

THE TRAVELLER BY BASSAM IMAM

## COREY AND DADDY

Corey and I gawked at our slab of meat for a moment then we glanced at each other. It was an incredible site. We were drooling like hungry Bengal tigers.

"Corey, son ... before we eat, I have something very important to tell you. Please believe me ... Corey you're my son and I love ... like umm ... love ... I mean, I care about you very much; more than anyone else in the whole world. I'd never betray you, nor would I ever care about you any less because you're not a humanoid. You're my own flesh and blood."

I don't know what it was, but I just couldn't successfully convey the 3 golden words (I love you) to my son. Maybe it was my ego that was stopping me. Anyway, I inherently knew that soon I'd have to muster up the courage to tell my son 'I love you'. Somewhere in my cast-iron heart was a soft spot.

"Corey what part of the slab of meat would you like?"

"Umm dad, I want the entrails in the freezer. I can smell those beautiful 'insides'.

The entrails are the first thing that lions eat when they're feasting. You see, entrails are jam-packed with power-building nutrients and blood. You can have this slab of meat, dad."

I grinned at my son, stood up, and then casually walked over to the freezer. After pausing for a moment, I opened the freezer, sunk my arm deep into it and then pulled out a large plastic bag with 'chunks' of meat derived from gazelle entrails. Mind you, it wasn't enough to feed a lion. Corey was much smaller than a lion, of course, but I didn't want to make a big issue about it.

Surprisingly, the food in the freezer had been thawed out. For some unknown reason Corey had known. Anyway, I carried the plastic bag back to the kitchen table, ripped open the bag, and then placed the food in front of Corey.

True to his wild feline instincts, he didn't acknowledge my presence or my favour; he ripped through the entrails using his incredible teeth, jaws, neck muscles, and claws to do the job.

I in turn dug into my food. We both feasted like beasts growling and licking off any traces of animal blood on our mouths and on the kitchen table. In fact, a splatter of blood dropped to the kitchen floor. Corey eyed it but I quickly gave him a 'no' nod. I didn't want him licking blood off the floor. That's not very sanitary.

But then, I was proud of my son. He knew how to eat entrails. It only took us 15 minutes to finish off our food. Afterwards, we burped and then grinned at each other. Corey, being a true feline licked off the remaining blood from my face. He smiled at me in the process, but I knew better. He wanted the blood smeared on my face; that's why he smiled at me.

But in all honesty, I felt a bit apprehensive while Corey was licking my face. I mean, like, umm ... he could've forgotten himself and bit a chunk out of me. Thankfully, that didn't happen.

"Dad that was the most incredible meal I'd ever had in my whole life!"

"Corey, I'm always glad to see you in good spirits."

"Dad, please don't say 'spirits'! You've probably forgotten but that's another word used for high alcohol content drinks. I can't help it but like umm ... I still get cravings now and then for a shot of booze. In fact, on a few occasions I actually had a seizure."

"Corey, one of these days, you and I will have to work on 'booazed desensitization'. You can't go on like this. That creep Jeff and his fraternity brothers really did a number on you.

They took you in under their wings, indoctrinated you into their fraternity, and then changed your behaviour for the worse.

Corey, let's do something fun and interesting to get our minds off this stressful subject."

"Dad, why don't we go to the game room and goof off for a while?"

"Corey, that sounds like a good idea! But, we must wash up first. Is that okay with you?"

"Of course it's okay with me, dad!"

My relationship with Corey appeared to be blossoming. But I wasn't getting my hopes up too high just yet. Any sudden shocker could easily have devastated our relationship.

Just before we decided to walk to the restroom to wash up, Corey yanked on my pant leg 3 times to get my undivided attention. I knew what he wanted. Just looking at those pretty little kitty eyes of his was almost hypnotic. Underneath those eyes was a message; dad carry me in your arms if you love me to death."

I felt kind of embarrassed about opening up to my son so I tried to brush it off. My Planet X, big shot, masculine ego got the better of me. But it was a terrible mistake indeed.

"Dad, you know exactly what I want! You don't love me because I'm just a little kitty to you, a slab of talking meat. You want to be left alone so you can continue your inter-dimensional travels. Dad, why can't you love me?"

"Corey ... umm ... I'm sorry. Please forgive me."

"Okay, but on the condition that you carry me to the restroom and kiss me between the ears. Then, I want you to stroke me between the ears, make me a vanilla malted consisting of a giant mound of vanilla ice cream, 2 scoops of sherbet, 2 bananas, pineapple, chocolate syrup, ground nuts, marshmallows, maple syrup, and a teaspoon of honey. I want my dessert to weigh at least 2 lbs."

