

It was a quiet afternoon at the Galleria Mall. Well, except in the Mall Manager's Office. There our protagonist is being shouted at by the manager of the mall. Mall manager George Fillmore has had quite enough of young and eager security guard John Brown. For the past month, John's been bringing up a pet store that had opened up at the beginning of the month. He protested that something didn't 'feel right' about the operation. However without concrete evidence, the mall manager is less than inclined to investigate anything. In fact, he dismisses any notion each time. Today was no exception.

"For the last time Brown, I am **not** chasing my tail around just because you want to play cop! You're a mall security guard, act like one!" The mall manager bellowed.

"But sir..." John began before promptly getting shut down by another bout of shouting.

"No butts! Now get back out there and do your job before I send you home for the day! That's an order!" The mall manager pointed to the door of his office. John nodded dejectedly, walking out. He proceeded to walk into the main atrium of the mall where people went about their busy shopping.

"Johnny! Johnny! Over here!" A voice called out from a distance. John looked up, smiling a bit he walked over to a large store called "Ranger Surplus". It was a pretty modest sized store, specializing in outdoor and survival gear oh, and military surplus. An old man wearing army camouflage and a WWII army helmet was waving at him, John approached with a tired smile and a wave.

"Hey there Mr. McGuckin. What can I do for you?" John asked.

"Did he listen to ya?? Did he??" The old man asked, quite eager for the answer. John looked at the ground, shaking his head. "Well dung diddly damn it! What's it take for someone to look into things around here! I tell ya, I have a bad about feeling about that shop.." The old man stroked his wild and untrimmed beard, thinking to himself.

"Don't worry Mr. McGuckin, if I can't get the support from the security department as a whole, I'll keep looking into things on my own. I'm sure I'll turn up something." John replied, ever the optimist.

"And that's why I like you youngin', always getting things done! You still got that gear I got ya?" The old man asked, causing John to chuckled a bit.

"Well yea...but Mr. McGuckin, I hardly think I'm gonna need it. Remember, us security guards just detect, deter, observe and report!" John had received a 'care package' as a gift from the old man a few months back. It was a gift after some juveniles vandalized his store during business hours. John promptly tracked them down, called the police and cornered them with a golf cart.

“Well you helped me out a few months back, the least I can do is repay you with some well needed supplies!” The old man looked around before leaning in, whispering. “Ya never know when the new world order will take over!”

“Aaaand I lost him.” John thought to himself before speaking. “Right heh, well yea, ya never know! Well, I gotta get back to work. You take care Mr. McGuckin!” John offered a smile and wave before walking out of the store and towards the security office.

“You too Johnny, remember, keep your nose clean and wear you foil hat at night!” The old man called after him. John soon reached the security office, walking in he let out a long and defeated sigh.

“Still going on about that pet store, eh John?” an older man with white hair and a white mustached asked with a kind smile as he approached John. He sported the same kind of uniform John had but his shield was a more gold color. This was Mark Sloan, head of security for the Galleria Mall.

“Aw Chief, you know I can’t let this go! I mean, something about that operation doesn’t seem right, I know it, old man McGuckin knows it!” John protested. Mark nodded, listening to John as he sipped some of his coffee from the mug he held.

“I know sport, and I completely agree as well. But you know we can’t act without the manager’s approval, last time we sent two officers to poke around, he threatened to fire the whole staff. Going on about respecting business privacy or something like that. The best we can do is monitor the situation, and act on anything that might occur, that’s our best bet.” Mark noted John’s defeated look and placed a hand on his shoulder, patting it. “It’ll be alright, things have a way of working themselves out. Why don’t you take over monitor duty. Get your mind off of things?” John offered a weary smile before agreeing and heading over to a door labeled monitor station. Upon entering the room, he was greeted with a wall containing dozens of monitors He walked over to the guard sitting in the chair, tapping him on the shoulder. The obviously bored guard looked up and nodded, getting up and leaving the room. John walked over to the now vacant chair and nearly fell back onto it. He couldn’t recall when the last time he wasted so much breathe. Thoughts of the pet shop lingered in his head. Who were the owners? Why does the staff seem to dislike the very animals they’re taking care of? Why do the men look like they belong in a mob opposed to working with animals?

