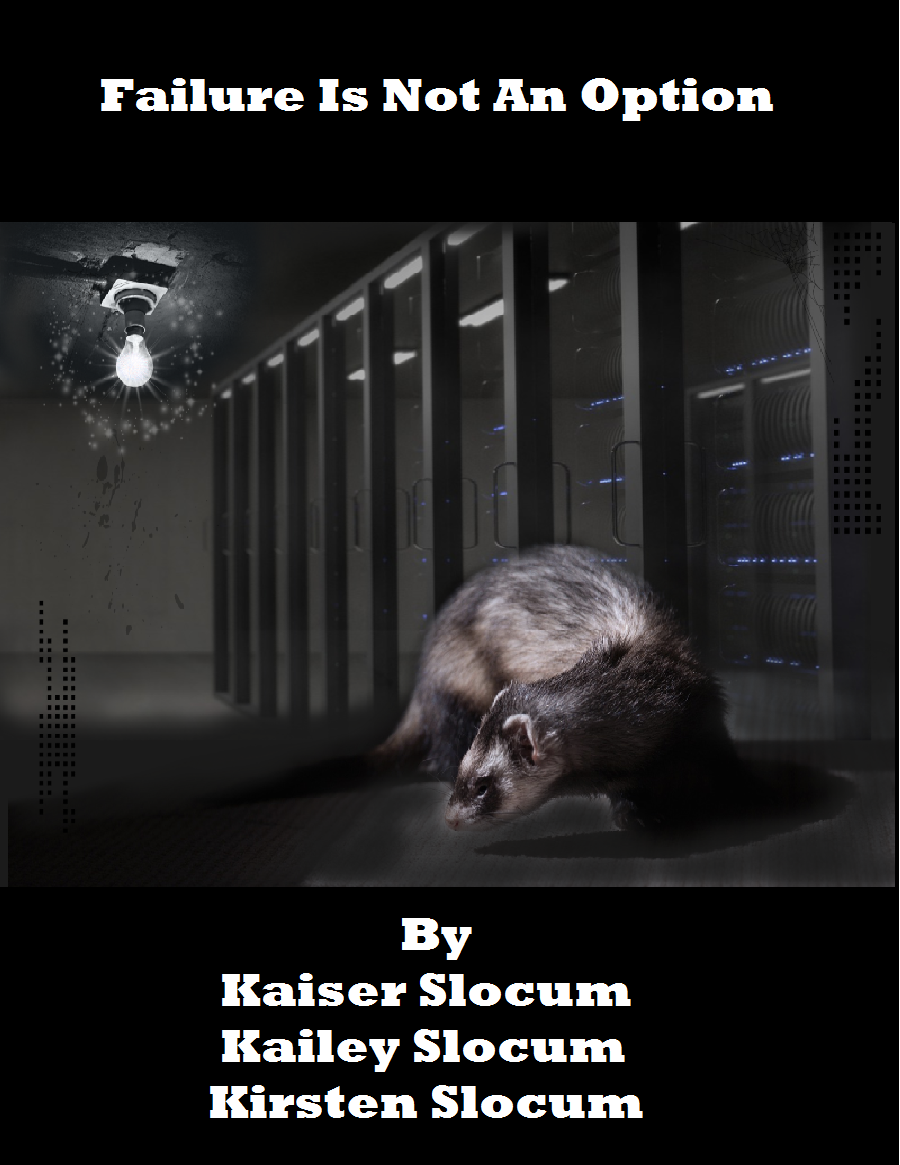
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***This book is dedicated to the***

***Wonderful hamsters***

***Coconut, Timmy, Katie, DJ, Cupcake, and Prince***

***Who selflessly put others first***

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**Chapter 1: Eluding**

The sword sliced through the air towards me. I quickly dodged out of the way and brought my arm up in a quick motion, catching my opponent off guard. However, he quickly recovered and jabbed both of his swords forward in a quick, violent motion. I could almost feel the cold steel as it flashed under my nose. *Whew, those swords were way too close. Time to take some more aggressive action.* I did a scissor-spin with a type of upper-tornado to confuse him as I executed a perfect calf-snap to knock his legs out from under him - just as his swords flashed over my head. I had to quickly duck to get out of the way, which caught *me* off balance and landed me on the ground, *hard*. With a menacing sneer, my opponent raised his sword over his head to finish me off.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You may wonder how in the world I got myself into this kind of trouble. I mean, what normal kid gets attacked by a crazed assassin? Not a normal one, that’s for sure. Then again, I have never been a *normal* kid. Now that I think about it, neither have my parents (been normal parents, I mean).

