We Managed...Somehow

by Sapperjoe85

Summary

Judy is the newest member of the ZPD. After being put on parking duty she takes it as a challenge to prove herself. A fateful run in with a certain fox and his son puts them on each other’s radar as they go through life. Enevitably bumping into one another time and time again.

Notes

So I was up really late last night looking over several fics that were never finished. I really like a couple of them and was inspired to write something similar. This first chapter is what I came up with before falling asleep. I didn’t proof read it very thoroughly so be kind.

See the end of the work for more notes
“Two-oh-one.” After placing a ticket on her own meter maid cart, the sound of a loud horn blaring caught Judy’s attention. Turning the see what was causing all the commotion, she sees a fox barely miss getting ran over by a ram in a moving van.

“Watch it fox!” the wooly mammal yes at the vulpine. The fox simply makes a gesture and looks back angrily.

Judy continued to watch as the fox slinked his way to the door of an ice cream shop. Glancing around as if he was making sure no one was watching what he was doing before following a much larger mammal through the doors.

Every instinct she had said something was wrong. Crossing the street, Judy made her way into the ice cream shop. Stepping inside, it only takes a second for her bunny ears to pick up on the conversation coming from the counter.

“Listen, I don’t know what you’re doing skulking around during day light hours,” the elephants deep voice threatens, “but I don’t want any trouble in here. So hit the road!”

Hearing the fox was causing trouble, Judy reached down and unclipped the latch holding her can of Fox-Away. Taking a cautious step towards the counter to intervene.

“I’m not looking for any trouble either sir, I simply want to buy a jumbo pop. For my little boy.” The fox then reaches out of Judy’s view and pulls forward a red fox kit with identical markings to his own. “You want the red or the blue pal?”

Judy watches and the little fox walks up to the display window and looks excitedly at the giant popsicles before looking back at the older fox and pointing at the red one. The smile on his little face falters slightly when he sees Judy. They’re eyes meet for a moment. Her amethyst meetings his sapphire. Her heart sinks as she sees the joy in his eyes sink away. She immediately puts the latch on her pepper spay back in place and turns to leave, not seeing the older fox turn to look at what caused his son’s distress. Whispering to herself, “Oh, I’m such a…” pausing when she heard what was said next.

“Oh come on kid back up. Listen buddy, what, there aren’t any fox sized cream joints in your part of town?”

“Oh, no no, there are, there are. It’s just my boy, this goofy little stinker,” he said while rubbing the little fox’s head between the ears, “it’s his birthday and he wants to share popsicles with his friends.” Judy coos ad the adorableness of the little fox wanting to share with his friends. Making her place her paws over her heart.
“And well it’s cheaper to buy a jumbo pop and split it between the bunch of them. I save a little cash and you make a little cash. So, what do you say?”

“Look, you probably can’t read fox, but the sign says,” the elephant starts to raise his voice, “We reserve the right to refuse service, to anyone! Now beat it!”

“You’re holding up the line.” A female elephant behind the fox says while stepping forward and pushing the adult fox. Causing the little fox to lean in close to his father and whimper under the glare of the rude mammal.

Judy decided enough was enough, she stepped forward and called to the elephant behind the counter. “Hello! Excuse me?”

“Hey, you’re gonna have to wait your turn like everyone else, meter maid.”

She couldn’t help but notice the way pronounced the last words. Standing as tall as she could she pulled her orange vest to the side and showed him her badge. “Actually, I’m an officer. Just had one question.” She then raised her voice so that every mammal in the store could hear her. “Are your customers aware they’re getting snot and mucus with their cookies and cream?”

She saw an elephant on the other side of the room blow ice cream through its trunk and into his date’s face. Looking back at the elephant behind the counter, Judy listened to his obvious question.

“What are you talking about?”

She took a casual step forward, holding her paws together, looking as innocent as possible. “Well I don’t want to cause you any trouble but, I believe scooping ice cream with an ungloved trunk is a class 3 health code violation.” She paused a second as he looked at the other elephant behind him scooping ice cream.

Once he turned back to face her, she continued, “Which is kind of a big deal.” She said while making an exaggerated expression. “Of course, I could let you off with a warning if you were to glove those trunks and I don’t know,” she gestured toward the foxes, gently touching the dad’s elbow to turn him back towards the counter, “finish selling this nice dad and his son a...” she looked to him for help, “what was it?” she whispered.

“A jumbo pop, please.” He said kindly.

“A jumbo pop.” She tacked on.

“Please?” the little fox spoke for the first time. Judy couldn’t help but look over and smile at him. But when he looked at her, his smile fell once again and he hid behind his dad’s legs. “Maybe he’s just shy?” Judy thought to herself. Making sure to keep her smile bright and friendly as possible.
Sighing, the elephant begrudgingly agreed. “Fifteen dollars.” He said gruffly.

The fox pulled out a twenty dollar bill and laid it on the counter. “Keep the change.”

As they walked out together, Judy couldn’t help but notice how the little fox tried to stay hidden behind his dad. She also couldn’t help but admire how the fox seemed to effortlessly tote the jumbo pop, which was nearly three times his size and had to be double his weight.

“Officer, I can’t thank you enough, so kind, really. Can I pay you back somehow? Lunch or something?”

“Oh, no I couldn’t. It’s just, you know it burns me up to see others with such backwards attitudes towards foxes. I just want to say you’re a great dad and just a…a real articulate fella.”

“Ah well that is high praise.” He said back while placing one paw over his chest. “It’s rare that I find someone so non-patronizing. Officer?”

“Hopps.” She introduced herself raising her hat off her head in greeting. “Mister?”

“Wilde, Nick Wilde.” He replied and offered her his paw. Which she gladly shook before stepping towards the little fox glued to his leg.

“Hey little guy. Happy birthday! Here I got something for ya.” She reached into one of her pouches and produced a roll of Junior Detective stickers. Peeling one off, she held it out to him. Looking up at his dad, like he was silently asking permission, he waited for his dad to nod that it was ok.

He reached out and took the sticker before placing it on his chest. For the first time he looked back at Judy and gave a small smile. It warmed her heart to see the little fox be happy.

“Well I’m afraid we must be off before this thing melts all over me.” Nick said. “It was a pleasure Officer Hopps.”

“Likewise.” She replied. She watched them walk away for a moment before turning to go about her duties for the rest of the day.

Later that afternoon, she was still giving out tickets when she noticed a familiar fox kit across the street. Walking over, she called out to him. “Hey little…guy.” Stopping where she was when she saw another short tan fox walk out from behind the van he was standing next to. The tan fox was barely bigger than he was.
She watched as the tan fox was gathering up glass jars full of red liquid that was coming out of drain pipe. She followed the pipe up and there was the dad from the ice cream shop. “I thought that was for his birthday?” She said internally.

Curious to what was going on, she decided that she would follow them and see what they were up to. After watching them refreeze the popsicle into smaller ones. They then went into a recreation building in Savanna Central. They stayed there for nearly an hour before leaving.

After that, she followed them to another part of Savanna Central where she saw them selling them to lemmings from a bank, she watched as they carried the used popsicle sticks to Little Rodentia. Where they then sold them as lumber calling them “red wood”.

The more she saw the more the anger continued to grow. Finally she watched as the adult red fox counted out the money to the smaller tan one. Once it was split between the two of them, the tan fox getting the majority, the red fox turned to the little one next to him.

“Alright buddy, time to go with uncle Fin.” He said while kneeling down to be at eye level with him.

“But I don’t want to.” The sadness in his voice had Judy frowning for him. He still had his Jr Detective sticker on.

“I know but you know what happens if you don’t.” Nick said back. The little tod only nodded in response before climbing into the van with the tan fox. “Thanks Fin, this means a lot to me.”

“Don’t go getting soft on me Wilde.” The surprising deep voice had Judy freezing in place for a moment as she approached the van. “Or I’ll bite your face off! Ciao.” With that he cranked the van and speed off down the street and out of view. Nick watched the whole time until they turned down anther street and out of sight.

“You lied to me.” Nick turned and was surprised to see the bunny cop from the ice cream shop. “You liar!”
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

If you've been following this story you may have noticed that I posted this chapter and then deleted it. Some one pointed out a couple of things that seemed to be confusing. After taking a fresh look I agreed on a couple of things they pointed out and made the neccessary changes. It didn't change anything in the story except cleared a couple of points up.

Chapter Notes

This chapter has been slightly modified from a previous version to include a different relationship status between Nick and Adam's mother.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Pretty long chapter by my standards. Everyone seemed to have a lot of questions after the first chapter and as promised I think I answered all of them in this one. Let me know if I missed anything

"Well, I stood up for you and you lied to me." Judy stood on the other side of the van waiting for it to leave before confronting the fox now standing in front of her. "You liar!" She accused pointed to the ground angrily.

Nick looked at the rabbit officer standing in front of him for a moment. Shifting his weight to one foot and placing a paw on his hip. Slowly taking the pawpsicle out of his mouth, smacking his lips a couple of times before replying.

"That's quite presumptuous of you Officer. But I'm not the liar," Making a dramatic show of placing his paw on his chest then pointing down the street, "he is!"

Watching as the bunny meter maid looked down the street Nick made his way in the opposite direction and quickly turned down a side alley. Smiling like a fiend.

Judy glanced in the direction the lying fox pointed. Seeing nothing she quickly looked back only to find him gone. Glancing around, she caught sight of bushy red tail going into an alley way. Running after him, she quickly caught up. "Alright slick Nick, you're under arrest."

"Really for what?" Nick said while dropping the used pawpsicle stick in a garbage can.

"Oh I don't know, how about, selling food without a permit, transporting undeclared commerce across borough lines and false advertising." She said with a smirk.

Nick smirked back while reaching for the permits he carried behind his back. Only to find nothing there. With lips curling downward, he quickly scanned his surroundings to see if they had fallen out. Only to see nothing. "No, no, no! I have to find them!" Thinking they fell out somewhere
on his way here, Nick quickly turned on his heel and started running back the way he came.

Judy stood there and watched as the fox in front of her went from cool and collected to near panic after hearing his crimes. Just when she was about to make her first arrest and read him his rights, he took off at a dead sprint back the way.

Judy was so caught up in the excitement of making her first arrest and possibly proving herself to everyone, it took a couple of seconds for her brain to catch up to the fact that the fox was running away from her.

"Hey!" she yelled as she ran after him. Rounding the corner she spotted him nearly half way back to where they first started. "He really is fast!" She thought while chasing after him. "Stop in the name of the law!"

Seeing the fox come to a sudden stop, looking in either direction like he was confused, it appeared he was trying to decide which direction to go. Judy, however, wouldn't give him the opportunity. Using her powerful legs, she leapt at the fox and tackled him to the ground. Causing him to bounce slightly with her on top.

She wasted no time quickly grabbing his wrist and cuffing them behind his back while reading his rights. "Ha! Looks like the rabbit out foxed the fox today! What do you say to that slick!" No reply. "Slick?" When he didn't reply or even move, Judy walked around his larger body to get a better look at his face. Only then did she see the road rash on the side of his face next to his left eye and the blood soaking into his fur.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed while reaching for her first aid pouch. Pulling out a gauze wrap and pressed it to the wound. She then pulled out a roll of medical tape and secured the makeshift bandage to his face. Standing back, she inspected the rest of him for anymore injuries. Not finding any she now faced a new dilemma. "How am I going to get him back to the station?"

The meter maid cart wasn't big enough to carry him and would be problematic if he were to wake up on the way to the station. Letting out a small growl of frustration, Judy reached for her radio and keyed the mic. "Officer Hopps to dispatch."

Waiting for several seconds, she was about to key the mic again when a familiar voice came over the speaker. "Hey Hopps! How're you doing out there?"

"I'm doing fine, but I need some help. I've got a 10-31 and need a larger vehicle to transport the subject back to the station."

With a loud gasp across the radio Clawhauser responded. "Were you attacked? Are you ok? Do I need to send an ambulance?"

"No, Clawhauser, I'm fine but the perp is going to need medical attention. A small abrasion on the face and possible concussion. I need pick up at-" She gave her current location as best she could given they were still technically in a back alley.

"Okay Hopps, what size pickup do you need?" He asked so he would send the appropriate sized cruiser to pick them up.

"Small to medium will work." She replied.

"Copy that. Officers Khan and Pridelands are in the area. They'll be there shortly. I'll notify the nurse of an incoming patient. Over and out!"

Judy used the time to check him for any weapons or items of interest. Finding only his wallet and
cell phone. She opened the wallet and the first thing she noticed was a collection of photographs. Most of the small red fox she saw earlier. She looked at a few more until she found one that made her stop. Sleeping in a worn beige colored recliner was a younger version of the fox that now lay on the ground at her feet. In his arms was a baby fox wrapped in a blanket.

What gave her pause was the size of the small bundle. She couldn't be sure but he seemed a lot smaller than she would have expected a new born fox to be. Surely if there was something wrong with the little fox they would have kept him in the hospital, she reasoned. So she continued her search.

She checked his ID confirming his name 'Nicholas P. Wilde'. "I wonder what the P stands for?" About fifteen minutes later, a large police cruiser pulled to her location. Out stepped a large tiger with yellow eyes and a lanky lion with a black mane and green eyes. When he got closer she noticed the scar over his left eye.

"Officer Hopps?" asked the tiger in a bored tone.

"Yes that's me." She replied.

"This your perp?" He pointed at the fox laying still behind her.

"Yes, can you assist me with transporting him back to the station please?" She asked in as nice a tone as possible. Thinking maybe now everyone would have a little more respect for her.

Without saying a word the tiger simply stepped over to the unconscious tod and lifted him by the scruff of his neck. Once he got a better look at him the tiger froze. His face turned to one of horror as it went white. He turned towards the cruiser and walked to his partner who adopted a similar face when seeing the fox.

"What is it? Is he hurt worse?" Judy worried she hadn't inspected him thorough enough and perhaps missed a much more grievous injury.

"Oh no, it's…uh." The tiger stammered for a second before his partner stepped in with a much calmer voice.

"Perhaps, you should accompany us to the statin Hopps. It is your arrest after all." He said with a grin.

Judy started to feel a bit embarrassed at her situation. She tugged at the orange vest she was still wearing in a nervous twitch. "I would but I have to take the meter cart back to the station."

"We can place it in the trunk. That way you can be the one to process the perp you apprehended."

"Oh, okay! Wait here, I'll be right back!" Judy then took off around the corner to fetch the cart.

"What are you doing Taka? If he wakes up and-" The tiger tried to object but was cut off by his lion partner.

