

Shedding Pounds:

By: IndigoRho

The main hall of the Pinebrook Inn was fairly quiet, just a handful of travelers eating their last meals of the night before heading off to bed. An exhausted local bard continued plucking away at his lute, though most were attempting to ignore the uninspired music, including a very hungry snow leopard. Vel looked down on the pitiful plate of food before him, and his stomach let out a loud rumble of disapproval in return. Normally the meal would have been filling—albeit poorly flavored—but the current size of his rather demanding gut ensured he wouldn't be satisfied tonight. He preferred being slimmer, despite the potential uses for the excess bulk. Rarely feeling hungry, only having to worry about knocking things over with his fluffy tail instead of his belly, being able to scale trees without fear of snapping branches off. He didn't understand how so many of his associates both endured and enjoyed being so large.

“You gonna eat or just glare at your food all night?” The equally hefty crocodile besides Vel asked with a snicker.

“Eating this won't make me any less hungry. Why isn't your stomach growling as loudly as mine is, Rakuva!” Vel grumbled.

The crocodile cleared off more of his plate, answering in between bites. “The trick is to always be eating in between your meals! That's why I snagged anything edible we passed on the road up here.”

“I'm not sure stuffing myself silly is the best answer.” Vel shifted his gaze to his round middle, giving it a frustrated poke with a paw. “I over prepared for this journey, I didn't expect it to be so...uneventful.”

“Stop whining, you could've dealt with that problem easily by just bumping into a few people at the market, and you know it!”

Vel let out a quiet growl. “Too many chances for things to escalate. Maybe I should just pass on the burden to...”

The snow leopard stopped as he felt something light bounce off the back of his head, then clatter to the wood floor below. A quick glance revealed the projectile to have been a small bone, a few strips of torn meat still attached. A second bone hit his neck, and this time Vel heard the laughs of his “assailants” coming from a table nearby. He turned to face the pair, an obviously drunk ram and seal, hopeful an annoyed look would be enough to convince them to stop, or at least bother someone else. Instead, the ram tossed yet another bone at Vel, bouncing it off his gut. The drunks immediately burst into laughter.

“Told ya I could hit 'im from here!” The ram gloated, before taking a chug of beer from his mug.

“How could you not hit someone that wide!” The seal laughed again, loud enough to gain the attention of nearly everyone else in the room.

Tempted to simply curse the pair out, Vel suddenly realized he'd been presented with the perfect solution to his little weight problem. He stood from his chair and waddled towards the pair, exaggerating the sway of his belly to keep them distracted and flinging petty insults his way. They didn't appear to see him as a threat, neither paying him any real attention even as he stopped behind the ram's chair, a devious grin on his face.

Vel gently placed a paw on the ram's shoulder and concentrated, relieved to feel a warming tingle spread over his whole body as he did. His inebriated victim showed no signs of noticing the similar sensation in his own body. “You two enjoying my weight?”

The ram snorted. “Not as much as you, from the looks of things!”

“Bet he'd clear out half the market if given the chance!” the seal added, despite being on the chubby side himself.

Vel ignored them for the most part, his eyes drawn to the ram's once flat stomach, which was

slowly beginning to round out. Meanwhile, Vel's clothing was loosening in turn. He wondered if the drunks had even heard of lipomancy before, let alone seen it in action. Not that Vel's style was particularly common amongst practitioners of such magic. With a single touch the snow leopard could transfer fat from his own body to another's, though the process was gradual. As a brawler, Vel's favored tactic in combat was to transfer weight to his opponents in ten pound increments, improving his mobility with every landed punch while turning them into exhausted, wobbly messes. Vel doubted the ram would get much of a chance to fight back, though.

"He'll probably pass out half-way up the stairs to his room, might clog up the whole hallway!"

The ram downed the remainder of his beer to celebrate his joke, but as soon as he'd finished gulping it down he discovered his tunic felt terribly tight. Confused, the ram attempted to adjust it, only to discover it was strained over his growing middle. He let out a *baaa* of fright, then a cry of pain as Vel dug his other paw into his shoulder to pin him in place.

"No need to run off, I promise I won't be getting stuck in the halls any time soon," Veli said, his voice almost soothing. "You on the other hand..."

The ram grimaced as seams all over his tunic ripped apart, his gut and even arms becoming far too flabby for his clothing to handle. His friend watched in shock as he fattened up before his very eyes, face growing rounder and a double chin forming. Eventually he gained the courage to stand himself, knocking aside his chair and storming the short distance to Vel.

"W-What are you doing to him!" the seal shouted, ready and willing to pummel the snow leopard if he didn't get an answer.

Vel's mood was bitter, and on a whim he decided nothing short of disproportionate retribution was in order. A quick swipe of his tail knocked the seal right off his claws and snout-first into the floor. The seal groaned and opened his eyes to the sight of Vel's tail hovering before him, its tip abruptly splitting open to reveal a dark, saliva-drenched tunnel. His scream was short-lived, muffled as Vel's tail lunged and engulfed the seal's head and shoulders.

