

The following days, Aaron settled steadily into the idea of working less. The snolf still went out in the afternoons to help his companion, though with the new machine at work, the serpent found that his assistance was reduced to simply hauling bales of crops to the barn. It was work he was used to, a comforting familiarity that made his lessened workload easier to accept. Of course, that still left his mornings rather open, and without much to occupy himself with, Aaron more and more frequently resorted to snacking out of boredom. Zach found that his prepackaged food stores were being raided regularly, though the big feral was at least kind enough to make sure he never left a mess.

Still, after a little more than a week of lowered activity without lowered caloric intake, the effects were starting to show. Laying out on his side in the living room, head propped up on a pillow he'd placed on the end of the coffee table, Aaron watched the nature documentary on the television as his tail slid chips into his muzzle, munching absentmindedly. Though he failed to notice, the hybrid's form had grown a bit huskier, a small, yet noticeable layer of padding coating what used to be a toned abdomen. It wasn't exactly overt, yet definitely enough to soften up the feral's once defined musculature. Even his tail, formerly svelte and muscular, was showing signs of that slight padding, pinching into the slightest of supple folds wherever it curved, a subtle jiggle working through the limb when the snolf wagged at something he saw on the screen, completely oblivious to the state of his own figure.

The changes did not go completely unheeded by the feral's sole companion. With how busy the fennec was during the mornings in his office, however, he rarely had the chance to truly notice their severity. It was through pure chance that a potential client had canceled their orders that morning, prompting the fox to take an almost forced break from his work and venture downstairs for something to drink.

Everything went as usual right up until the moment he walked past the opening to the living room and was greeted with a rather blatant view of Aaron's, well, let's just say generous backside. Sprawled out and lazing about as he was, it actually took Zach a few moments to realize it was his very own, fit, borderline workaholic wolf lounging in his living room, blinking and tilting his head while he took in the sight of the green-furred hill that was the massive feral. Spending so much time in one another's company on a permanent schedule had given the fox a very, very clear idea of his friend's every feature. The length of his tail, the broadness of those shoulders, the white lines stretching out from the edges of his eyes all the way to the very end of his lengthy spine. Zach knew what Aaron looked like.

And, looking at him now, something was definitely off.

Curious, the vulpine grabbed a cup of water in his paw and then nonchalantly wandered into the living room, making sure to carefully step over the tail that lay over the carpet on the floor. Did... did the limb look broader than usual? Just one sideways glance towards the lazing hybrid confirmed the fennec's suspicions, and it took great effort not to choke on the mouthful of water he'd dunked into his muzzle when he noted the state of Aaron's abdomen in general. It wasn't convex anymore. And for someone who'd grown accustomed to seeing his sole companion in a permanently toned, svelte shape, the change was a rather baffling one. And for more reasons than one would expect.

Coughing softly and clearing his throat as he struggled to get the water transported from his lung pipes to their rightful place, the fox gave a little smirk to the massive wolf beside him as he walked up to the pillow his head rested upon. "I see someone's getting used to their new schedule quite... well." The teasing was there. That snarky, witty smirk was there, too. Yet there was something else, a sort of quality neither Aaron nor Zach, really was familiar with.

Perking up when he realized he had company, the snolf lifted his head and looked toward Zach as his brow was brushed by a slender hand, his tail tapping at the ground the moment those digits made contact. "Could use a bit more variety in things to do in the morning, but I'll get used to it," Aaron said reassuringly, his smile turning curious as he took note of the way the fox's eyes glittered with curiosity, head tilting and ears flicking inquisitively. Not to mention the unfamiliar quality to the fennec's voice, something that had the lupine gently nosing at his companion's chest while he asked, "Everything okay, buddy?"

The fox blinked, and then suddenly felt his cheeks heating up ever so subtly. He should have really figured that it wasn't only him that noticed any and every change in their companion's behavior. Aaron had just as keen of an eye for those things as himself, thanks to the months spent together.

"O-Oh, yeah, everything's fine!" came the reassurance rather hastily, Zach's muzzle splitting into a toothy grin while he reached over to gingerly pat the lupine's neck, that paw freezing momentarily as it contacted the subtly padded excess that now coated the massive feral's collar, azure eyes drifting towards the bag of chips Aaron's tail held securely, "I was just checking in on you on my break. You seem... to have taken a liking to those anthro snacks, huh?" the fennec remarked in a somewhat reserved tone.

It was Aaron's turn to blush slightly as he glanced at the bag of chips as well, tail coiling around the satchel a bit more as though trying to conceal its catch. "Y-yeah, I can see why people say you can't have just one," the snolf chuckled abashedly, and as much as the wolf expected for some teasing or rebuking to come from his increased consumption of the snacks in question, something novel came instead.

"You want me to bring you some more of that?"

Aaron paused at the anthro's offer, head tilting again in that classic canine curiosity. "I-I mean, I can get it myself," the serpent reasoned, his head ducking slightly as he tapped his paws together, "I haven't gotten so lazy that I can't even fetch myself food, you know!"

