Derailment

by Zanrok

Summary

Judy and Nick had a plan to deal with Bellwether, it was a good plan, a great plan, it even worked. But even the best plans can't account for everything, and sometimes one little unexpected event can derail the best of plans and send them off in directions no one ever anticipated. Now Judy and Nick have to learn to live with the aftermath and most terrifying of all each other.

Notes

**Transferring this work over from FanFiction.net. So I'll update a few chapters every day.**
Prelude - Aftermath

Chapter Notes

Warning: If you received a shipment of a box claiming to be full of funnies. DO NOT OPEN. IT’S A TRAP!

1st - I am a READER not a WRITER. Based on that, this being anything more than the utter dregs of the trashbin means it's better than I expected. 2nd – I did not intend to write this, it sort of just fell out of my ear and splattered on my keyboard when I was banging my head against a horribly long report. 3rd – I am a Grinch with the heart the size of a shriveled raisin. I may have been diagnosed with a terminal case of romanticism but that is beside the point, oh and I'm crabby without my coffee.

So, read at your own peril

M Rating just to be safe- I seriously doubt there will be lemons, lemon zest – maybe

New Update to Intro: Well for anyone new, I'm now in remedial 'writing for dummies'. Some are claiming the writing is getting better as you read further, but no guarantees.

Disclaimer: I do not own Zootopia. That DVD IS NOT MINE!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Judy suspected that her rational mind was in some sort of state of shock as she walked down the street, leaning a bit on Nick for support, due to the stitches in her leg.

They had just made their escape from the media circus at Zootopia Central Hospital due to what had now been dubbed by the media 'The Nighthowler Conspiracy'. Could your world really shift so radically in just 48 hours, was it even possible? Judy knew she wasn't dreaming, she'd checked just to be sure. She had though that the two days with Nick during the savage mammals case had been life changing, but that was nothing next to everything they had just gone through.

Judy looked at the red furred paw wrapped around her waist steadying her as they slowly walked down the nearly deserted side street and couldn't help but lean in a bit more into Nick's side and breath in his scent as the storm of emotions inside her flared up again. She had always been emotional even for a bunny, it was something she had learned to use as a strength, what kept her going when everyone said she couldn't. But she also admitted to herself that she sometimes acted on her emotions before her brain could catch up to what she was doing. And to top it all off she was trying to cope with feelings that she had never had to deal with before, at least not till she had meet a certain fox.

But their quiet walk after the near constant flood of events was giving her mind a chance to think beyond 'survive past the next moment' and really consider everything she, no they had done. Her mind was labeling the actions with a long list of terms that only started with reckless, audacious, and impulsive. The consequences were just starting to come into focus and she wasn't sure whether she wanted to jump for joy or find some deep dark hole to hide in.

Judy peeked up at Nick, and could feel her ears heat up again. He still had his casual trademark grin
on, like this was any other normal boring day, but she could hear how his heart sped up when he glaced down at her and feel how his arm tightened ever so slightly holding her close to his side.

There were so many uncertainties in their futures now, so much she and nick still had to share and learn about each other. If she could go back and redo the last 48 hours would she still make the same choices? Her mind was still picking up speed, thinking over and analyzing past events and future possibilities, but the content happy feeling coming from holding onto the mammal next to her sealed the decision for her.

Yes, yes she would do it all over again.

A grumbling, growling noise came from Nick's stomach and Judy couldn't help but laugh at the sheepish expression he gave at her upraised eyebrow.

"So Nick, I know this might be a little late considering everything earlier today." She gestured with her free paw back in the direction of the hospital. "But do you want to catch a bite to eat, you know, sort of like a first date?"

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks to gonekrazy3000(FanFiction.net) for sending me a list of typos I missed here. The rest of you now get a smoother intro thanks to those helping to proof read.
Chapter 1 - Not Every Hustle Goes According to Plan

Chapter Notes

(Fanfiction.net original comment) Ok, I have to admit seeing this get a bunch of hits from the US and Europe before I could even link in the first chapter was kinda cool. Morning to you all across the pond, Viva La WildeHopps!

Just a Note: If you haven't see the movie, don't expect this to make much sense. But if you haven't seen the movie what are you doing here anyway?

Disclaimer: This story is written under duress, so I am not liable! PS If anyone can help me I have been abducted by pirates from the SS Whildehopps. They've chained me to a desk and won't give me coffee unless I write more.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"It's a hustle sweetheart"

Judy couldn't ever remember feeling so smugly satisfied as she watched the realization wash over Bellwethers face as she stood there poised against Nick holding out her carrot pen.

So this is why he's always wearing that grin

Their plan couldn't have worked out better. It looked like half of the available officers of precinct 1 had responded to the rogue train car crash at the museum just in time to hear the recording. Bellwether had turned around to see all the police mammals behind her with a look of shock on her face.

Judy's smugness ratcheted up another notch or two thinking about what would happen, Bellwether would have to drop the gun and surrender. Bogo seeing what had happened might give her a second change and she could get her job as a police officer back. And most importantly she'd get the chance to return Nicks application and ask if he still wanted to be her partner.

And that's when it all fell apart.

Bellwether didn't drop the gun. She didn't surrender.

Judy froze. Instead of what Judy had expected, Bellwether's shocked expression changed to one of rage and she let out a snarl that would have done a wolverine proud. Judy saw Bellwether's free hand shoot from her pocket to the back of the gun and heard the snick of the ammunition chamber close. The officers were already moving but not fast enough.

Judy watched in shock as Bellwether shot Fangmeyer and McHorn, little splotches of blue appearing on their faces, as she turned to face Judy and Nick.

The world seemed to slow to a near stop. Nick was shouting something; he had wrapped his arms around her and was throwing himself to the side. Bogo had charged Bellwether, hoof outstretched to grab the gun. It felt like she and Nick were moving through molasses; Bogo's hoof was only inches away from the gun.
The gun stopped, leveled at her. Judy had never seen so much hate on a mammal's face before.

The gun fired.

Time seemed to flip into fast forward as the world erupted into pandemonium.

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Bogo’s hoof knocked the gun from Bellwether's hand a fraction of a second too late. He grabbed the sheep lifting her off the ground by the cuff of her shirt when he heard an angry bleating from the side. One of the rams in a stolen police uniform was charging him. Bogo barely had enough time to throw his head down to meet the charge. A loud crack resounded through the atrium as Bogos horns clashed with the rams. The ram stumbled back a few steps, eyes crossing and fell to the floor out cold.

"Higgens, secure bellwether and the ram!" Bogo bellowed shoving the lamb into the hippo's hands, as he turned to the rest of his officers. Francine was using her trunk to hold down the other ram as she cuffed him but Fangmeyer and McHorn were on the ground in what appeared to be seizures. Grizzolie was radioing for medical assistance while trying to prevent Fangmeyer from thrashing around. The tiger stopped moving suddenly only to let out a blood curdling roar and then send Grizzolie careening across the floor. Bogo made it to Grizzolie in mere moments. As he helped the officer back up he noticed the bloody claw marks on the bears front and side.

"Not as bad as it looks, Chief” Grizzolie grumbled and winced.

Looking back Bogo saw McHorn on all fours eyes narrowed at the two officers, pawing the ground and snorting. It took Bogo only a moment to size up the situation and realize exactly what Bellwether had meant by 'darting all the predators' in the snippet of the recording they'd heard coming in.

"Those darts are making them go savage" Bogo shouted, "Francine, restrain McHorn. Grizzolie and I will get Fangmeyer." The Chief started reaching for his tranq pistol when his eyes widen as he remembered the two mammals Bellwether had been aiming at right before he got to her.

"Higgins! Get to-" His shout was cut off as he was slammed to the ground by Fangmeyer.

The next few minutes were complete chaos. Grizzolie went down with a torn up arm having saved Bogo when Fangmeyer had nearly gotten to the chiefs neck. McHorn had charged the grappling group despite the darts sticking out of his uniform, horn down, only to be intercepted by a trumpeting Francine when she tackled him from the side and the two went tumbling over the edge into the display pit, nearly taking Higgins with them. There were panic shouts, roars and bellows. Bogo thought he heard Hopps shouting followed by a shrieking scream from the pit after Francine and McHorn slammed into the floor.

By the time that help arrived and the scene was starting to come under some semblance of control, no one could find the bunny or the fox.

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Nick had hustles go wrong before. He thought one of his best traits was his ability to either fast talk his way out of nearly any situation and failing that his ability to slick his way out from whatever catastrophe was about to descend on him. But this time was different; He'd been in situations nearly as bad before but it had always been him, his safety on the line. Now watching bellwether turn toward them with a look that promised to take them with her if she was going down, he was scared, very scared, more scared then he'd ever been in his life. And he wasn't scared for himself.
He moved more out of instinct than anything else, snatching the bunny at his side and hurling them out of the Bellwether's aim.

The gun fired

*Never let them see they get to you.*

The problem was that the dumb bunny had gotten to him. She had gotten under his skin from the moment he had met her. At first it was only in annoyance at her too upbeat attitude, and later at when she'd cornered him with that stupid recording. But she had gotten to him in more ways than just that. Her determination, her ability to give as good as she got, her unstoppable stupidly optimistic outlook, the way she *cared*. It had struck a cord deep inside him, resonating with something that he had given up on long ago. He had taken all those feelings and emotions and tried to lock them back away in some deep dark recess of himself where he could forget that they existed. But they had refused to stay there, no matter how hard he tried they started slipping out and around his defense. Finnick had nailed it all those weeks ago, she had gotten him *good*.

He heard the 'puff' sound of the Bellwether's gun as it discharged. Heard the sound of his own shout, of the sound of the police chief charging to stop Bellwether.

Back on the skytram station watching as the police chief was tearing apart her dreams and hopes, when she was about to learn the same lesson he had learned all those years ago, that dreams don't come true, that no matter how much you cared or tried it didn't matter, he wanted to feel smug. To be able to go and rub it in her face. To be able to say *I told you so*. But he hadn't felt smug, or happy, or vindicated. He had felt angry. And that is when it started happening. Something snapped, something inside him started to break. And emotions and feelings he had repressed, that he had promised that he would never let himself feel started pouring out. Like a leaky dam that had finally broken, they crashed through him in a flood. He would not stand there and watch as someone's dreams were smashed, not when they tried so hard, not when they cared so much. He wouldn't, he could not let that happen. Not to her. By the time he had started to get his emotions under control again, to put his mask back on, he had already shared with her a story he had never shared with anyone else. He hadn't known what to do with the tumbling swirling tsunami crashing inside of himself, he didn't know how to handle it, how to decipher the mess. So he threw up some makeshift levies to hold back the rising tide to give himself some time to try and sort through it.

Nick felt something thwack against his elbow right before he slammed into the floor still clutching Judy.

After the skytram there had been the incident at the Cliffside Asylum and their near fatal plunge over the falls. When he had broken the surface he had been terrified. Not from the escape but because he couldn't find Judy. The building dread as he had called for her was like an echo of the pain he felt losing his father, and a foreshadowing of what he was feeling now. It had been while he held onto her after they had made it to shore, while Judy called for backup, that he realized he was unwilling to let her go. A sneaking suspicion of what might be buried in that emotional storm he was just barely holding back started to occur to him. But he couldn't accept it, the idea was absurd, outrageous, impossible. It was something that could only lead to more pain.

Nick could feel a numbness followed by a lancing pain start to spread from the point on his elbow.

Pain. He had still been grappling with just the idea, the possibility of what he might be feeling at the press conference. When what she had said hit him like a knife to the heart. It had hurt, hurt so much because if that was what she believed then she would never accept him as a friend, let alone anything more. He would always be just a fox, a sneaking, conniving, untrustworthy fox that she would always have to watch out for; that she would always need something like foxaway pepper spray to
protect herself from. It hurt, and he lashed out from the pain. He had run away before it could get worse. But the pain from that fight didn't go away. He had heard her calling after him as he left. And the pain only grew and deep down he knew it was not only what she had said but how he'd responded. It had taken him days to come to terms with that and then more days before he scrounged up the courage to try and find her, to try to fix the bridge he'd burned. But by then she was gone and his world had taken on a new type of pain. A pain so deep that he was numb to the world. He had kept functioning, barely, on autopilot, his mask firmly in place because he had nothing else. That time it wasn't someone else's fault.

The glance at his elbow showed a blue stain and just confirmed what he already knew. He looked back and saw that Judy's gaze had followed his. Her purple eyes going wide in fear as she stared at his elbow.

"Judy, quick you have to get away from me!" Nick said as he tried to push her away. But he didn't expect her reaction.

"No! Not this time" she nearly screamed. She grabbed his arm with surprising force and tearing off the sleeve of his shirt tried to use it to wipe away the blue stain from his elbow.

"Judy! Please, It's not safe!" Nick rasped trying to extract his arm and failing. His body was already starting to shake.

"I'm not losing you again Nick!" she abandoned the futile effort and grabbed him hard around the waist holding him as tears started soaking into his shirt.

Nick couldn't even speak at this point let alone try to push her off of him. His muscles where cramping and twitching as waves of pain rolled through him. He heard an involuntary growl slip past his clenched jaw and Judy just squeezed him tighter.

Nick knew he needed to do something, anything, but he could barely think. His vision was starting to tinge red. Scattered memories were mixing with his increasingly scattered thoughts. Memories of being bullied, memories of his father, memories of his mother, memories under a certain bridge as he held a crying Judy to his chest. Memories of a promise he'd made at that moment to himself.

With a trumpeting bellow a policed uniformed elephant struggling with a rhino in police gear came hurtling over the corner of the pit where Nick and Judy lay, and slammed into the ground only feet away from them. Their decent snapped some of the fake foliage of the display pit, and one segment lashed across his arm and chest. Nick felt Judy's hold loosen as she slumped across him.

Nicks vision flared red and the last thing he could remember was hearing a wailing shriek leave his throat.

Chapter End Notes

Kudos to gonekrazy3000(Fanfiction.net) for taking the time to help find typos.
Ok sort of getting the hang of AO3 now,

(Fanfiction.net orginal comment)Ok, now if I can just get someone from one of the Antarctic research stations to view this story I will have successfully spread my drivel across all seven continents. I'm not sure if this is wickedly cool or downright terrifying.

To the reviewers:

(Fanfiction.net)Lunar Silver - (insert dramatic closing scene music) Find out next time Ooonn Derailed!!, opps, nope wait here it is :)

(Fanfiction.net)gonekrazy3000 - ok this is more of a genie thing than grinch but lets give it a try, Alacazam! -here you go, chapter 2. No refunds or call backsies.

(Fanfiction.net)Arnasyll - Correct capitalization regarding Proper and Normative nouns and Apostrophe usage pertaining to correct possessive tense verse pluralization? Dear God Man, (author quickly turns his head and spits over his left shoulder three times) Do you want to have my third grade english teacher track me down and torture me, Again?! Why do you think I have a heart the size of a shriveled raisin? anyways instead of Bellwether's, bellwethers could be referring to a mini-me army of angry little sheep, heh talk about a dystopia. (author now has coffee) In all seriousness thanks for pointing that out and for your review.

Disclaimer: I do not own Zootopia. I would not, could not if I tried.

Judy was a morning bunny, she usually had no problems waking up. But right now, her thoughts were slow and jumbled, rising and dipping in and out of the edge of consciousness. For a while she was content to just relax and let her mind drift. She imagined she was floating on a warm fuzzy cloud drifting through the meadows back at the farm where she'd grown up on. The smell from meadow was earthy and exotic and wrapped around her like a comforting blanket, it made her think of wild flowers and the earth in a freshly tilled field. She felt like she was at home in a way that her old apartment at the Grand Pangolin had never quite achieved nor her childhood house had felt like in years. Her cloud settled in the meadow surrounded by a wall of warm red grass. She snuggled into it, letting out a contented sigh, and the warm wall of red grass seemed to rumble lightly in a happy sort of way as it snuggled back around her. The scent from the meadow grass was stronger so close to it, but it just made her feel more at home. She felt safe and happy, and wished all her dreams could be like this.

Judy didn't know how long she stayed there like that in her happy little meadow. But eventually a stray thought, almost like a butterfly, made its way into her mind. She didn't remember red grass in any of the meadows back at the farm. She pondered this for a while as the wall of red grass around her continued to wave ever so slightly in the breeze, back and forth, back and forth. Judy liked her red grass, so why should it make any difference? But the thought/butterfly kept nagging her landing on her nose and making it twitch. She tried to shoo the butterfly away with her paw but all this did
was make the grass's rhythmic swaying shift before it rumbled happily again. Another butterfly joined the first. Since when did grass rumble? But this time she was determined to ignore the butterfly. Rumbly grass was clearly better than regular grass anyway. And rumbly red grass was clearly betterer. She just huffed and snuggled close into it smelling the homey scent it gave off. One of the grass stalks leaned down brushed against her muzzle. The feeling made her almost giddy inside and she started to purr lightly. It must be morning in the meadow she though because the grass still had dew on it. The grass stalk kept at it for a while brushing over her cheeks and neck and between her ears, Judy happily purring the whole time. It eventually stopped and the grass snuggled closer around her again with one last happy rumble and resumed its steady swaying, back and forth, back and forth. Judy smiled, red rumble grass was certainly betterer than regular grass but that one red grass stalk was the bestest of them all. As her purring faded away she snuggled back into the grass's embrace, but this time as she shifted her hindpaw she felt a light twinge of pain.

That she didn't like. Why did her leg have to hurt anyway? She was warm and happy surrounded by her rumbly red grass, but now that she'd noticed the pain, the light throbbing wouldn't go away. And now she could feel a sore bump on the side of her head. Where had those injuries come from? She tried to focus, but that was a lot harder than it should have been.

She remembered the press conference after the savage mammals case, and how she'd destroyed her budding friendship with Nick. She'd been pressured for an answer she didn't know and desperate for something to say had ended up spouting old stereotypes she'd learned growing up as a kit. She'd broken the city with that press conference, but to her the worst part had been losing Nick.

The three months afterwards had been the most miserable in her life. She had hoped that with time the hurt would go away but it didn't. She had found herself thinking back to her time with Nick over and over again. He had been a real jerk when she had first meet him, but the more time she had spent around him the more she realized it was just a front; he put up a mask that hid someone else from the world. And right when her world, her dreams seemed to be crashing down around her as Bogo was about to take her badge, the fox behind the mask had stepped out and stood up for her. Nick had nothing to gain and everything to lose by doing that. He threw away his chance to prove that everything he had said was right, to get out of the agreement she'd hustled him into, and instead he threw his lot in with her on a hopeless bet with the deck stacked against them. No one had ever done that for her before. Not her friends not even her family. The mammals that hadn't mocked her for her dreams might cede grudging respect, and those closest to her were even proud for what she had accomplished but no one had supported her let alone joined her. And then on the skytram he had shown her a deeper glimpse into who he really was. Judy new that was when Nick had become her friend, a true friend. That she slowly came to realize months later was when she had started falling for Nicholas Wilde.

With that crack in his mask everything had changed. For the rest of the case she could catch glimpses of the real Nick, her Nick. The hint of a real smile here, a joke he shared with her there, and every step of the way he was by her side, watching her back. She remembered how after going over the falls he had helped her to shore and held her close to keep away the cold until the police had responded. She had been so happy then. They had beaten the odds. The two of them, together. She had felt like anything was possible. And she had felt so comfortable and safe being held in his arms, being held by someone she knew she could completely trust.

Another butterfly of a thought crossed her mind but she ignored it, she might not be thinking completely clearly but the memories were coming clearer and faster.

By the time Gideon and her parents had given her the clue she and the ZPD had been missing she had already realized what the storm of emotions mixed in with the guilt was. She didn't have the foggiest idea of what to do about it or even how to handle it but she had accepted that she loved that
dumb stupid sly fox. The Fox she had only just started to get to know, the fox she couldn't find, the fox that certainly hated her, the fox in the city she'd broken, the fox that a stupid country bumpkin bunny had fallen for. She knew that he would almost certainly never feel the same way, interspecies relationships between close species were rare let alone something like a fox and a bunny; That was more like something out of a fairytale or an old historical fable like Beauty and the Beast or Helen of Troy. With very few exceptions, mammals from different species just didn't become attracted to each other. There were just too many differences, from the older hold over traits such as what one species found as attractive from looks to scents, to the different cultures of the individual species; even the legal requirements for marriage and mates were not the same between species. But even if he never felt the same way, she at least wanted him back as her friend, to go back with him and fix what she had broken. Maybe if she was lucky they could even eventually be partners at the ZPD. That she was sure, she could live with. That is exactly what she had set out to do.

And surprisingly everything had worked out just as she'd hoped it would, better actually. Not only had she gotten lucky finding Finnick but when she found Nick and apologized he hadn't just agreed to help her, he'd taken her back just as if he had been waiting for her, wishing for her to come back. She had never felt so happy as when Nick was holding her after the apology, she'd almost slipped up then; she had wanted so much to lean up and kiss him, she had almost done it, actually started to, but in doing so had moved her hindpaw back onto his tail which had wrapped around them. But after that minor hiccup, everything started happening so fast. They were back together working even better than they had before, and they had hit one lucky break after another. All the way up until they meet Bellwether in the museum.

One of the little butterflies in her dream stopped pestering her and fluttered away.

Her leg. She had been so clumsy going around the corner, not watching where she was running, and had ran right into the mammoth tusk edge, leaving a long gash on her leg. It hadn't been life threatening but there had been no way she was going to be able to escape. She had wanted Nick to take the gun case and run. It was the smart thing to do, the right thing to do. But he had refused to leave her. She could see past the front he had put up, clearly see the fear behind the mask, how to hide his fear he kept joking as he bound her leg. But despite his fear, despite running being the best option, he had chosen again to stick with her, to stay at her side.

The feeling remembering that was indescribable. A mix of giddy joy and happiness unlike anything she had ever known. A love and a longing to find Nick, her Nick and stay by his side like he had stayed by hers. Forget rumblly red grass, she wanted her fox, she needed her fox. She didn't care what others thought, she would wake up from this silly dream, she would find Nick, and even if he didn't feel the same way she did, she would always be there for him. She was his bunny after all.

The rest of the butterflies started stirring and flying away.

Memories started flooding back faster and faster. The plan they'd come up with, being knocked into the display pit, the blueberry hitting Nick, Bellwether's confession, their fake savage ploy, The ZPD arriving, the…

Judy went stiff, her mind was still cloudy but she remembered. The hustle had worked, but it all came apart at the end. Bellwether hadn't given up and Nick got hit with the Nighthowler pellet, the real pellet not a blueberry. She had been determined to save him, she didn't know how, she'd hoped maybe with so little on him and on an appendage, it might be slower, that the other officers could get there in time to help her. The one thing she knew for certain was that she was not going to leave him, not again, not ever. She remembered holding him as his bigger frame shook, crying into his shirt, hearing the roars and shouts above them and an earthshaking crash behind them before something hit her and everything went hazy.
She could only remember bits and pieces after that. The shrieking sound like something from the stories told around campfires when her siblings were trying to scare each other with wild tales of rabid foxes. The feeling of something sharp but gentle lifting her by the scruff of the neck. A confusing set of images of a rhino and an elephant wrestling against the pits wall, as she seemed to move from the ground onto their backs and out of the pit. A few scattered images and sounds of streets passing by, cars blaring their horns and mammals screaming about a savage fox and a dead bunny, followed by dirty back alleys and the fading noise of the city center before everything went dark.

Judy opened her eyes, breathing hard, only to have the red grass replaced by red fur. The meadow smell crystallized into a scent she knew, the strong musk of a male fox, her fox. She put out a shaking paw not sure through the muddy feeling in her head if this was real or just another dream. But the fur was warm as she moved her paw through it. She could feel the slow steady in and out of rhythmic breaths. The red fur changed to creamy white as she brought her paw down between where she lay snuggled up to the mass. She looked to the side and saw a dark red paw draped over her holding her tight. She traced the arm back to a shoulder and to the side of a red furred neck where she'd been nuzzling, up to a familiar fox's face, the end of his sleeping muzzle covered by the tip of the tail that was wrapped around her. And Judy began to cry. She could feel the fox stir as she clutched at his chest and cried. She had been so afraid that she would lose him, that one of them would end up dead. That she would not even get the chance to tell her fox how she felt. All the emotions from the past months boiled up inside of her and mixed with the utter relief after having made it through Bellwether's attack with both of them still alive.

Judy hiccupped and gave a startled laugh as a fox's muzzle came into her tear filled view and booped her on the nose. As her crying slowed down the fox proceeded to lick the remaining tears off of her cheeks. Judy couldn't hold down her giggles as the somewhat rough tongue lapped at her.

"Nick! EEww! You're slobbering all over me!" she barely managed to say between fits of giggles. When it was over and Judy had recovered from her fit of giggles she looked up into the fox's face. Nick lacked his usual grin but Judy swore she could see a smile at the corners of his mouth, but what caught her attention was his eyes. They weren't the normal emerald green eyes she was used too. The softness was gone, there wasn't a hint of the joking hustler behind them. They were the eyes of a predator, a wild predator, a savage predator.

Judy considered this for a second through the still muddy workings of her thoughts.

She lowered her head back down into Nick's neck, this time in the creamy white fur under his muzzle and started to giggle. again.

"The savage fox did catch the bunny then" she squeaked, and proceeded into another fit of giggles.

The situation was just too ridiculous and her head was still muzzy and her thoughts were all over the place, and she just couldn't give the situation the seriousness she knew it probably deserved.

Oh, I so have a concussion she thought

Which set off another giggle fit.

The fox lowered his head between her ears and let out a huff as Judy continued to giggle against him. She wrapped her arms around him and dug her paws into his fluffy fur, and felt his arms tighten around her in response. She just couldn't care. They were alive and had made it through in one piece, more or less. She giggled again. And she was happy and in the arms of the fox she loved. She had dreamed of being able to run her paws through his fur. But this was better than any dream she'd ever had.
Fur. The thought stuck in her mind for a second, as her paws kept roaming through his cream and russet colored coat.

"Nick?" she asked knowing that she wouldn't get a response "Where are your clothes?" This time she felt her ears blush hot as another giggle escaped. She knew she probably shouldn't, but she couldn't help herself. She looked down, and her ears went from blushing to burning. She still had her torn up jeans and plaid shirt on but her body was pressed into Nicks, who was completely 'in the fur', every detail visible. She could feel a heat building, accompanied by a longing she'd never had for another mammal before.

"I might have to check that this isn't a dream again" Judy mumbled behind a lopsided grin as she looked back up. She could see the foxes nose twitch and his ear stand up. The sight made her blush all the harder and the heat grow in intensity. The scent of fox, male fox, her fox was all around her. She couldn't help but breath it in with every breath. And it was like a bellows stoking a furnace. He was in her arms and holding her. She knew that Nick wasn't in his right state of mind, she knew she probably wasn't thinking clearly either. Her emotions, her need was boiling over. Three miserable months separated from her fox and then she'd almost lost him again.

Again.

Never again.

She had moved before she was aware of it. She was rubbing her chin from his ears to his nose, marking him.

Never again.

She was rubbing her chin along the side of his muzzle and down his neck. Nick had moved after a surprised moment and was now rubbing his long muzzle against hers, over her head and along her ears, marking her in return. The feeling made the inferno in Judy flare.

Mine.

She could feel a rumble start in her fox's chest and it only increased her frenzy to drive her scent into him. To claim him. Nick was now marking her neck, he had rolled over her and know stood above her on all four paws. His marking was devolving into nuzzling and nips against her neck and shoulder. The sensations sent an arc of lightning down her spine that exploded in the inferno raging inside her and what ever restrain she still had fell away.

Judy never quite figured out how her clothes left her, all she could remember was the storm of feelings and sensations. The feel of a larger body pressed against hers, the soft tug as his fur ran through hers. One heat meeting another. The white hot explosion of pleasure as two bodies meshed. His growls and yips, her moans and shouts. Gentle bites and frantic paws. A building pace till a yipping shriek and a hot flood and growing pressure sent her mind over into a white bliss and she joined her voice to his.

When her vision started returning, she could fell the fox lowering himself next to her and wrapping her up in his arms and legs and tail. He buried his snout in the crook of her shoulder and neck, biting softly and slowly panting. She could still feel him as the rolling waves of pleasure ebbed away, an unexpected and almost but not quite painful pressure holding them together. She knew that she had been rash, had acted without thinking, that there was an avalanche of repercussions awaiting for her actions, but she simply couldn't find the effort in her foggy but happy mind to care. She held onto Nick and nuzzled at his shoulder, a contented sigh leaving her. Her fox had his bunny and that's all she cared about for now.
But unfortunately, that peaceful state lasted only a few moments longer. She felt the hackles on the fox lift and he released her shoulder to let out a growl. Not a happy low rumbly growl. No this was near a full on snarl of a growl, one that promised violence.

"HOPPS!" She heard a shout from nearby, and her minds gears ground together for a moment before they clicked.

"Chief Bogo? Is.." Her sentence was cut off as a drat passed through the fluff edge of the tail wrapped around her and hit her in the shoulder.

The fox screamed another shriek rolling over to stand crouched above her. But her vision and thoughts where already floating away once again. As the encroaching darkness took her she could hear a curse and the puff of a dart pistol, and then nothing else at all.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't realize this until what (if your generous) could be called my proofreading attempt. But Freud would probably have a field day with the beginning of this chapter. (snicker) For some reason I find this far funnier than it should be, I blame a lack of coffee.

Oh and a special callout to (Fanfiction.net)Fox in the hen house, Thanks. If you haven't read his story you probably should, its better than this.

(Fanfiction.net)gonekrazy3000 has just gone crazy with a dictionary on this chapter. Its thanks to him that I might not have to fear the wrath of my third grade english teacher. Thanks, you just saved me from the worst nightmare ever.
"NICK!" Judy yelled as she sat bolt upright, eyes wide, frantically looking around. White bed sheets, light beige walls, medical equipment and monitors, another bed with a red furred form in it. Her heart skipped a beat then started to return to a more normal pace. Judy started breathing but before she could do anything else her mind finally registered another important detail.

"Ow, Ow, Ow, ow" She moaned grabbing the side of her head in a futile attempt to stem the raging headache. Judy sat there for a moment rubbing her paws against her temples, before the door swung open and a young antelope in a nurse's uniform rushed in.

"Doctor Winters said that you'd probably have some head pain when you woke up, she said between the concussion, dehydration, Tranq dart, physical exertion." The antelope definitely blushed this time as she continued on in one long breath, "and the minor blood loss from your leg that she wouldn't want to be you when you woke up," The nurse handed Judy a small white paper cup with two pills and a bottle of water as she continued, "Said you were to take these when you woke up, nothing too strong, just aspirin, Doctor Winters didn't want to have you take anything stronger till she got a chance to check on you herself, Oh! I'm supposed to go get her! Hang on she'll be right over, don't you worry."

Before Judy could do more than grab hold of the pills and bottle placed in her paws the antelope had already rushed out of the room. She blinked a few times before registering what she held and swallowed the two pills. She drained the water bottle in one go then laid back down with her ears over her eyes waiting for the pain in her head to recede.

After a few minutes she though she felt the headache start to ease, and glanced over at the other bed were Nick lay on his back, muzzle partly open as he breathed. The bed covers were pulled up half way over the hospital gown he wore; Judy realized that instead of her farm clothes she was wearing
Judy's gaze wandered back over to the fox roaming up and down his frame before snapping back to his arm. She felt a flare of anger when she realized that Nick's arm was handcuffed to the bed railing. Why was he handcuffed, he hadn't done anything wrong, he'd helped her expose Bellwether's plot, he'd been hit by the Nighthowler pellet and then..." Judy felt her whole face flush and let out a startled 'Meep' as she remembered the rest of what happened. I can't believe we... we... another part of her brain seemed to pipe up, not that you're complaining, you wanted him after all. Judy smacked her head, and let out a groan as her headache flared at the impact. It was her fault though, concussion or not she had started it, and she hadn't just jumped Nick, she'd marked him. Judy Hopps, probably the only bunny in Bunnyburrow who had never had so much as a fling let alone a real boyfriend, had marked and mated her best friend out of the blue, her best friend who wasn't even in his right mind at the time, who by all accounts should have torn her to pieces under the influence of the Nighthowler serum not marked her back and mated with her. Wait, the handcuffs, he couldn't still be under the effects of the Nighthowler could he? The opening door cut off her whirling thoughts, and an older petite gray wolf wearing a doctor's coat stepped in.

Judy started speaking before she even realized it, "Doctor! Why is Nick handcuffed?! Is he alright? He isn't -"

The wolf cut her off with chuckle as she interrupted Judy's rambling, "No, no dear, don't worry he's fine. The handcuffs are just a precaution. He was given a dose from the second batch of the Nighthowler antidote they brought in a few hours ago. So far the effected mammals have been recovering without incident. The police are just being cautious, especially because he was displaying uncharacteristic behavior while affected by the toxin. They just don't want any more Nighthowler related issues now that things are starting to settle down."

The wolf gently took one Judy's paws and started taking her pulse.

"Now, let's see about you. I'm Doctor Winters by the way. How do you feel?"

"Uhm, I have a pretty bad headache." Judy said, looking down, embarrassed for her outburst.

"Thought so, did Lucy give you the aspirin?" Doctor winters asked.

"The antelope nurse? Yes, she gave me two aspirin." Judy said bobbing her head in a nod. Judy was calming down, the doctors grandmotherly voice and demeanor doing much to settle her nerves.

Doctor Winters' chuckled again. "Good, I worry about that girl sometimes. Smart as a whip, but she can be a little scatterbrained at times. Humm, steady pulse, little fast even for a bunny, but not too surprising considering how you probably woke up." She pulled a pen light out of her coats front pocket,

"Look at me please, dear. Good, good. Eyes are tracking," she shined the pen light in her one eye then the other.

"Eyes dilating properly." She put the pen away and picked up a clipboard and began to write.

"How is your head dear, any trouble remembering what happened, sluggish thoughts, sensitivity to light or noise, nausea?"

Judy shook her head, "No, nothing besides the headache and that's starting to get better."

"Well you seemed to have gotten lucky, that was a pretty nasty bump you had there. We were most worried about your head injury, but you seem to be recovering well. We'll be keeping you here
overnight just to be sure everything is ok. We gave you an IV earlier for the dehydration but you'll need to keep drinking some liquids." The doctor scribbled some more notes on her pad.

"Now, how does the rest of you feel?" Doctor winters asked with a kind smile.

Judy considered this for a moment now that her headache wasn't washing out everything else she felt. She pulled back the bed covers and gown to see a shaved section of fur where the gash on her leg had been stitched closed.

"The cut hurts a bit, but not nearly as bad as I thought it would, besides that I'm just a bit sore and hungry" Judy said, and then felt her ears heat up a bit at what she'd said.

The doctor just smiled as she spoke, "Well the cut appeared worse than it was. Ragged and long but not too deep. You'll have to be careful moving around not to tear the stitches." She gave the bunny a matronly glare, "No strenuous activities or running around, understand?" Judy quickly nodded; she felt like a kit back home being given a stern warning by her mother.

"Good." She patted Judy's shoulder, "I have Lucy bringing up some food, nothing too heavy but it should fill you up. Now, as for that soreness," Judy looked down and started fiddling with her paws as she felt her ears warm up.

"after they brought you two in and we were able to get you two unstuck,-" The doctor continued in an even motherly tone. Judy wanted to sink into the bed and disappear. There wasn't so much as a hint of judgment in the doctor's grandmotherly voice, but this was even worse than when her mother gave her 'The Talk' about the birds and the bees and the bunnies.

"-checked to make sure there was no tearing. He's certainly big for you, especially with the knot, but there's no damage. -" Judy was going to die from embarrassment, she just knew it; "-though unlikely, but you're still on birth control so that's not an issue, -" She might need a fire extinguisher before she died though because she was sure her ears were on fire.

"Now given the fact that you marked each other there usually wouldn't be any concern but considering the circumstance and your mate's " Judy could feel her cheeks join her ears, and was sure that she was probably as red as her fox, "condition at the time. We'd like to get an official statement from you to clear up the situation."

"Well," Judy stammered, "we, uhm. I mean, when I, uh. Woke up, and he was, um, curled up holding me naked" she smiled, then blushed harder, she hadn't thought she could blush any more than she was, "and well, I was, I mean, I wanted to tell him, uhm., how he, ah. How I, " Judy squeaked the next words before rushing on "love him, and I'd almost lost him! And, well, I just, umh. Sort of, ah, just, marked him" she squeaked again, "and then, he ahh, marked me back, and then, I, he, uhh we just, well, ahh, you know…" she petered out.

"So just to confirm, before you two mated, you marked him first, then he marked you." Doctor Winters asked still with her warm mother voice and smile, while she continued to write. If anything, her smile was maybe a bit wider. Judy just nodded, not able to look her in the eye.

"did he scream or bite and hold you during your mating?" Doctor Winters asked. Judy wasn't sure why it mattered but it was all she could do just to nod again.

"The scent markings are new, but were you two intimate before this?" She asked. Judy shook her head.

"Well, that at least clears up a few issues." she chuckled warmly, finishing writing her notes, "I have
to warn your mate and you that the psychology, neurology, and toxicology departments will want to interview you two. What we know of the Nighthowler toxin is that it inhibits higher level brain functions and usually sends the mammals into a fight or flight reaction, tending toward a blind rage type response. What has the departments scratching their heads isn't so much that he ran from the fight but his interactions with you. Foxes are very selective with mates and the primal state he was in would have only made that worse. For a fox to choose a mate under those conditions, let alone a mate outside of his species, with the difference in scents and the rest is astonishing. Regardless the situation along with your species difference makes this a rather unique case. Many of the doctors would cut off their own arms to be able to study it; they're already talking about publications and research awards."

Judy was still trying to get her embarrassment under control and process everything the doctor had said, when the door opened again and Lucy came back in holding a tray of food.

"I brought the food like you asked Doctor Winters, made sure to bring enough for both of them, thought that would be a good idea considering that he's going to be waking soon, made sure to get foods that would sit well, they are having a special desert today too," Doctor Winters interrupted the antelope who was speaking faster and faster.

"Thank you, dear. I think we can leave her to eat and rest up." She turned back to Judy, "I have to go take care of this paperwork. If you need anything just use the call button on the side of the bed. I know that Chief Bogo will be coming by to see you now that you're awake, but you should have some time before that." And with that the small wolf ushered the antelope out of the room and shut the door.

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Nick's rise to consciousness was surprisingly smooth and relaxed. There was a comforting feeling coming from somewhere and a smell that put his mind at ease. Nick hated waking up, especially when he felt so comfortable, but his mind was already starting to spin up and he could tell a losing battle when he saw one. Ok, first thing to do, find coffee. His mental gears engaged fully. Judy! What happened to Judy after I was hit? And why am I not freaking out, I should be freaking out! Ok reprioritize, find Judy then coffee.

Nick opened his eyes and saw a gray paw holding his. He tilted his head and saw the bunny the paw was attached to sitting in a chair next to his bed. Ok, that was easier than I thought, she doesn't look hurt. What the hell happened after I went savage? He smiled watching her as she sat there, her thumb stoking along his paw lost in her own thoughts. He gently squeezed the paw holding his and watched as her ears jumped straight up and she turn to see him smirking at her.

"Hey Carrots, I see the big bad fox didn't get you." He was hoping to get her to smile. But Judy's ears started turning pink and she reached up and pulled them down over her eyes as if trying to hide behind them.

He leaned over to her smirk growing wider, "Well while I'll admit that that is very cute, I" He stopped as the scents around him started to register. He had recognized her scent almost as soon as he had seen her paw on his; her scent around him had probably been what kept him from losing it. But as he leaned toward her he recognized another scent on her, a heavier musky scent mixed with hers, not the regular scent you might pick up being around other mammals and that washed away easily, but the kind of scent that took weeks to fade away, a claim mark. His claim mark, and just as this realization slammed into him he realized that the scent of Judy he'd been smelling wasn't her normal scent. And it was far too strong around him to be coming from her.

Judy was peeking out from behind one ear and saw the shock break through his smirk.
"Nick, I'm so sorry. After Bellwether shot you, things just happened so fast. You went savage and grabbed me and ran after I got hit. And then I woke up and even like that you were there with me, watching out for me and I wasn't thinking clearly." Judy was nearly sobbing by this point, tears welling up in her eyes, "I know you won't think of me in the same way but I'd fallen for you after the savage mammals case and then lost you, and I couldn't lose you again so I marked you. I know I shouldn't have, I didn't mean to just do."

Judy's voice had faded to the background, Nick felt like his world was spinning. He hadn't believed that she would ever feel, would ever care for him in that way. Even if she didn't want him, couldn't ever want him like he wanted to be with her, he'd swore that he would always be there for her. His dreams might never come true but he could protect hers, he could be her friend, a true friend, and always watch out for her. He could have lived with that, that would have been enough for him, more than he'd thought he might ever have. But now, now. His feelings were overflowing again; how she'd held his paw, the smell of her scent, the reciprocation he'd regulated to his dreams and fantasies, and knew he'd never have. It was too much, too much for him to hold in any longer.

Nick leaned over all the way and touched his nose to hers, effectively silencing her rambling apology as she looked at him with uncertainty, mouth slightly ajar.

"Judy, I love you"

The tears that had been welling up in her eyes suddenly flooded over, so Nick tilted his head and kissed her.

It was a slow long kiss with every bit of his feelings he could muster behind it. It wasn't passionate or wild or filled with lust but steady and caring and loving. He wanted to stay there kissing her forever like that but he pulled away so that he could look her in her beautiful amethyst eyes.

"I don't deserve you but if you'll have me then I'm yours." he said reaching up with the hand she'd been holding to lightly cup the side of her face.

Tears were still rolling down her cheeks, and she let out a hiccupsing sob before she launched herself at him crashing into his chest. Nick fell back into the bed with Judy wrapped around him head buried in his neck, as her tears rolled into his fur. When he reached up to wrap his arms around her he finally noticed the handcuff securing his other paw to the bed. He held her with his one free paw and after a few moments when the tears slowed and the sobs died down, he asked in a gentle voice with just a bit of humor.

"Sooo, why'd you cuff me to the bed?"

She looked up at him and he felt like he could fall into her eyes.

"Because," she reached up with both paws taking hold of his head, her voice still a bit choked up from crying even as she almost laughed, "I can't let my fox get away" And she ran her chin down his muzzle. The scent of Judy all but exploded in his nose. It was stronger, deeper than her normal scent, a scent that screamed mine even to those without a strong sense of smell. Judy lowered her hands to wrap them around his neck and Nick ran the side of his muzzle across her cheek over her short muzzle and along the other cheek marking her back.

As soon as he finished, she looked back up at him a smile breaking across her face,

"I love you too" she said and then caught him in a swift kiss. This time it was her turn to lead and he could feel her arms tighten around his neck, the softness of her lips, the taste of her mouth, as she poured her happiness and love into the kiss.
They separated to catch a breath before they came together again. And again. And again. The kisses were still slow careful loving kisses, each exploring, learning, showing as they held each other tight. Each kiss a little deeper, filled with a little more longing. Nick had lost track of time, his world focused solely on the bunny he loved, when a sudden loud *Thump* from the door broke their kiss and they looked up to see two older bunnies, the larger one in overalls splayed out on his back like a felled tree and the other in a light gray and blue skirt and blouse with her paws over her mouth, purple eyes the same shade as Judy's wide open, and her ears turning pink.

Judy's hold on him tightened further as she squeaked,

"Mom? Dad?"

Chapter End Notes

Thank you gonekrazy3000(Fanfiction.net) for your valiant efforts to exterminate typos. As promised here is your payment of a crumb too small for a mouse - .
Chapter 4 – Machinations and Rumors

Chapter Notes

* Thank you everyone on AO3 for the kind reception, bit busy today so I can't do as much as I'd like but I'll at least throw this up here till I get some more free time*

Just a bit a teaser for the up coming chapters. And yes I know that I left you on a cliffhanger, I'm a Grinch remember, Deal with it!

Disclaimer: (Insert legalise that will keep me out of trouble)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bogo walked back to precinct one from the city council meeting at the mayor's office, scowl firmly in place. However much he hated to admit it the new mayor pro tempore chosen yesterday by the scrambling city council had been a decent choice. The cranky old badger formerly the head of the justice department might be a rude stubborn old salt and possibly half senile but he had a reputation for always upholding the law and watching out for the city's wellbeing, that plus a knack for politics and an indifference for who he steamrolled while doing his job.

Bogo's teeth ground as he thought back to the meeting, Mayor Bristleton had managed to pull the city council together and play the politics and media to stop the anarchy that had nearly taken over the city after news of Bellwether's arrest and the reported death of former hero cop Judy Hopps by her apparent friend. But he'd also run over Chief Bogo like a tank on the war path to do it. The city might have nearly been on fire but he hadn't needed to drop a bomb on it to put it out. And now Bogo had to deal with the fallout and the effects to his officers. Or more correctly what he thought of as his two newest smallest officers to be.

Bogo might be stubborn in his own right but he could recognize when he'd made a mistake; and he'd certainly made a mistake in not taking Hopps seriously when she'd first arrived. He thought back to the application he'd found with her effects. She had all the makings of a first class officer and if he thought that that overly snarky fox she'd worked with had the potential as well he was willing to give him the chance. That fox, Wilde was it? Had stood up to him after all, maybe there was actually more to him than you saw at first glance, Hopps certainly seemed to think so.

His memories flipped back to finding them under the bridge on the outskirts of an abandoned warehouse facility, and he immediately blocked the image. Don't care, Don't care, Don't care. He repeated to himself. Her personal life was her business, that was one of the things that had irked him so much about the new mayor's actions. He stubbornly repeated his mantra to himself. Don't care. So long as relationships didn't effect their work it was none of his business. Due to the fact that some mammals just didn't work well outside of their pair bonds the rules allowed him final choice in the matter. Don't care, Don't care, Don't care.

He sighed and rubbed his temple, it had been a long night and day and he needed to find some more coffee; the city, or at least the police would fall apart if it wasn't for the black ambrosia, well that and donuts he secretly thought.

After the fiasco the night before and the news stories that broke, they'd had their hands full preventing riots from breaking out. Then they had to deal with the massive protests this morning that
had been building toward full on fighting in the streets before the new mayor's machinations had started to work. The city was calmer now, well not calm, but at least it wasn't about to eat itself.

His thoughts shifted back to the mayor and his fists involuntarily clenched. The problem with the mayor's approach was that he was looking out only for the city and not the individual mammals of that city as well, in particular two of his mammals. An idea was starting to form in his head as he thought over his options. He still had the application. A smile, that not even the most generous would call pleasant was creeping onto his face. Well if the mayor wanted to play political and legal games, there was no reason he couldn't play too. He opened the doors to precinct one. He had to go see his legal and administrative department.

"Ya, you wouldn't believe it" The voice of one of his officers, officer Wolford to be exact, drifted to his ears, "Tired us all morning to track those two down, he'd even managed to tear off his clothes and then doubled back on his trail. Chief was worried sick that she'd be a goner when we found them. The trail was picking up again when we heard screaming and a fox screech and go running toward this bridge where the noise came from pistols up expecting to find him eating her or something, but nope!"

There was a high pitched squeal, an all too familiar high pitched squeal, "NOoo, they weren't, were they? The news rumors are right?"

"Yep, completely tied, marked each other too, swear on my grandmothers grave."

"OH MY GOOODDDDDNESSSS!"

"Missed the first shot unfortunately, got Hopps. Geeze I swear I've never seen a mammal so pissed as that fox was then. He looked like he was ready to rip our throats out if he hadn't been stuck to her. He'd rolled over her in this protective crouch fur bristled out, and mean all of it bristled and snarling like a whole pack of wolves. Was quite the sight, but made the second shot easy. You should have seen the EMTs when they showed up though, thought their eyes were going to bug out"

There was now full on giggling from the second voice

A vein was starting to pulse on the chief's forehead as he approached the front desk.

"WOLFORD, CLAWHAUSER!"

Chapter End Notes

gonekrazy3000 strikes again. Typos might soon be on the endangered species list at this rate.
Chapter 5 - First Impressions

Chapter Notes

Ha, Do you really think that nice reviews will make a Grinch's heart grow bigger? You'll have to try better than that! Now were did I put those heartburn tablets?

Disclaimer: Oh come on your really going to try to sue me over a bunny and fox? I didn't even want to write this!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Mom? Dad?" Judy squeaked.

Judy felt Nick's arm tighten around her. She glanced up to see his ears plastered against his head, mouth slightly ajar, and a look of such shock on his usually collected face that it almost made her laugh despite the situation.

"Judy?" hearing her mother's voice killed whatever humor she was feeling at the situation and brought her focus back to her parents, or one still conscious parent, her father still being passed out on the ground.

"What are you two doing here?" Judy asked not even quite realizing she had spoken.

"You've been all over the news, Judy. We were so worried. First you'd apparently been killed by a savage fox, then they say you're alive but injured after the mayor attacked you. There's all sorts of stories going around and last we'd heard is that you were in the hospital so we grabbed the first train we could and came to make sure you were all right. The receptionist said that your injuries weren't all that bad and sent us up. We expected to find you in a bed resting not making out like it was prom night." Her mother's demeanor had shifted from shock to worry and was settling toward exasperated.

"Uuh," her mind was scrambling for something to say, she'd always found her siblings' embarrassment funny when they'd get caught by her parents sneaking in or out of the house for a secret cuddle, kiss or sometimes more with their high school crushes. Now it wasn't so funny, not in the least. She realized she still had her paws wrapped around Nick's neck. She quickly untangled them and slipped off his lap to sit next to him on the bed. She grabbed his free paw needing the connection and felt his tail wrap around her.

Her mother's gaze caught every movement and shifted up to the fox next to her, Judy could see the mental cogs in her mother's mind working. But didn't have a clue as to what she was thinking.

"And who exactly is this Judith Laverne Hopps" Judy flinched at being full named by her mother.

After a moment to try to collect herself, she nervously answered.

"So, Mom, I'd like you to meet my boyfriend Nick" Judy hoped she managed her usual upbeat voice, "Nick, this is my Mom" she gestured with her other paw. "and, uh," she glanced down at the form still lying on the floor, "my dad" she trailed off.

Nick tried to raise his free hand in a little wave only to be brought up short by the handcuff latched to it.
"Hello Mrs. Hopps, nice to meet you, I, ah," He glanced at the handcuff and winced, his hustler smile and confidence not quite up to his usual standard, "was hoping to be able to introduce myself under some better circumstances."

Mrs. Hopps had crossed her arms and her demeanor had finally settled on 'classic parental mother'.

"Well, it's not," she pointedly glanced at the handcuff, "quite, the worst way I've meet one of my kit's boy or girlfriends. Though your display might explain the way Judy's been acting the last couple of months"

"Mom! He isn't in any trouble, he's handcuffed just as a precaution for the night howler antidote not working." Judy quickly tried to explain

"Well before you explain exactly what has happened since you went driving off with the truck I think we need to discuss this," she gestured at the two of them. Before Judy could so much as sputter her mother hit her and then Nick with a 'Don't even try to argue' look only mothers are capable of.

She turned to her passed out husband and sighed. Patting him on the cheek, she started trying to rouse him.

"Stu, Stu, time to wake up now, come on dear time to get up"

The bunny shook his head, and blinked his eyes a few times.

"Cheese and crackers, I didn't sleep through the train stop, did I?" He shook his head looking up, "I had the craziest dream that those rumors on the news network were-" He saw the two almost terrified looking mammals sitting in the bed and his jaw got stuck, before he started scrambling at his pants pocket.

Judy's mother just rolled her eyes, before she neatly swiped the fox taser from his fumbling paws and placed it in her purse. Helping him up she said, "Come on Stu, you need to come meet your daughter's" she hesitated at the next word, "boyfriend, before they explain what Judy's been up to"

Stu just gaped and almost fell down again. "We are going to go over, sit down, and have a nice" she stressed the word and shot him a firm glance, "conversation, right Stuart?"

Stu's ears dropped and he meekly said, "Yes dear". As he followed her over to the chair Judy had been sitting in, he kept shooting wide eyed disbelieving glances at the fox next to Judy. As he settled into the oversized chair sitting next to his wife, Nick released Judy's paw from his grip and reached it out to shake her fathers.

In a nearly steady voice he said, "It's nice to meet you Mr. Hopps. Your daughter is the most amazing girl I've ever met."

Just as Stu started to shakily reach out to accept the handshake, Judy felt a rumbling feeling from Nicks side, and a gurgling growl emanated from his stomach. Stu's eyes went wide before they rolled up and he flopped forward limp as a ragdoll.

There was a moment of complete silence, Nick's paw still outstretched.

Judy glanced up at Nick, a look of utter embarrassment on her fox's face, then glanced at her passed out father. Her mother just put a paw over her face and sighed.

Judy let out a small laugh before covering her mouth with both paws to stifle anymore as she tried to hide her smile.
After a moment, she spoke up

"The nurse," she glanced at Nick's embarrassed face again and stifled another laugh, "brought up some food for you Nick," she gestured at the tray on the table between the two beds of the room, she could feel a smile reaching completely across her face as she poked Nick in the stomach, which let out another grumbling growl, "I don't think eating my dad will put you on good terms with my family,"

Nick just looked down at her, his expression half embarrassed half aggrieved "Really Carrots? Really? We need to work on your jokes" He suddenly smirked and leaned down till his muzzle was next to her ear and in a slightly deeper than normal voice with a bit of rumble that made Judy's insides melt whispered, "You should know there's only one bunny that I want to eat"!

Judy's ears shot bolt upright and she blushed hard. Nick started to sit back up, a completely satisfied smirk on his face, when Judy's paw involuntarily shot out and grabbed the neck of his hospital gown. Before the fox even had so much as a moment to react she yanked him back down into a hard, frantic kiss. She let out a moan as her tongue ran along his, pressing more firmly into the contact. She felt her paws clutching madly at his fur, needing to feel her fox. Part of the hospital gown ripped as she ran them down his neck and through the thick fur of his chest.

A loud cough brought Judy back to reality, and she let out a 'eep', her ears plummeting as she and Nick jerked apart. One shoulder of his hospital gown had the seam pulled free and hung down. She shot a mortified glance at her mother before groaning and flopping forward, trying to hide behind Nick's tail which was still wrapped around her. Judy had thought her talk with Doctor Winters was going to be the single most embarrassing moment of her life for all time, but this was so much worse. This was her mother, her mother who had not only just caught her making out, but was sitting there, right in front of her when she'd apparently lost her mind and tried to jump Nick. She was sure she was now vying to make the top of the Hopps family most embarrassing story list.

She couldn't help but think that if she ever wanted to be able to show her face in public again she'd have to get a hold of her out of control emotions and desires. She just didn't know how. She'd never felt so strongly about anyone else before. Just being near Nick made her want to completely forget the world and she couldn't even consider not having him around. Being away from him before had been the worst experience in her life. She was pretty sure being away from him now would kill her. Maybe they could run off to some remote corner of the world, somewhere she could be alone and uninterrupted with her Nick, then she could… She groaned again trying to stop her train of thought and hugged the fluffy red tail tighter as that was all the protection she had between her and the world.

She heard her mother sigh again and could just imagine her rolling her eyes as well. There was sounds of movement and then a tray being lifted from a table.

Her mother spoke up, "Well why don't we get you fed. It's Nick right? Hopefully my husband will wake up soon and Judy will stop hiding like when she was a 5 year old kit and accidentally broke my favorite rolling pin mock sword fighting with her brother. Though there was that time she'd-"

Judy jolted upright, still clutching Nick's tail, "MMOOMM, Please, please no stories."

Nick piped up and Judy could feel the smug delight dripping from his voice, "But I'd love to -" Judy reached up and held his mouth shut.

"He means that he'd love to get some of that food so we can have our talk" Judy said instead, giving Nick a glare. He just smirked at her and gave the paw over his mouth a small lick. Judy, valiantly tried to keep a straight face as her mind immediately thought back to how his tongue had felt against hers; she could feel the heat rising in her ears.
Her mother smiled and handed Judy the tray of food. Before taking a seat next to the still passed out form of her father.

"So you've decided to stop hiding and talk to me now?" her mother said. Looking rather pleased with herself.

"Yes, Yes, Fine!" Judy quickly said nodding her head for emphasis.

She heard Nick mumble from behind her paw, "Did she just hustle you?"

"Be good and eat your food" Judy said to Nick removing her paw from his mouth and placing the tray on his lap.

Nick leaned down and gave her a quick peck between the ears, "Anything for you Carrots" he said before shifting his attention to the tray of food. Judy could feel a tingle where he'd kissed her and had to fight down the urge to lean up and kiss him back.

"So why didn't you tell me you had found a boyfriend when you were back at home?" Her mother interrupted her thoughts, settling the internal battle she had been waging with herself. She did not kiss Nick, but turned back to face her mother. She let her paws fiddle with Nick's oh so fluffy tail as a consolation prize instead, as she responded.

"Well, he sort of wasn't my boyfriend at the time"

Her mother just gave her a look that said 'really' before continuing "Well, it's clear now that you were love sick, I should have seen it earlier, especially with how much you talked about him," Nicks tail snuggled around her a bit more at that, and she kept fiddling with its tip having a hard time meeting her mother's gaze "but you've just never really been interested in dating anyone before. Why didn't you talk to me about it?"

Judy tried to put her thoughts into a coherent response "I just," she sighed, "I didn't know at first, I screwed up and hurt Nick and the city with that press conference, and by the time I figured out all these new jumbled feelings I had, figured out I loved him, I was at home, didn't have a way to find him, and was sure he hated me.

Nick stopped eating for a moment and turned, catching her eye.

"Judy, I could never hate you. That fight at the press conference was more my fault than yours, I knew deep down that you hadn't meant to hurt me, but I let it get to me and then I ran away. And in the end, you were the one who found me, and you were the one who apologized." He sighed, "I never told you how sorry I was for snarling at you or for running away. Can you forgive me for all that Judy?"

She would not cry she kept telling herself, she wouldn't burst into tears in front of Nick and her mother, so instead she turned and hugged Nick as tight as she could.

"Yes, Yes Nick I'll forgive you but only if you never leave like that again." She said through the ruff of fur at his neck.

"Agreed," he wheezed, "got to - breath – Carrots" Judy released her hug, but couldn't help but snuggle up to Nicks side, even with her mother watching.

Nick kept looking at her for a second before he said "Judy, you do know that you're a better mammal than I deserve, right?"
She looked up at him and straight into his emerald green eyes. "No, Nick. You deserve me every bit as much as I deserve you." She gave him a quick kiss, "Now finish eating." She turned back to her mother who had patiently waited through the exchange watching the two of them.

"I just didn't know what to do, mom. I'd never even been close to being in love before and then I ended up in love with Nick. And besides all the other problems there's the fact that I fell in love with a fox. I didn't know what to think at the time and I didn't know what you all would think either." She looked straight at her mother for the first time during the conversation. "Mom, I know this is unusual, even unheard of. I didn't think there was anyway Nick would ever feel the same way back, but I really do love him."

Her mother held her gaze for a moment before she let out another sigh, "I know you do Judy, it's pretty obvious. But you two will need to give us," she glanced at Stu still slumped over in the seat next to her, "especially your father, some time to get used to the idea of you dating a fox. We won't object. I'm happy you've finally found someone to love, that's one worry at least I won't have to deal with anymore, but it is… well Beth marrying a hare was unusual, this is, well, extremely unconventional. So please be patient with us, ok?"

Judy nodded, she wasn't sure if she could speak right then. She'd been worried how her parents would take her falling in love with a fox, especially with her history with Gideon. To not have to worry over it was a huge relief.

Her mother continued "Once everybody at home gets used to the idea I don't think you'll have much to be concerned about, you at least won't have to worry about your father tasering your boyfriend. I'll make sure of that."

"That's very much appreciated Mrs. Hopps" Nick chimed in between bites.

Her mother gave the fox a small smile.

"You just make sure not to break my little girls heart. Otherwise you'll have more than just Stu coming at you with a taser to worry about, understand?"

Nick quickly nodded his head, with a "Yes, ma'am."

"Now you finish eating. You're as thin as a rail." Nick gave one more nod to her mother and went back to finishing the last of the food.

"You're really fine with me and Nick?" Judy asked.

"Yes Judy." Judy quickly extracted herself from Nick's tail and hugged her mother, who hugged her back and continued "It's just a little shocking. There have been all these crazy news reports about what happened and to find out that at least part of the wilder ones are true was-" She stopped, nose starting to twitch.

"Judith, did you mark each other?!" she nearly shouted, a thunderstruck expression on her face at the realization that the mix of their scents wasn't just from them making out and sitting next to each other.

"Um," Judy looked back at Nick for help, but he was coughing on a drink of water that had gone down the wrong pipe at the outburst. "Um"

Her mother was now staring at her, eyes a little wide.

Stu groaned and sat up, rubbing his head, before saying, "Carrot sticks, not again. Bonnie what did I miss?"
Chapter End Notes

I've received an official protest from the grammar police. It seems gonekrazy3000 is putting them out of business.
Chapter 6 – Cuddies & Relationship Status

Chapter Notes

Ao3: Ha! figure out how to get the italics back in. Now I just need to go back and fix the previous chapters, darn it.

Author sips coffee and looks over the cliff at reader hanging by his fingertips. Author smirks. I warned you to read at your own peril!

Disclaimer: So it turns out that the pirates that abducted me and are forcing me to write this story actually have a good lawyer. Who woulda thunk? Turns out I probably won't have to worry about Disney suing me after all. Still doesn't help the fact that I chained to a desk being forced to writing this, at least the coffees good.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick was cautiously optimistic. It was a strange feeling for him. He usually operated on the assumption that everything and everyone was pitted against him. But that little bunny was changing him. His bunny. That part still felt too good to be true, he couldn't help but feel a little afraid that this was just some dream, that he'd wake up and it would come to an end at any moment. But the longer he was around her, the more his fears, his pessimism ebbed away. It wasn't something she did consciously, it was just part of who she was, part of the reason that he loved her so much.

He kept eating as Mrs. Hopps had told him to but made sure to pay attention to the conversation with one ear. Judy was snuggled into his side, his tail wrapped around her. He didn't think she knew exactly what that meant. There were so many nuances, customs and gestures unique to a particular species, things that most mammals outside of that species just didn't understand. Some mammals mostly due to their professions, did study the customs of other species so they could interact with them better but that was uncommon; the average everyday mammal didn't bother because they didn't need to.

He knew there was a lot about Judy, about bunnies that he didn't understand either. Things like being called cute, most mammals knew it wasn't polite to call a bunny cute, but not why, beyond being used to stereotype bunnies he was sure that there was some deeper meaning in their culture that was tied to the word.

He could feel her fiddling with his tail. It sent happy shivers up his spine and he had to restrain himself from rumbling happily. Just like bunnies had their issues with the word cute, foxes had issues with their tails. It was common courtesy not to go around grabbing someone's tail, but foxes were protective of their tails to a degree most other mammals would consider prudish. Foxes only let their direct family touch their tails, usually just their mates or kits. He didn't think Judy was fully aware of the meaning of a mark to a fox either. To be fair he wasn't quite sure the extent it meant to a bunny. A scent mark was an obvious claim but depending on the species the meaning could range from boyfriend/girlfriend to a marriage declaration. There was so much they still didn't know about each other, so much that was different. This, what ever this was they had between them shouldn't have worked, but it did. He loved her, he'd marked her, and he'd stay with her as long as she'd have him.

If he was honest to himself his attraction, his desire, the overwhelming need to stay with and protect his bunny, his Judy, scared him more than a bit. The feelings, the underlying need, was unlike
anything he had ever experienced before. He remembered when he was younger, when his father tried to explain to him about falling in love, before he was gone and Nick had given up on the idea of love along with so much else.

"No, Nick. When you fall in love with someone, it's not quite the same as the way you love your mother and me, or the way we love you. That's its own special kind of love. Falling in love is a different special kind of love, one you can have with only a single other person in the whole wide world. You'll know when you're older and find that special someone. They will make your world a better place just by being there, make you happier than you could ever believe. Even when things get hard you'll know that they will always be there for you, always care for you. And you will always want to be there for that one special mammal for the rest of your life."

"But Emma at school said her Mom got unmarried and then remarried. Don't you have to be in love to get married? You said that kind of love is only for one other."

"Hmm, maybe it wasn't true love. Maybe they fell out of love, that happens sometimes though it's really, really sad and painful. But I'll tell you a little secret, foxes are a little bit different from most other species. Some say we're still closer to our instincts because when foxes fall in love its almost always true love, its why foxes almost never remarry even if one of them passes away. It's also why foxes don't mate till they're married. In a few years you might find yourself having feelings for some pretty little vixen,"

"Eeww dad! Girls have cuddies!"

His father chuckled, "Well so they do. But you might find yourself being attracted to some girls anyway. You might even find yourself kissing a few of them too."

"EEEWWww. That's gross!"

" - but you won't have the desire to mate till after you find that special one, the one you want to spend the rest of your life with."

His father's eyes drifted over to his mother who was making dinner, and his smile grew a bit more, "Nick I'll tell you one more secret with foxes." He leaned down and whispered conspiratorially, "See girls are usually better at this whole falling in love thing; you'll find each other and when you're both ready, that's when she'll mark you first and you'll mark her back."

"But why are they better at it?"

His father chuckled again, "it is why they have cuddies!"

His attention came back to the present as he felt Judy untangle herself from his tail and move to hug her mother. He reached for the bottle of water on the tray. Yes, things were looking up. There were a few, 'issues' with meeting Mr. Hopps but Mrs. Hopps seemed willing to give him a chance despite their admittedly rough start.

He uncapped the bottle and started to drink.

He had Judy. His, girlfriend? They'd have to sit down and straighten that one out sooner or later. Sooner preferably, but when her parents weren't right there. He needed to find out exactly what a bunny's mark entailed. If it was only a declaration of him as her boyfriend he could work with that; it didn't matter how long it would take, he was there for the long haul anyways, he could-

"Judith, did you mark each other?!" Mrs. Hopps' shout startled Nick, some water going down the wrong pipe and he began to cough.
After a few moments of coughing and pounding on his chest, he started to breath normally again.

He heard Mr. Hopps voice, still a little muzzy, say "Carrot sticks, not again. Bonnie what did I miss?"

"Judith Laverne Hopps!" Ouch, that was the second time in the past 10 minutes she had gotten a full name scolding by her mother, "You do remember what that means don't you?" her mother was giving her a look that screamed 'did you forget how to eat as well, maybe breathe too?'. Judy retreated off the chair and back to Nicks side. His tail wrapped back around her in a comforting embrace more on its own accord than any intention of his.

"Remember what?" A very confused and groggy looking Mr. Hopps asked.

"Yes mom, I know what it means." Judy replied almost sullenly.

Mrs. Hopps was getting on a roll, even Mr. Hopps looked slightly afraid, "So you've been back in the city, what a day? And you've already declared yourself engaged?!" Well that clears up one question, Nick thought.

Mr. Hopps had fallen out of the chair, and hit the ground with an audible thump at that. He managed to gasp, "What!?"

Mrs. Hopps continued and Judy pushed further into his side as if she could use him to withstand the maternal tirade. "Out of all your brothers and sisters I would never have expected you to be so rash! Have you even been on a date yet?" Judy colored a bit at that, "Not even your brother 'jump first, think second' Jeb marked his mate so quickly," Nick was honestly glad that Judy was between him and her mother. He was even more glad his mother wasn't here right now. That would be a conversation he'd like to put off for a while, maybe a few years, or better yet forever.

Mr. Hopps was trying to rally, but he looked like he had gone a few rounds in a ring and was losing, badly. In a punch drunk voice he said, "She marked him? But she couldn't have, they were only kissing, but that would mean…;"

"No, they've clearly marked each other" Mrs. Hopps said her nose still twitching. Mr. Hopps eyes bulged liked he'd just been gut punched. Mrs. Hopps sent part of her incredulous reprimanding look at Nick, making sure he knew that he was in just as much trouble as Judy. His ears pinned back and he scrunched down holding Judy tighter, not able to meet her eyes. No one but his mother had ever been able to do that to him "I don't know why it took me so long to notice, I must have been distracted by everything else. Have you two even considered what's involved being engaged," her gaze locked on Nick for a second, "assuming that's what a scent mark means for a fox," Nick though he might have visibly blushed, even through his red fur. No that's not what it meant to a fox, it meant something more. "This isn't dating, Judy, this isn't testing the waters or a one night stand that you can then forget about if things don't work out. Bunnies marry for life, once you marry and start your own family there's no going back, no others, no re-does, that's it! Are you really ready to spend the rest of your lives together?"

Nick couldn't help the response. He blurted out, "Yes!" almost the same moment Judy did. They both cringed under the 'Did you really think about that?' glare they got in return.

"So, you two have thought this through have you? Where are you going to live? How are you going to support each other? Do you even know if you two can mate?" That one hit Nick hard, he wasn't sure, she was so much smaller than him, maybe only half his weight, he wouldn't, couldn't ever do anything to hurt her.
If the question had hit Nick hard though, it had hit Mr. Hopps like a sledgehammer. The best he managed was some splutters. The idea seeming to have caused his mind to lock up and his tongue to flop.

"Well you actually don't have to worry about that" a voice from the doorway said. Nick looked over to see an older wolf in a doctor's coat and the chief of police standing next to her looking like he'd rather be anywhere else. "They had no trouble with it despite the, ah, size difference. You can ask Chief Bogo here if you're still not convinced. He can attest to the fact that their mating didn't have any problems."

This seemed to be the final blow for Mr. Hopps. He Just fell back like he'd been KO'd in a boxing match. Nick wasn't doing much better. *We, we already, but when? Oh, but that means, that means*… his mind was having a hard time trying to process that. He was pretty sure his mouth was hanging open, as he stared at the bunny wrapped up in his tail and snuggled into his side. She was holding her ears over her eyes and had turned to bury her face into him as if she had reconsidered her decision not to try and hide from the world. *His bunny, his mate, his…*, the thought still wasn't processing right. Mrs. Hopps to her credit only looked shocked for a few moments before regaining her balance. With a fortitude only parents are capable of she said in a voice of resignation, "So it's done then?"

Chief Bogo stepped forward and laid a newspaper on the bed so that they could all see the front page. Under huge black letters screaming 'Afternoon Special Print' and 'The Fox and The Bunny' was a picture of a passed out Nick and Judy together on a gurney being pushed into the hospital. There was a blanket draped over their shoulders and lower bodies but it was clear from their position and the way the two had their heads nuzzled into each other that the two were not just friends, not by a long shot. Underneath it read,

*After the uproar over former Mayor Bellwether's arrest due to her lead role in the 'Night Howler Conspiracy' and the subsequent erroneous reports of the death of Judy Hopps, formerly of the ZPD, by her apparent friend Nicholas Wilde, both of whom the police report took injuries while uncovering key evidence in the conspiracy in addition to solving the 'Missing Mammals Case' three months ago, extreme controversy has gripped the city over their alleged interspecies relationship. Reactions have ranged from disbelief and outrage to tentative and outright support for what some are calling the fairytale couple. Mayor pro tempore Bristleton, in a press conference at noon earlier today tried to calm public debate and conflict by clarifying what to this point has been speculation and rumor. "While I cannot comment on how, when, or why their relationship started, nor is it our role to dig into the personal affairs of law abiding citizens, I will clarify the legal status of the two in question in order to hopefully curb the near riotous controversial reactions. The pair in question has meet all legal laws and cultural customs for both fox and bunny marital unions, as such the city formally recognizes their union. It is not the place of the city to comment on the ethicacy or rationality of their union, only the legality. We at city hall and in the government of Zootopia will continue to maintain and uphold the laws of our great city to ensure that every mammal, predator and prey, can live in harmony and prosper. We urge the public to maintain calm and respectable attitudes when dealing with or debating this controversial topic." Continued on page A3.*

Chapter End Notes

Ugh, I had to use a Hazmat suit when transporting this to the site. I think I over did the fluffy portion.
gonekrazy3000 strikes again! look at those typos vanish!

To the reviewers (FanFiction):

GusTheBear, Guest, Uranium235, Fox in the Hen House, GoneKrazy3000, Meh1234321, Murican Hero, Combat Engineer, Luna Silver, and Armasyll.

Thank you all for the reviews. Since I ran out of sugary fluff I think I'll use the praise as sweetener for my coffee.

To the new reviewers on Ao3: Thanks again everybody! This sites review system is a bit better so I'll be replying using that. Hope your enjoying the story.
Chapter 7 – Loose Meet Rigid

Chapter Notes

So I've asked my pirate captors if they could go out and kidnap, I mean, recruit a proofreader. I can't get sued for that can I?

Ok, this chapter was supposed to be longer but I'm breaking it up into two. You'll see why, You'll probably hate me for it, but it was too perfect. (*Smirk*). Anyways I'm a cranky grinch who can take out years of pent up frustration on waiting for books and updates and other authors doing exactly this on you all, (this is called Grinch therapy) and even if you want to tar and feather me, You'll never find me so Neener-Neener

Disclaimer: Neener-Neener

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The two bunnies and the fox just stared at the newspaper for a minute. Nick didn't quite know what he felt, elated, terrified, happy, frightened. He looked down at Judy, his... his wife, he rolled the word around in his mind. Her paws holding him hadn't loosened, if anything they gripped him more firmly, almost possessively. Nick knew, probably better than Judy, the amount of trouble they had just caused, trouble that would inevitably find its way back to them. But Judy was still there with him, so the rest of the city could just go stick their heads in a ditch for all he cared. If this was a dream than it was too good of a dream to waste.

Mrs. Hopps was the first one to move. She got off the chair and went over to Mr. Hopps on the ground, Nick heard her muttering something about 'leaping before you looked and overly emotional husbands'. The Doctor stepped up next to the two and started giving the passed out bunny a quick examination to make sure he was alright.

"I assume you are Mr. and Mrs. Hopps," she said with a quick smile, "I'm Doctor Winters. I've been taking care of your daughter and," her smile grew just a bit, Nick could clearly see the amusement she was taking from the whole situation, "your son-in-law."

"Yes, my one overly enthusiastic child has apparently brought back another," Mrs. Hopps deadpanned

Doctor Winters seemed to finish with the examination and carefully lifted the bunny walking over to Judy's bed.

"Well, since someone seems to have found somewhere else more comfortable to rest," Judy who had been staring at the newspaper the whole time, looked up at the other bed, at her position halfway in Nick's lap, at the doctor's now clear smirk, groaned and let her head fall against him. Nick could only grin at his wife and wrap her up in his tail and free arm holding her tight. "I think we can let Mr. Hopps recover here for a bit. Nothing seems to be wrong with him, not even a bump on his head, I assume this is just from the shock of meeting his new in-law?"

"No, he usually only cries for that. This is his reaction to finding out his daughter is, I guess was now, dating a fox, well that and to try and taser him." The doctor let out a short laugh at that.
"I suspect that you'll be able to explain the facts of life to him when he wakes up, it's something he's going to have to deal with because it isn't going away." She replied. Mrs. Hopps sighed but grinned back.

"Oh, don't worry all I'll have to do is remind him how we ended up married. I don't think he'll complain too much after that, or at least he won't try to run off his son-in-law with a pitchfork. He still has the scars on his rear from the night when my father chased him out of my room after the Carrot Day Festival."

Judy groaned again, "MOM, I do NOT want to hear about my parents hooking up. This is embarrassing enough with everyone here, let alone the whole city finding out before… I… uh…" she had looked up, her amethyst eyes met his and her words petered off. Nick could watch the blush creep up her cheeks and ears, and her scent shifted, another smell still Judy but different, mixed with her normal one, a scent he was starting to recognize from her, one that stirred his primal desires. This time he couldn't hold down a happy rumble and he leaned down and stole a kiss. The red creep traveling up her ears turned into a flood and her scent spiked.

"NICK!" she whacked him on the shoulder, half squeaking, half hissing, "BEHAVE! NOT IN FRONT OF MY MOM."

He almost, almost, leaned down to kiss her again, but managed to stop himself. Her paw still lay against him from where she'd swatted him, like she didn't want to remove the contact. So instead of kissing her, he said with the rumble traveling into his voice, "So that means later, right?"

Judy bit her lip and let out a groan as her head flopped back into his chest. But that groan hadn't been from exasperation and embarrassment. The rumble in his chest increased and Nick had to stop his tail from trying to wag. In an overly pleased voice, even to his own ears, he simply said, "Yes, dear, I'll behave."

"Well" Doctor Winters, smirk still solidly in place, said to Mrs. Hopps, "I don't think there's much your husband could do to keep them apart even if he tried."

Bogo cleared his throat loudly. His hoof was pinching the bridge of his nose as if he was desperately trying to stave off a migraine.

"If you two are done auditioning for Marriage and Mates, there is a lot of business we need to get through."

Nick had sized up the chief before when they met during the Missing Mammals case. He didn't think the Chief was cruel or bad despite the event on the tram platform, he was just too rigid in his thinking, too stuck in his ways. A mammal like that needed to loosen up a bit. Nick took it as one of his personal goals in life, a sort of civic duty, to help such afflicted mammals, or so he told himself. Plus he couldn't just leave an opening like that lying around for anyone to trip over.

"AAahhh, Chief I didn't think you were a fan too. Most guys think that's ssuuucchh a girly girl show" Nick could feel his grin stretching his face. Mrs. Hopps and Doctor Winters were now watching the very burly cape buffalo with very interested looks. The chief's arm bulged as his muscles tightened, Nick was surprised the chiefs nose didn't snap under the pressure as he pinched it harder. The crease between the Chief's brows was deepening to the point that it more closely resembled a canyon, but there was a distinct darkening under the fur of his cheeks. Mrs. Hopps actually put a paw up over her mouth to stop a giggle and the Doctor's smirk was one to almost rival Nick's own.

She spoke up right as the chief was about to yell at him, "Don't worry Chief all the girls like a male that has a chewy center."
The chief stopped, took three deep breaths, though the blotches on his cheeks did not fade, and looked at Nick. With eyes trying to bore through him and what Nick had to applaud as incredible control the chief calmly, oh so calmly, said, "Wilde, do you want those handcuffs removed, ever?"

Nick was considering making a remark about that depending on Judy's preferences, and asking if maybe he had a padded pair he could borrow instead, but noticed the pulsing vein over the Chief's eye and Judy's suddenly wide, possibly fearful, eyes. He reevaluated his situation, he would after all very much like to get his arm free, it was starting to ache and staying alive would be nice too. So determining that the Chief's therapy for the day had been duly administered he reined in his snark and replied with a, "Yes, thanks Chief, was just about to ask about that"

The chief held the stare for a few moments longer, before finally letting out a blast of air through his nose and moving over to unlock the handcuffs.

"Now," he said in a completely no nonsense business manner, "Doctor Winters needs to certify that you are no longer under the influence of the Nighthowler serum, I need to get statements from you two regarding everything that happened and then give both of you a debriefing on the current situation since you two managed to not only get another mayor arrested this year," the throaty base in his voice was starting to increase as he continue, as if irritated that they had made his life more difficult, "and stopped a plot to terrorize the city but also managed to then turn Zootopia on its head and shake it by first running through the streets making everyone think a savage predator had killed a prey mammal and just to top things off make headlines on every news network as Zootopia's newest celebrity couple igniting another city wide controversy." He paused for a moment to give them another glare, "Now any objections before we start?"

Nick and Judy quickly shook their heads.

Bogo was fairly pleased, though he didn't show it. It wouldn't do any good to let Wilde think he could get away with anything more, especially after he had managed to get Wilde's smartass comments and snark under control. Bogo was coming to think he understood why Hopps wanted to recruit Wilde, not including whatever weird connection they had formed. He had not gotten to interview Wilde during the mess with the missing mammals case and then the fox had upped and disappeared after the press conference. But while taking their statements about what had happened from the moment Hopps had figured out the link with the nighthowler flowers to waking up in the hospital the chief could see a great deal of potential in the fox. He was far smarter than most mammals would probably give him credit for due to his species, and he had a knack for reading other mammals and situations, acting quickly, and improvising when needed. And below all the cynicism he wore, Bogo could tell that deep down somewhere he cared, he wouldn't have let himself get dragged through two cases like this otherwise. Yes, he would make a good officer.

It was something he might have ignored before he had been forced to work with Hopps since he was still a small sized predator, but who said old bulls couldn't unbend a bit every now and then. The only problem he could see was the fox's attitude, both his snark and ability to bend the law till it screamed. The fox was just a bit too loose in the way he worked. However, a stint at the academy would probably fix that, and if nothing else being stuck married to Hopps would probably cure him too, or kill him. Bogo really didn't care which.

He had to suppress a giggle thinking about it, that fox had no idea what he was in for being married to Hopps. He almost pitied him. Almost.

Doctor Winters had certified that the antidote had worked, though they would keep him overnight for final observations and release him in the morning. Mr. Hopps meanwhile had woken up and had a
hushed and rather amusing conversation with his wife that included Mr. Hopps being blackmailed with some of his more foolish adventures from his teenage years, one of which involved having to get stitches from taking a pitchfork to the rear while jumping from a window to escape her angry father, a couple of ear twists, and an exceptionally well done glare, Bogo had actually take some notes on it so he could try practicing it; the demoralized bunny had finally broken under the threat of sleeping in the barn. Bogo had kept a straight face through the whole ordeal but he was actually slightly worried that Hopps might prove you could die from embarrassment. The fox on the other hand was grinning like it had been an award winning comedy show, which Bogo silently agreed, it could have been. The poor fool though hadn't yet made the connection that his new wife had grown up learning from that little but terrifying matriarch.

Mr. Hopps had come over ears drooping (one was still slightly red) and had shook Wilde's paw. After muttering some apologies and platitudes he had started to say something about coming after the fox with a taser if he every hurt Judy, before Mrs. Hopps dragged him away by the ear, promising to visit in the morning.

Bogo was finalizing the statements, asking a few additional questions to clarify some points of the story. He thanked his lucky stars that he didn't have to ask Hopps exactly what had happened under the bridge since Doctor Winters had already taken a statement from her regarding it. He was sure he already had lasting mental scares from what he'd seen.

They had been a little vague on exactly how they had gotten the information from Duke Weaselton, but he could put the pieces together and could guess how 'asking Fru Fru Big if she or her father would help convince Weaselton that he should help the city by talking to them' played out. They hadn't lied though and he was sure that despite how carefully they worded their responses that if he asked them directly they would answer him truthfully.

Mr. Big might be an old time Mob boss but he had been careful over the years, both to leave the ZPD with nothing to be able to charge him with and with staying away from anything that would bring the full might of the ZPD against him. Bogo had to grudgingly admit that the small shrew had been a cunning adversary his whole career, especially with his reputation for icing mammals. One interesting fact Bogo had found over the years was that for all the rumors and fear of 'Iced Mammals' there had never been a confirmed death or even missing mammal linked to him. There had however been a few cases of mammals suspiciously turning up at hospitals near death with hypothermia, ones that in the end conveniently couldn't remember how it had happened. Bogo had his suspicions that the little shrew had crafted his reputation into a weapon far more dangerous when skillfully wielded than the brute force of other criminals in the city. One way or another there was a reason that Mr. Big was the only true crime boss left in Zootopia; he was the last and probably greatest relic from a by gone age of mob power.

Bogo had to admit that it would be useful to have a cop that they could absolutely trust like Hopps who also had a connection to Mr. Big, particularly to the daughter that he doted on. He doubted Mr. Big would be sloppy enough to give them anything that could be used against him, but Bogo could think of a dozen ways he could use them to keep an eye on the old shrew.

But he was getting ahead of himself. First He needed to get these two back into the ZPD, or into the academy in Wilde's case. And to do that he had to first beat Mayor Bristleton at his own game. Meanwhile he needed to keep an eye on Hopps and Wilde. He didn't want those two little hellions running lose, unsupervised in his city. He was losing count of how many times they'd either brought the city to its knees or stopped it from falling. But Bogo had a plan to deal with all of it, a good plan, a great plan, a plan he was sure would work.

*Ok Fox,* Bogo thought, *You were a street hustler, let's see how you deal with someone who learned*
to hustle in the government bureaucracy. Bogo finished writing down the last part of their statements and looked up at them. He smiled.

Chapter End Notes

(Evil cackles of laughter)

gonekrazy3000 is getting so good at destroying typos he's apparently doing it in his sleep now.
Chapter 8 - Marriage & Future Dreams

Chapter Notes

Am I a mean, vindictive, heartless bastard? Well, Yes, yes I am. Enjoy your chapter! (*evil smirk*)

Disclaimer: So I'm playing hide and go seek with Disney's lawyers right now, and there it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick finished answering Chief Bogos last question. He and Judy were sitting leaned up against the headboard of the bed in a much more respectable manor than the snuggling they'd been doing earlier, though they were still holding each other's paw under the bed sheet across their laps.

Bogo's pen stopped scratching on the pad of paper and every alarm that Nick had cultivated over the years of hustling, the warnings that kept him alive when he'd had to deal with the darker side of Zootopia and the more cunning and dangerous mammals started blaring. He was sure Judy had felt him stiffen, it took a conscious effort to prevent his hackles from rising. He looked around, careful to make the gesture look casual, and saw the chief raise his head to look at the two of them. And smile.

Oh, shit. Was immediately followed by a reclassification of Bogo in his mental rolodex of people from 'Government flunky (tag: screw with whenever possible)' section to 'Political Player (tag: screw with at your own peril)'.

A shiver ran down his spine, and not a good one. He didn't know what the chief was up to, but he was pretty sure he wouldn't like it. He'd played the hustle game too long to not be able to recognize when another had sighted his mark.

Nick noticed that even Judy looked a little taken aback and slightly confused at the Chief blatant smile.

"So," the chief began in a voice too pleasant to Nick's ears, "Now that that is out of the way we can get to the real issues at hand, I've got bad news and more bad news, where would you like to start?"

Nick spoke up before Judy, his automatic response engaging while he scrambled to marshal all his wits, which unfortunately had been off vacationing in LaLa land thinking about kissing a certain bunny.

"I think I'll start with option three if you don't mind"

Bogo's smile widened, "Good choice." He replied and pulled out a standard yellow office envelope with a clasp on the back and passed it over to him.

Oh shit, got upgraded to 'Crap' as Nick realized that Bogo had come prepared for whatever game Nick was now stuck playing.

He carefully used his claw to snap the clasp and pulled out a rather thick set of paper, not printing paper but the high quality kind of paper used for official documents. Across the top of the first one read 'Marriage Certificate'. Nick scanned the page then started flipping through the rest of the stack
He heard Judy gasp and speak up from next to him, "But how? I mean, Chief really, isn't this kind of overboard and fast? Why did you go through all the trouble to put together a full marriage contract?"

"You can thank Mayor Bristleton for that. He had it put together, asked me to deliver it to you two with his congratulations before I left for the hospital." The chief pulled out his reading glasses, placing the small set on the bridge of his rather large nose and continued.

"I must say that it's a rather impressive document. You see here is the standard parts of a bunny marriage contract," he gestured at one page, "here is the foxes, and here is the best part, "He gestured at the largest section, "He apparently wrangled a few of the city lawyers and judges together to hash out and certify this section to make sure there wouldn't be any grounds to contest the marriage certificate."

"But, this is… is… How can they work? I'm a bunny, he's a fox!" Nick could hear the confusion in Judy's voice, but he kept scanning through the pages.

"Well Hopps, or I guess I should be calling you Mrs. Wilde now," Judy's jaw dropped at that, as he pointed to a line on the certificate, "Since that is a standard rule for both foxes and bunnies marriages, but I don't care. As you can see Hopps," he stressed the name as if daring them to try to get him to change, "there really isn't anything in the marriage laws for either species that would cause a direct issue with the other. For a bunny the willing decision to mark someone legally declares them engaged, the, ah, consummation," Judy's ears turned a bit pink at that, "and then recognition by either the head of family or any official seals the deal. Foxes are a bit different apparently," Bogo flipped back to a page near the front, flipping it over what Nick had been reading, to show Judy, "Foxes really don't have an engagement. The important part is that the female willingly marks them. So long as the male reciprocates that's pretty much it for the legal side. It is customary for the consummation to include tying and a claiming bite from the male, but you two apparently took care of both of those too."

Judy was well past lightly blushing by now. Nick had mostly finished reading the documents. He considered himself a decent street lawyer, you had to be able to understand the law in order to find the loop holes and figure out how far you could bend them if you were going to stay just this side of legal in the hustling business. What he was reading seemed, well, iron clad. No loop holes, no give in the conditions.

He spoke up, "There's no separation clause,"

Bogo took off his glasses and leaned back in the chair. "No, both bunnies and foxes marry for life. Mayor Bristleton also made sure there wouldn't be any room to contest it regarding the situation it occurred under."

Judy beat him to the question he wanted to ask, "But why? Why go through all this, we might not be a normal couple, but it's not like it's the mayor's job to personally involve himself in every marriage in Zootopia!"

Bogo gave them a questioning sardonic look, Nick could swear it was aimed mostly at him, "What you two don't want to be together?"

"That's not what I said!" Judy said at the same time Nick said "Hey! I want to be with her!"

Bogo just snorted at their reactions.
"No, the Mayor did not do this out of the kindness of his heart. He set that up," he gestured at the documents, "so that even if you two were to try and file a petition to get the marriage dissolved, and even if the petition wasn't summarily dismissed, it would take years of legal proceedings to nullify it. He wants you two married so he can use it as a political sledgehammer."

"What?" Nick blurted. He might be good at his field of hustling but he was starting to feel way in over his head, he looked at Judy next to him who didn't seem to be doing much better.

"After Bellwether shot Wilde, he ended up sprinting through part of the city carrying Hopps's limp body by the jaws." Bogo started explaining, "To make it worse she was recognized. The news that Hopps, former hero from the 'Missing Mammals case' had been killed by a savage predator broke on all the news networks almost immediately. That was the tipping point, we had to call in the whole ZPD to prevent full scale rioting in the city. The news of Bellwether's plot broke shortly thereafter, but there were already massive mob protests forming, and that kind of idiot mob mentality is hard to stop once it gets going. By this morning it had polarized into two sides, prey protesters on one side convinced that even without the Nighthowler serum they were in danger and using Hopps as their poster child and predators on the other side, angry over being victimized by Bellwether's plot and claiming all prey were out to get them."

"At that point the city council had elected Bristleton as the temporary mayor, but being the third mayor in 3 months his authority was on pretty shaky ground and the public wasn't paying much attention to him. When we found you two, the Mayor took the news and ran with it. He didn't just use the fact that Hopps was alive to deescalate the situation but dumped the rumors of you two being mated, and the fact that even savage he hadn't hurt you onto the news networks."

Bogo sat back, a grudging look of acceptance on his face, "I have to give the Mayor credit. It's not what I would have done, but it worked. He essentially threw so much fuel on the fire that it burnt itself out in a flash. The protest sides dissolved because they started arguing amongst themselves over the interspecies issue." Bogo actually chuckled, "One moment there would be a predator and prey arguing against each other about potential harm and victimization and the next they're supporting each other arguing against someone else on whether interspecies, especially a predator/prey relationship was right or wrong."

Bogo regained his normal demeanor and continued, "After the protest lines broke up it was fairly easy to get them to disperse and get the city back to some semblance of normalcy. The pred/pray issue is still there but it's died down a bit and is being eclipsed by the interspecies issue at the moment. The Mayor who is taking a personal stance against interspecies relationships but validated the legality of it is playing to both sides of the field. He'd lose a lot of his support if you two ended up not being together."

Nick looked at Judy, she looked shocked at what Bogo had told them. He could sympathizes with her on that feeling. It was hard to imagine that they had managed to disrupt the city to such a degree. But while Bogo's explanation did a lot to explain things he was sure that Bogo was not just here to deliver some paperwork and give them an explanation of current events. Nope, no way. He was still playing at something and Nicholas Piberius Wilde, master hustler, still didn't have a clue as to what.

Nick didn't have any angle to work so he took the direct approach, "Ok, so why are you telling us all
Bogo's smile widened and there was an edge to it, "Well its only proper for the Chief to warn his officers and cadet officers when political issues are hindering their careers isn't it?"

That blind sided Nick. Judy on the other had immediately perked up, posture straightening and ears going erect.

"Sir, I was going to ask if it would be possible to get back on the force, and," She glanced at Nick almost shyly, "if Nick still wanted to apply to be my partner at the ZPD. But how did you know about that?"

The chief snorted like it had been the stupidest question ever asked, "Hopps, I'm the chief. It's my job to know everything. Anyway since you were involved in this incident I had to go check your records, turns out there was a problem with your admin file," he pulled out another folder from one of the pockets on his uniform, and opening it up handed her two documents, one of which had a huge deep brown stain on it, "The ZPD is still a little old fashioned, most of the important administration paperwork still has to be done in hard copy. Unfortunately, when I pulled your file it seems someone had spilled some coffee on it; can't read most of it. Now I could have sworn that when we talked a few months ago that you where resigning not taking an unpaid leave of absence but that's what the admin department told me had been on the paperwork. Said there'd be a mistake putting it in the computer system, so they correct your status to inactive. So you need to redo that paper work," he pointed at the other document that Nick noticed was a blank copy of the first, "So we can get it squared away."

The chief turned to Nick, and handed him sheet of paper from the envelope. He looked down at the official looking letter, the first line reading, 'Congratulations on your acceptance to the Zootopia Police Academy. You are required to report…' Nick looked up, "But I didn't even apply yet!" he nearly squawked. Judy meanwhile had already started to tear through her new set of forms, filling them out.

"Yes you did," the chief answered and handed him another piece of paper, this one a photocopy of a very familiar looking application with his signature and the bottom administrative portion filled out, approved, and stamped."

"But, but.." he stopped since he couldn't seem to speak properly and looked to his side to see Judy looking at the paper just as stunned as he was.

"I," She looked up at him, face half confused, half filled with a ridiculously happy grin "I kept your application after the press conference, but I have no idea how the Chief got it. Last I knew it was in the pocket of my jeans."

Bogo's stern expression was looking all too pleased seeing Nick in his current state of bewilderment, "Well someone submitted it this morning. Since the application was endorsed by another officer the paperwork got fast-tracked."

Nick just looked at Judy. She was nearly bouncing on the bed in excitement. He could remember the feeling he had at the press conference when she had first asked him to be her partner on the force. To be able to work with someone he trusted, someone who cared, and to do something more than hustle mammals, something better, something to be proud of. It was a kithood dream that had been impossible. Now to be able to have all of that, to be able to do a job every day that he had only dreamed of and to do it with the bunny he loved. It was too good to be true, he knew it, some sense was telling him there was a catch but he didn't care. He could spend every day with his Judy, wake up with her, go to work with her, and come home with her. It was so much better than even the old
dream he had harbored as a young kit, It was that dream but with someone he could share it with every day, every step of the way.

He leaned over to Judy, a smile breaking across his face, not a smirk or a grin but a real smile, "So you still want me to be your partner on the force?"

"Yes, that would be perfect!" she nearly shouted, bouncing up and giving him a quick peck. She was beaming, looking happier than he'd ever seen her.

Bogo coughed, "Assuming Wilde can make it through the academy with top scores in order to get a spot at precinct one." His face hardened into one of absolutely unquestionable seriousness, "You realize that I will tolerate NO public displays of affection. If, and that is one big if, you two end up working together, the moment you let your relationship interfere with your work you will find yourselves in different precincts let alone with different partners. DO. I. MAKE. MY. SELF. CLEAR."

Judy and Nick both nodded. Nick was feeling like he was on top of the world at that moment.

"Good. However, there is a problem. Currently you both are no longer eligible to be part of the ZPD."

Chapter End Notes

Did this chapter just get split again because of another perfect cliffhanger? you betchaya

Did this chapter just get corrected because gonekrazy3000 is on a typo hunt? you betchaya

Was this chapter maybe not as fluffy as normal? Well tough luck! life aint' all sugary awesomeness to be mixed with your coffee. (However, groveling and gifts of coffee may potentially change my opinion on this: ship to SS WildeHopps pirates, care of the jail-keeper, he'll get it to me after his cut) Till next time keep worrying about your favorite duos futures.
Judy had to stop, go back and replay Bogo's words to make sure she'd heard them correctly.

"Good. However, there is a problem. Currently you both are no longer eligible to be part of the ZPD."

She replayed it twice more in her mind. Carrot Sticks! And things had just seemed like they were going to be perfect. The marriage contract had been more of a surprise to her than anything else, and thinking back on it she couldn't help but see it as more of a pleasant surprise, a very, very, pleasant surprise. As her mom had pointed out she might not have fully thought this through, but she knew she wanted to be with Nick. And when Judy knew she wanted something, had decided on it with that degree of certainty, nothing, not anything, would stop her. She couldn't help but admit to herself, way deep down in the secret corners of her heart, that if she had known what she did now about fox mating customs, she probably would have marked him under the bridge right after her apology. Just the idea that someone else could have claimed him made her blood boil. He was hers, her mate, her husband. She rather liked the sound of that word. She had decided, or accepted, not that there really was a difference to her, that she loved Nick; just like she had decided that she had wanted to help mammals and be a police officer, about which, she thought, her mind refocused on the topic at hand. Bogo's statement might have caused most mammals in her position to become disheartened. But she was Judy Hopps, she stopped, had to rethink that last piece and corrected it with a smug mental smile Nick would probably be proud of, she was Judy Wilde, she didn't get disheartened, or at least not for very long, she got determined.

She looked up at Nick next to her. He had a rather sour expression, like someone had just given him a carrot, ok probably blueberry, ice-cream cone and then taken it back after the first taste. She squeezed his paw and when he turned to look back at her, she hit him with the best, most reassuring smile she could.

She couldn't have been more pleased with the result. Nick's expression after a moment of looking like he'd just been blinded, softened. Judy had to stop herself from kissing him again. In front of her mother was bad. But in front of Chief Bogo could hurt their careers, could prevent them from being partners. She would not risk that. Don't kiss the fox, don't kiss the happy handsome fox, don't kiss your happy handsome fox that's looking at you like that! Judy was honestly relieved when Nick's hustler mask reestablished itself and he turned back to face Chief Bogo with a return squeeze to her paw. She didn't think that she could have held out much longer when Nick, the real Nick behind the front he put up to the world looked at her like that.

"So Chief, what's the issue? Public opinion against us? Too much bad press for the department?
'Bristleton the Blind Bulldozer' making a fuss?" Nick spoke up, voice back to default smug.

The Chief just looked at him for a second before letting out a half grunt/half chuckle, "Figures you'd heard of that name. I don't care what mammals think about who we hire, what I do care about is hiring the best police mammals we can get. And no mess of the Mayor's is going to stop me from doing just that."

"So it was something the Mayor did?" Nick pressed.

"Not directly. We found some plans in Bellwether's apartment for a series of slow gradual policy changes to completely segregate and oppress the predator population. So after Bristleton the Blin-, ahem, Mayor Bristleton started stabilizing his position, he leaked some of what we found to the press and was planning to officially announce his first policy act as Mayor, as of," The Chief looked at his watch, "about 45 minutes ago, to revoke all policy changes that Bellwether had influenced or passed. For the most part this is a good thing, the down side is that the Mammal Inclusion Initiative is now officially revoked. Without that the Zootopia Police Department will be forced to retire you Hopps and rescind its Academy offer to you Wilde since neither of you meet mandatory minimum regulation requirements and therefore are incapable of properly executing the job of a police officer due to your sizes. Unfortunately, unlike relationships between officers on the force this regulation cannot be bypassed by a waiver. You'll be receiving the official paper work sometime in the next few days giving you the regrettable news."

Bogo and Nick were both showing almost no emotions, like this was meaningless pleasantries over tea and scones. But Judy was getting better at deciphering the fox behind the mask, there was a spark of mischief behind his eyes, like at the DMV when right before Flash had finished typing in the plate number and he distracted him with a joke.

Nick spoke up, "Well, won't that cause a bit of mess when the it gets out that the Mayor is forcing the police department to let go of their cute-" Judy elbowed him right under the ribs, though she had to hide a smile. Nick winced and amended his statement, "I mean their hero bunny cop? What ever will you do." He finished on an overly concerned note.

"Well the Mayor made it clear at his last council meeting that he has no intention of making further policy changes. Something about presenting a strong and stable government for the citizenry and everything being fine before the last two incompetent waste of mammals took office." Judy gave the chief a look, "His words not mine." the Chief replied with a shrug and continued,

"Since the ZPD is being forced to let go of one of our best officers," Judy could feel a warm glow of pride at the compliment, "and a promising cadet that already has an impressive record with the ZPD and has been officially accepted into the academy, we have submitted a case to the judicial branch regarding what now appears to be a prejudicial rather than logical regulation requirement," the Chief glanced at his watch again, "about 30 minutes ago. I'll need you two to sign these, so that we can add them to the case file." Chief Bogo handed her and Nick a rather large legal document and started pointing out where they needed to sign and initial. Judy had to correct her signature the first time, she was still getting used to having a different last name, but the document gave her a good chance to practice, it required quite a few signatures after all.

Nick was grinning the whole time, and after the last signature he piped up, "I like your style Chief, that was a nice move using the justice department against the former head of the justice department. Think it'll work though?"

"With only one mammal, they might argue it was a fluke, but there are now two that have now been accepted into the ZPD. It's a much stronger case not to mention it has the full backing of the police department"
Nick considered this for a moment, and his mood seemed to sour a bit, "Chief, you're forgetting something. I'm a fox, a fox with a not particularly stellar background."

"In a case where prejudice is a factor? No, the department's lawyers assured me they can make that work to our advantage. And there is a certain government official in particular that wouldn't want a public spectacle over prejudicial treatment of a predator in the courts right now. The Mayor will be making sure that every government department is going to be on their best behavior to prevent the pred/prey issue from reigniting."

Chief Bogo smiled again, Judy thought he need to work on it because his smile was not happy or reassuring.

"And as for your background. I made sure to do a thorough check of it to ensure nothing problematic comes up."

Nick gulped, "Besides some legal if not entirely respectable entrepreneurial adventures, include one apparent misadventure into the amusement park industry," Nick actually looked a bit abashed at that, she had to make sure she got that story out of him at some point, "the only issue that came up was some questions regarding your taxes after the forensics teams took a look at a certain carrot recorder pen while going over evidence for Bellwether's case." Judy glanced up at Nick, eyes going wide. She hadn't meant to get him in trouble with that, she thought her conversation with Nick hadn't heard the conversation Nick recorded under the bridge. Judy had learned in her time at precinct one that police departments lived on coffee, donuts, and rumors. She didn't need 'dumb bunny' added to the mountain they probably already had.

Nick was about to speak up, when the Chief just rolled right over him. "Now I'm sure that it was just some innocent mistake so I had our financial department review all of your taxes since you are, or I guess were, a ZPD cadet. They found a few mistakes here or there and put together a small corrected tax form for you, said it wasn't any trouble at all. All you need to do is sign it and pay some minor back taxes you owe." Bogo produced another tome of a legal document. Judy really felt like she needed to figure out how the Chief seemed to magically produce all these documents. It was an impressive trick and she noted that it would probably be effective for police interrogations considering Nicks reaction.

Nick hesitantly took the document and blanched after reading the top page, "I don't have that kind of money!"

Chief Bogo just looked at him while he seemed to melt, his ears were down and he had sunk to the point that his head was even with Judy's. Chief Bogo finally spoke, "Well it's a good thing for you then that there was a reward for assisting the police on each of the fourteen missing mammals you helped find three months ago. You should have stuck around longer after that press conference, but it all worked out in the end. I instructed the financial department to go ahead and pay off your back taxes with the reward money. Here's a check for the rest of it and if you can finish signing those tax forms all that will be taken care of."

Chief Bogo handed Nick a check, and after looking at it he muttered under his breath, "Of course" in a dejected sort of way. Judy looked over to see a check from the Zootopia Police Department that was for a dollar and thirty two cents.

"So Wilde, your past history won't matter. Our department lawyers are quite sure that we will win, the only remaining problem is time. These sorts of cases don't happen fast, I was told to expect that this one could take a year or so."

"Little long for a honeymoon" Nick muttered still engulfed in reading the tax document. Judy blushed at that, and Bogo frowned as if trying desperately to avoid thinking about the subject.
"Unfortunately there's nothing that can be done to speed it up. Do either of you have any idea as to what you'll be doing in the mean time? It wouldn't reflect well on the force if the two star recruits they're advocating for are out hustling *popsicles*.

Nick looked up at that, "Hey! They were Pawpsicles! And everybody loved them."

Nick's look of righteous outrage and hurt hit the Chief and bounced off without leaving so much as a smudge.

Judy was trying to think up of something, going back to Bunnyburrow to farm carrots with Nick for a year was right out. Not only did she not care for her family's traditional business and that the idea of her city slick Nick farming carrots was nearly ludicrous, but small town communities thrived on gossip. Besides how the crops were doing there wasn't much else to talk about. Which buck was courting which doe was prime grounds for gossip and any hint of something juicy or scandalous would be talked about endlessly for weeks, sometime months. There was absolutely no way she was going back till the rumor mill had a chance to grind down.

She turned to Nick, "Got any ideas slick? I can't really see you farming carrots off in Podunk, and I've never done anything else beside that and police work."

Nick shook his head, "Sorry Carrots, you're enough for me, and I'm fresh out of jobs that don't include hustling."

There was a moment of silence, broken by the Chief.

"Well, there are a few spots I know of in the mammal resource office in city hall. I'm sure a recommendation for the Zootopia Chief of Police, could get you two a job there."

Judy wasn't too enthusiastic about that, but the Chief had suggested it and she didn't have any better ideas. Anyways a job was a job and it would only be for a year. She was about to nod her head when she saw Nick's terrified face.

"What?" she asked him. Nick leaned over to one of her long ears and spoke in a quite desperate voice.

"Judy! Mammal resources is staffed by sloths! Flash has his nickname for a reason, he's held the DMV's most productive employee award for 5 years straight!"

Judy shuddered. A year working every day with sloths? She shuddered again, Bunnyburrow was looking like a decent option compared to that.

"Or," Bogo said picking up the documents he needed, an almost happy look on his face, as he got up and headed for the door, "You could try something like applying for a private detective's license from the ZPD. Also, I'll be sending an officer up in the morning with the personal affects we recovered while tracking you two down. Goodnight."

And before Judy or Nick could get out so much as a word out the chief was gone.

They spent almost a minute looking at the closed door before looking at each other.

Nick slumped down laying on his back, "Ughh, I can't believe I'm planning on getting a job working for that mammal."

"So, what was that about an amusement park?" Judy asked. Nick groaned louder and covered his face with a pillow.
"Juuddy, it's not polite to kick a canine when he's down. Bogo just got us, me in particular, three ways till Sunday. How can I ever look at myself in a mirror again and call myself a hustler after that?"

"Sooo?" she grinned looking down at Nick who peeked out from around the pillow and sighed.

"Tomorrow, I'll tell you if you ask me tomorrow." Judy leaned over and gave him a quick kiss for that, which coincidently seemed to cheer him up a good deal.

"I'm assuming we're probably going to look into this whole private detective deal," Judy nodded, reaching down and started playing with his ears.

"You realize that he left us with that idea for a reason, it's probably some nefarious plot to ruin my reputation further," He waved one paw in the air dramatically. "It's a trap!" he said in a voice to match the gesture.

"But think about it, we get to work together, get to solve mysteries and hopefully help some mammals. It'll be like training for being partners on the force." She was scratching around the base of his ears now.

"He left that hook out there with a bit of bait, and… we're falling for it… hook line… and… and…" Nick was having trouble finishing his sentence, his eyes half closed and a rumble building as she kept scratching. She hummed happily, seeing his reaction.