My mother, Tanya Decotu Hwang, is half Japanese - half American and grew up as an orphan in Japan while my father, Tokero Viro Hwang, grew up in a large family in China. I knew a lot more of Dad’s past. I guess his father was a missionary from America and met his mother in Beijing. They hit it off and married, living in Beijing for all their lives. When my father was 20, he got a job working for a weapons company in China but was unfortunately fired when he discovered major military misuse by the Chinese government. He escaped to America, where he started his own small weapons company. Using his knowledge of high-tech weapons and his new wife’s marketing skills, Tokero has launched a massive weapons company.

After establishing their company in California, my parents moved up to Troutdale, Oregon to establish a new headquarters and research center. That is where I was born and raised. It was now the last day of school, and I was veritably itching to get outside and have my summer begin - for three reasons! Number one: what kid doesn’t want the school year to be over? Number two: I have a serious deficiency in social interaction, so I wanted to do something fun for once. I saw all the other kids at my school laughing and hanging out in the front lawn or getting on the bus, but the only person I ever talked to was myself, and you can see how fun that was! Number three: Some relatives on my dad’s side were coming to visit us, and I had never met a single relative in person. I quickly exited the main lobby of my school and walked over to the crowded parking lot. The school didn’t have any motorcycle parking lots yet, so I had just parked my custom-Ninja on the sidewalk near a parking space. I’ll probably talk more about my motorcycle later, but basically, I always ride a really sleek, customized one to school every day, which is virtually the only fun thing I get to do on a normal school day. I’m sure all the rest of the kids at my school think it is pretty awesome too, but they never come up and tell me so. Oh well, at least I can impress myself. As I jumped onto my motorcycle and warmed up the engine, I thought back to what I knew about my visiting relatives, or at least what little I did know. It was a huge deal for them to come over, because they lived all the way in China. They have the only cousin I know of: Xen (pronounced “Zhen”). I think he is a tad older than me, but I really don’t remember, and my dad hasn’t kept amazing contact with his siblings so we really don’t know how they got a hold of our phone number. Whatever the case, one day the phone rang, and my uncle was on it telling us they were all coming over for a visit today, and that they wanted to know where we lived. A little sudden perhaps, but cool nonetheless.

I roared down the street towards home, a little faster than is probably legal, but I was excited in more than one way. The one thing I did know about my relatives was that Xen is a sword-fighting master. He learned his skills in an elite training center in Beijing. After my dad heard about his sword-fighting-prowess, I read a few Chinese articles on him. I was hoping that he would show me some of his techniques, and I could show him some of my martial arts moves. When I drove up to my house, I noticed the blue Honda sitting there. *Oh no! They’re already here, and my school didn’t let me out in time!* I eased my motorcycle into the garage next to my parents’ vehicles and barged through the backdoor. I could see everyone out on the back patio, so I tore up the stairs to my house’s second floor and dumped my backpack on the floor of my bedroom. Then, just as quickly, I flew back down and halted behind the patio door. Checking my appearance in the shiny reflection of the nearby fridge, I patted down my hair and adjusted my leather motorcycle jacket. Then, I smoothly opened the patio door and made my grand entrance, trying my best to look cool and calculating (and not the least bit out of breath or socially awkward or nervous like I was feeling). I strutted out and leaned my arm on the top of a patio chair.

“Hello, Kai!” my aunt said, “How are you?”

“Good thank you,” I replied. My dad introduced me to my aunt, a shorter lady; my uncle, a more muscular man; and my cousin, a well-built 20ish kid with fiery eyes and a buzz cut as his hairstyle. We did some small talk for awhile before Dad announced that my parents and Xen’s were going out to eat together and that Xen and I should stay home and get to know each other. I nodded politely and waved goodbye as they drove out in the blue Honda. When they disappeared around the corner, I looked at Xen, and he looked at me.