"If he wakes up he'll see the rabbit who arrested and assaulted him sitting next to him. He'll focus on her and not us. Now put him in the back and put the seat belt on. I'll have her put the muzzle on him. The camera in the cruiser will show her doing it. Not us." He said in a low whisper to keep the bunny from hearing them.

Nodding in response the tiger caught on to what his partner was thinking. Let the bunny take the fall for her own mistake. He gently sat the fox into the back seat of the police cruiser and strapped him into the seat belt.
After a few more minutes Judy came riding in on the meter cart and parked it behind the cruiser. Officer Pridelands popped the trunk open and reached in before grabbing the cart. In his large paws was a fox sized muzzle.

"Is that really necessary?" Judy asked. "He wasn't confrontational when he was conscious."

"It's procedure. You understand you have to ride in the back with him. If he wakes up and isn't all there he may try to lash out at you." The lion held the equipment out to the bunny.

"Better safe than sorry Hopps." The tiger added.

Judy reluctantly took the muzzle and went to wait at the passenger door. While the tiger loaded the cart into the back of the large cruiser, the lion opened the door for her. She could have opened it herself, but it was difficult with her size difference. Saying thank you to the lion as he closed the door.

Judy stepped over to the unconscious fox and placed the muzzle over his snout and securing the straps behind his head. She checked his wounds and looked for any more that she may have missed. She then sat on the seat across from him and put her own seatbelt on.

Once the lion and tiger were back in the cruiser, they radioed in to dispatch that they were returning to the precinct. About half way there Judy could hear him moan as he started to wake up. She watched as he slowly opened his eyes for a couple of seconds before clinching them shut again and started thrashing about wildly.

Everything was fuzzy for a while. Nick felt like he was in a dream or an out of body experience. When he tried to rub his head he felt his hands had been restrained. With the sharp pain around his wrist he moaned silently to himself. When he opened his eyes, it took a moment for his vision to clear. There on his snout was the one thing he had hoped to never see again. He clinched his eyes shut, willing the device to disappear. When that didn't work he started shaking his head to make it loosen. It didn't take long for panic to set in as he felt his hands restrained. Thrashing about, desperately trying to free himself when he felt a sharp sting in his thigh.

Looking for the source of the new pain he opened his eyes only to see a dart sticking out of his leg. He was now laying on his side. Still held in place by the seat belt. Glancing up he saw the grey bunny doe holding a tranq pistol. She quickly turned into two bunnies and then four before everything went dark again.

"What the hell happened?" The lion roared. The tiger had been trying to turn to see but it had happened so fast all he saw was Judy pulled her tranq pistol and discharge it inside the cruiser.

"I don't know. It was like he was waking up and then went crazy." She replied, keeping her pistol trained on the fox.

"Well he's out of it now." The tiger remarked. The two large cats turned back to face out the front. Leaving Judy to stare at the drugged fox beside her.

"What was that all about?" She wondered. A few more minutes and the cruiser was back at the precinct. The lion unloaded the meter cart and the tiger carried the fox into the precinct to the infirmary. Judy waved at Clawhauser as they passed his desk. She thanked the two officers for helping her, before they both left to resume their patrol. It was still early evening and the chief was known to roam the halls looking for slackers.

Once there, Judy sat as a wolf officer assisted with taking off the cuffs and securing him to the table while a camel medic examined the fox. The wound on his face was only a scrape and
wouldn't require stitches. He treated it with disinfectant and then placed a proper bandage over it.

Once finished, the camel informed them that he would be out for probably hour or so. Suggesting they go ahead and move him to holding, the wolf removed the restraints and replaced the pawcuffs, he paused, and started staring at the fox very intensely.

"What is it?" Judy asked.

"I think I know him from somewhere…but I can't place it." The wolf, who Judy had learned was named Wolfard, replied. Shaking his head dismissively, he placed the fox in a wheelchair used for just such an occasion and started to wheel the fox to a holding cell.

After Wolfard placed him on a cot in an empty cell, Judy went to remove the muzzle and cuffs.

"What are you doing Hopps?" the wolf asked.

"I'm taking these off. He won't be able to hurt anyone while he's locked up." She explained.

"If you say so." He shrugged before wheeling the chair back out of the cell.

Once Judy collected the muzzle and pawcuffs, she left the cell and locked the door. Making her way to Clawhauser's desk, the excitement of making her first arrest started building up again. Soon she was nearly running down the hall and out into the lobby. Slipping to a stop in front of the chubby cheetah's desk.

"Clawhauser! EEEEEHHH!" she squealed. Causing the cheetah to drop the donut he was holding in his paw as he jumped in surprise. "I made an arrest!" he excitedly whispered.

"Nice." He replied. Smiling at the cutest member of the force but dare not say it. "What was it for?"

"Selling food without a permit, transporting goods across borough lines, false advertising and resisting arrest!" she proudly explained while puffing her chest a bit.

He chuckled at her excitement. "Good for you!" His bubbly personality wouldn't allow him to tell her how minor the crimes were and would probably be thrown out.

"Do you think I can borrow a desk?" She still hadn't been assigned an office or given a computer. Although that morning she had been given a username and password to access the system.

"Uuuhhh…Ooh! Take Bob's, he's out on paid migration."

"Thanks!" And she was off again. Quickly finding the office he had spoken of, Judy walked into a large office with elephant sized furniture. Looking it over, she placed her paws on her hips and tilted her head to the side. "Hmm!" She made her way to the chair and hopped up on top of the seat, reaching over the side to pull the lever to raise it up.

Standing on the seat she was barely able to see over the edge of the desk. Seeing a mouse pad, she jumped up on the desk and started using it to access the system to file an arrest report, having to use both paws and press her full body weight to get it to respond.

She then moved to the keyboard and jumped from key to key to type in her report. Feeling like a kit on a trampoline, she was glad no one walked by and saw her. Once finished, she pressed the send button and checked the time. It took nearly an hour to complete the report. Realizing her perp would soon be awake, she walked out of the office and towards the holding cell. Unbeknownst to her, an email tagged urgent had arrived at the Chief's computer containing the rabbit's report.
Walking back into the lobby she spotted Clawhauser waiving her over. Hoping over she propped
her elbows on the edge of the desk. "Hey Clawhauser!"

"Hey Hopps, so who was it you arrested? Some drug peddler or a purse snatcher?" Excited for the
bunny he thought would struggle on the police force.

"Well a lying fox for just a couple of misdemeanors really. Nothing real serious but he tried to run
when I told him he was under arrest. So add resisting arrest to that list." Show proudly proclaimed.

"A fox hu? We get a lot of those, unfortunately." Judy watched as his expression saddened at the
realization. Before Judy could inquire about why that was, a deep voice coming out of the holding
cells caught her attention.

"-sure you Mr. Wilde that she will be disciplined appropriately." Judy leaned around the cheetah's
desk and spotted Chief Bogo walking aside a red fox with a familiar bandage on his face. At first,
she thought she misheard what sounded like the end of an apology. The sight of the fox with his
arms behind his back, presumably still in cuffs, seemed to back that up.

Until he held one paw out in front of himself and started talking to the Chief of Police in a
reprimanding tone. A smug grin plastered across his face. The way he talked condescendingly to
the chief made her want to slap the smugness out of him.

"I'm not interested in apologies Chief. I want to know why you haven't done as you've promised
and cracked down on species profiling. It's been six months since the city councilers meeting
where you," he pointed a clawed finger at the Chief as he came to a stop. Turning to face the large
mammal next to him, "promised the entire council that the police, across the city, were
implementing policies to put a stop to profiling of disdained species."

"Mr. Wilde, I assure you, the policies we've put into place will greatly decrease the number of
false arrest there have been in the past. But there is nothing I can do to change mammals' opinions
of others species." Bogo replied confidently. Noting that several of his officers in the lobby were
not watching or eavesdropping.

This was a conversation he would have preferred to have in the privacy of his office. However,
this did give him an opportunity to publicly show his support for the officers under his command.
One officer in particular he was especially interested in seeing.

Judy Hopps, the rabbit that the mayor stuck him with. It made his precinct the laughing stock of
the city. After receiving the email with the urgent notification, he quickly read over the report it
held. Initially he thought she would be another officer he would have to keep a short leash on.
Species profiling was becoming a major issue in the city.

Having more officers who acted out on their prejudice would not help. Especially one as high
profile as she was. Making her a meter maid for the time being was meant to keep her busy and
out of the public eye for a while. At least until he found a way to transfer her to one of the outer
districts without drawing to much attention.

He hadn't realized he'd been glaring at the grey rabbit until she was blocked out by red and green.
Only then did he realize that the fox had left his side and walked over to talk to her.

Nick watched as the buffalo glanced around the room. His quick wit had already prepared a retort
when he noticed Bogo was no longer looking around. Instead he seemed to be focused on one
point in particular directly behind where Nick stood.

Turning his gaze, he found the grey rabbit that had tackled him to the ground and knocked him
"This will help prove my point." Nick thought to himself as he looked recognized her. Walking over he took a moment to assess his new target. Now that she no longer wore the overly large orange vest, Nick was able to take in her full image.

"She certainly is easy on the eyes." "Wait? Did I just think that? About a rabbit?" Before he could analyze his own thoughts further, he was standing beside her. Despite his own distracted thoughts, he noticed that she never looked at him. Her eyes were locked on the large buffalo across the room.

Everyone seemed to notice as well. Bogo staring daggers into the rabbit and "Hopps was it?" was beginning to falter badly. Her ears were beginning to droop and she seemed to be trying to shrink in on herself. Nick looked back at Bogo with a sneer of distaste. "His prejudice truly knows no bounds."

Nick stepped in front of Judy, blocking her view of the disgruntled buffalo. That seemed to get her out of her daze as she slightly shook her head, blinking several times, before looking up at him.

"Hello, Carrots." He voice low but not in a good way. What he had planned didn't involve playing nice at the moment.

"You're going to want to reframe from calling me carrots!" She strongly warned him.

Nick leaned back a little as he stuck his paws in his pockets. Pulling a breath in through his teeth. "There's the fire from earlier." "My bad I just naturally assumed you came from some poor little carrot choked podunk, no?"

"Uh, no! Podunk is in Deerebrook county and I grew up in Bunnyburrow!" She fired back proudly. She had help her track team win the state championship against Podunk her senior year in high school after all.

Nick chuckled at her little display of pride. "She really is something." He thought. "Chief Bogo, can you come here for a minute?" He didn't even bother looking to see if the chief was still there. His nose telling him he was. So he just kept his eyes locked on those amethyst pools of wonder. "Wait? What?"

Once the chief was standing next to them, Nick held his paw out towards Judy. "Chief, who is this naïve little hick standing before me?" He asked in an overly sweet tone.

Judy's jaw dropped and she blinked her eyes several times trying to wrap her mind around what he just called him. The chief didn't even seem to blink at the insult he just threw her.

"This is Hopps, our new meter maid." He grumbled. Although, inwardly he was hoping that the pesky fox city councilor would demand she be fired for arresting him. That would make it a lot easier to get rid of her.

"Tell me chief, how did she get assigned to precinct one?" Now the fox was just starting to annoy him.

"The mayor assigned her here. Part of his mammal inclusion initiative." Bogo rolled his eyes and crossed his arms over his chest as he answered. Judy's ears dropped behind her back. Learning that she truly wasn't wanted here was hard to take. She couldn't even hold her gaze up any, instead looked down at the floor.

"Uh, no."

Bogo was so stunned, he had to blink several times before looking at the source of the voice. Surprised, Judy looked up at the fox standing in front of her. His eyes still locked on her. Only
now the smug grin and the uncaring eyes were gone. In their place was fire behind his eyes and slight frown. Yet, she didn't feel like it was directed at her.

"What did you say fox?" Bogo's gruff voice finally replied. His patience beginning to wear thin.

Judy watched as Nick's face changed from one of anger to a neutral expression before he turned to look up at the large buffalo. "I'm sorry what I said was NO!" Bringing one hand out of his pocket to mockingly amplify his voice.

Before Bogo could retort, Nick turned towards Judy. "Officer Hopps, how many members of your graduating class were assigned to precinct one?"

Judy answered the question before her brain could really process what was going on. "Ten. Including myself."

"Do you know why, the other nine were assigned here, Officer Hopps?" He asked leaning towards her, slightly tilting his head to the side. His voice sounded almost caring.

Judy hesitated a moment. Glancing around at the other officers who'd gathered in the lobby. All either trying to make it look like they weren't paying attention or not caring if anyone noticed them watching. Judy suddenly felt extremely nervous about being watched by her peers. She wasn't sure how this would play out.

"Because…uh."

"Hopps," Judy stopped looking at the officers around her and focused on the emerald eyes that were softly looking into hers, "it's alright."

Judy took a deep breath, steeling herself under the gaze of everyone in the room. "Because they scored in the top ten of our class."

"Top ten! That's very impressive. Tell me Bogo, why were none of those new recruits placed on the mandatory two week parking duty like Officer Hopps here?"

"Mandatory two weeks? Why didn't I know about that?" Judy thought. Then something else he said stood out in her mind. None of her fellow graduates had been placed on parking duty. They were all assigned partners and put on patrol or on the missing mammal cases. "I really am just a token bunny." She thought dejectedly.

When Bogo opened his mouth to reply Nick lifted his paw for him to stop and interrupted him. "Here's the thing chief. I already know why. Precinct one gets the best of the best. If Officer Hopps had scored below the top ten she would have been assigned somewhere else. I know, the rest of the council laughed when it was suggested she get assigned to my part of town. Instead, she graduated valedictorian and was assigned city center. Lionheart jumped on the political bandwagon the same as he always does."

That does not diminish Officer Hopps achievement in anyway." Before Bogo could make a retort Nick turned to Judy and clasped his paws together. "Officer Hopps," he said in a pleasant tone, once again changing his facial expression to a neutral one, "would you be so kind as to escort me out of the building." He then turned and started walking towards the exit.

Judy stayed where she was for a moment, looking back and forth between the chief and the back of the fox. When she noticed the chief stopped staring at the fox and started looking at her, he didn't look so happy. So Judy made the smart decision and quickly walked after the fox. He shift ended 20 minutes ago anyway.
Walking towards the door, she could feel the stares the other officers were sending to the back of her head. Her spirits lifted slightly when she looked up to see Nick holding to door open for her. A genuine smile on his face. "Officer Hopps." He said respectfully while gesturing for her to exit first. Causing her to return the smile before walking through the threshold.

Once outside, she stopped at the first step. She was so certain of everything that morning. She had made it to her dream job. She was in Zootopia. The place where anyone could be anything. But now the cold truth of reality was setting in. She was nothing more than a token bunny to the one place she held above all others.

