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It was night time, both Apus and Lacerta had since left the museum, but Vulecula remained. He wanted to solve it, plain and simple.

A small couple of hairs could mean the difference between a criminal facing justice for their crime or getting away with it. Evildoers beware the fiendish claws of the tiniest detail with valid reasoning placed behind it! If they left behind even the smallest molecular trace pointing in their direction, then chances are that it would be found. Or at least, that's the mind-set that every good criminal should operate under.

Even still, something about finding the hairs didn't feel right to Vulpecula.

He watched the footage repeatedly, until it had become a file "Saved As" in his conscious-thought. It was a forced compulsion of his routine, but he was also looking for something.

He just didn't know what that something was.

The feeling of a case challenging him was the only thing that ever-kept Vulpecula's attention for long. It was the thrill of the chase, and there was something peculiar about this chase.

The view from the camera was obscured in the beginning of her heist.

Vulpecula didn't imagine that her methods of getting to the top of the Malane Palace were very elaborate; scaling the walls of the Malane Palace should have been easy enough. Even without the equipment that she undoubtedly had. (The footage showed that much.) The Malane Palace stood at around one-hundred and thirty-three feet in height, so it was doubtful that the dame would have taken the risk of climbing the building with her own wits alone. If she wanted to though, she probably could have.

The building had plenty of ledges, ridges, and cliffs. If somebody would have wanted to climb it, they could have. Vulpecula knew that statement to be a fact because he tried to climb the building himself.

He failed.

However, he had the sheepish Officer Pends do it, and he succeeded just fine after falling only three times.

And so, she scaled up the Malane Palace with relative ease.

The rooftop didn't have anything too particular about it; there wasn't a foot-print or any dandruff. Vulpecula insisted on recreating the thievery at night because that was when the thievery had taken place. He wanted to know everything that was going through her head. He wanted to feel the cool air blowing through her fur, or for her, the sweat-shirt and the ski-mask. There was the look of the dwindling traffic reinforced by the lit lamp-posts. Once climbing the building, there were only two clear ways of getting to the down-floor.

There was a door on the north-west side of the building, it probably would have been locked, in which case, she would have had to pick the lock. Afterward, she'd go to the rafters of the building, look down at the Sword of Tertius, and use a rope to reel herself down. This way seemed like a distinct possibility; however, there was an alarm-system that would have sounded at the very minute the door was opened.

Even still, Vulpecula made certain to inspect the route for evidence, and found nothing.

After climbing to the building, there were five windows on each side of the Malane's walls; she selected the one closest to the sword. There wasn't an alarm-system to the windows, but they were old, and therefore, they were difficult to get open. She didn't want to take the risk of scratching or clawing at it as she had worn gloves to lessen the possibilities of leaving finger-prints. She used a knife, or some other sharp-object, and pried the door open. Vulpecula hung vicariously off the ledge of the building by his cane. (It was dark-brown except for the end which curved like a scythe with a dull

blade. It was a cane that had once belonged to his father.) He began eye-balling the window, making a mental-note of the slits and cuts at the center of the window where it had been opened.

She opened the window, made her way to the rafters; descended, got the sword, and then she left the same way that she entered.

Vulpecula arose back to the top of the roof, and at last, acknowledged the vibration from the pocket of his leggings. "V," he answered simply.

"It's Lacerta, they found a match for the hair found at the Malane Palace, where are you?" Vulpecula's ears pricked at hearing Lacerta's words.

"I'm at the Malane Palace, who did the hairs belong to?"

Static on the other end, Vulpecula suspected that Lacerta wrote the name down somewhere, and was now looking for the paper.

"Harriet Collins," Lacerta answered.

"What is her address, or contact information? I need to set up a meeting with her. I will need Officer Pends and preferably both you and Apus for when I go talk to her. I don't have a full-handle on how dangerous she is, but David taught more than Goliath about underestimating others, if you catch my drift." Another long silence befell them, and before long, Vulpecula was starting to wonder whether he had been hung up on. (or worse, that he hadn't caught his drift.)

"I never do, but I'll work on getting the address," Lacerta responded.

The next morning, Lacerta had been courteous enough to do just as he said he would, and Officer Pends even arranged for a meeting with her. She lived only a couple of blocks away from the Malane Palace, and so, while Officer Pends offered to drive his cop-car out-there, Vulpecula assured him that it'd be less hassle simply to walk. He liked the cooling air on his fur, and the sheer simplicity of it all. It was one of the few times where he felt as if the world's loud disturbances weren't so bothersome to his conscious. As he, his friends, and Pends walked down the sidewalk, Vulpecula spent little time looking at the cars going by.

He watched the sidewalk, a blank and solid gray-color, which could act as a projector for all his thoughts to illustrate themselves. There wasn't very much information on file about Harriet Collins. She didn't have a criminal-record, and she didn't have anything else of regard.

