

# Touch of Chaotic Harmony

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## Chapter 2: Different Night

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### **The First Ones-----**

Ezee didn't exactly speed, but he was keeping to the ten mile over the limit window. That wasn't speeding. It was well known that you didn't get pulled over until you were 11 over. He honestly didn't think her clutching the hand rests when he took the corners was necessary.

"I'll try to be back within an hour. Have your stuff ready," Ezee said to her as she climbed out. He sighed. "You just had to put the idea of hooves appearing while driving in my head..."

He had things to do. First off; last minute shopping. There was a stock of canned and dried goods at the cottage already, and even more in his house. He could toss the ones at home in the trunk. But there was the other matters of fresh food. The book said ponies were primarily herbivorous, but there was a 66% chance, actually, 84% chance that at least one of them would need protein. More importantly, he should grab a couple plastic sealed tuna rather than tinned, just to give time to get used to hooves...

Right, he needed to pick up his electric can opener... and Appollo... Not to mention fresh fruits and veggies. They were turning into herbivores. Fruits, veggies, carbs... He winced slightly, thinking of the hit his credit card account was going to take getting all this stuff. Hmm... He needed to call utilities to get the power running in the house again. It got water from the local well and had a tank on top of that, but electricity was another issue. Still, there was the generator and a couple gallons well of gas up there.

His first stop was walmart. He started with food, then moved on as other things occurred to him. Some pastries and ice cream for comfort food, a cooler to keep things fresh until the power could kick in, food for Apollo, though he would be able to catch his own up there, some new bedding, a ton of those traction stickers for the bathtub. I had no idea what hooves would be like, and how long this would last, so better to be cautious.

A couple more things here and there and he checked out, dumped his prizes in the trunk. He scratched thoughtfully at temple, thinking what his next move would be. He paused when he felt fur on the back of his ear. "No time to waste, boy..."

The mall. Well, the mall and surroundings. First stop; the Bell Canada store. What was a hundred dollars to get a 4G router? It would still run off his same internet plan, just no need to plug it in. He didn't even have a home phone. He used his cell phone number for everything. He stopped by Canadian tire and picked up some more general supplies and finally headed back home for the last top up. Four shopping bags from the basement. They wouldn't have gone to waste anyway; it would have been his contribution to the family barrel to relatives back in Jamaica if they never got used, and most all of the contents had been purchased on sale. He inherited that much from Dad.

He found a message from Naomi waiting.

*[I can get get something for you if they ask, but WHAT THE HELL? You have a tail? You're messing with me, aren't you? Look, if you don't want to tell me, fine. But if yuo aren't lying, you could be in serious trouble. Let me come take a look at you and see if you're okay.]*

*[No. It might be contagious. Magic spell book. Really genuine magic. And you know how I love urban fantasy. Give me a day or two to try and work things out. Talk to Yan, he knows what's going on as much as I do. If it's safe, waiting a while won't hurt. If it's not, I dno't wan you to get it. Love ya too much for that. I'm pretty sure I'm turning into a pony, but I'll let you know when it all works out. No go get back to saving people's lives. Other people's, not just your brother's.]*

Reply sent, bags moved, he had three major things left. He gathered his perishables from the fridge and put them him an insulated bag with some bags of ice, he backed a bag enough for a two week stay, added a fourth thing to the list when he realized he didn't prepare for laundry and grabbed his laundry supplies and basket to the car before moving to the last item on the list. "Hey! Apollo! Time to go on a trip!"

Mariah headed inside and quickly got het stuff. She found her luggage easily enough, burried under sevrul pounds of clothes and shoes. She had to remember the last time she had wore most of them... She shook her head, gathering her things. A weeks worth of clothing (no telling how long this transformation would take, or if it would reverse itself), the same for toilttries, the magic book of course, her cell phone, her laptop and rocketstick, the charger for said laptop... and the cell phone charger, some pencils, pens, paper (she'd make a diary of the changes until she couldn't hold onto the pencil any longer)... what else would she need...

Mentally, she debated on making a note to Rachel. She really didn't think it was a good idea to tell anyone about this. The government, CDC or whoever would want to swoop down to contain things.

Rachel was busy with \memorizing another taekwondo kata when she heard Mariah return to the room. Just about all the kata were based on repetition and muscle memory to help you learn the moves. She left the room so she could greet Mariah at the front. "Oh...Mariah...you're back...", she said.

Mariah yelped in shock, making sure her ears were covered again under her hair. "Rachel! Hi! Can't talk, gotta get some things together." She grinned nervously as she headed to her room. "Gonna be away for a while. Something came up, big. Huge! Unavoidable!" She nervously laughed.

"What kind of thing...", Rachel wondered aloud.

"Big! Huge! Involves that comet that might hit earth. Figured I'd get out od dodge with Ezekiel just in case. Said it was okay." Mariah smiled. "Ummm... Please tell me you didn't read the book that I found. Or... Even touch it. Or even look at it. No! Did you even think about it after I left?"

"Book? L...oh that book, I just thought you were interested in ponies...that's all...", Rachel said sheepishly.

"So you didn't read it?" Mariah asked, looking at her roommate. "Touch, or anything?"

"No...no I didn't...", Rachel said trying to reassure Mariah.

Mariah let out a huge sigh of relief. "Thank god... One bit of good news..." SHe muttered. "Still... Gotta pack. Ezekiel's comming back for me to the cottage trip. Not sure when I'll be back."

"Wait so you're taking cover with your new boyfriend while leaving the rest of us to die?", Rachel asked, confused by the proceedings.

"Not to die as such, but if it does hit, there's probbaly going to be a lot of panic and I don't want to be around for that." Mariah lied, rather convincingly.

**Bluff: Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 17 +2

**mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 7

"And you think it's all right that I and others are left to fend for ourselves in the chaos?", Rachel asked, "I'm still not sure what's going on..."

"In all likelihood, nothing's going to happen. It'll probbaly just pass us by or maybe smash into the moon. Plus well... That's not the only reason. I finally got a date with Ezekiel and we wanted to go to his cottage to relax and see if it would work in a more romantic setting." Mariah said, hoping that would do the trick.

"Oh...well okay then...", Rachel said.

"I'll take my phone, you know the number, right? You can call me if you need anything." Mariah said.

"Um, alright then. Hmm...but what are you two planning to do in your little cottage?", Rachel asked in a joking tone.

Notice: **mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 11 +1

Mariah blushed. "Ummm... Stuff...?" She asked, unsure. Then the thoughts entered her head.

"Trying to make this date extra special I guess? Or just stuff", Rachel added air quotes for stuff.

Mariah blushed even more and backed off, heading to her room. "Well, I don't want to tell you to much. Yet that is. Once I get back, sure. Maybe." She said.

"Why so secretive...it's not like you...", Rachel said to her.

"Ezekiel's my first shot at getting a long term boyfriend," Mariah replied. "I don't know how things are gonna go. Any tips?"

