

Columbia State 1: Uncontrollable Urges

By: IndigoRho

“C'mon man, it'll do ya some good!”

Riley winced a little. He knew Niall was just talking over the music, but the whole room didn't need to hear them.

“How does eating *more* people help me? You don't know how frustrating it is to worry about waking up to a mystery meal.”

Niall shrugged. “Honestly that's a sign of a good night to me.”

“Yeah, well most of your meals turn out to be strangers...” Riley sighed. “And digesting a living being might be easy for a goat, but it's hell for the rest of us.”

“Chug Pepto, problem solved! Besides, you're a puma, an actual predatory species! If you'd hunt with me a little the sleep eating thing would go away completely.” Niall had been telling him that for years with ever greater conviction. Riley feared he would be desperate enough to agree one day.

“You really call *that* hunting?” Riley gently poked Niall's massive misshapen belly, which sprang back to life. “I seem to remember you just grabbing the poor guy while he was opening a beer.”

Niall looked down at his prize, grinning with exaggerated triumph. He was intimidating, especially for a goat, standing over six feet tall and weighing between 350 to 450 pounds depending on how ravenous he'd been. In contrast, the wolf he'd swallowed earlier was fairly short and practically emaciated. Niall gripped his gut with both paws, shaking it to settle down his meal. The rest of the party guests had been keeping their distance after he'd eaten, though he noticed some staring nervously now. Very few people were comfortable with casual vore; Niall reveled in it.

“Hunting's all about catching your prey unaware. Move fast enough and they won't realize what's happening till their head enters your stomach!” He gave his belly a hard slap, refusing to muffle the resulting belch.

Riley cringed, feeling the stares of everyone nearby. He had just wanted to relax after a long week and hang out with some new people. Now he was bound to spend the rest of the night avoided for being friends with the voracious goat.

“What's wrong?” Niall asked. “Appetizer here wasn't on Lindsey's 'Do Not Eat' list, and I know he's not your type...”

Riley jabbed him lightly in the stomach, blushing slightly. He was annoyed anyone knew his preferences, especially Niall. “That doesn't have anything to...never mind.” He felt bad Niall's meal had taken the brunt of his interruption. A silly concern considering the wolf was about to be digested. “I still can't believe Lindsey didn't just ban you from eating guests outright.”

“Eh, she's been to enough parties with me before, she knows what happens,” Niall said. “The list means I don't get yelled at as much. Personally, I think she just knows a surprise meal or two makes the party more memorable.”

Niall's belly had settled down again, its contents running low on energy and air. He zipped up his hoodie, conveniently concealing his meal, and gave the room a quick scan. The other guests avoided eye contact, a few even cowering at his gaze.

“You already leaving?” Riley asked.

“Well, nothing else here really catches my eye, and Victor mentioned having some leftovers he needed help finishing off. You're free to tag along.”

Escaping the inevitable awkwardness of the party was tempting, but Riley was reluctant to leave so early. Besides, hanging out with Niall and Victor usually just meant nostalgic hunt stories or drunkenly skimming through vore videos online. “Nah, Lindsey was pretty insistent I be here tonight, and I want to avoid being yelled at just as much as you do. Thanks, though.”

Niall wrapped an arm around Riley's shoulder, pulling him in close enough to feel the digesting wolf beneath the thick layer of fat and fur. “Alright bud, talk to ya later. Oh, and if you change your

mind, here's the list." Niall forced a crumpled piece of paper into Riley's paw, and gave him a hard slap on the back to preemptively end discussion. The goat hurried across the room and out the door, guests stumbling over each other to avoid him. While a handful cast worried glances at Riley, most seemed relieved, with many conversations shifting to focus on vore.

Still recovering from Niall's rough goodbye, Riley carefully smoothed out the paper he'd been given. The list was simple, obviously tailored for Niall and exhibiting Lindsey's well-known bluntness. Each line included a brief physical description—rarely flattering—and species. Names were included in parenthesis at the end, but looked less legible; Lindsey obviously knew what Niall would pay more attention to. Riley was surprised to see barely half the guests listed, though amused to see himself included, described as “your cat bestie, idiot”. He also noticed one of the names outlined heavier than the rest, with lots of squiggles and asterisks to draw attention to it. Something about a zebra...