These questions and more began to fill John’s head again. That is, until they were interrupted by John’s two way radio shoulder mic.

“Attention personnel, we have a disturbance on level 5 near the pet section.” The dispatcher announced. John immediately perked up. He scrambled to one of the monitors on that floor. Grabbing a control joystick from the table, manipulating the view on one of the cameras,

aiming it towards a shabby looking pet shop. It was the same one he had just been thinking about!

“Great!” John thought to himself. “I can go over and use the response as an excuse to finally take a look at these guys and see what they’re **really** up to! ...Wait..” John noticed a short and angry looking blonde throwing some kind of tirade outside the store before stomping her way inside.

“Can someone please respond? Don’t make me look at the duty roster and call you guys out..” The dispatcher threatened. John quickly grabbed his shoulder mic.

“This is Officer John Brown, I’m on it!” He responded in his most official voice he could muster. Quickly running out of the room.

“Thanks John, at least we can count you. Unlike everyone else!” The dispatcher replied. John in the meantime ran right past Mark who was still enjoying his coffee.

“John, don’t you think you should get someone to replace you on monitor duty?” Mark asked calmly. John stopped in his tracks, turning around, looking out the entrance of the station then back at Mark.

“But...incident...happening...wanna...respond!” John replied. Apparently too excited to formulate proper sentences. Mark chuckled and shook his head.

“Oh go on, I’ll get somebody.” John smiled wide in response before making a mad dash right out the station. “Hey! You be careful out there John!” Mark called after him, he shook his head with a smile. “That boy..”

“Listen lady, I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about!” One of the two employees of the pet shop shouted. The two men were hiding behind a counter as a very angry Maxine Hellenberger holding an empty pet kennel over her head head a la Donkey Kong, yelled at them.

“You’re gonna tell me what it is you two phonies are **really** doing here or I’m gonna pry the info out of ya!” Max shouted. Just then John burst through the floor.

“Hey! Put that down this minute!” John demanded. Max looked back to see John approaching her cautiously.

“The fuzz!” She exclaimed, dropping the kennel and running away, further into the store.

“I got a runner!” John called into his shoulder mic as he ran after Max.

“A runner? What do you mean a runner? John are you chasing someone? Do not pursue I repeat, do **not** pursue! Remember the ‘golf cart incident?? I repeat do not chase! ...We don’t do that!” Dispatch shouted. John offered no response as he chased Max through aisles.

“You’ll never take me alive coppers!” Max shouted as she turned a corner. Spying a display case filled with plush cat toys, she used both arms to get two armfuls and waited for John to turn the corner as well. Once John caught up...“Eat adorable playthings creep!” Max shouted as she flung her armful of toys at John, who proceeded to get a face full of plush cat goodies.

“I’m hit!” John exclaimed before falling onto the ground on his back, buried in cat toys. Max smirked before resuming her escape.

“Aha!” She exclaimed, seeing the exit being a straight shot. She grinned and began running towards the door but was rudely interrupted by someone grabbing her ankle, causing her to fall to the floor. She looked back to see an arm sticking out of a mountain of cat plushies. John’s head poked out.

“End of the road!” John exclaimed, getting out of the mountain of plushies, quickly subduing Max and zip tying her wrists together. Max grumbled and seethed as John began to escort her towards the exit.

“Alright gentlemen, I’m sure we can come to some sort of understanding...” John began. Emerging from behind the counter were two employees, as John noticed before, they definitely didn’t look like they belonged in a pet store. One was tall with a comb over and a smile that was slimier than a slug, his name tag read Bud. The other worker was an average sized fellow with slick hair and a tired and slightly dopey look on his face, his name tag read Lou.

“Finally! It’s about time you guys showed up!” Bud exclaimed, obviously infuriated. He grinned, walking up to Max. “This crazy bitch was ruining our legally established and honest business.”

“What did you call me!?” Max asked in a seething yell, struggling against the zip ties and John.

“Hey now, no need to name call alright? I’m going to escort her off the premises....sorry about the incident sir.” John replied, not really wanting to say it, not liking the two men as it was, even less for insulting Max.

