

Reyna began her work in Aaron's Exceptional Confections a couple days after the initial offer. She needed to smoothen out her schedule in order for the lessons to coincide with bakery experience. The otter ended up taking mainly morning classes and sticking to the well-lit confines of the pastry shop in the afternoons.

After witnessing the impact the first concoction had on her dragon's belly, Reyna was all too willing to take time once the store was closed for intimate experiments. The otter found herself mentally producing different mixtures in her mind, trying to determine the best way to see Callum expand. The first creation she'd tested with the loaf of bread, formally known as the Caloric Infusion, was only one of numerous variances in the field of Infusions. The otter's considerable experience allowed her to think of incantations with inflation properties, ones that multiplied on command, others that liquefied a substance for ease of consumption, swellings/expansive capabilities, and simple infusions that directly transferred food mass into fat. Despite the otter's ability to memorize the various ingredients associated with each one, she remained unpracticed in inducing the magical properties that went along with them. Hence the appeal of a certain dragon who seemed to be a willing test subject.

Reyna often took advantage of the time she spent in the bakery kitchen to discuss and inquire about the large spectrum of choices involved in producing each infusion successfully. While Callum was a nice conversationalist, the subject of the finer, inner workings of magic often eluded the plush reptile, and this resulted in the otter consulting Aaron. The violet spirit possessed a vast array of knowledge and experience, due in part to his exceptional age, but another portion was attributed to the serpent's long years working a successful bakery.

The two worked seamlessly in the kitchen, passing implements back and forth as often as they conversed. Reyna would bring up the subject matter she'd studied that day, present to the patient snake, and then listen to his response and explanation with careful consideration. Aaron's capabilities allowed for him to demonstrate the proper incantations for each infusion. "For the Multipus Infusion," the serpent explained, "You need to envision the concoction replicating over and over, focus your mind on the image, and hold it there while stating the proper words. The image will become an existential entity with the correct enunciation and take the form of a mist that can be physically added to the natural ingredients."

“The makes more sense,” the otter nodded thoughtfully, “You’re methods of teaching are much easier to understand than my professor the other day.”

Aaron smiled in recognition of the compliment, before the two returned to their busy bakery work.

Callum, at first, was slightly miffed at the notion of Reyna spending the majority of her time conversing with the serpent while working in the bakery, but he quickly rescinded the sentiment when he realized how much it helped her. The well-rounded dragon found himself growing warmer to the idea of his newly found companion becoming better friends with Aaron. The fact that the two were also discussing topics mainly associated with his expansive waistline also eased the drake’s preoccupation.

Looking down, Callum grinned and patted his large belly adoringly. He’d acquired quite a bit of padding since the contest a couple days ago, and Reyna’s Caloric Infusion added even more flab to his midsection. The drake was only able to see his scaled feet if he bent far forward, but even that action caused his gut to crease and compress against his shirt and thighs. The drake knew when he had a good thing going for him, and wasn’t about to get in the way of the otter and serpent’s conversations.

While Reyna and Aaron spent a hefty amount of time discussing the various modes of expansive infusions, other areas were also broached.

“I think your practices would go a long way in the popularity of our customers,” Aaron confided in an appealing tone. “They always love coming upon new products, and if your desire is to be a chef,” the serpent shrugged, “Then perhaps we might create a couple more products with magical enhancements.”

Reyna smiled at the suggestion, “And of course we would need a test subject before they were released to the general public,” she tapped her chin thoughtfully. “Though I can’t imagine where we would find one.” Both turned simultaneously to the pudgy dragon who was just coming in from the front room.

“What?” The drake said uncertainly, widening his eyes at the unnerving gaze of the two individuals. “What!?!” He reiterated with more force. “Are you too plotting another prank?” The drake folded his arms and rested

them against his rounded belly, "It's not nice to conspire behind my back."

Finally letting the hapless dragon off the hook, Aaron smiled and shook his head humorously. "We were considering adding some new, improved confections to the menu," he explained, "And were looking for someone willing to run consumption trials on them."

Callum smiled eagerly, "I would be happy too," the drake said quickly.

Reyna tilted her head, amused by how easy it had been to get the drake to comply. "You know Aaron," she said in a slightly serious manner, "I'm not sure if our mutual friend is up to it."

"Wait, what? Now hold on a moment," Callum said, attempting to intervene as a panicked look spread over his muzzle. "I would be more than happy to..." he noted the smirks on both their faces, "You were joking, weren't you." The blustering drake sighed and shook his head, eliciting a gentle wobble from his chubby face. "Will I ever learn?" He muttered to himself.

"Nope! I wouldn't count on it," Reyna chirped happily, "So how about you quit pouting, and we get started on the first experiment."

