

The sun rose over the sloping roofs of the quiet village, indicating the ninth and final day of Reyna's stay. She had played an instrumental part in aiding her brother with restorations and refurbishments to the community after they'd yielded an impressive crop boom. With increased production, the elders of the village had sent word to David to receive help in making connections with neighboring townships in terms of trade, deals, and economic inner workings.

Currently the pair was walking down the town's central street which was already beginning to show signs of life in the early morning light.

"It's sad that you were only able to spend a short time here," David said earnestly, as he squeezed his sister's shoulder comfortingly.

Reyna nodded with a slightly sad smile, "It is, but at least we were able to see each other when we did. I thought it would be another couple months at least." She cast a quick glance over at her brother with a reassuring expression, looking at him for a long moment while he considered his reply.

David was only a couple inches taller than her, sporting the same classic chocolate-and-cream color scheme native to their species. The soft white fur coating his under chin lifted as he grinned at the pleasure of the two of them simply spending time together. He possessed a lean build and wiry arms that affectionately wrapped themselves around Reyna in a brotherly hug.

She was quick to return the gesture, before the two parted and David adopted a teasing expression, "At least you're not entirely deprived of embraces in my absence," he said in a knowing voice.

Reyna turned a deep crimson that reflected idly off her fur, "Well...of course not," she chuckled, thinking of the numerous hugs she'd shared with Callum. "Is that a bad thing?" She asked.

Her brother had received the news with a mixture of surprise and, after hearing the comical experiences they'd shared, some degree of approval. As Reyna touched on the subject of his heft and corpulence, David greeted it with both incredulity and amusement. "You always did have a penchant for the softer things," he said, shaking his head and ruffling her round ears. The gesture was sourced from sibling affection that they'd built over the

years, and also because David knew she despised the notion; claiming it was demeaning to her position. That only earned her another head rub.

As they continued walking, David placed his index finger and thumb thoughtfully to the point of his chin and recalled the other individual Reyna had described. "I will certainly have to meet Callum in the future, see if he's as big as you claim," he smiled at the glowing blush spreading deeper into Reyna's physiology, "And the serpent, Aaron. He sounds like a good teacher."

Reyna nodded, "More of a friendly mentor and companion," she stated fondly, remembering the prank she and Callum had played on the magical snake. While she fully trusted David, she didn't feel it was her place to impart the more unusual nuances of Aaron's spirituous past on him. "He's been instrumental in progressing my Infusions course," she said warmly. "And Callum helped a bit too," she added, eliciting a hearty laugh from both of them. The drake had certainly offered unorthodox methods of assistance, usually revolving around taste testing or simply being the test subject himself.

As they neared the edge of the village where Reyna planned to head off and back to the city, David surprised her with additional news. The two were exchanging another hug when he said in a nonchalant tone, "I look forward to seeing you in a couple weeks."

Reyna's eyes widened at the statement, as she'd thought he wouldn't be returning home for a couple months. Her grip unintentionally tightened, and she gasped lightly. "That's incredible," she said with a shallow laugh.

Her brother accompanied the sentiment once they released their grasp on one another. "Settling this village went along quite a bit more quickly thanks to your aid," he explained, rubbing her head. "So I get to spend more time with my darling sister, and finally meet her friends."

Reyna's excitement increased with each word, "This is amazing," she bubbled in a light chitter. "I know they would love to meet you too," she continued, shifting her glance from his beaming face to the path leading into the woods, and then back.

David shook his brown and white muzzle, feeling the infectious excitement kindle his own tired senses. "And I look forward to meeting them," he said

humbly, before rolling his shoulders to ease some of the sleep from his joints. It was still early morning after all. As he gave his sister one final, heartfelt embrace, another fleeting idea darted into his mind.

Looking to Reyna, who was gathering up her bags and equipment, he said, "I'm not sure what you're planning over the coming weeks, but if you wanted to surprise your friends, there is a traveling fair that comes through the province in a couple days."

