We fled down the garage like literal criminals. Floor by floor. Heartbeat between heartbeats, tensing as Val swerved the minivan down to the second floor.

As planned, the vixen paused the vehicle for a short moment (whiplash hurt, but fuck it!), giving me and Blu enough time to place our dark hoodies over our heads. My feline ears poked at the fabric for a microsecond before they finally plopped through the two holes in the top, while Blu’s ears had a little trouble at first. However, we had little to worry about, placing our facemasks on and gripping our backpacks before sprinting out the sliding doors.

“Good luck, Val!” Blu’s deep voice sounded muffled through the mask that covered his muzzle, but we heard clearly. “C’mon, Adam! C’mon!”

As the Doberman pulled me to the central stairwell, Val’s reply only came from the sound of screeching tires and the faint sound of distant police sirens. It all echoed down the concrete staircase that circled for another floor, all of it now empty of other furs. Good.

“Vox, this is Blu! Objective complete, I repeat, we completed our objective!”

“Excellent work, Blu!” came the swift fox’s crackling voice, sounding equally as frantic. “Airport is bein’ evacuated. You and Adam better be gettin’ to your next objective. Good luck, boys!”

“Yessir!” we barked in unison. Seconds later and Blu used his brute strength to smash the flip phone against the cinderblock wall, hastily tossing the broken device into a nearby storm drain once we exited into the streets.

The few civilian furs outside this evening fled away from the explosions, while some tried capturing the event on their smart phones, thankfully ignoring us as we snaked from the parking garage down the boulevard. It didn’t take a genius to realize what would likely happen to the photos once they were uploaded online, but whatever.

I half-expected an intense escape laced in desperate adrenaline, all amidst a hail of gunfire. Luckily for me and Blu, the ‘mass vandalism’ occurring on Moses International’s runways—our termite explosions’ bright orange glowed like small stars, reflecting from the glass windows of surrounding buildings down onto the sidewalks and cars, their passengers flabbergasted at what was happening—distracted almost all nearby authorities for the time being.

As planned, Val in the minivan would rendezvous alongside Vox and the others to pull police, government agents and potential Archangels in the area on a wild goose chase. And, from the distant gunshots and blaring police sirens a block away, the wild goose chase had already begun.

“**—coded curfew is in effect!**” screeched the emergency speakers from powerlines and a couple of nearby streetlamps. My ringing ears folded inward at their high volume. “**All civilian personnel are to return to their homes immediately. Repeat: a red-coded curfew is now in effect. All civilian person—**”

I tried offering the Peoria cell a prayer to God, to give them safe passage back home and live another day. However, there came little time to even speak His name. Between raw epinephrine and his fast pace, Blu and I jogged down the sidewalk and under a dirty highway. Honking and gasps echoed from above, nearly drowning out my thoughts. Even with the city in chaos over the explosions, it didn’t mean we wouldn’t be found quickly. For all we knew, a plainclothes Archangel was likely tailing us, waiting for the perfect time to strike during all of the chaos. Or, perhaps to follow us to more of our kind.

Speaking of our kind though…

The downtown buildings and semi-industrial wasteland slowly transitioned into inner city neighborhoods, empty of civilians as the state-controlled speakers continued bellowing out orders. Blu’s jogs became even more frantic then, as did mine despite my wobbling, numbing legs. I willed myself to ignore the pain. To ignore the long-term effects of my past muscle atrophy. To keep moving. One foot after the other.

Then, we arrived on the sidewalk to an intersection lined up in a traffic jam. A couple of uniformed officers, guarded by a wolfish Covenant Guardsman armed with a shotgun, guided the lineup of vehicles around the wreckage of two cars that apparently collided earlier. Both automobiles were completely totaled into twisted metallic sculptures. At first, as Blu pulled me along the incoming crosswalk, all I could focus on were two furs—a middle-aged Great Dane and a bandaged ocelot, being tended to by ambulance first responders.

I couldn’t help but blanch at the sight. Did we…cause this?

My eyes traveled from the crash site to the opposite corner of the street. Behind a gathered crowd of several furs, I could spot two familiar individuals watching the unfolded scene; a light-furred fennec in casual clothes, and a grey-furred timber wolf in his signature black hoodie jacket, staring directly at me.

His smile was practically infectious, once we locked eyes on each other.

“Blu,” I stopped in my tracks, silently nudging the taller canine’s shoulder. “Across the street. It’s Lowell. And Hector.”

“Is he the wolf?” he asked, to which I nodded fervently. The Doberman remained calm and quietly muttered down to me, “Good. They see us too. Let’s follow. Remember, look like you’re also trying to get back home for the curfew.”

My tail flicked against the sidewalk, trying to calm down. “Got it.”