

Measures and Balances

When we left off last time Jeremy had taken to stealing a bit of mass from a neighbor and adding a portion of it to himself. Having been a bit disappointed at the lack of results he spent some time studying PATOMES. Lets see what he does with his new toy the next day.

First though, I highly doubt you'd be interested in a long drawn out explanation of how Jeremy targeted each and every one of his victims, I know I would. Instead lets skip ahead to the end of the school day.

Yeah, I thought you'd like that...

Jeremy's family like so many others lived within a few miles from his school so they walked or rode bikes. He was just another of the countless students leaving the academy after the last class module of the day. He rode his bike back toward home with his friends Sam and Alex. He'd not targeted them anytime during his day. He didn't really feel they deserved having mass taken from them. Alex was a raccoon and Sam a ferret, they were both about the same age and therefore roughly the same size he was. He instead had taken mass from the students from the larger specie. His PATOMES storage account had grown as a result.

Nearly half of his school's fifth and sixth year students had contributed to his account. No one had noticed any of the changes. Even better he had all weekend to figure out what to do next. Well, not next but after he got home and added some of the stored mass to himself.

It just might take all weekend long to figure out PATOMES too. The tutorial was as confusing as it was complex. There were so many avenues the menu kept branching off into. He was slowly getting used to the different search commands, the activation prompts, and the inquiry routes within PATOMES. That was okay though, he liked puzzles and this puzzle promised to have an exciting payoff as soon as he figured it out.

He was only two houses from home when he realized he hadn't said anything to either of his friends. Luckily for him neither had really noticed. They were still talking with each other when Jeremy said his farewells and turned up his driveway. He slowed and watched as they continued on to their own homes. They were still talking as though his distraction were a normal thing. It was in some respects. He wasn't the most talkative kid on the block.

Inputting the code to open the garage door he stored his bike and made his way inside listening for his brothers. He was usually the first one home even if it was normally only by a few minutes. It seemed today was going to be a normal day, family wise.

Both his parents worked and would be home in time for dinner. Sam as the oldest had the responsibility of having dinner ready by the time they got home. That might change if he passed his graduation exams though. Jeremy hoped things would change, his oldest brother already felt it was his right to order him around. His parents not only let him but even backed him up ever since he'd turned eighteen. Still there was a good chance Sam would be out of the house soon, but for now he had an experiment to conduct.

He practically ran upstairs. Locking the bathroom door he dropped his backpack with his books and homework inside the door. With an ear listening for any of his brothers to get home he activated PATOMES as he stood in front of the mirror. He knew just what he wanted to do. He'd been planning this all day long. He had searched through the command route before and quickly and efficiently returned through the necessary pathways.

The youngest of four he stood at less than three feet tall. His oldest brother was almost a foot taller. Sam was almost as tall as their father now. If this worked as well as he hoped Jeremy would someday soon stand larger than them all.

[[ACCOUNT BALANCE 5139 UNITS]]

Jeremy's heart raced. He held his breath for a second making sure none of his brothers had come home yet. He'd hate to have to wait for this.

[[SUBJECT JEREMY CURRENT MASS 2271 UNITS]]

[[100 UNIT ADDITION TO SUBJECT JEREMY]]

[[TIME OF TRANSFER FIVE SECONDS]]

[[READY]]

He stepped back from the countertop. He looked at his grinning face in the mirror. His ears were perked and tail swishing back and forth behind him. There was no way he could contain his excitement. There was no reason he should.

Activating the command he watched his reflection as the mass was added. After five seconds and closely observing himself for any noticeable change his smile faltered just a bit. Still, from his previous try of adding mass he knew not to expect too much visibly. He programmed another addition of mass, this time two hundred units.

Once completed he stood staring at himself. His favorite shirt did feel a little tighter on him. Moving his limbs he noticed how it pressed his fur down against his skin in several areas. The shirt had been the first thing in years his parents had bought him clothing wise, and that had been last years Celebration Day gift. A year old shirt and it now looked like he was finally growing out of it. He smiled at the thought and puffed his chest out. Yes, PATOMES was working just as much as he'd hoped.

