

The Day Lupus Grew:

Redwood Cove was an iconic island city on the Eastern Seaboard, adjacent to the snow-peaked mountain ranges in the West. A chunk of land that housed nearly 250,000 people was carved from the mainland by the Jordan River and connected by one suspension bridge. It was prosperous. Vibrant. The sounds of car horns, plane turbines, and the overground railway system erupted across the island. Vehicles that carried tens of thousands through the city for their daily routines. Regardless of the mundane activities ahead, the population marched and moved through the concrete streets like an ant colony.

Within the financial heartland of the city, a spire of glass that was the Olympia Shard shined in the daylight. The city's pride and joy dwarfed the surrounding office complexes and apartment buildings. Inside the maze of high-rises, beside a jumbotron in the town square, a white wolf jogged through the crowd. A toned winter wolf with sapphire eyes ran briskly through the bystanders.

Lupus Kintsugi.

Lupus wore an unfaltering, forced smile as he searched for the next gap in the crowd. He swiftly manoeuvred through the slow-moving masses with grace and agility, white treads pounding onto the pavement. His fingers sliced through the air with every precise stride.

A sigh left his lips. Lupus' mind distanced from reality as he focused on both pace and heartrate. For a moment, the winter wolf reminisced his soles crackling through freshly packed snow and the freezing wind ruffling his fur back home. A flashback that disappeared as quick as it arrived when a car horn erupted to his side.

The wolf jolted to face the red Sedan, until he caught a glimpse of a jumbotron. Those sneakers planted onto the pavement, whilst he wiped a brow with a flick. Ignoring the tightening in his chest, the canine's ocean-blue eyes were fixated on the magnified screen above. That involuntary smile started to fade the longer he stared at the news-report above.

“-and there is still no explanation of the bizarre paw-shaped craters that appeared this morning. For now, scientists have urged the public, there is nothing to worry about.” The suited otter-woman insisted with a robotic tone as she narrated over the image.

There the crater was. What once was a field of oak-wood trees was replaced with an oval shaped crater. A city-block crater with four spherical dips was filled with crushed tree logs and a

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newly-formed waterfall spewing in. Anything beyond the impact site was preserved. The camera travelled further down, revealing a slightly smaller paw-crater. Then another, and another. Still, the sight left a chill in the viewers minds as their imagination wandered on the owner of the giant paw. Matters were made worse when they soon realised that this titanic being was a size shifter.

Lupus stood still within the concerned crowd. The wolf's ears flickered at the idle chatter amongst him. Predatory senses that honed on the citizens every whisper and mutter, but he was quick to regret his curiosity. Lupus' ears collapsed to his cranium, whilst the expansive snow-white tail dropped to meet his calves.

'Monster'

'Beast'

He heard it all. Comments that would pierce his lonely heart, but thankfully practice made it bearable. Lupus may have been accustomed to the arctic winter, but this what being 'cold' truly felt like. To the wolf's relief, that mask-like smile concealed the heartache from the disturbed crowd. At least, until a hand slapped down onto his shoulder blade, jolting the canine upright.

"Hey dude, you doing alright? Come on, you got nothing to be scared of," a stranger asked with a softness to his voice, and leaned to greet Lupus with his black-furred visage.

Lupus' eyes followed the hyena who stood beside him, alongside a white and bronze-furred individual who held the yeen by the hand.

"Is that so? What makes you so sure?" Lupus replied with a raised brow, and looked to the smiling couple to his right.

"Because, we are still here aren't we?" The hyena challenged with a smirk, stroking the wolf's firm shoulder back and forth. "I doubt someone that big would go unnoticed if he wanted chaos, hmm?" he asked.

"Perhaps, that is true sir. Still, people here just see a monster-" the wolf whispered, until he watched the hyena shake his head.

"What do *you* see?" He queried with a comforting smile.

"Well, I see-" just as Lupus' lips parted in reply, a soft rumble started to resonate through the pavement.

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Lupus' ears perked at an eerie clang. His eyes turned to peek through the gap in the crowd, and towards a nearby café. The surface water inside a glass rippled. Silverware clattered sideways against plates and cups. A prolonged sonic boom started to resonate through the pavement, and caused the birds to rapidly flock to the sky in a swarm. Particles of concrete dust rained down between the bricks, until the ground finally erupted in a violent motion.