"I got nothing...I mean I get along fine with boys, but nothing long term like you're hoping...good luck with that...", Rachel said to Mariah.

"Thanks." Mariah said and began packing, putting together her list of things.

"Still all that stuff you're packing, it seems more like you're planning an extended stay at the cottage rather than just a date", Rachel said.

"More like an extended date." Mariah said, packing her laptop and electronics first. The book was where she left it and that was next to be stashed and hidden.

"You've got enough supplies to last you a month...is there a special bunker I don't know about?", Rachel said.

"More like a week," Mariah said dismissively.

"Still this feels too suspicious to just be a date...", Rachel replied.

Mariah smiled, packing her clothes next. "Something new I suppose," Mariah said. "Dinner and a movie? Pfft. Too normal. Overdone and lame."

Sometime after Mariah and Rachel's little talk, Ezee and Avery pulled out up out front and a horn blew twice before Ezee realize he could have just as easily called rather than disturb the peace.

"Oop!" Mariah called. "Gottagobye!" Mariah said, snagging her luggage and taking off.

Rachel looked out of the window to see two guys waiting ina car. "What who's zeke's friend?", she asked Mariah.

Mariah was already tearing through the house on her way out. "Don't burn down the house while i'm away, all that stuff!" The door opened, Mariah left, door closed and the girl raced to the car.

Rachel exited the house to send off Mariah. "Oh hey Zeke, you two lovebirds have fun now...but not too much fun...if you know what I mean.", Rachel called to them.

"Um... sure?" Ezee said. Then he slipped into his natural people skills. "Don't worry about us, we'll be fine."

Bluff: 17

"Sure, still we're talking a whole week, and with the comet...and she's been frantic about packing...it seems there's more going on than just a weeklong date...but I dunno.", Rachel said to him.

"Why Rachel, are you jealous of the time your roommate will have with your favourite researcher?" Ezee asked with a sly smile.

"I prefer to think of it as a healthy dose of paranoia...actually maybe a bit unhealthy...ack...", Rachel blushed and waved goodbye.

Mariah entered the car after putting her bag in the trunk of the car and buckled her seatbelt. She adjusted her hair once more and hoped that it still hid her pony ears, rocking her neck back and forth, trying to work out the kinks and the pain in there, hearing the little pops. Or expecting to. [She may have intended to put it in the trunk, but it was packed with grocery bags, both the disposable plastic ones and the more popular reusable 'made from recycled materials' one, along with three coolers, two backpacks, a laundry hamper with fabrics and plastic bottles and three cardboard boxes, one claiming to have oranges, another claiming to contain flour and the third's label blocked.]

"Just put it on the backseat," Eze called at her.

"Right." Mariah said and sat in the back behind her seat as she took shotgun.

"Okay, really..." Eze asked as he pulled out and air conditioning combined with closed windows, running engine and ever increasing distance (and Apollo's hissing from inside his carrier) ensured privacy. "What did you tell her?"

"That we were going to your cottage as an extended date to see if it could work in a more romantic setting since movies, dinner, and all that stuff are too boring and overdone." Mariah said, leaning away from Ezekiel just in case he attacked her. Not that it would help any, but still...

"Remind me not to let you come up with cover stories," Eze sigh as Apollo's hisses turned into plaintive yowls. "You're fine, kitty," he called, trying to calm the cat down. He never did like car trips. Still, he'd calm down eventually. Eze finally finished his initial thought. "Ever."

"I was in a rush and it was the first thing to come to mind." Mariah said lamely.

"Lovely... you know she's just as curious as I am, right?" Eze asked.

"What would you have told her?" Mariah asked. "And besides, you told Yan that you're turning into a pony."

"And not that it's an extended date... that's just weird..."

"So... What would your story have been?" Mariah asked again.

"Probably just that you were going to be out of town for a few days for either family, personal or medical reasons," Eze said with a slight shrug of his shoulders, shifting slightly in his chair and hitting the indicator. "What's done is done. And you know what? I'm hitting a drive through."

Mariah began searching through her pockets for her debit card. "Less you want to put it on yours? I don't mind paying for what I want."

"I plan to get some of everything," Eze said with a sudden fierce grin, hunching over the wheel a tad. "I haven't eaten since breakfast, and I'm turning into something that's almost totally herbivorous, if the book is right. And since I don't know how long it's gonna be till we figure out a way to fix that, I'm going out with a bang!"

Mariah nodded as she took hold of her card. "If you have any steak there, I'll make it or something." Mariah said, thinking of her order. She didn't want to take any of Ezekiel's food, after all.

"Mostly fish and some eggs," Eze said. "In terms of what I have for uncooked food. Twilight recommended fish for pegasi and unicorn."

"That... doesn't make much sense, but i'll take your word for it. Still, for a last meal, steak sounds good." Mariah sighed. "Last meal...that sounds really bad."

"Last *meat*. Totally different," Eze said. He pulled up at the end of the line at a red light and turned the volume down on the music a bit. "I planned on hitting the KFC on Front then the Burger King over on Hamilton. But I suppose the No-Frills is on the way north too... And magic. It's literally magic. Three types, er, tribes I think was the term, or ponies. Unicorn and Pegasi need animal protein to properly regenerate their mana levels. Pegasi need it to fly and unicorns literally need mana to live. Earth ponies get by with solely plant based proteins and don't have the same animal protein cravings the other two get.

"Huh..." Eze said thoughtfully. "You think they have horror stories about undead meat craving unicorns and pegasi?"

"I dunno... might be in my book or something." Mariah said shrugging.

"Ah, baskets of fleece!" Eze said suddenly, snapping his fingers as something came to him.

"Huh?" Mariah asked. "What's wrong?"

"I don't have power running yet. Not for another few days," Eze sighed.

"So much for the steak idea then. Unless there's a barbecue?" Mariah asked and thought. She'd have to use paper for transcribing her transformation notes.

"It's a gas stove and the propane tank was near full, not counting the spare one," Eze said as he turned on Front, a bit heavy on the gas to beat the light that was teetering on turning red. "Just the fridge won't be working for a while. At least the pipe water is cool. Aww... that means the can opener won't work either... can't use the generator just for tuna... Good thing I bought some sealed in plastic..."

Mariah nodded. "Well it's not too cold out at any rate so it's not like we have that to worry about. Can you imagine this happening in the winter?" she shuddered a little bit from picturing the cold.

"Look on the bright side; we're growing fur!" Ezee teased. There was his first target! Not 1.2 kilometers down the road, the KFC sign rose majestically above the rooftops. *My precious...*

Mariah blushed intensely. "Well... When you put it like that..." Mariah twiddled her thumbs nervously, dreading what might happen if he rifled through her bookmarks.

"Sorry if I'm being too casual about all this," Ezee admitted as the turn for KFC steadily drew closer.

"Hey it's all right," Mariah said. "Truth be told this is... Umm... Maybe later." She said, still blushing. "I think it might be fun." She said carefully.

