

New Paths Act I

The Arthur Bedford Manor was a lovely historic three story house in the middle of a sea of urban blight. The original Arthur Bedford built his ideal home and then promptly died in it. It had somehow resisted the call of Eminent Domain over many years, until it was acquired by a private owner who rented rooms out to college students as part of an agreement with a local public university. And over the years it had acquired a sort of reputation. It was one of the cheapest places of private housing available exclusive to students, but the current owner was rather picky about who he would allow in. The second floor was never available for any price, the first floor was largely public space save for a master bedroom, and only three people could live on the third floor. Since only three students every year could live there, and the current owner would only accept people according to some odd criteria of his own devising, the Manor had acquired a mystery to it amongst the student body. It was said that anyone who spent even a semester there would leave changed by the experience. Of course, few really knew exactly how right that was...

Day 1

One morning in the early fall a taxi pulled up to the Arthur Bedford Manor. A young man standing at a tall 6 foot 2 stepped out of the passenger door then retrieved a multitude of belongings from the trunk. The young man, Asian in complexion with short black hair smiled and thanked the Taxi driver giving him an almost extravagant tip, then looked around briefly wondering how a pretty well maintained but extremely old styled house existed in such an old and dilapidated looking modern area. The young man went by the name of Mike. He had brown hazel eyes, lightly tanned skin, a pretty well toned body, and handsome features that seemed at odds with the way he carried himself. He hunched his shoulders with every step, bending under an invisible load that only he could feel. His smile faded as he grabbed some of the larger items of Luggage and made his way to the front door, stopping briefly to open the gate first. Putting a bag, he rang the doorbell.

Mike graduated from the local high school a few years ago with dreams of following his friends into one of the best public Universities within the state. He won some educational scholarships that would more than pay for his education. He had a steady relationship with a girlfriend and loving parents that prided themselves in knowing they produced a good son. That is, until something terrible happened and his life changed. Mike shook his head, not willing to dwell on the past. That was months ago, he was trying to put it behind him, and now he felt ready to turn over a new leaf.

The owner was a young tiger with bright orange fur lined with black stripes all along his body, save for his underbelly, which was white, and a few tufts of white fur along his ears. To better fit in with humans, he'd taken to growing his head fur long and dying it brown, so as to appear more recognisable to them. It didn't work as well as he'd planned. He tended to wear cooler colors, and this day was wearing deep blue jeans and a bright blue shirt that had water stains in places, as he worked on cleaning dishes. As he heard the sounds of a doorbell ringing, he walked over to the front entryway. He moved almost silently. When he was barefoot, it was easier to hear a fly sneezing than it was to hear him, unless he wanted you to know. The tiger stopped at the front door to practice his smile. The new renter was a human, and in his experience they tended to freak out if they saw too

much of one's fangs, for some reason. He opened the door and gave a small, yet noticeably warm smile. "Hello! Howdy! Hiya! Are you Mike? I was told to expect a Mike around one in the afternoon." His smile grew that was far too big to be comfortable on his face as the tiger held out his right paw for his guest.

Mike took the paw and shook it, taking care not to squeeze too hard. Mike returned the smile, but it was obviously a strained one. Mike was dressed in darker colors. He wore a pair of dark brown cargo pants, black athletic shoes with socks, and a black gaming T-shirt with "Join the Glorious 60FPS Revolution" written on it that had the design of a desktop PC behind it. "Yes, I am Mike, I saw your ad on the University's renter list and sent you that e-mail a couple weeks back. The paw was interesting to feel. It wasn't the first paw Mike had ever felt, but it was an extremely rare occurrence. Back in highschool there were only a few fur families that lived in their part of town, the richer part of town. They were the families of people who could afford the procedure, after all. He found the warm paw pads pleasant enough. His hold on the handshake lingered a bit longer than would be courteous. Mike let go a blush growing on his face. Embarrassed he tried to cover his mistake by asking, "Mind if I bring my things in?, the envelope with the first month's rent and the deposit is in one of those bags."

Terinas tilts his head and smiles. His new "project" had blushed at so much as a handshake "Hmmm... well, I do like to let college students have a place off campus that is safe and away from prying eyes." He folds his arms as he let go. "I'd love to have you come in! Just remember that I have rules here, as well. No parties, and no gatherings of friends larger than five people. No booze or smoking inside the house, either. Or else I may have to call your parents." he stuck his tongue out in a playful joke. Of course the kid was a college student! His parents probably wouldn't even care. But it sounded childish and embarrassing. The tiger stepped aside and offered him a chance to move his bags in. "You're the only tenant I have at the moment. The last girl moved out with her girlfriend last semester. But I'm looking to get more soon, and you'll find the place has... character... all it's own. Your room is on the third floor, second room from the left. The second floor is kept locked at all times. And you have a key for your room, and for the front door as well, so you can have privacy if you want it. What's your major?"

