

Following the mysterious circumstances of a zebra mercenary being arrested, the Mooncrest team comes to his aid for support, aided by an unlikely ally. And following the trial is a massive manhunt to ensure no one escapes the defiant police chief!

The Great Escape

After the huge chase around the Rockport City area, Seely was last seen in the Riverfront Stadium in Downtown Rockport just off of Highway 201. Then without warning, the zebra is mysteriously and suddenly arrested by the police after ducking into a safehouse in the same district. Though the zebra makes no resistance, he alerts his team to his arrest and subsequent imprisonment, but even stranger, no imprisonment came - the court trial came next with the aid of some backup. Three lawyers were hired as a defense team to aid in proving Seely's innocence as well as the guilt of the police department as a whole.

No problem. The trial is later set which gets underway. As far as the Mooncrest team is concerned, they are innocent. But later on, things begin to take a dark turn.

Minutes into the trial, the police chief claims that the Mooncrest team are a dangerous bunch, utilizing their cars to tear up the streets and ignite chaos and disorder. However, he singles out Seely in particular, calling him a 'striped street racer'. The Mooncrest team's defense team later destroys the chief's claim, citing the team's history with the police force, as well as the good standing the team has with them. Yet after calling into question the strange activity of the police chief behind closed doors, the chief denies allegations of wrongdoing.

One of the lawyers exhales tersely and folds her arms, "Okay sir, then tell us this - how did there come to be a receipt with your name on it? This was found inside of a safe where you were withholding valuable information, along with various stolen items. So tell us, how did you get the receipt?"

Bennett argues, "I paid for whatever it is I bought as I usually do. What's the harm in that?"

Watching the police chief throw his hands up, the female wolf lawyer reasons, "Items you purchased to use for illegal means, that is. Have you been keeping secrets from the community or are you really a model example?"

"Your men were pretty unorganized and weak in trying to capture our clients. Might that suggest more police training is in order?" Next to the female wolf is defense attorney Tyson Devereux, who also chimes in with his line of reason. But Bennett is showing no signs of nervousness - just a calm demeanor.

The police chief later admits, "My officers haven't been doing a pretty good job in high-speed pursuits lately. More training is in order. But all street racing is a threat, including mercenary teams."

“Even if it involves simple tasks such as deliveries?” Tyson arches an eyebrow at the police chief, aiming to get to the bottom of the matter.

Bennett nods, “Yes, even deliveries. All that reckless driving being done for what?”

“Getting the delivery to their client in the fastest time?” Tyson retorted, folding his arms, “You tell me, sir.”

“Uh-huh... all the more reason to arrest the striped driver and his lackeys.” Bennett claimed. Showing no remorse, the police chief claims, “Left up to me, these goons would spend the rest of their lives in jail. Street racing in Rockport is the biggest no-no.”

“Then why is there video footage of one of your vehicles racing along a tollbooth tr-” the female wolf lawyer brings up a video clip of a Chevrolet Corvette C6.R police cruiser racing along a highway at over 120 mph, but Bennett cuts her off in establishing his view on the matter. “Faster response times and improved responses. Gotta have the best vehicles to keep up with such heathens.”

The female lawyer, Estefania, retrieves a second receipt from her pocket and shows it to the police chief, who suddenly turns apprehensive and nervous at the ticket being dangled right in front of him. “Now, can you explain this receipt? What were you guys really doing after busting racers and impounding their rides?”

“Oh right! Or should I say, literally tearing their rides apart? Is that legal?” Estefania claimed. The receipt is actually a list of parts that were sold illegally by the cops after vehicle impoundments. While stripping the cars is legal, selling the parts to a chop shop is not. But Estefania is referring to a different type of method.

The female wolf continues, “After impounding whatever cars you took, your men drove them to a chop shop to destroy them and resell these parts for profit. Tell me, Chief Bennett, is that how you guys really roll?”

“I think you have it all wrong, sister. We take the cars to the impound lot to have them stored until the person pays or we crush it.” If Bennett is smug now, his expression will change once Estefania pulls up something next.

“Tell us this - why is there a Rockport Police Department cruiser following a white Ferrari F40 to a body shop?” When Estefania presents this security camera footage to the court, Bennett turns red and hisses, “Where did you get that camera footage??”

Estefania reports, “We happened to be investigating when the detectives gave it to us as part of their ongoing investigation into your shady business dealings.” Seeing the infuriated look on Bennett’s face is all Estefania needed to close the case. Even the judge presiding over the trial is aghast at learning of the new details.

The judge sighs, “Well Chief Bennett, what do you have to say for yourself? The defense has brought up a valid accusation. Do you have any explanation for this?”

The police chief then turns thoughtful, leaving his sudden indignation behind. He proposes, “I have nothing to do with that, but it could be a detachment of rogue officers trying to frame me.”

“Then explain this receipt you got.” Estefania shows Bennett the transaction receipt once again, further reminding the chief of his purchase he made. This causes the police wolf to debate, “So what, it's my receipt!? It doesn't prove that I am involved in illegal business!”