Reyna paused to consider the possibility, and felt warmth spread through her cheeks as she envisioned Callum's 'appreciation' for what the fair might provide. "It sounds like a wonderful idea," she agreed, "I would only have to ensure that Aaron would be partial to it." She already knew what her dragon's reaction would be, but the ultimate decision would be up to the boss. Bidding a final farewell, the otter hefted her pack onto her lean, muscled shoulders and strode forward into the morning light, which was dimmed by a low hanging fog clinging to the trees.

Upon return, the last thing the tired otter expected, as she entered the shop, late in the night, was how big Callum had grown in her short absence. And then how such a big individual could move so fast when he dropped the broom he was sweeping the shop with and dashed toward her in a lovable waddle.

Reyna felt a slab of draconic pudge engulf her own curvy stature softly, and laughed as the overtly hyper dragon performed his best reiteration of a bear hug. The overwhelmed otter managed to tap one pudgy shoulder, and she stepped back a couple of feet, only to be gently grasped by a series of vivid, violet coils. Aaron's grasp was nowhere near as dramatic as Callum's, but sincere nonetheless.

"Welcome back," the friendly chef said smoothly, a flicker of fondness flashing in his neon gaze. His coils loosened their temporary embrace on the otter's body, and Aaron playfully poked Callum in his soft, round side to bring him back from the precipice of ecstasy.

The drake eventually calmed down, as Aaron unleashed a low, chittering chuckle accompanied with the light words, "She was only gone for a short time, you know."

Rubbing one hand over his curved horns, Callum blushed mildly and folded

his arms over his flabby chest. "I'm just showing my appreciation," he quipped, before turning to Reyna. "You missed us too, right?" He rounded his gaze to feign pity and was rewarded with a playful punch from the otter into his knee-level gut, which caused it to wobble and tremble from impact.

Reyna chortled loudly from the drake's fish-eyed expression and turned to Aaron, "I certainly missed some things around here."

All three were silent for a moment while Callum hulked over his barreled midsection and dragged in fresh air through his mouth. Once he recovered, he righted himself and tried to pretend nothing had happened. "So how was your trip?" He asked in a conversational tone.

Reyna fell into a brief, winded account of her time in the settlement. Callum simply listened quietly, occasionally smiling at a particular time when she used her Infusion skills to settle particularly tricky, crop-oriented issues. Aaron's attention was attuned to a more academic perspective, and he added complimentary comments on her efforts. Once she commenced the wonderful time she's spent with her brother, the violet serpent clasped her shoulders approvingly. "I'll be sure to put a good word in for your performance with the college," he said in a proud tone.

The otter, whose eyes were dim with weariness nodded and mumbled a quiet, "Thanks." She momentarily nodded off, before recalling the final tidbits of information her brother had told her as she departed. Both Callum and Aaron seemed quite eager to meet David as well, and she decided to tell them the additional news.

"Oh, and David will also be visiting in a couple weeks," she mumbled, "Is it all right with you?" The otter tilted her tired gaze to the serpent who nodded encouragingly. The solidification of David's arrival was enough to send one final spurt of energy through Reyna's body, before exhaustion purged her of any sentient life.

Turning to her bulbous drake, who sat in the booth next to her, she smiled and said, "There's also a fair taking place in a few days." She could see the luminescent blue light in his eyes spark with interest. "He thought it would be fun for us to go." With that final announcement out of the way, the otter tilted forward, spread her arms out wide, and sunk into Callum's fleshy midriff, which was piled high on his lap.

His expression grew to a priceless mask of surprise and indignation, as he became a makeshift pillow. Aaron's lulling chuckles were accompanied by a soft, coiled pinch to his ample girth, "Told you, you were useful for something other than stuffing," the wily spirit joked in a teasing manner.

Callum raised his voice to protest, but quickly changed his mind when Reyna unleashed a soft purr of her own and dug her paw pads deeply into the rolls and love handles that accumulated into a three foot mound of scaly adipose. A smile effortlessly twitched at the corners of the fat drake's muzzle, and his pudgy shoulders relaxed and decompressed around his wings. Perhaps it wasn't all bad. After a couple moments, the otter was out with the force of an extinguished fire, and Callum realized he wouldn't be going anywhere for quite awhile.