Mike was moving his bags in from the front door step into the foyer. He froze when "parents" were mentioned but continued his work after answering, "I am... undecided, but I was accepted into the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences." He went outside to the curb and picked up a few more bags, brought them in, then went out to bring in some boxes, some of which were obviously his Computer and some other electronics. It would be obvious to Terinas that Mike was moving in more than the typical College student. One might think what he brought in was all that he had. Once everything was inside and the door was closed, he seemed to relax visibly. He couldn't help but stare at Terinas a little bit. This was the first time he was so close to a tiger anthro for an extended period of time. He couldn't help but examine Terinas and even stare at his tail a bit. He seemed to be on the cusp of saying something about the tail in particular, given how his eyes were riveted to it, but he shook his head, again in embarrassment as he began to take his things up the 3 flight of stairs to his room. Conveniently for him, the door to his new room was open. He put the first couple bags down and took a look.

Terinas noted the boy staring at him, and was almost tempted to make a coy remark about it. Almost. However, this one seemed to be a box containing a mystery, and Terinas loved to play Pandora... you never knew what you'd find! He chuckled and walked over towards the stairs, putting a paw cupped around his mouth. "THERE IS A COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST AND DINNER PREPARED FOR YOU EVERY DAY! DON'T FEEL GUILTY ABOUT TAKING SOME, THE SCHOOL PAYS ME TO DO IT!" He smiles and then turns back to walk into the kitchen, getting back to his work. He'd let the boy have a few hours to get himself set up before he started getting to work on him. Terinas prided himself on molding bright young minds, and when he was done with Mike, the boy wouldn't even recognise himself.

It took almost an hour for Mike to bring all his belongings up to his room and set everything up. He was surprised to find modern amenities in the room and in the communal bathroom. None of the furniture looked old, there were internet ports that presumably went down to a main router or hub of some sort. The lights, walls, and flooring looked pretty well maintained, though he noticed scratch marks on the floor, probably due to the clawed feet of furs. Soon his room looked more like a place he would live in. The queen size bed was made up with all his blankets, covers, and pillows. His clothes were neatly folded and put into the armoire, his school supplies were put away by the desk, and even his computer was set up with his stack of games lined up on the bookshelf. In the center of the room, under the bed, and spilling out of the closet was all his other possessions. There were a bunch of things left to unpack, but he figured it could wait. For now... his stomach grumbled. He was sweaty and sticky from his endeavors, so he changed his shirt and dried off his face and arms with a towel before going down to the kitchen.

Terinas was seated by his own personal computer in the study by the time he heard the boy coming downstairs. He managed the wireless network at the house, and had learned enough to snoop into the browsing histories of anyone connected to it. Of course, this wasn't something he announced to guests. He wanted to make sure if they got unruly during their stay he could bring up any embarrassing websites they went to. It was a fun little way of making the squirm. And what they looked at often was good for... ideas. He had left a tray of cookies at the dining room table. It was too early for a proper dinner, but he figured that Mike was likely a bit hungry from his trip. The cookies were sugar cookies shaped like ducks, covered in yellow frosting, and had pink sprinkles on them. They also had the chemical he slipped into them as well. The one that helped relax anyone who ate them. The one that dulled the mind until it was fully digested, and made them more receptive. Temporarily, anyway.

Mike found the cookies in the middle of a rather large dining table. It was interesting that they were in the shape of ducks, the Tiger must have an interest in baked goods or something. Mike briefly wondered how the Tiger kept his fur out of the cookie dough, but then he grabbed 3 of the cookies and began munching on them. When he was finished, he explored the rest of the building until he came across Terinas. He pulled the envelope with the first month's rent from his pocket, and the safety deposit money as well. "Hey uh, Terinas, here is the first month's rent." He would give it to Terinas directly, then paused and continued, "I can't thank you enough for accepting me so late in the season, I found out I was accepted not too long ago and well... some of my classes have

already begun. Thank you for being so accommodating." He bowed, a cultural carryover from his parent's traditions.

