

Can't Cheat a Cheetah
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It started with such a subtle sound... Barely more than a breath, then a hiss. The raindrops were so small that they didn't so much splatter as much as they saturated everything. In moments the wide sidewalks of the college campus darkened several shades and the grass was weighed down by the moisture that clung to it. The large leaf trees collected the water until they could hold no more and then they dropped it in concentrated dribbles. As the rain came down, the smell of the soil being nurtured by it wafted up - petrichor. Bryson slowly inhaled the smell, his blue eyes slipping shut as he simply enjoyed the moment. Bryson was a Junior, his silky blond hair pulled back into a short, neat ponytail. He was as thin as a rail but suitably tall, though many confused him for a freshman even this many years in.

Bryson had hunkered down in an often overlooked nook on the other side of a retaining wall on the porch in front of the dorm room. He was sheltered from the rain by an overhang, although barely. The color was slowly draining away from his cheeks from the cold. Even with a thick sweatshirt and a couple layers of pants, it didn't take long for him to start shivering. It would have been madness for many, but he had to be there. He had to be there when- Bryson's chest forced in a stilted breath as he heard the pitter-pat of feet growing louder and louder. He wet his lips with his tongue as best he could before trying to look as if he was just hanging out, that weathering the cold was no big deal. His eyes scanned the edge of the path where it disappeared beyond the theater building and then, like a specter that cut through the raindrops came the most elegant, refined, fit young men Bryson had ever set eyes on.

Undaunted by the rain, the Senior jogged at an even and measured pace. More than that, his long flowing black hair cascaded down to broad shoulders. His arms swept forward and back in perfect rhythm, uncovered. His tank top was soaked by the rain, clinging to pectorals and abdominal muscles that any model would aspire to. He didn't just have a runner's build, his muscles betrayed a little bit of wrestling in his background. His skin was as well tanned as it was toned, a tribute to his mixed heritage. Bryson could swear he saw the raindrops clinging to the runner's legs like dewdrops... and amid it all, amid all of it, he was smiling...

"Crow..." Bryson whispered, unable to keep the name from slipping out of his lips. He let his head pan slowly, keeping Crow in the center of his gaze until he crossed the courtyard and disappeared through the thick bushes that cornered off the edge of campus. From there he'd probably ring the school or perhaps run all the way to the fields at the edge of town. Bryson wilted, knowing that now Crow was getting further and further away. With his quarry gone, he slowly hoisted himself up, wincing at how tight his joints felt from the brittle cold. His shoulders drooped a little as he shambled over the retaining wall, slid his card and moved back into the dorm.

Normally the lobby was unattended and empty, but it seemed with the poor weather that some fellow students had gathered on the modest couches and the reasonably sized flat screen television. Bryson winced a little, hearing grunts and cheers from the young men. Glancing up, he saw they were watching sprinters preparing for the upcoming olympic games. With their attention so invested, he hoped he'd be able to sneak past them unnoticed.

“Hey, Bryson!” One of them shouted with a faint accent, turning around and grinning, his twisted bleach blond braids swinging against his almost cherub cheeks as he grinned, “Wanna join us? Got plenty of snacks.” he offered. Bryson gave a shy smile at that, though he found it hard to make eye contact.

“That’s really a nice offer, Malik, I might stop by later if I have time.” Bryson said. His deflection seemed to be taken at face value as the other just grinned.

“You’re always welcome, mate.” Malik said with a nod before turning back as the rest of his group burst out cheering. Bryson exhaled a little before he took the moment to rapidly cross the lobby, slip into the stairs and ascend. He made it up to the first flight with relative ease, though the second flight was a little slower. By the time he reached the third story his legs were already burning. Bryson managed to come to a stop at the top, hand braced on the translucent partition at the edge of the door. He caught his breath before he pushed on again, heading down the hallway.

One would have thought that living on the third floor would have given him some muscles, some stamina, anything really. If it had, he would have tried to offer going on runs with Crow, keeping up with him and getting to know him better. Instead he’d merely upgraded from leering at him from the window of his dorm room to finding a rather uncomfortable position to watch him pass just a little bit longer. By the time Bryson got to his room, he cranked the heat, shut the door and stripped off his cold clothes and tossed them in the hamper. He rummaged through the closet and found a baggy sun yellow t-shirt and pulled it on over his narrow upper body and then pulled on sheer, stretchy black pajama pants.

Bryson stretched a little before he hoisted up the double layer of quilts from his raised bed, slipped onto the cushy overstuffed mattress and disappeared beneath the layers. He loved the softness and weight of the quilts against him. It felt like being in a warm pile of love. He closed his eyes and let the warmth slowly sink back into his flesh as he relayed the image of Crow running by. He was so handsome, so hot, so cool. He tried to sit near him in the cafeteria and even got a job in the school mailroom for two weeks in the hopes they’d work together, but Crow had been sent out to deliver packages to the various faculty in a golf cart while he was left to sort out envelopes. Once again, it had been a dream deferred.

Sleep swept up around Bryson easily, pouring through his veins and reaching his extremities in mere moments. Still, the diffused light coming through the blinds and the patter of rain hitting the window kept him lucid enough to guide it. Bryson had a little fun imagining Crow running across campus, his sneakers hitting the cement as he heard a sound just slightly off tempo. Bryson fell into step beside him, flashing him a warm grin, each of them wearing the school’s tank tops and shorts. Crow gave him a sly grin, Bryson returned it with a bashful smile. Crow would gesture with his head to take a side path into the botanical gardens. As soon as they were off the beaten path, Crow would grab Bryson by the shoulders and pull him into the soft grasses, the two toppling together before their lips met and their bodies pressed. Bryson could feel Crow on top of him, straddling him, pinning him to the ground. He lifted his hips, not to buck the athlete off, but to give him as much of a ride as he could.

In Bryson’s dream, Crow wasn’t satisfied with kissing his lips. He moved down to work on either side of his neck, his throat, his chest. Bryson was peppered by the kisses and hands started to knead his chest, fondling his nipples, tenderizing the meat there. They jumped and ground and clawed at each other’s clothing. Bryson could feel that hot, heavy body against his,

that silky hair brushing his ribs as Crow went lower and lower and lower. Under his covers, Bryson gasped, his back arching for a moment before he collapsed again. A hot, slick, syrupy pool quickly seeped across Bryson's stomach before it was soaked into the fabric of his pants, his sleep shirt and the blanket. It was a mess, but Bryson didn't care. The fantasy was a tonic and the orgasm was just the right nudge to send him crashing over the edge into his dreams. There wasn't anything quite so nice as taking a nap in the late morning in the middle of the week when you were young, except perhaps having that sleep colored by such warm dreams.

Night had fallen and with it a great deal more precipitation. The cement outside was slick with accumulated moisture, turning into rivers of molten citrine as they reflected the mercury glow of the street lights. Bryson had debated crossing campus for dinner at the cafeteria, but the weather and the fact that Crow rarely ate dinner there dismayed him. Against his better judgment, he'd headed back down to the first floor lobby and found Malik and his friends still gathered around the television. What their gathering lacked in sophistication it made up for in refreshments. A stack of pizzas had been brought in along with several cases of soda. A little socialization seemed a worthy price to pay for some food.

Bryson was on his third slice of meat lover's pizza and his second can of a knock off soda he'd never heard of before called Sprint when he saw Malik bound over the back of one of the couches, move over and plop himself down on the cushion next to Bryson. The new weight caused the cushion to cave a little, forcing Bryson to slide towards Malik. The other Junior was leaning precariously over to snag a veggie lover's pizza slice and a can of Sprint himself. He looked back with that same cherub grin and a sparkle in his eyes.

"I'm stoked you could make it, mate." Malik grinned pleasantly, "Needed a recharge?" he asked. "Oh, yeah... I mean, the nap felt so good but I guess I should have gone to the gym or something. Sleep is sort of the opposite of what I want." Bryson admitted. Malik's eyebrows arched a little.

"You're gonna start working out? That's righteous. Just general health?" he asked. Bryson felt as if every moment in this conversation was causing him to sink down lower into the couch, but something about Malik's earnestness kept him from closing back up.

"I want to take up running, actually... As a hobby, I mean." he corrected, "I don't think I'd be that competitive. But... I'm shit at endurance." he said softly. Malik seemed to stare at him thoughtfully, almost through him. There was a moment in the air before he nodded.

"Crow, huh?" he asked finally. Bryson froze so hard that the muscles in his chest, back and stomach suddenly hurt.

"What?" he whispered. Malik winced a little.

