

A Fat-Free Snack

By: IndigoRho

Marcus yawned and rubbed his eyes, trying his best to stay awake. Work that day at the Emerald Shore Arcade had been utterly exhausting, and thanks to an excessive number of call-outs the zebra's original eight hour shift had ended up extended to nearly twelve. Even with the end in sight he was regretting the decision. He'd needed to cover for multiple workcenters, manning registers, seating guests, overseeing the Pred Maze. There was practically no downtime throughout the day, and weighing close to four hundred pounds didn't help the situation. At the very least the Arcade was now closed. All that remained was some last minute tidying up and then he could head home to collapse into bed.

As the zebra took a moment to recuperate, a deer walked quietly up to him holding a glass of water. "Marcus you look exhausted, have something to drink."

Marcus eagerly took the offering and gulped it down in one go. "Thanks Aaron. And yeah, day's been a bit rough, hehe."

"I'm very thankful you agreed to stay later. We would've been way worse off without your help," Aaron said, smiling slightly.

"Oh, uh, no problem," Marcus said, brushing off an odd tingling sensation in his gut. "Couldn't just ditch when it felt like half the staff was either sick or digesting. Especially after Vann and Floyd both managed to get scarfed down during the lunch rush."

Aaron laughed. "That was rather unfortunate. When they show up for work again I'll have to remind them about staying out of reach of the rowdier tables. They should have recognized an impromptu eating contest from a mile away."

The refreshing cool of the water was lingering for some reason. Marcus assumed he was simply tired and imagining things, not noticing his belly had swollen slightly, smoothing out the handful of creases in his work-vest. "Well, it happens. I mean, I've been grabbed quite a bit myself." He sighed. "Apparently fat zebra tastes delicious."

"Unfortunately that taste comes at the price of quite a few calories," Aaron said, daring a subtle glance at his subordinate's growing middle. "I'm sure you tend to devastate waistlines."

Marcus blushed. "Tell me about it. My boyfriend's gotten so fat because of me, but the whole sleep-eating problem makes it kind of hard for him to resist."

The zebra's eye twitched as he suddenly realized how snug his clothes were feeling. He looked down at his even rounder than usual belly just in time to watch the first button of his vest pop off, then the second, and third. Marcus gave his gut a suspicious poke, feeling the tautness that was a tell-tale sign of inflation. With understandable concern he saw that his arms had also bloated a bit, threatening the seams of his undershirt. The swelling abruptly began to speed up, bursting his vest open and tearing at the sides of the shirt beneath, exposing more and more of his striped belly.

"W-what the Hell!" Marcus yelled in confusion as his clothes slowly ripped apart.

"Sorry about this," Aaron said with a smile, rather unapologetically. "I was really looking forward to eating Floyd today until someone beat me to him. You're a respectable replacement, though."

Marcus' blubbery middle had grown considerably, rounding out like a doughy balloon. He could feel the pressure within him increasing by the second as his fat was gradually spread out across the enlarging surface of his body. His boss's revelation turned his confusion into panic, and he frantically attempted to flee. Unfortunately Marcus quickly discovered just how unwieldy his bloated form had become, barely making it a few feet before tripping over the tattered remains of his own clothes and tumbling to the floor. The massive zebra rolled back and forth, flailing wildly in a desperate attempt to right himself.

Aaron continued smiling, casually strolling over to his immobilized prey and watching with

satisfaction as Marcus' limbs swelled and slowly became engulfed by his expanding body. "You know, I don't think I've had the pleasure of seeing you inflate before. Always fun to see how the stripes react, how their pattern gets distorted as you're skin's stretched to its limit."

"P-please don't eat me, I just want to go home and sleep!" Marcus begged as he wobbled about, his quickly vanishing arms and legs no longer anywhere near the ground. "I worked my ass off today, give me a break!"

"You'll rest better in my stomach than you would any bed," Aaron said, gently running a hoof along Marcus' side and feeling the zebra's soft hide grow tauter beneath. "Besides, you'll get a day off out of it."

Marcus winced as his sensitive skin was teased by the deer, his body almost a perfect sphere now. "I can't enjoy a day off if I'm spending it digesting!"

Aaron stopped in front of Marcus and looked him in the eyes. "Don't worry, with what I have planned, your time in my stomach will be rather brief. Painless, too, at least from what I've heard." He produced a strange pair of gloves and began putting them on.

The zebra groaned, very aware of how extraordinarily tight his hide was. He was somewhat sure he'd finally stopped inflating, though he felt dangerously on the verge of bursting. A question nagged at Marcus' thoughts: why had Aaron risked popping him if he was so intent on eating him? "T-the pressure's too much, if you don't deflate me a little I'll explode!"

"Oh Marcus, for this to work I *need* you to explode," Aaron said, pulling out a visor and sliding it over his eyes and ears.

"What?"

Aaron carefully placed a gloved hoof on either side of the inflated zebra, his eyes barely visible through the shade of the visor. "As I said before, you're overloaded with calories. Eating you would satiate my hunger, but I'd have to skip work just to digest you down to a manageable size, and the weight I'd gain would be obnoxious."

