

Another rainy evening in El Paso. It seemed to be the season.

In the midtown area, off of Edgemere Boulevard, was the Pebble Hills Apartments complex. It was fitting that the place was located midtown, for the apartment complex itself was essentially a middle-of-the-road affair. The sand-colored buildings were fairly clean and fairly large, but were not especially fancy. They did not exactly catch the eye for their aesthetic qualities, but certainly did not look a shambles. The exterior indicated exactly what they were: clean and serviceable.

That was really all a person could often ask for, nowadays...and many would settle for less if they couldn't afford even that.

A woman with mocha-colored skin and sea green eyes approached one of the buildings in the complex carrying a plastic bag in one hand, the other steadying herself with the guardrail as she tromped up the stairs. The lady was slender in build, with long black hair tied back in a ponytail, and a small mole on the left side of her chin.

She was dressed in a police uniform, with a badge that read "Vasquez."

Officer Vasquez approached the door to the right side of the staircase as soon as she reached the top. She brushed a few stray hairs, dampened with rain, out of her face; the rain itself was mild and drizzly - a gray-sky-born pitter-patter of thin wet streaks that seemed to evaporate within the first three seconds after they hit the pavement of the sidewalks below.

The Southwest Texas heat will do that...but at least it meant the day was cooler for the people in the city.

Officer Vasquez knocked on the door; a masculine voice from inside called out, "Come in!"

The woman nodded to herself, reached into her back pocket with her free hand, and pulled out her keycard. She swiped it through the electronic lock, and once it opened, turned the knob and pushed open the door.

Once through the threshold, Vasquez shut the door quickly behind her, and then pocketed her keycard before strolling through the foyer and past the kitchen area into the living room.

Her roommate and police partner - out of uniform - sat on a stool beside their sofa's pull-out bed. He was an athletic-looking man with tan skin, a crew cut, and a small black moustache. A silver ring was on his left hand, and his piercing black eyes quickly looked up as he heard the lady enter the room. He smiled a thin, weary sort of smile at her, then turned away again to focus on

the figure lying on their sleeper sofa.

“Day three,” he intoned, gravely. “Still nothing.”

“Nothing at all?” Vasquez urged.

The man sighed softly, his hands clenched into fists, brow furrowed in concentration; his partner knew he was clearly stressing, and didn’t blame him...for a while, Vincent had smoked to ease his stress, but he’d been trying to quit for over a year now, and wasn’t about to introduce nicotine and tobacco to their hapless patient.

She knew the look in his eyes was a “God, I could use a cigarette,” look.

“He mutters, Vanessa,” said Vincent. “Just mutters. Most of the time I don’t even know what he’s saying.”

Vanessa put down the bag on the coffee table nearby, then approached her partner and placed an assuring hand on his shoulder.

“We’re doing what we can,” she said, softly. “That’s about all we’re able.”

Vincent nodded to her, then both looked to the creature in their care: a huge, red-brown furred, anthropomorphic bat. Its left wing was uncomfortably wrapped in a sling and bandages, the right carefully spread out. Its lower right leg - including its ankle and part of its foot - was also swathed in bandages, and still more were wound about its chest. The kevlar vest it had been wearing was hidden away in one of their closets, and the pair of bloodstained cargo pants it wore were still attached - neither of the officers had wanted to remove them. The creature breathed steadily in and out, slumbering peacefully, mouth slightly agape.

“He’ll pull through,” Vincent said softly.

“I know,” said Vanessa Vasquez, patting her partner’s shoulder and giving it a gentle rub. “It’s just a question of how long...”

---

Night Glider’s dreams were a mess of literally nightmarish proportions. Time was meaningless as he found himself spiralling through a hazy mental landscape; a hell of his own brain’s concoction. At this point, he was in a great black void, when suddenly he heard a howl in the distance. He ran through the blackness, but no matter where he went, the howling never stopped, and it always felt like something was right behind him. He wanted to look back, but could never

get the courage. Finally, he'd try to fly, but even as he took to the sky, the howl grew louder, and a giant, black wolf with glowing eyes formed before him. The creature grinned with jagged fangs oozing with blood, and would snatch him out of mid-air with one paw...before callously, carelessly, dropping him inside of its fanged maw. Night would scream for what felt like an eternity as he tumbled through infinite leagues of horrid black air, before landing in a pool of what seemed to be blood. The pool would grow larger and deeper and more horrendous altogether, as he flailed and tried to swim, but only seemed to be sucked deeper and deeper...

Then, even as he desperately fought for air, and shouted to the sky, begging any God that would listen to save him, to show some form of mercy or pity...he felt something press at his forehead.