"Sorry, was that supposed to be a secret?" he asked gently, "If it is, you've been pretty bad at hiding it." he said in a backhanded apology. Bryson's brows furrowed low over his eyes. Was he that transparent? How much of a loser was he? Malik saw Bryson spiraling and set his food down before resting a hand on his shoulder, "Relax mate, it's just me and the boys that noticed. You kind of pine away anytime he's running by. But what was the plan, to run fast enough to catch him?" he asked softly. Bryson looked up, his normally pale cheek rosy with shame.

"Kind of, I mean... If I ran with him, we'd get to know each other better." he said softly. Malik pursed his lips a little.

"I mean, maybe, but there are other ways." Malik said. Bryson shook his head.

"We don't share any of the classes, he goes to lunch while I'm in Philosophy and as far as I can tell, he doesn't eat dinner. He just disappears into the sunset and reforms the next day when it rises." Bryson said. Malik chuckled.

"He's in my organic chemistry lab..." Malik said. Bryson straightened up.

"The night lab? The one after dark?" He asked rapidly. Malik chuckled.

"That's generally when night is, mate." Bryson said, patting his shoulder again, "How about... You drop by with me for our next lab. We've got a two hour one on Thursday." Malik said. Bryson grinned, though his grin seemed to evaporate a little.

"Wait, I mean this is great for me, but won't it look weird if... I'm just there staring at him?" Bryson asked. Malik looked pained and reached up to rub the bridge of his nose.

"You won't be there just to creep on him, dude. This is your chance to make conversation, get to know him." Malik said. Bryson tilted his head.

"Labs don't usually have plus ones..." Bryson considered. Malik shrugged.

"Volunteer to be the lab assistant, help pass out supplies. They'll love the extra help." Malik said.

"Have I told you that you're the best, bro?" Bryson asked. Malik shrugged.

"Not nearly often enough, no." Malik grinned. Bryson smirked.

"You're the best, bro." Bryson repeated. Malik grinned at that, picking his pizza back up to bite into it eagerly.

There was something different about being at school at night, especially when it was a laboratory instead of a classroom. The thick black Formica tabletops had seen a lot of science over the years, as had the cherry wood shelves that sectioned off countless bottles of chemicals and organizer drawers full of specimens and materials. Beakers and bottles that caught the light during the day were dark and mysterious. Bryson might have felt unnerved by the setting, but it seemed the professor had gone to great lengths to facilitate the night labs. Recessed lighting was embedded beneath the cupboards, casting ample light across the work spaces. The lighting was also a warmer part of the spectrum, than energy efficient illumination usually ran. Most of all, though, Bryson was reassured by Crow's presence.

The Senior sat at one of the tables, all smiles and warm chocolate eyes. His long black hair was worked into a top knot with an ample spill over and there was still enough to reach the nape of his neck. He'd slipped on a rich purple sweatshirt and black sweatpants, slouching in his chair so his legs extended nearly to the other side of the table. Despite the poor posture, he had a pen in hand and his notebook ready, copying down the instructions from the antique chalkboard.

Bryson had been given a brief by the other teacher's assistant prior to the students showing up for the lab, instructions repeated verbatim on a little card. He passed out workbooks, prepared tool kits and then a sample container. Bryson couldn't help but think back to early days in High school when his chemistry teacher had given them an experiment without

instructions. It had been up to them to determine that the ingredients were part of a litmus test for PH. Whatever these students were doing, though, seemed far more involved. There had also been safety goggles, gloves and a few other pieces of protective equipment that were distributed. Bryson was attentive to all the students, but he couldn't help but linger a little when he got near Crow. Setting the items down in front of him, Bryson's breath caught in his chest when Crow looked up, that wide grin across those supple lips.

"Thanks dude." Crow said in recognition. Bryson smiled, his eyes nearly fluttering a little before he moved to the next student. Dude... Was dude good? Was dude bad? Was being dude zoned as bad as being friend zoned? Still, as he glanced back and saw Crow had sat up straighter and was already getting to work on his lab, he felt reassured. Crow had taken the time to thank him and he was committed to the lab. Even if it was just to get through it and get out of there, he wasn't a slacker and he didn't ignore the little people. Bryson felt even more committed to his crush. Glancing at his watch, he realized that he'd completed the first phase of his duties. Pulling out the card, he cleared his throat.

"You will have forty five minutes to complete the lab. Results must be submitted online no later than 10 pm. Catalytic reactions will take about ten minutes before you can begin the measuring phase." Bryson said, not entirely understanding what he was instructing them to do. Apparently the instructions they had been given combined with the knowledge from their coursework was enough because the students all started mixing various liquids together in different containers. Bryson watched with a little fascination, wondering if he should take this class when he got into his senior year.

The moments ticked by, though undoubtedly faster for the students than they did for Bryson. He watched Crow work from a spot near the front of the classroom, admiring his work ethic and how magnificently he combined beauty and brains, but he knew he was pressing his luck. Glancing down at the worn floor tiles, he eventually decided to follow the teacher's assistant off to the small office that was attached to the lab. Knocking on the door gently before he opened the door, Bryson stepped out of the lab and into the confined space.

The teacher's assistant was sitting in a threadbare office chair, eagerly biting into a nine grain sandwich stuffed with more kinds of greens than Bryson knew were accessible on this side of the Mississippi. The TA seemed to be in his mid twenties with thick, curly brown hair spilling out of a lumpy beanie. His almond colored eyes were framed by thick black rimmed glasses and a thick tuft of hair hung down from his chin. His ears were stretched with gauge piercings and his rumpled clothing seemed like he'd been wearing it for two to three days already. The old brown band shirt and red plaid flannel jacket did little to hide how lean his torso was, though his baggy brown corduroy pants seemed to show his legs were thicker.

"I haven't seen you before." The TA said, taking another bite of his sandwich, his teeth crunching through the lettuce and kale layers easily. It was almost hypnotic to watch his chin rise and fall with that long goatee as he ate. Bryson forced a smile.

"This is my first time." Bryson said. The TA nodded.

"Yeah, hence me not seeing you around." he replied wryly, his eyes shrewd and narrowing a little as he looked at Bryson. After a moment, he shook his head, "You're not here trying to steal stuff for drugs." he concluded. Bryson's jaw dropped.

"What?! Wh... Has anyone done that?" he asked. The TA scoffed.

"Loads, though they never know what they're doing and they always get caught." He replied, "And it's a non paying position, so you're not here for the money." he added. Bryson looked offended.

"Can't I just be here for experience? To contribute to the academic system?" Bryson asked. The TA wrinkled his nose at that.

"I mean,, you do seem like a nerd, but not THAT much of a nerd. Besides, you would have shown up here earlier if you were a credit hound." The TA added. Bryson nearly puffed out his chest.

"I know I only just met you, whoever you are, but why do I have to be here with an ulterior motive? Has every other volunteer been such a thorn in your side that you don't trust anyone?" Bryson asked. The TA took one more bite of his sandwich, though he stopped mid-chew. A smile crossed his lips.

"You're sweet on one of 'em, aren't you?" he asked, the grin nearly doubling, "That's it! You've got the hots for one of them. Who is it? I promise I won't tell, I mean, unless its really tragic or something." he said. Bryson paled at that.

"I-I-I mean..." Bryson stammered. The TA laughed and pushed off the desk with his foot, sending the office chair spinning.

"Alright, that I can work with." he said before springing up to his feet. He moved over to the door and cracked it open, peeking out. He scanned the gathering of students who were all waiting for some sort of chemical reaction to finish. Some had switched to occupying themselves on their phones, a few were taking naps. Crow seemed to be in the latter category, leaning back with his arms angled behind his head like a pillow, using his knees to keep his chair tipped back on two legs without risking a fall. Bryson gazed out at Crow, at the way the warm recessed lights brought out the warm russet tones in his skin and how his resting face was so peaceful. It took almost a full twenty seconds to realize the TA was staring at him, slowly eating his sandwich.

"What?!" Bryson asked defensively. The TA smiled.

"I'm Curtis, by the way." he said simply. Bryson nearly fumed.

"Bryson." he replied. Curtis didn't blink and he didn't look away. He merely smiled at Bryson.

"How bad do you want him?" he asked. Bryson's eyebrows nearly short circuited. He turned away from the door and retreated back into the office.

"What's the next part of the lab?" Bryson asked, his voice lowering. Curtis frowned.

"Cleaning up at the end, but you came this far. Don't you want to go further?" he asked. Bryson looked back up at the TA, a nearly wounded expression on his face.

