

I almost posted this one as an extra last week. Not only does it pick up just minutes later but last week was kind of short. Still, kind of glad I didn't. Now that I've spent a bit of time going over this one the tone between the two are completely different.

The movie Sam picked was the latest superhero action movie. Jeremy chuckled at the pick and ribbed his brother as they were waiting for the show to start. His brother returned the verbal barbs until the previews came up. Jeremy's thoughts turned to the brief exchange with his brother.

It had been the first time in years they had both acted almost normal, acted like the brothers they were. They could never go back to the relationship they had when they were younger. Jeremy would now and always be the dominant brother, but he also found it had felt good to just be himself with Sam once again. All that was pushed to the back of his mind as the movie started.

The show was about a young wolf that discovered he had the ability to grow larger. His ability not only grew him in size but strength and power as well. Jeremy found it a bit over the top in how the wolf struggled with the idea of his being able to grow so much larger and stronger. Like all such stories the hero wolf was able to save the day, but only by the barest of margins.

While he appreciated the show Jeremy found it a bit uncomfortable that the fictitious wolf was depicted with the same ability PATOMES gave him. The wolf hero even had a mentor in the film that set him on the path to becoming a hero. Worse yet was the seeming synchronicity of his own mentor having just brought up the same issue with him. As enjoyable as the movie was Jeremy was left more disquieted than entertained by all the parallels.

As they left the theater Sam nudged him with an elbow good naturally. "Admit it, you liked the movie."

"Well, yeah, but what kind of name is that? Sounds more like a villain's name than the hero."

"Oh well, in the comics he started out on the path to becoming a villain but was saved from that by his mentor. He kept the name as a personal reminder of how fine a line it can be between heroes and villains."

Jeremy stopped and stared at his brother as he in turn stopped and looked back to him. "Wait, you didn't tell me you're into comic books."

"Yes. So?"

"When did this start?" Jeremy asked surprised at finding something new about his brother he'd never known.

"I've always been into them, we could never afford to buy any when we were young. Even now I can't afford to buy too many. I can still keep up with the story lines though."

"Huh. I never knew." Jeremy said as he started walking next to his brother again. "So, KingDead actually started out as a bad guy?"

With just that bit of encouragement his brother started expounding on the character and his storyline, at great length. His brother's discourse reminded Jeremy just how Sam had always been able to spin a good tale. He was still going on about the wolf hero when they arrived home. Sam stopped a few

steps inside and was looking at their brother sitting on the couch. Jeremy stopped next to him and stared at Eric as well.

Eric was on the couch watching the television with a diner plate resting on his lap. He was finishing off dinner. The large bone that had been in the middle of the roast was on full display on Eric's plate, and there was little meat left around it. Jeremy closed the door as Sam made his way to the kitchen. The smell of the roast still in the air made his stomach rumble again. He stared at Eric's plate.

"He ate the whole fucking thing!" Sam said from the kitchen.

"No I didn't, theres still enough left in the pot for you."

Jeremy shook his head and brought a paw up to rub his fingers against his temples. "What the fuck Eric?" dropping his arm back to his side he continued. "Are you really this selfish, or is this an act?"

"What? I said there's more left."

Jeremy said. "If you weren't family I'd throw you out right now. As it is I gave you until the end of the week to find somewhere else. Until then, you don't have the right to eat anything unless you bought it and cooked it yourself."

Eric stared at him for several seconds. "You wouldn't say that if I wasn't a threat to you."

"What?" Jeremy was shocked at the turn of the conversation.

Eric leaned back on the couch setting the plate on the cushion next to him. He took a deep breath as he put his hands behind his head and looked over to where Sam stood. Eric held eye contact with his brother for a second and smirked. Looking back to Jeremy he continued smirking and flexed his arms and abdomen.

Jeremy laughed at the display of his brother. The comparison between the Eric in front of him and the imaginary Eric from his dream a day ago couldn't be more drastic. "I'm sorry, was I supposed to be impressed?"

Eric's smile faltered for a brief moment. Forcing his smile back on his face he turned to Sam and asserted "It impresses him."

Jeremy glanced at Sam who was staring at Eric. He could see his brother was furious. He understood his reaction. He'd been looking forward to the meal and was upset with Eric for taking the best part. Watching Sam for another moment he realized he was one wrong move or another stupid comment from pouncing on his brother. Eric may have had a few inches and close to forty pounds on his older brother but at that moment Sam had far more determination. Jeremy guessed it would only end with one of them getting hurt.

"End of the week, be out of here. Don't test me." Jeremy said to Eric. Looking back at Sam he observed "Looks like we're eating out." as he opened the door. He made it a point to turn his back on Eric and sidestepped enough to intervene if it became necessary.

Sam walked out without looking at either of his brothers. Jeremy followed him to the elevator and kept silent during the ride down. He only glanced at his brother a few times as he seethed. Even though he was a dominant and had no real fear of his brother he still felt a slight bit of intimidation. As the doors opened Sam turned to him and closed his eyes as he sighed.

"Sorry. He just knows how to push the right buttons." Sam said as he stepped out of the cab.

"No need to apologize." Jeremy said. He was about to add he'd done Eric the favor but stopped. He'd rather not encourage Sam into taking on his larger brother.

Sam lead the way out of the building. Jeremy followed his brother even though he was sure his mind was still on Eric.

