

## Courageous and Gentle

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# Courageous and Gentle

by [Joelcoxriley](#)

## Summary

Owen Grady has a soft spot for raptors. E, a female raptor, just happens to hit all those spots. E faces a terminal illness that leaves her unable to vocally communicate with others of her kind. Wu is unwilling to provide treatment to a living failure that mars his perfection of evolution. Owen chooses to be her advocate, and her sole companion, much to the ire of Blue.

## Notes

I wanted to do a work regarding Owen for some time. It turned into this.

So far, I only own E.

E is originally from a work called Broken Raptors, which is an AU where the Indoraptor survives.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Hey, girl. You miss me?" The trickle of her Alpha's voice wafted through the confines of her exhibit-through the thick metal bars that kept her separate from others of her own kind.

Away from everything, despite having the comforts of her own territory.

Her exhibit was small, sporting a small pond stocked with fish, thick jungle foliage for hiding, and fields with an open area.

For E, it was the same thing, everyday.

It was the same well trodden paths she traveled to-grasses broken from her walking to and from her sleeping area, to the pond.

It was the same trees, the same little field with worn grasses, the same little patch of dirt for clearing, and the same little pond with fish that was occasionally stocked.

The only thing that changed in E's little world, was the days into nights, and nights into days. Whether it rained, whether it was sunny, whether it was cloudy and grey, and whether it stormed.

That, and whatever her Alpha brought to her.

Her Alpha was always bringing her special treats and toys.

It was the sanguine female's favorite part of the day.

And upon seeing her Alpha with treats and toys, E sprung forth in a series of shrill, high pitched chirps and whistles, arms flailing as if she were an excited chick again.

E's scaled head bonked against the thick steel bars, body sliding and rubbing against the cold metal akin to a feline. An audible purr rivetted from her throat, whistled and broken.

Owen's lips molded into a smile, stubble adorning his features, his person the scent of a masculine musk, sweat, and the natural scent of Sorna's jungles. A bucket of dead rats were dropped, and a calloused hand rose to brush against her scarlet hide-however limited by the bars, "You singing for me, Ep?" The man laughed, producing a whistled song of his own-however brief and limited.

For an instant, Owen's smile dropped, and molded into a faint frown.

Whistling.

Yeah.

Singing.

Yeah.

Blanket terms he used to try and mask what he knew.

Epsilon was sick.

She had cancer of the throat.

Owen didn't remember what stage it was.

He just remembered the vets diagnosing, and Dr. Wu suggesting euthanasia.

'To minimize the animal's suffering in the diagnosis of an inoperable illness,' were his exact words.

'It is our responsibility to advocate for the well being of these animals, even if the choices we make go against our own morality. We don't chose by what we feel. We chose by what is right by the animal,' Henry said.

Wu didn't even seem to want to try to cure E.

And Simon Masrani didn't want to put a dying animal on display at Jurassic World.

Wu spoke about advocating for these animals.

Owen didn't understand. There were ways to help people-Why not try on a raptor-even experimentally?

As far as anyone was concerned, Epsilon of Project Beta was a failure.

And no one wanted to advocate for a failed project-Or, at least-they were not advocating to Owen's standards.

This animal failed the program by no fault of her own.

And thus, Owen fought tooth and nail for this raptor.

Owen fought against Wu's euthanasia plan.

Who was Wu to play God and deem an animal unfit to live?

Owen fought against E living in a medical bay-indoors and in a box of metal to be monitored.

Who were they to deny an animal sunlight and fresh air?

Owen fought against E living in a pen made of concrete like the Raptor Squad.

Raptors were social animals.

Who were they to deny an animal sight and touch?

Yes.

Owen fought, and argued, and raised hell for a failed member of a project-because no one else would.

E was special.

But Owen couldn't figure out why.

Perhaps it was just because his soft spot for raptors was hit even harder by this specimen?

His brown eyes looked upon the scars and ruined scales upon her scalp and flanks-evidence of bullying from her former pack.

Because she was different.

Vulnerable.

A weak link.

Yes, the raptors of Raptor Squad Beta were different from Raptor Squad Alpha.

Squad Beta was created-and intended to be all male.

They were not all male.

It was a project to test obedience between sexes.

It was a project to test aggression between sexes.

Epsilon was an unplanned variable.

Because Epsilon-was female.

And with the mixing of sexes-came the risk of breeding.

Thus, E was put on birth control, rather than putting her in with Raptor Squad Alpha.

The higher ups didn't want the project ruined by introducing another female into the pack and upsetting the hierarchy.

In hindsight, that may have been better.

E gained weight due to hormone imbalances, and became less active than a typical raptor.

On the plus side, breeding was controlled.

On the down side, E appeared to be negatively effected.

And then there was a change in her vocalizations.

That seemed to be the catalyst to E's bullying.

Vets assessed her, tests were done.

E was diagnosed, taken off the birth control, and isolated.

Owen couldn't entirely tell if E was happier alone, or with her old pack.

She had others to bond with, and socialize.

Here, she didn't have to worry about getting attacked or hurt.

But she was alone most of the time.

And Owen could tell she was lonely.

He could tell in the way she attempted to rub against him-but the bars prevented it.

He could tell in the way she breathed-breath in whistles and trills.

He could tell in the way her muscles went lax at his touch.

He could tell in the way her eyes closed.

E was lonely, and Owen knew that.

He also knew social animals didn't do well alone.

The last thing Grady wanted was one of his raptors falling into a depression.

Owen's hand slipped from E's scales, and reached for a targeting stick, "Alright, E, gotta focus a bit, girl. Think you can do that?" The man asked. E's sapphire eyes focused intently upon her Alpha, pupils widening in excitement, weight shifting from foot to foot. Her killing claws flexed, clawed hands clenching and unclenching. Her eyes went from Alpha-Owen, to the bright colored ball upon the black stick.

"Aight, girl. Paw. C'mon, E. Paw." Owen tapped the targeting ball upon the metal bar, his free hand slipping into the food bucket to pull out a dead rat.

The sound of a clawed hand being slapped against the metal was heard, scaled fingers seeking to grip upon a thick bar.

"Atta girl, Ep. 'Atta girl." Owen flung a rat through the bars, bones crunching and saliva spraying as E's jaws clamped shut. Her head swung back, throat muscles bobbing as she swallowed the prey whole.

E's clawed hand began to slide down the bars-and a firm warning from Alpha-Owen brought her scaled fingers to grip upon the bar, "Hey-No, no. Stay."

His tone was firm, and authoritative.

While E didn't like not being able to move her arm, it usually meant more treats if she did what Alpha wanted.

And more treats were always good!

"Good. E, paw." Owen then moved the target to indicate he wanted her other hand raised.

After a few seconds, E's other clawed hand rose, and were held against the bars. Her jaws opened, excited squeaks escaping her as she awaited for food.

"Sorry, girl, not yet. Target." Owen then pointed the bright orange ball above E's head.

E produced a gargled noise, though extended her neck in order to try and boop the pointer with her snout, legs stretching.

Owen took the moment to inspect the white under scales of the female-more importantly-the symmetry of her throat. Looking for any evidence of a mass.

A deep exhale, followed by a brief brush of the chin and throat, "Good girl, Ep."

Another rat was given, and it was another morsel of prey that E was swift to devour.

E, upon seeing the pointy thingy put away, kept her rapt attention upon her Alpha despite mustering a more lax posture.

Her tongue lapped at her scaled lips, nares flaring and seeking any more treats she could find.

Rather than pull out another treat, Owen would pull out something from his trousers.

It was a strange object that E did not see before, nor recognize.

She watched with curious blue eyes as Owen fiddled with the object within his hands, and her nares flared, attempting to discern if the item was a treat.

It certainly didn't smell like food.

"You know what this is, E?" Owen asked, holding up the object. It was a raptor's larynx, reconstructed from a 3D printer, "This will help me call like you." The tanned man's brown eyes looked down at the reconstruction, calloused fingers fidgeting and tracing over the structure.

It was stupid.

Grady knew it was stupid, talking to an animal as if she'd understand.

He knew it was stupid, because while he knew E was sick-she was oblivious.

She didn't know.

To E, everything was okay, and normal.

