

# Kitten Caboodle

By Dale Robert Jenkins

## Disclaimer and Copyright Information

Alright I might as well get this over with. This is one of my first true pieces of work, so you'll have to pardon me if there are a lot of errors within the story. If you find any spelling errors, or find any part of the story you don't understand, just e-mail me with your concerns. I appreciate and accept any feedback you have to offer. I don't mind the criticism either.

And just to get this out of the way. Any resemblance to people living or dead, real or unreal is purely coincidental. The subject matter held within the story is a work of fiction and may not reflect all of my or anyone else's views and/or opinions.

And finally characters are © 2007 to Dale Robert Jenkins unless otherwise stated in the respective chapters in which they are contained. No one may use any of my characters without my proper authorization.

## CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Strange Beginning's.....	1
Chapter 2: The Cat's Out of the Bag .....	8
Chapter 3: The Calm After the Storm.....	14
Chapter 4: Meet Little Allen .....	19
Chapter 5: Mrs. Sheryl Reece .....	26
Chapter 6: It's Only Four Years to College.....	30
Chapter 7: Trouble; Thy Name is Kimberly .....	34
Chapter 8: A little thought .....	40

## Chapter 1: Strange Beginning's

Fall 1981, 11:58 A.M.

Screams of pain filtered into the hall as a special occasion was about to occur, though for the mother to be this was not at all pleasant. They had been waiting for this to happen for a long time, and today was the day that they were finally going to be proud parents. They took explicit care to ensure that everything was prepared. Now they could only pray that nothing went wrong.

The mother looked up at the father to be and could see just how proud he truly was. He had tried so hard to ensure that this child would have the best life he could provide. He couldn't help but smile at the occasion. Even through the sharp agonizing pain shooting through his hand as his wife endured another contraction.

Doctor Ben Connelly had been with this young couple since long before this child's conception. He felt an obligatory responsibility to be here to deliver this child. He knew both the parents well. They had come to him for both advice and consultation. When the child was finally conceived, the tests he ran showed that there were some slight anomalies that he couldn't explain.

He was later relieved to find that this wouldn't hinder the child in any way. Especially since he knew both parents would panic if something were to show up that might affect the child. He always expected this from new parents. It was nothing new to him.

However something about this particular birth seemed to settle uneasily with him. A feeling he couldn't quite shake. As far as he knew everything was mostly going according to plan. He had not expected it to take this long. He felt that maybe this was what was unsettling him. Patiently he counted the seconds between each contraction.

A nurse came up behind the doctor and handed him a file she had been holding. He took it and glanced at the contents inside before handing it back.

"Thank you nurse." he said handing the file back to her before addressing the mother who was enduring another contraction. "Now Clair, I need you to hold on just a little longer, it's almost time."

The other doctors around him had gone through this procedure a thousand times before. Yet he could still feel the tension that seized the room around him. He had never encountered a birth that took this long. He was somewhat relieved that it would all be over soon. When Mrs. Coven went through another contraction, Doctor Connelly noted the number of seconds apart and informed the soon to be mother. "Now Clair I need you to start pushing as hard as you can." he said with his usual practiced tone.

She did as instructed and while still holding her husband's hand. It was obvious that she was determined to get this child out of her. Her husband was

caught off guard by this and dropped to the floor after an even greater searing pain surged through his hand and arm. The pain was so much that he couldn't even let out a scream of pain in response.

"I can see the head." Ben stated as he urged her to push once again.

Through tears of pain she looked at the husband who was now picking himself off the floor still holding her hand. He gave a reassuring smile in an attempt to comfort her. He was rewarded with her smile in return before she attempted to push once more. Kevin Coven was in the middle of telling his wife how much he loved her when more pain shot through his hand interrupting the last word.

When the head emerged the whole assembly of doctors and nurses were shocked at what they saw before them. Ben was momentarily stunned as to the realization of what he was seeing. Attempting to hide his worry he urged Mrs. Coven to push once again. Within minutes it was finally over and the child's wailing cries could be heard.

"I have him." Ben said in a semi shaky tone as he held the crying infant. "It's a boy." Taking care to ensure the child not be seen by either parent he quickly handed the child to the nurse and assured the parents the child would return.

\* \* \*

The hospital was rather busy on this day. This was partly due to a severe car pile up that had occurred earlier on the highway. Staff was running around busily trying to alleviate the chaos that had been unleashed. This also caught the attention of a certain Father Allen Makintry who visited the hospital quite often. He had heard about the accident and rushed over to help put some of the victim's families at ease. He knew there wasn't much he could do but that didn't stop him from trying.

"Greetings Father." One of the staff said as the pastor passed by.

"I heard about the accident on the news and where the patients were going." he said as he addressed the shaken staff worker. He could tell that the man must have just started recently. In an attempt to put him at ease Allen gave a reassuring smile and said, "Don't worry; all we can do is our best. Even if all we can do is make them as comfortable as possible."

He noticed that he seemed a little more relieved yet still uneasy as he continued about his work. He felt he still had more to do so he continued to the desk to tell them that he was here.

The lady behind the counter looked up and said in a flat tone, trying not to betray her worry, "I'm glad you're here. They could use some reassurance right about now. It's not looking good for many of them. As it stands three of them may not make it through the day." As she continued to explain the situation Allen's heart sank for every patient she named and described.

"I'll see what I can do." Allen's voice barely betraying his sorrow.

The lady behind the counter just pointed him in the direction of the families waiting for news about their loved ones. As he approached the waiting room he found that he already knew most of the people here. He could see the looks of worry in each of their faces as he cleared his throat to get their attention. Immediately he knew that it wasn't going to be easy, but then it never was. In as calm a manner as he could he proceeded to explain the situation to them and gave his condolences to the ones that lost their loved ones that day.

After he finished consoling the families he was about to leave when he noticed a group of nurses in the baby nursery area. He smiled at the sudden realization that a child was just born. He watched as the nurse began to clean the infant before going to retrieve a blanket to wrap him in. He immediately noted the color of the blanket and was overjoyed at the fact that a father was going to be proud of his new son. He then decided to perform what he liked to call his usual tradition whenever a new baby was born. He always loved blessing new born children. It always filled him with a sense of joy that he couldn't ever describe.

As the nurse was about to wrap the infant in the blanket a small white furry arm with a black furry hand reached up at her. She couldn't help but feel sorry for the infant. The worry evident in her eyes, she quickly wrapped the infant and hurried off to take him back to his mother. On the way the nurse was stopped by Allen. She knew him because of his frequent visits here. She knew he would want to see the baby. She was dreading having to tell him what happened. Yet she also felt that she needed to relieve some of the burden she now felt within her. The priest could easily see the distress in her eyes and decided to listen as he urged her to begin. "What seems to be troubling you? I can tell something's bothering you."

He could see the tears well in her eyes as she tried to hold them back. She slowly pulled at the side of the blanket allowing a clear view of the infant's face. Allen peered into the blanket to see what looked like a small animal. He was further surprised when it reached out with what looked like a fuzzy human hand with stubby claws. It became evidently clear why she was worried.

"They don't know yet." the nurse said in a shaky voice, "They haven't seen him."

Immediately a knot began to form in his thought. *First the auto accident and now this.* He knew this wasn't going to be easy. He tried to console her the best that he could. All he could do now was pray for the child's well being.

\* \* \*

The nurse later entered the room of the proud parents. Calmly she handed the child over to his mother who accepted him gratefully. She noted sorrowful looks and how oddly silent the doctor and nurses were. A look of concern crossed her face as she cleared the blanket from the child's face to get a better look. Both parents were shocked at what they saw staring back at them. It didn't even look naturally human.

“What kind of sick joke is this?!” Kevin screamed in utter rage. He jerked a finger at the oddity in the blue bundled up blanket. “That can’t be my son!”

“Mr. Coven, please calm down,” Ben said raising his hands in an effort to calm the frantic parents “I assure you that this is no joke.” he waited till they calmed down before continuing. “We can honestly say that he is your son. We all saw him as he was being born. There has been no mistake.” he said while making a single hand motion at the other doctors and nurses around him.

He could see the pain evident in the new father’s eyes. He knew that this child was going to have a hard time ahead of him. The pain both parents would go through. He wasn’t even sure that they would want to keep the child now knowing what he looked like. This never even showed up on any of the sonograms of the child he took for these parents. He silently swore to help them however he could. He looked sorrowfully at the shocked parents wondering if the child even stood a chance. He felt he should have listened to Mrs. Coven when she said she was feeling strangely funny the last couple of months of the pregnancy. Maybe he could have helped them in some small manner.

“I truly am sorry but we did not see anything like this before.” Doctor Connelly said as he thought of all that had happened today. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined this ever happening to him. He was afraid, not for the child but for something else that might be laying in wait. Something he was hoping he wouldn’t ever have to deal with again. He noticed the shocked and stricken looks on the faces of his staff. He signaled for all of them to leave so that he would have some time alone with the parents.

The father now had his face buried in the blanket beside his wife who was trying to comfort him with her free hand. Both were wondering where things could have possibly gone wrong. The father quickly scanned his memory in an attempt to figure out what happened, but could find no answers at all. In every way this child should have been born a normal human being, instead of what could only be described as a human animal half-breed. He never imagined any way that this could happen. All he could think about was how painful this would be for him. He even felt a bit of resentment over what had just happened. He thought that this child couldn’t possibly be his son. Then he thought of how these things didn’t happen to normal families. To him it felt like some kind of bad dream.

He put his hand over his wife’s right hand as it rested on the blanket covering his son. Immediately a swarm of emotions quickly overcame him sending him sobbing into the blanket again. He kept asking himself what others would think when they found out about the child. In all that he had heard about fatherhood he had never expected anything like this. He began wondering what he was going to do next. How were they both going to handle it? He wondered if there was any other way. For a brief second he almost considered putting the child under before quickly dismissing the thought.

