

Time to buckle up because we're about to take a hard turn story wise. Well, maybe not hard but certainly a sharp change of direction. Felt you lot needed something to shake off that creeping sense of predictability you had for me. Enjoy.

He felt almost back to normal by the next morning. Before work he called Alex and explained what had happened, and how he'd discovered his talent. He also explained the toll it took on him.

"That's a ferocious talent, Jeremy. You'll need to take care in how long you use it, of course."

"Yes, sir." Jeremy answered. "I understand that."

"Good. We'll discuss it next week, until then do not use it."

"Understood." Jeremy said knowing he'd rather not push himself beyond the point of exhaustion.

"Well then, have a good week." Alex replied sounding satisfied that Jeremy would follow his warning.

It was a busy week. Jeremy had collected everything he needed to implement his plan for Allen's compatriots. By Friday night he was ready to track them down.

Jeremy spent the night tracking their movements with PATOMES. He had found each of their housing situations earlier in the week. He shouldn't have been surprised that they all lived on the same block. Allen had indicated as much in their conversation. He sat in a public laundry across the street from where he guessed the lion lived watching the door. That male hadn't moved in an hour making Jeremy wonder if he was going to stay in for the night. None of the predators had moved more than a few yards in hours.

He was drifting off only half awake when his phone buzzed. The others in the laundry had turned to look at him in curiosity. He stood and made his way to the door pulling it from his pocket and read the text message. He thumbed the contact number in the text as he was turing from the laundry.

As the call was picked up he identified himself. He slowed as he was transferred to his supervisor. Stopping just outside a subway entrance he again identified himself.

"Jeremy, have you heard the news?"

"No, sir. I've been out for the night."

"There's been an earthquake in South America. Since we have a few interests there we're mounting what will be considered more of a relief effort. You're going to be part of our effort. We're sending three teams down, you'll be teamed with Sahar and Makannish. Our flight doesn't leave until four, so you have a bit of time to pack for an extended stay. I'll be sending the details shortly. Again it'll be an extended trip so take that into consideration. Questions?"

"No, sir." Jeremy glanced around but there was little traffic around.

"Good, see you at the terminal." He finished and disconnected before Jeremy could reply. Pocketing the phone he made his way down to the subway and headed back to his apartment. While disappointed at his cancelation of stalking the predators he was actually excited at the prospect of taking on such a huge challenge.

At his apartment he turned on the news hoping to see the scope of the challenge. He only listened as he packed a few more things in his 'Go Pack' and came back out to the living room. He stood watching the news channel waiting for a report. Sam came out of his bedroom and after seeing Jeremy standing with his pack slung over a shoulder sat on the couch. It took Jeremy a second after he'd glanced at his brother to notice that he had come out in only his fur.

"So, what's up?" Sam finally asked.

"Going to South America."

"Whoa, no shit?"

Jeremy nodded. He expected the news to start back up with the earthquake as the lead story after the commercial. He looked at his brother. "Sorry to wake you."

"No, that's okay. So, what happened?"

Jeremy was about to answer when the report came on. They both watched in silence. It had been initially measured at a magnitude of 7.2 centered just miles outside Valdivia. There had already been an aftershock of 6.2 less than an hour after the first quake. Damage had been extensive and calls had already gone out for aid. Jeremy had never heard of the city but then it was down in Chile.

Jeremy turned at Sam's look. His brother was staring at him. He shrugged and kept watching the report. It started devolving into the typical chatter when the talking heads had exhausted the short supply of information they had.

"Sorry, but I have to go. I'll call when I can." Jeremy said. He paused as his brother stood and stepped over to him. He was surprised at the hug Sam gave him.

He stepped back from Jeremy looking up. "Be safe, okay?"

"We'll be fine." Jeremy replied. He looked back at his brother trying to smile reassuringly. His brother's concerned attitude made it difficult. He turned for the door repeating "I'll call."

Jeremy looked back at his brother as he reached behind himself to close the front door. The way Sam was standing in the living room in only his fur made him pause. The expression on his face was one of worry. He searched for something to say.

"Relax, we're going there to help. Besides, it's not as though it's a war zone."

The faint, and clearly forced smile of his brother finally let him close the door. He tried to put his brother's reaction out of his mind but the more he tried the more resistant it became. It had been the first time his brother had reacted in such a way. He managed to catch a taxi to take him to the airport.

