The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

by GabrielLaVedier

Summary

Prison has changed nothing for Dawn Bellwether. Not really. Her heart is full of bitterness and hate, now focused, laser-like, on Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde, the relationship her scheme created. She would do anything to break them apart. And a being of great power hears that, and comes to try her, to test the strength of her 'anything.'

A supernatural tale of second chances and the power of just one minute, just one influence to change the whole world.

Notes

Mix a little Twilight Zone with a touch of redemption and this is what comes up. A repost from FFN, and featured on ZNN.
The Morning Star

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter One: The Morning Star

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The buzzing hum of fluorescent lights were Dawn Bellwether's only companions in her small cell. Twenty-three hours a day, with heavily-monitored exercise in the yard, her only glimpse of sunlight. Some of the guards said she didn't deserve it, and would not be so quick to act if someone tried something. It wasn't always a predator. Some of her fellow prey held her in contempt, when she had done it all for them.

She ground her teeth as she looked up at the bottom of the upper bunk. Thrift and laziness had moved the prison to over-purchase bunk beds for medium mammals and so she had one in her solitary cell, giving her some option for sleeping. Mostly she used the empty bunk to store the few things she was allowed, books on subjects the prison shrink had declared sufficiently bland and not prone to cause undue stimulation of antisocial tendencies. Stupid yak. They were banal and sedate but they were hers, and staved off any madness.

"Those ungrateful wretches..." she said to the emptiness. Her voice came back to her, if faintly, lost in the fluorescent hum. "I did it for them. All of them! Well... the little ones. The big ones could... well, there were bigger sheep and... it was for all prey!" She hit the mattress as her derailed thoughts upset her smooth attempt at justification.

Her internal clock was becoming fuzzy and imprecise. Almost ninety-six percent of her day was spent in the same box, interrupted only by a barred door that looked out onto a wall, with a security camera's unwavering red light reminding her that the unblinking, cycloptean gaze of the ones keeping her there was inescapable. She had only the vaguest notion of day or night, and time of day based on when the prison sent her over-processed mush to choke down.

Her thoughts were consumed by what little she could learn, given that her reading material was very static. Other prisoners were told not to discuss current events too loudly when she was passing, but she still heard things. The insufferable pair, the ones who had ended her plan by being the very thing she had feared, they were still in the public eye. The fox had broken from his place in the world and become a cop. But more than that, the two had become... become...

"A couple!" Dawn spat, sitting up in bed and seething. "I wanted predator and prey to stop cooperating on a daily, social level! And those two, they broke the big taboo and got together! Because... because they... stopped me..."

Dawn stared off into the infinite distance one of her solid walls created. She saw past it, through it, because for the moment, it wasn't there. There were only her thoughts. Her burning thoughts and her abject hatred for what those two were doing. They mocked her, because their affront to the natural order came about almost solely because of her machinations.

They were the final product of her scheming.
Of course, with such important symbols out there, the social consensus was changing. That unendurable sweet and friendly pop star had always promoted peace and harmony between predator and prey, but she was apparently on the forefront of open interspecies relationships by revealing her long-lasting but secret relationship with one of her muscle-bound, glittery dancers.

That openness, she caused that too.

Her perfect plan to make prey rise up and dominate predators with iron fists had brought together two total opposites and allowed the most outspoken proponent of integrated relationships to promote it even harder. Prey and predator were coming together in business, on the street, in the schools and even in the bedroom. She was staring into a funhouse mirror, watching her intentions distorted into their absolute opposite.

She even heard that that accursed Lionheart was out again, no longer mayor but still in politics. The very thought of him made her her shudder and grind her teeth. He had snowed her when they first met, playing on her soft wariness and need for notice. She played into his paw so easily, thinking she would have the clout to enact some of her policies.

She was undone the first day he put her in that little boiler room. And she had to smile and accept his saccharine grin as he smoothly rumbled about cutbacks and staffing troubles. Temporary. He had said temporary. She remained there, plotting her revenge on all carnivores from that shabby little dungeon he had foisted upon her.

Being forgotten and ignored had made the plan easier. No one looked down, no one saw the little sheep going about her business, being indispensable. She was the master cylinder. That lazy layabout lion was certainly good with speeches and had, she had to admit, a crafty and canny political mind. But it was couched in thoughts of power, control and strength. Such carnivorous thoughts, base, brutish and barbaric. She really had just been showing what lay at the heart of thecarnivorous psyche. If it took a drug, so be it. It was still true.

"I knew what I knew... predators are dangerous beasts. Brutes! They still are, it's in the DNA. Nothing can change reality, nothing changes truth. I know it, and they know it deep down. They have no choice but to be base monsters..." Dawn spoke to the emptiness of her cell like she was addressing the crowds she had always envisioned. Cheering prey looking up in awe and reverence, hanging on her every word, nodding in agreement. That had been her dream, the dream she had almost grasped, before it was all stolen away. Stolen by them.

"They destroyed a perfect plan for a better world, and they not only walk away, they get their disgusting and unnatural happily ever after. No!" She hit the bed again, rising up and setting to pacing. "No... they don't deserve a happily ever after. They don't deserve to be together. They ruined me. They should be apart because nature dictates it, but they should be ripped apart because they deserve to suffer. Oh what I would do to tear that happy little couple of perverted freaksapart..."

"What would you do?" A mirthful voice rang out around the room, emerging from nowhere and yet echoing from everywhere. "I hear that time and time again. But when I ask they just clam up. No one wants to own up to what they would do. But I suspect you would, Dawn."

"What's that? Who's there? Damned guards, don't do this to me! I don't want to see that stupid yak before I'm scheduled to!" Dawn cast fearful eyes around the room, looking for speakers or similar devices, rushing to the door to see if anyone could be seen retreating. She was holding her sanity well, or thought she had been. She was nowhere near the level of hearing voices. It hadn't been that long.
"Oh I am not one of your minders. But I have had a casual eye on you, Dawn Bellwether. You're fascinating, truly you are," The strange voice teased. "Driven, ruthless, even... predatory..."

"No! Don't you even dare say that!" Dawn glared hatefully around the room, gaze casting hatefully about. "I was acting like a prey animal, protecting myself from predators. I did what I had to do!"

"Did it to the hilt, loving every minute of it. You didn't just react to fear, a stimulus-response activity. You savored the things you did, the panic and chaos... the anticipation of Judy Hopps being torn apart by the tod that now shares her life and his her perfect match," the strange voice said, with a smooth and grinning tone.

"Who are you? How do you know all this?" Incapable of actually mounting an objection to the mysterious voice, Dawn needed to fall back of solving the mystery of its origin.

"Names... such permanent and yet ephemeral things. Naming a thing makes it a true thing, special and noted. Yet those names can fade away, until it becomes a nameless, noted thing to be named all over again..." the source of the voice moved through the room, as if a mammal was casually walking around, invisibly and intangibly.

"Fascinating. Then give me one of yours so I know what I need to tell that obnoxious yak in my next couch session," Dawn huffed, stalking around the small room herself, tracking the bodiless voice.

A subtle wavering in the air grew more and more present, coalescing by small amounts into the form of a small, gray sheep ewe, of about Bellwether's age, dressed in a simple gray robe, her eyes blank white, and a playful smile pulling her lips. "I have been named many times. Given names but never presented one. Why should I let anyone else think they make me special? I already am."

Dawn regarded the other sheep with a critical eye, her expression dismissive. "Really? Being my species? My imagination got really small in this stupid cage. So what are you supposed to be? Some kind of demon?"

The other ewe scoffed, waving her hand dismissively and sending Dawn tumbling back into a pained heap. "Don't you dare attach such pitiful trifles upon me. Gods, devils, petty nothings compared to what I am. I am older than any such things. Older than your society. Older than your intellect. I watched the sun dawn on your kind. But you need a name to ease your mind. Call me Morning Star, if it will ease your mind to know I have a name."

Dawn cared little for the pain in her twisted limbs. It was less important than the revelation it wasn't an hallucination, her own mind eating itself out of isolation. This strange creature was real. Painfully real. She was some ancient... thing... a manifestation of pure age, of ancient arcana. Her capabilities were unknown but seemingly potent. "Why... why are you here?"

"Ahh, yes. Down to business," Morning Star said. "I am here because I am an ancient being. Beyond anything you can understand. I watch this world. I watch all worlds. You may be amusing creatures but even I can get bored. If it suits and amuses me, I will come into any place I think some desperate seeker will find me. Anyone with a dream or desire they say they will literally do anything to reach. I test their mettle, to see how literal their prideful and passionate insistence really is."

It took Dawn some time to process the speech, which she did as she slowly rose to her trotters, eyes never leaving the strange creature. "You're a fairy tale. I heard about you, once, around a campfire. You live far from us. We have to come to you."
"I move by my will alone. Sure, it's fun to watch your kind crawling and scrabbling through hostile wilderness. But if it is to my will, I'll come straight to the heart of civilization to see who I want. And I want to see you, Dawn Bellwether. The hate in your heart burns so bright that it wants to rip apart a couple that is perfect, not for the bigoted reasons you could list for days on end, but because they beat you at the game you thought was yours and yours alone to win, and through that found one another. I could tell you, in minute detail, how every thing you did and said made them come together more and more, until now they may as well be one mammal..." Morning Star taunted.

"No!" Dawn cried, grinding her teeth and seething through them. "No. Just get to it. What kind of test do I have to pass? What do I need to do? Sell you my soul or something?"

"Oh yes, now the ignorance," Morning Star laughed. "What would I need with the petty scrap of ephemera you creatures call your soul? It's worthless to me, and seems barely of any use to you. This isn't a business transaction, this is my whim. My fiat. Frankly, I just want to see what you would do when I offer you everything you want. You'll do anything to get your will, right? If I never told you the actual price, would you still take your heart's hate?"

"Exactly what I want... but you won't tell me what it costs?" Dawn asked, a brow quirked. "That's a deal for suckers. I need it in writing, with terms and conditions. I don't put my name down unless I know what it'll cost me."

"The eternal politico!" Morning Star laughed, slowly strolling around dawn with a grin. "There's a fine line between cautious and paranoid. You don't sign on the dotted line for Honest John the weasel with a used car because you know you can't trust him. You can't trust me, but you should. I'm a being of inestimable power. If it pleased me to trick you, a mere contract wouldn't matter. If it pleased me to be honest, a contract would be worthless. You must take me at my word because you have no choice. I don't need to tell you how it will be accomplished. You said you would do anything if I can tear them apart. Will you?"

Dawn shifted nervously, caught inside the orbit of the stalking spirit. Even if she was made up like a sheep, she stalked and arrogantly asserted herself like a proper predator. "It's a disgusting abomination, and it needs to end."

"That one more than any other?" Morning Star asked.

"That one more than any other," Dawn confirmed, nodding firmly. "They are the manifestation of my failure, and the mockery of everything I tried to do."

"I love it when your kind are open with their selfishness, pettiness, bigotry and hate. It's so raw, so real, it cuts through all the things you tell yourselves. You're a small folk, and here you show it. Then say it openly to me, make it explicit, without any coy aversions or prevarication." Morning Star stopped before Dawn, blank, white eyes staring into her gaze. "Say to me, 'I will do anything to break the couple of Nicholas Wilde and Judith Hopps, and I will not, from this point forward, attempt to reverse myself or withdraw my statement.'"

It was unnerving, staring into the infinite whiteness, a depth piercing far beyond what the artificial skull could hold. Dawn had to shudder as she was stared at, and commanded to recite a formula without any input on the matter. Still, she took a deep breath and recited, "I will do anything to break the couple of Nicholas Wilde and Judith Hopps, and I will not, from this point forward, attempt to reverse myself or withdraw my statement."

Morning Star stepped away with a flourish, laughing and rubbing her hands together. "And so it begins! Now I can tell you exactly how this will happen."
Dawn stepped back, feeling emotionally drained as the heavy and intimidating atmosphere broke, leaving her in a kind of light daze. "Are you going to kill one? Make them hate each other? Maybe make one have an affair?"

"Oh no, are you kidding? I don't screw with minds that directly, it's not any fun. I may as well just set up the world as I want it, and know everything. Hardly entertaining. And I don't kill directly, again, no fun at all. I like entertainment," Morning Star said.

Dawn shook her head, gaping in disbelief. "This is crazy... you have power! Use it! Rip them apart! Throw them into a forest fire or something!"

"Do not tell me how to use my powers, you dust-crawling worm!" Morning Star roared, voice reverberating powerfully, bouncing off the walls and cowing Dawn into huddling submission. "This is my entertainment and my will. The solution is simple. Your scheme brought them together. I will undo your scheme. Or rather, you will undo it."

"Wh-wh-what do you m-mean?" Dawn stammered, her heart pounding in her ears. That terrifying cry hadn't just rocked her body. Her entire being was shaken and unnerved.

"You said you would do anything. Would you undo your whole scheme? You could modify it, but the universe is very resilient, and things can go out of control. The only guarantee of success is to never do the one thing that you know would bring them together," Morning Star noted.

"Do I need to recite something again, let you undo what I did?" Dawn asked, some hint of her steel edge seeping back into her voice.

"Oh I already know what I'm going to do..." Morning Star waved a hand, slicing through the very fabric of the universe, creating a wavering slash filled with writhing colors of every hue, including alien tones that had never been seen before. "You're going back. Back before the plan. Before Doug and those badly broken bleaters you had working for you. Before you were even the Deputy Mayor. All you have to do is resist the urge to undertake your plan. Show me how much you want to split them apart!"

Dawn looked on the strange portal, fascinated by the bizarre colors. "I can end them. I'll remember them, I'll work to tear them apart in every sense..."

"There is... one catch..." Morning Star noted with a grin. "I can't very well send you back exactly as you are, with perfect knowledge of every little detail. You wouldn't give a true accounting of yourself. I cannot forcibly change your mind but I can reset it to what it was on the timeline."

"And what does that mean for me?" Dawn queried with a suspicious eye.

"Watch your tone, but it's a valid question," Morning Star cautioned. "You will be exactly as prejudiced as you were. No more, no less. The state you were in, it will be that state. Not this one. You will feel about predators exactly as you did at that point."

"Then nothing changes..." Dawn said darkly.

"Oh how little you remember..." Morning Star chuckled. "You will remember them, remember their relationship. You'll recall your plot, your cohorts, but you won't remember the very minute details. No lottery numbers or sports scores or anything like that. And just to make it more interesting I changed one moment. A single, small, powerful moment."

"Stacking the deck against me?" Dawn asked, stepping boldly up to the tear.
"I don't need to. This isn't anything you should care about. But every life is full of moments, every moment has a choice. A muzzle could make someone choose to break. A scar from a bully could make someone choose to never give up. One moment, one choice. I changed one actor and the moment passed so differently," Morning Star sighed, almost wistful.

Dawn stood, determined, even haughty. "No little moment is going to change what I am, what I think, and what I'm going to do."

Morning Star stood behind Dawn, grinning a huge grin and showing off predator fangs. "Oh I forgot to tell you..." She gave Dawn a shove, sending her screaming and bleating into the swirling colors. "It wasn't a moment of yours I changed!"

To Be Continued...
The Mind of Dawn

Chapter Summary

Thinking through the transit to the past and the return of an old mind.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Two: The Mind of Dawn

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Dawn was sure she had been screaming for a thousand years. A billion. Infinity. Time meant nothing and everything in the yawning void between moments into which she had been thrown. Colors passed by her eyes without registering as anything more than vague light, and multitudinous shapes writhed in the dark space just outside her eyes, giving her the vaguest impression.

She was screaming along at the speed of light and standing stock still, floating in nothing and trapped for a thousand eternities in the colorful emptiness. She was alone with her thoughts, in a deafening silence waiting for Morning Star's portal to take her back to before it all began. To destroy Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde.

Judy... Hopps... Nick... Wilde...

The names... the names were burned into her brain, indelibly marked. A rabbit and a fox. A rabbit and a fox in love, with each other. They were perfect together. So close and so in love they were one mammal, a union of opposites that could only join in sheer perfection. She had brought them together, through the force of her scheme she had brought them together. Turning predators against prey by... something Doug did.

Doug. From college. Slacker on the competitive darting team, another study in opposites. Not very driven, easily led by a flock head, but unwavering and able to see an action through to the end. He did the dirty work, she planned it all. But each time she tried to grasp what she did exactly, it slipped away.

Her mind was going back, in broad strokes, returning to how she thought at an earlier time, how she felt and what specifics she knew. Lottery numbers, sports scores, and something about plants. She remembered Morning Star, being in prison, a horrible crime, and the perfect pair. She made them and she wanted to... destroy them. The reasons were becoming hazier. It was something about species.

Fox and rabbit, not a common pair. The thought of a predator and a prey tickled something at the back of her head. Some measure of disapproval. She didn't see traditionally hostile types getting on well, and it didn't sit well, like tigers and wolves, or tree squirrels and ground squirrels.

Nothing specific in predators came to the forefront, beyond crippling annoyance and a small stab of
genuine ire, given how her stature had left her at the mercy of being pushed aside by bigger predators. But as her trip went she could remember, with greater clarity, how large prey had also bullied her aside.

Her life had not been pain. It had been something worse. Pain was intentional hurt. A mammal bringing suffering with a mind focused on specifics. Worse than that was the crippling emptiness. To them she was a zero. An empty set. A cipher. She didn't matter enough for them to invest pain. They didn't even spare a thought to making her miserable. They just ignored her completely.

She had been noticed, to be used. The slower, dumber types always managed to get her to do the work they were not willing or able to do. They had ease while she toiled. A memory bubbled up, searing her mind like an acid burn. Leodore Lionheart, mayor of Zootopia. Predator. Power-hungry and insincere brute. But as fast as the thought rose, it faded again, until she knew no more than his name and face, if in a misty swirl she could pierce with effort.

There was no toehold for her hate, nothing 'real' anchoring attempts at fury. She was going through the motions, or perhaps playing pretend, like a lamb would. She was a grown ewe, too old for make-believe, too mature for a fantasy world growing more and more like some kind of odd dream. She knew it was real, but would soon be something else.

Going back and changing her path to eliminate the chance of romance would make her future never happen. She would not be a prisoner, reviled and mistrusted. She would do something new with life, and in the process accomplish a goal she could still feel somewhere inside was vitally important and entirely necessary. She had staked her own personal 'anything' on it. She couldn't afford to be a liar to a being like Morning Star. The challenge had to be met.

Her mind was back to that old way. Her plan was a string of vagueries, little shadow signposts containing Doug, flowers, the office of Mayor and the ZPD, ending with a fox and rabbit embracing in a way that could only be love. She only knew that it had existed. That any of the relationships existed. She knew in a detached way, like knowing the history and personality of a character in a book. She was looking down on her brain like a scholar peeking into a dusty tome. Everything was a million miles away, just asking to be looked at with no sense of connection.

Morning Star was foremost in her mind, all smugness and self-assurance. She could give anything, without having to regret it like the old stories. She was not getting power which could be taken away. She was going to take something away. Nothing could be stolen from her. She was in control.

Even still, Morning Star had changed something. Someone. Changed a moment. One moment. But that could not have been a big impact, or else there would be no point to insisting she stop her scheme. A large alteration would have ruined the plan anyhow. She'd need to see what was different. Maybe Doug had applied himself and started playing in the professional leagues, or finished school and became a science teacher at a high school.

The wondering came to an abrupt end. She started to feel inertia again, the feel the actual rush of something around her. Her eternity within Morning Star's portal was finished, and a bright light made her squint. It was the world, the way it had been long before.

Dawn grit her teeth and prepared to break through the over end of the space-time rift. She braced for some kind of impact, envisioning a disoriented landing and a confusion about basic directions. Thus steeled, she thought about her plan, and found very little save for her singular drive, to break up a couple.

To be continued...
Savanna Centering

Chapter Summary

Day one in the past, and just how things have changed.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Three: Savannah Centering

By: Gabriel LaVedier

When Dawn opened her eyes she was almost shocked by the finite reality following a her brush with surreal infinity. The colors were normal, the sounds were normal, the feel was normal. She stood still and it felt like it. When she cautiously moved her arm it felt like she was moving her arm. She was back in reality.

In every sense of the term she was back. Her mind was back, though she regarded it as normal; the mind from her past, in the future, was something she had not yet been, even if she had been that not that long ago. She knew what she knew and what was important. Some vague thing threw the mental equivalent of a temper tantrum, demanding she remember the rabbit and fox, and destroy them. She thought about them and wondered why some part of her was so eager to do away with just another rabbit and fox.

Her mental return in transit had left her disoriented, on some level. The little moving boxes of memories and impressions were being shuttled about in her head to make the switch, such that her future which was past was put in the back as what was left of her memories and feelings, while her farther past, the experienced present, was returning to proper prominence. The net effect was that she regarded the old memories not as sepia-toned flashes but as an unbroken chain of recent recollection right up to the moment she came back to catch up with them.

She was no longer thinking hard to remember where she was and what she was doing at that moment, but was seamlessly following along with her life, like someone walking from one room to another and not even noticing any kind of break and retaining continuity with the thoughts happening while crossing the threshold. She was in Savannah Central, right outside Savannah Central Station, holding a small valise that had not been with her in the portal but had been in her hand that day, the day she came to central Zootopia not to visit or make deals, but to stay.

She had come from a successful career in politics, a big fish in a tiny puddle. She had practically been born into politics, the Bellwethers being an old and established Meadowlands dynasty. But they were a Meadowlands dynasty. The prey citizens were easily led and always were willing to follow along with the more audacious members of their species.

She had done normal things, gotten an education, had friends, but ever over her head was the eternal specter of a career in politics. But it was a specter she embraced with the devotion of one embracing the ghost of a parent. She was good at it, working her way from a staffer for her father
to minor positions on small boards like the Fodder Board and the Water Authority. She made proposals with some impact, and cultivated a good reputation as a polite, quiet but shrewd politico, and forever thinking ahead in her proposals.

Ultimately, she had not only become a member of the Meadowlands District Council, she had succeeded her father as the Council Head. For all it meant, it was something at least. They were little more than a glorified suburb full of ungulates and some families of plains predators like ferrets and wolves, but they were a force to be reckoned with. The electorate exerted great influence over the whole city, given their large population. When someone like her got the herds of Meadowlands to flex their collective electoral muscle, ungulates and other non-hoofed prey from Outback Island to the heart of Downtown would listen, and often vote as needed. It wasn't often successful, but when it happened, even predator politicians took notice.

She could have retained the Council Head position, her numbers were good and she ran unopposed once. But she had grown to realize she could do more. She had ideas, big ideas. Ideas that she couldn't do in Meadowlands. She had notions to help the smaller prey who were locked out from certain jobs and locations. She wanted to help them. Her father had always told her how unfair predators could be to prey.

Even with their small numbers predators held incredible power. He had elaborated on the power structures of the predators, how they were connected by common cause, and how they were able to use their aggression and size to occupy key positions. A single wolf on the District Council had kept him grumbling, hating the wolves and all their kin. Snarling beasts out to invade the herd.

Deep down, she knew there were huge prey and tiny predators. The other sheep were much bigger than her, almost frighteningly so. Her bookish nature had been mocked by rams and billies, the nannies and other ewes were seldom eager to let her be with them, though some did let her into the circle. But family teaching loomed large and monolithic. She was convinced of the rightness of it, even if it was only a shadow, as present and important as the hot ire that came from the hazy space of her future memories.

She had taken her savings and rented a good apartment in downtown Zootopia, leaving the money she had received from her trust fund for the monthly expenses while she went after a political position in the heart of Zootopia. She was being bolder than any other sheep she knew, throwing herself into the city before she was even on a ticket, in order to start gaining credibility, to paint herself as something besides a suburban outsider. She was a real and proper Zootopian, not just another Meadowlander gawking at big buildings.

Not even her father had been so bold. He had been content to embed himself in the fabric of Meadowlands, safely surrounded by the flock, being mighty in his own small space. As a little lamb she had admired his great command. As a grown ewe... she still did. Her body had not been the only thing stunted by some force. She still held her father in high regard, even if he never dared. He had imprinted himself onto her mind. He was the reason she held power in esteem, he was the reason hate roared from the corner of her mind dedicated to the future that she had given up.

She would do something for Zootopia. She would make a mark on the city, she would become important. She would make something good happen for the little folk, the ones ignored, pushed aside, forgotten. The ones who lived in fear of the huge predators. Who lived in fear of all the huge folks. Predators were the problem, holding such great powers as they did. The solution was to help those affected by a lack of chances. The motto of Zootopia had to mean something. Everyone needed the chance to be anything.
She was going to offer them a chance. Zootopia was supposed to be good at chances. Second chances, and also first chances. She felt like she could trust the city, even given all the talking down her father had done about the city. It wasn't an unwashed cesspool of predator corruption. It was the shining beacon she had been drawn to, a place to really refine herself.

Demographics notwithstanding, she didn't trust her chances in the big races. Police Commissioner, District Attorney, Director of Parks and Recreation Areas. Prey voted for predators in Zootopia, in overwhelming amounts. A hot stab made her wince and fumble her valise a bit. Her unmade memories reacted to the power of predators. Hate welled up in that small pocket but just couldn’t radiate far. There was nothing there but a vague distaste for the odd fact of political life.

Predators lived with some stigma, and there were a lot of stereotypes. Most had disadvantages and turned to some shady businesses, but Dawn was sure it wasn't all of them, as her father told her. Some did, after all, go into law enforcement and politics. And she had forced her father to admit that politics was not a dirty business. It always seemed that predator politicians mostly did minor things, never too much or too little, to appease the prey base and not rock the boat, which meant leaving predators in their common state.

She wasn't like that. She wasn't just a wary, stalking predator minding the polls and keeping just enough prey happy to be reelected. She was going to do something that mattered. She was going to do many things that mattered. She would make Zootopia keep its promises, while bringing up the general welfare for her kind in a way no predator politician would do. In any capacity she would be out there fighting for the little guy, sticking it to the big lugs and getting them to join society on an equal level.

She had timed her transition perfectly, the major elections preparing to get going. There were big changes on the way, she was sure. All the big races were going to get underway, and no incumbent had any good chances. The city council was going to change a majority of its members if the polls were right, even without knowing who the new contenders were. Many of the director positions were in serious contention, especially for Parks and Recreation areas, which had had the director accused of graft. That would be a nice fit. But District Attorney... she had passed the bar and done some work in law. She could convince the electorate she would be firm on crime and mold the legal situation on the line she wanted, justice for small prey.

Her mind swam with potential, tickled by the teasing half-remembering of her specific path that led to her end. Details were gone. Only the burning thrust of anger kept certain identities boiling above the surface of foggy forgetfulness. The thoughts haunted her as she mechanically entered a cab, one sized for someone larger than her. She was lost in the back seat, tragically closer to the scent of many previous mammals, as well as poorly cleaned vomit and other things she preferred not to consider.

A long moment passed in silence, with Dawn just staring at the hack license, feeling slightly bitter towards Mr. James F. Capra. What stung her even deeper than merely being ignored, as ever, was that Mr. Capra was a goat, another prey species. Yet he treated her like a predator might. Or... like she imagined a predator might in a similar situation. She was thrown by the situation.

She softly cleared her throat and looked up over the divider to finally catch the goat's attention. "Hello?"

"Oh! Sorry. I thought those hamster jerks were opening my door again. They like to make me think I have a customer," Jams said with a bleating laugh.

Small rodents. Small rodents who were causing trouble for a prey species. So much for predators being the only problem and the little guy needing absolute protection. "Nope! Nope... just me. Can
"Sure, sure... I go out that was more often than not, I know the place," James said with a casual ease. He flicked on the meter and got his cab under way. "Sorry again, but I'm surprised to see someone of your... particular breed out in Zootopia. You usually stay in Meadowlands, where there are more things built for your needs."

She knew that he didn't mean to be denigrating. It was actually quite true. She just never thought about it much and the consideration was slightly uncomfortable. "Yeah, yeah, so they tell me. But I had to make a change. I couldn't spend my whole life doing nothing on the Meadowlands District Council. So I came here, where I could do some good!"

"Oh! You're a politician from out there. I get it. You're just in time for the political season, but I'll be you knew that. Planned it all ahead of time, probably already got something lined up. Yeah, you politicians, you've got a lot going on. Not me, it's why I drive this cab. It suits me, and its work that I can understand perfectly well," James stated with a firm nod.

"You really should think better of yourself," Dawn nearly-scolded. "It may not be perfect, but there still should be the freedom to be anything in Zootopia. That's the whole point of it!"

"You don't have to tell me. Born and raised here. I know the whole line, start to finish. I know anyone can be anything. And me, well, I'm a cab driver. I looked at everything, looked at my cab and said, hey, you and me, we can make this happen. So here I am, driving medium folks around, just taking it easy."

Dawn had to stop and think about that. She was used to some measure of ambition, her own or what she saw from her father. She wasn't sure what to make of a seemingly satisfied prey animal with no drive to break out and be dominating. "Haven't you ever wanted more? To be more and do move and just have more? You're free to go for it and you're free to relish your triumph."

James shrugged, rolling his neck to crack it and accidentally scraping the partition with his horns. "Why? It won't do anything for me, and it's not what I want. I make good scratch here, my coworkers respect me, the boss-lady doesn't ride my ass unless I deserve it, I can have three squares a day, Snarlbucks on weekends, McGraze for dinner now and then, plus a flat screen that fits in my apartment and cable. What am I missing?"

Dawn wanted to rebuke him, and rebuff his assertion. She opened her mouth to do so, but slowly let it close as she was forced to see there was no rebuff that actually would work. He had his life sewn up in a neat package, and it would be impossible to fault him. He had his Zootopian dream, and didn't need to be a powerful mammal. He just had to do what he did.

She rode in silence the rest of the short way.

The cab pulled up to the address, a nice apartment building that was well maintained. The thing had been modernized, shining glass and steel making it look more impressive than its scant four stories would normally appear. It even had a doorman, a burly buffalo in a dark red suit looking as cheerful as he could given his natural demeanor and the boring nature of his job.

"That'll be..." James began.

"Oh never mind. Just keep the change," Dawn interrupted, passing along three crisp twenty buck bills.

"Well, thank you very much. And hey, good luck with the election! If I see you on the ballot I'll
vote for you, uh..." James prompted.

"Bellwether. Dawn Bellwether," Dawn said with a bit of pride, sliding from the cab and shutting the door.

"May I help you, ma'am?" The buffalo looked down on dawn, peering at her with a hint of suspicion. He towered over her and yet still regarded her as a threat, the huge bull clearly professional and dedicated.

Even if he was a prey animal, he still intimidated Dawn with his physical presence and obvious power. She fumbled with her valise, stammering as she looked up. "I-I-I'm a new resident..." Trembling hands finally pulled her wallet out of the case and opened up to reveal her ID. "Dawn Bellwether. M-my things should have been delivered..."

The buffalo peered hard, leaning down and assuming a more menacing and looming posture as he read the diminutive card. His face lit up with delight as he snapped back up. "Ah, Miss Bellwether! Yes, the movers took your things up to your apartment and I was told you would be arriving today. Welcome to Pleasant Pasture Apartments."

"Thank you! This looks great," Dawn chirped, suddenly relieved and far more comfortable. She easily moved through the door once the buffalo pulled it open for her.

The lobby was quite nice, clean and bright, with faux marble floors polished to perfection up to a few feet past the door, where it transformed into colorful floral-inspired carpet. A few wooden chairs and a low table with a large flower arrangement sat near the center of the room. To the right was the long counter for the residents to pick up mail and communicate with the manager's flunky for keys, complaints about maintenance issues and other things. Beyond was the bank of elevators and the stairwell.

She went to the low tier of the counter, hitting the bell for service. She was soon confronted by another ewe, but a much taller, and older, one. "May I help you?"

Dawn showed her ID again, much more comfortable with a fellow sheep. "Dawn Bellwether. My things were delivered and I already signed all the documents and paid first and last month's rest, plus the security deposit."

The ewe nodded and punched some things up on the computer. "Right, right. Here we are. Paid up, all legal and ready to go. Bellwether... You were the District Council head from Meadowlands. And your father was too. I have family there, and I hear about that kind of thing. Getting into Zootopian politics?"

"Absolutely!" Dawn chirped with a huge smile.

"Good luck. You'll really need it," the older ewe deadpanned, pulling out two keys on a simple ring and passing them over. "Red lacquer is the deadbolt, green lacquer is the regular lock. You read the rules, keep to them and things will be fine. Enjoy yourself at the Pleasant Pasture Apartments."

The sudden statement, delivered as it had been, took a bit of the wind out of Dawn's sails. She took the keys with a nod, wandering over to the elevators. She didn't really think about anything as she went up to the top floor. As the units were quite large, befitting the look and price, only a few were on each floor.

The elevator let dawn out into a corridor with the same bright floral carpeting, the walls papered in pastel blue, with tasteful wall sconces in the shape of seashells along the walls between each door.
The present light was provided by the huge window at the end of the corridor, with a low table in front with a nice flower arrangement in a glass vase. She moved down, reading the numbers on the door until she found her unit.

She slowly turned the key in the lock, not sure why she trembled. Even as a rerun she still did it. It was likely because of what it represented. This was entirely new. She was far away from her home, away from the 'job' she knew, living away from family and other members of a support structure. Beyond the door was a totally new world. Even knowing she had already passed through it didn't make it any less impactful. The click of the lock sent a shiver down her spine. She was so happy she didn't even care the knob was slightly higher than she would have liked. She fell between the large size categories, and this was the best fit she could find. It didn't matter, it was just slightly more square footage as far as she was concerned.

The door swung open slowly to reveal her new home. It was bright. That was all she could think of it. The far end of the front room was a large pane of glass, sun streaming into the boxy space. She was directly in a vague living room, cheap but fluffy carpet beneath her tapping trotters. The carpet reached out into a small hallway to her right, which led to the single bedroom and the bathroom, both of them also against the back wall to get light from outside. In the main room the carpet stopped at the linoleum expanse of the small combined dining and kitchen area. She had a gas stove with a microwave over the top of it, with the twin-basin sink beside it. Her refrigerator and under-slung freezer were across from the stove. The appliances were all stainless steel and the countertops were faux marble. Paying more was certainly worth it.

But beyond that, there was nothing. The walls were painted a semi-gloss white, bland and dull. She had nothing in the way of provided furniture. Any night light would be provided by wall sconces, and she would close off the outside with simple vinyl blinds. The only other things were boxes. Cardboard boxes, marked in her cute hand, identifying the contents. There weren't that many of them, but they were there. She knew that her small bed was sitting, bare, in her bedroom, and could see her single, small armchair almost hidden behind a pile of boxes. It was all the furniture she had, aside from deconstructed shelves she would put up later. It looked so small in the large apartment, but she would not feel bad about it. It had always sufficed and would continue to do so.

She was broken from her reverie by a sharp, curt knock at the door. "Ah! Y-yes?"

"Miss Bellwether?" The voice from behind the door was deep. Powerful. Even muffled by the door it was smooth and even charming, just from saying her name.

She knew that voice. She knew it in her present state in a vague way, heard on the radio and on television, talking smoothly and confidently about his skills and abilities. The caged-up memories not yet made knew it, and shrieked in its confinement. It brought up misty memories of fetching coffee, of a tiny office, of anger and disrespect. She knew it well.

Dawn rushed to the door and threw open the door, mind finally catching up to her need to check if what she heard was real. Her panicked features turned to a simple, strained smile, head already craning up to a height her other memories told her was right.

There he stood, tall, noble, clean-cut. His mane was brushed and gelled to perfection. He wore a smart blue suit, though rather than being an overly expensive bespoke suit it looked like a nicely fitting off-the-peg number. He looked down on her, yet something in his eyes and demeanor made that downward gaze seem kind, not condescending. One huge hand reached out, claws fully sheathed. "Welcome to the building, Miss Bellwether. I'm your neighbor from one floor down, and have... been waiting for you because I wanted to invite you out for a conversation. My name is Leodore Lionheart, and I want to run for office with you."
Deja vu, deja me

Chapter Summary

The strange sensation of having lived through a situation, but just a little off.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Four: Deja Vu, Deja Me

By: Gabriel LaVedier

'This was how. This was how, it must have been...' Dawn thought to herself. Her not-memories raged and screamed, prejudice, hate and pain burning in her brain, just barely kept from intruding on her active mind. Morning Star had been deft with keeping specifics away. She knew Leodore Lionheart was part of the plan, that he was responsible. The hate, the bile, it all told her he was a catalyst for the terrible thing she had done. But that seemed improbable.

The more she looked, the more she noticed that his suit came right off the peg, and not from the claws of a professional tailor. It was the kind of thing a mammal wore to impress a Mammal Resources director for a new job or beg for a raise. It was a small detail, but she had learned to pick up on such things.

Council members back home who were full of themselves and overly proud went out and got tailored by Zootopian shops, mostly using their own wool, like that snob Julius Merino. The more reasonable members, genuinely humble folks like the labor leaders and teachers who were newly elected, they went out to the warehouse haberdasher and got something that fit well enough made of slightly thin material and put together acceptably well.

'It's only a suit,' she told herself, 'But it seems to say everything.'

Leodore's whole self seemed to show the good kind of politician. He had some vanity, all male lions did. But his vanity was tempered. His mane shone, but without the high gloss of the expensive conditioners. The cut wasn't what the ZNN style segments showed, but a more restrained thing from a neighborhood barber. She had seen enough comparisons on television to know the difference.

This was a figure her future hated. Her future of malevolence and hurtfulness was apparently powered by the being before her. She tried to fit that into her paradigm of loose bias and prejudice. The fit was too basic and broad, not exactly fitting the image package she had built up about ambitious predators.

The two were sitting together at a table in a charming little cafe. Not a Snarlbucks, but a smaller place that served tea, bubble tea and pastries. The warm aroma of brewed tea, the wild flavors blended in for pairing with tapioca balls, and the melange of butter and spices infusing the pastry made Dawn really notice the place. It was warm and inviting, it got her to relax, as did the petite
cup of chamomile and timothy hay tea. Part of her mind didn't want her to be soothed and relaxed around Leodore. But his buttery smooth voice and easy manner made it hard to resist.

"... and so I was talking to Agnes... that's the manager, Agnes. Nice woman. Never married but she says she liked a few of her tenants. Anyhow, we talk all the time while I get my mail, and she mentioned there was a Meadowlands politician moving in. She still keeps up with things there, likes to know how her family are getting on. So, I looked into which one, read up on your record and political history and figured out you're steadily progressive. It's too stagnant here in Zootopia. Even steady progress would be preferable to gridlock."

The stream of talk tickled her ears. A mix of friendly generalities, folksy asides and direct comments on subjects that she thought much about. It wasn't the polished patter of a master manipulator; her father had more than taught her what a political grifter sounded like. This was a lion that had been charming mammals all his life, and doing it with pleasure rather than as a cynical calculation. "I can appreciate the concept of steady progress, Mr. Lionheart. I moved things along in Meadowlands with an eye to the future. But, well... I'm not sure why you wanted to see me."

"Oh! Ha... my apologies, Miss Bellwether. I guess I was so far ahead in my planning I forgot to live in the present," Leodore said with good humor. "I'm saying that I admire your methods, like how you plan and execute policies, and think you could be a boon to Zootopia. I'm... assuming you came here to enter politics. Otherwise I'm about to look very foolish."

Her mind was filled with vague impressions, the absolute limit of the bleed-through from the life she had already lived, that she was living out. Everything was the same, but different. She knew this situation with a hateful intimacy, every detail, because it represented something important about her path to her fate. But it was only just familiar enough for her to think she had a handle on it, but it slipped through her fingers as an instinctual anticipation was not met.

Maybe that was the real origin of a sense of deja vu. Everyone who experienced it was just another piece of entertainment for Morning Star, their unmade memories matching but not matching right. The feeling permeated her whole being, especially once the subject of Zootopian politics had been broached. "I... I did come here for that. I didn't set myself up, I had other concerns at the time but yes. I came here to run for some office. Probably Director of Parks and Recreation Areas."

"I can imagine you'd be quite good at that," Leodore offhandedly said, taking a long sip from a brightly colored cup of bubble tea, the dark tapioca balls and nearly neon liquid rushing up the thick straw.

"What do yo mean by that?" Dawn nearly shouted, her voice cracking up a half octave with a squeak at the end. She perceived a horrible speciesism behind the casual comment. Certainly a sheep would know all about grassy parks.

A few eyes drifted over to Dawn, brows quirked at the odd almost-outrburst. Leodore didn't look fazed. He was easy and relaxed, taking a bite of a cricket-flour, breadfruit macaron and another sip of his bubble tea. His attitude didn't speak of arrogance or a dismissive nature. He had no reason to believe that anything offensive had been said. "I've read your voting record and your proposals. You made magnificent strides in reforming open land use for shared grazing and recreation. You tamed the wild areas of Meadowlands, in some sense, and with as much force as you could with an abulic council and disinterested constituents."

Dawn was stricken to silence by the response. The dark psychomachian element driving her sense of deja vu was practically slapped into stunned quietness. That was not supposed to happen. Not in her memories, not in her assessment of a predator politician. "You read my voting record? You... noticed my silly little policies?"
"Silly little policies?" Leodore asked, incredulous. "You inched a fair policy forward, balancing the district control and the public needs. You did it all without entangling central Zootopian meddling with a purely local matter, like others might have done to keep themselves from working. You did something, and I have been taught from my youth to respect action, to respect actually trying."

Her memories whispered it was a lie, some new variety of mendacious Lionheart. It had to be a trick. The old memories from the future knew what Lionheart was, knew what he wanted to do. She didn't know, and couldn't conceive of this folksy charmer being a manipulative bastard. She might have been culturally sheltered, kept from the wider experiences of multicultural Zootopia, but she was far from naive. She knew the warning signs well enough, but saw none of them in Lionheart. He was open and relaxed, unguarded, not like the tight, suspicious and deflecting cynics populating most political positions. "I just wanted to do some good. For the little guy..."

"Absolutely!" Leodore roared, drawing more attention over their way, and making Dawn blush deeply. "That's the important thing. I was always taught the little guy means the most of all. They get hurt more, then get pushed aside and used. If you're small, you may end up needing an extra hand. And it's for the best, for everyone, to give it."

'This is a lie. A filthy, predator lie...' Dawn thought, half of it trying to convince herself, half parroting the feelings emanating from her memories. Neither side of it was very convincing. It just didn't have the feeling of a lie. It was, really, everything she believed. She actually had a rapport with him, and on an issue that was foremost in her mind. "That's exactly what I always wanted. That's what I had in mind for a grander policy, if I was anywhere important, politically speaking."

"It's a great policy, to be sure. It deserves to be implemented, with some force. It needs a big office behind it. Like, say, the Office of the Mayor..." Leodore rumbled, in an innocently suggestive manner.

The barest hint of something rushed across Dawn's mind. The Mayor's Office. She was there, doing something. It was just the smallest impression, nearly erased after a flash of the image, leaving only the impression. Her mind recoiled, chastised, she could tell, by some dark tendril of Morning Star's power. Her mind was trying to break the ill-defined rules. "Mayor... of... you mean of one of the incorporated suburbs, rights?" Dawn asked, with a breathy laugh full of shocked nervousness.

Leodore let out a loud, friendly laugh. "I know I should say yes. But it's time to make a leap. I mean, get in on the big office. Mayor of Zootopia. I've worked my way through lower offices; council seat in Sahara Square, director of the Airspace Board in the Nocturnal District, which is almost always held by a bat, and I was just Comptroller."

"You think you can beat Swinton? She's been there for a while, and likes it..." Dawn noted, taking a slow sip of her tea.

"I have heard, from a very reliable source, that Swinton has plans to go into the private sector. Being mayor is nice but a cushy board job is easier. She's been competent but stagnant, as ever in Zootopian politics. She and Growlov will fight off newcomers, but not as passionately. She might be grooming him for her job but he's not there yet. He's the third assistant mayor she's had. Not a good sign. It shows either distrust or incompetence in that arena," Leodore related, daintily munching his macaron, and sipping his bubble tea a bit at a time.

Dawn sipped her tea and contemplated an ill-run Swinton campaign, just giving up the office to a newcomer. Political Mercy Killing, her father called it, when an entrenched pol wanted out but wanted to retain their dignity. "I see. It's not pretty, but it works..."
"Oh... I'm sorry about your father..." Leodore softly rumbled.

"What? My father?" Dawn looked up with a confused expression, brow slightly furrowed.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, please, but I looked at your campaign for the District Council head. You went up against your father, and you won. You ran a firm and clean campaign, and he was weak about his own. You let him go out with his pride intact. But it couldn't have felt good going against your father and knowing you were gently ousting him by his will," Leodore said, in a muted tone.

Dawn's heart practically skipped a beat. She had mostly pushed that out of her mind, ignored it. It felt too predatory, euthanizing her father's political career with her bid to take the top spot. She knew she was putting his career out of its misery before it lingered longer than he wanted. He wanted her to do it, but hunting him down in the polls didn't get any better if it was by his will.

"No. Ah, you're... you're not wrong, Mr. Lionheart..."

Leodore gave an apologetic rumble, slowly reaching out and softly touching the pad pad of his smallest finger to the back of Dawn's hand. It showed off the great contrast between their sizes, yet that massive size also made the touch even more significant, showing the real gentleness by contrast. "I'm sorry for dragging it up, Miss Bellwether. I thought it would be a sore spot. But I had to mention it, because I know you've run that kind of campaign before."

Dawn turned her hand, just a bit, to touch her palm to Leodore's finger. She winced, subtly, as her mind recoiled from the gesture. She was buying his tenderness. She had every reason to buy it. 'It's not fake. It can't be. He's real.' She sternly chastised her mind, turning a half-smile on him. "Thank you for being so kind. It was... a hard campaign, but he passed the torch to me, with his head high."

Consciously, unconsciously, she couldn't be sure but... her digits gently pressed on his finger, giving it a gentle squeeze.

If he noticed the gesture, Leodore gave no indication, save for a throaty rumble, which turned into a commiserating sound. "I don't know if I really want Swinton to hold her head up when she leaves. But I know we have to give the impression that we're running a full-bore campaign, with all the trappings, but not so hard we aggravate her into putting the hammer down on our heads."

Dawn nodded, taking a slow, contemplative sip of her tea. "You... want to run with me? You want me to be Deputy Mayor? Of... Zootopia proper?"

"It's what you came here for, wasn't it? You wanted to do some good for the little guy?" Leodore queried.

Dawn softly nibbled the edge of her paper cup, eyes darting behind her glasses. "I... maybe..." She had had grandiose plans. Nebulous, but grandiose plans. Something about putting the predators in their place, taking away the advantages they always wielded over the smaller prey. And all the bigger prey that pushed them around. "We'd need a strong platform. Attack ads and the like won't do it. If we give them a solid platform and strong messages staying on topic that will work out best. What's the basic platform you want to work on?"

Leodore gave a broad, embarrassed smile, softly rubbing at his neck. "Well... steady progressivism..."

A long moment of awkward silence refaced Dawn's slight head-tilt. "And..."

"I'll... admit, the platform isn't as fleshed out as I'd like. I sort of made a leap after the comptroller position was done with and I had a chance to reorganize myself. I should have prepared better, maybe thought about my political reality a bit more," Leodore rumbled, sheepishly.
"I have... one idea..." Dawn recognized herself in him. Leaping without thinking, out for political gold but without any sense of what or how. She came without any kind of strategy, and was flying without a net. They were two of a kind, falling together. Predator and prey. She didn't think she could have any union with him. Her memories said to refuse him, his charm begged her to trust him. "We both want to do what's best for the little guy, right? To give mammals the freedom to reach their fullest potential and power, yes?"

"Absolutely," Leodore said, lightly thumping the table. "It's all I ever wanted to do all my life, ever since my mother taught me about the hurts that fall on the heads of the powerless."

Stale coffee. Long nights. Pain. Misery. Disrespect. She could feel them, the burning impressions were tangible enough to be recognizable. She was going to be trapped in a cage, put upon and forgotten. She didn't remember, as it had not happened. 'And won't...’ "I have an idea for a new initiative we can run through. Something to give a measure of power to the forgotten and dismissed. All the little folks will get a chance, Zootopia would be a place where anyone really could be anything. There are so many formal and informal barriers to, say, a sheep being a cop, or a bunny being a helicopter pilot..."

"Wait, I can see it..." Leodore stood up, hand sweeping slowly before him as his eyes shone, looking to an imagined distance. "Zootopia, a city without discrimination. No more hiring lockouts, no more excuses based on species. If you can do the work, you can get the job. If there's a test, you can take it, without restrictions or handicaps. If there's a requirement, you have the right to earn it. If you have it all, no one should turn you away. Do the work, get the reward. We can have more participation, greater representations. Rats as doctors, wolves and tigers in education, no barrier to any motivated, qualified mammal!"

"Yeah! All for, for the little guy!" Dawn cried, drawing even more stares. But she didn't care. She felt good, having her idea taken seriously.

"The Little Guy Initiative! Hmm, the name needs work. That's our killer plank. We put that in a standard platform, Swinton won't know what hit her. Can you write up a draft?" Leodore asked.

A wince crossed Dawn's face, and the sensation of a knife in her belly made her almost double over. "M-Me? You want me to write it up?"

"Absolutely. It's your idea, after all. You bring the basic outline, and together we can polish it to perfection. Of course, you'll get the credit for the initial idea. You brought it to the table, you show it off," Leodore said.

Deja vu ran off the rails and crashed, leaving an unrecognizable wreck of broken memories. Each checkpoint she passed let her recall how it had been. She had proposed the initiative. He had claimed it. He was supposed to claim it, not give her the credit for its creation. "I'm... only going to be the assistant mayor..." Dawn squeaked, almost shocked that she was attempting to talk herself out of credit and appreciation, all so everything would fit with how predators were supposed to greedily devour credit and praise.

"Well yes, you could look at that as focusing on the first part, Assistant Mayor," Leodore admitted. "But honestly, I'd prefer you think the opposite way, as Assistant Mayor. We're running together, we're working together. If your record and public details are anything to go by, we'll make one powerful team."

Dawn drank down the last of her tea, and watched the smile on Leodore's face. He showed the barest hint of teeth, so small of a sliver as to not even indicate his fangs were fangs. He was non-threatening, trustworthy, and genuinely wanted her along for the journey they were set on. She
wasn't wary, wasn't afraid, wasn't degraded by his words or deeds. "Assistant Mayor... never thought of it like that before. Not that I really considered it. Much as I wanted it, I always figured no predator would ever let a prey like me get in even a look at an office that important."

"That's the problem with this city. It needs to keep its promises. There are a lot of prey out there that want representation, need a figure like you, standing out, proud and public with your success in Zootopia. You want to do good for the little guy? Be the first one. Help yourself and help others with your power," Leodore rumbled out, holding a paw out to Dawn. "Is it a deal? I'll get the paperwork done for the campaign, pay the fees and get it all going. Just bring the outline for the new initiative and we'll put our heads together to polish it up into the first thing we put into effect, to progress this city closer to the way it always promised to be."

Predator. Prey. Working together. She could have power. Power to do... something. Something horrible. Something that would lead her to making a deal with something older and more powerful than any imaginary demon or god. Something that made her hate a fox and rabbit couple. She had to refrain from that, and succeed in her plan that had sent her back, to prove something to Morning Star. Her father would never have wanted it, he would have wanted her to be the Mayor, with another prey as a yes-mammal Assistant. She wanted to give power to prey. Small prey, the ones pushed around and dismissed. She wanted it.

Dawn clapped her hand against Leodore's, her hooves consciously... unconsciously... somehow moving to slightly rub his palm before his fingers gingerly closed around her hand to seal the deal. "For the little guy, all the way to the top."
Campaign Contributions

Chapter Summary

The crafting on the Mammal Inclusion Initiative, take two.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Five: Campaign Contributions

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"...And whereas it is noted that the injured party of the first part shall have freedom to seek redress via the direct intervention of the party of the third part, it shall also be that... ugh... it shall also be that Morning Star was very strict..."

Dawn slipped off her glasses and held her face in her hands. Her apartment was largely still boxed up, her very life on hold for the more pressing reality of her political ambitions. She was on her single, small armchair, with a diminished pad of paper before her, a well-chewed pencil and a pile of crumpled sheets in the small wastebasket beside her.

"I already wrote this. I should be able to remember the specifics. It's not a sports score, it's something I created!" She shouted into her echoing apartment. "So was the plan. So was my desire to make sure the fox and rabbit never get together. I don't remember any of it. For... for the best..."

The current sheet was pulled off, wadded up and dropped onto the voluminous pile. She was being blindsided on ever little thing she wrote. Even the name was giving her fits. Her original placeholder, The Little Guy Initiative had died fast and early, as it really failed to capture the gravitas she felt that proper legal matters should have. She had cycled through The Prey Promotion Initiative, The Prey Pride Reacquisition Initiative, The Prey Progress Initiative, and had consigned all the titles to the wastebasket. She was working off of Inclusion Initiative to get the text of the thing down.

She struggled through flashes of inspiration, as well as stabs of information from her future memories. Shades of impressions, mere ghosts of chunks of legalese, passed by her perception. She grasped at the ephemeral text, jotting down the sketchy impressions she could just scarcely perceive in her most focused moments.

Nothing was coming easily, though she had to imagine that originally it had been the same way. Nothing was handed to her on a platter when she did it the first time. It was really almost like cheating having even those shadowy images giving her a vague idea about the path to go on.

Her goal was clear, or so she thought it was. She wanted prey pride to include the idea of being powerful like the predators were powerful. Maybe even more powerful. They couldn't live as equals, that was what she had always been taught. She was told that in Zootopia, where predators flexed their muscles, they dominated, despite being ten percent of the population. That was her
father's excuse for the spiderweb of interconnected law, codes and social agreements that sharply repressed the predators of Meadowlands. Evening the odds, he called it. Keeping them from making similar headway by stopping dangerous ambition.

"He's not so bad, father..." Dawn whispered, unbidden. She dropped the pad and pencil, mouth hanging open and eyes darting about, as though seeking her father's unhappy form. Such thoughts were anathema, heretical, so far as he was concerned. Predators were tolerated at best, and held in suspicion at worst. There were no truly good predators as far as he thought. Only those not presently doing wrong. Leodore was certainly not doing anything wrong, and she had read him like a book all through their meeting.

Her mind throbbed, memories pulsating darkly and making her double over in pain. The deja vu was stronger, and more painful, than before. She remembered, or perhaps merged her memories with her present. That was why she had been so eager to craft what she had, how her passion had flowed into it. She could sense his slippery insincerity, his elitist predator ways, his contempt. She had seen through him, seen the real him that no voter ever experienced. He embodied everything her father had said about predators, and the predators needed balancing.

This Lionheart, the one that had touched her hand and rumbled his apologies for mentioning a delicate subject, the one that wanted the foremost thought of her mind to be Assistant Mayor, that was equal with her, working with her, giving her credit for the creation she was working on, he was different. It was night and day.

Day.

Morning.

Morning Star.

"Oh I forgot to tell you... It wasn't a moment of yours I changed!"

One moment. One single moment, she had said. A powerful moment. She had changed one thing in someone's life. It wasn't in hers, it was...

"Leodore..." Dawn whispered the name into the lonely room, her mind awash in theories. She just barely had an inkling of what he was like. No details, no bullet points of his outrages, no concrete statements. But she knew how he had been. A bully and user. He smiled for the camera and snarled for her. She was afraid of him. She hated him. He fulfilled her impressions. He could lead her to do horrible things. This one, wouldn't. Couldn't.

He would be incapable of it. She could feel it down to her bones. He could never do to her what she half-recalled the other Leodore had done. The species-hatred within her tried to come through as viciously and arrogantly as it had been when she undertook the journey. The one thing she could remember, the thoughts at either end of the passage, ground together with a painful scrape. It was beyond a round peg in a square hole. It was a square pillar in a needle's eye.

"Oh, how little you remember..." she whispered, echoing the words of Morning Star. There had been a dark chuckle with those words. Mocking, arrogant, mirthful. She had been laughing at a joke only she could remember, because Dawn had chosen to forget.

What she remembered of her future was not pretty, but she knew it was true. She could even vaguely follow the thread from familial negativity to active hate. The details were fuzzy, by design, and she had little idea about what had transpired. But looming like a monolithic statue, the source of blame, the one who drove her to the things she did after her inclinations were nurtured in
tears, fear and hate. Leodore Lionheart. Monster.

"Was he really everything my father said? It couldn't possibly be so, no single moment could have changed someone from the kind of beast that would make me..." her words caught in her throat and she briefly choked as she recalled the vague notion of what had transpired. "No moment could make him change so much. It can't be true. He couldn't have been a brute. I must have... but I... how did I..."

"Bye-bye, bunny."

Willpower alone kept Dawn from screaming, her fists crushed to the side of her head, teeth gritted so hard she thought they would shatter, her eyes squinched shut and showing phosphenes exploding behind her eyelids. Her head was truly on fire, and she practically heard the screams of her memories as Morning Star's unbending will castigated the willful thoughts for sneaking through a detailed line. From her lips.

She had been saying good bye. But not with love or friendship. Her fading recollection of the transgressive phrase showed it to be cold, harsh, hateful. She was condemning the mammal. A bunny. That bunny. The one she remembered, in the relationship with the fox. She had tried to rip them apart, by eliminating her. She didn't need details, she didn't want details. She just knew she had done it.

Her stomach flopped inside of her, and a hot bile rose at the back of her throat, sour and bitter at once. Even swallowing it back down still left the burn rasping at her throat. She slowly opened her eyes, almost blind from the tight closure, the perception returning incrementally. She grimaced from the taste and held her belly while her stomach settled.

Leodore must have changed a lot. From one moment's alteration he took a path that made him into something new. He would have been unrecognizable to his counterpart from the other future. Somehow her latent dislike for predators, put in by her father and bad experiences, had been mutated into a monstrous rage by the acts of the other Lionheart. It was an astounding thing to contemplate.

Sufficiently rested, and no longer in danger of vomiting or screaming, she recovered from her slump and turned moist eyes on the blank page. Her hand moved almost of its own accord, picking her pencil up and jotting down every impression she could catch in her head. She had been making an error, trying to keep time working as it had been.

It had been a one-ewe show before, all her own work. Leodore had barely had any impact as far as she could recall. She had done it. She had been trying to do it again. She had wanted it polished and perfect, start to finish, ready for presentation and absolutely settled. That wasn't a bad thing but it was unnecessary. Leodore had told her to bring a draft and they would polish it up. Together. And she would get the credit for the idea and the creation.

She jotted down the last of her considerations, with the long strings of legalese that properly and precisely described the intention. She knew what she wanted to say, she laid it all out as carefully as she could and added side notes to help Leodore understand. She could just take it down to him. He was just one floor under her. A simple stroll to the elevator and...

She would be alone with him. A charming predator, that wanted her to be his... his equal.

Deputy Mayor.
"I have to say, you're very thorough, Miss Bellwether," Leodore said with a smile, as he shuffled through her papers.

His apartment was essentially a form copy of Dawn's, just much larger, to accommodate a mammal of his size. Huge appliances, huge furniture, huge decorations. His color philosophy seemed in line with the personality he presented, full of warm colors, but light ones, all pastels to tone down any potential sense of threat. He also looked to favor muted amounts of technology, a modest television, a combined video player system and an older stereo were the only things in evidence. The stereo even had a record player on it. There was certainly plenty of well-loved vinyl. The spines, where visible, showed a lot of soft rock, standards, crooning and smooth jazz.

Dawn was sitting on what for Leodore was probably a good armchair but was a loveseat or small couch for her. She looked especially small, her back not touching the rest, legs swinging off the front of the cushion. She thought about sitting against the back, but didn't want to get too comfortable. She wasn't there to be comfortable. They had work to do. It was all professional.

Even if she was drinking a rather large cup of tea that was almost a replica of the one she had had in the cafe. He remembered her order.

"Thank you, Mr. Lionheart. I put down every idea I had, made all the notes I could and hopes that we could pull it together. I tried to write a polished initiative myself but that... well, I have a lot of recycling to take out," Dawn laughed, sipping her delicious tea, glasses fogging a little.

"The first lesson, of life really, is that you can't do it alone. It's why we have cities in the first place. We just can't be on our own. And as long as we're cooperating, we need systems to help make it smooth," Leodore said, scribbling in additional notes as he read through the ideas. "And I'm terribly sorry about the seat. I wasn't really prepared for company. Is there anything I can do?"

"See the liar. Feel the liar. He's too polished, too perfect. He never mentioned your size or species, a minefield of potential insults, cut off. No one is really so good. He is a master manipulator here. One moment turned him into a greater monster Destroy him!"

The voice from the future past hissed to her, in some way, made her doubt her ability to read someone. It was on the level of a conspiracy. Conspiracy... her conspiracy. She couldn't quite remember, but it had been damaging. Toxic. Sickening, saccharine smiles, practiced in the mirror, long hours of practicing to make the guile look absent. It took a lot of investment to be mendacious on so complete a level. It took a lot out of a body.

Leodore all but shone with life. He had the flush of health, not the sickly pallor of pelt that any well-trained deceiver would have to hold. The other Leodore, he had groomed and preened and done everything to hide that. He was all artificial. This one was natural.

"No, no. I don't mind. Not everyone expects company of every size," Dawn said, giving a lopsided smile.

"I should have at least been ready. I am willing to receive any kind of guest. The least I could do is be ready to accommodate them," he said, running a hand through his mane. "When you've finished your tea, we can work at the kitchen table. No rush, I saw you liked the savoring sip. I've met a lot of sheep and almost all did that. I'm too wound up, all go-go-go. Maybe I should try it sometime."

Dawn looked down into the fogged part of her glasses to hide her gaze, taking a dainty sip of her tea. "I don't want to take up too much of your time. Besides, you probably want a chance to look over all of that and do your own edits."
"Nonsense, I asked you over to do the edits together. And I want that opportunity. It's going to take a lot of long nights together, we should get used to it early. I have a feeling we'll be having a lot of tea and coffee to carry through a campaign," Leodore replied, walking to his kitchen area and sitting down at a modest wooden table set up there. "Don't mind me, just come over when you're ready."

Had Dawn not done all that contemplation in her own room and run through the gamut of emotions she would have been a bit overwhelmed at that offer. She sipped at her mug just a little faster, heart racing just a little as she held it. Something about the mug itself set her anxiety off. It was just a mug of tea, with a smiling ewe on it and the words *Yes Ewe Can*. The cold bile rose in her throat but she pushed it back down.

A few more sips drained out enough of the tea to justify hopping off the chair and heading over to the table. It was rather low for a lion, possibly a refinished second-paw thing picked up at a discount. Practical but functional. The chairs were sized for it, but broad, to make seating comfortable on some level. She still had to clamber up and stands on the chair, but it wasn't an arduous climb. "Let's work on this. I think I got the majority of it in place."

"Yes you did, and I'm quite impressed with what you managed in so little time. The detail, this wonderful specificity, even with only part of the formal language. It's a beautiful thing to see a piece of legislation crafted so well," he said, with a winning smile.

"I shouldn't think about getting lost in those..." Dawn thought to herself, gazing deep into Leodore's unguarded, steady eye, not unsettled by their red color. Like his apartment color scheme, they were a lighter, softer red, friendly and inviting. At the back of her head some part of her was scolding her. If she was telling herself she shouldn't be doing something, it meant she already was. "I did my best, Mr. Lionheart."

"I don't doubt it. Even if this wasn't your best, it certainly beats out what other folks do," he said, sliding the papers to a point midway between them, and scooting his chair closer. "I notice you didn't have a title ready."

"Oddly enough that was giving me the most trouble. All the ideas I had just lacked punch. They didn't have the appeal that we would need to get mammals to sit up and take notice..." Dawn began, trailing off when she noticed Leodore getting a wide, faraway look. "Mr. Lionheart."

"Perfect..." he mumbled, still looking at nothing.

"Perfect?" she queried, quickly turning to look at the spot he was gazing at, to see if she had missed something.

"You solve problems just by talking about them," he slowly said, taking up a pencil and writing in *Mammal above Inclusion Initiative*. "Mammals will sit up and take notice if they realize this is for them. All of them."

The name flashed across Dawn's mind, another piece she was allowed to recall in some small way. The bunny. The bunny had come because of the initiative. But it wasn't part of her plan so keeping it hurt nothing. It just wasn't what she intended. She had meant for it to help small prey. Prey in general but mostly small prey. Though on reflection, it couldn't possibly do any harm to have it apply to everyone. "It was right in front of me and I never noticed."

"We can't do it alone," Leodore rumbled, reaching out to offer his hand to Dawn. "Congratulations. With this name and our combined polish, I can all but guarantee we'll be the Mayor and Assistant Mayor. Working together, for the good of every citizen in Zootopia."
Her mind told her not to. It was a truly irrevocable step. But it was the right thing to do. He only thing she could do. She took his hand and shook it, lightly grazing his palm with a stroke. "It'll be a pleasure being Deputy Mayor. With this... I think we can put Swinton down gently but firmly."
The Campaign

Chapter Summary

Stumping their way through Zootopia, on the road to office.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Six: The Campaign

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The skyline of Zootopia shone beautifully in the early morning light. The spires of buildings, both the flat-topped and the pointed, created a sea of steel and glass reflecting the brilliance of a sun coming off the twin eastern biomes of Tundratown and Sahara Square. The pale white snow lit up as rainbows refracted through the cold mist and snowflakes, and the golden sand glowed in a rich tone, both qualities of light setting the upper reaches of Zootopia's skyscraper jungle to shimmering.

On the street in Savannah Central, the daily changeover. Nocturnal mammals were closing up exclusively focused businesses and making their way home, while nocturnal workers in twenty-four-hour establishments were trading places with their diurnal counterparts. The streets had some traffic but in the main they were clear. What few figures were on the street moved casually, happily, without care or concern.

Beyond the commercial areas, the residences gave every indication of a pleasant place to live. Those coming in or going out of the apartment fronts were greeted by helpful doormammals, if they had them. Even if not, everyone looked highly pleased with the state of their home, everyone beaming with happiness and pride.

The scenery of the functional city passed slowly by, while Leodore's voice spoke over it. "This is our city. A proud city. A happy city. We're doing very well. But every place can do better. We've come very far and can continue to be on the move into the future. With a new mind, and a new initiative to give opportunities to all, I'm sure we will make this grand city even greater."

The skyline was seen again, soon joined by the text, Leodore Lionheart/Dawn Bellwether for Mayor and Assistant Mayor. Inclusion for all, for a new, brighter tomorrow. "I'm Leodore Lionheart and I approved this message."

"Well, what do you think, Dawn?" Leodore asked, turning off his TV and turning his smiling face to Dawn.

She was sitting on what looked like a throne of pillows on his couch, allowing her to use it in a comfortable fashion. There was a smile crossing her features, which grew wider when asked. "Oh that was lovely! I knew we could get great shots on our budget."
"It's all about timing," Leodore noted. "The city is beautiful but there are those certain moments, those special times in special places, when it becomes... transcendent."

Dawn's eyes moved along Leodore's face, watching the subtle shift as he waxed rhapsodic about the city. The warm and genuine love for his home beamed from his features, radiating out with sincerity and delight. With her old side more shackled and subdued, she was free to really appreciate how handsome he was. Even the old side begrudgingly accepted that the allegedly evil version of him was physically appealing. The mental ugliness stoked the old side's ire, and lacking that, the present Dawn had no obstruction to appreciation.

"You have to be in the next one," Dawn blurted out, sinking down with a blush after the outburst.

"Why is that? I had intended that for a little later. We should build up the city itself, show we know the place and can show off the best parts. Appearing too quickly might look arrogant," Leodore said.

"Well... um... your face," Dawn mumbled.

"My face?" Leodore queried with a tilt of his head.

"When you talk about the city, how special it is, your face just lights up. It's so sincere, so welcoming, you show off real love for the city. You're a real son of Zootopia, and it shows," Dawn said. "The city core is your home but it's clear you know how to love every district. Show it. We could show you in every district, saying how you'll make them even better."

"We," Leodore corrected. "How we'll make them even better. Maybe we should start in Meadowlands, you can show me all the local beauty."

"Is... is he... flirting with me?" Dawn wondered, lightly nibbling on her bottom lip. She was laying emotion on him, drinking in his happiness and goodness, but couldn't picture even daring to hope she would have the nerve to do anything about it. They had been spending a lot of time together, working so closely for such long hours that they exceeded the closeness of newlyweds, or so it seemed. Maybe it was just nerves about the campaign and her own emotion skewing her perception of his words and possible intent.

"I think I can show you the nicest parts of the place. I think I can give you the best possible look at it at least. You can get a good impression of the district, glad-hoof around, drum up some support, meet my father and..." Dawn realized she had gone from commercial blocking to having him meet her family.

"I think it would be wonderful to meet former Council Head Bellwether. A real, seasoned politico, who has helped make you an effective politician. I could probably learn a lot," Leodore mused.

"Not as much as you might think that's useful..." Dawn mumbled to herself. "Well! That sounds great. I'll give you a quick rundown on the best parts..."

The rolling hills and vast stretches of lea and meadow that made up Meadowlands fairly waved when the breeze blew along the bending grass, catching the early morning dew and the sun-kissed expanse. Tightly-built, well-ordered communities were seen, planned on straight lines or very precise curves, cookie-cutter split-levels in very proper grids.

In other locations were the block-designed centers for particular needs. The strip malls of precisely sized square storefronts, blocks of car care and repair shops, and the one big shopping center, Meadowlands Mall, as plain and basic as its name.
"Meadowlands. Clean, orderly, happy. Just one of the many beautiful jewels set in the crown of Zootopia. Ours is a city of cities, each district a vibrant and unique part of the magnificent whole that is this storied and wonderful modern mammal metropolis."

Leodore stood before the mall, at a lectern and beneath a sign proclaiming Lionheart/Bellwether. Clapping sheep and goats were cut into frame, with not a few of the ewes and nannies looking quite appreciative. Almost unseen back and slightly behind him, by her own positioning, was Dawn.

"I know it's a wonderful place. But together, we can make it even better. We'll polish these jewels and make them shine brighter than ever before. With your help, your own native daughter Dawn, along with myself, will sweep into city hall and do all we can to make it better for everyone. And hey, happy thought, you're part of everyone! Help others, help yourselves. And with our new initiative, crafted by Miss Dawn Bellwether herself, we can make sure that our promise holds true. In Zootopia, anyone can be anything, no matter diet or district. So please! When the time comes, vote for change. Vote for a brighter tomorrow! Vote for us."

Over the scene appeared the text Leodore Lionheart/Dawn Bellwether for Mayor and Assistant Mayor. Inclusion for all, for a new, brighter tomorrow. "I'm Dawn Bellwether and I approved this message."

Dawn pushed paused on her phone and smiled a bit nervously. "So, that was our targeted Meadowlands commercial. I think it captured the essence of the district, what's really important to us as a whole. What do you think, father?"

The venerable pol, Vesper Bellwether, looked on his daughter with his usual neutral distance. He was a huge, imposing ram, wrapped up in a finely tailored blue suit with a stiff starched shirt and silk tie. He snorted softly and pushed his gold-rimmed glasses up his snout. "Why aren't you the first tame on the ticket?" He asked in his usual imposing, stentorian voice.

Dawn was caught off guard, having to remind herself of her own maturity. She was not a little lamb. He was not ruler over her life. "I just decided to go in with him. He came to me, asked me if I wanted to join him. And I, well, I thought it would be a successful run."

Vesper gave a noncommittal grunt as a response and turned away. "Better than nothing, I suppose. And you think that this... feel-good pap will crush the likes of a seasoned muckraker like Swinton? She's no soft touch."

"Leodore... that is, Mr. Lionheart, says that he has inside information that Swinton wants to go out fighting. If we run hard but not too dirty she'll graciously allow herself to lose."

A tiny moment of stiffness hit Vesper, the ram grinding his flat teeth together before giving a curt nod. "Yes, I see. A very good way to leave with grace and dignity. I'm sure Mayor Swinton will have good experiences in the private sector."

Silence descended on the two, with Dawn growing increasingly uncomfortable around her father, for reasons she couldn't strictly fathom. She had never found him to be comforting or warm, but she had always had more luck pretending not to be put off by him. The nagging whispers of her old life intimated to her that her more liberated and obstacle-free adoration of Leodore was the problem. She was guilty about entertaining thoughts of romance with a mammal her father would never have
Said mammal broke the tension by arriving in the cramped, musty study of the Bellwether estate, his generous frame just barely fitting through the large-for-sheep-house door frames. He strode confidently forward in his best suit, a lower-tier imitation of the one Vesper sported. "Mr. Bellwether this is a unique honor."

He took Leodore's paw and shook it with all the physical strength he could muster, noting with some frustration he was strong enough to take his attempt at intimidation. His critical eye sized up the huge lion, finding him an excellent model of his species, which was all the more aggravating. "So, you think that message will work for you? It might play to the rubes but you need more style. I can tell your substance is weak."

"Father!" Dawn looked appropriately shocked, and looked up at Leodore with soft eyes. "I-I'm sorry. He really does want to help us but he's very... plain-spoken."

"No other way to be. I'll say it outright, these Meadowlands voters would pick a grass sandwich if they had the right lighting and a speechwriter. I trust you actually have something for creatures with more in their heads than cotton."

A very uncomfortable look passed between Dawn and Leodore, with the lion adding a quickly-faded look of pure incredulity. "I, ah, believe that this plan will work well in all districts. Every district is very proud of itself. Lead them in by making them love themselves then make them agree to to care about this big city we all live in. That's the way I want to run, on pride and inclusion."

"Leave it to a lion to talk about pride," Vesper chuckled, without any real mirth. "I think it's too safe. Even if Swinton is going to give you a pass I think it's too weak. She'll change her mind and cut your throat at the ballot so badly you won't even be able to run for a position in the PTA."

If Leodore was offended he didn't show it. He just smiled on, without fangs showing, and gave a polite laugh. "I don't think so, but, we will see. I did come to get some insight from a professional, after all, and it's always nice having an unbiased opinion."

"Don't try to hustle me like a new-minted Poli-Sci major! Run it your way. I'll keep out of it entirely. I always told Dawn that she was on her own and that Zootopia would chew her up and spit her out. Looks like it'll take far less time than I anticipated. Better for her, I suppose. She can learn her lesson early and come back home to a more proper and conventional political career, then maybe settling down to have the next link in the dynastic chain."

"I- I- but..." Dawn couldn't even hope to find the words. She had just been pronounced a failure, before the election even happened. She was being told what to do, and in no uncertain terms. To be a tiny nothing, then a mother, because it was what he wanted.

"Mr. Bellwether..." Leodore rumbled, face falling, if only slightly. "I know I'm something of an upstart but I have a solid track record. You, of all mammals, should know what qualities Dawn has. She's a natural, and has proven herself many times, including before your very eyes. I'm supremely confident she is the sort of mammal whose skills can be scaled up successfully, to let her compete in any arena. I wouldn't have her has my running mate if I didn't think so. So, even if you don't trust her, I do."

Heaviness hung between Leodore and Vesper, the two men staring each other down before the ram broke the stalemate and turned away. "If you say so. I don't like your chances but make a go of it. I'll see you again, Dawn. Perhaps sooner rather than later." He slowly strode out of the study,
leaving Leodore and Dawn.

"He... he really means well..." Dawn stammered, pulling a too-tight smile.

"I know what he means," Leodore sadly said, putting on another confident smile. "He'll come around. I'm sure we'll have the numbers we need to really impress him."

The unflagging confidence was something Dawn still wasn't sure about. His indefatigable spirit was something she had never seen before. He carried himself with the swagger of a Selenic Convoker, wrapped in the humble warmth of a Peaceground Tender. "He's... not so important..."

"Every vote matters. Everyone matters. Granted... maybe we don't need to court him all that hard," Leodore said with a deep laugh. "But what we will absolutely do, is prove him wrong. I know we can. And I hope you know it too. Do you?"

Dawn stared deep into his eyes, hoping to draw in some of the endless energy he seemed to have bottled within. Her old future memories did not approve of her slow descent into being a true believer in his seeming. The old one was slick, but she could tell from mere impression, there had been tells this one never gave. And which she knew- not felt, but knew- he never would. "I do. I know we can. We will."
The tense election and memories of the road to that night.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Seven: Election Night Zootopia

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Mayor Swinton was looking slick and professional, in her usual off-peach sheath dress and reddish half-jacket, sitting in her imposing chair in her office. She was just slightly resting back, yet still looked focused and attentive. She was turned slightly from her desk, such that framing her showed the view outside of the office’s huge windows.

"Hello, Zootopia. You know me, and you've voted for me, repeatedly. There's been a lot of talk about change and such. This Leodore Lionheart is talking a lot about this initiative and that policy. But you know me. You know what I can do, and you like me enough to keep me in this chair. Sure, he's all about differences and movement, but I can promise you stability.

"Strength, surety, no nasty surprises along the way. I'm the one you need to keep things going the way you want it to go. That's why you put me here and keep me here. I'll keep things going strong, and keep it the way you always had it. I'm your rock-solid and dependable politician. The smart choice. The best bet."

Swinton turned further, to look out over the city while the words, Swinton/Growlov for Mayor. The sure bet you can trust. "I'm Estee Swinton, and I approved this message."

Dawn lightly nibbled on her hoof as the commercial ended and ZPD: The Line came up again. She had somehow gotten hooked on the drama, even if she wasn't normally a fan. The strong characters had pulled her in. She was in the huge armchair again, with Leodore again, waiting on the election results.

"I'm sorry I'm taking up space on your chair and using your TV. This is probably really rude, but... I don't think I could be alone tonight. Nervousness, you know?"

"You're not taking up anything. I find your presence very comforting," Leodore rumbled in response. He was over by his radio, one ear bud in.

"How are we doing?"

"Still counting in all districts, but they're close to closing in Marshlands and Outback Island."

Outback Island. That had been an experience. In theory Dawn was very up on things, but she had
been just a Meadowlands sheep. Her practical experience with most everything was nearly nil.

"You know, there are more sheep here than I thought," Bellwether observed, looking around at the small beach party and campaign stop that Leodore had managed to get up on the beach. It had been such a nice day Dawn had been convinced to wear pastel yellow clamdiggers and a white-and-peach striped short sleeved top, crowning her look with a souvenir hat with one side of the brim folded up and a pair of dark sunglasses.

"A whole lot of them just loved the western part of the island, can't say why. They just came in and made a little community all their own. Must enjoy all the hills," her conversation partner said, in the typical Outback Island accent. She was a lovely, petite reddish-toned flyer, dressed even more casually in a one-piece swimsuit, with a huge hole cut out of the belly, exposing her pouch and distended stomach. "I'd imagine it's somewhat nicer than Meadowlands, beggin' your pardon, Miss Bellwether."

"No offense taken. It's landlocked and very... 'the same' all over. Here they can have access to the sea whenever they want. Plus, interesting food!" Dawn nibbled on a eucalyptus leaf and coughed as little as possible. "These leaves are very... potent."

"Oh leave those to the koalas, luv. They're the only ones that can stand gum leaves. How's the Yeastiemite treating you?"

Dawn blanched slightly, gamely licking over a small blob of black paste on a cracker. "Very, um... regional. I can see your unique culture in it."

The kangaroo gave a hearty laugh and shook her head. "Oh you are from way out there, aren't ya? They must have not told you how it works. Sometimes they think they're so funny with visitors. Hot toasted bread, thick slather of coconut oil margarine and then a thin little spread of it. We sell it in small jars for a reason."

Dawn had thought of herself as savvy and competent, and for the most part, she was. She knew politics inside and out. But she mostly knew sheep and goats, and how Meadowlands worked. She had never felt more like a rube. "I'll be sure to remember that for the next time." Desperate to find another subject, she pointed at the suit's hole. "What a unique style Seems very unusual but I'm not familiar with local fashion. Do you have any idea when you're due?"

As she leaned in the pouch suddenly opened wide and a small, reddish joey popped its head out of the pouch and chirped out a happy, "G'day!"

Dawn shrieked and fell backwards into the sand, her plate of food flying all over. Hearty laughter erupted all around, though some tried to hide it behind their hands. While Dawn was feeling the blush burning on her cheek she also noticed a huge paw reaching down to help her. "Miss Bellwether, are you alright?"

She took the offered paw and slowly nodded, her blush still burning bright but not just for the original reason. He wasn't laughing. He was concerned. "Yes. Just a little startled. I forgot about that particular feature."

"The folk on Outback Island are pretty unique, and that's a wonderful addition to a wonderful city," Leodore said, earning a slight cheer from the crowd. "But, are you sure you're alright? I can cut this short..."

"No! No, it's fine," Dawn insisted, brushing off the back of her outfit. "This will just make for a nifty story to talk about when we're in office."
Leodore gave her a huge smile. "That's the spirit."

"Outback Island just went for us!" Leodore roared, punching at the air. "Now, Marshlands just turned in results for Swinton but they were always solidly conservative."

"Why are you here instead of at the campaign HQ? The staffers are probably all having a party."

"This is just my way. When I get nervous about an election I prefer to be alone."

"And... having me here?"

"This is my first joint election. And if I'm going to be alone, it should be with the one sharing this stressful, wonderful time with me."

A feeling of warmth spread through Dawn's core, offset slightly but the petulant hum of hatred from her segregated memories, the only dark spot in what was otherwise a pleasant, if nerve-wracking, night.

"I'm a little worried about Tundratown. Swinton spread a lot of money around there, keeping up appearances right to the hilt," Leodore noted. "The Nocturnal District should go our way, they still know me down there."

Tundratown had been an experience. Her wool had been almost sufficient but she still found herself wrapped up in a heavy coat with a fluffy ushanka made of wool she had sheared for the occasion. They had toured an old-fashioned clothier where she watched the wool transformed into a functional hat that fit her perfectly. Leodore had been out promising to protect both the traditional industries and the newer, more technological ones, all through the lens of revitalization of both through including all the best mammals, not just the typical ones.

The Nocturnal District had been something else altogether. A land of perpetual gloom at best. At the exits daylight could shine through and create a small halo that ended not that far in. There were some places that allowed for light to shine through to create spots for tourists that wanted their sunlight. Beyond that, the light was usually very low, using alternate wavelengths of gas tube lighting, with neon relatively sparsely in evidence, along with natural luminescent fungi and insects. The experience had been so alien but also enriching.

The little campaign delegation were doing fairly well on the small tour, despite being majority diurnal. Rather than interrupting the normal environment, and looking like tourists, they had all donned night-vision goggles at Leodore's suggestion. The greenish tone to their vision made the environment feel distant and disconnected but brought out all the awe-inspiring details from the centuries of stalactite and stalagmite building and the small changes that had been made to improve the structure for the citizens. It was a beautiful merger of nature and development.

"I might not be a predator, but that blind cave fish hatchery was really amazing," Dawn said, keeping the silhouette of Leodore in sight.

"They've really done well for themselves in the district. They've developed technology to become somewhat self-sufficient. Those blind cave fish are now a staple and they don't need to buy from the Tundratown or Canal District fishmongers. Combined with the abundant fungi and insects they can easily produce they have a local food industry that is gaining topside notability," Leodore replied. "But, all that pales in comparison to this next place."

"He's always gotta show this one," their local guide, a gray-headed megabat, said with a chuckle, slowly going on the ground in a slightly awkward waggle, his arms folded as close to his sides as
he could get them.

"It's something I used when I was here as a team-building exercise. This seems like a good time to come back to it," Leodore chuckled.

Many images flashed through Dawn's head, trying to connect a cave to team-building exercises. Maybe they would be rappelling into a notorious and possibly bottomless abyss, trusting to each other to keep from falling into eternity. Maybe there was a waterfall they would have to rush through, and her wool would become as waterlogged and heavy as it had in their junket in the Rainforest District, without the accompanying bonus of tropical fruit smoothies and Leodore in a soaked, tight khaki shirt, which somehow seemed to also make him more inclined to breathe in deeply and flex every muscle he had. He had a lot of muscles...

She caught herself before she used the outline to picture the pelt beneath, but her breath had grown quick enough and loud enough that Leodore turned to face her. "Are you claustrophobic, Miss Bellwether? You could have opted out of this leg of the campaign."

"No! No, I was just thinking about... what... this exercise might be. I'm not very... physical."

"Don't worry at all. It's not one of those imposing physical exercises. This is all about mental preparation and steeling the inner self."

That still could have left the waterfall part. So, soggy wool. But Leodore needing to strip down to dry off by a fire or at least towel off. She bit her lip as she mentally weighed the pros and cons.

