

Game Night

By Nada_Rakshasa

On our weekly game night I found my modest apartment overtaken by a gaggle of gamers. Between parents, roommates or significant others, my home had become our groups' sole gaming location. Perhaps our late hours and bouts of not-so-quiet activity were off-putting to them. But living alone and maintaining a distant relationship with my neighbors, I was free to have host games at my sole discretion.

We got together every Saturday for table-top role playing or the occasional LAN-party. Depending on who was there, sometimes a combination of the two. On this occasion, the group consisted of Eric, Greg, Marston and Quinn. We were seated at my dinner table preparing up for the latest session of an ongoing role playing campaign when there was a knock on the door. Puzzled, I glanced up from my reading. Most of the expected players were already here.

"Oh, yeah," Marston hopped up, gesturing for me to remain seated. "I ran into Noel on campus today; He told me that his other plans got cancelled so, uh, he's here." He dashed around the corner to the front door. Noel attended the same Economics class as Marston. After their mutual interest in gaming came up, Marston invited him to several game nights six months back. He'd made a good impression on all of the guys and rapidly became a regular.

"That helps." This came from Eric, the person running tonight's game. "I have some plans that tie in to his character's backstory."

Marston quickly returned, accompanied by the man in question. I'd always found the new arrival to be handsome, his dark brown hair combed back under his beret, his gray eyes bright. Noel was around average height, probably no more than five-nine in his leather sandals; But he was a stocky fellow, his weight settling in pear shape accentuating his slightly waddle. He wore an unbuttoned plaid shirt over a tank-top, a tight fit over his pert moobs and gut; His broad hips, rump and thighs filled out the relaxed fit cargo shorts considerably.

A chorus of greetings was exchanged as Noel sidled behind me chair, the soft swell of his lower belly brushing against my neck and upper back. "Hey, Harrison," he said, pausing to give my shoulders a light squeeze before taking a seat beside me. Stifling the blush I could feel rising, I raised a hand in greeting, offering a slight smile.

He smiled warmly in return, and I noted how pleasingly his thin mustache and stubble framed his full lips. Bumping his knee against mine, he asked, "How are you doin'?" I replied that I was doing quite well, which caused him to chuckle. "Good to hear." When I put the same question to him, he responded with his usual, "Wonderful."

Eric started distributing character sheets around the table. We each went over our information, re-familiarizing ourselves with our characters. I'd built a rogue, an assassin who excelled at stealth and dealing extra damage from backstabs. He had a few other tricks, brewing poisons and dabbling with spells.

Our characters were part of an adventurer's guild in a major city, something of a contrivance, but had it saved time on introductions and explained our characters' allegiance to each other. The basic premise of the campaign was that our party was being sent to a colony on the outlying regions of the country to set up a new branch of the guild. It was a long journey, the road littered with enemies, dungeons and adventures just waiting for us to stumble across them, too. It'd been fairly combat heavy so far, but I expected the social aspect to pick up once we got to the colony, with still more adventuring once we set up there.

I was enjoying this campaign a bit more than some of the last few, and I found myself looking forward to it each week. For some reason it brought Eric joy to circumvent my expectations of the narrative.

Anyway, the campaign had left off with our party tracking a horde of bandits who'd been preying on some

homesteaders. We had some fun interactions, amongst the players and the non-player characters, and some not-so-serious combat in the form of an inn-fight (Our bard, Quinn's character, is something of a heavy-handed flirt) as we prepared for our hunt.

We'd been at it for a couple of hours when I heard a pronounced grumble beside me. I glanced over at Noel, my gaze instinctively darting down to his stomach, where he'd lifted his shirt to soothingly pat his lightly furred gut, before rising to meet his sheepish gaze. He blushed, "I skipped lunch today." I nodded sympathetically, turning my attention to the group at large.

"Guys? How are we feeling about a food right now?"

I'd learned that gamers (or maybe it's just guys in general), round or thin, can consume a lot of food over the course of an evening, if it's readily available. So, I'd arranged for a decent assortment of drinks and some snacks, but I left the actual food arrangements open. Depending on the mood, sometimes we got something delivered, sometimes a party was sent out to collect food from a chosen fast-food restaurant or grocery store.

