



Roughin' It

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A commission for Vesryn



Leaves crunched underfoot as Vesryn paced about the campsite, desperately searching for a grain of interest in his desert of boredom. The purple unicorn never fancied himself an outdoorsman, but his friend made it sound like the single greatest thing ever. He was beginning to realize why that same friend conveniently came down with the flu on the weekend of their outing, however. No sane person could possibly handle all of this nothingness! Sure, peace and quiet are generally regarded as good things, but there's a fine line separating them from isolation and emptiness. This particular section of woods had passed that divide long ago, and the concept of going full circle was apparently lost on Mother Nature.

With a weary sigh, the unicorn settled into a flimsy collapsible chair and tipped his head back. The sky was just as vast and unappealing as it had been ten minutes ago, but the sun was at least slightly farther along its celestial arc. The birds fluttering between the surrounding branches sang their tired songs, and the squirrels deepened the ruts of their trails under the shrubbery as if someone wasn't dying of idleness right in front of them. In the lengthy few hours he had spent in his little slice of exile, nothing had even tried to change. Vesryn let out another huff, this time loud enough to startle the wildlife. Despite his wishes to be literally anywhere else but there, he refused to leave for two reasons. The first, and most important, was his inability to recoup the money sunk into the affair, and the second was to spite the local ranger. The bear practically spat his coffee when the unicorn reported to claim the campsite, and to leave now would be to admit defeat.

Regardless, Vesryn found himself wondering if a few dollars and the "respect" of a stranger was worth all of this. The novelty had worn off in a matter of minutes after settling in, and he still had a day and a half to go! He loathed the fact he had left his 3DS charging on his nightstand, and no amount of praying or bargaining seemed to bring it to him. With nothing better to do, Vesryn resigned himself to pouring out the contents of his bag and sifting through the ensuing pile. He was sure of its absence – his six previous attempts provided great evidence for that – but he had nothing to lose by searching a seventh time. "Positive thinking," he muttered to himself. "My 3DS is definitely in this bag."

The clothing crammed into the backpack shifted as it was upturned, eventually spilling out onto the plastic floor of his tent. Vesryn half-heartedly looked between folds of cloth, but abruptly stopped as his hand bumped something hard and plastic. He was overcome with surprised delight as he fished the object from the heap, and laughed with triumph as he realized what it was. Lost within the contours of a thick jacket was the rectangular godsend, one of the few things that would make this barren pocket of nature survivable. Even better, the system had a full charge and his favorite game! Without reflecting on how he could have possibly missed it so consistently, he flipped open the console and immersed himself in a world of massive creatures and brave hunters.

The unicorn spent the better part of the day enjoying his fortunate discovery, the device holding his attention until his body demanded food. He cut the system off with care as he made his way to a duffle bag loaded with canned meals, proceeding to brush through it but finding nothing appealing. He had built his menu on the suggestions of his absent friend, who coincidentally didn't have to live with the outcome. Half of the tins appeared to hold what could only be called mystery meat, and the others seemed to be heavily processed vegetables. His stomach rumbled at the possibility of sating his hunger, but his mind reeled at the thought of actually eating the stuff. "Just once I'd like to see someone can something appetizing," he said to the trees.

The metal tins slid past each other as the stack destabilized, allowing the edge of something previously unnoticed to catch his eye. He extracted the container with hastened curiosity, seizing the chance to have anything else for dinner. Vesryn was once again pleasantly surprised with his finding. If the wrapping was a trustworthy indication of what was inside, the unicorn had stumbled upon a gourmet stew. His mouth watered as he cooked the stew for the prescribed time, the scents of fresh meat and thick broth teasing his ravenous appetite. Finally it was time to take the ambrosia off of the portable hotplate, and for the starving equine it wasn't a moment too soon.