The procession came to a halt at the end of a small jutting rock, with a metal barrier at the end to prevent accidental falls. Beyond the jutting front was a long, slightly tapering cave with cracked and craggy walls, looking fairly unremarkable through the night-vision headsets. "And here we are. It's a little off the beaten track but worth the trip."

"Oh it's very... well I don't think I've seen a cave like it. It looks like a crackly funnel," Dawn said with as much enthusiasm as she could muster.

"It certainly doesn't look like much. But, it just takes a little action to see what it's for," Leodore cryptically stated. He leaned on the metal barrier, leaned forward slightly and let out a tremendous, imposing roar that practically rumbled all those standing by him.

The particular shape and resonance quality of the cave made the roar come back in several waves, each one at a different booming tone, to the point that everyone covered their ears.

"He always liked that trick!" The bat shouted, his sensitive ears practically mashed on his head. "This is the most resonant place in all of the district. Get a good sound into it and it really rewards you."

"A roar like that makes me think back to my childhood, to one of the most formative influences in my life. I feel alive, revitalized, and more committed than ever to my path of helping others," Leodore said with great pride. "Miss Bellwether, now you. Give your best shout and show your power."

Dawn was stunned and still, still rattled by the huge roar, ears just recovering. "M-me? Oh no... sheep don't roar. We bleat and that's it."

"Then bleat. Bleat your heart out and show us all your dedication and strength."

"Oh... well..." Dawn meekly stepped up to the edge, sucking in a breath and releasing a half-
hearted and anemic bleat that weakly came back, in the most generous estimation. She gave another few goes and coughed into her hoof. "Like I said..."

"Feel it here..." Leodore pressed his paws to his broad chest, over his heart. "Draw in all your dedication, everything that drives you, everything that makes you what you are, and then let it all out, to tell the world who you are and what you are."

Her old memories chafed at the idea of Lionheart teaching her about pride, offended by the notion that he would try to inspire her, at least directly in a positive way. She pushed all of that out of her thoughts as she drew in her breath. She thought about the good things that she was intent on: Justice and advancement for prey, especially small prey; proving to her father she was capable of success; following Leodore's unwavering flag to the top. Being with him to see where it would all go.

Her mouth opened and she surprised even herself with the tremendous, powerful bleat that left her mouth, seeming bigger than the small frame that had created it. It struck the cave walls and bounced around the cracks and crags, coming back again bigger and bolder than before.

"See I knew you had it in you. But more importantly, now you know you have it in you."

Dawn stood there, awash in the rumble of her own bleat. Her own power. That was her, sounding out over Zootopia, showing her own power and spirit. She was filled with pride, washed in the amazing feeling of her own capability and more sure of herself than before.

"Both! Both the Nocturnal District and Tundratown went our way!" Leodore roared, standing to do a very excited, if spastic, dance.

"Both of them? Are... are we leading?" Dawn turned off the television. She hadn't been paying attention anyhow.

"Given the population numbers, and the percentage we got, yes. We're surging ahead. There are a few potential speedbumps but the biggest hurdle is Meadowlands, even above Little Rodentia."

"You're worried about... Meadowlands? But... won't I just automatically win you the sheep vote?"

"They're not a monolithic bloc. You know that. That would be a cynical position to take, having you just for their vote. I'd never do that."

He wouldn't. Dawn had become absolutely certain of that. He would not; that was biggest difference between the two Lionhearts. He just would not.

"You'll never win me over to these silly notions and I still say your campaign is dead as a tick under a heated wire," Vesper Bellwether insisted, practically butting his chest into Leodore's, even if his imposing stature was not quite up to the powerful lion's.

"Mr. Bellwether, I've done all I could to slowly and patiently convince you of the viability of our campaign. Our. Your daughter is part of it too. However you may feel about me, don't you have any support for her or confidence in her?"

"I am absolutely insulted by your hideous implication, Mr. Lionheart! I feel no especial hatred toward you and have aimed no vituperatory invective against you. I can read your meaning in your pose and mild exclamation. Using my daughter is a cheap tactic, you populist rabble-rouser!"

"Populist may be true, depending on how you feel about giving rights and freedom from fear and want to all citizens, but I am for law and order. I'm a sensible candidate, out to work hard for all
the citizens of this megalopolis, even if they don't feel particularly charitable towards me. I can see that I can't convince you, that it is literally impossible to move you because you've taken an active opposition."

"Ha! Surrendering! Giving up on a constituent, are you?!” Vesper snorted derisively and turned from Leodore. "You haven't the guts to be a politician. For all your bluster you're just another nothing and will be ground to dust with Dawn there to blow away in the wind that takes what's left of you."

Leodore balled his fists momentarily, claws softly digging into his pawpads, the sting taking him back to his right and mild mind. Empathy restored, he heaved a huge sigh, long-suffering and only slightly frustrated. "I've listened to everything you said. You've insisted on intentionally being contrary. You've made a personal, willful decision to be against everything I try to do and say. You don't even deny it, you just accuse me of giving up. If you choose to call it that, that's your choice. You made the conscious decision to do it and I leave you to it. Not every voter can be courted and sometimes it's best to know how to recognize that."

"Pusillanimous pap! Don't feed me a line like that! That's more talk for surrendering, for giving up on a precious, precious voter! Every one is needed, every one! Or you're nothing but an usher of weakness and failure!"

"If it made sense to me, for some bizarre reason, I could insist grass was blue as a fact. I could rebuff all evidence to the contrary and petulantly strut around like a child claiming victory when someone walked away, calling them a quitter with no dedication to their theory of green grass. I understand reality, that wasting energy on a willful contrarian steals energy that should be put into receptive voters." Leodore huffed loudly and shook his head. "I didn't think it was necessary to say it to a seasoned politician like yourself, but grow up and stop acting like a lamb."

The sudden, quick and cutting retort hit Vesper so precisely and so hard he couldn't interrupt or respond, anger filling his features. By the last statement he was apoplectic with rage, his eyes seeming to pop from his skull. "Y-you dare?! How..?! Get out of my house! Get out of this place and never come back again!" He stabbed a single hoof toe at the exit and ground his flat teeth together so hard they looked liable to shatter.

Leodore turned and strolled out, holding his head as high as possible. As he passed through the doors to the study he didn't seem to notice Dawn standing behind one, a smile on her face and a tear in her eye.

Leodore stood suddenly, the bud falling from his ear and a faraway look in his eyes. "It's a lock... an absolute and complete lock..."

"A lock? So soon? But... that can't..."

"Eighty-nine percent in Little Rodentia. Ninety-five percent in Meadowlands. Doing the population figures in my head the only way Swinton could win is to sweep every other district, and she's been polling poorly in most of them. We... we did it. We're the mayor and deputy mayor of Zootopia!"

Dawn leaped off of her seat and bleated in triumph, using the same loud tone she had used in the cave, letting all the city hear her triumph. She ran to Leodore in a thoughtless frenzy of pure emotional thrill, leaping higher than she thought possible to grab his chest and plant a spontaneous, celebratory kiss on his lips.

Everything stopped in that moment. The universe seemed to shudder, and a feeling like an ice pick made of concentrated hatred rammed through Dawn's brain. Her neurons were on fire but she
crushed out the shout by keeping her lips pressed tightly to his. He didn't quite kiss back, but he wrapped her up in a supportive embrace and... she didn't know, she didn't care, she couldn't even tell through the searing pain of her rebellious old memories.

The kiss broke as the lashing out faded, cooling and shrinking to a dull throb in her mind. She scarcely noticed how gingerly he set her down, how soft his eyes were as he looked on her. "A little... emotional, I see. I appreciate your enthusiasm."

She had made an absolute fool of herself, but he wasn't going to make her ashamed. Not like the old one that thoughtlessly posted her falling on her backside as a PSA about office safety. She only nodded meekly and gave an appropriately sheepish smile. "I... I was just so happy. I suppose that was... too much?"

"Not at all. This is a big event! Congratulations, Assistant Mayor Bellwether!"

Dawn turned slightly away, and looked to the ground. Those words had never been said with such admiration or sincerity, she was certain. She was allowed to know and it made the moment all the sweeter. "Congratulations to you, Mayor Lionheart!"

As they celebrated together she hid her discomfort. Saying those words so happily and with such genuine admiration made the dark part of her seethe and lash out all the more.
Chapter Summary

A new job and new environment, remembered differently.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Eight: The Office

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"I do solemnly swear and affirm that I, Leodore Lionheart, will faithfully serve the constituents of this great city, fairly and honorably, to the best of my ability and never bring shame to the office of Mayor," Leodore solemnly intoned, right paw raised, eyes on the crowd that cheered after he was finished. He was standing on a metal dais set up in front of city hall, with Dawn, the members of the city council, and a hyena in a colorful robe, who then turned to Dawn.

"And now Assistant Mayor Bellwether, your turn," the hyena said. "Raise your hoof and repeat, I, Dawn Bellwether, do solemnly swear and affirm to serve as adjunct to the mayor, to aid and support, and take up the full duties if needed, with all the skill I may."

Dawn lifted her hoof slowly, her previous memories loosed as the future past caught up to the present, and she more clearly saw how different things were. They had won with muckraking and other harsh tactics. There had been no mercy, a predatory slug-fest, bruising and battering both sides, leaving everyone shamed and humiliated. Leodore had treated it like a conquest, and she had seen into him, to what he was deep inside. It had happened again but what she saw was a happy and successful gracious winner. Swinton was actually in the audience, watching. That certainly had not been the case before. "I, Dawn Bellwether, do solemnly swear and affirm to serve as adjunct to the mayor, to aid and support, and take up the full duties if needed, with all the skill I may."

The crowd applauded again for her, filling her with a sense of pride and actual accomplishment. She recalled feeling so hollow. The other campaign had been a brutal fight, souring her sense of politics. But with an orderly and neat run done well, she had only her happiness.

Leodore placed a huge paw on her shoulder and smiled down a her. "Let's see those teeth. Don't worry, I've got a perfect fangless smile."

She had learned to hide her wincing when her caged memories lashed out at her. That phrase burned in her mind, context and meaning held from her, but there was a darkness behind it somehow. She showed her blunt teeth, facing forward eyes turned to him. "This is an amazing day. It was such a... tidy run."
"Best way to do it. Swinton may not be on our side, but she's at least favorable toward us. If we need her support for something, it might be possible. Some mammals might say that being an angry, combative monster is the way to go. But being a good and friendly mammal has opened up doors I never imagined. I wasn't even trying. Just being me made it possible."

Dawn nodded slowly, looking at Swinton who was smiling and applauding with a restrained enthusiasm. She actually gave a small nod to them. "I see. So... what happens now?"

"Well, we write up the Mammal Inclusion Initiative formally, get the approval of the city council, and start seeing what kind of things come of it. I can hardly wait to see what the first fruit will be. It's an exciting prospect, isn't it?"

**Bye.** She tensed up. **Bye.** She braced herself. **Bunny.** She slowly breathed in a measured pace, letting the screaming pain pass through her. She was there to break the rabbit from her relationship with a fox. A rabbit she didn't know and a fox she didn't know, brought together by her machinations. She said she would do anything to stop it from happening. Anything.

Leodore gave Dawn an odd look, noting the strained breathing and bodily stiffness. "If you need a moment, I'll be glad to go along. On this day more than any other, we appear together or not at all."

After a few more breaths she gave a slow shake of her head and a lopsided smile, "No, it's okay. I guess I never thought about how much stress something of this magnitude would cause. I'll be fine. Promise."

"I can always trust that promise. But for now, we can dodge the paparazzi and duck out of the limelight for a while," Leodore said, graciously leading Dawn away to an outdoor buffet area set up for the campaign staff, under a tent and placed around a corner from the main action.

"Thanks. I'm used to much more sedate swearing-in ceremonies. Maybe this is just so imposing because this means more to more mammals."

"Don't let it swamp you. Think about the boring practical things to take some of the air out of the inflated import. We've gotta move all of our things into brand new offices."

Office. It was just an echo of a memory. But the word rankled her in some fashion. "Offices? Plural?"

"The assistant mayor normally works at a desk in the Mayor's office. But there are plenty of spare offices on the same floor, including one with a view comparable to the one in the Mayor's office. Now that I'm the mayor I can have it remodeled and made into a more proper office."

"Well that's... that's wonderful!"

"I may have been a bit premature. I already had the main office converted into a single office, moved the desk out and all. But, of course, I ordered a much better one. A genuine IBEXA Gerfuufufen... Gerffufun? Ergonomic and sized for what they have listed as Class 3, and one of the examples they used was a dik-dik. That seemed right. The chair was included, an ungulate model. It's actually larger than I would have thought but apparently it has a system to move objects around the surface."

The whole prospect seemed impossible. Ridiculously implausible. Her own office, after a conversion to a single office. It made the back of her neck itch. Her memories of the future made an uncomfortable heat roll across her, an almost charitable warning. "I'm not sure how I can repay you for that."
"Discretionary fund. Did you know that office decoration and remodels are budgeted and... far more generously than I would have thought? We may have to undo a few things Swinton put in while getting comfortable in the office."

"I don't mean to be uncharitable but Swinton always did strike me as that sort. There are a lot of pigs in Meadowlands and most of the ones I knew were extremely clean, almost to the point of being neat-freaks, and loved home decoration. I think they're the ones that mostly support the home décor stores."

"To each their own, I suppose. It was a bit indulgent of her but she did a good job, so it's not too big of an issue," Leodore said. He clapped his huge paws together and smiled brightly. "Right! We've got a lot of work ahead of us, making Zootopia a better place for all. And together, we can make it happen."

"Right! Together!" Dawn cheerfully chirped. The pain from her memories throbbed, but she banished it by remembering the kiss she had pressed onto Leodore. She remembered every detail, every minute sensation from the press of lips to his powerful arms around her. It confused her, but also made her hopeful that the future would skew farther and father away from the future locked in her head.

"There's been... a problem..." Moving day. Swinton had left, with a positive attitude and plenty of nice things to say about Leodore and Dawn. Boxes of little nick-knacks and other personal touches had been delivered to the upper reaches of the city hall building, but Leodore was leading down down to the lower level, with an uncharacteristic look of concern.

"A problem? Wha- what kind of problem do you mean?" Dawn followed along, nervous and pained. She felt a stronger sense of déjà vu than ever before, as though she was reaching the point of ultimate crisis, the heart of all the things she would do. So far he had been nothing like the other Lionheart. Even if she had come to believe in him totally, the other part of her waited, impatiently, for him to betray it all.

"The decorators clearly had some kind of cozy deal going on and have a rather obvious homogeneity. Either they think no one else can do the job or no one else should. This new Mammal Inclusion Initiative should get some real change going on. Also, that ridiculously named desk is backordered. Only a few days but it's the principle of the thing."

"All that sounds very annoying but what does that have to do with us being down here?"

"It means your office isn't ready, and I already converted mine. This is a mess I never anticipated and now it means... a shuffle is in order. A temporary shuffle," Leodore said, stopping by a nondescript door and opening it up.

As far as Dawn cared he might as well have opened the safety door in a nuclear reactor. Her brain screamed, her vision almost went white, she stood her ground and fought to hold back shudders. Feelings of utter revulsion, almost of horror, ran through her body. Her gut tightened and her gorge rose.

**Smellwether! World's Best Dad Assistant Mayor.** She was 'graciously' allowed to see and hear the parade of humiliation the dingy little dungeon represented. From there did her evil come. In that prison she started a plan that ended with a desire to wedge apart a romance she had created. Hate so powerful it wanted to kill the love of others in revenge.

She took longer than seemed prudent to reply, trying to get hold of all the control she could, so she
wouldn't betray her inner turmoil. "So...this is my new office?"

"No, it's mine," Leodore answered with a good-natured sigh.

Everything went silent and still. The prison of emotional pain and abject humiliation was drained of menace and evil. It was just a small room. A small, ordinary room. What she remembered from her other life just turned into a hazy nothing. Its time had passed and would not be repeated. It was real only in the loosest, technical sense, and meaningless to her present. "Yours?"

"This is all my fault. Even if it was all beyond my control, I made the decision to charge ahead without any thought of a contingency in case of something like this. I guess sometimes trusting the better nature of others and hoping they'll be professional is a little too much. In any case, this was where we moved the old stuff. You can use my office, as we're both working on the same things, and I'll use this one until this mess is cleared up. It's only a few days. Probably won't be the most pleasant but, that's life."

Sitting in the big office. Surveying the city. Being big and important. No part of her mind knew what to think as Leodore wedged himself into the room, settling onto the small chair and checking all the things that had been laid out. "Are you sure about this?"

"I had them connect everything, including an extension. I'm number thirty-seven. I checked it out and the size is not an issue. I also added some padding to my chair and moved all the things in closer to your part of the desk. I can't do much about the computer but it's a low-large, so it won't be overly difficult. It's not sized for an elephant or anything."

"Is... is that all?"

"Unless you had anything, yes. I think so. We can keep in touch over the intercom and through e-mails, and really, if it takes longer than a few days I'll lodge a formal complaint because it is just unacceptable."

Dawn had an opening to leave. She could have gleefully scurried away to a huge office and the trappings of grandiosity but her new self was flying without a net and was filled with questions. "Why are you doing this?"

"Doing what?"

"Any of this, the decoration, the desk, taking this stupidly tiny storage room as an office?"

"For most of that it's being kind. For the last, it's because it's the right thing to do. I made a mistake that I did not foresee, and all actions have consequences, so here I am."

"No," Dawn said, her true belief slipping in the wake of that powerful rush of fear and pain. The constant pressure and whisper of the old, locked away future had finally made her doubt. "No. That's not how this works. That's not how anything works. You can't be that nice. This can't be real. This can't be what really happens."

While confusion was the emotion Leodore began with, it melted fairly quickly into understanding. A very tragic understanding. "Vesper Bellwether is not the kind of mammal I would wish on anyone being shaped and molded," he sighed.

"What was that?" Dawn snapped, uncommonly defensive about the implication of the statement.

"I'm not a cruel mammal, but sometimes being kind means saying things that are truthful and rough. Vesper Bellwether is a cold, calculating mammal with a head full of ideas about how to help
himself. Learning at his hooves I can guess you're not used to acts of freely given kindness."

Everything had been a transaction with him. Everything had been a test. Success was the only metric that mattered, and nothing was allowed to interfere. Her mother had done some things to temper the training but a lot of the things that had driven her disbelief, that had created the willingness to do something terrible, had been instilled in the quest to create a perpetual success. "I... I didn't..."

"Take all the time you need. I'll tone down the overt cheer and all that..."

"No!" Dawn bleated, pulling slightly into herself in reaction. "No... that's your personality, that's why we're here. You were firm but positive. You didn't make the campaign a predator brawl. Everything you've done, you did with that attitude. It always worked and I saw it work. I can't... won't be a petulant and willful naysayer like he was. I need to learn to accept you're a kind mammal and that you want what's best for everyone."

"It's a rare trait. I'm almost certain things could have turned out very differently if things hadn't worked out the way they did. All I know is, this is how I am, wanting to do good for everyone. Because it matters. Building them up means they can do the same. Everyone prospers when we all care."

Dawn slowly nodded her head, the darkness within whipped into silence. She looked at Leodore sadly cramped into that space and felt sorry for him. The old one hadn't felt that for her. This one didn't even want to have her go through it at all. "I think you should stay out of there as much as possible. It's almost lunch, want to order in and eat in your office?"

"Your office, for the time being," Leodore chuckled, slowly rising and sidling his way out of the storage room. "That sounds great. Bug Burga and Grazer King?"

"Two different places? And how will you get fast food delivered?"

"Ordering from two different places barely rises to the level of small nuisance. And we can order in because this place is full of interns, most of whom are usually very idle and very bored. For the cost of one meal for a newcomer in city politics we don't have to be restricted to the cafeteria, the deli down the block or pizza."

"In that case, I'll have the Fescue meal with a small fry and Diet Dr. Pfeffa."

"I'll have to remember your choice. It looks like great value for money," Leodore noted, lounging against the huge picture window in the Mayor's office. He was chomping away at an extra-stacked Feline Fancy codgrub burger with a side of wheatgrass and cat grass. On a nearby credenza he had his jumbo Diet Dr. Pfeffa.

"It's kind of ordinary, but it's filling," Dawn laughed, getting as comfortable as she could in the lion-sized chair in front of the huge desk, effectively held in place by piles of cushions and rolled towels. "It's my go-to order because there's hardly any options in Meadowlands. I guess even corporate control can't affect what they know about customers."

"What would you have wanted over there?"

"Oh I know this very well. Any of the brassica grown for leaves and stems. I wanted a mixed brassica bowl of kohlrabi, collards, kale all for the bulk, plus watercress and mustard for a bit of spice. I'm not afraid of spice. I guess that's why I wasn't quite as... eager to stay in Meadowlands. 
My father wanted me to stay but I knew I could do better. And I was right. I was absolutely right."

Leodore nodded, motioning with his burger before swallowing. "Absolutely. You showed him what you could do, and you should be immensely proud of it." He took a bite from his grass container and a large sip of his soda.

Dawn giggled softly behind a hand, getting a curious look from Leodore in return. "Sorry. I just don't have much experience with felines. I'm surprised to see you eating grass. And you didn't have to order the same drink as I did. There's no way we could have mixed up the cups."

"Cats have a drive to chew grass, and the fiber is good for digestion," Leodore said, slurping another mouthful of soda. "Plus, I love Diet Dr. Pfeffa. The diet part helps me keep some calorie control, and it was developed by a feline, so one of the many secret ingredients isn't a secret to any cat, felis or panthera. It's catnip." He put a finger to his lips and winked. "Don't tell anyone. It's that very subtle minty bit at the back of the taste profile."

Dawn looked at her cup with a sidelong glance and gave a chuckle. "Really? Catnip? Actual catnip? They can put that into drinks?"

"The detectable levels are under the classification of strictly aromatic or gustatory. It's an extract now, with the psychoactive elements taken out. Even back then it was mild and sold as an alcohol alternative to cats. It didn't work that well, even for catnip-sensitive folk."

"Mm, you sure know a lot about my favorite soda..." Dawn mused.

"I have extensive knowledge about everything that goes into my body."

Leodore responded by flexing an arm, even if it didn't show through his suit jacket. He did also puff out his chest, which certainly did show through his white dress shirt. "Vanity is second nature to the male lion, even if some of us are less obnoxious about it. Incidentally, the patties are waxworm and cod, a new batch. By law they have to list the specific insect and fish contents, so I can always tell when it's a good time to eat out."

Dawn slacked on eating, and moving, to stare in open desire when the flex and puff happened. She couldn't tell what he was doing, but no matter what, she approved. "Y-yeah, I get it now... looks like it works..."

"Thank you. It feels good to be appreciated."

Dawn locked up again, a cold fear gripping her as the words reverberated darkly inside her. The image of a mug flashed in her mind again, as it had down at the small storage room. She had said it. Her. Not him. He wasn't supposed to... "I've always said that, too. Being a sheep with a... condition... makes it hard to get noticed."

"But you did it, and did it well. You've really come far," Leodore said, taking another sip of soda. "So, are you interested in dating me?"

Dawn spluttered her own drink, coughing so badly and for so long Leodore rushed over to pat her back with a moderated force, dropping the remainder of his meal in his haste.

"A-are you alright, Miss Bellwether?"

"Fine! Just fine!" Dawn rasped, dragging his a few breaths and giving one more cough. "Just got it
down the wrong pipe."

"As long as you're fine..." The food on the floor caught his notice and Leodore cleared his throat. "I'll get maintenance up here later."

"That... that is the least important thing on my mind right now. Did you ask if I wanted to date you?"

"Oh! Absolutely. I've noticed a lot of signals but I wanted time to make sure. I think the strongest indication was in the Nocturnal District, if you can believe it. The celebratory kiss could have just been a momentary burst of excitement, but you managed to give me looks through night-vision goggles, which is an impressive feat."

All the bare parts on Dawn's body flushed bright red, and she looked away quickly. "I, ah... yes, well... I can't quite say how I feel..."

"I'm not in a hurry. I feel a little silly, being so casual about it, but if it's what you want, I'd be in favor of it. I can't say I've been entirely innocent with you, either. Maybe I did pick up a few hints early, and maybe I did respond a little bit. I really didn't need to gesticulate so much in the Rainforest district, I just noticed it made you happy. And I could have had more fabric in my beachwear on Outback island, but my choice seemed to make you very happy. I pick up on these things. Probably a side-effect of empathy and being eager to be involved with folks."

Dawn smiled, looking on Leodore with appreciation. "I just need to sort it all out. Thinking is one thing but anything more might just be too much concentrated emotion."

"I completely understand. Whenever you feel like it, just say so, Miss Bellwether."

"Dawn..." she softly said.

"What?"

"If you want to, I mean, you can call me Dawn."

Leodore smiled his trademark wide, warm smile and slowly nodded. "If that's what you want, Dawn."

The name sounded like honey and wheatgrass with a dash of mustard from his lips, sending a tremble though her that was more appreciation than pain from mental retaliation. "It's much more friendly, Mr. Lionheart."

"Leodore, if you're comfortable."

"I've been comfortable for a while, Leodore. I've been very comfortable indeed..."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Note

I thought I'd be writing more of these but there aren't that many things to sort out yet.

IBEXA is an obvious nod to IKEA, funny name for the desk and all (which is actually
a reference to something Rose Nylund once said on Golden Girls)

Diet Dr. Pfeffa is a reference to my favorite soda, and the rabbit language made by Richard Adams, where pfeffa means cat.

Felis or Panthera- Some folks don't know that not all cats are created equal, and by that I mean are cousins separated from the basal feliform into the Felis and Panthera. Because Leodore is a cat, the distinction matters to him.
The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Nine: Dinner and a Show

By: Gabriel LaVedier

With aggressive phone calls, stern words and tracking down a warehouse in Sahara square, Leodore had managed to push the decorators, and get desk and chair together and delivered. He even had an idle intern put the whole thing together, with moderate complaints and the price of a latte.

Dawn entered the office with no sense of disappointment that she was surrendering the big office. It had always been temporary and she had no greed about it. It was much more significant that she was getting an office all her own with furniture sized for her, but still large and impressive.

The room was a cool, inviting green tone behind all the shelves, offsetting the office-standard acoustic tile ceiling and florescent lights that, at least, were the slightly more expensive kind without buzzing. The carpet was still the same tight-pile gray but didn't distract overly much from anything, and the enormous picture window only made sure no little problems could spoil anything.

As Leodore had said, it was just as impressive of a view as his own, looking out onto the city vaguely in the direction of Tundratown. The haze of mist that rose up from the cold air meeting the warm day gave it a dreamlike quality, appropriate for a slightly distant vista. Her more immediate view was of the glass and steel buildings surrounding city hall, marks of the city's prosperity. Far below, clusters of citizens moved along, of all different sizes and composition. In their own way that was another sign of the prosperity of the city.

She finally gave a real notice of the desk and the chair. While set somewhat low when compared to the one she had been using it was still high enough to be noticed by most mammals. The straight front was contrasted with sloping sides that made the top somewhat like a trapezoid, while her side was something of an arc, so she could pull in very close and have more usable material at the sides.

As said, there were systems in place to access the parts she could not easily reach, mostly consisting of what looked like metal croupier sticks to get the most out of the surface area which were combined with variously sized baskets for things from papers to office supplies. On the right side was a tray that could be swiveled outward to the side and back in close which had a magnetic surface holding down a stapler, a tape dispenser and a small cup of paper clips. She opened the
drawers and saw the bottom one could have its bottom cranked up to allow it to be reached, while the upper ones all had their bottoms slightly angled inward to keep everything in reach.

The chair had a carefully designed fake adjustment bar that was suitable for hopping up into the chair, with the real adjustment button recessed into the chair base. The cushion was just as cradling and comfortable as the pile of cushions that had held her in the other chair, while the back was extra padded, to allow her to remain forward in the large seat, so she could easily conduct business.

The final touch really put the icing on the cake for her. Next to her computer keyboard was a lion-sized mug with a bow on the rim. She preemptively silenced the negative memories which thought they knew what it was. She knew what it was, and smiled all the brighter when she turned it to confirm it. It was that mug she had been drinking out of when they jointly crafted the Mammal Inclusion Initiative. The same happy sheep looked out from it, with words that had become more significant since she had first seen them. *Yes Ewe Can.*

It wasn't a new one, it was his, with the same small chip on the handle that she had noticed before. Leaning against the inside was a tea strainer, which she could smell was loaded with her preferred blend. She had noticed a tea box in her upper desk drawer that smelled full as well.

"Now that's an office-warming gift!" She cooed, taking note that there was a small electric water heater on a low circular table on the side of her office, under shelves with the small collection of framed photos of herself on the campaign which she had brought in much earlier, and which she had stored in Leodore's office.

A short time after Dawn had moved in formally, Leodore found her standing at his door with her slightly comically large mug, a smile on her face and a slight bit of fog on her glasses from the tea steam.

Leodore rose from his desk and came around the back of his desk. "Dawn! Come on in. I take it you like how your office came out? I hope the Ger... the desk was good for you."

She tapped the mug lightly and gave him a mock-stern look. "Giving me your throwaway mug? How tacky."

"Well you seemed to enjoy it the last time," Leodore quipped.

"I was just being polite. I don't need a mug to tell me I can succeed," Dawn huffed. She took a sip of the tea and sighed happily. "But it sure feels-"

"Good to be appreciated," Leodore said along with her.

"Great to be appreciated... so you think you can buy a date with an electric kettle and a cute mug and my favorite tea blend?"

"And a taste-neutral tea-strainer, don't forget about that," Leodore added.

"I thought the flavor was very crisp. Not having a teabag or the taste of metal really made a difference."

"A big difference?"

"Enough of a difference," Dawn laughed. "Do you think it's even a good idea?"

"What? Dating you? I think it's a fantastic idea. I wouldn't be considering it if I thought it was a bad idea."
"I mean from a social standpoint. Sure, Zootopia is pretty open, and can tolerate a lot. But predator and prey dating? I know it happens but it usually gets hidden away."

"Division families," Loedore said, his face falling. "One of the policies I really, really wanted to talk about. If at all possible I want to put an end to that social stigma. There's no law preventing inter-diet or inter-species marriages. We have some of those now, just within a close class. But that fear is so powerful... did you know some parents actually tell their children that it is illegal? And the school system doesn't tell them any different, not in civics or sexual education."

"I actually learned it from my sex ed teacher, but she was a fountain of bad information. I think dad got her hired by putting pressure on the school board. He got a lot of teachers hired," Dawn said into her tea.

"Am I surprised? No. Should I be? Probably not. But that's the real problem. These relationships happen but folks like to pretend they're strange aberrations. How do they think hybrids happen? Magic? Just because they're barred by family and social pressure from marriage doesn't mean they'll break up."

"Some of them do," Dawn sighed. "And not always by choice. Patty Curltail was seeing Chester Lupus all through high school. After graduation they held on, but her family put so much pressure on them that they eventually forced her to break up with him and pressured him to stay away with such vehemence that he moved into the city proper. Last I heard he was living in Happytown."

"Happytown, now there's another, bigger issue to deal with, hopefully with the MII. So, does she still?"

"She hasn't ever dated after that, doesn't have any serious relationships and when one of the uncles that chased Chester out of Meadowlands died some folks said they saw her literally dancing on his grave."

"I won't say I approve of that kind of thing but you can probably guess where I fall on the question."

"Probably a little morecharitably than I do. Did. Getting out of Meadowlands and out of contact with... some of the folks there really opened my eyes. The campaign tour alone really broadened my world."

"Travel is the best cure for stagnation. As I plan to be a very active mayor, I'm going to do a lot of direct district interfacing, especially in areas that need a lift. And of course, I want you there with me."

"Which brings us back around to the dating question. Are we even allowed to?"

"The law is silent on the question; it would only be an issue if we had a bad breakup and it affected our ability to uphold the oath and duties of office, then one of us would be ousted by the city council."

"Seems like a high price to pay, then."

"Depends on what you value. But then, the office is a good way to affect real change in Zootopia. Losing it over a breakup... but then again, what would I be without a soft heart that looked for love?"

"Oh, I'll bet there are a lot of lionesses that would love to go out with you. Plenty of them must have written in to say how much they adore your powerful figure, golden voice, good humor,
humble personality, great ideas, handsome mane..." Dawn desperately drank her tea, to keep herself from rambling more.

"I'm genuinely not interested in lionesses."

The tea-sipping stretched on longer while the statement was processed. One moment changed... in the womb? "So you're... gay and in need of a woman to look good for some reason?"

Leodore gave a warm smile and shook his head. "Outsider. Kinkajou Scale six. And no, not a strong five. Believe me, I had to prove to my parents and took a full Multiphase Personality Index with an Orientation Axis. Kinkajou six, Kitsune One. I can show some level of appreciation for other men but not enough to make it significant."

Her insular upbringing had left her generally inexperienced with many aspects of social life. She knew of gay folks, because it was reasonably common to find gay and bisexual rams and billies. She knew the Kitsune Scale very well. But the Kinkajou scale was barely mentioned in her sexual education class. She was aware some mammals had varying levels of attraction outside their species, from near genera to completely different families. One of the biggest taboos was the inter-diet relationship. They were called Outsiders, as they were attracted to those as far outside their species as possible. A Kinkajou six meant a full-preferential Outsider, no attraction at all to their own species and even some limitation in attraction to close genus members.

"A six?" Dawn questioned, voice barely over a whisper.

"Solid six, and no change over time," Leodore purred. "My mother was highly supportive. My father decidedly was not but I've done my best to ignore him and his suggestions. I succeeded as much to spite him as in spite of him."

"No wonder you were so firm with my father, not that he didn't deserve it..."

"Oh I treated Vesper like the petulant child he was. He earned what he got for the way he acted and the way he treated you. My own distaste for my father's methods of trying to get me to succeed had nothing to do with that."

"Thank you, Leodore. I guess I just got used to how he raised me. And he did help me succeed in some ways... though you might imagine, he was less helpful in other areas."

"He never liked non-sheep, did he?"

"Not even goats..." Dawn sighed. "No sense in denying it. You probably saw right through him."

"Like he was a pane of glass. He got puffed up and proud because he knew his attitude wouldn't play anywhere bigger than Meadowlands and he got used to telling himself he was always right."

"Hopefully he's proud of what we did together, this accomplishment should at least mean something."

"Why do you care what he thinks? He was supremely dismissive and very egotistical. He's not worth the time or the effort."

"Because it would really lanolin his wool if he had to be proud of me after I did everything wrong, according to him, and still managed to succeed," Dawn answered with a grin.

"They do say that living well is the best revenge. Know what would also gall him to no end? Dating me," Leodore purred, ending his his trademark booming laugh.
Dawn laughed so hard she snorted a little, finishing with a phlegmy sigh. "What's your major focus? I've read enough ewes' magazines to know what that means."

"You won't believe me in a million years, but honestly, it's ungulates. Truthfully, I can give you the profile I had done. Artiodactyls, primarily bovids."

"Like sheep," Dawn stated, a brow quirked. She looked down on her large mug and the smiling sheep face. He'd had it for a long while before her. "I'll bet I know your favorite campaign spot."

"When you gave your huge, proud bleat into the cave and showed yourself that you had greatness in you."

"You know, I actually believe that. Having spent so much time with you... oh sweet lemongrass... we've been dating since we started this crazy campaign."

"I was a little too focused to notice. Most of the time. I still did a lot of... gesticulating to give you a smile."

"I didn't even want to think about it at first but I thought about how much time we spent together, more than any newlywed. But we had business to take care of."

"We still do, far more important business. The business of running this city. We need to get the MII approved by the City Council, then start using it to make a real difference in all aspects of the city. You reminded me of a very important one that I need to write up and share with you. It's something of a long-range project, and will require a lot of late nights and intense combined effort."

"Why Leodore Lionheart, I believe you're trying to seduce me," Dawn huskily breathed, putting on her best smoldering look and adopting her best imitation of a sultry pose. Both of them cracked up after a moment of mock seriousness, Dawn clumsily knocking her glasses off as she wiped her eyes with her free hand. "Oh I'm sorry. But I watched this movie once and the line was too good to pass up. Working together is surprisingly suggestive."

Leodore picked up the fallen glasses and gingerly placed them back onto Dawn's face. "It was entirely almost unintentional. I love that you used the line, it really hit the right note."

"But you are trying to seduce me, right?"

"In less charitable terms, yes. If it isn't working I'll have no other recourse than to leave and hide between a couple of vending machines, because this is my office and asking you to leave would be tacky and rude."

"I didn't say it isn't working... How about lunch? No, no we did lunch, that's where you asked in the first place. Dinner. Just in here. I know, I know, timid sheep. But I think the city Council will be more agreeable if they don't think the MII is something inspired by our relationship."

"To borrow your phrasing, that's not to say that it isn't, it just wasn't initially thought up that way. I mean, maybe you were a little inspired by your feelings?"

Tiny pins and needles pushed through Dawn's brain, pulsing with the beat of her heart as she remembered trying to recreate what didn't exist, recalling dimly she had originally made it to try and exert power over those larger than her. Her species prejudices had moved her pen, driving her to craft something to give some edge to the small. "Feelings did play some part in it. But I still think it's better to wait on public appearances."
"I understand completely. It works for me. I'll have something nice delivered... when you tell me when."

Dawn could have pushed it back forever, let herself enjoy the idea without having to take the leap. "Tonight. We'll just stay late and plead paperwork. In a bureaucracy that's always an excuse."

Leodore smiled, taking out his phone and looking up information. "Dawn, you're a natural."

"I really did love living in Meadowlands, but... even if it was considered a district of the city, it wasn't really a part of the city. It was a glorified suburb covered in one giant lawn," Dawn said, sitting on her own chair, which she had dragged into Leodore's office. Both of them were eating out of several Styrofoam containers, which were spread across his desk. "There were just certain things that you couldn't get. Like, delivered food that was anything but pizza. And if you lived in the wrong neighborhood, forget walking to anything of any significance. You had to have a car, a bus pass or friends with a car."

"I never really knew about that. I've lived here so long all this just seems natural. Like the selection of this spread," Leodore said, pointing at the various boxes with chopsticks. "Sashimi and sushi, fish and vegetarian, plus ice cream mochi for dessert. And your pasty with vegetable gravy stuffed with potato, swede and turnip, and a side of fries, from the same place I got fish and chips. And a shared salad. I found a place that delivered and had exactly what you always wanted. A mixed brassica bowl. Kohlrabi, collards, kale, watercress and mustard greens. Plus a little wheatgrass and cat grass for me."

"It all looks like a lot, but I never actually watched a predator eat. They were always on the other side of the cafeteria. I hope by choice."

"I know it looks a bit like overindulgence, but I eat a lot more roughage than is probably strictly good. I get all my proper nutrition, it just means I have to eat more. I also exercise a lot and have a naturally high metabolism. I'm usually at the gym on Sundays and Friedes after morning unification. You should come along, it really gets your blood pumping."

"Oh no, no... I'm a very bookish ewe. I like quieter things. I walk for exercise. It's less intimidating than a gym."

"I could assure you the gym I go to is much less intimidating than you think, but you seem happy with your choice."

Dawn paused, open-mouthed, hovering over taking another bite of her pasty, as a thought struck her. "Did you just want me to come to the gym to watch you flexing those huge muscles of yours while shirtless and grunting?"

"We're effectively alone in the building except for the late-vesper and night shift workers. I don't need to get you to the gym for that. If you asked I could take my shirt off right now," Leodore teased, fiddling with one of his shirt buttons under his mane.

"You think I'm going to stop you. But maybe I won't stop you. Maybe I'll finally see if I was right about what I imagined when you were covered in condensation in the Rainforest District," Dawn huffed, intently watching Leodore's fingers.

A quick flick of the thick digits opened the first button and exposed some of his tawny chest. "I will. The minute you tell me not to I won't but until then..." The next button popped open, showing more, including the top of a tuft of fur the color of his mane.
'Stop him. Stop him. Stop him.' She wasn't sure if that was her hateful memories or her own current mind, not wanting to go too far. But... too far really had no meaning in this case. She was fully allowed. And Leodore was so kind, so sweet, he would do anything that was according to her will. "Just unbutton it all. I just... please let me see it."

Every move was done with style, sometimes slow, sometimes with intentional speed, and once with his claws out, not even nicking his shirt. Each button showing more and more of his cut, defined body. His pelt was tight on his powerfully muscular form, as healthy and well-sculpted as his claims of proper eating and exercise had implied. Dawn had seen Leodore the liar with his shirt open while he was changing them in the middle of the day. He was fair. Fair. This Leodore could have been dancing for Gazelle, and outshining the ones already there.

"This feels so wrong..." she sighed, not sounding as contrite or unsettled as the words would have implied. "You wouldn't be asking me to open up my top."

"You didn't ask, you just didn't ask me to stop. I'm big on mammals doing what they like if everyone is fine. When there's a conflict, we all hash out a resolution. If this is uncomfortable I'll button back up. It was just a lark to begin with."

"G-give me a minute. Just please... give me a minute..." Dawn munched on her pasty absentmindedly while her eyes traced over the bared chest and belly area. "I don't want to ask..."

"Please don't mind me if I eat while you look..." Leodore casually commented, reaching out with his chopsticks for thin slices of raw fish, slowly dipping them in soy sauce and bringing them to his mouth. He ate huge forkfuls of salad, munched on his fish and chips, popped a small mochi ice cream ball, all without ever crossing his arms over his chest, and using as much exaggeration as possible to flex his arms, to little effect, and also move his pecs and abs, to great effect.

Dawn was just eating on automatic, grazing from a small salad plate she had made for herself and dipping her inarizushi in soy sauce before consuming it with the same steady pace as everything else. Tawny slabs up top and what looked like an entire set of extensive foothills that would have made prime real estate back home. And that tuft. The thick thatch that looked like an extension of his mane that ran down in a healthy trail between the hills of his abs, it was somehow oddly alluring. His body was like a topographical map of an expensive parcel of land. She could have retired there and not even bothered with a house. "I'm going to remember this forever. I'm going to remember this many times, I'm sure."

"It's very late at this point, but I was only guessing if you're an Outsider. Granted I had a good reason to assume but it's not polite..."

"Lambchops. I could have said something when you were just in khaki and soaked from humidity. I never got tested, I don't know what my number is but right now it's a seven."

"It's a zero to six point scale, there isn't actually..." Leodore began.

"You have no idea what I'm feeling right now!" Dawn bleated. "I'm telling you, invent a seven because that's what I'm feeling right now."

"I didn't know it went up to eleven," Leodore quipped, chuckling softly.

"I could probably get to eleven, but at that point I'd eat your clothes off," Dawn huffed.

"I never knew a sheep could go savage."

Dawn went stone-faced, body stiff. That one word exploded across her mind with a sound like
thunder. She had had the good fortune to be hiding her face in mock shyness. She fought against her natural inclination, forcing herself to fight the pain of the memories lashing out at her. Savage. That word meant everything to the future. The plan, the plan was all attached to it. Savage.

She pulled herself out of her own head just ahead of Leodore's concern. She looked on him with wide, staring eyes, her breath huffing, just above the lustful panting she had just been using. "Savage... I don't know if I'd go that far. But... I think.. whew..."

Leodore cleared his throat and slowly started buttoning his shirt again. "Just in case you wondered, I had no objection at all to doing this. It's only our first formal date but I had a lot of fun with it."

Dawn gave a shaky laugh and slowly rubbed the side of her head, out of Leodore's sight, her head starting to go back to normal. "I never... never really dated much. My condition and my father's intimidating nature made that hard. M-more the condition... I..."

Strong, gentle fingers slowly curled under Dawn's chin, to lift her gaze up into Leodore's caring, soft eyes. "It's not a condition. It's just you. And I don't care a bit."

Dawn gasped softly, hands grasping his wrist before her head turned in and down, kisses landing across the pads of his palm. She could feel little scars there, right where his claws would be with a balled hand. He felt pain, and spared others.

You hate Leodore Lionheart. She could feel the old memories rasp out to her, telling her how things were, how they were meant to be.

She made a motion, pulled herself at his arm, and he responded as she had hoped, bringing her up into an embrace. Their lips met in a solid, slow kiss. It wasn't the mindless, excited kiss from their victory day. It was tender, it was shared, it was full of meaningful passion and unashamed adoration. She could finally say it, outright.

You hate Leodore Lionheart. "I love you, Leodore. I think I did the minute I saw you were good."

Leodore did his best to bury his huge face and radiant mane in her neck. "I love you too, Dawn. I don't think I can keep this from everyone. I thought I could but..."

"Just until we win over the City Council," she said. The chastised memories whispered back, cold and deceitful. He would never do it. He would never admit to loving a sheep. "B-but it has to be in public. We have to have a press conference and a lot of notice."

"Done. I'll book us on a talk show tour," he huffed back, gently licking and kissing her slender neck.

"I want to believe. He's told me the truth so many times, but..." She believed him, until her future memories reminded her what had happened before. Until it happened, she was in a prison of her mind's making, still tormented by the wicked version of the lion holding her close.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Division Families- In the parlance of this particular world, Division Families is the
name for monogamous, often child-including families that are not headed by a married
couple. They're just like all other families but they lack tax incentives and other social
programs given to married folks because the social stigma of the relationship
(typically meaning it's an inter-diet one) precluded marriage.

**Happytown**- I threw in an abandoned concept from the original Zootopia pitch. In this
version, it's a ward of Savannah Central, under the purview of the Mayor's reach. It's
largely an ill-treated slum of predators that gets semi-official disdain from the
government. The population and size would let it be a small district, possibly with a
City Council seat, but prey bigotry has kept that from happening.

**Kinkajou and Kitsune Scales**- A sort of Zootopian version of the Kinsey scale, with
a twist. The Kitsune Scale measures sexual orientation in the standard 0-6 manner. The
Kinkajou Scale measures extra-specific inclination. Also 0-6. It forms a rough X/Y
chart, though the Kinkajou scale is usually supplemented with a clade chart, to identify
areas of major romantic focus, as, ironically as it seems, the more someone feels
inclined to stray out of their species, the more focused they are on a particular
category.

**Late-vesper and Night shift**- Another piece of worldbuilding. The city of Zootopia
contains enough animals which are or can be diurnal, nocturnal and crepuscular that
they can run effectively continually, in four six hour shifts, rather than the usually
mentioned three eight hour shifts. Matin, Day, Vesper, Night. Matin runs 3 AM to 9
AM, Day 9 AM to 3 PM, Vesper 3 PM to 9 PM and Night 9 PM to 3 AM.

**Dawn's Condition**- There's never any mention in the movie made about Dawn's
unusual size compared to other sheep, and her eyes. It could be called Sexual
Dimorphism (though the size is a bit extreme for a mammal, that's more in the realm
of fish and insects.) It might be a breed thing, as both Sharla and Gareth have round
pupils but the size is a big deal. It's never really given notice beyond the euphemism
but Dawn isn't sure if what she has is some kind of congenital disorder or a recessive
(and heritable) case of unusual dwarfism, in that all her bodily proportions are exactly
equal to a standard sheep, just scaled down.
The Mammal Inclusion Initiative

Chapter Summary

The first meeting of Leodore's city council and the press for the MII.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Ten: The Mammal Inclusion Initiative

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The City Council represented the collective will of the districts, effectively sub-mayors of the miniature cities that made up the megalopolis of Zootopia. Some districts, due to size or prior legal agreement, simply didn't have their own council member, and just relied on the Mayor and served as a demarcated organ of the city. Meadowlands had its own district council for internal matters but relied on the city for most everything else. The Canal District and Marshlands were too sparsely populated for representation, Canyonlands was always quibbling about its status in relation to Sahara Square and the Polar Strait had been considering division, but remained as a smaller segment of Tundratown. Happytown certainly qualified for district status, but no one ever dared make an effort to give them a proper status, given the population composition.

Sahara Square, Tundratown, Little Rodentia, the Rainforest District, the Nocturnal District and Outback Island, all had their representatives that sat three times a month or if an emergency meeting was called by the mayor or one of the councilors. As Mayor, Lionheart was in effect also representing Savannah Central.

The chamber in which they met had been built to demonstrate a sense of regality and stoic justice. The walls were all paneled in dark wood to half way up, while marble veneers went up to the ceiling. The domed ceiling was a fresco, representing the three primary social religions: the sun, stars and earth of Solaterra, with farmers in toil and praise; the moon and glade of the Holy Selenic Convocation, with baying figures and the raising of insects; and the peaceful waterhole in the savannah merging the two in the center representing the Peaceground Unitary Church Association.

All the furniture was modular, each podium sized and designed for the councilors serving at present, though the one for Little Rodentia looked to be older than the rest, as it never changed much. The central of the seven podia was set higher and slightly more forward to represent the Mayor's primacy in relation to the rest of the council. Set to the left side was a small stand for a steno, the one for the day being a trim and studious-looking cheetah woman, in a light gray pantsuit and a pair of glasses on a chain perched on her snout.

Dawn was there, but as an observer, sitting at a small desk on the opposite side of the podium line from the steno. It provided a nice sense of balance, predator and prey on the two sides, both looking civilized and professional. In front of the semicircle of the council seats was a large table, with two sizes of chair and a tiny staircase onto it, with three sizes of microphone sitting on the tabletop.
Behind that was a low wooden balustrade with three different sizes of gate in it, separating the formal area from the audience area. A series of padded wooden benches were separated by size in the area, along with some rodent-sized seats arranged on the walls like theater boxes.

The councilors all entered the chamber from the rear entrance taking their seats in their own time. An older female fennec from Sahara Square in a sandy brown skirt and jacket combo; a slim stoat in her summer color, wearing a conservative black dress, represented Tundratown; a male lemming in a toned-down business suit sat for Little Rodentia; a slightly heavyset male armadillo in a light-colored suit with a bolo tie was there for the Rainforest District; a male gray-headed flying fox in an oddly modified vest and pair of pants was there for the Nocturnal District; and a small female wallaby in a white pantsuit represented Outback Island.

Leodore cleared his throat and shuffled a few papers that he had brought with him. "Well then, let's get this City Council meeting underway. Is there any old business from Swinton's last meeting?" After a negative murmur from the others Leodore clapped his paws together and smiled. "Well! New business. I have a new initiative I'd like to get approved by the council. I had copies distributed to all of you and there should have been time to look it over. Will anyone second to begin the discussion?"

"Second," the stoat said, raising her paw.

"Thank you, Miss Erminova," Leodore said with a smile. "Now, as I related to each of you personally, this was an initiative crafted by my highly talented Assistant Mayor, Miss Bellwether. If at all possible, I'd like her to offer the formal explanation of the whole thing. A vocal vote will confirm it."

Dawn blushed hotly at the praise from Leodore, and blushed even more deeply when everyone agreed with the proposal. She strolled over to the table in front of the council, availing herself of the highest chair and the medium microphone. "Thank you Le-Mayor Lionheart. This initiative is aimed at helping those traditionally underserved by the machinery of social activity in the city. Now..."

"A moment, if I may," the lemming said, holding a paw up.

"The council recognizes Mr. Seedsworth of Little Rodentia," Leodore said.

"What kind underserving were you talking about? This note about machinations of social activity seems very conspiratorial."

Dawn twitched slightly, looking down at her notes to hide the wince that ran through her. "It has been my observation that there are traditional pockets of highly conserved activity. Certain professions, or broad professional areas, have been narrowly restricted by species or at least genera lines. Either by dint of 'conventional wisdom' or archaic notions of 'perpetual niche competence.' Both ideas should strike all of us, civilized and modern mammals that we are, as inherently speciesist."

"A question, please," the fennec from Sahara Square interjected.

"Yes, Mrs. Fanak, you may proceed," Leodore rumbled.

"I take your meaning, but we rely on these shortcuts and rules of thumb to help this modern, civilized society function smoothly and speedily, do we not? Why should we not rely on the best we can get?"
"But that's the point of it," Dawn said, flipping through her papers. "We don't always get the best, we get the conventional. We just make a blind assumption that this mammal or that one is the best because, at best, we happen to be a particular species. At worst, their family pushes them into it because it's what the family always did, even if they show no aptitude."

"Is this some new method of predator promotion?" Seedsworth asked, cutting in before any other comment could be made. "Did you put your words in the mouth of a sheep, Lionheart?"

"Mr. Seedsworth you are out of order. Frankly, on many levels, but you did not seek recognition and your accusation is uncalled for," Leodore snarled, rapping a gavel sharply.

"I would like to address the comments made by the representative from Little Rodentia," Dawn humbly said.

"Please proceed, Miss Bellwether."

"The initiative does not focus on any family in particular, but applies equally to all species, with no restriction. It's about equality and inclusion, which will help everyone, by offering them equal opportunities formerly denied, often for no reason at all. Look at me, it's clear I have a condition, one I was born with. But I'm capable and smart, I can do things, and I had the opportunity but only because I had connections. Someone exactly like me, without those, would not be here. In essence, that's what the Mammal Inclusion Initiative is all about. If you can do the work, you get the job, without restrictions based on old thinking."

"Your estimated financial impact is somewhat unclear, Miss Bellwether, could you elaborate on that?" Miss Erminova asked.

"Yes, well, as this only inserts language into existing city codes and adds extra protections it's hard to estimate impact, as it's unclear how many will avail themselves. Court costs will be the largest concern, but those can be minimized by strong encouragement to businesses and other organizations to police their own groups. It really does work more smoothly and efficiently that way, and they'll see the difference. By hiring the right mammal for the right job they can avail themselves of a skilled sector of the population they might not have considered before."

"Unknown costs, a nebulous benefit, a lot of folksy words and populist platitudes. It's just not adding up for me," Mr. Seedsworth said.

"Yes, Cecil, we know you used to worth at Lemming Brothers," the wallaby said with a roll of her eyes. "If you prefer to think about bucks and not mammals you can go back there. I heard you were good at that."

"Money is the ultimate bottom line in a city this big! They say you can't eat gold but you can't buy food with warm feelings!"

"But you can get help when mammals are mammals and not something you write off and throw away!"

"There is no proof I ever wantonly dismissed anyone over a matter of profit or loss!"

Leodore rapped his gavel sharply, looking between the two councilors with a sharp gaze. "Mr. Seedsworth, Miss Macadam! This is a new opportunity to cease this kind of fractious behavior and do something of real, tangible benefit for the city. I promised the citizens this kind of new inclusiveness and open opportunity for all. I'm willing to use my executive power to enact the initiative in the districts under my direct purview, and allow the Meadowlands district council to
vote on implementation in full or external enforcement. Then we can watch migration patterns to the open areas, and the economic benefits Miss Bellwether mentioned. Meanwhile, your own constituents, who voted for me on the strength of this, will be battering down your doors and clogging your phone lines demanding to know why other districts get to have something they don't. It's a painful, protracted and yes, Mr. Seedsworth, costly possibility.

"But I would very much prefer we not do that. I want the maximum benefit for as many mammals as possible as quickly as possible. And as well, I want everyone here to continue to look good. I think we all want the best for the citizens of Zootopia, so let's show them that we mean all the things we promised to get to this place."

The council went silent for a long moment, all of them seeming to think deeply on the words. Dawn was rubbing her head as expectation crashed headfirst into the new reality. The old Lionheart had made the same threat, but with more shrewd venom and pomposity. He had used things he knew about them to subtly intimate a negative outcome, and still had almost gone ahead with it. He had won no friends that day. She just grasped that that had come back to hurt him somehow, but the specifics were still lost and locked in the haze of Morning Star's will.

"You're a shrewd mammal, Lionheart," Cecil said, breaking the silence. "I like that. I can respect that in an executive of any type. I'm inclined to give this a go."

"Sometimes we all need a little help, I guess. I was lucky I have money on both sides of my family, and the perception is that fennecs are shrewd enough to be politicians, as opposed to red foxes," Mrs. Fanak sighed. "I take no pride in it but I still availed myself of it. I did prove myself, but they were gambling on a bias. They should be voting on assured promises of competence."

"I'd like to open a vote of acceptance, to then begin the process of implementation. Those in favor, raise your arms," Leodore said. Though it took a moment, all of the councilors raised their arms. "Let the record show a unanimous positive vote."

Dawn just managed to hold her happiness, clapping her hooves together cheerfully, tapering off as she realized she was being stared at. She took her papers and scooted off back to her seat.

Leodore gave a huge smile and cleared his throat. "Well, now that that hurdle is out of the way, let's move on to the other matters involved in running this great city of ours..."

Hours later the council adjourned, with a great deal accomplished besides the agreement to fully implement the MII. Dawn followed Leodore into the heart of City Hall, nervously chewing her lip. She had to ask him about his promise, but she was almost too afraid to. She had no reason to believe he would betray her but she couldn't fight the old memories.

Leodore whipped out his cell phone and brought up some contacts. He made several phone calls as he walked, all of them being some variation of talking to a reporter or the news desk, arranging a press conference. He spoke a lot about a major announcement, but gave no further details.

"So are we... announcing the Mammal Inclusion Initiative?" Dawn shyly asked.

"That's on the agenda. We need to strike while the iron is hot, and, let's be honest, put the whole city on notice that prejudice in hiring and education and everything else will no longer be tolerated. That should shake things up a little bit. Since I called all the news outlets they'll be aware of each other, and realize this is big. We'll get a tremendous boost to coverage."

The comment didn't do anything to assuage Dawn's fears about the promise being ignored. Though her more rational mind was well aware of how silly it would have been to hold a press conference...
and talk show tour to announce a simple relationship. It would have been pure excess. "Will it be in your office?"

"Out front, very public and visible. It projects a more powerful image to have City Hall in the background, and to be down on the street, among the populace. That says it all, creating a mix of political power and a concern for the Zootopian in the street. That's what this is all about."

"Yes. All about..." Dawn echoed softly, keeping her smile up, but without any spark in her eyes.

In very short order a small herd of all varieties of media mammals had crowded around the steps of City Hall. The big three networks, ZNN, the local papers, news radio and even the independent stringers hanging at the back of the crowd. They all started clamoring for commentary, flashbulbs popping to snap shots as Leodore and Dawn left the building.

"Thank you all for coming out, I have very important matters to relay, so the whole city can prepare."

A large rhino pushed his bulk forward, waving a microphone in Lionheart's direction. "Mayor Lionheart! Jeremy Bicorn, ZNN. Are we to understand you have passed the initiative you promised during the election?"

"Absolutely! It was the first order of business and we were swift about it."

A svelte red deer slipped up close with her own microphone. "Trisha Roe, ZBC. Did you make an executive decision and put it only in places directly under your power?"

"No, not at all. We had a debate and the initiative was unanimously passed, to be implemented in all districts at once, once the language has been inserted. Formally, as the law states, it will take effect in one month's time, unless action has not been completed."

A mouse on a moving, elevated platform brought himself up near Lionheart. "Musculus Gray, Little Rodentia Union-Tribune. Just what will be the actual effect of this? All your campaign information was very vague."

"That was just the question I was waiting for. I want to make sure this is clear. This new initiative absolutely puts to an end any preemptive hurdle to acceptance into contention for a job or other position open for general filling. If a test can be taken, anyone can, if an application can be submitted, anyone can. Any mammal with a desire to perform a task will be tested and assessed without bias. It brings me no pleasure to say that the courts can and will be involved if discrimination is overt and provable, but, and I emphasize this part, it should be obvious to all concerned it would be best that that not happen.

"The reasonable solution is to comply and accept all applicants and have standardized methods of hiring. It's a new, modern world. Why we've held back this long is a mystery. But, all the mistakes of the past will be remedied. Long neglected potential will be broken free, doors opened, possibilities realized. That's the effect of the Mammal Inclusion Initiative."

The reporters all chattered together, some calling their editors and hyping the story, preparing the night editors and others to get the announcement flying out over the airwaves or across the pages of the papers.

"Looks like a smashing success. That should get the word out successfully. All those businesses and major civil occupations will certainly be on notice," Dawn said, with a smile plastered on her features. She really had no other expectation, and should have been happy that the initiative she
had crafted, and for which she had been credited, was in place and being promoted all across Zootopia.

"I wasn't finished!" Leodore roared, attracting the attention of the busy reporters. "I had another announcement, and arguably, a much more important one, also related to a promise I made. And as an honorable lion, the right thing to do is to fulfill that promise."

"What's this new announcement, Mayor Lionheart? Some new piece of legislation that was passed as well?" Trisha asked.

"No, no. This is something entirely personal, and very happy! I promised as soon as the MII passed I would announce to the city, formally, that Miss Dawn Bellwether graciously agreed to see me, socially. I can't find any way to express how much it means to me. And I want to express it to all the city. I love Dawn Bellwether."

The whole crowd went silent, half in disbelief, half in pure shock. The quiet stillness burst open like a shattered dam, unleashing a wave of sound, the furor all directed at Dawn's stunned, slightly-pained face. Microphones pushed at her face and every reporter that could reach her cried out for her reaction.

In her mind, a storm. The ego wasn't there. The claim on ownership, the smiling assurance of his certain legacy, vague deflections and not much of anything real, with her in the background, forgotten. But no, this Leodore, this one was too good for that. He had kept his promise; the divergence was wider than ever, the difference never more sharp. Even if the other one had been involved with her he wouldn't have said so, not that that quickly.

Her mind burned with hatred, from the locked-away memories, from the rage the old memories held for any predator, especially Leodore Lionheart. He was the source of her anger, the heart of her plot. Elsewhere.

She fought the pain, fought the fear, fought against the tide of words. She felt Leodore's paws on her shoulders, heard his firm voice calling for calm and respect for her. For her. She opened her eyes and stared at the crush of bodies.

"It's true! I'm dating Leodore Lionheart. The Mayor and Assistant Mayor are a couple, and I don't care who knows it! We shared lunch and a really nice dinner, and we got to know each other. I've been charmed by him since this whole campaign started, and I'm not going to apologize! He's the sweetest lion out there, well worth being involved with!"

Leodore drew her closer as the reporters pushed in, like the third act in a zombie movie. She was softly pulled off her hooves and pressed into that glorious chest, into a place of comfort and security. "That's enough! We'll be releasing statements later, but you have your story! Now please let Dawn... that is, Assistant Mayor Bellwether be!"

She clung to him, as he swept her along back into city hall, with the cries of the media behind them. He rushed them into an elevator and hit the button for their floor.

After a moment of silence Dawn finally asked, "So.. are we chancing going home through that?"

Leodore dropped his usual hearty, booming laugh. "Oh no, they're probably watching the bus routes and our cars right now."

"I thought so. I guess... takeout? My treat, you paid last time. And... you actually did it. I didn't think you would. I don't think I was really sure what would happen."
"Well now we know. And of course I had to do it. I promised you. A promise is a debt, but to you, it's something even deeper."

Dawn blushed, burying her face in his thick, luscious mane, enjoying the scent of fruity mane conditioner and a touch of sweat from the sudden dash. No matter how hard her head throbbed, nothing could make her stop loving that moment.
The press blitz for Dawn and Leodore's love. And the MII.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Eleven: Taking a Tour

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The ZNN Evening News looked as it ever did, backed with the creatively blurred distant panoramic shot of the city, and the main anchor desk. However, the usual lineup was not present. Peter Moosebridge was on the right side, but Fabienne Growley was not with him. Instead Moosebridge was joined by Michael Tanuyama, with a dewy ginkgo leaf shining on his head.

Moosebridge looked into the camera and began reading from his teleprompter. "Good evening, Zootopia, I'm Peter Moosebridge."

"And I am Michael Tanuyama. Fabienne Growley is on special assignment tonight."

"Our top story tonight, Mayor Leodore Lionheart's extremely surprising first political moves. After settling into the position of mayor and preparing himself, he made good on his promise to enact the Mammal Inclusion Initiative, as written by himself and his Assistant mayor, Dawn Bellwether. At his very first city council meeting the new mayor got full support, enacting the sweeping new initiative through all the districts.

"But at the news conference announcing the acceptance of the MII, Mayor Lionheart also dropped a surprise announcement; namely, that he was romantically tied to said Assistant Mayor Bellwether. When asked for comment, after a moment of surprise from the crush of reporters, the Assistant Mayor confirmed that it was so. The two then fled into City Hall, to escape the near-riot by the press."

Michael nodded and turned his gaze to the camera. "The announcement has sent shock waves through much of the city, given both the political statuses of the two, and the species constitution of the pair. Our Fabienne Growley was offered an exclusive, early interview with the two in the Mayor's office at City Hall. Here is that interview."

Fabienne's cultured, soft voice spoke over footage of the Mayor's office, showing Leodore in his chair, Dawn in the one from her office and occasionally the snow leopard herself, sitting across from them. "I had the opportunity to speak with the two, first about the finer points of the Mammal Inclusion Initiative. The conversation then led into the subject likely on the minds of most
"The announcement came as quite a surprise to everyone in the crowd and continues to resonate through the city. What was it that inspired you to make such a statement with no preamble or prior statement?"

"Well as I said the other day, this was a promise I made. I think... Dawn believed that I wouldn't do it, because of the traditional feelings about Outsider relationships. She wanted us to be open and admitted. She's certainly worth that, no question at all," Leodore purred, looking aside at Dawn with soft eyes.

Fabienne politely chuckled at the statement, more a smile-backed few sounds. "I can see you're very sincere and very daring. Not many mammals would have the gumption to do what you did. I gather, few would even begin such a relationship at all, at least in a situation where reputation is everything. Assistant Mayor Bellwether, I gather he didn't tell you before he did it what he intended. Did you have any expectation he might, or any plan for his following through?"

Dawn gave a high, bleating laugh and shook her head slowly. "I had a strange sort of forlorn hope, holding out for him to do it. I felt bad when I thought he was just going to talk about the Mammal Inclusion Initiative. My rational mind knew it was kind of silly, maybe lambish, to imagine he would do it, but there's that last little bit of being a romantic that made me want it. And he brought it... I had no idea what to do. You can see on the video I'm stunned. It's not a sheep thing, though being nearly trampled by reporters would bring out fear in anyone. I was trying to shift gears without using the clutch. It took a minute for everything to catch up."

"According to the reports you never left City hall. Are you at all comfortable with saying what happened or..?"

"Well, I am," Leodore said. "But Dawn has to agree before-"

"We ordered takeout, picked up by a nocturnal intern. I had a mustard greens salad with fried daikon radish and a side of lemongrass, he had a pachyderm meal with crickets and grubs, and we shared an elephant-sized Diet Dr. Pfeffa," Dawn answered.

"That same intern also was sent out to purchase travel-size personal hygiene products, two blankets and some clothing deodorizer. I don't know about Dawn but I slept under my desk with my suit folded on top. I brushed my teeth in the bathroom and breakfast was the matin shift's coffee and donuts."

"I slept on top of mine, with the blanket for a pillow and my clothes folded on my chair. I always keep a few Scarp bars in my desk just in case I need them, and I used the water fountain to fill the electric water heater Leodore got me as an officewarming present to make some tea, which I also keep in my desk."

"Seems like you and I have some things in common. Nothing beats a fresh cuppa in the morning," Fabienne said with a small laugh, which was shared by the rest. "Understandably, some mammals won't quite believe you kept separate."

"And that's their decision," Leodore said with a sigh. "It's perfectly legal, maybe even ultimately healthy, but certainly morally neutral to imagine something like that. In small doses. They want to think that, that's fair. I told my side, Dawn told hers, and that's the best we can manage."

"I really think it says more about the one saying that kind of thing. As if a male and a ewe can't sleep separately while dating. Physical intimacy has its place, but mammals do think about others
things most of the time. Their lives aren't a simple, repeated thought about that sort of thing. Just like Leodore, all I can say is, we slept apart."

"A very mature position. I'm very much driven to believe you. I think that answers most of the possible questions that the public would want answered. Have you any additional statements before we conclude?"

"Well, yes. This is a personal message to my father, Vesper Bellwether," Dawn said, with a soft and sweet tone. She pulled gently on Leodore's tie, his head dipping down to meet her in a warm, loving kiss. She turned to the camera once it had concluded and said, "Father, thank you so much for all you did. You drove us both to succeed, and brought me into this relationship that enriches us both. I can't possibly show more gratitude."

Leodore gave a curious look and stammered out, "Y-yes, that's right. Mr. Bellwether, thank you for providing us with your advice and comments, it helped to shape our campaign. Your suggestions also helped to draw us closer together. You're truly generous."

"Kind words indeed for a father and a fellow politician. He should feel truly appreciated at this moment. Reporting from City Hall, this is Fabienne Growley."

Peter appeared again, looking serious. "That was Fabienne Growley with a deeper look at a situation that will doubtless occupy the Zootopian mind for a long while."

Michael nodded, bobbling his head-leaf. "This event has spurred a conversation long whispered but seldom voiced, about the relationships between distinctly different groups. Our reporters went along to interview Zootopians in several districts, to get the opinion of the public."

A beaver in a hardhat shouted instructions to several workers before turning back to the camera. "So, the Mayor's down the river with a lady. None of my business. I hear my aunt didn't get married 'cause she was keepin' time with an otter. They eat fish, so I guess they're preds. If he keeps his promise to get me better workers and move my schedule up, I don't care what he does." A sound from behind him drew his attention and he was just heard to say, "That's right I'll replace you! In a heartbeat!"

"It's shocking and frankly unnatural," a well-dressed elephant cow snorted, rattling the camera a bit. "Now I did not personally vote for Lionheart but I was supportive of his initiative. But now I see what he was really trying to say. I think Zootopia would get on well enough without any of his social engineering. We should not be forced to accept his strange, alternative lifestyle. How would we ever explain it to our children?"

"You know, on some level, I think that's what I was hoping for," a stern-looking oryx said, while standing in the doorway of his apartment. "Maybe I don't get getting with someone that far away, but I figured that inclusion thing would get around to folks that didn't stick to the herd."

A voice from inside the apartment cried out, "Close the door, already! Invite them in or go out in the hall but don't just stand there!"

"There isn't enough room in that cracker box apartment or the hallway!"

"Don't scream about the apartment, or old lady Armadillo will raise the rent!"

"Ignore him. Like I was saying, I don't get it, but I get it."

"This lion, he brings great honor to himself and the city," an older shrew said, being carried by a large, well-dressed polar bear. "He made a promise to the city, and to this good ewe. If he cares so
much that he will do what he can to keep his promises, honor the responsibilities, he's a true leader. And that is the only thing that really matters when it comes to running an organization, like a city."

"I'm telling you, Dawn never should have gone out to the city," a frustrated-looking sheep bleated. "This is just the kind of thing I was afraid would happen. She should have stayed here and just kept sitting on the district council. It was enough for her father it should have been good enough for her. That city got her so twisted around she's herding up with a lion. A lion!"

"A collection of voices from this fair city, primarily supportive, but with some dissension. How this affects the new mayor and his assistant will be seen as time goes by. For right now, we can only speculate. Peter?"

Peter nodded, looking into the camera. "That's right, Michael. For now, let's turn to the weather..."

The studio audience packed tightly into their variously sized seats almost seemed to be twitching in anticipation, a hushed murmur running through the assembly while the lights were low. Cheers and different sorts of howls and squeaks rang out when the lights rose an an Applause sign lit up.

Spotlights hit the stage, showing a brightly-colored desk covered in cheerful nick-knacks, and a mug with a big, smiling wolf on it. Beside it were two casual-looking chairs, sized for two different scales of mammal. Over a painted silhouette of the city skyline was the name Selene.

From the side of the stage with the desk strolled a cheerful cream-colored she-wolf in a light gray pantsuit, dark charcoal vest and white shirt. The crowd went wild over her appearance, all of them standing and gyrating as music bared over the studio speakers. She danced her way up into the crowd, following a path through the audience.

From off to the side of the stage, where a live band was sitting, a tall giraffe announced, "It's time once again for Zootopia's favorite talk show with everyone's favorite host! Selene DiGiancoda! Give it up for her, folks!"

Selene danced her way back to the stage and waved to everyone. "Hey, Zootopia! We've got another great show for you today. We've got Gerenuk Jones to talk about the new movie, Savage Skies; another round of Zoogle Photos Oversharing; and another day of our Sahara Square Giveaway. Now, normally I'd be giving a monologue, but I've got something even more special. My first guests are mammals that have lit a spark across the face of the city, starting a conversation long overdue. Please welcome Mayor Leodore Lionheart and Assistant Mayor Dawn Bellwether!"

The two walked onto the stage in a crashing wave of applause and a brassy little number from the house band. Leodore helped Dawn climb up into her chair before taking a seat himself, the structure and padding giving them roughly equal heights. The two waved to the crowd before turning their attention to Selene's smiling face.

"This is a pleasure! I'm not usually a political show, but I did have former Mayor Swinton on a few times to do a decorating segment. I hope you don't mind if I leave off the politics."

"I think I'd prefer it, this is enough pressure," Dawn said, lightly fanning herself.

"Don't worry, Asisstant Mayor, we're all friends here, right folks? Give her some love!" Selene's call to the crowd was answered with another huge, ringing wall of applause and cries of positivity.

"Looks like we're not going to get any boos here, Dawn," Leodore rumbled, smiling across at her.

"Oh no, not here. We've got the best audience in the city here!" Selene pumped her paw through
the resultant cheer. "We're all pretty accepting around here. That's why I wanted to have you on before anyone else. This is a safe place where you can get the word out about this kind of thing. Outsiders are just not that well understood, even in a city like this."

"You'll find an article here or there in magazines for the ladies. I know I only knew anything about what I did because of a few small things in EwwE magazine. I certainly didn't get any good education in the sexual education courses."

"I know you wanted to be apolitical, but I wanted to mention another goal is to get a comprehensive sex education package into all the schools," Leodore said. "I've seen instances of intentional misinformation with regard to biology, social interactions and law. That's an appalling thing, and should not be allowed to continue."

"It'll help out all those citizens out there who are too shy to go for a relationship, or were lied to about what a relationship meant, or were forced to break up with someone..." Dawn trailed off.

"Oh no! Was that what happened to you? I'm sorry..." Selene reached out a paw to pat Dawn's shoulder.

"No, no. I never dated, because until Leodore my condition left me too shy, and I was just very focused on success. I think she won't mind my saying, because it was never a secret and she was still upset about it. Patty Curltail, from back home. She was absolutely in love with a wolf. Her family ripped them apart, socially..." Dawn winced, the dark irony of her opposition sending her prior mind into a riot. It wasn't a screaming suffering but very throbbing and painful. Her hoof went to her temple and rubbed slowly, which she could usually hide, but not with such scrutiny.

"Dawn, you don't have to do this..." Leodore whispered, leaning in to press his huge features against the soft wool of her neck.

Dawn shook her head amid soft sounds of emotion from the audience. "No, I need to. She stayed and never dated. He moved here. Sorry to bring this down. I love your show, Selene."

"Hey, we have all kinds of things around here. I think that story was perfect. It really shows how we can do better as a city. We need fewer stories like that. And more stories like yours."

"While I'm here on camera, and with folks knowing me for my promise-keeping, I'd like to promise..." Leodore nuzzled into Dawn's neck again, rubbing her wool softly. "That to the best of my ability, I'll try to make you happy."

"Leodore..." Dawn slipped her arms around his neck and hopped out of her chair, clinging to his form.

"And I thought Mercedes and I were the queens of cute," Selene noted, to the applause of the audience. "So, Mayor Lionheart, did you know of any couples like that?"

"Not personally, no. But I blame that on upbringing. My father was a fairly basic, uncomplicated mammal, an executive at Pride Heavy Manufacturing, and he kept the family well-provided-for but relatively bland. My mother, she was a much more open, colorful lioness. Being an elementary school teacher probably influenced that. But she had limited chances to really do much. I didn't have any Outsider friends that I knew of, and didn't know any, besides myself. It just wasn't discussed which is, I think, how I got in under their notice."

"What does that mean?"

"Well, I've always been an Outsider, everyone has their preference from a young age. Now I'm a
solid Kinkajou six..." Leodore began.

Selene interrupted him, "For all our viewers who don't know, the Kinkajou scale is how attraction based on species is measured. Six is the highest and means Mayor Lionheart only likes non... felines, would it be? At that level?"

"No, that would be more of a four or five. It measures both attraction and lack of it. Four would be a loss of attraction to all Panthera, along with attraction to other families, five is all Feliformia and six is all carnivores. If you'll pardon the bad joke, as far as dating goes, I'm a vegetariantarian," Leodore chuckled, getting a groaning laugh from the audience.

"Hey now, hey now! Dad jokes happen. And you don't even need to be a dad."

"I actually know this because I got a personality inventory and orientation axis, because my parents didn't believe I was genuinely not attracted to the lionesses they brought. Well, my father didn't. Mother was always a charitable lady. My father gave me one piece of advice, just don't embarrass the family. I think he meant by having a fling or a sham marriage with potentially embarrassing consequences. They're both retired now, living in Sahara Square, on pensions and investments. Hello there! See?" Leodore hugged Dawn tightly to his chest and gave a toothy smile, a carnivore-to-carnivore action of closeness. "Not embarrassing. The Lionheart name is more respected than ever."

"And how about you, Assistant Mayor Bellwether? Do you know your number?"

"Not yet. But it feels like a three. Keep in mind, I'm new to this. I grew up in Meadowlands, and my father was... even more basic than Leodore's. He wanted me focused on success and governance. I see his point, he was well aware of what my condition did to my social life. But he could have been a bit more warm about it. Still, here I am, so he didn't get things completely wrong."

"He missed a few marks, but you came out very well, Dawn Bellwether..." Leodore said. "We both missed a thing or two from family but hey, now we can shore each other up."

"I think a relationship like that deserves another round of applause, what do you folks say?" Selene's voice rose in vain at the end of her request, her audience showing their approval clearly and freely. "We've got a little more time with them, then Gerenuk Jones, those Zoogle overshares and more when we come back after these messages!"

"I didn't know there was a television studio in here..." Dawn quickly zipped along beside Leodore, though it was hardly necessary. His usual long, loping stride had slowed in its pace and span, to more comfortably accommodate his smaller paramour's legs. "I mean, I'm only medium-surprised given the size and opulence but still..."

The two were working their way through the busy heart of the magnificent Palm Hotel and Casino, the pride of Sahara Square. They had been eagerly ushered in by a smiling springbok doormammal and then sent to a finely-dressed hippopotamus that had directed the two across the busy base to a bank of elevators, while also passing along a glossy black keycard.

"Oh there isn't a studio in here. It's just what you see. Casino, hotel, private residences above for celebrities and the wealthy. This is sort of... a detour on this tour of ours. We're here for a kind of interview that won't be broadcast on television but, I would say, will be seen by just as many folks and last forever."
"Seen by... last forever? Mm, a surprise from a lion. I shouldn't be surprised but I still am. Well played, Leodore," Dawn chuckled.

The two were waved through a roped-off area by an elephant in sunglasses and a dark suit, which led them to a bank of elevators. The keycard activated one of them, which opened up to reveal a richly appointed space, brightly colored and embellished with precious metals. Classical music was piped into it, and there were no buttons to indicate a floor. The application of the card was sufficient to set it in motion.

A short upward ride brought a huge cascade of light from the back of the elevator. Slightly tinted glass gave a spectacular view of the burnished sands and low, rounded homes of the district. They were going up at a good clip, well past the usual areas of the great structure, each passed floor offering a greater view of the expanse of shifting sand and intermittent signs of activity.

At the floor allowed to the card the two were faced by a small pack of wolves, in suits and sunglasses, looking them over with the practiced eye of a professional security detail. "Ma'am, they've arrived," one of them said into his cuff. He pressed lightly on the earpiece in his right ear, slowly nodding as he got his response. "Right away." He motioned with his head. "Follow me please."

"Sweet lemongrass, I thought our security was tight..." Dawn softly said, watching the wolves move in precise, practiced ways, two falling in behind and three leading them.

"Our security is extremely competent and professional, but this is that cut above, for when you can afford it and it matters," Leodore rumbled.

The corridor they were being taken down was very nice, if relatively bland. The walls were a sandy tone, the carpet was a basic weave, it looked like something the building had come with. There were no pieces of personalization or individual embellishment. The only saving grace of the slightly curved area was the half-full long windows, which gave more beautiful views of the district in the noontide light.

The finally arrived at a set of double doors, carved, polished, painted, all in a relatively dull way. The lead wolf took out his own card, undid the electronic lock and opened the door wide for Dawn and Leodore, letting out the sounds of cheerful pop music and the faint smell of popcorn and sweets.

Through the door, everything was different. Outside, there was no personalization. Inside, it was nothing but. The main room of what was certainly a suite, if not a full multi-bedroom apartment, was painted bright pink, with red, orange and black touches, joined with sparkling glitter. The furniture was similarly pastel in color, though looked somewhat worse for wear, with a few claw marks that Dawn knew were inevitable on things owned by felines. The music was coming from a large sound system, the big speakers pumping out the sound. But just the music. There was singing, and it was being provided, karaoke style, by Gazelle herself.

The pop diva was dressed quite nicely, in a very clingy sparkly-blue skirt and a tight blue-and-silver top. Her back was to the door, attention focused on the karaoke screen, despite it displaying a song she knew by heart. Rather than her usual pack of tigers, only one seemed in evidence, lounging languidly on a couch, dressed in a very casual pair of jeans and a blue t-shirt that looked to be tour merch.

"We have an interview with Gazelle? I didn't even think she was a show host," Dawn hissed to Leodore, eyes wide and disbelieving."
"She contacted me a few days ago. Direct, even! She says her new DVD will have some bonus features about Outsider love, and our relationship was something she wanted to highlight."

"I'm going to be on a Gazelle DVD? You're right, this will be widespread, and it will certainly be big!" Dawn practically gamboled in place like a little lamb.

They waited at the door, between the security wolves, while Gazelle finished her song, which finished with a round of applause from the tiger. She set the microphone down and turned around to regard the two politicians with a smile. "Welcome Mister Mayor, Miss Assistant Mayor. It's a great pleasure to have you here."

"Miss Gazelle, this is a unique honor," Leodore said, shaking Gazelle's hand.

"I've listened to your music a lot recently. I got into it late because I was... steered away from it for a while..." Dawn admitted, shaking Gazelle's hand with a slight blush.

"I watched your interview on Selene. At least now you're much freer," Gazelle replied with a warm smile. "Please, come in. Gracias, Señor Howlmeyer. Your team is very effective."

"Bitte, Fraulein. Bürgermeister, Assistent Bürgermeister," Howlmeyer nodded to the two and smiled. "Mein liebchen thanks you, Bürgermeister; now they will no more say eine Damhirschkuh cannot be the auto mechanic." With a final nod he trooped off, with his wolves in tow.

"I got the gist of that, and I think I'm happy about it," Leodore confessed as they all strolled into the room, being met by the tiger, who had risen from his place once the door closed.

Gazelle pressed herself to the burly tiger's front, reaching up to cling to his shoulders and get in a good, solid hug. "This is Hu Lin. Mi tigre. He's why I wanted to do this interview with you."

"Not many are willing to be as open as you are," Hu Lin commented, one huge hand slowly stroking down along Gazelle's back.

"And you... I presume that some of your fans will be somewhat surprised by your revelation. Forgive me, I... have a different taste in music. But believe me, I know of you and all the good you do for this city, with your charities and promotion of the city in various ways," Leodore said.

"I don't hold musical taste against anyone. And you two have, in such a short time, given so much to the city yourselves. That's why I wanted you to be the ones I talked with. Your high positions and openness will make it mean more. But if it lasts a long while... would you consider marriage, even if it is often denounced?" Gazelle asked.

"In the fullness of time, I want to marry Hu Lin. I want the whole city to know my love for him. Maybe some positive change will come of it," Gazelle sighed happily. She pressed a kiss on his
chest and stroked his shoulders. "I had been thinking of doing it much later. But with such a grand proclamation of Outsider love... maybe we can have it happen sooner."

"There are many things we plan on doing that would benefit from someone like you. I don't plan on the Mammal Inclusion Initiative being the only thing done for the benefit of equality in this city."

"It would be my pleasure to help you in an endeavor like that. But for right now..." Gazelle walked over to a side table, picking up a digital camera and setting it on a tripod. "I'd like to talk about what it's like being in an Outsider relationship when you're in the center of so much scrutiny."

Dawn looked into the camera, wondering why she was so nervous. She had been in front of so many cameras in the last few weeks. But this wasn't just a clinical, detached media personality. It wasn't just an interview that had no stakes in the game. Gazelle was an Outsider. So was Hu Lin. Just like Leodore. And, on reflection, just like her. This was an authentic Outsider asking questions that came from a real place. She had to be open; Gazelle would know if she was holding back. Her buried memories burned but she had become quite adept at fighting through it, giving no reaction.