"Just figured-" Once more, he motioned to the larynx, raising it up, "In case you get lonely. You might not have any other raptors to try and talk to, but-well, you got me, girl. Just hope I don't raptor talk asking you out on a date or anything." Once more, Owen laughed, canines showing.

Humor.

An attempt at humor.

If only to mask his own emotions.

Because he knew, sure as shit, that Epsilon had no idea what he was talking about.

E would be oblivious about her illness so long as she felt well.

And Owen was determined to help E, no matter how little.

Thus, the ex marine put his lips to the larynx, and blew.

Owen didn't know what it was that he exactly said, but he did something he was sure no one else accomplished.

He held a conversation with a raptor.

No matter how socially inept his pathetic calls were and were probably raptor nonsense, and how twisted and hoarse and off pitch E's calls were.

It was at least something.

## Chapter End Notes

I'm honestly not sure what this work will become. Would it be something that Owen sees E as a pet (or, at least, as close as she can become?), or would it be something deeper, either as a platonic relationship (or a platonic romance?), or a more physical romance?

Or would Owen magically become a raptor? Does that make any sense? No. Would it be fun? Yes.

I was also thinking of adding Ellen into this story, since I haven't really used her since Error: Code Catholicon, and I'm too lazy to update that work. They had good chemistry, and I would like to more deeply explore their relationship.

Either way, Blue would more than likely be quite upset and jealous about another raptor taking away her position as Beta, from her point of view.



Thank you for reading.

Please feel free to give your thoughts.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

I sat down to write Broken Raptors.

This came out instead.

Thank you for reading and supporting.

Hopefully I'll update Broken Raptors either this week or next week. I had fun writing Owen and Ellen.

The rumbling of a motorcycle thundered up the gravel road, tropical trees overlooking the waters of a calm lake. A trailer was nestled along the lakeside, signs of repair and handiwork present.

The purring of a motor was cut as the man silenced his bike, the scent of gasoline and vehicle oil upon his person. The earth crunched under his boots, the cool winds a brief respite from the tropical warmth and humidity upon his brow.

The ex marine was quite eager to just go to bed.

He certainly did not expect a brown chevy trax to be parked in his driveway.

He expected Ellen to be present in his lawn even less, just making herself right at home. The short blonde woman was currently lounging in a lawn chair in the dying rays of the sun painting the skies, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and shorts, bare feet tapping and splayed toes idly pulling at the grasses.

Owen's heavy, weighted footfalls upon the gravel signaled his approach.

Ellie's neck craned to look upon the man. Her arms raised above her head, back arching in a stretch, "Owen! You came back from your date! Finally."

The raptor trainer cocked his brow, brown eyes narrowing ever so slightly, "Date? Claire and I-"

"No, Sexy Epsy," The blonde then relaxed her body, though still did not get up, even as the trainer ceased his advances to a mere foot away, "I didn't want to disturb you."

Owen's tanned and developed arms crossed over his chest, "Disturb me? What, you stalking me? I know I'm irresistible with the ladies, buuut-"

"Pfffft! Yeah, real lady killer of the scaley kind. Look, you're attractive, but I have raptors of my own. I was just making my rounds. And-I saw you. Gotta say...", Ellen, at long last, sat upright. Her blue eyes stared behind thick glasses, brows knitted together in concern, worry, "Owen? Are you *okay*?"

"...Okay? Sure! Why wouldn't I be?" The man responded after a slight pause, confusion and something akin to uncertainty laced in his tone. It was immediately followed up in a jest. An attempt at a jest. It arguably wasn't a very good jest, "You remember who you're talking to, right, El? You get heat stroke from being in that hoodie?"

A chill breeze brought on from the lakeside blew several golden strands from Ellen's loose ponytail, the wind caressing the nearby trees and grasses, causing them to dance.

The blonde woman frowned, "Owen, I'm just concerned for you. You seem to be...taking this matter with E...", Ellen's hands rose, as if grasping for words, attempting to gather and mold her thoughts, "Very...personal? I'm not stupid. You've been visiting her a lot. She's my charge, and...admittedly, you've done a helluva lot more for her than I ever did. You advocate for her. That's good. I'm just...concerned for you. Like, I would expect you to do this for Blue, or Echo, or Charlie...but a raptor of my charge? One you have not bonded with like your own? I don't know. Maybe I don't have the connection to them like you do. But if something else is going on, you can always, you know...talk to me about it."

Uh, fuck. She hoped he understood her intentions through all that blubbering. Oh, fuckin' well.

"I...uh...Thanks, El. I...I'll keep that in mind." Owen spoke, arms slightly dropping to his side, "So...You've been keeping tabs on me?"

"Like I said, you visit one of my charges almost daily. So-Yes." The short woman nodded.

"So...Do you have a problem with that?"

The blonde shook her head in response, "No. I think it's good you drop by. A lot of the time I'm too busy with my own raptors. The...viable ones, as Henry would put it. Besides, E likes you better than me. Just, uh...be careful, Owen."

The ex marine raised a brow, "You forget who you're talking to again?"

"No. It's just-your raptors imprinted on you as a parent. For you, everything went fine and dandy. For my group-it was all kinds of fucked up. C'mon, big guy. We can talk over a beer, yeah? I put a pack in your fridge." The short woman smiled, and began to meander towards the man's trailer.

Owen blinked. Blinked twice. Thrice.

He shook his head, "Wait-What?-"

"You're welcome!" Ellen chirped.

---

The sound of soft clinking of glass against wood resounded in the calm silence, followed by the groaning of an old chair tolerating added weight.

"So...How'd you get in my home again?" The man asked, sitting opposite of the small woman as he twisted off the cap of his own beer.

Ellen took a swig of her bottle. Her nose scrunched, "You should maybe, I don't know, lock your door, Owen? Don't worry, I didn't snoop. If that's what you're worried about." Lashes fluttered in a wink behind thick glasses.

Owen's stubble was molded by his smile, "Good! Then you didn't find my porn stash."

"Oohoo, Mister Grady, Mister Grady, you naughty man! You have any of those old Playboy ones?" Ellen asked, deciding-against her dislike of such a drink-to take a second swig. Once more, she grimaced. Ew.

"A few, yeah. But I ain't sellin' 'em. They'll be worth some cash, maybe," The man then connected his lips to the rim of his bottle, and chugged, throat muscles bobbing as he swallowed.

"Hard day?" The blonde asked in a slight, if sullen frown. Once more, the sound of glass hitting wood resounded, however more forceful, and heavy.

"Yeah...You can say that...," The ex marine's brown eyes briefly flicked towards Ellen's feminine fingers. They appeared to be too small to even clasp around the girth of the bottle, "You don't have to drink that if you don't like it. I think I got...whiskey?"

"You got any coke? I can take rum and coke, then." Ellen spoke, body slouching forward. Her cheek pressed flat against the aged table wood, and she removed her glasses in order to be more comfortable. Her hair splayed around her, spectacles laying lazily nearby. Her shoulders slumped as she exhaled deeply.

She could hear Owen rise from his seat, naked feet slapping against the floor.

The sound of the fridge opening.

Then closing.

The clinking of glass.

The clinking of ice.

The popping of a can.

The pouring of liquid.

"...What happened?"

Ellen's voice was soft, tone laced in fatigue.

It was a fatigue Owen knew well.

At first, he didn't answer.

At first, he merely stared at the mixed drink, briefly swirling it, as if inspecting it.

Really, he was stalling.

Feet upon cheap flooring.

A cling of glass upon the table.

The sound of an old chair groaning as Owen sat down.

"...Here you go, El."

Owen's voice was soft, tone laced in fatigue.

It was a fatigue Ellen knew well.

Slothfully, lazily, the woman's hand rose, fingers searching, wandering. They curled around the glass, abandoning the beer bottle, "...Thanks, Owen."

Ellen then moved to sit upright, lips pressing against the crystalline rim.

Owen's voice broke through the blur of her vision.

"...A boy almost died today."

It was followed by another long chug from the male raptor trainer.

The blonde's eyes flicked towards the blob that she knew was Owen. Slowly, carefully, her glass lowered, and moved to rest upon the wood, "Owen...I'm sorry..."

