

A Cause For Concern

So, if you lot think that's all there was going to be after a fight like that, well maybe you haven't been paying attention. Yeah, I know some of you have been good but not everyone bothers to comment. Anyway, lets get back to the story.

When Jeremy showered the next morning he had to take extra care. It took a good deal longer not only in cleaning the blood out of his fur but keeping too much water from getting on his wounds. The stings told him of his failure. He rewrapped his arm before he dressed. His reflection in the mirror shocked him. He understood why his mother had been so shaken. The fur around most of the scratches had been shaved to better treat them. There were a lot of bare patches that showed the numerous cuts he'd sustained.

Stepping back on school grounds Jeremy was gawked at was if he was some conquering hero. Nearly everyone was inclining their heads in a show of respect and looking at him in admiration and more than a little fear. He checked in to the administration building to find out if he would still be allowed to return. He needn't have worried. The videos taken by the spectators exonerated him to the point that the dean didn't even ask for his version.

He was walking toward his first module when he was stopped by a cougar. She wanted to sign the bandage on his arm.

"Why? Its just going to come off at the end of the day." Jeremy asked at the request.

"Everyone that was there are sorry for not helping. We just want to show our support."

He stared at the cat a few seconds before shrugging. As she was signing the edge of the cloth bandage another asked to also be allowed to give their signature. Jeremy was held up for several minutes as more asked for what seemed to be considered a privilege of signing his bandage. He spent the time in thought.

He knew why they had held back, but couldn't explain they had no reason to feel guilty. He looked at the signatures already on his arm. Looking back at the cougar still loitering at the edge of the group he opened PATOMES.

"Sheila, what's your family name?" he asked adding her and labeling her profile as she gave her last name. He added everyone that was signing his bandage. He didn't intend to do anything to them, he had decided to use PATOMES to help him remember names. If he was going to be the thrust into being the leader of anything he should at least try to remember the names of those who would support him.

His first module of the day started off slowly as even the instructor stared at him for a few seconds. While personally embarrassing the treatment reinforced his victory. He found it hard to pay attention. Only a little of that could be attributed to the painkillers. With Candy out for a while and her entire entourage expelled things could return to normal. But without the explanation he couldn't give Jeremy wondered if it really would.

Between modules Jeremy was again asked by several for the privilege of signing the bandage on his arm. At his lunch break Marcus found him and also signed his arm. The cheetah that had become one of the lion's friends was with him and also added his name. He already knew the cheetah's first name but even as he added Allen Alversten to PATOMES he knew it wasn't really necessary for him to remember the lion's best friend.

The cheetah stepped back and as Jeremy had noticed the pattern furthered his introduction. "I know you may not feel the need, but if there's anything you need from me you have only to ask."

"I appreciate that, thanks." There was something in the way the feline had spoke that made Jeremy wonder if he was offering something more. He didn't pursue the line of thought and let another fellow student add their signature and secretly gained their profile. By the end of his lunch break there wasn't any more room on his bandage.

He stopped at the meeting room but since he'd missed his Monday appointment there was no one waiting. Leaving the administrative block he walked slowly in thought on his way to the library. He started on his homework until people started coming in for the tutoring hour. His mind kept wandering away from his studies. With everyone behaving as though he were a true dominant he felt compelled to act accordingly. The trouble was he had no idea in what direction to lead.

Back home Jeremy called the gym and explained his absence the day before and apologized for having to be out until the doctor cleared him for a return to work. He found that his manager had already heard about the fight, and instead of terminating him was perfectly willing to wait until he could return. In the twenty four hours since his fight there was now a waiting list for his services. He could now pick and choose his clients and would now be free to turn down those that were less than motivated. They'd certainly wait for his return.

Ian got home from his job before their parents and bugged him to see his arm without the bandages. Jeremy was a bit surprised at his brother's reaction. He'd been neutral toward him for a while and the sudden interest was major change. Jeremy set aside the makings for dinner and unwrapped his arm and let Ian lightly touch the wounds.

"Damn, Jeremy, does it hurt much?"

"Only a little. The doctor gave me a prescription for the pain, but I'm not having to take as much as she recommended."

Ian stood next to him and looking over the rest of his exposed arm shook his head. "That's fucking amazing. Have you seen the video yet?"

"No." Jeremy said as his brother turned and made his way to the family computer. He was about to say he didn't really want to see the fight, that he'd been there but his brother had already started searching for it. Not wanting to offend his brother just when he was beginning to act positively around him again he walked over to stand behind him.

There were over a dozen versions of the fight posted online. Ian picked one and sat back out of the way so Jeremy could watch for himself. It started early, when he was still trying to talk his way out of the fight. Once the wolf started pulling at him Jeremy was surprised at his own speed. It had felt like the fight had taken minutes but it was down to the jaguar and him in a matter of seconds.

The part of the video after Addleson went feral and bit him was minutes long. Jeremy had not heard Candy order everyone to stay where they were, he had been too preoccupied. The video even caught her snarling at several students that had actually attempted to come to his aid. He was impressed that they had been able to make the attempt even against the onslaught of her projected pheromones.

