

Kaiju Kingdom

The day had finally arrived. Merric had been left waiting on tenterhooks for a full two weeks while his superiors hemmed and hawed over how the week he wanted off would affect staff numbers, whether he would be needed for any projects, whether it was 'a good time for a vacation'. Eventually, however, the green light shone on what he anticipated as being the greatest week of his life. How well or badly it ultimately went, however, all hinged on one day: the Wednesday, today...

When he'd told his co-workers what it was for which he was so excited, they had been understandably underwhelmed by his answer of 'an amusement park'; going on rides and such was certainly a fun day out, no question, but it spoke rather poorly to the general excitement of the squirrel's life if something as simple as that would be considered the zenith of his entire existence.

He had, of course, refrained from telling his mere acquaintances exactly which amusement park was on his itinerary: he would much prefer to be known as a boring shut-in than the oddball they would no doubt have taken him for had he revealed his true plans. Those closer to him, however, did get the full story and, knowing him well as they did, weren't in the slightest surprised about where he was going and why he was so thrilled by the prospect.

Even though what he was going to was a franchise with locations across the globe, the nearest one to where he lived was a three-hour train journey distant. That being the case, he had booked a room at the adjoining hotel for two nights; this was something else to look forward to as it was a full five stars of unadulterated luxury.

With his train scheduled to depart in the early afternoon, Merric spent the morning checking and double checking that he'd packed everything he could conceivably need on a three-day trip. When he wasn't doing that, he found himself unable to settle to anything, often resorting to pacing blindly from room to room while his mind jumped from image to image, idea to idea, plan to plan.

By the time his Uber arrived he was feeling decidedly jittery; he fidgeted in the backseat into which he'd crammed himself for the whole fifteen minutes, only able to give his driver curt responses, and more than once had to ask them to repeat themselves. The feeling didn't pass once he was at the station either, but at least once he was on the train and had found a seat he could distract himself: he pulled his phone and earphones from his bag, ready to settle down a little with some music.

"Shiiiiiiiiiiiiit..."

After all the reassurances he'd given himself that he had done and packed everything he needed to before leaving, he had overlooked needing to charge his phone which was now all but demanding that it be fed. Sure enough, when he checked his bag for it, he discovered that he hadn't packed his charger. Denied that one outlet to keep himself sane, he flopped back in his seat, feeling defeated.

"Here," said a voice from the aisle next to him and a white charger homed into view from his left, "Borrow mine."

Merric looked up, his eyes meeting those of a tall - at least as tall as his already towering frame - blue-scaled dragoness.

"Thanks!" he said gratefully, taking the tangle of plastic and wires from her.

"Mind if I join you?" she asked, already loading her bag onto the shelf overhead, her head dipped a little to avoid the ceiling.

He nodded, feeling rather relieved when the battery icon on his phone changed from blinking red to having a lightning bolt on it. Now he had company, however, he didn't feel he could plug himself in and disappear into his music, so his jitters persisted.

There was silence between them for a few minutes, during which Merric glanced around the carriage and out the window, shifting in his seat every few seconds.

"You okay?" the dragoness asked, frowning across the table that separated the two pairs of seats they were occupying, Merric requiring both of his.

He jumped at the sound of her voice, his eyes flinging themselves from the city outskirts they were gliding past to fix upon her face. "Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine. Just..." he shrugged, "a little anxious, I guess. Good anxious."

"Ah," she said simply, her yellow eyes still gazing across at him, "Keen to get to wherever it is you're going, huh?"

Merric nodded, his own eyes growing restless once more.

"What's in store for you?" she persisted.

"Oh, just an amusement park," he said, trying to sound airy and offhand.

"Ah," she said again. She was silent for a few moments, still seeming to be getting a measure of him just by staring at him. "Kaiju Kingdom, am I right?"

The squirrel's attention flew back to her in a heartbeat. "I...How did you know?" he asked, his expression bewildered.

She chuckled, leaning back in her seat and looking more at ease herself now that she'd truly broken the ice. "No ordinary park's going to get anyone *that* excited. Anyway, I know a fellow lover of 'big' when I see one."

"Oh?" he asked, becoming more invested in talking to this dragoness by the second now, "Have you been?"