The hearty soup would prove to be one of the best meals Vesryn had eaten in a long while, and it lifted his spirits more than anything else. Despite his insatiable hunger, he slowed his eating down simply for the sake of savoring the meal. Almost an entire hour passed as he sipped away at the wondrous stew, and by the time he finished the sun had long since vanished below the tree line. Darkness crept in from the edges of the campsite as he scrapped his spoon along the bottom of his bowl, plunging the unicorn into the chill of night. The warm meal ward off the worst of the cold, but he was still forced him to seek shelter in his tent. He thought about continuing his conquest of a virtual world, but ultimately decided against it. The equine found himself uncommonly tired after a long day of doing nothing, and sleep came easily as he nestled into his bedding.

Vesryn rose to the warmth of sunlight and the sounds of frolicking wildlife. There were likely an infinite number of furs that would have killed for such a glorious morning, but the splendor of nature was wasted upon him. The unicorn was still stranded in a land of stagnation, but he was at least a day closer to being able to leave. He felt the pull of his electronic savior, but it lacked the intensity and allure it held yesterday. Still, it was by far the most worthy time sink he had on hand, and it was more than enjoyable than stretching his legs. His only complaint was the length of the session, which was cut short by woefully depleted batteries. For the second time that weekend he found himself unable to take the edge off this relenting nothingness, and for the second time he began to pace the campsite.

What separated this instance from its identical twin almost exactly 24 hours prior were his woodland visitors. The animals of the forest had grown accustomed to his presence, and though they maintained a cautious distance, did not stick to the underbrush as they had before. One of the more adventurous squirrels even abandoned the safety of the treetops to wander the outer edge of his campsite. The curious rodent darted between his bags as it likely searched for something to eat, but raced back out of sight when Vesryn so much as breathed. Most would have simply thought nothing of the critter's actions and gone on with their day, but Vesryn had nothing else to do!

The unicorn sat back in his chair as he watched the patch of foliage the creature had disappeared into, and eventually his attention was rewarded. Bushes parted as a skunk tentatively wandered into the clearing, curious of the smells and sounds created by the strange equine. Vesryn sat motionless as the animal ventured farther from the relative safety of the forest. He was captivated by the skunk's pelt, not by any inherent beauty, but by its resemblance to a creature from his favorite game. This particular specimen even lacked his species' characteristic white stripe, rendering it an almost spitting image of the fictional beast. In an effort to get a closer look, the unicorn produced a small scrap of food and held it to the ground. More similarities to the virtual monster became apparent as the skunk approached, bringing a smile to his muzzle. "You know," he said softly. "If you were a lot bigger and a little rounder, you'd be right at home in my video game."

The mephit sniffed at the offered treat as he spoke, a strange glow enveloping it as the unicorn watched with shock. The light intensified as an unknown force took hold of the skunk, the creature's body warping and stretching under its influence. Over the next few moments the animal grew by an order of magnitude, slowly becoming something greater than a lowly beast of the woods. The creature's frame filled out as muscle and pudge coalesced under his glossy pelt, bringing it to a size that rivaled the unicorn's. The luminescent mist dissipated as rapidly as it appeared when the transfigured skunk hit his target size and weight, now large enough for the unicorn to ride comfortably. Both of them froze as they struggled to come to terms with what had just happened, but the newly transformed mount took to his role quite readily, kneeling down so the equine could climb up onto his back.

Vesryn recovered swiftly as the freshly minted creature nuzzled into his side, a smile spreading across his muzzle as a grand plan pieced itself together. His hand rested between the animal's ears as he idly stroked the soft black fur, an idle gesture as he formulated the next test of his apparent power. A rumbling reminiscent of a purr captivated his muse, sealing the oddity beside him as his target. The only question that remained was how to modify this gentle lump of affectionate clay. The unicorn mulled over his options as he lavished the beast with rubs, eventually convincing him to roll onto his back. As he stroked over the former skunk's pudgy middle, Vesryn made his decision. "It would be fantastic if you were heavier," he murmured. "I could have a nice, soft, warm bed then."

