Avatars-15

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Introducing Wolf, Cougar and Confronting A Situation

Artemis and Athena did not get the message to come home until the next morning when they finally entered the apartment’s kitchen. Artemis had followed Athena in to eat breakfast, while sharing her thoughts. she had concluded that if she lost the ability to become male, she would be perfectly happy to remain female. Athena was asking her if her feelings were the same the other way around when she noticed the light blinking. Athena checked in silently with her other to find out what the emergency was, and after hearing the report, demanded to know why they had not contacted her directly.

Athena’s other told her point blank that she had been about to, but noticed what they had been up to and decided not to interfere at such a decisive moment in Artemis’s life. Athena shared the news that Artemis might have just decided to remain a girl forever. Athena’s other asked her the hard question, would she decide to be a guy to compliment Artemis if she did. Athena told herself that she had given the matter some serious thought. For Artemis, definitely yes—but for herself, she did not know if she really could.

Athena’s other left her to her thoughts, and turned to consider the problem with Erin again. They were up, eating breakfast, discussing whether or not anyone had noticed that Aaron had entered the party and never left, and Erin, who had never entered the mansion, leaving. How were they supposed to find out without asking a lot of questions, and how could they ask a lot of questions without pointing out the very thing they were trying to hide. The only thing they could think of was to have Erin circulate a bit, and see if or how people from the party reacted to meeting her.

The people they really needed to test that theory on were the very people least likely for them to visit. That morning, the head of security for the party organizers was making a round of all the rooms trying to locate the one guest who had not been checked off. The head organizer caught up with him and asked for a status report. The conversation between them would have greatly interested the Morgan household. Wolf informed Cougar that one of the guests had not been checked off his list. Aaron had been on the invitation list, and he had been checked off with his date when he arrived, but never checked out.

Wolf had tracked down the few people who had managed to leave without being crossed off, and his date had been one of them. She had left with two girls, one another invited guest’s date, but the third had not been noted at all. He dragged Cougar over to the sound room where videos taken at the party were being reviewed by Wolf’s staff. Wolf pointed out the three girls, leaving the party with one of the girls who lived at the mansion. Wolf was guessing that she had brought the girl in without notifying the party organizers. But he was waiting for more information to verify it.

They had not been able to rig surveillance in the bedrooms, so Wolf had placed photographers in locations where they could catch snap shots of anyone who went into or out of the bedrooms. Cougar asked him if he was suggesting what he thought he was suggesting. Wolf nodded. A number of potentials had been spotted and were on his list to be investigated further, but he suspected that they might have actually caught an active. When the photos finally arrived, rushed at Wolf’s express command, both young men poured over them together.

They quickly sorted out the photos that showed Aaron and his date. Aaron had been photographed going in with her, and she had been photographed coming out, going back in and finally leaving with the unidentified girl. No alarms had gone off all night, so he had not gone out the window, and based on the evidence, and the thorough work of Wolf’s security, they had apparently caught an active. Now all they had to do was track her down. Cougar congratulated Wolf for a job well done and called a meeting of the inner circle.

Athena quietly excluded herself as she and Artemis arrived home with Morgan, Lauren and the four older boys they had picked up. She simply joined her other as she met her at the door, then escorted the others in and stood aside as they were introduced to Erin. Being part of the Families, there was no reason to ditch them or exclude them from the introductions. Besides, it would be interesting to see how they reacted to Artemis’s story, which was bound to come up when the adults got around to explaining to Erin the events leading up to her own miraculous transformation. They were surprised, but three of them confessed to an embarrassed Artemis that they had gone through a similar phase, and she had adapted far better than they had. The fourth came out and revealed that he had been born a girl, and chose to remain a boy.

Chris and Erin took his story to heart, finding assurance in their own decisions to change, and Artemis kept it in mind. If she had to make a decision, she would want to be a boy for Athena and a girl for herself. In order for that to happen, she would have to have an “other”, like Athena did. The boys’ confessions did set the topic for a heated debate. They discussed, sex, gender and the mind’s potential, and the fact that changing sex seemed to be the perfect short cut to awakening psi potential. It had been so for Chris and Jean, and proved again that morning with Erin, who had to be tackled when she slipped out into the back yard and spread her arms to take flight.

