

So, last week's chapter seemed popular. This one's going to be a bit of a departure from that. Now, don't go racing for the exits, remember we're in this for the long haul.

Jeremy was more than a little pleased at his first full paycheck from Nicholson Inc. He'd known his new job paid well but seeing the money show up in his account solidified the reality. A few more months and he'd have enough saved to consider moving to his own apartment. It would have to be a small one bedroom, but he was currently sleeping on the floor. There was only up from there.

He brought up the possibility with his brother the first weekend after payday. The other room mates had taken the hint of him living with his brother. A dominant alpha could provide excellent motivation even when he never said anything. Everyone was paying their rent on time and had even paid his brother back all the back rent he'd had to cover.

Sam had a different idea. "Why not find a place for the two of us?"

"Why? Well, yeah, why not." Jeremy answered as he thought about the idea.

Sam continued "We could get a place between both of our jobs. I've actually looked around a bit."

Jeremy looked closer at his brother. He was a bit uncertain, but to Jeremy his brother seemed eager to press the issue. "Did you find someplace in particular?"

"Yeah."

"Are they open on Saturdays?" Jeremy asked guessing his brother had thought about this since he'd moved in.

Sam grinned and answered "They are. Interested?"

Jeremy thought about his finances. He could probably make first and last and the deposit with his brother splitting the cost. Sam would also know how much they could afford, so there was really no reason to go through much of a discussion. "Okay, if you have time, then we should go see it."

Sam grinned and grabbed his jacket from the hanger behind the door and tossed Jeremy's to him. Jeremy followed him to the subway and together they made their way to an apartment building several miles further inside the city. Jeremy had heard the downtown area was out of their combined budget but Sam kept leading them deeper into the city. He'd thought his brother was being generous when he'd said it was between both of their workplaces. The building they entered really was in the area between Nicholson and MnGloumond.

Jeremy doubted they could afford not only the area but an apartment building like the one they walked into. The lobby was furnished well clearly making the statement that these were luxury apartments. He wondered if Sam had overestimated what he could afford until one of the leasing agents started talking with them. The prices were unusually low for the area causing Jeremy to wonder about the building even further. He looked at his brother as they rode the elevator up. Sam only smiled back.

The agent showing them the apartment had apparently seen the glance. As she lead them through the tour route the skunk started explaining. The building was still new, in fact the upper floors were still being finished. The owner was eager to have the building filled as soon as possible and was giving

substantial discounts for the first year. Apparently it was standard procedure for new buildings. Jeremy was impressed with the fitness room, it had plenty of new top line equipment. Once they had a look around the apartment the rent she quoted was well within their budget.

Sam looked at the skunk and asked "What else is available? Maybe a little larger?"

She smiled and led the way to another apartment as she continued to explain about the building's amenities. The second apartment was on a higher floor and had a window in the living area, even though the view was of a neighboring building. Jeremy liked it and the rent was still within the budget but Sam wanted to see yet another.

Jeremy followed silently. He thought Sam was getting a little too ambitious for their budget. He could already imagine having to move out after the first year. He'd heard of situations like the one they were about to get into. Sam still asked to see a forth. Sure he was overreaching Jeremy barely looked at the apartment as they walked in, at first. Jeremy perked up at the sight of the two bedrooms being on opposite sides of the apartment. He didn't care that it had no windows and by the way Sam was examining the kitchen neither did he. In looking around a bit more his interest in the apartment only increased. They would have to share a bathroom but the isolation of the bedrooms was enough for him.

Jeremy asked about the rent and was pleased that it was slightly lower than the rest. He paused only a moment to glance at his smiling brother. Sam nodded to him and he turned to the leasing agent and said "Well take this one."

It took another hour of filling out paperwork before they were on their way back to the old apartment. Jeremy smiled to himself at the thought of leaving Sam's old apartment. He liked the idea of sharing an apartment with just his brother but it was even better that they wouldn't share a wall. Growing up with Sam he'd always been eager for him to move out and yet now he felt grateful he was still in his life. His smile faltered a little at a new thought. He now had to start looking for furniture.

