

Hey out there, the name's Hauke. I hadn't told many folks about this; it happened about a year ago, before last Easter. Someone convinced me to put this story out there, since he said there were others who may have gone through something like this, so I thought "Why not" and tried to the best of my recollection to put this together. There's more I'm sure I've forgotten. Get in touch if you've got your own similar story, because the worst thing in the world is feeling like you're the only one going through something, you know? I'm @HaukeBasilisk...easy to find.

Who doesn't want to look sexy? I mean, I realize I'm no spring chicken anymore, and I wasn't hoping for miracles, but the only normal looking thing about me was my comb and wattles. I have a big snake tail in place of anything resembling tail feathers, aside from that weird little puff at the end that sprouts up around the rattle at the end. My beak's got these crooked, jagged points on it, like teeth or fangs. So I took a great deal of pride in my comb. When it started getting a bit faded, pale, and too wrinkled, I looked into treatments.

I thought a bird doctor would be a bit more dependable and understanding about this. That's just making excuses, though--he didn't force me to try out those drugs. I have to say my vanity brought all of this on me. I did it to myself.

All this went through my mind as I sat in Dr. Astue's office, switching between adjusting my protective glasses and drumming my talons on my huge, puffy gut. The extra chunkiness was what I was there to talk about: it came on right about the same time I started taking the comb-reddening remedy.

The doctor read the drug bottle's label, then a few papers, then reread the bottle, then reread the papers. Finally he gave the bottle a long glance, peering at it so closely that I thought he was going to try to balance it across his beak. "Yes, this would explain the side effects," the eagle finally said. "There are warnings about not using it with gynopotent members of ophidian phenotypes. It says in the fine print here: 'May interact strongly--larger than normal clutch size, no other adverse effects'. So yes, knowing this now, your current condition would not be considered unusual. It's unfortunate that your composite nature was overlooked during the initial treatment phase. Perhaps some care should have been made to bring this to our attention."

My tail rattled with irritation. "Are you telling me you never noticed I'm only a chicken mostly from the waist up?" I tried to gesture towards my waist, but my current girth made that impossible. My belly was so full of eggs, I hadn't been able to fold my hands across it in several days, and had to give up standing upright as being too hard on my back and legs. Honestly, I could barely crawl forward because of my gut hanging down against the ground.

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Dr. A sat behind his desk and from his attitude, I gathered there was only a minute or two left of his commitment to this appointment: I didn't have long to make my case. "But that medication was for stiffening up my comb and improving the color! What kind of crazy side effect is this?"

"As I explained: those with snake ancestry or comparatively similar anatomy who show non-standard reproductive traits...as you do....should avoid this medication for precisely the reasons which you're currently experiencing." He folded his wings at his sides and nodded to me. "This is going to be one heck of a clutch. You haven't had any episodes of being egg bound, have you? Everything's worked normally the last time you've laid eggs? Er..as normally as it can, in your case?"

"I've never been egg bound," I said. "I've laid plenty of eggs. There was just one a time before. Being egg bound? How will I know if that's happening? Normally they say if it takes more than normal to finish the clutch, that's a problem, but this? If they're the regular eggs, just more of them...I've still got four or five days to go! How big am I gonna get?"

"Big enough that we might be able to interest you in a steerable wheelbarrow," the doctor said.

The next few days I didn't do much besides eat, sleep, try to solicit pity from my roommate, and make a call to Mr. Dude's Duds, the company that buys up infertile eggs for decorative purposes. Easter was coming up, after all. I'd used them before at this time of year, and figured this time around I'd be cashing in big. "We'll send you a few boxes," they told me. I hoped a box held more than I thought it did, because my roommate wasn't a fan of having my eggs sitting around the house for too long.

I tried to find out why a few times, but the conversation usually went to "I just wouldn't feel comfortable eating anything with...with them," and then he'd shudder. I don't think it'd actually hurt anything, hey! If that picky badger would rather eat eggs laid by someone he DOESN'T know, that's his business. I've gotta say, though, knowing some of the things he's eaten, I'm a little indignant that I couldn't make the cut, if you know what I mean.

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Anyway, I decided to do what he normally does when there's something he doesn't want in the way, or cluttering the place up: dig a new hole for it. Since the snake part of me helped cause this mess, it seemed fitting to have a more snakelike nest. Plus, a hole would be easier to widen for more space, if necessary. Lastly...I could barely move from where I was. I doubted I could even fit through the tunnel he had dug out for me to come and go from the sett.

There's something about looking at a nest that triggers things; gets them rolling, so to speak. I almost couldn't get over it fast enough.

I think an artist friend of mine says she doesn't know what to paint and just stares at the empty canvas. I hear more than a few writers complain that an empty page mocks their inability to fill it, and the longer they stare, the worse it gets.

What I felt, a mere instant after digging a little pit and sitting up to look at it, was the exact opposite. It was time to lay some eggs! The first one was crowning as I tried to roll myself upright and into a good position over the newly dug nest pit.

I'd laid eggs before, as I told the doctor and as I told you. Usually, I know pretty much when the egg's coming. And as I said, building the nest and looking at it can help trigger the whole process. But the process usually starts with feeling the egg slide along a bit at a time. It's not the most comfortable way to spend an afternoon, and that's the typical time I set aside for this. Quite honestly, it hurts a little bit, being stretched wide; I like to take my time, gradually letting the emerging egg have its way with me.

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With this clutch, in same span of time it took me to tell you about the normal process, three eggs shot right out, pop pop pop. The whole stretching wide thing happened in rapid succession, before I really had a chance to react, though as the third one tumbled down into the nest I yelled loudly.

"Little BASTARDS" I yelled, trying to look over my shoulder at them. They felt huge, but they looked like they were my normal sized eggs. It was just the speed they passed through.