“See that you do pal, and keep her off the premises! Charge her with disturbing the peace or somethin’, just keep her out of our store!” Bud yelled after her. Lou simply nodded in agreement. John nodded, escorting Max out of the store and towards an area of the mall that seemed to be under renovation.

“Grr! Let go of me! You don’t know what you’re doing! Those animals are in danger!” Max cried out, struggling the whole way.

“Come on now, you’re making a scene...” John replied, trying to calm her down as best as he could.

“Calm down? Calm down?? How can I calm down when there are animals in danger! Those two assholes aren’t even remotely interested in taking care of those animals, they’re doing something shady in there, I know it!” Max protested, struggling again.

John nodded to folks passing by as he tried passing off Max’s struggling as not being a big deal. “I know! I’m trying to figure out what it is!” Upon hearing that, Max quickly stopped struggling, turning her head to look at John.

“Seriously?” She asked in a bewildered tone. They both arrived at a secluded part of the construction area. “Also, why did you bring me here? Speaking of being shady..”

John blinked, quickly shaking his head, undoing Max’s zip ties. “No, no, no! I was just trying to get to a blind spot!”

“Blind spot?”

“Yea, there are cameras everywhere in the mall, but this area is being renovated, one of the few spots without cameras. Well at least until they get done renovating, then they’ll have some new ones!” John explained, putting the zip ties away. Max folded her arms, a bit skeptical at the sudden change of heart.

“What are you trying to pull here?” She asked, not quite convinced. John looked at her, letting out a sigh before pushing up on his glasses.

“Nothing at all! Look, my name is John, I’m a security guard. I brought you here because I wanted to get your side of the story without arousing suspicion. I’ve suspected that those guys weren’t what they seemed since the moment they opened up shop. I’ve been watching them for weeks now and I’ve noticed they handle the animals only if they have to, they don’t treat them well at all, they seem to know next to nothing about any of the animals in their shop, things just don’t add up. I’ve been trying to investigate it, bring in the security or maybe even the cops in to investigate. I even suggested summoning the ASPCA but the manager of the mall won’t let me! He says I’m just trying to be a cop hero or something, he’s even threatened to sack me! But something’s wrong in there, I know there is...and it doesn’t help that those animals could be in danger.” John finished, taking a breathe. He never really had the opportunity to go in depth about the issue with anyone. Well anyone except Old Man McGuckin....but then again....it was Old Man McGuckin.

Max tilted her head, eyeing John for a moment before nodding to herself. “Yea, I guess you seem legit. My friends call me Max. Though it’s pretty weird that the manager of the mall doesn’t want to even look into things.”

“I know! I mean...I know I can be a bit of a pest sometimes but would it kill him to at least get a detective or something? Just poke around!”

Max nodded in agreement. “Something big’s happening here. And it’s not happening during the day..” She paused for a moment before looking at John. “Have you looked around the mall after it closes?”

John shook his head. “The mall locks up every night at midnight, manager’s orders. Nobody has the keys to open the doors to the mall except the manager, the head of security and myself since I’m the only guard that shows any...enthusiasm for work. We use the keys to lock up at night and open in the morning.” He explained. Max arched an eyebrow.

“So...any one of you could get in during the night?” She asked. John suddenly had a bleak look on his face when he noticed Max’s expression.

“Oh....oh no way...you don’t think-!”

“One of you go in after nightfall and do shady and possibly illegal things before the mall opens? Well I wouldn’t know...I suppose there’s only one way to find out..” Max grins as John slowly begins to shake his head with his eyes wide.

“Ooooooh no, you’re not thing of-”

“Going in after midnight and seeing what we can find? Of course I am!” She replied with glee.

“B-but, nobody’s allowed in the mall after it closes!”

“Nobody?”

“W-well yea!”

Max clasped her hands together, bringing her fingertips to her lips, appearing as if to ponder, taking a moment. “Constable, think about it. Do you honestly think that there isn’t at least SOME possibility that someone else who owns a copy of that key is coming in and doing shady acts of who knows what at night?” Max offered. John rubbed the back of his neck. He hated the thought of someone on staff being a suspect of anything. “Look, let me propose this. We come in at night, take a look around and if nothing happens we slip out before the

mall opens! Nobody has to be the wiser! Come on Constable, whaddya say?" She leaned in to hear his answer.