"Yep! This will be my second time," she said, reaching into a pocket and flashing a ticket with the Kaiju Kingdom logo splashed across it, identical to one Merric had.

He leaned across the table, his face as eager as a kid in a candy store. "What's it like?" he asked, barely whispering in his excitement to hear first-hand tales of his dream that, tomorrow, would become reality.

"You're going to absolutely love it, I can already tell you that. You look like you're just like me: more than big already, but there's no such thing as 'big enough'," she said, beaming at him, "I went with my boyfriend last time and we didn't get up to quite as much of the stuff I'd wanted to do as I'd hoped, so I'm biting the bullet for a shot at my own idea of a good time."

"I didn't know you could do it with other people," he asked, every minute seeming to bring a new revelation.

“You can, but I wouldn’t recommend it,” she answered, then elaborated at his questioning look, “My boyfriend’s libido got away from him, you could say: he just wanted us to fuck on the ruins of downtown.”

Merric stared. She laughed and grinned at him. “Not that I didn’t get fun of my own. Let me tell you, there’s no greater thrill than crushing a mansion with just one tit.”

He was gaping at her now as, with the assistance of a box of mints, she demonstrated: with the rectangular metal container on the table, she leaned over it and, after lifting one of her weighty, shirt-covered and bra-contained breasts, let it drop onto the box whose contents rattled on impact.

“That, but with free-flopping boobs the size of small asteroids.”

Merric’s phone was left untouched for the rest of the journey, allowed to gather lifeforce from the wall outlet beside the table. What would have otherwise been three hours of anxious anticipation alone became an even greater form of excitement, yet somehow calmer thanks to the dragoness – who eventually introduced herself as being Azara. Every word that came from her mouth seemed designed to make the squirrel all the keener to have his turn as the macro he’d always dreamed of being, his mind conjuring still more images of what it was going to be like the following day.

Not everything she said was encouragement, however: “Try to keep a grip on yourself when you grow, though,” she’d advised, her expression suddenly that much more serious, “You’ll be a little...overconfident, so be ready to rein that in *before* it happens.”

To Merric’s surprise, after dropping off and picking up furs at stations every half hour or so, the train didn’t roll to a stop at some backwater town or in the middle of nowhere: instead it slid smoothly into a tunnel dug into the foot of a steep mountainside, coming to a halt at a large underground platform with a sign emblazoned with ‘Welcome to KAIJU KINGDOM, the ultimate entertainment!’

As it was the last stop on the route, the few remaining passengers were disembarking along with he and Azara. Once they were all on the platform with their luggage, Merric noticed that they were all looking around uncertainly, clearly unsure where to go or what to do now they had arrived. Everyone, that was, except Azara: she led the way up a flight of steps that took them into a small lobby area, a row of elevators facing them. As the rest of the small crowd – around a dozen or so people – followed along in her considerable wake, she summoned an elevator to collect them; two arrived in quick succession, the dragoness leading Merric into the first; an handful of others joined them, crammed into the metal box with the two tall, broad figures. She pressed the button neighboured by the word ‘Reception’, and off upwards they zoomed.

“Enjoy yourself tomorrow!” Azara called once she and Merric had both checked in, a bellhop leading her away in the opposite direction to where he was heading.

“You too!” he said in return, waving.

“Remember what I said about overconfidence!”

“Here we are, Mister Sands,” said the gecko carrying Merric’s bag, inserting a card into the door of room 704. The green light blinked, the lock clicked, and the reptile held the door open while

Merric headed inside. The lizard then placed the bag on the luggage rack and said, "If there's anything else you need, sir, just dial 0 and you'll be put straight through to reception," before departing.

"I'm definitely getting my money's worth," Merric whispered to himself as he cast an eye around what was to be his home for the next two days. He had arrived in what was an exceedingly well-appointed living room with a large, plush couch facing a vast TV mounted to the wall, with a table and chairs set by the floor-to-ceiling windows. A door led into the bedroom where there was yet another enormous TV opposite a vast super-king bed: one that would actually, for once, accommodate all eighty-seven inches of squirrel. The bathroom completed the luxury: the shower had multiple jets; there was a cabinet full of all manner of shampoos, conditioners, colognes, and the like; and, best of all, was the hot tub with yet another, though much smaller, TV built into the wall.