The crowd burst into a synchronised scream as the street started to bobble up and down, knocking them off-foot to greet the pavement. Buildings shuddered from the strain of withstanding the earthquake's vibrations. Concrete splintered open and gave way to a seismic roar that thundered through Lupus's frozen body, but still he stood as he watched the escalating damage around.

Trapped in conflict, the wolf tried to inspect the catastrophe unfolding in the city street. An earthquake that mocked Redwood Cove's high-rises, persisted to torment the already startled population. Those sapphire eyes shifted to the high-rises, watching as cracks consumed the foundations. Particles of dust rained onto the white wolf and the crowd, slightly staining his snow-white complexion.

Hanging above the terrified citizens, the jumbotron's screen was replaced with a pitch black screen. Behind the enlarged television, an array of sparks of exposed cable's ignited as the jumbotron gave way. It descended with a whistle and shattered on impact, but to Lupus' relief, no one was near the crash site.

However, he did not budge.

Those sapphire eyes stared at the jumbotron wreckage and high-rises, until one caught his eye. A glass office complex that soon gave into the monstrous earthquake with a snap of concrete.

SNNNNAPPPPPPPPP!!!!

The upper-half of the high-rise descended.

A high-pitched whistle struck the citizens' ears. Lupus rushed to face the city street below to catch a glimpse of a huddled crowd within the impact site.

“Everyone, get to the bridge now! Go, go, go!” Lupus barked at the crowd.

He leaned forward in a textbook running position, and set off in a sprint. Fear flooded his blood stream with adranaline, pumping oxygen and energy to his legs. He charged forward. Lupus' toned thighs bulged and propelled him through the fleeing crowd, whilst his arms sliced forward.

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The wolf's eyes were fixated onto the teetering structure, watching it descend with a dreaded slowness.

“HANG ON, HANG ON!!!” Lupus shouted out, pushing his legs further and higher to reach the five frozen citizens ahead.

Just as he passed the herd of people, the wolf channelled a surge of electricity. It cascaded in roiling, ever-expanding waves within and forced his body to swell. That power extended to his black running shorts and sneakers, letting them grow in proportion. Lupus devoured foot after foot as he pushed ahead.

The ground began to crack beneath the wolf's footsteps as he rushed forward, his size continuing to increase as his lengthening shadow stretched out over the street before him.

Monster...

For a brief moment, the word floated across Lupus's mind, but it was gone as soon as it appeared. Loud, metallic, snapstore through air, paired with the sight of the helpless people before him, kept the wolf focused on driving forwards.

A powerful warmth accompanied the stretching of his body as Lupus rose to his full, towering height. Enormous shoes crashing onto the road before them, the group of five finally had their attention pulled from the collapsing building, just in time to see the giant, white wolf striding between them and the crumbling structure. Lupus thrust his arm out toward the building, the powerful limb crashing into the building's facade and keeping it upright while Lupus hunched down over the five people below. Shining glass rained down over the snow wolf's arm to the ground on all sides, his protective shadow keeping the little crowd safe from the debris.

From below, the sight of their saviour was breathtaking. Lupus's toned musculature was exhibited easily through his snow-white fur, his towering body clothed only in a tight, black pair of shorts that clung tightly to his muscled thighs and bulge. After checking to make sure the building was properly braced against his arm, Lupus slowly turned his head to look down at five, shaken forms.

“It's alright,” Lupus spoke in a soft voice, though the sound still rumbled like thunder, reverberating off the buildings around him. **“Stay under me. You're safe there.”** The wolf's smile

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was alleviating, easily putting the group at ease as they stood beneath the gentle giant and his protective gaze.

The group of five huddled underneath the muscular roof of the wolf's abdominal and watched the office complex creak behind Lupus' palm. Bodies interlocked, standing near the canine's toned calf, they went quiet.

“Alright lil one’s, don’t move yet-” Lupus cooed down tenderly to those near his leg, until a scream erupted metres from the wolf's cranium.

His eyes darted up, peaking between his fingers and inside the shattered windows. Level with his ears, a group of office workers held onto the building's support beams with all their strength. Sweaty palms struggled to find grip on the crumbling concrete until they slid. Gravity took hold. Their screams turned frantic when the angle steepened, sending the suited individuals tumbling to the exposed windows.

“Oh god no-!” The wolf's freepalm rushed to meet the window ledge, forming a leathery pad platform for the fallingworkers.

