

Back again? Well, take a seat, we've got a funny this week. No not that kind of fun, at least not yet so cool your jets there turbo. Anyway, for those of you hear for the actual story, thanks for coming. This week begins a bit of a turning point for Jeremy. Enjoy.

Jeremy finished his homework early and headed off to his meeting with Marcus well before time. They spent several hours going over the economics module the lion was having trouble with. Jeremy was a bit taken aback at how difficult it was for him to explain something he could understand almost intuitively. The task was forcing him to slowly work through his own way of thinking. It was clearly as strenuous to him as it was to Marcus.

After three hours Marcus called for a halt, claiming a serious headache. Jeremy was ready for a rest himself. He felt Marcus was finally beginning to understand the underlying theory. He suggested taking the topic up after classes on Monday. The lion readily agreed to meet him in the library for the rest of the week until his final.

Jeremy had the rest of the weekend for the feeling that had arisen in his head at the task of explaining the theories to Marcus. While not painful his head felt as though the internal pressure had built up from the extra activity in tutoring the lion. His not-quite-headache took only the time it took for Jeremy to ride home to fade to the background.

On the ride home his mind was also on an association that his tutoring had caused. Putting his bike away in the garage he roamed about the house checking on everyone's location and activity. He wanted to check on something without anyone noticing. Standing in the kitchen he stared at the door frame where their father had been marking their heights each of their birthdays.

He'd been dating the marks, so what Jeremy was looking for had been concealed. Making the necessary adjustments he looked at the marks relative to each of his brother's ages. He'd never really noticed the significance of the marks being bunched together. Jeremy saw that even at age six he was already beginning to outpace his brothers. He also noted that after he obtained PATOMES he'd taken a huge leap ahead.

Opening the program he checked over his history. Once he'd stopped using it as a cheat tool his growth had slowed. He sat at the table and turned his new theory over in his head. Using a quick calculation based on the marks on the door frame and his history he charted his growth curve. At once he saw that once he's stopped using PATOMES his actual growth curve aimed at rejoined what could be considered an expected gradient. His cheating had resulted in slower recent growth, until his height met with the expected curve once again. Whats more he was now at the point on his mental chart where he could expect his growth to pick up once again.

Considering his options Jeremy smiled. Using PATOMES again didn't feel so much like cheating than using a survival tool. He went through the still familiar command paths to add a hundred units to himself. He considered adding to himself every week again. For now, he'd add just a little, until it became known he was on his way to being a dominant alpha. He was sure of that now. Once his status was well known he could add as much as he needed to shorten the time of his vulnerability. Then no one would think twice of such rapid growth.

He went about the remainder of the weekend in good cheer. Even that week at school brightened his outlook. As he'd predicted, his tutoring Marcus was noticed and became widely known. By Thursday a few more started stopping in at the library after classes to ask him a few question about subjects he'd

already taken. Marcus had kept his word too, his status had remained a secret. He smiled at the thought that Marcus had helped him more than he could ever know.

Friday came and Jeremy stopped by the library to start his homework for the hour he'd spent tutoring through the week. A few minutes after classes had ended three new people came into the library to ask for his help. They were all smaller specie like himself but it showed that word was getting around. He answered questions for about five minutes before Marcus joined them. By the feline smile on his face Jeremy guessed he had done well. He politely waited for an opening to ask Jeremy a few questions about a history module he'd taken.

The next week the attendance for his little study group grew. By that Friday more than a dozen more people had shown up. Granted, they didn't stop in every day, but they were becoming regulars. Another large carnivore had even stopped in on Thursday. Jeremy did his best not to give the wolf any special attention. He still spent half an hour with him going over the same module that had almost tripped Marcus up.

By then it had become easy for him to help people through whatever difficulty they were having. He understood better than ever how his mind bent itself around a puzzle and sought the solution. In just a few minutes of talking over a subject he had the feel for where they were missing whatever the goal of the module was. He never gave any answers, that would get them all expelled. He only coached them in finding their own way to the answer for themselves.