“You may not be directly involved but you are definitely in charge of it.” Estefania folds her arms confidently, citing the responsibility the chief bears over the chop shop business. And the receipt she's presented is proof of it.

At first, there is silence. Then, the police chief muses, “You must have a good eye and attention to detail, good for you. But that still doesn't mean anything.”

Suddenly, Estefania glares daggers at the chief and hisses, “So you think all racers that are arrested have their vehicles taken away and then illegally destroyed? What if you arrest someone without any evidence to back up your claim?”

Tyson adds, “In that case, anyone who's wrongfully arrested should be compensated with a full recovery of their vehicle.”

“Not to mention there are other crimes out there besides street racing - drugs, stolen vehicles, drunk driving, you name it.” Adds Ronnie.

“All you're doing is making a mockery of me and my unit, and that calls for some payback too.” The chief smirks at the defense attorneys staring at him, to which he further adds, “Do you all believe that I am dumb enough to operate an illegal chop shop ring without being fully aware of the consequences?”

“No, but we do have this...” The lynx lawyer, Ronnie Romulund, marches up to a view screen and taps it to portray an image of a spray painted license plate which appears to be vandalized.

“And this...” the lynx moves on to a new image, this time showing the trunk of Bennett's Chevrolet Corvette C6.R police cruiser being popped open with several large bags of money inside. The chief is now deadly silent and aghast at seeing the images, but this wasn't the end yet.

Ronnie waltzes to the Chief, joining Estefania while bluntly questioning the chief, “The detectives who examined the license plate revealed that it was you who vandalized this license plate, which came off of an impounded Lamborghini Aventador SVJ Roadster. Now as for the money in the trunk, answer us this: Were planning on turning that money back into the bank or using it for your own greed?”

That's when the police chief started to sweat. But even his own team continued to defend and justify the chief's alibi, claiming that he still has no connection. But after Estefania, Tyson, and Ronnie concurrently present the evidence to Bennett's team, they still refuse to accept the facts, further cementing the defense team's allegations.

The consequences later come when Bennett finally admits his guilt to the ring. Seely is subsequently declared not guilty, whereas the police chief is not so fortunate.

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Following the verdict, the results were devastating to the police department as a whole, but the not guilty verdict for Seely resulted in a bittersweet victory. While the team agreed to stay in Rockport temporarily, Seely is outside, getting some fresh air. Caelus joins him outside for the moment, reflecting on the trouble they just narrowly escaped.

Linking an arm around the unsuspecting zebra, Caelus whispers to his zebra partner, “Seely, it's over. We won! You have absolutely nothing to worry about or be guilty for. We beat the police, really, we did!”

Seely exhales through his nose and murmurs, unsure, “I don't know, boss. I have a bad feeling something is gonna happen, and it's not gonna be pretty. Our defense team has proven the department guilty of corruption, and with the chief being fired, we're basically targets ourselves now.”

Suddenly, Caelus' phone begins ringing in his back pocket and the lion withdraws from his zebra friend, excusing himself to take the call. On answering, Caelus hears the roar of a 5.4L Modular V8 engine with the whine of an aftermarket supercharger.

“Yeah?” Caelus answers the call, his ears flicking occasionally. He frowns upon picking up wailing sirens in the background.

 **Pursuit Theme #5 - Need For Speed: Unbound OST)**

“Caelus, right? This is Estefania! Bennett has not taken this lightly and he's ordered a manhunt for everyone involved! I'm being chased now and everyone has to leave the city, pronto!” The sound of spikes being deployed even catches Seely's attention, as well as the concerned look on Caelus' face.

“Boss, what’s going on??” When Seely approaches Caelus, the lion has just hung up from Estefania. Pale in the face, Caelus urges Seely, “We have to leave the city ASAP! Everyone is in danger!”

“You’re seriously joking, right? The police force wants us all dead??” Seely sweated.

“Apparently, yes. They’re already hunting Estefania and her team down! Who’s to say they won’t hunt us down also??” Caelus reasoned.

The moment the pair rush back to their cars, Caelus calls his team to alert them to the police shutdown in hopes of ensuring their escape.

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Meanwhile, in the Camden district of Rockport, Estefania is racing along Chase Road in her gray Ford GT, being tailed by three squad cars trying to stay with her.

:Attention all units! Attention all units! Multiple Code 6 drivers are aggressively evading police. They will use their vehicles to ram police. All units, exercise caution when apprehending. Suspect vehicle is a gray Ford GT.:

The frustrated female wolf manages to reach Highway 99 just before a police roadblock cordons off the section up ahead. And from there, the pursuit resumes.

:Attention all units - we are at Condition 10!!! Repeat, Condition 10!!! This is not a drill!!!:

“How many cops are there? The police chief was fired!” Estefania could only see more police units converging on her location. What she fails to notice are two vehicles in particular also converging on her position - a silver Aston Martin DB9 and a purple Renault Clio V6.

Working together, Ronnie and Tyson use their cars to keep pursuing units at bay. At the same time, Estefania sends out an alert for Caelus and his team to beat it. It is now a massive war on the streets with both sides fighting for control of one another. However, it should be no problem for the Mooncrest mercenary team.

