

Yeah, okay I know some of you are saying here we go again. Just, just shut the hell up and read. It least this initial comment is small enough to skip over. So, yeah, here we go again...

A Special Delivery

As all stories of this sort, this one starts with a delivery. While it could be assumed that this delivery had been made to the wrong address the events that followed would leave the eventual recipient forever wondering.

In some inexplicable way a small but powerful piece of technology found its way to a time and place it didn't yet belong. What might be surprising to some; the packaging from where it actually belonged looks much the same as it does elsewhere. Thus the weasel to start our story found himself to be the eager recipient of, a thing. He stood just inside the front door having found the normal looking box on the step when he came home.

Having pulled the think staples from the cardboard and Sam opened the box. Pulling out an inner case that had been hidden within he brushed off the styrofoam peanuts and commenced battle with the shrink wrap. With his graduation from the academy coming up he hoped to receive a few gifts for the occasion. With a job of his own that was ready to go full time as soon as he was free of school he understood his graduation would ease the strain on the families finances. He only hoped his parents would allow him to stay at home however he did on his finals. His thoughts halted in puzzlement as he opened the box and stared.

Picking up the smaller object he turned his find over in his paw. He'd never encountered anything this simple that held any interest for him. To him it looked like a plain but shiny metal tube. There was nothing to plug a charger into, or even an 'On' button. Disappointed he dropped the box back into the larger one it came in. It obviously wasn't for him after all. His youngest brother was more interested in mysterious and perplexing things like that.

Guessing his parents had bought the little twerp a new toy for his maturity birthday he took it to the playroom. With nowhere other than the table clear enough to put the box he set it on top of the half finished puzzle. If his little brother wanted to work on his stupid puzzle again he could move the box out of his way.

Jeremy was always taking things apart and piecing them back together. He even managed to do it without ruining what he was taking apart and reassembling. His brother had taken apart their father's motorcycle and put it back together one weekend when he was away. The little schmuck even put the bike back together so well it still started up on the first try. Lucky for him too, if their father ever found out what he'd done to the bike his ass would be furless for weeks. The little shit even excelled at school better than any of his brothers. Sam had no interest in the toys you had to figure out how to play with.

Sam much preferred his video games, mostly the ones that were just point and shoot. That was more his style. He'd be glad to be done with school. Even though work sucked just as much as school it at least paid him for showing up and doing what was expected. As he headed back upstairs his mind returned to the most worrying thing in his life.

He needed the time to study for his graduation finals. He couldn't afford to fail. His classes had been tough and it showed, his marks could be described as shaky at best. His parents hadn't brought it up yet but he was certain that conversation was going to happen any day now. His graduation exams were

already scheduled for next Friday. Should he fail and not receive a graduation certificate he'd likely be asked to move out.

Minutes later Jeremy found the box on top of his latest puzzle. Curious he picked up the ring from inside. Turning it over in his paws, much like his older brother had with its smaller companion, he thought about his find. He guessed his parents had ordered this for his birthday and it had been delivered late. Rather than disappointed he was thrilled. He had another gift for his birthday. This birthday had been special, now that he was at the maturity age he was no longer considered a child.

He now had right of ownership, his toys now belonged to him and not his parents. He could be out alone without the need for parental permission. He also could get a part time job, but there was no hurry for that in his mind. Only his oldest brother had been pressured to do that so far. Even with the extra money he could spend Sam still wasn't happy about having a part time job. Jeremy, much like his other brothers had pretty much developed the same attitude by association. He smiled down at the apparent toy in his paw.

It was large. Heavy too, it must have weighed three pounds. Folding the circle in his paws he thought it looked like mercury and was just as pliable, only this held together rather than spilled out of his fingers. He shivered at the association he had in seeing the metal in his paws.

It looked just like liquid metal. In appearance it was so close to the stuff portrayed in a certain movie it frightened him just a little. Experimenting with it he was able to form it into a small ball yet once he opened his hands it reformed to its original shape.

Unlike his brother, Jeremy was curious and looked into the box for any clue as to what the ring did. Finding a glossy booklet at the bottom of the box he started reading through it. On reading for less than two minutes he stopped and looked around the room. Questions whirling through his head he listened for the slightest sound, suspicions plagued him as he stood silent.

Were his brothers up to something? Even if they were, how would they know about his desire to be bigger? Had his older brothers noticed how envious he was of their greater size and strength? Whichever of his brothers behind it would have had to enlist someone else's help in producing a fake instruction manual this good. Jeremy was aware how envious his brothers were of his cleverness. They often pulled pranks on him that played into his curious nature. They always taunted him and labeled him a gullible idiot for falling for their pranks. As hurtful as the taunts and insults from his brothers were he just couldn't change his nature.

