

Lucid Eating

By Dragonien

“Alan, come on, it's time for lunch!”

The caramel-colored dragon's voice was loud enough to carry through the entire house thanks to his larger-than-normal lungs and vocal cords. One of the benefits of being eight feet tall was that you could project your voice like few others. Despite this, the house remained silent for nearly a full minute.

“Come on, man! I've been craving burgers all week, and you know I can't drive the truck!” The dragon tried again, the tiniest hint of whining leaking into his otherwise exasperated voice.

When he got no response again, the dragon glowered before lumbering his way up the stairs, intent on retrieving his kobold roommate himself. As he went he couldn't stop himself from grumbling a bit under his breath. It wasn't the first time Alan had gotten too absorbed in some project or task and stopped paying attention to the world around him. Add that to the struggle of squeezing his larger-than-normal bulk up the narrow staircase and around the smaller hallways and rooms of the second floor, and it became the perfect recipe for a grumpy dragon.

The sight that met Reuben when he finally squeezed his way upstairs was anything but surprising. The little red kobold was hunched over his desk, various pieces of paper and journals sprawled haphazardly across the desk with half a dozen strange-looking objects strewn on top of them. They ranged from the innocuous, like a completely normal-looking fountain pen save for the faint blue glowing aura around it; to the absurd, like a skeletal hand that looked like it was made of solid gold. Reuben was used to Alan getting absorbed in his magical research, but that didn't make it any less annoying. Particularly when that was what stood between the dragon and the burgers he was craving.

“Hello? Earth to Alan?” Reuben called out from the hallway. When he got no reply, he grumbled again as he ducked down to squeeze his bulk through the comparatively tiny bedroom door. “Hey, Alan!”

It was only the combination of the dragon's heavy footsteps, his deep voice rising in volume, and his looming form partially blocking the light from the overhead lamp that finally drew the kobold's attention out of his work. His head snapped up as if he had been in a daze, and only now he realized that he wasn't alone anymore. It took him a couple of seconds of

frantically twisting his head back and forth before finally leaning backward in his chair and looking straight up into the draconic face looming above him.

“Oh, hey, B! What's up?” Alan asked with sincere, oblivious innocence.

“You know I've been calling you for 15 minutes now? If I didn't know better, I would have thought you were having some kind of out-of-body experience again.” Reuben grumbled. “It's burger day, remember? I need you to drive the truck.”

For a moment, the kobold's eyes seemed to glaze over, and Reuben swore he could hear the gears turning in Alan's head as the kobold mentally scrolled through his internal calendar.

“Oh, right! Uhm... gimme a few, I'm right in the middle of something,” Alan finally responded. “Let me just finish these notes and we can go.”

Grumbling loud enough to be heard, but not loud enough to be understood, the dragon slouched and leaned up against the wall to wait. He was patient for the first couple of minutes, but as three minutes became four, then five, his tail started to twitch impatiently on the ground. All the while, the completely oblivious kobold continued writing in one of the journals in front of him. When they reached the 10-minute mark, the dragon gave an exaggerated, frustrated sigh to try and encourage his roommate to hurry up, to no avail. Finally, he resigned himself to simply waiting, knowing that his only other option was to physically abscond with the kobold, and he wasn't quite that desperate... yet.

To stave off boredom, the dragon began glancing around the room looking for something to catch his interest. He didn't come up here very often, mostly considering the room wasn't exactly built for someone of large proportions or height like him. So, the few times he did visit, it always seemed like there was at least one new thing. Unfortunately, he was about as magically inclined as a dentist, which is to say not at all. The various books and artifacts lining the walls and shelves meant next to nothing to him. Eventually, his attention turned to what had Alan so interested. He picked up one of the artifacts, the golden skeletal hand, and raised it to inspect it. No, he didn't go for the golden object first just because he was a dragon, that would be a stereotype. Or at least that's what he told himself.

Looking the object over, he was surprised to find that the joints of the bones didn't seem to have anything attaching them, yet they stuck together as if held by immovable magnets that kept the hand perfectly straight and fingers spread out. In each of the knuckles was a different colored gemstone embedded into the gold rather than worn on a ring. Most curious of all though was the strange sense of... anticipation that came from holding it. The feeling was strange in that it felt like it was coming from outside his thoughts and being pushed in. It was difficult to describe it as anything more than a strange longing for... something. And not just burgers, either.

“What is this, anyway?” Reuben asked, giving the hand a shake in the kobold’s direction.

“No idea. I'm still cataloging these and trying to figure out what they do. The only one I know for sure is that the fountain pen makes whatever you draw become real. The others are a total mystery.” Alan replied absentmindedly, clearly barely paying attention to the question.

“Are any of them dangerous?” Reuben pressed.

“...Hmm. No, don’t think so.”

“So, what you're saying is, they can wait until later.” The dragon accused.

That time the kobold didn't respond. Reuben couldn't quite tell if it was because the kobold had stopped paying attention, or if he was consciously choosing not to answer. Either way, it only annoyed him further. He wasn't exactly mad at the kobold; he was just grumpy because he was hungry. Dragons get grumpy when something stands between them and their food.