“Hey, uh, I heard you are good with swordplay. Could you show me some moves?” I began. Xen shrugged and yanked his two swords out of the scabbard on his back (which I thought was kind of weird. Who keeps their swords with them ALL THE TIME?!) I watched carefully as he “danced” his swords through the air. Though I have never done much swordplay, I have always enjoyed watching sword fights on television.

“Can I hold one of your swords?” I finally asked when he finished demonstrating a block and parry.

“Depends on what you are going to do with it,” replied Xen.

“Well, let’s see. I am going to summon my extraordinary and largely unknown sword skills, attack you, and throw you off this back patio deck,” I laughed. “Of course not! I just want to know what it feels like to wield one of those things. I have always wanted to be as good as the pirates you see in movies all the time.”

Xen shrugged again and tossed me one. “Sure, but remember - when it comes to swords, I’m your man!”

I carefully studied how the blade was inserted into the handle. It appeared to be a relatively new blade - very strong and sharp, but the handle was what intrigued me. It appeared to be a polished kind of petrified wood, with a swirly kind of symbol inscribed on one side and well-worn figure indentations all around it.

“What does this symbol mean?” I asked, pointing to the swirly figure.

“That?” Xen asked. He suddenly became *very* fidgety. “Oh, um, I don’t know. I have no idea!”

“Oh. I mean, I thought that since you *are* the sword guy after all, you would know, but hey, no prob. I didn’t mean to get you upset.”

“Just shut up!”

“Okay, okay, calm down.”

“I’m calm, you’re not!”

“Well pardon me, but it certainly would appear that you are the one who is all worked up,” I finally edged in.

Suddenly, Xen lunged at me with his sword. My instincts kicked in, and I dived out of the way, the sword in my hand clanging to the ground. As soon as it hit the patio, Xen scooped it up with a lunging swoop. I had no idea what had gotten into him.

“Whoa! What’s the problem?” I said. Xen didn’t reply - unless you count a generous dual-sword swing in my direction. I could hear the air throb as the swords flashed by. When that happened, I struck out with a wind-smash and a fake-die that ended with a wipe-spin.

See, my mom is a black belt in karate; she started teaching it to me when I was very young, and I became a black belt when I was 13. I also mastered judo and a dozen or so other forms of martial arts by the time I was 15. At this point, I stopped attending all but the largest contests because I easily whipped all of my opponents, and my room was becoming rather crowded with medals and trophies. Anyway, I decided to invent my own form of martial arts. I call it slice-whip. Using a combination of moves from all of the martial arts I have mastered, I have created an extremely effective and personally tailored form that has proven very satisfactory, even enabling me to beat armed assassins, which I would count Xen as at the moment. I had to be very careful though as many of the moves (if not properly executed) could seriously harm my opponent. Additionally, I doubt my uncle and aunt would be excited if I killed their son.

Anyway, these martial arts moves surprised Xen and gave me the element of surprise. He countered with a bunch of well-aimed swings, but the swords only met air as I nimbly dodged out of the way. This continued on for a while, him trying to get at me and me barely managing to stay out of his way. By this time, I should have just called the police, but I was mad at him and wanted to show him that his sword skills were nothing compared to my martial art skills. With that, I performed a very risky move, a sharp dive to his feet with a back feet slam to follow it up. Amazingly, I avoided certain death by sword and toppled Xer to the ground. I quickly put his arms into an incredibly painful lock and knocked the swords away. Then, I grabbed him and threw him across the driveway - right into the path of an oncoming car. The problem is that the car was not just any car, it was a blue Honda. *Uh oh. Just my luck.* I hoped my parents saw the part about Xen attacking me and missed the part of me throwing him twenty-five meters. I was not too hopeful about this being the case though, especially when the front car doors flew open and Dad jumped out.

“What were you thinking?!” Tokero yelled, storming in my direction. “You could have killed him!”

“I didn’t mean to; he attacked me first,” I replied defensively. Xen slowly picked himself up, pointed his finger at me, and roared, “Uh, uh! You just attacked me out of the blue and sent me to my death!” He then followed this statement with an incredibly fake moan and sagged backwards. I groaned.