"If I'm that easy to read, if I'm that transparent, and Crow still hasn't noticed? What's the point?" Bryson asked. Curtis exhaled through his large nostrils before he reluctantly set his sandwich down.

"You had to come here with a plan, didn't you?" Curtis asked. Bryson shrugged weakly.

"To help out, to be close." Bryson said. Curtis wriggled his lips.

"Okay, so no plan... Any ideas? Any fantasies?" Curtis asked. Bryson looked up sharply at that. Curtis held up his hand, revealing his nails were all painted black, "Not... not like that kind of fantasy. I mean, good for you if you had them, but spare me those particular details. I just

meant... what did you picture on getting close?" he asked. Bryson was quiet for a long moment, looking up at the wall covered with degrees and certificates before he looked back at Curtis.

"He's a runner, one of the best on campus. He runs every day, rain or shine. I just... imagined myself being fast enough to run with him. I figured if we spent more time together, we might... connect." Bryson said. The smile slowly returned to Curtis' face.

"See, that I can work with," he said knowingly. In moments Curtis was rummaging through drawers and pulling out bottles and vials and containers. He dug with purpose and conviction and let out a small bleat of satisfaction as he found what he was looking for. Setting them on the counter, he started a little experiment of his own, combining several of the liquids together. Bryson watched the substance inside turn from clear to golden yellow and then clear again.

"I thought you didn't like students that came here looking for drugs." Bryson said cautiously.

"I don't, but I'm also a bit of an Organic Chemistry Cupid." He replied. Adding one last drop to his concoction, he hesitated for a moment and then added a second. Seemingly satisfied, he screwed a lid on the container and turned around, offering it to Bryson. "Three drops tonight in any liquid aside from grapefruit juice. Make sure to eat a good breakfast and stretch before whatever time your heartthrob goes for his runs." Curtis said.

"What is this? Speed?" Bryson asked in a harsh whisper. Curtis couldn't help but suppress a roll of his eyes.

"Speed is child's play... But no, this isn't some upper or anything that's going to push you and burn you out. No, this... this is a cocktail to make sure you've awoken primal genes connected to speed, endurance, and stamina. You'll no longer be bound by the limitations of a cerebral evolution, You'll call back to primal roots that enabled us to be hunters as much as gatherers. In short, you'll be able to keep up with him." Curtis said, still holding the vial. Bryson stared at it. It looked so innocent, so innocuous. It was as clear as water without a single imperfection or bubble. The fact that it had changed color temporarily barely concerned him. What DID concern him was how strongly he was considering this.

This scruffy, jaded, almost seemingly disillusioned teacher's assistant had just whipped him up a life altering substance in a matter of moments after realizing he had a crush on one of the students. Was he this reckless with anyone else? Had anyone been poisoned? Or maybe it was a placebo! Some color changing liquids to convince him that it was something more than just a PH test and a control solution, something to boost his confidence and get him to rise up to the challenge. That had to be it, but at the same time, what would the point of such an act be?

The vial slipped out of Curtis' grasp as Bryson took it. He closed his fingers around it, looking at it in his palm, he finally slipped it into his shirt pocket for safe keeping. Curtis grinned and clapped him on the shoulder with his hand. "We should get out there when they start to test and measure. If any of them spill, we're going to need to act fast before it dissolves the laminate." Curtis said before he grabbed his sandwich, took one last bite and then headed back into the lab. Bryson lingered behind, feeling the pressure and weight of the vial against his chest. Whether it was real or it was a placebo, he had a shot at making his dreams come true. If he could keep up with Crow, well, there'd be no way to ignore him then. Bryson smiled at that, straightening up and squaring his shoulders before he stepped out into the lab, ready to do whatever it took to get through the evening and get that much closer to his true opportunity.

A deep thunder rumbled across the campus, the sound of rain pelting the upper floor window quite audible. Normally Bryson would have found it comforting and reassuring. Sleeping was one of his favorite activities after all, but tonight he tossed and turned. His bones ached as they had when he'd still been growing. He extended out a leg to try and find a comfortable position only to feel his calf muscles try to tighten into a charlie horse, forcing him to retract just before the pain washed over him. His blond hair was soaked with sweat, sticking to him and soaking his pillow. His cheeks felt tight too, twitching involuntarily.

The discomfort was a sharp contrast to how well dinner had gone. He'd never tasted food so good, so fresh, so savory. He'd had to go back for seconds, then almost thirds before the cafeteria had started closing up for the night. Bryson figured he was probably lucky that he wasn't feeling nauseous on top of his fever. It served him right for believing Curtis so openly, that he'd have any fast fix to his dilemma. Rolling onto his stomach, Bryson pushed himself up off his pillow to try and fluff it up, but he froze.

Hanging down just below his collarbone, slicked with sweat, were two subtle but distinct mounds extending from what had been a painfully flat chest mere hours ago. Bryson frowned in confusion, wondering if it was some sort of anaphylactic reaction. Shifting his weight onto his right arm he went to lift his left, but his left pectoral twitched. Bryson's crystal blue eyes widened in shock. He repeated the motion and, again, the pec bounced. He did it three more times, then five, realizing that exercising the muscle sent out a wave of heat, warmth, and a bit of a rush. Trading arms, he tried the other side and got an equal response.

The quilt rumbled to the floor as Bryson jumped out of bed and promptly crumpled to the floor, jagged lines of pain lancing up his legs. He groaned and panted, suddenly splaying out his legs to avoid another round of Charlie horses. Rolling onto his ass, he turned and looked down, again amazed. One of his high school classmates had once called him tube socks because that's what his featureless, pale noodle legs looked like... or at least they had before. Now they had curves and mounds and shape. He could see hamstrings, tensor and extensor muscles, even soleus muscles pressing against taut, healthy skin that looked as though it had seen more sun than Bryson had ever given it... but beyond his legs, his feet were completely different.

The blond boy wiggled elegant toes that were shapely and long, the toenails taking up just the right width, though they looked a little too long. His arches were higher, his heels a little more compact than he remembered them being. Bryson cautiously raised his right arm, looking at it. While it had not changed as dramatically as his legs or chest had, there were smaller bulges around his biceps and triceps. It seemed that he had gained a runner's build over the course of the night. All it had cost him was a bit of sleep, a lot of sweat, and several questions he'd have to ask Curtis the next time he had a chance... but that wasn't going to be the first test, no. It looked as if he'd finally be able to keep up with Crow, and he wasn't going to miss that opportunity. Glancing at his alarm clock, Bryson began to calculate just how many hours were left before Crow's morning run.

The overnight storms had shed the last of their precipitation before being pressed on by a low pressure system elsewhere. They raced from horizon to horizon at a nearly unsettling pace, tearing apart just long enough for narrow fingers of silver sunlight to rake across the valley. The wide, pristine cement pathways on the west side of campus had nearly dried out and the high winds brought with them very fresh air. The door to the basement floor of the oldest dorm on Campus clicked loudly as it was opened and Crow emerged, already at a light jog as he moved up the ramp to ground level. As the wind hit his luxurious black hair, it waved and rippled behind him.

"Perfect..." He murmured, inhaling the air until his lungs were full. It didn't take long for him to hit his natural stride, his feet pattering across the path. He ran between his dorm and the science building, heading on his normal route when he spotted another runner coming up along a path that merged into the main thoroughfare. Crow wasn't unused to there being other joggers, though he was used to knowing who they were. He glanced over with idle speculation at the blond hair, the ponytail and headband combination, the somewhat tight t-shirt and unusual shorts before he glanced back up to the face, his eyes widening in a bit of surprise.

"Good morning." Bryson said, falling into stride alongside Crow. Before Crow could question anything, he glanced over with an earnest enough smile, "Hope you don't mind some company. Can I jog with you?" he asked. The harmony of their footsteps was almost a hypnotic percussion. The question seemed to push the discordant thoughts from Crow's mind as his honest smile brightened in response.

"Not at all. Pretty rare these days to find someone brave enough to face the elements." Crow said. Bryson tried out his best smirk.

"If you really are committed to something, you have to give it your all." Bryson said, painfully aware of the irony of how he had achieved this particular goal. Then again, he had given it all he was capable of. He just needed help to get the rest of the way.

"I couldn't agree more." Crow replied. The two jogged without words for the rest of the length of the quad, though as they approached the music conservatory, Crow glanced back at Bryson, "I take it you don't head out to the street and go around? I haven't seen you running before." Crow said. Bryson blushed a little.

