

Got a nice big fat juicy chapter for you this week. Hope you lot like it. I've been looking forward to throwing this at you for some time. When I wrote it I wondered how many of you would guess where I was going. I only hope its a nice surprise for most of you. If not, I'm getting too predictable and will have to do something about that...

Jeremy waited for the expected call from Allen but it never came. After a while he opened PATOMES to see if the crow had taken the opportunity to flee. To his surprise both Allen's and the former panther's profiles were active and at the same location. He would have to wait for Allen to broach the subject with him, if he ever did. The way he'd sent the cheetah on his way he had to admit that Allen might just try to handle this new wrinkle by himself.

He went to sleep with the cheetah and changed panther on his mind.

Jeremy woke the next morning to the sounds of his brother in the kitchen again. He walked out to the living area smiling at the routine that was developing. Sam was making pancakes. Looking at the clock he saw it was earlier than normal.

Jeremy asked "Waking up earlier on my account?"

"A little. Actually its good to have the apartment free of Eric for a change."

Jeremy nodded and sat watching his brother for a time. "You know, you're more of an alpha than he is."

Sam glanced at him for a second. Still working on breakfast he responded "How can that be? He's about five inches taller than I am."

"Its not so much about size than about strength of character. You have it and he doesn't."

"So, what, are you saying I can beat him in a fight?" Sam asked, the doubt clear in his voice.

"No. Although the other night when you were so pissed at him you might have had enough motivation to hurt him as much as he could hurt you. Its more like, when I was assigned meetings with mature dominants. I met one that was almost eight feet tall and huge. I was only in the room with him for maybe ten minutes, but looking back I get the impression that his attitude was covering for something. I have a feeling he's perhaps one of the weakest dominants."

He shared eye contact with Sam for seconds before his brother turned to making breakfast again. As he put a plate full of pancakes in front of Jeremy he asked "So, what is it then? What makes you think I'm an alpha and Eric isn't?"

"Eric's lazy and trying too hard to act like he's more than he is." Jeremy waited until Sam had finished making his own meal to start on his. Speaking around a mouthful he added "Just because he was lucky enough to be taller than you doesn't make him better."

Sam looked at him for a few seconds and shrugged. "Maybe he'll grow out of it, like some of his other phases."

"Maybe." Jeremy agreed, even though his voice gave away the doubt he had in his brother.

"So, what do you have planned today?" Sam asked. Jeremy smiled at the change of subject.

"I was thinking of wandering around the park. Just to see how big it really is."

"Sounds fun." His brother said.

"You don't sound convinced."

"I'm sure you'll be fine. Its just not something I'd do by myself."

Jeremy looked at his brother. Sam was focusing on his meal but looked discouraged. He wondered just how much Eric's behavior had influenced him. He'd always seen Sam as being more confident than he was showing now. He didn't want to point out his observation so copied his brother by shrugging and changing the subject. They chatted the time away until Sam had to go to work thanks to Jeremy promising to clean up the kitchen for him. It was the least he could do to help his brother shake off Eric's influence.

He had an appointment with Alex only an hour after Sam left for work. He was pleased that his mentor would continue training Jeremy in dominant abilities. It was a further sign that he was somewhat safe from sharing the fate of Candy Krowly. Jeremy hurried through the cleaning and was out of the apartment and on his way with only a few minutes to spare. When he arrived he was surprised to see Zane at the self defense club as well.

After greeting each other Zane explained his presence. They would discuss how to proceed in exploring Jeremy's talent. For more than an hour suggestions were brought up as well as potential hazards. It was agreed, and after considering it somewhat obvious that Jeremy's inability to move his limbs when he's been in a higher speed of thought a safety mechanism.

Had he been able to move his limbs as fast as he had wanted at the speed intended Jeremy would more than likely have broken several bones in his arms. That was considered the least horrific outcome should he be able to move without the self imposed limits of his talent.

They came up with several simple and straightforward work arounds of the limitation. Jeremy would have to practice each, but once he had fully mastered his talent both Alex and Zane speculated that it would be nearly impossible for anyone to best him in an encounter like the one where he'd discovered his ability. Alex called the day's meeting at an end. They'd spent almost two hours in discussion. Alex and Jeremy would begin his training the next meeting. Zane would also begin working with Jeremy in teaching him other abilities dominants typically shared.

He left the club with Zane. The pangolin owned a luxury vehicle almost the same model Jackson Buttons drove. His mentor offered to drive him to his apartment much to Jeremy's surprise and pleasure. The ride with Zane was extended by a slight bit of traffic. Jeremy rode with him for a few blocks sharing a silence before he glanced at the male. "May I ask what your talent is?"

Zane looked at him and smiled. "Its really rather mundane."

Jeremy waited. He could feel a smile forming in anticipation. He was beginning to understand and appreciate his mentor's humor.

The pangolin cleared his throat and said "When I wish it I have perfect memory."

Jeremy pondered the admission until they reached another red light. "I'm not sure I understand."

"Well, there's good memory and then perfect memory. You've heard of people with photographic memory. I can remember every sight, sound, even smell if I concentrate."

"How draining is that?"