"I don't know if 'fun' is the word I'd use, but interesting anyway," Ezee said, then sighed. Maybe he could figure out a way to handle some of his job online if it didn't work out for the best? Managing the databases and such could be done from offsite. He'd need to improve his computer software and programming skills a bit... Could you even type with hooves? Actually... maybe he should be focusing more on sorting things out than making a life as a pony... was that even possible? He mused on it as he turned into KFC.

"Want anything here?" he asked, slowly pulling up to the ordering speaker. Actually... he should hit the bank's drive through too, pick up some cash.

"Sure." Mariah said and looked at the menu. "Actually, we might as well just split a bucket. Some macaroni salads, french fries... Use my card for this one, by the way." She said passing it to him.

Ezee didn't even twitch. Normally he'd swap the side for more fries, but if she wanted the macaroni, she could have it. Ordering didn't take long. He added two big crunch sandwiches as well. Nothing went with chicken quite like more chicken. Trust him on that one. Better yet, try it yourself. Avery rolled down to the next window and Ezee started up conversation again.

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: *19+5 stability to not wince*

"So does it scare you? Or at least worry you? The whole thought of potentially loosing your.. humanity?"

Mariah looked to Ezekiel. "You really want to know?"

"Right now, there are two people in the world going through this, and they just so happen to be sitting beside each other," Ezee said, his tone somewhere north of bland, west of sarcastic, a few blocks from confounded and maybe across the road from contemplative. "Might as well start talking about it before it turns into a bad sitcom." Dammit... cable. He forgot about the cable... He'd have to call them in the morning. Then again, you could get all you needed from the INTERNET! (yes, all caps and exclamation mark required) and it was basic anyway.



Mariah sighed a little. *Might as well see how he'll react...* "Truth be told... I always wondered what it would be like to be something other than a human. Sure, there's the advantage of being sapient, but it's still... I dunno, boring. It's hard to explain." The blush came back to her cheeks once again.

"Science fiction and Fantasy have always been my favourite genres," Ezee said, tapping out a sombre beat on the steering wheel. "And I do the D&D thing often. We actually have a game that runs every other week at the library. Never played a human yet. What scares me the most... is that none of this actually scares me. I just feel... excited? Nervous, as to how it would turn out, but not fearful. Nervicited?

"Plus. I don't think I'm going to be losing humanity anyway. Human form, maybe, but humanity is largely upbringing." Ezee slipped away from the pop culture and hobby reasoning right into the sociological and philosophical without missing a beat. "People don't call murderers and rapists inhumane because they are suddenly not human in form and appearance, but instead because they've become divergent to the moral and behavioural standards people established."

Mariah nodded. "I might join that group if we get out of this. Though my characters might be a bit... weird. But anyways, I suppose that's true. Part of me just..." She took a breath trying to see what the right words were. "I suppose it's that I've never felt... Comfortable? Complete? I dunno. Just this..." She gestured, tugging at her stomach. "Just never felt right. Like I was meant to be something else. Or I should be." She paused. "I'm not making much sense, am I?"

"Your order?" the girl that had been on the other end of the speaker connection said. "It's 32.45." There was a bit of difficulty in getting the card reader over to Mariah, but the machine had the length for it. Once they paid and the bounty was theirs (and Ezee's hunger temporarily addressed with a few fries), he brought out his response.

"Species dysphoria."

"What do you mean?" Mariah asked. "I just always called myself a furry... Dunno what specifically caused it though."

"It's a psychological condition. Pretty sure it's official," Ezee said as he pulled back into the main traffic. His MP3's shuffle was apparently trolling them and hit Imagine Dragon's Monster at that time. He was getting academic, so the talk of sex and such that was linked to the topic didn't so much as make him twitch at the moment. "Unfortunately linked to sexual deviants, because of course that's what people will think. They did the same thing to gender dysphoria before the LGBT communities really took off. Anyway, some... 40% of the surveyed Furry Fandom was found or suspected to have it."

"Wow... Not that I can't see why, I suppose... I'll have to look it up when we get to your place." Mariah said and perked up with the song. "Love this band." She started humming along.

"Much harder to find than you would think. Aside from a wiki article, there's not a whole lot readily available," Ezee admitted. "And it's not good for your mental well-being to read up on something you think you have from an encyclopedia of sexual deviations and criminal tendencies. Believe me, I found an article that covered my... randomness in one of those books. Not the best existential crisis, or one you'd want to have." It claimed he was a budding sociopath. He was not a budding sociopath! He was just... nonstandard.

"Ah." Mariah said simply. "But yeah... I'm honestly... Well, like you put it, nervocited. I want to see what it'll feel like, but also worried about how I'll be able to adjust to life after this. My friends, family, work, school, everything."

Ezee was silent for a long while. "Sorry."

"What for?" Mariah asked, blinking.

"we still don't know if this is my fault," Ezee admitted, almost missing a turn. "If it is... sorry for dragging you into it."

"Apology accepted," Mariah replied. "and if it's not, no harm no foul. So..." Mariah asked, wondering if she should bring this up again as she didn't want him to spin out and this topic was one of the things that would cause it. Instead, she came up with something. "Do you think we should tell people about this? Once it's all done, that is."

"Do you want CynEzee's answer, Ide-Ezee's, practEzee's or pragMEzee's response?" Ezee asked.

"All of them," Mariah replied.

"CynEzee says that people on a whole can't deal with different skin colours, much less a whole new sentient species. Look at America. The republicans *still* can't get over the fact that the president is black. Quebecors still can't get over the *language* issue. Not to mention all the religion and culture issues. Like the head wrap thing in Quebec last year." Ezee's expression darkened for a moment as his thoughts ventured down grim avenues.

It brightened with almost whiplash speed though as he grinned. "Ide-Ezee is all for it. New species. Magic! Canada is one of the most accepting countries in the world. Speaking of... we should probably take video and photographic evidence for legal purposes of identity." Ezee added.

"PracEzee and PragMEzee's responses are similar. We have to tell someone. We can't just live in isolation. I might not be the most extroverted person, but even I would go a little stir crazy. Not to mention supplies and so on. It's just a matter of who do you tell. Government? CynEzee brings up lab experiments, PragMEzee tentatively agrees but points out it might be nessessary. Family is a must, there's a reason I texted Naomi. She calls every few days anyway. Same for Yan. At least two solid connections back. Not to mention bills and income and such.

"Online work isn't easy to find. I know I can do some of my sort of training online only, but that calls for connections and set up. I might be able to get a teaching certification through correspondence with my degrees and experience, but that's a tenuous idea at best, and highly circumstantial. Family, of course, would be worried, but I've got no idea how they would react to something like this. Anyway, this is Canada. You need money. Especially in the winter. Last two winters were brutal."

Ezee chuckled softly as the second holy site approached. "Sorry, went off on a mini-rant there. Though spiel would be a better term for it."