"I, uh, usually go through the center... past the library and UC and stuff." Bryson said, "But I think your route seems like more of a challenge. Maybe we should go out and around."

"Do you like a challenge?" Crow asked, a black eyebrow arching, his lips curving into a competitive smile. Bryson's heart fluttered a bit. Technically he did not like a challenge, but he felt like one was going to be necessary given the kind of person Crow was.

"What sort of challenge?" Bryson asked carefully, still not losing his stride. Crow considered for a moment before nodding to himself.

"Out to the street, around campus and back to the point we joined up. If I beat you there, you buy us lunch." Crow said. Bryson nodded at that, feeling the gears turn in his mind.

"And if I win, you buy us dinner." He offered as the two jogged past the point of no return, taking the path that would lead between the newer dorms and off of campus.

"Dinner?" Crow repeated, still grinning. Bryson ran his tongue along his teeth, a little surprised at how sharp his left canine tooth felt.

"Yeah, Dinner, like a date." Bryson clarified. Crow let out a soft murmuring sound.

“How do you know I won’t just throw the race?” he asked. Bryson’s heart went from flutters to full on jack hammering.

“Because you’re honest and you have pride? I want to make sure I actually earn this.” Bryson said, unable to filter the words before they tumbled out of his lips. Crow, however, seemed completely satisfied by the terms. He grinned.

“You better work for it, Bry.” Crow said before he suddenly accelerated, taking all pretense of casualty out of his form. Bryson’s cheeks flushed. Had Crow just given him a nickname? A nickname on top of agreeing to the chance of a date? Had he just... sped off at a speed worthy of track champions? Bryson grunted, took a deep breath and pushed off for all he was worth.

Every footstep echoed off of the walls of the dorms that framed the courtyard around them. Normally Bryson would have been a shivering mess and ready to go back to his room and curl up in his blankets, but there was something about the race that pushed his circulation into overdrive and warmed him up from the tips of his toes to the edge of his ears. Bryson’s muscles were firing on all cylinders. If anything, it was his lack of practice that was holding him back. He’d been able to match Crow’s poise and posture as they’d jogged side by side, but now that he was pulling ahead? It was like learning how to dance without a teacher.

Bryson breathed in and then exhaled, puffing out his cheeks a little. He did that a few times as he kept trying to run faster. He tried thinking about his feet, his knees, his hips, his arms. All it managed to do was to turn him into a clunky mess. Instead, he lifted his blue eyes, looking up toward the edge of campus, seeing Crow’s beautiful caramel colored arms pumping away, his legs pistoning up and down. He had to close the gap, he had to catch him... and with that thought, it was as if everything suddenly fell into place.

Every footfall came with a rebound, propelling Bryson that far forward. His arms cycled forward and back with a cyclical ease that seemed to stabilize and balance him. His chest rose and fell with a new tempo. His blue eyes dilated, the black growing larger and larger. The headband that he wore had been a good idea, catching sweat that beaded out as he ran. The cool morning air lapped at his rosy cheeks, blowing through wisps of fine, clear hairs that pushed out along the surface.

At first, Crow was nearly a block ahead as he ran down the street that bordered campus and the surrounding town. Making it through the shrubs and orienting to the street had been what held Bryson back a little. Still, with an all out open stretch, Bryson began to catch up. By the time that Crow reached the corner of the fenced-in football field Bryson was only half a block behind him. As Crow reached the far end of the field and hung a right, Bryson was only a quarter of a block behind. The two were racing at top speed. The casual, carefree face Crow wore was now one of determination, his purple tank top rippling from his bare shoulders. The breeze generated by their running was drying the sweat on his arms, though his clothes were collecting it like a sponge.

Bryson had never felt so alive before. He truly had been a miserable weed growing in a garden of perennials. How had he never had this before? His heart was racing, his mind was tingling, and his lungs... He could smell the freshly mowed turf of the football field, the exhaust of the cars on the street, and a scent that he only realized by the third turn had to be Crow. It was salty, earthy, peaty like moss and leather... and he loved it. He needed it. He pressed on harder, his feet and legs starting to hurt, but he didn’t care.

By the time Crow ran past the backside of the cafeteria, Bryson was only a few paces behind him. This time their footfalls were not harmonious. Crow could hear Bryson's feet landing just a little bit faster than his, gaining in tiny fractions with every step. Crow strained, pushing everything he had into it. Bryson had been right about his pride. He was competitive to say the very least. Even if the outcome to the beat was pleasant, he didn't want to lose.

The two young men nearly toppled over each other as they reached the rich red brick inlay work that ran between the science building and Crow's dorm. Bryson was forced to cede the inner track to Crow, giving him a slight advantage, but his own determination pressed him on that much more. They came into line, shoulder and shoulder, their eyes focused on the path ahead. Bryson knew the ornamental gardens lay to his left, hidden in a nook between the art building. It had been there that he'd waited, listening, calculating the exact right time to jog out to fall in line with Crow. His calculations had worked out perfectly, but now? Now it all came down to physical speed and stamina.

Both Crow and Bryson were panting hard, soaked with sweat, having gone full out for a distance that would have been considered competitive by many. Bryson leaned forward a little, trying to use his body mass to give him an advantage at the cost of stability. Crow gritted his teeth, his face tensing. A few of the other students on campus glanced over, surprised to see two young men come racing out of a side path at full bore. To Crow and Bryson, there simply weren't anyone else in the world.

Bryson glanced over out of the corner of his eye, wondering in this moment of truth if Crow would throw the race. What he saw instead... was a squirrel anxiously running away from a gardener and directly into their path. Bryson cringed and lunged, slamming into Crow and sending them both toppling off the cement path and onto the slight, grassy slope that bordered the quad. The two rolled and tumbled, landing in a tangled heap. Bryson grunted and groaned, dirt smearing his cheeks and shoulder where he'd torn up the turf. Crow coughed and sputtered in surprise. A terrible thought dawned as Bryson came back to his senses.

"I wasn't trying to cheat, there was a squirrel!" Bryson exclaimed. Crow coughed a little more and chuckled.

"I know, I saw it." he said, rolling onto his back, panting heavily, his black hair spread out beneath his head like a blanket of kelp. "We can add animal lover to your list of endearing qualities." Crow said after reclaiming his breath a little. Bryson rolled over onto all fours and crawled closer before lying down next to Crow, looking up at the silver clouds with his deep blue eyes.

"You have a list already?" Bryson asked with a warm smile.

"Yeah. We can discuss it over lunch..." Crow said. Bryson's head snapped as he turned to look at his competitor. Crow only grinned wider, "And if it's too long, we can discuss it at dinner too." he added, unable to resist the urge to look back into Bryson's eyes. The two were battered and bruised, drenched in sweat and covered in dirt and grass stains. Bryson merely leaned over and brought his lips to Crow's. Crow murmured and closed his eyes, letting his lips meet Bryson's. They stayed like that for several moments before Crow finally broke the kiss, "Just promise me you'll get rid of that terrible headband." he added. Bryson reached up, plucking the moist elastic cloth from his head. He yanked it off and hurtled it back towards the path they had been running along.

“What headband?” he asked. Crow made a soft grunt of approval and grabbed the back of Bryson’s head, pulling him into another kiss.

Malik’s head bobbed in time to the music pumping through his studio headphones as he ascended the stairs, feeling the burn in his calf muscles. It almost felt as if it defeated the purpose to eat a big dinner in the cafeteria, then cross the whole campus and climb three flights of stairs. Between that and his natural metabolism, he was hungry all over again by the time he made it back to the dorm. His flip flops slapped against the back of his heels as he emerged into the main hall, heading down at a fair clip. He slowed a bit, however, as his hazel green eyes fell across someone that was clearly not where they were supposed to be.

“Curtis?” Malik asked, reaching up to slide his headphones down from his ears, resting them around his neck instead. The Teacher’s Assistant had been knocking on one of the dorm room doors but he looked up at Malik, looking far more rumpled than usual. The beanie he always wore looked as if it had been pulled down almost painfully over his thick, curly brown hair. His ears were hidden from sight, although there were odd lumps in the front of it. His shirt rode up, revealing a stomach with a thick patch of brown hair and his corduroy pants looked ready to burst. To Malik’s surprise, the man’s goatee seemed even longer where it hung down from his chin, a good six inches or more... but something else was off too.

“Is this Bryson Harris’ room?” Curtis asked. Malik hesitated, trying to identify just what felt so off about the other man.