On Tuesday of the next week he received a notice to report to the deans office. He knew the test results were in. At the beginning of the waiting period he had worried, but now he was as certain of a positive result as he could be without already seeing them.

Jeremy slipped away to head to the administration building during his lunch break. He made his way to the deans office doing his best to be as inconspicuous as possible. He only had to wait for a minute before the dean's secretary asked him to go inside. The dean had a large manilla envelope on her desk. She had her paws on either side of it with her thumbs resting on the edges.

"Before we get to the point of our meeting today, I understand you've started a little after school study group."

Jeremy nodded. "Yes, ma'am. I'm being careful not to give any answers out. I'm just helping everyone with understanding the concepts."

"I am required to ask if you're asking for any kind of monetary compensation."

"No ma'am. It's free to all." Jeremy answered only then realizing he would have to make sure everyone understood that rule of the academy. He, like most, already knew of the rules regarding cheating. The issue of taking money for services inside the academy rarely came up.

She nodded in return and as she slid the envelope to Jeremy said "Very good. It is my duty to be certain that the rules are strictly observed, you understand."

"Yes, ma'am."

"So, as it is addressed to you personally its for you to open. Rules, you see." The badger finished with a smile.

Jeremy couldn't help but smile back at the unexpected humor. "Yes, ma'am. May I?"

"Yes, I expect I'm almost as eager to know the results as are you."

He stood and stepped to the edge of the desk. Keeping the envelope low he broke the seal and slid the papers out, orienting them sideways to allow the badger to read along he scanned it quickly. Both genetic markers for dominants were present in his sample, and active. He was officially recognized as a dominant alpha. He stared at the highlighted sections for several seconds before the dean stood.

"Allow me to be the first to congratulate you, Mister Dawn." She said, reaching her paw out.

Jeremy passed pads with her, an irrepressible smile on his face. "Thank you, Dean."

"The results are yours. We will be officially notified in due course. Do you still wish to keep the results secret?"

"Yes, ma'am. You understand my reasons?" Jeremy asked sobering at the question.

"Yes, I've been doing my own research. I must say, your strategy is rather clever. If there's anything you need from the academy, you have but to ask."

"Thank you ma'am. I should get back in circulation before I'm missed."

"Certainly, Mister Dawn. Have a great day, Sir." The dean finished with a slightly submissive nod.

"Thank you dean," Jeremy paused at the sudden thought of gathering allies. "I appreciate every consideration you've given me." He finished, nodding slightly while doing his best not to be overly submissive. He wanted to assert his new status, but carefully. He needed the dean's help, but also felt he might require more action from her than a simple request would supply. He was in new territory, groping blind in the unfamiliar. He would have to make every effort to keep every option open and seize every opportunity.

He had turned and was on his way to the door when she spoke. "I do have one question, Mister Dawn."

He stopped and turned, waiting.

"As to Hugo Winder presenting himself as a dominant?"

Jeremy had thought about the wolf and his situation. He felt the best strategy would be to allow him to maintain the facade. "He has his graduation finals coming up soon, does his not?"

"Yes, although he's begun representing himself with a status he does not deserve. It is not this institution's policy nor in the academy's best interest to allow this ruse to continue."

Jeremy frowned and stared at the floor in thought for a moment. Still looking at the floor he replied "I understand, do what you must." Looking back to the dean he added "Thank you for keeping this under cover for as long as you could."

He nodded to her and turned. He was disappointed that he was going to have his secret out early but the dean had a point he hadn't considered. In the dean's outer office he took the time to stuff the envelope in his backpack. Checking through a slightly open door to see the hallway was empty he left and made his way back toward his next module.

The rest of the week went by with Jeremy waiting for word to get out. It never happened. Instead, Hugo stopped being so aggressive and while not having been officially and publicly reprimanded

questions started to spread. Speculations were being floated that Hugo's dominant test came back negative. When Jeremy heard that he smiled at the dean's cleverness. He hadn't considered that option.

