

Columbia State 37: The Open Challenge

By: IndigoRho

“So, up for the challenge?”

Xander did his best to avoid eye contact, as if he could simply dodge the question. The otter had just finished his chores at the Tau Tau Psi frat house when an upperclassman—Derek—had snuck up on him.

“Xav's told me all about your dumb challenges, Derek,” Xander grumbled, unconsciously glancing at the brown gryphon's sizable gut. “No one ever wins, and any pledge dumb enough to accept just adds to your waistline.”

Derek flashed a frustrated glare before reverting to a look of faux innocence. “I just like giving pledges a fair chance at survival, especially ones a demerit away from being eaten by me anyway.” He took a couple steps towards Xander, cornering the otter against a couch. “One missed alarm, one bad hunt...that's how close you are to being pudgy.”

The otter's heart was racing. He'd tried not to think much about the sheer number of ways he could get that third, fatal demerit with the frat, how easily he could be doomed by simple neglect. Now his mind was jumping from one terrible possibility to the next.

“All you have to do is beat me in a video game, and you'll automatically pass your pledge period.” Derek managed to loom over Xander despite being somewhat slimmer. “Besides, I hear you're pretty good at *Arena of Fate 6*. I thought you'd accept on the spot.”

Xander *was* good at the game, having been a fan of the series since it debuted, but betting his life on a video game seemed crazy. If he won though...

“Found you, you blubbery twerp!” Another otter, vaguely similar to Xander but far less fat, stormed into the room. A bright pink heart was marked onto the white fur of his forehead.

Xander saw his way out and jumped at it. “Oh hey Xav, having a good morning?”

The other otter practically shoved Derek aside, before flicking Xander hard on the ear. “Xan I *know* you're the one who doodled on my head, you're lucky I'm your brother or else I'd be scarfing you down right here for violating frat rules!”

“Geez it was just a joke, lighten up,” Xander rubbed his ear with a paw. “*You* should be lucky that's the only thing that happened thanks to you leaving your bedroom door wide open after passing out!”

The snarky comment was rewarded by a few more ear flicks. “Don't test my patience bro, not when this stupid excess flab's got me feeling hungrier than normal.” Xander's brother was usually rather thin for an active pred, but the recent undesired consumption of a rather hefty friend had left him pudgy.

“You'd be closing in on three hundred pounds if you ate someone as fattening as your brother, Xavier,” Derek interrupted. “I don't think you reached that even during your pledge period, might be fun to see.”

“Shut it Derek!” Xavier kept his attention on Xander. “Xan you're on bone duty now. Saul and Coby finally finished digesting that house party they gorged on, so you're gonna help me take the remains to a clinic.”

Xander's jaw dropped. “I already finished my chores, the fat rats can cleanup after themselves!”

“Dumb. Pledges. Don't. Get. To. Whine!” Xavier delivered a swift ear flick in between every word. “Now c'mon!”

Xander quickly waddled after his brother, nursing his ears the whole time. At least he'd managed to escape Derek.

Derek, meanwhile, frowned as the pair left. He'd woken up that morning with a strong desire for vore, and with the frat President away for the weekend he'd felt it was the perfect time to stuff himself with a gullible pledge under the guise of his annual open challenge. Xander would have been a prize

catch for so many reasons, so of course Xavier had managed to intervene just in time. Despite the lost opportunity, though, Derek wasn't deterred. The gryphon always tricked at least one pledge every year, and Xander had merely been the first one approached. Surely someone else would take the bait...

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Derek was on the verge of pulling his feathers out. Pledge after pledge had shrugged off his challenge, most not even hesitating for a moment to refuse. His stomach was growling from missing breakfast, and the thought of breaking his pledge meal streak within two months of graduation was surprisingly aggravating. It was one of the few legacies he'd have been able to gloat about if he ever returned to visit the fraternity. The last pledge couldn't refuse, no matter what.