Nick stepped next to her and glanced down, taking her in from the corner of his eye. The way her ears were still droopy and shoulders sagged. She was staring at the steps as if they were deep chasm that would consume her whole if she were to try and cross. Nick let out a sigh before speaking. Knowing how she might be feeling at that moment.

"Listen, Judy," Judy's ears perked up at the use of her first name, "I know you probably have a lot of doubts at the moment. You probably have a few questions as well." She did indeed. "I'll answer your questions, maybe even put your mind at ease, if you'd join me for dinner."

"Is he asking me out on a date?"

"I'd like to make you a job offer, if you're interested."

"Oh. Why am I disappointed?" Judy looked up at him. He was looking back with his eyes half lidded and an expression that didn't seem natural yet welcoming. Like he was always trying to impress someone. "He is well groomed. Although his fashion sense is awful. A bit skinny but maybe that's what foxes find attractive? Does he find me attractive?"

Judy's eyes shot wide and her ears began to warm slightly. Nick seemed to notice as his grin only grew. "I'll let you wonder on that one for a while Carrots."

"Oh, sweet cheese and crackers!" Judy looked away and covered her face with her paws. The slight warming had turned into a scorching heat from her cheeks to the tip of her ears. Which were now folded firmly against her back. "Did I really say that out loud?"

Nick chuckled before pulling out his phone and tapping on it a second before replying. "Yes, yes you did." Placing his phone back in his pocket, he reached out and placed a paw on her shoulder. "Come on Carrots, let's go get something to eat." And he lead her out to the street where a zoober was waiting for them.

Nick opened the door and let Judy get in first before going to the other side and taking the seat beside her. After driving for a couple of minutes in silence, Nick finally spoke again.

"If you want you can start asking questions now. It'll let us have more time to enjoy our meals when we get to the restaurant." He offered.

It wasn't a matter of if she wanted to ask questions right then but more of a matter of which to ask first. So she took a moment and ran them through her mind before deciding where she wanted to start. "Why are you not still in jail?"

He laughed after hearing the question. Finally collecting him self enough to answer. "Because none of the charges were enough to keep me there. The reason I ran was to look for my permits. I usually keep them in the small of my back. But for some reason I took them out and left them in Fin's van."

"Is he the small tan fox?" she asked.
"The one and only. As for the false advertising, I told that construction worker the boards were red wood with a space in the middle. Wood that is red. It's in the receipt they get in an email. We actually had it trademarked." He finished small chuckle.

When he talked about the red wood something clicked in Judy's mind. The popsicle sticks weren't the only things that were red with him. "Mr. Wilde?"

"Please, call me Nick, fluff."

"Are you just going to keep calling me nicknames?"

"Absolutely, 100%." Judy let out a huff and rolled her eyes.

"Fine." Judy paused for a moment as she thought her next question over carefully. "Is today, really, your son's birthday?" She watched as he features changed from a sculptured set of relaxed and at ease to one of dejection. Even her sensitive bunny ears had trouble hearing him when he replied.

"Yes."

Before either could continue, their driver made his presence known by telling them they had arrived. Nick had been the first to exit the vehicle. Eager to move on to something else. He managed to get around to Judy's door before she even had time to open it. Being the gentlemammal he is, he politely opened the door and offered his paw to help her out.

Seeing go from indifferent to obviously broken and then back again within half a minute left Judy feeling a little uneasy. Wondering if maybe he was in need of psychiatric help. Still she accepted the offered paw all the same. Thinking maybe he just wanted to change the subject. She would oblige for now but made a mental note to ask more when it was appropriate.

Once out of the car, she finally noticed the diner they'd arrived at. The neon sign red Mel's Diner. The bright red and blue colors glowing in the late evening light. The building was a polished sheet metal the reflected everything around it. It looked like something from an classic black and white film where teenagers would go to have milk shakes.

"Best food in all of Happytown." Nick remarked. Judy looked over to see him smiling while his eyes showed a fondness for the old diner. Or maybe he was just hungry.

"Happytown?" She looked up at Nick. Confusion showing on her face.

"Yes, Happytown. The lowest of the low for Zootopia." Judy looked around. The diner was the nicest building around by a long shot. The other buildings were either boarded up or dilapidated. It made her think the building her little shoebox of an apartment was located in might be considered high class around here.

Nick noticed her glancing around at the other buildings as they approached the door. Happytown was not a happy place. At least not now. "It wasn't always like this." Nick started talking as he held the door open for her. Leading her inside to a booth with adjustable seats. "It started as a suburb to the city. Mammals would commute to work in city central or one of the factories in the other districts. Eventually it became the go to place to live. Until the stock market crashed.

With the stock market went the housing market. Families lost jobs and banks foreclosed on homes. Few could afford to buy homes or build new ones. Eventually the houses sat abandoned for years until they entered a state of decay and were condemned. When the city limits encroached on the suburb a few entrepreneurs bought the land nearest the city and built apartment complexes.
This gave a momentary boost to the little community. However, as time past the surrounded abandoned houses became dens for drugs and other illegal activities. At the time there had been a lot of unrest in the city over a war the public didn't agree with and the police were to short handed to intervene. Thus driving those who were able to get their families and children away from the area.

Judy absorbed everything he told her. Taking in all the historical facts of the section of the city she probably knew the least about. She was brought out of her musing when a vixen with slightly greying fur walked up to their table.

"Hi'ya Nicky! Who's the-what happened to your face?" Judy bristled slightly as the waitress nearly yelled the last part.

"Oh nothing serious, just a little scratch is all. I want you to meet someone. This is Officer Judy Hopps of the ZPD. Carrots this is-" he was interrupted when the vixen slapped the back of his head. "Ow! What was that for?"

"You're lucky that's all you got. If you mother knew you were making speciest comments like that she'd shave your tail!" The vixen then turned her attention to Judy offering her paw to the bunny. "Names Emelia sweetheart but you can call me Emma."

Whatever misgivings Judy had about the Emelia over the cute comment were instantly erased as she reached her own paw out. "Judy, pleasure to meet you Emma."

"Pleasure's all mine darlin'. Now what can I get'cha to drink?"

After ordering a coffee and tea the two sat in silence, looking over the menu while they waited for their drinks. When Emma returned Judy ordered a green salad and Nick had the salmon steak.

Once Emma left with their orders Nick leaned forward on his elbows and rested his chin in his paw. "I'm surprised you haven't ask what my job offer is yet car-" Nick looked over toward the counter where Emma was standing, watching him from the corner of her eye with a knowing look, "Hopps." He finished.

"Look, I appreciate the offer slick, I really do. But being a cop is what I've always wanted since I was like nine. I can't see myself doing anything else. Why are you smiling like that?" The whole time she had been talking Nick's smile had kept growing till it was nearly touching his ears.

Chuckling at her questions Nick leans back in his seat and waves a paw in front of him. "Who said anything about not being a cop?"

Now confused, she asked with a raised eye brow, "Then, what are you offering?"

"I want you to transfer to the Happytown precinct. I know it's not as prestigious as precinct one might be but at least there you'll get to do actually police work. We are a mostly domestic district so there aren't any parking meters. So guess what that means." He sat back and watch her reaction closely.

"No parking duty?" Her whole face seemed to light up at the thought. Nick simply nodded with the same slight grin he always seemed to have.

"You would be partnered up immediately." Emma had returned to their table to deliver their food and refill their drinks. After offering their thanks, she was gone again.

"I won't lie Hopps." He continued while slicing his fish into manageable sizes. "Most of our
precinct's calls are routine and mundane. We don't get near the excitement or high profile cases city hall hands to Precinct one. We don't have the mammal power to take on a work load like that. But you would be helping the mammals here. Making their world a better place."

Nick watched as she lowered her eyes to her salad. Her brow knitted together as she played with her salad with her fork. She was thinking it over. Nick inwardly prayed that she would take his suggestion. He desperately needed her to work at the precinct in his part of town if he was going to turn it around like he promised in his campaign.

The police precinct in Happytown was short staffed already. Only have 38 of the 50 slots filled. Of the ten new recruits they were supposed to receive, only three showed up, four requested transfers, along with two of the officers currently stationed there, and three simply resigned. Not that he thought the cops already there were bad or anything. Most seemed to be pretty clean. There were always a couple of rotten apples, he knew that. But other wise they had just become complacent.

He finally saw her close her eyes and release a soft sigh. Outwards he looked unfazed, but inside he was falling apart. "I'm sorry Nick, I worked to hard to earn that position. I can't give up on it now. In two weeks time I'll be off parking duty and out working for the whole of Zootopia. Maybe even before then if I can help it. But thank you for the offer." She finished with a smile.

Nick's expression never changed, he simply nodded in reply and turned his attention back to his meal. "Why am I so disappointed? It's not like I really expected her to accept the offer. None of the others did when I asked them. So what makes her so special? She's still wearing fox-away for crying out loud!"

"Nick?" He lifted his eyes to meet hers. Those amethyst orbs truly were captivating. "I know I said no to your offer, but I was wondering if I could still ask you a couple of questions. You can ask me a few in return if you'd like."

Smiling up at the fox across from her, Judy hoped he would accept her offer. Being a bunny still meant she had a desire to be close to others. Growing up in a large family meant she never had to worry about being alone. Here in the city, with a room mostly to herself, with no friends she was beginning to feel more lonely than she's ever felt in her life.

"Sure." Nick answered without even thinking. Shocking himself even more with his next words. "What would you like to know?" "Why did I say that?"

"Um," Judy hesitated as she wondered if she should ask this next question, it was personal, but she had never seen a parent not want to talk about their children, "what's your son's name?" She was worried he might try to pull away or look for an out like he did in the zoober. The way his eyes widened a bit before looking at her amplified that worry.

His deep emerald pools displaying emotions ranging from fear to anger in under a second before settling on…contempt? He then took another bite of his fish before wiping his mouth with a napkin and leaning back in his seat again with a genuine smile. "His name is Adam."

"Adam, I like it. How old is he?" "Here it comes." Nick thought.

"Eight."

"Eight?" Judy repeated. She thought for sure he couldn't be more than six. She thought back to an old memory. The size of a red fox standing over her when they were nine. Her paw subconsciously brushing across her cheek as she mentally compared Adam's size and age to that of a childhood bully. Nick noticed paw brushing across her cheek. His sharp eyes making out the
faint discoloration on her skin and the small gaps in her fur when she pushed it to the side.

"Claw marks?" He looked down at his own paw. Judging by the size and spread of the marks, there were only a few options of what species could have done that to her. And the pink canister on her hip certainly gave a hint. Now he didn't blame her for carrying it with her.

"Nick?" He looked up away from his paw. Judy now showed a worried expression as a frown tugged her lips downward. "Is something wrong with Adam?"

Nick sighed and looked over at the condiments at the side of the table before replying. "Adam suffers from fetal alcohol spectrum disorders." He heard Judy gasp and glanced over at her. Her ears were pressed firmly against her back while both paws covered her mouth. Her nose was twitching rapidly with her eyes wide with fear. "Fortunately, his shorter than average height, is the only symptom that he suffers from right now. He could develop other complications later in life."

Judy gave a small sigh of relief when he told her that. Closing her eyes momentarily, thankful that the sweet little fox didn't seem to be suffering exponentially. "We met in college."

Judy looked up at Nick as he continued to talk. She knew what happened to Adam. His mother drinking alcohol while pregnant was the only cause of the symptoms. She wasn't going to pry, she could tell by the way he stared out the window that what he was about to tell her was painful.

"Nick, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to." She offered him an out.

He just grinned back at her, eyes glancing over for a second before looking back out the window. "It's alright carrots. We met at some frat party my fourth year in law school. We were both drunk. It was nothing more than a one night stand. When I woke up the next morning she was gone."

Judy watched him closely. Studying his features as he continued. "I didn't think anything of it until I found her again a few months later. She was in some back alley with a bottle in her hand. Drunk out of her mind. I called an ambulance to come get her. Told them I was the father so they'd let me tag along. I didn't know for sure at the time. I only knew for certain after a DNA test. Anyway, she gave birth to three pups. Two tods and a vixen. The other tod was still born and the vixen died of complications three days later." Judy watched as a tear ran down his cheek. Hearing his voice full of emotions made her own eyes start to sting. "They were nearly a month premature and Adam had to stay in the hospital for nearly two months before they released him.

I convinced his mother that we should get married and try to make it work for his sake. She conceded and two weeks later we went to a justice of the peace and were legally wed. It seemed to go well the first month or so. After that she started disappearing on occasion. I didn't think much of it after a couple of times because she came back and would go several days without disappearing again. I just assumed she was visiting friends or something. Eventually she started showing up drunk, sometimes high on something. We almost made it a year before I started demanding a divorce. Her only reply was 'It's about damn time'.

She didn't even try to argue when I asked her to sign over full custody to me. I took care of him for two whole years before she showed up with a lawyer demanding custody back. I tried to fight it but she married some rich hotshot from Sahara Square that convinced the judge I forced her into it. I got the standard weekends and holidays though. Including birthdays."

"Nick, I'm so sorry." She wanted to reach out and hold his paw to offer him some comfort but felt it would be inappropriate since they barely just met.

Looking away from the window, Nick looked into Judy's eyes, lingering there for a moment
before replying. "Thank you."

The two sat in silence for a few moments, finishing their meals. After finishing his own, Nick finally worked up the courage to ask Judy a questions. "May I ask you something personal fluff?"

Considering everything he just told her freely, Judy couldn't think of anything he may ask that she would want to hide. "Sure slick."

Nick smiled at her willingness to share about herself. He wasn't sure what made him share Adam's story. Having only shared it with Fin, his mother and Emma out of necessity, with her, it just felt right for some reason. Deciding to be straight forward with his question, his face shifted from friends to serious so quickly Judy barely noticed it.

"Who's the fox that clawed you?"

So there it is. The back story behind Adam and the way I envision Nick acting as a father after all that. Don't think I'm finished with Nick's past either. But for now I need to warn you. Updates to all my stories may be a long time coming in the future. With warmer weather finally here it's time to get outside and get active again. It was easy to write more when it was cold outside and I had the excuse of keeping the boys in. Now that spring is upon us I don't have that excuse anymore.

Chapter End Notes

So there it is. I hope I answered most if not all of your questions from chapter 1. But now I have to give you the bad news. Since it's summer I'm going to be spending a lot more time outside soaking up some galactic radiation. So updates might be a while.
Open My Eyes Part I

Chapter Notes

Been a while since I posted something to this story. I've actually had part of this chapter down for a while. So if you want to know more see the A/N at the bottom. Also Big thanks to TOGDOESSTUFF for proofreading and helping to get this to come out the way it did.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Who’s the fox that clawed you?” Nick asked.

