*Lowell’s right*, I thought back to when he told me at the Maverick Hotel. *This* is *exciting!*

The Defiant were making progress in the days leading up to the Independence Day celebrations. Not only had my and Lowell’s ‘errands’ been causing decent chaos (FaithTV called the library hacking I helped out with ‘an immoral message of seduction and hate towards God’), but I was slowly learning the ins and outs of how to be a proper rebel.

Just yesterday, I vandalized public property for the first time. I spray painted resistance fists and the words ‘free your mind, join the Defiant’ on a brick wall outside the D.S.A. post office, all while this creeping fear gripped me. As I did this, that lingering doubt inside simmered a bit, only to fade away at the familiar thrill running up my tail, especially as me and an impressed Lowell booked it before an officer could spot us.

They’d been distributing wanted posters to civilians and onto billboards. Thankfully, none of them included a picture of a twenty-three-year-old tabby cat, though one of them included a picture of a hooded wolf, but not his face. And for every officer handing them, I noticed pedestrian furs keeping their distances, like locking eyes with an authority figure guaranteed arrest. There existed another hidden emotion besides fear amongst the civilian population: antipathy.

As we were preparing for tomorrow, Lowell claimed this was progress.

“Wait,” I asked, packing up my backpack again, “isn’t it bad that they’re angry?”

“Only if they’re angry at the government,” the wolf reassured me. “Johanna wants us to disrupt public order in a way that won’t get the public angry at us.”

“…I’m still confused.” My feline ears fell slightly.

“Well, think of it this way,” Lowell cleared his throat and zipped up his bag, turning to my direction. “If you live in a huge family, and one cub gets into massive trouble for say…spray painting the walls, then that cub will get grounded. Then say he does it again, but Dad suddenly gets the idea to restrict what that cub and the rest of his siblings can and can’t do. The more trouble the punk causes, the more Dad decides to tighten his grip on the house, even if the problem cub does something as slight as interrupt him. Now, you can’t even do anything without him knowing or asking for permission. Who would you be mad at in the end? The cub or Dad?”

“…the Dad,” I concluded.

“Exactly! So long as we do things that mostly inconvenience the government, who then place restrictions that inconvenience the public, this will allow the seeds of dissent to grow. And when the Devout civilians realize how tyrannical this government is…voila!” Lowell clapped his paws together. “We have a revolution in the mix!”

*Knock! Knock! Knock!* “Boys? Can you come see me and my husband down in his office, please? We need…to discuss something?”

Lowell and I exchanged confused glances, the wolf more so. “Okay.”

Minutes later, after putting our phones in the basket beside the door, we found the couple standing in Kevin’s office. Behind Mary’s soft smile was this melancholy I’d noticed in her this past day. I didn’t know if it was something personal or not, but I could see the same hidden emotion behind her husband’s façade also.

“We…need to talk…to Johanna.”