Then, everything abruptly went black, and he heard voices...

"He's not running a fever, so that's good at least," said a man's voice.

"Oh! Careful," came a woman's. "Looks like he's finally stirring..."

"Watch him," the man said in a warning tone.

"Roger," the woman responded, crisply.

Night Glider moaned as consciousness returned; his head was pounding, and everything felt horribly numb for a few moments as his green eyes fluttered open...

"Wh-what...? I'm...where am I...? This isn't-"

He froze, eyes snapping alert and open, as he came face to face with two human faces: a tan-skinned man and a mocha-skinned woman.

The bat didn't take time to fully register the sight. Didn't take time to take in any other information. Didn't even spare a moment for the two humans to take a breath.

He just reacted.

"SCREEEEEEEEAAAK!"

"Hold him steady!" the man snapped.

"On it!" the woman responded, and both humans practically dove as they grabbed the batty

vigilante and struggled to pin him down. Night Glider screeched and squealed in fear, flapping his one good wing, shaking his head violently, and kicking out with both legs, the claws threatening to rake through the humans who tried to keep held in place.

“LET GO! LET GO!” Night Glider screamed. “LEAVE ME ALONE!”

“Calm down! Relax!” shouted Vincent.

“I WON’T LET YOU HURT ME! GET OFF OF ME!” snarled Night Glider, and snapped his short, sharp teeth in Vincent’s face.

“We’re not gonna hurt you!” exclaimed Vasquez..

“YOU BET NOT!” spat Night Glider, kicking at her and letting out another screech. He had to get away...he was in danger...he was caught...HE HAD TO GET AWAY...!

“Will you stop thrashing?!” hissed Vincent. “You’re gonna break what few bones you have left at this rate!”

“You’re only making things worse!” said Vanessa. “For God’s sake, can’t you tell you’re wounded?!”

“FREE! FREE! NEED TO BE FREE!” squealed Night Glider, whimpering between screeches, clearly not registering anything.

The cops were worried, to put it in the mildest terms; if they couldn’t settle the giant bat-person soon, he’d be hurt even more than he already was, and helping him heal would be harder than ever.

“He needs a sedative!” growled Vincent.

“How are you gonna get one?!” snapped Vanessa. “I can’t hold him on my own!”

Just then, her eyes lit up.

“Wait a minute, wait!” she exclaimed, “I have a thought, I have a thought!”

And before Vincent could ask what it was, Vasquez managed to adjust her grip, and extended one arm towards Night Glider’s head.

Night Glider whipped his head about, and growled dangerously, baring his short sharp teeth. For a second, it looked like he might bite Vanessa's hand off...

...Then, she brushed her fingers over his snout.

Night Glider froze up; he blinked his huge eyes, and his grooved, fox-like nose twitched as he fidgeted a little more...then fell completely still, panting heavily and whimpering as Vasquez stroked over his snout carefully in slow, smooth motions.

"There we go," she said softly. "There we go...easy now, big fella...my name is Vanessa. My friend is Vincent. Do you remember? We introduced ourselves when you woke up the first time."

Night blinked again...and his ears slowly fell back as he whimpered again.

"...Va...nes...sa," he repeated, in between heavy, wheezing breaths.

Vanessa nodded.

"Officer Vanessa Vasquez," she confirmed. "We're police. But we don't want to arrest you. We want to help you."

Night Glider gulped thinly...then whimpered and finally settled completely, going limp and heavy in the officers' arms. They released and let him relax onto the sleeper as Vanessa retracted her hand.

Vincent gaped.

"How did you know that would even work?" he asked slowly.

Vanessa grinned.

"My *papi* used to work at the zoo."

"...You never mentioned that before..."

Vasquez shrugged.

“You never asked.”

“Vincent?” spoke up Night Glider, addressing the tan-skinned man, who turned to him and nodded.

“Officer Vincent Rando,” he confirmed. “We found you in an alley. You’re still in pretty bad shape.”

Night bit his lip, looked down at himself, and shuddered. He groaned and let his head fall back, closing his eyes; now that consciousness was mixing with his reason again, he could feel the pain; his thrashing had opened up some of the wounds under the bandages, sending prickling sharpness through various parts of his body.

“...How long was I out?” he whispered, hoarsely.

“You woke up after we brought you here,” Vincent answered, “But then fell asleep again almost immediately. You’ve been asleep for almost seventy-two hours since.”

Night smacked his lips.

“...That explains why I’m parched...and a little hungry...”

Vincent and Vanessa looked to each other with slight smiles; Vasquez nodded to Rando, and then stood up and moved towards the kitchen. Night Glider watched her go, then looked to Rando.

