sit!"

Nick and Judy took the two chairs in front of Angelo's desk, which put them more or less on eye level with him, and the plump little shrew groaned as he sat back down in his own chair.

"Fru Fru said you were the best defense attorney in the city," Nick said, and Angelo chuckled and waved dismissively.

"Aww, she just says that 'cause she married me," Angelo said, although Judy thought she could see a small smile on his face, "I am pretty good, though. Ain't nobody wins all the time, but if my track record was any better I'd be runnin' races."

He laughed at his own joke, and then sobered up. "Ya needin' a lawyer, Nicky? Fru Fru thinks a ya like family, I know she does."

Judy felt a tension she hadn't realized she had been carrying leave her as Nick spoke. "I appreciate that," he said, "But this is a real bad one. Judy?"

Judy had been carrying both folders, both the one that Darnielle had given her and the thicker one that Bogo had, in a snakeskin leather bag she had found in Nick's closet. It was too big to be a purse for her and she had been forced to adjust the strap to keep it from hitting the ground, but it was perfectly sized for carrying the folders and her purse and she had happily borrowed it. She pulled out the folder Darnielle had given her and put it on Angelo's larger desk, taking care not to knock over any of the minuscule filing cabinets or shelves as she did so. "I'm sorry it's so large," she said, but Angelo just shook his head as he stood up and walked over to the folder.
"I'm used to it," Angelo said, "Ain't no problem. I represented a coupla elephants once. Pair a yutes they said jacked a car. Every bit a paper was larger'n my damn desk, lemme tell ya."

"This is a bit worse than carjacking," Nick replied, "They're saying I murdered two cops and one of the cop's husband."

Angelo whistled between his teeth. "That's bad, alright."

"It gets worse," Judy jumped in, "They've got pictures and a forensic match on the gun."

Angelo shook his head. "Sounds like ya wanna legal miracle. Lemme ask ya right now: did ya do it?"

"No," Nick replied, and Judy thought she could hear a note of desperation in his voice.

She certainly couldn't blame Angelo's skepticism; it had to have been one of the least promising cases he had ever taken on. He surprised her, though, when he spoke again. "OK, OK, I'll take it, then. All a dis is client-attorney privilege, ya unnerstan'? Walk me through it."

They spent almost an hour going through the file Darnielle had provided, Judy and Nick taking turns to walk through the details while Angelo took copious notes. When at last they had come to an end, Angelo capped his pen and flexed his paw. "I'll do some diggin' a my own. Dis is good stuff, though. Where'd ya get it?"

"There was a lawyer named Darnielle—" Judy began before being interrupted by Angelo.

"Oh, Darnielle? She was born widda silver spoon up her—" he coughed, and then continued, "—mouth, but she ain't half bad for alla dat. Decent lawyer if ya got a simple case or the cops mess up, but she's got too much on her plate for the tough ones."

"This is a tough one, isn't it?" Judy asked, and Angelo nodded.

"Come back inna day or two," Angelo said, "We can talk strategy. For now, I gotta level wid ya, Nicky. Sure sounds like a frame job. Any idea who hates ya enough to frame ya?"

"Besides Lionheart or anyone who works for him?" Nick asked, "Not really."

Nick was silent a moment, and then he added with a chuckle, "Except maybe Bellwether."

"Director Bellwether?" Angelo asked, "Outta the Bureau a Prohibition?"

When Nick nodded, the shrew groaned and brushed at the fur atop his head. "That ain't funny, Nicky. She plays ta win, that one."

"As if Lionheart's any better?" Nick asked, and Angelo shook his head ruefully.

"Ya gotta point there, Nicky. Listen, ya think a any other real possibilities, ya let me know, OK? An' try an' keep ya head down."

"Will do," Nick said, and he stood up to shake Angelo's paw.

"We really appreciate this," Judy added as she made her goodbyes, and Angelo shrugged.

"Don't thank me yet," he said, "But I'll do what I can."
When they left the building that Angelo's office was in there wasn't much in the way of traffic on the street, let alone any taxis for hire, so Judy put her trust in Nick's sense of direction and followed him as he started walking in what she assumed was the shortest path to the nearest major street. There was a news stand on the corner of the nearest intersection, and Judy only glanced at it briefly. The proprietor, a bored-looking goat who didn't even acknowledge them as they walked past, had more than a dozen different newspapers on display, but all of the headlines seemed to run along similar lines. Literally every single one was about Lionheart's arrest, and they ran the gamut from ones as simple as "LIONHEART ARRESTED!" to the somewhat breathless "BELLWETHER STRIKES MAJOR BLOW AGAINST BOOTLEGGERS — ARREST OF LIONHEART A 'VICTORY FOR MORALITY.'" One of the papers, printed on luridly pink paper, was dominated by a massive photograph of Lionheart, his paws cuffed behind his back, being led out of the back of a van by Bogo and a burly moose.

When they were a few steps beyond the news stand, Judy stopped so suddenly that it took Nick a moment to realize that he was getting ahead of her. "Carrots?" he asked, "What's wrong?"

A well of excitement was bubbling up in Judy's chest, and the words more or less fell out of her mouth as he reached out to grab Nick's arm and pull him back. "The newspaper! Look! Look at it!"

Judy pulled Nick along until they were in front of the news stand and she pointed at the top copy of the newspaper with the photograph of Lionheart being led away. "Look!" she said, tapping it.

Nick shot Judy a questioning look, but he indulged her. "It's Lionheart being arrested," he said slowly, clearly not understanding what she wanted him to see, "If you want to read about it, there are much better newspapers than the ol' Porno-Graphic."

The newspaper was actually called the New Yak Evening Graphic, but Judy ignored Nick's joke. "No!" she said, so forcefully that the goat behind the news stand shifted a little in his seat and seemed to start actually paying attention to them, "It's Lionheart arriving at the police station! But it's not!"

The confusion in Nick's eyes lasted a moment longer before Judy could see him make the same realization that she had. His eyes widened, his ears tilting backwards as he grabbed the newspaper and looked more closely at the image. "You're right," he said, "This isn't what happened."

The memory of Lionheart being escorted out the back of a police van was burned into Judy's memory; she didn't think that she'd be able to forget it if she tried. The photograph, though, was completely wrong. The police van in the photograph was smaller than it had actually been, and its sides looked cheap and flimsy compared to the solid metal of the real one. It was parked in front of the Precinct One police station, but it was much too close to the main door and the perspective was just ever so slightly off. Lionheart himself wasn't right either—the lion in the photograph was wearing a suit, not pajamas, and while Lionheart's face was unmistakable the lion's body had a slight pot-belly unlike the powerfully built gang lord. Chief Bogo, by comparison, looked even taller and more heavily muscled than he actually did, but his police uniform wasn't quite right, his badge much too large and the sleeves not nearly long enough. The final piece of it, though, which was what had caught Judy's attention in the first place was the moose standing next to the chief; Judy distinctly remembered Bogo being joined by Captain Keeshan and a donkey in escorting Lionheart, neither of which were visible in the picture, and there hadn't been a moose officer involved at all.

"It's a fake," Nick said, and Judy could hear a reflection of her own excitement in his voice, "I should have thought of this! The—"

"Hey! This ain't a library, pal," the mammal at the news stand said, scowling as he leaned over the counter of his news stand and pulled the copy of the New Yak Evening Graphic out of Nick's paws, "Ya wanna read it, ya gotta buy it."
Judy fumbled in her purse and pulled out a nickel, slapping it down on the counter and pulling the newspaper back. "Keep the change," she told the goat, and grabbed Nick by the paw to tug him back away from the news stand in the direction they had been walking.

Judy held the newspaper tightly clenched in her free paw, but she didn't need to look at it again. "I should have remembered that the Graphic ran fake photos," Nick said, continuing his train of thought, "And I bet—"

"That whoever makes their fakes—" Judy interrupted, unable to contain her enthusiasm.

"—Could tell whether or not a photo was real," Nick finished, "Maybe even tell us who could make such a good fake."

It was exactly what Judy had been thinking, although at Nick's words she wondered if the picture of Nick outside Zweihorn's door was really all that much better of a fake than the one of Lionheart in the newspaper. The one in the newspaper was more obviously fake from all the little details that didn't match up with what Judy had seen from witnessing Lionheart being walked into the station through a window, but it probably would have been convincing enough for someone who hadn't been there. The picture that was supposedly of Nick had been taken at night and wasn't all that great of an image; it seemed to Judy that the darkness could hide a lot of imperfections that would have been obvious in a better-lit shot.

But while the police might not have anyone who could tell whether or not a photograph had been altered, Judy was willing to bet that someone who did it for a living could. All they'd have to do was go to the newspaper office and ask, and at the thought Judy's excitement started to dim. "But how do we get that? This paper is printed in New Yak, right?" she asked, letting go of Nick's paw to unfold the paper and spread it in front of them.

"They have a local office," Nick said, before he even looked at the newspaper again, and then quickly scanned the front page with a finger before pointing out a cramped address box at the very bottom of the page, "See?"

The addresses were squeezed under an article titled "'HE WAS A MONSTER IN THE BEDROOM' — VICTIM OF SCANDALOUS MARRIAGE SCHEME SPEAKS OUT!" and in addition to the address for the main office in New Yak City, there was indeed one listed for Zootopia. "How did you know that?" Judy asked, since Nick had clearly known about it even before spotting the address box.

Nick's response was nearly instant. "They have some really good puzzle contests," he said briskly, although Judy couldn't help but wonder if he had read the newspaper for its articles.

"I'm sure," Judy replied, doing her best to imitate Nick's half-lidded expression, and was rewarded with his laughter.

He wrapped one arm affectionately around her shoulder, despite his own warning, and Judy didn't resist, more than happy to keep walking alongside him. "We can take a taxi there," Judy said, and she was surprised when Nick shook his head no.

"We could, but we shouldn't," Nick said, and Judy's protest was nearly instant.

"But we might be able to prove your innocence!" she said, "And—"

"And I don't know about you," Nick interrupted, although his tone was gentle, "But I haven't even read half of what's in that file you got from Bogo. So why don't we go back to my place, read it all,
and then plan our next play?"

Judy swallowed. She had tried to take a look at everything in the folder Bogo had given her, but she had read maybe only a quarter of it thoroughly. She wanted to prove Nick's innocence more than she had ever wanted anything else, but she could see his point. If they kept jumping at lead after lead without thinking, they might overlook something, or waste hours or even days trying to find something out that had already been documented. In her enthusiasm she had completely ignored everything she had ever read about the right way to do investigations, and the realization was painful. Getting Nick out from underneath the murder charges wasn't going to be a matter of just believing in him; he needed her to be thinking things out. "OK," Judy said, the word almost a sigh, and Nick brushed the bottom of his chin against the top of her head, making her realize that she had allowed her ears to droop.

"I do appreciate the enthusiasm, though," he said, and Judy could hear the smile in his voice.

He straightened back up, and they were both silent a moment as they kept walking. "You're right," Judy said, "But that doesn't make it easier to wait."

Nick chuckled. "Then it's a good thing that you have me to be patient for you," he said, "But we should make one stop on our way back. Walking and taking taxis everywhere is kind of a drag."

Judy looked up at Nick. "Did you have Finnick store a second car for you?" she asked; she didn't know what had happened to the Buchatti but assumed that it had been impounded as a piece of evidence.

"No," Nick admitted with a careless shrug of his shoulders, "But I'm sure I can talk him into letting me borrow one. After all, what are friends for?"

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "You Gave Me Your Heart (So I Gave You Mine)," comes from a 1922 song written by Francis Wheeler and Harry Smith. I figured it's worked well as a reference to the beginning of this chapter, as Judy considers what Nick means to her. In this story, it's not just Nick that's inspired by Judy; she has in turn been inspired by him to try and live up to her dream rather than just following it for her own selfish ends.

The building that Petruccio and Associates is located in is based on the Rookery Building, a real-life building in Chicago very close to what I describe. It's in Chicago's Loop and is indeed fairly close to the Chicago City Hall. The building is one of my favorite examples of Chicago's surviving 19th century architecture. It was built in 1888, at which time Frank Lloyd Wright was an architectural assistant in the firm that designed it. In 1905, he had the opportunity to redo the atrium, which is very much as I describe it in this chapter. If you ever go to Chicago, it's worth checking out as it really is quite spectacular. If you're a fan of BioShock, it actually looks like it could be something out of Rapture if it was, you know, underwater instead of under the sky.

As of this chapter, the date is Saturday, September 03, 1927 as the raid took place very early in the morning of Friday September 02 and Judy was held overnight. Much larger chunks of time have passed in these past few chapters than in earlier ones, but my intent has always been to focus on what's important and interesting, and long periods of waiting really aren't. Besides, it'd probably get a bit torturous to have Judy stuck in a jail cell for ten chapters. Back to the point I was originally going to make, though, that's the reason that Angelo's receptionist references it being the weekend. The weekend is a good time for a lawyer to be available to their clients, at least, and also explains why Angelo was at home with Fru Fru when Nick and Judy visited; the guy does have a wife and
children, after all, and if he's working on weekends it only makes sense to take days off during the normal workweek when he can. As previously mentioned, the Snarlston is a pun on the Charleston, a popular dance in the 1920s.

As when he last showed up, Angelo has a very thick Brooklyn accent. In particular, his pronunciation of the word "youth" as "yute" as well as his profession as a lawyer is a reference to My Cousin Vinny, which is a great comedy and supposedly a fairly accurate legal drama.

The expression that someone was born with a silver spoon in their mouth to indicate that they were born into a wealthy family was in use by 1719, although before Angelo cuts himself off it's likely he wasn't about to refer to Darnielle's mouth. Her being born into a wealthy family does explain, though, why she has the large diamond earrings that Judy noticed; Darnielle doesn't need to rely on her income as a lawyer to survive, so she can afford to work pro bono.

The New Yak Evening Graphic is a reference to the real-life New York Evening Graphic, a short-lived tabloid newspaper published from 1924 to 1932. The New York Evening Graphic had two distinctive quirks that set it apart from other newspapers: it featured stories in it were written from the first-person perspective (including from murderers, bootleggers, adulterers, and other scandalous criminals) and it frequently had what were dubbed "composographs," photographs that had been crudely manipulated. Generally, composographs were shot with actors on a set, and then the faces of the people supposedly involved in whatever story the picture went along with were composited over the bodies.

As you might guess, the New York Evening Graphic did not consist of what you would call quality journalism; it was quickly nicknamed the Porno-Graphic and it struggled to attract advertisers willing to associate their name with its reputation. It was, however, wildly popular, and its gossip column was a guilty pleasure of many upper-class people who wouldn't be caught dead reading it in public. The paper itself was also printed on pink paper, which helped it stand out. They did also have a popular contest section, so Nick's defense of knowing about them having a local office is plausible, although the local office itself is more of a plot device so that this story doesn't have to go across the country.

The existence of composographs does indicate that it was possible to manipulate photos in 1927, but I'll avoid discussing that any more in these notes; I'll return to this topic in a later chapter's notes. I do, however, want to give a tip of the hat to Alons-y inc for not only guessing at the possibility of photo manipulation but also referencing composographs as a precedent for the time period. Well done, Alons-y inc! I'm very happy to see that I inspired you to do some research; learning new things is one of my greatest passions and I love being able to share it even in a small way like this.

In 1927, copies of the New York Evening Graphic cost one cent, so Judy did overpay by giving the mammal at the news stand a nickel, which is worth five cents.

Describing something boring or unpleasant as being a drag dates back to the late 19th century, so Nick's usage of it in this chapter is period appropriate.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
"There ain't no way I'm letting you borrow a car," Finnick said.

The little fox's arms were crossed across his narrow chest, and he looked up into Nick's face with a flatly defiant expression on his own. Finnick had let them into his shop willingly enough, but it seemed to Judy as though there were limits to what he was willing to do for Nick. Nick had breezily tried making small talk, not even mentioning the ordeal that he had been through or the charges looming over his head, and then had casually requested to borrow a car almost as though it were an afterthought. Although she couldn't claim to know him well at all, she got no sense that Finnick was joking, and when Nick began talking again the shorter fox instantly cut him off. "You have any idea how much a Buchatti is worth?" he demanded, "You know how much I could have sold that for?"

"Well—" Nick began, but he didn't get another word out before Finnick continued.

"Of course you don't, 'cause you didn't pay for it. And now that you lost it, you want me to give you a car?"

"Borrow," Nick interjected, "Let me borrow a car."

"Please," Judy added, and Finnick looked at her as though he was noticing for the first time that she was present, "We need your help."

The scowl across Finnick's muzzle didn't go away, but it lessened a degree even as his focus on Judy seemed to increase in intensity. "I—" Nick began, but Finnick cut him off, raising one paw.

"I wanna hear the prohi explain it," he said.

"I'm not a prohi anymore," Judy admitted, "I got fired."

When Finnick's expression changed a degree towards what might have been disinterest, she quickly added, "But that doesn't matter. Someone framed Nick for three murders and we need to prove he's innocent or he's going back to jail."

Judy's voice cracked a little on the word; saying it aloud somehow felt as though it was giving the idea power, that if she said it was a possibility it might happen. Nick himself shifted a little, but he didn't say anything as Finnick considered her words. Eventually, though, he sighed, and Judy thought she could see Nick relax slightly. "And you didn't think to lead with that?" he asked, and he rubbed at his head as he turned to face Nick again, "You trying to make me say no?"

"And make you worry?" Nick said, and he spread his arms expansively, a smile spread across his muzzle.

Finnick's laugh was sudden and booming, as though it had come out of a much larger mammal. "Bit late for that, Wilde," he said, "Now what's in it for me?"

The way that Finnick said the words was somewhat different from how he usually sounded, and it took Judy a moment to realize that he was teasing Nick. Nick, however, took on a wounded expression of such incredible purity that Judy almost felt a twinge of sympathy for him, if it wasn't for the clear delight in his voice. "Oh, I see how it is," he said, "Your old pal comes asking for a favor and you want something in return."
"Sharp as always," Finnick said; it was disconcerting to Judy to see the little fox's face set into something other than his usual sour expression.

"So what you got?" he asked, and rather than immediately answering with words Nick first gestured at Judy, brushing a paw against her shoulder.

"Did you know you're looking at the first bunny to get a spot in the police academy?" Nick asked, and Judy couldn't help but shoot him a worried look.

Although she hadn't seen anything to indicate that Finnick was anything other than what he appeared to be, she still had no idea how the two foxes knew each other. It was entirely possible that it was through a less-than-savory connection, but her concerns eased when Nick continued. "It could be useful, having a friend on the force the next time someone feels like hassling you."

Judy remembered how Finnick had complained, when they first met, about police officers turning his shop upside-down to look for the very same stolen Camellac that had eventually been fished out of the river. "You really going to be the first bunny cop?" Finnick asked.

"We're the ones who caught Lionheart," Judy said, "Chief Bogo promised me a recommendation."

She tried to say it as matter-of-factly as she could so that he wouldn't think that she was boasting, and the little fox snorted. "Knew it couldn't have been Bellwether," he said, shaking his head, "Way I hear it, she spends more time keeping her agents in line than going after bootleggers."

"Where'd you hear that?" Judy asked.

She couldn't help her curiosity; she didn't know how Finnick would know anything about the inner workings of the Bureau of Prohibition and was more than a little curious as to what else he might know. "Just about any cop'll complain about her," Finnick said with a small shrug, "The way they talk, she runs the Bureau like a kingdom and acts like the police outta be reporting to her. Gets real upset when Bogo don't play along."

"You see what you have to look forward to?" Nick asked dryly, and Judy couldn't help but laugh. It might have been a bit mild, if anything, to say that Bellwether ran the Bureau of Prohibition as though she were a queen rather than a director. In retrospect, Judy knew that she wouldn't miss the Bureau, but it was somehow good to hear that other mammals thought as little of Bellwether as she herself did. "Be real good to have a cop not trying to shake me down," Finnick said.

"Does that mean you have a car we can borrow?" Nick asked.

"Oh, I got something," Finnick said, "Just gotta get the keys out of my office."

"Thank you," Nick said, and to Judy his sincerity appeared totally genuine, without any playful exaggeration.

Finnick nodded, but he didn't immediately start walking towards his office. "C'mon with me, long ears. I wanna word with you. Alone," Finnick said, and without even waiting for a response he grabbed Judy by the wrist and pulled.

His grip was surprisingly strong, but Judy didn't resist as he led her to his tiny office. Just before Finnick closed the door, she saw Nick, who hadn't moved from his spot, give her a kind of half shrug, which she took to mean that he didn't know what she could expect. The office itself was barely more than a closet, the only illumination a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling that cast swinging shadows across the crowded contents as the cord it hung from was put into motion by the
force of the door closing. A small workbench, covered with greasy metal parts and equally greasy service manuals, took up most of the space in the little room. The powerful smell of motor oil and cigarette smoke hung in the air, and the walls had a dingy tinge to them where they weren't covered with yellowing diagrams of engines. There were only two seats in the office, both of them low stools, but one of them was covered with a filthy assortment of sockets and rags. Finnick made no effort to clear off the second stool or to offer Judy a seat; he climbed up the one relatively clean stool and stood on it, which made him slightly taller than her. "I seen the way you look at him. The way he looks at you," he said without preamble, taking advantage of his position to look down at Judy, "It's a new crush, ain't it?"

Judy wasn't sure what it was that Finnick had seen; maybe he simply knew Nick well enough to pick up on some of the same cues that she had only recently started to notice when his mask of aloofness wasn't perfect. She couldn't deny it, though, and she didn't. "Yes," she said.

Telling someone else about her feelings made them feel more real in a way just about completely opposite from how admitting the possibility that Nick might end up in prison did. Finnick grunted in response and leaned towards Judy, seeming to take the opportunity to take a closer look at her. "You know, there used to be a line of vixens getting themselves all dolled up and throwing themselves at Nick. Some damn fine chasses on 'em too. All willing to laugh at his jokes and bat their eyes at him."

Finnick clasped his paws together and batted his eyes at Judy in an almost grotesque parody of flirting, considering that his mouth was set into something of a sneer. "You know how many he went for?"

It wasn't something that Judy had ever discussed with Nick. She had no idea what kind of past he had when it came to dating. It was true that she hadn't seen any pictures of him with a vixen other than his own mother hung up in his house, but there were an awful lot of gaps on the wall of his bedroom. There were plenty of years for a partner to fit in, no matter that Nick had never mentioned it. "Go on, guess," Finnick urged as Judy's silence dragged on too long.

"I— I don't know," Judy admitted.

Finnick held up the fingers of his right paw in a circle. "None. Not in all the time I've known him. They wanted to be an egg. Drape themselves 'cross his arm and get into all the best clubs, drink the best booze, ride in the best cars. Not a one of them wanted him."

He was silent a moment before continuing. "I ain't gonna make threats. But you better treat him right, you understand?"

It sounded as close to a threat as anything Judy had ever heard, but she nodded vigorously. "Absolutely I will," she said, hoping that the little fox would believe in her sincerity.

"Good," Finnick all but growled, but he climbed off his stool and rummaged through the untidy pile on the desk and came up with a key. "And you're going to make sure he brings this car back, too."

"Finnick has a twisted sense of humor," Nick said as he gingerly got out of the car that the fennec had let them borrow.

Judy couldn't help but agree with Nick, at least a little; she had no idea what kind of car it was since if it had a nameplate it had fallen off long ago, but it made the beat-up old Furd that her parents owned look like it had been freshly rolled off the assembly line. The car was tiny, so much so that if it had been any narrower Judy would have had to have sat on Nick's lap to drive it, and yet it was oddly tall. Of course, her most recent point of reference was Nick's Buchatti, but even her parents'
Furd had a steering wheel. The rusty heap that Finnick had lent them had a tarnished brass tiller and didn't even have proper electric headlights, just a mismatched pair of kerosene lamps that Judy didn't have much faith in if it came to night-time driving.

The thin tires and harsh suspension had made it a punishing drive back from Finnick's garage to Nick's home, and the car had so little power that it felt almost dangerous to drive it as traffic effortlessly passed them. Still, it had gotten them back to Nick's house and no matter how rusty the bodywork was, the faded green paint peeling and bubbling away, the little engine had purred smoothly. "So what did he want to talk to you about, anyway?" Nick asked.

Judy thought that Nick had probably been too stunned to ask when they had still been at Finnick's place, as his jaw had literally dropped when Judy and Finnick had emerged from the office and the car he was letting them borrow had been pointed out. "Just warning me about your cake-eating past," Judy said lightly.

Nick chuckled. "He's a bit jealous, I think, that the vixens all wanted me. But who wouldn't want this?" he said, and he gestured at himself.

Judy leaned against him briefly as they walked from the small garage tucked away behind Nick's house to the door. "I'm glad you didn't choose any of those vixens," she said as they walked in.

Nick nodded sagely. "It's no contest between them and you," he said, and although his words were simple Judy could feel a flush of warmth in her chest.

"Are you ready to go through the file again?" Judy asked, changing the subject as she pulled the folder out of her bag.

"As ready as I'll ever be," Nick replied, and they spent the next few hours at his dining room table, each carefully reading through everything that Bogo had left them.

There was an incredible amount of information packed into the various reports, and Judy started making a list of everything that seemed important to either her or Nick. Although she wasn't sure she always agreed with him—he seemed to put far more importance than she did on the fact that his Buchatti had, in fact, been impounded as a piece of evidence—it was helpful to have someone to provide a different perspective. She had already decided that they had to visit the Zootopia office of the New Yak Evening Gazette as well as the coroner's office, but her list started to grow. She hoped that Dr. Tolmie might even be able to provide some insight into how the results of the ballistics test of her revolver had been faked; although it was probably far outside his area of expertise she trusted the wombat significantly more than she did whoever had actually run the test. Neither she nor Nick, though, was quite sure as to how to probe further into the police station and investigate the officers who might have been involved in framing Nick, but Judy added the names from each report to her list.

It was difficult to get too happy about it while the specter of three murder charges still loomed over Nick, but Judy was pleased to read that the charges against Zoya Medvedeva had been dropped. Apparently, once Mr. Quill had learned of Lionheart's arrest he had been desperate to tell the police everything he knew in an attempt to reduce the charges he faced. The transcript looked exactly like the ones that Judy herself had put together what felt like years ago for the Bureau of Prohibition, and even through the dry script-like format Judy thought she could all but feel Quill's desperation. Everything he said confirmed what she had suspected. Lionheart, Quill claimed, had extorted him into first storing his illegal alcohol under the Thief of the Night and then into setting up events to allow Medvedeva to be framed for Carajou's murder. Judy was somewhat skeptical of Quill's claims to be a victim of circumstance, and Nick had obviously shared that skepticism; not even a page into reading the transcript Nick had snorted and said, "I'm sure it's just a coincidence that the Thief of the
Night happened to have a hidden crawlspace connected to the bar.

That had led them into an unfortunately circular discussion about how deeply involved Quill had actually been, as they simply didn't have enough information to do more than make reasonable guesses. Although they both agreed that Quill was stretching the truth at least a little, Nick had taken a somewhat dimmer view of the hedgehog. He believed that Quill had likely approached Lionheart about an arrangement to store alcohol and only then been pulled into the setup for murder once Lionheart had something concrete to hold over his head, although he did admit that it was based mostly on his own knowledge of Quill's greed.

The more important question, Judy had suggested, was why Lionheart was framing Medvedeva in the first place. She thought that her earlier theory, that Lionheart was carefully weakening the other gangs through a combination of murders and frame jobs that hid his own involvement, was likely correct. "She never quite denied working for the Black Paw, did she?" Nick had agreed thoughtfully, "Maybe she'd be willing to talk now that she's free."

"Maybe," Judy sighed, and leaned back to stretch, "But I don't have a badge anymore."

Nick laughed. "Do you really think Zoya talked to you because you had a badge?" he asked, "She talked because you were willing to listen."

Judy rubbed at her eyes. It was starting to get late and she was starting to get tired. They had only taken a single break since getting back to Nick's house, and that had been to go to a bodega in walking distance for groceries, followed by a quick meal. It had almost felt as though things were the way that they had been before Nick's arrest, when the breaks from the investigation had been a welcome respite—and also when there had still been a distance between her and Nick. She had felt it a few times, both as they walked to the store and as they did their shopping, that Nick was deliberately keeping himself apart from her and not just physically. He had still joked around, still delighted in showing off the incredible variety of Zootopia, but he hadn't quite looked at her the same way he did when they were alone.