She leaned down next to his ear. Nick was a limp, lightly rumbling mass with his head in her lap and a big dopey grin on his face by this point. "You know we don't have to deal with that till tomorrow. It's almost evening now. The doctor is done with us for the night, my parents are gone, Chief Bogo has left. It's just you and me."

Nick's happy rumble increased at that and his tail actually started to wag. Judy had to suppress a giggle at that; it was just so adorably cute watching him like this. She loved seeing him this way, relaxed and happy, she loved that she could make him feel like this.

She whispered into his ear, "You know I thought you said something about a honeymoon earlier. Does that start tonight?"

Nick's eyes popped open, the rumbling suddenly ceasing. He looked at her for a second, his emerald green eyes locked on hers. And before she realized he'd moved, he was holding her in his arms, his big paws on her back, a flurry of kisses descending on her. She hummed happily and kissed him back, kissed him on his neck, on his cheek, on the side of his long muzzle.

It wasn't long before the storm of wild kisses turned into deep kisses exploring each other's mouths with breaks just long enough to breathe. Judy was finally alone with her fox, her one and only mate, and she didn't have to hold back the feelings and desires as she'd been doing while they dealt with the world. Now her world consisted of Nick and only Nick, and she let her desires take rein. She wanted to touch him, to feel his fur against hers, to meet his need and show him that she was as much his as he was hers. And so she did just that.

---

A considerable amount of time later, Judy was just getting her breath back. It was hard to describe exactly how she felt, but happy would be a good place to start. She was laying on her side holding, and held up against Nick's furry chest, their hospital gowns long since discarded. Nick had rolled them over on their sides so his larger bulk wasn't on top of her as their breathing returned to a more
normal pace. She could smell him everywhere, with every breath, his scent and the slightly different musky scent of his that screamed mine. She was pretty sure that they had marked every spot of each other's bodies. She wiggled closer to him but the movement caused the pressure holding them together to shift and pulse and a wave of sensations and pleasure ran through her making her hum as she buried her face into his fur breathing in his scent and running her paws through his long sleek fur. She could feel his breath hitch at the movement before he quickly marked her again and placed a few kisses around her ears just for good measure.

After a minute or so she managed to speak, "So, as odd for a bunny as it might seem I'm kind of new to all this and bunny sex-ed class only covered part A going into part B, they never covered any part C keeping the two together."

Nick laughed lightly and kissed her between the ears. The movement from his laughter caused another wave of sensation and she let out an involuntary gasp followed by a deeper hum.

"I'm new to all of this too" he said back to her.

It took her a moment but she managed to speak again, "Well I was just sort of wondering how long we're going to be stuck like this, not that I'm complaining! I actually like it, its just..." She could feel her ears turning pink as she trailed off. Judy felt one of his paws move under her chin and tilt her head up till she could see him looking down at her. His green eyes seemed to smile happily at her and he leaned down and gave her a long light sweet kiss that told her how deeply he loved her. By the time he pulled away her heart rate had tripled and all she could look at, think about was Nick. His voice broke through to her thoughts, "Judy, you're my mate, the only mate I'll ever have, my wife," his tone as he said that was filled with wonder and happiness, "You don't ever have to feel embarrassed talking to me about anything. We're both learning, and I want to know everything about you, what you do or don't like, in and out of bed, what growing up on a farm was like, what being a bunny is like, what you want from your future, everything. I want you to always be able to talk to me to tell me how you're feeling and what you're thinking." He kissed her on her nose. "I love you Judy. I always will".

Judy choked up hearing that, she could feel tears welling in her eyes. She managed to say, "I love you too," before she buried her face back in his chest and let the tears flow. This was why she loved him so much, this was the fox that hid behind the mask. Mating with Nick might be wonderful, beyond wonderful, but this feeling, the loving care in his words, in the way she could feel his paw stroking her ears as he made comforting sounds as she cried. This is what made her feel truly content and happy. As her tears slowed and stopped, Nick kept petting her, but spoke again.

"I like being like this too. I like being able feel you, to hold you close, to know that you choose me and that you are mine. I especially like that you enjoy it too." He kissed her again, "as for how long, well that depends on a lot of things but especially how emotional and responsive we are. The stronger your scent, the more you make my heart pick up, the stronger my feelings are running, all of that plays into it. Could be 10 minutes or nearly an hour, I've never done this before so I really don't know, but I'd expect us to be like this for a while yet."

Judy looked up still too full of feelings to be able to speak, so she just chinned his neck, and ruff, and chest again.

She snuggled into Nick and could feel him wrap himself around her. Tomorrow would be a new day, would bring new adventures, and she and Nick would face them together. But for now, she could simply enjoy being with her Nick. She didn't think it was possible to be happier.
RIP Typos, gonekrazy3000 was here

To the (FanFiction.net)Reviewers:

Starfang's Secrets, Archangel12575, gonekrazy3000, bagnome, Fox in the Hen house, AnimeFan51, RenkonNairu, redwolf23456, Darkwolfslayer21, Uranium235, GusTheBear. (I think that's everybody since last time)

Also all the new Reviewers on Ao3,

Thank you all for the reviews, support and helpful comments. My pirate captors are pleased and have issued me an additional coffee allowance today. Whoppie!

Also it's really cool to see some real big name authors comment on this story, never would have seen that coming.

Now until next time, Happy Thanksgiving! I need to go treat my fluff exposure burns from writing this chapter and see if I can steal some turkey from the jail keeper.
Chapter Notes

We interrupt your normally scheduled programming for this, well what ever this is,

Disclaimer: Here's an IOU. My pirate lawyer will get back to you after we've finished recovering from partying and overeating. Clawhauser would be proud though.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lucy Holfsteader was ecstatic as she nearly skipped through the doors into the hospital. She loved her job as a nurse at Zootopia Central Hospital, but that would not normally be enough to have her in such a state. No, it was the fact that Zootopia's newest celebrity couple was recovering in her wing of the hospital. She nearly squealed just thinking about it. She had texted all her friends and had spent a ridiculous amount of time, even for her she admitted, on MuzzleBook chatting about it. She had even swapped with Tom for his night shift because they'd be checked out before her next scheduled one.

"Evening Arnold," She waved at the hospital security guard, while speaking almost too fast to be understood, "Oh I guess its morning, isn't it just such a great morning though, I'm so excited for work tonight. It's just awesome!" She did squeal now just thinking about it.

"Morning Lucy" the older timberwolf at the security desk said back with a look of one dealing with a loveable but exasperating cub, "Isn't your next shift tomorrow?"

"Oh No! No no no, I switched with Tom, you know how he hates the late shift. Don't know why he'd want to change though. I mean how often do we get to deal with celebrities. Isn't it just sooo cool?!"

Arnold flipped back up the newspaper he had lowered when the doors had opened, "If you say so Lucy. I'm not sure you can call them celebrities though, give it a few days and the hype will die down." Lucy let out an indignant huff at that, "Anyway Lucy, make sure to keep an eye out tonight. Not only did the police ask us to be extra careful but I caught two reporters trying to sneak in. Had even dressed up as doctors and everything."

"Sure thing Arnold. I'll be extra careful, no one will get past us, I can guarantee-"

"Lucy" The wolf broke in not even lowering his newspaper, "As much as I love talking to you, you're going to be late if you don't hurry"

Lucy looked up at the wall clock and gasped before rushing off with a hurried, "Thanks Arnold!, I'll make sure to text you everything!"

As Lucy headed for the elevators she didn't see the wolf sigh and shake his head with a small smile, or hear his muttered, "Cubs these days, too many newfangled gadgets and ideas for an old wolf like me." He flipped a page and seeing another article on a certain fox and rabbit sighed again but didn't lose the amused smile and began to read anyway, "Cubs these days"

The elevator doors opened and Lucy rushed over to the nurse station. But before she could get so much as a word out an irritated voice spoke up.
"Where have you been? My shift is over and I want to get home."

"Oh don't be like that Doris," Lucy said still upbeat despite the hares obviously bad mood, "I'm only a minute late. What's got your ears in a twist? Ohh, you're not worried about your date tomorrow, are you? I should have known, you must be nervous, maybe you should take a few notes from the Wildes, they seem to know how to handle this whole romance thing." She let out a giggle at that but stopped when she saw the hare stiffen.

Doris turned to her now clearly mad, "Stop your jabbering Lucy! Two different species can't love each other, and anyone who believes in that kind of hoax is just showing how gullible and stupid they are. Those two are nothing but filthy unnatural abominations. No bunny in their right mind would willingly choose to mate with a damned fox! I tell you, that lowlife either threatened or tricked her into.. into.." The hare was so mad she was nearly shaking, "Damned filthy conniving pelt! That fox is just another pred criminal running another scam, and that dumb cowardly bunny would be better off dead than letting herself be used like that! I can't believe we have to tolerate, let alone actually waste our time providing care for trash like them!" having finished her tirade the other nurse turned and stormed away, leaving Lucy in open mouthed shock.

…

Lucy was sitting at the nurse's station thinking back on Doris' reaction. When Arnold had made his rounds a few minutes ago he had immediately picked up on her downcast mood and asked her what was wrong. For a moment, she didn't know whether to tell him about Doris or not, but she trusted Arnold and needed someone to talk to. Arnold was a kind old wolf who had always watched out for everyone at the hospital, he even joked that they were all like a second pack to him. Despite the age difference they got along well, Arnold had been at the hospital almost as long as she'd been alive and had helped her out a lot when she had started here; she had helped him in turn with his new phone and other bits of 'fancy new technology' as he always jokingly called them. He was a friend, almost more like wise older uncle to her. She could trust him and he could probably help her sort out all the mixed feelings she had after the altercation, so she told him what happened.

Arnold had patiently listened, even pulling out a handkerchief so she could wipe away a few tears and blow her nose. By the end of her explanation she could see that his normally happy smile had a distinctly sad look to it and his ears which were normally always alert and attentive, even when reading his newspaper, were drooping a bit.

"She's always been so kind and nice, I just don't understand how she could suddenly change like that."

"Lucy, I wish I could give you an answer and make everything better but I can't." he let out a sad, world weary sigh, "I don't know what made Doris hate interspecies couples like that, but what I can tell you is that most mammals don't intend to be hateful or cruel. Sometimes pride can make mammals intolerant, or something could have happened in her past to prejudice her against them. But most of all when mammals are afraid of things that are different or something they don't understand they let that fear build and fester into something nastier. Rather than try to understand or even just accept it, they can't so they end up lashing out at it from hate built of fear." He stopped for a second considering, "Have you seen over the last couple months how Doris has been getting more timid around predators, even around me?"

"Yes, but everyone was scared. Now we know that it wasn't anybody's fault, that the savage cases were part of Bellwether's plot to split up the city!" Lucy replied some firmness coming back to her sad voice.

"Mammals may know but that doesn't mean they aren't still afraid. Bellwether was playing on an old
fear but one that’s been around for a long time. If Doris is even now letting that fear influence her is it so surprising that she’d let a fear of something so different as an interspecies couple, especially a pred/pray couple and one that is particularly close to her own species and traditional enemy, turn to hate?

"But, but they're doing nothing wrong! You understand that!"

"Understand it? Too be honest Lucy, I don't. I can’t imagine how those two ended up being mates, friends sure, but mates? Their species are so different, and mating its… Well, Lucy you know I'm an old wolf set in my ways. I have cubs older than you. The idea of interspecies marriages is just too foreign to me."

Lucy was just staring at him in open mouthed shock.

"The thing is, Lucy, that even though I don't understand it I'm not afraid of it either. Theirs a lot of new things in the world I find hard to understand and this is just another. They're not hurting anyone else and they're not hurting each other or themselves, so what reason do I have to be angry at them? Sheesh, I still find that fancy new phone scarier than an interspecies couple."

"But Arnold, what do I do now? I never thought that Doris could… could hold so much vitriol! How do I work with her knowing that?"

"There's a time and place to try and change others opinions through talk and such, but in most cases especially in everyday life the best thing we can do is to keep on being accepting regardless of those that aren't. Without something to feed on, hate and fear will eventually die down. We just need to make sure not to give it any more fuel than possible and show those that do that there is another way. Now," he looked at the clock on the nurse's station counter, "I've got to finish my rounds and get back to the security counter before Fred thinks I'm slacking off." He gave her one last smile and started walking down the corridor. "Don't forget. You promised to text me all your gossip."

"It's not gossip!" she said back at him, but a smile had returned to her face even if it wasn't as large as her normal one.

…

A little while later Lucy was going down the corridor doing the early morning check on patients. She had thought long on what Arnold had said. She still had a hard time believing that the kindly old wolf couldn't really understand interspecies relationships, not that she was interested in that way; she had a very nice buck she liked down in the pharmacy department that she was pretty sure was the one for her. But this was Zootopia where anyone could be anything, where predators and prey had first started learning to live with each other, well at least that's what the city claimed. The point was that even if she wasn't herself into that kind of relationship, this was the city where it should have been accepted without issue. Most of her friends agreed with her and believed that the fox and the bunny if anything should be applauded for their courage in showing what two mammals could be.

Her mood was improving the more she thought about it though, Arnold was right, the best thing she could do was continue as she had and be happy and supportive for the two adorable mammals.

She closed the door on the beaver's room, he was sleeping without issue, the construction injury to his tail seemed to be recovering well and continued on to the next room.

She nodded her head in determination, she would -. She stopped as she heard muffled noises from the next room and worriedly headed over. She was about to open the door when the noises registered and she froze.
They were not the noises of someone hurt, quite the opposite. Lucy put up a hoof to cover her mouth and could feel her face start to burn. The heavier carnal sounds were interspersed with softer ones and passionate murmurs, moans, and growls between two mammals. The heat on her face doubled when she made out a set of 'I love you's and the sounds increased.

Lucy unfroze and quickly continued down the hall to check on the next room. The patients in that one where obviously fine. She started giggling, face still flushed and hoof over her mouth, thinking back on her almost blunder. She couldn't wait to get back to the nurse's station so she could start texting all her friends.

---

Bogo was in a good mood as he walked to precinct one for the start of his morning. He noticed the normal wide berth that mammals gave him, he would have thought that his normally stern expression would have been softer with his unusually jubilant mood. He decided to try smiling. The other pedestrians suddenly gave him an extra foot or two of space on the sidewalk. He just snorted at that and took a sip from his morning coffee as he continued to walk. A morning newspaper stand caught his eye, and he bought a copy of one of the papers, skimming through the front article as he continued to walk. The paper was one of Zootopia's extremely popular if sometimes less creditable papers, not at the level of the gossip magazines, but close in Bogo's opinion. The Zootopia Inquirer had a front-page article labeled 'Scandal or Hoax', and it was not one of their better written articles either. It was rife with rumor and speculation and little fact. It also claimed that an undisclosed source from the hospital had stated that Hopps and Wilde could barely stand being in the same room with each other and that the entire marriage was a fabricated scam.

Nonetheless this kind of reaction was to be expected, and all Bogo had to do to raise his mood back up was think back on Wilde's confused and flabbergasted expression from yesterday. Yes this was a good morning, his plan was working perfectly, and one problem after another had been getting fixed. And speaking of problems, Bogo thought as he entered the lobby of the precinct seeing a particular chubby cheetah destroying a box of donuts while loitering around the front desk again, talking to a nearly asleep looking moose officer station behind it.

"Clawhauser! Aren't you supposed to be down in records?" Bogo said, he was sure he hadn't shouted, it was just his normal conversation voice, but the cheetah's jovial mood seemed to deflate like a popped balloon.

"And Antlerson, Haven't we had this discussion about falling asleep at the front desk, you've only been here what a half an hour?" The Moose nodded in answer with a barely heard, "yes chief" before seeming to nod off again.

Bogo killed the desire to start rubbing his temples. He would not let this destroy his morning. Clawhauser, had snagged three boxes of donuts and was slinking dejectedly toward the hallway that lead to records. Bogo had noted that his eating habit had gotten far worse (he wouldn't have previously believed that was possible) since his transfer to records and was getting worried that he wouldn't be able to make minimum requirements at the next physical if this kept up. Antlerson on the other hoof was a conundrum Bogo had never understood. Bogo had never had an officer keep the records room so organized or be able to identify or pull information so quickly and actually like the work. And all that despite always seeming to be asleep.

Well, now that I don't have the mayor's office pressuring us I can fix this stupid situation. Bogo thought.

"Clawhauser, Antlerson. You two seem to be having issues with your new stations, due to this
deficiency I'm forced to have to reassign you back to your previous posts. If your efficiency doesn't pick back up I'll be forced to put an official reprimand in your files. Is that understood?" He finished with a bit of extra sternness for good measure.

Antlerson actually seemed to wake up at that, and Clawhauser had turned around and looked like Gazelle had just walked through the doors. They both eagerly nodded their heads.

_Humm, better force Clawhauser to get some exercise too._

"Antlerson be ready to move back down to records by noon, Clawhauser before you swap back with Antlerson I need you to run by my office and grab the paperwork and personal effects recovered for Hopps and Wilde and deliver them to the hospital. It's not very far so don't bother checking out a cruiser"

Even exercise didn't seem to phase Clawhauser, but Bogo wasn't sure if that was because of him getting his spot at the front desk back or going to visit Hopps. Well, he didn't care which it was, so long as his officers started getting their work done again. With another snort, he continued to his office with a last, "Well stop standing about and get to work!"

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Nick was in that happy place between being asleep and awake. He loved sleeping in in the mornings when he didn't have to hustle or sitting out in his lawn chair snoozing away under the afternoon sun. This was so much more pleasant than normal though, he felt more relaxed than a slow morning nap and felt a warmth better than sunshine. He cracked one eye open to see why and noticed a long grey ear draped over his muzzle.

_Ohh, that's why._

He closed his eye and started drifting back off to sleep still holding Judy against him. The warmth of her fur against his was so comforting and her scent that surrounded him was intoxicating. He breathed it in with every slow breath luxuriating in it. It was different from a fox's, lighter, sweeter. It made him think of fresh air and _home_. Not the home he'd grown up in but a home of his own, of theirs, one he wanted desperately to build with her. Her scent shouldn't have been able to affect him like this, but it did and he loved it. He floated back off to a state of semi-sleep smiling, still thinking of his bunny. Or at least until the alarm went off.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA,

Judy squirmed against him nose twitching before nuzzling up against the underside of his chin and muttering, "stupid clock" while desperately flailing at the table next to the bed with one paw.

"AAAAAAAAAAAWWWWWWWWWW,

The high-pitched squealing alarm continued unabated. Nick, eyes still closed, kissed the base of one ear as it wiggled in front of his mouth, murmuring, "Morning Carrots, why'd you set an alarm?"

"WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW,

"I didn't" Came an exasperated response along with a desperate nuzzle and kiss, as she moaned "Make it stop Nick"

The alarm suddenly changed.

"OOOHH M GGGOOODDDNNNEEESSSS!"
How did gonekrazy3000 get my computer to play 'another one bites the dust' when his corrections arrived?

So Lucy's part was planned as a short funny intro into this chapter, but sometimes stories have different ideas, taking on a life of their own and derailing from the writers intended path. Looking back on it I can't really complain; this chapter became something more than it would have been otherwise.

And anyways The story needed a bit of a break from the fluff, almost couldn't taste my coffee through all the ridiculous stuff. Plus now I get to throw in another cliffhanger. Your welcome, The cries of frustrated readers is sweet music to my ears.
Chapter 11 - How To Start A New Day

Chapter Notes

A/N

I have a big pot of coffee today so I thought that I needed this to go with it.

Disclaimer: Ok we might be in trouble, Disney has apparently sent out Captain Hook to hunt us down and all I have is a digital clock.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"OOOHH M GGGOOODDDNNNEEEESSS!"

That, Nick decided did not sound like an alarm clock. Before he'd fully opened his eyes, Judy had sat up straight like she'd been ejected from their snuggle.

"Clawhauser!" Judy said then looked down at her unclothed self, a very lovely if ruffled figure Nick thought. They'd certainly need to get a shower and groom a bit before they left, Judy's gray fur was a bit disheveled, tufts matted and tousled from their activities yesterday evening, and night, and a few times this morning Nick remembered with a satisfied grin looking at his mate.

For that matter they probably needed to take a shower to attempt to knock down the smell as well. Between their liberal marking of each other, which Nick thought was an understatement if he'd ever heard one, and their bedtime activities, even the most scent blind would be able to smell exactly what they had been up to all night.

Judy's eyes widened as she took in her state, Nick knew he probably didn't look any more presentable than her but he found her figure mesmerizingly beautiful, ruffled or not.

Judy apparently didn't agree because she grabbed the first thing she could and used it to cover herself.

The rather chubby cheetah officer in the doorway, Clawhauser was it? Had both of his paws on his tubby cheeks as he continued to squeal in apparent utter joy. Seeing Judy trying to cover herself, his eyes got even bigger and he started to bounce, muttering in a high pitched voice, "Oh My Goodness, I can't believe she just did that! I knew it! I Knew It! They're SO cute!" Nick just grinned more, even rumbling a bit.

"Clawhauser, what did I say about the C-word?" Judy asked exasperatedly, before then asking in a confused tone, "Know what? Did what?"

Clawhauser just pointed one finger at her bouncing even more now. Judy looked down and finally saw that she had used Nick's tail to cover herself. She blushed a bit but seeing Nick's grin recovered fairly well.

"Oh, well I knew he was useful for more than just keeping the bed warm" she said shooting Nick a mirror of his own smirking grin. Nick sat up and gave her a good morning kiss.

"Almost Carrots, but you're still blushing" he teased after. Grabbing the sheets on their laps and
wrapping them around them like a makeshift toga.

Clawhauser looked like he was fit to burst by this point, "Oh M Goodness! O M Goodness! I know a fox from high school, he doesn't even like his mate touching his tail! That's just the most cu-" he quickly rephrased his sentence, "adorable thing I've ever seen!"

Judy gave Nick a quick wide eyed look before letting go of his tail, "Oh, Nick! I'm so sorry I didn't know, I -"

He kissed her to stop her apology, and not lightly either. There was a loud joyful squeal and a thump.

"Carrots you and nobody else is allowed to touch my tail, and any other part of me you want," he added for good measure, before leaning in close, "I love feeling you against me and the way your paws hold me"

That got him an equally passionate kiss back, and by the time they finished Nick was afraid his smile was going to break his jaw. He looked over to the door to see Clawhauser sitting against the door frame giggling madly.

"You ok over there bud?" he asked. Clawhauser was just barely able to nod, "That'll be a dollar for the show" Nick said still feeling giddy himself from Judy's kiss.

"NICK!" Judy said with a light punch to his shoulder, before she turned her head to see the cheetah frantically waving a pawful of bills at them and giggling twice as hard as before.

"CLAWHAUSER!"

Nicks smirk was well past breaking, he looked at his flustered bunny and simply couldn't resist, "Well Carrots, I guess we need to give the crowd what they paid for."

"Nick, don't you dare-"

But he'd already swept her across his lap, his paws on her back supporting her and leaned down to kiss her like they were at some grand dance not sitting on a hospital bed. He didn't just kiss her. He Kissed her. He gave her a kiss that would make gods envious and the best romance movie actors seem like bumbling high schoolers. He could feel Judy's arms come up and wrap around his neck; the world seemed to stand still and there was nothing but him and Judy as the kiss went on.

And then there was an eruption of cheers and whistles, and even some camera flashes. Nick ignored it all and finished the kiss before slowly pulling back to look at his happily dazed bunny and slowly pulled her up to sit on his lap.

He turned to the door which now was filled to bursting with a small still cheering crowd and gave a short bow, "Thank you, Thank you all! We'll be here all week." Judy looked over to the door, gave a small 'EEpp' before turning and burying her burning face into Nicks ruff.

Nick continued to pander to the crowd which had only picked up its volume at Judy's embarrassment.

In the door way was the still jubilant Clawhauser sitting on the floor, cheering and playfully cat calling while tossing bills; Judy's parents, her father, mouth agape looked like he might just have had a heart attack but her mother was standing there with her phone out snapping pictures with what Nick could only describe as a hustler's smirk on her face. Behind them and to the side was Koslov paws outstretched holding a cheering Fru Fru Big who was also waving some bills in the air. Nick could swear he even saw the stoic bodyguard of the Big family blushing under his white fur. And to
the other side was their antelope nurse who was bouncing, cheering and snapping photos like she was at a concert and a grinning Doctor Winters who gave them another wolf-whistle.

After a few more moments Doctor Winters spoke up, "Ok, everybody settle down, settle down, they're obviously done canoodling, and we don't want to wake up everyone else since the show's over."

"Well, Judy, seems like you bagged yourself quite the dashing one!" piped up Fru Fru's small but excited voice over the calming crowd, "Seems like we might be interrupting, I just wanted to stop by and give you mine and daddy's congratulations. He said that if Nicky doesn't ever treat you right just tell him and he'll straighten Nicky out."

Nick managed not to show it on his face but he winced inside thinking of what Mr. Big would consider 'straightening out'.

Judy, peeked around, cheeks still bright but smiling just a bit, "Thanks, Fru. And tell Mr. Big thank you too, I don't think I'll need him to straighten Nick out, but I'll keep it in mind if he forgets to put the toilet seat down."

"Juddyy!" Nick whined and nuzzled the top of her head, as a few laughs broke out.

"Well, we'll get out of your fur. Tea day after tomorrow?"

Clawhauser piped up before Judy could respond, "OOhh! I knew the best little bakery that just opened up! I'll take both of you and Judy can tell us Everything!"

There was a quick murmured conversation between Clawhauser and Fru Fru, a flash of phones and typing as they exchanged numbers and before he knew it or Judy could join the conversation Koslov and Fru Fru were leaving, Fru Fru waving and yelling back, "Day after tomorrow, 5pm at Honey Bear Bakery!"

Nick turned to Judy, "Carrots did that really just happen? Did I just see another police officer befriend Fru Fru Big?"

Judy looked back at him, "Oh, hush, everybody loves Fru Fru, she's one of the sweetest mammals I know."

Nick just shook his head muttering, "Ya, sweet, sweet like no icing anyone on her wedding."

Doctor Winters broke in, "Well as much as I appreciate a show, you were building up a bit of a crowd and I'll need you two free and ready in an hour. We need to give you two a final checkup and there are a few other doctors that would like to ask you two some questions about your, hum, unique proposal, before we check you two out."

She turned to leave taking the still giggling nurse with her, "Oh, and you might want to shower and wear something else beside the bed sheets." And with one last smirk the two were gone.

Judy sniffed the air, looked at her parents, (her ears where turning violently red again), looked back at their disheveled fur and loosely wrapped bed sheet, and looked over at her mother still holding the phone up. Her ears dropped like two bricks.

"NOOO, Mom you didn't!" Judy said desperately.

"Oh come now, dear, you want the family to get used to your new mate," There were a few clicks and a ping of a message being sent.
"NNNNOOOO!" Judy looked like her mother had just sentenced her to fifty years of hard labor.  

"The best way is to show them how much you two care for each other."

"MMOOMM!" Judy nearly whimpered.

"Well, we need to be getting back to Bunnyburrow and its a long drive. I just hope your siblings haven't burnt down the farm. You remember the house party they threw when we came out to your graduation." She came over leading a shell shocked Stu by the paw, she nudged him and he placed a bag on the bed, all while still dazed. "We picked up some clothes for you, since you didn't seem to have any with you yesterday."

Mrs. Hopps had a quick discussion with a dismayed Judy, and after some pleasantries and getting the location of the farm truck Judy had driven to Zootopia from them gave Judy a kiss on the cheek and looked up at Nick, who had to admit to himself that he was a little apprehensive. "Now you better take good care of our daughter. I expect you two to come out and visit us soon, do you understand?" Nick gave a quick nod and "yes, ma'am", to which she smiled and reached up and lightly pulled him down by the ear for a motherly kiss on the cheek. "Good, and make sure to give this to your parents," she said handing him an envelope, and leading Stu out of the room, with a last wave and, "Take care and do wash up before you head out"

Nick turned back to Clawhauser who was still smiling like a cat that had stolen the cream and got away with it too.

Nick smirked and said "Hey Claw man, I'll take you and the other officers out for a round of beer next weekend, if you all will give me the good stories on Judy from her time at the precinct."

Clawhauser bounced up to his feet and shook Nick's paw faster than he would have imagined the tubby cheetah could have moved with all his flab.

"Deal," he said nearly bouncing, again. Before Judy could even get out her, "Hey! Now wait one carrot baking moment!"

"Oh, don't worry Judy, they're all funny stories and everyone will be happy to see you again. You'd just gotten past all their gruff exteriors when you left, and they all miss you!" He stopped, quickly looked over his shoulder and continued in a low voice, "Though don't tell any of them I said that, they'll deny it even more than Chief Bogo does about being a Gazelle fan!"

He straightened back up. And handed them an office envelope and a few police evidence bags stamped with 'Cleared for Release'.

"I got to be getting back to the precinct, I got my spot back at the Front Desk!" He nearly shouted with joy. "Bogo asked me to deliver this to you all, said to get the paperwork back to him today if possible and not to expect to get your recorder pen back as they're going to need to keep it for Bellwether's case."

Judy started saying, "Thanks" before the two of them were enveloped in a bone crushing hug.

Nick gasped, "Air… Need Air…"

After the deceptively strong cheetah released them with a giggle, he started to leave saying, "I'm sooo happy for you two, you're absolutely adorable together!" He stopped in the doorway, "And Judy don't forget about Honey Bear Bakery!" He squealed in joy and left.

Nick took a few moments and looked at Judy. Her brows were a bit furrowed and her nose was
twitching in the cutest way possible. She looked like she didn't know whether to be happy, embarrassed, or exasperated. He kissed her on the tip of her nose, and nearly laughed when it immediately stopped its mad twitching.

"Well, they all seemed far more supportive than I would have imagined." Nick said. Judy just huffed and crossed her arms.

"almost too supportive" she said exasperation seeming to take the lead.

"I have to admit, Judy, that I'm worried how people will respond to this." Nick said some seriousness coming into his voice as he gestured at the two of them. "Fox's have a pretty bad reputation, let alone the issues with pred/prey and interspecies marriage. I'm worried that that's all going to come back and hurt you."

Judy's expression changed to one of stern determination, "Me? And what about you Nick?"

He shrugged, "I've grown up with it, I'm used to the looks and distrust and sneers. But this is probably going to be even harder than what I've had to live with let alone what you've probably experienced."

Judy reached up and grabbed his ear, and not as carefully as her mother had. He let out a yelp as she pulled him down so they were nose to nose and she speared him with her eyes.

"Now you listen here and listen good. You are mine! I don't give a carrot stalk what everyone else thinks or says, and if anyone so much as dares to do something to you or me they'll find themselves eating dirt so fast that their tails will have to race to catch up."

Nick looked back into her rock hard amethyst eyes filled with an unshakable determination, and could feel his throat tighten up. He tried to speak, to tell her how much she meant to him, how much he loved her but couldn't. Nick had built up so many defenses over the years, so many walls so that no one could ever hurt him, so that no one would ever see that they got to him, but that little bunny, his bunny, could smash right through them. He wrapped his arms around her and held her tight not able to say anything and buried his head in the crook of her neck and shoulder as the emotions crashed through the broken defenses around his heart. Judy just hugged him back as he shook with silent sobs and rubbed his back, murmuring reassurances into his ears as he cried like he hadn't since he was a kit.

Nick didn't know how long it took, but the tears slowed, and his breathing started to even out. Judy had held him the entire time, comforting and reassuring.

He looked up and with a hiccup in his voice said, "No one would ever believe it, the big bad fox being comforted by the bunny."

Judy smiled back at him, "You're this bunny's big bad fox. And don't you forget it."

Nick let out a short hiccupping laugh and Judy continued, "You don't have to hide from me Nick, I'll always be there for you, the world might not agree but we'll face it together and when it gets to one of us the other will be there to hold them up."

Nick hugged her again and whispered into her ear, "I love you, Judy"

"I love you too, Nick"

For a bit they just stayed like that not wanting to move, but eventually Nick reached up and with the back of his paw wiped away the drying tracks of tears.
"So what did Clawhauser bring us?" he said, in an almost normal voice.

Judy looked in the office envelope first. "It looks like application paperwork for a Private Investigator's licenses, hum, oh wow, also tranq gun license applications and ZPD bounty hunter applications. I didn't even know they still issued those."

Nick chuckled, almost back to normal, "They're pretty rare, the ZPD has been stingy issuing them over the last decade or so. Been trying to slowly cut down on the program since they see it as being too close to having people take the law into their own hands."

He chuckled again thinking back to Bogo and how effectively he'd been herding them along in the direction he wanted. "Clever old bull. They only issue those to PIs and while we would be completely separate from the ZPD, they'll still have oversight over us."

"Humm, we'll have to read through all that carefully," she opened up the evidence bags, "Lets see, well, the clothes we were wearing are pretty much destroyed but here's our wallets and phones." She handed Nick back his. "So what are you going to do for clothes when we leave?" She smirked a bit, "Going to leave wearing a hospital gown? I don't think you can go walking around in just your fur outside of a naturalist club."

"Well, wouldn't you just like that?" Nick shot back with as best a grin as he could manage.

Judy, looked him up and down with a critical eye, "Nope, I'd be spending too much time beating away other females to enjoy it."

Nick could feel his chest puff out at her words. He was pretty sure she'd said that hoping to cheer him up, so he gave her a kiss, before opening up his phone. He was lucky, it still had about a quarter battery left.

"Well, we can't have that now can we?" Nick replied, ignoring all the missed call messages and dialed a number.

The phone rang a few times before the call was picked up,

"I should bite your face off!" came an angry sounding deep voice.

"Hey Finn, what's cooking? I need a quick favor." Nick replied in full hustler mode.

"Favor? FAVOR!? You call me up after that bunny cop comes running along bugging me to try and find you? After you two apparently go rampaging through the city and gods know what else. I'm half inclined to believe those crazy rumors the news is spouting about you just up and marrying a bunny! You'd be just nuts enough to do it." Nick was holding the phone away from his ear so that the volume of Finnick's tirade didn't blow out his eardrum.

"Well about that…" Nick began, but Finnick just rolled right over him.

"Do you know what it's been like out here? My van almost got wrecked by goddamned protesters! My Van Nick! Forget it, I will bite your face off the next time I see you! Will teach you a lesson. And what Favor do you want now? Need me to come pull your tail out of some new mess you're starting?"

"No, no, just need you to bring me a change of clothes at the hospital."

"Hospital? Hospital! What the hell are you doing at the hospital naked? Forget it I don't want to know."
"Thanks Finn, I owe you"

"Damn straight!" Nick was feeling pretty good by now. Despite what others might think, the irascible little fox was one of his very few real friends, he just had an odd way of showing he cared.

Right before Nick hung up, Finnick said one last thing that made his fur stand on end.

"Yo, dirt for brains, Your Mother called me, seems like you weren't picking up your phone, said to tell you, you'd better call her right away. Sounded pretty mad to me!" There was a laugh, "You be screwed!" there was a click and the call ended.

All Nick could think was *Oh Shit.*

Chapter End Notes

gonekrazy3000 is like a kid with a magnifying glass zapping ants but with typos.

Ok Thanks to all the (Fanfiction.net) reviewers since last time(below), and the new Ao3 reviewers.

ShadowJ95, kirbster676, Starfang's Secrets, Chris Redfield-General Chaos, Fox in the hen House, bagnome, gonekrazy3000, Archangel12575, Darkwolfslayer21, AnimeFan51, RenkonNairu, redwolf23456, syhsnakey

Once again my captors are pleased. They've even promised to go raid a starbucks if I keep it up. Whoopie!

And for all of you who haven't died of fluff exposure, don't worry there getting released from the hospital soon and there will be WildeHopps (Yes, Yes I know but that just sounds better than Wildes) shenanigans in the near future, that is if Someone survives the world destroying wrath that we all fear from or parents no matter how old we are.
Chapter Notes

So apparently selling Clawhauser alarm clocks is an infringement on Disney's copyright, too bad, it was a cool idea.

Disclaimer: A clock, A clock! My story for A Clock!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Judy heard the click of Nick's phone and the deep voice of Finnick was cut off. Judy had seen Nick in a number of states, from happy to scared, flummoxed to embarrassed (she had to stop a giggle thinking back to right after their conversation with Bogo), but his current look was closer to terror. Not the kind of terror she remembered from the pit in the museum, thank goodness, but too close for comfort.

Nick sat there with his phone in his hand, ears flat, jaw hanging partially open and eyes wide as saucers. She could feel his fur standing on end.

"Nick?" she said, a little worry in her voice.

He just kept looking at the phone like it was an execution notice. Well she couldn't leave her fox in such a state and Judy was never one to back down from a challenge or a problem. She'd face this head on, no matter what kind of reaction her, she gulped a little, mother-in-law would have to them.

She reached over and with one paw gently closed his mouth before placing her nose against his.

"Nick, it's going to be ok." She said softly as he blinked his eyes, seeming to start to unfreeze. She broke the contact and, giving him a quick kiss, snuggled back into his side before she started fiddling with the phone she'd eased from his paw.

Nick was looking down on her with an expression of almost amazement, like he had just been told that she'd single-handedly stopped the world from ending. Judy hummed a bit seeing that and leaned into his side. There it was. She hit the call button next to a contact labeled 'Mom'.

Nick spoke up, "Judy thanks, it's just that I have…" his eyes focused on what she had in her hand and she was pretty sure she could see the blood drain from his face. But before he could form any other words there was the distinct sound of the call connecting. Nick let out a strangled squeak instead of what ever he intended to say and Judy could feel him stiffening against her side.

"Hello, Nicholas? Are you all right? What is going on?" came a worried voice through the phone speakers.

Judy cleared her throat and answered, "Um, is this Mrs. Wilde?" Judy couldn't deny that she was rather nervous.

"Yes, who is this? Is Nicholas ok? Is he in some sort of trouble again?" The worry seemed to increase.

"No, Nick is fine. He's not in any trouble. This is Judy Hop- um, Judy. Nick just got his phone back
and Finnick told him you'd called.” She bumped Nick's side and he mumbled a very sheepish and embarrassed "Hi mom".

"Oh, Thank Marian" came Mrs. Wilde's relieved voice, "Judy was it? But the papers said that…” her voice trailed off.

There were a few moments that Judy could only describe as extremely awkward. Unfortunately, she was drawing a complete blank on where to proceed from there.

"Um, Mom" Nick said in a very nervous voice, "I'd like to introduce you to Judy, my… um… mate."

Judy gave a weak, "Hi" now feeling the full force of her nervousness.

There was dead silence over the line.

"Um, mom?" Nick hesitantly asked after there was no response. "are you still there?"

More silence. Nick was about to speak again when there was a response.

"Nicholas Piberius Wilde," The voice didn't shout. It didn't sound angry. It was the epitome of a calm and collected, neutral voice. It sent a shiver down Judy's spine reminding her far too much of her own mother when she'd been caught doing something she wasn't supposed to. "Is this some sort of hustle you're pulling?"

Both Nick and Judy quickly and vehemently responded with a "NO!".

"Then are you telling me, Nicholas, that after everything you have always said you've gone and gotten married?"

Nick looked like someone had just slammed and barred the exit door on his only escape route, "Um… yes"

"That you're in love and you've mated and imprinted?" Mrs. Wilde continued, her voice still unnervingly steady.

"Yes," Nick said in a small voice.

"That you did so without even introducing her to me first?"

"Yes." Nick was nearly curled in on himself as he whispered in a dejected voice.

"And am I right in assuming the news is correct and that your new wife is not a vixen?"

"Yes."

Silence.

"And your promise?" Nick went completely rigid.

"I'm not sure I remember what you're talking about." he tried desperately to deflect the question, eyes frantic like he was trying to find some escape route.

"Nicholas." The volume did not change but a thread of sternness entered the voice.

"Oh, that promise! Yes, yes I remember now." Nick backtracked desperately.
"And?" Mrs. Wilde's voice was back to neutral, perfectly calm, neutral, waiting.

The last of Nick's futile resistance seemed to collapse. He looked over at Judy and reached down to take her paw.

In a defeated tone he spoke his surrender. "Yes mother, when do you want to meet her?"

Mrs. Wilde's voice changed and was now as pleasant as could be, "Oh good, dinner will be ready at 7. I'll see you two then." and the call ended.

Nick collapsed back onto the bed and pulled Judy to him, as if desperately needing her with him. She didn't mind it in the least. She could feel how fast his heart was beating. She lay across him one paw still holding his, the other wrapped tightly around him and nuzzled at his neck and face. She could feel his tail wrap around her and his free paw come up to stroke her ears.

After a minute or two of petting and nuzzling back and forth to show that neither of them were going anywhere, that she was there for him and he for her, she could finally feel Nick's heart rate slow down to its normal pace.

"So. Want to fill me in on what that was all about?" she asked him with another nuzzle.

Nick whined, and then kissed her hard and deep before holding her tightly for a bit before responding.

"You sure you want to know? It's complicated, long, painful, and doesn't reflect well on me."

Judy kissed him back before saying, "Yes, Nick, I'm here for you. I'm not going to leave you ever. You're mine and I want to know you. All of you."

He sighed but brought up their clasped paws, laying a kiss on the back of hers before starting,

"I haven't really gotten along well with my mother for the past decade or so. I still love her and she loves me, but we don't talk much or see each other." She could hear the sadness in his voice, "It's my fault really. I can't be around her without feeling like I'm a disappointment to her. It's not that she said anything, or even berated me, well, not unless I got in serious trouble or did something really stupid. But I always knew she wanted to see me do something more than hustle, be something more than what I was determined to be."

He looked at her and she wanted to sink into his emerald eyes. "It wasn't until after I met you three months ago that I really started to consider doing anything with my life. I always knew I wasn't going anywhere with what I was doing, but I didn't really care, there wasn't a reason for me to care. Then you hopped into my life and upset everything. After you left I knew that I wouldn't be able to keep going on like that for long. You," he kissed her between the ears, and she hummed again in response, "have no idea just how much you've changed me already. How much you mean to me. You are living proof that dreams are more than fabrications and lies."

"Do you remember that story I told you on the sky tram?" He asked her. Judy, nodded and buried her nose in his ruff so that she was completely surrounded by his scent. She had wanted to cry for that little kit when he'd told her. She still wanted to, just thinking about it now. But she could smell him and feel his chin as it rested lightly on the top of her head and feel the rumble of his voice and beat of his heart. Whatever had happened before she might not be able to fix but she was here for him now.

"That day, the day I told you about, was when everything changed for me. After that, I started noticing how others treated us, distrusted and snubbed us just because of what we were, especially
those outside of the poorer parts of the city. It wasn't everybody and rarely blatant but it was there, always there. You might have guessed but my family wasn't very well off. We weren't homeless but my parents had to work hard for what we had. It made me so mad when I figured out that my parents had to work harder for everything we did have just because of how others treated us. But my parents were more like you Judy. They always looked on the bright side, always kept up hope, always believed that by just continuing to do the right thing that things would work out."

"I never told them or anyone else what happened that night when… when they muzzled me." He paused but unlike the time on the sky tram, Nick didn't move away from her. He held her close and she could feel his snout move, feel the shift of air against her fur as he breathed in her scent before he continued.

"I'm sure my parents knew something had happened, something bad, but I wouldn't tell them, and they eventually stopped asking. Things were rough for me after that. Having the happy veneer of life stripped away like that? Well, let's just say that it did a pretty good job of destroying my childhood. I still might have turned out differently. My parents never wavered in their support or love and they worked hard to try and make life better. Things were just starting to look up in high-school, my dad had managed to get a loan to start his own tailor shop, called it Suit-topia; he made it a point not to refuse service to anyone. And slowly it seemed to be working. Business was picking up and I was just starting to think that maybe, despite everything, that if you did just try hard enough, did the right thing despite however anyone else acted, that things really would work out. And then my dad died."

Judy could feel a tear hit her cheek and roll down it. She just squeezed his paw and held onto him. She felt a tear of her own roll down to mingle with his.

"It was so stupid, so like him. He'd been on his way home when he saw this older zebra mare that worked in a local dinner getting mugged. So he called the police, but the rhino started beating her, and of course he couldn't just stand by and watch, just wasn't in him. He didn't have a mean bone in his body, didn't even try attacking the bastard, just tried to protect her, and so the rhino killed him instead. Said later at his trial that he'd laughed seeing a fox trying to protect the zebra, and that since he had tried so hard that he'd obliged and killed him but left her alive." Judy felt more tears patter down on her, "The worst part was what the mare said at the trial, said that it was a shame, because that was the only worthwhile fox that ever had or ever would live."

Nick stopped. She looked up at him and saw that he had his eyes closed but a few tears still leaked out. She scooted up his frame a bit, never letting go of him or his paw, so that she could place her cheek against his muzzle and speak into his ear.

"I wish I could have met him, Nick" he held onto her as a few more tears leaked out and he nuzzled into her neck.

"I know he must have been a wonderful mammal because I can see him in you." She continued.

"But, I'm not like him Judy, I'm nothing like him" he sobbed into her neck.

"Then why did you stand up for me against Bogo? Why did you stick with me through everything at the Asylum? Why did you forgive me, and help me, and protect me?"

"Because it's you, Judy," came his muffled response, and she couldn't help a hum that built in her chest at that.

"That might be part of it Nick, but I saw how you looked at the mammals at the Asylum once we recovered them, or how much you wanted to help stop the attacks when I came back. You can't hide from me Nick. I know you care, that you're like your dad, and that he'd be proud of you."
She held him for a bit before he said, "You know how he got the loan?" Judy just shook her head, "None of the banks would give him any loans. Said a poor mammal, especially a fox, was too much risk to be worth giving a loan to. I found out years later that he got the loan because of Mr. Big," He gave out a short laugh, "Apparently, Mr. Big found out about his attempts to get a loan and asked to see him, so my dad went with his whole proposal and presentation just like he had with the banks but told Mr. Big straight to his face that he'd have nothing to do with any criminal activity what so ever. That they could set up a completely legal private loan through the bank with no strings attached or that he'd have nothing to do with it. Koslov was apparently so mad at my dad for being disrespectful that he nearly iced him. But Mr. Big stopped Koslov, said that he could respect my dad for his conviction and determination. Mr. Big put some pressure on one of the banks to give him the loan and never brought it up again, never so much as spoke of it or even tried to use it to so much as influence me in my business dealings with him."

"The most respect and fairness ever received by my father, an upright citizen determined to do good, was from the city's biggest crime boss." Nick gave out a sad short chuckle.

"I don't know how my mom managed after my father's death. It absolutely devastated her, but she kept working anyway, kept on trying to care for me. She'd maintained a happy upbeat attitude for me but I could see how exhausted she was from always working and pretending, and I could hear her cry at night when she thought I was asleep."

"It was around then that I started hustling, coming up with cons to make money, to try to help ease the pressure off my mother. Told her I was taking odd jobs after school though I don't think she ever believed me. The one thing she asked me was to not do anything illegal. That's part of the reason I've always found loop holes or ways to twist the laws to my advantage. But I thought that if other mammals cared so little I shouldn't either, so I didn't. I never cared if I was essentially cheating the system or other mammals. I always told myself 'Why should I? They'll just treat me same either way'." Nick sighed into Judy's neck, his voice was returning to normal but Judy could still hear the pain in it, "I might not have done anything to directly harm other mammals but I certainly didn't care if I was sleazier than the worst car salesman."

"And your mom?" Judy asked.

"Well I barely made it through high-school with all the hustling I was doing. And a year or so afterwards I put together a big plan with Finnick." Judy couldn't help the bit of curiosity that spiked through her, "Wait, when did you become friends with Finnick, and was that big plan with the amusement park thing Chief Bogo mentioned yesterday?"

A small smile broke out on his face as he put a finger on her now twitching nose. "Only one story at a time, Whiskers. I promise I'll tell you anything you want to know but you'll have to be patient with me."

Judy nodded, and reached up to grab his paw so she that she was now holding both of his close to her chest.

"Well after that went south in a big way. My mother had to bail us out. We were cleared of all the charges," he kissed her on her nose which had started twitching again with all the questions she had about that, "and yes, I will tell you what happened, just not right this minute. The point is that my mother gave us one hell of a verbal lashing for almost getting hurt and in so much trouble." Nick did let out a laugh at that point, "I think she's the only mammal on the planet that can scare Finnick." Nick's brief merriment dried up though and he continued.
"Well things just got more tense between us after that. The breaking point was when she asked me how I expected to build a family with what I was doing. I told her I didn't want to, that falling in love and having a family wasn't worth the pain. I can still remember how sad she looked at that. She tried to change my mind, tell me that I'd be missing out on the most important and happiest part of my life, but I wouldn't listen. It was the one real fight I had with her. I ended up storming out shouting that I'd never be dumb enough to fall in love or marry. That hell would freeze over first and that if it did happen that she'd be the first to know, that I'd listen to everything that she had ever told me and would never hustle another day in my life. The last thing I heard her say as I left was that she'd remember that promise."

"I think that was the lowest day in my life, Judy. I really hurt her with everything I said and I could never bring myself to apologize because I swore that I'd never fall in love. I kept sending her money from hustling but I probably wouldn't have even kept in contact with her if it wasn't for Finnick."

Judy could feel his beating heart and breathing after he finished. His ears were drooping and there was no hint of a smile, sly or real on his muzzle. He wouldn't even meet her eyes; like he was afraid of what he might find there.

She squeezed his paws, "So was she right?"

"About what?" he asked, voice still dejected.

She let go of one of his paws and bopped him on his nose, "About falling in love, you dumb fox"

He blinked at that and turned to meet her gaze.

"I really am just a dumb fox you know. Too dumb to listen to my mom, too dumb to realize that she'd always been right. I'm so dumb that I didn't even realize I'd fallen in love with you and almost lost you because of it. I was too dumb even all the way back when I had that argument to realize that I was dumb enough to fall in love, and not just with anyone but a bunny that is far too good for me."

Judy leaned down and gave him a short kiss, "I've told you Nick, you deserve me just as much as I deserve you, and you're this dumb bunny's dumb fox."

Nick reached up with his paw to cup the side of her face and kissed her.

It was warm and sweet and filled with love and caring. They stayed there like that for a while, sharing kisses not filled with passion or lust but a slow, unwavering devotion to the other.

…

It was long minutes before it slowed to simple cuddling, and even longer before Judy's contented gaze drifted over to the wall clock.

Her ears snapped up, one accidentally smacking against Nick's muzzle, startling him.

"Oh No! Nick, we've got to be ready soon for Doctor Winters!"

She dragged him up off the bed and hurried him over to the bathroom and into the shower. Looking back at the clock, she knew they wouldn't have enough time for two showers, so she joined him and turned on the water. They'd just have to make sure they didn't get side tracked. She grabbed a bottle of shampoo and started to quickly scrub Nick before handing the bottle to him and he returned the favor. As the water pressed Nick's wet fur to his body, his well defined lean but muscular frame became apparent. She felt his paws with their rougher pads work through her fur, feeling just the tips of his claws as he carefully scrubbed her. They just had to keep their minds on the task at hand, she
thought. That's all we need to do, she told herself as she felt her short nails slide over his stomach and through his creamy belly fur.

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Doctor Winters entered the Wilde's room to see if they were nearly ready. A rather boisterous Fennec fox had stopped by a few minutes ago and dropped off a set of clothes at the receptionist desk for Mr. Wilde. Hearing the shower running she placed them on the bed, before heading over to the bathroom door to knock.

As she approached it she could make out low frantic voices and muffled sounds over the sound of the running shower.

"Oh come on! There's nothing you can do about it? We're going to be late! Doctor Winters is going to be back here any minute!" The voice cut off with a muffled moan followed by a stifled yip.

"Please stop moving Judy, That's just going to make it take longer!"

"Well I'll stop moving," there was another involuntary moan, "when you stop! You're like a leaky lawn sprinkler! There's seriously nothing that you can do?"

"No, you're far smaller than a normal fox and from what I've heard that's nearly impossible to get unstuck from. I'm still surprised we fit together-," There was another moan and some shuffling. A few more non-verbal sounds interspersed with a, "OH, Nick" and some very heavy breathing. "There's not a… chance in hell of… us getting unstuck… before… *whine* before… oh gods Judy!" There was some quite a bit of growling and gasping followed by more moans and a few soft cries of names after that.

Doctor Winters couldn't stop the grin from breaking across her face. She knocked on the door, and asked pleasantly, "You two almost ready in there?" There was a loud 'Eeep' and 'Yip' before a shaky voice replied, "Um, in just… a…" there was a valiant but failed attempt at stifling another moan, "b-bit."

"Well, I hope you two aren't fooling around in there." She nearly laughed at the terrified, "nope" and "certainly not!" she got back. "A Mr. Finnick stopped by and dropped off a change of clothes for you Mr. Wilde. Please hurry up and ring the nurse as soon as you both are ready."

Doctor Winters headed for the door, paw over her mouth to make sure she didn't laugh. Right before she closed it she heard one last snippet.

"Judy, Judy, seriously! Stop squirming so much! I… I… can't…" The voice broke into a fox's mating cry before it was quickly muffled.

"Oh gods, Nick! Oh…Oh… Carrot Sticks! We were just getting loose! You didn't just get bigger again did you!?"

Doctor Winters quickly closed the door before she broke down laughing.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, Gonekrazy3000, GusTheBear, MetalFox2013, Starfang's Secrets, Archangel12575, and Fox in the hen house & Ao3 reviewers
for your reviews! The pirate crew attempted to raid a starbucks supply facility, but it turns out starbucks security is closer to a small military force than simple security company. They decided it was a bad idea and are waiting in line at the closest starbucks at port.

A special thanks to Fox in the hen house & gonekrazy3000 for proofreading reading this chapter!
Broke a hundred followers! Cool, I'm Big league in the kiddy pool, Woohoo! Wait, what do you mean this is a puddle next to the kiddy pool? Well it's my puddle, and you can go mop up someone else's!

Posted Notice: Ok so I've got real world grinch stuff that's going to slow down the next few chapters, I'm still aiming to try and update every day or so, but we'll see. I'm going to go grab a BIG pot of coffee and try and power through, and I'll leave you all with this shorter chapter to hopefully tide you over till we get to the more meaty parts of the story. Don't choke on the fluff.

Disclaimer: What do you mean you had Peter Pan's number on speed dial? You forgot? Seriously, YOU FORGOT!!?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As Judy finished up in the shower with Nick and stepped out onto the fur-dryer she reminded herself that as amazing as it felt to, how had Doctor Winters phrased it? Oh yes, 'fool around' with Nick, that she might have to be more careful in the future. With all her brothers and sisters Judy had heard quite the collection of stories regarding near escapes from late-night escapades and dalliances with highschool sweethearts and such, but she was coming to realize that as pleasant as Nick's anatomy was, and that she admitted to herself with a satisfied grin, was like calling the ocean a puddle, that it did seem to have, hum, situational drawbacks, she decided was the best way to put it. Mandatory cuddle time as she'd just found out was mandatory for a reason. It was like one of those stupid finger trap toys, the harder you tried to pull away the more you got stuck and the longer you ended up being there. Not that that was a bad thing, not at all, quite the opposite in fact, just not in that situation.

She was pretty sure that the screaming need to jump Nick every time she glanced at him was at least in part due to having been separated from him for three miserable months. She'd never had an issue with her drive before, in fact she really hadn't had one, which had caused her parents no end of worry as it was quite odd for a bunny, but now she was having trouble looking at Nick without dragging him by his tail to the nearest bed, ok, ok she grudgingly thought, it didn't have to be a bed, the counter top would do, pretty much anywhere with Nick and a bit of privacy would do, well the privacy would be nice at least.

She shook her head. She needed to get a bit of control back, to focus on what they needed to do now. This was just a bit new for her, that was all. It would die down to tolerable levels in a few days. She hoped. She remembered when her mother had to take a trip to see some distant family and her father had to stay on the farm. When her mother had returned they'd gotten the older children to take care of everything for a day and disappeared till the next morning. This, she thought, was like that, it was natural for a bunny, just her natural bunny instincts, she glanced to her red furred mate next to her. The fires that they'd so recently banked in her started building again. Just natural instincts to want to be with her mate, she told herself again, her handsome mate with his intoxicating musky scent, her lean muscled mate with his luscious thick fur who just happened to be a fox, well ok so maybe it wasn't entirely natural for a bunny.
Bunnies didn't find lean lithe muscle to be attractive, they found plump and curvy to be sexy, (something she's always secretly been a bit jealous of since her figure ran more toward slim with a bit of muscle for a bunny) and bunnies were certainly not normally attracted to the rather strong scent of fox musk. If anything, that tended to put their instincts on edge, not make them want to burrow into the fox's fur.

Maybe her type was just a little different from other bunnies. But no, she didn't find other foxes or predators attractive, she could remember his scent actually being a little off putting when she'd first met him. She couldn't really remember when it had stopped bothering her, or when she had started finding it desirable. No, this wasn't normal for a bunny, but then she really didn't care much for normal either. She looked at Nick who was standing on the floor fur-dryer as the hot air ruffled his cream and russet coat, and the fire in her flared again. Cheese and Crackers, she needed to get him into some clothes before she jumped him again.

Deep breaths, she thought to herself. Wrapping a towel around her, she went out into the room to retrieve their clothes. The shower had washed away the smell of their night time activities but it had only knocked down the claim marks they'd scented each other with to moderate levels. She was finding it reassuring that the claim marks couldn't be so easily washed away, It was like she was carrying a bit of Nick around with her everywhere she went. She could still smell him, and his scent that told other mammals she was his with every inhale; she loved it. Ok so deep breaths weren't that good of an idea either.

She had a minute or two to collect herself, Nick would need more time on the fur-dryer due to his longer coat. She determinedly blocked out the memory of her paws running through it as she looked at the simple blue jeans and shirt her parents had dropped off for her. Carrot sticks, she still needed to groom down her fur before dressing. She was thinking about Nick so much that it was interfering with her ability to even dress properly.

She could do this, all she needed to do was make it through the day and then she could have as much of her fox as she wanted, needed really, when they got home.

Home.

That word made her pause. She no longer had her lease at the Grand Pangolin Apartments, and that had taken her nearly a month to find and secure. Apartments in Zootopia were hot items and unless you had a ridiculous amount of money to toss around, finding one was a long and brutal battle. She didn't even know where Nick lived. Would he want to live with her? To have her move in? She couldn't imagine going back to not having him holding her when she slept. She honestly thought that the idea he wouldn't want to move in together was laughable after what had happened already. I mean, come on, we're married. But they hadn't even had so much as a chance to talk about it.

Well, she decided, it was simply one more thing they'd have to take care of today. And it was past time to get started.

Nick came strolling out of the bathroom without so much as a washcloth to cover him. And Judy's eyes of their own volition tracked over and jammed looking at him. She wanted to alternately laugh and snuggle him to death at the same time. His longer fur had puffed out from the dryer. He looked like the most adorable fluffy fox plushy she could imagine. His puffy coat looked so soft. Nick was grinning like mad, and she realized that she had somehow teleported over to him and her treacherous hands were running through the fur on his chest. That was about as far as she got before another thought overrode everything else.

SOoo Fluffy
Nick holding a brush out to her, broke her out of her stupor.

"I thought that maybe we could groom each other, it'll be easier than doing it ourselves and I promise not to kiss you like I did in the shower."

She quickly nodded her head and snatched the brush out of his paw.

The next few minutes Judy thought were blissful and torturous. The last time someone had groomed her fur was her mother when she was a little kit. Nick just like in the shower was surprisingly gentle, and the combination of him brushing down her coat and the looks he gave her and the feeling of his ridiculously puffy fur was a trial worse than the academy ice wall. They had just gotten clean, they were already running late. focus, Focus, she told herself sternly.

Nick moved his tail around to her lap so she could start working on it and she thought she'd died. Carrot sticks! do not think of his tail. His wonderfully soft tail. His amazingly soft tail connected to…

Good things weren't supposed to be this agonizing she thought. It simply wasn't fair. She almost broke when he brushed her back and the short tuft of her own tail.

He leaned his head over and she could feel the rumble from his chest, see his nose flare with every breath, "Judy, if you don't stop twitching your tail, and giving off that scent of arousal, I'm not going to be responsible for what happens."

Judy whimpered. Nicks nose flared again and his rumble grew.

She was on a cliffs edge already tipping over, she flailed desperately for anything to stop herself, and started rambling in desperation, "Um, Bogo's meeting, Doctors… late for doctors," why did she want to stop herself again? "Apartment, Home," Home, Nick was home, "Dinner… mother-in-law" Judy was already nuzzling his chest marking him again and Nick was doing the same between her ears when that last mumble made him go rigid and freeze for a moment. It was just enough to let her mind rally. Her eyes snapped fully open and she nearly vaulted away from Nick before she completely lost it.

"Okay, too close, too close" she quickly brushed down the rest of her fur not caring that the brush left some of Nicks hair on her and set a new world record for getting dressed.

Nick was now getting dressed as well, though it took him three tries to put on his shirt properly. He looked like he was well past inebriated and working toward drunk. Judy was slowly getting herself back under control. Dinner is at 7, You'll have him all to yourself after that, No fooling around until then. She adamantly promised herself. She kept repeating that to herself and it seemed to help a little. The raging part of her that wanted Nick now, sulked back to its corner and with vehement protests settled down to wait.

Judy sighed seeing Nick fumbling with his tie. He was looking a bit better himself but not back to normal; his brows furrowed a bit as if he was concentrating on the world's hardest mystery.

"You okay, Nick?" she asked.

"I think so," he replied, "This is just… Judy, Fox's are always a bit, ah, needy, when they first mate. Sometimes you'll hear them refer to it as a mating frenzy, but that's a bit of an exaggeration. This," he glanced at her, and then away again. She came over to him and gently moved his paws away from his tie, so that she could finish it for him. "This, seems a bit extreme even for that. I'm having a hard time not just pouncing on you." She blushed a tiny bit at that and repeated her new mantra of the day to herself.
"I've got no experience with this at all, Judy. But I've seen other foxes get together, and none of them seemed to be this bad off," He threw his arm up in an exasperated gesture, "Judy, you're a bunny. Yes, you're a bit sleeker and stronger than a normal bunny, but you're still a bunny! So why can't I stop trying to look at you, why does your scent drive me absolutely crazy?! Why is my every other thought of how gorgeous and sexy you are? I might not have dated before but I've always been into vixens, how they look and smell and walk. But now the idea of looking at a *Single Vixens* magazine doesn't even have the slightest appeal."

He sighed and hung his head, "Judy, I don't know if this is normal or not, well a fox and a bunny is certainly not normal, but what I mean is that I don't know if the way I'm reacting to this is normal or not. I'm looking back and everything has happened so fast."

She finished with his tie and asked him, "Do you want to slow it down?"

"See that's the part of this that scares me Judy, I don't want to slow down this relationship we're building. I want to burn that bridge, blow it up for good measure and then go tearing off with you to I don't even know where."

She lifted his muzzle and gave him a quick kiss, a very, very quick kiss so she didn't get any more ideas than she already had. She already felt like she was bursting inside from everything he'd shared with her. "Well as long as I'm with you I don't care where we go. This is all new and strange for me too Nick. I mean come on, I'm a bunny throwing herself into the fox's den. A fox that apparently likes the taste of bunny." She saw the inside of his ears tinge pink, thinking back to last night she was sure. She couldn't help but smirk, it was pretty hard to get one over her fox like that.

"Touché" Nick said grinning back at her now.

"Ok," Judy continued, "now we've got a lot to do today, so no funny business until tonight, agreed?"

Nick nodded his head, if a bit reluctantly. And she turned and headed for the door to go find the nurse.

"I just hope you have someplace figured out where I'll have you all to myself tonight," she smirked as she turned into the hallway and could hear Nick scramble after her.

Chapter End Notes

We interrupt your fluff for this breaking news: gonekrazy3000 strikes again
Chapter 14 - Balance

Chapter Notes

Ugh, too tired to be snarky. Here's a down payment of a chapter for my pirate captors. The next few will probably be longer and we might even see the signs of some mystery develop among all the fluff and humor. gotta find that drama somewhere though.

Disclaimer: Rock beats Scissors, Peter Pan beats Hook, you lose Disney, Neener Neener!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Nick was having the damndest time keeping his tail from wagging like a fan on overdrive as he followed Judy out of the room. gods, why had she had to say that? He wanted so badly to just grab her and drag her back to the bed and hold her, and kiss her and... dammit, his tail was going to fly off and break something if he didn't stop it. He'd taught himself to control his emotions, his bearing, his posture so that he could display to the world the exact look he needed to. It was something he had learned in order to hustle and to keep anyone else from ever seeing that they could hurt him. But out of any part of a mammal the tail was usually the most reflective to a mammals emotions, the hardest to control and the first spot most hustlers looked at for a tell.

He doubled down on his efforts to re-establish his control. Judy might be right, he didn't have to hide from her, with her he could let down his guard, show her his true feelings, but that was for her and her alone. Despite the constant reminder of her mark on him, of her sleek frame, with its silky smooth gray fur that would make any vixen envious, (or at least so he thought) despite that beautiful bunny nearly skipping with enthusiasm down the hall in front of him, he started to slow the motion of his tail. If Judy could wait, then so could he, he would not let that lingering scent of arousal from her break him, or that perfect little tuft of a tail tempt him. No, he was Nicholas Wilde, veteran hustler, not even the perfect tufty tail that twitched in the most sinfully alluring manner, that tail he wanted to just sit there and stroke as he held her to him would beat him. Not him, he'd survive till tonight. He might have to hustle a few kisses and snuggles along the way to do it, but he'd survive. And anyway, kisses and cuddles wouldn't be breaking his promise to her. She hadn't exactly defined what 'funny business' was; kisses and cuddles were obviously just normal interactions for mates, they couldn't count as funny business.

His tail was still swaying gently from side to side as they got to the receptionist desk but it wasn't too bad, he could work with that. Make it look like it was just part of his normal confidence as he strolled along. He pulled out his shades, he'd have to thank Finnick for dropping them off with his clothes, and placed them on his head, tilted up so that he could drop them down over his eyes at a moments notice. Cool, collected, confident; he worked on displaying just that. It was far harder than usual with Judy there with him but he managed. He had his game face back on, he was ready to face the world.

They stopped at the receptionist desk and Judy started talking to the antelope nurse who seemed delighted to see them. Nick stopped next to Judy and let her do the talking. He finally noticed the nurses name tag on her uniform, Lucy it read. He was just starting to get back into his groove. The events over the last two days had been a non stop rollercoaster ride and had thrown off his center of balance. That he knew was the secret to his hustler front. You had to have something to center yourself, something that you could use to counterweight anything anyone threw at you, it's what let
him stay collected to think and act when others would freeze or falter. Nick had regained his, he could feel everything click into place, just where it was supposed to be, and started noticing all the little details he normally would but had been missing, the schedule and hall map posted on the wall, the little emotional tells on the nurse, the buzz and message notices on her phone, those and everything else.

Nick felt calmer now, he was back on familiar ground, he still wanted to run off with his bunny but he could at least think clearly, and that was a relief. It's what had made him such a good hustler and more importantly what had kept him alive. He had found his balance again.

It took him a few more moments before he noticed that while standing next to Judy, his tail had unconsciously wrapped around her back and that she, seemingly unaware of it herself, was stroking the tip of his tail where it lay against her hip.

Well, that's certainly different than before. He started to draw his tail back, but right as he started to move it he felt his internal balance shake and tilt. He stopped the motion and everything returned to normal. This is going to take some getting used to, he thought.

…

The rest of the morning went by in a blur of activity. He'd had to laugh when Doctor Winters had come up to the receptionist desk to collect them. She'd looked at them, looked at Lucy, looked at the wall clock, and then back at Lucy with a smirk and a raised eyebrow. The nurse pouted a bit and handed the doctor a twenty-dollar bill, while mumbling about knowing she shouldn't have made a bet with the doctor especially when it involved a canine.

Judy's final checkup was fairly quick. There were no signs left of the concussion besides a bit of a bruise, though the doctor warned her to come back if any symptoms reappeared. The gash on her leg was healing well, she'd even managed not to pull the stitches yet. The doctor had given her a prescription of antibiotics to take for a few days so it would stay uninfected and cautioned Nick to make sure that Judy didn't do anything to tear them. She'd actually said that if she started jumping or running around he could use whatever means he thought appropriate to stop her, and gave him one hell of a wink and smirk before adding that sometimes you just had to tie down overactive mammals for their own good.

While Nick fought not to blush himself, the doctor had pulled the very visibly blushing Judy to the side and had a private discussion with her for a few minutes. Nick waited politely but couldn't help but be curious at the subject matter since Judy's ears turned progressively brighter and brighter red throughout the entire conversation.

Before he'd had a chance to ask her though, he was put through a battery of tests. There was everything from an MRI scan to a few blood samples that they drew for final testing. Nick was certainly glad that the hospital had offered to waive all costs if they agreed to let some of the department heads and doctors in the research divisions interview both Judy and him for research purposes.

As tedious and even embarrassing as all of the interviews and questions were since they had insisted on trying to draw out every detail on his interactions with Judy before and after the nighthowler incident (He was coming to despise the phrase, It's all for science) they did seem to have some interesting ideas and theories.

Things had been going smoothly right up until they were finishing the last of the paper work to check out. I thought only politicians and lawyers lived on paperwork. Nick couldn't help but think sarcastically as he continued onto what seemed like the hundredth page.
Judy had finished before him and headed to the reception area to wait for him. Her absence left him with a slight sense of unease, but it was manageable for the moment. Throughout the morning he had noticed that he was calmer and more focused around her, well at least when he could keep his mind from slipping into the gutter. They both seemed to unintentionally seek out contact without even noticing they were doing it. Clasped paws here, a wrap of his tail or arm around her there, an occasional bump of a shoulder or hip or even just leaning a bit into each other. Nick mostly noticed it after it had already happened. It just seemed so natural so normal that its absence was when he noticed it most. When they were separated for some test or interview he couldn't help but keep looking around for her. He was starting to get the hang of not showing it but he was pretty sure Judy was in a similar state because he could see her relax, see the slight tension leave her whenever she joined back up with him. They probably needed to sit down and discuss it at some point soon. He wasn't sure how much of it was just the clinginess of being newly mated and how much of it was from their rather odd start to their odd relationship.

But he could put that aside for the moment, the opportunity for some mischief and fun had walked right up and presented itself to him, and he wasn't one to let something like that go unused. It would be downright wasteful to do otherwise.

He finished up the paperwork but before handing it to the nurse, spoke up, "So, Lucy was it? Earlier this morning you were taking some pictures of our... what did Doctor Winters call it? canoodling show?"

The antelope looked up and blushed a bit before speaking, "Oh, that. well... yes, I'm sorry, I probably shouldn't have. I haven't sent them out to any of my friends, I can delete them if you want."

Nick waved his arm, "Oh, don't worry about that, I don't mind if you share them with a few friends, I was just hoping you could send a copy of them to me." He gave her his best hustler smile.

"Oh, of course, not a problem at all, just a second. You two make such a sweet couple you know, you're absolutely adorable together," Nick took out his phone and gave her his number while she continued to ramble on. There was a ding and he saw that he'd received a message. He flipped through the photos she'd sent over and couldn't help but grin more. The nurse for all her excitable fidgeting had a knack for taking photos and they had put on one hell of a good show. He couldn't wait to tease Judy with these. He bet that her nose would start to twitch in that frustratedly embarrassed way that was so cute and made him want to kiss it.

He said goodbye and walked over to the reception area and joined back up with Judy. The unease vanished as she bumped her hip against him and he leaned down to steal a kiss before they headed toward the front doors of the hospital.

"Ready to blow this scene?" he asked with a cock-sure grin. He felt her paw intertwine with his as the doors slid apart and they walked out into the day.

They hadn't taken more than two steps when an eruption of bright flashes and shouts blindsided them.

Chapter End Notes

Scoreboard: gonkrazy3000, 1284. typos, 3.

A quick thanks to all the reviewers. I'll be sure to use all your compliments and reviews
as sweetener for my coffee when working on the next chapter.
Chapter 15 – Valkyries & Escapes

Chapter Notes

Oh Lord, reporters! Thank goodness I have my coffee. INCOMING! TAKE COVER!

Disclaimer: There are disturbing rumors that Disney is overhauling its fleet from Pirates of the Carribean since Hook failed, and where did that grenade come from? (snicker- you'll get it or you won't) I OWN NOTHING!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Flash. flash. Flash, Flash!

"How does it feel to be Zootopia's newest celebrity couple?"

"Is your marriage real or is it a hoax?"

"How do you respond to those claiming interspecies relationships are unnatural?"

Flash. flash. Flash

"Will you comment on the ZPD's change of policy after your involvement breaking the Nighthowler Conspiracy?"

"Are you planning a public wedding?"

flash. Flash, Flash!

"Is this a public statement against Bellwether's anti-pred agenda?"

"Were you forced into mating? Were you threatened? Has he hurt you?"

Flash, Flash!

Judy had been a bit stunned by the sudden onslaught but still holding Nicks paw had tried to make it through the crown of reporters and camera mammals. She had felt Nicks tail wrap around her protectively and had found it reassuring. She didn't have a great track record with reporters and they made her a bit nervous.

But that last question stopped her in her tracks. She didn't want to deal with all the reporters or especially the paparazzi, had in fact been determined to ignore them. That last question though. She had readied herself for them to question her relationship, her decision, her mental state, had even prepared herself for sneers and insults, but she had not been prepared for that.

Her nervousness evaporated in a split second at the raging tidal wave of her anger at that question. Judy had felt anger before, anger at Gideon for bullying her friends, anger at those who had tried to stop her becoming a police officer, anger at Bellwether for her betrayal. But she had always been able to handle those with a sort of clinical detachment. This time was different. This time someone wasn't just trying to hurt a friend, they were trying to hurt her mate, and they were trying to use her to do it. She had never been so angry in her life. How dare they say that. The anger exploded in her
like a flash fire. How dare they insinuate that about her mate.

She turned to face the mammal that had asked that last question. If her anger had been a physical force, the reporter would have disintegrated like a dry leaf in the path of a firestorm. As it was the buck, wearing the logo of ZNS, nearly cowered before her. He had **Dared.**

The other reporters had gone silent, the cameras flashes had ceased. There wasn't even the sound of a pen tip moving on their pads. Judy brought the full weight of her fury down upon him with her gaze and the rabbit gulped like she was choking off his air. If she had had one single micron less restraint than she did, the hospital wouldn't have been able to help him because she would have smashed him six feet under right through the concrete sidewalk.

When Judy spoke, she didn't yell, she didn't shout, she spoke slowly and deliberatively, she spoke with a voice so strong that her words felt like they were being seared into those who heard them, that it would be wiser to question the truth spoken to them from a god incarnate than to question her.

"How dare you." Each word struck the buck like the weight of an avalanche, and even those near him flinched as if the shockwave of each words impact rolled through them.

"How dare you insinuate that my mate threatened me?! That my mate hurt me?!"

The buck managed to choke out a, "But he's a pred!" before his voice withered and perished under the now colossal fury of her outrage. She let her full wrath and contempt of the sheer stupidity of his reason wash over the buck. The other reporters had shuffled away from him as if terrified that they might catch the slightest edge of her gaze and draw its attention.

"He is my mate." She let each word smash into the buck. His knees were shaking, and his adams apple was working in his throat as if he was desperately trying to swallow air but unable to get any.

"I choose him. I claimed him. He is the mammal I love and that loves me. For that reason and that reason alone I made him mine." The microphone in the buck's paws was now visibly shaking.

Judy let her gaze wash over the other reporters, who jerked like they'd been scorched by fire, before it came hammering back into the buck who quaked under it. She reached over and grabbing Nicks tie slowly used it to pull his head down to her level and very deliberately marked him from the base of his ears to the tip of his nose. She looked back over at the buck and when her eyes caught his, he froze, not even breathing.

"If you think Nick being a predator is an issue for me deciding to marry him, then I'll show you how predatory a bunny can be." The buck almost collapsed. All the blood had drained from his ears and the fur on his face looked a few shades lighter than it had before.

"Any other questions?" she asked him. He barely managed to shake his head.

Judy still holding Nick's paw pushed past the buck and led Nick down the side walk.

There was utter silence from the crowd of reporters behind them, for all of ten seconds.

"Is it true that that she claimed you first?"

Flash,

"How do you feel about a predator being claimed by a prey?"

Flash, Flash!
"Are you simply humoring her?"

Flash!

The buck from ZNS hadn't so much as twitched but the other reporters rushed after them. They looked like they were heading into a battle they didn't expect many to return from, but came on none the less, firing off questions and photos like a full offensive was their only chance at survival.

Judy groaned, her energy exhausted by the previous encounter, and leaned into Nick for support. He wrapped his arm around her shoulder and his tail around her waist and turned them to face the onrushing assault. He held up his other hand in a stop motion and spoke up in a loud clear voice.

"If you all will kindly not mob us again I'll answer all of your questions."

The rush of reporters came to a halt in front of them, some looking pleased, some looking like they suspected a trap, but nearly all looking relieved to some degree.

"Did she claim me first? Yes, yes she did. Do I mind? No, no I do not. Do I want to be married to her? Do I claim her as my mate? Do I love her?" Nick leaned down and just as deliberately as she had done marked both of her cheeks. As he did so he murmured in her ears barely loud enough for her to hear. "be ready and play along"

Nick finished marking her and looked up at the reporters,

"Yes, yes I do" He let his response sink in for a second as they frantically scribbled on their pads or snapped photos. Nick opened his mouth to speak again. But right before he did his head jerked a little to the side looking directly at the hospital entrance behind all the reporters and a confused look started crossing his face before it turned to a look of horror. Judy followed his gaze to the hospital entrance which had absolutely nothing going on, and let out a shocked gasp bringing her free paw up to her mouth. The now confused reporters in mass turned around to find what had caused their reactions.

Just as the reporters all turned, Judy felt Nick scoop her up in his arms, and with a speed she hadn't imagined he possessed, sprint down the sidewalk and then out and around the side of an ambulance. It probably hadn't taken him more than a few seconds to get out of view of the reporters and even as he paced alongside the ambulance she could hear the frustrated cries of the reporters behind them.

The ambulance, driving the slow speed limit of the hospitals public drop off area on the street in front of its main entrance continued on and turned around the side of the building to the employee parking section. After they had made it around the building corner and well out of earshot, Nick slowed down and returned to the sidewalk. He placed her on the ground and held out his paw for her to take, which she did. He gave her one of his smirks, and she mirrored it, before breaking into laugh.

"Oh Carrots! Their faces! They looked like you were about to eat them! I'm pretty sure that you just made one of ZNS's top reporters pee himself!"

"No way, I didn't!" She said back between laughs.

"Yes, Yes, you did. You made Brian Fantana wet himself like a scared kit!" Nick said breaking down into another set of laughs.

It was a few more moments before they started to get their laughter under control. But right as she did, Nick pulled her into a hard deep kiss. It wasn't long but she could feel his longing and love and the echoes of his laughter in it. It made the fire in her flare again and tested her resolve to make it
through the day without dragging him off somewhere private.

The kiss broke and Nick looked down at her with his emerald eyes sparkling. He wrapped an arm around her and they started off down the street in the direction of precinct one.

Nick was still chuckling but smiled down at her and said, "Nice job catching onto that escape plan, Carrots. That was quite the performance."

She let out another short laugh. "That was the same trick you used to almost get away from me when we first met."

"Yep, and you're one of the only mammals to ever actually catch me when I've used it."

"You're surprisingly fast. And who else has caught you?" Judy asked curiously.

"I was on the track team in highschool. And if Flash's cousin Steady Steve was there we would've been in trouble."

"Wait, Flash's cousin? You're telling me that there's a sloth reporter? And that you couldn't have gotten away from him?" Judy asked in disbelief.

Nick grinned at her again, and gave her a quick kiss on her twitching nose. "You're telling me there can't be a sloth reporter, why the next thing you'll say is that there can't be a bunny police officer!"

"That's not what I meant! It's just, just… Oh come on, how does he get anywhere, or ask mammals questions before they're gone? How would he have stopped what you did just now?" She asked in exasperation.

Nick snickered, "Oh Carrots, I've got to ask Flash to take you out to the racetrack sometime and really teach you how to drive."

Judy blanched and muttered, "I'd die of old age before we made one loop."

Nick snickered louder before continuing, "You'd be surprised at how well sloths can drive and Flash and Steve are the best drivers I know, and that's saying a lot. As for how Steady Steve is one of ZNN's best reporters,"

Judy broke in, "Wait I've never seen any sloth on ZNN broadcasts."

Nick smiled and held a finger up to her mouth to hush her, "He works for their newspaper division, and he is one of their best reporters. His specialties are big preplanned events, balls, press conferences, high society parties, things like that where he can get to it beforehand. And I don't think he's ever actually asked a question in his entire career. He simply listens and watches and he's good at it. With all the attention on the other reporters, mammals tend to forget he's there and that lets him get the best pieces. If he was back there with that group, while every other reporter was looking back he would have still been turning, and would have seen our escape. I would imagine 'Fox sweeps bunny bride off her feet for getaway' or some such title would have made for a juicy news piece."

Judy just stared at him still trying to get the idea to stick. It made sense but it just seemed so odd, she would never have imagined a sloth could be a successful reporter if Nick hadn't had a perfect case and point to show her. She guessed that's how Chief Bogo must have felt when presented with the first bunny officer.

Judy shook her head but smiled and looked up at Nick. When he next looked down at her she hopped up and stole a kiss. She smiled wider at how his ears perked up and the surprised happy look
he had after that.

"See Nick, Zootopia is where anyone can be anything"

His arm moved down to her waist and drew her into his side.

"Well, I want to always be with my bunny"

She blushed a bit but wrapped an arm around him in return, partly to help support her leg with its stitches, but mostly because she wanted to hold onto him. She could easily smell his scent being so close and feel the warmth of his body and even hear the beat of his heart. She felt content and happy.

She let her mind wander for a bit, thinking back over everything that had happened, everything that had changed over the last 48 hours. How rash and lucky they'd been. She let herself start considering where they might go from here beyond just the next moment. There were far more uncertainties in her future than there were before, so much she and Nick still had to share and learn about each other. But thinking back over all her actions she was sure that she'd make the same choices all over again if it meant that she could be here at his side. As for the uncertainties and possible troubles in their futures, well it just meant that life had gotten a little more interesting, a little more Wilde.

Yes, yes she would do it all over again, in a heartbeat.

A grumbling, growling noise came from Nick's stomach and Judy couldn't help but laugh at the sheepish expression he gave at her upraised eyebrow.

"So Nick, I know this might be a little late considering everything earlier today," She gestured with her free paw back in the direction of the hospital. "But do you want to catch a bite to eat, you know sort of like a first date?"

He gave her a smile with just a hint of a smirk in it, and in an all too satisfied tone said "Why yes, I would love to Mrs. Wilde"

Chapter End Notes

Typos are officialy protesting at the U.N., There accusing gonekrazy3000 of genocide, or is it typocide?

And Finally! We've made it back to the beginning. Thank you all for bearing with this story to the end it's been an interesting ride and I hope you all have enjoyed it.

Gotchya! We've only made it to the start of this story! You should see your faces right now!

Tune in next time for Chapter 16 – Wilde Beginnings
Gotchya Again! The Next chapter is Chapter 16 – Wilde Beginnings

This is just the Intermission *smirk*

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So before you get to your teaser there's some stuff that needs to be said,

First, STOP Bribing my pirate captors! This is not helping me get unchained from this desk, in fact it's the opposite of helping me!

Second, I must thank that glorious black brew of ambrosia. Without you how could any of us go on in life? Ok yes there's also Wildehoppus but that's not the point.

Third, Thanks to all of the favorites, followers, and especially those who took the time to review this story. I'm still surprised anyone would want to read this let alone hang in there through all the snark and cliffhangers. To the reviewers:

Stafang's Secrets, Phantomreader42, gonekrazy3000, Archangel12575, Darkwolfslayer21, Fox in the hen house, WildeHoppus85, Kirbster676, hadowJ95, HoppinWidedly, GusTheBear, Siber13, MetalFox2013, Chris Redfield-General Chaos, Channelcat, bagnome, AnimeFan51, RenkonNairu, redwolf23456, syhsnakey, Uranium235, Guest, Meh1234321, Sir Swagglleton, Combat Engineer, luna silver, Armasyll, kayadme, DrBry, Jack_Kellar, Storyholder, Criaxis, CorThunder, Anteroinen, Erinnyes, Tilkin, Raynor, Ickus, Toolazyforagoodusername, foxfan59, moggan_le_fae, OldFan123, xAndurielx, Gunslinger99, Dagonn

-Thanks.

To those reviewers who have consistently reviewed this story. A special thanks, you all are the only reason that this story's updates have been coming so consistently, well you and coffee. Thank you for the constant reviews. I always appreciate hearing how the story is being received.

Also a special thanks to those who have pointed out and helped with typos and the such. It is greatly appreciated as I'm allergic to grammar.

And one more special thanks to those other authors who took the time to answer some questions regarding this story. Its pretty cool when real authors deign to spend their time helping out us mere mortals. (by that I mean the crazy people who write awesome stories by choice rather than being trapped into doing it by a lost bet, such as this far more rational reader)

Finally, ok for real this time, one last thanks to two very cool authors whose pen names and reasons for being thanked will go unnamed until the appropriate time in this story. For all of you, probably most of you, that are confused by this, well I'm still a snarky
Benjamin Clawhauser, was happily settling back into his proper place in life as the front desk officer for the ZPD. He loved being a police officer, but while he could do the job of a regular street officer, (he had made it through the academy after all) he much preferred his current role on the force. Here he could still help mammals but it didn't require all the nitty gritty of running around. Here he was paid to essentially gossip with and help out mammals and officers that came into the ZPD, along with monitoring the radio dispatches. That of course was where some of the departments best gossip also tended to be. It was amazing what police officers could fit into the professionally technical communications on a slow day, and when it wasn't a slow day he was at the heart of the ZPD helping the officers across the city.

He opened up a box of his favorite donuts and munched sedately (Nothing like his binge eating down in the depressing and gossip-less records room) as he settled back in.

There was also one other unofficial part of his front desk duties that he loved. While you were supposed to be focused on your job when on the clock, Benjamin had a semi formal exemption to the rule. No one, not even Chief Bogo gave him flak, ok too much flak, for constantly monitoring media and Muzzlebook and in general just keeping up with the latest scandals, events, and general gossip of the city, as long as he kept up with his regularly assigned work. He was the unofficial source of such information for precinct 1. When any officer needed information on such a topic for an investigation they came to him.

When would they need to set up extra security patrols for a gazelle concert or other event? Ask Clawhauser.

What new protest was being planned in the city that would need the police to monitor it so it didn't get out of hand? Ask Clawhauser.

Who is this mammal actor or minor celebrity that sent in a report of a stalker and who should they look at first? Ask Clawhauser.

What was this group or scandal you'd never heard of that came up in a case? Ask Clawhauser.

He even kept the chief up to date on new social events or media that could cause issues in the city, along with slipping him the best gossip about gazelle. The chief liked to try to stay one step ahead of problems in his city.

So it wasn't odd for him to be perusing social and media websites like he was now. In fact, he had a new almost favorite celebrity, you couldn't ever dethrone gazelle, that he was paying particular attention too. Well more like a minor celebrity couple, but they were just so absolutely adorable cute that he simply couldn't understand why some mammals had issues with them even if it was a very odd pairing.

The mere thought of them made his tail snap back and forth and an involuntary squeal leave his throat. He couldn't wait for his meeting with Fru Fru and Judy. There wasn't anything better than juicy gossip and sweets and he and Fru Fru were sure they could drag every detail out of Judy,
They'd even set up a surprise shopping trip for her afterwards because Judy being Judy on Duty was sure to not have any proper clothes for a newlywed bunny. He was already becoming fast friends with the energetic little shrew since they were finding that they shared similar interests, particularly one which very few knew about. He was so glad to have someone else to toss ideas back and forth with.

He was paging through Muzzlebook when a trending video clip caught his sharp eye. It had only been released half an hour ago, and it was already gaining views at an insane rate. It seemed to be an un-official news recording of an interview a short while ago in front of the hospital. It was labelled, 'Predatory Bunny destroys ZNS reporter Brian Fantana!'

He clicked on the link. As he watched, his paws came up to his cheeks and progressively pushed them higher and higher as his tail whipped around behind him. His adoring squeal that emanated when he watched such a public claim of another mammal, didn't even bother the other officers in the area as this was fairly regular behavior for him. Many of them actually seemed relieved to have him back at the front desk, rather than the always asleep Officer Antlerson.

Clawhauser giggled at the embarrassing loss of control of the ZNS reporter that was clearly evident in the video before it shifted to run after the retreating pair. That particular reporter was on Clawhauser's personal list of naughty mammals. He had a reputation for building his career by destroying others. He could be found at the worst scandals and his articles and broadcast were always heavy with damaging suggestions and light on any sort of facts. Clawhauser was by nature a happy and kindhearted mammal but it felt so good to see someone like that get a well deserved taste of their own medicine.

He squealed even louder at the return of the public claim. It was just something that wasn't done. In public? To *publicly* claim someone like that? It wasn't that the act was obscene, no more so than kissing someone, but the meaning of that was unmistakable. It was something straight out of a fairy tale. It didn't matter what species you were. No one, absolutely no one could miss or deny what they had declared. It was something they would now, never be able to retract. Those arguing it was a hoax would now have to find a way to justify why they'd publicly committed to each other for the rest of their lives.

Clawhauser had actually clapped and cheered when the two managed to disappear, leaving a crowd of bewildered reporters. Forget something out of a fairy tale those two were a real-life fairy tale. Oh, he couldn't wait to talk to Fru Fru about some of his ideas.

He went ahead and attached the video to an email and sent it to the Chief. He was pretty sure he'd want to at least be aware of this development with two of his potential officers and if nothing else the chief would certainly admire Hopps. He grinned and fidgeted as he corrected the thought, Mrs. Wilde's handling of the situation.

Chapter End Notes

gonekrazy3000 was here!
Holy crap, Writers Block isn't something that authors made up just to justify taking breaks from what they should be doing. (Which everyone knows is providing constant entertainment for us). However, There Is a solution, and it comes in a little blue and silver can with bulls that gives you wings. I take NO responsibility for this chapter as it may have been written while dancing on my desk playing an air guitar with my keyboard to blaring music.

Also the pirates thought that in the spirit of the Christmas season and in honor of my attitude that I should dress up in a Grinch costume. When I told them they could shove their costume were the sun don't shine, they left and came back with paintball guns. Saying that I'm blue might describe my mood at the moment but not my color.

Disclaimer: (Indecipherable due to green paint splatter)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick was scared. They had just gotten to the Mike's Mammal dinner, when the thought crossed his mind, Will they have food Carrots can eat? It was a rather stupid question. All mammals, pred and prey alike, shared a large selection of foods that were part of their normal diets. And Mike's was not some specialty restaurant geared toward one specific species or group. It was a regular dinner. And this was Mike's dinner. Nick was sure that Judy would enjoy the food. But that was not why he was scared.

That stupid little thought brought some friends and those invited some more friends who it appeared had spread the news that there was an open party with no cover charge going on in his head.

What are Judy's favorite foods?

Will eating chicken or fish in front of her bother her?

Do I have any food that she'll like at home?

Hey, dung for brains! Our bachelor pad barely qualifies as a crash pad, you can't live there with her!

I agreed with the idiot, she needs a proper den.

Don't forget the ring, she still needs a ring.

Have you thought how we're going to support her?

The rainy day fund isn't going to go very far.

Agreed, you're a married fox now, we can't go on living day to day!

Told you not getting a bank account or health insurance would come back to bite you in the ass one day. Idiot.
Ya, we need to start saving up too, what about once our family grows?

Kits?! *thought fizzles out*

Doofus, we're married what do you think will happen someday?

Wait one moment, I'm not ready for kits! I'm still just a big kit!

Does Judy want kits?

Can we even have kits, I mean there are hybrids, but a bunny and a fox?

Hey, I want kits! I want Kits with Judy!

We can't have kits yet, We Don't Even Have a DEN!

Judy's paw on his elbow stopped his tumbling thoughts.

"You ok there? You kinda spaced out for a few seconds." Judy asked.

He looked down into her lavender eyes, his eyes a little wild as he tried to reorder his thoughts (he'd called in his mental MPs to deal with the unruly crowd)

"Food. Kits. Den… I'm Married!?” The words just sort of tumbled out of his mouth before his brain caught up with it.

She squeezed his paw and with a smirk, she was getting better at that, said, "Just hit you too? Yes, yes you are. Now are you ready for that first date?"

His mouth had apparently switched to autopilot because he heard his response before it registered that he'd spoken, "Do I have a chance at first base?"

Judy's smirk took on a wicked glint and she pulled him through the doors while his brain short circuited.

"You'll just have to wait and see, now won't you?" he heard through the rushing sound in his ears.

The brown bear behind the counter at the stove of the small and bedraggled looking dinner looked over at Nick, glared and gave a single contemptuous snort. Judy stiffened at the greeting but Nick's wits were calling in for emergency reinforcements, air support, artillery, the drummer boy, whatever it could scrounge up and now damnit, so he gave her paw a quick squeeze to signal everything was ok.

"Afternoon Mike, I'll be taking a booth today instead of a bar seat"

The bear used his metal spatula to point at an empty booth like he was brandishing a saber, before returning his attention to the stove.

Nick lead Judy over to the oversized booth and hopped up onto the seat. The table top was high but manageable for him. He was wondering if it would be alright for Judy, He didn't think she'd be very receptive to the idea of a booster seat. But instead of hopping up into the seat across from him, she jumped up onto his side and made herself comfortable in his lap.

Nick's mental defense shook and almost collapsed. His tail without thought snaked around to lay across her lap. Nick could hear calls for medics, that half the reinforcements were now out of action, and his air support had just been shot down. Plus the drummer boy was leading a mutiny with the
troops down south.

Judy shifted a few times getting comfortable and he could feel her fluff of a tail brush up against his stomach. Nick was desperately trying to rally his remain ragged troop and make a desperate retreat to his brain to fortify it against the growing rebellion.

Judy looked up at him, smirk back and tsked, "Now, what is that I feel there?" She shifted again and Nick groaned, he was surrounded and the drummer boy's rebellion was battering at his desperate barricade. "Now, I thought we agreed on no funny business?" She twitched her tail against him, and the drummer boy broke down the barrier and started climbing through followed by his troops. "Naughty, naughty fox," she waved a finger and tsked again. Nick started leaning down to kiss her, his arms had already wrapped around her, as she continued, "I thought you wanted to get to first base? Keep this up and you might lose that and the home run later tonight." Nick froze, the drummer boy who had succeeded in his coup was now rethinking his options.

"You're bluffing." He heard himself say.

"You sure you want to risk it?" She shot back. All Nick could see was those two sparkling amethyst eyes.

The sound of a throat clearing tipped the balance and the drummer boy relinquished control back to Nick; he retreated with Nick's whole army and the stern warning that he would be back later for his due.

"We don't sell rooms here, there's a motel down the street." Came the voice from the waitress standing at the end of the table.

Nick quickly spoke up, since the drummer boy seemed to have taken interest at that.

"No, no. Ahem." Real smooth Nick, he thought to himself, "Uh, just here for lunch is all."

The gazelle in the waitress uniform looked unimpressed, "Uh huh, looks like you have your lunch all wrapped up in your lap there."

Crap. He could feel his ears burning.

"More like dinner" Judy piped up.

Double Crap. It was damn hard to make Nick Wilde blush, and even more so to make him blush enough to see it through his fur, but by the smug look on Judy's and the waitress's faces they sure had managed. Recently mammals were getting the jump on him far too often, he thought.

"Well hun, since your seat warmer seems to be doing its job there, what would you like to drink?"

"Waters, a glass of carrot juice, and" she looked at Nick for confirmation, "a coffee?"

He just nodded, too embarrassed to speak in front of the waitress. His arms and tail were still refusing to leave Judy, but he was at least sure he wasn't about to ravish her right here on the dinner bench.

The waitress gave Judy a single menu and a wink. With a, "Right away sweetie, can't have your seat warmer run out of energy, now can we?" she walked away. Nick just closed his eyes with a sigh and laid his muzzle between Judy's ears. He could feel her giggle a bit under his chin.

"Well she was nice, but what was up with the bear? Does he not like interspecies couples or something?"
Nick still with his eye's closed responded, "No, that was actually Mike in one of his better moods."
"Better moods, are you serious?"
"Yep, and he likes me, did him a few favors, so we got a better reception than most others will."
"How does this place stay in business then?" Nick didn't have to open his eyes to know that her brows were coming together as she tried to figure out the conundrum.
"Wait till you try his cooking. This place might be a little rundown, but the foods amazing. I'd suggest asking for the chef's special."
Judy flipped though the menu, "I don't see that in here, what is it?"
"That's because it isn't. I'd been stopping by here occasionally for years before one of the old geezers that comes here every Sunday for brunch clued me in. The chef's special is whatever Mike thinks you should eat. Could be anything on the menu or even off it. Never seen a mammal not like it though and he won't do it for most mammals either."
"Judy closed the menu setting it aside, leaning back into him with a happy sigh. "Ok, I trust you Nick, Chefs special it is."
They spent a few happy minutes like that before the waitress stopped by dropping off their drinks and taking their orders.
After taking some sips of coffee, and feeling a bit more in control of himself, Nick asked, "So what did the doctors mention to you about this." He waved his mug in a motion that encompassed both of them.
"Well," Judy started off a bit nervously. She grabbed his tail for reassurance and Nick felt a shiver run up his spine. He loved the feeling of her paws. He really liked the feeling of them anywhere on him. But he absolutely loved it when she held or stroked his tail.
"They had a few different ideas, and besides the one jerk of a doctor," "The one that thought we were mentally dysfunctional due to choosing mates outside our species?" Nick cut in.
"Yeah, that one"
"He was my favorite" Nick said. Judy turned her head to give him an indignant stare.
"What? Watching the other doctors throw him out of the room was hilarious, it was like something from the three stooges." Nick grinned back at her.
Judy huffed at him and crossed her arms, but he could see a smile at the corner of her mouth. "What do you know about bunny mating and bonding?"
"Besides what your mother mentioned, well just a whole lot of rumors and nothing."
"Bunnies might fool around and rut before they choose someone but all that stops when they find a mate and mark them," Judy said, "Beside technically being the engagement that's when the process of mate bonding for bunnies usually starts. The emotions involved in marking is what normally sets it off. It's a process for bunnies that takes a few months. Its one of the reason why bunnies have an engagement period rather than just becoming married like foxes I guess. The engagement lets the
bond settle in, and after it does the pair usually won't have any interest in others besides their mate. Bonds between bunnies can vary a bit in strength but it usually makes us quite devoted to our mates."

She looked up at him shyly, "They, um, said that I seem to be on the extreme end of that." She continued on in a low voice, "I've never really dated before, or messed around at all with anyone else, I'd always found bucks physically attractive but I just never had the desire to, well you know. My parents actually had a few doctors see me before about it. They always said that I just had an 'emotional prerequisite' that was keeping my drive lower than normal, not very common but nothing to worry about."

Judy had her paws on his tail again and was fidgeting nervously with it. "It seems that, I probably started bonding to you back during the missing mammals case. And then there were those three months away from you. One of the doctors called it 'separation backlash', said that with being separated from the mate I'd chosen, that I'd started to bond to, that it just kept building up and once I saw you again it all started happening at once instead of over a period of time. That because of the way I've always been and then the 'separation backlash' that made it far stronger than normal, more like what you'd see from a bunny couple that had been married for decades."

She stopped for a few moments before continuing, "I, ah, tried to mark you under the bridge, after you accepted my apology."

Nick blinked at that, "I was about to kiss you and mark you but I stepped on your tail. Then things just happened so fast and I almost lost you again. And when I woke up with you, I just didn't care that you were savage at the time, I just couldn't lose you again so I actually did mark you, and..., well they said that whole incident just compounded my bond."

She looked up at him still with a bit of nervousness, but holding onto his tail seemed to be helping her, and Nick had kept the paw that wasn't holding his coffee mug, snuggly around her waist.

"So, I hope it won't bother you too much but I'm a bit more than just ears over tail in love with you, it's more like terminally crazy in love with you with a bonus of extreme possessiveness."

Nick gave her a gentle kiss between the ears, which made her hum a bit, and said, "I'm in a similar way about you Judy. Foxes are almost always monogamous, for us it's a one shot bundle deal. Foxes will usually date for quite a while before doing anything more than kissing. We don't have a bonding period like you bunnies. We imprint on our mates. Its closely tied with marking and mating. Any one pretty much guarantees the other two. And foxes are extraordinarily protective of their mates" He though back to his memories after meeting Judy, "Do you remember the sky tram station right after Mr. Manchas went savage?"

She nodded her head ears perked as she ran her paws through his tail.

"You probably saved my life back there, twice actually, with the trick that got us tangled together in those vines. I think the docs are right that I pre-imprinted on you sometime during that mess. If nothing else when Bogo started tearing into you, that was the last straw. I was so mad at him for doing that to you, I didn't know why, I hadn't figured it out. I'd been on the verge of attacking him, you know."

"Finnick is going to laugh himself hoarse if he ever figures it out because after I ran away from you, for those months before you found me, he wouldn't stop bugging me to find out what I was pining about. But I was too dumb to figure out I was pining over losing my mate. When you came back, I was still trying to sort out my mess of feelings; I was certain that you'd never want me as a mate, so I made a promise to myself under that bridge that I'd always be there for you no matter what, even if
"The docs were all arguing about the particulars of the Nighthowler toxin and how that effected things, but they all agreed that I'd already imprinted on you as my mate and that's why I protected you. At that point it was just natural instinct to protect my mate. They, um," it was his turn to feel a little shy, "they said that due to the fact I marked and mated with you while I was in a primal state on top of already imprinting on you that it wasn't surprising that I feel so insanely protective of you. Instead of just the normal fox overprotectiveness my subconscious, my instincts seem to be permanently stuck in 'protect mate mode' so to speak. It's, ah, to the point that I get nervous and worried when you even leave the room I'm in." He tightened his grip a bit more, he had the irrational fear that she might leave him, "I'm working on it so that I can give you a bit of space but you might have to get used to the idea that I'm mostly going to be stuck to you like paint on a wall."

Judy turned around, looked up into his eyes and then kissed him. It was an amazing kiss. He made it to first base at a leisurely walk and danced on it while the rest of the team just watched dumbfounded. The oversized booth prevented anyone else from seeing them but the long, wonderful kiss broke when they heard the clatter of dishes as the waitress served some mammals a few tables down from them.

"You can stay around me all the time" Judy said as she cuddled into his chest. Nick could feel a low rumble start deep in himself. Rumbling, sort of like a deep steady growl rougher than Judy's hum was something that foxes did sometimes, but not as often as he'd been doing it. He'd only ever seen his father do it a few times with his mother. He figured that this was just another aspect of his relationship that he'd have to get used to, but Judy seemed to like it so it was fine by him.

She giggled a bit before saying, "Though you can't follow me into the women's bathrooms."

He nuzzled her head, "You know this means I'm going to be very gregarious and touchy with you?"

She was humming now, "I like you cuddly and touchy."

"It also probably means I'm going to be much more needy than a normal fox, kind of like last night"

She giggled again and looked up at him with an amused exasperated look, "Nick, I'm a bunny. Some stereotypes do have a grain of truth in them."

He smiled down at her, "I don't know, normal fox couples get pretty frisky during winter, I'm already completely like that now, It will certainly be far worse for me then."

She looked at him with a slightly confused expression with, was that a bit of hope, longing? "What's different about winter?"

"Mating season, Carrots. Its mating season for foxes. Bunnies don't have one right? I'm probably going to be a perfect example of why for some species they have a special category under their sick days for mating season or heat. There are probably going to be a few days during winter that we won't make it out of bed"

She was just looking at him, a slight "Oh" escaped her while she stared, and then she was kissing him before he knew what happened. Nick could feel her paws and short claws gripping the back of his neck and head as she pulled him into the kiss with surprising force and ferocity. He could feel her tongue on his, the sweet taste of her mouth, and the hot breaths they shared. She wasn't being cautious at all, she was being furious and possessive and Nick was loving every second of it.

A very deep, gruff and irritated voice spoke up and Judy broke off the kiss with a sheepish smile,
"Stop eating each other's faces and eat the damned food."

Mike slammed two plates down in front of them before heading back to the other side of the counter.

Chapter End Notes

Congratulations to gonekrazy3000 for setting a new speed world record in find typos! That was truly amazing.

Also for anyone who cares, (looks at now empty audience room. Figures. Oh, no wait there's still a cricket left) This whole story only ever got past the stage of a few scribbles about WildeHopps plots because I lost a bet. Now since the introduction is over and I realized that I might have ever so slightly underestimated the size of what I now find myself stuck writing (The introduction was supposed to be short, not freakin 45,000 words, how the hell did it get that long anyway?! I don't write, damnit! *shudder* I might just die of old age before I finish this story. Stupidest bet ever), I've called out for some reinforcements. Hopefully some of the authors I've started talking to can explain how this whole 'writing' thing is actually supposed to be done. If those brave stupid souls decide to accept the mission of teaching a determined reader how to write properly (and survive the self-destruct explosion after reading their messages) then you all may see an improvement in this stories quality. (*snicker* they're in for a world of pain, I graduated valedictorian from Ignoramus University 'Superbia Stultus!', I still wear my graduation dunce cap). Hey, where'd the cricket go?
Damnit. Why the hell do pirates have paintballs that are not water soluble paint? **** **** ****, I'm going to be green for the next freakin month. And don't you dare think of saying it or I'll come find you and steal your Christmas away from you. I don't care if I'm chained to a desk, held captive by pirates, and you just thought the thought on the other end of an anonymous internet connection. I'll find a way to do it, see if I don't. And forget about even leaving the mouse a crumb, I'll steal him too.

So I tried something a little different and made this chapter is a bit longer than usual. If you all like it this way send me a pm saying so. Just remember that longer chapters take longer to write.

Disclaimer: (see following transcript of court meeting)

Judge: "And how does the defense plead to copyright infringement?"

Pirate Lawyer: "The defendant would like to make a personal statement to Disney the Great and All Powerful"

Defendant: "Ahem," clears throat, "Neener, Neener"

Brian Fantana stormed into his office after hurriedly returning to the ZNS building downtown and using the small locker-room there to clean up. Thank gods he had a set of spare clothes there, but unfortunately some mammal, probably someone from gods damned ZNN had already posted a video and not only had it gone viral the second it hit the web, but they had anonymously emailed the link to everyone at ZNS. He'd already had to endure the jokes and laughs from the rest of the news crew. The damn raccoon intern had broken the copier when he saw him because he was laughing so hard and even his secretary who was known for her stoic uncaring emotionless personality had covered up a laugh with a cough. Damn that fungus riddled carrot of a bunny for humiliating me like this! He went over to the cabinet on the wall and pulled out the bottle of very expensive cologne he decided to try using today. He'd even hoped that he might have been able to charm her, get her to react or say something that would have made for a scandalous article or news clip. He threw the bottle into the trash can next to his desk where it broke with a satisfying clatter of shattering glass. Guaranteed to work on 60% of females regardless of species his fluffy ass. He'd find a way to get back at that sick little perverted bunny one way or another. He'd show her humiliation. The overpoweringly harsh smell of far, far too much cologne sent him into a coughing fit. Gods damn that bunny…

Judy was staring at her fox.