"B-but you can't eat me if I pop!" Marcus said.

"Maybe not your high-calorie body, but popping you will release that delightful fat-free soul of yours," Aaron said, his grin widening.

Aaron suddenly began to dig a sharp finger on each hoof directly into Marcus' body. The zebra's overstretched skin no longer had any give, and Marcus gasped in pain as he felt his body pierced, though the deer's fingers swiftly moved into place to block the escape of air. With his mouth momentarily opened Aaron lunged, locking lips with the zebra in a deep kiss he couldn't escape from. Struggling only seemed to worsen the pressure and provoke ominous creaks, though Marcus couldn't help but twist his head in an impossible effort to evade Aaron's confusing embrace. Audible inhaling made the zebra freeze up as he realized the purpose all too late.

Aaron ruthlessly emptied the air from his lungs directly into Marcus' mouth, forcing a muffled yell right back down the terrified zebra's throat. The deer could feel Marcus' taut skin inch up his embedded fingers ever so slightly. Marcus' face contorted as the pressure within him spiked, able to sense the thinnest parts of his hide preparing to snap. He heard Aaron taking a second deep breath but all he could do was whimper in despair as the next exhale blew into him, bringing him just beyond his limits. Countless tears erupted across the zebra as his body violently came apart, shooting white and black swaths of hide in every direction. Aaron barely flinched as scraps of Marcus and escaping air pelted him, his eyes glued to the void left by the immense zebra's explosion. His true prize appeared just as expected.

The ghostly form of an obese zebra fell to the floor exactly where Marcus' had just been, as if he'd been suspended within. Aaron saw the normally invisible soul clearly thanks to his visor, and could tell Marcus was still dazed from his sudden death. Wasting little time, Aaron bent down and grabbed Marcus, his gloves adhering to the incorporeal spirit, lifting him into the air with ease. While Marcus still had the appearance of a four hundred pound zebra, his soul felt lighter than a feather.

“Oh this is perfect, you don't weigh a thing!” Aaron said joyfully, spinning around and holding Marcus high in the air as remnants of the zebra's former body continued to flutter and settle. “You'll be a wonderful low-calorie snack.”

Marcus was still recovering from the traumatizing experience, not entirely sure what had happened and grimacing as he spotted the strewn about pieces of his own hide. “D-don't do this, just let me fade and re-form!”

“You shouldn't be so picky about the path you take to returning to life,” Aaron said, opening his mouth wide.

Aaron engulfed Marcus' head in a single gulp, the soul trying in vain to wiggle his way out of the deer's grasp. He could only vaguely feel what was happening, the tight confines of the mouth and throat only coming across as a dull pressure against his body. There wasn't the usual warmth or moisture he'd come to expect from the numerous times he'd been swallowed whole, nor the muffled noises pounding in his ears. The lack of familiar tactile sensations somehow made the experience far worse than what he was used to. Marcus squirmed and whined as he was quickly gulped down, Aaron not bothering to taste or tease his meal. Why bother. Souls only had the faintest hints of flavor—though allegedly experienced connoisseurs could enhance it—and Marcus wouldn't have been able to feel any real teasing.

Aaron's originally chubby belly rapidly ballooned outward as Marcus' soul was forced into the deer's stomach, the buttons of his vest popping off in succession on the way down and his shirt rolling up. This was the first time Aaron had ever consumed someone's spirit, and the lack of weight in his gut proved somewhat disorienting. He was reminded of inflating more than eating, though Marcus still expanded his middle in an uneven manner that was far different from filling with air. The final gulps came quickly, and within a matter of minutes Aaron had managed to shove Marcus' soul completely into his stomach.

A loud belch echoed throughout the empty room as Aaron purged the air from his stomach and set about admiring his form. The deer's belly was preposterously huge, wrapped tightly around what should have been a four hundred pound meal. Instead, it swayed with ease, almost detrimentally so. Aaron was forced to take a moment to adjust to his unwieldy, weightless gut, bouncing it around in his hooves like an oversized beachball. Marcus fidgeted and shifted within—much to Aaron's enjoyment—still begging to be released. The pleading was one of Aaron's favorite parts of eating others, though, and the deer merely basked in Marcus' misery.

While Aaron would have loved to spend hours toying with the soul he'd gobbled up, even he was growing weary, and he was needed back at the Arcade early the next morning to open. He decided to leave the cleanup of Marcus' burst body for later, strolling towards the back office just as fast as usual, albeit a tad bit careful to avoid smashing anything with his bulging belly. Getting home in his condition would be a slight hassle, but the meal had definitely been worth it. By the time he woke up tomorrow his stomach would have shrunk almost completely back down to normal size. Aaron grinned to himself; eating souls almost felt like cheating. He'd gotten all the joy of swallowing someone whole without having to face the annoyances of digesting a body or gaining unwanted weight. Perhaps he'd have to start eating souls more often.