

Columbia State 5: Patrolling Hungry

By: IndigoRho

The sky had cleared up nicely following a week of persistent rain, the moon and stars shining down upon the extensive park of the local university. Most students were preoccupied with Greek row and a block party celebrating the start of the semester, though, so the park was unusually quiet for a Saturday night. Niall, a member of the campus security, considered this to be incredibly frustrating. As the night was not too cold, the goat had abandoned his heavy jacket back at the station, relying solely on his normal black uniform for warmth. And his considerable stores of body fat.

Niall guessed he was probably a few pounds short of four hundred at the moment, most of it being contained surprisingly well by his button-up shirt. He would have been even larger, but his hunting attempt the previous month had been foiled, and no good opportunities had arisen since. A rare weekend night patrol like this would normally provide Niall with plenty of options for prey. His supervisors had managed to avoid scheduling him for them for quite a while, but the start of the school year meant more patrols were necessary. He had been absolutely delighted when told he had a night patrol, and then utterly dismayed to learn it would be as far away from the crowds as possible.

The night was still young, though. Someone had to be doing something foolish in the park right now. Niall lazily walked along the park's path, listening out for anything interesting and grumbling under his breath occasionally. To his joy, he finally spotted someone. A rather short distance away was a hyena pissing next to, and often on, a park bench. His balance was poor, and Niall assumed he was probably a rather lost drunk. Hopefully he would meet the right requirements for prey.

Niall calmly approached the hyena, who remained blissfully unaware he was being watched. "Nice night we're having, sir," he spoke up with obvious sarcasm, shining a light on his head. "I'm afraid the bench isn't a toilet."

The hyena was startled, and hit the bench one last time before hastily zipping his pants and turning around. He squinted from Niall's flashlight, doing a poor job of shielding his eyes with his paws. "Oh...uh...I kind of had to go real bad. Sorry." Definitely drunk.

Niall had all the justification he needed to bring the hyena back to the station, a little more was needed to see what condition he'd make it there in, though. "Sir, you haven't been drinking, have you?"

"Ha...just a bit Mr. Officer. It keeps me..." the hyena had to think for a moment. "...distracted. Yeah. Don't think much about Mikey then."

"Well, too much alcohol can be bad for your health," Niall said slowly closing in. "Really easy to have an unfortunate accident."

The hyena either didn't notice or didn't care about Niall's approach. He just looked a bit solemn. "I miss Mikey. I...I shouldn't have picked where to eat...he'd still be...."

Niall gently rested his hands on the hyena's shoulders. "What's your name, sir?"

"Drew," the hyena replied.

Niall sighed. "Well, Drew. You're very drunk right now, so I'm gonna put you in lock-up for a while till you sober up, ok?"

Drew nodded.

"Good."

Niall opened his mouth wide and began swallowing the hyena's head. Drew made no attempt to struggle, instead diligently standing still as he was eaten alive. No kicking, no shouting, no flailing of arms. Niall hated every moment of it. This wasn't hunting, even by his often questionable standards. Even the black-out drunk meals resisted to some degree. He couldn't let go of the feeling that Drew had *wanted* to be eaten, and Niall wasn't enthusiastic about being used for someone's suicide attempt. Drew slid effortlessly down the gullet and into the stomach, swelling Niall's belly. The buttons of Niall's uniform strained, but held on, tufts of white fur poking through. Once fully in "lock-up", Drew moved little, shifting just enough to get comfortable and making no noise loud enough for Niall to hear. Niall

began swallowing large gulps of fresh air. He couldn't think of a good excuse to actually digest the hyena, who seemed to be poorly handling some sort of hardship. Instead he would keep him alive and release him unharmed at the station, where the hyena could stay the night and get sober. For now, though, Drew would ease Niall's hunger pains.

"You'd better be thankful when this is all over, Drew," Niall told his belly as he began the long walk towards the station. "This park is really popular with hunters, it's a miracle you weren't gobbled up by one of them instead."

His belly remained quiet.

"Instead, you're safe and sound in the one place a pred can't reach you!" He laughed at what he considered a clever joke. The amusement, apparently, was not mutual.