After reaching the consensus that food would be good, we began the slow process of figuring out what sort of food people wanted and how they hoped to attain. Too many people were tired of pizza at the moment (I was pleased to hear Noel say that he didn't understand how that was possible, something I agreed with wholeheartedly). And since no one felt like preparing food at the apartment, they settled on a nearby fast food restaurant.

Prepared for this eventuality I had cash on hand, but most of the other guys, aside from Noel, only had plastic of some variety.

"I guess I'll drive," Quinn said, taking out his keys. "Guys with cards, I guess you can ride with me. Harry, Noel? What do you guys want?"

Ask any of these guys what you need to build a master archer and they could give you several optimized character builds, without even cracking open a book. But ask them to remember a meal order? That didn't end so well. So, as was becoming our habit, Noel and I wrote our orders on a sheet of scratch paper. Noel's list was, as usual, much longer than mine.

"Okay," Quinn said, pocketing the cash and list. "We'll be back soon."

As they filed out of the apartment, I calculated that Noel and I would be alone, if experience was any guide, for at least forty-five minutes, likely longer (These ventures tend to become complicated. That's just how it is).

"So," Noel said, with a coy smirk, "how would you like to kill some time?"

Despite the numerous ideas I had for these occasions, I once again found myself recommending a round of Left 4 Dead, a first-person shooter set in a zombie-filled cityscape. Hardly the romantic interlude I'd imagined previously, but Noel didn't seem to mind. Once the game was set up, he settled into the loveseat beside me, close enough that our knees and thighs pressed together as we tackled the hordes of infected.

It turned out to be a fairly short food run. We'd barely started up a second campaign when the other guys returned, food in tow. Most of them settled at the table, but Marston made a detour to deliver our orders.

"Thanks," I said, pocketing the change and placing the paper bag beside me. Noel accepted both of his bags with more enthusiasm, digging into them immediately. Even as I turned my attention to my own meal, I couldn't help but notice Noel working his way through a prodigious amount of food: Four bacon double-cheese-burgers, two orders of french-fries, chili, a soft-drink and a milkshake, all of them large-sized (Which I've begun to admit has

become excessively accurate recently).

He looked up at me looking at him, catching my eye with a grin. "Zombie-killin' makes for hungry work."

I laughed quietly. "'tis true."

Despite the disparity between the amounts of food we'd ordered (I'm something of a light eater), Noel and I finished around the same time. I rose to my feet, and offered my hand to Noel who, after licking the residue of his meal from his fingers and wiping them on his trousers, took it. I braced myself as Noel stood up, leaving a broad indentation in my loveseat. We stood close for what should have been a second, close enough that I could smell the soapy scent of his body-wash overlaid with the salt-and-grease scent of fast food and feel his full stomach press against me.

"Thanks," He murmured, after we'd shared this position for what was probably a little too long for an entirely platonic relationship. He patted my arm as he moved past me to the table. I turned to follow him, enjoying his lingering aroma and the view of his ample rump as he walked ahead. Yeah, I was in trouble. Even if he was just playing with me, I was hooked.

After everyone had finished eating, we returned to the matter of role playing once more. We tracked the bandits to their camp and put an end to their criminal paths. Eric then left us with the question of what to do with the women and children, who we discovered concealed in the bandit camp, whose husbands and fathers we'd executed. As we argued about how to resolve that issue, the night grew late, even for us, and came to a close.

The guys packed up their books and dice and other assorted belongings, thanking Eric for the game and me for hosting as they left. The process was slowed considerably by the distraction of conversation. But people worked their way to the door, and I saw each of them out, exchanging handshakes and man-hugs.

As Eric headed out, his laptop bag in hand, Marston trailed behind him, burdened with rolling travel bag that contained the small library of D&D books Eric brought to each game. I was so caught up in my duties as a host that I had almost missed that Noel remained in the apartment, his few books and dice bag in one hand. He leaned past me, all but on me, as he plucked his beret from the coat rack.

"See ya next week?" He asked, smoothing down his hair before putting his cap on.

"That's the plan," I nodded.

"Cool," Noel said, smiling. "I'm looking forward to it."

I was so startled when he interrupted his side-step out the door to give me a hug that I didn't realize it was happening until it was over.

He smiled crookedly as he registered my confusion. "Sorry, I saw you hug the other guys and hoped I was at at that point, too. I hope it doesn't bother you."

"No, no," I said. "It's-" Nice. "-cool. I'm okay with hugs, even the ambush kind."

