

Title says it all, so not much more to say.

For the next two weeks Jeremy's job was much the same as his first week. The lack of the anticipated incident gave him time to get comfortable enough with everything else about the new job. It was still challenging but not overly so. He wasn't allowed to feel overconfident with Sahar constantly reminding him he would eventually face a real test of his abilities.

He also spent a good portion of his free time playing with PATOMES. There were still so many avenues he had yet to explore in the advanced functions he hadn't yet had the opportunity. With four roommates coming and going at all times he had limited time alone in the apartment. Jeremy finally had an extended period of time when he could expect to be left to himself in the apartment. To be sure he wouldn't be walked in on he locked the bathroom door and prepared for his first extensive test of the newly achieved functions of PATOMES.

He activated the command and stood watching himself. Within PATOMES he again had selected not any individual's profile but chose to design a body that exemplified what would be considered an average of all the species samples stored. In ten seconds his image altered from a weasel to that of a cheetah. His body and most of the features of his expectant face had changed. He stared back at a reflection of an oversized cheetah.

He spent a few minutes making slight changes to himself as a cheetah before saving it as a favorite. The favorited cheetah body Jeremy stood in was almost as tall as his current weasel body and almost matched it in muscle. Close to the top of the range of cheetahs height and muscle wise he'd not arouse any attention in this body. Better than that he could use the same clothes he had as a weasel dominant alpha, at least for now.

Satisfied he activated the second change. He watched as his image as a cheetah slowly changed and shifted. His fur darkened and muzzle thickened slightly. There were a few more subtle changes but none were enough to wrest Jeremy's attention away from the most obvious things happening to him. His attention was centered on his rapid drop in height and mass. Almost as interesting was the changes he felt in his mouth.

The teeth of cheetahs were slightly different than those of weasels. Squirrels were a whole new story. He felt with his tongue as his canines slid up to almost disappear even as his front teeth dropped down and enlarged to replace them. His smile looked odd and alien to him as the changes finished. His tail too was almost acting on its own volition. It sprang about behind him twitching with movement at every stray thought. He wondered how Sahar controlled her tail. After a disquieting minute of staring at himself as a squirrel he programmed another change.

Jeremy picked the average body of a coyote for his next experiment. As his body transformed he was again struck by how much his body changed during the process. It wasn't just the size, or even the alteration of his musculature. There was something about how he stood still and felt his center of mass subtly shift. Jeremy was also becoming fascinated by the even more subtle differences between species. His latest change was a perfect example.

On average coyotes were larger than weasels and yet he stared at himself in disbelief. His coyote body felt so much smaller than he'd expected beforehand. Staring at himself as a coyote he couldn't help but smirk. Yes, they were an inch or so taller than weasels but his coyote body was also more on the lanky side. He experimented with a few movements from Alex's training. His joints moved just a bit differently, even the arc of travel of each of his limbs was subtly different as a coyote. Even the oddly

strange feeling from a simple movement like scratching a random itch at his ear let him know he was clearly in a different body.

Seemingly thin underdeveloped arm and leg muscles screamed for improvement, as did his chest and belly. He was tempted but put that off until a later time. He wanted to explore one aspect of his coyote form he couldn't fail to notice. It was playtime after all.

Jeremy had always heard canines boasted a sense of smell far better than other species. He was truly impressed at how sensitive their olfactory acuity really was. Lingered at the top of everything in the room was the scent of the squirrel he'd just been. Beneath that was the strong weasel scent he was more familiar with only now he experienced it from the aspect of his new canine senses. He wasn't impressed by sensing his own scent, they were strong enough to be detected easily as a weasel. What impressed was the fainter scents he could now detect.

Taking another deep breath through his sinuses Jeremy savored an even deeper and greater appreciation for canine acuity. He could detect each of his roommates lingering in the air. Sniffing deeply again he was still far too new to these coyote senses but he felt with practice he could guess what each roommate had eaten the past couple days. He listened for anyone in the apartment for a second and opened the door slightly.

Stepping out of the bathroom Jeremy followed the most prominent scent to the kitchen. There was some food in the fridge that was on the verge of going bad. He'd check that in more detail later, right now he sensed something that drew his attention more than anything else. Very faint, and just a hint even to the nose of his coyote muzzle he smelt an unfamiliar presence.

He traced the scent to Remoary's bedroom. He'd left a pile of clothes he'd not yet cleaned in the corner of his room. Compelled by the scent Jeremy picked through the pile and took several minutes pulling every article of clothing and sniffing each one. Eventually he found a pair of female's undergarments. After he replaced the raccoon's clothes he stood and stared at the reconstituted pile of laundry.

He was amazed at the power and sensitivity of his new coyote sniffer. He had recognized each of his roommates separately just from the lasting scent on air and had caught the one unfamiliar scent in the apartment from just a single piece of clothing hidden under a pile of soiled clothes. He spent a few more minutes sniffing around the apartment out of curiosity. There were no other unfamiliar scents lingering in his apartment. Canines were so lucky.

Returning back to the bathroom he stood at the mirror and activated the waiting command. Jeremy watched himself shrink again. From the large coyote down to an average sized mouse. When it was done he stood little more than two and a half feet tall. His chest barely cleared the vanity counter. As thin as the coyote seemed mice were positively diminutive. Jeremy found he disliked being this small. It was too much like being the smallest of four brothers all over again. He decided to use a more familiar function available in PATOMES. He quickly programmed some mass addition and activated the command.