"Corey, you're really pushing it. How about I just carry you to the restroom and then we'll decide upon our next move."

Corey agreed, but very reluctantly. Tears were dripping down his cheeks but being a father is very serious business. I had to raise my son to be a kind, but ferocious lion at times (if need be). Indeed, he had to grow up.

I leaned over, hoisted Corey unto my chest and then kissed him between the ears. He in turn bit my left earlobe.

"Corey, why did you bite my earlobe?"

"I want more. I want you to begin stroking me between the ears. Then, I want my dessert."

Apparently, Corey had changed his mind. He was no longer content without his food. Deep down I felt guilty, so I promised

him that he'd get what he wanted after ... and only after we washed up.

Corey and I marvelled at the incredible carpet, wall paintings and chandeliers in the hallway. It was an amazing site, especially the beautiful paintings of nature strewn on both sides of the hallway.

"Corey, let's go to the restroom, wash, dry up and then we'll go to the game room to have 'our' dessert. You made me hungry with all that talk of ice cream and multiple toppings.

How does that sound to you?"

"Dad, I love you. I hope you love me too."

I grinned and then nodded my head in agreement. I was signifying that I too loved him. Unfortunately, I was unable to verbally convey the 3 golden words to my son.

I kissed Corey on the sides of his face, hugged him ever so tightly, and then caressed his sides. Afterwards, I slowly walked to the restroom.

Meanwhile, Corey's eyelids appeared to be getting heavier and heavier by the moment. I knew that he felt content with me holding him. I liked that.

As I was walking, a sudden jolting thought overtook me. I'd realized that sooner or later my son and I would have to leave the castle. Furthermore, we'd have to have aliases just in case our true identities were to cause us problems.

I stopped dead cold in front of the restroom and then carefully placed my son on the carpet. It was time for a short daddy lecture.

"Corey, as you're well-aware, we must be very careful about not telling people where we're really from. Planet X is a secret place. Most people think it's only a myth, a legend, or something in fantasy or fiction stories.

Corey, you're a very handsome short-haired cat. Physically, you look like an American shorthair. Therefore, it's imperative that you tell people that you're an American. You don't sound southern so you can't tell them you're from the Deep South. I recommend you tell people that you're from a big city. You can lie about the details."

"Dad, I'll say that I'm from New York."

"Why did you choose that city?"

"The ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) was established there. Besides, Henry Bergh, the hard-working animal welfare activist was born and raised there."

"Okay, that's nice Corey. I'll tell people I'm from Montreal. I lived there for a while and know the streets, alleys, and circuitous routes in the entire area."

"Dad, you don't love me. You don't want anyone to think that we're from the same city because I'm not a bipedal humanoid like you."

"Corey, no, that's not it. Listen up! If we tell people that we're from the same city they'll drill us with questions. Many of their questions will be unanswerable. I'm the elder of the two and also your father. Let's stick to different cities. Is that okay with you, or do I have to explain it in deeper detail?"

"Okay dad, I'm sorry for pouncing on you. Now, let's clean up so we can eat our delicious ice cream."

Corey and I entered a lavish restroom with clean, beautiful decor, shiny floors, spotless mirrors and a fresh scent in the air. Neither I nor Corey had ever seen anything like it before.

Corey and I cleaned up. Afterwards, we decided to take a shower. I gently carried my son to the nearest shower stall (there were 6 of them in all).

In a jiffy, warm water was streaming down Corey's entire body. I made certain that he closed his eyes when I cleaned his body with soap and his hair with kitty shampoo.

After the shower I dried Corey off with a fresh towel, but told him that next time he'd have to take his own shower ... alone. All was well. Corey accepted that.

After disrobing, I entered another shower stall and took a nice long hot shower. Roughly a half an hour later I turned off the water and exited the shower stall then dried off.

"Corey, are you game?"

"Yep, I certainly am. Now, let's go to the game room and have our super sundaes."

I was very happy that Corey was in good spirits. Any decent father will tell you that they want all of their kids, whether they're sons or daughters to be very happy and successful. I'm like those typical fathers.

Corey and I slowly walked to the game room. Our craving for a sugary snack was overwhelming. In fact, both of us were drooling like hungry lions.

"Corey, we just have a little more to go. I'm so excited about our 'oncoming food'. Wow, it's like we're on a tropical island with free food around us and all the other amenities."