After a couple blocks Jeremy asked "Are you even hungry?"

Shaking his head he said "No, I can't eat anything when I'm this upset."

"Okay. Let's stop here then." Jeremy replied and turned to his right. He opened the door to the establishment and watched as his brother smiled. Sam entered the 39 Flavors first and stepped up to the counter looking up at the menu. After they both ordered and received bowls they took a table and started in on their ice-cream. A few bites into their snack his brother started telling Jeremy about everything Eric had done while he'd been in Chile.

Jeremy listened and could only shake his head at his brother. A little less than a month after he'd gone to Chile Eric had dropped by as a visit, and stayed. Sam had protested after a few days only to have his brother rough him up for bringing the subject up. As shocking as Eric using his greater size and strength against his brother was, his next stunt truly angered Jeremy.

Three months ago their mother and father had hosted a family get together and had of course invited Eric. He'd used that opportunity to pick a fight with their father. Having already asserted himself over Sam and Ian they had felt compelled to stay out of the fight. With their father isolated Eric had succeeded in supplanting their father as the family alpha. At least while Jeremy was out of the country.

It seemed to him that Eric had fallen in with the muscle head crowd at the gym and become one of their worst examples. From his experience working at the gym most treated everybody normally, but there were those that developed a condescending attitude toward anyone they deemed of less stature than themselves. It had been bad enough working in that environment with them around, Sam had had to live with one for the last five months.

Even before Sam finished his rant Jeremy resolved to do something about his brother's attitude. He'd have to talk with Alex and Zane first. When Sam finally fell silent he watched Jeremy almost expectantly. He waited for a while as Jeremy stayed silent.

"Well, are you going to do anything?"

"I'll have to think on what to do." Jeremy said. He was a little surprised at Sam's question, as well as his current attitude.

Sam sighed, clearly exasperated. "Yeah, should have known you'd say that."

"I didn't say I wouldn't do anything. I just need to figure out the right way to go about this." Jeremy said in his defense.

"I know, its just that you always were like that." Sam replied. After a few seconds of Jeremy staring at him with a curious expression he added. "You always thought everything though from every angle before acting. I never liked playing any strategy game against you, you always beat the crap out of the rest of us."

"Wait, the last time we played anything as a family was when I was about, what twelve?" Jeremy asked.

"Yeah, thats about right." Sam said. "You ruined game night by being too smart for the rest of us." He added laughing.

"No, you guys started getting more homework."

"Actually, that was just an excuse." Sam admitted with a smirk. "Just like the idea of getting ice-cream and listening to my rant to calm me down. Your plan worked perfectly, and now I'm hungry, so lets get something to eat."

Jeremy watched his brother stand up from the table and followed suit. With a smile he pulled his brother close for a one armed hug. "I'm glad you didn't move to another city. Wouldn't have been the same without you."

Sam punched him lightly on the chest saying "I'm glad you're back too."

Jeremy dropped his arm away from his brother and smiling said "Right, lets eat. You pick the place, I'll buy again."

"You sure you want to do that?"

"Yeah, I feel safe knowing that the mooch of the family isn't here."

Sam laughed loud enough to draw a few glances as they walked out of the ice cream parlor. He led the way a few blocks to a small restaurant. They ordered and ate while chatting about the little things remembered from their youth. For Jeremy it had turned into a pleasant evening despite Eric's actions. They got back to the apartment to find Eric sitting on the couch watching television with his plate still on the coffee table. Sam went to the kitchen and came back out reminding his brother to clean the dishes.

Eric as always tried to shrug it off until Jeremy picked up the remote and changed the channel. He sat on the couch and started channel surfing. "You have a chore to do, go do it."

"Chores? Are you shitting me?"

"No. I never invited you to stay here. Neither did Sam. So if you really need the rest of the week to find somewhere else to go, you'll do all the chores while you're here." Jeremy said as he kept sifting through the channels. Turning to his brother still sitting next to him he stared at him in the eye and added "Unless you think you can challenge me."

Eric looked away and after a few seconds got up and headed for the kitchen.

"Don't forget your plate." Jeremy reminded him.

Eric turned and attempted to stare at Jeremy. He dropped his eyes and after picking up his diner plate went to the kitchen. Sam had watched the encounter and sat next to Jeremy with a smile on his face. Jeremy handed him the remote. Sam took a few seconds to find a movie that had recently started. They watched the show together ignoring Eric as he loudly washed the dishes and grumbled about having to even do chores.

Once the movie finished Sam went to his room to sleep. Jeremy turned the sound down and kept watching even though he didn't feel like watching anything. With Eric sitting next to him waiting for the couch to sleep on he was going to stay up as long as he felt like. His brother caught on fairly quickly and settled in and put his feet up on the coffee table.

"Keep your feet off the furniture."

With a look at him Eric put his feet back on the floor. "I do have to get some sleep."

"Then you should have found somewhere else before now."

"Fuck, Jeremy, you don't even watch television."

"I do when it irritates you."

"Fuck it then." Eric said as he got up. He crossed to the front door and picking up a few of his clothes left.

Jerney walked over to the door and threw the security bolt to keep his brother from returning and went to bed.

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Kingdead's character was used with permission. I mention it here because I didn't want to spoil the surprise. I'm way ahead in writing out the first draft but there may be more cameos in the future.