"Nothing ever happens during the day.." He muttered, letting out a long sigh, somewhat resembling a deflating balloon. "Oh alright, deal. We'll meet tonight around one in the morning. But we're only going in to check on the store and that's it! No five finger discounts!" John warned, wagging a finger at her. Max smirked and nodded.

"I'm not interested in stealing anything, I just want to be sure those animals are safe. Deal." Max agreed, now very hyped for tonight's planned event. John smiled offering his hand for a handshake. Max grinned wide with a raised eyebrow.

"A handshake? Please! We're sealing this deal the Max way!"

"The 'Max way'? What's that M-"

Before John could finish, he was promptly pounced by Max. Latching on to him as she kissed him. Getting caught off guard, John stumbles backward with his back against the wall, struggling at first, but quickly finding himself returning the advances with gusto.

Later that night at Ellen and Jamie's apartment..

"Absolutely not! Are you crazy!?" Ellen shouted.

"Well maybe not stab-stab crazy.." Jamie added. Max rolled her eyes, she was fully dressed in what could only be called a ninja outfit.

"Look, I came here to ask for help on helping some innocent animals that may very well be in danger!" Max protested. Ellen rested her hands on her hips.

"Then call the police, call the FBI! Call **anyone**, just don't go yourself!"

"You know Ellen's right, this is pretty crazy, even for you!" Jamie exclaimed. "Also, you look like a ninja, nobody really does this sorta thing dressed as a ninja.."

"I'm not a ninja! This outfit was chosen to maximize full stealthiness!" Max explained as she made a few goofy sneaky-type gestures. Suddenly Max's cell rings, looking at it, she nods in determination. "Ride's here. Time to put Operation Break Out, Make Out in motion!"

"Operation...what? Max wait!" Ellen called to Max as she opened the door to leave. "Are you sure about this? What if you end up over your head in this?"

"I wouldn't have to worry if two of my best friends in the whole wide world agreed to come with!" Max gave Ellena and Jamie a pleading look.

"Max....this is crazy..!" Ellen protested, feeling 'the look' take hold.

"Yea, come on Max, I don't want to have to risk going to jail again! I've been booked enough times in my life, I'm done!" Jamie looked at Max's face as well, trying not to succumb her pleading eyes, her pouting lips..

"GADDAMNIT!" Ellen shouted while sitting in the back seat of John's car. Jamie sat next to her with his face in his hands and, Max sat in the front passenger's seat, adjusting her utility belt.

"Is something wrong?" John asked as Ellen shot him an incredulous look.

"I'm sitting in a car at 1 A.M., helping my friend break into a mall to save animals. Yes something is **very** wrong!" Ellen fumed.

"What am I even doing here..?" Jamie asked in a slightly defeated tone. Max turned around to face them both.

"Listen you two, you don't even need to get out of the car. Just stay here and get help if we need it! Here." Max a small earpiece.

"What's this?" Max asked as she looked at the earpiece.

"So we can stay in contact!" Max tapped on an earpiece she was already wearing. She then turned to Jamie.

"Jamie, I need you to keep her calm if anything happens. Alright?"

"Alright.." Jamie replied with a sigh.

"Alright! Let's go Constable!" With that Max hopped out of the car along with John. They pressed against the wall as they made their way towards the entrance. John then took out his long ring of keys and started to look for the right one.

"Don't get me wrong, I love a man in uniform, but don't you think you should've dressed more....I dunno...sneaky?" Max asked as she tried peering over his shoulder.

"I didn't have anything in my wardrobe that screamed 'stealth mission'. Besides, if we do encounter anything, it'll be easier to establish myself as an authority figure if I have my uniform on." John explained as he found the key and began to unlock the doors.

Max giggled and rolled her eyes. "Whatever you say Constable."

Now inside the mall John signaled for quiet voices as they quietly made their way towards the pet shop, doing their best to avoid detection.