Even though watching the fight made him a little queasy from remembering he felt better that several had actually tried to help him. The video ended just after he asked for someone to call the police. His back was to whomever had taken it but they listed themselves as smileyrabbit83.

Closing the browser Ian turned to him and remarked "Remind me not to ever try fucking with you." with a grin.

"Funny, but I don't think you're in any danger from me."

Ian joined him in making dinner, another indication that his attitude had changed. Jeremy hoped it wasn't from the fight. He'd take it, but he would prefer the change from something other than his beating a bunch of predators into submission. After dinner Jeremy was able to finish his homework and suddenly had extra time on his hands.

He came out to the living room and joined Ian and his parents as they watched a movie. He'd seen it before as they had but sat and watched just for something to do. He thought that with Ian warming toward him it would be worthwhile to make an equal effort. He didn't notice his attention drifting and was woken by his father after a second movie had ended.

Jeremy found himself apologizing again only to be cut off.

"Don't worry about it. After the past few days you've had maybe it would be a good idea to stay home for a day or two."

Jeremy looked around but Ian and his mother were out of the room. "I'm okay. Just the pain meds kicking me to the curb is all."

"Well, up to you, just don't overdo it." Steven said holding his paw out in an offer to help Jeremy up from the sofa.

Standing Jeremy gave in to a sudden impulse and hugged his father. Steven hugged him back and when he stepped back was smiling up at him. He didn't say anything, his face said enough for Jeremy.

"I think I'm done for the night. Good night Father."

"Good night, son." he replied before turning and headed for his bedroom.

Jeremy turned the television off and made his way to his room. Eric had come home while he'd napped and was already sleeping. He managed to slip into bed without waking him.

The next few days went by in the same manner. Each day he came to the academy with a fresh bandage and before the end of his lunch break it was covered with signatures. He was pleased to find he didn't need the help of PATOMES to remember most people's names.

A few days after the fight Eric announced he had gotten a job. Their parents were happy for all of twenty seconds, until he revealed it was at the same gym Jeremy worked. Eric had also taken a position as a trainee in the same program Jeremy had. While he argued with his father Jeremy reassessed his brother.

He'd not really noticed but Eric was only an inch shorter than their father. While Eric couldn't compare to his size, he had filled out and should he press the issue as he had with Jeremy, he might actually be a close match for their father. Jeremy stayed out of the argument even though he could guess Eric had intended this confrontation by applying for the job. He also wasn't about to leave the room and have Eric

try anything physical with heir father. It saddened and angered Jeremy that he no longer trusted his own brother.

The shouting ended just short of their father ordering Eric out of the house. In the end he left having made his stand and succeeded in further aggravating his father. Steven, with his temper still in high form stared at Jeremy a second before accusing "He did this because of you, you know."

"I'm sorry." Jeremy said. He didn't want to start anything with his father. The points he had made during his argument with Eric had almost convinced Jeremy to look for another job.

"No, I apologize, that was uncalled for." He said clearly calming himself.

After an awkward couple of seconds his father changed the subject. The rest of the night went smoother, but Jeremy still felt like he was on eggshells.

Saturday morning Alex was waiting for him at the club. Knowing Jeremy wasn't able to use his arm he instead had downloaded several videos of the fight. He sat down with Jeremy and critiqued his performance as they watched each version. At the end of an hour he suggested Jeremy was ready to join one of the regular sessions.

"I thought you were training me in private so as not to cause a disruption."

"That was more to asses your skill level. I'd place you in one of the advanced classes, but it would be a bit of a challenge for you at this point. That is after you've healed properly."

They discussed the classes and scheduling for a while. In the end Alex suggested Jeremy think about which direction to go until he was ready to restart the physical training. He left Elkins' club just a few minutes before it was to open. He was home before ten and with his homework already done had more time on his paws than he'd had in years. He would have liked to take a ride on his father's motorbike but the ride back from the self defense club had also caused his arm to start complaining.

With only a week left before Celebration Day he decided to walk to the nearest shopping center. His future income was questionable but he'd managed to save a small chunk of change. The family hadn't been able to really take part in Celebration Day festivities for years. With the final year of his and Eric's schooling already paid for Jeremy though it time to start buying each other gifts. They had always known the families around them had always participated in the tradition. It was perhaps finally their turn.

Jeremy spent several pleasant hours looking for gifts for the family. He saw several of his school mates and was able to remember their names without the help of PATOMES with all but two. He left for home just past two in the afternoon. The gifts he'd chosen for his family were small and easily fit in his backpack. He was pleased at the idea that they'd not know he had bought anything until Celebration Day.

Preoccupied with the idea of surprising his family he heard the footfall behind him only a half second before the blow to the back of his head.

* * * *

Yep, cliffhanger. Anyway, going to continue to hold off any comments for a while. Its a real life thing. I am still open to questions though.

Also going to remind you that I have a Patreon page up. I've got plenty of rewards set up and am even open to ideas as well. Just follow the link on my page.