"As long as they look, they can't hide. If we don't, they won't. When they give us notice, they can't pretend to be anything else but what they are. In that respect, it's useful for identifying folks we'd be better off ignoring," Dawn said, right into the camera, with no hesitation and no reaction to the lashing of her mind.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Michael Tanuyama's gingko leaf: Some folks might not know that traditionally tanuki used leaves as part of their illusion magic. This has developed into making the leaves actually magical, as in Super Mario Bros 3 when the leaf was used as a power up or in Animal Crossing where leaves become items and are sold by Tom Nook the tanuki. Gingko, being a medicinal leaf, would have strong significance and be a strongly preferred choice.

Scarp bar: Being a geological feature, it's a quick and easy joking reference to a Cliff bar

Selene: A clear reference to Ellen, a favorite show around my family.

Herr Howlmeyer's speech: I don't speak German, that was all Google translate. It's supposed to be a bilingual bonus. Spoilers for those who like to figure out foreign language for themselves, he has a stake in the game too, as he says his liebchen (sweetheart) is a deer doe, specifically a fallow deer.
I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twelve: One Moment

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Do you think that we can affect actual change, as opposed to just whitewashing a disaster area?"
Leodore slowly swirled a glass of wine, looking out over the beautiful burnished sands of Sahara Square, watching the eddies of dust swirl in the distance.

The view was magnificent from the top of the Palm Hotel, at the very private and exclusive roof restaurant. It wasn't enough just being mayor and assistant mayor. They were on a government salary, and while both were from affluent backgrounds, they weren't of the 'casually decadent' level. Gazelle's good word had not only gotten them in, but had gotten them comped, a gift they had no problem disclosing to the public following the release of her tour DVD with their interview on it.

Dawn regarded the same landscape, almost losing herself in the bright beauty of the ending day. She had never been there before, so far as she was allowed to remember. He life had diverged so far there were no more direct feelings of deja vu. There was nothing to compare it to. "Well... if that's all we can do... I have to say this is the nicest-looking disaster area that ever existed."

Leodore got a strange look as he watched the wind bow, a kind of half-smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. "I know it's a nice place for most folks. But there's a difference between most and all. There should be an acceptable minimum that everyone should enjoy, rather than just making do with 'good enough.' That was part of what the MII was for. I hear that we've had a few court challenges already, which were all decided for the applicant. And there's some buzz from the ZPD training academy about a rabbit entering soon on the MII. If she can make it, that would really prove the need always existed. The qualified can come from anywhere. Anyone really can be anything."

The mention of a rabbit police officer made Dawn wince hard, her hooves almost snapping the stem of her wineglass. That was her. That was the one whose love she had come back to destroy. She hated this unknown figure so much she deserved loneliness and misery. She breathed slowly, focusing on the strange look on Leodore's face. She knew his every mood, and had never seen one so conflicted. "I know it isn't perfect. It's messy and uneven. I think... I think I know why you think it's a disaster." She took a long, slow sip of wine and sighed. "You want to stop the Division Families and you want Happytown to be happy. Because before I met you and actually learned to open my Meadowlands eyes I forgot that it's all clover and cress... for prey. Just being prey made
life infinitely easier. I didn't have to get lucky about birth, I just was lucky about that. But even the poorest prey can get on fine. You... lucked into the chance to be powerful."

Leodore continued to look out at the landscape, slowly nodding his head and not noticing that Dawn was gripping the table, her face a fading mask of pain following her comment. "Predators have power, physically, but that's not absolute. An elephant can deal serious damage to a tiger if they choose to. Otters certainly aren't a threat to prey. Meerkats eat bugs by choice and always have, but they're still called predators. Predator and prey can be terrible to each other and their own. Your father certainly demonstrates that."

Dawn had almost forgotten what she had once been. She had hated predators because... the real reason was locked away, her shackled memories trying desperately to fight Morning Star's restrictions, being lashed and chastised by the force keeping them locked. Unable to remember the justification she had told herself, she had only the reality, unvarnished and loosed by her love for Leodore. She had been taught to look down on predators as a whole. They were all loud, clumsy and terrible. She had been taught to be afraid of them, then to distill that fear into hate. "Fear always works..." she whispered, grinding her teeth together in the wake of saying it.

"Dawn! What's the matter?" Leodore turned a concerned look on her, reaching out to cup her face, and turning her face to him.

She had gotten good about swallowing her mental anguish, to ride out the punishment of what she used to be. She sniffed softly and gave a warm smile up at him. "I think I might be allergic to something. My sinuses aren't very happy with me. But it doesn't even rise to the level of a nuisance. I was just saying... he always taught me one thing that I was supposed to keep in my pocket to use if I needed to succeed in a run-off. Fear always works. Make them afraid, turn that to anger, and make sure you, and you alone, are the savior. Wield their fear and anger like a weapon, punish your effigies and never lose sleep over their victimhood."

The sharp tang of blood sprang up, Leodore's fingers curled in to press on his palm pad, his claws sliding out far enough to draw a bit of blood. The flush of anger drained quickly from his features each time a wince crossed his face. "He... he did give me that impression. He seemed like that sort of ram. I didn't want to think that badly of him but he showed all the signs."

Dawn didn't say a word, she just took the napkin off of her lap and pressed it to the bloody claw-pricks on Leodore's paw. "Mother wanted to counteract him. But she finally gave up. She moved in with a second or third cousin somewhere out in the sticks. I used to wonder why she didn't take me. Now I realize that she would have been dragged though a legal nightmare, and never kept custody anyhow. It took years, but now I can admire her for not doing that. Television and movies try to tell folks to just fight no matter what, that it's more noble somehow. But there are real consequences. And if you know that not only can't you win but it will bring too much pain... not fighting is the only solution."

Leodore took the hoof pressing the napkin to his paw and brought his head down to give it a kiss. "Sometimes folks forget that it's fine to be willing to accept that some things aren't going to come out their way, no matter how much they hope. They can try if it only affects them. But once it starts to hurt others, that's when the gambling becomes no longer worth it. It's a balancing act between playing the lottery for a chance at something and putting every last buck on a spin of a wheel."

Dawn sighed and nodded, looking out at the desert again. "We're whitewashing a disaster area. But... you've made it so welcoming, so warm and homey... I don't think even the predators of Happytown care about the disaster part. They just admire how smooth and even the paint is."
"I really don't want that. I want prosperity for everyone, real peace and freedom for predators and prey alike. It's not enough to just ease the way, I want them not to have to worry about things like discrimination and social abandonment. They need to be given help to rise up and reach their potential."

Dawn had been puzzling one thing out, over and over. Morning Star had told her she changed one moment. Not hers. It was clearly Leodore's. One single moment had cascaded out and altered everything in its wake. She wondered how far back the moment was, and just what moment had changed. This Lionheart was so very like the surface the other presented, but he paid off his image. He was style and substance, and even had slightly more dedication to his body, which only really mattered to her, late at night in her apartment.

"I love hearing you talk like that. But it brings to mind a question I've wanted to ask you for a while. Y-you don't have to answer, of course! It's just my own curiosity..."

"You know I don't keep things from you. Ask me anything and I'll tell you the truth, outright and openly."

Dawn bit her lip, chewing thoughtfully as she considered. She always did this, always hesitated at a critical moment because she knew the anticipation was at least something she knew. The unknown was something she feared... and could hate. That made up her mind. "Do you... do you remember any particular, special moment that really made you... you? That made you so dedicated to all this goodness? I mean, of course I love it. It's done so much good. But do you remember the major inspiration?"

Leodore laughed in his usual jolly, booming manner, bringing Dawn's hoof up for another kiss. "It's funny you should ask that. It's a time that stands out so clearly in my mind. I know that if it had been slightly different, well... I wouldn't be here, I'll tell you that. Maybe I'd be some executive but certainly not Mayor of Zootopia."

Mayor... yes, Mayor, but not a good one. An effective one maybe. But not that good. Still attractive, still with something there. But... no, you were never here, never this loved. They could always tell what you were. The other you. They know what this one is, and I think they love you as much as I do. "I'd love to hear that story. It sounds like a real insight into how we got here."

"I discovered a lot of things that day. How to be good, a desire to do the best I could for everyone, a drive to be in politics, and even, maybe a little bit, that I was an Outsider with a focus on sheep. Let me see..."

For young Leodore Lionheart, it was a fantastic day. He was off from school for the summer, and he was alone in the large condo he called home. His mother taught at a Year-Round school, and his father was, as ever, pushing papers at work, making the money that made the condo possible.

He had considered going outside to play, as the neighborhood had a good mix of other affluent predators and prey who were not opposed to hanging out with predators. His consideration was halted by what he had seen on television the other night. A commercial for a day of short cartoons on the Musculus Channel had showed a lion and a lot of sheep, including sheep around his age. Something about that had made him very interested. Ewes always seemed so nice and pretty and soft. He loved watching shows and cartoons with ewes in them.

A honey badger maid had been in and out, keeping an eye on him, making snacks and lunch, all the usual things. But for the most part he was left to his own devices. He was usually a slight handful, but never too much. On that day, he was a perfect cub.
All his attention had been focused on the television all day, anticipating the cartoon about sheep and a lion. The rest of them were nice, usually very funny with lots of good music. But they were about things like mice and wolves and pigs. They weren't what he wanted.

"Leodore! Have you been a good cub?" His mother's voice rang around the condo like a bell. Gwendolyn Lionheart was a tall, lovely lioness with stunning snow white fur. Her blue eyes marked her as leucistic, not albino, the condition seeming to have skipped her son's generation. She set down an attache case and strolled into the large living room, hanging up a gray jacket and leaving her in her white shirt and gray dress.

"Yes! I've just been watching cartoons all day," Leodore said, not even turning to look at her.

"Is that so. They must be very interesting if you've kept quiet and still all this time," Gwendolyn said with a smile, sitting down on the couch with her son and giving him a hug.

"I've been waiting for..." The comment ended when music started to play and he saw a title card that read *Lambert the Sheepish Lion*. "Oooh! This! I've been waiting for this."

"More sheep. You certainly do like sheep, don't you, Leodore?" Gwendolyn inquired, settling close to her son and slightly shaking her head at the title that had passed. It was an earlier time, and the term was never terrible, but it had grown so much less common, for the best.

"Uh-huh! Sheep are really nice. There's a ewe lamb in my class and she says 'hi' to me but I just can't talk to her," Leodore replied, watching the credits pass.

Gwendolyn thought on the matter while she sat and watched the cartoon with her son. She had to hold him tight when some of the scenes got a little rough. A lion cub was adopted by a ewe in a sheep community, and the poor fellow never fit in, being an outsider who just couldn't get anything culturally sheep-like right. He couldn't play the hard-tackling games the way they did, he didn't bleat, he ate bugs in his grass, the young ewes laughed at him, the young rams bullied him.

Finally, when they were all out together, a dangerous wolf with a knife stuck up Lambert's mother. The rams that had been so tough all ran off in a panic. When Lambert heard the cries of his mother he unleashed his inner lion, roaring so loudly he stunned the thuggish wolf, knocking him unconscious with a headbutt then calling the police from a payphone. That had endeared him to the other sheep.

Leodore rested against his mother's side, seeming deep in thought about what he had just seen. "Mom?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Why did all those sheep treat Lambert like that? He wasn't hurting anyone, he just wanted to be friends..."

"Well, dear... sometimes mammals are... just not polite. They get angry about things, they don't like things, especially things that are different from them. It's not right, of course. But it happens. The important thing is to be like Lambert. Don't give in to anger or be too sad. You have to remember that they might not understand things. Maybe they never met anyone that was different. You can certainly tell someone about it, but remember that it's never your fault, others just sometimes don't know how to feel about things that are different."

Leodore thought about his mother's words for a long time. "You mean, just wait and they'll learn to be nice?"
"Sometimes. But sometimes you can show them. Be an example, keep being friendly, always look for good, always do good for everyone possible. If you're a good mammal, inside and out, it shows, and others will respond to it. But did you see something else in the cartoon?"

"See what?"

"Lambert was different. There was only one lion in all those sheep. He wasn't like the others so he stood out, and that made them be mean to him. When there are are few of some kind of mammal, or they're small and weak compared to others, they get excluded from things. That hurts them, especially when they could be just as good as the others, and they're left out for no reason at all. Lambert was sad about being left out, wasn't he?"

Leodore nodded. "He tried really hard and he got good at stuff, they just didn't let him try. But he saved his mom! That was great."

Gwendolyn smiled and gave Leodore a kiss on the head. "Yes, that was great. He showed that even if you're afraid, you have to do the right thing. You show how noble you are by doing the right thing even if it's hard. Doing the right thing because that's what's important is so essential in life. I know you'll always do the right thing, Leodore, that you'll always be a good lion. Maybe you can do things that scare you. Like... say 'hi' back to that lamb."

Leodore giggled a little bit in his mother's embrace, stopping when the door opened and his father's voice boomed through the condo. "What a miserable drive! How do things like this happen?"

"Something the matter, darling?" Gwendolyn asked.

"You're home earlier than I thought. I'm always here before you."

"It was the strangest thing. We ended the day early because of a scheduled maintenance thing, and when I got on the road the traffic was smooth as silk. I may have sped a little but I didn't hit a single slowdown or see any ZPD traffic cops."

"It was the total opposite for me. The big boss Taka dropped extra work on me toward the end of the day, and I finished up a little later than usual. I thought a few minutes wouldn't make a big difference but I had nothing but snags and snarls the whole way back. I should have been here at least twenty minutes ago."

"Well, now you're here. I'll whip up something nice for supper. The cook can take the night."

The elder Lionheart shook his head and ruffled his son's mane. "You have fun today, champ? Get out and play and network?"

"Nah, I watched some cartoons, and even watched one with mom."

"Well, she's indulgent like that but, hard to be upset about that," he said, watching his wife smoothly glide through cooking prep in the kitchen, visible through the large open space past the bar-like seating area, which was the sink on the other side of the half-wall. "Never mind that, let's go watch her work some food magic."

Leodore smiled and happily hopped off the couch, rushing off to scrabble onto one of the high, swiveling chairs at the bartop area and standing on it, to watch his mother cook.

"I actually did say hello to that nice lamb ewe. Wanda was the name, I believe. Heard she married well and that's fantastic for her," Leodore said, a thoughtful look crossing his features.
So many things swirled in Dawn's head. It all made sense. She recalled that cartoon. It really did have all those messages. And his kind-hearted mother had helped awaken him to those messages. One moment. One moment with his kind mother had turned him into a lion she could love. "You said your father usually got home first?"

"Wasn't that strange? Worked out great, though. He usually caught all the breaks driving home, and got off before mom did. Not that I'm complaining! Ah, I love the guy but he probably would have given me some spiel about... power leveraging, weakness being punished with ridicule, keeping up appearances of force, being tough all the time like Lambert in the end, where he had respect. I don't think he would have gotten it."

One moment. One, singular, vital moment. Morning Star dropped paperwork on a businessman and snarled traffic for him. She gave a teacher a short day and a smooth ride home. With his mother there, he became... her Leodore. "I should watch that cartoon again. I recall it had nice messages but if it was such an influence on you, well, it certainly did a great thing." She thought for a moment, redness passing over the exposed parts of her face. "Would it be weird if... I called you... Lambert?" He would never accept, never.

"I don't know if I'm worthy of such a heroic and kind name, but if you feel like it, then by all means do it. Maybe in private. I like being open and honest with the public, but we should have our own, private things, little secrets that are ours and ours alone, like all couples do."

She lightly clinked her glass with his and smiled. "Let's be Lambert. Do good, even if it seems scary and impossible. Do it because it seems scary and impossible but is absolutely the right thing to do. This is the good kind of gamble, right?"

"If we lose, we only hurt ourselves and we know it. If we succeed, we enrich everyone in the city and lift up those on the outside looking in. We'll make this city listen to good ideas and get it to do the right thing. No more whitewashing a disaster area. Now, we clean up, repair and make it a peaceful, beautiful place."

"A risk worth taking." Dawn said with a nod, sipping her wine and completely ignoring the objections of her mind.
Happy Town

Chapter Summary

Opening the thorny matter of Happytown and what to do with it.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirteen: Happy Town

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"We've been indulgent with you this long, Mayor Lionheart, but this is blatant predator promotionism," Cecil Seedsworth said, the city councilor from Little Rodentia striking his podium with a balled paw.

"Are you prepared to engage on a stable, adult level, Mr. Seedsworth or will a recess be needed to allow you to gain professional composure? We're all adults here, and quick accusations without discussion are no good for any of us," Leodore responded, mildly.

"Don't patronize me, Lionheart! I've been in the business of business longer than you've been giving political pap to voters!"

The City Council chamber was thick with a tense environment. The public viewing area, which had grown to be a popular spot after the election of Leodore and Dawn, was on the edge of their seats as debate slowly degraded into posturing.

"Please refrain from personal invective, it really doesn't help. Mr. Seedsworth, if you want to make a point, make it, and we can debate it," Leodore said.

"I think I understand his point and can make it with less... vehemence," the armadillo from the Rainforest District said, with a high, light voice.

"That would be wonderful, Mr. Tatu. Calm, rational discourse is what's called for here."

"Thank you, Mayor Lionheart. We all respect and admire the things that you and Assistant Mayor Bellwether have done for this city, that is not in question. Your initiative has given opportunities that were never seen before and have allowed for a higher rate of employment and more competent employees. But that was an economic thing and that made sense. Happytown is... something else. It's a political hot yam that could bring nothing but ruin and misery."

"Glad to see you, also, avoided alarmist hyperbole, Mr. Tatu," Leodore said, with a tired tone and a roll of his eyes.

"Maybe we need a better idea of what you intend to do, Mayor. Issues of predator interest obviously affect a few of us here," Miss Erminova, the representative from Tundratown said.
"Much like the Mammal Inclusion Initiative, a multi-step plan to revitalize and elevate Happytown is long overdue. Looking through archives of city council, police and general social activities shows that the whole place had been swept under the rug and forgotten, to the point that the best chance for justice in there is to hire private investigators as the police have codes and unofficial policies that limit any response in the area, exacerbated by the fact that service has been so lacking, and disdain so naked, that the residents are actually opposed to the police being there. Frankly, I lack any surprise over that given the toxic environment of those who should have been serving the area."

"Spare us your Kumbaya Pollyannaism, Lionheart. You just want a new district of predator voters to swell your power!" Cecil Seedsworth shouted.

"Rats are omnivorous and shrews are as insectivorous as any meerkat or mongoose in Sahara Square. I'm sure your constituents will be happy to let you know how they feel about your statements," Leodore said, pointing to the audience, which had started furiously tapping out things on their smartphones. "There's a reason they can keep those in here. Democracy runs best when the citizens can know what their leaders really do and say."

"I stand by my statements," Cecil said with a proud huff.

"And fall by them too, mate," Miss Macadam of Outback Island said with a derisive snort.

"Happytown is under my purview. I wanted a Council vote for a city-sanctioned policy change. As with the MII, I'll do what I can with my own demarcated authority and it will be unpopular with many. I thought we were all better than this. Letting predators occupy a slum because they were pushed out of other areas is unconscionable. Are we civilized or savages?"

The question hung in the air for a long time, before Miss Fanak of Sahara Square asked, "Do you have any support at all?"

"I do. You may well laugh but I do," Leodore responded.

"I'm already laughing, you may as well make it official with the punchline," Cecil said.

"Gazelle is already eagerly waiting to throw her support behind anything I come up with, from a simple proposal to a city-endorsed multispectrum press. Her dancers have roots in Happytown, so she is eager to do all she can to reinvent it and destigmatize it. There are other areas of low-income housing in the many districts, but none are actually actively hated or treated like a cesspool."

"A single pop singer with a sob story about tigers? That's your support? Ha!" Cecil laughed for a short while, the sound slowly dying as he looked around at the others looking at him like he had sprouted ten eyes. "What are you looking at me like that for?"

"Cecil, forgive me, but even if you're just an old banker playing at politics... surely you realize just how big a deal Gazelle is. You must be aware of her market share at least, her draw power, her earning power and social prominence, things that businessmammals would know intimately," Miss Erminova said, voice dripping with incredulity.

"I don't pay attention to such needless frivolity," Cecil huffed. "From your stares I take it that her portfolio profile is... prodigious?"

"She sells out Animalia Stadium with such ease I'm certain she has no idea that that should be a difficult task," Leodore said. "But it's not just that. Selene, the biggest daytime talk show host in the city, will instantly hop on board if Gazelle does. That covers word of mouth and internet
conversation, and television notice on a major network with a tremendous viewership. I hate it when I'm forced to make this kind of thing clear, but you could almost bet your positions on this. Coming out looking bad might mean those remaining won't have the pleasure of your company after the next election cycle."

"And you know it's not idle threat, Mr. Seedsworth," Mr. Tatu said. "I almost understand your objection, I almost agree, but Mayor Lionheart is the real deal. He can do things with politics that are like miracles. I should go to my local Convocation and chatter to the moon because he's giving me religion. I'm not willing to lose my position because you're out of touch and thinking backwards. I won't go down with you, Seedsworth."

"You bloated weakling! You promised you would hold with me!" Cecil spat toward Mt. Tatu.

"You made promises I should have known you could never keep. And you told me he was powerless! I only wanted to avoid a protracted fight. But there is no fight here. There is only a personal thing. My brother lives in division with a giant river otter. I have two nieces who don't have the Tatu name because of mammals like you. If it comes down to it, I'd be a fool and a savage to side with you now that I know Lionheart isn't the soft weak upstart you promised me he was."

"The vote need not be unanimous. Five would break any need for additional debate or rider attachments and revision. Presumably you had one more vote that you were counting on besides the earnest Mr. Tatu. I'm willing to guess that vote no longer will manifest."

"I underestimated you, Lionheart. I've worked with executives of unbending will before, but you're just as savage as you accuse me of being and just as predatory as would be expected of the son of a suit. I respected you when you were being clever. But predator promotionism is the last straw."

"Making the lowly equal only looks like promotionism if you believe the elevated have a natural right to their unquestioned pedestal. Making a predator area equal to a prey area doesn't take away the right of prey unless you think prey have a right to discriminate and bully. The MII closed most of those boltholes. The rest will be pasted over bit by bit. I don't care how slow or steady I need to be, it will happen. No more fear, no more hate. Fear might always work, but we should be above that. And if we aren't... I fear for this city."

Cecil looked to the rest of the members of the council, seeking help, support, any kind of understanding. He saw only frowns, even from those he assumed would support him. He kept his scowl but looked down at his podium. "This world is all chaos. The old values mean nothing anymore. But I stand by my words and by the ways that made this city something special. There might still be some out there that remember. And I hope they make it impossible to make predators lords over prey."

"If that's what you think any of my policies are, then I pity you more than I ever thought I could pity another mammal. I want to open a formal discussion on the topic of Happytown, and its status as an underserved community in need of direct city intervention. Who will second?"

"Second," Mr. Tatu said, with as much force as his high voice could muster, while staring daggers at Cecil.

"This will help to lay down the specifics of what the city can and will do, giving all the possible steps, ironing out the allocations, or potential allocations, any new regulations or statues that would be needed, the whole thing. This is a complicated procedure, that demands serious, professional, thoughtful focus. There's no time or place for odd conspiracy theories, notions of privilege or fears of what giving social and economic equality to others might do. We have to be civilized adults, and do our best to push forward."
"Awareness campaigns, all over, all at once, that's step one I should think," Mrs. Fanak said. "What works for gambling addictions and alcoholism can work to raise the notice profile of the plight of Happytown. Even if everyone is vaguely aware of it and all the issues, by putting it in their faces they are unable to plead ignorance. Again, much like alcoholism and gambling addiction, once they can't turn away, things are changed."

"You know, Dawn said the same thing on Selene's show. Our relationship being public meant that it couldn't be ignored and that the reactions to it could show what kind of mammals were out there. Letting everyone know about Happytown and what could be done would now allow us to see the caliber of mammals who don't help if they are able. We'll need something to go along with it, the awareness for a broad base-building and something more concrete to start the process of making things better," Leodore said.

"What you need is the law," Miss Macadam said. "You said it. Private eyes pass for the law and the coppers avoid it as much as they can. They don't trust the police, even if they're also predators. But we need to take care of the culture that has developed. We had a slightly similar problem when the koalas went a little aggro over their gum trees and ended up turning their gum groves into their own little closed-off neighborhoods. They wanted to make all their own decisions and it took the police a long time to get them to accept the law."

"We'll definitely need a peek into the problem. I suspect a lack of appropriate resources is part of the problem, general squalor caused by price fixing and withholding services. I'll tell Chief Bogo he had better be ready to work even harder, because I think we're going to be rounding up a lot of slumlords," Leodore said, making some notes for himself. "Thankfully, the Council wisely approved one of the things that can help immensely. The MII will solve the employment discrimination problem."

"It won't help if there are no jobs," Cecil brusquely said.

"Your pessimism is noted, Mr. Seedsworth," Leodore began with a tired tone.

"I'm not trying to be pessimistic. If I'm forced to be here I will contribute when you reach my area of expertise. All your social solutions sound like the kind of thing that would be suggested by your like. Fine. Business solutions are my bailiwick. I have input and would like to contribute."

"Oh, very well, Mr. Seedsworth! Please do elaborate," Leodore said with a surprised tone.

"Thank you. Now, allowing no discrimination means jobs can be filled by those that apply. But there must be jobs. Happytown is a notoriously low-job-density area. Businesses are hesitant to set up shop there, leading to mostly trivial things. No big corporate offices or large, professional locations. At best you'll have franchises, and only because independent owners shoulder the burden of losses. So, there will be independent, small-time businesses that employ very few, and typically in unskilled positions. With wages being living that might be good enough but it leaves very little wiggle-room, creating a very real sense of income insecurity, and further compounds any social issues. It doesn't help that there are a lot of stores that make their best profit on alcohol, and... well, the financial reports tell grim tales about your need for police. Mrs. Fanak, how successful are your addiction awareness and treatment programs?"

"We have independent research which confirms an eighty-one percent success rate thanks to partial district subsidization through the tax on gambling and by creating an environment that de-stigmatized seeking help or marginalizing those folks who need help," Mrs. Fanak said proudly.

"Lionheart, we need small-scale addiction redirection. Vice-for-vice is a dirty idea but sometimes life is dirty. Small card clubs and maybe slot stations, maybe one of those fancy computer poker
clubs I hear tell about. The legal wrangling won't be too hard, as there are provisions for such things. You must know there are illegal gambling institutions there, the police have to at least be aware of what they're ignoring."

"It's a sorry state of affairs..." Leodore sighed. "But I understand. Dry up the illegal activities with legal versions, increase the capture rate of those committing the crimes and make it a more risky proposition, and make sure the situation stabilizes, and that the criminals don't take over the legal ones."

"Those kind of places always make money, the house is practically guaranteed to win. If safety increases, folks from nearby might even take the chance on going there when they have some extra money but not enough to justify a full trip into Sahara Square. It won't bleed off any from there because, as I said, they wouldn't have the wherewithal to go there in the first place, but would put small-scale tourism dollars into the area, both at the location and at shops and restaurants."

"And if they really want to take a trip, they'll save up, because gambling is only a fraction of why they come, they want a vacation, time in a nice hotel and shows or sightseeing," Mrs. Fanak added. "Nothing is lost and everyone wins."

"Never knew you were a softie deep down, Cecil," Miss Macadam said with a smile.

"I'm a businessmammal, and a good one. I have a reputation. If I can tease success from a floundering concept it's just like a successful reorg and division spinoff, with the same sense of satisfaction and triumph," Cecil said with a proud sniff.

"If we cut down on the alcohol problem and the illegal substance abuse problems the citizens will be in a far better state, with jobs close enough to cut out the need for cars, which can be a needless expense, and which would also support the local economy and state of affairs in general, as opposed to enriching a place far away from where they live," Leodore said, scratching down more notes.

"I'm usually loathe to say such a thing but you'll need control on rent. If it becomes too high a percentage of income we'll have citizens starving in their own homes. I can't see any other possible solution besides an anti-gentrification process, cleaning up without pricing folks out of living there. Obviously, just as we need services for all sizes, we need locations for all levels of income. I... do have some sense of... perspective," Cecil said, with a nervous chitter.

"And those places should be, within reason, livable and reasonably equal in security and a chance at a decent life," Leodore noted.

"Which brings me to a point I think sometimes gets politely neglected because it may embarrass some to think about practical reality," Cecil said. "Getting the interview is one thing. But if a mammal lacks, say, regular hygiene, or a set of interview clothes, or something similar, they will find the doors a bit reluctant to open, MI or not. I wouldn't hire another rodent if they looked like they just bathed in the sewer. Some education on that front will help. If they want to work, let them be appropriate. Business is business, and the workers need to be up to the task on all levels."

"Because of high turnover due to wear, Tundratown has a brisk resale business on worn clothes. It's sturdy stuff, but functional, and generally sized for the large mammals we sport. We have consistent budget surpluses due to our highl profitable fishing taxes. We could move a little around and purchase surplus stock to be used in some kind of city-funded training program. Appropriate clothing provided on completion of a series of training meetings," Miss Erminova said.

Cecil jotted down a few notes and tapped his chin. "This is going to run into some money. And all
for one area, not a district. I know what I said and I do stand by it. I'm not for the rise of predators, and I'm not for slums, if for no other reason than they drag down the bottom line. We'd need buy-in from the voters, a city referendum. If they approve we can move on things. Encourage volunteerism and corporate giving. That's always good, cheap PR and puts the cost burden elsewhere. We could have matching funds to halve the city's costs with the full measure of effect."

"You squeeze those coins til they scream, don't you, Cecil?" Miss Macadam laughed.

"Pressure makes diamonds, Miss Macadam. And diamonds make profit. It all works out in a neat line," Cecil said with a smile.

Leodore scribbled a few more notes, lightly chewing on the end of his pencil. "We've made a good deal of progress here. But I notice that beyond awareness and perhaps later calls for volunteers to help with certain cosmetic elements, the most basic issue is the law. I plan to put tremendous pressure on Commissioner Shearly and Chief Bogo. And if they come to me with excuses about money I think we can all agree that they might find the shortfall will come from perks and salary."

"The punishment of junior executives is a delicate thing. But you seem to have hit on the recipe precisely. One thing they truly treasure is the status, and attacking the tokens of that hurts worse than anything else in the world," Cecil noted.

"Well, my father was a suit for years, junior executive for most of it. Taka Pride knew how to keep them in line. He always talked about how he rode them hard and knew just when to mention bonuses and the company's economic situation to hint at salary cuts. Jostle the privilege and the owner starts to shake even harder. Right, Mr. Seedsworth?"

Cecil huffed softly and looked aside. "Yes, yes... this is all just business. But believe me, if predators start to rise up..."

"I'll be the first one you can gloat to about how right you were and you can put that on all your campaign posters," Leodore chuckled.

"That was... well, I knew you had the skill but you really did something," Dawn said, looking up at Leodore with great appreciation. "It sounds like a long road. Don't... don't expect anything to happen in Meadowlands. I don't know about anything else but the vote there will not be good."

"Believe me, I already wrote off that headache," Leodore said with a sigh. "Focus on the gambles that don't hurt anyone, right? I've made good use of the things you taught me, and this might actually go somewhere. Having ready support broke the threat of a fight and now that support structure is ready to enhance what we're working on."

"Little snippets already hit social media, the press is waiting outside for a statement," Dawn noted, scrolling through her media feeds. "I've been fielding calls and e-mails since you broke down Mr. Tatu and Mr. Seedsworth."

"I somewhat suspect Seedsworth was counting on Miss Erminova, though I don't know what he promised. She was the one to tell him about Gazelle, and since she knew that I guess my support from her got her to bow out gracefully."

"Should I say something too? I don't know exactly what would be helpful at this point."

"I think you can liaise with Chief Bogo, and possibly Commissioner Shearly. Bogo's a head-butter, very gruff with large opponents, but he's deferential to those with power but not size. He's big on positive PR, surprisingly. Shearly plain doesn't like me. I didn't need the official rundown to figure
that out. He's your father's ram. I don't know if he'll go easy on you or not, but you'll probably get a better reaction."

"I don't know. With how my father feels about me, I may get a worse reaction than you," Dawn laughed.

"Still, you've got a golden touch with folks. I believe in your capabilities. For now, that's what you can say. You're going to be liaison to the police as we move forward. That puts the pressure on them. You've got high popularity and strong support. Any pushback from the police makes them look like the bad guys, and they have enough trouble in Happytown as it is. They don't need a worse reputation."

"We'll just leave that comment off the conversation topics," Dawn chuckled, walking beside Leodore as they left city hall, to face a pair of podia and a crowd of reporters.

Leodore tapped the microphone on his podium to get the reporters to quiet down. "The statements to be made will be brief for now, as the council's proposals are in a very nascent stage. Firstly, a comment from the Assistant Mayor."

Attention swung around to Dawn, who cleared her throat and reflexively adjusted her glasses. "Thank you. Mayor Lionheart has appointed me liaison between the Mayor's office, as well as the City Council, and the Police, with primary focus on Chief Bogo and Police Commissioner Shearly. I'm to help smooth the way and ensure both sides have their concerns heard and understood. Knowing the Mayor's plan as I do, I'll do my best to make sure it's not only communicated properly but also followed as much as possible. That's all I can say at this time."

Leodore nooded, the focus shifting back to him. "A promise we can all trust. Now, much of what was discussed went out on social media, so I want to bring attention to the ultimate aim of this whole matter. Happytown has been many things, from an effigy to be blamed to a carefully ignored area that would sting the conscience of those that thought about it. It represents many things, yet it shouldn't. It's an area. A place. It's a place where those with modest means can live. There are other segments of the city like that, but they get no condemnation and hatred. That's terrible and unacceptable.

"The city will do a great deal to rectify this, all of which will be revealed in the coming weeks. It's been a long time in coming, and the work will be hard but it is absolutely necessary. We made mistakes. We. The whole city. This is not about species and hasn't been for ages. I'm the mayor, and many predators were before me. Predators own many companies and work in important roles in them, like my father, an executive. There are affluent predator-majority neighborhoods. It's all economic matters with species used as a convenient effigy by the small-minded and uncaring. That kind of bigotry and inequality has no place in this city, and should be banished to the same place as the species hatred it pretends to be. Thank you, that is all."

Dawn and Leodore made their way down the steps side-by-side with the reporters clamoring for more details and statements. They walked away hoof-in-paw, matching pace smoothly and naturally.
The Long Road, part one

Chapter Summary

Starting the path to respectability for the slum of Happytown.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Fourteen: The Long Road, Part One

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Chief Bogo, you do realize that your salary is very competitively generous for a bull in your position, yes?" Dawn gave the big cape buffalo her best and sweetest smile, her voice all honey and clover. But her eyes were hard, and she clutched a folder to her chest with the chief's pay history inside. "You have a unique position, being so highly placed in such a large city's most prestigious precinct. No other district could afford to pay you so well, nor give you such generous bonuses. And as for other cities... it would be hard to match the praise, prestige and the private school stipend for your calf."

Bogo subtly narrowed his eyes at Dawn, his normally sour features pulled into a solicitous smile, with a little pulling of his brows to show he was not appreciative of the implications. "Assistant Mayor Bellwether... I understand the promises your b- that the Mayor made to the city. I understand you're doing your job, but..."

"Oh you can say it. We're a couple, and a political force. I don't mind. Yes, the Mayor made a lot of promises, promises that he can keep if he gets support. It's all in your court now, and I say that because, however I may feel about the Police Commissioner, he's at least enough of a politician to recognize that he needs to just swallow his pride and act. And he'll gladly leave you in the wind if he thinks he can get out of this without a scratch. He's very limited in what he can do, practically speaking, but he has a lot of power over who is where."

Bogo's jaw shifted slightly, teeth grinding just a touch. "I don't relish what this means, but I understand you well enough. There's a reason we left Happytown to PIs and personal payback."

"Because it's full of predators and immigrants," Dawn said, voice strained just a bit.

"Because it's full of violent anti-police sentiment and a generational culture that believes police are the enemy," Bogo shot back.

"You used to be. You abandoned them, they never did anything except be poor predators. The entrenched bigotry started it, you didn't have to rise to it," Dawn sternly said, a hoof going to her head and rubbing as the bigoted side of her personality made itself known with a stab of indignation.

"It wasn't me. I wasn't even born when that started, you can't put this on me," Bogo insisted.
"It was the police, as a collective. They made the problem worse and worse and harder and harder. Like it or not, you represent the police right now, and it's your job to do. In the eyes of the public, you're the face of the ZPD. You may only be the chief in this district, but this is the one in question, so your face is the one they know. Face a problem right away, or a mess just gets bigger."

"So I'm discovering," Bogo grumbled, falling heavily back into his chair and holding his snout's bridge. "Your migraine is catching, Assistant Mayor. And you really handed me a huge one."

Dawn shook off the objection from her mind and faced Bogo again. "You know this is the right thing to do. You know better than most in this city. Swinton never asked questions about your calf because she just wanted things to run smoothly, and making fuss requires effort. We won't either, but for entirely different reasons. You know, down in your heart, this is wrong. I know you just had to keep up a tradition. But please, do this. The city is going to allocate extra funds to make this more possible. This is a pressing problem for the city, and the city council is all on board for this. Make it happen."

Bogo looked down silently, drumming his hoof-capped fingers on the desk. "I'll assign my biggest predators, make this a top priority. We'll have to dismantle entrenched crime organizations and fight past anything from apathy to hostility. But we'll make them see the advantages of peace. But I swear, if any of my officers are hurt, or sun and stars forbid killed..."

"Chief, you have my word, you'll have all you need to keep them safe. If they get hurt, we'll do anything needed to help, and if, sun and stars forbid, anything worse happens, we'll take full responsibility and do even more to ensure it doesn't happen again."

Bogo nodded slowly, sighing heavily. "I don't look forward to this, but at least I won't have any more surprises."

A tiny thought prickled at the back of Dawn's mind, a vision of a smarmy Bogo, the vision of an otter and a rabbit, a rabbit that loomed large in her mind, dark and threatening. That rabbit. The one she hated. The one she didn't know. She shrugged it off and slapped on a smile. "This will be good for everyone! Your name will go down in Zootopia history as the police chief that brought law and security to Happytown, for the benefit of all." She waved as she left the chief's office. "Have a good day, Chief!"

"Yes, yes, Assistant mayor..." Bogo slumped in his chair, reaching out to pick up a framed photo and look at it. A smiling calf looked back at him, with tiny horns, braces, freckles and a beautiful golden-toned coat. He pushed the intercom button without even looking. "Clawhauser."

The reply came back quickly, slightly muffled before a swallow cleared the sound. "Yes, Chief! What do you need?"

"The Assistant Mayor has just left. You know what we're going to be doing. Send up Grizzoli, Fangmeyer, Delgato, Andersen, Johnson, Wolfard, Jackson and Snarlov. I think they'll know why, but better to make it official."

"Right away, Chief!"

"And Clawhauser..."

"Yes, sir?"

"Get ready to earn a lot of overtime. At least we've been promised increased allocations. You'll probably be able to afford more Gazelle kitsch."
A small squeal sounded on the other end of the intercom. "That sounds great! I can't wait!"

Bogo chuckled softly and slowly shook his head. "Thank you, Clawhauser."

"No problem, Chief!"

"This city is one of the most amazing in the world. It's unique, colorful, varied, just the most astounding. We all live here, we live in peace, and we really should care for each other. We do in most places, that's beautiful..." Gazelle artfully swooned backward, landing in a kneeling Hu Lin's arms, her hoof hands slowly caressing his strong form. "But not everywhere. We still have a tragic problem."

Hu Lin smoothly drew a paw across Gazelle's jawline, looking lovingly into her eyes before snapping his gaze back up. "There is a dark cloud over Happytown. The city has kept every promise it ever made, except one. Happytown is far from happy."

Gazelle gave Hu Lin's strong chin a soft kiss and slowly drew her shoulder up his chest. "There are places all over this city, in every district, where those who do not make much money may live. But we do not throw hatred or disdain on them, nor do we hate places such as Steppe Heights or Hyenahurst filled with predators, who are also affluent."

Strong, striped hands stroked up along Gazelle's form, ruffling her sparkly red attire. "Happytown is special in disdain and polite refusal to acknowledge problems. I'm from there. All the Stripers are. We all make a big deal about how we 'made it' and 'moved up' from there. But..."

"But that is so terribly tragic..." Gazelle sighed, rubbing her cheek slowly along Hu Lin's pectoral definition. "To think there is a place, an area of some size, whose citizens have no love for it. They do not feel pride for their home, they think of it only as a place to 'come from' and the only point of pride is getting out and not having to live there any longer." She slowly shook her head, merging that sad motion with a rub against Hu Lin's chest.

"I don't want pity, or condescension. But I want respect, for being a mammal. I'm a mammal no different from any other," Hu Lin rumbled.

"All mammals deserve respect, no matter what. There's a base level of respect, one that we all need. We are all worthy of such. Coming from one district or another, from one area or another, doesn't change a thing," Gazelle cooed, pressing her back to Hu Lin's front and slowly rubbing up and down.

"Give respect to me, because I am a mammal. And give Happytown respect, because it's just a place. Not evil, not cursed. Just a place. It's a place long-neglected, but soon to be helped, as it has always needed," Hu Lin almost purred, wrapping his huge, strong arms around Gazelle's midsection, settling his head next to hers. "The promises made will be fulfilled. And that's wonderful."

"Please, Zootopia, make this dream come true," Gazelle softly pleaded, turning her head to kiss Hu Lin on the cheek, arms up to wrap around his neck. "Make Happytown happy. Help us, give us support, do what you can. If you feel it in your heart, if you really want it, please help."

"Cut! Print! Perfect!" A delicately featured hyena male cried into a megaphone and nodded his head toward Gazelle and Hu Lin. "Beautiful! Absolutely perfect! I never thought I'd ever encounter a one-and-done in this business."

Gazelle laughed lightly, legs kicking lightly as Hu Lin casually rose up, lifting her as though she
weighed nothing. "Señor Director, you've never done a live performance, have you?"

"I did drag in college, most hyena guys do, but that's the extent of it," the hyena admitted. "I did it for the art. And the hyena girls. But... I should have known you'd get it in one."

"It takes hard work and practice to get this big," Hu Lin said, strolling over to deposit Gazelle in a chair near the craft services table. "Was that acceptable, Mr. Mayor?"

Leodore was standing by near the director, checking things off on a clipboard and scribbling notes on a different page. "That was wonderful. You looked so natural and comfortable together. That's to be expected. I don't think Dawn and I could pull that off, yet."

He let loose a booming laugh and slowly shook his head. "And she couldn't hug my neck like that. The mane is too thick. Can't trim it down, the fullness is part of the stance. It's a lion thing."

"Thick and full, and some of the more... insecure fellows dye them black. That's as insincere as the makeup tricks that make the face slimmer and the lips fuller. Good on you for staying natural," the director noted, holding out his fist.

Leodore gave a hesitant bump, laughing at his own lack of coolness. "Don't tell her I know, but I found out she likes how fluffy it is because sheep have some appreciation for all things extra puffy."

"My lips are sealed, Mayor," Gazelle said, pleasantly munching on a bagel half. "All couples need to have their own understanding, to meld into each other."

"In time, of course," Hu Lin added. "From your interviews it seems you're not in the overnight stage."

"We're getting there. Taking it slow is prudent. Besides, she lets me clip her wool on what she calls the 'public areas.' I think it's a sheep thing that means I'm her ram. Or near equivalent. And she likes to watch me work out. I keep a treadmill in my office because it makes her happy."

The director laughed heartily and clapped his paws together. "That's why hyena males like doing drag. Hyena ladies just love to watch hyena men extra made-up and extra sweet and demure. I trust you... well, I'm not sure the visual cues that ewes like. But I trust you dress up or down as needed."

Hu Lin coughed softly and used a subtle motion to indicate his sparkly blue shorts. "And stott, if that's a shared artiodactyl thing."

"She likes to gambol, but she told me that's a ewe thing in adulthood. Clipping and lanolin-washing are the things she seems to get the most soft and delighted over."

"I know about sheep, at least some," Gazelle noted. "You perpetually look good to her. Your thick mane resembles a ram with a heavy winter coat, a survivor, powerful. But your short coat looks like a sheared ram, who has given up his wool, making you a provider, and especially generous and capable of going on even without your wool. Does her coat cause a problem? Tawny is more common."

"Leucistism and melanism are not at all unusual in lions. Melanistic males get more interest from lionesses because of their dark manes and coats. My mother was a leucistic lioness, and she once told me that she made dad's mane look darker by comparison. It gave him prestige. He does love her, a lot, but it certainly didn't hurt that that was the case."

"So long as they're not using each other, there's no harm," Gazelle sagely said, leaning casually against Hu Lin's body.
Leodore made a small motion and Hu Lin chuckled deeply. "I could hold up the side of a building. She might as well be clothes for all she weighs on me."

"My girlfriend once held up the side of a building," the director commented, earning some stares. "She's in construction. It was mostly the frame of a small one but she put her back into it and held it while they attached lines to it."

"There's a key for every lock, they say," Gazelle noted. "There's no need for division anymore. I'm sure you understand my meaning, Señor Lionheart."

"I absolutely take your meaning. I'm not going to allow it to continue either. I'll do something about it, but I don't know what, more than likely during later steps in the revitalization of Happytown. We all have a lot on our plates right now. At least I'm sure this one will be in the can and on the airwaves and internet very soon. Right, Mr. Spotts?"

Mr. Spotts nodded eagerly. "Absolutely! We'll have very little to do in post, slap on all the information about where to go and what to do, and send it off. This was an inspired bit of creation. Better than the average PSA I've been tapped to direct. I've worked with lesser celebrities but never with such professionals who actually cared."

"It means everything to me, and more now that the climate of the city is changing. A new tide of openness is coming. Repairing the damage done to Happytown by hate and tradition will be the true marker of that," Gazelle said, standing and stotting for emphasis.

"I'm not an Outsider but I'm all for them. When I was in college my Drag Mother was a meerkat married to a warthog. I know, they're both predators by tradition but, an artiodactyl with a mongoose? That's just so amazing."

"Social problems pile up like a traffic jam. I'm sure former Mayor Swinton would like to be properly classed as an omnivore. This 'one-bite' social perception is ridiculous. And insectivores would probably like folks to stop offering them fish," Leodore sighed. "I was talking to Dawn a while ago and expressed that it felt like I was whitewashing a disaster area. This would be almost comedic if it wasn't tragic. One problem gets a solution, another is made painfully clear."

"Try everything, even though you could fail," Hu Lin commented, getting a laugh from everyone.

"But do. You've undertaken a large mission. Healing a city will be, perhaps, generational. It took that long to create this mess," Gazelle said.

"I have a thought that it took only one generation, or part of it. It was the hatred of the day which was active and burning. What took generations was apathy and ignorance. Mammals don't overtly hate now, not the same way. Now they're lazy, sedentary in thinking. It's become the rut they don't want to fix because it's hard work," Leodore said, pounding his pawpad with his fist. "This city has given them so much, and some even more than their sensible share. It's time they started mentally working to keep them from turning into root vegetables."

"The Selene interview is next week, that should make things even more widespread," Gazelle said.

"And ours is the week after. We're going to play that guessing game, do sheep crafts and talk about the Happytown project. Dawn is thrilled because I have to shear her for it, and then we'll card the wool on television. Uh, yes, she likes to watch wool-carding. I think that's also a sheep thing."

"I've cooked dinner in a dress and Preyda heels, and done it with flair. It's like having the biggest, knobbliest horns that ever were, to make a comparison everyone will understand," Mr. Spotts
"The ones I endorse?" Gazelle asked.

"Only the best for my sweetheart. I like the balance, they don't totter as much as others I've tried. I keep that to myself, it's less impressive if that gets out."

Leodore laughed loudly and clapped the hyena on the back in a friendly manner. "It's the little things that make a relationship more interesting. So, if we're done with this, now what?"

Mr. Spotts stepped over to a clipboard and flipped through the pages. "I have you down for another message about the Happytown project, something about the police. If you can make it quick we'll be done and we'll save the city some money."

"I'm sure Mr. Seedsworth would be happy to hear that," Leodore chuckled.

"Okay, set dressers, give me the plastic ficus... make it two, very close on either side, and pull the big chair from the back, with the high back and the big arms. The faux-fish-leather one. It has to look mayoral. Drop the lighting by fifty percent and we'll see how we look. And get the flicker out, we want homey here, firelight and all that. We're going to edit in something like a parlor, gives it that friendly atmosphere."

Leodore found himself caught up in the whirling rush as meerkats and dik-diks rushed about, arranging the set and adjusting things as required. He was rushed to the chair, which had been placed before a greenscreen, and carefully adjusted, to look casual without being sloppy.

Makeup artists dashed in and stood on the chair arms to throw quick applications of tacky makeup powder onto his face, brushed and blended with both speed and care. His tie was adjusted, his suit jacket lint rolled and his cufflinks given a polish. In short order he was all set, and looking only slightly dazed by the happening.

"Do I need to buy a ticket for that ride or was that part of the admission?" Leodore asked with a hearty chuckle.

"You paid for professionalism and so you got it. My crew is, as you can see, quite excellent at what they do," Mr. Spotts said with a sniff of pride.


"You know, it's true. Lions tend to brush hyenas aside and vice versa," Mr. Spotts said, blocking the scene with his paws. "Thanks for giving me the opportunity."

"Your credentials were the best, your bid was the best, you got the job because you fit the bill," Leodore said. "Now, just say when."

Mr. Spotts looked down the side of the camera, crewed by a dik-dik standing on a box. "Ready, and... action!"

"Ma'am, I'm going to need you to calm down," Officer Fangmeyer insisted, the huge tiger holding out a paw to the agitated cheetah before him. He was standing on a street corner in Happytown, by a liquor store covered in graffiti, while getting between the gruff warthog with a broken tusk that ran it and the cheetah. "I cannot help you if you refuse to be sensible."

"Just get me a PI, I don't need no damn useless cop," the cheetah huffed. "That guy doesn't know
anything. I didn't steal anything."

"I saw you stick that Fishbits pouch in that big damn purse of yours!" The warthog cried.

"I had that when I came in! You don't know," the cheetah insisted.

"Ma'am, the security footage will bear out your claim, if it's true. Please don't be troublesome, just go back inside so we can review the footage."

"You think you're better than me? Do you? Rich snob tiger! Always gotta think you're better than other cats," the cheetah hissed.

"That's an Amur stereotype, and I'm not one. I also get a city salary. If you continue to be belligerent I'll have to take you into custody until the fact of the matter can be determined," Fangmeyer insisted.

"Take her in! She steals from me all the time!" The warthog snorted.

"Sir! Please calm down, you're escalating the situation. Go back into your store and wait to be asked to provide the needed footage."

"He lies! You lock him up for lying! He lies all the time! He's lying right now, I'm just a poor mother, I didn't steal anything!" The cheetah cried, leaping at the warthog and running into Fangmeyer.

"Ma'am, you get one, just one. I'll call that an accident, you didn't mean it, you're just acting out. If you rush like that again I'll run you in for assault. Attempting to leave the scene while he intends to press charges is also a crime, but I'm trying to be nice. Either let us watch the footage to prove you were vindicated, or you give the item back, we call it done and we all move on."

The cheetah snarled softly but dug into her purse, taking out a foil pouch and roughly handing it over to Officer Fangmeyer, stalking away with a parting growl. Fangmeyer passed the pouch back to the warthog, and nodded. "Sir."

"Thanks officer. Damn cats... uh, no offense intended you understand. Foxes are worse..." the warthog started.

"Not my place to comment sir," Fangmeyer sighed. "Have a good day, sir."

A little further down the street Fangmeyer became aware of eyes on him, his eyes casting about until he saw a group of wolves all standing around or sitting on a beat-up older car. They had been laughing and apparently drinking before they caught sight of the officer, and all went silent and still.

One of the wolves finally called out, "Hey! Hey Amur! This ain't your turf!"

Another one howled out loudly and laughed. "Yeah! Amurs get out of this street! This is Loup Garou territory! Your kind aren't welcome here!"

"I'm not an Amur," Fangmeyer said, just loud enough to be heard. "Just go about your business, sirs. I won't even make a fuss about the public drinking this time."

"Shut your hole! We'll drink all we want!" The angered wolf chugged his beer, staring daggers in Fangmeyer's direction.
Fangmeyer got only a few more steps out before he was aware of the sound of low muttering and steps approaching him. He casually reached up and clicked his shoulder radio. "Officer Fangmeyer to Officers Grizzoli and Wolfard, come back, kinda quick."

The radio crackled immediately after. "Grizzoli, what's going on."

"I might need to defuse a problem with some tiger-negative fellows, on Fangore Street, between Eyetooth and Carnassial."

"They mistaking you for an Amur, buddy?" Wolfard asked.

"Been happening all day," Fangmeyer laughed, trying to remain casual. "A little drunk and disorderly might not stay little."

"I'm literally around the corner, hold on," Wolfard said with a serious tone.

"I'm on my way. Don't leave me out," Grizzoli said with a similarly serious tone.

Fangmeyer slowly, subtly and smoothly popped the button on his taser, getting his digits on it, pads pressed firmly against it and slowly flicking it on to get the charge started. He just walked on, hearing the pads behind him, waiting on the others with as much steadiness as he could muster.
Chapter Summary

After the tense encounter, another step down the road to Happytown's advancement.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Fifteen: The Long Road, Part Two

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Will he be alright?" Dawn asked, looking up at Leodore.

"The doctors say it was largely soft-tissue damage. The wolves suffered more. Officer Wolfard arrived on the scene fast enough to split attention and Officer Grizzoli put the cap on the whole thing. It's bruises and shallow rakes. Officer Fangmeyer isn't even taking a day off," Leodore said.

"I know it seems somewhat overly soft to ask, but the wolves..."

"Battered, tased, irritant-sprayed and clawed a little. They're all in the secure ward, and are all going down for assault on an officer. What's more important is they told us they're a particular group. It's something I think I overlooked. Part of raising up the area is dismantling the street gang presence, which has taken speciesism to a fractured place, focused on specific animal types," Leodore said.

Dawn scratched down a few notes and nodded firmly. "We do have anti-gang task force capabilities. Chief Bogo has informed me he actually asked Commissioner Shearly for extra resources to combat the gang threat but was shut down, with a confused explanation."

"Confused how?"

"It was like Shearly couldn't decide if his reasoning was pure species hatred, the usual polite ignorance of Happytown matters, or some kind of long-running operation he chose not to disclose. Bogo didn't buy any of it because he was more shifty and unhelpful than usual, his own words, but I can see how they came about."

"Just as I feared. I thought he was just another Vesper-approved do-nothing but now it's clear he's an active agent of regression. I just need a good cause to oust him for genuine incompetence and malfeasance. Being a do-nothing just means I won't renew him when his term comes up. I don't know who'd replace him, but I think most anyone would be better."

Dawn scribbled down a few more notes, then checked her phone. "Officer Fangmeyer has been released and accepted the meeting with you. The car is waiting for us."

"Good. I don't generally like using a city car; I learned to drive for a reason. But this does seem like a formal occasion," Leodore said, walking through the main lobby of city hall, adjusting his
cufflinks as he went.

"It's a hired car. I got a good deal from some service in Tundratown, and they were only too happy to give us that deal. It gives them prestige, I guess. A little bit of self-aggrandizement on their part, and that's alright. It's a way of giving back to the community, I suppose," Dawn commented, walking at a leisurely pace beside Leodore, who had altered his gait a while back to have smaller and slower steps.

"Mr. Seedsworth does have some good points about economy and all that. I got my fill of that from my father. He could go on and on about corporate culture and financial matters. It all got to be a bit much. Not that I hold it against Mr. Seedsworth. Deep down, he's pretty alright. Give him a way to stroke his ego and show off his skill with finances and the economy and he'll give his all," Leodore chuckled.

He held the door open for Dawn and she took his paw after, giving it a soft kiss. The hired car was waiting for them just down the steps, sitting on the street. It was a long, black limo, with city flags attached to either side of the hood. All the windows were tinted and the back door was open, with a smartly dressed jaguar standing beside it. There was also a police motorcycle at the front of the limo with a wolf astride it.

"Mr. Mayor, Miss Assistant Mayor, I'm Renato Manchas, and I'll be your driver today," the jaguar pleasantly rumbled, smiling without fangs to Dawn and with some fangs to Leodore.

"Glad to keep honest, working mammals employed," Leodore said, taking a surprised Renato's hand and giving it a hearty shake. "A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Manchas."

Dawn stood, a smile frozen on her face. Time was moving, things were advancing. She was out of deja vu, but figures from that time still existed. Each time she was exposed to one she got painful flashes of some import, dark and dire warnings about the monster she used to be, or would be along a different timeline. She tried to wrench herself out of her bodily paralysis, stiffly extending her hoof and also shaking his paw. "A pleasure indeed, Mr. Manchas."

Renato chuckled softly, adjusting his chauffeur cap and shaking his head a little. "I seldom get shakes from my passengers. You are truly a friendly mammal, Mr. Mayor."

"Mr. Lionheart if you like," Leodore said.

"Mr. Lionheart, yes," Renato said. "Please enter and I'll get the door for you."

Leodore slid into the padded back seat, Dawn sliding in against him, with his huge arm sliding around her and drawing her in close. Renato shut the door and moved around to the front. A few checks later he motioned to the police officer on the motorcycle, who took off with his siren going, Renato setting off just after.

Leodore chuckled a bit, his fingers gently stroking one of Dawn's legs, below the hem of her skirt. "I hope that officer wasn't pulled off more important duty just to do this useless assignment."

Dawn rubbed her lower hooves together, toes lightly clacking as they slid past each other. "I understand he volunteered. He worked with Officer Fangmeyer and wanted to do something. It's an honor for him. So, just more giving back to the community. It's a bad day, but at least some good incidentally emerged."

"Nothing makes up for a truly terrible thing, but if there's some... collateral goodness, then at least it's something," Leodore sighed, squeezing Dawn in slightly closer. "I knew this was a possibility."
"It's a risk everyone in the ZPD takes. They knew it was going to be a possibility. And, small comfort, it was only relatively mild. Focus on the positives. It's the best way to keep going forward."

"This is another thing Seedsworth got right. Sometimes reality is ugly. Our best intentions end up going wrong somehow. At least we predicted it. That way we had solutions in place."

"This is a good way to unclench some fists from around some money," Dawn said, wincing a little bit. "That... that came from my father..."

"If you hadn't said it I would have," Leodore confessed. "Vesper Bellwether isn't the only buck-clasping cold father that ever raised someone."

"We're such a pair..." Dawn sighed, sinking comfortably into Leodore's grasp. "But at least we're a pair. Could you... could you imagine if we hadn't been so... able to be close to each other?"

"We probably could have worked together well enough. But it would have been so cold and divided. Efficient, I guess, effective, but boring. At best," Leodore said. "It's hardly worth thinking about. I say that because I'm struggling just to imagine what that would be like. You've become a part of my life, and that makes it hard to take you out of it."

Dawn remembered, in some way. She knew what had happened in her shared past. From the first moment it had all been different. The same nascent desire had been there. But while the other one had not been fertile ground for the cultivation of love, this one was the richest, most Rainforest-District-quality loam. Her love had sprung up so fast it had surprised her to realize it had become a blooming garden. The inertia from her old life had dragged her back. But she had gotten past that. She leaned up and kissed Leodore on the chin, through the thick fluff of his mane. "I surprised myself with how close I got to you and how quickly."

They rode on in silence, settled against each other.

The escort and limo pulled into the parking structure of the Peaceground Memorial Hospital, by Leodore's direction. Renato let them out of limo and drove off to park in a more convenient location, the officer parking in a legal motorcycle space and going with Dawn and Leodore.

"I understand you volunteered. You're a good officer and partner," Leodore sad to the officer escorting them.

"I worked with Fangmeyer on night patrols. He kept me from howling too much, and liked that I knew enough to realize he wasn't an Amur," the officer, whose nameplate read Wulfberg, replied.

"I'm lead to understand that was a factor, in some way," Dawn said, strolling along through the corridors of the hospital on the way to Officer Fangmeyer's room.

"That gang of wolves were drunk and stupid and thought he was one. They probably would have done that for any tiger and use that as an excuse. It's all a fractured mess with how those speciesist gangs work."

"Believe me, I'm going to lean hard on Commissioner Shearly to allocate more resources to really bring out some anti-gang task force power to resolve this issue and prevent this from happening again. Shearly's the problem; Bogo told me he's been holding funds and approval, and I'm guessing he might have leaned on a few judges in some fashion. I'll find them and remind them that the Mayor has the power over their political lives," Leodore growled.

"I didn't want to say anything but I always got the impression he didn't care about predators and he
put Bogo where he did because Bogo was prey, and kind of a head-butter. He gets the job done, and he's good, but it was a political thing."

"Swinton did a lot of things out of expediency and some efficiency. I don't hold it against her, she was doing her best. I respect that, but it let one of Vesper Bellwether's rams get somewhere. It's hard to tell without special insight," Leodore said.

"He fancies himself a political mover. He likes being powerful and respected in Meadowlands but can't go farther. So he grooms others to do it for him, so he can take the credit for being the one who set it all up," Dawn added.

"Not my place to say anything ma'am..." Officer Wulfberg started.

"It kind of is, you're free to say anything you like, especially about my father. I'll probably agree with you," Dawn laughed.

They arrived at the room and let Officer Wolfburg in first. "Hey! Fangmeyer! You planning to take the whole day off?"

"Are you kidding? They kept me here longer than I wanted, I should be out there," Fangmeyer said, giving an up-high paw-clasp with Wulfberg. His face was a collection of very small bandages holding small wounds closed, along with some residual swelling.

"Officer Fangmyer... I can't say anything more than sorry. I knew this was a risk, and I thought it was an acceptable one, but it should never impact working officers in this fashion. I hope this hasn't soured you on the project. If it has, I understand," Leodore said, coming forward with his paw out.

Fangmeyer took the offered paw immediately, shaking it firmly. "Mr. Mayor, this is the risk I always take. It's no different anywhere. If it wasn't drunk wolves it could have been a rhino hopped up on locoweed. It's why I get a taser, a collapsible club and a license to use claws when deadly force is indicated."

"And you exposed an important element, the need to strongly deal with street gangs and gang speciesism," Leodore said.

"So... no cameras? I'm actually slightly surprised, but not entirely," Fangmeyer chuckled.

"I didn't call any," Dawn said, checking her phone. "And no one asked for media approval. This is supposed to be a small event, though I'm sure someone will want to interview you."

"Watch out for wolves," Officer Wulfberg noted. When all eyes went to him he just shrugged. "The pack is the pack. You keep strong bonds for lean times but you also lose your objectivity. I'm lucky my family wasn't like that, so I can tell you that wolf muckrakers are going to try to make hay out of you being a tiger. Tell me who did it and when, and I'll tell them to tuck it and sky-belly. That'll usually shut up a wolf, when someone with authority says it."

"I'll tell them to fold and slink, and if they really bug me I'll tell them to round-out. Sometimes it works, if they know what I mean," Fangmeyer said.

"They'll know. If they're speciesist enough to lump all tigers together, they'll know the slurs you don't use to another species that they use for themselves. Don't forget to tell them that Wolfard was there tasering the stupidity out of them too."

"Just as a note, Officer Fangmeyer..." Leodore said. "You might get contacted in some way by a
tiger gang, as clearly the wolves were organized against someone. They might see you as one of them, and might think you're dirty for some reason. Let them think it. Give them some encouragement, without suggesting anything or taking anything. That should start a second front on the opposition. We can know some things about the Loup Garou and their presumptive rivals."

"Hey, you get to be an undercover without Bogo riding your tail over protocol," Wulfberg said with a smile.

"Unofficial, of course," Leodore quickly added. "This is based on a little guesswork and need. If Shearly won't do anything, and Bogo can't do anything because of it. I'm sure he wants to. If it happens, tell him, then tell him what I said. We'll work around obstructionism, even under color of law."

Dawn scribbled a quick note and chewed the end of her pen lightly. "Do you think he's dirty? Influence peddling and obstruction are viable reasons to get him out."

"We don't have the proof yet. Just one scrap and I'll have Bogo personally arrest him," Leodore growled.

"Let's get you back to the station. Bogo needs to personally tell you to go home and rest up," Wulfberg said, gently pulling Fangmeyer's arm.

"He's tough, but fair," Fangmeyer explained, following Wulfberg's lead, both followed by Leodore and Dawn.

The quartet went along in relative quiet, Wulfberg and Fangmeyer chatting animatedly about precinct happenings while Dawn and Leodore just held hands. On exiting the hospital they were confronted by a flood of flashbulbs and a sea of reporters clamoring for comments.

"No comment! Talk to the police media... thing. Whatever you call it, talk to them, I'm busy," Fangmeyer growled, tapping away on his phone to arrange a Zuber pickup.

"The official Media Liason for the ZPD will have a statement prepared and sent out," Dawn smoothly said, adjusting her glasses and looking as important as possible. "Please give Officer Fangmeyer his space."

"Why were the wolves so badly beaten? What kind of message is that sending?" A scruffy wolf in an ill-fitting suit asked.

"He said no comment, now let him be," Officer Wulfberg snarled.

"Coverup! Police brutality, enforced against your own!" The reporter howled, sending the questions of others off in the same direction.

"Hey, Officer Wolfard was there too! This isn't a species thing, it's a cop thing," Wulfberg insisted.

"Oh, a cop coverup, ZPD leaning on the preds and using their pet preds to do it, I see how it is," the reporter said.

Officer Wulfberg growled slightly and just held back from curling his lip. "Tuck it and sky-belly, you muckraking parasite!"

"The public has a right to know the big cat in charge is leaning on the little preds! Hey! Hey Amur! You wanna beat me up? Huh? You wanna beat me up?"
"I want you to shut up!" Dawn shouted, turning a little sheepish as attention flew to her. "You're just a provocateur. I've seen your type a million times. Who paid you? Was it Shearly, or was it the gangs? Who put you on this? There was no call from the ZPD or the Mayor's Office for media presence."

The wolf was caught flat-footed, jaw down but no sounds emerged. He stammered for a short while as his eyes shifted. "You can't silence the truth, I'll get the story!" He slunk off, leaving the remainder much more subdued.

"Nice chain of logic, if a little evil," Leodore whispered to Dawn.

"Dad had slightly more subtle sheep-stirrers and herd-botherers," Dawn replied. "But I know the drill. He might not even be a wolf, maybe a freelance coyote with a makeup job, a dhole or a painted hound or... no, no, that couldn't happen..."

"What couldn't happen?"

"He always had this idea of the ultimate provocateur, a sheep in wolf's clothing. With just the right prosthesis he could get police-level camouflage. But no... that had to be a canid. It had to be," Dawn said, watching the slinking reporter for some kind of sign.

"It's something to consider. We're getting small-scale pushback, but the ones doing it seem to be organizing."

"We'll push the awareness programs more, get more word-of-mouth and internet presence," Dawn suggested.

"That should be a high priority, there's a lot of bile on the electronic front," Leodore said.

"It never seems to end..." Dawn sighed, as Fangmeyer got into his car, and Wulfberg escorted her and Leodore to where Renato had parked.

"Chief, I need to see you about something important," Fangmeyer said, stepping into Chief Bogo's office and slowly shutting the door behind him.

"You could have made an appointment," Bogo grunted, looking over the top of his reading glasses. "But this seems serious. What's the problem, Fangmeyer?"

Fangmeyer took the chair in front of Bogo's desk and fidgeted with his paws. "I want to say, this was something Mayor Lionheart told me to do, but I agreed with it completely. It was a logical way to go about things and I had to find the right time to actually mention anything.

Bogo quirked a brow slightly, his ears wiggling a touch. "I can't wait to hear this one..."

"A few days after my encounter with the Loup Garou, I got an anonymous note telling me to contact someone about tiger matters, something Mayor Lionheart said might happen. To cut down to the point, as you always tell us to, there's a rival gang called the Striped Claw, and they think I'm sympathetic to their ideas."

Bogo slammed a thick fist down on his desk and snorted loudly. "Undercover work? Fangmeyer you know I have to approve that kind of thing!"

"Unofficial! I promise, I didn't suggest activities and never accepted anything. I just got basic information and confirmed they exist and have some limited influence, just like the Loup Garou.
The Mayor suggested it because Shearly still won't release funds for more proper anti-gang activities. The more we build now the easier things will be when we get proper support."

Bogo nodded slowly, turning his chair slightly and steepling his fingers. "I don't hate to admit when he's right, but it makes it hard to dislike him. He has a point. I wish he didn't but that's neither here nor there. How much of this information can we confirm?"

"I ran a few names I was given, those I might help in the future, if I associate with them. Some low-end losers but the kind that suggest bigger things," Fangmeyer answered.

"They want their own dirty cop. That's not good. That tells me they might need one. With pressure being put on Happytown the gangs won't have unlimited run of it anymore. One of them will have to rise to the top to survive the pressure of law and order. This is going to get worse before it gets better..." Bogo turned to Fangmeye and nodded. "Keep it up as long as it's safe. This is all unofficial and I know nothing about it. When something happens or they want more commitment, come to me and we'll work the next move out."

Fangmeye nodded and stood up. "Yes, sir. I'm sorry for not telling you sooner."

"I understand why you didn't. As long as the outcome is something we all want, I can let this slide, especially as it was the Mayor's suggestion. Keep me posted regularly, and keep up with the other gang situations. Some indication from them might let us know about the activities of others."

"Yes, sir, and thank you again for understanding," Fangmeyer said, letting himself out of the office.

Bogo drummed his fingers on his desk, contemplating what he had learned. Assistant Mayor Bellwether had been much more pleasant of late, as he was hitting his targets. She also shared veiled concerns about Commissioner Shearly, concerns he echoed. If he was reading her right, she was looking for proof he was dirty, intentionally obstructing justice for some unknown end. That would really boil his oats.

Prey or not, Shearly was not at all in his circle of acceptable mammals. A borderline prey-pride bigot, an obstructionist, a smugly superior annoyance, and possibly involved with keeping Happytown the way it was. He had gone from unhelpful to unpleasant since the Happytown project started. Knowing him, he was deeply interested in pred hatred, using that to keep the law on them.

He pressed his intercom button. "Officer Clawhauser."

"Yes chief!" the cheery voice on the other end responded.

"I need you to, quietly, look up and copy all the information you can find on Police Commissioner Shearly. Not, and I have to emphasize this, the electronic records. Get me everything you can on paper. Paper only, your eyes only. Get it, bring it to me, and don't tell anyone about this. Am I clear?"

"Like a window, Chief! But not, you know, like the stained glass windows at the Peaceground sanctuary. I mean you can kind of see through them but they use that weird, thick glass with all the waves in it, and then the colors, well, the light ones sure. But the blue and dark purple, I guess that would be midnight blue or plum. Plum... maybe I could get a plum pastry, it wouldn't take up that much more space..."

"Clawhauser!"

"Ah! Sorry Chief! I'll do that just as soon as I get some time. Don't worry, I'll make sure I do it
right," Clawhauser said.

"I'm sure you will, you're very dependable. Thank you, Clawhauser."

"Not a problem, Chief!"
The Long Road, part three

Chapter Summary

The road hasn't ended but the terrain grows more rocky.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Sixteen: The Long Road, Part Three

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"There's no getting around it. We need to hold a special election because there are some allocations we need to make, some very important things to do," Leodore said, sitting with a special session of the City Council.

"I've been predicting this for a while. I wrote up some templates for bond measures," Cecil Seedsworth said. "Matching funds and donations and volunteering only help modest issues, for food, clothes and educational supplies as well as cleanup and repair. But we have infrastructure concerns, big and long-lasting concerns."

"We can't keep the police situation as it is. We need a new police building in Happytown, an entire precinct in fact. That's why new ones have always come into being. The population or service area increases, and we find we're stretched too thin."

"That's how it worked on Outback Island. We had cops in from the mainland but the population went up and seriousness of the situations went up because they took so long to get there they couldn't help but put in our precinct," Miss Macadam added.

"And that's how things got so bad. High response times, lack of response at all, insufficiency of response, and some contempt also grew from the perception of the police as outsiders, invading their territory. That's how the gangs work, they carve up the territory the police can't fully control and now we have to take them apart," Leodore said.

"With some measure of success. But do be careful," Miss Erminova cautioned. "You have to pry them all out or the ones left become stronger by taking over any niches and then consolidate into one."

"Which is why drying up opportunities is so vital," Mrs. Fanak said, searching through some papers she had in a folder. "You recall we had a very delicate situation some decades back when the easy money brought in skimmers who wanted more direct and harsh control to finance themselves and other shady activities. We had dirty cops, burials in the desert, an insecure district that was a big draw but could be dangerous."

"That was under Mayor Wulfberg as I recall. He started our conception of what a gang-buster task force could be. The Stainless Badges. That was a pretty rough business, but they got the job done,"
Leodore said, with a slight moue of distaste.

"I keep telling you, Lionheart, life is dirty sometimes, but dirty like scrubbing out a kitchen. It's filthy work, and not at all a game. But if you want that place to sparkle, you do it and accept it. Then you do that for a few years and earn an MBA and learn about a dirty business for life," Cecil said.

"The more I learn, the more I'm surprised and the more there is to glean," Leodore said.

"Has Assistant Mayor Bellwether gotten anywhere with Bogo and Shearly? I get conflicting reports when I ask Commissioner Shearly's office, and it's hard to get a straight answer from my police precincts. I think they're upset I'm focused on Precinct one," Mr. Tatu asked.

"I don't mind saying this openly, you're getting conflicting reports because Commissioner Shearly is being either intentionally or incidentally obstructionist. He's holding back proper allocations for establishing a more proper anti-gang task force. He's not going to let this thing happen. If I get the evidence, I'll have him removed. Being a do-nothing is bad enough. Being a do-nothing with an agenda is something else altogether." Leodore snarled.

"If he's doing nothing he's getting paid too much to do it," Cecil groused. "I don't hold with busybody do-nothings." After a moment of held laughter he said, "I am a busybody but I do something."

"And he has a contract. It's an appointed position but he has a term to wait out. Even if we all agreed we can't get rid of him until he's done something actually criminal," Leodore sighed.

"If we put in a new precinct, wouldn't Shearly appoint the new Chief? He'd put in someone who thought like him," Mr. Tatu noted.

"That's the one thing we could override. If we veto the selection we have some control over that much but he has ways around it like a vote from the police brass. He's not that powerful but you never know how it might go," Leodore said.

"There aren't enough predators to provide a negation if Shearly got all the prey as a bloc. It's like packing the board with yes-mammals and ousting the chairmammal," Cecil said.

"But it's not a bad thing if they're a problem. My father told me that was how his boss turned around the company, he had to stack the board and force his own brother out. Worked out for everyone but... again, life is a dirty business. But we clean up after and we go out to dinner. Or the theater or..."

"Or your husband takes you to a show and the casino security interrogates you for an hour because you're sipping a grasshopper and he's far taller than you and it looks like something far, far different than it actually is," Mrs. Fanak said, with a breezy and casual tone.

Leodore chuckled deeply. "You have a fascinating life, it would seem, Mrs. Fanak. I'm guessing from the description that..."

"Painted Hound. He's very tall, he's very thin, and I stole him from no less than five extremely powerful hyena women who would have crushed him in a frenzy to get him," Mrs. Fanak explained. "And he took my name. He's a good man."

"It would seem that Dawn and I are not unique in certain aspects of our relationship," Leodore chuckled.
"Not feeling so special any longer, Mr. Lionheart? Mis-sized interspecies pairs are to be expected when many species are of different sizes. Hardly a surprise," Cecil said with a smile. "But, to the point, I propose that we vote to begin a discussion on bond measures that will be used for Happytown projects. We need to hammer out details for the bonds to be voted on in a special election. Do I have a second?"

"Second," Leodore said. "Please pass around your templates so we can start to work on the finer details."

"I know that you hate me, because my father told you to hate me," Dawn bluntly stated, standing before the overly ornate and imposing desk of Police Commissioner Shearly.

The whole of the office had become a monument to ostentation over the time that the pretentious Shearly had occupied his position. His single rear window was tinted so darkly it hardly let in any light, leaving the whole office illuminated by the overhead lights, which had been installed after the florescent lights were removed. His walls were made into bookshelves, packed with impressive tomes that looked pristine. In all likelihood he had never opened any of them. On the free spaces of the wall near the door were photos of the Commissioner with various politicians and businessmammals, including a section of photos taken with Vesper Bellwether. His desk was covered in papers, but also small, gold-colored Deco-style statues of sheep.

The corpulent sheep laughed deeply, with a slight wheeze, his tailored suit straining at the motion of his form. He heaved his rotund body out of the chair and slowly made his way around the desk so he could haughtily look down on Dawn. "You flatter yourself. I don't need instructions from Vesper Bellwether to dislike your choice in relationships. That he happens to agree is incidental. He practically lives in mourning with his only lamb being the accessory of a slobbering, filthy predator."

Dawn gave a wry smile and lifted her head up high. "That's Assistant Mayor Lamb and Mayor Slobbering Predator. He's only upset that he can't make himself more powerful than a district councilmammal. A suburban one. He's a glorified Homeowner's Association member, measuring grass and writing fake tickets over front door color."

"And yet his guidance got me here," Shearly snorted.

"Which is the only reason you have a job. You're a useful idiot, but only as long as you can keep doing things he likes to see happen. That's not going to be the case for very long."

Shearly narrowed his gaze, staring hard into Dawn's unwavering look. "They can't push me out. Your predator can't get rid of me just because I'm in his way."

"The council is preemptively ready to reject any choices you make for the new chief of the Happytown precinct until you're forced to select one that is more than just a political puppet," Dawn said.

Shearly laughed heartily and shook his head. "It will never happen. No one will vote for the bonds necessary to establish such a thing. And even if it happens the whole place will never be civilized enough for it. The preds are too foolish."

"The poll numbers are looking good. A consistent push will make the special election an overwhelming success for our goals. By not releasing the funds and the approval for the things the police are asking for, especially the anti-gang task force approval, you become political poison. Even my father knows that past a certain point you turn on your own actual values, pretend to have
a personal revelation and beg to be given a chance to try out a new perspective on things. Keep being obstructionist and everyone of substance will leave you in the wind."

Shearly huffed, turning around to waddle back to his chair. "I think we're done here, Miss Bellwether. I still don't see the point of doing what you wanted me to do. I have to look into the issue more closely. But it might take me some time, I have many other concerns on my plate."

"Well, I believe you have a lot on your plate," Dawn snorted. "You're on borrowed time, Shearly. Just wait, you'll get to the point where you can't wriggle out of something. You're not as slippery as you think and not as talented as my father at squirming away from responsibility."

"Thank you, we're done now," Shearly said, heavily falling into his chair and making the strained wood creak.

Dawn pushed open the door to Shearly's office, noting that the larger ewe that was his secretary gave her a disdainful look, the same as when she'd gone in. Dawn gave the secretary a warm smile. "Please schedule another appointment at Mr. Shearly's earliest possible convenience."

The secretary made a token motion of looking at the computer screen and tapping a button on her keyboard. "Sorry, he's going to be very busy for..."

"City administrative staff are under a department whose budget and composition I oversee. I can very heavily influence your position. You don't have a contract with Mr. Shearly. You, by all real estimation, have a loose agreement with me," Dawn said, holding the sweetest smile she could the whole time.

The secretary scowled slightly but put on a similar smile and actually typed something into her computer. "But, as you're such a valuable part of the government and liaison to this office he can see you in two days at the same time as today."

"Thank you," Dawn said with a lilt.

"I think it's wrong. I just want you to know that it's wrong," the other ewe said, with a slightly odd tone, as if she was speaking too fast and in danger of tripping herself up.

Dawn looked over the secretary's desk and her accessories. A small picture frame sat there, with some small scratches lightly evident on the back, while she also had a wristguard-style bracelet, with regular and shallow furrows, narrowly placed and going to the top, not around. While she was mostly normally shorn her head bouffant had two small peaks that were slightly feathered at the ends. "You dated a caracal. And you liked it."

The secretary went dry-nosed and stiff, lip quivering slightly, her small-pupiled eyes darting. "Wh-what? What are you... what are you even saying?"

Dawn pointed to the frame and the bracelet. "I'm dating a felid, Gazelle is too. I know that even the most careful ones can't help but leave small furrows on soft things like cardboard and soft metals like gold. And you can't stop the fleece-do you used to do for him. Only someone who dated a caracal would have tufts like that. And you kept the do, and the gifts he gave you. I know your salary. Even cheap gold is gold and you'd sell it in a minute if it meant nothing to you."

"But, a caracal..." she started.

"This city is my shared responsibility. I have to know things about it. The narrow spacing means a smaller felid. Margays live in the rainforest District; Serval, in Sahara Square and Savannah Central. But they don't have tufted ears. Bobcats do, but they're in Canyonlands. I was very
familiar with the Meadowlands census reports, which said we had a minority population of caracals. And a District-bigoted ram like Shearly would only ever hire a ewe from home."

"And that... I liked it?" The secretary squeaked, with large, liquid eyes.

"If he'd had to grab your arm to drag you along the scratches would be deep and go around. But that upward caress... Leodore does it too. When a feline feels something hard their claws are more likely to come out. Plus.. that shearing... I don't know who made you like this, but I'll hate them for you."

The secretary was on the verge of tears, eyes darting around rapidly. "Please don't tell Mr. Shearly. Please. I need this job. And don't... don't tell anyone else. Please, give me that. Just give me..."

Dawn sighed and turned to walk away. "He's going away, sooner or later. Just wait it out. And I hope whoever you did this for, if it wasn't Shearly, I hope they were worth it. I won't guess, but... some mammals really are worth more than... whoever it was."

"Have you heard the latest news?" Leodore casually asked, leaning on the low chair which Commissioner Shearly provided for those coming into his office. He smiled, in his usual jovial way, to the sheep, but his eyes were quite focused and piercing.

"Your secretary was just here. Why did you feel the need to come here... Mister Mayor?" Shearly queried, attempting to look servile while trying to hide the scowl that creased his multiple folds of fattened extra chins.

"If you mean the Assistant Mayor, the one I'm seeing romantically and who is a bright light that outshines all other lights in my life, then she didn't accomplish what she had hoped because of your obstinacy, and potentially personal disdain, so I'm here to attempt to put a dent in the fleshy, corpulent wall you have built to arrest progress," Leodore answered, staying all smiles.

The scowl ceased being covert, his fleshy features falling into cavernous creases. "That's your opinion, sir. I have many important considerations and I have to refrain from snap judgments."

"I'd imagine you chew over a lot of very major matter," Leodore noted.

"Yes, your stray made the same joke. I think you're putting things in her mouth besides the usual ones," Shearly remarked, with a sneering smile.

Leodore pricked his pawpad, holding back his anger. He took a deep breath and released it as a low, rumbling sigh. "Numerous statements on that subject have been made. I'm warning you, say anything about that to a camera or put it in print or online, and you'll be in line at the unemployment office for libel or slander, as appropriate. I can sell malfeasance very easily."

Shearly snorted and turned his attention to his papers. "I'm a busy mammal. You said you had something of note to tell me? Some news?"

"Oh! Yes. I had to tell you, did you hear Judge Swinemore just sold his vacation home in Sahara Square? Apparently, after I had a talk with him about the necessity of generosity and the coming changes that would make Zootopia a better place for all. I mentioned that I had looked into his nice, new vacation property and wondered how he happened to get that when his salary, while generous, was not the kind to result in having a property like that, at least not so quickly. When I said Chief Bogo might be interested in hearing about it, and some very unusual rulings and rejected warrant requests, he immediately promised me he would sell it, and not keep a single penny. He
was going to donate it all to various Happytown project organizations, and give his open support for it. Isn't that fantastic? He's a good-hearted, open fellow. He's the third judge I had a casual chat with, who then went on to be generous with their time, money and support."

Shearly's face had started to fall at the mention of Swinemore's name, but as the casual, even jovial conversational tone continued he flashed between worry and anger. At the end of it he had settled on guarded petulance. "Yes... very interesting, but what does that have to do with me?"

"Your name came up, a time or two. He didn't say much but you apparently have very strong opinions about the disposition of certain cases, and he was receptive. He seems the agreeable sort. Coincidentally, he was given a very nice gift by an organization that wished to remain anonymous. It was the darndest thing, in his words. He wasn't sure what to make of it. But he really had no use for it, and the tax burden, just terrible. Now, he feels good about himself, and that's the most important thing."

