

Looks like no one has read it, or if they did remembered it. I'm really not surprised, it is a fairly obscure book even if the author was famous. More on that later though, for now lets get to what you lot really came here for.

It was a few weeks after Jeremy's successful trip to the city that Eric's finals were scheduled. He didn't bother to take time off from work, and much to their father's discontent hardly studied.

Ian finally nailed down a date for his wedding. The ceremony was scheduled for almost a month after the next Celebration Day.

Jeremy let the gym know he'd be changing jobs soon after graduating. They did what they could to talk him out of leaving but he'd already made up his mind. His clients were also told over the course of the next week. Some chose to end their training on the spot. Jeremy was fine with their decision. It only left him with a bit more free time that he could use.

Eric took his finals and came in to work that evening smiling. As far as he was concerned he was now free. Jeremy overheard a comment that he didn't care whether he passed or failed. He already had a job that he considered a career. Jeremy kept an eye on him the rest of the night.

His brother had seemingly developed to become an alpha. He was a bit on the large side for a weasel just as their father. From Jeremy's perspective he was nowhere near large enough to match even an average specimen of the larger carnivore specie. Without Jeremy adding to him his growth had stalled. Not so surprisingly the stalled growth only caused Eric to work that much harder at getting stronger.

The next Monday Eric had gone full time and his schedule had adjusted so that he was just getting off when Jeremy was starting. He had to hear from Ian the next day that Eric had gotten home and announced that he'd failed his finals. He had also announced his intention of moving out as soon as his first check from being full time at the gym could pay his share of rent elsewhere.

The argument that followed ended just short of becoming another physical test of their father. They separated just short of blows leaving a silent vacuum in place. Jeremy could only shake his head at the change in his brother. Ian was of the same mind, Eric had changed almost to the point that they didn't know him any more.

Another unsteady week went by before Eric actually moved out. He didn't even bother letting his parents know where he was living, or who with. He'd confided to Ian that he wanted what he called a clean break. Ian only told Jeremy after securing a promise he in turn wouldn't pass the information on to their parents. It bothered him that they were being kept in the dark but he had given his word.

A few more weeks went by and Jeremy's finals were scheduled. His parents placed the house up for sale in response. There was no longer any need to stay in the area where housing prices were so inflated. They could easily afford a one bedroom apartment in the city and be much closer to each of their work places. Ian had anticipated the move and had been planning on moving in with his fiancé's family. Jeremy felt he was the only one that hadn't known they had been sleeping together for more than a year.

His job at the gym ended as planned so that he could spend the extra time studying. He'd have a gap in his income stream but he had enough in savings to cover the time between jobs. None of Sam's room mates were ready to leave, or be forced out, so Jeremy would only have to pay a fifth of the rent for the couch. The tutoring hour would be in good hands. There had been plenty of others willing come in for an

hour after their last module of the day and tutor for years. He made arrangements with Sahar to start his training with her after his exams.

The day of Jeremy's finals came and he felt good after finishing them. He'd have the results in a matter of days, but considering how well he'd done all through school he had no reason to expect any surprises. He would have to wait almost three weeks before the next graduation ceremony. It would be a simple matter of taking a day off for the ceremony.

The days after his finals were more hectic than he'd anticipated. He moved in with Sam and his other room mates. He'd have to live out of boxes for a while, but at least he was still with at least one family member. His commute was almost as short as the one he had to the academy.

His first few days at the new job was spent sitting with a small group of other new hires watching orientation videos and lectures. Sahar explained that they could get away with bending only so many rules to the point of breakage. Jeremy was forced to undergo the same week long orientation as everyone else. The following week he was to be teamed up with Sahar.

The next Monday he was given his company identification. Sahar also gave him a company phone and as they were actually consultants an expense card. The limit on the card was an amazing fifty thousand dollar limit for each week. Sahar explained they needed such a high limit to handle the occasional emergencies that came up. They would also have to account for every purchase.

The Personnel Resources representative had explained he was to shadow her for the next two to three months just getting a handle on the job requirements. She of course countermanded that. She'd let him follow and watch for a few days, then he was to take the lead and she would step in if she felt his advice would cause any problems. The first two days were spent mostly listening in to Sahar on the phone.

Jeremy had underestimated the true size of Jackson's empire. Jeremy had been hired into a small firm placed within the parent corporation. He was beginning to understand why they were considered consultants.

At first he thought no one was allowed to make the kind of decisions she made until Sahar corrected him. The solutions Sahar was coming up with seemed logical to anyone with common sense but at a corporate level they went against every rule and routine. It seemed odd to him but most simply followed orders even if they seemed foolish. Jeremy was finding that was the extent of the spread and scope of real common sense in the corporate world. He started noticing on the first day that most of the situations they were tasked with could be handled by the slight application of just a bit of brain power.