“What’s the damage?” he asked, quietly.

“The biggest issues are your left wing and your right leg,” Vincent said. “Whatever you were fighting, they pretty much shattered your ankle, and left some pretty big holes in your skin. Your wing membrane is shredded, and you somehow dislocated the shoulder on the same side; probably from taking a tumble.”

“That’s one way of putting it,” the big bat mumbled.

Vincent chuckled wryly, and pointed to the bandages on his chest.

“Two cracked ribs, as well,” he said. “That vest of yours kept it from being any worse, I think. You also had some pretty deep cuts on your cheek, and at some point bit your own tongue, but

those have mostly healed.”

Instinctively, impulsively, Night Glider reached up and touched the cheek in question gently; he shuddered as he felt the scabbing gashed there, remembering the beast that had given him those cuts...

“Hey, don’t pick at it!” Vincent snapped.

Night Glider winced and lowered his winged hand.

“S-Sorry,” he said quietly.

The officer nodded stiffly.

“Anyway, aside from all that, a few bruises here and there, and a mild head injury; if you’re awake, then that’s no longer a problem.”

“Tell that to my headache,” growled Night Glider, then tilted his head slightly. “Bit my tongue, you say?”

Officer Rando nodded again. Night Glider scowled, running said tongue across his fuzzy lips.

“...That explains why the tip feels a bit numb...”

“Just be glad it’s healed enough for you to speak; wasn’t a very deep bite, thankfully.”

“Hopefully,” came the woman’s voice, “It’s not so numb you can’t taste anything.”

Night Glider looked up...and his ears pricked up and his nose twitched, eyes lighting up as he saw Officer Vasquez approaching with a big bunch of bananas.

“I was tempted to bring you the blood of virgins,” she smirked, “But I didn’t think you’d appreciate the vampire joke.”

The look on the human-sized bat’s face indicated she thought right.

Officer Vasquez placed the bunch of bananas on the coffee table, and broke one off the stem. She then offered it to the Night Glider. The huge bat-man grinned and took it in his free “hand,” then used his sharp teeth to peel it carefully. With the cream-colored fruit within exposed, the big bat

sniffed at it carefully, let out a soft chittering sound...and licked his lips with his pointed tongue.

Officer Rando chuckled...then jumped as - SCHLOMPH! - the giant bat snarfed up half the banana in a single bite. His cheeks stuffed almost cartoonishly, he chewed and smiled and let out another happy chitter, looking over to Officer Vasquez gratefully. It seemed the batty vigilante was too polite to talk with his mouth full, so he simply nodded.

The officers smirked and looked at each other as the immense Fruit Bat continued to stuff his face.

“Well,” said Rando, “At least we can feed him easily.”

“Indeed,” winked Vanessa. “But you’re the one responsible for taking him on walks.”

Night Glider responded by sticking his pointed tongue out at them before finishing off his banana. He was frankly far too hungry to feel upset.

And far, far too happy to be alive.

---

*One Month Later...*

Chief Domingo sighed softly, the fingers of one hand pressed to his temples as he scratched his pen against some paperwork with his other hand, looking tremendously bored. The hurly-burly senior officer with graying brown hair took a moment to adjust the glasses he wore before his steely eyes, and scratched at his scarred cheek idly before continuing his work.

A moment later, there was a knock at his office door.

“Who is it?” he called out gruffly.

“Officers Rando and Vasquez, sir.”

“Come in. I’ve been waiting.”

The two officers, in full uniform, did. Vasquez had her sunglasses on a lanyard that hung about her neck. Rando removed his as he stepped into the Chief’s office, and pocketed them carefully.

Chief Domingo put down his pen, pocketed his own glasses, and looked up at the two, who stood at attention. He nodded to them silently, and gestured to the seats before his desk. The two



partners nodded back, relaxed, and sat down.

“Is something the matter, Chief?” asked Vasquez.

“Possibly,” Domingo admitted.

“I didn’t do it!” blurted out Rando.

Both the Chief and his partner looked at him.

“...Do what?” Domingo asked, suspiciously.

Rando shrugged.

“I dunno. Whatever it is, I didn’t do it. I’m flexible that way.”

Vasquez sighed and facepalmed, shaking her head wearily at her partner’s antics.

Domingo just scowled.

“I’ll thank you to be serious, Rando,” he said, coldly.

The impish smile on Vincent’s face fell, and he nodded back.

“Yes, sir,” he murmured.

“I’ll cut right to the chase,” the Chief said, folding his hands before him and leaning forward in his chair. “For the past few weeks, you two have been behaving...oddly.”

The two looked at one another, then back to the Chief, saying nothing.