"Dad, it's odd that you used the term 'amenities'. I know exactly what you mean. Amenities are women. Am I right?"

I didn't want to answer Corey so I took his mind off the topic at hand.

"Corey, run into the game room and take a seat near the counter. The ice cream and all of the toppings are located behind the counter."

Don't worry Corey. These seats are 'kitty friendly'. They swirl."

Corey sprinted to the game room like a cheetah on a hunt. I couldn't believe how fast a runner my son was. He certainly didn't get his running skills from me. Well, there was no use in pondering about the matter so I followed him at a steady walking pace.

A short while later I reached the entrance to the game room. But as I peered therein I noticed my son resting on one of the pool tables. I figured he wanted me to cater to him while he was lying on his back. Well, I didn't want that. I wanted us to eat together on the counter. So, I called out to him.

"Corey, I want you to come here! Please, I don't want to eat apart from you. I want the two of us to eat from the same bowl like father and son. How about it ... does that sound good?"

Corey didn't budge. So, I had to use another tactic. I figured a few right words would get him up and running to me.

"Corey, ice cream sundae ... I can smell it from here!"

As I expected, Corey shot up like a rocket, leaped onto the carpet and then leaped towards me. The force of his leap was so incredible it actually knocked me to the ground. I didn't take it personally. Corey wasn't trying to hurt me. He just wanted to eat one of my specially prepared sundaes.

Corey ended up hovering over my head. I was out for a minute or so from the banging of my head.

Corey's mouth was wide open and tears were streaming down his cheeks. In fact, one of them landed in my eye. I wriggled my eye and then spoke my mind.

"Corey, I forgive you. I know that you weren't trying to hurt me. Right, I mean, like, you love me, right?"

Corey came back with a blunt answer.

"Dad, I love you as much as you love me. I mean, like, when was the last time you told me that you loved me?"

Being in a tight spot I had to think fast. Luckily, I knew exactly what to say.

"Corey, there isn't an ice cream making machine in this game room. Besides all of the toppings that are needed here either.

Corey, you and I must hustle down to the nearest snack bar. That's where we'll find the ice cream and whatever else we need."

"Dad, you're so awesome! You're right. Let's go to the snack bar. Actually, we passed one on our way here."

Corey and I exited the game room and then headed straight for the nearest snack bar. Thankfully it was only a few rooms down.

Upon entering the snack bar I dashed straight to the ice cream maker located behind the snack bar counter. There, I'd find all the toppings necessary for our sundaes.

Corey instinctively sat on a swivel chair. Unfortunately, the chair was too low for Corey. So, I raised it several inches.

The first thing I did was open the fridge. I figured there'd be something of use therein. Well, I got the shock of my life. Inside the fridge was a mini ice box full of ice cream. Now, we were ready to go but I wanted to know exactly what my son wanted.

"Corey, how about we settle for Neapolitan flavour (Chocolate, Vanilla and Strawberry)?"

"Dad, that sounds just fine! Now don't waste any more time. I'm dying here! I'm craving for a magnanimous, gargantuan ice cream sundae."

I removed the large container of Neapolitan ice cream and then placed it on the counter. Then, I reached under the counter and grabbed hold of a gigantic bowl and a ladle.

Thereafter, I piled on an incredibly large heap of ice cream. I opened up the toppings lids and then piled one scoop of topping from each lid.

We ended up with ice cream, ground nuts, pistachios, chocolate sprinkles, Hershey's chocolate syrup, honey, maple syrup, pancake syrup, the contents of an entire can of pineapple slices (including the juice), a cup's worth of low fat milk, liquid marshmallow and a dozen chocolate chip cookie. Of course, I crushed the cookies in the process.

"Corey, how much do you think the contents in this bowl weigh?"

"Dad, I think we've got ourselves a good 20 lbs. worth of food. Please carry the bowl to that table over there. I don't want to end up speaking so long that our sundae melts."

I carried the gigantic bowl to the table that Corey had pointed at. But as soon as we sat down I felt that I'd forgotten something.

"Dad, we forgot something. We forgot the spoons."

"Corey, you know something. Look, you and I are flesh and blood, from the same planet, and there's no one around. Why should we have any table manners? Look, let's eat our sundaes as though we were lions feasting on a wildebeest carcass; no utensils, no table manners, no nothing."