A slight "Oh" escaped her as she thought about what he'd said. She'd grown up her entire life surrounded by siblings and friends who, especially during their teens, had talked of nearly nothing else besides sex. Crushes, relationships, breakups, escapades, and chosen mates. These where the constant theme in conversations and interwoven throughout it were the in-jokes, the hushed giggled
retelling of experiences, speculations of who was doing it with whom. Judy had always felt like she was a bit on the outside since she was one of the few who hadn't had the experience necessary to fully understand what all the hype had been about, and most others found the topic of what you wanted to do as a career boring in comparison. She had garnered quite a bit of ribbing, mostly good naturally, during her highschool years for it.

But now, now she had Nick. And that threw a whole new light on those conversations from her youth. She found most of them far funnier now and certainly could see the appeal of the subject that had always been lacking before. She might still find it silly and even stupid to some degree but that didn't stop her from smiling every time her thoughts went back to last night or speculated on this evening. The idea of a whole day with Nick and nothing besides Nick made her inner fire roar almost out of control. She had thought that the events of last night would have been the single best memory of her life, but an uninterrupted entire day? Screw it. She needed to let off some of the pressure now or in another few seconds she just might flip Nick over on the bench and rip off his clothes. There certainly wasn't enough time to get to the motel, and she did want her lunch after all.

Judy took first base faster than a cheetah in the pro league. She was pulling the startled fox into the kiss and after a shocked second he was responding with enough passion to match hers. Everything she'd ever heard paled in compared to Nick. Ha, Love? What did they know of love? What they had talked about wasn't even a shadow of what she felt for Nick, and he'd already put their best stories of lovemaking to shame last night. There were a few of her sisters that she just couldn't wait to talk too, Jill in particular. Judy knew that she'd probably make fun of her new mate, how she'd be so sorry for Judy because he'd never be able to satisfy her like a real bunny could, but that might be alright because she was Jude the Prude after all. Just a few stories from last night would have her sister blushing and sputtering. A whole uninterrupted day that her mate wanted to spend making love to her? Judy's intensity doubled as she thought about that. Her caring, loving Nick who wanted to always be there with her, who wanted to spend his life loving and making love to her. Not any other female, not any other vixen, or doe. Her. That pushed the thoughts of petty revenge right out of her mind because all she could think of was Nick and how much she loved him.

A very deep, gruff and irritated voice spoke up and Judy broke off the kiss with a sheepish smile, "Stop eating each other's faces and eat the damned food."

The brown bear slammed two plates down in front of them before heading back to the other side of the counter.

Nick just grinned that stupidly happy smile down at her and it sent shivers of delight through her. She'd only ever seen him smile like that at her. It was a smile that said that everything was wonderful because of what he was looking at.

"Humm, but I'm still hungry for my bunny" he said, his smile even wider.

Judy reached up and gave him one more strong kiss before turning back around to the table and settling back in his lap. Sitting like this might have just become her newest guilty pleasure. It felt sooo comfortable and utterly natural. It was just one more extra piece of proof for her that she and Nick were absolutely perfect for each other. Despite all their differences they seemed to fit together flawlessly. And in more than just that way, she was sure she was grinning just as stupidly as Nick was.

"We'd better actually start eating, Whiskers. The one thing guaranteed to tick Mike off is ignoring his food."

Judy was still thinking about how in every way it seemed that Nick was perfect for her, but she nodded and reached out for a fork and took a bite of food. The explosion of flavor in her mouth was
enough to derail her thoughts. It was an amazing mix of flavors that blended together and highlighted something exotic, something she wasn't sure she had tasted before, but that had a wonderful flavor and texture.

Her thoughts were side tracked again when she noticed Nick's paw had frozen in midair, fork half way to his mouth. She looked up at him and quirked her eyebrow at his shocked expression.

"What? It's really good, just like you said it would be." She got out after swallowing the bite. Nick's eyes just got a little wider at that. His mouth worked a few times before he managed to speak.

"Uhm, Judy?" Nick actually sounded a bit nervous, "You know that that's my dish, right?"

She gave him a teasing smile, "What you don't like to share?"

"No, no, it's not that, I'd share anything with you. It's just... well that's a dish made for a predator." He finished cautiously.

Judy looked back at the two plates. One had a vegetable medley that looked really good but the one she'd eaten from was an alfredo pasta with bits of pink something mixed in. She reached out and used the fork to shift one so she could see exactly what it was.

Oh.

Judy looked back up at Nick. He had an expression like he was expecting her to blow up or freak out or something, and was desperately trying to figure out how to handle the it. An idea popped into her mind, it was something Nick would be proud of. She turned back to the table and while slipping one paw into her pants pocket to grab her phone, scooped the piece of shrimp with her fork and popped it into her mouth.

She looked at Nick and said, "Pretty good shrimp."

The look on his face was priceless. Judy laughed and was able to get several very good shots of it before Nick managed to break out of his astonished look of befuddlement and disbelief.

"But, but, you're a bunny!"

Judy's laughter had die down to giggles. She pulled down an ear as if examining it and gave a theatrical gasp, "Oh my gosh, I am a bunny, how have I never noticed?" and broke into another fit of laughter which drew a huff from her fox.

She was still laughing when his arms wrapped around her. She felt the vibrations from deep down in his chest that was pressed against her back as he began to rumble and his muzzle went to the that spot at the crook of her neck and shoulder before he nipped it and kissed it.

Her laughter broke as she let out an "Eeep" and low moan.

"NNiick, not fair! You heard the bear, eat your food, not me!"

"Mumm, but I want my crazy bunny" he whispered in her ear and gave it a nibble. It sent an arc of electricity running down her spine.

OOOhh, Oh, Carrot sticks! Too far, too far! She could feel her tail wiggling madly against him as she desperately tried not squirm in his lap and moan again.

His muzzle ran along hers, making her mind go fuzzy, before it pulled away as if to kiss her. She
was leaning into it, before his mouth opened and he plopped a forkful of pasta and shrimp in it. Judy just stared in shock, her mind trying to comprehend what happened to her kiss. Nick chewed and swallowed before saying with a smirk,

"Pretty good shrimp, but I like my Carrots better."

Judy huffed indignantlly. He couldn't do that to her and not kiss her. She grabbed her fork and speared a bit of carrot from her plate and jammed it into his grinning muzzle.

"Well that's all the carrots you're getting now!"

He just ate it slowly as if savoring the flavor. "Mmm. Not bad but I've had better" he said and gave her another blinding grin, green eyes shining with mischief.

*Ohh no, no, No!* she quickly turned around to pull her plate to her and started eating before his eyes, those beautiful emerald eyes of his could draw her in and trap her. Cheese and Crackers. Hadn't her parents always warned her that you had to watch out for foxes? They'd just apparently forgot to warn her that she had to watch out for them in *that* way.

Occasionally muttering about sneaky beguiling foxes, Judy followed by Nick ate their lunches. Apparently, Nick thought her comments were rather funny judging by his chuckles. She used the break the food caused to get herself under control and plan out her revenge for tonight. If Nick wanted to play games, he was in for one hell of a surprise. She was good at games, a master at playing games, she'd grown up with 275 brothers and sisters after all.

Judy made a point to steal bits of Nick's lunch just to teach him a lesson. But after the first time he started stealing bits of hers in return.

As they slowed down, the food was very good and filling. Nick asked her, "So do all bunnies secretly eat meat? Or are you hiding some sort of secret? I'm not going to find myself waking up to you sucking my blood or having you turn into some sort of predator on the full moon am I?"

She elbowed him lightly, "Nnoo!" She snagged the last piece of shrimp from his plate. "Prey animals don't have any dietary need for the types of protein in meat but it doesn't mean we can't eat it. It's not like predators don't eat vegetables. Eating meat for prey is just one of those things that's just not done; sort of taboo." She took the last bite of her food and set her fork down. She sighed and leaned back into Nick, full and comfortable.

"Most prey actually try meat at some point. It's one of those stupid dare things you do when you're a teenager to be rebellious and show how brave you are to everyone else."

Nick looked curious, "Are we talking about tofu and bug-a-burger 'meat' or real meat like fish and chicken?"

Judy giggled thinking back to highschool. "Depends on how daring you are. Most prey don't actually dislike the taste, but just find it too odd and disturbing. Some will just try a bug-a-burger pred sandwich, some will actually try real meat."

"What about you?"

Judy was pretty sure he could guess by the smirk on his face. "Didn't care much for bug-meat,"

"Nobody does, it's just cheap and convenient" Nick broke in with a chuckle.

"but I've tried seafood a few times and chicken once."
"Did you like it?" Nick looked fascinated.

"not bad" Judy waved her paw in a so-so gesture. "The shrimp in that pasta was far better than what I remember eating before." She looked up at him, "And what about you? Ever try any of those 'prey' foods beyond regular vegetables and fruits?"

Nick grinned, "Got me. Tried some alfalfa hay on a bet from Finnick once. Didn't really like it, very bland but I made fifty bucks easy"

Judy chuckled trying to imagine Nick eating hay.

"So what's the deal with prey seeing predators eat meat then? It always seems to put some of them off."

"Partly the idea of meat; it's what makes it such a great dare. The idea that you're eating something from another living creature even if it's not a mammal and can't think just freaks some prey out. Also some prey have a fear of claws and fangs, so watching a predator using their teeth to eat meat can be disturbing for them. It doesn't matter how irrational it is, but most prey find it to some degree fascinating and disturbing."

"But not you?"

Judy wiggled a bit, "Well, I did when I was younger, but there were some predators in my school growing up and certainly at the academy. After a while I just got used to it; Every mammal's gotta eat and it's not like any mammals have eaten each other in what thousands, tens of thousands of years?"

She leaned up and kissed the corner of his mouth right over one of his longer canines, before nuzzling into his shoulder and breathing in a long breath filled with his scent.

"I'll admit that I kind of find your teeth and tail interesting, they're just so different from a bunny's"

Nick laid his muzzle on her head, "I'm kind of relieved and happy to hear all that, I was a bit worried that you might not like seeing me eat meat, or that my teeth or scent or something else might be disturbing to you."

Judy squirmed a bit at that, and could have cursed herself for it. Nick had immediately tensed up.

"You don't, do you? Oh gods, Judy, I so sorry-"

"Nick!" she had to straighten this out quickly, "I like you just as you are, I actually..." she blushed a bit and shifted around so that her back was to him and she could use his tail to cover her embarrassment before continuing.

"I really like how you smell, and how you look and feel. When I first met you I didn't, but... Well the doctors said that it sometimes happens to interspecies couples, that what they find attractive can change over time because of how strongly they feel towards their mate. I think one doctor called it emotional remapping. They were really interested in it because it happened so fast and there isn't a lot of study on interspecies couples and effects like that. Judy sighed and hugged Nicks tail tighter. "I really, really like you Nick, all of you. I like your musky scent and your build and your fur color and texture, your tail, even your teeth and claws. It's weird and different but there it is. They warned me that even if my mating bond made sure that I wasn't interested in others, that I might not even see other bunnies the same as I did before"

Nick nuzzled her a bit before speaking, "I should have paid better attention to the docs. I couldn't stop thinking of you the whole time I was in the individual session with them, so I may have been
distracted. They told me the same thing, I just thought it was a another effect of my instincts getting messed with from the Nighthowler toxin like the insane overprotective drive. I'm not sure how much of it is mixed up with the imprinting, I still can't really see other bunnies as seriously attractive but I can't see what I saw in vixens anymore either. But when I look at you it drives me crazy with desire. Your tail, your ears, your scent. Judy, you have no idea what you do to me with your scent, I can't get enough of it and when your aroused I can smell it and it takes everything I have not to grab you and claim you again."

She hummed a bit still holding his tail and very blatantly breathed in a lung full of his scent, "I think I might have an idea."

His rumble returned. It wasn't loud but she had good ears and she could feel it. She might not have a good enough nose to be able to easily pick out changes in his scent but there were all sorts of other signals a mammal gave off.

"Nick? Have I told you recently how much I love you?" the rumble grew.

"I love you, too" he gave her a quick kiss. And Judy hummed in return. They spent a happy minute just enjoying each others presence before the waitress came back to refill their waters.

"Well, I know Mike's food can sometimes make mammals nod off in delight, but this is a little much don't you think?" Judy cheeks tinged a bit but she was too comfortable holding Nick's tail and with his arms around her to care.

"You two want desert or are you just going to have each other?"

Judy full on blushed at that, but Nick spoke up. She didn't even need to look at him to know he was smirking.

"Well, I could use some whipped cream and a cherry to go with her."

The waitress laughed and Judy elbowed him hard for that one. She could feel the heat coming off her ears and cheeks.

"Ok, ok Fluff, I'll be good just don't hit me again!" She felt Nick shift his attention back to the waitress, "So does Mike still make his blueberry cobbler?"

"Yep, we even have a few pieces left from his batch this morning. Better get one if you want it, otherwise we'll be all out."

"One cobbler and another coffee. Whiskers you want anything?"

Judy started to shake her head then stopped and asked, "Do you have mint tea?"

"Sure thing, hun, be back in a bit." And she left to get their order.

Judy sighed and let go of Nick's tail, though she really didn't want to.

"As much as I'd like to just sit here and cuddle, we should probably have a plan for the rest of the day."

Nick nodded, and reached back to pull the yellow office envelope with the papers Clawhauser had given to them out of his back pocket. He unfolded it and handed the papers to her, before speaking.

"Well you already filled out most of these and I filled in the portions about me you didn't know."
Judy started flipping through them, and made sure to memorize Nick's information like his birth date and social security number.

She spoke up as she continued flipping through them, "So we're going to go see Chief Bogo next, and have dinner later tonight. I also need to do a bit of shopping since I don't have any other clothes or stuff here right now. And we are probably going to need to stop by the bank and figure out what we're going to do with our accounts, I'm kind of in favor of joining them." She stopped, "Oh wait I've been using Zootopia National Bank, do you use a different one like Lemming Brothers Bank?"

Nick was looking a little embarrassed as he answered, "Well, you see fluff, I, ah, sort of don't have any bank accounts."

Judy just looked up at him in shock, Nick was 32, how had he survived his adult life without even a bank account? When the waitress arrived. She placed their drinks and desert on the table and seeing Judy's shocked expression looking at Nicks embarrassed one and said, "Well hun, you can always just eat him for desert. Wouldn't have to worry about him after that." And then with a smirk, placed a can of whipped cream and a saucer with a cherry on it, on the table before leaving.

Nick spoke up quickly, "I, ah, didn't have a very good opinion of banks after what happened with my dad, and with my previous job a bank account could have been problematic."

Judy swatted his paw, which had slowly been moving toward the can of whipped cream, and confiscated the item. "Well we're going to fix that, and since you're all caught up on your taxes and are going to be staying caught up you won't have to worry about problematic issues. Especially with your new employer." She smirked, which seemed to slightly alarm Nick.

"Wait, what do you mean, new employer? Chief Buffalo Butt isn't going to be our employer till the court mess with the regulations gets sorted out."

"Didn't you read through all this," She waved the papers still smirking.

"Yes, applications for private investigator licenses, class 2 weapons licenses including concealed carry permits, and fugitive recovery agent licenses all through and certified by the ZPD along with the paperwork to start and operate a P.I. company in Zootopia and its affiliated regions." Nick rattled off still looking at her uneasily.

"Yep, we're going into business together, Slick. And while it's a joint venture between us, who's officially going to be the senior P.I.?" Judy felt like her smirk was going to split her face. She could almost see Nick thinking back and going over the relevant section of the paperwork in his head. He froze for a second, then looked back at her, then took the papers and flipped through it before stopping and rereading a section, before muttering, "Sly little bunny."

"Yep," Judy said happily, "I have previous experience as a police officer, so that makes me the senior detective in our soon to be business." She crossed her arms and looked at Nick smugly, "Welcome to the job junior detective. If you want, we can get some stickers for you to wear."

Nick looked at her, and shook his head. "We're really going to do this, aren't we?"

"Got something better you'd like to do?" she replied, still smug.

"No, not really, plus I can't see you selling pawsicles." Nick said, a bit chagrinned.

"And I can't see you as a carrot farmer." Judy shot back.

Nick laughed at that. "I'd make a terrible farmer, Whiskers. Or I guess I can call you boss now." He
grinned and handed back the packet of papers. And picking up a spoon to dig into his blueberry cobbler. "So Boss, we're going to meet with the chief of the Fuzz, go take care of some bank issues, and do some shopping, and then dinner with my mom? I miss anything"

"Hum, that pretty much covers it for now. You got anything else you can think of?"

Nick munched happily on his desert, before nodding, "Apartments, we need to find a place to start a den." He stopped, "Wait do rabbits call home a den?"

That happy bubbly feeling was growing inside her again hearing Nick talking about starting a home with her. She snagged a bit of his cobbler before grabbing her tea and snuggling back into him.

"We usually call it a burrow, but I kind of like the sound of den, it sounds nice and comfy. But the place you live won't work?"

Nick grimaced at that, "No, we might have to stay there a few days, but it's not a home. It's just somewhere I can sleep at. We'll have to stop by there before going to the bank since I've got most of my money stashed there. You'll understand when we do."

Judy looked at him with a bit of concern, "Please, tell me you don't keep your money under your mattress."

Nick gave a halfhearted sheepishly smirked at that, "Well, first it's not really a mattress and second only some of it." Judy just looked at him, before he continued, "Hey, you never keep all your stash in one place, and it's also smart to leave a bit in the obvious spot so if someone breaks in looking for it, they'll think they found it and stop searching for the rest."

"Which is why it's safer in a bank"

"Ahh, but in a bank it can be seized or frozen by the government and there's fraud too, don't forget about that, fluff!" He said, smirk completely back.

"Well not if you don't owe back taxes! And the banks have insurance to cover fraud!" Judy realized that Nick's smirk had been growing the entire time she'd been talking. He leaned down and kissed her nose which had started to twitch in exasperation. Her twitching nose stopped, she apparently hadn't realized that her nose had a mind of its own. But that was beside the point, Nick was looking far too satisfied with himself. She crossed her arms and gave him a look.

"You did that on purpose."

Nick shrugged his shoulders and held up his paws like she'd caught him stealing from the cookie jar.

"Hey, what can I say? Your nose is cute when it twitches."

She doubled down on her 'look', "Don't call me cute."

"Actually, I meant to ask you about that. Why do bunnies hate that word?"

"Because all other species see us as, cute, helpless, little bunnies."

"Okay, but why do bunnies call each other cute?" Nick asked, still grinning but almost apologetically.

"From another bunny its closer to calling someone pretty or sexy" She said partially mollified.

Nick's smirk came back up and he leaned down to her ear. "Well then as the mate of a bunny I have
to tell you that your nose is cute, your tail is cute, you are cute." Judy was trying to look stern arms still crossed but she was blushing hard and her nose was starting to twitch again. Nick pulled back so they were almost nose to nose. His grin was well into the roguishly dangerous territory now. "Your nose twitching is so utterly cute I want to gobble you up." And before she could react he'd spritzed some whipped cream on top of her nose, dropped the cherry on it and licked it up, all in one smooth motion.

"NICK!" her blush was now liable to set something on fire. Nick was grinning so much you'd have thought he'd just won the lottery.

Judy was not going to let him get away with that. She snatched the whipped cream can out of his paw, spritzed him on the muzzle, then grabbed him and kissed him hard.

---

Behind the bar counter Mike was working at the stove of his small diner. He heard the loud "NICK!" from the table where Wilde and his new wife of all things were at. It was a bit odd, but Wilde had always been a funny one. The brown bear didn't really care, so long as they paid and didn't make too much of a commotion. Anyway the fox had helped him out in the past. He waved over his one waitress for the place, and the gazelle came over with her usual confident saunter. She'd been getting a kick out of the two little mammals but she'd miscalculated when she'd offered him the bet.

He pointed with his favorite spatula over to where the bunny had spritzed the fox on the muzzle and was now kissing him while the fox was reaching to steal the whipped cream can back. It was like something from one of the cheesy romance novels he liked to read in his free time.

"Well, I'll be damned. They actually used it," She said, though she looked rather pleased, even as she handed him a twenty, "This is better than watching Marriage and Mates."

---

By the time Judy and Nick finished fooling around, the fur around their muzzles was seriously mussed up, and the whipped cream can was empty. The cobbler was now gone as it had been commandeered as additional ammunition and though they needed to wash their paws of the blue stains their muzzles, besides needing the fur brushed out, were completely clean.

Judy was cleaning the worst of the blue juice off her paws with some napkins, satisfied that she'd showed her fox who was in charge, and asked, "So where were we?"

"Banks" Nick said. He wasn't smirking, not really. It was more of a dopey happy smile than a smirk. "I agree with you for the most part. I still think we should keep some cash on hand for emergencies and I have a few small stashes hidden around the city that I'll need to show you. It's not much more than a couple hundred here or there, but I've found in my previous business, and I kind of expect this to hold true for what we're about to get into, that having some cached supplies in convenient spots you can get to is a good idea."

"Sounds reasonable. But hustling doesn't sound that dangerous." She said looking back at Nick, "Usually isn't. But it depends on the mammal and how you hustled them. Remember how I screwed up with Mr. Big?"

She snickered at that. "I still can't believe you sold him a skunk butt rug"

Nick chuckled, "It's funny looking back on it, but not at the time. I might have been a foxsicle for a
while there. My Tundratown stash saved me then."

"You've got to tell me that story some time too."

He tussled the fur on the top of her head, "Will do, Carrots. But that's a story to be told over a few beers"

Judy squinted her gaze at him, "Did you just get blueberry juice on my fur?"

Nick tried to look aghast, but failed miserably due to his smirk, "Oh gosh, I'm so sorry. Here let me clean that up for you."

…

'Cleaning' her fur took a minute. Judy used it to plan further revenge against her fox. His ministrations might make her blush redder than that stupid cherry and the fire inside her flare with every touch. But she would get him. By carrots and lettuce and every other vegetable out there, she was going to get him back.

She was glad there wasn't anyone in view. There was no one at the bar and when she glanced over the brown bear was turned around still cooking. She was going to have to go into the rest rooms and straighten out her fur before she left since now not only was the fur around her muzzle all tussled up but so was all the fur on top of her head. Vengeance she promised herself. Vengeance. It would be swift and terrible. She just had to wait for the perfect moment. Vengeance.

…

"Ok anything else besides the bank and apartment searching?" she asked after they'd used the restrooms to clean their paws and get their fur mostly straightened out. They were finishing up the last of their coffee and tea and the waitress had dropped off the check.

"I think that about covers it for now, I can do some quick apartment searching on my phone while we walk." He set his coffee mug down and took out his wallet.

"One last thing, Slick." She tapped the paper work on the table. "What do we call our new private investigation company?"

Nick placed the money for the meal and a large tip with the check.

"Well, all the classy ones from the movies or books usually keep it simple, just their last name or something, and Chief Buffalo Butt refuses to call you by your new last name Mrs. Wilde," He grinned at her, "so why don't we just call it 'WildeHopps'"

"WildeHopps, huh. I like that. WildeHopps it is"

Chapter End Notes

Ok, we need some additional credits here. First to Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps (and if you don't know who he is or haven't read his stories, then your life is beyond fixing). If my memory serves me right he was the first to come up with the idea of the jealous Hopps sister 'Jill' of which I think I have correctly pilfered. He also used the idea of Judy liking shrimp, though if I remember right, credit for that one goes to Ultimate Naco
Topping, another amazing author and one you should have already read. (Though he seems to have disappeared again. Let's all just hope he comes back and continues writing). And since I'm naming awesome authors here (Unfortunately there are too many for me to completely list). If you liked Nick's internal war in the last chapter you need to read MinscLovesBoo's 'Love's Tales'. Though I can't really credit him for that scene since it's not even a pale shadow of what he writes.

*Credit correction: 'Jill' is the angry sister in Spintherella's comic 'Inter Schminter' which is also amazing well done. (and didn't make me cry like the truly well done but sad comic 'Judy is dead'. yes, yes I know the title should have been a dead giveaway) Cimar I think still gets credit for the first angry/jealous Hopps sister usage though. His is just named Jessica. So I managed to pilfer from two authors at once! cool. (fine Spintherella might have made me cry but it was in a good way)

Disclaimer: Grinch's do not cry. It's impossible. It was just raining that day.

And Kudos again to gonekrazy3000 for his expert assassination of grammar issues and typos!
Chapter 18 – Strawberry or Blueberry

Chapter Notes

Conniving pirates! That court meeting was a trap. Apparently saying "Neener, Neener" constitutes 'contempt of court'. And their 'bail' was an agreement with the Judge to keep me chained to the desk and writing! I think they bribed the Judge with WildeHopps. That stuff should be illegal, it's too addictive and fluffy.

Hit 100 Reviews! And a shout out to #100, Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps! That's one cool coincidence, having one of the big league writers comment on this story for the hundredth review. I might be in danger of losing my prized reader status. However that's why I have superglued my 'Reader Only' badge to my shirt, ain't nobody gonna take that away from me!

Thanks again for all the reviews! You all and your reviews have insured that my coffee ration has not been cut, and I would be doomed without that life giving brew.

Disclaimer: I want a new lawyer! AND MORE COFFEE!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick was getting frustrated. Between his phone getting closer and closer to being completely dead, (He'd already gotten the 'Warning Low Battery - 10% Remaining' message) and the very few leads he was getting on finding an apartment, even with using his not inconsiderate pool of contacts and acquaintances, he'd almost lost his cool.

He'd been so distracted he'd almost walked into the back of a porcupine. Judy had saved him from probably another, and very embarrassing, trip to the hospital by giving him a tug on his tail to bring him up short. The only upside of the whole event was the face of an old and stern looking lioness matron that had gasped aloud at seeing a bunny grab a fox by the tail. She'd looked like she'd wanted to bring out a ruler and wrap her across the knuckles while lecturing her on 'decent behavior'. Nick thought she might have had an aneurysm when Judy grabbed his tie and used it to lead him around the porcupine. Nick just gave the lioness the most nonchalant shrug and smile he could manage as if saying 'hey, what can I do?"", as he let the bunny pull him past her.

He halfway expected her to exclaim, "Well I Never!" or "In my day!" or some such tripe.

The reaction they were getting from the public wasn't as bad as he'd feared. Most mammals were too busy with their own lives to pay much attention to them. Very few actually seemed to recognize them from the news. This was one nice part of Zootopia being so diverse and having so many mammals and species. One fox and bunny looked very much like another to most mammals. The tie incident and some pawholding and leaning on each other got far more reactions than any recognition. It was mostly just stares or quick glances; some showed intrigue or possibly what Nick's still regrowing optimistic side might call support, but many were also shocked or disgusted.

One beaver had actually started berating them on their 'unnatural behavior' when Nick had his arm wrapped around Judy, but a quick kiss with her had sent the beaver into outraged splutters and they managed to slip by him.
Their experience at the hospital had actually been quite nice by comparison though. Nick suspected that those at the hospital who had blatantly hostile views against their relationship had been kept away from them. It was only now that they were out in the general public that Nick was really starting to get a feel for the publics response. It was also giving him a chance to discover some more changes with himself.

He was finding it far harder to keep up his mask of indifference than usual. It wasn't the comments that were directed at him that were the problem. He was handling those just fine. It was anything that was directed at Judy, his mate, that was causing him issues.

Nick had never been one to resort to violence, he'd actually built his life as a hustler around avoiding it whenever possible. Something in him despite his predatory nature just shied away from direct conflict. But every comment or sneer at her made his hackles want to rise.

The only reason he'd been able to maintain his mask was his mates calming presence beside him. She was actually handling the reactions far better than he was, and every time his mask had been close to cracking, a quick touch, squeeze of her paw, or brush of her against him would give him the support he needed to maintain it.

He was pretty sure that given some time to get used to the new feelings, that he'd be able to handle them better without constantly needing her support, but for right now he was determined to stay glued to her side come hell or high water. It was these new feelings and protectiveness that was what had caused the near incident with the porcupine. It wasn't that he was having so much trouble finding an apartment as he was worried about providing a proper den for his mate.

His phone buzzed.

'Warning Battery Critically Low - 5% Remaining'

He sighed and put it into sleep mode before returning it to his pocket.

"No luck?" Judy piped up from his side. She was leaning in close with an arm wrapped around his waist, using him to help support her still injured leg. He was worried that she might be stressing it too much but she'd claimed it was fine.

"No, There are a few places I've found but they're either almost as bad as my place or too expensive, and a few of the apartment managers I messaged or talked to seemed like they might have issues with a pred/prey couple or our semi celebrity status causing disturbances.

"Ya, that yak had quite the extensive vocabulary. I bet he could have taught salty old sailors a few new curses."

Nick grinned down at her. "Heard that did you?"

Judy just pointed to her ears, "It's not like he was being quiet either. And unless you turn down the volume on your phone quite a bit, I'll probably be able to listen in."

Nick had to consider that for a few seconds, "I knew you had good hearing, I just didn't think it was that good."

She gave him a happy smile, "Elephants are one of the very few species that can normally out hear a bunny, and even for a bunny my ears are good."

"Yes they are, I could nibble on them all day" Nick shot back. It was just too good of an opportunity to miss. Judy gave him a bump with her hip and a smile.
"Behave, Nick. But yes, I heard all your phone calls. It doesn't sound like we'll be finding anything immediately."

Nick was sure his expression and demeanor didn't change in the slightest as he walked, but he could feel a knot of unease building inside of himself. He needed to find his mate a den, a proper den. Judy though, seemed to pick up on his thoughts. She pulled him to a stop and hopped up using her good leg to give him a quick peck. Nick looked around quickly to see if there was anyone who was going to object, he could already feel his hackles trying to rise defensively. But they were walking through the older portion of Savanna Central that hadn't been gentrified yet and there were relatively few mammals on the street.

His attention was brought back to Judy, when she called his name.

"Nick." He looked down at her and her smile calmed him again. "It's going to be okay." She grabbed his tail and wrapped it around her waist as she leaned against him "As long as I'm with you and you're with me, everything will be alright. You've been tense ever since we left the hospital and more so since we left the dinner. I don't care where we live as long as you're there with me. Got it?"

He gave her a quick kiss in return, "Got it, Carrots. Sorry I've been so tense. Its just that I want you to have a good home, I want to be able to provide that for you, and I hate how some mammals are treating you and sneering at you. I'm supposed to be the cool collected fox and you're supposed to be the emotional bunny but it seems we've got that a bit mixed up today."

She squeezed him and hummed a bit as they started walking again. "We'll build a proper home together. And I got pretty good at ignoring others growing up as the bunny who wanted to be a police officer. I really don't care what others think or do until it actually starts to intrude into our life."

Nick was feeling better with her stroking his tail. He snickered a bit thinking back to earlier today, "Like with that reporter and the beaver?"

"Hey that reporter deserved what he got for trying to make a news story about you hurting me and forcing me to marry you! And anyway" she giggled a bit, "That beaver spluttering was pretty funny."

"You missed the lioness when you saved me from impaling myself on that porcupine." Nick teased.

"Really? What was she like?" she asked grinning.

"Classic stuck up old biddy wanting to chastise the uncouth and impertinent youths. Better than the beaver"

Judy laughed, "Oh, I wish I'd seen that one."

Nick looked at his bunny as they walked along. He still had a hard time believing that someone so amazing and from such a different background would want to spend the rest of their lives with him.

The street was still mostly empty so he leaned down and marked her cheek again. She chinned him in response and hummed before asking, "What was that for?"

"Because I love you." he responded with a smile. Not a smirk, or a grin, but a real honest to gods smile. He couldn't remember the last time he actually just smiled at someone like that.

"Love you too." she responded before leaning into him again and humming louder.

He didn't know how she did it, it was just part of what made her so special he guessed, but she was
always able to make the world seem like a better, happier place. His worries took a back seat as they continued to walk.

They were maybe 10 or 15 minutes away from the precinct. Almost out of the old downtown of Savannah Central. When Nick's hustler instincts started sounding alarms. His attention focused on a group of mammals that were causally heading to a small grocer's store down the street. He didn't know those particular mammals, but their bearing and walk and attempt to look just like other busy mammals along with being in this part of town gave him a damn good guess as to who they were and what they were up to.

Judy had felt him tense up and had followed his gaze to the group entering the shop. She was looking slightly confused like she knew something was off about them but couldn't point out what. "What's up?" she asked.

They'd be walking right past the store in a minute. Nick leaned in a bit closer to her and talked in a low voice without making it obvious to any observers.

"How many groups of mammals have you seen around here,"

"Not many," she replied.

"How many mixed species groups have you seen here,"

"There was the one at that old café we passed." Her answer just reminded him how good her attention and memory was. Most mammals wouldn't have picked up or remembered such a detail as they were just casually walking down the street.

"Smart bunny, and what about their clothes?"

She took a few seconds to think before answering. Her nose twitched a few times then stopped. "They looked over dressed, and the clothes were a bit mismatched and ragged. And that stags coat looked a bit bulky."

Nick nodded, "He probably has a bat or piece of pipe in it."

Now Judy looked a bit alarmed, "Why would he have that?"

"You still aren't used to the big city, Carrots. They're probably part of some local gang trying to shake down that shop."

Judy didn't look alarmed any more, now she looked mad, "They can't just do that, how can they get away with it?"

They were getting close to the shop and Nick could spot a shape in the alley across the street. He leaned in and placed his arm around Judy's shoulder's playing up the couple look, not that he had to try very hard. "Don't look directly at him, but there's a scout across the street in the alley. These small groups can do it because they're good at making sure there isn't anything they can be charged with. It's a real headache for the ZPD. If they get too big or ambitious they'll screw up on something and get taken down. But without being there ahead of time, a smart group, and this looks like one, will get away with it. The small shop owner even if they're not too terrified to tell the police won't have any evidence that can be used against them".

As he'd spoken, Judy's look of anger had shifted to one of determination, one that was frankly worrying Nick a bit. She had pulled out her phone and tapped away at it quickly before putting it
away. They were almost in front of the shop now.

Judy looked up at him and her expression had completely changed. Now she looked exactly like what Nick would have expected from the most vapid and air-brained bunny. In a sickly sweet and high voice that did wonders to reinforce her image as a complete bimbo bunny she said, "Nicky, it's warm today. Can't we get something to drink or maybe some ice-cream? Oh, Oh, look. See! There's a shop right here! Don't you think strawberry is better than blueberry ice-cream?" and while hanging onto his arm and doing a pretty good job of making it look like he was still leading them, forced him toward the door.

Nick reached out to open it, making the door chimes ring and leaning down to playfully nuzzle her ears, whispered, "Carrots, what are you doing?!" before saying out loud, "Anything for you Sugar Wuggums, but studies show that blueberry is definitely better."

She stood on her toes and gave him a loud smacking kiss on his cheek while whispering back, "Getting evidence" and after the kiss replied still in that voice that made any mammal sure she didn't have two brain cells to rub together. "AAww Nicky! Everybody knows Strawberry is better!" She continued to chatter away like that as she lead them over to the line of wall freezers and fridges and pulled out two strawberry popsicles and two sodas before leading him to the counter.

Nicks Hustler instincts were screaming at him to run. His instinct instincts were screaming at him to protect Judy, to which the first responded with a Well grab her and run! All to the background noise of another part of his mind that was going This isn't going to end well, this isn't going to end well, repeatedly like a broken vinyl record.

There was a rather scared looking female goat behind the register and the stag and weasel in front acting like they were looking over the snack selection. The third member of the group a giraffe and rather short one at that. He was at the far end of the counter perusing some magazines and humming a tune to himself loudly. His head was also, oh so conveniently blocking the security camera in the corner.

Despite the complete mess his brain seemed to be at the moment Nick was holding it together. The presence and touch of Judy was enough to keep his act from falling apart and the absolute overriding need to make sure nothing happened to her was allowing him to think despite all the background chatter.

Nick was playing the nerdy idiot boyfriend to Judy's air brained bimbo act for everything it was worth. The combination was absurdly over the top cliché. They were fawning over each other in such a sickly sweet fashion that it drove the act well past disbelief and all the way around into obvious certainty, because two mammals so desperate to find anyone else, especially two nobody in their right minds would want to be stuck with, wouldn't give a care in the world what species they ended up with as long as they had a heartbeat and didn't have to be inflated with air.

Nick clumsily but enthusiastically nuzzled her again, and in between the insipid chatter, whispered, "Plan?"

And when she responded in kind, she whispered back, "Wing it, police coming"

That did not do much to reassure him, but she seemed to at least have some idea of what she was doing so in one last desperate and amateurish display of affection that wouldn't have qualified to be on the worst film ever, but completely reinforced their performance, whispered back one final time, "You lead"

Judy giggled in a high pitched and extremely annoying tone, before grabbing his paw that wasn't
holding the popsicles and rushed over toward the counter waving her other paw with the sodas enthusiastically. She bumped into the stag as she dragged Nick along, in just the right way to knock him off balance so he fell onto his rear. She placed the sodas on the counter still giggling that awful giggle, and turned back to nick. The stag meanwhile was getting back up while looking at them disgustedly.

"Two Strawberry popsicles and two colas pleaseee!" Judy said to the goat, before grabbing one of the sodas back off the counter and turning to Nick as she started opening it. "NNicky! (horrible giggle) do you want to buy your girl her, ahhh!" The last part of sentence trailed off into a shriek of surprise that should have broken the windows as the soda she'd opened sprayed foam everywhere. She took two steps back and with the grace of a complete klutz tripped, bringing down all her weight on the corner of the giraffe's hoof.

The giraffe let out a startled cry of pain, his head whipping up to crack into the ceiling before doubling over to hold his head.

"Ohhh, I'm sooo sorry! I'm sooo clumsy" Judy started saying, hints of hysteria coming into her voice as her eyes went large and started to water.

Nick started rushing over to her in a panicked manner arms flapping around uselessly, "Muffin! Are you alright?!"

As he did so he jostled the stags elbow, causing the hidden bat to fall out onto the ground in full view of the now unobscured camera, and just for good measure while using his body and the flapping coat to shield the move, extended a claw and hooked it into the seam of the inside pocket of the jacket near the level of his head, tearing it as he moved past him to help Judy.

There was a curse from behind him. And Nick heard the weasel nearly shout, "Mark you idiot! The money!" Nick was helping the now bawling Judy up, while saying the most idiotic lines he could think of. Looking back he could see that the bulging pocket he'd ripped open had scattered crumpled cash all over the floor, and the stag was frantically trying to pick it all back up.

The weasel, who Nick was now sure was the leader of this little group had pulled out a rather wicked looking switch blade and was issuing orders.

"Trevor, stop your whining and grab those two imbeciles. Mark get the godsdammed money and bat and lock the door." He jumped onto the counter and pointed the switchblade at the goat who was now holding up her trembling hooves. "Where is the rutting recorder for the rutting security camera!" He yelled into her face.

The goat pointed a shaky hoof at a door, that had a sign labeled 'Office' on it, and squeaked out in an unsteady voice. "I don't, don't have the, the key for it."

Right as she finished speaking. There was a loud whistle blast from outside the shop.

"SHIT!" The weasel screamed, "Mark, forget the money, bust down that door and smash the recorder!"

"But," The stag stared to say

"Now, Godsdamnit! The police are going to be here any second!" He turned back to the goat, "You gonna say one word to the police?" he asked screaming at the goat while waving the blade dangerously at her, while the stag started beating at the office door with the baseball bat. The goat squeaked a terrified, "No!"
"You know that if you do the rest of our gang will make sure you don't live to testify, right?" he shouted his question again.

She squeaked an even more terrified, "Yes!"

He jumped down and headed for Nick and Judy, switchblade out in front of him menacingly. The door which was apparently painted metal was holding but the wall around the door handle and latch seemed to be cracking.

"Trevor grab these two and let's get the hell out of here through the back, we need to have a little chat with them." There were now the distinct sounds of sirens growing.

"Shit, Shit, Shit, LETS MOVE!" the weasel screamed as Nick felt a hoof grab his shirt collar and lift him bodily off the ground. The giraffe missed grabbing Judy as her bawling had turned into a full on hysterics with erratic jerks and movements.

The weasel moved toward Judy waving the switchblade, "You! Dumbass Cutesy! You'd better stop-"

Nick, felt something hot and vicious snarl in his mind at the weasel threaten and moved toward his mate. He felt his muzzle peel back into a full snarl and was about to rake his now fully extended claws through the giraffes hoof holding him when Judy acted.

In a split second the hysterics stopped, and before the weasel could react, she'd grabbed the paw that had been waving the switchblade at her, twisted it so that the blade fell out of his now slack grip, and continued the motion twisting his arm up behind the weasels back and toward his head till it locked all the joints in his arm and shoulder and kicked the back of his knees so he fell bending over backwards, arm still immobilized. It took her less than a second and she had the weasel gasping from pain looking like a cross between a flopping fish and a pretzel. She leaned over and snarled unlike anything a bunny should be able to produce, "Don't Call Me CUTE!"

The flurry of action was able to snap Nick out of his near rage. His mind, back in full control, went into over drive.

Rule 1 of hustling, don't break laws. Bend them, twist them, jump around them, but don't break them. He couldn't rip out that weasel's throat no matter how much he wanted to for threatening his wife, especially since she'd already subdued him. That would not constitute self-defense. He shuffled the whole rage response to the back of his mind to consider later since it wasn't a priority at the moment. That was a terrifying new development he'd have to consider seriously later.

Rule 2 of hustling, whenever possible talk your way out of a problem. Well it was a little late for that one.

Rule 3 of hustling, when things go south, avoid direct conflict and run. Little hard to do hanging in midair, and he couldn't leave Judy anyway.

Rule 4 of hustling, when you can't avoid direct conflict, use the minimum amount of force to escape. Pissing off mammals more than you had too when they might come looking for you, was a bad idea. Following this rule was why Mr. big hadn't done more than banish him from his turf.

Nick was pretty sure he'd need to modify his rules to fit his new lifestyle with Judy, but he could also consider that later. For the moment, they'd do.

He and Judy weren't cops. They weren't even PIs yet, not that PIs were any less susceptible to charges of vigilantism than citizens. So all they could do was act in self-defense. This was all being
recorded so he couldn't do anything rash either. Judy had taken care of the weasel; the next issue was
the giraffe holding him and who was now winding up to slug his wife in the back.

Nick was able to hold back the rage this time. Instead of letting it run wild he used it. Nick didn't like
fights. Fights got mammals hurt and sometimes killed. He tried to avoid both of those since they were
detrimental to one's life expectancy and expensive, especially if you didn't have insurance, like oh,
one Nicholas Wilde. (that was another thing that went onto the to deal with later list). But he also just
didn't like hurting other mammals, he guessed it was a little piece of his dad that had always stuck
with him. That however had not prevented him from getting into a fair number of scraps and fights
throughout his rocky highschool and hustling years. Nick was by no means a good fighter, but he'd
learned enough to get him out of the scraps he found himself in occasionally, and due to his
unorthodox learn on the spot training and emphasis on getting away, he'd learned to fight dirty.

Nick retracted his claws, and twisted. The cops would be here in moments. Claws would be
excessive and he didn't want to have to explain bloody wounds to the police even if it would
probably be ruled self-defense. No all he needed to do was distract this big bastard long enough for
the police to arrive. Fortunately, the giraffe seemed to think he was cowed and was holding him at
the perfect height. Nick shot a quick powerful, if sloppy, punch right into the portion of the giraffes
pants where the legs met.

The giraffe nearly instantly dropped him as his hooves went to the spot Nick had slugged and fell to
his knees. Nick landed on his feet and stepped out of the giraffes way as he doubled over moaning.
Judy looked over at him and the giraffe rocking on the ground, and said, "Really?"

Nick paws now in his pockets and casually standing next to the giraffe, who now had tears rolling
out of his closed eyes, just shrugged as if saying 'what was I supposed to do?'

"I really need to teach you how to fight" Judy commented, shaking her head. Nick walked over so
he could stand next to her and felt his tail wrap around her back. She'd rolled the weasel over onto
his face and every time he started to twist or squirm she tightened her hold on the arms she had
twisted around his back almost to his head. Nick though that learning from Judy might be a good
idea. You didn't always have a chance to take a cheap shot and Judy was able to stop the weasel
from doing anything just by adding a bit of pressure to her hold on him. It was rather impressive.

"What the hell?"

Nick glanced up to see that the stag who had just battered the office door open, looking back to see
his two companions down on the ground. He started toward them while raising the bat, past the goat
that was now cowering under the counter.

Now was time for Rule 2.

"Mark, do you really want to do that?" Nick asked completely calmly. The drastic change in his
voice from the idiotic prattle he'd been spewing before and the unnerving calm attitude froze the stag
for half a second before he continued toward them.

"And why wouldn't I fox?" He spat face going red as he approached, bat raised. The sirens were
getting very loud.

"Let them up and I'll let you pipsqueaks live!" the stag shouted, half panicked.

Nick yawned, "Well besides the camera on the wall you also forgot about the backdoor," he pointed
toward the rear of the building where nothing was going on, "and the police coming through it."
The stag who had just been about to swing at him froze momentarily again, his eyes widening and dashed for the front door, sprinting out it just in time to run into the side of the first of the police cruisers that pulled up in front of the shop, sirens blaring and lights flashing.

Judy gave him a look, not even needing to say 'Really?'

Nick shrugged again, but this time with a grin that conveyed, 'It worked didn't it?'.

... 

The next thirty minutes were rather boring since they had to wait around for the police to do everything.

Nick gave the still shaken goat a twenty and grabbed the two popsicles and the remaining soda and went over to sit with Judy as the four police mammals cuffed the gang members and started securing the scene.

The two police mammals that came over to get their statements, including a wolf named Wolford Judy knew, were apparently slightly exasperated to find Judy sitting in his lap with his tail wrapped around her, while they ate their popsicles and drank their soda.

Nick couldn't help having a little fun with the wolf while giving his statement.

"Well, then Judy said 'AAww Nicky! Everybody knows Strawberry is better!' " he repeated it in the best high pitch replication of her voice he could manage, "to which I responded 'Muffin top! you know that could never be true'. And she said back," he went back to his bimbo Judy voice impersonation, " 'But my Foxy Woxy said he loved when I used strawberry lipstick…" The wolf looked like someone was twisting screws into his knuckles. Judy gave him a light whack, though she was giggling too (her normal happy light giggle, thank gods Nick thought), and he stopped torturing the wolf and summed up what happened.

They waited for a while more and finished up their snack as the police collected evidence including among other things the security tapes. Eventually everything was done and Wolford asked if they wanted a lift back to the precinct since Judy had mentioned that they been heading that way at the beginning of the incident.

Nick found himself sitting in the back seat of a police cruiser tail still wrapped around Judy as they headed toward precinct 1.

"So how did you all get here so fast?" Nick asked the wolf in the passenger seat up front. He and the Wolford had started getting along after he'd stopped the hideous rendition of their idiot couple chatter. The equally traumatized face on the wolf's partner had gotten a laugh out of Wolford and he was grinning ear to ear after watching the replay of the security footage.

"Well Clawhauser got an anonymous tip that there was a robbery going down at that store. Funniest thing." He looked back at them with a big grin on his muzzle, "I didn't think anonymous tips usually come through the front desk. And what a coincidence to find Hopps, I mean," His grin got wider as he looked at them and took a not too subtle sniff of the air, "Mrs. Wilde and you there. Just how crazy is that?"

Judy blushed just a bit, but grabbed Nicks paw before speaking, "Any mammal could have sent that anonymous tip. That's why it's anonymous, and we just wanted to get a snack, watch the tape again if you don't believe us, and it wasn't like we knew they were doing anything illegal. The first time we witnessed anything illegal was when they dropped the bat and money and the weasel pulled that
knife."

Wolford laughed, "Oh I'm sure, Judy on Duty, the rookie cop who solved two of the biggest cases in years, one that stumped the entire precinct and the other we didn't even know was going on till it was over, didn't have any suspicion that something was wrong!" he laughed again.

Judy colored a bit further. "Well, I had help with those," she squeezed Nicks paw, "and it's wrong to judge a mammal based off of suspicions. Plus I wanted a popsicle!" she huffed.

Nick couldn't help but pipe up, "Still think blueberry would've been better."

Wolford broke into another laugh as they pulled into the parking lot of ZPD Precinct 1.

They got out and headed to the front doors while the two officers went to help bring the three cuffed mammals in from the second cruiser.

Right before they entered Judy let go of his paw with a mutter the sounded almost like 'Chief Buffalo Butt', before she spoke to nick, "Remember, we can't show any public displays of affection around the precinct. We might not be on the force yet, but Chief Bogo won't like it."

Nick looked at Judy's disappointed face and then stepped around so he was at the side with her injured leg.

"Promise carrots. No PDA. But that leg must still be hurting you. No one can fault me for helping you walk with your bad leg." He grinned and put his arm around her shoulder, and felt her arm snake around his waist. He was able to keep his tail from wrapping around her, but couldn't fully prevent it from wagging slowly behind him.

They walked through the front doors and were met with an
"AAAAAAAAAWWWWWWwwwwww!" from a very familiar cheetah at the front desk. But before they could so much as respond another familiar voice boomed through the precinct.

"WILDE, HOPPS. MY OFFICE NOW!"

Chapter End Notes

Bad Grammar and Typos are going to be telling their great great grandchildren, generations from now about the Big Bad Monster known only as gonekrazy3000.

So just because I feel like it and there was some discussion with people about savage stories. I though I'd give a shout out to some of the good ones I've seen. First there's 'Embrace It' by Starfang's Secrets another big author, and is an awesome and fluffy story. Another good one, though a romantic emotional rollercoaster is 'Wilde Heart' by Libious. Also another awesomely fluffy one called 'Instincts' by Buddykins (Please Please keep writing this, we've been waiting for like forever for this to update!) and lastly two that are probably going to make any reader blush, the new story 'A Bunny Can Go Savage' by Fox in the hen house and the Undisputed Champion of the mature rated WildeHopps tales, ones that are so smoothly written and ridiculously sweet they can break the hardest hearts and make rocks turn red are stories from Kulkum's 'Broken Masks' universe.
Ugh, Coffees gone, and I'm to tired to come up with decently snarky and grinch worthy dig at the pirates, readers or Disney. Don't worry though I'll remember your freebie you got here. When you least expect it, that's when I'll get you all, and your little dog too!
Chapter 19 – A New Job

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, someone bought tea instead of coffee. Simply doesn't work as well. I know you all are probably complaining that it's been forever since I updated, (the pirates are) so here you go. Now give me my damn coffee please.

…

Also on a cool note, there turns out to be these nifty newfangled group things called 'communities' on FanFiction. My encyclopedia (yes I still have a hardcopy encyclopedia, stop laughing), was not able to explain this internet phenomenon. So I grabbed my caveman's club and cautiously went exploring to figure out why it appeared two 'communities' had claimed this story. Did my story cause a war between two 'communities'? (cool) Was I being subjugated (again) and going to owe them taxes? (that would be bad) Did they have coffee? (I hope so). Well it turns out they seem to be spots to collect like minded stories or maybe the evolution of the good old reading clubs/circles. You clever little Neanderthals and your 'agriculture' and 'internet', constantly having new ideas (Shakes head in amused exasperation)

So this story now has proud citizenship in 'Savage Wilde' and 'Zootropolis Public Library' communities, how cool is that?

Also Disney sent Boba Fett after me. Too bad for them we're old friends. We had a fun lunch and swapped stories. I almost got him to get me out of here, but the pirates paid him double my offer not to, damn it.

Disclaimer: Gonna have to try better than that! HA!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"WILDE, HOPPS. MY OFFICE NOW!"

Judy flinched at the shout. She'd been yelled at plenty of times by large mammals at the academy and that had never phased her. But Chief Bogo somehow managed to get the same reaction of dread out of her that her mother did when preparing to scold her for something she'd done. Her mind stuck between the thoughts of her mother and the Chief conjured an image of a mad squeaking rabbit sized Chief Bogo in her mom's carrot apron and she almost laughed at the ridiculousness of it, but the guilty terrified portion of her mind absolutely squashed the reaction. If Chief Bogo was anything like her mom, then antagonizing him would be a bad, bad idea.

Clawhauser, who also looked a little cowed at the angry shout, gave them a smile and a thumbs-up as Judy lead Nick past him toward the chief's office.

Nick who was looking as calm and unfazed as he normally did, shot Clawhauser a cock-sure grin and two fingered salute in return.

When they got to the chief's door, Judy knocked twice.
And there was an immediate and gruff, "Enter."

Nick without a word lifted Judy up to sit on his shoulders. She reached up, grabbing the door handle and twisted while Nick moved back, opening it. She was about to jump down but felt Nick place his paws on her legs to hold her in place as he walked into the office and over to the too large chair in front of the chief's desk, where he released her so she could clamber onto the uncomfortably hard surface of the unpadded seat. After she was seated Nick jumped up in a graceful leap and settled next to her. He didn't hold her paw but she could feel his tail wrap around her, as he gave the chief a smirk and said, "Long time, no see Boss mammal."

The chief hadn't said a word about their unorthodox entrance but narrowed his eyes at Nick's comment. He slowly reached up and took the reading glasses off. Setting them slowly and carefully on the side of his desk, he looked at them and in a calm voice, like the thin ice covering a raging river started, "Hopps, you want to be a police officer correct?"

Judy's paw was trying to sneak its way over to Nick's, but she stopped the motion and instead, casually laid her other paw on Nick's tail tip at her side, before speaking up in a slightly nervous voice, "Yes, sir."

"You want to make police detective someday, right?" Chief Bogo said, voice still as pleasant as frozen water, eyes unmoving.

"Yes, sir." Judy's ears were down and plastered to her back now.

"Then let's see how good those detective skills are, shall we?" Judy was sure the room's temperature dropped a few degrees. She just nodded this time.

"So tell me what conclusions you draw from this. Officer Clawhauser, the front desk officer, receives an anonymous tip of a gang shakedown. The officers that respond not only find the gang members but a certain bunny and fox who are coincidentally friends of said front desk officer. The couple who were apparently there just to get popsicles, seemed to have not only inadvertently interrupted a shakedown but then out of purely self-defense subdued most of the criminals."

Judy was surprised that there wasn't frost forming in the room, "Umm, sir, well..."

Nick piped up with a smug tone, "Well it's obvious that the store owner, getting robbed of valuable popsicles, anonymously called their biggest customer who happened to be on the police force, and the unlucky couple at the shop was just protecting themselves."

Judy felt the winter gale of Bogo's gaze shift over to Nick. There was a creak and pop from the chief's neck muscles like that of cracking ice as his gaze turned to settle on its new target.

"Wilde, where were you and your mate a few hours ago?"

Nicks tail curled in a bit more around Judy, but his hustler face was holding under Chief Bogo's barrage.

"Just checking out of the hospital."

"And," The chief's gaze hardened though Judy hadn't thought that was possible a moment before. Nick's mask was starting to show a few cracks, "what is your wife's condition right now? Is she fully recovered?"

Nicks ears dropped, and in a smaller voice he simply said, "No."
"That was stupidly reckless of you two. Calling the police was the right move, but you should not have gotten involved, and if Hopps," he shifted and gave her a blast of his gaze again, "felt like she had to do something, then you two could have stayed back and just taken video to give to us. Getting involved in a situation for the police especially when you're not even fully recovered was dangerous."

Nick, eyes still downcast, tried to rally, "Judy's still on the force right now, she's just inactive."

Judy could hear the chief's molars grind for a moment before he grunted, "Not anymore." and slapped down two pieces of paper in front of them. Nick grabbed them and his face went blank; he handed them over to her to read. One was her official discharge form and the other was a letter from the academy informing Nick that due to policy change it was forced to rescind his acceptance.

Bogo sighed, His demeanor losing some of its frigidness. And punched a button on his battered looking desk phone.

"Clawhauser!" The chief barked, "Come up here."

A nervous voice said, "Yes, chief!" through the tinny speaker.

"Hopps, Wilde. Excuse me for a second, Clawhauser has to run some paperwork down to the administration department." The chief looked at Nick expectantly.

His ears perked up a bit and he pulled out the packet of forms they'd been reviewing earlier at the diner.

"Oh, ah Sir, we had some paperwork that'll need to be approved by the police department. We were going to drop it off at the administration office but if you," Chief Bogo reached over grabbing the packet. With startling efficiency, he daintily placed his reading glasses on the bridge of his nose and scanned the documents. His rapidly shifting eyes stopped for a second as he seemed to reread a single line before he grunted, "WildeHopps" and continued. He finished, pulled out a stamp, and with enough force that the heavy desk bounced, stamped a few of the sheets before writing a note and sticking it on top of the packet which he dropped on top of a stack of other papers in the corner of his desk.

"Since you just happen to be here already, I can approve it directly. The ZPD extends its congratulations to the latest two mammals to be approved as fugitive recovery agents of Zootopia. However, be aware that while it grants additional privileges to your new status as private detectives it also puts your actions involving any fugitives under the oversight of the Zootopia police department."

There was a knock on the door, and the chief barked, "Enter."

Clawhauser came in, looked at her and Nick and then at the chief, and stood to attention, though his tail was whipping back and forth in a nervous erratic fashion.

"You asked for me Chief?"

"Yes, I understand there was an unusual anonymous tip that you received a little while ago." The chief said sternly looking at him.

Clawhauser tail twitched at that and he quickly glanced at Judy, eyes wide, before turning back to the chief and squeaked, "There was, Chief."

"Well, the source turned out to have provided some good information. I don't care why whoever they
were decided to contact us in such an unusual fashion, but if you get any additional anonymous tips make sure to forward them on, understood?"

The much relieved looking Clawhauser chirped a happy, "Yes, Chief!"

"Now, please take this stack of paperwork," he gestured at the stack which he'd dropped their forms on, "to the administration department and have them deal with it promptly, dismissed."

Clawhauser grabbed the stack and gave Judy and Nick another bright smile and a wink as he headed out the door.

Chief Bogo reached underneath his desk and dropped a small box in front of them. This time Judy beat Nick to it. Inside it there were two police style wallets. When she flipped one open, the top half contained a clear plastic sleeve showing a card with her photo on it and identifying her as one Judith Laverne Wilde, a licensed private investigator and certified fugitive recovery agent. It also had a section giving her license information for class 2 weapons and concealed carry permit. The bottom of the flip wallet held a metal shield, similar to but different from her previous police officer's badge, with the words 'Fugitive Recovery Agent' and her name and new license number stamped into it. It reminded Judy more of the badges she'd see watching old western movies that the sheriffs and deputies wore. She opened the second wallet and saw it was Nick's; the only difference was his did not have any weapons license on it.

The chief had apparently caught something in her expression as she with Nick leaning over her shoulder examined the wallets, because he spoke up.

"Hopps your police training prequalified you for everything, however Wilde has no documented weapons training on file. His weapons license and carry permit is pending the completion of a written and practical examination. Drill Sergeant Friedkin from the ZPD Academy is overseeing a round of cadet weapon examinations this Friday and has offered to let Wilde sit in and take it since he is an official fugitive recovery agent, I'd suggest you take this opportunity rather than waiting."

Chief Bogo looked hard at Nick, emphasizing the last portion.

Judy certainly remembered Friedkin, the phrase, 'You're dead' might as well have been engraved into her ears from how many times the instructor had yelled that at her. Friedkin cared about one thing and one thing only and that was competence. She didn't care if you were an elephant or a bunny, if you failed to meet the standards she required, then you failed. She would cut Nick no slack whatsoever in his examination and three days was a very, very short time to try and train someone to Friedkin's high standards. Judy wasn't sure it was possible, so why was Chief Bogo pushing him to try so soon?

Nick seemed to have a similar concern, he raised his hand almost like a kit in school but with his smarmy grin back, "Um, Chief sir. Why that one? Couldn't I take an examination in a week or two or say three? I'm pretty sure it'd be wise to, oh train a bit beforehand."

"Yes, it would advisable to train beforehand. I'd suggest starting as soon as possible." Bogo dropped a heavy book that was awfully familiar to Judy in front of Nick. "You'll be cut no slack in the examination. That's the academy handbook that was assigned to you before your application was rescinded. The last quarter is everything you need to know for the weapons exam."

"Last quarter?!" Nick bit off, looking at the thick book.

Chief Bogo continued right over him, "I suggest you also go to one of the weapons and defense schools in the city to use their ranges and get as much practice as you can. You could always sign up to take one of the certification tests they usually offer quarterly but it would be wiser to have all your
paperwork completed and filed away *before something happens to slow it down.* The chief emphasized again giving Nick a very pointed look.

Nick seemed to understand something Judy didn't, because he nodded his head with a muttered, "Oh."

Chief Bogo leaned forward grabbing their attention again. He didn't have the anger underlying his voice like he had before but he was still dead serious.

"I need to make some things clear to you two. First, those," he nearly jabbed the badge wallets in Judy's paws with his hoof while pointing, "are NOT police badges. You need to understand exactly what you can and can't do with those. If you break the law even if it is for a good reason, I'll be forced to either suspend or revoke your licenses. Do I make myself clear?"

Both Judy and Nick nodded their heads.

"You two may have some friends in the police department, but that will not mean you can pull favors like getting access to our records or resources. You two will have to play by the rules, just like everyone else. If you don't it won't come back to just hurt you, but also whoever in the department helped you." He turned and looked right at Nick, "Don't rut up again like with your taxes, in fact I'd suggest you play it a bit safer than you're used to. If you mess up now, you're going to hurt more than just yourself."

Nick looked at her with far more emotion slipping through to his face than she was used to seeing, before he looked back to Chief Bogo, and gave one clear nod.

"The department has gone out on a limb to try and get you two on the force with this legal proceeding we've started. You two have come to the attention of quite a few mammals through your recent actions, and there are a number of those mammals, some even in high places, that for one reason or another have it in for you two. So you need to watch each other's backs and don't do anything stupid."

Chief Bogo leaned back in his chair.

"Since you two were part of breaking the Nighthowler conspiracy you should also be aware that Doug, Bellwether's chemist, has not been apprehended."

This came as a shock to Judy. Bellwether might have been the mastermind, but Doug had been the one with all the knowledge and ability to refine the flowers into something far more dangerous. Having him on the loose certainly made her uneasy.

"Also Bellwether had a source or sources of funding we haven't been able to identify. That piece of information is confidential and only being shared with you because it is possible that you may be targeted for your role in upsetting her plans. We don't have any evidence to support it or to place you two in protective custody even if you wanted it but you should be aware of the possibility.

The uneasy feeling had settled into one of queasiness in her gut at that. She felt Nicks paw quickly take hers and give it a squeeze before releasing it.

"I expect you two to call us if anything happens. I don't care if it is so much as an odd coincidence or a gut suspicion. The police cannot shield you from political pressures and annoyances but we can and will damn well protect our citizens from any threat of harm." Chief Bogo finished with a tone of absolute certainty, like he was daring the universe to try and prove him wrong and was ready to pummel it into submission if it did.
After he was sure his message had sunk in he gave a snort and picked up another file on his desk, "Now I still have work to do, so scram"

Nick took the police academy book and the box with their new badges before he got off the chair and helped Judy down to the ground. He moved to the side with her injured leg and wrapped his arm around her shoulder and lead them to the door.

This time Nick jumped up grabbed the handle and while twisting it pushed off the wall to open the door. He dropped down and rejoined Judy. Right before the door closed Chief Bogo spoke up again.

"See Clawhauser on your way out. Oh, and Hopps make sure to teach Wilde right, so he doesn't tranq himself in front of Friedkin."

That and Nick's grumble at the comment almost made her smile, but she still had that that queasy feeling in the pit of her stomach from the news about Bellwether's funding and Doug's escape. She'd been so certain that it was all over. It should have been over. But to find out now that it wasn't…

The stop near the end of the hallway jarred her out of her spiraling thoughts, which promptly scattered with Nick's sudden passionate kiss. The feel of his mouth against hers, the heat from his body as he pulled her into the kiss, the scent of her fox temporarily overpowered everything else.

It's absence as sudden as it's arrival, left her reeling. Her ears shot straight up as her mind reengaged and she quickly looked up and down the empty hallway to see if there were any mammals who’d seen them.

"Nick! Cheese and Crackers! What were you thinking, doing that here?"

Nick was grinning down at her now. "Well, I can't have my bunny all sad and gloomy now, it simply isn’t right. I don't care where we are, if something manages to get to you and hurt your optimistic happy spirit than I'll be forced to take emergency actions to fix it, no matter how drastic."

He grinned more and leaned down to plant a quick kiss on her nose which had started twitching as she looked around.

Judy punched him lightly in the arm and grumbled, "Stupid fox." She wanted to feel angry at him for kissing her in the precinct but she had to admit that she did feel a bit better now.

Nick made a show of rubbing his arm and moaning before coming back to her side and wrapping his arm back around her. He started guiding her toward the precincts central atrium.

"That news about Bellwether come as a shock?" Nick asked her, the playfulness in his tone gone.

Judy sighed, "Yes, I just thought it was all behind us. You seem to be taking the news well though."

Nick shrugged, "I was half expecting it. That kind of operation couldn't have been funded on an assistant mayor's salary."

Judy put her paw over her face in frustration, "I should have noticed that. But now there are probably mammals out there who might try to continue dividing the city, and there's nothing we can do about it!" Judy said exasperatedly as they entered the elevator to go down to the first floor of the atrium where the front desk was.

"There isn't?" Nicks sarcastic response surprised her. She looked up at his grinning face.

"Nick you heard Chief Bogo, we're not police officers!"
Nick brought a claw up and scratched his chin as if thinking. "Humm, I guess you're right." He pulled out his wallet and took out the check the chief had given him yesterday and handed it to her.

She looked at it in confusion. "What's this for?"

"I want to hire you." He said with a grin.

"Hire me? hire me for what?" she asked having no idea what he was up to.

He pulled out the flip wallet with her new badge and gave it to her. "Well, that says that you're a private detective. I have reason to believe that there are mammals that are out to get me and my wife." He pointed his claw at her. "So, I'm hiring you to find out who they are, and bring proof of it to the police."

Judy looked between Nick and the check a few times in shock. "You want to hire me?" She looked back at the check, and as an afterthough said, "For a dollar and thirty two cents?"

The elevator doors opened and Nick left in an exaggerated huff, "fine, Fine. You know that you're awfully greedy for a P.I., you're going to bankrupt me, but I'll double that once the jobs done. Now will you take it or not?" He stood facing her from the lobby, he looked as if she was skinning him alive with the price haggling.

Judy looked back down at the check. She could feel the warm glow of affection for her fox grow stronger and hotter. Whenever she thought she'd hit a dead end, he'd pull that smirk of his, make some sort of joke and come up with some half crazy plan. No matter the situation he was there for her, and she loved him for that. She smiled and tucked the check into her pocket before stepping out of the elevator.

She stopped next to him and looked up, "Alright, I'll take the job, but" she started walking away, leaving him behind. She wasn't surprised to see his nose twitch and then flare as he sniffed the air. With all the heated feelings that were bouncing around in her she'd expected he'd be able to pick up on it. "I'll expect some bonuses for taking this job, and if I've bankrupted you, you'll have to find some other way to pay me." She smirked back at him and twitched her tail for good measure. Nick dropped the book he'd been holding, as he stared at her retreating form mouth now hanging slightly ajar. It took him a few seconds before he managed break out of his stupor. And he scrambled to pick up the book and hurry back to her side.

Judy was feeling happy and rather smug as Nick nearly plastered himself to her side, in his supposed act of supporting her injured leg. She could feel him rumbling softly. That, she thought to herself, couldn't have worked any better.

She looked forward and the smugness vanished, though the happy feeling refused to go.

In front of them Clawhauser was standing behind the front desk bouncing in place as his eyes tracked their every movement. He had both paws on his cheeks and he looked like he was going red from holding in his breath. Judy saw his mouth open and cringed.

Chapter End Notes

Bit shorter than what I'm trying for with the new chapters, but this was just too good of a spot to stop. *smirk*
I was going try put in a snippet her from the song 'bad boys' and replace the bad boys with typos and deputy with gonekrazy3000 bit it didn't quite flow. sorry gonekrazy3000 you won't be immortalized in song but thanks for getting those typos.

Also as gonekrazy3000 noted, while Bogo's 'admiration' department was a typo it was hilarious.

*Evil note accidentally left in story* - Come Max, we will accept these 'communities' offers of citizenship and worm our way into their leadership, then use them to conquer other communities, and then after we've conquered them all, we'll steal all their presents, and feasts, and puddings, and even the roast beasts, we'll steal…
I always like when my favorite books include a map so you can keep track of where stuff is. I however am too lazy to draw one. On the bright side the website Transitmaps (it's a net not a com site) has an awesome Zootopia Transit Authority map made from clips seen in the movie. (It's based directly off of the missing mammals map from the film and has routes from clips from the train scenes) So I'll be using that for this story if you want to keep track of where stuff is. {also I do believe on Ao3 I can put pics in so I may try to figure out how to do that for the map but for now I need to get this up so I can get some sleep}

Easiest way to find the map is to google for Zootopia map. It's literally the first one that comes up under image search.

Broke a hundred Favorites! Woohoo! The pirates bought me a Starbucks Frappuccino as congratulations, who knew heaven came in a frozen coffee slurry?

Disclaimer: Hey you can't sue me for that map as well! I didn't make it, all I did was steal it.

Bogo watched as the fox dropped from the now open door, and left with the bunny. He checked his watch, and sighed. There was still so much to do today and the day was half gone. He looked down at the file in his hand on the planning of an operation against a rising gang. The Savanna Smashers were an up and coming small time gang that had formed in Savanna Square's old downtown area. They'd been smart enough not to get caught outright and the ZPD had been working to try and setup a sting operation to shatter the group. Two separate teams, hundreds of hours of effort, and he shuddered at the amount of paperwork involved. So much had been devoted to the effort and they had still been two days away from starting their operation. All that and Wilde and Hopps fresh out of the hospital, while just strolling by managed to catch them in the act and take down not just a few gang members but the head of the gang as well. Between the leader and the two Smasher members they'd caught the ZPD would easily be able to play them against each other to rat, he should probably say weasel, out the rest of the gang.

Bogo tossed the now useless operations file in his waste basket and leaned back in his chair massaging his temples with a hoof, though there may have been the faintest up turn to the corner of the grim set of his mouth.

He wasn't sure whether he wanted to praise the two mammals or find some excuse to lock them up in a safe house under ZPD protective custody to give him a few days of relative calm to work with and to force Hopps to finish healing.

He'd have to make sure to keep a constant eye on that pair. They might be good at wiggling out of problems and leaving a wake of stunned criminals and confused citizens behind them, but they were only two mammals. Bogo could only do so much to help them without breaking the rules and he was worried that there were even more mammals out to get the pair than he was aware of. Besides upsetting the Nighthowler conspiracy and making enemies of whoever had provided the funding,
with all the news coverage they had become the defacto targets of every mammal against interspecies relations, not to mention those mammals that still held onto species supremacy like Bellwether. Those two groups might not even constitute a majority of the population and even most of those held no more than vestigial resentment, but there were a few exceptions and some of those would be willing to act on that hatred. Even a very, very small fraction of the population was still a worrisome number of mammals.

There were even a few mammals in the government that had already tried to create problems for the Wildes,

*Nope don’t let yourself fall into that trap, Hopps and Wilde, Hopps and Wilde.*

Bogo had managed to get one of the more idiotic and bigoted mammals removed from his office for blatant misuse of their position to target Hopps and Wilde, but the others that had an axe to grind with the pair for whatever reason had not done anything directly against the law; they just stalled, and made things difficult.

Bogo didn't think Bristleton the Blind Bulldozer fit in that category, the new mayor por tempore was an honorable if crotchety old fart; He had stormed into Bogo's office after the news of the ZPDs case regarding Hopps and Wilde had hit the news, spitting mad. But he hadn't been mad over the case itself, he'd even done so much as admitted that he was certain it would pass, that he himself would have ruled in their favor. He'd been mad that Bogo had done something that could have upset the city just as tensions had started to die down.

Bogo didn't regret that decision for a second. The precedent that the case would set would probably end up being more useful than the MII program in the end and was well worth any short term political fuss. Plus, he needed good officers. What he did reconsider, for probably the hundredth time was the decision to put Hopps and Wilde out on the sharp end where he could only provide them with the most limited support. But for the hundredth time as well, he concluded that those hellions would certainly find trouble one way or another. And if he couldn't stop them, he might as well try to direct them and try to keep them from getting themselves killed or hurt.

Bogo sighed again and looked at his watch. 2 minutes, they'd probably be in the elevator right now, gods only new what trouble they were about to stir up as soon as they left the building. He hoped they'd at least be smart enough to get properly set up and armed before trying anything else like that stunt with the gang.

Bogo considered the fact that he'd tried to drum Hopps out of the ZPD and now he found himself fighting horn and hoof to not only get her back but get a fox on the force as well. His wife sure as hell had found the irony of the situation funny last night. Those two, though, might just be tough enough to survive whatever trouble he was sure was headed their way. They'd been strong and tough enough to convince him that they were capable of surviving being police mammals despite their small sizes, after all.

He gave the idea of locking them in a safe house for a few days or even until they were on the force, one more thought before dismissing it. He was at least smart enough not to mention that musing to his wife. She was sure to make some sort of comment regarding what a mess a newlywed couple would make of the place before sitting him down to watch another episode of Marriage and Mates. Bogo actually enjoyed the show, it wasn't as good as Gazelle music videos but it appealed to the small romantic side that he shared only with his wife. However, he could do without her needling him endlessly about his two future officers. He would not, *could not*, allow himself to think of the romantic escapades of any of his coworkers, no matter how adorably cute they were. He had a reputation to maintain, and blushing or squealing was detrimental to that.
His wife however thought that seeing him blush was sweet and was using every opportunity she could to get him to. She'd even found a group of online writers that wrote romance stories and had started a WildeHopps section. Bogo couldn't believe that in less than 24 hours there was a minor fandom with some budding stories that had actually seemed more like the start of professional works than amateurs. He'd been able to hold a straight face through the start of one that had been so sweet and cute it was terrifying and had a stupidly lovable sappy title of something about always a sly bunny or had it been something like my dumb fox? But then his wife had shown him the start of another that had made it feel like someone had napalmed his face. Damn that author, Culcom? Kulcon? Colkum? Whatever their name was. Bogo had thanked his lucky stars that he'd arrived after Hopps and Wilde's little escapade under the bridge and not during the middle of it, he didn't need to read something that described the two of them…

he stopped thinking. -Don't care, Don't care,…- He would not think about it, nor the damn story no matter how romantically it was written.

Bogo banged his head in frustration onto his desk trying to clear his thoughts. Gazelle, think of Gazelle's next music release, it's only a few days away. A traitorous part of his mind wondered about the bits of mystery that had started in those two stories. He liked mysteries, it was part of why he'd become a police officer. Maybe if he just substituted different names. Maybe Rick and Trudy. Maybe he could check to see if the second chapters got posted tonight on stories about a Rick and a Trudy. That first one had seemed awfully warm and cute, and the other one seemed like it had put his wife in the mood, she'd said something about him trying that with her. And if it was half as romantic as that fox and bunny in the story…

Don't care, Don't care, Don't care.

He needed a distraction immediately. Bogo rallied his considerable mental faculties. Was there any case going on that needed his immediate and full attention? No, he'd be joggling the elbows of his officer. His mountainous paperwork that needed to be done certainly wasn't going to help. Discipline then, there was always someone goofing off a bit, and a little extra discipline never hurt, plus it maintained his reputation. Who was the most likely to be goofing off right now? Probably anyone interacting with Wilde. Where was he now then. Bogo glanced at his watch and did some mental math. Probably in the atrium, who in the atrium would be…, well that didn't take a detective to figure out. He held his hoof over the desk phone. Any second now, any second…

"AAAAAAW"

The happy delighted squeal started to roll through the precinct.

Perfect. He slammed his hoof down a split second after the squeal started, adding another dent to the reinforced desk phone.

Bogo usually gave officer Clawhauser a little extra tolerance since his foibles were actually useful in keeping a good image with mammals that came to the precinct, but if you didn't trim a hedge every now and then it would get out of hand.
memory), made a new friend, and gotten to help bust the Savanna Smashers gang, and after work he could call Fru Fru up and get some serious gossiping and planning done, not to mention getting to spend some time on his other hobby.

One of the elevators at the side of the atrium lobby dinged open, and Benjamin's attention was side tracked as Nick Wilde came huffing out and into the lobby. Benjamin froze.

*Oh no, no, no!*

Were they having an argument? They couldn't have an argument! They were the perfect couple, they were adorable together, they were just too cute together. What if the fight hurt their marriage? What if they didn't want to be together after that?

Benjamin felt like his heart might break at the very idea. He was standing now chewing on his claws in worry.

Nick turned around and seemed to make some sort of ultimatum. He picked up the words 'bankrupt me' and he looked like Judy was about to pull out his fur.

Were they having financial problems? Was this the end of Zootopia's fairy tale couple?

*No, No, Oh NO!*

He was going to wear his claws down to nubs if this kept up. Judy seemed a bit stunned. She looked down at something in her paws before a smile started breaking across her face. She tucked whatever it was away in her pocket. Benjamin was listening for all he was worth now. He took in a huge lungful of air and held his breath. He wasn't sure what was happening. Was it good? Was it Bad? His tail was twitching to and fro spasmodically.

Judy walked out of the elevator to Nick's side and stopped. She was facing the front desk and Nick was still facing in the opposite direction toward the elevators. It was like something straight from a classic movie. Judys smile was now a straight sly smirk. Benjamin started getting a warm bubbly feeling, this didn't seem bad. This seemed good, very good. He wished he had a bag of popcorn to go with it too. His paws went to his cheeks and he started bouncing on the pads of his hind paws.

Judy looked up at Nick, and he looked down at her. His look of unyielding determination awaiting her response met her look of smooth sly guile that promised he'd already been beaten.

It was like watching the climatic showdown between two undaunted and cunning agents on opposite sides of the clandestine showdown in a romance spy thriller. It was so dramatic and perfectly done it would have won an Oscar if it had been in a movie.

Judy spoke, voice smooth and amused, sure she had him dead to rights, "Alright, I'll take the job, but" her sly smirk grew just a bit, before she started walking away from him. Nick’s nose twitched like he was scenting the first signs of a trap, his expression having gone wary. His eyes suddenly shot wide just as Judy strode confidently away. But before he could say anything, she turned her head half way toward him as she continued to walk, and in that same voice but with the perfect hint of seduction said, "I'll expect some bonuses for taking this job, and if I've bankrupted you, you'll have to find some other way to pay me." And twitched her hips at him with subtle grace.

Clawhauser could feel a squeal building but held it in. This was too good. This was better than any movie he'd ever seen.

Judy's last salvo shattered Nick's determination. His frame went slack, his jaw dropping and the book in his paw slipped out of nerveless fingers to thump onto the floor. It looked like she'd speared him.
through the heart despite everything he could do to resist, and before he could comprehend his complete and utter defeat she turned her head back forward with one last quirk of her smirk that reeled him in like a puppet that had its strings pulled.

OH M GOOODNESS!

Benjamiin couldn't wait to tell Fru Fru about this. It had been so utterly dramatically romantic. He thought he was going to pop. He couldn't hold the squeal of excited happiness in any longer, and it burst out of him in a rising, "AAAAAAAAAWW"

But before it could even really get started the front desk phone intercom went off and a very gruff and irritated Chief Bogo stopped the squeal dead in its tracks.

"Clawhauser, you'd better not be fooling around! Where are those reports you said you'd get me on the cities different protest groups that have sprung up?"

There was a seconds pause but Benjamin couldn't speak past the trapped squeal in his throat.

The chief, gave him no more time and continued, "Well since those reports aren't done, I think I'll have to order Officer Higgens back here to help out. He won't have time for the precincts afternoon donut run." Benjamin shuddered at the thought of losing his donuts, he needed those donuts. How could he get through the afternoon without them? "Now have you given Hopps and Wilde their packets or do I need to come down there and do it myself?"

The combination of holding his breath and the sudden and unexpected cessation and traffic jam of his squeal made Benjamin feel like he was going to pass out. But he couldn't. There were donuts on the line. He might just be able to survive an afternoon without them, barely, but to deprive the other officers of donuts as well? He couldn't do that to them, it was monstrous and cruel. So, Benjamin gathered all his strength and responded to the chief.

"No… No sir. I'm taking care of it! and I've got the reports for you. I'll email them right over. There's no need to call Higgins back." He crossed his fingers and hoped.

After an interminably long wait there was a snort before, "Then stop fooling around and get to it." before the speaker clicked and died.

Judy might have been relieved about not having to listen to what she now thought of as Clawhauser's alarm clock squeal, but she was also a little worried for the feline. Chief Bogo's call had frighteningly uncanny timing. Clawhauser, now that his donuts were no longer in danger seemed to be almost back to his normal self. He was still bouncing as he quickly tapped away at his keyboard, and smiled hugely every time he looked at them, but his jubilation seemed to have returned to a simmer rather than boiling over.

With a final tap, he finished and turned back to them.

"Soo, how did the meeting go?" he asked expectantly, "And what was that about hiring Judy and bonuses?" Judy blushed a bit, but Nick let out a laugh at Clawhauser's suggestively wiggling eyebrows. She had to admit that it was comically funny on the cheetah's joyful chubby face. Something about Clawhauser just made it so easy to open up to him. So, with a little more forwardness than she would normally feel comfortable displaying, she placed her paw on the tip of Nick's tail and wrapped it snuggly to her side before responding, "The meeting went well," she pulled out her new badge and showed it to Clawhauser, "And Nick here decided to hire me for my first job. Had to sell me his ears and tail to afford it." She shot him a smug smile, but blushed hard at
Clawhauser's murmured, "And a lot more too I bet."

Nick spoke up his smug grin a little to happy to reach its normal quality. "Now Claws, that's a confidential business contract, she can't go telling you that."

Clawhauser giggled at that before pulling out a stack of packets and some smaller books.

"These are the documents and rules for the P.I. bounty hunters. I was wondering why Bogo asked me to make sure I had a set on hand. It's so rare for the ZPD to issue those licenses anymore." He poked a claw at one of the small books. "This is the fugitive and wanted list. There's information in the packet on how to use your licenses to get access to the online listing on the ZPD webpage but we still print updated listings at the beginning of every month. Some of the old timers like Ferguson & Fredrick like to stick with the hard copies, always call it their bingo book."

Noticing Nicks already full paws, Clawhauser gasped a quick "Oh" before scrambling behind the desk and coming up with a bag from Trunkin Donuts to put all the stuff in.

Handing it to them he said, "Everything you should need will be in there, and Judy," He squirmed a bit in delight, "Don't forget about our bakery date with Fru Fru on Thursday, I want to hear everything!" Judy's face heated a bit again, but she nodded with a smile before starting out with Nick, who was still plastered to her side. It was like he wanted to have as much of himself touching her as he could possibly get away with in public. She could hear Clawhauser giggling behind them and a murmured, "Oh M Goodness, They're sooo cute!" but let it go.

Right before they left through the doors, Clawhauser spoke up one last time, "Oh Nick, the boys and girls in blue decided to take you up on your offer. Saturday night at Murphy's! First rounds on you!"

Nick turned gave Clawhauser a smirk and another two fingered salute, saying back, "Saturday! You bring the stories, I'll buy the beer!" before the doors closed.

Judy bumped him, "So where to next, slick?" she asked as they started heading away from the precinct.

"Subway station. We'll catch a train over to Lowland drive, so that we can drop some of this stuff off and pick up my cash before heading to the bank."

Judy ears perked up at that, "Ohh. So, I finally get to see your secret hideaway?"

Nick smirked at her, "It's not much of a secret hideaway and don't get your expectations up. I'm certainly going to find a better den for my wife."

Judy gave him a quick squeeze for that. But as they walked to the subway and waited for the train, no amount of questioning managed to get Nick to say another word about his home. His grin was getting a bit too big, so when they sat down on the train seat, she decided it was best to change topics. She pulled out Nick's police academy manual and flipped back to the weapons portion.

Nick's grin lost some of its smugness at that.

"Judy, do we have to start studying now?" he almost whined and pressed himself closer into her in the seat they were sharing despite the shocked looks of some of the other passengers.

She was the one grinning now. "Well we only have three days to get you ready. And I'll tell you what. For every right answer you get, I'll give you a kiss."

Nick's ears snapped up at that. He seemed far more eager than he had a few seconds ago.
gonekrazy3000 is getting to good at setting up rendezvous with the pirates to get corrections made. I'm starting to think he's part of the pirate crew!

Again thanks to all the reviewers!

Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps, Erinnyes01, Siber13, Honey the Queen Bee, Fox in the henhouse, gonekrazy3000, Starfang's Secrets, ebolson, Archangel12575, GusTheBear, Man0Man192 MinscLovesBoo, Storyholder, FenixWarriorBrX13, Kagehana15, ShadowJ95, Lockdown00, bagnome, and HoppinWildedly

I hope I got everyone since last time. Thanks everybody. Reviews seem to have become my new favorite sweeter besides fluff to go with my coffee, so much appreciated.

Also a special call out and thanks to the writer of Broken Mask AU series (I'll leave them unnamed for the moment), Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps, and King in Yellow! If the rest of you don't know why, then you'll just have to try and figure it out before the end of the story where they'll get their well deserved recognition.
Chapter Notes

Yes, it's an intentional pun. It's a glaring obvious mistake, an intentional mistake, a mistake that will not get fixed despite pleas and begging. A mistake that will get stuck in your thoughts and will pop up at inconvenient points in your day. And the more I point it out the harder it will be for you to get it out of your head. I'm just a mean grinch like that :)

Disclaimer: Disney's wised up to the fact that I'm friends with most of those on the dark side of the force. Now though I have to worry about Yoda, maybe he'll take it easy on me since I'm still painted green from the damn pirates.

Nick was either one of the smartest mammals Judy had ever met or the incentive of kisses had driven him to an astounding level of focus. He hadn't missed a single question from the reviews of the couple of sections they'd covered.

They certainly attracted some odd glances and even a few sneers, as she inevitably gave him kiss after kiss on the train. But the traffic was light in the early afternoon and they had the row of seats to themselves. Nick's hackles had started rising when one bull had given them a very nasty glare before pointedly moving as far away from them as possible, but Judy had distracted him with a kiss far more heated than the other ones.

That, had seemed to rid his mind of any worries, though it had almost made him miss the next question. By the time the train made it to Lowland station Nicks tail was wagging back and forth and he seemed exceptionally disappointed that their study session had to end. To be truthful so was Judy. She thought it was a bit unfair that she couldn't have met Nick before she started studying for the academy. It would have made those long hours far more enjoyable.

But the past was the past, and more importantly Nick was here with her now. She leaned into him as they walked down the street, his musky scent comforting as they passed through a deserted and abandoned section of old industrial buildings on the outskirts of the city.

She wished that today could be over sooner so that she could spend some time showing her mate just how much she loved him. And in a fit of emotion driven silliness ran her paw that was wrapped around his lower back down to caress the base of his tail and give his rear a quick squeeze.

The result was hilarious. With a yelp, Nick jumped straight up like someone had lit his tail on fire. Judy nearly fell to the ground in a fit of laughter, but was glad she hadn't when Nick landed and looked at her. She let out a startled, "Eeep" seeing the look on his face and glint in his eyes and took off tearing down the road all the while giggling madly. She heard her fox take off and chase after her. While she ran and laughed and tried to catch her breath she thought that maybe she had taken her teasing just a bit too far. Nick's look had been full of hunger and determination and lacking in restraint.

She could hear a loud rumbling growl closing in on her but she just couldn't stop her giggles to get a full breath of air to run properly.
Nick swept her off her feet in his strong paws and swerved off the road into some over grown grass and flopped down with her before attacking her with a wild barrage of kisses. She was laughing even harder now under the almost ticklish sensation as he kissed her everywhere. And then his mouth closed over hers and she couldn't laugh anymore because he wasn't kissing her, he was kissing her. She could feel his entire body on hers and his scent was overpowering, blocking out everything but him, and his mouth, oh his mouth. Judy was pretty sure she lost some time in the bliss of the kiss because before she could remember the kiss ending, Nick was marking her again. He stopped and pulled back so that they were almost nose to nose.

He looked almost feral, almost like he had when he looked at her when he'd been savage, though his eyes hadn't changed. He was panting slightly but growled out one word as if daring the world to challenge him on his claim.

"Mine."

Judy looking up at him, and the fire raging behind his emerald eyes. She knew what that fire was, he had caught her, and he was never letting her go. This time he didn't kiss her, she kissed him. She broke the kiss just long enough to growl one word back at him as fiercely as she was capable of.

"Mine."

... 

It was a few minutes of frantic and very heavy kissing before the interference of clothes between their two bodies caused enough of an irritation to break their minds away from kissing each other. Judy wanted to throw away every care about the world and claim her fox right there and then in the most primal way she could. But the idea of some mammal stumbling across the two of them stopped her. With a whimper she let the kissing devolve into more marking and nuzzling until they were just cuddling in the tall grass as the sun warmed them and their heart rates slowed.

They might not smell of sex but they'd marked each other so much in the last few minutes that any mammal they came across for the rest of the day would know they'd been doing more than holding paws. Rutabaga, they probably couldn't tell which is the bunny and which is the fox just by smell, she thought. While she did feel a bit embarrassed about that, it was overshadowed by the portion of her that felt inordinately please at having staked her claim on her fox in no uncertain terms.

Judy really didn't want to move. The sun was warm and Nick's hold on her was so comfortable; his light happy rumble vibrated through his chest and she hummed in return, but she looked around, and was surprised when the surroundings looked vaguely familiar.

Her eyebrows scrunched and before she realized what her nose had been doing, Nick chuckled and kissed it to stop its twitching.

"Ok, Carrots. What thought is rattling around your head now?" Nick asked smiling at her.

"What?" she responded tearing her gaze away from his lips.

"Your nose is a dead giveaway," he placed his nose to hers before her eyes crossed trying to look at it, and he laughed and kissed it one more time. "Whenever you start really thinking, or a question pops into that head of yours, your nose starts twitching away like its hosting a jumping bean convention." He smiled at her, that smile that was for her alone, "So what's bouncing around in your head?"

She looked around, her mind still trying to put the pieces together. There was an old abandoned red
brick factory with a chimney stack but the high scraggily grass was blocking almost everything else. "This just looks familiar for some reason."

Nick with a last nuzzle stood up and brushed himself off before helping her up as well.

"It should. You would have had to drive down Lowland Drive to get here last time."

Judy was about to ask him, what he meant about last time, but now on her hind paws and looking around, actually seeing her surroundings and because her mind wasn't preoccupied with thoughts and fantasies about the fox that had been chasing her, she realized she had been here before. Across an open field was a very familiar looking warehouse and an old stone bridge she would never forget.

She let out a small gasp, in recognition, part of her mind pulling up happy memories of this place, but the other part of her was putting bits and pieces together like a puzzle.

"Wait, Finnick didn't say you live here!" she said gesturing.

Nick looked aghast, a paw moving over his heart like she'd mortally wounded him. "Fluff, I can't believe you think I'd live under a bridge like the hungry fox in 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'? Not on my worst day, would I ever!"

Judy snickered, "Well, the big bad hungry fox sure gobbled me up under that bridge."

The insides of Nicks ears went pink and he huffed. "Well, that may be, but you wanted it."

With a smug smile she went over and grabbed his tie, using it to lead him toward the Trunkin Donuts bag he'd dropped, and in a completely satisfied tone said, "Did I want it? Yes, yes I did."

Nick didn't seem to have a comeback for that one, and a glance back showed the insides of his ears were red and that his eyes now seemed to be desperately trying to avoid looking at her backside. She twitched her tail again and his eyes lost the fight and stuck on her.

"So, mister big bad fox, where is you're den if your too high class for that bridge?"

This time his ears fell a bit and the dopey smile left his face. He spoke up in a voice that didn't even try to hide his embarrassment. "Joking aside, it's not much better than under the bridge," he took a ring of keys out from his pocket and led her over to a side door of the rundown warehouse. "There's a small room under the warehouse that also served as a sort of office. I started using it as a place to crash and just sort of moved in after a while."

Nick started unlocking a pad lock on the door.

Judy's curiosity was getting the better of her, "So who owns this place then? and how'd you get permission to start living here? Isn't that against some sort of housing requirement?"

Nick smile came back a bit and he placed the tip of his clawed finger on her nose which, Carrot Sticks, had started twitching again.

"One question at a time Judy. And I already told you yesterday that I'd tell you all about it today."

"No you didn't!" she said, "You said that you'd tell me of your amusement park misadventure."

Nicks grin was certainly coming back now as he opened the door went inside and flipped a bunch of light switches.

Judy was looking at him trying to figure out what he was up to when the overhead lights started
coming on. Her jaw dropped. As each row turned on, one after another more and more of the inside of the warehouse became visible. It looked like someone had stuffed a small-town carnival inside the building.

Nick turned back to her and with a smug look, and said, "Welcome to Wilde Times"

Judy took a few steps into the building and just looked around. None of the rides, booths, or games seemed to be of professional quality, actually most of it seemed almost home made, but it was done in a manner that fit perfectly with bright colors and almost kit-ish style of the attractions.

Nick lead her over to a tiki-bar in the center of the warehouse where there was an old, beaten up, oversized lazy-mammal chair incongruously placed in the middle of the tables and chairs around it. He lifted her off the ground in both arms and jumped up, flopping down onto the seat, and placed her on his lap.

"Get comfortable Carrots this is going to take a bit to explain."

Judy settled back against him and felt his arms and tail wrap around her. She almost laughed when she realized that the chair was perfectly situated so it had a good view of an old, old tv on the bar counter, but she continued to move her head around eyes trying to take in everything.

"Nick? What? How?" she stopped, snuggled into him a bit more and with a smile said, "Okay, slick tell me a story of how the big bad fox under the bridge actually lives in a secret indoor carnival."

Nick gave a short chuckle before starting, "Well after the big bad fox finished highschool he was sitting around with the little bad fox after a rather lucrative hustle." He snickered a bit at that.

"Don't ever tell Finnick I called him that, but anyway, we were having a few beers, tossing ideas back and forth for other hustles and we somehow ended up talking about how most predators try to hide their more predatory qualities when in public."

"You've got to understand Fluff, that the key to any hustle is to take advantage of some quirk in peoples behavior or the law. The elephant costume played on sympathy for kits and we used that and some loopholes in the legal system to remarket the elephant sized products to smaller demographics and actually make a profit.

"We knew that the quirk about predator behavior probably had an angle we could use to make some money. It hit me that just like the Mystic Springs Oasis Club allows mammals to relax from societies normal rules, that there would be a market for a place that could let predators let their instincts out a bit."

"Every attraction in here is geared toward predators; games, rides and activities that involving chasing or pouncing, displays of strength, agility and speed, or just playing on adrenalin or other things you aren't 'supposed to do' in public."

Nick let out a chuckle, "I always got a kick out of watching wolves at the Howl-a-long and the wind tunnel."

"What was so funny about that?" Judy asked.

"Wolves are always trying to act so proper but they have some deep instincts in them that are hard to avoid. You used that at the asylum when you started that howl. But have you ever noticed that they also love sticking their heads out of car windows and such?"

"Judy shook her head, "Not really, I don't think I've ever actually seen one do something like that."
"Well I'm not surprised, they really try to avoid it, probably more than they try to avoid howling in public; I think they find it embarrassing but they love the feeling of wind in their faces. Pretty sure it has something to do with feeling like their running in a pack, but I'm not a wolf." He waved a paw, "The thing was, we'd get whole groups of wolves over at the wind tunnel just so they could have their fur and cheeks blow back in the wind stream. Made for some ridiculously funny group photos."

He snickered again, "I kind of wish I could bring Clawhauser over to the Cheetah Chase too"

Judy giggled at the idea, trying to imagine her chubby friend in any sort of running game.

"Oh course to get his motivation up, we'd probably have to replace the fake bunny at the end with a donut, bet that would get him moving!"

Judy smacked Nick, "No! You didn't!" she said half laughing and half indignant.

He just grinned at her, "What better thing for a predator to run after than a fuzzy wuzzly cute-"

The rest of his sentence was cut off as Judy smacked him again, and not so gently this time.

"Okay, Okay, sorry" he held up his hands in defeat, but was still smirking "But to be fair this was all long ago and I'd chase after you anywhere you went." he finished looking at her in his lap with a very satisfied expression. A bit of the glint from earlier outside the warehouse came back and made her blush a bit.

But the thought sparked an idea in the back of her mind. *He'd chase after me would he?* The mix of ideas and options that had been tossing around in her mind since back at the diner after the blueberry juice incident coalesced into a plan, a wonderful plan, a wonderfully awful plan that would be certain to get her her revenge on Nick. She just smiled up at him with a smug look that she was coming to enjoy and gave him a quick kiss before signaling for him to continue. All she needed to do now was wait for tonight and she'd teach her fox a lesson or two, she squirmed in his lap just thinking about it, but calmed herself and snuggled into him for the rest of his story.

"So anyway, I found the company that owned this warehouse and made a deal with them. You see this area is right between the Canal District and Savanna Central. The artificial climates clash a bit here so the property value is very low. It was mostly used for industrial spaces and warehouses. But after the Tundra Town port expanded a few decades ago most of those types of business shifted to be close to the port. Most of the property in this area is nearly worthless. Nobody wants to spend the money to demolish the abandoned structures and build anything else because they won't be able to make a profit from it. Most of the companies that own the property around here would sell it off if they could get even a poor price just so they didn't have to deal with the taxes on it."

"So what kind of deal did you make?" Judy asked.

Nick smirked at that, "What kind of deal do you think a hustler would make? They wanted to get rid of the property and also make a little money. So we set up a 5 year lease for a lumpsum payment that gave me full rights over the property though, that way they couldn't be held accountable for anything I did. The deal also had the agreement that I would buy the property at the end of 5 years for 10 percent of whatever WildeTimes was worth by then."

Judy wasn't convinced that that had been everything, "What's the catch, that sounds more like they were hustling you."

Nick grinned, "Of course they were trying to hustle the stupid fox. They'd get paid for the property and possibly get a bonus from whatever the business was worth if it succeeded, far better than it just
sitting there costing them money every year. They wanted to sell it to me outright for the lumpsum, and the percentage of the business in five years but I didn't want to deal with the property taxes or utilities right away which is how the lease got set up. They'd cover all that for first five years but I'd still be stuck with all the liability and having to take the property off their hands afterward."

Nick was grinning his full hustler smirk now, and Judy just gave him a look with an upraised eye, and waited.

"Well, since they were essentially trying to cheat me, I felt fair was fair. They'd set the contract up so that it was impossible to get out of without paying a truly ridiculous penalty, one in the millions of dollars. I, ah, may have added a zero to the lease agreement time when they were, hum, a bit distracted right before we signed it and had the city notarize it."

He was grinning like mad, "They didn't figure out that the contract they'd signed forced them to pay all the property taxes and utilities for 50 years until after the first five years where already up. By that time WildeTimes had been closed due to the city so I didn't even have to pay them anything for the rights to the deed."

Nick laughed at Judy's expression which she realized was probably a mix of surprise with a bit of astonishment, "While I have the rights to this property's deed and rights to use the property itself I won't have to hold the deed or pay for anything for the next 39 years!" Nick was looking as smug as she'd ever seen him.

"I'll bet they weren't happy about that." She said, a little concerned that the level of smugness might damage his face.

His grin shouldn't have been able to get any wider but it did. "Nope, but there wasn't anything they could do about it without making me a millionaire. It actually didn't work out too badly for them because they at least made some money off of the initial payment, and I doubt they could have sold or leased the property to anyone else. Anyway, I don't have to worry about them anymore, since the company went bankrupt a few years later and the city ended up getting stuck their end of the contract when its properties transferred to them to pay off debts."

Judy looked around the warehouse at all the attractions and gestured, "So what happened to all of this, to WildeTimes? Chief Bogo called it a misadventure."

Nick grimaced at that, "Politics. As you can see we set this up on a shoestring budget. I had to take out a loan from Mr. Big just to cover the payment for the property." He glanced at Judy's concerned faced and said, "Now don't worry about that, it was all legal. First and last time I'll ever do that though. I already paid back his initial loan and the extortionist interest he charged as quickly as I could, so he doesn't have anything to hold over me. It was close though, WildeTimes got shut down not a month after I finished paying him back."

"Why'd it get shut down though? How does politics play into it?" Judy asked feeling better that Mr. Big couldn't pull any favors from Nick. As much as she liked him and Fru Fru, she had to remember that Mr. Big was still a mob boss.

"Politics played into it when the head of the city's Building and Safety department who is a goat, finds out that his college freshman daughter in a fit of youthful rebelliousness went with a mixed species group of friends to this sketchy low budget predator amusement park. She may have also gotten pregnant by a sheep ram in a drunken tryst during that fiasco."

Judy looked at him unbelievingly, "You can't be serious."
Nick just shook his head, "Completely Fluff. I'll never forget that group. Do you know how hard it is to try and control drunken college students or prevent them from being stupid? I wish that I had just barred them from entering; in addition to damaging some of the rides and making a mess they brought the wrath of her father and more importantly that of his safety inspectors down on me."

"They had this place shut down almost immediately, he even managed to pull some strings and get us arrested; tried to get us convicted for intentionally endangering the safety of mammals. That's when my mom had to bail me and Finnick out of jail. Luckily we had the place inspected and permitted before we started,"

She gave him another look,

"Hey so we got the laziest inspector to do it. There was no foul play on our part, and it's not my fault if he got here near the end of his shift and did a cursory inspection because he wanted to be done for the day. And I'll have you know," He held up a claw in a self-righteous manner, "that while this all might be jury rigged we never had anyone get hurt from our rides or attractions."

"That's not saying anyone didn't get hurt." Judy said, calling his dodge.

Nick huffed, "Then you try to stop stupid drunken college students from doing something idiotic. Anyway, after paying all the lawyer fees and fines I was more broke than when I'd started. The only thing I got out of it was the property, tax and utility free, for the next four decades, so I sort of moved in rather than pay for an apartment. I certainly think it's better than sleeping in a van like Finnick"

"Wait, so Finnick does live in that van? Where does he wash and bathe?" Judy couldn't help but ask.

"Fin probably loves that van more than he likes me, and he's got a life time membership to Gold Horn Gyms. They're open 24/7 and he uses their locker rooms and facilities for everything he needs." Nick gave her a sly grin, "That's also the reason he's got such a nasty swing with that bat of his, No one expects such a small fox to be as strong as he is, but when he isn't drinking, hustling, or killing time he's in the gym working out."

Judy poked him in the stomach, "Do you work out there too?"

Nick grabbed her finger and intertwined their paws. "Nope, never been one for weights, I'm more of a runner."

Judy's ears snapped up at that, "So you won't mind joining me on my morning runs once my leg fully heals?" she asked him with her sweetest smile.

Nick looked wary now, "You'll have to define morning, fluff. I'm not much of a morning mammal and let me clarify that last statement. I'm more of a sprinter than runner, I was on the track team with Flash in highschool."

"Wait, Flash? Flash the sloth? He, was on the track team?" Judy nearly spluttered.

"His nickname isn't Flash, Flash, hundred yard dash, for nothing, Carrots." Nick looked slightly relieved at the change of subject and Judy was pretty sure he'd distracted her on purpose. Well, she thought with a smile, he never said he wouldn't join me. I'll just have to wake him up in the morning to come with me then.

She asked him a different question getting back onto their original topic, "So back to your story. I'm surprised that you can live in a place like this, isn't it against building codes or something?"

"They tried to nail me for that as well, since I was already using the room to sleep by then, but it
It turns out that there's no law against sleeping here since I essentially own it and I'm not renting or selling it as living space."

Nick sighed, "As much as I love sitting here with you on my lap, we'd better get moving now that story time is over. We need to get to the bank and do a bit of shopping before heading over to my Mom's for dinner."

Judy pouted a bit and squirmed in his lap before jumping off just to see the small smile and perk of his ears it caused.

Nick headed over to a door by the entrance she'd missed and opened it with another key. The door, like the side door to the warehouse, wasn't as large as Chief Bogo's door but was almost too large for Nick to use comfortably. As he lead her down the flight of stairs he turned back and said with a small smile, "Don't laugh too much alright, fluff? I've got my male pride to try and protect."

The short staircase ended in a room that had an old metal desk that Judy was sure would have been impossible to move down the staircase and a bear sized bedroom dresser along the other wall. There were pipes and conduits that crisscrossed the ceiling, and an open door to what she could see would have been a very cramped room with a toilet, sink, and single shower stall, for any mammal larger than them.

Besides a microwave, mini fridge, and coffee maker behind the desk there really wasn't much else in the room. Nick, had dropped the Trunkin Donuts bag off on the desk and went over to the dresser, pulling out the large center door and grabbed a backpack out before closing it.

"So where do you sleep?" Judy asked in confusion, still looking around

Nicks ears tinged pink again, but rather than saying anything, he pulled out the bottom drawer of the huge dresser.

Judy looked at in shock for a second, before she placed her paws over her mouth in a failed attempt to stifle her giggles.

The bottom drawer which was easily big enough to hold Nick with some extra room to spare had been made up with a pile of blankets and a pillow into something halfway between a bed and what might be called a nest. It looked exactly like what she and her siblings might put together when they were kits and 'camping out' in the living room or having a sleep over.

The inside of Nick's ears were turning a shade of red almost matching his fur now and he shuffled his feet while muttering something about 'proper dens', so Judy went over to him, still giggling and gave him a quick peck before pulling him back into the makeshift bed for a quick round of kisses. It was more comfortable than she had imagined it would be and the scent of Nick was everywhere in the 'bed' making it feel safe and homely. It might not be a proper den like Nick wanted for her, but it would do for now; it was probably better than her old cramped apartment room anyway, and for the next couple of minutes she made sure to tell Nick so without using any words.

Before things could get too heated Judy pulled herself back from the precipice. Besides everything else they had to do today there wasn't any reason for her to stop and she knew that if she let it go anywhere past light kisses and nuzzles she wouldn't stop until the bed, full of Nick's scent was permanently filled with their scents. And anyway she still had her plan for tonight. She smiled thinking about that and used it to help calm herself. Tonight. Tonight, she'd get to do everything she wanted and get her payback for the blueberry juice.

Nick whined desperately as she got up from their cuddle and tried to pull him up as well.
She smiled at his pleading face and said, "Come on Nick, we've still got places to go and do you want to show up at your Mom's smelling like we've been at it all night on top of already having thoroughly marked each other?"

Nick just whined again, trying to drag her back with his big green eyes.

"We can get back to studying on the way to the bank." She said with a smirk. That seemed to do the trick.

Chapter End Notes

gonekrazy3000 managed to slip by Disney's attempt to blockage the pirate port of Tortuga and make the secret rendezvous with the pirates to hand off corrections. You can thank him for the much higher quality of this story. Now if I can only get him to bring me starbucks too.

I think someone has already used the idea Gold Horn Gym as a shower stop but I don't know who to credit. Well thank you other mysterious authors of whom I've probably pilfered work. Now to the really question at hand, Where is my damn coffee?
Chapter 22 – Surprises Part 1: Mine

Chapter Notes

Pardon the swearing, I've been hanging around pirates too much lately (Not that I really have a choice) but considering species and context it just fit too well. Please forward all complaints to Disney to deal with as I don't want to and their already out to get me and my little dog too.

So I was attacked by a plot bunny, the pirate doc checked for rabies and while that isn't an issue I got a few wonderful awful ideas for the next chapter that would make it better (I hope), however after writing for hours I realized that this was going to be far longer than I anticipated so its getting split into a few parts. Looks like three right now.

