

Not Exactly As Expected

So we're finally getting to some interesting parts. I'll just get out of the way and let you get to the story for this week.

The next school day seemed to take forever to end. Jeremy was eager to talk with Zane again. He'd thought a great deal on what they'd discussed. In just a short time he had come to think the mature dominant pangolin had much to offer. Aside from liking the male, he felt a sudden need for Zane to respect him as another dominant. He wondered if it was a normal reaction.

As he entered the meeting room Jeremy saw the male pangolin reading something. Zane looked up with a surprised look on his face as Jeremy sat on the opposite side of the table.

"Have you seen your own transcripts?"

"No. Was there any reason to?"

"Well, no, not normally. Yours are, well you should see for yourself." He said setting them on the table and sliding them across.

Jeremy picked the file up, noticing the words 'Certified Copy' printed across the top he started reading. He was already familiar with most of his marks through the years. It was the comments of his instructors that proved illuminating. Starting from his first year at the academy he was singled out as not only a fast learner but also unusually clever. The comments were mostly positive. A few were neutral, and only one of a negative nature. Jeremy remembered that instructor clearly.

The rat had exhibited an attitude against not only Jeremy but anyone from a carnivorous specie the entire time he was in his module. Everyone had the same opinion of the instructor. Unfortunately he led a mandatory module that was also a prerequisite for several subsequent modules. His behavior was at all times subtle enough not to violate any of the academy rules while also taunting those he was prejudiced against to make that one step over the line. Due to his well known reputation most of the first and second year students that were ahead of schedule were forced to take his module to get through it. Jeremy had taken an intense dislike of the rat. From his comments on his transcripts it had been mutual. Jeremy had shrugged the rat's attitude off as he was a well known speciest.

He glanced up but Zane was clearly allowing him the time to read his entire transcript. From the moment it became known he was becoming a dominant his instructors made what they called due considerations. Those that bothered to mention it noted that they were taking pains to avoid any hint of favoritism. Most of them admitted to pushing him harder, even though they also stated he had never asked for any consideration due to his status. His marks were still at the top of the spectrum.

Jeremy finished reading and looked up at Zane apologetically. "In my defense Mister Gerald is a speciest. He's well known for docking students of non prey specie for the slightest infraction."

"What? No, never mind a single module." He replied.

Jeremy looked down at his marks for a second and looking back at the dominant asked "I do my best. I hope my marks are good enough for a dominant."

Zane chuckled. "I think you underestimate yourself. Anyone, dominant or not should be proud of marks like that."

"Oh, thank you." Jeremy said, not sure of anything else to say. While his parents were currently focusing most of their attention on Eric they were always pressuring Jeremy to do better, just not as harshly.

The pangolin stared, clearly confused at the response. "Well, anyway, your marks are impressive, for anyone. There's no special intelligence associated with being a dominant. You've got high marks simply because you're an unusually smart kid."

Jeremy smiled and thanked the pangolin again. He asked about the promise from the day before. Zane explained that dominants inherently exuded a different set of pheromones. Part of any training would entail him learning to control and even the use of his body's pheromones for any situation. The simplest example was what had come to be called by everyone as the greeting of equals among dominants.

"So, it really isn't so much about making eye contact, but being able to?"

"Exactly. Only fellow dominants have the ability to ignore the instinctual submissive response our pheromones cause."

Jeremy was still asking questions when the half hour was up. He paused wanting to continue but stood reluctantly holding his arm out for their mutual salute. As he did he got the impression that Zane was actually willing to continue. Still, he did not want to take up his potential mentor's time. Respect had been a large part of their discussion. He also didn't want to miss the tutoring hour.

The pangolin released Jeremy's arm and said "I've mentioned before the designated dominant typically only comes once or twice at most, by that time both parties know whether there would be any call for further discussion. I think I'll be here all week."

"I appreciate that, thank you." Jeremy said with a smile.