The man's beer bottle hit the table again. Fatigued. Heavy, "Yeah, well...You know what he tried to do, El? He tried to save a pig. A fuckin' pig...And he fell into the pen...They barely listened to me. My own fuckin' raptors barely listened to me. I mean-they're animals. Let's face it. They listen to me *because they choose* to listen to me. They don't *have to listen*. Beyond the pen? Up on those top gates? I have all the power. But in that same damn space? That enclosure? I don't have shit. *They have the real power*. They don't have to listen. They can tear me apart-and I know they will, as soon as I turn my fuckin' back...I don't know, Ellen. People fuckin' watch me all the damn time, and they look at me as if I have some kind of magical fuckin' powers. And today...I don't know. I guess it just fucked me up. Because if I made just one mistake, one nervous twitch, one...they'd be on me. And that kid?...Well..."

Owen picked up his beer once again.

He went to drink more.

It was empty.

Thus, he reached for the woman's long discarded beer, and began to leech off of that.

The woman frowned, "Owen...I'm sorry that happened to you. But that kid? You saved a life. That's what matters."

The bottle clinked against wood, "...Yeah...I guess...Still...Today was just fucked up...Good thing Vic wasn't there..."

Ellen perked up-if ever so slightly, "Oh? Vic was supposed to see you training your raptors?...Oh."

Owen's brown eyes then flicked upon the blue eyed woman, and lingered, "...What? Shit happen for you, too?"

"Yeah....," The blonde shifted slightly in her seat, "Vic got between me and Rust. Turned his back on the cage. Rust got him good."

The man's eyes widened, "One of your raptors bit Hoskins?"

Ellen merely nodded, "He needs fifty stitches, at least." Her glass rose, and she took a large sip. Her drink clanked upon the aged table, "And you know what? He was *amazed*. That an animal can be so loyal. Rust could have done more damage. Could have. But he didn't. It's my fault as much as Vic's he got sliced. I shouldn't have let him get between me and Romeo."

"Subject Romeo? You call him Rust?" Owen asked.

Once more, Ellen nodded, "Yeah. A bit ironic military code named him Romeo. But Romeo's an ugly name. So I named him Rust. Completely off record. Because he's a grumpy, miserable, aggressive fuck. And because his imprinting got fucked up. So he didn't imprint on me like Bravo and Storm-eer, Sierra, did. At a child-parental imprinting bond. Rust imprinted on me later. So-I'm his mate. This means I'm the alpha female-and Rust, the alpha male. Which means he automatically hates any male that gets between me-and him. So, yeah...Poor Vic. And it also means he enforces order upon the other males. So...in a sense, he's my beta, I guess."

"...So..." Owen blinked, thoughts attempting to comprehend her situation after taking another drink, "...You're getting dick from a dinosaur? Nice to know, I guess. So I can avoid your boyfriend."

The man's comment caused Ellens' face to flush a red hue, a laugh escaping her, "I ain't gettin' it anywhere else! Nice to know I have an option available. But, really, no. I wouldn't want to be in the same enclosure as Rust. Without bars. He's not too kind with the ladies."

The blonde's comment caused Owen's brow to raise, "He ever do anything to Ep?"

Ellen shook her head, "No. I don't think so. Not that I'm aware of, anyway. As far as I know, she's never been bred."

"But she was put on birth control?"

"As a precaution against breeding, yes. But I've never seen the males do any courting behavior around her. Just bully behavior."

A silence then fell over the pair.

A silence that was broken by the female trainer, "Ah, speaking of courting behavior, that reminds me. Owen? Just be careful E doesn't imprint on you. Sexually, I mean. She might start viewing you as her mate."

"Why? You'd get jealous?" The ex marine questioned in jest.

"No. I just don't...I don't know. They're smart birds. And like birds, they can breed for pleasure. I think it would just be a bit cruel, is all. To have her imprint on a mate, but never receive that pleasure. From a woman's point of view, anyway. It would be like being in a celibate relationship and being sexually repressed. Kind of. Not really. But-you get my point?"

"So...Romeo imprinting on you is cruel as well?" Owen asked.

"Well...Yes. It is. You know what-never mind I said anything. I just figured I'd tell you to be a teeny twenny bit careful around E? Maybe not get anymore attached than you are? Maybe it won't get your girls jealous? It'll be easier for you, in the end." The blonde spoke.

The man simply nodded, "Yeah...I get ya."

Silence then reigned.

A fatigued, heavy silence.

Then the pattering of rain upon the roof.

"You're not going home, you know that, right?"

"Owen, don't be silly. I almost crashed driving here."

"Atta, girl. I'm training you well."

A quiet chuckle, "Not well enough, Mister Grady. *I'm not on my knees.*"

The woman's comment caused a dusting of red to spread across Owen's cheeks.

Thank God, Ellie couldn't see.

"...Owen? Are you *blushing*?"

"No."

"I think you are, Owen."

"No."

"Yes, you are! I *feel* that blu-uuush!" The blonde cooed.

Silence was the man's only response. Either Owen had no comeback, or was busy drinking.

"You're cute when you blush."

"Stop it."

And then, Ellen's lower lip jutted out in a pout, "Awe... You're no fun."

"Pffft! I'm tons of fun."

"Sure, big guy." The woman replied. She then produced a burp, "...Excuse me."

The ex marine smiled slightly, "You're not excused."

"You're mean...Hey, can I use your shower? You still don't have those stupid towels that are short so I have to chose to cover up my tits or my ass, do you?" The woman asked, reaching for her glasses. She was tired of being blind.

"Hey. Those towels aren't stupid. They're doing their job."

"Ew...You pervert." Elllie remarked, "Sly, smart pervert...Huh..."

That...That was actually intelligent.

Owen rolled his eyes, "Yeah, well, your fancy long towels are under the bathroom sink."

The short woman then stood up, figuring she could finish her drink later, "Mine? Ha! More like Claire's!"

Once more, a reddened hue danced across the trainer's features, "H-Hey...Stop it."

The blonde was already on her way to the bathroom-and promptly closed the door.

Soon, the sound of running water was heard.

Owen sighed, finishing his second drink in several large gulps.

He moved to get a spare blanket and a pillow.

Well, tonight might be interesting.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

I apologize for any grammar/spelling errors.

This work was supposed to involve more of the raptors, but it became more human focused instead.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Alright, Owen, you ready to lose?" Ellen asked as she idly gripped the rope pulley that would raise the metal gate, blue eyes side eying him behind thick rimmed glasses. She looked upon the blob that was Grady out of the side of her vision.

The ex marine briefly looked at the five foot tall woman. He smirked, "Heh. I never lose, El."

"With Claire, you always lose." The blonde spoke, lazily chewing a piece of gum.

Owen's smug features turned into a frown, "Ow..."

"Don't fuck with me, and you won't get burned, Raptor Boy." She briefly blew a pink bubble.

It was an action the raptor trainer decided to take advantage of with a crack of his own, "Didn't know you were so good at blowing, Ellie. Mind showing me sometime?"

Upon hearing that, the woman's gum bubble popped. Her sapphire eyes narrowed behind thick rims, "-Ew."

"Hey. I ain't that ugly." The veteran murmured, features once more falling into a hurt frown, however faux.

"Owen, I think you only bathe, like, once a week. That's gross." The blonde spoke, a faint ghost of a smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

The man's eyebrows rose in mock shock, "People bathe more than once a week? How can people smell my fragile masculinity if I bathe more often?" Owen then nudged Ellen's shoulder with his elbow. He hit her shoulder, "Loser buys the other a beer, eh?"

Ellen rolled her eyes, however slightly, "Sure. But I'd say you owe me a pack. Of beer, that is. Not like, raptor pack."

The pair then started at the camera monitors. It showed video feed on all the individual little paddocks the raptors were in.

They were small transfer cells to serve as a transport funnel, each cell having two metal gates that could be controlled with a pulley system.

No different than transport systems when zoos moved larger, dangerous animals such as tigers or lions.

It was a simple, if effective design.

And best of all, the little cells were connected to the raptors' paddock.

No sedatives needed.

No risk of harm.

The animals only went where they wanted to go.

And if they didn't want to go and explore-well tough shit.

"So, who do we have up first?" Ellen asked, hand still idle upon the rope to release the animal.

Owen briefly looked upon the monitor, "Echo. Then Charlie, Delta...then Blue."

