

Oh, did you lot like that one last week? Well, this week's isn't as intense, I'm going to tone it down a bit. Don't want you lot getting overstimulated on me. Hopefully this will be just as enjoyable.

The week after Jeremy's first time riding his father's motorcycle was when Sam was to move out. He would start at the new downtown office the next Monday. That Saturday afternoon he was packed up and had the rest of his belongings in the family vehicle and was about to make the last trip in the move. As Steven settled behind the wheel Jeremy saw Sam absently staring out the car window at nothing in particular. Again he brought his eyes up after a few moments and looked at Jeremy with a grim expression. He guessed his brother was still upset from the previous weekend when he saw Jeremy riding their father's bike.

Steven started the car and a few moments later pulled out of the driveway. Jeremy was surprised at the feeling welling up within him. He'd never thought the prospect of his older brother not being around to harass him would generate such an empty feeling.

Once they were out of sight Ian turned and went inside. Jeremy was about to follow him when he noticed their neighbor across the street staring at him. Niven stared for a moment longer before stepping back up on his bike and peddling off down the street. Jeremy thought the behavior a bit suspicious but then he'd seen all the tigers from across the street do the same thing from time to time.

He went inside and started on the rest of his homework. The house was quiet until their parents returned. Even then the atmosphere was subdued. With Sam out of the house there was less expense, but also it was one less income. Ian's part time job helped but the family budget was suffering a net loss. Things were going to be tight again for a while. For Jeremy it couldn't come at a worse time. He had grown to the point where he was wearing some of his father's older clothes.

Throughout the morning on Monday Jeremy noticed several odd looks in his direction. During lunch he was sitting at an empty table when Marcus also appeared and sat next to him. The lion said his hellos and started eating leaving Jeremy to enjoy his own meal. Soon the male leaned across the table and in a low voice asked "Have you heard the latest rumor?"

"No." Jeremy replied. There was always something going around. Rumors were like illnesses, no one could avoid contact.

"People are speculating that there really is a dominant at the academy."

Jeremy swallowed what he'd been chewing and stared at the lion.

Marcus nodded. "They think its you." he confirmed and leaned back. The lion looked around with a slight smile.

Jeremy followed his gaze and saw nearly half of those sitting around them were watching and listening to the conversation. Looking back at Marcus he asked "Who else do they think is a dominant?"

He shook his head. "Just you."

Jeremy looked around again and sighed at the sight of almost everyone staring at their table. "So, who elected you to be the one?"

"What?"

"How is it you're the one to bring this up, and with everyone around us watching?"

"Honest, I never said anything. I just told a few people I'd be willing to bring it up with you."

Jeremy tried to ignore the eyes he knew were still on him. With Hugo out of the picture things weren't as dangerous, but only by a little. The wolf had been trouble largely because he was known to actively target those smaller than him. Jeremy also knew he had secretly been a predator and had even led others to do the same. Looking up and around he knew he'd be a target to anyone that wanted to take Hugo's place.

"So?" Marcus prompted.

"So, it wasn't going to stay a secret forever." Jeremy said softly, hoping he could have had just a little more time without everyone knowing. Until then the only people that knew were his parents, the dean and Marcus.

The lion started laughing. He looked around nodding. Jeremy looked around seeing everyone around them either smiling or grinning openly. He scanned the group around them. There was only three students from large carnivore specie. The thought struck him that very few of the students at the academy were actually from the larger carnivore specie.

Those who would actively prey on the smaller were for the moment without any leadership. On the other paw those that were always the targets of such activity had never had anyone they could look to as a leader. He'd have to think about the idea forming in his head before acting, but he was seriously considering stepping into a new role.

It took several minutes for the stares to subside. Marcus finished his meal well before Jeremy. The lion waited for him to finish and walked with him toward the exit. He was watching the reactions around them. It was clear word of his confirmed status had already started spreading. Everyone was glancing their way at least once. He and Marcus had chatted but it had been about inconsequential things. Jeremy still had several minutes before his next module.