“Yeah... He’s usually in bed by now, but he also is pretty good about answering his door. Is something wrong?” Malik asked, looking at Curtis’ face and then his eyes. His pupils were misshapen, flattened to more of a strip than a circle. Malik knew that usually meant either drugs or medical trauma were involved.

“I gotta find him, I gotta warn him not to push things too far or something baahhhh!” Curtis suddenly bleated, reaching up to clamp his hand over his mouth, but it wasn’t enough. “Bahhh! Bahhhhh!” He bleated again and again before he gasped, his back arching. As he threw his head back, his beanie slipped up enough to reveal the base of two thick, umber brown horns curving up from his forehead. One long, droopy teardrop shaped ear flopped free, then the other. His pant legs rose up to reveal that he wasn’t wearing any shoes, but his ankles transitioned directly into cloven hooves.

What had been alarm and concern was replaced by arousal. One hand reached up to scratch at the fur on his stomach, lifting the shirt inch by inch, rubbing at his furry chest instead. The other hand dropped down, groping lewdly at the bulge in his overstrained pants. How had he held himself back this long? How could he resist such things? His face was serene, though there was still a hunger there. He unbuttoned his pants before Malik could back away, drawing the zipper down and letting pressure do the rest. The fabric splayed apart as a huge, thick, uncut cock sprung free. It wobbled and bounced a little, veins pulsing along the length. As the cool air hit it, the foreskin peeled itself back, allowing the cock to stretch outward.

“Curtis!” Malik muttered, unable to manage anything else. He had almost blurted out the word ‘satyr’ as that was just what Curtis looked like, but Malik’s brain seemed to be malfunctioning in the face of something so blatantly impossible. Curtis responded, however, by

shucking his pants and his spent underwear, letting them fall to the floor before he stepped out of them. The way he tilted his hips revealed a little spade of a tail wriggling over wool covered ass cheeks. Huge, heavy furry balls swung between his powerful legs, no doubt feeding the behemoth extending from his groin.

“Oh this is so good...” Curtis murmured, reaching up to stroke his long goatee, appreciating its thickness, its robustness, and the wild way it made him look. His unusual goat eyes, however, drifted back to Malik. The satyr ran a tongue over his lips, “You like to party, right Malik?” he asked. Malik had opened his mouth to say something, anything really, but nothing quite came to mind. Maybe he’d just snapped and lost it completely. How could there be a satyr just standing there in the hallway, his junk out for all to see?

Not sensing a no, Curtis took a step forward and reached out, his hand cupping the back of Malik’s head. He pulled the young man into a kiss, their lips meeting. It was furtive and gentle at first, but Malik began to reciprocate with more hunger and abandon. Their lips smacked, their tongues tangled and the backside of Malik’s hand brushed the hot rod by accident. Malik broke the kiss, panting a little. He glanced around and then back into Curtis’ unusual eyes.

“We can’t let anyone see you like this. My room is just down here.” Malik said, taking his hand and leading him along. After a few quick paces and a somewhat loud slam of a door, the only evidence left of the unusual spectacle was the discarded pair of corduroy pants and underwear, but stranger things were strewn about campus on a regular basis. Even the strange guttural grunts and moans and thumping that started to come from Malik’s room wasn’t entirely out of place. Those few that could hear the sound merely cheered their compatriot on in silent celebration.

By the time Bryson and Crow emerged from the restaurant, day had given way to night. It had not rained again and the rapidly cooling air was still fresh. Somewhere in the distance, crickets were chirping, bringing a sonorous temp to the evening. The moon was nearly full, giving the two young men plenty of light as they started the walk back to campus. To Bryson’s delight, they were walking hand in hand. He glanced over at the taller man, though perhaps not quite as tall as he’d originally thought... but Crow was just as handsome as Bryson had always believed. Perhaps even more now after they had shared so much.

Crow had tried to be a gentleman and reframe every answer he gave to ask the same questions back to Bryson, but Bryson merely wanted to know the inner workings of the man he’d had a crush on for so long. Crow loved archery but hated hunting. He loved swimming but never seemed to be able to keep a kayak upright. The venn diagram of their favorite shows and video games had some overlap, but the area they seemed to have the most in common was food. A dinner date had been perfect after all.

“I don’t think I’d be able to eat another steamed bun...” Bryson chuckled. Crow grinned in his good natured way, his long dark hair fluttering behind him.

“Sure you could. We just gotta burn off some calories. How about a moonlight run?” Crow asked. Bryson’s eyebrow nearly twitched. That was not at all the romantic end to the evening he’d been picturing, but it wasn’t as if he could resist the very thing that had brought them together in the first place.

“You really love running, don’t you?” Bryson asked. Again, Crow’s smile was easy and genuine. He rotated his shoulders a little as he stretched.

“Nothing quite like it. It’s freedom, you know? Being in tune with your body, mind and soul. We won’t race this time, just... a faster way to get to campus?” Crow offered, seeming to sense at least part of Bryson’s hesitation. The blond nodded a little.

“Sure, that sounds great.” he smiled back. The smile wasn’t entirely forced. It wasn’t as if his body refused to run as it had before the serum. If anything, he truly did feel more attuned with his body. As Crow started to pick up speed, Bryson did too. It was a little but of a false start as they had to hit the crosswalk button and wait for the signal to change, but then they were off, jogging across the intersection and down the next city block. Thankfully, as Crow had indicated, they were running shoulder to shoulder unless a street light or mailbox constricted movement.

While Bryson had been hesitant at first to run, he soon found it kind of charming. He was Crow’s equal, his partner, his date. They were two strong, fine specimens, faster and stronger than anyone else. Jogging gave him the chance to keep up with Crow, to see him in action and enjoy him in his natural habitat, to hunt with him at top speed and take down prey in an elegant and majestic blur! The intrusive thought was punctuated by a series of sudden cramps that ripped up Bryson’s left leg and down his right. He toppled to the ground, trying and failing to suppress the unexpected agony.

“Bry!” Crow said, turning around and closing the gap that had formed when Bryson had fallen. Blood rushed to Bryson’s cheeks, the blush visible in the moonlight, but the sudden circulation caused something else as his cheeks began to tingle, then burn as hundreds of tiny soft blond hairs began to emerge. He rubbed at his calves, trying to soothe the muscles with friction and heat but they too were bristling with a fine golden fuzz. His toes clenched and unclenched in his shoes, his toenails seeming to catch and drag on the fabric of his socks and bunch up.

“It’s okay, I’ll be fhhhh....” Bryson hissed, his eyes closing. Crow grimaced, crouching down to examine it.

“Stay calm, breathe...” Crow said, “Which leg is it?” he asked. Bryson made a soft clicking sound with his teeth, his ears now taking their turn to burn as fuzz grew across the back of his ears.

“Both of them.” He muttered in pain, not fully understanding what was going on.

“Okay, we’re going to gently ease it out of this position, and then I need you to start stretching. Flex your feet up and down and your toes.” Crow said. Bryson murmured.

“I’m bleeding.” He stated, looking up at Crow.

“It’s just road rash, every runner that takes a fall gets it.” Crow said, “You haven’t taken a fall like this before? I mean, other than when you tackled me?” he grinned, using his hands to help Bryson’s legs through the range of motion. Bryson looked up at him and thought about saying that he’d never ran before this week, but he decided not to, especially as another wave of pain suddenly ripped up his spine. He splayed out on the sidewalk, back arching. His hands snapped down, fingernails dragging across the sidewalk.

Normally the cement would have chewed his soft fingertips up, but as his hands moved his fingernails stretched outward, the ivory color taking on an almost bamboo like opacity. The inhuman nails curved and honed to a point, only growing sharper as the cement scraped away

the edges of the keratin. The nail beds grew puffy and swollen, the flesh stretching out over the top of the claws.

Bryson panted, groaned and gasped. As his blue eyes snapped open, they seemed to shimmer like icy pools surrounded by ash. His pale eyelids grew darker and darker, ringed by an inky blackness that seemed to run down his cheeks and around the contours of his mouth like tear tracks. Crow had been trying desperately to help his date, but seeing the dark marks appearing in the moonlight gave him pause, especially as his cheeks twitched and several clear, wiry whiskers prickled out of his cheeks and began to stretch outward. The golden fuzz that had been growing out across his cheeks spread under his chin, across the bridge of his nose and surrounded his eyes. As the advancing fur hit the darkened flesh, inky black fur grew instead, filling in the malar stripes.

