

Kevin sat down on the edge of the bed, staring at the phone in his paws. The thing was huge, by phone standards, but it fit perfectly in his hands. His fingers tapped across the screen, and with a sigh, he hit send. He watched the app spin its wheels before the feed updated itself, his message now sitting at the top.

[quote]Kevin Malka * 3:57 AM

Sitting here and finishing packing for the combine. Have to leave very soon to catch my plane.[/quote]

It was true, but only just. He looked around the sparse hotel room, the walls an off-white with very little furnishing. There was the bed, of course, and a small desk, and finally a dresser with the television built into the wall behind it. The top drawer of the dresser was open, a few articles of clothing left inside. He turned to look behind him, at the purple suitcase lying open on the bed. The thing wasn't even half full, and yet there were only a few more items to put inside. Lying next to it was his backpack with his gym clothes, his laptop, and his headphones. He sighed. Not much of a selection to wear at the combine, but, then again, he had been expecting to be packing for his trip at home, not at a hotel room in Toronto.

He looked at his watch. 4:05 AM. He really needed to hurry; he'd miss his flight if he didn't get to the airport soon. He grabbed the few remaining pieces of clothing from the drawers and tossed them into the suitcase. As empty as it was, no amount of folding would prevent it all from getting wrinkled on the plane ride to Huntsville. He zipped up the suitcase and placed it onto the ground, grabbing his backpack from beside it. Looking down at his phone he dialed the number of the cab company that the front desk had provided for him. An accented voice picked up at the other end of the line. "Yes, hello. Can I get a cab please? As soon as possible. I'm running a little late for my plane."

The cab rolled up ten minutes later, which surprised him. An older fox stepped out of the cab and grabbed his suitcase. "Travelling light, eh?"

The pangolin nodded his head. "Yeah. Luck of the draw, I guess."

The fox smiled as he got into the cab. "Where you headed?"

Kevin buckled himself in, turning to look out the window. "Pearson International, please."

The fox nodded. "You look troubled. Anything you'd like to say?"

Kevin shook his head. "Just like to think, if you don't mind."

Kevin didn't hear the fox's reply as the cab rolled down the street. He thought back to the previous week. He had gone home to Manitoulin to visit his family, just as they had been planning a trip to Toronto. The pangolin had sighed with frustration

when he learned that he had driven the 7 hours up there just to turn around and drive back the very next day. But seeing his family had been fun. And then there had been Edwin's graduation party. The Canadian Goose had invited him over twitter at the last minute after hearing that he would be in the area, and Kevin had gone gladly. He'd gotten to know the goose, at least a bit, through their time on the court, and most recently at CFIS. He thought of the goose as his friend, though, truly, he didn't know if the goose thought of him the same way. After all, they had only met each other the few times, and being from different schools in different cities, it wasn't as if they could hang out. But, he had been invited, so off he went to the graduation party, although not before grabbing the goose a small congratulation gift.

The cab pulled up to the airport, and the driver broke Kevin out of his thoughts by asking which terminal to park at. "Oh, uh, SouthFur Airlines, please." The cab pulled up to the terminal, and the Fox turned to face the backseat. "We're here. \$42.50, please."

Kevin pulled a fifty from his wallet. "Keep it," he said, getting out of the car and grabbing his suitcase from the trunk. The cab took off as soon as he was on the sidewalk. Looking to the sky, the pangolin turned and walked into the terminal.

It was emptier than Kevin had anticipated. He pulled out his tickets. He had gotten them mailed to him, since the ticket booth would be closed at that hour. It was a short trip through security, and then a brief walk to the gate. Nobody else was there. He looked at his watch. 5:30 AM. Plane wasn't set to load until 6 AM. He took his seat, and glanced around the terminal. No restaurants were open at that hour, and his stomach felt like it would revolt if he put any food in it anyways. He pulled out his phone and typed out another tweet, not that he expected anyone to be awake at that hour.