The fox simply gave a dismissive wave when he headed toward the kitchen again, setting his water on the counter and bending over to rifle through the snack cupboard, fluffy tail waving behind him. Aaron's ears flickered again as he shuffled in place; it felt weird having the anthro so willing to accommodate his cravings. Not bad-weird, just strange and unfamiliar, especially after years of the snolf self-regulating his diet to such a strict standard. What was even more odd was when Zach came back, holding not one, but two packages in his hands; another bag of the chips that the snolf had been munching away on, and a sleeve of cream-sandwich cookies,

setting both down on the coffee table beside the feral's pillow. "There, consider that a bonus for my hardest worker," the fox said in his familiar, teasing manner, giving Aaron's ears a playful ruffle.

Blinking, the ophidian glanced between the treats on the table and his employer, before giving a little, fond smile. "Well, if you really don't mind," Aaron said, leaning over to nuzzle the fennec's shoulder, "Thanks, Zach."

God, he really was too adorable for his own good. "You're welcome, you big doofus. I'll let you..." chuckling, the fennec threw a cursory glance towards the general lounging area the wolf had settled himself into, "Get back to your *work*. Make sure you don't overexert yourself, we wouldn't want any injuries." Giving the snarkiest little smirk he could manage, the vulpine gave a final, gentle pat to the lupine's head, as well as a subtle glance to the way his massive form lay spread out so lazily over his living room, before turning and grabbing his water from the counter to make his way back up the stairs, leaving Aaron alone once more with his newfound snacks.

Watching the fox leave, Aaron's ears folded a bit at being left alone again, though he soon perked up a bit as his attention fell onto the food that had been brought to him. It certainly seemed like the fennec didn't mind him being a bit, well, lazy, for lack of a better word. Even after pretty much snacking all morning, to have more brought to the snolf felt, well, really nice. Different and unfamiliar, yes, but nice.

The serpent smiled to himself as he settled back into watching the television, his paws fumbling with the new packages of treats and getting them open even while his tail resumed passing chips to his muzzle. Relaxing more as the minutes passed, Aaron hardly registered when his paws joined his tail, bringing chips from both bags up to his maw while he munched away, starting with only one at a time, though soon the snolf's paws were scooping up twos and threes, before bringing entire pawfuls up and crunching happily on the salty snacks. When his digits brushed the bottom of the emptied sack, the wolf simply set it aside and took up the cookies, once more bringing as many as his paw could hold up to his muzzle and chowing down, too focused on his show to notice just how quickly he was going through the sweets.

That realization came eventually, however, when the snolf's paw once again found only plastic when reaching into the package. Brow furrowing, Aaron's attention finally released from the screen that displayed gorgeous natural vistas to investigate what had happened to his snacks, only to suddenly blush once he comprehended just where all those treats had gone. One glance at himself was all the lupine needed to confirm the location of his missing treats, as his once-smooth middle now poked out into a distended curve, ears folding and tail curling around himself, wondering when in the world that pronounced roundness had happened. Inquisitively, the incredulous serpent placed a paw on his middle, rubbing around the silky, yet tightened surface as his head tilted this way and that. Only now did Aaron realize just how much softer he felt, a fact that got his face lit up in crimson hues. It had only been a week since he'd lowered his workload, how in the world had he gained this much weight?

Bemused to no end, Aaron huffed as he rolled over onto his middle in an effort to hide his newfound curves, though he just blushed more as he felt his belly spreading out to his sides ever

so slightly from its bloated state, thighs pinching in around his tummy in a vain attempt to squeeze his sprawled belly back in on itself. Just how much had he been eating over these last few hours? And why hadn't he noticed it sooner?

Those questions were interrupted by the sound of paws descending down stairs, the snolf's ears wilting and eyes looking around frantically for a moment, before grabbing one of the cushions off of the couch and plopping it against his side haphazardly. It was a rather pathetic "disguise", but in that moment, it was all the snolf could think of to conceal his softened flank.

The "camouflage" was almost immediately noted by the lithe vulpine descending the stairs, and he completed the last few steps with a much slower gait as he eyed the rather unorthodox sight of his companion. "Making a pillowfort out of yourself, big guy?" he tilted his head and gave an amused giggle when the question got a rather intense flush from the prone wolf, Zach sighing as his arms raised in the air above his head and he stretched his back with a few satisfying cracks.

"Ah, I'm gonna get lunch going," the announcement was so nonchalant and casual that it almost seemed like it wasn't the fox himself who had supplied the massive lupine with two other package of snacks just an hour or so prior, moving towards the kitchen and promptly leaning over to procure a pan from the lower shelf, that bushy, downy tail peeking over the counter while its owner disappeared behind the shelves, "I was thinking... I'd... eh, where's that fucking thing... Ah!"

Straightening back up and flashing a grin to the hybrid that still lay steadfast and unmoving on the ground in the living room, Zach twirled the pan in his hands for show. "How does lasagna sound? I'm not sure if you've ever had it, but I think you'd really enjoy it given how much you seem to like anthro cooking these days," even without waiting for a proper confirmation, the fennec got to preparing for the suggested meal, calling over the counter when he leaned down to grab a few more pots and whatnot, "And perhaps... some cheesecake to go along with it... hm... That could be nice!"

Aaron's head tilted as the anthro considered what to make, fidgeting with his paws while he wondered whether he should admit he was already feeling full from all the snacks he'd had. That would mean admitting to his lazy snacking spree, however, and in his indecisiveness, the ophidian wolf simply gave a shaky agreement of, "Y-yeah, that sounds good! I *definitely* have plenty of room for that!"