The rest of the week went smoothly. Zane explained a few more of the dominant abilities without actually guiding Jeremy through the learning process. He explained that it was for the mentor to accomplish, as soon as Jeremy had one. That Friday just before the half hour was up Zane offered Jeremy his phone number. He furthered that he was leaning toward offering his time as a mentor to Jeremy.

He paused as Jeremy stared at him and added "You understand, its an important decision not to be taken lightly by either of us. So, take a week or two to think on it. Also, it might help to talk with a few other dominants before choosing anyone."

"I understand, sir." Jeremy said. He was pleased just to have the pangolin's number. It was a start, and while he liked and respected the male he too wasn't sure if he wouldn't find a more suitable mentor. Then again Zane had said at the beginning it wasn't a bad idea to have more than one mentor.

Jeremy thought about Zane through most of the weekend. As the meeting with the next dominant mentor prospect neared he felt his anxiety level increase. Knocking on the door and entering Jeremy paused at the door, closing it behind himself.

This week a meerkat was waiting. He stood as Jeremy came in and introduced himself as Morgan Locke. They shared a gesture of equals even though the large meerkat was a foot taller than the weasel. Jeremy sat across from the male and waited for him to start.

"So, Jeremy, to begin I'd like to know if you have any questions." He asked as he swiveled the chair slightly side to side. The behavior reminded him of Zane only slightly.

"Yes, actually. Do you have a mentor yourself?"

"I have three actually. Francis Oman, he's a wolf. Ken Middleton, a rat and Jeffry Loomis an otter. I understand I am scheduled a bit early in the process but have you decided on any mentors for yourself yet?" Locke finished. His voice flat and barely held any emotion.

"Nothing definite so far. I'm almost certain I want to ask Zane Rook if he'd mentor me."

He nodded and replied "Yes, I know of Mister Rook. I know he advises that it's never a bad idea to have more than one mentor. As you now know I agree with that advice." The way he's stated his opinion Jeremy felt it had been meant as a slight even though the meerkat's voice had almost no inflection.

Jeremy had a sudden question arise in his mind and prefaced with "Now that you mention their names I confess I've never heard of any of your mentors. It makes me wonder just how many dominants there are."

Locke answered "From what I understand dominants seem to appear at the rate of one for just about every million of the population, normally. There are more than five million people living in the city, and yet York has far more than that due to certain factors. As it is, here in the city we account for about one to every forty to a fifty thousand, so there are going to be more than a few you've likely never heard of."

"I meant no offense, I was--"

"None taken." the meerkat said. "It's a decent question to ask."

The way he'd responded made Jeremy wonder if it had been meant sarcastically. It had been the first time the meerkat had added any inflection to his voice. Jeremy was beginning to get annoyed by the 'kat. His manner and tone had from the start been one of slight condescension. He was becoming rapidly disinterested with the male. He was glad Zane had made sure he understood he didn't have any other responsibility other than to meet the prospective mentor on each Monday.

"Okay. So, how many dominants are you mentoring?"

"None."

"None? You haven't met anyone yet that you've connected with enough to mentor?"

"I haven't met anyone I thought had enough merit to consider mentoring." He corrected.

Jeremy was ready to get up and walk out but instead decided to continue just for informational purposes.

"Could you explain that?"

"For starters, someone whom shows proper deference to their superiors. Also one should show proper manners when addressing an elder dominant."

Jeremy smiled. "That scratches the next question I had."

"Good. What other questions do you have prepared?"

"Is this the first time you've done this?"

"Yes, but what does that matter?"

"It shows," he answered as he stood watching the meerkat's surprise. He was pleased at the reaction.

"What? You're leaving?"

"I don't like wasting time, mine or any one else's." Jeremy stated as he shouldered his backpack.

"But we've barely started."

"Yes, yes." Jeremy replied doing his best to match the meerkat's tone. "And yet, I've already decided not to continue."