"Good to know," He chuckled. He glanced out toward the lot, then back at me. "Hey, do you have my number?" I acknowledged that I did not. I took out my cell phone, programmed it in as he told me, and gave him mine as well. "If you feel like it, give me a call. Doesn't have to be for a game, it can be just 'cause."

"Thanks," I said, trying not to blush. "I'll do that." I asked him what would be a good time, and he let me know

what his schedule was like, for classes and work study. I made the same offer to him, telling him he could call to me to hang out, or just to talk, if he felt like it.

“Cool,” He said, a smile tugging the edge of his lips. With that, he waved, “Good night.”

“Good night,” I said, waiting by the door as he walked down the stairs, across the lot and drove away.

Over the next several months, Noel also began to work his way into my life outside of Saturday gaming. Our calls were tentative initially, just once or twice a week, and usually just to chat about what was going on that day. There was some trial and error as we got to know each other’s schedules. I’d have to let his call run to voicemail because I was at work (Non-emergency personal calls are frowned upon) or he’d bounce my call because he was in the middle of class.

But eventually we found a good pace, with several calls a week when we got the chance. Short calls during the afternoon, Noel’s between classes, mine during my breaks at work; Longer calls in the evening, when I’d nestle into my comfy chair and we’d have rambling talks. And, of course, we saw each other on Saturday nights where I began to notice that, given the opportunity, Noel made a point to sit next to me, to increase our interactions from the verbal to the physical, in little ways.

I was beginning to find myself won over by the sincerity of his interest, although I remained unsure if it were strictly platonic or... otherwise. While I accepted his advances with more than my usual neutrality, I overstepped no bounds Noel hadn’t already crossed. While intrigued and definitely interested, I decided to match him step for step, not up the ante.

After what felt like an unusually long work-week, brightened by my brief midweek interactions with Noel, I rolled out of bed Saturday morning with an oddly auspicious feeling. But I spent my Saturday morning as usual: a quick shower, some light gaming (catching up on my Nth play-through of Chrono Cross) with breakfast (syrup-slathered waffles, eggs and bacon), before straightening up the apartment in preparation for the game.

Around 11:30am, I gave Noel a call. It rang for a while, and I had begun to formulate a voicemail when he picked up.

“Hello?” He yawned. I’d learned that, like most of the guys, he was a later riser on weekends.

“Hey, it’s Harrison,” I said, “I was wondering what you were up to this afternoon.”

There was a sort of pause, and I had a visual of his mind booting up like a computer.

“Oh. Oh. Hey, Harry,” He said, sounding a bit more awake, but not much more so. “Not really doing much. What’s up?”

“Not too much, either,” I admitted. “That’s sort of what I was calling about.” Now came the hard part. “I was wondering if you’d care to join me for lunch this afternoon, before the game. It seems like you tend to skip lunch on Saturday, so I wanted make sure you were taken care of today.” I added teasingly, “Although I suppose it’d be breakfast for you.”

“You got me,” Noel laughed, and I could hear springs creaking as he shifted in bed. “I slept in today.” He groaned and, in my mind, I could see him stretching, upright in bed, his phone propped between his outstretched arm and his ear, his upper body heaving gelatinously. “But, sure, I’d be up for that. Where d’you wanna go?”

“There’s a nice Chinese buffet not far from my apartment,” I said, giving him directions. “We could meet here and

walk there.” We finished making our arrangements and, since he mentioned a dire need for a shower, I returned to Chrono Cross.

I’d been playing for about an hour when I heard a knock on the door. I ambled as casually as I could to the door, opening it to find a trendily-dressed Noel outside it. I smiled, pleased to see him, but also slightly enjoying the still-not-quite-conscious expression on his freshly scrubbed face. He’d opted for the layered look, a black t-shirt over a white long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans and, of course, his faithful beret. His wardrobe seemed a bit snug, particularly around his chest and belly and waist (not that I was complaining), and I wondered if he’d be due for an upgrade in clothing size soon.

“Hey,” I said, waving him in. As was becoming habit, he interrupted his side-step into the apartment to give me a full-bodied embrace, enveloping me a soft, sweet-scented hug. I hugged him in return, my hands unconsciously drifting down to grasp his love-handles. At his slight jump, I remembered that I was getting ahead of the program. With a gentle pat to his side, I began to pull away. With an audible sigh, he relinquished his hold as well and, with sheepish smiles, we headed inside.