“Riley!” He instinctively re-crumpled the list as Lindsey approached from behind. “So sorry for keeping you waiting, there are just so many people to catch up with!”

Riley turned to greet the lioness. “No worries, I was just chatting with Niall.”

Lindsey's smile wavered momentarily. “Thanks for distracting him. I heard about the voracious goat's antics in the garage. I was kind of hoping he'd find the list a hassle and just not bother eating anyone.” She rolled her eyes. “He did follow the list, right?”

“Uh, maybe?” Riley honestly wasn't sure himself. “The guy he ate was a wolf, kind of short, real thin, greyish fur...um...green shirt, I think.”

Lindsey stood silently for a moment, putting together the description. “Alright, pretty sure I know who you're talking about. Not on the list, might be an acquaintance of an acquaintance, I think.” Her response was uncomfortably matter-of-fact. “Where's Niall now?”

“Oh, he left when his meal started digesting. Something about hanging out with Victor.”

“Figures he'd treat my place like a drive-through, oh well.” Lindsey replied cheerfully. “What's important is you're still here. I've got someone you need to meet!”

Lindsey grabbed Riley's paw, leading him towards the open door to the garage with little resistance. He knew she was only this insistent on introducing people when she tried playing matchmaker. Lindsey was obnoxiously good at picking out his type, but the relationships had always ended poorly. Maybe, for once, she would be wrong, and Riley wouldn't have to deal with the inevitable. Entering the garage, Lindsey guided him around the many guests surrounding the snack table and playing video games. In the far back of the room, next to a worn out couch and piles of junk, a zebra stood patiently, staring at his half-empty beer.

The zebra was short, and a little bit stocky. He had a slight dome of a belly that noticeably strained his plaid shirt's pattern and buttons. Riley caught himself wondering if the stripes of his belly similarly strained. Small traces of his weight were visible on his face, mainly in his rounder cheeks and hint of second chin. Lindsey really did know his type. The zebra was just beginning to readjust his glasses when he noticed the pair approaching.

“Hey Marcus, sorry for running off like that! Had to make sure a goat wasn't eating anyone he wasn't supposed to, and I ran into that old friend I wanted you to meet!” Lindsey finally released her grip on Riley.

Marcus hesitated for a moment before speaking. “Hey, I'm Marcus, nice to meet you.”

“I'm R...”

As the two shook hands, Riley's introduction was interrupted by Lindsey. “This is Riley, I've known him since college, we were neighbors for like, two years. He's just one of the nicest guys I think I've ever met, always so thoughtful. Oh, and he's an amazing cook, though I think that's fairly obvious.” She gave Riley a quick slap on his own pudgy belly.

Riley forced himself to maintain eye contact with Marcus, failing miserably to hide his embarrassment.

Lindsey moved on. “And Riley, this nerdy little striped goofball is Marcus. He's been teaching

me how to play piano for about four months now. His music is beautiful! Sometimes I screw up on purpose just to hear him play again! I'd have never forgiven Niall if he'd snapped him up!"

Marcus followed Riley's lead and simply stared straight ahead, speechless.

"So glad you've both finally met! Now I really need to get back into the living room and catch up with some more people. Parting gifts!" Lindsey handed Riley and Marcus a brownie each. "Really awesome blend in these. Really strong, though, so watch out!"

Lindsey hurried away from the pair, managing a few more one-sided conversations with bystanders as she left the garage. The mutual awkward silence was prolonged as Riley and Marcus ate their offerings.

Riley recovered first. "Lindsey's really, uh, something, right?" He laughed meekly. "I had a lab class with her once, I can only imagine what it's like teaching her an instrument."

Marcus chuckled. "It's definitely interesting, though she'd learned a bit as a kid so we weren't starting from scratch. Lot of enthusiasm."

