

Over the next couple of weeks, Callum and Aaron began to incorporate the serpent's levitation skills into their work process. It didn't take long for the drake to ease into the system of simply plucking his desired implement out of the air and using it at his leisure.

Aaron and Callum also developed an increasingly stronger telepathic link between them, which allowed for more fluid activity around the shop. Communicating in this manner increased efficiency and speed considerably. And with the increasing familiarity between the pair, the synchronization of Callum's mind with the serpent's allowed for seamless connections to be formed in the workplace. Effectively, Aaron's abilities allowed for the two to increase their productive output by almost a two fold.

The most notable change in the bakery life however, was the drake's ever increasing size. As he continued his strict regiment of consuming confections each night, the dragon's body swelled. Callum had officially transcended the realm of simply being pudgy to heartily filling the label of 'downright fat.'

The drake's face sported two puffy cheeks and a handsome second chin under his scaly muzzle. His chest swelled with an extra layer of plush that smoothly transformed into the ominous bulge of the dragon's belly. Standing in an upright position, Callum's stomach dipped down over his waistline and brushed the upper part of his chunky thighs where it formed a set of compressed love handles. It's impressive weight caused the soft mass of flab to squash slightly out of shape, resembling a warped circle. A padded tail and widened rear formed a counterweight to the drake's front-heavy figure, and provided an enjoyable layer of cushioning for sitting. Chunky legs sported their own layers of lard and increased the drake's increasingly cuddly appearance.

Despite his impressive weight, Callum still retained a considerable range of flexibility over his movements and motions. He attributed the notion to the muscles buried under his flab which also grew from a combination of Aaron's nutrient-boost and the regular chore of hefting around his increased baggage. The drake hadn't noticed it at first, but he had also increased almost an inch in height. While the drake was considered tall amongst the majority of anthros at 6'0", his recent eating activities seemed to have increased his height in order to aid in easier locomotion.

The only reason either became aware of the additional height was thanks to Aaron's regular observations of the drake's expanding figure. Utilizing magic to register the different physical aspects of Callum's form, the serpent noticed a slight, but still noticeable difference in the drake's stature.

"It seems you've actually grown," Aaron said after gently placing the dragon back onto the floor after their latest examination. "Not much, but it is certainly noticeable from a couple weeks ago."

Callum rested his claws on his belly, rubbing his smoothly curving ventral plates as he took the serpent's words into consideration. "Well, I've always been tall," he said thoughtfully. "How much?"

"Approximately one inch," Aaron said. "It's an interesting development, one I haven't seen from most. You're now almost 6'1" and I would assume you would continue."

Nodding his pudgy face in agreement, Callum then asked, "Is this a bad thing?"

The serpent shook his head, "Not at all. In fact it is most certainly beneficial, as it might be your body's efforts to use some of the nutrient-boosting compound to increase your stature for smoother movement."

A wide grin split Callum's face as he realized his ordeal would become even easier to handle in the future. "Well, if you're encouraging it, then I suppose I'll listen. After all," Callum gestured to his generously proportioned body, "I haven't felt this well insulated for years."

Aaron smiled at the enthusiastic drake and gently pinched one of the rolls bunched around his waist good naturally. "I'm sure you are," he said before laughing pleasantly when the pinch elicited a startled yelp from the dragon.

"Don't do that!" Callum growled, half heartedly batting the snake's tail away from him. "You know one day I'm going to get you back for all these pranks you've pulled on me," he smiled sinisterly, "It will be a glorious moment."

Aaron crossed his arms and smirked at the dragon, "You truly think you'll be able to get the better of me?" The drake nodded earnestly, before the serpent let loose a hearty laugh and said, "You mean like the time you

attempted to arrive earlier than me in order to set up your special ‘flour surprise?’”

Callum’s grin melted off his face as if it were butter on a stove. “Well...that wasn’t my..best..er..effort,” the dragon mumbled, recalling the unfortunate incident.

He’d risen an hour before dawn with the intent on surprising a certain purple snake, and was planning to set a trap for the seemingly unsuspecting reptile. Callum had snuck into the bakery with the stealth of a wraith and gathered several large bags of flour. His plan had been to rig two from the ceiling with the hopes that they would be dropped on the snake who would trigger a rudimentary trip wire strung across the door. The plan would then allow for said serpent to be covered in said flour and, in a flurry of confusion, would initiate a second reaction that delivered a concoction of grain and water. The process would result in the usually pristine, purple serpent resembling a crude, bread roll. Callum would have been able to have his laugh as he trumped the snake in a game of wits and humor, if not for one singular factor: Aaron had sensed the drake’s intent and arrived several minutes prior to the dragon. Residing in the pantry with the aid of a simple camouflage incantation, Aaron had observed the drake implement his ruthless scheme and then came up with one of his own.