"I know that you don't want it to be solved this easy, but you have to admit that it makes sense, right?" Lacerta said while he trekked behind Vulpecula, trying to keep up.

"Why wouldn't he want it to be solved easy, isn't that less work?" Officer Pends chimed in.

"He doesn't like it whenever a case is solved too easily, it bores him."

Officer Pends looked at Lacerta as if he couldn't grasp the thought that somebody might enjoy using their intellect for something other than twiddling their thumbs, Vulpecula thought, while walking, and ... twiddling his thumbs.

"She is a History teacher, and so, at least to a certain degree, the shoe fits. She could possibly carry the skill capable of such a heist, considering her level of education, but she hasn't shown as much as the slightest in criminal intent." Vulpecula spoke. He didn't know whether they were listening, and didn't especially care, but he found it easier to organize his thoughts when he articulated them aloud. "Why else would her hair be found at the scene of the crime? Apus checked to see if she might have volunteered at a point for the museum, but he found nothing." Lacerta pointed out.

Oh, and so he was listening.

"That's one of the problems, look at what the thief was wearing, there was no reason that so much hair should have been lost at the scene of the crime." At last, they met the drive-way leading to Harriet's abode, and Vulpecula's eyes began to frolic about it. The home was a polychrome styling in which the dwelling stood, interconnected with several others. There was nothing too peculiar about

the exterior of the home, which is something that Vulpecula's intuition had expected the thief's home to be. Rather, V led his acquaintances up the steps leading to the small, plywood porch. The wood had been painted over, poorly, with white, to match the building itself. There were clear footprints and dirt, and with that alone, Vulpecula knew that this wasn't the lady who stole the Sword of Tertius. He took a breath and readied himself to plead her case.

"There isn't a criminal-record to be found, no sign of wrongdoings, which surely wouldn't render Harriet as innocent. In-fact, the video-tape that we have seen details somebody, perhaps cunning enough to evade the law for all of this time. However, those footprints entail a hippopotamus, which is impossible. The frame of the thief's body described somebody much smaller." Vulpecula tried very hard to contain some of the intrigue that bumbled inside of him like the regular every-day bee, but he questioned his effectiveness.

"Are you saying that we're back to square-one?" Lacerta asked. He didn't have nearly the same enthusiasm that Vulpecula had.

If Vulpecula didn't know any better, he'd think Lacerta would much rather be sipping sparkling liquid in one of Italina's finest hotels with a view of the Tower of Sanchi.

"No," Vulpecula replied firmly, and without elaboration, he knocked on the red slab door and waited for a response. "Hold on, hold on," a high-pitch voice cried from the inside. Vulpecula rifled with the fur on his chin as habit commanded and tilted his nose to the ground. There was a loose-nail sticking out from the wooden-porch, and it admittedly bothered him to no ends. He didn't wear boots and was liable to step on it on the way out.

The door swung open, and Harriet Collins greeted them all with a smile. "Whoever you are, can we make this quick, my hair is an absolute mess!"

If Vulpecula were to go to the Watergate, a small book-store in Italina, then go to the "Mom" section, grab the first book about soccer, and look at the cover, he had no doubts that he would have seen Harriet Collins.

He was right in assuming her species, but hadn't anticipated her appearance, which only further proved that she wasn't the culprit. She had a silver complexion complemented by a blonde beehive-shaped head of hair, as well as a heavy amount of make-up. As far as her ensemble, she wore what looked to be an Italianian Blazers shirt; unfortunately, the several necklaces that she was wearing kept V from confirming that assumption. Besides that, she was also wearing yellow shorts that didn't do her tree-trunk legs very many favors. In-response, Vulpecula gave a face that would hopefully be misinterpreted as polite and not disgusted. There was also a strong smell of perfume radiating off her.

"Hello, Mrs. Collins, my name is Officer Pends, and this is Detective Vulpecula Noel, and his accompanying party is Apus Yields and Lacerta Kerrick. You may recall that I called you," Officer Pends began, a sound of ... shear ... professionalism in his voice that Vulpecula found to be pretty flocking dumb. (A baaaad pun.) Vulpecula never really appreciated the necessity of procedural introductions. "He called you because we thought you stole the Sword of Tertius on-account of evidence found at the Malane Palace linking you to the crime. However, at last your size and the clumsiness of your species has worked to your good fortune, and your name has been cleared," Vulpecula explained.

"Congratulations."

Vulpecula's eyes dwindled away from Harriet long enough to see the look of terror in the eyes of his helpers, but he couldn't decipher why they seemed so afraid. His eyes returned to Harriet once more only to see the door slammed before him.

Vulpecula smiled dryly, and let out a sigh, the rudeness of the world was always lost on him.

"I will never understand how you are Hensley's son," Lacerta admitted with a smirk.

"Pshaw," V started up. "The lady didn't have the wits to keep loose-nails off her porch, let alone

assist in solving this case, and yet, I do believe that she has."