Corey and I dug deep into our sundae. Our faces became smeared with the contents of the bowl. But then, Corey stopped eating. Naturally, I stopped too. I wanted to know what was wrong.

"Corey, why did you stop eating? Is my food preparation not to your liking?"



"Dad, listen up. I want another topping on our sundae. But, it only comes in liquid form. Now, if you don't like this topping we can split our sundae in half."

"Corey, you're scaring me. Judging from the tone of your voice and your mannerisms something appears to be dead wrong."

Just then, Corey fell onto the carpet and then began to convulse. My son was having a seizure!

I stood up and then walked over to my son's side, knelt down and then got to work.

I managed to carefully turn Corey's head and body to the side so he wouldn't swallow his own tongue or choke to death on his vomit or saliva.

I gently stroked Corey's legs and body speaking to him kindly, softly, and slowly in the process.

"Corey, you're going to be all right. Daddy won't leave you, neither will he stop caring about you any less. Please get better. Daddy is counting on you."

Thankfully, only a few seconds later Corey's convulsions simmered and then abated.

Thankfully, it wasn't too long before my son's state of health improved drastically. It was then that I asked him what'd happened.

"Corey, what happened? I just want to know. I know you don't have epilepsy."

"Dad, can we pour a bottle of Peach Schnapps ... and maybe a bottle of red wine into our bowl too?"

"Corey, we can't do that! Please, Corey, don't let booze overtake you at any time in your life regardless of where you're at or what you're doing. I know as a fact that the fraternity brothers really did a horrible number on you. They 'convinced' you to party with them.

Corey, just relax all of your muscles. For the next few minutes think about booze ... but try to be strong and 'reject' your convulsions."

Although I really cared about my son our sundae was melting ever so gradually. I noticed that Corey glanced over at the bowl every so often too.

Thankfully, a short while later Corey and I resumed our sundae gorging. It was a very tasty snack indeed.

"Corey, don't worry about cleaning up. It seems like this castle self-cleans itself. You'll see if we ever return to this snack bar it'll be shiny clean. Even the ice cream will be replaced. Now, let's go to the restroom to clean up. Afterwards, we can go to bed. Tomorrow will be a new day for us."

"Dad, can we travel to another dimension tomorrow? I like travelling with you. You're my father and I love you a lot. I know that deep down inside you also love me but you find it hard

to open up to anyone because you were a big shot, powerful, feared, and respected man on Planet X. I know that you weren't supposed to show any signs of weakness or emotionality. Almost like a Vulcan or a Romulan."

I offered to carry Corey to the restroom but he refused, sighting that he had to be his own lion. He didn't want to become a sissy. He wanted to grow up to be a powerful feline.

But before we exited the snack bar we admired the decor, counter, swivel chairs, the paintings on the walls, and even the eating tables. They were made in 1950s style. Even the salt and pepper shakers were old fashioned. How the heck this came about was a big mystery.

Corey and I exited the snack bar and then headed to the nearest restroom. Our stay therein was uneventful. We did the usual; brush, floss, wash and then dry up. Afterwards, we walked to the nearest bedroom and then crashed out on a giant King Size bed. Boy was it relaxing!

Corey and I ended up sleeping like babies. I awakened roughly 8 hours later refreshed. But there was something deeply set in my mind. I knew that there must've been a master doorway of sorts; a super-doorway to be found within the castle of course.

Unfortunately, I'd have to find it on my own. I couldn't quite trust Corey for the time being. He wasn't mature enough to keep that kind of a secret.

The bedroom we'd slept in was gargantuan. It was fit for a king. Therein was the most awesome brown carpet I'd ever seen. Chandeliers that were mind boggling, a 100 inch giant T.V. screen with a remote control containing countless options, a stereo system, beautiful paintings on the walls, a mirror 10 feet high with the same width, an incredibly pleasant aroma, a 10 foot high fridge and a mini-fridge that contained bottles of booze and cans of beer. All alcoholic drinks were off limits to Corey and me.

As a member of the high elite on Planet X I was strictly forbidden to use or consume any mind altering drugs. Junk foods and caffeine were permitted. I understood the reasoning.

The devastating effects of booze and other psychotropic (mind altering drugs) were apparent on many planets in many different dimensions. Hardly a fleshy creature can tolerate large quantities of these drugs.

Before exiting the bedroom I made certain that Corey was sound asleep. However, I forgot to do something. The consequences were to be felt by me upon my return to the bedroom.

I crept out of the bedroom and then strolled through the hallway. I wanted to clear my mind before searching for the

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