‘How did he know?’ Judy’s mind quickly ran through everything she knew about the fox. He’s a lawyer who is now a city councilmammal and a single father… That was it. She could see no way he could know about the incident with Gideon Gray.

“How…” unable to form a complete sentence. She opened and closed her mouth a few times, but nothing came out. She watched in disbelief as his expression changed from a serious one to a mask of indifference.

“You don’t have to tell me. In fact, it’s probably best that you don’t.” Nick looked back out the window again. The smell of how nervous she was, beginning to thicken.

‘At least it’s not fear.’ Nick thought to himself.

“So, let me ask you another question. You are aware that each species has their own tendencies or customs?”

Judy nodded in response. ‘Where is he going with this?’ Her nerves were starting to settle as curiosity took its place.

“Then, for example, you know that a canine’s growl can have different meanings depending on the pitch or intensity.” He looked out the corner of his eye for her answer. She looked confused. He expected as much. Schools still only taught that predators growl, purr or wag their tails. It’s up to parents to teach their young how to interpret or use their growls and purrs. Tail wagging seemed to be a little more instinctual, more socially accepted.

“I’m guessing that’s the first you’ve heard of it?” he asked.

“Yes.” she replied, “They taught us in school that certain predators still growl and purr.” They told her more, but she was reluctant to share it with the councilmammal sitting across from her. To hear that rooms of bunnies were taught that felines purr for pleasure and all predators growl only when aggressive wouldn’t be helpful to anyone now.

“Why are you telling me this?” Her curiosity piqued. He seemed to be trying to dance around the
subject he started, she wanted to know why.

“Three things.” He leaned against the table with one arm, holding up three fingers with his other. “One, you now have homework to do.” This caused Judy to raise an eyebrow. “Research the meanings of canine growls. I suggest you start with wolves and make your way to foxes last.”

That’s curious’ Judy thought. “Two, lose the fox away.” Judy stiffened before releasing a breath and looking away. Her hometown’s prejudice had followed her to the city, she deeply regretted bringing the item with her. What he said next surprised her a little.

“Fox-Away is nothing more than high grade bear spray in a smaller can.” Judy gave him a look that asked ‘seriously?’ “You can get something just as potent in a can your size, at half the price. Besides, that pink clashes horribly with the blue uniform.” He finished with a smile.

This caused Judy to force a smile in return. Here he was on the receiving end of her family’s- and her own, prejudice, and he was trying to make her smile. Nick’s attention went back to the freshly refilled mug in front of him. Like he was done talking and didn’t want to say anything else. Judy waited a moment before trying to pry it out of him.

“And number three?” she finally asked. She waited as Nick sighed into the mug still in his paws, he closed his eyes as he spoke.

“Three, whoever clawed you... It was meant to be personal.”

“He was just a kithood bully.”

Nick opened his eyes and saw the bunny with her ears held high, face bearing an expression of long suffering. As if she had explained it repeatedly over a very, very long-time.

“He stole some of my friends’ tickets at a fair. I had just announced to everyone that I wanted to be a cop so I decided that I was going to be the good guy and confront him. He pushed me down and held me there. Taunting me until I managed to kick him in the muzzle.”

She paused for a second when Nick chuckled a bit.

“That’s when he clawed me.” She watched as Nick’s small smile became a frown and his overall expression became sullen. Judy sat up straight and beamed with pride at what she said next. “But I got my friends tickets back!”

He seemed to slip back into an act of indifference before clapping lightly. “Well done, officer fluff.” Nick then reached for his wallet and left several bills on the table. “Well it’s getting late. I have important meetings tomorrow and I’m sure you have another day of parking duty.”

“Ugh, don’t remind me.”

The two left the diner and, against Judy’s protests, Nick called a Zoober to take her home. “Call it an apology for putting you on the spot back at the precinct.” He had said. Her ride arrived shortly and took her back to her apartment. Leaving Nick to walk the short distance to his own.

Back in her own apartment Judy began the task of removing her police gear. Stopping short when she examined her utility belt. Particularly the case with the pink can inside of it. Pulling it out to examine it closer. She could hear Nick’s voice in her head.

‘You can get something just as potent at half the price in a generic can your size.’

‘That pink clashes horribly with that blue uniform.’
"What's his game?"

She was pulled out of her musing, surprised by the sound of her phone ringing, nearly dropping the spray bottle to the floor. She quickly pulled the phone out of her pocket and groaned at the image of her parents wanting to muzzletime. Knowing that not answering would only make things worse, she took a deep breath and plastered on the best smile she could muster.

“Oh, hey! It’s my parents!” She said with false cheer.

“Hey Jude the dude!” Her dad chuckled at the old nickname. “How was your first day?”

“Oh it was great! Lots of fun and amazing, police stuff, yeah!” Even she didn’t believe her tone of voice. The first clue her parents didn’t was the way her mother was moving her head around as if it would allow her to see behind Judy better.

“Judy! What happened?! Something happened! Stu! Get the car ready! Don’t worry hun we’ll be there to bring you home in a jiffy!”

“Mom! Stop! Nothing happened! Really!” Bonnie’s nose was twitching madly, but she stopped talking long enough to listen to Judy explain. “Why would you think something happened?”

Bonnie gave her one of those knowing looks only a parent can pull off. “Judy, I know you’re hiding something... Your ears are drooping.” Judy reached back and pulled one of the offending appendages over her shoulder.

‘Traitors.’ She thought to herself.

“Mom, nothing happened, really. It’s just been a crazy day, is all.” This time Judy’s smile and tone were honest. It truly had been a crazy, long day for the country-grown bunny. The admission seemed to get her mother to relax as well.

“If you say, dear.” There was a crash in the background followed by screams and crying. “I’ve gotta go, dear. Love you!”

“I love-“ The call was disconnected before she could finish her sentence. "...You too" The small apartment was left in silence. Judy let the phone drop to the desk along with her head.

“Tomorrow’s another day.” She lightly whispered to herself. Standing up from the chair, she pulled off her uniform and prepared for bed.

Standing by her bed she looked at it despairingly. The lumpy mattress hadn’t been much comfort the night before. The only appealing feature was the small mound of plush bunnies stacked around the pillow. Judy crawled into bed and reached over to grab one. It was grey with a blue t-shirt. An old Junior Detective Sticker barely holding on. Judy pet the top of it’s head, then rolled onto her side and closed her eyes. Letting the exhaustion of the day carry her away.

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Three months later and nothing had changed. She was still being placed on parking duty. She’d given up trying to get as many tickets as possible. All that seemed to do was make Chief Bogo all the more angry due to all the mammals clamoring to contest parking tickets. So, after a month, she switched tactics, volunteering for extra duty at events.

All it managed to do was get her a little overtime pay- even then, only when they actually accepted her, which wasn’t often. She couldn’t even get a spot when she volunteered for street patrol on Howlloween. She actually wasn’t disappointed this time around. It was one of her
favorite holidays. She had always dressed up as an officer, this time around, she was simply wearing her uniform, having a bowl of candy ready by the door for trick or treaters.

Sadly, not one knocked at her door, though she watched several walk past her building, none ascended the steps. As the evening hours passed and the sky grew dark, she settled for watching scary movies on her phone. She had to wear earphones so her neighbors wouldn’t complain about the noise. She had to turn the volume up to drown out their bickering. That, being the main reason she didn’t hear the knocking at her door.

It wasn’t until someone was banging on the wall next to her so hard that she felt it rattle her bed, she took the earphones out.

“What!” She shouted angrily. Glaring daggers at the mammals on the other side.

“There’s some shifty fox at your door, rabbit!” Came the muffled reply.

“Yeah he’s been knocking on your door for like five minutes!” The second voice added just as muffled.

“Oh turnips!” She harshly whispered. Trying to think of any fox other than the only one she knew in the city that might show up at her door. ‘What could he possibly want?’ She thought as she reached her door. After three months of struggling to be recognized and no trick or treaters to brighten her day, she was not in the best mood.

Ripping the door open, a rebuke on her tongue, she was stunned into silence with her mouth hanging open at what she found at her door. Instead of the annoying adult fox she had expected to see, she was greeted by a short fox kit wearing a police costume, complete with hat and plastic badge. The sight, were she not stunned into silence, would have drawn out a heartfelt coo, the badge even had his name on it. Adam.

“Trick or Treat!” He said cheerfully, eagerly holding up his bag, already brimming with candy. Judy stood there flabbergasted until a familiar vulpine head poked into view.

“This is where you hand out candy carrots.” He smugly remarked in a mock-whisper.

“Right!” She shook herself out of her stupor and reached for the bowl of candy on the stand next to the door. She smiled at the little fox as she shoveled out enough candy to have his little bag nearly overflowing. Causing Nick to chuckle.

“Easy there fluff, the dentist already sends us Christmas cards.”

“Well you’re the only ones I’ve had show up, so...” Setting the candy back on the table, Judy looked at Nick’s attire for the first time. He was wearing a black business suite with a white shirt and red tie a couple of shades darker than his fur. His jacket was unbuttoned as well at the button to his collar. His tie hanging loosely around his neck. He was leaning on his right shoulder against the wall next to her doorway, both paws in his pockets.

“Might have something to do with your landlady actively chasing kids away.” Nick offered. Judy stepped into the hallway to face him better.

“And how did you sneak past her?” Crossing her arms across her chest with a suspicious look as she squinted at him, hiding a smile.

Still leaning against the wall, he pulled out his left paw and placed it on his chest with a dramatic look of hurt. “Me? A politician, sneak? Madam, how dare you wound my honor!” He said, turning his muzzle up with a pompous frown. Only to smile slightly when he looked back down
and saw she was amused.

“Har har.” She mocked back but the smile she wore gave her away. “So, what are you doing here anyway? Shouldn’t you be out kissing hands and shaking babies?”

Now it was his turn. “Ha ha ha. Don’t quit your day job carrots.” He noticed how she looked away for a second, as if she were ashamed of something, before smirking back at him.

“Oh please! Like your dad jokes are any better.”

“I’ll have you know those are classics. Anyway, we came here because Ada-“ Nick lowered his paw and gestured to a now empty space where Adam had been standing. Nick pushed himself off the wall and began to franticly scan the hallway for his missing son, calling his name. “Adam!”

“Hey dad! Check it out!” Judy turned to face back into her apartment while Nick leaned over to peer in. Adam was standing next to Judy’s bed, gaping at the pile of stuffed bunnies.

“Adam! Come out of there!”

“No, no! He’s fine.” Judy said before entering back into her doorway. She walked over to the little fox tod and stood next to him. “Do you like them?”

Adam seemed to clam up when Judy stood next to him, looking hesitant to speak. When he simply nodded she took it as a queue to try and get him to open up. Nick simply stood back and watched. Since their encounter at the ice cream store, Adam had become something of a fan of the rabbit officer. Something Nick only slightly hesitated to encourage, while his mother outright opposed it.

“So what made you want to dress up like a police officer?” Judy finally asked. She watched as the little fox seemed to shrink in on himself. His ears turning a darker color than they already were.

“Adam.” She turned to see Nick, still standing in the doorway, looking at his son with an admonishing expression. “Officer Hopps asked you a question. It would be rude not to answer.” Judy noted that his tone was soft, yet he delivered the message firmly. Then she looked back to Adam.

“Uhm, because I like you.” He said barely above a whisper. Thankfully Judy’s excellent hearing picked up every syllable.

“Aww, I like you too Adam!” Adam’s head raised and his tail started wagging behind him as his previously sheepish demeanor dissipated. “Tell you what-” Judy reached for one of the stuffed bunnies in the pile, adorned with a little blue shirt and gold badge. “If it’s alright with your dad, why don’t you take one home with you?” Adam’s mouth dropped open, his eyes wide with surprise. He quickly ran over to Nick, bouncing up and down with excitement.

“Can I dad, please?!” Nick looked down at Adam for a moment with a sense of long suffering.

“Fine.” He grunted out. “But you’ll have to leave it at my house.” As Adam jumped back over to the waiting bunny Nick called out to him again. “What do you say?”

Adam stopped bouncing for a moment and withdrew his hands from reaching for the stuffed bunny. Placing them behind his back and looked down like he was embarrassed at his own actions. “Thank you, Officer Hopps.”

Judy smiled at the cute little kit and held the stuffed bunny out to him. “You’re very welcome.” To which his eyes lit up once more. Running up to Judy and giving her a surprisingly hard hug before
releasing her and taking the offered toy. Offering another quick thank you as he started to play with the newly acquired toy - cops and robbers no less, the little bunny being his partner.

Nick had stepped into the apartment close enough to Judy to whisper without drawing too much attention from Adam. “Thank you.” He said.

Judy looked up at him. Nick was watching his son scurry around the small room playing with the little bunny. For the first time, she felt the smile he was wearing looked real.

“Well.” he said after a moment, “It’s getting late. Adam, say goodnight to Officer Hopps.”

“Aww, do we have to?” The little tod complained, causing Judy to giggle.

“Fraid so stinker. It’s getting close to your bedtime.”

Judy had been expecting a simple goodbye. She was surprised again when Adam came up to give her another hug. This time, she was able to hug him back. The contact felt comforting. When he pulled away Judy reluctantly let him go. Nick had stepped forward and offered his paw.

“Thanks again.” Judy took the offered paw and smiled back.

“My pleasure.” She replied.

Nick then turned and headed out the door. “See you around, carrots.” Closing the door behind him, they were gone. To Judy, the room suddenly felt smaller and colder than ever before.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you enjoyed this chapter. I’ve been wanting to put something on here for a while. I was torn between cutting the chapter short after Judy started examining the foxaway and continuing on with how it played out here. So much that I even rewrote the chapter a different way. Big props to TOG for keeping me straight. I really like the way this chapter played out. The next chapters should come out soon. I already know what I want to do with the next one. Till then.
Once again HUGE thanks to TOGDOESSTUFF for editing and proofreading for me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nick sat at his temporary desk in city hall, fingers massaging his temples to try and ease the migraine that had grown since arriving that morning. He hated this part of the job. Meetings upon meetings with Lionheart and committee members. Voting to approve motions and bills for the city, most of which either didn’t accomplish anything or were attempts to channel funds from necessary expenditures to programs that, in the end, were nothing more than legal ways of buying votes.

Nick groaned when he heard the alarm on his phone going off. With a final sigh he lifted himself from his seat and walked towards the front doors.