A smile lit up Callum's face as his excitement returned once more, all notions of embarrassment dissipating as they were quickly replaced by the relish of consuming new products. "I can't wait," he said rubbing his claws excitedly over his soft stomach.

"It will take some time to create our first batch," Aaron told the drake, "But they should be ready by the end of the shift."

Callum nodded, before asking, "What will the new one be?"

"I was thinking a simple muffin with berries that changed their colors based on the customer's preference." Reyna said thoughtfully.

"We could call them...hueberry muffins!" Aaron exclaimed, a satisfied smile adorning his visage as he saw the otter and drake grin in appreciation for the humorous pun.

"Works for me," Callum said, running his tongue over his muzzle, "I don't care what they're called as long as I get to try one."

“And that’s why some of these will have an extra Caloric kick to them,” Reyna murmured, winking sneakily at Aaron.

The serpent’s smile widened at the otter’s plan, “I like the way you think,” he said softly while Callum made himself busy with a batch of pumpernickel loaves. “I believe you will be satisfied with the outcome,” he announced to the bulbous reptile, who nodded in agreement before the three companions returned to their different modes of work.

As Aaron and Reyna worked through trials of infusing the muffins with slight variations of the same berries, Callum focused on his own magical progression. The drake had made considerable progress in the field of levitation, but stood nowhere near the capabilities of Aaron or Reyna. His parlor tricks of making entities float for extended periods of time was really only a parlor trick in comparison to the hailstorm of kitchen items powered by his friend. Callum realized he needed to move onto the next level of advancement: Actually willing the objects to perform simple functions.

Focusing intently, the amply proportioned drake focused his plush face on a small bowl of flour and willed the bowl to float. His desire was to pour it into another, larger bowl in order to mix the ingredients, at least that was the plan. The drake injected concentration, fortitude, and dedication into his minimal incantation as he said, “Pourous Flourous,” with as much sincerity as he could muster. At first the bowl seemed like it would actually heed the drake’s command, before it rotated ninety-degrees to face the unsuspecting reptile and plowed straight into the drake’s face.

“Aaaack-gaaack pfffffft...gah,” was all that issued from Callum's muzzle, before crashing down squarely on his well-padded rear and adhering a death grip to the menacing bowl.

Snapping their heads to identify the cause of the commotion, both Aaron and Reyna almost died laughing seeing the bulbous reptile get attacked by the rogue flour bowl.

“You should know not to stick your snout where it doesn’t belong!” Reyna shrieked fitfully before being overcome by a second wave of chortles.

Aaron seemed to find the situation equally amusing, but he was able to maintain his composure long enough to help remove the offending

implement from the drake's face. He only lasted that long before breaking into a second round of howling fits when he saw the stark white mask that adorned the hapless drakes' face.

"You resemble a swan," the serpent said, mercilessly poking fun at the humiliated reptile.

Callum crossed his arms and attempted to pout, before a series of sneezes overcame his being and flour particles invaded his nose.

"Wafff...wafff...wafff..." with each violent expulsion a small cloud of white powder burst into the air like a miniature firework, only ebbing the already uproarious laughter that had seized the otter and serpent.

The image of a plush drake quaffing spurts of harmless flour was enough to fill the kitchen with a mixture of tittering laughter, mirthful quaking, and the periodic interventions of a steady "Wafff...wafff...wafff" as Callum tried desperately to clear the remaining flour from his snout.

Eventually the situation died down, as Reyna and Aaron grew sore from laughing so long and Callum eventually calmed his assaulted olfactory senses.

Despite his best efforts to be angry at the otter and serpent, the drake couldn't help but see the ridiculous nature of his situation. "I was just trying to pour a bowl of flour via telekinesis," he explained once the others were recovered enough to listen. "What was I doing wrong?"

Aaron thought for a moment, "It seems that you were concentrating too hard on willing your own influence into the action rather than allowing it to occur naturally."

"I thought focus was a good thing," Callum said, furrowing an eyebrow.

"It is," the serpent agreed, "But if you performed the action physically, you would never enforce that much intensity into one simple action. You want the effortless nature of pouring a bowl of flour naturally to transcribe into the ease of doing so magically."

Callum pondered the statement for a couple moments before he nodded and said, "I think I understand. Let me try it once more."

Reyna coughed into her fist, "You'll understand if I stand back here, right?"

Callum narrowed his eyes at her jab, before turning and facing the bowl once more. This time he had the bowl float effortlessly in the air, and then allowed his mind to access the simple muscle memory of tipping the flour into another bowl. This time the spell worked without a single hindrance. Eyes widening at the success, Callum turned to Aaron and said, "Thank you." The sincerity was evident in his voice as Aaron acknowledged the thanks with a nod of his head.

"Now then," the serpent said, clapping his hands together. "Let us return to our previous modes of work."