Turning his attention back to the strange object in his hand, Reuben gave it a shake then tried pointing one of the fingers at something to see if anything would happen. After a few more random, fruitless nonsensical tests, he lost interest. Exasperated, Reuben let out another impatient groan to try to get the kobold’s attention.

“Come on, Alan! I’m hungry...” Reuben all but whined.

Alan responded absent-mindedly, not even looking up from his journals, “You're always hungry. If I left you alone, you'd eat the entire city!”

“I would not!” Reuben grumbled petulantly before continuing in a more subdued voice. “If I was going to do that, I wish you would eat half of the city with me.”

The moment the words left the dragon's mouth, the fingers on the golden skeletal hand clenched into a tight fist as if holding onto something. The light bulb overhead flickered ominously. The room filled with strange intangible energy like there was a static charge in the air. Alan froze in his chair and turned to stare wide-eyed at the object in the dragon's hand.

Before either of them could react, the hand shook violently for a split second then a thick, billowing cloud of smoke spewed forth from the finger joints and began to fill the room! Unlike regular smoke, this was, of all things, a bright neon-pink color. Almost like cotton candy. The smoke-filled both of their nostrils with a strange, sweet smell and left a sugary aftertaste on their tongues as it completely obscured their vision for several seconds. Then, just as suddenly

as it had appeared, the cloud rapidly disintegrated and left nothing behind other than that sweet scent in the air.

The first thing the two wide-eyed roommates noticed was that the skeletal hand had vanished from Reuben's grasp. As Alan looked around the room, he noticed that any magical artifacts he had lining his walls and shelves were now gone. Anything else non-magical was still there, such as his books and furniture, it was only the magical items that had vanished without a trace.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! What just happened?!" Alan muttered in a panic.

Before he could work himself up any further, he was distracted by the dragon's much calmer voice. Reuben had put up with the kobold's magical antics for long enough that things like this didn't faze him anymore.

"Uhm, hey, Al... Does everything look... a little more colorful than it should be?"

Now that he mentioned it, Alan could see he was right. He'd been so distracted by his initial panic at all his magical objects being gone that he hadn't noticed. Everything in the room seemed just the slightest bit off like the colors had been turned up a couple of notches. The pale lime color of his walls was noticeably brighter, and the wooden frame of his door had darkened a couple of shades. When he looked closer, he could also tell that the lines separating various parts of the room seemed more defined, as if there was a tiny black line separating everything. If the kobold didn't know better, it was almost as if they were in...

"Al, are we in a cartoon?" Reuben asked.

The more the two of them looked around—as ridiculous as it sounded—the more likely it seemed. Their whole room looked like a true to life, if cartoonishly colored, version of itself. Alan began running dozens of different thoughts through his head, trying to put pieces together to figure out what exactly they had gotten into. To figure out what exactly that skeletal hand had done. He ignored the large dragon behind him sniffing about and poking at his door as he tried to process the situation. But it wasn't until he heard a sharp crack from behind him that he whirled around and got the final piece of the puzzle from the sight before him.

From the sight of Reuben taking a bite out of his door.

"B, what are you doing?!" Alan yelled, running over to inspect the damage.

"What?" The dragon replied, words slightly slurred as he tried to chew and talk at the same time. "It smelled like Graham crackers."

The statement made the kobold go still for a moment as he looked over the bite mark missing from his door. To his surprise, it seemed that Reuben was right. Instead of splintered wood sticking out of the missing chunk of his door, there were sweet-smelling crumbs around the edges. His door really was made of Graham crackers! Or at least something like it.

“I, Uhm, I think I know what happened.” Alan cautiously admitted.

“Hmm?” Reuben muttered, still distracted with his mouth full of faux door.

“What was that last thing you said before this happened?”

“That I would only eat half the city?” The dragon answered, confused.

“No, no. Well, yes, but the whole thing. Specifically, you said *I wish*. The moment you wished something; the hand activated. It must be some kind of weird variant of a monkey's paw!” Alan explained before turning an accusing glare on the dragon. “And I bet you were thinking about food, weren't you?”

At least Reuben had the tact to look a bit abashed.

“Maybe a bit, I guess...” He admitted.

“Well, there's no way that thing turned the entire world, or even the entire city, edible.” Alan asserted even as he broke off a corner of his desk and sniffed at it. It smelled like hardened chocolate. “I could tell it had nowhere near that much power even if I wasn't sure what it did. Also, I'm pretty sure if this building was really made of edible materials like Graham crackers and chocolate, it would not be structurally sound.”

To emphasize his point, the kobold walked towards the wall and then rapped his knuckles against it several times. While it sounded completely identical to a regular wall, he then dug his claws into it and pulled out a chunk. Rather than drywall, the materials stretched briefly before snapping off. It looked like it was made of something like saltwater taffy. Then to follow up, he walked to the middle of the room and began jumping up and down as violently as he could, as if trying to break a hole in the floor. Other than the regular rattling sounds of the room shaking from his movements, nothing else happened. Alan kneeled and repeated the action he had done on the wall with the floor. Whereas his entire weight—not that it was exactly a lot to begin with—had not damaged the floor at all, his fingers easily broke through and pulled up a chunk of the hardwood that turned out to be peanut brittle with a layer of Graham crackers underneath it.