Once they were safely back inside his house, though, it was as though a switch had been flipped. Not only had he had insisted on her help in preparing a truly bizarre salad that she would have sworn he came up with by choosing ingredients at random, but he also didn't let the distance between them drift to more than a few inches. In the end, Judy had to admit that mixing apples, grapes, walnuts, and celery with mayonnaise was surprisingly delicious, and also that Nick could actually prepare something beyond the hash that he had previously cooked up. Their empty plates were drying near the sink and Judy wasn't sure how long it had been since they had eaten, but it was already dark outside and she stifled a yawn. "We can keep going in the morning," Nick suggested, obviously having seen her yawn, "I'm getting pretty tired, too. I didn't sleep too well last night."

Although he had said the words lightly enough, Judy guessed that it was something of an understatement. She had no idea how it must have felt for Nick to be trapped alone in his cell, and she couldn't stop herself from putting a paw on his. "You can have the bathroom first," he said, although he gave her a crooked smile, "I'll get all of this put away."

Judy was sitting in Nick's bedroom on his bed, feeling more than a little ridiculous. Although Nick had generously bought several new outfits for her when they had visited the department store, it hadn't occurred to her at the time to pick up a nightgown. She was borrowing one of his dress shirts again, and it made her feel like a kit playing dress up because of how enormous it was on her even with the sleeves rolled up. Still, she had come to a decision as she had brushed her teeth and she wasn't about to let something like her clothes make her resolve waver, even as she waited at least ten minutes for Nick to finish his own preparations for the night. She was looking at the pictures on the
wall, wondering what Purris was really like, when she heard Nick walking down the hallway. He stopped in the doorway, resplendent in silk pajamas, and Judy thought she saw a flicker of mild surprise cross his face as she saw that his bedroom wasn't empty. "I can take the sofa if you want the bed," Nick said, and he was already turning to leave when Judy replied.

"No," she said, "I don't want you to sleep on the sofa."

The silence that stretched out between them seemed as though it lasted an eternity. Nick stood in the doorway, almost completely still except for the gentle movement of his tail, and Judy couldn't read the expression on his face. "I thought you wouldn't want to be alone," she added, and after another pause Nick wordlessly walked into the bedroom and sat down on the bed next to her.

The springs creaked a mild protest against his added weight and the mattress gave ever so slightly, bringing them so close together that Judy's thigh was almost touching Nick's. "I've been alone for years," Nick said quietly.

He was looking ahead rather than at her, but he wasn't pulling away the way he had when they had been grocery shopping. Judy couldn't help but remember what Finnick had said about how vixens had all but thrown themselves at Nick. If the little fox had been telling the truth, Nick had managed to be alone in a crowd even before his exile to Podunk, and Judy wondered how long it had been since he had had any kind of meaningful connection to another mammal. "You don't have to be," Judy said, and she placed her paw atop his.

Every time that she touched him, Judy felt a kind of surprise at how warm he was, how he could be so solid and strong and yet feel so soft. "Whatever you're ready for... Whenever you're ready... I'm ready too," Judy said, "We... We don't have to be careful when it's just us."

The words all but fell out of her mouth, the lines she had tried rehearsing as she waited for him tumbling away forgotten as she could feel Nick looking at her. A slow flush ran its way up from the base of her ears to their tips as he leaned in. "Are you sure?" he asked, and his words came out in hot little breaths that she felt against her ears.

There were a hundred unspoken questions Judy could almost hear. *What about your family? What would they think? What about becoming a police officer? What about kits? What about—*

Judy could smell the minty freshness of the toothpaste Nick had used, a curious counterpoint against his own natural scent. His muzzle was inches from her own, and his eyes filled hers. His expression was open, his ears delicately tilted out a little, and the hope that Judy saw was so raw it almost hurt. She realized the point that Finnick had been getting at; it wasn't just him expressing his concern for Nick, no matter how gruffly he had done it. She had started off treating Nick the same way that so many other mammals had, interested only in what he could get her and not in him, but she might have been the first in years to move beyond that.

Judy closed the distance between them, choosing to answer his question without words. Nick's lips tasted minty, but with her head angled against his and pressed into the downy cream-colored fur of his muzzle her nose was filled with the smell of him. His paw came up from under hers and moved to the small of her back as he leaned into the kiss, and then his other paw was at her cheek. The roughness of the pads of his paw against the side of her face stood out in contrast to the softness of his lips against her own, and Judy could feel the same electric tingle she had felt when they had kissed for the first time gathering in her belly.

Nick was breathing heavily when they finally broke apart, but his words and intentions couldn't have been clearer. "I'm going to turn off the lights."


Author's Notes:

I was, I admit, somewhat tempted to leave the author's notes off the end of the last chapter to make the cut from Nick's confident prediction to what actually happened in this chapter stand out a bit more, but there are at least some limits to what I'll do for the sake of a weak joke.

The title of this chapter, "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" comes from a song written by Roy Turk and Lou Handman in 1926. It seemed appropriate to me for the events of this chapter, both for the title and the lyrics. The song has been covered a number of times, perhaps most famously by Elvis Presley, and is in my opinion a beautiful song.

The word "crush" to mean a romantic interest in someone was a relatively modern bit of slang in the 1920s, but it is period appropriate. The word "chasses" is being used as the plural of "chassis" which was 1920s slang for a woman's body and seemed a particularly appropriate bit of slang for a mechanic to be using. Also in 1920s slang, an "egg" was a person who lived the high life, and it's probable that this bit of slang is why in The Great Gatsby F. Scott Fitzgerald used East Egg and West Egg as the names for the two fictional parts of Long Island that old money and new money residents respectively live in.

The car that Finnick does eventually let Nick and Judy borrow is based on a 1903 Rambler, a car that you sit on more than you sit in. Showing the pace of automotive development, by 1927 it was badly outdated. With only 6 horsepower it was somewhat woefully underpowered even by the standards of the 1920s. Its diminutive dimensions and lack of an enclosed body would make it stand out against more modern automobiles, which were quickly becoming larger and more refined as the 1920s went on. The particular car that Nick and Judy get is even smaller than a real Rambler, though. Real Ramblers were manufactured by the Thomas B. Jeffery Company, which in 1902 was the second-largest car manufacturer in the US after Oldsmobile, having made about a sixth of all cars on the road. In 1916, the Thomas B. Jeffery Company was purchased and became the Nash Motor Company. Unless you have an interest in old cars, it is very likely that you've never heard of the Thomas B. Jeffery Company or the Nash Motor Company, and if you're familiar with Oldsmobile it's probably just as the minor car company that went out of business in 2004. The landscape of the automobile industry has gone through several dramatic shifts, and I know I'll be interested in seeing what things look like decades from now. In thirty years Tesla might end up as a well-established brand or they might be resigned to the books as little more than a footnote on the history of electric cars. With any luck, though, it'll be possible to drive a Tesla on Mars.

Real Ramblers (or at least early ones) were more or less as described; they had a tiller instead of a steering wheel, for example, and kerosene lamps rather than electric lights. Going from driving a Bugatti to a Rambler would definitely be a big change, though. Like many early cars, Ramblers simply didn't last, and the car being in cosmetically rough shape after about 24 years would have been completely typical.

As mentioned in chapter 3, a "cake-eater" was a lady's man in the slang of the 1920s.

Based on the ingredients, Nick and Judy made a Waldorf salad. The Waldorf salad was invented at the Waldorf hotel (hence the name) around 1896, and by no later than 1928 had taken its modern form of containing apples, celery, grapes, and walnuts, mixed with mayonnaise and served over lettuce. The salad also gives its name to "Waldorf Salad," my second-favorite episode of Fawlty Towers after "The Germans." Prepared mayonnaise being available to buy in stores was something of a recent development in 1927, as commercially prepared mayo in jars was first available in 1907. I figured that it was reasonable for Judy not to know what a Waldorf salad is, considering her upbringing. I enjoyed the challenge, throughout this story, of finding appropriate food for the characters to eat, and a Waldorf salad also seemed period appropriate to me.
As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
Confessin' (that I Love You)

When Judy woke up, the golden light of the rising sun coming through the window was making Nick's fur glow like burnished copper. At some point in the night he had curled himself around her, and her head was resting on his belly facing towards his head. Nick hadn't put his pajama top back on, so Judy could feel the softness of the cream-colored fur that covered his stomach tickling gently at her nose with each slow rise and fall of his chest.

Judy glanced at the alarm clock at Nick's bedside. After looking at it she realized that she couldn't hear it ticking and it must have wound down, so she ignored the time the clock showed and looked instead at Nick's face. His expression was peaceful, and it wasn't just a matter of sleep taking away the sly cast his features usually had. He looked contented, the side of his muzzle curled upwards in a gentle smile. The night before, with the lights in the bedroom off and only the dim glow of the streetlights coming through the windows to provide illumination, Judy had felt Nick more than she had really seen him. She couldn't find it within herself to regret it, but as she admired the lines of her fox's body she thought maybe they could leave the lights on the next time.

He was so different from any buck, but the lean and angular lines of his body gave him a sort of grace and power that no bunny could match. Or at least, that's what Judy suspected. When she had been younger Judy had listened to her older sisters' whispers and giggles about bucks, about what they had expected before their first time and what had actually happened. As it had turned out, the only thing that they had been right about was the need for a towel afterwards, but she couldn't guess if that was because her sisters simply hadn't been able to explain things properly or if it was just another one of the differences between foxes and bunnies.

Without really being aware that she was doing it, Judy started to run her fingers through the downy fur of Nick's belly, and when she realized what she was doing she didn't stop. It was a pleasure to simply touch him, she had discovered; their closeness had burned to a climax that had felt as though they were one and the same, and now each touch had a faint echo of that moment. Nick gave a wordless murmur and shifted slightly to give Judy more access to his belly, the curve of the smile on his muzzle widening slightly as his ears tilted back. A moment later Judy felt his tail swing against her leg before she heard the muffled thump of it hitting the mattress, and at the little laugh that escaped her mouth Nick's ear perked up and his eyes slowly opened and focused on hers.

"Good morning," he said, and while his face was split by a wide yawn there was no mistaking the smile in his eyes.

"Good morning," she said back, and her throat felt oddly thick as the words came out.

Looking at Nick, and playing with the fur on his belly, while he slept had been one thing, but suddenly with him awake the enormity of what had happened the previous night hit Judy. She thought that she had realized what Nick meant to her when he had been arrested and they had been separated, but looking at him as he propped himself up on one elbow, a mildly quizzical expression on his face, she realized just how deep those feelings truly ran. The idea of losing him again was too painful to contemplate and she tried to push it aside, but it must have been plainly visible across her face.

"Well that's a serious expression," Nick teased, "Penny for your thoughts, Carrots."

"I love you," Judy said.

The words had fallen out of her mouth almost unconsciously, but she kept going. "I want you to
know that," she said, "That I love you."

Nick's eyes had widened a degree at her words, and he simply smiled in response. "You told me so last night," he said.

It was true; Judy had said it, when Nick had been doing something that her sisters had never even hinted at and might not even be possible for a buck to—Judy tried to push the memory aside, but if she hadn't been covered with fur her face would have almost certainly been as red as Nick. As it was, she felt as though the insides of her ears had to be glowing scarlet, and she hastily added, "I wanted you to know that I mean it."

Nick chuckled, and drew himself smoothly upwards, gently using one paw to pull her upright too so that they were sitting side by side on the bed, their heads turned to face each other. "Judy," he said, "Do you know how I know you love me?"

His tone was light, but she was sure that he wasn't teasing, and she simply shook her head. "You could have left me to rot in prison and you still would have gotten everything you wanted. But you came back for me," he said, and Judy shook her head again.

In a way, he was absolutely right. She could have left him to his fate and still gotten her chance at becoming a police officer. Even with Bellwether taking the credit, Lionheart would still be behind bars himself and Bogo's offer would have stood whether she helped Nick or not. It was the sort of conclusion she might have accepted a little more than a week ago, but in a more important way than how Nick was right he was absolutely wrong. "I wouldn't have had everything," she said, "I wouldn't have had you."

Nick laughed, and nuzzled his head against her shoulder, his head angled up so that the end of his muzzle was against the base of her ear. "Bunnies," he said, "Such hopeless romantics."

He pulled himself backwards until he was looking into her eyes again. "And do you know how I know that I love you?" he asked.

"You told me so last night," Judy said, doing her best to echo not just his words but also his tone.

Even as she felt her ears flushing again at that memory, Nick did not seem even the slightest bit embarrassed. Quite the contrary, his smile widened a degree in both size and smugness. "My charm is wearing off on you, I see," he said, but his voice grew more serious as he continued, "When I was rotting in that cell, all by myself, the only mammal I wanted to see was you."

Judy could feel her heart swell at his words and she wrapped her arms around him and squeezed until he did the same. They sat there for a long moment, Judy burying her head against Nick's chest so that she could feel his heartbeat even as she could hear it. There were other conversations that they'd have to have, she knew, other topics they had both thought of the previous night but not brought up. For the moment, though, she felt as though they had had the most important one.

Nick had taken breakfast as an opportunity to try something more ambitious than either hash or a salad, and the golden-yellow sauce he painstakingly prepared for Judy's poached egg and steamed asparagus was surprisingly delicious. He had prepared a similar meal for himself, with two poached eggs instead of one and a couple links of chicken sausage alongside the asparagus, and positively preened as Judy ate her own meal as quickly as possible, her enjoyment apparently evident on her face. When she had finished, pushing her plate aside as she wrapped her paws around a mug of
coffee, she had asked him what it had been. "Hollandaise," he had replied, giving the word a slightly exotic flair with his pronunciation, "It's *haute cuisine*, you know."

"It was delicious," Judy had replied, and then she had pulled out the thick file that Bogo had given her and started organizing the documents while Nick finished his own meal.

By the time he was done, she had sorted the contents out; the stack of items that they hadn't gone through yet was starting to get very small. It only took a couple of hours to get through the last of it, and in the process of doing so they had come up with one other item of interest. Judy had missed it on her first time reading it, but Nick had caught that in addition to having unusually large amounts of money hidden in their homes, the money that River and Zweihorn had was sequential with what had been found on Carajou's body. And, as Judy had realized with growing excitement, the contract that they had found in Carajou's binder for the Tundra Towns Lanes job had been for five thousand dollars, not the three thousand in crisp bank notes that had been on his body. "So how's this for a theory?" Judy asked eagerly, as the pieces fell together in her mind, "Lionheart gives Carajou the job of killing Koslov at the bowling alley, and Bauson has the job of giving Carajou his payment. But what Bauson was really doing was distracting Carajou—"

"—So that Scursly could gore him," Nick interrupted as he took up the thread of her thought, "And the reason it took place at the Thief of the Night—"

"—Was because Lionheart knew that Mr. Quill would call River and Zweihorn—"

"—Which means that *they* would be the first officers on the scene and could take their cut from the envelope—"

"—Which was payment for making sure the frame job on Zoya for murdering Carajou went through!" Judy finished triumphantly.

Both Nick and Judy sat still for a moment. The pieces all fit together so perfectly; although Zweihorn had only had eight hundred dollars hidden away rather than a full thousand like River, that was easily explained by the possibility of her having already spent it. Judy remembered perfectly how obviously new the hundred-dollar bills in Carajou's possessions had been, and how obvious it was that they had been pulled out of a bank recently. In fact, maybe the chain of payment hadn't ended with Zweihorn and River; maybe there were other crooked officers who were supposed to dip into the money for their own cut once it had been taken into police custody. Judy scribbled the idea down as Nick began to articulate an idea of his own.

"Lionheart was always planning on killing Carajou, Scursly, and Bauson," Nick began slowly, "But I bet he only had River and Zweihorn killed because they didn't do a good enough job making sure no one asked too many questions about Carajou's murder."

"Crooked cops are too valuable to waste," Nick added, "I guess he thought I was worth it."

He smiled, but there was no humor in it. "But why didn't he try framing me, too?" Judy asked.

It was something that Judy still couldn't think of any reasonable explanation for. Her apartment had been burned down, but it seemed as though that was it for attempts to make her stop her investigation—unless Nick had been wrong and the intended victim of the fire really had been him instead of her. She still had no idea how the gunpowder residue on Nick's paws had been faked, but it didn't seem like it would have been much more difficult to frame her in addition to him. Nick simply shrugged. "Maybe he thought you wouldn't question it," he said, "When he saw us at the restaurant, I doubt he thought you liked me much."
Judy couldn't help but feel a twinge of guilt at his words; although his tone wasn't sharp at all, she really had treated him terribly when they had first met. Nick must have seen her features fall, because he put a paw around her shoulder and squeezed gently. "This would be a lot harder if we were both in jail, you know," he said, and Judy nodded.

"I still should have treated you better," she said softly, and Nick responded instantly.

"You really should have," he said cheerfully, the words—and his blatant refusal to allow her to engage in self-pity—so unexpected that Judy couldn't help but laugh.

Just by the fact that he was willing to joke about it so openly, she knew he couldn't have been holding it against her, and although she doubted her guilt would ever fully go away, it did ease up a little. "He probably did think it'd be good enough for you," Nick said, "A couple of police officers get murdered, a former gang accountant gets blamed for it, and the evidence says a different gang got me to do it. Didn't you notice the note that got planted on me wasn't in Lionheart's writing?"

"You're right," Judy said, "It was typewritten. He must have wanted it to point to one of the other gangs."

They both fell silent again, and Judy was sure that Nick was thinking about which gang Lionheart might have wanted to implicate. It would have certainly been a plausible motive for a gang to kill a crooked cop that was loyal to a different gang, but there simply wasn't anything to go on from what they knew. As Judy repressed a sigh, her gaze fell on the dirty plates from the breakfast she had shared with Nick, which they had left pushed aside to a corner of the table for the past few hours. She had been far too eager to get back into the file to stop for something as simple as cleaning up after themselves, and a small frown crossed her face as she looked at the mess.

Judy's ears leaped upright as she came to a sudden realization, and she herself shot out of her chair nearly as fast as she stood up. "Maybe he didn't clean up!"

"Carrots?" Nick asked, looking at her with an eyebrow quirked in confusion.

Judy paced around the dining room, already seeing in her mind's eye what had likely happened and trying to put it into words as quickly as she could. "Lionheart didn't plan on getting arrested himself," she said excitedly.

"I would imagine it was something of a surprise for him, yes," Nick said, and Judy could see that he still didn't get it.

"Every other murder, there's been someone who really did it and someone to pin the blame on. He pinned the murders on you, but there's no... But someone else obviously did it, and they always got killed. But this time, for River and Zweihorn—" Judy said, fumbling over her words in her rush to get them out.

"Maybe he didn't get the chance," Nick said at the same time Judy did, and she nodded eagerly.

"So whoever killed River and Zweihorn might still be out there," Nick said, "Or maybe they're already dead, but Lionheart didn't get the chance to make the next link to frame someone else for it."

"Or maybe," Judy said, "He was able to start framing them, but not finish."

Judy's epiphany certainly wasn't anything ground-breaking, she was sure, but it took an obvious fact she had known all along—that someone else had murdered River and Zweihorn—and gave her something useful they could do with it. Lionheart almost certainly hadn't had the chance to make things as clean as they possibly could be, and all they needed was an inconsistency—any
inconsistency—that they could use to pry the case open and prove Nick's innocence.

"But we still don't have any clues as to who actually did it," Nick pointed out, but Judy shook her head and rummaged through the file until she found the picture of a fox on Zweihorn's doorstep.

"We have this picture," she said triumphantly, "It has to be a fake. But they put your head on the real killer's body."

"Unless the whole thing is faked, and there wasn't an original from the night Zweihorn was murdered," Nick countered, but Judy knew he was bringing it up more as a possibility than trying to dismiss her idea completely.

"But either way," Judy persisted, "Someone put your head on the body of another fox."

Nick nodded. "We've read everything," he said, gesturing at the table, "I guess it's time to go to the New Yak Evening Graphic and ask some questions about faking pictures."

Judy felt her excitement suddenly fall. "But I don't have a badge anymore," she said, and Nick gave her a crooked smile as he waved dismissively.

"Oh, I think I know how to get them to help," he said, and Judy could hear the absolute confidence in his voice.

"Then come on!" Judy said, grabbing his arm and pulling him towards the door closest to the garage, "Let's go!"

"Before you get yourself in a lather, aren't you forgetting something?" Nick asked as he stumbled a few steps forward, and then looked down at her meaningfully once he had pulled her to a stop.

It took a moment for Judy to realize what Nick was getting at until she looked down at herself and realized she was still wearing one of his dress shirts as a nightgown. They had come right down to the kitchen after getting out of bed, and after breakfast they had gone right back into the file; Nick was still wearing his silk pajamas, and from the way his fur was sticking out at odd angles she guessed hers wasn't any better. "Oh," Judy said.

There was a pause, her paw still wrapped around Nick's wrist, and without letting go she pulled him in a new direction. "Then come on, we need to take a shower!" she called over her shoulder as she set off for the bathroom.

Author's Notes:

Before I get to anything else, I've got something pretty cool to share. Reader JoenSo put together a playlist on YouTube of all of the songs from the chapter titles of this story, which you can listen to here:

[And All that Jazz YouTube Playlist](https://joenso.deviantart.com/)
Thanks again for putting this together, JoenSo! I think it’s a great companion to the story, and it’s perfect if you want a little mood music while you read.

As for this chapter, the title comes from a song variously known as “Confessin' (that I Love You),” “Confessin’,” “I'm Confessin',” or “I’m Confessin' that I Love You.” I went with the title I liked best, but whatever you call it the song was written in 1930 by Al Neiburg as an alternate set of lyrics to the song "Lookin' For Another Sweetie," by Chris Smith and Sterling Grant, which was written in 1929. Besides the obvious nature of the title and the events of the chapter, “Confessin' (that I Love You),” also has very sweetly romantic lyrics.

You may find it disappointing that this chapter skips the events of the previous night, but I thought that the emotion of their closeness was more important than the particulars of any physical acts, and that hopefully came through well enough.

Nick’s alarm clock stopped because it wasn’t wound while he was in jail, and he was somewhat distracted the previous night to wind it again. In the 1920s, watches and most clocks were powered by a coiled spring that slowly unwound, not electricity. Self-winding watches were starting to become more common in the 1920s, but as they rely on the motion of the body the mechanism wasn’t practical for alarm clocks, which are generally left by the side of the bed and don’t move. By the 1930s, alarm clocks that were electrically powered were more common, and clock radios also started showing up in that time period.

Hollandaise sauce is indeed one of the five sauces of French haute cuisine, and the original recipe dates to at least 1651. It’s an emulsion of egg yolks, butter, water, and lemon juice, and can be somewhat tricky to prepare without accidentally curdling the egg. It’s a key ingredient in Eggs Benedict, a popular American breakfast and brunch food made with an English muffin topped with ham, a poached egg, and hollandaise sauce. Eggs Benedict was first created in 1894 (supposedly as an attempt at a hangover cure by a stockbroker named Lemuel Benedict) in Manhattan, and from there started to become more widely known. In either case, I think it’s reasonable considering Judy’s upbringing that she wouldn’t be familiar with hollandaise sauce either from its European origins or from its use in a popular East Coast breakfast.

Nick had noticed, in chapter 17, that the three thousand dollars on Carajou’s body was in sequential bills, and in chapter 33 the contract that Carajou had in his hotel room was indeed for $5000.

Getting into a lather was, in 1920s slang, to get yourself worked up about something. The origin of the term comes from the tendency of horses to sweat when they’re exerting themselves. When horses sweat, the sweat can form a sort of frothy white lather, giving an obvious visual cue. Since there are horses in the world of Zootopia, I figured that it made sense for the expression to still exist; horses are one of the few non-human mammals that produce significant amounts of sweat from their body to help regulate their temperature, and it would definitely stand out there as much as it does here.

This chapter was more of a beat and something of a recap than a chapter intended to really move the investigation further, but I thought it was crucial to have these scenes here before they jump back into investigation mode as some of the development of their relationship, so hopefully it worked. Next week, though, it is off to the offices of the tabloid. As always, thanks for reading! I’d love to know what you thought!
"You're not limping anymore," Judy said, speaking the words as the realization came to her.

She was walking next to Nick as they made their way across the block and a half between where they had left the car that Finnick had lent them and the Zootopia office of the *New Yak Evening Graphic*. Judy wasn't sure when Nick had started walking normally again; between their shower and helping Nick brush out the luxuriously long and soft fur of his tail afterwards, she had been more than a little distracted, to say nothing of her concerns about what they might be able to learn from the tabloid. Still, Nick favored her with an easy smile even as he kept walking, a smoothly confident swagger in his step. "It doesn't hurt too bad anymore. I've still got quite the bruise, though."

Judy involuntarily glanced down at his ankle, but she couldn't see anything through his fur. While she was still looking down at his leg, Nick let his paw brush against Judy's cheek briefly. "What about your face?" he asked.

Judy touched the scrapes Nick had caused when her apartment had been burning down around them. The marks were hardly visible and already well on their way to being fully healed, and she said as much. "It's fine. They're almost healed."

Nick nodded. "I'm sorry," he said, and Judy reached up to give his paw a gently squeeze.

"I don't blame you," she said, "It's my fault. Your leg, your arrest, it's all because I pulled you in."

Nick was silent a moment as the tabloid's office came into view. It was a three story building, built plainly of brick without any outstanding features other than a series of brass letters over the main entrance that spelled out the name of the newspaper. "You don't have to keep apologizing," he said mildly.

"Then neither do you," Judy countered, and Nick nodded slowly.

"I suppose we can both be sorry together, then," he said, and he reached down to squeeze Judy's paw.

Despite how large the building was, the reception area was small and more than a little shabby. There were grubby marks on the plain white walls near the door where countless paws and hooves must have brushed past, and there was a grayness to the simple white tiles of the floor that made Judy think they were no longer their original color. The entire building seemed to hum and vibrate, and from the noise Judy guessed that the printing presses that ran off the paper for Zootopia were somewhere in the basement. She thought she could catch the faint scent of fresh paper and ink, but that might have just been her imagining what she expected to smell. The reception desk was set across from a simple waiting bench of a stepped design so that it could accommodate mammals of a variety of sizes, and the desk itself was equally simple. At the moment, there was no one in the reception room other than the receptionist, a middle-aged female beaver in a plain dress, who quickly put away a stub of a pencil and a little book of crossword puzzles as Nick and Judy entered. Before they had left his house, Nick had said that he had a plan for getting the mammals at the newspaper to cooperate, and considering that she no longer had her badge Judy was happy to let him take the lead. His only guidance, before they entered, had been quite brief: "Just stand there, look concerned, and don't say anything."

"Excuse me, ma'am?" Nick said, his tone the very essence of politeness as he approached the desk,
"Is the mammal who makes these pictures here?"

As he spoke, he held up the copy of the *New Yak Evening Graphic* that Judy had purchased the previous day so that the receptionist could see the image on the front page. The beaver squinted at Nick suspiciously, and her tone had more than a note of hostility when she responded, "Who wants to know?" and looked the fox up and down as though trying to find fault with his appearance.

Although Judy would admit she had something of a bias, when it came to Nick's appearance, she didn't think that anyone would have been able to find fault with how he was currently dressed. His suit, one of the ones that had been in his closet rather than one of the ones that he had purchased on their trip to the department store, was immaculately pressed, the crisp wool spotlessly black. A pair of silver cufflinks adorned with glittering emeralds almost exactly the same color as Nick's eyes were just barely visible on the sleeves of Nick's shirt underneath his suit jacket, and a matching tie clip secured an elegant silk tie with a bold pattern of diagonal black and green stripes. Nick had taken off his straw boater and tucked it under his arm the moment he had walked through the door, and something subtle about his body language had changed in that same moment. To Judy, he looked somewhat more serious, almost solemn, and even the way he walked was different, his back rigidly upright and every step precise.

Even the little chuckle that Nick gave in response to the beaver's question didn't sound like his normal laugh; while to Judy's ears Nick usually sounded as though he was laughing at a joke that only he really understood, it instead sounded entirely perfunctory and without any humor. "That's not important," Nick said, and his wallet appeared in his paw so suddenly that it looked like a magic trick.

In the blink of an eye, Nick had liberated a twenty-dollar bill and slid it across the desk while his wallet vanished again, but the beaver made no motion to take it. She did look from the money, then up to Nick, and then to where Judy stood. Judy didn't have to pretend at being concerned anymore; although Nick was plainly trying to bribe the beaver, they didn't have nearly enough money to casually waste if she insisted on more payment. Even worse, it suddenly occurred to her that even if someone at the newspaper was willing to help prove that the photograph of Nick was a fake, they might demand a cut of their own. Still, the beaver's features resolved themselves into an expression that Judy had no problem reading: naked greed. "It might take a little more," the beaver said, her voice dropping down to a low whisper that Judy had no trouble making out even above the low murmur of the printing presses below them.