"Which ones are you going to count in the experiment? You have four. I have three." The woman pried, eyes narrowing upon the camera that focused upon the room with the puzzle.

It was a fairly complex puzzle for aves that would need to be solved with the use of basic tools and problem solving skills.

Should be no problem to raptors!

Right?

The ex marine paused slightly in his answer, "We have E?"

Ellen furrowed her brow, "Yeah, but that would fuck up the data and skew the results. E is female. And we're comparing sexes-" The blonde paused as Owen chuckled softly.

At first, she was unsure as to why.

Then she realized her choice of wording.

She laughed as well, "That-uh, that came out wrong. Fuck, I hate you, Owen. Ever since I met you my humor devolved to horny teenage humor."

The ex marine raised a brow, "Horny teenage humor?"

"Yeah. Say dick and stuff, and we start laughing. But, experimenting on the different sexes-I cannot have Epsilon join." Ellen murmured, idly chewing her gum. It long lost its taste.

"Weeeell...We can have E try for fun. What's the harm? All my raptors will try. Why not E?"

Ellen paused. She looked as if she were about to say something, but did not, "...Fine. For fun."

The man smiled, and pulled the rope to commence the experiment.

---

"...Three minutes and fifty four seconds," Ellen briefly wrote down the time upon a piece of parchment, "Not bad...Fastest one yet."

The time was written by Delta's name.

Several names of the raptors were crossed off, either signifying they were disqualified or failed to meet the time criteria.

Rust's name was crossed off, a 'Disqualified for specimen failure to participate.' was scribbled beside his name.

Storm's time was written as four minutes and thirty one seconds.

Bravo's was written for six minutes and five seconds. His name was crossed off due to going over the five minute time limit.

Echo's name was crossed off, a parenthesis in place behind her name, and an arrow drawn up to Rust's statement. She also failed to participate.

Rather than seeking to solve the puzzle, Echo decided to chew upon the equipment in order to get her treats.

Rust completely and utterly ignored the puzzle.

Charlie's name was also scratched off, if only because she, too, went over the time limit.

"You know...I'm really disappointed in my boyfriend. I thought he'd do better." The blonde murmured, "Oh, well..."

"You need better taste in men, El." The man commented in jest. Owen's eyes watched the screen, Blue now in the testing area, inspecting the puzzle.

"Yeah, they need less scales." The woman remarked dryly.

Ellen ignored the feeling of Owen resting his elbow upon her shoulder. She briefly side eyed him.

All she could see was a blob.

Though she could practically feel the man's shit eating grin, "Well, well, well. I think I won."

Ellen wrinkled her brow, "Like fuck you did. It's not over yet."

"Yeah, but, like...We're tied. Unless Blue wins this. Which she will. Because she's Blue." The ex marine commented with a tone that was half jest and half inflated ego.

"Owen, you're...You know what, ever mind. What happens if we tie?" The woman asked, blue eyes staring behind thick glasses at the camera.

"We ain't gonna tie."

"But-,"

"We ain't gonna tie, El."

".....Mmmhmmm..." The woman hummed, briefly watching the time on her phone.

".....You know what my favorite hobby is?" The male raptor trainer asked after a pause, eyes fixed upon the screen.

Ellen didn't bother to lift her eyes from her phone, "Hmmm?"

"Using you as an arm's rest."

"I'm trying to ignore the fact you're discriminating against my height." The blonde replied. Her eyes flicked towards the screen.

Blue was almost finished.

"At least I ain't calling you a spinner."

The blonde blinked several times, "Oof. I don't dance on poles, I spin on dicks. That takes skill. Short woman skills."

Owen opened his mouth to respond, but found himself overwhelmed with excitement, "Blue's done!" A calloused finger pointed at the screen, elbow slipping off the woman's shoulder.

"Hang on...three minutes and twenty eight seconds."

Fuck.

She lost.

"Fuck me in my asshole, I owe you a beer, Owen."

"A beer? You know, El, I know we agreed that the loser buys the other a beer, but-," The man's stubble molded upwards as a grin spread across his face.

It was a shit eating grin.

"-I'll settle for a kiss."

The blonde woman tilted her head ever so slightly upward.

She squinted, blue eyes leering behind thick glasses.

Trying to tell if he was jesting, or being serious.

"-Fuck no," Was Ellen's response, and she looked back down at her results.

Trying to ignore the feeling of the ex marine's eyes upon her.

She could practically feel the man's frown radiating from him, "Awe."

"I'll buy you a beer. Or something. Now-What about Epsilon?"

---

"Owen?"

Silence.

"Owen?"

More silence.

"Owen. Hey-I'll kiss you, Grady."

The ex marine's eyes flicked up towards Ellen, "...What?"

A beer was placed in front of him with a soft clink.

"Well, that got you to look at me," Ellen murmured. Though a sullen smile molded its way upon her lips, "You wanna talk about today?"

The man raised his arms, calloused knuckles rubbing at his eyes, "You saw what happened..."

The seat groaned in protest as Ellen sat across from the brunet, her elbows resting upon the table.

The soft lights of Owen's home glowed in the evening hours upon the island.

Once more, Ellen decided to invite herself to the man's dwelling.

More so to see if the raptor trainer was okay.

Ellen wasn't sure he was.

Grady just wasn't being...well...Grady.

"I know. But if you want to talk-"

The table shook as the man's fists slammed down on the hardwood, the blonde jumping in start, "For fuck's sake, El, I don't wanna talk about it!" A flare of simmering rage boiled forth. She could hear it in the callousness of his tone. See the hardness in his eyes. See the rage pulsing through arteries just under his developed forearms and clenching hands.

Ellen closed her eyes tight, as if she were anticipating to get struck-or perhaps she did not like the violence of his tone. However, when she opened them, her lips fell into a frown, "Owen, I didn't...Sorry." Her voice was soft, akin to a soft mumble.

She didn't feel like explaining.

Not if her attempts to help were just going to get him riled.

Her cerulean eyes flicked towards the trainer's calloused hands.

His fists were shaking, clenched together so hard his knuckles were white.

Her brow crinkled in concern.

Slowly, tenderly, hesitantly did one of Ellen's hands move to rest upon one of Owen's.

To curl her soft fingers around his calloused.

She felt how much tension and strength his had in his one hand.

She felt how tough and heated his skin was.

Felt the bounding of pulses under weathered skin.

"Owen," Her hand firmly squeezed his.

Grady's eyes flicked upwards.

Locked upon hers.

Ellen looked on, mouth opening to speak.

No words came out.

Rather, her blue eyes were then cast downwards-towards her hand upon his.

She did not keep eye contact.

She felt his fist uncurl, and his muscles release tension-however slight.

Owen's shoulders heaved as he breathed deep, and then exhaled, "...Sorry, Ellie...I'm just being an ass."

"I know you're an ass, Owen." Ellen smiled, however forced.

The ex marine's lips turned upwards in a smiled, likewise, however forced, "That's me..., " And then dropped into a sullen frown, "It's just...seeing Ep like that..."

The man felt Ellen's fingers softly trail along the skin of his own.

Eager to calm and soothe, yet hesitant to touch.

Owen's lips pressed firmly together into a thin line, the corners of his mouth downward as his mind recalled the events, "Just like...*that*...just on the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth...eyes rolled back...laying in a puddle of her own piss...choking on...I never should have taken her out of her cage. I should have known, Ellen-I should have *fucking known* it would stress her out too much. If I-

"Owen, don't think like that. If Epsilon was going to have a seizure, she was going to have a seizure. She would have had one regardless of you not moving her. You very well may have saved her life. Because of you, we found her. Because of you, she got medical attention. She's better off because you cared to think about her. That's it. That's the best you can do-and that's the only thing you can do." The blonde woman's voice carried through the stillness of the dwelling, "She's in good hands. You saw. She's was given IV fluids and medication, and she's being monitored..."

"...I know, El," Owen's eyes flicked to look at her, "Do you think I'm making the right choice? With Ep?"

Ellen was swift to look elsewhere.

