

Learning To Go With The Call Of The Flow

By: A.X. Bueno

Sometimes I forget how big this campus is. I think as leaves crunch under my hooves and I cut through the grass to try and keep up with my friend who's keeping a perpetual 5 paces in front of me. We've been speed walking for 10 minutes now trying to rush to this club he's been telling me about, trying to get me to actually join since the middle of the spring semester. We're in the beginning of fall now and "very nearly there" he says. I stop to catch my breath and it takes him a minute for him to notice and turn his head back to look at me, with all six of his eyes.

"Are you seriously out of breath already bro? I thought mountain goats had plenty of stamina. This walk can't be harder than climbing mountains can it?" If it was anyone else I'd be mad at them dissing my efforts or calling me a mountain goat but my canine buddy can get away with it.

"First off I'm not a mountain goat I'm a Spanish goat and yes that is a breed of goat. Mountain goats aren't even real goats they're closer to gazelles and antelopes! Two, how are you not out of breath? I'm way more in shape than you are. Three, why didn't you tell me sooner this place, wherever it is apparently in the farthest corner of campus?!" After getting those questions and bit of impassioned yelling out I feel ready to continue and Tomás can already tell and starts moving again as he responds to me.

"Ha! I may be a bit more on the chubbier side than you but three heads means three times the oxygen intake, it takes a lot more to get me tired. Besides I don't know what you're complaining about when we're here already, Rye." One of Tomás's heads winks at me with one eye, joking around and trying to rile me up as he does and I hate to admit it's working a little. Of course I won't tell him that but still.

"For real though I'm glad you took some time to come out here with me. I know you've been busy and might be sick of me hyping this place up but I think you're gonna like it." This time it's a different head of Tomás's talking and the two of his heads that have so far smile while the final one looks to the side while using one of Tomás's hands to smooth over the fur on his floppy ears.

"I'm hoping so buddy. Thankfully I got through my Journalism 305 *and* Calculus 214 homework. Classes are also done for the day so it's not like I've got much else to do." There are three buildings around us, I'm vaguely familiar with the International Studies Building but not as much the other two.

"It's over here Rye, come on!" Tomàs grabs me with one of his fluffy paws and I let him lead me into the building that says Isurus Swimming Center.

Tomàs has always had the most perfectly long and fluffy fur and pretty well kept paws. He's not just a cerberus but also a Great Dane and Samoyed mix which is what helps give him those qualities. I've never been ashamed to sneak feels and rubs of that poofy yet smooth fur and we're close enough that he lets me get away with it. It's a sort of exchange for him doing the same but with my hooves, horns and belly which I let him rub on occasion as long as I can do the same. I realize my grip on his paw is kind of loose as I'm gently stroking the fur along it with my thumb and while two of his heads are only looking forward as we walk past the small flight of outdoor steps to the building one is looking back as we go through the doors. It gives me a sly smile and I just now realize his tail hasn't stopped wagging. When he stops after putting a bit of distance between us and the entrance my friend happily splays out his hands directing my brown and black eyes to what he's been trying to lead me to for so long.

"Ta-daaaa! Was it worth the **agonizing** walk?" Tomàs says jokingly as I look around at the

It's a pool, a giant community sized pool that looks to be about 4 feet deep on the shallow side and 10 feet deep on the deeper side. There's several lanes of it separated by lines of buoys which are being swam through by a diverse body of my fellow students. To the right and left are the locker rooms and straight down appears to be another, seashell themed hallway. It's all very unexpected and eye-catching but not as eye-catching as someone I see coming up a ladder on the poolside nearest to the entrance and me. Tomàs snaps me back to reality by rocking my shoulder with his paw.

"Huh? Oh... yeah, it's an awesome pool. I didn't know the campus had one. Is this all you wanted to show me.?" I stumble to say as I slowly try to maneuver his black and white furred paw off me and try to stay focused on the fox making his way off the ladder and away from the pool.

"No, it isn't just this! I wanted to see if you'd join the swim team with me. Where are you staring at... oh, ohh! I forgot that you had that crush on Reggie. Now that he's leaving can I introduce you to-." I cut Tomàs off before he finishes as Reggie the muscly hunk of a marble fox of my dreams walks into that hallway with seashells drawn all over it.

"Dude! Don't say that out loud, I don't want him to know I like him yet. Now what we're you going to say?"

"I was going to say can I introduce you to the coach of the swim team? That way I can get on with the reason I actually brought you here. He's in one of those offices down the hall over there, let's go!" Again I'm lead by the big dog's hand as we go around the pool and towards that same hallway Reggie walked down just a minute or two ago.

We pass by Reggie on the way to this office and for a second his silver eyes meet mine as he waves hello and I wave back not giving a second glance in case he sees my blush. Tomàs opens one of his mouths like he's about to say something but then shuts it again. He just leads me further down the hall till we reach a door that says Roger Larimar, Swim Coach on it. Right before we go in is when he decides to talk.

"Let me introduce you when we go in. Don't speak until Mr. Larimar asks and definitely avoid staring at his left eye even if it is distracting. One last thing before we go in... you know between me and Reggie I think you have a thing for white and black fur. If the two of you don't end up getting together I know a panda or maybe a nice dalmatian you could hook up with."

"*Sigh*. Sometimes you remind me why we stopped dating."

"Oh please. We're such good friends because you know you still love me." He tussles my red headfur that some say clashes with the rest of my brown fur and I smile cause despite myself he's right.

"Anyway, serious face on. You do the talking."

"Huh? But I thought you said- oh you were talking to one of your other heads." I mutter out as he points to the head on his left to take charge since I guess it's the most serious one. It's hard to tell sometimes which is which or even when Tomàs is trying to be totally serious.

"Ah Tomàs, another two minutes and you would have been late for prac...tice. Oh did you bring me some fresh meat that I can tenderize? He is here to join the team, correct?" Mr. Larimar turns out to be a white tipped reef shark with a voice that sounds like he was a drill sergeant in a past or maybe very recent life. Along with a left eye that looks to be made out of glass making me understand why Tomàs said not to stare.

"That is correct, sir!" Tomàs left head says with a tone of formality and nervousness I very rarely hear from him.

“What’s the guppies name, son?” I’m tempted to say it myself when the coach asks but Tomàs gives me pleading eyes not to with his centermost head so I don’t.

“His name’s Rylande. He’s a fellow sophomore and a good friend. I think he’d also be a good fit for the team.”

“I see. Now you may speak, tell me why I should let you on this?” The shark smiles at me with all of his large, sharp teeth on display as he waits with an almost unsettling amount of interest for my answer.

I give him the answer I think he’d most likely want to hear and how I’ve enjoyed swimming since I was a kid. After about twenty terrifying minutes of back and forth he decides to let me on the team. I start the next day and within two weeks I’m keeping pace with almost everyone else. Today we’re trying to beat our best times at the backstroke. I look at Reggie on one side of me, Tomàs on the other as I get my swim goggles on and question how I didn’t join up sooner. Mr. Larimar gives the go ahead with his webbed hand and I hit the water with a nice splash as I get ready for another great swim.