He then looked up when he heard a short squeal followed by something that tickled his hand. It was his son's small furry hand grabbing his. He studied the small five fingered paw and noticed how despite the fur covering all but the palm, it still looked quite human. He smiled as the new born made small cooing sounds in an effort to get some attention. It was then that all the worries of both parents melted as they cuddled their new child. The tears that they shed were now ones of joy. What the child looked like no longer mattered anymore. At that moment they knew that eventually everything would work out.

Ben, who had been watching them silently couldn't help but smile as he watched the happy couple pamper their child. Any doubts he had were now almost completely gone as the new family embraced their son.

He watched as the mother unfolded the rest of the blanket around their child's head so she could get a better look. They all were surprised when both of the child's cat-like ears perked up having now been released from the blanket that restricted them. They could see now that he was covered from head to toe with fur. A black patch of fur covered both of his ears and his left eye. His muzzle was completely white, both his hands were black with white arms, and he was grasping his black tail in his left hand. This struck both parents as a little odd, yet it didn't seem to matter. From what could be seen his facial features looked more animal like than human, yet his body was evidently more human in form. This still didn't change the love both parents now felt for him. As far as they were concerned nothing else mattered but their son.

It was then that a small metal object wrapped in the baby's blanket fell to the ground with a small metallic clang. Doctor Connelly walked over to pick up and inspect the small metal object. He wasn't surprised to see that it was a small metal cross that was cleverly hidden until now. It didn't take much for him to figure out that Allen put it there. He figured that Allen must have stopped by after hearing about the accident and one of his assistant nurses must have explained the situation about the child to him. He then must have slipped it in the blanket without the nurse knowing. Connelly couldn't help but smile while saying, "Thank you Allen, bless you." He handed the cross to both the parents and asked. "So what are you going to name him?"

Both parents looked befuddled for a moment. In all the excitement, they had forgotten about naming the child. They began discussing possible names with one another. As Kevin was making a few suggestions, Clair began to wonder what the doctor had said before handing them the small cross.

"What was that you said?" she asked the doctor curiously.

"What?" Dr. Connelly asked momentarily perplexed.

"Just before you handed us this." she said pointing at the miniature cross in her husband's hand.

"Oh, Allen, he's uh..." Ben paused to collect his thoughts before he answered, "He's a priest that visits here quite often. He must have slipped

that into the child's blanket when he came by. It's his way of giving blessings to new born children here. I can give you his number if you'd like."

"Thank you Doctor, we'd appreciate that." Kevin said thanking the doctor.

"Allen." Clair repeated affectionately. "It's perfect."

"I agree hon." Kevin said peering into his son's blue eyes. He couldn't help but think about how out of most of his son's features his eyes looked more like any normal human being's eyes. He quickly pushed this thought aside as he continued to say, "Hello Allen, welcome to the world."

Ben smiled to himself as he wrote the name down on the form he was holding. It was then that he noticed a shadow towards the door in the corner of his eyesight. He looked up to see his friend Father Allen Makintry standing there. He immediately knew the question on his friend's mind to which he could only give a nod. Father Makintry's face turned to one of fear as he swallowed at another knot that had formed in his throat. Ben mouthed the words, 'later' before turning his attention back to the couple who were coddling their child.

\* \* \*

Later both Clair and Kevin Coven were sitting in Dr. Connelly's office waiting for news about their son. Ben had asked both parents if they would consent to some minor tests. He told both of them that it was to make sure that baby Allen wouldn't have any physical or mental problems later on in life. They had given consent to avoid any future complications aside from the obvious. Both were unsure how to handle it. Ben told them that there had never been a documented case like this before. How this happened was a complete mystery.

Suddenly the door to the office opened and Dr. Connelly entered with the baby in one hand and a folder in the other that was labeled Allen Bartholomew Coven. He gently handed baby Allen to his mother then proceeded to the seat behind his desk.

"Well?" Kevin asked with a hint of concern in his voice.

"Inconclusive." Dr. Connelly replied. "We did however discover a few interesting things. For instance his digitigrade feet are similar to a feral animals yet the structure is slightly different. This difference may enable it so he can walk upright, or it may hinder him such that he may never walk at all. We just don't know at this point. Another thing we noticed is that despite his animal-like features, on the inside he seems very human with some slight anomalies in his blood system. However we can't run any more tests until he develops a little more. I'd say when he comes around the age of two or three you should bring him back in and I can run more accurate tests on him." With that he handed them a folder telling them in greater detail everything he just informed them of and wished them luck as they exited his office.

A few moments later there came a knock on the door to which he

replied, "Come in." He was greeted by the familiar face of Allen Makintry. "Ah Allen, please have a seat." He said folding his arms on the desk. "I can only guess that you're here about what you saw earlier?"

"Do you suspect he had some involvement in this?" the pastor asked not bothering to hide the concern in his voice.

"I don't think so," Ben said with equal concern in his voice. "I ran all the tests just to make sure. All the evidence suggests otherwise. The birth was completely natural according to the tests. And if I'm not mistaken there isn't a piece of technology that exists today that can tamper with genetic material on this scale. Not even the equipment we had back when we were working for him was nearly that advanced."

"So you're saying that this truly is a natural development?" Allen Makintry asked. His voice calming a little.

"Yes." Ben replied though the worry was still evident in his voice. "However, you know as well as I that this will grab his attention, wherever he is. Should this get out."

"That thought has crossed my mind." Makintry said uneasily. "What about the parents?"

"I uh," Ben muttered a bit while looking down briefly at his shirt sleeve cuffs. "I haven't told them yet."

"What?!" Makintry asked while sitting up in surprise. "Well why not? I mean they have to know about this. They have to know what's coming. If he does come, wouldn't it be better that they are prepared for it?"

"Given the circumstance I'm forced to agree with you." Ben sighed, "however I'd let them be for now. Mrs. Coven just gave birth to a half human half cat son. Dropping this bombshell on them right now might make matters worse."

"I suppose your right. I'll give them time to adjust to things before I Tell them." Makintry insisted. "It might go over a little easier coming from me."

Ben sighed knowing that there wasn't going to be any way he could talk his friend out of it once his mind was made up. "Very well, But I would be cautious about what you tell them. Some of the things that went on there are better left unsaid."

Father Makintry only nodded in agreement as he soon exited the office, leaving Dr. Connelly to his own thoughts. Most of all he feared for young Allen Bartholomew Coven's future well being. As well of the impending horror should a previous employer of his find out about young Allen.

## Chapter 2: The Cat's Out of the Bag

One month later.

An old nineteen fifties Studebaker slowly pulled up in-front of The Coven residence. Its faded red paint was a clear sign of the cars age. The driver's side door opened and its driver stepped out. Father Allen Makintry gave the house with a worried look. He didn't want to burden either of the new parents with his past. Yet he knew that if he didn't tell them soon, more than likely they would eventually find out the hard way. Slowly he approached the door only to have it open just as he was about to knock.

"Hello Father Makintry." Clair greeted. "Please come in?"

"Thank you Clair." Allen said while stepping inside, "I am sorry to call you so suddenly. What I have to tell you involves Allen."

"What's this about father?" Clair asked, a hint of worry crossing her voice as she led him into the living-room. "Please have a seat? I'll go get us some coffee"

"Thank you very much." He said while taking a seat on the rather large sofa. "Is Mr. Coven here? What I have to say concerns both of you."

"No, he's at work right now." She returned from the kitchen handing Allen Makintry one of the hot coffee mugs before taking a seat in the chair situated next to the couch. "He won't be home for some time."

"I see." Father Makintry said, placing his mug on the coffee table in-front of him. He pushed himself forward a little on the couch and folded his hand as if in contemplative thought. "What I have to tell you is not an easy thing. It involves a past that I really wish I could forget."

"What does your past have to do with my son?" Clair asked as a look of worry began to cross her face, matching Father Makintry's.

"It's not just my past." He began again. "It's about a very dangerous and powerful man from my past who might want to take little Allen if he knew that this child existed. He was or is a scientist, a geneticist to be precise."

Clair was visibly frozen with fear. She couldn't stand the thought of someone taking her son. Let alone a scientist who might do inhuman experiments on a child of his unique birth. "P-please continue?" was all she could manage to ask.

Father Makintry took a deep breath before regarding Clair again, "I wasn't alone in all of this; Ben Connelly was a colleague of mine as we worked together under a man by the name of Steven Carregon. When we first started working for him we had no idea how obsessed he was with his work. He sought to create what his ideas were of the perfect living being. He even went so far as to kidnap random people off of the streets in order to perform his insane experiments. He called it a noble sacrifice for science. In the end

Ben and I felt we had to do something to stop him so I went to retrieve the authorities. By the time I got back to the facility I had found that most of the instruments inside were destroyed and much of the so called “failed experiments” were charred to a crisp. It didn’t take me long to figure out that Ben was the cause of this rather devastating act, though I could hardly blame him either. Many of the victims were in so much excruciating pain that it even hurt for some of them to say even so much as one word. The only things that remained intact were the large data computers which were sealed in a different part of the lab. The authorities used that data to incriminate Carregon for kidnapping and malpractice abuse. The only problem is that Carregon was never found.”

“So he’s still out there?” Clair said somewhat softly. Her body was visibly shaking with fear.

“I’m afraid so.” Father Makintry said before sighing deeply. “I’m sorry to burden you with this...”

“No Father,” She interrupted, “You were right to tell me this.” She leaned forward to place her mug on the coffee table. “Though the news is a bit disturbing it probably took you some courage to tell me this. What I want know is why didn’t Dr. Connelly tell us this in the first place?”

“That’s because I asked him not to.” He explained. “I felt it would have probably been better if it came from me.”