“You’ve been taking separate shifts,” the Chief said, “More often than usual. You’ve been unusually silent during briefings and meetings. You’ve been actively seeking more and more jobs close to your residence.”

“Is there anything wrong with that?” Vasquez asked, slowly.

“Not at all,” the Chief answered, calmly. “But it’s not how either of you usually act. You’re usually together as frequently as possible. You usually don’t really care what jobs you get, let

alone how close or how far away they are from Pebble Hills. You're usually a lot more vocal at meetings, asking questions and making suggestions...even if they usually suck."

"Gee, thanks," grumbled Rando.

"I still think you'd look good in spandex, Rando," the Chief said...then, half a second later, suddenly pointed at the officer. "THERE. That's another thing!"

Rando jumped, as did his partner.

"...Wh-what do you mean?" stammered the tan-skinned man.

"You squirmed," said the Chief, narrowing his eyes. "Any time I bring up the whole Night Flapper-

"Night Glider."

"Whatever, Vasquez. Whenever I bring it up, one of you or both of you get this funny look on your face. You're both good cops, but you're not very good at keeping secrets."

Vasquez and Rando were silent.

"So, are you?" asked the Chief, calmly. "Is something wrong? Does it have to do with the Night Glider? Do you two know something I don't know?"

The officers each took a deep breath.

"It's...complicated, Chief," admitted Rando.

"Explain," Domingo demanded.

"We can't right now," apologized Vasquez. "It's something personal, Chief. Something the two of us have to work out together. All we can do is promise you it isn't affecting our performance."

"You don't have to promise that," shrugged the Chief. "I can tell plainly. Keep working the way you are, and you'll be catching more crooks than that...that THING ever could."

The pair said nothing.

“Are you SURE you don’t want to tell me?” the Chief pressed. “I won’t penalize you for it, and I won’t ask again.”

“Very sure, sir,” Vasquez nodded.

“Sorry, sir,” added Rando.

The Chief looked the pair up and down, sighed, and shook his head before putting his glasses back on.

“Fine. You’re dismissed. And if it’s really so important, take the day off. But be here early tomorrow!”

The pair looked at each other with surprise; the Chief wasn’t usually this gracious. Not by a long shot.

“Well...thank you, sir!” Vasquez nearly laughed.

The Chief just grunted and waved a hand dismissively, seemingly focused on his paperwork.

“See you tomorrow, Chief,” smiled Rando, and put his sunglasses back on, before leading his partner out of the office.

The Chief waited till the door closed...then looked to it briefly and frowned. His gracious behavior had been a last ditch effort to get the pair to talk to him; he knew neither would react to his usual brusque manners. Domingo was sure that the two officers knew something about the Night Glider; the vigilante had not been seen or heard from in over a month, and there were even rumors in the underworld that he was finally kaput.

If the interfering thing was dead, that was perfectly fine with the Chief; it had been making a mockery of his department for too long, and he wasn’t even sure of whose side it was really on. But if his officers knew something - even if it was as simple as knowing where the creature was buried - he wanted to be sure it wasn’t something compromising.

They had all but admitted to hiding something. Now, he needed to know what.

The Chief picked up his office phone and dialed the front desk.

“Yes, sir?” said the flighty voice on the other end.

“Get Adrian and Armando in here, on the double,” the Chief ordered. “I have a special assignment for them. Tell them it’s long-term...”

---

*One Week Later...*

Officer Vincent Rando whistled a cheery tune as he moved through the grocery store. He looked over a checklist as he left the dairy section and began to browse around the fresh produce area.

“Let’s see...grapes, pears, peaches, mangoes, watermelon, apples, bananas, oranges, lemons...”

“Wow,” came a voice, “What are you looking for? The best recipe for fruit salad?”

Rando turned around fast...then smiled.

“Yeah, didn’t even let me say pineapples,” he chuckled. “No fruit salad is complete without those. What’s up, ‘Mando?”

Officer Armando smiled at his fellow cop and shook hands; off duty, the fellow officer wore a white ballcap and plain white t-shirt, along with blue denim jeans.

“Needed to pick up some stuff for my wife,” he answered, gesturing to his own cart, which was filled with baking supplies. “One of my son’s friends is having a birthday soon; she wanted to bake a cake for the occasion.”

“Oh, nice!” said Rando, and gestured to his own cart. “Just finishing up here; getting general supplies. Our fridge is running low.”

“That’s one way to spend the day off,” shrugged Armando, and tilted his head. “You do seem like you’ve got a lot of fruit on the list.”

“Diet,” was all Rando said.

“Never told me about it.”