The gryphon found his target in the fraternity rec room, alone. He was a fairly overweight white-and-orange rabbit, with a green bandana holding down his ears and his gut snugly contained by a goofy tank-top that read "Vacancy: Inquire Within". Derek didn't really have anything against Kyler, but he also wouldn't have a single regret gorging on him.

"It's your lucky day tubbs, cause I've got the deal of a lifetime."

Kyler rolled his eyes at the gryphon. "I'm not accepting your stupid challenge, dude."

Derek should have expected word to get around by now, and decided to drop the pleasantries immediately. "You've got two demerits and your new gut's gonna make it harder for you to deal with frat tasks since you're not used to it yet. You're pretty much guaranteed to fail."

"I've got good friends to help me, and it's not *that* hard to deal with some extra pounds," Kyler gave his belly a shake of confidence, blushing in the process.

"I don't know, the seal those pounds came from could get you in quite a bit of trouble." Derek grinned.

A look of pure dread came across Kyler's face, and all the effort in the world couldn't hide it. "How..."

"The library gives a bird's eye view of all sorts of fun things, including your rule-breaking meal." Derek gave Kyler's gut a hard poke, nearly pushing him over. "Such a shame I recognized the seal from a past Predmoot, otherwise no one would know you ate someone from Zeta Nu Delta."

Kyler was on the verge of panicking. Barely a couple weeks earlier he'd reluctantly eaten the seal after freeing a friend's brother from him, despite the clear ban on consuming members of rival pred frats. He'd hoped the isolated location and spontaneity of the act would keep his crime a secret, but apparently the worst possible witness had spotted him.

"And I *did* record the whole thing for funsies, by the way," Derek added. "With evidence like that you'd be digested for certain, especially with all that lingering tension we've had with Zeta Nu this year."

"W-what do you want?" Kyler said.

"I already told you what I want. Accept my open challenge, and see if you can't save yourself from becoming another forgettable meal." Derek made sure to lick his beak.

Kyler was barely holding back tears. He knew Derek was far better at the video game than he was, but the alternate was literally death. There was no way he could excuse his consumption of the seal, not as a mere pledge already sitting at two demerits. His mind quickly equated both options with digestion; he was done for.

"I...I-I accept," Kyler managed.

The rabbit slunk over to the couch in despair, so lost in thought the next few minutes became a blur as Derek eagerly spread the word throughout the frat house and gathered witnesses. Every attempt to reassure himself shattered instantly, and all Kyler could think about was being crammed into Derek's sweltering stomach as digestive juices boiled around him. He felt an odd sense of relief that his family had already dealt with a handful of losses due to vore. Two other siblings had already been digested

years ago, along with many cousins and even the occasional aunt or uncle. Sure he'd be mourned, but his loss was...manageable.

Amongst the frat members gathered were two of Kyler's closest friends, the ram-dragon Vann and the jaguar Jordan. Neither could believe Kyler had actually accepted Derek's challenge, and the rabbit seemed too out of it to explain himself, or honestly acknowledge their presence even. All the pair could do was watch in dismay and hope for a miracle.

By the time the game had been turned on, most of the audience were already aware of how one-sided the match was expected to be. Derek's relative lack of popularity and the general apathy towards Kyler created an atmosphere of awkward silence rather than the usual boisterousness of a voracious bet. The awkwardness only intensified once the game began. Derek outright thrashed Kyler, effortlessly defeating the anguished rabbit in two rounds, his victory received only by groans.

Derek wrapped an arm over Kyler's shoulder and leaned into the rabbit, laughing. "Oh wow, that was kind of underwhelming to be honest! I thought you'd take this way more seriously considering the stakes."

Kyler was speechless, shaking.

"A deal's a deal, though, and I'm too hungry for a long goodbye."