With a slight blush, I turned to attend to my forgotten game, and I could hear him follow me into the living room. He glanced over my shoulder at the television, where my game was still paused. “So you decided to replay Chrono Cross? Cool.”

“Yeah,” I said, picking up the game controller. “Our conversation reminded me of how much I enjoyed it.” I patted the console. “Let me just save this game real quick... Okay, done.” I slipped on my jacket and looked over at my portly guest. He was leaning against the sofa arm, just watching me.

“You ready?” He asked, to which I nodded. So we headed out into a brisk autumn afternoon. It was an exercise in futility to avoid catching sight of the not-so-subtle jiggle that seemed to ripple through Noel’s body with each step, particularly in his chest and lower belly. I was surprised to realize that he seemed to be engaging a similar surreptitious study. It sent a curious flush through me.

“I apologize if my invitation was a bit abrupt,” I said. The idea had occurred to me only last night, at such an hour that I was hesitant to call, even on a Friday night.

“Nah, it’s cool,” Noel said, he glanced over at me. “You seemed kinda frantic this week.”

“Sorry about that,” I said. “With fall break, a few people got approved to take vacations on overlapping days, so I had to fill in a lot more than usual. There were some early mornings and late nights and not always in the most intuitive pattern.”

“That sucks,” Noel said. “Well, hopefully they get your schedule straightened up soon.”

“It should,” I said, “Until the holiday season really starts.”

“Ouch,” Noel said. After a moment he asked, “So, you’re not taking off for the holidays?”

“Nah,” I said. “I don’t really have anywhere to go, so I tend to just fill the scheduling gaps. My manager and I have an arrangement.” I nodded reassuringly. “There’s decent overtime pay.”

“Oh, okay,” Noel said, although he seemed oddly affected by my explanation. We turned to other topics as we approached the restaurant, such as the night’s upcoming game and our previous experiences with other campaigns and he quickly to return to his usual self. We entered and, despite the afternoon lunch rush, were quickly seated in a booth near the back of the restaurant. We took a moment to rearrange the table, allowing more room for Noel’s,

shall we say, larger proportions. The waitress, Zi, took our drink orders and directed us to the buffet.

"It looks good," Noel said, taking in the rows of food. He sniffed the heavily scented air. "Smells good, too."

"It is," I promised, guiding him to the stacks of plates. I'd been to several other buffets in town, and it seemed like their plates were slightly larger than the others, more like platters. It probably made for marginally fewer trips, I suppose, and accommodated those who might find such matters inconvenient. I'd observed some hefty customers frequenting this place over the years.

I knew my route and picked up my favorites, returning to the booth in short order. Rather than partaking of my own meal, though, I waited for Noel, watching him idle through the aisles, slowly filling up his plate with various dishes and delicacies. When he finally ambled over to our seats, his plate was piled high. I could see some of my favorites, teriyaki chicken, crab Rangoon, stuffed mushrooms, assorted types of rice and a sampling of pretty much every non-dessert available.

"I like to try a bit of everything," He said, noticing my expression as I took in his plate, which was making me full just looking at it. "I figure out what I like, then get more of that for the next plate, then figure out what I really like and get more of that on the third plate. And then I usually get dessert and repeat."

"So you have a buffet process," I said, smiling at the thought.

He laughed. "I guess I do. That's just on the first trip, though. After that, I just get a few plates of my favorites and a couple of plates of dessert."

I was beginning to develop a better understanding of Noel's current size.

We were quiet during the meal. At least, we didn't speak. Under the clatter of dishes, the murmur of other conversation, and the general hustle and bustle of the restaurant, I could hear Noel smacking his lips and chomping his way through the mountain of food. I wished that I were better cook, because I could tell by just observing that he savored each bite and taste. No verbal affirmation of a job well-done would be needed.

I was once more surprised to find that we finished our plates at the same time. I hadn't gotten that much and he'd gotten quite a bit. I'd always been something of a slow eater, but I was also a light eater, so he must have been gobbling down food at a decent pace. We went to the tables, and again I returned to our buffet first and was treated to the view of him bearing a platter of, as planned, a smaller selection but of similar portions to the first plate. Also as planned, this was repeated twice more. By the time he was done, he'd undone his pants and I'd had to pull the table back again to make room for him. But, finally sated (more like over-sated) he leaned back in the doubly padded seat, the hem of his shirt sliding over the swell of his belly to reveal a furry strip of flesh as well as the hollow of his belly button. He finished his presentation of appreciation with a rumbling belch.