‘Time to pay the piper’ he mused.

He shuffled his way to the doors barely making the effort to dodge the heavy steps of the larger mammals around him. Stepping out into the cool air of late fall, he took a moment to allow the breeze to penetrate his exposed fur. Overheating could be an issue with his winter coat was setting in.

Feeling somewhat revitalized, Nick made his way to where he had parked his car. A black Impala SS. Its family friendly features being the only deciding factor in its purchase of course. Nick could see his car in the distance when he heard the dreaded beep of the parking meter go off.

‘Just in time.’ He thought. Pulling his paw out of his pocket, he counted out the required amount of change to the feed the meter. Stepping beside it, he reached up and had the coin half fed when he noticed motion in front of him, causing him to freeze and glance upward.

There, propped up on his hood, was a familiar grey rabbit in a meter maid outfit. Her paw held out with a parking ticket, about to slip it behind his windshield wiper. The sight caused his paw to go on autopilot and drop the coin into the meter. The resounding clatter of the coin falling into the slot seemed to resound around him. The noise of cars passing by, mammals walking the sidewalks, absorbed in their own conversations, fading out of existence.

The noise clearly caught her attention as well. He noticed how her closest ear perking slightly in his direction while the rest of her body froze in place. Her head slowly turned to face him until making eye contact. His paw seemed to still be on autopilot as he slowly fed another coin. Her paw also seemed on autopilot as it slowly moved to plant the ticket in its place.

They maintained eye contact the entire time.

After placing the ticket, Judy slowly slid from the hood of the car. Having reset the meter, Nick slowly walked around the front till he was on the same side as her, and continued to approach. Judy stood her ground, watching him approach until he was mere inches in front of her. Nick watched as her eyes grew wide and nose began to twitch rapidly when he bent at the hip, bringing his muzzle barely an inch from hers, she did not yield.

He then smirked and leaned back upright as he brought the ticket into her view. The blush he saw through her fur making her look even more adorable. Nick knew this was his chance to say
something witty so he took it.

“Hi.” Was all that came out.

Judy recomposed herself to offer a more intellectual response.

“Hi.” Or maybe not.

After a moment of awkward silence, it was finally Nick that spoke up.

“Um, Adam really enjoys the little stuffed bunny you gave him.”

“Oh! That’s good.”

“So, uh, are you still on parking duty?”  ‘Probably not the best subject’ he mentally chastised himself.

Judy visibly deflated, and for the first time looked away from him. Nick watched as the once proud bunny took on a look of defeat. It had been nearly three weeks since he saw her at Howlloween.

“Yes, and I know what you’re going to say. I should have taken your offer and transferred. It’s just... I worked my tail off to earn valedictorian of my class so I could be assigned to Precinct one. It’s the most prestigious precinct in the city. I can get assignments to assist in all the different districts. It’s the place I can do the most good.” Judy finished her little speech without ever looking up, her voice became a tone of despair. “At least, it would be, if they would ever give me the chance.”

Nick couldn’t believe what he was seeing. The transformation that happened before his eyes from the determined, optimistic go getter from that first meeting to the pitiful, dejected excuse he saw before him was heartbreaking. Knowing that it was probably his fault she was still on parking duty, he had to find a way to make it right. As his mind tossed around possible ideas on how to fix this problem, a sudden gust of frigid wind made its way round them. To Nick it was a cool relief from the warmth of his winter coat and business suit, but as he continued to look at Judy, the shiver that shook her for longer than it should have made him instinctively drop his mask of indifference.

“Please tell me you at least have a coat, carrots?” The concern in his voice didn’t seem to faze the rabbit as she stood there still shaking.

“Yeah, it’s in the cart.” Judy pointed over her shoulder at the open-air vehicle that Nick could only think of as a three-wheeled joke mobile. A rabbit size jacket laid across the seat.

“You should probably put it on before you catch your death out here.”

“Heh, if only.” She muttered darkly. Nick reached over and placed a paw on her shoulders. Gently guiding her to the heatless cart. Standing there as she pulled the jacket on without saying a word. It wasn’t till she put the little thing in gear that he realized she was going to leave without another word. Quickly grabbing the roof, he leaned into the passenger side of the vehicle and spoke in as merry a tone as he could.

“Hey fluff, do you have plans for Thanksgiving this Thursday?” The sight of her ears popping up from her back and nearly pushing the small hat off her head and over her eyes was almost enough to make him coo at how adorable she looked just then.

Pushing the hat back on top of her head, Judy studied him for a moment as she thought the
question over.

“I... Have to work.” Nick just rolled his eyes at the obvious reply.

“Yeah, I figured that. I mean afterwards.” Judy took on a stunned expression and kept quiet for a moment. In truth, her parents had planned a big dinner that would be broadcast over muzzletime to all their children that were away from home. Judy’s other siblings- that had taken careers other than farming, said it was nice to have a reminder of home during the holidays. To her, however, it only served as a reminder of what waited if she... She couldn’t finish the thought.

“No... No plans. Why?” Judy’s slow answers had given Nick plenty of time to prepare a response to her most likely answers.

“Well, Adam has been asking if he can see you again. He’s been quite smitten with you since you gave him that stuffed bunny. He even named it after you.” Nick noted that Judy’s ears turned a darker shade of pink just then. “So, if you don’t have any other plans. How would you like to join us for dinner?”

Judy’s mind raced between the two options. Sit in her lonely, cold apartment and listen to her parents tell everyone how wonderful it was back on the farm, displaying all the homecooked holiday foods, or have thanksgiving dinner with a fox and his son. To her, the two options weren’t much different. They weren’t her family and there was no guarantee she’d be able to eat much in a pred’s home. Although, the prospect of getting to spend time with the energetic little fox tod became very appealing when she remembered the hugs and excitement he’d shown on Howlloween. Though, telling her parents she wouldn’t be able to ‘join’ them would cause an onslaught of questions she would need to think of answers for. So, for the time being she settled on a neutral answer.

“I’ll think about it.”

Nick then pulled out a business card and scribbled his address and cell number on the back.

“Well, if you do decide to come over, here’s my address and number. Dinner should be ready around six.” He said. Adding with a wink. “Dress casual.”

Judy took the card and looked it over before tucking it away in her pocket. “I’ll let you know.”

As he watched her ride off in the useless little cart, he couldn’t help the smirk that appeared as he finally found a way to make up for the trouble he had caused. Although, he wasn’t sure his idea wouldn’t cause more trouble, at least it would help to return some dignity to the rabbit his son so dearly admired. For now, he had a lot of research to do and phone calls to make.

Two days later, Judy sat in her little apartment staring at the paw-written address on the back of a business card. Tomorrow was Thanksgiving. She needed to decide tonight while she still had time to call her parents. The two nights prior, she’d managed to skirt the conversation, but now her time was up. The conversations with her parents over the last few months had been gradually heating. It was getting harder and harder to hide her depression and keep up the facade that she was enjoying her job.

As her anxiety level began to rise she started pacing the small floor space allotted to her. After several minutes of wearing a path in the boards beneath her feet, she stopped and rubbed her face with both paws before running them over the top of her head and brushing her ears down. When she opened her eyes, she was facing her bed. The small pile of bunnies that were ever present in her life staring back. All but one.
As the memory of where the missing bunny had found a new home asserted itself in her mind, she found herself calling her parents for the first time in several weeks with a genuine smile waiting to greet them.

“Judy!” Her mom exclaimed over the muzzletime camera. “Stu! Judy’s calling! How’re you doing sweetheart?”

“I’m actually doing really well.” She replied and the smile on her face grew. It was such a relief to tell her parents how she genuinely felt instead of having to hide the truth.

“You certainly look like you feel better. Did something change?”

“Well, that’s actually what I wanted to talk to you about.”

“Oh! Did you meet someone!?” Bonnie excitedly interjected.

“Well, yeah, but-” She didn’t get to chance to say more before her father interjected by jumping into the screen, rubbing cheeks with Bonnie.

“So, who’s the handsome buck?” Judy looked the excited expressions on both her parents’ faces.

“Dad! He’s not a buck and we’re not dating! He’s just a friend who invited me over for Thanksgiving dinner. That’s it!” Judy watched as both her parents stared back with wide eyes. She could see the fear that was dancing in their eyes.

“So, he’s just a friend?” Stu finally asked. Judy let out a sigh of irritation.

“Yes dad, just a friend.”

“Oh. Well, why haven’t you mentioned him before?” Bonnie asked.

“We don’t really see each other very often. He works for the city and we bump into each other on occasion.”

“So, you’ve only met him a couple of times?” Judy nodded yes to her mother’s question. “And he’s invited you to have dinner.” Another nod. “At his place?” Another nod.

“Is he single?” Stu asked, butting into the conversation.

“Well, yes, I think so, but I don’t see what that has to do with anything.”

“Are you sure it’s not a date?” Bonnie asked.

“Wha-? No! Mom it’s not a date! Listen he’s just a friend. Okay? He’s just being nice. Stop reading into it so much.”

Bonnie and Stu both looked at each other for a moment. Almost like they were silently communicating with each other before turning back towards the phone.

“Okay hun, we believe you.” They both smiled, somewhat mischievously.

“Yeah Jude, we just worry about you is all.” Stu offered. Judy had a sneaking suspicion that this conversation wasn’t truly over, but her parents were willing the drop the subject for now, and she was more than happy for that.

“Thanks, you guys. You’ll tell everyone I said hey tomorrow, won’t you?”
“Of course, dear. We’ll talk to you later.”

“Love you guys!”

“We love you too.” And the call was ended.

Judy slumped back in her chair with a long sigh of relief. Now that was over, she could finally get some rest before tomorrow.

Only it never came. She spent most of the night tossing and turning, her parents’ questions rolling around in her head. Eventually asking herself if it was a date, then asking if she wanted it to be a date. By the time morning rolled around she’d already given up on sleep altogether and sat upright on the bed. She realized that today was going to be a very long day.

Stepping out into the cold morning air had her folding her ears down against her back as she made the trek towards the precinct. She was not looking forward to another day of riding around in the cart, freezing her ears off. Before long she walked through the front doors of the precinct and made her way to the bullpen. Only waving at Clawhauser as he scarfed down a bowl of lucky chomps. She made it to her usual seat only a couple of minutes before Chief Bogo stormed in. Judy barely noticing how he somehow seemed angrier than normal.

She only half listened as he called out assignments. Most of them were for the different missing mammal cases. She’d tried getting assigned to one of the different teams investigating the disappearances to no avail. After the room had emptied of other officers, the Chief finally addressed her.

“Hopps.” His strangely calm tone was betrayed by the fire in his eyes and the creak of the wooden stand beneath his hooves. Judy suddenly sat ramrod straight in her chair, barely able to see over the top.

“What did I do now?” She wondered.

“I don’t know who you talked to at city hall to pull this stunt but I won’t tolerate insubordination of this kind. It is only because of the attention you’ve brought on yourself that I’m not firing you now.” Judy could only sit there dumbstruck as the Chief concluded his little tirade. “Because this would be a massive misuse of department resources to keep you on parking duty, I’m assigning you to patrol duty in city central where I can keep an eye on you. Go report to Clawhauser for further details.” And with that the chief angrily stomped his way out of the bullpen.

It took Judy a couple of minutes to come to her senses and leave the room herself, making the short trip down to the reception desk. There she found the cheetah was his usual bubbly self and when he presented her with a set of keys to a patrol car she leapt in the air for joy. Giving the Cheetah a tight hug before dashing for the parking lot. She scanned the various parked cars for the number that would match the one on the back of the key fob. ‘Z-240'

When she finally found it her jaw dropped. In front of her was a wolf sized coup SUV with a suspension lift and oversized off road tires. The front bumper was defended by impact bars meant to minimize damage in the event the police needed to use aggressive force to stop an out of control driver. Decorated in classic black and white with a stylized Z across the doors. Judy clicked a button and started bouncing with excitement when the lights blinked on, indicating the door was now unlocked.

She ran over and jumped up on the door to pull it open. When she got her first look inside she was surprised to see it had already been modified to fit her size with a smaller diameter steering wheel and pedal extenders, including an adjustable seat that would allow her to see over the hood. Judy
Judy realized they had gotten this vehicle specifically for her. Now the Chief’s anger made a little more sense. However, Judy found it hard to dwell on that fact as she placed the key in the ignition and brought the powerful motor to life, feeling like a kit on Christmas morning. The rumble the big beast created sent a shiver of excitement up her spine. Reaching over she turned the radio on and tuned it to the proper frequency. With the microphone in her paw, she had to take several deep breaths to calm herself before addressing dispatch.

“Dispatch, this is Zulu 240, reporting 10-8.” She hoped no one else picked up on her excitement over the radio.

“Zulu 240, Dispatch has you as 10-8. Take care Hopps!” Ben’s excitement seemed to match her own.

“10-4!” Judy quickly replaced the mic before she could say anything embarrassing over the radio. She put the cruiser in gear and, before releasing the brakes, she looked out the front windshield with wide eyes and a grin that reached her ears. Finally, everything she had worked for, all the weeks of suffering through parking duty had paid off. Before she pressed the gas and launched herself into the destiny she knew she was meant for, a single phrase came to mind and she proudly announced it to the world that awaited.

“Time to make the world a better place!”

At the end of the day, making the world a better place consisted of cruising around the relatively small area of Savannah Central. While she did write two tickets for traffic violations, it was mostly quiet. Still, the excitement of her first day of actual police work followed her all the way to the lobby of precinct one. Where she turned in the key to her cruiser and gladly filled Ben in on the events of her day and he informed her that she would get tomorrow off for the holiday work. Giving her a three day weekend.

While actually being disappointed at having a day off, since she just starting doing actual police work, she took the news with a grain of salt and planned to take advantage of the opportunity and catch up on the sleep she missed out on the night before. After trekking back to her apartment, she entered the small room and changed out of her police uniform into some comfy carrot print pajamas. She then sat at her desk and opened the muzzletime app on her phone.

She gasped in surprise when she saw the open invite to join her family’s thanksgiving dinner video chat. With all the excitement she completely forgot what day it was. Glancing at the time, she saw she had fifteen minutes to make it to the address Nick had given her. She closed out muzzletime and ordered a Zoober to pick her up.

She put on her best jeans and her favorite pink flannel shirt. Grabbed her jacket and went to wait downstairs. It was only a couple minutes later when the Zoober arrived. Judy was surprised at the amount of traffic for a holiday. The ferret driver informed her that it was mostly shoppers looking for early black friday deals.

