

So, now that Chile is behind us I have to admit I had a lot more planned. I cut the visit short because it would have come close to derailing the story. As it is I'm thinking two chapters is a fair chunk to help introduce the next few threads of the story. Having cut it much shorter also leaves a bit of mystery behind as to what really happened to him down in Chile. You'll all get to find that out eventually.

Jeremy got back to his apartment and had to pay for his lost key before the night manager would give him a replacement. She almost refused since he'd also lost all his identification in Chile months ago. Fortunately they had a photocopy on file and the meerkat relented.

He showered for almost half an hour just standing under the stream until the hot water ran out. Walking into his bedroom he stopped and stared at his bed. There was someone sleeping in it. It took a few seconds for him to recognize Eric. Shaking his head at the irony he turned and went to the living room. Laying on the couch he was asleep in seconds.

Jeremy slowly came awake to the smell of bacon in the air. He pulled the blanket off himself and sat up looking around disorientated. The inside of his own apartment was now completely unfamiliar to him. He stared at Sam in the kitchen for a second before his mind caught up to the situation. He'd gone to sleep in just his fur and Sam must have added the blanket. His brother grinned happily back at him.

"When did Eric take over my bedroom?"

Sam's smile vanished. "Um, a couple months ago." He answered, his voice full of uncertainty.

Jeremy stared at the blank screen of the television. "Is he at least paying for the privilege?"

"Well, he doesn't have any other place to stay at the moment. But hey, I'm glad you're back." Sam said trying to sound cheerful.

Jeremy stood and went to the bathroom shaking his head. He took another shower just because he could. When he came back out Eric was sitting at the breakfast bar separating the kitchen from the living room. He was wearing the familiar uniform of the gym, only a size smaller than he probably should. In the six months Jeremy had been gone Eric hadn't progressed as much as he should have although his gut had grown. He turned and looked at Jeremy.

"Huh, so he is back." Eric observed without enthusiasm. His eyes were roving across his brother's body.

Jeremy ignored him and went to his bedroom. He had to sift through some of Eric's things to find his own clothes. His brother had mixed everything together. It was clear he'd taken the liberty of wearing some of his clothes. Why his brother thought his clothes fit him Jeremy had no idea. Some of his old clothes had gotten a bit tight on him in the time he'd been down south. Having found something still comfortable he went back out and crossed to the kitchen.

Sam had finished making breakfast and Eric had taken a good portion and was already eating. Jeremy looked over the remains of what Sam had prepared and saw Eric had taken far more than his share. Sam had yet to take any for himself. Jeremy took less than half the remainder for himself and after grabbing a fork from a drawer stood next to Sam. He waited for his brother to take the rest before taking his first bite.

He'd made a concoction of eggs and bacon with cheese and a sprinkling of diced vegetables. To Jeremy it was amazing after months of simple rations scratched together. "Oh, this is really good. Thanks for breakfast, Sam."

"I've had better." Eric said.

Jeremy stared at his brother pointedly. Eric shrugged effecting his usual 'I don't give a shit' attitude he'd perfected with their father.

Jeremy turned to Sam and asked. "So, how's everything?"

"So, what was it like down there?" Sam had asked at the same time.

Jeremy paused and looked at Sam with a smile.

Eric nodded and said "Yeah, everything is pretty good family wise. I've got a full schedule at work." before shoving another forkful into his face.

"That why you're stuffing yourself so fast?" Jeremy asked. His temper was getting away from him.

Sam softly said "Let's not start just when Jeremy gets back."

"Fuck it." Eric said as he dropped his fork on the plate and stood from the bar stool. He stepped back grabbing the jacket that was draped over the other stool and turned to the door.

Jeremy watched him leave only noticing after his brother had gone that he'd taken his riding jacket. He'd also left half his acquired meal on his plate. Like always Eric had started with the meaty parts and left what he considered the undesirable parts for later. Only with him later typically turned out to be never.

Sam was just finishing his own breakfast and as he rinsed the plate in the sink said. "Yeah, sorry but I gotta run too. I've got just enough time to get the cleanup done."

Jeremy looked at his plate. It was still half full but his stomach couldn't take any more. He put a paw on his brother's shoulder as he started rinsing Eric's plate saying "Nonsense. I'll do the clean up. We'll catch up later."

Sam stepped away from the sink looking up at Jeremy. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I need normalcy more than anything right now." Jeremy said, sensing a bit more truth in the statement than he'd intended.

Sam smiled as he turned from the sink. "Thanks. I'll try to get off work early, then I'll take you out for dinner. We can catch up then."