Clair leaned back in her chair nodding to Father Makintry’s explanation. For a few moments both of them sat there silently deep in thought when the phone rang jarring them from. Clair stood and answered the phone located on an end-table at the other end of the couch.

“Dr. Connelly, what an unexpected surprise” she said in a somewhat confused tone.

“I’m sorry to call you so suddenly like this.” He said into the receiver while hunched in his chair. There was a constant rapping at his office door with a lot of loud muffled voices trying to scream through his door. “Is Allen, Father Makintry there?”

“Yes, he’s here.” Clair answered still dazed with confusion. “He told me everything.”

“I don’t have time to explain but I need you to turn on the television immediately. Turn to one of the news channels.” Ben said before hanging up the phone and proceeding to dial the police for assistance in getting the mob outside his door under control.

Clair hung up the phone, a look of confusion on her face as she followed Ben’s instructions.

“Is everything alright with Ben?” Father Makintry asked.

“I don’t know” Clair said as she was flipping through the channels. “He

just told me to turn on the news.”

As Clair finished flipping to the appropriate channel they were shocked upon seeing the headline appear on the screen as the announcer spoke up. “Earlier today, one of the nurses at a local hospital has decided to speak out and share with us a rather unusual story that had occurred approximately one month ago. I find this to be a very strange story indeed. We go to tape with Stan on scene.”

The image immediately changed to a location within the hospital young Allen was borne in. On the screen was a woman who appeared to be in her mid-thirties with dark brown hair and hazel eyes.

Father Makintry immediately recognized her. “That’s the woman who first showed me little Allen. What could she possibly be thinking?”

The reporter on the television stepped into view of the camera and spoke into the microphone he was holding. “We’re here with a Janice Lussa who witnessed a very strange event to a couple who were giving birth at this hospital last month.” The reporter turned to face the lady and asked his first question. “Mrs. Lussa would you care to relate to us the events you witnessed on that night?”

“I have never seen anything like it in my entire life.” The woman explained smoothly into the microphone. “It started out like any other birth that I had assisted in the past. It was taking her a little while to give birth, but other than that it was going very smoothly. Things didn’t get strange until the woman actually gave birth. What I saw coming out was definitely not human.”

“Could you please elaborate a little bit on that?” the reporter prodded. “What do you mean when you say it was definitely not human?”

“It had the head, tail, and legs of a cat yet the body looked like it was human in shape.” She replied while handing the reporter a couple of pictures of the cat that she took from a small camera she happened to be carrying that day.

“I see.” The reporter said looking over the pictures he had been handed. “Is there anything else you can tell us about this unusual child?”

“Everything about this child was unnatural.” The woman said brushing a hair out of her face while smiling as if in an effort to allow the cameras to see her better. “From the way it kept looking at me with those blue eyes and reaching up at me from that baby bed. To the way it kept clutching that tail in its hands. I tell you it just ain’t right.”

Father Makintry was fuming as he turned the television off. “How could she?!” he exclaimed. “She had no right to do that. And for what, a few minutes of fame on television?! This is outrageous!”

“Father Makintry, please?” Clair said trying to calm the priest down. “There’s nothing we can do now. The world knows that he exists.”

“And let’s not forget about Steven Carregon.” Makintry said catching himself too late before looking over at Clair who was once again frozen in place with a look of shock and fear on her face. “I’m sorry Clair; I didn’t mean to say that.”

“I know father.” Clair said as she sat back in her chair, holding up a hand in dismissal. “The question is what do we do now?”

Clair just sighed to herself. She knew she couldn’t hide little Allen away, not now after the whole world had discovered his existence. They didn’t have long to think this over as a moment later they heard a few vehicles come screeching to a halt outside. Both she and Father Makintry glanced at one another knowing full well who were waiting for them outside.

\*\*\*

Kevin shoved his way through the crowd of fellow reporters trying to get closer to the television they had there. He watched with both a mix of fright and anger as the reporter continued to inquire of the same nurse who one month ago handed them their child. He was a little relieved as he saw Doctor Connelly storm into camera view informed the nurse that she was fired before storming back into his office. The reporters following closely behind only to have Ben slam the door in their faces.

Kevin turned away from the television the anger within him building as he proceeded towards Stan’s office His anger continued to build as he rounded the corner and stormed in to see that Stan seemed to be expecting him.

“How could you?!” Kevin screamed at the reporter sitting smug behind his desk.

“Now Kevin” Stan said in a playful tone matching his smile. “Just because I snagged the best story ever doesn’t mean you have to come...”

“He’s my son you’re talking about!” Kevin interrupted, “It wasn’t enough that you just had to rub your so called success in my face. Now you have to go and involve my family in this!”

A brief looks of confusion crossed Stan’s face before the full realization of what Kevin said sank in.

“Hold on a second Kev...” Stan started and was again interrupted.

“No you hold on, Stan!” Kevin raged. “I’ve had enough of you trying to constantly get one over on me. The truth is I didn’t care, but there hasn’t been a day that you haven’t tried to throw it in my face anyway! I’m sick of it! I’m not about to let you ruin my family’s lives just so you can have ten minutes of fame!”

“I had no idea he was your son, Kevin.” Stan said looking at Kevin with a sense of panic. “Do you have any idea what this is going to do to my career?”

“I do.” Their boss Charles Besmirch said as he entered Stan’s office. “Every time you get the inkling for a great story you jump on it without any regards to the consequences. It has left egg on me and everybody else’s faces. Why I’ve put up with you for this long I have no idea, but not anymore. You’re fired. You have thirty minutes to pack up before I have security throw you out.” With that Charles turned to Kevin placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “You look like you could use a drink. We’ll talk in my office.”

\*\*\*

At the Coven residence Father Makintry was busily closing all the blinds and shades on every window of the house in an effort to fend off the hungry news hounds now surrounding them. Clair hung up the phone just as Father Makintry entered the living-room from his earlier task.

“I just got off the phone with the police.” Clair said glancing briefly at the hoard of reporters behind the drawn window.

“And?” Father Makintry prompted.

“They said they’re on their way already.” She said uneasily as she walked towards the kitchen, gesturing for Father Makintry to follow.

Allen Makintry took a seat at the table with a sigh of disbelief. “In all my years as a Catholic Priest I’ve never seen anything quite like this.” He quickly leaned forward turning slightly to face Clair. “Listen, if there’s anything I can do for you, please let me know?”

“Oh no, Father,” Clair dismissed with a wave of a hand while handing him a fresh cup of coffee. “You don’t have to go to any lengths for us.”

“I don’t mind at all. I could help smooth things over with the masses. I have had previous dealings with this sort of thing before, as I told you earlier.”

“Are you sure about this?” Clair asked, looking over her shoulder just in time to see a reporter appear readying his camera only to have a shade drawn down in-front of his face.

“Not really, but given the circumstances it never hurts to have a little extra help from the higher up every now and again.” Father Makintry said in an effort to lighten the mood. With a sigh he took a sip of his mug.

“I hope your right.” Clair said taking the chair across from Father Makintry.

\*\*\*

It had been a hectic day for Ben Connelly. The reporters had come and were forcibly removed by the local authorities; however he had resigned to remain in his office for most of the day so as to avoid any unwanted attention. He could only imagine what horrors Clair and Kevin Coven were going through right now. He was interrupted from his previous train of thought when there came a knock at the door.

“I told you, I'm not doing any interviews.” Ben called through the door. “And if its one of the nurses it had better be an emergency. Otherwise I am not to be disturbed.”

“Not even for an old friend?” Came a voice that froze Ben in his chair with fear. It had been years since that incident and now it seemed that person had come back to haunt him once more. “I have to talk to you.”

“I always knew this day was coming.” he finally mumbled to himself as he quickly got up and half ran to the door, opening it slowly to let his once former employer Steven Carregon in.

## Chapter 3: The Calm After the Storm

Kevin sat back in the plush chair situated in-front of his boss' desk. Charles Besmirch always took great care of his employee's so long as they didn't push their limits. Charles had just finished locking the door before walking over to a nearby liquor cabinet. Snatching a bottle he poured himself and Kevin a glass each before taking a seat behind the desk.

"I'm really sorry about Stan, Kevin." He took a quick sip of his drink before continuing. "If I'd have caught wind of this before he rushed it to the air I could have stopped things from blowing as far out of proportion as they are now."

"The damage has already been done." Kevin responded. "To be frank, I'm actually very scared right now."

"You have every right to be. The question is what are you going to do now?" He leaned forward folding his hands on top of his standard metal desk.

"I don't know." Kevin said nursing his drink.

Charles leaned back in his chair as if in contemplation. "You know we're going to have to air a retraction don't you?"

"Excuse me?" Kevin looked up at Charles with a half look of surprise. The realization of what his boss was getting at slowly sinking into his mind. "You're saying that you want me to..."

"I'd like to interview you and your wife personally." Charles smiled taking another sip of his drink. "Let the viewers see your child for whom, and what he really is."

"I don't know." Kevin said a little shakily, "I'd have to run it by my wife first."

Charles responded by handing Kevin the receiver of his desk phone and saying. "Be my guest, I'd love to hear what she thinks of all this."

\*\*\*

"So let me get this straight, you've spent over six years in prison, you did your time, you got a job as a real government funded scientist, and now you're telling me that you're not the least bit interested in Allen Bartholomew Coven. Is that correct?" Ben had feared the worst when a ghost from his past came into his office. Now after hearing Steven Carregan's life story after they parted ways he couldn't help but feel suspicious yet somehow relieved.

“That’s about the gist of it.” Steven was a much older man than Ben, His complexion along with the grey hair and beard showed the clear signs of his age. “What I came to say does in some way involve little Allen.”

“I knew there was a catch.” Ben responded suspiciously.

“Hear me out, please?” Steven pleaded with a cynical tone while holding up a very thick folder he had brought with him. “As I said I’m not the least bit interested in Allen but I’d still like to help by donating some of my old research.”