Looking at the quality of the instruction manual he tried to puzzle out which of his brother's friends would have helped. The more he thought about the situation the less he thought his brothers were involved. He couldn't explain how something like what he had found its way to his paws. He didn't even think something like what the instructions described could even exist, at least not yet his speculation prone mind added for him. Even if the manual were a fake, the strangely fluid ring certainly looked to be the real thing. His parents would certainly not have access to anything as sophisticated. Even if his doubts were unfounded, how would anything like what was presented within the booklet have been invented without worldwide fanfare?

After insuring he was not being watched he went to the door and closed it. After testing the lock he snuck back to the table. Taking the other ring out of the box and setting both rings on the half finished puzzle he picked up the booklet. Carefully reading through the owners manual he took the larger of the rings and gave the situation one last appraisal.

"This is crazy." Jeremy whispered to himself.

He still had doubts, but neither his brothers nor their friends had the ability to make or obtain anything like what he had in his paws. Deciding to take the risk he placed the ring over his head and let it settle on his shoulders. As it sat around his neck he could feel the weight and coolness of the metal even through his shirt and fur. His fingertips pressed against the ring and he felt the corresponding pressure on his chest.

Becoming excited he looked at the smaller ring still sitting on the table. Picking it up and examining it he barely noticed his breathing had sped up. It looked like a simple thin tube almost two inches wide and an inch long. The metal was slim, maybe as thick as two sheets of paper. He couldn't see any special markings although the metal of the tube looked like it had been overheated. This ring was rigid and wouldn't flex despite its thinness. Following the directions he placed it against his right eye. Looking through the ring he took a deep breath before pressing it up against his eye socket.

He was surprised at the deep stinging sensation sinking in around his eye. Thinking he'd discarded the ring as he'd flinched at the pain he pressed his paw against his eye. He leaned over grimacing and pressing his paw against his eye firmly as the pain only increased. The pain soared well beyond the intensity of any ice-cream binge caused brain freeze. A moment later he felt the metal ring flow into his fur and chill the skin around his neck.

Hissing at the still rising amount of pain in his eye he knew then he'd been tricked after all. Forced to his knees at the levels of pain he also felt the deepening cold spreading down his chest. There was too much pain in his eye to open it or its companion.

Even through the pain his shook his head at the impression that the ring around his neck had turned to liquid. It certainly felt as though it was seeping in through his fur and chilling his skin. That didn't make sense though. If it was now liquid it should have spilled to the floor when he bent over. Jeremy bit back a scream at the freezing cold sinking into his chest as much as the excruciating pain in his eye. His hands found the floor as he barely avoided falling in a heap. He only just had enough presence of mind and spare mental energy to keep his bladder from emptying.

He thought little of the humiliation he'd have to endure. He was more concerned about the kind of marks that were going to be left over his body. Was his fur burning, or was his skin experiencing frostbite? So, his brothers had known of his hidden desires and used them against him after all. Where had they gotten their paws on something so clever? This was beyond anything his brothers had ever done to him before. Worst yet, now that he was past the maturity age his parents would be unable to properly punish his brothers.

After a few more seconds the pain started to diminish. Soon enough the pain was all but a memory. Standing back up as soon as he was able and putting a brave face on he looked around expecting his brothers to be there ready to mock him.

He was still alone in the playroom.

Looking down he examined himself. There were no marks anywhere. A few seconds of self examination went by before he realized the metal band was no longer visible. He paw brushing over his neck and chest gave no indication of anything under his shirt. Looking to the floor he couldn't find where the smaller ring he thought he'd dropped had gone. Perhaps if he hid the evidence of their trap he could for once deny ever being tricked. Turning he looked under the table when he started blinking at something in his vision.

[[INITIALIZING]]

Standing he found the image stayed in the same area of his vision. Closing his eyes yielded little change. Bright blue and scrolled across the bottom of his vision the word stayed in the same place no matter where he turned his head.

This was beyond anyone's capabilities. He realized there was no trick involved. Technology like this only existed in science fiction. For several seconds he stood in the middle of the family playroom not able to think beyond the single word across his vision.

About ten seconds later it changed.

[[INITIATING INTERFACE]]

Heart beating fast enough to sound in his ears Jeremy picked up the instruction manual and quickly found the necessary page. As the instructions predicted a few seconds elapsed before the next step started.

[[OBTAINING SUBJECT PARAMETERS]]

Furiously paging through the manual Jeremy sat on one of the chairs as the process continued through the many steps. Finally it stopped.