He didn't bother to go back to the meeting room the rest of the week. Jeremy spent the extra time in the library. The next Monday Jeremy sat with a beaver dominant that by the end of the time actually stated he'd not be interested in mentoring Jeremy. He took no offense as he was coming to the same conclusion. They did part ways amicably, as compared to the meerkat from the previous week.

Ian had been unexpectedly disappointed in his relationship and was moping around the house when not at work. They had been only months away from their marriage, so it was a hard blow to his brother. Steven and Elisa were doing the best they could in consoling him, but they also gave him the space he needed to lick his wounds. Jeremy thought his parents were starting to get out of their depth with their sons becoming adults.

They had also begun pressuring Jeremy about his job. Their point was that his position as a personal trainer at a gym a waste of his potential. The fact that he enjoyed the work mattered little to them. It didn't make it any easier defending his job when he wasn't making that much money at it.

The next few weeks of Individual Studies also went poorly for Jeremy. Three dominants in a row proved to be uninterested in mentoring him. He was able to shrug it off. The meetings with mature dominants was also having another effect on him. He was already large for a weasel but they were far larger than even the larger specie at the academy. His father was tall for a weasel and yet Jeremy now stood four inches taller than him. He was at the point where it took only a glance to suspect he was a dominant. Weasels were simply not normally the size Jeremy was becoming. To sit talking with someone the size of a mature dominant humbled him.

He had maintained contact with Zane Rook and was even getting the occasional piece of advice from the pangolin. His job at the gym was finally turning around and he had earned his certification as a trainer. He was now able to have clients of his own and his income had begun to improve from the change. It helped that he was obviously fit and much larger than a normal weasel. A few of his clients had even admitted that they wanted the status of being trained by a dominant.

At first he was pleased but it was after a time beginning to feel a little put off by their lack of effort. He had expected the same attitude as those that came to the tutoring hour. Jeremy now had more than a few clients that when coached to try harder simply smiled back and ignored him or even went so far as to laugh him off. They of course knew he was still not yet a full adult and subtly made sure to take advantage of it as well. It was beginning to frustrate him. His training schedule seemed to have begun to

fill up with those that lacked the motivation to actually put full effort into the training. He was going to have to come up with something soon or he'd be training uncooperative clients all day long.

His brother was nearing completion of his current year of study and had his advancement exams scheduled. As a result he spent more time at home studying. For all the difficulty he was having in his school work Eric was finally having some success in another area. He was catching up to their father in height and stood just two inches shorter. His parents were at least understanding of his need for study and barely interfered. Jeremy wondered if his increasing stature had anything to do with their parent's change in attitude.

It was Monday of the same week Eric had his advancement finals that gave Jeremy the help he needed. He knocked and entered the meeting room as always but then he stopped at the sight of the tiger standing up from the conference table. For the second it took for the feline to stand Jeremy stared despite himself. The ceilings were all at ten feet high throughout the school with lights that hung down only a foot. This tiger's ears could almost brush against the lights. Jeremy had never seen another so big.

The tiger smiled and said "Hello, I'm Terrance Greenwood. You must be Jeremy Dawn."

"Yes, sir." He replied. For the first time he felt fully intimidated by another dominant. Part of him realized this was what it was going to be like for normal people around him in time.

The rumbling laugh of the tiger filled the room. "Come on over here, I won't bite."

Jeremy steeled himself and complied. He felt tested by stepping up to the enormous cat. He was proud of himself to be able to hold eye contact with the large male until he looked to set his pack down next to the chair. Looking back up he saw the cat was holding out his paw in the gesture of equals.

Jeremy took hold of the forearm of the tiger even as the gesture was returned. He couldn't help but stare at the grip. The cat's arm was huge. Jeremy's fingers didn't even wrap half way around his thickly muscled arm. The tiger's fingers had little trouble meeting as they encircled Jeremy's arm. Releasing the grip he looked up at the tiger.