She gave Owen's hand another squeeze, before allowing her fingers to slip away and retreat under the table. She paused to think, and gather her thoughts, a deep breath causing her chest to expand. Her shoulders slumped as she exhaled, "I don't know, Owen. I think that depends upon Epsilon. You have to keep in mind the seizure could be caused by her cancer. This could be a progression of her disease, and she'll have to live with it. Maybe it went to her brain, and that's what caused it? Maybe it was just stress? It could be anything. I just know, an animal doesn't want to die. No one wants to die. But when their quality of life is at stake, sometimes it's for the best. You'll just have to chose when you think that choice is right. She'll let you know."

"...I hope you're right, Ellie."

A pause.

Then a crack of an opening can as Owen's calloused hand grabbed the beer.

Ellen slouched forward, chin resting upon the wooden table.

It certainly was not a comfortable position.

"...I hope so, too."

More silence.

Owen's throat muscles bobbed as he worked on chugging his beer.

He set it down with a clink, "...Rum and coke?"

Only a slight heave of the woman's shoulders came in response, at first, "...Eh. Why the fuck not?"

The sound of Owen rising and walking towards the kitchen.

His footfalls were heavy, and fatigued.

The clinking of ice in glass.

The crack of a can.

The pouring of liquid.

More heavy footfalls, closer, closer, heavier and heavier.

The light tap of glass upon wood as the drink was set in front of her.

Owen resumed to take his seat across from the woman, chair protesting.

"...Thanks." Ellen murmured.

She did not bother to reach out, and grasp.

Not yet.

"So...About that kiss thing," The blonde's eyes flicked upwards. It was quite the task, and even then, Owen was a mere blob, for he was outside the realm of influence of her glasses, "...Were you being serious? Or joking? I can't tell."

She didn't need to see Owen's gaze to know he was looking upon her.

She could feel it.

"Oh, uh...that...Well...", The ex marine cleared his throat, a hand rising to idly scratch his neck, "I was joking. Mostly."

Ellen's brow crinkled in concern at that, "...Mostly?"

"Well, yeah. You know. Mostly. And...well, you know how that goes. Right? Why? You did- Didn't think I was serious, did you?" The man attempted to laugh. It came out as a nervous chuckle.

Like he was trying to play off some kind of corny joke.

"Umm...Well, that's why I asked?" The blonde remarked, "So...I guess you were...a little bit serious?"

...Awe, shit.

...Uh, oh.

...Oh, no.

...Oh, hell, no.



...Oh, fuck no.

Ellen didn't want any part of this shit.

She didn't like where this was going...

"Yeah. A little-a little bit. So...uh...would you be interested?" The man's voice was light, and airy. Ellen couldn't tell if it was from a pinch of nervousness, or if it was just a long, winded joke.

A really, really bad, long, winded joke.

Once more, the woman's brow furrowed in concern, "Interested in...You? Or...a kiss?...Cause, like...you know I think your handsome, but...I don't-"

"Yeah! Me! And, like...a kiss in general? So...uh...me? I guess? In general?"

"-Owen? Me? *Me*? But...I-Owen, I don't know what the fuck you're trying to ask me? Am I fucking stupid? Are you asking me to kiss you, or like...date you? I'm so confused-"

"Yes! To the kiss! But a date work, too-"

What?

What?!

*What?!*

Ellen didn't even know what verbal diarrhea was coming out of their mouths, but whatever the fuck it was-she didn't like it.

It was too sudden, and too stressful for her.

It was simply too overwhelming and snowballing into scary things.

"Nononono-Owen, Owen, please, stop. I like, can't kiss you. I suck at kissing-" Ellen's head shot up, hands trembling as they almost knocked over her drink, "Shit!"

The man's head cocked slightly, "Hey, that's okay. I kiss like a-"

"No, Owen, I like-can't kiss. I've like-," Ellen's voice quivered, and her pale skin flushed, eyes wide, "I've never kissed before. *Ever*."

The blonde's face flushed even harder, blue eyes white in terror, "I know, I know, I know, I'm a loser, and-and-*and*-"

Her lips trembled.

Her eyes watered.

It looked like she was going to cry from sheer embarrassment and shame, "...*I'm gonna...go and hide now...*"

Thus, Ellen folded her arms, and planted her head face first into her castle of forearms and elbows.

Hiding.

'Hiding'.

Owen's brow crinkled in confusion, mind attempting to piece together what happened in such a short period of mere seconds.

The man frowned.

Awe, shit.

Slowly, the man's calloused fingers moved to touch an arm, "...El?...Ellie? I'm-I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass you..."

Fuck.

Shit.

But now it made sense.

Why Ellen never spoke of any passed relationships.

Why Ellen avoided topics of romance.

She had none.

And that embarrassed her.

Fuck.

Owen.

Stupid, fucking Owen.

Now he knew why Ellen was so guarded about letting people get so close.

She had a fear of intimacy.

She never let anyone get close.

"...Ellen?...It's okay-"

"*No, it's not! I'm a twenty seven year old loser...*"

The male trainer frowned, "Ellen... You don't have to kiss me if you don't want to. I just... I didn't know. I'm sorry."

Owen didn't know what else to say.

"...I'm sorry if I scared you."

Silence reigned for a long time.

When Ellen raised her head, her glasses were steaming, and her eyes red. Dried tears stained her cheeks.

She sniffed, and swallowed hard, "...Owen? I... I want to try."

The man's eyes flicked upon the blonde, a hand rubbing her arm in an attempt to soothe, "...You want to try? Okay."

The blonde nodded, face still red, "Just a kiss?"

The ex marine nodded, "Just a kiss. Nothing more."

"Okay," Ellen's voice was soft, barely above a whisper, "Just a kiss."

The blonde's small hand then clasped upon the cool glass of her drink. She chugged it.

It burned her throat.

"Oooof. I shouldn't have done that. Okay. Now I'm ready to do some stupid shit."

Grady couldn't help it.

He laughed, "First kisses are always the most dangerous, eh? They're more dangerous than raptors. You risk taker, you."

"Owen-Get ready for the worst, sucky-ish first kiss of your life. You are a very brave man."

Poor Owen.

---

"...Owen?"

"HMMMMMM?"

"...I'm scared." Ellen whined, fingers trembling as she wedged herself as close to Owen as she thought was suitable. Her heart was hammering in her chest.

She didn't even attempt to kiss the man yet!

She wasn't even sure how, entirely.

Where?

The lips?

...Mmmm...Maybe too soon?

The cheek!

A-ha!

The cheek!

Yes!

Then Owen wouldn't feel how clumsy and inexperienced she was!

What if she was so bad at kissing, he didn't want to be friends with her anymore?

Or at least kicked her out of his home?

Or worse!

For some reason made him more interested in her?

Why was he interested?

It must have been the alcohol.

Because there wasn't anything interesting about Ellen.

She wasn't Claire.

"I can tell." Owen responded with a smile.

It was warm.

It was patient.

It was...well, Owen.

Her fingers trembled as the pads of her fingertips pressed gently, tenderly, upon his cheek.

Feeling the rough stubble upon his jaw.

He probably felt how gross and sweaty her hand was.

Oh, God.

Oh, God.

Oh, God...

Ellen's hand gently turned his head, the woman attempting to figure out the best plan of action for her attack.

Why was kissing so hard?

How did others make it seem so easy?

She attempted to go for his cheek opposite to the one of her hand.

She awkwardly craned her neck, nearing ever so closer.

She could feel his developed musculature under his clothes.

Could smell a masculine musk with the scent of forest.

Could see the smile plastered upon his features.

Could see his eyes looking at her.

Staring.

Judging.

Her lips trembled as they slightly molded into that of a kiss.

Her breath was heavy of alcohol and a moist heat upon Owen's skin.

She was hesitant.

She neared his stubbled cheek, nose smooshing against his skin.

Oh, God!

She fucked up!

She fucked up and he was judging her!

Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!

Slowly, oh so slowly, Ellen's lips inched closer and closer.

She was moving so slow, it was torturous for her-and embarrassing.

She was shocked Owen didn't just back hand her away.

She felt the heat of him radiating upon her lips.

Felt his stubble tickle her.

And then her lips pressed against his cheek, molding to softly deliver a kiss.

In a quiet squelch, Ellen pulled away.

Her face was red-and the alcohol did not help.

She forgot her hand was still on Owen's cheek-until the man moved to look upon her, neck twisting.

"Now was that so hard?" The man asked in a low drawl, hot breath laden with alcohol.

The tone was one Ellen only heard in movies-and never directed at her.