He'd grown up surrounded by those being educated and as a result many of his friends and peers had learned how to think for themselves to some extent. He was beginning to understand just how out of the normal that was in the real world beyond the shadow of the academy. He'd always noticed the difference in his own ability to think strategically compared to all his friends and even family. That was now coming in very handy in his new job.

On his second day Sahar took him to several satellite companies where small problems had cropped up. He was a little surprised at how easily she handled the situation. From the initial impression of the job it was more a matter of letting the people involved talk all they wanted. He followed along and by the end of the day felt he had a grasp on the basic idea.

Jeremy's third day she pushed him to take the lead as promised. She even made him drive the company car, an ominous large black SUV. He was tense as they drove the two hours out to the first site they were to visit that day. The monotony of the drive was broken up by several phone calls where he was tasked to make the decision others were either afraid to make or simply hadn't thought things

through. Once on site he followed Sahar's example and asked questions until he had an idea of how to proceed. With a few calls to distributors the proper equipment they needed was on the way.

On the drive back he commented on his impressions thus far. Sahar stared at him for a few seconds before nodding and saying "That is the majority of this job, yes. Maybe as much as ninety five percent of it. Pretty soon you'll get a real call. That's when we'll know if you can handle this or not."

He nodded at her assessment understanding the test of his abilities would come eventually. Even though everything in his life had been turned upside down and new, he was liking the challenge. He felt like he was being stretched to new limits. Sleeping on the couch the first night had left him stiff and tight in a couple joints. He now slept on the floor instead, it was actually more comfortable than the ancient relic Sam and his roommates called a couch.

The oddest aspect of his job he had to adjust to was working with Sahar. She was half his height and probably a quarter of his mass. He'd refrained from adding her to PATOMES out of respect. Still, spending eight or more hours a day with someone half his height was forcing him to realize just how large he was becoming. Just shy of six feet Jeremy was clearly on his way to becoming a dominant. Sahar had never even brought it up, she'd seemed to accept it.

The rest of the week was much the same giving Jeremy time ease into his new role. Just before he left early for his graduation ceremony Sahar told him it would likely be his last weekend without being 'on call'. As she described it he would have to carry the company phone at all times and respond to any emergencies. After a moment of thought he asked "Is that the kind of emergency that's going to be the test of whether I'm up for this?"

"Possibly." She answered. Looking at him she continued "Is that a problem?"

Looking back he answered "No, I don't think it will be. I'll do my best to handle it, that's all I can say beforehand."

The squirrel smiled. "Yep, that's pretty much all anyone can do."

Friday evening was the graduation ceremony at the academy. He'd also arranged an invited for Zane Rook and Alex Elkins. Alex had declined but Zane had said he would attend. Jeremy had attended two of his brother's ceremonies and knew how it went. He was seated behind the podium with the rest of the graduates that had completed their schooling over the last month.

Jeremy was pleasantly surprised to see Jackson Buttons sitting next to Zane. The fox smiled and nodded slightly when their eyes met. Jeremy could barely control his grin. The dean made her standard short speech and started announcing the names of those who'd earned their certificates.

Jeremy sat through the first ten or so called up to accept their scroll before him. He slowly realized the dean had passed him whether in order of passing finals or alphabetically. He could feel his ears press down into his head fur at the mounting anticipation. With only two others left he was certain the dean was holding off on announcing his name for last.

As the only other graduate sat after accepting her diploma the dean paused and with a glance back at him started another speech. She related how proud she was to have the first dominant graduate from the academy in seven years. She only hinted at his high marks before detailing his initiating the tutoring hour. He hadn't known it had had such an impact. She explained that the successful graduation rate had increased by more than twenty percent since he'd started the study hour. As she called him forward nearly half the room gave him a standing ovation.

He was humbled at the praise. Jeremy took his scroll in one hand and touched pads with the dean. He turned to face his family for a second before turning back to his seat. The dean grasped his elbow keeping him at the podium.

"I'd like to break with tradition for the moment and allow Mister Dawn a moment to take the floor."

Jeremy was shocked at the gesture. He stared dumbly as she stepped back indicating he was to take her place at the podium. He stepped up rolling the scroll in his paws nervously. Looking out at the assembly from the front of the stage he realized his mind was empty.

Clearing his throat for time he looked out on the sea of faces. Taking a deep breath he started as the words came to him. "Thank you, Dean Winters for the high praise. I'd also like to thank my parents, I know I haven't said enough to them in appreciation of their sacrifice in raising not only myself but my brothers as well. I'd like to also thank my mentors Zane, and Alex who couldn't be here." he paused and simply nodded to Jackson, not sure how the male would take any comment assuming too much. "Finally, I'd like to say to my fellow students, not only those here tonight but those who have gone before and those following us, and say that its an honor to know each of you."