"My client," Nick said, his voice at normal volume as his eyes flickered back at Judy, "is the victim of some truly scurrilous accusations, bolstered by a faked photograph of a..."

Nick paused, looking back and forth and waiting for the beaver to lean in a little before he continued, his voice suddenly low, "...scandalous nature. Why, if it can't be proven as a fake, marriage might be off the table."

The beaver looked past Nick and at Judy, as though for confirmation; Judy felt her ears flushing at the sudden wash of emotion as Nick said the word "marriage." She couldn't meet the beaver's eyes, looking down instead as what Nick was implying ran through her head. Was he really suggesting that he would marry Judy in a way the beaver wouldn't catch? Although Judy had never been one to dream of her own perfect wedding the way some of her sisters had, clipping out pictures from the Steers catalog and talking of the exotic places they might hold the wedding or the honeymoon (although to the best of Judy's knowledge, no Hopps had ever married anywhere but at the church in Bunnyburrows or taken a honeymoon any further away or more elaborate than a weekend in Deerbrooke County), the image irresistibly filled her head. She had attended countless weddings as a kit, and suddenly all of the details that had always seemed so boring when she was fidgeting in her
Sunday best as a preacher droned on and on about love and commitment, repeated over and over until she couldn't distinguish the memories of one wedding from another, took on a new life. It should have seemed strange to imagine Nick, dressed in his absolute best, standing before an altar with Judy across from him and pews filled with bunnies behind them, but somehow it fit perfectly in her mind until she thought back to how her family might react if she so much as introduced Nick to them.

Judy was so consumed by her thoughts that she nearly missed the beaver's response, which sounded a touch skeptical but not outright dismissive. "A fox working for a bunny?" the beaver asked.

Nick gave her a smile that, at last, looked like his own. "Who better to dig up what's needed?" he said, giving the last word a subtle emphasis, and the beaver's face slowly lit up with dawning comprehension.

Judy thought she understood what Nick was suggesting, too; the obvious implication was simply that he was looking for someone willing to say a picture was fake, whether or not that was true. Although Nick did wait a moment, once he seemed satisfied that the beaver understood, he put his paw on the twenty-dollar bill on the counter and began slowly drawing it back. "Of course, if someone here can't help—"

"Margaret Waschbar," the beaver interrupted quickly, placing her paw on the money and stopping its movement, "She works upstairs in the attic. Through that door."

The receptionist motioned with her head in the direction of a door even as the words fell out of her mouth at a rapid pace. "Wonderful," Nick said, letting go of the money and clapping his paws together, "Let's be going, then."

He directed his last statement at Judy and pulled the door open for her, gesturing at the entryway and waiting for her to enter before following himself. Judy waited until they had gone about half a floor up the narrow stairwell before she turned back to look over her shoulder at Nick. "Marriage?" she asked, and a sly half-smile played across Nick's face.

"It's the truth," Nick said, "It'll be pretty hard for me to get married if I'm in jail, and I am the victim of—how did I put it?—a scurrilous accusation. I never said that you were the client. Or that it would be the two of us getting married."

He paused a moment as they continued climbing the stairs. "But," he added, "If that's the only way to stop living in sin..."

To Judy, his tone sounded half-playful and half-serious, and she tried to strike the same balance with her own response. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves," she said, "We've got a case to solve first. Besides, you've got an awful lot of courting left to do before you can talk about marriage."

Nick suddenly squeezed past Judy on the stairs, allowing his tail to brush up against her in a slow and lingering way that couldn't be anything other than deliberate. "Is that so?" he asked, and Judy couldn't help but smile.

"Posilutely," she said.

Judy's first thought, when they entered the attic of the tabloid, was that it looked as though someone had taken a forgotten storeroom from her family's farm and stretched it to enormous proportions. The room was long and wide with a high ceiling, the dusty rafters of the roof above plainly visible. The walls of the room were barely visible behind an incredible variety of junk that didn't seem to have
any kind of organization. There were untidy piles of books stacked here and there, rolled-up carpets
leaning at dangerous angles, and racks upon racks of clothing in all different styles and sizes. An
equally varied assortment of chairs and tables were in an unorganized mess where there was room,
and beyond the familiar there was also the bizarre—an enormous broadsword was balanced across a
crate, a stuffed and dust-covered goose stood in one corner, and an open chest was full of what
looked like gold coins, rubies, and pearl necklaces but surely had to be fakes.

At the center of the room, it looked as though someone had erected three of the four walls of a
bedroom, but while the insides of the walls had been painted a clean eggshell white with elegant-
looking wainscoting running halfway up the walls, the outside revealed that they were just cheap and
rough-looking plywood with some bracing added. One of the walls had a window in it with a piece
of canvas painted to look like part of the Zootopia skyline by day positioned about three feet behind
it. Inside the fake room there was a variety of relatively standard furniture, including a writing desk
with a matching chair and a sofa, but the bed was as obviously fake-looking as the room itself when
looked at from the right angle. What appeared to be a solid oak headboard from one angle was, from
a different angle, just a piece of plywood that had been incompletely painted and decorated. Outside
the fake bedroom, which didn't have a ceiling of its own, a female raccoon was struggling to setup a
complicated series of electric lights and shades all angled inwards. The raccoon, who could only be
Margaret Waschbar, was muttering and cursing under her breath as Nick and Judy approached, and
she didn't seem to notice them at all even when Judy cleared her throat and said "Excuse me?
Margaret Waschbar?"

It wasn't until after Waschbar had gotten one of her lamps set up with a wordless noise of triumph
and turned away, rubbing one paw against the other, that the raccoon realized she was no longer
alone. She gave a sudden start as she caught sight of Nick and Judy, her ringed tail going straight
back in surprise. "You gave me quite a fright," Waschbar said, clutching at her heart in an
exaggerated demonstration of fear that she obviously didn't feel, "The two of you here for a shoot? I
didn't think I had anything on the calendar for a bunny or a fox, but..."

Waschbar shrugged her shoulders in a simple gesture that seemed to say, in a way that words
couldn't, that her job was one of ever-changing priorities and jobs. The raccoon had an easy
cheerfulness to her that Judy immediately appreciated, although her appearance wasn't quite what she
had expected. Judy had imagined that someone who faked pictures for a tabloid for a living would
have an oily, unpleasant air to them rather than looking like a friendly mechanic. Waschbar was
wearing a paint-splattered set of corduroy coveralls, the fabric of which had faded to a gray-black
slightly lighter than her fur. She was a about half a foot shorter than Nick was, but looked as though
she might not weigh too much less; her coveralls seemed particularly snug at her generous hips and
stocky legs. Her eyes were a chocolate brown somewhat lighter than the black mask of fur that
surrounded them, and she regarded both Nick and Judy with mild curiosity. "No, we're not here for a
shoot, Ms. Waschbar—" Judy began, but the raccoon quickly interrupted.

"Peggy, please," she said, "Everyone calls me that. Everyone I like, anyway. So, who're you and
what do you want?"

Her words were brisk, their bluntness set off by her smile. "My name's Judy Hopps and this is Nick
Wilde," Judy said by way of introduction, gesturing at Nick as she spoke his name, "Are you the one
who makes the pictures for the paper?"

"Sure am," Waschbar said, "You're not here to serve me papers, are you?"

For the first time, a hint of anxiety crept into the raccoon's voice, and Judy supposed that the paper
might have been sued in the past by those who thought that their articles (or, probably more
pressingly for Waschbar, their pictures) were libel. "Oh, no, no," Judy replied hastily, waving her
"Of course I can!" Waschbar replied, her relief evident, "No one's better at making composographs than I am."

"Composographs?" Nick interjected, clearly as unfamiliar with the word as Judy was.

"Sure, sure," Waschbar said, and then she pointed at the newspaper Nick had tucked under his arm, "You've got a Porno-Graphic there, right?"

Judy involuntarily made a noise between a cough and a laugh, and Waschbar simply laughed. "I know what folks call it, you know."

Nick gave Waschbar a smile and the pink tabloid. "The Lionheart picture. That's a composograph; I put six different pictures together for that one," Waschbar said, nodding, "Not one of my better works, but not bad for five hours between getting the job and getting the paper printed, eh?"

"It's very good," Judy said, and the raccoon smiled.

"Come over to my desk, let me see this picture of yours," Waschbar said, and she strode purposefully off, gesturing for Nick and Judy to follow.

The raccoon's desk was in one corner of the room and was positively enormous, with a drafting table set next to it. Like the rest of the attic, the desk was covered with assorted junk, from stacks of pictures to razor blades, paint brushes, cameras, photographic negatives, and sticks of charcoal to an enormous and expensive-looking airbrush. Besides what were apparently the tools of her trade, Waschbar also had a number of large models on her desk, mostly cars and buildings, and one in particular caught Judy's eye. It was a model van, about two feet long, and while one side of it was painted green, the other side was painted black and had the letters "ZPD" painted in white. "That's the van from the picture, isn't it?" Judy asked, pointing at the model.

Waschbar gave Judy a wide smile as she nodded. "Sure is," she said, "I didn't have a picture of a police van with the doors open that I could use. So I made one."

She shrugged modestly. "I didn't get the perspective quite right, though, did I?" she said, and sighed.

Nick exchanged a glance with Judy. "Maybe before we show you our picture, you can tell us how you made this one. Could you explain it, Peggy?" he said, and he put the newspaper down on a relatively clear spot of the raccoon's desk.

That seemed to be the right decision, as she positively brightened at the chance to explain her process. "It's real simple," she said, "I started with a picture of the police station I already had. Then I posed the actors in front of a backdrop. I've got some actors to dress up."

A frown momentarily crossed her face. "I wish I could have found a better lion to stand in for Lionheart. He doesn't have a gut like that," she said, and then hastily continued onto her point again, "I found some pictures of Lionheart and Chief Bogo that were from more or less the same angle as each other. I always try to make it a little more dynamic than just head on, you know? It really makes it—"

She cut herself off. "This is real dull, isn't it?"

"It's very interesting," Judy said encouragingly, and Waschbar continued.

"So then I posed the actors in front of a backdrop. I've got a bunch of different colors so I can go
with something that makes it easy to cut the image of the actors out with a razor blade once I develop them, and then I get the lighting to match the picture I'm going to paste them into. When I've got more time, I put up sets like that one," the raccoon said, pointing in the direction of the fake bedroom in the center of the attic, "It makes it easier. A lot less retouching to do if all I'm doing is pasting faces."

"Anyway, for this picture, I cut out the actors and put them over the picture of the police station. Then I cut out the pictures of Bogo's face and Lionheart's face and put them over the actors'. That's the hard part, really. It took a lot of time with the airbrush to blend Lionheart's mane in, let me tell you."

"It looks very convincing," Nick said, and it wasn't a lie; if Judy hadn't known that the picture was a fake, she couldn't see anything around the lion's head that showed that Lionheart's face had been put over someone else's.

"I took a picture of the model van, same as the actors, and put that in too," Waschbar continued, "And that was it."

It was a pretty modest summary, but Judy thought that she understood at least a little of the effort that the raccoon had gone to and discussed so casually. "Thank you," Judy said, "Here, let me give you the pictures we have."

She pulled the photographs that supposedly showed Nick on Zweihorn's doorstep and gave them to Waschbar. "And you're saying that this isn't you?" she asked, looking from the picture that showed Nick's face most clearly to the fox himself.

"It's not," Judy said before Nick could get a word out.

"Why do y—" Waschbar began, and then after cutting herself off continued, "You were framed, you think?"

"That's right," Nick said, and the raccoon nodded thoughtfully.

Judy had to admit that Waschbar seemed pretty sharp, and she was glad when the raccoon pulled out a magnifying glass and began wordlessly examining the pictures without asking any more questions.

"Hmmm," Waschbar said at last, "This is tough."

"So you can't tell?" Judy asked, and a note of desperation must have come through because the raccoon patted her arm.

"I didn't say that," Waschbar said, "It's just that these aren't great pictures. It wouldn't take a lot of skill to fake a photo this bad."

The raccoon paused a moment, sucking air through her teeth as she seemed to consider the problem that they had set before her. "Do you have the original negatives?" she asked, but she didn't seem disappointed when Judy shook her head.

"I guess that would have been too easy," Waschbar said, but she sounded cheerful enough as she went back to examining the images.

After a few minutes, she turned to Nick and asked a question that sounded like, "Do you die?"

Nick blinked and looked at Judy before turning back to face the raccoon. "If I got shot or stabbed, I'm pretty sure I would," he said, and then it was Waschbar's turn to look confused.
"No, no," she said, "Your tail. Do you dye the tip of your tail?"

Nick gathered his tail up into his arms and stroked it. "Never," he said, "Why do you ask?"

"Look at this," Waschbar said, and held the magnifying glass in front of the picture that Judy had thought the raccoon would have little interest in, because the entire image was so badly overexposed that the body of the fox in the image was barely visible and the face couldn't be seen at all.

"See?" she said, and pointed near the tip of the fox's tail in the picture.

Looking at it under a magnifying glass, Judy saw that there was a tiny bit of white visible between the darker tip of the tail and the rest of it. "Someone may have gone and darkened the tip. It would have been easy enough to lighten the negative before developing the picture."

"So we're looking for a fox with a white tail tip?" Judy asked, already feeling excitement rise in her chest at the potential lead.

"Well, maybe," Waschbar said, "The picture's so overexposed it might not mean anything."

Waschbar then held up the other photograph. "I'm pretty sure this part of the picture is real," she said, gesturing at the part of the image showing Zweihorn standing in her open doorway, light coming out around her, "Faking this kind of lighting would be really hard."

"Could you do it?" Nick asked.

Waschbar considered the question for a moment before responding. "If I had a few weeks, sure," she said, "I'd have to model it out to get it this good."

"So that part is probably real," Judy said to Nick, and he nodded.

Whoever had faked the photograph could have only had hours at the most, unless they had planned it out long in advance. From the techniques that Waschbar had described, it would certainly be possible to fake one part of the image before the rest. "As for the rest of it, I think the revolver was swapped out for something else," she said, tapping the image.

Judy looked at the gun closely, but she couldn't see anything, not even something as subtle as the tiny bit of white fur in the other image. "Why do you say that?" Nick asked; he had been examining the photograph as closely as Judy had, but he obviously hadn't seen anything either.

Waschbar shrugged. "I'm always real careful with paws and hooves, myself, and that's a real awkward way of holding a gun is all. To me, it looks more like this fox was holding... I dunno, a bottle or something. Something cylindrical."

That wasn't much, but it was another possible detail. Still, Waschbar hadn't hit on the topic that was probably the most important. "And what about the face?" Judy asked.

The raccoon sucked air through her teeth again. "Could be a decent fake," she said at last, "The picture's not good enough for me to be sure. Is it a picture of your face you recognize?"

She directed her question at Nick, who considered it a moment before responding. "No," he said at last, "Besides, no one's taken my picture since I got this cut."

He gestured at the mostly healed cut beneath his ear, but Waschbar shook her head. "It could be older," she said, "Adding a cut's easy. But if you can find the picture your face was taken from, there's no denying that this picture is fake."
"Do you know anyone who could fake photographs like this really fast?" Judy asked, but from what Waschbar had already said she wasn't too disappointed when the raccoon shrugged.

"Just about any artist could with a little practice. To me, these look like decent fakes, the kind I could do in about half an hour if I had all the pictures ready. Not great, not terrible, but without the original negatives or the picture his face came from I can't prove it. Really, I don't think anyone could."

Judy considered what they had learned for a moment. Although Waschbar hadn't been able to immediately prove that the pictures were faked as she had hoped might be possible, they hadn't come away empty-pawed. Knowing that the fox who had really been on Zweihorn's doorstep had a white-tipped tail and had likely been holding a bottle was a promising start, as was knowing that there were ways to prove that the photographs had been tampered with.

"Thank you, Peggy," Judy said, and Nick immediately echoed the sentiment.

Waschbar shrugged again and gestured to take in her attic studio. "I'm happy to help. Making a real difference would feel a lot better than making all these fakes."

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "It's Only a Paper Moon," comes from a 1933 song by Harold Arlen. I thought that it was appropriate because the lyrics are about how everything in the world seems fake and cheap without someone believing in and loving you. It seemed appropriate considering that in this chapter Nick and Judy visit a studio filled with the tools to fake photographs, including props as fake as the paper moon in the song’s title and referenced in the lyrics. "It's Only a Paper Moon" is also one of my absolute favorite songs, particularly Ella Fitzgerald's version, and I felt I had to include it since it's a sweet and period appropriate jazz number.

The receptionist at the tabloid being engrossed in a crossword puzzle is a reflection of a real-world trend in the 1920s; crossword puzzles were enormously popular at the time, with newspapers quickly including them. The first book of crossword puzzles was published in 1924 and was immediately successful, and the fad was still going 3 years later in 1927, although they were no longer quite as popular by the end of the decade.

The way that Nick is described as being dressed in this chapter is accurate to 1920s men's fashion. Although nowadays most men's dress shirts have cuffs that can be secured with normal buttons and cufflinks are relatively uncommon, they were a necessity at the time as the cuffs in style at the time were too stiff to be held together with standard buttons. Also in the 1920s, as ties made out of silk became more popular for those who could afford them, tie clips came into fashion as a way of securing ties without damaging the fabric the way that a pin would. Striped ties were also in fashion at the time, and if anything Nick's tie is somewhat subdued compared to some of the flashier colors popular at the time. As in the 1920s cufflinks and tie clips were some of the few pieces of jewelry it was considered acceptable for men to wear, some of them were quite elaborate, and a wealthy man having his inset with emeralds wouldn't be out of the ordinary.

As mentioned in chapter 6, when Nick used the word, "posilutely" was a bit of 1920s slang that's a combination of "absolutely" and "positively."

The set that's being built in the *New Yak Evening Graphic* offices is made mostly of plywood, which was available in the 1920s. Plywood was invented in the 18th century, and while the now-common four foot by eight foot sheets didn't become standard until 1928, the material was readily available and cheap in 1927.
Margaret Waschbar's last name is from the German word "waschbär." Waschbär literally means "wash bear" and is the German word for raccoon due to the tendency of captive raccoons to rinse their food before eating it. Interestingly, in the wild raccoons aren't apt to do so except when they're foraging for food near a shoreline, so in captive raccoons it may simply be a fixed behavior that is triggered by food and water being available near each other.

Waschbar gives what is hopefully a pretty good explanation of how photos were faked in the days before Photoshop. Any additional explanation that I add would be more or less a repetition of what's in the chapter, so I'll leave it there. As the name kind of implies, Photoshop was designed to provide digital equivalents to physical techniques, and while there are a ton of things that can be done with Photoshop that would be difficult or impossible with physical manipulation, it is still quite possible to achieve impressive results with simple tools.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought.
Judy was still blinking spots out of her eyes as she made her way down the stairs from the attic, Nick a step behind her. From the faint sandpapery sound of the pads of Nick's paw against the smooth railing, she thought that his more sensitive eyes might have gotten the worst of it. Considering that Peggy had quite graciously helped them without asking too many questions about the crime Nick had been accused of, it had seemed a small enough payment to allow the raccoon to photograph them. Peggy might have been interested in the potential for the *New Yak Evening Graphic* to get a scoop or she might have simply wanted pictures of a bunny and a fox she could paste different faces over for some future story, but whatever her motivation was it had turned into a series of shots of Judy and Nick both together and apart. In the process, Judy had learned something else about photography she hadn't truly appreciated before: flash powder was blindingly bright.

Although Peggy had worked quickly and efficiently, each time she had set off her tray of powder as she took a picture Judy found herself momentarily blinded. Even after saying their goodbyes, it wasn't until Judy was a few steps away from the end of the staircase that went from the attic above the third floor to the ground floor that her vision was finally back to normal. Judy tried to ignore the receptionist as they walked out of the building; she could feel the beaver's eyes burning at the back of her neck, and she imagined that the suspicious mammal had to be dying to know all the sordid details of the supposed scandal Nick was helping to free her from. Once they were outside the building Judy turned to Nick and asked the question that had been eating away at her ever since Peggy had explained what she had found in the photographs. "Do you know any foxes with white tail tips?" she said.

Nick was obviously still trying to get his vision to adjust; he was blinking with something of a grimace set on his face, and he narrowly avoided stepping on the tail of a dormouse walking to a little electric car parked on the curbside. Still, when he answered his voice had its usual quality. "Could you name every bunny in your hometown?" he asked, and then before Judy could answer, continued, "Wait, wait, I'm sure you probably could."

Although his tone was teasing, Judy understood his point. If a crime had occurred in Bunnyburrows and all she had to work with was that it had been done by a bunny with, say, brown fur, the list of suspects would be impractically long, even if it was limited to the ones she knew by name. It had been something of a long shot to hope that Nick would have been able to identify the fox his own face had been pasted over with nothing to go on but the color of the tip of their tail, but Judy still found herself disappointed. "It does help though, doesn't it?" she said, trying to focus on the positive.

Nick nodded slowly as they kept walking towards where Judy had parked their car. "It has to be someone about the same height and build as I am, but with a white tail tip."

After a moment's pause, he added, "And much worse taste in clothes."

Judy laughed, but she remembered that Nick had said he wouldn't be caught dead in the clothes the fox in the picture was wearing. "Is his suit really that bad?" she asked, "It looks almost the same as the one you're wearing now."

Judy was sure that most of the look of horror that spread across Nick's face was him playing up his disappointment for her benefit, but his answer was immediate. "Bite your tongue!" he said, "Can't you tell the difference?"

He waved one arm up and down to take in his own appearance as he spoke. "My suit, as you'll notice, fits perfectly. His suit is at least a size too small. Look at the picture again. Wearing a suit that
tight is a serious faux pas."

"I'll take your word for it," Judy said, but she did make a mental note of it, building out her mental image of the fox who had really showed up at Zweihorn's door.

"So do you think the officer who took the pictures was in on faking them?" Nick asked, smoothly changing topics.

He seemed to be able to see normally again, at least, and was looking at her with a thoughtful expression. "I don't know," Judy said; the same question had occurred to her, and she wasn't sure of the answer, "It was dark. Not everyone can see as well at night as you can."

The officer who had taken the picture might have only been able to make out that the mammal they had taken pictures of was a fox, but they would have also had to have missed getting a good look at whatever the fox had been carrying. Peggy had suggested that it had likely been a bottle, not a revolver as the picture showed, and Judy assumed that an honest cop would have said something after seeing the picture. Then again, maybe their vision at night was poor enough that the officer hadn't been confident in their memory, choosing instead to trust the photograph. Nick nodded sagely. "A terrible burden, I'm sure," he said, and then his tone became more serious, "But I'm not sure how we can follow up on that."

They both fell silent as they kept walking towards the car, the normal hustle and bustle of the city going on around them. The Zootopia office of the *New Yak Evening Graphic* was neither in one of the city's good neighborhoods nor one of its bad ones. The flow of traffic was solidly middle-class, mammals in modest cars and modest clothes going about their business. Whereas before Nick's Buchatti had always stuck out as far too nice a car no matter where they went, the one that Finnick had lent them stood out almost as much but for the opposite reason. No one had parked near it, probably out of fear that anyone willing to drive a car in such rough shape wouldn't be particularly careful pulling away from the curb, but that was just as well; Judy did find it somewhat difficult to maneuver with the odd tiller it had rather than a proper steering wheel. Just before she climbed up into the car, Judy paused and turned to Nick. "Do you want to drive? You're not limping anymore, and I seem to remember someone saying something about bunny drivers..."

Nick chuckled as he climbed into the car on the passenger's side. "I'm afraid not, Carrots. As much as I'd love to show you what a great driver I am, this jokemobile was made for someone your size."

He did admittedly have a point; it was a tight squeeze for him to get his legs and feet into the car, and he couldn't seem to move them at all once he was seated. Judy repressed a sigh as she started the car. She was incredibly grateful to Finnick for lending them a car at all, but Nick was right about calling it a jokemobile. "Chin up," Nick said, his voice perfectly audible above the feeble clatter of the engine, "Anything you drive after this is going to feel like my Buchatti."

Judy cranked at the little car's tiller as she tried to maneuver it into the flow of traffic without hitting anything. The car wasn't nearly as quick off the line as the Buchatti had been, and she heard the honk of a horn from behind as she darted into traffic. "Are you saying you won't let me drive it again?" she asked.

"We'll see," Nick said, raising an apologetic paw to the driver of the brand new Model A that Judy had just cut off, "Maybe not if you keep driving like this."

Judy forced a laugh. It was remarkable to her that Nick could keep his sense of humor even with three murder charges looming over his head, but she felt as though it was helping her not panic. It almost felt normal, at times, to ease back into bantering with him, that if they could act as though he wasn't in a dire situation that he wouldn't be. "Thanks," she said, and reached one paw over to pat
Nick didn't ask her what she was thanking him for, and maybe he didn't need to. Nick gave her a half smile. "To Dr. Tolmie, then?" he asked, and Judy nodded.

Although it was somewhat past noon, Nick hadn't had any interest in lunch when Judy offered to make a quick stop before driving to the coroner's office. Perhaps, like her, he was still full from the breakfast he had prepared, or maybe he just didn't want to eat before going to see the wombat. While Dr. Tolmie himself seemed completely unaffected by any of the horrors he ran into while doing his job, Judy knew that it wasn't the same for Nick. Considering the fox's sensitive sense of smell, the coroner's office had to be even more unpleasant for him than it was for her, but he walked through the door without complaint anyway, just a step behind her.

The reception area looked almost the same as it had on their previous visits, although there was one noticeable exception: the mammal behind the reception desk wasn't the woodchuck who had been there before. Instead, there was a pig sitting behind the desk, reading a thick book with the daunting title *Comparative Morphological Features of Pulmonary Anatomy*. There were two empty glass bottles standing on the desk off to his side, along with a few crumpled Moon Pie wrappers, and he had one hoof on a half-full bottle of something dark brown and fizzy. As Judy approached the desk he set his book aside and looked up, and she saw that he had smears of chocolate at the corners of his mouth and crumbs down the front of his faded blue sweater. She recognized the pig as Dr. Tolmie's assistant, but she couldn't remember the pig's name until Nick leaned casually against the desk and greeted him as though he were an old friend. "Jimmy!" Nick said, his face split by a winning smile, "You remember us, don't you? Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde."

Nick gestured to Judy and then to himself as he said their names, as if the pig could possibly have any difficulty telling who the names belonged to. The pig nodded and took an enormous bite out of a Moon Pie that hadn't been visible behind his book and a great swig of his drink before answering. "The two of you came here about Scursly and Bauson," he said, showing none of Nick's enthusiasm. "That's right," Judy said, jumping into the conversation, "Is Dr. Tolmie in? We'd like to talk to him."

"You know," Jimmy said, "Yesterday Dr. Tolmie said he had something he wanted to show you. Did you get his note?"

Judy hadn't paid much attention to the pig when she had seen him before, probably because she had been trying to focus on Dr. Tolmie's words and not the awful stench of the corpses of Bauson and Scursly. Looking at him more closely, he looked like a pretty typical pig: he had a slightly chubby build, his rosy pink skin perfectly visible underneath his short coat of bristly blond hair. Although his clothes didn't look particularly well cared for, with a stain of some kind visible on his sweater, his eyes were sharp and intelligent, and unlike his boss his words were crisp and directly to the point, almost cold, when he spoke. "We'd really appreciate that," Judy said; if he wasn't going to ask for her credentials, she wasn't going to risk him choosing not to talk if he learned that she wasn't a Prohibition Agent anymore.

"But I can help, if you need something," Jimmy said, "Sure beats just sitting here."

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"You know," Jimmy said, "Yesterday Dr. Tolmie said he had something he wanted to show you. Did you get his note?"

Judy exchanged a brief glance with Nick, and she guessed he was probably thinking the same thing she was. Judy hadn't returned to the Bureau of Prohibition since her arrest, and she had obviously missed out on any mail sent there. "I haven't been in the office lately," she said carefully, which was
the truth, but the pig didn't press the issue.

He simply shrugged. "I guess everyone gets a day off," he said, apparently unaware that she had been fired, and then he stood up, "I'll be right back."

"What do you think Dr. Tolmie sent me a note about?" Judy asked once Jimmy was out of earshot.

Nick shrugged. "Could be anything," he said, but she could tell his interest was piqued.