His study group continued. By the time Celebration Day break neared there were more than forty different students showing up whenever they needed help. The week before the break another student came in and approached Jeremy. Julian asked if she could also help field questions and help people study.

Jeremy instantly agreed. She'd actually waited for a time when he was on the side of the little cluster of five students currently working with Jeremy on their most troubling assignments. He made it a point to raise his voice slightly as to be overheard when making the point that it was an unofficial study group, and that anyone could attend and even participate in fielding questions. There was a brief moment of silence as the vixen smiled back at him.

When school started back up after the Celebration Day break there was a steady increase in the number of students coming to the library after classes. With word getting around that he'd also opened the session up to anyone with a desire to help there were also several more willing to act as tutors in attendance. Even though most of those filling the roles of tutors were older and in more advanced modules they still deferred to Jeremy as their leader.

He'd been using PATOMES again and appeared to be enjoying the start of another growth spurt. By the time he took his advancement finals he was just a few inches shorter than his father. It was by coincidence that Jeremy took his exams the same week Hugo took his graduation finals. It was viewed with widespread relief that the wolf would no longer be a student. Then word got around that the male had failed.

The laughs and chuckles died a nasty death when Hugo reappeared two weeks later. His was one of the few families wealthy enough to send him back to repeat his final year. While his former pack mates felt the injustice as much as anyone they fell back in with the wolf as though nothing had happened. As for Hugo, the failure and whatever family intrigue had gone on his attitude had undergone a dramatic change. Jeremy was at a safe distance when he saw for himself on the following Friday.

The wolf had been strutting down the hallway as usual when without even slowing he spread an arm out and elbowed a third year ferret in the back of the head. The ferret went down hard at the blow dropping his pack in the process. Jeremy made his way to the ferret but several others were closer and were already there helping Orontic to his feet. Jeremy had watched the wolf and knew there was more trouble ahead when he never looked back.

A few concerned questions and less than helpful advice later Oro was telling everyone he was fine. Jeremy walked away from the crowd still gathered in thought. Jeremy knew that with Hugo in the academy for another year there would be no way to avoid a confrontation. Knowing the male's reputation that meeting would only come at a place and time that the odds would be stacked so far in his favor there'd be no way for Jeremy to avoid it. He simply did not trust the overly aggressive and arrogant wolf with his life in such a situation. He had no choice but to take matters in his own paws first.

With PATOMES still open he decided to test the kernel of an idea. Bringing up Hugo's profile he idly watched as the wolf got further away from him. Jeremy kept the program open and tracking the wolf through two classes. By his lunch break the wolf had meandered to the opposite side of the campus.

Jeremy grabbed a quick bite and started stalking the male. With PATOMES able to track the wolf's location it was easy finding him. Jeremy came to within a couple dozen yards before ending the search. He could hear the wolf discussing something with several others. They were around the corner, loitering in a hallway. He turned and made his way back to his next module sure he could repeat the search when it was more convenient.

He spent the rest of the day in his usual routine, and even spent a little more time in the library after classes than normal. The entire time he was turning his plan over in his head. Testing for flaws and adjusting his strategy accordingly. By the time he peddled home he felt ready, at least intellectually.

Jeremy spent as much time he could on his homework. He anticipated not being in the mood for it the next day. Not after what he had planned.

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So last week I rambled on a bit about predation in Jeremy's world. It was actually in preparation for this and the next chapter, or two. So that ground being covered I really got nothing story wise. Instead I'm going to hit you with a shameless plug.

For those of you not racing for the exits I've opened a Patreon account. If you have a moment take a look, the links are somewhere on my page. The past chapters are open to the public. I'll open the current week's chapter to anyone with a Patreon account a day or two early as a bit of incentive to dip your toes in the waters. I'm thinking a lot of you have never taken a look at Patreon, I hadn't.

Its free to sign up for an account and take a look around. There are no obligations until you actually take the effort to make a pledge. My little bit of incentive, just saying it twice, is to open the week's chapter a bit early on Patreon to anyone with an account.