Terinas looked over the envelop, taking out the check and smiling. "Thank you, Mike! You seem like a great guy." As he smiled and stood up, hugging him. "I can tell we're going to be good friends!" he whispered into the boy's ear. "Really good friends!" He let go after that, and smiled. "If you ever have some issue with the rent each month, just talk to me. We can always work something out. I won't let you stay for free, but well... we'll work things out." As he folded his arms. "And I try to be very accommodating! If there's ever anything you need, or just want to talk about, or need to confide in me about, you can always come to me. You can trust me, Mike. You should learn to trust me. It'll only help you during your education."

Mike smiled and found himself trusting the Tiger a bit more than he ought to, not knowing that the cookies he consumed were already have a potent effect on him. The Tiger seemed to be so friendly and open. He didn't even find it creepy when the Tiger whispered those words in his ear or was very physical with touching and hugging him. "You won't have to worry about the rent or anything Terinas. My, uh, inheritance is more than enough to pay for my education." He stopped talking after he finished that sentence, a single tear flowing down his right cheek. He sniffed, and tried to cover it by wiping at his eye.. "I'll see you at dinner." He turned and left quickly to go back to his room. Once in his room, he booted up his computer, unaware that his landlord could spy on him. He checked up on his class schedule, played some games, then began to look at pictures of anthro tigers. He was curious to see if all anthro tigers looked similar to Terinas. He noted that Terinas's dyed head fur compared to the other styles some other anthro tigers had. He then went to Furafinity, a guilty pleasure of his he came across a few years ago when another friend told him of a place where he could look at porn for free without dealing with viruses! He checked his inbox then went to his profile. He had a rather typical lion male as his current fursona Inspired mainly from the art style of a certain old Disney film. His "OC" wore his mane in a large ponytail and kept the mane hair on the chest trimmed low so his mane on his head could be more or less stylized. He had a rather muscular body and was obviously tall. In several of the adult pictures, the character was drawn to be rather well hung. If anything really stood out about this character, it was the Greyish cast to his color palette, the only exception to which is his eyes, which were a mix of a deep green and a bright gold. The character was actually drawn by himself and in most of the non adult art pieces. wore the same clothing as he did. One would note however, that all the recent pictures of this character appeared... sad, or downcast at the very least. Many of his submissions older than a few years old looked happy and was in several collab pictures with other furs. His favorites folder had a collection of more or less straight porn with very few exceptions.

Terinas went back to what he was doing. Of course after a few hours he checked out the boy's web history. And he smiled when he found the boy's furafinity account. But that smile changed into a frown as he looked through all his submissions. The word "inheritance" and his talk about his sudden circumstances. His odd melancholy attitude and the strained smile. Something happened to the poor boy, and recently. Something that he was still dealing with now. Something that would probably end up being an issue with Terinas' own plans for him. He sighed. "Oh well... one more detail I'll have to address." As he pulled out a small blue quartz crystal tucked under the neckline of

his shirt, and began to stare at it idly. He had a few hours to kill before the boy was asleep, at least, and he needed to do SOMETHING. After staring at the gem for a few moments, he tucked it under his shirt again. "It doesn't matter what means I use, you'll force changes to happen in any way, won't you?" he said to no one in particular. The tiger frowned and went upstairs. He knocked on Mike's room's door, and waited.

Mike froze when he heard the knock on the door. He figured he would have heard the Tiger approaching. There was the sound of shuffling and a few quick clicks from his mouse as he closed the FA browser. He got up from his comfortable red swivel chair and walked to the door opening it. He was lucky his landlord didn't simply open the door for himself. "Yes? Is it time to eat or something?" he asked. He opened the door wide, not wanting to give an impression he was trying to hide anything.

Terinas was staring down as Mike opened the door. He wanted to see if the boy's pants were tented. As he felt the door open, just as Mike looked at him, he jerked his eyes up. It was easy to wave away an "accidental" glance as just that: an accident. He folded his arms and locked eyes with the boy. "I wanted to ask you how you were settling in. And if you were feeling ok. A lot of people have trouble on their first night away from home... do you miss your parents? I remember one of my other tenants, er, roommates cried a bit. Funny thing is, he even wanted me to hold him!" He chuckles

Mike's pants were not tented, but Terinas could smell old arousal, as if the young man got some pre in his boxers when he was looking at a hot picture and stroked at himself a bit through his pants. Mike seemed taken aback at the question about his parents. He cleared his throat trying to formulate a response, but answered as he regained his composure. "I miss them very much, but I will be fine." He did not comment on the latter part of Terinas's explanation. Despite his feelings for trusting Terinas, he couldn't openly talk about his parents, not like this. He tried hard not to think too hard about them. He gave a half hearted smile.