Niall gave up on the one sided conversation, and tried to increase his pace as best he could. Drew wasn't very big, but walking with a prey-filled gut was always difficult. He also made regular stops to catch his breath and simply admire his size. Niall loved being big. To him, his weight represented his hunting prowess, his dominance, his position at the top of the food chain. When he was smaller, Niall had been a target, a joke...helpless. Now he could intimidate other predators with his presence alone. The few dumb enough to challenge his status merely added to his ever-changing waistline, a warning to others. He loved getting massive, even teasing the five hundred pound mark on occasion, but loved losing the weight nearly as much. After all, regaining mobility meant more hunting was in store.

The pathway Niall traveled was nearing the edge of the park, where it would split up and provide him with a shortcut to the station. Niall spotted two individuals walking towards the junction of paths. Visibility was poor, so he knew little more than their number as he closed in. Eventually, one of the strangers spotted him, and both stopped. Niall considered the possibility they were a hunting pair and readied himself for a potential confrontation. Then one of them waved. He was confused at first, but squinted a bit and understood the gesture. His friend Marcus was waving at him enthusiastically, while Eli stood besides him.

"Hey guys," Niall said as he joined them at the junction. "Didn't expect to see you two here this late at night."

Eli, a thin arctic fox, spoke up. "You know it's the shortest route to my place, we've walked it before."

"Aha! I've caught you two in the middle of a shameful tryst!" Niall declared with bemusement. "Marcus, what would Riley think!"

"How do you even know what tryst means!" Eli said in frustration.

Marcus giggled. The overweight zebra was a bit more adept at handling Niall. "We're just going to watch some movies together. Riley has to be at the restaurant really early tomorrow, so he's already in bed."

"Terrorizing the pillows, I assume? How many has he eaten again?" Niall asked.

"It's not his fault he sleep eats," Marcus replied with a frown. "And we solved the pillow problem once we figured out he only ate them on days I'd been over. I guess my scent sticks to them well." He smiled half-heartily.

"Well, that just shows how much he likes you," Niall tried to lighten the mood. "They always say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach!"

Eli glared at Niall's suspiciously lumpy belly. "I see you've got a suitor yourself, then."

Niall had practically forgotten about his uncomfortably well-behaved meal, and quickly swallowed some more air. "Just a temporary situation. He was drunk and not thinking clearly."

"Yeah, being digested is a hell of a way to sober up." Eli said disdainfully.

"I'm not going to digest him, I swear!" Niall shot back with a passion that surprised even Eli. "Leaving him back there in a stupor would have been cruel. He'd have either gotten himself hurt or gotten himself eaten."

"Whatever you say." Eli wasn't entirely convinced.

Niall gave his belly a gentle shake to provoke some movement from Drew as proof. "See, still alive. I'm throwing him up when I get back to the station. Eating someone who doesn't fight back is, I don't know, just gross."

Marcus knew he had to play peacemaker. "Eli, I believe him. His approach is...unique, but he's trying to help."

"Thank you Marcus," Niall said smugly. "Congrats on the weight, by the way. You look like a pie short of passing Riley."

Marcus' face struggled to express appreciation and embarrassment simultaneously. Niall was correct, the zebra had just reached 156 pounds that morning, just a few shy of Riley. "Th...thanks. It's a big milestone, though I've had to borrow some of Riley's clothes. Most of my old stuff is just too small now." He blushed. "Not that Riley minds."

"Thought that jacket looked familiar," Niall said. "Well, I need to get back to work, really shouldn't test my guest's acid tolerance. And be careful walking through here at night now that school's in. Hunter's prowl it pretty hard."

"I'll keep that in mind," Eli assured him.

The pair gave their goodbyes to Niall and headed towards the park's exit and relative safety. Niall continued his trek to the station, a rather hilly route from that point on. His friends' interruption had been an enjoyable distraction. Well, for the most part.

"I can't believe Eli didn't believe I'd let you go." He began talking to his stomach, again. "I mean, you believe me, right?"

Drew made no recognizable response.

