Avatars-16

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Introducing the Wild-Psi’d, Lynx, Tiger, Jaguar, Panther, Fox and Kodiak

Jaguar arrived at the meeting of the Wild-Psi’d with the developed surveillance photos. Lynx had the research on Aaron and the girls who had helped him escape from the party after his transformation. Jaguar was excited, Lynx was apprehensive. Cougar looked at the two of them and asked for what would be the good news first. He laid out the photos, capturing Jean’s shift in full detail, announcing that they had confirmation that the target was a psi. Wolf interrupted to inform everyone that the person in those photos was not the target, but in fact the girl he had been with, with her hair dyed black. There were now two targets. The proof about the second validated the existing evidence about the other.

An excited debate followed, with individuals throwing around theories they each cultivated about the relationship between gender dysphoria and psi potential, and which might be at the root of the other. Cougar interrupted the debate to ask Lynx for the background report she had assembled. She began by laying out the photos from the party. She picked one that showed Athena, Jean and Erin sneaking out through the garage and asked anyone if they recognized the third girl.

Everyone studied the picture and then someone shouted in recognition. It was the girl that Eric was constantly surveilling. Someone reminded him to use Eric’s cover name, Keith, or at least the code name Dragon. By any name, he was a young man most of them feared, and then maybe respected. Lynx then pulled out the background data and announced it was bad news. The worst. There were a few details Keith had been leaving out of his reports, not that he was particularly good about keeping the group informed.

While doing the background on the two people they had been able to identity, Aaron and Athena, she had discovered several interesting things. One, Athena apparently had reunited with a twin sister who had been abducted at birth, through the simple trick of having her reported stillborn. The pair of them were enrolled in summer classes at the university. Their records contained the bad news. They were both in a class held by Jack Hunter.

The room went deathly silent. She had to confirm her report. Keith had never established that Athena was more than a very promising potential, but if Hunter was that close to her, she was probably more, and without doubt in great danger. Worse, both of the targets they had identified were only one step away from being spotted by Hunter himself. The people in that room had been rescued from Jack Hunter by Eric, his younger brother. How could he have failed to notify them that Hunter was back to his old tricks?

It went to an immediate vote. If they acted quickly, they might be able to contact and warn Athena, and the other two targets, before Hunter made his move. On the other hand, if they acted too quickly, they might end up back in Hunter’s clutches. He might already have sold the girl his lies and could be using her to quicken others, starting the cycle over again. If they approached her, and she was on his leash, she would betray them to him. First, they had to confer with Keith, he might have good reasons for keeping Hunter’s emergence a secret.

Until then, they could only continue surveillance. An opportunity might present itself, or adversity, and they had to be ready to act. Athena, her twin and anyone who was observed to be closely intimate with them or the targets they already had, would be kept under observation. Because of Athena, Keith was certain to contribute to the effort. In the mean time, they had to go over the list of potentials they had screened at the party. It was the reason they had gone into the business of staging parties, they could not neglect the potentials simply because they had a line on a few actives.

Athena, in male guise, arrived at Xanadu and was introduced as Ares—a new code for Alexander. She had been talking to Victor at her old home about assuming Artemis’s original identity, while Artemis and Jean had been speaking together at Xanadu. Athena frustrated Jean by proving to have perfect control over her sex. Jean did not say anything as it turned out that Athena’s other was a family secret, shared only with Artemis, Chris and Jean. Her other had stepped out of the meeting that morning to keep from exposing the secret to Erin, Lauren, Morgan and the four boys who had come with them from San Francisco.

After the family meeting she had sent her other back out with the others and called on Victor. Victor had agreed to Artemis suggestion that Athena take on the role to aid the development of her male side. With Artemis growing more and more into the female role each day, it might well be appropriate for Athena to take on a male role. The most important thing was that the two of them resolve to marry and have kids. Their child would be the vindication of a thousand generations of breeding.