Mariah chuckled. "Don't worry about it. Though I suppose I won't be seeing the ocean floor in person anytime soon. That's really dissapointing..." She sighed a little. "I was really hoping to go down there sometime. Still, I want to hope for Ide-Ezee, but agree with pracEzee."

"Who knows. Maybe the big book of magic has a spell for that," Ezee laughed. At last... the Realm of His Royal Majesty, Ruler of all Burgers, the Burger King. Hail his exalted greatness and generosity in making the best of burgers accessible to all. "Want a burger?"

"Haven't had one in forever. Why not?" Mariah mused. "My card again or all on one?" She offered.

"Only because it's my cottage," Ezee said firmly, before ordering a Whooper and a chicken burger for himself and whatever Mariah wanted. Why no, he didn't go anywhere and not order chicken. "Man I'm going to miss chicken until this get's fixed..."

Mariah had a bacon cheeseburger, fries, and a drink. Nothing all that special. Normally at least. This was going to be her last meat though so she would treasure it. Mariah nodded and shrugged, letting Zeke keep the card for the time being.

"Still want to buy that steak?" Zeke asked, sacrificing a hand to hold a burger.

"On second thought, no. Who knows how fast this will go and I wouldn;t want it to go bad." Mariah said.

"Then to cottage country we go," Ezee said. Though tempting, he didn't do anything more than let the burger sit on his lap, it's aluring aroma tempting. He waited until he hit the rural road before eating though. He could manage a steering wheel with one hand, but having the other hand free was better, always better. So best to occupy it when all that's left is straight roads. "Ever been to cottage country before?" he asked between bites.

"Once or twice. Friend of my parents has one." Mariah replied. "It's a nice place."

"And the cottages are kept secluded from one another. Lots of space and stuff," Ezee said. "It's pretty much... actually, it is just a house. Just in a house in the country."

"Seems like the perfect place to pony up." Mariah smiled, though still nervously. "Are you feeling anything by the way? Any oncoming changes?"

"My ears are itching, so I think they are next. No clue why you grew ears first though," Ezee admitted. "Slightly itchy all over though. Blame the fur for that one."

"Huh... When we get there, we should write down what's happening and in what order." Mariah said, pushing her hair back to reveal her completely shifted ears, covered with white fur. She felt around her neck, searching for more signs that it was spreading beyond the pain in her neck and back.

//she's had fur growing down her spine for a while.

"Memories for when we are the famous faces of pony?" Ezee snarked.

"More like so we know the symptoms in case anyone else comes down with this. Also, I think I've got fur growing down my back." Mariah had an idea and blushed again. "Umm... Nah, I'll tell you once we're there. Well... Ask you. Once we're there. At the cottage." She sighed. "I sound like such a ditz, don't I?"

"Turning into magic ponies," Ezee said, waving his half eaten burger. "Kind of a get out of jail free card for a lot of things at the moment."

Mariah smiled. "Thanks." She said and wondered what else the two could talk about. "So... When you're not at the library, whatcha like doing?"

"To be honest... I read and research a lot," Ezee admitted. "Research on different topics, reading novels... game manuals... I really need to do more stuff for fun..."

Mariah chuckled. "Meanwhile beyond reading at the library when you're around, that's basically nothing in common on that side. I play Lacross, take lessons with Alistar, watch movies every once in a while..."

"See? You do more stuff than I do. Even when I hang out with Yan it tends to be me reading while he games or programs or something." Ezee laughed.

Mariah giggled. "Maybe I could get you into something else. Or I could get into some of your things. I wouldn't mind trying some of the tabletop games your into though."

"Sure, I can teach you," Ezee said. The burger was gone. Its sacrifice will be honoured, for it shall hold permanence as the last burger before becoming a magic pony. Wait, no; last beef burger. There was still the big crunch waiting. The fries were down to the last eleven stalwart souls, huddled together, fearing the time with the grotesque *thing* would descend from the void, once more claiming more of their brethren, dragging them up into the abyss, their screams haunting... so haunting... The soda was all bubbly and chipper, begging to be drunk. Soda was weird like that.

Mariah smiled. "I have some character ideas. Mostly ones from half-baked novel ideas I tried to do. Though... Will we still be able to do it with this stuff?" Mariah was saving her food until they arrived.

"With what stuff?" Ezee asked.

Mariah pointed to her ears which flicked a little. "Ponyfication. Doesn't rolling a dice need a bit more dexterity then hooves?"

"I've got a magic book that came with a key and was apparently mass, ish, produced. I figure they manage. Somehow." Ezee shrugged, not quite sure how they managed, but they apparently did.

"Fair enough." Mariah shrugged and looked out the window, trying to figure out where they were.

They weren't far now, well into cottage country. The landscape had gotten picturesque, the road and surroundings having the strong 'countryside' feel to it, small ponds and streams common amidst the farm land and swaths of untamed and unworked land. From their, it was another four turns, first off the county road, then unto progressively more remote looking roadways. "On the downside, they don't clean out here often in the winter. That's why there's an ATV in the shed."

"I'd rather hibernate," Mariah said. "I like being warm. Comes from being blasted with lake effect snow." The young woman had come from Thunder Bay and had frequently gotten snowed in for the winter.

"But the cold around makes huddling up all the sweeter~" Ezee teased. He was driving slower now, a consession to the narrower and less tended road.

Mariah blushed. Again as she thought about it. "Well... there is that. But fireplaces are romantic no matter what time of year."

Thank god for black skin. And focusing on the road. Now that stupid christmas song was in his head. Two of them, actually...

*I really can't stay - Baby it's cold outside*

*I've got to go away - Baby it's cold outside*

Go away, Ezee muttered mentally.

Mariah smiled and gave an embarassed chuckle. "Sorry... I'll shut up now. Least... until we get there."

Ezee might have insisted on calling it a cottage, but it was blatantly a house. A house in a secluded area and something of a rustic, homey feel to it, but a house. Two stories and likely a basement. Driveway leading to a decent parking area under a covered 'garage' that was more barn; roof and simple wall with no door aside from the bundled canopy under the leading edge. There was a small shed sitting beside the garage as well, a large black tank around the corner, sitting on a small wood and metal platform, which also doubled as the wood stockpile location.

<http://www.cottages-canada.ca/cottages-canada/PhotoChalets/6871-1-vacation-rentals-38.jpg>

Ezee was somewhat embarrassed by it. He's folks bought it for a steal, the former owner having to foreclose it. But it was a high end place, pulling in something like eight thousand dollars a month in the winter in rent. They were toying with the idea of putting solar panels on the roof too. Three bedrooms, a large fridge, electric stove, gas run camp stove, two bathrooms, a fire place, a *fire pit*, wrap around deck on the main level (technically top floor), a satellite (though the plan was inactive at the moment) for television, generator in the utilities section of the basement...

"I still think this is a house," Mariah chimed in.