Disclaimer: Wow, Yoda smashed his way through most of the pirate crew without breaking a sweat. Only reason any of us are alive is that the jail-keeper has apparently been sending Han Solo copies of the story. He called him up for help and Han got Chewbacca (Who is apparently also addicted to WildeHopps) to call Yoda off. That is one scary little green monster.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It might be undignified, it might be embarrassing, but Nick couldn't help but whine again as Judy tried to get him out of his makeshift bed. True den or not this had been his defacto home for years. It was his territory, somewhere where nobody else could interrupt them. Having his mate there in this safe place almost drove him beyond reason. He wanted to take her, make love to her and make sure that her scent got mixed in with his throughout this little makeshift den. The drive, the instinct was nearly overwhelming. Dignity be damned, he wanted his bunny now. He looked up at her with as much pleading as he could muster, not bothering to hide his longing for her in the least.

While it didn't get the reaction he was hoping for, the light blush and heightened scent of his mates arousal did make his tail thump a few times.

Her smile shifted halfway to a smirk and she said, "We can get back to studying on the way to the bank."

Nicks ears perked at that. He'd still much rather drag her back to the bed, but winning kisses from her was very enjoyable too. He found it adorable that for as much as she was throwing herself at him, just like he was for her, that she still had a streak of modesty and embarrassment. Even just a peck on his cheek could make her ears stand on end and make them tinge pink. It made the slow game of kisses astoundingly fun, as he tried to see just how red he could make her go.

He sighed and got out of the bed. As he moved around collecting the things he needed before they left, he made sure to rub up against her at every possible opportunity. And opportunities, in Nicks book, weren't just by chance but could be made if you were smart enough. So instead of grabbing everything he needed from the dresser and then from the desk, he started grabbing one item from each forcing him to go back and forth through the small room; and with each pass he slid up against her and brushed his tail along her as he passed. Judy was standing in the room, eyes closed and forehead scrunched like he was trying her patience, but he could see her biting the corner of her lip, and smell her scent grow with every touch.
Her good leg started thumping the ground in the cutest fashion he could possibly imagine and Nick couldn't help stopping as he passed her, snapping his fingers like he'd just realized he'd forgotten something and turn around her back toward the dresser, completely wrapping her waist in his tail as he did so.

He could fell her shiver at the contact and her scent spiked hard. She started mumbling something about waiting till tonight over and over again.

Nick held down his snicker, if she could do that to him it was only fair that he could do it back to her. He'd grabbed the old plain backpack, a spare battery pack to recharge his phone and had started to get the money he had hidden around the room. The money was in small bundles in odd places; under the blankets was only the start, he had others above pipes, in the fridge, and a few more spots secreted around the room. He left a small bit of money, just a hundred or so behind the fake back of one of the locking drawers of the heavy desk. He liked the idea of being able to go completely legit and keeping their money in a bank, but it never hurt to have just a bit of cash on hand.

Judy still had her eyes closed mumbling to herself so he kissed her on that wonderfully cute pink nose of hers to watch her eyes shoot open and told her, grinning all the while, that he was ready to go.

He snagged the academy text book as she led him up the stairs by his tie. He just grinned wider. Judy could be so shy at times but it was mixed with a strong assertive streak as well. The give and take that it created between them thrilled him to no end. She could drag him anywhere she wanted, and being dragged along by his tie like this gave him the perfect opportunity to ogle her shapely rear and oh so fluffy tuft of a tail. No, he thought to himself, he had no objection to her dragging him around like this, None what so ever.

Unfortunately, he had to stop ogling Judy at the top of the stairs to relock the door.

"Ready yet, slick?" she asked, her foot starting to thump again.

"Almost, got three more money stashes to pick up here." Nick responded still with his grin. He took her around to the tiki- bar and then the Bite-O-Meter, collecting the hidden money before stopping by the Cheetah Chase.

He leaned over to one of her long ears, and asked in a taunting tone "So Carrots, can you guess where the stash is?"

"You think I can't?" she asked back, and then determinedly headed over to the game and started searching. It consisted of an oversized and extended treadmill with a rolling screen of images of savanna and sky along with a stuffed bunny on a movable arm that would shift further away the closer the runner got. Nick had always though it was a bit funny how popular the game was. He figured it was like how kits would always try running up the down escalators at the mall despite their parents always telling them not to.

Judy was becoming visibly frustrated as her quick search became longer and longer without her finding it.

"Ready to give up yet, Fluff?" Nick called out to her enjoying the sight of her halfway under the mechanical contraption while searching it.

Her bottom half sticking out from it, went stiff at the remark. Nick was fighting the urge to go over and grab her indignantly erect tail as payback for her grabby paws out on the street but laughed at her irritated shout of "NO!" as it echoed out from under the machine.
He just leaned back against a booth and continued grinning at her. After she extracted herself and was searching the screen a second time he spoke up.

"We don't have all day. I can give you a hint, Whiskers, but it'll cost you."

Judy looked over at him warily. He had his best hustlers grin on, but she wasn't buying it at all.

She crossed her arms, foot tapping faster and faster before it stopped. She looked at him, as if hating that she was having to ask.

"What will it cost me?"

Nick's hustler grin broke with all the smug and became a smirk, before saying, "All you have to do is tell me your naughtiest fantasy about me."

He watched with delight as her face and ears went beet red. Oh, he couldn't wait to find out what thought had caused that kind of reaction, it had to be something really good. His tail started wagging as Judy spluttered a bit before getting out any coherent words.

"NICK! Come on, that's not fair!"

"That's why it's called a hustle, sweetheart." He responded grinning for all he was worth.

Judy fumed a bit more before saying, "Fine, all I have to do is tell you right?"

Nick nodded, nearly oozing a sense of satisfaction in winning.

She crossed her arms, "Alright, you win. Where'd you hide the money?"

Nick raised a claw wagging it back and forth, tsking. "No, you only get a hint."

Nick swore he could almost see smoke rising from her ears as her leg started up again. After another second or so he continued smugly, "Now Carrots, you of all mammals should know I have a weakness for cute bunnies."

Judy seemed like she was about to shout at him for that, had even raised her paw, when she froze. Her ears dropped and her head snapped over to the stuffed rabbit before whipping back to him, "You didn't!" she growled.

He just kept grinning, and asked "So where's my story?"

Judy's cheeks bulged holding in a frustrated shout. Nick would probably never admit it to her, he liked being alive too much, but her fuming anger mixed with embarrassment was one of the cutest things he'd ever seen.

Judy turned and stomped over to the stuffed rabbit, snatched it off the mechanical pole and quickly found the zipper. She pulled out the money, stomped back over to him, slapped the wad of cash into his chest and stormed off toward the side door of the warehouse, posture indignantly stiff. Nick just watched as her tail ticked angrily with each step.

It was too perfect. He couldn't stop himself. He let out a long wolf-whistle.

Judy stopped mid step, ears swiveled back to him, before turning and quickly storming back over to grab his tie and use it to roughly dragged him behind her.
Nick snickering the whole way, leaned forward to coo into her ear, "I'm still waiting for my story, I'll even promise to try to make your fantasy come true."

She huffed loudly and sped up her angry march out of the warehouse but there was such a strong scent of arousal coming off her now that it was making him feel drunk and giddy. He could feel himself rumbling now. She smelled so good, her scent was like all of his dreams, hopes and happiness distilled into one intoxicating addictive aroma. He brought his muzzle to her neck and nuzzled her lightly breathing in more of his mate's smell and Judy nearly missed a step as she shivered at the contact. Nick knew he wasn't thinking clearly now, but his mind wasn't functional enough to do anything about it. Her scent, the feeling of her fur against his, the way she was leaning back into his nuzzle. All he could think of was her. All he could smell was their mixed scents and marks and her arousal. He trailed a slow caress of his muzzle up her cheek and marked her again, though she already smelled so much of him that he could barely notice the addition. That very fact though, just made his rumbling purr louder.

Judy's pace was slowing and she was breathing harder, "Niicckkk!" she said in a voice halfway between scolding and moaning.

Mine, he thought, and marked her between her ears. My Mate. He kissed the base of one ear, and her other ear flicked, swatting him across the muzzle. Mine. He nibbled the edge of the ear that had swatted him.

This time he couldn't make out what she tried to say through her moan. She was still walking forward, if clumsily, but was yanking on his tie so hard that it was pulling him fully against her back. Her breath was almost ragged.

"Mine" he rumbled aloud.

Judy broke. She was on him before he realized she'd moved. Her legs were wrapped around his waist, her short muzzle buried in the side of his neck nuzzling and kissing as her paws frantically worked at his shirt.

He didn't even try to hold himself back.

…

Nick found himself looking up at the sky. The back of his head was throbbing but while he was still trying to get his breathing under control the pain seemed to have cleared his head and thoroughly killed the mood. Karma, he thought was a truly bitchy deity. Best he could figure out, since he hadn't been doing very much thinking at all, was that he had probably intended to push Judy up against the wall and rut her right there. Unfortunately, there hadn't been a wall to push her up against but an open door for him to trip over. He'd managed to twist to protect Judy from the fall but had taken a solid blow from the hard ground to his head.

"You okay over there?" Judy asked.

"The ground sucker punched me." He managed to reply. He twisted his head, which throbbed at the movement, to see where Judy had landed after tumbling off him when he hit the ground. She seemed unhurt but not enjoying the unpleasant return to the real world from Nick and Judy land. He could sympathize; Nick and Judy land was far, far more pleasant and comfortable than the real world and vindictive painful things like the ground.

"If you're still joking than you're not hurt." She said, before huffing. "I told you no fooling around until tonight!"
Nick just whined in return.

A few minutes later Nick was walking back down the street toward the subway with Judy. He was still holding her close supporting the side with her injured leg though she didn't seem to need the support all that much. While the fall had knocked the friskiness out of him he still felt more comfortable being close and touching her. That need to be around her and his protectiveness of his mate was still on his mental list of things to think over, but he wanted to try and get some perspective on it before giving it any serious thought; He was hoping his mom might be able to tell him just how normal or abnormal it was. For the moment though he set the thought aside.

Trying to get some of the cheerful flirty mood back he nudged Judy's head with his muzzle and asked, "So now that we're not trying to rip each others clothes off," he gestured to where she'd managed to rip off one of his shirts buttons, "Are you going to tell me that story?"

Judy didn't even bother looking up at him. Her ears still tinged at the mention but instead of spluttering she just smiled a bit.

"Yep" she said in a far too chipper voice. Nick knew that voice. It was the same voice that she'd used when she'd booted his strolled and hustled him into helping her. He could feel his small grin retreat as he looked at her warily.

"Well, I'm waiting Fluff" he said.

"And you're going to keep on waiting. I agreed to tell you, there was nothing in that deal about when I had to tell you." She said, her happy bounce coming back into her stride as she looked up at him smugly.

Nick was trying to think up of a response, any response. But she spoke before he had a chance to.

"It's called a hustle sweetheart." She said, her grin mimicking his usual one.

Nick groaned as his tail and ears dropped. He could hear Finnick's voice in his head saying, 'She hustled you! She hustled you good!'.

"I can't believe I walked into that." he muttered.

"I can't believe you have more than one of those shirts." Judy shot back, smirk growing.

He facepalmed. Every good hustler knew when a gig had gone too far south to save, so he muttered, "I give up. You win, Judy. I surrender, just please stop rubbing salt into the wounds. I'll be good, I promise."

"You'll do what I say?" she asked.

Nick sighed out a long and defeated "Yes."

And Judy bounced up and gave him a quick peck on the cheek, with a cheerful "That's a good fox." He muttered under his breath, "No, I'm just your fox." But judging by Judy's hum she'd heard him.

Sighed again, Nick shut his mouth before he ended up telling her that she could get him to do anything she wanted if she asked him. She certainly didn't need to know she had that kind of sway over him.
He reached back into his backpack and pulled out the small portable battery to recharge his nearly
dead phone. As he plugged it in and brought it out of sleep mode he did a quick check of his
messages that he'd been ignoring before. The sheer number of them surprised him as he started
flicking through them. Judy looked over at him and seeing what he was doing gave a little laugh.

"If you think that's bad you should see mine. I've had messages from nearly everyone in my family,
my extended family, and my friends."

"Big family?" he asked, still looking at all the messages. Most were from acquaintances or business
contacts that had seen the news but there were quite a few from his mom, and even a couple from
Finnick, which either showed how worried the fox was about him or how afraid of his mother he
was.

"Big, might be an understatement" Judy said, which caught his attention. He'd need to get to know
his new in-laws at some point and he suspected that Mrs. Hopps would require that their promised
trip out to visit be sooner rather than later.

Looking for more information he asked, "What, you have a dozen or so siblings?"

Judy was looking a bit embarrassed, "A few more than that. My parents decided to have an old style
traditional bunny family."

Nick had heard that those that lived out in the country sometimes had 'traditionally' large families.
From what he remembered from his school days it was a holdover from older times when a large
family was a safer family and more likely to prosper, but had been getting more and more rare over
the years as city and suburban lifestyles with their emphasis on smaller families, since it was simply
more affordable in today's society, became the norm. Some species, like bunnies, also just tended to
have larger families. He knew that in Zootopia, a normal fox family would have a couple of kits and
that a normal bunny family might have double or even triple that number.

"Okay, so you have a few dozen siblings" he said.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, a portion that both scared and elated him, was wondering how
big of a family Judy wanted. That he decided was something they would have to discuss very, very
soon, probably tonight. It was…

Her next words cut off his thoughts, "Um, actually, I have 275 siblings". Nick stubbed a toe as he
mis-stepped hearing that.

"275!?! he said in astonishment. gods, even if the idea scared him half to death he knew that he
wanted kits, well someday at least, but 275?! Did she want a family that big? He didn't think he was
capable of handling that many kits let alone half that number. Sheesh, he wasn't even sure he'd be a
good father for just a few kits. 275!?!?

"Uh, Nick? Are you alright there?" Judy asked, some worry showing through in her voice.

Nick pulled himself back together, deciding to completely ignore the panicking portion of his brain
that was running in circles jabbering. They'd definitely need to sit down and talk about kits tonight.

"Y-Yes." He said, "that's just a little larger than I was expecting." He held up two of his fingers just a
little bit apart.

His joke seemed to reassure her that he was ok, since the worry left her face and she leaned back into
his side. "Yeah, it's a little big even by traditional bunny standards."
"You're going to have to help me learn all their names," Nick said, "We'll probably have to practice a lot before we visit your family." He nodded his head thinking about it, "I think you'll have to quiz me and give me kisses if I get them right."

Judy giggled a bit at that and gave him a kiss, "That," she said, "Is for being so accepting of my big sometimes annoying family." His tail wagged a few times at the kiss, but he settled it since they were in public. There were other mammals about now that they were close to the subway.

He gave his phone another glance flipping through the last of the messages, and murmured, "You all must have one hell of a data plan."

Judy outright laughed at that, "ZT&T went and revised their 'unlimited family data plan' after my parents got that when I was in highschool!"

Nick smiled at that, "Hustled them good?"

"You bet, ZT&T tried just about everything to get my parents to change plans since they can't force them out of the one they have. Their local manager has tried so often that my parents send him Christmas cards!"

Nick had to chuckle at that. Judy's family seemed to be pretty good hustlers in their own right. He stopped near the bottom of the list of messages on his phone looking at a particular caller id of one of his few real friends. He typed out a quick reply.

They reached the bottom of the escalator and she grabbed his arm with a very strong grip and hauled him over to the side of the room out of the way of the minor pedestrian traffic. Her odd behavior was starting to worry him. This was not like Judy at all, his instincts were starting to insist that something was wrong, something was threatening his mate, that he needed to protect her. But he didn't have a clue as to what had caused the shift in her attitude.

His worrying was interrupted when she none too gently yanked his head down and marked him right across the nose, before letting go of his tie and poking him hard in the chest. In a relatively low voice for the amount of anger in it she said, "You are mine Nicholas Pliberous Wilde! So why do you need to go see some old flame of yours?"
Nick now seeing the source of her anger, tried to calm his bunny. "No, No, No, that's not what I meant!"

Her foot was thumping in an ominous manner, and she jabbed him in the chest, "hit it off pretty well?" she jabbed him again, "Been close ever since?" Nick's mental smooth talk editor looked back over the previous statement and said, 'Shit!' before bailing.

"Please Judy!" he whined, "It's not like that!"

She'd crossed her arms, "Then, what is it like exactly?" she speared him with a look far worse than anything Chief Bogo could have ever hoped to manage.

"We're just old friends. Other kits picked on her and I didn't get along with most others so we ended up hanging out together. I swear I've never thought of her romantically at all. She's more like a sister to me than anything. I've never so much as kissed her, in fact before you I'd only ever kissed one girl before-"

His words were cut off as she yanked his head back down till they were nose to nose, Nick didn't know how she managed it but he was absolutely sure she was standing over him looking down at him.

"WHO. DID. YOU. KISS?"

Nick's mind was stuck repeating, shit, shit, Shit, SHIT, and his instincts seemed to have taken over. His ears were flat, his tail was between his legs, and while he was letting out a low whine his instincts were screaming at him to do anything to calm his angry mate, so he spilled his proverbial gut.

In a frantic pleading voice, nearly tripping over his own words he told her everything, "It was a vixen in second grade during valentines day, just a stupid little kits peck on the cheek, not even on the lips. I did it more because my friends had dared me to since I had a small crush on her," Nick cringed under Judy's furious look, "Judy I was eight years old! Just a stupid little kit who thought girls had cuddies and thought that just because a girl was cut-" he flinched again, "ah, pretty that I was in love with her. It wasn't even a strong crush and it didn't last at all. In fact we started to not get along with each other after that year. Last time I saw her was right after highschool and we practically hated each other. Judy, please you're the only one I'll ever love, the only one I want to love. I don't want anyone else, all I want is you." That finally seemed to mollify her anger a bit.

She grabbed both sides of his muzzle and proceeded to ruthlessly and meticulously mark every single part of him visible above his shirt collar. Nick didn't offer the slightest resistance, he was just happy that she seemed to be calming down. He was a little worried at her overreaction and thought they might need to talk about that too, one more thing to go on the list, but he certainly wasn't going to bring it up until she'd had some time to cool off. And if his mate being the slightest bit possessive of him was the worst bump they hit in their sudden and unusual marriage, then he'd count it as a blessing. He actually liked that she was so possessive of him, well at least when it wasn't liable to scare his fur white.

She finally finished her marking and he gave her cheek a small nuzzle and mark in return, just to show her that he wanted her, too.

"Everything better?" he asked softly.

She seemed much calmer as she replied, "Yes, but you're mine, Nicholas. And I'm not going to share you with anyone, not another single mammal."
He marked her other cheek, "I don't want you too, and I feel the same way about you too."

She lowered her head to his ruff and just hugged him for a bit. He hugged her back, but started noticing the stares they were getting.

"Um, Judy? I think we made a bit of a scene." He said softly.

She sighed, before releasing him. She took his paw and turned around. Seeing all the stares, she shot the small gawking crowd a hard look, and said in a loud challenging voice, "He's mine. Anyone got an issue with it?"

The other mammals quickly murmured, 'no's and 'nope's before looking away and hurrying off.

"Come on," She said to Nick and lead him by the paw to the trains.

Chapter End Notes

Warning: This Chapter contains toxic levels of Fluff. Oops, should have put that at the top, oh well.

Running out of coffee, so I don't have a smug line this time. gonekrazy3000 proofed this chapter. you all should thanks him

Also the pirate crew had to get together for some sort of secret pirate meeting with other pirates. Why was the biggest ship there called Cimar of Turalis?
Chapter 23 – Surprises Part 2: Shopping

Who woulda thunk it? My drivel has over 200 followers now. The other writers in the kiddy pool said they might even consider letting me in. I responded by trying to splash water from my puddle at them. Well, to sum it up I lost the splash war but my puddles bigger now, so I'll count that as a win.

Disclaimer: Disney says that they might be willing to sell Zootopia to me if I come in person to meet with them. I think its a trap.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick let Judy lead him to the station and onto the train he pointed out to her. She hadn't said anything in the past couple minutes since her outburst in the station lobby.

She sat him down in a seat near the back of the car where they weren't likely to be bothered but instead of sitting next to him had pointedly sat in his lap and pulled his tail around her before she placed her nose in his ruff and closed her eyes.

Nick just gave the top of her head a kiss, murmuring a "I love you" that he was sure she heard judging by the small nuzzle she gave him, and started stroking her ears which were laying down her back. He kept the steady smooth caresses going and pulled out the academy book to keep studying as the train moved on.

It wasn't until they were nearly to the Peak Street station in Zootopia's city center that Judy moved interrupting his petting.

"Nick," she started, hesitantly.

He leaned down and gave her a short nuzzle and responded with a, "Yes, love?" He knew that they'd need to talk about the outburst at some point. But until she was ready, he was more than willing to just be there for her and show her how much she meant to him. Nick was pretty sure that any psychiatrist would have told them that the way they had ended up together, even ignoring the whole different species issue, was not a great way to build a solid relationship. They'd been practically thrown together due to circumstances, and it was probably going to lead to a few bumps along the way. But he was determined to make this work. He couldn't, didn't even want to try to imagine what his life would be like without her as his mate and it was barely a day since they'd officially been married.

Judy glance up at him shyly and with a little trepidation like one expecting to get scolded for something they knew they'd done, before speaking, "I'm sorry. That was a, a little overboard back there."

Nick chuckled and rubbed his darker nose against her pink one. "It's okay, Carrots. I'll admit, it was a little terrifying, but it's okay. I already told you I'm your fox. I don't mind you being a bit possessive of me." He rubbed her nose again, "To be fair, I'm not sure how I'd react to hearing about any of your old crushes. I'm a bit afraid I'd be tempted to go find them and make sure they'd never come within a hundred miles of you."
"Um," Judy murmured, "I don't want you running away from me to go beat up some bunnies, so I think I won't talk about them for now, ok?"

He just gave her another mark right on the bridge of her nose. They’d marked each other so much in the last day that it was ridiculous even by honeymoon standards, but at this point he didn’t see how scent marking her again could hurt, it wasn't like anybody within 20 feet of them could miss it anyway.

Judy spoke up again, "Nick, this whole marriage scares me a bit." That got his full attention, but before he could speak she continued, "It's not that I don't want to be married to you, because I really, really do. But it's just so new, and my emotions are all over the place. I didn't think much of it when they told me about the mating bond being so abnormal, but when you mentioned your friend," Nick could feel her grip on him strengthen even just speaking about it, "I was… I don't know what I was feeling. I was angry that someone might try to grab the attention of my mate, I was angrier that someone had dared kiss or taken a kiss from my mate, I was terrified that I might lose my mate, and a hundred other emotions mixed in." she was shaking now so Nick wrapped her up in his arms and tail so that she was trapped in his embrace and let himself rumble softly. It wasn't like his previous rumbles that were mostly filled with desire but softer, more like a rough purr, though any feline would scoff at the comparison. Judy seemed to find it comforting though, and started to settle down.

"Judy, I can't go back and change the past but I'm your fox, I want to be your fox, I'd do anything to stay your fox."

She sniffed in his arms and asked, "You promise."

"Three times I promise."

She looked up at him, "Why three times?"

He placed his nose back against hers, "Three times I swear, I am yours and you are mine" He gave her a light kiss on the mouth. "Three times because that's the traditional mating vow a male fox gives when his mate marks him, and I don't think I did it under the bridge."

Judy, kissed him back and buried her face back in his ruff. He thought he heard a few sniffles but just resumed petting her and rumbling a comforting purr.

They were interrupted a minute later by the ding and announcement of the train arriving at the station.

As they disembarked, Judy wiped her eyes and took his paw in hers, intertwined their fingers. She led them out of the train, then let Nick lead the way.

"Judy, if you don't want to we don't have to go see my friend." He said as she walked beside him.

"No," she shook her head, "we should go. I need to figure out how to deal with this, and I'm not going to be the reason you can't meet with your friends."

"Promise you won't attack her?" he asked jokingly and playfully swatted her back with his tail.

She squeezed his paw, "Only if she doesn't try anything with my fox."

"Then I'll just have to keep your right by my side, Fluff. That way you can scare of the hordes of females that want to catch this handsome sexy fox." Nick smirked, "I'll probably just keep you by my side always anyway."
Judy bumped his hip, "Now you're just being dramatic."

Nick looked at Judy happily. The sudden emotional storm from earlier seemed to have passed and his smiling exuberant bunny was coming back. "What no comeback? I was expecting you to try and deflate my huge ego a bit."

She smiled at him. Yep, his bunny was back. Nick could feel his tail start to wag behind him, but managed to keep it to a slow swooshing back and forth rather than acting like a fan at her smile.

"What? You don't think I'd find the best mammal in all of Zootopia and make him mine?" she said, still holding his paw as she turned to walk, well more skip than walk, backwards right in front of him. "I'll tell you all about him, he's got gorgeous russet and cream fur, he's handsome and sexy in a very roguish way and has the most wonderful scent I've ever smelled. But best of all, behind all the jokes and smirks he's the kindest, most dependable mammal I've ever met."

Nick had stopped and was simply staring at her.

_Damnit, how can she do that to me?_ He had to blink a few times to clear his vision and resist the urge to snatch her off the ground and kiss her hard right in the middle of the busy downtown street. They were already attracting the attention of nearly every mammal that went by, if not from their paw holding then by the heavy scent markings.

Judy's smile turned into a smirk with a bit of steel showing through and she sidled up to him and in a lower voice said, "And if anyone tries to take him away from me I'll show them exactly how I managed to knock out a rhino at the academy."

She returned to his side seeming very satisfied with herself, "Now, Mr. handsome and sexy," she bumped him with her hip again, "No funny business till tonight, we don't want a repeat of earlier now do we?" Nick groaned a bit at that, the back of his head was still a bit sore, "And we have some shopping to do! So lead on!" she pointed forward enthusiastically.

Nick didn't trust his voice not to betray all the emotions he was feeling so he just smiled and shook his head before continuing on, paw in paw with his happy bunny.

…

"Wait, this entire building is a mall?!!" Judy asked looking up at the huge structure.

"Yep," was all Nick said, enjoying the look of awe on Judy's face. They weren't just outside a mall, they were outside _the_ mall.

She looked at him like he was pulling her leg. Nick did have to admit it was impressive. There were a number of different malls scattered throughout the city in the different climate zones but not even Savanna Central could compete with the grandeur and scale of Zootopia's city center. And this huge structure didn't even qualify as one of the true downtown skyscrapers.

"Well its more than just a standard mall," he said to the still disbelieving Judy as he took her inside, "It's got just about everything and anything you could want, regardless of species or climate. I find it a bit crowded personally but knowing how much of a workaholic you are I doubted you'd gotten the chance to come here before, and since we were headed this way anyway," he shrugged "Well, I thought you'd enjoy seeing it and getting to do some real shopping. Plus, I may know a few people around here that can get us good deals. Ready to have a bit of fun?"

Judy gave him a kiss and pulled him forward.
They spent a happy hour acting almost like tourists. Nick bought Judy an ice cream she shared with him and took her to some of the attractions inside the massive mall before doing some needed shopping. Judy had to pick up all the normal sundry items she'd left back in Bunnyburrow and a few sets of clothes. Luckily in the crowded hustle and bustle of the mall, which was a mixing ground for the city, even a fox and a bunny together didn't get to many odd stares. And with the mix of scents from the crowd only those close to them or with a better sense of smell noticed the fresh and heavy scent markings.

They did cause quite a number of mammals to gape when Judy dragged him into a store that exclusively sold bunny products. Nick couldn't help but snicker at the scale of the 'family planning section' which earned him a light elbow by a less than amused Judy, but he had to ask her what 'chew sticks' were. She was giving him what seemed like a college level lecture on bunny dentistry and proper tooth care as they made their way to the cash register.

Nick was afraid for a moment that there would be a problem as he noticed the manager in the corner of the store; he was watching them with a can of 'fox away' pepper spray inexpertly hidden in his paw. The young doe at the cash register that looked like some cross between a goth and a punk rocker, didn't give them even a second glance as she tallied up their items and chewed her bubble gum. Her attitude screamed that nothing in the world, not even a fox smelling like a bunny in a bunny products shop, was interesting enough to waste her time on.

Just as they were leaving the shop, Nick made an excuse about leaving one of the items back at the register, and asking Judy to wait rushed back over. He decided that he needed to be quick, since not only did leaving Judy's side in such a crowded place cause a lump of worry to form in his gut, but he saw the manager start heading in his direction.

The doe at the register just gave him a bored look and popped her bubble gum, "*pop*, *chew*, Can I help you, sir? *pop*, *chew*" she asked, as if he was interrupting her bubble blowing practice.

Nick quickly and quietly asked, so that Judy wouldn't hear, "So if I want to get her," he gave a subtle gesture, pointing at Judy, "something nice what would you suggest?"

"*pop*, *chew*, You tried carrots?" she said still bored. Oh, great a smart ass, Nick couldn't help but think. Normally, he'd find it fun to throw some smart ass comments back, but the manager was still headed his way and not looking friendly.

Nick slid the doe a twenty and asked, "Look, what could I get her that would be romantic?"

The doe quirked a heavily pierced eyebrow at that, took a very obvious sniff of the air as if just now bothering to notice Judy's scent mark, before speaking, still in a completely bored tone, "*pop*, *chew*, tulips. *pop*, *chew*" Nick noticed the twenty had disappeared, and quickly made his escape with a muttered 'thanks' as the manager rounded the last isle headed in his direction.

He felt far better back at Judy's side as they left the mall store but Judy seemed to have lost some of her cheer again.

"What's up, Fluff?"

"Do I need to go back there and pummel that doe, before tying your tail to me and whacking you every time you glance at a female?" she asked.
Oh

Nick did a quick mental review of how that must have looked to Judy. "damn" he muttered. Judy just looked at him waiting, considering her earlier outburst she was showing an incredible amount of restraint, she only looked like she wanted to break something in half, like maybe a heavy log or an I-beam or the doe at the cash register.

Nick sighed, and pulled her over to an open bench for shorter mammals and sitting down pulled her into his side. The closeness seemed to calm her and she grabbed onto his tail running her paws through it. "Sorry about that Judy, I didn't think that through. I guess you didn't buy my excuse?" She just gave him a 'are you serious' look, so he continued, "I for some odd reason don't have any rabbit acquaintances or business partners, I needed some advice on a surprise for you, so I asked her."

Judy let out a held breath in a sigh, "I'm still overreacting, aren't I? I'm sorry. It's just that even with all those piercings she was prettier than me. And having prettier females around you seems to make my temper flare." She was already snuggled into his side so he started rumbling softly. He'd noticed that she seemed to enjoy his near purr and that it calmed her. The last of the tension seemed to leave her.

"You're far prettier than her Judy. Your cuter than any vixen, and yet you still have a far more lean and strong body than other rabbits. It's the most gorgeous figure I've ever seen. You don't have to ever worry about another mammal being prettier than you because they can't be."

She closed her eyes, saying, "Please keep saying things like that." before humming a bit.

Nick smiled down at her, loving how she felt against him, "Can't fluff, or I'd be liable to do something that would get us arrested for public indecency."

She let out a small laugh at that before asking, "Sooo, you wanted to get me a surprise?"

"Well it, won't be a surprise if I tell you. Sooo, you'll just have to wait and see." he kissed the top of her head. "There's another store in here I'd like to visit before we head out, you ready?" he asked.

She nodded, so he got up, re-slung his backpack over his shoulder and grabbed their shopping bag before leading her to one of the higher floors of the mall.

It was one of the quieter sections, with higher class clothing and jewelry stores, where he entering a shop named Sheppard and Son's.

A bell above the door tinkled as they entered the shops darker front room.

"One moment," said a voice from the back room.

Nick was watching Judy again, with a smile. She was looking around the shop with that look of wonder back on her face. One wall had cubby holes from floor to ceiling and along its entire length filled with bolts of cloth of every type, color, and pattern imaginable. There was even a rolling wooden ladder like you'd see in an old library. The other wall held a few mannequins with suits and dresses for show and a large three sided mirror stand.

An old black wolf with silver speckling his fur came through the door. He wore a cloth tape measure around his neck and had a very thick set of glasses on the bridge of his nose. Nick could see him take a small sniff of the air, which lead to a confused look before he readjusted his glasses and peered down at them.
A few more adjustments, and he let out a laugh, "Oh Nicholas! Should have known that you'd smell
different now that you have a mate, hum, didn't think my nose was still good enough to pick up a
scent marking like that." Judy's ears seemed to color a bit at the comment, but the old wolf gestured
them over. "Well come on, come on. Are you finally taking me up on my offer to get you some real
clothes, Nicholas?"

Nick brought Judy over to the wolf and shook his paw before introducing them, "Mr. Sheppard, this
is Judy Wilde, my mate. Judy, this is Tyler Sheppard, one of, if not the best tailor in all of Zootopia."

"Now see here, don't you go trying to butter me up Nicholas." He turned and reaching down, shook
Judy's paw. "Pleasure to meet you Mrs. Wilde, pardon me for saying so but you'll have a wild time
keeping this one out of trouble. I don't care how unusual your marriage is, it's about time someone
settled this one down."

Judy was certainly blushing now, and after some mumbled pleasantries asked, "So how do you and
Nick know each other?"

"Worked with his father, Mrs. Wilde, Yes ma'am, tried to teach this one," he nodded at Nick, "But
he was always too restless to sit and learn the art of tailoring properly." Nick stuck out his tongue at
the old wolf, and Judy promptly pinched his ear and hissed at him to behave.

Mr. Sheppard laughed at Nick's wince and apology, before continuing, "She'll do, Nicholas. You
need an alpha to keep you in line. Now what will you be getting today? Oh, of course. Trevor! Get
out here!" he yelled toward the back room.

Before Nick could intervene Trevor Sheppard, a younger version of Mr. Sheppard came hustling out
of the back room.

Mr. Sheppard started issuing orders, "Grab the stool for the mirror. We'll need to get their
measurements, and start looking at designs, it's been a little while since we've made wedding outfits
for mammals their sizes. We'll need…"

It took Nick a few moments to get the old wolf's attention and explain that they didn't need wedding
outfits, but needed some clothes appropriate for their new jobs.

After adjusting his glasses a few more times examining Nick's new badge, he handed it back. "Well,
I never thought I'd see the day. John Wilde's rebellious kit working on the side of the law, the next
thing you know you'll be working for the law!" he laughed and slapped his knee.

Judy was about to speak up but Trevor beat her too it.

"Um, dad." He said, "I'm pretty sure that article in the paper today about the ZPD regulation's case to
allow a bunny and fox back onto the force was about them."

The old wolf stopped laughing and looked back at them, adjusting his glasses again. "Well now,
doesn't that just beat all?" A slow smile was crossing over his muzzle, "Didn't you use to dress up for
Halloween as a police officer and go around saying that was what you wanted to be when you grew
up?"

Nick's ears dropped and he shot a mortified glance at Judy, who was now giving him the same look
she would probably give a 'cute' baby or kit. It made him feel like he was having his dignity
emasculated.

"Mr. Sheppard! Judy doesn't want to hear about any of that." He tried to say quickly but was cut off
by Judy's,
"Oh, yes I do!"

"-And, anyway we're here to get some clothes," He finished lamely, and coughed into his paw in embarrassment."

Both Mr. Shepard and the younger Shepard laughed at his embarrassment only making it worse.

"Wow, I never thought I'd see the day when Nick Wilde could get flustered by a girl," Trevor said, still chuckling at him, "You weren't even this embarrassed way back in second grade when I dared you to kiss-"

Crap! Crap! Not that story! Nick was thinking, and nearly shouted in desperation, "Trevor! We really do have a busy day! We-" he was cut off as he was pulled down by his ear.

"What ever might have happened back in his younger days. Let me make one thing clear to everybody." Judy said the steel back in her voice, and she marked him right in front of the wolves, "He's mine!" and she kissed him with such ferocity that it nearly knocked him off his feet.

It took a few moments for Nick to collect himself. Judy was looking pleased with herself, Trevor was snickering at his completely flustered state, and Mr. Shepard was nodding his head, his glasses nearly falling off muttering, "She'll do, She'll do just fine. That boy always did need a strong female to put him in line."

"Um, clothes, here for clothes" Nick said still a bit dazed by the kiss.

Mr. Shepard straightened his glasses which had almost fallen off, and started tapping the side of his nose, "Humm, clothes yes, you two need something respectable to wear. I'll make you two a deal, I'll give you two our family price for everything you get, but…" He trailed off

Nick did not like where this was heading. Mr. Shepard had a knack for maneuvering others into getting exactly what he wanted. "But what? What's the catch?"

Mr. Shepard's lips pulled back in a smile only a predator could manage. "The catch is you have to get your wedding outfits from us. And also your Dress Blues once you make it onto the force."

"We're already married! Why do we need wedding outfits?!" Nick asked exasperatedly. He couldn't help but sneak a glance at Judy and imagine her in a dress. Foxes didn't really have weddings but they did have marriage celebrations with family. The thought of her in a dress made his heart skip a few beats, but the thought of the price even at a discount made his stomach turn. The Sheppard's were one of the best tailor shops in Zootopia for a reason. They were able to charge a price equal to their quality of work from the quite exclusive and wealthy clientele they grown over the years.

"I'll give you the wedding outfits at materials cost," Mr. Sheppard said showing far too many teeth for his smile to be considered publicly polite. "Or, I can charge you my standard price for new customers on everything."

That made Nick's stomach drop, but Mr. Sheppard wasn't done with him yet, "And don't you think her parents and your mother will want some sort of ceremony? From what the papers said yesterday I don't think you could have had much of one at the hospital."

Nick threw up his hands, "Fine! You win. gods! Just don't go talking to my mom alright? She hasn't even met Judy yet!"

"Agreed." The old wolf said and reached out to grab and shake one of his flailing paws. "Always said you needed to wear something better than those trashy shirts you got for that hustle. I warned
you when you asked that they wouldn't sell. The materials comfortable enough, but the pattern and stitching! Mediocre at best."

He turned to Judy taking the cloth measuring tape from around his neck, "Now, young lady, if you'd be so kind as to step over here," He pointed to the stool that Trevor had placed in front of the mirrors.

As Mr. Sheppard started in on Judy, Nick knew he had a bit of time before the old wolf would be done, so he cornered Trevor.

His friend from his early school days was still snickering at him, "I thought you said you'd never get married?"

"Well, she didn't give me much of a choice." Nick huffed.

"You didn't seem to be resisting when she marked and kissed you! I don't think I've ever seen your tail wag like that!" He snickered again.

"Ya, well, she's a hell of a girl." Nick mused, "Now, before your dad is done with her we've got some stuff to take care of."

Trevor's attituded turned serious, "I know that look, what are you planning now Nick?"

"First, don't mention other girls around her. We've, ah, had an interesting start to our relationship and let's just say that some old instincts for both of us are running a bit out of control." Trever just raised both eyebrows at that, "Now, I'll be taking her by to visit Honey's place in a bit, -"

Trevor rolled his eyes, "Of course, she'd want to talk to you after everything with the Nighthowler conspiracy, Sheep!"

Nick nodded, "Yep, but I'm thinking that Honey might also be able to help us get our new P.I. company set up too, you want to talk to her to and see if she can help you two with some of the more special aspects of the clothes?"

Trevor, in the same manner as his dad did, started tapping the side of his nose and mumbling, "Hum, yes, got to remember your private investors, going to have to cut it wider, hum, have to trim it a bit to make sure it looks right... hum." He seemed to realize he was rambling and looked back at Nick, "Don't worry we've done this kind of job before and I'll make sure to call Honey to see if there's anything special we need to do. You two will have to stop by tomorrow so we can start checking the fit. Anything else?"

Nick pulled his backpack around, "How much is this all going to cost? I want to pay for it now so Judy doesn't have a chance to argue about me covering the bill."

Trevor looked back over at his dad, who was eagerly talking with and measuring Judy. And smiled a bit, "Dad's going to enjoy this job. Tell you what, just because it's for you and her, call it a package deal. Ten thousand flat."

Nick grumbled a bit as he pulled out the cash and handed it over. It was going to put a serious dent in his savings but in a hustle, looking the part was half the battle, that he thought was probably a universal truth. And he knew that even at that price, the Shepard's were still giving him one hell of a discount. There'd be no way for him to afford clothes like these without it.

Trevor counted the money and nodded, "You two won't be disappointed. Anything else? I can get started measuring you right now."
"Actually, there was one more thing. Who's the best jeweler around that won't skin me alive in a deal?" He nodded to Judy, "I'd like to run over while you keep her occupied so I can get her something special made."

Trevor started grinning, "Still can't believe you're married. You know my dad would tell you, trying to pull one over on your wife, never works, right?"

Nick just smirked, "Won't know unless I try, now will I? So, any suggestions?"

Trevor shook his head, "Shouldn't have even tried stopping you, go try Martin's, 4 shops down from here, can't miss it. He's young and new, just opened up a few months ago, but surprisingly good. Dad used him for mom's anniversary present, and they both seemed very pleased with his work. Tell him we sent you"

Nick nodded, and with one last glance at Judy, he whispered, "Keep her busy till I'm back."

... 

Nick had no trouble finding the shop. It stood out among all the others with their traditional names like Shepard & Son's, being called Ore and Rocks.

Nick entered the shop and saw a ginormous buffalo, someone to match the chief's size behind the back counter wearing something that looked like an ophthalmologist headset with lenses and magnifying glasses all over it as he concentrated on whatever he was working on. The Buffalo ears twitching at the sound of the door opening and sniffing the air, yelled, "Rabbit sized Jewelry is at the end of the counter! Give me a minute and I'll be right over." without ever breaking his concentration at his task. Nick went over to the counter eying the small display of ready jewelry. He paid particular attention to the rabbit sizing guide thinking back to Judy's paw and mentally comparing it to the guide. He was quite sure he could pick out the right size, he might not have hearing like Judy's but his eyes were his sharpest sense.

He heard a grunt and the creak as if a heavy weight was lifted from a chair. There was another grunt, a more surprised one this time, and a muttered, "the hell? Smells like a rabbit?"

The buffalo came over to where he was though and shook his paw pleasantly enough, "Martin's the name, how can I help you? Fox sized stuff is over there." He gestured down the counter.

"Wilde, Nick Wilde." He responded, "The Shepard's suggested I talk to you about getting a wedding ring for my wife," He paused for a moment to judge his reaction, "who is a bunny."

The bull grunted again and shook his head, "That explains it; was warned when I moved to the city that things were a bit different." He narrowed his eyes, "Wilde, hum, you're that fox that was in the papers?"

"That would be me," Nick said, face still a calm mask waiting for his reaction.

"Then it wasn't all a hoax?" the bull asked, still eyeing him.

"Not a hoax, happily married to a bunny" he said.

The bull just eyed him for a few moments, before snorting, "Well, not my place to judge. A rabbit wedding ring then. What style are you looking for?" he gestured at the display, "This is mostly for display to show what I can do, I usually make items custom ordered."

Nick relaxed a bit, but now was faced with the problem that he really didn't have any idea about
what to get Judy. He'd picked up the basics in hustling of telling fakes from the real thing, but he had no clue about different styles and fashions. He'd never been very concerned with it or worn any jewelry himself.

"Uh, what would you suggest?" he asked instead. "I'm trying to get this as a bit of a surprise for her, and only have a few minutes while she's busy getting measured.

The bull's grunt this time clearly showed his exasperation at Nick's inexperience, and he started bombarding him with questions.

"What is she like? Does she wear a lot of jewelry? Would she want something flashy or something subtle? What are her most defining features?

Nick tried his best to answer all of them as fast as they came; caring, no, probably not flashy, her eyes, …

The bull's questions continued on for a few minutes before stopping and giving Nick his business card.

"You'd better get back before she figures out what you're doing, give me a text at this number," he tapped the card in Nick's paw, "and I'll send you some options and pictures. I can't give you a price until you pick out a particular ring, but if you put a down payment on an order with me I'll give you a discount for using me rather than another jeweler." He gestured to the rings and the price tags, I don't make a habit of up-charging the display prices, this is the range you'll be looking at minus 10%.

"15% and I'll put down a deposit." Nick said.

The Bull eyed him again, before reaching out a hoof to shake, "Fine" he grumbled, "Only because the Shepard's referred you. But don't try to haggle any more than that. I guarantee the quality of my work for the life time of the recipient. The price I give you before the discount is the price its worth."

Nick sighed again and pulled out more of his cash. He handed over the amount for one of the middle-priced rabbit rings in the case. He hoped he'd have some cash left to deposit in the bank by the time they made it there.

…

Nick slipped back into the shop right as Mr. Shepard seemed to be finishing up with Judy, and the knot of worry that had started and been growing stronger and stronger the longer he'd been away from her, vanished. He was pretty sure that if she hadn't been with mammals he trusted that knot of worry would have been far, far worse. He found the implications of it slightly disturbing.

Judy hopped down from the stool and Mr. Sheppard gestured for him to take her place. Nick muttered a 'thanks' to Trevor as he passed him heading for the stool.

The measurements took far longer than Nick had anticipated, but it had been a while since he'd seen the Shepard's so the time passed fast enough as they chatted back and forth. The only problem was that the damned feeling of unease returned as they worked. He was really hoping that Judy wasn't getting bored waiting for him. He couldn't see her in the angles of the mirrors as they were placed to show him different views of himself, and when he'd started to turn to look for her to reassure himself, he'd received a tongue lashing from Mr. Shepard about standing straight and not moving his posture. That he knew better than to move as it would mess up the measurements he was taking.

The feeling was only getting worse and worse, and by the time Mr. Sheppard said he was done he was starting to fidget.
The moment he was given permission he whipped his head around to find Judy leaning up against the propped open door. He rushed over to her as the knot of tension started to unwind. It finally disappeared when he took her paw in his.

Nicks ears flattened in embarrassment as he realized both of the Sheppard's were grinning at his near sprint to Judy. Trevor was even snickering again.

Mr. Shepard came over to shake his paw again.

"We'll see you tomorrow for initial fittings, but make sure you stop by more often than once every year or so in the future, you hear?" he reached to Nick's shoulder and pulled a piece of grass he hadn't realized was stuck under the collar of his shirt and then flicked the spot missing a button on the front. "And I expect you to take better care of the clothes I'm making for you, they're not for rolling around in the hay, understand?"

Nick muttered some affirmations, as he dragged his giggling bunny out the door, trying to hide the fact his ears were heating up.

Chapter End Notes

gonekrazy3000, despite overwhelming numbers of typos and mistakes, fought on. Against all odds, despite lack of sleep and running out of coffee (shudder) he prevail and typos are no more.

To all the reviewers (now on both FanFiction and Ao3)

Thanks for all the feedback and support. You all and the new high level of followers to the story got me another starbucks drink. Hell ya! Thanks!
HAHAHA! I'm Free!

I wasn't going to go, I swear. But Disney said there'd be free starbucks coffee! Who could resist that? And yes, it was a trap. The stuck me in a deep dark dungeon of a prison with other fanfiction writers on their hit list. However, I still had my spare coffee spoon and while the other authors scribbled stories on the walls to stay sane, I shawshanked my way out of there! Ha, didn't even dig in the wrong direction. Take that Monte Cristo!

As a serious note, the combination of this annoying thing called real life and a lack of coffee and a savage attack by plot bunnies that has lead to the creation of a second story, (To my shame, I've been informed by the readers guild that my Reader status is officially on probation) caused a bit of a longer break between updates than I anticipated. Sorry for that. I'll try to be a little more consistent. I'm hoping to stay with 2-3 updates a week right now, but things might stay a bit hairy till Christmas season is over. (many grinchy things to do, and I have a meeting with Ebenezer Scrooge I simply can't miss)

Disclaimer: Runs around beach in Joy, "I'm Free!, I'm Free!" looks over and sees pirate crew, "Oh, Crap"

Judy was feeling much better as they re-entered the subway than when they left it for the mall. She boarded the train with Nick, headed toward Taigra Ave north of the city center. She was still coming to grips with the unexpected pangs of jealousy regarding Nick, though pangs might have been slightly understating the towering, protective and possessive rage she'd been feeling. The doctors had mentioned that it might take a while for her to adjust to her sudden bonding, They also mentioned the possibility of 'light mood swings'. She let out a laugh at that and Nick looked down at her sitting in his lap with a quizzical expression. She just shook her head and gave him a quick kiss before asking, "Almost done with that chapter?"

Nick with the paw that wasn't wrapped around her waist like a comfortable seatbelt, flipped a few more pages to the end of the chapter in the academy handbook.

"Almost, Carrots. Got a few more pages to the end of the chapter in the academy handbook.

"Almost, Carrots. Got a few more pages before you get to quiz me." He said, and she snuggled back into him feeling his arm wrap more tightly around her.

Judy, sighed happily; while her reactions may have been, okay, certainly were, out of proportion, Judy didn't feel any regret for the cause of those feelings. She had managed by fate or luck to get the single best mammal in the world and now that he was hers, she wasn't going to give him up to anyone else. The way he hadn't even snapped back at her emotional outburst, but had just continued to show her his love for her was only another example of why he was so perfect. Nick's steady constant presence and caring was making it easier and easier to handle her rampaging feelings, well that and having him quite literally covered in her scent helped too. She blushed a bit at what other mammals most be thinking, but she couldn't bring herself to regret it.
The Mall had been wonderfully fun, but she had enjoyed it more because Nick had been there to show it to her, than by the grandeur of the mall itself. Her favorite part of the entire experience had been how her fox had tried in his sly way to sneak around in order to get her a surprise. She wanted so badly to tell him how much she loved him for that, but thought that it would be better to show him in the same way. She couldn't wait to see his face when she pulled her surprise on him. She smiled just at the thought.

Nick would need to get used to how good her hearing was if he was going to try and slip anything by her, but because of the effort she thought that she might take it a bit easier on him tonight. She was still going to get her revenge on him but she might let him survive the ordeal now. Thinking about it made her smile grow larger and caused her to squirm a bit in his lap.

She felt a light rumble in response, before Nick shoved the Book into her paws and said, "Okay, you need to stop that or I'm not going to be content with just winning kisses, and you'd better start quizzing me before my mind starts thinking of exactly what I want to do with you instead."

Judy gave a bit of a hum before opening the book and starting. She couldn't help but think that if kisses could get these kinds of results what upping the prize might do to his learning rate. It was certainly something she might try tonight, purely in the interest of seeing Nick pass his exam of course. She smiled as she asked the first question; it might just be possible for Nick to learn everything before Friday.

…

"Nick stop grinning so much!" Judy said as she quickly tried smoothing out the fur around his muzzle. She knew she shouldn't have taken his bet on whether he'd get every single question right. Granted it had been one amazing and passionate kiss even despite disgruntled noises from a few other mammals. She gave his muzzle one last brush with her paw; well that will have to do, at least now it looks like he's just a little wind blown, not like I was eating his face.

"Come on Nick! This is Taigra Ave." she said and pulled the still grinning fox with his wagging tail off of the train right before the doors chimed and closed. "Okay, slick you're going to have to lead from here. I don't know where your friend-but-dead-mammal-if-she-makes-a-move-on-you lives."

He gave her a nuzzle, before leading her toward the exit and grinning even wider now, "No need to worry Judy, I actually think you'll get along with my friend once you meet her. She's a bit… hum, odd, but every mammal is in one way or another."

Nick stopped at the bottom of the medium mammal sized escalator, and looked back at Judy.

"Darn it, I forgot. You've got shorter fur than me even without my winter coat."

Judy shrugged, "Isn't Taigra Ave in the Mountain Zone, not Tundra Town?"

Nick smirked and shook his head, "I keep forgetting that you're still new to Zootopia. Tundra Town and Sahara Square have the Climate-Wall that separates them, but it's the Mountain Zone that separates Tundra Town and The Rainforest District. Out of all the different climate zones in Zootopia, the Mountain Zone is by far the most varied, It runs from the north edge of downtown city center all the way to the meadowlands and has portions that range from moderate in the north section to high altitude jungle on the west side and finally," he gestured up the escalators, "to frigid mountains on the east side."

The air coming down the escalators was a bit chilly but it didn't seem that bad, so she shrugged again, "That doesn't seem-"
"And," Nick cut in with a smirk, that seemed to laugh and say that she was still missing something, "It's high enough that the artificial climates of the different climate zones on each side of it not only clash with each other but also the natural climate of Zootopia. Makes for some seriously erratic and interesting weather."

"Well, there's not much we can do about it now that we're here, so we'll just have to deal with it." Judy said resolutely, before squeezing his paw, "And if I get too cold I have a handsome warm fox that will warm me up." She bounced up, kissed him on the cheek and pulled him onto the escalator.

As they rode up, with Nick's tail still wagging despite his obvious effort to slow it, he called across to an old billy goat on his way down the escalator next to theirs, "How's the weather today?"

The goat gave them a glance before doing a double take, head snapping back to take a closer look at them. "Winds been picking up." He finally said, "but you never know here, hope you two don't have far to go."

It was just a moment later that they passed under some air blowers at the top of the escalators and the very frigid air slapped Judy hard. She immediately snapped her ears down against her back and scooted close to Nick who wrapped his tail around her.

"So how far do we have go?" She asked, trying to not let her teeth start chattering.

Nick chuckled, "It's only a few blocks!" he said raising his voice at the end as they left the cover of the station and the screaming wind hit her like a knife.

Nick started hustling along the sidewalk, which she thought were far closer to stairs than any sidewalk. They continued moving uphill passing houses here and there sticking half in, half out of the rugged and steep slopes. Judy let out a surprised "Eeep" as something very very cold slapped into her nose. She looked up just in time to have another half frozen rain drop hit her and freeze to her fur. Her jaw was chattering hard now, and even Nick was looking like the cold was getting to him.

He looked down at her after glancing uphill with a worried expression, and said, "Gonna have to make a run for it."

And before she could respond, he'd shifted his hold on their shopping bag and swept her off her feet, sprinting along the path. She could feel more drops of freezing rain starting to patter on her back.

Instead of arguing with her fox she just buried her frozen nose into his unimaginably warm ruff.

If this is his summer coat, How fluffy will his winter coat be? She couldn't help but think.

In less than a minute, Nick had stopped running and was pounding against a door.

There was a click and an irritated voice came over a speaker, "What do you want, I'm busy!"

"Honey!" Nick nearly shouted, as his muzzle started chattering with the increasing downpour. "Open this door now! Or you're going to have to bring an ice pick to get our frozen bodies out of your doorway!"

The voice over the speaker changed to a surprised tone, "Nick? Wait you aren't supposed to be here until… Oh, damn, I lost track of time again working on a project. Sorry, it was-"
"Honey!" Nick shouted, now with a note of pleading in his voice.

"Ohh, right, right." There was a click as the speaker shut off, and a short wait that seemed like forever, before the door finally opened. Nick hustled inside and the voice from the speaker said, "Over to the side, give me a second."

Nick chattering just as hard as her now, took a few steps over and then there was a gloriously warm stream of air coming up from the floor. Judy sighed but didn't move away from Nick. She thought she might pass out from the comforting pleasure when Nick dropped the shopping bag and started rubbing feeling back into her hindpaws.

"Thank gods you finally took my suggestion to get a heating mat, Honey. I still don't know why you choose to live in this place."

The voice, with a touch of the irritation coming back, said, ""You and everyone else allways complain so much that I finally got it just so I wouldn't have to hear your grumbling, so stop griping! And I get a view here to rival the penthouses in the downtown skyscrapers, you know that!"

"Still not worth it." Nick grumbled.

The voice gave an irritated snarl, but stopped for a moment before shifting into a very smugly pleased tone, like she'd just caught Nick in the middle of a hustle, "So, for a self-proclaimed life time bachelor you seem to wearing an interesting cologne and a new jacket there." Nick stiffened and Judy shifted her head, and saw a badger in a camouflage patterned labcoat over jeans and a t-shirt pointing at her. Judy blinked, her mind seemed to be trying to make some sort of connection but wasn't succeeding.

"I thought that you might have been suckered into that marriage by that old coot in city hall, but you seem to be holding onto her rather… protectively." The badger said with a snicker.

Judy couldn't help the gut reaction as the female badger, one of Nick's close friends, pointed at them, at him.

"He's Mine!" she blurted out, before blushing and muttering a quick apology.

The badger though only laughed, "And you can have him. His snarky attitude would drive me crazy and I'm not into foxes, he's too thin for my tastes." She said, with a disdainful sniff.

Well her loss, Judy couldn't help but think with a smug smirk, thinking about Nick's long frame with his lean predatory muscle and how it felt as he held her close, like he was unwilling to ever let her go or let anyone take her away. How that wonderful body felt as it moved against hers showing her in every way how he loved her, how he…

Nick took an involuntary sharp inhale and started nuzzling hard against her neck.

"Hey, Now! None of that here!" said the badger angrily waving a claw at them. "Watching Nick be affectionate might scar me for life, now come on." she said and turned heading down a corridor from the house's front room.

The view of the badger in the lab coat turning around triggered a memory and Judy spat out, "Hey! The Missing Mammals case, the doctor at the asylum?! Was that you?!"

"Couldn't be," Nick said, though he was looking at the badger with narrowed eyes and a confused look, "The scents different, but…" he trailed off looking more confused.
The badger turned around and smirked. "You know me Nick, I nearly failed biology. I'm a tinkerer not a doctor." She gave them, particularly Nick's confused face, a smirk, "My cousin, Madge Badger however is a doctor, and the one Lionheart commandeered. He was a fool for trying to hide those mammals and getting only one doctor to find the cause. With her team, she was able to produce an antidote within a day, once they knew what the cause was. I already talked to her and got a bunch of details on what happened but I want your side of the story too. I've been saying for years that the meadowlands policies have been encouraging sheep isolation and supremacy attitudes!"

Nick groaned a bit at that. "You're going to hold this over me forever, aren't you?"

The badger looked extremely pleased, "Damn straight!" she said before heading out of the room.

Judy looked at nick and asked, "What was that about?"

Nick just shook his head and intertwining their paws before following the badger. "During high school Honey made a presentation in a social studies class. She's argued that some of the policies certain regions promote keep species from mixing with others and foster ideas like species supremacy. She used sheep as a prime example but ended up getting laughed at by the class. But being the stubborn badger she is, she dug in her claws and wouldn't let the issue go. She got labeled as the sheep 'conspiracy' quack for it, but between us and a few other friends of ours it's turned into a running joke."

He snickered and leaned over to whisper into Judy's ear, "When we get together every now and then Finick and Flash both staunchly support Honey's sheep 'conspiracy'," Nick said the last couple words in an overloud whisper, grinning. There was a shout from down the hall, "It's Not a Conspiracy! It's stupid laws and prejudice that leads to idiocy and bigotry!"

Nick smirked at the response, "I like to play devil's advocate with Trevor on the other hand whenever it comes up."

"You all know each other?" Judy asked, curious about her fox's past.

"We had all met by the time we were in highschool." Nick shrugged, "They're probably the only real friends that I have. Most other people I know are closer to acquaintances or business partners."

Judy was about to ask him more about his friends, but right then they entered the main living space of the house buried in the mountainside and Judy seemed to lose track of her thoughts. Whatever she had imagined the badger's house looked like, this wasn't it. Maybe the lab coat should have tipped her off, because the mostly open floor space of the house was some sort of cross between a very nice apartment and a crazy science lab, and it was all set to a stunning back-drop view looking out over the mountainside, provided by a large floor to ceiling window that ran the length of the room. There was a small bar counter in front of a kitchen area, tucked eloquently into the corner of the room next to an area with comfortable looking couches, and the most expensive looking TV, speaker and entertainment set she'd ever seen. The rest of the room was filled with computers, work benches, tools, half completed projects and an assortment of equipment that Judy could only start to guess at. And the view. They were looking out over the mountain side as it fell away to Tundra Town and could watch in comfort as the small but furious squall raced down the mountain. It was like something an evil mad scientist would choose as their secret lair in a movie. Ok, a mad scientist with a bit of style, she admitted still looking around the house, but a mad scientist none the less.

"What is this place?" Judy asked, still a bit stunned.
Nick smirked before saying, "Welcome to the Honey Badgers hideaway."

The badger in question came out of the kitchen area with a tray of drinks, scowling, "Now don't you start in on that again. It's not my fault my parents gave me the most obvious name they could think of."

"Don't worry Honey, I call her Carrots, so you're in good company." Nick said as he sat on one of the couches.

Honey turned to Judy, after setting the tray down on a coffee table, "You want to be married to this bag of bad jokes?" she said with a pitying look at Judy, before reaching out a paw, "And yes, the name really is Honey Badger."

Judy smiled back and shook her paw. "Judy Wilde" She said stressing her new last name and smiling wider at Honey's returned grin. She could see why Nick had become friends with the badger, she was starting to come to like her a lot too. Despite her gruff demeanor and (she thought back to the bizarre living room/work room area) eccentric-ness, she had a streak of humor as well as hidden empathy and friendliness.

Judy sat next to Nick and used his tail as a lap blanket before deciding to do some teasing of her own, "And he does an excellent job of keeping the bed warm. Besides he comes with some nice fringe benefits too." She smirked.

The badger looked at her, looked at her hold on Nick's tail and looked at Nick, who appeared to be quite content with the situation.

"She's got you totally whipped doesn't she?" the badger asked incredulously.

Nick Just shrugged and smirked, "I'm her one and only bed warmer. I find that position very satisfactory, besides," he gave Judy a happy and slightly hungry leer, "It comes with some nice fringe benefits too."

"What the hell did that sheep do to you?" Honey questioned, looking like she didn't have a clue who Nick was.

"Bellwether didn't do anything," Nick said taking Judy's paw, "This bunny just hopped into my life and decided to take my tail with her. So, if I want to keep it attached to me I've got to stick with her forever. Simple as that." Nick gave Judy a chaste kiss on the cheek, which caused the badger to break out in a fit of fake gags and choking sounds.

When she was done with her acting, she turned to Judy, "Seriously what the hell did you do to him? He's always been a little more open with me than others, but nothing like this!" she waved a paw at Nick who was still smiling, actually smiling. "And I've never, ever seen him do that." She pointed at the tip of Nick's tail which was hanging off the other side of Judy's lap and flicking back and forth like a happy excited kit.

"Well," Judy said, wanting to nestle into the side of her fox, "He stole my heart so I had to chase him down and make him marry me properly."

"You are such a liar." Nick murmured at her, and she felt him wrap his arm around her, sliding her closer to him

"Okay, forget that I asked what you did to him, he's obviously too far gone to save, but" she gave them both a glare, "If you don't stop the lovey-dovey act I'm going to go get my modified super soaker." Nick's arm immediately withdrew and he scooted a few inches away from Judy, much to her
displeasure. She looked at him, and he leaned over and whispered, "Last year she warned Finnick that if he didn't stop stacking the deck at our monthly poker game that she'd use it on him… and well, let's just say it's the only time I've seen a doctor actually believe 'fell down in the shower' as the excuse for an injury."

"Hey" The badger replied, "I fixed that problem, I now have a special setting for fennec foxes so I won't send him flying across the room."

Judy just looked at her quizzically, trying to imagine what 'modifications' she could have possibly made to a kits toy to get that kind of result. She looked over at all the equipment and then back at the badger. What by Carrots and Cabbage did this badger do? Her mind tried to put all the various pieces together and fit it into some sensible whole.

Honey leaned over to Nick and whispered, though Judy could still easily hear it, "Why'd she go all quiet and what's up with her nose twitching like that? Is she alright?"

Nick chuckled, waving at the room, "You're too big of a mystery for her not to try and figure out, and that's her deep thinking expression," Nick let out what might have even been called a giggle, "Watch this! It's something I love about her" he said, and still grinning maniacally leaned over and kissed judy lightly on the nose.

Judy, who had heard their conversation but not really paid attention to it, too far into her thoughts froze for a second before blinking. There was a muffled, "Oh that's precious!" before a few coughs and some gruff unpleasant mutterings about mammals not being able to control themselves.

"She is certainly far more than just some tinkerer, is she part of some research and development project?" Judy asked, deciding to just ignore everything that the other two had done in the last thirty seconds.

Honey looked at her and murmured, "Bunny's too damned smart." Before looking at Nick and asking pointedly "Is she trustworthy?"

The question surprised Judy. She was already considering Honey a friend and the question stung, but before she had more than a moment to register the feelings, Nicks answer made her heart swell.

"I trust her with my life, Honey, If anything she's more trustworthy than me. Hell, she's gotten me to go legit and signing up to become a police officer."

Honey looked at her with an evaluating gaze for a minute as if judging if she could trust Judy before giving a nod and speaking.

"I've always been good with building things, tweaking things to work better, and such. I actually helped Nick and Finnick set up some of their more complicated jury rigged attractions at Wilde Times, which is where I got the money to really start tinkering with stuff. I do it mostly because I like to but I also get contracted out for jobs. A few years after Wilde Times, I got a few contracts from, let's just say the government for specialty equipment. Ever since then they've been my primary customers."

Judy looked back around the room at different projects here and there, some she had no idea what they were but others looked familiar. A standard ZPD tranq pistol stripped down and being worked on, something that looked similar to swat team armor. Electronics that looked like what had been covered in the academy's familiarization with undercover agent and surveillance specializations.

"Do you work for the ZPD?" Judy blurted out, pieces starting to fall into place. "No, maybe research
for new police equipment? Or specialized operations?

Honey shrugged, "Can't really say more than I have, I get paid by Zootopia that's something you can confirm by going through public records, but I can't tell you details about exact jobs." She waved her paw toward her work room, "Most of this is stuff I'm tinkering with so you can't even tell what's a job and what's not. I think Nick has guessed a lot, we've known each other since we were kits and we trade favors and help each other out," Honey shrugged at Judy and gave her a smile, "But he's never asked too many questions about it, not that I'd tell him even if he did. So, I just call myself a sort of freelance tinkerer for hire."

Nick leaned over and kissed her nose, which, *Carrot Sticks*, had started twitching madly again. "Just think about it Carrots, and we can swap rumors and hearsay later without putting Honey in a tight spot with the source of her primary income." Judy blushed a bit, seeing Honey try to stifle a laugh and whispered to her fox a, "Okay, slick."

Nick turned back to Honey. "Speaking of jobs and favors, I actually came her with Judy today to do more than just introduce you to my stunning wife," he shot Judy another smoldering look, causing her blush which had just started to die down to flare up again, "and swap some stories with you."

Honey sat up and looked completely serious now. "Ohh, this should be interesting." She crossed her arms, "Since you're claiming to go legit this isn't going to be for a hustle, and from what I read in the paper you're not going to be able to get on the police force any time soon, so what are you up to? And why do you need the services of a tinker for hire?"

Nick tossed his flip wallet, which landed on the coffee table and flopped open, displaying the ID and badge.

"We," Nick said in full hustler mode, "Need to get fitted out with some proper gear, and anything we could buy from police surplus would be sized for mammals far larger than us. Who better to make us some custom gear than a tinkerer for hire?" Nick crossed his arms, "And one who wants some information from us and owes me a few favors?" Nick smirked.

Chapter End Notes

Redacted Typo Disclaimer: Also I am posting this before my proof reader has had a chance to review it so beware. I'll change this Note once it's been corrected so you can wait till then or just read it now and wince at my bad grammar and typos. (I'm betting that it's easier to run from the wrath of my proof reader than the wraths (plural) of wildehopps addicts that are currently going through withdraw)

Answer: Nope he caught me
Chapter 25 – Surprises Part 4: Money

Chapter Notes

*Ao3 is now caught up to Fanfiction*

Typo Disclaimer: My proofreader has been good this year, so he is busy either sleeping or enjoying his Christmas, I'm still waiting on my shipment of coal. Regardless when he looks this chapter over and I get a chance to update this Note will change.

... Wildehopps Pirate Captain glares down onto the deck with assembled crew, "Bring forth the prisoner!"

Writer is dragged up onto the deck, "Ha, I hustled you, I hustled you all good." Writer smirks as he's tied to the grate.

Jail keeper, mumbles "at least he's been reading the movie manuscript we gave him."

Captain glares, at jail keeper then at writer, "There is no justification for turning the Maps page into a prank to traumatize our ship and crew! You shall receive the worst punishment we have; WildeHopps will prevail!"

Chanting from the crew 'WildeHopps! WildeHopps! WildeHopps!'

Writer, still smirking, "Ha, this is payback for the paintballs! Vengeance! Is! Sweet! What are you going to do flog me? You'll have to do better than that! Nothing you can do will make me regret it! *Cackles*"

Captain gives a smile the opposite of nice. it was un-nice, "We'll see about that, Jailor!"

"Yes, capt'n?" jailor knuckles forehead.

"What is the state of the fluffle?"

Jailor pales and gulps, "Extra playful today. Excuse the question, Cap't but are you sure?" glances at still snickering writer, "He might'n survive dat Cap'in!"

Captain smile turns un-nicer, "That, is why the doc has emergency expresso ready, Jailor. He won't be getting away that easily. Now, Bring forth the Box of Funnies!"

Jailor knuckles forehead, and leaves.

Writer snickers, "What? You're going to flog me with bad jokes and puns? I survived hours of your damned sea shanties! This'll be nothing compared to that! *more laughter*"

Jailor returns, wearing welding mask and heavy leather gloves carrying a box emitting overly cute noises.

Writers smile falters as Jailor approaches and stops next to grate.

Captain, smile now past un-nicer and reaching un-nicest, "Jailor, the full Box of Funnies
for ten minutes." The jailor set the box down and hesitantly reaches in.

Captain, "Begin the Fluffle Flogging!"

Jailor pulls out an eye searingly fluffy and cute funny and box. He starts reaching over to place them on writer.

Writer, now panicking, "W-Wait, WAIT! This isn't a flogging! NO-O! I'm sorry! I won't do it again, I Promise! J-Just Not That! Anything but THAT! T-That's banned by the Geneva Convention! Please, *whimper* I'll do ANYTHING-"

Jailor turns helmeted head to captain.

Captain, "Ten minutes. Begin."

"NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

...

Disclaimer: I REGRET NOTHING! NNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 25 – Surprises Part 4: Money

The mammal at the bar was sipping his drink, having called it an early day. He had to put his tumbler down when his phone rang.

"Who's, this now?" he tried not to sound too pissed off at their interruption, "Oh, Fantana, what the hell do you want?"

"Um hum, I thought you said that, that was even too low for you to do. So, again what the hell do you want?"

"exception?! Wow what did this mammal do to piss you off that badly?"

"Dude, relax, whatever happened I didn't do it."

"Look if I get my cut of it that's all that matters to me, so who's the mark?"

"Wow, That might be tough"

"No, I'm not backing out, but this one will cost you"

"Not negotiable, higher risk, higher pay."

"Yes, high risk, damnit, there have been some quiet rumors in-

Judy watched as Nick and Honey continued their haggling. It was fairly entertaining to watch. Nick would bring up some favor he'd done and Honey, would return with some bit about how she helped him out of this or that. Nick would look offended or wave his arms dramatically and mention some other debt. Honey would glare and retort, bringing up one he owed her. She even got Nick to bush once, which made Judy laugh, but Nick said something back which made the badger hiss and squeal
with an indignant and embarrass outburst.

They seemed to bring up favors and events going all the way back to their middle school days, including a debt still owed over borrowed lunch money (Nick insisted he'd lent her three quarters and Honey claimed it had only been two). As she watched the show continue, she used their distraction to snuggle back into the side of her fox, and his tail seemed to unconsciously wrapped around her like it was trying to pull her closer.

Judy started to hum happily just enjoying the feeling of leaning into him. She closed her eyes for a bit, and just listened to her mate's voice.

... 

Some while later, she heard the comforting voice stop. After a few long moments of silence, Nick gave a huff before saying, "Deal. You know you're the single most stubborn mammal in all of Zootopia right?"

"You'd better be glad of it too," Honey shot back, grinning, "Otherwise I would have grown tired of your wheedling by now and thrown you out in the snow." She got up and walked over to the kitchen bar counter and started making coffee from a very complicated looking coffee maker.

"I'll make sure to talk to Trevor tonight," she said tapping a claw on her arm and looking back over her work room as if already planning on what she needed to do, "I'll meet you two tomorrow at Mr. Sheppard's shop, but I'll need a few days to get your gear together." She grabbed the coffee pot and three mugs and came back over to the couches.

"Now," she said, smiling and showing many more teeth than was normal for a predator, "I believe that you two owe me some answers as part of your payment."

... 

Watching Nick, the veteran hustle go up against the stubborn badger might have been fun, but Judy didn't think it wasn't nearly so fun when that stubbornness teamed up with a determination to know everything that had happened from both the Missing Mammals case and the Nighthowler Conspiracy. It might not have been that bad but Honey seemed to have a knack for knowing when they were skimming over the details and seemed to take extreme pleasure in watching Nick's embarrassment as she teased out every last little thing from the two of them, including the most embarrassing parts.

By the end of the retelling Judy was using Nicks tail to hide her flushed face and ears and even Nick was looking embarrassed and a bit redder than normal.

Honey leaned back smirking at them. "Seeing Nick like this almost makes up for your sickly sweet cute couple act."

Judy, stiffened a bit and opened her mouth to tell the badger off, but Honey rolled her eyes and continued, "oh, don't start that with me on that. I know that bunnies don't like being called 'cute', but watching a fox, especially this 'don't let them see that they get to you' fox sit here trying not snuggle you and sneaking glances at you with puppy eyes is the definition of hideously cute. I'm only tolerating it because this, including just a bit ago, is only the third time I've ever seen him blush, and now I can use it as blackmail during our next poker game."

"Hey!" Nick yelped, "you can't do that! I-"

"After everything you an Finnick have pulled you have no right to complain." Honey shot back and
gave Nick a knowing look that dared him to try and argue the point. Nick seemed ready to take up her challenge, but Judy spoke up.

"What made him blush the first time?"

Nick's eyes went wide and his mouth snapped shut with an audible 'plop'.

Honey on the other hand, smiled more widely, a glint appearing in her eye, "Well, you see-

"I'll buy you your favorite pizza for the next game if you don't say a word" Nick said frantically.

Judy elbowed him, while still looking at Honey, asking "So, the first time?"

Honey opened her mouth and Nick nearly tackled Judy, wrapping his arms, legs and tail around her before she could elbow him again. "With extra anchovies!" he nearly shouted.

"Done!" Honey said at the same time Judy let out an angry 'Hey'.

She couldn't get a good angle to elbow her, admittedly very warm and comfortable cage, and she didn't want to kick him either. She wanted him functional tonight after all. But she leveled a stern glare at him, "What don't you want me to know-" She was interrupted as Nicks mouth covered her open one in a fast deep kiss and fireworks seemed to go off in her mind.

Nick pulled away for a second to take a breath. "Don't think you can-" His mouth came down on hers again and his sly tongue slipped past, meeting hers. There seemed to be cannons going off with the fireworks considering how her ears were ringing when he pulled back for another breath. "C-Can k-kiss your w-wway-" There might have been a marching band there too now, but Judy wouldn't have been able to tell. Somewhere along in the third kiss, Judy had gotten her paws free and had grabbed Nick's ears, but something went wrong with the signals her mind sent her paws because instead of using the grip to get control of her fox, she was using them to yank him into an even deeper kiss, and how had her tongue ended up in his mouth? And why had she cared?

Her legs where now wrapped around his waist and she ground her hips into him; Nick's paws which were doing far more than just holding her now, clutched at her in response, one squeezing her tail. She ground harder into him moaning desperately into his mouth, and a huge blast of water smashed into them toppling them and the couch over backwards.

Judy was lying next to Nick in what seemed to be a lake of water, trying to figure out what in Blueberry fields had just happened, when the form of Honey caring what looked like a large toy water gun for a wolf sized mammal crossed with a small jet engine, stepped over and looked down at them.

"I warned you" she said, and Nick who had been starting to get up just groaned and flopped back down.

…

Nick and Judy where standing on the heating mat by the front door as the warm air drying out their clothes and fur. They were using the brush Honey had given them to attempt to touch up their fur, while keeping a respectful and polite distance between themselves. Honey was refilled her super soaker after muttering alternately about mating frenzies, the need to figure out how to get more than one shot per refill of her water gun, and how to get the smell of wet fox and bunny trying to go at it out of her living room.

Judy was brushing down Nick's neck fur and ruff, while determinedly keeping her thoughts off of
how much she wanted to run her paws through it and bury her nose… She snapped her mind off that track and looked back over their cloths. They were almost completely dry now but after the eventful day they'd had moving around the city, bringing down gang members, a few unintentional make-out sessions and getting rained on and water blasted, they were looking a little ragged. There clothes where wrinkled and even had some grass and dirt stains, plus there was only so much you could do just trying to touch up your fur like this.

"Nick?" she asked.

He looked at her and then looked at his feet, "Its nothing bad," he said his voice a little desperate, "It's just really embarrassing." He glanced up at her and the inside of his ears tinged a bit before he glanced down again and shuffled his feet. "If you really want to know I'll tell you, but… just not today, okay?"

Judy's heart felt like it might burst with happiness as she looked at her fox; he trusted her. He wanted to protect her and care for her, to be strong for her, but he also trusted her enough to completely open up to her.

She took a step closer and ran her chin down the top of his muzzle before pressing her nose to his. The soaking hadn't done much to lower the smell of her scent markings, but she felt better just making sure. She was never going to let anyone take her fox away, never. She didn't think she could survive without him anymore.

She rubbed her nose against his just a bit to show him how happy she was, "Okay, Nick. I love you, all of you. Embarrassing parts and bad jokes too. Thank you for opening up to me."

Nick met her eyes, and she felt like she was falling into those green depths. "Always Judy." He nuzzled her cheek and marked her again as well. "I love you so much, and I want to open up to you, it's just… hard. Can you be patient with me?"

Judy's heart felt like it was breaking and she hugged him fiercely.

"Always" she murmured into his neck, "Always, you dumb fox. You can take as much time as you need, but I'm going to get to know and love every bit of you, no matter how long it takes. You married me and you're not going to get rid of me, not now, not ever."

Nick hugged her back, and lowered his head, starting to mark her ears and head again.

They froze at the sound mutterings growing louder from the hallway and separated right before Honey, still carrying her oversized super soaker, came into the room.

"You two had better not have been doing anything," Honey said, eyeing them, "I don't care how damned cute you are. My house isn't an hourly motel."

"Wait, I thought we paid for a full day?" Nick said. Happily his smirk now returning.

Honey pointed the super soaker at him and Nick raised his paws, "Hey! Careful were you point that, Rule one of weapon safety, don't point at anything you don't want to hit!"

"I'm pointing it at exactly what I want to hit." Honey said back. She gave Nick a few more seconds of her glare before she lowered the super soaker. She tossed Nick his backpack. "As much as I'd like to wash that grin off your face I got to get back to work, especially if I'm going to get your stuff done too. The squall has lifted so you should be fine on your way back to the subway."

Nick deftly caught the bag, before rummaging through it. He pulled out another stack of cash and
tossed it to Honey. "As agreed, your commissioning fee." He gave her a stern glare, "It had better be worth it!"

Honey just gave him a snort and didn't even bother counting the money before placing it in her pocket. "Has any of my work ever failed you?" she asked.

Nicks smirk broadened, as he looked down at Judy, "Well your cuddie shot from back in middle school seems to have failed."

Honey groaned, and turned to go back down the hallway, "You are such a kit. Gods help you with him Judy, you're going to need it."

After she was out of sight, Nick sidled up to her and wrapping his arms around her, whispered, "Do I get a kiss for getting that rule right?"

Judy smiled and gave him a quick peck before going over and grabbing their shopping bag and heading for the door. The combination of her fox and the warm air from the heating pad was far too dangerous to do more than give him that little kiss, however much she wanted to.

Nick joined her and they left, heading back toward the subway. The frigid air was an unwelcome change but at least dampened down her inner fire, well at least for the moment.

She took a look at her fox again. "Nick, were going to need to hurry. We still need to get to the bank, and I'd like to get a chance to get cleaned up before meeting your mom tonight."

Nick looked over them, and nodded. "I think your right Carrots, we'll swing by the warehouse before heading over to her place." Nick looked back over at her and then at the snow and ice covered slope in the direction of the station. His grin came back, and Judy recognizes Nick in hustler mode. "In fact if we're in a hurry I've got a fast way to get us to the subway."

Judy crossed her arms, "What's the catch, Slick?"

Nick casually clasped his arms behind his back, ambled over to her, until there was almost no space between them.

"Oh, well," he wrapped his arms around her, and Judy tried not to sigh, or at least not too loudly, "you'd have to be very close to a big bad fox,"

She leaned forward into him, "and what else?" she asked now too happy to really care what his little hustle was.

"It'll cost you five kisses." Nick said with a wink.

She looked up his face, his happy face. Well, she thought, If I'm going to get hustled, what better way to go about it? She leaned up and gave him a long kiss. She almost giggled watching how his ears perked straight up at her move.

She pulled back a bit, "That's a down payment," she couldn't help but smirk back and give him an even stronger kiss that had him clutching her to him, "And that is because I wanted too."

She grinned at his goofily delighted face, "So Mr. big bad fox, how are you going to get us to the subway?"

...
Judy was laughing in delight as the wind whipped passed her face. She was holding the shopping bag in her lap and Nick's strong arm was wrapped around her waist holding her in his lap as he used his other paw, with claws out, to control their pace as he tobogganed down the empty slope directly for the station.

Judy couldn't remember sledding at home ever being so fun, or maybe it was just that the seat in her sled had never been this comfortable. She could feel the wind snap past her and Nicks cheeks pulled back in a grin where he had it up against hers. She let out another whoop of joy and laughed some more.

... 

Nick had been right though, it was a fast way to get to the station, almost too fast for Judy. And she made a mental note that come winter she was going to take her fox back to Bunnyburrow and show him her favorite sledding spots from her childhood.

The few mammals going in and out of the station gave them funny looks as she joyfully peppered Nick with kisses. Nick's tail was full on wagging by the time she had finished.

"Well, that was more than five, though I have not issues with extras," He said, grinning, as he dropped the old pizza box he commandeered from Honey's recycling bin as a makeshift sled in the paper waste bin before getting on the escalator with Judy.

"Call it your tip," Judy said and wrapped her free arm around his waist as they road down.

...

The ride to the Savanna Central seemed to take no time at all. But then again, Nicks tutoring lessons on the way over were very pleasant. She gave him another kiss, this time on his nose for the correct answer to the last question from the section on dart pistols, and handed him the book back so he could start reading through the next one. Nick though put the book in his bag, and pulled her closer to him in the seat they were sharing.

"Going to be at the station in just a minute or two," He said.

Judy, looked back at his bag, "Hey, Nick," she said as she leaned into him, and he replied with a 'humm'

"Today has been wonderful so far, but you've been spending a lot of money. You paid for Honey's commission and," she shot him a knowing glance, "don't think I didn't hear how much the clothes cost at the Sheppard's shop." Nick gave a slight wince at that. "I don't have a lot in savings but we're in this together and I'd like to help out too."

Nick gave her a kiss between the ears, "Sorry about that, Carrots. I'm still getting used to the idea of us rather than me. And," he looked slightly embarrassed, "I kind of wanted to get this stuff for you. It might be a little old fashioned but I want to be able to provide for my wife." He gave her another kiss between the ears, "Being able to provide with my wife sounds pretty nice too though. It's why I like your idea of just having one bank account."

Judy gave him a nuzzle rather than verbally respond her agreement, and Nick rumbled lightly. "Just don't get used to this type of shopping spree." He chuckled, "We needed to get setup properly so there was no avoiding those cost, but I've run through two thirds of my savings. The rest should see us in at least a decent if small apartment, with a little left over to add to your savings. I figure we can use that as the start of our family account."
The arriving announcement sounded.

"Sounds like a plan to me," Judy said, looking up and giving him one last kiss on the lips before taking his paw and the shopping bag in the other as they departed the train.

Savanna Centrals late afternoon streets where packed as mammals rushed to get their shopping done and head home for the night. Judy stayed close to Nick's side, never letting go his paw as they maneuvered through the crowd. It was something she was still getting used to, since with the exception of the rodents they were some of the smaller mammals in the street. Nick, however navigated the streets with a grace that probably came with growing up in the city.

Judy followed him as they moved through the crowd almost like it was some sort of dance he was leading. A slight tug, and he was deftly leading her around an elephant almost like a spin, a nudge and they swung back around a lion, a back step and he brought her into the wake of a porcupine. Before she knew it Nick was opening the doors to the bank as he led her in. Judy was almost disappointed that they had to stop, and the part of her brain that now always seemed to be thinking about her mate, wished he would have finished by twirling her into a dip and kiss. That kiss this morning Nick had given her for Benjamin had been earth shatteringly good. She couldn't help but think back on it and wonder what it would have been like if they had actually been dancing at a ball.

A wolf in the line ahead of them gave startled sniff of the air, before trying to hid the action and subtle looking around, nose flaring ever so slightly. His subtly failed though when he saw Judy holding Nick's paw. The wolf actually gapped when Nick, noticing the wolfs reaction, put his arm around her shoulder possessively and gave her a small affectionate nuzzle, which she returned.

"So," Nick said in a low deep voice, with his head still close to her ears. It caused the blossoming heat in her ears raise a few more degrees, "What made you smell like you want to grab me by the tail and ravish me? Not, that I'm complaining, but the bank might kick us out if you do."

Judy folder her ears back to try and hide the blush and shushed Nick, refusing to say anything else to him while they waited. Nick chuckled and squeezed her paw. She couldn't help but to smile a bit and squeeze back.

After a few minutes they were directed to an open banker in one of the glass walled offices along the back of the lobby. Rather than taking two of the smaller chairs Nick helped Judy up into one of the medium mammal sized chairs and joined her in the seat. To the banker's credit, the smartly dressed Tigress sitting on the other side didn't show any shock or discomfort at their unusual pairing or seat choice.

"How can I help you today, Miss and Mr. …?" she said in a pleasant voice, leaving her question hanging.

Nick gave her paw a squeeze and she took the lead.

"Actually it's Mrs. and Mr. Wilde. That's part of why we're here today. I have an account under my maiden name, and I'd like to get it updated and changed to a shared account with my husband." She looked at Nick with a smile and squeezed his paw back, just because she was happy she could call him that.

The Tigress still looking like this was nothing out of the ordinary smiling pleasantly and moving her keyboard in front of her. "That shouldn't be a problem, Mrs. Wilde. If I can have the name on your existing account and see some identification, we should be able to get you and your husband set up in no time."
"Judith Laverne Hopps," she replied and both she and Nick pulled out their driver's licenses and newer P.I. licenses and passes them to the tigress.

She looked at the identification, nodded and started typing on the keyboard. "Do you want to change your credit card to a shared card as well? We will..." she stopped, looking at the screen for a moment, her brow creasing ever so slightly, before turning back to them. "There's a note on your account, one moment please."

She reached over and picked up the desk phone hitting a few buttons.

"Margie, is Mr. Donalds available? ... Thank you... ... Yes, sir. Mrs. Thompson... I have a Mrs. And Mr. Wilde here, there's a... yes sir... Right away sir." She hung up, and got up from her seat.

"If you'd follow me, the branch manager will be taking care of you. You can leave your bags here if you prefer," she nodded at the numerous cameras around the lobby, "They will be safe enough."

Judy looked at Nick and at his nod, placed her bag next to his pack and followed the tigress still holding Nick's paw. She shot him a confused glance and he shrugged, but despite his calm exterior Judy could sense his worry.

They were lead further into the bank to a large wood office door, that an ewe secretary had opened. She pulled up two separate chairs their sizes in front of the desk. Judy reluctantly let go of Nicks paw and seated herself.

The hippo sitting on the other side shifted his bulk, almost popping a button on his expensive suit as he reached across to shake her paw.

"Miss Hopps, I am the Zootopia National Bank main branch manager, Mr. Donalds." He said in what Judy thought was a stuffy and pompous voice. "I'd like to extend the banks and my personal apologizes for the..." he glanced at Nick, "unfortunate state, that uncouth and agenda-ed government policy has left you in." Judy had gone stiff, not quite be living she'd heard right, but the hippo continued, "We here at the bank would like you to know that we understand that this situation is not of your choice and out of your control. We will do everything we can to protect your personal assets from..." he again glanced at Nick, "unwise financial influences and any illegal attempts to withdraw or manage your assets." This time it wasn't a glance, it was a condescending sneer. "We here at the bank are here for you in this difficult and trying time."

The hippo gave her a reassuring smile and leaned back into his chair.

Judy looked over to Nick, who's face had such a neutral expression it could have been carved out of stone, and then back at the bank manager. She replayed what he said in her mind just to be absolutely sure she hadn't somehow miss understood him.

She took a deep breath, she'd been flying off the handle far too often today, and now was not the time or place to shove the bigoted pompous over large managers head up his ass where he apparently kept it most of the time.

Hold your carrots, you don't want to have to explain to Chief Bogo how the Zootopia National Banks condescending egotistical intolerant Jerk of a manager ended up in the hospital. She told herself, and took one more deep breath.

Maybe it isn't as bad as it seems, maybe he's just operating off of his stereotypes and assumed, like a did when I first meet Nick... just ten times worse.

Judy didn't shout, she didn't get angry, she remained calm. She wasn't calm, not by a long shot, but
this time she'd managed to prevent anything like her earlier outburst. Instead of a hot rage, the anger settled deep in her with a frigidity that would give a polar bear hypothermia.

"First Mr. Donald the name is Mrs. Wilde. Second, I believe that you are making a few wrong assumptions." She calmly, calmly got out of the chair and went over and sat herself in Nick's lap. She leaned up and gave him a quick kiss before wrapping his tail over her lap.

"Even if the unfortunate incident of the mayor's terrorist plot had never happened, I would still have married my husband." She said in a level cool voice.

**Nope, not one face their prejudices and fix them when confronted.**

The Hippo was looking at her with a surprised and disgusted face. "Miss Hopps," he started, in a patronizing tone, as if he were talking to a kit that had made a mud pie, stick some worms on it as icing and was determined to eat it. "I know that you little cute bunnies," Judy's ear twitched angrily, and she more felt than heard what might have been the start of a snarl from Nick, "aren't very confrontational, that you might think it is easier to just go along with whatever happens rather than do something about it, but you should consider your reputation and your happiness. Going along with a sham marriage with a conniving fox that you were forcibly married to, might seem like the easiest thing to do, but you don't need to sacrifice your life for some political agenda. The bank is even willing to suggest some very good lawyers that could help you get started with the legal process to get this fixed. Granted it might take a while, but I'm sure with the support of the bank behind you that they will give you a reasonable rate; I might even personally be able to suggest one or two that would take the job pro bono, just to right this wrong."

Judy didn't erupt, she didn't yell, she didn't try to beat some sense into the prejudicial idiots mind (that she was sure was a lost cause to begin with). Her, mask of calm might be cracking… badly, as her cold rage rapidly approached absolute zero, but it held together, barely. If it wasn't for her grip on Nicks hand she wasn't sure if she would have been able to prevent herself from completely snapping. Nick, was doing a better job of holding his mask together. If she hadn't been able to see through it or been so close to him she would probably have missed the hurt and anger and inaudible snarl behind it.

She needed to Get out of her soon though, because she didn't think she could handle much more of this without putting the hippos face through his very ornate desk.

"Mr. Donalds," Judy said, voice still level and calm but with a bits of the sub-artic frigidness seeping through the cracks, "I would prefer to interact with one of other bankers if you cannot even get my name right, let alone understand that I love my husband and choose to be with him. And I'm going to pretend that you haven't been slandering my mate or demeaning me. Now if you don't mind, you are wasting our time."

The manager looked like she had slapped him full across the face while he was obviously helping her, and his pompous expression started to scrunch up in anger.

"Look here, you ignorant rabbit, if you insist on maintain this obscene farce, than the bank will have to reconsider the advisability of the options available to you. It would be clear signs that you are a dangerously incompetent client and posse a high risk to the bank, at a very minimum we will have to revise our credit rating of you. Now, listen to someone who has your best interest at-

Judy, got up, ignoring the spluttering halt to the waste of her time across the table and pulled Nick by the paw toward the door.

"Y-you impertinent fluff brained idiot, what do you think you're doing?" The hippo shouted, face
now going maroon with outrage and anger.

Judy stopped at the door, paw on the lower hand the secretary had used, and said over her shoulder, "Since this bank has not only treated me and my husband so rudely, but is going so far as to let person prejudice and hate effect their business practices, I am going to the teller to withdraw all my assets and close all my accounts. I will be taking my business elsewhere and will not be using this bank for anything in the future." She opened the door and walked out, but right before closing it, stopped, "Oh, and I have three brothers who are lawyers, if there is any funny business with my accounts or money, anything missing, any sudden changes of policy, and hold ups or delays, I will sue you personally as well as the bank."

"Y-you... you, you Can't do that!" the manager spluttered angrily, "A-And if you try," he said, his voice steadying out and filling with menace, "I'll not only sued you for every penny you have on grounds of slandering my company and my person, but I guarantee that there will never be a bank that won't kick you out the door before you even walk into it."

Judy was about to snap, could feel the last of her restraint breaking, but Nick spoke up for the first time, his voice unreasonably calm, "Oh, really? And you think you'd win in a court of law, your word against ours?"

The hippo actually laughed at him, "Nobody is going to believe some criminal fox and a brainless rabbit only good enough to pop out litters. And even if they did, I am a respected, wealthy, banker. I have connections. I could go squash some small mammal on the street in front of everybody and get away with it. You think you'd win in a court?!" he laughed again.

Nick pulled the paw that wasn't holding Judy's out of his pocket, and held it up. "Hey, Steve you got all that?" Nick said.

Everyone besides Nick froze, and for a looong moment there was silence. Then a slow voice came from the speaker.

"Yeeppppp. … Geeett hiiiss ffaaccee iiinnnn thhheee ccaaalll"

"Oh, sorry, almost forgot." Nick turned the phone so that it was clearly capturing the hippo in the video call. "How's that?" he asked

"Goooooooodd"

The hippo finally snapped out of his frozen state, "What do you think your trying to do to you rutting pelt?!" he bellowed.

"Oh, pardon me," Nick said politely, "I forgot to do introductions. Steady Steve this is Mr. Donalds, the Zootopia National Bank main branch manager. Mr. Donalds this is Steady Steve, one of ZNN's best reports. Would you like to say anything to Steady Steve?"

The Hippo was standing now shaking with rage, "If your friend even tries reporting on me then he will be out of a job and on the streets before he-"

"Cooorrreee, tiiimmmeee?" Steve's voice came through the phone. And another voice higher and so fast it was almost impossible to understand.

"5:35-steve-4-minutes-till-news-updates,-broadcast-team-has-already-decided-to-run-the-clip-as-a-special-"Big-Bank-Corruption,-The-New-Criminal-Mob"-oh-high-I'm-Steve's-tech-mammal-Edwards.-thanks-for-calling-steve,-didn't-know-why-he-stopped-to-take-your-call-before-but-this-is-gold!"
"Thhhhaaannnkkksss, Niiicccckkk", said steve's slow draw finally cutting of the rapid chatter of the other mammal. "Stttaaayyy ooonnnn thhheee liinneee," "Will do Steve." Nick replied, and with his hustler smirk on he turned back to the hippo who seemed to be finally realizing the situation he had put himself in, "Well that gives you," Nick looked at the time on the phone, "three minutes before your little tirade and threats hit the late afternoon news, so you'd better start seeing whether your contacts can get you out of this one. And just in case you decide to do anything rash, like oh I don't know, squash me, I'll be staying on the line with the reporter and you'll end up not just breaking news but front page news as well."

He turned and squeezing Judy's paw walked side by side with her back to the front lobby. Right before they entered, Judy pulled Nick to a stop and faced him. "How do you always know what to do, Nick?" she asked, and he shrugged in response.

"I usually don't," he said, looking down at her, "I find myself following you, because you almost always know what to do, or at least what you want to do. I just help a bit with the details and occasionally make up crazy plans when you hit a road block till you can get back up on your feet again. There's a reason you're the Boss." He said with a smirk, but one that was almost a smile.

Judy had to blink back a few tears, too much had seemed to happen for just one day. And every time she though she couldn't come to love her fox any more, he stole away another piece of her heart with some caring gesture or comment and a joke. She stood on her toes and gave Nick a kiss, not a passionate kiss though there was plenty of longing in it but one she hoped conveyed her love for him, her commitment to always be there with him.

The kiss seemed to go on forever but was far too short for Judy's opinion. "Ready?" she asked him, and Nick only gave her another quick kiss that clearly said 'yes', before joining her at her side and they reentered the lobby.

Surprisingly it only took ten minute to payoff her credit card balance and close out her accounts. They picked up their bags while the cashier went to pull the money from the bank safe and count it before handing it to her. Nick thanked Steve for his help and hung up, while Judy put her money in Nick's bag with the remainder of his savings and they headed for the door. She hadn't had a lot in the bank and some recent expresses had diminished that quite a bit, but it more than doubled what Nick had left. If they could find a decently priced apartment it was enough to cover them for a half year or so; more than enough time to get started in their new jobs and use the leftover to use as a start to their savings.

Judy found the topic pleasant just thinking about it, not the money, but the fact that it was theirs.

As they reached the door, Judy asked, "Still want to trust banks? Or are we going to stash it?"

Nick, shook his head as they walked out, "One bad mammal doesn't mean they're all bad," his face dropped just a bit, and Judy caught his mumbled, "most of the time." before he spoke up again, "Anyways Carrots, we need a bank account, as a hustler by myself, living one step above a criminal, I could get away without it. But it's risky and, it limits what you can do. How about we try the Lemming Brother Bank? I've heard good things about them, hell, I've probably sold pawpsicle sticks to most of them. There right around the corner and we can probably get in before they start closing for the night"

She bumped Nick in the hip and nearly skipped along beside him, "Sound good to me. Then we can run by the warehouse and go to dinner with your mom."
"It'll be tight time wise but we should be able to manage," Nick gave her a warm glance that made her heart swell. "We always d-" Nick abruptly stopped speaking, in fact he completely froze, he almost looked terrified. Judy only got a fraction of a second to try and figure out why before she heard the click right behind her.

The sound was not one the click of a camera flash but that of metal sliding against metal and spring compressing and locking. It sounded very much like the sound she'd only heard from the weapons familiarization at the academy before, the sound of the hammer on an actual revolver being cocked. Not any sort of tasor or dart gun, but an actual pistol.

"Good choice fox!" cackled the voice of a hyena behind her, "Move and I put a few holes in her!"

Chapter End Notes

Also as a penance for the end notes prank I helped Fox in the hen house with the christmas special 'Good Ole Saint Nick', so if your in need of some extra fluff go check that out.

Besides that, Thanks to all the reviewers it is greatly appreciated, even if it is only you venting at my cruelty (It's good for my grinchy heart!) and lastly, looks over at still mad jail keeper, *grudging tone* Merry Christmas, *happy tone* enjoy the day and this cliffhanger.

This all better not change my first place spot on Santa's naughty list. I worked hard and sacrificed much *Shudders at memory of The Fluffle* to get to the top spot on that list with my prank last chapter.

Also, I swear that the bankers name was unintentional, it was picked completely at random. If it seems to perfectly portray anyone in real life with or without a similar name, that is a pure coincidence. Ironic in a very karmic sort of way? Well I'll let you all decide that, but I did not do that on purpose. And if you must assign some instigator for that coincidence and won't don't think its fate then that would be what ever higher power you be live in, not me. (Though, to be fair to my character, my pompous, bigoted, and probably poor business mammal of a banker at least has a decent vocabulary and can speak above an elementary school level). Now, I've got enough problems with goddamned pirates and would like if I could keep real world issues away from my imaginary ones.

And on that note, I've managed to pilfer some cookies and milk and the paintball gun and green ammo after being revived by the doc. I have a secret meeting with Scrooge and we have a trap to setup. There's a particular guy that we agree needs a change of wardrobe color, he's been wearing far too much red, and we think grinch green would suit him better.
Chapter 26 – All Before Dinner

Chapter Summary

Nobody's watched Hoodwinked? Seriously? Well, maybe somebody will get it eventually.

I'm still recovering from the fluffle flogging and Santa plus the next chapter is still in works so I thought I'd drop this teaser. Also, it is completely unfair that Santa can drop an entire tactical team of elfs with paintball gear to ambush our ambush. I think I might actually prefer green.

Heh, I'm going to try and sneak this by my proofreader before he starts tearing back into the chapters to correct them.

Disclaimer: Disney sent me tickets to Disneyland as a Christmas present, I wonder if it's a trap?

Benjamin Clawhauser was sitting at the front desk munching away happily. He was wondering if he had time to run to the breakroom and get some popcorn, but he didn't want to miss anything and his shift was going to be over shortly anyway. He had a screen up in the corner of his monitor showing the latest news from ZNN as he continued to browse MuzzleBook and look for other interesting things, like news on Gazelle.

Clawhauser, managed to hold back a laugh again as the mugshot from the videocall of the surprised looking Banker was shown again. He'd buzzed the chief as soon as the news hit and he realized who was involved, he had to muffle a few giggles remembering that too. The chief had groaned, muttering something about mammals only being allowed to make so many issues a day, before hanging up to watch the news broadcast. It was probably a good thing because not 2 minutes later the new mayor had personal called wanting to speak with Chief Bogo about bank corruption.

Benjamin would have to review the legal codes, but while he didn't think they could arrest the banker since there wasn't actually a physical altercation or tampering with the Wilde's accounts, He was pretty sure though, that the mayor was about to come down on the banker and the entire bank like a falling meteor and bring the entire weight of the Zootopia legal system with him. If there was one thing that was absolutely guaranteed to get Bristleton's hackles up it was bank fraud and corruption; it was actually the reason the old badger had gone into the Justice department to begin with.

The police radio on the front desk crackled to life.

"Main dispatch to any local units, we have a report of a 10-15, local disturbance at Savanna Central Boulevard, one block south of the ZNB, wait. Now several reports from the call center, possible 10-35. Looks like an assault and mugging.

"Roger Dispatch, this is cruiser 12, we were on our way back, diverting to incident, ETA 2 minutes."

"This is cruiser 15, do you need assistance? We're 4 minutes out."
"Appreciated Snarlof, see you at the scene"

"All units be advised, reports of a weapon, repeat, probable 10-32"

"Roger, Dispatch. Anything else you can tell us?"

"Hold one Cruiser 12…. Suspect is a jackal assaulting a fox and rabbit"

Benjamin, reached over and hit the chief's direct line on the desk phone.

"Listen here Bogo," a tinny, pissed off voice could be heard on the other end, "I've been working in the Justice Department since you were in diapers. I will not have godsdamned greedy bastards hurt ing."

Bogo's voice came over the line, sounding almost relieved, "Hold on a moment Mayor, Clawhauser what is it?"

"Um, sir," Clawhauser started, a bit hesitantly, "There's a report of…"

"Mayor, this might require my attention, I'll talk to you tomorrow morning, I'm sure you can have the city's case ready by then, and the court summons can be deliver then. Clawhauser, tell Snarlof to get his ass their fast, and keep me updated, I might have to keep the PR department here late."

Bogo reached to his phone and cut off both calls. He rubbed his temples with both hoofs, before reaching into his desk for a bottle of aspirin.

Those two can't even wait till they finish causing one mess till they start another, he glanced at the wall clock and sighed, and now I'm probably going to be late to dinner. Gods, if this continues I'll be here all night and only half the city will be standing by morning. That is if my wife doesn't bring down the other half if I completely miss dinner.

Bogo pulled out the files on his two future officers and started rifled through them, he wasn't really paying attention to them because his mind was already working through potential issues and how to handle them, more than anything it just gave his hoofs something to do so he didn't break something like his coffee mug by accident, again.

Hopps is still recovering, and Wilde isn't trained. If something happens to them, he shuddered a bit; it was something he'd had to get used to over the years. It was his job to send his officers into harm's way, but this… He always made sure that his officers had every advantage, did everything he could to make sure that they would be able to come home afterwards.

Those two better be alright. If for no other reason, then this will hurt our case if they get injured. The opposition would use it as proof they're not fit for the job. I might need to talk with Friedkin and see what else we can do. Now if I can just keep them alive for a few more days at least. Bogo continued to flip through the papers thinking, How the hell do I keep those hellions out of trouble, even just for the night would be nice… he stopped flipping the pages as he registered something. It was the emergency contact section of their application forms. The Wildes, no Hopps and Wilde, Hopps and Wilde, had put each other down as their primary emergency contacts but below that…

Bogo smiled, this might just do the trick.

He dialed the number from the sheet and waited as it rang.

"Hello?" came a female voice from the other end, there where sounds of dishes clinking as they were
moved in the background.

"Pardon the interruption, but this is Chief Bogo of the ZPD. Is this Mrs. Wilde?"
"It'll be tight time wise but we should be able to manage," Nick said shooting Judy a quick happy smirk, it might have actually even been a smile. He looked back forward, and his features settled fully into his 'hustler smirk', his tail giving a happy wag. It was too perfect of a setup for a joke to miss. He loved seeing his bunny with her unique combination of embarrassment and happiness, and this was certain to make her blush.

He took a step ahead of her and turned back around, smirk going full blast, "We always did-"

The world seemed to freeze.

Right behind Judy, a hyena wearing nondescript clothes had pulled his paw out from his pocket and was pointing a gun at his mate. Nick couldn't tell if his heart had stopped or was going too fast for him to tell the beats apart, but the world seemed to shrink down to those two, everything around him fading to insignificance. He seemed to be in two places at once, here and back in the pit with Bellwether pointing the dart gun at them, and something feral and full of rage broke free deep within him.

"Good choice fox!" cackled the voice of a hyena behind his mate, "Move and I put a few holes in her!"

Nick didn't move a muscle, but that primal beast and his cunning hustler mind seemed to merge with one purpose, with one need.

A wrong move could would get his mate killed, a wrong word, a failure to act at just the right moment and not before. He didn't so much as twitch, but he could feel his claws ready, his muscles on a hair trigger, ready to move at instants notice.

Part of his mind was wondering why someone would be so stupid as to try and mug them right on one of Savanna Central's busiest streets. Knew that their where dozens of mammals that would be
witnessing this and that the police would be alerted and on their way, would be here in mere minutes if not sooner. But not soon enough, and his mind ignored the thoughts as they were not relevant to the absolute and overriding need to protect his mate right now.

The hyena cackled again, and Nick caught the scent of booze and something else. Some trace of scent on the hyena's breath that wasn't natural. He's drunk and probably high, probably twitchy, but more easily distracted the rational hustler portion of him thought and the beast within him growled in consent focusing on the gun, on the other mammal's claws, watching, waiting.

"I waited long enough, but you two finally came here just like he said you'd would! Too easy! Too Easy" the hyena hooted. Nick met Judy's eyes; she was standing as still as him but something seemed to pass between them, her eyes hardly moved, but glanced in the direction of the hyena's paw, and she gave the slightest of nods.

The hyena reached with his free paw, and grabbed Judy by the neck, claws pressed against her throat and lifted her up, holding her like a rag doll near his chest and shifted the aim of the gun onto Nick.

"Now, now, nothing funny foxy, I just watched you walk into the bank and then out again with a backpack that seems a bit fuller now." The hyena let out a shorter cackle again, his noxious breath washing over Nick, "I think I deserve a bonus, so why don't you toss that over here."

Nick glanced at Judy, and slowly, very slowly without any sudden movements slipped off the straps and held it in one hand.

He forced himself to speak past the lump in his throat, but noted that his voice was still mostly steady, "You'll let her go if I give this to you, right?"