“Get to your room, and we’ll talk about this later,” Dad growled angrily. Knowing that any explanation on my part would be futile, I ran towards the house, swung around the front porch pole, somersaulted through the air onto the second-floor deck, and disappeared through my bedroom door. I didn’t want to argue. Contrary to what you may be thinking of me right now, I dislike people confrontation, and I especially didn’t want to give my uncle and aunt a bad first impression of me, though it would appear that I had just done that. I collapsed onto my bed. *What a rough day.* I could hear everyone entering the living room downstairs, and my father called me down. I didn’t go. First of all, I didn’t want to see Xen again as he had nearly killed me, and second of all, I knew my parents wouldn’t force me to come down anyway.

I think that by now, I may have gotten ahead of myself. First of all, I’m eighteen. I attend the local highschool and have a total of zero friends. Sure, I have a few friendly acquaintances, but for the most part, everyone leaves me alone, which I guess could be good as well.

I feel bad that I had thrown Xen, knowing that I should have just called the cops, but I was so in the moment that I let my anger and excitement get the best of me. However, this brash behavior is something that is not evident in my normal character.

As I lay on my bed, trying to compose my thoughts, my pet Spark entered my room. I had just adopted this female ferret from a rescue center about a month or two ago when my parents told me that if I wasn’t going to have any friends, I should have a pet. We had really enjoyed each other’s company, and I am currently finishing some work on rigging up a small camera to attach to her. She was a sort of vessel of comfort, helping me to overcome my social anxiety and get back to reality. Having a lot of social interaction was very taxing on me, especially when that interaction was all but friendly. After a while of “meditation,” I decided to go on a motorcycle ride. I LOVE motorcycles. Not dirt biking, but street racing. Of course, Troutdale is not a crowded town so there are plenty of roads to ride on but, unfortunately, the speed limit never gets over 55, so I have to be content with going slow. My parents bought me a custom motorcycle with wicked-awesome speed and maneuverability when I turned 16 (the legal age to start driving in Oregon). For my birthday last year, they took me to a race track in California and rented it for an hour (which you can do by the way, although it’s pretty expensive). I gunned it and reached 200mph, though I had to be careful not to accidentally kill myself. Whatever the case, I lived to tell this tale, and I had a HUGE blast.

I carefully let Spark down (yes, she “rules” my room but she never messes anything up, and she has her own carefully washed cage in the corner) and crept down the stairs to the garage. I slinked through the kitchen (taking only a small peek at the family in the living room) and reached the back garage door. Just as I reached for the door knob, two things happened in quick succession – 1. A thought struck me that my uncle hadn’t been in the living room. 2. My uncle tapped me on the shoulder.

If it hadn’t been for the fact that I don’t scream when I get scared, you could have heard me back in my grandfather’s home town in China. However, my jump told all.

“Hey, it’s okay. Didn’t mean to scare you!”

“Oh, hey, umm. How are you doing?” I timidly replied.

“Fine. Hey, I don’t want you to feel bad about what happened, I know you didn’t want to hurt my son,” my uncle reassured me.

“Uhh, you do?”

“Yeah, see”-

“Could we go into the garage to talk?” I interrupted

“Sure.”

I opened the door, and we walked into the garage. There stood my super-charged motorcycle and the family cars next to it. Did I mention we had a three car garage?

“Xen used to be the nicest boy you could ever meet. My wife and I raised him up in a Christian household, and we taught him everything. He was on a good path,” started my uncle.

“Well, Christians aren’t all they are cracked up to be, no offense,” I replied. (None of my immediate family were Christians but most of my uncles and aunts were)

“Well, it is true that some Christians are fake, but there are many more who are sincere. Anyway, one week my wife and I went on a vacation to a large ski resort in the mountains of China, and we left Xen home alone. When we came back, he was very secretive and nervous. He wouldn’t leave the house without those two new swords of his, and we never could figure out where he had gotten them.” my uncle explained, “ Did he try to *kill* you?”

“Well, it’s kind of hard to say if he would have really killed me, but I was certainly under the impression that he would have if he could have,” I replied.

“We need to come up with a solution to this,” sighed my uncle. “Anyway. Where are you going?”