"What's up with Constable?" John asked in a hushed whisper.

"Huh?"

"Why do you keep calling me that? Aren't Constables only in the UK or something?"

Max smirked as they made their way through the atrium. "You're no cop, but you care a lot more than any security guard I've ever met. So I figured constable was a good fit. You just need a billy club and a helmet!" Max hissed in laughter in an effort to keep quiet. John smiled and shook his head. They made it to the pet shop, where they realized that the doors lights in the store were on. They tried opening the door to surprising ease, it was unlocked.

"It's unlocked!" Max exclaimed in a whisper.

"Okay, that could mean anything right?" Ellen's voice asked over the headset.

"I got a bad feeling about this.." John muttered as the two proceeded to sneak inside. They looked around and saw no signs of anyone except for the animals in the store. Max waved John over and pointed to a door labeled "employees only". They both made their way over to the door, gently pushing it slightly open. The room was dimly lit, but it was apparent that empty kennels littered the room, not to mention unlabeled potato sacks.

"Max..!" John whispered to get her attention, pointing at something. When Max looked to see what he was pointing at, her eyes became wide when she realized diamonds littered a table in the middle of the room.

"Oh God, it's so cliché it hurts..!" Max whispered. "Okay, now that we know this is bad news for the animals, let's get them out of here!"

"What? What's going on??" Ellen's voice asked.

"We're not sure but a lot of diamonds are in the back room. I'm almost positive they're stolen!" Max answered in an angry whisper.

"...Maybe it's a jewelry **and** pet shop?" Jamie asked.

“Yea, I doubt that. Stay frosty troops. Alright Constable, let’s commence Operation Break Out, Make Out! Though admittedly the making out is after the mission’s over but it’s the start to the rest of the fun!” She winks at John who promptly blushes.

“Oh for the love of God, get going already!!” Ellen shouted.

John and Max quickly scattered, finding the keys to the cages, opening them and getting the animal kennel and cages and taking them outside of the mall out of harm’s way. John stopped as he got to the spider cases.

“What are you waiting for??” Max asked as she opened another cage.

“...I don’t do spiders..!!” John exclaimed raising his whisper voice. Max blinked in astonishment.

“John, we don’t have time for this!” Max warned with a serious look. John gulped and sighed, getting an arm full of cages, his face distraught as he quietly whimpers, carrying the cages out of the store.

“Perfect! I can’t wait to get these assholes a taste of real justice!” Max said smiling to herself.

“I don’t think so.” A voice from behind her interjected. Before Max could turn around, she was hit in the back of the head, getting knocked out.

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John snuck towards the pet store again from dropping off the spiders outside, looking rather miserable. “Max! I really hope you appreciate me handling the spiders because I know I didn’t! ...Max! Ma-” He called out in annoyed whispers. However he quickly fell silent, diving for cover against a wall as soon as he realized something was amiss. He made his way towards the front door of the shop. Much to his horror, he saw the two pet shop owners tying Max up, leaving her sitting on the ground. She began to regain consciousness.

“Rise and shine!” Bud smirked as Max started to open her eyes. “We told ya not to come back.”

“You! Rgh! Let me go!!” Max yelled through her teeth, struggling against the ropes.

“Now see, we can’t do that. We already gave you one chance to amscray and you didn’t get with the program. Ain’t that right Lou?” Bud asked, Lou simply nodded enthusiastically. “...He don’t talk much.”

“You assholes will never get away with this!” Max yelled out.

“Wow, you **are** spunky.” A voice replied from the back room. A man emerged, revealing himself to be..

“Mister Fillmore..!?” John whispered to himself in shock. He pressed his back against the wall after witnessing the mall manager’s entrance, his mind racing. “What do I do? What do I do?? ...Wait a minute, what am I talking about? I have seven years experience as a security guard! Come on, think John, think! What has months of training as a security guard taught you?” He whispered to himself. He took a moment to think, slowly realizing something with a worried look on his face. “...Nothing..!”

“W-what are you doing with that gun?!” Max’s voice asked, quickly becoming alarmed. John scrambled to the door of the shop, peering inside again. He saw the mall manager pull out a gun. Wide eyed, he scrambled away from the shop.

