

We Think By Feeling

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We Think By Feeling

by [nagi_blue](#)

Summary

Written for the fic_promptly prompt: "Losers, Cougar/Jensen, a dystopic world where emotions are illegal."

Cougar, a Cleric sniper, watches Jensen, a rebel.

Notes

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

The thing about about a Distance guy was that no one expected Cougar to talk, just to watch. The other Clerics, with their fancy gun katas and severe black uniforms, were the public face of the Grammaton regime, reassuring the emotionless public that they were safe from the vicissitudes of feelings. The Clerics were heroes, the warriors against the untamed rebels roaming the Nether. Cougar was the backup, watching from a distance, rifle at the ready, to make sure his comrades-in-arms were safe during raids.

So no one talked to Cougar, and no one asked him questions, and they expected him to watch.

And watch he did.

If the others asked what he watched, well, that might prove a bit complicated.

Because he watched Jensen. Cougar wasn't sure if it was a first name or a last name, but the man was - alive. Vibrant. He smiled, and he laughed, and he brooded. He played with toys and he sang along to loud music, and he was beautiful.

Cougar was in love with him. At least, he was pretty sure he was in love. He'd never felt it before. He'd never felt anything before.

But being a Distance guy meant that he spent most of his time alone. He picked up his dose of Prozum. No one waited around to see him take it.

And he went off to train, alone, making deadly distance shots over and over again.

And watching Jensen through his scope.

Cougar was pushing the boundaries - literally. His training spot was right on the edge of patrolled territory, and with his scope he could see out into the Nether. It had taken him a while to settle on a training spot where he wouldn't interfere with any of the other Distance guys, and that was how he'd found it, the house of rebels. With his scope aimed just so, he could see through a stand of trees to a house with a flat roof.

Jensen lounged around on that roof. He read, he sang, he danced, and sometimes he napped. The first time Jensen stripped off his shirt and sprawled out in the sunlight, head tipped back, dappled gold, Cougar had been surprised, because Jensen looked like - something out of a book. A book of old art. A book Cougar had confiscated on a raid years ago, back before he became a Distance guy.

Cougar could read lips. It was how he knew Jensen's name. Whoever Jensen lived with, they tended not to use his name all the time, and more than once he saw Jensen lean over the roof and yell down,

It's Jensen. J-E-N-S-E-N. Use it right!

Cougar wondered how anyone was using it wrong.

The first time Cougar saw Jensen cry, he was confused. He'd climbed up on his perch, set out his ammo, affixed his scope, assumed prone position, and closed one eye. Peered. Jensen was sitting dangerously close to the edge of the roof, face buried in his hands, shoulders shaking. Cougar had seen him laughing before, but he had his strange red sunglasses set to one side, and when he lifted his head, his face was wet. His eyes were wide and his mouth was slack and he was pale.

He was - upset.

Cougar had seen the word before, but he'd never known what it meant.

He felt it, seconds later, a tightening in his chest and a speeding of his pulse, uncomfortable warmth prickling under his skin. Jensen was upset, and Cougar was upset along with him.

Why was Jensen upset? And more importantly, why was Cougar?

The irony of it all was that Cougar hadn't even wanted to rebel. He'd accidentally missed a dose of Prozum and gone to train and seen Jensen, laughing and dancing on the roof and something in him had come loose. He'd received a reprimand for forgetting to pick up his dose, so he made sure to always pick it up, but he didn't take it, because he wanted to understand what that feeling was.

That was his first mistake, because there was no understanding feelings. There was just *feeling* them. The problem with feelings was that Cougar didn't know the words for them, so all he could do was let the sensations flood his body - hot and cold, warm and cool, restless and stillness - and ride them out.

He learned to identify repeated sensations. He felt warm and a little restless when Jensen danced. He felt hot and very restless when Jensen sunbathed. And he'd felt cold and still, upset, when Jensen was crying.

Cougar's biggest - and last - mistake was not arresting Jensen when he headed to his sniper perch and Jensen was already there, shirtless and basking in the sun.

Cougar drew his pistol without even thinking. He was a Distance guy, but he was a cleric like the rest, and the gun katas were in his blood and bones.