The fox paused, turning to give Aaron an amused look that let him know the fennec was fully aware of the snolf's little game. "Oh, really?" Zach replied, the serpent's head ducking bashfully as he realized he was caught; the emptied snack bags on the coffee table were enough of a tip-off for anyone.

Yet, instead of backing down, the snolf impulsively committed to his previous statement. "S-sure, yeah, I'm uh... real hungry for that!" Aaron insisted, internally berating himself for the stupidity of his current life choices, offering an unconvincing, overly-toothy grin.

The fennec froze once again, an eyebrow raising while he gave the wolf a curious, bemused look. “Huh,” shuffling in place and looking over the assortment of ingredients he’d gathered, Zach seemed to consider something for a moment, before simply turning towards the fridge and opening it to fish out even more food, “I... guess I’ll make a bigger serving of both, then?”

“O-oh,” Aaron squeaked, before clearing his throat and fidgeting his paws, “Y-yeah, sounds good!” Even as the words left his muzzle, the snolf berated himself for them, cursing himself for his own stubbornness. Well, at least he wouldn’t be going hungry.

That trepidation was eased somewhat as the scent of the food began to waft over to Aaron, his snout and whiskers wiggling as he sniffed at the air. The savory aroma of the lasagna was certainly enticing, and the cheesecake even moreso, enough that by the time steaming tray of meaty pasta and the pan of creamy cake were settled onto the table, Aaron’s filled stomach was growling hungrily. The sound made the fennec’s oversized ears flick slightly, giving an amused smile as he reached out and patted the snolf’s head, his other hand holding the comparatively-miniscule portion of his own lunch.

“You weren’t kidding, huh?” The fennec threw the teasing remark without missing a beat, watching in utter amusement as the statement promptly caused the wolf’s ears to droop subtly, chuckling adoringly and wishing his companion a good meal before making his way back upstairs to finish his work for today.

Again watching the fox go, Aaron glanced between the stairs and his food several times, ears, head, and tail all lowered. Just what had he gotten himself into? He’d *just* realized he was putting on weight, why’d he have to go and insist on something that would undoubtedly result in more? Even more pressing, why was Zach so willing to accommodate the request?

Well, Aaron knew the answer to that last question; the anthro always did have a soft spot for the large lupine, and of course the feeling was mutual. Still, an entire cake and a huge pan of lasagna... that was something completely new. And yet, it all smelled so good.

Fidgeting a bit more, the snolf looked around, as though expecting someone would jump out and scold him if he even touched the dishes that his meal was presented on, before leaning in and sniffing at the lasagna. He was still full, but just a bite or two wouldn’t be too bad, right?

Tentatively opening his muzzle, Aaron took ahold of the first layer of pasta in his teeth, pulling off a little piece and chewing for a moment. Just a moment. That’s all it took for that meaty, savory, cheesy flavor to completely melt away the snolf’s hesitation, his eyes sparkling in pure delight at the taste that washed over his senses. Fullness forgotten, the snolf shoved his muzzle into the pan, rising to his paws with his enthusiasm and wagging his long tail gleefully. Why had he never tried this before? And why did the fox have to be such an amazing cook?

Paws tapping the ground between bites, the snolf wolfed down mawfuls of cheese-drenched, meat-filled pasta with reckless abandon, forked tongue pulling every last bit up away from the pan’s corners as he worked from one end to the other. It was only the very back of the serpent’s mind that registered his middle pushing against his thighs, huffing in both pleasure and growing

fullness. Lost as he was to the experience, it was only after he'd been licking a sparkingly spotless pan for several moments that he realized his lasagna was gone; and an instant later, all that repressed fullness hit.

Shuddering, the snolf whimpered as he slowly lowered himself onto his haunches, tongue hanging out as he panted in shallow breaths. He didn't want to look, but... morbid curiosity drew his gaze downward, ears once more wilting at the sight of his tummy pressing against his elbows in his seated position. With a soft grunt, the lupine lifted a paw and gingerly rested it on his middle, giving a wince as he rubbed the tightened surface. Not from discomfort; it was mortification that had the snolf cringing, his tail again coiling around his haunches and lower belly in an attempt to hide away the broad dome of creamy-white fur that rounded out under his ribs.

That's it, Aaron thought to himself, scooting back from the table ruefully, no more eating for today. Just rest it off, he could work extra-hard later to make sure the lasagna didn't stick around. Hauling crops would certainly get him back down to a trim and proper form, right? Where was the remote? He needed to turn off the television so he didn't... cheesecake.

Eyes wide, the snolf stared at the untouched confection on the table, muzzle partly open. He reached a paw up to cover his snout, yet it was too late; that scent was already there, worming through sensitive receptors and communicating its axiom right to Aaron's brain. "Here I am. And I am delicious."

No. No, no, no. No more food, Aaron told himself, getting to his paws and backing away from the table a step. Just turn around and go outside. Get some fresh air. Walk around a bit, work those neglected muscles... yeah, that's what he should do. Any moment, now. Just, um, turning around, yes sir.

The logical side of Aaron's brain continued to urge the primal side to leave the vicinity, and yet, in spite of the warnings, that cursed reptile brain had his tongue flickering, catching airborne particles and bringing them in to reconfirm what he already knew. That cake was going to be divine, the scent making his mouth water, his stomach giving a groan that was both objection and anticipation. That same thought came again; just one bite. A little taste, and that's it.