“I’m taking my motorcycle out for a spin.”

“Awesome! I’ve always wanted to ride one of those things but never gotten the courage to do so. Well, have fun!”

“You know I will!” I replied. As my uncle slipped back through the garage door into the house, I donned my riding gear, slipped on my helmet, opened the main garage, and hopped onto my motorcycle. Not wanting to attract any undue attention, I quietly started my motorcycle and zoomed outside. Unfortunately, and as I said before, none of the main city streets have a very large speed limit, but I cruised outside my neighborhood and merged onto the main street through town. I passed the restaurants and street-side shops, and the large FedEx shipping plant; then I got out into more of the country and brought my speed up to 55mph. As I sped along, I turned a corner and, on the opposite side of the street, at least three or four black SUVs sped by. There were kind of intimidating looking, and I immediately checked my speed to make sure I wasn’t going too fast. A little later, my innate curiosity kicked in, and I felt like I had to see where they were going. When the last of the SUVs shot by, I turned around in a side gravel street and started back towards town, making sure to keep myself distant from the line of SUVs. However, when I got back into town, they appeared to disappear. I sighed, but didn’t feel like participating in a full on search, so I turned onto Moore Street and headed to my favorite video game arcade.

This video game arcade has been in town for a *long* time, and I love to go there and play a few classic games on the old machines. I purchased an Orange Crush at the counter (my all-time favorite drink), and sauntered over to the Pac-Man machine. I’ve always dreamed of playing a perfect game, but since I don’t spend every waking moment of my time playing Pac-Man like some people do, my dream will probably never be fulfilled. After a few games of Pac-Man, Lon, and Shut-Up Shirle, I checked my watch and discovered it was already 6:00pm - time to go home. I dragged my feet on the way out, not wanting to go back home for obvious reasons, but I was hungry for dinner.

However, when I reached my house, I noticed my relatives had already left because their car was gone from the front driveway. I clicked the garage door opener button on my dashboard and parked my motorcycle inside the garage. As I slipped into the kitchen, I found my parents deep in conversation about something, but they abruptly stopped when I entered.

“We heard about Xen, honey,” said Mom. “It’s okay, we don’t blame you.”

“I don’t need your pity. I just don’t want to get blamed for things that really aren’t my fault.” I admitted. Then, the doorbell rang.

“Must be my brother. He probably left something,” replied Dad.

He got out of his chair, crossed the living room, and opened the door. To our surprise, my uncle wasn’t standing there. Instead, there was a troupe of FBI agents! Or at least they *looked* like FBI agents in their standard black suits and dark sunglasses. Somehow, though, they looked a little off - as if there was something not right. I was trying to figure out what appeared wrong, when they spoke.

“We’re here to talk about some Chinese secrets you collected in China a few years ago. It has come to our attention that the Chinese are making some nuclear weapons, and we want to know what you learned.”

My dad paled visibly. “Umm, yeah, umm, would you like to come in and sit down?” he replied.

“Sure, but let’s make this quick,” replied the leader. As my house was filling up with more agents, I slipped out the back door and crept along the fence to keep out of sight of any possible FBI agents. Then, I wove my way around to the black SUVs parked outside. What I saw confirmed my suspicion. When I had first seen them tearing down the country road, I had noticed that their license plates were not yellow like any government vehicle would. Instead, they were normal license plates; meaning that they could very well not be FBI agents, or if they were, they were very undercover ones at that. I seriously doubted that though, because there was no need to be “undercover” for this “mission” and the added fact that they never showed us their badges, which they always did in the movies (though I don’t know if that is true in real life) made me worried.

“Oh dear,” I said. The problem with what I said though is that I was more right than I originally thought. No sooner had I said that, than a black cloth was stuffed over my head and my arms pinioned behind me. I could barely breathe, and the guys behind me shoved me forward, causing me to trip and face plant into the ground. Now I *knew* they weren’t real agents, and I quickly “transformed” into attack mode. In quick succession, I twisted my arms out of their grip, threw off the cloth, and whipped into a hi-cha stance. There were only two that I could see, and they quickly whipped out their guns. Normally, that would be a problem, but this time I had been expecting this. I took both of them out with quick leg slices and the guns scuttled harmlessly on the street. One of them tried to get back up, but I bashed his head with a nice elbow slam, and he collapsed back down. The only problem is that one of the “agents” let out a loud moan and soon the whole “armada” came charging out of my house. Guns came out of their holsters.