Jensen lifted his head, pushed his sunglasses up so Cougar could see his blue eyes. "The thing about you Clerics," he said, "is that you assume feeling makes us stupid. It doesn't make us any more stupid than you, though. Just means we have more fun."

Cougar had read this word, *fun*, but he wasn't sure what it meant.

Jensen sat up, a single smooth motion, muscles sliding beneath skin. As a Cleric, Cougar knew the best and brightest and fittest in the city, but seeing them move was nothing like watching Jensen move.

“So, what’s the deal?” Jensen rested his elbows on his bent knees and studied Cougar. “You playing the long game? There gonna be a raid on the house?”

Cougar studied Jensen right back. Up close, he could see the flaws in Jensen’s beauty - he only had one dimple when he smiled, which was asymmetrical, and a mole on his left cheek - and he had the sudden urge to kiss him. Instead he lowered his gun.

“No raid,” he said.

Jensen tilted his head. “You’re pretty quiet, even for a Cleric. Most of them would be waxing philosophical, about safety and the greater good. You planning on shooting just me, then? Because you could have taken the shot a long time ago.”

Cougar holstered his gun, and Jensen’s eyes went wide. “Holy shit! You’re one of us! You - how?”

Cougar shrugged, but he reached out, placed a tentative hand on Jensen’s shoulder. “May I?”

“May you what?” Jensen scrambled to his feet. “Come on - come home with me. Clay and Pooch will be so glad to meet you.” He started toward the ladder.

Cougar didn’t know how to ask, so he followed, helplessly. No one ever noticed whether he took his doses of Prozum. It would be a while before anyone noticed that he was gone. So he followed Jensen home.

Jensen strolled blithely through the trees, like he’d walked this path a thousand times - had he? On the days Cougar hadn’t seen him, had trained instead? He chatted about Clay and Pooch and Pooch’s wife and daughter, and how they were looking to get the kid a puppy, but those were damn hard to find, and maybe if they found two older dogs, a puppy would happen eventually, right? They had almost reached the house when Cougar put a hand on his shoulder again.

Jensen turned, raised his eyebrows. “What’s the matter? You allergic to dogs or something?”

Cougar plucked Jensen’s glasses off his face. Clerics never touched each other for anything but training. Cougar had never been one of the Clerics to take a wife. Without his glasses, Jensen looked younger, more vulnerable. But he smiled, his expression open and sweet.

“Oh, hey. Wow. You - you want to -?”

Cougar leaned in and kissed him.

Jensen kissed him back, softly and a little tentatively. He pulled back, blinking and dazed. “Um, okay. So - that’s why you’ve been watching me. Both flattering and a little creepy. More flattering than creepy, though, I promise.” He tilted his head and peered at Cougar. “Was that your first?”

Cougar ducked his head, looked away, but Jensen crowed.

“Your first! That is so cool.” Then he took a deep breath. “Of course, since I’m your first, we should take it slow, but - what’s your name?”

“Carlos Alvarez. They call me Cougar.”

“Cougar? That’s badass. I’m Jensen. Jake Jensen. Most people just call me Jensen.” Jensen took another deep but shaky breath. “This is so intense. Clay’s gonna kill me. A Cleric sniper just kissed me, and I’m bringing him back to the house, and -”

Cougar kissed him again.

Jensen hummed into the kiss, wound his arms around Cougar’s neck and pressed close, and Cougar’s body was flooded with heat, the kind of heat he felt when he watched Jensen in the sun, only multiplied by a thousand, and this - this was *lust*.

“Kissing is better than talking,” Cougar said.

Jensen nodded his agreement. “Yes, yes it is. Okay. House is this way.” He turned to lead the way, paused, laced his fingers through Cougar’s, and kept on walking. Cougar followed him through the trees, to the house, to the Nether, to freedom, and thought, *This is the beginning of the end*, and it was.

Three days later, rebels bombed the Prozum factory and took over the city, and a rogue Cleric killed Father, and Jensen - he took Cougar dancing on the city rooftops.

End Notes

Title from Theodore Roethke's The Waking

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