They didn't have time for any further speculation as Jimmy returned, carrying a small but long cardboard box. "The police found these in a sausage factory Lionheart owned," he said, and when he lifted the lid to show the contents Nick turned away.

Judy couldn't blame him; there were two silver-plated horns in the box, bits of bone visible at their bases stained a rusty brown from dried blood. There was no question in her mind that they had previously been attached to Scursly's head; the silver parts were exactly as Gazelle had described them, covered with beautifully engraved loops and swirls. The metal gleamed brilliantly under the overhead lights; even the rivets that must have been used to attach them to Scursly's nubs of horns were made of silver, and Judy asked the obvious question. "These are Scursly's, aren't they?" she said.

Jimmy nodded, closing the box and setting them aside. "A perfect fit," he said, "Dr. Tolmie wanted you to know your theory was right. Scursly did gore Carajou."

Judy was struck by how blandly the pig was recounting the details; while to her it seemed that Dr. Tolmie simply didn't notice the worst of what he was surrounded by due to his enthusiasm for whatever he was talking about, Jimmy seemed as though he didn't care. She thought that she liked the wombat a lot more than she liked the pig, and her impression of Jimmy wasn't helped any by his response to the question that Nick asked. "A sausage factory on 34th Street?" he said.

"Obviously," he said, and Judy thought she heard a touch of annoyance in the pig's voice.

"Was there something else you wanted?" Jimmy said, turning his attention back to Judy.

"Ah, yes," Judy said, "Have you done a full autopsy on the two Zweihorns and River?"

"Dr. Tolmie has, yes," Jimmy said, "There's not too much to add to the original report."

"Please, indulge us," Nick said; if he had noticed the pig's dislike for him—and Judy was sure he had—he gave no indication of it.

A frown touched Jimmy's lips before his expression smoothed out, and when he spoke his words were all but devoid of emotion. "The cause of death was obvious for all of them. All three mammals were shot through the right eye at extremely close range," he said, "There were powder burns on their faces. River had enough laudanum in his body that I doubt anything could have woken him up at the time he died. The Zwei—"

"And that's not unusual?" Judy interrupted; if River had been poisoned, it might be a helpful clue in proving Nick's innocence, or at the very least that there was a cover up going on.

Jimmy seemed unperturbed by the disruption. "He had several bottles of laudanum in his medicine cabinet. His fellow officers said he frequently complained of insomnia, and he was nowhere near a fatal dose."

"Oh," Judy said, trying not to let her disappointment show on her face.
Jimmy continued as though she hadn't interrupted. "The Zweihorns had both consumed significant quantities of methanol. Again, unlikely to be fatal."

"And that's not unusual?" Nick asked, "Seems a bit odd for a cop and her husband to be drinking poison."

"Drinking methanol is common enough," Jimmy replied, and Judy heard a note of peevishness in his voice, "We see it all the time when mammals drink too much and end up on our tables."

Although Jimmy was right that it was common for mammals to drink things they shouldn't when they couldn't get alcohol—Judy had read, in the Bureau files, about a speakeasy that had been serving its patrons drinks made out of paint thinner—Nick was right that it was odd for a cop to drink it, especially a crooked one. One of the unfortunate truths of Prohibition, it seemed, was that the rich and connected got by just fine while poorer mammals killed or blinded themselves drinking anything that got them drunk. "Was whatever they drank still in their house?" Judy asked, trying to control her excitement.

It seemed an obvious link to her that, if the fox who had entered the Zweihorn's home had been carrying a bottle as Peggy had suggested, it might have contained the methanol that the two rhinos had consumed. Moreover, it might explain why the police officer keeping watch hadn't heard any gunshots before they left their post—the fox might have been pouring the Zweihorns drinks, chatting with them and getting them to drink enough methanol to put them out so that they wouldn't put up a fight and could be easily shot. If the fox had known about River's use of laudanum, killing him in his bed would have been a breeze. The pieces all seemed to fit, and Jimmy's answer didn't suggest she was wrong. "Yes, it was a tainted bottle of whiskey. Probably made by diluting down a real bottle with methanol to make a few fakes, but that's not my area of expertise."

Judy looked over at Nick, and thought that he had come to the same conclusion by the thoughtful look upon his face. "This might also be outside your area of expertise, but there are a couple more questions I was hoping you could answer," Judy said.

"I can try," Jimmy replied.

"Do you know any way to fake a test for gunshot residue?" she asked.

"It's easy enough for a test to come up negative," he said, "GSR is about the same consistency as flour—it washes right off. Even if a mammal doesn't wash their hooves, it'll fall off eventually in a few hours."

"What about a positive result when there isn't any residue?" Judy asked, and Jimmy shrugged.

"They're possible. I've heard varnish can do it."

None of what Jimmy had said was any help in proving that Nick hadn't fired her revolver to anyone but Judy, but it was something. She knew Nick had taken a shower before they went to the police station, and while she couldn't prove that to anyone else, it did prove to her that it had been no accident that the test came up positive for him. Judy had thought that it might have been possible that Nick had somehow gotten gunshot residue on his paws from touching Carajou's gun, but knowing that any residue would have washed off in the shower made her realize that it wasn't possible. Deliberate tampering seemed to be the only possibility, and she remembered the mammal who had administered the test. If the awkward koala was to blame, Judy wouldn't rest until he was in jail himself.

As Judy thought through the implications, Nick asked another question. "Back to that bottle of
"whiskey," he said, "Were there any fingerprints on it?"

"No," Jimmy replied, and once again there was a note of irritation in his voice.

"Was there anything else?" the pig asked, directing the question at Judy.

Judy bit her lip as she thought about it, but she couldn't think of anything else that the pig might be able to answer. Despite the chilly contempt he had treated Nick with, Jimmy had been genuinely helpful, and Judy tried to make her thanks sound as sincere as possible. "No, that's it. Thank you very much, though. You've been a huge help."

Jimmy nodded, but he didn't pick his book back up or move to return the grisly souvenirs Lionheart had taken from Scursly to wherever they had been stored. Instead, as Judy started to leave, Nick at her side, Jimmy unexpectedly spoke up. "Could I have a word with you, Agent Hopps?" he asked, his tone bland, "Alone."

Before Judy could start to say that anything Jimmy could say to her he could say to Nick, Nick touched her gently on the shoulder. "It's alright," he said, "I'll be outside."

Jimmy waited in silence until Nick was outside before he spoke, and when he did there was a gentleness to his voice that hadn't been there before. "Is that fox making you do anything you don't want to?" he asked, "If he is, we've got a telephone. I can ring up the police right now."

Judy wasn't sure what she had been expecting Jimmy to say, but hearing what sounded like genuine concern about her safety certainly wasn't it. "Of course not!" Judy said, a bit more loudly than she wanted to.

"Nick," she said, emphasizing his name, "Is helping me with an investigation."

"That's not what I meant and we both know it," Jimmy replied, his voice still gentle, "I can smell him on you. You reek of fox."

"We've been— That is, we've— We've spent a lot of time together on the investigation, that's all," Judy managed to get out, but Jimmy shook his head.

"You have spent time with him," he said, "But not in the way you'd ever need to for an investigation."

Judy could feel her ears flushing, but before she could manage another protestation, Jimmy raised one hoof. "Listen," he said, "If it's your choice and he's not forcing you, it's your business. But there's something you ought to know."

"What's that?" Judy asked, her throat feeling suddenly incredibly dry.

"Did you know Dr. Tolmie used to be married?" Jimmy asked, and it took Judy a moment to process the question before she shook her head.

It wasn't even close to how she had expected the pig to continue, but she had to admit she was more than a little curious about where he was going. "This was about thirty years ago," Jimmy said, "He married a squirrel. He doesn't talk about her much, but I know he loved her more than anything."

"What happened?" Judy asked.

She thought that Jimmy might be trying to warn her that relationships between two different species were doomed to fail, that they would in the end be too different to last together. The way he
continued, though, was a far worse than that. "One night, they ran into a few squirrels who didn't appreciate seeing her with a wombat. Dr. Tolmie likes to think those squirrels didn't mean to do anything but scare him and his wife, but..."

Jimmy sighed. "I think sometimes he sees good in mammals that isn't there. Dr. Tolmie and his wife got thrown off a bridge, and she hit her head."

Jimmy didn't continue, but he didn't have to. Judy understood exactly what had happened, and could almost see the scene playing out before her. It wasn't too hard to imagine herself and Nick in the same situation, a horde of bunnies overpowering Nick and throwing him off a bridge while she could do nothing to help before it was her turn to go over. "If Dr. Tolmie was still married to her," Jimmy continued, "He might never have gotten his job as chief medical examiner. He loves his job, you know, and in the years I've known him he's never given it any less than his absolute best. But I know he'd trade it away to have his wife again."

Judy could feel a lump in her throat and Jimmy waited a moment before continuing. "I've seen what can happen when two different species get in a relationship," he said, "I've seen things come across the slabs here you'd never be able to forget. I've seen what happens when neighbors or families don't approve. I've seen smaller, weaker mammals get forced by a bigger, stronger one."

Jimmy's face crumpled a little on his last sentence and it wasn't hard to imagine why he had been just short of hostile with Nick. "I love him," Judy said.

She hadn't imagined that the first mammal she would say that to would be a somewhat unpleasant pig she didn't really know, but it felt good to say the words, to stand against the horror stories he was clearly imagining. Jimmy nodded, and for the first time Judy saw him smile. It didn't exactly light up his face, but it was so obviously genuine that Judy thought that the pig felt much more deeply than he let on. "Then take care of him," Jimmy said, "And yourself."

He pulled something from beneath the reception desk and gave it to Judy. It was a small bottle made of brown glass labeled "Peppermint Oil."

"It masks scents," Jimmy said by way of explanation, "We use it when we're dealing with bodies that have gotten a little ripe."

Judy curled her fingers around the bottle. "Thank you," she said, and Jimmy nodded.

"Stay safe out there," he said, and Judy smiled.

"We'll try."

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Nobody Knows (And Nobody Seems to Care)" comes from a 1919 Irving Berlin song, and I chose it because it seemed to apply to both the relationship of Dr. Tolmie and his wife and that of Nick and Judy. The lyrics are about feeling crushing loneliness and a deep need for companionship that is invisible to the outside world, which also seems to fit.

It's very common to see, in works set in the 19th century, a photographer using a plate of powder that gets ignited for a brief and extremely bright light rather than using a bulb for their camera's flash. Without a flash, pictures taken indoors or outside at night are murky at best, and pure black at worst, and once film technology had advanced to the point that images didn't require minutes of exposure photographers quickly turned to pyrotechnics for brief high-intensity lights, with the first use of flash
powder for photography occurring around 1862. Using flash powder for a camera's flash was still common in the 1920s; although some pioneers experimented with high-intensity electric carbon arc lamps, flash bulbs weren't commercially available until 1929, a couple years after this story is set.

It shouldn't be too surprising that the book Jimmy is reading is thick; considering how many different species of mammal there are, it's got to be tough to be a doctor in the world of Zootopia. At least he's not dealing with live mammals, which gives him a bit more of a safety margin than other medical professionals. I'd imagine that most doctors would have to specialize in a few species or be really good at looking information up as needed.

Moon Pies are a real American confection, invented in 1917. They consist of graham cracker cookies sandwiching a marshmallow filling, coated in chocolate. Moon Pies were quite popular in the early part of the 20th century in the US as a working man's lunch, alongside an RC Cola, which seems to be how Jimmy is enjoying his lunch. Personally, I prefer Mallomars but Moon Pies are pretty tasty, and they're basically the same as Choco Pies if you're not in the US.

Jimmy was first mentioned in chapter 31, although as Judy notes in this chapter she didn't pay much attention to him at the time.

In chapter 35, Nick did mention that at least in 1925 Lionheart owned a sausage factory on 34th Street, and this chapter confirms that he does still own it.

Laudanum was still fairly easily available in 1927, and is a potent (and potentially addictive) painkiller. It was historically used as a sleep aid among many other uses, so River using it wouldn't have been out of the ordinary at all during the period in which this story is set. Nowadays, its use is heavily controlled and you certainly can't just go out and buy it.

Methanol, also known as methyl alcohol or wood alcohol (due to being historically produced from wood), is quite toxic. It can cause blindness and kidney failure in people who survive methanol poisoning, but it can also be easily fatal, as it is a potent central nervous system depressant. Unfortunately, methanol is extremely easy and cheap to manufacture in large quantities, and it's possible to get drunk off of it in the same manner as ethanol, which is the alcohol in alcoholic beverages. Worse, it smells and tastes basically the same as ethanol, so it's quite easy to unknowingly ingest. These properties—being easy to manufacture cheaply and being difficult to distinguish from ethanol—mean that it was not uncommon, during Prohibition, for people to drink it, either because they had been tricked into thinking it was ethanol or because all they cared about was that they could get drunk by drinking it.

Adulterating real bottles of alcohol certainly happened during Prohibition; considering the price that bottles of good quality alcohol smuggled into the country could command, it wasn't uncommon for greedy bootleggers to try increasing their profits by diluting it and making up fake labels to put on empty bottles. Of course, some bootleggers didn't even bother starting with real good quality alcohol and just made up fakes.

Gunshot residue does indeed have a consistency like flour, and Jimmy's explanation is correct. It's quite possible for someone to shoot a gun and then wash their hands and come up negative, particularly with the test in use in the 1920s. His example of something that can give a false positive is also correct; since the Griese test detects nitrites, it can falsely suggest that someone has fired a gun if they've handled something else that contains nitrites, which some varnishes do.

The story of Dr. Tolmie and his wife puts into a new context the cross-stitch that he has in his office, as mentioned in chapter 17, that reads "The squirrel that you kill in jest dies in earnest," which is a quote by Henry David Thoreau.
My intent, in this AU, is that marriage between members of different species isn't illegal (at least, within Zootopia itself) but is definitely uncommon. In the real world, we have no exact equivalent of inter-species relationships; I'd say that the closest real equivalent would be either gay or mixed race couples. In the 1920s, gay couples would definitely not be able to marry in the US, and mixed race couples could only get married in certain states. In fact, mixed race marriages were only legal in 12 out of 48 states in 1927. However, one of those 12 states was Illinois, where Chicago is located, and since Chicago was the basis for this version of Zootopia I decided that it'd make sense for inter-species relationships to be legal at least in the area where the city is. The caveat, though, is that I imagine prejudices against inter-species couples to be particularly strong for obviously different species, as demonstrated by what happened to Dr. Tolmie's and his wife. The two of them would have gotten married around 1897, depending on how accurate Jimmy's statement of it happening thirty years ago is. At that point in the real world, mixed-race marriages had been legal in Illinois since 1874. It's kind of a grim note to end a chapter on, I realize, but there are many less than positive aspects to the past and it's not an easy path that Nick and Judy have ahead of them.

Peppermint oil is actually used in the real world by some doctors to mask terrible smells, and considering that pigs can indeed have a very good sense of smell it makes sense for Jimmy to have a bottle on hand.

I've said, for a while now, that this story is reaching its end, and now that it's past the point where the number of remaining chapters could serve as a potential spoiler for people reading this story as it gets published, it's time to let you know just how close the end is. There will be 50 total chapters, which means that there are 4 chapters left. I hope that you enjoy seeing how things wrap up, and if you're so inclined to comment I've love to know what you think of this story.
"Was he trying to warn the meek little bunny to stay away from the big bad fox?" Nick asked as Judy stepped outside.

The little glass bottle that Jimmy had given her was cool to the touch, and Judy held it tightly as she looked up at Nick. He was leaning, with a casualness that was truly impressive, against the block of marble that stood in front of the coroner's office as a sign. Nick's eyes were half-lidded as usual, a sly half-smile across his face, and he lightly pushed himself fully upright. Nick had done a masterful job showing how little he cared about what the pig thought of him, and there might have even been some truth to it; certainly Nick had lived long enough that his mask of bemused indifference wasn't completely fake. "Something like that," Judy said, and when Nick caught her expression a frown crossed his face.

"What did he say?" he asked.

Judy could feel her grip on the little glass bottle tightening. "He told me Dr. Tolmie used to be married. To a squirrel."

Judy didn't say anything more, which was just as well because she wasn't sure she would have been able to. There was a lump in her throat and her eyes stung thinking of the story Jimmy had told. It was monstrously unfair, and all the worse because she never would have guessed it from talking to Dr. Tolmie. Jimmy had said that Dr. Tolmie likely wouldn't have been able to become the chief medical examiner for the city if his wife hadn't died, and she wondered how much of the doctor's enthusiasm came from his job being all that he had left. Would she be the same if something happened to Nick?

Judy realized she knew the answer when Nick brushed a paw against one of her ears, not even bothering to look first to see if anyone was watching. "Oh, Judy," he said, and the words were like a sigh.

"He gave me this," Judy managed at last, holding her palm out to expose the bottle of peppermint oil, "He told me to be careful."

Nick studied the little bottle, a grim expression on his face. "I don't want to be afraid," Judy said, the words were like a sigh.

"He gave me this," Judy managed at last, holding her palm out to expose the bottle of peppermint oil, "He told me to be careful."

Nick studied the little bottle, a grim expression on his face. "I don't want to be afraid," Judy said, "But Jimmy told me what happened and…"

Judy shrugged helplessly. She had gone her entire life tackling every obstacle that had come her way, but realizing that it might not just be her getting hurt made it seem as though she had been whistling past the graveyard. "You've still got the key to my house, right?" Nick asked.

Judy couldn't do much more than look at Nick. "What?" she said.

"You've got the key to my house," Nick said, "I know in the country everyone leaves their doors unlocked and no one ever steals anything, but do you know why we have locks in the city?"

Despite herself, Judy couldn't help but smile at the somewhat sarcastic tinge Nick had given his words when he spoke about the country, but she tried to give a serious answer. "Because you're afraid of being robbed?" she asked.

"No," Nick said, "Because we don't trust anyone else who lives in the city."

With that, he started walking towards the car, and Judy considered Nick's words as she followed,
finding herself glad when Nick changed the subject. "We're pretty sure Zoya worked for the Black Paw," Nick said, and Judy nodded, waiting for him to continue.

"Maybe she'll tell us more about that, maybe she won't. But besides me, she's the only mammal we know that survived a frame job in all of this."

Judy nodded again, considering Nick's angle. "Maybe we missed something," Judy said, and Nick nodded.

"I think it wouldn't hurt to ask again. There's an address for her in that folder you're lugging around."

Judy fell to her own thoughts, and neither one spoke again until they got to the car, at which point Judy found she couldn't ignore the bottle anymore.

"I don't want to use this," Judy said, holding it up.

"I know. But it doesn't mean you're living in fear," Nick said, and Judy sighed.

She uncorked the bottle.

Zoya's apartment was in a building that seemed far too close to the climate wall, at a point that seemed about as far away as possible from any break in the wall. The side of the building closest to the climate wall didn't have any windows in it and was coated with a thick and irregular layer of ice. Just about anywhere else in Tundra Town, the wind that the climate produced would be a subtle chilly breeze, but so close to the wall it seemed to bite at Judy and threatened to blow their little car off course from the slick road. The drone of the fans in the wall drowned out not just the pathetic sound of the car's engine but everything else and Judy could feel the vibrations of whatever kept the wall working coming through the pavement. After parking it was a surprisingly difficult struggle to force herself forward to walk towards the building, the wind was so strong. Beside her, Nick seemed equally miserable, his ears flat against his head and his eyes squinted nearly shut, and he gripped his hat firmly under one armpit as he walked forward step after step. When he spoke, the wind nearly took his words, but over the din Judy could make out, "I wonder why rent's so low in this part of town?"

She laughed and instantly regretted it; the cold wind cut at her mouth like a knife. At last, though, they had made their way to the main entrance of the apartment building, where the building's bulk shielded them from the worst of the wind. It was a dismally practical-looking building, only four stories tall but with the floors spaced much more widely than they would have been for something built for bunnies. The bricks might have been red once, but they were stained nearly black with soot and exhaust where they weren't covered with hoarfrost, and every one of the narrow windows set into the thick walls was frosted over. The cement steps up to the main entrance were awkwardly tall for Judy and treacherously slick with ice where they hadn't chipped and crumbled away. The door was painted a forest green that was flaking off where it hadn't bubbled up with rust from the thick steel, and it was so heavy that Judy thought at first it was locked. It took Nick helping her, pulling at the handle with all of his strength as she did the same, in order for them to get it open. When it did, the high-pitched squeal of the hinges set Judy's teeth on edge, and from Nick's expression she thought he had been able to hear it over the wall's fans too.

Inside, the building was almost as cold as it was outside, but at the very least there wasn't any wind and the walls were thick enough to block the worst of the noise. It looked to have been built as cheaply as possible; the floors were scuffed green tiling that looked somewhat uneven, and the wallpapering was lumpy and crooked in places, making the thin gray stripes run crazily. The entrance simply led into a series of hallways for the apartments on the first floor, with a wall of
mailboxes located across from the door and a staircase of graying and unpainted pine that traced its way up the building with somewhat less than geometric precision in the middle. Zoya, unfortunately, lived on the fourth floor, and it took a very literal climb for Judy to get there; much like the steps in front of the building, the staircase was simply built to a much larger scale. Despite his slight advantage in height Nick had to do the same, and he was panting with exertion by the time they reached the top. "I really hope she's here," he said in between gulps of air, and Judy nodded her agreement; although she thought she was in somewhat better shape than Nick, it had still been a long way to climb.

She resolved to improve her exercise regimen to include climbing up stairs in the parts of the city meant for larger mammals as they made their way down the hall looking for Zoya's apartment, but she could hear the bear even before she saw the door with the right number sloppily painted on it. Zoya was, to Judy's great surprise, singing, although not particularly well. She was stumbling over the words as she struggled to keep the song's time and key, and while Judy could hear every sound they meant nothing to her. The reason for it became obvious when another voice joined in, still perfectly audible despite being behind the door. It was, she realized, the bear who ran the Blue Glacier, Roger Monarch, and she could hear the laughter in his voice as he tried to correct Zoya's pronunciation and sang the line. He wasn't much better at staying on key than the polar bear was, but the words flowed with a kind of beautifully liquid grace that Judy enjoyed even though she didn't know what he was singing.

Judy exchanged a glance with Nick, who seemed more amused than anything else, and then knocked on the door firmly, which made the singing instantly stop. "Ms. Medvedeva? This is Judy Hopps—"

"And Nick Wilde," Nick interjected quickly.

"Do you have a minute? We'd like—"

Judy never got the chance to finish as the door suddenly flung open, revealing Roger Monarch standing there and looking down at them. Even in Zoya's apartment, which had a ceiling that had to be at least twelve feet high, he looked enormous, and his massive body filled the door frame. "You!" he said, as he tilted his head down to look at them. An expression of surprise was plainly visible across his head. "Oh, it is you!" he said, and before Judy could react Monarch swept her and Nick into a crushing hug.

Monarch lifted them both off the ground as though they weighed nothing and squeezed them so tightly against his chest that Judy couldn't draw a breath and felt something in her own chest protesting. "It is your work, was it not?" he said, as he rocked back and forth, "It is the two of you who got Zoya her freedom, eh?"

Judy couldn't see anything but part of the massive expanse of Monarch's suit, which looked nearly the same as the one he had worn when they had met. Monarch's breath tickled at her neck and brought with it the sharp smell of alcohol, which probably explained why he and Zoya had been singing so poorly. "Let them go," Judy heard Zoya say, although she still couldn't see anything but Monarch's suit, "Or they will not be able to answer."

Monarch instantly set them down on the floor with a gentleness that was truly surprising considering how sudden and crushing his hug had been. "I am sorry, my friends," he said, scratching at the back of his neck with one massive paw, "Only I am so happy for Zoya. You did show her innocence, did you not?"

"Yes," Nick responded almost instantly, "We knew she couldn't have done it."
That was, in Judy's mind, stretching the truth a little; it had only been after Lionheart's arrest and Quill's confession that Zoya had been cleared, and it had taken a raid on a piece of property Lionheart owned to prove that the murder weapon hadn't been the lightning rod supposedly found by River and Zweihorn. Since neither she nor Nick had been involved in any of that it seemed a little unseemly to take credit, but it had certainly been their work that made it all possible. "Is this a visit on Bureau business?" Zoya asked suddenly, and Judy saw Monarch's face fall in a look of almost comical fear as his eyes shifted towards a table in the corner of the apartment that Judy could just barely see past his bulk.

There were four reasons for Monarch to be worried, because standing on a table that was comparatively small for the two bears were four very large bottles of wine, three of them empty and one of them nearly so. The look on Zoya's face, to Judy's eye, seemed like resignation, as though the polar bear expected her lucky break to end. "No," Judy said, "This isn't Bureau business. I'm not a prohibition agent anymore."

The look of surprise on Zoya's face was mirrored on Monarch's, and there was a moment's awkward silence before Zoya broke it. "Then come in and let us talk," she said, and she gestured for Monarch to let Nick and Judy past the doorway.

Although the apartment was significantly larger than Judy's had been, she supposed that proportionally it wasn't really all that much bigger. The furniture was all sized for a polar bear, and a neatly made bed took up a significant chunk of the floor space. Besides the sharp and somewhat sour smell of the wine bottles on the table, the apartment smelled like a library. Not counting the table in the corner and four matching chairs, the only other furniture was an assortment of bookshelves in a variety of styles, which were squeezed into almost every free inch. As Judy followed Zoya and Monarch to the table, she saw that the books on the shelves seemed to be mostly pulpy mysteries, but some of the books had titles written in strange characters that she couldn't read. All of them, though, seemed to vary quite a bit in size, from ones that had obviously been printed for a mammal the size of a bear to some that even Judy would have found a little small. Other than the books, there were a few photographs arranged on the shelves; the one closest to the bed showed what must have been Zoya on her wedding day, looking significantly younger, seated next to her groom with four polar bears (her parents and her husband's parents, Judy assumed) standing behind them. Judy couldn't help but notice that the faces of Zoya's husband and of two of the polar bears standing behind her in the picture had been carefully cut out, which she supposed said quite a lot about the wedding.

Once they had reached the table, Zoya gestured for them to sit before she did so herself, and Judy awkwardly climbed up the chair to take a seat before realizing that the chair simply wasn't high enough for her to both sit down and see over the table. Zoya quickly retrieved two thick books and wordlessly offered them to Judy as boosters, which she gratefully took. Once the polar bear had done the same for Nick, albeit with one book instead of two, she sat down herself. "Wine?" she offered, and while both Nick and Judy declined Monarch pushed the glass he had been drinking from forward.

Zoya filled his glass and topped hers off, and then took a long sip before speaking again. "So you are not here on a bust and you are not a prohi," she said, looking down at Judy over her wine glass, "Why then do you come?"

"It's for him," Judy said, gesturing towards Nick, "Someone's trying to frame him for murdering Officers River and Zweihorn."

Monarch's paws were suddenly on the table, and there was a hint of warning in his voice Judy could hear even under his accent, which seemed to be thickened quite a bit by his drinking. "Are you thinking Zoya killed police?"
"Of course not," Nick jumped in, his tone soothing, "We know she didn't do it, but Zoya did survive being framed. We thought—"

"You thought I maybe not tell you everything?" Zoya interrupted.

Her voice was calm and steady, and Judy couldn't read the bear's expression. "I—" Judy began, but Zoya cut her off with a wave of one paw.

"It's true. I did not. But I will," Zoya said, and Monarch shot her a glance.

"Zed," he began, but Zoya shook her head once and he fell silent.

Zoya took in a deep breath and took another sip of her wine before she continued. "When I die and my sins are counted I can say murdering my husband is the one and only I do not regret. But it is not my only sin."

Zoya paused again, seeming to collect her thoughts. The only sound in the apartment was the faint noise of the keening wind of the climate wall against the building, and Zoya had the complete attention of the other three mammals at her table. "I have never lied, never, about what I did to him, and for that I was sent to prison. And there I might remain, but…"

Zoya sighed. "I wanted to be free again. I wanted to walk the city as I please, not an exercise yard for an hour each day. One day, maybe one or two weeks before a parole hearing, I came back to my cell and there was a letter there like a miracle.

"It was... how do you call it?" Zoya said, a frown crossing her muzzle as she groped for the words, "Knife and cape."

"Cloak and dagger," Nick added, and Zoya nodded.

"Yes, it was all cloak and dagger. One day, there was a note on my bed, a black paw print on the front. Maybe it was a guard, maybe it was a prisoner who put it there. I think a guard, though. It said the Black Paw could get me out of prison if I promised to work for them. It said to write an answer on the note and leave it in my cell the next time I left."