As Callum set up the trap, his nerves were wired tighter than an elastic band. He was solely focused on finishing the set up, and didn’t register any other movements within the kitchen. As the unfortunate drake crouched over the second trip wire, Aaron had mercilessly poked the drake with his tail before saying “What’cha doin’?” in a loud, piercing manner. The action caused said dragon to squeal and leap higher than either would have thought possible. The drake collided with the bowl containing the water and grain before descending in a disastrous ark and landing squarely on the first trip wire which let loose two large sacks of flour. Callum was knocked out cold from the impact with the ground and awoke to five very large, very friendly eyes filling his vision. Aaron tilted his head as if to display concerned interest in the dragon’s intent; all he said was, “Nice attempt, but you’ll never get me.” The incident lived on in unfortunate memory as Callum was constantly reminded by the mirthful serpent of his failed attempt and consequential humiliation.

Delving back into the present, Callum shook the memory from his head and grinned up at the serpent, “I was young and naive at the time,” he said

in a dramatically apologetic tone, "But I have learned the error of my ways, and will see success in the near future."

"Well one thing's for sure," Aaron smiled, poking the dragon's protruding gut once more, "I doubt you'll ever be able to jump that high again."

Callum swatted the serpent's tail away before pressing his paws deep into the plush, globular layers, "I'll agree with you on that sentiment. But there's more than one way to go about these kind of things."

Shaking his head, Aaron donned his hat before adopting a more serious tone, "Well I'd say we're going to have to put such petty foolishness aside for now and commence with another day of business."

Slipping his apron around his soft neck, Callum nodded in agreement, "I suppose we do. But mark my words..." the drake said in an ominous tone, as he backed off the kitchen and gave the serpent the universal two-fingered gesture that the dragon would be watching him.

Chuckling, Aaron feigned an expression of fear before shaking his head. 'That dragon will never get me,' he thought to himself.

After exiting the kitchen. Callum turned to the counter and began prepping it for the day. 'Now how can I outwit that overgrown snake?' He thought, keeping careful not to trigger his communicative link with the spirituous chef.

Periodically, a steady stream of customers came through the door.

Mrs. Sanderson entered early on with a pleasant looking gentleman at her side. The two seemed very happy, and Callum congratulated them on finding contentment, before sending them off with a small bag of complimentary cinnamon rolls.

Tay dropped by around lunchtime to pick up his usual order. The boisterous, bulging ursine exchanged words with Callum over his work in the forge before complimenting the drake on his expansive success. Bunching up his own belly, Tay emphasized the feeling of satisfaction it gave him to eat so heartily and then enjoy the effects after.

The leopard..Zach came in around the same time as Albert who both

seemed to recognize each other vaguely. The tiger then noted that he had seen the leopard's comings and goings through the city gate quite often. The mysterious feline grinned at this and assured the guard that he preferred the splendor of nature. Both left with goods, though the leopard's was considerably larger than the tiger's.

Around mid-afternoon, Callum received a rather surprising visit from a young, female otter. The otter, whose name was Reyna, seemed slightly put out as she stumbled in under the weight of a large, three-tiered cake covered in radiant swirls of blue and green frosting. Callum almost instantly recalled her, as Aaron had constructed the special order only the day before. He padded around the counter to help her bring it to a rest on a table.

Once the cake was settled, Callum read the words on it and remembered that it was 'Welcome Home' surprise for the otter's brother. The distraught otter seemed quiet and distant from the dragon, who had to ask her a couple times what was wrong.

"I was planning to see my brother after he'd been away on some expedition for nearly a year," the otter explained in a soft voice. "But all I received was a letter stating that he would be delayed for another several months."

"I'm sorry to hear that," the drake said, awkwardly attempting to comfort the distressed anthro. He gently patted her on the back with one pudgy hand before saying, "At the very least let us refund you your money."

Reyna let loose a small laugh, before shaking her deep brown head. "I appreciate the sentiment, but there is no way I could ask you for that."

"But we will be doing so anyway," a comforting voice emanated from over Callum's shoulder. Aaron was glancing down tenderly at the distraught otter, and laid a kind hand on her shoulder. "You've been a loyal customer and good friend over the years, and we certainly aren't going to ignore those facts over something as trivial as a cake."

Sniffing gratefully, the otter blinked a couple times to clear her deep brown eyes before smiling at the pair. "I appreciate your generosity," she said before looking over at the cake with a note of disdain. "I know that I won't be having it, but perhaps one of you would enjoy it." Her gaze

unintentionally flickered to Callum's belly, which protruded substantially against the drake's apron. A faint hint of intrigue glinted in them, before the otter reaffixed her eyes to the pair standing before her.

Callum blushed slightly at the indication, while Aaron smiled knowingly. "Of course we would love to take the cake," the serpent said smoothly, "I'm sure Callum here would be exceptionally interested in fulfilling your offer."