After the first ten, they quit popping out quite so easily. This had some pros and cons: on the up side, it wasn't making me squawk and yelp when one came shooting through, ripping me back open. On the down side, it was starting to be like my usual labors, except multiplied by a score. Things settled into a routine: I'd wait a while, feeling the next egg blocking up my chute, but I'd be too tired to push it through so I'd just cope with the pressure and the discomfort, trying to catch my breath, until I could attempt to lay it. That wasn't always successful--it was taking me two or three tries to get them through.

Then it was back to resting while dealing with urges to keep pushing because my guts were telling me "Hey, you know there's an egg here, right? Ready to come on out! PUSH."

I guess I was occasionally grunting or moaning more loudly than I thought, because the badger showed up. "Are you STILL at it? How long is this gonna....Whoaaaaah, didn't need to see that."

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"Don't buh--nnggghhh..bother me, I'm busy," I grunted at him.

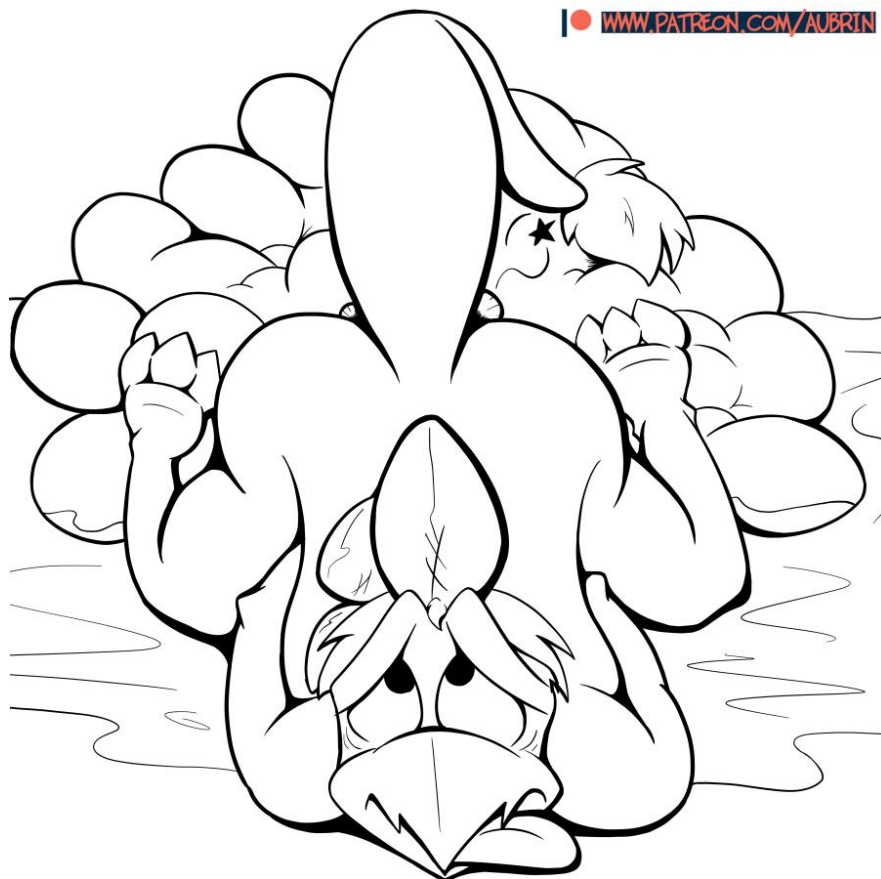
"No kidding! Quite a pile you're squeezing out there." I couldn't see him; he came in through the usual tunnel, which I was facing away from. That meant he got a great view of egg number whichever poking out and dangling before I managed to get it all the way through.

I could tell he was turning his head so he didn't have the whole ordeal in view; I mentioned the whole thing makes him squeamish. Typically he steers clear when I'm due, so this was a surprise for both of us. "Got a ...mmmm..nnggh...a ways to go," I finally managed to mumble.

He was quiet for a while; so quiet that I thought he had left. But I heard him walk around the pit, and come into view. "Based on how big your gut was, I'd say you're half done. Uh...keep up the good work. I came to see if you'd be hungry later. I'll check in." And he left me to my labors.

At the time, I had lost count of how many there were. It turned out there were 34. I didn't really count them until I was loading them into the boxes to send off to Mr. Dude's, which I put off for almost a day. I felt I needed some recovery time after that--I was at it for almost seven hours.

A 'gator friend of mine laughed at me when I was complaining about how many eggs were in that clutch. "Dude," he told me. "I came from a clutch of 45! That wasn't even my mom's biggest! What a wuss." I felt like petrifying him but sometimes he's my ride. I know some reptiles have big clutches like that, but the whole thing was pretty new to me!



I think I fell asleep after the last one was laid. I don't know how I knew it was the last one; it was just finally over. I knew it, I felt it, I was relieved to accept that reality and I really needed to crash. At some point later I must have woken up and crawled off to coil up on the side of the room, but I don't remember that. I just remember sitting up awake, realizing it was a new day, and seeing the big pile of eggs.

The badger roommate seemed to have been desensitized somewhat to the whole egg thing, since he asked me when the next time was going to be. I told him I didn't want to even think about it.

"Well, just keep this in mind...I met this guy, he's a Dodo. You've heard of them, right? He's sort of an archeologist, paleontologist, or something; I know he collects eggs. Well, I was telling him about you...he might have a business proposition for you."

I still haven't gotten back to him about that proposition. A year's a long time, but not long enough to forget what I went through. But sometimes a mythological gynopotent guy's gotta do what a mythological gynopotent guy's gotta do, and why not make a little extra cash on the side for it?