It was ten after six before they finally made it to the given address. After thanking her driver, Judy quickly made her way into the building, up to the apartment number Nick had given her. The building was brick and the exterior mirrored her own apartment in many ways. The only real
difference is the paint on the door looked like it had been done fairly recently. Inside was a very
different story. The walls were clean and brightly painted. The floors had nice carpeting
throughout. The trim around the doors looked almost new. Even the doors looked like they had a
fresh coat of paint.

Standing on the fifth floor in front of room 508, Judy panting slightly from running up the stairs.
Thinking she could reach it faster that way rather than take the elevator. She took a final calming
breath as she raised her paw to knock- when a thought in her mother’s voice stopped her cold.

‘Are you sure it’s not a date?’ Was she sure? The sudden doubt put her on edge. Her ears were on
alert as she stared at the door in front of her.

It was this reason she could faintly hear voices on the other side. Curious, she leaned against it,
pressing an ear to the painted wood.

“I’m sure she’ll be here any minute.”

“You said that an hour ago!”

“It’s been five minutes.”

“Well it feels like an hour.” Soft laughter followed the comment.

“Dad?” His voice sounded sad.

“Yes, Adam?” A short pause

“I don’t think she’s coming.” Judy felt her break at the disappointment in the little fox’s voice. But
she wanted to hear what Nick would say to him.

“I’m sure she just got held up at work. You know that can happen a lot when you’re a cop. They
have very important jobs. Lots of mammals depend on them to keep the city safe. That’s
something you’ll have to accept if you decide you want to be a cop. Do you think you can do
that?” Judy assumes he nods an affirmative when Nick starts speaking again. “That’s my big tod.
Now why don’t we go ahead and start eating. I’m sure Officer Hopps will be along any minute
now.”

Did he really believe she would be there or was it all just to ease Adam’s disappointment she
wondered. Judy decided that was her queue and rapped her knuckles on the door three times, then
took a step back.

Nick turned his head at the sound of someone knocking on the door. He looked back at Adam to
find him staring at the door with his ears turned towards it, tail starting to wag faster behind him. “I
wonder who that could be?” Adam never took his eyes off the door. Only rotating one ear to his
father’s voice before turning it back to the door.

Nick laughed inwardly at the display. He walked over to the door and checked in the peep hole
before opening it. When all he could see were two black tipped ears, he knew it was safe to open
the door. Sure enough, once the door was open he was greeted with the rabbit those ears belonged
to.

“Well, Officer Toot toot!” Judy’s happy smile nearly faltered at the new nickname. Only to be
renewed when she saw the fox nearly fall when Adam pushed him to the side.

“You came!” He shouted.
“Of course! I wouldn’t miss a chance at dinner with a handsome tod like you!” She told him, mirroring his excitement.

“Come on! I’m starving!” Adam stepped forward and grabbed Judy’s paw, pulling her into the apartment.

“Adam! Slow down.” Nick tried to admonish his son but Judy wasn’t having any of it.

“He’s fine. He’s just excited.” Judy let herself be pulled through the doorway and past the adult fox.

Walking into the apartment there was a coat closet to her left where she removed hers and handed it to Nick to be hung up.

“I hope it’s not too cold in here. I bumped the heat up a little. Hence the casual attire.” Running a paw up and down along his torso to demonstrate his point. He and Adam were both wearing short sleeve shirts. Nick a green polo and khaki cargo shorts and Adam a simple blue t-shirt and black gym shorts. Both poofing their shirts out with their thicker fur. Judy couldn’t help but notice how soft it looked.

“You didn’t have to go to that much trouble.”

“Nonsense carrots, you’re our guest.”

“Come on, Officer Hopps! I wanna show you my room!” Adam reached up to tug her arm once more before Nick stepped in.

“Wait a minute, don’t you think we should let Officer Hopps eat first?”

“Oh yeah! Dad made all kinds of food this year!”

Judy could only giggle as she was pulled around by the excited little kit, giving her the nickel tour as he guided her to the table. The wall to her right continued on while the wall to her left turned and there was a large flat screen TV hung above a couple of gaming consoles. Past that was another door to a storage area. In front of the TV was a fox sized couch and recliner with a coffee table sitting in front of the two. Further along the opposite wall were three doors set into a small alcove with two of the doors facing each other. Each leading to a bedroom while the third door in the back led to the bathroom. The dining area had a rectangular table with six chairs around it. The kitchen had a granite topped bar and counters, broken into sections by stainless steel appliances that looked either new, or well maintained.

And true to the little kit’s word, along the bar were several dishes and bowls filled with all sorts of holiday food. Everything from cornbread stuffing to a banana pudding was present. Judy took a moment and enjoyed the aromas with an audible sniff. It didn’t take long for her blissful smile to turn into one of embarrassment as her stomach made its eagerness loudly known, making both foxes chuckle.

“Sorry... Had a light lunch.” She meekly offered.

“Well grab a plate and help yourself.” Nick said, grabbing one himself and fixing it for Adam as he was still too short to reach to top of the bar. Judy climbed up into a chair to give her a better vantage point. That’s when she noticed something was missing.

“Hey Nick?”

“Yeah?” He was standing on the other side of the bar after handing Adam his plate, now fetching
his own.

“I thought predators usually ate turkey for thanksgiving?” The way she looked at him for an answer told him it was more out of curiosity than anything.

“We do, I even bought one, I just didn’t cook it since you’re joining us.”

“Why?” She couldn’t understand why they would deny themselves a delicacy just because she was present.

Nick looked at her somewhat perplexed before composing himself. “Well, most prey find it a bit... Unnerving to watch.”

Judy thought that over for a moment. She could understand why prey mammals found the consumption of flesh disturbing. But she grew up with predators, close friends with a cougar and jaguar, who would often eat meat in front of her. She knew it was a necessary part of their diet as did her other prey friends. No one in Bunnyburrow ever made much of a fuss over it. Well, for the most part.

“It really doesn’t bother me. I had a few pred friends back home, they ate meat all the time.” She stated in a matter of fact tone.

“What!?” Nick and Judy looked to the table where Adam was sitting, his mouth hanging open. “You mean we could have had turkey?! AAAWWW!” He dramatically threw his hands up in the air and slumped down into his seat with a deep scowl. The two adults just laughed as they filled their plates before sitting down. Judy next to Adam, Nick across from Judy.

Nick watched as the conversation over dinner was mostly Adam telling Judy everything about himself or asking her questions about herself. The only thing giving him pause was when Adam asked her what it was like to be a police officer. Knowing that she had only worked as a meter maid up to this point.

Nick wasn’t sure how she would handle the question.

“Well it’s not all excitement and chasing bad guys like you see in the movies. Most of the time it’s pretty quiet and boring, which is a good thing.”

‘Like a champ.’ Nick thought with an approving smile.

The longer they talked, the more Nick noticed subtle things about Judy. Her eyes were starting to get red, eyelids were having trouble staying open, ears hanging loosely behind her. Her smile, though tired, was genuine and ever present.

Watching the two interact, Nick leaned back in his chair and just listened. When he tossed a glance to the clock hanging on the wall, he had to do a double take at the time. It was already fifteen minutes past nine. Adam’s bedtime. Nick cleared his throat to get their attention.

“Sorry to interrupt, but it’s bedtime for a certain young fox.”

“Awww, do I have to?”

“Fraid so buddy. Come on, say good night.”

Judy was surprised again when he all but jumped in her lap. Hugging her tightly, She returned the hug with as much energy as she could muster, before he hopped down to get ready for bed.
“I’ll be back in a minute, make yourself at home.” Nick told her while gesturing towards the furniture in the living room. The two then disappeared into what had to be Adam’s room. Doing as he suggested, Judy got down from the chair and walked towards the couch.

After claiming a seat, she felt herself sink into the soft cushions. The way they felt against her weary muscles was doing nothing to assist her in the small battle to stay awake her mind was waging. She tried to focus her hearing on anything to keep her awake. Through the wall behind her, she heard the shuffling of dresser drawers and clothes being thrown on the floor. Then, two doors opening one after the other, followed by running water and the brushing of teeth.

It wasn’t long after hearing the doors shut again that her next memories were of the world darkening and a warm blanket that smelled of cedar and wildflowers wrapping around her, feeling at home for the first time in what felt like ages, her eyelids gave way.

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone is enjoying this story as much as I am. I know that this story has kind of shifted in these latest two chapters. My goal for the outcome remains the same so just hang in there and enjoy the ride.
The day was warm and welcoming. Judy found herself lying beneath a cedar tree in a large field. The grass was a vibrant green and stretched for miles. Occasionally the wind would carry the fragrance of wild flowers as it made the tall grass dance around her. For the first time in months, Judy felt happy. The irony wasn’t missed by the bunny. That she would be happy in a place like this when this is what she was running away from. She didn’t question it though. She’d missed feeling this content and so she laid there a while longer sinking further into a blissful state.

It couldn’t last though. Soon her ears were twitching as they picked up new sounds. At first it was just a change in the background noise. Almost like she was hearing something under water, eventually becoming clearer as the sound seemed to get closer. Soon her blissful world began to gradually darken as the noise became more discernable.

They were voices. One was angry, seemingly at the other much calmer but obviously annoyed speaker.

“I can’t believe you had her over for dinner. Especially after I told you I didn’t want my son anywhere near her.” An angry female voice said.

“First off, you don’t get to dictate who I associate with, and secondly, he’s our son.” She heard Nick’s voice.

“Don’t remind me. I don’t want you filling his head with ridiculous dreams. He’s going to inherit David’s business, he has a future ahead of him. He doesn’t need dreams of being a cop getting in his way.”

“He’s eight years old. He has a right to dream.”

“We’ll see about that.” The angry voice said before a door slammed.

At this point Judy was fully awake. After hearing the door slam shut she waited a moment to sit up. The room was dark and cool but not to the point of uncomfortably cold. Still under the warm blanket, she checked and found her clothes from yesterday still on. Sliding off the bed, she padded over to the door following the entering through the cracks.

She paused for a second and trained her ears to what was beyond the barrier. She could hear the door to a refrigerator opening and closing, the clattering of bottles shaking with the motion, before hearing liquid being poured into glass. Deciding she might as well let her presence be known, she felt for the door knob and eased the door silently open.

Stepping into the living room, she peaked over towards the kitchen. A tall lamp in the corner was the only source of light. Through the dull light, sitting at the breakfast bar, she saw Nick staring at a glass of orange juice, his back turned towards her wearing a simple grey t-shirt and black gym
shorts. She took a moment simply to observe and try to guess at his current demeanor. His gaze, as best she could tell, was focused on the glass in front of him, ears laid back and tail hanging limply. Whatever was going through his mind at the moment it certainly wasn’t cheerful.

Stepping away of the door, she cleared her throat to announce her presence. Nick’s ears rose up and one flicked in her direction before he turned to face her.

“Morning fluff.” He said through a warm but tired smile in a cheery tone.

“Good morning.” She politely replied.

“I, uh… I suppose you heard all that?” Judy thought how to answer that for a second. She didn’t want to seem nosy, yet, he didn’t sound judgmental, just curious.

“Just a little, before they left.” She admitted. Nick hummed an acknowledgement before speaking.

“Hmm, sorry if we woke you. If you want, you can lay back down and try to get some more sleep. You were pretty exhausted at dinner.”

“Thanks, but,” She looked up at the clock hanging on the wall showing it was already 5:30 a.m. “I usually get up around this time anyway.”

“Well, in that case, care for something to drink?” He held up his own glass to showcase the offer. Although Judy felt she was imposing after passing out on the couch and waking in Nick’s room, she didn’t want to be rude and just rush off. After all, she had nothing to do today.

“Sure, I don’t suppose you have any carrot juice?” She asked while moving to take the seat next to his while he went into the kitchen and fetched a glass for her.

“Funny you should ask.” He smirked while pulling out a carton of carrot juice from the fridge.

“No way!” She giggled while he poured her a glass, a big grin on her face.

“Surprised?” He asked while handing her glass over.

“A little.” She admitted.

“It was Adam’s idea.” Judy giggled again.

“Did he recently develop a taste for carrots or something?”

“Just one carrot in particular, I think.” He gave her an amused smile.

Judy felt her cheeks heating slightly at the revelation as she turned away, trying to hide the sudden blush. She was already aware that Adam seemed to look up to her but she thought Nick’s remark about him being smitten with her was just a joke. Clearing her throat she attempted to change the subject.

“I’m sorry, by the way, for being such a terrible guest.”

“Oh? And how is that?” Nick asked with a smug grin.

“For falling asleep on your couch and then…” Judy froze for a moment, a little detail that only just registered itself playing in her mind. She fell asleep on the couch but work up in Nick’s bed and she couldn’t remember how she got there. She looked over at Nick, who was taking a very slow sip from his drink, his grin was only growing bigger.
“Nick?” He pulled his drink away from his lips, setting the glass on the countertop. He turned his head to face her, licking the juice from his lips. “How did I end up in your bed?” Judy’s ears were turning a darker pink on the inside. She willed them down behind her back to hide them from Nick.

“Hmmm, that’s a good question carrots.” He tapped his chin and looked away dramatically, like he was pondering the situation himself. Before he glanced at her from the side. “All I remember is laying a blanket across you when I found you asleep on the couch, then I went to bed.” He gesture towards a blanket neatly folded on the couch arm. “Then, sometime during the night, I remember someone crawling into bed with me. At first, I thought it was Adam, but I soon realized it wasn’t him.”

Nick turned and took another slow sip from his drink before turning his attention back to Judy.

“Do you know how I realized it wasn’t him carrots?” Nick asked, leaning in closer till their noses were nearly touching. Judy, with eyes wide and her cheeks and ears on fire, could only shake her head. Her purple eyes never leaving his lush green ones. He moved his snout around to the base of one of her ears till his breath was tingling the sensitive velvet fur within as he whispered into it.

“He doesn’t moan when he cuddles.”

Judy’s jaw dropped and her eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets as her gaze focused on nothing.

“Sweet cheese and crackers.” She whispered. She was only pulled out of her embarrassed induced shock by the sound of Nick’s snorting and failure to hide his snickering. She looked at him for a moment, lost as to why he found the situation so funny. Until it hit her.

“Oh! YOU JERK!” She yelled as she boxed his arm. “You made that all up! Didn’t you?!”

Though Nick was now furiously rubbing his arm, it didn’t stiffen the fun on laughing he’d fallen into.

“You should have seen your face!” He gasped out between rounds of laughter.

Judy, however, didn’t find it so funny. She hopped down from her chair and started walking towards the exit.

Nick, having realized where she was headed, quickly composed himself and called after her.