“Didn’t need to,” shrugged Vincent, and waved as he went on his way. “Anyway, gotta get back to shopping. Peace!”

“See ya!” chortled Armando, and went on his own way...but the moment he was sure Vincent

couldn't see, he pulled his cart into another aisle, pulled out a small pad of note paper, along with a blue ink pen, and wrote something down...

-----  
*Two Weeks Later...*

Vanessa Vasquez hummed softly as she exited the public library. She was heading to her cruiser when a sharp whistle caught her attention. She looked up and smiled.

"Adrian!" she recognized, and waved. "How are you?"

"All right, so far," her fellow officer observed, and lifted a book he carried under one arm. "Just figured I'd use part of my lunch hour to return this."

"Same here," nodded Vasquez, and tilted her head. "What book is it?"

Adrian held it out in response, and Officer Vasquez took it. She frowned at the title.

"How to Take Care of a Cat - For Total Idiots."

"That sums me up perfectly, don't you think?" Adrian joked.

Vasquez didn't even smile as she looked up at him. She seemed confused.

"...But...aren't you allergic to cats?"

Adrian responded by hastily taking the book from her.

"L-Long story, heh heh!" he stammered nervously. "Just...gotta run, 'kay? Talk to you later!"

So saying, her fellow officer - Armando's twin - hustled into the library. Vanessa watched him go for a moment...turned away thoughtfully...then shook her head quietly before getting into her cruiser and leaving.

As she pulled away, she was unaware of the fact Adrian watched her go from behind the tinted windows in the library foyer. The officer sighed softly, and then approached the front desk.

"Returning this," he said to the matronly lady in red-rimmed glasses who sat behind it.

"Oh, certainly!" she replied, and took the book carefully, then tilted her head as Adrian frowned

and pointed to another nearby book.

“Did the lady who was just in here return that?” he asked. “The fellow officer.”

“...Well...I’m not sure if I am supposed to tell you, but...I see no harm in it,” the elderly lady shrugged. “Yes, yes she did.”

Adrian nodded slowly.

“Thanks,” he answered, and hurried out of the library.

The old librarian watched him go, rather puzzled, and adjusted her scarlet glasses as she looked back down at the book in question.

It was a biology book all about bats.

---

*Another Week Later...*

Officers Vasquez and Rando moved up the stairs leading to their apartment.

“Nice of the Chief to let us off early,” Rando chuckled. “Now we can keep an eye on the flying fox...”

“He’s been very generous these past two months...”

Rando paused as they reached the landing halfway up the stairs, and turned to look back at his partner.

“You say that like it’s a bad thing,” he observed.

“Not bad. Just unusual,” Vasquez responded. “Either what we told him really got to him, or...”

“...Or...?”

“...Or,” Vasquez said grimly, “He suspects something.”

“Psh.”

“I’m serious,” Vasquez said. “He brought up Night Glider. He hasn’t spoken to us about that

since. He doesn't do stuff like that lightly."

"He probably just decided it wasn't worth it, and with the lack of activity, he hasn't had much time to get angry," shrugged Rando. "Once Night's back out on the streets, ready for action, he'll be his usual grumpy self. Wait and see."

Vasquez did not look convinced, but said nothing; she only sighed and followed her partner as they continued the climb upstairs to their balcony-view apartment.

When they reached the apartment, Vincent knocked on the door.

"Hey, Night," he called. "We're here."

"Keep it down," grumbled Vanessa. "Walls have ears here, you know."

Vincent rolled his eyes, and waited. When he received no response, he tried again.

"Open up," he called, knocking a second time. "It's us!"

Still no reply.

The two cops grew worried, they glanced at each other, and Vincent stepped aside so Vanessa could try.

"Hello?" she called. "Are you there?"

Still no answer.

Now truly concerned, Vanessa whipped out her keycard and carefully and quietly stepped into the room. The pair were still in uniform, and Vincent placed a hand on the butt of his pistol, shutting the door quietly with his foot.

The pair moved past the kitchen...then stopped short as they peered around the corner into the living room.

Both sighed with relief, and smirked at the sight before them.

Night Glider was seated on the sofa quietly, his attention fully focused on the television set. (Presumably, he had been so focused, he'd never heard them.) The bat-like inhuman had lost

most of his bandages, as well as the sling, though his foot was still wrapped up. He was watching an anime that the police had recorded for him: an episode of “Hellsing.” (The irony was lost on no one.) This, however, was not what got the duo’s attention most.

No, that was the fact that Night was watching the show with huge, wide eyes...while happily munching on a mango, his cheeks stuffed and speckled with bits of uneaten fruit, ears flicking here and there and chewing fast, a chipper little smile on his face.