The commotion had long ago drawn the attentions of everyone else in the room. Seeing the ram magically gain weight as the snow leopard lost it was strange on its own, but now the leopard's tail was greedily swallowing someone, too. Most swiftly left their tables—wanting nothing to do with the altercation—and the bard happily called it a night and left the inn completely. The innkeeper himself kept his distance and refused to interfere; the crow hadn't seen a voracious fight at the inn in years, and was intent on not ending up in a patron's stomach. Besides, he was certain the ram and seal had already paid for their rooms and drink, so there wouldn't be personal loss to him.

Vel began to happily hum to himself. He guessed he'd transferred close to a hundred pounds to the ram already, and the weight loss felt absolutely wonderful. His clothing was especially designed to handle his fluctuating size, shrinking along with his waistline, while the ram's was gradually shredded. The feeling of the seal frantically squirming for dear life as Vel's tail started gulping down his legs was an added bonus. Vel was generally apathetic about the taste of others, and his tail-maw gave him the opportunity to indulge in the delightful struggles of a living meal without being stuck with the lingering after-taste of leather or fabric.

Panicked cries for help were just barely audible from within the wiggling bulge traveling up Vel's tail, and he moaned as his belly swelled again slightly from the seal entering his stomach. The ram was too busy failing to escape his own predicament to even realize what was happening to his friend, let alone help. He could *feel* himself growing fatter, his butt spreading across the chair and his new gut into the table. Splinters on the rough wooden edge slowly poked into his exposed flab, while the chair creaked painfully from a combination of the ram's dramatic weight gain and some added pressure from Vel. Inevitably the chair's legs snapped, the ram crashing to the ground with a yelp and a thud that stung his spine and jiggled his belly before he fell backwards into the debris.

By then the seal's flailing paws were slipping past the tip of Vel's tail, which clamped shut behind them. Vel cradled his swelling middle with both paws, grinning wildly as his spontaneous meal

squirmed beneath his grasp. The ram was disoriented and groaning in pain, unable to manage the nearly two hundred pounds of fresh fat Vel had “gifted” him; his rare attempts to sit up were met with failure and heavy breathing. Looking upon the damage he'd caused, Vel was hit with a sudden, irritable thought: the seal was likely to be dreadfully fattening.

Vel's dismay was brief, though, as he realized a satisfying solution was directly in front of him. Or, rather, directly below him. He flicked his still-bulging tail into the ram's open mouth and pushed till it was just barely within their throat. The seal's movement into Vel's stomach abruptly halted, then reversed, the bulge slowly traveling back down the snow leopard's tail. The very confused ram finally saw what had happened to his friend, and his eyes widened as he realized what his attacker intended to do. He frantically wrapped his hooves around Vel's tail to pull it out, but he was powerless to stop the gravity-aided passage of the seal straight into his throat. Instead, he had no choice but to start swallowing.

There was fear in the ram's eyes, tears beginning to well. Vel assumed the ram and seal had never found themselves so utterly outmatched before. They'd be learning a valuable, lasting lesson in humility thanks to him. Well, one of them would at least. He laughed at his own morbid amusement, which simply unnerved the ram even more. Vel's middle had flattened out again as the ram's began to grow, the seal now very aware he was being shifted from one stomach to another. The ram's desperate attempts to stand or change his fate were becoming increasingly impossible as he swallowed more and more of his friend. He cringed at every terrified kick the seal made within his stomach, which was stretching wider than ever before in his life.

When Vel finally plucked his poofy tail from the ram's mouth, though, there was no relief. The ram whined as he gulped down the last of his forced meal, painfully full. Feeling a living being squirm inside him was horrifying, but he was so convinced he'd burst apart he made no effort to throw up his own friend. Worse yet, the seal's pleas and struggles had steadily grown sluggish throughout the ordeal, having been denied fresh air far too long.

Vel stretched and let out a delighted sigh as he readjusted to being slim. “You would not *believe* how nice it is to be this light again! I'm truly thankful you volunteered to take that burden off my waist,” he told the traumatized ram. “Not to mention gobbling up that fattening meal I was planning to have. I'm sure he'll look far better on your middle than mine.”

The ram was too dazed and distraught to reply, and Vel happily strolled back to his table.

Rakuva had been content watching the spectacle unfold. “I don't get to see you act so petty often enough, it's great!”

Vel shrugged. “They caught me in a bad mood. Besides, what I did to them is far more merciful than what you would've. Doomed to the void of your stomach...”

“Hmph! Sating the Endless Hunger is an honor, and a far better fate than they could hope for!” Rakuva said with pride. “But we didn't come here to eat, we came here to recruit, remember?”

“Yes I remember, and we'll deal with that tomorrow. Shouldn't be too difficult to find a fat green cheetah, even in a town this size.” Vel began moving for the stairs, eager to rest after expending so much energy on the pair of annoyances.

Rakuva followed close behind. “Bet he's gotten fatter since we last saw him!”

“Wouldn't doubt it.” Vel left a modest pawful of coins on the bar in front of the rather nervous innkeeper, payment for damages and his less-than-civil actions. The crow merely nodded as they retired to their room, relieved the two travelers were only intent on staying a single night. At least all he had to clean up was a broken chair and an over-stuffed patron tonight. That was just barely preferable to blood or a limb...