"Enthusiastic's a great way to describe Lindsey." Riley's laugh was more genuine this time.

"So, uh," Marcus said. "Lindsey said you like cooking?"

Riley welcomed the opening. "Yeah, my parents used to work late shifts so I had to fend for myself a bit food wise. I was also dealing with some, uh, odd eating problems and thought maybe cooking my own food would help." He immediately regretted bringing the last tidbit up. "Anyways, I loved making food so much I decided that's what I wanted to do with my life. Working as a chef at Vicente's right now, over in West Hill."

He was worried he'd been rambling, but Marcus appeared captivated. "I'm jealous. I'm horribly inept when it comes to cooking, pretty much live off the microwave and fast food." Riley couldn't help but notice Marcus scratching his belly a bit. "I always feel a little bad downing a combo meal while watching some ridiculous three course feast being prepped on the cooking channel."

"I don't know, sounds like a fun evening to me." Riley blushed, surprised by how direct he was being.

Marcus grinned. "Glad to know someone else feels that way. This might be an odd question, but do you have any specialty dishes?"

"I've got a few pie and cookie recipes I'm rather fond of." Now it was Riley scratching his belly. "Haven't really been able to experiment much recently, though. Eli just doesn't eat anything, thinnest fox I've ever seen. Victor loves everything regardless. Niall only cares about food if it's still moving."

"Well if you ever need someone to taste test your leftovers I'll valiantly step up," Marcus said with an odd mix of mock and genuine seriousness.

"That, that would be really nice." Riley ignored the little voice in his mind telling him to hold back, reminding him how this always ended. "Want to grab some snacks?"

"Yeah."

The pair left their quiet side of the garage, reaching the messy refreshment table. Picked through chip bags and abandoned plates took up most of the space. Fortunately an assortment of last-minute pastries were still plentiful. Riley and Marcus each sheepishly grabbed a single cookie, eating them bit by bit. Their second servings were eaten with far less hesitation. Riley began passing Marcus anything he assumed he hadn't tasted yet, while Marcus acted as if any repeats were brand new. Absorbed in the guilty pleasure, Riley paid little attention to the brownie chunk he scarfed down himself, at least until he noticed its odd aftertaste. Riley stopped, desperately trying to convince himself the taste was something else.

Marcus stood by, confused. "Something wrong?"

"Fuck, fuck, fuck! I just ate another pot brownie!" Riley cursed under his breath.

"Do you get bad highs?"

"I, um..." Riley was too afraid to tell Marcus the truth. "I just...zone out if I have too much. It's frustrating, that's all."

Marcus seemed relieved. "Don't worry man, I'll keep ya company. We can chill out on the couch. My edible's starting to kick in, anyways."

Against his better judgment Riley agreed, returning with Marcus to the beat up couch and attempting to look less worried. The couch felt about as comfortable as it looked, though it was far preferable to standing.

Marcus tried to lighten the mood a little. "Man, last time I double-dipped on an edible I spent the night on a soaking wet patio swing. Bus ride home the next morning was uncomfortable as hell. If you do pass out, I'll make sure you're on something dry."

Riley slumped back into the couch. He couldn't pass out, he couldn't black out. If he did he knew he'd wake up with a full stomach, and Marcus was increasingly likely to be the victim. Lying about his condition was putting Marcus in danger. He would learn eventually, and Riley wouldn't be able to forgive himself if he learned the hard way.

"I...I need to be honest about something." Riley finally managed. "This is really embarrassing, but I have a sleep eating problem."

"Like, you'll raid Lindsey's fridge if you fall asleep?" Marcus asked.

"No, more like I'll try to eat the nearest person." Riley stared at the floor, afraid to see Marcus' reaction. "I learned about the condition on a camping trip in high school. Went to sleep the first night sharing a tent with my friend Eddy; woke up a few hours later to the sounds of him digesting. Chaperones didn't believe me at first when I said I didn't remember eating him, thought I was trying to play stupid. Then, on the last night, one of them found me roving the campsite, sniffing the air repeatedly and completely out of it."