Derek abruptly rolled Kyler face-first onto his lap, sending a controller flying in the process. Kyler passively struggled on instinct, but the rabbit was too overwhelmed to argue his fate, whimpering as his head was roughly shoved into Derek's beak. A few frat members sheepishly walked away once Derek began unceremoniously gorging on the pledge. Vann and Jordan watched on in horror, distraught the rules of the competition prevented them from rescuing their doomed friend. Derek tore Kyler's tank-top to shreds as he swallowed, treating the rabbit as a chunk of meat and groping his gut at every opportunity. His meal twitched and squirmed from the mistreatment, much to Derek's delight. He enjoyed reminding prey they'd become nothing more than food, and constantly tasting and ever-so-lightly chewing on them always worked wonders.

Kyler whined as he was pulled deeper into Derek's gullet, his head sucked into the stomach just as he felt a beak stretch across his plump gut. A strong swallow suddenly dunked him right into the pool of stagnant digestive juices, which was far deeper than he'd expected. With no way to breathe, Kyler started thrashing, but Derek dug his talons into the rabbit's legs to pin them in place, continuing to eat him as casually as he had before. The turmoil in the gryphon's gut was mostly hidden by thick layers of flab, though most of the preds in attendance could at least guess what was happening. Jordan finally turned away, eyes watering, fearful he was witnessing his friend's final struggles. He wasn't sure if it'd be more merciful for Kyler to drown in the stomach than risk being conscious for a painful digestion.

The twitching and shaking continued until Kyler's knees passed through Derek's beak, when the rabbit's legs finally went limp; Kyler had passed out. Derek wasted little time gulping down the rest of his meal, disappointed that his prey had somehow lost consciousness before he was even completely swallowed. The gryphon thrived off tormenting those he ate, often keeping them alive in his gut for hours when he was able. All he could do now was hope the rabbit's head ended up above the lake of stomach acids, that he'd wake up in a bit to amuse Derek. Oh well, at least he was full.

"That's one big win for me!" Derek said with a smile as he gently patted his swollen belly. "Anyone else brave enough to challenge me?"

From experience Derek knew there wasn't likely to be a second attempt. Seeing the bulge of their former fellow pledge tended to discourage even the confident ones, which merely worked in Derek's favor. He'd get what was essentially a free meal, and fewer people would realize his gaming skill suffered on a full stomach.

"I'll do it!"

Derek turned in surprise, almost smirking once he realized who his challenger was.

Jordan was sweating, all eyes in the room suddenly on him. "I'll...I'll challenge you, but if I win

you let Kyler go.”

“Dude, what are you doing!” Vann hissed under his breath. “You’re not much better than Kyler, and we don’t...we don’t know if he’s even still...” He couldn’t bear to say aloud what both feared.

“You did the exact same thing to rescue Reave when he lost a bet, I can’t just abandon Kyler!” Jordan brushed aside his friend and sat on the couch, the cushion still warm from when Kyler had been sitting on it minutes before. “Do you accept or not Derek!”

Derek took a moment to size up his challenger. The jaguar looked to be as fat as Kyler, and likely as delicious. Digesting *two* bulky meals would be inconvenient, but the potential for fun trophies was high, and he was increasingly interested in how his classmates would react once he waddled in nearly a hundred pounds fatter afterward. Not to mention the fact Xavier would be furious about losing his cat toy.

“Your funeral, spots,” Derek grinned.

The rest of the frat leaned in to watch the second match, a few verbal bets passed here and there, some more foolish than others. In the first round, Derek failed to achieve the decisive victory he’d enjoyed against Kyler, and it was obvious to most in the audience that his bulging gut interfered. Unfortunately Jordan couldn’t take advantage of the opportunity, his health slowly whittled away as Derek became more accustomed to his state, until once again the gryphon stood triumphant. Jordan didn’t take the first loss well, never recovering. Derek crushed him in round two in a near repeat of his previous game against Kyler.

Jordan sat in shock. He’d thought that with Kyler’s life on the line he’d be able to pull through, play better than he ever had before, but in the end he didn’t even come close. The suddenness of becoming just another meal caused a wave of nausea to hit Jordan, and the jaguar nearly fainted on the spot. Again Derek wasted little time indulging in his reward. He treated Jordan just as callously as he had Kyler, stripping the jaguar of his shirt, his jeans, and his dignity. Jordan whimpered as he was forced against the bulging gut containing his friend, though soon even that was muffled as a beak closed around him.