Terinas twitches his ears at the boy's reaction. Yup. He had parent issues. Either they didn't accept him or... they weren't around anymore. He nodded. "Well, if you want someone to spend some time with tonight anyway, I've got plenty of free time. We could play board games, or watch a movie, or plug in the old X-Box..." he started walking off. "I'll be downstairs if you need me."

Mike paused by the door, his mouth half open and he struggled with his inner feelings for a moment before shaking his head. "Hey, wait up, I'm coming" He followed Terinas downstairs saying, "Any of those things sounds like fun, which would you prefer to do?"

Terinas smiles. "Well, why don't we watch a movie? I've got the Lord of the Rings movies on DVD if you're into that." As he sways his tail and turns back to stare at Mike. "You seem like you'd like a bit of fantasy."

"You are correct!" Mike said giving his first real smile of the evening." He followed the Tiger down

the rest of the stairs, his eyes consistently being drawn to Terinas's tail as it swayed and danced around behind the tiger. He didn't want to ask about it. He thought it might be rude. He always kind of wondered how being a fur actually differed from being a normal human being. Terinas, while eccentric, certainly seemed relatively normal. Mike took a seat on the couch and helped himself to another one of those duck cookies.

Terinas smiled as he sat down next to Mike, watching him munch at a duck cookie. He popped the DVD into the DVD player and pointed up at the LCD Projector mounted on the ceiling. "I don't have a screen, but this projector displays on the whole white wall. Pretty awesome setup, huh?" He hit play on the remote and then looked over at Mike. "Do you want to touch it?" He smiled, as he reached back to take hold of his tail and hold it up to the college student. "You've been staring at my tail all night. Or maybe my butt. I don't judge. If you'd like, you can touch it. I've had lots of humans wanting to pet my tail in the past."

Mike's face grew pink, was he really that shallow? Wordlessly, he grasped the tail at its base with his left hand and ran fingers along the length, taking care not to pull, but just to feel. He found himself relaxing more as he stroked the tail more and more. Soon he was just petting it without a thought. It felt soft, thinner than he thought it would, but all the same, the feeling of living fur running through his hands felt good. He soon turned his eyes from the tail to look at the movie, but his left hand never left that tail. Even when the tail twitched too far from his hand, his hand automatically reached for it again, until it rested on his lap, the human petting it lightly through the movie. "It's so soft," he commented, silently wishing for a brief moment that he had one of his own.

The tiger spoke soothingly, just barely audible over the sounds of the movie. "Doesn't that feel nice?" His voice a low purr. "I love having my tail petted." His eyes glinted a bit. "You can do this because I trust you. I trust you won't yank my tail, or pet it the wrong way, or bite at it or anything nasty." He smiled. "And you trust me. You wouldn't touch my tail if you didn't trust me. I know this... you really do trust me. And I'm so grateful you trust me so much that you can feel comfortable enough to touch my tail every time you need that warm soft fuzzy feeling... you know you have but to ask and you can touch my tail and enjoy the feel of my fur against your hands... you trust me so much, don't you?" The tiger's words slipped into Mike's foggy mind as Terinas turned away, mentioning that he wanted to "watch the movie." However, even turned away from Mike, Terinas kept occasionally repeating how glad he was that his new roommate trusted him.

Over the course of the movie, Mike continued to pet the tiger's tail slowly, the words of his feline Residence Assistant sinking in. It was hard to really think coherently when he was being distracted by the meat of the movie and of course the relaxing agent in the cookies. He didn't consciously note the words Terinas said, but he found that he felt "warmer" just sitting next to Terinas, as if the tiger was one of his trusted close friends. Even though he'd only knew Terinas for several hours he found himself mumbling "I trust you..." under his breath as he continued to touch that tail.

Terinas waited until the movie was finished before he smirked at Mike. "Never let go of my tail the whole time. If I didn't know better I would say you were sweet on me, boy." As he chuckled at the

joke only he'd ever get and stuck his tongue out. "Well, its getting late." As he stood up, gently tugging his tail out of Mike's grasp, then stretched his arms up over his head and yawned. "You should probably get some rest. Classes start tomorrow for you, don't they? And I wouldn't be a good RA if I didn't look after you."

Mike blinked, the movie had been a haze for him. Did he doze off or something? He had the barest sensation of the tail flicking out of his slack grasp. For some reason the feeling of touching that fur was comforting and without it, he felt....it was difficult to quantify. "Yes, you are right, I've got class at nine o'clock tomorrow morning." He said. His stomach grumbled a little in discontent, "Mind if I have a snack first? All I had to eat after I got here were those delicious duck cookies."