Shearly loudly cleared his throat and reflexively adjusted his tie, seeming suddenly choked by the band of silk. "Yes, yes, fascinating. Good for him giving that kind of money and all that. He must be very relieved to have that burden off of him."

"Absolutely he is. I have plans to glad-paw about some more, see more members of the judiciary, maybe talk to their clerks and a few District Attorneys about their feelings on this project. Miss Bellwether is going to talk to the police brass about this too. She might get her own interesting stories on that little goodwill mission. Anything to help a good project along, am I right?"

"Fascinating... but ultimately meaningless," Shearly said, with an attempt to sound casual coming off as disconnected.

"Only so far. Meaning has a way of emerging from noise if you sift hard enough. Just thought I'd make a little conversation. Maybe it could improve relations, make us understand each other and smooth the way to better cooperation," Leodore said.

"I understand you perfectly. But I'm in no rush to make any changes to the current policy, I have a vision of how things should go, and it's my job to do such things. Now, I'm sorry to cut this meeting short but I have many things to do. Do excuse me, Mayor Lionheart," Shearly brusquely huffed.

"I'll be back, Mr. Shearly. Hopefully with some cheerful news," Leodore said, turning and walking briskly from the room. He looked to his paw pad, the right one lightly spotted with blood. A little sound at his side drew his attention to the secretary, who was offering him a tissue. He took it and dabbed at his pad. "Thank you."

"Miss Bellwether... didn't say anything, did she?" The secretary asked.

"Anything? About what? She mentioned she's back on the schedule, and that Mr. Shearly was especially unpleasant. Did something happen?"

"No! No! Nothing... just... I was just wondering," the secretary sighed, slumping back in her chair. "I'll schedule you for a later date. Do you have a preference?"

"Anytime is good. Just call me when you have a spot selected and I'll tell you how it works for me."

"Yes, Mr. Mayor, I'll do that," the secretary said, scribbling a note for herself as Leodore left.

When she was alone she slowly drew her hoof-capped fingers along the furrows on her bracelet,
tears lightly shining at the corners of her eyes.
The storm comes to Dawn at last, a figure from her future past bringing pain.

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Seventeen: Judith Laverne Hopps

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Dawn shuddered as she lay in bed, blankets clutched tightly to her chest. While her waking mind was restricted and attempted incursions were chastised harshly by Morning Star's will, dreams were a different story. She could only surmise that, because dreams seldom were remembered or were mutated in the process of trying to turn fleeting impressions into true memories, she had vivid dreams. Dreams about what she had been, or would have been in the old world.

She seldom remembered those things, and got only shadows of images, which she could cobble together with what was revealed to her, pieces at a time. She knew that some of the random folk she met had great import from the way her closed-off mind reacted. She knew certain phrases and places were important. All that was vital, yet ultimately tiny.

What loomed largest in her fevered mind were two figures, the two figures that had driven her to make a deal with Morning Star. But... she hadn't... she had never made a deal, not really. Morning Star had petulantly disclaimed any need to explain the terms, citing her power. She had said she would break them apart. Kill their love. She didn't know why. She didn't know them.

She hadn't known them.

As the liaison with the ZPD she had the job of looking over incoming officer reports, and earmarking those with the highest potential for Bogo's consideration and Commissioner Shearly's strong suggestion. Leodore had told her there was a surprise for her in the latest report, which amused her because she couldn't imagine what it would be.

One name glared at her, the typed and machine-set letters almost aflame in her eyes.


Age, 24; fitness reports, high; competence, high; even a personal attestation of high ability and capacity from the chief instructor, Major Friedkin. That almost never happened, an indication of a real talent, a prodigy. But all that just barely washed across her consciousness.

The name itself blazed, it burned across her eyes and her mind. Her brain screamed, her body just
barely stayed still, in an almost paralytic fashion. Her long hours of practicing getting hold of her
pained responses only just aided her. Her hands flew to her head, she cried out, bleating helplessly,
vision almost whited out by the implications that name carried with it. Connecting some true
memories to half-recalled, kludged-together nightmares.

She had flashes of impressions, as ever, allowed memories of her ideas. But, as she was the most
important thing, or one of them, the rabbit became more painful than any other memory. She had a
name. But worse, in some loose way, being real and present, she had context. 'Bye-bye, bunny.'

She had recalled Leodore there, his comforting hands on her, looking into her face and asking if
she was alright. Migraines. She had said that was the problem. Given all her previous actions that
looked like headaches it was an easy sell. One quick trip to the clinic, and a mention that her
mother had also had migraines had earned her bed rest in a dark room, and an informative
pamphlet on migraines, with a need to follow up at a later date.

Going to bed hardly helped, it only let her contemplate what was happening. She was going to meet
her. That was what she knew most clearly. Because this Judith Hopps was one of the biggest
symbols of the MII. She was the fruit of it, the first rabbit cop, straight out of the sticks. She was
going to be put in Precinct One, that was either something Leodore had said or something she
remembered. Things were merging into deja vu again.

She couldn't plead migraines every time she interacted with Miss Hopps. She couldn't avoid it, not
with how often she was at the precinct. She'd have top hope that, much like the tiny office, after an
initial shock nothing further would happen. She also wouldn't milk her allowed time off, for any
reason. She had a responsibility to the project that had been started. She wasn't just a neutral
observer. If nothing else, she was fighting Shearly.

And her father.

Bigots and regressives. She was in a war against hate, and had to see it through. Even if it hurt, she
had to keep up the fight. At least, her terrible crime couldn't happen. She didn't remember exactly
what it was, but it brewed a seething hatred for a rabbit and fox, a pair so in love she could still feel
a bit of it though her memory's distance. She could count on being spared that much.

The buzz of her phone shocked Dawn out of her internal monologue and sent her, on autopilot,
reaching for the phone. "Assistant Mayor Bellwether, what's the nature of the call?" She said in a
small, tired voice.

Silence, for a time. "I feel instantly terrible about this now," Leodore said, in an apologetic tone.

"Sweet lemongrass, why would you? You think I don't want to hear your voice at any point of my
day?" Dawn chuckled.

"You just sound... well, you don't have your usual gamboling pep."

"I'm not a lamb anymore, that's for sure. I can't be all cress and mustard all the time. Looks like my
mother left me a little something besides an understanding of when to fight and when to realize it's
time to go."

"I'd never considered it before but... it would make sense that it's genetic. Predispositions to things
can be. I'm just sorry it's affecting your life."

Another twinge, a serious one. Genetic predisposition. Nature. Something to blame for something
terrible. "I read that with proper management and an understanding of the triggers it's possible to
live without any drugs or focused therapy."

"But you're still going to follow up, right?"

"Absolutely. I know this is just a minor thing that might have been exacerbated by stress. I've certainly had plenty of it trying to move that bloated tick Shearly."

"I had a few... 'we never had this meeting' meetings with Chief Bogo, and he slipped me a few 'you saw this while I was watering the porcelain' files. Eyes-only, hard copy information about Shearly and his activities, the ones he could get without a warrant, public things and things available to the police as a matter of course. Now that I know those things, anything I manage to dig up can be collated and possibly passed back to him as a 'useful tip' which he can, coincidentally, synthesize into an arrest warrant."

"How goes the quest? I've seen a few judges and higher-ranking cops suddenly becoming very generous and very eager to stump for the Happytown project. The bond vote should push us past the point of no return. Once we get the money and clearance for the Happytown precinct, nothing can stop the forward motion. I wouldn't be surprised if Mr. Seedsworth was right about it becoming a full district at some point."

"After doing all the work that he has, I think he might be okay with it, because he seems to like areas that are bounded and administered by some kind of executive. It's a businessmammal thing, given extra force because he was part of it. He's not a bad mammal all told, he just really wants to be involved and active Given how he might have been treated due to his stature, I can't say I blame him overly much."

"At least he was only afraid of a vague political thing," Dawn sighed. "His stance on predators was a response to a fear of what might happen if they treated prey like prey used to treat them. I doubt he ever actively did any mistreating but being so small he'd be extra oppressed. Shearly... Shearly is something more disgusting."

"His naked hatred is shocking. I know there's a bubbling undercurrent but I've never seen it like that. Usually they hide it behind more civilized, less overt actions. They have polite codes and justifications."

"I won't be telling who but... I found someone who gave up a love like ours because of mammals like Shearly and it makes me angry, sad and disgusted with the whole matter."

Leodore was quiet for a while. "Shearly's secretary. I don't know what kind, it doesn't really matter. She asked if you had said anything, and I had no idea what she meant. She was very nice about my appointment and gave me a tissue because my pawpad got a little... messy. Encounters with Shearly require some perspective shift and empathy recollection."

"Caracal," Dawn said. "Someone from Meadowlands. It's just like Patty and Chester. Won't this ever stop? Why doesn't it... stop?" Sniffles and a slight catch of her tone followed.

"Because progress is slow and some mammals are like your father, intentionally, willfully and stridently oppositional. Maliciously and arrogantly. He would deny facts as long as it serves him."

"I know. I know... better than others. I just started hoping that in Zootopia proper, out of the suburbs, it would be better."

"It will be. That's what this project will help. By lifting up such a potent representation of predators we'll make predators less disdained in some fashion. Maybe we can even encourage openness
about Outsiders. No more division, that's a promise I intend to keep most strongly."

Dawn said nothing, for a long time, staring at the darkened bedroom's walls.

"Dawn? Dawn?" Leodore let some slight fear creep into his tone.

"Are you planning to stay late at the office?"

"I don't have any plans for it. I've been getting all my work done during the day. Why? Did you want to go out to dinner or a movie? That foreign film about goats and wolves just hit downtown."

Dawn took a moment to reply. "No. I don't feel like going out."

"Oh, well then what-"

"No more divisions," Dawn whispered, her soft voice still managing to interrupt Leodore's comment. "No more."

"Dawn are you..? Are you saying what I think you're saying?"

"Well... at least Shearly won't be lying about something anymore..." She said with a breathy chuckle.

"Are you even up to have a visitor? With your migraine and all."

"You let me worry about that..." Dawn said, her mind throbbing as her old memories reacted to her intentions. She ignored it. This was her life now, she controlled it, and she would savor it. "You don't need to bring anything, you don't need to worry about anything except being here. I'm finished with divisions. And I think you want to be finished with them, too."

"I'll see you after work. But only if you really want me there."

"Don't worry, I want you here. I'll be anticipating it, Leodore."

"I'll try to be on time, Dawn. Don't worry."

Both of them kissed at the air, unbidden, just as a natural action, before hanging up. Dawn fell back onto the bed, staring up at the ceiling and thinking about what she had done. She hadn't even considered hesitating, doing her usual tap-dance or at least briefly going through the motions before plunging ahead. She just felt it was time.

With that rabbit, that Miss Hopps, coming to the fore, making the reality of what she had done in her other life more real, she had to move on with the life she had. Her new life was precious, special, amazing. It fulfilled her on a deep, personal level. It was like a dream come true, a paradise compared to what she could glean about her other life. Instead of misery and disdain she had love and sweetness.

Dawn did all the things she could think of to prepare for Leodore's arrival, or at least all the things that she guessed were right. Her apartment was always neat, or neat enough. It was tidy, at least, though the garbage probably could have gone out. She didn't do a lot of cooking and had only a few dishes in the sink. Mostly, she saw to herself.

Her wool was short enough, and she kept the lanolin out by and large, but she made an extra effort to scrub out any trace, even using her special shampoo normally reserved for when she neglected it for a while. She picked the wool into curly puffiness, arms, legs and face the perfect forests of
fluff. She kept her public areas clipped but soft, as good ewes were supposed to. Under the clothing was a different story.

Climate was different in Zootopia proper, slightly warmer thanks to the urban heat island effect, and often highly variable due to which way the wind came in relation to Tundratown or Sahara Square. It rained less than the properly-watered Meadowlands but again, she could be inundated in the Rainforest District, with humidity and heat added to it. Her usual clothes sometimes shrank a little after official trips there. Her usual attire was suitable, but only if she stayed shaved to the skin.

Most of her form could be done at home, though she had a salon she liked when she needed it professionally done. There was no time for that, just a quick going-over with her cream conditioner and waterproof electric clipper, with much of her focus going to the most difficult spot, the back. Every curve needed her attention, every smooth rise and slight dip, along her spine, across her shoulder blades, even over that spot she only reached by the grace of modern technology and spending extra on the next size up.

Washed, shorn, perfumed and powdered, she was looking her natural best. She turned to her ill-used makeup collection. She applied only the lightest of it, most days, to brighten her eyes and add a tint to her lips. She was a good ewe. Conservative, quiet, sensible, proper. For the public. This was a private matter, a very private matter. She was free to be anything she wanted. She could do anything.

Some time later, a gentle knock announced Leodore's presence. When the door opened her appeared, standing with somewhat the posture of a nervous teen on his first date. In his paws he carried a bouquet of honeysuckle and roses, her snacking favorites, as well as a bottle of wine, of a type similar to the one they had shared at the Palm. The nervous smile on his face turned into an open-mouthed gape, eyes wide as he took in Dawn's form.

Her face was ringed in a very slightly pinkish powder makeup, the wool around it making her soft and smooth features even more radiant. The shadow over her eyes was smokey, and her lashes were teased up into incredible length. Her lips, normally thin, had been darkly lined in deep wine with the lips made to look plumper with a cerise primary lipstick.

Beyond her made-up face, she had changed up her usually tidy, conservative attire. She was barely in anything at all, wearing a filmy, diaphanous slip that hung off her shoulders, most of the material a nearly transparent light pink, with two thicker pieces of silk across her abdomen and chest, and as a lower fringe covering her hip area. Beneath, a pair of frilly, pink panties.

The two stood there, staring at each other for a long while, before Leodore broke the silence with a stammering, "Th-that's a new look, Dawn. I, uh, I like it. A lot."

Dawn blushed a touch, stepping back and nervously shoving her glasses up her snout. "Th-thanks. I, um, can't do anything about the glasses. They probably ruin the mood."

"Actually I always thought your glasses were an attractive feature," Leodore admitted. He remembered that he had the rest of his body besides his eyes and mouth, stepping forward awkwardly and offering his gifts. "I know you said you didn't need me to bring anything but... I wanted to."

Dawn accepted both items, setting the wine aside on her small coffee table, and giving the flowers a deep, pleased sniff. That was followed by a generous bite of one of the roses, earning a long sigh. "Oh... fresh and dewy..."

Leodore slowly closed the door and stood in the middle of Dawn's apartment, awkwardly. It took
him a full minute before he took off his suit coat, during which time Dawn put the bouquet into her vegetable crisper. "I hope I'm not being too direct when I say that you look amazing. I didn't even know you had something like that."

"I suppose I always had dreams... silly dreams. Just silly flights of fancy, my imagination running wild as I ran a district or worked with others or got an education. I wanted to date. But my condition did a lot to halt that. But I still hoped and dreamed. I bought this on an impulse, and just... had it. I was certain I'd never wear it. But..." She executed a spin and looked only a little dizzy after. "I'm... I'm sorry I don't have a good place for you. I guess I should have come to you."

"I don't mind standing. I'm just not sure where to go from here," Leodore said with a slight shrug.

Dawn had two glasses ready, one large, one small, the large one looking awkward in her small cupboard. She also took out what, for her, was a comically large corkscrew. "Care to uncork? I think a few sips couldn't hurt."

Leodore dutifully took the corkscrew and only took a moment to pull the cork from the bottle, his muscles flexing and straining his white shirt, actually visible to a small degree. That done, he poured out some wine for Dawn. "Just say when."

"Oh tonight, definitely tonight..." Dawn said in a breathy tone, eyes wide and focused on his arms as he poured.

Leodore fumbled at that statement, lightly splattering some wine on the floor. "Oh! Sorry... I'll pay to have someone come in to get that."

"I shouldn't try doing things I'm not good at," Dawn nervously chuckled, taking a slow sip of the dark red wine. "I've seen seductive tones in movies but I guess I didn't do it right. I was a little distracted by... the fact that I can sort of see your muscles now."

Leodore took his own sip, hiding his smile behind his glass. "You see them, I don't use my treadmill with my jacket on."

"Running isn't pulling a cork out. That was a flex. As far as I understand lions, you might not have a dark mane but your figure... you could be albino and still get all the lionesses."

"That's an exaggeration, but...thank you," Leodore mumbled, setting his glass aside and casually undoing the buttons on his shirt, slowly revealing his chest tuft and pectorals.

"What... what are you doing?" Dawn asked, eyes wide and staring as more and more was revealed to her eyes.

"You're very... briefly dressed. I thought this would be appropriate."

"I really jumped ahead. I wanted to be... sexy for you. I haven't had much of a chance in my life."

"I think you're doing just fine," Leodore rumbled, throwing his shirt open and off with a flourish, showing off his gym-honed body. Just as before, his abs were perfectly rounded, taut hills, while his pecs were broad and flat expanses that shifted as he moved. With the shirt full removed his powerful arms were in view, the massy muscles flattening out then bulging up when he focused on making them flex up and hold, directly in front of Dawn's face.

She was absolutely enraptured by the flex, her hoofed fingers unable to resist giving the thick arm a squeeze. She felt along the swollen rise of the bicep, tracing the dips and curves from there to the shoulder and back again.
The slight distraction gave Leodore the chance to undo his pants and slide them down with another, slightly awkward, flourish, to reveal a very improbable garment. Primarily blue, extraordinarily spangly, excessively form-fitting spandex shorts. They hugged the thick muscles of his thighs, brought notice to the muscular firmness of his hind end, and put all his careful development of gym-made muscles on display.

The look of awe on Dawn's face slowly fell. She never fully lost her look of delight, but it shifted to more of an especially bemused smile. "Really? Striper shorts?"

"Official Striper Shorts," Leodore proudly stated, stepping out of his pants and posing on one knee, one arm flexed forward and up, the other behind and down. "Hu Lin suggested it while we were on set for the PSA he shot with Gazelle. When I later said I thought it would be a good idea he had their wardrobe mammals make me my own personal one. I thought you might like it, so I slipped into it in my apartment before I came up. Like it?"

Dawn slowly took one of Leodore's huge paws into her own, gently pulling him in the direction of her bedroom. As she led him along she very softly sang, "I wanna try everything, I wanna try even though I could fail..."

Several hours passed in the bedroom which was slightly oversized for Dawn and slightly undersized for Leodore, neither one even bothering to notice the difference. The walls of the apartments were better quality than most, very dense and dampening, though fortunately there was no one in the apartment nearest to Dawn's bedroom wall. No dampening could have silenced a few of the louder roars.

The whole apartment reverberated with the sound of a long-simmering passion. They had been engaged in a long, slow burn, potentially heating up from the moment they met until they reached her bedroom. It finally subsided with a few final roars and some last, trembling bleats that were the last sounds from the encounter.

The bedroom was in an odd state of organized chaos, pillows tossed, sheets thrown all around, stuffed dolls scattered all about, papers in disarray. But nothing was actually ruined. Not a tear, not a ripped out piece, not a single claw rake. Not even the attire, which was strewn around, had any marks, despite Dawn's being notably delicate.

The pair were down on the bed, panting heavily, covered in perspiration, Leodore flat on his back and just barely fitting on Dawn's larger-than-necessary bed. Dawn was cuddled up on his broad chest, wrapped up in his huge arms. She slowly swirled one hoofed finger through the fur over his heart, sighing as she felt his powerful, pounding heartbeat slowing down.

"I hope... we did the right thing..."

"You certainly did everything right," Leodore chuckled deeply, eyes closed and face a mask of absolute bliss.

"Dating is dating, but... this step is fairly final. And neither of us prepared. We didn't have any... protection... I probably should have my own pills. We had a lot of time to think..." Dawn planted a kiss over Leodore's heart. "But even so... that was amazing... my Lambert"

Leodore stroked thick fingers slowly down Dawn's back, lightly tapping along her spine and chuckling warmly at the promised nickname. "If that should happen, then I'll marry you. No... I'll marry anyway. I'll marry you, because it's important."

Dawn went stiff, her mind all in disarray as the words broke upon her. "You... you want to... you
"You said it. No more divisions. The deepest, most terrible division is the division family. Mr. Tatu said his brother is with an otter who has had his children. He lamented, in the council, that the children aren't Tatus all because we accept Division Families. I'm going to marry you. But I want to do it in the middle of Happytown. The end of all divisions, once we've fixed the last, worst problem in our city."

There was nothing to say. She barely thought, she could barely breathe. The entire idea seemed simultaneously ludicrous, fantastic and fantastical. It literally couldn't be real. At that moment she had the concept that she had hallucinated Morning Star while having a stroke or a hemorrhage and her dying brain had concocted one last fantasy to show her the error of her ways.

"It can't be real..." she whispered, clinging to Leodore extra tight, as though he was about to melt away.

"I have a ring. But of course... it's back at my apartment. I had planned for a more elaborate proposal, but... after what we did, after your concerns about potential pregnancy, I thought the time was right."

The thumping heartbeat, which had fluttered up when the actual proposal happened, was Dawn's anchor. Somehow, that throbbing heartbeat, off tempo from her own, told her it wasn't just the death-throes of a guilty brain. Leodore's heart beat for her. Her responses, her decisions could make it faster or calm down. She had become just as essential a part of his life as he had become of hers.

"Now we have a new reason to get this done. It's a hard road, and it hardly seems any closer to the end, but I believe in it. I always did, but now there's even more riding on it," Dawn said, kissing over Leodore's heart again.

"I'll give you the ring a little later. We can both come up to my apartment," Leodore rumbled. "But... I don't mean that in the... well, in this sense. I promise, I'm better than that."

"You realize I turned a sympathy call into a call to come have a passionate encounter, right? I won't object if you bring me up to your apartment to give me an engagement ring and go for round two," Dawn chuckled.

"We had some breaks. I'd call it round five. Six, if stopping to have some Scarp bars counted as an actual break and not just a part of the... action."

"Well... to spare both of us from a few giggling blushes, let's call it a break and not part of the action."

"But we should try it again... for entertainment purposes. I mean, it was entertaining for me," Leodore said with his usual, booming laugh.

Dawn looked over at her small side table, to the digital clock just visible under one of the tossed sheets. "Mmm, if we fall asleep now we might just be able to barely make it into work tomorrow with minimal fatigue. Major fatigue if we wait a little longer."

"We've got no reason to be worried about anything. It's all pretty boring and ordinary. At least you didn't wait a few days, we have that very important matter this Asterdas."

"Asterdas? I must be very pleasure-numb... what's happening on Asterdas?"
"We're going to the Police Academy graduation. The Mammal Inclusion Initiative is about to pay off in the biggest, most public way possible with the arrival of Judith Hopps, rabbit cop," Leodore said, with pride.

Dawn curled up on him, squeezed him even tighter and shut her eyes as the name washed waves of pain over her mind. All the half-memories came back to haunt her, all the things she knew or thought she knew or feared were true. She made every effort to seem to be hugging Leodore tight, just from love. "That's right... that's right..."

"As Mayor of Zootopia, with the Assistant Mayor by my side, I can say we are both immensely proud to announce that our Mammal Inclusion Initiative has produced its first police academy graduate. Valedictorian of her class, ZPD's very first rabbit officer, Judith Hopps!" Leodore said, to great applause from the crowd, most especially the pack of rabbits there to support her.

Dawn was a wreck, hiding fatigue and fear behind tinted prescription lenses, participating as best as she was able. She watched the happy, blithe rabbit approach, seeing someone that she had hated so much she had forced time and space itself to warp, through the mediation of an ancient thing. But she didn't even know the lapine that faced her, didn't know what crime had caused the hate. Not specifically. Her crime. The rabbit only got in her way.

"Assistant Mayor?" It wasn't Leodore. Not the second time around. He was smiling, looking pleased with the notion of the MII. The rabbit herself had spoken. "Sorry, you seem distracted. But, the badge?"

"Oh! Right! Sorry..." Dawn rushed over to pin the badge on, again. "Sorry. This is just such a momentous occasion. It really makes our dream come to life."

"A dream that grows brighter and more real every day," Leodore said. "Judith... Judy, I see it says you want to be called. Judy, it's my pleasure and privilege to officially assign you to the heart of Zootopia, Precinct one. City Center."

"Congratulations, Officer Hopps," Dawn bleated, with a too-large smile pulling her lips.

"I won't let you down," Judy said, leaning in to add, "This has been my dream since I was a kid."

Somehow, knowing that made the knife in her gut twist all the deeper. On a momentous day, in the happiest of circumstances, her only thought about the rabbit before her was that she had to snuff out the perfect love she could share with a soulmate, a love no less amazing than the one she and Leodore shared. "You know it's a really proud day for all the city, and for your hometown too."

"It really is. My family have been so amazing, and so supportive. They all came out for this, and I can't thank them enough. This is just... wow. Like I said, a dream come true."

"Dawn, Officer Hopps, let's arrange ourselves for some photos," Leodore said, indicating a few risers that had been placed on the stage to put them at roughly the same level.

Dawn stepped up onto hers and knew these hadn't been there the first time. Some rage, some hate, some of her motivation had been fed by dismissal and erasure. But here, she was on par with Leodore, literally on his level. And on the same level as Judy. They were the same, in that moment. The same in a lot of ways. Ways that would become painful before too long.

One love could live, one couldn't. In her hateful haste she had made sure that would be the reality. But, even knowing it, Dawn smiled on, hugging close to Leodore and savoring the joy he was feeling. No matter what it represented for her, for him, it was a happy day. And that was too
precious to destroy.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Asterdas- More of my worldbuilding, another day of the week. The full list runs this way. Frededas is the first day, the day of highest religious attendance and time off. Next, Moondas, not usually a day off except in the Nocturnal District with a lot of Selenic worshippers. Baydas follows, a normal Monday in the Nocturnal District, an unremarkable Tuesday most other places. Sarxdas comes next. Terredas following on that, then Asterdas which is a very common Friday analogue but, again, Thursday for Nocturnals. Sundas comes next and serves as more or less a Saturday for a lot of folks. Ironically, a lot of Selenic folks love Sundas because it's essentially their Friday.
Shots Fired

Chapter Summary

The situation in Happytown comes to a true crisis.

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Eighteen: Shots Fired

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Hopps... parking duty," Chief Bogo said, with a gruff, deep tone. "Alright, you have your assignments. Dismissed!"

"Chief! Chief Bogo!" Judy hopped out of her chair.

Bogo heaved a heavy sigh and regarded his new officer with his usual base level of slight annoyance. "What is it, Officer Hopps?"

"Sir... there are more important assignments than just parking duty. I don't know if you forgot, but I was top of my class at the academy."

"Didn't forget, just don't care," Bogo snorted.

"I'm not just some token bunny," Judy insisted.

"No, you're not. Right now you're a bureaucratic pain in my posterior. City hall is riding me to do things that are far above your pay grade and will be even after you've been here for twenty years. Rookies like you do time on the traffic cart and no one avoids it," Bogo rumbled.

"I worked hard for this, sir. I specifically trained to attain special skills for urban peacekeeping. I used my size and agility to give myself an advantage over larger and more troublesome characters. There must be other assignments for me."

"Hopps, this is my decision. I don't know you, so I'll just assume this insubordinate streak of annoyance is a one-time issue and not an indicator that I should defy the Mayor and pawn you on some other, unsuspecting chief."

"I don't think the mayor would appreciate that, Chief," Dawn said with a light, cheerful tone as she swept into the bullpen. "You've been working together so well lately, why would you jeopardize that relationship?"

"Assistant Mayor Bellwether! What an... unexpected surprise," Bogo said, forcing a smile onto his face and pushing his way in front of Judy.

Bellwether regarded Judy with a lopsided smile, lightly rubbing the side of her forehead. "I know
you hate me spreading headaches around, but I have an assignment choice for Officer Hopps."

"Assistant Mayor..." Bogo's facade started to crack, just a touch, his smile strained all the more. "I know that you and the Mayor are doing good things for the city but... this kind of thing is my decision."

"Oh yes, but there are certain... inputs that we can give. If something seems important, one of us will mention it. It came to mind that you might not truly appreciate Officer Hopps because of certain entrenched positions, and that her skills would be critically underutilized, either through bias or some kind of police-tradition hazing. Need I remind you what the police tradition did to Happytown, which effects we are still trying to fix?"

Bogo didn't answer for a period of time that stretched so long it started to get uncomfortable. Judy nearly commented before she was preemptively interrupted. "I take your point, even if I disagree on many levels. Just where would the mayor, or you, like to assign Officer Hopps?"

"Happytown."

The answer lingered in the air for another long space, Judy breaking the heavy silence with a soft tone. "Happytown, Assistant Mayor Bellwether?"

"That's the big thing now, the hot zone for activity. Gangs, petty crime at high levels, police mistrust. You're a friendly face, Officer Hopps, and you have skills, you proved that."

"Well, I certainly did that..." Judy said, with a touch of pride.

"All theoretical, not a single actual happening," Bogo said firmly. "There's a big difference between pads and guards in a ring and a genuine 'nip-crazy Amur with his claws out, who doesn't feel the suppressant spray or the low-range tasers. I doubt a rabbit could carry the electrical hardware needed to take down something that massive without having a backpack battery and a rifle-sized unit."

"I think we can work out more... sensible and friendly methods to give her some measure of control over dangerous situations," Dawn said.

"I promise, I can use a standard taser in conjunction with my extensive knowledge of sensitive nerve points that have to respond to an electrical jolt. Pure science and physiology I knew I'd have to know it so I studied it as hard as I could," Judy asserted.

Bogo snorted and shook his head. "I'd need to see proof of that. I'll get some of our officers to spar with you. I am absolutely inflexible on this. I may not be happy about being saddled with her, but I will not stand for seeing one of my officers harmed for political points. I'm still on the razor's edge about what happened to Fangmeyer and throwing a bunny into that mess is willingly sending her to the hospital or a grave."

"That's perfectly acceptable. You know I'm not in favor of putting anyone in danger if they can avoid it. I was going to suggest some kind of verification or extra certification so everyone could set their minds at ease," Dawn said with a nod.

"Chief, I promise you, I can pass any test you throw at me. Any fair test you give, I'm up for it. I won't get shoved off by hazing or tricks. Assistant Mayor Bellwether, you and the Mayor helped me reach my dream, can you assure me that any certification with be genuine and not just an attempt to make to try to divide by zero in real life?"

Both Bogo and Bellwether looked at Judy in slight confusion. "Quite an... apt but odd metaphor,
"Well, you know, I'm good with math. After all, bunnies are good at multiplying," Judy replied, laughing heartily at her own joke.

Bogo facepalmed and groaned softly, while Dawn gave a good-natured and sincere laugh. "That's good... but you have my word. City Hall will look into any tests and make certain they actually have realistic goals, and are not simply, well, literally impossible by design. Not that I think the Chief would do so on purpose, but by accident he might tweak a few of the requirements into levels that are physically or logistically impossible, or within error bars that other officers don't come close to having to work with."

Bogo grunted sharply but pulled on his best saccharine smile. "Of course, Assistant Mayor, I'll be quite careful about this matter."

"Now that's excellent. I know you only want the best. I mean, that's why your calf is in Savannah Early Preparatory Academy, and is doing very well, so I hear."

"Oh! Chief, I didn't know you were married!" Judy said.

"Dismissed, Hopps," Bogo grunted, his smile vanishing.

"I... I'm sorry, I didn't-" Judy stammered.

"Dismissed!" Bogo bellowed, sending Judy scampering out of the room. He turned to Dawn and finally gave her a scowl. "The first time was dirty pool but I took it. You do not threaten my child nor use them as a pawn in front of my officers!"

"It wasn't a threat, it was a compliment," Dawn huffed, locking a steely look on Bogo's own hard gaze. "I don't know why you dislike me, but I won't stand for it. It's hard enough getting disdain from that bloated lump Shearly because he's smug and invincible at the moment. But getting it from you... not all of us are alike, I see that. We won't always have common cause even with something in common. But I'm trying to do what's right for this city. Leodore is trying to do what's right for this city. And if that makes your job more complicated than yelling at subordinates and keeping your routine static then I'm sorry but that's how it is. If you want to be a lazy do-nothing, do it on your own time! We have work to do and we need workers to do it. So work, or let Shearly fire you. He probably wants to. He's salivating for it. He's a predatory sheep now that he's being hunted, and like it or not, you're on his list. We need to stand together, or we're just wasting our time."

Bogo glowered down at Dawn, chest pumped, eye narrow, his hands balled into tight fists. He finally let out a hard snort, upper body relaxing some and his eyes turning away. "I'm not a lazy do-nothing. I'm nothing like that fat bigot. But I have a job and I recognize things you might not see. Every decision I make can have a hundred consequences, some of them terrible. Some of them fatal. I send officers out to make sure the areas under my purview are as safe and peaceful as possible. I don't appreciate being part of your little experiment with rabbits as police. I wasn't consulted, I wasn't given any indication. I'm pushing back because I don't know how to use this new officer you foisted on me, and that makes my job harder, a job you already made far more difficult."

Dawn turned her gaze aside and lightly nodded. "I know. We've done nothing but spring things on you, and trap you between City Hall and Shearly. That was wrong. But what happened to Happytown has been wrong for a long time. I'm sorry it landed in your lap, and I'm sorry to accuse you of being lazy. But every police chief of Precinct One kicked it down the road, to be someone
else's mess to clean up. Be mad at them for being lazy bigots. And as for this rabbit... she's an officer. She does the job everyone else does, that's what she trained for. You could actually look through her qualifications, check her pursuit speed, agility, adaptability. Like you would with any other rookie with advanced skills and fitness reports."

"An untested rookie is a body waiting to be taken to the hospital or the grave," Bogo reiterated. "The Academy stamps them out, but it's my job to season them right and make them hard enough to survive. My methods are not dainty, and my choices are not easy. But they're good, the results speak for themselves. I'll put this bunny to the fire, but no hotter and no closer than any other cop I have. But tell me, Assistant Mayor... why Happytown? That's a whole area of police-hating predators organized into speciesist gangs. Why not traffic duty and speeder interdiction? Why not undercover or something with narcotics? Why throw her into the mouth of predators?"

"She's shown the skills need it to make it there. She has a desire to help and the stamina to keep going. Encourage that strength, make it grow and she'll throw herself into the effort with all she has," Dawn explained. "It's high profile, it's what she can do, and it'll highlight the Happytown situation even more strongly. The papers will be all over it, we'll look good, you'll look good, she'll look good. We all win. Even Happytown wins, as the transition will have full coverage, hamstringing the gangs. If they get out of line, the response force will be crushing. And if some notice is made about a lack of anti-gang resources..."

"Shearly has to start doing something, rather than putting up an endless delay, because the continual coverage will make him look like the lazy pile of fat he is. He'll sweat up so much lanolin he can skate on it, and then he'll have to do his job, or else be investigated," Bogo said, smacking a fist into his palm. "I may not think much of politicians, but there's a lot to be said for a good trap."

"And I'm especially sorry for mentioning your calf," Dawn said, looking down slightly. "But you're doing all this work for a reason. I want you to continually remember the right reason. Think about the perks, but think more about what that means to your life."

Bogo hmphed lightly, shoulders slumping slightly. "I do everything for them. All the long hours, all the hard work, all my success, so they have a good life. I don't ever forget it, Assistant Mayor. Let me do my job, I'll give her a fair chance. I assure you, if she's worth the trouble, I'll put up with her."

"I promise she is. This isn't a stunt. It's the true fruit of the MII, something that makes Zootopia a better place. You'll see," Dawn assured Bogo, giving him her best smile. "This is a good thing. Just keep her here doing some paperwork until the tests are set up and she takes them."

"Alright. That's probably an even better solution. I'll get things set up and assign another traffic officer."

"Excellent. I'll see you again, Chief!" Dawn hummed softly as she made her way out, passing by the front desk and under the view of Officer Clawhauser.

"Bye, Assistant Mayor! Thanks for stopping by!"

"Clawhauser, if you can find her, catch Officer Hopps and tell her she's being put on records and processing duty until her large mammal pacification tests are complete," Bogo said, walking out just behind Dawn.

"I saw where she went, just give me a second!" Clawhauser said, riding from his seat and wobbling his chubby frame along.
Dawn smiled as she pushed the glass doors open, but frowned when she saw her reflection had the jagged teeth of a predator. "You keep her out of Savannah Central, Dawn Bellwether. You said anything. Now that you have to put your words to the test, you make sure your promise was real."

"I know..." Dawn sighed, stepping into the light of Zootopia with a downcast look and a shiver.

Judy strutted her way along the streets of Happytown, getting odd looks each time one of the citizens saw her. She could hear vulgar calls from distant mammals, though she couldn't pick out who was saying it. They hid in groups, all in their own species. That was fine. She had proven capable of taking care of herself.

_Hogan’s Alley, the police marksmammal course._ Rotating targets, moving targets, randomly assigned cutouts of all sizes of citizen and criminals. She didn't have a tranq gun, just a few tasers on a modified utility belt, and extra quick-change battery packs on her ballistic vest. Her eyes cast around the scene, nose twitching slowly but steadily, ears subtly turning and shifting at each new sound that came in the still room.

She flicked the charge switch on two of the tasers, taking them into her paws and dropping her stance. She walked on in a slower, more cautious sidle, eyes darting quickly as she caught the soft shuffle of pawpads and the huff of large mammals preparing for a strike.

From the right a huge tiger leaped from a shadowy alcove, roaring loudly. The initial rumble of the roar had been loud and clear to Judy, giving her more than enough time to drop low and, oddly, to spit on the leg of the jeans the tiger was wearing. She rammed one of her taser probes onto the spit spot and activated it, electricity surging right into a reflex nerve and throwing off the tiger's balance critically. He hit the ground with a tremendous thud, looking dazed and shaken.

Judy holstered one of the tasers and clicked on her dummy shoulder radio. "Officer Judy Hopps, under assault, unknown number and composition of assailants. One tiger down, inside Hogan’s Alley." Her sharp hearing just let her hear past her own call to another snort, but she felt the thud of a heavy charge, letting her leap far away from the path of a rhino.

Using her great hopping skills she leapt up and onto the rhino’s back, digging her taser into his shoulder but not clicking it on until he tried to throw himself back into a wall to crush her. The sudden jolt of electricity made his arm jerk hard, throwing him into a tighter spin than he anticipated, causing his shoulder and padded-helmeted head to impact the wall, sending him down.

"Rhino added to assailant list, downed by self-inflicted head trauma. Roll a bus," she cried into her dummy radio. She checked the condition of the rhino, losing her focus for just a moment, which let a heavy paw come in and crack her across the side of her head, sending her rolling along the ground. Without missing a beat she coughed into the radio, "Officer injured, unknown assailant, situation critical."

Her attacker, a wolf, leaped over to her and snarled as he loomed over her prone form.

Her limbs were all tucked in, hands at her chest, feet pointed up. All of a sudden her legs released like a coiled spring and slammed her broad rabbit feet into the crotch of the wolf who let out a high-pitched howl mixed with a gurgling cry of pain before slowly tipping over, paws covering his stricken area.

Overhead lights snapped on and Chief Bogo entered the room, along with a few medics. "Not the neatest, Officer Hopps, but you proved you knew what you were doing. I'm honestly a bit worried, I
didn't think that your interdiction would be so... crushingly violent."

"You do what you have to to survive, sir!" Judy said, hopping back to her feet, with only a small wince as one of the medics looked over the stricken part of her head.

"Oooh, even wearing the cup... hey, can I get an extra check to make sure it still works? Scarlet is probably going to want a whole wolf on date night," the wolf, visible under the light as Officer Wulfberg, said with a pained tone.

"Yeah, sorry... but at my size, when I'm on my back most mammals are... crotch-level kicks," Judy said with a sheepish look.

Bogo winced, slightly, and cleared his throat. "My final assessment of your final test is excellent. You did everything right here, including radio calls, and your creative use of the taser sized for you was excellent. I guess I can enact Assistant Mayor Bellwether's suggestion and clear you for patrol duties in Happytown. Congratulations, Officer Hopps."

Judy threw a salute to Bogo and smiled brightly. "Thank you, Chief! I promise, I won't let you down."

Being naturally crepuscular, and capable of choosing to do a Matin or Vesper shift, she had selected the Matin shift, just to shake things up, and to dodge the worst of her argumentative neighbors. She wasn't sure what was worse, the arguments or the lovemaking that served as apology. They almost seemed to fight to make up.

The shift was going relatively well, aside from the perverse calls that she was guessing had to do with sex. If not she was worried about what the folks considered a sexual act, given the terms they were using. She might just have been unprepared. She was from Bunnyburrow. Even with the internet she didn't know much about city culture.

"I told you to stay out of my territory!" An angry voice shouted, on a street around the corner from where Judy was.

"I pass through here from the store! I'm not in any gang, I'm just a guy," another voice insisted. "Leave me alone or I'll get a cop!"

"Cops don't care, they'll just walk by, now get out of here and keep off our territory!"

Judy sighed and rushed over around the corner, finding a huge tiger confronting a smaller, slimmer snow leopard. The tiger was shirtless, wearing long jeans, the hems almost falling over his feet and his waistband low and showing off black boxer shorts. The snow leopard was fully dressed, wearing a slightly oversized Motley Für tee, and khaki pants that fit him well. "Officer Hopps, turning onto Eyetooth from Rathbone, sounds like a member of Striped Claw is declaring Eyetooth part of their territory and threatening a snow leopard. Please stay alert for updates."

"Ten-four, Officer Hopps. I'm clear and can head down there if you need," Officer Wulfberg replied.

"Stand by, this guy might get skittish with a cop here," Judy replied. She stepped more properly onto Eyetooth so she could be seen by the snow leopard. "Is there a problem here?"

While the leopard stared, the tiger turned and laughed on seeing Judy there. "What is this? You a stripper, bunny? Get out of here, males are talking."

Judy clicked her radio, keeping eye contact with the tiger. "Amur, with the attitude you described, I
might need your cuffs, or else I'll have to fill out an excessive force form after pacifying him in the way I did in Hogan's Alley."

"Use the move you did on me," Wulfberg said. "I'm on my way."

"Oh, that how it is? Think you can take me, cop? A cute little bunny?"

Judy's nose twitched rapidly at the word, her paw on her taser, flicking on the flow and keeping it there. "Sir, please refrain from personal comments. Cease threatening that mammal and go about your business."

The tiger unsheathed his claws in response to the taser charge whine, holding them up while he snarled. "You threatening me, cop? You got no power here. We got a cop already, this territory is protected."

Judy slowly drew her taser and looked past the tiger to the snow leopard. "Sir, please proceed to your destination, this fellow has no authority here."

"I told you, we're protected and don't need no bunny here playing cop. Get out of our territory!"

Judy listened carefully as the high-tension situation went on, to try and hear the approach of more Striped Claw members who heard the commotion. What she heard instead was a very soft sound, something she almost didn't detect over the ambient city sounds. It was a soft puff, echoing out from a semi-enclosed space and bouncing around the buildings. That was followed by a sound like a splatter and a harsh grunt from the snow leopard, who started rubbing the back of his neck. "Sir?"

The tiger turned around when the snow leopard started grunting and huffing, dropping slowly down to his knees. "What's the matter with you? You get some bad nip?"

The struggling, spasming snow leopard writhed and snarled, huffing softly for a short space before he lifted his head and showed off slitted pupils. His claws shot out without hesitation and he leaped out at the tiger, fangs fully bared.

"Emergency! Emergency! Active claw-to-claw fight between subjects! Roll a bus, send backup!" Judy screamed into her radio and leaped into the fray, landing on the snow leopard's back and ramming her clicking taser into the space between his shoulder blades. The hard jolt of electricity made him leap up and back, contorted and roaring in pain, sending Judy leaping off of him. A quick look showed the tiger with bloody gashes along his chest and abdomen, harsh rakes but not fully into the abdominal cavity or down to bone.

"Affirmative! I'm running!" Officer Wulfberg called.

"Officers and ambulance en route!" Officer Clawhauser cried, his usual soft tone high and cracked from panic.

The snow leopard shook off the stunning strike, snarling and swiping a bloody paw at Judy, who easily leaped out of the way. "That's right, you, over here. I don't know what happened, but you're not going to get away with this," she muttered, warily eying the claws and the drooling, fang-filled maw.

He lashed out with a fast swipe, which Judy dodged with the smallest margin, awkwardly hopping her way to the side while the snow leopard followed with a roaring charge, leaping and clawing each time he made a move on her. Another puff, louder and more familiar, rang out as Wulfberg arrived on the scene, tranq gun out. The police-issue dart stuck out from the flank of the aggrieved
snow leopard, and he slowly started to move more sluggishly and with less dexterity. "Officer Hopps, are you hurt?"

"No, no, I dodged every strike and tagged him in the back with the taser to get him off the tiger," Judy replied, seeing to said tiger who was on the ground, writhing and roaring in pain. "Sir, hold still, the ambulance will arrive shortly."

"What was that! He went off on me! Didn't even say anything! Damn savage! What in the moon's shine was that?" The tiger batted at Judy, who avoided his flailing limbs and applied gauze pads from a pouch on her belt, rapidly running out after only a few rakes at been covered. "Officer Wulfberg, I need more gauze and some tape!"

Officer Wulfberg threw over what he had after cuffing the semi-conscious, snarling snow leopard. "It's not gonna do much."

"I'm just keeping the wounds covered until they arrive with the ambulance," Judy replied.

"What was this? Did they start a brawl?"

"No, I was dealing with hostility from the tiger, then I heard... something... he grabbed his neck, started twisting and shaking, then he went on the attack, clawing and snapping, for no reason. He went crazy. Savage. Even his eyes changed, they went to slits."

"That happens when cats start something, but never like this," Officer Wulfberg said, looking into the groggy snow leopard's eyes and noting how narrow and shiny the slitted eyes had become. "And they round out when tranqued. This is... I don't know what this is."

Judy looked down the street as the sounds of sirens started to grow louder. She scanned the area, looking for movement or indications that anyone was down there. She knew she had heard something, subtle and soft as it had been, and that something had affected the snow leopard. A puff, like a tranq gun, maybe. It might have been nothing. But it was worth keeping in mind.
After Action Report

Chapter Summary

The follow-up to Judy's savage encounter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Nineteen: After Action Report

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Sir, I know what I heard. It was a puff, just like our tanq guns, except it was far away and echoing. Like a rifle version," Judy insisted, as she gave a debrief to Chief Bogo at the station.

"The paramedics didn't find any kind of dart, not even a mouse one. And that snow leopard didn't go down like a lump, he went mad. When he came out of Wulfberg's darting he's still out of it. It's like he's completely lost his mind," Bogo replied.

"Savage..." Judy said. "The tiger he clawed up said he had gone savage."

"Savage... that's not a term I thought I'd hear, that's such an old concept. There may be something here, and we should look into what might have been wrong."

"I really think this is something that needs to be looked into," Judy insisted. "Maybe it wasn't a dart. Maybe it was something else."

"And just what else might that be, Officer Hopps?"

"I... I don't know sir. But I swear, I heard the echo of the gas jet, I know what I was hearing. I was completely focused and concentrating on all the smallest sounds to detect the approach of other Striped Claw members. The street was silent except for growls, the jet was there. The snow leopard grabbed his neck and had some kind of attack right after. It must have been related."

"Officer Hopps, I understand you think you know what you heard, but there's no corroboration, and there's still a huge question mark regarding what's causing Mr. Glace to be in this uncommunicative state. And until we have any clue what could be happening, we have no reason to offer any theories about what brought it on."

Judy looked prepared to offer some kind of objection, but she gave a sigh and shook her head. "Sir... I know there was something. I'll find out what it was, I promise you. You sent me to Happytown, and now something in there is threatening this city. I take my responsibility very seriously."
Bogo grunted and leaned back in his chair. "I knew from your fitness reports than you'd be this dedicated. I knew it from the way you attacked all those large animal suppression tests. But this is dangerous, Hopps. This is animals going crazy, for no sensible reason. I have every intention to reassign you to the traffic cart, because I just can't risk you tripping or missing a jump."

"Sir... I can't stop you, but I'm telling you, I'll get to the bottom of this. It happened right in front of my eyes. I'm at the heart of this, and I intend to see it through."

Bogo motioned Judy out of his office. "I can't stop you, and City Hall would have my horns if I tried. But Hopps, if you get killed, you're fired."

Judy stopped at the door, processing the comment before she broke into a small smile. "Understood, sir. And, thank you."

Judy reached the bottom of the stairs and found herself confronted by Mayor Lionheart, who looked hastily put together, with his suit slightly disheveled and his mane a bit lopsided. "Officer Hopps! I heard the news and I came here after I got bad information about you being at the hospital. Are you alright?"

Judy nodded and casually waved her paw. "He never got a claw on me. The tiger was... well, he got hurt because I couldn't act as fast as I needed to. I've never encountered anything like it. That snow leopard, Mr. Glace, he just went wild, and my usual attacks didn't do what I hoped."

"You did all that you could, Officer, and that's more than most would dare. That's why Dawn... Assistant Mayor Bellwether assigned you to Happytown in the first place. Oh, and she extends her deepest condolences. She wanted to be here but she's suffering from a terrible migraine. The sudden stress of this situation, the fact that she put you in that situation, must have been too much. She's been under a lot of stress as liaison, mostly because of Commissioner Shearly."

"Please tell her that it's not her fault, I accepted the duty, I fought for it, and I went after it with everything I had."

"This whole thing is very strange. Did anything strange happen while the fight was going on?"

Judy looked around for a bit and nodded. "Chief Bogo says it's nothing without any clear indication of what happened, but I know that I heard the echoing puff of a gas-powered darting gun. I know they didn't find a dart in him, but I heard it while I was listening for gang members. Right after the puff Mr. Glace had almost a seizure or some kind of attack before he just went off."

Leodore nodded slowly, stroking his mane slowly. "It's something to keep in mind. Might be a mistake or a coincidence, but given what I hear about his condition we're going to have to consider every possibility about what it might be. I know it's only one mammal, but it's such a bizarre happening."

"He just went wild. I could tell by his look he genuinely wasn't in a gang. He looked too put-together, respectable. He was casual but very law-abiding. The tiger was clearly a Striped Claw member, he was talking about territory and having to keep others off of it. But... he attacked first, and without any real reason. That tiger was threatening me, and I was prepared for it. Then... violence, from out of nowhere."

"He's in a secure area in Peaceground Memorial, but apparently they're completely baffled. It's like nothing they've seen before, at least not like this."

"It's a mess. But, we both have jobs to get back to, cleaning up that mess, right?" Judy asked, with a
Leodore nodded firmly "Absolutely! I should go and see about Dawn, tell her that none of this was her fault, then we can start working on the final version of the bond measures we're putting up for special election."

"That's outside my area, but, I know you'll do great. So, let's go make the world a better place," Judy said, hopping her way toward the locker room, while Leodore rushed off to the front doors of the precinct.

Dawn writhed in her bed once more, agonized by her mind. What was worse, she wasn't completely sure why her mind was aflame and her memories screaming. She had noticed that bright, horrifying flashes of memories would be triggered by certain words, certain connected ideas. Savage. That one was the worst.

She was wracked with waves of guilt she didn't know the origin of. Her crime. Her horrible crime that Judy Hopps and the unknown fox stopped. Savage.

Bye-bye, bunny. Judy. She was condemning that lovely and earnest Officer Hopps to death, by her will, by some unknown means. She had only the words to haunt her. At that point she probably relished it. She had to have been completely different, horribly different. Angry. Vengeful. Hateful. Hateful enough to kill. To kill love.

Love. She had so much bile in her heart and hate on her mind that she called up an ancient being to destroy a love she was allowed to know was as touchingly beautiful as the one she had made with Leodore. Touching that closeness, savoring it, made what she had to do more terrible.

All of that, was connected to savages. Savage predators. Not just mammals in general, predators. The distinction seemed so important that it stood out like a flag, waving in her face. This savage change made predators look bad. It certainly cast a shadow over Happytown.

That meant something. But she couldn't tell what it really meant besides the strangeness of it. The public would probably have a lot of questions. The government would have to provide a lot of answers. Unified answers. One savage predator, not much. But it was a scary thing, especially since there was no real reason.

Dawn reached out and gabbed the phone on her nightstand. She hit her most-used number and waited for Leodore's sweetly stentorian voice. "Dawn... are you alright?"

"Pain passes, this city needs to last," Dawn replied, softly rubbing her head. "The worst is over and now we need to move on. We need a response, we need a unified response and we need one before Shearly vomits out some cud that's all speculation and fear."

"I'm on my way to see you. I just had some words with Officer Hopps, getting her perspective on the attack."

"I forgot... was she... did she have serious wounds?"

"No, she wasn't in the hospital. The information was garbled. She was perfectly fine, and eager to get back to work."

The weight of guilt melted off of Dawn's shoulders and she fell limply down onto the bed. "Sweet lemongrass... sun and stars that was the most terrible feeling of guilt. I assigned her..."
"She understood. She said not to worry, that she asked for the assignment, she wanted it and fought for it. She had some insights about the attack, but right now I need to get over there."

"No, no, you need to get to Chief Bogo and tell him to prepare an identical statement, something about an unknown attack. You have to be unified. If you and he are exactly mirrored Shearly will be coming out against two extremely well-liked members of the city. His fearmongering becomes grist for the mill, easily able to be turned back on him for what it is."

"I'm still coming over. I'll call Bogo right after I hang up and arrange a joint statement, but right now... if I had to choose importance I'd choose you every day and twice on Frededas."

Dawn smiled. "I know. Should I put on the lingerie?"

"Don't put on anything, I just want to hold you right now, until you feel better."

Dawn winced as she considered the situation again. Duller, but still sharper than she liked. It wasn't going to soften quickly. "I'd love that. I'm really looking forward to it. Just use your key. I'm in the bedroom."

"I'm doing the limit, see you soon," Leodore said, before hanging up.

Dawn wracked her brain to try and remember what had happened in a life that didn't exist. She never felt the same kind of burning hate for Shearly, who seemed easily capable of doing a crime heinous enough to be incarcerated like she was. She had a knotted belly over him, she felt uncomfortable and rankled by him. In hindsight, it wasn't just his unpleasant presence, he meant something.

He must have been a part of her prior life, but not in a way that tore at her like others she had encountered, or the places that meant something to her old self. Those places and persons had had something to do with pain to her. The tiny office, that was where she had been stored, like salad or flowers, held in absolute disrespect. The limo driver, she didn't know what he meant but he had affected her on some level. And Judy...

Judy Hopps was at the core of this whole thing. She and an unnamed fox had done something against her. Judy's presence had affected her so much that she had to invent migraines as an excuse for being almost incapacitated by her name. She had hurt her, made her angry enough to agree to something she could recognize as evil in retrospect. Taking a perfect love and crushing it... no... murdering it before it could even happen.

Morning Star had carefully left out all the details, any little trace of who and what and where, but included specifics of just how well they fit together. How tender, how sweet, how romantic. And she could feel the same with Leodore. They were the same. They shared the same romance. Hers was allowed to live, so long as Judy's was not.

She had to think that that was why Morning Star changed Leodore. She would have repeated her plot if she had it to do over again, would have created the same situation that made Judy's love possible. She had to have a reason to avoid recreating the scheme. One moment, one change, and suddenly she was not the same. She had all the same intelligence, all the same capability, but she had turned her 'powers' to good, rather than whatever evil it had been that pushed Judy together with her fox. It helped so much and the city was so richly rewarded because of it.

There was no doubt that Morning Star wanted her in pain, wanted her decision to make her suffer. With a new personality, a new look at life... she was certainly feeling that pain and guilt. Forced by Morning Star to keep Judy out of the city center, presumably because her fox lived there, and one
meeting would vitiate her agreement.

Anything.

Anything.

She had promised anything.

Leodore arrived not long after, slowly and softly entering the bedroom. He had his jacket off but everything else was still on. "Dawn?"

"Did you call Bogo? And did you arrange for a joint press release and secure camera muzzle time? It's too late for Matin news, we have to wait for the Day turnover. I'll call the media department if you didn't..."

Leodore slowly crawled into bed and wrapped his arms securely around Dawn. "This city already loves you as much as I do. I'm sure it'll understand if you take one night to be sad and scared about something sad and scary that just happened..."

"There isn't one night to spare," Dawn sighed, slowly twisting around to face Leodore and bury her face in his mane. "We have a responsibility. One hint of fear, one hint of a reason to panic, we'll have a monster on our hooves. I hate it, I hate that he was right. I hate that that disgusting, cruel bigot might be right. But what he told me... fear always works. We can't give Shearly the power he could have with that fact. He'll pay some sleazy muckrakers and herd-botherers, whip up the bigoted elements he knows are out there with innuendo and rumors, say the city has no response to anything that happened, that the police themselves are baffled and silent. I would love to rest, I probably need to rest, but this city deserves focus and mature, responsible attention."

Leodore laid a kiss on Dawn's head, caressing his pawpads down the smooth flesh of her back. "If I had known the kind of fight we'd have to put up..."

"I would have campaigned in your place. I would have openly called him a bigot and a traitor to the ideals of this city," Dawn bleated, squeezing Leodore even tighter.

"Yeah you would have. And I'd be the Assistant Mayor, and still be happy about everything."

The change is so complete. So total. The old one could never have accepted second place, not happily. The old... me... barely tolerated second place. But now I know it isn't second place. It was just made to feel that way. Could I ever forgive that one, even knowing it was all bad advice that did it? He's not blameless, but now I understand.

"In the morning, we'll have to talk our mouths off, deflect leading questions, downplay unknowns, reject conspiracy theories, but be open and honest. We can't hide this, and it would be futile to tr-ah!" Dawn curled in, wincing as images blazed over her mind. Some old facility, police lights, the mere feeling of oppression and concealment. The old time had included trying to hide the savage citizen. By the police lights, without Bogo's cooperation. Her new thoughts were dismissing things the old one found appropriate. An inversion, as seemed appropriate.

Leodore caressed Dawn more softly, whisper-light touches along her spine. "Shh... just relax. Let it melt away, be free of it now, be free of it here. Don't stress, don't panic. Just be here. With me."

Dawn squeezed Leodore even tighter, pressing her face into his mane, nosing at his neck. "I'm trying... trying so hard, Leodore... my sweet Lambert..."
According to the latest word from the hospital, the affected snow leopard, whose name is being withheld for privacy reasons, is still unresponsive, suffering from some unknown mental effect following a seizure or some other sort of attack. At this time no explanation can be offered and anything said would be medically inadvisable speculation. While a suspected member of the Striped Claw gang was injured following the unexplained attack, the quick intervention of Officers Hopps and Wulfberg prevented any further danger from said snow leopard," Leodore said, cameras flashing and reporters holding microphones out to him as he sat behind his desk. "Chief Bogo has released a similar statement, detailing all that we know at this time, thank you.

The room exploded in questions, the microphones pushing in even closer to his face, one of the reporters, a very scruffy wolf, getting closer than the others. "Mayor! What's with these widespread and credible reports about the victim being savagely mauled while the police waited? And that the perpetrator is in some kind of savage state?"

Leodore narrowed his eyes, looking the wolf over with a knowing gaze. "As I said, Officers Hopps and Wulfberg pacified the situation without incident, as stated by Chief Bogo. But more importantly I noted that it was medically inadvisable to speculate on the condition of the unnamed snow leopard. All you would get are rumors and innuendo, if you're not making it up on the spot. If you claim to know something, and I know you can't quote a source, prove what you know without rumors and innuendo, or risk the consequences of libel."

"It's not libelous to report what I've been told by a reliable source!"

"Do you have any proof? You need the paper trail to corroborate hearsay, otherwise the papers would be full of any crazy rumor that someone made up and told themselves in a dark alley. Are you your own source?"

The wolf snarled softly, showing his teeth more than he intended. "You! That's slander!"

"I asked you if you were your own source. If you aren't, you can say so, then I can retract the question," Leodore said with a broad, fang-free smile.

"I was not my source, I had information from a different, private source," the wolf replied.

"As only police officers and hospital staff knew anything, and were required to hold absolutely secrecy, are you admitting that a hospital worker violated a police order or that a police officer has, in fact, disobeyed a direct order? Are you alleging police corruption?"

The wolf growled even louder, some of the prey reporters pulling away from him. He turned and stalked out without a comment, leaving the other reporters asking questions about the potential for corruption.

Dawn had been waiting just inside the door of her office, watching the wolf make his way out. She had been waiting for this. Just like at the hospital, someone raking muck, trying to raise lurid possibilities. Just the kind of sheep-disturber who would sway a vote with implications. The online chatter she had heard about from Chief Bogo had talked about trying to rattle the prey majority to kill the bond measures needed to renovate Happytown and add a police precinct.

She was no Jack Savage, even if Leodore would have made a delightful Skye, but she could still leverage her small frame to follow someone expecting a standard-sized mammal. Her condition wasn't often an advantage, as far as she was concerned, but in that one case, shadowing the snarling wolf through city hall, it was helping.

Being a popular and well-known figure, and being in her place of work, she had to hide from her
own staff and visitors, doing her best to keep an eye on the wolf. He wasn't exactly subtle, and she had a good idea that he was going to the main exit. But starting off shadowing him meant she could keep it up as her pursuit went on. There was, at least, a way to leave without notice, if she was quick.

She slipped through a side-hall and took an elevator down to the lower level. Her mind softly throbbed as she sought to be ignored. She knew, somehow, her other self had been maliciously ignored and pushed aside, making her invisible. She made her way as quickly as she could through the subterranean parking garage and out the ramp to the surface.

The wolf was just in view, coming out of the front doors. She kept her head down and profile low, slinking over near to the wolf as he made a phone call. "It's me, you... no! Don't you talk to me like that! I had no idea the suit had his brains in his head. I did my job, they got the idea. No, I didn't hear what happened. Look.. I did my job. You better pay me or else... yeah, that's right... keep that flowing in and you keep that big, fancy desk you fat cotton swab. Just remember, you need me."

Dawn narrowed her eyes and hit her phone, glad she had decided to record his one-sided conversation, finally certain that her suspicions were correct. Shearly had hired a provocateur, and he was trying to stir up a panic, affect the vote. This was more than anything Shearly could do on his own. Her father must have been advising him. But... she had no idea why he would. Happytown had no effect on Meadowlands. He had to have been doing it for spite.

Taking advantage of any possible tragedy or calamity, that was almost lesson one. To him, politics was a game, and voters were just pieces. It was a game to win, not a way to govern wisely and help the population. No wonder her old self had been so eager to do... something... hurtful. She had broken free from his grip after leaving Meadowlands because she had a bigger vision than taking up all the space she could and getting satisfied with having absolute power in one small area. Dealing with Leodore had finished her transformation. The old one had reinforced her obsession with image and projected framing. This one wanted to succeed, as one.

She followed the wolf by weaving through the modest crowd, hiding among the taller folks and watching the scruffy lupine make his way down the street. He turned down a few streets, before arriving at a badly painted, slightly dented older model Pride Simoom sedan. She snapped a photo of the license plate as he drove off, ducking behind a mailbox as he passed her by, staying back there until he turned, to keep out of sight of his rear view mirrors. She was reasonably certain that he hadn't seen her, and that anyone who had would just have thought she was... being odd but harmless, hopefully. She didn't want to show up on social media under hashtag crazy sheep.

She sent the photo off and then immediately hit up her contacts.

"Assistant Mayor Bellwether... I know I gave you my phone number for official reasons..." Chief Bogo began.

"I just sent you the photo of a license plate, a '22 Pride Simoom, reddish in color. I've also got one side of a conversation on my phone; don't worry, since you can't hear the other side it was a recording in a public place and not protected. This guy was trying to rile up prey by talking about what happened. He had information that could only come from bribery or a dirty cop. He's working for Shearly, he said as much with his talk about a fancy desk and being a fat cotton swab. And that means he's being fed information, trying to rattle the cage before the special bond vote."

There was silence on the other end for a long time. "Come down to the station as soon as possible. I'll have a technical officer save copies of both just in case he tries to have something happen to you and your phone."
"No sheep."

"What?"

"There's no question Shearly is only a middlemammal. He's not slick enough to organize all of this himself. His mentor, my father, has to be pulling the strings. He must have been waiting for some unexpected thing, any gang violence to start his slime machine. That must have been why Shearly was holding up the task force funding. The longer he waits, the more likely the police attention will set off some kind of gang response. The gangs attack, the public gets skittish, the vote fails, and the project folds or limps along to become political poison. He wants to ruin me and Leodore, and keep prey fearful and dominant over predators. To keep the idea that made Happytown alive and hurting others."

"Assistant Mayor... I don't know if I can really follow you that far, I believe in thorough investigation. But I can't deny how much sense that makes. I'll check this plate, and do everything I can to tunnel into this mammal's life without needing to bother a judge. What is he?"

"I assume a wolf. But your guess is as good as mine. Best bet is a coyote if he's something else, the muzzles look the closest, and there are coyotes in Meadowlands. Shearly's a district bigot, he only hires from home. You'll know if you can run the plate."

"From the way you're telling things, we might run into an alias. That's not an easy thing to do. I'll prepare to run in the usual hustlers. And... I'll put my sheep on parking duty, keep them out of the important loop."

The word hustler had an effect on Dawn. She got a powerful twinge in her memory, sharp and burning as the kind that Judy had evoked at first, but much shorter because it was just a word. That told her something. Foxes were often thought to me natural sneaks. A hustler fox... Judy's fox. There was a hustler out there, who was Judy's perfect match. And he was in the city center. "Focus on Happytown. That would consolidate all their operations there, and end the trail in a place that would make the public even more prejudiced against it."

"Smart move. Very devious, but smart. You're a bit wasted in politics, Assistant Mayor. A mind that can out-think criminals at their own game should be a cop."

"I'll leave that to professionals. I'm just glad I can help."

"This really will help. We might finally have a chance to get Shearly. Come down at your earliest convenience. And bring the Mayor. He'll want to be fully involved with this."

"I'll be right back to City Hall. Once the press conference is all cleared out I'll grab him and come down."

"Excellent, I'll see you shortly. " With that, Bogo hung up.

Dawn slipped her phone back into her pocket and started the brisk trot back City Hall. She had lied. Happytown would be the last place Shearly would go to hire a fake ID maker. Downtown would be the most convenient. When bigotry wasn't his motivation, lazy expediency was. But she had to keep that fox on the streets. Coming into the precinct would mean he could meet Judy. And that was what she had promised would never happen.

A jolt of pain made her softly bleat and rub her temples. Sun and earth forgive her. She had promised.
Author's Notes

'22 Pride Simoom- Making car names and styles from scratch can be just one of many minor but often necessary jobs in building a functional, fictional world. The company name, of course, is the Pride Heavy Manufacturing company, seen here and in Unbounded Love, in the story Sisi Ni Sawa. From implications, they have a division that makes or made their own cars, as it's described as an older model. The name Simoom comes from one of many words used to describe powerful Saharan desert winds. More particularly, it's the name given to the leopard in the movie "Passion in the Desert." As for '22, there's no reason that the years should mirror ours, or that they should be close to the end of a century or millennium. I'm not sure where their calendar starts or how they mark eras but I figure it's either in the thousands, reckoned from the first civilized peace between predators and prey, or from the founding of an important city-state or empire which contains Zootopia, which would be maybe a few thousand years to a few hundred years. It might be shorter, with eras reckoned by big events without negative numbers, like the system used in The Elder Scrolls which mark Eras.
Chapter Summary

A major sacrifice in the name of safety makes the savage war more impactful.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty: Quarantine

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"This is the fourth, and it's really starting to become a problem," Dawn said, shuffling through the papers that littered her usually neat desk. "Officers Hopps and Grizzoli intervened and managed to subdue him. As expected, another gang member, Polar Kings. Polls are getting shaky. The fear is working."

"He's winning," Leodore mumbled. "Has Bogo said anything? You gave him that information last week."

"That was when the next two popped up. He didn't want to make anything of it, but a sheep was working in processing when they started bringing in various Happytown petty criminals who could make fake IDs. That must have set off a need to distract the police with immediate responses and a lot of on-camera tap dancing. This one must have been to put a bow on it."

"We should go down to the hospital. They got in a new specialist because nothing is working so far. Dr. Madge Honeybadger, a neurologist and neurobiologist. She'll be able to use the resources at the hospital to really look into this. We were lucky she's a professor at Zootopia University."

Dawn held composure, even as the name raked across her mind. She saw the dark facility again, the police lights. The hiding had happened with her help, likely without her explicit participation. "Oh thank the sun and earth. Having a specialist should help things. I hope. Staving off fear is eating up all our time and effort."

"Then having Dr. Honeybadger there should quell some of the fear, assuring the citizens that we're working on the problem full-blast."

"And it is work, seriously. My father is a lazy lump. Fear is so easy, it's brainless. Stopping fear's the real trick," Dawn sighed, slipping from her chair and making her way to Leodore's side. "We'll stop this thing, once we figure out what it even is."

"There has to be a reason. These kinds of things don't just happen," Leodore said, letting Dawn walk ahead of him.
"People are thinking it, though. There's been online talk about savage ways, and Officer Hopps wondered if that could be a factor. Bogo had to chew her out because it wasn't just predators, it was Happytown predators, and only gang members... mostly. Genetics wouldn't do that. Well..."

"What are you thinking?"

"It's not the ultimate cause, I'm sure, in light of the first victim, but there could be an induced susceptibility. Happytown has had a couple of generations, there might be some genes that became prominent because of the limited pool of mates. Combine a small predisposition and then some toxin or disease sets it off," Dawn said, concluding with a sigh. "I mean... it's an idea without evidence but it's more than we have."

"I'd hate to think that might be the case. In that case there could be a kind of epidemic going on, and not all Happytown predators stayed in Happytown. The genes could be scattered around, if that's what's happening," Leodore rumbled.

"That doctor you mentioned could at least tell us about what's happening in their heads. She must know specialists who focus on genes and such if her work doesn't help anything. But right now, anything can help," Dawn said. "How are we getting to the hospital? Your car?"

"I hired a car. I've seen the way you look lately and, frankly, I need to give you massages for the next week or so, as non-stop as possible. This situation is affecting you and triggering more migraines than is healthy. I just don't know what else to do. Even with all that, you're working harder than ever, and you weren't slacking off before. You live on tea and Scarp bars."

Dawn sighed and leaned against Leodore as they walked. "Is this odd? It feels odd. You're the Mayor, I'm the Assistant Mayor. I shouldn't be working this hard. But it just means so much to me. I feel like it's my duty to do this."

"You feel an immense responsibility because you love this city. I can't fault you. I know you were right about how urgent this is, with Shearly being... the way he is. But you're not a machine. You have to take a rest. You're not good to the city burned out and distracted."

"I promise, once I know that we have the best folks looking into every aspect of this, I'll ease off some. I won't stop but I'll take it a little easier," Dawn promised.

"That's all I needed to hear," Leodore rumbled in return, softly cupping the side of her face in one huge paw.

Down at street level there was, indeed, a sedan waiting for them. A sleek, cherry red Boutavant Globetrotter, with a familiar figure standing beside the back door. "You may not know, but I also drive for Zuber," Renato said, with a bright, fang-free smile.

"Life's funny that way. Familiar faces pop up sometimes. But that's for the best. We can get familiar with folks and depend on the reliability we see," Leodore said, lifting Dawn up and into the back seat.

"It's prestige. Oh, don't get me wrong, you're delightful company, and I enjoy driving you, but there is a certain amount of status to it. I think only those who have driven for Gazelle feel more proud. Being someone known to the Mayor is quite a thing."

Leodore slipped into the back side and immediately began to slowly rub her shoulders, thick thumbs pressing back onto her shoulder blades and rubbing in small circles. "This is such a stressful time, that any amount of ease helps immensely."
"I've been noticing some change," Renato sighed. "I still have assignments at work, and on Zuber, but the boss has given me fewer prey assignments, preemptively, and some of my Zuber customers cancel when they see I'm a predator. It's not many, but it doesn't make me feel hopeful."

Dawn slumped even more, rolling her shoulders reflexively into the rubbing. "And if any more mammals turn up this way... we could have a full-blown panic on our paws..."

"Not if we keep putting out messages early and steady, keeping folks as reasonable as possible. We can't control them but we can keep the response down to a twitchy uncertainty. It sounds bad but there are worse things," Leodore quietly said.

"The only boon is the restriction. Mostly gang members, all in Happytown..." Dawn mumbled.

"All predators," Renato noted.

"We may need to take measures of some kind, institute curfew, have some kind of checkpoint system, do something to allay fears as much as possible. We're looking at a powder keg, and we all know someone wooly is there waiting to light a match," Leodore snarled, his fingers just keeping from letting his claws pop out.

"It's the sheep behind him that has the match. It's more than a powder keg. He has Shearly slopping gasoline around to make that match all the more powerful," Dawn bleated.

"We won't let him. We're going to figure this out. I promise you, we'll do something significant and get this city back to the peaceful place that it was," Ledore rumbled, leaning in to softly kiss Dawn on the top of her head.

The trip to the hospital was uneventful beyond that, Renato letting them off in the parking garage, as he had last time, and saying he would try to keep his schedule open to drive them back if they Zubered him again.

The pair made their way through the garage entrance of the hospital and down into the deepest part of the hospital, passing by a few elephant police officers with high powered tranquilizer rifles, that sternly waved them through. That lower area was a place of very low light, an almost industrial-seeming environment of exposed steel pipes and polished artificial stone floors sealed and smoothed to hospital standards. Everything was washed in a weak yellow glow from the heavily covered lights set at distant intervals along the path.

Their walk ended at a rather ordinary-looking door of metal and plastic, with an intercom beside it. Leodore pressed the large, red button on it and rumbled out, "The Mayor and Assistant Mayor, here for our meeting with Doctor Honeybadger." A light blinked in response and the door unbolted with a loud click, allowing them through.

Past the doors the environment changed dramatically. The whole place was largely metal and plastic, all in white, lit by rather bright florescent lights running along the ceiling and upper parts of the walls. Equipment of unknown use ran along the walls, into the central area which was a hub of some kind. Other doors led off from it to different places. Computer terminals of various sizes and scientific workstations of similarly varied sizes were nearly placed in the center of the large room.

Several different animals typed out reports or flipped through papers in the central area, one of them turning to approach Leodore and Dawn. She was a pleasantly portly honey badger in mint green scrubs and a lab coat, carrying a clipboard. She shook hands with the two when she arrived and offered a sincere, if fatigued, smile. "A pleasure to finally meet you both in the pelt. Dr. Madge
Honeybadger, from Zootopia University. I've spoken with Mayor Lionheart but this is the first muzzle-to-muzzle contact. And you, Miss Bellwether, it's a special pleasure to meet you."

"Me? Why would that be?" Dawn asked as she shook Madge's broad, plump paw.

"Because there's a skinny beanpole gerenuk waiting for me at home who never would have said anything if you hadn't led the way. Actually... he still didn't really, but on the third stammer I'd asked him out already," Madge said with a hearty chuckle. "He's a skittish guy, though, so this whole matter has him a little on edge. I just need to soothe his mind and figure out what's up with this and we can go back to... I think you know what we can go back to, right, Mayor?" She elbowed Leodore lightly and winked.

Leodore let out a hearty, booming laugh, drawing all eyes to him. "Dr. Honeybadger, I like your style."

"But... you look tired. I'm guessing... it's been a bit..." Dawn said, softly.

"I've been puzzling this out before I was formally invited here, and it takes a lot of late hours to solve a mystery," Madge chuckled, looking at Dawn with a commiserating smile. "Running a city can't be much easier. You and me both, huh, Miss Bellwether?"

Dawn laughed softly and slowly nodded. She inspired it? She had done that without meaning to but was delighted by it. In the back of her head, though, she wondered about the other world. There had been no such declaration of interspecies love that she could recall. At least, it didn't come to mind during this period, so far as she could tell. She was the reason Dr. Honeybadger had a nice buck she apparently had an... energetic relationship with. Without her action, would the moment be lost? Did that relationship exist because her own existed? Relationships lived and died for many reasons. Wanting Judy and her fox back together was essentially asking that Madge and her buck not exist. Unless they did meet and fall in love later... Morning Star had truly twisted her mind around. "I need about a week in bed. If Leodore is there, two weeks."

Madge laughed again and waved them over. "I've needed a good laugh like that for a while. I need to take the edge off of a dead end. Come here."

All three proceeded to Madge's workstation, which was near several monitors which cycled through live feeds of locked lexan-walled rooms holding the savage mammals. The snow leopard that started the whole matter, a wolf, a tiger and the latest, a polar bear. They stalked around the enclosures, eyes oddly shiny, the felines seeming permanently slitted. Each image included data from sensors that had been placed on them, indicating heartbeat and temperature.

"Oh... I... I hadn't seen them... like this..." Dawn shivered and pressed a little closer to Leodore.

Madge slowly shook her head and pointed to the wolf, listed as Webster Howler. "Apparently he belonged to that gang Loup Garou. We got lucky with him. One of the residents, another wolf, managed to assert dominance and temporarily force a cooperative state, allowing us to take a live blood sample without having it swimming with sedatives. We have a clean look at his blood."

"A wolf. Must have been someone from the MII, this hospital was notorious for not having predator residents. Paying dividends every day," Leodore said with pride.

"Indeed, that sample was quite fascinating. The levels of adrenaline were up, but cortisol was low. It wasn't stress and fear, it was like his body had a new natural adrenaline baseline. That might explain some things. The fight-or-flight response might explain some of the things we're seeing, but that's just the physiological effect. I'm pretty sure that it has a neurological component, if not a
cause. Maybe, just maybe, it's some kind of feedback loop that sustains itself somehow. An external component could also be to blame somehow."

"I considered that," Dawn said. "That some kind of district-specific gene mutation in some mammals could have an interaction with a toxin or a virus."

"That's not my area, but it's another idea to consider, which is about all we have right now," Madge sighed. "What I really want is to get one of them into the MRI, or the CAT scan, preferably the active variety so I can see what's going on while they're aware and active and not zonked out of their minds with the sedatives needed to get them there."

"I don't like this..." Dawn muttered, getting a slightly curious look from Madge. "That's nothing against you and the team here, Dr. Honeybadger. It's just frustrating to me. The citizens are getting skittish, we have no real answers that can be fed out with soundbites and that's what we need to counter the likes of Commissioner Shearly. He's stirring up panic over this."

"In some way maybe hiding this would have been better," Madge offhandedly mentioned. Dawn winced and huffed softly, hoof going to the side of her head and slowly rubbing. "I... I recognize that it might be more expedient, but incarcerating them without official notice, without any mention is illegal, and would ultimately poison public confidence in the government."

Madge nodded. "Yes, you're right. Sorry, I'm a doctor and not a politician. I don't really have a fine grasp of things like that. I can tell you how their brains work while they react to this kind of fear, but not how a population is going to be best handled. That's your department."

"We all have a job to do, and we need to fully embrace our responsibilities," Leodore said. "We just wanted to see what progress had been made, and if you had any suggestions about what we can do."

"Again, I'm not the kind of doctor that looks into things like etiology and epidemiology, not in this kind of situation anyway. All I can tell you is that so far they seem to be in a continual fight-or-flight state, but in normal mammals that doesn't result in an inarticulate state. They seem to have lost high brain functions, only able to access and act on more primitive brain areas. If I could get them into the machine I'd probably see a small or absent amount of activity in the forebrain, and certain lobes associated with language and abstract thinking."

"Lost, or just temporarily unable to use it?" Dawn asked, a slight bit of fear in her voice.

"Until they get in the machine or... I crack one of their heads open and have a look I can't say. I can't even speculate on it right now."

"As long as we have speculation going on... Officer Hopps mentioned the sound of a gas gun, during the first happening. She said that Mr. Glace grabbed the back of his neck before he had the attack and lost his faculties. There was no dart recovered, but could that be something?"

"It goes along with Miss Bellwether's conjecture about something like an infection or a toxin. The blood work didn't show anything, but we only did the standard panel, you have to look for certain things, especially if enough time has passed for the initial dose to have had the chance to pass out of the system. Something that binds with persistence to neurotransmitters and neuroreceptors wouldn't be detected unless... again, crack those melons open, cut out some pieces and get them under the microscope. I think we all want to avoid that at this juncture."

"I think we want to keep that completely off the table. That might be a bit naïve, but it's better to
keep in mind the hope that we won't need that. They might be potential criminals but they're still mammals, citizens with rights," Dawn said, rubbing her head again and wincing slightly. Her old life was rebelling, and she could guess why. If she was a hateful bigot in her other life, the memories that made up the sum of that life would hate her being so kind and so concerned for these figures. She wasn't anything like that Bellwether anymore.

"Do you need a moment, Miss Bellwether?" Madge asked.

"Migraines. They come and go, and this high-stress period is really working her over," Leodore explained.

"I can imagine. You really need to manage that kind of thing if you aren't taking anything for it. And some of those drugs send you into slowdown like a sloth on Moondas," Madge said.

"Hence why I try to just manage. It's just so hard with this going on..."

"Well, I'll try to help your head by figuring out what's happening in theirs. Again, without slicing them open like a calabash. Speaking of, Miss Bellwether, surprise treat for an artiodactyl. Gourds, yes or no?"

"No, not proper gourds, those are hardly a treat. Too bitter. That's a main dish, and usually bitter leaves are better for that. If you really want to serve one, roast it, with oil. For fleshed treats you need melons. And for a gerenuk... you want a kiwano. Heh... it's kind of a truism that prey can be skittish if they're of the more willowy sort, and kiwano are intimidating fruit."

"I'll pick some up in Sahara Square once date nights come back into play. I'm... I'm actually sorry I don't have anything for you besides the vaguest things that don't mean much," Madge said contritely.

"You're doing what you can, and it's a slow uphill climb. We know that we can count on you and that you'll do your best. We all have a vested interest in the resolution of this, in one way or another," Leodore said.

Madge nodded slowly, turning to her workstation. "I don't want to hurt him, because I'm out of my mind."

"Then let's find out what's making it happen," Leodore said, everyone nodding slowly.

"Two more. And in so short a span. This is really starting to get things riled. There are some rumblings against predators in general, not just Happytown. It's still small, but it's there, and that's unacceptable," Leodore said, lightly hitting his desk, which was covered with various reports as well as copies of local papers, mostly those whose headlines talked about the 'Instances of Savagery.'

"Even the sympathetic outlets are forced to let Shearly speculate while we just put out what we concretely know and rebuff his more general or erroneous claims... and folks still remember the wrong information, even if we tell them it's wrong," Dawn said, scrolling through her phone.

"It's mammal nature. It's been said many times by any number of philosophers that we need to be patient with others and ourselves. We may be evolved, but deep down we're the animals we were. That's why fear always works, but also why we feel a sense of community and pride. We had to band together to survive. We're still learning, but we're not hopeless."

"Keep that boundless hope. We need it right now. There's still a lot to do. Gazelle wants to have
some kind of peace rally, to keep folks positive, to give them a reason to hold out hope. Selene is planning to work in conjunction with her as part of a live broadcast of her show from it, keeping the mood as high and supportive as possible. They've been really good with the social campaign against Shearly's muckraking."

"Peace and plenty on those two, abundance of all fruits indeed for their efforts. I think they're working as hard as we do," Leodore rumbled, sitting back down behind his desk.

"I know why Gazelle is so intent on it, she has a vested interest. I admire that. But Selene is just a very supportive ally, and there's something to be said for that. Having two of the biggest personalities in the city on our side keeps the rest of the population a little bit inoculated against my father's bile. I'm almost certain without high level goodwill we'd be facing down torches and clubs."

Leodore slumped down in his chair, looking down at the papers on his desk. "Symbols are important in this world. They represent complex emotions and ideas. They're something around which folks can rally."

"Father understood that, for evil purposes. I told you what he said about fear, about effigies. Put all their fear and hate into those and don't care about what horrific things happen after."

"But symbols can represent better things, like Gazelle, the symbol of our wonderful city. And in a strange way, understanding how they can be used for bad can let them be used for good. Imbue one deserving figure with all that negativity, and use it as a way to take the pressure off innocent folks. Like a boiling teakettle. If the spout was plugged it would probably explode, but give it a release and the pressure eases off somewhat."

Some inkling of what he was implying crossed Dawn's mind, and she slowly shook her head. "L-leodore... you... I don't know what you're saying but... no..."

"Dr. Honeybadger called me, saying that she'd love to get a volunteer for some light-to-moderate medical examination. No calabash cracking, but... I'd have to go into the hospital. Even more than that, though... do you realize how much of a danger I am to your efforts?"

