

There was no need for an alarm, for there was nothing urgent on the agenda for the day: no work, no school, no errands, nothing. Yet, despite having a leisurely day of doing whatever he fancied – including sleep – ahead of him, Ashes was keen to wake. Still, the clock in the bottom corner of one of his screens was steadily ticking closer to ten when he woke that morning.

The moocario gave a small grunt as his mind shifted from the weird, wacky, and (sometimes) wonderful land of dreams to the real world where his conscious mind held court. He yawned and tried to open his eyes, but they were thickly crusted with sleep; he remedied this with one hand, rubbing his lids clear of interference until they could flutter open, not noticing in his sleepy state how the action squashed his plump cheek against his snout.

Another yawn crept up on him as he was finally able to see his familiar surroundings; familiar, though still with some degree of novelty. Until a couple of weeks ago he had occupied a bed just like any other: moderately comfortable, layered with blankets, increasingly incompatible with his bulk. He had started every morning by throwing the covers off himself, gradually levering himself into an upright position, then stumping to the kitchen to raid the fridge and pantry. A shower may have followed, but more often he postponed such an unproductive use of his time in favour of getting on with a day of lazing either, moving between the couch and his desk as necessary.

His days now were different, certainly better as far as he was concerned thanks to a very special present from his closest friend; a closeness cemented by this particular act of generosity. The gift was a new bed. Not just any bed, mind you, but the bed of Ashes' dreams. Its spaciousness wasn't anything to write home about: it accommodated his many hundreds of pounds well enough, but that wasn't what made it special.

This new bed was exactly where the old one had been: in the corner of his bedroom, bordered by two of the four walls. Along the wall to his right were shelves: the top three were packed to metaphorical bursting point with food and drink containers, both empty and full; the fourth was where he kept his controllers, his wireless keyboard and mouse, his Switch, all with easily accessed charging cables or ports; on the bottom shelf was a vast array of consoles, from the antique Atari he had refurbished and into which he had breathed enough life for it to be functional once more, to the latest technology capable of graphics even crisper than that which the real world offered.

Just beyond his feet – or where he assumed his feet would be if he could have seen them – were a pair of monitors mounted on a sturdy stand, safe from toppling to their demise should Ashes have moved a little too energetically. These were never switched off, nor was the computer tower nestled safely out of harm's way beneath its displays. At the moment they showed nothing more exciting than his desktop, though that was surely soon to change.

The pièce-de-résistance as far as Ashes was concerned, however, was the object supporting his head and back as he clawed his way back to full consciousness. The best definition was that it was a pillow, yet it was much more than that: when he wanted to rest on his back, fully reclined and stretch out (which was most of the time) it let him do just that; but when he wanted to sit up – often as part of the unenviable process of getting out of bed – it expanded and inflated itself to help push his blubber bound body upright.

The first order of business that day, as it was every day now, was pick out something for breakfast from the veritable buffet next to his right hand. His fingers sadly found more empty bottles, boxes, and wrappers than full ones – another bank-breaking grocery order was no more than a day away – but he was still able to scrounge a full family-size packet of chips and a bottle of soda with which to get his day started right.

With his jaws put to work crunching up the first fat fistful of salt and vinegar, his next consideration was what form of entertainment would be best suited to starting such a gloriously inactive day. Games, he felt, could wait until his fingers were less busy and not being continually coated in potato flakes, so it was off to Netflix to continue his latest binge.

Several hours passed, though Ashes hardly noticed, with episode after episode of the show that had so captured his imagination in recent days passed by his eyes. The chips had long since vanished, the packet's air content having doubled its starting point of fifty percent. As if of their own volition his hands had sought out further nourishment, leaving the surface of his belly and what little space there was around him on the bed littered with potato-y, soda-y, chocolatey, and even noodle-y debris.

Shocked as he was to discover, when he had tired of laying there idly and gradually stuffing his face with whatever was within reach as if his arm was an automated feeding machine, that a full three hours had passed since he'd dragged himself back to the land of the living, he completely unironically considered them to be hours well spent.

He had no thought of rising from his bed, instead powering on his Playstation 2 and settling in for some Dark Cloud, controller perched atop his chest as his arms pressed those two slabs of fat together to hold the little piece of plastic.

Though he knew he must at some point, even just to make use of the facilities in the next room, Ashes would have very much liked never to leave his cosy little nest.

*I wonder how you could hook up a shower to this thing...oh well, a bit of RPG action first!*