They got back to the apartment and announced their intention of moving out. Jeremy was intrigued at the argument that ensued. Remoary and Phip both demanded Sam pay an extra month for the short notice. He reminded them he was only responsible for each current month and since he'd already paid for more than the lease term's conditions he owed them nothing extra.

They continued to argue in an effort to guilt trip his brother until Jeremy entered the argument to remind them they'd been late too often to argue about what his brother owed. Their response was that he should stay out of it since he'd been in the apartment less than a full month.

Jeremy felt his temper rise at the accusation. "Right, and it only took you two less than that to not only catch up on rent but pay Sam back everything you owed him."

Phip wasn't satisfied nor did he catch on to Jeremy's ire. "Just because he brought you in to intimidate us into paying what we couldn't afford in the first place."

"And how is that his fault? Or mine? If you put yourself in a situation you can't afford its your own fault."

"We've got expenses, you've only been here for a few weeks. You have no idea how much it costs living in the city."

"You're telling this to a male that's still sleeping on the floor?"

"That's your choice, not mine."

"Right, just like being late on rent was a choice."

"Shut the fuck up, you're not my parents."

"Lucky for you I'm not. Just don't expect anything more from either of us."

"Fuck you."

Jeremy lost his cool and stepped up to the male projecting the threat he intended. "Get out of my sight, you fucking ungrateful deadbeat." He stared down into the meerkat's eyes as he wilted. It was an impressive display of tucking tail and backing down. Jeremy didn't even have to look in the raccoon's direction for him to slink off to his bedroom. Phip wasn't far behind him in retreating to his room.

Jeremy took a calming breath as soon as they were out of sight. He looked at Sam and saw he was staring wide eyed at him. "What?"

"Fuck." His brother replied, "Remind me to never piss you off." His tail was down between his legs as much as Phip's had been.

"You've got nothing to worry about." Jeremy said. He was pleased his voice was back to normal. "I'm hungry, how about we eat out for once? I'll buy."

Sam smiled, obviously a little reassured his brother was not upset with him. "Yeah, I was going to start something, but I know of a great place just around the corner."

Sam led him to a small hole in the wall a block and a half away. The food was good for the small space they occupied. They chatted over their meal about what to do next. Jeremy admitted he was looking forward to getting some new furniture. Sam was more pleased at leaving his roommates behind than Jeremy expected. They idled in the small cafe for longer than needed. Jeremy realized neither wanted to return to the unpleasant situation at the apartment.

When they did get back Damian had gotten back and was playing a game on the television. Sam had the idea of hitting a movie, he'd pay this time. As they made their way to the theater he explained the back rent that had been finally paid was more than enough to cover for the rent at the new place and more. The show wasn't memorable to Jeremy but the time spent with Sam was.

As luck or karma would have it Jeremy got a call just after midnight. Something had come up that he and Sahar were to take care of. He'd been told to have a 'Go Bag' ready at all times as often as keeping his phone handy. It took less than five minutes for him to throw some clothes on brush his teeth and grab his bag. He met Sahar at the airport.

He was a bit excited at seeing the company's corporate jet waiting for them. They climbed onboard without a word to each other. They were seated and rolling to the runway in under two minutes. The wait for clearance took only five minutes. They were in the air within ten minutes of Jeremy arriving at the airport. His excitement faded as he started getting calls on his phone. Even in route he was expected to start handling the situation.

One of Nicholson's manufacturing plants located eleven hundred miles away had caught fire. This was obviously the real test Sahar had repeatedly warned him about. She let him take the lead and listened in on every call. The first call he took let him know the plant was still burning. Instead of waiting for it to be put out he started collecting information. He could assume by the panic of the first three callers the plant was going to be a total loss. He calmed them down and ordered them to focus on finding alternative sites.