“Skinwalker...” Crow muttered, remembering lore that had been passed down through his family over the years. Bryson was caught up, barely able to breathe. The chest he’d so admired as he grew pecs and abs was now completely covered in golden fur. It spilled out of the collar and cuffs of his shirt, climbing up his throat to join with the fur on his chin. His ears flattened and rounded, tufts of fur filling in where the wrinkles had been before. While most of the fur matched the blond tones he’d been born with, several spots darkened to shades of brownish-black, forming freckles on his cheeks and the back of his neck. It felt exhilarating and demoralizing all at the same time.

“I’m so sorry...” Bryson hissed, his heart thumping so fast that his toes were bouncing, only for Bryson to realize that his toe claws were already cutting through the front of his shoes, fraying apart the rubber until they stuck out awkwardly. His spine was soaked with sweat - sweat that had saturated the fur that had grown out of it. Somewhere in the back of his mind he thought about how many animals didn’t sweat and had to pant or wallow or find other ways to cool down. The thought faded as he looked back at Crow, realizing the other man hadn’t said anything. “I’m not a demon or anything. This was... a science experiment?”

“A science experiment is turning you into a cheetah?” Crow asked.

“A cheetah?” Bryson repeated, lifting his paw-like hand to examine his claws, his golden fur and the speckles that ran up his arm, “A cheetah...” he said again before swallowing. He looked back at Crow. At least with the fur he had it was harder to see him blush. “I had a crush on you, but I couldn’t keep up with you, like at all. I’d watch you running and dream of catching up. That night I came to your organic chemistry lab, the TA gave me something that’d help. It’s how I was able to run and keep up with you, at least... at first.” Bryson said. Crow seemed to be thoughtful. He crouched down lower and reached out to rub at Bryson’s legs again.

“Is it still hurting?” he asked. Bryson’s eyes widened a little in surprise, flecks of copper starting to stain the blue.

“N-no, at least not like it was...” he admitted. Crow nodded slowly and stood back up, offering Bryson his hand. Bryson took it and was promptly pulled up to his feet. He shivered a little as a six inch nub of white, black and golden furred flesh popped free of his waistband and began to wriggle behind him as it grew out.

“You do know what this means, right?” Crow asked. Bryson slowly shook his head. It could mean a hundred things or nothing. Crow took in a deep breath, “It means you cheated... You owe me another lunch.” he said. Bryson’s eyes widened.

“What?!” he asked, equal parts shocked and relieved.

“I mean, first we gotta get you sorted out. Whatever is happening could be dangerous. Do you think we should get you to the hospital?” Crow asked. Bryson nearly fell over again.

“No! I mean, they’d dissect me or something. If Curtis gave it to me, he’s probably gone through the same thing before. We just have to get back to the dorm and he’ll know what to do. Then... I’ll buy you lunch every day for a week.” Bryson said. Crow slung an arm around the small of Bryson’s back to support him and keep him upright in case there were any more muscle spasms, walking with him at a more subdued pace.

“And after classes, I’m going to help you stretch and properly hydrate and work at getting those gains naturally.” Crow said. Bryson looked up at him.

“And what if I’m still a cat?” he asked meekly. Crow shrugged, trying to suppress that same natural grin.

“I guess we’ll just have to find out if you like belly rubs.” he smirked, continuing to help support Bryson’s weight as they moved between the light of the street lamps and the shadow of the night.

The egregiously loud clank of the electronic lock releasing echoed through the lobby of the dorm as Crow moved carefully in, followed by a figure shrouded in a violet hoodie. Thankfully at the late hour, no one was in the lobby. Despite having the hood pulled over his head, Bryson’s changing features were hard to miss. His bare midriff showed creamy white fuzz around his navel and spotted fur down the small of his back. He’d tried to stuff his modified hands into the waistband of his pants, but his wrists were still visible. Crow acted as a shield, walking in front of him as they made it to the stairwell and started their ascent.

Each step sent strange ripples of pleasure up through Bryson’s body, energy hitting through his musculature. They had stopped by Crow’s dorm room just long enough to grab the sweatshirt, but given that he shared the space with three roommates, it wasn’t a viable option to lay low. Now, though, the ascent seemed to be pushing the changes through Bryson’s body faster. His feet throbbed and pulsed, swelling in the front of the shoes while shrinking away in the back. The materials were contorting around his feet. His ass cheeks tingled and throbbed, slowly pulling apart from one another. It had the dual effect of making his ass look bigger while also allowing a bit of a draft to reach the undulating ring inside.

A soft mew escaped Bryson’s lips as his tailbone continued to ache, reaching a new tenor as it repositioned further, angling outward and gaining new mobility. What bones made up his coccyx were shifting. They were hot and soft, malleable as they grew and yet firm enough to stretch the skin. New ligaments wove themselves out along the mass, joined by sinew and muscle and then entirely new bone segments. Inch by inch, the nub of flesh and bone was elongating. It had remained in Bryson’s pants for the first floor, but a jolt of pain caused it to twitch, snapping upright and springing free. As the whip-like tail escaped, the cool air caused a chain reaction where more fur sprouted along the length, coating it protectively.

“Crow, you... you should leave me.” Bryson panted, his tongue instinctively going to where his upper lip had started to split. The crease that ran up the center felt strange, but so too did the way either side curved out in crescent shapes, deforming. His nose had darkened, the flesh around the nostrils taking on a spongy texture.

“I’m not leaving you when you need me...” Crow said simply. He reached back and squeezed Bryson’s paw, feeling the paw pads that had formed. The pressure caused his ivory claws to slide out further from his fingertips. Bryson looked up at Crow with his now golden eyes, both of them glistening. Crow wasn’t afraid... at least for himself. It was fair to say they both had a healthy fear of the situation.

After what felt like an eternity, the duo reached the third floor and headed down the hallway for Bryson’s room. They moved a little quicker, passing the few doors that were open in a blur. Bryson squeezed past Crow for the last few feet so he could get out his key, unlock the door and slip inside. For a brief instant he thought about closing the door with Crow outside so he didn’t have to witness what was happening, but by the time he’d had the thought, Crow had followed him in, closed the door behind them and locked it. He went to the window next, making sure the blinds were tilted enough to be opaque.

“How is it going?” Crow asked. Bryson looked up, his expression a mix of bewilderment and doubt. Crow grunted a little, “Okay, bad question. Does it hurt?” he asked. Bryson shook his head, reaching up to pull his hood down. Two rounded furry ears popped up, his whiskers twitching out to their full width. Realizing how confining it was, despite how nice it was to wear Crow’s shirt, he grabbed at the base and pulled it off at the same time he removed his shirt. What was revealed was an exquisitely long, fine torso with creamy white fur from the chest to the waist. He still had a runner’s build, his arms defined but not overly built. Two puffy nipples poked out through the fur, feeling sensitive in the cool light.

Bryson reached up to touch one, gasping as his fingertip brushed the flesh. The engorged nub seemed to sizzle and then released a small gush of translucent milky liquid. The experience made his tail straighten out, his toes tighten and a bulge formed in his pants, a bulge that was very clearly larger than Bryson had been before. Crow’s jaw dropped a little at that, especially as a strange sweet smell filled the dorm room air. It smelled like summer grasses after the morning dew started to evaporate. As much as it had stirred a reaction in Bryson, Crow felt his own manhood grow turgid in response.

“We... should see the rest of you...” Crow said. Bryson looked up in alarm.

“What?” he asked. Crow swallowed dryly.

“I mean, to know if you’re okay, how it’s... make sure nothing’s wrong.” Crow said. Bryson’s brow furrowed, causing a crease in the spotted fur on his forehead. He couldn’t refute the logic, and he couldn’t deny that part of him was screaming out that that’s exactly what he’d always wanted for Crow. Bryson moved to gingerly sit down on the edge of his bed, bringing one leg up. He went to untie his shoe only to find that the laces had tightened so much that the knot was nearly impossible. He tried in futility for a few moments before he sighed. Brandishing one of his claws, he began to slice through the laces with a gratifying pop each time they frayed and broke. He wobbled the shoe forward and back before he extracted it.

The confined mass beneath was shifting rapidly. His heel had almost completely eroded away, bringing everything to the ball of his feet. Each toe seemed plump and round and distinct. Claws had cut through his socks, splaying them open. Bryson used his claws again to cut back along the sides until the sock sprung free. His foot continued to warp and shift, fur sprouting out across the tops while puffy paw pads pushed out of his toe tips and the bottom of his foot. The fur raced upwards, growing and meshing into the fur that had already claimed his ankle.