Pudgy cheeks glowing madly, Callum cast a sour glance up at his boss before smiling back at Reyna. "I would be happy to take care of it," the dragon said simply, before taking the cake in his arms and lifting it. The weighty confection rested on the drake's belly, using it like a shelf and squashing it out of shape as Callum precariously edged back into the kitchen to find a temporary home for it.

Aaron smiled at Reyna, and said, "I think we have certainly found a home for it. Now permit me to offer my condolences by way of a refund and a couple of complimentary Danishes." Knowing these were the otter's favorite food, Aaron was positive he could aid the saddened otter in her grief by providing her with support in what ways he could.

Soon Aaron was wrapping up the confections, while Callum made small talk Reyna. He inquired to the everyday workings of her life and made small jokes at his expense, mainly his weight, which elicited light laughter from the otter as well as seemingly casual glances at the drake's globular gut.

Aaron slithered around the counter and deposited a small bag of coins in one paw and a sack of pastries in the other. Smiling comfortingly, he and Callum wished the otter well before she departed in much higher spirits.

The serpent and dragon quietly returned to their work as Aaron looked down at the drake approvingly. "You were certainly able to make her feel better," the snake noted.

Callum smiled and said, "She's always been nice, but this was the first time we were truly able to talk." He cast a quick glance over at the large cake resting on the counter. It stood about two feet tall and almost eighteen inches in diameter. "I suppose that cake will be my meal for the night then?"

Aaron smiled as he affirmed the dragon's inquiry. "I see it as the perfect opportunity for you to increase your capacity."

Furrowing his eyebrows and looking down at his ponderous belly, Callum found himself slightly intimidated by the challenge. "Well I suppose," he said, "At least it looks good, for your passable efforts at least." A faint smirk spread over the dragon's muzzle as he chuckled humorously at the jab.

A large oven mitt suddenly swatted the drake over his head as he looked over to see Aaron pretending to busy himself with work. The drake rubbed his head and scowled, before muttering to himself about how couldn't wait to get the snake back.

Together, the drake and serpent wrapped up their work for the day and bid each other farewell.

Callum took longer to get home, as he had to transport the monolithic cake. Once he arrived, he set it on the dining table, knowing that such a messy endeavor would completely wreck his couch.

Once the bulky dragon placed the cake down, he panted lightly from the exertion and slowly took off his self-expanding work clothes and changed into something more appropriate for the occasion.

Donning a comfortable cotton shirt and soft wool pants, the drake returned to the table and observed the cake for a moment. Such a large confection certainly deserved consideration before the drake attempted to eat it. He decided to split it by tiers, reasoning that starting with the top would allow him to get used to the richness of it before moving onto larger portions.

Using a large knife, the drake maneuvered the top portion off and down onto a wooden plate. He settled it and took in the aroma, which hinted vaguely of fresh vanilla and soft lemon shavings.

Already salivating, the drake decided to dig in with gusto. Being alone allowed for him to consume his food with a certain degree of freedom in his manners, but he still refrained from using only his hands. Instead the industrial drake used a large fork, which was perfect for cleaving off large, but manageable bites.

The first half of the tier was gone in a flash, barely registering in the drake's

expansive belly. Callum took this as a sign his increased capacity and forged on without hesitation. Polishing off the rest of the first tier, his belly only seemed to have expanded an inch or two and gave a halfhearted growl to indicate that it wasn't nearly satiated.

Callum repeated the process of wedging the second tier off the cake, taking more care as it was half again as large as the previous one. The drake settled it on the wooden plate and scooted his chair forward, feeling his belly bump against the surface and crease slightly. Placing the first piece in his muzzle, Callum made quick work of the bite and soon fell into another food-driven stupor. He plowed through the second portion of the cake, gradually causing his belly to swell in proportion to the volume of food being shoveled into it. The drake's abundant layer of fat covering his belly slowly began to stretch with the increasing pressure, becoming firm and resilient in the process. By the end of the second round, Callum's stomach sent out a contented gurgle to indicate its fullness, but the drake knew he still had the final portion left.

The base of the cake was larger than the previous two combined as it functioned as the foundation. The slice was approximately a foot and a half in diameter and eight inches tall. Staring at it, Callum felt a surge of ambition and began to work on the final piece. Halfway through the process, he felt an unnatural pressure bump against the table. Looking down, the drake was surprised to see that his belly had extended a ways out into his lap and was almost reaching his knees. The pressure was considerably tighter for the drake's belly, which strained considerably against his shirt and bulged outwards expansively. Encouraged by the sight, Callum became more determined than ever to finish the confection. He scooted the chair back slightly to provide room for his large stomach and then worked on finishing the process he'd started. Each bite caused the swollen sphere to swell out increasingly, and the drake's belly grew tighter and tighter as the remainder of the cake disappeared down his gullet.

