

Dog eat Dog World

By: IndigoRho

As the illuminated floor numbers in the elevator slowly ticked up, Joe took a deep breath and readjusted his posture, hands firmly on the food cart before him. He'd been grateful to secure a job as an office assistant at Coolidge & Brown, even if it meant essentially being at the beck-and-call of the entire office. Coolidge & Brown represented opportunity for him, a chance to get a foothold in the business world and finally achieve some sort of stability, no longer stuck bouncing from one retail job to the next. Then again, he wasn't really sure how likely it was for a human to climb the corporate ladder of a business run and dominated by toons. Toons weren't a rarity, of course, but in all his previous jobs they'd barely made up a small portion of coworkers, where at Coolidge & Brown he sometimes felt like he'd stumbled into a cartoon.

Joe tried not to worry too much about such things, though, instead dedicating himself to leaving the best impression he could. The elevator gently shuddered as it arrived on the twentieth floor, Joe putting on an eager smile as the doors opened and he hurried out. As expected, the office was a flurry of controlled chaos. Employees were racing around to meetings and cubicles, loud boasts of secured deals filled the air, and more than a few innocent pranks were being inflicted upon new hires. While there'd always been a playful air about the place, things had abruptly escalated the last few weeks, though Joe wasn't entirely sure why.

A pair of overly bubbly coyotes at the water cooler greeted Joe as he passed and the human returned a friendly wave. Even after working in the office for months the reserved human was still adjusting to the sheer energy of the place, though at least everyone had been welcoming of him despite his overall timidity. Joe weaved in and out of work spaces, delivering lunches to the various departments while politely laughing at jokes and congratulating successes. He'd just finished handing out a mass order of ribs to Accounting when a boisterous fox gave him a hearty slap on the back.

"Hey Joe, how's it going!" the fox said, shaking the cart in the process. "The Big Guy wants to see you in his office, asap!"

In an office of predominantly bulky toons, there was still only one referred to as "Big Guy" in such a way: his boss. Joe gave a nervous thanks to the messenger before parking his cart and quickly making his way towards his boss' office. The dutiful secretary announced his arrival to the boss without ever looking up from her computer, typing away with preposterous speed as Joe sheepishly opened the office door and slipped inside. Looking out the wide glass pane windows and with his back turned was the Boss, an imposing wide-bodied wolf dressed in an immaculately tailored suit.

"Um, y-you wanted to see me, sir?" Joe's voice nearly cracked.

He'd only met the Boss once before personally, and even then only in passing. His presence was enough to keep even the rowdiest toons in line. His face could be stern and all business one moment, then letting out a laugh loud enough to rattle the whole office the next. Though all the other toons spoke highly of him, Joe still wasn't familiar enough with their often peculiar personalities to be anything other than intimidated around the wolf.

"Yes, yes. Have a seat." The wolf said, still gazing out the window, a large puff of smoke rising from the cigar in his paw.

Once Joe was seated the Boss finally turned back around. "So, a human in a toon world. Not always the easiest thing to adjust to. Have you enjoyed it?"

"O-of course. Sir," Joe managed. "Everyone's been very nice, very accommodating!"

"Glad to hear it." The Boss let out a low chuckle that showed off his teeth. "I've heard a lot of good things about you around the office, that you're reliable. Have you considered moving up in the world, though?"

The question was abrupt, and though Joe feared it might be a trap he answered truthfully. "Yes! I...I know I can do a lot more for the company outside of simple errands."

The Boss' stern demeanor was broken by a devious grin. "Just what I wanted to hear. You see, a new position just opened up, and I feel you've got the potential for it, what do you say?"

Joe could barely hide his enthusiasm. He'd expected to be stuck as an assistance for at least a couple years before shifting into something better, but now he was already being offered that chance. Without even waiting to hear what the job entailed he accepted, too excited to worry about details. The Boss' smile somehow grew wider, and he casually strolled around the table to Joe.

"Wonderful! Time for a bit of celebration." The Boss plucked the cigar out of his mouth and stuck it right into Joe's without warning.

Joe winced a bit, having never tried out a toon cigar before but reluctant to refuse the wolf's offer. The cigar was thicker than mundane ones, brighter, smokier. After a couple nervous puffs Joe felt himself calming down. Even after the smoke poured from his mouth the aftertaste seemed to only grow stronger, swirling down his throat and beyond. There was a comforting warmth to it that gradually spread outwards from his chest into his arms and legs, practically seeping into his head as well. His worries faded as the warmth enveloped him, but so did most of his thoughts in general, leaving him with a single urge: keep puffing.