Zoya shrugged her shoulders. "I was weak. How was it justice to take my life for what I did? I had done the world a favor. I told myself such until I believed it, and I wrote yes. The letter was gone when I got back to my cell the next day. And when my parole hearing came, they let me go."

Judy thought about the position that Zoya had been in. The bear was unquestionably guilty of murdering her husband, but just as unquestionably believed that she had to kill him. It wasn't hard to imagine her growing despair as the days turned into years and she faced the prospect of dying in prison. Monarch seemed to be thinking along similar lines, because he patted Zoya's paw with one of his own. "Anyone would have done the same," he said, but Zoya shook her head.

"A stronger mammal would not have," she said, "I was out of prison, but I wasn't free, not really. I did many terrible things when the Black Paw asked me to."

When Judy had spoken to Zoya before, the bear had pointedly not talked about what her involvement with a gang, and now that she was talking Judy found she couldn't interrupt. For her part, Zoya's eyes were liquid with tears but she plunged on. "Three weeks ago, I decided it was enough. I stopped doing jobs. I quit. I thought they would kill me in the streets, but I did not think of being framed for a crime I did not do."

Monarch looked across the table at Zoya and Judy had an uncomfortable sense of intruding on a
moment she shouldn't have. "You have a good heart, Zed," he said, and the tears in Zoya's eyes began to stream down her cheeks.

While the larger bear offered Zoya his handkerchief, Judy turned what she had just learned around in her mind. There was the shape of something she couldn't quite grasp, and she wondered at the connections. Zoya had been recruited into the Black Paw with a letter, not too different from the ones that Lionheart had sent to the mammals who had both done his dirty work and then died for it. Knowing that Zoya had quit the Black Paw provided a motive for them to kill her, but did that make it a coincidence that Lionheart had chosen her as a patsy? As she thought it over, she glanced at Nick and saw that he seemed to be doing the same, but once Zoya's tears had stopped he asked her a question. "Who gave you the jobs?"

"I don't know. I never met them. Only letters, put on the seat of my truck," Zoya said, and then she laughed weakly.

"The bottling plant fired me anyway for missing shifts," she said, and Judy remembered Zoya's prediction that her legitimate job would fire her for missing work due to being arrested for Carajou's murder.

"I could use a bouncer," Monarch interjected awkwardly, rubbing at one ear, "If you are looking for work. I was going to offer. If you are interested."

Zoya's smile brightened her face. "I would be," she said, and she placed her paw briefly atop his.

While Judy once again felt as though they were intruding, Nick frowned, his tail flicking from side to side. "That does sound like the Black Paw," he said slowly, as though he was ignoring the latest exchange between Zoya and Monarch, and while Judy couldn't claim to have his direct knowledge she thought he was right.

Everything she had learned about the Black Paw when she had been a prohibition agent suggested that the organization was deeply paranoid; no one even knew who the head of the gang was, as that mammal preferred to be shrouded in mystery. Judy supposed it also gave everyone in the organization the fear that anyone they talked to might be higher up the organization than expected. It might even mean that there wasn't a head of the Black Paw; Judy had seen the theory that there was no central structure, just a loosely affiliated group of smaller gangs that might even operate out of prison. She wasn't quite sure where Nick was going with his line of thought, though, until he continued. "But what if it wasn't?" Nick asked, and suddenly Judy realized what he meant.

Anyone could have sent a letter with a black paw print on it, and anyone could have continued to send letters. Maybe Lionheart was actually a much more powerful gang lord than anyone thought; maybe he had set up his own fake branch of the Black Paw to help hide his own involvement. Or maybe he was the head of the Black Paw as well as his own gang, and kept them separate to keep from being too big of a target. They didn't have a way of proving it, but it might be the connection to Lionheart that Zoya was currently missing. "I don't understand," Zoya said, "But that's fine. I never did ask, what questions did you want me to answer?"

Zoya had actually guessed at most of what Judy would have wanted to ask, but not quite all of them. Judy dug through her bag and pulled out the folder Bogo had given her, flipping through it until she came to a picture of Bauson. "Have either of you ever seen this badger before? His name's Richard Bauson," she said, angling the image so that both bears could see it.

Monarch squinted at the photograph and then shook his head almost instantly. "I have a very good memory for faces and names," he said, "Never have I seen him."
After a moment, Zoya shook her head too. "I don't know this badger," she said at last.

"Are you sure?" Judy pressed, focusing on Zoya, "Someone said he was the one who put the blood on you."

Monarch pounded the table hard enough to make the bottles and wine glasses on it jump. "Then I will take him to the police myself if I ever see him!" he growled, his voice suddenly low and dangerous, "After I make sure he never does that again."

"He's dead," Nick said, leaning away from Monarch.

Judy couldn't blame him, considering the aura of danger the bear seemed to be radiating, but at Nick's words Monarch relaxed somewhat, nodding in satisfaction. "He deserved it, then."

"I've never seen this Bauson," Zoya said, "If he was at Roger's club, I don't remember it. Maybe he was, though. I've forgotten most of that night."

Considering that whoever had planted evidence on Zoya had also put something in her drink to incapacitate her and it had had the side-effect of making Zoya forget most of what had happened, Judy supposed it was the best answer they could get. Judy thought that Quill was likely to be so desperate to save himself that he would say anything, but she didn't think he had lied in the testimony Bogo had provided a copy of.

With that out of the way, there was really only one question left, but it might be the most important one, and Judy didn't ask it until she had put the folder away and could turn her full attention back to Zoya. "Were there ever any foxes you worked with in the Black Paw?" Judy asked.

Zoya considered the question for a moment. "Foxes?" she asked, "Like him?"

She pointed at Nick, who simply nodded. "Three, then," Zoya said without any additional hesitation, "Erwin Wustenfuchs was a safe cracker, but he died last year. Lisa Patrikeyevna. Not her real name, of course."

"Of course," Nick said agreeably, although Judy strongly suspected that he no more knew why that would be a fake name than she did.

"She's a forger," Zoya said, "And then Brian Redfurred. He does rackets."

"Numbers rackets?" Judy said, leaning forward and completely unable to hide her excitement.

"Is there another kind?" Zoya asked, sounding more puzzled than anything else, "I am not sure."

"Do you know what color the tip of his tail is?" Nick asked, and Judy could hear a note of excitement in his voice.

They knew that River and Zweihorn had been involved in a numbers racket, and if their point of contact had been this Brian Redfurred it would explain perfectly why Zweihorn had been willing to open her front door to the fox who had murdered her. A frown crossed Zoya's face as she considered the question.

"White, I think," Zoya said at last.

Author's Notes:
The title of this chapter, "I Can't Get Over a Girl Like You (Loving A Boy Like Me)" comes from a 1926 Ted Lewis song, and I think it works pretty well for both Nick and Monarch. And Judy and Zoya, if you flip the genders in the title.

"Whistling past the graveyard" is an old American idiom that means to proceed with an activity while being ignorant of the risks or consequences involved, which certainly seems to be an appropriate use here.

In the very first chapter of this story, the narration had mentioned that no one wanted to live or work right up against the climate wall in Tundra Town if they could avoid it. This chapter shows the reality of how miserable it would be to live right next to a powerful series of refrigeration coils and fans, leaving aside the dangers of the refrigerants available in the 1920s.

When Nick and Judy arrive, Zoya and Monarch are singing a French drinking song, which although it goes unidentified might be "C'est à boire," which means "It's a drink."

The Volstead Act, which put Prohibition into effect, did have some loopholes for wine. As wine is used in many religious ceremonies, there were exceptions allowing its manufacture for sacramental purposes (which naturally led to people forging credentials to appear as though they were legally allowed to buy it), and it was also permissible for farmers to produce wine bricks, which were semi-solid blocks of grape concentrate sold with the warning that the consumer shouldn't dissolve the brick in a gallon of water and place it in a cool dark area for twenty days because if they did so it would ferment and turn into wine. However they got their wine, though, Zoya and Monarch are obviously in violation of Prohibition with their little get together.

The expression "cloak and dagger" to mean a situation involving secrecy dates to at least the early 19th century, and likely comes from a translation of the French phrase "de cape et d'épée" or "of cloak and swords" for stories of swashbucklers such as *The Three Musketeers*. I think it's understandable that Zoya doesn't remember the phrase quite right—she and Monarch have been drinking, and English isn't her first language. Idiomatic expressions can be particularly difficult to pick up for non-native speakers since the words have a literal meaning that doesn't necessarily give much insight into the intended meaning. While you could likely guess from context what "cloak and dagger" means if you're familiar with the tropes of stories of adventures and assassins, it's kind of opaque if you don't.

The names of the foxes Zoya knows are all references to something; Brian Redfurred is a pun on Brian Bedford, the voice actor from Disney's 1973 animated Robin Hood film in which Robin Hood is a fox. Erwin Wustenfuchs is a reference to Erwin Rommel, the German general nicknamed "der Wüstenfuchs" or "the Desert Fox" in English. Lisa Patrikeyevna is named after a fox in Russian folklore, "Patrikeyevna" meaning "Fox Patrikas's-daughter" where Patrikas is a prince remembered as a sly politician. This is a reference that Zoya obviously gets, being Russian herself, hence why she suggests it's a pseudonym.

In chapter 19, Nick mentioned that River and Zweihorn were involved in a numbers game, also called a numbers racket, hence Judy's excitement about learning about the occupation of one of those three foxes.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought.
Among my Souvenirs

"And you're sure that Erwin Wustenfuchs and Lisa Patrikay... key... keyva... Lisa can't be involved?" Judy pressed, the seriousness of her tone somewhat undermined, she felt, by her inability to properly pronounce the vixen's last name.

They were sitting at Nick's dining room table, eating a late lunch of tomato soup that had come out of a can along with a stack of toast. The soup wasn't nearly as good as what Judy's mother made—it was far too salty for Judy's taste—but Nick had sliced the bread to exquisitely thin pieces of equal thickness and then toasted them over the stove top to a perfect golden brown without burning so much as a slice. A small smile had crossed his face at her butchering of Lisa's last name, but he seemed to take the question seriously, gesturing at Judy with a bit of toast. "I'm positive. Lisa Patrikeyevna," he said, emphasizing the foreign syllables of her last name as if it were as easy to say as Judy's own, "Is a vixen. I've met her a couple times. Real charmer, that one."

The bitter pang of jealousy that Nick's words evoked surprised Judy. It made no sense to hold either the words or the slightly wistful expression Nick had worn as he spoke against him; he had made absolutely no effort since returning to Zootopia to seek out either Lisa or any other vixen, and she had no reason to doubt his feelings for her. Still, the sense that there was a part of his past in which he might have shared with someone else what he now shared with her burned like a hot coal. Nick must have seen at least some of Judy's feelings on her face, because he brushed his free paw against hers. "She's also old enough to be my grandmother," he added, "Just too stubborn to retire, I suppose."

"Oh," Judy said, and her relief felt surprisingly complicated, colored with shame.

She already knew that Nick had a past; he had lived decades before even meeting her. Judy knew what could be only a fraction of his life's story, from his doomed military service to his work for Mr. Big, from hiding a fortune under the created name of Randall Steervens to living all but penniless in a tar paper shack. It didn't seem fair to him to think that all his life had consisted of nothing but low moments until they had met, and if he had found happiness with someone else before that meeting it meant only that it was a part of who he was, not that she was his second choice. Judy resolved to talk to him about it when they had the chance; she would have loved nothing more than to learn about Nick's past and what had given him the strength to stand up against a world that seemed bent on pushing him down. In the moment, though, Nick glossed over the unspoken topic and continued speaking. "She's a vixen," Nick repeated, "Whoever's in those pictures definitely isn't."

He did admittedly have a point there; although neither photograph was particularly good, the body beneath that tight-fitting suit did look masculine to Judy's eye. "And as for Erwin Wustenfuchs, well, he's a fennec," Nick said.

"Like Finnick?" Judy asked.

If Erwin was anything like the gruff little mechanic, it would explain Nick's confidence in him having no involvement; the fox in the picture was clearly about Nick's size and build and Finnick was shorter even than Judy. "Like Finnick," Nick said, "I've never met the fella, but from what I hear, he's a little taller and jollier."

A playful frown of mock seriousness crossed Nick's muzzle briefly as he paused in contemplation. "So really, nothing at all like Finnick," he said, and then offered Judy a wicked smile as he dunked the piece of toast he had been gesturing with into his soup and bit off a fastidious nibble.
She did her best to return his smile and then looked back down at her mostly full bowl of soup. They hadn't stayed at Zoya's apartment very long after the polar bear had described Brian Redfurred, and while she had done her best to tell them what she knew, it didn't amount to much. Zoya hadn't known where he lived and seemed to have only the vaguest idea of where he went about his business of running numbers rackets; her job had apparently mostly been to stand there and look menacing when mammals didn't want to pay what they owed. Judy strongly suspected that on more than a few occasions Zoya might have done a bit more than that, but neither she nor Nick had pressed the issue.

Zoya herself had only had one question for Judy, and after getting an answer had led both Nick and Judy to her front door. "I hope you find what you seek," she had said gravely, and then after taking a furtive look back over her shoulder to where Monarch still sat at the table she had added in a low whisper, "But unless it is life or death, maybe don't come back before tomorrow. Afternoon."

Nick had given the polar bear a wink, which she returned with something of a leer as she shut the door, and then he had turned to Judy, clapping his paws together. "Why don't we go back to my place and plan our next move?"

Although Judy had wanted to immediately go after Brian Redfurred, she had no idea of how to find him, and had reluctantly agreed, her mind spinning at each possibility she could think of on the drive back to Nick's house. Partway through the drive, a creeping doubt had begun to set in; what if Brian Redfurred wasn't the fox they were looking for? What if it had been one of the other two, or none of them? Or all three of them? Nick, however, had the look of a mammal who knew exactly what he had to do, and if he had any concerns about finding Redfurred it didn't show on his face. He had bustled about his kitchen, fixing their meal as though he didn't have a care in the world even as Judy's mind gnawed at itself until she couldn't contain her thoughts anymore. And although Nick's explanations as to why the mammal in the photographs couldn't be Erwin or Lisa made sense, all that did was bring her concern about finding Redfurred back to the forefront of her mind, and she asked as much. "So how do we find Redfurred? The DMV is closed today."

"It is," Nick said, "Which would only help if he has a car, but I'm not too worried about finding him."

Judy gaped at him for a moment, but if he was making a joke it didn't show on his face. "Why not?" she asked, and Nick responded almost instantly.

"Because he runs a numbers racket," he said, and when he saw that she didn't understand, he added, "If you want to run a numbers racket—or a successful one, at least—you need to be easy to find. Otherwise, how are the poor saps supposed to pay in?"

"So all we need to do—" Judy began excitedly before Nick interrupted.

"Is go to the neighborhood Zoya told us about and ask," he finished, nodding, "And that's where it gets tricky."

"But you just said you weren't worried about finding him," Judy protested, and Nick took a moment before responding.

"Look," he said at last, "The White Widow telling us about Redfurred was the first I've ever heard of him. I've got no idea what kind of mammal he is."

Judy thought over his words, but she couldn't tell the direction Nick was going in and so she waited for him to continue. "If he's had a polar bear around as a leg-breaker he might not be too popular. Or if he's given a few mammals some heavy sugar paying out on bets he might be everyone's best
friend. I don't know," Nick said, and Judy thought she could hear the frustration in his voice on his last three words.

But after a moment's consideration, Judy realized she was wrong. It wasn't frustration she was hearing; if everyone hated Redfurred and was afraid of his retribution she was sure Nick could still find someone he could talk an address out of, and if everyone loved Redfurred she was sure it wouldn't take an ounce of charisma to get an address by pretending to be interested in making a bet. "You're afraid," Judy said, and Nick slowly nodded.

"For my sake," she said, and he didn't dispute it.

"We're getting close," Nick said, "Maybe someone already got to Redfurred. Maybe he caught a lucky break and they failed, or maybe he caught an even luckier break and Lionheart was arrested before he could order it. I have no idea what we'd be walking into."

Nick spoke his words calmly, and his face was set into its usual mask of aloofness, but Judy thought she could see the cracks in it. No matter what he had said to her about the little bottle of peppermint oil, which she had rubbed a few drops of into her fur before their trip to visit Zoya, he was afraid for her sake. "Neither do I," Judy said, and it was her turn to reach over and touch his paw, "But there's no one else I'd rather walk into it with."

Nick didn't move, and when he spoke again his words were quiet. "You're not a prohi anymore. If things go wrong..."

He didn't have to finish the sentence. If things went wrong, she didn't have a gun or backup or even a badge she could rely on. If they got in over their heads they would have to get themselves out. "Then let's figure out the best way of learning what we want before we go anywhere," Judy said, and as she spoke the words she could feel her own desire to immediately leave Nick's house fading.

The feeling didn't vanish, not entirely. Knowing that the fox who might be the one actually guilty of the crimes Nick had been accused of might still be walking around the city or else a corpse hidden away somewhere made stopping and thinking of the best way to learn more about him a kind of torture. "I really am rubbing off on you," Nick said, and his smile was in his voice as much as it was on his face.

"Only as much as I'm rubbing off on you," Judy replied.

She knew that Nick wasn't as callous and self-centered as she had thought him to be when they first met. She knew that there had been mammals—and yes, maybe even vixens—that he had cared about deeply before she had ever seen him. But she thought that it had probably been years since he had last been willing to show that part of himself to the world. He cared. And as much as being with Nick had changed her, she knew it had changed him.

Nick gave her a small nod. "I've had a few ideas," he began, and Judy settled back in her chair, ready to listen.

The plan that they had worked out was, in Nick's words, elegant in its simplicity. Although it could be reduced to simply being that Judy would find someone and ask where Redfurred could be found, Nick had brought up a number of concerns that the plan addressed. First and foremost was that while Feweler Park was a poor neighborhood, it was also a prey neighborhood.

He had mentioned that detail during their planning session casually, saying that anyone who lived there would simply assume that he was a gang member of some kind simply because he was a fox.
Judy hated how he had mentioned it as though it was simply a factor to be accounted for, the risk of someone alerting an actual member of the Black Paw outweighing the potential help he could provide in learning the information that they wanted.

Once Judy was actually walking the streets of Feweler Park, she had to admit that he had a point. In many ways, Feweler Park looked a lot like the Yard. The buildings were rundown and falling apart in similar ways, and while the air didn't stink of the slaughterhouses the neighborhood felt equally grim. The businesses in Feweler Park did have something that none of the ones in the Yard did, though. It seemed to Judy that every business she passed, from the bodega with a selection of wilting rutabagas and turnips out front to the pawnshop with a filthy front window with rusty iron bars in front of it, had the same sign on their front doors. Some had been painted, some had been printed, some looked new and others were yellowed with age, but the words were all the same: NO PREDATORS.

Although Nick was safely a few blocks away, the car parked in front of the bustling little cafe he had claimed a booth in, Judy could hear his voice as though he had been walking besides her. "Try to find someone taller than you are," Nick's voice said, her memory of what he had said at his dining room table capturing what felt like the essence of his voice, "You don't want to seem threatening. You want someone who looks friendly, on the older side if you can."

It was a bit strange, walking the city without Nick by her side, and it felt painfully similar to when Nick had been in jail and she had been working to bail him out. Judy took what comfort she could in her memory of Nick's advice, and when she saw a middle-aged goat dressed in a plain dress walking along the street with a bag of groceries in her arms, she tried to put it into action. "Excuse me? Ma'am?" Judy said, making sure that her paws were visible and not in a threatening pose as she slowly approached the goat, who had to be at least two feet taller than she was, "Would you happen to know where I could find Brian Redfurred?"

The goat's expression, which had been one of mild disinterest, suddenly changed into a sneer. "As if it wasn't enough the way you bunnies breed," she sniffed, "You want to gamble? You ought to be ashamed, you Jezebel."

Judy found herself lost for words as the goat kept walking, her nose in the air. "You want to find someone who looks a little seedy, but not dangerous," Nick's voice offered helpfully in Judy's ear, and she sighed; it was her own fault for not meeting one of the criteria he had described.

It took Judy another twenty minutes before she came across a promising group; there were four rams sitting at a rough wooden table outside a barber shop, apparently enjoying the sunshine as they played contract bridge and exchanged light-hearted insults. Even better, the dark brown bottles on the table didn't look like they contained soda, and Judy approached the table. "Excuse me?" Judy said, and the four sheep all turned to look at her.

They all looked to be about fifty or so, with tightly spiraled horns and shaggy wool that made them look larger and heavier than they likely were. Although they were sheep just as much as Bellwether was, Judy thought that they had to be a different species; even the smallest of the rams looked to be more than twice the height of her former boss. "What d'ye want, bunny?" one of them asked, his tone light.

Judy offered him a smile. "Do you know where I could find Brian Redfurred?" she asked, and while none of the sheep reacted the way the goat had, the rams all exchanged glances before the one who had spoken to her first spoke again.

"He be owin' you a payout too?" the ram asked, "Ol' Mickey here's owed twenny dollars, the great lucky bastard, and he's seen not hide nor hair of that fox in two days."
As the ram spoke, he pointed carelessly at one of the other rams, who didn't seem to take any insult at what the first had called him. "Not my fault you're too thick to see a sure thing, Shaun," Mickey shot back, a broad grin splitting his face, "I'll buy you a drink if you admit it tweren't luck."

Shaun huffed and turned to one of the other sheep. "Don't your sister's daughter work for Redfurred?" he asked, and the third ram ponderously shook his massive head.

"No, it's me sister's husband's cousin—"

"Margaret?" the fourth ram, who had remained silent until then, broke in, and the third ram shook his head again.

"No, no. Liddy, it is. Liddy O'Sheared," the third ram answered, and the fourth ram's eyes brightened in recognition.

"The one what got pinched for stealin' silverware?" he asked, and the third ram nodded.

"Why d'you think she's workin' as a maid for a fox? Never was respectable, the poor thing. Never knew what me sister was thinkin', marrying into that family."

"She's my cousin too, y'know," Mickey interrupted, and the third ram waved his arms as if to disavow his words.

"An' what family is perfect, I ask?" he said, "Only—"

"Only you'd best choose your next words real careful-like," Mickey interrupted with his eyes narrowed, and then he slugged the third ram in the arm.

It didn't look to Judy as though he had hit particularly hard, and the third ram laughed. "Only Liddy's a bit of an odd one," he said, and Mickey and the fourth ram both nodded, their faces set in near-identical expressions of commiseration.

Judy felt as though the rams had completely forgotten that she was present, but she remembered one of Nick's other pieces of advice; sometimes it was best just to let the other mammal talk. She got the feeling that he might have been well-suited to interrogations if he ever became a police officer. Or if anyone ever let him become a police officer, at least. Although she desperately wanted to try to beg the rams to just answer her question directly, she had already learned some facts of value. Leaving aside the tangled chain of family between the four rams, who seemed to be loosely related, she had learned that Brian Redfurred hadn't been seen for a couple days, which probably didn't bode well for him still being alive. None of the rams seemed to particularly like the fox, but they also didn't seem particularly afraid of him; if they thought that predators were beneath their dignity that was their loss. She forced herself to keep listening as the conversation between the rams circled on and on, and while she didn't think anything else they had said was going to be particularly useful—unless she felt like taking Mickey's tip for the next Cubs game, which he had assured everyone present was another sure thing—they did at last manage to pull out of their collective memory the address for Brian Redfurred's apartment after first naming and describing every restaurant and deli worth eating at within four blocks of it.

It was nearly an hour and a half later when she met back up with Nick, who was slowly nursing a cup of coffee as he read a newspaper, and her heart warmed to see him immediately perk up when he saw her. "I was beginning to think I'd have to go after you," he said, and while his words were light Judy thought that he meant it.

"I'm not sure the mammals I asked even noticed I left," she said, and Nick smiled.
"But you did get an address?" he said as he left a few coins on the table.

"I did," Judy said, and Nick nodded.

"I knew I was rubbing off on you," he said, and he let his arm brush past hers as he pushed the door of the cafe open.

It was a small gesture, one Judy doubted anyone watching would have particularly noticed or given any significance if they had seen it, but the brief moment of contact was enough for her. At least, it was for the moment.

Brian Redfurred's apartment wasn't in Feweler Park, or even near it; it was actually only three blocks away from Nick's house. The apartment building wasn't quite as nice, but it was a perfectly respectable three story building neatly made of brick with a few marble ornamentations to break up its bulk. Somewhat surprisingly, considering Redfurred's line of work, there wasn't a mammal at the door and they were able to walk into the building and up the stairs to the top floor, where Redfurred had a corner unit. Although the hallway was bright and somewhat elegant, with clean white walls and plush red carpets, when Judy knocked on the door to Redfurred's apartment it swung open a fraction and she saw that the door frame was splintered where the lock had been broken. "It's not breaking and entering if the door's open, is it?" Nick asked.

Judy thought he was trying to keep his tone light, but she could hear the tension in his voice. "It's something of a gray area," she said.

She wasn't afraid as she pushed the door the rest of the way open, but what met her eyes wasn't quite what she had been expecting. The apartment looked as though it had been turned upside down and shaken, with the contents of drawers strewn across the floor and pictures in cracked frames hanging at crazy angles from the walls. But there wasn't any blood and there wasn't a body. Beyond those details, she couldn't see much; although it was mid-afternoon the apartment was gloomily dark, with only a few bright pinpoints of light coming in through a few uneven spots where the window had been painted black and the paint was chipping away. Judy reached into the room and groped for a light switch, but when her fingers found it and flicked it the wide frosted glass globe on the ceiling stayed dark. "The light doesn't work," she said, and she could hear Nick take in a deep breath, leaning his head into the room for a long moment.

Judy heard Nick sniff at the air and she could see his triangular ears swiveling in all directions before he finally withdrew his head. "He must like it dark," Nick said at last, his voice barely a whisper, "Do you hear anything?"

Judy strained her ears, but she couldn't hear anything coming from the apartment, just the sound of water running through a pipe somewhere and the muted sounds of the city around them. "No," she said, and her voice was as low as Nick's.

"We should really just call the police," Nick said, but Judy shook her head.

"Not before we have a look," she said, her voice a harsh whisper, "Someone on the force is tampering with evidence. We can't give them a chance."

Nick sighed, and when he spoke again his voice was at its normal volume. "I thought you might say that," he said, and he took a hesitant step into the room.

Judy was only a step behind him, and although they left the door into the hallway of the apartment building open it seemed as though the light was being sucked out of the room. It wasn't just the
gloom that made the room eerie either. The room smelled like a male fox, but where Judy associated Nick's scent with its pleasantly floral undertone, Redfurred's apartment had a harsh and musky smell that set Judy's teeth on edge. She pushed the feeling down and made her way over to a bookshelf that had been knocked over, scattering the contents across the floor. Redfurred had apparently had little model trains and airplanes on display, and the models had shattered into their component pieces when they had hit the floor. There were also heavy cardboard books of foreign coins, an assortment of postcards with pictures of far-off cities, and a few well-worn books with titles that made Judy's ears burn. The contents of the bookshelf struck Judy as being not too different from what one of her bachelor brothers might have put together if they had had a bit more money (although after flipping through Redfurred's books in a fruitless attempt to see if any had been hollowed out she hoped that her brothers didn't have anything similar). It was, in short, junk, just a brief insight into the life of an idle mammal spending his money on whatever caught his fancy.

When Judy turned to ask Nick if he was having any luck, she was surprised to see him running his fingers against the floorboards at the center of the room underneath the light fixture. "What are you doing?" she asked, and Nick took a moment to reply.

"The floor's scratched here. Can't you see it?" he said, and Judy shook her head.

She felt half-blind in the room, but apparently to his fox eyes it was bright enough. "C'mon," Nick said, "Help me take a look."

He lifted Judy gently until she was sitting on his shoulders and craned his head upwards to look her in the eye. "Take a look in that light fixture," he said, and once he had positioned them underneath it Judy did.

"There's not a bulb in it," Judy said as she felt around, feeling a thin layer of dust sticking to her fingers.

"You did turn the switch off, didn't you? I'd rather not the both of us fry," Nick said, and Judy felt a smile touch her face for the first time since they had entered the apartment.

The sudden and inappropriate thought had entered her head of playing a prank on him by pretending to get a shock, but she pushed it aside. It would have been cruel, and besides, sitting on his shoulders was a somewhat precarious although not unpleasant spot. His body was warm against her, his neck thick enough to wrap her thighs around without squeezing too hard, and Judy chuckled. "I did," she said, "Now hold still."