His attention went to the display in his sight.

[[SUBJECT JEREMY CURRENT MASS 2571 UNITS]]

[[SAVE CHANGES]]

[[CONTINUE]]

[[QUIT]]

He unlocked the door and stepped out into the hallway as he activated the save function. His shorts too still fit but not as loose as they had before. He'd thought about how to approach his use of PATOMES all day. It was best to take things slow, add to himself only in amounts that could be explained as a rapid growth spurt. Even at the pace he'd decided on it was going to be better than waiting to gradually grow up like everyone else. It felt a little bit like cheating, but if he continued to be careful and go slowly no one would ever know the difference. He just had to learn how to use PATOMES properly.

He made his way back downstairs to the kitchen where his parents had been marking their heights for years. The pantry door jam was littered with marks denoting the changing heights of all four of their sons. Checking again to make sure he was still the only one home Jeremy stood with his back to the jamb and put a pencil mark on the doorframe. Turning he stared at the only pencil mark on the paint.

The last mark from his birthday little more than a week ago was more than an inch below the mark he'd just placed with the rest. He was an inch taller just from adding three hundred units to himself. He had five thousand more in storage. The potential left him staring wide eyed and slack jawed at the mark.

He heard a key being inserted in the front door and rushed to erase the pencil mark. He grabbed a snack from the pantry and tried to act normal and hide the excitement he felt. For a first, no second try it was exciting. He glanced at Eric and Ian as they entered the kitchen exchanging the usual verbal greetings. They too grabbed a snack and stood in the kitchen eating and talking about the usual nothing.

With his brothers home Jeremy couldn't do much more with PATOMES so grabbed his pack and pulled out the first of his homework. He was just getting started on the dining room table when Sam came home and after grabbing his own snack joined him at the other end of the table and started studying. Jeremy kept his mouth shut and even Eric and Ian left the vicinity. They all knew Sam was stressed with the upcoming exam.

He looked up at his brother wondering if he should excuse himself and leave him alone. Sam had his typical empty stare, eyes on the middle of the glass tabletop his thoughts were obviously on something else. Jeremy braced himself. He'd seen this too many times before. Sam would do this and the moment he came back to reality he'd order Jeremy to do something that would essentially get him out of his brother's sight. He put his eyes back on his homework and waited.

"Jeremy, get dinner started."

He looked up seeing an angry stare from Sam.

"You've got all weekend to do your homework." Sam added as he looked back to his own studies.

With a sigh Jeremy put his work back in his pack and started setting the table except where Sam sat. From then on it was a typical weekend. Eric and Ian came back and joined him in preparing the meal with Sam only giving direction occasionally. After dinner they watched television, except for Sam. He was in his room studying. The rest of the weekend ended up being almost entirely Sam-free.

No one noticed anything different about Jeremy. He was a bit disappointed, but at the same time reassured he was adding to himself at the right pace. As soon as his homework was complete he was free to use his time as he wished. He spent most of his time in the playroom dithering with his latest puzzle. His attention was more on going through the PATOMES tutorial and exploring the command pathways. Early Sunday morning he peddled to the nearby park to experiment.

He picked an out of the way corner of the park. The benches there were covered in moss and filthy. He'd never seen anyone sitting on it for months. He climbed on it to sit on the top plank that made up the backrest. From there he observed the birds and feral squirrels. He'd decided to do his experimenting on birds. No one really noticed birds. Just as any other day crows were flying, hopping and wandering all over the park. There were all sorts of birds around actually.

His test subjects of choice became crows. Crows were the perfect subject for his desires. They were everywhere, they were even for the most part considered a nuisance. He could always look out his bedroom window and see a line of them perched on the power lines.

After having experimented with and explored the extensive menu Jeremy thought he'd deciphered how he could adjust the addition of mass. With this new discovery he could add or subtract mass in the proportions he desired. It had taken some time before he learned how to adjust the formula within the command needed to achieve what he desired. He felt he was ready for a live test.