He knew it wasn't. The snolf knew, and still his paws had him stepping forward, sniffing at the cake tentatively. Just one bite, and he'd be a goner. Yet "just one bite" kept playing in his mind. And no amount of rationalizing or reasoning could stop him from leaning down, his muzzle parted even before he realized it, and taking that one bite.

If heaven had a flavor, certainly it had to be cheesecake. That creamy, melt-in-your-mouth sweetness filled every corner of Aaron's muzzle, and every corner of his mind an instant after. That one bite sure did require a lot of chewing and swallowing, and involved a good deal more than just one mouthful of pastry. Yet that confection was just too good to resist; if he was more cognizant in that moment, Aaron probably would have wondered how his companion could limit himself to a single serving of his own cooking. As it was, the snolf was completely lost again, sugar clinging to his whiskers as he gluttoned down the large confection, and once more the pan

was nearly more clean than before it had been used by the time the snolf realized what he'd done.

Moaning softly, Aaron shuddered again as he felt his stretched middle pressing against the edge of the table, scooting back and looking down at himself through half-lidded eyes. It looked like he'd swallowed a ball, and he certainly felt like it as well, his cheeks red as he gingerly pawed at his midsection. He certainly would have felt regret if he hadn't been so sleepy, his ears splayed out and eyes fluttering as a food coma edged in around his consciousness. Head shaking, the snolf groaned again while he adjusted himself, sluggishly laying out on his side and letting his head flop onto the pillow on the table. Paws curling around his middle, the serpent let out a long sigh, before his breath evened as he drifted away.

It was later into the afternoon that the fennec finally emerged from his office. Descending down the now all-too-familiar set of stairs usually posed no risk to his life, but it was still by the grace of some guardian angel that Zach managed to hold onto the railing when he nearly tumbled down the last few steps at the sight that greeted him in the living room. Yipping silently and immediately clamping his muzzle shut with a paw, the fox's ears flattened against the back of his head as he cursed himself for his clumsiness, glancing back over to the literal hill of green that lay sprawled out on his carpet.

When absolutely no signs of consciousness came from the massive wolf, the fennec let out a relieved sigh, only to widen his eyes and arrive on ground zero with an expression that was a mixture of curiosity and utter bafflement. The little "challenge" he'd imposed upon the hybrid was simply supposed to be another one of their games between them. An innocent exchange of teasing and daring that usually resulted in harmless fun. What the fox certainly didn't expect was that this time, Aaron would go all out on his word.

Jaws parting as he stared up at the stuffed, fluffy midsection that curved into the air much like a fluffy, white, snowy hilltop, Zach felt actual concern rising in his chest when he noted the two completely emptied and suspiciously clean dishes on the coffee table. Was he... even breathing? Did he knock himself out by eating everything he was offered? Well, obviously, yes and yes. The display spoke for itself, the fennec's head shaking in disbelief as he let his azure gaze wander across Aaron's filled out, and fuller form. The not-so-subtle weight gain of the last week wasn't last on the vulpine, and while the wolf did show signs of a rather formidable appetite in the past, that paled in comparison to recent developments.

At once, there was a sense of guilt and responsibility gnawing at Zach's heart. He knew he was pushing the whole "relax" agenda a bit too hard, and now the consequences were laid bare before his eyes. There was no doubt in his mind that he'd caused this. The curving, amply filled paunch, the subtly rolled flanks and thickened thighs and tail.

A soft sigh left the fennec's lips as he wrung his paws and chewed on his lower lip in thought. *Was* he doing more harm than good? It certainly seemed like Aaron wasn't really protesting. If anything, with the very recent memory of him practically requesting a bigger serving, it could have been hypothesized that the wolf was growing accustomed and perhaps even mildly fond of

their new arrangement. The sight of the completely emptied and licked-clean dishes only reinforced that notion.

Yeah... he wasn't... spoiling the wolf rotten, right? He was just being a little... nicer, more accommodating. Heck, with all the hard work he'd done over the last few months, he deserved it and then some! R-Right?

Cheeks flushing a bright crimson red as he realized his damn tail was wagging, Zach raised a paw to scritch at his cheek pensively. Sure, the wolf was getting a little, er, huskier. Thanks in no small part to his own willingness to make sure the lupine was comfortable. On some logical, completely objective level, the fox had an inkling that what he was doing was straight up, honest-to-god spoiling. And yet, that biased part of his mind, the one that adored the goofy, cute nature of the massive wolf was too loud, its roots too deep in his heart to give up so easily.

Aaron had worked so, so hard. He could use a break. And some extra treats. Right? Just a few more to let him know how much the fox appreciated his help and company. Yeah. That'd be nice, right? It surely wouldn't be overdoing it... *right?*

One real, sober glance at the stuffed state of the wolf would have convinced anyone to put the huge hybrid on a diet right then and there, and yet Zach was in the kitchen before he knew it, already leaning down to procure another selection of whatever snacks he thought the overfed wolf would enjoy. And as if that weren't enough, the preparations for dinner began in earnest soon as well.