"I like enthusiasm and loyalty, they're essential for keeping a company running as smoothly as ours does. Then again, so does having good security," the Boss smirked, watching as Joe's eyes began to wander. "The office has been a tad too rowdy for my tastes lately. A somewhat laid back environment can be good for morale, but business suffers if there's more messing around than actual work."

Joe looked like he was sinking into his chair, nodding along to the Boss' every word.

The Boss continued. "I'm too busy to personally keep everyone in line myself, but I've found having an imposing security guard or two goes a long way. I expect you'll flourish in your new job as one by the way, especially once you've changed into a more—heh-heh—'fitting' wardrobe."

On cue the office door opened, a trio of toons rushing in carrying a neatly folded uniform. Joe was barely registering what was happening, his head swirling as he kept instinctively puffing away at the toon cigar. He tried his best to remain upright, but inevitably he slumped back in his chair, complacent. After a nod from the Boss the new arrivals wasted little time getting to work. They spun Joe's chair around and began systematically disrobing the dazed human, who didn't resist, merely mumbling in confusion. His tie was undone and slid off his shoulders, a firm tug pulled his shirt over his head, belt and pants slid right off. Joe's dress shoes were promptly tossed aside, landing with a *thud* as they hit the expensive carpet.

Had Joe not been so out of it he likely would've been blushing at the embarrassment of being down to his boxers in sight of his boss. With the outfit of his old position dealt with, Joe's "tailors" cheerfully helped him into the new one. Dark blue pants replaced the old slick black ones, though they appeared comically loose on Joe's rather lanky frame, the rigid new belt only emphasizing the size difference more. A new light-blue collared shirt was literally draped over him, a tie expertly knotted yet still far too loose for how thin he was. Large, oddly shaped shoes were slipped onto his feet, essentially dangling on. Pouches and accessories were added to his belt in between, a heavy walkie and flashlight serving to pin Joe's pants to the chair so they wouldn't slide right off. A simple cap was placed atop his head to top off the ensemble.

Joe looked like a child had tried to dress up as a security guard. The Boss, though, seemed rather pleased. "It's a tough uniform to fill, but I'm sure you'll overcome that issue shortly," he let out another laugh, shooing the three assistants away.

Joe's daze was only growing worse, and the odd tingling sensation spreading through his body wasn't helping. His ears wobbled strangely, then suddenly stretched and shifted till they were long and floppy. Fur sprouted over both of Joe's hands, his nails turning into claws. The once too-large shoes were steadily becoming more comfortable as his feet expanded unseen into paws. Joe's whole body was growing broader and meatier, his whole frame changing from skinny and unassuming to bulky and

imposing. The faded colors of a human gave way to the more vibrant tones of a toon, fur spreading out from his arms and legs.

The Boss looked on with glee as his newest employee shaped up, eager to test his capabilities out. "Aside from making sure the riffraff stays out of the building, you'll also be tasked with escorting fired employees off the premises. That won't be an issue, will it?"

Joe sluggishly shook his head just as his face extended to become a snout, his nose turning black and growing. He didn't put any thought into what his boss was asking, he just knew to comply. Following orders was what he did best, all he needed to do his job right, all that mattered, really.

"Excellent. I've got the perfect soon-to-be former employee for you to deal with right now, a real sleazeball who's about to get sent packing." A claw to the intercom put him into swift contact with his secretary. "You can send in Mr. Parker now."

Again the door to the office opened, a toon dalmatian slinking in. He had an air of unwarranted superiority about him. The small tuft of white fur atop his head was slicked straight back, his coat obsessively groomed, his tail whipping back-and-forth a little too perfectly. While Joe had showed the Boss fear and most of the office showed him unwavering respect, Parker expressed utter apathy; it was as if a meeting with the Boss was an inconvenience rather than an honor. He paid only the most minimal attention to Joe, despite the human unmistakably transforming into a toon dog.

"I was wondering when you'd finally fix our little human problem," Parker scoffed. "He's never been able to get my lunch order right, not once!"

"Trust me, you'll never have to worry about that again." The Boss momentarily held back his disdain for Parker.

"Well back to business. I assume this is to congratulate me on that big CompTech deal," Parker smirked. "I imagine the signing bonus will be generous; perhaps it's finally time I got my own office as well."

The Boss unexpectedly returned the dalmatian's conceded discussion with a smile, though it was a sinister one. "Are you ever not full of yourself?" Parker's response was delightful, a flash of poorly hidden fury that slapped the grin right off his face. "You barely did any of the work with that deal but took all the credit, a recurring theme if my investigations are correct. Not to mention all the client complains I've gotten as well."