Marcus had listened quietly as Riley told him the story, looking upon him with sympathy rather than disgust. "Does it happen every time you fall asleep?" he asked.

"Apparently only if I get hold of a strong scent." The inquiry made him nervous. "Really good chance if they're in the same or a nearby room. Guaranteed if they're in the same bed."

"I...I'm so sorry," was all Marcus could think to say.

"Oh, no it's...it's not that horrible," Riley lied. "I just have to be really careful. And sometimes wear a muzzle. Usually end up eating only one to three people a year."

"So you're not an active predator?"

Riley froze up at the question instinctively, though he felt his answer to be the right one. "No, that's just not who I am. Though my friend Niall sure wishes I were. He's utterly convinced that would solve my sleep eating problem, but I know the gluttonous goat just wants a hunting partner."

"Was Niall here tonight?" Riley nodded in reply, and Marcus laughed unexpectedly. "A while ago a rather hefty goat wandered in. Didn't talk to anyone, just kept glancing at something in his hand a lot. Gave me a big grin at one point and looked like he was gonna introduce himself, then looked back down at his hand and left the room looking really disappointed. I assumed he was texting, but now I get the feeling I was really, really lucky."

Riley began laughing, though he felt horrible about it. "Yeah, that was definitely Niall. Fortunately you were apparently on Lindsey's 'Do Not Eat' list she gave him, otherwise you'd be adding to his ridiculous waistline right now." He would have to thank both Niall and Lindsey for that later.

"I guess Lindsey really does enjoy the lessons," Marcus said with a smile.

"Apparently," Riley replied. "Though if you want to remain lucky, I should really leave now. I'm sure Lindsey can lock me in a closet till I'm a hundred percent again."

Riley tried to stand, but found Marcus' hand on his shoulder. "Man, exiling yourself to a closet would just make the rest of the night worse, at least for me." Both noticed the other blushing. "I mean, I'm sure I can keep you distracted."

"Marcus, if I lose myself you'll be the first person I try to eat, I...I don't want to wake up to that." Riley was surprised by his own candidness.

"I have no plans on being anyone's midnight snack tonight," Marcus answered. "Besides, I've

got plenty of experience avoiding conscious hunters; I think I can handle an inebriated one.”

In spite of his better judgment and dozens of painful experiences, Riley relented. “Alright, just be careful. I've been told I can sneak up on people really well.” He smiled nervously.

“Thanks for the heads up. Anyways, why don't I, uh, *lighten* things up a bit,” Marcus said, snorting at the joke only he would understand. “One summer during high school I went to a weight loss camp,” Riley perked up a little. “Problem was, vast majority of the campers were brand new predators who'd hunted themselves to obesity. The staff were completely unprepared. Every group activity and team building exercise devolved into a vore free-for-all within minutes. A few predators were so successful they actually ended up immobile from their weight gain, though that wasn't enough to prevent some from being eaten themselves eventually. I wasn't a predator, so instead I just spent the whole month exercising and dodging voracious campers. Think I might have been one of the only ones there who lost weight. I was terrified at the time, but honestly I've come to appreciate the experience.”

Riley had been poorly disguising a smile throughout Marcus' story, and burst into a giggling fit once it ended. “Sorry, sorry. That really does sound terrifying.” He composed himself. “But it also sounds just, ridiculous in a morbid sort of way.”

“That's how I like to look at it,” Marcus said. “I still give my parents a bad time about it, seeing as they were the only reason I went to the camp. One of my cousins had gotten really fat and ended up as a classmate's lunch, so they became convinced the same thing would happen to me. I weighed about a hundred pounds more than I do now. Guess that'd be appetizing to a pred who didn't care about their waistline.”

“A...a hundred pounds?” Riley stared at Marcus' small belly, imagining it ballooning out to its former size, buttons bursting, stripes stretched. “I'm, uh, sure slimming down was nice.” The disappointment in his voice did not go unnoticed.