Callum turned his head back to his workstation, when Aaron added a small irresistible jab, "And try not to be overcome by the dough, Callum. It has quite a temper."

Cursing streamed back over the drake's shoulder to the serpent's absolute delight, and Reyna failed to smother a small laugh as she went back to work on developing the opalescent berries in their new muffins.

For the remainder of the day, Callum alternated between practicing simple exercises with his levitation skills and answering customers at the front counter. Aaron and Reyna were helpful in the kitchen, but their intent remained on perfecting the new product. The otter seemed to be getting closer to her goal with each try as the berries residing within the confections were growing increasingly responsive to changing shades on command. The drake spent considerable effort attempting to shut out the enticing fragrances wafting from the experimental foods, but his ponderous gut had other ideas.

Callum felt an anticipatory growl emanate from his midsection, which was loud enough to flag the amused attention of the experimenting duo.

"You truly can't wait to try one, can you?" Reyna quipped, snickering as the drake's pudgy features turned a bright red. When he only nodded in assent, the otter became a little more understanding, "Don't worry Callum, I think we only need to run a couple more tests and then you'll be free to enjoy."

The drake smiled in satisfaction; rubbing his low-hanging gut self-

consciously before saying, "Take your time. I'm in no rush." The hollow attempt at reassurance fell short as Aaron chuckled at the drake's evidently dissatisfied promise.

"Here," the serpent said, tossing the dragon an ordinary muffin infused with Reyna's simple Caloric spell, "We haven't tested this one yet, but it should be enough to sate your hunger."

Something in the wily spirit's voice should have warned Callum not to trust the muffin, but he was much too hungry to care at this point. The drake consumed the confection in a single bite, smiling from the pleasant taste. After several seconds, the drake realized he felt considerably fuller than any respectful confection should. Looking down at his protruding gut, he didn't see any visible difference, but the drake could feel the appendage grow considerably tighter.

Callum looked accusingly at the grinning serpent, "The Caloric Infusion?" He asked, rubbing his doughy midsection concernedly.

"Why whatever gave you that idea?" Aaron asked innocently, before an unavoidable smirk played across his face.

Reyna joined in on the fun with a mirthful chuckle, "Perhaps there was a small amount in there," she confessed, but it was only to shut your belly up.

Blushing, Callum pressed his hands into his soft sides and said, "Well I suppose it's alright then. I just can't wait to try the new ones."

"They're almost ready," Aaron reassured the grumbling drake, "I feel only a couple more trials are in order and then you may enjoy them at your leisure." His smile widened, "And if you find them satisfactory, then we will begin selling them regularly. This could be a wonderful way of introducing magic to a wider array of people."

Callum looked encouraged by both notions, seeing his magic spread to others would be incredible and the muffins, which resembled confections that had been rolled around in jewels, seemed delightful. Resting a hand on the upper curvature of his bulbous gut, the drake returned to his work with more enthusiasm.

The waning hours of the afternoon passed quickly into darkness as Callum wrapped up his work and bid the final customer a farewell and safe night. Locking the doors, the drake padded back into the kitchen with a spring to his step that caused his entire body to jiggle.

“How are they coming along?” He inquired gently, coming to a stop behind the studious otter and appraising serpent.

“Quite well,” Reyna said with a contented smile seeping across her muzzle. The otter’s tongue peeped out of the corner of her mouth in a focused gesture, and Callum took this as a sign to remain quiet until the pair were finished.

A minute later, Reyna finally stood up with a triumphant grin. “We are successful,” she declared grandly as she held out the final product. An ordinary muffin rested in her paw, but it seemed to have been studded with gems as the berries caught the light and shimmered in different vibrant shades.

“At long last,” Aaron chipped in like a presenter, “The very first rendition of the hueberry muffin.”

The three of them laughed at their ridiculous reverence for a trivial confection, but Callum was entirely transfixed on the sight. “So now it’s ready for the next stage?” He asked slyly, gesturing to his ample belly, which growled in unison.

Laughing, Reyna said, “I think so, but the final step is to record the proper ingredients to ensure we can remake it. Once that’s done, you are free to enjoy.”

Adopting a pathetic whimper and scrunching his plush features in a wan pout, the drake attempted to manipulate the otter’s emotions by way of sympathy. This was quickly put to an end when a hazardous rag whacked Callum in the face and wrapped around his pudgy head.

“Gah, alright! I get it,” he grumbled, glaring menacingly at the seemingly innocent serpent. “I’ll wait a little longer.”

“Good,” Reyna said. “Patience is a virtue.”

Callum rolled his eyes, crossed his arms, and huffed at the otter's chiding tone, but otherwise he remained silent.

"And there we are," the otter said conclusively, marking the last series of directions on a sheet of paper, "Now you may enjoy."