"Marcus," Jeremy started, pausing just outside the door he continued in a normal voice knowing it would still be overheard "I appreciate keeping it to yourself for as long as you could." He held out his paw to the lion. As they touched pads several of those close stopped and noticed. Marcus was beaming in the unexpected praise. "Talk to you later." Jeremy finished.

"See you later, Jeremy." Marcus replied.

His two brothers were beyond upset. They hadn't realized, nor been told about his status as a dominant. Now that the news was out they didn't take Jeremy's status well. They also took their exclusion to the circle of those who knew as an insult. Jeremy didn't care enough to ask which bothered them more. They knew better than to challenge him now that he was even larger than when he'd so easily beaten Eric.

The after class tutoring hour as it had come to be known continued and expanded only a little more. They were now filling up half the tables in the library. There were now also a dozen students fielding questions and giving help in modules they'd already taken. Jeremy began taking extra time in talking to those that came. He was starting to gage the attitudes of people from the larger specie on predation.

About a month after he moved out Sam came to visit for a weekend. Jeremy was surprised by the change in his attitude toward him. Sam was even friendly with him for the first time in years. It was a good weekend with his brother back, even if it was only for a day.

Another month saw Jeremy spend time talking with as many of the larger and midlevel specie he felt comfortable approaching. Jeremy was at that point almost ready to implement his plan at the academy. He was almost as tall as his father and now gaining fast. In comparing himself to his father he guessed he was far stronger. His muscle mass was clearly more developed than the average adult weasel. People at the academy were already beginning to show signs of submission around him.

He first discussed his idea with the dean. She was receptive to the idea but also cautioned him that the rules of the academy would be adjudicated evenly should anything happen. Satisfied with the provisional backing of the administration he was ready.

Jeremy started with Marcus. The lion readily agreed to the idea as Jeremy was sure he would. From there Jeremy approached a few more and after only a few days he could count over a dozen allies. Together they would stop any incident of bullying or intimidation they saw. Those agreeable would also enlist others, with the same caution that the dean had given Jeremy. They could not physically accost anyone but they could still do their best to stop any incident they came across up to that point.

Jeremy hoped it would be enough. No one had yet become the acknowledged replacement for Hugo. The few eager for Hugo's vacated throne were for the moment too busy jostling amongst themselves for that position. If Jeremy's little coterie spread fast enough they'd not have the power to intimidate or prey on others Hugo once wielded.

As the weeks of enlarging his circle of allies turned to months Jeremy began to realize just how much he'd changed the atmosphere of the academy. The power struggle for Hugo's title ended without a clear winner. There had been a few disrupted incidents of bullying in the first weeks but after a month they no longer happened. Everyone regarded him as a dominant, even those that had been vying for the predator's leadership position he'd secretly vacated. In enlisting such a large number of others to end the bullying it was widely known he'd not tolerate the behavior.

Jeremy now felt he had a clear path to survive long enough to become an adult dominant. He was glad it had ended without the open fighting he'd feared. He turned his full attention to his upcoming advancement exams. The dean even called him to her office to ensure he wanted to take them so soon. He had raced through a year's worth of coursework in under ten months.

He took the exams well ahead of schedule anyway. It was a gamble but he was already beginning to feel the restrictions school was placing on him. He had closed the gap with his father's height to less than an inch. The weekend he waited for the results of his exams his father took him for his drivers exam. He passed easily. Studying for the drivers test was far simpler than his school work. He could now drive the motorcycle any time he wished. He had to buy his own fuel though, so he really couldn't. His scores on his advancements stunned even him. He'd managed a ninety-sixth percentile.

Eric was beside himself at the reality of his younger brother in the same year of study. Their parents brought even more pressure to bear on him to improve his marks. Unable to actively challenge Jeremy he became more subtle. Eric began subversively making the chores Jeremy was assigned that much harder. If it was Jeremy's turn to mow the lawn he'd have to take extra care not to run over small rocks concealed the grass. When it was his turn to clean the bathrooms shared by his brothers there would be a larger amount of dried toothpaste and litter to deal with. All of it traceable to Eric, but of such minor offenses that Jeremy felt it wasn't worth bringing up.