She went to open her mouth to speak, but found herself struggling, "I...But, I didn't-your lips?"

She felt her cheeks heat up upon hearing Owen's response, "Then kiss me. For *real*. Don't be scared. I can help you."

"...But, I...But..." Ellen's lips trembled. Her hands were sweating heavily. She felt Owen's calloused fingers gently press against her chin, and better angle her head.

She felt his arm wrap around the small of her back, and smoosh her against him.

Their breaths were intermingling.

Their eyes locked.

Ellen's one hand rested upon his chest, the other exploring along his jaw, and lightly toying with his hair.

Her fingers were clumsy in their exploration.

When Owen spoke, their lips were so close, Ellen could feel them brushing against hers whilst he spoke.

His tone was a husky drawl, "Your move, El."

Ellen's lips trembled.

Tingled.

She wanted to kiss him.

To feel his lips on hers.

To taste him.

But Ellen also felt too pressured.

Felt too uncomfortable.

Everything was moving too fast.

It was scary.

What if Owen didn't stop?

What if Owen wanted more?

She wasn't sure if she felt safe.

But she felt bad for wanting to not kiss him as well.

What if she let him down?

What if this led to something more?

And with Claire-?

Ellen closed her eyes tightly.

She opened them.

Her lips molded, and then fell lax.

Unsure of what to do.

Ellen didn't know what to do.

She never experienced this confusion before.

What if she never got the chance again?

But what if things went more than just a simple kiss?

The blonde could feel Owen's hot breath upon her.

It seemed like an eternity.

It was torturous-the feeling of wanting her lips to be against another, feeling that temptation.

"...Owen? *I'm scared.*"

Slowly, carefully, Owen pulled himself away to look at the blonde woman.

To actually *look* at her.

His brow crinkled in concern, eyes shining in worry. His hand rubbed the small of her back in comfort, "You okay?"

His voice was quiet, and soft.

Ellen frowned, her hand falling from toying and tilling through Owen's hair.

Shame, and guilt crept within her.

The feeling of failure.

Like she disappointed Owen.

*"...I'm sorry..."*

*"...I'm just too scared..."*

"It's okay, Ellie." Owen looked down upon the woman. The blonde rested her head against his chest.

She seemed content to simply remain as is, at least.

When her eyes met his, Grady saw the look of disappointment in her blue eyes.

The ex marine smiled gently, softly, a thumb caressing her cheek in slow, lazy circles.

His eyes flicked from her own, to her brow. Then back to her eyes hidden behind thick glasses.

"Ellie? Forehead?"

A pause in thought, followed by a nod of the woman's head.

Owen bent down, planting a tender kiss upon her creased brow.

It was an affection he held for several seconds, and then pulled away.

When he looked at Ellen, a faint smile was upon her face.

*"...It's okay, Ellie. You were brave today."*

The blonde breathed softly, "I want to be braver. More brave. I don't know if I ever will, but...I'll try."

A silence fell over the pair, the dull chorus of singing insects wafting through an open window.

*"...I'll try."*

## Chapter End Notes

I was originally going to go into detail of each raptors' puzzle attempts, but found I just couldn't do it.



And then it dove into Ellen's fear of intimacy.

And it became...whatever the hell it is now.

Though this work is technically Owen/OC, I'm unsure if it will be Owen/E or Owen/Ellen. Or both. Who the hell knows?

I truly seem to struggle with writing the raptors in this work, and I think it's due to most of my writing being about the Broken Raptors series, so it's a breath of fresh air to actually write dialog.

I am also busy updating Instincts, and have been thinking of including Blue/E in this work (though that may be unlikely). Ever since exploring them in Instincts, I've come to love the coupling, and have honestly been shocked by the amount of support I've gotten for the pairing.

Either that, or I've been thinking of adding the Indoraptor into this work as a park attraction, but I honestly highly doubt this scenario would work.

All in all, I have a lot of fun writing Ellen and Owen's interactions, and I want to explore more of his relationship with E, and explore more of the impact of her dying upon Owen's psyche, as well as the ethical and moral debates.

And maybe explore Claire as well.

Thank you for reading and feel free to give your opinion.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

I sat down to write, and this came out.

I wanted to show a little bit more of the raptors, but it's still largely human focused. It's nice to write people for a change. I also want to update Instincts and Beautifully Broken, soon.

I apologize for any grammar/spelling errors.

I also write Raptor Daddy Owen as being more pissy the more stressed out he is.

"Is...There a reason he's staring at me like he wants to kill me?" Owen asked as he walked side by side with Ellen. The blonde was closest to the cage, fairly slow in her stride as they walked along the length of the exhibit.

The soft sound of taloned feet pattering along the brush on the other side could be heard.

Walking with them.

Slowly.

Methodically.

Ellen abruptly stopped in her stride, "Because he wants to kill you."

The quiet weight of a stalking predator ceased as the beast on the other side of the cage halted.

Owen twisted slightly to look upon the shorter woman, his legs halting to prevent himself from getting too far ahead. His blue eyes flicked towards the raptor he knew was standing beside Ellen, though could not see-however separated by steel.

A snort, followed by a serpentine hiss slithered from the bars.

Briefly, ever so slightly did the ex marine nod, a hand resting on his belt, "Yeah...Yeah, I think I get that."

"Good," The blonde woman commented, beginning to resume her slow meandering along the exhibit's perimeter. The barely audible pawing of clawed toes followed in sync.

Owen waited until Ellen caught up for him to resume walking by her side, "...He always like this?"

"No. Usually he has a stiffy." Ellen's response made the male raptor trainer glance down at her, "-You saw it?"

The woman nodded, "Yeah. I see it a lot. That's why I said I wouldn't want to be near Rust without a fence. It's why I don't turn my back, either," Ellen turned her head briefly towards the pen, "Say Rusty, you handsome boy?" The blonde cooed.

There was no response save for the faint rustle of foliage.

The female trainer shrugged her shoulders, "Eh. You got him pissy."

"Good to know he recognizes game when he sees it." The brunette spoke. His comment caused a soft laugh from the short woman, "Ah, yes. A true rival in love."

Ellen's gaze then turned towards a small building that was attached to the exhibit. A hand slipped in her pocket, keys jingling as they were pulled out.

The bending of ferns stopped as they further neared the entrance, the blonde putting the key into the knob, and turning. The door swung open and she stepped inside. The flick of a light switch, and the room came to life.

There was a laptop and various folders and papers upon a desk-which also housed a coffee maker. A tv was positioned against a wall, facing a coffee table. The table was flanked by old wooden chairs.

A worn rug splayed out in the middle of the room.

A couch with blankets and pillows lay nearby.

There was a mini fridge and cooler.

Various art supplies was stashed in a corner. Easels, white primer, various paint brushes and buckets of colors. Cardboard was folded up and rested against the wall.

Owen couldn't help but notice something as he stepped inside, and closed the door,-

-One easel housed a painting with white primer.

It was shredded with a single, knife like slash.

"So, uh...This where you live? It's, uh,-"

"A shit hole, right?" Ellen laughed lightly, "I know. But this is my office. And doubles as an apartment. Mostly. Sorry if it's hot in here. The AC took a shit. But, uh, I got coffee. If you, you know, want anything." The blonde then made her way towards her desk, opening a folder, fingers prying apart papers.

Owen merely shook his head, "Thanks, but, I'm good. Buuut-," The man's calloused finger rose as he pointed towards the art supplies, "Didn't know you have anger management issues. Or were an artist."

The short woman paused to look at the ex marine, brow furrowing in confusion, "Huh?" Her gaze then followed his finger, neck twisting to see with her glasses, "Oh. No. I've been teaching the raptors how to paint."

The male trainer, upon hearing those words, blinked.

Twice.

Thrice.

"...Say that again?"

Ellen's shoulders heaved as she exhaled. She then turned towards the man, "I've been teaching them how to paint. Well, I say 'them'. I mainly mean Rust," The woman's arms crossed over her chest, "I've made progress."

Owen squinted his eyes at the woman, before his brows raised in curiosity-and wonder, "Really? How'd you do that?"