Even as tired as he'd been from his previous meal, as the scent of dinner drifted over Aaron's muzzle, that lupine snout started to wiggle against his pillow, head lifting up slowly even before the feral's eyes had started to open. Blinking his lids slowly, the snolf looked around for a moment once he registered where he was, before giving a little snort of surprise when a tray came down in his field of view. A familiar giggle helped to rouse the groggy snolf's mind up into wakefulness, his eyes focusing on the dish that had been placed before him, slowly comprehending the image of three huge, multi-layered burgers sitting before him, surrounded by packages of crackers, cake bites, and danishes, all opened and ready for him to enjoy.

Wide-eyed, the snolf glanced between each item on the table before him, before looking to Zach with all-too-evident confusion. In his not-fully-awake state, all the lupine serpent could manage to say in that moment was a rather groggy, "W-whaaa?"

It was neverendingly amusing just how lost the massive wolf could look fresh out of the bed. And though chuckling at the evidently questioning glances towards the assortment of foodstuffs, Zach still felt his ears subtly folding in mild embarrassment when he truly realized just how big of a "dinner" he'd brought over to the already overfed lupine.

"H-Hey, sleepyhead," the fox tried to greet casually, walking around and reaching up to gently place a paw against Aaron's neck on his way to the couch, plopping down with a sigh and giving the groggy wolf a curious look, himself, "W-What? I... figured you could use the bigger serving since you ate everything I made for your lunch. Or..." pausing, Zach gave the most hopeful, if



somewhat misleadingly worried little frown, “Did you not enjoy my cooking? I can... just put it in the fridge if yo—”

The snolf blinked for a moment, as Zach spoke, before his eyes went wide. “Oh, no! I love your cooking!” Aaron insisted quickly, his head shaking as his paws waved about, “It’s just, uh... I didn’t expect so much, you know?”

Flashing a somewhat forced, still-waking-up grin, the serpent looked over the food that had been brought to him, before turning his gaze to Zach and giving a more honest smile. “Thank you for putting so much thought into it, though,” Aaron said gratefully, nuzzling at the fox’s side, “You really didn’t have to~”

The fennec’s previously folded ears perked right back up at the reassurance, and he couldn’t help but wag his fluffy tail when the massive wolf’s head came up to nose at him affectionately. “Well... maybe I didn’t have to,” Zach flashed a somewhat uncertain grin, a paw coming up to rub the back of his neck abashedly, “But I felt like you deserved a nice dinner. Especially after I saw how much you’ve... enjoyed lunch.” there was a subtle glance thrown towards the hybrid’s still-tightened, obviously filled midsection, before those azure eyes settled back onto Aaron’s groggy features, “I hope I didn’t make too much...?”

He absolutely, definitely had made too much. Yet looking at those hopeful, abashed eyes, Aaron simply couldn’t bring himself to say it. Not to mention when those dexterous digits settled on the serpent’s ears, combing through the fur with blunt claws; the poor hybrid didn’t stand a chance, simply feeling his trepidations melting away as he leaned into the gentle contact. “N-not at all! It looks so great, I, uh, I can’t wait to dig in!” the snolf insisted with a broad, rather silly grin, his tail thumping against the ground as he saw Zach perk up a bit.

Reassured, the fennec slid his hand under the wolf’s chin, giving a few encouraging rubs, before patting the hybrid’s neck as he gave an adoring smile. Grinning right back, the snolf gave a little huff when Zach stood, his ears folding slightly when he realized the fox was leaving. Gently catching the farmer’s sleeve in his muzzle, Aaron lightly tugged the fennec back for a moment, nuzzling at his oversized ears. “Thank you so much for all this, really,” the serpent purred, giving a warm, fond smile, “I’ll make sure I work extra hard to earn it!”

Letting out a little yip of surprise and a chuckle when he was pulled back, Zach’s own, much higher-pitched purr joined in with the huge feral’s while he simply leaned against his companion’s neck, hugging around his head affectionately. “Sure, if you want,” the fox replied, and while in the past it would have been left right then and there, the fennec felt the sudden, inexplicable urge to add, “But it’s not like you *have* to, either! I like cooking for you and... I don’t really expect anything in return, y’know.” And with that, the vulpine pulled away, patting the wolf on his head between his ears affectionately one last time.

The lupine’s ears twitched as he watched the fox leave, head tilting this way and that. Nothing in return? After all the effort he put into dinner? It sounded too good to be true... or, perhaps, a little intimidating, the snolf thought to himself as he looked over the spread before him, his tail sheepishly laying over his midsection. Didn’t the fox know that if Aaron kept eating so much,

he'd wind up getting out of shape? How would he help around the farm, then? Plus, he was already full. But, if Zach came down and the food was untouched, wouldn't that be really rude?

Conflict playing across the hybrid's features, Aaron continued to fidget and fuss for several moments, before finally giving a soft sigh. The least he could do was try the food Zach made for him; it wasn't like he needed to finish everything in one go.

Right?

Reasonably reassured, the snolf rolled over onto his belly, cheeks flushing as he felt his filled paunch splaying out to his sides. He wasn't nearly as full as he had been after lunch, but still, he was definitely sated. But, those cheeseburgers sure did smell nice, now that he was leaning in and sniffing at them; they'd certainly make a nice breakfast tomorrow. And probably lunch, too, with how much there was. Smiling to himself, the snolf nodded at the assessment, certain that he could just work off the meal if he took it in segments, leaning down and taking a modest bite from the first burger.