“I’m afraid you interefered quite enough young lady. You and that annoying security guard have been causing me a lot of grief this month. I don’t suppose he’s here with you?” The manager asked, looking around, rather hopeful to see John.

“I don’t know who you’re talking about!” Max shouted, trying not to be shaken by the very real possibility of getting killed.

“Shame, would have been nice to take out two birds with one stone. Ah well, I can always just fire him tomorrow, save myself some grief. Do you have **any** idea how hard it is to steal diamonds these days? It’s a real pain in the ass you know. You just can’t waltz in, wave a gun around and take them like the good old days. There’s surveillance, security, all sophisticated. You have to go in with a plan and an edge. Sometimes you have a lot more collateral than planned.” The manager explained with a grin.

“But why a pet store? Why endanger these innocent animals?!” Max demanded, if she was going to buy the farm, she deserved some answers.

“Why? Because it’s the perfect front! Nobody ever suspects a pet shop of anything! Just take care of these stupid animals and people are none the wiser!” He looks back at a kennel holding puppies, he chuckled kicking it slightly. “Probably dump them somewhere after we’re done..” The manager thought aloud.

“You do that and I’ll fucking kill you!!” Max screamed, struggling even harder against her ropes. the manager simply smiled, aiming the gun straight at her.

“Oh contraire my dear, it is **I** who is going to kill you..”

Suddenly the mall speakers switched on. Eerily playing music throughout the empty mall.

“What the hell? ...Is that music?” The manager asked.

*♪Don't you ever feel sad  
Lean on me when times are bad  
When the day comes and you're down  
In a river of trouble and about to drown  
**Just hold on, I'm comin'!**♪*

A loud siren rang out in the mall. Bud and Lou ran over to see what exactly it was. Completely being caught off guard, Bud turns around to urgently inform the manager.

“Boss! It's that security gua-” Before Bud could finish the door was broken open by a large force. That large force was a jury rigged security Segway with two rows of duct taped plywood on the front, acting like a shield. It was being driven by none other than John, wearing a football helmet, and a teeth guard with a cricket bat is strapped to his belt. The force of the ram pushed the two goons away, one was knocked into a shelf holding containers of kitty litter while the other is pushed into a large open bin of dog food. The Plywood promptly broke into pieces as John continued driving full speed towards the manager.

“Max! Get outta the way!!” John shouted. Max quickly rolled herself out of the way as the manager tried grabbing her to no avail. He quickly turned his attention back to John who forced the Segway to an abrupt stop, using the momentum to hurl himself at the manager. As if it were in slow motion the manager fired his gun at John, hitting him four times dead center in his chest. John winced in pain as he pulled out the cricket bat in mid air, using every ounce of strength to hit the manager on the side of head, sending the crook into a display shelf filled with empty fish tanks. The manager collided with the tanks, breaking most of them before crumpling to the floor, out cold. John fell to the floor face first himself, still clutching the cricket bat.

“John!!” Max called out.

“Everybody, freeze! Don't move!” Soon after that shout a group of police officers barge in with their guns out.

“Hey! A little help over here, please?” Max wiggled in vain against the rope, showing that she was well tied up. One of the officers approached her, undoing the rope.

“Listen you've got to believe me! These three poor excuses for human beings have been using this store as a front while stealing diamonds!!” Max exclaimed, flailing slightly.

“Yea, we know.” The cop who untied her replied.

“Eh?”

“You’re Max, right? Your friends explained the whole situation. Even recorded what was transmitted through your earpiece.” The officer explained.

“Sweet! How do you like them apples!?” Max shouted while sticking her tongue out at the motionless bad guys.

“We appreciate the assistance, but that doesn’t explain how you got in here..”

“Oh! Well my friend John who works as a security guard here helped me....Oh shit! John!!” Max exclaimed as her eyes went wide. She rushed over to John, turning him around.

“Somebody call a god damn ambulance! He’s been shot!” Max shouted at the police before turning to John. “Don’t you fucking die on me!”

John stirred slightly, opening his eyes, blinking a few times, unable to see very well due to the glass of his glasses being cracked from hitting the floor. He let out a murmur before coughing suddenly.