[[TUTORIAL]]

[[EDIT EXTERNAL]]

[[EDIT SUBJECT JEREMY]]

[[CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE 0]]

[[HISTORY]]

[[HELP : UNABLE TO CONNECT]]

[[FAQ]]

[[QUIT]]

Jeremy read through the owners manual through the distraction of double vision. Having finished the manual he stared at the opposite wall unseeing. Sixteen pages told him little. Looking back at the cover was just as confusing.

P.A.T.O.M.E.S. What did that stand for?

He wondered how anything this powerful could have been dropped in his paws. Would someone come looking for it? It was a part of him now. He had no idea if it could be removed. He'd rather not even think about what the procedure to remove it from him might involve.

He gathered up everything. The wrapping and manual he stuffed back into the box and closed it up. dropping it to the floor he stomped on it until the box was as flat as his slight weight could get it. Picking it back up he tucked it under his arm. Unlocking the door he stepped out looking around for anyone else in his family. Still by himself for the time being he made his way outside. Standing on his tip toes he stuffed the box as deep into the trash as he could. Turning from the trash can he looked around the neighborhood. No one was watching him.

As he understood it, he'd need to add to his account before he'd be able to use it. Three of his neighbors across the street were out in their front yard kicking a soccer ball back and forth. He would have to take from someone. He decided to run a quick and simple test. Nothing too extravagant lest he draw some unwanted attention. Opening PATOMES with a thought he went through the steps to target the oldest tiger sibling.

Two years older than the weasel's oldest brother, Stan was a constant undeclared threat. The tiger was already twice the size of Jeremy's father. They were still new in neighborhood terms, they'd only been across the street from Jeremy three years. The tiger family had the entire neighborhood on constant edge, then again most of their neighbors were prey specie.

[[EXTERNAL TARGET 0001 ACQUIRED]]

Now he needed to decide how much he could take without anyone noticing.

[[SUBTRACTION OF 1% ORGANIC BODY MASS]]

Jeremy guessed nobody would notice a drop that small in a tiger Stan's size. It seemed there were more options. Jeremy thought about his next choice.

[[TIME OF TRANSFER 20 SECONDS]]

[[READY]]

Smiling to himself he was seconds away from what he'd always dreamed of being able to do.

He took a deep breath and activated the command. He didn't want to be noticed staring at the tiger the same time he shrank. In reality he didn't want to be noticed staring at the tiger at all. Turning he went around the back of the house to go inside.

[[TRANSFER COMPLETE]]

[[ACCOUNT BALANCE 67 UNITS]]

So one percent of Stan equalled sixty seven units. Surprised at the implication, Jeremy made his way through the kitchen and to the living-room. The rest of his family was in watching the television. He sat at the end of the couch next to the window. From the safety of his house Jeremy watched through the window looking to see if any of the carnivores had noticed anything. The three tigers continued playing not knowing the oldest was now just a bit smaller. Now he could take the next step. He waited for what seemed an appropriate time.

As a commercial started he made his move. Heart racing he went to the bathroom. Locking the door he stepped in front of the mirror and stared at his reflection. He wanted to see the effects of the next step for himself.

Going through the proper selections he paused and readied himself before the mirror.

[[60 UNIT ADDITION TO SUBJECT JEREMY]]

[[TIME OF TRANSFER 10 SECONDS]]

[[READY]]

With an eager smile Jeremy selected the activation prompt.

He watched constantly looking over himself. The seconds went by and he failed to notice anything. The completion signal came up and he didn't see any changes to his still thin body. He'd been sure most of what he'd taken from the tiger would have shown itself on his much smaller weasel body.

Disappointed he made his way back to the living room. He sat with his family as they watched the television. Jeremy paid little attention. He was going through the tutorial of his new toy. It seemed he had successfully added mass to himself from Stan. He'd made the mistake of expecting what was really a fairly small quantity to show.

Still, it was probably for the best. He didn't want anyone to notice anything too drastic about himself. He did resolve to surreptitiously add more to his account. There were plenty of kids at school who could do without just a bit of mass. He also needed to learn just what he was capable of with PATOMES. He also wondered if it had limits.

* * * *

So, as those of you who saw the first run may have noticed this one is already a bit different. I'm going to be clearer in the story itself but also here at the exit. The first major change is the steps in maturity in Jeremy's world. At the age of thirteen one is granted a few rights and responsibilities, but not as many as when they become a full adult. The distinction was made so that Jeremy even at a fairly young age can go about by himself without being hassled like an unaccompanied minor.

Also, like last time I'm open for questions that can best be answered here instead of in comments. I figured not too many revisit the story once they've read it and would miss the answer to any question brought up in the comments.

You eager little fuzzballs be safe until next time.