Lupus concentrated on catching the monochrome-clad individuals pouring out of the crumbling structure. Their bodies barely made an impact on the wolf's awaiting hand. Its padded surface merely knocked the air out of them for a second. Coming to their senses, the office workers slowly looked to the owner of the giant hand, and locked eyes with the wolf's ocean-blue eyes. A sight that left them speechless until Lupus broke the silence.

“I gotcha, I gotcha!” he insisted with warm breath and a low-browed visage, but that radiant smile remained. Those eyes focused on his catch, and began to descend his palm to meet the other five citizens.

Extending those tree-stump thick fingers, the suited employees slid off his palm to meet the ground by Lupus' sneakers. A mix of leather shoes and high heels signalled their landing onto the ground with a tender thud. Their eyes turned to the bus-sized footwear that firmly pressed its weight onto the ground for support. To their left, a wall of toned thigh smothered in pure white fur was planted firmly on the street. The results of intense exercise and endurance on Lupus' quadriceps rested near the office workers and extended upwards. Looking beyond the wolf's pillar-like legs, a set of black

gym shorts encased his waistline that struggled to conceal his bulge outline. Past the fabric, a white furred cliff of the wolf's toned pelt extended to the sky.

“Stay still, you’ll be alright” the wolf's demand was executed in a nurturing tone, and when the citizens rushed to address the voice, they were greeted by that same empathetic smile from Lupus.

That pleasant smile focused towards the huddled crowd by his trainers, until Lupus leaned to plant two hands on the crumbling office building. Wrapping his padded digits on the structure's exterior, and held it firm in his grasp. Yet, the high-rise persisted to disobey Lupus' efforts with another support beam giving way to the earthquake.

“Grrrrffff” Lupus growled quietly to himself as he held the office complex between finger and palm, until his thigh uplifted and legs shifted.

A rainfall of concrete expelled from Lupus' kneecap, whilst the wolf arose to stand parallel to the collapsing construction. The white tread delicately peeled off the asphalt to expose the oval crater a few deep. A collection of concrete boulders were lodged inside his treads, and any loose particles were expelled to rain down in a grey shower. Two distinct thuds signified the wolf readjusting sneakers, tips facing the front entrance, and stood still. Using his upper body strength, the wolf stretched his arms to tilt the collapsing upper-half back upright. Hovering above them, the crowd witnessed Lupus' toned glutes shroud them in its shadow, and his white tail drooped down.

With dexterity and precision, Lupus cautiously maneuvered 25 stories of offices back ontop of the building's base. Shifting side to side, the wolf applied pressure to reconnect the disconnected support beams. Except, it had no effect. The building persisted to crumble in his grip. His sapphire eyes watched the array of concrete fissures expand, until he peaked between his extended arms. The little citizens that watched Lupus at work took a step back and huddled together.

“C-Come on think. Think-!” The wolf paused mid-whisper when an idea came to mind, but he had to be quick.

“Trust me, please.”

Was all the titanic canine spoke before he released the building to meet its inevitable demise. Panic swamped through the tiny crowd below, until that watched a pair of hand's descend to wrap around them. Lupus scooped the shivering group from the ground, and concealed them in behind
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his interlocking fingers. Fluffy barriers of bone and sinew held his passengers together before they were abruptly lifted into the air. They tumbled down to meet the cushiony softness of his pad, whilst a distinct thump echoed from outside the wolf's grasp.

“Hold on, just hold on!” Lupus demanded with a concerning tone, and held his little passengers between two hands.

After the group was secured, the wolf watched the teetering structure tilt to meet the ground in a thunderous groan. Raising them to meet his abdominal, Lupus lunged out of the impact site with a thump of his sneakers. Keeping his hands still to not jostle his passengers, the wolf maneuvered swiftly with only his back foot narrowly escaping the building's collision. However, his snow-white calf was smothered in the subsequent debris of concrete. A coating of grey that once was an architect's pride and joy would be later washed away at the wolf's next shower. Still, he did not care for the discolouring of his fur, the wolf's focus was the group inside his hands.

