

Sorry this is being posted a bit late. This week has been crazy busy at work.

Jeremy stayed at his apartment only long enough to put away the notebook Jackson had given him. He felt it deserved an extra level of protection from being considered family property. He'd not let himself leave it laying around. Back in the hallway he wondered for just a brief moment where his brother was spending his time. At the freight elevator he turned his attention to changing into his Dominic persona.

In the back alley with PATOMES to guide him he started tracking the ocelot police officer. Her profile was stationary and miles away. Taking the subway to bring him closer Dominic regained the street level to see she was indeed in the northern section of the city. Still several blocks from her location Dominic found himself in an older part of the city. He made his way to the building she was in..

The ocelot was in what looked like an ordinary brownstone, almost identical to the ones next to it. He'd seen its like portrayed in movies and shows. Hers was a stereotypical aged building from an era fondly remembered only by those that had lived it. He knew of the trick of pressing several buttons until some unwary resident buzzed him in. Again from the same entertainment venues that showcased the brownstones. It was typical of the area; older residents that still lived in a more trusting time.

Normally he'd rather not make that much commotion or draw any attention to himself, normally. Tonight though, he was making a statement. It didn't help his attitude that an officer that abused her authority also lived here. It only added to the stereotypes. Dominic pressed half the buttons before he hit on one that buzzed him into the building, some people never learned.

He walked past the elevators and continued toward the back. PATOMES told him she lived above. He found the stairs and started climbing. Guided by PATOMES he found her floor and stared eliminating the apartments of that floor.

Dominic soon stood outside the door of the ocelot's apartment and listened. At three in the morning he doubted the cat would be awake. He pulled out the pry bar he'd bought earlier in the day. Jimmyming the door open he stood and listened for any sound of movement in the apartment.

PATOMES told him she was inside, but he knew to be cautious since he wouldn't know whether she lived alone or not. He stepped inside heart beating fast. He was crossing a new line. He'd killed before but the seemingly simpler matter of breaking into someone's home was shaking his confidence. He looked around at the darkened apartment. To him it looked like the cat lived alone. There was no signs of male habitation allowing some of his confidence to return.

Stepping deeper into the apartment Dominic moved toward the door he guessed was the bedroom. His guess proved correct. He could see the ocelot sleeping in her bed. She faced away from the door and luckily for him she indeed lived alone. He triggered the command in PATOMES and watched as the cat shrank. Relaxing at the lowered threat he stepped up to the edge of the bed and pulled the covers off the tiny feline.

Reaching over to turn the light next to the bed on he started sifting through the sheets. Dominic found the cat and stared down at her. She must have woken as he'd searched for her smaller body.

"Remember me?"

"How did you get in here? How," she stopped speaking and looked around. The confusion was plain on her face.

Dominic sat on the edge of the bed. With the reduced stature of his rat body he'd had to almost climb up to do so. "From the park, the other night? Or were there so many of us you can't recall a single rat from the rest?" Jeremy prompted reaching out to push a finger against the two inch tall cat.

"This is impossible."

He lay on her bed, putting his face a foot from the minuscule feline. "Its entirely possible. After all, it just happened to you. Now, answer me." he said his voice taking on a threatening tone.

The ocelot stood her ground even though her fur had ruffled in the breeze of Dominic's breath as he spoke. "What was it you wanted to know?" She asked. He wondered if she'd decided this were a dream.

"Do you remember meeting me before?"

She shook her head.

"In the park, you and your partner kicked me out for doing nothing other than being the wrong species. Recall that now?"

She shook her head again.

Jeremy frowned. "Okay. So, do you often tell people to leave parks just because they're rats or other undesirable species?"

The ocelot stared a second. "That's not how it is, we constantly get complaints about, your kind causing everyone to feel uneasy."

"From the way you and your partner acted it seemed as though you were following orders. There was also that other pair of officers I ran into on my way out, They did the same. So, who gave the order to evacuate the park from, how did you say it, 'our kind'?"

"Thats not how it is."

"Then how is it?" Dominic said leaning down to put the end of his muzzle inches from the cat.

She stepped back at the closeness of him. "Please, we were following orders, yes."

"Who's orders?"

"The chief's. The chief of police gave the order, probably at the behest of the mayor."

Dominic slammed his paw down a foot from the cat. The mattress bounced with the force of his blow causing the cat to bounce and tumble as the surface rebounded. "The park is free to all. Hear me? I see or hear of any cops rousting us from it there'll be severe consequences. Understand?"

She stayed on her back looking up at him.