“I wouldn't describe myself as slim.” Marcus gave his belly a quick squeeze, to Riley's obvious delight. “And honestly, I didn't care too much about my weight. Wasn't always convenient, but never bad enough to annoy me, personally. Of course, I was also the 'thin' one in my friend group. Hard to match the bulk of an elephant or hippo.”

Riley, emboldened by his growing inebriation, decided to open up more. “This is a silly thing to admit, but recently I've been trying to only date guys on the heavier side.”

“Oh?” Marcus prodded.

“The way I see it, the fatter my boyfriend is, the harder it is to accidentally eat them.” He blushed. “It would just ease a lot of my worries. I've even helped a few work towards the ideal weight.”

Marcus seemed surprisingly accepting of the admission. “Well I think that's a perfectly sensible approach.”

“Unfortunately it hasn't really worked yet. Few candidates, a lot of close calls, and some unfortunate...well.” Riley looked down at his own soft belly, guiltily.

“It's a shame I went to camp, then.” Marcus mused. “I'm sure my old weight would have met your requirements, or at least been close.”

“I guarantee my cooking could solve that problem,” Riley replied without hesitation.

Now Marcus was hiding a smile, though Riley was in no condition to spot it. “If that's an offer for free food, I might have to accept. Speaking of which, I'm gonna see if the snack table's got anything left. I'll be right back.”

Marcus eased himself off of the couch, noticing with amusement Riley's gaze following his belly. He had never considered his weight an asset before. Growing up his friends had always joked he was too scrawny and encouraged him to gorge, but once he began dating everything was different. Guys would be concerned he was eating too much, that he was flabby. Walking towards the table, Marcus thought of what he himself wanted. He didn't care about getting thinner, but he'd never considered regaining the weight he'd lost. At the same time, he wasn't actually against gaining the weight back. His old friends Len and Paul would get a kick out of it, for sure, and Riley obviously had

a thing for pudge. Maybe he was thinking too far ahead. Riley was stoned, and Marcus himself was enjoying a buzz. They could sober up tomorrow and feel completely different. Marcus looked down, realizing he had been lost in thought at the snack table for quite some time. A few scattered pastries remained, though most looked dried out and crumbled. He grabbed one of the last intact cookies and held it close to his mouth.

No harm in a little head start. He thought to himself, scarfing down the fresh-enough cookie.

Brushing the crumbs from his hand, Marcus suddenly became aware of the warm breath on the back of his neck. The zebra twisted around sharply, hands against the table, adrenaline already pumping as he faced the perceived threat. Half-expecting Riley, he was relieved to instead be facing a wolf. The wolf was a little taller than Marcus and likely the same weight. His shirt seemed well-worn, but a size too small; the messy gray-white fur of his spare tire was hard to miss. He smelled strongly of vanilla, from a cologne Marcus vaguely recognized.

"Hey there, uh," Marcus said.

"Blake"

"Blake. Enjoying the party?"

"Not yet," the wolf answered, still blocking Marcus' way. "Only came cause a couple mates said they'd be here. Then one backs out, and that beanpole Reggie seems to have bailed early or something." The liquor on his breath was painfully apparent now.

"That...that sucks?" Marcus offered, with growing concern.

"Glad you think so. Now the real problem is that I got here a little late, and the leftovers are slim pickings." Blake moved in uncomfortably closer. "Lucky for me I seem to have found something way more filling than cold pizza."

The wolf lunged forwards, pinning Marcus' arms to his sides and his back to the table. He dug his claws into the flesh of his prey, causing Marcus to cry out and disrupting his efforts to resist. Guests who had been sitting around a television nearby turned to the sound, though they offered little more than sympathetic or curious stares. Blake opened his maw wide, releasing a cascade of drunken breath that nauseated Marcus, then roughly engulfed the tip of the zebra's muzzle. Marcus began to panic. Moving his arms only provoked a sharp clawed squeeze, his body was sandwiched between table and wolf, and his head was now locked into place, forced to stare into the eyes of a stranger who saw him as nothing more than a free meal. Worst of all, barely twenty feet away were more than enough people to pry Blake off and save him. They simply watched.