"By being very careful, and very patient. At first, he just attacked the painting. I'd try and demonstrate through the fence. Actually-That big ass window that has the shades down? That fucker's reinforced glass. It allows me to see directly into their home. And them-me. That's why it's almost always down. But I started demonstrating from here, so he could see, since it was hard through a fence."

The man's features crinkled and withered into creases of concern, "Ellen, don't you think that's, I don't know...dangerous?"

"It is dangerous. And stupid. But I figured, hey, then can probably break the glass if they wanted too. But then against, I guess if they could, the builders wouldn't build the place like it is. And if I die, then I die. I just hope I would die fast and not slow," The woman replied, "But, I want to show you something. I think you'll love it." Ellen's thin lips stretched into a smile as she moved towards a closet. She opened the door, and bent down to pick up a painting.

The ex marine raised a brow, "I'll love it, eh? What is it? Another kiss?"

"Oh, shush, you. Remember when I said I was making progress?" The short woman hefted the painting up, and upon turning to Owen, raised it as high as she could, "Ta-da!"

The painting an arrangement of colors. Some were smeared in thick lines as if paint was dragged along the side of a clawed finger. Others were thin, and slight claw marks were embedded in the primer. Other colors were in round, large splotches, as if pressed against with a snout.

It was a mass of chaos in yellows, blues, greens and red blending and mixing to create new colors.

Ellen seemed to point-quite excitedly, to an area where there seemed to be some thought put into the chaos of colors.

Two blue splotches of a snout were side by side.

Above them, slightly blending into the blue and creating a sick green, was a thick, if messy smear of yellow.

"I think that's me, Owen!" The blonde woman chirped, "I think that's me! Or at least, the hopeless romantic in me hopes it is! Owen, Owen, Owen, do you know what this means? Raptors have complex cognitive thought! Ahhhhh!"

Owen couldn't help but be both amazed-and shocked-and a bit...concerned? Perhaps? He wasn't sure?

"Damn. Your boyfriend really fancies you, huh?" The man remarked, moving closer to inspect the artwork, "But-He didn't get your glasses."

"Hmmpf." Ellen carefully set the painting down, "Laugh all you want, Owen. I think it's cute he's thinking about me even when I'm not here. But-beside the fact, I was thinking...Maybe you can try and get E to paint? She might like it. Raptors are smart like that."

"I...And...How would I do that? I'm used to training raptors, not teaching them how to paint." Owen wasn't too sure about that. But...Then again...Maybe enrichment would be good for Epsilon?

The blonde smiled, "Demonstrate, silly. You can do that. You're a big boy."

Owen opened his mouth to speak, but was interrupted by a tapping upon glass in three swift strikes.

Once.

Twice.

Thrice.

"Oh, don't worry. That's Rust." Ellen remarked, moving to open the shades.

Owen was expecting a raptor.

But he wasn't expecting the type of raptor he saw.

And he certainly didn't expect a large raptor to be pressed up against the glass, taloned arms raised and pressed, the side of his scaled head flush to the cool window. His fingers twitched and clawed, golden eye rimmed red focusing upon Ellen and circular pupils narrowing. A struggling lizard was in his maw, haplessly flailing and thrashing.

But he was not expecting a heated and throbbing erection to be pressed against the glass, masculine fluid smearing upon the abused window.

"Aaaahhh, oh, uh...Never thought I'd get cock envy..." Owen cleared his throat, a bit uncomfortable as his lips pressed together.. There was a slight crack in his voice.

The brown and red hued raptor's gaze flicked to Owen. His scaled lips peeled back into a snarl, bloodied teeth on full display. His jaws tensed, and the lizard went limp.

Ellen was swift to pull the shade down, a thick dusting of red adorning her face, "I...I am so, so, sorry you hhhh had to see that..."

Why was it so awkward?

They would normally laugh at this shit.

Crack up some jokes.

But ever since last night...

...Things just didn't feel right.

"...So...Uh...", Owen tried to think of what to say, "Uh...You said he's like that often?"

Ellen cleared her throat, though stared at the shade rather than turn around the look at Grady, "Yeah. He thinks I'm his mate. I told you that-"

"-Yeah, but, El...To actually see the behavior? I don't think it's healthy. It's like you're encouraging him-" The man was cut off by a short and vexed hiss from the blonde, "Oh, for fuck's sake, Owen, it's not like I'm fucking a raptor."

"I-I didn't say that." Owen raised his hands in an attempt to show no harm-but Ellen was already on the offensive, "Look, Owen, I don't think you have any right criticize my charges and the way I handle my damn animals. I know what I'm doing." Though her voice wasn't raised, it was quite hard.

"El-Look-I didn't mean it like that-It's just...I'm worried for you. What if you sleep here and that damn glass breaks? What if-" Once more, the ex marine was interrupted, "Owen. I said whatever happens, happens. Just stop. Okay? Stop."

Owen's features turned into a hard scowl, almost one of fury. His arms crossed over his chest, hands balling into fists. His knuckles were white, arteries fluttering, "Well, fuckin' sorry I don't like the idea of my best fuckin' friend sleeping with an obsessed raptor with a hard on right outside. Look, Ellen-,"

The man grit his teeth, jaw tense. He cracked his neck in a vain attempt to try and relieve his tension, "I just don't feel safe with you being here alone. Why don't you stay at my place?"

The blonde woman's nares flared, "Owen, no offense, but no. I don't really want to be...around you? In general. Like, I've been around you too much already. I need some space,

okay? I just...don't-won't feel comfortable staying at your place again."

A breath of irritation puffed and blew from the male trainer's lips, "Ellen, is this about last night?"

"Pfft. No." The woman's lips twisted into a slight snarl.

"Uh-huh. Sure. Can we talk about it?"

"No."

"Ellen-"

"Owen, I don't want to talk about it."

"So you want to pretend nothing happened?"

"Yes, I do. Because ever since last night, everything's weird and awkward. And I made stupid mistakes-"

"-By opening up to me?"

"-Yes, exactly! And I got drunk and...Look, I'd just feel a lot better if everything would just...go back the way it was because I was stupid...because I don't like how we feel right now. It feels like everything changed. And now I don't know what the fuck is going on, or what the fuck you and I are? And...just...please. I don't want to talk about it. I just don't."

Owen's jaw tensed and untensed. His knuckles cracked. He opened his mouth as if to speak-but instead, a fatigued breath just came out instead, "...Okay...Then we won't talk about it."

The woman breathed a sigh of relief, "...Thank you. Now, please...Go see Ep."

"...Okay..." Owen muttered in quiet defeat, arms falling at his side.

The man then moved to take his leave towards the door.

Ellen's voice stopped him, if ever so slightly, "Owen?"

"...Yeah?"

"...I'm sorry for being a cunt."

"...I'm sorry for being an ass."

"...Wait. I'll help you load up the art supplies."

---

"...Hey, girl. You miss me?"

Owen's voice trickled softly through the quiet din of her cage.

The red and white female was still under observation for any seizure activity.

She was given magnesium and fluids, and blood work was drawn.

Her labs were in the toilet.

Owen didn't need to be a scientist to know that meant she was sick.

And seeing E the way she was-broke his heart.

The female raptor did not even bother to raise her head-nor open her eyes to look at him.

Her breath was sluggish and shallow.

She was drowsy.

Her eyes were sunken into her skull. Owen could see her eyes flicker underneath her lids in erratic, frantic motions. Her fingers and toes twitched. A whistled whine slipped passed her throat. It almost sounded like a dog's whine.

Her lips spasmed and teeth bared.

The paleo-vets said she would be sluggish, and sleepy.

An after effect of the seizure.

But to Owen, it appeared as if she were having a nightmare she simply could not wake from.

Owen couldn't help but wonder, what did raptors have nightmares about?

The ex marine had them often.

War zones.

Raptors.

Claire.

And then there were the thoughts.

The horrid, vivid thoughts.

Many were real, from his past.

Others were made from his fatigued and tired mind.

It would be a lie to say Owen Grady was a selfish man.

He always cared too much.

About his fellow soldiers.



About his dolphins.

About his raptors.

About Claire.

About Epsilon.

About Ellen.

But...to think-imagine-fear-what could happen to Ellen?

What if the raptors got out?

Broken through the glass?

What if they tore her open from the belly, and ate her alive?

Or worse-what if the male raped her, and then killed her?

Owen didn't like the idea of the petite woman staying there.