Looking to Aaron, he shrugged and, in an unperturbed tone, said, "We have to go to that fair."

Aaron considered the implications of a trip into the rural areas of the province, and found himself immediately attracted to the notion. Nodding, he smiled and said, "I see no reason not too."

Callum grinned as he realized how much fun, enjoyment, and, of course, food would come with the celebration. As he was lost in a somatic reverie of the events to come, Aaron decided to add his own source of comfort to the deserving otter.

With a pulsating flash of violet light, he transformed into an equally vibrant, feral feline approximately five feet in length and two feet tall. He was an iridescent, five-eyed snow leopard, and the newly christened cat form hopped onto the table, padded over to the dozing pair, and curled himself neatly between the table and Reyna, enjoying the cushion beneath him.

Callum raised an eyebrow at the sudden change, but realized he wasn't entirely surprised by the spirit's nearly limitless host of powers. Besides, the feline was something akin to a large ember, as it radiated soothing warmth. With all three comfortable, the last withers of light faded into a barren moon that cast metallic light through the shop. All eagerly looking forward to the notion of taking a well-deserved trip into the wonders of the country festival.

The three spent a couple of days winding down business with regulars and

other customers. Aaron efficaciously informed the buyers that his shop would be closed for approximately, "One to two weeks, depending on the level of interest the fair offered." The news was always greeted with a polite nod, followed by cordial disappointment that they would be deprived of their wonderful confections. Not a single entity held issue with the change in plan.

Callum's excitement glowed with mounting intensity as he imagined all the different experiences he might enjoy in the company of Reyna. His newly accumulated bulk strapped itself lovingly to his body, and was constantly caressed by the impish otter. He was often prone to gentle pinches, nuzzles, and surprise cuddles that always rendered the same, startled yelp. Reyna adored it.

As the three enjoyed one another's company, Aaron began to indulge in his new hobby of shape shifting more often. His skill was quite evident given the effortless nature with which he transformed, but his intent often left a dubious pulse in the back of Callum's mind. A snake coupled with an unpredictable wiliness, and the addition of magical powers resulted in a combination that would change into various, soft creatures to either comfort or scare the hapless drake.

Reyna was more aware of Aaron's ability to surprise and retained the mental fortitude to keep a placid front when the spirit attempted to get the better of her. Callum was a slightly different case.

He found a purring raccoon asleep in one of the mixing bowls and promptly dropped the masked, violet critter to the floor with a shriek. The snow leopard who'd provided him comfort some nights before decided to pounce on his aproned figure early in the morning; resulting in much cursing, crashing, and a hollow, "Thwump," as his jiggly rear bounced to the ground. Callum had entered an entirely new plane of pranking warfare, and the day they left for the fair could not arrive soon enough.

With the rise of the sun, the three made final preparations to place the remainder of the products in deep storage. They also informed the delivery service not to drop any base ingredients off at 'Aaron's Exceptional Confections' for at least a week. The rest of the baked goods were sold at discounted price to the fretting customers.

The fair was approximately fifteen miles from the outer walls of the city,

residing in a popular meadow located near the edge of the forest.

Reyna and Aaron had a perfectly easy time making the trip; with the otter already used to a steady pace and Aaron winding his way effortlessly down the country lane. Callum was a bit more worrisome. His bulging sides heaved and quaked in labored steps after the first two miles or so. At first the others expressed concern for the drake, but it was only temporary as his additional musculature soon warmed up.

Aaron smiled as he realized just how useful his nutrient booster had become. He extended one coil to the gut heavy drake and nudged a rolling love handle, "Feeling all right?"

Callum flashed a quick thumbs up and spread a grin over his abundant visage. "Yeah," he chuckled, "I just needed to get used to consistent effort."

Reyna comfortingly patted the layer of plush adipose covering his rib cage and said, "Well think about the end game." She squeezed his rolled scales, "Plenty of food and idle time when we arrive and..." The grip tightened, "Plenty of appreciation for this."

