

By Way Of Explanation

Okay you lot, for me that was an awesome week. Thanks again for all the questions and comments. These past few weeks of comments have been good but last week made me feel as though I've got the best readers following along. Just gotta let you all know how much that's appreciated. I feel so good I can't even do snarky this week. Yes I can...

When Jeremy woke up the next morning Eric had already left. Sam was still in his room and by the sound, deep asleep. He went into the kitchen and started cleaning up after Eric again. He knew bringing up Eric's habit of not doing his part would end in an argument and also fail to change anything. Even knowing how useless it was made him that much angrier with his brother. Looking up at a sound he saw Sam standing at the kitchen entry staring back at him.

"I was about to start making breakfast, but now that you're up I'd rather go out to eat."

"In only your fur?"

"Huh? Oh." Jeremy said looking at himself. "Well, I kind of fell in with a bunch of lizards down there. They don't really have anything external, so they tend to go about without when they're with only other lizards. I kind of fell into the same habit."

"Really? Didn't they stare a lot?" his brother asked crossing his arms and leaning against the wall of the kitchen entry.

Jeremy chuckled. "At first, yeah, but once the novelty wore off I was pretty much treated as one of the crew. After a while they viewed me as close to one of them a mammal could get." He looked at his brother as Sam appraised him. Jeremy knew that months ago he'd have felt self-conscious but now his older brother staring at him in the fur barely registered.

"Damn Jeremy, you look tough as nails. What'd they do to you down there?"

"They do have a pretty intense training regime. Then again, most of those I worked with were military."

Sam shook his head as he walked into the kitchen and changed the subject by saying "Anyway, I'll make something quick for the both of us."

"It would be faster going out. Besides its the weekend."

Sam looked at him. "Admit it, last night was the first time in how long you've had a real home cooked meal?"

Jeremy stared at his brother thinking back. "Didn't we eat together just after I got back?"

"That was just a quick breakfast, and Eric ate most of it." Sam reminded him smiling at the irony.

Jeremy sighed. "You're not going to take no for an answer, are you?"

"You know me." Sam said in agreement.

Jeremy tried helping but his brother insisted on doing everything himself. He sat on one of the bar stools on the other side of the bar that separated the kitchen and living area. Watching his brother work he became impressed at how he was able to handle several different tasks at once. Soon he had everything in pans heating on the stove.

"You always were better at this than the rest of us." Jeremy observed.

"Just a matter of practice." Sam said. Looking over at Jeremy a moment he asked "Have any plans for today?"

"I have an appointment in a couple hours."

"Doing what?"

"Was going to start training with Alex again."

His brother shrugged and rolled his eyes with a smile. "Okay, what about after that?"

"I was thinking of hitting a few book stores."

"You already read too much. When was the last time you went to a movie?"

"When did dad take us all to watch 'Fortress'?"

Sam stopped and stared at him for a second. "Damn, that was more than ten years ago." He started laughing. "Dad almost pulled us out of there halfway through when it started getting really brutal, remember that?"

Jeremy laughed with him at the memory. "That was a pretty vicious movie. It was the last time he ever thought about taking us to the movies again."

"Yeah, it was worth it though."

Jeremy snorted at another memory. "Yeah, it was, and Eric had nightmares for months after that."

Sam laughed again, his tone a bit different. "I'm not surprised. Me and Ian were old enough to handle something like that. How'd it affect you?"

"I was okay. I think maybe I understood it was just a story, or maybe having all the bad guys ending up dead helped. I can't remember having any nightmares from it."

Jeremy watched his brother finish making breakfast as he thought over his memory of that time. He didn't want to bring it up with his brother but that was also the year Alex Elkins made news. The violent message of the movie combined with Alex being in the news had turned out to have been a formative time in his life. As Sam set a full plate in front of him, Jeremy asked "What movie did you have in mind?"

As his brother started eating his own breakfast he listed off several movies Jeremy had not even heard of. After listening to his brother Jeremy asked him to make the pick. Sam smiled and after nodding until he could swallow his mouthful accepted the burden.

As Jeremy finished Sam observed "I should have made more."

"No, that was the perfect portion. I don't want to be too full for training." Jeremy answered. He walked around and entered the kitchen and started helping his brother clean up. Once they were finished with the clean up Jeremy stripped his bed and put his bedding in the wash. After that he showered. He doubted Sam could sense it but to him he smelled of his brother after sleeping in the same bed Eric had commandeered. He even suspected Eric had used his bed after getting back from the gym without showering.

He had more than enough time to dress, pack his workout gear and shift his laundry to the dryer. Finding his phone he sent a message to Jackson Buttons before leaving for his training session. He arrived early at the club and was shown in by Elkins. The red panda led him to the back office and instead of starting a training session asked him about what he'd done with his time off.

Jeremy briefly described his trip. Alex probed for more and after a few minutes started focusing on his interactions on a few of his stops. Jeremy was eventually forced to admit he'd gotten into a fight. His trainer was surprisingly amused at the incident and asked for more details.