She angled her arm to feel around inside the frosted glass of the light fixture and was surprised when her fingers touched something cold and metallic that could only be a gun. When she groped for it, she put her fingers across a familiar-feeling knurled wood grip, and when she pulled the revolver free she understood why it had felt familiar; the gun in her paw looked identical to her own. "I found a gun," she said, gripping it tightly as Nick carefully lowered her off his shoulders and back onto the ground.

Nick looked at it for a moment before looking at Judy. "I'm not any kind of expert, but isn't that the same kind of gun you had in your purse?" he asked, and Judy nodded.

"I'm willing to bet that's what they were looking for," Nick said thoughtfully, "What do you want to bet that's the gun that Redfurred killed River and Zweihorn with?"

"That's not a bet I would take," Judy replied, carefully wrapping the gun in her handkerchief and tucking it into her bag.
She thought that Nick was right, though, and she could imagine how events had played out. Lionheart had hired Redfurred for the murders, but maybe the fox had been suspicious of the lion's motives and had held onto the murder weapon, not trusting him to leave him alone after the frame job on Nick was complete. Maybe Redfurred had already been murdered or maybe he had gone to ground, hiding somewhere. To frame Nick they might have swapped out the bullet that had been compared against the ones in the bodies of Zweihorn and River for one Redfurred had fired in advance. It would explain why a bullet from Judy's gun had supposedly been a perfect match, but to make sure that no one caught on to the switch in bullets they would have needed to swap the guns out too so that if the test was repeated it would still show a match. If Judy was right, it'd be possible to prove that Nick was being framed, but after excitedly explaining her new theory to Nick she paused a moment when he asked if she wanted to leave. "The gun must have been whatever the mammal Lionheart sent was looking for," Judy said, "But maybe they left something behind. We ought to keep looking."

"And then call the police?" Nick asked, and Judy nodded.

"We can call Bogo himself," she said, and he seemed to find the answer to his satisfaction because he turned to keep looking.

As they both made their way through the apartment, Judy found nothing else of interest, just more tawdry curios that seemed to only show that Redfurred had held a magpie-like interest in collecting things from stamps to bottle caps. Nick was working his way towards the bathroom, Judy nearing the bedroom, which was even darker than the main room; the curtains on the window were drawn and there wasn't a light fixture or switch she could see.

As Judy took a step forward towards the curtains to throw them open, she felt a sudden pain in her foot and let out a wordless cry, stumbling backwards as she tried to keep her balance. Her foot hit the floor again and the pain suddenly became eye-watering. "Dagnabit!" Judy swore as the pain made her lose her balance and she fell, landing flat on her back.

"Judy!" Nick said, and he was instantly at her side, "What happened? Are you OK?"

Judy winced. The pain in her foot was throbbing and she could feel a trickle of blood running down towards her heel. "I stepped on something sharp," she said, and offered Nick a smile she didn't feel, "I'll be fine."

Nick wrapped an arm around her shoulder and helped her up into a sitting position. "You're sure?" he asked, and even in the dim lighting his concern was obvious across his face.

"I'm sure," she said, "Could you get it out?"

Judy could feel whatever she had stepped on still embedded in her foot, and when Nick looked at the sole of her foot she saw his concern deepen. "It's bleeding," he said, and she nodded.

"I can feel it," she said, "Now can you get that lousy thing out of my foot?"

Rather than answer, Nick put his fingers against her foot, and she could feel him grasping at the object before there was a sudden tugging sensation. Having the object leave her foot hurt a lot less than when it had entered, and it hit the floor with a small metallic sound when Nick dropped it. Only after Nick had wrapped Judy's foot in his handkerchief, knotting it tightly, did he pick up the object and bring it over to where Judy could see it. It took her a moment to recognize it as an earring, the wickedly sharp stud red with her own blood. "I'm guessing Redfurred either had a lady friend or whoever ransacked this place had expensive tastes," Nick said as he offered the earring to her, "What do you think?"
When he rotated the earring to show her the decorative part of it, Judy saw that it was a mid-sized pearl, connected to a vaguely wing-shaped gold fitting inset with little chips of diamond, and her blood ran cold. The question that Zoya had asked before showing them out the door suddenly came to her mind. "Why aren't you a prohi anymore?" the polar bear had asked.

When Judy had said that she had been fired, Zoya had nodded. "That speaks well of you, I think," she had said, and Judy had laughed politely, understanding why the bear wouldn't think much of the Bureau of Prohibition in general or Director Bellwether specifically.

Now, seeing the earring before her, Judy could feel the pieces coming together, and when she spoke her voice felt as though it were coming from miles away. "No," Judy said, "No, that's not it. I recognize this earring."

Nick's eyebrows arched in surprise, but Judy barely noticed. "Really? Whose is it?" he asked, and Judy's mouth felt suddenly dry.

Of course she recognized it; the mammal it belonged to had bragged about the earrings at length when she had received them a few weeks ago for her anniversary, and had worn them on several occasions since. "Bellwether," Judy said, "It's Director Bellwether's."

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**Author's Notes:**

The title of this chapter, "Among My Souvenirs," comes from a 1927 song by Edgar Leslie. I chose it because it seemed appropriate to how among the assorted collectibles in Redfurred's apartment there's also a far more important clue in the form of Bellwether's earring.

Condensed tomato soup in a can would likely be Campbell's, which was available in 1927. Campbell's introduced their tomato soup in 1897, and in 1927 the cans wouldn't really look too much different than they do today; Campbell's has left their branding mostly unchanged for more than a hundred years now. Recipes for tomato soup do date to no later than 1872 (for warm tomato soup, at least; gazpacho is significantly older) so it certainly could be something Judy's mother prepared. Canned soups do tend to be pretty salty, too.

Although it's something of a throwaway line that Nick had sliced the bread he toasted himself, it does reveal something kind of interesting. Pre-sliced bread wasn't available until 1928, so in 1927 if you bought a loaf you had to cut it yourself. It may be a little surprising that sliced bread is a relatively recent invention, and the popular expression "the greatest thing since sliced bread" is a play on the somewhat grandiose advertising used when sliced bread debuted of being "the greatest forward step in the baking industry since bread was wrapped."

Toasters were one of the very first electric appliances (alongside "personal massagers" but I won't get into that) that were commercially available and early models connected to the electrical grid using the same screw fitting as lightbulbs. Considering that electric lighting was the first widely available electric utility, this made perfect sense; familiar electrical outlets didn't come until later. As Nick has what is a very modern kitchen for the 1920s he likely does have a toaster, but he might find it easier to toast thin slices of bread evenly over the range than with a toaster.

As Erwin's last name literally means "desert fox" as mentioned in the last chapter, I thought it followed pretty logically that he'd be a fennec, a real-life desert fox. Considering that Finnick is the only fennec to appear in the movie, it's impossible to say whether or not his appearance is typical for his species. It's possible that Finnick is shorter than usual for a fennec, average, or tall for his species, but in this story I assumed that he's on the shorter side of average and Erwin is somewhat taller than average.
In Illinois, offices of the Department of Motor Vehicles are closed on Sundays, and most are also closed on Saturdays. As of this chapter, it's Sunday, September 04, 1927, so the DMV would be closed. Since death, unfortunately, does not take holidays, it's not unusual for the coroner's office to be open seven days a week, and due to the demands of printing a paper I thought it made sense for the New Yak Evening Graphic to be open on Sunday too.

Using the term "sap" as a noun to mean that someone is a fool was a pretty common bit of 1920s slang. As previously mentioned, whether you call it a numbers game or a numbers racket, it's a form of illegal betting. Organized crime isn't exactly known for being scrupulously fair when it comes to wagers (for example, 1927 isn't too long after gang kingpin Arnold Rothstein fixed the 1919 World Series by paying the Chicago White Sox to lose) so Nick isn't just being cynical.

Calling someone a leg-breaker as a euphemism for a mob enforcer is a phrase with origins that should be pretty obvious, the implication being that the person in question is willing to commit terrible but not fatal acts of violence as punishments. The phrase came into common use around 1920 so its use here is appropriate.

"Heavy sugar" was a slang term for a significant amount of money in 1920s slang; although the sort of numbers racket that would operate in a poor neighborhood would be unlikely to pay out huge sums of money, perspective is important. Even today, whether or not $50 is a lot of money depends on how much you have and what it's in relation to.

Feweler Park is a pun on ewe and Fuller Park, which is a real neighborhood in Chicago. It has historically been a poor neighborhood, from when it was created from the annexation of Town of Lake in 1889 and into the present day. It's currently Chicago's most dangerous neighborhood, with a high unemployment and violent crime rate and it was unfortunately much the same in the 1920s.

The Yards is the neighborhood that Nick and Judy visited back in chapter 18, which in this story was a poor predator neighborhood.

By calling Judy a Jezebel, the goat is referencing the biblical story of Queen Jezebel, whose wearing of fine clothing and makeup eventually led to her being used as a euphemism for prostitutes.

Bridge is card game that requires four players playing in two teams of two players each. In 1927, contract bridge was one of the most popular versions of the game, railroad executive and champion bridge player Harold Stirling Vanderbilt having published his rules for contract bridge two years previously in 1925.

It's an unspoken joke in this chapter that Liddy O'Sheared is the black sheep of the O'Sheared family, seeing as how she's apparently both a petty thief who stole from a previous employer and now works as a maid for a fox, much to the rams' collective horror. O'Sheared is a pun on the real Irish surname O'Shea and the word sheared, and one of the rams is named Shaun after the sheep spun off of the Wallace and Gromit series of stop-motion animated films.

"Dagnabit" is an old-fashioned stand in for the stronger (and profane) curse "God damn it."

Zootopia, of course, has an obvious reason to not include swearing; whatever else it is, it's a children's movie made by an American company. However, I think that it also did a good job of establishing Judy's character such that her saying "cheese and crackers" in the movie seems perfectly in character for her. I'll admit, I have a hard time imagining Judy actually swearing; I imagine that one or both of her parents took a dim view of profane language and it's one of those habits she's simply never broken.

Earrings weren't quite as popular in Western fashion in the 1920s as they are today. Earrings really started surging in popularity in the US in the 1960s, and until about the 1970s basically the only men...
who would wear earrings were sailors so Nick instantly assuming that it was a lady's earring would be expected, even leaving aside the not particularly masculine style of Bellwether's earring. Still, earrings for women were common enough in the 1920s, and Bellwether's earring would have been reasonably stylish, if a tad conservative, for 1927.

As always, thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought!
Chief Bogo still looked like a police officer even when he was wearing a suit. The thought had popped into Judy's head completely unbidden, but it seemed as though ever since she had seen Bellwether's earring her brain was making random connections, the patterns between events suddenly seeming as clear as day.

That Bogo was in Redfurred's apartment at all, dressed in a conservative gray suit that he somehow still wore like a uniform, was only the result of an agonizing discussion with Nick. Although Judy's first reaction, once she had recovered enough from her realization to do anything, had been to reach for the telephone that had been knocked askew from a small table in the main room of Redfurred's apartment. Nick had stopped her, though, with a single question: "What if Redfurred's phone is tapped?"

Judy had spent her first month with the Bureau of Prohibition, before the assignment to investigate the Thief of the Night and determine if the club was illegally selling alcohol had somehow spiraled beyond anything she could have imagined, transcribing recorded or live wiretapped conversations. She could remember the names of dozens of mammals the Bureau had been keeping tabs on. She could even remember the cadences of their voices, scratchy and garbled on the recordings and faint and tinny on live calls though they were. What she couldn't remember, though, was whether Brian Redfurred had been one of those mammals. She thought he hadn't been; the name hadn't stirred even a hint of familiarity when Zoya had said it. But she wasn't a hundred percent certain, and the small creeping doubt made it feel as though it would be a certainty that his phone was tapped.

The image of someone from the Bureau of Prohibition, like the almost aggressively antisocial Agent Ramses, listening in on a call and immediately alerting Bellwether had a sort of vividness that no dream Judy had ever had, not even her nightmares of Nick burning in a fire, could match. She had imagined Bellwether, likely with some loyal member of the Bureau to do the dirty work, showing up at Redfurred's door, her face split by an insincere smile. Then again, it didn't even have to be a member of the Bureau; Bellwether obviously had contacts within the ZPD itself to be able to frame Nick. Judy had thought that it could be an officer who would show up to tie up Bellwether's loose ends, ready to make sure that neither Nick nor Judy had the chance to share what they had learned.

In the end, after what had felt like hours but couldn't have been much more than ten or fifteen minutes, they had decided that the risk of using the phone was worth it, but not the risk of calling the police. Instead, when Judy had picked up the phone she had dialed the operator and requested a connection for Chief Bogo's house. As the operator, who spoke in a friendly and open tone with her words spaced apart almost as far as Priscilla Acedia's, looked for a number with an agonizing slowness Judy kept the fingers of her free paw crossed as she cradled the receiver in the other. She hadn't known if Bogo had a telephone in his home or even if he would be home; he might very well have been on duty at the station or else otherwise occupied on a day off.

When Bogo had picked up on the third ring Judy had let out a breath she hadn't even realized she had been holding. "Chief Bogo?" she had asked before he even had a chance to speak, "This is Judy Hopps."

"Ms. Hopps," Bogo had said, his voice robbed of its power by the tinny reproduction that was the best the telephone could do, "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

Judy thought that she had heard a note of interest in his voice, but that might have only been her imagining what she wanted to hear. Judy had worked out what she was going to say with Nick with a carefulness that would have been frustrating if their situation hadn't been so dangerous. "It's about the
murder case, sir. I know you told me not to keep investigating but—" Judy began.

"But you ignored my advice and decided to play cop. What did you find?" Bogo interrupted, and although his voice had a harshness that wasn't due just to the connection Judy could feel herself relaxing a degree.

Bogo had obviously intended for her to keep investigating; he certainly wouldn't have given her the file that he had if he had expected her to stay quietly on the sidelines. Judy had quickly caught on as to what he had meant, and she was relieved that he had done the same. If someone was listening in on the line, Judy wanted to make sure they learned as little of value as possible, and she pushed on. "Nothing, sir. But—"

"Ms. Hopps," Bogo had interrupted again, "You called me at my home on my day off to tell me you found nothing?"

Judy had suspected that not all of his irritation was being feigned for a potential eavesdropper, and she quickly moved on. "Someone ransacked Brian Redfurred's apartment looking for something. We didn't find anything but—"

The lie about not finding anything had come just as easily the second time as it had the first, and Judy would have sworn that when she had mentioned Redfurred's name that Bogo had taken a sudden breath. "But you decided to bother me instead of calling the police. Are you still at Redfurred's apartment?" Bogo had said.

"Yes," Judy had said before giving him the address.

"There will be consequences for this, Ms. Hopps," Bogo had said, "You have no authority to perform investigations, not for the Bureau and not for the police. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir," Judy had replied, doing her best to sound suitably humbled at the harsh words.

Nick, who had been standing next to Judy for the entire call, had given her a wink and a smile as he had nodded approvingly. "Good," Bogo had replied, "I'll be there in half an hour. You had better have an explanation for why you thought this was a good idea."

With that, the buffalo had simply hung up, but Judy knew that he had understood her meaning. When he had finally arrived, Judy had been incredibly glad to see him; while waiting for him to show up every sound had been a potential visit by an eavesdropper who had figured out what they meant. It hadn't taken long to explain everything they had learned, from the possibility that the pictures of Nick had been forged, to how they had gotten onto the path of Brian Redfurred and from there the revolver and the earring. When Bogo had opened his suit jacket Judy had half-expected him to pull out a gun and prove that trusting him had been a terrible mistake, but it had only been to retrieve his glasses to aid in his examination of the earring.

At long last, Bogo lowered the earring away from his face. "I have seen Bellwether wearing this," he said at last, and a flash of irritation moved across his broad face, "And heard her bragging about it."

"So you see how it all fits," Judy began eagerly, "Bellwether's the one who framed Nick! That's why all of the other notes were written by Lionheart but the one planted on Nick was typed! She must have seen that she had the opportunity to take all the credit for Lionheart's arrest and get Nick arrested. You wouldn't believe how much she hates him!"

"She really does," Nick added, "How many times did Bellwether tell you to find an excuse for arresting me?"
Bogo's seemingly perpetual frown darkened a degree as Judy answered, "Three."

Bogo opened his mouth to begin speaking, but Judy plunged on before he had the chance. The connections were suddenly so clear to her that it was all she could do to try to keep her words focused, and her mouth seemed to be running on its own. "So she hired Brian Redfurred to kill two officers, and then had someone—or maybe it was more than one mammal, I don't know—tamper with the evidence to frame Nick. But she didn't have the gun that was actually used in the murders—I think Redfurred didn't trust her—so she came here herself to look for it and lost her earring. And she got me arrested long enough to make sure she could steal the credit for arresting Lionheart! It all makes sense!"

Judy looked up at Chief Bogo, aware that she probably sounded pleading but unable to do anything to change it. "Please, don't you see it?"

He was silent for a long moment, polishing his glasses before putting them back on. "Ms. Hopps," he said, and his tone had a gentleness to it Judy had never heard, "You're asking me to believe that a senior member of the Bureau of Prohibition—who has dedicated her life to stamping out bootleggers—risked her career and her reputation for the chance to resolve a petty grudge?"

"And advance her career," Nick said, staring up at Bogo, his expression neutral, "She might have been in league with a bootlegger all along, too. This might be more than a tempest in a teapot dome."

The possibility that Bellwether had been colluding with one of more of the gangs had also occurred to Judy herself, but she wasn't sure she would have been able to say it without sounding like she had gone completely screwy. "In which case you're asking me to believe that some of my most trustworthy officers have betrayed that trust," Bogo replied, but he didn't sound angry at the implication.

She got the sense that the buffalo was taking her measure, and Judy took a deep breath before she answered. "And are you sure that they're trustworthy? The officer who took the photographs outside Zweihorn's house, the mammal who ran the test for gunshot residue, the one who compared the bullets... Do you trust all of them?"

Bogo frowned. "Perhaps one of them doesn't deserve that trust, but every single one of them has served loyally for years."

Judy thought she understood his unspoken point. Framing Nick seemed to require an extraordinary amount of cooperation between several different mammals rather than the actions of a single mammal, and nothing Judy had seen in the personnel files Bogo had included in the packet he had given her gave her any reason to suspect that a single one of them would work against the police. Although Judy suspected that the fact Bogo had included those files at all meant he was willing to entertain the possibility that one of them had betrayed his trust, it did seem hard to fathom. The officer who had taken the photographs outside Zweihorn's home, Michael Bison, had had a niece die years ago when she had been caught in the crossfire of a petty gang squabble. It was hard to imagine the bison, who had been a member of the ZPD for almost twenty years and had a distinguished service record, could have possibly been involved, and while the other mammals didn't have records that were quite as unimpeachable there was nothing that Judy or Nick had seen to suggest that they were traitors. "Frankly, that sounds like your problem," Nick said, and his tone had a kind of forcefulness to it that should have been surprising considering how Bogo towered over them but somehow wasn't. "We've served everything else up to you on a silver platter. Or will we need to find Redfurred, too?"

If Bogo was upset at Nick's words, which weren't quite respectful, he didn't show it. "I'm afraid that won't be necessary," he said.
"You have Redfurred?" Judy asked, her optimism flaring to life and then immediately dying when she saw the look in Bogo's eyes as he shook his head.

"I think we might," Bogo replied, and he pulled a Manila folder that looked tiny in his massive hoof out of his suit jacket.

From the folder Bogo pulled out a photograph and held it so that both Nick and Judy could see it. The two of them stared at the image mutely, and it was Nick who broke their silence. "Chief Bogo," Nick said, his head rising from the photograph as jerkily as a half-broken windup toy.

"Ms. Hopps," he continued, giving Judy a nod that let her see his pupils had contracted to pinpricks.

"If you'll excuse me a moment," Nick said, and his words were oddly precise after he took in a somewhat shaky breath.

Without waiting for an answer, he turned away and walked across the room, his movements still jerky and stiff, until he reached the small water closet adjacent to the bathroom. Before he even had the door fully closed, Judy could hear him retching. She couldn't blame him; if she had been capable of vomiting herself she would have been right there with him. As it was, her guts seemed to churn in her chest from having seen the picture of the fox who had to be Redfurred.

Judy had thought she had a strong tolerance for seeing violence. Even when Carajou had been sitting in a pool of his own blood, his head twisted at an impossible angle, she hadn't panicked. But how the wolverine had died was nothing compared to what the fox had suffered. She didn't have to be a doctor to know that the fox had been savagely beaten to death, his body swollen and misshaped beneath a tight-fitting suit and his head so battered it was easy to understand why Bogo wasn't completely sure that he was Redfurred. That on its own shouldn't have been too terrible after everything else Judy had seen, but the fox looked so similar to Nick in his build that they could almost have been brothers.

It made it all too easy to imagine his suffering on Nick. Judy could see Nick's near-perpetual half-smirk destroyed by a mouthful of cracked and shattered teeth, the light and seemingly effortless grace he moved with lost to twisted and broken limbs that ended in ruined fingers and toes. Redfurred, and she didn't doubt that it was him, had suffered terribly. She could only imagine Bellwether's rage when Redfurred wouldn't say where he had hidden the murder weapon, someone larger and stronger than the little ewe dishing out vicious blows until they went too far. "I stopped by the station on my way over," Bogo said as he slid the photograph back into the folder it had come from, "This fox was pulled out of the river yesterday morning. No one could identify him at the time, but I believe it must be Redfurred."

"That's..." Judy began, and even as she heard Nick's continued retching from the water closet she could feel her eyes filling with tears of helpless and frustrated anger.

They had come so close to finding the link that could prove Nick's innocence once and for all and it had turned out to be another dead end. Judy could practically hear Bellwether's simpering laugh, and she was surprised when Chief Bogo placed a single hoof on her shoulder so lightly that she could barely feel it. "You've done exceptional work, Ms. Hopps," Bogo said, "But Dawn Bellwether plays politics better than anyone I know. This earring isn't going to be enough."

Judy knew that Bogo was right and hated it. She could practically hear the excuses. Bellwether might blame Judy for stealing the earring and planting it, or maybe the ewe had already bought an identical pair to replace her missing earring. If Judy was right that the revolver Redfurred had hidden in his light fixture was the one actually used to murder the Zweihorns and River it was an excellent clue towards Nick's innocence, but Judy was sure Bellwether could squirm her way out of that as
well, and even if Nick went free so would the ewe. "I do think that you might be right," Bogo continued, "And I'll see what I can find."

"Is that a promise?" Nick asked.

Judy hadn't noticed him come back into the main room of the apartment. His fur seemed in much more of a disarray than it usually did and his eyes seemed to have sunk into his head, but he had at least a little of his usual ease as he walked up to Chief Bogo and looked him dead in the eye. "It is," Bogo said, "But I do have to call this in."

As Bogo moved to the telephone, Judy gave a quick glance to make sure that his back was to them as she looped an arm around Nick's waist. "Are you OK?" she asked, pitching her voice low to avoid being overheard.

"Oh, I'll be fine," Nick said, waving one paw carelessly, "It was just a little difficult seeing a picture of a fox who looked like he went twelve rounds with an elephant."

His tone wasn't quite as steady as it normally was, but Judy didn't question him, content to stand beside him. "How's your foot?" he asked, and Judy let him change the subject.

"It's fine," she said, "It doesn't hurt at all when I walk."

That much, at least, was the truth, and Nick nodded. "So what do you say we get out of here?" he asked, and Judy saw no reason to stay; if anything she wanted to be gone before any police arrived.

"Let's go," she said, and as she walked out of the apartment it occurred to her that she still had her arm wrapped around Nick and Bogo might see them.

Somehow, though, she couldn't bring herself to find that more important than supporting Nick.

Judy didn't know which station Bogo had called or if it had simply been because he had phoned in the call himself, but the police response was impressively quick. By the time that they walked out of the apartment building there were already a couple of police cars making their way down the block to join the spot where Bogo had left his own car in front of the building. Curious mammals had already left their buildings at the sound of the wailing sirens, which Judy supposed must have been fairly rare in the neighborhood. None of the mammals, who seemed to be mostly pigs and goats with a few smaller mammals like a dormouse and a few larger ones like a giraffe (wearing the battered coveralls of a lineworker carrying a beaver dressed the same way on his head) mixed in, paid either fox or bunny any mind as they walked away from the apartment and towards where Judy had parked the car.

Judy ignored the other mammals too, her mind racing through what possible avenues of approach that they had left. "We should go back to your place," Judy said, "We need to go back through the files. I'm sure there's something that we've overlooked. But we'll find it."

Nick was silent until they had made their way back to the car and they had climbed in. "Carrots," Nick said slowly, "Do you remember how I promised to take you out for a night on the town once this all ended? A tuxedo for me, something slinky for you... You know, really putting on the Ritz?"

He spoke the words carefully, and Judy regarded him with an equal amount of care. He seemed more or less back to his usual self, and Judy nodded. "Of course I do," she said, "And we will."

Nick shook his head. "Will we?" he asked.
There was no anger or sadness in his voice, and that made it all the worse. To Judy, he sounded more like he was discussing the weather and less as though his life and freedom were on the line. "Listen to me, Nick," Judy said, and she leaned in as she looked up at him until she could see her breath making the fur of his neck ripple, "I am never going to give up on you. Never."

She didn't know if Nick had started their embrace or if she had, but somehow Nick's arms had ended up around her and her arms were around him. His body was warm against hers and she could feel the underside of his muzzle resting against the top of her head between her ears. "What did I ever do to deserve you?" he murmured, and Judy's response was immediate.

"I ask myself the same thing," she said, and then Nick chuckled.

"I bet when we first met it was for the other reason, wasn't it?" he asked, and Judy nodded, enjoying the feel of the fur of his muzzle brushing against her head.

"Well, at least you're honest," Nick said, but he didn't sound upset.

"Listen, Judy," he said, and he still hadn't let her go, "I know what you're saying when you won't give up on me."

He squeezed her gently. Although the thought hadn't occurred to Judy herself, she realized that what he was implying was true. The reason she refused to give up on Nick wasn't just because her sense of justice wouldn't let her rest while an innocent mammal was being framed and she had the power to do something about it. It was because she loved him, and to give up on him would also be to give up on that love. "But I've got my own way of telling you something important," he continued, "So I'm saying that we need to go dancing."

Whatever Judy had expected Nick to say, it hadn't been that. "Dancing?" she said, her voice rising a little in her incredulity.

It was about the worst possible time to give up and do something frivolous, but Nick simply nodded, the motion dragging the nape of his neck between her ears. "Dancing," he repeated, "I know a nice little club, not too far away. Not a swanky one, but we can save that for later."

"But—" Judy began, but Nick cut her off before she could continue.

"I'm not going to go back into jail tomorrow if we take the time to have a little fun tonight," Nick said, and Judy couldn't hear so much as a trace of teasing in his voice, "Going to my house and worrying isn't going to do anything."

Judy was quiet a moment, considering what he had said. She remembered something Nick had said what felt like years ago, when he had asked her if she had ever done anything fun in Zootopia since moving to the city. The answer had been no then, and she remembered the regret she had felt when she had realized that she hadn't so much as explored the city. Maybe he was right that they should take a break, and the memory of the last time they had danced came back into mind. "Someplace like the Blind Tiger where no one will notice a fox and a bunny together?" she asked, and by the way Nick laughed and pulled himself back to settle into his half of the car's bench seat she knew that he knew he had won.

"Mammals noticed," Nick said, and she could see the familiar half-smile on his face, "They just didn't care."

The club that Nick had instructed Judy to drive to certainly didn't look like much from the outside. Like the Thief of the Night, it was in the basement of a building. The building was squat and a little...
run-down looking, the windows on the first floor so hazy that they looked as though they hadn't been cleaned in years. A grimy white sign of warping and splintering boards above the front door labeled the building as "ACME EXPORTS, LTD." Rather than approach the front door, though, Nick led Judy past a loading dock in the back of the building to a door labeled "BASEMENT" under which was a crudely stenciled and faded image of a pink pansy. As they approached, Judy could faintly hear the sound of jazz being played, and when Nick pulled the door open the noise became almost overwhelming.

The mammal stationed just inside the door, a surprisingly large mountain goat who had squeezed himself into a poorly-fitting gray suit, nodded at Nick as they entered. "Mr. Wilde," he said, his voice barely audible over the din.

"Rick," Nick replied, nodding in kind, and without any further conversation they were inside the club.

