

Expanding Local Business

By: Terry! (thesoman)

Featuring: Terry! © me

Pom and Mardi are © Ghostbellies

It was early morning, the sun was just beginning to rise and the last batch of baked delicacies was just about ready to be put on display. Terry! wiped at his brow with his sleeve, busy prepping the latest batch of the muffins to be put out for the world to see. He had just opened up his new bakery and was feeling excited to finally start getting customers! Though yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that... there didn't seem to be much interest in the new storefront that popped up in town, today would be different! It had to be! As the caracal put the muffins in the glass display counter, Terry! stepped over to the door, unlocked it and turned the sign to say 'Open', then stepped over behind the counter to welcome his new customers.

The bell above the door chimed, signaling a customer had just walked into the bakery. Terry! jumped out of his nap, hair mussed up and glasses out of place quickly adjusted himself and squeaked out, "Ugh, buh, w-welcome! How can I hel-"

Just in the door frame was one of the strangest creatures he had ever seen in his life. They were small, and this was coming from someone who barely registered 5', and quite round, with long, flowing green hair, orange skin and green fingers and toes.

"Um, that is, what can I get for you this morning?" It was still morning, right? Terry! glanced at the clock, noting that it was already 10 AM. How did he fall asleep for that long?

"Oh, I just can't decide, they all just look so mighty tempting," the small creature mumbled, his tail twitching excitedly. "I think I'll get, uhh, a dozen, no, TWO dozen doughnuts!" He raised two pudgy fingers in emphasis.

“Uh, right away, which ones would you like? There’s chocolate, vanilla, chocolate marble, chocolate raspberry, maple, red velvet-”

“Oh, I can’t decide!” the chubby creature interrupted, “Pick whatever you think is good! I’ll eat ‘em!”

“Eh? You’ll eat them?” Terryl was dumbfounded at the statement. Two dozen doughnuts were nothing to sneeze at, and all by one person(?)? “Uhm, yeah, ok. Sure, I’ll pick out the best ones! No one in town will beat my doughnuts!”

The little creature started to drool, “Ooooooh, I can’t wait! It sounds so tasty!” After picking some of the finest selections on display - after all, this was his first customer, and he needed to start with a loyal base - Terryl brought the boxes over to the register.

“Alright, two dozen, that’ll come to \$24. Will that be cash or card?”

The tiny creature started patting his shorts with his chubby hands, seeming to grow more desperate with each passing second.

“Aw, fiddlesticks! I think I left my wallet at home!” He started to stare at the boxes of doughnuts, his expression quickly changing from disappointed to despair, tears starting to well up in his eyes.

Terryl started to panic, he wasn’t good at handling other furs’ emotions, he can hardly handle his own! Anxiously searching for a solution, he blurted out, “Why don’t I start up a tab for you?! You can take it now and pay it later!” Please stop crying, I’m sorry!

The diminutive orange being stopped crying, though he was still sniffing, “Are you sure? I don’t want to be such a bother.”

“It’s ok! So long as you promise to pay it back later, there shouldn’t be any problem!” And I need customers, so please take it and buy more later.

Sniff “Ok, if you say so. You’re so nice! No one else has been this nice before!” He beamed up at Terry, with all the cheer and brightness of a small sun.

Terry blushed and quickly fidgeted with his glasses, “OH, n-n-n-no! It’s just, g-g-good business practice! SO! I’m going to need your name, please! For my records!” Being this embarrassed, Terry was having some trouble properly adjusting his volume.

“Oh, I’m Pom! It’s nice to meetcha!” He extended a chubby hand.

Terry took Pom’s hand and shook, “I’m Terry, it’s good to meet you, too, Pom,” Wait, this was just to establish a tab, why am I introducing myself like this? Gah, whatever, good business practice, make good client relations. “Just... make sure to come back to pay, alright?” He handed the boxes to Pom, who took them graciously.

Pom nodded, “I will! I’ll be back tomorrow with enough! I promise!”

Terry smiled down at the little guy, “Ok, then I’ll see you tomorrow? Oh, before you leave,” he grabbed a business card and placed it in the folds of cardboard, “that’s my card, so if you ever want anything specially made, give me a call!”

Pom smiled back, “Aw, gosh, that sounds swell! Bye bye! I’ll come back tomorrow!” And with that, he exited the bakery.