“I'm guessing this is some kind of imagined world in our heads. As I said, that thing didn't have a whole lot of juice, so there's no way you could be warping reality like this.

Everything seems as solid as normal until we consciously try to take it apart and eat it, then it becomes malleable like the food it is.” Alan explained aloud, as much to himself as to Reuben. “But it doesn't feel magical. There's no energy still in the air, so there's nothing to cancel or dispel to get out. My best guess is it's like some kind of a dream. We either have to conclude it, or we have to shock ourselves awake.”

The entire time the kobold had been speaking, Reuben had been giving him varying levels of attention while occasionally breaking off chunks of the door. Alan was completely oblivious to the dragon munching on pieces of the door like they were snacks for a show he was watching. It was only when Alan finished talking and turned to stare at him that he froze, a chunk of door partially in his mouth. Slowly, as if somehow thinking that if he moved slow enough the kobold wouldn't notice, his lips pulled the rest of the chunk into his mouth. Three slow, loud crackling jaw movements of chewing later, and then he swallowed. He never once broke eye contact with the kobold in the process.

“...Anyway,” Alan continued, clearly exasperated as he took note that most of his door had already been eaten, “Unless we want to go jumping off a cliff or running in front of a bus, the only way I see to get out of this is to complete this dream's purpose. And I'm not even sure if trying to hurt ourselves would even work. For all we know, the bus we try to jump in front of might just turn to marshmallow and do no damage. So, I guess...”

When Alan trailed off, Reuben picked up his train of thought. His lips spread into a big, happy grin and suddenly the kobold was engulfed in the dragon's hugging arms.

“We have to eat the entire city!”

Alan wheezed from the unexpected tight grip and tried to push himself free. Unfortunately, the comparatively small kobold had no hope of escaping the burly arms of the powering dragon that was his roommate. Only when Reuben was satisfied was Alan released to stand on his own again. Once he had been freed and had a moment to contemplate, it quickly became obvious that there was a serious logistic issue.

“How are we supposed to eat an entire city? I mean, it could take us hours if not the entire day just to eat this house! And that's assuming that this little fantasy world is giving us an unlimited stomach capacity. If we can still get full and have to digest, we could be stuck in here for a lifetime. There's got to be...” Alan mused out loud, only to trail off as he stared up at his draconic friend.

Reuben had gone back to eating the remains of the door while Alan was speaking. But it wasn't him breaking off and gobbling up chunks of edible wood that had drawn the kobold's attention. The dragon never liked coming upstairs because it was so much more confined than the open lower floor was. It was annoying for him to have to duck down and squeeze through

the door frames, not to mention if he so much as rose on his tiptoes, his head would bump against the ceiling. However, after a glance down to the dragon's feet to confirm they were flat on the floor, Alan noted that Reuben's head was now pressing firmly against the ceiling to the point that he was unconsciously hunching down slightly. In other words...

The dragon had grown.

"Of course..." Alan sighed, planting a palm on his face.

"Hmm?" Reuben mumbled through a mouthful of the door. It was only when Alan pointed up that the dragon finally caught on. His eyes went wide open. "Oooh! I'm bigger! Maybe that's how we do it? The more we eat, the bigger we get, and the bigger we get, the more we can eat!"

Unlike the dragon, Alan was conflicted. He had never really gotten to experience being unnaturally large, seeing as most magic seemed unable to physically affect him. Here, however, with all the other laws of physics being wonky, there was a real chance he could finally get to be big for once! While he certainly didn't complain about the mental image of being big enough to swallow a house whole, he didn't have the same gluttonous attitude as his roommate did. The thought of eating that much, even if he never actually got full, made him a bit queasy. Even if it was his ticket to finally get to be huge for once.

Not that his reluctance slowed the dragon down. If anything, the new revelation had lit a fire under Reuben. His casual snacking had quickly turned into full-on gorging as he simply ripped the remains of the door off its hinges and began gobbling it up like it was an overly large cracker. The sudden show of strength would have been rather impressive if the hinges hadn't crumbled apart like they were hardened chocolate, rather than bending and tearing like the metal they were supposed to be. It only took him a few seconds to finish the door, and once he did, he simply angled his head sideways and took a big bite out of the door frame itself!

Alan tried to think the situation over a little bit more but ultimately couldn't come up with any alternative theories. As he watched the dragon devour more and more of the entryway to his room, he could notice small but visible increases in the dragon's size that confirmed at least that part of the theory. Tentatively, he turned his attention back to his desk and broke off another chunk of it. Like before, it snapped apart like a cracker rather than wood and tasted much the same when he took a bite. He made a bit of a production of chewing it up and swallowing it down, cataloging the sensations and trying to compare them to reality.

Other than the abnormal size and shape, it was exactly like eating a Graham cracker, and he could even feel it going down his throat as he swallowed. However, the moment that it got past his diaphragm, there was a strange sense of emptiness. It was like if the food had vanished, for lack of a better term. More importantly, that strange sensation of the food not entering his

stomach seemed to urge on his appetite as if his body was demanding more food to replace what had vanished. Taking another bite, he found the same thing happened when he swallowed that one as well. Everything up to the point of it going down his throat was normal, and then it vanished and only seemed to exacerbate his appetite. The kobold turned around to face the source of the sounds of gluttonous self-indulgence that had been constant while he was testing himself. He had been ready to share his discovery but found himself a bit too surprised by the sight in front of him.