An explosion of savory, greasy, meaty, cheesy delight completely derailed the snolf's thought process, his eyes wide as he stared at the burger under his muzzle, momentarily stunned by how amazing that one mouthful was. How the heck do anthros manage to make things so incredibly tasty? Who knew a cow, some vegetables, and some wheat could come together to make this miraculous morsel? The cheese melted in his mouth, the mix of ketchup and mayonnaise blending with the meat perfectly, multiple buns and patties filling his muzzle in such a satisfying volume. It was almost a crime to swallow without taking at least a moment to savor this delicacy, yet in spite of that thought, Aaron found himself gulping fast and leaning in for another bite.

Just a little more, then I'll stop, the thought came to the snolf, despite full well knowing there was no stopping himself, now. The feral's instincts were screaming for more, finding such an incredible source of nourishment and life-sustaining calories. One bite became two, two became four, and soon the snolf was veritably shoving his face into the large burger, sitting on his haunches as his paws pulled the layered patties and buns into his muzzle greedily, reaching for the next even as his muzzle closed around the end of the first oversized morsel.

The serpent's rounded middle bounced as he panted with both pleasure and enthusiasm, the pudge on his tail and rump rippling from his blissful wagging. Somewhere in his mind, pushed back by the feeding frenzy, Aaron knew he should stop, he'd had enough, he was full. Yet still his paws pulled more food into his maw like a drowning man grasping for a life preserver, barely chewing before gluttonously gulping down his cheek-bulging mouthfuls. That same buried cognizance registered that his gut was starting to press against the ground between his thighs, feeling his hind limbs shuffle and spread to give his paunch room.

What he had meant to spread out over two or three meals, the snolf wound up glutting down in mere minutes. And even after the last morsel of burger passed his lips, the snolf resorted to licking off every drip and crumb from the platter, desperate for more of that amazing meal. It took a few moments of slurping at a sparkling platter yet again for the hybrid to finally snap out of his frenzied gorging, blinking a few times as he realized what he'd done.

In the space of nanoseconds, emotions rapidly cycled through the snolf's being. Guilt and remorse were first, as Aaron realized he'd just overloaded his calorie count to a ridiculous level, aggravated at his lack of self control. Yet as stimuli rose up from his abdomen, the serpent's eyes went wide with surprise; it wasn't the agonizing belly ache he had assumed would come from such unrestrained gorging. It was something else, something different, entirely less unpleasant.

Pleasure. Pure, unadulterated, primal pleasure. The sort that urged reproduction and drove animals to seek out what they needed to survive. That primordial gratification of a hunter sated on prey brought down by its own efforts. That was the feeling that Aaron was flooded with as he sat in stunned silence, waves of euphoria traveling through his whole body as his stomach signaled its stretched, filled state to its owner, reptile mind going crazy with joy, while his mammalian side struggled to comprehend what was going on.

In that moment, Aaron felt something awaken in his mind, and his ears wilted as he registered a desire that he thought for sure he shouldn't have had. More; he wanted more, despite feeling like a Thanksgiving turkey, that foreign want making him whimper in confusion. He should have been sick from all that food, right? He'd never eaten this much before, and his lupine instincts were telling him he was definitely overeating at this point. Yet the instincts from his serpentine heritage were telling him something entirely different; if a meal wasn't at least this filling, it wasn't worth the effort of eating.

Caught as he was in his existential crisis, Aaron didn't hear the steps that came down the stairs, his ears pinned back against his scruff as he stared into space like a shellshocked soldier. He was far too engrossed in the battle of wolf versus snake in his mind to notice that a slender form had stepped up behind him, regarding the emptied platter with just as much shock as the hybrid had. It was only when he spoke up that Aaron gave a little yelp, head whipping around to face the sudden intruder.

"Oh, wow..." Zach breathed in confused disbelief, eyes glued to the utterly cleaned dish on the coffee table that had housed three franky massive burgers just a couple minutes prior, "I... g-guess I didn't make too much..." the fox added, his tone an odd mixture of mild concern and insuppressible curiosity. With the initial shock of the lack of leftover scraps leaving his mind, the fennec finally took note of the culprit who had gulped them down, eyes going wide when he noticed the very obviously rounded state of the wolf's midsection, the tightened mound resting heavily on the ground and one of his thighs while he lay on his flank.

But it wasn't that display that nearly caused the vulpine's mind to go haywire. Rather, it was the subtle, yet noticeable shuddering and panting that came from the lazing giant, Zach having to tip-toe slightly to look over the massive feral's rising side and get a better look at his upper body and head. Sure, the wolf looked utterly sated, to say the least. And it wasn't anything unorthodox to see a feral panting softly when gorging themselves on so much food. And yet, those pants weren't all exclusively labored breaths. Nor were those shudders one of discomfort. There was something amiss, and while the fox couldn't quite place a paw on just what had transpired while he was gone, he could definitely say that he had never seen Aaron in such an odd state before.