“Don't worry, I've got you. I got ya!” He sung down delicately to his enclosed fingers, and proceeded to march with purpose between the row of tilting high-rises

Despite holding a handful of people inhand, Lupus continued to look left and right to peek inside the unstable structures. Those metallic fibre arms were pressed close to his body to ensure his elbows did not contribute to the already amounting damage. Quickly and cautiously, the monolithic canine strode through the narrow empty street with tail dropped to meet his calves. His predatory senses searched for any plea or whimper, whilst he swung a foot forward to avoid landing on a vehicle. Until, the wolf's ear flickered at a desperate cry coming from down the street.

Lupus paused abruptly. One sneaker dangling over the abandoned street, heel preparing to land down. The wolf squinted down to scavenge the wreckage around as the earthquake persisted to torment the city's infrastructure. When one of his tiny passengers shifted over his finger, Lupus' attention was returned back to the people in his grasp.

“Oh gosh, sorry lil ones. Just stay still, I gotta check something out-”

Torn. Conflicted. Lupus had to ensure the safe travels of the tiny citizens, and the unstable apartment would jeopardise that. The wolf's vision locked onto the little ones concealed in his

grasp, until he glanced down at his gym shorts pockets, and then those white-furred cheeks turned crimson.

“Forgive me, but I gotta keep ya’ll safe. Sorry.” The wolf mumbled down to his cupped hand, and raised it momentarily to meet his lips for a good luck kiss.

“Just grip onto my fabric, alright?” Lupus cooed down, and shifted his hand down to greet his shorts pocket.

Uncurling those fingers, Lupus poured the handful of people inside the fabric cavern. The suited and casual dressed individuals slid down his clothing to land in the deepest corner. Delicately placed inside his clothing, they stayed still against the wolf’s thigh as his leg shifted. It was warm. Toasty. Lupus’ body radiated heat and a masculine scent that lingered in the air of the pocket. They held onto one another, whilst they heard their city infrastructure collapse.

After the last person left his fingers, Lupus began to crouch down to greet the apartment building. The gym shorts stretched under the strain to pin the crowd softly onto his thigh, whilst his ears honed in on the debris of bricks and mortar, until he picked up that begging call once more. The wolf’s ears twitched at the voice as his cobalt eyes faced directly inside the shattered windows to glance at a fox and raccoon under a dining room table. Lupus leaned slightly back to raise a palm level with the exposed windowledge and waited.

“Come on, it’s not safe-” Lupus whispered towards them, and watched as the fox and raccoon shook their heads in response. Their fingers squeezed the table leg as the ceiling rained down onto the floor.

“Please, please hop on before it falls-”

Lupus’ protective instincts kicked in when the ceiling started to crack, falling down to meet the fox and raccoon. The two residents ducked down, arms raised to protect their necks, and anxiously awaited the impact. However, in an instant, Lupus slid two fingers inside the window to catch the descending ceiling. Those fluffy digits caught the cracked roof with ease, whilst one blue eye peeked inside to the fox and raccoon. His other hand remained level with the window.

“Get on, I got it” he spoke, nurturing the startled pair that watched their entire livelihood subside around them and a roof held up by two wolf fingers. **“Now climb on, it’s not safe.”**

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Staying still, Lupus witnessed the fox stand up to lift up the raccoon, and walk to his open palm. Lunging out of the windowledge, they landed down to lie flat onto the wolf's paw platform. Their eyes looking upwards to see the wolf's pupil's reflecting back at them. The titanic canine focused towards them, and prepared to maneuver them to meet his abdominal.

“I gotta be quick, but I'll keep you safe” he said warm-heartedly before sliding the two into his other pocket, secured against his thigh.

Broken gas mains erupted into pillars of smoke that threatened to consume the trembling buildings. The fox and raccoon's neighbouring apartment was the first to be tested by the blaze, until Lupus rushed to survey the roads. His eyes locked onto the vehicles below, separating the buses and cars from the trucks. Back and forth those sapphire irises moved, until they met its target. A water truck where the vehicle's body was tossed over by the shaking, abandoned, but the water it carried was preserved.

“So so sorry, but I'm gonna have to borrow this-” Lupus insisted, leaning forward to extend a hand, he formed a roof of muscle over the scampering crowd.

With agility and finesse, Lupus' padded fingers wrapped around the silver container to pluck up upside down. The truck's body dangled off its base as the winter wolf held the vehicle like a tin can. That is all it was. A metal bottle of water that Lupus held delicately, whilst his black claw pierced the top to peel open. Popping the water truck open, he hoisted it above the smoking building and poured it down.