The dragon had grown.

Over half of the wall separating Alan's room from the hallway was now completely gone. The edges of the newly created hole were uneven and curved in the obvious shape of bite marks. And filling the overwhelming majority of that new open space was Reuben: all twelve feet of him. Normally he was just shy of brushing his head against the ceiling, but now he was forced down on all fours, and even then, his back was starting to stretch intimidatingly close to the ceiling overhead. The entire time that he had been slowly experimenting with his snack, the dragon had been shamelessly gorging himself. Considering the dragon's normally healthy appetite, to put it politely, Alan shouldn't have been surprised that the seemingly hunger-inducing aftereffect of each bite had driven the dragon to this. As many questions and concerns as the kobold had about their situation, he thought that letting himself fall too far behind might not be the best idea. The last thing he wanted was to wind up on the wrong end of his roommate's mouth if he let himself get too close to bite-size.

So, he too joined in the gluttony.

Alan was hesitant at first, not as eager to embrace the idea of eating what still appeared to be inedible materials as his roommate was. However, a few more bites out of his desk encouraged his appetite enough that his reluctance began to fade. Within a few more mouthfuls, he was taking bites directly out of the piece of furniture rather than snapping them off one bit at a time. The various writing utensils and papers on the desk found their way down his throat as well, the paper dissolving like cotton candy on his tongue and the pens like gummy snacks filled with sweet liquid candy when he bit into them. Even his chair was quickly gobbled up as the kobold momentarily lost himself in his own little feeding frenzy. Then his bookshelf, his bed, and his dresser all found themselves disappearing down his gullet. It wasn't until he stood upright from devouring his closet door that he was snapped out of his feeding frenzy by the impact of his head smacking against the ceiling.

"Ow!" Alan grunted, only to immediately startle at the sound of his own voice.

His voice was so loud, so deep! Hearing the voice that he had spent his entire life with suddenly drop several octaves and become powerful enough to echo off the walls was a jarring experience. The sight of his room, or at least what was left of it, looking so small to him had

much the same effect! The kobold's normally small stature made it so even an average-sized bedroom like his seemed spacious and luxurious. Now though, even after most of the furniture had been removed and devoured, it felt practically claustrophobic. Unfortunately, Alan didn't have long to revel in his newfound size before he was distracted by Reuben.

Turning his attention to his roommate, he found the dragon was now practically stuck in the hallway! Whereas the kobold was now easily at least nine feet tall, the girth of the dragon's belly alone was enough to rival the kobold's height! The dragon now lay fully on his stomach, his backside and hips pressing up against the ceiling even with him flat on the floor. His thick legs stretched halfway back into the room despite his upper body already having eaten its way through most of the bathroom and into the smaller adjacent spare bedroom! Reuben was taking up at least half of the second floor all by himself! And though it was a little difficult to say for sure, Alan swore that the dragon looked a little heavier on top of his overall increase in size.

But it wasn't the dragon's gluttonous feeding frenzy, nor his prodigious increase in size, that had drawn Alan's attention. Rather, it had been the ominous creaking sound coming from the floor beneath them.

Almost as if sensing his realization, a loud crack filled the air just before the entire second floor caved in! Both Alan and Reuben were sent tumbling down into the first floor amidst a pile of broken debris. It turned out that, while the laws of reality may have been malleable in this weird dreamscape, the weight limit of buildings seemed to be fully intact. The one good thing that came from their abrupt fall was that the impact snapped the dragon out of his feeding frenzy.

"Ow, what the heck?" The dragon grumbled as he wiggled himself free from the debris. "What did..." He started to ask only to trail off when looking around made the answer apparent. "Oh..."

"Yeah," Alan responded, brushing a few broken boards off his shoulders.

The kobold was about to suggest they come up with a better plan but found himself at a loss for words when his dragon roommate sat up. Now, the kobold wasn't new to being around people significantly larger than himself. Experience, however, never was quite able to undo the initial shock of seeing a drastic size difference for the first time, and Reuben certainly qualified.

Even still sitting on his backside, the dragon's head nearly touched the ceiling on the second floor! His legs stretched out and covered more than half of the living room. When he rolled over to sit up, his backside had crushed their couch and he hadn't even noticed! Even with Alan sitting at easily twice his normal height, he looked smaller compared to the dragon than he normally did.

“I, Uhm, I think I got a bit carried away there,” Reuben admitted sheepishly. “I guess I’m hungrier than I thought.”

Alan was tempted to try and explain that the act of eating seemed to spur on appetite rather than satiate it in this dreamscape but decided against it. Ultimately, it didn't matter. The dragon probably didn't need the extra incentive to devour anything he could get his hands on. Despite his clear embarrassment at having lost control, Reuben still was looking around the room with longing eyes. Alan couldn't blame him. Even no longer in a feeding frenzy, he could still feel the lingering hunger of the seemingly endless void that had replaced his stomach. And yet he still felt they needed some kind of plan. Unfortunately, he found himself unable to resist the increasingly fleeting expression on the dragon's face.