"I don't hunt nearly as much as he seems to think I do. This is a hobby, not a career," he continued. "Besides, my meals always deserve it."

His belly coincidentally shifted at that moment.

"Ok, maybe there are some misunderstandings. But they're rare. Though I *have* been tiring out faster during patrols..."

Niall tried to remember his last few meals. There was the hyena at the Cafe way back in July, the wolf at Lindsey's party in June, the two panthers at Apex in May, the bear in the park in May. The numbers matched a normal hunting season for him, though they were usually spread out more. He stopped for a second to hold his belly, rubbing it softly and trying to feel the flab around his temporary meal. Maybe he should fast a little early this time to guarantee being light enough to really enjoy the November hunt. After all, being impaired on the anniversary would be shameful. Whatever he ended up deciding, he at least knew for certain the hyena in his stomach wasn't going to factor in to it.

Lost in thought, Niall nearly missed the faint sounds of a nearby conversation. He carefully neared the path's railing, and peeked over at the clearing below. A llama had his back against the wall of a park restroom, a look of despair on his face. In front of him stood a rather plump crocodile and a much slimmer jackal. None were aware of Niall, who quietly waited above.

The llama looked back and forth at his pursuers, unable to find a safe way out. "P...please let me go, I'm just trying to get back to my dorm!" He pleaded.

The jackal laughed. "Hey Chris, looks like the frosh is lost. What should we do?"

"Well, Mitchel," the crocodile answered. "Obviously we need to escort him back. And I know the perfect place to keep him safe and warm while we do so." He slowly patted his belly.

"No...no...no..." The llama's heart was racing. "D...don't eat me, please!"

Mitchel laughed again. "He's asking nicely. Maybe you should reconsider, Chris."

Chris scratched the bottom of his snout and made exaggerated sounds of contemplation. "I don't know..."

"Why are you doing this to me! I haven't done anything!" the llama cried.

"Oh, you've done all sorts of things," Chris insisted. "You've made my belly growl and my

mouth water...and soon you'll make my shirts a bit tighter."

The llama was desperate. "Please, I'll do anything, just don't eat me!"

A devious, toothy grin grew on Chris' snout. "Anything?"

The llama nodded, tears beginning to stream from his eyes.

Niall's heart was pounding. He felt like if he gripped the railing any harder it'd be crushed. The scene below was everything he'd wanted to find tonight, the perfect justified hunt, but the cost would be high. He looked down at his belly in dismay, still mostly motionless despite its occupancy.

"I'm really sorry Drew, but I'm not gonna be able to keep my promise," he whispered.

A nearby pair of stairs led Niall from the hilly pathway right down to where his prey stood. He was behind them and unnoticed, even by the llama.

"Well, frosh," Chris continued. "My buddy here is pretty hungry himself, aren't ya Mitchel?"

Now the jackal grinned. "Absolutely famished."

"So one prey isn't gonna cut it," Chris said. "If you were to introduced us to your roommates, though, then I'm sure both Mitchel *and* I would get our fill."

The llama looked even more horrified than before. "No...no. I won't feed my friends to you!"

"I wasn't planning on having you feed them to us personally, but I'll keep that in mind," Chris answered. "And before you try to play hero, you should know something. Even if you say no, we'll just nab your wallet and keys before you're swallowed. I'm sure we can find your room on our own from there."

The llama seemed ready to break, openly sobbing into his hands and muttering pleas to himself. By that point, though, Niall had reached the group, standing barely a foot away from the jackal. Now it was his turn to grin deviously.

"Nice night we're having!" Niall shouted, startling the other three.

Mitchel twisted around first, trying to figure out what had managed to sneak up on him. He was rewarded with a hard fist to his muzzle, sending him to ground with blood dripping from his nose. Niall shook his hand a bit from the pain as Chris watched first in confusion, then rage.

"You fucked with the wrong pred, rent-a-cop!" Chris growled. The crocodile charged Niall, jaws wide.