“Hope this works, sorry about this lil ones” he whispered back down, hoping that his message would reach the apartment owners on the streets.

A steady torrent of water flowed out of the exposed truck, and landed on the roof with a splash. It radiated outwards to wash over the apartment. The pillars of smoke were snuffed out under the waves, but Lupus' took a whiff and still sensed a burning smell.

“D-Damn it-” he growled quietly, vibrating across his chest before he took a deep breath. Lupus tilted his head backwards, and then blew his warm breath onto the building.

Like blowing candles off a cake, the white wolf directed his lips towards the densest pillars of smoke. A gust of moist warm wind was expelled from his maw to extinguish the smoke, and even dry off the drenched apartments.

Just an ember of success triggered a smile across his maw as he stood.

Then, when the wolf prepared to stand up once more, he turned with a dreaded slowness to watch the city high-rises buckle and break around him. The street he walked down was abandoned, but a hefty trail of sneaker prints decorated the road. As for the adjacent roads, they were filled to the brim with people evacuating. His heart bled for the thousands that attempted to flee from the falling debris. Lupus stood above the chaos that consumed Redwood County and felt his upright posture weaken.

“There’s too many, there’s way too many of you. I-” he spoke empathetically to the civil unrest that plagued the once structured society. Lupus’ vision swept through the last standing high rise, until it stared at the Olympia Shard.

Redwood County’s infamous glass spire seemed to withstand the earthquake’s energy, but the structure would not last. Lupus was about to tilt his head down to meet the citizens only for the earthquake subsiding to catch his attention. The wolf did not serenade the ending, but rather an eerie shiver travelled down his spine. Like a sixth sense, Lupus felt a disturbance from afar that went undetected to the people around his treads.

“Everyone, everyone listen!” The wolf projected across the city, catching the hundred’s off guard who stopped to face the colossal canine.

Lupus raised a hand swiftly, pointing a finger towards the Olympia Shard. **“Everyone, off the streets. Off the streets and get in!”** the wolf asserted when another earthquake tremor rocked the city.

The canine reached into his pocket to fish out the citizens and squatted down to the streets. Wrapping those furry digits around his passengers, Lupus slid them down and watched as they entered the crowd. The paralyzed citizens faced the giant wolf’s visage only for a quake to nearly topple them off-foot. Their panic began anew when they dashed to the Olympia Shard entrance, whilst the ground buckled and shook beneath them. Hundreds upon hundreds ran across the

splintered concrete as their high-rises lost structural integrity. Except, any debris that dared threaten the people was swiftly caught in hand by Lupus. Chunks of concrete were pebbles to the wolf, and were grinded into dust between thumb and finger.

Just as the last person entered the structure, the wolf averted his sights to the surrounding streets. Back and forth those sapphire eyes investigated the wreckage that once was Redwood County with a heart-wrenching sigh. Lupus lifted his left sneaker from the street and strode cautiously towards the Olympia Shard with a series of soft thumps. The bus-sized footwear parked outside the skyscraper, white treads filling the view of the ground floor.

“Everyone lie down, it’s gonna be alright” the wolf spoke to the structure, and raised two hands to wrap his fingers around the exterior.

With that same electrical surge that triggered his growth, Lupus began to channel it through his anatomy and onto the skyscraper. An energy travelled through every nook and cranny of the Olympia Shard and its occupants. A harmless current of electricity that altered each molecule, until the building started to shrink. An entire high-rise that was the jewel of Redwood County proceeded to decrease in size in the wolf’s grasp. Lupus crouched in sync with the diminishing structure, allowing his caring eyes and smile to follow the occupants within. As the building’s roof struggled to surpass his knee, the wolf withdrew his palms from the exterior and held it between two fingers.

The citizens collectively watched the crouching white wolf’s shadow eclipse them, whilst the surrounding wreckage started to rival the height of buses. Their eyes focused towards Lupus who curled a finger around the skyscraper trinke with dexterity that betrayed his size. Within the glass casing, the people watched his snow-white digit bathe the floors in darkness before they were plucked up.

Uplifted at a snail’s pace, Lupus held thousands between two fingers as he arose back to his towering stature. Everyone laid down on the cold floor, but couldn’t stop to watch the wall of wolf muscle fill their windows. An elevator ride that provided a tour of Lupus’ chiselled anatomy from his calves and biceps to abdominal and pecs. The final stop on their ascension was the wolf’s wet black nose and sapphire eye leering towards them.