“Okay,” Vanessa whispered, “Not gonna lie...that is the cutest thing I could have hoped to walk in on.”

“You say, as he watches one of the most gory things ever put to television,” mumbled Vincent.

“Hush, don’t spoil the moment,” hissed Vanessa. “Just *look at him!*”

Vincent rolled his eyes.

“You are such a girl sometimes, you know that?” he teased.

“I will judo toss you out the window,” Vanessa said, very seriously.

Vincent’s teasing smirk fell.

“Sorry,” he grunted.

Apparently, Vincent’s grunt was a little too loud, as THAT somehow managed to break Night Glider’s concentration. He froze, jerked his head towards them...and let out a rather mousey squeak before swallowing his mouthful of fruit. The giant fruit bat licked his fuzzy lips with his long, pointed tongue and blushed, ears flattening back in embarrassment.

“Oh! S-sorry, heh...just...um...having lunch...”

He hiccuped and chattered softly, covering his mouth with one wing while the other held the mango, his nose twitching as he blinked up at the pair.

“...Holy mother of Mary,” mumbled Vincent. “You’re right, he IS adorable.”

“Huh?” Night cheeped out.



Vincent Rando hung his head as his small moustache bristled.

“N-Nothing,” he muttered.

Officer Vasquez rolled her eyes, and then stepped forward, smiling at Night Glider.

“You’ll be able to leave us tomorrow,” she said softly, crossing her arms over her chest, and eyeing his ankle in concern. “Still aches?”

Night nodded and glanced to his leg as well with a sigh.

“Yeah...they, uh...they got me real good there...”

“At least you’re alive,” put in Vincent. “Though I wish you’d tell us who did this...”

Night smiled almost sadly. In truth, he had considered more than once, over the past two months, telling his new friends about Oscuro...but each time they asked, he held back. He had told them nothing except his enemy was something no normal human could cope with.

And the X-Men were a little busy at the moment.

“I want to thank you both,” he said, quietly. “For all your help. For...for taking care of me, keeping me secret, letting me heal.”

“You cost us a fortune in fruit,” snorted Vanessa. “You SHOULD be grateful.”

“Sorry about that,” chuckled Night.

“I wish we could do more to help,” put in Vincent. “Or maybe have you help us.”

“Help you?” Night asked. “How?”

The cops looked at one another, then back again.

“Well...you’ve been catching more crooks than our department has been able to handle for a while. The Chief blames the rising crime on you, but I’d say you’re the one keeping things from getting any worse.”

“I just don’t think the Chief would cotton to the idea of you helping us out directly,” Vanessa put

in. “But there might be another way.”

“What’s that?” asked Night.

“You could be our undercover helper,” Vanessa explained. “Give us tips, and we can close in and round up the bad guys; if you need back-up, we’re there, and if you get ‘em before us, we snag ‘em right away. So you can keep working in private, but we can get more credit.”

“And the Chief never has to know,” added Vincent.

Night frowned. He was about to voice his doubts about the plan - namely that he would need a way to communicate with the cops, among other issues - when suddenly, the apartment door flew open with a BANG!

Acting on instinct, the two cops whirled about and whipped out their guns. Night’s eyes widened more than ever, and he let out a fearful chitter, memories of sharp teeth and claws returning to his mind as he carefully moved off the sofa; his wounded wing had healed, but it still felt stiff...

...However, it wasn’t a werewolf that entered the room. In fact, the three figures that DID enter were as much of a surprise to the two police officers as they were to Night Glider.

“Chief?!” exclaimed Vanessa and Vincent together.

Sure enough, there stood Chief Domingo, flanked by Officers Armando and Adrian. The two officers slung out their own guns and aimed them at Rando and Vasquez.

The Chief, for his part, was holding a taser.

There was a pause. The Chief glared sourly at the two officers.

“Well done, boys,” he growled to Armando and Adrian. “You did a good job keeping tabs on these turncoats. Looks like our suspicions were right.”

“Um...your suspicions, Chief,” Adrian thought to say, relaxing slightly.

“Yeah,” Armando added. “I mean...they could have just been tending to a NORMAL bat...”

“Shut up, or you’re both fired.”

The officers subsided.

The Chief's scowl became a triumphant smirk as he looked towards Night Glider, whose own eyes narrowed.

"Well, well, well," the senior officer practically purred. "Our very own 'superhero.' To think you were bunking with two of the finest members on my force the whole time. Clever, gotta say."

"It's not what you think, Chief," Vanessa Vasquez said.

"You need to listen to us!" pleaded Vincent Rando.

"Stow it!" snapped Domingo. "Your badges are mine! You'll get plenty of time to explain this in the lock-up!"