“Fine...” Alan sighed, unable to suppress a grin spreading across his face. “We already started. Might as well finish going Hansel and Gretel on the house, then we can figure out what to do next.”

With that, the two of them went back to devouring the house one piece at a time. Even Alan was a bit more enthusiastic and active this time. While he didn't want to admit it or look too eager, he was rather excited to finally get to experience being huge for once! Reuben, however, needed no encouragement and was glad to start gorging himself once more. Within minutes, the living room and dining room had been completely cleared out and Alan was putting a dent in the kitchen appliances and countertops. Reuben on the other hand was finishing off the remains of the second floor instead of getting on hands and knees to get anything below that. Wires were pulled from the walls and slurped up like licorice. Water pipes crumbled apart in his mouth like peanut brittle filled with liquid chocolate. And with every mouthful they ate, they grew.

Soon Reuben's head was sticking up through the hole in the roof he had already eaten and his shoulders were pushing up around its edges. If the wall between the living room and the kitchen hadn't already been devoured, his tail would have long since bulldozed through it. Alan on the other hand was eating his way through the back wall and was now outside systematically taking bites out of the exterior walls. It really was like some kind of bastardization of Hansel and Gretel. It wasn't much longer before the only thing left of their house were a few stray bits of debris and an oversized dragon and kobold sitting back-to-back on top of the house's foundation.

“Uuugh.” Alan groaned as he patted his stomach. “I'm so glad all this wasn't actually candy or all that sugar would probably be killing me right now.”

“I don't know. I kind of like the idea of being able to eat all the sweets I want without it rotting my teeth!” Reuben replied with a happy rumble. “Besides, we still have way more to go!”

“Oh, God, don’t remind me.” Alan groaned.

While the two had continued increasing in size, they had been doing so in more than purely height. Their bodies had begun to fill out with extra layers of flabby padding as if they really had been on a sweets binge for God knows how long. Reuben was luckier in that, despite him being closer to forty feet tall than Alan’s thirty, his naturally heavier-set build let the extra mass spread more evenly across his frame. The kobold on the other hand was naturally rather lean and thin. Even a few extra pounds would give him a visible paunch and he was certainly more than a few pounds heavier even when proportional to his new height. His belly had a definitive curvature to it now and jiggled slightly every time he moved. He still wasn't quite in the realm of what you could call *fat*, but he certainly wasn't thin anymore either.

After taking a few more moments to rest, Alan pushed himself up to his feet to survey their surroundings. Even despite the unusual nature of their situation, he still couldn't help but smile as he looked down on the surrounding two-story houses in their neighborhood. He had always wanted to experience this himself. Standing on top of elevated areas like rooftops and skyscrapers was good for letting you imagine being that tall, but it could never compare to the real thing! When he took a step into the street though, his lips twisted into a frown. He expected the concrete to crack at least a bit under the impact of his footstep like he had seen it do for others that had gotten this large or even larger. While the ground did crack apart, the texture was somehow... wrong. It reminded Alan more of the feeling of chalk candy crumbling than what he expected of concrete cracking apart.

His frown only deepened as he experimentally kicked over the tree in their front yard. The trunk snapped apart far easier than wood that thick should have even considering the kobold’s size and mass. Chunks of bark and wood crumbled like a brittle cookie as the tree fell to the street. Even when Alan got desperate and walked over to press his foot down on top of their truck, not even that had the right feel to it! He had never really wanted to be the destructive-rampage type of giant, but at least once he had wanted to feel a car being crushed under his foot! To his horror, the truck squashed far more literally than steel and glass should have. It was like the vehicle was made out of fruit gummy! Not only that, but the more he moved around, the more he noticed that his body felt strangely light and easy to move. He didn't feel like he was carrying around the extra mass that someone of his size should have. When he swung his arm experimentally, it felt like any other time he swung it rather than with the extra force that several hundred more pounds of him should have produced. Now that he thought about it, while the ground had crumbled when he stepped on it, he didn't feel it shake at all from the impact!

“This is,” Alan murmured aloud, “all wrong! This is weird. I mean, being big is supposed to be fun and all, but I almost don't even feel like I'm a giant right now! It's more like I'm in some kind of toy. This... this sucks! This isn't any fun at all, is it, B?”

Alan turned around to face where he had left the dragon and let out a sigh in exasperation at what he saw. While he had been experimenting and musing on his new size, Reuben had continued happily gorging himself. The dragon currently lay flat on his hefty gut with his head completely buried inside the neighbor's house, even as his head was rapidly approaching the size of the house itself. To Alan's surprise, he even saw the couple from next door getting into their car in the parking lot and then simply sitting there. When they saw him looking, they waved happily at him but otherwise didn't react to the fact that the now giant version of their neighbor was currently devouring their house from the inside out. And when the house was gone in only a few more bites, their only reaction when Reuben picked up the car and tossed it in his mouth was to wave again just before vanishing into the dragon's maw! It was only after he swallowed the vehicle and patted his gut in satisfaction that he noticed the kobold staring at him.