Paw reaching out and gently brushing against the hybrid's neck, the fox gave a sheepish grin as he tried his very best to not stare at the feral's abdomen out of consideration. "I came down to... make some dessert for you to go along with the dinner. You really seemed to enjoy it for lunch, after all and you seem..." pausing, Zach shot an incredulous glance towards the emptied plate and the curving, tightened paunch of his companion, "Like you were... really hungry. Should have made more burgers, huh...?" That last comment was obviously a joke, yet the tone in which it was uttered almost betrayed that notion.

"N-no, uh, I..." Aaron huffed, trying to find his words as he shook his head, forcing his eyes to focus on his companion and giving a little whimper, "I don't... think I needed more? But it was all, u-urf, so good, and... did you say dessert?"

The question was asked in a mix of curiosity, incredulity, and hopefulness, the confusion plain on Aaron's features, yet the fox still perked up as he seemed to take note of only the hint of eagerness he heard. "Oh, you want dessert?" Zach asked, his head tilting as he gave a little smile of interest.

Well, there was the question. He certainly did not need anymore food; the wolf was going to take days to work off what he'd just glutted himself with. He should just march out to his barn and get to sleep

"Y-yeah... I'd like that."

Aaron blinked, his muzzle remaining open for a bit in shock at himself. What in the world did he just say? He didn't really want even more food... did he?

Zach just smiled a bit more, patting the stuffed lupine's cheek affectionately, before turning and heading into the kitchen. Wait, no, cease, desist, stop, all those words were on the tip of Aaron's tongue... and yet none emerged, his bliss-addled and confusion-riddled mind caught hovering on the edge of a decision he had no idea he was on the verge of making, only able to stare silently as he watched his companion work, pulling out ingredients and putting them together and...

Wagging?

The snolf's eyes narrowed, squinting to make sure he was seeing that right. A farmer that was supposed to keep his beasts of burden fit and ready for work had just seen their beast gorged like a bear making ready for winter, and he was making that beast more food and wagging while he did it. It was almost as confusing as Aaron's own internal conflict, the wolf's head tilting this way and that as he regarded the busy fennec. He looked... happy. Perfectly pleased to prepare even more on the snolf's behalf. After all he'd already done for the lupine serpent in this past week, there he was, baking away without a single hint of regret or resentment. Did he really find so much joy, just taking care of Aaron?

Well, of course he did. The snolf knew that already; Zach had always been kind to him. Especially after a while, they'd come to enjoy cuddling up to one another in the evenings, the snolf's head receiving many a pet and stroke from those precise paws. And of course he'd made

Aaron food before; just, not with anywhere near this frequency. It was a rare treat to sample the anthro's cooking before; now, every meal was prepared by that caring fennec, and it felt nice. More than that; it felt wonderful, really. Yet the dutiful snolf had to wonder what he'd done to earn such a thoroughly enjoyable treatment, what favor he'd unwittingly committed to receive so much care and attention. What... was his paw doing?

The snolf blinked, looking down at himself bemusedly, before blushing as he saw his forelimb tracing circles around his broadened belly. Ears splaying, he quickly planted the paw down on the floor, tail coiling around himself as he shook his head. What in the world was happening to him?

He couldn't believe it. Even with the absolute and thorough destruction of his lunch, Zach still couldn't believe that Aaron has been hiding *this* sort of an appetite. Now, however, with the request for dessert right after that lunch in question... and then the dinner on top of that? The fox felt many questions begin to swirl around in his mind from the recent developments. From what he'd witnessed this last week so far, it seemed like, while doing a serviceable job of caring for his companion the way he deemed it to be fair and deserved, it sort of... kind of... seemed like it wasn't enough?

Aaron had eaten every single meal, snack, dessert he'd been offered and then some. Was he really doing *enough* to sate the massively overgrown wolf?

That thought alone was enough to cause the fennec's oversized ears to fold subtly as he prepared a generous serving of brownie mix in a bowl. The lupine was eating more than perhaps... ever, and yet did not seem like he objected to or detested that new urge. If anything, with this newest request...

Sighing softly, the fox frowned behind the counter. God, was he really this clueless? Of course Aaron would have a bigger appetite, what with his sheer size and all, and to add on top of that the work he'd been doing the last few months. Naturally, anyone else would pounce at the opportunity to finally sate themselves properly after days, weeks, months of haphazard meals, or the occasional bite from a piece of steak before heading out to work. Just thinking about the sort of diet he'd kept the wolf on sent a wave of guilt through Zach's chest, and it was with mindless commitment that he began to mix a second bowl of brownie mix once the first one was finished.

So what if he was eating a bit more? They certainly had the funds now to accommodate a little diet change, right? And it wasn't like the wolf was displeased. Heck, just one glance at the lounging hybrid confirmed that, watching that big, long tail brushing against the carpet with its gentle swaying. The evidently conflicted visage that was attached further up on that very limb was somehow magically ignored, however.

He deserved this. He really did. And frankly, it felt sort of nice.

Blushing softly, the fox felt his cheeks heating up as he realized his own fluffy tail was wagging behind him once more. A motion the limb had grown oddly fond of as of late when it came to cooking for the massive wolf. It just felt... good. Having his cooking appreciated to this

extent by his sole companion. Someone who had pulled him out of the rut he'd found himself in all those months ago. It really was all Aaron. The fox might have been the owner of the idea, yet it was the hybrid who had executed his plans without ever really asking for much in return.