Watching one friend eaten alive had been too excruciating for Vann, he couldn’t handle an encore. The ram-dragon walked away from the couch and covered his eyes, trying to hide his tears from the others. Even then he could still *hear* the sounds of Jordan being swallowed. Wet gulps, the body being dragged further into the maw, Derek’s expandex shirt stretching to contain his swelling belly. Worst of all were Derek’s moans. He was obviously savoring every inch of the terrified jaguar, and he wanted everyone gathered there to know it. A low belch signaled the end, but it took a minute for Vann to build up the courage to see the results for himself.

Derek’s gut was huge. The gryphon had slid off the couch, resting atop his bulging, shifting middle like it were a beanbag chair. A look of sheer, smug satisfaction was upon his face. “Damn, you lot are treating me well this year! Feels like my birthday,” Derek grinned as he kneaded his distended belly. “I always love weeding out the dumber pledges.”

Vann wanted nothing more than to strangle Derek then and there. His challenge to the gryphon was purely instinctual, to the point he barely realized he’d said the words.

“Dude I’ve won enough for one day,” Derek said, snorting. “Eating three of you idiots would be excessive, even for me.”

“What, afraid your game will be off cause of a little snack,” Vann sneered. He knew the gryphon could be provoked, he just needed to piss him off more. “You were eager as fuck to challenge me an hour ago!”

Derek scowled, angered less by the actual insults and more by the tone a mere pledge was taking with him. “Well maybe if you’d accepted then your friends wouldn’t be on their way to becoming soup, bones, and flab.”

“Shame you won’t be able to keep claiming you’ve never backed down from a challenge.” Vann refused to give up. “I know that’s the only accomplishment you’ve managed all these years.”

Obvious provocation or not, Derek was infuriated. He could see how the others grinned when he was insulted, knew he'd be snarked at forever if he turned down Vann's challenge. Playing while immobilized by his own writhing gut wasn't ideal, but the gryphon felt just confident enough to risk it. The pledge needed to be put in his place.

"Hope you enjoy being crushed beneath your friends while digested alive," Derek growled.

Vann wasn't the best at *Arena of Fate 6*, but sometimes anger and desperation actually worked for motivation. Derek struggled during the first round as his gut fought against him, and to the surprise of everyone watching, he lost. The audience loudly cheered Vann's initial success, most simply glad to see Derek's ego bruised a little. Losing even a single round made the gryphon fume. He went into the second fueled by spite, pulling off a victory that was far too close for comfort. Tied and with one round left, the nerves of both competitors were somewhat shook. They played cautiously, made unexpected mistakes, and for a second it looked like Vann was a couple combos away from saving at least one of his friends.

Derek was never one to shy away from underhanded tactics, though. As soon as Vann gained momentum the gryphon let out a bellowing belch, causing his belly to tighten around his earlier meals. The implications of the sound made Vann falter and miss a single button. The opening was all Derek needed to turn the tide. He rushed his opponent and finished off the last sliver of Vann's health, winning both the round and the game. Vann was utterly devastated.

There was an audible wave of disappointment from the crowd as Derek won, though no one seemed interested in leaving until the loser had been feasted upon. With the aid of an upperclassman Vann willed himself to get off the couch and kneel before Derek. He'd been his friends' last hope for survival, and he'd failed them. Like the others his clothes were torn away, his curled horns used to pull him into the open beak, his sight stolen by a dark, damp maw. The trip down Derek's gullet was brief, and when his head pushed into the gryphon's stomach he was greeted by the light of a cellphone. He could see Jordan curled up, shaking but still awake, and holding up the unconscious Kyler so he didn't slip beneath the pool of stomach acids.