The drake's resolve was entirely realigned by her words. While he had previously been getting used to the rigors of travel, her words were enough to act as a second source of adrenaline. His belly wobbled and compressed into the flabby plates stretched over his globular body as he stood. Smiling he said, "Well I certainly think continuing won't be an issue now."

Aaron nodded to Reyna knowingly. He was adept at ascertaining and aiding others in their difficulties, and Callum was relatively simple to encourage.

With the issue alleviated from their path, the three headed down the lane once more. A winding, violet hued serpent, lithe otter, and bulging, carbon reptile ambling their way through the early winter sun, towards a p

The fair rose in the distance as the sun was hanging low in the sky. It's drooping position mirroring the slow decline of Callum's gut as he hung his head deeper and deeper. He was tired, both physically and mentally as the excursion had been playing along his thoughts all day. When the three

finally reached their destination, Aaron willed a roomy, vaulted tent to erect in a comfy space along the fair's outskirts. Reyna aided him with the setup, while Callum mumbled something about doughnuts, stumbled a couple feet, and collapsed onto his soggy waist. He landed on one of the linen cots that Aaron had mentally willed into place.

A contented smile crept over the drake's face as he lost consciousness. Both of his companions grinned at the sight before finishing up the homely set up. Callum's expression lasted through his slumber, with his pudgy cheeks framing his comfort.

Once the others finished, they took their time to settle in. Reyna dragged her cot adjacent to her drake's and allowed her upper body to sink into a soft support of warm, draconian fluff. She was soon joined by the cloudy, glowing snow leopard Aaron had grown fond of embodying, and they all fell into the clutches of night.

The next morning, Aaron was the first to rise. He flexed his luminous feline form before transforming back into his serpentine self with a brilliant violet flash. As he stretched his extensive coils and brought a hand to his muzzle to cover a yawn, the others stirred from the pulsating glow.

Reyna was up and alert before her fat companion, and she took sinister enjoyment in sending a rippling slap reverberating through his knee level abdomen. Callum jerked upright with a yelp, scowling at his aggressor.

Aaron's vivid eyes closed in uplifted arcs as they reflected a mirthful chuckle. Reyna laughed along, and the plush reptile found it hard to maintain his pouting demeanor.

"Well I suppose that's one way to wake a helpless dragon up," he murmured off-handedly, righting himself and attempting to crack his back. He succeeded, but still bunched plenty of flesh in the process.

Reyna smiled at the drake's words, taking comfort in the notion that some things would never change.

Once the drake's grumbling subsided, Aaron kicked everything into gear with a flick of his tail. The tent magically realigned itself to textbook neatness while he said, "I suppose the first order of business would be breakfast?"

Callum visage naturally lit up at the mention of food, and Reyna nodded appreciatively at the notion. After their arduous trek the day before, everyone was willing to indulge in the edible pleasures of the carnival.

Together they slipped from their cloth tent and took a moment to appreciate the sprawl laid out before them. The fair seemed to form a rough, incongruous circle about a mile in diameter, with several large tents at its epicenter. From the inner ring, booths, stages, attractions, and performers splayed themselves out in a casual, pleasant display of lighthearted entertainment.

Callum found himself eyeing a booth closer to the outside of the ring. The bulky drake ambled forward as he realized that a combination of wondrous country-style cooking scents and a sign that promised top-tier food was why it proved so attractive. He stepped up to the maple serving counter, allowing his heavy belly to press softly into the lip of the wood, and said, "Good morning sir, I was wondering if you were serving yet?"

A large, multi-shaded mass of fur turned to face the inquisitive drake. They bore a draconic form reminiscent of Callum's own stature, but were coated in voluminous layers of silky fur and sported bleach-white antlers. It was certainly obvious they were a hybrid of sorts, and this one introduced themselves in a quiet, jovial manner.