"You're not going to go savage! You're my Lambert! You can't ever hurt me!" Dawn screamed, her voice taking on a bleating tone from the intensity.

"I don't want to think that, and I... I don't really. But it's predators going savage. Even if restricted to one area, it's predators. And what is the mayor? A predator. The citizens, on some level, must be terrified of me. There's a provision, in case of medical incapacitation as recognized and signed off on by a doctor, for the temporary placement of the Assistant Mayor as Mayor-pro-tem. With all powers and responsibilities for the period of my incapacitation."

"You're not incapacitated, you're not incapacitated at all, you're-" Dawn almost chanted, her words cut off with Leodore leaning in you kiss her. "You can't let them win. You can't let the city hate you."

"They need to hate someone, or put up some imitation of it. More than that, the other predators need a representative. I'll endure worse than curfews and maybe more police presence. The prey get their blood, the predators can see one of their own going through something, and, you get to stay here, continuing the mission, solving this mystery."

Dawn looked into Ledore's eyes, cradling his head, her hooves sliding along his jawline. Tears unashamedly fell, spattering softly onto the floor of his office. "If you go... we won't have to fully
quarantine predators into their own areas. We get that little sliver of freedom, a bit more wiggle room to see this through."

"I'll call Dr. Honeybadger, and tell her to prepare a room for me. And arrange a press conference so you can make the announcement after she sends an ambulance," Leodore whispered, huge tongue deftly swiping Dawn's face to lap away her tears. "Freshen up. Gotta look happy for the cameras. Sometimes appearances really matter. It's not all vanity."

Dawn tucked her head under Leodore's chin, burying her face into the lower part of his mane, desperately dragging in the warm scent of him. The lightest hint of musk, the fruity shampoo and conditioner he loved, and her. He always smelled just a little like her lanolin, no matter how much she scrubbed. She had marked him. Hers. She couldn't let him go. Didn't want to.

An hour later she was standing in front of City Hall behind a podium with flashes going off like strobes, a confused jumble of voices asking the same questions, while a sea of glass eyes glared, unblinking, at her. Her eyes were red but her tears were dry, and her whole bearing had been carefully put together, calculated to look just right in front of all the cameras.

"At seven PM this evening Mayor Lionheart was taken to Peaceground Memorial Hospital into the care of Dr. Madge Honeybadger, the specialist currently heading the team looking into this Savage incident. She wanted a volunteer to be examined as a baseline, and to provide information on responses to certain stimuli. In doing so, Mayor Lionheart has decided to do all that he can for the city, in the interest of security and putting an end to any fear and this whole matter.

"There will need to be some hard choices made in the coming days, an increased police presence, maybe private security provided for areas deemed in need. Curfew will be enforced, but no zone restrictions will be put in place. We can't be afraid. Philosophers have told us to be patient with ourselves and others. Even evolved, we're the animals we were. We're led by fear and lies, but there's a finer thing inside of us, something more than fear and anger, something better than hate. Our caring, our compassion, our need for one another. We survived and thrived because we came together. We have to let that overcome fear and hate.

"The government will continue regular operation, because, by the provisions of the law, as soon as Mayor Lionheart was taken into the care of Dr. Honeybadger I... I became M-mayor-pro-tem. Just until this matter is concluded. That's all, an official statement of greater depth is forthcoming. Thank you."

Dawn hopped off the riser that had lifted her up, turning and ignoring the clamor for more information, for a statement, for comments on rumors and conspiracies. She walked back into City Hall, head held high and tears held back. She didn't have time for them. Something was attacking her city. Their city. Virus, toxin, genetic quirk. It didn't matter what. She'd do everything to solve the mystery or die trying.

Chapter End Notes

<>Author's Notes

Cherry red Boutavant Globetrotter- Mr. Manchas has a much nicer car than the unnamed reporter, by implication. I intentionally used "cherry red" to evoke old hot rods and other classic cars, where "cherry" was also slang for, in essence, "awesome"
or "excellent" with an additional intent of "pristine" or "perfect." In this case, even if it's more meant as a sedan or possibly a four-door coupe, it is supposed to seem nice. It would be the upper end of the middle class car, maybe even a low luxury model, heavily implying Mr. Manchas is very well compensated at his usual job. For the name, Marc Boutavant is the creator of Mouk, a series centered around a bear who travels the world. It's an educational creation, with a television show exploring various cultures. So, it seemed appropriate to name a car referencing that a Globetrotter.

**Dr. Madge Honeybadger-** I like Madge, at least, I like her name, and her look. And I like that she's seemingly very different from Honey in the Zistopia setting. Given the way a honey badger looks I sort of overtly made her into kind of a tough shortstack. If I never say it, either because it never comes up or because I forget, she refers to *herself* as "More-to-love Madge." And it seems she is an Outsider, a five or six even, as a gerenuk is as far as you get from a honey badger. She also has a type, as can be gleaned from her mentioning her nameless beau's skinny figure. Given his species he's probably also very tall. It's a Jack Sprat situation. She's also the second woman in the story to have that. Mrs. Fanak of the City Council is also married to a man significantly taller than her, but that's because almost every non-fennec canid is.

"Peace and plenty on those two, abundance of all fruits indeed for their efforts"- Here there's a clear indication that Leodore and Dawn have different religious traditions. Besides her usual soft epithets like Sweet Lemongrass she occasionally mentions the sun and earth, meaning she's a Solaterran, which is the majority faith in Meadowlands, unlike the rest of the city. Leodore's epithet here is an expression of blessed bounty, as well as peaceful harmony, which might seem Solaterran, but by actually asking for peace and plenty, without reference to sun, earth, stars or the moon, it shows he's a Peaceground follower., as most Zootopians are.
Pro Tempore

Chapter Summary

Dawn takes her place as the temporarily empowered Mayor of Zootopia.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-One: Pro Tempore

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"So far it's not so bad," Leodore said, his face taking up the entire MuzzleTime screen. "The room is small but I can move around, I get any movie or show I want, I have a computer and the food's actually nice. I've had worse experiences. I went to one of those 'Wilderness Experiences for Rich City Kids' camps that my father thought would toughen me up. That was worse, because my flaming marshmallow got tossed into my tent and I had to spend the week sleeping under a blanket next to a tree."

Dawn slowly stroked the screen of her desktop computer, a small tear held back in the corner of her eyes. "I... I love your positive attitude," she said with a small sniff.

"Never lose it, that's what someone said to me once," Leodore said with a chuckle. "But really... compared to others, I'm on vacation. The curfew has been obeyed by and large, so far as I've seen, and we still have positive traction. But the campaign against Happytown is grinding it all away. Have you made any progress against Shearly or your father?"

"Chief Bogo finally managed to dig into that plate I gave him. As expected, the car was bought, for cash, from an unlisted seller, and it's registered to someone who doesn't have much in the way of a history. But worse, they've gone to ground. Their last known location was cleaned out, most likely thanks to that sheep that saw what was going on. Bogo has started to cut out sheep officers and I think they're aware of it."

"That's going to get complicated. They can scream discrimination, Shearly backs them up, Bogo gets put under a microscope... has he considered transferring them to Happytown?"

"I all but told him to do it. He liked the idea, maybe too much, but he dismissed it, because that's an active area that needs his best. He has Officer Hopps there because she actually demonstrated her skills repeatedly. I can't help but feel this will somehow get worse before it gets better. And it's already worse for me," Dawn said, stroking the screen again.

"At least I have your face with me every morning, and your voice any time I want," Leodore rumbled. "I feel bad about small things. The repeated scrubbing needed to keep me properly
sanitized has washed out your lanolin scent. I feel strangely empty. I lived my whole life without it, and even lacked it after I met you, but somehow it's become a part of how I see myself."

Dawn finally let go, sobbing softly and wiping her eyes with the side of her hoof. "I'll give you plenty of wool wax when you get back. I'll get it so deep in your mane you'll never get it out."

"And I know you always keep your promises. That's something I can look forward to," Loedore said. He turned his head slightly at an indistinct sound from the other side of him. "They need me to test some aromatic compounds that are prevalent in Happytown. Sorry to cut this short."

"Go. The faster they find a solution, the faster you come back to me," Dawn whispered, leaning in to press a kiss on the screen.

Leodore matched the motion, both of them kissing extreme closeups. "I'll be back soon, I know it. Meanwhile, you need to keep up with the day to day. Say 'hi' to all the council members for me, especially Mr. Seedsworth. I got an odd message from him, he seems angry about something. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Dawn sighed as the video connection died and she hopped off of her chair to make a pot of tea for the meeting. She had bought herself a big metal thermos for occasions she had not exactly considered. She had just figured she'd eventually need it. She did.

As the water came up to temperature she had to think about what she could do. Goodwill was still in their corner, and polls showed the vote could still go their way, but two different forces were creeping into the discussion. Fear, and apathy.

Other districts were starting to show mixed poll results that could not be accounted for with hate. But just being tired of hearing about it was starting to affect things. The population could be induced to care, but after some point the government would have to do the heavy lifting, which had a long memory and as much patience as a succession of folks could muster. Until the vote, the population had to shoulder some measure of the concern, which relied on the fickle patience of a population.

She sighed and poured the hot water over a few of her sachets in the thermos, waiting for them to steep before plucking them out with a small silver set of tongs. Another gift from Leodore, washable, reusable sachets when she needed to make a large amount of tea, and her small strainer wasn't up to the task. Adequately equipped with her tea, she took her big mug and made her way down to the council chamber.

A larger chair had been placed behind Leodore's usual podium, and Dawn climbed up to it with as much aplomb as she could muster while carrying her mug and thermos. The other councilors watched her with a respectful silence, occasionally looking down at their own podia, piled with papers.

"I call this meeting of the Zootopia City Council to order. I'd like to move very swiftly into business so we don't get bogged down with... irrelevancies."

"By your leave, Mayor Bellwether," Cecil said.

"Mayor-pro-tem, Mr. Seedsworth," Dawn corrected. "Let's all keep that in mind. Pro-tem. Leodore is coming back to this position. I'm here to keep things running. Oh, yes. Mr. Seedsworth, Leodore made a special point to ask me to say hello to everyone, but especially you. You're upset about something?"
"Hah... that politico... he has more seasoning than someone twice his age. Tell him we miss him. No disrespect to you, Miss Bellwether, but continuity is best in times of crisis, an upheaval is only good in emergencies that have sharp contingencies set up. He sprang this on us all."

"But it was understandable. My district actually showed a sharp upswing in approval of the central authority when it happened, even though we instituted firm curfews and had more police spot checks of our large predators, which we have plenty of," Miss Erminova noted.

"A calculated move. Grudges fade, but respect does not," Cecil noted. "And he was right. Anti-predator sentiment is creeping into my district and I will not accept that. Little Rodentia will be free of this poison or I'll show them the harsh paw of the government."

"That's a very... firm stance to take, Mr. Seedsworth. But from what I've seen, you have a very open way about you as long as predators don't gain power with exclusivity," Dawn said.

"We've had vandalism of the property damage and graffiti variety in the Macrocosm area, and then only against the predators. And not against the predators in the central areas, just Macrocosm. When my constituents turn into hatemongering bigots, it's time to drop the paw and keep it dropped."

"That's a strange division of hate, are they... saying they're afraid of larger folks?" Dawn asked.

"Some of them have been uncomfortable in the past concerning the Macrocosm area. They're afraid of a rampage or something, like those old, awful low-quality movies," Cecil replied.

"This current situation is revealing a lot of very uncomfortable things about this city. I... I don't want to say that's a good thing, but in some way it may be a useful thing. We now know these folks are out there, and these kinds of attitudes are just waiting for the smallest provocation. It's just like I told Leodore, with our relationship, we have to be out in the open, then no one can deny we exist and they can't hide what they think."

"It reveals the true ugliness of some folks that we'd like to pretend doesn't exist. It hurts, and hurts a lot, but we need to endure the pain and get through it to get better," Mrs. Fanak said. "Addiction counseling language tends to work into your mind when you dive deeply into the idea to make sure it's helpful."

"Can you get addicted to hate? I have to think some of these folk are actually addicted to their bile," Miss Erminova noted. "Hate, or fear. Or both. Hardly seems to be a difference. My district has large predators and prey that are only slightly smaller, so scowling looks and huffy attitudes abound, along with anonymous abuse. They hate because they fear, it would seem."

"I feel so out of it, we haven't got much in the way of predators. Dingos are about as far as it goes, got a few folks that moved in but that's about it. They're not just a minority, they're a tiny minority. I don't think anyone hates them, but I hear tell they have some contempt for them, being so small a group and all. Hard to say what's worse," Miss Macadam said with a huff.

"I wouldn't say social order is collapsing, but traditional notions of politeness and agreeability are crumbling a little. I blame younger folks who are not interested in useful values. We can get along if we just remember manners and politeness," Cecil stated sharply.

"I almost want to say you're right, Mr. Seedsworth, but I can't. It might be alright in Little Rodentia but it went wild in Meadowlands and created a poisonous environment. We accepted shunning, rumormongering and forcing apart relationships. I've told the story about Patty and Chester but I recently met another, and a sheep. A ewe. She didn't deserve that happening to her, all in the name
of our traditions. Happytown was the result of traditions."

Cecil passed on commentary and instead looked at one of the papers on his small table atop the podium. "This latest victim of this happening is odd. I can accept that all folks can have pasts they're escaping, or hidden dimensions, but I'm now convinced we may not have the comforting certainty of only gang members being victims of this savagery."

"A florist," Dawn said, incredulously. "A florist, of all things. Digging into the background will take time but I'm with you, this is not sensible. But then again, the first victim was only near a gang member, not one himself. We've always been operating under a mistaken assumption, it's just easier to do that."

"I think that the fear would spread even more if we didn't have that misapprehension, it gives the populace a small measure of control, or at least of logic, of some sense in this senselessness," Cecil said.

"And making sense means keeping order. Nothing is more orderly than a little government bureaucracy. Some red tape always takes the fear out of a chaotic world," Dawn said. "Is there any old business Leodore left that needs to be discussed?"

"We have to decide when to put out the bond measure, wait for the public sentiment to wane even more to reach the official ballot, or follow through on the plan to initiate a special election. The debate hadn't concluded and we were very much not settled on the matter," Mr. Tatu said.

"In that case, old business will be continued. Let's hash out all the details, finish the debate and make it official, if at all possible. Long delays due to the debate will sort of force us to wait for the election proper anyway," Dawn said with a laugh, which was returned by the others.

Dawn didn't like using the city car any more than Leodore did, but Mr. Manchas was off on an assignment and so she had little choice. It wasn't so bad, it was still a large fancy car, just not a limo. The driver was also just some public servant roped into the assignment. It lacked the warmth of prior drives. But, it also lacked Leodore, which made it an even colder trip.

At least, it gave her time to consider a strange letter she had received. It was from someone that wanted to remain anonymous, with a postmark from Meadowlands. According to the message, written by a predator, their brother had gone missing after just leaving to go to the store. After a day, when no word had come, they had gone to the police. The police had told them there was no reason to look into it. They hadn't even filed a report. The police had all but told them to drop it or else face a consequence.

There had been specific phrases that made her realize it was the police closing in and making it clear they'd get the law on them. They were threatened, and told never to tell anyone that they had mentioned it. That made them ask around, getting more stories of missing predators, who were talkative among other predators given the need to be in unison. The police got wind of it and had given them a firm but low-mark beating, warning them to stay away from doctors and to stop asking. Hence the letter to the one politician they felt they could trust, though finding it ironic because she was a sheep, and all those that had threatened and beaten the writer had been sheep.

That was disturbing. Meadowlands had its council but it was still somewhat under the purview of the Mayor's office. Which was her. The police were not looking into missing predators... which made her head pulse. Missing predators. There were some memories of that, connected to the police lights and hidden facility, and the environment was something like Meadowlands. They were vanishing, for some reason. The police were not acting, for some reasons. Corruption was
starting to feel like a very likely thing, especially after losing the reporter to, potentially, a sheep police officer.

She shook her head and sighed, resolving to think about it after the rally. She sat back and tried to relax.

The car made its way to the vague border area of Happytown, where police had massed ahead of two opposing groups. Those with openly anti-predator sentiments stood, restrained by the riot shields of the police, apart from those who favored peace and a close relationships. Outsider couples waved signs and cheered in support of Gazelle, who stood on an elevated platform with her Striper Squad.

The cheers grew louder, as did the jeers, when Dawn stepped from her car and was escorted to the main stage by Officers Hopps and Wulfberg. She received a hug from Gazelle when she arrived, much to her slight chagrin. A microphone had been hooked up to some speakers, and she was given the first chance at speaking to the cheering crowd of supporters.

"Welcome, everyone, to this wonderful rally, a thing of peace and togetherness! We're here to try and push back a dark and terrible tide of unkind thinking and misplaced fear. Certain elements of society, which I will politely not name, have made it almost a mission to ruin the togetherness that makes a city, a society, run at all. Fractious, unkind folks have made it a mission to crush our accomplishments. That's not right at all.

"But they did one thing, for better or worse. They exposed these divisions, this fear inside them, this hate, in fact, inside them. I said to Leodore, and I'm sure you've heard it before, being open will expose not what you really are, but what others really are. Once they know a fact about you then they have to react with their true colors the longer you are open and unafraid. They've now told us all we need to know about them. Even if they seem to be wonderful mammals, this is what they think of you, and your loved ones. We should never dismiss them, just understand what they are at their core.

"We're here for peace and we're here for unity. And we can be happy in that. With us today, you know her, you love her, Zootopia's own Queen of Pop, Gazelle!" A huge spike in cheering made Dawn wince, the low-grade throbbing pain stabbing up more sharply. This was too familiar, again. She had seen this before, but from the other side. She had not been a participant but she had... mayor... Because Leodore was locked up... locked up for breaking the law. The confinement... he did it to others, in secret, not himself. She shook off her thoughts as her silence went on too long.

"And watch the crowd, Selene is filming live and will want your input on this situation, and just how you express your unity and solidarity with all mammals.

"Now, let me hand the mic off to Gazelle, who has some impassioned words to say about this great city and all that it means," Dawn said, passing the microphone along with a wave of cheers making her head throb.

"Thank you, Mayor..."

"Mayor-pro-tem. It's very temporary," Dawn insisted.

Gazelle gave a small, sad smile. "Of course. Thank you, Mayor-pro-tem, for your words and your introduction. This is a situation that is sad, and perhaps worrying. We've lost sight of the togetherness we once shared, the unity that made us strong, and truly great. This fear, fear of an unknown thing creating fear of our own neighbors, those closest to us... it's a real tragedy.

"Zootopia is a unique place. It's a crazy, beautiful city where we celebrate our differences. This is
not the Zootopia I know. The Zootopia I know is better than this. We don't just blindly assume blame. We don't know why these attacks keep happening, but it is irresponsible to label all Happytown predators, and all predators in the city, as savages. We cannot let fear divide us. Please, give me back the Zootopia I love."

The crowd cheered and chanted Gazelle's name as she passed the microphone back to Dawn and almost fell into Hu Lin's waiting arms. Dawn knew to give the crowd time to calm, and let them drink in the sight of Gazelle caressing the tiger she loved. It was a powerful symbol, an appropriate thing to see in that place, at that time.

Officers Hopps and Wulfberg were onstage, providing close security for Gazelle and Dawn, both of them using their talents as best they could, Judy trying to hear over the crowds, Wulfberg listening and sniffing, but also keeping a wary eye out. They stood closest to Gazelle, by expediency, staring out at the crowd of supporters, trusting the line of police beyond to monitor the detractors.

Officer Wulfberg noticed something, just the smallest flash from just across the street. A sudden instinct in him led him to leap up with a most un-wolf-like technique, putting him in front of Hu Lin's chest and neck, a small blue splatter striking his cheek and being absorbed beneath his fur. He hit the ground with a sharp bark, writhing around and giving strange cries, somewhere between a howl and a bleat.

"Officer Hopps at the peace rally! Officer down, showing signs of the strange affliction, rolls a bus now!" Judy checked on Officer Wulfberg, noting the fading bit of blue evaporating from off of the fur on his neck. She shook him lightly, as his eyelids fluttered and his eyes rolled. "Come on, fight it, don't let it get to you! You're a cop! You've trained for harder situations."

He made an effort to answer, but his twisting body finally went limp, his eyes shining, pupils wide and pulled slightly horizontal. He leaped to all four paws, lips pulled back and teeth bared. But he didn't snarl nor did he howl. He gave a loud, goatish bleat, leaping at Judy with his head down, attempting to headbutt her, occasionally turning to throw back-leg kicks at her as she bounced and dodged around.

The crowd was panicking to some extent, the gathered officers attempting to maintain order while Judy dealt with her fellow officer. The attack technique threw her off, it was not at all the kind of thing she had expected at all. His attacks were like an enraged goat, as were his vocalizations. That shook her enough that she hesitated before attacking, but she finally did pull out her tranq gun and darted Officer Wulfberg when she had a shot clear of civilians.

He went from a bleating, charging force to a stumbling state and down into an unconscious lump very rapidly, Judy kneeling at his side to check the area she had seen stricken. Nothing. Barely a bit of wetness but not any trace of the subtle blue she had seen evaporating from him.

"Is he alright?" Dawn asked, approaching slowly, but still approaching.

"He's out like a light, but seems alright. He... I saw it. I didn't hear it this time, but he saw something, and I saw a little spot of blue. It was evaporating, but I saw it. I know I saw it! I knew I heard something that first time. I knew it..."

Dawn fell to her knees, grabbing her head and hissing softly though her teeth. It was like claws raking across a chalkboard, a hundred chalkboards, all burning across her brain as the situation hit her. The spot of blue. Judy Hopps. Something happening with those elements. Her plan. Her crime. She had had a hoof in this madness.
The pain slowly subsided, her eyes opening to see Judy looking at her, still by the tranquilized Wulfberg but looking over. "Mayor... are you alright? Your migraines and all, you must be extra stressed these days."

"Pro-tem..." Dawn groaned out, slowly clambering back to her trotters, shaking her head and sighing. "I don't care about that. This city has jobs that need doing, and a situation that needs managing. I'm here, I'm the one left to shoulder the burden, so I'd better throw all my weight into it. You know that better than others. We're gonna need to talk about this, before someone can make hay out of it and cast the police in a bad light. And given that he's not only not from Happytown... he's not all wolf, clearly."

"It's not just predators. It can't just affect pure predators. He's a Division child, and his prey part was affected," Judy said, looking down at Wulfberg again.

"The cameras are on their way. We've gotta give them one consistent statement. Little guys, sticking together," Dawn said, watching as the police managed the waning crowd.

"Absolutely, I was here again, and the public needs to be properly informed," Judy said, ears perking up. "Ambulance sirens, they're almost here. Once he gets on it, we can get ready to talk to the press."

About half an hour later, Wulfberg had been loaded onto an ambulance, the area had been mostly cleared, and the reporters had swarmed in, cameras either rolling or flashing, as required, microphones all shoved out at Dawn and Judy, who were standing together and facing down the mob of media folk.

Judy stepped forward first, righteous indignation shining in her eyes. "This is a message to everyone that thought this was a predator thing, that it was influenced by Happytown, or their genes. Including me. I was wrong to think it that it was something in the predator makeup that caused this, even when I was aware something was going on. I was there for the first happening. I heard something, I knew there was something wrong with the idea it was natural. But I let my fear and wild imagination get the best of me. Even if I did it temporarily, it distracted me from what was real, and that was wrong. This isn't something in nature, something in the predator mind connected to ancient ways.

"He's a good cop, and he felt something was about to happen. He acted like any good officer should have, and I think we can all respect him for that. He didn't hesitate, he didn't hold back. He paid for this action by becoming a new victim to this madness, saving Hu Lin and Gazelle from harm. I'm going to the hospital right after this, but you all needed to hear from someone on the inside, the ZPD doesn't think this is a predator problem. I don't think this is a predator problem."

Dawn softly patted her shoulder and drew her against her side, staring directly into the sea of glass. "The Office of the Mayor, as well as the City Council, reflect Officer Hopps' statement. As Mayor-pro-tem I officially castigate any mammal or organization that has or does declare this to be the natural happenings of predatory genes. This is far from that. Given what we have seen here, this is something far different..." Dawn winced sharply, pressing a hoof to the side of her head. She was splitting in two, being ripped into shreds. She had a feeling, deep down inside, like she was fighting against herself, condemning herself. But if the 'her' of a different world was guilty of something, they deserved condemnation. She deserved it. She needed to be condemned, she had to make up for what had happened by doing the right thing. "This is something else entirely.

"Zootopia, please don't be afraid, but be vigilant, be strong. Come together now more than ever, unite, predator and prey. Officer Wulfberg is a Division child, and the part of him affected was his
prey side. Anyone could be affected, but predators were targeted, to sow dissension. End that, at once. Hold together as a society and as a city, predator and prey neighbors against an enemy that wants unknown fear. This is not a genetic issue or a random toxin or illness emerging new from some unknown place.

"This is intentional. Citizens of Zootopia, it's now clear. This, is terrorism..."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

**Macrocosm Area-** As usual, no one explains anything because you really don't do that in real life. Everyone knows certain things if they're in particular professions. In this case, it refers to a kind of internal border area of Little Rodentia, a place where non-rodent-sized folks can live. It grows from those of about Weaselton's size, the smaller weasels and viverids and larger rodents like nutria and beavers, to those of a more average height up to about a wolf in size. They're inside the district's border wall and have been vetted as safe and acceptable. They tend to do a lot of heavy lifting in the warehouse areas that rest nearby, or do something in other areas and live there because they like it or enjoy the cost. It's called that just for the Macro name.

**Division Child-** The colloquial term for a child which is the result of a Division Family, that is, from two folks who cannot be married by tradition. Officer Wulfberg is half goat but doesn't look it, unlike his sister, who actually has horns and a goatee despite also looking like a wolf. As Division families are very loose parallels to interracial couples in America's past, Officer Wulfberg would be called a "passing" child. That is, he looks so much like one parent that it's not immediately apparent he's a halfbreed. Incidentally his parents, and sister, are found in "Unbounded Love" chapter 2, The Incredible Life.
Battle Stations

Chapter Summary

The battle against the poisoners begins in earnest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Two: Battle Stations

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The mood in the City Council chamber was tense, a heavy pall cast over the whole proceeding. The councilors all seemed nervous, twitchy and tired. No one seemed to have gotten much in the way of a good night's sleep. They shuffled papers silently, finding various notes they had written or reports that they had been given.

Miss Macadam was the first to break the silence, looking out at the empty gallery. "I'm not sure what to think of not having an audience."

"From a security perspective, it's practical. You do these sorts of things when necessary. Sometimes life simply is unsafe and it's required that tough choices be made," Miss Erminova responded.

"Curfew and travel notices have been put into place, and everyone is being advised to always travel in a group and remain as covered as reasonably possible. According to officer Hopps it's delivered via gas-powered gun and is both absorbed and evaporates quickly. To think, now that they're so exposed, given that someone can fire from outside the fence, a lot of my constituents are taking refuge in Macrocosm, whole families comfortably living in closets or on shelves. At least something positive came out of this mess," Cecil said, with a proud puff of his chest.

"It solves one issue, the city is starting to unite, but not fully. Terror has the advantage of, well, spreading fear through uncertainty. No one knows who is involved, as as it could happen from a distance, anyone could be a target. Large prey and most predators get askance glances because having them go savage would be devastating," Dawn noted.

"Now that they know, is there anything being done?" Mrs. Fanak asked.

"Now that it's understood to be an intentional act, a lot of the odd, disparate pieces are being examined as part of a whole," Dawn said. "New reports expressing carefully released speculation is turning the public tide as they start to realize they were being manipulated through fear to be against the Happytown project. The poll numbers are going back up, and those bigoted individuals are seeing a backlash of serious proportions, including job loss and social ostracism. I... I shouldn't
feel so vindicated and cheerful about that. But, all that hate put Leodore in the hospital for tests. So, allow me a little bleat." She let out a high-pitched, cheerful, lamb-like little beeh of happiness.

The other councilors actually gave her a polite round of applause. "I feel a similar amount of smug satisfaction watching those hateful folk forced to take refuge with the larger folk they had been bigoted against so recently. However, smugness is uncouth, so, I will only express a good sense of being right all along," Cecil said, chittering pleasantly.

"But we still have serious matters to consider. Including one that no suddenly takes on a far, far darker tone," Dawn said, flipping through her papers and holding up the letter she had received. "I gave you all copies of this, and I presume you've read it."

"It's... disturbing. The implications are quite overt, even if expressed in uncertain tones," Mrs. Fanak said with a shudder.

"Kidnapping and corruption. The police are compromised," Mr. Tatu said. "They must be completely rotted, like a compromised tree."

"The police are all sheep," Dawn said sternly. "Meadowlands precinct has the lowest diversity in the police department of any other in the whole city, and resists change by deflecting suggestions to change through the actions of the district council. My father did it... I did it as a matter of tradition, and that was the most horrible thing I could have done. And the new district head, some spineless ram my father picked to replace me, is keeping it up. And, of course, who controls a lot of aspects of the police?"

"Shearly," Cecil snarled. "I'll be willing to wager Cheviot McLiff is in on it, he has to be. He was put in there by Shearly, and he directs the police to investigate what he chooses."

"Now we know, and we can act in secret, hence one of the reasons I closed off the gallery today. We need to coordinate with... selected elements of the police to root out the corruption, especially from Meadowlands. The district council can drink my lanolin, I plan to cut through that place like a newly-honed clipper through winter growth," Dawn snorted.

"You've got all the fire of our absent Mr. Lionheart. Excellent. We need another good, firm hold here. And if we can't have him we're lucky to have you," Cecil said.

"I think we might be getting just a little aggro here, right? I mean... we can't just punish them without some evidence. The letter... it... it's bad. But it might be a hoax, or it might be, just, the police doing their best and they misinterpreted something," Miss Macadam noted, mildly.

"Pusillanimous pap. I expected better out of you, Miss Macadam, much better," Cecil tsked, with a shake of his head. "Lionheart gave what I thought was that until he laid out his whole plan. Don't disappoint us all by giving us the velvet glove without the iron paw beneath."

"I don't know... this is just too much! We just never have this kind of a problem on Outback Island. Even the gum grove situation wasn't like this. I don't want a lot of innocent mammals caught up in all this. There are sheep there, a lot of them. Are they evil masterminds too?"

"You realize it's not about species alone, don't you?" Miss Erminova asked. "We can understand that some species are in a higher concentration in certain shady industries but not all. It makes it easier to focus on a particular place, especially if some connection is properly established. When organized malevolence is concerned, networks are how things are torn out by the roots."

"We think alongside someone like Shearly or my father, figure out how they would do a task, think
about what they would use, then interrupt that line of thinking at some convenient point," Dawn added. "The police do that all the time, out-thinking criminals with notable drives, rather than just reacting to crime they're called to. Doing both makes everyone safer."

"It's the same in politics as it is in business. Think about what a competitor might do to surpass you or harm you, then guard against it or beat them to it. If it's legal, then it needs to get done," Cecil said.

"We must do everything that is legal and pragmatic right now. Legal and pragmatic. We have supposedly missing mammals in Meadowlands, why are they missing? Answer the question and you'll see a whole new world open up," Dawn said.

All the councilors considered the question, but Mr. Tatu responded first. "Merciful silver crescent... they were living experiments!"

"It's a likely consideration. If you want to make sure that your savagery poison works on a predator, you have to test it on a predator," Dawn said.

"It's all speculation... but it's... it's too... I should have gotten a job giving guided tours..." Miss Macadam lamented.

"Stiff resolve, Miss Macadam. We here are the core of Zootopia's stability, we must hold strong," Cecil insisted.

"We have no data, and no real way to check without giving the game away. Which is why I suggested select police elements. Chief Bogo is absolutely trustworthy. He has a shortlist of the incorruptible elements of his force, his own Stainless Badges, as Leodore once brought up. They can work Internal Affairs, or go undercover in Meadowlands to find out about the missing mammals."

"Can we use Officer Hopps? As small prey she would be particularly effective in this endeavor," Miss Erminova asked.

"She's too notable, and has spent a lot of time in the hospital asking about Officer Wulfberg. She feels guilty about what happened. I've asked Bogo to keep her assigned to Happytown, to maintain order and peace. We're still dealing with the gangs, even with this terror alert over our head. They struck when it would be most politically expedient and socially hurtful," Dawn huffed.

"That's the nature of such mammals. They're devious, and know exactly when to strike, they can take any opportunity. As you and Mr. Seedsworth noted, we must think alongside them, detect when their attempts to act will happen and then act in opposition to them. What can we do at this juncture?"

"The police are now looking into the prior attacks with new insights. Seeing that they were intentional there's more possibilities to mine, particularly the florist. That was more of an anomaly than the first attack, and there's a lot of potential there. Time will tell. Until then, let's keep this city together until they round up these criminals," Dawn declared, shuffling her papers and looking down at them.

"He's still out of it. I... I should have detected the attack first. My senses were part of why I got top marks at the academy," Judy sighed, carefully moving file folders in the lowest fire drawer of the drawer stack in the back room of the flower shop in Happytown whose owner had been the victim prior to Officer Wulfberg.
"You can't blame yourself. He was in the right location, with the right set of skills. He must have used some of his hybrid senses and nature, maybe being half prey made him extra skittish while his predator side had more focus, to do something with the input," Officer Grizzoli noted. "I mean, it's pretty obvious I'm a half-and-half too, just predators on both sides. I get a lot of hunches and impressions that one side or the other might not have picked up. I also like ice lichen, like... a lot. It's not a problem really, but it means I spend probably more than I should going to Tundratown to buy nicely wrapped boxes of it. Somehow that makes it taste even better."

The area they were looking through had enough room for the large grolar bear and small rabbit, despite being only a modest place. It was nicely organized and well decorated with the back wall taken up by tiers of shelves holding nice orchids. The place looked quite neat, with a few nice credenzas and plenty of filing cabinets, along with a corner containing clay pots, a UV light and transplanting equipment. The large center desk was likewise neat and orderly, with a nameplate on the front reading N. Woolfe.

"This fellow really loved his orchids, I guess. I never got into them. Exotic, sure, but not very tasty, and too expensive at that," Judy noted.

"And his place is so... nicely organized. Everything's in a folder, it's all crisp, he even has duplicates and triplicates filed right," Grizzoli added.

"I'm not surprised. The background check says this guy used to be a PI, what used to pass for law and order in Happytown before we started this big push. He got out of that and started selling flowers. A respectable occupation," Judy said, picking up a piece of paper which had fallen onto the ground. "Hey, here's something that's out of place. A letter. If you can find the envelope we can see where it came from." She gave it a quick read, her paw starting to reflexively thump as she made her way through it.

"What's up with the paw? Is it racy? Love letter from an old flame like in those black and white movies?"

"Read it, there's something going on here," Judy said, pushing the letter up at her colleague.

Dear Nero,

It's always a pleasure to hear from you, for any reason. But when the news is good, that's even better. I'm glad to hear that you've finally entered a flush period with a lot of surprising income, you certainly deserve it. You worked hard and still do, even in a different occupation. Selling flowers in Happytown isn't the easiest thing in the world, but now you have something, and something in your wheelhouse. Yes, yes, Nero, I know. The crocus and the orchid are very different things. A corm is a corm, you worry too much about those kinds of details. Leave them to scientists.

I find myself capable of supplying you, to keep your new buyer happy but, I must hesitate. I know I said that details aren't a worry except for scientists, but... what do they need this many for? At best they're decoratives, especially in the city. Only farmers ever need so many of them, for practical purposes. Though, you did mention it was a sheep, and those Meadowlands folks do love their overly organized, excessively neat gardens, free of even the tiniest trace of pests.

As well, it's a C botanical. I can't just shove them out the door. It's not catnip or locoweed but the law still wants all eyes on it. I'll write up the proper paperwork. But Nero, please tell me you aren't selling under the table. You can confide in me but please tell me you're not. If you need money there are better ways. Do you want to go to prison for selling something as lowly as Midnicampum holicithias? I know you don't generally enjoy such humor, but there are better botanicals to go to jail over, more respectable and understandable ones.
Your buyer may not be happy, but we can keep this between us, flower mammals. Once I have all the paperwork done, I'll immediately send you a few boxes of the corms I have available. You can owe me. I'm not entirely sure how I feel about all of this.

I hope your success continues, with far more respectable methods.

Your friend,

Emmitt O.

"So, the guy was dealing something under the counter. Maybe he was connected to the gangs somehow. You meet all sorts as a PI," Grizzoli mused.

"Thing is, I know what he was talking about in the letter. I come from a carrot farm, and the fields are thick with Midnicampum holicithias. They're between every row, and extra thick around the borders of every field," Judy said.

"Is your family in the botanicals business? I thought they went in for moonshine brewing in the sticks."

"No, no, it's legal, you just have to have a permit. Dad always complained every time he had to renew his 'crocus papers', as he called them. They're not really useful as a drug, but they're toxic to insects, that's why we use them. They repel and kill insects. The letter mentioned neat gardens without pests, but also said... a sheep."

"A sheep. Well, it wouldn't be him, that would be too easy, but one of his flunkies, that's easy enough to believe," Grizzoli growled.

"We need the envelope. I'm willing to guess his supply of the corms ran low, but the buyer was still coming in demanding more. So, he asked a fellow florist to send him some, and one he knew well, one he thought wouldn't do all the paperwork. What would happen if your buyer comes and thinks you're either holding out or figured something out?"

"You go savage, and then they find a new dealer."

Judy nodded, looking under the desk and around the area. "I don't see anything here. We'll get the chief to send in a forensic team, and look for this Emmitt O fellow. We have a head start, we know he's in the plant business, that he's probably not in the district, or else he wouldn't need to write, and that he's licensed to own and sell at the very least Class-C botanicals. That's actually a lot. We should narrow down the identity fast, then we can interview him."

"A good day of good police work. Let's make a run over to Tundratown before we head down to the station. There's a shop on Domovoi that sells thirty-two flavors of ice lichen, my treat!"

Judy laughed softly and shook her head. "Information first. Then, sure. I came to the city to try new things. It couldn't hurt."

Dawn casually strolled the streets of downtown, clearing her head. She really was losing some quality of life to stress. The migraines were fake but the pressure was real, as well as a recurring stab of pain from her old life as she sought to undo the harm of the crime she had doubtlessly been instrumental in committing in the old world. Being an open-minded Outsider was not making her old memories happy. Somehow, despite the pain, it made her happy.

She was thinking of nothing in particular as she went along, occasionally stopping to pose with
folks who stopped her for a handshake, to praise her or who wanted a picture. She had never felt so loved, she was sure. They had feared her, or respected her. Something that wasn't love. She was soaking it all in, making her past petulant but her present joyous.

Even in the middle of a threat, the citizens of Zootopia were still trying to live lives as normally as possible. They did look guarded and skittish, especially prey, but they still went around. One happy change that she noted were prey and predator were traveling together. Some as friends but some very much not. She watched a tiger carrying a rabbit child on his neck while a doe that was most probably her mother kissed and hugged his thick neck as he held her up in one arm. Without hesitation, either. That set Dawn's trotters to trotting, practically on air.

"Pawpsicles!" A cold fear stabbed into her gut, and a burning pain raked through her mind. She had been through Judy's name, endured the ultimate suffering of her mind. The new pain was similar. It was second, but a near second. That voice. She needed to know nothing else but that voice. Confident, even friendly, but saturated in practice, in guile and just a touch of smarm. He was trying to hide it, but two different lives of looking at the fake and the polished had showed her how to identify an unctuous fake. "Organic! Pawpsicles!"

Having suffered through the debilitating attack that was the effect Judy had on her, it was easier to get through what that voice brought out. The pain faded more quickly but it throbbed heavily while it was there. The fox had been a lesser actor in her downfall, but still an actor, and was tied up in the plot that had unseated her in another world, another life. By some miracle of guesswork she managed to drag herself over toward the voice that was plaguing her, catching sight of a small stand, loaded with ice, with paw-shaped ice pops sticking up. She fumbled in her pocket for the requisite two bucks and held them out. "One, please... anything cold is worth any price right now."

"Mayor Bellwether, patronizing my little stall? I should add it to the advertisement," the fox chuckled, taking the bills and dutifully passing on one of the frozen treats.

Dawn took a better look at the figure, Judy's Leodore, the match that could transcend any division, that would spark with just one meeting. He was... a fox. Russet and regular. A cheesy smile, a guarded stance, all with a loud shirt and an oddly out-of-place tie almost but not quite properly used as intended. He meant nothing to Dawn, but would mean everything to Judy, if she could be allowed to meet him.

The pop was pressed against her forehead, cooling some little bit of the burning in her mind, or at least she had the slight sense of it. "Thank you very much. Oh I need that..."

"Something the matter, mayor? Need some more? On the house, of course, if you'll tell folks just how helpful they are for headaches," the nameless fox said, slickly shifting from concern to commerce.

"Mayor-pro-tem," Dawn corrected. "I'm only a substitute for right now. I'll buy another one once this melts all over my head, but thank you for the offer. I try not to take any free items without mentioning it publicly, it keeps me honest and transparent."

"Honesty is the best policy, so they say," the fox said with a shrug.

Dawn considered walking away, leaving the encounter as just a distraction. But something inside told her she had to do more. He was too close to the police station. Even if Judy worked Happytown she lived in Savannah Central. At any moment she could meet him, and spell disaster. She was tasked with doing anything. Anything. "May I give you a bit of advice Mr.?"

"Wilde. Nick Wilde. And certainly, always good to get advice from someone who occupies a top
position like mayor... sorry, mayor-pro-tem."

Dawn didn't need all her faculties to be able to pick out details, she had been drilled in searching for weaknesses and ways to undermine any opponent practically from the cradle. "You don't belong here and we both know it. Your cart is rickety, your storage methods are atrocious, your treats are improperly chilled on a bed of snow and not by mechanical refrigeration, they aren't individually wrapped for consumer protection, I can see fur on a few of them, and in the snow, you don't have fully displayed nutritional information or allergy warnings, you have neither your small-scale vendor's permit, tax certificate nor health department grading placard, you're not wearing gloves and if this is organic I'll drink my own lanolin."

The smug smarm simply melted away from Nick's face as Dawn smoothly and cleanly eviscerated his carefully concocted lie of a business through simple observation and a clear understanding of legal requirements. He might have held his facade under a lesser figure's observation but the combination of a casual statement and the status of the speaker took all the wind out of his sails. "I, I can assure you I have it right here, see, a permit and health inspection," he lamely said, quickly whipping out the papers requested without mentioning any of the myriad other things brought up.

"No tax certificate, in a cash business with what looks like zero overhead. If you ever filed a tax return I'll eat my wool. Don't insult the both of us, Mr. Wilde."

"Hey, hey, the customer is always really, really annoyingly right," Nick said, with his sleazy charm a little worse for wear. He held out the money he had been given and offered a big, insincere smile. "Maybe you'd like a refund? You can keep the pawpsicle, of course."

"I'm not here to shut you down, not at this point. I'm saying that you're very much in the wrong place. Do you have any concept how close you are to Precinct One? How many cops pass by this area?"

Nick blinked, slowly, looking on Dawn like she had grown an extra eye. Given her reputation for being close to the cops he had expected something different. "Uh, too close? Well... yeah, I guess I could see that. But what are you saying, Mayor-pro-tem?"

Dawn sighed, steeling herself for what she had to do. "I'm saying you shouldn't be here. You should move to a place further from the police, and more likely to be open to your wares. Or maybe... maybe more open to you."

While Dawn was busy with a piece of paper and a pen she pulled from her pocket, Nick was still in the midst of utter confusion. His hustling mind had a very specific idea about how the world worked. He had shifted through two different conceptions of Dawn, from a soft touch with a soft heart and head, to a law-enforcing arch-politician eager to show off her heavy hoof of law and order. "Pardon me?"

Dawn handed off the paper she had been writing on, which contained two phone numbers. "Call the first number after the Vesper turnover, or on City Council meeting days call the second after the council session is over. In either case tell them your name and that Dawn wanted you to call. Tell them you're interested in going to Sahara Square, because you're a fox, and you deserve respect."

Nick reflexively crumpled the paper in his paw when his species was mentioned, and his lips pulled back before he could think better of his actions. "What is this, some kind of new way to mess with me? I'm just here making a living. If you want me moved I'll move but this has nothing to do with me being a fox!"
There was nothing to the anger. It was a mere reflex, a bad reaction spurred by a life of pain. The teeth didn't intimidate her, she knew she was safe. "It has everything to do with you being a fox. Everything. Because, quite frankly, we failed you."

Another shift without a clutch. One more confusing thing thrown in his face. "Failed me? What do you mean? I don't need your prey pity and your syrupy excuses. I have a life to lead, my way!"

"You're the reason Leodore and I created the Mammal Inclusion Initiative. You can't fix a city as cracked and patched as Zootopia in one swing. You do work, and lots of it. You saw and hammer and sand and polish and actually fix things, address problems and close the loopholes. You make sure there are ways for others to succeed, so they can enjoy the promise that you do. Foxes have been put down by too many groups, all for traditions' sake. For stereotypes. For no good reason at all."

Nick huffed, showing his teeth again. "Maybe I'll just go to Happytown. Predators are always welcome there. That's where a fox can have respect."

"No. Not Happytown. That's the last place for you to get the respect you need. You think prey animals look down on foxes? At least prey just believe in stupid stereotypes and rumors. Predators keep a hierarchy, and this gang war has shown it. The organized predators, the ones with prestige, they take the top spot and they look down on lesser predators like otters and meerkats and foxes. You don't have to deal with that. They'll respect you in Sahara Square."

"You don't know and you can't know. You don't know me, I didn't ask for a handout, I'm just a tod selling his wares. So I'll move this, clean up the fur and, I don't know, get plastic bags and an ice chest or something. I know you want everyone to be happy and together just because you and some rich lion got cozy together. Fine, a few lucky predators got into the higher up jobs. It's still prey making all the decisions, it's still them that can deny you loans and tell you what Ranger Scout troop you can belong to. Not everyone can be anything, no matter what that tiger-kissing singer says. Sure, they all got out of Happytown. But if you're still in Zootopia, you can only be what you are. Slick fox, orderly sheep."

Dawn didn't rise to the bait, not for her friend nor for her boyfriend. She rode the waves of his bitterness, noted when and how he revealed his own insecurity and offered him the best treasure she could. She didn't comment on any of it, even if any number of responses could have ripped his heart out of his chest and given him back the pain that he wanted her to feel. "The first number is for Osuyiani Fanak. The second is for Tiziri Fanak, city council member from Sahara Square. They believe in helping others, starting over, and making a fresh beginning free from the pain that dragged a mammal back. But more importantly, she's a fox. And an important politician. The folks of Sahara Square don't look down on foxes, they prize their craft and skill."

Nick resolutely threw the paper away, landing it in the snow of his cart. "Thanks for the advice Miss Mayor for now. I've got pawpsicles to push. I'll just push them somewhere else."

Dawn silently watched him go, upset for any number of reasons. She was forced to do this, to rankle and push this innocent fox just because Morning Star willed it. She had promised him a recovery from the injustices of the past, reminding him of them and making it seem like she somehow understood, when she really didn't. She only knew the outcome in numbers, not the pain of individuals.

Her machinations on behalf of her 'benefactrix' had some effect, which set her emotions roiling into greater turmoil. He was moving, but moving in the direction of the Sahara Square border. He also surreptitiously picked the paper out of the snow and carefully opened it back up. He would consider it, she was sure. Start over, with a new life. He'd get help, he'd get a way out of hustling
cheap ice pops and sun and earth knew what else. He'd get some relief from the historic degradation accorded to foxes.

But, what really twisted her stomachs into knots, was that he would get a new life, without Judy. And it was all her fault.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Drink my lanolin- Overtly, a very specific, sheep-centric moderate to strong oath that falls somewhere between 'kiss my ass' and 'eat s**t'.

A Half-and-half- A marker of the stratification or social class division between acceptable and unacceptable. Those of the same type but not species, usually meaning diet, have far fewer restrictions than Outsiders, hence why no one bats an eye at Mrs. Fanak who is overtly married to a non-fennec, or at Bucky and Pronk who are married and of different species but both are antelope types. For children of those pairs, the more neutral half-and-half is used. Also, this is me writing in a reason that Grizzoli has that name when he's apparently a polar bear. I split the difference and said he's a grolar bear, and that, possibly, his father is a grizzly bear. Or, his mother. As Mrs. Fanak proves, there's no requirement that the wife take her husband's name. The change can be very traditional (most male hyenas take their wife's name after marriage) or just left up to the couple in question, possibly influenced by prominence (in "Unbounded Love" the highest likelihood is that Gideon will become Ovine to shed the baggage that comes with his name, and Travis will become Dreyson because they're loaded and the name carries weight.)

Ice Lichen- Not quite like ice cream, actually. It's more like an Italian Ice or an Icee or Slurpee. The ice lichen is blended with the snow on which it grows, sometimes with flavoring, then potentially compressed in chilled molds either into discs covered in chocolate, or balls around bonbon size packed into fancy boxes, or else left mostly liquid and mixed further with extra ingredients as a dessert or a vaguely healthy drink.

N. Woolfe- I used to be very into all things mystery, mostly novels but also movies and television. I enjoyed striking characters with big personalities and interesting quirks and outlooks, like Colombo or, indeed, orchid-loving Nero Wolfe. I thought a reference here was more than appropriate. Also, just as an extra reference, the name is also formed by combining his last name with Virginia Woolf's, because I'm an unashamed literature nut.

Corms- Plant people, Like Mr. Woolfe, Mr. Otterton and Judy, would invoke the insistent terminology trope for specific plant parts and identities. Crocuses are not related to orchids, and neither one come form bulbs, as strictly defined, but rather corms. And Mr. Otterton sort of puts a humorous cap on that by insisting it's too fine a delineation to quibble about being asked for a crocus variety when Mr. Woolfe is an orchid expert since, to Otterton, corms are corms.

Nick- I know most readers have been clamoring for Nick, and they want him to sweep in and have a big impact like Judy, and do something amazing. But here's the sad truth
about our favorite fox: In a very real sense, he had nothing to do with the movie. He was a random less-than-honest and far-less-than-strictly-ethical streetcorner purveyor of probably slightly paw-tasting frozen treats that had been melted through a rainspout who only happened to sell one particular otter an ice pop and then coincidentally got caught walking out of frame. For all he actually did he could have been replaced by a taco cart guy. Taking Judy out of the meter maid cart, removing her contact with Nick took away any context. He's just a poor fox hustling pawpsicles, like he was before she arrived. Judy gets to be a heroine cop because taking her out of her old position put her where the glory was. And Nick, well, in that instance, he doesn't really matter, which might be a hard truth to swallow. But maybe he'll actually call Mr. or Mrs. Fanak, get help setting up a new place, learn that there can be a place where foxes don't have to play to base stereotypes. Heck, maybe Finnick can help him settle in.
The Sheep War, part one

Chapter Summary

Dawn fights her father through his proxies.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Three: The Sheep War, Part One

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Emmitt Otterton liked to keep a clean shop; orderly, neat and well put-together. It was something of a rebellion against the chaotic disorder of the rainforest growing wild outside his shop. His orderliness was ironically rebellious. He didn't seem it, with his sensible tweed slacks and the paw-knit fish-pattern sweater-vest his wife made him. But he had a very interesting life within the confines of being a good family mammal.

His career as the personal florist for a very... unusual fellow helped to keep his store more than flush, with an even grater bump thanks to his supplying of the flowers for the wedding of his benefactor's daughter. He also enjoyed his private time at the Mystic Spring Oasis, doing yoga to help his back. For all the wild stories about mustelids, especially otters, being living springs their near-liquid backs were still very mortal and prone to problems. With all the bending and stooping he did at his job, his own back was something of a mess that his doctor had suggested could be helped with yoga. He hadn't necessarily said naked yoga, but he hadn't said anything against it.

The whole shop made for a wonderful contrast with the outside. In contrast to the darkness beneath the canopy he kept his lights bright, to help the plants and make his customers better capable of seeing all the details on his plants. On the right side of the shop was a bank of refrigerators, loaded with pre-cut, pre-arranged bouquets for many occasions, in a small range of sizes, for those capable of entering and browsing the shop with relative ease. Anyone too large or small would be redirected to other places that could help them.

To the left were several different sections of live plants, including small flats of flowers ready for transplanting, and plants in pots prepared for decoration. There were flowers, small trees, ferns, mossy rocks with an attached kit to encourage the moss, and some lovely, exotic-looking succulents, with thorns and without. All along near the ceiling were the hanging planters, hanging pots and a small collection of epiphytes and aerophytes, which always served as a good novelty plant to try and talk up a sale.

He had just finished sweeping up behind his counter when two rather large fellows entered the shop. One glance told him his neat and orderly day was done. They were both imposing rams, tall and wide, though they moved with the kind of ease that said it was probably mostly wool and not
fat. The two sported horns, as rams tended to, though the one with black wool sported much large, far more intimidating horns than his gray-wooled partner. To make up for it, that fellow's right eye was covered with a black patch, with small markings coming from underneath to how it was not merely decorative. The fellows sported jeans and print t-shirts, the black ram advertising some place called the Double Ewe and the gray one displaying a ram skull.

Emmitt slowly approached the pair, preparing to launch into his usual quick, densely-packed speech about his fine variety of wares when the ram with the larger horns cut him off. "Listen, I believe you know a very close associate of ours, a Nero Woolfe. Until recently he'd been keeping us supplied with a very specific plant that we need for... important agricultural work."

"Unfortunately," the ram with the eye-patch said, taking up the thread, "Mr. Woolfe finds himself a little incapacitated at the moment. We're very big on agriculture, and need those plants right away. We'll take them young but if you have them already grown, that would be even better, for everyone concerned."

Recognition flashed in Otterton's eyes, and he wordlessly ducked behind the counter, emerging again with a stack of paperwork and two pens. Before he had even started explaining the process, the eye-patch-sporting ram was holding out a small wad of what looked like relatively small bills, if the five-denomination sign on the outermost bill was any indication. "Now... we're really in a rush. We're all honorable gentlemammals here. I think we can all work together in mutual understanding and sort of let things work themselves out, without the need to make a big fuss."

"Really, Jesse? With a bundle of fives? How do you even think of making a bundle of fives? You get twenties out of the machine, did you actually break a bunch of twenties to make that?"

"Woolter, don't use my cudding name! We're trying to conduct private business here," Jesse insisted.

"You just used my cudding name, you crash-drunk idiot!" Wooler shot back.

"Look, here's some money, and a good amount of it," Jesse said, almost shouting the last six words while looking aside at Wooler. "You seem to know what we need. And you seem like a smart otter, probably way smarter than your friend Nero. He must have gotten it into his head that he wasn't going to play ball anymore, and that was really not a good idea."

"This is a good business to be in, I assure you. You'll get more money than that... and not in cudding fives the next time we have this conversation. Just have a little padded box ready, or just throw them in a bag if that works for you. No need for all that paperwork or any kind of headache like that. We get the things, you get paid. Simple, like it was with Nero. But I'm certain you're a smarter pred than him. You won't hold out on us and then tell us you just couldn't get more, like we're idiots. Do your job, keep us happy and we'll all be happy." With that, Woolter motioned to Jesse and both of them made their way out of the shop.

Emmitt slumped down over his counter, his worst fears confirmed. He knew what had become of Nero, how his poor friend was languishing in the hospital, savage. They had done something to him, all over some useless pesticidal corms.

All for those... those things that some cultivators had taken to calling Night Howlers, when the scientific name got to be too much. It was odd that they didn't have a proper colloquial name. Then again, those that used them were out in the sticks, and probably had more names than just Night Howlers, but no one ever heard them. He only barely knew that name.

He'd need to examine the literature on them, maybe run a few tests on them. He didn't have a great
"Nothing. Not a single trace of an envelope," Chief Bogo grunted, slumping back in his chair. "We have to assume that whoever attacked Mr. Woolfe to turn him savage took the envelope because he had been told a friend was sending more bulbs..."

" Corms, sir," Judy said. "The plant in question is a type of crocus and they develop from corms, not bulbs."

Bogo slowly rubbed his forehead and huffed. "Very well, Officer Hopps. He learned the friend was sending more corms, and got nervous. Is that better?"

"I grew up farming, I know about these things," Judy said with some bit of pride.

Bogo sighed and looked at the various photos included in the envelope. "They don't look like something worth poisoning a mammal over. Frankly, they look like a bunch of moldy onions."

"Onions are bulbs, which is why there's so much confusion between the bulb and corm."

"If the agriculture lesson is over, we have things to consider. Have you started the search for this friend?"

"I asked Clawhauser to look into it. He seems really good at secretive research into obscure places." Judy said.

"He's always been good at that. All the paper documents he brought on Shearly have given us some interesting insights that we've copied through to Mayor Bellwether. With the revelation that this is intentional we can look at the things in his background with fresh eyes."

"I never knew something like this could happen. The only time I ever saw anything at all like this was in a Jack Savage movie that finally made it out to the Vogue Bijou downtown... in what we called downtown, which I now see was a bit... grand of us," Judy said with a slightly self-deprecating chuckle.

"This isn't common, that's for certain. If the Mayor is correct her father is at the heart of this, but for what reason, I can't say. He might be trying to keep the status quo, keep Happytown a slum, or he might be trying to intentionally inflate bigotry and fracture society, hurting Outsiders and others that don't fit in with his narrow ways as well."

"I looked at Meadowlands while I was on the train here. I mean, I looked through their website. It seemed nice. It had a homey feel to it. It didn't seem all that sinister," Judy noted.

"Maybe it didn't used to be. It was bland and inoffensive, that was all that they used to say about it. It was often boring, but that was influenced by a lot of the folks that lived there. They wanted everything to be the same, thinking like a herd. They were at least nice, if a bit distant. That's how the stereotype worked until Vesper Bellwether started enforcing the unity and herd thinking. He kept all the old looks, made sure to use all the bright and cheerful words and images, but made sure it was all according to his will," Bogo explained.

"The Mayor has certainly gone beyond her upbringing," Judy said, with wide eyes.

"It's been known to happen. We all have things we've been taught, and most of them are fine. But every so often we need to grow past something our family or community thought. How to act, what
to like, who to be friends with, who to fall in love with... or, other things."

Judy looked up at Bogo with great curiosity. That first day, Dawn had mentioned his calf, and he had been upset by questions about his wife. Or rather, the mother of his calf. "I... I don't have much experience in this kind of area but Officer Wulfberg is a really good cop. It's hard seeing him out like that. I never knew he was a Division child. But that just made him really good at his job, I guess."

Bogo snorted at the line of small talk but eventually gave a short nod. "I suppose it did. There are certain advantages to having a good mix of capabilities and natural strengths. It makes for a diverse workforce, which is at least something positive I can say about that Mammal Inclusion Initiative."

"And it gave me the chance to prove I'm a capable cop," Judy proudly stated.

Bogo huffed, either a dismissive snort or a repressed laugh. "Yes, yes, Officer Hopps. You're a tremendous pain in my haunches, you started off overly insubordinate and I think you're a little crazy for wanting to fight big predators on a daily basis. But I can't deny the skill and dedication you show. You've done extremely well for yourself, in line with the reports from the academy. In hindsight, it was certainly not a mistake to put you here. This city is getting fractured by Vesper Bellwether, and we need good cops to hold it together. Good cops like you."

Judy laughed softly. "Chief, I think you're getting sentimental."

"Watch it, Hopps," Bogo said, with a stern expression whose level of seriousness was not immediately evident. The whole matter became moot when the intercom buzzed. "Did you find something, Clawhauser?"

"Officer Grizzoli showed me that ice lichen shakes go great with cake donuts, and that the compressed frost medallions are the most perfect donut hole fillers ever on hot days," Clawhauser cooed.

"Did you find out about our mysterious plant seller?" Bogo asked, enunciating clearly for added emphasis and to make his displeasure clear.

"Oh! Yeah, I went through the records in narcotics and got permit lists. The one mammal that matches everything in the profile is a guy named Emmitt Otterton, who lives in the Rainforest District. He owns a shop called Otterton's Ornamentals, and I have the address all ready for you."

"Excellent work as usual, Clawhauser," Bogo said, looking to Judy. "Grab Grizzoli or McHorn and rush down there right away. They've had a head start and I fear what we might find when we arrive. I just hope they tried to make him a new source, rather than looking at him like a loose end."

Judy nodded and rushed out of the office. "We'll get there fast, chief!"

"Take him into protective custody!" Bogo bellowed. "He's the only thing we have in the way of a lead!"

Emmitt wasn't a proper chemist, not really. He had studied chemistry in university but he had mostly stuck with his botany. He still found chemistry useful, however. Besides making better or more specialized plant food and fertilizer he could work out what compounds were in some plants that could do different things like cause allergies.

A few days after the rams had visited him he was still hard at work in the back of his shop, seeing
what was so special about the Night Howlers. He knew of their properties as pesticide and pest prevention. Early work showed very small traces of the active ingredient in the corm itself and the shoots that started developing. The actual flower contained a great deal more in the petals and sepals, which gave it the characteristic bright blue hue.

His side research on the plant itself was largely dry, boring examinations of its use as pest control. He had dug up some interesting history, about certain agricultural societies in far lands who had use it in combination with woad as a war paint, telling great stories of how simple farming prey could crush predator and large-prey invaders with the ferocity seldom seen in times of peace.

He had encountered references to it in the same category as Amanita muscaria, with older traditions of burning the plant in rituals to produce visions and to ensure the success of rituals to give warriors so-called secret and amazing powers. The historical literature at least added some spice to the research, which was otherwise dull and almost pointless.

The combination of traditional ideas about what it did and the more modern clinical examination started a chain reaction in his head.

The method of action was for the active ingredient to bind to certain receptors in the brains of insects, which were conserved across a broad range of them. Crop-destroying pests showed either aversion to the flower and its pheromone emissions, or ate it and were quickly induced to engage in risky behavior, leading to predation. The active compound apparently stopped neural activity related to restraint, leaving the insect acting in unpredictable manners. While persistent, at normal doses found in the flower the active agent would only remain in the body for a certain period of time.

According to research the active chemical could have some effect on mammals as well, with particular neuroreceptors in the mammalian forebrain being analogous enough to the insect receptors that the chemical could bind to them as well, potentially with even greater persistence. Further, if the dosage exceeded that of the average plant there was speculation that it would never leave the system, the compound not being filtered by the liver or kidneys to any great degree, allowing receptors to be 'replenished' with the chemical when what was already binding wore off.

Ethnologists examining traditional tales and ancient artwork and artifacts found the repeated use of the same plant in different places but vaguely similar contexts significant. It was always associated with agricultural societies, unsurprisingly, but those that maintained their social stability with periods of defensive war against interlopers or hostile neighbors. All of the farmer-warriors were noted to be fearless and strong, endowed with special power that left them when the battles were done.

There was little consensus about what was just aggrandizing mythologizing, and what was a distorted report of actual effects. A lot of plants had psychoactive effects, a fact that Emmitt knew well. He had permits for class C and B botanicals, and was well aware of the care and handling instructions as well as how to identify someone who had been using them. All part of the rich tapestry of being in the plant business.

It was just something to keep pests away from gardens. He didn't have much call for it in the Rainforest District but he had customers that used it, so he stocked it, with all proper safety protocols observed and the law followed properly and precisely. Naked yoga was one thing, but dealing in plants was something he couldn't be a part of.

It also wasn't likely to be a long or healthy career, though with more thought, it was nothing but a trap. Nero had been providing but their needs were too great, and they apparently had no patience. If he slowed or ran out the corms they would take care of him in the same way, take him away
from his wife and children. Again... over useless pesticide plants.

His looking around in the papers online showed one he had almost overlooked. The writing was dense and technical, beyond the chemistry he had taken. But one part of the conclusion caught his attention. *We have demonstrated a potential pathway for concentrated and refined Midnicampum holicithias to vitiate the function of forebrain activity though persistent binding with receptor pathways connected to higher brain functions. While only potential, the chemical data bears up the possibility. No current process has been discovered for concentrating and refining the chemical outside of ways that make the resultant suspension extremely toxic, but if the toxic elements could be removed the refined chemical itself would have the effects outlined. At present, even with proper synthesis there is no proper method for in vitro testing, and in vivo tests would be unethical. This constitutes a dead end, and further research would be unfruitful.*

The tales of the old agricultural societies, about creating berserk warriors with their war paint and fumes, fighting without fear and with tremendous ferocity. Crushed or burned, taken in, but only in small doses without refinement. It passed out of the system, but left them raging, potent, savage fighters.

"By the silver glow... they figured it out. The... the Night Howlers! They refined the Night Howlers!"

Chapter End Notes

**Author's Notes**

**Otterton's Muteness**- There are several rivers of inspiration that make their way into this little running gag. Primarily, of course, it's because Otterton never speaks in the movie, and so this seems more true-to-life even though it would be natural for him to actually speak. But as well, it's a kind of reaching reference to the Jerry Lewis movie *The Bellboy*, which also features a character who can speak but doesn't, because of the circumstances happening all around him.

**Crash-drunk**- A sheep term largely equivalent to 'punch-drunk' with a similar idea, being dizzy and disoriented from repeated smacks to the head, though in this case from headbutting rather than boxing. It's used as an emphatic, most often as an adjective modifying some combination of idiot, moron, or crackie (itself a term for crackpate or crackskull, the term, mostly figurative, for someone who's gone off because of too much headbutting, either permanently crash-drunk or just generally crazy because of head trauma.)

**Vogue Bijou**- I like slipping in references from my life, along with references to more conventional media. Both of those names are classic names for theaters that might be found in small towns. But, there's two elements here. The Bijou, besides being a cliché theater name, is the theater found in the introduction to the excellent game *Secret of Evermore*, where the main character emerges from at the start. The Vogue, meanwhile, was the name of the second-run theater that showed older but not necessarily classic movies. The lower-cost theater that showed movies that had left the megaplexes. It was also located in my hometown's "downtown" area, which was about as "small main drag" as Bunnyburrow, just suburban and not rural. It's not there anymore. Misdirected gentrification and attempts at Hipsterizing ruin everything.
"By the silver glow"- It's an odd thing to show, but there are apparently more than a few Holy Selenic followers in the Rainforest district. When Mr. Tatu talked about his strengthened religion through Leodore's pluck and skill he mentioned the moon. And here, Mr. Otterton also expresses his Lunar devotion. All that dark living under the clouds and canopies must encourage such a thing, much like the darkness of the Nocturnal district.
Interbellum- Intel

Chapter Summary

Otterton has information. Others would prefer he not tell anyone.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Four: Interbellum- Intel

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Octavia Otterton kept a clean house, much like her dear Emmitt kept a clean and orderly shop, and mostly for the same reason. It was a literal jungle out there, a twist of vines and littered with leaves. At the very least she could keep things tidy in her own home. It was a little domed building near one of the many rives created by the constant rain, the water being the processed runoff from all the trees above that would get a second processing before being sent back to the sprayers.

She took a seat on one of the petite settees in her front room, which was quite a bit more expansive than what she needed but it was at least in proportion to some degree. It had probably been intended for a capybara family, but they fit, so it was sold to them. They didn't normally have otters of their size. Rainforest district otters were of the giant variety. They were an anomaly, but Emmitt had wanted to live in a place teeming with a wide variety of plant life. It suited her as well. Despite the mess it really was beautiful, and that was a great selling point.

Her relaxed state left her a little distracted, so much that she nearly didn't notice that it was ringing. Annoying little device. All her friends seemed to like them, but she only needed it to store photos of her family and occasionally play a game of solitaire. She noted, with a smile, it was Emmitt, probably sending a little random love for her. He was still like a newlywed. "Emmitt, you sweet..."

"Octavia! Octavia! Are you at home?"

"Emmitt? What's the matter? Why are you so..."

"Listen! You need to listen... please, please be home... the children! Where are they?"

"They're here, doing homework. Emmitt, you're scaring me. What's the matter?"

"There's no time. Lock all the doors, block off the windows, don't let anyone in! That crazy terrorist might come around. Don't call the police, not unless you call Precinct One and get Chief Bogo or that bunny. Only them. I'm sorry. I need to go..."

"Emmitt! Emmitt!" Octavia looked down at her phone, but the call had ended. She looked around, checking her windows, half expecting to see a lurking monster peering in. Her first thought was for
her children. She ran for the far side of the house, sunk slightly down into the riverbank. If the windows were a problem, at least there were none in the bedroom and bathroom areas.

"Mommy? What's wrong?" Her youngest son poked her head out of his room, looking concerned.

"Nothing's wrong. Go back to your room and do your homework," Octavia said, trying to give every indication that everything was alright.

"Is daddy staying late at the store?" Her other son looked out from his room with a tilted head.

"I... I don't know. He just called me to say he was... busy and might be out for a while," she answered, puzzling over what little that Emmitt had said. Something about the one making mammals go savage, lock the doors, block the windows, protect the children. Despite her panic, she had to smile a little. That was her Emmitt, always thinking of his family.

At that moment, Emmitt's thoughts were forced away from his family to more practical concerns. He was in his small, secluded lab, the door locked and his shop darkened and listed as closed. He selected another number on his phone and desperately twitched as he waited for a reply.

"Mr. Otterton? I didn't expect to hear from you. Need a ride to more wedding matters?"

"Renato! I need you to come to my shop. Please, I know I can trust you. If you're on an assignment please find a way to come here."

"I'm in the limo but I just finished. I'll be there for you but what's the matter?"

"I've been approached by some dangerous mammals, and I'm sure they're going to come after me."

"We're in a dangerous line of work, no matter how normal it seems now."

"No, this has nothing to do with Mr. Big. The terrorist who attacked all those mammals, he's connected to two rams who came to see me, I know it. They need me to supply them with the plant to make the drug they're using!"

"What? How can you possibly know that?"

"I looked into the plant they tried to bribe me to give them. It's a controlled botanical, but they still wanted me to get them lots and lots of it. Somehow, these folks turned it into a drug to make animals savage."

"Silver shine protect us... are they there now?"

"I don't know when they'll be coming back. They already made my friend Nero Woolfe savage when he couldn't supply them with the plant. They won't hesitate to do it to me, and I will not supply them with it."

"I'm making the turn into the district. Do you need me to do anything special when I get there?"

"Call me as soon as you get to my shop. I'll rush out to the limo. I need you to take me to Precinct One, or City Hall. I have to see Chief Bogo or Mayor Bellwether. I know I can trust them. They need to know who is involved in this, and what the poison they're using is made of. Please, hurry. Moonlight guide you."

"By the gentle glow, I won't let you down," Renato said, hanging up his phone by tapping his earpiece.
The Rainforest district was home, the dark and often leaf-strewn surface streets were second nature to him, even in the cumbersome giant limo. Most of the travel in the district was done via walking or by the balloon barges, given how dark and cramped the surface was, simply by the nature of it being a rainforest. Only trained folks with an R-certificate on their license were allowed, and then by tradition and practical necessity only well-informed natives ever bothered to do it. Renato was very much one of those.

He pulled the long vehicle through the winding streets, keeping his balance in the pouring rain, driving like a stuntmammal on a movie set. It wasn't exactly the best idea. But the fear in Mr. Otterton's voice, the terrifying implications of what he had said, it spurred him forward.

Being someone associated with the Mayor of Zootopia, he almost felt like he had a vested interest in it. He had heard Lionheart and Bellwether discussing the matter in the back of the limo and his car. He had felt the fear of savagery before learning it wasn't a genetic problem but a malicious act. Knowing the actors had approached someone he knew, and had menaced them by implication... even if he was attached to a none-too-kind organization he was still a mammal with feelings. And that meant he wouldn't let harm come to the otter.

It took all his skill but he finally made it, his heart thudding all the harder when he saw the shop dark with the sign flipped around to 'Closed.' He fumbled with his phone, desperately tapping at the screen to call the number. "Pick up, pick up, pick up..."

"Renato! Are you here? Is the coast clear? I don't know what that means when someone could be waiting with a gas gun but..."

"I'm out here and I don't see anyone. I have the rearmost door facing your shop unlocked. Hurry! I'll rush you to City Hall. The Mayor will protect you."

The scene was still, save for the splattering rain, largely silent and dark, full of menace. Renato's heart thudded in his chest, adrenaline still surging high after his insane high-speed rush through the rain, in a limo. A limo. That had to be some kind of record. Fear and friendship could make mammals do amazing things.

The front door finally opened, and Emmitt gracelessly flopped out of it, weighed down by a briefcase almost a size too large for him. He threw himself against the limo door and desperately scrambled at the handle, finally managing to yank it open and hurl himself inside. "Drive! Drive!" He cried as he slammed the door shut again.

Renato pulled his chauffeur cap down a little, threw the limo into gear and gunned the engine. A record race through the district? He'd do it again, faster.

"I got through to the provider and got the number, Chief! I'm calling it now!" Clawhauser yelled out, using the computerized phone system to dial the number he had received. It was something of a redundancy, as there were already officers on the way, but better to let him know that.

The phone rang for an uncomfortably long amount of time before a small, fearful voice asked, "W-who is this?"

"Officer Clawhauser, ZPD. Mr. Emmitt Otterton?"

"Are you from Precinct One?"

"Yes, sir. Are you currently at your place of business?"
"No, no, I'm in a limo being driven by a friend; we're making our way out of the district. I have important information for the police and I must reach them!"

"Chief, he says he's on his way in a limo, we need to do something or they'll miss each other!" Clawhauser called out.

"Get him to pull over and relay his location, Hopps and McHorn can rendezvous with them and take them into protective custody," Bogo replied.

"Mr. Otterton, please get your driver to pull over and have him tell you where you are. We have police officers on the way and need to take you into protective custody."

"Renato! It's the police, the good ones. They want you to pull over and tell them where we are, they have officers on the way." A short pause followed, with the barely audible voice of Renato in the background. "He says we're at true-ground level, and right at the low intersection of Vine and Tujunga. Our doors are locked and the windows are up but I'm afraid the ones that threatened me know I'm running. I don't know if they know why but I'm running."

Clawhauser clicked the police radio over the right band and clicked it. "Clawhauser to One-Aardvark-Twelve. Proceed to the true-ground level of the district, at the lowest intersection of Vine and Tujunga. Mr. Otterton and a limo driver named Renato are there waiting for you."

"Read you, Clawhauser, proceeding to Vine and Ta-jun-ga," Judy answered, butchering her pronunciation.

"Actually it's Tujunga, with an H-sound in there. Everyone gets it wrong don't worry. The sounds are different in the Rainforest District. I remember..."

"Clawhauser, I've got it. Proceeding to Vine and Tujunga to pick up Mr. Otterton and his... limo driver? Huh, being a florist must pay way better than I thought."

"Mr. Otterton, Officers Hopps and McHorn are on their way to your location."

"Renato! We're safe! One of the officers is Judy Hopps! Oh thank you... thank you so much. M-my family, they need to be protected, if I'm in danger..."

"We have your address, and as soon as you're secure we'll roll more police to go collect your family. Does your... limo... driver... need help? A limo?"

"We work for the same wealthy individual in different capacities. He's a set driver hired from a service, and I do all things plant-related, such as decoratives and table settings. He was coming back from a job when I asked him for help."

Clawhauser beamed in relief and reached out for a chocolate frosted bar doughnut. "Sounds like everything's just fine, then. Just stay on the line until—"

A small burst of activity came from the other end of the line, Renato's indistinct voice sounding excited, or frightened. The next words were quiet, and trembling. "Renato says he saw someone lurking in the undergrowth, just in the view of the lights. He can't tell what it was but it can't be the police. Please, tell them to hurry..."

"One-Aardvark-Twelve, how much longer? He says someone is creeping out there, in a creepy manner. I mean, he didn't say it but he implied it. Or I inferred it..?"

"Just a few more minutes, Clawhauser, hopefully less! Driving in the rain and on the lower streets
isn't for the faint of heart. I'm glad they require this at the academy."

"Mr. Otterton, just a few more minutes, can you hold on?"

"We might need to take off quickly if the situation gets worse. The windows are tinted back here but Renato says that he saw a few of the plants moving before he lost them past the windshield. I don't like this. It's like they're stalking us, hunting us, like a spear-fisher after a fat salmon."

"Just keep calm, Mr. Otterton, you're going to be fine. Keep down, don't let them know you're in any particular..."

A sharp cracking sound rang through the call, and a good deal of screaming came through the call. "They smashed the window! They're trying to break in!"

"Are you alright? Can you see the assailant?" Clawhauser clicked over to the radio. "One-Aardvark-Twelve! Active assault on the limo! They're trying to break through the windows!"

"Any faster and I'd be flying! We're almost there!"

"They can't quite break in. The glass is tinted and reinforced. They're cracking it up but they can't really break all the way through. It's reinforced but we still need help. They're trying to headbutt through it."

"Just hold on the others are almost there," Clawhauser assured.

"Arriving at the scene! We've got a figure attacking! You! This is the ZPD! Halt your assault and surrender!" Both the radio and the phone went mostly silent, indistinct sounds emerging from the background of both, shouts and impacts just audible to a nervous Clawhauser. "Mr. Otterton? Judy? Is anyone still there? Is everything alright?"

A long moment of mumbles and silence followed, before Emmitt responded. "They're here. The sheep outside the limo ran away and now we're being moved to the police vehicle." A small voice came from the background and Emmitt laughed softly. "The city will pay for having the limo towed, I'm sure. Don't worry, Renato. We're safe now, let's just focus on that."

"Clawhauser, we've got both of them. The suspect fired a few rounds of the toxin at us, but either missed or hit the reinforced, non-porous parts of our uniforms. The rain took care of what didn't evaporate. We'd pursue but in the rain, in the undergrowth, he's long gone. Suspect is a large ram with what looked like beige wool, no horns, I repeat, no horns. Probably with head wounds from attempting to headbutt reinforced glass, wearing a dark blue or black outfit, hard to tell if it was one piece or just tight pants and a snug jacket. Matte, very hard to get details out of."

"I'll put out the details and get the hunt started, after I dispatch officers to Otterton's place. Mr. Otterton, are you still there?"

"I'm here. Thank you so much."

"Call your family, tell them police are on the way."

"I will. Thank you... thank you so much. The glow bless you, all of you." The call ended with a soft click.

"One-Aardvark-Twelve heading back to the station. Clawhauser, get some coffee and donuts for our guests, they're wet, scared and need your signature cheer."
"You got it, Judy! I mean, uh, affirmative, Officer Hopps. We'll be ready for them here," Clawhauser said, falling back into his chair and slumping. That had been way more excitement than he was used to. But he couldn't rest too long. The folks coming in would need tending to. Being a good and friendly face was his specialty, and he had to maintain his perfect record of being welcoming.

O o o

"It's there, on the aggregator website, National Archive of Peer Review," Emmitt said, taking a sip of coffee to brace himself. "If I'm remembering right it was called Ethnobotanical investigation of Midnicampum holicithias and the viability of the proposed used of holicithianine in explanations of traditional legends of special abilities by... well, I believe the paper was by Washbar et al. The conclusion got me started on the path to thinking of how they had done what they were doing. Refining and extracting a non-fatal version, that could be used as a contact poison."

"This is... this is frankly amazing. I never even realized that it could do that, or that they were called anything else. Dad always just called them Midnicampum holicithias," Judy said, carefully writing the statements down and waving her carrot pen a bit as she smiled. "'Now you kids stay away from the Midnicampum holicithias!' It would have been a lot simpler if he had just called them Night Howlers."

"As I understand it there are more than a few common names, but no consistency. Hence why the scientific name is so common. It's oddly easier when there's no agreed-upon colloquial name," Emmitt said, munching on a chocolate-frosted sprinkle doughnut. "I also read that in the case of accidental ingestion of the petals even prey animals can be affected, suffering reduced inhibitions, an increase in aggression, loss of speech, ocular alteration, lack of rational consideration, nausea, vomiting and elevated temperature. Presumably the more aggressive compounds alongside the holicithianine caused the nausea and vomiting, or only did that when eaten. Whoever did this could probably tell you."

"You mentioned that. The ones who came to see you, who presumably threatened Mr. Woolfe and also may have turned him savage."

"Yes, I'll never forget them. Big sheep, huge. Towering brutes. One of them with black wool and absolutely titanic curled horns. The other had gray wool, with smaller horns but I was more intimidated, because he had an eye-patch, and I could see scars from under it, so he probably really needed it. They called themselves Woolter and Jesse. Jesse had the eye-patch and Woolter had the big horns."

"But the one assaulting the limo with you and Mr. Manchas had no horns at all. So that's a third, unknown figure. All sheep. I shouldn't be surprised. So, I'll just need you to take me through that encounter with this Wooler and Jesse again..."

"Well, that's a load off my mind. We not only know it's a toxin, but what it's made from. The doctors can work on a cure for it if they know what it comes from," Bogo said, standing behind the interview room glass with Dawn.

"I never thought that knowing something seemingly irrelevant would make me feel so good. But just like you said, we know exactly what it is, and now a cure can be found. But even harder work begins," Dawn said, somewhat ominously.

"And I presume Mr. Lionheart will be gracing us with his presence once more," Bogo said, with almost a playful mirth in his tone.
"No, not at all. In fact I might just have him sent into a deeper level of quarantine," Dawn sighed, turning away from the interview and slowly resting the back of her head against the window.

"Not usually my place to ask about potential domestic issues but... you've been miserable without him. Why leave him there?"

"Are you kidding me? That's the best place for him to be. He's watched twenty-four hours a day, under the care of professionals I can be reasonably certain aren't part of this crazy conspiracy. He's got the most secure protection he could ask for, even more than I do. I love him, of course I'm going to keep him in a place that's gone from necessary prison to absolute fortress of security. It's the greatest political contingency plan ever. If I get hit with that stuff and lose my mind, Dr. Honeybadger has only to declare Leodore completely functional and he can take up the mantle of Mayor, from inside the hospital as a continual place of protection."

"Equal parts pragmatic and romantic. I think the two of you have something special," Bogo chuckled.

"We do seem to fit together very well, no matter what others might say," Dawn chuckled. She slowly sighed and turned to look at Judy and Emmitt. "This gives us some serious information. And... I think... I think I know who he means."

"Again, not really my place but that's usually just a stereotype, that all species know their own. I never thought I would see it invoked for real."

"Believe me, in my father's Meadowlands it became too real. That conformity, that stick-to-your-own nature, behaving like an unthinking herd, all wrapped up in the illusion of bland suburban sameness. That was his doing, and he made sure it was done his way. Most sheep were put together at some point or another, in school or in 'free' extracurricular activities. I 'chose' to do a lot of activities I never remembered even having a passing interest in. And I saw at least one, which means I saw the other ram. That eye-patch is real. Jesse McLiff. Yes, the son of the chief of Meadowlands police."

Bogo snorted sharply, reflexively curling his fingers into a fist. "If only it was required that he be taken down with excessive force. His worthless son put one of my officers in the hospital; seems fair that I put my fist through that wool-stuffed skull of his."

"You'd have a time of it. His son got that eye-patch for being unable to resist fighting. He'd headbutt anyone. Which is why I think I know that Woolter the guy he got into trouble with. I don't know his last name but I know who they all made a trio with. Doug. Doug Ramses. I remember because he was a weird guy. He had no emotions. He was so cold and so unfeeling he regularly hacked off his own horns so no one would want to headbutt with him. They tried. He's only not in jail for malicious poisoning because Jesse's father imposed on my father to keep him out of jail."

"I see how all this goes. They handle the low-level thuggery, collecting the b- the corms from the likes of Woolfe and Otterton. What about this last guy? Sounds like just muscle."

Claws screeched across the chalkboard of Dawn's mind as she delved through the names, picked up what echoes and shadows she was allowed and meged them with genuine recollections, using painful allowance with her analytical mind to come up with answers. "I remember Doug. If you think he's dumb muscle, then he wins. That's how it works. I told you, he poisoned the ones that messed with him. Doug was an emotionless robot, probably an empathy-deficient sociopath, and he only cared about two things. Chemistry, and competitive darting. His specialty was not the spring gun, like most folks prefer, but the gas pistol. And he was disturbingly good. I thought he'd at least turn his talents to a professional team, or that he'd be a research scientist... or maybe a drug dealer. I
Dawn nodded slowly. "Jesse and Woolter make a mess, Doug cleans it up. Old Ram McLiff can't do it anymore, someone has to make things go away. They jumped the gun on Woolfe, he goes savage. They lean too hard on Otterton, he attacks a limo. I'd be willing to bet anything he was hoping they'd have the windows down or get out of the car inside the district."