Strolling back to the window, he at first thought that he had a mountaintop view of a nearby city, only to realise after a few moments' inspection that there were a few things amiss about the place. For one thing, there seemed to be no activity going on whatsoever: not a vehicle on the streets, not a plane taking off from or arriving at the airport, nothing. There also looked to be no roads leading in or out, save for a single track extending from what to be the foot of the mountain on which the hotel perched. And, most odd of all, the gaps between the hills and mountains encircling the city had been filled by immense walls, hundreds of feet high with what looked to be guard towers dotted along their tops.

As Merric's suspicions reached a peak, the confirmation arrived: a cheetah, at least a hundred feet tall and naked as the day he was born, came into view from behind one of the hills, stomping his way towards the city centre. This, Merric felt, was the warm-up act, the sound test before the main feature the following day.

The best two hours of his life were scheduled for noon, thus giving the squirrel ample opportunity to sleep in, enjoy a leisurely breakfast, and sample the rest of the hotel's hospitality. The first part of that plan went off without a hitch: Merric woke a little after nine and was straight into that elaborate shower for a good long soak, his hair getting some spa-level treatment thanks to the boutique shampoo and conditioner he'd picked out of the cabinet. The scents and the steam kept him in a state of relaxation even after he'd exited the bathroom, still towelling himself off.

It seemed that the first macro of the day had already started having their fun, and it just so happened to be a familiar face out in the faux cityscape. Azara was strutting her stuff, even larger than the cheetah he had seen the day before, kicking aside buildings as she strode away from the airport which lay in ruins. He watched her for a few minutes, chuckling to himself as it only took two 'asteroids' dropping on the flat roof of a skyscraper to send it crumbling to the ground at her feet in a billowing cloud of dust.

The calm only began to ebb away in the breakfast room ten minutes later. Merric had helped himself to everything that had taken his fancy on the buffet and had sent photos of both that and of his plate piled high with breakfasty goodness to a certain tiger when he felt that sense of eager anxiety starting to creep over him once more. Though he couldn't see her from where he sat, his mind nevertheless conjured images of what havoc Azara was wreaking down in the oversized playpark; his imagination blended those pictures seamlessly into ones in which he was the

protagonist, the unstoppable giant destroying the puny, pathetic, unworthy little village the insects below called a city.

“Is everything okay, sir?”

Merric jumped. “H-Huh?” he said in surprise, looking around and seeing a petite doe in server’s garb standing by his table. He now realised that he’d been staring straight ahead of him for what must have been a good couple of minutes, bits of omelette dropping off the chunk on his fork one by one. “Oh, yeah. Everything’s fine,” he reassured her, a nervous little bucktoothed grin crossing his face, “Just...thinking.”

A knowing smile formed on her lips and she nodded. “Understandable, sir. Enjoy the rest of your breakfast.”

As intent as he had been on seeking out the further pleasures the hotel offered, Merric just didn’t feel that he could settle to anything, not even with an hour and a half left to kill. He instead returned to his room and, doing his best to ignore Azara as she ripped up a fake pylon with her tail, lay down in bed with his earphones rammed firmly in place to lose himself in his most captivating tunes.

He lay there with his eyes closed, zoning out as best he could, until eleven o’clock on the nose; a literal second after the hour had ticked over, his phone buzzed. Waking from his near stupor, he peered at the screen, at the top of which was the icon for an unread text message.

‘Good morning, Merric!

Your session in Kaiju Kingdom will begin in one hour. Before you begin, we require you to attend a briefing located on the City level, accessed by the main elevators. Your supervisor will meet you there as soon as you are ready.’

Seeing no point in idling any longer and certain that he would feel less angsty if he were actually *doing* something, Merric left his room straight away and made for the elevators. Sure enough, when one arrived, he found the very lowest button to be marked ‘City’; mere moments after pressing it, he was stepping out into a hallway as comfortably decorated as those in the hotel proper.

Standing just a few feet down the passage was a shark, about a head shorter than Merric but with a powerfully muscled physique and a military air about him.

“Merric Sands?” the shark asked, holding out his hand. Merric nodded, grasping it briefly. “My name’s Hercus. If you’ll follow me, we can get started on your briefing while the city’s set up for you.”