"Whatever..." Ezee muttered, stopping Avery near the front door so they could unload everything better. Great. Here he was up in cottage country at the cottage that he had partial ownership of (he paid 10% of the upkeep) which was so far past 'dangerously close to a house' it was actually a better house than he had (seriously. His place was a two bedroom, single bathroom. This one had two and a half bathrooms...)

"Well... welcome to my family's cottage," Ezee said after failing to come up with anything better to say.

"This place is amazing. Brighter then I thought it'd be. And less... Loggy. Dunno why I thought it would be." Mariah got her luggage carrier and brought it alongside the door as she went to grab her food to sooth her growling tummy. "It's been nice knowing you, ham and beef. I sure am gonna miss you." She said and took the first bite. She got as far as the door before realizing it was locked. Made sense though. Couldn't leave your cottage unlocked for months at a time.

"It would help if you waited till I actually got the door open," Ezee deadpaned, pulling Apollo's carrier from the backseat. The kitty had eventually fallen asleep, but now he was awake again and looking around eagerly, moving from one end of the carrier to the other, poking his paws out.

"Need some help with that?" Mariah asked after swallowing.

"Nah, it's fine," Ezee said, juggling the keys with his free hand with little to know issues and undoing the two locks on the door. Inside was a tad musty, but it wasn't as bad as it could have been since he'd been up a few times in the past month.

Mariah followed close behind, looking around to make note of where everything was, also bringing in her stuff. In her mind, she was planning how things would go and what was needed first. In no particular order, finish her food, find out where her room was going to be, getting a list of the transformation symptoms down, a shower wouldn't go amiss

"Should bring Avery around... easier to carry most of the stuff straight to the storeroom... And I need to bring up the camp stove anyway..." Ezee mused out loud. He idly flicked the light. Nothing happened. "Should grab the candles and lamp too..." he added thoughtfully, setting

Apollo's carrier down. No way he was letting the cat out until he got everything into the house and the doors, screens at least, closed. He might be indoor/outdoor, but that was in the city.

Mariah nodded and sat down at the kitchen table, eating her food, savouring her last meat for the foreseeable future. She'd miss this... As she ate, she looked through the front compartment of her luggage where she stashed the paper and pens. As she ate, she wrote down the symptoms thus far with a line through the middle to indicate Ezekiel's.

*Start aproximitly 6:00 PM (first noticed it then): Ear tingleing. Pointed up and growing fur (white). 8:30 PM: Pain along back and neck, thin line of fur going down back. Will have Ezekiel look over body to see more changes in a moment.*

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*Start time: Unknown. First symptom: growing tail (greenish? Seems that way from my prespective. Unknown fur growth, will look him over later. Reported ears tingleing and going though above changes at 8:00 PM (estimated.)*

*Note: Unknown how long this list will be able to be continually added to. Will scribble on side margin when hooves grow in and prevent further note taking.*

It wasn't much of course, but it was still something. And who knew? maybe something good would come of putting this down.

While Mariah ate and wrote, Ezee got the rest of his shopping unloaded, adding the perishables to the stockpile in the store room, checking the generator, subpump, water lines and power connections while he was there. Everything looked fine, and just the way he left it at that. It still took a while to get everything sorted, and then he had to move Avery back since he didn't get the nonperishables, like the fresh fruits and veggies and the KFC into the kitchen *then* move Avery to the garage. Really should have thought things through.

A short time later, Mariah finished and waited for Zeke to come back so she could get his thoughts on what she had made. Not to mention his symptoms. With the wrappers in the garbage, she dug out her laptop and put in the rocketstick, wondering if she could find out more about this. then again, it might take more time to research then she had... and she did want to spend some time with Zeke... not in that way! Well... maybe in that way... If he wanted to. She shook her head and instead put the laptop away and dug out her magic book, picking up where she left off. She wouldn't even bother hiding it when Zeke popped back in.

First thing; letting Apollo out. With a yowl the young cat took off into the depths of the house. Meh. He'd turn up after a while. Likely after getting used to the place and getting hungry. Casting a wistful glance at the electric stove, Ezee hooked up the camp stove to the propane tank and rummaged in the cupboards for a pan.

"You can take either the bedroom up here or the other spare one downstairs," Ezee told Mariah.

Mariah perked up. "I'll take the one up here. If it's all right with you." She said and set her book down. "So... This is the book that started it for me." She ran her fingernails along the back cover. "By the by, if you want, you can add your list of changes here." She gestured to the piece of paper and took her stuff to the upper level. "Do you... I mean... We could share the bedroom..." Mariah said, looking to the book in embarrassment.

Ezee sucked the air in wrong and broke into a fit of coughing. "Wh... what?"

"Well... you said earlier you have a crush on me... I have one on you." Mariah blushed again. "I'm sorry, it was a stupid idea. Forget I said anything."

"Don't you think that's going a little fast," Ezee said, still coughing a little. "Especially considering everything that's happening?"

"Would you believe it's my first time having a crush and being unsure of how this is supposed to go?" Mariah asked.

"Same," Ezee said, swallowed. "You're following stuff from that book, aren't you?"

"Well... Yeah... It's all i've got to build on." Mariah fiddled with the silver pendent around her neck like she did when she was nervous.

Ezee sighed. "You need to read more books. Sharing a room... it's very... intimate. That's for later, okay?" As if it wasn't weird enough with just the two of them here. "You said something about a book and writing stuff down?"

"Ah, yeah. The changes you're going through. They're different from mine so I suppose you could add to what I've got here." Mariah said.

"Okay, sure," Eze said, lighting the stove to a low heat and putting his chicken in it to reheat slowly. He lit a few candles and the lamp as the place darkened.

Mariah tilted her head, but decided not to say anything and let Zeke do what he wanted to do, wondering where he was going with this, if anywhere at all.

Food getting ready for consumption, he checked the book and add his notes.

*Book (Guide on Magic Arts) recieved 10:40am. Suspected start/trigger of changes.  
First pain (lower back) really noticed roughly 1pm, suspected started earlier but overlooked.  
Tail development noticed 3:20(?)pm. Approximately 6 inches at time.  
Tail seemed to reach full length by...*

"Hey, Mari, does this look like a full length tail to you?" He asked, pausing in his writing, the tail in question flicking.

//does it?

//it's about a foot+ long now. And yes, it does. All nice and bushy and thick.



Mariah got up to give Zeke more room to work with and looked over his notes, making mental notes of what to add for her section that she didn't have. Mariah's ears perked up when she heard her name, literally. "Ackk! That feels so weird! Umm..."

"Um?" Ezee encouraged, running his hand on the back of his hair line.

*Fur grown completely up spinal column [8:50ish]*

"Well... yeah." Mariah said. "It's... Scuse me," She said, doing a rough comparison to her arm, marking where it ended (roughly, she didn't want to bad touch him) to where it stopped growing then came back. "About this big. Seems full grown."

"Kay-lo," Ezee said. He added the time to the tail section as well. Rapping the pen on his chin, he had a minor eureka moment and spent a few seconds rubbing and tugging at his thighs through the pants.