Crow stirred a little across the room, feeling conflicting sensations sweep across him. He was genuinely worried about Bryson's well being. He was touched and a bit guilty that he had done this to himself just to get his attention. Bryson seemed so sweet. Would they have ever found each other if Bryson hadn't pushed himself? And then... something about his new form, his changing form... It was so primal, so exotic, so unique. Thinking about that soft fur, that powerful muscle, and then the way he'd produced milk... Just thinking about it made Crow hard. His pants were tenting, his loins churning. It wasn't normal, it wasn't natural, but he couldn't deny that he liked it.

It took Bryson even less time to remove his other shoe, letting the torn up and destroyed article topple to the floor. He wriggled his new toes and set his paw down on the floor before hoisting himself back up to his feet again. Taking a little breath, he hooked his claws under the waistband of his sagging pants and drew them downward. He shivered a little as the cloth dragged over his erection, his eyes widening as the thick member bobbed upwards. He was even more surprised to see how large his balls had grown, the orbs distinct despite the sack they were contained in or the fur that had grown over them.

With a little more effort, the pants were shrugged to the floor and Bryson sat there on the edge of his bed, a cheetah boy. Tall and almost lanky but just fit enough to look virile. His blond hair had taken on a slightly more golden hue, his eyes were now a burnished copper around large pupils. His whiskers twitched as his dark nose sniffed. His hands seemed to be taking turns kneading the bed anxiously, his claws pressing in and out of the bundle of quilts. He looked down at his manhood, although that too seemed to be changing still. The surface of the large head seemed to have several tiny goosebumps that beaded along the flesh.

"I can't believe this happened..." Bryson said, feeling the crushing weight of the change.

"But you're so handsome..." Crow whispered. Bryson looked up in shock at that.

"What?" he murmured. Crow hesitated in his words, but he stepped forward with confidence. He reached up to caress Bryson's cheek and the blond couldn't help but lean into it, feeling a vibration start to manifest in his chest.

"You're very handsome, it's just different... And I mean, I've always been a cat lover." Crow said with a soft smirk. Bryson looked up at that, his face contorting a little. His teeth felt like they were growing and taking up more room in his mouth. As they did, it forced his jaw to press forward to make room, stretching his face into a short muzzle.

"Be careful, I might just take you up on your offer to be a cat lover." Bryson said with his mild attempt at humor. What surprised Bryson, and perhaps even Crow, was that Crow leaned down and kissed Bryson on his modified lips. It took a little getting used to, but as Bryson tilted his head and opened his maw, he tasted Crow's tongue delving inside. Crow's hand started to explore Bryson's body, caressing his shoulder, then his chest. As his fingers brushed one of the fat nipples, Bryson shivered and a small gush of milk ran down his stomach fur. Crow broke the kiss. Beneath his fur, Bryson was blushing furiously.

"I'm sorry, I know it's weird, you're being so nice to me and-ah!" Bryson gasped in shock and pleasure as Crow wrapped his lips around his left nipple. Crow began to suckle, using his lips and tongue to squeeze the flesh. Each tiny press ushered forth a fair amount of milk. Bryson reached up, wrapping a paw around the back of Crow's head, holding him there. Every suck and slurp made Bryson hornier. The beads on the head of his cock pushed out into tiny rubbery barbs. His shaft swelled fuller, fatter and longer. His balls were churning in moments. Bryson's

face contorted, popping and snapping as his muzzle grew in the rest of the way. Still he held Crow there, feeling the other man's lips on his chest, feeling him drinking the savory fluid.

Crow slowly started pushing Bryson back onto his bed, guiding the cheetah to sprawl out. He climbed on top of him, straddling him. He reached down to fumble with his pants, opening the button and the fly, revealing he hadn't worn any underwear of his own. His long, smooth brown dick slipped free to brush and rub against Bryson's as their laps came together. Bryson slid his paws up under Crow's shirt, tracing paw pads and claw tips up before he circled and massaged Crow's chest in turn. Encouraged, Crow only began to suckle harder, drinking down that milk.

Bryson began to grind upwards, rubbing his cock against Crow's, humping him and using their body weight to create additional heat. While his tail was half pinned, it twitched and flicked around the bed in delight. There was something primal about feeding someone in this way, letting them grow strong from his essence. Bryson's eyes closed, a soft chuffing sound coming as he involuntarily purred and mewed. It was hard to tell at first, but Bryson's massaging fingertips were brushing less and less against skin and more and more against hair, or rather, fur...

Jet black patches sprouted along the back of Crow's shapely neck, blossoming across his chest and prickling out of his legs. It crept across rapidly like shadows during an eclipse. Every strand was uniformly dark, as black as his hair and his namesake. The hand that held Crow upright above his reclined partner was burning hot with heat. The nail beds of his fingernails swelled and grew outward, stretching across his fingernails until they were nearly obscured. Having successfully latched together, the skin began to thicken and grow healthy again.

As primal as it felt for Bryson to be feeding Crow, Crow felt something ancient stirring inside himself as he drank down the warm cream. His upper lip toughened and swelled, splitting up the center as either side rounded and pushed forward. The tongue he used to lap at the nipple grew rougher and rougher, developing tiny velcro like barbs that dragged and raked the flesh. His teeth stretched out into fearsome weapons, sharp and dangerous despite the intimacy of the moment. He couldn't stop himself and he didn't want to.

Soft pops came as Crow's ears began to reshape and reform, taking on slight points as black fur raced up the backside while the interior became leathery and flattened out. His nose tugged and pushed and reconfigured itself, tilting upwards. The slight hair on Crow's arms grew dark and thick before being joined by much more. The shadow of black fur continued to envelop every inch of his body. Even his handsome face disappeared beneath the frothy coating of eternal night.

Using his flexibility and fueled by determination, Crow brought his hips forward while still not releasing Bryson's chest. He nearly bent himself in two, wriggling his pants down lower. Freed of its confines, two black furry globes twitched as he brought them in line. Crow angled as best he could before he sat, letting Bryson's rough, thick cock head push through his ring. He growled into his boyfriend's chest, feeling inch after inch slide into him. He'd never been on this end of a cock before, but something about the moment felt right. He began to flex his calves, practically crouching on top of Bryson, using that momentum to fuck himself on top of Bryson.

Hot breath blasted over dagger like teeth as Bryson reveled in all of the changes. He grabbed onto Crow's hip with one hand and really started going to town. He thrust up as Crow

came down, allowing themselves to crash together easily and rapidly. Crow moaned, gasping as Bryson got that much closer to his prostate. The rapid fire impacts had a side effect. Pressure built up more and more in his tailbone, causing a lump to form. As the lump slowly peeled away from his body, it was ensnared by the same fur lined coating that covered the rest of his body. The velvety rope-like tail stretched inch after inch, extending outward in seconds.

The bed started to lurch as their lovemaking picked up the pace. Crow's suckling became more urgent and greedy as the flow finally began to subside. As if it was trying to draw out every last drop from the source, Crow's face extended forward into a short feline muzzle as the black fur crossed his face, the flattened bridge of his nose and his forehead. He lapped at the sensitive nub before he pulled back. New whiskers twitched from his feline cheeks. There were still sinewy muscles elongating and thickening beneath his fur covered flesh, but the long haired man that had pushed into Bryson's bed was now a long haired panther.

Crow licked his new lips with satisfaction and debated going after the other side of Bryson's chest. As he contemplated he continued to ride that cock up and down. Deciding that he'd save the cream for dessert, he just wanted to enjoy their love making. Now upright, Crow's tall, lithe torso stretched as he placed each clawed hand behind his head, angling his arms outward in a double bend. He pushed off the bed and rose that much higher before he came crashing down again. It wasn't long before he felt the firm base of Bryson's cock against his prostate. Crow's black tail swayed back and forth behind him as his eyes slipped shut. His claws stretched out, his back arched and then he let out a yowl of pleasure.

Bryson moaned as he felt the hot, slick wet cream splattering across his chest. He leaned down and opened his maw, catching as much in his mouth as he could. The changes had made Crow a lot more productive. The cheetah got enough cum in his mouth to take a few gulps as well as feel it dripping from his chin. The flavor, the spectacle, the sensations, they were all perfect. Bryson grabbed onto Crow's hips, digging in with his claws as his back arched and he let out a feral yowl himself. He shuddered and moaned, cumming hard and deep into Crow's ass. Crow slowly sank down lower, as low as he could before he leaned forward.

