

Its been a rough week so let just get to the story.

Dazed at the blow to his head Jeremy felt himself fall and land face first on the pavement.

He had been set upon while taking a shortcut down an alley. He'd taken the same shortcut dozens of times before. The area had always felt safe since it was so close to the academy. Lifting his nose off the pavement and turning his head to the left he opened PATOMES. He couldn't see his attacker on that side though.

His opposite side received a kick. "Not so tough now, are you fucker?" a voice taunted. It sounded familiar.

He was turning his head to the right as he felt a lance of fire dive into his side. His scream was cut short by a kick to the head.

"That's for Sam, you fuck." said another voice. The reference was enough for Jeremy to make the connection. He wasn't sure which attacker it had been that had just stabbed him. Some of them hadn't spoken before he'd knocked the shit out of them.

He reached along his flank and felt something warm and wet under his fingers. There seemed to be a distressingly large amount of blood coming from the knife wound. The leopard stepped into view and crouched down leering at him as he reached out for his arm. He took hold of Jeremy's forearm and pressed a thumb into the bandage forcing a scream of pain again.

Jeremy activated the command in PATOMES and rolled away from the cat to get a look at his other attacker. The otter was striding toward him with his knife still held at the ready. The grim expression was all Jeremy needed to know of his intent. He targeted him and activated the same command for him as well.

"What fuck?" the leopard inarticulately wondered.

The otter had stopped and was staring at his feline colleague. Jeremy was able to scan the alley. There was just the three of them. Jeremy remained as still as he could with the pain coursing through his body. He needed them to remain preoccupied with each other for a few more seconds.

Jeremy quickly scanned through his history in PATOMES. His last save and been just that morning. He was glad he'd kept the habit of checking his progress even though he wasn't playing with mass any more. The save before that was a week earlier. He activated the return to the latest save of his profile. In an instant the wracking pain in his side was gone and his growing headache had left. He rolled the rest of the way onto his back cautiously watching the knife wielding otter.

The otter had lost more than two thirds his height and was having a great deal of difficulty keeping his now oversized knife in his paw. Jeremy reached up and grasped the otter's forearm. Sitting up he used his good arm to take the knife from the rapidly shrinking otter.

Looking at both entrances of the alley he saw no one had come along, yet. Rushing to his feet Jeremy crossed to the nearest dumpster opening the lid. It was empty but for a few random bits of trash

that had no use for him. Looking around the alley he spotted a discarded soda cup. Picking up and pulling the cap and straw off he emptied it as he went back to where they'd ambushed him. He noted that there was still ice in the beverage.

The otter was still standing dumfounded and staring at him as he approached. Jeremy plucked up the inch long otter and dropped him into the cup. He looked for the leopard but didn't see him. Knowing time was running out Jeremy picked up the discarded clothes. Taking them to the dumpster he hid in the corner. He set the cup down and started picked through his attacker's clothes. The leopard had been almost the same size as he was, and had been wearing a loose fitting shirt.

He changed shirts and wrapped his blood stained shirt in with the remaining clothes of the leopard and otter. The rest of their clothes and personal effects he stuffed in his backpack. The shirt wasn't his style and fit even looser on him but it would have to do. With PATOMES he knew the leopard was still in the alley, but it wouldn't help locating the cat much beyond that. Leaving the otter's cup in the corner he stepped out and started looking for the leopard.

There was a large puddle of his blood left in the alley. The leopard had run through it in trying to escape. It took a while to follow the tiny leopard's tracks but Jeremy managed to catch the cat before anyone came into the alley. Dropping him in with the otter he recapped the cup and carried it as though still drinking from it. He walked from the alley perhaps ten minutes after he'd entered it.

He paused across the street and looked for anyone that may have been watching him. He made his way back home constantly checking behind for anyone following him. Jeremy took another short alley and dropped the leopard's and otter's things in a half full dumpster. He was able to find a plastic bottle more suited to holding live captives and transferred the leopard and otter to it.

Once home he snuck back inside and make his way to his bedroom. Eric was out of the house again giving Jeremy the opportunity to set his backpack next to his bed and head to the bathroom. He took a quick shower to clean the blood from his back fur. Dressed in fresh clothes he stuffed the borrowed shirt in his pack with the bottle containing his captives. He stopped in the kitchen and took a couple slices of bread and also stored them in his pack. On his way out his mother reminded him dinner was only hours away.

He peddled to the park and circled the small clearing he had used for his previous tests with PATOMES. He spent three circuits of the small out of the way clearing projecting as strongly as he could. He would rather not have anyone come in while he was engaged in what he had planned. Setting his bike against the back of the bench he pulled out the bottle that contained the otter and leopard.

Tilting the bottle Jeremy watching the pair of inch tall predators tumble out onto the seat planks. He crouched at the front staring down at them as they righted themselves and stood looking back at him. "You are only alive because I have a few questions I want to ask you. Answer honestly and you just might survive to see tomorrow."

The otter glared up and shouted "You can't get away with this."

"As opposed to you trying to kill me. You obviously thought you could get away with that." Jeremy accused.

"Fuck you."

Jeremy brought his paw in front of the otter and flicked him off the bench with a finger. Looking at the leopard he observed "There's always a lot of crows and other birds around this park. Trust me, they know how to hunt little vermin."

The leopard looked back to where the otter had disappeared into the several inch long tall grass. Looking back up at Jeremy he only stared, waiting.

"Why did you attack me?"

"To get back at you."

"For what?"

"Getting us expelled."