“John you colossal idiot, that was **incredible!** Stupid as fuck, but still incredible!” She praised as John smiled and nodded.

“It...seemed like a good idea at the time..” John slurred out, coughing again. Max cradled him in her arms.

“Don’t worry, we’re going to get you help, an ambulance is on the way. We still have the last half of the operation to finish!” Max said with a smile, trying to fight tears. John suddenly looked concerned, shaking his head.

“N-no...Max, I don’t need an ambulance..”

“What are you insanel!? You were shot four times! I am **not** letting you die here tonight!” Max shouted.

“Max...you don’t understand..”

“What **is** there to understand!? Bullets usually equal death most of the time! So help me if you refuse medical help, I’ll kill you!” Max hissed through clenched teeth. John chuckled meekly before taking off his tie and unbuttoning his shirt.

“You....you....you **asshat!**” Max quickly dropped him on the ground, standing up.

“O-ooow! What was that for..?” John asked, rubbing the back of his head.

“A bullet proof vest!? When were you gonna fuckin tell me!?” Max asked as she folded her arms.

“When I regained breathe! Geez, you know how much it hurts being shot? It knocks the dang wind outta ya! It was gift from one of the mall tenants,a crazy but good natured old man!” The two glared at each other for a minute before they both burst out laughing. One of the police officers leaned in to another.

“Are they...laughing?”

“Yea, I think they’re both literally insane...”

Outside the group were reunited amongst police cars, ambulances and fire trucks. Ellen, Max and Jamie stood together, while John was checked by paramedics not too far away on the bumper of an ambulance. Ellen promptly punched Max’s arm.

“Ow! What was that for!?” Max asked, rubbing her arm in pain.

“That was for doing something so unbelievably stupid! My God! Imagine if we hadn’t come along!” Ellen shouted. Max rolled her eyes and smiled.

“Ah but you did come along. You believed in my cause! My crusade!”

“More like you coerced us into going..” Jamie replied.

“Aw well you say potato...” Max trailed off with a snicker as Jamie shook his head.

“Can we agree never to do something this insane again please? I’d very much like that.” Jamie added.

“Yea, that goes without saying. I can do without anything like that ever again.” John said while approaching the group, one of his arms cradled his chest in slight pain.

“You okay?” Max asked.

“Yea, I’ll live, bruising mostly, getting shot **hurts**..” John replied with a slight wince.

“I know exactly how you feel. At least you had a bullet proof vest!” Jamie rubbed his arm, remembering back to a certain incident. “Getting shot once was more than enough for me.”

“I hear ya brother..” John replied with a light chuckle.

“So...still employed?” Ellen asked.

“Yea! In fact I’m getting a police commendation this weekend!” John beamed with a bit of pride.

“Congratulations.” Ellen said with a smile

“Yea, you totally deserve it.” Jamie offered a thumbs up.

“Holy shit, you should have seen him!” Max exclaimed. “He was all like fuckin’ John McClain Going all like, kablam! Right through the door, took two guys out, then, wearing stuff he found in the mall, and that vest, fuckin’ leaped into the air, got shot **four times** and thwacked that mother fucker right in the side of the head with a cricket bat!” Max shook her head with a smile, still not believing the scene that had played out in front of her. She then eyed John mischievously. “Well now, if you’ll excuse us, my labido is going insane and I need nay, I demand to get my bone on! Afterall we’ve got to finish the second part of our operation!” She replied with a cheeky smile.

“Second part of the plan? But the crooks are booked and the animals are going to an animal shelter, what else is there left to-” John was interrupted by Max’s nibbling of John’s ear. “I....oh..”

“Come on Constable!” She called as she grabbed the collar of John’s undershirt, leading him to his.

“Ulp! But Max, I’m injured!” John protested as he was lead away.

“Tough officer, I’m rewarding you even if it kills you!” John silently worded the word ‘help’ before being led away. Ellen and Jamie follow not too far behind.

“Oh God...I am **not** looking forward to the car ride home..” Ellen muttered as she rubbed her temples.

“If things get weird, I’ll just jump out of the car.” Jamie said with a sagely nod.