"What? The whole city includes the people. I even asked permission. Asked if they were okay with me eating them, and they just nodded and waited in their car for me!" The dragon argued defensively as he pushed himself up to his feet.

Even if neither of them seemed to carry the same amount of weight and mass their size should have allowed, it was still a bit intimidating for Alan when he found himself about waist-high to his roommate despite being at least three stories tall himself. The dragon was now pushing past the 60-foot mark thanks to his ceaseless gorging. It was then that something odd happened.

When Reuben reached down to grab the tree in the neighbor's front yard, clearly intending to pluck it up and eat it, the tree didn't budge. Confused, Reuben pulled again to no avail. Shifting his bulk a bit so that he could grip the tree with both hands, he started pulling with all of his might as if trying to uproot a stubborn weed! Yet no matter how hard he pulled, it simply wouldn't budge! Grumbling, he turned to try to pick up a car parked in the street only for the same thing to happen as if the thing was glued to the ground. It outright refused to so much as budge!

"What the heck?!" Reuben growled in annoyance.

Before Alan could speak up, the dragon was down on all fours and spreading his jaws around the parked vehicle! Intending to simply bite the thing up off the ground, he clenched his teeth around it only for them to stop the moment they hit the frame. No matter how hard he bit or how much he pulled on his head, he could neither lift the vehicle nor bite through it. The dragon became increasingly irritated as he kept trying to bite through the seemingly impervious vehicle. As he did, Alan tried to figure out what was happening. For some reason, suddenly Reuben couldn't eat anymore in this dreamscape that was meant to be all about eating.

Curiously, the kobold reached down and tried to pick up the tree he had knocked over. To his surprise, he picked it up as effortlessly as if it was a twig. Trying to ignore his increasing disappointment at his less-than-realistic first experience of being giant, Alan tried breaking the tree apart and it once again crumbled as easily as a brittle cookie. Even when the kobold raised it to his mouth to take a bite, he had no problem whatsoever doing so. The moment he swallowed, he heard a crunch and looked over to find the dragon's teeth having bit the car in half the moment he had swallowed. It didn't take him long to put the pieces together.

"I think there's a limit of some kind," Alan explained aloud, talking as much to Reuben as he was putting the pieces together for himself. "It's like the place won't let one of us get too far ahead of the other. Right about when you got to twice my size, it wouldn't let you eat anything anymore, but the moment I ate something else, you could too. Which means... ugh. Which means I really do have to eat half of this dang city, don't I?"

He was about to say more, but the next time the kobold opened his mouth, a pudgy, scaly hand slapped over his muzzle instead! The car held inside the dragon's palm was pushed into his open mouth as Reuben force-fed him the vehicle. Alan coughed a bit after swallowing it down then glared up at the dragon. Despite his chastising look, Reuben simply beamed a big, dopey grin down at him. Despite the happy expression, there was a faint ominous undertone to it. Regardless of all the other weirdness, Reuben was at least enjoying getting to gorge himself on tasty treats, and Alan didn't doubt that if he wound up being the thing standing between the dragon and his food that Reuben wouldn't hesitate to force-feed the kobold enough to keep up.

So, Alan gave in.

Reluctantly, he turned it to the opposite neighbor's home and began imitating Reuben in devouring it from the inside out. Much to his surprise, just like the dragon had described, the moment the occupant found themselves face-to-face with him they only smiled and waved. Then, of all things, simply hopped into his mouth the moment it opened. They didn't speak or yell or make any sound for that matter, they simply offered themselves to him as a treat! It was a bit disconcerting, but the kobold had more important things to do than muse on the actions of fictional dream characters. Although even that only further added to Alan's disgruntlement at the whole situation. It's not like he had exactly WANTED to go around eating people, but he'd be lying if he hadn't thought about it at least once or twice. And even that turned out to be a disappointment in this cartoonish parody of reality.

After only a few more minutes, the majority of the house was gone, and Alan had made up a decent bit of the ground between the two of them. From there, the gluttony began in full force. Before long they were both popping multiple cars in their mouths like they were gummy treats. They were able to devour entire rooms with a single bite until eventually the entire house itself became bite-sized. Power lines were slurped up like licorice spaghetti and their poles

munched on like chocolate-covered Pocky. The more they ate, the bigger they got. And the bigger they got, the more they could eat.

However, Alan still couldn't find himself enjoying the whole situation as much as he would have if this were real. The bigger they got, the more noticeable the lack of tangible effect around them was. Before long, they were both over a hundred feet tall, and yet they could walk down the street without their footsteps causing so much as a tremor. Their bodies should have felt ponderous and heavy from all the extra mass that they were swinging around, even if they had the proportional strength to carry it. Yet no matter how big they got, they both felt just the same as if they were both their normal sizes. Well, almost the same. The endless stomach capacity and insistent hunger pangs were new. Despite his gleeful enjoyment of the situation, Reuben wasn't so self-absorbed to not notice the increasingly obvious signs of Alan's disgruntlement.

"What's wrong?" Reuben asked, pausing in the middle of stuffing a bus into his mouth. "You look like something's been bothering you for a while."

Alan paused for a few seconds before finally deciding to answer. "Honestly, this isn't what I expected. I mean, look at me! I'm the size of a building, but I feel no different from normal! If anything, I feel weird because I know everything shouldn't feel this average when I should weigh a few hundred tons at least!"