He saw the nod and stood from her bed. "We'll be watching. Leave us alone and we'll do the same." He turned and walking through her apartment to the door. He made his way out by the elevator no longer worried about being seen. He waited to activate the command in PATOMES returning her to her normal size until he was several blocks away. Even then it would take an hour for her full return. He wanted to make an impression, he also wanted enough time to also visit her partner.

The jackal lived several miles from the cat, he made his way to the male's residence by way of subway. Most of his attention was on PATOMES as he tracked his progress in closing on the jackal. He did notice that people moved away from him on the car. He guessed his intense purposeful attitude was showing.

Once he'd located the officer's apartment he decided to use the direct approach. Knocking on the door continuously he readied PATOMES. The second he heard the locks being thrown he triggered the command. Even as the door opened the cop was dropping in height. Dominic pushed the door open knocking the jackal away and sending the gun he had in his paw flying away from the male. He shut the door and turned to look at the pile of clothes in front of him. He didn't bother retrieving the weapon, it would now be far too large for the jackal.

Dominic lifted the shorts the jackal had been wearing watching the cop tumble out. As the male looked up at him Dominic said "Yes, there you are. I've already made a visit to your partner so to save time I'll just give my message. Good?"

The jackal looked around and up to Dominic. He was clearly shocked at the turn of events.

Dominic crouched and pointed a finger at the jackal who looked at the huge appendage just inches from him. "You and your partner kicked me out of the park a night ago. I wasn't doing anything to make anyone near me uncomfortable. I take affront to that. Your orders of sending rats or any other specie out of the park for no other reason than minding their own business is over. If I see any more cops throwing our kind out of the park you two will be the first to pay the price. We'll be watching. Do not test me." He stood and glared at the tiny jackal.

The phone started ringing as he watched the jackal. He looked to where the phone sat on the counter. Pointing he said "Mind if I take that for you, thats probably your partner now."

Dominic walked over and picked up the phone. Flipping it open he listened. Smiling at the voice on the other line he crooned "Too late. I've already delivered my message to him, but here, I'll let you two talk things over."

He walked over to the jackal and placed the phone on the floor next to him. Dominic stepped back letting the male climb up onto this phone. He turned and left. He avoided the cameras that adorned most of the intersections in the area. He again triggered the male's return when he was several blocks away. He too would be back to normal in an hour.

He was now close enough to walk back toward his apartment. He'd made a huge bluff, to borrow one of the popular gambling terms. He had no way to back up his threat should it come to that. To be honest with himself he didn't really have the inclination to follow through with his threat either. He still needed to figure out a way to know what the reaction of his assaulting the two cops was gong to be.

Back at his own apartment building he made his way through the back ways and was back as Jeremy in no time. He smiled as he walked toward his apartment, practice really was making him faster in changing persona's. Letting himself in he went straight to his room trying not to wake his brother.

He lay in bed with PATOMES open tracking the movement of the ocelot. She had left her apartment and as Jeremy could have guessed was on her way to the jackal's. The female had been back to her normal size for some time but the jackal was still under eighty percent. Jeremy smiled at the reunion. He wondered how that conversation was going. Jeremy instructed PATOMES to continue tracking their movements and closed it for the night.

He had begun to get used to having erotic dreams overnight. This night he had a bit of a reprieve and yet the dream was just as disturbing.

Jeremy typically didn't remember much of his dreams. In this dream he was only the size of one of his shrunken victims. When he woke the imagery had blurred and was already fragmenting and fading but the one thing that stuck with him was being trapped in a corner by three giant cheetahs. Laying in his own bed it was as if he were actually remembering the feel of the wall against his back.

Even while he was cleaning up for the day ahead the dream continued to bother him. Even his erotic dreams faded in less than a minute. The dream he'd just had was still in his mind, its emotional power still effected him. He was certain it was imaginary and yet couldn't get over the idea there was something to it. Opening PATOMES he reviewed every profile he'd removed mass from. Dismissing the two that he'd let go as ferals Jeremy was surprised that one old profile was still active. It took him a few seconds to remember where it had come from. One of Hugo's predator friends had survived.

As shocked as he was at the predator still surviving all this time he had to admit he was impressed. To still be alive at only an inch tall showed incredible resources. He found himself suddenly rooting for his victim. There was not enough time to search for the little male, he was expected at his parents apartment in only a few hours.

Coming out of his room he saw Sam sitting on the couch reading the same book from days ago. Glancing at him as he made his breakfast Jeremy saw he was almost at the end of the book. While not ant of his favorite foods Jeremy had a simple cereal. His mind was on PATOMES. He more than suspected his order to track the two police officers and resulted in stirring up something from the old profile. He was trying to think of how to verify his theory.