"I certainly am!" The elkdragon said, a smile parting their light brown muzzle. He stuck out one chocolate hued paw invitingly, the appendage contrasting deeply with his lighter, bulky under belly. "My name is Cade by the way," he stated as he smoothened his apron, "Though most refer to me as Chef Sorenus."

Callum grasped the smooth paw cordially, "Callum," he said, looking the elkdragon over and taking in their unique appearance. Cade had a physique similar to his own. His belly was a tawny brown that ran up his chest and covered the lower part of his throat. His ample sides, wings, and arms were a darker shade of brown reminiscent of the chocolate frosting that adorned some of Callum's favorite confections. As if to cap off the continuously darkening color scheme, Cade's fluffy hands, head, wing tips and legs were a deep, rich brown that ruffled lightly with the elkdrake's movements.

He sported a wide, genial smile and had a fat, fluffy stature that spoke volumes about his fondness for foods and good company. Callum had just found his furry equivalent, and the other two became acquainted quite quickly. Cade's outgoing mannerisms were a perfect welcome to the fair.

After a moment, the fluffy anthro righted himself and gestured to the various meats, breads, and delectables behind him. "Was there anything I might be able to interest you in?"

Callum's grin widened and his belly rocked with a light gurgle. A vigorous nod solidified his decision and he said, "I would love a mincemeat pie."

Chef Sorenus clasped his hands together delightedly and turned to snag the requested food. His deep and light brown tail swept behind him, also thick with lard as it was framed by a generous, cotton clad posterior. Turning back, he offered it to the waiting drake and looked to Reyna and Aaron imploringly. "And for you, my friends?"

The serpent and otter each ordered their own foods, making sure to compensate the elkdragon well for his quality product and friendly service. As they enjoyed their breakfast, the elkdrake made small talk with them, detailing different aspects and activities within the fair. He was sharp enough to pick up on Callum's obvious passion for food and, in the end, offered to simply act as their guide for part of the stay.

Aaron was surprised by the generous offer, but realized Cade had a couple reasons to do so. For one, he and the spirit shared similar culinary expertise. The chef also seemed rather new to the carnival scene given his youthful age of around twenty. And he also simply seemed wanting to engage in interaction with someone of a likeminded disposition and girth, which Callum seemed more than happy to go along with.

After additional conversation, they agreed to meet in the late afternoon for a nice tour of some attractions. For the moment though, the three were left to their own devices, and Reyna decided to spend it in the best manner she knew; by stuffing her dragon with plenty of carnival treats.

Aaron acted as a chaperone for his younger, more enthusiastic companions. Ensuring Callum didn't spend too much of his time at a certain booth. Despite his more responsible attitude, the serpent spared no effort in enjoying the drake's ever expanding middle.

Callum was prone to additional nudges, pinches, and shakes from both fronts. With the day passing under the slow arc of the sun as it passed its morning, midday, and afternoon cycles, the drake's belly gently swelled in a pleasant, satisfied curve. The allotment of a steady, yet not overbearing stream of food resulted in his ponderous, three-foot girth widening and rolling heavily over his thighs. Each ventral plate formed an increasingly dramatic S-curve that swooped with the bolstered pressure pushing against it.

Callum loved the notion of being able to enjoy the multitude of different foodstuffs offered. One paw constantly assuaged the thick, scaly flesh in supple strokes while the other practiced divine summoning of different floating foods. He was able to practice magic, enjoy the company of his closest friends, and indulge in the prominent bulge sagging over his waist.

Most of the stands passed by with a similar polite appreciation and addition of an inch or so to the drake's supple abdomen. The only stand other than Cade's that managed to catch his attention was one manned by an anthro of his own, native species.

The draconic chef specialized in deep-fried affects, with meats, kabobs, and funnel cakes reminiscent of all classical, carnival foodstuffs. Callum found himself yearning for several of the saliva-inducing concoctions despite his swollen middle.

The pearl and grey drake turned to face his quarry, a friendly smile and glinting eye tinting his padded face. His body was generously layered in a similar manner to many of the vendors among the fair. A belly that folded neatly over the waist and wobbly flesh everywhere else reminded Callum of his earlier stages of bulking up. The wrecking ball that occupied his front was a testament to the encouragement and pleasure he derived from experiences like these.