The drake stepped forward eagerly and picked up what seemed to be the finalized product. In appearance it resembled the actual one in every aspect, but internally, the one Callum had seized was a prototype that had been infused a large dose of the Caloric Infusion incantation as a result of Reyna's frustration from getting so many wrong.

Before either she or Aaron could intervene, the muffin disappeared in one large gulp. Reyna gasped in concern when she realized what had happened and Callum's satisfied expression slid from his face when the others turned to him with grave looks on their faces.

"What?" The drake inquired nervously. "You said I could enjoy."

The otter held up the finalized muffin in her paw, "Y-you must have eaten one of the trial ones," she stammered. "I'm not sure what will happen, but I think you had one that possessed a large quantity of the Calorie spell."

As her words sunk in, Callum slowly rubbed his belly. "How much is a large quantity?" He asked fearfully.

"Probably five or six times as much as the one we gave you earlier," Aaron said softly, gazing at the drake's midsection. "Hopefully it won't have any other effects," he mused.

As if on cue, the muffin's Caloric ingredient initiated its chemical reaction, latched onto the bread molecules, and expanded. At first the drake only felt the initial fullness of the previous muffin, but the sensation quickly surpassed that and began causing the drake's belly to swell tighter and rounder. His gut slowly lifted from its overhang on his thighs and bulged ominously from the increasing pressure. Swelling with the large dose of Caloric Infusion, Callum could only watch spellbound as his ventral plates smoothened out into concentric curves and separated from the increasing pressure. Tender silver skin peeked through the soft, blue stripes of plates and compressed against the hardier ridges. The drake felt his hands gently lose their grip on the amassing appendage as it reached a final rigidity of

firmness.

The impressive sight of Callum's swollen stomach transfixed both Aaron and Reyna with neither offering a comment or whisper during the process. It was a fascinating sight to behold, and when it ended, Callum was almost as large as when he'd won the contest. Gasping in relief when the process didn't continue, the drake took a seat on a nearby stool and allowed for the tension to seep out of his mind. His gasping caused the underside of his belly to brush against his thighs, a novel experience that testified to the true girth the drake had attained.

"Well," Aaron said, breaking the entrancing silence, "I'm certainly grateful there were no other impacts on your figu-.."

"HIC!" Callum unleashed a loud hiccup, which caused him to quickly clasp his claws over his muzzle in embarrassment. "Sorry, I don't 'hic' know where that 'hic' came from."

Reyna and Aaron, who might normally have found such an innocent outburst hilarious, were entirely silent when they watched the splendor that accompanied each expulsion of air. The drake's belly pulsed faintly with a radioactive glow from each hiccup. The source of the phenomenon was obviously the color-shifting berries, yet the effect was incredible.

Looking down, Callum realized the source of the pair's awed stares and let out a surprised yelp when he witnessed the spectrum of colors ripple through his stuffed middle with each gasp. "What the 'hic'-hell?" He said, grabbing the soft mass in his hands and staring at the ridiculous effect the muffin wrought on him.

"Looks like the muffin took some of the luminescence from the berries and saturated the bread in your stomach," Aaron explained calmly. "I don't believe it's harmful, but the impact is quite unique in any case."

Callum placed his hands on his ample sides and cocked an eyebrow at the sincere serpent, "You don't 'hic' say," he responded in a sarcastic tone as his swollen midsection flashed in brilliant neon fashion.

"It makes sense," Reyna said softly, "I'm sorry." She wasn't sure if the dragon was scared or mystified by the unnatural side effects, but the otter wanted to ensure he knew she was apologetic for the state he was in.

The drake's expression turned to one of sympathy, "It's all 'hic' right," he assured her before placing a claw on his illuminated midsection and looked at the otter invitingly. "It's a pretty 'hic' interesting experience," he said with a little enthusiasm, and then guided her paw down onto the rotund surface. "Watch."

Reyna was captivated by the impressive firmness of the globe resting in the drake's lap, but what truly made her gasp was the incredible effect the pulsing light had on her paw. With each 'hic' and bounce of Callum's stomach, her own hand briefly turned transparent and created the illusion that it was made from bioluminescent materials.

"That's incredible," the otter murmured with a hypnotized quality to her voice. She softly drew her stunted claws over the firm, tense scales and exchanged a warm, sincere smile with the drake. The constant 'hics' were beginning to slow down in the drake's cavernous belly, and the lights slowly faded, but the mutual affection shared between the two lingered. Reyna gently embraced the drake, "I glad you're alright, you silly dragon," she said softly. "Only you would manage to turn a magical muffin into an adorable light show."

Callum's smile widened at the words as he returned the hug over the impediment of his belly. "You 'hic' are the one who encouraged me," he chuckled lightly.

Aaron watched the plush dragon encompass the wily otter tightly into his soft stature, and a knowing smile played over his face as he enjoyed the deepening relationship take place in front of him.