I raised my drink as if following a toast, "Hear, hear."

He laughed, then groaned, groping his full stomach between both hands. "Don't make me laugh. I might rupture something."

"I'll try not to," I said. He did look very stuffed. Concern warred with increasing arousal. Fortunately, I recognized that humor is often best served spontaneously, so I made no effort to force the matter.

"Ooh, man," He groaned, exhaling heavily as he rested his hands on his belly. "I think maybe I overdid it this time."

"It was an impressive display," I said cordially.

Now, I admit, what follows is a bit out of character for me. I'm not sure what made me so bold, perhaps it was in response to the sheer openness of Noel's earlier exhibition. But I watched as I reached across the table, carefully rubbing Noel's gut, not far under his well-rounded chest. I blushed as I realized what I was doing, but I realized that Noel's expression, as he watched my hand rest on him, was not one of affront. His lips had curved into a pleased smile, one of contentment and... affirmation?

"I don't think I've seen someone take such pleasure in a meal before." This time he blushed, and I patted his hand where it now rested on the table. "I don't mean that in a bad way. You made me wish I could create or do something that would bring someone as much gratification."

Noel got a funny look on his face, opened his mouth as if to speak, closed it and opened it again. "Then I guess that's a good thing."

I nodded, picking up the check, which the waitress had brought after collecting Noel's third plate (pre-dessert plate). If it had been a hint, Noel certainly hadn't taken it. I almost felt guilty as I looked at the total. It wasn't a small amount, but compared to what Noel had eaten, it almost seemed like too little. But Zi had been very attentive, refilling drinks and clearing plates with almost robotic regularity, so between the two of them, I tipped a little better than normal, slipping my card onto the receipt tray.

Noel reached for his wallet, and I waved him off, "My treat."

As it turns out, I needn't have bothered. Seated and stuffed as he was, he couldn't get his wallet out of his blue jeans anyway. He blushed, but nodded gratefully, with a murmured, "Thanks." Zi returned with my card, thanked us and went back to her remaining customers. I slid out of the booth, taking a moment to watch Noel wriggle out, again pushing the table before making it out and onto his feet. He turned away for a moment, and after some fidgeting I assumed he redid his jeans and belt before following me out.

As we walked back to my apartment, observing Noel's subtly increased waddle and somewhat labored breathing, I mused. "In hindsight, we probably should have driven."

"I'm okay," Noel said, "s' not so bad to have a good walk to follow a good meal." He paused. "Maybe ... Maybe we can do this again next week?"

I tried not to over-react to the implications of this question as I answered, "I think that I would like that."

"Me, too," Noel said, sounding pleased with himself. A cool breeze danced around us, and I suddenly I found myself pulled close to Noel, his arm around my shoulder as he held me against his warm bulk. "Wouldn't want you to catch cold," He said, a coy smile on his lips when I looked over at him, my arm slipping as far around his broad waist as it would reasonably go. He was so irresistibly warm and soft, I couldn't help leaning into him. "You're not as well-insulated as I am."

"'tis true," I replied, perhaps slightly drunk on his food-tinged scent and my sudden proximity to his roundsome frame. I say this, because I found myself rubbing his gut once more with my free hand, less carefully this time, my hand exploring the curve of his belly down below the notched up hems of his shirts, which he hadn't bothered to tuck back in. I could hear him stifle a moan before I stopped. "You're very well padded."

"Perhaps too well padded?" He asked, looking vulnerable for a moment.

"I'd say that you're just right for keeping me warm," I said, leaning my head against his. "Hot, even."

I could hear his smile in his voice as he rested his head gently against mine, with a very quiet, “Cool.”

I don’t think I need to say that it was more than a pleasant walk back to my apartment. I fumbled with my key as I let us into my apartment, finally stepping apart as I closed the door and hung up my jacket and he his cap. He was breathing heavily, and I was uncertain if it was simply the walk (which turned out to be longer than I remembered) or if some other stimulus was responsible.

“So,” He said, leaning against the door, arms crossed over his stuffed stomach. “The game isn’t s’posed to start for a few hours. And most of the guys probably won’t even be here for a few hours after that. How would you like to kill some time?”