The last bite caused the drake's belly to creak alarmingly with pressure, straining tightly and completely firm as it bulged proudly into the air. Callum dropped his fork and moaned from the heavy meal now weighing densely in his gut. The drake's ventral plates had separated once again to provide additional surface area for the dragon's gut to expand, and Callum gently scratched the tender silver flesh beneath. Breathing raggedly from the gargantuan meal, a satisfied grin spread over the drake's ample face. He

sighed contentedly from his accomplishment and slowly got to his feet so that he could pass out on his bed from the sense of fullness that hit him like a wild horse.

The drake stumbled out of the kitchen, being forced to lean back for fear of his belly surging toward the ground and causing the drake to fall. Callum collapsed into his bed, making sure to be careful of his stomach. Lying on his back, the drake's belly protruded proudly into the air and obscured the drake's vision of everything else. The last thing he recalled, apart from his hillock of a belly, was the sentiment of revenge. He had a certain serpent in mind who would never expect another attempted prank from the bulging drake.

Still yawning from the previous day's work, the purple serpent's fangs briefly popped out as he stretched the muscles in his jaw with a deep, tired sigh. Aaron steadily made his way to the bakery, wondering how his friend had managed with the cake. He wasn't going to admit it, but Aaron had snuck a large dose of his nutrient-boosting ingredient into the cake while it had resided in the kitchen the afternoon before. Aaron reasoned it was a good opportunity to increase both the drake's capacity and the padding on his body.

Eventually winding his way up to the door, Aaron quietly and morosely opened it, realizing he should expect the chubby dragon to attempt something. Looking around the room, Aaron glanced down in front of himself to find a trip wire identical to the flour incident strung across his path. Chuckling Aaron gently slit the wire and used his mind to levitate the bags of flour from their positions on the ceiling. He then recalled the second bowl of water and grain residing slightly further on and had them hover down to him too. The snake snickered at the ridiculous attempt of a prank and had his five eyes wonder around the room to try and spot the drake.

Suddenly Callum burst from his hiding place in the pantry and yelled, "Surprise! Gotcha." Before coming to a disappointed halt when he saw the serpent holding the flour and water in his hands.

"Nice try," Aaron chuckled gleefully. "But I would never fall for such a small, mundane effort. It's insulting to think you would rehash the same fruitless

attempt just to spite me.”

Callum huffed disappointedly, his arms folding over his considerably larger belly, which quivered from the movement and hung halfway down to the drake’s knees. “You just think you’re so smart, don’t you,” he said in a tone of mock disdain. “Well I guess you win this round,” the drake sighed before smiling once more, “But at least I get credit for trying right?”

“Of course,” Aaron assured him. The serpent donned his chef’s hat and jacket, before looking amicably at the dragon, “It’s always good to retain a good sense of humor,” the snake advised.

The drake nodded, grinning at the compliment, “I will certainly keep that in mind,” he said.

Returning the smile, Aaron slithered over to the main prep table to prepare food for the day, when he felt something faint brush his torso. Casting a glance downwards, the snake saw a light piece of yarn trailing around the main table and disappear from sight. Looking back up, the only thing the serpent had time to register was a large dollop of dough dropping onto a braced tray of....was that flour? The dough catapulted a large cloud of powder into the serpent’s face.

The snake stumbled around, hissing small curses as he tried to wipe the powder out of his face when, suddenly, he felt another faint brush give way to his coils. All that ran through his mind was a brief ‘Uh oh,’ before a bowl of water and grain were launched perfectly in Aaron’s nose. “Aafff-aff-aaaafffoooo!” Aaron tried to sneeze the water and grain from his snout and danced around the kitchen in a deranged attempt to rid the sticky concoction from his face.

Callum meanwhile was asphyxiating from laughter as he collapsed on his knees and leaned forward to brace himself. His belly jiggled madly from the movement and pressed against the drake’s soft thighs, where it quivered with each breath as the drake watched his boss try madly to expel the grain and water still lodged in his nose.

Eventually Aaron recovered from the doughy surprise, allocating a rag to wipe the worst of the offending mixture from his visage and jacket. Casting a stern glare at the corpulent dragon, he tried to express the appropriate emotions needed for the ridiculous situation, but found himself at a loss for

words, feelings, and thoughts. Opting for the angry choice, Aaron furrowed his eyebrows, pursed his lips and slithered over the still gasping dragon whose bulging gut swelled with each chortle.

Looking down at his familiar, Aaron said in his most serious voice, "And I suppose you find this to be ridiculously amusing?"

Glancing back up at the snake, whose face dripped with a sliver of wet flour and whose jacket was covered in blasts of grain, Callum sniggered once more, adopted a serious tone and said, "Ah, but remember Aaron, we must always retain a good sense of humor." Then the bulbous, blustering dragon broke down again and was once more reduced to tears.