"It's not nearly as physically draining as your talent. I can go for hours."

Jeremy looked at his mentor for a brief second. As they started moving again he observed "No offense sir, but you're right, it does seem mundane."

Zane laughed, easing Jeremy's mind. "Well, our talents tend to be extensions of who we are. Mine makes sense for me as does yours."

"Sir?" Jeremy asked.

"Somewhat like your job. You even said the first time we met you liked puzzles. Your talent helps in that. It's the degree in which it helps is amazing." He slowed for another light and looked at Jeremy. "It's not often that a dominant has an ability as potent as you."

Jeremy stared at the pangolin a moment. "You were using your talent when we met?"

Zane smiled his answer. "I do when meeting all young dominants."

Jeremy nodded. "Which is why you were the first to meet me. To assess me, whether I was a threat or not."

"True." Zane said as he stopped. "Well, here we are." He said as they pulled over in front of Jeremy's apartment building. He looked Jeremy in the eye for several seconds.

For Jeremy the brief stare they shared was full of understanding. They'd already discussed the subtle dangers an undisciplined dominant posed. Jeremy felt a rueful smile form on his face. He knew there was nothing else that needed to be said.

They shared an arm clasp before Jeremy got out of the car. He watched as Zane pulled out into traffic and turned at the end of the block.

Jeremy headed to the park. His mind was on the discussion with his mentors while his eyes wandered the sky. He spent a good portion of the morning looking for hawks and other larger birds. He managed to add several raptor profiles to PATOMES.

Once he became hungry he left in search of a new spot to eat. He felt a desire to be able to show his brother something new for once. Sam was always the one to show him new places. He wanted to return the favor eventually, even if just once. He picked a small eatery at random and entered. Even though the service was good and his meal was out to him quickly it was not all that remarkable. He'd have to keep looking for a place that would please his brother.

Back at his apartment Jeremy finished cleaning the kitchen from his earlier rushed attempt. When done he still had hours on his paws. He changed and went downstairs to work out until he was satisfied. After showering he sat down and started going through the books he'd bought. The book he had chosen to start on first was a bit of a challenge but he was able to make headway through several chapters before Sam got home.

His brother apologized to him and explained he had plans with coworkers for the evening. Jeremy assured him he understood. Sam was back out the door in under half an hour leaving him with the entire

evening to himself. After a few moments thought Jeremy stuffed a few things in his pack and left the apartment.

He made his way to Center Park and found an out of the way clearing. After his experiments with the captured predators he was confident he could repeat the experiment for himself. With the night settling in Jeremy doubted anyone would venture to the out of the way part of the park he had found. He was actually eager to feel what it was like for himself. He stripped and stuffed everything in his pack. Once it was stowed in some brush he felt ready.

In programming the changes he was sure to set an automatic reset for two minutes. His experiments had proven that even if he lost himself using the reset in PATOMES would bring him back. Of course should he lose himself an auto reset would be the only way for him to get back. Taking care to double check everything, even the compatibility test, he was ready.

Activating the command Jeremy felt a sudden jarring sensation and blinked at the change of perspective. He hopped up onto the bench feeling the wood bend under his weight. His eyesight had lost a bit of capability to see in dim light but in return everything he focused on came in such detail that he began to feel the now familiar mental pressure of the new ability. The not quite headache went away when he closed his eyes and focused on the rest of his new body.

He could feel the potential power in his chest. He'd not expected the massive flight muscles to feel this way. He was more than ready to take to the air but felt it wiser to wait for the automatic reset. Spreading his wings he opened his eyes to observe just how large they were. The reach of his first joint was past the edges of the bench, his wings had to be more than twenty feet wide. Bringing them back in he hopped down in anticipation of the reset.

As the timer counted down in his vision he felt the change again. This kind of change was going to take some getting used to. He would accept the strange dislocated feeling of the change if it gave him the ability he was seeking. He grinned at the anticipation of something new to experience. Programming the change for a two hour period Jeremy readied himself. Just before activating PATOMES he noticed something on the bench.

Leaning closer he saw the marks his claws had left in the top rail of the bench. His feet had gouged deep marks and even splinted the wood. He'd not realized his talons held that much power. He remembered using the muscles in his feet and legs more than normal in keeping his balance. The results on the bench were shocking. With a smile he activated PATOMES.

Once again he was a four foot tall hawk. Far larger than a normal bird Jeremy felt the same eagerness to take to the sky. He could feel the bird instincts urge him to find a safe place to sleep but they were faint enough to override with little effort. Crouching low and then springing up as he spread his wings he leapt into the air.

His first rush of air under his wings thrilled and terrified him. He was eight feet in the air with his first leap and flapping with all his might just to keep from falling back to the ground in a heap. In a few flaps he was far beyond the point of falling gracefully. With his heart feeling as though it were in his throat and beating rapidly he worked to get higher. His bird instincts were screaming for height. His mind was screaming to get back to the earth. The contradiction may have been the cause of his accident.

He sensed for the first time what it felt like to drop ballast as a bird. Titling his head a bit he couldn't see where his leavings landed but could hear the splatter as it hit branches. Voicing his humor he was surprised at the volume of his own screeching cry. He kept climbing, his focus was on getting higher and suppressing his own desire to get back on solid ground.