Jordan didn't say a word when he spotted Vann entering the fleshy tomb, he merely sobbed. Vann did his best to avoid crushing his friends as he was swallowed, though controlling his descent was difficult, especially with how fat they all were. A considerable amount of shifting was required, and in the end Vann was still squeezed up against Kyler's soft gut with little room to move. The heat within Derek's stomach was almost unbearable. All three prey were giving off body warmth, and there was no flow of air aside from Derek's persistent gulps. Fading from heat stroke before the gryphon could torment them almost seemed like a blessing, though.

Derek groaned as he felt the weight in his massive belly shifting. He couldn't remember the last time he'd eaten three meals at once, let alone ones so fattening. The gryphon would be immobilized for days while his stomach worked to break the trio of friends down, and Derek guessed he'd weigh around a hundred and twenty pounds more by the end. Hunting would be out of the question for quite a while, at least until he slimmed down some, which was irritating but not a huge issue. After all, the trophies he was about to obtain were more than worth it.

As Derek basked in the glory of his tremendous feast, Xander and Xavier finally returned back to the frat house from their trip. The brothers had been given a heads-up that something was wrong before they even stepped foot in the house, and Xander had run as fast as he could to the rec room, afraid of what he'd find. Derek's size made his heart drop, his eyes watering as he spotted the pile of torn clothes that had once belonged to his friends. The crowd hadn't dispersed just yet, and most avoided eye contact with the distraught otter.

It didn't take long for Derek to notice Xander's arrival. "Welcome back tubbs! While you were gone I found three braver pledges, though unfortunately they were more bark than bite."

Xavier finally caught up with his brother, and he scowled once he realized the extent of Derek's gluttony. "What the Hell Derek! Scott's gonna have your hide for stuffing yourself with pledges like

this!”

“Not my fault the idiots were stumbling over each other to challenge me!” Derek smirked. “Everything was official, and I've got plenty of witnesses to prove it. Besides, punishing me for this would be like punishing you for eating Josh.”

Xavier hated admitting Derek was right, at least technically. Pledges were at the bottom of the totem pole, and chastising an outgoing Senior would be pointless.

“If you want to fight me so bad then fight me!” Xander yelled.

Xavier looked horrified, and quickly grabbed his brother by the arm. “Shut the hell up, Xan! This isn't the time to play hero!”

While Derek had been reluctant to face Vann, the gryphon wasn't about to miss out on a chance to eat his original target. “If he wants to challenge me then let him. Three blubbery meals stewing in my belly gives me quite the handicap, so he might actually have a chance at winning. What do you say, Xav?”

“Don't fucking call me that,” Xavier seethed. “I'm not letting my little brother get eaten, so fuck off!”

“Xav I can't...I can't just let them die,” Xander said, eyes drifting to the pile of clothes. “If I beat you they go free.”

Derek shook his head. “If you beat me *one* goes free, and it'll be whoever I ate last. Or you automatically pass your pledge period. Those are the options, dude.”

“Deal.”

“Xan what the Hell are you doing! You'll be--” The otter was silenced by an unexpected flick to his left ear.

Xander had never managed to catch his brother off-guard like that before. “Please bro, trust me.”

With the challenge officially accepted, there was nothing the older otter could do to stop it. As if in a trance he watched his brother head over to the couch and pick up a controller, the game starting up. Despite his disruptive girth, Derek was convinced he'd still be able to trounce the emotional otter, especially with the three games of practice he'd just had. When the first round began, though, Xander was on him in a flash. Derek was jilted by the virtual onslaught, forced to play entirely defensively for the first time that day. The squirms within his gut proved more distracting than he'd expected, and his talons stumbled across the controller as Xander essentially crushed him.

The shock of being at the losing end of a one-sided victory lingered well into the second round, and Derek played only marginally better. A juggling combo spelled his doom, leaving Xander as the clear winner. Derek let out a string of curses, nearly throwing his controller in a rage. He'd never lost a yearly challenge before.