Terry waved goodbye, then sighed, “Well, that’s one potential customer at least...” He started to rest his head in his hands again, then with a twitch, he bolted upright. “Wait, I know! I remember now!” He thought back to an article that he read a few years back about sentient pumpkin people - Pumpkinders - that mysteriously appeared in pumpkin gardens from time to time. Terry didn’t have any from his old town, no real pumpkin farmers around, so it had slipped from his mind rather quickly.

“Well, now that that’s figured out, just have to wait for more customers.”

The morning light began to stream into the storefront to Terry's Confectionaries, where the proprietor of said establishment began opening the shop with a huge sigh. Nobody came after Pom, but at least there's a shelter that accepts the leftovers... He moved behind the counter and sat on the stool sitting in waiting, hoping not to fall asleep today.

A few hours passed before the door chimed. Terry's ears quirked up, while his eyes focused on the who was coming into the bakery.

"Good morning, how can I help you?" He said as if he was auto-pilot. It didn't register that the customer that entered was Pom. "Oh! Welcome back!"

"G'morning! Those doughnuts were seriously so yummy, I couldn't help but scarf 'em all down! I really loved the chocolate one, and the marble one, and the..."

Terry started to zone out as Pom listed off all of the doughnuts that he gave to the little Pumpkinder yesterday, his thoughts filling with warmth and hope. He likes my baking! Someone likes it! Maybe I can make it in the business! Tears started to well up in Terry's eyes, overcome with gratitude for his first loyal customer. He quickly brushed them away before Pom could notice since he was still listing off doughnuts.

Waitaminute... He actually ate all the doughnuts? And... was he looking a little chubbier? They shouldn't be that heavy in calories, he made sure that his baked goods were as lean as possible. It might just be a trick of the light, Terry thought, shaking his head to get rid of the sleepiness.

"So, what can I get for you today, Pom? Some more doughnuts, muffins, cookies?"

Pom's brow creased in concentration as if he was trying to figure out a difficult math problem. After a few minutes, he blurted out, "Muffins! TWO dozen!" holding out 2 chubby fingers again. "Alright, and what kinds would you-" Terry looked at Pom's face, yet again scrunched up in thought, "Uh, how about a random assortment, then?"

"That sounds like a mighty good plan!" Pom's eyes lit up at the suggestion, happy that he didn't have to decide on which ones looked best.

With both boxes filled with muffins, Terryl moved over to the register.

“So, the two dozen muffins, plus your tab, equals \$60.”

Pom started patting his shorts again - Did they look snugger? - and started panicking again.

“Oh, fudgsicle stick! I left it at home again!” Pom covered his mouth in embarrassment, “Oh, I’m sorry, I shouldn’t cuss like that! But I’m really sorry, but I don’t have to money on me right now!”

Terryl thought for a second, maybe this is a good opportunity, “I think we can put this on your tab too, I mean if furs see you leaving with some more of my stuff they might be interested and check out my store? So don’t worry about it for now!”

Pom beamed up at him, “Aw darn, I don’t wanna take advantage here... But if you insist!” He grabbed the boxes of muffins and left the store, thanking Terryl for his kindness the whole way out.

I hope this can work...

A week had passed since Pom first stepped foot into Terryl’s bakery, and while there had been some extra customers, it hasn’t quite been enough to get him out of the red yet. Heaving a big sigh, Terryl sank down in one of the booths that were available for furs dining in. Every day, Pom had come in and left with a large order, and every day he forgot his wallet at home. His tab was building up rather quickly, a few days he had ended up ordering three or even four dozen baked goods. And every day, it seemed as though he had gotten a bit bigger. This time, Terryl was sure it wasn’t a trick of the light. Just yesterday, Pom had to bend over to pick something up and tore his already strained looking shorts. But I suppose eating that much a day could do that to ones’ figure.

The door chimed yet again. Terryl groaned internally and buried his face in hands, knowing that it would be that damn pumpkin again. He lifted his head and gazed towards the door. And there he stood, that damnable pumpkin, eating away at his bottom line, always forgetting his money... Did he even have any? Possibly not. Did his shorts even have pockets? Was he playing Terryl for a fool? A possibility. His mood soured as he stared, and barely noticed the figure that entered behind him.

“So this is the place that you’ve been bumming off of for the past week?”

Terryl was pulled out of his reverie by this new voice and turned his attention towards its source. Standing behind the (bigger) pumpkin was a short, pear shaped red dragon, a scowl on his face as he looked at a bashful Pom.