Ben took the folder graciously, thumbing it open and looking at some of the first few files. “These aren’t from that accident so many years ago.”

“No, they’re from one of my old, now declassified, experiments.” Steven answered. “The government will be publicizing this research soon to the medical community.”

“This is astounding!” Ben almost couldn’t contain his excitement over what he had just been handed. “The implications of this research could very well change the face of medicine some day.”

“Won’t be any time soon I can tell you that.” Steven replied sardonically.

“Still as cynical as ever I see.” Ben said walking to the door of his office with Steven in tow.

“Call it what you want but I’ve paid for my mistakes.” Steven said while walking past Ben into the hall. “I’m just trying to burry the hatchet and move on with my life. You won’t see me again, count on it.”

“Only time will tell.” Ben replied matching the cynicism as Steven walked off. “Only time will tell.”

\*\*\*

Both Clair and Kevin were rather nervous as they sat on their own living room couch. Kevin’s boss, Charles was sitting in the chair off to the right which had been repositioned to make it easier to regard the couple as he asks his questions. The rest of the camera crew was busy setting things up for the interview. Little Allen was currently bundled up loosely in Clair’s arms. His little one piece pajamas had been slightly modified to accommodate his kitten tail which twitched and swayed. Father Makintry was sitting off to the left in the other cushy chair.

“Now Kevin, Clair, I want to thank you both for doing this.” Charles said regarding the couple. “You still have a chance to back out of this now if you want?”

Clair sighed swallowing her nervousness as she spoke. “We need to do this. I’d rather the world actually know him for who he is rather than let them make false assumptions based on misinformation.” Kevin only nodded in response.

The camera crew gave them the ten second warning after they had finished setting up all the equipment. The couple sat holding their breath nervously as the cameraman counted down and then silently after he reached five. In moments the camera light went on and focused on Charles who had already turned to face the camera.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am Charles Besmirch of Channel Five News.” He began in a professional tone. “I apologize for interrupting your daily broadcasting but we wish to apologize for an earlier misrepresented interview from one of our now former reporters. I am now here with the proud couple of the most extraordinary child. His name is Allen Bartholomew Coven. His parents are Clair and Kevin Coven, and with us is their pastor Father Allen Keith Makintry.”

The camera panned over to the couple holding the kitten/human hybrid. Father Makintry just smiled and waved at the camera. Little Allen began to fuss a little having been awake from his previous nap just before the interview. Clair affectionately took hold of Allen’s tail and put it within reach of the child’s hand. He quickly calmed down after clutching onto it, snuggling closely against his mother’s chest. Kevin tried tickling under Allen’s chin only to get a pouting cry in response.

Charles couldn’t help but chuckle as he flipped through the note cards he was holding, trying to find a good question to start the interview with. After shuffling for a few moments he finally found one he felt seemed more appropriate. “Now you two are the proud parents of the most unique child of any in the world. Never before has there been anything like this in all of recorded history. Have you given any consideration as to what you’re going to do about Allen’s future?”

“As a matter of fact I have.” Clair spoke up. “Though I haven’t been able to come up with anything appropriate, I mean there’s no way around it. We can’t bear the thought of anything happening to our little Allen.”

“We also have to keep in mind how this might affect our child in the future.” Kevin said stepping in where his wife left off. “Keeping him locked up may do more harm than good in the long run.”

“I see.” Charles mused to himself for a moment. “Father, before we aired you said something about being there at his birth. Would you care to elaborate more on this?”

Momentarily surprised from the question Father Makintry stumbled a few moments over his next few words, nervously cleaning his glasses before placing them back on. “Well I uh, wouldn’t put it that way exactly. To be honest I was just at the hospital on the day of his birth. I never actually witnessed Little Allen being born. In fact my first encounter with him was when I saw him being swaddled in a blue blanket. I didn’t actually see him until after I approached the nurse that was carrying him back to his parents. I wanted to perform a blessing on the child. It’s an old tradition of mine that many of the town knows me for. Upon opening the blanket it was then that I got a good look at him, those gorgeous blue eyes looking back up at me. It was at this moment that I couldn’t help but feel for the child. The nurse that carried him seemed rather nervous about him as well, but after a few encouraging words she seemed to be alright. Ever since that day I have been helping Kevin and Clair with little Allen as much as I could.”

“Given the circumstances I can understand your reasoning, Father.” Charles said while flipping through a couple more note cards. “Little Allen, An interesting choice in a name.”

“Father Makintry is our child’s original namesake.” Clair interrupted. “He had apparently snuck a small memento of his in the blanket covering our new born son. I had heard our doctor mention Father Makintry’s name.”

“It sounded like the perfect name so we figured why not.” Kevin stepped in once more.

\*\*\*

As he watched the interview take place on his television set in the dimly lit room, he couldn’t help but marvel at the curious child the mother was holding. His own furry hand was scratching between his Labrador’s ears. “At last there is another.” He finally said.

A man off to the side turned to regard him. “What is it you intend to do sir?”

“We do nothing for now.” The man said folding his arms, pressing his fingertips together. “Let’s just wait and see what develops for now.”

“Very well sir.” The second man said turning to exit the dimly lit room. “I’ll give them a call and alert them of the status.”

“Thank you Leon. That will be all.” The man said before turning the

television up.

## Chapter 4: Meet Little Allen

### **Summer 1986:**

The air smelled of disinfecting alcohol as little Allen and his mother sat in the exam room waiting for Dr. Connelly to return. Little Allen's tail twitched about nervously as he sat on the crinkled paper covered examination table/bed situated in the center of the room. His hands were currently playing with a new toy his mother had given him called a Rubik's Cube. Clair knew that her son wouldn't really know what it was or what to do with it, yet she had also learned from a few past events that it's better to keep her son's hands busy than be idle.

She chuckled lightly as she looked up to see her son turning the different segments randomly. It was in this light she noticed something different about the child. His very expression showed that he was obviously concentrating on the small segmented cube. She couldn't place her finger on it, but to her this seemed to be the first inkling that there was something even more special about her son than his looks. Her thoughts were interrupted when Doctor Connelly entered the room.

"I have the results from the latest tests, Clair." He said turning to hand her a copy of Allen's medical folder. "I'm afraid it's not much right now."

Clair nodded as she opened the folder, thumbing through a few of the pages. "What did you find?"

"After running several tests we have managed to determine that physically he will have no problems at all." Ben explained. "He'll be able to go through life with no physical hindrance what so ever."

"That's good to know." Clair said while looking up at her son, this time with a bit more of a shocked expression. "Anything else I should be aware of?"

Ben smiled as he walked over to little Allen who was now offering him the solved Rubik's Cube. Ben took it absentmindedly before he stopped to take another look at it, and then at the kitten child perched on the examination bed. He remembered that little Allen was messing with it earlier, however it was a mess of colors then. After musing over this for a few seconds he just nodded as if adding this moment to his own mental notes before handing the toy to Clair.

"To be honest I was more concerned about his physical health at the moment." Ben rubbed a crick in the back of his neck caused from crouching

behind several pieces of test equipment. "Now that they're out of the way we can begin the next phase in his testing."

"How long will this take?" Clair asked with a hint of worry in her voice.

"For the better part of his young life I'm afraid." Ben sighed. "You see, we've not had anything occur like what happened with your son. In order to better provide for Allen we need to understand more about him. Not just physically but mentally as well."

"Speaking of health," Clair returned her attention back to the folder, turning to the last few pages. "What's this about his dietary needs?"

"Oh that," Ben said while flipping to the appropriate page in his own copy of the folder. "Since he was here I felt it might be wise to test him for any possible allergies to various foods and the like. What we've found is that as far as foods go, he can eat just like a regular human with the exception of a few things."

"Such as?" Clair looked up at Dr. Connelly with slight concern.

"One is, no over abundant consumption of regular milk chocolate." Ben explained. "And absolutely no dark chocolate what so ever, that stuff can potentially kill him. Regular chocolate would only just make him very sick to the point of involuntary expulsion if he consumes more than a hand full. It's all there in your copy."

Clair glanced over at her son briefly before returning her gaze to Ben. "That's good to know."

After collecting little Allen and saying her goodbyes, she and little Allen headed into the parking-lot where Father Allen Keith Makintry was waiting to pick them up in his old nineteen fifty one Studebaker.

"Hello Keith." Clair greeted the priest. "I hope we didn't keep you waiting."

"Oh not at all, I just arrived moments before you two came out." Keith assured her as he opened the passenger side door so Clair could fasten little Allen into a car seat in the back. After a few moments they were on their way back to the Coven residence. Little Allen was looking out of the nearby window, watching the world go by.

A few quiet moments passed by before Father Makintry finally decided to break the silence. "So how is everything going for your family reunion?"

“Everything is going according to plan.” Clair answered. “The whole family just can’t wait to see little Allen this weekend.”

“Yuck!” Little Allen replied from the back seat which prompted a chuckle from both Clair and Father Makintry.

As they drove on, Keith decided to turn on the radio to ease the rest of the trip to the Coven residence. After pulling into the driveway Clair climbed out of the front seat and turned to retrieve little Allen only to find that he had already managed to work himself out of his own car seat and was now crawling into the front. With a sigh she scooped little Allen up into her arms and proceeded inside.

Upon entering, Clair placed Little Allen on the floor who immediately went bounding up the stairs on all fours into his room. “No running in the hall.” She called after him just as he ducked into his room. Leaping straight onto his bed he landed with an abrupt thump that sent the previously made bed covering’s to flutter out before resettling.

Laying back on his bed he turned on a nearby radio that he had received as a present for his last birthday. The DJ’s booming and obnoxious voice blared from the speaker as he announced the next song which began playing shortly there after. As he looked around his room his gaze stopped at a shelf on the wall across from the foot of his bed. On it were various coloring and activity books that little Allen had already solved or colored.