The club, which Nick had said was called the Pink Pansy on the drive over, didn't make Judy think much care had been taken when it had been converted from a basement. The walls were made of brick that had been sloppily white-washed and the coating was visibly flaking away in spots. It speckled the floor of oiled dirt like dandruff near the walls, and the small stage crammed into one corner of the room looked as though it had been made from a varied assortment of reclaimed wood from wooden crates that had been broken apart and rejoined. There was a bar in the opposite corner of the room where it seemed no effort had been made to disguise its origin; it was simply two large crates, the stenciled letters "ACME EXPORTS" and "THIS SIDE UP" perfectly visible across them even in the dim glow of a few light bulbs in tin reflectors scattered across the ceiling with no discernible pattern. The basement room was warm, almost stuffy, but considering how many mammals were packed into it that was no surprise. They filled the basement with their scents, cologne and perfume and natural musk all combining into a smell that managed to be both sickly-sweet and somehow sour. Although Judy didn't spot very many mixed-species couples dancing, there were a few among the dozens who crowded the dance floor, spinning and twirling in a way that seemed careless and yet didn't seem to result in bumping very often.

The musicians, a quartet of weasels whose skill seemed to just narrowly exceed their obvious enthusiasm, played a song that Judy had never heard before although she was perfectly willing to dance to it. Nick offered her a paw and she took it, marveling at just how right it felt to have his other paw delicately around her waist as he led them into a rapid foxtrot. "So what was it that you wanted to tell me?" Judy asked, doing her best to imitate Nick at his smuggest and most teasing.

"You know I love you," Nick replied easily; the music was so loud and his voice was so low that even if someone had been standing right next to him Judy doubted anyone could have overheard him, "But there was something else."

He led Judy through a spin before she got the chance to say, "What's that?"

His answer was so shocking that Judy stumbled a step and might have fallen to the floor if he hadn't had his arms around her. As it was, she couldn't remember either the next few songs or even if Nick had said something else, her mind running through the possibilities of what he had suggested. She thought that he had most of it right, but she couldn't think of how to fill in the void of what he had suggested. It was almost half an hour later before something like a solution seemed to nibble at the edge of her mind, the answer not coming all at once but rather gradually, each piece making the next link obvious. "Do I smell smoke coming out of that little bunny brain?" Nick teased, and when Judy turned her attention outwards again she saw that he was smiling.

"Not quite," Judy replied, "But I think I know what we need to do."
"Hold that thought," Nick replied, "I need to bribe the musicians."

Judy eased herself until her back was to the wall, not caring that the white-wash was probably flaking off onto her dress, and watched as Nick smoothly maneuvered himself to the crowd until he reached the stage. From across the room not even her ears could pick up what he was saying to the weasel who seemed to be the band's leader, but there was no mistaking how a five-dollar bill seemed to appear in Nick's paw and disappear into the weasel's with an equal amount of magic. By the time that Nick had made his way back to her, the weasels had started playing the unmistakable strains of "Someone to Watch Over Me," and while the female weasel singing had a voice quite a bit smokier and rougher than Gazelle's the song was no less sweet for it.

"It's my greatest shame," Nick said by way of greeting as he offered his paw to Judy to dance again, "I'm horribly soft at heart."

Judy simply laughed and let herself brush against his body. "It's one of the things I like about you," Judy replied, and she could hear as well feel it when he said, "Mm-hmm."

"It must be an awfully long list," he teased, and Judy waited a moment before she said anything, trying to hold onto the simple pleasure of dancing with Nick.

Before too long, though, her impatience won out, and she said, "We need to set a trap."

"And what were you thinking of for bait?" Nick asked.

It was a good question. They had precious little to tempt anyone with; although the frame job on Nick might falter it still couldn't be positively proven to be a frame job with Redfurred unavailable to testify. Judy had already given Bellwether everything she had wanted by giving her Lionheart in a way that the ewe could take credit, but she thought that it might just give them an opportunity now.

"When you turned over Randall Steerven's books, you didn't give them everything, did you?" she asked.

Nick's pulled Judy slightly closer to him even as his footwork remained impeccable. "Not everything, no, but nothing that'll do me any good. I've got a few duplicate ledgers hidden away in safety deposit boxes, but they're worthless with Randall Steervens dead."

"That's not true," Judy said, and she couldn't keep the smile off of her face as she leaned against Nick.

"That the ledgers are worthless?" Nick asked.

With his voice low, it was hard to hear him over the sound of the music, but Judy could hear the confusion in his voice. She stopped moving with Nick until they were both standing on the dance floor. He looked down at her, head cocked to the side, and Judy reached up to gently grab his cheek with one paw, pulling his head down until he had bent down far enough that she could have kissed
him on the mouth. "That Randall Steervens is dead. Tomorrow morning we're going to one of those safety deposit boxes and bringing Steervens back to life."

And then, since his head was at the perfect level, Judy kissed Nick until the confusion melted away from his face as he leaned in, his focus solely on her. Judy had planned on explaining herself once the kiss ended, but when Nick made no motion to break the kiss, instead gently lifting her up until his arms were wrapped entirely around her and squeezing her against his chest. Well, Judy thought, I guess it could wait a few minutes.

Author's Notes:

The title of this chapter, "Say it While Dancing," comes from a 1922 Abner Silver song. Considering that the crux of this chapter is the discussion Nick and Judy have while dancing, it seemed appropriate.

Judy noting that Bogo somehow wears a suit like a uniform, as well as the fact that he was actually at his home when they call, was intended to indicate that the particular Sunday that this all happened on was one of his days off. In the movie Bogo's never actually seen wearing anything other than a police uniform (unless you count an app that crudely pastes his head over that of a scantily-clad tiger), but he does presumably have both other sets of clothes and days off. I suppose he might have given himself and Clawhauser a "security assignment" as a thinly-veiled excuse for attending Gazelle's concert at the movie's end, explaining why he was in uniform then.

Seeing as how this is the second to last chapter of this story, there are plenty of threads tying it back around to the beginning. Judy's boring first month with the Bureau transcribing telephone calls was touched on in chapter 2. Also as she notes, the assignment that kicked this whole chain of events off in chapter 3 was only to determine whether or not the nightclub the Thief of the Night was violating Prohibition by selling alcohol.

That Judy was able to dial the operator on Redfurred's telephone indicates that he had a telephone with a rotary dial, which were first introduced in the late 19th century and quickly became common as the alternative was to always begin a phone call with a direct connection to an operator who would operate a switchboard to properly connect a call. That the operator speaks slowly is a reflection of telephone technology at the time; in the 1920s the quality of the sound reproduction wasn't all that great, and speaking loudly and slowly was still frequently needed to make yourself understood.

Judy crosses her fingers for luck in the movie, and the gesture itself far predates the 1920s. The gesture has in fact been used for centuries, possibly as a result of its use by both pagans and early Christians resulting in it becoming widespread.

Bellwether did in fact instruct Judy on three separate occasions to find an excuse for arresting Nick, first in chapter 11, then reminding her in chapter 23 and for the last time in chapter 34. She does seem to have something of a one-track mind when it comes to Nick.

When Nick says that their investigation might be more than a tempest in a teapot dome, he's combining the common expression "tempest in a teapot" with a reference to the Teapot Dome Scandal, which would probably be remembered as the biggest US government scandal of the 20th century if it hadn't been for Watergate. The details emerged in 1922, shortly before President Warren Harding died in office in 1923, and it turned out that his Secretary of State, Albert Fall, had leased the petroleum reserves at Teapot Dome (an oil field in Wyoming) to private companies at incredibly low rates and without any competitive bidding. Interestingly, while Fall became the first Cabinet member in US history to be sentenced to prison (in his case for accepting bribes from the oil
companies to give them such sweetheart deals), no one was ever convicted of paying the bribes. Warren Harding’s reputation was further tarnished after his death once it became known that the Republican Party had been blackmailed by his mistress in 1920 to avoid having the details of his decades-long affair with her become public knowledge ahead of the election; to date Carrie Fulton Phillips is the only woman known to have successfully blackmailed a major US political party. In any case, in 1927 the details of the Teapot Dome Scandal were pretty well known by the general public and would be a reference just about anyone in the US would have gotten.

"Screwy" was a bit of 1920s slang to mean "crazy" and while it is still sometimes used in that sense its meaning has drifted more towards strange or unusual.

Officer Michael Bison is a nod to the Street Fighter franchise, in which the main villain (in the English version, at least) is a hulking man named M. Bison. As bison are the largest extant mammal native to North America, it seemed appropriate.

Windup toys are also quite old, with the first such examples being built in the 15th century for the amusement of royalty due to the expense of precision gears, springs, and other clockwork components. By the late 19th century, they had become drastically cheaper and could be mass-produced as toys, and they remained popular into the early 20th century when this story is set. Consequently, Judy's narration noting that Nick's movements are as jerky as a windup toy when he's trying to keep his composure is a historically appropriate comparison.

As noted in the author's notes for chapter 8, a water closet was a polite euphemism for a toilet in the 1920s, hence its appearance here (in the form of a small room separate from the bathroom likely converted from a literal closet) when the sight of a picture of Redfurred's body makes Nick vomit. Throughout this story I've tried to demonstrate that he's a little squeamish, and seeing a picture of someone who was beaten to death was finally enough to put him over the edge. Judy, in contrast, noting that she's incapable of vomiting is something that's actually true of real rabbits and is one of the reasons that they're so fragile in real life; if they eat something disagreeable, it has to pass through their entire system to be excreted. Whether or not this is also true of bunnies in the world of Zootopia is, I suppose, anyone's guess.

A lineworker is someone who works on power lines, and it seems like giraffes in Zootopia would be well suited to serve as a living cherry picker for a smaller mammal, as I implied was the case with the beaver riding the giraffe's head. After all, why bother paying for a machine when you can have someone do it just as well with their natural abilities? It seems like a market that giraffes could easily corner, at least until the machines get really inexpensive. Although most cities nowadays bury their power lines, in the 1920s it was still quite common to see tangled webs of hastily and cheaply put up lines on poles, which would inevitably fail due to weather or just their shoddy nature.

Way, way back in the comments for chapter 17, I had told Matri that "putting on the Ritz" would appear in the story in some form, and here's the phrase now. The expression means to dress fashionably, and was also used for the song "Puttin' On the Ritz" by Irving Berlin. As the song was written in 1927 but not published until 1929, the use of the song would be anachronistic in the story, but the expression did predate the song.

The name of the building that the club is in being Acme Exports Limited isn't a Road Runner reference, but actually a reference to the trend that was parodied with the Acme Corporation within that cartoon. In the 1920s as yellow pages and telephone books became more popular, businesses were quick to take note of the fact that these listings were alphabetical and that most people were too lazy to look very far down a list of businesses, preferring instead to simply call the one listed first in its category. This led to the name Acme being widely used by countless unrelated businesses (including, incidentally, Acme American Wrought Anvils, such as what would be featured in the
Road Runner cartoons) to the point that it became something of a generic name.

The club being named the Pink Pansy is a reference to the fact that the cocktails that many speakeasies served were called pansies. Most of these so-called pansies were either created or became popular as a way of hiding the bad taste of poor quality alcohol, as the top-shelf stuff made outside the US by reputable distilleries was out of the price range of most people during Prohibition and drinking something made in someone's backyard out of a still cobbled together out of an old radiator could be unpleasant.

Floors really can be made out of oiled dirt; it's significantly cheaper than concrete to simply seal the floor with a coating of linseed oil, and from the general description it should be pretty clear that the Pink Pansy is about as far from a high-class joint as you can get.

This was the second to last chapter of this story, and I've avoided providing much in the way of details as to what Judy's plan is for the trap that they're setting. I figured that it would be repetitive to explain it and then immediately have it get set in motion, but chapter 50 is going to wrap everything up, including whether or not they succeed. This is really the home stretch, and I hope you enjoy it! As always, thanks for reading, and if you're inclined to leave a comment I'd love to hear what you thought!
Judy woke up a few minutes before the alarm that Nick had set. He had wrapped himself around her, his long muzzle tucked between her ears, and she listened to his slow, even breaths as she waited for it to be time to get up. The light of the rising morning sun through the window of his bedroom made his fur glow, and his arms around her were warm and soft. Considering what they had planned in the Pink Pansy between dances before finally returning to Nick's house, she had expected to wake up tense and perhaps even a little nervous, but those feelings weren't quite there. She could feel a slight quivering of nerves, and maybe that would get worse as they actually put their trap into action, but more than that she felt confident that they would succeed. Maybe it was just the comfort of having Nick with her, but she tried to hold onto the moment, burning it into her memory.

When the alarm did at last go off, Nick had woken slowly, first squeezing Judy against himself before untangling his limbs from around her. "Are you ready?" he murmured in her ear before pulling his head away.

Judy nodded. "Are you?" she asked.

Nick jumped out of bed, landing lightly on his feet and stretching enormously before shutting off the alarm. "Ready as I'll ever be, I suppose," he said, and Judy nodded.

They got ready as fast as they could, and before too long they were standing in front of the bank where Nick had left one of his duplicate ledgers.

The bank was in the heart of the financial district, and there was a steady stream of mammals around them, males in fine suits and females in expensive dresses, but the line moved quickly enough. The architecture of the bank seemed to have been designed to inspire confidence in the bank's ability to keep money and valuables safe; the windows set in the front wall were narrow and tall and showed just how thick the walls of the first story were. The bank had been open for an hour or so and still looked immaculately clean, the polished white marble of the floor free from any scuff marks or litter. A thin and hazy cloud of cigarette smoke hung over the long counter with more than a dozen booths for tellers, arranged with little sets of steps in front of them so that even mammals shorter than Judy would be able to see the teller.

When it was finally their turn, the teller had looked at Nick with an expression of careful disinterest, but Judy thought she could see the wheels turning in the middle-aged goat's head. Nick was a fox, but he was also dressed well, the same pair of emerald cuff links he had worn previously at his wrists and his suit crisp and impeccably pressed. "How may I help you today?" the goat asked, and Nick smiled as he withdrew a small key from his pocket and set it on the counter.

"I'd like to take something out of a safety deposit box," he said, and then he leaned against the counter and added in a voice barely above a whisper, "I've got some very valuable documents I need to look at."

He winked at the goat, who gave no outward reaction. She inspected the key carefully and then nodded after transcribing the number on it to a piece of paper she had pulled from somewhere behind her desk. "I'll just need you to fill this out, sir," she said, and she slid the paper across the counter to Nick.

From what Judy could see of the page, it was a simple form of acknowledgement, and Nick filled it out quickly, signing his name at the bottom with something of a flourish. "I'll be right back, sir," the goat said, and she took the page and left her desk to go into the back of the bank.
Nick drummed his fingers against the counter as they waited, half-turned to look out into the lobby. Even though it was a Monday and most mammals who worked in an office should have been there, there were easily two dozen or more mammals all waiting for their turn. Most of them were taller than Judy and none of them seemed to be paying any attention to her or Nick.

After a wait of a few minutes, the teller came back. "The guard will see you to your box, Mr. Wilde," the goat said, and gestured at a burly ox in the uniform of a bank guard.

"Ducky," Nick drawled, and then he turned to the guard and asked, "I'll just need a few minutes. It is secure, isn't it?"

The guard gave Nick a thin smile. "If we didn't keep the door open, you'd suffocate in there. The vault's air tight."

"Well, that's reassuring," Nick said, and he started following the guard.

Judy began to follow, but the teller cleared her throat and the guard paused. "I'm sorry, miss," the goat said, "But only Mr. Wilde and Mr. Steervens are authorized to view the contents inside the bank. Bank policy."

Judy gestured at the lobby. "I'll wait here, then," she said, and Nick nodded.

"I'll make it quick," he said, and with that he and the ox vanished down the hallway.

As it turned out, it was more than half an hour before Nick returned, a slim ledger with a black cardboard cover tucked under his arm. "I'm sorry about that," Nick said cheerfully as he came into sight of where Judy had sat down in an overstuffed chair in the lobby, "There's so much here we might as well take it with us."

Nick turned and nodded at the guard. "You take care of yourself, Barry!" he called after the ox.

Barry turned and gave Nick a smile. "You too, Mr. Wilde," he said.

"I told you: call me Nick," Nick replied, and the ox smiled again.

"Bank policy, Mr. Wilde," he said, and they both laughed.

As Judy followed Nick out of the bank, she turned to him, more than a little amazed by his little show with the guard. "Barry?" she asked, and he shrugged.

"Being a guard's lonely work," he said, "Poor fella just wanted someone to talk to, really."

Judy nodded, remembering how eager Officer Clawhauser had seemed to talk when he had been her guard. They walked in silence after that until they were back to where they had left the car. Judy had parked the car about a block away from the bank, right next to a police call box. Compared to some of the other call boxes in the city, it was in immaculate shape and looked as though it had been freshly painted. Appearances in the financial district were important, she supposed as she opened the box to grab the receiver, but it was only that the phone worked at all that she cared about.

Nick leaned against the pole, watching mammals go by, and his presence was a comfort. If the mammal on the other end of the line had been less willing to hear the desperation in Judy's voice as she identified herself and made her request to speak to Chief Bogo she might have asked Nick to try smooth-talking, but after a few seconds that seemed to drag on the connection was made. "This is Chief Bogo. What's so urgent, Ms. Hopps?"
The buffalo's voice was tinny and weak over the phone, but there was no doubt that it was him. "I need you to get Director Bellwether into your office as soon as possible. I'll be there as soon as I can," Judy said, doing her best not to stumble over her words.

"Ms. Hopps," Bogo began slowly, "Is this about the matter we discussed yesterday?"

"Yes," Judy said, and in her relief realized she was nearly shouting into the phone, "Yes, absolutely, it is."

"Then I look forward to seeing you," Bogo replied, and with that he simply hung up.

Judy stood at the call box for a long moment, staring at the receiver she held in her paw, and then looked up at Nick. "We've got our chance," she said, and she couldn't stop the grin from spreading across her face.

Nick nodded, but before he got back into the car he paused, looking down the street with a thoughtful expression across his face. "You know," he said, "We're only about half a block away from Angelo's office. We really ought to tell him I'm not going to need a lawyer."

Nick's face split into a sudden smile. "Besides, maybe this way we can make Bellwether squirm a bit while she waits," he said, and Judy laughed.

"Let's go, then," Judy replied, and the two of them started walking in the right direction.

Although Judy would have liked to have held Nick's paw as they walked, she forced herself not to, trying to be content with just being by his side and occasionally brushing against him. They didn't speak on their way up to Angelo's office, but they didn't need to. When they were taking the elevator up to the floor that Angelo's office was on they were alone. Nick reached over and gave her paw a gently squeeze, and she nodded. She knew exactly what he had meant by it; he was there for her as she was there for him.

Judy kept that thought in mind as they entered the law office, where the receptionist was quick to direct them to Angelo. "Nicky!" Angelo said as Judy and Nick walked through the door to his office, "It's great ta see ya again. Listen, I've been askin' around, and I think I can get ya a plea deal for thirty years wid a chance a parole. Wid good behavior, ya'd be out in fifteen, twenny years tops."

Angelo's office looked much the same as it had the last time Judy had been in it; it still seemed comically over-sized for him, but he did have a stack of papers Judy would have been able to pick up and read without having to squint stacked on the large desk that his own tiny desk stood on top of. The little shrew puffed himself up, beaming as though he had given them wonderful news. Then again, considering that Nick was accused of the murders of three mammals, two of them cops, it might really have been a remarkable bit of legal work. "So c'mon over," Angelo continued, beckoning towards his desk and the stack of papers, "We can work out alla details, if ya want."

Nick walked towards the desk, a half-smile on his face, but he shook his head. "I'm afraid that's not going to work out," he said, "We figured out Bellwether's the one framing me."

Angelo reeled back in his chair, an expression of stunned surprise set across his tiny features. "No," he said, "Ya mean that? Really, she's framin' ya?"

"I'm afraid so," Nick said, "So the way I see it, she's not going to let this go. You know what she's like."

Angelo's head bobbed up and down, almost bird-like, before he replied. "But... if ya know she's the one framin' ya, whatcha gonna do?"
Nick's smile broadened. "What I'm best at," he said, and he gestured at Judy, "Make a deal."

At Nick's sign, Judy pulled the ledger out of the bag she wore slung around one shoulder. She gave it to him, and she could feel him drawing out the moment of contact as his fingers brushed against hers. "I thought, what do I have that Bellwether would want? Even if we could prove she framed me, you know she'd just wriggle out of it. Probably come after me twice as hard, too. So we're going to cut a deal with her."

"What kinda deal?" Angelo asked slowly, his eyes going from Nick's face to the ledger and back again, "What's dat book?"

"She might be willing to give me up in exchange for Randall Steervens," Nick said, flipping through the pages until he reached the end, "See? Sure looks like Randall Steervens is alive, doesn't it?"

Nick held the book out towards Angelo briefly, showing him the page that Nick had painstakingly doctored in the bank. The writing was a perfect match for Steerven's own, as Nick had written everything the deer supposedly had, but much more importantly the entries were all quite recent, the newest a mere two weeks ago. Angelo's eyes visibly widened as he saw the page before Nick snapped the book shut and gave it back to Judy. It was a promising start to the ledger passing muster, but the real test would come inside the police station. "We're going to make a little trade," Nick said, "She gets the book and can burn it for all I care. In exchange she pins the blame for framing me on someone else. I figure she has to have a patsy or two ready."

"An' you're goin' along wid this?" Angelo asked, turning to face Judy.

Judy shrugged. "I'm not a prohi anymore," she said, "Besides, we're going to double-cross her once she agrees."

"Ah ah ah," Nick said, waggling a finger in mock warning, "We don't want to put Angelo in a position where he'd have to lie if things go south. Surely you still hold onto some of those wonderful Bureau ideals, don't you?"

"Sorry," Judy replied, shifting uncomfortably, and Nick chuckled.

"We'll let it slide this time. Anyway, Angelo, we're on our way to see Bellwether and Bogo now and I just stopped by to say thank you. I didn't want you wasting your time trying to cut me a deal when we've got it all figured out."

Angelo licked his lips, looking from Nick to Judy and back again. "Listen, Nicky, dis is an awful idea. Why don't ya lemme help ya, huh?"

"I appreciate the offer, really I do," Nick said, "But it's too dangerous. You have a wife and babies. If things go wrong..."

He shook his head solemnly. "We've seen what happens to mammals who cross Bellwether," Nick continued, "I'll admit, she might be smarter than I am."

Nick paused a moment, and then shot a glance over at Judy. "That's where you were supposed to say that she isn't," he added.

Judy crossed her arms across her chest. "This really isn't the time for jokes," she said, and Nick nodded.

"I suppose it isn't," he said, "Anyway, I really do appreciate your help," he said, and he stuck out his paw for Angelo to shake.
After a moment's hesitation, Angelo reached out, grasping one of Nick's claw between his minuscule fingers, and the two mammals delicately shook. "Ya sure ya don't want no help? I'm an awful good lawyer," Angelo pressed, and Nick shook his head.

"Take care of Fru Fru, would you?" he said, "I'm not worth risking yourself over."

"Take care," Angelo echoed, slumping a little in his chair, and with that Nick and Judy left the little shrew's office.

It was a short drive from Angelo's law office to the Precinct One police station, and although the jokemobile (as Nick had once called it, permanently binding the name to the vehicle in Judy's mind) was quiet enough that they could have talked, neither one did. Nick showed no outward sign of tension that Judy could see at their upcoming confrontation, but when he had time to prepare he was incredibly good at hiding his emotions. Judy, for her part, could feel her heart pounding in her throat, and if she hadn't been too busy concentrating on driving she thought her foot might have tapped a hole through the rusty floor of the car.

She hadn't been nervous before, but they had reached the point where everything rode on what happened in the next few minutes. Nick looked up at the station and paused. "Are you ready?" he asked, and Judy nodded.

"As ready as I'll ever be," she said, and Judy opened the door and entered the station.

It was a flurry of activity, from mammals waiting to speak to the receptionist to officers hurrying around the building, some carrying stacks of papers and others escorting mammals in cuffs. Judy remembered exactly where Chief Bogo's office was, though, and she didn't stop for the receptionist, instead striding purposefully forward and trying to exude confidence. If anyone noticed, they didn't stop her, and when Judy knocked on the door to Bogo's office his answer was immediate. "Come in."

When Judy opened the door, she was somewhat disappointed to see that Bellwether wasn't there yet, although the chief had put out three chairs suited for smaller mammals in front of his massive desk. "Ms. Hopps, Mr. Wilde," Bogo said, "Would you care to explain what this is about?"

As Judy took a seat, she gave the buffalo an expression she hoped was suitably apologetic. "Not until Director Bellwether gets here," she said, and Bogo sighed.

He turned back to the stack of paperwork atop his desk and there were a few awkward minutes when neither Nick nor Judy had anything to do as the chief read through a report of some kind. A ceiling fan turned lazily above them, and Judy's ear pricked upwards at the sound. Nick leaned his chair back onto two legs and then let it fall back to the ground, looking from Bogo to Judy. Judy fidgeted, brushing at her nose, and Nick tapped a claw against his leg. "So how about those Cubs, huh?" Nick said at last, and the look that Bogo gave him could have curdled milk.

Before Bogo could say anything in response, Judy heard the clicking of hooves against tile, and a moment later the door swung open as Bellwether let herself in. "This had better be important," she said, "I have to prepare for my meeting with Hooves tomorrow and—"

The expression of disbelief on the ewe's face was comical as she realized that Bogo wasn't alone in his office. "What are they doing here?" Bellwether demanded, her voice rising, "Don't you know what they've done?"

"It's nice to see you again too," Nick replied, a smile crossing his features, "Why don't you have a
"You—" Bellwether began, but Bogo cut her off.

"Please have a seat," Bogo said, and then he turned his attention to Nick, "Ms. Hopps has something to explain."

By the way that the buffalo spoke, it was clear that he was warning Nick not to speak another word, and the fox seemed to catch the warning. Once Bellwether had sat down, with obvious reluctance, Judy began her explanation. "Director Bellwether," she said carefully, "Yesterday, we found one of your earrings at the apartment of Brian Redfurred."

"Who?" Bellwether asked, a slight scowl crossing her features as she looked at Judy.

"Brian Redfurred," Judy repeated, "He ran a numbers game in Feweler Park. He's also the one who really murdered the Zweihorns and Officer River."

"And you think an earring is proof I did it?" Bellwether sneered, crossing her arms across her narrow chest, "You're delusional."

"Now I understand if you're not going to confess," Judy continued, "Which is why we came to offer a trade."

She pulled the ledger out of her bag slowly and set it on Bogo's desk and flipped it open to the middle, where transactions for November of 1923 were neatly recorded. "Ms. Hopps—" Bogo began, but Judy pushed ahead.

"This is the ledger for how Mr. Big's money was laundered," Judy said, and Bellwether laughed without any humor.

"We've already got that," Bellwether said, "Now really, if you're just going to waste—"

"Not this one," Judy said, "This one goes to 1927."

As she spoke, she flipped to the very last page. Even as Bellwether started to lean in to look at the book, Nick leaped out of his chair, jumped up on Bogo's desk and sent papers scattering, and then jumped again, reaching for the ceiling fan with his arms outstretched. When he landed on the floor, his arms were raised in victory as both Bogo and Bellwether stared at him. Bogo had started to say something that might have been a curse or a question, but he stopped when he saw what Nick was holding. Or, more accurately, who Nick was holding. In Nick's left paw was a dormouse and in his right Angelo Petruccio. "Chief Bogo, Director Bellwether," Nick said cheerfully as he held out the squirming shrew, "Let me introduce you to the mastermind behind the recent series of murders."

"Who is also the head of the Black Paw," Judy added, getting out of her chair and walking over to stand by Nick.

"Well, co-head, right? It's you and Fru Fru at the top, isn't it?" Nick asked Angelo.

The shrew didn't respond, but Bogo at least had found his voice. "What the hell are you playing at?" he demanded, standing up and taking a step forward.

"We figured out who's been behind the gang murders," Judy said, "We can explain everything."

"You wouldn't happen to have a cage, would you?" Nick interjected, "I'd rather not keep holding both of these guys."
Bogo drew out a small wire cage from his desk, which Nick dropped the two much smaller mammals into. Once it was clear that neither was going anywhere, Bogo looked at Judy. "You had better start explaining," he said.

Bellwether had a stricken look on her face. "It was Lionheart who masterminded all of those murders," she said, and Judy could hear a tinge of desperation in her voice, "It had to be Lionheart, it had to be!"

"No, it didn't," Nick said, "Care to explain, Angelo?"

The shrew grunted. "I ain't sayin' nuthin'," he said, and Nick shrugged.