"Huh?" Mariah asked.

"Okay in reverse," Ezee said and he continued tugging, around the knee this time.

"Oh. Though I meant what's wrong with your leg." Mariah asked. "You got that look a mad scientist has when he finds out how to more efficiently make a minion. No I don't know why that was the first thing to enter my head."

"Huh... I could use some minions," Ezee said, before breaking out into a full-fledged evil laugh.

Mariah blinked. "Somehow, that doesn't surprise me that you'd do that... And not just because you dressed like a mad scientist that one halloween."

Ezee stuck his tongue out at her. "Anyway, I was tracking how far down the fur was growing."

"Oh. And?" Mariah asked.

"Fur's near the knee now," Ezee admitted.

"I'll be with you in just a sec," Mariah said and zipped off to the bathroom for a closer look at herself. Locking the door behind her, Mariah stripped down and looked herself over, searching for signs of ponyfication.

[fur is midway down her back, but limited to the middle of her spine]

Mariah blushed, remembering artwork of one of her favorite artists. She bit the inside of her lip and had to will herself to calm down. Mariah got dressed again and headed back out. "Midway down my back, but still mostly around my spine." She said. "Completely white too... Kinda reminds me of a marshmallow."

"Fur reminds you of marshmallows?" Ezee asked after taking a moment to swallow. He was moved to the table and was working his way through a plate of chicken and a big crunch sandwich.

"Well it's white, very soft... I dunno. it's just the first thing that came to mind." Mariah said and was about to offer to show it, but decided against it. As she opened her mouth though, she changed her line of thought. "Umm... Zeke? I think your hair is sick or something. It's looking a little green."

"Really? Must be matching the tail then," Ezee murmured. "Figure it might. Have you seen the colours of these ponies? That Princess Twilight has three flavours of purple on her head."

"Yeah. Pink and yellow, white and purple, orange and... blond." Mariah said, listing off the ones on her book cover. "Apparently rainbow coloured manes are a thing too if that is anything to go by."

"That... sound's..." Ezee shook his head. He was working on his third piece of chicken, the burger and most of the fries gone, but he at least looked like he was slowing down. "At least the pale green and... pale grey work together. Imagine if they clashed. Ponies must have it heard sometimes..."

"To be honest, I think that'd be kinda cool." Mariah said. "like... 20% cooler. and did you say they have it herd?"

"I had my mouth full. Meant hard," Ezee said. Now that he was going at a more sedate pace, he wiped a hand on a napkin and fished out his own tome. Laying his hand over the lock and muttering a quick 'unlock', he flipped to the page where he left off last and started glancing as he spoke with Mariah. "I really hope I can figure this thing out. I don't think I can get access to the full table of contents for a while. I just know the next chapter starts talking about basic magic. Then it starts altering itself based on which tribe it's keyed to."

He snickered. "It's like a computer program on paper."

"So each tribe has magic? does it say what that entails?"

"It's like... wait, you don't do D&D..." Ezee said, aborting his initial analogy. "Simply put; Unicorns are the predominantly active magic users, because they don't have any really intrinsic magic abilities. They are the only tribe that can create light and levitate things, but that's just a basic magic spell they all learn in school.

"Earth Ponies are the super humans... super ponies? But they have superior strength and endurance compared to the other tribes, though pegasi apparently might match the latter with training. Pegasi have natural flight and weather manipulation."

"So... Harry Potter, Captain America and... Thor I guess?" Mariah asked for clarification.

"More... Storm for the last one. They can even walk on clouds. Earth Ponies have a natural earth affinity. Anything they grow and build tends to be better than a unicorn or pegasus counterpart. And some can even force grow plants. Also, unicorns are more... Harry Dresden Wizards than Harry Potter. Some unicorns just can't learn more magic than the basics. It's there as a note to parents so they don't try to force their... foals too hard to pick up advanced magic. Apparently, 4 to 6 spells was the upper average for the common pony."

"Never saw the Dresden files, but okay." Mariah said. "Interesting though. Still, i suppose it's not how many you know but how you use them."

Ezee choked on his mouthful of chicken and started coughing. After a few moments it was clear it was from laughing, rather than actually choking though. "Anyway, it goes back to the amount of alicorn in their body. It's what makes up the..." he referenced the book, "itineris. She says she'll go into more detail next chapter."

"You okay there, dude?" Mariah asked, ready to pat him on the back to hopefully help. "And what's an alicorn?"

"The think that lets you cast magic, apparently," Ezee shrugged. "It's only chapter one."

"Ah well. Maybe my book might have it." Mariah shrugged and took hold of her book. "So... Research as the change goes on? Because I was also going to search online for as long as my battery will hold out. maybe making a blog or something. Perfect our notes, stuff like that."

"Search online for what?" Ezee asked blandly. And a blog? He didn't see much point to that one, but whatever.

"oh my god i got pony ears?" Mariah shrugged.

"AKA: 'please come and get me, government'?" Ezee responded quickly, before wincing. "CynEzee."

"Well we probbaly won't be able to use keyboards soon unless I can rig up a fork and some tape to a hoof or something." Mariah pointed out.

"You'd be surprised. Considering the quality of the books," Ezee lifted one side of his for a moment, "I'm gonna assume hooves are more capable than we'd guess. And what's a little hunting and pecking?" he teased. He flipped a page as he read on.

"I guess." Mariah shrugged and opened her book, picking up where she left off. "It's doubtful, but if I find anything, I'll let you know."

"Have fun," Ezee said. "I'm going to finish reading this chapter again, then sleep... not much I can do without access to the rest. Or power..."

"Sleep!?" Mariah asked incredulously. "How can you even think about sleep at a time like this!? these are our last hours as humans! Sure humans are overrated, but still! This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!"

"It's late, it's dark, and all we have are candles and lamps for lighting. What can we possibly do as humans?" Ezee asked, rolling his eyes.

"Well... I dunno. Record the changes? Especially since you're ahead of me and--" She looked at him and was possibly on the same page. "Oooooohhhh... You mean..." She blushed. "Yeah. I can go with that." She said smiling.

<https://docs.google.com/drawings/d/1jVMbjVo1eSJqguErSQhIuIYHBQ8ryYid4T7R7IhxxMo/edit?usp=sharing>

//by the by: acceptable nicknames for Mariah: Maria, mary, Jackie, Amber, Rose, etc.

//Hana. Or Jude.

//how do ya figure?

//<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDdI7GhZSQA> Hana is just random

//i still don't see where Jude comes from with Mariah Jacquelyn Ambrose

//\*points to the song\* Nicknames don't only come from given names.

//okay lol

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Rachel called Yan on her cell phone, she was suspicious that there was more than just a date...they don't go from the occasional dinner to a full week in the woods.

\*ring ring\*

Yan picked up the phone. "Aye?" he replied into it.