With a brief sigh he laid back on his bed. Not long after there came a knock at the door.

“It’s open.” Little Allen called through the door. He turned in his bed to see his mother enter his room.

“I came to see how you were doing.” Clair explained.

“I’m fine.” Allen said while rolling to his side, facing away from the door.

Clair smiled lovingly at her son, sitting on the bed next to him. “You’re nervous about this weekend aren’t you?”

Allen just nodded in reply.

“It’s alright to be scared sometimes.” She reached out and began petting her son’s shoulder. “Wanna know a secret?”

Allen glanced over his shoulder towards his mother. “What?”

Folding her hands in her lap she began to explain. “They’re going to be just as nervous as you are, but they’re all a part of our family. There’s going to be a lot of other children your age there as well.”

Turning to face his mother fully he stopped to think to himself briefly before finally saying, “There won’t be any like me.”

Clair gave a comforting pat on the kitten hybrid’s shoulder. “That may be true but I’ll bet they might like to play with you all the same if you ask them.”

“You think so?” Allen asked sitting up a little.

“You won’t lose anything by trying.” She smiled as she answered.

Allen quickly sat up and gave his mother a hug. “Thanks mom.” With that he quickly bound out of his room and down the stairs.

“I told you, no running in the house.” Clair called after her child. She chuckled to herself before standing and closing the door behind her.

\*\*\*

### **3 days later:**

The Covens residence was abuzz with activity as a majority of the Coven family-tree was still yet arriving. The back yard and most of the ground floor was filled with many family members, however the guest of honor was still locked inside of his own room with the family’s priest and little Allen’s godparent, Father Allen Keith Makintry, who was helping him get ready.

“It’s alright to be nervous little Allen.” Father Makintry said as he helped comb out little Allen’s tail. “Remember, they are just as nervous about meeting you as you are of them.”

“I can’t help it.” Little Allen sighed. “I wasn’t expecting there to be so many.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be right there with you and your parents.” Father Makintry assured.

Downstairs Kevin and Clair were tending to their guests. Much of the talk from the back yard and into the living room was about the yet to be introduced child. Some were making idle speculations about how such a birth could be possible though quickly going quiet when Kevin walked by on his way to the kitchen where Clair was putting the finishing touches on one last entrée before

bringing it out to the back yard where a majority of the family was currently situated.

Placing the entrée on the outside table Clair turned to Kevin and with a worried look asked, “Are you about as nervous as I am?”

“Oh yeah,” Kevin said leaning closer to his wife. “I can only imagine what our little Allen must be going through.”

“He’s probably scared to death.” Clair replied before she felt a hand tapping on her shoulder. She turned to face the person and was surprised to see someone she wasn’t expecting. “Mother?! What are you doing here?”

“Surely, just because I never approved of your husband doesn’t mean I still can’t see my own daughter.” Clair’s mother dismissed.

“Hello Lenora.” Keith said offering his hand though not bothering to hide the distaste in his voice.

“Hello Kevin.” Lenora said with equal distaste. “I didn’t see you there.”

Clair was about to say something to her mother but was cut off when they heard Father Makintry call out to everyone from the bottom of the staircase.

“Everyone, can I have your attention please?” The priest raised his hands in an effort to direct everyone’s attention his way. “It’s time to introduce our guest of honor, without further ado I present, Allen Bartholomew Coven.”

All eyes soon turned to the top of the staircase. They watched with anticipation as what appeared to be a fuzzy digitigrade foot stepped into view. Slowly step by cautious step little Allen emerged. His royal blue eyes scanned over the guests crowding into the living room and pouring through the glass door from the back yard. The creaking steps were all that anyone heard as the kitten hybrid finally reached the bottom floor. For a few brief moments he stood there in silence, clutching his own tail tightly in both hands. He looked up at Father Makintry briefly before returning his gaze to the crowd. The silence kept building more as everyone stood still, observing the oddity standing before them. Never before had any of them seen such a child as little Allen.

Little Allen shifted a bit uneasily from all the silent stares, feeling a knot forming in his throat. He opened his mouth as if wanting to say something but only managed a short mew. A few more moments passed and the silence soon turned to awkwardness for little Allen. He started to retreat backwards in the direction of the stairs before a woman from the gathered audience called out. “Oh he’s so adorable!”

In an instant everything changed, the audience that had come to see him soon gave out equal coos and cheers of joy. Both Clair and Kevin gave a unified sigh of relief upon hearing most of the family-tree's acceptance of their child. Little Allen's fur soon puffed up with fright as several women quickly approached him and began fawning over the cute child, a couple even going so far as pinching what they guessed were his cheeks. He eventually calmed down a little when the reality set in that they weren't going to harm him. This soon prompted a half groaning \*merowl\* from his lips as it also quickly dawned on him that these women weren't about to let him go any time soon.

Father Makintry couldn't help but chuckle while watching little Allen's plight. Not long after, he was joined by Clair and Kevin who also couldn't help but chuckle upon seeing the child's current predicament. As the realization dawned on her, Clair rushed to retrieve a camera from one of the couch's end tables and quickly snapped a picture of the still puffed up kitten child and the four women fawning over him, this only prompting another half groan half growl of displeasure from Little Allen.

The reunion seemed to move along without much difficulty after Little Allen's initial introduction. Most of the people seemed to accept little Allen with open arms and warm hearts. Even some of the children wanted to play with Little Allen who was currently playing tag with them, though his rather unique agility did prove to give him an unfair advantage.

Everyone seemed to adore the child except for Lenora who only eyed the child warily. She continually puzzled over the oddity that was chasing a couple of her nieces and nephews around the yard. Digging into her purse she soon brought out what looked to be a chocolate candy bar. Lenora wasn't usually one to bring such things in her purse but she had felt this to be a rather unique occasion. Many children upon seeing the silver of the wrapper shine in the sun soon crowded around Lenora as she handed out pieces of the dark chocolate.

Being the ever curious kitten, Little Allen joined in with the rest of the children who were now starting to disperse. Cautiously he approached, sniffing at the sweet smelling goodie in Lenora's hand.

"Go on." She prompted. "It's only a harmless piece of chocolate."

Little Allen canted his head to the side for a moment as if thinking. He only seemed to think for a moment before snatching the chocolate and running off.

With her goodies now gone Lenora had resigned herself to sit at one of the yard tables. She didn't get to enjoy it for long when Clair's voice cried out in fury, storming up to her. "Mother, how dare you!"

"Good lord child." Lenora sighed. "What have I done now?"

“You know very well what, mother!” Clair growled. “You tried to poison my son with that dark chocolate when he’s allergic to it!”

“What?!” Lenora exclaimed with a mix of shock and fright. “Clair, I would never resort to murder! I may not like your choice in a husband but I ... I would never take it out on your child, my grandchild.”

It was now Clair’s turn to be surprised. She had thought that she had given ample warning about Allen’s recently discovered food allergies. She didn’t stop to consider that maybe not everyone had received the news. “Mother I’m so sorry. I thought that I had gotten word out to everyone.”

“Clair, I know that some may consider me very harsh but I would never...” She and Clair both stopped in mid argument when they heard a soft mew coming from between them. They both looked down to see Little Allen standing there with his tail clutched delicately in both of his hands.

With his bright blue eyes Allen looked up at Lenora and said, “Gramma?”

For a brief moment both Clair and Lenora were completely speechless. They exchanged looks with one another completely unsure of what just happened. However Clair was caught even further off guard when her mother fell to her knees. “Oh Allen, thank you so much!” Lenora exclaimed pulling Little Allen into a loving embrace. “None of my grandchildren have ever called me grandmother before.”

For the rest of the afternoon the reunion went on without a hitch. Little Allen was happily perched in his new grandmother’s lap for much of the remainder of the party.

## Chapter 5: Mrs. Sheryl Reece

**July 29th, 1996**

"So how long you gonna be messing with that thing?" Asked Jeremy, a long time friend of Allen's. He had been a playmate of Allen's for as far back as he could remember. Allen's parents had set them up and ever since then the two were almost inseparable. Jeremy was roughly two years older than Allen.

"Well dad said he needed this thing fixed and he knows nothing about computers." Allen replied with his nose and muzzle buried inside an open computer case. For much of his life the human-kitten hybrid had a difficult time growing up. His only contacts with the outside world were the various interviews or guest show appearances he had been forced to attend for many years. When not out doing guest appearances he was back home developing his mind with a home school professor that his grandmother had seen fit to call upon and pay for.

"Your nose is always stuck in these things." Jeremy said. "You should consider making this a career."

Allen smirked at the comment. "You really think there's a field for something like this?"

"You wouldn't be asking me that if they actually let you out of this house once-in-a-while." There was a long pause as Allen sat there quietly in thought. Feeling the unease Jeremy sighed. "Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that."

"I know." Allen sighed. "It doesn't make it any easier, but come next week that will all change."

"What happens next week?" Jeremy asked curiously.

Allen could hardly contain his glee as he replied. "Next week I'm heading over to the local high school and applying for classes."

"Hold up!" Your parents are taking you to get registered at high school?" Jeremy only got a silly grin from Allen in response, forcing him to prod further. "Which one?"

"Terrance Valley High." came Allen's quick reply.

"My high school?!" Jeremy couldn't help but smirk at the irony of the situation. "Allen why you gotta do this to me, huh? It's bad enough I gotta take care of you when you get in trouble here, now I gotta watch your butt at school too?"

"I can take care of myself just fine." Allen mock protested. "My grandmother did pay top dollar to have a martial arts master train me up to a

black belt."

"Yeah, I know." Jeremy grinned. "You could probably kick the entire football team's ass with your Tiger Kung-fu."

"Crane style actually." Allen corrected as he returned his attention to the machine he was working on. Closing up the case he hooked up the various components to the back.

