

A Promised Meal

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A long, barely muffled growl echoed over the sounds of both TV and conversation, abruptly shifting all attention onto the red dragon in the room. Holo looked down upon his slim, yellow-scaled midsection with feigned surprise, as if his stomach didn't make such noises on an almost daily basis.

"Well, I guess I should have eaten a bit more for breakfast," Holo muttered.

On the couch beside the dragon was a fairly obese blue cheetah, whose gut jiggled as he snickered. "What, did you only chug one gas canister this morning instead of two? I've got a fresh thing of lavender-scented laundry detergent if you want an early lunch!"

"Very funny, Indi. I definitely have never heard that one before," Holo replied to his friend as sarcastically as he could manage. "And don't knock gasoline till you've tried it!"

"I don't have a weird magical stomach like you, I'm pretty sure I'd keel over if I chugged that stuff."

Holo smirked. "If your gut can handle the grease from all that pizza you eat, than it can handle anything."

Indi grumbled under his breath, but any poorly thought out comeback was pre-empted by another loud gurgle from Holo's stomach.

"Ugh, when it gets this loud I always need something *really* filling to shut it up," Holo said, with a tone that completely lacked disappointment. His gaze quickly settled on Indi's large belly.

"Whoa whoa whoa, it's not polite to eat the host so don't get any ideas!" Indi knew he wouldn't be able to flee Holo even if he had a ten minute head start. Aside from the cheetah's excessive bulk potentially slowing him down, Holo's control over shadows made Indi a comically easy prey.

"Well a good host ensures his guests are properly well-fed, right?" Holo slid off the couch with ease, a feat Indi utterly failed to imitate. "Besides, you owe me."

Indi was still trying—poorly—to escape the couch, weighed down by a morning of constant snacking. "Wait, how do I owe you?"

Holo gracefully retrieved his wallet and pulled out a folded in half index card, which he expertly tossed onto Indi's gut. The cheetah's memory seemed rekindled by the card once he bothered opening it. *Happy Birthday Holo! Eat me one time whenever you want. Indi.*

"Honestly I'd completely forgotten about your little birthday present until recently, and now seems as good a time as any to cash it in." Holo gave Indi a smile that was unnervingly innocent.

Indi, too, had nearly forgotten about his last minute gift. "I knew I should've just bought you a gift card! Alright, enjoy your mopey cheetah lunch."

"Hmm, not in here. Follow me, I need some space to work with," Holo said, manipulating Indi's own shadow to give him a boost off the couch.

Indi reluctantly waddled after his friend, thankful their journey ended barely a few feet later next to the sturdy dinning room table. With no warning shadowy tendrils rose from the floor and coiled around Indi's legs and arms, lifting the startled cheetah into the air as if he were a feather. He squirmed out of instinct at first, though from experience Indi knew escaping Holo's hold was practically impossible, so he quickly settled down. The cheetah assumed Holo was simply going to show off and use the shadows to guide his blubbery body into the dragon's mouth, but instead found his body lowered atop the table, which creaked under his weight but managed to stay together. The tendrils maintained their grip on Indi, though.

"Man, why do you always have to be so showy with—mmmpfh!" Indi's complaint was cut-off as a thick bundle of shadows converged from across the room, forcing their way past his jaws and down his throat. He thrashed about, gut swaying back and forth as it slowly began to swell. His throat grew numb as soon as the shadows entered, and the feeling spread outwards to every inch of his body as more of the odd substance filled his belly. The "feeding" ended just as abruptly as it had began,

leaving Indi with a tingling sensation and much tauter belly.

“Wha...what the heck was that for...” Indi mumbled.

“A courtesy,” Holo replied, grinning. “It wouldn't be nearly as fun for me if lunch passed out from pain after the first bite.”

Indi's eyes went wide. “B-bite? Why would there be biting, you're just supposed to swallow me whole!”

“Eating a meal whole can be nice at times, but you really don't get to savor it as much as when you just dig into it.” Holo carefully lifted Indi's leg, squeezing the cheetah's plump calf with a claw.

Unable to even squirm, Indi watched in horror as Holo chomped down on the thickest part of his calf, fangs piercing flesh, and pulled back. Muscle, tendons, and fat were torn from Indi's body with a sickening, wet *riiip*. Though whatever he'd been fed numbed the pain completely, the sight and sound alone were enough to make Indi scream in horror. Blood spurted and poured from the wound, oozing onto the table and dripping from Holo's mouth as the dragon chewed the first bite of his lunch. He gulped the meat down and let out a loud, over-exaggerated sigh of satisfaction.

“Damn Indi, you're just as delicious as I'd hoped!” Holo said, ignoring his friend's whimpers and babbling. “Lot of fat, but that was to be expected. If I wasn't so hungry I'd be tempted to save a bit of you for later and experiment with sauces.”

“No no no no no no no!” Indi shouted, looking at the blood—*his* blood—running down Holo's lips. “I said you could eat me, not butcher me!”

Holo shook his head. “You were very, very vague with your gift. Nowhere on that card did it mention any restrictions on *how* I could eat you. Honestly I feel I'm being very civil right now; I don't always expend the energy to make the process painless for my meals.”

While his friend was technically right, Indi wasn't at all excited about the prospect of being eaten piece-by-piece while he watched. “P-p-please Holo, anything but this, please!”