“I swear I was gonna pay it, but you were gone and I didn’t know where the money was...”

The dragon sighed heavily and rolled his eyes, “Look, just... don’t try to do stuff like this while I’m gone, ok? Save me some hassle? And we should probably find the owner and own up to what you did...”

Terryl took this as an opportunity and stood up from the booth he was sitting at, “Oh, hello! Welcome back, Pom,” his voice betraying his lack of energy.

The dumpy dragon turned to Terryl, “So, you’re the owner, huh? I’m Mardi, sorta the... caretaker of this little shit here,” he pointed a thumb to Pom, standing behind him, trying - and failing - to disappear behind the dragon. “Sorry about him, he gets... carried away when I can’t look after him. So I hear he has a tab here? How much do I owe ya?”

“Oh, hold on, let me take a look,” as if he didn’t have it memorized already, “That’s, uh, \$264?”

Mardi’s eyes bugged out in shock, “Pom! What the hell?! We don’t have that right now, I just had to pay some bills! No wonder you put on weight while I was gone, eating all that extra for a week!”

“But I gained weight! It’s getting closer to the competition, and I wanted to try to get into it early...”

Mardi sighed again, “Ya know I like to be around to keep track of what you’re eating, how much you’re eating and how fast you’re eating it. Ya, don’t wanna burn out early.” He pinched the bridge of his nose, “Ok,” he turned back to Terryl, who stood back to attention after witnessing this strange exchange, “what can we do to pay you back since we don’t have that much at the moment?”

Terryl started thinking about an idea when it hit him. He’d hoped to use Pom for advertisement, why not use that to help him pay off his debt?

“Well, I have an idea...” he directed his gaze to the too-wide-to-hide pumpkin, “I said to you last week that I was hoping that your love of my goods would peak interest in other furs, right? Why don’t you do the same thing for me? Just, this time, you’ll just be sitting outside the door confessing how much you love my baking to passer-bys.”

Pom thought about it, and started looking hopeful, “It doesn’t seem too hard, and I love your doughnuts! And Muffins! And cookies! And-”

“I think he gets the point, Pom,” Mardi interjected with an annoyed voice. “I’ll make sure he gets here in the morning, and then pick him up at night when you close. Sound good?”

Terryl nodded, “Yeah, that works. Deal, then?” He extended a paw.

Mardi nodded back and grasped the others paw, “Deal.”

Morning came, and with it, Mardi and Pom. The pumpkin still looked like he was sleeping as he was being dragged by the slightly taller dragon.

“Morning, here’s your charge. I’ll be back at closing.” And with that, Mardi left the dozing pumpkin at Terry’s feet.

Pom started to stir as the smells of the bakery wafted towards his nose. “Is it breakfast now?” he mumbled sleepily.

Terry looked down at the orange lump and sighed, “Yeah, it is. I’ll get you something to wake you up, but then you need to get to work.” He brought out a muffin and some juice, which Pom devoured rather quickly. With newfound energy, Pom stood up and turned to Terry.

“What do you want me to do?”

“Well, you can sit out by the door, and talk about my bakery. I don’t think you need to embellish, but try to make it sound appealing, at the very least.”

Pom stood at attention and nodded, “I’ll do my best!” And he left for his seat by the door.

As the morning went by, Terry could hear Pom shouting words like warm, gooey, flavorful, moist, and other positive adjectives about his baked goods. Since it was nearing lunch, Terry had decided to give Pom a bit to eat, a couple of doughnuts, some freshly squeezed juice, and a cookie. Pom scarfed it all down with a smile on his face, practically glowing from the food itself. He heightened his efforts to bring in more customers after that pick-me-up.

Afternoon rolled over into evening, and Terry had to close up shop soon. He had some extra customers today, so it seemed that his plan was actually working! He allowed himself to hope for the future of his little project, looking forward to it becoming a real business. He looked outside to see Pom starting to drift off into sleep. Terry went outside and woke him up with a fresh cookie and took him inside to wait for Mardi to pick him up. The door opened as Mardi walked through. “So, how’d his first day go?” he asked as he entered.

“It actually went somewhat ok, I think this whole thing could work out for a while.”

“Well, that’s good. Don’t wanna be in debt with anyone, so it’d better,” Mardi growled.

“Uh, yeah...” Terryl started a bit nervously. He didn’t want to be on the bad side of this dragon. “Why don’t you take some of the leftovers? If you’re starting to get him,” Terryl points to Pom, “bigger, anything extra could help, yeah?”