Before he knew he'd climbed so high he could see rooftops under himself. He leveled off and soared for a few minutes. His chest felt the burn of his efforts. With his wings spread and relaxed in his open position his body recovered from the effort almost instantly. Watching the sky around himself he just observed and felt the exhilaration of flying under his own power. Were he in his own weasel body he'd have shivered with the excitement. This hawk body he wore he only noticed fluffed feathers for a brief instant. The wind over his feathers felt natural and soothing even though it was Jeremy's first time experiencing it.

The air around him seemed odd in his vision. At first he thought it was a result of the low light but the more he looked his certainty grew. Instead of being perfectly transparent the air hinted at extra colors. Very faint, but visible to his new bird eyes the air actually had a tint to it. He realized birds could see deep into the infrared spectrum. Focusing on those deeper areas he watched as the colors shifted and trembled.

Guessing at the cause he tilted his wings to turn his body and approached the column of tinted air. As soon as he entered the faintly tinted air he felt the lift hit him and strain his wings. Voicing his excitement as he adjusted his wings and tail Jeremy rode the thermal higher. He gained height with little effort. He only needed to stay in the rising column of air. In watching the sky around him he could detect several other updrafts in the vicinity.

He was unused to estimating altitude, he was far enough above the city that he could begin to see the outlying suburbs in the distance. Adjusting to leave the thermal Jeremy simply glided in a large circle. His heart was still beating fast, but he was beginning to wonder if it was normal for his avian metabolism. At the height he'd gained Jeremy could see everything.

In looking down at the city he realized he could see far too much. He had no idea how to find where he'd started from. He could pick out the small outline of Center Park but was uncertain exactly where he'd left his backpack. After a few moments thought he figured that he could find his trail with his coyote sense of smell once he was back on the ground. From wherever he landed it would just be a little tracking to find his pack. That is if he couldn't find the bench from the air. The thought taught him that he couldn't really smile with such a massive beak.

Out of curiosity he brought up the profile of Allen and his new crow companion. Both Allen and the new crow were at the same location. Adding profiles and overlaying them in his eyesight he could understand the layout of the city better. With the help of his family member's locations he was starting to learn the landmarks from above.

All too soon the two hours limit was starting to run out. He'd not thought it would have been so engrossing but he had less than half an hour to land before PATOMES reset his body. To save time he tried a slight dive. The feeling of speed and air ripping over his face and wings was an all new thrill. He dared to steepen the dive and pulled up above one of the taller buildings.

Jeremy screeched the strain on his wings as the air pulled him up short. It was far more strenuous than taking off on his wing muscles but the feeling was well worth the effort. With the roof of the building so close he decided to try a landing.

Circling out and coming in to land on the edge of the roof Jeremy reached with his feet out and wings open to catch air and stall just shy of landing. He fell in a tumble from misjudging the timing and distance. Picking himself up and testing his limbs he found he gained a few aches but nothing was damaged. Hopping back on the short parapet at the side of the building Jeremy looked down the side.

There was a perfect updraft sliding up the glass of the building. Extending his wings to about two thirds open he could feel the air almost lifting him off the edge. Pushing off and flapping he took to the air again and headed for the park. Soaring over the buildings at a lower altitude he enjoyed the thrill of

speeding over them with a new perspective. At the higher altitude he could only guess at his speed from the air passing over his feathers. Passing just over the rooftops he got the feeling his speed was faster than any other mode of transportation.

Jeremy found himself soaring over a few rooftops with just feet to spare. The exhilaration was so great he challenged himself to continuously get closer. Passing over the last one before entering the airspace of the park he gave voice to his excitement. He knew he could be heard for miles but didn't care. In circling the park he could see the trails and follow his memory of his trip to the small clearing he had stashed his pack. With a quick cry of joy he came in to land on the bench.

The next second flew by in a blur of excitement and confusion.

It took him a few seconds to stop his screeching after his attempted landing. Looking back up at the bench from the ground he saw the force of his landing had broken the top two planks of the backrest. It had been a hard way to learn he was far too large to land on anything as flimsy as a park bench. He'd easily remember that lesson, it felt as though he'd broken something in his left wing. He activated the reset in PATOMES early.

Sighing his relief he took a moment to collect his thoughts before climbing to his feet. His pack was where he'd left it. Once dressed he headed back toward his apartment with a smile on his face. He obviously needed practice on his landings. Once he got that down he'd have a new hobby to pass what little spare time he had.

As an experience, flying in the body of a huge hawk was second only to sex.

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I am so bursting at the seams from you lot. There has been so many comments and guesses dancing around PATOMES its getting hard not to comment. Some of you seem to have a good sense of what it might be, but so far no one has hit the bullseye. To be honest, if anyone had I wouldn't be saying this. As it is I've already sworn one of you to secrecy for a guess about something coming up soon. That so many of you have stayed with the story is another pleasant surprise. Things like this is probably one of the best things for writers. As a reward and thank you for everybody I'll be posting an extra chapter some time this month.