Niall leaned out of his attacker's way with impressive speed considering his size, surprising the crocodile. Taking advantage of the moment, Niall wrapped his arms around Chris, catching him in a powerful bear-hug. Chris tried to claw his way free, panicking and scratching pointlessly at Niall's shoulders. In turn, Niall tightened his already strong grip, forcing the air from Chris' lungs. The crocodile's eyes began to bulge, desperately gasping for breath. His struggles soon diminished. He was nearly unconscious when Niall released him, and simply crumpled to the path on his knees.

Having taken control of the playing field, Niall began his work. He shoved Chris' snout into his mouth, the rest of the head following soon after with minimal effort. Chris hadn't been given a chance to recover his breath. He was dazed, barely aware of the danger he was in and not putting up much of a fight. Niall easily swallowed Chris' shoulders, arms, and chest. The crocodile's chubby scaled belly wasn't even a real roadblock for a predator like Niall. He wished he could savor the taste, but there was so much to eat in so little time. Chris began sliding into Niall's stomach, refreshed by the swallowed air within. Glimpsing a curled up hyena, he suddenly returned to his senses, realizing just what was happening, but he was far too late. His legs and feet flailed outside as Niall gulped them down, leaving only his tail still free. Niall's belly had swollen greatly from its newest guest. The buttons of his uniform failed immediately, shooting off into the night. His undershirt hadn't torn, but did roll up to expose his bulging white and brown furred gut.

On the ground nearby, Mitchel was moving again, slowly regaining conscious. He put a paw up to his nose, wincing from the pain. Then he saw Niall. The goat was enormous, his belly was shaking wildly from its contents' struggles, and there was a crocodile's tail hanging out of his mouth. Mitchel watched in horror as Niall slurped the tail up like nothing. Then Niall looked down at him. Mitchel

didn't bother standing, he just rolled over and desperately tried to crawl away. Niall rolled his eyes and sluggishly waddled after him. He grabbed a hold of the jackal's ankles, putting an end to the retreat, and swallowed his feet. Mitchel had put himself into nearly as bad a position as Chris had, barely able to struggle effectively. More and more of his legs slid into the goat's maw. He clawed at the dirt and stones of the path in a vain attempt to find leverage or reverse his fate.

"Please don't do this, don't eat me!" Mitchel begged. "This was all Chris' idea I swear, I didn't want to eat the llama!"

Mitchel's waist began to disappear.

"I'll...I'll never hunt again, I promise!" The jackal received no response. "I'll do whatever you say, just let me go!"

He could feel his feet entering Niall's stomach, pressing against some part of Chris.

"No! I don't...I don't want to die!" Mitchel was sobbing into the dirt.

Niall wrapped his hands around the jackal's muzzle to silence him and began to pull. Mitchel's neck and head slid into Niall's mouth, leaving only his outstretched arms in the open air. A few strong gulps finished the deed, sealing Mitchel's fate. Niall carefully rolled onto his back, exhausted. He hadn't eaten this many people at one time in years, probably not since graduating college, and never while sober. Alcohol did a lot more to ease the painful fullness than he'd thought. He almost regretted the gluttonous act. His belly was absolutely monstrous, a mountain of fat and prey, trembling violently. Chris and Mitchel hadn't given up yet, though their prison was so cramped they could do little more than sway violently. Drew was caught in the middle, too drunk and withdrawn to understand what was happening.

The llama had remained in place throughout the ordeal, too afraid to move even after his attackers were disposed of. He knew he'd been rescued and recognized the strange goat's uniform as being campus security, but wasn't sure what would happen next. What if the goat was still hungry? Eventually, he gathered enough courage to dislodge himself from the wall and cautiously approach his savior. The goat's belly looked horrifically bloated, and the recognizable movements of its contents were unnerving to the llama. Although the crocodile and jackal had wanted to eat him just minutes earlier, he wasn't necessarily pleased with the outcome. Digestion wasn't a fate he wanted to wish on anyone, enemy or no. He didn't think his opinion mattered much to the goat, though, and some gratitude was in order.

"Th...Thank you," the llama managed to say. "You saved my life!"

Niall groaned some before composing himself slightly. "All part of the job." He belched loudly, shrinking his stomach a tad. "Now hurry back to your dorm, and don't walk around the park alone at night anymore!"