"And Officer Wulfberg will tell us about seeing something move or flash, getting a glimpse of the shot about to happen. He was going to do it. He was going to dart Hu Lin and have him rip Gazelle apart at a peace rally. What kind of monster would do that?"

The agony that throbbed through Dawn's mind was not new, but it was unique. Her old life railed at the indignity of the insult. Being called a monster for the monstrous things it had done did not sit well with the old life. But her new life, her proper life railed against that. She had been a monster, a cold monster willing to do harm to make a point about mistreatment and her own slanted interpretation of abuse. She deserved the castigation, even by someone in another world, a world where she had never committed those crimes. But they had still been committed, she had lived through it and retained the memory, even if it only came to her in waves.

After a moment of suffering she sighed, holding her throbbing head in her hands. "A desperate, foolish monster, someone who hasn't thought things through. Or who thought them through and either didn't care or relished the devastation. I'm not sure. But let's haul in Mr. Ramses and associates, and ask them directly."

Bogo nodded and clicked his shoulder radio. "Clawhauser, start a BOLO for Jesse McLiff and Doug Ramses. If they aren't in the system, details will follow from the notes that Officer Hopps is making right now."

"McLiff? As in, Chief McLiff?"

"The very same. He won't get his son out of this one. And Shearly won't be saving either of them unless he wants his world to come crumbling down."

"Getting right on it, Chief!"

"He wanted Happytown to be political poison," Dawn quietly said, staring at her slight reflection in the glass. "I've got his political poison right here. We're in for a war. But now everything we need is on our side. He'll go down angry and fighting, they all will. Shearly, McLiff, my father. But, Chief, for the sake of this city... let's make sure they all go down."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Octavia Otterton- If you don't give her a proper first name, we have to invent one. Alliteration and a reference to the voice actress works for me.

One-Aardvark-Twelve- Do I love classic television? Of course I love classic
television. Dragnet is a favorite of mine, and the spin-off, Adam-12. It made for a nice reference here.

**The Structure of the action**- This is based on a classic episode of Dragnet, "The Big Bar." In that episode, the climax involves the police pursuit of a murderer told entirely through radio calls. It was quite a tense, dramatic scene.
Chapter Summary

More war against the wicked sheep of Zootopia.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Five: The Sheep War, Part Two

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"This seems excessive..." The next day, after the action and chaos of recovering Mr. Otterton, Mr. Manchas and the Otterton family, Dawn was trying to get comfortable in her office, to have one bit of normalcy. Being confronted by Gazelle, Hu Lin and the wolves of her security detachment had thrown that thought out of the window. "Besides, don't you need them?"

Gazelle laughed musically and squeezed Hu Lin's muscular arm. "I have mi tigre... what else do I need? He can protect me. You need security more. Your job is dangerous. More dangerous now than before. They're professionals, and now they wear more covering to protect from the poison pellets."

"It's been a nightmare getting all the police equipped with both absorbent and impenetrable gear. Some of them have resorted to wearing wetsuits saved for their tropical vacations, or trying to stretch their uniforms over parkas and anoraks. I guess if it'll help. There's a natural precedent for politicians hiring private security. We're VIPs. I can even credit the savings to the city. It's not much but maybe it'll offset something."

"Bueno. We've been meaning to spend more time, just the two of us. We can be secure in the Palm, they have their own security. I'll leave you to Señor Howlmeyer, he should keep you perfectly safe."

Dawn rather awkwardly hopped from her chair and gave Gazelle the best hug she could manage. Thankfully, the singer dipped down to accept it. "You've done wonders for the city. I can't thank you enough. We just might weather this storm."

"We will. I know it," Gazelle rose again and leaned against Hu Lin. "A la casa, cielito..."

The huge tiger nodded and quite effortlessly lifted Gazelle off her hooves, bearing her away.

Dawn regarded the small pack of wolves, all wearing what looked like neoprene bodysuits under their regular formal black suits. They even had tight hoods and coverings for their ears, with mesh fronts to allow for hearing. Only their muzzles and faces remained on display. "A pleasure to see you again. I hope your... fallow doe? Fallow doe is doing well."
The leader of the group smiled, his covered tail wagging slightly. "Ah, sprechen sie?"

"I looked it up later. I like to remember important details about folks, in case I work with them later. A doe... you really are the one for proper protection."

"Outsiders must watch each other. Who else will, Bürgermeister?"

"I'll wear that title. It's not for much longer now. So, this seems like a small pack. Who's in this little group?"

"This is personal protection. Visible, ja? Others will be in the shadows. Some may even look like ordinary citizens. It is necessary we keep you safe. For all of us. We cannot lose the city we love, and do... what we must..."

Dawn thought about that statement for a moment, turning it over in her head. "Where did she go?"

"Bunnyburrow," Mr. Howlmeyer replied. "So many left, and I do not blame. I told her to go. Liebchen... I could not protect her, not with other responsibilities."

"Look... this is all very formal. I've learned from Leodore that it's better to loosen up, be friendly and gregarious. It works out amazingly well for him. I don't want a lot of stiff titles or code names. Tell me your names, and this might be a bit more cohesive, as well as friendly."

The very notion seemed to brighten up the pale gray wolf. "Ja. I am Steiner Howlmeyer, I own the company und keep it strong. This..." he indicated a sooty, very dark but not quite black wolf, "Is mein Schwester, Gerhilde. You can say the Outsider is... a family trait. Und these two..." He indicated a black and white wolf pair who were standing quite close. "Are the Hochzeitsreise couple, Gary und Larry Lune. They are some of my best, but they howl too much."

"That's a half-truth!" Larry said. "Gary's the serial howler. Not that there's anything wrong with it..."

"You join in. You love mixing your voice with mine," Gary teased.

"Professionalism is our motto, I assure you. We are just not... on the job yet, ja? You see when we are working, all business," Steiner said, lightly rubbing his temple as Gary and Larry made flirt eyes at each other.

"Do not mind Bruder, he is too hard on himself. He thinks we must look always strong. We are always strong, Bruder. If we look or not, we are," Gerhilde noted.

"It is better if we look and are, Schwester," Steiner mumbled.

"I don't want to get into the middle of a family thing... but isn't it better to be strong and appear only average or flawed somehow?" Dawn asked. "I don't often cherish the lessons I was forced to learn, but it's an old truism, the best thing to do is give the appearance of soft incompetence, so an opponent goes after that area. It's too late when they figure out you only looked like you didn't have a clue."

Steiner laughed softly and nodded slowly. "You have been in the military, ja? The thing in school or something?"

"Well, living with my father was a little like fighting a war, but no. I just had a lot of time to read. My condition left me with very little socializing that wasn't forced by my father," Dawn answered.
"Condition?" Gerhilde asked. "You have the special medical need we must tend to?"

Dawn indicated her short stature as compared to the much taller wolves. "I was born like this. They're still not sure if it's something congenital but not genetic or if it's strictly genetic. I'm unique among sheep. The eyes aren't part of it, that's a breed variance thing. It's from my mother's side of the family."

"You do much with what you have. You really are strong when no one knows it," Steiner said with a broad, bright smile. "Where do you go today?"

"Nowhere. I have no plans at least. I have a lot of papers to look over, mining for something to nail Commissioner Shearly with. We know he's dirty, he has to be. He was in cahoots with a provocateur trying to push fear and division. We have the guy on tape all but saying it was Shearly on the line, and we had his plate. That car's probably in a junkyard and he's got a dye-job and a new name."

"What was he?" Gary asked.

"We're pretty good at finding folks that like to try and get to important folks, even if they hide," Larry added.

"He wanted everyone to think he was a wolf. I'm almost certain he was anything but. Best guess would be coyote, dhole or... a sheep in the best disguise available. Police-level. Perfect enough to work in a crowd and survive some scrutiny."

"Sheep in wolf's clothing," Gary muttered, making a note. "Let us hear that tape later. If we know what to listen for, we'll be able to pick up on his voice easily."

Dawn pulled her phone out of her pocket and smiled. "It was recorded on here. Listen to it carefully, and remember this guy. If he's dumb enough to still be in Zootopia, we can catch him and hang him out to dry."

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"Yes, that's right! We know what they're using!" In the hospital's deep quarantine section, Dr. Honeybadger was talking animatedly on her cell phone just outside Leodore's lexan-walled containment cell, which looked more like a college dorm, with its sparse but livable collection of personal furniture and homey touches. "I have some idea about exactly how and to what the chemical binds and I've been giving them my input so they can work on a proper treatment for the toxin."

"And she's been doing a fantastic job with it, and she's been a great hostess!" Leodore called out, giving a deep, rumbling laugh after.

"Yes, that was the Mayor. No, I haven't... oh you!" Madge laughed and kissed at the phone. "Are you really jealous? You know I'd never go after another pred. No. I'm all yours. Yeah... with the cure being worked on we're in the home stretch. Even if they keep at it we can just cure the ones they hit, until the cops catch them. So don't be so scared anymore, okay? Don't you worry your handsome little head. Just rest up. More-to-love Madge is coming home soon, and you're gonna need to be in top shape. Get some electrolytes and... what? No. No, you buy those and I'll fill every one with water and chuck them at your head. Yes I mean it. Because we both have some money through some manner and I don't think there'll be such a thing as Division Families much longer. Just keep your chin up and think about... yes, that. In the dried leaf skirt. I've gotta go, babe. I love you, too. Bye." she let out a huge sigh and hugged the phone to her chest.
"I think we should socialize after all this. I think you and Dawn would get on famously," Leodore noted.

"She's been doing an amazing job, so far as I can gather. Keeping a city together while under threat is no small thing. And identifying the culprits... I think I remember one of them. You don't get to be a chemistry genius without some professional training of some kind. I didn't mix much with the chemists but I heard about the promising students. He could have graduated Magna but dropped out. I can see what he went into... that doesn't reflect well on the University," Madge said with a sheepish look.

"It's not their fault. It just means you train the best. Sadly, not everyone uses their skills for the good of others."

"I'm sure whatever madmammal is doing this thinks they're working for some kind of good. They're ludicrously wrong but they'll figure that out when the police, hopefully, taser them in the gut and throw them in a cell," Madge chuckled. "Have you ever wondered... about how your skills can be misused? Thinking that someone else on track to be a professional, maybe a doctor, could do this... if my skills were used for evil... I... it just sort of makes you question things, you know? You have to consider it..."

"Sometimes... when I'm holding onto Dawn, and it's late at night I'm just thinking about how far we've come, how much we've done. And I think there could be a world where I don't love her, where we're strangers to each other, or worse... if I hadn't been raised right what kind of of a creature would I be? Clearly unworthy to be mayor, and not right for her, at all."

"And her... oh could you imagine if she used her skills for evil? That much clever capability, that competence, being used badly. Hard to imagine but it could happen. Right? Or maybe it can't. Maybe some skills are only actually useful for good, and just fail when used for bad ends," Madge considered.

"I don't think I'm able to think of her like that. Not anymore. Maybe when she was just a random stranger, but not now that I'm more... intimately acquainted with her..." Leodore chuckled softly and sighed. "Just to make conversation while I'm being kept safe in here, who's your guy?"

"Ian Garanuug. He's a post-grad student at the University and no, before you ask, this isn't a conflict of interest. He's a botanist, so we're good to go. The Dean even had to mention it. Some of my colleagues are a little upset at my success. Predators aren't suited for the field, so they say. I think one of them was also kind of miffed about a predator 'poaching' a prey guy. That she was a springbok probably says a lot."

"I happen to know very well that Dawn's father hates every fiber of my being, and has probably convinced many of the citizens of Meadowlands to despise me as well, so you're in good company," Madore sighed.

Madge showed off her phone, which showed a photo of Ian. His lyre-shaped horns were notably thin, and very well polished and conditioned. His narrow face was delicate even for his species, and his long, giraffe-like neck was wrapped with a few colorful scarves. "He's a handsome one. Looks young, doesn't he? Don't worry. It's only five years. He doesn't look like a post-grad, does he? He looks fresh out in the world, like he should be living in a dorm with a hot plate and a roommate from some wildly different district, instead of in a condo we both make payments on."

"Dawn's apartment is almost right downstairs from me. It's a foot at best of floor and empty space but it might as well be a million miles. Isn't life funny like that? You must feel like you're on the other side of the world stuck down here with everyone working on this thing."
"At least once, sometimes twice, during the day, I have this intense need to squeeze him until his spine cracks. I hold back when I have the chance but the point is, we end up with folks in our lives that were never there before, and that suddenly are very vital to what we've made," Madge said, looking aside at Leodore. "I think you might be right, Mr. Mayor. We ought to hang out. We're a couple of Outsiders with good relationships. We get each other. And I don't fit in with that University crowd. They're fine and all, but there's a lot of that Prey-First thinking in some of them, and the rest just don't stand up to it."

"That's why I pressed the MII, why I've been working so hard for Happytown. If preds can be given more prominence, to be allowed to shine, and if the last bastion of discrimination's poison can be cleaned up, we might change some minds, and make your colleagues at least be a lot quieter."

"I'll take it. You know... ratels don't have the best reputation. In a weird way I understand what they mean, that in the main I wouldn't normally have the temperament for science work. At least, not given the ones I know, family and close friends. They can be surly, but not stupid. I didn't fit into that mold. I also sort of had... body issues. Look at me. I look like someone squashed a regular predator. It wasn't just being compared to the prey models, they were all long and skinny. I never fit anywhere, I just happened to be good at something that was in a place I didn't quite fit but could still get into. It was like an opioid receptor, it took me, no matter what I was, for better or worse."

"And now you're working on a major city project, getting prestige, making friends in high places. And you have one of those skinny prey models for your very own," Leodore rumbled pleasantly.

"It feels good to make it. It feels better making it and having so much to enjoy beyond simple success. But why am I telling you? You know that exactly. Maybe your family is more accepting than mine. Surly as ever. At least I'm not disowned. They just get snappy. Ratels. We always come back to snapping."

"My father is pointedly neutral about the whole thing. He's fine knowing that I'm not creating a scandal. The Outsider part almost went into that territory but he appreciates how I deflected that. That's about as much as I can hope for from the old suit. Mom's the other way. I call her every Frededas as she can't gush enough about every aspect of Dawn. She's beautiful, she's poised, she's clever, she's sweet. Everything. I'm not surprised. She knew I was an Outsider before I really did. She always knew I'd end up with a sheep. She encouraged my first attempt at indulging a crush. Even if it went nowhere, it meant a lot."

Madge opened the containment chamber door and motioned toward the main hub of the facility. "It's about lunch. Let's make plans for a couples' outing once this whole matter is taken care of."

"Sounds like an excellent idea. Is there fish on the menu?"

"Not yet. I keep asking, they keep delaying. Doesn't matter. They serve Croaka-Cola, and that's enough for me."

"Now I know that my own favorite actually used to have detectible amounts of active catnip, but did that really have actual toad mucus in it?"

Madge laughed and nodded. "Did it ever! And before they dropped it just for the flavor compounds I should tell you when they tried to reduce the problem with that New Croaka-Cola substituted with Amanita muscaria..."

 o o o
Dawn idly tapped on her phone, playing *Blazing Towers*, and unashamedly taking in the eye-candy that was her primary adventure team. The armor on the males got very brief, much as it did on the females, as they got more powerful. Her lion barbarian was very reminiscent of a certain someone, which had inspired her to pay the microtransactions and push him to his ultimate look. Just like Leodore, if his Striper shorts were replaced with a fish-leather loin cloth and he was carrying a giant axe. It was something to consider. She could probably pull off the outfit the sorceress mouflon had, even if her curves were less... full.

In the middle of repeatedly poking the barbarian to make him cycle through his suite of animations, most of which included flexing of some kind, her phone started ringing, showing an unknown number. Her bodyguards all swarmed in, looking down at the device.

"Don't worry. I'm the Mayor, for now, I get calls. But... if something seems suspicious I'll let you know," Dawn said, tapping to answer the call. "Hello, Mayor-pro-tem Dawn Bellwether speaking. What is the nature of your call?"

"Miss Bellwether..." The voice on the other end was quiet, fearful, almost hissing as she attempted to whisper yet also tried to be heard. "Please... you have to do something."

"Wait... are you Shearly's secretary?" Dawn asked, motioning to the phone to indicate potential trouble. "What's the matter?"

"I can't do this anymore. He's... he's going too far."

"Calm down and tell me what happened. I promise I can help you if you just explain what's going on."

"He's been having me process a lot of strange paperwork, nothing for the city. It looks like something to do with some charity I've never heard of in Meadowlands. I... I may have made a few extra copies of some of the sheets. It's his personal money going into it, but all the names on them are different and some of them are just numbered accounts. He's either embezzling or paying someone he shouldn't. I'm sorry... you're not wrong... I was..."

"Scared. Scared and intimidated. What's important now is keeping you safe and getting a hold of those papers. Can you take a break or something and rush over to City Hall?"

"Not right now. Mr. Shearly is meeting with some angry ram that kept demanding to see him. I finally had to let him in and they've been arguing for a little while."

"Can you get the phone close enough or put it on speaker?" Dawn asked, turning on the speaker feature of her own phone."

"I'll try..." The room hiss increased as the speaker was activated on the other end, and she put the phone up closer to Shearly's office, where he and his mysterious guest were very unconcerned about eavesdropping, given their volume.

"Wooly that's enough! I'm not having this conversation with you any more! You got paid, you got relocated, now shut up and leave before you do something you'll regret."

"You've been trying to brush me off for a while, even in this talk. Why are you so eager to get rid of me, Commissioner? I can see your wool wax melting into the cavernous folds of the globs of fat. You're scared. What's scaring you so much, you ear swab on legs? Pressure getting a bit too high? Is that why you dumped me in Tundratown? I'm not a cold-weather sheep, Shearly! You could have tossed me back in Meadowlands. All sheep are alike enough to herd in and get lost."
"Watch your tone! You're hidden, and that's all that matters. You got your money, you got your get out of the district free card, and we even took care of that rustbucket you were driving around in. You got sloppy. Some cop saw you and wrote down the plate. If our ram inside Precinct One hadn't noticed, you'd be in a cell."

"Telling on you and on Vesper Bellwether."

"Wh-what? What are you-"

"Save the blubberous bleating, it makes all ten of your chins wobble when you try to lie. You can't be in charge of this. You're barely competent to do the job you pretend to do. There's only one sheep that can run something this big, and that's the ram that put your fatty mutton in that chair in the first place. Maybe I'll like the climate of Savannah Central Minimum Security, or get a halfway house deal for being so forthcoming with my information."

Angry bleating snarls were audible from the phone. "You listen to me, Wooly... the jig is up. They know it's not predators going savage, that anyone can be affected. That filthy predblooded Division cop had his goat side go crazy. It's all random, all unexpected. You might find yourself in the hospital with the rest of them, and not saying a word."

"Threats, Shearly? You're crazy. No one will buy that, just a random attack. They'll know."

"They won't know anything. And it was just an observation. It's dangerous in the city with that crazed terrorist on the loose. Anyone could be a victim at any time. Remember that. Go back to that little icebox we gave you and be grateful about it."

"I'm gonna tell them everything. Everything! Give me a better place back home or they'll know what you tried to do. They'll know Vesper is behind it all."

"Without proof, you're only admitting to stirring up trouble, all on your own. There's nothing connecting us."

"You didn't pay me all in cash. You had to get my car with bigger funds."

"Get out! And if you think you can intimidate me, think again." The sound grew muffled and hissed sharply as the phone was quickly repositioned, and the sound of trotters angrily stomping out could be heard. Just within the range of audibility Shearly's voice bellowed out, "Miss Chamois!"

Her voice came through softly, as she likely hadn't left her desk. "Y-yes, Mr. Shearly?" The demand was too guttural and distant to be picked up, but the reply came through. "Right away, Mr. Shearly. I might be a little late, one of the secretaries from the Department of Grazing and Fallow wants me to join her for a late lunch. No! I promise I'll put your assignment first but I like to see what's happening in other departments. Gossip is important to me. Yes, I'll be sure to file everything properly. I've seen the revised staffing proposals, and I'll make sure that they all get to where they need to go. But you've had me here past lunch. Yes, sir, I ordered up your usual. The interns will be bringing it up right away. Thank you, sir..." the call cut off abruptly in the middle of the sound of clattering and hasty gathering.

Gary nodded to the phone. "That 'Wooly' fellow, he's absolutely the guy on the recording. Even though two speakerphones it's unmistakable."

Larry nodded. "He's right. Equally abrasive, the same rate and kind of insults, the tone and rumble all sound right. He really was a sheep in wolf's clothing."

"It's clear she's going to come here. That Wooly fellow might as well. He seems upset enough to
defect. I wish I'd had some kind of secondary recording device. Now we know something but have no proof..." Dawn mused.

"She has the copies of things. She will bring them to show you, so we have the proof there," Steiner said.

Dawn leaped out of her chair and motioned to the pack. "Come on, let's go to the steps out front. We can meet her and escort her in. It's not much, but offering any protection is better than none."

Steiner saluted and drew his gas-powered tranq pistol. "Jawohl, Bürgermeister. Komm, wir gehen, Rudel!"

The rest drew their own pistols and responded with an on-key howl that reverberated slightly. Armed, the quartet followed Dawn out of her office.

They gathered roughly around her as she stood on the steps of City Hall, eyes scanning for the secretary through what gaps they left in their protection. "It'll be a bit of a walk if she's trotting. If she has a car she'd have to park, then come up... I'd call her back but I don't know if she's driving or not. It couldn't hurt..." She took out her phone and hit the number in her recent list.

"Miss Bellwether?"

"I need to know how you're getting here. I have a security team waiting, we'll get you inside and keep you safe."

"I'm in a cab, there's some traffic but I'll be there shortly. Am I going to lose my job or go to jail for this?"

"Absolutely not. Your contract is with the city, you'll just be working for Shearly's replacement. And he is getting replaced. If you had to do anything illegal you're protected because you were ordered to do it and you informed higher authorities. You're a whistle-blower, and there are strong protections against official retaliation for whistle-blowers."

There was a moment of silence. "And... unofficial retaliation?"

"That's why there's private security here and the ZPD once you leave here. Chief Bogo's just as eager to end this as I am and he'll make sure you're as safe as possible."

"Thank you... I... I don't know what to say..."

"Just get here safely and we'll take care of you as best we can."

"Traffic's moving again, won't be long... thank you again..."

Dawn smiled as the call ended. "Just a little longer. She's in a cab."

Time ticked away, the wolves standing as still and straight as they could, eyes quickly darting toward each new figure that came into view, seeking the three sheep they knew were on the run, as well as the false face of a sheep in wolf's clothing. Larry's ears perked as a cab pulled in, with a sheep in the back. "Got her. She's here. Do we move?"

"Do we, Bürgermeister?" Steiner asked.

"Let's try and meet her half-way, we can all move into the building together."

With a short series of hand-motions he directed the pack to surround Dawn, all of them matching
pace with her while keeping her largely blocked.

At that time, Miss Chamois had left the cab carrying a slim manilla folder, eyes darting about in great suspicion. Her nervousness melted somewhat when she saw the approaching ring of wolves, her steps very calm and light.

Just before they could all meet, the secretarial ewe staggered forward slightly, bleating piteously, a bright blue stain splattered heavily across the back of her puffy bouffant, the liquid reaching the thinnest part of her coat at her neck, touching the skin and also evaporating rapidly as it had in prior times.

Immediately the pack pointed their weapons out in the direction the shot had come from, looking for unusual movement or full-fledged fleeing. Dawn was more concerned with the fallen ewe, only stopping a moment to close the fallen folder before the papers could spill out. In the short moment she saw it the top sheet had something to do with donations to something called Revitalize Cliffside, a reference that created a jolt of pain. "Miss Chamois! Miss Chamois!"

The savagery drug had started to take her, body contorting and panting breath full of fearful bleats. "T-tell... tell..."

"I know, we'll tell Bogo it was Shearly. How did he find out? How..?"

Miss Chamois grabbed Bellwether's sleeve and pulled on it, eyes wide and desperate. "Tell Geta... tell him I still love him!" Her intended next few words transformed into terrified bleats and she struck out with one of her trotters, catching Dawn and kicking her away.

A gas discharge was answered by a bleating shriek, and Miss Chamois slumped to the ground, going quiet and mostly still. Gerhilde came to Dawn's aid, kneeling beside her. "Are you..?"

"Don't even worry about me. Call the hospital and the ZPD, get Bogo direct. Whatever she brought me was enough to get her turned savage, just like he threatened to do to that Wooly guy. It might even have been a change of plans. They were going to get Wooly and saw her coming to City Hall. I won't stand for this."

Steiner was already on the phone, giving clipped bursts of information in response to questions, Gary was checking the vitals on the tranquilized ewe, and Larry was also on his phone, insisting on being put in touch with Chief Bogo immediately. Gerhilde, all other jobs done, took the file and opened it up. "For this she was attacked? Very secret things. Money going where it shouldn't, ja?"

Dawn took the folder and gave it a closer look. As had been said, money going to a charity. Some disused and condemned asylum, named Cliffside. It was so... oddly random. Pouring money and effort into a charity to revitalize a place that was just a public eyesore, waiting for demolition. She vaguely knew about it; she vaguely knew about all the abandoned features that were probably better off publicly auctioned or plainly sold to developers with a contract to get them demolished and the space used for something useful.

The pieces were there, she was sure, especially since the throbbing and stabbing pain in her mind told her there was something to it. She had learned to read her pains. It was something that hadn't been part of her downfall, but something that had made a difference somehow. It all connected. More importantly, it connected Shearly. And he had all but admitted her father was mixed up in it.

She looked over at the fallen ewe and sighed. They were getting answers, but the costs were starting to pile up in fear and pain. She shouldered her burdens and rose to watch over Miss Chamois until the ambulance arrived.
Author's Notes

Croaka-Cola- Pretty obvious but it bears mentioning. Coca-Cola did really used to contain cocaine, as it was marketed as a health tonic, back when coke was used for health reasons. In this one, psychoactive toad mucus is used, and was probably intended less as a health tonic and more as a recreational non-alcoholic drink that still got folks loopy. The fiasco of New Coke is here parodied with New Croak, and having an actual reason to fail, the use of an even more overtly psychoactive substance, the quintessential magic mushroom.

Blazing Towers- Everyone, even professionals, can succumb to app games. In this case I'm offering a generic idea of a common class of game, the, usually South Korean-made, beautifully designed RPG-type game. In my case, Dragon Blaze is my favorite but also Dragon Heroes is up there. And while both are different types of game they both have a similar design aesthetic. Reflecting the greater equality of genders in Zootopia and how good marketing panders to all their customers, both the male and female characters get skimpy attire. Also, Dawn may have just turned herself into a cosplayer by sheer accident.

Geta- Maybe this is dark, maybe this is geeky, maybe it's just amusing. But, the name of Miss Chamois' longed-for beau is a reference to the son of Roman Emperor Septimus Severus. Why that name? Because he had a brother name Caracalla. Why dark? Because he had his brother Geta killed. But you can't ask for a better reference than a caracal named Geta.
The Sheep War, Part Three

Chapter Summary

The elements start to converge and the heat rises.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Six: The Sheep War, Part Three

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"This is a special message to the citizens of Zootopia," Dawn said, her image broadcast all over the city. A public service announcement, cutting in on the emergency broadcast system. There was certainly an emergency. "Yesterday at around 1:37 PM Melody Chamois, secretary to Police Commissioner Shetland Shearly, was stricken by the terrorist in our city and sent into a savage state. At that time she had come to deliver certain papers vital to the identification of the ones responsible for this. It was overtly an attack intended to halt the progression of the investigation. Chief Bogo of Precinct One is aggressively pursuing this case with the full might of the entire ZPD. If you've seen something, please say something.

"A ram named Wooly was in the vicinity and may have also been an intended target. He is believed to be in Tundratown and hiding out under an assumed name. All information is appreciated, and the resolution of this matter would help this city calm itself down.

"As a personal message, requested from me before Melody lost herself, I have to say this. To a Meadowlands caracal named Geta, please come to the hospital. She says she still loves you. She never forgot you, and never stopped loving you. Throw away any fear, and stigma and come to Peaceground Memorial to see her. She wanted you. In the last, fading moments of her rational mind, she could only think of you.

"Thank you, Zootopia. Remain safe, remain vigilant and help us ride out this terrible time."

She shut off the television that had been installed in her office with a small sigh. At the very least, the appeal was working. Tips were coming in, and being sifted to filter out cranks and members of the opposition. Even more wonderfully, she had been told that Geta Felna had arrived at the hospital, desperate and sobbing. He had set himself outside of her quarantine cell and cried his eyes out. He was still there, so far as she knew. None of the hospital staff had the heart to ask him to leave.

She turned her attention back to the collection of copied documents Melody had brought. It seemed almost disgusting. A poor, put-upon young ewe, working in a job she hated, trying to do the right thing, and being punished by losing her rational mind. She wasn't sure on what level specifically
Shearly was involved, but no matter which one she hated him with the same amount of burning fury.

The name Cliffside continued to make her mind ache, it was so familiar. So connected. She was barred from remembering much but she knew it was somehow involved. A disused asylum, marked as slated for demolition as soon as the funds could be mustered. Yet it was kept in a continual holding pattern, still owned by the city, but no reasonable offer had been made on it. It was the very model of a white isopod, impressively built-up but useless and with more cost than it was worth looming, given the need to either do extensive cleaning and repairs or to tear it down and either reclaim the land or build something new on the foundation.

The charity was allegedly there to maintain the ground and develop strategies for revitalizing the place; they buried the city in so many proposals that, even if they didn't actually own it, they were good at keeping it to themselves. No one else wanted to buy it for the obvious reasons, and because it seemed practically spoken for.

Shearly and others had been pumping money in for a while, with occasional transfers from numbered accounts to numbered accounts. The very idea made for a very curious thing. An abandoned asylum, with no guards and no real oversight, anyone could go in and out, there was no way to check. And being condemned and not owned there was no one but the city to worry about, and they had trouble enough on their own.

"Are you willing to be assigned temporarily to a personal protection detail besides me?" Dawn suddenly asked, lifting her head from the paperwork.

Steiner nodded vigorously in reply. "Ja, Bürgermeister. We are assigned here because Gazelle paid but let us in your employ. If you say we will protect others you say need protecting. All the pay is equal."

"And you're fully certified? Iron-clad and legal for the protection of someone operating in an official capacity?" Dawn asked. "I can't have Shearly getting a loophole to exploit..."

"Don't you worry," Gary replied. "We keep current on all the certification and legal requirements. Independent though we are, if assigned to someone acting in an official capacity we won't be tossed out of anywhere or put some kind of legal whammy on action. Mr. Howlmeyer is too smart for that."

"It is true," Steiner said with a sniff of pride, making a show of polishing his claws on his outfit. "It is how we can protect you without fear of the legal trouble. What clever thing now are you planning?"

"Clearly, this place is important. It's also still in the hold of the city; it was a city facility to start with. It's condemned and in desperate need of demolition or a serious and costly reinforcement and refurbishment. Maybe the prior inspection was too hasty and didn't pick up on all the aspects of the place. But I can't very well sent in a city inspector without protection. I also need to send a police officer with you to make things extra legal. They're the obligatory government protection, you provide specialized and trained bodyguarding, and the inspector is a good pretense to bust in and look around. Would you and your pack be willing to guard a city inspector as they looked through an old asylum?"

Steiner laughed softly, joined by the others in his pack. "Bürgermeister, that is not any problem. When will this happen?"

"I need to make a call to the city inspector's office, then to Chief Bogo to get the right cop for the
"job. Shouldn't be more than a day or two of waiting."

"Red tape, again. We run into it a lot," Larry huffed.

"Honey, when the guy tells you you can't stuff fish fillets in your pockets or pour mashed potatoes into a hidden bag that's not red tape, that's the rules," Gary replied.

"It was all I could eat!" Larry insisted. "But I didn't want all I could eat that minute so I just took what I wasn't going to eat right then for later. It was perfectly reasonable."

"Taking fish and mashed potatoes from a buffet isn't reasonable. Tasty, but clearly unreasonable.,” Gary chuckled.

Dawn couldn't help but softly laugh along. "Red tape protects us all and binds this crazy, fractious city together in the loving arms of bureaucracy, all for the best."

"Very well, we will be prepared for this. Do you think they have many guards hiding there?" Steiner asked.

Dawn put a hoof to her head, wincing. Guards. In the asylum. Had... had they been there? Had they been part of it all? The lovey-dovey pair almost seemed somehow familiar. "They have to maintain the look of the place as abandoned. They can't have too many of them in there. Ideally, they just left a lot of evidence of what they did there. If they're still in there... there could still be victims in there. Who knows how they're keeping them?"

Gerhilde snarled softly. "Horrible. But... they... if they have not kept them... we will find the bones..."

"I never thought I would hope that we'd find poisoned and savage captives..." Dawn sighed, falling back into her chair and staring at the ceiling. Closing in on the end seemed to make things worse. But at least it was closing in.

Sir, I have very important information," Officer Fangmeyer said with some urgency in his voice as he slipped into Bogo's office.

"I can read that tone and I don't like it. I have plenty of headaches finding this Wooly character, and the mammal that shot Melody Chamois with the savage serum. What else have you come to lay on me?" Bogo snorted.

"I just got a very self-important message on the burner phone the Striped Claw asked me to buy. They need me to lose or alter several records pertaining to members of the gang we had before or that we just caught. They say they need them, and they're going to need me to help others look the other way. They need me to talk to them soon. Very soon. And also, to stay out of Happytown. They have things to do there."

Bogo stared into space, his mien darkening as the report was delivered. He steepled his hoof-capped fingers before his face and rumbled deep in his barrel chest. "They're starting. We know vague things about the other gangs but they think you're dirty. Now they want their members free and back on the streets. On the streets of Happytown. This is more than a war for control or power. If they press hard enough they can force their way into a stalemate. The town's a brittle tinderbox. They instill that fear they can do a lot of damage."

"How do I respond, Chief? Now they actually want me to break the law. And once I do this..."
"You don't respond. The longer we leave them hanging the more they see they made a mistake. If they're acting in response to a threat from another gang then we mop them both up. If they're intent on taking the streets by force and stamping their will all over them we'll leave them that much weaker, and put the focus they don't want directly on their heads."

Fangmeyer nodded and looked down at the cheap flip phone in his hand. "Destroy it?"

"Oh no, you leave that here, leave it active with the tech mammals. The second it rings we find out where they're conducting business. And if they try to be clever and call you while they're on the street, we'll use every available jam cam to track them back home. We'll get faces, names, possible license plates, and certainly the location of their claimed territory. I realize we have to rip out every gang, but you walk one step at a time," Bogo grunted.

"Are we going to step up patrols?"

"Too obvious. If we scare them they'll dig in, make our job even harder. I want these disgusting ticks pulled off and thrown away. They've been parasitizing this city for too long... because we let them get a hold," Bogo sighed. "I recognize that, annoying as she can be, the Mayor was right. We did this. All of us. All of law enforcement. Because we didn't protect Happytown they were consumed by organized crime, and everyone prior thought only they would have to suffer. Now we have cops being injured and being caught in the middle of gang maneuvering because of it. If I could I'd slap every last one of the previous chiefs. And don't tell me some of them are still alive, I know it, and don't think I won't if you give me the chance..."

"Sir, you don't have to tell me twice. I was caught up in that speciesist gang hate. I want it over fast. I'm going to go deliver this to the non-sheep tech members, and after that... assignment, sir?"

"As posted. Nothing changes until it's time to move in. Just be ready to pull on the armor and bust a few heads if they go through with the organized attacks."

"Yes sir, I understand," Fangmeyer said, saluting before he left the room.

Bogo slumped there, alone with his thoughts, all of them dark and troubling. Ending something was always the most dangerous part of the endeavor. He had been in the middle of considering playing his Gazelle app to calm his nerves when his phone lit up with the Mayor's number. "Mayor Bellweather... hope you don't mind the shortening."

"I won't endure it that much longer. Remember that information we got from Melody Chamois?"

"Have you finished looking through it? Is it the information we need to take down that greasy yarn-ball?"

"Maybe. Strong maybe. As I intimated when we got it, it's a list of donations, from private citizens and numbered accounts into a charity that I can't properly identify. All connected to a condemned facility. The Cliffside Asylum. They pay for upkeep at the city's welcome and bury us in paperwork outlining proposals that go nowhere. They're keeping it abandoned, unsold and allegedly empty for reasons I'm hesitant to say. It's too horrible."

"They're keeping the victims of their evil experiments there. Either the still-savage figures or the bodies after they got rid of them," Bogo said, flatly.

"How very... grimly put. But... entirely accurate to what I was thinking."

"Miss Bellwether, you, better than most, understand the importance of thinking ahead of the bad guy. Given Shearly's involvement, it had to be connected to what you said about experimenting on
kidnapped Meadowlands citizens. The missing mammal information is plastered everywhere around the station, for all the good it does. That accursed Cheviot McLiff has to find them, when he's the monster that made them disappear in the first place!"

"Don't say that too loud. My father can hire very good lawyers to protect Mr. McLiff's allegedly good name. I need you there in that chair, head-buttng your way through these conspirators and all the plans they've made. We're getting there. We just need to catch and flip one of the major underlings we know and it all comes crashing down. Not Doug, though. No... not Doug..."

"I recall. I have to ask, strictly for my own peace of mind... or future loss of it... were you just engaging in a bit of hyperbole or is he really a sociopath?"

"Serial. Poisoner," Dawn said, emphasizing both words as hard as she could. "He never showed emotion, never let himself demonstrate anything but cold competence. He is only capable of using his skills for evil. We'll never flip him. He's a machine. A monster. He obeys my father because that's what he was. Always a good little sheep following the lead ram with no desire to be the lead ram. He's unsuited to it and knows it. So he follows an intelligent leader blindly, and we'll never crack his shell. For all Doug cares, I'm willing to bet, my father is the sun and earth, the silver moon, the bounty of nature. All of that, wrapped up and moving around as one ram with a mission."

"Just what we need. A genius true-believer with a gas-gun, a stock of toxin, a perfect hiding place and belief in a mission that a madmammal has given him. Sorry, ma'am, but..."

"'But' nothing. I can't wait for the evidence to cross my desk so I can have you arrest my father. Use excessive force, I'm sure he'll at least try to put up a fight. His ego won't like admitting that he lost at something he thought was nothing more than a game."

"I don't play games with criminals, ma'am. I've got one officer down already. This isn't a game for me and he'll find that out the minute the warrant comes to me."

"Then let's expedite that. I told you the asylum is city property. I have a city inspector lined up, the perfect pretense to look inside, legally. Anything we find is automatically evidence against everyone on the charity donation lists. I have my private security team ready but I need a police officer there to make it official. I want Officer Hopps."

"We have a major gang situation brewing here. She's one of my best but I can spare her. This could be a bloodbath, and as competent as she is, it's important to use specific units. She's not SWAT trained, that was the one thing she didn't do at the academy, and we don't have the armor for her besides that."

"Have her report to Cliffside tomorrow, can she make a Matin shift? I have the inspector slated for eight in the morning."

"She does as she's ordered, and does it all well. Don't worry, she'll be there, ready to gather the evidence to take down this herd of criminals."

"I almost hope we find only remnants of an experiment and nothing else. Maybe they just got let go elsewhere and told never to come back. But... time will tell."

o o o

Dawn poured out a glass of wine with a soft sigh. She had been drinking slightly more lately, but that didn't mean much. Given her condition a little bit went a long way. Since Leodore had bought
a just-a-bit-less-than lion-sized bottle of wine the night they had first been intimate, she was hardly putting a dent in the thing. It was special in a way. Just a taste of it and she was back in that night, experiencing what all those muscles she admired could do.

Her face darkened quickly, and not from the alcohol, as she remembered all of that. That kind of love. Powerful but controlled. She could easily have been hurt, but for all the ferocity in Leodore's lovemaking, he had restraint, knew how to pull back and hold himself in reserve. She got to feel as much force as she could take, enjoy the power in his toned form, without worrying about harm.

Another sip took her back to what happened after, the snuggling. Warm and comforting, resting atop the topographical perfection that were his pecs and abs, savoring the warmth of his presence and the steady, powerful beat of his heart. She felt it slow back down from the powerful and rapid thudding of the lovemaking to the calmer, more sedate pace of relaxation. And even then, if she kissed him right or otherwise gave some indication of her adoration, his heart would flutter. She could make the huge lion react on cue. It was good for her ego, and spoke well of him.

_A love just as perfect. Just as wonderful. Just as real and tender and now, dead..._

She almost dropped her glass as the thought of her own love reminded her very sharply about what it actually cost. Her beautiful romance had a price tag and it was hefty indeed. The sacrifice of an equally valuable love, thrown into the fire as a fee for her new happiness.

Her phone was in her hooves before she had time to think about it, hovering over the icon for Chief Bogo. She could say any number of things. 'Judy is just too talented for a simple escort. It's just red tape there, and she'd probably know it. She's still hurting over Officer Wulfberg and she wants her revenge. She should work out her feelings on the streets of Happytown. And if there's a gang war, she's useful for weaving in and out of big crowds practically undetected, gathering information and even making arrests where possible. It only makes sense, I was wrong about assigning her to protection earlier. We all make mistakes sometimes...'

She was contemplating it, seriously considering doing it. Keeping Judy far away from things was better, even if Nick was probably in Sahara Square. She wasn't sure. She hadn't talked to Mrs. Fanak yet. But he seemed like an earnest tod, who really wanted to improve his lot, seemingly tired and strained with carrying the burden of his background.

They could accidentally meet. Maybe nothing would happen. They could just meet, and that would be it. They were perfect together, so, being together in any sense would be wonderful. Maybe even just as friends. That would be harmless. Friends. Just good friends...

Her intention was thwarted when her mirror image grabbed her wrist and pulled it back from her phone screen. "You made a promise, you made an absolute, inviolable agreement with me, and you will obey the terms."

Dawn looked into Morning Star's face, fearful yet still angry somewhere behind her fear. "It's a big city! Even in the same district they might not meet. Even if they did meet the would probably just be friends."

"A perfect love doesn't live on just as friends. Their relationship is inevitable if you give it even the smallest hint of encouragement. And you promised me anything to break them apart. Anything. You do your job and follow your agreement," Morning Star rumbled, showing her pointed fangs.

"Maybe I don't care anymore. If they can have a relationship, they should have it. I have mine, they should have theirs. And if I fail, well, failure isn't a crime."
Morning Star glared at Dawn with her infinitely deep gaze, forcing the other sheep to get lost in the depth. "Touch that phone and I will erase you from existence..."

Though locked in the deep, gray emptiness of a supernatural stare, Dawn still slowly started to reach for the icon.

"No... no, that won't work anymore," Morning Star mused, locking the phone in place and pushing Dawn's hand away. "Erasing you would be no punishment. You see that now. Oh it would agonize those left behind and throw additional chaos on the city but if I did erase you, it would do nothing. The old you, she would never have seen beyond herself, too wrapped up in her own ego. Erasing her would deprive the world of her presence. Unthinkable. But you realize that wouldn't hurt you one bit.

"No... touch that phone and I'll scrub Leodore Lionheart from the face of the earth!" Dawn reacted with a pleading cry and Morning Star looked on her sternly. "No one would remember him. No one but you. They would all believe and remember you running alone, leading alone, never being in love. The love that you feel defines some portion of you now, vanished and unremembered. Not a trace left but those in your head.

"Now you understand the penalty for failing me, for defying my will. Do as you're told, as you promised. This was your will, your promise, your desire. The ideal you begged for is now the price of your joy. And it is a true joy, isn't it? It's delicious, it's transcendent and soul-stirring. You've grown so used to it that it now informs how you make decisions. I didn't do that either. You made all these choices all on your own. If you rue how they limit your ability to do things, well, once more you have only yourself to blame for every last bit of it. Maybe in the future you'll be more cautious about what you promise to what being.

"Beg me, and I'll send you back, humbled and broken, and leaving this world a mess to be cleaned up by those left behind, seeking answers to questions they can't hope to answer. They can't fathom the truth. Or else... live with your pain. Endure it. Embrace it if that will drive you to remember what you begged for, and remember to be careful with your desires. I don't teach soft lessons. Learn well..." With the last words echoing in her ears Dawn blinked and Morning Star was gone, leaving her holding her phone, still almost about to call Chief Bogo.

It took her a long moment of contemplation before she turned it off and set it aside, far away from her reach. The hateful beast had been right. She could gamble with her own existence, but threatening Leodore... though even if she was the one, they would all languish in worry, wondering what became of her, if she, too, had become a victim of the conspiracy, never getting answers and having only uncertainty. Even if her annihilated self would have no feeling about it, the her that was alive and well and there certainly had a lot of feelings about it. She would have been made obedient with that threat alone.

Threatening Leodore was a shot to the heart. Literally. It was the ultimate show of Morning Star's control, her demand for obedience, and a show of how foolish the old her really was. Breaking a love. For what? Petty ego. For nothing. Dust and ashes, arrogance. She had a new love, yes. But as ever, she had to remember the price. The price...

She put her face in her hooves and sobbed long into the quiet night.

Chapter End Notes
Author's Notes

**Geta Felna**- His last name is a reference to classic anthro character Erma Fena of the comic series *Albedo Anthropomorphics*.

**White Isopod**- The equivalent of a white elephant, something lovely to look at, but not meant to be eaten or otherwise used, so pretty useless and apt to just absorb upkeep costs.
"I know this might sound unprofessional but... I feel a little nervous about this," Judy admitted. She was in her full, modestly armored, kit, standing outside the guard booth at the abandoned asylum. She was standing there with Steiner, Gerhilde, Gary, Larry and a rather slim, medium-sized pig holding a clipboard and wearing a white hardhat. "Unknown situations always get my nose twitching."

"It is good. Nervous folk seek danger und find it before it hurts them, like your Division colleague," Steiner said.

"They've tried a few of the preliminary treatments but nothing has happened so far," Judy sighed. "I see his girlfriend every so often. Scarlet. She seems nice, but she never wants to talk. She mostly asks the nurses about progress and leaves."

Gerhilde gave Judy a knowing smile and winked. "You think she is... not right for this friend, ja? There are better for him, maybe?"

"I don't know. I worked with him more than a few times and we got along pretty well. I was there when he got hit and I... sort of feel a little responsible. I couldn't see what he did and he paid for it. Now I have this odd sense of responsibility. Like I need to keep him safe in other aspects of life."

Steiner and Gerhilde shared a look and both wolves chuckled softly. "Ja, only keep him safe. That is how you feel," Steiner said.

"I'm ready to go. I'm not looking forward to it, but this is how I get the big bucks," the inspector said, clipping a pen to his clipboard.

Judy thumped her feet on the ground and let out a cleansing huff of breath. "Right. Last minute nerves. This place might house either dead bodies or poorly cared for victims of a terrorist plot. So we can get going right away Mr..?"

"Swinton. Giorgio Swinton," the inspector replied.
"Swinton? Like the former mayor?" Judy queried.

"That's my big sister. Don't worry. It was kind of a family favor but I promise you, I'm competent and honest. In this administration you get opportunities, and then shown the door if you don't live up. Sis told me to watch my curly tail, do my job and don't make her look stupid. This is kind of a big deal. Mayor Bellwether asked for me personally, because she liked my record of thoroughness. I think she expects me to tell you if there are hidden passages or secret rooms," Giorgio explained.

"Can... can you do that?" Gary asked, tilting his head.

"You would assume that's a joke, but given how much I know about building codes and proper construction techniques, as well as how things are supposed to look when they're normal, I can actually tell you if something is off and what that might mean. She might have sent the right boar for the job."

"The Bürgermeister is wise in such ways, she only uses the most proper workers in every job," Steiner noted, pulling his tranq pistol and checking the pre-loaded dart containers. "Please lead us, Polizist Hopps. We will guard Herr Swinton from behind."

Judy was double-pawing for her assignment, a pistol-grip contact-taser in one and her own tranq pistol in the other. She gave a curt nod and stepped through the propped-open front door of the facility.

The years of disuse had been oddly gentle on the old asylum. The front foyer was still dark, having been built before more modern and gentle theories of mental health had taken sway. It tried to give an impression of an airy atrium, with molded faux pillars in the corners, plastic flooring imitating granite and the usual painted plaster walls doing its best imitation of classical marble.

The electricity was still on, one of the red flags they had noted before even entering the place, and the light bulbs were at least new enough that they cast a low, sickly light across the area, saving them from having to use flashlights yet. The low illumination brought out further details in the entrance. The floor wasn't nearly as dusty or debris-strewn as it ought to have been given years of neglect. The toppled, mostly broken waiting area furniture had all been piled up in one corner, along with other broken and useless bits like mildewed magazines and the ancient, probably Bakelite, telephones.

The reception desk was strangely organic, a rarity in a building so old. It came off the wall and made a grand sweep, a gentle curve that almost enclosed a small section there the long-ago intake nurses and receptionists had sat. The area had also been cleaned out, and showed some signs of recent use. Impressions in the dust still left on the counter showed squares about the size of modern laptops or possibly a tablet. The chairs were still there, and were clean, while trails in the hastily swept floor showed them being pulled out and pushed in more than a few times.

Two doors branched off from the entrance area. Behind the reception desk were reinforced double doors whose sturdy locks had been broken, with a faded and askew sign above reading Asylum staff and authorized mammals only. The other door was opposite to the main entrance and the fading sign beside the wire-reinforced glass doors read Visitors: Have badges visible at all times. No unaccompanied minors. Security will inspect all parcels.

"I'll defer to you, Mr. Swinton, where do you want to see first?" Judy asked.

"I know you expect me to break the mold and assume no one would be foolish enough to hide things in the most obvious place. But mammals work along patterns. It's how they build, it's how they make mistakes, it's how they work. We'll go to the staff area first. I checked the old blueprints
and they were fairly clever in that there was no actual way to get to patient areas through the
visitor's entrance. They weren't big on familial interaction back then, one of the reasons the place
needs an overhaul if they intend to open it again. Going over there would be a big dead-end."

The employee door swung open with a gentle push; not only had the lock been destroyed but the
latch was taped down. The door had been held closed simply by the friction of the slightly swollen
frame on the door itself. The door led into a corridor that stretched into the dim distance, lit by
alternate wall sconces. Doors lined the passage, labeled with such expected titles as Therapist,
Medical Intervention, Security, ECT. Given the length, there were several numbered rooms for
things such as therapy and the medical rooms. The words were written in peeling decals on the
wire-reinforced frosted glass on each door.

Curiosity got the better of Larry and he opened up the door marked ECT, shining his flashlight into
the darkened space. He illuminated something out of a horror movie, with a large table absolutely
covered in heavy straps, and a machine that had been left behind because it was set into the wall.
Switches and dials all over made it look intimidating, while the heavy wires leading to what looked
like an adjustable helmet with metal contacts gave off some very frightening vibes. "Well, I don't
need sleep anymore. Who's with me? No sleep? Anyone?"

"Don't be such a big pup," Giorgio blandly stated after closing one of the medical rooms. "That's
where they did shock therapy. Sure, it's rough. But it really does have real uses. I looked it up when
I saw some of the machines were left behind and I wanted to know what I'd find."

Gary slowly stroked a gloved paw under Larry's chin, when no one else was looking, and smiled to
him. "Don't worry. If you're awake I'll be there with you."

"The walls on these rooms are solid. They wouldn't bother cutting or busting through them,"
Giorgio commented. "They might use them but so far they look pretty untouched. I think we'd be
better off looking downstairs. Last door on the right goes to the upper area where they had patient
cells and the full clinic, but downstairs is where they had a secondary clinic, operating theater and
the quarantine-slash-confinement and observation cells. When padded rooms weren't enough then
some solid walls and heavy security would do the trick."

The door to the downstairs area was similarly broken, lock and latch bypassed to make entry and
geress easier. A simple concrete staircase went down into the depths, ending beside a large
elevator, sized for gurneys and doubtlessly connected to the patient area above.

The lower level they found themselves in was not only cleaner than the prior level, but had been
overly remodeled. The old cells had been completely refurbished, with lexan front walls and
doors, electronic locks and metal trim. Sirens and emergency lights were up on the walls near the
ceiling, security cameras pointed at the cells, the lights on them showing they were active. Most
disturbing of all, the cells were not empty.

The arrival of the small party had roused the inhabitants of the cells. They looked lean, and seemed
weak, but they were not as far gone as they would have been had they been there without care for
as long as had been assumed. Their abandonment had been a recent thing.

The mammals within were naked, and stalked about on all fours, giving anemic roars and snarls,
pawing and scratching at the walls. Several wolves, a few caracals, a pig, and, most curiously, a
goat. They didn't do much besides offer threatening postures and sounds, somewhere between
genuine menace and the false bravado of weakness and the need to bluff.

"Heiliger mond..." Steiner softly whispered, as he looked on one of the wolves. The amber-toned
wolf tucked his tail, flattened his ears and presented his belly on seeing Steiner looming over him
like an alpha. "They were to stay here. To starve."

"They were well on their way. I can't believe mammals would treat each other like this..." Judy quietly said, watching a caracal feebly scratch at the door.

Giorgio watched the pig lumber around, without the energy to be aggressive. "And I used to think mom and dad were crazy to leave Meadowlands. They said we'd have a better life in Savannah Central so they moved when they got married. I thought about what I could have had being raised there. That could be sis in that cell."

"It's clear where all of that fake charity money was going," Judy said, holstering her pistols and punching her paw. "It was way too much for just burying the city in paperwork. They were into embezzlement and money laundering territory, enriching whoever was at the top of the pyramid. But... all that money went into things. Horrible things..."

"Polizist, you have trained in finding clues and keeping them to process, ja?" Steiner asked, turning away from the wolf with a snarl.

"You better believe I do. I came with evidence bags and evidence vials, I have a certification to withstand cross-examination questioning my collection capabilities, and, more importantly, this is all being recorded," Judy said, tapping a bulge in her vest, then a small spot by her badge. "ZPD body cameras. I'm almost certain Shearly allowed the financing of these so we could get shocking footage of antagonistic predators. The irony of what it's being used for now is just delicious."

Giorgio looked something up on his phone, pointing down the corridor of cells to a set of original-installment metal doors. "Medical stuff down there, a small operating theater and a secondary but functional clinic. If they were doing anything medical, it happened in there."

"Medical? Nein. Das Schlachten, like the fish. If they operated, we will find blood, und poor mammals gutted like fresh trout, because these are monsters," Steiner spat.

"Let's not assume this is one of those creepy movies that they show midnights at the Vogue Bijou a year after the buzz died down on the internet," Judy said with a nervous laugh, leading the collection of mammals down the hall of cells. "Not that I ever tagged along with my siblings when I was supposed to be studying. But if I did it was just to see how they portrayed law enforcement in movies. Not well, not well..."

"They show us worse," Gerhilde commented. "Like we want only the money and have no loyalty. It is hard to see, hard as with polizei. Movies must become better."

Judy opened the far door, to a section of the asylum that showed a mix of the old construction with some new equipment and additions grafted on. The doors had been replaced with sturdy, barred ones made of metal with electronic locks. More security cameras lined the walls and the lights were still sickly but were newer. On one side a painted arrow on the wall pointed to the door and read Clinic 2 in faded paint. On the other wall, Emergency Surgical Theater. At the far end of the short corridor a staircase was visible.

"Okay, the stairs go to the viewing area of the surgical theater, the other two doors are dead ends," Giorgio said. "If we want a good overview, we hit the observation area. But we look into the clinic first."

Judy got ahead of her nervousness, which had started her nose to twitching and her feet to thumping, by simply quickly yanking the door open and shining her body-mounted flashlight into it. It was a nightmare of blood and discarded bandages. Varying levels of blue staining were visible
on the walls and floor, as well as the filthy beds hastily covered in thick brown paper. Though most of it had been removed the broken remnants of a few pieces of laboratory glassware showed there had been a chemistry setup there. A broken UV light and scattered dirt showed that there had also been plants in there at one time.

"A one-stop drug lab. I was ready to be assigned to narcotics and see something like this but knowing what it was used for makes it all the more horrible," Judy whispered. "What did they even do here? There's just... I'm so glad they forced us to do blood-scent acclimation. All the vomiting was worth it."

The others had wrinkled their snouts and covered their noses when the door opened. The longer they stood the more pained they looked. Giorgio actually ran away and gagged heavily, fighting hard to keep from actually vomiting. "It is far worse for some, Officer Hopps," Larry gagged.

"Sensitive noses are sometimes so great. But oh sweet Lunar shine when it's bad it's bad," Gary said through a tight throat.

"Schreckliche tiere! Schauen Sie mal! Das Blut!" Steiner howled, stomping out of the room with his teeth bared. "How could they dare?"

"Beruhige dich, Bruder... deep breaths," Gerhilde said, patting her brother on the back.

For her own part, Judy was looking through the hastily abandoned room, videotaping everything and finally having the mind to click her radio. "Any reception down here? Anyone there?"

Clawhauser answered her faintly, as from down a long hallway. "Just barely, Officer Hopps. Something the matter?"

"Send ambulances. Plural. I need ten for full coverage but as many as they can spare. We found the missing Meadowlands mammals, and they're being starved to death, suffering from Nighthowler poisoning."

Clawhauser took a moment to respond, sounding especially concerned. "All of them are on the way. Where are they?"

"Tell them to go into the employee area, and take the elevator which I'm sure still works to the basement. There are electronic locks but they're the kind that can be overcome with the application of excessive force."

"Is there anything else?"

"Not so far. But I'm collecting samples right now. There might be more mammals who... aren't here," Judy said, rubbing a swab over what looked like a single smear of blood to collect what she hoped was an uncontaminated sample.

"Oh... oh this is... this is..."

"All that and more. Hopps out," Judy said, capping one sample and moving to the dirt. She bagged up a small sample of it, along with some pieces of plant, likely to come back as Night Howlers. It was all adding up, and that was making things finally look up.

She closed the door resolutely behind her, the others breathing just a little bit easier, though Giorgio still looked rather green. "You all had special training. I just didn't want to contaminate a crime scene," he said with a husky voice.
"I know it's not much but thank you, Mr. Swinton. Let's... go to the observation area. Sol Invictus et Sancta Terra protect us from more of that. Please, please... no more of that..." Judy said, voice growing quieter as she spoke, leading the group up the stairs.

The concrete stairs each had a grip tape strip to provide extra traction, and the passage up wound in a blocky spiral, to save space. It all ended in a simple wooden door with metal braces and a wire-reinforced glass square showing the interior of the viewing area, though the glass was dirty and revealed very little.

Opening the upper door led to the viewing area, which was largely open, but contained a few slightly battered wooden chairs. They sat, upright, on threadbare carpet that bore the stains of, thankfully, food and drink. Sloppy eaters had taken the opportunity to watch whatever had happened in the operating room while eating. Properly, it had been the practice to stand and watch any procedure, for teaching purposes, not entertainment.

The semicircle of glass at the front looked down onto the surgical theater, which had largely been gutted save for the operating table still solidly anchored into the center. As with the clinic, there was blood splattered across the floor and the table, which had been reinforced with extra metal and had straps anchored into it. Several of the old surgical trays had been retained and stood with syringes and other surgical tools on them.

"At least this place is airtight," Judy noted. "It was just a toxin ball. Why all this blood?"

"Maybe they had to start with invasive injections, and maybe they had to... open them up... to see... ugh..." Gary held his stomach and turned away from the operating room.

"Und... there were savages. They knew nothing. Only an experiment. Perhaps this was the criminals. Good," Steiner snarled.

"I know it's not exactly Sundas service proper, but if that's how it happened, then I'm surprisingly okay with that," Judy said.

"I don't envy you having to go in there to gather samples," Larry said, shaking his head.

"I don't... think I have to..." Judy said softly, reaching down with a swab to pick up a smear of something by a blob of fallen food. "Only a slob like Shearly would leave drool. Plus, I'm fairly sure this is his lanolin on the chair next to it. I'll take the samples and get the DNA expedited. If we're very lucky they just didn't bother to clean up."

"There's a long shot involved here," Giorgio said. "They have security cameras here. Unless they have a dedicated off-site feed with hard wiring we can check, they used to have a signal that someone can try and locate, or they had an on-site security suite, that they hopefully didn't completely clear out."

"Where would they put it? I can't do tech things but the crime scene techs that they have on the way will want to get a look at it," Judy said.

"They ran the wires through the old structure, if we follow them we can find them. I'd imagine they put it in..." Giorgio pulled out his phone and looked through the blueprints again. "This... room..."

"What? Here?" Steiner looked around suddenly, and sniffed at the air sharply. "How?"

"It's brilliant. Used for evil, of course, but brilliant. They're unlucky I have great spatial awareness. Look at the room. It seems symmetrical because of the window. It seems like the full size, and
goes from edge to edge. But it's not wide enough. It's off by a foot, and if you notice the slight tinge to it, it's been mirrored on that side so no one looking up can see who's in here. But it also prevents seeing what's on the other side of the glass. That edge over there is a complete fake. The wall has been made flush but I'm willing to bet my pay there's a way to get a portion of it to swing open. It's subtle but it's at an angle cutting off slightly more at the back than the front."

"I'll be sure to tell your sister you've been a huge help, Mr. Swinton," Judy chuckled, knocking on the wall and pressing one large ear against it. "It really is subtle. I can just hear the echo."

"They must have put down baffles to deaden the sound, on the side and inside the false wall," Giorgio stated.

"Mr. Howlmeyer, please use some... necessarily extreme force around this area. I'm willing to guess they might have had an electronic control to open the wall, but it's paint and plaster," Judy said, pointing to a particular area. "Keep it in here, that's as best as I can determine to be between what studs they used."

"Ja, Polizist. I have anger, und need to do something about it," Steiner said.

"This is legal, Polizist?" Gerhilde asked.

"This is an illegal addition to a city-owned property. Having it demolished is strictly legal, especially since we have a reasonable expectation that it's concealing evidence of criminal activity," Judy replied.

Steiner pulled a collapsible baton from his belt and let out a snarling bark as he hit the wall with it. His baton crashed through the cheap drywall, revealing the foam baffling, which he ripped out once the hole was large enough. He continued to batter through the wall until he had made the hole large enough to look through. "I don't see how they can open this, but Herr Swinton was right. It has some equipment still in it."

"Alright, stop. We just need enough of an opening to see inside," Judy said, looking through the hole that had been made. "Looks like they left behind some furniture and a monitor. The rest of the equipment was taken out, but in a hurry. I'm sure they left prints behind. The team coming in will sweep it. And they can take... the operating room... let's go back topside to get proper reception and call in the forensic team."

"Larry... I wanna howl tonight. A lot. For a long time," Gary said with a soft voice, as they were making their way out of the observation room.

"Believe me, we're going to howl all night and if the neighbors complain I'll gladly pay the noise complain fines," Larry cooed, leaning in his kiss his husband on the nose.

"Ja. We all need comfort tonight. Going home I will have mein liebchen give me massage like only he can," Gerhilde sighed.

"Ja, ja... Deidre always has the aches when she comes home from the garage, but we can share the bath together. I don't care the grease gets in there. Better we are together than fully clean," Steiner said, still softly panting from the activity.

"Clawhauswer, you receiving me?" Judy asked into her radio.

"Ambulances are still en-route. It took a while to coordinate," Clawhauser replied.

"It should go without saying, but roll a full forensic team. Send the best you can," Judy said, with a
particular tone.

"Gotcha. I'll send in plenty. Anything they need to know?"

"Blood-scent acclimation. They'll need it. A clinic and operating room with lots of blood. And tell the lab to get ready. I've got two top priority samples for DNA matching, saliva and lanolin with attached wool. I want it done sooner than immediately, and tell them Bogo probably agrees."

"They're already waiting. They know what this means. Bring the samples to the lab and they'll get right on it."

"Good. We're going to wait for the ambulances and other police then escort Mr. Swinton back to his office to make his report. There were plenty of things to note. Hopps out."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Giorgio Swinton- Why that? Because I chose to name his sister Estee. So, Estee Lauder, because for all Swinton was going to be a villain, she was stylish. And had nice lipstick. So I figured another high-class reference would work here, so I went with Giorgio Armani.

Sol Invictus et Sancta Terra- More than most, the Bunnyburrow Solaterra church has lingering traditional elements, including multiple services in Latin. So Judy was raised not just as a Solaterran but one whose liturgy included extensive Latin portions. So her oaths, though infrequent, would have a traditional flair.
Culling the Herd

Chapter Summary

The sheep of note and infamy are cut from the herd.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Culling The Herd

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Bogo checked his phone, as though trying to will it to ring. The lab was done processing and he was eager to move. All he needed was the word and he'd send his officers out with a vengeance. He might join them. He was a bull of action, a mammal eager to be in the thick of it.

Further thoughts cooled his eager attitude. The gangs were still looking for trouble. They could cause real mayhem if they struck while the police were off going after Shearly, McLiff and Bellwether. And if Vesper's pet fanatic added to the misery by making the predator gangsters savage it would be a whole different kind of violent chaos. For the good of the city, he'd have to stay put in case he was needed on something of actual import.

Across town, Dawn was doing her part to give Bogo what he wanted so desperately.

"Your honor, I'm going to say it straight, it's over," Dawn flatly stated. She was in the private chambers in the Savanna Square Municipal Court, looking more diminutive than usual given the scale of the room. It was sized for its occupant, a tall, lank giraffe dressed in the standard black robes of a judge, and also the optional powdered wig that some chose to wear.

"I'm not sure what you mean, Ms. Mayor. Well, I think I have some inkling, your predecessor implied a great many things, a great many insulting things, as he tried to get me to modify my stance on certain case dispositions and social matters," the judge huffed, looking down on Dawn with contempt.

"The buffets of arrogance meant nothing to Dawn as she tossed a folder up on the desk. "Evidence, and plenty of it. It supports the accusations and shows the propriety of issuing arrest warrants for Shetland Shearly, Cheviot McLiff, Jesse McLiff, Doug Ramses and Vesper Bellwether for conspiracy, terrorism, assault, battery and unlawful imprisonment.""

"The judge languidly flipped through one or two pages before shutting the folder. "I see hardly anything conclusive. Come back when you have something substantial.""

"The smile that grew on Dawn's face changed the judge's haughty sneer, even if he was barely capable of registering it. Something in the curve of her lips struck him deep in his core, told him..."
something was amiss, that he had somehow cut his own head off just by being himself. "Your 
honor Mr. Hobknob, I entreat you to look near the back. Past the irrefutable DNA evidence, past 
the eyewitness testimony, past the records of communication and financing of provocateurs. To the 
financial records. To a numbered account that put money into your personal account following 
rulings, and further, your private account donating money to what is now known to have been a 
front for the attackers, the sham Cliffside charity, which was also financed by the numbered 
account that paid you."

Judge Hobknob paled, and took his own time doing it, the color washing from every bit of exposed 
flesh on his head. "This... I... I get donations for my career. And I can... give as I wish. I was under 
the impression it was a good charity..."

"Perception is reality," Dawn stated. "At least it is in cutthroat politics. And you have a lot of throat 
to cut, your alleged honor. You chose to make it this way. We could have been civil to one another, 
we could have been polite. But you wanted it rough and bloody. How predatory, Mr. Hobknob."

"Your honor," Judge Hobknob snarled.

"That's not what you'll be when the Ethics Committee is through chewing you up and spitting you 
out. If you're lucky, you'll merely never work in the legal field again for the rest of your life, 
rendering all your education meaningless and wasted. But given the kind of stench attached to 
everyone on that donation list, I believe you'll end up with an inmate number. Prey First and Prey 
Power are over. It's done. The idea is dead, and if you care one bit about anything, you'll quietly do 
your job and give it all up, being inoffensive and bland for the rest of your life."

Judge Hobknob was silent for a long while, his eyes closed. "You came to me specifically. This 
evidence is strong enough that any reasonable judge would give the warrants. You wanted an 
antagonist."

"You were the one Leodore couldn't crack. By the way, he's not my predecessor. He's my fiance, 
and you'd better remember that, your honor. Sun and earth bless him, but his sweet subtlety and 
piercing implications only go so far. Oh, very far, but they have a limit. That's where I come in. I 
wanted a clean sweep. I wanted... needed to break you. And turning down, as you said, strong 
evidence, was just the thing. I may be the hammer, but you provided the anvil I could crush you 
against. Your malfeasance is its own punishment. So far. Shall I call the Ethics Committee?"

Judge Hobknob grimaced, and started signing the forms required. "I presume that there is a cost 
beyond this simple performance of my duties?"

"An astute deduction, your honor," Dawn said, with as mild a tone as possible. "Like I said, it's 
over. No more overt or covert support for Prey First or Prey Power ideas. You're going to be under 
a very subtle microscope, but never doubt it'll be there. Honestly, I misplace files now and then, 
and come across them at the most useful times, sometimes. I'd imagine it might be personally 
embarrassing, to say the least, for this to come back to haunt you, especially after all the trials and 
the nasty revelations about the kind of poison they promoted."

"You realize that's extortion, yes?" Judge Hobknob flatly stated.

"Generously, it's blackmail, but I'm not actually demanding the remitting of money, property or 
services. You refusing to do your job is criminal negligence and telling you so isn't a criminal 
threat, it's a legal reality. You're acting on your fear of being punished for a crime which you know 
is a crime, and my telling you is window dressing at best," Dawn said with equal blandness. "You 
want to get someone in trouble? Arrest the Ethics Committee if they make you afraid for your life 
or freedom because they're the entity that threatens those. I'm sure your fellow judges will stand
Judge Hobknob violently shoved the papers across his desk. "You realize you haven't actually cured the problem, yes?"

"The fact that you recognize that it's a problem is the start of something. If you know you're wrong, enough to call it a problem, then continuing to be wrong is a willful act of mental petulance. You're acting like the villain from a bad movie. Are you motivated strictly by generic evil or something like it?"

"I gave you what you wanted and I promise I'll stop supporting causes I believe in," Judge Hobknob snorted.

"Yes, ceasing to support terror, assault and bigotry are good things. Are you even listening to yourself? I should get you taken off the bench if you genuinely think that this was a good idea."

"No! No... I didn't know how far they would go. I was only promised predators, subjugated."

Dawn winced and turned away. "Give me an excuse. Just one. I know I'll see you again, because as much as you love this job, it's clear you love your hate even more. You'll make a mistake, and I can see you behind bars." She whipped out her phone and hit one of her common numbers.

"Mayor-pro-tem. You have news?" Bogo asked, eagerness evident in his voice.

"Ready your SWAT officers. No sheep. We're going to need a three-pronged assault. We're arresting Commissioner Shearly, Chief McLiff and my father. I'm willing to bet Jesse is with his father and Woolter is with both of them. And Doug will be protecting his flock leader."

"All for them at once? We have the gang war threat. Without any confirmation of when something will happen it's a bit of a risk."

"Send Judy with the wolves again. Four professionals and one of the best cops in the precinct should be able to take down my father and his sociopath. And a small force should be suitable to the others, as their making a scene would make things even worse. And I'll be going with you to arrest Shearly. My father and McLiff have been very distant, and I don't feel like confronting either of them, but that corrupt ball of greasy mutton..."

"I can arrange that. Just the specialists, with some special gear. But you going along? Even in the most innocuous scenario... are you sure, ma'am?"

Dawn replied with a dark neutrality, "Be ready in twenty minutes."

"I'll be ten, ma'am."

Cheviot McLiff was a ram on the far end of a good career. Some lingering trace of his strength and fitness was concealed beneath a layer of indolence-bred fat, showing what had happened when a strong and active patrol sheep was turned into a politically corrupt suit.

He looked out of the window of his office, which was at the highest point of the relatively low Meadowlands police station. It was in keeping with the suburban aesthetic with sweeping curves and something of a tower that only rose to the equivalent of three stories. The whole, grassy expanse with its ribbons of black looked calm, orderly and ruthlessly controlled. Everything was in its place. Sun in the sky, ground below, all was right with the world.
Except, it wasn't. He wrapped his lips around the opening of a bottle of bismuth and took a long, deep chug. He wiped the pink smear off his lips and glared hatefully at his son and his idiot friend. "It's done. Our perfect, ordered society of sheep, of herded beasts following orders exactly... done. And it's all your fault!"

Jesse shrunk down a bit but surged back up and pointed at his father. "You can't put this on me! You're the one at the head of this conspiracy!"

"But you were supposed to not mess up! I should have remembered that I had to bail you out all the time. Of course you'd make the mistakes, threaten that otter that got us caught," Cheviot grunted.

"Festering cud! That's a lie and you know it! You did this, keeping all those animals in the asylum! Not investigating all those **disappearances** from here made them get that stray involved. You knew what Vesper trained her to be, now she's using all that cud for evil! If you had just faked some investigations and made nice with the filthy preds we wouldn't be in this pile of plop."

"I don't have to show any fish-stinking preds any respect!" Cheviot bleated.

"You don't have to send your idiots to beat up those disgusting meat-rippers! That's what got us in trouble! That was way before my little problem with that otter that wouldn't take the money and shut up."

Woolter snorted. "You offered him fives! Cudding fives! I told you! You jumped the gun on the wolf in Happytown, and you didn't try to keep enough of an eye on that otter. He escaped Doug and now we're here!"

"Blaming me? You were there too! If I was making such a big mistake then why wouldn't you stop me?"

"I just assumed your pop would actually slap some sense into your head, shake some of the grassy plop out and make you think right, like always!" Woolter shouted.

"I can't give him the supervision he needs. I'd have to keep him muzzled and on a leash to keep him from making mistakes," Cheviot snorted. "Stand together, stay quiet and just let Vesper and Shetland take care of things."

Further comment was silenced by the door opening with a huge bang, admitting a SWAT-armored Bogo, flanked by similarly armored Grizzoli and Delgado. The two officers aimed automatic tranq riles toward the three rams, Delgado roaring, "ZPD! Hooves to the sky!"

"It was Vesper Bellwether, I was just a pawn in his sick game!" Jesse cried, hooves high, falling to his knees and crawling forward.

"Coward! Traitor to your own species!" Cheviot yelled, strolling forward toward the three without his hooves being up. "Chief Bogo. Three of you? To take on a fellow police officer?"

"You're an empty suit playing police. This is a district that got full of itself. Your district council means nothing more that a homeowner's association. You're a glorified code enforcer measuring grass, neighborhood watch dressed up in a cheap costume," Bogo grunted, pulling cuffs from his belt. "There's only room for one Chief in this city. Your title means nothing."

"Big, big bull, aren't you? Slave to your predator masters! Got your stooges there with you, predators going after prey. All that force for three sheep. So strong," Cheviot huffed, holding his wrists out.
"I could break you like a twig, and ram your loser son and his idiot friend into a sticky pink paste all on my own without breathing hard. But unlike you, I care about my officers, and won't ever ask anything of them I wouldn't do, especially something of this level," Bogo said, firmly slapping the cuffs on Cheviot's wrists.

"I didn't do anything. Doug did all the darting, his dad had cops beating predators. He's insane! He's completely insane and hates predators so bad he was fine with keeping them in the asylum," Woolter cried out, struggling slightly as Delgato cuffed him.

"There's no honor among thieves, and apparently less among terrorists," Bogo said with a chuckle. "I hope you ordered really good food and movies for your prison, you'll be dealing with them for a long, long time. Well, you hope. Most of your officers are going away and space is limited. You might get put in Sahara Square or Tundratown."

"Gloat all you want, you Order-traitor, but that will never happen. I'll never see the inside of a jail cell. I'll never see the inside of a courtroom. You have no idea the kind of power you're dealing with, the sheer political might and invincible will that will be bearing down on you. I'll retire to somewhere far away and full of prey, where I can be free from predator stench," Cheviot huffed.

"Well, that bleating idiot was right about one thing. You really are insane," Bogo said, pushing Cheviot along to the elevator back to the main floor.

When the doors opened they were met with a sea of sheep, officers glaring at them with their wide pupils, with the occasional round pupiled variation in the sea. They held their batons, tasers and tranq pistols, and crowded in to block the door.

"Chief?" Grizzoli asked, one paw holding Jesse, the other reaching for his suppressant spray.

Bogo grunted and waved off the action, sternly pointing at the gathered sheep. "Most or all of you are going to be out of a job, maybe going to jail depending on how much you tell us. Give up. Interfere with us and you'll end up cuffed, just with more bruises and goring wounds. You can run if you think you can, go lock yourselves up in your homes for a last stand. But every guilty party is getting what they deserve, no exceptions and no escape. Now let. Us. Through!"

The flock held together for a long moment then slowly parted, hanging their heads in shame as Cheviot, Jesse and Woolter were led through their midst.

"I swear I had nothing to do with anything," the ram pleaded, down on his knees and begging before Dawn, Officer McHorn and Officer Pennington. The sharply-dressed ram was in a dark blue suit with a powder blue tie, his wool sheared down very close to his head. "I just got this job a few days ago! I told them I didn't want it but he found out I'm from Meadowlands! Please don't arrest me! I just needed a job!"

Dawn clicked her tongue and slowly shook her head. "I realize that you're just Melody's replacement. Is Shearly alone or is there a scary, blank-faced ram in there with him?"

"N-no, it's just him. Him and a huge platter of salad loaded down with nuts and oil dressing. I was just lucky it didn't slop all over my suit when I carried it in for him," the ram said with a disgusted look on his face, taking a reflexive sweep of his suit.

"That's him, right to the end," Dawn said with a shake of her head. "There's a ZPD cruiser outside. Talk to the officer out there and tell him anything you can think of. It might help things. You
probably won't be needed in court, but at least keep your schedule clear. Oh, and don't worry about the job. Once the cure is ready Miss Chamois will be coming back to this position."

"She can have it," the ram commented, rushing past the officers and out of the office.

"You should fall back, ma'am. This could get ugly," Officer Pennington said.

"He's already ugly, it can't get any worse," Dawn casually said, strolling forward and leaping up to open Shearly's door and let the others in.

The finely appointed and sumptuously decorated office looked largely the same, except the more expensive little things were gone, leaving the books and a few of the cheaper things, indicating which symbols of status were actually always fake. Shearly was behind the huge desk, with a bowl of salad dripping with dressing and loaded with nuts. He ate without concern, shoving huge forkfuls of greens into his maw, dripping oil and slightly drooling. "So, it would seem becoming a stray destroys manners. Hardly surprising. You absorb the trash morals of predators. Disgusting."

"Yes you are. And good for us," Dawn said. "Your disgusting rolls of fat leaking lanolin all over and your drooling maw slobbering while you're eating gave us plenty of DNA to show you were in Cliffside, watching whatever bloody horrors you either ordered or approved of in that surgical theater. And your need to watch the money gave us the unified proof of everything. All the money, all the names, the numbered accounts the forensic accountants and warrants will break and reveal. You'll pay for everything, especially what you did to Melody Chamois."

"Another stray," Shearly grunted, shoveling more salad into his mouth. "Hiding right under my snout, playing pretend, all the time lusting after some flesh-hungry mangy feline."

"Yes, I recognize that love is foreign to you, but just imagine that a partner is a delicious salad and maybe you can understand how other mammals can feel for each other. Maybe. I don't think the savage lust you feel for food can be compared to more tender feelings that others have for one another. Like I have for Leodore."

Shearly dropped his bowl onto his desk and grunted as he slowly rose from his chair. "Good thing I was done. You're going to make me sick. At least you brought prey to take me away. I wouldn't want to fall into the hold of filthy predators."

"I asked Officers McHorn and Pennington here because they're two of the strongest on the force. I had half expected... or hoped... they would need to taser or punch you into incapacitation and I needed two strong folks to cart your corpulent bulk to holding."

Shearly grunted as Francine clicked the cuffs onto him. "Shetland Shearly, you're under arrest for conspiracy, unlawful imprisonment, professional malfeasance, assaulting a whistleblower, tax fraud and terrorism. You have the right to maintain your silence and free speaking will negate the right against self-incrimination. You have the right to legal representation of your own choosing or one appointed by the state prior to questioning."

"Savage. Like your drooling predator. I will never spend a moment in prison. There is a political power that will save me."

Dawn snorted. "You're as insane as Doug. If you believe that, you have a good chance of spending your life in an asylum rather than prison."

"You underestimate your father's power. You left the herd and have no clue what you're fighting. Look at what we've done."
"Officers, consider that an uncoerced confession of his involvement in the plot against the citizens of Zootopia. It's finally over, Shearly," Dawn stated.

"Your father will not be so easily defeated. This is far from over. You will be made to suffer more and more..."

...oo...

"You must lead us, Polizist. You know the legal needs," Steiner said, quietly, as he crouched in the shadows in front of the Bellwether manor. It was something of a glorified suburban house, a core of a large two-story family home with attached wings on the sides and back, an extra second story attached to the back wing and a small third story that resembled a tower.

The four wolves were covered head-to-tail, their faces shielded with plastic face plates to compliment the cloth masks that covered most of their muzzles. They held their tranq pistols at the ready and clustered around Judy. Judy had decked herself out in some patched-together anti-Nighthowler armor, mostly composed of stitched-together wetsuit material, with her police armor on top, a visored SWAT helmet secured to her head and her ears bagged in more waterproof material. "We have a warrant, and you've been duly authorized to work with the police in the apprehension of dangerous criminals, helping to serve this warrant under police auspices. You can act under my discretion if I feel your skills are necessary. And right now, you need to bust down the door. Mayor Bellwether gave me a map from her memory, telling me just what the layout is like. Did you memorize it?"

"Ja, fully. Where do we go first to find him? Or do we need to split up and sweep the house?" Steiner asked.

"She seemed pretty certain he would be at the very back of the house, in his den. He's aware that he's going down. If he's here, he'll be there, trying to feel big and important. Keep your face shields down and your weapons ready, because she also thinks Doug is going to be in there protecting his idol to the end. He's a violent sociopath who headbutted reinforced glass to get at a target, has extremely good aim with a gas pistol and is likely to have plenty of Nighthowler extract to fire at us. If he's protecting Vesper Bellweather, this won't be easy."

"But must be done. No matter what. For those mammals in the asylum, it must be done," Steiner said firmly, Gerhilde helping him to pick up a large battering ram.

Judy hopped up to the front door, followed by Steiner and Gerhilde, with Gary and Larry close behind. She faced away from the door and pounded it repeatedly with back-kicks. "ZPD! We have a warrant! Open up and surrender peacefully or we'll be forced to enter violently!"

After no response came she nodded to the two wolves who swung the battering ram hard, rocking the door but not quite breaking through. A second swing, accompanied by a tandem shout, led to the door splintering around the knob and swinging in. Gary and Larry pointed their pistols in. "All clear! Officer Hopps, please lead the way," Gary said.

Judy hopped in as quickly as she could in her bulky armor, keeping low to the ground and holding her tranq pistol as best as she could. A few hand-signals had all five winding through the halls that had been marked on the map. None of the doors were shut and nothing resembling traps had been set up. That put the five on edge, as they had to wonder exactly what was coming.

The large double doors to the den were shut and didn't yield to simply turning the knobs. Another few signals had Steiner and Gerhilde taking up the battering ram again while Judy gave the doors more back-kicks. "Vesper Bellwether! This is Judy Hopps of the ZPD! I have a warrant for your
arrest! Come out and surrender or we'll be forced to come in after you!"

The lack of a response prompted Steiner and Gerhilde to ram the doors, shuddering the heavy wooden things. Another ram made them open slightly, showing the knobs were chained together on the inside, necessitating several more hammerings to try and dislodge the knobs.

Loud gas puffs rang from within as the doors slowly yielded to the ramming, several spots of blue splattering across the wolves as they became visible in the opening doors.

"Bruder!" Gerhilde cried, as a pellet splattered on Steiner's face mask.

"No penetration, he is not as good as he thinks," Steiner replied, standing his ground and continuing to hammer the doorknobs with Gerhilde's help.

The knobs finally broke from the doors, sending the chains clattering to the floor and letting all five into the room. The room had not been overly converted from a simple, opulent den, loaded with expensive little tchotchkes, high bookcases, a fireplace blazing away and a high-backed chair set at the back, occupied by the calm form of Vesper Bellwether.

He was in a blue silk robe, worn over what looked to be a button-up shirt and, potentially, short undergarments. He calmly sipped at a snifter of some kind of alcohol, poured from the bottle sitting at the table beside him. Behind the chair Doug Ramses was firing what looked like a tactical paintball gun modified heavily to be more accurate and powerful.

Judy took aim the moment the doors opened and fired off her spring-powered tranq pistol, being below the notice of Doug's firing. Her dart missed the back of the chair and sank deep into the ram's neck, making him bleat loudly and reach up to pull out the dart. He fired off a few balls of poison in Judy's direction, wavering in his aim before finally dropping the gun and falling to the side, thudding heavily on the ground.