The hyena nearly threw back his head as he laughed this time, but the gun didn't shift and his eyes never left him. "Sure, fox. I'll let you both go!" and he smiled in a way that promised the exact opposite.

"Ok, ok, here. Just let her go." And Nick tossed the bag in a slow underhanded arc toward the hyena.

He watched as the bag seemed to slowly tumble through the air, and the hyena's eyes followed it's leisurely course toward his paw with the gun. As the bag flipped halfway through its arc, everything in it started tumbling out through the zipper Nick had carefully opened as he'd slid the bag off.

The hyena's eyes went wide as the few items and money started scattering and time seemed to jump forward as he moved his paw in reaction, trying to catch the falling items.

The beast in Nick roared and his coiled muscles exploded, catapulting him forward, just as Judy's good foot snapped out hitting the base of the hyena's finger on the trigger, making a crunching sound.

Before the hyena could even howl in pain as he dropped the weapon, Nick was on his arm holding Judy sinking claw and fang into the wrist, which opened reflexively as he snapped out his arm trying to shake the fox off.

Judy dropped to the ground, but the hyena's surprised howl of pain turned into a shrieking half crazed cry of rage, as he threw himself at them, the fight quickly descended into a brutal and savage melee.

The hyena was nearly four times larger than Nick, and if his drunken and mind addled state made him clumsy, it also made him ruthless and determined as he fought with the seemingly sole goal of
ripping them to pieces.

Bellwether might have used a drug to induce a complete reversion to a primal and savage state, but savageness was not something that was new. Any mammal that was pushed too far from a rat to a tiger to an elephant might draw upon their more primal instincts in a near berserk rage. It was the reason that the ZPD had a standard police code and response for such incidents.

Bellwether had caused panic from one segment of the population going completely savage for no apparent reason, but this seemed almost worse compared to his experience with Manchas, Nick couldn't help but think as he felt claws graze his side as he rolled under the hyena's legs and clawed back at the rear of his knee. The hyenas savage rage was coupled with some ability to think and was something terrifying to face in a fight. The very few times he'd seen anything close to this before he had fled from those fights as it was by far the smartest thing to do, but now…

Nick saw, Judy kick the Jackals mouth as he tried to turn and bite at Nick, and Nick’s full attention focused on the paw that then came swiping at her.

They were too committed, to close in to get out, and Nick simply could not leave his mate behind. But while Judy seemed to know what she was doing, acting with thought out careful moves, Nick did not. This was far beyond any fight he had ever been in, and all he could do was listen to the raging beast that seemed to have subsumed his mind.

The fight could have lasted hours or seconds, but Nick had no idea as the terror for his mate was all consuming. The hyena roared in pain and outrage, Nick screeched back, mammals were screaming and shouting, there was the sounds of sirens and yells.

Nick shoved Judy out of the way and took a backpaw slap meant for her that sent him tumbling, he got up groggily and noticed the hyena stagger as blue fletching's appeared on his side and back.

But the importance of that was washed away as the hyena staggered toward Judy intent on taking another swipe at her. He was on his feet running, not hearing the frantic yells of "Wilde, Stay back!"

He was about to jump at the Hyena again when Judy's voice brought him back to his senses.

"Nick! Stop! Come over here!"

He diverted his lunge to the side and scrambled over to Judy as the Hyena took a few more steps and few to the ground limp.

Judy was holding him, paws on either side of his muzzle as she tried to looked him in the eyes, "Nick, Nick? Are you alright? Nick?"

But, Nick couldn't speak past the knot in his throat as he frantically patted her down looking for injuries. He couldn't lose her, not her, not now, not ever. He was too terrified that she was hurt somewhere he couldn't see, still too high on adrenalin from the fight.

"Nick, I'm alright" came her calm soothing voice, and the frantic beast inside of him settled a bit hearing it's calm tone. "I'm ok, everything's ok."

Nick, finding no new injures besides the cut on her leg which had started to bleed a bit again, buried his muzzle in her neck, breathing in her scent as he hugged her close. He could feel her hug him back as she continued to reassure him, and feel tears drop onto her fur but he didn't care that he might be making a spectacle of himself, he could only feel over whelming relief that she was safe and all right and that he hadn't lost her.
He picked Judy up and went over to sit against the nearest building, where he proceeded to wrap her up with his arms and tails, needed her as close to him as he could possibly get at the moment.

Nick continued to ignore the rest of the world and held his mate, even as some of the police officers tried to talk to him. He just held onto her all the tighter.

"Nick? Are you alright now" Judy asked rubbing her muzzle against his.

He nodded, and rubbed back returning her nuzzle.

She pulled her head away and placed her nose against his, finally managing to look him straight in the eyes, "Can you let the EMT's look at you? Please, your bleeding."

He nodded again and gave a week, "okay" before she extracted herself from his embrace and took him by the paw, leading him over to the polar bear officer that had tried to talk to him and the panther in an EMT uniform by the ambulance.

Nick though, refused to get looked at before the panther had checked Judy, but by the time they were finished with the two of them he had mostly recovered from the fight. Nick had his normal mask back in place and was even joking back and forth with the panther about biting of more than he could chew, as the EMT patched up his scrapes and examined his bruises. Through all of it though, he had refused to let go of Judy's paw. The one time the panther had commented about it, she had scooted closer to him making it obvious she wasn't going to let go either.

The panther had just shrugged and continued patching him up.

Unlike the incident at the groccer's store earlier, they we're stuck at the crime scene for quite a while before Snarlov, the rather quite but polite polar bear officer, helped them into a squad car and drove them back to precinct one where they had their statements taken for what seemed the third or fourth time.

After the lion officer finally finished asking them questions on their view of events, and had left asking them to wait, Nick noticed the time on wall clock and groaned.

*My mom is going to kill me, we were supposed to be over at her house 15 minutes ago*

Judy looked up at him from where she was sitting next to him, and asked with a smirk and cheery tone, "What's up? We made it out in one piece, and two times in one day! Wildes 2, criminals 0"

Nick just looked at her for a moment like she was crazy before he broke out in a short laugh, "Wow Carrots, competitive much?"

"Made Valedictorian at the academy" she said smugly, and Nick reached over and ruffled the fur on her head. She made an indignant sound and tried to swat away his paw. She always seemed to know just what to say to convince him everything would work out, and he once again marveled at the fact that she wanted to stay with him forever. He wanted so badly to lean over and kiss her, and then just keep kissing her, but they were at the precinct for the moment, so he held himself back promising that there would be plenty of time later tonight.

"Well, I might just need you to teach me some of your kung-fu bunny moves you were using back there," He teased and she crossed her arms but actually looked pleased, before replying with a grin worthy of his hustler name.

"You bet slick. But that was some very sloppy fighting on your part. We'll just have to find time tomorrow for me to start training you."
Nick eyed her carefully. Coming from a cute little bunny in a happy voice it shouldn't have sounded so ominous.

"Well, your kung-fu bunny moves aren't going to help either of us when my mother gets ahold of us" Nick said instead of trying to come up with some retort.

Judy's eyes went a bit wide and her ears dropped like two stones. She looked at the wall clock before giving out what might have been the worlds cutest frightened, 'Eep' from what Nick thought had to also be the world's fiercest bunny.

"Don't worry fluff, I have a plan" He said confidently, patting her head.

Judy looked up at him hopefully, asking "Ok, what do we do? I want to make a good impression on your mom."

"First, I'll send her a message we'll be late," Nick said pulling out his phone and beginning to type. Judy gave an enthusiastic and hopeful nod.

"and then?" she prodded when he was quite for a few moments.

"Then, Fluff, when we get there we drop to our knees and beg for mercy." He said bobbing his head like it was the most surefire plan ever. Judy stared at him for another second or two, before flopping back against the seat and muttering,

"We are soooo dead, aren't we?"

Nick nodded again, "Yep, but at least we can run by the warehouse and shower and change before we meet her," he tugged at his shirt to show off it's current state. It was torn and splattered with a little of his and the hyena's blood, as well as being rumpled with plenty of grass and dirt stains. It looked more like he'd just escaped a warzone. Nick looked at Judy and raised his eyebrows, since her clothes weren't in much better shape than his and just for added emphasis, he took a careful sniff of the air, before saying "Plus we still smell like we've been rolling around in each other's scents all morning."

"That's not my fault!" Judy shot back indignantly, before blushing and mumbling, "Not entirely my fault." at Nicks look.

Before Nick could say more though, the door to the room they were in opened, but instead of the lion officer coming in, Chief Bogo strode into the room and sat down across from them.

He shot each of them a glance, that clearly showed he was tired and wouldn't be very tolerant of horsing around. Nick, mind still preoccupied with thinking about exactly how to best grovel to his mother, thought that it might be a good idea to keep his snark and jokes to himself for tonight. There would be plenty of time in the future for them he assured himself.

Bogo, after a long moment gave a satisfied snort and spoke, "I hope this is the last time I will be seeing you two today, or for the rest of this week at least for that matter." He dropped a large stack of papers on the desk and slid two that had their statements over to them, "Signe these if they are accurate. Are you two planning on pressing charges?"

Nick and Judy glanced at each other before they looked at the chief and Judy spoke up, "what would you suggest chief?"

"The heyna, one Mr. Spotson has a long history of minor offenses and few financial assets. He's essentially a low level thug that has bounced around different groups as hired muscle. You could file
charges against him, but it would extend the trial and probably not get you anything in the end."

Nick nodded, half expecting that, and after another glance at Judy for confirmation said, "I think we'll just leave him to the ZPD then."

"That's probably for the best." Chief Bogo replied, "We will be able to put him away for a while with the drug, illegal weapon, robbery, and assault charges; hopefully since he will behind bars for more than a month or two, the prison rehabilitation program might actually be able to do something useful this time. You two have also been cleared of any potential charges as all the witness and evident clearly show you two acting in self-defense, despite any..." he glanced pointedly at Nick, "less than conventional self-defense tactics. I trust, especially with the field you two are planning on working in, that he will be trained in how to defend himself?" Bogo pointedly looked at Judy this time, who nodded quickly with a 'Yes, sir'.

"Good," Bogo continued, "you two will need to stay in Zootopia or inform the ZPD if you plan on travel anywhere outside the city until the trial is over, though. Now, for some not so good news."

He looked up at both of them, "The book bag and all its contents are being detained as primary evidence for the trail, which means that we won't be able to return it to you for at least a month, possibly longer." Judy shot a worried look at Nick, who was feeling a bit gut punched at that news. That had been almost everything he had, and all of Judy's savings as well. He reached over and clasped her paw as Bogo continued, "I wish I could help you there, but if there is any sign of tampering it could be used as grounds to throw the case out. However, I do have larger concerns that just your financial situation. Did you two notice anything odd about that mugging?"

"Besides a drunk and high mammal somehow getting a gun and knowing where we would be?" Nick said a little sharply, as he'd been worrying about that, ever since the fight.

Judy chimed in too, "It sounded like someone had hired him to come after us."

Bogo, seemed to understand Nick's reaction though since he only nodded, "Good, you two don't seemed to have missed much. Since you two are involved in this and the hyena openly answered our questions, well more drunkenly raved than answered, I can tell you what we found out." Bogo leaned back tiredly in the chair, "It seems that someone found him down at one of the bars near Mole Harbor last night when he was already nearly blind drunk. All he seems to be able to remember was that the mammal, who was apparently about his size, wanted a message sent to the city and that he was also supposed to get five thousand dollars. He was also remembers being told that you two would probably be visiting that bank today. He can't even remember if they only wanted you scared, hurt, or killed, but he woke up the next morning in an alley with the revolver fully loaded and a bag of what we believe was a cat-nip variant street drug we've been having trouble with lately."

"We'll be looking into this but I wouldn't expect anything fast. Whoever hired him seems to have done a good job of using Mr. Spotson to cover their tracks. The gun is clean besides for Mr. Spotson's prints and the drug, has mild hallucinogenic effects which will impair his ability to remember anything clearly."

Bogo looked hard at both of them, "What has me worried is that whoever aimed the Hyena at you, knew enough about you two that they could anticipate you'd probably visit the Zootopia National Bank today. I can't divulge active leads we are looking into but with other events that have happened today and the Bellwether money backers that we still haven't caught... Well, let me just reiterate that you two need to be careful." He looked at them both hard, until they nodded.

"Good, that will be all. Try to stay out of any major trouble for a few days until you both heal up and finish with Wilde's certification." Bogo stood up as if to leave but stopped.
"Hopps, a friend of mine and Friedkins started up a small gym and gun club in the Haymarket section of Savanna Central. He's offering a discount for new members, something about the first two months free. He's a retired cop and holds classes on self-defense and marksmanship. I thought you might be interested." He pulled a card out of his pocket and handed it to her before turning and walking to the door.

Nick looked over at Judy, who looked up from the card and asked, "You interested?"

Nick smirked, "How else am I going to learned a super secret move to beat your bunny kung-fu? But first I think we need to get moving or even groveling won't save us when we get to my mom's."

Bogo turned the nob to the door and started to open it before turning back to the two of them, and Nick froze, a feeling of dread coming over him as the chief actually smiled; it was almost even a happy smile.

"Oh, I almost forgot, there seems to be someone here to pick you two up. I asked them to wait outside while I finished up with you two." He opened the door and left, revealing an older vixen wearing a purple dress and a small pearl necklace tapping her paw against her handbag impatiently.

Chapter End Notes

I haven't gotten to say Thanks for all the reviews favorites and follows lately with the holiday season and trying to find enough time to keep these updated. S I'm throwing in a general Thank You to everyone, particularly the reviews for taking time to comment. (my coffee ration depends on it)

Also, There's a couple of hidden easter eggs in this story, I think I might give a callout for anyone who can figure them out before they're revealed!
Chapter 28 – Dinner Conversation

Chapter Notes

Stupid pirates refusing to move away from sail power. Now we're stuck trying to make it to Tortuga to resupply and There's no wind!

*Sigh* looks at empty coffee mug *ssigh*

Disclaimer: I wonder if Disney's jail serves coffee?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bogo walked into the atrium where a number of officers that were now technically off shift were loitering around.

"Who won the lottery?" He asked, making sure to sound as uninterested and uncaring as possible. He pulled his phone out and started delicately tapping on the screen of the damned over complicated piece of technology; He didn't want to have to have to get it repaired again.

Clawhauser, who was the closest to him replied, "Wolford, Chief." He looked up at Bogo carefully tapping at his phone, "Chief? Are you trying to download Gazelles newest dance app?" he said in an excited squeal.

"What?!" Bogo barked, a bit startled, "No I'm trying to get the stupid camera, wait... there's a new dance app?" He quickly looked up from the phone and then immediately coughed into his hoof, glad that none of his officers except Clawhauser seemed to be paying attention to him.

"They just released it today! I'll text you the information Chief, but why do you need your camera?" Clawhauser said as he excitedly pulled out his phone and started furiously typing away on it. A second later the Chief's phone buzzed.

Bogo coughed a few more times, "Um, no, no, Clawhauser that's not necessary, I'll find it... I mean I don't need any gazelle apps on my phone. My wife just promised to forgive me being for being home late to dinner if I bring her some pictures of the Fairy tale-" he coughed again, "I mean Hopps and Wilde."

"OH M Goodness! Is she a fan too, Chief?!!" the pudgy cheetah said, his paws coming up to his cheeks, and looking up at the bigger mammal with wide adoring eyes.

"Camera, Clawhauser, camera." The Chief said holding out his phone to the cheetah trying to avoid looking at his angelically joyful face.

"Oh," Clawhauser said and made a single swipe and poke at the screen bringing up the camera function, "Right there Chief. Need any help using it?" he finished and looked up at him with a smile twice as bright as should be legal.

"No, I think I can figure out how to use a simple camera Clawhauser." Bogo replied trying not to roll his eyes as he brought the phone up to eye level. As he did so he accidentally tapped the screen and it snapped a picture of Clawhauser's beaming smile. The Chief stifling a groan, and rubbed his temples. Now he'd need to figure out how to delete the picture, but with his luck with the
temperamental piece of bull s***, he might end up replacing his gazelle concert background with it.

The crowd quitted a bit as there was a noise from the side hall.

"MMOOOOOMMM! Please stop that, we're alright, I'm not some kit! And that's embarrassing!"

"I don't care how old you get, you'll always be my kit. And there's nothing wrong with parents marking their kits. Your mate didn't complain when I marked her."

"Because she's too embarrassed to be able to complain! And that's something you only do to little kits!"

"Which makes it perfect for you; always running around getting into trouble and worrying me! And with how much you two have marked each other I doubt even a wolf could smell a mother's scent mark over all that. Now come on or dinner is going to be cold by the time we get back."

"MMOOOOOMMMM! We said we were sorry! It wasn't our fault! oww! OWW! I coming, don't tug so hard!"

"are you coming along too, dear?"

"Run Carrots! Run away quic- owW! OWW!"

"Um, I, ah… EEEP! Yes Ma'am! Right away!"

"Come on you two, we don't have all day. And I know it's not your fault, but I have a right to worry about my kits. And If I ever get my paws on that mammal that tried to hurt you I'll tan his rear till the fur falls out!"

They all watched as the older vixen came walking out into the lobby dragging one very heavily blushing and flustered looking bunny and one exasperated looking fox behind her by the ears. She came over to Chief Bogo and stopped, and the fox behind her stuck his tongue out at her and received an immediate ear twist for it, resulting in a few more, 'Ow, OW, OW!'s.

"Thank you, Officer Bogo for trying to watch out for my wayward kits," she gave the fox's ear another tug, and there was a 'OW, I didn't do anything this time!', before she continued "especially this one. I'll try to make sure they don't cause you anymore trouble tonight."

Bogo looked down at the vixen and wondered if there was some secret sergeants school all mothers went to. "No, problem ma'am. We're just doing our job. I have an officer that has offered to drive you all home since his shift is over."

"Thank you, that would be very much appreciated." She replied with a nod.

Bogo turned his head and shouted over to the milling crowd, "Wolford! Are you ready to go?"

The gray timber wolf came forward grinning widely, "Absolutely Chief, got the cruiser waiting out front." Wolford gave a wave to the other officers and led the way to the front doors, followed by the vixen leading his two future officers by their ears. Bogo quickly, brought up the phone and tapped the screen a few times, to make sure he had his 'get out of jail free card' for when he got home.

Clawhauser was bouncing on his paws again, muttering 'Oh M Goodness' over and over, but Bogo didn't comment. He needed to get his officer to exercise more, and if it wasn't regulation jumping jacks it was better than nothing.
"Chief, Chief! Did you hear that! She called both of them *her* kits!*" the cheetah squealed. "I can't wait to get home tonight and write about this!"

Bogo shook his head and turned to leave, "Don't spend all night gossiping Clawhauser. That's not an excuse for being late." He raised his voice before he left, "And the rest of you. Shows over and you aren't getting paid to loiter around here!"

... 

Nick had thought a lot about how his reunion with his mother would be, had recently thought a lot more on what she would think of his unconventional choice in a mate. But in all of the scenarios he had considered, he hadn't expected her to be picking them up at the police station while they were completely disheveled and now *broke*. That was a serious problem that had just made its way right to the top of the list of things that needed his, well *their* attention. But *that* issue was the last thing he wanted his mother knowing about.

*Oh, hi mom, I've been keeping us estranged for years because you were worried about me and I refused to listen. But now that I've found out you were right all along, I've jumped ahead past all that dating and stuff and imprinted on and married my girl, oh she's a bunny by the way, Can you come and pick us up from the police station since we've spent the day kissing and marking each other and then gotten in a serious fight after our, wait let me count, third altercation of the day. Oh, and about that being ready to start and support a family, Surprise! I'm completely broke!*

*Yep, he thought, that might not go over so well. He did not want to have to go and explain *that* to her on top of everything else and he'd like to keep his ear attached to his head too. The one good thing was that the epic level of embarrassment being dragged through his hopefully future place of employment like this with his mate was that, that last little detail would hopefully go unnoticed.*

*Maybe, if he bought all of them an extra round or two at Clawhauser's bar meet later this week for stories they'd agree to never mention this embarrassing event again too,*

*Oh wait, I almost forget, *I'm, we're broke.**

Karma, he thought, as his mother pulled him toward the front doors of the precinct, was being a bit unfair right now and *why* did it seem like she was tugging harder on his ear while she only lightly pulled on Judy's? He considered sticking his tongue out at her again; yes it was childish, but it would at least make him feel better, well it would if it probably wouldn't result in another ear twist.

His attention though was brought back away from just his ears as the doors opened and they left walked right into a crowd of *reporters*.

Karma was sitting somewhere laughing her ass of at him right now, he was sure of it.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wilde, any comments regarding your treatment by Zootopia National Bank?"

"Are you planning on suing?"

"Mrs. Wilde, did your mates violent reaction to the attempted mugging frighten you? Are you now scared of him?"

"Was the bank incident a staged statement for interspecies relations?"

"Will you explain *why* you were at the bank today?"

"Was the incident at the bank tied to the mugging attempt?"
The wolf officer was trying to make a path through the reporters, but they closed in like sharks smelling blood in the water. Nick was honestly surprised it took them so long to ask about why he and his mate were being dragged along by the ear, though he had to admit that the way it was phrased was spectacular in its idiocy.

"Mr. Wilde, care to comment on your current situation? Is this a previous lover vexed over your recent marriage?"

The rest of the reports quieted for a second and if this had been highschool there would have been a round of scandalized, 'Ohhs'.

Before, Nick could make any response, his mother's posture stiffened and she caught the reporter, a bobcat, with her gaze, "And who are you," she asked sternly, clearly affronted voice.

"Tim Robbins, from "The Inside Scoop' magazine, would you care to comment Miss…?"

Though it seemed impossible his moms posture seemed to grown more indignant, before she responded.

"I am Mrs. Vivian Wilde, and these are my kits. Now if you don't mind we are late to dinner and I need to get to know my daughter-in-law, so please move."

Nick was sure that if any mother, not just his own, had spoken to him like that he would have apologized profusely and gotten out of her way, but it seemed like reporters lacked some sort of basic survival instincts because the reporter did not move.

"Mrs. Wilde, would you like to comment on your son marrying a bunny." He asked, crowding forward rather than moving out of her way.

"Who my son marries is up to him, and I think he made a fine choice. Now Mr. Robbins, if I'm not mistaken you're the son of Margery Robbins who runs the Walnut Street fur salon; are you going to move or do I need to tell her that her son's manners need some work. And I could also always share some of her stories about you too, she's always so eager to tell mammals about her darling little fluffball and how he'd hug anybody and purr as a kit. Why she even has the most adorable pictures of you hugging-"

"No, no! Nobody wants to hear about that and you seem to be in a hurry Mrs. Wilde!" The bobcat was suddenly all to eager to get out of her way and help them through the crowd. A few of the other reporters kept asking questions, though some were now pointed at the bobcat, but most of the crowd seemed a little wary, as if now afraid their own embarrassing childhood secrets might get revealed if they asked anything.

Nick couldn't help but snicker at the bobcat as he passed, but let out another 'OW' as his ear got yanked for it.

He decided to stay silent until he and Judy were in the cruiser and his mother had let go of her death grip.

Surprisingly, after they were seat buckled in, (Nick's mom had unfortunately taken the middle seat so Nick couldn't even hold Judy's paw) and were driving down the road to his mom's house, the first question came for Wolford.

"Mrs. Wilde, um, not you Judy" he shot the Judy a quick grin over his shoulder as he drove, "Do all mom's know each other or something, because my mom does that all the time. She can pull up the most embarrassing stories from any wolf I've ever met."
"And what makes you think she and I haven't shared stories about our sons?" Nicks mom replied, eyebrow raise and a smile on her face.

There was a small jerk in the car as the wolfs paw twitched on the wheel, but Nick couldn't fault him, because he was also staring at his mother with a panicked expression.

She reached forward and patted the wolfs arm through the open divider, "Don't worry there, I haven't had the pleasure of running into your parents yet. That back there was luck more than anything else." She smiled a bit more smugly then, "But, all mothers have seen enough to take a fair guess whenever we need too, I'd bet there are some absolutely adorable baby pictures of you all gussied up in matching clothes with your brothers and sisters."

There was a larger jerk this time as the wolf gave her a few glances that might have had hints of terror behind the panic.

"Nick raised his hand like he was in school, "Oh! Oh!, Do her next!" he pointed at Judy, "What embarrassing stories can you guess about her!"

Judy, who had been absolutely quiet up until now gave out what had to be the cutest embarrassed squeak ever, before shouting, still in a squeaky tone but with a bit of desperation, "Niicckkk!"

His mom patted the bunny next to her in a comforting manor, before opening her purse, at which point Nicks ears along with his smirk began to plummet faster than a sky diver.

"Here dear, you might like to see these photos of Nicholas when he was much smaller than you."

Nick saw a photo she pulled out, and squawked in embarrassment, "MMOOOMM! NOOOO!". But the seatbelt stopped his desperate lunge to snatch the photo and Judy and his Mom where already exchanging insipidly cheerful 'ohhs' over it.

Judy giggled, "So why was he naked eating icecream with his paws, in the icecream tub?" Judy asked, and Nick could even hear the wolf's snicker, through his groan.

"Oh," His mom said happily, "We had the hardest time keeping any clothes on him as a baby, would try to take everything we put on him off. Why he didn't grow out of that phase till he was-"

"MMOOOOMMMM!"

... The rest of the drive was torture, an experience of pure agony inflicted one embarrassing photo and story at a time, like slow unending steady drip of water. Nick wanted to curl up and disappear. How could he ever work for the ZPD with the stories that he was sure Wolford was going to spread around about him? The only thing that gave him even the faintest bit of resolve to suffer through the torment rather than throw himself from the moving car was hearing Judy laugh. Despite this, he promised himself that he would find a way to get Mrs. Hopps to share every photo and story that she had with him.

The Drive of Torment finally came to an end when they arrived at his mother's small house near harbor street on the west side of Savanna Central.

Nick quickly escaped the metal prison and circled around the car to help Judy and his mother, who had finally put away the photos, out of the car.

He and Judy thanked Wolford, but when Nick's mom thanked him, the wolf stopped for a second
before responding.

"Um, not a problem Mrs. Wilde, I certainly enjoyed the drive." He grinned a bit but not as fully as he had before, "Uh… Mrs. Wilde can I ask you a bit of a personal question?"

Nick's mom turned back and walked back over to the open window. "I don't see why not. I'm not saying I'll answer but there's no harm in asking." She said, looking curiously at the hesitant wolf.

"I… um, I wanted to know if what you said back there with the reports, well… I wanted to know if as a parent what you thought of…"he gestured toward Nick and Judy, "the… the interspecies aspect of their relationship…" he looked down as his question petered out.

Mrs. Wilde looked the wolf over for a moment before speaking, "I meant everything I said, I'll admit it's a… like odd. But as a parent I want my son to be happy." She gave the wolf who was half looking at her and half looking at the floor of the cruiser a hard stare catching his eye, "If they love each other then I'd hope they'd chose to be together even if I didn't approve." She gave him one last look, "Thank you for dropping us off, now you drive safe, you hear?" The wolf nodded and as Nick's mom stepped back, the crusier pulled away down the street.

"What was that about?" Nick asked, and his mom just gave him a light whack on the back of the head as she passed.

"If you understood, then you wouldn't have spent three months pinning after your mate" she said and unlocked the front door of the house gesturing for him and Judy to come in.

"Hey! What was that… wait, how do you know about those three months?" Nick asked startled as Judy passed his mom with a 'thank you'.

She smirked at him, "You don't think I wouldn't squeeze every bit of information out of Finnick that I could after finding out that my son, the eternal bachelor got married overnight? I can put two and two together; now are you coming in to eat or are you going to let me go get the family album and sit down with Judy?"

Nick made an indignant and embarrassing noise he didn't think he had was capable of before rushing into the house.

…

His mom went straight to the kitchen while Nick went over to Judy and slyly stole one of her paws with his.

"You've been a bit quiet, anything wrong?" he asked and after a quick glance at the kitchen door, stole a quick kiss.

Judy squeezed his paw back, and whispering, "She's your mom! What if I do something and she doesn't like me?"

Nick looked back down at her and rubbed his thumb over the back of her paw trying to reassure her, "Judy, I think my mom might like you more than me already" he smiled at her and leaned over to her ear, "But if you want to earn extra points with her we can go over and set the table."

Judy looked back up at him and gave him a smile and a quick kiss before leading him into the kitchen to help out.

With the two of them following his mom's orders it wasn't long before the table was set and the
dinner was reheated and ready to eat. Nick meanwhile kept up a constant stream of chatter, telling Judy all about the small house he'd grown up in. For his parents, having a house, no matter how small or rundown it and the area was, had been a point of pride for them. Nick got Judy to laugh and his mother to smile as he told her stories about his adventures as a kit helping his dad after school to fix this or that.

He was happy to see Judy loosen up a bit more and start joining the conversation with him and his mother and asking them questions. Seeing his mother again, and seeing her get along with Judy made Nick's heart feel like it was fit to burst. He couldn't remember the last time he had felt this happy and content. Judy seemed to fix the broken feeling he'd had in this house ever since his father had died. He finally felt like his family was whole again, and as he looked at Judy helping his mom carry the food and set it on the table he knew that this was what he wanted, to build a life, a home with his mate.

Nick snagged Judy as she returned to help bring the water over to the table. He picked her up and swung her around out of sight of his mom, and silenced her giggles with a long kiss.

He could feel her arms wrap around his neck and as the kiss finally ended he placed his nose against hers, and sighed happily.

"What was that for?" Judy asked, her voice happy and threatening to break into another round of giggles.

"Because I love you" he said and kissed her again.

"Whenever you two are done in there, dinner is ready." Came his mom's voice from the other room and Nick and Judy quickly jerked apart, looking at each other a bit sheepishly. Before returning to the kitchen, both their ears a bit redder than normal.

The dinner was not only the best Nick had had in years but he happiest as well. His mom had made a vegetable casserole along with some of his favorite dishes from when he was a kit, and just when he didn't think he could eat anymore she pulled a blueberry cobbler out of the oven.

Nick was leaning back in the chair full and content, and trying not to rumble as Judy stoked his tail that was now in her lap hidden by the table.

"Thank you again for the dinner Mrs. Wi-" Judy stopped at a glance from his mom, "I mean Vivian, the food was wonderful."

"That's better, you can always call me mom as well, dear." She gave Judy a smile.

Smiled back, Judy reached up and twisted one of her ears a bit nervously, "I, ah… have to admit that I was a bit worried about what you would think about me becoming Nick's mate, and with it being so… sudden."

"Judy, I haven't seen Nick this happy since he was a small kit. Did he tell you why we haven't seen each other in years?" Nick winced a bit at that.

Judy squirmed a bit, "Yes he told me right after your phone call."

Nick's mom nodded her head, "I'll bet he even told you about whatever happened with the ranger scouts." Nick shot a quick glance at Judy and his mother, but his mom was paying full attention to Judy who was blushing now.

"He, ah… he told me the second day after I forced him to work with me on the missing mammal's
case, right after he stood up to Chief Bogo and saved my job." She murmured the blush growing a bit.

His mom gave him a knowing glance and he looked down.

"Two days and he was already in love with you, and he trusts you more than he trusts anyone else. Judy, I've been worrying about him for years, worrying that he might cross that line and get into real trouble with the law, worrying that he was so hurt from losing his father that he would never open up enough to trust or love anyone else. And then you came along, and I not only have my happy kit back, but he now has a real job and is working his way toward being a police officer, the first officer of his species. He always talked about how he'd grow up to be a firefighter or a police officer and help people, but he gave up those dreams so long ago, but now… now…" She quickly wiped at her eyes, before getting up and coming around the table and hugged Judy.

Nick barely managed to move his tail in time but it was only a moment longer before he felt himself pulled into the hug as well, and he couldn't help but hug them back. He didn't even complain when his mom ran her muzzle over him and Judy leaving her mark on both of them.

"Now I have my son back and a new daughter." She said, and squeezed them before letting go, and returning to her chair. Nick could feel his cheeks burning a bit and caught Judy's paw. It was a few moments before his mom was able to speak again.

"Thank you Judy, you won't ever know just how much this means to me, to have my Nicholas back and to be able to see the way he looks at you."

Judy's ears where down but Nick could still see the blush on them, "He's the one that saved me. And every time I get stuck he's the one there that believes in me and helps me out," she squeezed his paw and looked up at him with a shy smile, "I'm the luckiest mammal alive because he loves me just as much as I love him."

Nick leaned over a gave her a small, quick kiss and pulled her over onto his chair wrapping his arms and tail around her.

He heard his mom give a few sniffles, but the moment was too perfect, to happy and content and comfortable. He had his mate who he loved and his family was back together, no longer broken or separated, and it was all because of the bunny that was snuggling into him.

There were a few more sniffs, before his mom spoke up again happily, "So… so when are you two planning on giving me grandkits?"

Judy's ears shot straight up and Nick jumped in the seat, over balancing when he came down, and clutching Judy to his chest the seat toppled over backwards.

"MOM!" Nick said from the floor, he was absolutely sure his face was blushing hard enough to be seen through his red fur, "I haven't even had a chance to talk to Judy about that! I'm not even sure if we can!"

His mom gave a half sniff and he could just knew she was rolling her eyes, "And why not? They might not be common but there are certainly enough hybrids out there, even a few between very different species, just look at Napoleon, he was half lion half wolf."

"but… but…" Nick spluttered from the floor. "She's a bunny and I'm a fox."

"Um, actually…" Judy started saying, before Nick looked at her and she blushed violently, "D-Doctor Winters, um… told me back at the hospital that its almost certainly possible…"
Nick was on his feet in a second, he'd picked Judy up and placed her on her seat, before looking at her near frantically, "But, we've been…last night and this morning…” he placed his head against her stomach as if expecting to be able to tell anything by that, before pulling away and looking at Judy who was blushing more than he'd ever seen her do before. "A-are you…? Do you want? But…”

She grabbed his paw and squeezed it lightly before giving him an embarrassed glance, "Nick, I'm still on birth control, most bunny does start in highschool because… well I've told you how large my family is…"

Nicks was just staring at her, mouth hanging open.

"It'll last until through the rest of this year before it expires..." she trailed off, as she kept glancing at him, her blush not fading.

"Well, it's not like I'm asking you two to start right this second," his mom said with a bit of exasperated huff, "You two do want kits though right?"

Nick blurted out a "Yes" right at the same time Judy did. They looked at each other and then away, and Nick could feel his face heat up a bit more.

Judy mumbled, "I was hoping Nick would want to wait till we're on the force…"

While Nick had started saying, "Just… not right now, I mean I really want to, really really want to, but… but… I have to get a Den!" Nick could feel himself starting to ramble, "And the police academy! I don't want to be stuck at the police academy away from Judy when she is… is… preg" Nick looked at Judy, at his mate, at her lovely and embarrassed and hopeful? face.

Nick hit the ground, out cold.

Chapter End Notes

I'm now in a desperate race to try and get more chapters out before my proofreader catches up and starts berating me.

oh, congrats to Andrea and Naturberd for finding the easter egg in chapter 25 - Surprises Part 4: Money. (third time was the lucky guess for her, and no, she did not post the winning guess in the reviews so you all still have to figure it out. And that's only one of a few I've hidden away so keep looking :P )

As for all the other Reviews, Thanks again everybody, I should be able to trade in you reviews for coffee... if we ever get to port.
Ok, Never Ever go to Tortuga to celebrate New Years. I can not possibly voice all the reasons why this is a bad idea because I don't think I can remember all of them. First, THEY LIED. That wasn't just a 'special Tortuga coffee blend' I'm pretty sure it was mostly rum. Second, well that one and most of the rest are a bit hazy, but lastly, when I tried to escape, they crowed surfed me back to my cell. That is a completely undignified way to get caught! The only good thing was I got a souvenir coffee mug.

Disclaimer: I don't think Disney's lawyers will be much of a problem at today's meeting. For New Years, the pirates gave them a couple of bottles of the rum that you could set fire to and might just also make you go blind. (*smirk* I'm planning on stomping my way around and shouting everything I say, I've even got a pot and ladle to beat together. Is this mean, and cruel, and probably the worst thing you can do to someone with a massive hangover? Yes, yes it is *smirk*)

Typo Disclaimer: I snuck my proof reader a bottle of that rum too. And he was just starting to try and catch up too *snicker*

Judy didn't think that it was possible for a mammal to look absolutely overjoyed, hopeful and utterly terrified all at once, but Nick sure did, right before he collapsed into a heap on the ground. One second he was looking at her, with wide eyes and the biggest real smile, she had ever seen on him while his tail was simultaneously puffed out like a bottle brush and wagging faster than a fan, and then he just froze before falling like a puppet that had its strings cut.

Judy was off her chair and at Nicks side faster than a cheetah.

"Nick! Nick, are you alright? Nick? What happened? Come on," Judy could feel herself starting to panic as she held his head in her paws and patted his cheek.

"Judy dear, calm down." Vivian said as she walked around the table toward them.

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"How can I calm down? Nick just passed out for no reason! He could be hurt! Maybe they missed something when they checked him over from the fight, maybe-"

"Judy," Vivan said calmly, "This isn't surprising at all, in fact I'd say this is probably normal."

"Normal? The only species I know of that its normal to just up and faint are fainting goats!" Judy said disbelievingly. "Are you telling me that its normal for foxes to be fine one moment and out cold the next?"

"No, dear" the older fox said patiently, "You've got to remember though that while you're a bunny, he's a fox."

"And what does that have to do with anything?" Judy replied hotly, still cradling Nicks head.
Vivian shook her head with a small understanding smile, "Different expectations dear, especially for him." She cut Judy's next comment off with a wave of her paw and continued, "foxes tend to have far smaller families than bunnies, even in the city. And he's grown up never expecting to have a family of his own, telling himself it would never happen. When I found out I was pregnant with Nick, my husband fainted, then when he woke up he was bouncing off the walls in joy like a kit on a sugar rush before crying like a babe. It was all I could do the next morning to get him to stop cuddling me and go to work. I thought I might have to use a crow bar at one point."

"oh..." was all Judy could say, trying to take in everything her mother-in-law had just told her. Her family was unusually large even for country bunnies but kits were a normal part of almost any bunny's life. She was one of the few bunnies who wasn't already well on their way to building their own family at the age of 24, well had been anyway. She could sort of see how this might be different for Nick, especially with the argument with his mother over having a family and growing up as an only kit.

"I'll admit," Vivian said with a bit of a sly grin, "That I'm hoping since he's married a bunny, that you two will have a large family. That way I can have a bunch of grandkits to dote on and spoil absolutely rotten."

Judy felt a little alarmed at that, She didn't think she want a big family like her parents, she didn't even think she wanted the normal bunny's idea of big; but then again she was still thinking by bunny standards. What was big by fox standards?

As she absentmindedly stroked Nick's head, she hesitantly asked, "Um, when you say large, how big exactly is that?"

Vivian shot her a blinding smile, "Well, maybe not as large as you're probably thinking, I work at a nursery and preschool dear, I know how big bunny families can get; though I wouldn't mind that many grandkits," her mother-in-law's tail started swishing back and forth behind her, "not at all! If you two want to have dozen or even two dozen kits!" her tail was swooshing faster and faster, and Judy felt a different sort of panic rise up in her.

2 dozen kits?!

She looked down at her fox. Even out cold he still had a little bit of that dopey happy smile on his muzzle and something deep in her twinged with want and need. A sudden though that she wouldn't mind having 2 dozen kits with Nick, popped into her mind, she certainly would mind the effort involved in making those two dozen kits either.

Where the hell did that thought just come from?! She thought, now a little more panic than before, I want to a few kits with Nick, maybe even 4 or 5," she looked back at Nick, at his handsome features, at his sleek frame, and could remember how that frame and fur felt pressed against her, how he felt in her. 2 dozen...? That's still a lot... right?... She felt herself blushing hard again.

Judy realized that she'd missed some of what her mother-in-law was saying.

"-hard to support that many kits in the city, but a grandmother can always hope!" she leaned over toward Judy, tail now swishing just as fast as Nicks had been, "How long do you think it will be before you two start trying?"

"um, a, ah, a few years... I guess. I, um, we need to get onto the police force... and have a steady income..." Judy said now completely flustered.

Looking at her excited mother-in-law was making the blush worse, but when she frantically looked
elsewhere her eyes landed on Nick, and the images he was bringing to mind right now… well it was making 2 dozen kits sound better and better.

"I, um..." she stammered, "Uh, I ah, think this is something I need to, uh, talk over with Nick whenever he wakes up..."

"Oh, you don't need to wait, dear. Here," Vivian said and then in one fluid motion grabbed a glass of ice water off the table, and splashed it on Nick's head.

Nick's eyes popped open as he spluttered and coughed a bit, before blinking.

"J-Judy?" he asked looking confused, "W-What happened?"

"Your mate wanted to know how many kits you wanted and when you wanted to get started." his mom said without the faintest bit of embarrassment. Judy felt her face burn as Nick's head snapped back to look at her and she could see the inside of his ears turn pink as well. He gapped for a moment and glanced back and forth between his mother and Judy.

"Ummmm..." he said and gave Judy a desperate pleading look.

She grabbed one of her ears and pulled it down behind her, twisted it nervously, "I was, ah thinking that we could just wait till after the academy and I'd let the birth control expire and we see where it goes from there..." she now had Nick's absolute and undivided attention, "uh, I was hoping you'd want, um, well maybe we can just try for a few and then after, um..." she said, trying and failing to keep looking at Nick. He was staring at her with such intensity and-

And then he was kissing her frantically, a storm of small furious kiss, on her nose, on her mouth, on her cheek. His wet muzzle and shorter whiskers making her giggle under the onslaught, before his mouth locked on hers and he was kissing her. She wasn't giggling or laughing then, it was like all the fuse breakers in her mind popped at once with the lightning that kiss sent through her and everything else but Nick and the kiss disappeared from her thoughts.

She was holding onto him, pressing herself into him, needing him. She could feel one of his fangs slide against her mouth and his tongue against hers as the kiss deepened but it just sent a jolt of pure animalist craving through her. She was clutching at his fur, now pressing the kiss instead of Nick. He was her mate, hers, she-

"Well, at this rate I might get those grandkits sooner than I was expecting," said a pleased voice.

Judy's eye's snapped open. He was her mate, hers, but she wasn't going to start rutting him right in front of her mother-in-law! She broke the kiss feeling absolutely mortified, and Nick let out a whine that tore at her heart, and almost broke her.

NOT IN FRONT OF HIS MOM!

And Cheese and Crackers, how the hell did she end up on top of Nick, straddling him and kissing the daylight's out of him?

She quickly scooted off of his waist and nearly caved to her desires again at the second whine nick let out. Judy just couldn't bear to completely lose contact with him, not with the need and how his green eyes were looking at her, so she compromised and cuddled into his side while he sat back up and used his tail to shield herself from his mother to happy look for a bit.

Nick glanced over at his mom, did a double take, and his expression turned to horrified embarrassment before he tried to hide behind his tail as well.

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Nick glanced over at his mom, did a double take, and his expression turned to horrified embarrassment before he tried to hide behind his tail as well.
"You started that!" Judy whispered crossly and shoved his muzzle back out from behind her shield.

"It's my tail." Nick shot back, trying not to look at his now snicker mother.

Judy stuck out her tongue at him, "Well, you're my fox! So deal with it!" and then she buried her face in the soft fluffiness and comforting musky scent and decided that she was just going to ignore everything else for a while, maybe forever. Well not forever but at least until she didn't look as red as Nick's fur.

Vivian chuckled, and Judy heard the sound of a chair move against the floor, before a voice said happily, "Actually I have a bit of a present for you two, I'll be back in minute or two… or maybe three." Before there was the sound of a door closing.

There was a few minutes of blessed quiet and calm before,

"Ok fluff, she's gone, you can let go of my tail now."

Judy just shook her head, and breathed in another wonderful breath of his scent.

Then there was the brush of fur along hers and a small kiss behind her ear. The spot tingled pleasantly after his mouth left it.

"would you please come out from behind there?" he asked sweetly, and she shook her head again.

He trailed a few kisses from her ear down to her cheek, "please?".

Another shake and the tingling trail now made its way from her cheek toward her short muzzle.

"pretty please?" this time it took all her effort to shake her head. She was steeling herself for another assault of those small tender kisses that were making her heart melt, but this time there was a wiggling sensation as his muzzle burrowed between her's and the fluffy fur of his tail.

"Pretty please with blueberries and carrots?" and then he managed to kiss her on the corner of her mouth.

Her heart seemed to liquefy and drop down to her toes. She turned and kissed him back not being able to resist.

Damn sly cute handsome foxes!

His smile was far too close to a smirk as she realized that by the third or fourth short kiss her paws were back on his chest. She frowned, and whacked him lightly, before saying "Bad fox! Bad!"

His smirk ratcheted up a few more notches, as she tried to extract her paws from him, the action being far harder than it should have been, and he leaned forward and whispered, "But I'm your bad fox, and you can do whatever you like with me."

Her face felt like it burst aflame and she hissed, "Not In Your Mother's House!"

He just chuckled wickedly, running his muzzle ever so lightly against hers, "Care to share what that idea was? We'll be leaving shortly and then we won't be in my mother's house."

"BAD, BAD FOX!"
By the time Nick's mother came back, it had been more than just a few minutes and they were back in one of the chairs, Judy having been lured into sitting on Nicks lap by the promise of an apology back and shoulder rub.

But while his big paws and pads felt absolutely wonderfully as they lightly caressed and massaged her, she had her arms crossed and a determined look nailed to her face because he was taking the opportunity to whisper very naughty suggestions in her ears as he did so.

_Still in his mother's house, still in his mother's house_, she could feel the heat below her belly growing with every comment and suggestion and a growing dampness. _Still in his mother's house_,

All she needed to do, she promised herself, was to just survive till they got back to his warehouse apartment, _then_ she'd get him back! Oh how she was going to make him pay!

Nick finished telling her about what he wanted to do tonight in _vivid_ detail as his mom came back in and Judy was having a very hard time not squirming around in his lap, but by the slight sniff of the air and sly grin she shot her, all her effort at hiding the state Nick was putting her in was apparently for naught.

_Stupid canids and their unfair sense of smell._

"Well it seems like you two are ready to head off to bed for the night," Vivian said and Nick growled lightly in Judy's ear, sending excited shivers through her "_yes, bed. All night long._"

"But, before you two leave for the night" She continued but seemed to sober slightly. She still had a smile but it was the kind of smile you saw when someone thought back on happier memories long since past, "I wanted to give you two this," she handed them an old yellowing envelope.

Nick took it, hesitantly opening it, only to have a set of keys dropping out onto Judy's lap. He looked down at them and them and then took in a short surprised breath before slowly reaching over to pick them up and turn them in his paw. Judy couldn't tell what was so special about them, but they had to be considering the way that Nick turned the two identical old brass keys around.

"Your father always said he was building the shop for you, so that when it was your turn to build a family that he'd have something to pass onto you. I…" she paused for a second and wiped at her eyes, "I just could never bring myself to let go of the building. The store space never rented well enough to make it worth holding onto but… well I think he would have wanted you to have it."

Judy looked up at Nick speechless and feeling overwhelmed and the beginning of tears forming, but Nick for one of the few times she'd known him wasn't wearing his mask. Her fox looked more choked up at the gift than she did. Judy slid off his lap, and with a tug on his paw she led him over and hugged the older fox. She could feel one of Nick's arms wrap around her as the other wrapped around his mother, and there were a few drops that pattered onto her shorter head, but from which fox or both she didn't know.

"T-thanks mom." Nick said in an almost hoarse voice, before his mother squeezed them one last time and broke the hug.

"I wish we'd been able to give you to more," she said, sniffing a bit, before giving them a sad but warm smile. "It's not in the best part of town and its rather run down but I though from what you two told me over dinner that you two might want to use it as the office for your new P.I. company."

"That… that would actually be perfect." Judy said, eyes still watery and went and hugged her mother-in-law again. "Thank you."
The older fox gave her a quick hug back and one last scent mark between her ears. "I know my husband would have been overjoyed to see you become his daughter-in-law." She sniffed, "Now you make sure to watch out for Nicholas for me, alright? Don't let him drag you into too much trouble, and if he's acting like too much of a kit, you just give me a call."

Judy gave a small laughed, "I'll remember that, and don't worry, I'm going to make sure nothing ever happens to Nick." She said smiling back before going and taking Nick's paw, as Vivian led them to the front door.

Nick paused. Before they left.

"Oh, Mom. I almost forgot." he said and fished around in his pants pocket for a second before pulling out a now rather rumpled letter. "Mrs. Hopps asked me to give this to you." He passed the letter over and the other fox opened it pulling out a folded note and starting to read.

About half way through she stopped and let out a guffawing laugh, before snicker as she read the rest of the letter. She folded it back up with a chuckled, saying "Oh I can't wait! This is going to be so much fun!" and smiling broadly the whole time.

"Um," Nick said a bit confused, "What was that all about?"

She shook her head, patted Nick on the cheek and gave them both a motherly kiss before ushering them out.

"Don't you two worry about it, Mrs. Hopps and I will take care of everything. Now you two head home for the night and don't go wandering off to find trouble again! You can wait until tomorrow to give that nice officer at the station another headache, and I'm sure you two can think of something to do in the meantime." She turned around and started closing the door before stopping and saying with a smirk worthy of Nick's hustler days, "Oh, and we'll call you as soon as we pick out a date for the wedding ceremony!"

Chapter End Notes

I almost wanted to leave the typo 'knot' instead of 'naught' (yes I actually found a typo all by myself) but I felt like that might be too immature. I'm already writing a story about a fox and a bunny with every funny and embarrassing situation I can think of and using a tissue (a very thin tissue) as my modesty screen, but I have to draw the line for my dignity somewhere.

Also a sneek peak, the next chapter is 'Chapter 30 – Vengeance' *smirk*
Ok this one took a bit longer than normal to write. Why you ask? Well first I almost broke my lemon zester writing this. I had to get creative, since I'm determined to hold onto the last of my dignity and maintain my tissue paper modesty screen. Is there a spot light shining behind that screen? Did I maybe step right up to that line, toe it and lean over it? probably, but I'm still on my side of the line! There isn't anything here that can't be explained as just some misinterpreted reference. Hey, maybe that was just a candybar in his pocket. They may be absurd explanations, but they're still explanations. And snogging for all of you who somehow missed highschool, is pg-13. (Oh and ignore that I'm wearing a hazmat suit while writing this. Go on, keep reading. If you've made it this far you know you're going to anyway, so stop delaying the inevitable, you'll survive the cliffhangers…maybe)

Oh just fair warning, to anyone allergic to absurd amounts of zesty fluff, then just skip to the next chapter after they get off the subway. Its still not lemons, but some people are probably gonna try making lemonade with all that zest and call it close enough.

Disclaimer: Disney's lawyers are looking very pissed off today and they all brought noise canceling headphones, maybe they didn't like my musical rendition of 'The Best of Kitchenware'. It couldn't have been that bad though because I didn't sing.

Typo Disclaimer: AHHH writing faster, my proof reader is catching up!

Judy stared at the closed door for a few seconds, mouth hanging open before turning to Nick, who was looking mildly panicked. Why was he only mildly panicked? Her mom was conspiring with his to set up their wedding! This wasn't something for just mild concern, he should be at a complete freak-out level of concern!

She knew her parents would want some sort of ceremony, but she had hoped they'd be able to set one up a few months from now. Something small and not too elaborate and tell them once everything was already decided. Because if she got involved…

Judy shuddered in terror, she still remembered what her mother had put together when Beth and Charles had gotten married. Since Charles was a hare her mother had wanted the family to get to know him and accept him…

She looked desperately at Nick, her fox.

"Did she just say what I think she said?" Judy asked fearfully. Maybe she'd misheard despite her long ears. She rarely misheard tings but… well, she was still pretty distracted from everything Nick had been doing to her and making her feel. Yes, that seemed plausible, even likely… she hoped.

Nick looked at her and his normal calm seemed to reassert itself. Ok, that's a good sign, I'm probably just imagining things are far worse than they are.
"I think so… my mom always did say she wanted to throw me a big wedding," he shrugged, "knowing her there's nothing we can do to stop her now." He looked down at her and smiled, reaching out and ruffling the fur between her ears, "Don't look so glum Fluff. Fox ceremonies are usually very small and quick, more like a dinner party with the families. Even if she's always wanted to do something a bit more than the usual it won't be that bad."

"Nick! Bunny weddings are anything but small! Not only is it a wedding ceremony but bunny families use them as family get togethers and excuses to throw parties, and if you think just my immediate family is big, well just wait till you every bunny even vaguely related to me decides that it's been to long since their last visit and comes to see the wedding and have some fun" she shuddered again while Nick's ears had gone flat against his head, and his grin had frozen, "Plus if that wasn't enough I'm their, well was their oldest unmarried daughter. Not only is my mom going to go overboard because she's going to want everyone to like you since you're a fox and they're bunnies, but even my dad will probably get over his shock and join in. Every year his plans on what he wants to do for my wedding has gotten bigger and more elaborate!"

Judy was yanking on her ears in worry now and Nicks mask was well past cracking.

"Why don't we just elope?" he asked, now seeming to fully comprehend the situation.

"We already eloped Nick! We're married!" she nearly shouted, looking around like some magical escape would open up out of thin air for them.

"Well if we did it once why don't we do it again?" he asked trying to force a grin back on.

Judy stopped yanking on her ears and gave him a trapped and horrified look, "My sister Beth and her husband tried. My mom told everybody that since they we're running off that the party would be canceled and then called the train station manager and got him to stop their train from departing Bunnyburrow long enough for a mob of my cousins to literally tie them up and drag them back! If we try and run away she'll have every bunny and rabbit in and around Zootopia hunting us down!"

"Gods," Nick shivered and muttered, "that sounds worse than even Mr. Big."

Judy froze, her look of horror going to one of terror. With both paws she grabbed Nick's shirt and jumped up onto him using his knees like footrest so that she was could look him straight in the eyes before saying in a desperate and panicked whisper as if afraid that they might be overheard, "We can NOT let Fru Fru get involved in planning this too!"

Nick gulped, "Marian save us! She'd try turning this into the media wedding of the century." Judy nodded frantically and Nick shot a very worried glance at his Mom's door, whispering back, "We can Not tell my mom!".

And like she'd been listening and waiting for that moment, the front door opened back up, and they froze like deer looking into headlights.

"Oh, I'm glad I caught you two." She walked over apparently deciding to ignoring their terrified expressions and the fact that Judy had nearly climbed up Nick's front and was nose to nose with him. She gave Nick their shopping bag with everything they'd gotten earlier at the mall. "That nice officer said that since you had dropped this and it wasn't part of what that nasty mammal was trying to steal he could get away with not putting it in with the evidence. Made sure that nice wolf had gave it to me in the car."

She smiled widely. "I saw a receipt in there from the Sheppard's shop. I'm so glad you're still in touch with them; I'll have to call Mr. Sheppard up tomorrow and see if I can afford to get him to
make the clothes for the wedding! Oh, and there was also a card and receipt from Ore and-

Nick scooped Judy up as they both started to quickly making loud excuses cutting her off,

"Oh my gosh! Thank you, I wouldn't have had anything to wear tomorrow, but it's getting late…" Judy said frantically while Nick was also saying desperately in and overly loud voice, "Thanks mom, but I got to get Judy home, you know bunnies, not naturally nocturnal and everything, Bye!"

And Nick's backing up turned into a full-on retreat as he dashed away down the street, carrying her.

"My mother… better not… have heard… that… or we're… screwed!" Nick said between pants as he continued to run. Judy meanwhile just hugged him around his neck and buried her nose into his ruff, letting Nicks musky scent surround her as she fervently hoped that her overzealous friend would not find a way to 'help' plan her wedding. Her life was already crazy enough right now, but, she thought hopefully trying to regain her optimism, Fru Fru didn't know either her mom or Nick's; how would she ever find out about it before it was already planned and she got the invitation?

…

They’d calmed down a little by the time they boarded the train back headed back to the warehouse and spent most of the ride trying to come up with increasingly desperate and irrational escape plans. The best idea they’d been able to come up with so far though, was begging Chief Bogo to put them under police protective custody on grounds that their families were trying to kidnap them and forced to attend their own wedding. Judy however, thought that with all the issues they’d caused the Chief today alone, that he’d simply turn them over to their parents' custody to keep her and Nick out of 'trouble' for a few days. And it wasn't like they could even hide from their parents and the police at one of Mr. Big's safe houses because then there would be the issue of Fru Fru.

Judy was pretty sure they were as Nick put it, screwed by this point of the discussion; the best they could probably try for was to mitigate the damage. So instead of continuing to worry she cuddled up close to Nick in his lap for comfort and shut out the sounds of whispered comments she could over hear from the other commuters. She closed her eyes and let the smell and feel of her mate surround her, making the world and its problems fade into the background.

…

Far too soon for her comfort though, the train stopped at the Lowland drive station. Before she could untangle herself from her comfortable position, Nick shifter her and lifted her up bridal style and exited the train carrying her and the shopping bag.

Judy blushed a bit especially when one of the other passengers snapped a photo of them, but Nick smiled at her making her feel warm all over; so she just snuggled against him wrapped her arms around his neck.

She giggled a bit at the ridiculousness of what it must look like to the other mammals as they left the station. A fox carrying a bunny like this, and her snuggling into him? Scandalous probably only began to describe it.

She breathed in another lungful of air through his fur, and his scent along with the care in which he was holding her reignited the that simmering fire in her.

"Soooo, why are you carrying me like this?" she asked, the feeling of happiness Nick was causing her overriding her worries from earlier.

"Nick looked down at her with a smile that nearly stopped her heart, as the evening lights made his
emerald green eyes sparkle, "Because, makeshift den or not, I want to carry my wife through the front door for our first night at our home." He gave her a feather soft kiss, "well, home at least until I can get you a real den."

Judy let out a happy satisfied hum and curled up in his arms till her muzzle was between his neck and shoulder. She could feel Nick starting to rumble softly in response to her and she gave his neck a few soft kisses before nibbling at it lightly, causing the almost purr Nick was giving off to deepen.

"What did I do to deserve you Nick?" she asked huskily looking up at him, as he left the street headed toward the warehouse side door.

"Well, for starters, you care and you make me the happiest fox alive. But," he smirked, "you also saved my life a few times, and then went and stole my heart," he leaned down and bopped her nose with his, "Bad, bad bunny! You should know stealing is a crime!"

Judy rubbed her nose against his and then along his cheek, before saying playfully into the corner of his muzzle, "Hum, well you stole my heart first, so I don't care if it makes me a bad bunny, I'm not giving yours back," she kissed him at the far corner of his lips and teased, "So what are you going to do with your bad bunny?" and nipped the corner of his lip.

Nick's rumble became a possessive growl as his he quickly worked to unlocked the door. Judy let out a startled 'Meep' when his paw stopped her wiggling by grabbing her tail with a soft tug. She tried hard to muffle the moan by burying her muzzle against her fox's neck but wasn't completely successful, judging by the second soft tug and wandering fingers that started stroking her tail.

"Well, as punishment you're just going to learn to live with your fox because he's never leaving you now. As for exactly what I'm going to do with this little bad bunny, well you should have listened more carefully after dinner. I told you exactly what I'm going to do with you." He got the key into the pad lock and started opening the door with one paw while he nuzzled her. "If you don't recall I told you how I'm going to take you back to my den, and then we're going to make it our den."

He pulled back from the kiss just far enough to speak despite her attempts to keep kissing him, "but maybe you need a reminder," his paw stroking her tail tugged again before continuing its stoking but heading further down between her legs. Lightning seemed to arc up through her as she gasped, reflexively rubbed hard back against his paw. The dampness from earlier now started soaking into her pants as they were press against her.

Nick stopped and Judy let out a short whimper of displeasure. Nick pushed forward pinning her against the door, the bulge in his pants pressing between her legs. He said in a deep growl, "You, my bunny, made the mistake of letting this fox catch your scent," he brought his paw up and sniffed it, "and then you let him have a taste of you," he licked the slight moisture on his fingers, smiling wickedly, "and know he can't get enough of you." He ran his muzzle along hers marking her before making sure than one of his large fangs ran along her lip and through her fur, causing her to shudder in delight. He rocked his hips, and the friction of movement it caused made her moan aloud, and she could feel his lips curve up in a smile. "I'm going to take you… back to our den and I'm going to show you why you are my mate." He rocked his hips again and this time she half moaned half cried out his name.

"Yes, love?" he rocked forward slowly again, and after the wave of pleasure from that movement died down she noticed her legs where wrapped around his waist and her paws were clutching so hard at his shirt her small claws where tearing it.
He smiled at her inability to respond. And then started kissing her neck, saying between the small pecks, "You want me to keep telling you? Well, I'm going to take you... to bed" he nipped her and she inhaled a sharp breath, and there was a tearing sound as the rips in the fabric of his shirt tore more, "and I'm going to make you call out my name," another sharper nip,

"oh gods, Nick!" she moaned, and squeezed her legs, feeling an lengthening hardness against her

"then after I've made sure you can't get away from me, I'm going to cuddle you, and kiss you, and nuzzle you, and mark you till anyone would swear by smell that you were a fox." Judy was running her paws through his fur, his shirt now closer to being rags than clothing, pulling him closer to her. Nick moved up from her neck nuzzling hard against her cheek, before again running his fang through her fur, making her buck against him.

"then," he growled right into her ear rocking and rubbing his hips against hers, where wet patches were appearing on their pants, "when the fox doesn't have his bunny trapped anymore I'm going to do what I'm sure our ancestors did and track that sweat wonderful smell to its source and lap and eat it up."

Judy was clutching desperately at him kissing and nipping back against his neck and muzzle as she tightened her legs rubbing back against his motion. Nick had one paw behind her head caressing her ears lightly and the other had dipped back down and was running his claws lightly through her tail.

"and after I've finished my meal," he continued his lower paw sneaking past her pants to run through her fur as it slowly caressed its way further down, "I'm going to do it all over again." He growled deeply and kissed her with a predator's swiftness.

The kiss caught her by surprise, and for a moment he was in complete control, his lower paw squeezing her pulling her against him and his other angling her head so that he could deepen the kiss, his larger muzzle dominating hers as his tongue claimed her mouth. Judy's world seemed to explode in sensations and cravings and need.

Judy had never been submissive, never been one to let others take control. She had always been more assertive than a normal bunny, had always been one to take charge because she didn't like when others told her what to do, when they left her with no options besides what they wanted ignoring the silly little bunny.

But for once she found that she liked surrendering control, liked the feeling of his larger stronger frame taking charge, like being submissive to her mate's desires. He was her mate and she trusted him completely, trusted him enough to know that he would never hurt her, that he cared for her, that he wanted to be the one to make her happy.

Oh, gods, I could get used to this, she thought as he blew the fire of desire in her into a raging inferno.

But as much as she wanted to let him have his way with her, she had promised that she would get him back, that she would get her vengeance. She'd promised revenge for his sly comments at his mother's house, for all the small teases throughout the day stirring up her emotions till she felt like she was going to break from having to hold herself back from what she wanted, and

for the blueberry juice in my fur!

She kissed him back with just as much force, clutching at his fur pulling him toward her, as their tongues seemed to battle through the kiss.
No, she wouldn't mind letting Nick take charge but not tonight, well not right now anyway. She was finally somewhere that she could do exactly what she wanted. She had her fox all alone and to herself, and it was time that he received the revenge that he had accrued throughout the day. She was going to make him feel every moment of anguish he'd put her through tenfold, she was going to make him cry out for her in desperation and need and she was going to enjoy it.

Her vengeance was going to be swift and terrible.

Her vengeance was well over due.

Her vengeance was going to start right now!

Judy redoubled her effort in the kiss, taking control. She could feel Nicks smile against her lips as she asserted herself and she could feel hers curl up in a satisfaction and smugness.

She shifted one leg wrapped around his waist, lowering it to hook behind his thigh, and bucked hard against him throwing all the force and her weight against his opposite side as she pulled up with her leg behind his collapsing it. In one fluid motion, she'd spun him around so that she was pressing him against the door as he slid to the ground against it.

His tail was beating wildly as she sat in his lap and kissed him like there was no tomorrow.

She broke the kiss as suddenly as he had started it and swiftly kissed his neck then under his chin. One paw discarding the remnants of his shirt and the other slid down the soft fur of his belly and passed his belt till it was against something besides fur.

She nipped him and squeezed lightly stroking and this time it was Nick who yipped and moaned out her name.

"Yes, love?" she parroted what he said before. But when he smirked and tried to reply she moved her paw again and wiggled her hips up against him causing him to shuddered and groaned.

"You remember that story I owe you?" she said into his ear, as she continued to tease him with small caresses and kiss and movements. "that one about my fantasy that you'll hear eventually?"

He nodded, panting a bit as he shivered and gasped under her. His reactions to her light movements sent a thrill of excitement through her. That she could do this to him, that he wanted her needed her like this. Well, he'd get her in the end, he'd already managed to catch her.

"I'll tell you right here, right now, if…" she nipped the corner of his jaw, causing him to make an adorable sound somewhere between a whine and a groan, and filled with pleading. His muzzle tried to move to kiss her but she escaped it by moving and kissing the underside of his chin a few times before nipping him ever so lightly.

"if?" he managed to gasp between a pant.

Judy smiled and nuzzled him, easing the motion of her hips and letting her paw continue exploring, causing a few more shudders and his paw still on her rear to tighten as he gave a small buck.

She let out a small gasp of her own at the feeling of his paw on her and the friction of his movement pressing up against her. She snapped his other paw that had sly made its way to up her front and guided its larger digits, showing him where to move and touch.

She let out moan and a deeper hum as she nuzzled her way up to the other side of his muzzle, feeling him nuzzling back.
"if" she said still humming with the occasion break for a 'oh' or a small groan of pleasure, "if you promise to tell me yours," she stopped and gasped moment as he hit a particular spot and then squeezed her cheek with his lower paw at the same moment.

She could feel his smirk forming as he was about to speak, so she quickly caressed him and rocked her hips eliciting a sudden yip as his tail seemed to go mad for a second. She snatched his paw away from her front and intertwined it with hers.

His paws were too dangerous to let them both roam like that, he was too likely to distract her from her vengeance. And she would have it by Carrots, she was going to have her fox just like she'd been imagining for half the day.

"If you promise to tell me yours," she repeated with a kiss at the base of his ear, "when I ask you for it."

She moved her paw and rubbed up against him, the damp cloth separating them molding so that they could feel exactly what was on the other side of it. Judy had to bite down on Nick's shoulder to keep her focus as she felt his heat against hers, even through the wet layers of fabric, but Nick didn't fair nearly as well. He squeezed hard on her paw and cheek and gasped desperately with a few involuntary jerks of his hips against hers, "Yes! Yes! Oh, gods Judy I'll tell you!"

She kissed his cheek, "Promise me with a kiss? You'll tell me when I ask, no tricks, no delays, no hustles?" and she rubbed up against him again ever so softly this time.

He gasped again and then he was kissing her urgently, his free paw now cupping her tail as he pulled her tight against him. She could feel him hot against her and she wanted to cry out with the pleasure of it, but his mouth was against hers as her silent cry mixed with his breath. She could feel his desperate need for her resonate with her own need for her mate, as it echoed back through the kiss and she lost herself for a few moments in him, in the musky strong scent of male fox, her fox. The scent that seemed to overpower everything else, it was surrounding her and infused in every breath she took, as he pulled her against his body.

Judy lost her resolve in that kiss. Nick could have taken her and she was ready to beg him to do so, but when the kiss finally ended, Nick spoke instead of pressing his unknown advantage.

"Yes, Judy, I promise" he said and kissed her, lighter this time. "Now will you finally tell me?" he kissed her again, "I already even promise to try and do anything you want." He gave her another kiss.

"Um…" Judy said after the last kiss a bit dazed, why had he stopped kissing her? he smelled so good, and he was so warm and the way he was stroking her tail was sinfully pleasurable, and that heat pressing against her wet pants and underwear… she leaned up and kissed Nick pushing every bit of herself she could against him.

But Nick kept the kiss short, pulling away from it to nuzzle her as he held her against him.

"a deals a deal, Carrots." He said rumbling happily and nuzzled her more energetically.

'Deal? What deal? She thought hazily as she nuzzled back and humming, something about a story, oh yes the dreams about him, which dream again?

"Um…" she started as she tried to put her thoughts back in order; wasn't there something about retribution?, "I've been dreaming of you ever since the missing mammals case…"

Nicks tail thumped against the door loudly, "at first I kept dreaming that you'd come back and let me
apologize, and you'd say it was alright and that we'd always be friends no matter what…”

Nick kissed her cheek and moved his nose to hers, still holding her tight against him, "I tried to Judy, but I took too long and you were gone, but I'm here now and I'm never going to leave, I'll always be your friend, your mate, your fox."

She wrapped her arms around his neck as she marked him on top of his muzzle before kissing him. She could feel both of his paws wrap around her back, holding her tight in turn, and she buried her nose into his neck.

After a few moments just holding him as tightly as she could she sniffed and leaned back till she could put her nose back against his. She looked him in his beautiful green eyes and putting every bit of her feeling behind it she could, said, "I love you."

Nick smiled, his tail making the door sound like someone was beating on it.

"Good, because I love you." He said back just as intensely.

Judy wasn't sure who started it but the kiss that followed eclipsed every other thought for the next few minutes. It was sweet and slow and loving. It made her heart ache, and the only thing that could soothe it was the presence of her fox holding her.

That slow kiss though, deepened. And more primal passion joined with her pure feeling of love for her fox. She was still pressed up against him, could feel every movement he made and the burning heat where their damp clothes barely kept them apart.

She broke the kiss long enough to reaching down and undo his belt buckle, but Nick grabbed her paw in his lacing their fingers together.

"First, I think you were still telling me a story." He said with absolutely satisfied smile. "And how did I forget about my vengeance? Judy thought staring back at that smile turned smirk for a second or two.

"Story first, then…” he rolled his hips up, making sparks buzz and tingle around her belly.

Yep, vengeance first.

"Fine…," she said drawing the word out in an exasperated tone, hiding her own growing smirk and started slowly wiggling against him as she spoke.

"Well, then. After a while in those dreams after I'd apologize you'd kiss me, and shortly after I got home I started having trouble getting a good night's sleep because in my dreams you'd started doing more than just kissing me." She rubbed up hard against him and started running his paws through his fur, beginning at his shoulders and moving to his strong lean chest and then down. "After that I was dreaming of you in all sorts of situations, but you'd always find me and kiss me and make love to me. We'd run away together, we'd stay in Bunnyburrow together, we'd come back to Zootopia together."

Judy's wiggles had turned into slow gyrations against him and her paws had made their way through his belly fur down to his pants and were working on shimmying them down below his tail. Meanwhile Nick's paws where on her hips as she slowly moved against him, but his entire focus was on what she was saying as she blushed a bit but continued to speak.

"You'd make love to me in every way I could possibly imagine, and some that I'm not sure are even possible. But there was one that kept coming back more often than all the rest." His pants slid down
enough for his boxers to tent out against her, and he shuddered and moaned as her next movement rubbed up against it.

"You'd find me out at the farm and when I'd apologize I'd slip up and tell you how much I loved you. After that I'd realize what I'd said and run off. But you'd chase me across the fields and into the woods. I'd hear you gaining on me from behind, the strong handsome fox that I was scared would never love me back. And then I'd trip and tumble forward. I'd be on my paws and knees and trying to get up and then you'd catch me. I'd feel you settle across my back, hips behind mine and your arms over my shoulders, pinning me, holding me."

Judy increased the tempo of her hips and started sliding his boxers down as well "You'd growl in my ear asking if I'd said I loved you and when I replied yes. You'd reach back and start ripping of our clothes while you leaned over and marked me telling me that then I'd just have to be your mate. Then you'd take me like that, over and over again, telling me that I was yours, your mate, that I'd have to stay with you forever, that I'd have to be the mother to your kits."

Nick was looking at her with a near feral lust and need behind his eyes now, and Judy smirked past her blush and suddenly stopped her movements.

"And now I can make that fantasy of you chasing and catching me come true" she said with a truly wicked sly grin and bounced to her feet leaning forward so that she could flip on all the light switches next to the door. She'd angled the movement so that Nick's nose ended up right between her legs and she hear him take in a huge sniff right before she jumped back off of him, escaping before his paws could get ahold of her.

She turned around and flicked her tail right in front of him, "Catch me if you can Fox!" she cried out gleefully and took off running not a second to soon because she felt his paws barely miss her as he lunged with a wild growl full of desire.

Nick had listened to Judy's story of her dream with rapt attention, but hearing her admission of some of her deepest desires and the constant, increasing movements against him was pushing him beyond what he could control. He didn't think he'd be able to make it to his bed, hell, the only reason he hadn't already taken her was her enrapturing story.

She finished but right before he moved to hold her, kiss, her and make love to her right there, she smirked at him with those gorgeous lavender eyes sparkling with mischief.

"And now I can make that fantasy of you chasing and catching me come true" she said and hopping up. His vision went white, in part due to all the lights that had just come on but more so because she was pressing the wet spot of her pats right into his nose.

He took an involuntary inhale and was absolutely blindsided by the overpowering scent. It was all Judy; it was bunny and female and excitement and need and arousal. The cocktail of scent and pheromones seemed to not just fry every part of his brain but reached the more primal side of himself. And it did more than just take notice, it went berserk. It smashed through his stunned state and took control responded to that overpowering smell from his mate that screaming for him to take her, to mate her, to pour himself into her until she was carrying his kits.

She jumped away just as he tried clutching at her, and he blinked seeing her standing just in front of him shaking that tail like a perfect fluffy white flag.

"Catch me if you can Fox!" she cried in a jubilant voice, and Nick lunged with a wild desperate growl, and missed her by a fraction of an inch.
She started laughing as she ran, and Nick gave chase, well tried to give chase except he tripped over his pants and boxers around his ankles.

Judy stopped in front of him to taunt him some more, now shaking his ring of keys at him.

"There's no way out fox!" she half giggling, smiling manically, "You've got your bunny trapped inside and you can't even catch her?"

Part of his mind thought, how the hell did she get my keys? They were in my pants pocket…oh

Well that was pretty obvious seeing as she'd been the one to pulling them down so he'd trip.

But those thoughts in the corner of his mind where overshadowed by a larger concern. The drummer boy had returned leading Nicks entire mental army, and he was accepting no quarter this time. His bunny had called and they were ready to fight to the death to get her. The few remaining logical portions of his mind looked back at the bunny now shaking her beautiful tail at him again and defected turning on the spot to help the drummer boy, and Nick lost himself to instinct and emotion.

He shook the clothes off of his hindpaws and with a feral cry shoot after her. He hadn't been on the track team in highschool for nothing and he almost, almost caught her. Judy gave out a loud 'EEP' that sounded more excited than startled and took off, Nick right on her bouncing tail. If the starting gap between them had been just a bit shorter or his bunny just a bit slower he would have had her, but she nimbly speed through the indoor carnival, gaining a bit of distance back with her quick turns.

She made another sharp turn and stopped for just a second to flip a switch before jumping on the track of the cheetah chase as the treadmill started moving.

Nick jumped on behind her and cut the distance down to just a few feet on the straight track. He gave out a cry of victory as he closed on her, but right as he reached out to grab her she jumped up in a huge leap and landed on the chase bar where the old stuffed rabbit used to sit, it being just wide enough for her to balance easily on.

"Well, now isn't this ironic?" She nearly purred smirking back at his frustrated face taking a seat on the bar, "Why don't we see how you do when there's a real 'fuzzy wuzzly cute' bunny as your prize."

Nick growled and sped up but as he came closer the bar moved further down the treadmill and it speed up. He'd latter wonder why he didn't just step off the treadmill and go around to get her, but at the moment he was operation on pure animalistic instinct and emotion. His bunny, his mate was sitting there right infront of him and his world seemed to narrow down to her and the space between them.

"Ohhh," she cooed at him, "I though you said you'd chase after me anywhere?" she giggled a bit, "Maybe I can give you some extra motivation,"

A few seconds later and her shirt hit him in the face. He ripped it off and threw it to the side but her pants slapped across his head next. After another more desperate growl he threw those of to the side and glared at his bunny before almost tripping as the drummer boy and his army in his mind froze for a second upon seeing her.

She was stretched out on the bar like lingerie model. He didn't think he'd ever seen something so sexy in his life. It beat every one of Finnick's Single Vixen Magazines. They weren't even in the same league as his bunny.

She stretched languorously, and the crowd in his head broke out in wild cheers, and nick let out
savage cry. She looked at him, batting her eyelashes and tisked at the foot or two of distance he'd lost over the misstep. "Now this was supposed to help, not make you fall behind!" She slowly moved her paw up her leg over her panties, with its large wet blotch and up to her bra, and Nick's throat seemed to go dry as his eyes tried to pop out of his head as he watching her paw, and ran after her.

"Well maybe we'll just have to try something else." She said and she reached back unsnapping the bra.

The army went quite for a second as she slowly removed the fabric before waving it at him like some princess waving a favor at a knight in a medieval tournament. The drummer boys army went mad, cheering and shouting while Nick surged a couple of feet closer.

Judy smirked, "Well I do think I found something to motivate you, why don't we try to see what else I can do to help you win your prize?" she tossed the bra and it landed right across his muzzle, he snorted and flung it to the side and looked back up to see her slowly easing her panties down revealing more and more of her gray and white belly fur. Then in one quick motion she yanked them off. The drummer boy was now leading the army in a mental chant of 'bunny! Bunny! BUNNY!' getting louder and louder. Nick wouldn't have been surprised if he'd developed a nose bleed looking at her now draped across the bar in the pose he'd see of vixen silhouette on tractor trailers.

She smiled wickedly at him and stretched.

"Like what you see?" she purred, and blew him a kiss "All you have to do is catch me," she moved a paw down her chest and over her belly, "and I'm all yours." She moved he paw further down between her legs and looked his naked running form up and down lecherously. "Uhm, um, Uhm. Come on fox I need you, don't you want to catch me?" she smirked and tossed the panties at him.

This time he snapped the piece of clothing out of the air with his jaws and put everything he had into a burst of speed, growling, "GET OVER HERE BUNNY!"

She just smirked at him again stretching more as he got closer and closer, but the closer he got the further the bar went back and the fast the treadmill got. When Nick was only a few feet away sprinting all out, with Judy still smiling and stretching sending his instincts and the chanting army into an absolute frenzy. He launched himself into the air in a high leap. Judy watched him with a lazy smug smile and then darted off the beam right as he came down on it. He heard her laughing giddily right before he over balanced and fell back onto the still moving treadmill, which shoot him back and off the end.

"BUNNY!" he yelled, "YOUR MINE!" and took off on all fours after the laughter.

He came around the corner of the wind tunnel and saw the door to the warehouse office open with his keys still in the lock, and her scent trail with its strong smell of arousal clearly showing that she had gone through the door.

He beelined over to it and snatched the keys closing it and locking it, before tearing down the stairs. He came into the small room and found his gray bunny in his bed, tail perked up in the air, her rear facing him and tail twitching in excitement. Her smell was everywhere in the small room and it was less than a second before he was on her, wrapping around her, holding her.

"Your Mine Bunny!" he growled in her ear as she nearly quivered under him pushing her tail up against him. "There's nowhere you can run I won't follow."

"And what if I don't want to run from the fox that caught me?" she said flicking her tail against his belly.
Nick growled and thrust forward till his hips were snug against hers, claiming his mate with near savage ferocity and she gasped and pressed back into him as he growled again this time in pure pleasure at the feeling of her surrounding him like he was wrapped around her back. He pulled back and she whimpered, trying to scoot back toward him, but he had her pinned under him, and didn’t allow it.

He leaned down to her ear, and thrust forward, eliciting a cry of his name, "I'm going to take the Doctors advice, what did she say? 'sometimes you just have to tie down overactive mammals for their own good?' that sounds like excellent advice and just what my bunny needs" he picked up a steady tempo and his mate started mirroring it in counter point as it became faster.

Neither of them said much coherently after that, though they made plenty of sound and the bear sized dresser started rocking slightly in time to the motion of the fox and bunny in the makeshift bed. Its rocking got progressively fast and faster until two cries echoed through the room and the steady motions devolved into a series of short frantic ones as the fox closed his jaws over the point of the bunnies shoulder and neck while she cried out his name over and over again, shaking and pressing back against the large body pressed against her.

When the final frantic movements died down, the fox shifted his hold and rolled them over onto their sides, proceeding to wrap the smaller form against his chest and belly up with all his arms, legs and tail, before starting to nuzzle and kiss her.

"Nick?" Judy started asking but broke off in a small moan of satisfaction and pleasure at the small thrust against her, and the pulse of warmth deep inside.

"Hmm?" he mumbled back as he nuzzled her cheek working his way back to her ears.

Judy sighed happily and turned to kiss him before his muzzle was out of her reach, but only managed a few before moaning again as another spurt of heat joined the rest and she clenched reflexively causing a happy whimper and a few more movements against her and another pulse.

She tried cuddling further back into the furry body at pressed up behind her and sighed, blissfully happy, as Nick try to hold her even tighter, wrapping her up in a warm fluffy ball of musky russet fur.

"I love you, Nick. I love you so much I can describe how much I love you." She brought the red tail she was holding onto up to her face and nuzzled it.

"I love you just as much, Judy. I always will." Nick replied and started kissing and grooming her fur starting at her ears. He was rumbling happily as he continued to cuddle and groom her and there was another small jerk and pulse of heat and pleasure. She buried her face in his tail squirming against him and his rumble grew.

"Thank you for choosing me, for everything, for tonight." She said when she thought she could speak again.

Nick stopped his grooming and nipped her ear, "First there is no need to thank me, I'm your mate, second if we're going to play the thank you game, I'm going to win because the most amazing mammal ever hopped into my life and completely changed it for the better, and third," he growled happily and thrust against her deliberately and harder this time, sending the liquid fire even deeper into her and causing her to moan out loud, "I told you exactly what I plan on doing tonight, and we're nowhere near done."
Ok, some elements of plot may actually return to the story next chapter, because the new lemon zester the pirates ordered will take a while to arrive. Also why did I find it surprising that to get mail all pirates have PO Boxes in Tortuga?
Chapter Notes

Okay, most of the lemon zest is out of the way... for now. There's some milder zest left over at the beginning of this chapter but if your super sensitive to about it and don't want to read it well you can scroll down to the line break and read from there. (This time the line break is not a character perspective shift, its just there as a marker and normal time break)

Disclaimer: Disney's Lawyers were starting to get on my nerves at the meeting, so I did a musical rendition of 'My Little Tea Cup', even did the dance and everything. That shut them up, even broke their Noise Canceling headphones, (a few of them were also hospitalized), but the pirate lawyer, after he stopped twitching on the floor, told me that if I ever do that again he'll make sure I get fluffle flogged to the point of near death. So no more musical renditions for me.

Typo Disclaimer: (to proof reader) Ha, You can't catch me! I'm the ginger bread man! ... Fine so I'm the grinch who stole and ate a gingerbread man, still can't catch me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick was jarred awake by an ungodly annoying alarm at an ungodly early hour and the warm ball of fur he was wrapped around snuggled closer into him before whining.

"Thant's not Clawhauser again is it?"

He stroked her ears with one paw as he reached over to the pile of their clothes and purchases from yesterday that they'd haphazardly piled next to the bed sometime last night after the second chase.

Nick had to smile at the memory. He was pretty sure they would have done more than just turn heads if anyone had seen him running naked for all he was worth, being chased by a very determined looking bunny.

Nick's paw found the vibrating, screeching source of the noise and fiddled with it until the blaring sound stopped.

"Carrots, why do you have your alarm set for 5:30?" he groaned and put the tip of his nose back between her ears, nuzzling her sleepily.

"It's 5:30 already?" she asked and he nuzzled her again in confirmation.

This time she groaned, "Why can't it be the weekend? I don't want to get up and workout."

He nibbled on her ear causing a different sort of groan, "Then let's just go back to sleep." He said muzzily into it.

She sighed and the started moving as if to get up, "That would be starting a very bad habit, and anyway now that I'm awake I don't think I can go back to sleep." She said as her head popped up out from his embrace and she gave him a kiss.

"Would you like to join me for my morning work out?" she asked and gave him a loving look and
smile so happy and bright that even this hateful early hour of the day seemed to brightened.

He watched as she stood up and stretched, her soft gray fur over her well-toned body seeming to ripple even in the dark room. She was absolutely breathtaking, and it struck him again just how luck he was to not just have her in his life, but to have her love him, to have her as his mate. He could not describe just how much he loved her back; she'd taken his world and flipped it upside down and become the single most important thing that he could and ever would care about. He'd do anything for her, absolutely anything. All she needed to do was ask; he'd even get up at this horrible hour of the morning and workout with her if it made her happy.

He watched her stretch again, while trying to mentally preparing himself to leave their comfortable nest of blankets they'd made before collapsing asleep last night, well really this morning, late this morning… in fact, only a few hours ago. But her movements made his mouth go dry and other parts of him besides just his heart swell with love and longing as he watched her.

"All always join you if you'll have me," He said, and she hit him with another smile that should have lit up the room like the sun itself was shining in there. His jaw moved but no words came out and he had to focus hard before he could get himself to speak. "Can I pick the mornings exercise today?"

She leaned over and gave him a kiss on his nose, "Sure, what do you want to do?"

Before she could lean away he kissed her swiftly. Not a little peck but a full deep kiss, his tongue darting in as her mouth opened in surprise. He pulled her down on top of him until their bodies where pressed together and with his paw gave her tail a small squeeze. He could feel a fast growing heat and dampness from where his hips met hers and he growled into their kiss in satisfaction at the physical confirmation of her want and need for him just as his pressed back.

With one last light stroke and tug of her tail, he broke the kiss and said, "Then this morning's exercise is going to be catch the bunny, I'll give you a three second head start."

With an outraged squeal, she jumped back from him, though the scent of arousal from her spiked, "That's not fair! It needs to be a normal exercise!"

Nick grinned in the dimly lit room, "That wasn't in the rules when you asked." He said smuggle, "Three…"

She gapped at him, and he scooted forward on all fours and took a large sniff of the air right in front of her. "Two…"

Her scent spiked again. "N-Nick-" she started, but his tongue darted out and licked right between her legs and she gasped, her scent going wild. "One…"

She bolted up the stairs and Nick was right behind her nipping at her perked tail.

…

This time the chase didn't last very long and Nick was carrying a squirming bunny that was alternately trying to kiss him and escape.

"I tripped!-" he silenced the protest with another kiss and her paws grasped at his fur, pulling him deep into it.

"I caught you fair and square," he said as he laid Judy back down on their bed. "But, we don't have to continue if you don't want-"
Two small paws grabbed him and he was yanked down onto her before she flipped him over and was sitting on top of him.

"You started this!" she nearly growled at him before rising up off him and then coming down with a swift motion that made his world nearly explode as he yipped from the flood of sensations, "Now you're going to finish what you started" Another movement, another uncontrolled yip, "And you're not going to stop until I'm satisfied!" she leaned down and kissed him aggressively, the action full of possessive need and Nick responded, trying to keep up with the fast rhythm she started.

... 

Nick was deliriously happy as he caught his breath afterwards, his bunny curling into his chest humming contentedly, which was good since they weren't going anywhere for a while. He curled himself around her and rumbled softly in return.

They stayed like that, just crooning back and forth to each other as they dozed, but the peaceful quiet morning was broken as Judy's phone went off again. Nick growled unhappily at the jarring noise and reached out for the phone, still nuzzling into Judy's neck.

"Hit the dismiss button, not snooze" she murmured into his shoulder before giving him a few light kisses there.

Nick's paw after a few tries, found it and the phone went quiet as he pulled it back to their bed.

Judy's trail of kisses was traveling up his neck and cheek, and she murmured happily, "As much fun as this was we're going to need to do really work outs in the morning, Nick." and then she gave him passionate kiss, her tongue darting against his.

There was a gasp, and it took Nick a second to comprehend that neither of them, with their mouths locked together had made it. Nick knew that Judy realized it at about the same moment he did because her ears shot straight up nearly whacking him in the head.

"Judy?" came a very familiar motherly voice, before another younger one squealed, "O M G! Jude-the-Prude is finally getting laid?!"

They both swiveled their heads and looked at Nick's still outstretched paw holding her phone, whose screen now showed Mr. and Mrs. Hopps along with a bunny that looked very similar to Judy.

"Jill?! Mom! DAD?!!" Judy nearly screeched, and tried to jump up.

The next few moments where a series of yelps, yips and gasps as Judy was brought up short from her hop and tumbled sideways out of the makeshift bed dragging Nick with her onto the cold floor.

Judy let out a very loud 'MEEP' that was even louder than his yelp and Nick clutched her to him with both paws and leaped back into the bed.

There was a loud thud from over the phone, Lots of snickering, and a worried 'Stu, not again!'.

Nick hastily pulled his lower paw, still holding the phone, away from where he'd grabbed Judy under the hips to support her as he'd jumped.

"Wow Judy I thought you might be desperate but you really rushed off to tie the knot, didn't you? Now who's the adventurous one? *snicker*"

"SHUT UP JILL!" Judy shouted and grabbed some of the blankets to try and cover them.
"I have to give your credit though. From nothing to riding something so... exotic! Well that's probably best for you, being with a mammal that can only go one round, because you couldn't handle a real buck."

"Best? Real Buck?" Judy said now furious and snatched the phone out of Nick's paw, "a half an hour round with my fox sure as hell beats your prom night with Billy Leaps the 15 second wonder!" she snarled back, "Nick is better than any buck! How many of your bucks have finished and fallen off you asleep? After Nick finishes, and I guarantee that he can outlast any bunny, He cuddles and nuzzles with me while I get to still feel every bit of him the whole, long time!" she smirked into the phone and then ground down on Nick causing him to yip and buck. "oh, and he can go far more than once!"

The voice came back bitingly, not nearly as smug now, "Don't try to exaggerate Judy! You couldn't find a real mate let alone a buck that wanted you so you had to go let a fox take you!"

"Take me?! I took him! And he's better than any other mammal out there! You'll never be able to find a mate as loving and handsome as mine! Because I have the best one AND I'M NOT GIVING HIM UP, EVER!"

"GIRLS!" Mrs. Hopps voice cracked like a whip. "You'll stop this, right this second! Judy, Jill, apologize to each other."

Judy's entire body was taut as she clenching her paws, nearly grinding her teeth. Despite what she was unintentionally doing to him at the moment because of her tense state, which was making his mind spark with random fireworks, Nick though that he should intervene.

He took her paw in his and leaned up giving her a light kiss. "I love you too, and I'm never going to give you up either." He placed his nose against hers and smiled, "And while I can't say I really mind you bragging about me," he could feel his chest and ruff puff just a bit, "you don't have to fight with your sister about me. I'm your fox" Judy sighed, her ears dropping back down, "yesss, But she-!" he kissed her again.

"But you'll always have me no matter what she says, and if I have to try for a 15 second wonder and then fall asleep right after to make you happy, well, by Karma, I'll try." Judy giggled a bit, "It might take some practice..." he said and got another giggle and a small kiss.

"Okay... okay, Nick. I'll apologize, but you make me happy just as you are, so don't change. No 15 second wonders."

Nicks tail started wagging, "anything for you Judy."

There was a disgusted noise from the other end of the call.

"Jillana! don't you walk away, you'll apologize this second!" Mrs. Hopps's very stern voice sounded. A grudging and curt, 'Sorry' came through, and Judy replied with a more sincere, "Sorry Jill" before there was the sound of somebunny storming away.

Nick could see Mrs. Hopps shaking her head on the phone screen before she spoke.

"Judy, please try to get along with your sister, you know she's going through a rough spot right now and she looks up to you."

Judy was about to scoff, but her mother gave her a look, stopping her, "She does Judy. Why do you
think she was always following you around?"

There was a very quietly muttered, 'to ruin my life' and Nick stifled a laugh and booped her with his nose.

"I'll try mom," She said with a sigh, "but why did you call? I'm kind of in the middle of something."

"Well, from the view we saw, that would describe your mate not you." Her mom said with an absolutely straight face.

Judy groaned and flopped her ears over her face, "NNICK! Save me!"

Nick gave her nose a quick kiss, "Sorry, love. You told me no 15 second wonders."

She groaned again and whacked at his chest feebly.

"We called to just check up on you, dear." Mrs. Hopps relented, "Your usually done with your morning workout by now and you two where mentioned in the morning newspaper as having brought to light a bank scandal. We just wanted to make sure you were alright."

Nick whispered into one of her ears, "Do all bunnies get up this early?" but he evidently wasn't quiet enough by the laugh that came through the phone.

"Farmers dear, got to start working as soon as the suns up. Well, I won't keep you two much longer since you seem to be in the middle of Judy's new 'workout'. But I talked with Mrs. Wilde last night and she and I wanted to see if you all are going to be free the weekend after next to come out and visit so the families can get to know one another."

Judy gave Nick a quick look, and he shrugged.

"Sure Mom," she replied, "Now if you don't mind?"

"Okay, well you two have a good day now, don't stay in bed too long." Mrs. Hopps said with a smile that might just have had an evilly smug glint at the edge.

"MMooomm!"

"Oh, and Nicholas dear, try stoking the inside of her ears." There was a click and the screen went dark, right before a louder, embarrassed, "MMOOMM!"

Nick looked from the dark screen back to Judy's blushing face.

"Did your mom just give me advice on what I think she did?" he asked a bit startled.

Judy covered her now brightening cheeks with her ears and groaned dejectedly, which was perfect because it hid his paw from view as it snuck up to the base of one ear. With a claw extended, he lightly ran it along the velvety soft interior of her ear, all the way from the base to the tip.

The was a sudden gasp and Judy's entire body clenched sending more fireworks off in Nick's head before she more moaned than groaned and went limp against him, twitching slightly.

"Wow," Nick said after catching his breath, "Do moms always have good advice?" he stroked her other ear the same way and was pleased when he heard his name desperately called between the other sounds Judy made as she seemed to try and burrow into his fur.
Later, as they snuggled together and dozed, Nick thought that he was going to have to remember that trick with her ears and keep it in reserve for special moments. It had set off another round of kissing and 'exercising' and their workout cooldown timer ended up having to be reset. He didn't mind in the least though because he could see a smile on his mate's face as she held onto him and that made him feel even better than their 'exercising' did.

He nuzzled her again holding her tight, more happy with the world than he'd ever been before.

... 

Nick was brought to a half-conscious state by sounds above in the warehouse; the sound of the main door sliding open and a familiar rumble and beat. Recognizing the sounds, he nestled against Judy's fur and started slipping back into a light doze. Judy's ears however, twitched up, one tickling his muzzle.

"Mumm, Nick? Wazzs that?" she said, seeming to be just about as awake as he was.

Nick nibbled the offending ear and Judy nuzzled her nose further into his ruff.

"Nothing to worry about." He said muzzily between his nibbling, "Probably just Finnick dropping of his-

There was the sound of a key in a lock, and the sound of a door opening, before a deep voice echoed down the stairs.

"Yo, dirt for brains, I'm calling my favor due! Hell, after the inquisition your mother put me through you owe me far more than that!"

Nick's eyes snapped open with a startled mutter of, "Oh, shit." He looked down at Judy's alarmed expression, as there was the sound of someone coming down the stairs.

"shhh, don't make a sound!" Nick whispered, and curled around her covering her up almost completely with his limbs and tail.

"You still asleep down there, or do I need to bite you?" came the deep voice, now at the bottom of the stairs.

Nick shifted his head so that he could see the door just as Finnick came around the corner holding an ice pack over his muzzle. His friend looked like he hadn't had the best of nights, but Nick was pretty sure that the mammal that had given him the light shiner was probably in far worse shape. He wasn't happy to see Finnick hurt but had to thank Karma that his friend's nose seemed to be out of commission for the moment with the way the room smell of them... and what they'd been doing all night... and this morning.

"What's up Finnick? It's too early in the morning and I'm official out of the hustling business."

Finnick stopped dead for a second and blinked, "What?" then he gave a deep laugh, "Good one Nick! That actually sounded like you were serious there for a second. Next you'll have me believing you actually went and married a bunny. Like you'd ever even be interested in a prey mammal that way." He gave another laugh, and Nick felt Judy shift against him and her ear twitch, "Shit, you aren't even interested in vixens most of the time, your ten times the bachelor that I am! Hell, I might actually find a mate someday, but knowing you, you'll be single when your old and gray." He snickered and pointed at Nick, "Hell, your fur looks like it's already getting gray patches! Have you been dying it to keep me from noticing?"
"I'm serious about the hustling Finnick," Nick said a bit peeved, and shifted his position and tail covering the sliver of Judy's fur that had shown against his chest. The small fennec fox stopped his laughing to stare at him.

"Neither of us ever really liked it, Fin. It's past time for a change." Nick said.

Finnick threw his paw not holding the ice pack up in the air, "Like it? We never liked it! But what the hell does that have to do with anything?" he cut Nick off before he could speak, "It makes good money, Nick!, Moola, Dough, The shit that keeps my Van fueled and running! What the hell would cause you to give up hustling?"

He stopped and narrowed his eyes. "And if you say it's that bunny cop…" Finnick sighed, and Nick could feel Judy's grip against him tighten, "Nick, hell… I don't know what she did to you. It's like that one hustle she pulled on you broke you somehow. You've been mopping around for months and then she comes back, pleading with me, trying to find you."

He gave another sigh, his time some actual emotion and sadness creeping into his deep voice, "She might be one of those mammals that actually believes we can all get along and sing kumbaya or something, but that little idealistic bunny is gonna get crushed when she meets the real world. Fuck, you were there when she gave that little speech that showed how prey see us and started all the trouble we've been having lately!"

Nick felt Judy's paws dig almost painfully into him as her frame shook a tiny bit and she buried her muzzle into his fur. He gave her a subtle stroke with his paw trying to reassure her.

"Fin!" Nick broke in, "She didn't mean it that way! We all make mistakes but at least she's tried to fix things! And all that trouble wasn't her fault. That was all Bellwether. I was there with her, helping her put a stop to Bellwether's plans to make predators go savage!"

Finnick gave a deep sigh, "Sure, Nick. But one decent bunny isn't going to be enough to fix this city. I wish she could, but there's just too much wrong with it. Now why don't you get your lazy ass out of bed and help me?" He said as if tired of the subject.

Nick thought furiously trying to come up with some excuse.

"Oh for gods sake, you squeamish bastard, I'm dropping off my speakers and equipment! I had a gig last night DJ'ing, and I need to take my van in to get some work done at Sky High Auto. You know she won't work on my van when its loaded down because of her crappy car lift!"

He started moving toward Nick as if to yank him bodily out of bed. "Damnit, I told that rabbit where to find you hoping she would get you out of your funk!" he said in exasperation. "stop lazing around and going all naturalist on me. If you aren't even gonna hustle what the hell are you going to do for money? Because laying here won't get you any; I might, just might, be able to make enough money with my moonlighting as a DJ, but that's a one fox job. What the hell are you going to do?"

Nike was thinking fast, trying to come up with something to side track Finnick and ended up blurted out the first thing that came to mind, "I'm going to be a cop, Fin."

The small fox stopped dead a few feet from him and just stared mouth open, he tried to speak, tried again, then guffawed, "A cop? Have you lost it? I don't know how that bunny became a cop, but they'll never let you be one! You're a fox if you forgot! Hell, I'll believe that bunny wants to sleep with you before I believe they'll let you be a cop!"

He laughed again, and this seemed to be the last straw for Judy. Her ears shot straight up from under
his muzzle and tail like two black tipped gray flags, followed by a muffled shout.

"He IS going to be a cop!"

Chapter End Notes

jwagne51 receives the gonekrazy3000 apprentice proofreader award for noticing the very first word was 'Nice' instead of 'Nick'
The pirates were a bit inattentive and I managed to make a break for it by jumping overboard and swimming for shore. The pirates rather than hunting through the small tropical island after me just set up a big party on the beach and made sure to keep a big pot of coffee brewing. I tried to resist, I really did. But after a few days without coffee, *shudder*. Well they caught me when I tried to sneak into their party to steal some. *sigh* Now they're forcing me back onto a writing schedule. (sad grinch face)

Sorry about any additional fluff in this chapter, the story derailed a bit from the original chapter plan and didn't get as far along in the plot as it should have. Ugh and there's still so much for them to do today!

Disclaimer: Well, good news: I don't have to go back to any meetings with Disney's lawyers. Bad news: Disney's once again on the war path and this time their lawyers are leading it. Also, just as an interesting note: Bose headphones added a clause to their warranty that any damages due to musical renditions of 'My Little Tea Cup' are no longer covered.

Typo Disclaimer: Crap, gonecrazy3000 is almost caught up correcting the older chapters! Darnit, I need more gingerbread cookies! (and coffee).

Well this wasn't how Nick wanted to introduce Judy as his mate to his oldest friend. Maybe he could pull it off as some sort of trick or a hustle. Finnick did look rather dumbstruck, if he just covered her ears…

Judy's head popped out from under his tail and Finnick fell on his rear, eye's wider than Nick had ever seen them.

"Nick is going to be allowed to be a cop!" Judy repeated angrily and added, though it was a bit unnecessary considering their current position, "And he married me! He's my mate and the only mammal I'll ever want! I love him!"

Finnick was just gapping… repeatedly.

Nick had to snicker a little at the scene; he wished he had a camera to take a picture of Fin's face. He had never seen his friend so shocked before.

Nick's chest and ruff had puffed out on their own accord at Judy's words and he couldn't help but marked her between her ears, murmuring, "Can I get that on record? I'd like to listen to that every night."

She turned, chining him in return, "You know Bogo's got my carrot pen in evidence. And why do you want a recording when you have me?" she kissed him on the nose, before shooting Finnick a glare as if daring him to say something.
"Nick?" asked Finnick, his deep voice very unsteady. Nick looked over to see his friend sitting on the ground, paw still held up to his face to hold the ice pack, though it had slipped through his fingers and fallen to the ground.

"Yep?" Nick said in an overly cheery voice as if there was absolutely nothing odd about the situation.

"I think I need to go to the hospital." The fennec fox said and flopped back, his paw grasping a few times before he managed to find the ice pack and place it back over his face.

Nick watched Finnick with a bit of worry, "Fin, you okay?" he asked.

"I didn't think it was that bad," Finnick mumbled in a deep, confused, and worried voice, "Asshole must have hit me harder than I thought because I just hallucinated that you said you were going to be a cop and then that stupidly cute little bunny popped up out of your bed like-"

"Don't call me cute!" came the angry retort from Judy, "… and who are you calling little?" she added after a second heatedly.

Finnick's finger shot up and pointed in Judy's direction. "Yo, imaginary bunny, shut up or I'll bite you!" his voice shifted from an angry shout to a confused mutter, "Hell, I've got to have a bad concussion or something, I'm arguing with a hallucination, Fuck, why am I even hallucinating Nick and a bunny cuddling naked? Goddamned Nick, this is his fault for not shutting up about that 'cute cop bunny'. That… that… is just so… wrong. A fox and a bunny?" he gave a shudder.

"That's it!" Judy snarled, "There is nothing wrong with me loving Nick, or Nick loving me!" Judy tried to jump up, paws fisted, but only managed to lift Nick partially off the bed with the aborted leap while he yelped loudly. Nick quickly grabbed Judy's hips to stop her from trying that again.

"Nick! By Carrots! How long have we been in mandatory cuddle time?! I need to go give that pipsqueak of a fox a second black eye! Nobody but you gets to say that I'm cute or that they'll bite me!" Judy said incensed now, wiggling and twisting determinedly trying to get free.

Her frantic movements caused a sudden series of explosions to go off in Nick's mind, and everything in the world but Judy seemed to fade into sudden insignificants. Judy opened her mouth to make another angry retort but only managed to let out a startled 'Meep!' followed by a moan as his mouth locked over hers in something too primal to really be really be called a kiss.

Judy wasn't the only one making frantic movements anymore and Nick felt his whole body shudder and explode as Judy now clutched at him seeming to try and get as close to him as she possibly could instead of away. Her whole body suddenly went tight shaking against him while she tried to gasp out his name. Nick couldn't help but growl back in pleasure at the obvious sign that his mate wanted him, enjoyed him, needed him, just as much as she did her.

A deep voice from the outside their bed, muttering desperately, "This is just a nightmare, that punk at the bar knocked me out cold and this is just a nightmare,-" brought Nick back to the present after what he hoped hadn't been too long. The feeling of his mate was still making his mind spark, but he could at least think now… mostly… a little.

He looked over the bed at Finnick, who had his eye's closed and his paws holding his large ears as he continued to mutter. Nick turned back and looked at Judy who at least no longer seemed angry judging by the dazed, happy grin on her face as she snuggled into his chest.

Nick sat up holding Judy to him and leaned back against the dresser drawers behind the makeshift
bed and covered Judy with his tail. He grabbed a sheet and brought it up covering most of her too.

Nick's emotions were running high and hard and his instinct to protect *his* mate was beating at him.

Friend or not, he couldn't stop the protective and possessive urge to defend his mate that having Finnick, another *male* fox, in their den right now was causing. If Nick hadn't known and trusted Finnick as much as he did, he expected he'd probably be snarling. She was *his* mate. He'd do anything for her, anything to protect her. He marked her again and used the reassurance the action brought to put a leash on the instinct to drive the other fox away from his mate, that their sudden flare of passion had brought on.

Nick took a calming breath, the mixed scents of him and Judy and their night and morning workout, another reminder that she was his, helped to steady him. He looked back down at Judy and smiled.

"Um, Carrots," he said, and Judy looked up at him while still nuzzling against his ruff, "You just reset our cuddle timer."

She looked at him for a second and blinked, then frowned in concentration for a second before letting out what had to be the world's cutest, 'oh.'

She shifted around a bit, sending a few more pleasurable sparks flaring in Nick's mind and after seeming to confirm that, yes they were well and truly stuck, settled down snuggling her back up against his chest.

"This is just a nightmare, oh Fuck me, I'm gonna need to see a shrink after I wake up, that or a bar…and a bar, a few bars," Finnick continued to mumble and Judy after glancing at the small fox still laid out on the ground, giggled and whispered to Nick,

"Did we break the little bad fox?"

Nick grinned back and gave her a quick peck before grabbing a pillow.

"This is just a nightmare, This is just a-" The small fox's muttering came to a sudden halt when the pillow, almost as big as him, smacked him square in the face.

"Fin!" Nick called as the smaller fox throw the pillow off in a splutter of curses.

Nick placed his muzzle right between Judy's ear, which perked up at his movement framing his face. He wrapped both arms around his mate and hugged her back into his chest.

"Fin," Nick finally seemed to have Finnick's full attention as the smaller fox craned his head up from the floor to stare at them, still wide eyed, "Judy is my mate."

Nick waited as Finnick tried to speak. After the third or fourth attempt, he finally got out, "This still has to be some Fucking nightmare…"

"I can hit you with another pillow if your still not convinced." Nick said in reply smirking.

Finnick still looking confused growled back, "Do that and I'll grab my bat and-"

There was a growling sound from under Nick's chin and Judy's ears angled around and down, laying back against Nicks shoulders, while her paws tighten over his arms. "Grab your bat, and I'll feed it to you." Judy ground out

Finnick looked more startled than anything else. His eyebrows creased in a frown as he ignored Judy and looked right at Nick.
"Nick, if this isn't some nightmare, then What The Hell?" he asked seeming half confused, half angry. "Feisty little mammal or not, she's a bunny!"