"Take it away, Judy," he said, and Judy did her best; she and Nick had worked out the details of their trap as best they could, but she realized they had never actually thought about how to explain it if it succeeded.

"After Nick's arrest, I knew he was being framed. We were trying to prove it, and yesterday we found the apartment of the mammal who actually murdered the Zweihorns and River. We found an earring identical to one that you have, Director Bellwether, and a gun identical to the one I had, the one that the murders were supposedly done with."

"Which it wasn't," Bogo interrupted, "Forensics confirmed that Ms. Hopps's gun wasn't the one used in the murders, but the one recovered from Brian Redfurred's apartment was."

"No," Bellwether said, and she pointed at Nick, "He's the murderer!"

"It looked like Bellwether had hired Redfurred to commit the murders, but he had held onto the murder weapon," Judy continued, "And then, when Redfurred wouldn't give it up, he was beaten to death. It all made sense. But Nick realized something very important last night: if he was being framed, then maybe Bellwether was being framed too."

Judy didn't think she would ever forget her shock at Nick's words when he had put forth his theory in the Pink Pansy, but the more she had thought about it, the more it had made sense. "He couldn't figure out who would frame her, though, and when I thought about it I realized that there was only once answer that made sense," Judy continued.

"There was something I had heard about the murders at Tundra Town Lanes that just didn't make any sense. Koslov sent the band that was playing that night away right before the murders happened. But why would he do that?" Judy asked, and then Nick picked up the thread of the story.

"Because Koslov knew who was coming for him. He suspected that he was going to be murdered, but his honor just wouldn't let him act on it, would it?" Nick said, looking down into the cage where Angelo glared defiantly at him.

The dormouse, by contrast, had fallen to his knees and was weeping, his arms over his head. "He trusted whoever arranged that meeting. It was Fru Fru, wasn't it? That's what this all comes back to. She knew all the names of Mr. Big's old gang, and it burned her up something fierce that so many of them had been disloyal. They turned their backs on her father when he was arrested. He stood strong, didn't he? He didn't squeal on any of them, and they were probably relieved when he had that fit of apoplexy and then couldn't. So the two of you started planning how you'd kill two birds with one stone: get revenge on all the traitors and take Lionheart out of the picture. The Black Paw would be the biggest, most powerful crime racket in the entire city."

"Ya can't prove nuthin'," Angelo replied, and his face was the very picture of anger.
"The two of you had a good plan, too," Judy said, "River and Zweihorn were both bought off through Redfurred, so when Carajou was murdered in the Thief of the Night you were ready to frame Zoya. She never worked for Mr. Big, but she was a traitor too, wasn't she? She wanted to quit the Black Paw, and no one can quit once they're in."

"It was well done, too," Nick said, "Someone slipped something in Zoya's drink, and then they put some blood under her claws. But the bartender at the bar she was at would never have drugged her, and he didn't see anyone approach her all night. But someone did. Was it you, pal?"

Nick directed this last question at the weeping dormouse, who moaned and shook his head. "Well, someone about your size, I think. They would have been able to sneak up the table and put something in Zoya's drink without anyone seeing anything. That's pretty clever."

"I'm not sure how you were planning on ending things, but I ruined it when Chief Bogo made the deal with me to let me investigate Carajou's murder. Suddenly, it wasn't going to be an open and shut frame job on Zoya. That's why my apartment building got burned down. You were trying to kill me to take me off the case."

Angelo didn't say anything, his grim gaze fixed on Judy. "And you," Judy said, looking at the dormouse, "I've seen you before. You were in the jail when River and Zweihorn arrested me, weren't you? You overheard Bogo and me making that deal. And you've been following us, haven't you?"

The dormouse nodded, sniveling, and Angelo turned on him. "Don't say nuthin', Lonnie! They just talkin'!"

Nick shrugged. "Maybe, but it's all the truth. So when Judy and I visited you at your home, you realized that you had failed: not only was she still alive, but I was back from the grave, too. The two of you had been careful enough all these years, though, so you didn't panic too much. In fact, you had a better idea: you'd give Judy all the evidence she'd need to pin the murders on Lionheart and then you'd frame me while you wrapped up your loose ends. You're not stupid, Angelo, and I'm sure you figured out that if I was still alive it probably meant that I had betrayed Mr. Big. But you never knew that Randall Steervens never existed."

For the first time since Nick had grabbed him, Angelo's expression changed, shock running across his features. "But— No, no, that ain't possible! He had ta be real!" he said, slumping against the wall of the cage.

"It is," Judy said, "Only the Bureau of Prohibition and the district attorney's office knew that, but it's true."

"You really should have checked up on that," Nick said cheerfully, "It's how we set our trap, but we'll get to that later."

"But you never infiltrated the Bureau of Prohibition, did you? You didn't think they mattered too much, but the police did," Judy said, and Bellwether made a choking sound at the words.

"So you started changing your plans a little. Scursly, Bauson, and Carajou were the ones who did the Tundra Town Lanes shooting, and you had already had Scursly and Bauson murder Carajou. You made sure that we'd find all the clues we needed to prove that Zoya didn't kill Carajou. That's how you've done all of this. You've been tampering with crime scenes," Judy said, and Bogo cut in sharply.

"Were the officers guarding the Thief of the Night in on it?" he asked, and a frown crossed Nick's
"I don't think so," he said, "You sent someone in through the environmental tunnel that connected to the hidden part of the basement, didn't you?"

When Angelo didn't answer, Bogo spoke again. "That had been frozen shut for days, at least," the buffalo said, "No one could have gotten through it after the murder was committed."

"No one your size," Nick corrected.

"Or my size, or even her size," he said, jerking a thumb in Bellwether's direction, "But it was a grate. A rodent got through just fine, I bet, and knocked over a bottle to make sure that someone could smell that there was something hidden under the floor."

"Lies," Angelo protested, but his voice was weaker, and Judy picked up from where Nick had left off.

"So you implicated Mr. Quill, who I doubt you cared about one way or the other. He was smart enough to know if he talked you would have him killed, so he clammed up. You probably fed him some kind of story, didn't you? Whatever you did, you waited until after Lionheart got arrested and told Quill to lie and say that Lionheart forced him to allow his crawlspace to be used."

"I wonder what Quill would say now if he knew we caught you?" Nick interrupted, and Angelo sagged even deeper.

"The next step was killing off Scursly and Bauson. You probably had them drive to a garage somewhere near Lionheart's sausage factory, and you made sure it was filled with carbon monoxide. A nice, clean death, and you had an accomplice saw Scursly's horns off for framing Lionheart with later," Nick said.

"The car they had driven—a Camellac sedan identical to one Lionheart owned, just in case anyone had seen them at Tundra Town Lanes and to make it look like Lionheart had a reason to want them dead because they used his car and then had to have another one like it stolen to cover that up—got pushed into the river with their corpses in it, but you had doctored another piece of evidence, didn't you?"

"The cigarette case with Carajou's address was planted in the Camellac," Judy said when Angelo didn't respond, "Probably after the car was in the impound lot. Again, it'd be pretty easy for a rodent to sneak in and do it."

"And Carajou's hotel was another great opportunity for planting evidence. The room was locked, but there was a gap at the bottom of the door. You had someone forge a note from Lionheart and put it in Carajou's binder of the jobs he took. Probably had them destroy the one Carajou actually created, too," Nick continued, and then he looked over at the dormouse.

"Was that you, Lonnie?" Nick asked, directing his question at the dormouse, "There's plenty of jobs here for rodents, and you haven't been talking much."

There was a pause, but the dormouse nodded. "It was," he said, his voice a miserable high-pitched squeal, "I'll tell you every——"

Before he could finish, Angelo gave a cry of rage and jumped at him, but before he could make contact, Bogo had the cage open and the two rodents separated. The chief pulled out another cage and put Lonnie into it, and then motioned for Nick and Judy to continue. "You burned Scursly's apartment down and put a forged note from Lionheart in the ashes before the police got there," Judy
said, "And that was enough to get the police to raid Lionheart's house."

"You knew Bogo would bring his most trustworthy officers to Lionheart's house, but that didn't
matter, did it? Lionheart's committed enough crimes that there would be plenty to keep the police
busy even if there was nothing tying him to the recent string of murders. Besides, all that would
mean is that he was careful enough to not leave evidence of committing murders just lying around.
Planting Scursly's sawed-off horns in Lionheart's factory was probably a little more difficult than
planting pieces of paper, but you managed somehow."

"With Lionheart arrested, you knew his empire would collapse as his crimes came to light, so you
planned to finish your revenge by tying off two loose ends and framing Nick. It should have been
perfect, but you thought I'd believe Nick would do it, didn't you? When we stopped by your office
after I bailed Nick out of jail, you realized you needed to frame someone else. It's also when you
realized you needed to keep a closer eye on us. That's when you had Lonnie start following us,
wasn't it?"

"It was," Lonnie said weakly, and for once Angelo didn't say anything.

"There were rodents tampering with the evidence, weren't there?" Bogo asked, scowling down at
Angelo, "It's not that any of the officers involved turned traitor."

"I think so," Judy said, "He thought you'd buy it if you wouldn't believe that so many of your
officers could be involved. Someone swapped out the bullet fired from my gun for the comparison
with one from Redfurred's, and I'll bet that someone swapped out the roll of film, too. If Redfurred
visited Zweihorn at night before, there might have already been a photograph that could be used for
blackmail that could have been tampered with to show Nick instead of Redfurred."

"It might have been Fru Fru forging notes and photographs," Nick said thoughtfully, "She always
did have an artistic streak."

Angelo said nothing, but his scowl deepened.

"And what about the test for gunshot residue?" Bogo asked.

"There was probably a rodent hiding in the technician's case, wasn't there?" Nick asked, "Dr. Tolmie
said varnish could give a false positive. Just applying a dab to the right swabs before they were used
would have been enough."

Neither Angelo nor Lonnie said anything, and Judy continued. "When you realized that you needed
to frame someone else, that's when Redfurred was killed. You ordered him beaten to death and
planted an earring in his apartment. Are you missing an earring, Director Bellwether?" Judy said.

"No, not that I can remember," Bellwether said, and she sounded somewhat dazed.

"You must have had an identical pair bought. Or you had it stolen from Bellwether and she just
hasn't noticed yet," Judy continued.

"You were probably setting this up for us to fail, weren't you?" Nick said, "To try and make it look
like we were framing Bellwether so you could get rid of both of us."

Angelo stayed silent, and Judy turned to Bogo. "This is enough to get a warrant to search his house
and his office, isn't it?"

The smile that Bogo gave her didn't seem to fit his face; it looked almost predatory. "It is," he said,
"Mr. Petruccio, this is a battle you're going to lose."
Angelo threw himself against the side of the cage. "Then take me," he said desperately, "I'll confess ta everything, I swear. Jus' leave Fru Fru alone, will ya? We got children, ya know."

The look that Bogo gave the shrew was entirely without pity. "You should have thought of that before building a criminal empire. You can throw yourself at the mercy of the district attorney."

Angelo slumped to the floor of his cage. "How'd ya catch me?" he asked, "That secret hole in the fan's been there for years."

"I rubbed peppermint oil on my fingers before we shook paws in your office," Nick said, "I could smell you up there. She could hear you, too, when she knew what to try listening for."

Nick nodded his head at Judy. Angelo took a moment, and Judy was sure he was thinking through the plan that she had worked out with Nick. Once she had realized that Angelo and Fru Fru had been the ones arranging everything, the pieces had quickly fallen into place as to how must have done their dirty work, including that they must have had a way to listen in on conversations in Bogo's office. That they had simply made a hidden tunnel through the walls, floors, or ceiling had seemed like the most likely possibility, and by using the ledger supposedly written by a very much alive Randall Steervens as bait, they had ensured that Angelo would want to go along and listen for himself, particularly after Nick had hinted at the possibility of Bellwether destroying the book once they made a deal. After all, if Angelo and Fru Fru were targeting traitors while consolidating power, there was no one they would have wanted more than the silent partner they thought had brought Mr. Big down. By making their plan in the Pink Pansy, where it was too loud for them to be overheard, Nick and Judy had made sure that it had been a surprise, and by acting as though every word they had said before springing their trap could be overheard they hadn't given Angelo a reason to doubt the story they had told him in his office.

"How'd ya figure it wasn't Bellwether?" Angelo asked after a long moment, looking up at Nick.

"If Bellwether really had framed me, she wouldn't have lied to me about Judy making a deal to save herself," Nick said, and when he looked over at the ewe his expression was bland.

"She'd wait to gloat until she was sure it stuck, the same as she did for Mr. Big," Nick said, but Bellwether didn't seem to notice his words.

"It really wasn't Lionheart?" Bellwether said, "It was him?"

She was looking down at Angelo with an expression somewhere between disappointment and terror. "But— But I've staked my reputation on this! J. Edgar Hoover's going to be here tomorrow and—" Bellwether broke off, apparently unable to finish the thought.

Judy thought that the ewe deserved far worse for the casual cruelty she had shown to Nick while he had been arrested, but she said nothing. Nick, however, seemed perfectly willing to speak. "And by stealing the credit for Lionheart's arrest, now you've stolen the blame for getting it wrong," he said cheerfully, "Funny how that works, isn't it?"

Bogo simply sighed. "This is going to be a lot of paperwork," he said.

The days after the arrests of Angelo and Fru Fru were somehow both the longest and the fastest that Judy had ever lived through. It seemed as though she had been interviewed at length by every mammal who could conceivably be involved, from the police to the district attorney, and even J. Edgar Hooves himself. Unlike her interrogation following Nick's arrest, though, every single mammal had been polite, asking clarifying questions and for confirmation on details. At least, every
mammal except Hooves, who had only stopped in briefly to congratulate her. "The Bureau of Investigation could use a mammal with your talents," he had said, the words coming out surprisingly fast as the pig shook her paw and gave her his card, "I'm glad that this wasn't a wasted trip."

Despite his words, Judy wasn't sure she had exactly liked the pig; he had seemed to carry a cold, calculating air that even the warmth of his words couldn't offset. None of her other meetings stuck out much in her memory, although she did frequently find herself wishing that Nick could have been with her. She understood why it was important for their testimonies to be separate, but it felt as though they hardly saw each other; Nick seemed to be in extraordinary demand with Robert Cowe, the district attorney (who as it turned out preferred being called Rob over Bobby) and Chief Bogo.

When Judy did get to see Nick, after long and exhausting days of answering every question that they could, they had barely had the energy to try to keep up on the way that the case was proceeding. Judy had tried not to show her pleasure at reading that Director Bellwether had been asked to step down from her role as the head of the Bureau of Prohibition, but that news, which might have made the headlines if there wasn't more going on, had been buried deep in an evening edition. Day after day, the papers were gleefully reporting on the biggest bust in history, as more arrests and the details leaking out began to paint a clearer picture of the true extent of Angelo and Fru Fru's empire. They had likely gotten married in the first place to merge together Mr. Big's Zootopia Outfit with Angelo's Black Paw, and if it hadn't been for the timing of Mr. Big's arrest and the need to lay low for a while they likely would have already run the city. A suspicious number of judges had announced their retirements, and Judy suspected what only the boldest of papers even hinted at—that the reason for Angelo's incredible record as a defense attorney was having a fair amount of the legal system in his pocket. Lionheart, meanwhile, seemed as though he'd be mired in a legal battle claiming that the evidence of his other crimes the authorities had only because he'd been framed shouldn't be admissible.

Otherwise, straightening out the pieces of Nick's life was surprisingly time consuming, from getting reimbursed for the bail money that Judy had paid to getting his Buchatti out of impound. Judy had barely had the time to send a quick telegram to her parents, promising that she was alright and would visit them soon, before the papers had started giving her the credit for taking down Angelo and Fru Fru. To her significant embarrassment (and Nick's unabashed delight) the first paper to run the story was the *New Yak Evening Graphic*, with an enormous composograph on the front page of her triumphantly holding Angelo and Fru Fru Petruccio in her paws. Leaving aside that the image showed something that had never happened, only the face on the bunny in the picture was actually Judy; whoever had been the body model was significantly curvier and had a magnificent fluffy dewlap at her neck. The model was also wearing a much more revealing dress than Judy ever had, and Nick had tapped one finger on the image. "See, when we go out on the town, this is exactly the dress you'll be wearing," he had said.

"It won't look as good on me," Judy replied, and Nick had laughed.

"Of course it won't," he said, "It'll look better."

The sentiment had been sweet, but the accompanying article had been nearly as inaccurate as the composograph. It credited Judy as a private investigator rather than a fired prohibition agent and didn't mention Nick at all. He, at least, had not seemed to mind, not even when variations on the story started to be picked up in more reputable newspapers.

If the inaccuracies bothered any of the mammals asking them questions, Judy never got a sense of it, and when the last day of questioning came she was ready for it all to be over. Right before she was finally free to go, a mammal she had never seen before had showed up. He was a bull in the uniform of a police captain, and although he had a build to rival Bogo's, his liquid brown eyes seemed soft
and kind. "Ms. Hopps," he said as he offered her his hoof to shake, "I'm Captain Joe Ruminante. I think you've gotten a letter from me before."

His voice was as soft as flannel, and his expression was somewhat rueful as Judy realized that he was the head of the Zootopia Police Academy and by extension the mammal who had rejected her first application. "It's— It's a pleasure to meet you, sir," she managed at last, and Ruminante chuckled.

"Likewise," he said, "Normally, we deliver these by mail, but I thought I'd make an exception for you."

He gave Judy a sealed envelope bearing her name and the address of the academy. "Congratulations, Ms. Hopps," Ruminante said, "I'm sure you'll make a fine officer."

"Thank you," Judy said, and she wasn't sure she could have managed anything else.

"It's just a pity about that fox of yours," Ruminante continued, shaking his head.

"Sir?" Judy asked, not entirely sure what he meant.

"We need more predator officers, Ms. Hopps," Ruminante said, and Judy felt a spark of hope ignite in her chest before he continued, "Predator communities trust predator officers more than they do prey. It's good policing, and I'd love it if I could make Mr. Wilde an offer too."

Ruminante sighed. "But the papers would eat us alive if the details of his past came out," he said, and the note of sorrow in his voice was either genuine or masterful acting.

"He's a good mammal," Judy said quietly, and she could feel her heart ache as she realized a fantasy she had barely even allowed herself to consider was truly impossible.

"I'm sure he is," Ruminante replied, and with that their conversation had been over.

When Judy had met up with Nick afterwards back at his house, she had tried to match his mood. He proposed a trip to Podunk to put his affairs there in order, and he pulled out a document he'd been working on. "I'm going to set up a scholarship for the students there," he said, and he didn't have to say the name for Judy to know that he really meant it for Milton, the wolf cub who dreamed of becoming a pilot.

"That's wonderful," Judy said, and her enthusiasm was unforced.

"The D.A. and Chief Bogo had an offer for me," Nick continued, "It's going to take a while to get through all the financial records for Lionheart and the Petruccios. They thought someone with my, ah, financial talents could help."

Nick paused. "So I think I'm going to be staying in the city for a while," he said, and Judy pulled him into a hug.

Just knowing that he wasn't going to move back to Podunk was a relief, and even if he couldn't be an officer it suggested that Chief Bogo, at least, had come to respect his talents. They stood there a moment, and then Nick caught sight of the envelope still in Judy's paw. "Is that what I think it is?" he asked, and Judy nodded.

"From Captain Ruminante himself," she said, and Nick's smile had lit up the room as he picked her up and spun her around.
"We keep getting more things to celebrate," he said, "But before our night on the town, how'd you feel about a little trip by train? We can go to Podunk, swing by Bunnyburrows so you can explain everything to your parents... First class, too."

"I'd like that," Judy said.

"Now, I do have just one more question," Nick asked, and his expression had gone uncharacteristically solemn although there was still a wicked gleam in his eyes, "Are your parents going to be more upset at the part where you're living in sin or the part where it's with a fox?"

Judy couldn't help but laugh at the question, which she thought might have shown genuine concern on Nick's part. "They'll have to deal with it," she said, "I'm never going to be ashamed of you."

"Really?" Nick asked, and his ears perked, "You're giving me carte blanche here."

The interior of the first-class cabin was luxurious in a way that Judy couldn't have guessed at. They had an entire little compartment to themselves, which seemed to be larger than her entire apartment had been, and it was so finely made that Judy thought it would put hotels to shame. The walls were paneled with walnut, and the bed, writing desk, chair, and a little sofa all matched. There were electric lights in glass sconces on the walls with elegantly filigreed brass bases, but it seemed as though the compartment would be plenty bright once morning came; in addition to the windows set into the train's side, the entire roof was a beautiful assembly of glass panels in a brass frame. Three fine velvet shades, dusky maroon in color, were currently retracted and the night sky was entirely visible. The bedspread was exactly the same color as the shades, as was the upholstery on the chair and sofa.

It was on the sofa that Nick had sat down, curling his arm around Judy as she looked up through the roof and at the buildings of Zootopia moving past them, slowly at first but then picking up speed as the train left the city. "Well," Nick said, "We've got about eight hours before we get to Podunk."

Judy shifted herself over until she was sitting on Nick's lap and then leaned back against him. She brought her paws up against the fluffy sides of his neck, where she had learned that he liked to be brushed best. Judy's fingers sunk into his fur and he practically purred in pleasure.

"So when does the police academy start, anyway?" Nick asked, and Judy hesitated.

Nick must have sensed it, because he leaned his head downwards, curling his neck around Judy's. "You are going to go, aren't you?" he asked.

Judy sighed. "I've spent my entire life working towards becoming a police officer," she said, "And I've been accepted to the academy now but..."

"But?" Nick asked.

"But you wouldn't be my partner," she said.

That was really the heart of it. Judy could imagine herself working to keep the streets safe, ensuring that criminals got caught and went to jail. She had been imagining it for years, from when she had been too young to really grasp what it would mean, and her mental image of what it meant to be an officer had slowly changed. Now, she realized, it was impossible to imagine doing it without Nick at her side. She knew he would watch her back, the way she would watch his, knew that her own strengths and weaknesses aligned with and were opposite to his own in ways that made it seem as though they had been made for each other. Maybe she could have that with another officer. But then again, maybe not.
"Oh," Nick said, and he nuzzled his cheek against hers, "You really are too sweet sometimes, you know that?"

"I'm being serious," Judy said, but she didn't push him away.

The genuine affection in his tone was obvious even through the teasing. "So am I. What do you want?" Nick asked, and he gently spun her around so that they were facing each other.

Judy watched the lights of the city continue to streak by as the train picked up speed. What did she want to do? She could accept the position at the police academy and finally achieve her dream. She could take up J. Edgar Hooves on his offer and see if the Bureau of Investigation would take her. She could even make the lie that the papers had reported a truth and go into business as a private investigator. "What about you?" Judy asked at last, turning the question around on Nick, "Are you going to take that job Bogo offered you?"

"I haven't decided yet," Nick said, "It does sound pretty appealing but..."

"But?" Judy asked.

Nick chuckled. "But if you decide you want to be a private investigator like the papers say you are, someone's going to have to keep an eye on that little bunny head of yours," he said, and he kissed the top of Judy's head, between her ears.

The spot he had kissed seemed to tingle, and Judy was quiet a moment as she considered. "I know what I want," she said at last.

"And what's that?" Nick asked.

"I want you," she said.

"Well, that's quite a coincidence," Nick said, "Because that's what I want too."

Judy hugged Nick, tucking her head against his. He was warm and soft, and the gentle rocking of the train was lulling. "Then I guess there's no hurry to choose about anything else."

"Very wise," Nick said, and they both lapsed into silence.

The train had passed beyond the borders of the city, and the sky stretched above their cabin, uninterrupted by any buildings. Stars twinkled above them in the vast sky as the lights of the city receded into the distance. Judy knew that a lot of what was coming was going to be difficult. No matter that Nick had joked about it, introducing him to her parents wasn't going to be easy. Living with him in the city, loving him, wouldn't be easy; she had gotten a taste of what other mammals would do and think and it had been incredibly bitter. For once, though, for the first time since she had been a kit and had set her sights on becoming a police officer, the future seemed as limitless and as full of possibilities as the sky was full of stars.

Author's Notes:

Normally I end these author's notes by expressing my appreciation for you, the reader, but for the last chapter I want to start with it. It's been quite a journey; this story took almost a year in real time to publish and counting the author's notes is nearly a quarter of a million words long. Whether you've been reading from the beginning, picked up this story while it was in progress, or you're reading this months or even years after it was published I want to say thank you. Thank you for sticking with me. It's been my hope that I've been able to add a little pleasure to your day; I know that you've done that
It's more than a little bittersweet for me to realize that this story is now well and truly over. I try to make my stories feel like they're windows into a vivid world that existed before I opened the window and will continue to do so even once it's closed. If that isn't sufficient consolation, this isn't necessarily the end of Jazz Age Nick and Judy; there's still so much history that they could be around for, from the end of the Roaring Twenties and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 to the end of Prohibition in 1933 and the US's entry into World War II in 1941.

As for this chapter itself, I usually applied chapter titles (as well as chapter breaks) after the fact, but for the final chapter I knew from the start that it had to be "The Song is Ended (but the Melody Lingers On)," which was composed by Irving Berlin in 1927. It's so wonderfully evocative of the sense that I wanted this story to end with. The case has been solved, but that's not really the end for our two main characters. The future is wide open for them, and I think it's a sign of how both have grown to accept that possibility together as they ride a train out of the city content to have each other even if they haven't decided what to do next.

I'd also like to comment on this story as a whole. It went through an enormous number of changes, but it started from two pretty simple ideas: I thought it would be neat to set a Zootopia story during Prohibition and I realized that Fru Fru may not be as innocent as she seems. After all, in the movie before she realizes that it's Judy, the bunny who saved her life, about to get iced, her objection to her father doing so isn't that murdering mammals is wrong—it's that he promised not to do it on her wedding day.

I did a ton of research before I started writing; if you've read my end of chapter author's notes, you've read more than a novel's worth of historical trivia and detail about the 1920s. Modeling Mr. Big after Al Capone was an obvious choice, and then things started falling in place around that; having Mr. Big become incapacitated after the fall of his empire seemed like a good motive for Fru Fru, and a twisted series of gang murders appealed to my own fondness for convoluted mysteries.

I'm a huge fan of mysteries myself, and one of the things that is often helpful in solving fictional mysteries is meta-knowledge, which I tried to exploit to make the ending be surprising when it happens but obvious in retrospect. I touched on this a little in my first story; when Nick and Judy are watching a terrible police procedural show, Nick correctly deduces who the crooked cop has to be because the actor playing them is the only officer not to appear in the opening credits as a main or supporting character. That kind of deduction is frequently quite useful for figuring out stories, so I thought it'd be interesting if I could use that to my advantage.

I intended it to seem obvious that Bellwether would be behind everything, and if you've seen the movie it's the natural choice. Since I figured that a Bellwether in an era where it was more acceptable to hold prejudices wouldn't try to hide her own dislike of predators, it helped make it seem like she had to be the culprit. Hopefully the true solution feels like it works rather than that it comes out of nowhere, but I did try to include all kinds of little clues, most of which Nick and Judy explain.

There's one clue that the characters don't touch on in this chapter, and is one of the bits of foreshadowing I was afraid might be too obvious and that someone might catch too early. In chapter 15, when Nick and Judy go to Fru Fru's house, Nick introduces Judy to Angelo and Fru Fru as Agent Hopps, and Judy doesn't follow up by mentioning her first name. Throughout the conversation in chapter 16, Nick never calls Judy by her first name either. When Nick and Judy leave, though, Fru Fru calls Judy "Judy" even though she shouldn't know that. Obviously, she knew this because Lonnie had provided the information to her and Angelo.

The dormouse spying on Nick and Judy pops up many times throughout the story, first appearing in
chapter 4 as another prisoner in the jail that Judy is placed in when she's arrested at the Thief of the Night. He's therefore present to overhear the conversation that Judy has with Bogo and Bellwether, and he appears again in chapters 42, 46, and 49 when Angelo keeps a closer eye on Nick and Judy.

The district attorney preferring Rob over Bobby is a call back to chapter 17, when Nick implies he knows him well enough to use that nickname. Milton the wolf was in chapter 6, and Captain Ruminante was first mentioned in chapter 2.

Next week, chapter 3 of my next story "The Unlikely Heir," will be up, and that story will run on a weekly schedule in this story's place. If you like my writing and/or Sherlock Holmes, you might enjoy it, as it's a 19th century Zootopia AU written in the style of Arthur Conan Doyle.

Thank you again for reading, and I'd love to know what you thought of the story and particularly the ending!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!