To emphasize his point, and vent a bit of his frustration, Alan turned to kick the front of a nearby department store. Even that turned to a disappointment as rather than exploding in a cloud of debris, it just crumbled apart like some kind of hardened pastry.

"See, that's not how buildings should act! The ground should be shaking when we walk! It just all feels so... wrong!"

Alan was all-but shouting near the end; clearly having bottled up more of his frustration than he had let on. Reuben suddenly felt a wave of guilt overtake him as it became clear he had been so distracted with his own fun that he hadn't noticed Alan's reaction to the situation.

"I'm sorry, bud. I know you've always wanted to try something like this." Reuben tried to console the kobold. "But honestly, you're not really missing a whole lot. I mean, the biggest thing is the view! Hah, biggest thing. I mean, look around, everything looks so tiny, right?! That's most of the fun right there, just feeling huge! And I mean, yeah, the ground isn't shaking when we walk and that is actually kinda fun to feel, but honestly, I'd much rather give that up and not have the extra weight. I mean, when you get this big you feel so much heavier, so every move you make feels sluggish like you're trying to move through water! It's kind of exhausting to be honest."

The dragon patted Alan on the shoulder in an attempt to reassure him. Alan wasn't sure if he actually felt better about the situation or not, but Reuben's concern at least was a comfort.

"Thanks, B." he murmured a bit sheepishly, suddenly embarrassed at the way he was acting. Even if this wasn't what he had been hoping for, he didn't want to be a killjoy for Reuben. "How about we get back to eating and we can talk about this more after we're out of here?"

Reuben gave the kobold another big hug, sweeping Alan briefly off his feet. "When we get out of here, how about I let you make me as big as you want, and I'll do whatever you tell me to for a whole afternoon? I'll even step on cars and stuff for you if you want! If you can't be giant, I'll be your giant!"

The offer, if not exactly what Alan would have preferred, still made the kobold smile. By itself, it was heartwarming at the very least. Only after setting Alan back down did they both turn back towards the city. Now that Alan seemed at least a bit cheerier, he was eager to get back to their shameless gluttony. Despite his concern for Alan, Reuben had to admit his stomach's insistent hunger had made it increasingly hard to pay attention to much of anything else other than the next bite.

As they both continued to eat, they continued to grow not just in height but in width. Reuben had gained quite the extra thickness to his lower body, giving his backside the kinds of proportions that, if he were normal-sized, would have gotten him stuck in hallways. Even his tail wound up thicker and heavier. Even if their overall size didn't seem to be increasing their mass, the extra fat still was. Reuben made that abundantly clear when he gleefully slapped his tail against the ground when he got to a parking lot full of cars, and Alan actually did feel the ground vibrate a bit from the impact. He may not get to feel the same kind of sheer weight and mass that should have come with being this tall, but at the very least both of them got to feel the extra weight that all the food was padding on to their bodies!

Alan wasn't gaining quite as gracefully though. His cheeks had become visibly pudgy, and his neck had gained a noticeable bit of extra mass. His stomach now distended out farther than his chin did, and his thighs were almost half as thick around as they normally were. Even his tail was starting to get pretty hefty, though it still wasn't quite long enough for him to slap it against the ground as Reuben did. Despite him being the size of a giant movie monster, he also looked like someone that had been on the McDonald's diet for at least a month or two.

And yet none of that slowed them down. Or at least, it didn't slow them down enough that an occasional force-feeding of a few vehicles to Alan for him to catch up didn't solve. Before long, their height was measured in four digits rather than three, and they were plucking entire shopping buildings and skyscrapers out of the ground to gobble down. At one point, at Reuben's urging, Alan got down on all fours over the park in the middle of town and dunked his muzzle

into the large reflecting pond to guzzle down its contents. Despite the varied and out-of-place tastes of all the other things they had been eating that day, the kobold still found something strange about drinking a lake that tasted like a sugary sports drink rather than water. Reuben on the other hand seemed to find great amusement in watching his normally thin and small kobold roommate visibly swelling with layer after layer of newfound fat as well as size as he guzzled down the contents of the lake. He actually got to watch Alan's body change as his hips widened, backside thickened, and belly distended, even as his overall body stretched out larger and larger across the park.

By the time they were both flirting with the mile-tall mark, most of the city was gone. Little more than building foundations, a few scant left-over light fixtures and street lights, along with maybe a dozen or so buildings at most were left in the otherwise barren wasteland that had once been a metropolis. Reuben had finally hit his limit and could no longer eat anymore, though by now even he was starting to feel somewhat satisfied. The now pudgy dragon was happily lounging on his backside, his gut feeling his lap and then some, while he happily massaged the soft ball of flesh as if encouraging it. Unfortunately, the weight gain had become even more unforgiving for the dragon's roommate.

Where Reuben was hefty and top-heavy, large enough that it took significant effort to get him up on his feet, Alan no longer could manage that at all. He was almost comically spherical and so bloated with extra mass that less than half of his arms and legs were still visible beneath the thick layer of pudge. Even if this had been a real setting and he really had been almost a mile tall in this condition, he wouldn't have been a threat to anything beyond what a slight jiggling of his body could cause.