Alone.

Without any access to help if something went wrong.

And to think how that male acted towards her?

It was courting behavior.

But it was something more.

It was behavior that sported intelligence.

Advanced memory.

Almost on the verge of obsession.

And Ellen seemed to think it was *cute*.

Calling the raptor 'handsome'.

And calling the raptor her 'boyfriend'.

Pfff.

Owen could be 'handsome', too.

Fuck, he already was!

...Was he jealous of a fucking dinosaur?

...No.

No.

No.

He wasn't.

He was just...worried.

Worried, and fatigued, and exhausted, and stressed...

Epsilon still continued to writhe and squirm in her sleep.

Owen's stubble was molded by his frown.

Slowly, carefully, a calloused hand slipped through the iron bars, and reached to caress the sanguine female's snout. His warm fingers pressed against her smooth scales.

E's snarling lips fell lax, and her body lessened in tension. Her sapphire eyes ceased their frantic search behind her lids.

Her breath calmed, and evened.

The ex marine's hand pressed flush upon her snout.

A sullen smile spread across his lips.

But Owen wasn't sure whether he should smile, or frown, "Hey, girl...I'm sorry I did this to you...If I'd have known..." The man's lips pressed together, forming a thin line.

He blinked.

Twice.

Thrice, "I'm sorry, Ep. I'm sorry...But I'm here, now. I'm here..."

"...And I got something fun to do for when you wake up..."

Owen couldn't hide the crack in his voice.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Notes

I apologize for the short chapter. I just wanted to get this scene out.

E's sapphire eyes were unveiled sluggishly behind scarlet scaled lids. Her circular pupils widened and adjusted to the dim light of her cell.

Warmth was what aroused her from her slumber.

Something soothing, and gentle and warm, spreading along her skin and running the length of her snout.

Something trickled in her ears, comforting and soft.

Her blurred vision began to focus-and through the bars, passed the light from the outside world-E's gaze narrowed upon a heated, calloused hand that lay flush against her scales.

Her nares flared as a croaking, guttural groan rumbled from her hoarse throat.

Alpha smelled good.

E thought she smelled that scent before-but she was unsure where.

She couldn't think right.

Everything was so hazy.

Faintly did the female raptor see Owen smile, stubble molding with his upturned lips, "That's my girl. You're finally awake."

The ex marine's calloused hand retracted through the bars, rustling behind him to grab something, "I got something for you...Ellie said I should try it...That you might like it."

Ellen said a lot of things.

And not all of them were pleasant.

Owen barely registered the light tapping of shoe soles upon the neat, polished floor.

"Hmmm. Interesting." The ex marine knew the voice. Low, soft and smooth.

Calculating.

He could practically feel Doctor Wu leaning forward in slight interest, hands clasped behind his back.

The trainer's blue eyes flicked towards the geneticist, "What's interesting, Doc?"

"That you think Epsilon might enjoy something so cognitively enriching as painting, Mister Grady," Wu's eyes slide from Owen, to the female raptor housed within the dim cell, "As you can see, I doubt she is in the mood."

"But she might like it."

Upon hearing Owen's works-Wu chuckled, "Like, Mister Grady? Now-That is what is interesting. You view things from a emotional perspective. Not a logical one. An animal does not hunt because it 'likes' to hunt. An animal does not fight because it 'likes' to fight. An animal only does what is necessary to survive. An animal feeds, drinks and breathes because it needs to. Not because it 'likes' to. The need of something, the necessity to survive-is genetics. 'Liking' something is not genetics, Mister Grady. If genetics were based on emotion-rather than necessity-well, Darwin's theory of evolution might as well not exist."

The ex marine grit his teeth and tensed his jaw, "But these animals aren't just genes and cells. They have personalities, things they like, and-"

A raised finger from the doctor silenced Owen, "Mister Grady-If I may-Have you ever heard of apoptosis?"

The raptor trainer's brow furrowed-partly in confusion-partly in irritation, "Uh...no?"

"Apoptosis is programmed cell death. When a cell lives its life, a complex pathway of receptors and enzymes trigger, and program the cell to die. However-sometimes this complex pathway fails. If one pathway fails-there are other pathways that trigger apoptosis instead. And yet-failure of these secondary means of apoptosis occur. When a cell cannot-will not-die-that, is cancer. Cancer is a genetic error that *refuses* to die. And then-that cell continues to function, and grow, and multiply. Producing more and more cells with the exact same genetic error that *refuse* to die. They do not stop. And then angiogenesis occurs-the formation of new blood vessels. However, this angiogenesis *steals* blood supply from healthy tissue-and feeds the cancerous cells. They remain unregulated, and unchecked-because there is nothing there to keep them from proliferating," Doctor Wu paused ever so slightly, intense gaze observing and judging, "If I am honest-Epsilon is a genetic failure in that regard. There is something within her body that failed to regulate her own genetics. But that imperfection is also a reflection upon me. She is a failure-but she is also beautiful. A part of her is immortal. A part of her will not die. Immortality is a disease in the guise of erroneous cells. And yet-the very nature of genetics, of evolution-for one's genes to survive, and be passed onto the next generation-kills the very organism it is meant to keep alive."

Owen's eyes narrowed, "So...What are you blabbing about? What does this mean for Ep?"

A heave of his shoulders, and a deep exhale of breath, "I would like to require in situ samples from the subject. Uh-In simpler terms-I would like tissue samples from the origin of the cancer."

"So...From the throat? Right?" The ex marine asked, eyes alighting with a sliver of hope.

The fancy doctor was going to do something!

Finally!

"Yes. The throat. Specifically, the larynx. I would need to remove it."

And just like that-Owen's small, hopeful smile faded, "Wait-what?"

Remove her voice box?

"So you want to rip out her fucking throat? What the hell will that do?" The raptor trainer seethed, arteries fluttering under tanned skin, teeth bared, "Why not actually treat her instead of playing fucking God?"

"Do you have any idea how expensive chemotherapy and radiation is, Mister Grady? Not to mention none are approved for dinosaurs-"

"-Then E can be the fucking trail!"

"-She is actively *dying*, Mister Grady. She will not die later-*She is dying*. Putting her body through the stress of chemotherapy *will kill her faster*."

"*You're fucking killing her by not letting her have a God damn chance!*" Owen hissed, voice hard and shrill.

E wiggled and writhed in her pen, disturbed by the loud noises.

"Chemotherapy kills both healthy cells and cancerous cells. There is no guarantee she will even survive. And her cancer has metastasized beyond the origin site. It can be anywhere in her body."

"But she's still *alive*. She's still *here*. She's still *fighting*. She's not holding on because she likes living. She's holding on because the very genes that are trying to kill her-her own fucking cells-are the ones she's waging war against to *live*. She's not fighting her own fucking body because she lives living-she's fighting her own damn cells because she *needs* to."

The geneticist's jaw clenched. Tensed.

He mulled over the options, "Fine. Epsilon will enter a trial round of chemotherapy. But Mister Grady-It is not without risks."

"So long as you don't cut open her throat, I'm fine with that."

Henry spared to glance upon Owen-then E. He then pivoted upon his heels, and took his leave.

The ex marine watched the doctor leave. Only when Wu left-did he somewhat relax.

A deep, heavy sigh caused his shoulders to slump.

His facial features creased in worry-and stress.

Once more, his hand slipped through the bars, and rested upon the raptor's cold snout.

"Don't worry, Ep. I'm not giving up on you."

A whistled purr riveted from the cell.

It caused a faint ghost of a smile to tug upwards on the corners of Owen's mouth.

"I'll fight so long as you do."

## End Notes

I'm honestly not sure what this work will become. Would it be something that Owen sees E as a pet (or, at least, as close as she can become?), or would it be something deeper, either as a platonic relationship (or a platonic romance?), or a more physical romance?

Or would Owen magically become a raptor? Does that make any sense? No. Would it be fun? Yes.

I was also thinking of adding Ellen into this story, since I haven't really used her since Error: Code Catholicon, and I'm too lazy to update that work. They had good chemistry, and I would like to more deeply explore their relationship.

Either way, Blue would more than likely be quite upset and jealous about another raptor taking away her position as Beta, from her point of view.

Thank you for reading.

Please feel free to give your thoughts.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!