With more than an hour before the flight Jeremy had time to take a seat in the small terminal and close his eyes. The area where charter flights boarded was in an isolated part of the airport. They were left pretty much to themselves due to the hour. Three others had already arrived and were waiting but they too were doing their best to catch some extra sleep. Having gone to several situations Jeremy knew there'd be little chance for rest once they got on the ground.

Twenty minutes later everyone that was going on the flight had arrived and they exercised the option of taking off early. They were in the air less than ten minutes later. Once again everyone settled in and did their best to catch some rest. It was going to be a long flight anyway.

Jeremy woke feeling the ache of sleeping in a sitting position for too long. He stood and stretched the stiffness out of his limbs and looked around the cabin. It looked like he was the only one awake at the moment. Stepping to the back he used the small facility and came back out to see nothing had changed. Sitting back in this seat he pulled out his phone to check on updates but as expected they were over an area without service. With nothing in the plane to occupy his mind he closed his eyes again.

He opened PATOMES and idly explored the command structures again. He was still finding new avenues within the command pathways. Jeremy was beginning to wonder if PATOMES was now constantly adding new functions. As a test of the theory he explored a single command path as narrow as he could define the function. Without moving or opening his eyes he activated the programmed change.

In seconds his sense of smell improved dramatically. He could smell each of the fellow passengers. With a sniff he could guess with an almost certainty what the fox sitting next to him had last eaten. Makannish smelled a bit ripe to his new senses, but then everyone on the plane had likely not taken the time to shower before heading for the airport, he hadn't. In a few minutes Jeremy had catalogued the health status, eating habits and cleanliness of each of the passengers and even the flight crew. About a half an hour after altering himself he could guess a large number of the plane's previous passengers. He was amazed once again at the olfactory acuity of coyotes.

It was an invisible change. PATOMES assured him it hadn't changed the shape of his muzzle. Jeremy was considering leaving the change as part of his own profile. No one would notice the new ability he'd granted himself unless he let slip a comment or observation. He was already cautious in everything he said and did around anyone. Driven by cautiousness he settled for adding an extra profile of his own into favorites and labeling it as a personal upgrade. He used the reset function to remove the change.

Once again with his own comparatively feeble sense of smell Jeremy opened his eyes. After looking around just to confirm everyone was still on the plane he was shocked at how reliant coyotes were on their sniffers. When he'd changed back to his own acuity it had been as if the others almost didn't exist any more. Sitting back he closed PATOMES and made an effort to find sleep again.

Jeremy woke with a start and the remnants of another oddly erotic dream fading from his mind. He held himself still as he assessed his situation. His cock was still ragingly hard but the dream hadn't brought him to the point of embarrassing himself. His eyes traveled to Makannish to see the male was still sleeping. His engorged cock was blatantly obvious within his slacks to even a casual glance. Even as he noticed the plane had taken on a downward angle Jeremy was more than a bit dismayed knowing how easily the canines on board would be able to sense his arousal. Moving as little as possible he looked around the cabin.

Most of his fellow passengers were still sleeping. Those few up were at the front where the snacks and drinks were stowed. He adjusted himself carefully moving his thick member to where he could stand without hurting himself. He got up and made his way to the back and locked himself in the lavatory. After emptying his bladder and washing the crusty feeling from his face and the damp out of his belly fur Jeremy felt he was presentable enough to go back into the main cabin.

Joining the few at the galley he selected a few snacks that he was becoming familiar with as his travel breakfast. The plane had for the moment leveled off again so they still gathered around the food and drink. As he ate he noticed several were eyeing him. "What?"

Jean, who was perhaps the oldest among the team lifted his muzzle a fraction and sniffed a few times. Pointedly leaning toward Jeremy and sniffing one last time he asked "How're you holding up to the sudden lack of pussy, Kid Dominant?"

Jeremy forced his ears to stay up at the comment. He waited for the chuckles to die down before answering. "Fine, how're you managing without your Cialis, ya grizzled fuckstick?"

Jean grinned at the reply unfazed at the return or the resulting chuckles. Everyone else in the Bureau was more than twice his age. He'd been surprised to learn that even Sahar was older than his own mother. Jeremy had had to get used to the constant ribbing from everyone. It was widely known he was just out of the academy. It was also known he had done so in almost record time. It had taken a while for him to find his own way of responding to the constant barbs, but once he did it was as if he'd passed the final test.

