

### Zenny, Axel

The young feline followed his nose down the street until he approached the mall. He went inside and embraced the warm air from the cold outside. He looked around and continued walking, taking the escalator up to the top floor.

“I can smell it, it's so close,” Axel said to himself. After dodging a few people and side stepping large groups that traveled around the mall, he stopped in front of a candy store and smiled widely while his tail swayed back and forth. The sign on the window said special deals for parents and children. He stood up tall and walked in. His nose was invaded by the smell of milk, dark, and peppermint chocolate. He looked around and saw Santa shaped candy bars hanging up on racks, peppermint shaped chocolates hanging from the ceiling, and a lot of adults in line waiting to purchase large amounts of candy for their lovers and children. The tiger nearly drooled and licked his maw as he walked around happily. He scanned the walls and the displays of different types of candy, completely oblivious to other people around him.

After walking in a complete circle around the shop, his hands were filled with one of each piece of chocolate he could get. He smiled widely as he started for the exit. A Leopard security guard stood in front of him and put a hand over the candy.

“Hold on their kid. You can't just take this without paying,” he said.

“Hey, what are you doing, let go,” the tiger said, turning to the side so he wouldn't touch his candy. “What do you mean I have to pay for this?”

“I mean, you have to pay for the chocolate with a parent or guardian. You'd be stealing if you didn't.”

The tiger frowned. “But my parents aren't here... They.. told me to get this for them,” he lied. “They're in a hurry though and told me not to be late. I have to go.” Axel turned and tried to walk out but the guard continued to block his path.

“I don't care how bad your parents are in a hurry,” said the Leopard sternly. “Either you pay for what you have or you put the candy back where you found them. If your parents have a problem with that, they can come here and we'll subtle this.”

“B-but...” Axel looked up at the guard with big puppy dog eyes. The guard folded his arms, immune to the tigers plea. “You do have parent's here to pay for this, don't you kid?”

“Yes I do... but I don't wanna put all this stuff down then go get them.”

“Well you don't have a choice. I'm going to put the candy back if you don't pay.”

Axel thought quickly. “Wait I just remembered they gave me money. I'll go and pay.”

The Leopard nodded but kept an eye on the tiger while he remained in the store. Axel stood in line behind the other adults and waited patiently. When it came his turn, he put all the chocolate on the counter top. The cashier, a tall deer, leaned over and saw the tiger.

“Hello, and how are you today?” he asked politely.

“Hi!” Axel waved happily. “I’m great. Can you give me this chocolate?” He said, trying not to sound impatient.

“One moment,” said the cashier. Axel hooped up and leaned against the counter as he watched the chocolate get scanned. He licked his maw slowly as he couldn't wait to consume all of it. “Alright your total is \$87 and 43 cents.”

“What?” Axel said louder than he wanted. “That's to much money. I don't have all that!”

“Well how much do you have?” asked the deer.

“I don't ha-” Axel stopped himself as he saw the security guard out of the corner of his eye watching him. “I-I mean my dad has it,” he said, hoping to keep up with his lie.

“Then we'll need to have your father here to pay. I'll put this on hold till you can get him but I'll need you to step out of line for a while.”

“But that's not fair!” The tiger protested.

The security guard came forward and grabbed the tiger's hand, pulling him out of line. The tiger whinned and struggled, causing a scene in a store.

“Let me go, let me go, let me go,” Axel repeated, pushing against the hand on his but found his fingers trapped in the Leopard's grip.

“Alright kid, enough games,” he said. “I'm taking you to the lost and found so we can find your father.”

Moments before stepping out the door the Leopard found himself stopped by a large tiger in a black button up long sleeve shirt and creased black pants.

“Excuse me, what seems to be the problem here? And what are you doing with my son?” The tiger asked.

Axel flicked his ears and looked up at the stranger. He saw the tiger nearly looked like him but had red eyes as opposed to his blue.

“Is this your child?” The Leopard guard asked.

The tiger bent to one knee and placed his hands on the cubs shoulders. Axel was about to call out this stranger until the red eyed tiger winked at him. Axel could feel a familiar presence about him then looked at the red orbed pin attached to his pocket.

“Z-Zenny?” he whispered to make sure. When Zenny shook his head and smiled the baby tiger hugged him. “Dad!” he exclaimed, wagging his tail. Zenny picked Axel up and put him on his shoulders.

“Your... son,” continued the Leopard, starting to believe them since they looked so much alike. “Needs to pay for the chocolate he just purchased.

“Chocolate?” Zenny asked, disguising his voice to match that of an adult. Axel leaned forward and looked at his 'dad' with puppy dog eyes, pulling his ears back in a pleading motion. “Alright,” Zenny said.

He walked up to the counter and purchased the chocolate Axel had. Axel reached for the bag but Zenny took it and kept it from his reach. He bent his head respectfully to the security guard then exited. Axel grumbled as he tried to reach for his chocolate but Zenny grinned and kept it away. They walked outside together and after getting a block away from the store, Zenny put the tiger down and reverted back to his original form in a small cloud of smoke.

“I knew it was you,” the tiger said. “Thanks for helping me out there. That was really close.”

“No problem,” Zenny said smiling. “You're really easy to find you know that? I could sense you though so I had an advantage.”

“Transformation is awesome,” the tiger said. “So... can I have my chocolate now?”

Zenny grinned a toothy grin “You mean my chocolate, that I paid for?”

Axel frowned and folded his arms. “No fair, I had that stuff first!”

“But you didn't purchase it so it's not yours. I paid for it so it's mine. You can have some if you want,” Zenny teased, shaking the bag of goodies.

“NO! I want all of it! Gimme!” Axel tried to reach for it but Zenny put the bag on his tail and kept the tiger away with his hands and a little magic. After a few minutes of struggling, Axel stomped the ground frustrated. “Fine, what do you want for it!”

Zenny thought to himself. “You'll have to do a favor for me in the future. And I get to decide when and what it is and you have to do it no matter what. Deal?” he grinned, wagging his tail and extending his hand.

Axel grumbled but his nose continued to sniff into the chocolate bag. He curled his hands together and reluctantly shook the phox's hand.

“Ah ah ah, no fingers crossed either,” Zenny said.

Axel rolled his eyes and tsked as he was found out. He revealed his other hand didn't have his fingers crossed and shook.

“Hehe yay! But you still can't have it yet?”

“What!?! Why not! We had a deal.”

“But I need to get you to Zen's Christmas party and I dont want you getting me sticky with chocolate as we fly.”

“Oh... okay,” Axel said getting happy again. “I forgot about Zen's party. Alright, what are we waiting for? Let's go.... Then you'll give me the chocolate?”

“Only if I can have just a little,” Zenny replied.

“Okay,” Axel smiled. He quickly drew his wings out then hugged Axel as they took off into the sky. Axel yelled in surprise and flailed as they ascended. Zenny let him go and Axel fell for a moment then

a  
t  
t  
a  
c  
h  
e  
d

h  
i  
m  
s  
e  
l  
f

t  
o

Z  
e  
n  
n  
y  
'  
s

b  
a  
c  
k

a  
s

t  
h  
e  
y

e