Still dribbling cum, Crow smeared their bodies together and laid his head on Bryson's furry shoulder. He licked and lapped a little, although honestly his tongue was a bit tired after all the drinking. He let his eyes stay shut as he ensnared Bryson in his arms and held him. Bryson didn't resist in the slightest, sinking down into the mattress. He could hear both of their hearts racing, their breathing rapid, and the last shifting mutatoes to move through their bodies. He enjoyed the stillness and closeness. What little brain power he still had relished the fact that Crow had chosen this change, that he'd chosen to be with him. It was heaven - at least until the persistent buzz of his cell phone.

"Ungh, no..." Bryson growled.

"Ignore it, Bry." Crow murmured sleepily.

"Yeah, of course..." Bryson agreed, waiting for the vibration to end. He smiled happily and closed his eyes. Another moment of stillness came before there was a notification chirp.

"You have eleven new voicemails and three audio memos from Curtis Larson." His phone's voice assistant announced through the muffled folds of the fabric pooled on the floor of the dorm room. Bryson groaned more at that. Crow slowly propped himself up at that, looking at Bryson's face for an explanation. Bryson wasn't going to deny him.

“Curtis was the one that gave me the stuff that triggered my change.” Bryson explained. Crow nodded a little, looking down at where their furry bodies met.

“He probably figured out something was wrong. He’s probably calling to warn you or tell you about it.” Crow said. Bryson let out a long sigh.

“I better let him know that I already know, and I guess figure out if this is permanent or what.” Bryson said, though he paused as a smile returned to his feline features. He reached up to caress Crow’s cheek, “You know, you make a very handsome panther.” he commented.

“You’re not bad yourself.” Crow purred.

While Bryson’s dorm had felt cozy for one and intimate for two, four certainly seemed to be pushing it. Bryson and Crow remained cuddled together on Bryson’s bed. Malik sat in Bryson’s desk chair, two small black horns curving out of his forehead and rising up in front of his bandanna. A short tuft of creamy blond hair grew down from his chin, contrasting his earthy skin tone. That left Curtis to stand at the desk, Bryson’s laptop turned to show youtube videos to the rest of those gathered. The videos showed various young people crossing an apparent spectrum of hybridization with other animal species.

“It was a binding enzyme...” Curtis said, a slight lilt to his voice but he was no longer compelled to bleat as he had before his time with Malik. The three sets of blank stares that came back encouraged Curtis to continue. He cleared his throat a little, “Its been used in countless products for over six years... Shelf stable, no previously known side effects, and thanks to various subsidies it was really cheap. It was the miracle of anyone trying to make quick advances in everything from muscle growth to cognitive speed to advanced healing.” Curtis said.

“So what changed, aside from.... Everyone?” Crow asked, looking at a pair of gazelles jumping over the picket lines in one of the videos. Curtis stood there, stroking his long goatee, his goat ears twitching thoughtfully.

“I think that’s what everyone is looking into, but the leading hypothesis is that the company that manufactured the enzyme had to cut corners to keep up with demand. The slightest defect in their formulation. The same ingredient that had been stable and predictable and safe before, started binding more and more things. Rather than just grabbing the target DNA, it grabbed the entire matrix it was delivered with. Adrenaline reacted with the enzyme and accelerated the process.” Curtis explained. Bryson looked down at his furry arms, and then at Crow’s handsome face covered with glistening black fur.

“What does that mean for us?” he asked softly. Crow reached over to rub his leg affectionately, trying to calm him down. This time it was Malik who spoke.

“Welcome to being a minority...” Malik said with some trepidation, “With luck we can get out ahead of it, fight for our rights before anyone can build up enough momentum to marginalize us.” he said. Curtis nodded at that. Crow looked more serious.

“Maybe this happened for a reason.” Crow said. All eyes shifted to look at him. His whiskers twitched a little at the attention but he continued, holding out a hand, a claw pointing at the screen, “Everyone was using this stuff to try and fix or improve themselves, to keep up with

society or deal with illness or to adapt to the changing environment, right?" Crow asked. Curtis shrugged.

"Yeah, or to get a date with someone they really liked." he added. Bryson just about sank into the blankets right there, but Crow merely smiled, his feline ears perking up.

"Exactly. This isn't any different than humans inventing clothing, trains, cars, air conditioning. We took the best nature had to offer and used it to become better. Sure, it may not have been intentional for everyone, but the result is the same. It's not terraforming, it's... Bioforming. Evolution and innovation. People can get behind something like that." Crow said. Bryson had to admit, Crow's charisma and enthusiasm had sold him on the idea.

"That sounds a lot better than me just making up random chemical cocktails in the lab." Curtis murmured. Malik grinned, reaching over to pet the wooly fur on his leg.

"And hey, who can resist two fun party guys like us, right?" Malik asked. Curtis' tail began to wag excitedly at that. Bryson, however, looked as if he'd just seen a ghost. Crow looked at him, reaching to pet his furry cheek.

"What is it?" he asked softly. Bryson almost couldn't look him in the eye.

"I... I just..." Bryson hesitated before he let out a pained whimper, "I just was thinking about how much you love to run, and about Malik watching everyone getting ready for the olympics, and how me becoming a cheetah was cheating and I owe you lunches and-" Bryson realized how fast he was talking and how hard his heart was thumping in his chest. He also remembered reading somewhere about how anxious cheetahs were and that they often needed dogs or other animals to calm them down in captivity. He forced his breathing a little more, "I just realized that by turning you, I messed up your chances to run professionally, to compete like that..." Bryson said. Malik grimaced a little where he sat, following Bryson's logic. The smile that Crow gave Bryson was soft, gentle, and as warm as the sunrise. It looked different given his feline features, but the sparkle in his eyes was the same and the way that long, thick velvety black tail curled and brushed around Bryson's hip instantly put him at ease.

"I love to run and I can really run now..." Crow said first, "And for a while it might be hard. I'll have to find others like us to run against, to challenge myself... But eventually I know there will be organized sports. Even if we have to be in a different league or division, we'll measure ourselves just like people always have... And then, one day when the science has rested and everyone can agree, we can compete openly again. We'll get there. This isn't a setback, it is an opportunity." Crow said.

Bryson's copper eyes glinted and glittered with the mist of tears welling up. The moisture collected at the edge of his eyes before running down the black streams that ran down his face. They were tears of relief, of joy, of love and of pride. Bryson pounced, pushing Crow down onto the tangle of quilts and blankets as he kissed him. Bryson tilted his head just enough that their short muzzles could line up, their lips parting enough for sandpapery tongues to dart out, catching and scraping and brushing against one another as they indulged. Sharp claws traced innocently across furry chests and their long tails whipped around.

"Wow..." Malik murmured, a bit envious of their affection. He looked back up at Curtis, "Maybe we should head back to my room?" Malik asked. Curtis licked his lips at that and bleated a little, reaching out to close the laptop.

"I thought you'd never ask." he said, moving to stand before the desk chair., Malik stood up before he jumped into Curtis' arms. Curtis wrapped them around Malik, feeling the younger

satyr's wooly legs anchor and latch around his waist. He carried his partner out of Bryson's room and into the hallway, knowing any shock or doubt the other students had now would be tempered by the news stories of the transformations spreading across the globe. They weren't alone anymore.

As the door swung shut, Bryson was left with Crow beneath him, pinning the darker feline. He straddled his legs over his partner, letting their groins rub and brush together. He humped at Crow, still kissing him, admiring how amazing his body was. It might have been cheating to catch up to him by using the experimental drug that Curtis had made, but what had the alternative been? If he hadn't taken the leap of faith he'd still be pining away from a distance, looking at the man he'd never have. Crow might have moved on, finding someone else. Curtis likely still would have changed, though his choice of partner would have been different. Change had been inevitable. Now he knew it had taken action to change it for the better.

A deep, resonant vibration began to emanate from Crow's chest. He purred and chittered, mewling softly as they kissed and humped. Despite his softness, he waited for Bryson to come in just a bit more before he pressed both large paws on his shoulders and pushed him the other way. Bryson grunted as he came crashing down on his back, only to have Crow atop of him in a second. Their kisses were heated and hungry, but so too were the hands that roamed one another's bodies. It didn't take much coaxing for Bryson's legs to be up and splayed, presenting his ass for his partner's pleasure.

Crow slowly inched forward, the head of his shaft homing in on the rubbery sphincter before him. Bryson gasped as he felt that thick, hard cock worm its way deeper and deeper. Before long Crow was already thrusting forward and back, claiming inch after inch of his innards. Bryson moaned louder and louder, wrapping his arms around Crow's neck. Whatever was going to happen, Bryson couldn't even begin to tell in how many different ways his dream had come true. He'd run down his prey, caught his quarry, and boy was victory delicious.