“Hey, wait, where ya going? You aren’t mad about a little joke are you?” Judy didn’t reply. When she turned the corner to the little hallway leading to the exit, Nick quickly jumped from his seat and went after her. “You’re not leaving are you? Carrots?”

Nick turned the corner to see Judy pulling her coat from the closet and placing the hanger back before closing its door.

“You’re not really leaving are you? Judy?”

She stopped after hearing him say her real name. He had made a point not to call her by her real name since they first met. Still angry from being so embarrassed, she stood where she was, refusing to look back at him.

“Look, I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have taken it that far. It won’t happen again.” She was still quiet and hadn’t moved. “If you want to leave, I’ll understand, just don’t leave mad. You fell asleep on the couch and I carried you into my room. That's all that happened, I promise.” When she stayed
quiet, Nick was about to speak again. As he parted his lips, he heard a faint sigh coming from the little rabbit.

“Cuddling, is a very important thing to rabbits.” She said softly.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know.” Judy nodded at his reply and removed her jacket. Nick helped her place it back into the closet before leading her back to the kitchen bar. Sitting in silence for several moments, it was Nick who spoke first.

“I don’t suppose, you’d be willing to share why cuddling is important to rabbits?” Nick waited for her reply as she played with the glass that still had some of her carrot juice left.

“Rabbits are very communal mammals.” Was all she said.

“How so?” Nick asked, trying to get her to continue as he pulled another swallow from his own glass.

“Well for starters, I have over 300 siblings.” She heard Nick nearly choke on his drink before coughing for several minutes. It hardly phased Judy, she was used to this kind of reaction.

“You can’t be serious? Can you?” Nick had a worried face as he looked at Judy.

“They’re not all actual siblings but communal siblings.” She stated. “I only have 12 actual siblings from my parents.”

“How does that work?”

“Well, each family lives in a burrow. A burrow consist of immediate family, parents and children and sometimes grandparents.” She watched as Nick nodded in understanding before she continued. “A burrow is a part of the warren which consist of several sometimes hundreds of burrows. The Hopps warren is actually one of the largest. Hence why I have so many siblings. Everyone in the warren pitches in to help with raising kits, working on the farm, chores, you name it. It’s kind of like a small town. We have elections to choose who leads the warren and manages assets.” She watched Nick for his reaction.

“That’s… Incredible!” Nick had no idea how rabbit communities worked. But he still didn't feel like it answered his question. “So, what does all that have to do with cuddling?”

“Well, with that many kits, there’s not a lot of room for everyone to have their own space. I had to share a room with my three little mates till I was old enough to move in with my older sisters and then there were four of us and we shared one large bed till we were in high school.”

“So cuddling is like a social construct?” He asked.

“More like a base instinct. It’s not something we grow out of or can change. It’s a part of our biology.” She explained.

Nick thought about that for a moment. He could accept that explanation. Foxes had similar attributes. Only they prefer to be lon...ers.

Nick suddenly looked at Judy with a worried expression. “Carrots, what happens if a rabbit isn’t able to cuddle for long periods?” Judy pondered on the question for a bit. It was rare but it had happened before.

“Well, we can get kind of cranky and sometimes fidgety, eventually leading to depression.” Nick’s mind was now consumed with fear. He knew Judy had lived alone for at least four months
now. But he didn’t know how long it took for these symptoms to start. The depressed look and dark comments from earlier that week fresh on his mind but Judy was starting to sound hesitant about answering his questions. He figured he’d have to do research on his own and tried to think of a way to quickly change the subject. Fortunately, Judy had been thinking the same thing.

“So, um, does his mother always pick him up this early?” Still looking away, she missed the way Nick’s smile faltered before returning.

“No, she just wanted to drag him around while she went black Friday shopping. She thinks the more toys she buys him the more he’ll love her.” Nick said in a flat tone.

Judy decided not to pry any further. It wasn’t any of her business how Adam’s parents raised him as long as they weren’t abusive. She hadn’t seen how Adam acted around his mother yet and wasn’t sure she ever would. There was something she said this morning that Judy felt she needed to address though.

“Nick, if my being around Adam is a problem—“

“It’s not.” He said, cutting her off.

“I don’t want to be the cause of him getting into trouble.” She said more sternly. Making sure he got her point. If her presence was going to cause trouble in their family, she would willingly stay away.

Nick let out a sigh before turning in his seat to face her directly. His eyes and features turning soft as he spoke.

“Before he met you, Adam was afraid of cops.” Judy’s mouth fell slightly open and her ears fell behind her back. “Laura, his mother, was arrested several times before I met her. A couple of times the cops…” He looked away from her for a second. Pondering if he should tell her this part or not. She obviously held the police force she worked for in high regard.

“They what?” Judy spoke softly. She’d heard of bad cops that take advantage of their authority or abuse the power they wielded.

“She claims they rapped her, but having been married to her, I know that when she’s drunk she can be very promiscuous. That doesn’t make what they did right, of course, I guess I’m just desensitized when it comes to her.” Judy seemed to take a moment to absorb the information. She wanted to object to his statement. Tell him that it didn’t make it right if they took advantage of her. But he spoke again before she got the chance.

“Anyway, it caused her to have a deep hatred for cops ever since. And she’s trying to pass that on to Adam. Running into you showed him that not all cops are the same.”

It felt like a lot of information for the young bunny to take in. She had no idea how big an impact she was having on the little fox that kept popping up in her life. Now she felt the weight of that responsibility, the weight of being a good role model, settle on her small shoulders.

Nick was starting to feel fatigued again. He didn’t have to work today and was more than happy to lay back down on the couch and fall back asleep. He was even talking to much. A sure sign he was slipping back into a state of being too tired to keep his walls up. Glancing back at the bunny sitting beside him, he saw her purple eyes staring into nothing. He could almost hear the gears spinning in her head. Deciding to make an escape while he could, he decided to call it a night, or morning, whatever.

“Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m off today and I don’t feel ready to face the world yet. I
suppose you’ll be heading off to work?”

“Actually, I’m off today because of the holiday.” She replied without thinking.

“Oh! Well that was nice of buffalo butt. I suppose you’ll be heading out for some deal shopping then?”

“No, not really into the whole race to save a few dollars thing.”

“So what? You’re just gonna go back to your shoebox and look out the window?” She hesitated a moment before answering. Giving Nick all the answer he needed. “If you want, you can hang out here for a bit. They should be showing some more of those cheesy holiday movies on tv. That way you can avoid all the crazy traffic till it warms up some more.”

‘What am I doing?’ Nick thought. ‘I really should just let her leave.’

Judy looked away from him for a moment and tapped her finger on her glass in thought. Nick remembered quite well the small room she called an apartment. The heat probably didn’t even work and her short fur wouldn’t keep her warm very well. But she continued to hesitate on his offer, so he sweetened the deal.

“If you stay, you can help me go shopping later, once all the crazies clear out. And if you want you can stay till Adam comes back.”

Judy continued to ponder her choices. Stay here with Nick, who she referred to as a friend to her parents, or go back to her apartment. The offer to stay at his much nicer apartment and relax on a very nice couch while watching tv, neither of which she had, felt very tempting. But there was the fact that she hadn’t showered since yesterday morning and currently smells heavily of fox. Specifically, the fox sitting next to her, that invited her over in the first place and let her sleep in his bed. His bed! The reality of where she slept had finally dawned on her. Yet through her slightly elevated pulse and burning ears she couldn’t help but hear her mother’s words echo in her ears again.

“Why?” She softly asked.

“Why what fluff?”

“Why are you being so nice to me?” Judy turned to watch him closely. In the short amount of time they’d known each other she had noticed he kept his emotions locked away when Adam wasn’t around yet he still had giveaways. Besides, she needed to know his true intentions. She’d been led on enough through high school to know hardly anyone wanted a serious relationship with her. The crazy doe who thought she could be a cop.

For Nick’s part he really didn’t have an answer to the question. It caused him to freeze in place for a moment. Why was he being nice to her? Why did he want her around? He admitted to himself that he found her attractive. He even heard her speaking to herself wondering if he found her attractive. He had caught her sneaking glances at him a couple of times. He doubted she had caught him ogling her when she was distracted by Adam.

But for all the reasons he couldn’t find for why he asked or even wanted her to stay, he had double the reasons to let her leave. The short time he was married to Laura was enough for him to form an attachment. Asking her to leave for the sake of their son was the hardest thing he ever did. He thought he knew what heartbreak felt like when she signed over custody leaving both of them out of her life without a single hesitation. Only to get a true lesson when she showed up again out
of nowhere with a court order and a new husband in her life. Accusing him of being abusive to both her and Adam.

As he hesitated to respond, Judy leaned closer and placed her paw on his bar forearm. His fur was unimaginably fluffy. The longer hairs felt rough and abrasive while the shorter fur that lie beneath felt incredibly soft. The warmth she felt radiating into her fingers was so inviting she nearly faltered and nearly agreed to stay for the simple chance she could feel even more of it. Yet her own self doubt held her back and she focused on getting the answer to her question.

“Nick?”

When Judy touched his arm, Nick could have sworn that time stood still. Her padless paw felt smooth as silk against his fur. She seemed to leach the nearly overbearing heat from beneath it. Leaving his arm feeling noticeably cooler than the rest of him. When she softly spoke his name he realized he’d left himself open and gently pulled away. Clearing his throat as he stood and walked to the living room.

“Geez carrots, can’t a guy just be nice without having some ulterior motive?” He forced his voice into playfully mocking tone. The response he got wasn’t what he was expecting.

“I wouldn’t know.” Nick turned to face her with a quizzical look. When Judy saw him face her, she gave the most obvious reason she could think of for her answer. “Rabbits are good at multiplying. We have a reputation for a reason.” She said with a shrug.

Nick looked shocked. He figured she had dated in the past, most likely not a virgin if what she said was true. But he couldn’t believe no one had ever been nice just to get to know her.

“So, you mean, no guy, has ever been nice to you just to be… friends?”

“Well yeah, I mean when I was little. Before puberty that is.”

“So, you have no guy friends?” To which she rolled her eyes.

“Yes I have friends that are guys. The predator friends I told you about last night, they’re both guys. We’ve just been friends since we were little. As well as a couple of bunnies. But no guy I met after going through puberty ever wanted to be ‘just friends’. They always wanted something more, something I wasn’t ready to give.”

It wasn’t all true. She had dreams of meeting someone special. Her knight in shining armor as they say. But every guy she tried dating always dismissed her dreams of being a cop. No one believed she could do it or thought they could change her mind. Eventually she completely gave up on the idea of finding that someone special.

“Well!” Nick said loudly, also clapping his paws together in front of him. Judy looked up to see him holding his ears high and a bright smile. “It’s time you made a friend! Come on rabbit, let’s find some cheesy holiday movie to lighten the mood!” Nick made his way towards the couch and plopped down after grabbing the remote. He then proceeded to turn on the big flat screen and prop his feet up on the coffee table.

Judy found his sudden jolt of jubilation refreshing and happily walked over to join him. She hadn’t had very many happy moments in the city since she arrived. Perhaps a day of just lounging about with a ‘friend’ is what she needed.

So sitting with a reasonable amount of distance between them, fox and rabbit watched a plethora of holiday comedies. Laughter mixed with banter, the two enjoyed a day of relaxation and left overs.
I forgot to add this author’s note to the original post so if you’re rereading this chapter and notice this I apologize. Nick originally mentions Adam’s mother in chapter two. Originally they were not married, I went back and changed that to allow a few more dynamics between Nick and Laura in this and future chapters.
Judy once again found herself in the shade of the cedar trees’ long branches. The tall grass wrapping around her frame as she lay in the shade. Small wild flowers mixing their scent with the cedar’s. The air was cooler than before. She could feel it against her toes and ears. Yet, her arms, core and even her nose felt warm. She eased her eyes open and observed a ray of sunlight breaking through the branches and needles, ending their journey on her. Keeping the areas it graced protected from the chilled air around her at bay. She closed her eyes once again to allow herself to bask in its warmth.

It was all so strange. Feeling the warmth of the sunlight shift against her body, as if it had a physical presence. She wrapped her arms around herself to try and capture it. She was surprised to find her arms had engulfed something solid that wasn’t there before. She opened her eyes, surprised to see a little red figure lying on her chest. She laid there, dumbfounded by this change of events. Where did they come from? Who is it? Is it even a mammal?

Her questions were quickly answered when the figure shifted its head slightly, allowing her to see the long slender muzzle of a fox. Not just any fox though, this was one she knew, one she was willing to say she cared for. The little fox that was shorter than he should be for his age due to a mother that didn’t take her child’s health into consideration.

Judy never gave much thought to being a mother. Her own mother, in an attempt to keep her from fulfilling her dream, had tried to persuade her by telling her what it was like having kits of her own, the love and joy they brought. Also, the need to care and be there for them, nurture and teach them, and although Judy had spent her fair share of time assisting in raising her younger siblings in the warren, she never felt compelled to have any of her own. When one got hurt or was threatened, she was there to heal and protect.

But those threats were easily dealt with, the harm they suffered from came from choices they made and not the choices of another. This little fox kit created an urge to protect within Judy she had never felt so strongly before. The thought of someone teasing or bullying him because of his deformity or what he was caused her to tremble with anger. She wrapped her arms around him fully and pulled him tightly into her, protecting him as best she could. Only then did she notice the slight trembling in his body. Worried she may be the cause, she loosened her grip just enough to relieve the pressure she was placing on him but still enough to keep him safely close to her.

When the trembling continued, she did the only thing she could think of, the one thing that would calm young bunnies down during a bad thunderstorm. She reached up and gently stroked his ears. To her disappointment, that seemed to have the opposite effect. With each touch of her paw to his pointy ears his body would only shiver more. It made her heart ache to know that she was causing the little fox to be uncomfortable. Stopping with petting his ears, she wrapped her arm around him again and gently spoke.

“It’s ok Adam, you’re safe here. I won’t let anyone hurt you, I promise.”

The little fox shifted his head till it was pointed towards her voice. She watched as his eyelids
rumpled together as though he were struggling to open them. Oh, how she wanted nothing more than to look into his bright blue eyes at that moment. To quell the fear that surely would be pouring out of them. She continued to watch as he seemed to struggle more and more. She began petting the fur between his ears, offering words of encouragement as he struggled.

Until finally, all the effort had paid off. He relaxed within her grip and she watched as his eyelids slid smoothly open. She couldn’t repress the smile that crept onto her lips at just the thought of getting to see his beautiful sapphire eyes again. Only, they weren’t sapphire, they were emerald. Half hooded with a hint of mischief behind them. All she could do was stare back into them. Too stunned to form a coherent thought of her own. Until suddenly…

“Carrots.”