“Alright everyone, don’t move. I gotta carry you to the mountains, fast!”

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Lupus wasted no time as he peeled a sneaker off the ground and swung it forward with a distinct thump. With the Olympia Shard in hand, and the streets deserted, the toned wolf briskly strolled across the wreckage. Any fallen debris was shattered into dust under his trainers to be lodged in the deep crevices of his white treads. He restrained from applying his full weight on the ground, whilst he moved between the parallel rows of broken buildings.

Except, that was interrupted by a siren roaring across the sub-layers of Redwood Country. The ear-piercing song instilled fear in the hearts and minds of its audience. A klaxxon that caught Lupus off guard as his trainer shadow smothered an abandoned SUV, until it disappeared with a metallic crunch and a boom. There was no moment of resistance. It was flattened in an instant to mould against his treads, whilst the wolf's eyes averted to the coast.

“Tsunami-!” he whispered, locking eyes with the horizon and an enclosing wall of water rushing towards them.

“Sorry guys, I need to put you down somewhere” Lupus spoke down.

Speeding up his pace with the building between his digits, Lupus lunged further forward to the bridge and mountains. His sneaker divorced from the ground to reveal the flattened SUV that peeled off to land down. The wolf's ears twitched at the sound, and turned back as he strolled to meet the car.

“Oh gosh, sorry. I'll pay for that-”

Lupus spoke to the thousands he held in hand, whilst he drew closer to the bridge only to see it was cut in half. The mid-section of the road was lost to the depths of the river, leaving the people above stranded. Dismay smothered his visage as he drew closer

“Hang on!!!” he called over, drawing the attention of the thousands who looked back to watch him emerge from the building maze.

Lupus' arrival triggered mixed emotions to those in his shadow, but he persisted regardless. Their eyes focused on the wolf's movements as he sauntered alongside the destroyed bridge. He had a job to do. Protector. Guardian. Words of warmth that the citizens longed for in this difficult moment that Lupus would bring into fruition.

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In a moment, Lupus' leg swung forward to plant a sneaker into the Jordan River with a splash, expelling a sea water shower onto the coast. Half of his treads were submerged inside the stream, whilst he walked over the river to meet the mountains. The people on the bridge watched his snow-white tail swing freely behind with a whoosh, until he crouched down and grew the Olympia Spire in hand.

“Stay here, you’ll be safe” the wolf kindly whispered, letting the building return to its full height. Its enlarging foundations dug deep into the soil, keeping it standing upright on the hillside.

After the Olympia Shard grew back, Lupus shifted a sneaker back to splash down into the Jordan River once more. Another tiny wave spread out from his treads, whilst his foot shifted as he turned. The momentum of those sneakers displaced the river to send a tiny wave to land on the beach. A cliff of the wolf's well-built physique loomed over the people on the bridge, until he squatted down to the people's surprise. However, his eyes did not face the people, but rather back to the tsunami for a moment.

“Everyone, you need to be quick, but get on and go!”

The wolf's words caused confusion amongst the audience on the bridge, but that confusion turned to a sigh of relief when Lupus raised a palm to fill the exposed bridge. Lupus' fluffy hand rested beneath the bridge to provide a walkway for the thousands who stared at it with hesitancy. Their lives rested in a newly emerged titan, but when the tide travelled out the wolf's ears flickered. The ocean current flowed out between his sneakers.

“Please guys, please. We don’t have much time!” The wolf pleaded down to them, keeping his teeth concealed through every syllable.

Out of the conflicting evacuees, a black jaguar squatted down to take a step off the bridge and onto the wolf's fingers. The jaguar's paw sunk into his digit and spread a warm delightful smile across Lupus' face.

“I promise, I got you. Now move, quickly-” he asked the thousands on the elevated bridge, until they leapt and swarmed in their masses across his fingers and palm.

A handful at a time crossed over his palm bridge, pressing bare paws or shoes into his pad and flesh. The wolf did not budge nor reflexed. He kept in position as the last round of people crossed his palm to the other end. Lupus leveled his abdomen with a bridge, and he anxiously raised a palm to rub his neck as he prepared to speak.

“Someone! Quick! Please, pass me a piece of tin foil and don’t ask why!” Lupus asked the crowd, and extended a fingertip near the railing.