The concern was not that one of them had to be male. That really did not matter in light of their abilities. The concern was that one of them had to be able to assume the role and responsibility of a child’s father. Good genes did not make a child immune to the environment she grew up in. Victor was already cursing himself for keeping his boy away from his mother so much. As a boy, he had taken after his father too much, and only as a girl had she escaped his hold on her and bloomed in her own right. Athena turned her life as a girl over to her other, and was focusing exclusively on being Ares, officially Alexander, until or unless Artemis asked her to give the role back.

Having made this momentous decision, she had decided to have fun with it. Right away, Artemis made a fool of herself, throwing herself at Ares. Athena’s other, now the only Athena, pulled her off of him and reminded her that Ares was engaged to Athena, meaning her, and had best not forget it. Poor Artemis was shocked to the pit of her stomach. What a fool she was, she had made no effort to act like Athena, and no one who had been there could have mistaken her for her twin with Athena right there beside her.

She got a grip on herself, telling herself that the scene had been more for Lauren and Morgan than it had been for her. Ares took one look at Athena and pulled Artemis back saying he could just as well pick Artemis, since it still honored the family agreement. Lauren and Morgan chimed in, telling him not to limit his options even that much. Artemis remembered what Athena had confessed about her friends and a wild inspiration took her. She grabbed Athena by the hand and walked her back to the pool, saying loudly that arranged marriages were archaic anyway; maybe they should just leave Ares to the wolves.

Ares looked shocked and Lauren and Morgan jumped into the breech. Artemis muttered under her breath to Athena, as those two girls pounced on Ares and dragged him the other way, that this was the best way for Athena to learn what being a boy had been like for her. Athena retorted that her other would hardly be troubled, she had dreamed of taking her two best friends as a man for years. Artemis confessed that she had known it. She was just curious to see what her love would do about it.

Artemis had trouble freezing Ares out, but as the sister of the girl he was supposed to marry, and a person he had just met, she understood that was the way she had to play it. If she could do a convincing impersonation of Athena, she might have tried it, but Athena’s other had a natural advantage over her. If this situation lasted long enough, they would have to swap places so Artemis and Athena could actually get married, but there was plenty of time for that. She was thinking first of the worst consequence of Athena’s impersonation of Ares. They might not be allowed to sleep in the same bed any more.

Oh, the adults in their household would not object at this point, they already knew what they had been up to. The deciding factor was that they were now openly keeping a young man as a guest, and they could expect their neighbors to be peeking in the windows and listening through the walls to catch any inappropriate behavior. Really, a person had more privacy with people who see through walls, and read minds. At least psionics did not lie to themselves about what constituted normal behavior, and had the sense to be discrete.

That evening, Ares was crushed to discover that he was now sleeping in the guest room with Victor. He gave a deep sigh, and asked Athena to give her love to Artemis. He was disappointed when his other showed up at the door to the guest bedroom and slipped back into his mind. Athena’s bed was not big enough for four. If not for the fact that Chris or Jean would be shoved out onto the floor, Ares could have stayed in Athena’s own room, tucked inside her own head.

Ares Athena finally got fed up. There was no reason why couples should be broken up by beds. She grabbed Victor and moved him into her room, dragging Chris, Jean and Artemis with her into the guest bedroom. Unless someone came into the house to do a head count they would never know who was sleeping with whom, but at least this way they all had a comfortable bed, the company of the one they loved—except Victor, Victoria was still in England. She reminded herself to ask Artemis what to do if she paid them a visit while she was pretending to be Ares.

Artemis had just decided that Athena had made an exception to her own rule, of living in the male role, when she slipped into bed. Her love was decidedly male, and she could not help but be strangely excited. They had both taken on the form to make love to each other, but she had not ever slept with a man, in the strict sense of the word. Chris looked on in amusement, while Jean looked on in envy. Jean declared loudly that Athena had to teach him how to do that; poor Chris was being neglected.