"High school is nothing like you think it is, Allen." Jeremy said laying back on Allen's bed.

"And how do you figure that?" Allen said not bothering to look up from the computer he was still working on. "How could it be any different from the outside world I've already experienced?"

"No offence but what you experienced as a kid was not the real world." Jeremy sighed. "In that world you were a celebrity, in that world you could do no wrong." Jeremy glanced over at the window. "But out there, beyond the flashy lights and cheery crowds is the real world. Those people are easily frightened. They'll often lash out at anything that's different. They'll take one look at you and judge you as a monster."

Allen's attention was now fully focused on his friend. "The way you make it sound, suggests I would be better off applying for an in-home university like my test scores suggest."

"Don't worry Allen, I got your back." Jeremy said while sitting back up. "That's one thing that ain't going to change no matter what anyone says."

After a short pause Allen nodded and turned his attention to the now reconstructed machine. He pressed the button on the front of the case and the attached monitor lit up. White text scrolled down the screen just before the Windows loading screen appeared.

"Hey dad! I got it working." Allen exclaimed before both he and Jeremy noticed a very potent smell in the air. Neither of them had to wait long to discover the source as the computer changed to a blue screen with white text before going completely blank. The case started smoking heavily and Allen yanked the power cord from the back as quickly as he could. "Dad, forget what I said. You need to buy a new computer. This one's not gonna work anymore."

"What happened?" Kevin called back up the stairs.

"The hardware couldn't support the new OS so I think it overheated." Allen called back towards his doorway.

"It's OK, at least you tried." Kevin called back up the stairs. "Your mother says dinner is ready so be sure to wash your hands before you come down."

\* \* \*

The following week Allen and Clair made their way to the high school. Clair's old car sputtered and creaked as it made its way into the school parking lot. Stepping out of the car Allen couldn't help but feel nervous as he looked at the rather large building in front of him. He couldn't shake the uneasy feeling that crept over him as his mother came along side.

"It's OK to be nervous Allen." Clair reassured. "I can only imagine what must be going through your head, but everything is going to be OK."

"That's easy for you to say, you weren't born like this." Allen sighed.

"Stop it, Allen!" Clair chided while grabbing her son by the arm roughly, stopping him in his tracks. "What's gotten into you? If I had my way you'd stay locked up in that house forever, but you know that's not possible. Cheer up. I won't have you feeling sorry for yourself." her frown soon gave way to an encouraging smile. "Besides if anyone gives you any flack then they'll have to deal with me, your father, your grandmother, and Father Makintry."

Allen couldn't help but smile now. "I guess you're right."

"Of course I'm right." Clair nodded while walking towards the entrance with her son in arm. "I'm your mother."

Upon entering the structure Allan was instantly flooded with all sorts of sensations all at once. The smell of the freshly cleaned floors and halls mixed with the scent of the other soon to be students and their families. The sound of light chatter in the air from some of the groups of kids off in the corner. And finally the feel of the fresh cool air from the vents brushing through his exposed fur as he and his mother entered the glass door.

After a few moments all chatter seemed to quietly die down as all eyes were now on Allen and his mother. The uneasy feeling Allen sensed earlier washed over him once more. The fur on his tail started to bristle as everyone stood in silence. Allen glanced around the lobby at everyone. He could feel their gazes piercing right through him. He didn't have to guess what some of them were thinking. Just glancing at their eyes told him everything that they were thinking. That judgmental stare as if they were staring at a freak show.

For what seemed like an eternity there was a very awkward silence. For a while no one ventured to say or do anything until at last the silence was broken by a boisterous female voice.

"Ah! You must be the Coven's." Said a woman walking down the steps leading to the second story of the lobby where the office and various other science labs lay. She had chocolate brown hair with hazelnut eyes, wearing thin

shades and a bright red business suit with a skirt that cut off at just above her knees. The only thing that seem to contrast her beauty was the rather large nose on her otherwise proportionally smaller face. She walked up to Clair and Allen offering a hand in greeting. "Hello. I'm Sheryl Reece, we talked on the phone last week?"

"Oh, Mrs. Reece." Clair said while taking the offered hand. "It's nice to finally meet you."

"And you're Allen." She turned to Allen with a practiced smile, taking his hand into hers and shaking firmly. "When I heard that *The Allen Bartholomew Coven* was coming to our school I couldn't believe my ears, and now you're here." With that she quickly turned and started walking back towards the stairs. "Come, let's take this to my office." She called behind her to Clair and Allen who were momentarily stunned at Sheryl's rather abrupt entrance.

Once everyone was in the principle's office, Sheryl resumed her conversation with the two. "First off I would like to apologize for my rather abrupt attitude out there. I wasn't exactly at my best, but I felt that if i didn't do something quick then things might have gotten out of hand and fast."

"It's alright." Allen spoke up first. "I'm used to it."

"Mrs. Reece." Clair chimed in. "When I talked to you over the phone last week you said you had a few ideas to help Allen out?"

"Indeed I did, Mrs. Coven." Sheryl folded her hands on the desk with the same practiced smile from before. "Here at Terrance Valley High we strive to give the best for our students. When I saw Allen's test scores I was amazed. You truly have a gifted child on your hands."

"My scores weren't that great." Allen muttered only to be hushed by his mother.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Reece." Clair said. "Please, do continue."

"Please, call me Sheryl." She waved her hand dismissively. "As for continuing, that is entirely up to your son. As I mentioned earlier we pride ourselves on giving our students the best and to do that I ask only one simple question." Her attention turned to Allen who was repositioning himself in his seat now that all eyes were on him. "Allen, I would like if you would please tell me what interests you?"

"Well," Allen picked at a bit of fluff on his altered slacks. "I've always had an interest in electronics and computers."

Sheryl's smile grew into a genuine grin as she opened a drawer in her wooden desk. "Then have I got a curriculum for you dear boy."

## Chapter 6: It's Only Four Years to College

Allen couldn't help but feel nervous for his first day of school. The front entrance looked as foreboding now as it did the day he went to register. The memory of the encounter that ensued was still fresh in his mind as he climbed out of his mother's car. Not far from the entrance he spotted his friend, Jeremy.

"Hey Allen, over here!" Jeremy waved, "Welcome to your first day of high school."

"Thanks." Allen replied as he glanced around at the many other students giving him odd looks, others even going as far as calling him 'freak' out loud.

"Don't pay any attention to them." Jeremy reassured. "Once you find the crowd willing to accept you for who and what you are, everything will be just fine after that."

"What crowd are you in with?" Allen asked curiously.

"I'm the secondary quarterback." Jeremy said proudly.

"Football?" Allen looked at his friend in partial disbelief.

"Hey, not all of us have the brains you got." Jeremy grinned. "That's what matters the most here. The smarter you are, the further you'll go. Principal's a stickler for GPA."

"Gathered that from my first encounter with her." Allen replied.

Once inside the lobby Allen could see that it was packed like a sardine can with students. As he looked around he was hit by a plethora of new smells. From them he could tell a little about some of the people around him. Things like what they might have had for breakfast or which ones were wearing perfume. One smell however proved almost overpowering on some people. A smell so wretched that his eyes started to water.

"Are you alright?" Jeremy enquired noticing Allen's facial expression.

"I'm fine." Allan said while briefly wiping his nose. "You know how sensitive my nose is."

"Oh yeah, guess I should have warned you that a few guys don't bother taking a morning shower." Jeremy chuckled.

"Why don't they?" Allen asked while trying to pull his schedule from his book bag.

"Look out coming through!" roared one of the football jocks as they shoved Allen aside. The small group pushed their way through the audience into the middle of the lobby just below the stairs.

"Travis." Jeremy half groaned to the star quarterback.

"That's my name." Travis said smugly before his eyes locked on Allen who was currently picking himself up off the floor. "So this is the freak you've been hanging out with, huh?"

"Travis, leave him alone." Jeremy warned as he grabbed the jock's school jacket.

"What, you actually have feelings for that mutant?" Travis asked.

"Travis I'm warning you." Jeremy said. "Leave my friend alone."

"You're sleeping with him aren't you?" the jock grinned to himself. "Yeah I'll bet that's it."

Allen looked about uncomfortably as he noticed various gazes locked on him and the jocks before his own gaze returned to Travis.

"Forget what I said." Jeremy fumed as he released Travis' arm. "Just remember that I warned you."

"That's what I thought." Travis laughed before he approached Allen. In his mind he began sizing up the kitten hybrid. Figuring he could easily intimidate the little freak. "We've got no place here for freaks like you." Travis hissed in Allen's face. "Why don't you go back home to your mama little kitty."

"Screw you." Allen hissed back, his ears folded flat against his head.

"Nobody talks back to me like that." Travis roared as he grabbed Allen's shirt collar. "Nobody!"

"Travis no!" Jeremy started to protest but soon found himself being restrained by Travis' other three friends.

"I'm gonna teach this freak a lesson first, and then I'm going after you Jeremy!" Travis growled while hauling back his fist.

As soon as the fist started its approach Allen's instincts kicked in. Using Travis' weight as a counterbalance he managed to twist his body just enough so that the jock's fist shattered the glass door and not his face. A few of the glass shards stuck into his hand as he quickly yanked it back, relinquishing his grip on Allen.

The other three jocks immediately let go of Jeremy in order to rush to Travis' defense. Two of them were making a dead run straight for Allen before they were stopped in their tracks by a shrill whistle.

"Mind telling me what you think your doing?" Sheryl boomed as she descended the steps.

"He just..." one of Travis' friends started to protest but was cut off.

"I saw what happened and you're all heading for two weeks detention." She fumed. "All that is except for Allen and Jeremy who were the only ones who didn't throw a single punch."

"But what about the game?" another one protested. "Travis' hand is..."

"I don't give a damn about your football game." Sheryl hissed. "All that matters to me is your grade point average. Now get out of my sight!"