“Pay up Derek!” Xander demanded, as a few other frat members congratulated the otter on his win.

“Whatever, you got a lucky win cause I could barely move!” Derek fumed, directing his rage towards his gut. “Alright, I'm loosening my throat so Vann can come out. If anyone else tries to escape I'm swallowing you all back down and purging the air immediately, so don't pull any shit!”

A large bulge gradually formed in the gryphon's throat, and Derek grimaced as he was forced to open his beak. A pair of saliva-soaked, trembling hooves lurched out. Derek resisted the urge to swallow, slowly hacking up the rest of Vann until another frat member stepped in to help pull the ram-dragon out. Vann coughed and gasped for air as he was released, collapsing onto the floor as soon as his tail was clear of Derek's beak.

Xander breathed a short sigh of relief as he saw at least one of his friends was safe and sound, but there were still two more at risk of digesting. “Time for game two, Derek.”

“Fuck that, I'm done!” Derek shouted, rubbing his sore jaw.

“What, afraid you'll get wrecked again?” Xander glared at the gryphon. “You were just spouting

shit about how the only reason I won was because of your gut, but now that it's smaller you're gonna quit?"

What should have been a relaxing day of showing off his dominance was quickly collapsing, and Derek was desperate to prove his loss was a fluke. "I'm gonna enjoy feeling you squirm in my stomach you little shit!"

The second game began, and Derek's bravado was swiftly proven to be shaky once more. He was able to stand against Xander better than in the previous game—having adjusted to his play style—but even with a smaller middle he couldn't keep up. Rounds one and two were both close, though each ended in victory for Xander, leaving Derek aghast. How was the otter so damned good? Soon Jordan was inching up his throat, the fat jaguar pulled onto the floor besides the still-recovering Vann. A couple frat members had brought in towels to wipe the digestive juices from them, along with water to ensure they didn't pass out.

Defeating Derek twice was momentous, but Kyler was still trapped. This time, though, it was Derek who angrily demanded a rematch, hellbent on reducing the otter to pudge for humiliating him so thoroughly. Of course Xander accepted.

All eyes in the room were on the TV screen when the first round started, and they remained as the two preds blocked, dodged, and stalled till the timer nearly ran out. Regaining his mobility was a visible boon to Derek, who's game play improved considerably. For the first time in a while, *he* was the one standing tall after a round ended. The loss was a blow to Xander, but the otter steadied himself and went into the next round swinging. Again the match was close, ending in a victory for Xander and tying the game.

Derek wasn't taking anymore chances. Only a few seconds into the final round, the gryphon let out a distracting belch just as he had against Vann earlier, and the results were the same. Xander hesitated for only a moment, allowing Derek to take control of match. Though Xander recovered, the damage had already been done. A spammy combo ended Xander's hope of saving his friend's life...and doomed him to the same fate.

Derek stood up from the couch in victory, his sagging gut bouncing as he did. He didn't give his opponent a chance to let the reality of defeat set in, grabbing the otter and digging his talons into Xander's shoulders.

"I hope you know the next few hours are going to be filled with suffering, *food*," Derek growled under his breath so only Xander could hear.

The normally composed Xavier was an utter mess, heart racing as a peer tried to see if he was ok. Everything was happening so fast, he didn't know how to handle it. He saw his brother's head vanish into Derek's beak, the otter's round belly exposed as the gryphon removed his shirt. Xander was gradually slipping away, swallow after swallow, Derek's middle swelling once more as he gorged. At one point Xavier took a few steps forward to interfere, but other frat members held him back, reminding him there was nothing he could do and urging him to calm down. His vision blurred from tears, and he became a gibbering wreck as soon as Derek's beak closed around his brother's footpaws.

Xander struggled and squirmed once he emptied into Derek's stomach, not prepared to die. Kyler had regained consciousness—though only just barely—and had seemingly given up. "I-I'm sorry. It was just supposed to be...me..." The rabbit mumbled.