The signal of his final acceptance had been Gakota christening him Kid Dominant in recognition of his age and status. While it was clear they all respected him as an equal he was also seen as the first of a new generation of bureau members. There hadn't been a new recruit to the bureau in almost a decade. He was a bit proud of his new nickname even if they were the only ones that would ever know or address him by it.

The conversation returned to where they must have left off. Jeremy listened without adding anything. It was his usual behavior to listen without responding until he had something to add and everyone had come to accept it as such. He guessed they thought it a sign of respect, which it was but to Jeremy it was also a lasting behavior from a youthful mistake. He'd noticed the difference in his behavior long ago, and to date felt no need or desire to change.

The plane changed pitch again and as it continued for several minutes it seemed the sign for everyone to take their seats. Another half hour and they were coming in for landing. Jeremy only glanced out the window a few times. He was listening to Gakota, as was everyone else. The ocelot had been busy getting the latest updates.

They were landing seventy miles from the epicenter. It was the closest airfield still able to make landings. They would then take a helicopter to where they'd get to work. Most of the briefing was planning for which team would take on the expected challenges. He was finished in under five minutes. Jeremy and the rest received and checked their new phones for the operation.

They were the latest in survival gear. High powered satellite phones that came with small vests that they'd wear. The vests had strips front and back that were reminiscent of safety vests often seen in work zones. The strips were actually flexible solar chargers sewn into the vests. The only drawback was the cord that the phone had to be plugged into to recharge. Jeremy guessed that small problem would be solved within a year or two. After slipping on his vest and plugging the phone in he watched as the phone accepted the charger. He was pleased to see the ambient light in the plane was enough to add to the battery life. The remainder of the flight was completed in silence.

They disembarked and walked the short distance to the waiting copter. Again, none of them talked. Jeremy knew they were doing the same as himself. His mind was sorting through the information from the briefing and going over several possibilities and making plans for eventualities. The flight in the helicopter was short and they landed in the area of devastation. As their copter took off once again Jeremy walked with the rest of the team. Even though they were all dressed differently the charging vests and bags slung over their shoulders were enough of a uniform to set them apart.

They were all looking at the destruction. It was shocking. They'd been dropped at what was once Valdivia's airport. The ground had shifted and buckled everything in the immediate area. Jeremy guessed the pile of rubble to their left was once the conning tower. To the south he could see where the water had

receded thinking at first it was low tide. After checking the position of the sun he realized it should actually be high tide, or near to it. The ground the city had been built on had risen several feet. He shook his head amazed at the thought.

Beyond the waterway were columns of smoke still rising in the air. They made their way to a hanger that had managed to remain intact, mostly. It was prominent due to the activity around it. As they were coming up to the hanger Jeremy could eventually see inside. After one look at the missing side Gakota shook his head. The local militia had made the ill considered decision to use the damaged hanger as a makeshift hospital. With a nod to Makannish he left taking the rest of the team with him.

The reynard led Sahar and Jeremy inside the hanger and with just a few words sent them on their own way to accomplish their assigned mission. Jeremy was to focus on people. He slowly made his way around the inside of the hanger watching the activity. It didn't take long to see who everyone was deferring to. The lizard barely had a chance to take a few steps before someone would come up to her and speak with her for a moment before almost running off.

Jeremy came close enough to listen to the lizard as she gave orders. Taking advantage of a break in the flow of subordinates Jeremy stepped in and introduced himself.

"Major Ferris, glad you're here, we certainly could use any help you can lend." She responded touching Jeremy's offered paw in greeting.

Jeremy dismissed the exotic feeling of her scales and asked "What's your most pressing need at the moment?" as he pulled the radio phone from his pocket.

The next minutes were a flurry of passed messages and brief interruptions as Major Ferris continued coordinating the efforts inside the hanger. Jeremy quickly lost track of time. He didn't even have a spare second's time to realize he'd been commandeered as the major's liaison with the relief efforts. Even after she was able to step out of the makeshift hospital he was at her side relaying messages

When the massive tent showed up with enough help to erect it and they began transferring the wounded to it Jeremy only then noticed it had been more than twelve hours. Only the slight aftershocks had punctuated the time he'd spent with the major. Some time in the middle of the night she finally had a moment to pause and take a break. She sat on an empty overturned fuel barrel and motioned for him to sit next to her.