"Sure." Jeremy answered and watched his brother collect a few things before leaving. He stared at the door. His mind was already forming a list of things to do. Jeremy focused on cleaning the things Sam had used in making breakfast. By the time that was finished his list had grown to fill the day. He found himself staring at the door again.

He searched for his own phone and after several frustrating minutes remembered he'd taken it with him to Chile. It was now long lost. Jeremy added another item on the day's list.

He made his way to Alex Elkins' club. Entering he saw his trainer pause for just a moment before continuing with a rare smile. Jeremy couldn't have come at a better time even if he'd planned it. Alex was just wrapping up the session. After he dismissed everyone the red panda watched his students slowly make their way out. As they passed Jeremy toward the door many of them stared at him.

Once they were alone Alex watched Jeremy stand and walk over to him. He knew the stare well. His trainer was appraising him every second. With the usual slight bow he said "Sir, I apologize for not contacting you sooner. I only-"

"Stop." Alex interrupted. "I understand. You let me know when you left that you did not know how long it would be. You don't need to explain yourself to me." he stepped closer and punched Jeremy in the arm. "But that's for making me worry about you."

Rubbing his arm Jeremy smiled at the unusual show of emotion from Alex.

"Anyway, welcome back. I'll not ask how it was. I followed events from here."

Jeremy nodded, "Yes, it was-" He stopped himself. If he was to begin explaining now he'd likely talk for hours. Alex wasn't the type to listen even under these circumstances. "Sorry. I would like to get back into training, if you're still interested in training me."

"Yes, I am still interested. But for now you need time to yourself." Alex said. His voice held more empathy than Jeremy'd ever heard from him.

"Sir?"

"You've been through a lot, yes? Take some time off from work if you can. Just to be alone to think, and find yourself again."

"I don't understand."

"I can see it in your eyes. You're still far too stressed." Alex asserted. "You still have that motorcycle? Take a trip, get out of the city if you must, but you need time to yourself."

Jeremy stood in front of the red panda remembering his admission of self commitment. "If you feel that's what I should do."

"I believe that right now, it's what you need." He said softly putting a gentle paw on Jeremy's shoulder. With the paw on his shoulder Alex turned him to the door using an easy pressure to move him forward. "Go, I'll let Zane know you'll contact him soon, but not until you've returned to yourself."

Jeremy stood outside the club almost wondering at how his trainer had gently evicted him. He stood thinking his advice over in his head. With the amount of free time at his disposal he knew what he wanted to do. There were a few things he needed to do first. At the bank he withdrew enough money and had it converted to travelers debit cards. He also had to stop and get a new license and identification. When he went to purchase a new phone he was in luck that they still had his account open and was able to retain the same number. Once that was done it was three in the afternoon. He made his way back to the apartment.

He plugged in the new phone to charge in the kitchen and made a call to his parents but had to leave a message. It was beginning to feel strange being off work when everyone he knew was unavailable. He'd considered Alex's suggestion further while running his errands. It seemed impulsive, seemed completely out of the ordinary for him. The idea of just lighting out and hitting the road made him

unbearably eager to do just that. Picking a few of his own clothes from his bedroom he packed his backpack and stuffed his phone and charger in a side pocket. He scribbled a note to Sam and left.

As he waited for the elevator he reconsidered. Before the doors opened he had turned and was walking back to the apartment. He plugged his phone back in and left it on the kitchen counter. Alex's suggestion was to have time to himself. The more he thought about the advice the more he understood the intent behind it. If he was going to leave to have that time to himself he'd need to disconnect from everything. The idea was more appealing as every second passed.

His bike was still in the garage, untouched and covered in dust. Wiping the dusty tank off he started it and made his way to the street. He paused at the end of the garage entry deciding which direction to take. He picked west since there was more to explore in that direction. He worked his way through the city glad he'd not waited until the evening commute really started.

Almost before he expected he was crossing the bridge out of the city. The sun was already going down, and the chill in the air made him glad he'd found a jacket that still fit. He traveled for another hour once he was out of the city.

Jeremy found a roadside campground miles from anything. He backtracked to buy a few necessities and made camp in the deserted campground. Seeing that all of the spots were open and he could take his pick he took the furthest spot from the road. The empty campground another indication that he was out of sync with the rest of the world.

Once settled in he stared at the small fire he'd built. His thoughts were on Karresa Ferris. He'd spent the last six months working closely with the lizard and it had had an affect on him. Even as she was promoted his duties and responsibilities in the recovery effort had also stepped up with her's. He'd gained an incredible amount of practical experience in leadership from the general while working with her. His efforts had also been noticed by Gakota as a result.