Holo dutifully ignored the pointless ramblings of lunch. More shadows crept from beneath the shackle on his right wrist, solidifying into a thick, heavy blade. He steadied Indi's leg with his free claw and carefully positioned the blade just above the kneecap, before raising it up and bringing it down hard. Indi let out another horrified shriek as he felt the blade glide through his flesh and dig into bone. Again there was no pain, but the sensation alone nearly made the cheetah vomit. A second, well-aimed chop managed to sever Indi's left leg off above the knee, much to Holo's delight.

Blood was pooling from the cheetah's leg at an alarming rate, staining the black wooden table and soaking into the carpet below. With ease Holo redirected another mass of shadows over Indi's fresh stump, preventing further blood loss and ensuring the cheetah didn't expire before the fun even began.

As Indi watched, Holo lifted the already chewed on chunk of leg and tore into it with zeal. He stripped every shred of meat and flesh from the limb, blood-soaked bits tumbling to the floor in between messy bites. His once flat stomach swelled out slightly from his feast, filling with the mashed chunks of cheetah. Only a few minutes were what it took for Holo to reduce Indi's leg to a bare bone and a discarded, lightly nibbled on paw. He tossed the remains aside and let out a short belch, happily patting his middle with glee.

“I'd kill for some hot sauce right now, cause as mouth-watering as you are Indi, I can only imagine how much better that'd make you!” Holo cheerfully strolled to the other side of the table, his hunger far from satisfied.

“This isn't happening, this isn't happening, this isn't happening...” Indi muttered to himself, shaking.

Holo removed the lower half of Indi's right leg, nearly succeeding in a single chop. This time he bled shadows from the blade itself to reduce the blood loss, amidst growing concern that Indi was a lightweight.

“Wow, you're just falling apart, aren't you?” Holo laughed, taking a quick bite from the leg he'd cleaved off. “But honestly, I should probably eat ya like this more often just so you get used to it. Might

help with the nightmares you're bound to have later, too. Oh where are my manners, want to try a bite of yourself?"

Indi's only reply was a string of gibberish that resembled a moan.

"Your loss." Once more Holo ravenously dug into the meat, his belly expanding from the extra-chunky feast. He could feel his belt beginning to strain already, and there was still so much of Indi left to consume.

The growls from Holo's stomach only seemed to grow louder the more he ate, and by the time the dragon circled over to one of Indi's arms, he was too hungry to care about etiquette. He laid aside the blade and simply gripped the arm firmly in both claws, twisting and pulling until it cracked and popped off at the elbow, spraying blood across Indi. The force and viciousness of the act renewed Indi's shrieks and pleas; Holo, of course, ignored them.

Indi's arms were, like the rest of him, covered in soft layers of flab, though they lacked the bulk of his legs. Still, Holo devoured every bit of meat he could get from them, spitting out stray bones and savoring the lighter taste. Even with Holo's meticulous attempts to limit blood loss, Indi was growing woozy, and desperate to finally lose consciousness so he didn't have to watch himself being eaten. Holo could see the cheetah's eyes wandering, his moans and terrified chirps growing garbled, and knew he had to pick up the pace a little so his friend could witness the grand finale.

Ignoring what was left of Indi's limbs, Holo dragged the cheetah down the table with his shadows till his partially-severed legs were hanging over the edge. He pressed his claws against Indi's massive gut, letting them sink into the pudge, and gave the cheetah's belly a teasing jiggle. So much taste, all trapped behind a fragile mound of fat. With little warning, Holo shoved his claws deep into Indi's middle, easily piercing the skin. He pulled away Indi's flesh and flab to expose the delicious organs within, the cheetah unable to do anything but whimper.

Indi's stomach was still full of the painkilling shadows Holo had pumped into it, and resembled a swollen pink balloon, having expanded below his rib cage and pressed into his intestines. The hungry dragon ignored it for the moment, instead tearing off an end of the intestines and greedily slurping them up like noodles as he considered what to feast on next. Keeping the cheetah's body running was no longer Holo's concern, and Indi shook and stammered as his gluttonous friend carelessly dug into his vitals. Soon his eyes rolled into the back of his head, the cheetah expiring just as Holo finished cracking open his ribcage to retrieve the liver.

Holo was too busy eating to care. His blood-stained gut slowly ballooned outwards as he gorged on Indi's innards, stuffing himself with the lungs, kidneys, heart, even the spleen. Meals like this weren't common, and convincing Indi to "volunteer" again would require either a lot of favors or a lot of threats, so nothing could go to waste. He lifted the heavy mass of Indi's stomach out of his chest and simply swallowed it whole, grinning as the bulge passed down his throat and emptied into his own gut with a bounce. Eventually Holo managed to strip the cheetah bare, and all that remained of Indi was a terrible mess of bones and undesirable chunks resting in a drying pool of blood, his head untouched. The dragon's belly bulged and sagged nearly to his knees, a ridiculous contrast to the rest of his still-slim body. Indi was bound to put a few dozen pounds on him, something Holo would make sure to remind the cheetah of constantly once he re-formed.

The overindulgent meal had made Holo ready for a nap, but before he passed out on the couch there was one, final thing to deal with. With a clean strike Holo severed Indi's head from what remained of his shoulders. He gently propped up the head and gave it a friendly pat.

"You'll make a delightful souvenir for back home once I've got you all cleaned up," Holo said, before muffling a loud belch.

With his hunger finally satisfied Holo waddled back over the couch, a trail of bloody claw-prints in his wake, and lowered himself onto the couch to take a well-earned nap. He rubbed his swollen gut as he gradually drifted off, the wonderful taste of his friend still fresh in his mind.