After the jocks left a younger man dressed in a casual business suit ran up to her. "Mrs. Reece, I called an ambulance. They should be here any minute."

"Thank you Mark." she said before turning to Allen. "You realize I can't let this go, right?"

"He was defending himself." Jeremy defended.

"I'm aware of that Mr. Fuller." Sheryl said, not taking her eyes off Allen. "The fact still remains that I'm going to have some very angry parents on my hands. I don't wanna see anyone else trying to punch through glass or a brick wall because of that mouth. Understood?"

Allen only nodded in reply.

"Good." Sheryl smiled. "Now get to class."

After the Principal left, Jeremy placed a reassuring hand on Allen's shoulder. "Well, look at the bright side."

"There's a bright side to this?" Allen asked.

"Yeah, It's only four years to college." Jeremy smirked.

Allen only responded with a cold scowl before shaking his head and walking off to his first class; a little smirk tugging at the edges of his muzzle.

"C'mon now, Allen." Jeremy said. "It was a joke."

## Chapter 7: Trouble; Thy Name is Kimberly

"Cutting it a little close there aren't you?" Said Allen's first period teacher. He appeared to be getting on in his years with his hair mostly grey now. The glasses he wore seemed just as old and weathered. He was wearing a button up shirt that was a robin's egg blue and tan Khaki pants.

Allen had managed to enter the classroom just as the last bell for first period rang. "Sorry, I was unexpectedly detained." Allen sighed.

"I heard." Said the teacher. "You must be Allen Coven. Mrs. Reece told me a little bit about you." He gestured for Allen to take a seat before walking over to the chalkboard, writing his name there. "My name is Mr. Charles Rockbell, and I'm going to be your Advanced Algebra teacher. Normally I'd get right down to business and start with the assignment but we haven't gotten this year's books, so instead we'll start with introductions and go from there." The teacher's hand fell to Allen who just so happened to be sitting in the front chair of the first row.

Allen could feel all the other student's gazes piercing right through him as he stood up. With a nervous breath he turned and said. "Hello, my name is Allen Bartholomew Coven."

A couple of the students in the back chuckled lightly at Allen's middle name before the teacher held up a hand to quiet them. He then turned to Allen. "Please go on."

With a nod, Allen continued. "Not many of you know about me or my predicament but I have been on several talk shows about it with my parents. I was born like this and nobody knows how or why it happened."

"Where did you go to school before here?" asked a girl from the back. "I don't remember hearing about you from any of the junior high schools."

Allen turned to the voice and the moment his eyes locked with hers something came over him that he couldn't explain. She had very short and messy dirty blond hair. Her eyes were a soft auburn in color. Her attire was a jean jacket with a black t-shirt that had a popular heavy metal band emblem on it and worn blue-jeans with white tennis shoes. For a few brief seconds he stood there in a trance before quickly snapping out of it. "Um.. I was home schooled actually."

"Were you taught martial-art's at home as well?" the girl prodded further.

"Kimberly Radford, right?" Mr. Rockbell interrupted before Allen could answer. "I'd appreciate if you wait till after class to interview him for your school paper. Right now I have a class to run."

"Sorry Mr. Rockbell." Kimberly said folding her hands patiently on her desk.

After each of the students had introduced themselves the teacher gave them some small problems to work out. Towards the end of the class Mr. Rockbell decided to let the students chat amongst themselves.

Taking this opportunity, Kimberly moved to the empty desk next to Allen's. "So you actually have brains to go with that brawn."

"I'm not interested." Allen replied flatly.

"Oh c'mon." Kimberly prodded. "It's not everyday someone takes on the high-school football champ without getting their face rearranged. Not that the jerk didn't have it coming."

"I said not interested!" Allen growled.

"Allen, right?" Kimberly asked. "I know you're new and all so I'll go a little easy on you but eventually I will find out more about you."

"Then why don't you ask my parents, or my priest Father Makintry?" Allen snapped.

"Maybe I will." A sly grin spread on her face as she pondered the name Allen had seemingly given her unwittingly. "But no sense in wasting a possible interview with you right now."

"You don't give up, do you?" Allen growled.

Before Kimberly could come up with a reply the bell rang for the end of first period. Allen had already sprung to his feet and was out the door before Kimberly had a chance to stop him. When she rushed into the hallway she looked down both directions and could see no trace of the kitten-like human. She did however spot something in the corner of her eye and decided to walk in that direction.

As Kimberly passed under the archway she stopped, turning her gaze upward at Allen who was trying to prop himself up between the wall and the ceiling. "You know, hiding above the door only works if people don't notice you're there."

Allen instantly leaped from his position above the door and bound down the hallway on all fours. His book bag bouncing against his backside as he dodged between the other students and out of sight around the corner.

"See you fifth period, Allen." Kimberly smirked, walking to her next class.

For much of the morning after, Allen had made a point to keep a careful eye out for Kimberly should she pop up again. There were a few close encounters but he managed to just barely duck out of her sight, hoping she didn't see or notice him, though he had a strange feeling that she was just humoring him.

By lunch time Allen was a complete mess. He sat at an empty table in the corner with his head propped up on his right shoulder. His left hand poking at the mess on his plate that was supposed to resemble food. With a sigh he scooped a bit of the mess onto his fork and shoveled it into his muzzle.

"I take it your first day is not going so well." Jeremy said as he took a seat next to Allen. "Nervous from all the odd stares?"

"It's not that." Allen sighed while taking another bite of his meal.

"Then what?" Jeremy prodded.

"I'm being tracked by this really obnoxious girl asking a bunch of personal questions." Allen grumbled.

"Short blond messy hair, Jean jacket, and a tenacity about her?" Jeremy got a nod from Allen. "Ah, Kimberly. She's a sophomore this year. She takes her role as a high school newspaper reporter a little too seriously if you ask me."

"Any advice?" Allen almost pleaded.

"Sorry, you're on your own with her." Jeremy smirked. "Once she targets you she will not leave you alone until you tell her what she's after."

"Great..." Allen fumed. He made a disgusted face after shoveling in another mouthful of food. "What the heck is this crud?"

"I think it's supposed to be cream gravy and country fried steak." Jeremy said while pouring gobs of ketchup over his meal before handing the bottle to Allen. "This stuff will cover the horrible taste."

Passing on the condiments Allen picked up his tray and got out of his seat. "I'm gonna head to my fifth period class."

"See you after school." Jeremy waved before finally digging into his own meal.

Allen stepped into the wide open room as the five minute warning bell rang. He had been looking forward to this class all day. He even donned his martial-arts outfit for this occasion. He had specifically requested to join the martial arts team for the school. He had not expected that they actually taught it as a regular class.

He noticed that a few of the other students on the other side of the room were dressed in similar garb to his. As Allen drew closer to the group he froze dead in his tracks. There, taking a few round house kicks into the large punching bag was Kimberly.

"What are you doing here?!" Allan exclaimed.

"I've been on the team for half a year now." Kimberly replied coolly. "So how about that interview?"

Allen couldn't believe his luck. After spending most of the morning trying to avoid her, he now found himself confronting her once more. Allen was about to answer Kimberly before the teacher came into the room, clapping his hands together to get everyone's attention.

"Hello everyone." the instructor greeted. "For those of you that are new this year I'm Mr. Rufford, but you can call me Patrick." The man appeared to be in his early thirties with very short black hair. At first glance the man would appear unassuming and his build lacking but Rufford was no slouch. He prided his work, not just teaching them how to fight but also how to better take care of themselves.

After a brief role call the class began with a few light warm up exercises. The teacher walked up to Allen. "So I understand that you are already versed in martial-arts, correct?"

Allen nodded in response.

"What's your particular style?" Patrick asked.

"Crane." Allen replied. "I train every summer."

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind demonstrating your skills for me?" The teacher asked. His face keeping a calm yet strong demeanor.

"I'll spar with him." Kimberly stepped in. "I happened to see his skills this morning."

"Kimberly, your paper can wait." Patrick chided. "I'm sure he's probably a fascinating topic but I will not have you harassing students in my classroom again."

A grin quickly spread on Allen's face as an idea sprang into his head. He figured that since he wasn't going to be able to avoid her then perhaps taking this problem head on might get the point across to her.

"Actually I don't mind." Allen spoke up. "I was watching her as I came in. She's obviously very skilled."

After pondering over it a couple of seconds Patrick finally stood aside. "Alright but I warn you, she is the top student of my class."

"That's OK." Allen smirked. His feline fangs poking through the front of his lips. "I happen to be a third level black belt. I think I should be able to hold my own."

After taking place on the sparring mat they bowed to one another before Allen takes the initiative taking up a crane stance. He was balancing himself on his right leg while his left leg was hiked up as if ready to kick. His left hand was held slightly over his head while the right took up a defensive stance.

"Impressive stance." Kimberly said nonchalantly. "But it takes more than the look to pull off the style."

"How about we make it interesting then." Allen offered. "If I win you leave me alone. If you win then I'll submit to an interview."

"You have yourself a deal." Kimberly grinned as she fell into her fighter's stance. She crouched on her back leg putting a majority of her weight on it while pushing her right leg forward as a counterbalance. Her arms quickly moved in perfect form with her legs as she flexed her fingers like claws.

Allen's eyes went wide as he immediately recognized the stance as tiger style. "Oh shi-" was all he could manage to get out before Kimberly sprang on Allen who could only block a majority of her throws. Tumbling out of her way he quickly rebound himself and came at her with a hard left kick that she only just managed to deflect. Now on the aggressive Allen came at her with a full flurry of kicks and a few jabs wherever he could get them in.

Kimberly jumped back from the flurry assault to take a few moments to regain her balance. After making a few quick mental notes she charged at Allen trying to come at him from the right side, hoping it would keep him off balance. She was not expecting it when he jumped over her head and flipped himself

around in mid jump. As he descended he brought his left leg out and around catching her on the unguarded left side causing her to stumble to the side.