Parker was obviously caught off-guard, stumbling through conflicting excuses and trying to shift the blame onto half the office. The Boss wasn't having any of it.

"Quiet!" The Boss boomed, causing Parker to cower. "Parker, you're fired! Joe will show you out." He carefully retrieved the cigar from Joe's mouth and chomped back down on it, billowing smoke as he chuckled.

Now it was Joe's turn to grin, licking his lips in a way that made his true intentions dreadfully clear to Parker. The dalmatian bolted to the door in a flash, confident he could outrun the dopey-looking security guard. He'd wasted too much time snaking his way up the corporate ladder to end up as lunch. The Boss was a fool to think he could simply do away with someone as crafty and cunning as —. Parker's internal monologue halted as the door knob refused to turn; the door was locked. His confidence shattered in an instant, Parker frantically shook at the knob and banged on the door, not that he'd ever have a chance of brute forcing it open.

Meanwhile, the mostly-transformed Joe lurched out of his chair, having grown into his uniform enough for it to stay on. He lumbered towards the distracted dalmatian, sluggishly adjusting to his new form and eager to follow the Boss' orders. With every step Joe grew a little taller and a little wider, broad chest and thick arms filling out the uniform well. Parker could feel the security guard's footsteps nearing and backed up against the office door, cowering in fear as Joe's shadow stretched and fell over him. Joe let out a low laugh as he cornered his lunch, his voice now completely unrecognizable from the hapless human Parker had so often brushed aside.

Parker begged and pleaded for a second chance, made vague threats, even tried to bribe Joe with

his wallet, all to no avail. Joe was rather keen on doing his job, and besides, he was starving. The security guard pinned Parker's arms to his sides to hold him in place, then greedily opened his maw wide, giving the dalmatian a clear view of his fate. There was one final plea for mercy before Joe engulfed the freshly fired employee's head in one gulp. Parker wiggled and squirmed in a panic as his face was coated in saliva and pulled into the back of Joe's throat, the guard's slick gullet looming ominously below him like a pit. He could feel Joe's lips stretching around his shoulders as if they were nothing, every swallow lowering him further and further down the throat and towards the stomach.

The strong aroma of the cigar smoke still lingered, causing Parker to cough and interrupting his sporadic shouts for help. Despite Joe's size, the journey towards oblivion for Parker was brief. A hearty gulp made him lurch right into Joe's noisy stomach. Joe's belly ballooned outward as Parker gradually began to empty into it, his shirt stretching to contain his prey. He happily swallowed the dalmatian whole as if he'd done so a dozen times before, just another regular part of the job he loved more than anything else.

The Boss observed from a distance, already satisfied with Joe's performance. He followed a rather literal interpretation of "dog-eat-dog world", and as far as he was concerned the best way to inspire greatness in his employees was to remind them they'd end up swaying from someone's waistline if they truly failed him. For the most part his methods worked.

Parker's legs flailed frantically as Joe continued gulping him down, his struggles plainly visible within the security guard's bloated middle as well. He futilely banged on the soft walls of Joe's stomach, making increasingly desperate attempts to stop his descent or force the guard to spit him back out. The dalmatian was completely disheveled, his fur a matted mess and his once pristine suit ruined, all the pomp he'd prided himself in gone. His fate was inevitable, though, and soon he was reduced to a pair of wiggling paws slipping past Joe's grinning jaws.

There was barely any hint of Joe's formerly human nature left anymore, skin covered by fur, eyes growing wider and more expressive. A wagging tail sprung out from behind him just as he closed his jaws shut, the transformation complete. With a noisy *shlorp* he swallowed the last of Parker, a large bulge rolling down his thick throat straight into his gut, which bounced about dramatically. His uniform was now tight and almost a tad bit too small thanks to the dalmatian he was "escorting" in his stomach.

Joe gave his shifting belly a triumphant slap with a paw, before slowly readjusting his tie. "Thanks for tha free lunch, Boss!" His voice was gruffer, rougher, nothing like the soft tone he'd always been known for. While he'd once somewhat rambled he was now brutishly concise, nearly to a fault.

"Glad to reward such a loyal employee," The Boss said in between puffs of his cigar. "Now that your lunch break's over, why don't you head back down to the lobby and keep an eye on things. I've got to work on finding a brand new office assistant."

"Yes sir!" Joe gave his boss a sharp salute before ruining it with a loud belch.

He lumbered out of the office, gut still swaying with the struggling Parker, eager to return to duty. His role in the company had always been so easy and rewarding. After all, what was better than sitting around for most of the day scarfing down free donuts and the occasional troublemaker? Nothing, nothing at all. Why anyone would want to worry themselves with climbing the corporate ladder was beyond him...