"Oh, God, no more...." Alan groaned, even his voice sounding somewhat muffled and subdued thanks to the extra flab around his cheeks and chin. "I can't eat anymore, B."

Technically, it wasn't true. His stomach still felt just as eager to accept more food as ever. He even still felt the craving to eat that the dreamscape exacerbated, urging him to devour more. However, he had simply become so tired of the act of actually eating even the unnatural hunger the food here caused couldn't encourage him to continue.

"You gotta, bud. That's the last bit and it's all yours." Reuben tried to encourage.

Then something strange happened. Reuben's stomach growled. However, somehow it both was and wasn't his stomach that made the sound. It clearly came from the dragon but seemed to echo all around them as if it were coming from every direction at once. Not only that, but the dragon suddenly felt a genuine pang of hunger, different from the fantastical hunger that the dream had been imposing on them. This was that true, stomach-clenching gurgle of empty space inside your gut demanding to be filled.

“Whoa... I think I’m getting actually hungry, like for real.” Reuben commented as he rubbed more consistently at his belly to try and console it. “You’re the one that said that if we finish the wish, then we should get out of here.”

“But I can’t eat anymore!” Alan whined, uncaring of how petulant he sounded at this point.

Despite there still being several buildings left, it was barely a mouthful for someone of the kobold’s prodigious size. Reuben was about to try and encourage him once more only for that gurgling hunger pain to rumble around them again. Encouragement turning to determination, Reuben sluggishly hefted himself up to his feet. Even with his body type better supporting so much extra weight, he still stumbled a couple of steps before he found his balance. He simply wasn’t used to being this ridiculously bottom-heavy and he almost fell forward onto his gut! Thankfully, he was able to catch himself, mostly by bracing against the side of the bean bag of a kobold that was Alan.

“C’mon, buddy. I’m hungry for real. And you owe me burgers.” Reuben insisted.

As he did, he pushed against the kobold’s side. It took him a few moments to build up enough momentum, but eventually he got Alan moving. The kobold wasn’t moving in the sense that he hadn’t been helped to his feet, but rather his dragon roommate was quite literally rolling him across the ground towards the last surviving patch of city. After two complete rolls, the little patch of buildings was directly below Alan’s chin. The kobold whined again at the sight of more to eat, but after an insistent nudge from the dragon, he finally acquiesced.

His tongue lolled out and simply dragged across the ground. If this had been a real-world scenario, it would have been like a tidal wave of pink flesh dragging across the Earth and uprooting everything from cars to people to buildings themselves. With the strange cartoon physics of this world, the building simply crumbled into candied powder almost like the powder you would find in a pixie stick. With a final groan of protest, he lapped up the last bit of the city and pulled it into his mouth.

Gulp.

The shift in perspective that followed was so jarring that both of them immediately fell to the ground. Reuben fell flat on his backside hard enough to shake the room while Alan tumbled out of his chair and onto the floor. One second, the two of them had been towering over the decimated remains of a cartoonish city, and the next, they were back in their normal bodies, normal-sized, and no longer both with quadruple their regular body weight in pure fat. The skeletal golden hand fell from Reuben’s grasp and clattered to the floor nearby. Its fingers were still clenched into a closed fist, but it no longer seemed to be active. Strangely, it somehow

looked like the gold was less lustrous than it previously had been, as if it had been drained of whatever energy made it work and drew people towards it.

When the two had taken a few moments to get their bearings and push themselves back to their feet, they took turns glancing between the hand and each other. After a cursory inspection over their bodies, they found that, at least as far as they could tell, there have been no actual physical changes to them in the real world. A glance at the clock on the wall showed that less than an hour had passed since Reuben had first entered the room, even though it felt like they had spent half a day inside the dreamscape.

Tentatively, as if almost scared of it, Alan reached down and picked up the hand off the ground. After looking it over, it seemed to no longer have any power and he placed it back on his desk. When he turned to look back at Reuben, he opened his mouth ready to speak, only to be cut off by the dragon.

“Ah, ah, ah. No. Stop right there.” Reuben asserted, giving Alan a stern glare. “Keys. Truck. Now. It's burger night.”

As if to emphasize his demand, the dragon's stomach growled loud enough that it could have been heard downstairs. The very thought of food after what they had just gone through made the kobold feel briefly nauseous.

“How can you even think about food right now?” Alan complained.

The only response he got was a repetition of “Keys. Burgers. Now.”

Throwing his hands up in surrender, Alan began digging around the clutter on his desk until he found the truck keys. Once he had produced them, the dragon cheered up noticeably and turned to lumber his way down the stairs. Neither of them said anything to one another until Reuben was comfortably seated in the back of the truck. As he waited for Alan to climb into the cabin, Reuben mused about their little dream adventure and how the hand had reacted to his hunger-driven desire. He idly wondered if it would work differently if someone had used it with a different desire in mind. Just as Alan was about to pull out of the driveway, Reuben leaned around the side of the cabin to ask a question that left Alan unaware of what Reuben really was planning in his head, feeling nauseous all over again.

“Hey, you think you can find a way to recharge that thing so we can do that again?”