His thoughts still on PATOMES Jeremy walked around to the other side of the breakfast bar and sat in one of the stools and ate. Sam put the book down and got up from the couch to walk over to sit next to his brother.

"It'll be time to go soon."

Jeremy stopped and turned to Sam. "Are you okay?"

"Yes. I'm fine, just not looking forward to today."

"They understand." Jeremy said. He knew their parents always hoped for the best for them but sometimes they could be somewhat overbearing. Sam's lack of a job would likely be an unavoidable topic sometime during the day.

Sam only nodded and stared at the counter.

"We could show up late like Eric." Jeremy said, trying to lighten the mood of his brother.

"I was thinking maybe we could go early and get the inevitable out of the way before anyone else shows up." Sam replied still staring at the counter.

Jeremy could hear the faint pleading in his voice. His brother was half joking but also desired to leave early to get the painful part of the day over with as soon as possible. Jeremy set his almost finished bowl on the counter and stood. "Lets go."

Sam looked up at him, a little surprised. "Really?"

"Yeah, besides, I'll need to leave a bit early. I have an appointment this evening."

Sam stood with a relieved smile. Together they made their way to their parents apartment. They were early enough that none of the meal preparations had started. Jeremy had the opportunity to talk with his mother alone. He asked that she avoid the topic of Sam's lack of employment. All she would promise was that she would not bring the subject up. Jeremy knew that was the best he could do for his brother. His father was more accommodating.

After a while they started making preparations for the meal later in the day. Once Ian and Shirley arrived they were the center of attention. Shirley was obviously due any time. She moved slow and awkward, almost waddling with Ian at her side helping as best he could. Ian was all but elbowed out of the way by his mother as she stepped to Shirley's side and took his place.

Jeremy stood back with Sam at his side and watched. Steven stepped back out of the way and joined them as Shirley took a seat on the sofa. As Elisa and Ian helped her get comfortable Jeremy softly asked "When is she due?"

Sam glanced at him and tried to hide his smile. Steven answered "Two weeks from today. But I think he's going to be early."

"He?"

His father looked to him with a smile. "Just guessing."

Jeremy smiled back at his father.

"What? Don't you three have something to do?" Elisa asked from her seat next to Shirley. "Steven, its about time to start dinner. Sam, help him out. Jeremy start setting the table." Her tone brooked no argument. All three of them silently got to following her directions. Once in the kitchen and hopefully out of earshot Sam observed "Nothing ever changes."

Before long Steven and Sam had dinner ready. Just as they were bringing everything to the table Eric arrived. His brother eyed Jeremy as he sat on the opposite side of the table from him. Their father took the seat at the head of the table as Jeremy maintained eye contact with Eric. His brother looked down after a few seconds. The meal went well after that, Eric behaved himself and even chatted in a friendly manner for once.

After eating Eric joined Ian at the couch as Jeremy Sam and Steven cleaned up. Once the dishes were finished Steven asked Jeremy if he had plans for the next weekend. As they discussed riding their bikes again Sam went to the living room. By the time they left the kitchen to join the rest of the family it was almost time for Jeremy to leave.

As he was saying his goodbyes Elisa stared at him with her 'come over here' look. She stood to hug him and as he stepped back said "Just one thing before you go." She pointedly looked to Sam and Eric. He had noticed they had been talking and looked at his brothers. Looking back at his mother when they looked to her Jeremy waited for someone to let him in on what was going on.

"Well, it seems to me the best thing is for Eric to move in with the two of you." Elisa said when neither of his brothers spoke up.

Jeremy sighed. "That didn't work out too well last time."

"Yes, but Eric has agreed to some ground rules. He does need to find a more permanent place, but for now he could stay with the two of you. Besides, Sam is still looking for a job."

The way his mother had spoken Jeremy knew there was no way to deny her request without creating a huge family fight.

"Fine, but he does his share of the chores, pays part of the rent, and stays out of our bedrooms."

His mother smiled and looked to Sam and Eric. Sam smiled a little even though it looked forced. Eric grinned as if he'd just won first prize in a gloating contest. Jeremy said goodnight to his mother again trying his best to keep his emotion out of his voice and left.

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Okay, since there haven't been many questions about the story I'm going to try something new. New to me anyway. I've seen comic artists give readers a chance to ask questions aimed at their characters. So, any character that appears in the story that's not a cameo will be open for questions. Ask anything, but considering some of these characters be careful what you ask of them. This could be fun, but I'll obviously have to keep them from spoiling anything.