With a grin Allen was about to charge and finish the fight when Mr. Rutford stood between them.

"That will be all, Allen." Patrick said. He had a very stern look on his face as he regarded the kitten-like human before him. "You are indeed very skilled and you showed a superb sense of balance but you lack experience."

"Looks like our fight's been canceled." Kimberly smirked before rejoining the rest of the students.

Allen sighed, walking over to his discarded book bag and retrieving a bottle of water from within.

"Allen, do you know why I stopped you?" Patrick asked, taking a seat next to him.

"I had her." Allen sighed.

"If you had the experience you would not have charged her, think back." Patrick instructed.

Doing as Mr. Rutford instructed Allen played back those last few moments. The event's played in slow motion as he went over every excruciating detail. He observed his own sense of balance and fluid motion. He played over Kimberly's smooth moves and quick reflexes after his roundhouse kick to her left side. That's when it hit him. His eyes going wide once more from the realization. "If I had charged her she would have tossed me aside and pinned me."

"Yes, though she lacked your balance she had already seen your lack of experience through your initial fighter's stance." Patrick smiled disarmingly. "You wouldn't be the first she's done that to."

"I didn't stand a chance." Allen said before taking a sip from his water bottle. "Thanks for stopping me."

After a long pause Patrick turned to face Allen once again. "So Allen, how would you like to be on my tournament team?"

A smile quickly spread across Allen's muzzle. "I'd like that a lot, thank you."

## Chapter 8: A little thought

Allen paced about the front entrance as he waited for his ride home to show up. The last bell had already sounded and he wanted to make sure he was gone before Kimberly showed up to pester him again. He hadn't been waiting long before an old yet very familiar Studebaker pulled up in front of the kitten youth. With a sigh of relief he opened the door and climbed into Father Allen Keith Makintry's car.

"Your mother couldn't make it today I'm afraid." Keith explained. "She had important business down town and asked me to come pick you up."

"What sort of business?" Allen inquired.

"Trouble with the bank I believe." Keith said while shifting the car into drive.

Out of the corner of his eye, Allen happened to notice Kimberly coming around the corner. He couldn't help but smirk as he and Father Makintry drove off. He glanced in the rearview mirror to see her standing at the curb watching them turn the corner onto the main roads.

"Mind telling me what that was about?" Keith asked.

"Just some girl that's been following me all day." Allen replied.

"I take it things didn't go so well on your first day then?" Keith asked.

"Kind of." Allen said. "Started out horrible but went up from there."

"What happened?" Keith prodded further.

Allen sighed before answering. "A football jock tried to punch my lights out but wound up punching through a glass door instead."

"What?!" Keith exclaimed. "You got into a fight on the first day?"

"It's not what you think, Father." Allen quickly replied. "He just called me a mutant and I told him to shove it. That's when he started swinging. I dodged the blow and he hit the glass door behind where I was. The principle stepped in before anything else could happen."

"Allen..." Keith sighed. "You should know better than that."

"He had me by the shirt collar threatening to punch me anyway." Allen argued. "In any case I wasn't about to start swinging back."

"Then it's a good thing the principal was there to intervene." Keith said coming to a stop at a light. "What were you thinking provoking him like that?"

"I don't know." Allen sighed, his ears laying back squarely against his head. "He had me by the collar and I just..." His words trailed off.

"It's OK Allen." Keith reassured. "You weren't hurt at least."

"More than I can say for the jock." Allen said.

"What do you mean?" Keith asked a bit hesitantly as the light changed to green.

"He cut his hand up pretty bad punching through that glass door." Allen explained.

"Oh dear." Keith said, a sense of worry coming over him. "What was his name? Perhaps I could check up on him at the Hospital after I drop you off at home."

"I only know his first name." Allen said. "Travis."

"Travis Colton?" Keith asked.

"I think so." Allen said, leaning back against his seat.

"His family attend my church regularly. I'll see what I can do about him." Keith explained. His tone quickly changed to one of curiosity. "Now tell me about that girl back at your school."

"Her name's Kimberly." Allen sighed once more. "She works for the school paper and has been hounding me all day."

"I see." Keith said, cracking a bit of a smirk. "Then perhaps it might be best to ask your father what to do. He is a reporter for the channel twelve news. He might know a thing or two about dealing with other reporters."

"Thanks Father Makintry." Allen said as they pulled up in front of his house.

"Please, call me by my middle name?" Father Makintry requested. "You're like family to me and it just doesn't feel right for you to call me that."

"Alright Keith." Allen smiled before climbing out of the car.

\* \* \*

Allen was laying in his room after having told his mother the events of the day. She wasn't too particularly pleased to hear that Allen had gotten into a fight but she was at least thankful he didn't get hurt. She had also teased him about the girl who had been following him all over school, making Allen blush in the process. She was concerned however when she learned that Allen had joined the school's martial arts team, though she was happy he was at least doing something he enjoyed.

As he lay on the bed, the events of the day played over in his head. A majority of his thoughts seemed to focus on Kimberly. His mind wandered over the moment he first laid eyes on her. He couldn't place his finger on it but there was just something especially different about her from all the other girls. His thoughts were soon interrupted as there came a knock at his door.

"It's open." Allen called, not bothering to get up from the bed.

Allen's father soon stepped into the room. "Your mother told me about what happened to you at school today. Want to talk about it?"

"I guess so." Allen said apathetically. "Maybe you can tell me how to keep that reporter off of my tail?"

Kevin smirked as he took a seat on his son's bed. "A good reporter will do almost anything to get a good story. I hate to break it to ya but I don't think she'll leave you alone until she gets something from you in the way of a scoop."

"That's not very helpful." Allen groaned.

"Sorry son." Kevin chuckled lightly. "Afraid the only thing you can do is confront her."

"Tried that." Allen said while burying his face under a pillow. "Would have almost lost the spar had the teacher not stopped me."

"Yeah, your mother told me about that." Kevin smiled. "She told me you said that you realized that had the teacher not interrupted the fight, you would have lost anyway."

"Don't remind me." Allen grumbled from under the pillow.

"Think about it Allen, you admitted that you lost." With that Kevin left the room, leaving his son to think on what has been said.

Allen sighed to himself, shoving the pillow aside. He didn't want to admit it but he knew his father was right. No matter how he looked at it, he still would have lost that fight. He didn't have much time to think on it more before his mother called Allen down for dinner.

\* \* \*

Things had gone a lot smoother for Allen the next day at school. Aside from the occasional student calling him a freak or Kimberly's constant attempts at questioning, it was actually a pretty calm day. Allen and Jeremy were sitting at a table off in a corner of the lunchroom during lunch period. Allen clutched the apple he got with his meal firmly in his left hand. His mind was replaying the events of the fight between him and Kimberly. With a sigh he took a bite from the apple just as someone sat at the table in the chair across from him and Jeremy.

"I suppose a bet is a bet." Allen sighed looking at Kimberly. "I didn't stand a chance against you."

"So the story is true." Jeremy chortled. "You almost got your ass beat by Kimberly."

"There's always next time." Kimberly grinned, her gaze never leaving Allen. "Like our coach said, you have the skill but you lack the experience."

"I still owe you an interview." Allen admitted.

"Unfortunately it will have to wait till later." Kimberly said while standing up again. "Mr. Rockbell is going to have the students run a few practice matches with the other students, and I have to help him set up being the team leader and all." With that, Kimberly walked in the direction of the glass doors.

"I think she likes you, Allen." Jeremy teased.

"And I think you've been tackled one too many times." Allen said before taking a bite of what he could only guess was a sloppy-joe. Despite the odd greenish red color it actually tasted like what the name suggested. After swallowing the first bite he regarded his friend once more. "This stuff actually tastes like what it's supposed to."

"There's a reason for that." Jeremy said while taking a bite of his own sandwich.

"What's that?" Allen asked.

"The chef's all used to be Army cooks." Jeremy said.

"That explains the green eggs and ham for breakfast." Allen chuckled.

Jeremy couldn't help but laugh. "C'mon Allen, that was bad."

"Oh no?" Allen retorted. "What about yesterdays fried chicken patties?"

Jeremy had to stop a moment to think about it. "OK I'll give you that one. Chicken patties aren't supposed to bounce three feet into the air after it hit's your plate." It wasn't long after before both were rolling with laughter.

"Yo freak!" called a voice from behind Allen, breaking his and Jeremy's humorous mood.

"Trevor, now is not the time." Jeremy groaned.

"You stay out of this, mutant lover." Travis roared before turning his attention back to Allen. "I'm gonna make you pay for what you did to my hand." Travis shook the bandaged right hand in Allen's face.

Allen just continued munching on his meal: he didn't even acknowledge the bandaged fist in his face.

"I very highly doubt that." said Mr. Rockbell wedging himself between Travis and Allen. "Allen here is a third degree black belt in Crane Style Kung-fu. At best you'd only succeed in injuring your other hand."

Travis glanced between Mr. Rockbell and Allen. The anger quickly rising within him as before he stormed off. "This isn't over between us freak!"

After Travis had gone Mr. Rockbell turned to Allen. "I was already on my way to the lunch room when I ran into Kimberly. She told me I might find you here."

"Something I can do for you Master Rockbell?" Allen asked.

Mr. Rockbell took a seat next to Allen. "No but when I saw Travis standing over you like that I thought it best to intervene."

"I appreciate it." Allen said before taking another bite into his sandwich.

"Now about that spar with Kimberly the other day..." Mr. Rockbell added.

"Don't worry about it." Allen interrupted finishing his meal. "I won't disrupt your classroom but a bet is a bet."

"I'm glad you understand." Mr. Rockbell said before getting up and heading off to get his own lunch.