The rest of the cat was similarly muscled. He was a monster. Jeremy felt like a scared crow to the monster tiger before him. "Okay, I have to admit I'm more than a bit intimidated."

Greenwood's rumbling laugh echoed through the room again. "You do understand this is probably how others feel on meeting a mature dominant?"

"I had that thought, yes."

He nodded, still smiling pleasantly. "Good. Have a seat."

Jeremy sat in the chair at the side of the table. The tiger sat across from him and watched as Jeremy looked over the tiger. He couldn't help himself. He was massive on a scale he'd never seen. He would have to double his own muscle mass with PATOMES even after gaining enough height to compare to the massive feline. "Are you something beyond a dominant? If there is such thing?"

"To my knowledge, no. There's nothing above dominants. I am pretty much at the top of the range though."

"So, how do you handle the reactions?" Jeremy asked.

The tiger's eyes smiled a bit as he shrugged. "It goes with the territory. You'll get used to it. Perhaps even come to enjoy it after a time."

Jeremy's eyes dropped to the floor as he admitted "I'm not sure I want to enjoy that kind of reaction."

A deep throated "Hum." came from the feline. "Have you chosen a mentor yet?"

"I'm leaning toward asking Zane Rook to be my mentor."

The tiger's muzzle wrinkled in a smile. "That would be an excellent choice. He's my mentor as well."

"Oh really? Any advice you can give me?" Jeremy asked before realizing how idiotic it sounded.

"Just be yourself. Zee's actually told me a bit about you. He hasn't confided what he thinks about mentoring you, but I can say he is impressed with your maturity."

Jeremy blinked. "My maturity?" he asked not sure what had been meant.

Greenwood hummed again before elaborating. "He was impressed at how you handled yourself. Most dominants we meet in these settings are already too full of themselves that they don't listen to anything. He said you caught onto his first hint of warning right away."

"You mean that thing about half the young dominants not making it to maturity?"

"Well, I think he exaggerates that, but yes. You understand why that is?"

Jeremy thought before answering. He'd had time to think on the implications since the discussion with Rook. "I imagine its to keep something like the Continental Wars from happening again."

The tiger stared for a moment. "What makes you think that?"

"Well, in the history modules that covered that period they only explain what had happened back then. Its the one place where no one talks about the motivations behind what actions were taken. After talking with Mister Rook, I guess I just put three and three together. Or am I off target?"

"No. You have it exactly right. While we as dominants can do a lot behind the scenes, as it were, we decided to self regulate to make sure that didn't happen again."

Jeremy felt a bit of dread at his suspicions being confirmed. "So, you eliminate those who don't follow the rules?"

The tiger was genuinely shocked. "No. Lets just say, there are ways to prevent an undisciplined dominant from fully maturing. We don't, to put it as bluntly as it needs to be said, kill anyone." He put his massive paws palm down on the desk. "I may not be the right one to say this, considering how intimidating I can be but we have a huge responsibility. After the war the leaders and those remaining dominants that advised were left with little resources to rebuild. It was only with the cooperation of those leaders that dominants as a whole escaped the blame they had earned. Had we taken that well deserved blame back then, well, it would have been the end of any dominant having the chance of reaching maturity for who knows how long. We can't afford to make that mistake again. You understand?"

"I think so. I still have a few questions that would help clear things up, but yes." Jeremy was more than a bit relieved. He'd made certain connections from what information and hints he'd had, but it had also been the wrong conclusions.

The male nodded. "I'll help as much as I can, but history was never my strong point in school. Zane, or a few of the others would know more of that period better than I."

They spent the entire half hour discussing a bit of history and how the dominants of that time had come to build the system that was now in place. Jeremy felt a bit unsatisfied with a few of the answers the tiger gave but then he had admitted to not being a very good student.

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Now that you lot have had your fun, and I've introduced a few more points about dominants it may be time to remind everyone that I'm always open to questions. As it is I've got nothing prepared for this week, so questions would also help me out as to what to discuss.