Once Jeremy finished recounting his encounter with the wolf Alex observed "That's good. Looking back, do you see why I advised you to get away from everything for a time?"

"It has helped. I didn't realize I was as tense as I had been. I'm not sure I understand how leaving and getting in fights would have helped."

The red panda laughed. "It's not that you got into a fight and worked off a little tension. It's not even that you're now under much less stress. You've gone through something that tested you. Now that you've had some time to reflect, what do you feel? What do you intend to do with yourself now?"

Jeremy asked "Do with myself? Other than get back to work and training, I'm not sure what you mean."

After a second or two of staring at Jeremy in silence Alex explained. "So far you've done everything expected of you as an adult. Now that you're about to resume training for becoming a mature dominant, what do you plan to do with the power you'll have? What will be your purpose in life? How do you intend to use the power you'll have?"

Jeremy stood in front of his trainer and could think of nothing to say. He took a deep breath and sighed out before admitting "I hadn't thought that far ahead." He continued to meet the red panda's stare.

"I understand, it's why I ask. Come back next Saturday, we'll continue your training then. In the meanwhile, begin thinking on what you want to be known for. What purpose you wish to have that will define who you are to become as a dominant."

"Yes, sir." Jeremy answered almost absently. He felt as though Alex had mentally hit him over the head with a plank. From the time he'd first known he was going to become a dominant he really had only been thinking of survival. Even after gaining his position at Nicholson he'd only been reacting to situations and only planned ahead in regard to the requirements of the situation. There was also PATOMES to consider.

He'd not thought about the mystery of how it had gotten to him in well over a year. Alex couldn't have known about it but his having such a powerful tool made his question all the more important. Jeremy wondered, with an almost eerie sense of certainty the question of his purpose was also tied into PATOMES. With such a powerful tool at his disposal, Jeremy was inclined to think whatever force, or organization responsible for it coming to him expected much of him.

Alex smiled and clapped him on the shoulder. "Don't fret too much over it. It takes years for some to find their purpose. Besides, the training to understand and hone their talent as a mature dominant takes far longer."

Jeremy understood Alex was making a distinction. Jeremy was tempted to ask more but refrained. From the expression Alex had on his face he felt doing so would lower his mentor's impression of him. Instead he nodded and held out his arm as he said "Until next week, sir."

After sharing an arm clasp with Alex, Jeremy left the club. Outside he slowed and did his best to remember what he had wanted to do after his training session. He stopped two blocks from the club and stepped out of the way of the other pedestrians. Putting his back to the wall of a building Jeremy sorted through the conflicting emotions and thoughts.

Over the last six months he'd learned to deal with several urgent issues at a time. He found himself exercising the same discipline of thought on his own mind. He found that he was excited at the prospect of having more in his schedule. Jeremy had learned to cope with having a full schedule so much so that he was looking forward to once again filling his day with activity. Now that he looked back, he'd been going at such a fast pace even before Chile that he felt as though he thrived under the pressure. Back under control he let the smile he felt find its way to his face.

Pulling out his phone and checking his messages and smiled at the reply from Jackson. He next conducted a quick search with his phone. The nearest chain book store was several blocks away. Jeremy pushed off the building and reentered the foot traffic at a pace that forced him to weave through the slower fellow pedestrians. Jeremy found he had missed the crowds, missed the hustle of the city, even missed the noise that had once seemed to be loud to the point of threatening hearing loss. It felt like he was finally home again.

Finding the book store he entered and started wandering the isles. Finding the section devoted to science Jeremy started looking over the selection of books. Taking the time to read the summaries on the back covers and paging through a few of the more promising ones he selected a few. He then found the recommendations Jackson Buttons had sent him. In all he carried ten books to the front. After paying and stuffing them in his pack he headed for the apartment.

When Jeremy got back the smell of something cooking made his stomach rumble even though he wasn't hungry. He glanced at Sam sitting on the couch and walked around to the kitchen to inspect whatever he was cooking. The oven was empty and off but there was a new slow cooker sitting on the counter. Lifting the lid revealed a large roast that had already turned a delicious shade of brown. It was surrounded by vegetables and swimming in broth.

"I decided to buy a slow cooker and try it out." Sam said from right behind him.

"It looks almost as good as it smells. How soon will it be ready?" Jeremy asked setting the lid back on.

"It'll be just right when we get back, I think. This is just a first try after all."

"How much time do we have before the movie starts?" Jeremy asked.

"About an hour, but we should probably leave now before you start drooling." His brother answered with a pleased smirk.

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There was a lot of speculation about PATOMES after last weeks chapter. I thought to be fair that maybe I'd share a few things I'd discussed with a friend back when I started the first version of Jeremy. After getting a few more comments and thinking about it a bit more...Naw. I think the story would continue to be more enjoyable if I left room for speculation. Besides, some of you are coming up with some great ideas that I wish I'd had.