"Hello Yan, it's Rachel, Yeah I dunno if I should even be calling, but it seems that Mariah and Zeke have left for Zeke's cottage for a week..they've barely done dinner dates before then...and Mariah was acting stranger than usual today...", Rachel said.

"Why are you sharing it with me?" Yan asked, scratching his head, knowing perfectly of the reasons for the cottage visit.

"Because it feels strange to me...and you're a good friend of Zeke's, I was hoping you could help me figure out why they are suddenly spending a week in the woods?", Rachel said.

"Well, you can guess that they might be having some time with books there," Yan replied off-handedly.

"That horse book that Mariah had? What does that have to do with it?", Rachel asked.

"...horse books, what? I've just meant the usual books, you know, the ones Z loves to read," Yan said, "Where did you get the whole horse books thing from?"

"Mariah had a new book about ponies...and what were Zeke's books again? He works in a library, I figure he likes all of the books.", Rachel said.

"Well, all the books?" Yan replied, "Why asking about that? I wasn't rummaging in Zeke's book storage, although he does like fantasy and DnD manuals with passion."

"If it was just books why was Mariah acting so suspicious? I wonder what they are doing in the woods.", Rachel said.

"You are overthinking it," Yan replied, sighing, "Also, reminding me of my parents, thinking I was buying some vodka when going outside, when I actually was going for some tea and putting money on my Steam account. They've thought my action of leaving the house without a stated reason was so suspicious... And that's why you remind me of them. Drawing the parallel, komrade, eh?" Okay... Was that last part Russian or Canadian in stereotypicaland?

"I suppose I am, but...it just still feels strange to me, why would they just go to the cottage when they've barely dated, and as for the pony stuff...those two are hiding something I'm sure of it.", Rachel said.

"Oh, I think I know what is it!" Yan replied with some fake eureka tone, "Yes, yes, I know! Put on your tinfoil! They are obsessing over ponies to hail Satan! ...hold on, I think you are obsessing over them, not they. Whatever. And why do you think it's strange? What if they just decided to date there or something?"

"It just feels strange that's all...and I don't see how you got Satan out of all that...and I guess, still they are living alone for a week after no sign of any serious relationship.", Rachel said.

"...you know that meme about people asking someone when someone asks stupid things: 'Why are you doing this' and the people reply: 'Why, in the glory of Satan of course!'. Gah, whatever. Also, not alone. I'm coming too. It's going to be sorta like DnD party." he said, clearly (to himself), lying on the whole DnD part.

**Yan** rolled a die with 20 sides for bluff. The die showed:  $12 + 7 = 19$

**Sense motive: mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $18 + 2$

"You know it's kinda strange that everyone's running off to the cabin in the woods...like there's going to be something going down...might have something to do with that comet or the pony stuff...probably not Satan...I hope...", Rachel said.

"Everyone being three people, really?" Yan countered.

"Eh still seems suspicious to me...all this makes me feel you're just hiding something.", Rachel said.

Yan suddenly turned aside from the phone and called out to the nothingness, making sure his phone would still be able to transmit it, "Shit, people, she's onto us! Quick, stop awakening the Cthulhu, we need to sacrifice Rachel because she thinks I am hiding something and she's so right!"

That done, he returns to his phone, coughs loudly and adds, "Back. Had some people here panicking for no reason, aside from our covers being blown."

Rachel rolled her eyes...Yan was good at acting he always was, but this confirmed it...she knew she was asking all the wrong questions...but it was too late for that. "So what's going on really?", Rachel asked him.

"We are summoning Cthulhu," Yan said, "Not playing DnD, yep. Ever heard of game Call of Cthulhu by the way? Yeah, I am planning to bring that one to that party too."

"Oooh sounds fun, I think I'll visit you guys...would love to try Call of Cthulhu..", Rachel said to Yan excitedly.

"...are you doing that with the sole intention of investigating for why are we going to be her-- ah, whatever, you'd see the game and you'd go away if you don't want to play. I suppose you should get the sheets, because we want to start off right away, wait, hold on, 'try'?" Yan started the stream of speech, "Are you not familiar with the system?"

"So? I've been interested in tabletop game systems, and I can learn...", Rachel said to Yan.

"That'd take too much time to teach you, really," Yan replied with a sigh, "We won't have much time for that, because afterwards we'd be doing other stuff (mainly astronomical) and I'd be helping Ezee with some of his software problems."

"Oh that's fine, I'll just watch the game, it'd just be good for me to hang out with friends. It's been a while since I've been able to relax with friends.", Rachel said to him.

"And ruin the date?" Yan suddenly asked.

"I'd say the same thing about you Yan? I recall Mariah saying it was just her and Zeke, she didn't mention you were going.", Rachel said.

"But I do, because it was scheduled before and Zach didn't want to be a tactless person to cancel what has been planned before," Yan replied.

"And how would my presence change that? After all Zeke is expecting guests anyway.", Rachel said.

"...really? He didn't tell me about it," Yan said.

"Well he's expecting you right? What's one more on top of that.", Rachel explained.

"He doesn't expect you, though," Yan said, "And you are really being selfish right now."

"Perhaps...but if there's nothing strange going on then what's the problem with a tagalong?", Rachel said.

"You are basically barging out onto someone's else date? I've already had to tell you about it so you would just quit pestering me about it and get some conscience," Yan replied.

"Considering that you're doing the same, why are you protesting, first it was the difficulty of teaching me Call of Cthulhu when that isn't the issue at all.", Rachel said to Yan.

"They know of my presence, hell, consider me invited, you are just barging in," Yan said.

"Well in that case you could just invite me...why are you so against me coming anyway?", Rachel asked.

"Because that's their party and I am there because I was promised to? Why are you so for coming there?" Yan replied.

"All this secrecy makes me curious...", Rachel sighed.

"This is not secrecy," Yan replied, "I've told you literally everything already."

"But not about the sudden interest in ponies...and what is with Mariah's desperation to be secretive about this...she embarrassed about something?", Rachel said.

"Why are you poking at people's interests anyway? If they are interested in ponies (and if they actually are), why do you care?" Yan asked.

"Curiosity ya know...alas, sorry for all the pestering...still, if Mariah is ill, I can help..I'm her roommate after all..", Rachel said.

"How did you get to illness..." Yan asked, rubbing his nosebridge with the fingers of his spare hand, looking into the personal abyss that appeared in front of him (or so it would seem).

"No matter..I guess nothing's wrong...still this is getting curiozier and curiozier...", Rachel said.

"You get curiosity from poking into people's lives..." Yan replied with a sigh, "Considered being a journalist or a photographer for a newspaper about celebrities?"

"Not really no.", Rachel replied.

"You really remind me of one at this point, though," Yan replied, shaking his head, "If it's personal, then it's personal, why poking your nose around there if they don't want it and they are not up to anything bad?"

"Argh fine...you guys go do your little thing and I'll go do mine.", Rachel sighed.

*[Alistar]*

It was a mixed evening. On one hand, pretty much all of the students (is there a proper term you want to use for this?) turned up. On the other hand, they were all obviously distracted.