Nick could feel Judy's anger rising again and gave her a squeeze and a small nuzzle with his chin, settling her a bit.

He looked right back at Finnick and simply said, "I love her." and Judy seemed to melt back against him, her ears lost their angry tilt.

Finnick on the other hand stared back at him before spluttering, "But!... but… Bunny," he pointed at Judy, and then at Nick, "Fox-"

Nick shrugged, and said again as if that didn't matter at all, "Yes, and I still love her."

Finnick's head flopped back to the ground, and he said in a still confused but now defeated tone, "You realize that you're never going to be able to fall in love with a vixen now, right?"

"I don't want to fall in love with anyone else." Nick said patiently, "She's my mate, Finnick, and I love her with all my heart."

"Dumbass. You're hearts apparently a stupid fool," Finnick growled, "What is your heart going to do when she leaves you?"

Nick's throat seemed to go dry at just the thought of Judy not being there with him and his arms tightened their hold on her. He didn't think Judy would ever leave, but the very idea of losing his mate was terrifying. To have to try and wake up without her? To not be able to feel her or hold her paw? To not be able to see her caring, loving smile? His heart was suddenly pounding in his chest.

Judy spoke up, but surprisingly, her voice wasn't really angry. Instead it was full of absolute unwavering conviction, "I am never going to leave Nick! He's mine, My mate! And I will always be with him!"

Finnick looked back up and locked gazes with Judy. For what felt like a few minutes but probably wasn't nearly that long, Nick just watched as they just stared at each other seeming to wage some sort of silent battle.

Finnick eventually frowned. He got up and turned around heading for the stairs.

Right before he turned the corner, Finnick stopped and turned back. "Dumbass, when you and your bunn-," his frown deepened, and he grudgingly seemed to change what he was saying, "mate, are done. Get your lazy ass cleaned up come help me move the crap out of my van."

He turned and stomped up the stairs muttering, "That Tiki-bar still better be stocked..." before the door slammed shut.

Nick let out a breath he didn't even know he'd been holding.

"Cheese and Crackers," Judy hiss out, "First my parents and Jill, then 'Mr. Toot Toot' seems to get his tail in a twist!" she gave a huff, "What by carrots was his problem? I thought after I told him I'd messed up, apologized and he helped me find you that we might actually get along."

Nick had to smile despite the situation; having his bunny sitting on his lap all huffy and mad with her fur up was for some reason, absolutely adorably cute. Well at least when she wasn't mad at him.
He nuzzled her and rumbled happily letting his paws stroke gently through her silky fur.

"Give Finnick a bit of time," he said and then chuckled, "and maybe a pack of beers." Nick stopped for a second thinking. "I really wanted to ease him into the idea of you being my mate. I knew he'd never believe it until he heard it from me, or well…"

"Walked in on our morning workout?" Judy finished and Nick grimaced sheepishly.

"Or, that." He admitted.

"So what got a burr stuck up his backside about us?" Judy asked.

Nick thought for a few moments trying to figure out the best way to explain Finnick to her. His rumble picked up as he felt her paws start stroking his tail. Gods, he loved when she did that, he could stay here happily all day with her doing that.

"I've told you a bit about the trouble I had growing up, right?" he said, still rumbling contentedly.

"um-hum," Judy said nodding, still stroking his tail.

"Well, Fin's had it rougher than me. I was just a fox, Finnick was a small fox." Judy looked up at him with a questioning glance clearly not understanding.

"Your too kind hearted and caring of a mammal to see what that means." He kissed her nose, "I'm bigger than you Carrots. Finnick isn't. A lot of mammals around our size that might just keep their scorn to glances and comments for me felt like they could actually push him around since he's smaller than them."

Nick gave Judy a second to think about that. He watched as her brow furrowed but rather than sympathy or pity a bit of her outraged anger returned. "Why do so many mammals have to be bigoted asses?" she muttered. Her use of a word that was almost a real curse made Nick chuckle.

He considered again just how luck he was to have Judy in his life now. His only regret was that he hadn't met her years earlier. She didn't only care about others but she was someone who would stand up for them too.

"Because not everyone has someone as wonderfully as you in their lives," He said and nuzzled her again, "Most mammals aren't that bad but it only takes a few really mean pieces of work to make it seem that way." He kissed her behind the ear, "It also only takes a few really good mammals to make you see the better side of things and believe that you can make the world a better place."

Nick felt her paws holding his tail hug it to her but before she could speak he continued.

"Part of why I love you is that you are such a mammal, Judy." He silenced her protest with another kiss, "Despite what you might think, you are. And as for any mistakes you might have made, you always try to fix them, and I love you for that too."

"Nick," Judy said in a small choked voice holding his tail. He just held her for a little while, trying to show and share just how much he cared and loved her through the contact.

"Finnick is in some ways better and worse than I am. I think once he comes to know you, he'll show just how good of a friend he can be. He's certainly been a better friend over the years to me than I've been to him. He might be a surly tough little bastard on the outside but Finnick really cares about his friends and will always be there for them." Nick let out another chuckle, "Hell, if you ever have the chance and half a day, ask Flash how he, a sloth, got onto the track team when we were in
highschool. The other mammals would never have allowed it if it wasn't for Finnick."

Nick's chuckle faded away, "Fin doesn't trust anyone else besides his friends though, and that distrust certainly runs deeper for prey."

"Is that why he seemed so upset about us?" Judy asked

Nick shrugged, "Besides the weirdness of being an interspecies couple? Ya, probably."

Nick grinned down at the frown Judy shot up at him and kissed her nose. "Come on Carrots," he chuckled, "I love you more than anything else, even blueberries" he laughed at her expression, "but you can't say that this isn't a bit weird." He smiled again, "That doesn't make it a bad thing, just different. Before meeting you, I never would have even imagined that I'd end up being attracted to let alone loving and mating some mammal not a fox. Can you say you wouldn't have thought it was odd or ever even considered me as a potential mate before this all happened?"

"Fine, so it is… different. You're still always going to be my fox. I don't care how weird it is." she conceded grumpily.

Nick nuzzled her cheek murmuring, "Always." and she chinned him back.

"Fin might think it's weird but once he gets over the shock of it, he won't hold that against us. It's just not who he is."

"Really?" Judy asked hopefully and Nick grinned.

"Don't get me wrong, he's going to give us grief about it. Expect no end of jokes and ribbing about it from him. But that won't stop him from being our friend. He just doesn't know you right now and is probably worried about me. Just give him some time."

Judy looked up at Nick, a small smile forming, "You think he'll really come to consider me a friend?"

Nick kissed her nose and the smile widened. "Finnick doesn't easily change his opinions and he makes friends even slower." Judy's smile seemed to halt, but another kiss kept it from fading, "however, I think he's already got a soft spot for you. I was surprised he actually helped you find me." Nick smiled, "I don't think you'll find it too hard to get him to think of you as a friend, he's already half way there."

Her smile made Nick feel warm and happy, and this time she leaned up and kissed him.

…

After a period of cuddling and some naturalist style grooming from Nick, which made Judy giggle, they were finally able to separate.

Nick just laid back, lazily smirking and watched his mate as she left the bed and stretched. He watched as her toned yet still nicely curved frame flexed making her gray coat and white belly fur ripple in the dim light of the room. He didn't think he'd ever get enough of this view. Judy was not beautifully in the way a vixen was and from what she'd told him she wasn't beautifully by rabbit standards either, but she had an elegance he'd never seen before. A combination of softness mixed with strength that he found unbearably attractive. She might not be beautiful to others but he thought she was absolutely gorgeous.

Judy stretched again, giving out a small groan as she did so and Nick had to check to make sure he
"Carrot sticks! I can't remember being this sore after a workout since the obstacle course at the academy." She looked over at him and a smirk appeared on her face, as she leaned down stretching again, tail perked high.

Nick was sure he was drooling now.

"Humm, a hot shower is just what I need to loosen up," Judy said still stretching but Nick's expression froze as his mind seemed to hit a speed bump while driving far too fast. "I'll even let you join me if you promise to be good this time." She continued with a playful tone before standing back up and walking toward the bathroom.

Nick's mind looked at the broken wreck of his previous thought process and panicked, trying frantically to hail down a cab and get moving again.

"Umm… ah…" he started speaking then realized he didn't know what he was trying to say. Judy shot him a smirk and flicked her tail before turning through the door.

"Ah, uh, Judy… about the shower…" he started brokenly, before jumping to his feet and frantically following after her.

"about the-" he tried again, a bit panicked, as he rounded the corner but was blindsided by the sight of his mate smiling and giggling as she stood on his step stool in front of the oversized sink looking into the mirror and turning to see herself.

She looked over at him, smirking and giggled, "My fur is all over the place!" She giggled again, "How is that 'grooming'? Bunnies don't do that but if we did we wouldn't call it 'grooming', it's more like the opposite of grooming."

Nick despite his panic, could feel his cheeks and ears heating up and mumbled something about instincts and family.

Judy laughed, hopped down with a light groan as she landed and came over giving him a sweet kiss before leading him by the paw to the shower.

"Don't worry, I love how you're so cuddly afterwards and the 'grooming' is cute." She giggled again, "But after our shower why don't you groom me the normal way?" she said with a huge smile, pulling the shower curtain closed behind them and looked at the unmarked nob on the water pipe leading to the shower head above them.

"Now which way do you turn this for hot water?" she asked happily.

Nick's throat seemed to nearly close in on itself and he squeaked, "About that…"

Nick followed right behind Judy as she shot out of the shower. He quickly grabbed one of the very thick and fluffy towels he kept in there and quickly wrapped her up, before grabbing one for himself with a shiver. Despite all the yips, yelps, squeaks and Meeps that they'd made in the shower there hadn't been any fooling around. They'd been far too busy washing each other as quickly as possible and trying to use one another as a shield from the cold stream of water from the showerhead.

"So-o why would someone make a shower without hot water?" Judy asked shivering as Nick worked to dry her first.
"This is a warehouse." Nick said now working on her ears. Judy sighed in leaned into him still wrapped up almost completely in the big towel, "There wasn't a need for hot water when they built it, so there isn't any at all. That shower was originally just an emergency shower I repurposed."

"W-well I can s-see why you hate m-mornings if you have to wake u-up to that everyday." Judy mumbled from within the towel, "We are g-going to have to do something a-about that."

Nick smiled having finished with her ears and head and moving the towel down so he could see her head.

"What I'm going to do is find us a real den." He kissed her on the nose and placed his against hers, which had mostly stopped shivering. "One with a big water heater so we can take long hot showers."

She caught him in a quick kiss before he could lean back and finish drying her.

"That sounds like a good idea." She said her normal happy look starting to return.

By the time they were dried, groomed, dressed and ready for the day it was after 8. It was still too early for Nick's taste but it at least wasn't the hideously evil hour of the morning when Judy's alarm had gone off at. Nick sighed thinking about it. He had a feeling that he might be getting up far earlier than he was used to in his future. Maybe he could compromise and keep the evil alarm from corrupting their weekends? Maybe if he promised extra cuddles and-

Judy's stomach suddenly let out a rumbling growl and Nick laughed.

"Keep working on that, you almost sounded like a fox!" he said grinning at her as she blushed slightly.

"At least my stomach didn't cause someone to faint!" She shot back, and her stomach growled again, louder this time causing her to blush a bit more, "Um, do you have anything here for breakfast?"

"I was thinking we could grab a bite to eat on our way to check out my dad's old shop this morning-" he was interrupted by a third, smaller rumble of her stomach, which made him grin, "but, if you're afraid your stomach will eat itself before then, I keep some food in the mini-fridge under the desk."

Judy seeming to be trying here best to keep her blush from growing as she walked past Nick to the fridge.

He snickered and gave her backside a light pinch causing her to jump with a surprised squeak before she swatted at his paw and give him a glare, though it wasn't very effective due to the pink showing through her fur on her cheeks.

Nick just smiled wider, not holding back any of his admiration and longing for her, "As for me, well I'd like to have bunny for my breakfast." He licked his lips and Judy's cheeks went red.

She marched over to the mini-fridge and opened it, reached in grabbing a yogurt and threw it at him.

"Eat that, you already had bunny last night!"

Nick caught the yogurt but kept gazing unabashedly at her, "Umm, I think your right. Bunny is best for dinner. It'll give me all day to keep your blush nice and red; I'm not much of a chef but I've heard that the longer you simmer something the more flavor it brings out" He said his smirk growing just as Judy's blush did.
"Don't you dare tease me, or I'll... I'll..." She sputtered as Nick walked confidently toward her. He stopped and leaned down and took a long sniff right in front of her at the level of her belly.

"Umm, already smells good. I think tonight might be a feast." He straightened back up still smirking as Judy tried to make some sort of response, her mouth just opened and closed.

He stole a deep, hard kiss and rumbled a bit as she leaned into him. He broke the kiss as quickly as he'd started it, grabbed a plastic spoon from the box over the fridge, turned making sure his tail brushed against her and jumped up to sit in the old office chair before opening the yogurt.

"I'll just have to make do with that and my blueberry yogurt until then." He smirked looking down at his mate who was looking as red as a beat and angry enough that smoke should have been coming out of her ears, though he couldn't tell if that was from teasing and kissing her or breaking the kiss off early.

His smirk grew a little wider, "Can't wait to taste steamed rabbit."

Judy let out a huge huff and turned back to the mini-fridge, no doubt giving him an unintentional but very nice view of her tail.

As they ate, Nick had to hold back his snickers at Judy's mutterings, which included everything from 'dumb fox' to something about vengeance.

After he finished he gave her a light kiss on the cheek and a 'love you too' which seemed to mollify her.

After a few moments, she looked over at him before taking another bite and asking, "Nick, why is there nothing but a few yogurts in the fridge?"

Nick shrugged, "As I said I'm not much of a cook. I usually eat out or grab something I can throw in the microwave. That's," he gestured to the mini-fridge, "just to snack on."

"But why only blueberry yogurt?"

"Who doesn't like yogurt? And as for blueberry; it was on sale and I like blueberries." Nick replied, though Judy still looked like she didn't quite believe his reasoning.

"Hey, you should be happy," he said a bit huffily, "I've never shared my yogurts with anyone! You're a special case."

Judy let out a short laugh and tossed her yogurt container in the trash bin by the side of the desk, before opening the fridge again and grabbing another yogurt and a fresh spoon, then heading for the stairs.

"You're that hungry?" Nick said bemusedly watching her.

She turned back to him grinning before starting up the stairs, "Nope. I'm just going to go share one of your yogurts with Finnick."

"Hey!" Nick yelled and chased after her.

Chapter End Notes
Bonus points for anyone who picks up and the tv show reference. (It was completely unintentional. I didn't even realize it till after it was written but it's almost perfect *snicker*, if only Judy had an Irish accent!) Hell, if anyone picks up on it I'll even try my best to get the next chapter out early!

Also sorry about the crazy long wait (gasp! It's been 8 days?!), real life and bad weather have a way of messing stuff up.

Thanks again to everyone who has left reviews and favorites/follows (or not since the pirates used all those to buy coffee and trap me into writing again) I've got a back log of comments and questions so I'll probably add an authors note at the end of the next chapter saying thanks and answering those but I want to get this out before I get fluffle flogged… again.

P.S. Why is Fox in the hen house taking care of the boxes and funnies for the pirates? Oh Crap! Did the pirates actually recruit him? NOOO, don't drink the kool-aid Fox! It's spike with rum and if they trap you aboard your never getting away!
Chapter 33 – Blast from the Past: Part 1

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little shorter than the normal ones now but I just had too, anyway stop complaining you get to read it earlier now. :P

Message from WildeHopps Pirates crew to Starfang's Secrets: 'One Of Us, One Of Us, One Of Us, One Of…'

Disclaimer: I just want to state again for the record that I'M WRITING THIS UNDER DURESS, I DO NOT OWN ZOOTOPIA, Disney does... for now. (And no matter how much the grinchy side of me approves of the pirate's thievery, that's beside the point). This fact though, does not seem to be enough to appease Disney. They've declared war on pirates and open season on grinches. The pirates are retaliating though, they've sent a commando squad of their best and saltiest pirates to help Fox in the hen house to steal the rights to Zootopia. (I wonder if the peg legs, eye patches and hooks will give them away?)

Typo Disclaimer: Neener Neener! You can't catch me, I'm - oh crap he's only two chapters behind? Ahh run faster!

Nick grumbled as he lifted the last speaker up and carried it out of Finnick's van over to the corner of the warehouse where Finnick stored his gear and tried to figure out how he'd gotten stuck doing most of the grunt work.

With her head start, Judy had too much of lead for him to catch her before she'd gotten to the Tiki-bar and already given the yogurt to Finnick. But while Nick was considering whether he wanted to risk getting into a scuffle with Fin to try to reclaim his yogurt, his friend and his mate had both re-engaged in their silent battle of stares. When Nick had tried to interrupt, them thinking he need to at least make an attempt to recover it, it wasn't just any yogurt after all, it was blueberry yogurt, they both turned their stares on him.

His protest had melted like a pawpsicle in Sahara Square.

He'd gotten sent over to where Fin had backed his van up to the main doors of the warehouse to start moving the DJ equipment out of it while they had gone off to have a private 'talk'.

Nick had nearly thrown a fit at hearing that. He knew Finnick and how most of his 'talks' ended up. But while he might have been the best hustler there, it had been two on one, and he'd ended up sulking away in defeat while threatening to shave Finnick's tail if he hurt his mate.

He grumbled more to himself thinking back to when they had returned from their 'talk'. Nick was a sheep and king of Zootopia if they had only talked. Words didn't cause mammals to come back limping and rubbing at sore spots. Granted, it looked like Judy had come out the winner and they both seemed far more amiable toward each other after their figh-, Nick growled again, 'talk'.

He'd nearly lost his temper at Fin and spent the next few minutes checking Judy for injuries despite
her protests, but she swore that the small sore spot on her chin was from 'tripping' on her way back. His angry glare at Finnick and question of, 'and your limping and rubbing your side because you fell too?' only got a smirking reply of 'Yep, that floor had one hell of a kick.' Only Judy's smirk back at Finnick and her paw pulling him back toward the van had kept Nick from trying to make good on his promise to give Finnick a new furstyle.

Finnick's amused deep voice calling out, "Don't drop that subwoofer!" from Nick's chair at the Tiki-bar and brought Nick back to the present, only making his grumbling and growl louder.

"And thanks for sharing your yogurts!" Finnick snickered loudly.

"Oh, Shut it!" Nick shouted back. He had some paint somewhere in this warehouse, maybe he could mix it in with Finicks body wash. Having his fur turned purple or blue for a few days would serve him right.

Judy passed him carrying a box cables and bumped his hip with hers.

"Come on slow poke," she said in too cheerful a tone for Nick's mode, "You want that kiss I promised for helping Fin right?"

Nick continued to grumble but sped up non-the less.

Judy smiled as she sat next to Nick buckled into the passenger seat of Finnick's van. Nick was trying hard to stay mad at his friend because of their talk, ok it had turned into a bit of a tussle when she had told Finnick that no one, especially not some toot-tooting fox that still rode in a stroller, was going to ever get her to leave Nick, but her presence seemed to be making it hard for Nick to stay mad. Her kiss had sure helped. His ears had perked right up and not even Finnick's whip cracking gesture and sounds had been able to bring them down. She snuggled up against Nick's side a bit more and his lips curved up in a smile before he seemed to realize it and forcefully put the frown back on his face, but she could see the effort it was costing him to do so.

Surprisingly though, after their little discussion and brawl, Finnick had seemed far more accepting of her. She wouldn't quite call him a friend… yet, but they seemed to have come to an understanding. Mainly, that if Judy ever did anything to hurt Nick that he'd do his best to beat her to a bloody pulp and that if Finnick ever tried to break them up she'd return the favor. Judy had to hold down a laugh thinking about it. Her dad needed to take some lessons on threating perspective boyfriends and mates from Finnick.

"Still can't believe that your trying to join the Fuzz, let alone that you married a bunny." Finnick said as he drove. He'd offered to give them a lift since he'd been heading toward the edge of the Haymarket area in Savanna Central near where Nick's dad's shop was located.

"Nick Wilde, the eternal bachelor, hustle supreme, brought down by a bunny." Finnick chuckled, and Nicks frown deepened, "She did more than just hustle you good! She fucking hustled you so good that you still can't even see it!"

"You're just jealous." Judy shot back at Finnick smirking. Nick's lips twitched up again and she felt his arm snake around her shoulder to holding her.

"She's right Fin. I think your just jealous that I have such an amazing mate." Nick said and Finnick scoffed with a loud,

"Not in a million fucking years, Nick. I'd marry my van before I married a bunny."
"That, I can completely believe." Nick said a grin coming back, "Anyway who was that fennec vixen you went on a date with a few months back?"

Finnick went stiff, his paws on the steering wheel tightening till Judy thought he might snap it. "Don't you start-"

"Greta wasn't it?" Nick continued, "Granted everyone has their own tastes, I'd take my beautiful cute bunny over any vixen or doe but I didn't think you where into girls that easily outweighed you despite still being shorter than you."

Judy craned her head around Nick to look at Finnick trying to imagine a fennec fox that heavy, while Finnick snarled back, "That wasn't a date, I had a drink and a dance with her and I was completely drunk! That was it!"

"More than just one dance," Nick snickered, he leaned over to Judy and stage whispered, "Honey has pictures, she was dragging him around the dance floor like a rag doll."

"Nick." Finnick said in an attempt at a calm voice.

"Yep, Mr. Charming?" Nick replied easily.

"Shut the Fuck Up!" Finnick snapped and Nick snickered for a bit while Finnick drove, now the one grumbling.

"You two are just like my brothers," Judy noted with a smile watching the two.

"Almost could be," muttered Finnick, "I've always had to watch out for this idiot like he was a stupid brainless little brother. And now he's not only going to try and join the freakin Fuzz but he's playing around at being a private investigator and fugitive recovery agent."

"We aren't playing," Judy shot back confidently, "We broke the Missing Mammals case and brought down Bellwether."

Finnick shook his head, "Bunny, you'd better be damned careful, you don't have the all the rest of the Fuzz to back you up working alone. We might have just been hustlers but we've seen enough of the city's underbelly to know the real dangers. And most of those sleezeballs are not going to take it well when you two come looking to collect their asses for a bounty."

He gave her a hard stare, "I'm holding you personally responsible if anything happens to the dumbass."

"Hey!" Nick said indignantly, "I can take care of myself!"

Finnick gave one hard barking laugh, "No, Nick you can't. Not when it comes down to a real fight." Nick tried to interrupt but Finnick cut him off with a look, "How many times have I saved your tail in a fight? You can usually get yourself out of a brawl. But this time you're going to be trying to take them down, not running away like the fucking smart thing to do."

Judy grinned, "Don't worry Finnick. I got his back."

Finnick shook his head muttering, "I can't believe that I'm trusting his tail to a damned bunny."

"First, I took down a rhino at the academy," Judy said proudly to Finnick's look of disbelief.

"And how the hell did you do that? Did you ask him kindly to fall or club him in the back of the
head with a bat?" he asked clearly not believing her.

"Nope, redirected his punch and got him to knock himself out," Judy said smugly. Finnick even looked slightly impressed and muttered quietly but not quiet enough for her ears to miss, 'would have made a hell of a hustler.'

"Second." Judy added, "Where not planning on getting in fistfights. Nick's going in to take his weapons license exam this Friday."

Finnick made a choked squeaking sound, "You're going to trust this dumbass with a \textit{weapon}?"

"Yep, gonna be just like the old wilde west!" Nick said happily.

Finnick was quiet for a few moments though he was giving Nick a look that asked 'how stupid are you?'

"Nick?" he started slowly as if talking to someone missing a few marbles, "Do you remember the cork gun carnival game back at the warehouse?"

"Sure do." Nick replied his smirk growing, "If I remember correctly I've beaten you at it every time you've challenged me."

"Yes, but you still missed \textit{over half the time}!" Finnick said, still speaking slowly but with clear exasperation in his voice.

Nick waved his paw as if that didn't matter, "Of course I missed half the time. I tampered with both of those cork guns so they'd never fire straight."

"WHATTT!?!" Finnick shouted, his deep voice rattling the van.

"You didn't think I'd put up a carnival game that would be easy to win, did you?" Nick said, his hustler smirk showing fully.

"But our bets? You bastard! You had me betting on a rigged game?!" Finnick snarled.

Nick gave him a look that clearly said, 'and your surprised?'

"I had to shoot using the same screwed up toy guns as you Fin. Fair is fair, and it's not like \textit{I} tried stacking the deck at our poker nights." Nick said in an almost patronizingly smug tone.

"I only did that once! And you knew about the guns!" Finnick steamed.

"Honey and Flash only caught you once, oh and you just missed the turn." Nick added helpfully.

Judy had to hold down her giggles as Finnick pulled the van in a U-turn to get back to the auto-garage's parking lot, cursing the entire time. They really did act like a lot of her brothers. Always bickering and trying to one up the other but still looking out for each other.

As they got out of the van, Finnick called over to Judy, "Make sure to take pictures for me when he does something stupid like tazers himself!"

Judy laughed, responding with an enthusiastic "Absolutely!"

"You're supposed to be on my side," Nick whispered, leaning down to her.

She gave him a peck on the cheek, "I am. Consider it incentive to \textit{not} tazer yourself."
"Kisses are a better incentive." mumbled Nick, though he was smiling a tiny bit.

"All carrots and no stick makes bunnies lazy." Judy replied.

Nick kissed her on the cheek and murmured right in her ear making her blush a little, "First I'm a fox, Second I like my Carrot." He then gave the inside of her ear a kiss and fire seemed to travel up and down from the point of contact.

Judy was trying to come up with a retort but a feminine voice called out from the open bay door of the garage.

"Fin, I though you said you'd be over right at the beginning of the day! You're an hour late."

Judy could feel Nick tensing up. He mumbled something about needing to get going but before he could lead her away, an arctic fox, a very beautiful, even to Judy, arctic fox came out. The vixen finished cleaning her paw on a rag and pointed the wrench she was holding at Finnick.

"And what happened to your face? If your late because you were drunk and got into a bar fight I'm taking back my discount for you." She said sternly.

Finnick walking around the front of the van shrugging, "Wasn't drinking, had a gig last night and a drunk wanna-a-be gangster fresh out of the system got upset at something and started tearing up the place. Owner gave me a bonus for helping to throw him out on his ass since the bouncer was already busy. As for being late," he pointed at her and Nick, "Blame the love birds, their shenanigans held me up this morning."

The vixen turned to look at them and Nick froze under her gaze. She crossed her arms, tapping the wrench.

"Nick." She said

Nick responded with a stiff, "Skye."

"It's been a while. I think you've been avoiding me longer than your mother." Nick flinched, "There've been some very interesting stories going around about you lately, though," she glanced at Judy before returning to her striking lavender eyes, eyes almost the same shade as her own, to Nick, "by the looks of things they seem to be true."

Finnick let out a ruckus laugh at that, "More than anyone in their right minds would imagine. Nick hasn't so much as even kissed a girl since me and Trevor got him to kiss you during valentine's day in elementary school and then he goes off in a single night and gets himself married! And to a bunny!"

Judy could feel her jaw drop as she looked back and forth between Nick and the vixen, the beautiful vixen, the type of vixen she'd expect to see modeling not working at an auto-garage.

The only other fact that seemed to register in Judy's mind besides the elegantly stunningly beautiful vixen was the statement that Nick had kissed her. Then some of what Nick had said at the subway yesterday popped up in her mind. This was the vixen he'd been crushing on. This was the vixen he'd called cute.

Chapter End Notes
Muhahaha! The Jedi might have the Force and the Sith might have the dark side but I draw my power from pure grinchy spitefulness :} (and coffee)

*snicker* I'm curious as to how many of you picked up on the hints and how many of you got blindsided this chapter.

Also, As far as Skye's eye color, feel free to correct me but I think the original concept art had her with purple/lavender eyes.

...

Now, I'd like to give a general thanks to everyone who has favorite/follow and especially those who have taken the time to review or pm. So Thanks, I can now redeem those for coffee credits. Now for some overdue answers and responses to comments and reviews:

First, congrats to Zero Reader and OldFan123 (Ao3) and Gunslinger99 (Ao3) for figuring out the reference in the last chapter.

Upplet – COOL! Another one of the big time (and real) writers actually read this drivel and liked it! So um I got a question, did the pirates abduct you too, or are you part of the crew? Because if you've been forced to write 400,000+ words in your story and haven't found a way to escape by now, well then that bodes badly for my future.

Man0Man192 – wow that joke was shaping up to be grinch level bad!

Phantomreader42 – well hopefully this made up for it!

Wolfear – LOL you don't know just how true that is… yet!

Zero Reader – Nice pickup on the reference, hope you enjoy this chapter too.

TheAssassin2 – If you're asking about the kool-aid then you need to check what's in that cup already in your hand.

GusTheBear – Thanks again for the names, looking forward to using some of them. As for the time it took to update, it was only a week (looks over shoulder at jailkeeper *sigh* back to work)

Starfang's Secrets – I guess Fin did accept it :) thanks again for all your reviews. Still loving your story. Oh, and as for the previous chapter that 'rubbing it in her sisters face' moment was one of my favorites too, also got to love parents :)

Archangel12575 – Thanks again for the constant reviews (Oh and as for typos, you missed the purposeful typo of somebunny, Muhaha!)

DrL0gic: aka Guest – Here's a nickle! Thanks for the review but I think I see another pirate ship on the horizon, Prepare For Battle!

BlackAngelRider – Hows that for perfect *snicker*

Lurangos – Thanks, it's been interesting trying to keep up such a writing pace especially as the chapters have tended to get longer, but don't worry (or at least you shouldn't, I am) the pirates are keeping me busy.
Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps – How’s this for kicking off a ‘mad Judy’ *snicker* hope you’re still enjoying this :)  

Uatu – ahh another typo, Run Away! Hope you continue to enjoy the story though :)  

Robert Escher – LOL oh you have no idea how true that is!  

Kenneth Walker (guest) – Thanks! As for the reason I’m not more explicit in the intimate scenes, well it just doesn’t seem to fit the style of this story. Just like the Old Arrangements story style just feels like it should be T rated. I may write a story in the future that is more explicit but first I’d need one that felt right for it, then I’d probably need some (a lot) of liquid courage (coffee) to help me get up the gumbo to actually do it. But both of those are entirely possible, so we’ll see :)  

There are a lot of others that I probably missed but to everyone I did, Thanks again! (Oh stop gripping all of you on Ao3 I can respond directly in the comments section there. Though oygy (Ao3) gets a honorable gonekrazy3000 proofreader medal for pointing out some truly bad typos)  

Till next time, keep hanging on to that cliff! *snicker*
Chapter Notes

Thanks again for all those who commented, favorited, followed, kudos-ed, etc. Its greatly appreciated as my coffee allowance (the immortal elixir of life) is controlled by the pirates and dependent on these. I'm gonna keep the notes short this time since real life is waging a side war with the pirates for my time and the WildeHopps Navy is demanding custody of me for a little while to get the next chapter of Old Arrangements out too. *Sigh* How did I end up here again? I'm a damned reader!

Disclaimer: Disney has issue a bounty on me for plagiarizing and stealing their stuff. They've even put out wanted posters. Here's my response to the one the pirate jail keep showed me, "Uh, uh… Agh! Oh no. No no no no no no no no no no, this is bad, this is very very bad, this is really bad… They just can't get my nose right!"

Typo Disclaimer: Life's been busy (Though the pirates are bound and determined to keep a decent update schedule) for both me and for my proofreader, so I get a free pass on this one, or at least until he catches up! Whoopie!

'Aaaand today we bring you the showdown you've all been waiting for! A no-holds bar grudge-match for the heart of one male! Who will win? Will the infinite passion of the new win out over the lasting love of the old?'

Ring, ring

'Or will the seeds of love planted in years past finally bloom and prevail over the wild flowers of recent days? Don't miss this epic show down! Fur is going to fly!'

Ring, ring

'This promises to be a cat fight the likes of which you've never seen before! Who will get the ring? Who will get married? Who will get the mate of their dreams?

Ring, rin-*click*-

"Hello, Reddish speaking." A feminine voice said into the phone.

'Make sure to tune in tonight and watch the final episode of Marriage and Mates: Bachelor Island!'

A paw pointed the remote at the TV turning it off.

"Spitz, it's been a while but not long enough." The female said, clearly not happy.

"For a sleezeball like yourself? Forever is too soon." She sneered, "Now if you don't mind I have better things to do today than talk to-"

She stopped for a second listening, before nearly choking and spitting out, "You want me to do what?!"
"I have at least some dignity asshole. And to think you have the balls to call me up and ask me to do that after you destroyed my friend's…"

She stopped for a second looking shocked, "repeat that?"

"Nobody would pay that much, even for scumbag job like that." She said disbelievingly.

She listened and after a bit mumbled, 'had that coming'.

She tapped the phone as she thought. After a few more moments she spoke up, "Fine. I'll do it but I want the money up front… and I want you to help me get that spot I've been trying for. I know you have dirt on everyone in this business. The money and the spot and I'll do it."

Her face scrunched up, "Dignity always has a price, especially in this line of work. What makes you an asshole is that you get a kick out of this type of job too." She snarled before slamming the phone down.

"He called her cute!"

That thought keep rolling through Judy's mind over and over again. The only break was the other thought about Nick kissing the vixen.

'Cute' had a very special meaning to bunnies. It didn't just mean fluffy and pretty or adorable. It meant lovely, beautiful, desirable. Calling another bunny cute was just about the highest praise and clearest sign you could give that you were interested in courting them.

And he called her CUTE!

He was her fox. He was only allowed to call her cute. Judy didn't care how pretty the vixen was, she wasn't going to let some gold-digger steal away her mate. She couldn't, she would not lose him. Those months at home had been absolutely miserable, and now after not just getting him back but being able to truly be with him, love him, wake up with him… No. nothing was going to take away her fox, no one not even the prettiest mammal in the world.

He was hers.

Judgy's thoughts were interrupted as the vixen took a few sniffs of the air before frowning, "You've always known what I thought of your choice to give up and hustle instead of get a real job, but I never thought that you'd sink so low as too hoodwink someone into whatever your trying to pull now."

Hoodwinked?!?

Judy's eye and ear twitched.

"Skye, I know we parted on bad terms," Nick started, "But it's not like that, people change-"

She pointed the wrench at him interrupting, "Oh you changed once, you used to be one of my best friends, and then you changed and became cynical and distrustful and nothing I ever tried could change you back. You said I was a stupid fool for believe that I could make my way with real work without cheating other mammals." She said heatedly, and with more than a little hurt.

"Well, look where it's gotten us know." She waved at the building behind her, "I owe my own business know, and you're now not just hustling popsicles, your"
there was a deeply voiced mutter of "they're not popsicles, they're pawpsicles" from Finnick, and the vixen turned her gaze on the small fox for a moment.

"There re-frozen popsicles that you make from melting bigger popsicles you hustle wearing kids clothing!" Finnick's face tightened a bit and he muttered obstinately "costumes, acting costumes, like the stuff movie actors wear."

The vixen rolled her eyes, "Whatever. You at least try for something more than being just a hustler. You haven't ever just completely given up. He," she pointed back at Nick, "has. And now he's apparently fallen to fleecing mammals by pretending to marry them! He even marked her!" She said in a mix of anger, hurt disappointment, and disgust.

The sudden argument had caught Judy and her reeling thoughts off guard but this was too much.

Judy grabbed Nicks paw before saying angrily, "You think this is some farce?!"

"Absolutely!" the vixen said back, but her voice wasn't nearly as harsh as she continued, now talking to Judy. Instead her voice was full of sorrow and sympathy, "I don't know what he's told you, but ever since he changed as a kit he's become the exact stereotype of what you bunny-rabbits and all the other species think of us foxes as. He has some scheme going to make a quick buck out of this."

Judy was trying hard to hold onto her temper, she'd been losing it way too easily yesterday, and she wanted so badly to wallop this overly pretty vixen at the moment. Bad enough that Nick had had a crush on her and kissed her and thought she was cute (it didn't matter if that was back in elementary school, he was hers!), but to then have that vixen call their marriage a sham?!

The vixen just shook her head and let out a sad sigh, before speaking again, "I don't believe in all those stupid stereotypes mammals toss around, so I'm not going to believe you're some dumb cute emptyheaded bunny. I read some of those news stories from a few days ago about you two, but I know him and who he's become. Do you really think a distrustful hustler like him would just suddenly stop and quit that kind of life because he gave you some tip and got knocked out when whatever hustle he was pulling then went wrong?"

She shook her head again. "The new mayor with his political agenda arbitrarily declaring you married to someone you don't even know because some stupid ambulance team threw you two together on a gurney where you ended up cuddling while passed out. That isn't going to make him your mate. He might have even marked you for whatever hustle angle he's working now, but he's never going to consider you a mate or love you, hell, I don't think he even knows what love is anymore, and the fact that he marked you just goes to show how low he's sunk."

Judy had noticed how the vixen's words had effected Nick; his ears and were pinned back and his tail was drooping all the way to the ground. In fact, his normal mask of indifference seemed to pretty much have disappeared. She could feel her anger hitting critical levels and knew that she need to do something before she went over and wholloped that fox with her own wrench.

Finnick cleared his throat, "Um… Skye, there actually toghe-"

Judy though wasn't paying attention to Finnick. She caught the vixen's eye and very deliberately let go of Nick's paw. She could almost feel Nick deflate next to her, but she reached up and grabbed the tie he was loosely wearing with another one of those ridiculous shirts and yanked him down to her level, were she vigorously chinned his head and muzzle. As soon as she was sure she done a thorough job she looked at the vixen and growled, "I don't think he'll consider me his mate or love me, I know he does!" before giving him the hardest deepest kiss she could without dragging him to the ground.
There was a deep, annoyed mutter of, "Gods damnit, I don't need to see this again." But Judy's focus shifted entirely to Nick. For a moment, she could feel his surprise, and she pressed her momentary advantage before he responded, his downtrodden posture and attitude seeming to wash away in the wake of her kiss. His paws wrap around her pulling her closer and she could feel the low rumbling growl of her mate. She wished that they could just keep on kissing like this but there was still that vixen to deal with, so after a few more moments of pure pleasure she broke the kiss. Nick bumped his nose to hers and she could see his smile return before he rubbed his cheek against her marking her and mumbling quietly, "Thanks Judy, I needed that,"

Judy gave him another peck before turning back to vixen who was looking at them with a quizzically surprised expression.

"You're the one who doesn't know Nick." Judy said. She could feel Nick scoot up behind her as his arms wrap around her and his muzzle rested on her head. She could tell just by the way he felt against her that he had a happily dopey smile on his face. She took one of his paws before continuing, "He might have a cynical hard shell and an awful taste in shirts and jokes but underneath that is the most caring, loving mammal I've ever meet."

The arctic fox raised an eyebrow before looking at Finnick.

"Fin, are you sure that's Nick?"

The small fennec fox gave Nick a close examining look before saying, "I think so? My nose isn't working too well at the moment though. Does it smell like Nick?"

The vixen gave another couple of sniffs of the air, "It is if I'm remembering right, but it's been quite a while, I could be wrong. You're the one that's still been hanging around him, are you sure this isn't some other fox," she waved the wrench in gesture, "a cousin or some secret twin brother we never knew about? Because that," she gestured at Nick, "isn't the Nicholas Wilde I remember."

Finnick grunted, "Ya, it's freakin weird seeing him actually smile,"

"or his tail wag," the vixen added.

"or how he's always trying stay close to her" Finnick pointed out.

"or that he actually seems interested in a female, not to mention she's a bunny" She said disbelievingly

"Oh, he's more than just interested," grumbled Finnick and the vixen gave him a questioning glance. Finnick shuddered, before muttering, "Don't ask, you don't want to know."

"I thought you said he's been more cynical and withdrawn these last couple of months?" the vixen said.

Finnick gave Nick another look, "Yep, as I said, this is weird as fuck. Almost as weird as him suddenly deciding to give up hustling."

Now the vixen finally looked shocked. "No way!"

"Yep, he's not only given up hustling," Finnick said looking a little dubious himself, "he's trying to joining the Fuzz."

Her jaw dropped.
"That's what I said too." Finnick replied to her look of disbelief, "Mrs. Bunny Cop apparently got them set up as PIs and Bail officers for the ZPD while the courts sort out his academy admission and her status."

"If you're going to call me 'Mrs.', Mr. Toot Toot. Then it's Mrs. Wilde." Judy said a bit peeved at their side conversation. She and Nick where right there after all.

Both the fennec fox and the vixen looked back at them and Judy felt Nick's chin shift on her head as he snickered quietly.

The Vixen narrowed her eyes at Judy before demanding, "What did you do to the real Nicholas?"

Nick reached back to his pocket with one paw and the held up his new wallet and with a smooth flick, Judy wondered when he'd had time to practice doing that, flipped it opened displaying his badge and ID.

"Present and accounted for" he said cheekily.

If anything, the vixen looked less convinced.

Nick sighed and dropped his cheeky attitude, "Skye, you were right about a lot of stuff," the vixen seemed about to speak but Nick kept going, "And yes, as you've repeatedly told me in the past I am a 'stubbornly idiotic dumb fox'. That's why it took so much time, along with one unstoppable bunny that cares too much for her own good, for me to finally get over my issues."

Judy tried looking up at Nick, which was a futile effort considering their current position, "You're not just some 'stubbornly idiotic dumb fox', you're my 'stubbornly idiotic dumb fox', and don't you forget it."

Nick's chin rubber her head, and he said with a smile in his voice, "Don't worry Carrots, I'll never forget that, and even if I somehow did, I trust you to drag me back by my tail and remind me."

The vixen spoke up again, "That's it? Time and a bunny that told you to change?"

"More like showed me I could change," Nick said before grinning, "And… she may have hustled me too."

Finnick barked a laugh at that, "May have? Skye, you would have loved to have seen his face. Never seen anyone get hustled that freakin good before!"

Nick quietly muttered something that sounded an awful lot like 'stupid back taxes' and 'a dollar and thirty two cents', before he spoke up again.

"Out of everything you tried Skye, you never tried to hustle me," he said grinning again at the artic fox who scowled back, "It also helps that she risked her life to save mine a few times and that she also stole my heart." He gave to top of Judy's head a kiss, before his voice turned more serious

"I'm sorry I was such an ass to you, especially when you were only trying to help. Hell, I'm still apologizing to Judy for how much of an ass I was to hear when we first met. But she's special Skye, or at least special for me. She managed to do what you and the rest of my friends and even my mom couldn't. I'm not one for all that preaching and faith stuff, but if there's one thing that makes me think that Karma and the rest might actually be there, well the fact that the mammal meant for me was a bunny and that she hopped on into my life right when it was finally starting to sink in that I really was just wasting it is one hell of a big coincidence."
The feeling of Nick holding her against him along with his words was sending warm tingle pulses through her. She couldn’t help but agree with Nick that she was incredibly lucky, almost Serendipitous, to have found someone so perfect for her.

_Now I just need to make sure that overly pretty vixen knows that that he's mine. She let the perfect mate slip through her paws and she's not going to get a second chance because I'm not giving him up to anyone!_

The vixen’s face took on an oddly funny look while Finnick broke out laughing.

Nick snickered, "Ya, you overly pretty vixen, the _perfect mate_ slipped right through your paws!" he said in far too pleased of a tone.

Judy’s ears and cheeks started to burn. "I… um, didn't say that out loud, did I?" she asked, hoping the answer wouldn’t be what she thought it was.

"Did you say that out loud? Yes, Yes you did." Nick said while nearly laughing. Judy reached up pulling her ears down over her face, while Nick chuckled some more before gave her another kiss. "Don't worry Carrots, nobody's as pretty or _cute_ as you," Judy face heated up some more hearing him call her cute, and she let out a low embarrassed whine of 'Niiicckkkk!', but rather than stopping him, it only seemed to encourage him, "And while having a beautiful and _cute_ mate that loves cuddling with me in bed and-"

She let out a shrill mortified squeak of 'NNNNIIICCCKKKKKK!'

"-but while all that is amazing, absolutely wonderfully amazing, that's not why I fell in love with you Mrs. Cutesy," Judy couldn’t even get out a verbal response this time. She tried swatting at him with one paw but the ear she released to do that popped straight up revealing her beat red blush and flustering her more. There was kiss on the back of her other paw, which caused her grip to loosen and her remaining ear popped up like a released spring.

"I love you, will _always_ love you, my lovely cute wife because you're the kindest, most good hearted mammal the world will ever see and you choose me to share that kindness with."

The heat in her ears was joined by a heat lower in her and Judy turned around burying her face in his chest while thumping him ineffectively with her paws, "Niiicckkk, you can't just say that kind of stuff to me in public!" she whined desperately, now clutching his shirt to keep her paws from trying to unbuttoning it while she worked to keep her eyes from watering.

Nick closed his arms around her and she could feel his tail wrap around her legs as he held her, "But I have so much more I want to tell you!" he said in a pleading playful voice, "can I tell you the rest in Fin's van? That's not in 'public' and I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

The was a very loud and indignant sounding snarl from Finnick, "If you even try Nick, not even your bunny is going to be able to stop me from rearranging your Face!"

Judy could feel Nick’s chest vibrate as he held back a happy laugh. He knelt down and pulled back till he could put his nose up to hers. He was smiling, his tail swooshing back and forth behind him. Nick gave her one small peck, barely a kiss, "Did I forget to tell you how much I love you today?"

She shook her head, she'd already lost count this morning of how many times he'd said that to her. She would have thought before meeting Nick that repetition like that might make it less meaningful, that it would make the words dull and mundane, but to the contrary, the more he told her the more it meant each time.
Nick smiled broader and gave her another small kiss, "Well, I can't remember if I did, so I just want
to tell you that I love you Judy. Nobody, not even the overly pretty vixen I had a puppy crush on for
less than a week in second grade is going to be able to lure me away from you. Your stuck with me
now and forever."

"Nick," called the vixen in a half amused and half peeved voice, "Call me overly pretty one more
time in that joking tone of voice and I'm gonna help Fin with rearranging your face."

Judy kissed Nick back before turning to the vixen and saying in a defiant voice, "You'll have to go
through me first if you want to get to Nick!"

The white fox actually gave a laugh at that, "Oh, I don't want him." She said as she smiled, "He's all
yours, I just thought me and Finnick could do you a favor by trying to knock some of that snark out
of him before it drives you crazy. Hell, that's most of what put an end to our 3 day romance as kits."

"4 day" said Nick, and the vixen rolled her eyes.

"Half a day doesn't count," she replied.

"That's not what Mrs. Horton, our math teacher said when we asked her! She said that you always
round up when its halfway!" Nick said triumphantly, "And, it was you stealing from my half of the
blueberries at lunch that's what ended our romance. Judy, on the other hand shared a whole bushel of
the best blueberries I've ever tasted, with me!" Nick said smugly and then stuck out his tongue in a
truly childish way, even making spluttering sounds.

"Unbelievable," the vixen muttered before looking at Judy, "Are you sure you want to be stuck with
that for the rest of your life? I don't know how you got him to change, but not even you, Mrs.
WonderBunny, seem to be able to cure him of being an overgrown kit."

"Oh, I'm not that bad," Nick piped up, "From what she told her sister, I seem to be doing an
excellent job as her bedwarmer and-"

Judy could feel her cheeks flare back up and she flicked her ear quickly, smacking Nick across the
muzzle, while she tried to shush him, hissing, "What happens in bed, stay in bed, Nick!"

He just smirked.

"Not when you answer a Muzzletime call in bed and your friend walks in on you," Nick said and
then nibbled the tip of her ear, causing her to squeak loudly as a bolt of electricity went running
through her. She jumped away clutching her ears as her body seemed to tingle warmly in the
aftermath of the spark.

Nick's happy smirk broadened.

"You sure you don't want us to try to and knock that out of him?" the vixen asked in a hopeful tone,
adding, "You can borrow one of my wrenches if you want to join in too."

Judy just looked back and forth between the two foxes, one still overly smug and the other with a
hopeful look, but before she could formulate a response, Finnick spoke up, "Unless we are all going
to go give Nick a good thrashing, can we finish up with this highschool reunion, I got sleep to catch
up on and shit to do."

Nick gave Fin a two-fingered salute, "Yes sir-e, Mr. Toot Toot!"

He looked back over at the other fox as Finnick grumbled but seemed to finally lose his overly
playful attitude.

Nick took a breath before speaking, his ears dropping back, "Skye. I know we, well… I ending things on bad terms, I was a really jerk during the end of highschool,"

"That's putting it mildly," she said stiffly.

"Fine. I was a total self-righteous ass too caught up with my own problems and the more you tried to help me the more I pushed you away. I'm sorry Skye." He said, his eyes and ears down, "I'm sorry I wasn't nearly as good of a friend as you deserved."

The vixen continued to look at Nick with the same stiff hurt anger for a few more seconds before sighing and walking over to him. She stopped in front of him, looking at his downcast expression before giving him a quick whack to the back of his head.

Nick let out a surprised 'OWw!' looking up at her.

"Your mom was right when she started calling me your older sister in middle school. You're like a wayward little brother that always needs someone watching out for them, and then after highschool you went haring off and started avoiding me and your mom! For Years!" She whacked him again, "You stupid kit!" another whack, and a muttered 'Oww! Hey! Come on,' from Nick who was now trying to protect his head, covering his ears with his paws. "If it wasn't for Finnick and the rest of our friends we probably wouldn't even know if you were alive or dead!" Nick cringed a bit, seeming to expect another blow.

Instead, she stepped forward and hugged him. "You stupid, stupid idiot, you didn't have to run away from us. Did you think we wouldn't forgive you?"

Nick stood there frozen, before slowly and shakily returning the hug. He squeezed his eyes shut and lowered his head to her shoulder, and after a moment, murmured something in a choked tone.

"Idiot. Of course, I forgive you." She said back, giving him another, softer whack to the back of his head.

Judy watched without interrupting. There was still a part of her that didn't like the other fox near or especially hugging her mate, but for the most part, the overwhelming protective urge from her screwed up mating bond that had made her edgy whenever another female so much as looked at her mate, was silent. Maybe it was that this vixen, Skye, was acting like an older sister. She actually reminding Judy of some of her own older sisters. Judy still felt a protective urge but the fox simply didn't feel like she was a threat anymore, if anything this felt like this forgiveness was something Nick needed. She could see exactly how much Skye's actions and forgiveness meant to him; the fact that his normal mask was cracking and his real emotions where peeking through illustrated just how deeply this mattered to him.

Nick reached up and rubbed at his eye's sniffing a few times before mutter about dust making him tear up.

The vixen, Skye, rolled her eyes again, "Stupid younger brothers. You don't have to try and hide your emotions. Real foxes do cry."

There was a shout from inside the back of Finnick's van, and the small fox's deep voice rolled out, "No they don't!"

Nick gave a hiccupping laugh, "And who are you calling younger brothers? Me and Fin are both older than you."
She took a step back, eyeing him like he should know better, "Neither of you two, especially you," she flicked him right in the middle of his forehead with a finger, "act like it."

"Ow, Hey! Quit it Skye, you've made your point," Nick said pleadingly.

"Good," She nodded her head, "Now are you ever going to do something that stupid again?"

"Nooo," Nick replied, his voice both remorseful and sullen, before he gave a small grin, "Judy wouldn't let me anyway."

Judy huffed, muttering, "And you'd better remember that."

Skye gave a single snicker as she shook her head, "I still can't believe that just finding a mate has done so much for you in such a short time." She said still sounding a bit dubious of it.

A small smile appeared on Nick's face and he gave Judy a look that made her feel warm and fuzzy before he said, "I told you, she special."

Skye gave another snicker, "Maybe I should try finding Finnick someone special too then. Might actually get him to give up that van and find a real place to live."

There was another indignant shout from the back of the van of "Never gonna give up my van!"

Nick shook his head, "Good luck with that, you'll need it to find some mammal willing to pry him out of it" He looked back at Skye, and a bit hesitantly, almost shyly and asked, "Are we back to being friends?"

She looked at him like he had asked something incredibly stupid, "I never stopped being your friend, I was just mad at you, and even madder that you ran away."

Nick looked a bit ashamed but hopeful as he asked, "So are we better then?"

Skye crossed her arms, before saying, "Almost."

She looked at him pointedly, a bit of irritation coming back, "Do you remember just how much of a jerk you were in senior year?"

Nick's ears dropped and he said remorsefully, "Yes, I'm sorry about that."

She nodded her head seeming to accept it but asked, "And do you remember highschool prom?"

'Um… yesss." Nick said very hesitantly and now looking worried, "You were prom queen. Went with that jock wolf as the, prom… king… and…" he trailed off falling silent under her gaze which was approaching a glare.

"and your prank?" she continued.

"I, ah… I'm not sure I remember any prank." Nick said, sounding a bit desperate.

"You sure? That must have been a lot of work to get an ice blower from tundra town set up in the gym for the 'Ice queens' entrance blizzard." She said as Nick started wilting under her accusing glare.

"Um… oh that little thing. Ah, you know it made for a pretty spectacular entrance, you looked stunning in the yearbook photo coming in with a blast like that." He tried, but Skye was apparently not ready to let it go.
She looked right at him, seeming to pin Nick with her gaze, "Do you remember what I told you?"

Nick gulped, "That… um, that I should remember that, because… one day I'd come to regret it?" he said looking very worried and even contrite.

She kicked him right between the legs. Nick yelped in a high-pitched voice and fell to the ground, while she grinned, looking satisfied and leaned over him saying, "Now we're good. Bet you regret that a whole lot right at the moment, now don't chya?"

Nick groaned and managed to whine in a pained voice, "I said I was sorry!"

She nodded her head smiling like she wasn't standing over Judy's mate rolling around on the ground in pain, and said sweetly, "Apology accepted."

Judy's vision seemed to narrow on the vixen, who stopped and glanced at her looking surprised. Judy only now realized now that she was growling.

Skye gave her a halfhearted, apologetic shrug with a, "That was long overdue, but if I had really wanted to hurt him I would have used my wrench" while gesturing at the large tool sticking out of the pocket in her work overalls, where she put it.

Judy could feel her ears angled back and down, nearly vibrating with anger, and as the vixen gestured at the tool her vision narrowed a bit more and she could have sworn it went red.

Nick decided as he lay on the ground moaning and clutching at the source of pain arcing through him, that Karma seemed to have a truly vindictive way of evening the scales. Then again maybe he should try to be grateful, he had one of his oldest friends back and if she had used that wrench then he'd be looking for a job that needed someone who could sing soprano. He let out another moan; It was just very hard to think positively when you were in this much pain.

He heard Judy's growl turn into something more like a snarl and Skye mutter what he thought was 'uh-oh' before there was a mad scramble. Nick rolled to his side and opened his eyes just in time to see Skye running all-out back into the auto-garage before a gray blur zipped by him heading from her.

Skye shouted out at the incoming fluffy ball of wrath headed her way, "Now bunny, Jude, Janie, Jill, what's-your-name, let's not over react-

Oww, probably shouldn't have called her Jill, Nick thoug in a moment between the throbs of pain.

The small gray storm let out a war cry as she entered the garage screaming, "Nobody Hurts My Fox!"

The next moments where filled with the sound of yips, yelps and auto equipment and parts clanging and crashing to the ground.

Finnick came into Nick's view carrying a small folding chair and the cooler he kept stocked with cold beer in the back of his van. He casually unfolded the chair and sat in it as a tire bounced and rolled out of the garage to the continued cacophony of noises and shouts. He adjusted his shades and opened a can from the cooler before turning to Nick.

"Beer?" he asked.

Nick nodded taking the cold beer and using it as an improvised ice pack.
"Might feel better if you drink it." Finnick suggested.

Nick half sighed in relief at the cool soothing sensation, half groaned at the remaining, throbbing pain, "I might throw up if I drink it right now." He replied.

"You gonna go and try to stop them?" Finnick asked sipping his beer. There were some curses from in the garage and something about shoving a wrench 'were the sun don't shine'.

"Not a chance in hell, I don't want my wife to kill me." Nick said quickly.

Finnick nodded like he'd said something truly wise, "Smart choice. Who do you think will win?"

"100 dollars on my wife" Nick immediately replied.

As Finnick seemed to consider that, there was a mad cackle of glee, followed by a 'Oh, Carrot Sticks!'

"Done" Finnick said, right before there was a blasting stream of water that came shooting out of the garage, followed a moment later by a soaked bunny sliding along the wet ground being pushed by the stream.

The cackling continued as Skye appeared carrying a hose sized for larger mammals, that she seemed barely able to control. It took Nick a second to recognize her because her fur had big black splotches of something on it.

Skye continued to hose the now cursing, could it be called cursing if it seemed to be a list of vegetables?, bunny along shouting as she laughed, "HA, Take that, and that *Cackle* That's for getting used engine oil on my fur! Do you know how hard that is to get out? Well I'll show you, *Cackle* first you take a lot of water-"

The large stream of water pushed Judy past Finnick's van but Judy caught the edge of the bumper and used it to swing herself behind it the van shielding her from the jet of water, to Skye's sudden displeasure.

"Hey watch the van!" Finnick barked at Skye as the water played over it and she tried to move to the side to get a shot around it.

"Call it a free car wash Fin," she said, grumbling while trying to maneuver the unwieldy hose. Finnick seemed about to protest, but immediately quieted down when she called back, "And I'll give you one too if you butt in! That Bunny is mine"

Nick despite the potential repercussions, couldn't let that stand unchallenged and managed an unsteady shout of, "Actually she's my bunny."

he was pretty sure he was about to get water blasted, when said bunny's very unhappy face, still dripping wet appeared in the window of the van.

Skye's attention focused back on her target and the water blasted across the window, but to no effect. Judy on the other hand took the chance to make some inappropriate gestures at Skye, much to Finnick's amusement. That accomplished, Judy smiled menacingly at the now glowering vixen and disappeared from the window.

There was the sound of the side door on the opposite side of the van opening and Skye moved the jet of water back and forth between the front and rear of the van apparently trying to catch Judy as she came around the van. But instead of coming around, Judy hauled herself onto the roof carrying
Finnick's baseball bat. Before Skye could redirect the stream of water, Judy leaned back and then snapped her whole body forward whipping the bat over her head and sending it flying forward, spinning like a buzzsaw blade, before leaping back down behind the van.

The bat though, hadn't been aimed at Skye and went sailing into the garage where it hit something and with a loud clatter the raised car lift dropped to the floor, right on top of the hose that had been dragged underneath it pinching the line.

The jet of water suddenly became a trickle, and Skye muttered a 'Shit!' before looking up from the now useless hose to see Judy round the corner of the van back on the offense. She was carrying something in each paw shaking them vigorously as she charged. Skye dropped the hose and dashed back toward the garage.

There was a snap-hiss and a can came flying after Skye spinning and spewing white foam and froth everywhere.

There was a startled cry from Finnick and he yelled, "Damnit! Don't Waste MY Beer!" But Judy had already opened and thrown the second can before Finnick had gotten his desperate cry out.

Skye yipped as she ran into the garage, the cans hitting the ground around her and spraying her with the liquid before she made it into the shelter of the garage, though Judy was right on her heals.

"She owes me for those two beers!" Finnick growled at Nick as a new eruption of clattering sounds and curses came from the garage, "Wasting beer is be a crime!"

Nick shrugged, "Deduct it from the hundred bucks you're going to owe me."

There was a sudden terrified squeak followed by a laugh of "See how you like this in you fur!"

Judy came sprinting out of the garage with Skye chasing her, carrying what Nick thought was a car grease gun. They rounded the corner of the building and a few moments later there was some taunting from Judy.

"Oh the poor little fox can't even catch a wee bunny rabbit? Too bad the windows too high for you-Oh Carro-!" he voice was cut off as there was some scrambling sounds from the side of the building.

Finnick leaned over, "Doesn't she know that foxes are pretty good at leaping?" he asked.

There was some sudden laughter from inside the garage, 'Ha! You must be fatter than I thought to get yourself stuck in the window! I thought foxes where supposed to be sleek! Ha, Nope! You can't even reach me with that grease gun and your stuck like a raccoon in a-"

"I'm not trying to reach you with it, you dumb bunny. But I'll use it to give you a mohawk furstyle as soon as I'm free!" Skye snarled.

"Cheese and cra-"

Judy's voice cut off by a yell of "FREE!" and there was a renewed round of scuffling sounds and things being knocked over, before there was another shriek of terror followed by some loud mechanical hissing and then cackles of laughter and more loud hissing.

Skye came running out of the garage, coated in white powder, followed by Judy dragging a fire extinguisher and spritzing her with white clouds. Skye was able to get some distance between them and beelined for the van, shutting and locking the doors once she was in. This time it was the rather disheveled arctic fox looking out the window and making rude gestures.
Judy sniffed and then blasted the window with the fire extinguishers spray. When she finally let up the window was completely covered in white dust. Judy hopped over to the door, and holding onto the door handle with one paw to keep herself up, began drawing in the dust on the window. It wasn't long before she'd cleared some of the dust away making the window look like a comical barred prison window through which they could see the now unhappy looking vixen's face. At the bottom of the window she wrote in the dust, 'WARNING: OVERLY PRETTY VIXEN, KEEP AWAY FROM PERFECT MATE'.

Judy hopped down looking completely satisfied.

Skye stuck her tongue out at Judy, who then responded in kind, and before long they were making faces back and forth at one another through the window.

Nick turned his head back looking at Finnick, who was frowning. The throbbing had died down enough that he could put on his best hustler grin without wincing as he said, "Judy trapped Skye. Pay up."

We interrupt your normal Fluff broadcast because I'm a grinch and I can. *snicker*

This was going to be a small intro to the next chapter but it's a wee bit too long for that, so I'm turning it into a sort of intermission chapter. It's about time for another one anyway.

Disclaimer: So not only is Disney after me for something I'm being forced to do. As in, IT'S NOT MY FAULT. But it turns out that if I tried to turn myself in to claim the bounty on my head they won't pay it to me. How messed up is that? But then again, I'd have to escape the pirates first so that's not really an option to begin with, but still!

Oh and Fox in the hen house, if you're still free and not imprisoned you need to check those lawyers of yours more carefully; I don't think they're Disney agents. Look for peg legs, hooks, and eye patches, because them singing 'Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, it's off to the Jail he goes!' should worry you because it's the pirate jailers favorite song.

Typo Disclaimer: SHHH! Be very, very quiet! GoneKrazy3000's says that it's about to be Typo hunting season.

A smile appeared on the face of the mammal as the slight difference in the sound registered to his long ear that was pressed up against the absurdly large safe as he turned the locks dial. He had to rely on his equipment to get past the electronic locks, hell, he had to rely on either equipment or specialists to deal with any sort of electronic lock, computer firewall or all that other digital mumbo-jumbo, but there were a surprising number of ways to circumventing those types of security system. That was why anyone really serious about protecting something also made sure to have a physical lock system too.

And this one had been a very good lock, exceptionally smooth and even with a few false tumblers that would have thrown off most experts of this rare craft. Too bad he was also one of the very best at cracking them.

He stood up, putting the tools he'd used to bypass the electronic part of the lock away in pockets below the elevator repair company uniform he was wearing. He reached up and grabbed the lower of the two wheels on the safe. Serendipity bless mammals who designed stuff with different sized mammals in mind, he thought before twisting the wheel.

There was a very satisfying but soft 'Thunk' as the locking bars in the safe door retracted and he swung the think metal door open on smoothly oiled hinges.

He would have let out a whistle in appreciation if that wouldn't have also alerted the entire meeting room of shady mammals only two walls over from him. He settled for a grin rather than snickers as he thought of how much fun this was going to be to rub in U's face. Nobody, not this group of
corporate and criminal bigwigs or even U would have expected him to try and break in during their big conspiracy get together meeting, which was exactly why it had worked.

He looked over the large pile of stacked money and gold bars before his eyes settled on a smaller stack of files.

*Bingo.*

He reached up to start looking through them to confirm that they were the documents he was looking for but stopping when some innate sixth sense went off. These mammals had been incredibly paranoid about security, they had to be to have survived this long while dealing in illegal international weapons smuggling. They'd been scrupulously careful to make sure that there were no digital records that could be hacked and very few physical ones that might be stolen. That was the reason he and a few others had spent the last half year tracking down different leads for information and evidence on this operation. The security in the building, or at least the upper floors, had been impressive and the safe even more so, but he couldn't shake the feeling that he was missing something.

He took a second, longer and more careful look. Yep. They were absolutely paranoid, but not paranoid enough it seemed. He took out a few more tools and for a rather tense minute, worked on disabling the large explosives package in the safe. Well more accurately he disabled the the pressure sensors under the money, gold and documents. He wasn't going to touch that hideously complex looking explosives package if he didn't have to; that would be just asking for trouble. Hell, it looked like a swiss army knife of an explosive package, he'd bet it had a remote activator and at least a dozen different anti-tamper devices that would probably set it off if he tried to fiddle around with it directly.

He couldn't help a moment of irritation as he worked. Black market weapons dealers they might be, but seriously?! Did they really have to use so much explosives? If they had just wanted to destroy the evidence, something not even a tenth that size would have sufficed.

He breathed a quite sigh of relief after he'd disabled the last sensor and found that, yes, he still was alive. He knew he shouldn't let himself feel smug, things always went to shit if you got too cocky. But he couldn't help but indulge in some momentary cock sure pride, which he blamed on the slight bit of euphoria from having messed around with high explosives and not blown himself to smithereens.

He reached up and started rifling through the pile of documents. It was smaller than he'd been hoping for but damn if this wasn't exactly the type of information they desperately needed. A very smug grin settled on his face and he muttered quietly, "I wish I could see their faces when they realize someone broke in, especial that bitchy-"

A sudden noise that seemed deafening in the silent room erupted from his pocket.

" ~What does the fox say? 'Ring-ding-ding-ding-dingeredinged'~ "

He cursed reaching into his pocket to try and silence the phone, while trying not to snarl, "Gods damned phone, I thought it was on vibrate! And why the hell does H always have to put the stupidest ringtones on it!"

He ripped the phone out of his pocket finally silencing it, but unfortunately the constant low level of conversational noise from the other room had gone silent too.

He could hear a deep voice ask, "What the fuck was that?" before more voices joined and there was
a shout of, "SECURITY! FIND WHOEVER THAT WAS."

"Shit, shit, and shit." He said before running over and throwing the heavy deadbolt on the inside of the door, then threw a chair against the handle, not that that would do much. He started looking around the room, not quite frantically, more of a controlled focused panic, as he looked for any way out, because there was no way he was getting back out by the elevators now.

The phone went off again, "~What does the fox say? 'Ring-ding-ding-ding-dingingeding'~ "

He hit the answer button holding it up to ear and snapped, "What? I'm kind of busy right now."

An older female voice, utterly calm though with the slightest hint of amusement, came over the speaker, "What? Wooing another doe that you're going to leave heartbroken after your mission? Make some sort of excuse, priorities have changed. We've already sent another agent out to take over your operation. I need you back in Zootopia, 00S."

The was a beeping sound from the door as the electronic lock outside disengaged, followed by a thud as the deadbolt and chair kept it from opening.

"OVER HERE!" yelled a shrill high voice. A voice he recognized, one that he frankly despised though he'd made sure to give her every inclination of the opposite in his interactions with her over the last month. She was the reason he'd found this little base of theirs to begin with.

"I'm past the wooing and sort of in the middle of the heartbreaking, U" he said flippantly, looking around the room just a bit desperate. His eyes passed over the large safe and then snapped back to it an idea popping into his head; granted it was a stupid idea. A hideously awful idea. An idea that was probably going to leave him dead.

The shill voice yelled, "Someone's locked the door from the inside. Break it down!"

But then again facing near certain death was probably better than having to try and act like he actually liked that egotistical, malicious sadist of a doe. Not that maintain that farce would probably help him any in the current circumstance.

"Agent 00S," came a calm, though slightly exasperated voice of U from the phone as he rushed over to the large and very heavy safe, "What did you do?"

There was a loud thump from the door followed shortly by another, as he worked to quickly and carefully, well at least as carefully as he could while completely rushing, to remove the explosives package from inside the safe while he replied to U, "Oh you know me, just went out for a stroll this morning and just happened to stumble on some of that information we were looking for."

There was shrill order to move aside. The loud pounding on the door stopped right before there was a series of gunshots. He looked over his shoulder just long enough to see holes appearing around the deadbolt which had bent from the pounding before one bullet hit the lock square on, sending most of it careening past him into the room.

"Just a stroll? Pretty loud for a just a casual morning 'stroll', are there fireworks on this stroll?" came U's voice as he managed to free the explosives package without messing with any of its wiring.

"Um, there's probably about to be" he said and slid the explosives underneath the safe.

"Please tell me that you are armed and have a backup escape plan." U said as if he was a kit who'd forgotten to brush his teeth before bed.
He winced as he stood back up and turned to face the door, "That would be a no and a sort of," there was an exasperated sigh which he ignored, "Security on this place was too tight to try bringing any weapons and that sort-of plan is about to happen so I gotta go. Later!" he hung up just as the door came crashing open, sending the chair skittering across the floor.

Two wolves in dark suits carrying pistols, one a tranq pistol and the other a slug thrower entered.

He raised his paws in a surrender gesture as both guns were leveled at him, though one of his paws was partially covered by the half open safe door. A few seconds later a white hare with far too much makeup on came into the room looking almost predatory, the bad kind of predatory, the 'I'm about to eat someone' kind of predatory. Her wickedly gleeful smile though, dropped when she spotted him.

"Terry 'humper?" she asked in a slightly squeaky voice, that was now very confused.

"Thumper, Terry *Thumper.*" He said dejectedly, stressing the 'Th' though he knew that it wouldn't make a difference, it hadn't any of the times before. At least that stupid name was just the alias for this mission, He'd hate to have that as his real name.

"B-But why are you here?" the doe said, her voice trailing off as what was obviously apparent finally seemed to dawn on her.

Her bewildered expression was rapidly passing her normal sneer and turning into something far uglier and meaner.

He gave her his most winsome smile before saying, "I just thought I'd stop by to tell you that I didn't think things between us were going to work out Dorthy."

He was expecting her reaction and had jumped behind the safe door before the first bullet from her pistol came whizzing by. An outraged scream of fury that would have done a banshee proud and two more bullets followed pinging off the safe door as he closed it, glad to hear the locking bars reengage as it shut, sealing him inside.

Now if he just played this right, he might actually get out of here alive.

There were a few more pings followed by a yelp from one of the wolves that he assumed might have been from a ricochet, before the shriek became understandable.

"We were supposed to be going out for a romantic dinner tonight! You two faced bastard! I'll cut your balls off and feed them to you!" another useless shot ping off the safe and he couldn't help but think, *and there's the Dorthy all the crime lords know and love* 'before she continued, "I had the perfect dress! I even had something special planned for afterwards, a hotel room just for you and me!"

He shuddered hearing that and mumbled, 'dodged a bullet there'.

"I though you where something special, someone I could actually love!" she shrieked and fired again.

Now, he just needed to play this right, if he could just use her massive ego and narcissism to his advantage he might just get out of this. All he needed to do was be his naturally charming self.

"You might have better chances finding love and a mate if you weren't a crazy homicidal maniac!" he shouted back though the door.

Another scream and a few more shoots. *Well that went well,* he thought and smiled.
Her shriek died back down and in something closer to her normal shrill voice she said, "Come out now 'humper and I might even let you live! I'll just chain you to my bed; If you're a good boy I won't even shoot you, not even a little bit."

*Shit, Shit, Shit. Maybe I laid on the charm a bit thick there? Well let's try again, "Dorthy, I hate to break it to you but it's just not going to happen, I'd mate with a fox before I'd rut you. Anyway, I can't stand mammals who dye their fur."

Another outraged screech and a few more shots pinged off the door.

**That went better, and that clip should be out of ammo.**

"There's someone else, isn't there?!" Dorthy screamed, "Some bimbo tricked you into doing this! Who is she?!!"

*Ok, not what I was expecting but I can work with this*, he thought before saying, "You're right Dorthy there is someone else, someone that has my whole heart. She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen and she's far cuter than you."

Her furious screech was back at banshee levels.

*Good, just a little more. He loaded his voice with as much pity as he could before saying, "I could never love you; How could I ever love someone so much less attractive? You'd always just be… inferior."

He was glad that there was a very thick metal door between him and her, because the sheer wrath of her shriek was probably peeling the paint off the outside.

*"IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU, NO ONE WILL! YOUR GONING TO DIE BURNING IN THAT SAFE AND I'LL SEND YOUR LOVER THE ASHES!"*

*Gotchya*, he thought pleased with himself while bracing on top of the stack of money and folding his ears down as tight as he could against the back of his head. There was the faint sound of a door slamming shut and then his world seemed to explode.

Well not literally. There was a skull piercing clap of thunder that rolled through the safe as he was smashed down against the pile of cash. Then right as a loud ringing replaced the sound of thunder he felt himself go weightless for a moment before being slamming down again, before going weightless again. This repeated another two times before the world decided to stop playing with him like a pinball and he was slammed down onto the cash for the last time.

He only gave himself a moment to groan and check that he was still alive,

*Heartbeat, check. Limbs still attached, check. Not gushing blood, check. Yep A-Okay, just gotta ignore the giant gong a bear is hammering on in my head*

He got shakily to his feet, before feeling around the inside of the door for the emergency release.

*Gods bless safety conscious designers, can't have little kits or spies getting locked inside of safes and not being able to get out. He thought as his paws closed on it and he yanked before swinging the door open.*

He took a stumbling step out into what appeared to be a… clothing shop, no, this was the clothing section of the department store on the first floor of the building.
"That worked better than I could have imagined, gonna have to remember that trick," he mumbled as he looked up at the sizable hole in the ceiling… and the ceiling above that one too.

He shook his head before turning back to the safe and collecting the documents, then just for good measure took a few of the stacks of bills and one of the smaller bars of gold.

Taking his bearing, he'd scouted out the building a few days ago, he hurried over to the small mammals clothing section. He was lucky that the store was almost empty at this hour of the morning. He removed his uniform revealing the normal street cloths he was wearing underneath. He grabbed a few items using them to hide the uniform and then hurried over to the cash register at the front of the store.

The hippo behind the counter was on the phone with a very worried expression as he talked to what seemed to be emergency services. It sounded like the hippo was being forwarded to the fire department from what he could pick up around the ringing in his ears.

Waving, he managed to get the Hippos attention. Acting as terrified as he could, he put the items on the counter along with some of his recently acquired cash, just enough to cover the items, before speaking.

"S-Sir! I don't k-know what the h-hell kind of store t-this is b-but I want to get my s-stuff and l-leave before t-the whole b-building comes down! He stammered, looking back occasionally toward the rear of the store with a terrified expression.

The hippo seemed about to protest, so he slid another few bills onto the counter, "H-Here, that's m-more than e-enough, k-keep the change I w-want out of h-here!" he said trying to force a bit more panic into his voice like he might be about to have a mental breakdown.

The hippo gave him another look and nodded saying something he couldn't understand past the ringing in his ears. He grabbed a bag and his items and bolted out the door like any stereotypical terrified small prey mammal.

Once outside though he immediately shifted back to a casual posture and walked down the sidewalk, mixing into the light morning pedestrian traffic.

15 minutes later and he'd made sure he wasn't being tailed and had also changed into the clothes he'd bought. He'd made sure to transfer all his gear before he'd dumped the uniform and the clothes the hippo had seen him wearing in an ally dumpster a few blocks back.

He took a seat on a bench in a small quiet park and pulled out his phone. The ringing in his ears was still there but it had faded to the point where he could hear normally for the most part.

The line connected almost as soon as he'd hit the dial button.

"You done with your stroll?" U asked.

"Oh, U does care!" he said cheerily before getting down to business, "Got out fine, the exit was a bit… unconventional but I have the files. My covers blown though."

There was a moments pause in which he could have sworn she muttered something about him always being 'unconventional', though he couldn't be sure with his current hearing, before she said. "Agent 00T is already on her way to your cover rental house, she'll torch it and be gone in less than fifteen minutes. Disappear and make your way to the secondary extraction point. By the time this phone call ends every record that Terry Benjamin Thumper that ever existed will be gone. Identification, birth records, bank accounts, credit cards, everything. You'll have to ghost your way
there. Any issues?"

Pretty much what he'd expected, "Nope, should be there by tonight."

"Good, I'll see you in a day or so, 00S." U said, "oh... and try not to go on any more strolls" there was a click and the line went dead. He pulled it away in time to see the screen go dark with a 'pop' and a small line of smoke come out from the corner of the case.

He got up tossing the phone in the nearest trashcan and started walking, blending back into the crowd of the foreign city's streets.

Chapter End Notes

A/N

Thanks again for everyone who has favorited or followed and especially taken the time to review this story. As before its appreciated as my coffee ration is dependent on it and if you think I'm snarky now you don't want to see me without my coffee!

So Thanks Everyone, and a special call out to the recent reviewers:

Cemsay

Kenneth Walker (guest) – oh by the way see the bottom for an explanation of your question

The Keeper of Worlds

Soildier

Cimar of Turalis WildeHopps – see next line

Upplet – still can't believe you and Cimar, two of the top TOP Zootopia writers reviewed and PM'd me, if I was any less grinchy I might make a big deal of that!

Kagehana15

Bleachfan0

GusTheBear – this is one super cool dude, but you all are gonna have to wait a few chapters to find out why.

TheAssassin2

Starfang's Secrets – Another one of the Big Zootopia writers *squeal* (delete that last part please)

Camoss

TwilightHexe

Archangel12575
Fox in the Hen house – One of the people I blame for getting me trapped writing this stuff, hey stop applauding him for that!

Sabress

eng050599 – This guy has a really interesting story based in probably the most realistic direct real world interpretation of Zootopia. Not a superfluffy story (though a guest piece of it in Cimar's '100 Kisses' is) it's still really interesting. This guy is like the Brian Greene of the Zootopia world. (I'm gonna see if the pirates can't scrounge up some imaginary doubloons to pay him to consult a bit on this story's Zootopia universe. (Here, there is absolutely the possibility of boxes and funnies, but I'd like to have my explanation straight for when the Disney lawyers finally drag me to court)

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And a general Thanks to the AO3 commenters as well! (You all have this really cool comment section below the chapter so I'm not gonna put it here.

...

Also a special Thanks to Gonekrazy3000 for all his help proofing this story, he's been a huge help. Yes where a little backlogged getting proofed chapters up but I'm a grinch so you English teachers out there are just gonna have to suffer a bit more.

...

There was a question posted by a guest about the religious aspect of the characters/species in the story. I'm gonna add a section to the Notes page before the next chapter is posted that covers this but the short of it is that that religions can be a sensitive subject to people so I'm staying away from it for the most part and also staying away from any direct crossover of any of the major religions (plus it just doesn't seem to work with any of the major religions because it would emphasise one species over another i.e. No fox Jesus, etc.) I'm building off of what has started to be a common theme in Zootopia stories with the references to Karma and Serendipity ("When Parents are Shippers" by Sophie Ripley, is one that comes immediately to mind though there are others and I don't know who started it). For here I'll just say that there's a sort of loose pantheon of 'gods' that are more like the embodiment of concepts than classic deities, and that each species usually has a favorite one they prefer (i.e bunny-rabbits, hares refer to Serendipity, while foxes and wolves refer to Karma)

Why does this matter? Well because it means I can't use curses like 'Jesus!' or 'Oh God' because they don't make sense in the concept of the story and I need something else to use. (and to those observant people, No Maid Marian and Robin Hood are not gods, they are significant folk tale heroes who by their significance to fox's have also entered into the use of exclamations and curses. Similar to the way Judy and some bunnies curse with vegetable names. No, there is no Giant Carrot God floating up on a cloud)

Additional Note: It seem's that Kittah4, another one of the Titans of the Zootopia world here is credited by most readers as being the originator of the Karma/Serendipity idea, so kudos to Kittah4! (*snicker* wow, my grinch collection of stolen ideas is growing, I need to get a trophy cabinet or something for them)
Chapter 35 – Welcome to the Family

Chapter Notes

For most of my readers you can probably skip right to the Disclaimer,

So I had some people who weren't happy about how this story is being written vent their complaints and frustrations online. Everything from Nick being a momma's boy and not being a stoic enough Schwarzenegger hard-ass (which is ironic because I'm pretty sure that if you asked Schwarzenegger he'd say that he's a momma's boy too), to complaints about Judy's jealousy not making sense (it's not OOC if there's a explained reason for it), and tons of disgruntlement over either too much fluff, to little fluff, or the fluff not just being a full on lemon, to being cheesy fluff (I prefer mine cheddar flavored, thank you) and so on.

First, I must say that my grinch side finds the sheer amount of frustration that these people present rather amusing. The fact that this story by its mere presence could derail people from their lives to vent about it? *snicker*, Second there is this side of me that might be a budding writers consciousness (If so I might have to amputate it, I'm a reader damnit) so I tried to explain why certain parts of the story where done in such and such a manner, which mollified some and enraged others.

So here's my standing policy on my stories, If you've got a concern, question, or suggestion please feel free to contact me, (pm's work great for this because I can easily respond back) and I'll explain my reasoning and if you present a valid point on something I haven't considered or think might improve the story I'll probably go back and correct it (I've done this before, and appreciate those who took the time to talk to me) but if you're just going to complain (and simply complaining is not constructive criticism), well I can't stop you. What I can do is just let my full grinch alter ego deal with it because watching people have internet melt downs and conniptions greatly amuses him.

As for where I'm proceeding from here, I talked to some real authors (i.e. not fakers like me) that I respect a lot. Their general consensus is that while I am still a new 'writer' (shudder) and still have areas I can improve on, that I've been doing a halfway decent job with this story and should continue on and not worry about those complaints. So take a guess as to whose opinion I'm going to take advise from, respected writers with lots of story writing experience or internet complainers who have not written anything?

…

Disclaimer: Transcript of events on pirate ship deck while captive was being given daily exercise:

Pirate in crow's nest: "Arrgh, der be a boat on da horizon!"

Captain: "There they are. No Disney ship or armada will stop us, Prepare for Battle! Run out the guns! Ready the Kerfluffle! Wildehopps will prevail!"

Crew: "Wildehopps! Wildehopps! Wildehopps! Wildehopps!"

Writer in chains: "oh not this again"
Pirate in crow's nest: "Um… Capt'n, dat there, not be a Disney ship"

Captain: *slightly confused* "What is it then?"

Pirate in crow's nest: *amused* "Dar looks to be a dinghy, be a few blustery land-lubbers throwing fruit from it"

Writer in chains: "Wait, I want to see this."

Captain: looks back at fleet of pirate ships. The biggest pirate ships raise black flags. *Captain smiles* "Stow the guns, they're not needed. Now, Raise the flag!" black flag with a bunny and fox face over crossed bones goes up "get the writer back below decks and break out the espresso," looks back forward and brandishes cutlass at dinghy blocking path, "FULL SPEED AHEAD!"

Writer in chains: being shuffled below decks, "Ahh, come on! Can't I at least watch?"

…

Typo Disclaimer: Karma and Gonekrazy3000 might get their revenge on me some day, but it isn't today!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bogo dropped the last of the reports he'd needed to review on his outbox and leaned back in his chair with a loud contented snort. He may have even let himself indulge in the rare smile of satisfaction. He couldn't remember the last morning that had gone so smoothly.

**Morning meeting and assignments went without issue.**

**Our case in the courts is moving forward.**

**Reports are finished.**

**Already completed the obligatory walk around the office with the 'you'd better be working' glare.**

**And the city seems to have finally worn itself out from the chaos; hasn't been this calm since before the Missing Mammals case.**

**And to top it off, my two hellions seem to be having an uneventful morning.**

While thinking of a certain rabbit and fox, his eyes wandered over to his cellphone. He'd already had his morning's moral dose of the Gazelle app with his morning coffee, but there was also…

He quickly tried diverting his thoughts. Why had his wife signed him up for those stupid alerts on new chapters? They were just stupid stories anyway. It's not like he wanted to read them.

**Don't care,** he told himself for probably the hundredth time since the email had pinged this morning on his way to work notifying him of a new chapter.

He looked at the clock. There were still fifteen minutes before his next meeting. Maybe if he just read it, he could stop thinking about it… No, *Can't fall for that trap. I don't care.*

He found his phone in his hoof,
Maybe another little moral boost dancing with Gazelle,

His finger swiped over the front of the phone unlocking it, but instead of clicking on the Gazelle app like he'd intended his finger missed the button and brought up his personal email, and right at the top was that stupid chapter alert.

Still, don't care.

Maybe just a peak

Don't Care, Don't care...

Could just get it out of the way

Don't Care, Don't care, Don't care...

His finger was inching towards the message. He was about to open it despite his firm resolution not to, when the door suddenly opened, startling him. Bogo's head snapped up to see Clawhauser, as his hoofs fumbled with the phone. He wanted to slam in do on the desk out of view but instead sent it skittering off the front of the desk and onto the floor.

"Clawhauser! How many times do I have to tell you to knock!" Bogo bellowed.

"Opps, sorry Chief!" The chubby cheetah sad not seeming chastised in the least. "Here, let me get that."

"No, no I..." Bogo started as he got up to get his phone while trying to contain his panic but Clawhasuer with surprising speed for his chubby frame got to the device first.

Don't look at the screen, just hand the phone back, Don't look..., Bogo thought desperately as he moved to take it back.

His hopes came crashing down as Clawahaser's usually large smile started growing and he let out a 'aaaaaaaAAAWWWW!' like tea kettle coming to a boil.

Bogo snatched the phone back out of the cheetah's paws.

"Oh M Goodness! Chief, I didn't know you read fan stories too! And not just Gazelle stories! What did you think of that one?! Was it any good?" The cheetah was nearly bouncing on his feet in excitement, paws pressing into his cheeks as he spoke while looked at Bogo with that expression. The Clawhauser expression. His eyes wide and adoring with a face so innocent and bursting with joy and excitement that looking directly at it could make you go blind.

Clawhauser had hit Bogo's wife with that look at last year's Christmas party when she'd complimented him for organizing the event; she and a few other guests as well, had spent the next five minutes cooing and gushing over the 'adorable young officer' like he was the winner of a kit pageant contest.

Bogo though, was a veteran cop. He'd seen the good, the bad and the ugly. He found or fought his way out of every impossible situation that this city had thrown at him for more than 20 years working this job. No face (short of Gazelle) was going to bring him down. And he'd figured out exactly how to deal with that look.

Bogo quickly diverted his eyes, focusing on the wall behind Clawhauser as he cleared his throat.
"ehem. Why," he started trying to throw as much gruffness into his voice as he could manage, "did you come barging in here Clawhauser?" Bogo's mind couldn't help but wonder if they could utilize 'The Clawhauser look' as some sort of anti-riot weapon.

_Might be more effective than tear gas; just roll up in one of the SUV cruisers, have him stick his head out the sunroof and show him a picture of Gazelle. That infectious smile would have an angry mob grinning right along with him in seconds, and wonder why the hell they'd been rioting in the first place._

Clawhauser's response cut through his musing, "Oh, sorry about that chief! It's just so exciting to know that you read those, I'll make sure to forward you all the best stories-

Bogo tried not to groan, "Clawhauser, the reason you're here?"

"Oh, right chief! Mrs. Woolstien is here early for your 9:30 meeting." Clawhauser said sounding a bit chagrinned.

Bogo headed back over to his desk, still avoiding looking directly at Clawhauser, _better safe than sorry._

"That's fine, I've already finished with the reports. Take those and show her in Clawhauser." He said handing the Cheetah the stack of documents before taking his seat.

Clawhauser saluted with a chipper, "Right away!" and headed out.

Bogo looked at his phone for a second before turning off the screen and placing in on the desk._Saved in the nick of time._

A knock echoed first this time around and Clawhauser opened the door letting in an older ewe dressed in a sharp business suit.

She came over and with only minimal trouble took the seat across from him.

"Mason." She said with a nod to him.

"Ulla." He returning the nod, respectfully.

She gave him a small matronly smile, "I'm glad to hear that you're finally pushing to allow smaller mammals on the force. I've been telling you for years now that they can surprise you with what they're capable of."

"Working out on the streets isn't the same as intelligence work, it can be very dangerous."

"Oh, I'm sure your right," she said, still with that smile of hers, "I'm in the intelligence division of the ZBI, what would a mere analyst know about field work?"

_Just an analyst my right horn_, Bogo thought as he tipped his head in acknowledgment. Ulla Woolington, was no ordinary ewe. She might just be an intelligence division analyst for the ZBI on paper, but there was a reason that while ZBI directors had change over the years, Ulla Woolington was still there, still in the same apparently dead end positon heading a small subgroup of analysts in the ZBI's intelligence arm.

"I've recently been shown thought, that size doesn't automatically mean a mammal isn't capable of handling those dangers." Bogo replied. He let out a breath, "It still worries me though. There are a lot
more ways that a small mammal can get hurt."

"Yes, that's true." The ewe said cautiously, "But a mammal can either do the job or they can't. If they can handle the job, then their size shouldn't matter. Plus, I think you'll find that smaller mammals might be able to bring some benefits that will compensate for that added risk."

Bogo nodded again conceding the point, before changing the subject, "I understand that you might have some information we could use."

A small frown appeared on her controlled, professional face, "Not as much as I'd like. And I need to apologize to you for more than that Mason. The Nighthowler plot caught us completely off guard. Most of the ZBI's intelligence resources have been focused on other interest, I and the ZI6 group certainly weren't paying close enough to attention to local activity."

"Local activity is supposed to be handled by the local ZPD branches," Bogo said shaking his head, "the ZBI's domain is crimes dealing with international components."

"Don't forget inter country crimes," Ulla added, to which Bogo just grumbled "depends on the circumstances." Intercounty crimes where a bit of a gray area between the ZBI and the ZPD, thought the larger cases usually ended up with the two working together, the ZPD assisting in their local areas while the ZBI agents coordinated between the local investigations. That's what was going on with the search for Doug and the financial backers to Bellwether's plot after all.

"Regardless," Ulla said, "Intelligence is my field, and we should have been able to at least give you a heads up that something of this scale was going on."

Bogo waved his hoof, "Can't change the past, Ulla. What do you have for us."

"A couple things." She said her expression going professional again, "First, there should be some information soon on the increasing in illegal weapons smuggling. The ZBI will be handling most of that but I'll make sure that the information gets to you as well. It might help the ZPD figure out whose working the local distribution end. As for helping you clean up the Nighthowler conspiracy, that might get difficult. From what the ZPD and ZBI got from Bellwether and her hired lackeys along with what we were able to piece together it seems like this isn't a full-blown organized conspiracy, which is a pity. That would be much easier to handle. Instead it seems like there are a number of small groups or persons that loosely know of each other and have too much money and festering resentment at the predator-prey cooperation in the city. This is going to be like picking out a slew of small thorns rather than dealing with one large one. Bellwether was simply a mammal in the right place and with drive to do something that came to the attention of one of the groups, which it seems then enlisted others as well. They simply gave her the funds and resources she had been lacking and let her run loose. The point of contact with her though seems to have been Doug."

Bogo tapped the table thinking, "Finding Doug seems like out best bet then to start unwinding this knot."

The ewe nodded, "That would be ideal but we have no additional information on Doug at the moment. We're devoting additional effort to trying to find any information on him and the financial backers though."

That was good to hear. For mere analysts, Ulla's group always seemed to piece together the most interesting and usually most useful information.

"As for the financial backers, we might have gotten a lucky break. I'm sure your aware of yesterday's scandal with the Zootopia National Bank?"
Bogo groaned, "More than aware, and the two responsible for breaking that were almost mugged right after though it looks far more like a hit. We haven't found any connection between that and the bank though."

The ewe seemed to take interest in that, "humm, would you mind if we take a look at the information you've found? Might be we can find a connection you haven't."

Bogo nodded, "I'll have a copy of the file made and sent over to ZI6."

"Thank you. Now as for the lucky break. The bank is coming under a lot of scrutiny because of that scandal. One of their employees had notice a number of… odd transactions and when he or she inquired about them, was apparently told by higher to stop looking into it. After the news story broke he sent the information to us anonymously. From what we've seen there definitely is something unusual going on that was being covered up. And where there's smoke there's usually fire. No guarantee it's the right fire, but my intuition tells me that it's in the right direction. The timing is just to coincidental. A full investigation is being put together by the ZBI but with the sheer complexity and scale of what they're going to have to deal with don't expect anything over night. Now in regards to…"

"We have so got to get one of these," Judy muttered as she stood on the fur dryer in Skye's small bathroom in the vixen's home behind Sky High auto. The upward draft of warm air ruffling her fur was as pleasant as sitting next to a pond in summer letting the sun dry her.

"Those fur dryers are absolutely wonderful," Skye said from the shower where she was scrubbing out the oil from her fur.

The end of their argument had come about when they both realized that Finnick and Nick had been betting on their fight. To say the least, that had put an immediate end to their argument as they teamed up on them.

*Males,* Judy thought not being able to stop the eye roll even though no one could see it.

Nick and Finnick where now finishing the cleanup of the garage while Skye had shown Judy back to her small house behind the her business so they could get cleaned up and throw Judy's soaked clothes in the dryer.

"Hey, Skye. Do you mind if I ask you a sort of personal question?" Judy asked.

"Go ahead. No guarantee I'll answer Whiskers, but there's no harm in asking." She replied.

Judy groaned, "Do all foxes have a thing about using Nicknames?"

Skye laughed at that, "See that wasn't so bad? I don't know about all other foxes but it's been something we've been doing since we're kits."

"That's not what I wanted to ask!" Judy said exasperatedly as Skye snickered. "You obviously care for Nick, I wanted to ask why you two never, well… never really got together. Not that I'm going to let you or anyone take him now, he's mine." She added hurriedly, to which Skye snicker some more.

"You really love him, don't you?" Skye asked and Judy could feel her cheeks heat up a bit from more than just the flow of warm air.

"Yes," she answered a bit shyly, she'd never had to try explaining her feelings like this to anyone before and wasn't quite sure how to go about it. "He's wonderful, sure he jokes around a lot, but he's
always there when I need him, he stood up to the Chief of police for me and when Bellwether was after us he stayed with me even when the smart thing to do was run. And underneath all that cynicism of his is the most loving, caring mammal I've ever seen. It doesn't hurt that he's cute, and has wonderful fur, or smells so…” she realized that she was rambling and shut up.

Instead of snickering at her, as Judy was half expecting, Skye replied in a serious, almost sober tone, "You must have really touched him, to get him to open up like that."

There was a short silence before she continued, "Nick was probably the most cheerful, happy and friendly kit you would have ever meet, but something happened. He's never spoken about it but Finnick and I am pretty sure it had something to do with some other kits bullying him."

"He told me what happened," Judy said with some anger in her voice thinking about what those kits had done to him.

"Did he now? Humm… Well, anyway, that changed him, he started closing up and then after his dad died… " she stopped again seeming to think, "Out of the three of us Nick was the only one to really have a normal family. He had two loving parents that he adored, and then to have that ripped away."

Judy could see Skye shake her head through the frosted glass of the shower door. "I think it is better to have had that kind of love in your life and lost it rather than never have it at all, but that must make losing it all that much more painful. He was never the same afterwards." Another short pause, "you know that foxes normally mate for life, right?"

"Yes" Judy responded.

"It's hard to explain to a mammal that isn't a fox, but it's a bit more than just choosing to mate for life. A lot of mammals have hold overs from older instincts, like wolves and their penchant for howling. For foxes the biggest is mating; our instincts get deeply involved. Heartbreak, for example can be a literal term for foxes, it's not all that uncommon for a fox that loses their mate to die from heartbreak. I think the only reason that Nick's mom didn't was that she still had Nick. Losing his dad though, torn a hole in his heart and then seeing his mother suffer through the loss just made it worse. Add to that the bullying and general distrust and prejudice of being a fox that he'd been so brutal made aware of as a kit, and it left a deep scare that none of us could fix."

Skye turned the water off and grabbed a towel, starting to dry herself, "You asked me why we never hooked up. I do love him, but it's the kind of love that siblings have. I'm not going to be able to explain it much better than that. I just don't think we would have made a good match, and I think Nick feels the same. We got along great as siblings, well for the most part anyway, but the few times we tried to see if we could be anything more it fell apart before anything could even get started. We just aren't right for each other."

Judy scooted over on the furdryer and Skye nodded and stepped onto it now that she wasn't dripping wet.

"Near the end of highschool Nick had pretty much given up on trying, every now and then there might be a glimpse of the old Nick, but he didn't want to try and fight for something more, he didn't want to find love. I think he was always afraid that if he ever found more, he'd lose it all over again, and he just couldn't face that. I think I tried pushing him too hard not to give up because it eventually he left and simply avoided me after that."

Skye turned and gave Judy a piercing look, as if she was trying to see down to the very depths of her being.

"I hope you're everything you seem to be bunny. I love Nick like he was actually my brother by
blood, but that love wasn't enough to heal his heart. He needed something more, something different, something I simply didn’t have to give him. Something he seems to have found in you. He's been hiding, avoiding opening up his heart for most of his life and now he's completely given it over to you.” her voice became absolutely serious, leaving no room for doubt, "You've been able to change him, to bring out who he really is, to make him believe in what he'd given up on, but if you break his heart, it will kill him."

…

They didn't speak for the rest of the time it took their fur to dry.

Judy followed Skye over to her laundry room afterwards, where she pulled out Judy's clothes from the dryer and handed them to her before starting to dress herself in another set of work overalls.

"Skye," Judy started, only continuing when the vixen nodded her head, "I'm never going to break his heart. I love him. I'd die before I did something like that."

The vixen gave her another appraising look before speaking, "Don't do something stupid like dying either, because that would fall under breaking his heart. I know that Finnick probably pulled you aside and had a conversation with you, but let me make this clear. If you kill Nick, there will be nowhere, not even hell itself that that will be able to hide you from me and I'll make whatever Finnick promised seem pleasant by comparison. He might have been hiding from me for years but he's still my little brother."

Judy nodded her head, "Fair enough, but you'd better remember that he's my mate."

Skye seemed to accept that, finally breaking from her grimmer visage and smiling.

"Oh, and one other thing," Judy said smiling back, "If that kick broke my fox, I'm going to come back over here tonight and take any pent-up frustration out by clobbering you."

Skye broke out in a good humored laugh before reaching over and tussling the fur on her head, "I'd expect nothing less!" she said before giving Judy a quick hug, "Welcome to our messed up little family, Judy. Don't worry, he'll be fine; I didn't kick him that hard." She grinned down at Judy, "but you've married into a fox's family; we'll always have each other's backs but we also rough house quite a bit and it's called rough housing for a reason."

"Oh, don't worry I know how to rough house with the best," Judy chuckled, "I've got 275 siblings and I can beat every single one of them."

Skye tripped and looked back at her, "275 siblings?! You're kidding, right?"

Judy smirked, "Nope. Just wait till the wedding ceremony when you'll get to meet all your new cousins."

It took Skye a moment to get over her shock, but then he started giggling before breaking out into full on laughter, "Oh my goodness, please don't tell Finnick that! I want to see his face when he meets them! That'll be absolutely priceless!"

Judy thought of how the fearless mob of her youngest siblings would react to seeing a small fox and grinned. The Kerfuffle would wash over him like a tidal wave and drag him off to go play with them.

*It's a good thing he has so much practice acting like a kid!* She thought before breaking out into laughter too.
After their merriment died down, and they were finished dressing, Judy asked something that she'd been wondering about.

"Skye, what about Finnick? How did he manage to stay close to both you and Nick?"

Skye lost some of her joviality, "Sometimes Fin worries me almost as much as Nick. He's certainly hasn't had it easy. He's got scars of his own, so he probably understands what Nick went through better than I did," She apparently saw Judy's curiosity on her face because she gave her a quick smile and shake of her head, "Not my story to tell Whiskers. As for Fin, while he's never quite given up on what he wants, he's still trying to make it as a DJ, he's got just as jaded a view of the world as Nick, and if Nick just wanted to hustle that world that was fine by him."

She looked back at Judy, "I'm actually kind of hopeful that with Nick getting out of the hustling business that Finnick might drop it and try for more too. Now come on, I've let those two stay alone in my garage for far too long, who knows what trouble they could be getting up to."

Judy grinned and followed Skye out of the house. As they headed toward the garage Judy looked over at the white vixen, "You know, I'm meeting up with two friends tomorrow at 5, since they're determined to interrogate me on Nick and what happened with the Nighthowler case. Do you want to come along?"

"Hey Finnick?" Nick asked, to distract himself as he lifting a box of parts back onto a shelf. The absence of Judy's presence was like a small ache that persisted despite everything he did to try and ignore it. It wasn't like she was even that far away just over in the other building, but despite all of his rational mind telling him that there was nothing to be worried about, that not being with his mate for every second of the day was completely normal and he'd better get used to it, his screwed-up instincts kept urging him to go find her and make sure that she was alright.

"Ya?" Fin grumbled in return as he worked to clean up some spilled oil.

"How did we get stuck cleaning up the garage?" Nick asked.

Finnick let out a laugh, "Because, dumbass, you let you wife find out you weren't only betting on something, but betting on her!"

"But I was supporting her by betting on her!" Nick said grinning, though he couldn't help glancing in the direction of where Judy had gone with Skye, thinking about her.

"I don't think that's how she saw it, regardless you ain't no bachelor anymore, so deal with it."

"Marriage needs to come with a manual or at least a warning guide." Nick grumbled.

"From what I know, marriage isn't that hard," Finnick replied smirking, "I even know the secret to it."

"oh?" Nick said rather dubious that about that. There couldn't be any magic secret to being married, and if there was one, Finnick wouldn't know what it was. "And what secret is that, since your such an expert?"

Finnick stopped and looked right at him with a serious face, "Something any tod should know. It's rather simple and easy actually. When dealing with your mate, all you need to do is remember one phrase; now repeat after me, Nick." Finnick said his smirk growing, "'Yes, dear'"

Nick gave an amused huff before returning to the task at hand, finishing putting everything back onto
the shelves from where they'd been knocked down.

Nick's phone buzzed breaking the silence of their work. He pulled it out and looked at the new message, a grin forming as he read it and looked at the attachment.

*That is perfect,* he thought, before sending a quick reply confirming the choice and asking when it would be ready before looking at the message again.

"What the hell has put that duffusy grin on your face?" Finnick asked, right before swiping the phone out of Nick's paw.

He took one long look at it before just staring back at Nick, who stubbornly tried not to show his embarrassment.

He glanced again to where Judy had gone before crossing his arms and saying, "She deserves a nice ring."

Fin just shook his head handing the phone back, "Still can't believe your freaking married now. Shit just isn't supposed to happen that fast for us foxes. Hell, you've been almost twitchy since she left just to go dry off. If it was winter I might be able to understand it, but it isn't. So level with me, what the hell happened? Because this ain't normal."

Nick tried holding out but Finnick was just as stubborn as he was. After nearly a minute of silence he sighed, "Fine, Fin." He went over and took a seat on some boxes along the wall. "I've been rather grouchy the last few months, right?"

"More like a pain in my ass, but yes. So what?"

"I, um..." Nick cleared his throat, Fin might be his oldest friend, as close to him as a brother and someone who had always been there to back him up, but neither of them had ever been very good at sharing their emotions to each other. "I sort of imprinted on her during the Missing Mammals case after she hustled me. It, um kind of happened by accident, and... I didn't realize it for quite a while."

Whatever Finnick seemed to have been expecting it wasn't that, "You've got to be shitting me, what did she do to make that happen? Save your ass from getting killed then carry you off into the sunrise while telling you that she loved you?"

Nick thought back to the incident with Manchas in the Rainforest district, to him almost getting mulled and then when they'd almost fallen to their deaths. Then to their departure on the skytram and what he'd shared with her. Just thinking about how she had reaching out to him then made his heart beat a faster.

"Pretty much," he replied, and Finnick just stared at him as if he was trying to tell if Nick was pulling a fast one over on him.

"ok, let's say I believe that," he finally replied, "That would at least explain your sour as a squeezed lemon attitude the last few months but what the hell is up with your..." he waved at Nick and then at the door where Judy and Skye had left, "your fidgetiness or whatever. You might be able to hide it from others but I grew up with you."

Nick shrugged, trying to grin and just said, "Nighthowler toxin."

At Finnick's confused expression, Nick relented, "I know you're not one to bother much with what's going on but you should read up a bit on the previous mayor's little scam. She was behind the savage mammals incidents, darting them with a drug to make them go savage. I got hit with it while we were
blowing the lid on the whole operation. Got hit with it while Judy was with me and already injured."

"And she's alive?!" Finnick asked seeming astonished and more confused, "You went savage and
didn't tear a wounded rabbit to bits? But... oh fuck." He stopped for a second, a look of dawning
understanding coming over him, "fuck, you'd already imprinted on her."

"Yep," Nick said, not surprised another fox might understand the implications of that when most
other mammals probably wouldn't, "Don't really remember most of it, just flashes here and there. I
got her away from the fight and then while we were alone... well you can guess what happened.
Docs said that with the drug pushing my primal side to the surface, and considering all the other
stress surrounding our mating, that I'm going to probably be stuck with my instincts dialed up far more than normal. I'm 'fidgety' right now because while I know that Judy's safe with Skye just a building away from me, my instincts are screaming at me to go find her and
protect her. Hell, I felt like almost attacking you this morning simply because you where another
male fox in my den with me and my mate."

Finnick took a bit to consider all that before giving a deep chuckle.

"What's so funny?" Nick asked a bit miffed at his reaction.

"What's so funny?" Finnick repeated, now laughing out loud, "What's so funny is that Nick Wilde,
the fox who didn't believe in love, the fox who swore he'd never get married, got his heart hustled
out from right under his nose and wrapped around a bunny's finger worse than any fox I've ever
heard of!" he let out a loud guffawing laugh, "Karma punked the fucking hell out of you!"

Nick snorted, but let Finnick continue laughing at him. There was more than a little irony to it, he
had to admit and when all was said and done he was far happier now with Judy that he had been
before without her.

After Finnick's laughing fit died down, and they'd just been sitting there for a bit in a companionable
silence, Nick spoke up.

"Fin, you mind helping me out a bit?"

"Depends on what you need help with," He replied in his normal taciturn manner, which for Finnick
was as good as a 'yes'.

"The rings gonna be ready in a few days, but I want to surprise Judy with it. You mind picking it up
for me when its ready?"

Finnick grumbled about not being 'a fucking delivery boy'.

"I'll bring the food to our next poker night," Nick offered, and Fin's grumbling lessoned
considerably. "Also, I want to do something special for her tonight. Things have been just a little
crazy since Bellwether's conspiracy blew up and I haven't been able to do anything close to properly
courting her."

Finnick snickered, "You're a little late to be just starting to court her now."

Nick grinned back, "Call me unconventional, but late or not, that won't stop me from trying. I'm
calling in that favor from Mike's cousin Luige for tonight."

"you're going to waste that favor on a dinner?" Finnick asked aghast, "Do you not remember how
much trouble we went through to get them that shipment of honey during the damned honey shortage
that year? I thought Koslov might wipe the floor with you when he figured out how you played
"Koslov might be a gruff scary bastard, but he's got his honor and he's a lot smarter than most mammals give him credit for. I beat him fair and square; he's not the type to come after me for that, granted he'll never play a game of blackjack against me again now that he knows I can count cards and his dealers know to keep an eye on me if I ever go in there again, but it all worked out."

"But all of that effort and your gonna call in your favor for a dinner?" Finnick said still perplexed.

"A romantic dinner," Nick corrected, "and if it makes my mate happy, then that was effort well spent."