Jeremy stepped back from the podium glancing at the dean. She was grinning with pride and joining in the applause that had followed his impromptu speech. He turned toward his seat to see all his fellow graduates were standing and applauding as well. On impulse he gave his fellow graduates a slight bow and turned back to the audience and repeated the bow. He walked over and took his assigned seat rubbing at his eyes.

It took a few seconds for the applause to die down. The dean was back at the podium and announced the proceedings concluded. Everyone stood and as always started milling about. Jeremy was swamped with his fellow graduates who wanted to press paw pads with him for what was likely one last time. It was several minutes before he was able to join his family. Zane and Jackson were both standing with them.

His father's smile said volumes, he was obviously filled with pride. The hug Jeremy received from his father lasted only seconds but seemed like the best moment of his life. As his mother hugged him he knew he'd not be able to speak for minutes afterward. Sam and Ian also hugged him, Eric had failed to attend but considering his recent behavior Jeremy was glad for his absence. Zane clasped his arm in the gesture as did Jackson. It was then that he noticed everyone milling about were surreptitiously watching. The presence of Jackson Buttons standing with them had attracted a lot of attention.

The fox surprised Jeremy by holding out a package. "Allow me to give you a small graduation gift."

"Sir, thank you. Thank you for everything." Jeremy said taking the package from him. It was heavy for its small size. He could guess by the weight and size it contained books. He looked at Jackson and asked "Should I open it now?"

"Sure, I have no doubt you've already guessed whats in there."

Jeremy smiled and tore the edge off the package. It was indeed a set of books. Slipping them out of the small box he showed his family and Zane. Flipping the books over one at a time to see the covers he was unfamiliar with the titles. He'd never heard of any of them but he examined the books closer. A mix of self improvement and leadership titles the oldest copyright was sixty three years ago. Even the newest was still five years old. Jeremy looked at his new boss as he put the last book back in the package.

"They're not the most exciting reading material in the world, I'll admit, but in my opinion essential for dominants."

"Essential?" Jeremy asked. He felt he was missing the connection between being a dominant and the need for the books Jackson was giving him.

Nodding the fox answered the implied question. "We tend to find ourselves in leadership positions by default. Most dominants simply fly by the seat of their pants and end up creating nothing but problems for those that choose to follow them. Even our mentorship program has limits. One can only learn so much from a single person. The best leaders are those that constantly seek advice and counsel from their peers. That's why the books."

"I think I understand."

"Anyway, that's for later. Its your graduation, time to relax and enjoy yourself." He looked at Jeremy with the grin back on his face.

Jeremy tucked the package under his arm and smiled back at the fox. He hadn't extended his mentorship, yet, but was already acting as though he had. It was more than enough for Jeremy. He turned to Zane still smiling and said "Would the two of you like to join us? We usually go out for diner after the ceremony. It would be an honor."

Jackson spoke first. "Sorry, I have an engagement in about an hour. Enjoy your evening Jeremy, all." He said nodding to Jeremy's family. He turned slightly to face Zane and held an arm out to the pangolin. "Zane, I'll see you later."

Zane turned from the greeting with Jackson. "I also have to decline. This is a time for family. Jeremy, everyone, have a good evening."

As the two dominants left Jeremy turned to his family. They all smiled back at him. He looked around at the auditorium. It was likely the last time he would step foot on academy grounds. After all the years he'd been working toward this moment the sense of accomplishment and excitement he'd anticipated wasn't there. He found it strange that he didn't feel any different. In its own way it also felt incredibly right.

With Jackson's gift of books under his arm he walked with his family out of the academy.

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I hope you enjoyed this one. Anyway, last week's little challenge was spotting where the Bureau Of Sabotage came from. Some of you are going to face-palm over this one but its from Frank Herbert's novel; Whipping Star. Yeah, that Frank Herbert.

I often find it odd when readers like something from an author but don't bother to seek out anything else. Sure, a lot of you have probably read Dune, but have you read any of his other books? If you had this might have been a easy challenge. And don't say anything about having seen the movie...

Anyway, thats my admonishment for failing this challenge. There will be others. Some won't be announced though, so pay attention.

As for the Bureau of Sabotage the concept is only vaguely similar to what I'm using it for. In the book it stood out in my mind so well that even after reading it more than twenty years ago I still remember it. There's another fun concept in the book that I was going to use as a test question, but I'll let the curious among you find that out for yourselves. Later...