The pursuit goes off the freeway in the Downtown part of Rosewood heading north towards the Rosewood College Campus, leading Estefania to careen into the circular Campus Way street but after spikes are dropped by Tyson behind her, this allows Estefania to widen the gap and hit the gas, but only for a brief moment.

Incidentally, a traffic accident up ahead forces Estefania to cut onto Union Way, leaving the campus behind. The remaining police units follow, adding to whatever pressure Estefania has left. But after cutting a hard right onto another street, she bypasses Highlander Stadium, heading towards Heritage Heights in the process.

“Caelus!! Where are you guys at!?” Tyson attempts to contact Caelus and his team through his earpiece. But a loud commotion erupts behind them, allowing them to escape the rest of the way towards Highway 99.

“We're all scattered about but we made Silverton our destination point! Head to the Paradise Motel on the Neon Mile!” Caelus urged. With a set destination in mind, the race to scramble out of Rockport is already underway.

“We're headed that way now! We'll meet you over there!” Tyson reported before hanging up.

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*:Close the gap!!! What's wrong with you people!?:*

Meanwhile in Downtown Rockport, Seely and Caelus are racing close by each other, having split up from the rest of the team to lessen police activity on them. Now they must regroup on the road to fight back in a collective effort to fully escape the police.

With his powerful Dodge Challenger SRT8, Caelus is able to keep up with Seely's Renault Clio V6, as well as being able to fight off the cops. Taking the lead along Highway 201, Caelus charges into the rear of an unmarked Lamborghini Murcielago patrol car, forcing it out of the way and flipping it over. Seely is able to make it through the gap, unscathed.

*:Suspect forced his way through the roadblock! Still mobile!:*

Upon racing along and passing the Camden part of town, the pair is able to catch up to another pursuit underway. Up ahead is a familiar Porsche Carrera GT being chased by two State Patrol squad cars. Then all of a sudden, there is a massive shower of sparks with blue and green streaks coursing throughout the squad cars!

Recognizing the design of the car up ahead and dodging the disabled police vehicles, Caelus proceeds to contact the driver for a situation update, “Amon, talk to me! How are you holding up?”

The eagle driver responds, “I’m holding up pretty well! These cops are putting up no kind of fight, just chasing me! Enzo and Cycnus are probably in the same light!”

“That's to be determined! Right now, we link up and beat it out of here!” The lion urged.

Coming out of Agostini Heights and exiting Highway 201, the team begin their journey towards the Rosewood district heading north when Cycnus contacts the team to inform them, “Hey guys, Cycnus here! I’m in Infinity Park! I just lost the cops after accidentally knocking down a big rig, but I'm fine! I'm with our defense team now! How are you guys holding up?”

“We should be there soon once we reach Highway 99! It should take us no time. The cops here are a joke, honestly.” Caelus grumbled. “Amon, Seely, and I are en route! Where is Enzo?”

At that moment, an explosion is heard in the background where the tiger makes perfect timing on making his presence known, “Had some pigs chasing me and I laid down a booby-trapped Stun Mine. Needless to say, it did the trick, though I am not surprised that our former client is a bounty hunter now.”

“Enzo, what did you do!?” Caelus hisses in return. Hearing the explosion in the background, the lion leader immediately demands an answer, to which the tiger simply remarks, “Just doing what I normally do - explosive traps.”

The comment from Enzo makes Seely groan in worry, “We’re really in for it now...!”

“Not unless we escape in time! Come on!” Reaching Highway 99 from a short drive along surface streets, Amon activates a Turbo Boost in taking the lead. But with his car being a step up above Caelus’ Dodge Challenger SRT8 and Seely’s Renault Clio V6, only Enzo is able to stay with the eagle in his Pagani Zonda F.

#### (🎵 **Cooldown Theme #5 - Need For Speed: Unbound OST**)

*:Lost sight of them! Working to catch up! Will advise if situation changes!:*

*:Cover units be advised - suspects were last seen headed along Highway 99. A perimeter is to be established a half-mile from the suspects’ last known location. Advise if situation updates.:*

“Uuugggghhhhh, these cops are a joke. I was hoping to have more of a challenge!” Seely groans in complaint.

“This is better than having a heart attack.” Caelus reminded, sticking to the escape plan.

“These guys aren’t even trying to catch us! What gives??” Even Enzo is questioning the police attention on them, finding it highly suspicious.

A short race later, the four remaining members of the Mooncrest mercenary team reach Infinity Park via access road, eventually meeting up at the Paradise Hotel to regroup with their defense team. Upon editing out of their vehicles, they all shake hands in respect, relief, and farewell; grateful for their assistance, Cynus observes, “We cannot thank you guys enough for drawing away the cops from us. You guys really do work as an impressive team!”

One of the lawyers in return, Ronnie, states, “We’re also happy to help! We never thought it would come to this, did we?”

After bidding their farewells, both sides separate and go their separate ways with the defense lawyers driving off and the Mooncrest team heading towards their safehouse. The next time they come out, they will not be pulling any punches...

***TO BE CONTINUED...***