"Fine, but it sounds like you have this all figured out, what the hell do you need my help for?"

"Flowers." Nick stated, and Finnick's expression froze before stubbornly locking up.

"you want me to get flowers?" he asked crossing his arms.

"Yep, flowers, tulips to be exact." Nick said calmly.

"Oh, no," Finnick said his expression hardening, "You are not getting me to go into some flower shop and be seen buying and carting around delivering fucking flowers! Not on your life!"

Nick smiled, giving Finnick a full blast of his hustler's grin.

Chapter End Notes

Oh and I'll trade some imaginary doubloons to anybody who wants to draw me that pirate flag, as I unfortunately have trouble even drawing stick figures (there always lopsided) (Hey, stop laughing at my lopsided stick figures)
Chapter 36 – Down the Rabbit's Hole

Chapter Notes

Too much fluff you say? Fluff too cheesy you say? Well then how about a double serving of extra sharp cheddar flavored fluff to start off this week? Ha, take that! (This chapter is NOT paid for by your dentist)

Disclaimer: The pirates received some glares from others in the Wildehopp's armada on our way to battle Disney's fleet (they hired the East India Trading company's war fleet from the Pirates of the Caribbean) for their treatment of a certain captive author (Noooo, I'm still a READER!). After much debate and a review of the pirate codes for ethical treatment of captives, it was apparently determined that I now fall under first class captive status since they've held me prisoner for so long and haven't posted a ransom. Woopie! Now I'm getting to write this while wearing my swim trunks and sunglasses, floating along behind the pirate ship in an inner tube that's being dragged along by a rope. They even gave me a fancy mug of iced coffee with a cute little umbrella in it. Granted I'm still a captive and being forced to write this, not to mention there's two more inner tubes behind me with pirates ready to stop me from trying to escape, but this is certainly an improvement. Thanks guys!

Typo Disclaimer: I have a bad feeling that mocking karma might not be the best idea, but then again when has a bad feeling stopped me before? It certainly didn't stop me from making the bet that got me into writing this in the first place? So, Typos, Karma, GoneKrazy3000: Neener Neener!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Judy watched Nick as they walked down the street toward his dad's old shop. He'd nearly appeared at her side when she'd returned to the garage with Skye. He'd given her a short kiss and hadn't moved more than a foot away from her since then.

His closeness and small touches, a subtle brush of his side against hers, a swipe of his tail along the back of her legs or even his outright holding of her paw didn't bother her, in fact she liked how he seemed to always want to be close to her. Bunnies were generally quite gregarious by nature and while she'd never been one to be overly affectionate, especially on the very few dates she'd been on in highschool, she was finding that having a mate like that left her with a warm fuzzy feeling. If this was how other bunnies felt with their significant other, then she thought she might finally understand the reason most bunnies were so into dating and finding a mate.

Not to mention she also found it adorably cute how he'd simultaneously try to subtly brush up against her as they walked along while acting like he wasn't doing anything more than just normally strolling down the street. Nope, nothing to see there. Just a normal, cool collected fox whose tail might just accidentally have brushed up against the bunny he was walking next to... repeatedly.

But as they walked she'd noticed her fox had an extra bit of bounce to his normally languid stride and a slight curve to the corner of his mouth.

He might not be in the hustling business anymore, but that didn't mean he still wasn't a hustler. And her hustler was up to something.
She'd been trained as a cop and she'd deduced that he knew something she didn't or had something planned though she had not the slightest idea of what it was. She'd spent most of the walk trying to get him to slip up and tell her but he'd deftly diverted every attempt and his smile grew just a fraction with her every try. Whatever it was, it had something to do with her and she was bound and determined to figure it out without directly asking him. She wouldn't let him win this game.

"You know, holding your breath like that just makes you look cuter." Nick whispered into her ear. His smug attitude had reached the point where he couldn't keep it hidden a few minutes ago.

Judy let out her breath in a huff, not having even realized she'd been holding it. She grabbed his paw and stomped forward all but dragging him behind her, muttering the whole time about dumb obstinate foxes to clever for their own good. She could hear him behind her snicker though his paw shifted and his larger fingers to interlace themselves with hers.

Yes, he is far too clever for his own good, she thought trying not to let him realize how much that simple gesture had done to mollify her exasperation.

"though not as cute as when your ears stand up like that," he whispered in her other ear from behind with a satisfied snicker.

Carrot sticks! She'd forgotten to control her ears reaction and now she had to work to also keep herself from blushing.

She flicked one ear back, satisfied at the surprised yelp the move caused as her ear whacked Nick across the muzzle.

"You've hit your 'cute' limit for the day," She said sternly, though she kept looking forward. It wouldn't do to let him see her blush, especially with the grin she just knew was on his face.

He might have won this round, but I still have an ace up my sleeve, she reminded herself to soothe her competitive spirit, thinking back to yesterday when she'd managed to slip out of the tailor's shop after convincing Trevor and Mr. Shepard to keep Nick distracted during the fitting.

Silly fox should have remembered how good my hearing is. But then again, if you can't beat them, hustle them better. I'll have to thank Nick for that lesson, she smiled at the thought.

As they rounded the corner of the street past a small coffee house with an overview of one of the small rivers that ran through Zootopia, a stern chiding voice broke through her thoughts.

"Do you need any help getting rid of that fox bothering you?"

Judy turned to see a cougar wearing a conservatively cut dress, her eyes framed by graying fur, glaring disapprovingly at Nick.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," she said angrily at Nick, "It's because of harassment like that, that a few of you keep prey mammals distrusting all of us predators!"

"Um… that's not-" Nick said, looking a bit like he'd just got caught with his paw in the cookie jar.

Judy decided that she better intervene.

"Thank you, but he's not harassing me," she said giving the cougar a kind smile before turning to Nick, "My mate here, is just too much of a joker for his own good sometimes." She reached up and
bopped him on the nose while saying, "Bad fox," in a mockingly chastising voice, "keep that up and you'll be sleeping out on the couch tonight."

Nick placed both paws over his heart making a gasping sound, "Noooo! You wouldn't, would you?" he dropped to his knees melodramatically and took her paw with both of his pleading, "Please not the couch, anything but the couch!"

Judy retrieved her paw while shaking her head, though she was smiling, "Stop your theatrics or I will make you sleep on that lazy-boy chair tonight."

Nick, grinning the whole time got back up while brushing off his knees. Judy looked back up at the cougar, who had a perplexed look on her face and was taking a few not to subtle sniffs of the air.

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness, but he really was just playing around." She said as she grabbed his paw, twining her fingers in his larger ones.

"Well I've never..." The cougar started, before giving her head a small shake and asking, "You two aren't the ones that have been all over the papers are you?"

Judy stood on her tip toes and gave Nick a small polite kiss on the side of his muzzle, taking extra satisfaction in how the inside of his ears tinged just a shade darker, before responding to the cougar, "Yes, I'm Judy Wilde and this is my husband Nick Wilde, it's nice to meet you Mrs...?"

"Catamount, Rosanna Catamount." She said still looking at them oddly, but gesturing back toward the small coffee house with a picture of a purple cat's face with a huge grin over one corner of the sign holding a steaming cup, "me and my husband own and run 'The Mad Tea Party' cafe, have been for the last 30 years," she frowned a bit at looking over the sparsely occupied café's patio, "Business used to be better before the cruise ships started docking over at Riverside rather than Harbor street, but we're proud of our little shop even if my husband picked such a silly name for it."

"Oh, I think it's a great name," Nick said, smiling broadly, "I loved that book, can you imagine a world with talking birds, reptiles and insects, not just mammals? Granted the author was crazy and high, but it's still a good book. Not to mention if any customers annoy you, you can simply say, 'Off with their head!'

Judy groaned and facepalmed with her free paw.

"Oh-no, not another one like my husband," Mrs. Catamount said in exasperation before looking at Judy, "You'll need to keep him on a short leash if Vernon is anything to go by." She shook her head, "Now, few customers or not, I need to get back to work. Don't forget to stop by if your thirsty and in the area." She said before turning back and heading toward the few occupied tables at the café, though she still snuck occasional curious glances at Judy and Nick.

"Come on Nick," Judy said, giving his paw a tug to get him moving down the sidewalk, "Maybe after we check out the shop we can grab brunch there before going to sort out our banking issues. She seemed nice enough, didn't make much of a fuss over us being an interspecies couple."

"Her reaction was certainly better than some we've gotten," he gave her paw a squeeze, "Maybe your right about the world being a better place than I thought it was."

They continued on quietly, though Judy hid a smile as Nick casually edged up against her side, still trying to not look overly lovey-dovey.

After a few moments of silence, Nick leaned over and asked in a quiet but serious voice tinged with concern, "You're not actually going to make me sleep on the couch, are you?"
Judy gave him a mirror of his normal smirking grin while letting go of his paw and nearly skipping as she moved ahead of a startled Nick.

"Depends on how good you are for the rest of the day!" she twitched her tail just for good measure, "Now where is your dad's old shop; shouldn't it be right around here?" she asked, more than a little smug with having managed to getting one over on Nick.

She looked back over her shoulder, in time to see him blink and stop staring at her before giving her a small grin, "Shops right here." He said, pointing to the building next to him, that she'd skipped right past.

... 

Judy hadn't really known what to expect, but her first impression of the building was that it looked old, old and run down. Granted most of the buildings in this area seemed a bit worn. It seemed that the loss of business that Mrs. Catamount had mentioned had hurt more of the western edge of the Haymarket than just their coffee shop, but despite that most of the buildings, even with their rundown appearances, at least looked cared for. This one stood out like a broken tooth in an otherwise normal, if unremarkable smile.

It was a three story high, old city townhouse style building with a flat roof and large store front windows on the first floor that were boarded up. To one side was a small side street with a few parking meters, though it looked more like an alley, that ran along the windowless brick side of the building. It led to a dead-end at what Judy could see was the river that ran behind the buildings and paralleled this street apparently also serving as the edge of the Haymarket part of Savanna Central. To the other side of the building was a smaller two story shop with a sign over the door advertising it as a rare and collectables book store.

"Well," Nick said, as Judy stood next to him looking over the dilapidated brick front of the building; there was the clear marks of a sign having been over the door, but it looked more like it had been ripped off the buildings face rather than having simply been removed. "It could be worse."

Judy forced a smile onto her face, determined to be optimistic, "It's... just a bit of a fixer-up."

"Right," Nick said, moving to the front door, "It just needs a little bit of work." He took out the old brass key and put it into the lock, having to try a few times before getting it to turn. He reached up for the door handled grasping it and turning only to have it promptly brake off the door.

"Or a lot of work," he muttered, looking at the broken noob and then at the hole in the door. Nick extended a claw, reaching into the hole and fiddling with the latch mechanism. Judy heard a grinding sound of unoiled metal screeching against metal before there was an audible click. Nick pulled his claw back out as he pushed on the door, which started to open before it jammed leaving only about an inch of a gap open in the door way.

"Oh, come on!" Nick huffed and threw his shoulder into the door. But the large door, big enough for even the larger mammals of Zootopia to squeeze through, only seemed to jam more in place.

"I don't think that's going to work," Judy said almost amused as she watched Nick back up before trying to force the door open again.

He hit the door, but this time the door didn't so much as budge and Nick bounced off of it landing in a heap before letting out a groaning, 'oowww'.

Judy reached over and helped Nick back to his feet, "Got any other ideas there Slick?"
Nick brushed some dirt off of his tail before smirking at her.

"Always fluff." He said before stealing a quick kiss and determinedly walking around to the side of the building.

Judy stared after him for a second, before coming to her senses and hurrying off after him.

*Cheese and Crackers, how can he do that with just a kiss?* She thought as she caught up to him.

*Well he is an amazing kisser.* Responded another portion of her mind that really wanted for that kiss to continue.

Ignoring that errant thought, Judy asked, "What was that for?" as they walked down the side street toward the back of the building.

"That was a thank you for helping me up," Nick said before stopping, turning to her and giving her a kiss that was anything but quick.

Pulling back smiling, he said, "and that was because I wanted to."

He took her paw, leading her in her still somewhat stunned state around to the back door of the building.

*Yep, he certainly is an amazing kisser.* That other portion of her mind stated smugly.

*Shut up! I'm trying not to pull a bunny on my mate right now.*

The back of the building had a small cracked patio and a few feet of actually ground with overgrown grass before it ran up against a walking path along the river's edge.

Nick went over to the rear door, this one sized for mid-sized and smaller mammals and put the key in the lock. Surprisingly this one turned far easier than the front one had.

He grabbed the handle but stopped before turning it, looking at Judy.

"Give me a kiss for good luck?" he asked her, giving her a charming grin.

Judy tried to resist.

For all of maybe a second, and then she was kissing him her paws around the back of his neck and digging into his fur.

There was the click of a latch and then Nick was sweeping her off her feet and carrying her through the doorway bridal style, all while still kissing her.

"Okay, you don't have to sleep on the couch tonight," Judy said once she'd managed to get her breath back.

*Forget being an amazing kisser, he's phenomenal.* She couldn't help but think.

*Told you, now kiss him again.*

*Shut up.*

Judy shifted her paws around from Nick's neck up to the back of his head and pulled him back down into another long kiss.
She could hear the swish of air as Nick's tail wagged happily by the time they broke apart.

"You're too good at that." Judy stated, feeling giddy and light as a cloud as Nick lowered her back down to the ground, though he seemed somewhat reluctant to do so.

"Mhhh, guess I'll just have to keep practicing with you until I become perfect at it." he replied.

She poked him in the side, giggled a bit, "And then what are you going to do once you're a perfect kisser?"

He gave her a tiny peck on her nose, "I'll kiss my mate at every opportunity I get so that she'll forgive all my faults and stay with me forever, what else?"

She stifled some more giggles, before saying, "Is that your hustle now?"

"You betchya," Nick replied happily before asking in a teasing tone, "Do you think it's working?"

"Humm," Judy started trying to sound uncertain, "I'm not sure, maybe you should kiss me again just to be on the safe side."

The inside of the building was darker than the sunny morning they'd walked in from, with the only illumination from the light coming through the partially open door, but it was enough for her to see Nick as he knelt down on one knee so that his head was level with hers. His paw came up cupping the side of her face ever so softly and she couldn't help but tilt her hear into it, not even caring that her ears where standing on end. He slowly, ever so slowly leaned forward until their lips where just a fraction of an inch apart, before stopping and whispering in a voice with just a touch of his rumble, "I love you."

She wasn't sure if Nick closed the gap or she did, but she found herself melting into him and that kiss. What followed was absolutely blissful, more than blissful, it was simply too wonderfully to be true, though she swore by every god she'd ever so much as heard of that if this was a dream that she was never going to wake up.

Judy eventually came back to herself in a dark room wrapped up in a warm embrace with something so soft wrapped around her back that it could only be Nick's tail. Her muzzle was buried in the musky fur of Nick's neck and she thought that he might be sitting up against the now closed door but wasn't entirely sure.

"yep… that hustle worked. Absolutely worked. 100%" she kissed his neck, "I agree, you should hustle me like that at ever opportunity you get."

Nick gave a pleased rumble and kissed one of her ears. She looked up but could only make out the outline of his face in the gloom with the door shut.

"Can you turn on a light in here? I want to see the face of the fox that hustled my heart away. My eyes aren't as good as yours." She asked still nuzzling his neck.

"Anything for you Carrots" he replied, before slowly unwrapping his tail and standing up. He gave a soft throaty laugh when she stayed clutched to his chest like a limpet.

"Comfortable there?" He asked and she gave a chirring purr back, nuzzling him harder.

Judy heard the sound of a light switch being flicked, but nothing happened. Another flick and still nothing.
"uh-oh" Nick muttered before reaching into his pocket and bringing out his phone and turning on the flashlight function. The room lit up enough to reveal a small nearly empty back room with two small broken windows covered up on the outside with plywood. Everything was covered in dust. The few mostly broken shelves, the floor, even the cobwebs in the corners of the walls had dust on them and looked abandoned.

"As far as something for a scary abandoned hunted house goes, I'll only give this a C-," Judy said glancing around from position attached to Nick's chest, before nuzzling the other side of his neck. "The Bunnyburrow Halloween festival has far better ones, but if you want I can pretend to be scared and just stay here." She finished continuing to nuzzle him and purring again.

Nick chinned her between the ears before saying, "While I'd love nothing more, I don't want to wander around a dark building like this, where I might trip and hurt you. Your too important to me."

That got him another few kisses before she, with more than just a little reluctance let go of him and dropped down to the floor.

"I'd be willing to bet that the power company has the power to this building shut off since it seems like it hasn't been used in years." Nick said as Judy pulled out her own phone to get some more light.

Nick had gone over to a large fuse box in the corner of the room and opened the cover. He flipped the main breaker, though that didn't do anything.

"Carrots, can you try the lights again?" he asked.

Judy went over and flipped the light switches by the door but nothing changed.

"Humm, so Carrots do you want to call it quits until we can get the power back on or do you feel like exploring a," Nick used a voice like something from a comedic horror movie, "scary hunted house with me."

Judy rolled her eyes and walked over giving his tail a light tug before heading to the only other door in the room with a grin on her face. "Come on Slick, I'll protect you from any ghosts or scary spiders you find." She held out her paw out, back toward him, "You can even hold my paw for comfort so you know your bunny is there to protect you."

Nick gave huffed but moved over to take her paw.

"I'll have you know that I'm not taking your paw because I'm scared but because no sane mammal wouldn't take their mates paw when offered."

Judy smiled up at Nick who was still trying, though badly, to look affronted at the jibe at his courage.

"Love you too," She said happily before opening the door and continuing through it with him.

Chapter End Notes

Ha, Take that Sigmund Freud, I hustled you and all the other lemonade loving readers with that title! Bet there are some ‘sour’ readers now! *snicker*
Grinch's Secret Plan for Escape. (Self-note: make sure to delete before giving pirates finished chapter)

Operation: Steal Nick's escape move.

Step 1. Stash away some coffee for escape attempt

Step 2. Point over in the opposite direction from next nearest island we pass, and yell "Look and the Boxes and Funnies!"

Step 3. Bail out of innertube and swim desperately for shore.

Note: Why is there now a SavageSkye ship trailing suspiciously close behind us? I could swear I keep seeing the same two very manly figures wearing bad dresses with parasols that seemed to hide spyglasses and waving handkerchiefs every time I glanced at them. Why do I get the feeling that I've seen them somewhere before? It's not like they could be more pirates though, I checked. Didn't see a black flag above the ship.
Chapter 37 – Exploring Haunted Houses

Chapter Notes

A/N

Here's an extra dose of fluff and fun to hold you all over. The next few chapters besides
being interesting might take a little bit longer than normal due to something else that's
come up, and no I can't talk about it since it's secret.

Disclaimer: Something's up. (and no it's not the movie 'Up') Disney's suddenly backed
off, sending their forces to I don't know where; that and the Pirates are secretly
discussing some story called 'The Conspiracy'. So, while they're all distracted I'm gonna
make a break for it!

Typo Disclaimer: GoneKrazy3000 has gone silent, I think the conspiracy might have
nabbed him.

Finnick watched admiringly as Skye lay on a roller board halfway under his van, her tail casually
flicking back and forth as she worked on it. He had to admit the sight was absolutely beautiful, every
time he looked it made his heart feel warm. He'd worked hard to get his baby, his pride and joy, the
one thing he could love without reservation (besides beer), and there wasn't a pretty girl out there.

Skye swore and there was some banging and a clatter from underneath the van.

Finnick sat up alarmed, "Skye! Damn it, if you hurt my girl I'll take a take a leaf out of that rabbit's
book and paint your tail!"

Some more swearing and a few more thumps before and very loud resonating, Clang!

"SKYE!" Finnick shouted in his deep voice, now alarmed.

The roller board, rolled out from under the van and a pleased artic fox stood up.

"Go have another beer and calm down, your fur is puffing like a ruffled mother hen." Skye said
nonchalantly as she removed the safety block from under the car-lift and lowered the van back down
to the ground.

"What did you do to her?! Is she alright? That sounded like you were beating on my baby!" Finnick
questioned determinedly. Skye obviously wasn't treating his girl with the level of respect that she
deserved.

The vixen just rolled her eyes and went over to an old computer on a work bench, "It isn't a 'she' Fin,
*it's a van*. I swear, you'd marry that stupid bucket of bolts if you could get away with it."

"Don't you go insulting my girl! You'll hurt her feelings!" Finnick barked back.

"Well, you're 'girl' is going to need a replacement bearing for the front right wheel along with some
minor maintenance. Constantly driving between Tundra Town and Sahara Square is wearing on an
old frame like that."
Finnick could feel a small knot of worry form, "How bad is it? Don't go sugar coating it for me, I need to know the truth, damn it."

Skye finished typing on the key board with a final click. "Nothing I can't handle. That bearing should be here from my auto supplier in a few hours and I'll finish up then. Your 'baby' is going to be fine." She finished with a bit of clear amusement at his attachment to the van, "Anyway, what time did you say you were going to need it done by? I have another customer scheduled to coming in later along with my project car to finish. I thought I was going to have all day to work on your 'baby'."

Finnick grumbled his response.

"What was that?" Skye said, looking at him clearly not having understood his muttered reply.

"I need it to be able to pick up flowers before all the shops start closing around 6." He growled louder this time.

Skye stopped and faced him, giving Finnick her full attention.

"Do I need to get my hearing checked or did you, Finnick, just say you were going to pick up flowers?"

Finnick could feel his ears fold back and he crossed his arms as his jaw tightened to the point it felt like it might break.

"Sweet Maid Marian! First Nick falls ears over tail in love with a bunny in what has to be a world record for fox courtship and then Finnick finds some mysterious girl he's getting flowers for? And don't try to brush this off as not being serious if you actually getting flowers for someone!" She said pointing a finger at him, before her eyes narrowed suddenly, "And if you say you're getting flowers for your van, then I'm going to have to beat some sense back into that thick skull of yours."

"No!" Finnick ground out having finally gotten his jaw to release, "I am not getting flowers for my van, and Fuck No I do not have some secret girl. Mr. Idiot decided that he's just now going to start courting the bunny that he's already married to and asked me to pick up flowers for his surprise dinner date tonight. Was very specific about getting tulips for some fucking reason."

Skye relaxed, "Thank goodness, I thought for a second that the world really had gone insane. I can only handle one crazy brother at a time." A smile crossed onto Skye's face, a delighted almost wicked smile and her tail started wagging. Seeing that expression sent a chill up Finnick's spine; he knew that look and he knew he wasn't going to like whatever he was about to be dragged into, "You said he's taking her on a date? Exactly where and when is this 'date'?"

Finnick shut his mouth determined not to say another word.

Skye's smile only broadened and she pulled out her phone, making Finnick's blood run cold.

_She wouldn't! That's Fucking cheating!_

Skye dialed a number and put the phone up to her ear.

"This is Skye… It's good to hear you too, but you wouldn't believe what I just heard from Finnick… oh I already got all that, even got to meet her… Yep, I like her too but Finnick says Nick's taking her out tonight… absolutely, it's the perfect opportunity for us to go and see how the two of them get along… Skye smiled showing teeth, as she looked right at Finnick, "Yep, it'll be dinner and a show, Finnick will send you all the details."
Nick had been planning to jump and scream 'EEwww!' at the first spider they saw and use the opportunity of acting like a scared kit to wrap his bunny up in a hug and not let her go, but when they'd entered the main room, the wave of memories and associated feelings killed the desire to joke around.

The nearly empty front room with only a few business counters and display stands covered in dust didn't look much like it had when his father had run his shop Suitopia here but Nick could still remember how it had looked, remember how proud his father had been after finally reaching his dream, remember those happy times with his dad running around this very room, and remember the pain the last time he'd been here and how empty the tailor shop had felt knowing that his father would never step foot in it again.

This was a place that he thought he would never again want to see, that reminded him of his father's loss and just how much having him gone hurt. He could still feel echos of that pain and didn't think that they'd ever go away. But this time was different. This time there was someone with him that he could draw strength from. Someone who might not be able to make that pain go away but who was adding newer happier memoires to this place to balance out the bad, who was repairing that gaping hole in his heart that he'd tried for so long to hide away and ignore.

Nick felt the small paw that held his, give him a reassuring squeeze.

"You alright their Nick?" Judy asked him, not sounding worried so much as wanting to be able to give him whatever support she could.

He looked at her, his small gray bunny, his mate. She might be beautiful, might be deceptively strong, determined and as bright and warm as the noon day sun, might make him feel more pleasure and desire than he thought was even possible, but this was the reason he'd fallen for her. The way she cared, from the largest matters to the smallest gestures, was how she'd stole his heart. He might fall more and more in love with her every day, find out new aspects of her to love as well but the way she cared, that was the very cornerstone of his love for her.

He leaned down and gave her a simple kiss.

His heart ached with how much he wanted to drag her off right then and there to make love to her, to show her in every way possible way how much she meant to him. But the moment wasn't right for that kind of love. Instead the kiss was plain and simple but with every bit of his feelings for her behind it. it was a kiss that said a thousand, thousand words in a simple 'I love you'.

He pulled back and gave her a smile, a genuine smile from deep down in his heart that now always felt warm because of her.

"I am now," he said, before squeezing her paw back and looking around the room. Their two phones and the sliver of light through the cracked open front door lit the room with a dim light as they walked about examining the place.

At some point Nick started talking, telling Judy about his dad's shop, pointing out where stuff used to be and describing how it had looked. She started asking questions and he answered, remembering all the good times.

By the time they'd finished and Nick had run out of stories, the gloom of the room had entirely vanished.

"This place was my dad's dream," Nick said quietly as they looked back over the open main room, "He was just a tailor but he wanted to make his mark on the world, to do what he could to make it a
slightly better place. It's the reason he wanted to run a shop that would make and sell clothes to everyone regardless of species." Nick looked down at Judy again with another smile, "I think he'd be happy that we can use it to help us on our own way toward trying to make the world a better place."

Judy looked up at him and gave him a smile that lit up the whole room.

"Well there's the problem." Nick said examining the large front door.

Unlike the rear windows the large display windows on the front of the building where almost entirely intact behind the plywood boards that covered them on the outside. The one to the right of the door where the hinges where had a broken corner at the top where the plywood had been smashed in a bit. Nick couldn't tell if it had been vandalism or simply sloppy work by whoever had bordered up the place. But the busted up wood and broken corner of glass had left a gap for water to run through.

The hinges were not only badly rusted but the wooden floor boards around the leak had warped and the door had jammed against one that had popped up.

"You know, if we can get some tools and supplies," Judy started leaning in to take a closer look at the damage with her phones light, "We could probably fix and clean this place up fairly quick to the point that we can use it as our company office." She looked up at Nick with a bit of worry though, "Problem is all of my savings are in evidence right now and I don't have a credit card from Z.N.B. anymore. How are we going to pay for tools and supplies, let alone pay to get the power turned back on for this building?"

Nick grimaced a bit, "I've only got some spending cash in my wallet, just enough for some meals and such. I've got a few hundred dollars in cash left at the warehouse and in a few other stashes around the city but that's it."

"Well we already needed to go to the bank, which is good because we'll need an actual account to be able to pay the utility company." Judy muttered, thinking out loud, "maybe we can take out a small startup loan from them too."

"Might work," Nick said musingly, "But what we really need to do is start getting paid,"

Judy shook her head, "We don't have any equipment yet, Honey said it would be a few days at least. It would be too dangerous to try and take in a bounty without any equipment. And we're not going to get any private investigation jobs when people don't know we're even P.I.'s yet."

"Sure," Nick said though the hustler in him was already starting to think over the situation, "but the level of danger depends on who and more importantly how we go after any bail skippers. A good hustle doesn't need a lot of equipment if it's well thought out."

Judy seemed to think it over, "Maybe. How about we finish up here and then go strategize over brunch and coffee at that café?"

"I like the way you think fluff." Nick said grinning.

Most of the rest of the building was the same, empty worn out rooms showing their age. Their path was marked by the trail they left on the dusty floor but unlike the main room, which had been sized so that any mammal even an elephant could come into the shop, the second floor, just like the back room, seemed to have been made for midsized and smaller mammals. It was still on the large size for
From what Nick could remember, the second floor had been his father's work room while the third had been used for storage, which was why he was a little surprised when they went up the old creaking stair case to the top floor to find not another empty work room but an area that seemed to have once been an apartment loft.

There was a small half open kitchen with what had to be the oldest stove and refrigerator Nick had ever seen, which was saying something, that opened up to a larger living room with a short hallway at the top of the staircase.

Light suddenly flooded the room and Nick turned to see that Judy had opened an old set of blinds over the two windows in the living room that looked out over the front of the building. Surprisingly they were intact and un-boarded, though Nick assumed that it might not have been worth the effort to try covering up the windows on the top floor.

Going over to the only piece of furniture in the room besides a table missing a leg, he grabbed the plastic sheeting covering it and yanked it off to see what was underneath.

He immediately regretted the action as it sent a cloud of dust into the air that engulfed him and started him coughing, sending Judy into a short fit of laughter and giggles.

"Oh stop laughing Car-" he coughed a few more times, "Just open up one of *cough* windows *cough* up!" he tried saying as he escaped the dust cloud.

It quickly became apparent to Nick that they might not have bothered boarding up the third floor windows because the first one seemed thoroughly jammed in place. They were only able to get the second one to open a few inches before it to stuck and refused to move despite both him and Judy standing on the window sill and lifting with all their might.

Nick gave up first, jumping back down to the floor and flopping on the ground panting from the short but strenuous effort, though the breeze of fresh air now coming into the room was a welcome relief.

Judy gave up after a few more tries, and hopped down landing right on him, making him release an explosive 'ouft!' of air.

Nick looked up at his smirking bunny, staring down at him and scowled, "You did that on purpose, didn't you? Your evil little bunny."

She gave a nonchalant shrug, "What can I say? I like you and your fur is thick and soft, it makes for a great landing pad."

"I thought the job description of being your mate was 'bed warmer' not 'landing pad'," Nick said grumpily to which Judy responded with a pleased, "Should have read the fine print! Too late now though, there's no getting out of it."

Nick crossed his arms looking at Judy, still sitting on him, "I want to renegotiate. If I have to be your landing pad I want extra cuddles and kisses."

"Hummm." Judy looked pleased with herself, "I'm not sure you've got room to renegotiate, Slick. I think I hold the higher position right now" she said wiggling a bit for emphasis.

"Oh do you now?" Nick shot back and before Judy could react, snapped his arms forward and
"NICK!" Judy squealed as she started laughing uncontrollably, writhing on him as she unsuccessfully tried to bat away his paws.

"All you have to do is agree to my terms and I'll stop!" Nick said continuing to tickle her mercilessly. She was squealing and laughing so hard that it took her a few tries before she managed to gasp, "Fine! Fine! You win!"

He stopped but kept his paws on her threatening to continue his tickle attack. "Extra cuddles?"

"Yes! Yes! Extra Cuddles!" Judy gasped still recovering her breath. "Extra kisses too." He moved one paw just barely touching her side.

She let out another squealing laugh, "YES! Kisses too!"

"And you'll let me take you out on a date tonight?"

"Yes! Yes! I'll let you take me out- wait what?" Judy ask, her breathing still a bit ragged from the tickling and caught off guard by the sudden change.

Nick wrapped his arms around her and pulled her up against him and into a long kiss. "Good, I'll swing by your place to pick you up at 7 then." He said grinning after.

"Wait! I don't have anything proper to wear, I don't even have anything to touch up my fur, I can't go out with you tonight!" Judy tried to protest, which Nick silenced by another kiss.

"You already agreed fluff and I'm going to hold you to it." Nick said pleased with how that had turned out.

"But Nickkk! I want to look good when I go out with you, not… not-" Judy said pleadingly and with some worry.

Nick cupped her face with a paw using it to turn it so that he could place his nose against hers, "Judy, you are beautiful just as you are."

"But I want to look my best for you," Judy insisted, though she seemed to be weakening, "I want you to be able to show me off as your mate, I want to make every other jealous female absolutely sure that I'm not giving you up. I can't do that in jeans and a blouse. And where are you trying to take me? Do I need to wear a dress, because the few I have are back in Bunnyburrow!"

He gave her a small peck, and rubbed his nose against hers, getting back her attention. "While the thought of you in a dress is enough to make me drool, I don't think you realize that even without it, I'm going to have to beat off bunny bucks by the handful,"

"Nick, don't exaggerate, I'm not that pretty." Judy said blushing and trying to look away.

He wasn't having any of that though and replied with a more passionate kiss.

"First you and your tail," he gave the said appendage a light pinch, causing her to 'meep', "look very sexy in jeans. Second, you know how we get all those looks and glares when we walk around holding paws?" he asked and she nodded a bit glumly. He puffed out his chest a bit, "Well a lot of those, especially those from bunny bucks are because this sly fox was able to catch the cutest doe out
there." he finished and silenced another protest before it could even start.

Pulling back from her lips, he continued, "Tonight's surprise is just for you and me, nothing to fancy so you won't need to dress up or anything. I've got it all arranged."

She looked at him, her eyes a bit watery, "Why?"

He cocked his head, "Why what?"

"Why are you doing all of this? Why are you going to all this trouble?" she asked and buried her face in his ruff, "I'm not that special, it's more than I deserve."

Nick huffed, "Regardless of how silly that is my dumb bunny," he managed to boop her nose with his finger, "because you are the most special person in the world and you deserve more than I could ever give you, I'm not doing this for that reason."

She looked back up at him a bit confused, and he looked right into her lavender eyes, "I'm doing this because I want to. I want to show my mate how much I love her. I want to take her out and see her smile and laugh and enjoy herself. You deserve a break from the chaos our life's been recently and to be treated this way, but I'm doing it because I want too."

This time she kissed him, she kissed him with enough heat to send his tail beating, stirring up the dust on the floor.

"I'll take that as an agreement," Nick said very happily afterwards, "You'll let me take you out tonight."

"Yes, you sly fox." Judy said and sighed against him, "I'd go with my sly fox anywhere."

"Good," Nick said smirking, "The Mystic Spring Oasis wouldn't be half as much fun without you anyway."

Judy went stiff as a board, her head snapping up to look at him with wide eyes, "You're taking me there?! But… but…" she looked down at him and blushed hard, from her cheeks all the way up to the tip of her ears and she squeaked, "We'd have to be naked! I mean, I love seeing you only in your fur, but… but, that's public!" she gave him another glance and though Nick didn't think it was possible for her to blushed even more, she did.

Nick bopped her with his nose, his tail wagging again. "Gotchya Carrots. Though judging by that reaction I'll definitely have to put that on the date list.

Judy gave him a hard jab with a "Nick!" while hiding her face under his muzzle where he could see her.

"Ouch! Okay, okay fluff." Nick chuckled rubbing the spot. "I'll lay off the teasing for a bit. Tonight's date is just something simple."

Judy gave a small huff before nuzzling him. She stopped suddenly though, "Did you say date list?"

Nick smirked again, "What? You thought I was going to take you out on only one date? Oh, no fluff you're not going to get away that easily."

He felt his bunny give him a kiss under his chin before say, "No, not really." She gave him a small
nibble that sent his tail jolting strait out, "But I want to renegotiate that list," and before Nick could react she started tickling him under his arms.

"Wow, I wasn't expecting that to happen," Judy giggled from their pile of tangled limbs amid the broken furniture after the excitement had died down.

Nick it turned out wasn't just a little ticklish; he'd squealed like a little kit, frantically rolling around in a squawking, laughing, tumbling ball of fur trying to escape her. It had been so cute that she simply couldn't let up. He'd finally managed to trip her up and tickle her back and they'd devolved into a kittish tickle war the likes of which Judy's youngest siblings in the Kurluffle would have applauded… before joining in.

They'd finally called a truce after rolling around on the floor and knocking the already off kilter and broken table over, breaking another leg.

Judy couldn't remember how long it had been since she'd just let go and had that much childish fun. Certainly not since going to the police academy. She'd kissed Nick afterwards in her happy giddy state, and not lightly either; she had kissed him. The short make out session that had followed had quickly progressed past steamy and had been well on its way toward them needing to rearrange their morning plans to account for an unexpected delay when it was brought to an abrupt halt.

They had stumbled their way over to the couch that had been under the sheet Nick had removed, and Judy had tripped Nick bringing him down onto it underneath her. She'd already had his shirt unbuttoned and had been working on his pants, but the couch it turned out, wasn't up to the propose they'd been about to commander it for and had broken.

_Collapsed might be a better description, Judy thought, or maybe 'imploded'._

They center of the couch had buckled with a sharp cracking sound, sending them and the old thin cushions right down to the floor, while the other cushions on the back and sides had tumbled down on them like, burying them as if they'd fallen into a quicksand pit.

After they'd extracted themselves from broken couch, Nick turned to it, giving it a look like a it had personally betrayed him and gave it a kick with a mutter of 'Karma's out to get me'.

Judy just giggled and went over to brush him off. They were absolutely _covered_ in dust from rolling around the floor.

Nick though flinched and let out a stifled laugh at her touch.

"Oh, come on," Judy said, though she was rather amused. She had just found a huge weakness to use against him when needed, "I'm _not_ trying to tickle you again, you over sensitive ball of fur, now come her so I can get some of that dust off of you."

"Promise?" Nick said looking at her carefully. To which, she rolled her eyes and replied with a 'yes'.

It took them a few minutes for them to clean each other off, during which Nick not only pulled a rather large ball of dust of her head making a joke about 'dust bunnies' but also took the opportunity to paw her tail, claiming quite gleefully after she'd squeaked loudly, blushed and knocked his paw away, that he'd thought it was simply another 'dust bunny'. She'd in turn, sighed regretfully at how much dust he'd gotten in his tail and spent far longer than she needed too running her paws through it to 'get all those bad dust bunnies of _her_ fox' while Nick tried desperately to not collapse to dirty floor again in a limp rumbling mass.
She let up after one last stoke and a desperate, needy whine from Nick. She hopped up gave him a peck on his now, dust free cheek, "Ready to finish and go get food?"

His paw seemed to slide into hers and he leaned down to running his muzzle between her ears, leaving a fresh mark over the spot that seemed to quickly be turning into a favor area for him to mark her. The smell of his old scent marks hadn't even faded but she liked the fresh, strong, musky scent of her mates claim on her.

"Absolutely," he rumbled, "Though, instead of whatever they have at the café, I'd really like to have my bunny right now."

She could feel the heat in her ears drop lower and the twitch of his nose and resulting hungry smile didn't help to put it out.

"Come on Nick," She said blushing hard and leading him to the small hallway. "There'll be plenty of time for that after our date tonight."

That got a chuckle out of him as he said in a delighted voice, "The date hasn't even started but it seems to already be going well!"

She gave him a sharp nudge with her elbow under the ribs. It wasn't quite taking a pin to his inflated ego but it seemed to get the job done as he finally settled down a bit, seeming content to simply hold her paw and brush up against her.

"Dumb fox," she muttered as they examined the first room in the hallway. "You and I both know exactly how that date is going to end."

The room seemed be a small bedroom or office with peeling wall paper and a window with a view out the back over the river, but turned out to be empty besides a few folded cardboard boxes along the wall. The room across was larger with a small open closet but the same faded wall paper and a single window. This room though had an old wood dresser, one that if still large for them was far closer to their size than the one Nick had commandeered at the warehouse to sleep in and most intriguing of all, an old metal bedframe and mattress under another plastic sheet.

Nick put up a paw to stop Judy, and with a grinning mock serious voice said, "Wait, I think I need to check this one out to make sure it's safe."

Judy watched in amusement as he went over to the bed and after carefully removing the plastic this time, gave it a few sniffs. It looked surprisingly clean and unused, simply old from what Judy could see. Nick looking satisfied, leaped up in the air like he was jumping off a diving board before splaying his arms and legs out and belly flopping onto the bed. There was a puff of stale air as the mattress compressed a little but the bed, unlike the couch didn't collapse.

Nick with a very pleased grin rolled over onto his side in a pose that looked like he should be modeling underwear and looked at Judy.

"Care to join me, my cute wife? The beds just fine." He said with smile that oozed male charm. Luckily, the earlier implosion of the couch had managed to knock a bit of sense back into her and she was able to resist his tempting offer. Though, the thought of Nick modeling underwear was now firmly stuck in her mind.

Nick changed poses and shot her another charming smile she had to fight off, as she eyed him up and down and watched how his tail flicked playfully every few seconds. Those light flicks drew her eyes which then slowly moved up to where his tail attached to him.
Yep, he'd make an excellent underwear model, especially with that tail and firm... Judy realized where her thoughts were drifting and immediately changed course, I'd better get him out of that bed before I end up eating him for lunch.

"Come on superstar," she said trying her hardest to sound unimpressed, "Auditions are later tonight, you can pose for me all you want then."

Nick gave her a languid smile, before rumbling, "Sure you don't want a sneak peek?" he got up and slowly strutted, that was the only way she could describe his walk not that she could tear her eyes off him, over to her.

He stopped in front of her and posed again.

*Forget the underwear, he could beat every model from Jill's collection of PlayBunny without even trying.*

"I got a show reserved just for you." He said in a voice that was far too sexy as he rocked his hips and did a tail flick that was a perfect copy of the sexiest moves from the buff lifeguards on Baywatch.

Judy suspected she was drooling and was about to give in and go completely bunny girl on him, when her stomach growled loudly.

Nick froze before doubling over in a fit of laughter.

Judy felt her cheeks warm as she crossed her arms and turned her head to looked away from with a sniff.

"It wasn't that funny!" she said as Nick continued to laugh.

Nick tried to stand up and pose again as he said, "I'm just to scrumptious for you, aren't I?" but her stomach growled again and Nick nearly collapsed laughing.

Judy huffed and grabbed his tie, pulling her still chuckling fox behind her, out of the room and to the last door at the end of the hallway between the two rooms.

"The sooner we're done the sooner we get to eat, now let's finish-"

She stopped suddenly looking through the door she'd just opened. It really wasn't surprising that it was a bathroom. It looked like it was in a state of disrepair like the rest of the building and was set up in the same decades old style as the kitchen and its appliances. But what registered to her was the combined bathtub shower at the end of the room. It looked so old, it was probably an antique; it had a white porcelain tub on claw feet with brass nozzles and piping that went up to host a shower head and metal loop for a shower curtain. It was oversized enough for her and Nick that a number of very fun activities they could do in it popped into her mind, but those were secondary to her primary thought.

Unlike the emergency shower at the warehouse Nick had repurposed, there was both a cold water and *hot* water nob.

Judy could handle cold water if she had to but that didn't mean she liked it. And the Academy's Ice wall in the environmental obstacle course that was feared and hated by the cadets, had ingrained a near hatred of cold water in her. Granted if the price for having Nick was that she had to take ice showers for the rest of her life she'd pay it without a seconds thought and never look back.
She felt Nick sidle up behind her and wrap his arms around her. His muzzle rubbed up against her cheek and he asked in a playful tone, "What has caught my bunny's eye? Should I be jealous?"

Judy turned around in his embrace and said excitedly, "There's a shower!"

Nick raised his muzzle and glared at the shower menacingly, "Don't you try to make any moves on her! She's my mate, you lecherous shower!"

She couldn't help but giggle before saying, "Nick, it's a shower with hot water. Instead of freezing ourselves we could take hot showers."

Nick looked back at her and a smirk started to appear on his face, "Humm... 'Hot' shower you say." He pulled her a little closer, "Would I be allowed in these 'hot' showers with you." He said emphasis hot and clearly meaning something else besides water.

"Oh, gods yes." Judy said and kissed him with enthusiasm.

"Well if that's the case," Nick said smiling at her, "I think I can allow the shower to stay, though I might need to always take showers with you, I can't let it get any ideas about stealing my mate away. Sneaky shower might make a move on you otherwise."

Judy laughed before grinning and replying, "Anyone that tries to 'put the moves' on me besides my fox is going to get a very nasty surprise."

"Oh, I don't doubt it." Nick said looking her over admiringly, "You'd send that shower to the junkyard in pieces if it tried anything, but then how would you get those hot showers? Best if we just always take showers together." He kissed her nose, "Plus, what if that shower tries to make a move on me? I need my little gray furred knight there to protect me."

Judy hummed a bit, and smiled back at him, "I think you might have a point there. It might be best after all if we always shower together."

Nick grinned widely and gave her a kiss that had her thinking about that bed again before letting her go and walking into the bathroom with determination, "Now let's see what we'll need to get this tub back up and running. If my bunny wants hot showers, hot showers she shall get."

…

They gave the shower and piping a quick inspection to see what they might need to do. Judy had a fair bit of experience with odd jobs, having grown up on a working farm were they took care of nearly everything themselves, and if Wilde Times had been anything to judge by, Nick could probably do a fair job as a handy-mammal as well.

With their combined experience they deduced the primary issue, which was that they also needed to get the water to the building turned back on. The water heater was an old electric model in the closet underneath the staircase on the second floor that Nick had found earlier. As far as they could determine without the power being turned on, it seemed to be in working order and Judy noted with relish that with its intended size for larger mid-sized mammals, they'd be able to take showers as long as they wanted without running out of hot water.

Judy had to put her shoulder into the misaligned closet door before it finally clicked shut and turned back to Nick, "Well, I think that's about everything we can do here. Ready to go get something to eat?"

"Seeing as it's finally a decent hour of the morning to be up and out of bed, absolutely." Nick replied
with a grin.

Judy couldn't help her eye roll but smiled and grabbed his paw as she headed down to the first floor. She could already guess that keeping her morning schedule was going to be a lot harder with Nick. She'd always been a morning person; waking up before the sun had fully risen and getting in a morning workout had always left her energized for the day. Nick on the other had seemed to be anything but; He was a fox so he did have nocturnal instincts in his heritage, though he was by his own admission a day mammal, but he seemed mostly to simply enjoy a lazier start to his day.

Before leaving the shop, they stopped to force the front door all the way shut, then headed out the back and locked the building.

Judy had to admit that sleeping in with Nick was more than quite pleasant, far more so than doing it alone had ever been for her. So maybe they could work out a compromise somewhere. From what her parents had taught her that sort of give and take was the key to a happy relationship, well that and finding someone that you truly loved.

Just like after leaving the hospital the day before, Judy couldn't help but think over the last few hectic days as they walked back to the Mad Tea Party café, all the while holding Nick's paw. They'd been hectic, crazy, life altering days. But she was happier than she'd ever been before even despite the setback with her dream to be a police officer. That path had just taken a different, more interesting and more wilde route, and best of all was that she now had someone else to journey down that path with. Her relationship with Nick might have been unconventional, something forged from extraordinary circumstances and shared dangerous leading to them coming together in the heat of the moment. And while her parents had always said that successful relationships where built one piece at a time, not thrown together, she was sure that they could make this work. She and Nick had something together, something Judy knew deep down that would have developed to what they were now even if they had meet under completely different circumstances.

Judy looked up at her mate who despite the mask that he only occasional took down for her, looked happier than when she'd meet him for the first time all those months ago. There was the slightest hint of a smile in the corner of his mouth, his tail seemed to be ever so slightly more energetic and his emerald eyes now had a constant hint of happy playfulness behind them.

Yes, they might have skipped a few of the normal steps, but that didn't mean they couldn't still build a strong marriage. She loved him and he loved her, they'd just figure out the rest as they went. Together, Judy was absolutely sure, there wasn't anything they couldn't handle.

They turned into the small café and were greeted by a recently familiarly voice as soon as they entered through the open front doors of the establishment from the patio outside.

"Well, I'm glad to see that you two decided to stop back here." Mrs. Catamount said looking at them from behind the counter.

"We heard that this place is quite the 'party'," Nick said grinning, "I hope where not late for tea."

Another cougar behind the counter turned from where he'd been working and looked at them, before smiling. Even despite his wireglasses and graying fur, his broad smile reminded Judy of the sign over the shops door.

"And who do we have here?" he said in a jovial tone, "You know, my wife told me that she'd seen the most impossible thing this morning. Said she'd seen the fox and the rabbit that the news had said were mates." He gave a boisterous chuckle, "I told her that sometimes I believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast. So why shouldn't I believe that they were mates?"
Nick leaned over to Judy and whispered, "I like him," before straightening, and with a grin as big as the cougars, said, "Off with her bloody big head!"

The cougar smile actually managed to broaden before he raised a coffee carafe in a salute, replying with an even louder, "Off With Her Bloody Big Head!"

Mrs. Catamount passing behind him with some dishes, managed to give him a light whack on the back of his head that did nothing to diminish his smile. "If your done fooling around, Vernon, see what they want to eat and drink."

He straightened his glasses which had slid down his muzzle and shot he a grin saying, "Absolutely dear," before he looked back at Judy and Nick.

"So what can I get the hatter and the hare for today's tea party?" he asked

Nick gave a laugh at that and Judy grinned, "I did always imagine the mad hatter having red fur," she said looking at Nick, amused at their banter, "I'm a bunny not a hare but I guess it's better than us being Tweedledee and Tweedledum."

Nick still snickering said, "We're here to grab coffee and brunch, we've got some planning to do before we head off to slay the Jabberwocky. What's the best things on the menu? We've got a full day ahead of us."
Chapter 38 – Beware the Jabberwocky

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Pirates aren't supposed to work with the Navy! That's... That's just wrong. I can not be blamed for this... this conspiracy, I'm the captive here! *Sigh* The sooner this little alliance is over the better. I can't try to escape when there are so many pirates and sailors around (and they're drinking all the coffee). I might *shudder* actually have to try to help them, then the navy will go away and I can try escape plan 23. I've got a good feeling about that one.

Typo Disclaimer: The Bunny and Fox MUST Kiss. Hey, were the hell did that come from? I can't seem to delete it, stupid computer. Blame the typos on it, there all it's fault!

Clawhauser looked at the empty box of donuts on his Desk and sighed. He knew that he should have paced himself, that he should have waited to eat that last donut, but it had looked so delicious. It had been one of those perfect donuts with just the right amount of icing that made it look like the archetypal donut of all donuts.

It had called to him and he hadn't been able to resist. That moment biting into it had been heavenly, but now he was paying the price because he'd have to wait till his lunch break to run out and get more.

He sighed, his ears and whiskers drooping, when like some wish coming true, a box of donuts appeared in front of his downcast eyes.

Clawhauser attempted to moderate his happy squeal when he noticed all the mammals in the atrium around the front desk where cringing or holding down their ears. He took the box of donuts out of the striped paw holding them and looked up to see Fangmeyer's grinning face while McHorn next to her was covering his ears with an almost pained look on his usually emotionless face.

"O M G, THANK YOU!" Clawhauser said in a more moderate tone. McHorn gave a gruff snort, mumbled and gave a slight bob of his head, by way of a 'Good to see you.'. Fangmeyer on the other hand hadn't seemed to have heard him.

She held up a paw in a 'wait' gesture and reached up to her ears and pulled out ear plugs.

"Hey, Benji. How's everything been around the station?" she said smiling.

"Well there was a critical lack of donuts but I think you just solved that." Clawhauser responded, returning her grin, "Things have been a bit crazy but they're getting back to normal. Did you two get cleared to return to duty?"

McHorn grunted and Fangmeyer spoke up, "Sure did, just finished getting all the paperwork straightened out."

"That's Great!" Clawhauser said enthusiastically before glancing to the each side and leaning forward in his seat conspiratorially, "Don't tell Wolford I said this, but everyone's been hoping you'd be back soon. He's been driving his temporary partners crazy while you've been out. Do you know
when you're going back to normal partner assignments?"

"Well, I'm gonna be stuck with McHorn for the rest of today," Fangmeyer said with a bit more cheer than normal and gave the rhino a punch in the shoulder to which he just rolled his eyes, "and Wolford and I are both off tomorrow, so you won't be teaming up like normal again until Friday."

"Well that's good to hear. He just about lost it when he heard you'd been darted at the showdown at the Natural History Museum-"

"He did?" Fangmeyer interjected, then waved her paw in apology, "Sorry didn't mean to interrupt."

Clawhauser grinned back at her. He could understand her shock. Wolford was usually pretty controlled, a bit of a prankster maybe, but it was rare to see him lose his cool, "He sure did. He wouldn't calm down until Bogo assured him that you hadn't been seriously hurt. He was a bit melancholy after that until he visited you and McHorn at the Hospital, but since then he's bounced back to his normal self. Maybe too much of his normal self. Jackson's been swearing all day that he's going to tranq him if he doesn't stop his tail from wagging so much. Said he doesn't have any idea how you put up with him and his dopey grin every day."

Fangmeyer scratched the back of her head and gave Clawhauser a half hearted chuckle and grin, "Well, I guess, um, I guess Ralph just grows on you. Anyway," she gestured around the precinct, "how is everyone her been? And how is Grizzole doing, I feel bad about injuring him." She finished looking a bit embarrassed.

Clawhauser gave her a smile and a wave of his paw, "Oh don't worry about that. His arm should be out of the sling in a week and then he'll be off light duty. You know how he is, he's enjoying lazing about the office. Even been bragging about how he went toe to toe with the ZPD's fiercest SWAT team member when she went savage, says the lady bears totally dig the story and the battle scars."

"Thought Bogo and him took her down." McHorn grunted and Clawhauser giggled, looking back at Fangmeyer

"Sure, but that apparently doesn't make for as good of a story for the ladies. Bogo got fed up with him this morning and threatened to put him in the precincts ring and sick you on him again, if he didn't stop talking and get back to work." Clawhauser said with more giggles and a grin.

"Well, I'm glad he's okay. I don't really remember anything until I woke up in the hospital and Ralph filled me in. I'm kind of surprised that the Chief didn't just clobber me." Fangmeyer said still looking a bit embarrassed.

"From what I heard, you were a real handful." Clawhauser chuckled, "Guess there's some truth to that saying about not trying to catch a tiger by the tail, huh!" Fanmeyer huffed but grinned back, and Clawhauser continued a bit more seriously, "Grizzole said though that the Chief was holding back, trying to restrain you without hurting you too badly."

"I'll bet, I heard he broke that rams horns headbutting him during that fight," Fangmeyer replied, rubbed the fur on her head with a paw and shuddered, "A hit like that would have cracked my skull."

"Nobody wants to challenge the Chief for the ZPD's fighting ring record for a reason" Clawhasuer said popping a donut from the new box in his mouth and wiggling in delight at the sugary perfection, before leaning forward and the desk again his tail snapping back and forth delightedly, "I've even heard that he K.O.'d Major Friedkin from the ZPD academy last year during a bet to see who was
better. I heard he did it in the first round!"

McHorn muttered something which sounded a lot like, 'freakin monster.' While Fangmeyer shuddered again and shook her head.

"I'd believe it." she responded but then looked a little confused, "What's up with the Chief today though? We saw him in the admin department earlier and he almost looked… happy?...I think? Well he smiled."

This time McHorn shuddered before muttering, "Smile was scarier than his grimace. Just not right to see him simile."

Clawhauser took a cautious look toward Bogo's office on the second floor of the atrium as if worried he might appear at the mention of his name, and whispered back to both of them, "Nobody knows, but he seems to be in scarily good mood this morning. He even cracked a joke at the briefing this morning!"

Fangmeyer's eyes went a little wide, "No way! The Chief? We are talking about Chief Bogo right?"

Clawhauser nodded his head and stifled a giggle, "He sure did, not like the 'Elephant in the room' one either, like he did on Francine's birthday, a full joke, and he laughed! Delgato fell out of his chair he was so surprised."

"Somebody spike his coffee?" McHorn asked, not seeming to believe it.

Clawhauser just gave him a look as if he was crazy, "Have you seen the Chief drink? I don't think a coffee mug of straight liquor would even make him tipsy! Oh, hey, I almost forgot!" Clawhauser became more animated, no longer whispering, "You two have to come with us this Saturday! The gang is getting together for some drinks to welcome Judy back to the city and to meet her mate! There just soooo cute together! Their-"

"Wait, hold on a second Benji!" Fangmeyer said holding up her paws in an attempt to slow him down, "Are they really really together. I thought it was just a publicity stunt by the mayor?"

Clawhauser stifled a squeal before speaking in an excited voice, "Didn't Ralph tell you about how they found them when he went to see you at the hospital?"

"No," Fangmeyer said quickly, "We talked of other stuff!" she shook her head, "I met Wilde before during the Missing Mammals case. Sure, he defended her against Chief Bogo and they seemed like they got along like good friends at the asylum but they didn't seem like… well…" Clawhauser started to let out a growling squeal seeing Fangmeyer, The SWAT Team's Mrs. Badass blush, "Oh hush, Benji! They didn't seem together. They got along better than any fox and rabbit I've ever known, but they didn't seem like they were a couple."

Fangmeyer worked to control her reaction and gave Clawhauser a stern glare. He giggled a bit more and couldn't help teasing her a bit, "Nadine! Have we finally found your weakness?" he giggled again, "Mrs. Serious Cop blushing at the idea of a cute unconventional couple?"

"Clawhauser!" Fangmeyer growled, though she was blushing harder.

Clawhauser giggled a bit more, but let up on his teasing; It was good fun especially because Fangmeyer was usually so serious and he'd never seen her blush, but teasing to much would probably be a bad idea, she'd earned her reputation for being tough as nails for a reason, "Okay, okay! But you should ask Ralph about what he saw," Clawhauser giggled again, "I only saw them kiss and that was quite the show! There's absolutely no doubt that they are a couple! Some mammals
might think its weird, different species and everything, but they're. Just. So. Cute. Together!" he squealed again. "They're sooo in love with each other!" he had to hold back another squeal, "Anyway, everybody is getting together on Saturday at the pub to meet them! You have to come!"

McHorn gave an eye roll and grunted something that sounded unenthusiastic.

"The first rounds on them!" Clawhauser said still excitedly and McHorn's grumble turned to an immediate and actually audible, "I'll be there."

"Well Nadine?" Clawhauser said, his tail snapping back and forth enthusiastically.

"I don't know if I'll be able to make it Benji, I've got plans for Saturday."

"Oh come on, you don't need to spend more time at the range!" Clawhauser pleaded, "You have to come. And get Ralph to come too!" Clawhauser said pointing at her, "I don't believe for a second his story about some unexpected important errand that is occupying his time on Saturday."

"Clawhauser, I-" Fangmeyer started but he gave her a pleading look.

"Benjamin..." she looked at him as if she was about to try softly letting him down.

"Nadine, you and Ralph have to come." He said in as convincingly as possible.

"Benji..." she looked at him again and then sighed, her shoulders and tail drooping.

"Okay, just stop looking at me like that. I'll see if I can't find some time to stop by."

"and Ralph?" he asked and she glanced at him before quickly glancing away.

"Yes! Yes! Ralph and I will stop by, okay? Happy?"

Clawhauser clapped his paws together excitedly, "Perfect! I can't wait! It's going to be so much fun!"

Fangmeyer lowered her face into a paw and shook it as if trying to figure out how he'd managed to convince her.

McHorn snickered, and her paw shot out, punching him in the shoulder hard. This time she actually managed to rock his body though McHorn just grinned ever so slightly and continued standing there like a statue.

"Come on McHorn, let's go before Benji convinces us to do something else like pick up more donuts." She said and turned away from the desk to head further into the precinct, McHorn following.

"Oh, Oh, make sure to pick up ones with extra sprinkles!" Clawhauser shouted after them.

Nick leaned across the table over to Judy with a wicked grin and whispered, "So if we're the hatter and the hare, does that make Buffalo Butt the Jabberwocky?"

"Nick!" Judy tried to sound stern and reprimanding but couldn't hold back the laugh and ended up giggling into the table as she tried to control herself.

"I mean the way he goes stomping around and glaring," Nick continued and tried imitating Bogo's face and expression, "Do you want these handcuffs removed, ever?"
Judy let out another set of muffled giggles, "Don't ever let him hear you trying to imitate him like that!" she said trying to get her laughter under control.

Nick grinned enjoying himself, happy because Judy was smiling.

A plate of food appeared in front of Nick and another in front of Judy.

"Here you two go, two of our secret club specials," Mrs. Catamount said and then topped off Nick's coffee, "Anything else I can get you all?"

Nick took the triple decker sandwich with an eager look but stopped before taking a bite, "I think I can remember having one of these when I was a kit." He said wistfully, taking a sniff of the sandwich and then a slow bite, his tail waving in a lazily happy fashion behind the chair as he chewed.

He sighed contentedly, "Yep. Just as good as I remember."

The cougar looked at him with a quizzically expression, "You came here as a kit?" she was taking a closer look at him, as if trying to find some recognizable feature.

Nick grinned up at her, "I think so, its been a long time so I'm not sure but I remember my dad taking me to eat somewhere near his shop. I remember that they also made the best blueberry tarts, though my dad swore he'd never get it for me again if I ever pilfered his coffee like I did one time. I think I ended up running around all energized and making a ruckus."

"You're John's boy," The cougar said suddenly, then shook her head, "I should have made the connection. Of course, you are; Same last name and you're ears and tail have the same markings his did. He used to bring you by after school. Why that was only a few years after we'd opened up."

She looked down at him but her smile wilted a little, "I'm sorry that he passed away like that, he was a good mammal."

The reminder brought back up a slew of painful memories. Remembering hearing the news, remembering the trial; Nick could feel himself sliding back into those darker painful memories but then he felt a paw take his. Nick looked up to see Judy looking back at him with a sad smile and she gave his paw a squeeze. It might not have seemed like a lot but that gesture was exactly what he needed. Nick smiled back at Judy and then turned to the cougar.

"I only wish that he could have met my mate," he said simply, squeezing Judy's paw back.

Mrs. Catamount seemed to have picked up on his discomfort and shifted the subject, "Are you two here then to look at his old shop? That building's been sitting there vacant for years now."

Judy picked up for Nick giving him a few moments, "Yes. Actually, we we're just looking at it, we want to fix it up so that we can use for our own business."

"Are you now? It'll be nice to have someone using that building again, right now it makes the street seem so empty and forgotten."

"We are!" Judy said excitedly, "We're working as Private Investigators while the city sorts out the legal mess holding us up from going back into the ZPD."

"Well, I'll be," the cougar said a bit startled, "I read something in the paper about an issue the ZPD was bringing up to the courts. Something about the M.I.I. act being repealed wasn't it?" Judy gave a nod, and Mrs. Catamount looked back at Nick, "I can remember you running around saying how
you'd grow up to help mammals, you even thought that being a ranger scout was an actual job," she smiled, "John always did say that you were going to go off and do something great when you grew up. I think he'd be proud that you're going after your dream and joining the ZPD, you'll be the first fox ever right?"

Nick tried smiling in return and gestured at Judy, "I really owe it to her, plus she has me beat. She was the first small mammal to make it onto the force and she's a bunny. That's a lot more impressive than being the first fox."

"Well, I wish both of you to the best of luck." She gave the both a warm smile and before turning away asked, "How about I bring out one of those tarts for you two? Vernon's only gotten better at making them."

Nick could feel his tail swish happily at the thought of that, "Please," he said almost day dreaming about the blueberry tart.

Judy poked him, "You are seriously addicted to blueberry's, you know that right?" she said smirking at him, "You look like your about to drool on yourself."

"Am not!" Nick replied, poking back.

"Are too!" Judy insisted trying to poke him again, though he blocked it and poked her saying, "Did not!"

That starting a small paw war as they tried to poke each other and swat away each other's paws like they were two immature teenagers. It stopped when Nick, losing the fight, cheated and grabbed her smaller paw in his trapping it, not that Judy seemed to mind him holding it.

"Hey, fluff." He said running the pad of his thumb over the back of her paw, smiling as the soft gray fur ran under it, "Thanks for before. Every time something tries to get me down, you're right there to pick me back up."

She moved her paw lacing her small fingers between his and then leaned across the table and gave him a short kiss.

"Always Nick. I'm always going to be there for you, just like you're always there for me."

"I've got to be the luckiest mammal alive to have you as my mate." Nick said in wonder as she sat back and then glance away blushing and fiddling with one of her long ears.

Nick couldn't help it, with the way she was sitting like that across the table. He pulled out his phone and snapped a quick picture of her. He grinned looking at it and started setting it as his background picture. She was absolutely the cutest mammal he'd ever meet.

"Nick!" Judy squeaked, blushing hard now, "Don't call me cute! At least not in public!"

_Opps, might have said that out loud, part of his mind realized._

Another part shrugged and responded thinking, _To late to take it back, might as well keep going then..._

_Beware, that way be danger. _The first part warned, only to get the reply,

_Very VERY Cute danger._
Nick finished and looked up, turning his phone around, "Carrots, there's no denying it. See this? This is my cute wife. Nobody, and I mean Nobody, has a cuter wife than me."

Nick smirked and just watched as her ears stood bolt upright, a deep blush traveled upwards like a rising thermometer. She opened her mouth, closed it, opened it again and pointed at him. The red hit the black tips of her ears and she looked about ready to boil over and shout at him, so Nick gave her his best, most charming and honest smile and told her exactly how he felt inside,

"I love you."

Judy seemed to explode and melt all in the same instance.

"You Dumb Fox!" she all but shouted and reached out grabbing his tie and yanking him across the table to kiss him hard.

…

Nick found himself falling back to sit in his chair after a long moment in a sort of deliriously happy daze while Judy sat across from him seeming to steam angrily though her ears were still standing bolt upright. She sniffed and started eating her sandwich without looking at him.

Nick, his tail wagging happily on its own accord just grinned and said dazedly, "Luckiest mammal ever."

Judy sniffed again and reached over stealing half of his club sandwich.

"I already bit that piece Carrots." Nick replied watching her theft with amusement.

"Don't care! It's mine now." She said stubbornly and took a bite out of it as if to prove her point.

He reached for one of her pieces but she swatted his paw before he could grab it. So, Nick just took his remaining piece instead and ate that while Judy munched away determinedly not looking at him. After he finished he put both of his elbows on the table to prop up his face and just looked at her, his tail swishing in a slow happy arc behind him as he grinned and then sighed happily.

Judy tried to keep up her indignant front as she munched on the sandwich, but Nick caught her starting to steal glances back at him, caught the small rises in her blush that she was trying to control.

She finished the piece she'd stolen and went back to the first half of her sandwich though her glances and blushes were growing more frequent.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she finally broke, but before he could respond quickly added, "And you'd better not say it's because I'm cute!"

Nick's grin broadened and he sighed again still looking at her before speaking, "Because I love looking at my mate."

"Nick!", she said in exasperation, her blush started to creeping up again. She grabbed the remaining piece of her sandwich and shoved it into his grinning muzzle, "Stop looking at me like I'm dessert and just eat that!"

Nick opened his mouth to reply but she cut him off by shoving the sandwich into his maw.

"And don't you dare make a joke about that!"

Nick sat up and took the sandwich half, grinning, and with a, "As my bunny commands," bit into the
sandwich, though he kept his eyes on her as he took each deliberate bite.

Judy thanked Serendipity when the Blueberry tart arrived. It was quite good but more importantly it finally distracted Nick enough that she managed to get herself to stop blushing. At some point, and she hoped that it was sooner rather than later, though that didn't look likely with how crazy their life was right then, they needed to take a few days off just for themselves and have a short honeymoon. Maybe after that she wouldn't feel so tempted to kiss him every time she so much as looked at him or have to fight against the urge to drag him off somewhere private every time he smiled like that. Last night had helped, helped a lot, but apparently not enough.

Thankfully the meal had been good and filling and they were both feeling full and relaxed. Rather than wanting to energetically kiss Nick, she just wanted to cuddle with him for a bit as the food settled… then kiss him.

Nick apparently felt similarly since he'd pulled his chair around next to hers and scooted over until his tail could wrap around her and she could lean against him, while he sipped his coffee.

It was too bad they still had so much to do today she mused, and with a sigh spoke up. They weren't going to have a better chance than now to figure things out.

"So Nick, we were going to plan how to slay the jabberwocky, right?"

"Humm." Nick rumbled, "I'm not sure if even we could take on Buffalo Butt, I'd rather just point him in the direction of our issues and get out of the way."

She poked him in the side and he grinned.

"Right Carrots, I'll be serious. Important stuff first." He pulled out his wallet and placed enough money on the table to pay for the meal though that didn't leave much, "Our first issue it seems, is money. Can't get the power or water turned back on without money, and I promised my bunny that she'd get her hot showers."

That she thought, while maybe not quite the most important thing at least deserved a kiss.

She pecked him on the cheek, and said, "Need to set up a back account to do that too."

"Right, fluff. We'll hit the bank next and get that straightened out, and as you said we can see if they'll give us a starter loan too," but Nick grimaced a bit at that, "Though I wouldn't count on it, I don't have a good credit record, really any record, and we sort of made a big splash yesterday with the banks, not to mention that mugging. They'll probably see us as a risky investment."

"Still worth a try." Judy said and snuggled into him a bit, enjoying the feeling of his arm around her shoulder, "We need to get supplies to clean and fix up the shop too."

"That might not actually be a problem." Nick said, "I've got some tools and supplies left over at the warehouse from when Fin and I put together WildeTimes. There might even be some left-over paint that's still good. We can use all that to start so we don't have to buy anything."

"Do you have a broom." Judy said teasingly thinking of all the dust and cobwebs.

"Possibly?" Nick said frowning, "But I've also got a shop vac. Much better than a broom. Anyway I'll ask Fin if he'll help us cart all of the supplies over from the warehouse in his van. There's a box of beer hidden at the tiki bar I can trade to him for that favor."
"Okay, but you realize your shop vac is going to be useless without power," Judy said playfully booping him on the nose, "right?"

He nipped her finger and grinned at her surprised squeal as she withdrew the paw and tried not to blush… again.

"Right, as I said at the beginning our biggest issue at the moment is money." Nick said going into full hustler mode.

"You're not going to suggest popsicles, are you?" Judy asked with a groan, though Nick laughed. "Pawpsicles, Judy. Pawpsicles. But no, Bogo made it pretty clear he doesn't want to see us doing that, instead," he put his coffee down and pulled out his new badge wallet and the small book they'd gotten yesterday, "Why don't we put these to use?"

He waved the book, "What did Clawhauser say the old floggies called this? The bingo book? I took a glance through it yesterday and there's some mammals in here that probably would give up at the first sight of a badge. Granted they're the ones with very small rewards but a small payday is better than no payday."

Judy looked at it thoughtfully considering it before taking the book and starting to flip through it looking at the each of the profiles and information for the mammals listed. There were mammals of every type from mice to elephants, everything from simple bail or court date skippers for minor offenses to some serious looking criminals.

"Still seems a bit risky without any equipment, plus we don't know how long it would take to find any of them-" she stopped staring at one image, "Nick?"

He looked down at her questioningly, and she turned the book around so he could see it, "Does this mammal look familiar?"

Nick looked at the photo of a shaggy brown wolf with greased head fur like he was trying to imitate old school gangsters right out of a movie.

Nick looked at it and skimming through the bio, "Hyde MacTire… skipped his meeting with his probation officer last month and wanted for starting an altercation in a bar that left two mammals injured… past of petty robbery, and some gang violence with a few assaults… no history with weapons though he apparently likes fighting and has issues with his temper…"

"Nope don't think I've ever seen him before, why?" Nick said looking up at her.

"Because for half the ride to Skye's shop Finnick wouldn't stop grumbling about the guy that hit him," she pointed to the picture, "A mammal that from his comments would look a lot like this one."

"Huh…” Nick said looking back at the page. "Also fits this guys style… hold on a second." Nick pulled out his cell phone and dialed a number, putting the phone on speaker.

It rang for a few moments before Finnick's voice came boom out, "Damnit, what do you want now? I already said that I'm going to get the-"

Nick cut in quickly, "Fin! Judy and I had a question, we wanted to ask you about last night."

"I was busy DJing last night, what the hell else is there to know about it?" came Finnick's irritated voice.
"We wanted to know about the guy that slugged you." Nick replied calmly

"Grade A asshole, wannabe gangster with ridiculous greased up hair that got pissy when some girl told him to leave her alone, had to break his nose and kick him out the door when he started making trouble. I can take care of myself Nick I don't need you trying to fucking mother me."

"What did he look like? Did you catch his name?" Judy piped up.

"And what's it to you bunny cop? You gonna go arrest him? Ha! I'd like to see that!" Finnick barked, laughing.

"Possibly. Depends, if it's the guy we think it is, then yes." Judy responded and couldn't help feeling a tiny bit smug when that shut up Finnick's laugher.

The line was quite for a few seconds before Finnick spoke up, "... You serious?"

"Do I sound like I'm kidding?" she responded and there was another short wait.

"Brown wolf, long unkempt fur and a greased hair-do. Little short for a timber wolf, I think he had a nick near the top of his right ear on the inside, don't know his name. Frank the bartender might, said that he'd heard from a few other bars that guy had been causing trouble around lately, plus not to give him credit because he'd skipped out on a few tabs."

Nick pointed to the picture, where there was a clear nick in the wolf's ear were Finnick had described. "Looks like that's a match, you want to try and take him in?" he asked looking at Judy, "Nice little payout but he's a bit feistier than I was thinking for our first try."

Judy looked back at Nick frowning, it was a riskier than she'd like, especially with them having no equipment, no cuffs, no backup, but this wolf had hurt Finnick. He seemed like a classic bully and that tweaked a nerve in her. She hated bullies; it was probably her experiences with Gideon growing up. And while Gid had turned a new leaf, the experience had left her with a special distaste for bullies and an ingrained a need to try and help when she saw one.

Judy looked back up to Nick and he seemed to recognize something in her expression because he gave a small nod.

"Okay, Fluff. Let's play this smart though. We can take care of our banking business first. That'll leave us the afternoon to see if we can find this guy. If we can find him, then we can work out the best way to bring him in. It might be worth checking out the bars around where Finnick was working yesterday and see if anyone has seen him."

Finnick's voice broke in from the phone, "If you two want to find him I can just ask the Frank to put the word out to his buddies. They don't like when mammals damage their places and scare away customers. Bad for business. Plus, bartenders have a special place in hell the reserve for mammals that don't pay their tabs. This A-hole's been a nuisance for them; if you can take care of him they'd probably be happy to tip you off if he shows up anywhere. What's the guy's name?"

Judy looked at Nick who shrugged, "Easier than going bar to bar. Okay, Fin, His name is Hyde MacTire."

"Right, A-hole name for a A-hole wolf, I'll talk to Frank and give you a call if he or any of his friends see him. Just do me one favor, would you?" Finnick asked almost pleasantly.

"Sure, bud, what'ch ya need?" Nick replied grinning.
"When you two drag this guy in," he growled in an unpleasantly happy way, "Tell him the little pipsqueak from last night says hi." And he ended the call.

Nick reached over and picked up his phone, putting it away before finishing off his coffee.

"And that," he said putting the mug back down, "Is one more reason why you never want to cross Finnick."

"Oh, I think he's got a good heart, below all that gruffness," Judy said and Nick grinned.

"Sure, but you'll never get him to admit it. Ready to go? It sounds like we're going to be busy today."

"Nothing we can't handle." Judy said getting up and holding her paw out for Nick to take as they heading out, "The closest Lemming Brother's Bank office is in Savanna Central, right?"

"See, you're already getting to know your way around the city!" Nick teased and pulled her closer as they walked toward the nearest subway station, "Hey while we're getting there, how about you quiz me again for the weapons test?" Nick said pulling the academy handbook out of his back pocket with a grin.

Judy looked at him dubiously, he seemed far to enthusiastic about *studying*.

"Fine, but we're putting a handy cap on it this time. One kiss for every ten questions and you get right and we'll restart the count every time you get one wrong."

"Deal, Fluff." Nick said his grin getting wider, and Judy couldn't get rid of the feeling he'd just hustled her… again.
Conspiracies really take a lot out of you so the Pirates graciously offered to let me hang out with them for a bit while I catch my breath. The only problem was they apparently had a 'accident' with a cannon and by sheer unfortunate coincidence shot my boat. Don't worry though they said they'll get me back. You can trust pirates right? Right?

On a slightly more realistic note. Other stories combined with obligations in this thing called real life and the fact that this chapter got rewritten a couple times caused a crazy long delay. Well, all that and my coffee machine also broke.

Good news, there's a new coffee machine! And some of that other stuff is getting sorted out as well. The point is updates should start coming at a much more reasonable pace. As for this chapter, well I'm still not one hundred percent satisfied with it but I think I'm at the point where I'm double guessing myself. So here it is and now that its out I can get to the next one which is going to be really fun.

Also this chapter is something I had in my mind for a long while since I saw some of the original concept art for Zootopia, primarily this picture:

(Opps, this is FanFiction dot net! No pictures or links allowed! You all can find it at either this same story posted on Ao3 or at 'Zootopia dot wikia dot com /wiki/File:TUSK04 dot png')

Disclaimer: The pirates said I can't get sued. And apparently from what I've been told now, modern pirates are always trustworthy. Now why does that parrot keep saying, 'pack of lies!' 'Run!' *squeak* 'Pack of lies!'?

Typo Disclaimer: If you find any blame the parrot, he proofed this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Original Concept Art for Zootopia that sparked some of the ideas for this Chapter:
"Seriously Nick, how does an *entire* bank just stop working for lunch hour?" Judy asked as they sat it the lobby of the Lemming Brothers Bank where every teller window, from the rodent sized ones near the floor to the large mammal sized teller stations far above them, along with all the offices in view had 'out to lunch' signs. "This is going to take longer than the DMV with Flash!" Judy added, her usual enthusiastic attitude faltering in the face of one of the few things she truly feared…

Waiting.

So far, her experience here had been quite different from any other bank she'd ever seen. First, she'd almost walked right by it because the ornate architectural entrance banks where known for was sized for rodents. They had doors for larger mammals of course, this wasn't Little Rodentia after all, but they were just plain doors like the entrances to every other shop along the street.

Given the entrances, she'd expected the inside of the building to be small and cramped, designed more for rodent sized mammals. She'd been right and wrong. The building *was* designed to be used primarily by rodent sized mammals but it wasn't anything close to 'small and cramped'. The interior of the building put the atrium at Precinct 1 to shame for its sheer spaciousness, though the bank's layout was drastically different. Besides the rodent tubeways that crossed high overhead near the ceiling, the walls weren't really walls in the classic sense but one seemingly endless tier upon tier of small rodent sized office cubbies.

Nick leaned over to her on the bench where they sat waiting, and said, "Because it's an entire bank run by *lemmings*! When *one* decides to go to lunch, *all* of them go to lunch. Don't worry about it though, lunch hour is almost over and if nothing else, lemmings are always prompt," he smiled and put a paw on her leg, which she hadn't even realized had started to thump rapidly with her growing impatience. And just like she hadn't consciously willed the limb to move, it stilled on its own just from his touch.

*Holy flying Carrots, how'd he do that? I have a hard enough time keeping my leg under control when it gets like that!*

Judy furrowed her brows trying to figure out why her body seemed more willing to listen to Nick than it was to her.

"Oh, and that was ten by the way, I'll take my kiss now."
Judy snapped out of her philosophical debate about traitorous bunny bodies and cunningly lovable foxes.

"What?" she looked over at his smug grin her brain finally reengaging, "Nick, that bet was only for the study questions!... and you got every one of those right," she narrowed her eyes at him, "How did you do that anyway? You haven't had that much time to study."

"How did I get those questions right?" Nick asked, repeating the question like she was a reported interviewing him, "Well, your right Carrots I didn't have much time to study, but as a hustler" he shot her a smile and corrected himself, "ex-hustler, that liked to stay just this side of the law I had to learn to read through city regulations and legal paper work quickly so I could flip it around and use it to my advantage; call it lots of practice, plus..." His smirk grew a bit more and his eyes narrowed on her with a wicked glint that would have gotten a violent response if it had been from any other mammal besides Nick. Instead it had her squirming and fighting back a blush, which became harder as his voice deeped, "I had one hell of a good incentive to study quickly."

Nick reached out and tapped her nose, "And that question makes one. Only nine more to go."

Judy huffed and crossed her arms, "Nick we finished studying! Don't think you're going to be able to hustle me out of more kisses. You took that last one after we finished the chapter and made a whole spectacle out of it!"

Nick shrugged sheepishly, "What can I say?! The street band outside the Savanna Central station was playing the perfect song and I had my new wife in my arms. No sane mammal would mammal would have given up that opportunity. Anyway," he waved a paw, "it wasn't like we were the only couple that joined in."

"Oh I think you could have resisted alright." Judy said dubiously, determined not to look at Nick as she lost her battle to control her blush.

Instead of taking his final kiss, he'd leaned forward and then sweep her quite literally off her feet and into a dance in front of the small band. All Judy really remembered was being twirled about like a top only to find herself being dipped down into a deep kiss as the song ended.

There had been a few other couples there so he was right that they hadn't been the only ones making a spectacle of themselves and Judy probably wouldn't have minded it except that the small crowd the street band and dancers had attracted had started applauding after Nick's showy kiss, and only applauded louder when he bowed in return. It had been unbelievably embarrassing… and thrilling and the kiss was fantastical but it was still embarrassing! She'd almost hidden behind her ears like she'd done when her mother had walked in on them in the hospital.

Nick snickered and leaned over close to whispering in her ear, "Oh I did resist! I didn't give them an encore, I kept it to the agreed upon one kiss after all."

Still fuming a bit over that (the embarrassment though, bad as it was still couldn't really compare Nick's kiss), Judy snapped back, "One long kiss."

"Yep, one long thoroughly enjoyable kiss, but it was still just one… speaking of which, you still owe me another." Nick said and she could tell just by his voice that he was wearing a smugly satisfied smile.

"That's not the point! And I do not!" Judy said in reply, trying and failing to flick him on the muzzle with an ear; he was wising up to that trick fast.
"And you do, you where the one that changed our agreement so that I got a kiss for every ten questions I answered right in a row. You never said they had to only be practice question for the test."

Judy turned to him, finger poking into his shirt to tell him he was wrong and stopped, her own words replaying through her mind, 'One kiss for every ten questions you get right…'

Judy's ears dropped as she realized that what she'd said could very well have been interpreted that way. Her ears didn't stay down long though because Nick leaned forward closing his mouth on her open one and sent them snapping back up.

Nick pulled back a few seconds later leaving Judy's mind reeling and trying to remember where she was and why the kiss had ended. It was a good thing she was sitting down because the intensity of that brief kiss would have turned her legs to jello if she was standing.

"You… You…" Judy stammered looking at Nick who was smiling broadly. "Why… you…!"

Nick reached out and touched her angrily twitching nose, making it go absolutely still.

"It's called a hustle Sweetheart," He said with a wink and Judy's stammering devolved into sputters.

Looking at Nick's smirk she gave a groan and slumped against his chest her ears going limp as the fell against him. Nick just wrapped an arm around her and chuckled.

She gave him a weak whack on his chest and muttered, "You know I'm going to find a way to get you back for that, right?"

He only laughed softly.

"I'm counting on it Carrots." He said with clear amusement, "But that's not going to get you out of your bet and that's two questions answered. Only eight more."

She groaned again, face still in his shirt, "And how long are you going to keep playing that bet?"

"Forever," Nick replied arm rubbing her side comfortingly, "You have to admit it's a great hustle. It gives me a free pass to kiss you in public and I don't intend to ever give it up. Oh, and that's three."

Judy looked up him, as her fox smiled happily at her and pecked him softly on the lips, before saying, "Well you never said I can't pay those kisses in advance. I'll just have to kiss you a whole bunch tonight, that way I won't have to worry about it since it'll already be paid."

"And to think I thought I'd gotten you," Nick said back putting his nose against hers, "Didn't take you long to get out of that one my sly bunny."

The happy moment was broken as she heard a muttered comment from another seat in the lobby.

"Stupid perverted whore is just trying to get herself eaten," Judy's head snapped around to see another bunny, a tan colored doe five or ten years older than her sitting a couple of feet away and glaring. The older doe hadn't been very quiet with her muttering either and all the other mammals which had for the most part been ignoring them, tapping away on phones or otherwise minding their own business were now cautiously looking between the two parties. Even the security guard by the front door had apparently heard judging by how he was no
longer lazily leaning against the wall and was watching intently as if sensing potential danger.

The doe, to Judy, had the look of a mother taking care of business while her kits were at school and not running her ragged. She had a bit of the Podunk accent as well as a an apparently large amount of the old country prejudices.

Judy was about to put the other doe in her carrot picking place, but felt Nick's arm around her squeeze lightly in a silent request not to. She looked back up at him and while his face was controlled, with an almost genially pleasant expression she could tell by the sharp almost savage look in his eyes and the vibration of a silent growl against her side that he was livid.

Nick leaned over and spoke to Judy and in a concerned whisper that she was sure by how it carried across the open room, that he'd intended it to be heard by all the nearby mammals.

"Judy, did she just say that she's a whore trying to get herself eaten? That's awful! Should we try to get her some help, maybe call someone?"

The doe glaring at them flushed angry. Judy catching on, whispered back to Nick in the same concerned manner, "She did. I feel so bad for the poor dear! We should probably give her one of the public help line numbers, maybe see if we can-"

A few of muffled snickers from some of the other mammals in the room seemed to be the tipping point for the fuming doe.

"I called you a whore, you stupid bunny!" She erupted bouncing to her feet and levelling a shaking paw at Judy, "Letting yourself get conned by some fox! Letting that filthy pelt defiled you! You're a stain on the reputation of all rabbits!"

Nick's presence next to Judy, the way his arm held her protectively, was just enough of a help that she managed, if barely, to hang onto her temper at the insults to her mate. She kept her head though instad of smacking the other bunny silly.

"Miss," Judy responded and though it took effort, she kept a calm and reasonable tone, "With all due respect, you're being a speciest bigot." The doe looked like Judy had slapped her, which even if Judy wasn't very proud of the fact, made her feel a bit better, "And I think your mistaken on a few points as well. Since my husband here," she leaned into Nick, feeling his silent snarl take on a bit of a pleased rumble when she called him her husband, and continued, "is the only mammal I've ever been with I don't see how I could be a 'whore', and he didn't con me. If anything, I conned him into marrying me."

Nick gave the top of her head a very public rub with his muzzle and in a surprised voice exclaimed, "That was you who snuck in and stole my heart!? Judy how could you?" he finished sounding horrified.

The now thoroughly enraged doe was spluttering so Judy smirked, turning back to Nick,

"Easy. Because I love you." She replied and kissed him holding nothing back.

"You Degenerate!" the doe nearly screamed at Judy, "You Filthy Pred loving Piece of Trash! You-"

"Ma'am," a deep voice sounding like crushed gravel being ground together broke through the bunny's tirade, and everyone's attention focused on the huge rhino security guard, "You're making a scene. If you cannot calm down and leave the other customers alone I'm going to have to ask you to leave."
"Ask me to leave?! And you'll tolerate... that," the bunny waved angrily at Judy and Nick, "here?! I thought this was a respectable establishment!"

The security guard looked at them with what might have been the epitome of a neutral face before speaking back to the angry doe, "Ma'am, I don't like it any more than you do but they aren't doing anything illegal or against the bank's policy, I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to either sit back down and stop shouting at other customers or I'll have to ask you to leave."

It was clear from how he said it that asking her to leave was simply politely saying that he'd make sure she'd leave.

The doe opened her mouth, shut it, and then smoldered for a few moments before shooting Judy and Nick a viscously angry glare and stalked back to her seat. The security guard took a final look at them as if debating saying something but seemed to decide against it and returned to his previous position.

Even with the small victory over the other doe, Judy still felt a little angry and more than a bit hurt by the whole incident. It wasn't even so much the other bunny; Judy had grown up being thought of as the oddball among bunnyrabbits in her home town, though this had been more... malicious than what she was used too. Seeing the small minded bigoted doe get sent back to her chair like a naughty kit in trouble had mostly appeased any need she'd felt to get even with her for her words. What had caught Judy off guard though, was the security guard's agreement with the doe. He hadn't said anything, hadn't treated her or Nick badly but he still had clearly agreed with the other bunny and that hurt.

"S'okay Judy," Nick said softly, still holding her. Judy blinked and then realized how tight her balled fists were and how wet her eyes had become and she tried taking a few deep breaths, "Don't worry about what that doe said, there's always going to be someone that objects. We just ran into a rather vocal one."

"It's not even really the bunny..." Judy mumbled looking down, she felt angry and hurt and felt stupid for even feeling that way because why did what they think even matter?

But that still didn't stop the hurt.

Nick gave a sad sigh and she could feel him slump a bit, "Is it finding out that someone you thought was on your side really isn't. That while they might not be outspoken they think of you with disdain?"

Judy looked up at him in surprise and he shrugged, "I'm a fox Judy, I've had to get used to it. Not even you, my wonder bunny, can change every mammal's heart," Nick cracked a small smile, "though I think you might try, And I think you might even manage it for most of them," his smile faded a bit and he continued more somberly, "But there are always going to be those who object despite everything. Best we can hope for in those cases is for them to at least keep it to themselves," Nick nodded toward the security guard, "or for them to at least act professional; He might think worse of us than that doe does but he's not doing anything to us. Better than miss loudmouth. And while you might have rekindled my hope that mammals can change, that this world can get better, that is going to be the best we are going to get for some."

Judy nodded and leaned into Nick's side trying to get as close to him as possible and his tail, no longer slowly wagging like it had earlier during their banter curled around her.

Nick gave her head another light nuzzle and whispered to her in a said voice that made her hurt more than either the doe or Rhino had, "I'm sorry you have to go through that, If I wasn't a f-"
"She held up a paw to his snout, silencing him.

"No. You don't have to be sorry for anything. This is not your fault and I don't want you to be anything other than what you are." She looked up into his eyes, so that he could see she meant every word, "I'd chose to be with you even if every other mammal in the world disagreed."

The large clock in the corner of the lobby chimed the hour breaking the silence that had come over the lobby and caused Nick to blink his eyes that where a bit more watery than normal. He gave her a quick kiss on top of her head muttering so low she barely heard him say the "I love you." before he cleared his throat and nudged Judy, pointed toward the front doors

"Enough with the maudlin thoughts, here watch this." Nick said quietly to her, though his voice was a bit rough and his smile forced.

Judy gave him a real smile and turned to look, though she stayed leaning up against his side. How could she continue to feel hurt when Nick was there and trying to cheer her up?

*Can't let him be more cheerful and optimistic that I am after all, the thought cheering her up even more, That's my job.*

What she saw almost made her giggle. As the big clock chimed again, lines of lemmings all dressed in almost identical suits, streamed into the bank, split off toward different rodent tubeways like a well-organized army on the march… or scurry. Nobody could call the way the lemmings little feet flashed back and forth as the moved, 'marching'.

Judy's watched in fascination as in rapid succession the hundreds of offices on the tier walls filled out and the 'out to lunch' signs at the teller windows dropped like dominos. In under a minute the whole nearly empty bank building began humming with the background chatter of voices, phone calls, computers, keyboards and paper being shuffled around.

Judy turned to Nick who was grinning, probably at her expression, "Are all rodents like that? There were only a few rodent families that lived in town back in Bunnyburrow, but I've never seen anything like that."

Nick chuckled, "Not all rodents act that way but lemmings… well they just are like that. The key to dealing with them is not to get in there way but to direct them. Get in there way and they'll march right over you like you weren't even there. On the other hand, once you manage to convince the first lemming of whatever you want the rest will follow like privets following a sergeant."

*That's almost like dealing with the kerfluffle, Judy thought and giggled. Then she remembered that first day she'd met Nick when she'd spied on him after spotting him and Finnick melting the jumbo pop she'd bought for him and his 'son'.*

"Like your popsicle hustle…” Judy mumbled still watching the lemmings and the now bustling bank.

*Pawpsicles," Nick said with a chuckle, "They were Pawpsicles, not popsicles. But yes, exactly like that."

Nick stood up and offered his paw to Judy, "Ready?"

She smiled and let him help her up before they headed over to the forming line.

A lot of mammals had collected during the lunch hour wait but the long line moved surprisingly fast, and in short order Judy and Nick found themselves in front of one of the small mammals teller windows behind which was a lemming whose name plate read 'Lenny Smith'.
Nick cleared his throat dropping back to his suave business mammal persona he'd used in his hustles, "Hello. We're new to Lemming Brothers, we'd like to set up an account both a personal account and one for business."

The teller gave Nick a quick appraising look before also looking at Judy. Seeming to have decided on something he shrugged and said, in a slightly squeaky voice "You'll need to speak to one of the bank agents for that."

He turned his head around and calling back, "Benny! Take these two to one of the free bank agents!"

Judy wondered who he was talking to as she couldn't see anyone else behind the counter top where the lemming sat at a small desk, but then a small door to the side of the teller window near there feet opened and another Lemming in an identical dark suit with a name tag that read 'Benny Smith', came out.

"This way please." He said up to the two of them and started off at a surprisingly quick pace for the small mammal.

Judy followed Nick who followed the small scurrying rodent as he lead them further into the huge building past the lobby area to where a number of glass fronted offices, all large enough to fit any sized mammal, where lined up along the ground floor. Each office held a rather impressively ornate and large desk on which sat a rodent sized chair and business suited lemming behind another more appropriately sized desk, all already busy with some other mammal.

As they walked the little mammal squeak to himself, saying "Freddy's busy, Kenny's busy, Jenny's busy," as they passed the occupied offices, each with a corresponding placard listing the agents name, all of which Judy noticed had the last name Smith.

"Ahh!" the little rodent squeaked as they passed another already occupied office, "Gus is free, right this way please" the little mammal said leading them into an office with the placard listing the agent as one 'Gus Smith'.

Judy followed behind Nick as he entered and did a double take, looking back at mammal who actually sat behind the large ornate desk instead of on top of it behind a lemming sized one as she'd been expecting given all the other offices.

The little lemming that had shown them the way, didn't so much as stop as he scurried across the office saying, "Bank Agent Gus Smith will help you two now," and scurried into a rodent tubeway by the side of the desk along the floor only to come out a moment later ontop of the desk and entered another tube that was one of several that lined the desks edge and led up to the tiered wall offices and networks of other tubeways.

The large brown bear leaned over from behind the desk, that had looked enormous for the lemmings and even her and Nick, but looked just a tad bit small for the bear.

"Welcome to Lemming Brothers Bank, family owned and operated for over a hundred and fifty years, I am Bank Agent Gus Smith. If you wouldn't mind taking a seat," He gestured in front of the desk where several differently sized chairs sat, "I'll be glad to assist you."

Nick looked at Judy and then followed her over to a chair more suited for a larger mammal where he was able to sit with her.

"Height controls are on the chair arm," the bear said, much to Nick's delight as he fiddled with it
raising the chair up until they were at the height of the desk.

Judy had nudge him to get him to stop fiddling with the controls and he whispered back over to her, "Chief Buffalo Butt has sooo got to get one of these for his office!"

Judy rolled her eyes. She seriously doubted it that would ever happen, as even her brief time at the Precinct had shown her how much of a nightmare the supply requisition process was. She doubted that the Chief who cared far more for results than appearances would waste his time to trying procuring fancy chairs.

Nick, his enthusiasm unfazed by her lack of shared excitement turned to the bear, and with his hustler grin held out his paw, "Nice to meet you Mr. Smith. I'm Wilde, Nicholas Wilde and this beautiful vixen here," he gestured at Judy with a wink, "is my wife, Judy Wilde. I must say, you're the biggest damned lemming I've ever had the pleasure to meet."

"Nick!" Judy hissed elbowing him harder, "Be polite!"

The large brown bear though rolled his head back and gave out a belly laugh before reaching forward to enclose Nick's paw… and whole fore arm in his and shake it politely. Nick was bounced in the seat as his entire arm was raised and lowered before the bear leaned back and his large business suit of the same design as all the other lemmings relaxed, no longer threatened to burst a seam. Noticing this and taking a fair guess at the amount of muscle the large bear probably had underneath his long shaggy fur, Judy gave a polite nod, which was returned, rather than risk being flung around by a hand shake.

"Mother always said that it was my appetite that made me grow so big. Told my siblings that if they wanted to grow up to be big like me that they'd better stop eating so much junk food and make sure to eat their vegetables." He laughed again, "They always said it was because I was adopted and that they couldn't be held to the eating standards of a bear, not that that argument ever held any water with my mother." He leaned forward and whispered conspiratorially, "They always slip me their vegetables whenever they could get away with it too!"

Judy gave a small laugh, liking the friendly bear almost immediately. She could remember all sorts of similar stunts she and her siblings pulled while growing up. In fact, the entire bank in some ways reminded her of her childhood home.

"The bank kind of feels similar to my family's farm where I grew up, I have a fairly large family and most of them work the family business there. I take it by the names that everyone who works here is related?" Judy asked a bit intrigued.

"Well I might not have the most traditional lemming name but everyone here is part of the Smith family," the bear smiled, "though a hundred and fifty years is a long time for a family tree to grow. Plus lemming tradition is for anyone who marries into or in my case adopted into the family, to take the name of the family business not necessarily to take the husband's name. Given time and the size of the Lemming Bank since it is one of the largest international banks the family connections can be… a distant, but we are all proud mebers of the smith family."

"Benny for example, " the bear gestured at the tube where the lemming that had lead the here had disappeared into, "is my eleventh cousin twice removed." The bear grinned at Judy, "there's a reason why the name Smith is one of the most common ones out there."

"Guess that makes you a bit like the black sheep of the family then?" Nick ask with a grin and Judy felt like smacking him for being rude but settled with another elbow and stern look, which only got her what might be, if she was gracious, a halfway apologetic smile.
Gus, though only grinned back, "You know mammals keep saying that..." he shrugged still grinning, "I guess a sheep in a lemming family is just as odd as a bear but I'm clearly brown not black."

"Not as strange as being a fox married to a bunny," Nick joked back, "But I'll make sure that if any of my in-laws ever makes the comparison to point out that I'm clearly red."

Judy decided that she'd better take charge or Nick might do something like start making jokes about three humped camels or do something else to keep them here all day.

Things went surprisingly fast once the topic changed from introductions to business though thee wee a few hiccups. The remaining cash they had between them in their wallets was enough (if barely) to start a shared personal checking account. But they ran into trouble with starting a business account. Judy was about to give up on it for now when Mr. Gus (the bear had laughed when she'd called him Mr. Smith and told her that that was pointless considering everyone in the bank was a Smith) mentioned something that gave her an idea.

"Mrs. Wilde, you have the paperwork in order to start a corporate account but you simply don't have the capital to open one up at this time. The corporate accounts require a minimum opening balance which you simply don't have to assure the bank of that it has the potential to succeed. I could put in for an exemption but it would be denied out of hand since your personal capital is currently... low, and additionally your previous bank has, however unfairly, severely hurt your credit history and your husband simply doesn't have one. Without some sort of viable assurance like a record of fiscal stability to justify to the bank that your company has a chance to succeed, no exemption will be approved."

Though Nick had kept his mask up, Judy could tell by the slight droop to his ears and a brief side glance he'd at her that he had been worried about and expecting something like this to happen.

Judy knew he was probably also thinking that this was his fault. That if it wasn't for his history and probably for him being a fox that she wouldn't be have these issues and she was determined to prove him wrong, to show him that they could succeed.

Nick was usually the one with the ideas, but seeing as he didn't seem to have any at the moment she decided it was her turn to step up. That's what partners did after all, and luckily this time she had an idea.

Judy looked back at Mr. Gus, "Do you think an exemption might go through if we had the first payment from a job for our company?" she pulled out her wallet and pulled out a check handing it over.

The bear took it, looked at it, then stopped and examined it more closely frowning a bit.

"It might not be a large payment, however..." Judy continued trying to pull off Nick's cool-as-a-cucumber business attitude he'd used convincing the Little Rodentia construction contractor that that the popsicle sticks odd coloring was 'red wood', "That is a check issued by the Zootopia government and shows that we have a very reliable client for our business. One that we can be certain would not default on their payments. I would think that stable client would be a good indicator of success, and we do have a good public record of solving cases for this particular client as well, our success have been reported in the news after all."

None of what Judy had said was strictly untrue, the check made to Nick finding the missing
mammals which was the type of work they were getting into now and Nick had used that check as an up front payment to her for their first official job.

Mr. Gus finally looked up at the two of them and gave them a long evaluating look before speaking.

"I do believe that that might work. Give me a moment to fill out the form and submit it to my supervisor and we should hear back shortly. Having the government as a consistent client would be an indicator of steady income for your business," he gave them a careful look, before saying, "I don't think I need to mention that this payment was only for a dollar and thirty two cents."

He then turned to start typing at the computer on his desk that, while orders of magnitude large than every other one Judy had seen around the bank, seemed just a tad small for the large bear.

As he typed he added, a slightly warning in his tone, "Considering the nature of our family bank my supervisor will probably accept this since I am also giving it my personal recommendation. I would greatly appreciate it if you two made sure that your business succeeds as it would otherwise reflect poorly on me."

Nick spoke up in full hustler business mode, "We appreciate that Mr. Gus. I believe that you'll find your trust in us well placed. We have already secured our new offices and have our next few jobs line up. Additionally, we are expecting to receive another, ah… more substantial payment in the near future. I believe that the bank will find us and our business valuable clients."

Judy hid her smile. They did have an office, it just wasn't in the best shape at the moment and between their current goal of bringing in Hyde MacTire and Nick's 'hiring' her to find out as he'd put it at the precinct 'whose out to get me and my wife' they technically did have two jobs, and two counted as a 'few'.

It didn't take longer than a minute from the moment Mr. Gus sent the exemption for it to be returned, approved and they were able to continue setting up the account.

Mr. Gus advised them against trying to take out any company or personal loans or credit lines at the current time since between their extremely low balances and poor credit history (The Zootopia National Bank had apparently had some very unsavory comments included with the closing of her accounts and Nick simply had no credit history) the best they could expect even with the property they owned would be very little with high rates. He suggested that if they did have payments coming in the near future to wait until they could deposit those, as the bank would be able to give them significantly better rates with a decent balance in their accounts to counterbalance the other factors.

Judy wanted to argue but decided that what the bear had suggested made sense and let it go for now.

With the final paperwork finished and signed they only had to wait a few minutes until a lemming came out of one of the rodent tubeways onto Mr. Gus's desk to deliver them their new check books and debit cards.

After that and another handshake that had Nick almost being lifted off the chair, Judy found herself exiting the bank alongside Nick.

"Well that went better than I expected it to." Nick said with a grin, looking over at her, "I think we got lucky with that bank agent and you pulling out that check, but then again," he smirked and reached over and tussled her head fur and ears, "I've got my own lucky rabbits foot. Two in fact."

Judy scowled swatting away his paw from her ears, "That is one of the stupidest sayings out there! Why do mammals think rabbits feet are lucky?!!"
Nick grinned and shrugged, "I never believe it before but then two rabbits feet hopped into my life and everything suddenly started getting better. That and those two feet are also attached to the most beautiful girl I've even seen."

Judy blushed hard but crossed her arms, "Don't try to save yourself with flattery mister!"

*Don't let on that he can save himself with flattery or he'll have me wrapped around his claw.*

"Just because it's flattery doesn't make it not true." Nick replied giving her a look that had ample amounts of appreciation and desire dancing in his emerald green eyes as they ran up and down her figure, "And I'm never going to let my lucky rabbit go. She's mine and I'm keeping her forever."

And with that Judy didn't care that they where on the sidewalk. She turned and hugged him hard.

"Dumb fox," she said into his shirt, "Like I'd ever leave you. And you're not keeping me. You're stuck with me because I'm not letting you go. Ever."

Nick's arms wrapped around her back and he rested his muzzle between her ears.

"I can live happily with that," he murmured and then his voice shifted to a teasing tone, "Though if where going to make another public scene, could dip and kiss you again?"

"Don't even think about it!" Judy said backing up quickly though she was smiling. She grabbed his paw and started marching him down the street before he decided to do it anyway.

Nick followed easily enough but she could feel his smirk behind her.

"Carrots do you even know where you're going?" he asked after a few moments.

"Yes." She said stubbornly, realizing she didn't have a clue, "Away from where we were being gawked at."

There was a snicker from behind her before Nick moved up to her side and pulled out his phone, tapping away at it for a bit.

Judy reached an intersection, the cross walk light showing a red halt sign, and came to a stop trying to figure out where to go now. She glanced at Nick but he was still preoccupied with his phone, though judging by the smirk in the corner of his mouth she guessed he was waiting for her to admit that she had no idea where she was leading them.

Nick finally put his phone away and looked back at her his smirk only growing larger, "Would I get punched if I told you that your 'determined' expression is absolutely c-

Her paw hit his arm, "You've hit your limit today for the c word, don't push it. Now where are we going next?" Judy double checked to make sure that her ears where folded down so that her fox couldn't see what him saying that did to her. To be truthful, it was more that she'd hit her limit; if he called her cute a few more times she was going to go savage on him. Complete total bunny girl gone crazy.

Nick might know that the c-word meant a lot more to bunnies, but he hadn't grown up as a bunny. It was one thing to know and another to understand. And while Nick wasn't a bunny he was her mate, which made that word from him mean so much more. She had to remind herself over and over again that they were in public, that all she had to do was wait until tonight.

*I hate waiting.* Part of her whined
Deal with it. You can kiss him more later. Her reasonable side retorted, and then added,

And NO quickies! This isn't the country, we can't sneak off to the hay barn or out to the forest!

What about a hotel room?

Really? And how would we even pay for it right now?

What about that bed back at the fixer-up? That's not too far away and we could be quick, bunnies are know for being quick.

Potato for brains! He's a Fox. He's got this little thing called a knot, remember? It would not be 'quick'

Oh, *giggle* I remember, oh I definitely remember *giggle* and Nick is so cute and cuddly during mandatory cuddle time, and the feeling!

MIND OUT OF THE GUTTER!

"Stupid sly fox," Judy muttered, trying to banish the half memory, half daydream before she got really worked up like she had back at their new old office fixer-up this morning. There at least she had a chance to cool down over breakfast and maybe cuddle lightly too. Getting hot and bothered now walking around the city trying to work would drive her nuts.

Nick though, might have heard because he chuckled and reached over taking her paw in his and giving it a squeeze and a tug.

"Come on my very acute bunny, as you've no doubt noticed, the lights changed," he said smugly and Judy felt herself heating up, again. Swearing, she looked up to see that the crosswalk light had indeed changed to show the lit outline of a walking mammal. "Savanna Central's old downtown is this way."

That is just unfair! Hiding the c-word in other words is... is... Cheating!

That's Nick, now can we drag our hustler back by that wonderful tail to the bed?

NO! Later! Not Now!

Judy sighed in defeat and followed Nick.

"You know I'm going to get you back for that as well right?" she asked and Nick laughed before looking at her with an expression that was as happy and playful as she'd ever seen him.

"Oh yes, I know. You're one of the only mammals that can execute a hustle and actually get me. I can't wait to see what you come up with this time," he gave her a smile and even his tail wagged a few times in excitement.

"You're just asking for it now," Judy said, giving him a mock serious glare.

She promised herself she would get him too. Damp clothes where uncomfortable. She'd absolutely get him for making her have to deal with them now.

"Am I?" Nick asked contemplatively, before looking at her, "Why yes. Yes, I am. We'll just have to see if you can get me before I get you." He finished in a satisfied tone.

Oh, Really? We'll see who gets who tonight fox! Because as soon as we're alone together its fox
"Oh I'm going to get you Nick, I always have in the end," She said giving him a look so dangerous and filled with a smoldering promise of retribution that Nick almost tripped. He swallowed grinning like he was thrilled and terrified. She even saw him make some minor adjustments to his pants.

**Well, if I have to be uncomfortable, he can join me in my suffering wait as well.**

She gave him one shot of that look before dragging her mind back to business, "Now why don't you tell me why we're heading back to Savanna Central's old downtown."