His parents weren't pressuring him to get a job, but he wanted one. It would be the only way he'd likely get more than just the few new clothes his parents could afford. Three pairs of shirts and two shorts were all they felt affordable considering how fast he was now growing. As bad as it felt being limited to so few things he saw their point. It took three weeks of searching but he finally landed a part time job.

It was a simple job of cleaning businesses that were closed overnight, and a few that were open twenty four hours. It wasn't hard work, it was more an extension of his chores at home but it brought money in. Jeremy was even allowed to keep most of what he made. It was the same arrangement that Sam and Ian had to endure but since the precedent had been set he didn't argue. It infuriated Eric beyond measure. He was now pressured even more to also get a part time job on top of his school work.

Things slid into a routine. Jeremy still attended the tutoring sessions after classes, he even got the occasional hour of study in for himself. At home he studied until dinner then left for his part time job. He often got home after midnight but the cut into his hours of sleep didn't bother him for long. The extra money helped. After a large cut of his first paycheck going to his parents, again the 'rent' arrangement his second paycheck was mostly his.

With his second check he got himself a few new clothes. The rest he reserved for fuel. He found the motorcycle to be as much of a thrill as his father did. The next month he started saving with the intention of eventually buying his own bike. It even became a dream of his to ride next to his father on his own bike. He kept that to himself. He told himself it wasn't from any superstition, but he really had no other excuse.

As things settled in for Jeremy his older brother Ian faced his graduation finals. Ian had always been able to bring in above average marks but as anyone would be, he was still nervous about his finals. As angry and rebellious of Jeremy's dominance Eric was, Ian had instead accepted his status after only a few weeks of aggravation. Their relationship had normalized to the point of neutrality.

The weekend before Ian's final exam Jeremy was studying at the table across from Ian and noticed how tense his brother had gotten. He got up and went around the table and stood behind him. Ian had not noticed his movement and jumped slightly at the touch on his shoulders. He turned his head and looked back at his larger brother, a bit of concern on his face.

"I can't help you with the subject material but I can help with the stress. Just relax." Jeremy said. He started massaging the muscles of Ian's shoulders. He slowly relaxed into the slow kneading of Jeremy's paws working on his tight muscles. It had been years since the last time they had play fought and even then Ian had been the larger brother. Now Jeremy was coming to realize just how long it had been since they'd shared any physical contact. His brother's shoulder muscles were tensed hard enough to feel like stone.

Jeremy worked the tension out of his brother's shoulders and moved down to his upper back. When that eased he moved back up to his neck and pressed the tension from the back of his neck with just his thumbs. After about fifteen minutes in which Ian had just sat and enjoyed the experience Jeremy felt his brother was relaxed enough to call the job finished.

With a final pat on the shoulder Jeremy said "There, that should do."

Ian looked up at him as he walked back around the table. "Thanks. I needed the break."

"You're welcome." Jeremy replied with a pleased smile. It had felt good to be able to help his brother by doing something so simple. It was even better that Ian had appreciated the effort.

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So last week I went on about how comparatively weak the governments and police are from what we know. That wasn't meant to imply that they were ineffective.

The distinction I made was in people ensuring that the governments wouldn't have the power to send them off to war so easily. Once that commitment is made they'd have to step up and fill the power vacuum. The result of this would tend to be the occasional act of 'self policing'.

While this would seem to slide into chaos to those of us living in a world where you feel like you can call the police for almost anything, in Jeremy's world they would have struck a different balance. The police and justice system still have a place and the power to enforce the laws. At the same time, the population would also have the knowledge that the occasional act of 'self policing' happens with very little consequences if within accepted bounds.

Again, a balance. Very few are willing to step out of line and face the possibility of waking up being scraped up off the sidewalk by the police. This would also not be considered predation. Maybe more on that next week.