Erin had confessed, after crawling out of that dog-pile, that next to being a girl, her fondest wish had been to fly. It seemed natural that with one miracle under her belt she should try for the other. After a lecture, in which everyone present sympathized immensely, she could understand how the will to fly was perhaps the most dangerous temptation for a psionic in the modern world. It took a long time to learn how to baffle radar, and even then there was always a chance of being observed visually. She agreed to wait until she was trained, and approved for night flying, before experimenting further in that direction.

The ban only applied to full out flight. The new house had been designed to accommodate anyone’s interest in levitation, and that was what the work crews had always done on their weekends, before the girls had made the new house their personal playground. Those older boys were about Kim’s age, so for the first time, she was eager to join the group headed over to the new house to play. The adults agreed that time spent practicing control was critical at this stage, and no one worked harder than when they were at play. The problem of Erin’s identity was set aside for the day, once Erin assured them that she often stayed out all weekend—as a guy—without her parents becoming worried.

It was decided that Jean, in male form, wearing Aaron’s clothes and a bit of make up, would pass for the missing boy. He went to collect Aaron’s car from the mansion, telling a story about having slipped out through the back yard, and getting out the side gate. The security from the party accepted the story when Aaron’s key proved to unlock and operate the vehicle. He drove the car to long term parking at the Oakland International Airport after meeting Vincent for the ride out.

On the drive to the airport, he had discussed another problem with Vincent. Officially, he was a boy. With the awakening of his powers, he had become a girl by default. His intentions, when he asked to be turned into a girl, had mostly been experimental, and had now evolved to acknowledge the fact that he had a whole other side of himself to develop, much as Artemis had. The fact remained, however, that being a girl left him in the same boat as Erin, devoid of legal identity. Unless Vincent seriously suggested creating an additional identity for Jean, a real possibility if it could be done for Erin, Jean had an obligation to maintain her male identity.

Vincent assured him that a suitable cover could be arranged if it became necessary, but he discouraged her from trying to fight his new natural state. He did not need to argue his point, since Jean proved it herself. The stress of staying male for the duration told on her, as she reverted spontaneously the moment she killed the engine. Vincent teleported them back to the new house. They had remained in the car long enough for their surreptitious tail to expose a full roll of film, catching her in the act.

Jean returned to the point she had argued. She had an official identity already. All she needed to do was maintain it. In order for her to do that, she had to gain better control over her ability to shift. As it was, it took her full concentration to remain male, and as she learned through the course of the day, it only took a moment’s distraction for her to slip unexpectedly back to female. There in the haven of Xanadu, the new code for the new house, she was safe enough, but if she enrolled in school with Chris in the fall, she had to be able to keep the male side up with less effort, or assume a new identity.

It took a bit, but a long talk with Artemis got to the root of Jean’s real concern. Jean confessed to her that her date with Aaron had been an epiphany. If she did not make an effort to maintain her link to Jon, she would be irresistibly tempted to remain female. Not even Chris could prevent that. Just being Jon had to be important enough in its own right or she would lose it. Give it up willingly. Just knowing that sex as a man could be as rewarding in the male role as it was in the female role did not do it. Artemis assured her she was dead right. Being a girl, she had discovered, was not an act or an experiment. It was an innate part of who she was.

Artemis explained further. The decision to live in the male or female role had more to do with how a person wanted to realize themselves socially, and in her entire life as a boy, she had known only passing acquaintances. Only as a girl, had she really made friends, and developed a social life. As a boy, she had actually gone to great lengths to keep from making any close ties to people. Being a boy, she had driven a wedge between herself and her own mother. Only as a girl had she been willing to see her father as a person, rather than the ultimate authority in her life. As it stood right then, she would fight to remain female. The boy in her would be fighting right at her side.

Jean listened to her with painful agreement. It was true. Already, she could not bear the thought of abandoning what she had discovered. Their lives were so much alike. The only exception was that Jon had been living in the same town his entire life, and was popular in school. The devotion he had to martial arts had never-the-less limited his social development. As a guy, he could deal with people he already knew, or who like Artemis, were as devoted to the art as he. With strangers he had always been on guard, remote. The fact was, she had better social instincts as a girl, and in light of the majority of people she did not know, it was as a girl that she could best deal with them.

Artemis shocked her by announcing that Athena was going to be taking over Artemis’s place. That is, she was taking over her male identity. Jean understood in part why she was doing that and hoped that she would not end up pressuring Chris to try the same.