Marcus saw Blake's maw begin to open again, knowing the next gulp would likely swallow up to his glasses. Blake's eye's widened abruptly, and he froze up. Confused, Marcus tore his gaze from the voracious wolf, quickly discovering the cause. Riley stood behind Blake, deeply inhaling the fur of the wolf's shoulder. Marcus' muzzle was freed from its putrid confines as Blake turned to berate the interloper.

"Fuck off dude, or I'll..." Blake was quickly silenced as Riley swallowed most of his head in one large gulp. The wolf released his prey to fight back, but there was no room for him to fully turn around himself. Riley rested a paw on the back of Blake's head and forced it into his maw completely, then grabbed the wolf's wrists. Still trapped himself, Marcus hugged the edge of the table. He had never witnessed vore up close, and wasn't necessarily feeling rescued just yet. Blake's muffled cursing echoed from Riley's throat in between gulps as his shoulders were swallowed. Riley gradually brought the wolf in closer, embracing him in a tight bear-hug and inching him off the ground. The handful of bystanders in the room continued watching with morbid fascination. A fox in a dark blue beanie raised his beer into the air, yelling "Chug 'em!" Others joined in, creating a disorderly chant

"Chug! Chug! Chug!"

The encouragement worked, and Riley began swallowing Blake faster than before. Marcus couldn't believe what he was hearing. *Was the wolf this disliked?* He wondered. *Or would I have heard the same chants while sliding down his throat.* Meanwhile, Blake was reaching the point of no return.

He swung his legs wildly, too panicked to effectively resist, knowing his head was inching closer and closer to the stomach's entrance. The effort was futile. Riley continued consuming the wolf effortlessly, never stopping to savor him, constantly gulping. Arms, butt, and tail disappeared, leaving only denim-covered legs, which the feline raised into the air. Gravity began pulling the squirming meal towards his fate even faster than before. Marcus watched Riley's belly swelling and shifting as more of Blake emptied into it. With an audible "Gulp" the tips of two sneakers vanished out of sight, and Riley finally closed his mouth with a huge grin. The onlookers gave a final, celebratory cheer.

Marcus stared at the massive belly that now blocked his path, close enough to see every distorting imprint made by its contents. When he finally looked away, his suspicions were confirmed. Riley's eyes were bloodshot and barely moving, his smile was awkward, and he seemed to be stifling the occasional giggle. Though saved from certain death, Marcus was still unsure if Riley's sleep eating was sated—or if a second course was in store. He carefully slid back into the open.

"Hey Riley," Marcus hoped the puma would respond to his suggestions like he did the cheering. "Why don't we head over to the couch now, maybe sit down and rest?"

With minimal direction Riley stumbled away, his meal visibly resisting each step. Blake was still yelling, though none of it was intelligible. Reaching his destination, Riley collapsed onto the already damaged couch with a thud and screech, followed by a much gentler Marcus. He was still weary, but felt the need to stay close. Especially when a few curious individuals wandered over.

"Dude, that's crazy! I've never seen someone eaten that fast before!"

"You should've seen the goat earlier, had some wolf up to his ankles before anyone noticed. Pretty sure he was with the Puma, too."

The beanie-wearing fox gave Riley's gut a quick rub. "You can, like, totally feel that guy in there!" Riley giggled from the touch while his meal struggled.

Others joined in, apparently convinced Riley was full. Marcus was simply confused. He was so used to vore being decried as uncivilized and cruel, a trademark of bullies and jerks, especially here in the city. PSAs against the practice were common, and schools usually promoted anti-vore programs as often as anti-drug ones. Most polls showed people being generally unwilling to eat others. Despite all that, Riley eating Blake was treated as hilarious. They obviously knew the whole situation wasn't a joke, that Blake wasn't going to be thrown up in a few minutes before things got bad. Alcohol was likely playing a role in their attitudes, but still. Marcus felt like he'd traveled back in time a decade or two.