"Now you surrender, Blutschaf," Steiner snarled, his hackles rising, teeth pulled back behind the lexan face shield and revealed more and more by the evaporation of the Nighthowler extract. He held his pistol up at Vesper and aimed directly at his chest. "Maybe I do not only dart once. Accidents can happen. Maybe you do not wake up..."

"Stand down, Steiner," Judy said sternly, approaching Vesper with her pistol up, making slow motions toward him, eyes flicked to Doug's collapsed form every few shuffles. "Vesper Bellwether, you're under arrest for conspiracy, terrorism, assault, kidnapping..."

"Yes, yes, and I have a right against self-incrimination and can see an attorney," Vesper said with a roll of his eyes. "I'm a politician. I know all of this. Let's conclude this farce as quickly as possible. I'd like to retire to a less predator-heavy location."

"How weak and brittle are you?" Gary asked. "There aren't that many of us anyway."

"Any is too many," Vesper snorted, draining his glass of what was finally revealed to Judy's nose to be brandy, and setting the glass aside. "Bad enough you disgusting creatures exist, you mix with our kind. Your diseased genes mix in and soon we can't even tell what anything is anymore, like that passing Division cop, pred-blooded and worthless. It was not my intention to get him. But it was for the best. Now everyone knows whichever parent claims him was an Order-traitor. And they will pay like the rest."

Judy snapped the cuffs on his wrists and frowned. "His name is Officer Louis Wulfberg, son of Olympia Wulfberg and Buck Mouflon. You're done for, and your movement is as dead as it gets."
She held something up in her hand, a pen shaped like a carrot. The sound of rewinding screeched through the den and then Vesper's words played out again. "It was not my intention to get him. But it was for the best. Now everyone knows whichever parent claims him was an Order-traitor. And they will pay like the rest."

"It is good that der Polizist stopped me. You will never see freedom again, und that will be good. Maybe the prison will let us come und watch you in your cage. I can bring mein Deidre, you are scary, like the monster in a movie. Perhaps she will jump und seek meine arms. She is a damhirschkuh, a fallow doe. It will make you mad, und that is true revenge," Steiner said, following close beside Vesper.

Gary and Larry had cuffed the tranquilized Doug and secured his Nighthowler gun, dragging his unconscious body along behind Judy. "This guy should do well in prison," Larry said.

"Oh no, he's going to the nuthatch, for good. They should send him into the one from the comic books, only a version that's not easy to escape from," Gary corrected.

"Nothing is ever safe. This city is still wild. It will still chew you up and spit you out. Don't think you've changed anything by solving this case," Vesper snorted.

"I changed one thing. I got you off the street. Nothing is instant, nothing is certain, but we all have to try. Life might be messy, but it's our mess and that means we can clean it up if we choose to. That's how I live my life, and look where it got me. Change starts with all of us and now we have a huge change... you're finished," Judy said, concluding her little speech by slamming the door of her cruiser shut and taking her out of sight of Vesper. "Clawhauser, we got them. A tranquilized Doug Ramses and a very sour Vesper Bellwether. That's it. It's all over," Judy sighed. A lack of response made her click her radio several times. "Clawhauser? Officer Hopps to Precinct One..."

"Judy! Judy! Sorry but it's all going on! The others were arrested too but they all finally happened!"

"What are you talking about? What happened? What's going on over there?"

"It finally started! The Striped Claw figured out they didn't have a dirty cop and started in on the Loup Garou and Polar Kings went after the Striped Claws because they were distracted, and then the Jackals went to burn down Loup Garou property but they were being watched by the Rippers... it's crazy! The Chief wants everyone in and ready. He says he wants you in the precinct because you lack SWAT training."

Judy huffed. "I'll give him a piece of my mind later. But first we'll take care of these two. Alright, back to the precinct. It's not over yet."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Stray- It came up before and I never said anything about it. Stray is the sheep term for a member of the herd that steps so far out of line they leave the flock in some sense. While usually meaning something as simple as cultural inappropriateness, or just being generally unsheepish, when used with a very sharp inflection it's the derogatory version of Outsider, specifically meaning a sheep that has gone off with a predator.
Order-traitor- Another derogatory name for an Outsider, referencing the taxonomic division of Order, and meant to imply that the person has been dallying off with someone of Order Carnivora.
Winning the War

Chapter Summary

The sheep are gone, the gangs remain

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Winning the War

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"How many have we arrested?" Bogo asked, crossing his arms as he looked over a large, lexan map of the Happytown area, which had been covered in mug shots and dry erase scribbles.

"From the list, we got almost all of them doing some kind of criminal act, about thirty. Then we have the ones that we didn't know and were acting tonight, adding an extra fifteen. And they're still subduing rioters and looters taking advantage of the mass war. ZFD is still putting out burning cars and shops," Clawhauser said, his tone going from strong to sorrowful.

"Chief! You have to let me go out there!" Judy insisted, bursting into the bullpen, partially stripped out of her anti-Nighthowler armor.

"Hello, Officer Hopps, excellent work capturing Vesper Bellwether and resisting the urge to beat him into a fine paste. I assume you finished the processing paperwork and filed your reports, as that's the only reason you'd be bothering me right now with your demands that cannot be met."

"I wouldn't be here if I hadn't finished it off. You know how fast I am about all my paperwork," Judy said. "I should be out there, sir. I was there for a long time, and I'm still in the middle of it. I deserve a chance."

"Send an untrained Officer into the middle of what is essentially a miniature war? I think... not," Bogo sternly stated.

"I know what you're saying, and there are reasons but... I started out in Happytown. I was part of this whole thing. It wasn't just my involvement in this poisoning plot, it happened in Happytown and that's what my beat was. And this is my city. Anything that hurts it is my responsibility. You said it yourself, the city needs good cops like me. Let me be a good cop."

"This is a major endeavor! More than anything this is abut the civilians. They're under real threat from the ones they tried to tacitly ignore. The gangs were what they tolerated because it kept the police out. Now it's coming back on them. This hit to their reputation... Happytown might never get revitalized after this. The reputation destruction is as bad as the arson..." Bogo rumbled.
Judy sighed, nodding slowly. "I know. I can already tell what others are going to think. I already had thoughts like that, back before Louis... Officer Wulfberg got driven savage. Maybe we can change minds after this. The civilians are the real issue, innocent bystanders. Predators aren't automatically bad, and prey aren't innocent. Not only can prey go savage, it can be evil. I felt it when I arrested Vesper Bellwether. When I looked at Doug's dead eyes. You need me out there! Prey helping to save predators and bring Happytown back to some kind of order! We need to make sure that the city gives them the help they need once this is all over! Because they're going to need it. You know I need to be out there."

Bogo looked out at nothing, clenching and unclenching his fists. "I don't have SWAT armor for you. You don't have SWAT training. That patched-up Nighthowler suit won't do anything against fire or claws."

"I still need to be out there. No matter what, it's important."

Another long, tense moment followed before Bogo pointed out the door and looked away. "Go... just go. But if you die..."

"I'm fired," Judy said with a smile. "Nice to know the offer still stands. Don't worry, I'll be back." With a final nod she hopped her way out of the bullpen.

Bogo scribbled Judy's name on the map and circled an area in the heart of the area. "She'll have to go into the middle of Happytown. The gangs are out at the outskirts now and all they have in the center is the ZFD fighting the fires, the civilians and looters. I... I don't know if it's any less dangerous. Those scavengers won't hesitate to maim or kill her, but they might just run from a cop..."

"Officer Hopps, Chief Bogo says he's going to want you to go to the core of Happytown, to protect the civilians, aid the ZFD by keeping them safe and arrest and detain or chase off the scavenging looters," Clawhauser said into his radio after clicking over to the right channel.

"Got it, Clawhauser. I'll put on what armor I can get to stay on and get whatever weapons I can manage. It's not going to be easy but it's the important thing. Scavengers are more despicable in this case. They're just taking advantage of chaos, all to stuff some more bucks in their pockets, and might endanger the firemammals. I'll tell you when I'm on the scene. Am I going with anyone or do I have to take the meter cart? I've never actually driven it on active streets."

"Chief? Are we sending anyone else in there?" Clawhauser asked.

"I wish we were. But I have everyone assigned already. And I can't possibly have her in that ridiculous little under-powered cart. We have modifications for her to use on standard cruisers, so tell her to see the garage about them. Pick any one with available usable equipment. But fill out the paperwork! All of it. Emergency or not we have paperwork there for a reason."

"Judy, the chief says you'll have to go alone. You need to fill out paperwork on a standard cruiser and ask for the quick-install modifications that we bought when you were assigned here. And he wanted me to emphasize the paperwork, I think because he's worried," Clawhauser said, getting a snort and scowl from Bogo.

"It costs a lot of money to train and outfit a cop. We can't just throw them away," Bogo growled, paying more attention than before to the map.

"Be careful out there," Clawhauser said.
"Will do. I'm about to get my equipment and fill out the paperwork as quickly as I can. I'll contact you when I need pickups for any looting idiots I arrest or... incapacitate when necessary. For now, Hopps out."

ooo

"You want some more of this? I got plenty of this for you!" Finnick the fennec was not having a good day, and his situation was getting steadily worse. He had just planned to park in Happytown. Parking was usually cheap-to-free, and he could always pop into the nearest bodega for some supplies. He could make his money stretch in Happytown, and he was used to unfriendly folks being around.

The whole damn place had suddenly seemed to explode. Snarling, howling, roaring, all kinds of noise. Breaking glass, pounding on doors, the sounds of mammals being beaten, all of it surrounded him before the new sounds of police sirens and fire alarms told him that the fools had finally done it. They'd gone stupid enough to fight the police. He might not have thought much of the ZPD, but even he knew better than to tangle with the fuzz, especially since they were on edge over losing one of their own to the savagery and were inclined to bust heads because of it.

The warring, the beatings, the smell of blood wasn't the worst of it. They had moved on to other areas, clashing with the police that had come to the border, once their destruction and burning were done. With the fighting gone and the police elsewhere, the filthy scavengers were left. The cowardly opportunists and those that picked at the flesh of society had rushed in to break windows that hadn't been broken and steal items they probably couldn't do anything with. But once the businesses had been picked clean, other targets started to look good, like parked cars. Or a big, flashy van.

He was outnumbered and outsized by the scavenging looters still left after his big personality and big baseball bat had done some rattling of nerves and heads. Three scruffy stoats, two ragged polecats, two red foxes and a scrawny wolf. They had only their bare paws and their teeth, which seemed like it suited them. "Just give up the van! We're just pickin' up what the gangs left us but we'll royally rut you up if you don't give us the tires and whatever goodies you've got back there!"

The wolf demanded.

"It ain't worth your life to protect that ugly, stupid van! We just want your stuff!" One of the foxes yapped, reaching in to claw at Finnick, getting a whack on the back of his paw for his trouble.

"You say spoor about my van again and I'll bite your face off! This van may not be much to you but it's my home! I ain't afraid of you, I'm a scrappy little needle-tooth that's gonna make you sorry you started scavenging," Finnick yapped, swinging his bat around to drive them back.

His white undershirt was ripped and splattered with blood that wasn't his, while his blue jeans showed little evidence of the fights he had been in protecting his van. Taller folk bled downward, naturally, and his shirt was the first and easiest target. "Let's get him! He's one fennec, and those guys are pushovers," the second fox hissed, baring his teeth toward Finnick.

"I got nothing against you reds, you got my respect, but you're makin' me inclined to crack your head open!" Finnick swung his bat and connected with the fox's arm when he failed to move back fast enough, drawing out a high-pitched, pained shriek and forcing him to fall onto the street.

"Want more? I got plenty more!"

The wolf suddenly stepped in and swept upward with his paw, catching the bat to the arm but still being capable of catching Finnick and whipping him like a lacrosse ball into the side of his van, forcing out a coughing bark. "You still got more, you little scat stain?!"
"Still got... plenty for you..." Finnick coughed, his grip on the bat never wavering, though he was struggling to rise. "You gonna pay for the dent... you omega..."

The wolf snarled and barked, some drool starting to slide over his fangs. "You'll pay for that one, fennec! We'll take your stuff and burn your damn van down. Maybe your attitude'll finally-" His speech halted with a howling shriek, his body wracked with pain and sharp convulsions running through him as an aggressively loud taser crackle rang out over the scene.

Judy ejected the taser contact heads from the front of her rifle-style taser which was connected to a backpack by heavy wires. She pulled another set of heads from a clip slung like a bandolier across her chest and clicked it into place. She was decked out in her usual patrol attire, with some of her Nighthowler-proof armor on her chest and arms and the helmet that fit her well enough, with the bags removed from her ears. "Officer Judy Hopps, ZPD! Step away from the van and surrender!"

The small collection of scavengers wavered in their reaction. Even though they were numerous and facing a bunny, it was a bunny in armor holding an intense taser that had dropped their leader into a groaning, incapacitated lump. They finally cut and run, screaming in terror.

"Officer Hopps to Happytown Command Center, I have six scavengers fleeing an assault and attempted robbery and arson in an alley on Rathbone heading through to Basil. It's three stoats, two polecats and a red fox. I'm here with their incapacitated leader, a wolf, and the victim, a fennec fox whose van was being assaulted. He seems to have been injured, send medics."

"Naw! No medics! I'm tough enough. Spoory omega just knocked the breath out of me," Finnick coughed, looming over the fallen wolf. "You feel like a big mammal now? Got yourself taken down by the fuzz!"

"I'd still feel better if you were looked at. It's also a requirement. A good one," Judy said, clipping the taser body to her side and slapping the cuffs onto the wolf's wrists. "I think I zapped him a little too hard."

"Nah, that wasn't nearly enough to do it. Fool just wasn't ready for it, it messed with his mind but not like... got it all scrambled up," Finnick commented, turning to look at his van and run some fingers over the dent he had left. "High holy plenty, dude, couldn't you have just whisked me into the ground? Police bunny, you got a mechanic coming with that medic? My casa needs some TLC, way more than I do."

"Your c... oh! Your home. Hah, I'm glad Jaguar taught me a little of his language now. You live in a van?"

"Pretty sweet ride, right? Custom paint, reinforced interior, shag carpet, a real silk pillow I got as a gift from a lady friend, and room for two, or even more if getting' close isn't a problem."

"I should have asked, are you sheltering anyone in there? Family or similar? I mean, you were very dedicated to protecting it..." Judy noted.

"Yeah, it's my home! It's my stuff in there! And Ni... oh, yeah... nah, it's just me now. Just my stuff. I had a bud that used to crash here and have his stuff with me but he moved to Sahara Square. I mean, I'm from there and I know it's kinda... okay... but he only went there because he 'Got some decent advice' from someone he wouldn't tell me about and got some charity from Mrs. Fanak the city councilwoman. I have no idea what he did to get her to notice him but she invited him to get a new lease on life. All he told me was maybe there's really something to this city. Sure, he's sittin' pretty now but what about me? I need a partner to get work done," Finnick said with a growing tone of sadness.
Judy came in and gently patted Finnick on the shoulder. "Friends can be very interesting mammals. You might be divided from them by all kinds of situations. And then out of the blue, they get in touch and next thing you're right in the middle of their life again."

Finnick thought about the advice for a while. "So you sayin' that one day we're just gonna be hanging out at the bar taking shots and getting back in touch, police doe?"

"Well, it certainly could happen. I have an old friend that got in touch recently. It was like nothing happened, though she didn't tell me about a new relationship she was in. It comes back in its own time."

"Well, probably no relationship junk, 'less he wants to hear about what kinda ladies I've been makin' happy," Finnick said with a deep chuckle. "So, police doe, you got plans after all this riotin' an' scat? You wanna get a drink?"

"Are you hitting on me in the middle of a gang war?" Judy asked, incredulous.

"Why not? It's happenin' no matter what, and I wanna get your digits."

Judy couldn't keep herself from chuckling in response. "So you're an Outsider like the mayor. That's pretty interesting, I never met that many back home."

"Bet you didn't. But I don't like to put labels on things. My love don't care what the species is, I give love to all the ladies in all the biomes. 'Specially if they got them hips. Bunnies be made of hips."

Judy partially dissolved into laughter, fighting to maintain her professional composure. "You'd probably love my family, though I doubt many of them have an attraction to foxes. We're pretty boring now that I look at it from a Zootopian perspective. And I... I'm gonna wait on dating, just for right now."

"Oh you got someone, you fell hard for some mammal that ain't a bunny. How about it, Officer? You an Outsider?"

"I'm... I'm not sure what you'd call it, when... okay, that's a little too casual," Judy clicked her shoulder radio. "Happytown Command Center, where are we on the medics and the reinforcements?"

"We're stretched thin here. Can you get the subject and the captured looter here?"

"My van's just rutted up on the outside, it works just fine otherwise. I'll haul this omega along if you lead," Finnick said, glaring hatefully at the recovered and snarling wolf. "You got a muzzle on you? Don't like 'em myself, after a bad story my old partner told me, but sometimes a cur's just askin'."

"No muzzles, and no need. I have a cage in the back of my vehicle," Judy said, hauling the wolf along and encouraging cooperation by pressing an active contact taser to his side with a finger on the trigger.

"What, they got a little bunny car for... oh by the bounty..." Finnick's grin vanished when he stepped out of the alley and saw Judy leading the wolf to the back of a big Pride Raksha, the SUV done up in ZPD colors. "They gave you a Big Mama? You can drive a Big Mama?"

"This is Zootopia. Anybody can do anything, and I believe that more than ever after the day I've had," Judy replied, slamming the door after stuffing the wolf in the back. "This is my third arrest..."
today and this guy wasn't an insane terrorist shooting poison pellets at me. And, you know, it has the standard modifications slipped in there so I can use it. They bought those when I was sent there and now they can use them."

"Wait wait wait... what? The terrorist? That guy makin' mammals lose their minds?"

"Hop in your van and follow me to the Command Center at the border of Happytown. I'll tell you all about it if you let the medics give you a look."

"Are you kiddin'? They can open me up and take out whatever they want if I can hear about that!"

"It's not just suppress and contain anymore. I think we're winning," Bogo said, adding a few extra lines onto the lexan map. "It took five shifts and a lot of coffee, and the ZFD getting on me about holding down rioters and looters, but we've got them. We broke the back of the gangs. And they made it easy for us."

"Easy isn't exactly what I'd call it," an exhausted Clawhauser said, dunking a frosted long john into a steaming cup of coffee and eating it with minimal discomfort. "I had to take a nap in the break room. Or maybe it was sleep. Is it sleep if you're at work? It wasn't the full night but it was close enough."

"Their internal fractures, the shuffling for position and status, the fights with other gangs that weakened all of them, it's all made it easier to yank the offending parties out of Happytown. They may have ruined their own home but hopefully the ones left behind will remember who made the mess, and who cleaned it up."

"And remember that their own neighbors tried looting and destroying," Judy added, stepping through the bullpen door with Finnick in tow. "We'll do everything we can to make sure the rest of Zootopia understands it was just a lot of weeds choking a perfectly good field. There's folks like this in it, so it has to be alright."

"Hopps, I'm slowly learning to stop asking as many questions, but why is there a civilian in my bullpen?" Bogo asked, leaning in and tipping his glasses to look down at the distant, diminutive form of Finnick.

Finnick, for his part, looked up at Bogo from behind his sunglasses and clicked his teeth. "Love the style, big dude, but don't go getting' on the doe. I'm just here for my van.

"I rescued him from a pack of looters going after his van. He took a fair beating but was okay, just bruised ribs and some minor lacerations," Judy explained."

"Ain't no spoory scavengers gonna take my van. I gotta baseball bat and a bad attitude and I know how to use both," Finnick said with a grin.

"You never have a normal day on patrol, do you, Officer Hopps?" Bogo asked.

"A riot of this size isn't normal, sir," Judy countered. "After the medics finished with him we did have to take in his van. It was evidence. The exterior was processed and that's all we needed, so now we have to release it to him. I figured it wouldn't hurt to check in, see if you need me to do another shift."

"You've done four. Sleeping some of a shift hardly counts considering all the work you put in. We might have some more work coming our way but I'm cycling out the cops that already saw
Happytown action. Go home, Hopps, get some actual sleep. You've more than earned it."

"You can go flub the nub over whatever not-a-bunny got you talkin' like you ain't trying to date anyone," Finnick said with a sly grin, looking up at Judy from behind his shades.

"Sweet cheese and crackers!" Judy yelped, the insides of her ears flushing darkly.

"What was that, Officer Hopps?" Bogo asked, Clawhauser looking over with a broad grin.

"And we're walking! Sorry, Chief, we need to go get to the impound lot and get his van!" Judy shouted, scampering toward the door, with Finnick sauntering along behind her.

"Maybe I should stop asking so many questions. Sometimes that rabbit makes it hard to justify questioning things," Bogo said with a shake of his head.

"I have five bucks down on Officer Wulfberg," Clawhauser said, unfolding a piece of paper with names and numbers scribbled all over it.

Bogo snorted softly, looking down on Clawhauser for a moment with a firm glare. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. "I'll put ten on that action."

Chapter End Notes

**Author's Notes**

**Pride Raksha**- Another fine vehicle from Pride Heavy Manufacturing's automobile division, and one purchased by the ZPD. This is meant to be like the one she's driving at the end of the movie. The name, of course, is a reference to The Jungle Book and is the name of Mowgli's wolf mother, a noble name for a powerful car.

"**Big Mama**"- This is, implicitly, the slang term, probably street criminal argot, for the Pride Raksha in ZPD paint, referring both to its size and, in a sly fashion, the origin of the model name.
Aftermath

Chapter Summary

Cures, new positions and an expanded love for all.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirty: Aftermath

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Life had existed from moment to moment for a long while. It had seemed like that. Life wasn't much beyond a series of impressions. Smells, sounds, with images as short flashes that made an impression and created the appropriate reaction. Everything was merely an experience, with no further thought. Thought wasn't even a happening. There was only panic and reaction.

Pain. A single jab of pain and the world started to collapse. Scent fell away, sounds fell away, and the flashes of impression were lost in the darkness. A think blanket rolled in, muffling everything, taking away everything but the vague sense of the self, which was only a nameless thing, just self and nothing more tangible than that.

A name... a name... Name. Melody. Melody. Melody. That came back as the fog lifted. The ideas came back slowly. Melody Chamois. That was her. She was Melody Chamois, a secretary. A secretary for... for Shetland Shearly. That was...

The memories that trickled back into her mind were painful. Agonizing. She knew who she was, she knew what she was. She had locked herself away to have a job that she hated, for a ram that she feared. She had nothing in the newest memories that were happy. She could recall the last clear impression in her mind, falling in front of city hall, stricken by the one plaguing the city. That's when the memories stopped and only the panic of savagery began. Seeing the mayor and a security team coming to help her, coming to keep her safe.

But she had been stricken. Shearly had been implying he was connected. It was all true. Her attempted betrayal had been paid with becoming a victim. It was a dark thing to recall, a terrible thing. The cloying darkness made it hard to keep thinking. But one thing in that last moment of a clear mind shone bright. One pure and good thing that her mind clung to in the waning bit of focus. Geta. In the falling fade of her rational mind she had thought of Geta. That had helped to banish her fear of the dark chaos of becoming savage.

The rest of her memories filtered in, filling in the gaps that had been lost in the panicked swirl of the savage mind. She felt them integrate, resuming her personal continuity and context. But she didn't care much. As before she held on to the warm memories of her time with Geta. Even if those
days had been filled with fear of discovery and every kiss and caress tense with the knowledge that being found out meant being shunned... they had been beautiful.

Once the memories had finished, the next thing to creep in was pain. Not a sharp and stabbing pain, but a dull, aching throb that seemed to have no real source. It wasn't an injury or anything like it. It was just pain. It surrounded her perception, consumed her world. She wasn't in agony, she was just all-over in pain. Everything hurt, like the result of a bad and overdone workout. Her whole being, such as she could feel it, was sore.

The light was painful too. Pulling out of her mind made her feel her body, control her body. She got control of her eyelids and opened them slowly, a bleating groan pulled from between her chapped lips as the low light of the darkened room proved almost too much for her.

"Melody!" A familiar voice. Drenched in fear and worry, but also filled with concern. It was familiar. It was completely unexpected. She could never have hoped for it. "Doctor! I heard her bleat!"

"Geta..." Melody whispered, still unable to open her eyes completely. All she could detect was a vague reddish-tan blob just standing out in the low light of the room. "Geta... is that you?"

"I'm here! I'm here, Melody..." Geta pressed himself in against her as best he could, nuzzling at her throat and purring as loudly as he could.

"Mr. Felna, please step out of the way," another voice said, Geta's warm purring removed and an even brighter light being shined in her eyes. "Miss Chamois, can you hear me? Do you know what happened?"

"I was coming to see the Mayor... Geta! I want to see Geta!" Melody thrashed in the hospital bed, almost throwing off the hooves of the deer doctor.

"L-let him check you, Do-Re, come on, just let him make sure you're okay," Geta said.

Melody calmed down when the nickname wafted across her ears, only twinging and wincing when her eyes were examined again. "The mayor said she could protect me. But Shearly figured out I was going to betray him. She was right there. I almost made it..."

"You made it, Do-Re, you made it. She got that file you wanted her to have and she used it to take down all the ones that did this. You saved the city, and you... you remembered me before you went..."

Tears beaded in the corners of Melody's eyes, and she settled back on the bed, looking boneless as the tension drained out of her. "Ge-Ta... you made me feel less afraid when I was losing my mind. I never stopped loving you..."

"I know. The mayor told me, she broadcast the notice across the city and... and I've been here ever since."

"He really has been," the doctor said. "He practically camped out when we had you in the quarantine cell. When we got a treatment that actually looked to work and we transferred you to the hospital proper he came right along. Dedication like that is a rare trait indeed."

"I wish I had been that dedicated," Melody whispered. "You shouldn't be here, Ge-Ta. I left you. I was a coward and I left you and that was the biggest mistake I ever made."

"The mayor talked to me while you were in quarantine. She didn't have a lot of time but she still
came by, mostly to meet with Mayor Lionheart. But she told me you kept that cheap bracelet I bought you. I ate tofu all that pay period but it was worth it. And the picture frame. And your wool grew out but she said you had sculpted tufts on your bouffant. I'm flattered you kept them. You never really left me, you were forced away."

Melody finally managed to focus her gaze and looked on Geta without pain. He was still the sharply and nobly handsome caracal she remembered. Remembered trying to keep a stoic look when she left him in Meadowlands, standing out in a field. He had become scruffier due to his vigil, but nothing destroyed the fine lines of his features, the dark fur along his face and up his tufts added to his nobility. He was in a simple white shirt and jeans, as ever. "I can tell from what you're saying, but I need to hear it. Can you forgive me?"

"Nothing to forgive," Geta said with a smile. He turned to the doctor and asked, "Is she alright?"

"Pupil response seems fine, as expected. We've already had several recoveries, so we're reasonably certain that there are no side-effects from coming out of it. But keep tabs on her, at least for a few weeks. She can be discharged today or tomorrow, and will need a followup check in a month."

"I... I don't live with her. Will I be able to just drop in and check on her?" Geta asked.

The doctor huffed softly and rolled his eyes. "Mr. Felna, don't insult us both by pretending you aren't going to be with her every second where it's feasible from now until... however long you live. It's uncouth to lie to a doctor when his patient is the subject of the conversation."

"H-he must have his own house. I wouldn't... wouldn't mind if he stayed over. But his job and all that..."

"Well, you can work it out. Just tell me if anything unusual happens. Dizziness, blackouts, memory lapses, fainting, seizures, recurrence of savagery, slurred speech or any similar mentally-connected issues. Also, she should avoid alcohol and non-prescription drugs," the doctor said, stepping out of the room, leaving Melody and Geta alone.

A long, uncomfortable silence passed between the two before Melody asked, "Are they sure they got all of them?"

"What you gave them, those papers, they identified the backers, and those folks gave up others. Some of the higher up folks turned on each other. If they didn't get everyone, they got everyone that mattered, and most importantly, the guy that actually made the poison. For all intents and purposes, it's over."

"I didn't think it could happen. I thought we'd live in fear forever," Melody said, licking her dry lips. "Did they leave any water?"

"Right here..." Geta picked up a bottle of water and unscrewed the cap, sticking in a straw and holding it near Melody's lips. "Just drink slowly."

"You remembered," Melody said with a smile, taking a long, slow sip through the straw. "I don't know why, I just like everything out of a straw."

"I remembered. I remembered when you said it was our first kiss," Geta chuckled, taking a sip out of the same straw immediately after. "I even got your lipstick on me from it. I remember everything."

Melody was silent for a long time, occasionally flicking her eyes up to take in Geta. "I missed you. I can't believe I get to see you again. I can't believe you came. I just... do... is this costing you your
"Not if my boss wants to keep his reputation. The mayor said my name on city-wide television. I told him I was going and, well... the garage can do without me and they really should still have a place for me. My apartment... I'm sure I can find another one."

"I... have a cozy apartment. It's not that big, but I'm sure there are garages nearby. But I have money. If you need some time to find a job... I need someone I trust to watch me until the doctor says I'm okay..."

"I don't want to be one of those worthless guys that sponges off of his girlfriend. I'm better than that, and you deserve better than that. I can make my own way, Do-Re, don't you worry. I'm a survivor."

"I didn't meant anything by it. I just want you with me. I need you back. I'm scared and alone and I don't want to be either anymore. Please, Ge-Ta..." Melody reached out and grabbed Geta's arm, pulling him in close to her. "Please tell me you'll come to Savannah Central, that you'll stay with me."

Geta allowed himself to be pulled into Melody's embrace, sinking into her slightly waxy wool, that was in need of a shearing. Even so, he settled in against her, arms coming up to wrap around her body. He breathed in the heady scent of her lanolin, washed in the smell of her. He began to purr, strong and deep, showing his contentment and appreciation.

"Purring! One of the pleasures felines can enjoy but a pantheran like me can't," Leodore chuckled, standing at the doorway beside Dawn. He was carrying a huge gift basket laden down with all manner of fruit and packaged snacks, while Dawn held up a collection of balloons that seemed on the cusp of carrying her away.

"O-oh! Mayor Lionheart! Assistant Mayor Bellwether!" Geta made an attempt to pull away but the two were entangled too well, leading to an awkward attempt at untangling limbs. "We weren't expecting any visitors..."

"We've been in the hospital, they've been bringing the bulk of the stricken mammals out of the savage state now that the cure has been found and confirmed to be safe," Dawn said, strolling forward with an extra spring in her trotters. She tied the balloons off on the railing of the hospital bed and smiled. "And we were waiting for the doctor to tell us that you had come around."

"M-me? You came here for me? I mean... you think I'm worth it?" Melody asked.

"It was a group effort, but the papers you gave us were the final nail in the coffin," Dawn explained, while Leodore set the gift basket down on a small table. "They showed us to focus attention on Cliffside, where we found the evidence to get Shearly. We had Cheviot McLiff with the testimony of a florist his son tried to bribe, and my father... we always knew he was the capstone of this pyramid. Financial proof tied him to everything, and his own words put the last swipe on his clipping. But you had the courage to come forward, with this important information, all because you finally stopped caring about sheep like Shearly."

"You're a heroine, Do-Re..." Geta purred, kissing at Melody's wool-coated throat.

"Do-Re... Oh! Do Re Mi. That's cute, they have a pet name," Dawn said, shooting a significant look at Leodore.

"That's what couples do," Leodore said, with a wink.
"Do-Re-Ge-Taa," Melody bleat-sang, sustaining the last syllable with a little twitching of her ears. "So-Loves-Me."

Dawn politely clapped her hooves together and smiled even more broadly. "We need to get you two on camera to talk about this. You're a city heroine, and represent all the best that this city can show."

"As you can tell by the collection of balloons and the extremely generous fruit basket, apparently with the best produce as selected by Officer Judy Hopps, you were a special case, and we wanted to make sure that you knew it," Leodore added.

"Do I still have a job?" Melody asked, suddenly. "I need to keep my apartment, and... well... Geta needs a place to live while he looks for a job in Savannah Central. The doctor wants him to keep an eye on me."

"I personally told your replacement that you were coming back, so no worries there," Dawn said.

"And don't worry about the loss of funds from being savage. I'm going to have the City Council discuss supporting appealing parties who are fighting eviction and job loss due to being made savage. The city must protect its own," Loeodore added.

"As soon as I get out of here I'm going back to work. And I'm hiring a Zoo-Haul to bring all your stuff to my apartment. I'm not losing you again, Ge-Ta," Melody said with a smile, lightly tapping Geta on the nose.

Leodore clapped Geta solidly on the back and gave him a huge smile. "Sir, congratulations. Sheep and cats go together like fish and cat grass. You're going to be quite happy."

Leodore clapped Geta solidly on the back and gave him a huge smile. "Sir, congratulations. Sheep and cats go together like fish and cat grass. You're going to be quite happy."

A few rooms away, another awakening had happened and the doctor had just left, leaving the two mammals within alone.

"Oh... Scarlet?" Louis Wulfberg asked, with a soft, groaning tone.

"Ah... nope. Just me, partner," Judy said with a slightly sheepish voice.

"Judy? Great to see you here. What happened? I saw the movement, I knew what was coming. Did they try again? Are Gazelle and Hu Lin safe?"

"Absolutely. I pulled my tranq pistol immediately and scared them off after you went down. Um, sorry about having to dart you. You were trying to headbutt and back-kick me at the time."

"Ahh, yeah... secret's out..." Louis said, his ears flattening against his head. "I had no idea what was happening but I guess my dad's side came out. Everyone knows I'm a Division Child now. What do they say?"

"Who? The folks at the precinct? They say they want you back on the beat as soon as possible."

"Really? They want a goat in wolf's clothing? Maybe I've just been buried too long in passing, but I didn't think they would accept a passing Division Child. I've always just been a wolf to them. It's not like my sister, she actually looks like a half-goat."

"Why would they care? Grizzoli is half-and-half too. And he's sort of passing as a polar bear, he just never hid the fact that he's half grizzly."

Louis stared up at the ceiling and drummed his claws on the side of the bed. "Huh. I guess I just
thought too much about how hybrids got along. It's different here in the city. My sister lives out in the 'Burrows because she actually found it nicer. She's in Division with a rabbit."

"You mean where I come from? You never told me that," Judy said.

"I always intended to. I felt a little closer to you because of that. My sister's out in the sticks, she's with a rabbit, there's some basic connection. It's tight-knit out there. Have you ever heard of the Demilop family?"

"A smaller family but they do alright for themselves. Small enough that I think I remember most of the members. Who's your sister with?"

"Thomas. Plain, very pale, I think he's leucistic, he has color in his irises. They have their own small farm out at a place called Grist Mill Lane."

"Oh I know that area. Yeah, Demilop property. Nothing special but it's theirs. They like to parcel out their land to children as they marry and start families. That must mean that you have some nieces and nephews out there."

"They... they seem to be carrying on the family tradition. Mom and dad love each other so much, they've been together since, well, since grandpa was mayor. But they aren't married. Nancy isn't either. And I don't think that I'll get married either. The Wulfberg name lives on with Nancy, and dies in me, and no one will ever remember Mouflon."

Judy approached the bed, reaching in to take Louis' paw and give it a squeeze. "Things are going to change. I can feel it. What Miss Bellwether did as mayor, what she and Mr. Lionheart can do together... they already started a full cleanup of Happytown, plus construction on the new police precinct. They ran through the emergency funds as soon as the fires were out. And with Happytown recovered, and gang-free, that leaves just one last, big gap to bridge."

"They couldn't. Could they?"

"Gazelle has dropped huge, heavy hints that she will. She's not shy at all about her relationship, and after that bonus DVD on her last album, everyone is saying she's going to break the taboo. She's going to marry Hu Lin."

"I can't even believe it. The thing my parents wanted all their lives, and now they're going to at least see their daughter have that ability. One breaks it, they all break it. I wish I could thank her for being so brave."

"You saved her life and saved her fiance from a lifetime of guilt. They're planning to come visit you because you're a hero," Judy chuckled.

"Hardly feels like it, I was out for a while. Where are we on the case?"

"It's all over, partner. We got 'em. I personally arrested Vesper Bellwether and Doug Ramses, the guy that darted you. I also found the evidence that got Commissioner Shearly. It was a team effort, between the Mayor's office and the ZPD. A successful partnership. Now things are getting back to normal."

Louis chuckled lightly and shook his head. "You took down Vesper Bellwether and the guy that got me. You've gotta tell me that story."

"I have plenty of stories to tell you, like about the fennec that hit on me while we were in the middle of a riot after I saved him from looters."
Louis just stared, blank-faced, while he waited for Judy's smile to break. It never did. He finally blinked a few times, whistling softly. "I mean... I... I have a lot to catch up on I guess. You really made a name for yourself."

"I was super motivated. I had to prove what I could do, and I did it," Judy said with a triumphant punch into the air. "But also, I felt... well, I was hired for my senses. I should have seen what you did, should have taken that pellet. It was my fault you went savage. Plus, I had believed it was all genetic, something in the predator DNA. The Chief chewed me out for it, and seeing your goat side go savage killed it off for good. I was wrong, and I had been wrong the whole time. So I had to work to make it up to you. I worked hard to make up for that one event. Maybe it was just a small part of things, but I still did it because you went down right in front of my face, and that's a huge thing."

"Wow... I had no idea you'd feel like that. I mean, I'm way beyond floored by that. You really go the extra mile for a partner."

Judy gave the paw another squeeze, rubbing her thumb across the back. "This... this might not go over that well... but... I'm not just thinking about you like a partner. I have to think about what I was really feeling when I saw you going savage."

Louis looked down at his paw, and the thumb stroking along it. "I have a girlfriend. She's... nice..."

Judy released the paw quickly and jumped back a step, the inside of her ears going dark pink. "Right! I know! I saw her once or twice while you were in quarantine. She didn't say much but she seemed nice."

"Hopps," Louis said, a strange smile on his muzzle. "I know she's not that present and attentive. She's funny and engaging but she really has a personality that takes a lot of getting used to. Effort is never a bad thing. I mean, by and large. But in a relationship that might be a sign there isn't a good mix. If you have things in common that's a much better reason to have a relationship than That vixen is super hot. I think... my family might have some kind of thing. My sister's with a rabbit. She's in Bunnyburrow. You're from Bunnyburrow..."

Judy laughed softly, coming close again and gently taking Louis' paw. "You don't have to spare my feelings by playing along."

"I'm a little caught between two places. But one of them is clearly winning out. We'll have to talk about it after I'm out of here. And I need to tell Scarlet..."

"No need," a voice said from the doorway. Standing there was a thin, regal-looking vixen with a carefree expression on her muzzle. She was in a strapless pink dress with a darker red false corset at the middle, with a strawberry beret tilted over one ear. "M-miss Liskuski!" Judy cried, releasing Louis' paw and stepping away. "I'm... I didn't mean..."

"Louis... did you know she was at your quarantine cell when I was, and when I wasn't? Even working as hard as she did, she spent time there. I think she used her spare time visiting you. You knew I was a flighty vixen, and wanted an untroubled relationship. I do like you, Louis, but I think we both see she has a bit more dedication."

"Scarlet, I kind of feel like you're not taking this very seriously," Louis noted.

"I suppose it looks that way. I'm not quite a unique mammal, but I like to think I act like few do. I feel things intensely, and I love that feeling. I dive into my emotions, and I savor them. But I'm a
pragmatist. I understand nothing is really forever. It can last ages, or it can collapse tomorrow. Sometimes a relationship is more strategic than romantic, sometimes it's silly but so necessary. I'm glad I had time with you, Louis. But if the choice is between me and her, and this is me saying this... choose her, every time and twice on Moondas."

"Scarlet..."

Scarlet snarled suddenly, snapping in Louis' direction, prompting Judy to leap up in defense. "Don't poison your emotions with maudlin and useless weeping and endless questioning and feelings of loss. Be mature about it. They're toxic if there's no need for them. Sometimes they're called for, but not here. Besides, she leaped up to save you. Even if it was just her training, she did it." She nodded and gave Judy a fangless smile. "Officer Hopps, take care of him. He's awkward, but earnest."

Judy looked at her in some confusion but responded, "Y-yes, of course... thank you Miss Liskuski..." She stood in more confusion, nose twitching, as Scarlet turned and walked out of the room.

Louis looked the most confused of all, eyes fixed on where Scarlet had been. "Did... did breaking up just give me a new relationship?"

"Let's figure that out after the doctors let you out. I think we should just take it a step at a time," Judy said with a soft laugh, bleeding off nervousness in every twitch and hop. She took Louis' paw again, and just sat by the bed, stroking the back with her thumb.

"In an expected and highly celebrated decision, the City Council announced that due to the successful expulsion of violent criminal gangs from Happytown, the area will be the recipient of earmarked funds for growth and development. The bond measures, voted for last week, have already been divided up to supplement the emergency funds to recover from the rioting and to rebuild affected areas. Already, the foundation and skeleton of the new Happytown precinct building can be seen, a symbol for the rebuilding, strengthening and true integration of Happytown into Zootopia proper."

Nick shut off the television, a half-smile on his muzzle. "It took arson and a gang war... but those two at City Hall always intended something for the place. Good on them. Of course it was going to happen. She's a hustler of the highest order. Can't help respecting all of that."

He was in a very different environment from his usual. He had traded flophouses and bridge underpasses for what the Sahara Square folk called a stone burrow. It was a domed structure with very small, north-facing windows and a door. Solar panels placed all around helped to offset some electricity cost, while the vast majority of the livable space was below in the dark, cool underground part. A neighborhood of stone burrows took up vastly less space than most others, even with those sized for larger animals. They were rather modest homes, his own a one-bedroom with a modest bathroom and living room underground, with the kitchen and dining area in the upper, rounded area where the ventilation could take away the heat of cooking. Not that he did much.

He was even nicely located, his little neighborhood right on a road that made it easy to reach the Fennec Souq, the marketplace that served his local part of Sahara Square. Given the heat and trouble of getting very far, having large, local markets just made more sense. It suited him. He could get all the grapes and dates he wanted, though occasionally he paid extra for blueberries and plums.
The bedroom of his stone burrow was actually cozy, right on par with a Savanna Central apartment, but it was actually his, and was actually more livable. He hadn't had much to bring along, and had been gifted or found other things. His bed wasn't exactly new, but it was a bed, soft and cozy, with real sheets and fresh pillows. The light in the room came from what amounted to a small nightlight plugged into the wall socket, and a special, timed, low-energy setting on the ceiling light.

A nightstand beside the bed had an old alarm clock, a few remotes and a dated but well-cared-for smartphone. A low chest of drawers was along the wall opposite the door out of the room, and a few little trinkets were scattered over the top. Another table held the TV and cable box so Nick could watch from bed.

He slipped out of bed, wearing only a pair of blue boxer shorts, and walked out of his room and across the way, to get cleaned up for the day ahead. After a quick scrub of his face and other morning ablutions he went up the winding stairs into the daylit upper area of his home.

The upper part was as plain as his lower area, having only a dining room table with a few old chairs, some curved tables designed for that sort of house, and the fully stocked kitchen. Old stove, old fridge, some countertops, and a curvaceous fennec in an apron and nothing else using almost a miniature scaffold to rush along from stove to counters while cooking. "Well now, look what finally hauled his brush out of bed. Needed more beauty sleep?"

"It's Fressedas. I don't do sanctuary regularly, I've got a bed, and I thought I'd get something on TV besides the news. It's good news, but just news," Nick said, flopping onto a chair and positioning himself with a bonelessly casual sprawl.

"What, is your ewefriend getting new laws passed to give everyone free rainbows and marshmallows?" The fennec vixen asked, flipping small flapjacks onto a plate and hitting them with a drizzle of syrup. She poured out more spots of batter and quickly took the plate over to Nick, who accepted it and gave her a kiss on the nose.

"You laugh but she got me out of police range. I didn't even have to own up to anything she knew I did wrong. She's doing great stuff for Happytown, now that all that savage business is over. I thought she was just blowing smoke up my backside, but she followed through... on all of it. Even those phone numbers she gave me. I mean... I have a house. An actual house."

"Not that you can do much with it besides pay for it," the vixen tsked, tending to her flapjacks and setting some strips of vegetable and insect protein mince near them in the pan. "You're hopeless, Nick. You cook worse than any other bachelor, you have no idea how to use the laundry machines at the laundromat, and you just barely do the shopping right. If it wasn't for me you'd have starved to death a week after you got here."

"Am I really a helpless idiot, or did I hustle you into taking care of me?" Nick teased.

"Don't think you hustled a hustler, I just knew my brother would raise high, holy bounteous yapping if I didn't keep you at least alive and working legit."

"He'll still raise it when he finds you you didn't just look in on me. You fell hard, Fussi, and I like it."

Fussi rolled her eyes and plated her meal, carrying it along to the table and hopping up onto one of the modified chairs with a built-in second seat sized for her. "You always had a crush on me and you know it. You just never said anything because you knew my brother would bite the face off of anyone that went after his baby sister."
"And yet you're a few years older than me. Is it weird yet? Baby sister, older than me, and what does that make him?"

"Gracious enough to take in a snot-muzzled punk and make something out of him. Now it's all different. That councilvixen got you digs, co-signed the loan, got you a job, all because the assistant mayor saw something in you."

"Guilt, I think. She talked a lot about how the city had let me down. Probably felt super guilty with all those predators going savage and her boyfriend in quarantine for his safety."

"No, I think it was that thing that nobody but the Assistant Mayor and maybe ten other folks have. Compassion. Let's cut the clever talk, Nick. Even with my brother's help you would have been out. They were going to clean up the city. Are going to. They're going to squeeze out the hustlers and sidewalk hucksters and streetcorner grifters. Nick, seriously, real talk, baby, you were going to jail, or going to die, on the street."

Nick focused intensely on his flapjacks, eating each piece he cut off with deliberate motions. "She didn't know that."

"You were selling dirty pawpsicles on the street. I respect it, but she read you like a book. Bitter, crushed, angry and without good job skills. Living in my brother's van every now and then. How's life now that you've got a roof, a souq in walking distance, legit money in your pocket and all the nookie I think you can handle?"

"I won't lie, it's a nice change of pace. Finnick never told me that foxes actually got respect in Sahara Square. He always told me to just stay out whenever I talked about coming to see you."

"Two things. First, he was keeping you away 'cause he knew you were after my golden brush. Second, he kind of messed up. Not like, you and Mr. Big messed up, but messed up. He has an understanding with a cop that looked the other way and an angry camel. Slate's clean, it's all good, if he stays gone. Better that he just stays there and we visit."

"I'll call him sometime. He can't bite anything off over the phone," Nick said with a grin, finishing off his breakfast and rising up to go to the fridge.

"Oh, now I'm invested. I won't let him because there are a few parts of you I can't have him bite off yet," Fussi said with a laugh. "Get me some grape juice while you're up."

"Why can't you get your own?" Nick asked, pouring himself grape juice from a large plastic pitcher.

"You're over there, you're actually a nice tod when you try, and you wanna keep me hydrated so I can wear you out tonight."

"I'll get you two glasses," Nick chuckled.

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"I, Idris Bogo, do solemnly swear to the best of my capabilities, perform the duties imposed by the office of the Police Commissioner, to uphold the dignity of the office and to ensure that I ever act in the interest of the citizens of Zootopia, making all decisions with a mind to their safety and security." Bogo's stentorian rumbled from the radio, followed by a massive cheering crowd.

"And there it is, Zootopia. Idris Bogo, formerly chief of police and the head of Precinct One, has taken the oath and become the new appointed Police Commissioner, to replace the disgraced and
imprisoned Shetland Shearly. Commissioner Bogo, as it is well known, was instrumental in resolving both the Nighthowler poisoning incident and the Happytown gang war. Working extremely closely with then-temporary Mayor Dawn Bellwether and using his officers with great aplomb, especially heroine rabbit Sergeant Judy Hopps, he helped to ensure both situations came under control.

"His elevation to the vacant position surprised no one in the know, and represents another step forward for this great city, putting a dedicated and honest mammal into a position of power and authority, to replace a repugnant villain, and thus make everything function better. His replacement as chief is being deliberated by the police brass but strong hints indicate a promotion from within Precinct One in order to maintain continuity and camaraderie in the station

"This has been a special report on the formal oath of Commissioner Bogo. I've been Brett McFang for ZBC Three News. We now return you to the regular program of music."

A soft, romantic ballad by Taylor Fisher filled the room with sound, and made Madge sprawl out on her large, soft bed. The whole room was a pastel paradise. The walls and ceiling were a cool blue color, the duvet on the bed was a seafoam green, with the sheets under it a lighter shade of green. The closet doors were mirrored, and closed, making the rather spacious room feel even larger. There was plenty of space in there, even though it contained nightstands, chests of drawers, and shelving units filled with books, plants and nicknacks.

The venetian blinds were drawn, and the ceiling light cast a lovely glow over Madge's bare body, which softly wriggled in delight. She was just luxuriating in the feel of the bed. It had been weeks since she had finally helped finish the cure for Nighthowler poisoning, but even so she had spent a lot of time on hospital cots and pulling all-night efforts. Her bed was the best thing ever. Her shared bed.

The door from the master bath opened up and Ian stepped out from it, a small puff of steam following him. He had a towel wrapped around his slim waist, and was still lightly moist. He was even longer and lankier than his photo had indicated. Without the scarves and clothing his long and graceful neck looked even longer, and his limbs were the same.

Madge looked at Ian with a turn of her head, her smile growing wider. "There's my handsome hoofer. I've been happy about a lot of things now that the cure is done, but I think you know what I'm happiest about."

Ian smiled at the loving words, but the smile slowly faded. "Madge?"

The fall of that smile affected her deeply, and she rose up slightly. "Hey, hey, what's the matter? You can tell me. I'll do anything I can to help."

"You have no idea how happy I am about all of this. And the last few weeks having you back after the Nighthowler cure matter have been amazing, even better than before. But all this carnal action really makes me wonder about how you feel about my mind."

"You mean your brilliant mind, the one that's crushing all your tasks and which creates wonderful academic literature, that mind?" Madge asked, in a flat tone.

"I know you say it. I know you mean it in your own way but..."

"While I was working on the Nighthowler cure I read and cited a paper in the course of development. Development and Synthesis of the Antiparasitic and Insect Repellent 2-Glysopartraminol in the..."
"Crocus sp matinaves varietal Greater Glory," Ian finished, looking a bit distant. "My... my paper. You actually read it."

"You wrote it. I'm not a botanist but I still read it because it had insights into the chemical pathways for synthesizing a compound similar to what was causing the Nighthowler effect."

Ian approached the bed slowly, head hung slightly, the towel slipping as he went. "I... you know I was raised differently. Insulated, constantly lifted up, buoyed by an old name and money. I was told I have such fine features, a graceful neck, glorious limbs. But not how great my work was. I love you. But I guess I sometimes forget you love me just as much."

Madge rested her arms under her head and smiled as her eyes closed. "More-to-love Madge loves way more than just everything that's perfect about your body. If I didn't respect you, I genuinely couldn't love you. I have to respect someone before I can give my love."

Ian tentatively reached out and gently placed a palm on Madge's back, stroking down the stripe to her tail. "I need to relax. I'm not just an heir anymore. I'm a researcher. I'm almost a doctor. Your citation makes my paper notable."

"It always was. Now just relax. Come on and climb into bed. Mama Ratel still has plenty of honey to give," Madge said with a teasing tone.

Ian slipped in beside her, longer than her by a lot but dwarfed by her thickness. "You're not that much older than me. I can't help looking like an undergrad in the one-oh-ones."

Madge just rested comfortably, eyes closed, a pleased look on her face. "I haven't been taking my pill since before I went to the Nighthowler project. And you were a good buck and remembered to leave that particular item off the shopping list."

Ian rested against Madge's thick side, stunned. "Are you..?"

"No idea. But there's nothing stopping it. We make money, you have money, and there won't be Divisions anymore. So let's just see where it all goes."

Ian buried his muzzle in Madge's neck and kissed her softly. "Peaceful dreams."

"Peaceful dreams..."

Chapter End Notes

**Author's Notes**

**Scarlet Liskuski**- If you think her reaction is weird and too fast, or that her emotions are odd and impossible, then you clearly have never seen *Loulou, L'Incroyable Secret* and the character on which she is based. Pragmatic, unreadable, flirtatious as a mode of life, and willing to use lust, love or anything like it as a weapon, a defense and a bargaining chip.

**Fussi the fennec**- It's pretty likely that Finnick is reasonably older than Nick. And some folks would describe even a very close younger sibling as "baby" compared to them, especially if they perpetually regard them as childish or really want to feel older
and more competent. That is, of course, not her name. Much like her brother, she
doesn't like her name. The reasons aren't given, but it's likely Nick will never say it,
because she can bite off worse than his face.
Happier Town

Chapter Summary

Happytown finally getting the goodness it deserves.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirty-One: Happier Town

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"As Mayor of Zootopia, it is my distinct pleasure to declare that this construction, the brand new Happytown precinct building, completed and open for staffing!" Leodore boomed, washed with a following cheer from the gathered crowd. He was standing on a riser behind a stand of microphones, on an unassuming street in the Happytown area, at the bottom of the steps of a freshly constructed building of stone and steel, polished and filled with grand sweeps and organic curves. With him on the podium were Dawn and Bogo, and a large, pink ribbon stretched across the stairs and passed along over the riser. "Assistant Mayor Bellwether, please make it official!"

Dawn lifted up the huge pair of shears, stepping over to the ribbon to more applause. "The new Precinct is now open for police business!" She closed the shears, sliding through the ribbon and drawing out another thunderous bit of applause. "The recruits are trained and the place is ready for them. We'll have a mix of experienced and new officers, to make it all work smoothly."

"As Assistant Mayor Bellwether said, we have recruits at the entry level, with veterans from other precincts in the upper areas. It took a lot of training and work considering how many officers were... removed... from the Meadowlands precinct. But, with a concerted effort we not only managed to graduate enough new recruits, and promote sufficient new upper level mammals, but the recruits who will be working this precinct, by and large, came from Happytown itself! The citizens will protect themselves, and be more dedicated to their jobs knowing it's their own homes and families they're serving and protecting. Now, Commissioner Bogo was invited to say a few words about this new development."

Bogo stood up amid cheers, shaking hooves with Dawn and embracing Leodore briefly before moving to the microphones. "Thank you all. This represents a new day, a truly glorious, truly advanced moment in this city. This has been necessary for years, but no one ever changed. Not even me. All the Chiefs, we intended to kick the problem down the road, turning a quick fix into a dangerous tinderbox. We left an effigy to be hated, victims to be blamed. And I was no less a problem. But unlike all my predecessors, I actually listened to reason. I changed, and I went forward with the right thing. I didn't always like it, but I learned to see I could, sometimes, be wrong. It's rare, but it happens."
"I was certainly not happy about getting Judy Hopps dropped in my precinct. I thought she'd ruin what I had created. But by polishing her up, seeing what she could do, she became a shining jewel in the force. Proper application of the right mammals in the right places. That's what it takes. Thanks to City Hall and the City Council, we have a place, and we have the mammals to do it. Mayor Lionheart appointed me to this spot to make sure the right mammals reached the right positions. I only hope that I succeeded here. Thank you all," Bogo said, turning away from the enthusiastic response from the crowd.

"For all who are here there's a meet-and-greet with the new officers and upper level staff, they've been inside setting up since before we got here. Everyone head on in and get a good look at the place. As of right now, they're going to be on patrol in Happytown," Leodore boomed, his words causing the reporters and crowds to rush for the new building.

"Well, glad I only have to do that once a decade. Right?" Bogo asked, giving Leodore a stern look. He looked distinctly uncomfortable in a rather plain gray business suit. His top button, as ever, was undone, and badly hidden behind his golden-toned tie.

"Oh Commissioner... I'm sorry the job is nothing like being Chief. But I couldn't imagine anyone else taking the position," Leodore said with a good-natured chuckle.

"A political job is a very special thing. You don't work any less hard, just differently. Believe me, you'll find a familiar level of stress and pressure," Dawn added.

"As long as I don't go soft. And I suppose I don't have to stay in the office all the time. I have a competent secretary to tell callers I'm out and to arrange meetings at times that don't bother me too much."

"Yes, how do you find Miss Chamois?" Dawn asked. "She appeared skilled enough, she managed to make that slob Shearly actually appear useful."

"She talks to her boyfriend too much. I know that's what she's doing, she tries to hide it but I can tell. But, she arranges things properly, files right, orders lunch as I like it. Still... I thought mechanics worked harder than that."

"He's a city mechanic," Leodore noted. "Not that they don't work hard or anything, but it's not like a private company that gets customers in all the time from all over. Sometimes none of the public utilities or personal transport vehicles are in need of maintaining or repair, so he has to pass the time. It's either talk to your secretary or, I don't know... social media? Games?"

"With the white wool skin the mouflon sorceress almost fits..." Dawn said, voice trailing off as she got unusual looks from the others. "But, it's good she's working out. I promised her she'd be working for Shearly's replacement once we took care of him."

"With that problem taken care of, at least largely, we can set our sights here. That gang war was something of a bounty under a bushel," Leodore said.

"I take your meaning, Mr. Mayor but please, tell me how a destructive rampage that ruined buildings, injured citizens and put one of my best cops in harm's way was all that bounteous," Bogo insisted, eyes narrowing a bit.

"It not only but focused attention on the area, but it swept out the biggest problem. The gangs. Those that weren't wholly depopulated through arrest were rendered weak and exposed. Possible members that abandoned the fight before they started are now known and under scrutiny. Supporters and nominal orbiters were taught they didn't have absolute protection under the gangs.
Now they won't be a factor when we move in new businesses and they won't be able to corrupt
them through silent partnership. No loan sharks, no protection rackets, no shady business. The area
gets to develop in peace, with protection, oversight and a fresh influx of money earmarked in
advanced and with attached goals to meet by specified times. I know it wasn't pretty. But you
wanted them ripped out," Leodore said.

"Like a tick. I wanted those parasites out, and now they're out. The area's cleaned up, housing
prices are still alright. I've got a load of slumlords in my jails. Phase one has really gone well. I'm
just hoping phase two does as well."

"We're going to try to make it go right," Dawn said. "Leodore had made a lot of plans and had lots
of input from the other members of the City Council. We can put out more jobs by encouraging
companies and single-proprietor businesses, predator-owned, with a lot of encouragement
campaigns to get folks to wean themselves off of alcohol. With the gangs effectively dead the
narcotics problem should be taken care of, now we need addiction counselors like in Sahara
Square."

"Well, that's your department, you and those Council mammals. Civilians and the innocent are
your responsibility. The festering dregs that managed to slip through the removal are mine. We'll
keep Happytown as clear as we can while you work on it," Bogo assured the two.

"As long as we have something planned and have a clean area for it, it's going to go well," Dawn
said with a broad smile.

"Now, if you'll excuse me, if I can't be out there knocking sense into criminals and hauling them
into jail, I'd like to meet the crop of Happytown recruits who'll be doing it for me," Bogo said,
nodding to Dawn and Leodore before making his way to the building.

"We should probably get in there too. I'm eager to see how they like the place," Leodore said.

"We made it just for them, to be a place to coordinate the protection of their home. I have a good
feeling it'll go over well," Dawn happily bleated, taking Leodore's paw and walking off with him.

"You have been a good class. I did not know what to expect. I am not a teacher, I am only a
soldier... was a soldier. Now I protect. Und now, you protect too," Steiner said, standing in his
straightest posture. He was in his less formal attire, black fatigues with some gear belts and a beret.
He was standing on a foam padded mat inside the gym portion of his company's building. Before
him, a line of the recruits that had entered his personal protection training program and made it
through his harsh methods to get a position in his company.

All the remaining recruits were dressed similarly to Steiner, each one with taser pistols and taser
batons in their belts. Among the successful students was a truly diminutive figure, with huge ears
lightly pushed aside by his beret. "So we got a job, right?" Finnick asked in an amused, casual
voice.

Steiner chuckled deeply and stepped over to Finnick, looking down at him. "Ja, ja, Herr Finnick.
Now you are in mein pack."

Finnick clicked his tongue and grinned. "I'm a fox, boss. No pack for me, but I'm glad to get that
cash in my pocket and keep the fuzz off me."

"Fuchs, Schaf, Löwe, Hase, it makes no matter. You have survived my fire. You are my pack now.
Mein bruder. You will now serve as I say. The polizei are stretched. They try, und do well. But still cannot be all places. We are still needed. These businesses in Happytown need security. Und you, Herr Finnick, have been hired."

"What? Hired already? You kidding me?"

"Nein. After congratulations I was to tell where you had been hired. We are working now. You, Herr Finnick, will be working Four Kings, a new, well-sized card club. There are no gangs, but they will have drunks, cheaters und thieves. You will not need much violence, but some violence will happen."

Finnick winked up at Steiner and laughed lightly. "Right. Only a little violence. Well, if they underestimate me I'll give them all the violence they can handle. Mostly though, I'll be staring at waitress hips and looking good. Do I gotta buy my own suit or is that job equipment?"

"You are still the comedian. But, if you have no proper suit, we will provide. You must represent this company well, bring honor to this pack."

"Sounds good to me. I look good in a suit, and the ladies love a sharp-dressed mammal. I'm gonna need my shades and an earpiece, really look the part."

"The shades you can have, if you can see. Nocturnal mammals have need of them. But the earpiece? You do not need one. It will be you und perhaps a few others. A radio can suit you, but would hardly be needed."

"The earpiece looks cooler. I'd look like Jack Savage, just, you know, way more suave and cool. You can make a bunny slick, but nothing beats a fox."

Steiner gave a good, hearty laugh to the statement, but kept his good-natured look. "You think such strange things. You will work hard, do the jobs needed. And one day, with experience und more training, you will protect the important mammals, like the core of the pack, such as Gazelle or the Bürgermeister. If you prove worth und skill. But only then."

"It's always something. Working for yourself and getting a little hustle on is so much easier," Finnick grumped.

"Ja. Easy. Easy is for those who do not know better. I care little for your life before, only that you now live right und serve with honor. You think it would still be easy? They sweep away these hustlers und clear the streets so the folk are safe. Do you want that, Herr Finnick?"

Finnick snorted softly and looked down a little bit, big ears twisting back just a touch. "No. I mean, I couldda made it, I'm slick. I'm the original sly fox. Those cops would have given up eventually and gone back to a normal level of not bothering."

"Even so, could you survive without work?" Steiner pointedly asked, giving a piercing gaze down at Finnick. "Und would you want the world where polizei don't care? Old Happytown?"

Though he tried to avoid it, Finnick was eventually caught in the focused look when he flashed a glance up. "I don't mind law and order. I just gotta be me. And get paid for it. I get why they care so much. But a tod's gotta eat."

"Und you will. By doing good," Steiner said, stepping away and back to his prior position. "Assignments will be posted. Now, mein pack, make me proud to be your alpha."

Finnick snapped a salute when one was given and nodded. "If you want it, you got it, boss. Tod's
gotta eat, businesses gotta run. Let's make it happen."

"With the numbers we're seeing, we're on trajectory for export levels. But we need to make some kind of resolution against Tundratown protectionism and market lock-outs," Arthur Pteropus, the representative from the nocturnal District said, tapping some papers that were in front of him. "Now that there are... less dangerous issues, this seems like something to mention."

"I would like to go on record as saying that there is no official policy of protectionism or lock-outs. Those are matters purely attached to private companies. And possibly... other forces," Miss Erminova said, making air quotes at the end of her statement. "I encourage the competition, personally. It might bring a rise in efficiency from our fisheries which are acting like more of a bloc than they should."

"Your points are well-taken, Miss Erminova, especially about external interests," Leodore rumbled with a nod of his head. "I'm sure Commissioner Bogo will take care of the matter, if there's something the police can deal with. And as for your operation, I toured that fish hatchery during my campaign. It was really coming along wonderfully, and I see that it's been on track as they reported back then."

"We're dedicated down in the Nocturnal District. Those predators down there are eager to have their own supply of local food, as we prey already have a ready supply of fungi. With the expanded fish hatcheries, they can have it," Arthur said.

"Healthy competition spurring on a drive to succeed and find a market balance in a popular niche, it's a beautiful thing," Cecil said, somewhat wistfully. "I see the same thing happening in Happytown. I watch the financial reports very closely and have some private investments in a few of the new business. I disclose it all, of course, and I'm openly listed as an investor. I'm backing many a predator with a drive to work hard."

"Change is inevitable, and change for the better is always something to praise," Leodore said with a deep chuckle. "Stability is rising, with the police being active and the folks of Happytown realizing they have the respect of others and don't need to play to base stereotypes. They have jobs and pride in themselves."

"And the environment is cleaner, as it were," Mrs. Fanak noted. "The gangs are gone, the opportunists are gone, and with the police being more serious, we're getting rid of cheats, cons and other street-level low-end criminals that slipped through the cracks. But we're trying to help them turn their lives around. Disincentivizing continued grifting, removal of illegal items to reduce the temptation to re-offend, offering them rehabilitation over jail time. Offering them the chance to change and giving them every opportunity to go beyond themselves."

"You do love your addiction treatment language. Is any of that working?" Cecil asked.

"Well, at the most base, they are removed from Happytown, which you must admit is a general good. Beyond that it's too early for strong data. Preliminary data shows that there's a large percentage of those caught taking advantage of the rehabilitation, and the rate of second offenses seems to be low. Time will tell, of course, but I like the odds. The Assistant Mayor actually led me to one such case."

"I recall her telling me about that. She met a fox selling low-grade ice treats Downtown and after he tried to push her away she gave him your phone number," Leodore said.
"An unfortunately common story. Attitudes differ by species and District but most foxes are treated poorly, especially red foxes. Miss Erminova can attest that in Tundratown arctic foxes are at least not devalued. They seem to be lower on the chain then other predators. That fellow had a lot of slick talk and deflections, probably in need of a little helpful therapy. But I just offered him some help. As I understand it, he's doing well. No legal troubles at all."

"I don't give much weight to anecdotes, and I tend to dismiss many aspects of victim-armor to explain criminality. But your mention of different contexts... makes a good deal of sense. I've said before, I do have some perspective on matters such as these," Cecil noted. "Macrocosm needs more respect, but my constituents have been slow to properly make amends for the wave of vandalism after the start of the savagery crisis. Basely using the homes of those in Macrocosm doesn't constitute respect or any kind of apology. But, one step at a time. They'll make amends, or they'll learn that they can't just use their neighbors after showing them hate and fear."

"Hate and fear... has the District Council of Meadowlands collapsed or been purged? Do we need to have a vote about complete dissolution and a complete devolution of power fully into Mayoral control?" Arthur asked.

"That would be so simple, that would be so very simple and easy. But simple and easy aren't always the ideals," Leodore sighed. "Having such high-profile members taken away in disgrace, losing police officers en masse, having sheep naming and shaming each other for criminal acts or simple bigotry... we threw the fear of the rest of the city in them. Vesper kept them insular and conformist, and now those that wanted to break free can, and the others are worried about what might happen. Shaping that fear, carefully sculpting it to good ends, would be far better than a heavy-pawed response, rushing through and destroying things."

"Now that sounds vaguely predatory, but major change can come from any diet. I'm not normally on board for that kind of thing, but I think they deserve the harm you could inflict. They asked for it, and well, I think we might agree they do deserve some of it," Cecil noted.

"I can see your perspective, I can see it clearly and understand exactly what you're saying. You may, on some level, even be right. But this is a case of catching more flies with honey. You take the structures away, assert control, put through absolute dominance, and you get stability. Vesper Bellwether's stability. He infantilized his own folk, treating them like mindless pawns and not individuals. Leave the structures in place, let them know their leaders made a critical error, offer them an opening for repair and reconciliation. Now it's not all my idea. Dawn talked me through the very particular way political progress works in Meadowlands. She described it as reshaping through very real fear, because it leads to that fear going away, leaving them stronger. They'll elect more moderate, progressive individuals, they'll act more openly, they'll do what they can to avoid that fear, as well as understand why the old ways don't work. An enriching path that makes everything better and brighter."

"I still think there should have been punitive measures but, as long as they were afraid for a while. That works well enough for me," Cecil said. "Now, we got a little off-topic. New fisheries and competition. I'd like to propose we begin a process to investigate anti-competitive actions and policies, using relevant city divisions and resources. Mr. Mayor, I'd like to call for a vote on opening the discussion of funding and specifics..."

The Central penitentiary of Zootopia was the biggest and most secure of the city, and it housed those who were in for the long haul. It was designed for the multi-decade toughs, the lifers, the multiple-lifers. Mass-swindlers, molesters, murderers, and even a cannibal. It was the only place in
the near environs set up for continued solitary confinement. Twenty-three hours a day in one room, with heavily monitored outdoor time.

Shetland Shearly blubbered most of his time there, complaining about the food and the amount of it. Cheviot McLiff constantly demanded deference and obedience from the guards that tended him, and got none. Woolter and Jesse had not he confined alone, but placed together, and bickered continually over whose fault it was. Doug was not with them. He had been judged so detached from reality, and organically so, that he was a danger to himself and others. He had been sent far away to the Imboca Bay Facility for the Mentally Ill. He was locked securely in the prison wing, and was expected to die in there, never thinking he did anything wrong.

In the most isolated of the cells, farthest from all the others, and most truly isolated, they warehoused the worst villain Zootopia had ever seen. His cell was bare, filled with only the essentials to keep him in a minimum standard of acceptable legal comfort. A prison-surplus sheep-sized bunk bed with only a mattress and pillow, a sink, a toilet, and measured and rationed toiletries. A few books from his personal library had been approved by the prison psychiatrist and allowed to him. His trays of food were stacked up by the door, to be collected by someone who came with his guards that escorted him to exercise.

He maintained a perfect sense of time, even without an indication of the time aside from his meals. He had kept a regimented schedule on the outside, and it served to keep his body aware of just when it was. He knew when he was to expect his food and his guards, and if that normal normal routine was disrupted he was painfully aware of it. The mere sound of approach cued him.

He read on, absorbed by a classic novel, preferring a world trapped in paper and ink to concrete and steel. "It was shocking enough these lowly creatures allowed you in the first time, but again? Have you really come again to once more gawk at the monster with your order-traitor doe? Pathetic."

"Yes father, you are."

The book slipped from Vesper's hooves, and he turned with a look of shock to the door. Dawn stood there, precisely out of reach, as indicated by a line on the ground. She looked confident, unconcerned. No longer a little lamb scared of her bombastic father. Even with her diminutive size, she didn't show fear. "So, the lost lamb comes to her flock head. You weren't even at my trial."

"I wasn't needed. I was a witness against Shearly, and I wanted to see the hope and arrogance drain out of his eyes, see all that fat fall into a scowl when they put him away. I got revenge for everyone he hurt with his political maneuvers, especially Melody Chamois. He blubbered and raged the whole time they were hauling his bulk away," Dawn said, voice low and calm. "But I couldn't be in the courtroom with you. My good name and spotless reputation might have affected someone on the jury who could have mistakenly believed that family is something that means a kind of transcendence or sharing of attitudes and morals. I couldn't let my positivity let you get any undeserved mercy."

"Ruthless. Cold. Scheming. Why are you such a rebellious lamb if you learned my lessons well? You act more like a predator than that primped and polished nobody of yours. That roaring cipher should have been just an expedient tool to set you in the big chair. You had it! And all you did was say how temporary it was, and you just gave it up. Shameful, just shameful," Vesper growled, rising and moving to the door of his cell to glare daggers down at Dawn.

"I'm not the one in a cell..." Dawn snapped, hoof going to her forehead as a powerful, fiery stab rammed through her brain. She didn't scream, but she wanted to. She had been. She was the monster. She had been the monster. She had been in that cell.
"I see your mother left more of a legacy in you than your eyes," Vesper huffed.

"At least I kept some part of her," Dawn whispered, as the pain slowly subsided. "You threw her away as soon as she was inconvenient. When she got rebellious and contrary you threw her out and took me away. You throw away everything that defies you. Why are you still trying to use the language of molesters and kidnappers to infantalize me and try to groom me back to your graces? I hate you, father, for reasons that even you can understand. I'm not here to supplicate myself. I'm here to see you here, powerless. Judy said you believed you'd escape to a predator-free land, by dint of your power. How did that go for you?"

Vesper scowled deeply, his glare growing more heated and hateful. "You're worthless to me now. You're defiled by that maned beast. I can smell it on you. I only hoped you would come to your senses in some manner. Whatever may have happened, I'm your father. That will never change."

"I'm small. Smaller than other sheep. That won't change. I might even pass it on to my children, without intending to. I can't change that either. But however well I've gotten used to it and learned to live in the size range that it puts me in, it's not good in the kind of world you forced me into, sized for sheep like you. We don't have to like or accept things that are hard to change. There are always ways to change things. And rejecting you is the only proper way to be."

"Family values are absolute, and families must protect, defend and always secure one another. No matter what they've done, you stick with them."

"That's a lie and you know it. You showed it when you drove mom off. If family members are criminals, you turn them in to the authorities, maybe even faster than a stranger. You shamed yourself, and made it necessary," Dawn huffed. "So, I'm not going to rise to your grooming and implications. You already said you hate me. I'm not about to come crawling back to you."

Vasper snorted sharply. "Then why are you here?"

Dawn smiled, the look both pleased and yet predatory and anticipatory. She thought back to the previous day, to the happening that prompted her visit and her next action.

Dawn quietly read a book in Leodore's apartment, casually sitting in his lap and resting against his broad, powerful chest. Both were casually attired, Leodore in boxers and an undershirt and Dawn in a pink silk slip.

Leodore, who was likewise reading, looked down from the pages to Dawn's head. He dropped a quick kiss on her puffy bouffant, making it gently bounce atop her head. "Hu Lin called me today. He wants me to be his best mammal."

"I can believe it. Gazelle wants me as her maid of honor. I'm guessing you turned him down, too."

"I had to. I'm going to be very busy. I have to be in Happytown, to show off the beauty and new peace and security by marrying my assistant mayor," Leodore rumbled, briefly rummaging into the pocket of his boxers. He pulled out a very well-polished gold ring with some diamonds studded around the edge and a lion head outline made of small rubies on the top. "It was my mother's, and my grandmother's and now it's yours. I even had it resized for your hoof. Mom says that she can't wait to see you wearing it."

Dawn slowly slipped the antique onto her left lower split, awed by the fit and positively glowing from realizing she was wearing a family heirloom. Leodore's family heirloom. "You took your sweet time about getting it. You said you had it in your apartment. You promised it the first time we made love..."
"I also said we needed to finish the job, get Happytown safe and clean, make sure everyone can feel proud of the place. If it hadn't been for that detour with your father's little conspiracy we could have been done a while ago. But, better late than never, right?"

She looked at the ring on her finger, a smile spread across her face. "Absolutely. Absolutely..."

Dawn showed off the ring, unashamedly, almost mockingly, waving it just slightly. She allowed the florescent lights to shine off the ruby lion head and the small diamonds around it. "I came here for this. To show you the world is moving forward."

"No! No! You can't do this! That's against the law! You're a rebellious lamb but not some criminal scum!"

"Wow... you became a true believer... the cult leader turned into a cultist of his own scam. You really believe your own lies. That was just some stupidity you fed to the teachers that you planted in the schools to poison the minds of children. There's no law against this kind of marriage. It's just no one was gutsy enough to do it. Gazelle will. And I will. You're here, and helpless. However much you might want to, you can't stop me."

Dawn turned and casually walked away, rubbing her engagement ring with a smile while her father's furious screams echoed behind her. "You won't! You mind me young lamb! I am your father and you will obey me!"

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

**Fuchs, Schaf, Löwe, Hase**- Steiner specifically uses this list to make note of his particular species of note after all the action. Finnick as a fox is included in the same list as a sheep, for Dawn, a lion for Leodore and a rabbit for Judy, all animals that earned his abiding respect.

**Arthur Pteropus**- I'm so sorry. I owe you all an apology. He was mentioned in the first City Council scene then sort of did a Chuck Cunningham. I was a bit more invested in the others. But, he's been there the whole time. Just unusually quiet. Think of him like the guy in the movie *Summer School* who goes to the bathroom at the start of the movie and shows up again almost at the end.

**Imboca Bay**- This is a second-generation reference. In the low-budget horror movie *Dagon*, based loosely on the Lovecraft story *A Shadow Over Innsmouth*, the story was moved from New England to the Galician coast of Spain. In that movie the town was named Imboca, a loose soundalike for the Spanish In Boca, meaning In Mouth, making it close to the original town. I tend to like naming asyla in stories after Lovecraft names and locations.
Chapter Summary

Here come the brides, at last.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirty-Two: Wedding Bliss

By: Gabriel LaVedier

"Way back when, I thought asking Leodore to tell the city we were dating was a huge leap, a test of courage and dedication," Dawn said, with a soft laugh. "I was so naïve."

She was in a large tent, securely sealed against the outside, which seemed to have been set up on the street. The thing was lit by some portable lights, shining mostly on a few long mirrors and makeup tables. Dawn was looking at herself in her wedding dress, a ruffled and puffy creation of taffeta and lace, making her look like an animated puffball, more so when she lowered her veil over her face. She was there beside Gazelle, who also admired her own wedding gown. She was in red silk, which fit somewhat tightly on her, though it still flared out near her hooves. She had a long train and a similar veil, though hers of red crepe.

Gazelle laughed softly and gave her hips a small shake. "There is no more public thing than a wedding on the street. A safe, clean street, all thanks to you."

"Minimal police protection, the kind normally reserved for a simple appearance. Sure, it's a special occasion but it's peaceful enough we don't need special logistics," Bellwether said, sighing softly. "I always wanted a big wedding, mostly because something big might offset... me..."

Gazelle gingerly set a hoof on Dawn's shoulder and squeezed. "You do not need to be offset. For all you did for this city... you stand a thousand stories tall. You earned your admiration, and everyone here is here because of how much they admire you."

Dawn placed a hoof on her forehead, wincing sharply. All she had done... The mind locked in her brain had been a monster. For all it had done she deserved scorn and contempt. They hated her in that other world. A world that seemed so far off. There was no sharper division. She had passed the point in time where her old life had stopped. Not only had it been changed completely, she was past the point where Morning Start had thrown her back into some version of her past.

One more look into the mirror and she smoothed out her puffy dress. "Well, our pantherans have been waiting for a long, long time. Let's go out and make them the happiest feliforms in Zootopia."

Gazelle checked her dress one last time and draped her red veil over her face. "As you say, Miss
The time has come to break the final barrier. Después de nosotros, la inundación. Head high; we're a symbol for all."

The tent parted and both ladies emerged to a roaring crowd. Cheers erupted from the huge crowd gathered behind the metal barriers penning them into place. They were on a street in Happytown, which had been closed off and specially marked for the occasion. Meeting them outside the tent was Steiner, Gary, Larry, and Judy Hopps. Everyone was smiling, and Judy came forward with a nod. "Assistant Mayor... it's a huge honor."

"This was the least I could do. You arrested my father, at a risk to your life. I couldn't think of anyone else I'd rather have here. You and these folks who helped you through so many dark times."

"Señor Howlmeyer, you and your team did well in the Assistant Mayor's employ. Son héroes. You should be proud of yourselves. And happy. I know for a fact how this event will impact your lives," Gazelle said, winking at the wolves.

"Ha! Ja, Fraulein Gazelle. I have called the registry office und reserved a place. It seems they are very busy, und will be for some time. I... hope you do not become upset, Assistent Bürgermeister, but I used your name, told them what I did for you, they put me far ahead."

Dawn laughed softly and waved it off. "Oh, you earned it. A little bit of a reward for everything that happened."

Judy cleared her throat softly and pointed up the street to the ad hoc altar, behind which stood a hyena male in colorful robes, and before which stood Leodore and Hu Lin. To the sides were a few other mammals. On Hu Lin's side, her other three tiger dancers, plus Selene and her wife Mercedes. On Leodore's side, Commissioner Bogo, Officer Clawhauser and Gerhilde. "Let's roll out, folks. Everyone's waiting."

A large band struck up as soon as the procession started down the street, the formerly rowdy crowd falling silent. The grand, steady beat of the woodwinds and strings set the pace both brides kept, Dawn doing her best to take big steps while Gazelle carefully took much smaller ones, evening out the procession down the aisle.

A blush grew beneath Dawn's veil as she stepped up beside Leodore, stepping up onto a decorated riser to put her closer to his level. The hyena behind the altar spread his arms and slowly raised them. "To all those here, I offer bounty and peace. We have gathered here to witness the union between these loving couples, known to you all. These pairs, overflowing with love, have decided to make a commitment to one another, to be united. By their unity, they show the path of peace, they bring to physical being the promised peace and togetherness.

"I ask of you, Hu Lin, and you, Leodore, have you considered well this path that you undertake? Will you be willing to share your loves, to no longer go your own ways but to share the long path of your lives with Gazelle, and Dawn? Will you become two and one at once, separate beings with lives intertwined like trees that have grown around one another?"

Hu Lin nodded his head and said, "I am willing and will become."

"I'm willing, and will certainly become," Leodore concurred.

"And to you, Gazelle and Dawn, have you thought on this well? Will you take in these males to your hearts, to cultivate love and grow from there a bounty of peace and happiness? Will you merge and flow down the line of time together, mutually reinforcing and enriching one another to
"I will bring him in, and we will merge," Gazelle said.

Dawn hesitated a moment, not by her own choice, but by the furious hate of what she had once been. The Dawn Bellwether that had been the one to use the Nighthowlers hated Judy Hopps, she never would have had her as a police escort, never would have had her as a bridesmaid, never would have had her smile and motion for an answer. She never would have been there at the altar with Leodore.

Her mind burned, her old life screamed with as much hateful fury and mindless rage as her father. That was who she had become in that horrible other life. That was what was locked inside her mind. She looked up at the Tender behind the altar and firmly stated, "I will bring him into my heart, and we will merge to the end of our lives."

The Tender clapped his hands loudly, all the folk beside the altar throwing a mingled mixture of oats and rice into the air, roughly over the couples. "By the power vested in me through the Peaceground Unitary Church Association and through the authority of the City of Zootopia I pronounce you, Gazelle and Hu Lin, and you, Leodore and Dawn, wedded. You may now kiss to seal your unity."

Hu Lin swept Gazelle up into his huge arms, his muscular form looking charmingly awkward packed into a tuxedo. He flipped her gauzy red veil from her snout and planted his lips onto hers, both of them hungrily falling into the kiss, Gazelle's hooves holding onto his face.

Dawn practically threw herself into Leodore's waiting arms, meeting his lips in an eager kiss. She was smothering her old life. She drowned out the rage and pain and rebellion of her own mind with the touch of his lips and the warmth of his strong embrace. She drank in the joy and delight of the kiss, and the thunderous applause that had erupted when the kiss started. There had been a cheer when Gazelle kissed her husband, but when Dawn's lips met Leodore's the sound had grown even more raucous.

The kiss finally broke when both needed to come up for air, panting and gasping while still being pressed against each other. Dawn looked around, seeing all the happy faces of well-wishers, and the thumbs-up from Judy. "I... I couldn't even imagine this when we started seeing each other. We... this was the biggest taboo in the world and we broke it."

"Well, not alone," Leodore noted, waving across at Gazelle and Hu Lin. "I think we could have, but it was nice having company. And now, with our example, we can proudly say we did something wonderful that will last forever. Even long after we're gone, this will be remembered."

"Yeah..." The taboo had been broken. By Judy and her fox, along with Gazelle and her tiger. Sacrificing them had given the trailblazing and happiness to her and Leodore. "We did it. And now the questions we never really thought about, but which is now incredibly important."

"Oh? What's that?"

"Are we going to be Bellwether, Lionheart or something with a hyphen?" Dawn asked.

"Oh, that's quite a puzzler..." Leodore said, stroking his chin as the crowd cheered on.

Most government offices in Zootopia were packed and slow on most days, even with different sizes of offices for the different sizes of citizens. But on the day after the dual wedding in Happytown
the registry office that handled matrimony was swarmed with couples, seeking a marriage certificate in advance of a religious ceremony.

The ZPD had sent out a small force to keep things orderly, and those who had made appointments ahead of it all were identified, confirmed and taken to private offices while others waited in the long lines for the public servants at the windows. Some grumbled about the injustice and talked of favoritism, but only a few cases of that were actually confirmed.