Jeremy got up and collected more loose wood for the fire. Sitting back and feeding the campfire a little he let his mind wander. After so much time with the lizard it stood to reason his mind would wander back to her. Their relationship had always been professional, even as closely as they had worked together. Jeremy knew his attitudes and changed. It had taken weeks for him to get used to lizards and their lack of taboos of going without clothes.

Jeremy made an effort to focus on something other than Ferris. He sought for anything to keep his mind from the female. Instead he remembered that about a month after arriving in Chile the situation wasn't so chaotic that they could actually work off of a schedule. She'd been a colonel then and had cut out a few hours every morning to get her command back into a regular fitness routine. It had been the beginning of a strenuous regime but he'd not only survived but had taken to it as well as any mammal.

Jeremy put some more of the gathered wood on the fire and scooted a bit closer. It was getting colder. He was more used to the southern summer temperatures, even though he'd been at a higher latitude the nights had been warmer.

The training with the lizards had been an educational experience. Alex had always taught him his body adapted to what he worked toward. His direction had always been toward working to make Jeremy's reflexes faster. In Chile the lizards worked at strength and endurance. After almost five months of training with them Jeremy had gotten leaner and yet felt stronger than ever. He had to acknowledge he'd likely have to regain some of his reflexive speed but he also felt confident he could merge the two programs.

Jeremy had eventually followed their example of physically training in nothing but his fur. As a whole they were almost embarrassingly open, after all they did have to share shower facilities, if it could have

been called that. At first it was nothing but a set of water barrels set above head height and one stood under the spigot to clean themselves. Jeremy smiled at the memory of the gentle ribbing he took at their observation of the anatomical differences between mammals and lizards. They'd also showed a new level of respect for him once he was able to keep up with them.

He smiled at the memory. After putting more wood on the fire he set out his sleeping bag and sat on it in front of the fire.

Jeremy admitted to himself that he'd been as fascinated by the differences between the two species. Males and females looked almost the same. Colonel Ferris was little different physically than her male counterparts. The only difference was in their crotch area. Even though male's equipment were internal they still had a substantial bulge that the females lacked. After the first few days of the open shower the comparative looks ended. Jeremy's sheath more than matched the mass of most lizard male's bulges, and he was a dominant. His equipment was far larger than a normal weasel, and lizards compared almost evenly to him.

He had to adjust himself. The thought of using the profiles stored in PATOMES to personally examine a male lizard's member and compare it to his own was tempting. His own cock was emerging at the idea. He shifted again and tried to force his mind away from the idea.

It had been impossible for those he worked with day and night not to notice his habits of releasing the building sexual tension. In their situation there was no way anyone could really have personal time. Only a few had commented on his behavior. They were just curious really. Most admitted to not working as closely with a mammal before. He'd never noticed any of the male lizards exhibiting the same behavior. Jeremy gave up and unbuttoned his shorts and spread his legs open. He no longer thought anything of exposing himself. Besides, there was no one else around for miles.

With his cock out the radiant heat of the fire on his bare skin was excruciatingly sensual. He sat and let the warmth ignite his imagination. He started stroking finally letting his mind focus on Karresa Ferris. She'd been an untouchable force in his dreams for months. He wanted her more than anything.

She had become the prime example of feminine desire in his mind. She had proved herself tough as any of those under her command. Lizards as a whole were a good deal stronger pound for pound than mammals and Karresa was no different. As was typical for her species she stood larger and stronger than most lizard males. To Jeremy the real draw was that she was smart, sharp enough to almost match him in the few strategy exercises he's taken part in. Her bare body was permanently seared in his mind from all the times he'd followed her lead the training routines.

His first ejaculation arced high. His eyes followed it until it landed in the fire. As the rest missed the mark of his first shot he thought it somehow apt. With his mind still focused on Karresa his first emission was rendered to nothing in flame.

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Last week I posted an excerpt from my notes that turned out to be as popular as the chapter. I have to admit I was surprised and very pleased at your interest.

I also realized too late I'd never made notes for pangolins. Since I doubt many of you would go back to look I'll add them here.

The single example of lizards helping another toward ascension are pangolins. While they look remarkably like lizards Pangolin are indeed mammals. Their armored appearance tends to make any think twice about bothering them despite their fairly small size. They stand at just above four feet tall on average and tend to have slight builds. They first arose throughout Central Africa. While still not numerous they are still considered to be the first of the second generation of species to ascend to intelligence. They came to intelligence around the same time as lions and yet were still pushed out of Africa in order to survive. They share a lingering animus for lions much like the other African species.