Mardi thought it over. “Yeah, could work, since we’re a little short on cash at the moment.”

Terryl started loading boxes with the leftover sweets and handed them off to the dragon and pumpkin.

“Well, see you tomorrow then?”

Another week had passed, and Pom’s advertising was doing the trick. Every day, new customers arrived to try out the hot new bakery and cafe. And every day Pom and Mardi went home with extra leftovers from that day, and it was showing. Near the end of that week, Pom started needing two stools to sit on outside, his belly draping over his knees as he sat down. It also didn’t help that Terryl started to give him more during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There was something compelling about watching the pumpkin grow fatter and fatter each day. And who knows, if he won a competition, that would be some major publicity for the bakery! He’d even have to hire employees! Terryl started to space out thinking of this hypothetical future, he was missing his increasingly impatient customers. As he finally snapped out of it, he apologized and started ringing everyone through.

Later that night, right after closing and Pom had been, rather forcefully, moved inside, Terryl sat down and started to formulate a plan. He was hoping that he could get Mardi to agree to it, so he wanted to talk to him when he arrived to pick up the overstuffed pumpkin.

The doorbell chimed and Terryl motioned to Mardi as soon as he entered. Mardi, with a quizzical look on his face, followed.

“So I have an idea. Since there is always leftover food, I was thinking that you could still take it after I close shop every night. If it helps Pom win the next competition coming up, it would look really good for me, too. So, what do you think? I help you, you help me?”

The dragon gave Terryl a grin that made the cat feel somewhat uncomfortable. “Yeah, that sounds good. Might be able to save a little bit of cash too, since I won’t be needing to spend quite so much all the time. Heh, yeah, you’ve got a deal!” The caracal and dragon shook hands one final time, then left with the massive pumpkin and armloads of sweets.

A month had passed, and business was thriving. So much so that Terryl had to hire a new employee to cover the front while he worked in the kitchen. He hadn’t seen Pom at all since that last night he had to work off his tab, though Mardi came by to pick up the leftovers every night. Is he growing bigger too? Terryl shook his head, it didn’t really matter anyway.

One night, when Mardi came to pick up the leftovers, Terryl asked if he could bring it to them the next day. Mardi shrugged, but agreed and gave him their address.

The next night, Terryl drove over to their house with his back seat spilling over with a number of leftovers he had. He may have gone a little overboard and made too much today. But he was excited to see what progress Pom had made, see how fat and big he had gotten. The thought of being able to sink his arms into the soft flab and use him as a makeshift bed made him blush. He pulled into their driveway and pulled the boxes out of his car and put it on a trolley to bring it to the door. He rang the bell, feeling nervous. He heard some thumping from the other side, then it was opened by Mardi. He was welcomed inside and into the living room and was immediately overwhelmed by orange.

Pom had grown absolutely massive. So massive that he took up most of the small living room. Remnants of a couch could be seen beneath his gigantic butt, though barely, and it seemed like it had been broken for a while and his tail seemed to be swallowed by those massive cheeks. His arms and legs were so caked with fat that they could barely move, absolutely bulbous in shape. Not that he’d be using his legs anytime soon, he wouldn’t even be able to get up at the moment. His face hadn’t been able to escape the fattening either, with cheeks so big they could be compared to watermelons and a neck so thick with fat that he couldn’t look down if he wanted to. His moobs could only be described as the size of beds, one fur sized for each, while they rested on the main attraction of his belly. Holy moly, that belly. It was so big it was almost

touching the wall opposite of where he sat, and taller than Terryl was and wide as a big rig truck. Terryl leaned into the wall of orange flab and sunk in gradually, all the while purring quietly.

“Do you mind if I feed him tonight?” Terryl’s voice was muffled by the multitude of fat he had his face jammed into.

“Be my guest,” the dragon said, preparing to hand the boxes up to Terryl.

He unburied his face from Pom’s side and started to climb. Once he got up top, he started to take boxes from Mardi.

“Oh, hi Terryl, how are you? Thanks for all the sweets!” A voice came from amid the fat that was Pom’s face, and he seemed to be smiling, though it was hard to tell.

Terryl scurried up to Pom’s face, “Hey, you’ve gotten really big! I’m here to help out tonight, so just relax and I’ll get you right stuffed.”

“Ok,” Pom replied, and let his mouth hang open to accept his first treat of the night.