"Alright, this class take of running," Alistar shouted to the class, hoping that the warm-up would be fast enough for the class to buckle down. "If you can talk, you aren't running fast enough." Alistair had them bring knees up, run backwards, slide, and all the other pre-line up warm-ups he always had them do.

"This class line up!" He expected a loud chorus of, "Yes Sir," but what he got as a smattering and pitiful sound. "Really? You guys need to answer loud, at all times." Alistair turned to the flags, "Bow us in and Alice can do the warm-up."

Bowed in and ready to work at it, the lack of enthusiasm was still prevalent. Of course, it wasn't everyone who wasn't into the class, but there were enough of them that the entire mood of the group was dragged down.

"Alright, stop, stop," Alistair rubbed his forehead, "Now, I'm trying to understand why you guys aren't working your hardest. Are you guys sick or what? Cuz you guys shouldn't be here if you are. Rest and whatnot."

"Well.." one of them started.

"They want to go to the party that's going on tonight," Alice sighed. "It's not even that great of a party."

"It's the first party of the summer Oasis is having," someone else chimed in. "I kinda didn't want to miss it. But I didn't want to miss Sa ba nim's class either."

"Why even come to class if you keep thinking about a party that is going on? Coming to class is optional, it's your money you waste, but it is your money. I'd like to teach you guys your new forms and such, but," Alistair paused and looked at the class. "But coming to class and not putting everything you have into it is even more of a waste of your time, your money, and my time."



Alistair walked back up to the front of the Dojang, "This class line up to leave. Come on, you heard me, line up."

"Sa ba nim?" one of them asked with a slight bit of confusion. A guy named Reed. Slim as his namesake, bendy like it too, but quick and light on his toes, even if he wasn't much for endurance.

"I did say, line up, didn't I? Chop chop, you don't have all day," Alistair said to Reed.

And line up they did. Angry scot might be a demographic stereotype, but sa ba nim was strong, skilled and had those lovely muscles. Anyway, they lined up promptly at the second order.

"That's better, Alice, would you be so kind as to bow us out? People have a party to get to, and I don't want them to miss it."

Alice smiled slightly. She adored this side of sa ba nim, so compassionate and caring to his students. Not that she was one of those that wanted to go to the party. The atmosphere in the room did shift slightly though, tilting towards suppressed excitement. Alice did her job and bowed them out.

Alistair looked at his class one more time, ooked at his class one more time, thinking of what he would need to remind them. "Let's see here, we are starting morning classes next week, so, if you want to make up for missed classes, or get ready for testing, you better come. Testing is in three weeks, June 26th. Class dismissed." With that, Alistair went to find his ride, Reggie, after changing.

[location check: book on pegaarts is mixed in with his belongings, whenever he gets around to them]

**Lupus** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: *14*

[also; to line 829 with thee! \*brandishes a sabre\*]

Alistair rushed to the restroom to change, grabbing his bag. When he pulled out his clothing, a book fell out. "The hell is this?"

The book was a book. Obviously. Larger than the standard paperback, slightly smaller than the standard hardcover, red with a blue binding on the spine. The cover had what looked like the silhouette of some creature with four limbs and a pair of small wings performing some sort of martial arts form, four going through the steps along the bottom edge, the one in the lower right corner leaping up or taking flight, with five more silhouettes doing some aerial forms. The title *'From a Cloud, a guide to traditional pegasi foundations'* (compiled by Kniving Wing)

"I don't remember getting this, or even why I would get something like this. Maybe the library messed up or someone is playing a prank on me. Whatever it is, I will find out what is going on." Alistair picked up the book after changing out of his Dobak.

[contact time: 4:50ish]

**[Reggie]**

In another room in the buildings, Reggie was working off some of the steam from his shift. Being on the geek squad meant he got to play hardware god and deny units their rightful passage to the great silicon valley in the sky. It also meant he got to deal with a lot of stupid people. Boxing was a useful release some days.

Reggie was indeed taking his massive amount of work related stress on one of the poor punching bags that is in the room, showing no remorse as he was probably thinking of that particularly stupid customer he had to deal with today. Seriously, there's a fine line between someone who simply didn't know and utterly stupid, that guy was dancing merrily on the latter and now this punching bag was going to pay! He winds up one last punch and hits it as hard as he could! <http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4723323/> Attack roll (purely for the lolz) 11  
ἄρχή rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20

The bag didn't even rock on it's chain from Reggie's attack. It just didn't have enough force behind it. On the other hand, it did manage to cause him to hurt himself. Poor, poor Reggie's hand.

Comically, the bag didn't even move, not so comically, his hand hurts, a lot, "ah f\*\*k!" He retrieves his hand from the bag and gently rubs it, yeah that hurts... guess punching it with that much force in that way wasn't the best idea. He shakes his hand a few times before moving to sit on the bench since he can't really continue at the moment.

"You need to work on your form," a man commented.

Reggie looks up, someone was watching him? "Huh? Oh, probably..." He rubs the back of his neck in nervousness, "How long have you been watching?"

"Not long," he said. Ryan was his name, one of the kickboxing instructors. "Bad day venting, it looked like. Lot's of aggression and tension."

Reggie chuckles, "One of the bad things about my job is the stupid people I end up having to deal with, so yeah, went overboard venting it out this time it seems."

"Maybe you should try yoga. At least the mats don't kick back," Ryan joked. "Release your muscles when you swing and hit. Well, don't lock them up. If you do, you lose striking force and you are more likely to turn the power on your own hands and arms. Muscle strain."

At first Reggie was going to retaliate, but then he started saying something that might be considered useful, assuming he can pull it off, "Okay, how exactly would I go about doing that?"

"Hey, Reggie! I kinda need a ride, oh, and class is over." Alistair shouted to Reggie.

Well apparently he wasn't going to get help on that little tip today, so he stands up, "Sounds like I have to go." He turns to leave before he realizes something and holds out a hand, "oh, I'm Reginald, but my friends call me Reggie. You're...?"

"Ryan," Ryan grinned. "And already, Alistair? Isn't your class supposed to be, well, longer?"

"It was, but most of the class was interested in this party going on at the Oasis," Alistair sighed, "To the point where almost nothing could get done. So I sent them off, and decided, why not, and go see what this thing is all about."

"That big club downtown, huh? I heard they were going to be having a think tonight. Got a couple DJs in to rotate through the evening and night," Ryan mused. "Not really my scene."

Come to think of it Reggie was considering going there himself, if nothing else then to say he went there for once. "I'm tempted to go as well. Might as well give it a shot."

"Well then, since you're the driver, it's up to you whether or not we go together or you drop me off at home and head over when you want." Alistair stated.

Reggie shrugs, "Can probably decide that in the car, just in case one of us end up wanting to leave early."

//Reggie's book is in his glovebox, for when he ends up looking in there.

Reggie quickly got cleaned up and obtains his stuff from the lockers before heading for his car.