Jeremy sat next to her and finally un-shouldered his go pack. Glancing at his phone before plugging it in and putting it away he was a bit surprised to see it was past three in the morning. Rolling the ache from his shoulders he looked at the lizard appraising her for the first time.

She was looking back with the same intensity. "I've rarely met a mammal that could keep up with me. Whoever sent you, thank them for me, will you?"

"Thanks, I'll send that along too." He replied seeing his humor was appreciated. He watched as she turned her neck and all but slumped from fatigue. He stood and moved to stand behind her. "If I may?" he asked before laying his paws on her shoulders.

After glancing back at him she nodded once and turned her head to stare at the ground in front of herself. Jeremy started massaging the lizard's shoulders through her uniform. At first it seemed her body was built differently from mammals by the strange feel of her muscles. After a few seconds he began to notice similarities. She actually had the same muscle groups but they were proportioned much differently.

Working up to her neck Jeremy felt her rise her head slightly, silently encouraging him to lengthen his stroke up to her jawline. Now up above the collar of her uniform he again felt the exotic scales under his paw. The texture of her scales felt strangely smooth as if wet but also sending him the tactile sensation of dryness.

He studied the major as he continued his massage. Her head had no ears and a smooth crown. Her forehead sloped down much like mammals only her snout tapered in a different way. Lizard jaws were far wider all the way to under their nose making them even more exotic to mammals. Her jawline was closer to a C shape than the more familiar V of mammals.

He watched her for signals and adjusted his technique to compensate. He moved down her back smiling as she leaned forward and crossed her arms on her knees and rested her chin on her arms. Soon she had relaxed to the point of unmoving making him wonder if she'd fallen asleep.

He finished and sat back next to her. Glancing at her he saw she had an eye barely open watching him.

"Thanks, I'd return the favor but you got me so relaxed I don't think I can at the moment. Hope you understand."

It looked to Jeremy she was making an effort just to speak to him. "Not a problem. You've been working nonstop before I got here. You deserve a rest."

She hummed and closed her eye. He sat next to her looking around for the first time in hours.

The fires across the water were still burning and filling the air with the heavy scent of smoke. Jeremy stared across the small bay and thought back on the day's events. He'd learned throughout the evening that more than half of the local population had simply fled after the earthquake. Before leaving they'd looted and pillaged taking much needed supplies with them. Taking the cue from the populace a large number of the police and military had joined them. Unfortunately they had slyly waited until the first of the relief supplies had shown up to make their move. Their departure had left behind even less than when the team had arrived.

Jeremy crossed his arms over his knees and rested his chin on them, copying the major. Closing his eyes he tried to get some rest. His mind rebelled against him.

The situation could be classed as dire, at best. They'd barely made a mark in the effort that lay ahead. Having spent all day with the major Jeremy knew more than the rest of the team. He'd taken it upon himself to begin filtering some of the bad news from them. There was so much more they needed, so much more that had to be done and an increasing lack of resources. The last thing any of them needed was the news that he was keeping from them. He knew there'd be consequences when they found out, but for now he felt it a necessary exception.

He'd always felt up to the task of finding the solution to any puzzle presented to him. He could work through anything, get to the center of the issue and find the key to solving the riddle. Here though, his mind mirrored their situation. He'd been dropped into the middle of the emergency this time. He was unused to finding his way out of a puzzle. To add to the mounting frustration it seemed as if the puzzle shifted and changed for the worst with every bit of bad news. His mind took on the task with a fervor that simply did not match his confidence.

For all his experience in dealing with emergencies, at that moment he felt like perhaps, this time he was in way over his head.

\* \* \* \*

When I first researched for this chapter I had no idea the coming sense of irony I was setting myself up for. After this past August's eclipse I looked into where the next couple were going to be. I wanted to see if I could save enough to travel to see the next one.

Imagine my surprise when I found the next path of totality crosses Chile. No, it doesn't hit Valdivia but still, Chile! On looking further the real shock came. For the one in 2020 the path of totality passes just miles from Valdivia. I want to go even more now.