"Yes sir!" the llama replied with far more reverence than Niall's position deserved. "Thank you again, I'll never forget this!" He practically sprinted off into the night, convinced there were more predators lurking behind every tree, just waiting to jump him.

Niall sighed. The llama had barely survived his first month of college, how was he gonna handle the whole year? Hopefully he'd learn some caution and commonsense, and not waste the second chance he'd been given. Especially considering an innocent bystander would end up digested for it. Niall had wanted to let Drew out, he truly had. Unfortunately, throwing him up would have taken time and alerted the predators. If Chris and Mitchel had gone free, not only would the llama have been eaten, but the llama's roommates as well, in time. Not to mention all the others the pair would hunt throughout college and well afterward. Sacrificing Drew was cold, but the right choice in the end, at least in Niall's mind. He tried to pretend the predators' taunts hadn't played a deciding factor.

At the very least, Niall would try to limit Drew's suffering. He began belching, over and over, draining the little fresh air hiding in his stomach. The movement within intensified; Chris and Mitchel obviously knew what was happening. Soon, however, Niall's stomach had tightened completely around his meals, ending their struggles. Niall was far too stuffed to get up, or move in general. His eyes felt

heavier and heavier, his vision blurring. He passed out, falling into a deep food-coma.

* * *

Niall sits on his knees in the mud, staring up at the wolf and bear, tears in his eyes. He can see the clear outlines of their prey-filled bellies, watches the desperate movement within. A ram lays at their feet, motionless, bleeding.

"Please, let them out!" he cries. "We didn't do anything to you!"

The wolf laughs. "You're prey. We're predators. That's all that matters."

Niall tries to think of any way to reason with the pair. "Please, I'll do anything, anything!"

A wide grin grows on the bear's face. "I might be feeling merciful today. How 'bout this. I've heard goats can eat anything."

Niall nods in agreement.

"Awesome. Now, if you eat everything we ask you to, no complaints, then we'll let them out." The bear lies.

"I'll do it, I'll eat everything you tell me to!" Niall shouts.

The bear continues grinning. "Good. Then eat mud. Just keep eating till I tell you to stop."

Niall looks down at the wet ground. With only a moment of hesitation he scoops a handful of mud into his mouth, gagging as he forces himself to swallow. He follows with a second and a third.

"Eat a rock," the wolf says.

Niall eats the nearest, and a larger one when the wolf isn't satisfied.

"Eat this bottle!" a voice shouts from the shadows.

"Eat your shoe!"

"A sock!"

"That backpack!"

The demands continue, Niall keeps eating, keeps looking up at the bellies of the wolf and bear. He feels sick, like he's about to puke with each new "meal". Soon his own belly is swollen, stuffed with random junk, sinking into the mud.

"Please," Niall begs. "I've eaten everything you've told me to, let them go!"

"Well, there's one thing you haven't eaten yet." The bear looks down.

* * *

Niall awoke with a start, sweating, heart racing. He turned his head left and right, recognizing the park and slowly remembering the events of the previous night. The sun was just beginning to rise and the sky was still clear, thankfully. Being rained on would have been obnoxious, and he really didn't need to juggle a cold and digestion. Niall looked up at his still enormous belly. The lumps were mostly gone, and it had shrunk to a more manageable size. Getting back on his feet wasn't necessarily easy, though. With a great deal of effort he rolled onto his side, slowly pushing himself off the ground. His belly sloshed around the entire time like a giant water balloon, the remaining solid bits bouncing against the stomach walls and each other in a way that made Niall uncomfortable on principle alone.

Finally back on his feet, Niall lifted his bloated belly to feel its weight. "I don't think I even want to guess how much I'll gain from this thing," He mumbled aloud to himself. "Work's sure as hell not gonna be easier."

Niall began slowly waddling back to the station, belly swaying side to side. His supervisor likely had an idea as to what he had been up to, seeing as he hadn't returned to the station last night. Eating three people, failure to complete patrol, destroying a work uniform. The conversation wasn't going to be fun. Not to mention all the necessary paperwork.