Targeting several crows he'd subtracted from some and added to others. Back and forth he moved mass among his crow targets. He learned plenty in the process but he was also becoming proficient in the PATOMES commands. Once he figured out the advanced addition process he knew how to properly adjust the proportions of mass that he wanted to add. Soon he was confident enough to conduct the tests he desired without having to go through so many command prompts.

Soon he'd successfully solved the riddle of how to properly add largely muscle to his targets he decided to have a bit of fun. Selecting a crow at random he added mass to the crow in a 80/20 ratio of muscle to other. The result was visible but still lacking for his desires.

Over the next few minutes Jeremy added more and more mass to the crow. Soon it was ten times the size it had been. A true monster crow. Eventually it stood with even more mass than the weasel. Jeremy was about two hundred yards away from his creation. He didn't feel completely safe from the crow even at that distance. His heart beat fast at the sense of danger from his being so close to the huge bird represented.

For a few minutes he let his giant crow roam free. It dwarfed not only the other crows but every bird in the area. It was clearly aware of its new status. Jeremy imagined it was behaving just as any crow twenty times its rightful size would. No other crow could dare compete with it. No other animal in the park even came close to matching it. In just minutes it had all the other birds keeping a wide berth.

It was looking about as birds do when its next action surprised Jeremy. With a wingspan of more than twenty feet it took a hop and short flight to land over a duck that hadn't been paying attention. The mallard only saw the shadow of the huge crow as it landed right next to him. Spreading his wings the duck tried to escape the proximity of the much larger bird. Too late for the duck to escape the crow easily stepped on the much smaller bird trapping it with a single foot.

The crow's talons were large enough to almost completely wrap around the duck. The duck flapped its wings and quacked desperately as the crow bent its head down to examine its prisoner. Jeremy noticed the crow's beak was longer than the duck's body as it pecked at the smaller bird trapped within its talon. The duck's squawking only increased at the punishment of the massive bird. For all the crow's size and power it seemed confused as to what to do with its catch.

Jeremy looked around to make sure no one else was seeing the encounter. Looking back at his monster crow he added more mass to it. He all but drained his PATOMES account in his excitement and empathy for the massive bird. It surged even larger. It had stood up at the first sign of its increasing stature. The duck gave a strangled quack and fell silent as the huge talon grew even larger around it.

Now more than a foot taller than the weasel its shape had more in common with an eagle or hawk. Its chest spread twice as wide as its abdomen but feathers hid its true power. The only area on the crow that showed its tremendous strength was its legs. Previously thin they had grown to be thicker than Jeremy's thighs. The yellow scales gleamed even as they shifted over the bird's huge leg muscles. Muscles that bulged and flexed with every shift of the bird's enormous weight.

With a single raucous caw the crow leaned back down to the trapped duck. The crow took the duck in its beak and stood. The duck's comparatively tiny wings flapped feebly against the huge black beak. The crow tipped its head back and took the entire duck into its gullet. With a head bob of the crow the duck was swallowed whole. Finished with the duck it looked around the park.

Jeremy and his subject made eye contact. He stood hundreds of yards away but did not feel safe from his massive creation. He feared his monster crow. He watched open mouthed the huge bird cautiously for any aggressive sign. It out-massed him more than three to one at the moment. Jeremy readied an almost instant subtraction from the bird should he need to. He waited hopefully for it to do more for him, to show him what could be done with true unstoppable size and power.

It turned its head to look around the park. Spreading its wings it took to the air. A wingspan of more than thirty feet it was more than ten feet off the ground in a single flap. Another second of flight and it was on a goose that had no clue of the crow's vastly increased potential. The crow didn't bother grabbing the goose with a foot this time. The goose simply disappeared into the crow's beak and with another head bob joined the duck.

As the giant crow looked around the park so did Jeremy. This had been just too good of a show but he also didn't want to be discovered. He removed the crow's extra mass leaving it at just a bit bigger than its original size as compensation. When it was done he carefully looked around the park once again and was satisfied no one else had seen the show.