He got up, also feeling kind of stiff as he stretched, eyes still following the tiger's swaying tail for a few moments. He had 4 classes tomorrow, it would be a long day to be sure. But hey, at least it was Syllabus day! For the first time since he got to campus, he wondered if he would make new friends. After what happened back at home...his "old" friends" were all too weirded out to contact him anymore.

Terinas smiled, his ears perked as he basked in the praise. "You liked my cookies? Its a purrsonal recipe of mine." He tended to make a cat pun once in a while. They amused him. "Go ahead and grab some food out of the fridge. I try to keep some healthy snacks stocked: lots of fruits, chopped vegetables, mineral waters... there's also some bread for toast and some soda if you want some, but I don't recommend getting into it this late." He deliberately worded his sentence to discourage Mike from drinking the soda. This was because the soda had a diuretic in it, and he wasn't planning on starting on Mike's "training" until the next day. But Mike was going to see the soda in the fridge anyway. If he decided to drink cola this late, it was his own fault if he stayed up late and his own fault if he wet his bed. At least Terinas thought so. For him, the first day was strictly a day of breaking down any social barriers his little projects may have had. Sometimes that stretched out to the first week, or even the first few weeks, depending on how mentally resistant the students he allowed to stay ended up being. But Mike had been so susceptible it felt to Terinas almost like he had a desperate need to trust someone. The tiger wondered what, exactly, had happened to him?

Mike nodded thankfully and went to the kitchen. It was getting late... that was "Lord of the Rings: the Fellowship of the Ring" for you. Trust guy to turn a book series into an 4 hour affair. Mike walked into the kitchen and noted that the refrigerator did not have a water dispenser. He decided to keep it simple so he had some bread, cheese, and ham with some of the mineral water. He noted that the soda bottles all had their plastic seals broken, even though they all looked full. Mike shrugged to himself and assumed that the soda belonged to some other visitor. Once finished with his meal he went up to his room, wishing Terinas a good night along the way. Meanwhile, Terinas turned and started to saunter off to other sections of the house, intentionally swaying his butt as he walked. He wasn't sure if Mike was gay, straight, bi, or otherwise but he definitely had a thing for furry people. And figuring out his orientation, based on his reactions to certain sights and sounds, would only make the tiger's job easier. Also, the tiger enjoyed it when he caught someone staring at his ass.

After wishing Terinas a good night, Mike couldn't help but watch Terinas's swishing tail as it swayed left and right, left and right, left and right. He found his hand twitching. He wanted to touch that tail, he needed- He shook his head, breaking off that thought, and continued to his own room. Mike flopped down onto his swivel chair tiredly, sighing a bit as he realized he had taken the first real step to leave his former life hundreds of miles away. He absentmindedly browsed through his email then Furaffinity a bit. He always had a taste for good artwork given that drawing was a rather large hobby of his, so he ended up looking through the more realistic drawings from some of his favorite artists. He wished for a bit he had the time to put in the effort to color and shade the way some of the artists did, it would definitely go a long way to make some of his earlier drawings come to life. As it would happen, the last page he visited on the website was a picture of a Tiger male hanging out in some park with no shirt on and a bell collar. The tiger has a rather mischievous look on his face that reminded him a lot of Terinas. Mike read the description below recognizing the character was from some anime and chuckled. It was so easy to confuse his landlord with some sort of cartoon character by the way he was talking to him and... and what during the movie? He shrugged, deciding it didn't matter. He turned off his computer, set his alarm clock, then went to bed.

Terinas smiled as he went around the house getting it locked up. He had noticed the boy staring at him. He had also chosen not to mention it. He'd made the poor boy blush enough today as it was! After making sure the house was locked up, and that the door in the stairwell that served as the only entrance to the whole second floor was locked and bolted the tiger retired to his bedroom on the first floor. He relaxed for a bit and then checked his tenants browsing history one more time. This led him to discover the picture of the Tiger in just a bell collar and pants. "Oh my." He found himself purring a bit. "Such a curious little boy." He grinned, crossing his legs. He was going to have such FUN with this one, he was sure. He knew that he had other obligations. One roommate wasn't enough for his work. He was going to have to find more. But the boy was fascinating.

"Oh Mike... I wonder how you'd feel if you knew what was coming? Heh heh heh." The tiger smirked as he crossed his legs. His work had just begun.