I dove into the street, grabbed the two guns that the other agents had dropped, and returned fire. I had handled enough guns to know that if I aimed directly at their chest, their bullet proof vests would keep them from getting killed, but they would certainly be hurt enough that they would probably not be able to keep on firing. With deadly precision, I picked some of them off. But I was doing a ton of weaving and dodging, and it would only be a matter of time before I was hit. However, that time never came because my mom arrived and finished the rest off with a few Olympic-worthy chops. I cheered, something which I never normally do, but I was quickly silenced by the sound of sirens in the background. All the shots and yells were, of course, heard by the neighbors and now the REAL police would be arriving. With two smoking guns in my hand, things would not look good for me, so I rubbed them in the wet grass and tossed them at the heap of groaning agents. One of them hit the ground awkwardly and shot off, puncturing a nice hole in the tire of one of the SUVs which promptly exploded. If there wasn’t enough noise beforehand, there certainly was now.

Needless to say, we were all marched into the police station and questioned thoroughly. By the time the “interrogation” was done, I was very tired, and I could bet my parents were too. It was pretty obvious to ourselves and to the police that the fake FBI agents had been trying to extract info from my dad in order to figure out how much he knew and to “dispose” of him if he knew too much. This meant that there were Chinese spies in America. That was very disconcerting to me, but what worried me more was that they were not afraid to kill those who did not comply. The police recommended that we move somewhere else to keep safe.

I was so tired that I fell asleep immediately at home and didn’t have any dreams, which is a good thing because they could have been pretty awful. When I woke up at twelve o’clock and went down for breakfast, my dad had an announcement.

“We are going to Fairview Washington!”

“WHAT!?! Why Fairview? What is *there*?” I asked.

“Only everything,” Dad replied. “My company is putting in a new headquarters there, and I figure that Washington would be as good a place as any to keep out of the way of rogue agents,” Dad smirked.

“But Troutdale is your headquarters,” I countered.

“Not any more,” Dad said.

“As of when?!”

“As of now?!”

I turned around in my chair and looked at Mom in the kitchen. “Is he serious, Mom?”

“Deadly,” she replied. (Which probably wasn’t the best word to use, considering everything that had happened recently).

“Fine,” I said. I mean it was summer anyways so transferring schools wouldn’t be too difficult, and it’s not like I have any friends anyway at my current school. However, I have grown to like the town, so moving to Washington seemed a bit imposing. However the big news wasn’t over yet.

“AND because we are moving to Fairview,” Dad continued, “we are buying TWO houses next door to each other and one of them IS ENTIRELY FOR YOU!” exclaimed Dad.

“WHAT?!?!” I choked (I had a mouthful of chips), “Are you serious?!”

“Stop saying that, OF COURSE we are serious. Do we joke all that often?” Dad responded.

Things were looking up. Not only would I have a chance to make new friends in a completely different state, but next year would be my senior year of high school, *and* I would have a whole one-story house to myself. I could deck it out with all sorts of cool stuff. There could be a whole room just for Spark! How awesome would that be!

Three days later, we were on our way to Washington. Some movers had already transported most of our main furniture and appliances to our houses already, so we were just driving up with a few sensitive belongings like electronics and chinaware. (Believe it or not, but my father actually owns most of the china-ware in the house.) My parents let me drive my motorcycle, and they both took their respective cars. We arrived at Seattle about noon and stopped at a McDonalds for lunch. I sneaked in Spark, who loves to eat with us, and we sat down for lunch. The problem, though, is that a black SUV pulled up outside and two Chinese guys got out and came inside. They didn’t seem to notice us and went straight to the counter to order their food. *What were they doing here?!*

However, this was our chance to catch some of them! Then, I had an even better idea. What if I just listened into what their plans were - then I could have even a better head start on them! Suddenly, a plan started forming in my head! If I could get a camera into their truck then I could listen to their conversations, and I could get the camera into their SUV by putting one of my mini cameras on Spark and getting her to go inside. That would be tricky of course, but I thought I could do it. I raced outside to Dad’s car and dug furiously in a few boxes in the back of the vehicle. I frantically dug around until I found a mini camera and Spark’s vest. When I got back into the store, the agents were just then sitting down to their lunch (6 big macs, 4 pepsis, 4 large fries, 4 parfaits, and two big salads). My parents were keeping an eye on them and hadn’t asked any questions until I came back with the camera.

