

Robert woke slowly the next morning. With the glass windows lining the entire observation deck the sun shone through and settled on his closed eyelids and proceeded to burn through his fatigue. Feeling a little achy from using his tentacles so much the night before but otherwise fine Robert opened his eyes to his second day of being a displacer cat.

He found it remarkable that when wrapped and laid over his body the long tentacles could cover him completely. It was as if he had his own heated blanket. He was reluctant to move or lift them off himself for several minutes, he simply luxuriated in the feeling of contented warmth. There was also the desire for more sleep but he eventually pushed it all side and stirred. Sitting up he idly groomed himself with the tentacles that were not only growing ever more familiar and proving amazingly versatile but an essential part of him.

Standing in the mercifully silent observation deck of the Needle, Robert took a huge relieved breath. And coughed at the reek coming from inside. He'd noticed the smell moments after his first Jump onto the observation deck of the Space Needle but now that there had been more time for things to ripen...

He conducted a quick tour of the abandoned Space Needle. At a guess, two hundred or more people had been trapped for a time in the Restaurant and observation areas when the power went out. Obviously they would have been forced to use the same facilities that also didn't work had left a time bomb as a calling card. The place now smelled horrendous. All the doors had been blocked open letting the facilities air out and still the smell nearly overpowered Robert. He hadn't thought through what to expect the night before.

His limbs were a little stiff at first but limbered up quickly. He felt ready to scale the full length of the Needle once again. Now though there was one last thing to clean up before deciding what to do next. After a moment's more consideration Robert Jumped.

It took a while but he managed to collect a set of four five gallon buckets left behind in a looted Home depot, a Jump to a local river to fill them and a Jump back was just the start. It took many more trips to the river and careful pouring of the water into the bowls of the filled toilets to wash the accumulation away. Following the stench of the lavatories throughout both levels of the Space Needle to clear away all of the filled toilets and still the smell lingered. He searched for and found the maintenance room and found air freshener. That only spread a layer of rank artificial citrus over the stink. It would have to do until the place aired out enough.

With that done he was satisfied that the huge space was presentable. The thought caused him to chuckle to himself. He doubted he would be entertaining guests. With the rest of the day to himself and his appetite surpassed by the smell he started groomed himself again. When Robert finished he wiped down the cushions he'd used as a bed seeing the pads of his tentacles cleaned them as well as his fur.

When he Jumped to inside the restaurant he noticed that the smell from the night before was well below tolerable and would in time only get better. He used the facilities and poured a bit of water to flush his waste away. He Jumped back to the observation deck where he'd left his stash of food. Taking breakfast and staring out at the amazing view he felt the adventure the night before well worth it.

He was munching on his third granola bar when the sensory organs in his tentacles picked up a disturbance outside. Similar to the sound of a plane drawing closer and rising enough to be heard Robert's tentacles picked up the audible buzzing of something coming closer to the space Needle. It was a single point source, hard as a spike and quickly rising to irritating levels to the sonic senses his tentacles provided. With his attention drawn outside Robert only caught a momentary flash of movement outside the windows to the southeast.

The droning sound, muffled now by the roof of the Space Needle continued for a few more seconds before cutting out. He stood still listening for a minute before going back to eating. Later he decided to Jump and search for some research material. On his return he sat at one of the benches in the observation ring and started reading. He'd gone to a bookstore and picked out a few books from the science section hoping they would help him understand exactly what he was doing now that he was suddenly capable of Jumping.

He was still reading when he heard something land on the roof. Whatever it was it sounded heavy enough to account for two humans. Still looking at the ceiling undecided on how to investigate the buzzing drone sound started again. His head moved to track the sound that only his tentacles were picking up. At the moment the noise was reflected around the disk of the roof and he could only use the guesswork of triangulation to narrow down the location of the source as it moved.

The buzz became a little more focused and seemed to be coming from above and just to the south side of the roof. Once it stopped again Robert walked over to the spot in the observation deck and considered Jumping to the roof. Before he could do so the buzz started again and dropped to where he could see the cause on the other side of the glass.

Big, for a bird, he stared at it as his mind took in what he was seeing. Not a bird, for it was the size of a dog even though a beak sprouted from the center of its face. It had dropped down to about the middle of the glass plates that lined the observation deck then started to hover and stare directly at Robert. They were thirty feet from each other. A second of looking at it and Robert began to pick out more detail. The blur of its wings, the long feline tail with short fur and feathers at the tip. The tail feathers were long and spread out in a fan, like that on a bird's backside. Its coloration strongly hinted at a hawk of some sort. Its hindquarters were feline, as was the lengthy tail.

Another second and everything clicked. He was staring at a gryphon.

And why not?

He really didn't think he had been the only one to have changed. As he watched he also had to conclude he wasn't the only one with extra powers. The gryphon was hovering with its body spread out behind it. With the wings mounted on the top of its shoulders the extra weight of its lower half of the body shouldn't be able to support itself. It had to have some power inherent to its new design to allow for such a gravity defying display. He was actually glad to have that confirmed. He smiled at the notion.

Hello

Robert blinked. With all the sensory information coming to him from tendril, tentacle and his ordinary senses that had also been ramped up he knew instantly and without a doubt that she was speaking directly to his mind.

Again, why not.

It was time to be accepting of the unusual. "Hello yourself." Robert said. "You can talk with your mind?" He said not really making it a question.

Yes. I'm Anna by the way

Smiling and walking closer to the glass he replied "Robert." He watched as she rose higher and flew over the glass and settled down on the walkway forty feet from him. He watched as she settled her wings on her back and sat on her haunches to stare up at him. To him it looked like she was trying to seem relaxed but he could tell she was tense and ready to take flight.

"Um, have you eaten? I have some food inside." Robert offered. Having taken over the Space Needle he felt he should be a good host.

No, thanks, I'm good Anna replied. Turning to look inside the observation deck for a moment she looked at Robert and asked *Where did all the people go?*