Judy woke with a loud gasp as she squeezed the red furred object in her grasp. A slight moan from above her drew her attention, she looked up and saw Nick with his eyes shut and muzzle in a grimace before he painfully spoke.

“Can you please let go of my tail?”

Judy quickly obliged and opened her arms, freeing the furry appendage. Nick tried to stand but stumbled as he took a step towards the nook with the doors.

“Nick! Are you alright!” She asked. Reaching out with her paw to try and steady him as he stood with his back towards her.

“Yeah, yeah! I’m fine.” He said as he managed to stumble his way to his bedroom door, closing it swiftly behind him. Judy heard him fall again and this time the groan she heard was definitely from pain. Worried she may have been the cause, she went to his bedroom door and gently knocked.

Nick lay on the floor of his bedroom clutching his crotch. The epic erection was like none he’d experienced in a long time. He couldn’t remember the last time he let someone pet his tail. The wet dream it gave him was the most vivid he’d ever experienced. It didn’t help that the images were rolling around in his head still. The image of a grey bunny with purple eyes running her soft paws through his coarse fur.

‘Come on, get control of yourself.’ Deciding to assess the situation, Nick rolled onto his back and pulled his shorts down. Before him stood a full erection and a partially inflated knot.

‘Great, now what am I going to do.’ Nick had two choices really. Option one: take care of his needs and wait the minimum 15 minutes he knew it would take for his knot to go down. Option two: wait for it to go away on its own and suffer from blue balls for the rest of the day.

‘There’s always option three.’ A mischievous voice whispered in the back of his mind. Nick quickly smashed that thought down, there was no way he was going to-

KNOCK, KNOCK

“Nick? Are you alright?” Hearing Judy’s voice caused his erection twitch on its own.

‘Ah hell.’ “Yeah, I’m fine. Nothing to see here.”

‘Yeah right.’

“Are you sure? You don’t sound fine, you sound like you’re in pain.” Judy’s worried voice came through the door.
“No, no. It’s just a, a cramp. Yeah, just a big cramp.”

‘Let’s see if she says it’s…’

‘OKAY! Enough of that.’

“Do you want me to help you stretch it out?” She asked.

‘Pretty sure you’d be-’

“No! Nonono! I got this, thank you.” Nick suddenly froze when he heard the door knob turning. His paws were covering his muzzle as he tried to calm himself down. His eyes were saucers as he watched the door quickly swing open.

“Geez, you big baby, I don’t know what…” Judy suddenly found herself speechless at the sight of a half-naked fox laying on the floor. With what had to be the biggest penis she’d ever seen, and why was it larger at the bottom?

“Oh, fluff?” Nick’s voice broke Judy from her trance and she quickly felt her face and ears burning.

She quickly brought her paws up to cover her eyes while apologizing profusely.

“Sweet cheese and crackers Nick! What are you doing in here? No, never mind!” She said with a raised paw in his direction. “I don’t want to know. I’m leaving!” She said as she slammed the door shut behind her.

Nick, noticing the embarrassment in her voice, quickly tried to salvage the situation.

“Wait, wait! Carrots!” He raised up from the floor and leaned on the door. Using both paws to prop himself up while talking through it. “Judy, please! I know how this looks but I promise I wasn’t doing anything perverted.” He paused and waited for a response or even just to hear the front door slam. It was possible that she had already ran out and left the door open, but Nick felt he needed to finish in the off chance that she was still there.

“It...It was my tail. I know that sounds like a lame excuse, but fox tails are very, sensual. I swear I was asleep and when I woke up I felt you petting my tail and I couldn’t control...it. That’s why I ran out as soon as you let go.” He paused to listen, when he didn’t hear a response he slumped his shoulder against the door, feeling his own walls come down as he believed he was now alone. “I don’t blame you for wanting to run. You’re a bunny, I’m a fox. You woke up in a strange place with a horny fox basically laying on top of you.” Nick let out a weary sigh before a thought popped into his mind.

“Dumb bunny just wanted to cuddle.” He said with a hint of amusement and a small smile. Nick continued to lean on the door a moment longer before finally pushing off. His erection had finally sorted itself out and was now back within its sheath as he pulled his shorts back to cover himself.

“I’m sorry.” Nick nearly jumped back out of his pants at the sudden voice.

Judy wasn’t sure why she stopped when he called out her real name and not one of his ‘Nick’-names. She stayed quiet while facing down the hallway to the exit, one ear turned back to the door as his muffled voice came through the barrier. If everything he said was true about fox tails, then she was the one at fault for their situation. To be honest, she felt more embarrassed for walking in on him than anything. It was still early morning and growing up with as many brothers as she did, she was aware of something called ‘morning wood’. She was prepared to leave until he mentioned
her need to cuddle. Even though he did call her dumb, she was struck that he would remember that from their conversation. It told her he cared, and he listened to her problems.

“Fluff, you still there?” He called from the other side of the door.

“Yes, I’m still here.”

“Listen, Carrots, I’m really sorry about what happened earlier.” He was still apologizing.

“No, it’s my fault. I shouldn’t have barged in on you.” She now turned and took a few steps back towards the door. “I’m really sorry I was doing that to your tail.”

“Oh, it’s no big, really.” He tried to play down the incident but Judy wasn’t having any of it.

“No, Nick, it is a big deal. I mean, I was basically sexually assaulting you.”

“You were asleep Carrots, we both were, you didn’t know what you were doing.” Judy was starting to get frustrated at him playing this down. She was at fault and she would take the blame for her own actions.

“How can you possibly be so calm about this?”

“It was just an accident Hopps. There is no reason we can’t act like adults about this.”

“At least let me make it up to you somehow.” She offered more to make herself feel better about the situation than anything else. She regretted it almost instantly.

“What did you have in mind?” Nick’s voice was full of mischief but Judy was too flustered to notice.

“I don’t know, what do you want?”

“Well since you’ve seen mine.” He said in a teasing manner.

“No! Absolutely not! Nothing like that.” She heard him laughing as he opened the door and stepped back in the same room.

“Don’t get your tail in such a twist Fluff.” She was still red but slowly cooling down. “Tell you what, if you help me with my Christmas shopping I have planned for today I’ll consider us squared. Deal?” Nick’s smug look gave Judy the idea she was getting hustled into more than she knew.

She took a moment to think it over. She didn’t have anything planned for the day, or tomorrow. The surprise day off gave her more time than she cared for and she had to admit, Nick was right, it was probably her instinctual need to cuddle that caused the whole situation. She needed to find a way to prevent something like that from happening again. A plan quickly came to mind, perhaps spending time with a friend, or at least the closest thing to one she had in Zootopia, would help sedate those needs. With her confidence growing, Judy smirked back at the red vulpine and gave her answer.

“Deal.”

The two got ready to leave, Nick changing clothes and Judy grabbing her jacket, and went down to the parking garage where Nick’s car was parked. Judy had seen the black car once before and had to admit, she was impressed with how nice it was. She was about to jump in when Nick asked her to wait.
“Just a sec fluff.” He then reached into the back seat and produced a booster seat.

“Really?” She dead panned.

“You want to see out the windows don’t you?”

Judy just rolled her eyes and then clambered up the side of the vehicle and sat in the height adjusting contraption. After pulling her door shut, she watched Nick dig out a set of keys and place them in the ignition. She felt her fur stand on end when the powerful V8 rumble to life. She was impressed with Nick’s driving, guys she had dated in high school with such vehicles often tried doing burnouts or accelerating quickly to try and impress whoever was watching.

‘Maybe because he's older?’ She thought and then tested the theory.

“Geez Nick, my grandmother drives faster than you.” She kept her expression as bored and unimpressed as possible. A sideways glance told her all she needed to know.

Nick simply smirked and turned his head slightly to give her a knowing look before shaking his head.

“Gotta try harder than that rabbit.”

‘Yup, he’s definitely old.’ Judy chuckled at her inward joke. Before she knew it Nick was bringing the car to a stop. She glanced around at the familiar setting. He parked the car across the street from her apartment building. Judy looked at him confused for a moment before asking.

“What are we doing at my apartment?”

“I figured you might want to change into some fresh clothes.” He said with a shrug. “We won’t be out that long but I don’t think you want to go around smelling like fox all day.”

Judy lifted the neck of her shirt to her nose and took a sniff. The smell of fox was strong, even to her limited bunny nose. Nick had let his chair lean back and put his paws behind his head closing his eyes.

“You go ahead, I’ll be here.”

Judy was about to protest when she remembered, she needed to spend time doing things with someone else and not alone in her apartment. Before she could change her mind, she got out of the fox sized car and speed walked across the street and up to her apartment. Gathered a change of clothes and went to the public shower hoping there would be a little hot water waiting for her. She was sorely disappointed. The water stayed cold and forced her to end it sooner than she would have liked. The only consolation being that she didn’t smell like fox anymore. Drying herself quickly, she got dressed and hoped Nick kept the car running with the heater on. She grabbed her jacket and sprayed a quick shot of musk mask on it since it was her only one warm enough to attempt the cold.

Getting back to Nick’s car she wasn’t disappointed. The foxy...er, lean fox driving, had kept the car running and the heater on low while he waited, turning the blower up once she was in to bring the temperature up to a warmth she could handle more easily. He then drove them to the Zootopia Grand Mall. Judy had been there a couple of times to shop for clothes or other items she needed during her stay in Zootopia. She tried to avoid the ginormous structure as much as possible with all the effort it took to avoid being trampled why herds of teenagers that scoured the shops for the latest trends.
Shopping with Nick though was different, the city fox weaved a patch through the crowd in a way Judy had never experienced. Falling in line with herds as they wandered the halls. Following a porcupine as the crowds parted to make way. Staying close to his side was proving difficult, even for the nimble bunny.

They stopped at various clothing stores and she helped him pick out clothing for little Adam. Then to a toy store where they found a few items he would like. Before she realized it they had spent nearly three hours in the store. The good natured conversation with the occasional bad joke seemed to make the time disappear.

Eventually needing a break, the two took turns watching the bags while the other used the restroom. Nick graciously let Judy go first while he waited. After taking his turn he found Judy staring at a nearby window of a jewelry store. In the window was a golden bracelet that had been twisted with green emeralds wrapped around the main band making it appear as though several miniature carrots were all lined up.

Nick waited a moment before approaching, observing how her paw came to rest of the glass. The way her ears drooped while her eyes had a sense of longing. He didn’t picture her as the jewelry type. ‘But I suppose every girl has that one item that calls to them,’ Nick mused.

“Ready fluff?” He called out from a distance, doing his best to hide the fact he had seen what she was looking at. Judy’s slightly darker ears gave him all the confirmation he needed that he had indeed caught her in the act of longing.

“Y-yeah!” She quickly picked up the bags around her and met him half way from the window. As Nick accepted his portion of the bags to carry, he studied her closely.

“See anything you like?” He nodded towards the window but never took his eyes off her.

“No, nothing in particular.” She looked back towards the window again and Nick noticed how her eyes automatically went to the bracelet. With a disguising smirk he started walking away from the window.

After their trip had finished and all the bags were finally packed away. He drove Judy home and noticed she seemed much more upbeat from and back to her normal bubbly self than the last few times he had seen her. The light behind her eyes seemed to have returned.

Nick offered to let her hang out at his place until Adam came home but she politely declined.

“Thank you Nick, but I’m afraid I have some personal things to take care of.” She said.

“Oh? How personal?” He teasingly growled. Little remarks about the mornings mishap had continued to popup during their trip. Judy was quick to respond by punching his shoulder.

“Not that personal, you jerk. I just need to catch up with my laundry.”

“Very well Carrots, then I bid you adieu.” He said a bit overly dramatic.

Judy just giggled before exiting the car, thanking him again for letting her spend time with them. As he watched her walk back into her apartment building, he found he couldn’t help but watch how her hips would swing side to side. Or how her tail seemed to tick with each step. He felt his heart clinch when she closed the door behind her, blocking her from his sight.

He felt sad, angry, confused all at once. But why? He drove home, parked in the garage, carried the bags to his apartment and sat on the couch, all on autopilot. The feelings from earlier followed him throughout the whole process. He thought going back home where he knew it was safe
would help him to sort out what he was suddenly feeling. Instead a new emotion made an appearance.

Loneliness.

But why? He’d always been alone, other than Adam, ever since he moved out of his mother’s. He never felt this way before. Not even while he and Laura were married or even after the divorce. Not even when he had to start letting Adam stay with Laura.

And then it hit him. All day he had been with Judy. Sure they slept in different rooms and stayed apart.-.

Little glimpses of the day raced through his mind. Starting with how she cuddled his tail. Then at the mall, as he lead her through the crowd, she stood right by his side, sometimes touching. At the stores, she would grab his arm to get his attention about something. If he tried to show her something she would nearly lean against him to see what it was. The sly bunny had been using him to slowly ease her craving for closeness.

Nick had to believe that what she was also doing was unintentional. There was no way she could know that was exactly how a vixen would show she was interested in a male!

Nick jumped up off the couch, pacing back and forth in his living room, trying to convince his instincts that it was not the case. She hadn’t meant to send that kind of message. She was just doing what bunnies do naturally.

Nick stopped dead in his tracks. What bunnies do naturally?

The thought lingered in his mind for a few minutes as he slowly brought himself back under control. Judy was only following her instincts, nothing more.

‘So, where does that leave me with my own instincts?’

He knew what his instincts wanted, just not how to act on them.

‘How would I act if she were a vixen?’

He knew the answer, the long courtship with several dates and a gift in one month intervals, a small token of his desire to deepen the relationship. She would either accept or reject the gift to show whether she felt the same or not. It would continue in this fashion until she would propose. But did Judy know that? The answer was undeniably no.

So what does she know? And a better question, what do I know?

Nick glanced over at the clock on the wall. Laura would be bringing Adam home soon. He hated it, she would barge in like she owned the place. Or worse, like she still belonged in his den. David would be rational enough to wait outside. For a male fox to enter another’s den uninvited was asking for trouble.

Released a heavy breath, Nick started hiding the presents and making dinner. While also making a mental note to research rabbit courting habits.

End Notes
This first chapter follows the movie fairly closely. I know it's not very long but that's how far I got before falling asleep. I don't know when I'll have time to write more so I'd like to ask what would you like to see? Let me know in the comments. I have an idea of where I want it to go but not a plan on how to get it there. This will be a side project until I can finish a couple of my other stories so updates will be rare for a while.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!