"You started that. I even tried to warn you that would happen. Still, it wasn't your fault, but you still fell in with Candy. How'd that happen anyway?"

"Don approached her when she transferred over to the academy."

"So, you were already a pack before she took control?"

The cat nodded.

"You were part of Hugo's pack?"

Again the feline nodded.

"Was it just the eight of you, or are there more?"

"It was just us eight left after Hugo and a few of the others disappeared."

"Who are the others?"

Jeremy listened as the leopard gave him the names of the rest of the predator pack. He'd known two of them by name already. They'd actually come to the tutoring hour a few times. He asked the cat where they lived, and after a few other questions knew where to find them. Once he was out of questions Jeremy stood in front of the bench looking down at the leopard.

Jeremy pulled the slices of bread out of his pack and climbed up on the bench. Placing his footpads on either side of the leopard he started ripping small pieces of bread off and tossing them to the birds. In minutes the bench was surrounded by crows and pigeons. He was surprised at how the two different specie fought with each other. The crows usually won, being the more aggressive of the two. Looking down at the leopard Jeremy saw he was watching. He was clearly terrified.

"What was your name?"

"Leo Brigham."

"Do you think your little friend is still alive out there?"

He looked to where the otter had disappeared and fell more than sat on his ass. He looked up and started pleading for his life. Jeremy sprinkled a few crumbs around his feet. He tossed the last of the bread out to the birds and watched as they devoured them. The leopard was watching too. He'd fallen silent.

He hopped down off the bench and got back on his bike. The crows and pigeons were keeping their distance as he did. The leopard saw his opportunity and took it. He was running as far from the bread crumbs Jeremy'd left on the bench as he could.

Jeremy backed away from the bench and stood watching. The leopard made it to the side of the bench where the planks were bolted down to the support. He dropped down in the gap between boards. Jeremy had to give him credit for thinking in a crisis. The crumbs were gone in under a minute. Most of the pigeons left in search of more easy meals but a few crows had spotted the leopard in his hiding place. Jeremy didn't see it but could guess one of the crows had managed to pluck the cat from his gap. The rest flew off after the first leaving the bench empty.

Just as he started heading home PATOMES opened with an alert.

[[SUBJECT LEOPARD 0129 NOT FOUND]]

From the alert he guessed the otter had found a hiding spot better than the leopard's and had survived.

The alert for the otter's end came in the middle of Jeremy's dinner. Jeremy was sure the leopard and otter would be missed. It didn't take much thinking to know he might even be one of those questioned about their disappearance. He would have to wait for an opportunity to take care of the rest of Candy's pack. For now they were safe, as long as they kept their distance.

The rest of the weekend went much quieter. Jeremy stayed at home the rest of the weekend even though he was more than a little bored with little to do. He decided to pick up one of Ian's books and started reading. His brother was into spy novels and had several laying around in almost all parts of the house. The one Jeremy had picked was at least interesting and took up most of the weekend.

On Monday he was back at the academy still getting the bandage on his arm filled with signatures. Jeremy thought more than half of the students had made their mark, and more were still waiting and hoping to do the same. He was surprised at a development between his third and forth modules.

Jeremy had turned a corner and stood in front of Candy Crowley. The bear had acquired a wheelchair. She took up almost half the hallway due to the need or more probably desire for a motorized chair. Jeremy assumed it was desired even though she looked capable of reaching the tops of the wheels to propel herself forward. As he watched her come toward him he found she hadn't changed her attitude.

"Fucking runt, what are you doing here?"

Jeremy stopped just short of replying that she had less right to be back than him. People had stopped to watch the interaction. Having made the resolution to be a better example of a dominant he stepped out of the way waiting for her to pass. As he waited he watched the female assessing her reaction.

In light of the recent attack he wanted to know if she had been involved in the leopard and otter stalking him. Judging by her reaction he tended to doubt she'd given them orders to track him. It must have been as the leopard had confessed. They'd taken action on their own when they'd seen him.

Candy made a few derogatory comments about him but he refused to take the bait. As soon as she was past him he turned and walked away, ignoring her. He'd been on alert for the possibility of her projecting but had detected nothing from her.

After he last module he went to his scheduled meeting with another potential mentor. Knocking and opening the door to the meeting room Jeremy found he had one more surprise for the day. The rabbit

that sat at the end of the conference table looked as though he might be close to eight foot tall. Dressed in a business suit Jeremy could still tell the rabbit was almost as muscled as Terrance Greenwood.

The male glanced at him as he entered and went back to his phone. "Afternoon, I'm Alexi Tansest."

"Jeremy Dawn, pleased meet you." He replied ready to accept the expected greeting. After a second it was clear the rabbit had no interest in greeting him. He pulled a chair out and sat waiting for the rabbit to finish his text message.

Several minutes went by as the rabbit continued texting and reading and only glanced up at Jeremy once in that time. Jeremy pushed back his chair and as he stood stated "Sorry to have wasted your time."

As he turned to the door the rabbit said "Thanks for your time."

Jeremy slowed and turned his head to glance at the rabbit but the male was clearly focused only on his phone. Closing the door behind himself he wondered why anyone would come to the meeting with so little interest in who they were to be meeting with.

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Nothing here either, other than a heads up. Have a little side story in the works thanks to one of my patrons. They earned a couple story cookies and has traded one in for a little surprise that all of you will enjoy as well. Will try to get it out soon. In the coming weeks I'll also share some of the topics from the short discussion we had that earned him his reward. So now that you know interesting comments get cookies there's no excuses for being silent.