"Get on the ground," added Armando, seriously.

"Don't make us shoot," Adrian put in, just as solemnly.

"Funny," sneered Vanessa. "I was gonna say the same thing."

"Please, please, calm down!" Night Glider cried out, and looked towards Domingo. "Sir, please, they--"

**BZZZT!**

Night Glider's words were cut off. He convulsed, his wings flopped about, and crumpled to the floor between the two roommates and the intruders.

"Too easy," huffed Domingo, then looked up at Vincent and Vanessa, who seemed stunned. "On your knees. Drop your weapons. Let's not make this any uglier, my little turncoats. Capisce?"

Vanessa and Vincent paused...then obeyed, putting their hands behind their heads.

"Good boy; good girl," grinned The Chief, nastily, then snapped his fingers and gestured to the other two officers. "Cuff 'em, *muchachos*."

Armando and Adrian holstered their guns, and each snapped out a pair of handcuffs. They moved to step past Night Glider and handcuff Vincent and Vanessa...

...That was clearly their undoing.

“SCREEEEAAARRRR!”

Night Glider suddenly let out an ear-piecing scream - not his super-sonic sound, but certainly quite shrill - and the two enemy officers dropped their cuffs and threw their hands over their ears. From the ground, Night Glider lashed out with his one good leg, and whirled about, tripping the pair and causing them to crack their skulls into the floor, knocking the two out.

Domingo took a couple steps back as Night Glider got to his feet and unfurled his wings, crouching in almost predatory way, standing protectively in front of Vincent and Vanessa.

“It takes a lot more than that to put me outta commission, Chief,” he hissed. “However, for the record? THAT. HURT.”

The Chief gritted his teeth, one eye twitching, and in response tossed aside the taser and reached for his own gun.

“THEN TRY THIS!” he shouted, and opened fire.

BANG! BANG!

The two shots were aimed at Night Glider’s head. The bat-like being ducked and dodged, and then plunged forward, slashing out with the claws of one winged hand. It wasn’t easy to move fast with a limp, but he managed, and knocked the gun out of the Chief’s grip.

Then, while Domingo was startled by the speed of the creature - THWUMP! - Night kicked his good foot into the burly man’s stomach. The Chief doubled-over, before - THRACK! - a swing of one clawed fist clubbed over the side of his head.

The Chief grunted as he fell on his side, his scarred cheek slapping into the floor. Night Glider wasted no time. He turned to the police still on their knees, and pointed to the balcony.

“Get to the window!” he ordered.

Rando and Vasquez obeyed in an instant.

“It won’t do you any good!” boomed the Chief. “I’ve got eight other officers on the ground!”

“Good,” smirked Night Glider as he hurried to follow the officers to the balcony. “I could use a challenge to stretch my wings.”

His words were bold, but they did NOT match how he felt; his heart was pounding with anxiety as he neared the window. Sure enough, two squad cars - all the doors open, four officers spilling out of each - were positioned directly below the balcony. When they saw Night Glider leap onto the railing, and noticed Vanessa and Vincent with him, one of the men pulled out a bullhorn, while the other seven tugged their pistols free.

“Stop where you are!” ordered the Captain. “Make one false move, and we fire!”

Night Glider gulped nervously, but knew what he had to do. He turned to the pair and whispered urgently.

“When I say to,” he hissed, “Each of you needs to grab onto one of my legs.”

The cops blinked.

“Are you serious?” Vanessa gawked.

“Just do it!” snapped Night Glider, and without waiting for further response, took a deep breath before giving his wings a mighty flap.

A few flaps later, and he steadily began to rise into the sky. His chest was sore, his newly-healed wing stiff, but he kept moving.

“He’s trying to escape!” the Captain shouted to his men.

“FIRE, YOU FOOLS!” bellowed Domingo, as he got to his feet and made a mad dash for the balcony. “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!”

Night Glider let out a screech as he gave his wings a powerful heave and surged forward through the air, dodging bullets as they zipped past his tail. He flapped again, and ascended into the sky. He took a moment to smile, enjoying the feeling of the fresh air on his wings...it made him feel ALIVE...!

But there was no time to celebrate his return. He had people to help!

Thus, the Inhuman swooped down suddenly, extending his wings in a gliding position, just as Domingo reached the balcony...

“NOW!”

Taking the initiative, Rando and Vasquez reached out...and both let out a sharp cry as they were seemingly plucked from the balcony and carried off into the heavens.

The Chief stumbled, stopping short and steadying himself on the balcony handrail. His men continued to fire till their guns were empty, but it was too late. The giant bat flapped his way higher and higher, his friends clutching to his legs for dear life...