By the time they landed two hours later Jeremy knew where he wanted to go first. He was impatient at the fifteen minutes it took to get a rental vehicle. Sahar drove, after obtaining the first location from Jeremy they were on their way. It was a vacant warehouse in a neighboring city. They arrived at just past three in the morning. From outside the fence the building looked large enough for their purposes. Jeremy stood and listened to the night for a minute and climbed the fence. He was surprised at how well Sahar managed to scale the fence behind him.

After breaking in and having a look around both Jeremy and Sahar were satisfied that it would be large enough to replace the building that was still burning. Driving away they found that it was situated in a tan area with acceptable access to transit routes.

From arrived at the plant in question to find it still burning. There were several of the plant's employee's standing in the outer parking area watching. Jeremy and Sahar began interviewing them. Sahar found one of the senior managers. She brought the kangaroo to Jeremy without saying anything other than to follow his instructions. It was clear to him that he was either handling everything right or she was letting him sink on his own. He felt like he was doing the right things so far and for the moment could only press onward.

He took a few moments to gather everyone that had come to watch their livelihood go up in flames. Jeremy authorized the senior manager to call in whoever else she needed. The 'roo was to delegate several tasks to others among those gathered who could oversee them. The first was to reroute everything she could to other plants that were capable of handling their previous job. He then set them to obtaining the rights to the warehouse he and Sahar had just visited. Questions started coming from everyone after that.

It was well past sunup when he was allowed to take a moment to take a look at the now smoldering plant. He'd never known Nicholson made the elliptical machines he liked so much. He was at it all day coordinating the efforts to get everything necessary to renovate the new warehouse. He even took the liberty of issuing requests of Sahar to get the company lawyers involved in obtaining a quick lease for he desired warehouse. It would still take months to get the new plant up and a running, but that was better than waiting years for the previous plant to be rebuilt.

It was just after noon when Jeremy relocated the efforts to outside the prospective new plant. They couldn't legally go inside but they could occupy the parking lot before gaining access rights but that was only a matter of time. He was a bit nervous of making the commitment but there was now no going back. He was given little time to rethink his decisions. He kept having to deal with something new the employees brought up.

He barely registered when Sahar shoved a sandwich in front of him. He hadn't really noticed how hungry he was getting. He ate automatically and had she asked would have been unable to tell her what he'd just eaten. By the time the sun was on its way down the issues that needed handling were becoming almost trivial. Soon everything seemed if not under control at least going in the right direction. As long as they could get the warehouse.

It was dark again before they were able to take a break and find a hotel for the night. There was still several days of arranging everything ahead. Once they were in the hotel room Jeremy suddenly felt the lack of sleep. He sat in one of the chairs and watched as Sahar sat on one of the beds. She had a pleased smile on her face.

"So, how'd I do, so far?" Jeremy asked.

"How do you feel about today?"

"Well, I feel like I'm a bit out on a limb if we can't get the lease, but other than that I can't think of anything I'd do differently."

Sahar laid back on the mattress shifting about so she was on her side looking at Jeremy. "That's about my assessment too. Thing is, if you get bogged down thinking about alternate plans too soon you tend to lose the momentum you need in these situations. You kept everybody running errands all day long. Kept them thinking that their future didn't go up in smoke. That's what's really important in cases like this."

"Honestly, I didn't even think of it that way. I just saw it as a puzzle to solve. Maybe a really big one, yeah," he added at her laughter "but to me it was just a problem to solve."

"That's not a bad way to look at it. Not worrying about what those that are affected helps us keep focused. It may sound callous, but what they need is someone who can make sound decisions even if it is with a bit of emotional distance."

"So, do I even need to ask at this point?"

"Since I didn't need to take over, I'd say you could have taken this one all on your own." Sahar said with a yawn.

Jeremy couldn't stop himself from yawning in response.

After a second yawn Sahar said "We better get some sleep, they might not give us more than a few hours."