Hours later, Vulpecula, Apus, and Lacerta all found themselves inside of Ollie's Abil, each having ordered their usual meal, and sitting in their usual spot. Neither Lacerta nor Apus cared very much when it came to the seating arrangements, but perhaps compulsively, Vulpecula found it pivotal to them enjoying their meal as much as the last time they ate there.

"Do you care to let us in on how exactly Harriet helped you further the investigation?" Lacerta asked with a startling amount of irritation in his voice.

Vulpecula noticed that Apus didn't seem as bothered with him withholding the information for as long as he had. Part of him couldn't help but wonder whether Apus was biting his tongue, and had, in fact, figured out as much as he had. "There were seven strands of hair at around fifteen inches in length," Vulpecula began while Apus and Lacerta both sat at the table and stared at him, curious to see where he may be going with this. They hadn't even begun to touch their food, both with a delectable helping of spaghetti resting upon fancy-looking porcelain plates that complimented it nicely. Ollie's Abil was a restaurant mostly visited by tourists for the novelty of it all, but it also made some of the finest food in all Italina. Vulpecula himself had opted for a simple assortment of rice and sushi.

He didn't want to take the chance of some of the spaghetti getting on his fur.

Vulpecula waited for what he believed to have been an ample amount of time for his comrades to digest the statement and found himself bewildered when they didn't respond. He began to fidget around with his fork, stabbing at a piece of sushi until he could withstand himself no longer and looked up at them.

"So," Lacerta blurted out. "All this tells us is that you have a photographic memory whenever it comes to details."

Vulpecula let out a sigh of disappointment before he decided to continue. "My memory is more comparable to a blank chalkboard, as if to say I can roll my eyes in the back of my head and see data that I had deemed important. For example, I can't very well describe to you the face of Harriet Collins from memory, but I can tell you her age, blood-type, and a variety of details. Once this case is solved, I will erase the writings from my mind, and will create space for the next case," he explained.

Lacerta never really seemed the type to strain himself intellectually for the benefit of a case, he was keener whenever it came to companionship, talking to people, and articulating the latest trends.

Pity, however, while it might not seem it, all three of those things had already helped them on several occasions. He watched as Apus made a peck at his spaghetti before carrying on. "Lacerta, in fact, this tells us much more than my capabilities because we had clearly seen from Harriett, her hair couldn't have been longer than eight-inches at most, and, not to mention, Harriet's hair was blonde. The hair that we found at the Malane Palace was brown, but did you notice the smell, a different scent entirely, both perfumes, potentially of the same brand, but not the same. So, to see what is learned, let's recite."

"We already knew that Harriet Collins' heavier stature made it impossible for her to have been the one who stole the Sword of Tertius. However, this doesn't explain why her hair would be found at the scene of the crime. While, she is a history teacher, none of the records indicate her ever being in a position where she would have authorization to be so close to the artifacts. How could her hair have possibly gotten there, well, now, we know that the hair found at the crime-scene isn't particularly fresh. The hair was brown, while her current hair-color is blonde; she could have dyed it recently, and most likely did, but had no reason to. And so, the question remains as to why her hair could have possibly been left there. I believe that the thief that stole the Sword of Tertius left her hair there to throw off the investigation, and/or to frame Harriet Collins' for the crime. Harriet's occupation as a

history teacher merely assisted in condemning Collins." Vulpecula took in a breath of air, the rapid-fire speaking had taken the wind out of him, but he noticed that he had the full attention of both Apus and Lacerta.

"The next question in solving this whodunnit would be to ask how the thief got Harriet's hair in the first-place. Now, one theory would be that she snuck into her house, found it on a brush, and that was the end of that, but the thief demonstrated in the video carried a prowess much too careful and meticulous to take such a risk. And besides, the amount of hair could only be received from plucking it right off from her head. There would be something more unorthodox and diabolical, and with that, it brings us to the fact that the hair was longer than Mrs. Collins' hair. I am suggesting that Harriet Collins' hair was trimmed, approximately four or five inches, and then dyed from brown to blonde. Along the way, seven full-length strands of hair found themselves at the bottom of the barbershop floor. They were sprayed with a fragrance, to be more likely discovered, and that fragrance was from the same place that Harriet usually buys her perfume, the closest salon in Italina, - Miss Marion's Barbershop."

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By the time that Officer Pends knocked on the door, she didn't even try to deny stealing the Sword of Tertius and went away without much controversy. This was lucky because if she were to put up a fight, the evidence was circumstantial, and she would likely be freed on a technicality, but no, she confessed. A little bit of hurt pride in how quickly she had been discovered, but not a whole lot of arguing.

And so, the white-furred fox, Vulpecula, grabbed his walking-stick and with his friends, the lizard Lacerta and the owl Apus, he successfully solved the case behind the Sword of Tertius.

A month later, it was stolen again.