...Until, with a final, victorious screech...he disappeared into the orange sunset.

Chief Domingo's eye twitched again...and he let out a roar of frustration, slamming his fists into the handrail so hard it bent and buckled, grinding his teeth together as his face went red, apoplectic with rage.

“DAMN YOU!” he thundered. “DAMN YOU, DAMN YOU, DAMN YOU ALL!”

---

*A Couple Hours Later...*

In a dimly-lit, shabby room, a solitary figure with brownish-red skin and deep, black eyes scowled as he watched a news report on television. He sneered as he barely focused on the chattering of the talkative reporter, and focused on the text headline that blared across the screen:  
*The Night Glider Lives!*

“Bravo, *murciélago*,” he growled, before taking a sip from the can of beer he held in one hand. His nails seemed to extend slightly, looking almost like claws, as he crushed it in one fist, and reeled back before tossing it angrily at the television screen.

As he did so, he flexed the area of his throwing arm tattooed with the image of a howling wolf.

“Next time,” the villain snarled, “I will bite off your head.”

---

*That Evening...*

Near the edge of the El Paso County Border is a town called San Elizario. It's a small place, not so far from the city, where noisy urbanization begins to give way to rural quiet. It isn't quite the

boondocks, but it's a point where you feel you're getting close to them. It's dusty, dry, and thrives on its past; from the prison that Billy the Kid once visited, to its historical Missions.

Despite being relatively small, the residents of this area are not especially close. Aside from the local parish of Guadalupe, there isn't too much community spirit. So when strange things happen, no one takes much notice; tours of haunted spots and tales of twilight superstitions are the norm. They are so used to the peculiar, the mysterious, and the unexpected, they no longer feel it is any of the above.

At one edge of the town is a large, blocky-looking, red-and-gray building, which resembles something out of a nightmare, inside and out. Long ago, it was a slaughterhouse, but it fell into disrepair and was ultimately closed. It has since been many things - from an attempted wholesale store to a dojan for Tae Kwon Do classes. (No, really.) But everything since seems cursed to failure...and no one seems brave enough, or else simply doesn't care enough, to take the place down and build something new.

It makes for an admirable hiding spot.

Night Glider panted and massaged his aching ankle as he sat in a dark corner of the old slaughterhouse; the machines used for its grisly functions years before were still in place, and one could faintly smell the blood of cattle and pigs that seemed to permeate the walls forevermore. It made his stomach churn...but it was the best he could manage.

In two other corners of the dark room where they stopped were Vincent and Vanessa, who looked exceptionally glum.

"Are you both safe?" gasped Night Glider.

There was a pause; it was Vanessa who spoke.

"Safe, yes," she said, softly. "But at what cost?"

Night tilted his head.

"We're ruined," she said, shakily. "We can't go back to the force. There are probably people putting us on Wanted lists as we speak. If we are discovered, we'll go to prison. We're done."

Night Glider hung his head.

“...I’m sorry,” he admitted quietly. “All you wanted to do was help me...I’ve brought you nothing but trouble...”

There was another pause...then, Vincent took a deep breath, and lifted his head.

“Then keep giving it to us.”

Vanessa and Night Glider looked to him with surprise. Vincent went on, a determined, confident edge to his voice.

“We rescued you,” he said. “We made the call. If we have to suffer consequences, so be it. But I’m not giving up just yet.”

He stood, and looked to Vanessa.

“We joined the force to help our city,” he said, bravely and gravely. “We bent and broke the rules to do it, but I can’t say we did the wrong thing.”

Vanessa paused...then shook her head slowly.

“I can’t say that, either,” she agreed.

“Then if we’re in the right,” Vincent went on, “We have to continue.”

He turned to Night Glider, and gestured to the old building around them.

“We’ll use this as our hideaway. We’ll find a way to help you out. And you can keep helping us, in return. Working together, we can prove just how much good we can do, for the city, for the county, maybe even for the world.”

He approached Night Glider and held out a hand.

“We’ll heal your wounds. We’ll do whatever you need us to. Say the word, and we’ll get to work. Whaddya say? Teammates?”

Night Glider eyed Vincent Rando’s hand; his nose twitched, and he looked over to Vanessa Vasquez.

Vanessa paused...then stood up, and nodded, her own expression just as firm and decisive.



Night smiled, looked back at Vincent...and rose before taking his hand.

“I say, *teammate*,” he smirked, “That the first thing we need to do is spruce this place up a bit. Can’t have you smelling like old hamburger, right?”

Vincent smiled wider, and shook the Inhuman’s hand.

“Whatever you say, Chief. Whatever you say.”

*The End*