"Well," Nick said grinning a bit shakelly though his tail was wagging behind him, "I thought I'd show you a dive bar in old savanna central, you know grab a few drinks, relax for a bit, sneak in some cuddling, see how many more time I can tell you how c…" Judy narrowed her eyes and _daring_ him to finish that word. He swallowed hard and rephrased what he was saying, though his tail wagged just a bit faster, "um… wonderful you are."

"And the real reason?" Judy asked poking his side with her free paw

Nick smirked, "Can't pull one over on you, can I?"

"Not anymore Slick," Judy said with another poke and a satisfied smile, "I know my fox. I know who he really is and all his weakness too. Now spill!" This time she poked him just below his ribs in a ticklish spot she'd found earlier and he yipped, giving a startled hop.

"Okay! Okay!" Nick said trying to protect that spot with a paw so she couldn't poke him again, "You win! Don't tickle me and I'll tell you."

Judy beamed up at him, "Told you I always win."

Nick gapped at her for a second before blinking and looking back forward with a mutter murmured that she barely over heard,

"My sly bunny is just _too_ cute when she smiles like that..." he cleared his throat.

_Don't Jump him! Don't Jump him! You weren't supposed to hear that!_

**But I did hear that!**

Nick still looking forward and missing her internal conflict, continued, "Seems Fin's buddy and the secret brotherhood of bartenders already spotted MacTire."

Relief washed over Judy, not because they had a lead on MacTire, but it gave her something to focus on.

_Right. The unruly part of her finally conceded, Catch the criminal, then drag Nick back and jump him._

"Got a message that he arrived at a dive bar there about a half hour ago." He Nick continued looked down at her, his face composed again just like hers.

He smirked, "Ready to go catch a bad guy?"

Judy looked back at Nick mimicking his contemplative look from before.

"Am I ready to go catch bad guys with my partner?" She looked back at Nick and gave him the best
smile she could. A smile that showed her excitement at being able to do something to help the city again, and doing it with Nick. Her Nick. Her Partner.

He stared at her again with a look like he'd just been sun blinded, and she squeezed his paw.

"Why, yes. Yes, I am."

Chapter End Notes

A thanks once again to Fox in the Hen House for letting me use you to bounce ideas off of and for giving me some good advice, or just letting me vent when the coffee's low or the pirates are laughing at me. Thanks! Oh and hey, look at this the pirates also invited him to come take a 'all expenses paid' vacation on their ship!

Also special thanks to GusTheBear, since not only does he have a great user name but he's an absolute genius at coming up with names for OCs and redshirts and such. He's been an invaluable help in this story and some of my other ones as well. He's been so much of a help I couldn't resist writing him into this story. (Okay and his name just screamed to be used… and it just fit perfectly with the character I needed for the unexpectedly different lemming but not a lemming for this chapter *snicker* can you imagine a lemming family with a bear? *snicker*)
Chapter 40 – Hole in the Wall

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Ha, this was a great idea! With everything else going on I let my work on this story slip and now the pirates are forcing me to walk the plank! Finally! I can escape from this ship! Wahoo! *ahem* I mean 'Please don't make me walk the plank! Oh woe is me! Don't throw me off this ship- Wait, those aren't fins in the water… HEY since when has the Kerfluffle been able to swim!? Oh No, No, NO! Not that again! I swear I'll stop procrastinating and write the stupid story based on stolen Disney characters, just don't push me- AGHHHHHHH! *splash*

Typo Disclaimer: AGHHHHHHH! Help me before I drown in 'Cute' and I swear I'll try to proof it better! AHHHHH!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Judy looked back over to Nick with a flat expression after sighting the bar across the street only for him to raise an eyebrow from behind his sunglasses that had appeared just as suddenly as the sun had from behind the days light cloud cover.

"You know Nick, when you said that the bar we were headed to was a hole in the wall I didn't think you were being so literal." She gestured to the bar where an old flickering florescent sign over the entrance read 'Hole In the Wall'.

"It's not the worst name for a bar I've ever heard," Nick snickered, "And you have to admit that it fits the place."

"Well… It does seem like an accurately enough description," Judy huffed shaking her head, "Come on lets go take a look." She said and headed for the recessed entrance of the bar that look like it had been built in the alley between to larger buildings.

She entered the windowless alcove and was just about to jump up to get the door handle when two red paws gripped her around the waist and Nick smoothly lifted her up so that she could reach it.

Judy smiled as she turned the handle and started opening the door. One of the things that still amazed her about Zootopia was the size of everything. Bunnyburrow being populated mostly by bunnies, had been sized for smaller mammals; Zootopia on the other hand had parts that, like the academy made her feel like she was living in a giants castle and other parts like little Rodentia that made her feel like the giant. As she swung the door open to the dimly lit interior of the bar Judy had to admit to herself that the portions of the city that made her feel like a tiny mouse where not only a lot easier to get around in while working together with Nick but just more fun too. She grinned, her ears up and her tail twitching, wondering if Nick thought so too.

A second later, with a small embarrassed squeak Judy realized that Nick might have had another reason for wanting to lift her up as he gave her tail, which was right at his muzzle height, a quick nip and kiss.
A bolt of fiery lightning seemed to burn through her extending from her tail to the tip of her ears and she would have hissed angrily at him as he set her back down but had to focus on staying upright as her legs temporarily felt like jello.

"Y-You!... You!..." she stuttered, jabbing him with one of her fingers as she held onto him with her other paw for support while he held the door open, but before she could make a coherent response he leaned forward smirking.

"I think the words you are looking for are 'You sly fox'," he said and stole a kiss before gesturing at the open door in a dramatic bow, "Ladies first."

Judy snapped her mouth shut and then, failing to come up with a witty reply, stormed by him, not quite snarling "Come on you dumb fox." Her sly fox or not Judy told herself that she couldn't, absolutely would NOT make out with him in that doorway with that garish neon sign flashing above their heads. Just for good measure and to get him back she grabbed his tie and used it to drag him into the bar behind her.

Unfortunately for her thought she had to stop after only taking a few steps into the bar as she could barely see anything in the dim interior after coming inside from the bright day outside. She heard the sound of Nick folding his sunglasses and sliding them back into his shirt pocket before he walked past her and turned asking quizzically in a smug voice, "You coming carrots?"

"Oh hang on for a second so my eyes can adjust," she huffed before muttering, "Stupid foxes and their stupid night vision, I'll end up walking right into something and I'll never hear the end of it."

She saw the blurry outline of Nick move a little as she chuckled and then something soft brush up against her, "Here, just follow me Fluff. I won't let you walk into anything."

The soft something brushed her again and she grabbed it, only then realizing it was Nicks tail. He started walking forward, snickering softly as she followed like a little kit being led on a line as she clung to his tail.

Stupid insufferable fox, I am so going to get him for this! Judy swore to herself as she followed, blinking hard to try and adjust her sight to the dim interior. Leading him around is my thing, he's not allowed to turn the tables on me! Doing that is also my thing... though his tail is ridiculously fluffy. She couldn't help moving her other paw through the think fur feeling the criminally soft under layer. It's not like she was feeling his tail up after all, she just needed to keep both paws on it so she didn't bump into anything as he led her. Anyway, he'd offered his tail ('MY TAIL!' shouted a little voice inside of her head) for her to use as a guide rope, it wasn't her fault for touching it.

Deciding she needed a better grip she slid her paw through his fur and Nick stopped and shuddered.

"Okay carrots," he said in a quiet but dangerously growly voice, and dangerous in a way that made her heart beat fast with in an excited way, "If you keep doing that I'm not going to be responsible for what happens."

Judy suddenly realized how ragged Nick's breathing had become, and despite her efforts not to couldn't help herself as she ran her other paw through the fur of his tail from the tip all the way to the base at his back all the while smirking at him and asking in a low innocent voice, "If I keep doing what?"

"If-" he stopped, a shudder visibly running though him, his breathing almost a pant now, "If you d-don't stop-" she ran her paw back down his tail, ever so lightly scratching with her short blunt claws and Nick shuddered violently and gave out a low growly whine.
"I have so got to remember this! Judy thought to herself with a giggle, He's like putty in in paws!

Her paw reached the tip of his tail as she giggled but before she could do anything else, Nick turned quickly. She gasped at the suddenness of his only half seen movement, but his mouth closed on hers before the sound could escape, and she felt his low rumbled as he pulled her to him for the short ruthless kiss. He broke it almost as soon as it started.

"Don't" he started and kissed her hard again, "play with my tail," a third kiss that had her gasping for air or maybe from the sudden cessation of the kiss, "if you don't want me," he nipped her neck just a bit sharply, his muzzle running up hers to her ears, "to lose all my self-control." He finished and nipped her ears, causing her to gasp into his ruff.

"Okay," She meeped, feeling the quick beat of his heart and a deep almost feral rumble as he held her tightly and nuzzled her.

"Duly noted, no playing with your tail in public." She said and meeped again, slapping her ears back and down as his nuzzling muzzle hit the sensitive inside of one and a hot flush ran through her. She suddenly noticed how his strong musk seemed to overpower the stale smell of spilled beer and other unsavory scents that filled the bar.

"Nick," she asked her breath now a little ragged. Maybe, she thought to herself, she'd taken her teasing a bit too far, because she was now having a hard time trying to put on the brakes, "We came here for a reason and, uh, I need a cup of water," she felt like she was burning up at the moment, pulled up against him. "It, uh, was a long walk over here… I, ah need something to cool down."

With a slightly louder growl and one last nuzzle, Nick slowly let her go, seeming to tear himself away from her. The fact that she could have that kind of effect on him was… Judy shook her head again, the thought not helping with her own internal struggle.

Okay, later. Just hold on until later, Judy thought to herself, using the promise to help right herself, At least now I know I can use his tail to get back at him if (when) he tries that trick with my ears again.

Judy blinked, realizing as she recovered that she could now see well enough in the gloomy light to move around the bar though she could recall exactly when her eyes had started to adjust.

Just going to have to be really careful when, or more like where, I use that tail trick on Nick, she noted to herself, finding her memories of the last minute a little hazy.

Judy looked around seeing that the inside of the bar was mostly taken up by one long bar counter that bowed out in a curve along the entire length of one side of the long narrow room. Luckily not only was the bar nearly empty at this time of day with only a few customers sitting spaced out from each other on barstools but with the curve and height of the bar and the dim light it looked like they hadn't even been noticed.

Guess being small comes in handy every now and then, she thought to herself flushing a bit at the thought of being seen making out in a dive bar like this. Her parents would no doubt be aghast and Jill would probably fall over laughing.

Nick, who'd taken a step back from her, took a final deep breath, before looking at her with what she thought was a sheepish expression, though the bad light made it hard for her to be certain.

"Sorry about that," Nick said, and from the tone of his voice she couldn't help but grin a little too.

Yep, sheepish alright. That must have really gotten to him.
"I um, have mentioned that foxes are a little… picky about who we let touch our tails right? They're, ah just a bit sensitive."

"Just a bit?" Judy giggled as a childish part of her brain singsonged, *I found a weakness! I found a weakness!*

"Just a bit," Nick said, holding up his paw, his fingers held slightly apart. Then he turned gesturing toward one of the high barstools, its seat just above his head, and asked "You need any help getting up there?"

Judy gave him a scrutinizing look.

"You're not offering so that you can ogle my tail again are you?"

"Me?!" Nick nearly gasped indignantly, eyeing her in a way that screamed 'Yes! Yes! Yes!', while he spluttered, "I would never!"

Okay, forget sheepish, Judy thought with a grin, *That look, is the definition of wolfish.*

"Right, I'm sure you'd never, not a gentlemammal like you Slick," Judy said as she moved past him and climbing up the few rungs on the back of the stool for shorter mammals, "I'm glad to hear I don't have anything to worry about then." She finished with an exaggerated amount of relief as she took her time climbing up, making sure to twitch her tail with each step. She was smirking by the time she reached the top and sat having heard the catch and gulp in Nick's breathing as he watched her climb.

With one last tail twitch she turned around and asked innocently, "Are you going to join me up here Mr. Slick, or are you just going to stay down there where your certainly not ogling my rear?"

"Right…" Nick said coughing into his paw before, in one of those foxy moves that still surprised her, made a graceful leap up to land sitting next to her.

*Then again, Gideon was the only fox I knew before meeting Nick and Skye and he wasn't exactly the most athletic mammal I've ever known.* The she smirked and stifled a giggle, *I wonder if Finnick can jump like that too?*

"Show off." She murmured, nudged him playfully and he puffed out his ruff smiling at her.

Nick gave a grinning shrug.

"Guilty as charged," he said, sounding pleased with himself, "What male wouldn't show off to try impressing the girl they're in love with?"

Judy blushed and Nick looked even more smug with himself.

"And what here can I get for ya?" a bored voice asked and Judy turned to see the bartended, a ram with a broken horn asking as he approached them, cleaning a beer mug with a rag that Judy thought might be putting more grim on the mug than it was removing.

"On second thought," Judy mumbled quietly to Nick, "I can do without a water right now." The corner of Nick's mouth twitch in a smile as he too looked at the mug in the rams hoof. Then his whole expression shifted as the ram stopped in front of them and looked over the bar to get a better view of the two of them as their heads (for Judy it was more mostly just her ears) stood above the level of the bar.

"Actually," Nick said casually his hustler mask fully in place, "We were just dropping in for a quick
look at the place, an… acquaintance of ours you might know said that we should stop by."

The ram stopped polishing the mug and looked at Nick his eyes narrowing a bit, "Really now?" he asked, clear suspicion in his voice, "And who'da that have been that would send ye all my way? We don't usually get mor' than the local regulars and occasional lowlives," his hoof set the mug down with an audible thunk as his suspicion hardened a bit more, "And I don't have the patience to be dealing with any scams… fox. Not politely, any-hows." He finished now fully glowering at the two of them.

The menace coming from the ram had Judy on edge. Her ears had dropped back and she was readying herself to fight, but then Nick chuckled and waved his paw in negation. "Not here for anything like that," he said smoothly, not seeming disturbed at all, "Certainly wouldn't have tried anything like that without first buying a drink and leaving a hefty tab."

The Ram barkeeper grunted and his glower lessened as if Nick had passed some sort of test. "And if ye ain't here to dop one of em drunks," he gestured with his hoof down the bar where a warthog and coyote where sitting grousing with each other and nursing their drinks as they watched a n old tv set above the bar, "and ya ain't drink'in, then whach'ya doing around here abouts?"

Nick smirked and leaned forward on the bar using his arms to prop himself up a bit more. "Well, now that there would be an interesting question wouldn't'chya think," Nick said copying the bit of the ram's accent, "See I gots a friend who told me there's been some hooligan causing his buddy Frank and some of his friends too, a wee bit ah trouble here abouts. Said something about a fool getting in the way of good o' mammals just tryin' to have a friendly drink and causin' a bit of ruckus wherever he's bin round. Told him that we wouldn't mind doing him and his friends a favor and takin' care of it."

The ram picked up the mug again and stated whipping it absentmindedly with his dirty rag as he looked back over Nick and her. "I might've heard about that; Frank said there'da been a bit of a commotion last night at his place and passed the word around. Was expecting someone a tad…," he looked the over again pointedly, "bigger… to be coming around here abouts. You two sure ye not be getting in over your heads? I don't get involved in any brawls unless they start wreckin' my place, ya understand?" he looked at them pointedly.

Nick snickered, "You won't have to be worrying about that. But even if there was any fighting, my bodyguard here," he nudged her and she scowled at him, "Would wipe the floor with them."

The ram gave Nick a slightly worried look, like he might be a bit daft, but Nick only leaned forward waving his paw for the ram to lean closer. "You heard about the whole Nighthowler mess?" he asked in a low whisper and the rams face hardened as he nodded and muttered some choice curses Judy had never heard before. Something about asinine sheep butting the city back to the stone age from what she could translate from his heavily accented mutter. Then his eyes narrowed more and he scrutinized them again.

"You two the blokes from the papers?"

Nick nodded, and gestured back to her, "You know that part in the papers had about the old train car crash?"
The ram was now looking at the with what might have just been a touch of respect in his craggy close shorn face, "Saw a picture of it in the papers. Looked like you two wrecked it good, ya did."

Nick grinned, "That we did. What the papers didn't mention is that Fluff here," he nudged her again gaining another scowl, "Fought off two of Bellwether's thugs on that train all by herself… while it was moving I might add. Knocked one near half silly right off the train, just to use him to hit the track switch lever, she did."

That got a snort and a half disbelieving look, "And what were you doing the whole time Miss Mighty Fluff-"

"That's Mrs. Mighty Fluff," Judy said a tad sharply, crossing her arms.

The ram gave a crooked grin and bob of his head, "Right'ch ya are Mrs. Mighty Fluff, but what was yer fearless companion doing the entire time you were tossin' rams around by the horns?"

"Me?" Nick cut in with a chuckle, "That should be obvious; handsome bloke like me was driving the getaway car."

The ram scowled, "Thought that train car crashed?"

Nick smirked, making a show of lazily inspecting his claws, "And a mighty fine job of crashing it I did too, if I do say so myself. Rather proud of that one. Takes real skill to crash a car like that."

The barkeep gave just shook his head and raised the tankard he'd been cleaning, that Judy would swear was dirtier than when he'd started, in a small salute, "That there ya did. Mighty fine job of it from the pictures I saw."

He leaned forward a bit and lowered his voice, "But if ya'll take a bit of advice from an old ram that's been around the block a few times, it might be better if ya leave the drivin' in the future to the Mis'sus there. You just keep working on being pretty so she keeps ya around." he gave Nick a wink, but then sobered, his expression going hard again, "But if ya two really be serious about dealing with that whanker there," and still leaning forward, he looked over at an old booth in the corner of the room, "Be careful. Fool came in and spent all his money on cheap crap and got himself langered. Been mutterin' bout what he'd do to who'ever busted his muzzle and I almost had to bring out me trusty pool cue and bust it again when I refused to give him any more. Seen his type before. Got a mean streak a mile wide when in the drink, and given that he hasn't flat out passed out yet can probably fight like a vicious savage son of a bitch in that condition too."

Nick nodded again no longer smirking. The ram leaned back and turned, heading toward the back shelf behind the bar, were he pulled an old dusty bottle of the shelf. He came back over and from behind the bar produced three shot glass, two smaller than the last and spoke, his voice no longer lowered, as he poured, "Now before ya two go off to have yer fun, I need to thank ya proper like me Mum taught me, for takin care of that crazy muppet of a ewe. Was wreakin my city and given me whole species a blackeye." He slid the two shots across the bar top to them, and while the amber liquid sloshed slightly not a drop spilled.

Nick grinned and picked up the shot that had stopped in front of him. He gave it a sniff and then looked up and raised both eyebrows in surprise, to which the barkeep just winked again.

"Me Mum might not have managed to force much into my thick skull but she taught me enough; Nothing like a good old shot of properly aged Rameson to thank another bloke, or lady" he added with a nod to Judy, "for doing what needs done."
He raised his larger glass before tipped it back and downing the shot with a slow savor. Nick grinning a bit raised too before drinking and Judy, feeling like it would be impolite not to, picked hers up and followed.

Having never been very interested in drinking, as she'd always thought that it would get in the way of her training and goal to be a police officer, Judy didn't have much experience telling drinks apart. Whatever it was, while it sure tasted different from the tequila she sort of remembered from her one true night of drinking to excess that she blamed solely on her sister Jill, it sure burned just as much.

She downed the entire shot but then leaned forward coughing and felt Nick's paw patting her on the back.

"I think I'll take that water now," she wheezed getting her breath back, her eyes watering a little as she gave Nick a thankful look.

"Sure thing," Nick said still rubbing her back as he smirked, "Good eh? Had a wonderfully smooth burn."

Judy coughed a last time and muttered, "I'll take your word for it."

The ram slid a surprisingly clean glass filled with water across the bar top to her with a wink, "Ya two just give a holler if you need anything else, Marty and Pete are gonna need there refills in just a minute." He grabbed his tankard he'd been cleaning when he first came over and started heading back down the bar, but called back over his shoulder, "Ouy! And don't go wreching my place, you here?!"

Nick gave him grinning nod and then turned back to Judy as she downed half the glass to wash the taste of the alcohol out of her mouth.

"Take it you're not much of a drinker."

"No. No, I am not," she said putting the glass back down. "What was that stuff anyway?"

"Whiskey. Old whiskey." Nick said looking at his empty shot glass appreciatively. "Haven't had something like that since me and Fin tinkered around for a bit with a liqueur gig before we started on the pawpsicle hustle. Lot of money you can make by messing around with low grade spirits and then selling them to…" he gave her a grinning smile, "inexperienced drinkers who can only tell the difference between the junk and the real high grade stuff by the look of the bottle."

Judy took another sip of her water, looking over at Nick who'd set his glass back down and felt her curiosity stirring, or maybe that warm feeling was just the whiskey settling, "What happened? Why'd you to give up that hustle if you were making a lot of money?"

Nick smiled and flicked the glass with a claw making it chime faintly. "Rule 1, Carrots. We made some good money at it for a little bit but it takes a license to distribute and sell alcohol, first time ours really got examined someone started figuring out that there was something fishy about it, which there was because we'd bought the licenses from a company that had gone bankrupt." He shrugged, "We might have skipped a whole bunch of the proper steps to get their license properly renewed since that would have been… problematic." He shrugged, "So as soon as our license got more than a cursory glance we got shut down." Nick smiled still looking at the shot glass, "Pawpsicles might not have made as much but I liked that hustle more. Far safer and the pawpsicles tasted better too, plus…" he looked over at her smiling. Not smirking. Not grinning. He was genuinely smiling, "some cute little bunny wouldn't have hopped into my life if it weren't for those pawpsicles."
"Nick," Judy said sternly, feeling a warmth flare inside in a way that certainly was not the from the alcohol. She poked him hard in the chest, "I've told you that you already hit your 'cute' limit for the day!" She gave him her sternest glaring look she could manage and then yanked on his tie, jerking his head down with a surprised yelp that she cut off with a kiss. A very long deep kiss.

…

Judy finally let up on his tie, needing to get some air. The flare of heat inside of her had settled into a smoldering banked fire. That kiss would have to do for now she reminded herself. With that out of the way, she could make it through the rest of the afternoon until they were alone again… probably… maybe. Well, there was a chance so long as Nick didn't say or do anything else that made her heart feel like it was melting again. Judy reached for her water glass and realized that at some point during her kiss it had been refilled.

Blushing, she drank some and to distract herself quickly asked, "So what's rule 1?"

"Huh?" Nick blinked and Judy giggled as he stopped staring at her and gave his head a small shake, "Um… rule 1? Oh, right; the hustle rules. nothing much, me and Fin just had a set of rules we followed, kept us from getting in too much trouble, usually. Rule one was to not do anything illegal."

"To 'not do anything illegal'" she asked, sounding dubious as she trying to figure out how that could possibly fit with hustling.

Nick laughed, and rubber the fur on her head, and she elbowed him until he stopped. Nick, looked down at her with a small grin and his wrapped around her.

"I should say, Rule 1 was not to do anything blatantly illegal. To always stay in that murky gray area of the law. Hustling is all about scamming not thieving. We always kept at least one paw on just this side of legal so that we couldn't get in serious trouble for any of our schemes no matter how sleazy they were. Take the liquor scam for example, we got shut down when our license got revoked once it was examined but without that license we might have ended up in serious trouble. Like huge fines and possibly jail kind of trouble."

"Humm… Well, how about we keep that rule and make sure that we always stay on the legal side of things?" Judy mussed letting her paw wander a just a bit to stroke the black furred tip of his tail, "We're both going to be police officers and help mammals; Can't do that if we start getting in trouble with the law."

Judy felt Nick's arm wrap around her, "Right, Judy. Well I'm done being a hustler anyway. Somebunny convinced me to not settle for what mammals expect me to be and to try for something more." There was a moments silence in which Nick just held her close, almost desperately before he cleared his throat.

"So Carrots, back to what we came here for have you gotten a good look at our…" he gave a small amused snort, "Hustler or not I'm having a hard time not thinking of him as our mark. Guess old habits die hard."

Judy smiled snuggling against him a bit still feeling a warm glow from her stomach, "Nick, we are absolutely about to trick this mark. Just like I tricked you into helping me and we hustled Bellwether. What matters is not what you call it but why you're doing it. Now…" she poked him lightly in the side getting his full attention, "If I remember your application to the police force correctly you claim to have good night vision, so tell me if that's our perp, because all I can see in this glum is some shapeless mid sized mammal."
"Right-o my half blind Boss," Nick said with a grin, "from what I saw of him he's a dead ringer for our guy. I wish I knew exactly how drunk he is though because I'm trying to figure out how were going to take him."

Judy smirked, one of her ears snapping up over his shoulder and swiveling around like a radar dish.

"Well, Mr. 'Can't hear to save my life', he's muttering and slurring pretty badly. Some of that might be because Finnick said he wholloped his nose pretty good, but he has to be fairly drunk too." She frowned considering her options, "I could probably take him right now, but I'd feel more confident if I could see better in here."

Nick shook his head, "Sorry Mrs. Mighty Fluff, we agreed to not take any risks, fighting a wolf where he can see and you can't regardless of his current state of mental state is far too risky." He tapped her nose, "Plus how would you keep him restrained if you managed to take him and how would we get him to the precinct. As I told our friend there," he gestured down the bar at the bar keep knowing working on cleaning another mug with the same filthy rag, "You're the muscle on our team, I'm the just your handsome sidekick." Judy poked him because he was sounding a bit too smug again, but he had some good points.

"Fine then," she tugged on the tip of his tail, "are you here just to look pretty, or do you have some plan in that pretty little head of yours too?"

"Of course I do Fluff!" Nick said smugly, before he leaned over close to her ear, "And… I'll even tell you if you kiss me again."

"Really Nick?!" Judy said with a bit of exasperation but he just winked at her and her face flushed as she realized what he was about to say.

"Nick, Don't even think about it!" she said quickly but he just grinned.

"It's a hus-" he started but was cut off as she growled and yanked on his tie again.

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"There, you got your payment" Judy huffed, leaning back, "Now what is your oh so brilliant plan?"

Nick gave a contented rumble, before leaning over and whispering to her, "Well, since we don't have a way of getting him to the precinct to turn him in why don't we just go up and ask him if he'd kindly like to follow us over there."

Judy stared at him blankly, "That's it? Get him to just walk right into the station?"

Nick nodded smugly, "Pretty much. What do you think, brilliant right?"

"Nick, you'd better have more to it than that, or I'm taking my kisses back!" she thumped his chest threateningly.

"Okay! Okay! No need to be hasty!" Nick said quickly, though he was still smirking, "Don't take away my kisses and I'll tell you the rest of it."

Judy crossed her arms and could feel her foot start thumping against the edge of the stool. She gave him a stern glare and said, "Talk fast, Slick."

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It took Nick a few minutes to fully explain his idea and then another couple to sort out the details but
eventually they agreed on it. The one real sticking point on it was that he’d refused to let Judy be the one to go ask the wolf to come with them, but his argument that not only did he know the streets better but that her leg still wasn’t fully healed had won in the end.

"You sure about this Nick?" Judy tried convincing him to change his mind one last time, "I thought you said you were better at sprinting not running."

"And your hurt leg is still sore from all the running around we did last night isn't it?" he asked pointedly and her ears slumped. He leaned over and kissed her between the ears.

"Don't worry Fluff. One drunk wolf isn't gonna be able to get me. I might not be that great in a fight but there's almost no one that can catch me in my city if I don't want them too. As I explained to you, its why I have rule 3 before rule 4. Run before fighting."

She huffed crossing her arms and he could see that she still didn't really like the plan.

"Got any better ideas, Carrots?" he asked and waited.

There was a quiet moment and then she muttered, "You could still get him to go outside and I could take him down there."

"And then how would you get him to the precinct? Neither of us is strong enough to carry a wolf."

Judy sighed, then looked at him seriously with a bit of worry in her eyes, "Fine, just don't get yourself hurt, Nick. Got it?"

He gave her a jaunty ranger scouts two fingered salute, "Loud and clear boss, just be there at the rondevu and it'll work fine."

Judy got up, standing on the seat and gave him a quick peck, "Okay. Give me a two minute head start and I'll see you there." And with that his bunny hopped down and headed for the door.

Nick watched her go, and let himself daydream a little as he watched the sight of her and her perky little tail bounce as she jumped up to grab the handle to the door before leaving. Waking up this morning with his bunny in his arms had still felt like a dream. A week ago and he'd been one of the most miserable mammals in the city. And then Judy had found him again, and suddenly things had gone back to the way they were right before the press conference, except better, far better. The following day had been crazy and terrifying but with her by his side he'd felt like they could do anything. Then waking up after the fiasco at the museum...

He shook his head still having a hard time believing it.

He'd awoken to find that his deepest most far-fetched wish had been granted, that the bunny who had stolen his heart, loved him and was his mate. Too good to be true was the first thing that came to mind, but it hadn't been a dream. Judy had been there with him ever since, meet his need and love for her with her own for him.

He sighed, already feeling a little niggling worry building with her out of his sight. He'd been trying to get used to the reaction, but it wasn't getting much easier. The moment she was out of his sight, that he could no longer smell her, part of him, that deeper more instinctual part that the Nightholwer serum seemed to have roused and brought closer to the surface, screamed at him to go after her, to find her, protect her, to make sure that she remained safe and his.

Mine.
Nick looked away from the door and took a long breath, working hard to reassert his control and banish the twitchy nervousness, though he only managed to stuff it back deep down inside himself for the moment.

*She'll be fine. She's strong and tough and I'll be with her in just a bit.*

"You've got it bad don't'cha ya there." the bartender said interrupting his thoughts and nodding to the door as he cleaned off the bar counter in front of him.

"Yep," Nick said then gave an amused snort, "Doctor said it's a terminal case too."

The ram nodded, stuffing his filthy rag in a pocket as he washing out their shot glasses and used a clean one to dry it before picking up the mug and continuing with his show of cleaning it with the dirty rag.

"Not one myself for looking at other species but she's got spunk, I'll give her that." He shrugged turning and saying before he started to head back down the bar, "I know you'll be getting your fair bit of trouble for it, if you haven't already for just being a fox, but screw all them prissy stuckup codders that got their horns stuck up der asses and do what you want."

Nick grinned as the ram walked away and jumped down from the stool. He stuck his paws in his pocket as he headed toward the corner booth were the shaggy brown wolf looked like he'd passed out and face planted into the table, though his paw was still clamped around a half filled beer mug.

He thought through how he wanted to play this then decided to just let his snark have free rein.

Nick stopped by the table and cleared his throat and the wolf rolled his head on the table toward him groggily.

"Hey your McTire right? Hyde MacTire?"

The wolf winced as if Nick's voice hurt, and muttered, "Ya, and who'da fuck wants to know?"

"Oh nobody important," Nick responded raising his voice a bit more, grinning as the wolf winced again, "I just heard you're the guy that got his ass beat by some kid that snuck into a bar yesterday. It's all the boys on the streets are talking about… well laughing about really." The wolf picked his head up and stared as if he wasn't sure he'd heard exactly what Nick had said right, and Nick used the opportunity to take a picture with his phone, flashing the surprised wolf straight in the face.

"What the *fuck!*" the wolf said blinking hard as he snapped his head to the side away from the flash.

"Wow," Nick said sounding as impressed as he could while examining the picture, "How the hell did some little kid mess your muzzle up like that? I mean I thought everyone was joking when they said you'd get yourself beaten up by a pipsqueak. Hey, could you turn your face in the other direction I want to get a shot of that side too."

The wolf was starting to scowl at him as if everything Nick had been saying was just starting to sinking in.

**Humm... so what would piss him off the most?** Nick thought looking over the wolf then his eyes fixed on the wolfs ridicules greased hair-do and he smiled.

... 

Nick ducked as the beer mug went sailing over his head and broke against the door.
"Look, all I'm saying is that rather than trying to compensate by wearing a greased mop on your head, you could always see a doctor. I hear they've got these little blue pills now-a-days to help when you have trouble tying the knot."

There was an enraged drunken howl, and Nick raised his phone and snapped another picture, stepping out of the way as the flash blinded wolf slammed into the wall. A quick leap up and he had grabbed the door handle and was outside.

"You know I could even refer you to a couple of good doctors," Nick continued as the door was thrown back open before it could close all the way, "they might even help you out free of charge as a charity case given how all the girls must laughing at you."

"I'm gonna rip your balls of ya little shit!" the wolf howled and Nick started running.

"Sorry bud," he yelled over his shoulder, "I'm not into that kind of thing, especially with guys that look that look like they're literal shit-heads!"

There was another near howl of fury and Nick had to stop talking for a second as he put on a burst of speed, cutting into an alley. The half crazed and drunk wolf chasing him, intent on ripping him to pieces, tried to make the turn and ended up slamming into the wall of the alley. He flopped to the ground but then with the ungainly grace only obtainable by the truly drunk and pissed off, managed to roll to his feet and charge off after Nick in a lopsided but still fast sprint.

Okay I can cut across Troop street and use some of the back alleys there, the twists and turns should slow him down enough for me to keep this up.

Nick stopped at the end of the current alley he was in and called back to the infuriated mammal barreling toward him.

"I mean seriously, how did your mother ever let you out in public looking like that? You must make all the girls and little kits cry when they see that hideous abortion of a fur-do. Oh… wait. Is that why that little kid yesterday beat the ever living hell out of you for?" Nick dodged to the side as the MacTire leap at him claws out and jaws open, only to smack head first into a parking meter.

The wolf groaned and then his paws shot up to the top of his head and the smashed mess of his greased hair-do as his bloodshot eyes went a little wide.

"See," Nick said, taking another picture and turning the phone around to show the wolf, "Looks a whole lot better already."

The wolf looked took one glance at the phone and then his eye's narrowed with an intensity that promised he would rip Nick to pieces if it was the last thing he ever did.

Nick for his part, took off sprinting as MacTire gave a howl that was completely savage.

Bogo smiled as he filled his coffee mug in the break room. Today had been going exceedingly well. Best day he could remember in years. The city seemed calmer than it had since before the Missing Mammals case, his meeting with Agent Ulla had gone better than expected and the old ewe had hinted cryptically that there might be some special assets arriving soon that would help with their investigation and his injured officers were out of the hospital and ready to get back to work. They'd even been able to round up the remainder of the Savanna Smashers gang after Wilde and Hopps had dropped the leader in his lap yesterday.

I've even heard rumors that Gazelle is going to be holding a special concert to help bring the city
back together, I'll have to make sure to get tickets to that. He reminded himself, unconsciously smiling as he walked down the corridor and consequently caused Francine to walk right into the wall as she stared wide eyed at him.

And with Fangmeyer back, Wolford and her can partner back up as usual tomorrow, before that wolf drives Jackson insane. There was a brief moment were Bogo thought about exactly why those two, whole usually got along quite well, hadn't meshed very well as a temporary team, but he put it down to the wolf being overly worried about his partner as it had been the first time Fangmeyer had ever gotten seriously hurt. Something about it still nagged at his detective instincts but the problem would be resolved by tomorrow so he didn't bother thinking any more about it. Instead he looked around the central atrium of Precinct One with a sense of satisfaction seeing officers moving to and from their jobs like a well-oiled machine. Things were going so smoothly he almost felt like something was wrong because nothing seemed to be wrong, but he shook that silly thought away.

He'd actually made it through his entire To-Do list for day without needing to rush or stay late. It was an odd feeling, but he put that down to it being something that he'd almost never experience before in his tenure as Chief.

*Hum, well there's always something that needs fixing,* Bogo thought to himself, *No point in letting the next bit of trouble find me, maybe I can get ahead of it for once.*

With a nod to himself, Bogo headed toward Clawhauser. There had been a few scattered reports and tips of possible street racing going on. The precinct two over in Sahara Square had just recently cracked down on an illegal street racing ring and his intuition told Bogo that the remnants of that might be trying to reform. Maybe if he looked over all the reports personally he could piece something together and stop it before it even got started.

"Hey Chief!" Clawhauser voice shout out as he quickly tried hiding the cereal box he'd been snacking on under his desk.

With a small snort at the chubby cheetah's eccentricity Bogo opened his mouth to request all the files and reports on recent noise and traffic disturbances as well as telling him to clean up all the crumbs he'd left on his desk when he heard the front doors opened and a sixth sense sent a sudden chill down his spine. His usual frown now back in place, Bogo turned around and then suppressed a groan.

"Hopps!" he bellowed, after reminding himself insistently that he refused to go around calling the pair of future officers Wilde and Wilde. The small bunny's ear twitched at his shout while she struggled to push one of the front doors open all the way instead of just slipping through the opened she had, "What are you doing here?"

"Oh… hi Chief Bogo!" she said still struggling with the door which only caused his frown to deepen, "I'm supposed… to be meeting… Nick here," She stumbled a bit as Bogo moved over and swung the door all the way open with the hoof that wasn't holding his coffee mug.

"Hopps, stop messing with the door and get in here so you can explain why the two of you aren't off recuperating or study for Wilde's weapons exam Friday. Bogo said trying to hold back his irritation. All of his hard earned instincts from his police career were blaring that those two meeting up here could mean absolutely nothing good.

"Thanks for helping with the door, Chief," Hopps said drawing more of his scrutiny as she glanced past him to the clock over the front desk, before looking at him, "We just had a small errand to run first Chief. Would you mind holding that door open for just a moment?" the small rabbit darted past his legs to the side as more warning alarms in his mind went off.
"Um, and Chief," she said a bit quickly in a nervously manner as she looked back up at his scowl, "you ah, might want to move out of the way of the door."

"And why exactly," Bogo said slowly, his voice grinding as his eyes narrowed. "Should I do that that?"

Something was up, he just knew it. His two future officers were up to something and that something was probably going to drag a heaping load of trouble right along with it. He increased his glower determined to find out exactly what that 'something' was before it exploded and wrecked his perfect day.

Hopps's ears swiveling oddly as she looked distinctly nervous now under his scow.

"Chief, I'll explain but you might want to move-

She was cut off by the sound of a rising commotion outside followed by a yell from a familiar sounding voice.

"INCOMING! Carrots you'd better be ready!"

Bogo looked up just in time to see Wilde fly up the precincts steps and then slide like a baseball player right under his legs while a howling brown blur came hurtling after him leaping up the steps only to crash right into Bogo's chest.

Bogo grunted at the impact, but didn't so much as move while the other mammal hit and bounce off him like a tennis ball hitting a wall before crashing to the ground with a screeching howl of pain.

"I'll kill you! Don't think you can run you little Bitch!" roared what Bogo now recognized as a brown wolf, as the mammal scrambled onto all four paws. It was a rather shaggy brown wolf that looked an awful lot like one of the mammals on their wanted list… except for the flattened mass of greasy fur on the wolf's head that looked nothing like the picture from what he could recall in that brief moment.

Then Bogo felt a slight wetness on his chest and looked down and the world seemed to come to a momentary halt.

His now mostly empty coffee mug was still clamped in his hoof and a dark brown stain was spread down the front of his pristine uniform.

Chapter End Notes

I swear, I'll try never to have that long of a wait between updates, Just don't ever put me through that again! My grinchy heart can't take that! Wait, are the Boxes and Funnies climbing up the side of the ship? Ahhhh *Runs back toward prison cell with writing desk and slams door shut*

...

Oh, and just a warning: I'd suggest not wearing anything red while reading the next chapter because someone’s coffee just got murdered and I agree with them that wasting
coffee is a crime of the highest order :P
Chapter 41 – Crimes Against Coffee

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: Ha! I FINALLY escaped from those pirates! Now I won't have to write more stories with stolen characters! *Snicker* Those silly pirates, bet they'll never think to look for me at the pirates of the Caribbean exhibit in Disneyland! I even bribed the actors with rum so they wouldn't tell anyone!

Disclaimer 2: Those **** of ***** ****** ******! Gods ***** Pirate actors! How could they take a even bigger bribe of rum to tell the real pirates where I was? Those double crossing ***** ****** ******! NOOOOoooooo! *Gets dragged back to the pirate ship by actual pirates*

Typo Disclaimer: Blame the Rum.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There weren't many things that could make Bogo freeze. And of those things that could… well… most of them centered around his wife… like when she'd found his signed Gazelle poster hidden in his dresser drawer when they'd been dating (and she then laughed and bought them tickets to her next concert)… or when he found out that all those pottery lessons she'd so determinedly taking last year were only so she could make him a personalized coffee mug as an anniversary present all because, how did she put it? 'My Big Buff Buffalo gets crabby without his Buffajoe!'…

A coffee mug that, after asking around the precinct for his favorite phrase, she'd stenciled 'Assignments... Parking Duty!' across the front while putting a little picture of her own smiling face winking at the bottom of the inside of the mug with the phrase, 'Time for more Buffajoe!' just so he'd see it every time he polished off his coffee.

A coffee mug that was in his hand… now nearly empty of his, oh so precious Buffajoe…

The coffee of which was now dripping down his perfect uniform… a uniform that his wife had pressed last night just because she'd wanted to and thought it would make him smile after he'd had such a rough week.

Bogo stood there, frozen, looking at his favorite mug… and his uniform… and the wasted coffee…

Wasted Coffee, that thought stuck in his mind (because if he thought about the other ones, he might really lose his temper).

That's criminal, isn't it? he thought to himself, still staring at his shirt, barely even noticing the wolf shoot by him.

"Carrots!" Nick shouted, his voice a bit high as the brown wolf shot past the police chief and right at him in a frothing rage. McTire leaped, claws spread and reaching and Nick scrambled backwards only for his back to hit the front of the welcome desk.

From everything he had heard, Nick thought that in a moment like that, a moment right before you were sure to die, that your life was supposed to flash before your eyes. But the only thought he had
at that moment was a wish that he was back in bed snuggled up with Judy.

Then again, she did seem to have somehow taken over his life and become the single most important thing in it… or maybe the moment was just too short and the rest of his life replay was cut off as a gray hindpaw tripped the wolf right as he leapt while another gray bunny paw grabbed his foreleg yanking down.

Nick's thoughts were interrupted as the McTire's 'I'M GOING TO KILL YOU' howl of fury suddenly shifted to a surprised and confused 'Aroof?' as his deadly leaping arc turned into an uncontrolled midair tumble.

The astonished look of bewilderment at his abrupt inexplicable tumble was so unexpected and funny that Nick broke out laughing and almost failed to duck out of the way as the wolf careened into the desk with a loud 'THUMP', before slumping to the ground upside down with his tail hanging between his legs and over his face.

For a moment Nick thought that the chase was over but the enraged wolf, whether from drunken resilience or an excess of pure fury growled menacingly before starting to scramble to his feet again, now sounding even more pissed than before.

"Oh, come on!" Nick said in exasperation, trying to figure out what his next move should be, "Don't you know when it's time to quit?"

McTire's answer was a howl of rage as he got unsteadily back to his feet, preparing to charge again.

"Clawhauser!" Judy yell at the wide eyed, chubby cheetah staring over the front desk, a bag of popcorn forgotten in his paw, "Grab his tail!"

"oh!" the cheetah blinked seeming to realize that this wasn't some action movie scene, "Right! I ah…” he looked at the popcorn in his paw and then back at the wolf who began charging after Nick as he backed up as fast as he could, only to trip and unceremoniously fall on his tail.

"NOW CLAWHAUSER!" Judy roared as she sprinted toward the wolf. Clawhauser, seeming to react almost out of instinct at the barked command, dropped his popcorn and with surprising swiftness considering his bulk leaned over the desk and grabbed the tip of the wolfs tail right before it was out of his reach.

The wolf's renewed howl turned into a high pitched yip as he face planted into the ground, brought to a sudden stop by the far heavier weight of the cheetah holding him back by his tail. And before he could recover again Judy was on the wolfs back pulling his arms around behind him.

"Nick get over her and help me!" Judy grunted as the wolf seemed to shake of his momentary daze and started snarling and squirming around, trying to extract his arms.

Nick scrambled back to his own feet and quickly started making his way over to help Judy, though he made sure to keep out of range of the wolf's snapping and snarling maw. The cheetah though, seeing Judy's predicament let go of the tail and reached for his belt, saying, "Here, Judy, use my cuffs… opps," there was a splash that accompanied that last word as the pawcuffs he'd hurriedly taken from his belt slipped from his fumbling paw and splattered into a large bowl of cereal on his desk, "Oh, sorry! Just a moment Judy!" he said snatching the bowl and starting to chug the contents.

Nick would have liked to have said something snarky at that, but he'd made it around to Judy and his attention was now mostly focused on trying to help her restrain the larger wolf, plus his survival instincts were telling his brain to shut up and save the snark for later.
Grunting as the wolf gave another powerful tug on his arm almost wrenching it free from Nick's grasp, he couldn't help thinking that he really needed to get Judy to show him the proper police techniques for this since she seemed to be having far less trouble holding the wolf's other arm despite being smaller.

"Judy," he grunted out, "I don't think I can keep holding him like this!" he said, moving slightly to avoid the wolf as he tried to bite him. He readjust his grip, but that only seemed to make it harder to hold his arm.

"Judy! Do something! Get Clawhauser to sit on him! Something! Anything!" Nick said a bit desperately feeling his hold slip.

Judy looked up at Clawhauser still chugging his bowl of cereal to get his pawcuffs and then back at Nick… and did something, just not something he'd been expecting.

Holding the wolf's paw bent behind his back with only one of hers, she reached across and grabbed Nick's belt and in one fluid motion unbuckled it and yanked it free. Nick gave a startled yelp as his trousers dropped reviling his Masked Fox themed boxers, and grabbed for his pants before realizing that he'd just let go of the wolf's paw.

Eyes going wide, Nick tripped over his dropped pants and fell back, unintentionally avoid a swipe from that paw just as Judy looped his belt around it like a lasso.

The next few moments seemed to Nick like the world's craziest rodeo with Judy riding McTire as the shaggy wolf thrashed and bucked on three paws and did just about everything in his power to throw Judy off him and tear Nick to pieces. While Judy seemed to almost be enjoying herself riding crazed wolf, Nick felt like he'd gotten the short end of that deal as he seemed to be the rodeo clown, stumbling around, tripping over his own pants and just barely staying ahead of the ragging wolf.

Then things just got down right terrifying. Judy finally managed to wrangle the wolf's lassoed paw up behind him and use the belt to tie it to his other paw causing the wolf to nose dive into the ground and stop, jaws snapping only a few inches away from Nick's tail after he'd tripped again, but that, wasn't what had him worried.

No, what had Nick worried at that moment as he looked back over the crazed wolf, snapping his jaws just an inch away from his own precious tail while Judy sat triumphantly on top of him was the view of the truly pissed off cape buffalo with the coffee stain on his uniform that was stomping their way.

"Um… Judy, I think we-" Nick started but was cut off as the Chief's bellow washed over them like a gale force wind.

"WILDE! HOPPS!"

Nick could see Judy flinch as his own ears flattened back like flags in a wind from the Chief's bellow; even McTire stopped struggling for just a moment.

"What by the gods is going ON?!" he bellowed, his face looking like a looming thunderstorm as he stopped next to them, glaring down threateningly like he might smote them right where they lay with lightning from his eyes if they didn't answer him right that very second.

"Well," Judy started seeming to choose her words carefully, "We happened to run into this bail jumper-"

"I'll Kill Him!" the wolf under her roared, recovering from his momentary surprise and focusing back
on his single minded goal of the moment as he began to thrash again, trying desperately to get at Nick, though without much success as his front paws where bound behind his back.

"I'll Kill Him! I'll Kill Him! I'll Kill Him!" he none the less, snarled over and over again still trying.

Nick flinched, but again not because of the wolf. He would have sworn that Bogo's eyes seemed to crackle with angry lightning as his face darkened, and then, in an terrifyingly calm voice like the sudden hush right before a storm breaks, the chief said, "You," pointing at the wolf, "shut up so I can hear what she has to say."

McTire, probably through a combination of his drunken state and half savage rage seemed to miss all the warning signs of impending danger. He blinked, looked at the pointing appendage and snarled, "Out of my Way or I'll Kill you Too!" and then bit Bogo's pointing hoof.

There was a single moment in which absolutely nothing happened and the world seemed to stand still… before Bogo's other hoof, still holding his coffee mug, descended like a hydraulic hammer, the coffee mug connecting squarely to the top of the wolf's head with a resounding Thunk, flattening the wolf's already ruined hair-do.

Another instant of silence and then one right after the other, there was a soft cracking sound as Bogo's mug broke off its handle and the wolf slumped to the ground out cold.

Nick stared at Judy in a mild panic, Judy stared at Bogo with a look of awe, and Bogo stared at his coffee mug handle in utter disbelief, while someone else in the lobby gave a whooping shout of, "Awesome! No more Parking Duty!"

Bogo's eye twitched violently and without even looking, his other hoof, the tough finger nail only scratched by the bite, zeroed in on whoever had shouted and he snapped, "Delgato! Wolford! Two hundred parking tickets by the end of the day or you get parking duty all month!"

There were no more comments after that.

The chief slowly reached down picking up his broken coffee mug and with furrowed eyebrows, tried fitting it back against the handle as if assessing the damage. After a few moments considering his mug like the rest of the world didn't matter, he grunted, before spearing Judy and Nick with his gaze.

"Explain to me," he started in an overly slow fashion, before stopping to take a breath, "Why, instead of studying for Wilde's exam and recuperating, you two are out causing trouble, getting tangled up with wanted criminals and getting chased by a savage mammal?"

"Um…" Judy started to say then trailed off, and Nick's snarky part of his mind, having been bottled up for far too long, decided to help her.

"Well, sir, that hair-do he had was a danger to the public. There are kids out there on the streets that would be scared for life if they say that horror. We had to do something… for the public good of course."

Bogo's eye twitched and his icy gaze focused full force on Nick, who suddenly wished that he might have held in his snark just a bit longer.

"And if it was that much of a public threat," Bogo started biting of each word, "Why didn't you call the police, Like I told you two to do yesterday, and request the SWAT team?"

"Um…" Nick scrambled for something to say as Bogo bore down on him with his gaze that Mr. Big would probably have applauded.
Nick cracked under the pressure, and quietly muttered as he looked away, "Because if we called we wouldn't get paid for bringing him in and I need the money to take Judy on a date… and fix the shower…"

Bogo looked like he wanted to reach out and strangle something as a vein in his forehead pulsed. His hoof moved forward and Nick had another flashing memory and thought of just wanting to be snuggled up with Judy in bed, but instead of smiting him from existence the chief facepalmed.

"Wilde," he said after a long, frustrated groan, "Pick your pants up."

Nick hurried to do so, and kept one paw on them to keep them from slipping back down as Bogo turned to Judy and pointed.

"Get off the suspect, Hopps."

She did so and with seemingly no effort Bogo lifted the wolf off the floor and flopped him down across the front desk before holding his open hoof out to Clawhauser and barking, "Cuffs."

Clawhauser scooped them out of his now empty cereal bowl and Bogo cuffed the wolf before untying the belt and tossing it back at Nick, where it slapped across his muzzle.

"Thanks." Nick muttered, rubbing his nose with one paw as he put his belt back on, though Bogo didn't seem to be paying him any attention.

"Officer Clawhauser, please book this filth bag..." he sniffed wrinkling his nose, "And maybe wash him off too, he reeks of booze. If I remember his file number 31415, one Hyde McTire, wanted for skipping bail and possible assault charges. Notify whichever team had him on there to do list, and fill out the paper work for those..." he looked back at Nick and Judy, the vain in his forehead throbbing. "Those..." his eye twitched, "them." his hoof came up and massaged his temple as he continued, "Noting that they brought him in."

Bogo glare at the still unconscious wolf, "And add the charges of drunk and disorderly, drug induced savagery, assault, assault on a police officer, resisting arrest," Bogo paused for a second looking at his broken mug and the coffee stain on his uniform, "and destruction of police property and criminal waste of coffee."

"Right away, Chief!" Clawhauser said standing straight and giving the chief an unneeded salute.

Bogo grumbled something else, before sighing and asking, "And where in the staff room do you keep the super glue Clawhauser?"

"Third cabinet, second drawer, in the back!" Clawhauser responded crisply and Bogo grunted.

For a moment, Nick thought that that would be it but as Bogo turned and headed for the hallway, he stopped in front of them and leaned down until his head was nearly level with theirs.

"Let me make this clear…" he said in a voice that made Nick gulp, "Today is Wednesday and Wilde's test is on Friday. If I hear of you two chasing criminals, or anything else like that before Wilde passes his test and you two get some actual gear, like cuffs not belts…" his voice grew almost menacing, "then I will cuff you two together, put you under house arrest and make Mrs. Wilde your jail keeper! Do. I Make. Myself. CLEAR?"

Nick and Judy both nodded.

"Good." He said, straightening up and half bellowing at them as he pointed back at Clawhauser,
"Then go get your paper work and get the hell out of my sight!"

Then with an angry huff he stomped off down the hallway, grumbling about 'mischief makers', 'hellions', 'in over there head fools' and 'pain in his asses' all the while fiddling with the two pieces of his coffee mug.

This time Nick waited until the chief was well out of sight, before smirking at Judy and smugly saying, "Well… that plan seemed to work out well enough. But then again my plans are always brilliant."

"Oh come on, Carrots!" Nick wheedled as they walked down the hallway toward the administration office of the precinct with the paperwork Benji had given them (only after reminding Judy several times, not to forget about their get together with Fru Fru tomorrow), "Fine it was our plan, but you have to admit I did an amazing job getting him here." Nick said puffing out his chest dramatically, "He never even got close to catching this handsome rogue."

"I remember him almost catching you with your pants down." Judy replied, poking him in the side, "Though I will admit that your boxers make you look," she giggled before saying teasingly, "Cute."

She caught just the hint of a blush tinge the inside of his ears as he spluttered, "Carrooooots! You can't call a guy that! Its emasculating!"

"Not for bunnies, it isn't," She said bumping his hip with hers and using the close proximity to sneak a feel of his lusciously soft and long tail, pleased at the soft hitch in his breathing she heard as her paw quickly moved through his fur.

Careful Judy… She reminded herself, feeling a slight thrill of excitement, playing with his tail is like playing with fire and I don't want to set him off here…

The thought of what Bogo might do if he saw them making out (or worse) at the precinct was enough to curtail anymore wandering paws for the moment. Anyway, she absolutely believed that should they get anymore on Bogo's bad side that he would sic Vivvian on them (and probably her mother too, she thought with a shudder.) How where they supposed to get anytime to themselves if their parents where there babysitting them for the police chief?

Better not to risk it. Judy thought moving her paw away from his tail, though she couldn't quite bring herself to take even a small step away from him.

"I thought you banned the C-word for the rest of the day?" Nick asked looking at her, his blush now obvious despite his efforts to hide his inner ears by splaying them back.

"No, I said you can't use the C-word for the rest of the day." Judy countered smugly, before eyeing Nick up and down. Touching might be a bad idea at the moment but words where fair game, "I can call you 'cute' as much as I want." She added smugly.

"And how is that fair?" Nick almost spluttered as he looked at her, before blinking, seeming caught off balance by her smug smile. Judy was so close to him as they walked down the hall that she could even hear the slight acceleration of his pulse.

She gave him her best smirk and standing on her toes with her next step, whispered into his ear, "It isn't Cutey."

"Carrooooots," Nick moaned, his ears flattening but Judy just grinned more as she giggled and nudged him with her elbow.
"This is payback for earlier Nick," she said before giggling again, and feeling giddy said, "And you shouldn't be surprised, being a fox and all, that paybacks a bitch."

Nick stumbled but recovered well and huffing crossed his arms saying, "Ya, but you're a bunny which makes you a doe!"

Judy hummed happily for a second leaning into Nick's side, feeling his heartbeat and the rise and fall of his chest as he breathed before replying, "yes I am, but I'm also mated to a fox, the cutest fox ever I might add, so I get that as an honorary title too."

Nick's heartbeat seemed to almost skip and she hummed contentedly again as Nick scrambled to come up with some response.

"I… you… It doesn't work like that!" he finally said and Judy smirked enjoying her flustered fox.

*That, she thought, just makes him even cuter.*

"Sure, it does," she replied and waited until Nick was about to respond before adding, "Skye said so after all, when we were cleaning up."

Nick's mouth snapped shut before he muttered something about needing to talk with Skye and something about bunny-vixens.

Judy just smiled and hummed again, because she could feel Nick's tail wrap around the back of her legs despite all his muttering.

"You know… it's *Cute* when you act all grumbly like that Nick," Judy said teasingly as she nudged him again, enjoying herself immensely.

Nick stopped his grumbling and looked at her, his emerald eyes sparkling with a dangerous light that sent a thrill through her, making her tail perk all on its own.

"You just remember this Fluff," He said never once looking away, "because I'm going to get you back tenfold for every time you call me cute. I have the rest of our lives to do it and I'll get you sooner or later." He leaned down close to her, his nose almost touching hers and added smirking broadly, "And your injunction on me using the c-word only last until midnight before it resets. *I'm* mated to a bunny remember? That means I get honorary use of the c-word *too.*" He finished, smirking as Judy’s breath came in a little short while her heart hammered away as he kept looking right at her, his eyes promising payback and *sooo* much more.

Then, Nick swiftly kissed the tip of her nose, stopping its rapid twitching, and mouthing the word 'cute' at her with a wink, turned and walked through the door to the Administration office they'd stopped in front of; his tail brushing along her leg as he moved only for its tip to flick up and tickle her nose as he left her standing in the hallway.

*I'm soooo playing with fire. And didn't Dad always say that playing with fire was dangerous and never to do it…* Judy thought sluggishly through the musky scent of her fox that lingered on her nose from where his tail had brushed it.

*Then again, he always did say to stay away from foxes too…* She thought before hurrying after Nick a silly happy grin on her face.
Good news everybody! This is the last chapter of Derailment! … NOT! :P

(I hope all the pirate actors that turned me back over to the pirate crew had minor heart attacks at that! That's payback for taking my rum and then double dealing!)

...

Also, Thanks to Upplet, DrummerMax64, and LapisLucius42 for some help brainstorming coffee mug ideas here. And just another Thanks to GusTheBear, for giving me the name for McTire's character.

...

Now More importantly, since my life has settled down for a bit (there's not that much to do in a pirate ship brig), all you damned pirate scallywags can look forward to weekly updates of Derailment because if I don't the pirates have threatened to replace my precious starbucks coffee with dunkin donuts mud *Shudder* (expect updates on Friday)
Chapter 42 – Work and Pay

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I'm slightly concerned at what these pirates are doing… They've got this new big cannon and there forcing me to write fluffy cannon balls to use as their ammunition… At least their first shot was a week off their anticipated schedule. Let's just hope they don't start getting more accurate or those Disney ships out after my hide might be in trouble.

Typo Disclaimer: Do you have any idea how hard it is to proof a cannon ball?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chhhh-*clang*

Ulla Woolington frowned as she shifted gears in her old, almost antique convertible as she drove back after her meeting with Chief Bogo. The old XS sized Cowdillac Eldorado with its flared tail light fins, didn't really fit in with the modern Zootopia scene but she'd had the car for going on 40 years and would rather shave herself bare than give it up. She was an old ewe though, so she thought the car complimented her anyway.

Chhhhh-chchhh-*clang*

That grating metal on metal noise from the transmission though was getting worse and starting to worry her. She'd noticed it a while back and knew clutch had been over due for a replacement but she simply hadn't had the time to deal with it, what with the city in near chaos during former mayor Bellwether's term in office and all the savage attacks. Now though, she was pretty sure that the car was going to need a real mechanic to work on it if she wanted it back up and purring along like usual.

That would normally have put her in a bad mood, since she preferred to do the maintenance on her car herself; even an old ewe needed hobbies and it also made it easy to ensure that no one had tampered with or bugged her car. She'd have to go over every inch of it after she got it repaired, just to make sure nothing was out of place or nothing extra had been added, not that she thought the mechanic would do anything like that, but it payed to sure. There was a reason Ulla Woolington had lived long enough to be an old ewe.

But while the need to take the car to a mechanic, in and of itself irritated her, she'd of course found a way to make the annoying errand work to her advantage. There were so many things going on, so many problems that needed dealing with, that if she couldn't figure out how to make different problems work to solve each other, she would have been swamped under all her work long ago. That and she liked to get out of the office on occasion and do some field work on occasion too. As the boss, she had to keep from getting rusty after all and this little side trip should be easy enough.

The old convertible groaned and grated as she pulled into the parking lot of the mechanic she'd looked up and with a final huffing cough like car was voicing its displeasure the engine turned off as she put the car in park.

"Oh don't be like that," Ulla said to her car, patting the dash board, "Everything I know about this
mechanic says that she knows what she's doing. She'll have you back up and running just like new."

Reaching over to the passenger seat, Ulla grabbed the background dossier on the mechanic she was about to meet and put the file in her purse. She grabbed her keys and reached for the car door handle but stopped before exiting, almost giggling to herself.

"Oh, dear me! I almost forgot!"

She reached over to the glove box in the passenger seat and opened it, then reached under a concealed cover pulled out a pistol. And not one of the ZPD tranq pistols, but a military class small caliber side arm perfect for her dainty little hoofs. She undid the clasps on her purse and delicately dropped the weapon in.

"Wouldn't want to scare this nice young mechanic by having her stumble across that!" she said to herself in an amused tone. Her purse might not be the best place to keep the pistol but it would do for now, she already had her regular tranq pistol in its concealed shoulder holster and only fools and movie actors went around sticking pistols in their belts.

"And I wouldn't want her hurting herself on this either," Ulla said reaching under her seat and pulled out a deceptively plain looking, but expertly sharp and well balanced knife and tucked that away in her purse too, "Young mammals shouldn't go around playing with knives after all." She said and then took another look at the inside of her car.

"And… just one last thing…" Ulla mused and opened the center console, then reaching under another concealed cover pulled out a grenade.

"I wouldn't want her asking where I got this, now would I?" she said with another dainty chuckle and dropped it in her purse as well, "I'm afraid not even my best little old lady, 'oh dear me, I don't know!' would explain that." She said with more than a little amusement as she snapped the clasps shut on her purse and exited her car to meet the arctic vixen in grease stained overalls that had exited the garage to greet her.

Ulla took a breath, mentally pulling up the personality she wanted to use and readied herself. The older slightly daft and belligerent workaholic with a touch of grandmother senility and chattiness, she thought, would probably be just perfect for how she wanted to play this. Granted, she might not accomplish anything more than getting her car repaired but there were powers and plots moving behind the scenes in Zootopia and a certain bunny and fox had somehow managed to catch their attention and inadvertently insert themselves right into the middle of things. And seeing as it was her job to root out those plots, she needed to find a way to keep an eye, or maybe an ear, on the new focus of those schemes and the closer the better. And what was closer than family and friends?

The grating of a car's clutch assembly badly in need of replacement caught Skye's attention and she scooted out from under her project car she had been working on while waiting for her next customer to arrive.

After hearing about the 'errand' Fin had need run… and then making plans for tonight with Mrs. Wilde, she'd had her parts supplier send over the replacement piece for Finnick's van with their fastest courier, which had been indeed been fast, why… Skye was pretty sure that it had taken the sloth driver less time to get there than it had for him to get out and give her the part. But with her work on Finnick's van done for the day she hadn't had much else to do but work on her project car she'd been repairing and hoping to sell for a tidy profit. Business had not exactly been booming lately, not that it really ever was, what with her being a small one mammal mechanic shop in the big city and a fox to boot, but she made do between the small customer base she'd cultivated over the
years and her project cars she resurrected from the junkyard and sold after refurbishing them. Why she'd even had a possible new customer call in this morning, a slightly desperate sounding old lady asking if she'd be available to do an immediate repair on her car since she had to get it fixed today! That her precious car was making the must awful sounds and she just couldn't wait for her normal mechanic to free up some time in a few days to look at it.

The car's engine outside in the parking lot, sputtered and coughed as it turned off and Skye noted that she would need to take a look at the cars air filter and sparkplugs in addition to the clutch if this was in fact her new customer.

Wiping her paws on a rag to get most of the grim off of them, Skye headed for the garage bay door to go great the little old ewe getting out of her old covetable carrying a purse clutched delicately in her hoofs.

Skye gave her a smile, though without any teeth as she didn't know if this was one of those overly timid prey mammals that thought all predators where out to get them.

"Welcome to Skye High Auto, are you Mrs. Woolington? The one who called this morning about the car making odd sounds?"

The sheep looked up and then gave a small startled hop at seeing the fox approach, before trying rather unsuccessfully to act like it didn't bother her.

"Ehem," she cleared her throat before looking back and hesitantly reaching out a paw, "Y-Yes, yes I am. Mrs. Ulla Woolington to be precise," she said as if everyone in the world should know her name, and Skye took her hoof giving it a short shake as the ewe continued to talk in a nattering manner. Skye sighed internally already guessing that this was one of those mammals that just had to chatter incessantly all the time, but she was the customer so told herself to deal with it.

"I just couldn't believe it when Hoof and Harris Auto said they couldn't fit me in until next week! By Jiminy! Can you believe that? Why did you hear that terrible sound my poor dear car was making? What if it broke down? what would I do then? What if…"

The old ewe looked like she was working herself up to the point she might break down crying so Skye interrupted.

"Well, mama, I'm sure that we can get your car fixed so that it's running just fine. Now, would you mind telling me exactly what noises you were hearing and when they started?"

It took less than a minute, let alone the full fifteen that the old ewe went on talking for, before Skye regretted her choice to ask the old ewe about her cars problems.

... It was nearly an hour later and Skye was mentally debating about whether the time she spent talking to this ewe should count toward her billed repair time for her car. She kept on trying to regain control of the conversation but it was like trying to grab a wet bar of soap with grease covered paws.

The little old ewe had strayed from talking about her car to talking about her family, to the city and then to the latest news and gossip and had somehow managed to drag Skye along with the rambling conversation and questions about what Skye though of the issues with her car, and if they could be fixed, and didn't she agree that family needed to look out for another and did she have any family and oh my, she personally knew that new… 'progressive' couple that was all over the news and what did she think of that, and then back to her car again and are you sure you can fix it and, my gosh!
Well, if you've managed to fix *that* car up from a wreck then you must know what you're doing, why it looks almost like new! And what a wonderfully talented mechanic you must be, I honestly never would have thought that with you being a… well, I guess this is the new and wonderful world we live, and you know I've been talking to *all* my friends and it seems so hard to find a good mechanic now a days and I must tell them about you, a sweet strong young girl running a business all on your own, though how you manage all that work all by yourself I don't know! And you know, my sister's friend has a grandson who is just moving into town and looking for work and he could probably learn a thing or two from such a well mannered and hardworking mammal like you, I must tell her to send him over to see you. Why I swear that boy thinks life is all about fun and games and it would do him some good to have a mammal like you teach him about real work…

Skye thanked her lucky stars when the little old ewe's ride arrived and interrupted her. Skye reassured her for the hundredth time that, 'yes, yes, I'll get right to fixing your car but it probably won't be ready until tomorrow' as she gently ushered the old lady to the waiting vehicle and that 'yes, fine, you can tell your friend to send over that boy, but I need to get back to work and your ride is waiting.' Honestly, she really didn't want any help (she probably couldn't even afford an assistant anyway) but if it ended the sheep's incessant chatter… and then again she had talked quite a bit about recommending to her friends that they should bring their business here… and she could sure use some additional customers. So keeping in this sheep's good graces might work out quite nicely for her… even if it meant taking on some snot noses lazy sounding kid as an assistant for a while. Well, from her description of him, the kid would probably quit after a week of real work anyway, and if it got her more customers…

Skye shook her head as she watched the car pull away (and wished that karma had mercy on the driver of that car for the conversation the little old ewe was probably going to inflict upon him). For right now though, she had a car to fix and then an evening's entertainment to get ready for.

"Let's get this old bird into the garage and see just how much work this is going to be." Skye said to herself looking at the old convertible and smiling. If nothing else, that little old sheep did have a decent taste in classic cars, and Skye had always enjoyed classic cars. She would of course have to test out the car once she was done repairing it to make sure that it was in perfect working order, and she was certainly looking forward to that.

Nick walked into the administration office ahead of Judy, still grinning from her nose-twitching, ears-on-end, bunny-in-the-headlights look he'd left her with after kissing her nose. Well… grinning from that and the scent of frustratedly aroused bunny, specifically, *his* frustratedly aroused bunny.

*I wonder just how much more I can tease her before she blows a gasket?* He thought, grin widening.

He'd *never* admit it to her but something about seeing that look on her was just flat out addictive… probably because it was *so* damndably *cute*. Back when they'd first meet he'd relished tweaking her nose because she'd just been such an uprighteous and innocent country bumpkin bunny (and okay, so maybe, just *maybe*, he'd thought seeing her all fluffed up was adorably cute) but seeing her all worked up, not because she was irritated or caught flat footed but because he'd pushed her buttons *just right* and she seemed on the verge of tackling him out of some combination of irritation and attraction, well… the thought of Judy tackling him made his grin widen all the more and Nick had to work hard to stop his tail from starting to wag. (And he couldn't have that now, or Judy might catch on)

"I swear," Nick muttered quietly to himself as he made his way to the counter at the front of the office, "that bunny is worse for me than catnip for felines…" he looked back and saw Judy hurrying through the door after him, ears perked up and a sort of stupidly silly grin on her face as she beelined
for him, "can't even imagine being without her now, and I even get the shakes when she's not near me…"

*More like Nick-nip, for one hopeless addicted fox…* he thought as she hopped up next to him. He looked down at her, a not so faint hint of her scent reaching his nose as she beamed up at him and his heart rate accelerated dangerously. Judy's ear twitched slightly and her silly grin turned into a smirk as she leaned into his side.

"You can try all you want Slick, but you're never going to beat me," she said, her confidence back and he was about to retort when his vision zeroed in on her perked tail as it flicked distractingly while she all but rubbing against his side. He gulped as suddenly, all he could think about was how much he wanted to nip at that perked perfectly bit of soft white fur… and that lead to a slew of other thoughts about where he wanted to nip, kiss and nibble… and the fact that Judy's scent after the chase and fight with the wolf was stronger than normal, filled with excitement and adrenalin and now with an added aroused flavor from his teasing was just making it worse…

Nick didn't even notice his paw, smoothly reaching around to that perfect little puff of a tail as his mind screamed that he need more Nick-nip and *right foxing now, damnit!*

Judy's paw intercepted his before it reached its target and she tut-tutted as he snapped back to a more general awareness.

"And where was this trying to go?" She asked teasingly and smirked, standing on her toes to whisper in his ear as he stammered having been caught red handed, "You're going to have to try harder than that *Slick,* but I'll give you a pass because you're so *cute* when you get flustered."

Nick's stammers turned into a groan as she emphasized the c-word and it was only as he looked back at his victorious looking bunny that he realized what she'd done.

"You did that on purpose!" he said, and her smirk only confirmed his suspicion that she'd just played him.

"You can't blame a bunny for getting ahead while she's got the advantage, now can you?" she said with a giggle, and tapped his chest right over his heart, "and it's just sooo cute how easy it is to tell when I'm starting to get to you." she finished, leaning into him again and giggling as his heart rate picked up again.

Nick grumbled and looked back up as he crossed his arms petulantly, though try as he might he couldn't get his heart rate to lower or stop his tail from wrapping around Judy's legs. Another happy giggle from Judy made him adamantly determined to ignore her until he found a good way to get her back. So instead, he focused on why they were there and looked across the empty counter he could just barely see over, trying to find whoever was supposed to be there before calling out,

"Helloooo? Anyone here? Got important paperwork to take care off. Right from the Big Chief Buffalo himself."

There was a slow drawn out, "Ooooonnnnee…. … Mmmmmoooommmmeenntttttt,.…." and Nick groaned as he spotted the sloth at the back of the room just starting to refill his coffee mug.

"Bbbbeee…. … rrriiiiggggdhhhhtttttt.. … wwwwiiiiittttthhhhh…."

"Karma hates me!" Nick muttered under his breath, before adding, "At least I now understand why the chief seems to always have his panties in a twist."

There was a soft laugh from Judy she let go of him and hopped up to grab the counter so she could
look over it, and after shooting Nick a look of purely evil glee, winked and called over to the sloth in a far too cheerful tone asking, "Hey, would you like to hear a joke?"

Nick squawked, his eyes going wide as the sloth's claws, which had just been about to pour the coffee from the pot into his cup, ground to a stop and his head started turning toward them.

"Sssssuuuuuuuurrrrrreeeeee,….. IIIIIiiiiii …"

"Judy!" Nick hissed as she smirked devilishly at him, "What are you doing?!

" Looooooovvvvvveeee ….. ……. …… …… .. jjjjjjoooooooo."

She leaned over from her perch, elbows on the counter top holding her up, and higher than Nick for once, kissed the top of his nose.

"Getting some overdue payback for the MVA," Judy said with another giggle as Nick's ears tried simultaneously to snap up at the kiss and flatten against his skull in alarm.

Judy broke out into laughter and tried to stifle it with her paws, falling off the counter as she did so in a muffled giggle fit, though Nick, more out of instinct than anything else grabbed his mate. He then held her up so he could give his nearly convulsing bunny a hard glare.

"Oh Carrot Sticks! *Laugh* that was… *laugh*;" Judy stopped and managed to point a shaking finger at the top of his head before chortling again. Nick frowned and then blushed, as his one ear that had gotten stuck in a sort of up and sideways position joined the other that had pinned back against his skull.

"oookkkkkeeeesssss." The sloth finished and Nick banged his head against the side of the counter as Judy broke down again into another laughing fit.

"You," Nick muttered, "are pure evil, that's why your so C, U, T, E," he spelled out, though Judy was still giggling too much to do more than make a token effort to thump his arm, "Spelling isn't saying, and anyway," Nick said huffily, "you are, and it's to hide the evil, diabolic, prankster beneath all that pretty fluffy fur." He said and then, justifying that he deserved it because he'd caught her when she fell, gave her tail a bit of a squeeze.

Judy, still giggling, all but hiccupped a startled 'Meep' and Nick could feel his own grin returning at her reaction and the sinfully soft feeling of her tail fur in his pawpads... before Judy yanked his paw away.

"NOT IN PUBLIC!" Judy hissed in a squeaky voice as her ears, standing on end, turned a bright pink. She used her paws to cover her tail, and shot Nick an accusing glare, "And you think I'm evil, Mr. Slick Paws?!"

Nick, more than mollified by his stolen feel said, "That evil bunny must be rubbing off on me," and shrugged in a 'what can you do?' manner, before giving her his best toothy hustler grin, saying, "Not that I really mind that… not at all..." as he leaned down to his blushing bunny who'd suddenly backed up against the counter at his predatory look, still holding her tail as he boxed her in. Nick moved like he was going to kiss her twitching nose again, but then flicked his tail around to tickle her paw cover rear, and as she meeped in surprise again, kissed her opening mouth before she could even get a sound out.

Judy tensed in surprise and shock as he took full advantage of her open mouth, but after only a moment, brought her paws around, grabbing him like she was about to unload a can of whoop-ass on one slightly too avaricious fox... but his paw snuck back around to her tail and Judy gasped into...
his mouth before nearly yanking him off his feet as she dragged him closer and ruthlessly took control of the kiss.

"Not!" Judy hissed quietly as she pulled back suddenly... then kissed Nick hard again before he could even say a word or take in a breath.

"IN!" She almost snarled quietly as Nick just tried to gasp in some air, but Judy was kissing him before he could.

"PUBLIC!" Judy finished with one last kiss nipping his lip almost painfully in a distinctly predatory fashion, before finally pulling away and then looking around the empty foyer of the administration room in alarm and adding in a hushed whisper, "And especially not at the precinct, Nick!"

It took him a few seconds to focus again after that, though he noticed that despite putting some space between them, Judy still had a firm hold of his shirt and her scent had grown stronger, sweeter and almost dangerously primal.

Judy, seeing no one else in the office lobby, let out a breath and slumped against his front.

"dumb fox." She muttered in voice that tried to be angry though it came out more defeated and needy as she nuzzled a bit against him.

Nick wrapped his arms around her and since her impressively acute ears where down against her back, whispered quietly enough that he hoped she might mis-hear him,

"cute bunny."

Apparently not quietly enough though, because she thumped his chest and shoot him a frustrated glare, though the effect was rather wanting as she was still pressed close up against him.

Nick could feel his tail curl tighter around her and couldn't help but say, "Ah Carrots, you know you love me." as he smiled down at his bunny while she bit her lip and clutched at him.

"Hhhhhhaaaavvvheeeerrrrrrrrddd... ... ttthhhhaaaatttttt..." the sloths voice, out of sight from the across the room drawled, and Nick froze as he stared down at Judy's suddenly aghast face, realized that he hadn't been quiet while saying that last bit, "... jjjjooooooookkkkkeeeeee... ... bbbbbbeeeeeeeffffffffooooooorrrrrre... ... wwwwwhhhhhyyyy .... wwwwwwoooooouuuullllllllldddddd... cccaaarrrrrrrrrrrooootttttssss... ... lllloooooovvvveee... ... yyyyyyooooouuuuuuuu?"

Nick stared blankly at Judy for a second as she stared back at him while he processed what the sloth had said. Judy apparently realized the sloth's misunderstanding first, because her aghast expression cracked and she buried her face in Nick's shirt as she started giggling uncontrollably.

Nick huffed and straightening up so he could look across the top of the counter at the sloth while Judy's shoulders shook with her only partially muffled laughter, said with a straight face, "Carrots love me because I'm a sly fox and they're just dumb," he tapped Judy's head below the level of the counter top, "vegetables, that's why."

Judy only shook harder with a renewed round of laughter while a look of confusion slowly began forming on the sloth's face.

"IIIiiiiiii... dddddoooooonnnnnnttttt... ... gggeeeeeetttttt... ... iiitiitttttt..." he drawled and Judy with another chortle of laughter piped up.
"No, Nick!" she said grinning at him and speaking loud enough for the sloth to hear, "Carrots love you because with your almost orange fur and hideous green shirt they think your one of them!"

"Hey! My shirt isn't-" Nick started to protest right as the first 'Hhhhhhhaaaaa!' of sloths laugh echoed across the room and Nick looked up with dismay to see the sloths face still shifting to one of riotous amusement.

There was a giggle from Judy and a teasing 'Dumb fox' before she hugged him hard and smiling up at him, said quietly, "This Carrot loves the dumb fox, because he's her dumb fox."

Nick looked at Judy and opened his mouth but nothing came out. He thought for a second trying to come up with a snappy retort and came up blank as he stared down at his bunny's smiling face, and with nothing good to say leaned down to kiss her. Words wouldn't have been enough to tell her how he felt right then, how much he loved her, anyway; plus they would have more than enough time as the 'HHHhhhhaaaaa! HHHhhhhaaaaa! HHHhhhhaaaaa!'s of the sloth slow laughter continued.

Cupping her cheek with a paw, Nick laid a slow soft kiss on her lips, then yanked away as a shout from deeper in the office startled him.

"Garth! What the heck are you laughing about?! We're behind on what we need to do, though there's nothing new about that; Aren't you done getting your coffee yet? I thought you said you were putting on a new pot a half an hour ago?"

Nick looked over the edge of the counter as female pig in a casual office dress came in to the office foyer and dumped a stack of paperwork behind the counter they were waiting at.

"Who are you?" she asked looking quizzically down at him, then stopped holding up a hoof with a few jangling bracelets in a stop motion before Nick could respond.

"Wait! As Bogo says, Don't Care."

She went over to the sloth whose amused expression was still slowly melting off his face and snatched the coffee pot out of his claws, then filled the empty cup still in his other long clawed paw before dumping in some sugar cubes and creamer and taking the filled cup like he'd just been holding it there for her like a coffee stand

After a long sip and sigh, she turned back and walked over to them.

"Okay, now what do you want?"

Nick opened his mouth to speak again but Judy beat him to it, "We just had some paper work we need you to finalize." She said cheerily and Nick saw the pig stop and blink before looking at her mug and then back at him and ask in a confused voice, "we?"

Judy's ears snapped up in apparent indignation, as she huffed and Nick had to quickly stifle a chuckle as the office worker stared at the two black tipped ears that were now just barely visible above the counter. Said ears, swiveled toward Nick, having probably heard him, and to forestall any witty comment from her (since he was already losing badly), he reached out with both paws and picked Judy up (much to her annoyance and his delight).

"Yes, we." Nick said to the pig, now that Judy's head was above the counter level as he held her in front of him, "as in me and her, or," he grinned wickedly, "if its easier to understand, as in emay, ethay yslay oxfay, andyay erhay, ethay upersay umperday idiculouslyray utecay unnybay."

Judy turned back and gave Nick a confused look while the pig just rolled her eyes.
"Right, you two must be the smart-alecky and the fluff ball of doom that has had the chief going nuts for the last couple of months," the pig said before shaking her head, "Okay what paperwork debacle have you two created now? Do we need to start another legal file on something or criminal case book, well more like book's, "she stressed the s sound making it plural, "with the whole Nighthowler mess..." the pig stopped and then looked at them, a grin forming, "or wait... is this another totally not intentional 'coffee accident situation' like we had in the records room because I have to admit, that was fun." She turned her head back toward the sloth whose expression was still turning to one of horror at his stolen coffee mug.

"Garth! Put on a Big pot of coffee and make it blacker than black!"

"Um... no... that's not why where here," Judy said holding out the slightly crinkled forms in her paw to the now disappointed looking pig, "We just need to get these taken care of."

The office worker sighed, muttering something about 'never getting to have any fun', and took the papers before quickly glancing through them.

"Right," she said turning and walking away while still reading through the forms, "Have this take care of in just a minute."

She headed past the sloth toward another work station, then back tracked to the sloth at the coffee maker, grabbed a mug and slipped it into his hand and filled it up, before stuffing two of the forms into his other clawed paw.

"Drink up, then go and add this to Hyde McTire's file and don't forget we still need to take care of the medical paperwork for officers Fangmeyer and McHorn that the hospital sent over. Chop chop, get to it!" she said before topping off her own coffee mug and walking past the sloth as he started, slowly, raising his mug to drink.

Judy looked over to Nick as he set her down and asked, "does coffee even do anything for sloths? And, wait... since when did you speak another language?"

Nick grinned but was interrupted by a snort of laughter from the pig and she answered before he could. "Coffee works great for sloths, just about triples their productivity though most can't tell the difference between fast slow and slow slow. As for your linguistic friend there-"

"My linguistic mate," Judy corrected with a minor bit of irritation and Nick could tell just by the pigs body language that she was rolling her eyes.

"right... well you're artsmay-aleckyay atemay, doesn't speak another language, he's just having a cheap laugh at me because mammals call that kids word game pig latin."

"I was not!" Nick said puffing up with over dramatic indignation and gesturing at Judy, "Iyay asway eakingtway ymay atesmay ohyay osay uteecay uittonbay osenay; that you're a pig just makes it all that much funnier." Nick finished and smirked.

Judy on the other hand, frowned, her eyebrows furrowing as she started mumbling what he had said in pig latin to herself and Nick wondered if she'd be able to figure it out. He was half surprised she hadn't ever heard of pig latin before as a kit, but it was certainly working to his advantage at the moment.

"Sure it does," the pig replied sarcastically from the workstation as she typed away on a computer, her voice clearly conveying that, first she didn't believe him and that second and far more importantly she really didn't care, "Now, does 'Wildehopp's P.I.' have a bank account because your file doesn't
have one in it, though… if you'd like to leave it that way you could always just donate your reward for bringing in McTire to the ZPD's overworked administrative department. I've had my eye on one of those fancy espresso machines and I'd love to see what Garth could do with espresso." The pig stopped typing and turned around pointing her hoof at Nick and saying sternly, "And no unnyfay usinessbay, or I'll tack on a ten percent translation fee."

"unnyfay usinessbay?" Judy muttered out loud, still in her own world, working away on the puzzle like a squirrel on a nut.

"means 'funny business' bunny," The pig said visibly rolled her eyes before looking at Nick and snapping her hoof impatiently, "Come on, come on, I don't have all day. I have paperwork to do and sloths to caffeinate."

Nick grinned and gave the her their new bank account information. Judy on the other hand, was frowning even more, fumbling to herself.

"unnyfay usinessbay, funny business, unnyfay… wait that's just moving the first consonant to end and adding ay… then what Nick said… emay ethay yslay oxfay, me the sly fox… andyay erhay, and her… ethay upersay umperday idiculouslyray utecay unnybay… the super dumper ridiculously cu-"

Judy stopped mumbling as her ears snapped up and vibrated. Nick quickly looked away and decided that it was a good time to start practicing his whistling… though in retrospect, he decided right after he begun, maybe started his whistling practice with the refrain from 'Bad boys' wasn't the best choice…

"Nicholas…. Piberius… Wilde…" Judy started out in a voice so calm that it screamed 'Take Cover!'

"did you just call me what I think you called me?"

**Thump, Thump, Thump, Thump, Thump, Thump, Thump**

Nick looked back and saw that in addition to Judy's ears nearly vibrating, her foot had started a rapid staccato thump on the floor.

He put on his hustler grin and cranked it all the way up as he replied, "Well… if you think that means I think you're the most beautiful, lovely mate in existence and that I'd do anything to be with you, then absolutely."

**ThumpThumpThumpThumpThumpThumpThumpThump**

Judy opened her mouth, shut it, pointed a finger at him and opened her mouth only for nothing to come out again while her rapidly thumping foot seemed to lose control, beginning to thump erratically as it picked up to an even higher speed before apparently breaking as it stopped mid thump.

"Y-You…" she barely managed to say, between heavy ragged breaths, "d-dumb FOX!" Judy bit her lip so hard Nick was afraid she might make it bleed, and her eyes were dilated further than normal. Nick took in a breath, trying to figure out what to say next and stopped as he nearly tasted the heavy, sharp spike in her scent. A strong aromatic spike of a sinfully *sweet* scent that fried a good part of his brain and had the drummer boy taking notice and beating a frantic 'To Arms!' call with giddy abandon. Nick swallowed hard as he tried to think and looked at Judy again, noticing that she was almost trembling and her paw had fist in the fur of his ruff with a death grip.

**Andddddd… I think I just found my bunnies breaking point.** Part of Nick thought with a sort of aroused terror at the intently hungry way she was looking at him, like… well like, a fox might eye a bunny back in the prehistoric days…
"Okay, here you go," the pig said dropping a few sheets of paper on the counter, not even bothering to look at them as she headed back to the workstation, "The reward money's transferred and the paperworks done, now get out of my hair so I can get some real work finished."

"Um… okay, Thanks!" Nick said, snatching the papers with a jaunty wave and smile at the female pig, before stopping as he noticed a rumbling growl from Judy that sounded very much like an extended, 'MINE' as her grip tightened, pulling him closer.

Nick blinked, looking back at Judy as his tail, now following orders from the drummer boy, started making short fast excited wagging motions. Nick though, amid rising assault on his mind from her scent and touch and look, didn't notice and instead, couldn't help but muse about what would happen if he told her exactly how "cute" her possessive growl was.

It was only when Judy went absolutely still, like a predator about to make a killing pounce, that Nick realized he'd said that out loud.

Chapter End Notes

Wait? You want another fluffy cannon ball for next friday? *Sigh* Fine, I'm working on it... Let's see... Chapter 43: 10-91 Bunny Gone Savage
So now that Derailment is over I'd like to thank all the Reviewers, Favorite/Followers and Kudos givers along with those readers skulking in the shadows (Yes, we know you're there, give it up. If you've made it to the point in the story where you're reading this then you're already past saving. Just give up and make an account already).

So, if you're wondering why the story finished where it did, well let me explain: As stated in the beginning I've got the attitude of a grinch, Thus I'm totally pulling your leg just to see your faces! (yep that's it! That look right there! *snicker*).

If you ask how I can be so cruel as to pull a trick like that, well, I'm low on coffee. And just in case you're still wondering if this is a double fake out, the very pissed off pirate jail keeper is now standing at my cell door glaring at me, sooo that would be a no. I'm still being held captive and this story is nowhere near done. And by the Coffee Gods it will be finished properly, one way or another.

As to what the hell I'm rambling about here instead of getting on with the story; Ao3 has this cool little function that lets me put in pictures, so this is officially the Maps page. I'll also have some info on Zootopia and this story's version of it along with the different regions as they apply here. This might get edited as the story grows but I think I've got most of it figured out.

As I continue to update chapters, (and the next one should be out very, very soon) this page will remain the last page until the final credits page. That might take a while though. This is looking like a Lord of the Rings length story.

GENERAL NOTE: If anyone from deviantart or where ever all the cool artist are hanging out these days, wants to make a real cover for this story or possibly do sketches of Judy and Nick in P.I. gear, or other parts of this story, I'll gladly take it and almost certainly add it. Should make for some cool chapter opening pics. And you could get your name immortalized in this obscure little story in the dusty attic of the internet.

Disclaimer: I'm on firm legal ground for once, can't get sued for speculation, Bullya!

Map 1: Zootopia Transit Authority (ZTA) Map, 'Get Moooooving!'
This will be the official subway and train map for this book. Its epicly cool and made directly off of stuff pulled from the movie from people with way too much free time on their hands. I've made small adjustments to the region names, but the stops and street names I reference are pulled from this.

Thank you 'Transit Map dot net' (have to do it this way since FanFiction will bounce anything close to an actually hyperlink) for showcasing this and 'Matthias Lechner's Zootopia concept art page' for, as far as I can tell, being the original source.

Map 2: Zootopia Sky View (Aerial View)
This is actually the view from the movie showing all of Zootopia as Judy comes in on the train. Its included here because it gives a great aerial view of the city and I'm trying to stick as close to this concept as possible. My version of the 'Mountain Zone' and its location came from looking at this.

Thank you, Disney, for an epicly cool movie from which I'm stealing this. I REGRET NOTHING!

Map 3: Missing Mammals Case Map (Bogo's map)
This is the map that Chief Bogo has in the movie. I believe that it is part of the source material used in the ZTA Map. Besides being cool, I'll probably include area references from within the Biosphere Districts that can be seen on this. But I'll also be adding some additional ones of my own such as the Savanna Central 'Old' Downtown just north of the actual Savanna Central. Also, this map does not match up perfectly to the aerial view (the ZTA map does a better job) and some of the names seem to be haphazardly placed. So, I'm using this one for general info. For a better idea of exactly what I'm drawing my concepts from and for reference use the Aerial sky view and the ZTA map.

Again, credit to Disney.

Map 4: Concept Art Map  ***TEMP NOTE: *Sigh* Got map 2 fixed and then this one developed Issues. Something happened to the source image, I'll try to figure out what and get it fixed**
Ok I found this map while trying to fix the Aerial map. It looks like an early concept art map, and I found it on the zootopia wikia (com) site; unfortunately there wasn't any additional data on it. It's cool and it gives an idea behind the conceptional idea of Zootopia and its layout which is why I have included it, but as for story accuracy I'm still going off of the ZTA map.

**Zootopia's 13 Biosphere Districts:**

Well this is a bit tricky, As far as I know there is no compete, official list of these districts. I have a list here of what I have read about. This list is not set in stone for this book. There will be notes of which ones are and which ones are speculation.

Also, I've got a very complicated mental picture/understanding of the Zootopia artificial climate systems. Suffice to say that with a bit of advanced and large scale (epicly large scale) engineering (and a dollop of Imaginative License) I can see them artificially holding different climates than Zootopia's natural climate which to my understanding is close to Savanna Central. I actually see Zootopia being a mid latitude city that experiences all four seasons, and for this story it will be. As for the artificial ones, well artificial isn't perfect so while a place like Tundratown will have snow year-round it will still get warmer and colder during summer and winter. Also, there's no invisible force field separating those zones (Go Away Trekkies, I refuse to have humans or crazy Syfy in my version of Zootopia) so without something like the BioWall (and that can't be perfect either) there's going to be some climate clash at the edges of the zones.

**Sahara Square:** *Official Stamp* One of the few Cannon (with a capital C there) Districts. One of the 4 Main Undisputable Biosphere Zones. I don't think I need to say much about this one. Climate: Always hot, low humidity, 80ish – 120ish degrees (F)

**Tundratown:** *Official Stamp* One of the few Cannon (with a capital C there) Districts. One of the 4 Main Undisputable Biosphere Zones. I don't think I need to say much about this one. Climate: Always will have snow. 32 degrees (F) or lower
Rainforest District: *Official Stamp* One of the few Cannon (with a capital C there) Districts. One of the 4 Main Undisputable Biosphere Zones. I don't think I need to say much about this one. Always Humid, Frequent rain, 60ish – 95ish degrees (F)

Savanna Central: *Official Stamp* One of the few Cannon (with a capital C there) Districts. One of the 4 Main Undisputable Biosphere Zones. Climate: mostly Zootopia natural. I don't see this region having any artificial controls, however since there's no BioWall between it and Sahara Square I see most of it having milder winters as the desert climate zones heat travels over. Because of this I see Savanna Central 'downtown'(i.e. the ZTA Savanna Central station) as being typical Savanna weather through most of the year while the area to the east (right) gets hotter as you go toward Sahara Square, and the area west (left) getting progressively more toward Zootopia's Natural Mid-latitude zone weather with all four seasons

Downtown: *Official Area* Not sure if this qualifies as a Biosphere zone but it is one of the major named Districts. (This, at least for this story, is the Skyscraper portion of the city or the Zootopia Downtown, not to be confused with Tundratown 'downtown' or Savanna Central 'downtown', etc.) If you're being creative, I guess you could say 'city' is a new artificial environment all unto its own. Climate: I see this as being mostly natural Zootopia climate, with all four seasons, But it is at the center meeting point of multiple drastically different zones. So I see it as natural Zootopia with a touch of sometimes crazy erratic weather as the natural and artificial climates all clash.

Nocturnal District: A very commonly reference zone, no idea on its official status. Stories range from this not being in Zootopia to having a city of its own underneath Zootopia. I am taking a middle (and in my opinion reasonable) positon on this one. No, in this Zootopia there is no epic cave network or 'city under the city', beside the unmitigated engineering nightmare, even most nocturnal animals venture out into the daylight. And, if someone got fed up with Zootopia and wanted to destroy it completely as seems the case in many of these stories, then why waste your time with a complex drug. just go wreck the supports under the city and turn it into one massive sink hole. THE Nocturnal District will be under the Downtown, it is essential the sub-ground levels of the skyscrapers in Zootopia's central Downtown that have been connected. Makes far more sense.

Canal District: *Official Area* Not much more on this one, seems very similar to Marshlands to me. For this story this is the area west of the Rainforest District where that artificial climate zone merges with the natural climate, making it relatively humid and near a lot of water; probably very close to the water table too (Zootopia New Orleans/Amsterdam?). This also just happens to be right over the stretch of small islands/canals along the coast. Fits perfectly. The only glitch is that Bogos map has it a bit to the north of where it looks like it should be, compared to the Aerial and ZTA maps. Again ZTA and aerial are superseding Bogo's map.

Marshlands *Quasi-Official Area* It's on Bogo's map but it seems to be on the other side of the bay from Zootopia. Also, I already see that climate being represented in Zootopia in the Canal District, which IS in Zootopia proper. For this story it's going to be the urban rural area directly west of the city on the other side of the bay, which means it's got to have natural Zootopia region weather, maybe its name just comes from being right up against the bay, lots of opportunity for marshy areas even in mid-lat zones in that kind of set up. (Maybe this is where the more urban/rural area that Hippos, Beavers and such mammals live. I can totally see there being ferries that go back and forth for commuting mammals.

Little Rodentia *Official Area* Like the Downtown, not sure if this qualifies as a Biosphere zone but it is one of the major areas in the Movie and even has its own subway stop and name listed on the ZTA map. BTW, its one stop west of Savanna Central 'downtown'. (As for Bogo's map, it seems to have a region name, not a District name, but it also has its own color code separate from Savanna
Meadowlands *Official Area* It's on both the ZTA and Bogo's map and it's on the same land mass/peninsula that the City is on. I figure that this is actually the urban area north of the city since it isn't served by the metro. Which also means that it's got normal Zootopia Region weather. Hurray, all four seasons. Side Note: Cliffside Asylum is officially located in the meadowlands, and Judy and Nick mentioned the truck taking Manchas there 'was leaving the city'. As for that water fall? Look at the top left hand corner where the bay narrows to a point and dips out of view. Mountains/Hills and near the Meadowland area; Very plausible that a river feeds into that and has a major water fall.

Canyonlands *Quasi-Official Area* It's on Bogo's map. It's the area in what is usually considered Sahara Square, right below the BioWall on Bogo's map. The funny thing is that, that looks more like sand dunes than Canyon from the aerial. There are however, (going by the aerial view t) what could be desert hills/canyons more to the west side of Sahara Square. This could very well be the 'Canyonlands'.

Polar Strait – this seems to be the name of the water mass east of Tundratown, (see Bogo's map) not a Biosphere

Outback Island – Mentioned in the original 'Jack Savage' concepts. There seems to be a lot of speculation and varying opinions on this one. However, Bogo's map shows it just south of Sahara Square and Savanna Central west of the Lion Tail river mouth and connected to Savana Central by a bridge named 'The Lionsgate'. The ZTA map also shows it there. Climate: Well it be the Outback, mates. Its location near Sahara Square makes it so that they could keep it similar to real Australia's average temp range generally 50-85ish degrees (F).

Bunnyburrow – Rural township in the greater Zootopia region. Sorry, despite the original concept art, it doesn't make sense the way the movie was made for this to be a 'Biosphere'. It's what? 200 miles south west of the city? So, regular Zootopia region climate.

Mountain Zone – *Used in Story* Heard a few rumors on this one but no cannon on it as far as I know. However, I think it represents an important Biosphere and the aerial view shows a small mountain range north of The Downtown between Tundratown and the rainforest district. I'm having this Biosphere be a mix of high altitude climates from the cold ones on the Tundratown side to high Jungle on the Rainforest side to normal mountain conditions on the north end near meadow lands. It also provides a good reason for why there isn't a BioWall between Tundratown and the Rainforest region. Climate: varies depending on the side, similar to adjacent Biospheres, interesting weather due to clashing climates.

~Other Notes:~

Biosphere District?

Not sure what is cannon here, Environment District? Climate Zones? I might have to check the movie, but until I do or someone corrects me this is what I'm using.

BioWall?

Not sure if this is the cannon name for the climate control wall between Tundra Town and Sahara Square, but until I hear otherwise it's what I'm using.

The Mysterious 'Happy Town'
First, this is NOT a Biosphere District (Come on people, mammals, Whos, whatevers. 'Happy' is not in any way a description of an environment) If anything this might be a region name like Otterdam (check Bogo's map, that's right under Downtown District). If you care to argue about this point, then bring it. I'm one hell of a scrappy Grinch and I fight dirtier than bad banana with a greasy black peel. I guarantee I'll nuke your donkey in any internet flaming war.

As for its use in my story, unlikely. No guarantees on this though. You'll just have to read and find out *snicker*

**Weapons and Zootopia:**

*Class One* – Lethal Weapons, basically your normal guns. Completely illegal. Police, Civil Defense, etc. are the only mammals authorized to use them.

*Class Two* – Non-lethal weapons, Tranq guns, Tasors, tear gas, etc. Since there are vastly different sized mammals for mice to elephants, while these are built to be non-lethal, they can be lethal in the wrong circumstance. Hit a mouse with a dart or tasor for an elephant and if they aren't squashed or speared by the dart/tasor-barb then the dose/current will almost certainly do it. So, these weapons are restricted to appropriate government departments like the Class One weapons, but also available to mammals who complete proper training and certification, such as, oh, PIs.

*Class Three* – General Defensive Deterrents. Weapons that have been deemed safe for use by the general population for self-defense and don't pose a significant risk of serious injury to mammals in general. I.E. Mace/Pepper spray and low level hand tasors. (Such as Fox Away and Fox Tasor)

~Misc. Topics:~

These are in most cases tangents but some people have asked, sooo…

**City State vs Country:** not going to be definitive on this for the story or at least not yet. Zootopia for this story is a capital city and the surrounding areas are land and towns associated as Zootopia's outlying regions. This means that the police in Bunnyburrow or Deer Brook county are still part of the ZPD, just the Bunnyburrow/Deer Brook branch. Hum, I wonder about more multi region crime and spy stuff, like parallels to the FBI or CIA? *snicker* (using US references here just because they're probably the most recognizable, blame Hollywood)

**ZPD hierarchy:** Ugh, don't want to try and get into this, at least not yet. So, this is the loose set up: Bogo's in charge of Zootopia and seems to also directly supervise Precinct 1 (He's the Chief, chief), though there are other precincts in the city as well, probably one per district. Each region around Zootopia has their own branch but is still part of the ZPD, just not under Bogo's authority. The big boss of the ZPD is the commissioner, more of a political position than a police department position.

**Zootopia Bureau of Investigation (ZBI):** Keeping my mouth shut on this one for now. Don't want to get into this as it may touch on one or two aspects of this story.

**Power?:** Zootopia must have one hell of a power source to be able to mess with mother nature like that (even in a small local area) Anyone who has any knowledge of basic building heating and cooling power requirements is terrified and amazed by this. It's not impossible…but it's out there (again dollop of Creative License). So, they must have one hell of a power grid. My guess is that they're using nuclear power and that the city is probably drawing power from multiple region power plants so one incident can't blackout the city. (sorry, no nefarious city destroying plot possibilities
Nukes? : Nuclear power, well then they can make nukes right. There don't seem to be any major country threats/wars, so in this the international politic setup is very non-threatening, Imagine if all the countries in this world took the Swiss approach to these issues. So, no Nukes, no need for them. (Shut up, Locke and Hobbes, you don't exist in this world) However, If you absolutely insist that countries in this world need strategic level weapons, then my solution is that Zootopia has Angry Bunny Mark IIIIs. (Read 'Love's Tails' by MincsLovesBoo if you don't get this joke)

Military: Same situation as Nukes, I see Zootopia with a Civil Defense force of some kind. Basically, a very, very, small actual military cadre that only trains part time, (sort of like the U.S. army reserves or national guard, where they spend only a portion of each month doing military stuff or training and hold normal jobs/lives for most of the time). For you people who have to have an explanation for everything. This would allow Zootopia to maintain the military knowledge and skills needed for quick response or to train up military forces if there was ever a need. (Ha, Kiss my hairy green donkey Hobbes!) Again, this is a complete tangent to this story, so for all you normal people, there is effectively no military.

Mammals: I believe that Cannon says NO HUMANS, and also no apes, gorillas, monkeys etc. This is a world were that evolutionary line didn't develop. Also, according to Cannon (I think) the idea was for MAMMAL evolution, so forget reptiles and avians, besides the fact that they eat chicken and etc. talking reptiles and birds are weird (Says the pot to the kettle). Also, I'm pretty sure that it's Cannon that all the Mammals evolved along similar lines, i.e. opposable thumbs, walking on two legs (most of the time), etc. so that rules out dolphins and other aquatic only mammals and also bats (not entirely sure about that last one, but definitely no purely aquatic mammals, at least not here). Oh, also no humans, thus no domesticated breeds.

Hybrids - Boxes & Funnies: The million-dollar question for all you shippers. Can there be fox-bunnies and bunny-foxes, funnies and boxes? Well, for all the mammal species to evolve the same key features (see above) and all to evolve at the same time, it seems very plausible that the different species, even entirely different families are all far, far more genetically similar than what we see in the real world. So, if similar family species in the real world where the genetics are more varied, such as with different big cats, and wolves and coyotes can interbreed, and even produce offspring that can then viably breed as well…. Again plausibility due to similar genetics (and if that isn't enough add a dash of creative license) can do very interesting things.

Bunny, Rabbit, Hare, bunny-Rabbit? – Cheese and crackers, this is a confusing subject. I'm going to keep it simple here, bunnies and rabbits seem pretty similar and they seemed to be used interchangeably in the movie, according to the all-knowing internet, Judy is a rabbit, but then there's so many references to her as a bunny. So, bunny-rabbit. Ya, we're going with that. Hares seem to generally be larger, and while most bunny-rabbits burrow, hares nest above ground. Great a simple set of differences I can stick to.

Bunny x Fox, aren't the…um, sizes too different?! - SHUT UP, I have an answer for that as well, you pessimistic skeptics. Go take your half empty glass and move your donkey to some other story that's going to be depressing. I'm a grinch, I will scheme, trick and steal my way to my happy ending if I have too, and I'll Blindly Bulldoze you into the ground if you get in my way! (and no that's not a write in of me, I can just sympathize with his methodology). Now, First, let's just get some real life numbers. Average bunny vs average fox, 2.5 lbs vs 15 lbs, (not so good). General weight range for bunnies vs general weight range for foxes, well for 'bunny and rabbit' that gets interesting depending on your definition, most are 1-5 lbs, but there are a number of breeds that also range from 5-15lbs whereas the norm for foxes is 10-30lbs. (better). Now let's look at the extreme end, Heaviest bunny
vs heaviest fox, 55lbs to 38lbs (I was shocked, but there are apparent 'Giant bunny breeds') well Judy obviously isn't that, Thank Carrots. Now Judy's weight is never given in the movie but Nick's is (on the police form he writes down 40 lbs), so it's apparent that while Zootopia sticks close to the size and weight ranges they're not breaking out the measuring scales to be exact, so there's a bit of wiggle room. Also, Judy's head comes almost up to Nick's chin (not including ears) in the movie, though her frame is also certainly more petite than his. At a glance, she looks about a third of his size. 1/3 of 40 = 13ish. A bit too high for most breeds of bunny-rabbits but not all. Add the wiggle room Disney gave and its reasonable. For story purposes, I'm going to pull a Disney and just round up to a nice number and call her 15 lbs. Is a 15 lb bunny-rabbit and a 40 lb fox unreasonable? Well for those who still think it wouldn't work, keep reading, the rest of you skip the next part and avoid the mental scaring. Let's take humans, generally people (male & female) weigh somewhere between 100-300 lbs and that range is even larger considering extremes which I will not do because I don't want to gouge my eyes out after thinking about it. So, if people can make that normal kind of range work then we don't even need to use 'Creative License' for Bunny x Fox to work. And if you are one of those people that is questioning that normal human range, I suggest staying in your cozy little world view and not venturing out, because there are things that once seen or even just thought of can never be unseen/thought of. So, don't think about that small cheerleader and large football jock couple from highschool. Just don't, and if you did, here's some bleach to wash your eyes and brain out with. Checkmate, Grinch wins.

Chapter End Notes

Gonna leave the choice to proof this up to my editor, It's a Map and Notes page, so I don't think its super important, but if he does he'll get credit right here –

Also how the hell did I end up doing so much damned research on a movie and particularly on foxes and rabbits? I can understand trying to justify Zootopia's regions and artificial climates, that kind of blue sky discussion appeals to me, but a bunny and fox? And why the hell did my mind put together a rational explanation for Bunny x Fox and Funnies and Boxes? (Automatic Mental Sanity protection procedures have been triggered. The writer is not authorized for this information or to speculate on this topic. To gain clearance, see your WildeHopps Pirate Psychologist. Purging thought process. Remember, this is for your own sanity, have a good day.)

... Message From WildeHopps Pirate Captain,

We apologize for the scoundrel's prank, rest assured he will be dealt with... (Captain gives a smile the opposite of nice. it was un-nice) properly.

The next chapter will be posted tomorrow.
Chapter Summary

General Note Since there seems to be some confusion.

No, this is not the end of the story. There is still A LOT before we get there.

Latest update is 'Chapter 42 - Work and Pay'

(Oh and I need to go back and fix the line breaks in the early chapters before i realized that Ao3 had a Rich text editor not just the HTML editor)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!