"Shut up, we can still escape!" Xander insisted, wincing as he realized the digestive juices were causing his skin to tingle. "He's been swallowing and throwing up too much, his sphincter has to be loose!"

"He...threatened Zeke." Kyler's eyes were growing heavy again. "I...I had to..."

Xander wasn't sure what Kyler was trying to say, or if the rabbit was going delusional from being trapped in a stomach so long. He managed to find the entrance to the gullet with his paw, but forcing it open proved difficult. After a few more failed attempts he got a desperate idea, pulling off Kyler's green bandana and wrapping it tight around his fist. This time the material had an effect,

irritating the sphincter open just enough for Xander to squeeze his fist through. Without a second thought, Xander grabbed a hold of Kyler's paws and pushed them into the throat, causing Derek to start gagging.

Derek—who had been in the middle of silently gloating as he watched Xavier suffer—suddenly gagged. He stumbled, gradually feeling more and more nauseous as *something* entered his gullet. Somewhat exhausted from playing games and eating almost non-stop, Derek found himself unable to swallow. Others stopped and stared as they realized the gryphon was starting to dry heave, a large bulge forming in his throat. Derek's eyes were a mix of fury and pain as his body aggressively purged one of his meals, Kyler's arms emerging from his beak. He tried to force the rabbit back down, but he couldn't overwhelm the oppressive instinct to hurl.

Kyler's head lurched out, then his chest and even thick gut, and by then there was no reversing the process. Derek fell to his knees as the rabbit's legs dropped out of his beak. He clenched his still-swollen belly and rolled on the floor in agony, coughing up a storm. His middle continued to shift, but Derek desperately thumped on his belly with a talon, forcing a long, pained belch. A drenched bandana flew from his beak. Deprived of air, the large bulge in Derek's gut thrashed wildly for a minute before slowly coming to a stop.

Breathing heavily, Derek dragged himself back up by using the couch as a brace, still coughing and gasping. He growled as he spotted the fidgeting body of Kyler laying on the ground nearby, though he soon accepted the prize that remained in his still belly. Plenty had gone wrong that afternoon, but the one thing that went right was the best possible outcome. Unwilling to get caught up in anymore challenges or taunts, Derek stumbled away, heading towards the sanctuary of his bedroom. As he dragged himself up the stairs he steadily began gulping down as much fresh air as possible, causing the bulges of Xander to become slightly less distinct.

Derek locked the bedroom door behind him and waddled to his dresser, digging around until he found a bottle of digestion inhibitors and greedily swallowing a couple pills. Then he eased himself into bed and waited. As he'd hoped, his belly eventually began to wobble slightly, and Xander gradually regained consciousness.

“Good, good. I was getting afraid you'd croaked already,” Derek laughed.

Xander groaned from within the gryphon's stomach, still coming to.

“I've been waiting months for the chance to eat you, ya know?” Derek flicked his gut with a talon. “And you can blame your brother for that.”

Xander didn't respond, squirming as best he could in his condition.

“Xavier found my cousin outside after the Winter's End Bash, had every opportunity to just roll him onto the sidewalk so he wouldn't get caught. Instead he helped drag him in so he'd be fed to you!” Derek growled. “Terry was the one person in my family I could actually deal with, that's why I never ate him. He deserved better than ending up as flab on a loser like you!”

Derek took a swig from his water bottle, happy to feel Xander shift more as a result.

“I'm sure Xavier's having a breakdown right now, thinking you're already digesting. It's a shame he'll never know just how long I'm gonna let you stew inside me,” Derek grinned. “You'll be begging for me to end you in a few hours, trust me. It's the most wonderful thing to hear a meal say.”

Xander's voice was just barely audible. “Fuck...fuck you.”

“Ha! Curse all you want, not gonna save you from becoming goop.” Derek gave his belly a gentle shake to torment the otter. “God I wonder what your brother will say once he realizes I'm keeping your skull as a trophy.”

The gryphon's laughs filled the room, drowning out the cries of his unfortunate meal...