Merric swallowed as he allowed himself to be led down the hallway, turning into a doorway on the right about halfway along; it was dawning on him just how real it was becoming, how close he was to living out his dream, and it was exciting him and terrifying him in equal measure. He sat down in the sturdier of the chairs Hercus indicated, facing a projection screen with the Kaiju Kingdom splashed across it for the time being.

“Right, Mr. Sands,” the shark said, his manner and the setup of the room giving Merric the strong impression that he would have been more at home calling him ‘Corporal’ or the like, “I’m going to take you through the procedure for the next few hours. Once we get the go-ahead from the

foreman, I'll take you to the duty doctor who will administer the growth serum via injection. If you're scared of needles, you're shit out of luck.

"You'll need to decide how big you want to be for your time in the city before you're injected since the doctor will need to prepare the required dosage. If you need an idea of the sizes of macro available," he paused, clicking a button on the remote he'd scooped off a table in the corner to bring up a chart of silhouettes with their respective sizes and comparisons to a twenty storey building, "you can use this as a guide. I can provide you with a paper copy after the briefing. I advise you not to choose anything larger than a thousand feet, and Kaiju Kingdom accepts no responsibility for any side effects from growing above that size.

"Once you have been administered your dose of growth serum, it will take five to ten minutes for its effects to begin. During this time, you will be transported to what we call 'The Spawn Point', a location around a mile towards the city from here. Before heading there, you will be required to remove your clothing as it will not grow with you. Your clothing and valuables will be placed in a locker here at the base while you're in the city. It will then take another five minutes or so for you to reach your selected size, depending on how large that is." He clicked through a few more slides reinforcing what he was saying, allowing Merric an opportunity to give nods of understanding as he went along.

"Once you have grown you will be largely free to do whatever you wish until your allotted two hours have elapsed. There are exceptions, however. You may not attempt to leave the city, there are guards stationed at the top of every wall and natural barrier around the city who are armed with guns loaded with growth serum antidote darts. You may also not attempt to interact with anyone who is not part of your party, including the guards. Breaking either of these rules will result in a lifetime ban from all Kaiju Kingdom facilities.

"Exactly two hours after receiving your dose of growth serum its effects will begin to wear off and it will take around ten minutes for you to return to your usual size. Once that has happened you will be collected from wherever you may be in the city and returned to this building where you will be able to change back into your clothes, cool off with a drink in the lounge down the hall, and collect any of a range of souvenirs that will be available to you, all personalised from your time as a macro."

Hercus clicked the remote once more, bringing the projection back to the Kaiju Kingdom logo. "Any questions?"

"Yeah, one," Merric said, sitting a little more upright having slid down in his seat a touch during the long spiel, "How will the city be ready for me already? I mean, I saw Azara before I came down here and she was smashing the place up real good..."

For the first time, the shark let a small grin mar his stern features. "I think if I told you that it would ruin the magic."

Merric nodded, still intrigued but prepared to let the matter drop.

"If there's nothing else, I'll take you to the lounge to wait until everything's ready. Did you want a copy of that chart?"

Somehow it seemed to Merric as though he was sitting on a couch in the lounge, sipping a glass of water and considering the chart Hercus had given him for both countless hours and mere seconds. A uniformed ferret looked in on him briefly, though only to get Merric's choice of size.

However long it really was, he looked up at the shark with an expression of terrified excitement on his face when he announced that everything was ready.

The squirrel could feel himself trembling as he followed him back down the hallway a short way and through another door, this time leading into a white and sterile room with cabinets full of tiny glass bottles along every wall. Waiting for him beside a medical bed, wearing a lab coat as white as its surroundings, was a plump little hamster, chubby cheeks dimpled in a smile as she peered a long, long way up to meet Merric's nervous gaze.

"My, already halfway to being a giant, aren't we?" she said with a good natured chuckle, "Five hundred feet, wasn't it?"

Merric nodded, sitting on the bed and gazing around the room: apart from the scores of bottles which he assumed growth serum, there was rather more equipment than he would have expected, including what he was sure was a defibrillator; this put him more on edge rather than at ease.

"What's with all the medical stuff? Don't you just need needles and serum?" he asked, still eyeing the room anxiously.

The hamster shook her head, donning a pair of spectacles as she prepped his dose. "We have to be prepared for every eventuality, just in case," she said gently and, seeing his disquiet, added, "We've never had anything happen yet, honey. Now, this is just like get a vaccination, so pick your least favourite arm and I'll get you loaded up with big juice."