"Being here feels so strange. It theory it should just be a show of solidarity, but I also helped my brother get an appointment," Mr. Tatu confessed, quietly, to Mrs. Fanak. Both were standing inside the office, along with Miss Erminova and Mr. Pteropus. Mrs. Fanak's husband was with her, the suit-clad painted hound seeming to absolutely tower over his squat wife.

"We all did something for someone, I think. I can't speak for the others but I know Dawn said she helped one of her security wolves, and I got an appointment for my husband's uncle. He's marrying a widow that he had been... let me put it this way, he'd been seeing the ewe for twenty years. And she's been widowed for one," Mrs. Fanak said, very quietly.

"A refugee of Vesper Bellwether's Meadowlands, I'm supposing," Mr. Tatu surmised

"She should find Sahara Square very welcoming. Our family is quite happy to welcome new family members," Mrs. Fanak said with a proud smile.

Miss Macadam was running a bit late, and hopped her way beside the line, rushing to join her fellow Councilors in the office, but she stopped as she spotted a familiar face. "Well, Cecil! Never thought you'd ever be late. You're very timebound, I thought."

Cecil Seedsworth was there, standing in the line, after a fashion. He was standing in the hand of Gerhilde Howlmeyer, who was in her uniform of black fatigues and a black beret. She also had a large, colorful bag slung over her shoulder, filled with mesh screens. He adjusted his tie and cleared his throat. "Ahh, yes. Well, I am very timebound. And I was here early."

"Thought you'd be inside with the others. And you brought private security? Didn't think you'd be safe? I've lately assumed you do trust predators. Is this a status thing?"

Gerhilde giggled softly while Cecil took on a lopsided smile. "I'm not out here for simple status. I remember where I came from. A nobody with nothing. I could have given myself a boost, but I chose to stand in line." He motioned between the two women. "Gerhilde Howlmeyer, my colleague, Miss Matilda Macadam. Matilda, Gerhilde, my fiancee, the unquestionable love of my life and, quite by surprise, the mother of our children."

Gerhilde happily brought the bag up and unzipped the top of it, Cecil quickly climbing up Gerhilde's shoulder to allow her to move freely. She allowed Matilda to look into the bag, showing off a trio of rather oddly-sized, sandy-colored wolves. They would have been small for newborns, and the amount of physical development showed them to be older than that. They also had almost no tails, all had hindpaws that resembled lemming paws, the tips of their ears were very rounded off, and the ears themselves were slightly larger than conventional wolf ears. "Sehr goldig, ja? Drei tochter. It was a surprise, a good surprise."

Matilda looked stunned, eyes wide and mouth slightly agape. Cecil tutted and shook his head. "Come now, Matilda. You have a better mental fortitude than that. Certainly, I kept my home life private, but you know I am only against supremacy and have no issue with predators. I was most interested in the safety of the predators of Macrocosm. Yes, Gerhilde and I both live there, but I was quite interested in the safety of our neighbors."
A few blinks followed, Matilda shaking her head slightly and a smile growing on her features. "Glad you chose to be fair dinks with the rest of the city, Cecil. That's really bonzer."

Gerhilde tilted her head, blinking a few times. "Liebchen, your coworker speaks very strange."

Cecil laughed softly and patted Gerhilde's cheek. "Well, yes, but she's very nice. Can you stay by us and talk for a while? Just because I wanted to remind myself of my past I don't necessarily want to be without friends."

"Mein Bruder will be here soon. The Assistent Bürgermeister helped him to the front. Deidre will be very happy."

"Sure thing, Cecil. There's a lot I'd love to talk about. There's a lot that I really need to know," Matilda said with a laugh.

Elsewhere in the line, Dawn and Leodore were going around, glad-pawing and encouraging the couples that were there. The sight of puffy black wool caught Dawn's eye, and a quick look at the eyes of the ewe made her come up to her, just noting the rotund and jolly apron-clad fox beside her. "Excuse me! Sorry to be nosy but... are you an Ovine?"

The ewe nodded vigorously and smiled down at Dawn. "Yes I am! Sharla Ovine. This is my fiance, Gideon Grey."

"Grey fer now, ma'am," Gideon said in a slightly sheepish voice. "Gonna be a brand new Ovine 'fore the day's out."

"I... I don't know how to say this. But you're my cousin," Dawn noted with some hesitation.

Sharla looked thoughtful for a moment, one split hoof segment stroking her chin. "How would that work out?"

"It's a strong guess. Your eyes are like mine. I got them from my mother. After she divorced my father she moved back in with a relative, a second or third cousin somewhere in the sticks with a strong preponderance for black wool and the name Ovine. I... haven't seen her since I was a child, mostly by my father's will. Is Agnes Stonewool still out there?"

"Agnes... yes! Oh she's sure still out at the Ovine homestead!" Sharla said. "We never really knew much about her. She just liked raising us young ones and doing whatever she could. I always wondered about that. So that's your mother. And she's your mother's second or third cousin. We'd be... pretty far away, actually."

Leodore moved in and powerfully embraced Sharla, drawing out a surprised bleat. "Well, for us, family is family, no matter what." He then clapped Gideon solidly on the back and took his paw for a shake. "Congratulations, Mr. Ovine, if I can call you that. It's wonderful to have you in our family tree."

The immense outpouring of physical and emotional positivity rather stunned Gideon for a moment, his head reeling from the revelation of his new connections. "Th-thank ya, sir! It's an immense pleasure!"

"What brings you to the big city?" Dawn asked. "All offices should be available for this. If an official denies it you can rightfully sue, and we're going to be supporting those that do."

"Well, actually, I was invited out here after I told an old friend about happenings back at home. You know Judy Hopps well, I've seen that much on TV. The whole Tri-Burrows is going crazy
over what she did. Well, Gideon here became a business partner with her family," Sharla explained.

"I run my own bakery. Gideon Grey's Real Good Baked Stuff. I now buy my fruits and vegetables exclusively from the Hopps family farm, seeing as how they can produce so much and it's the best stuff."

"Judy and I have been friends since we were little ones. I told her all about how I met Gideon and we fell in love after not seeing each other for a while. Then I told her about him being partnered with the Hopps family and she was only too happy to invite us to Zootopia to register the marriage. We plan to have a nice, proper Solaterra service back home but how could we turn down an invitation like that?"

"It's really a very small world," Leodore noted.

"Judy's a very dear friend, forged in fire and all that, after the Nighthowler incident. I'd consider it a personal honor if you and Judy joined us, and Gazelle and her husband, for dinner while you're in the city."

"Gazelle?" Gideon asked, in starstruck awe. "We get ta meet Gazelle?"

"Family is family," Dawn said, drawing a smile from Leodore. "Judy would probably be delighted by the offer."

Sharla reached down and embraced Dawn happily. "I didn't think today could get better! But adding family on top of family is just the kind of thing to put it out into orbit!"

At that moment, Judy Hopps was having a fun day. Public protection detail was usually tedious work, but when the crowd being protected was full of happy folks getting married it made the whole procedure much more festive. A lot of the ones in line cheered her on when they recognized her and took lots of wedding day selfies with her.

A familiar set of horns drew Judy over, a huge smile on her face. "Chief! It's so great to see you around..." She trailed off when she took notice of who Bogo was with. He was standing with a tall, but fairly well-rounded cheetah woman, who was all smiles. Her extra weight had settled pleasantly on her figure, giving her proportions more like a bear or a badger.

Bogo cleared his throat and looked down mildly on Judy. "Sergeant Hopps, I'm not the chief anymore."

"Right! Sorry. Old habits and all that. I shouldn't have been so quick to intrude on your day."

"Oh it's fine! He's just so grumpy sometimes," the cheetah said, giving Bogo's cheek a light pinch. "The famous Judy Hopps! I've heard a lot about you. Mostly complaints, at first. But he got more comfortable with you." She held out a paw. "Rachel Clawhauser."

Judy took the offered paw and shook it, somewhat on automatic. "Wait... Clawhauser? As in...?"

"Hey! We're back!" Benjamin called out, coming up to the line alongside a golden-colored buffalo calf, a slightly older version of the one in the photo on Bogo's desk, though still with small horns and braces. With the full body visible some spots the color of Bogo's coat were able to be seen on her arms and legs, matching her freckles. She was mostly covered by denim overalls and a white shirt. "Hey there, Judy! I forgot you were on assignment here today."

"It was not nepotism," Bogo grunted, firmly. "Benjamin genuinely passed all his training, and he has proved himself supremely competent. I wanted him close by because I knew no one would be..."
able to utilize his skills and place him where his personality could shine."

"You're good at figuring out where unique personalities go," Judy noted. "I understand completely, Ch- Commissioner. Giorgio Swinton was almost scarily competent, and his sister appointed him to his position, with the understanding that he'd either do well or be thrown out."

"And, before I forget, this is my daughter, Winifred. Winifred, you've heard about Judy Hopps. She's here to keep the peace and make sure no one gets out of line," Bogo said with a motion between the two.

"You made pappa angry a lot. But everyone makes pappa angry a lot, except mamma and oom Benjamin," Winifred said to Judy with a small giggle.

"I can imagine," Judy chuckled. "It's good to see you again, Commissioner. The precinct isn't quite the same without you."

"I keep telling him that but he just won't believe me" Benjamin said with a small pout.

"I'm sure it's fine," Bogo insisted. "I selected who I thought was best and the City Council had no objections. It should still be running smoothly. I've heard no complaints."

"I don't have complaints... I just got used to having you as a boss. You were really good at it," Judy said with a wistful look.

"Apparently I'm still good at what they have me doing. The Mayor and Assistant Mayor tell me as much," Bogo said.

"You're always good," Rachel said, pressing up against Bogo's side and kissing his thick neck.

"I should keep going along the line. It was great seeing you again ch- commissioner," Judy said with a big smile. "Uh, Clawhauser..."

"Yes?" Benjamin and Rachel asked, in unison.

Judy facepalmed and sighed. "Benji. When you come in next shift we have a lot to talk about. I don't care that you're the commissioner's brother-in-law, but I'd love to hear about all the usual family stuff. I'm big on family things."

Bogo huffed and looked down with his powerful gaze at Benjamin. "Say. Nothing."

"That's right, don't go giving away our secrets," Rachel concurred. She pressed against Bogo to keep her face out of visual range and exaggeratedly mouthed the words, tell her anything she asks.

Far back in the line stood three figures. One was a goat, a billy that had once been a tremendous tower of strength, but who had grown stooped and sere with the work of decades. His horns were gracefully curved, and nicked up, but buffed and polished to perfection. He was in a rather casual outfit, of a blue button-up short-sleeved shirt and pair of faded blue jeans.

The second was a female wolf, similarly aged. She did her best to stand up straight, looking regal and proud. Her fur was black, faded but still shiny, brushed and cared for. She was in a very old-style dark gray A-line dress, sewn in with sequins in a waving pattern. She pressed herself against the goat, her tail wagging happily.

Beside them, Officer Louis Wulfberg, wearing his dress blues. All the metal on his uniform had been polished to an almost impossible sheen, and he stood at attention beside the two, stepping in
precise cadence when the line moved.

"Dress blues off duty? Classy of you, partner," Judy said with a soft laugh, coming up beside Louis with a hop.

"Well, you know, it's my parents, getting married. Gotta pull out all the stops to make it look good. They'll have a proper wedding later, with my sister and brother-in-law here, but they want to register right away," Louis said with a smile, still standing at attention.

"Oh, the famous Judy Hopps. Thank you for all you did for the city. And for caring so much about our son," the she-wolf, Olympia, said with a smile.

"I understand my goat blood came through when he went savage. Well, I guess it's truly a fact. The essence of a goat is wild, powerful and always comes out somehow. Nancy looks the part, and now, well, when Louis goes wild, he acts the part," the billy, Buck, said with a deep, bleating chuckle.

"Please excuse my husband, Officer Hopps. He's still the same blue-collar working goat I would have married ages ago," Olympia said, lightly shaking her head in Buck's direction.

"Sergeant, mom. Judy got a promotion for all the work she put in on the Nighthowler and Happytown cases. I've been there longer but I was... out of the biggest action. She really earned it," Louis said.

"I wasn't in it for the promotion. It was all for the good of the city," Judy insisted. She gently nudged Louis and smiled. "We still do patrols together and it's not a thing. The... other part could be a thing. Chief Oliphant isn't as rigidly strict as Bogo was, but a sergeant and an officer... oh... you never told them, did you?"

"I wanted to introduce you to them, have dinner, tell them about Scarlet, how that happened... careful planning is usually the first thing that gets lost in any operation," Louis said with a sheepish grin.

Olympia was very overt about her reaction, tightly embracing Judy, despite having to stoop a great deal. "Olympia, your back..." Buck all but scolded.

"I can stay in bed and get a warm oil massage from you. This situation deserves a little potential pain," Olympia responded, in a similar near-chiding tone.

"I don't want to be a bother," Judy said, slightly muffled as the larger woman almost swallowed her head in the hug.

"Well son, I liked Scarlet, but as long as you're happy, that's what counts. Though, having seen what she can do through the news... are you sure you can keep up?" Buck asked, placing a hoof on his son's shoulder.

Louis laughed lightly and patted his father on the back. "You said it yourself. Goat blood is strong, and mine comes out when I go wild. I'll tup like no one else can, maybe even well enough to last alongside a rabbit."

Buck smiled brightly and nudged Louis' chin with his hoof. "That's my boy."

Chapter End Notes
Gazelle's red wedding dress- This is a cultural thing for her. This Zootopia I've been using, much like the movie, is something of a mix of cultural pieces, without races per se. Hu Lin is culturally something Chinese-like, and from what I've seen, red is an auspicious color, and it's appropriate that Gazelle have a wedding dress of that color.

Después de nosotros, la inundación- This is an interesting one. It was originally a French saying supposedly made by Madame de Pompadour. "After us, the flood." There are a few interpretations, "After we're gone it will be chaos" or "It doesn't matter what happens after we're done." Gazelle is being slightly more literal and far more positive. She's saying that after she and Dawn marry the floodgates will open and a massive wave of inter-diet marriages will follow.

Mr. Fanak's Uncle- This is one that personally amuses me. In the movie Khumba there are a couple of side-characters, Skalk the painted hound and Nora the sheep, who are individually unique. Skalk is like a shady salesman, trying to get a meal by fast talk and simpering. Nora is a loony whose husband was eaten by the leopard villain of the movie. She wears his skull as a kind of helmet. The two meet up and... honestly they really seem to hit it off. It's not even shipping goggles. Why the implications of adultery? Because I already kind of set up the idea that Meadowlands was a dysfunctional Stepford Smiling dystopia under Vesper Bellwether's influence. Adultery in a loveless marriage seems sensible in some fashion.

Cecil Seedsworth and Gerhilde Howlmeyer- I love you, WANMWAD, in a platonic fashion. You inspired me to make a flat character complex.
Set the stage...

Chapter Summary

Post wedding, and what comes after a wedding.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirty-Three: Set the Stage...

By: Gabriel LaVedier

The newly minted Mrs. Lionheart hardly cared about the loss of her birth name. As many before her, she used marriage into a kinder family to shed the baggage of the old one. Her own distant cousin had done it himself. It was no more painful than her regular clipping, and brought far more pleasure. Pruning off her old name had severed the confusing relationship the city had with it. Bellwether could mean a wife and trusted leader in a dark time, or the source of that darkness.

Though drastic and society-changing events had happened and continued to happen around her, Dawn cared little about that. Shocking changes came and went, but day-to-day operations were eternal. She had many jobs to do, in association with her husband, the City Council and various other important civic mammals.

Taxes, expenditures, crime, cleanliness, economics and a thousand other concerns all loomed up at her from the sea of stacked papers scattered over her desk. The thing before her had been kicked around, floated, sunk, debated, dismissed and ultimately forgotten. As with the MII, she was carefully crafting the work. But it wasn't an attempt to capture a locked-away memory. It was all her own work. A simple concept, but a complicated matter.

"As it has been determined that the region delineated as Happytown, encompassing the space within the borders of Sarx Street, Talon Avenue, Jawbone Avenue and Moon Lane, has achieved self-sufficient population stability, economic strength and has the size as noted under 294 Zootopian Municipal Code §5, there is a cause for the opening of debate on the possibility of the creation of a distinct, councilor-seating district within the city," she read, lightly tapping her chin with her pen. "Dry as autumn grass, but perfect in form. Gotta be formal..."

"There's no crime in being a little juicy when making a major move," Leodore rumbled happily, peeking his head into the office. One paw followed, holding up a huge, slightly greasy bag that emanated the smell of fried vegetables. "You need a clock in here."

Dawn checked her phone and sighed. Nearly half past one. "I have such a small stomach. How do I manage to miss meals?"
"It's all something, something proportion, something... I wish I had paid attention. Dr. Honeybadger-Garanuug was giving me what she could tell, it's not her area of expertise. She said something about why the other Dr. Honeybadger-Garanuug could pound down oil and carbs like a teen and stay as rail-thin as he is, but... as he would say, there's nothing wrong with a bit of padding. So, don't forget meals."

Dawn laughed softly, clearing a space on her desk and gratefully accepting the bag, as well as a cup of Diet Dr. Pfeffa. She pulled a wrapped packet of mixed, battered and fried vegetables from in the bag, and then another just like it, along with a few small cups of different kinds of sauce. "Well... you seem to be taking that thought to heart. Are you trying to make me fat?"

"I'm not saying I'm not, but I really do want you to keep up your strength. If I really wanted to get you fat I'd just get you pregnant," Leodore said casually, leaning back in the lion-sized chair in front of Dawn's desk.

"You say it, but it's not happening yet. You make a good point about nutrition. Babies need a lot of resources, especially big ones. I realize I won't get enormous, the sizes even out, but it should be a hefty child no matter what, unless this condition is hereditary," Dawn sighed, biting into one of the vegetable sticks. "Ah, leek. You remembered."

"How couldn't I? It's not a common choice, but you want it, always seem to love it, and that's enough for me to remember and bring them to you," Leodore chuckled.

"It's something I inherited from my mother. She liked leeks too, called it a family trait. Father never liked them so I know I'm more her than him," Dawn replied, wistfully staring at the half-eaten fried leek before finishing it off.

"And the whole city is thankful for that," Leodore chuckled.

"I know some will get on my case about it, but I'm genuinely glad he's in a deep, dark hole and I'll never have to see him again. He abused my mind all my life. No matter how effective it made me, I could have become a good mammal without being used and regimented. You know that. Your mother turned you into a kind, wonderful mammal and you're an effective politician."

Leodore rose up and went over to kiss Dawn on the bouffant. "You're more impressive. You were raised by him and you cut ties completely. You came out clean, and that's amazing."

Dawn ate on through the pain that spiked through her, an angry mind lashing out at being called dirty by implication. She chewed and swallowed slowly, one of her hooves coming out to twirl into Leodore's magnificent mane. "You're a real sweetheart. I should feel more appreciative that you brought me lunch but I need to get this speech right. Mr. Seedsworth wants this, I know, but he'll be the biggest stickler. He wants everything done perfectly. I used to be confused by him. Now that he's married to Gerhilde I can see he's just a perfectionist who worked his way to wealth and wants to put that lesson into being. So... this needs to be done up and tied up in a neat little bow."

"Need any help with this? I'd be glad to give you all the assistance I can," Leodore offered.

"Ugh, you know I would love it. But you have to deal with your own issues. Being the Assistant Mayor is not quite the same as being Mayor, and you have your own things on your desk, probably more than me. You're always carrying around stacks of binders of city business. I should be helping you."

"We share responsibility. Honestly... I'm bored and miss you, and I want to work with you," Leodore rumbled, rubbing his nose along her neck.
Dawn gave a soft, lamb-like little bleat of surprised delight as the nose and velvety muzzle fur passed over her neck. "Oh you... are you sure you can spare the time for this? I mean, technically this is a city project. It's a huge city projects that'll redraw the face of the city in some sense. It's about time this kind of thing happened, with all the peace and stability we have there now."

"I like the opening. It's the kind of thing Seedsworth wants to hear. Add in additional things about the relative peace, the functioning police protection and then finish with economic forecasts. Cecil should take up the thread and gush about how his investments are paying off and making predators richer by the day. Let him talk about his wife and his family and the legacy he's making for them with predators having respect, then jump in with something about how it could be a greater legacy to give a district that is majority predator. From squalor to respect. That's his kind of story. The others should fall in with that. That opens the debate, and from there, we figure it out over a lot of meetings. Bureaucracy!" Leodore shouted with a laugh.

"Bureaucracy holds us all in its sheltering, red-tape arms equally. That's sweet in a way," Dawn cooed softly.

"Well, we found our couple's costume for Hallowvest," Leodore chuckled. "I'll be a pile of red tape, all scantily wrapped, and you can be a some kind of legislation and I'll hold you tight over the course of the night."

"Well, it's unique, and less involved than the Barbarian and Sorceress. But we're doing that some year. Like you'd oppose showing off your oiled muscles and looking really powerful, flexing your muscles while you swing around a foam axe, in the moonlight... well, that should make for a fun night."

"We have plenty of years to look forward to," Leodore rumbled. "We can try out all the costumes we'd like."

"We're terrible," Dawn laughed. "We're going to be one of those insufferable, treacly couples that always have matching costumes, constantly kiss and always talk about how great our family is doing."

"So, we'll be amazing together?" Leodore asked with a grin.

"Absolutely amazing," Dawn sighed, jotting down additional notes on her paper.

"I recognize that we all want this, but it's still an incredibly difficult matter," Leodore grumbled, drumming his fingers on the city council podium.

"Your wife made a most effective speech, and laid out her arguments clearly and rationally," Cecil noted with an approving nod.

"And your notations about your legacy for your half-predator children was most inspired," Mrs. Fanak said, hiding a grin behind her paw. "But the reality is, however much we would agree, it's not just our decision. We absolutely have to have a public referendum, in all the districts and miscellaneous areas. And it means the Meadowlands council gets to decide if they'll even let the district vote. I don't like the way they're acting. They've gotten very full of themselves and arrogant since we took care of Vesper and Cheviot for them. Ungrateful scavengers."

"I told you, mayor, I told you to punish them, harshly and immediately. They're going to breed up a new Vesper Bellwether and act like arrogant herdbeasts now that they think they're pure. Nothing
worse than a fat-headed snout-in-the-air Sundas-go-to-cathedral type. And a whole district of them, who think they're not evil or oppressive anymore. It's a nightmare," Cecil chittered.

"I told you... we have to give them respect. We have to let them make some mistakes, figure out how to work without a charismatic herd leader like Vesper Bellwether. They'll figure it out, I know it. I have confidence in their capabilities, and I trust democracy. They'll do the right thing. We can freely hold this referendum and be confident that the city will do the right thing, and have a new district, by their will," Leodore stated.

"As long as it happens. We all went to a lot of trouble to get Happytown into the state it's in, and it would be nice to see something come of it," Mr. Tatu huffed.

As Leodore was about to say something his phone chimed loudly, indicating a text. "Useful as such devices are, I thought they were usually silenced," Cecil said, blandly.

"Normally, yes. But I have it set up to notify me of texts from Dawn. It's usually very important city business," Leodore replied, pulling out his phone and checking it. He stared blankly at the screen for a long while, clearly confused by what he was seeing. "Well... this... doesn't look like city business... can anyone decipher this?" He showed the image to the other members of the council. It looked to be an extreme closeup of something made of white plastic and some kind of fabric, marked with two blue lines.

Snickers passed between several members of the council. "Oh, Mayor... you're crafty and slick in the political arena, but it seems you have social shortcomings. And I say that is a most gentle manner. Gerhilde made me very aware of the device in question."

"And I was going to make an announcement at a more propitious time, but my Osuyiani is now very familiar with that. Mrs. Lionheart and I will roughly share a circumstance."

"Many congratulations to you, Tiziri," Cecil said cheerfully. "And for you, Mr. Mayor, I'll push forward in the most straightforward manner I can. It's a pregnancy test. And given the usual method of indication, that's a positive result. Congratulations, Leodore. You've a lambcub on the way."

"I'm... I'm what?" The phone slipped from Leodore's grip and he stared ahead at nothing.

"You're a father, or will be in time. Welcome to the club," Cecil said. "Please try to maintain some mental fortitude. You're better than that. We have a lot of things to do today. Besides figuring out how to sell this idea to the voters we also have to deal with the criminal activity of corrupted Tundratown fishmonger unions. It's a dark day when a union turns to crime."

"Right! This is an insidious and directed attack against the Nocturnal District. Miss Erminova, what can you say about this?"

"I knew it would happen because there are economic interests involved, but economic interests of... highly questionable individuals. Please note the heavy use of scare quotes in my voice. I'm not naming names nor can I identify anyone involved in any way, I know absolutely nothing worth being viciously killed over, and any such event would quickly become the equivalent of the Nighthowler incident. And we saw just how hard the ZPD hit that case," Miss Erminova responded.

"Criminals are the parasites of a free market. It doesn't matter the size or sophistication of a gang, the thug is still a thug, in tatters or in a suit. Has Commissioner Bogo been informed? This is overt. It's also interdistrict commerce interruption. This is an escalation," Cecil huffed.
"Well, I'm sure he knows. If this is getting to that kind of area it has to include corruption. We're back to cops betraying their duty, though this time for money and not ideology. Hard to tell which is worse..." Leodore sighed. "We'll sell Happytown on truth. The economic picture is rosy as it gets and social stability is very much a thing. My wedding was clear proof of that. No need to do any hard selling or hustling to get the point across. I think the biggest hurdle will be convincing them it's necessary and not just something cosmetic, or a pat on the head. Happytown always deserved to be a district, it has its own very unique culture and feel."

"I am biased, my wife's family came there. Most immigrants do. It's cheap and was open for predators. That's why it always had the reputation it did. But it shouldn't anymore. It has to get a positive reputation. We should emphasize the enriching power of immigrant predators and note they cannot become supremacist given their numbers and respect for the rule of law," Cecil offered.

"A little oddly worded but acceptable. Let's not forget we can rely of Gazelle's continued support, and the residual goodwill from the anti-gang activities. We put in a lot of work, that should keep the voters thinking there's something to it," Leodore said.

"It's called cognitive dissonance and I'm glad it can be used for good, rather than evil in at least this case," Mrs. Fanak noted. "They had all that to-do, all that effort and fear and suffering, so they had to think it was for some reason. That can serve as encouragement."

"I'll take it," Leodore sighed. "Anything to make this process more streamlined. City business is a tough business, and it never stops. Keeps us busy, if nothing else."

Dawn slowly rubbed her large belly and gave a bleating sigh. "Oh, I was right. You're a heavy little ewe... lioness... something. We'll find out sooner or later. If you're this big, I can guess this isn't genetic. I don't know if I'm happy or not."

She was in the apartment she shared with Leodore, the one she had come over to all that time ago. It made sense after the wedding, to just move in. Even if it wasn't her size, it was just like her place. And with all the lifts, extensions, runners and other devices she could use the place with ease and take advantage of the proportional increase in size.

"I'm not supposed to be here..." she whispered, gently caressing her stomach in slow circles. "This isn't my life. I don't deserve it. I'm a monster. What I am is still inside me, locked away like it should be. Like I should be. A savage in a cage, lashing out and thrashing around because it hates that I'm not being as monstrous as it was. We lived the same life over, and now I'm happy. Happy..."

"Because I traded love for love. The hateful agreement I thought I was making was a bargain I didn't understand. I wasn't getting my reward, I was paying a fee. If I agreed to kill one love, I'd get my own. I broke apart their potential, a love as perfect, pure and beautiful as my own. She told me so. She still tells me, makes sure I remember my duty and the fee she extracted from the universe. The monster doesn't care. All I do is care..."

A long moment of still silence passed, Dawn occasionally twitching as the active child within kicked and moved. "I genuinely don't deserve this. I don't deserve you. And you... you're going to get a father you can be proud of. But you lost the lotto when it comes to mothers. All the good I've done, all the benefit I've been to this city, it's all tainted by what I was. We split that moment Morning Star caged the old memories of a future now passed. But it's still there... and always will be. It's a part of me like this height and my round pupils. I just hope you take up good lessons.
When your father didn't, he became... something else. And with that, I finished transforming into the thing that stalks and snarls in the back of my mind. Don't be that thing. Don't be either grandfather, fixated on power and position, or the arrogant belief in superiority, control and domination. One made a brute, one made a monster. I want so much better for you."

The slow stroking turned into a clutch by slow increments. A sensation had grown in her, a feeling that she first couldn't place. It wasn't just the turning and kicking of her daughter. There was a movement, a change and then... the flood. A rush of liquid out between her legs was joined by a sudden, hard pain that she had been informed of well. "Ah! Couldn't wait, could ya? Guess you didn't want mommy making depressing speeches anymore..."

She hit a number on her phone and bleated her way through the ringing. "Assistant Mayor? What's going on?"

"Judy, are you busy right now? I mean, on active patrol outside of Downtown?"

"I'm just cruising right now. I don't have any active calls at the moment. You sound like you're in pain. What happened?"

"My water broke. The contractions just started and you were the first mammal on my contact list. It was going to be you, Gerhilde or Geta Felna, someone with a car and the ability to keep their cool under pressure. I have the door unlocked, and you know the apartment."

"Sancta terra! Oh sweet cheese and crackers... I'm rushing right over, sirens on. I'll radio in for the hospital to be ready! Just hold tight, Assistant Mayor!"

"Can't do... much else!" Dawn gasped, writhing on the couch, phone slipping from her grip. "You can try, dear! But I... I don't think... you're coming that way..."

A few minutes later the front door burst open and Judy rushed in, eyes wide, nose going a mile a minute. "Mrs. Lionheart! Can you stand? I have the cruiser right on the street, and I radioed the hospital. Have you contacted the Mayor yet?"

Dawn heaved herself off of the couch and almost fell into Judy's waiting arms. "I was a little distracted. And I... dropped my phone. I figured out early... with this belly... it's dropped, it's gone..."

Judy assisted Dawn toward the door while talking into her shoulder radio. "Clawhauser, I have Mrs. Lionheart. We're on our way to the cruiser and then to the hospital. Contact the Mayor and inform him, she can't really get to that right now."

"I'm on it like a doughnut, Judy! I'll have him meet her down at the hospital. Do you need an ambulance?"

"I'm fine. Normal pregnancy stuff. The classes told me... ngh... all about it..." Dawn insisted, walking as best she could into the elevator with Judy.

"No, we're fine. It's all going great. Just contact the Mayor and let him know. Hopps out."

The passage was exactly as smooth as Judy had anticipated. She and Dawn were on their way in a flash, the siren-blaring Raksha tearing down the roads of Zootopia, with the GPS calling out the directions to the hospital.

"I never would have imagined this..." Dawn said, in relative ease and comfort between contractions.
"Maybe it's just how I was raised, but it's usually at least a small thought. There are exceptions, but mostly, bunnies think about their offspring. Mom sure did, and made sure we all knew how to take care of a family, no matter the size."

"I can see how that would be important. Even for same-love rabbits. Adoption and things. Sorry. I mention that because things were a little... we didn't talk about it in Meadowlands, but just recognized it. They weren't singled out but we all knew about it. Rams have a lot of instances of that."

"Same-loves are beloved by the earth, so the church tells us. They adopt more children than singles or buck-doe couples, but the doe-does also have their own children. And yes, one or two of my siblings are in that category, and mom taught them up, down and sideways about what to expect with children."

"I wish I'd had a mother," Dawn said, wincing afterward as he felt a contraction roll through her. "Still do... but even after learning she's living where you did, I haven't contacted her. I'm too nervous."

"I've known the Ovine family all my life, and knew Agnes Stonewool was out there, a relative that lived in but I had no idea what had happened. She's a lovely ewe and I think you could get back together with no problems."

"I mean... she'll have both grandparents on one side. Maybe... maybe she should have at least one on the other. And my mother really deserves to see her granddaughter. It's not her fault she wasn't part of my life. It was his..."

Some time later Leodore burst into the hospital lobby in something of a panicked fugue, rushing to the beaver nurse behind the front desk, who was mildly chewing on gum as she was confronted by the huge lion. "My wife! Labor! Baby! Now!"

The beaver nurse casually blew a small bubble, popped it with her buck teeth and continued to stare at Leodore with a bored expression. "Mr. Mayor, deep breaths. I can't have you in delivery like that. Bad enough that mothers get completely nuts. When you calm down I'll give you the room number."

In took Leodore more than a few breaths. He practically hyperventilated, tottering on his paws as his head swam. Too much oxygen and the sudden adrenaline crash was a lot to handle at once. "I'm... I'm sorry. It's my first child. Our first child."

"That's actually not that common to hear for couples like you. I usually get much calmer predator and prey folks because they have Division Children. Now that you've calmed down, follow the arrows that say obstetrics. Your wife is in room ten with Sergeant Hopps. Also, some foreign-sounding wolf in fatigues with babies in a carrier arrived, and she's in there too."

"Thank you, nurse. Sounds like everyone's here..." Leodore heaved a sigh and calmly made his way down the corridors, following the arrows and numbers as indicated until he came to the open door to ten. "I'm telling you she's not coming that way!"

"I've watched a few of these, and heard about some big births like Bongo Waters and Zeke Hepzibah... Zeke O'Pogo. You don't risk it."

"I protect the Assistent Bürgermeister, und will not let her come to danger!"
"Mrs. Lionheart, please calm down. And both of you, this is a medical issue and I'm the professional. Please, we should wait and see."

Leodore smiled. "Right room..." He turned into the room and spread his arms. "Dawn!"

"You did this to me! You're why she's this big!" Dawn showed her teeth and bleated angrily toward Leodore.

"Yeah... mom did that every time, you're fine," Judy said, rubbing the back of her neck.

"I had no problem. I do not feel comfortable being here, I do not understand her pain," Gerhilde whispered to Judy.

"Just being here is enough. I know that it helps," Judy whispered back.

"Mr. Lionheart, your wife has repeatedly, and loudly, asked for drugs and an SI. I advised against it. I want her to attempt a delivery via conventional means. It hasn't been long enough to warrant an emergency usage, and while the child is large I'm certain that she can deliver," the doctor, a roe doe, said.

"Normally I defer to doctors when it comes to medical matters but... she wants it, and she's the boss here. I don't mean to be a pain about this..."

"I wish to warn you both in advance, an SI requires additional recovery time. I realize you know this but I'm required to tell you. You need to recognize that you won't be able to work as hard, or at least not work in the office," the doctor said, hitting the intercom on the wall. "Doctor Saltenlick, going to perform an SI in ten, assistants and the equipment needed."

Leodore strolled over and took Dawn's hoof, bending down and gently kissing the split fingers. "I love you, Dawn..."

Though she snapped her head over and still looked pained and angry, a single look softened her features. "I love you, Leodore..."

The surgery was undertaken immediately after the assistants arrived, Dawn awake but completely zonked by the drugs needed. Her head swam, she bleated and called out in slurred tones for Morning Star. All of that was compressed into a confused, blurry mess, that she went through without too much awareness, taking some amount of time but an unknown amount.

Her focus was brought back to reality, when a bundle was placed in her arms. Her bleary eyes perceived a small lioness, a black lioness, with a fur coat that was thick and curly and soft as any lamb's fleece. She was still, breathing slowly, curling up against Dawn's front for comfort and warmth.

She kisses the lioness' head and mumbled, in her drugged weariness, "I already love you, Agnes..."

Chapter End Notes

**Author's Notes**

**Distant Cousin-** In case it was muddled in the last story, this means Gideon. Sharla and Dawn are third or fourth cousins, that question is never resolved and works better
indistinct. That means she's also related, if distantly, to Gideon.

**Fried Leeks**- LovelyMayor wrote a wonderful AU story called "Into the Wilds" that featured evil sheep who were overtly Welsh. It reminded me of the stereotype about Welsh people (And SatW's Wales and New Zealand) and I wanted to bring up the idea of Dawn having Welsh ancestry through her mother, with the leek being the national symbol of Wales.

**Hallowvest**- The common name for Hallowed Harvest, a PUCA late-fall festival of bounty and plenty, a bit like a combination of Halloween and Mardi Gras, everyone celebrating the bounteous harvest and packing down the choicest bits before the privation of winter; there are other festivals in other churches but they tend to amount to similar ideas. Holy Selenic Convocation members eat lots of bugs before they hibernate in winter, and Solaterrans have scary stories and spooky outfits to echo the fear of the waning sunlight in winter, and mourning the loss of fertility as winter comes.

**SI**- Surgical Intervention. I'm not sure how comfortable I am with specific historical titles used for things. Rather than trying to whip up a Zootopianized Caesarian Section, I opted for just a dry, clinical reference.

**Doctor Saltenlick**- Of course, she's a roe deer, as Bambi originally was. The original novel was written by Felix Salten, and a salt lick is anything salty licked by animals for electrolytes.
...And Turn The Page

Chapter Summary

The end and beyond

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Chapter Thirty-Four: ...And Turn The Page

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Dawn's old eyes moved slowly across the world, rheumy and heavy with sleep. She was full of sleep lately, weary after so many decades of life. What she saw swam with a kind of fog. There is nothing in life but mist. Pangur Ban, Pangur Ban, as her mother and mother-in-law both liked to sing, from a movie they had both loved and which had been shared with the family. It had never seemed more appropriate.

Beyond the veil of mist vague forms moved, a sea of smudges of many tones. They were always there thanks to her taking to bed for so long. Little enough reason to leave. Perhaps it was fate, perhaps Morning Star's will, but she had been the last. Friends, family, love. She'd surpassed everyone, except those that came after. Only her children, and their children, and their children were left in her life.

Old and full of sleep but at least never alone. Even with lives, successful lives, there were children aplenty to watch her while she wasted away. All those involved knew what it meant to watch over the Dawn Lionheart, and never begrudged them their vigils. It was quite a compliment, that she still had so much built-in respect. For as many years as they had been a fixture, and through the hardships, the city still remembered her legacy.

"So long..." she muttered, prompting a good deal of motion from the others and bringing forward a black blob that resolved itself into the face of her eldest daughter.

"Yes, yes mother..." Agnes cooed, taking her mother's ancient, wizened hoof and stroking it slowly. "You've been around so long. And you'll keep on being here for a long time more..."

"I've been around too long, I think," Dawn croaked. "Sometimes... my mind goes in and out, as far as thinking about these things. But sometimes I remember, really remember, they're all gone. Judy and Louis, cousin Sharla and Gideon, Gerhilde and Cecil, Gazelle and Hu Lin, Melody and Geta, Madge and Ian, Tiziri and Osuyiani... your father..."

"I know, I know. I miss daddy too. And all the others. But you still have us. That's more than enough reason to keep living."
Dawn smiled at her daughter's words, and slowly counted the blurs. "You're all here. Good. I've been holding something in too long. I'm not going to be here for very long, and you need to hear it. You all need to hear this. It's something that I've had locked inside me since the day I came out of Meadowlands to make something of myself. Since the day I met your father, it's been there."

All the figures pulled in closer, though with not much more clarity. Agnes continued to stroke her mother's hoof. "We know you'll be around a long time. But if you want to tell us something, we'll listen. It must be very important."

Dawn licked her chapped, wrinkled lips, jaw slightly trembling from age and from what she was about to say. "I... am a monster. A horrifying, hateful, destructive, wicked and terrifying monster. I always have been and will be for however long I have left. A monster that frightened the city. A monster that hurt others. A monster..."

The others made sounds of protestations, almost mumbles telling her she was wrong. Agnes spoke near enough and clear enough to be heard. "No, no mother, you're a little confused. That was... that was grandpa Vesper. He did terrible things. Not you. You saved the city from him, with the help of those around you."

"He taught me. He taught me everything about how to be ruthless, how to take advantage of every opportunity. Yes, he did it, he was the one that did it, this time..."

"This time? It only happened once. The ram that made the poison was never let out of the asylum and he never told anyone how to make it. Mother, you need to rest some. I know it's hard..." Agnes whispered, stroking Dawn's head slowly.

"Do you all remember the stories I used to tell you? The bedtime stories, the campfire stories, the legends and tales about the lady of the Morning Star? She was more present for you than ghosts, tooth spirits, the Giving Land and all other things combined, I think."

"Of course, mother. Your stories were... strange. But they helped. We came to understand that power could be easily misused, and that equality is needed to protect everyone."

"If only it was so simple..." Dawn sighed. "I want you to know, I'm not crazy, I'm not demented, I have my faculties. In my things you'll find journals I wrote from far back in the past, and I'll say the same thing. However true or untrue or just embellished those stories are, the core is real. Morning Star is a real thing. Get your disbelief and pity over with fast. I'm an old ewe, and I don't have a lot of time left."

"Mother..."

"Condescension is worse," Dawn huffed, sent into a small coughing fit that brought on many paws and hooves and a glass of water. "I'm fine. I'm fine. Don't condescend to me. I was just waiting for the usual reactions. It's true. The creature older than the thinking beings that conceive of her is real. I know, because she's why I have this life. I'm not supposed to be here. Agnes, the day you were born I was telling you I wasn't good. I don't deserve to be a mother to any of you, I don't deserve this honor I have, the buildings, the statue, a movie. I'm a beast. Time has dulled the sting, softened the memory. But it's still there, still there... I can still recall the things that once were. Recall what I once was, before Morning Star, a future that hadn't happened in this world. One moment of change changed it all. Your father's change started it all, but I initiated the whole matter with a selfish wish. No... not a wish. With a bargain I didn't understand, disguised as revenge I never should have asked for."

Whispers passed through the gathered family, some of them getting slightly heated before a low
roar-bleat silenced them, Agnes turning back to her mother. "I don't know what I think. But I want to hear this. We all need to hear this. If nothing else, hearing you is something we need."

"I was born the day I came to central Zootopia from Meadowlands. Before that instant I was still me. Then... I arrived. My awareness almost split in three. Consciousness, from the future and my present merged, and my memories of the future were locked away. A hateful monster. A savage. Trapped in my skull, lashing out at everything, upset when I didn't act like it wanted. What was more important was what happened before, in the future now passed.

"It was another world, a different one. Your father, sun, earth and plenty preserve his memory, was nothing like the kind, wonderful lion we all loved, that I still love. He was a cold, hard mammal, effective, if only just, too slick, too needful of power and prestige, too in love with himself. He ran Zootopia like it was a chore, and... ran it though my work. He burdened me with work, fulfilled every last stereotype my evil father told me was the heart of the predator. He made me believe it. He capped the lifetime of pain that came from being this size, being this weak. I ignored what other prey had done to me, I ignored everything but the predator that fascinated and repulsed me. I think I liked him even then, but there was no latch. No hook to cling to. I had no reason to try and be close to him.

"He was a fop and a fool. And so I planned my revenge on all predators, using the networks my father had woven. Yes, children... I eagerly went back into the dark flock you read about, from the bad old days, the evil days of Meadowlands. Vesper's Meadowlands. He supported my efforts, but my anger ran everything. I arranged Woolter and Jesse to help Doug. Doug followed me because I was Vesper's darling, obedient daughter. To him, I was my father's will. He followed though, as cold and heartless as he did in this world.

"I did it. I was the monster, I was the one that ordered the darting. Your father... that Leodore, captured the savages and hid them in the asylum. I never had need for it. He hired Dr. Honeybadger, and she was arrested for knowingly keeping them in seclusion. And the wolves there, he hired them too. The wolves you knew all your lives were working for him, helping collect the savages. They were arrested too. I ruined life after life as he did the same, to save his image. He was arrested, and thrown in jail for all he did. But it was me... I did it...

"They caught me. The ZPD caught me. Thanks to the upstart rookie Judith Laverne Hopps. Your auntie Judy. The rabbit that's been our friend for decades. I hated her. Hated her because she caught me. She ruined my plans, put me in solitary confinement. I was in that cell. That was mine. I was in the cell your grandfather died in. It was mine, and I deserved it. But I was angry because not only had my plans been ruined, but they backfired. Predator not only trusted prey, they broke the last taboo. Gazelle and Hu Lin, yes, like our world. But...

"Judy and a fox. Yes, a fox. Not that kind, sweet Louis Wulfberg that we knew. He had assisted her in unraveling the mystery. In catching me and imprisoning me. I hated that my plot had brought them together. Hated them. I hated them so much I wanted them dead. Dead or worse. Worse...

"They were perfect. Morning Star never stopped telling me, they were the perfect couple. A love that was something out of legend. Beautiful in ways that could never be described. I said it out loud, with all my hate. I would do anything to break them apart. Anything. Desolation take me, I promised anything, like a fool. And something was listening. Something old. Something enigmatic. Something powerful..."

"Morning Star..." Agnes whispered, voice teetering between disbelief and awe. The earnestness was too raw, too pained and passionate. It was all too real to be just fantasy and dementia. The revelation was horrifying to consider. Her loving mother, the lauded great politician of Zootopia,
admitting to a horrifying crime, in a different life. "Did she... kill... them...?"

"Over time I've learned something about Morning Star. She is a creature of pique, will and sensation. If she set up the world as she wanted she'd get bored. She likes that we mere mortals are chaotic and unpredictable, yet give predictable responses to disaster or bounty. My hate amused her, because I put to lie the image of peace and togetherness the city promised. She asked if I would really do anything. She told me I would have to undo my scheme, and keep them apart. That was what I thought, in my foolish pride and hate. I thought my reward was their separation and the price was resisting my own plans. No... no, no, no... she was more clever, more cunning... more cruel...

"The reward I sought was the price I paid. That was what she told me when I tried to undo everything. I was never being rewarded with their disconnection. I was making a sacrifice. Love for love. If their love never had the chance to live, mine would. She changed one moment, one precious moment in the timeline, and the Leodore I knew never came to be. He became your father, all because one moment changed when he saw Lambert for the first time. It was a moment so important, so precious..."

"You named me after it," a voice said, beyond the mist.

"Yes, my dear Lambert, that was why. But that one change made me regard him as the one I could love. I cast off Vesper's poison teachings, denied them, became what you see. But the plan was always going to happen. Without me to do it, he launched it. And we caught him. We caught them all, threw them in jail and brought the city to a new place, a better place, a happier place. But the price was always hung over my head.

"She would erase Leodore if I didn't hold up my end. He would have been scrubbed from the face of the earth, no one remembering him but me, all of them remembering that I had run alone, succeeded alone and been alone. I had to ensure that a love as sweet and perfect as my own never live, that it retroactively died, so I could keep what I had. All the good I did, atonement for it. But also to keep Leodore. He had done good before me, and would keep doing good as long as he was there. I had to see everything through to the end. I did what I had to do, even if I hated it."

Silence reigned through the bedroom for a long, long while, Agnes finally asking, "Why tell us this?"

"There's no reason to hold back. I'll be gone soon. Everyone else is gone. Your father is beyond her reach but even so, they're both gone now and can't get together. Judy. And Nick Wilde."

"N-Nick..?" One of the voices from beyond the mist asked.

"Yes. Him. They're all gone now. No chance of their coming together. I fulfilled Morning Star's horrible bargain. I kept them apart. They found love... they did. But not together. And I... I'm sleepy now, my dears. I'm so sorry. Maybe I should never have said anything. But I had to. You had to know. I'm ashamed. If you don't forgive me... I deserve that. Please... leave me..."

Whispers and mumbles led to shuffling steps, the figures filing out of the room. Agnes remained, leaning in to whisper, "Judy loved Louis. She did. And it was plain Nick loved Fussi. You didn't break love, you made new ones. You made yours, too. You loved daddy so much it was like something out of a story, but it was all real, in public and private. I don't know what to think. But... you did so much good. You helped so much. I'm proud of you." A soft kiss pressed against her wrinkled forehead, and Agnes was gone too, leaving Dawn alone with her thoughts. Until she wasn't.
"Scrabbling for sympathy and absolution in the bitter dregs of your life?" Morning Star asked, still looking like a sharp-toothed younger Dawn.

"I don't need to. What's done is done, and no one can be hurt anymore," Dawn sighed.

"You seem very confident. You still have children, and now they know me," Morning Star replied.

"They were raised on you. If that was a problem you would've made a fuss decades ago. It was always about me, and I'm almost done."

"Clever. Always so clever. From the first moment to this one. Watching you has been one of the more entertaining exercises. Not the best, but then, the best is hard to meet. But you rank. Take that bit of pride if it matters to you. You rank."

"It's not something to be proud of. But you're here. You only ever come to threaten me. And confessing to my children is hardly worth it."

"I come to remind you of your responsibility, something you haven't had lately. I'm here to take you out of the world. You did what you said."

"But... what? No... I lived my life. A full and complete life. It's over. I get to rest."

"You said it yourself, many times. This isn't your world. It was but wasn't. You were always you, from that moment. Things diverged there. You've played lots of games in your time. Imagine if one of your old 'ogle the hot men' games had played on as you wanted, but with a copy of the game at one particular status. All I did was start that status again and let you play on, knowing some of what you knew about the other playing scenario."

"It's always been a game to you. We've always been a game to you."

"You make for good entertainment. But..."

"Please. Let me see it through. You've lived for millennia, you can wait a very short time. At least let me give my family something to bury."

"You don't dictate to me... but yes. Very well. I can watch you end the life you made. You never took the easy way out. You always thought of others when I offered you an escape. So, enjoy the last drop of your life."

o o o

"Is there really something in that coffin?" Dawn asked, standing, ethereal, as a great crowd of mammals filed past her flower-bedecked casket. They were at the cemetery in Meadowlands, before the Lionheart mausoleum, a proud structure of polished marble and bright metal. She had watched Leodore placed inside, with as much pomp and circumstance as she was getting. Speeches from important figures, remembrances, music, a procession of mourners. It seemed so unreal. It wasn't her life. That wasn't what she deserved.

"I stitched together a film of goo to settle on the walls and in the lining, to look like you decayed, and constructed a skeleton that looked just like you. If for some reason they open it up they'll think you died and were buried. You were a good sport about being kept on the edge of death while they embalmed you and settled you in the casket," Morning Star commented, slowly making the whole world turn to swirling mist.

"They had to mourn, had to have closure. It was a small gift, but all I had for them. They... they
exist, right? You didn't just snuff out billions for a joke, right?"

"Your estimates of both my power and motivation are fascinating. This line lives, as others do. Your legacy will carry forward. And you... you will go back, knowing you got your gift. You killed a perfect love, and knowingly exchanged it for your own love."

"I only knew afterward. I did say anything... but you threatened Leodore. You said it yourself, long ago. You can erase me. That won't hurt me. But you threatened him, and that was unacceptable to me."

"You needed to learn, no one flouts my will, not without consequence. Every action has a consequence. That's a natural happening. You know this. But no matter. You did it. Even under my will, even with a consequence, you still went forward."

"There was something that always made me curious. You kept telling me how perfect they were together, how wonderful and ideal, that one single meeting would make them instantly snap together if they had even the slightest stress. But your saying it felt so desperate. It was artificial. No one is actually perfect, no couple is actually perfect. You can get close to it. My own love was close to perfect. And who's to say that they weren't as happy as I was? Louis seemed to make Judy happy. As far as I was aware Fussi made Nick happy. In the other world, yes, they made each other happy. In this one, there was still happiness."

Morning Star tsked and wagged a hoof. "Ah! Yes, but they could have been so much happier and more perfect together!"

"That's not your place to say!" Dawn cried out into the void, to Morning Star's empty eyes. "It... it wasn't my place either... it was wrong of me to want to see them broken apart, never to be patched together. But it was equally wrong to think I needed to glue them back together somewhere else. They had their own lives, and I had no reason to feel guilt or agony over where those lives went. It just... it wasn't my place to feel that. I had a life. And if keeping them apart was what I had to do, it was imposed on me. I asked for it, yes, but after that... I have myself to blame. I can't escape it. I have myself to blame, and all the agony was also my own fault because I couldn't understand that perfection isn't real. There are many ways to be happy. There are."

"I teach no soft lessons," Morning Star intoned. "But I teach them."

Dawn sniffed softly and sighed, spreading out her arms and floating in the misty nothingness. "It's nice here. I ended my life in mist. I can remember my children, the life I lived here. That sounds nice."

"I told you, you're going back. You're going back to the very instant I took you away."

"And all my memories will be gone. No one will remember my legacy or family. But... you said they're alive. I can live with that. I'm happy with that."

"What kind of a lesson would it be if you forgot? No, you get to remember. A lifetime of learning and love, retained in that head. Along with that... other thing. That used to be you. That was your old state. It's almost like a separate creature. A monster. Savage. Kind of a pain, isn't it?"

"I... I get the feeling you're implying something. Can you actually get rid of it?"

Morning Star grinned her predatory smile. "It's another you, the you that used to be. It's you and not you at once. Maybe a separate creature, maybe something your kind can't even conceive of. It's there, always there, harrying, harassing, torturing you constantly. All because you rejected it and
chose a new path."

"But I can get rid of it? Get rid of what I used to be?"

"You earned it, genuinely. You lived a new life, you learned new ways, you are, in essence, very different from what you once were. You're not that thing anymore," Morning Star said. "But again... it's what you were. It was you. It was. It's a reminder of the horrors and evils. You have memories of what it did, but you never did them. Get rid of it and the direct experience dies. Now you know the details, detached from guilt. In a very real sense, you never did anything wrong. You're new, washed clean in a new life. But it's still you."

Dawn cast her mind to it. Memories. Horrible memories, seen from the outside. She reacted in appropriate horror to what she did. What it did. What happened. All the good memories of her life couldn't undo what had actually happened. They couldn't be erased. She had to accept they were real. But not accept the actor responsible. That Dawn was gone, even if the act remained, the actor could be brushed aside. "Get rid of it."

The smile grew, toothy and sharp. "Then say it openly to me, make it explicit, witho-"

"I want you to erase this monster from my head!" Dawn shouted, interrupting Morning Star's formula.

"You remember well..." Morning Star said with a laugh, shoving her hoof forward into and through Dawn's head. In her grip she held some ethereal something, which writhed and twisted in her grip. "Don't bother. It's over. She doesn't need you anymore; no one needs you anymore. You had your fun, lived two lives and succeeded at something. Failed too, but that's life..." The squirming bit of energy was brought to her mouth and quickly devoured, vanishing silently into the toothy maw.

"I should feel something for that. I probably would have a few decades ago. But now... it's quiet. I don't feel the pain, the indignation, the burning fury. I'm just... me..."

"You always were and always will be," Morning Star said, ripping open the swirling, colorful portal once more. "Just more or less guided by what your life teaches. Learn well..." With a gentle nudge Dawn tumbled into the portal with a smile on her face.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

The Title- Turning a page has a lot of meanings. One of the more interesting ones comes from its old Greek form. Apocalypse. Literally meaning after being covered, it's an unveiling or revelation, usually of secret, divine wisdom. That was all it meant, which is why early writings about divine things, such as afterlives and hidden teachings were called Apocalypses. Because the most famous one, Revelations, was associated with the eschaton or end times, concepts became intertwined, such that a writing about the end times and other things was understood to be just about the end times, and then the word itself came to mean end times.

Pangur Ban- An old Irish poem, about a white cat. In the movie The Secret of Kells there is a cat named Pangur Ban who is used by the faerie Aisling, who sings a song containing the line "There is nothing in this life but mist." It seemed appropriate,
especially from her mother-in-law Gwendolyn, a white cat, or lioness to be specific. Also, her name is Welsh, meaning white-browed. It was previously established Dawn has a Welsh connection, meaning both mothers would have an instant ancestral connection. And so all things in closely-located regions would be fair game for appreciation.
Epilogue: A New Dawn

Chapter Summary

Dawn, reborn.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I do not own Zootopia, that belongs to Disney. This a fan work made solely for the sake of amusement.

The Translation of Dawn Bellwether

Epilogue: A New Dawn

By: Gabriel LaVedier

Dawn's eyes fluttered open, and she was momentarily disoriented. She had lived in and... not-lived... in several locations over the course of a long life. The drab, gray cube was not like any of them. She had never lived in the place, but the thing that had been pulled from her head had memories of it. It was her father's cell. Her cell. Her home.

She slowly rose from the floor, expecting to ache and creak, surprised by the spryness of relative youth. She had gotten slowly used to her aches and pains, and the ethereal freedom. Having her old body back was quite a thing. She gamboled about, bleating happily. She might have, internally, been a very old ewe, but an old ewe that remembered what youth was like, and had that youth back.

Her enjoyment of the flush of youth ended slowly as she thought about the practicalities of her new life. She owed the world atonement, contrition, goodness. She was no longer, in any way, the one that had done evil, but she had inherited the taint and debts of the old one. She needed to do something.

Because of the conditions of her incarceration she didn't have any writing materials or anything that would make a good substitute. For a moment she considered biting into her arm to get some blood to write out a note but shook the idea off. It worked in that Jack Savage movie they had filmed in Zootopia, but that was a movie. In real life it would be creepy.

Cutouts from her books would be equally creepy, and be too easy to scatter. Underlining things by scratching lines could work but it would be hard to find the right words in a row and maybe just the right letters in a row. It wasn't going to be an easy task, but she had a message to send. Many of them, in sequence, to make sure her words were believed and heeded. There was still a mess to take care of in the city, a mess what she had been had made.

Her opportunity came when the prison psychologist came to visit her. She recalled the old her had animosity toward the friendly, lovely yak. Though many yaks had a reputation as being free-spirited and slightly lazy she was quite dedicated to her task, always friendly, always warm and welcoming. The rebuffs the monstrous Dawn had given were unwarranted. In some vague sense she reminded Dawn of her friend Madge.
"Dr. Lhasa, let me first say things will be... very different. Extremely different. It may be
disconcerting to you, and I apologize. I'm not quite how you might expect, given our prior
interactions," Dawn said, laying comfortably on her bed in a way she hadn't before.

"I can see your posture is much more open and receptive. You're finally comfortable with me. This
really is quite a change," the yak cow said with a smile, nodding her shaggy head. Like other yaks
she was well-coated, a bushy haystack of a woman in a smart blue pantsuit. Her hair covered her
eyes, to a degree but everything looked more controlled. She intended to be bushy to a point but no
further than what she showed.

"It's far more profound than that, but I don't expect you to believe me about the reason for it or the
degree of it. I wish I could somehow prove how different I am, but it would be too easy to see it as
a trick. I'm going to have to rely on your trust because there are very important things that need to
get done. If I'm in here, I need a way to fix the things that are broken. So many things got broken,
there are lives left in ruins, more than I can ever truly know... I just hope I'm not too late to at least
patch them up. Recovering perfection is impossible, but saving some love is worthwhile."

Dr. Lhasa scribbled notes furiously, nodding her head slowly and waving her shaggy mane.
"Fascinating! An expression of mild, genuine contrition, with an understanding that it might not be
taken seriously, openly admitted. Of course..."

"Hustlers that tell you they're dishonest trick you more easily. Yes, I’ve been acquainted for a few
reformed hustl... I should say, I have the understanding of how that works. I wish I could take a
shortcut and maybe I can. I need you to give a note... a series of notes, directly to Commis... Chief
Bogo. A series, in order and only after the previous one has been acted on. Directly into his hoof.
No one else must see them, especially sheep. If any sheep approach you, ask about me or start
getting curious about what I’ve said, run. Run to Precinct One and ask for Ch- Officer Judy Hopps.
She, Bogo and the rest of the officers should be able to keep you safe."

The notes were jotted down even faster, Dr. Lhasa tilting her head slightly at all the information.
"I'm... surprised by your extreme reversal. You used sheep in your plot, exclusively. You were
actively having them work toward a goal. Now... it feels like an extreme attempt at distancing, in
order to advance a position. I'm sure you realize it, and I see it too, which means it has a greater
chance of being a true shift. This is quite the fascinating mental exercise."

"I'd find it more interesting if it wasn't so important. I'm sorry, Doctor, but this is an important
issue. But... while you're here, I need to know, are our sessions absolutely confidential, with the
exception of clear and present danger and such matters?"

"Not even then in some cases, though I can take steps to prevent injury or other harm if possible
and I can be subpoenaed for my records. But in the main, yes. Anything that you say to me is
confidential."

Dawn sighed deeply, drawing on her inner strength to push forward with what she needed to do. "I
wan to explain what happened, and why I'm so different. But it's so unusual, so unbelievable that I
can't even begin to think you'll keep thinking I'm anything like normal. You'll think it's a deep
trick, that I'm trying something nefarious. I have to just go forward. I've been through a lot. A
lifetime. And I'm not being metaphorical. A lifetime of experience. I lived a whole life in the blink
of any eye. Let me ask you this before I go on. Did you ever hear campfire stories about the
creature in the wastes and wild?"

o o o

Being open and kind to Dr. Lhasa, as well as having her notes used as instructed, had afforded
Dawn a series of niceties. A comfortable chair, writing materials, posters that she wanted, information from the outside, even better food. She had gotten some new books as well but it was hard. Having been a voracious reader over a long, long life she had asked for one or two that hadn't yet been written and might never be.

She was enjoying one of the newer books that fit her broad criteria, a spicy story about a predator lady and a dashing prey man, and enjoying the comfortable chair she had been given. A lifetime surrounded by couples that had once been taboo had made her most comfortable in that crowd.

The book had been quite distracting, as the alarm for her cell went off and the door opened up, admitting Chief Bogo in his dress uniform. "Chief Bogo! This is a surprise. I wasn't expecting anyone until Dr. Lhasa's next visit."

"I've been personally debating this for a while, ever since the first note came from Dr. Lhasa, with all that paranoia about other sheep and doing things precisely in order. I almost didn't do it. I almost didn't contact the mammals you told me to, almost didn't look at the things you had me look at."

"But you did. You've always been a dedicated public servant and a good and reliable worker," Dawn chirped.

"Don't try to play me! You did it once already!" Bogo bellowed, looking both confused and somewhat contrite when he saw the look of real, primal fear and even betrayal on Dawn's face. "But yes, I did. I wasn't sure what was happening. But each new note did something. It exposed... things. Things I think we could have done without knowing, things that, frankly, hurt a lot of folk. But... hurt the right folks."

"I hope I arranged it right. I'm not working on full information. Just memories of memories. But you did it. You found the money trail, you worked through the relationships and the networks. You exposed corrupted judges, your own officers. You ousted my father, Cheviot McLiff, Shetland Shearly. You caught Woolter, Jesse, Wooly and Doug. You located Geta Felna, contacted Dr. Honeybadger, and Gerhilde Howlmeyer. And Councilmammal Seedsworth. Did it all work out? Even with more news from outside, I'm still limited."

Bogo looked sternly at Dawn, trying to read her look, which was filled with a kind of bright hope. She genuinely wanted to hear good news about things that either reversed everything she had done or gave help to those she couldn't have known or wouldn't have cared about. "What's your game, ma'am? Dr. Lhasa swore up and down you were reformed, and then some, never elaborating on what it meant. She said you were changed completely and everything you've done says so. But what are you trying to do? What is all this?"

Dawn took a moment to respond. A long moment. She looked deep in thought, the book slowly closing as she gave it careful consideration. "There is no such thing as perfection. It took a lifetime of pain and guilt to realize that one, simple fact. There are no perfect things. But some things are worth finding, worth creating, preserving and advancing. The acts of the Nighthowler incident caused a lot of pain. That broke so many things, things I couldn't even imagine. Repairing the things that were broken, making them better, is the most important thing I can do. Getting rid of monsters like my father and Doug is greatly important, but helping to fix what was destroyed by unthinking ways is a bit more important."

Bogo thought on the speech, catching onto a thread and looking up. "You never admitted to anything. In that whole thing you never said you did any of it."

"I should just take the responsibility. It belongs to me now. For all intents and purposes, as far as
anyone knows, I did it. It's mine to own now, no matter what," Dawn sighed.

"Dr. Lhasa said you'd talk like this, and begged me to try and understand, to listen to you. I'm listening, and you sound manipulative. But she said you might. That this isn't a game but I'd be compelled to treat it like one, and that you'd understand. I don't like being played for a fool but... so far you've only played a game that made me look powerful and competent. I need to know where this is leading."

"To a better Zootopia, I hope. To a kinder, more loving one, with freedom for all. It's getting there but needs more work, and I did my part, so far as I've been able to tell from the happiness Dr. Lhasa shows."

"Yes but..."

"Oh! And I didn't hear anything but I have to assume it happened because why wouldn't it? Congratulations to you and Rachel! You've a lovely couple, and you'll be a wonderful family through the years."

"How did you know that? You would know her name from the records but how...?" Bogo's reflexive anger was quelled again by the odd look of betrayal and fear Dawn manifested. "She said you'd make odd statements, talk about things you know that, for one reason or another, you shouldn't. But you do, and you can prove it in most cases."

"I always have to preface this, like I did with her. You can ask her about it. This is exactly what she'll tell you I asked about, in a sense. Were you ever a Ranger Scout? Or did you ever go on a lot of camping trips?"

"Well, I did like a lot of outdoor things, so I did have my time in the Ranger Scouts, and I went out to the woods to have a lot of campouts, yes. Why?"

"Did you ever tell stories about the thing that lurks, older than sun and shade and all we know? The creature of the waste and wild?" Dawn asked, with a low, dark seriousness.

It took Bogo a moment to respond, feeling quite stunned when Dawn turned so serious and almost grim. "Of course! Everyone loves a good story. Tricksters make for quality entertainment. Why?"

Dawn was silent for a while, drumming her hoof caps on her book. "She's real."

Bogo turned to the door in a flash. "If you're going to try and convince me you're a loon..."

"No one really understands why you put your brother-in-law in Precinct One," Dawn said suddenly, not bothering to look over. "They think of nepotism or some other kind of favoritism and the ones you hate most are the ones who think it was pity because he's somehow inept. But no, you have a very different reason." As she spoke her voice took on a greater and greater affectation of Bogo's accent, cadence and tone. "No one else could understand his capability. Everyone derided his figure and his attitude. His happiness is the greatest thing the sun ever shone on the earth. He makes the most dour and depressing job a joy. His competence in file searching and dispatch is unmatched. He has talent, he has skill, he's a good officer, sun and earth and every star in the sky he is better than most and more than anyone knows! He's never failed me, and never disappointed me. And I pity anyone that denies it to my face, because soon enough theirs will be a pink smear across my horns."

Bogo stopped cold, breath huffing, eyes wide. He turned slowly, looking on the diminutive sheep. "How did you ever know I would say anything like that? Even with all your scheming how did you
"You told me once, at a formal party. We were celebrating the opening of the Happytown precinct building, and I was trying to assure you that being police commissioner wouldn't hurt your brother-in-law. And you told me why you worried about him."

"Happytown precinct? Commissioner? You're talking nonsense. They're discussing Happytown projects and we do need a new commissioner after unseating Shearly but..."

"She doesn't have a name. But she insisted I call her Morning Star. I made a bargain with her, for her amusement. I lived a life that... while I had to feel a great deal of guilt and agony for, ultimately, no reason, was nice. It was different, because Leodore was different. I was different because I didn't give in to my bitterness and hatred. My father directed the Nighthowler plot, and I worked closely with everyone. I sat as the Mayor because Leodore went into quarantine for his protection. The only thing I thought of was him coming back. I stopped them, arrested them, and tried to make Zootopia a wonderful place. A beautiful place. And I like to think I succeeded. I died a very, very old ewe. And Morning Star brought me back to the instant she took me away. I knew you and Rachel for decades. I knew all of the ones I tried to help for so very, very long. They were my friends. Almost family. Outsiders stick together."

Bogo stood there a long while, looking almost through Dawn as the wheels turned in his head. "Tell me something..." He began.

"You daughter calls her uncle Oom Benjamin, not uncle, it's an endearing thing that always amused me. Gerhilde liked it too because we she grew up always calling mammals Herr and Frau and Fraulein. Steiner as well, a trait they both passed on to their own children. You really do love children, especially when talking about those of friends. Die appel val nie ver van die boom nie was your favorite thing to say every time someone had a baby and you were pontificating about what they'd be like."

"I only speak like that in private, with family and friends," Bogo huffed.  

"You're quite fond of a lot I can't really remember, but I do still recall Vinkel en koljander, die een is soos die ander because it rhymes, and you were always saying that when Rachel corrected an especially fine point that you didn't think needed refinement."

"I... you..." Bogo leaned against one of the walls, looking lost and confused. The change was real, and the explanation... it was impossible. There had to be another explanation. "I don't know how but you learned this somehow. Somehow... but you're doing good things. Somehow."

"I don't know the future, in case you're asking. I know my own past, a future that can't exist in this world, for many reasons. Some things can be similar, and I'm trying to get things to a happier place. I can help in many ways if only folks ask. I've changed, and I know it's impossible to believe, never mind believing the reason. And you're going to keep me in here forever, because, I told you, I inherited the guilt. The harm exists and someone must be punished. I'll accept it."

Bogo went quiet for a time, drumming his hooves on the wall. "I can't get you out of here. I want you to remember that. I can't get you out of here if all this is an incredible trick."

"I accept that. I lived a full, free life. I earned this. Even if the memories and experience of the old life were pulled out of my head and consumed to nothingness, it did everything and nothing changes that. This body gets what it gets."

Bogo nodded slowly and walked toward the cell door. "I still don't know what to think and I
probably never will. But if nothing else, I'm glad I came here. I can put that next note into action confidently."

"Next note... oh, yes. That one. I'll look forward to the outcome."

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Among the comfortable touches that had been added to her little stock, Dawn was most appreciative of the wall clock. Though little more than a plain circle of plastic it at least told her generally what time it was, allowing a better grasp of when to sleep and when to be active. It made time more real, and that eased her mind tremendously.

She was deep into her leisure time, which consisted mainly of writing, when the cell door alarm went off and drew her attention to two figures that had haunted decades of her life. Two figures that had been the source of her fear and uncertainty. Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde. She knew them. Some version of them.

She was all smiles, beckoning them in from her writing table. "Come on in. Sorry I can't offer you a chair. They only gave me one. You can sit on the lower bunk, they increased the padding last week and it's nice and soft."

The two officers, dressed in civilian clothes, warily entered the cell and slowly took a seat as indicated. "I want you to know I only came here because Chief Bogo told me I should. You're the reason we've been making so many high-profile arrests, rolling up parts of your organization, getting those that supported you. You're tying up the loose ends we didn't even know were out there. Why?" Judy asked.

"Because it's the right thing to do," Dawn answered, instantly. "There's no better reason to do something than it's the right thing to do. This will help everyone in Zootopia, help the city itself be happier and more free."

"You don't do things like that, you're nuts," Nick said, flatly.

"Yes, as you know me, that's the impression you'd get. I don't know that I can change that. Did Bogo tell you anything about why I'm different?" Dawn queried.

"He took me aside and explained as best he could for almost an hour. You really confused him. You're good at that. You fooled me, and I'll never forgive you for it," Judy huffed. "I don't believe you, not one bit."

"I didn't know what to expect out of this meeting. I wondered if you'd even come. Is there anything else you'd like to say? Want to ask me anything? I'll answer any questions you have," Dawn said, with a hopeful lilt.

Judy's look fell, almost melting from hard set anger to a confused kind of nonplussed stare. The last time she had seen Dawn the sheep had been bitter, hateful and personally abusive. This new figure was almost a completely new creature. "Well, I guess..."

"Carrots, she's playing us. She got Bogo all wrapped up again and now she wants to get out, or start a new network, or do something like that. It's a basic hustle," Nick said, loud enough that Dawn could hear him.

"You might assume. I know in this experience you never got Tiziri's help, but you did get Judy's... Officer Hopps' help. Hustling ice treats and feeling that the city had let you down because of the traditional treatment of foxes might stick with you for life. It always sort of did. I think I wrote you
off, but your being here with Chi- Officer Hopps makes her happy. I'm genuinely glad about that. Outsiders stick together."

Nick glared hotly at Dawn, slowly shaking his head. "You don't know me. You don't have the right to say anything."

"Nick... I may not be her biggest fan but she has something of a point. You really did feel like that. She's not wrong, just... I didn't know you were an Outsider. Not that it matters."

"No, it doesn't, I understand. I guess I got used to being around that... I feel no need to hold back so if I say something you don't understand, I'm sorry. I just like to ramble."

Nick shrugged his shoulders and Judy acted in kind. "I... nice to hear you've turned around. We've really done a lot of good things," Judy haltingly said.

"But we're not going to help you out of here, you can't hustle a hustler," Nick added.

"I didn't expect you to. You're always going to be guarded no matter what life you live, and that's fine. You keep her happy as possible. You have the chance to be together, and that kind of love is special. It's like my cousin, I know she's certainly together with her own fox, and she must be happy here too."

"Cousin? Fox? Here? What are you talking about?" Judy asked.

"You can ask Bogo about it. It wouldn't do much good for me to explain. But as for my cousin, my mother divorced my father because he was a horrible ram and drove her off. She moved in with a second or third cousin in Bunnyburrow. Agnes Stonewool, living with the Ovine family. My third or fourth cousin is Sharla. Lovely ewe. The black wool gene is strong, which is lovely. And she married that sweet Gideon. He's such a shy fellow, so retiring. The Solaterra Church was good for him. I'm happy for them both."

Nick pulled in protectively against Judy, but she very gently pushed him off. "Are you threatening one of my best friends and my family's business partner?"

"Wishing them well is a threat?" Dawn sighed and turned back to her writing desk. "Not everything that would be nice is possible. I understand. Thanks for coming anyway. That you did was very kind. Send my regards to everyone and tell Chief Bogo that I'm out of very simple useful suggestions. You've arrested, tried, convicted or ousted everyone of any import. Now it's all detail work. I'm glad I could help."

"I'll bet you are, crazy," Nick muttered. "Well, that went about how I expected. Let's go out and get some dinner, and go back to our apartment and just relax."

Judy looked back at Dawn, watching her mildly writing out something in a very fine, elaborate script. "If you really did change, thank you. If nothing else, you did help the city."

"It's all I want. Enjoy your relationship, it's a beautiful thing," Dawn said, a sad smile on her lips. Judy walked away, casting back many looks as the cell door slammed closed behind her.

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Much, much later on Dawn had grown comfortable with her confinement. In a sense it was a kind of injustice. Except for the body, she literally wasn't the same being that had done the crime for which she was being punished. But she was the next best thing, and someone had to be punished. It
was sensible in a way. It would be hard to sell others on it, even if she had done good for the city. At least she was no longer there forever.

She hadn't asked for any favors, hadn't wanted or expected any favors, but it had happened. Dr. Lhasa, Chief Bogo, apparently Judy. All had spoken on her behalf to a judge and the wheels of government, which she knew well, squeaked along to reach a new place. A parole hearing, something which she had not expected. It would happen at some time, but it wasn't what she was eager for. It was just a nice bonus, like bed padding and better food.

Life was moving along without her, but she didn't feel the sense of haunted hopelessness she was led to understand other prisoners felt. More of her life had been spent free than not, and with progressively more advanced technology all around her. Her sense of culture shock would be in the opposite direction, never mind all the small social touches that would doubtlessly be different.

Her restful consideration was interrupted by the buzz of her cell and the clanking of the door. In stepped a figure she hadn't seen in literal years. The youthful version, not the regal but aged version she had held as he slipped away. It took all her restraint and all her focus to stop herself from leaping up to embrace him. "Ah, L-leodore. Welcome."

"Thank you, Miss Bellwether," he said with a professional detachment. "I was told by several mammals that you might want to see me. Your change has been... well noted in the wider world. Speculation is running rampant, and my questions about what's going on have gotten some unusual answers. It's hard to believe, you know. After all you did. Especially all you did to me."

The words didn't come for a moment. Dawn tried to shift her brain while the clutch locked and the gears ground. It was the old Leodore, whom she never knew, and only had spotty memories of memories of. "Nothing I can say would help. This is a trap of the highest order. No apology gets a snide speech about ducking social responsibilities. An apology is not good enough, or insincere or just a social responsibility. I can't play that game. This is even worse than my other idea. I can't create what can't exist. You're you, and will only ever be that. I should feel hope but there's no reason. You had your influence, I saw the real you, and you're manipulative enough to trick any therapist or other professional trying to help you. You're nothing by my father with fangs. You have something to say to me, so say it. I don't want to deal with the emotions right now."

"I don't think you have me quite as sewn up as you assume," Leodore rumbled. "Did you ever think I have emotions surrounding you too?"

"I know you do. Pique. Petulance. Pride. I damaged your ego and made you look bad. It's all about how you were socially hurt. You don't know what real pain is like, you can't. Your father taught you to leverage power and predatory ferocity because your mother couldn't get home fast enough to keep him from poisoning your mind," Dawn bleated. She remembered this one. She had lived with his opposite for decades. This was the garbage dump where hers threw away all his vices and failures. She felt... something akin to hatred over the fact that he wore the face of her precious husband.

Leodore's carefully crafted speech fell apart at the strike of the piercing words. "My father? My... what? How?"

"He never would have let you feel emotions. He'd never help you say hello to Wanda or admit you're an Outsider and lover of artiodactyls. You probably never even bought the Yes Ewe Can mug because he rules your life to this day. You're a failure of a mammal, slick, composed and empty. I don't have time for you. I invited you here but your first words tell me everything I need to know. Go away. You're not Lambert. You're Mufasa Pride without the drinking problem. We all know what a bad lion is like."
Leodore didn't move. He couldn't. Secrets he had kept locked tight inside were flowing out of Dawn's lips like water. She was speaking of things like she knew them intimately, like he had told her. Her accusations stung oddly harshly, cutting him in ways that he couldn't explain. She knew everything. "I... you... Lambert was something I talked about in therapy. I did pay attention. I'm not some kind of cartoonish monster, I can change."

Dawn trembled a little bit. She knew to be wary of the Leodore in her midst. He was a master hustler, more than Nick Wilde. He was on a political level, a rarified level and range of skills. But... she had made others trust her when she had seemed to be manipulating them, after having done it. From the inside looking out it made sense because she knew how she had changed. Others had to trust her by her actions. She hadn't given him a chance to try. "Do you... do you have Dr. Lhasa? She's a wonderful therapist."

"I had a private therapist who was willing to come in to prison, Dr. Aurelius. He actually cut through my clever deflections. I paid him for results, but didn't expect him to be so effective. He was hard, unrelenting and approved by the parole board. I had to eventually agree that change was a good thing. I had to confront a lot of things that I had done wrong, face the ones I had hurt. Including... you..."

She winced, the tone seeming so sincere, so genuine. "We all... change in our own way and time... I guess I should have listened. It sounds strange to say but I have experience with change, with learning new things."

"I believe it. I've seen the things that Chief Bogo himself attributed to your information. Meadowlands is a whole new place. It's almost shocking. Almost as shocking as the things you know. I know that you had a vast network that is now gone. But there was no way for you to learn some of those things, unless you paid off Dr. Aurelius and that jackal would never sell his confidentiality for any price."

"Have you talked to anyone? Dr. Lhasa, Chief Bogo, or even Judy Hopps? I explained some things about why I changed. But it... it's hard for anyone to believe."

"I did talk to Chief Bogo, because I had to confirm you did all those things. He told me you might... say things. He didn't elaborate, I guess because he wanted me to be surprised."

Dawn smiled a bit and nodded. "I-I know certain details but... it's been so long the specifics are all confused. The timing is so fine in the grand scheme of things it's just hard to keep it straight. I know your father sent you on a, what you called, outdoor experience for rich city kids. You flipped a flaming marshmallow onto your tent and had to sleep under a tree for the whole outing. But did you ever go camping after that? Or just tell ghost stories?"

Leodore tilted his head, his disbelief starting to just fade away as the revelations became common, expected even. "Yes. I did all of that. It was how I could get toughened up."

"And did you ever hear the stories about the creature more ancient than all things, older than thinking beings, older than spirits and blessing and curses, the..."

"Creature of the waste and wild," Leodore finished, slowly nodding his head. "I know the stories. Out beyond the cities and civilization, in the heart of the wild-places and lonely places. Something is waiting there, ready for the daring to call on it."

"It will come if it wants. It will do what it wants. What she wants. She's so old, she's so powerful she can do anything she likes for her own amusement. She gets bored, and she can choose anything she want to see if it will amuse her. She called herself Morning Star, when she came to bask in my
naked hatred and fury," Dawn sighed, looking down at her hooves. "She made me an offer, a trick. She made me think I was getting an offer, but I was paying a price. The end I desired was the cost of my new gain."

There was a long silence as Leodore let the statement digest. "You want me to believe that a mythological creature came to you, did something and now you're changed?"

"She sent me to a world where Gwen... your mother came home first when you were home watching cartoons. She sat and watched *Lambert the Sheepish Lion* with you. And she taught you about how marginalization hurts minority groups, how being left out is unacceptable, how true strength is kindness and unity. She made you a Zootopian legend, who cared for others and wanted the best for it."

"You mentioned that already..." Leodore mumbled, looking away. "Dr. Aurelius got me down, pinned like a bug on a museum wall. He tore into my brain and showed me where it happened, when I chose to go after power, after fame and success, taking leonine vanity to the highest peak. It was father sitting down with me, telling me to roar and never stop, to butt heads, be aggressive, and never be seen as weak. Never."

"I wondered... then I found out how you turned out with a different influence. The things we did, together..." Dawn curled slightly, nakedly vulnerable. She was laying it out. Her words had no alternate interpretations. Not the way she said them. Was this betraying her husband of many decades? They were literally the same mammal down to the DNA, and to one pivotal moment in life.

"I'm bad at so much but reading mammals is one thing I had to be good at. And yes, that means I knew you were in distress. I was just too much of an egomaniac to care. I mistreated you and that was wrong of me. But... the way you said together... I didn't think that kind of tenderness was actually real. Again, I may be too self-involved but I've never seen that out in the world. How long...?"

"Decades. Wonderful, wonderful decades," Dawn sighed, curling up even more. "We had so many children. Grandchildren. Great-grandchildren. We were Mayor and Assistant Mayor several times, switching up who was what a few times. Two of our children were Mayor at different times, our family was respected, admired... but, that's not what you asked."

"It was, Leodore rumbled. "I think I wanted to know. I did look at you, and wonder sometimes... could I? Dr. Aurelius would call this self-diminishing or some kind of deflection but I know even in the haze of ego I knew I didn't have a chance. I burned that bridge when I first met you and treated you like a political chit. I had an opportunity and I squandered it, because of my ego."

"I... I think I can believe that you've changed, and maybe I can accept that you thought of me like that. I... I did to, which was how I latched on in the other life. But he... sorry, I shouldn't make comparisons. He was you but he wasn't you. He was naturally empathetic, warm, caring and selfless. He was the most tender mammal that ever lived. At least... I sure thought so," Dawn said with a smile, hugging herself tightly.

Leodore smiled, chuckling deeply. "I can tell. But I do want to know. You said he was a legend, that you made things amazing and had a great life. The least I could do is try to learn from... me, with a different influence."

"It's a lot of things and would need... well... changes that are more than just mental, in fact. My Lambert... Leodore was not quite like other lions. He wasn't quite as vain, wearing off-the-peg suits, keeping his mane only just styled, not being too flashy or forward. Humble, that's how I
would say. But he had a lot of internal, personal pride. He felt that he expressed himself best through personal activity. He ate reasonably healthy, a lot of cat grass and lean fish, he ate off my plate now and then, loved brassica and similar, and we both shared a love for Diet Dr. Pfeffia. And he loved to work out. I think his only concession to vanity was time in the gym, lifting weights and running on the treadmill. Things he covered with a suit... and showed to me. Showed me a lot..." Dawn trailed off with a breathy sigh, blush burning on her face, arms practically crushing her body.

Leodore nodded the whole time, crossing the cell slowly and ending standing, looming over Dawn. He dropped to his knees, putting himself as low and close to her as he could get. "I'm not your Lambert," he rumbled deeply, looking with a stern gaze. His look softened as he hovered a paw over her shoulder, wondering if he should go on or not. "But... I think... I can learn..."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes

Die appel val nie ver van die boom nie- Afrikaans for "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree", something Bogo probably thinks. Being something of a stickler and an uptight sort he probably believes in a certain degree of familial immutability, though he's open to being convinced, such as with Dawn's turnaround.

Vinkel en koljander, die een is soos die ander- An Afrikaans saying "Fennel and coriander, the one is like the other", the equivalent of "Six of one, half dozen of the other." Again, given that Bogo can be stubborn and gruff, if he doesn't want to bother about a fine point this could well be a stock "line" to wave it off, with an air of joking.

Thank you to all my wonderful readers for coming on this long, strange journey with me. Did you know, I intended this to be over by about the first Happytown debate? There wasn't going to be a Nighthowler plot, and Dawn was also going to choose to leave after the birth of her first child, leaving Leodore a single parent while she wallowed in failure and broken-spirited sorrow and contrition. Not exactly the best thing. So, I changed it up. And for the better, I think. Again, thank you all, and I hope you enjoyed what I made.

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