Nodding to himself resolutely, the fennec continued working on the tray—or more like, *trays* of brownies, sliding the first into the oven before straightening back up. Somehow, in his musings, the current state of Aaron slipped Zach's mind completely, and so did the sight of that white furred paunch that rested heavily on the ground in front of him. In that moment, the wolf could have very well been a starving mutt the fox had just rescued from the street, his affection had grown so strong, so steadfast in its presence. If the lupine wanted more food, he could have it. And perhaps some more pets and scratches. Yeah. That sounded nice.

Aaron's eyes widened a bit as he took note of just how much Zach was preparing. Even one tray of whatever that wonderful smell was would probably be too much, yet he could only watch with spellbound fascination as the anthro poured up another whole pan of batter. He didn't need more food... yet, if that was the case, why was his stomach growling so hungrily? Why was his mouth watering, his tail wagging at the idea of even more? Had he really become such a pig in only a few days' time?

The uncertainties just kept coming, yet one thing was becoming clear; something in the snolf wanted him to glut himself even more, and he was finding it entirely impossible to deny that rising side of himself. Even as he watched the second pan slide into the oven, Aaron couldn't bring himself to speak up in objection, in spite of the deep flush on his cheeks and the bashful splaying of his ears. That desire for more was winning, and no matter how he tried to resist internally, the serpent couldn't help the eager expression on his features as Zach approached with the first pan.

That visage was almost immediately noticed, and the urge to react was just as impossible to ignore as Aaron's own internal conflicts. "Aww, sorry to make you wait," the fennec purred affectionately, leaning down to place the steaming tray of delicious brownies atop the coffee table, before turning to cup under the wolf's chin and gently stroke up and down along its length, "Takes a while for these to bake, but I think... you'll see the wait is worthwhile." Zach flashed a smile, though an eyebrow did raise when he noticed the subtle wiggle of excitement that the massive wolf gave, the motion sending his husky frame and rounded paunch jiggling just enough for it to be impossible to miss. The sight was unexpected, to say the least, and caused the fox to freeze momentarily in place while he simply held the lupine's lower jaw in a little paw before pulling back and patting his head almost encouragingly. "I'll check on the second batch. You go ahead and enjoy~"

Aaron gave a nervous gulp as Zach turned and stepped back over to the kitchen, looking down to the steaming pastries on the table. By now, he knew that if he took even a nibble from those delicious-smelling sweets, there'd be no turning back. Did he really want to let himself go like that? And right in front of his closest friend, no less. The friend that was rather unwittingly enabling him to act like a complete hog. Zach had seen how bloated the serpent had become, and yet here he was, presenting him with even more food to distend that belly further with. Wasn't he put off by the sight? Shouldn't the anthro have been all up in arms about dieting and proper

calorie management? That was just part of their culture, part of the anthro way of life, making sure everyone was fit and thin wasn't it?

So why...?

Now that he thought about it, Aaron realized he'd been the one assuming what was expected of his diet and activity levels under Zach's care. The fox never really had done much diet regulation on his account; heck, it had been the feral that was so stringent in what he allowed himself to eat. It had been the fennec to offer him those occasional treats that had allowed him to take on a more padded appearance, in spite of the heavy manual labor he did on a daily basis. And now, without that work...

Gulping again, Aaron looked back at his belly, his ears wilting as he gingerly pawed at the exaggerated curve. Zach surely knew he was going to keep putting on weight, eating like this. Didn't he? Well, of course he knew, but... did he care? Or, was he testing the snolf somehow? No, that didn't make any sense. Zach was way too direct for that. So what in the world

The snolf gave a soft yip as the second tray of brownies entered his vision, following the arm holding it up to the face that regarded him with a hint of concern and curiosity. "Uhm... are you not gonna eat?" Zach inquired in a somewhat hushed, almost disappointed tone, looking over to the completely untouched pan of brownies that had cooled off over the last few minutes as he took off the safety gloves from his hands, "Do they smell off?" The fox mused aloud, leaning over to get a whiff of the chocolatey goodness and almost willingly ignoring the cause behind the wolf's lack of eating to be his rounded, heavy paunch.

"Oh, n-no! I mean, I... they smell wonderful," Aaron insisted, his muzzle curling in a sheepish smile, before leaning in and gently pressing his head against the fox's chest, giving a quiet, affectionate purr, that sound deepening as the fennec's hand came up and caressed his neck, "Thank you again for all this... it means a lot to me that you're putting so much effort into taking care of me~"

The fennec gave a genuine smile at those words. "Of course. No need to thank me, bud," he insisted himself, both paws curling around the wolf's thick neck to give him a loving hug, "I like cooking, especially when it's for my favorite and best employee~" Flashing a toothy grin, Zach gave the lupine a last pat on the head, before turning and letting out a long yawn while he stretched his back, "Whew, all this cooking sure does take a lot out of you, though! I think I'm gonna turn in for the night. Don't stay up too late! You have a *loooooooot* of work early in the morning." The wink that was thrown towards the lazy, lounging wolf could not have been more overt, the fennec giggling all the way up to his bedroom office as he left.

Aaron blushed at the teasing, fidgeting in place as he watched the stairs for a moment, before turning his attention to the brownies that had been settled before him. He didn't even bother pretending like there would be any tomorrow, though he still had to wonder, even as his head lowered to the pans, how in the world he could still be hungry after so much food.