"Alright this is getting ridiculous!" Everyone tensed a bit at the sound of Lindsey's voice. "Every time I leave a room someone decides to pig out! And Riley I expected better from you." She nudged the small crowd aside, looking down at the stuffed puma in frustration.

"Wait, Lindsey, he's got an excuse!" Marcus said a little more passionately than planned. "Blake tried to eat me, but Riley saved me. He only ate Blake afterward because he's, uh, not really all there right now."

Lindsey thought for a moment. "Ugh, I told him the brownies were strong, didn't realize he was such a lightweight." Her mood didn't appear to change. "Blake can be a prick sometimes, so no big loss there."

"You...you don't want Riley to throw him up?" Marcus was surprised.

"Eh, that'd just be more trouble than it's worth." she leaned in towards Riley's stomach. "Hey Blake! If you can hear me, you're on your own!"

Lindsey gave a hard slap to the lump she assumed was Blake's head, before walking away and leaving the garage once more. Her decision caused the guests to burst into laughter, while the unfortunate wolf thrashed about. Riley slowly rubbed his own distended belly and began to groan. Everyone stood back, fearing the puma was about to hurl. Instead, Riley let out a thunderous belch, clearing most of the stale air from his stomach in one go. Blake's outline was now more clearly defined, and his struggles less impressive. A series of small belches followed, limiting the wolf's movement

more and more. His muffled yelling became sporadic, and Marcus was the only one close enough to recognize it shifting to desperate pleas. The zebra felt a tinge of guilt, though it was overshadowed by the memory of Blake's earlier eagerness to eat him.

As Riley's stomach quieted and settled, the impromptu audience dispersed, no longer interested in the spectacle. Riley's eyelids flickered a few times before finally closing altogether, and the puma slid onto his side, content and asleep.

* * *

The next morning Riley awoke, sluggish and sore. Attempting to sit up, he failed, surprised by an unexpected weight. He pulled off the sheet draped over him and stared at the enormous mound of his belly in horror. A quick squeeze and jiggle confirmed the stomach's contents were mostly liquid; if anything living had been in there, they were nothing but bones and goop now.

"Not again!" Riley whined, desperately trying to recollect his last conscious moments the night before. He remembered talking with Marcus, how the adorable zebra promised to watch him, how....how he'd stumbled off after him to the snack table. His eyes began to water. *No...no, no, no, no!* Riley fell back into the couch, covering his face. Why hadn't he secluded himself away the minute he realized he was a hazard? Riley knew what he was capable of, knew he would become voracious once he was out of it. But he had wanted more time with Marcus. He hadn't felt this strongly about another guy in over a year, and the more he talked with Marcus the greater his hope was. Now he was just a soupy mess in Riley's stomach.

"Hey buddy, you feeling alright?"

Riley uncovered his watery eyes, and stared up in disbelief. Marcus stood beside the couch, holding a plate of donuts and looking down with concern.

"M...Marcus?" Riley stumbled. "But who's this?" He shook his belly, its contents sloshing about.

Marcus looked confused, before his eyes went wide in realization. "Oh, oh! Don't worry, that was some jerk named Blake. He tried to eat me last night, but you came to my rescue!"

"I did?"

"Well I'm not entirely sure you did so on purpose, but I'm not eager to complain," Marcus smiled.

Riley relaxed a little, before worry returned. "Crap, is Lindsey pissed?"

Marcus laughed. "Not really. Apparently Blake had a shitty reputation, lots of gloating about being an alpha predator. Lindsey seemed, uh, oddly OK with you digesting him."

"Well, that kind of makes me feel better." Riley finally noticed Marcus' pile of donuts. "Oof, those look delicious, but I'll be full for a good two, maybe three days."

"Yeah, I thought so." A huge grin grew on Marcus' face. "Besides, Lindsey said these were all for me." He finished off a half-eaten one in a bite.

Riley smiled back. "Quite a lot to have all to yourself."

"After last night, I feel it's good to live a little." He gave his belly a gentle pat. "And if I gain a little weight, well, I know someone will enjoy it."

Riley simply blushed. Perhaps, this time, things would finally turn out well.