[quote]Kevin Malka * 5:37 AM

In the airport. Plane loads in half an hour. Boy, I really hate flying.[/quote]

He hadn't been on many planes, and he liked to avoid them when he could. It wasn't that the pangolin was scared of flying, not really. It was more the plane that worried him. He didn't like the thought of a simple machine carrying him into the sky, ready to plummet to his death in one malfunction. But it was takeoff and landing that stressed him the most. After that, he could distract himself, unless the turbulence got too bad.

People started filing in ten minutes before boarding. Kevin shook his head. It was reckless, anything could cause a delay. Arriving that late, what if security had been packed, some of them might have missed their flight. But, by the time boarding came, the plane looked to have a full load. Toronto to Huntsville, arriving in more than enough time for the combine.

The engine started, the stewards presented the in-flight safety speech, and he felt the plane taxi-ing to the runway.

Instinctively, his hands gripped the arms of the seat.

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As soon as Kevin's head hit the pillow on his bed at the Furriott, the pangolin slipped into unconsciousness. It wasn't just the exhaustion from the flight, which had been more turbulent than he had hoped for, as well as the multiple takeoffs from the layovers, but it was the fact that he has been awake for almost twenty-four hours, not including the very brief moments of sleep on the plane. He hadn't even unpacked upon entering the room, simply shrugging off his messenger bag and collapsing onto the mattress.

It was hours before the pangolin awoke, just past 5 PM, if the clock was to be believed. He grabbed his phone, and flicked open the twitter app. Based on the notices, people were starting to arrive for the combine, although a few he could see wouldn't make it until the next day, and some the day the combine started. It made sense. Kevin had come early, so he could get acquainted with the town and the hotel, settle in, and prepare himself mentally.

He hopped on twitter, sent a message out to everyone to let them know that he was there, and that if they needed him, they could find him either in his room or at the pool. With a grunt, he pushed himself off the bed and opened his suitcase, retrieving the pair of trunks. A quick change later, and he was on his way to the pool. He responded to the few tweets he saw, but there weren't many.

He set down his phone and keycard on a chair just away from the pool, placing a few fresh towels on top of them, and slipped himself over the edge and into the water. He settled into a rhythm of slow, relaxing laps. He grinned, flipping himself over to stare at the ceiling. Most people, if they saw him, wouldn't have expected him to be a natural swimmer. It was the bulk, maybe, or the not-quite scales. But pangolins were good swimmers, and he had been keeping it up all his life. It was his relaxation, and, he thought wistfully, if he hadn't fallen so in love with basketball, maybe swimming is the direction his life would have taken him. But basketball had its hooks in him tight, and even if this draft season didn't go well, he didn't think he could give it up.

It was just before 9 PM when Kevin left the pool, water still dripping from him, despite his best attempts to dry himself completely. There was only so much you could do to get under the scales, no matter how hard you tried. His phone was in his hand again, the rest of the world just a passing blur. It seemed as if a professional player was having a relationship problem. He sighed inwardly, tweeting out his best wishes for the guy. He couldn't do much, he couldn't even offer real advice, not with no experience in the area, but he could at least offer support.

His room was quiet, and for the first time, he started to regret booking a single room at the Furriott. Sure, he had his privacy, but maybe it would have been better to bunk with someone, have someone to open up to. Not to mention that it likely would have been cheaper. He looked cautiously towards his wallet. He didn't have much left in his bank account, he had drained almost everything he saved during school to book his flight and hotel stay for the week.

He set his phone on the bedside table, flicking the small light off and plunging the room into darkness. He had planned a lunch for the next day, as well as a morning jog with the big gator Hal. He blushed slightly under the blankets. That would be an interesting start of his day, that he was sure of.

Just one more day before the combine began. He nervously started curling into a ball, though he forced himself to straighten out. Everything would be okay. He'd show the media and the GMs that he was a defensive force to be reckoned with. He'd meet new players, maybe make some new friends. He'd do his best, and show everyone exactly what his species was capable of. More than just D-League fodder, occasionally pulled up into the FBA. He would make his mark.

He let out a sigh as he felt himself slipping away. But he wouldn't be able to do any of that if he didn't get some sleep.