He got up on his bike and started peddling around. He watched the crow for a while but soon lost track of it. He was sure what he planned next was safe. He stopped outside the public restroom and got off his bike.

He was certain he could safely do for himself what he'd just done to the crow. He could add mostly muscle instead of the wide spectrum of mass he'd been doing. He was ready and more than willing to experiment on himself once again.

Stepping into the males restroom he made sure he was alone before proceeding. He stood in front of the mirror. He didn't need to remove any of his clothes but he pulled off his shirt anyway. Tucking the bottom edge of his shirt into the back of his shorts to hang behind him he readied PATOMES. Activating the program he watched as his body shrank. Removing just ten percent of his own mass dropped his height a couple inches.

With a smile he activated PATOMES again and watched as he grew. As the lost inches came back they came back as muscle. His chest showed the beginning signs of strength he'd not had before. Even his belly was hinting at signs of muscle through his thick fur. His arms showed a bit of the new muscles having grown just a little thicker than before. It again wasn't the changes he'd expected.

Watching as he posed and flexed in the mirror he decided it wasn't enough, he could barely tell the difference. He adjusted the ratio in PATOMES and subtracted mass from himself again. This time he left most of the additional muscle and removed fifteen percent of his mass. He lost more height than he'd expected dropping twice the amount as when he'd subtracted ten percent. He set the replacement percentage of muscle high once again and activated the return to his previous mass.

The difference this time was stunning. In five seconds his height was back but with far more muscle than before. He stared at his own chest not believing how much stronger he looked. Pulling his eyes away he saw his arms were now thick with muscle. His thickened muscles actually defined the shapes of his arms now, swelling out with new strength in all the right places. His belly now had clear ridges from his abdominal muscles. His shoulders had even become rounder and widened. His legs too looked thicker and stronger.

He wanted it to be noticed. He wanted his brothers to act like small birds around his giant crow. He also didn't want the attention such a rapid change would attract. This was far too much all at once. His apprehension at having someone else see his experiment with the crow also gave him enough pause to go slow. He'd have plenty of time to get larger and stronger. With a sigh he activated the undo function and watched as he returned to a more conceivable size.

Jeremy assessed his still larger muscles now that he was back to the first change. While not as obvious he felt this might be noticeable to anyone that payed close attention to him. He was happy with the results and willing to take the risk of having a little undue attention on him. As he saved the changes he guessed this would likely go unnoticed. Most of his family and friends hardly gave him a second look. Jeremy had to admit he was really no better in noticing other people. He would rely on that to help hide the changes he'd made.

He stood and posed for several minutes. He was now obviously larger, stronger. As he flexed and examined his more muscular body he imagined he may even be close to being a match for his brother Eric strength wise. Putting his shirt back on he found it tight enough to begin pressing his fur down in areas and hinting at the increased muscle mass underneath.

He smiled as he left the restroom. He'd outgrow all his older brothers soon enough.

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I didn't go into much detail about the school in this chapter. I don't intend to have everyone guessing on something that really isn't all that important to the story development. So, two things I want to highlight.

The academy; it's a bit different than what we have here in most of the US. The idea with it here as that its mostly self paced to an extent. Each subject is also split into modules that last anywhere from two to four months of expected study. There will be hints throughout the early parts of the story with more details but for this I think it'd be worthwhile to explain just a bit.

The area around the academy; it was mentioned in only one line so far but it is an important distinction here. I'm just going to give a bit from my notes as explanation.

School is a privilege. School is in session all year long and paid for the full year of study in advance. As so few people as a percentage are actually enrolled there are no busses. Families move close to the school raising housing costs and in the family's case forcing sacrifices. Those that don't go to school usually get jobs at age thirteen and can legally be kicked out of the house.

So, yeah, schooling is a seen a bit differently in this story. Again, I'm also open to questions. If not I'll just keep rambling on at the end here, so come on, ask.