The white drake smoothened his leather vest and cotton shirt, which covered light carbon scutes beneath. "Greetings," he said, allowing his hat to lilt quirkily to one side, "I can see at least one you are appreciating the carnival culinary."

The intended target for the tease only grinned and nodded, while Aaron let loose an amicable laugh and extended his violet tendril of a tail. "Our friend

seems to not be the only one," he replied, applying a fun-loving poke to the chef's lightly exposed side.

The comment and motion elicited a deep crimson blush to glow profusely along their white cheeks. "Well..er...you have me there," the flustered dragon said, trying to hide his evident embarrassment from the delighted gazes placed by Callum and Reyna. Eager to change the subject, the drake extended one clawed hand to his customers, "My name is Azar by the way."

Each member of the trio introduced themselves in quick fashion, before Callum inevitably brought up the subject he was always fond to discuss. "Well Azar," he said, running a forked tongue over his scaled maw, "Judging from your obvious appreciation for your foods, I'd love to try much the same." A wicked glint sparked in his sapphire eyes, which coincided nicely with the scarlet coloration that tinged Azar's neck, cheeks, and webbed fans running along the sides of his visage.

Turning away, the adorably humiliated drake busied himself in prepping additional platters of funnel cakes, slabs of juicy deer, and a kebab popping with ptarmigan, peppers, and bacon. For all his bumbling in the realm of weighty confrontation, Azar's expertise with the edible creations was readily appreciated by the three experienced bakers opposite him.

Turning back to them, he widened his grin and flicked a fan tipped tail with satisfaction. Callum nearly inhaled the foods, which snapped and spit their juices from the intense heat. The drake purred deeply as he felt his gut tighten once more in a warm, doughy drum that radiated contentedness. His deep blue ventral plates separated lightly to accommodate the seeping, platinum flesh beneath it.

Azar took the sight as a heartfelt compliment, and Reyna thanked him succinctly before rubbing the warm protrusion reverently. The chef turned his head quizzically at the sight, unintentionally thinking of the positive sides of possessing a larger figure. Glancing up, he caught eye contact with Aaron, whose five, luminescent orbs bore into him with mischievous intent.

Azar had the feeling that the snake knew precisely what he was pondering and was quick to change track. The serpent chuckled and said, "I can always aid you with that," he gestured to the bulbous, fleshy drake enjoying

the loving otter's company.

A hilariously panicked expression molded Azar's reaction from one of concern to outright fear. He could never, ever allow for his love for food to override his pride, could he? The white drake tried to strengthen his resolve, while Aaron did his best to persuade otherwise. It was an invigorating battle of the wills, but eventually Azar won out; at least for the time being.

In a polite tone he said, "Thank you, but I could never allow myself that freedom."

Aaron cocked his numerous eyebrows, unconvinced of the drake's words, but only nodded in return. The white drake hastily turned away and busied himself once more.

As Callum and Reyna came back from their indulgent cuddling, Aaron sinuously guided them further along the path. The two bid a short farewell to Azar, promising to return in the future, but for some reason he was only able to respond with a brusque wave. As the trio left, Aaron bore a wide smile, and Azar alternated between trying to convince himself that he was much too sensible to follow an expansive route, and casting glances down at his pudgy figure. Rubbing one white paw down his aproned middle, the notion occupied his thoughts for quite some time. Aaron knew exactly what the pearlescent drake's secret weakness was, and Azar could never truly convince himself otherwise.

As Aaron slithered behind his friends, he noted the position of the sun and realized they were close to their appointed meeting time with a certain, fluffy eldragon. He mentioned this to his companions who grinned at the prospect and eagerly followed the spirit back to Cade's booth. With the low dusk of the sun casting a diffusive light over the soft awnings and tents surrounding them, Callum gripped his gut in anticipation to enjoy an evening in the company of friends; old and new.