At first they stared at the fluffy digit, but a badger was quick to respond as he stepped forward. The black and grey striped man walked to meet Lupus’ finger, and placed a rectangular object encased in tin foil.

“Umm, you c-can have my lunch if you wish too-”the badger spoke up with a twiddle of his fingers as Lupus raised his finger.

Lupus cast a radiant smile to the generous badger, but was quick to turn towards the Olympia Shard.

“I don’t have much time, but I appreciate it sweetie. For now, I think you guys could use some food.”

As the sandwich ascended, the wolf swiftly grew the sandwich and tin foil in hand. The tiny lunch expanded in size and mass. A hefty meal that was perfect to tend to Lupus’ appetite. Except, the wolf focused on swiftly unwrapping the tin foil and placed the exposed sandwich down by the Olympia Shard. Bread the width of buses was perfectly placed onto the hills, letting its smell call to the people nearby.

Without another word, Lupus swung a foot forward to march across the soaked soil to face the coast. Powerful strides that carried him onwards. He held the enlarged tin foil, and began to bend it into a curve as it grew. Focused on the tsunami ahead, Lupus planted both sneakers a few meters from the beach with two distinct thumps.

“Please work-” Lupus mumbled to himself, and began to dig the building-high tin foil into the depths of the bay. Deeper the reflective surface penetrated the sand, until it formed a lengthy barrier across the beach.

The masses of people on the bridge and hill watched as Lupus supported the tin foil fortress in both hands, whilst his legs were planted into the beach and exposed ocean. That fluffy tail appendage was lifeless. As for his snout, it locked onto the wall of water approaching. All that stood between the tsunami and their home was a wolf in sneakers and gym shorts.

A protector. Their protector.

Anxiously they witnessed the tsunami enclose in on the wolf, until it crested and rushed across the bay. The torrent of water raced along the surface and collided with the curved wall of tin foil. It struck with immense power, forcing Lupus to grunt and push the tin-foil forward to hold its position. Except, the tsunami flowed upwards to double back out into the ocean.

“Phhhewwwww-” Lupus exhaled, watching the wave dissipate slowly. Once the coast was clear, he uplifted the tin foil fortress to let the ocean fill the bay and river.

Relieved. Lupus looked back to the Olympia Shard, the bridge, and the grown sandwich. A slight rumble emerged from his belly and triggered a blush across his cheeks.

“Ummm, s-say, mind if I have some of that sandwich? If that’s alright” he asked politely as he walked. **“And, is it okay if I join-?”**

The wolf was interrupted by a series of cheers from the hillside. A joyful crowd that grew in volume as the wolf got closer. Lupus awaited to hear the word ‘monster’ again, but there was only gratitude from the population.

He was speechless. That snow-white tail sparked into life, swinging with a whoosh behind him.

Those on the hillside watched their protector walk towards them and turn to leave his backside hovering above. Clad in tight gym shorts, the wolf turned down to ensure it was clear as he crouched. Legs bending and quads bulging, Lupus planted a hand to plant on the land to support himself. Hours of running had left his legs toned and glutes firm as they landed with a thud by the sandwich.

Lupus leaned backwards to rest, plotting both sneakers into the ocean as he focused on the tiny’s around him. His fluffy tail rested on the grass by the citizens who watched it in awe.

“Umm, s-should I shrink-?”

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Lupus hung down quietly, until he felt something in the dense fur of his tail. The wolf's sapphire eyes turned to meet the disturbance only to glance at a few people resting on his tail. It did not end there. Lupus caught eye with three people mounting the fabric of his shorts and thigh. His hands were next when a little golden retriever rested against his digit.

“You...you aren't afraid?” he asked, but was only given some strokes and nods in reply from the crowd around.

Taken back from the gesture, Lupus shifted his tail to wrap around the people in a furry blanket. Shifting a hand, he carefully tore a piece of bread off the sandwich. Raising it carefully to not test the people's nerves, the wolf slid it between his lips and swallowed with an audible gulp.

Over the next few moments, he happily watched the little creatures climb and rest on his body. Lupus' overwhelming joy turned to heartache when he looked towards the aftermath of the earthquake. Redwood Country was almost in ruins. A shell. A husk. He stared at the remnants of the city with despair. The wolf's ears fell to his cranium.

“I'll help you rebuild, I promise. I'll keep you lil ones safe” he whispered down, and bathed in the morning sun.

that lost its life.