The moment the needle was out of his left arm Merric was being asked to strip down to his birthday suit by the same ferret from before who disappeared with his clothes as Hercus returned to take him through a door that led straight from the doctor to something like a miniature subway, complete with an open-topped rail car. They were joined by two others, clearly guards judging from the fact they were both carrying tranquilisers.

Nobody said much of anything as they glided away from the base, air whipping through Merric's lengthy hair. He found nothing much to look at along the way, only blank, rough stone walls illuminated by fluorescent bulbs every few yards. He looked down at his hands and feet, trying to discern if they had started growing yet, but nothing changed from moment to moment; he knew perfectly well that it would take time to begin the transformation from big to *big* – Hercus had told him as much – yet he couldn't help but worry that, for whatever reason, the growth serum wouldn't work on him.

The little train came to a smooth halt at the end of its track, Merric still feeling no different to how he had done when they'd left except, if possible, even more nervous. One of the guards leapt onto the platform and opened a hatch in the ceiling, pushing it upwards to allow sunlight to spill into the otherwise gloomy tunnel. Hercus ushered the squirrel off the train too and up a flight of metal stairs that took them out into the middle of a flat, barren plain, the nearest walls and hills at least a mile away.

"This is The Spawn Point," Hercus said flatly, though nothing identified the place as special besides the open hatch just behind them, "As soon as you start growing, we'll leave you to it."

Merric nodded mutely, once more looking down at himself for any sign of change, feeling a little uncomfortable at being naked while accompanied by three clothed strangers.

Silence fell once again. Several minutes passed with nothing but the sound of the lightest of breezes ruffling one of the guard's pocket flaps to keep their ears entertained.

But then... "Looks like you're under way. Have fun, but stick to the rules."

Merric looked around at the shark who was turning back towards the hatch; the featureless ground had given him no means of identifying anything changing as he looked straight down at his feet, but now he saw that Hercus was now barely up to his shoulder and seemed to be shrinking with every passing second. The three of them descended the stairs back into the tunnel, the guard bring up the rear pulling the hatch closed with a bang. Merric stared at the spot it had been for a few seconds, then slowly turned his head to stare towards the city in the distance, a distance which now appeared to be growing smaller and smaller. It was time.

He felt his nerves evaporating the bigger he got, confidence blooming inside him to replace his retreating anxiety. 'What ifs' faded from the front of his mind as they were taken over by a growing certainty: he was no mere mortal; he was a god and it was time to prove it.

The bare earth, which had been compact enough to support even the considerable weight of his normal self, was compressed into footprints as he strode purposefully towards the city, each one bigger than the last. Plumes of dust began to erupt from between his toes the further he walked, though Merric's eyes were fixed on the first landmark on the way to the city, his first challenger: a tree. It stood there, proud and defiant in the face of a squirrel who was steadily outgrowing it. Its own confidence seemed to fade the nearer the giant rodent approached, its leaves trembling as each massive foot hit the ground.

When he reached it at last, Merric smirked down at what now to him looked like nothing more than a weed, slowly sliding down from his knee towards his ankle. He bent down, gripped its stem – as 'trunk' was far too grandiose a term for it now – between his thumb and index finger, and pulled. The roots parted company with the earth easily, then was crushed into splinters in the squirrel's fist.

'Not even a hurricane could have done that,' Merric thought to himself, brushing the shards from his hand, 'I'm more powerful than a tornado, nature herself bows to me!'

On he continued towards the city. The empty plain close to the hotel would have taken him the best part of an hour to traverse at his normal size, but as he continued to sprout towards the heavens he was in the outer suburbs in mere seconds. Houses crumbled into scattered heaps of matchsticks beneath his feet, destroyed completely without the slightest conscious effort on the part of the titan; such puny targets held no interest for him when he had the glittering spires of downtown in his sights.

The first edifice of any real size was a little below waist height when he reached it, incredible in its insignificance from his new perspective. Nevertheless, it *had* to be destroyed; it and every other part of this blot on the landscape – *his* landscape – needed to be turned to dust for daring to exist.