The pulse of growth that coursed through him was more intense than any he'd ever felt. He was barely able to stifle the shout of pure ecstasy flowing through him. His chest sent such an odd signal that it felt like he was out of breath and inhaling at the same time. A second after that the growth had finished. He panted from the aftereffects of his growth. Wanting to reach a proper size as soon as possible he'd scheduled the unusually aggressive growth for only a matter of seconds. The resulting rapid surge in size had almost dizzied him. Still, he just might do that again soon, it had been such a thrill.

He'd already learned PATOMES had plenty of safeguards built into it over the past few weeks. He could add one more to the list. Looking at himself as a giant mouse Jeremy stared openmouthed at himself. He'd miscalculated. He stood far larger than he was as a weasel. It would not be possible to go

in public as he was now and not have a ready explanation of his size. There would be too many questions about a mouse obviously the size of a mature dominant suddenly appearing out of nowhere.

Still, in looking himself over he understood Eric's drive to become larger and stronger. Even small movements of his limbs hinted at the power his body held. If he wasn't staring at his own reflection Jeremy thought his huge body as a mouse would be intimidating. He did find one thing odd about his body and stepped to the side as an experiment. Stepping back he watched behind himself. He could feel the air flow over the mostly bare skin of his tail. It was a decidedly strange feeling not having fur covering his tail.

As strong and powerful as he looked as an overgrown mouse the size he had grown to was clearly not practical. He'd have to revisit this form again eventually. He was sure that after further experimenting he could find an unobtrusive body he could use as a favorite, should he ever need to.

Deciding to try only one more subject Jeremy settled on the desired profile and activated the command. He watched fascinated as his fur changed to scales. He lost just a bit of height and mass, dropping a few inches in the mirror over the safer twenty seconds he'd programmed. When it finished Jeremy stood much taller than the average weasel, even taller than his coyote body but much stronger in appearance. He was already large and intimidating even though he'd only programmed for the average of the species. Moreover the small but thick scales covering him gave him the appearance of someone not to mess with. His smile even looked menacing.

It took several seconds to get used to the sight of his face without fur or even ears. His lizard body was naturally thick and muscular, and already on the above average size among the population. Rare in this part of the world they were a somewhat exotic sight to most. His scale pattern for now looked fairly nondescript for lizards. Stripes and bands of various browns covered his sides and back as they lightened to tan under his chin and down to his belly. As he turned to look at his lizard body he was struck by how the scales over his skin felt. Only partially reminiscent of fur Jeremy could feel each of his scales as they shifted over and with each other.

The sight of his thick tail shocked him, almost as thick as his calf through much of its length. Testing its mobility he found he was able to shift it almost as much as his own weasel tail. He was amazed at its heft and the feeling of suppressed power it held. Placing a clawed paw on his chest and stroking down to his belly his scales gave an odd feel. Sliding over his smooth scales Jeremy applied more pressure through his claws pleased that they held up against the pressure that would have left deep nasty cuts in furred flesh.

Jeremy heard one of his roommates enter the apartment. Reluctantly he returned to his own body. He slipped his clothes back on and sprayed a bit of air freshener to hide his multiple scents before going out to the living area.

Remoary had returned and was sitting on the couch when Jeremy came out of the bathroom. Jeremy sat on the other side of the couch and started reading one of the books Jackson had given him. It was fairly easy to ignore the television. He'd had plenty of practice living with three brothers. Remoary seemed unconcerned anyway. He never bothered to turn the sound down.

An hour or so later Sam came home and started fixing dinner. Jeremy got up and joined him in the kitchen. The evening went a little awkwardly for Jeremy. Sam's room mates acted strange around him. It seemed they didn't know how to react to a weasel far larger than normal. He noticed Sam was watching their reactions as much as he was. His brother seemed more amused than Jeremy at the situation.

Once everyone had taken to their own bedrooms Jeremy finally got the use of the couch cushions. He'd never gotten used to the worn out and terribly uncomfortable nature of the couch and had taken to

placing the removable cushions on the floor. That too was far from comfortable but it was a slight improvement to the hard floor. It was effecting his sleep.

Perhaps it had been from experimenting with PATOMES but Jeremy woke in the middle of the night from a dream. He usually slept right through them, and even if he woke they faded almost instantly. This one stayed with him though likely due to its disturbing nature.

In it he thought his body had changed to a cat of some kind. Through much of his dream he was staring out from a hiding place as three enormous cheetah prowled. They were joined by a pair of females and from there started engaging in some rather adult behavior. Jeremy woke feeling his reaction to the dream against his belly. He was glad none of his room mates had chosen to come out of their bedrooms yet. He took to the bathroom and satisfied himself before getting ready for the day ahead.

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So last week it was noticed that when Jeremy changed to a raccoon he was described as being larger as a weasel. It was a good catch, and intentional. I'll explain.

First and somewhat beside the point in this world predators may have the advantage one on one but they are far outnumbered. In coming up with the original idea for the story predation was always going to be a factor. I also didn't want everyone to be the same basic size. Once that decision was made I also set a finite number of species that would exist, you've seen or heard mention of about all of them by now.

Then it came time to set physical attributes to each species. I stacked the deck in favor of predators. Just to make things worse for those in prey species I also stacked the deck against them. As was noticed, raccoons ended up smaller than weasels. The justification was that raccoons were omnivores and weasels are more on the carnivore side. Another example not yet noticed is that rats and mice are roughly the same size as rabbits. You can guess why...

So, no, not a level playing field.