“What are you doing?” Dad hissed.

“I’m going to fit this camera on Spark and see if I can get her into their SUV,” I replied.

“That’s crazy,” Mom said, “How are you going to get Spark and the camera back?”

“Easy. We just follow their SUV and when they get out we get Spark back.”

My parents didn’t know what to say, so I snatched Spark away from her hamburger patty and fitted on the camera.

“Okay girl,” I said. “Get ready!”

Amazingly, those guys had already gulped down the majority of their meal and were polishing off their sodas. When they got up and left, I quickly followed them with Spark in hand. One of the spies opened his door and then walked back around to talk to his friend who was looking something up on his phone. I slinked back and shoved Spark onto the seat of the SUV; then ran back into the building. As soon as we had thrown away our trash, I jumped into Dad’s car and pulled up my camera’s app on my phone. There would be no way to keep tabs on what was going on in the car and help dad track the SUV if I was on my motorcycle, so I decided to ride in his car and pick my motorcycle up later. The SUV slowly rolled out of the parking lot with us and mom right behind. As it moved through afternoon traffic, I checked what was going on in the SUV. The inside of the SUV was surprisingly clean, and Spark was in the back seat hiding under a few reusable grocery bags. However, she had the camera/microphone popping out so I could see the back side of them and hear what they were saying. They were talking in Chinese, but I can speak Chinese somewhat fluently (my dad had insisted I learn the language of my ancestors). The problem was that they were talking about the latest badminton tournament in China, not anything that would be helpful to incriminate them. Suddenly the conversation ended abruptly.

“Hey those two cars have been behind us for a while, what is their problem?” asked the bigger agent.

“Maybe they are tailing us,” replied the other.

“Ha, not likely, but let's lose ‘em anyway,” replied the first.

“Up ahead, the SUV swerved onto a back road and disappeared down a narrow street. Dad took the turn like a pro and followed suit, with mom close behind. The chase was on, and it was pretty easy now as they were unfortunate enough to turn onto a back roads highway. According to what I heard on the camera, they didn’t want to attract any attention so they slowed down and just followed the highway. After a half hour, I was starting to lose attention when I glanced up just in time to see this sign by the road.

“Welcome to Fairview. Population 140,052.”

What was the chance that we would arrive at our destination city while tailing these guys, unless… Unless it was on purpose!!! With a loud roar, the SUV took a series of side roads, swerving in and out of Fairview traffic. Dad, however, kept up. He was awesome.

“We can’t lose them in this car. Let’s lose them on foot in that pet convention over there,” said the big dude. *Pet convention?*  I wondered. *Where was that?* It didn’t take long to find out though, because suddenly over to our left we passed by a very large field stuffed full of people with everything from dogs to chinchillas. There was also an equally large amount of tents, booths, stands, and food trucks.

“Get to that convention,” I yelled to my dad. The SUV with Dad, Mom, and I right behind pulled up into the nearby parking lot. As the agents got out, there was a blur of motion from the back seat and Spark streaked over to me. I scooped her up, as I was now in an almost full sprint and kept on going, passing up Dad in the process. The agents disappeared into the crowd with me close behind. However, I quickly lost them in the pet-happy crowd. When I saw a bit of black disappearing behind a tent labeled “Small Animals,” I charged after him yelling “Excuse me” and frantically looking about. Not only was I about to lose both of them, but I was feeling terribly embarrassed by pushing past everyone and getting a lot of strange looks about the camera-clad ferret hanging onto my shoulder. Then, things got worse; i.e. I slammed into a girl who went sprawling into the grass and dirt, spilling an armload of bottles of lotion and shampoo everywhere. The look on her face was anything but happy, but the look on Spark’s face lit up. If ever a ferret could smile, Spark did. For the girl was carrying in her arms another ferret, a male one.