A memory bubbled up to the surface, swimming into the view of his mind's eye: a video game character, crouched down after slamming their fist into the ground; yes, that was a fitting fate

for this, his first kill. Bunching his right hand into a fist bigger than many of the houses that lay in ruins behind him, he raised it high, holding it victoriously aloft for a second, then swung it down onto the roof of the building, feeling it buckle instantly as he drilled a hole right down the middle of it. Concrete, metal, and glass showered the surrounding streets as the tower was obliterated; all that was left of its former site was a crater in its foundations and Merric knelt over it, panting from the thrill of the destruction.

A dozen more buildings crumpled as he strode through the city, often taking shortcuts straight through blocks rather than following the streets. Up ahead he could see his reflection in one of the taller structures: a skyscraper whose outer shell was almost entirely glass. He grinned at himself as he stopped close by, separated by four lanes bereft of traffic, watching his face slide gradually up the side of the building as he completed the last of his growth, too tall for his face to be reflected once it was complete. This one had served a purpose – it had shown him his transformation into the true master of this planet – it could live...for now.

Out of the corner of his eye he noticed something that was far less pleasing: a tower with a tapered spire which took it above any of its neighbours, higher than even the spikes of his hair. How dare anything created by insignificant insects be more grandiose than him?

Stepping around the glittering edifice which had succeeded in pleasing him, he kicked aside another far less worthy structure on his way to the usurper of his crown. He glared at it for a moment, staring it up and down, then raised both hands to grasp its pointed summit. Steel girders twisted, screeching and groaning their pain to the helpless city before they snapped: more than fifty feet's worth of architectural mastery plummeted to the ground, many tons of materials smashing into neighbouring buildings, shattering windows, adding to the devastation.

His majesty reasserted, Merric turned his attention further afield, seeking a different challenge. He sized up the outer parts of the city, considering the merits of demolishing the industrial sector, a mall...the airport? Yes, the airport.

It was a pity the planes weren't taxiing along the runways or swooping around his head; the joy he could have got from swatting a 747 out of the air. Still, there was fun enough in leaping over the parking lots and main buildings to pounce upon a cluster of jets, feeling their fuselages crumpling instantly in his fingers and he squeezed and tore them asunder.

He rolled onto his back, much of the terminal instantly annihilated under his unfathomable bulk. The one aircraft he had so far left intact was cradled surprisingly gently in one hand, but it was soon flung high into the endless blue above. It soared hundreds, nay thousands of feet into the sky, spiralling as no jet was designed to spiral. Merric imagined its would-be occupants being pinned to the ceiling, walls, and floor by the centrifugal force generated by the simple act of him tossing it like a football; such power could not fail to stir his feelings.

The airport had been entirely flattened; the unidentifiable wreck of an Airbus lay scattered across several acres ten miles away. The city itself was in ruins: hardly any of the scant handfuls of buildings left standing in any shape were free from extensive damage; the tower in which the squirrel had been so admiring himself now bore a round hole two thirds of the way up its forty stories, several of the floors below on one side scarred with two deep, curved dents, as though they had been subjected to an attack by a pair of ineffectual wrecking balls.

Merric was striding back towards the epicentre of his glorious destruction, the grandeur of the mansions that once graced the gently slops at the southern end of the city now little more than a junkyard. Yes, the demolition was almost complete, all that was needed were the finishing touches.

When he reached the glass tower once more, however, he found something that wiped his all-confident, all-conquering grin from his face: he could see his increasingly dismayed expression reflected back at him, and it was sliding down the glittering panels at an alarming rate.

He bellowed his frustration to the heavens, his incoherent voice echoing off the walls and hills surrounding his kingdom. There was so much left to do! Downtown hadn't been levelled! The suburbs were still almost entirely untouched!

He fell backwards, crushing what was left of a city block beneath him as he hit the ground. His reign was over, he had failed. Those pathetic, worthless little bugs had, somehow, vanquished him.

He awoke on the back of what seemed like a flatbed truck, though his senses took a few moments to reacquaint themselves with the world. He could tell that he was lying on a stretcher, a plump hamster in a white lab coat on his left, a burly shark on his right.

"How did you find that, Mister Sands?" Hercus asked, the smallest of smirks curling the corner of his mouth.

Merric stared up at him for a second or two, his time as the macro he had always dreamed of being flashing through his mind in that moment.

"I wanna do it again!"