The change was immediate. Motes of light swarmed the reclining mount at Vesryn's implicit command, reshaping the skunk-like creature a second time. His middle swelled with a growing mountain of soft fat, the new center of mass forcing him onto his flank and burying two of his legs in a tide of flab. A thrill ran through the unicorn as he watched the spectacle, sparked by both the beast's massive form and the knowledge of its source. He had never known such power, even second-hand in legends of old, but now the strength of a god was subject to his every whim. An infinite sequence of possibilities played across his mind's eye as he fell into tempting daydreams, each one more delicious than the last. He was woken from his megalomaniac reverie by a shelf of dark fur rolling across his feet, prompting him to break the spell over the delighted animal.

The avatar of obesity dominated nearly half of the clearing and flattened most of the unicorn's gear, but to Vesryn these were acceptable losses. He climbed the pliant mountain of plush skunk, working his way up towards the animal's head and taking a seat on the willing throne. One hand idly scratched the docile beast between the ears, while the other stroked his chin in thought. There had to be more wildlife in this forest, and it was only a matter of time before another creature revealed itself. Given the commotion stirred up in the exploration of his power however, that may take some time. Waiting was a small cost for the opportunity to stretch his imagination, and he had a wonderful companion to help pass the time.

It was quite a while before the next citizen of the woods wandered into the campsite, but eventually the unusual scent of the new species captured the curiosity of a fox. The canid emerged in much the same fashion as the skunk, cautiously slinking across the open space to investigate the blob of black fur. Vesryn watched the vulpine sniff over his lazy living bed, silently planning out his next move. Two mountains of lard would likely result in flattened trees, which wasn't exactly a bad thing, but it felt like too obvious of a choice. Still, bigger was always a good direction to go, and that didn't always have to mean fatter. The unicorn perked up as he made his choice, the motion catching the nervous attention of the fox. "You know, I don't think I've ever seen a buff fox. Maybe today is the day I change that."

An increasingly familiar light emanated from the fox, infusing his body with the energy needed to carry out the slated change. The vulpine huffed in confusion as the spell began its work, refusing to take his gaze off the unicorn, but forced to acknowledge the sparks dancing along his nerves. The initial transformation took place on an unseen level, strengthening his bones and tendons to better accommodate what was to come. The vulpine's breath grew heavy as his muscles demanded more oxygen, the constituent fibers multiplying and condensing before starting their outwards expansion. It was a few tense seconds before any visual signs of change manifested, but when they finally emerged, they were impossible to miss.

The fox's hide rippled as nearly every muscle in his body expanded simultaneously, endowing him with strength far beyond his species. His legs wobbled as he was momentarily overcome with the sensation and weight of bulking up, but the no longer little creature quickly

adapted to his chiseled body. He stood significantly taller on uncommonly toned legs, easily rising to the height of a large dog. He still retained his vulpine grace however, seen in the sleek curves of his silhouette. His tail wagged with greatly increased force as he took inventory of his enhanced form, evidently pleased by the outcome of this encounter. He would be able to outrun everything he found in the forest, and there wasn't a vixen out there that wouldn't fall for him. Unlike the skunk, the fox wasn't inclined to stick around. He retreated back to the woods much faster than he had arrived, leaving a deep trail of paw prints in his wake. Vesryn watched the foliage part around the miniature hulk as he embarked on his next hunt, a soft chuckle rising in the unicorn's throat. "That fox has better abs than I do."

The forest fell unusually quiet after the departure of the shredded vulpine, allowing the unicorn to fall into an uninterrupted string of daydreams. He snuggled into the lardy almost-skunk beneath him as his mind wandered, idly scratching the creature as he envisioned a wood bent to his will. Birds flew overhead on double and triple sets of wings with gloriously ornate tails, landing in trees twisted into works of art. It was a paradise of his own design, and given enough time it could become reality. The mountain of black fur supporting him let out a quiet sound of inquiry as he felt his master shift, eventually moving to a cooperative slope of fat and sliding to the ground. Vesryn patted the immobile animal on the flank, sending a lazy wave through his colossal middle. "I'll be back in a bit. I've got a world to sculpt."

The bright unicorn set off from his partially demolished campsite, no longer content to wait for chances to exert his power. Bushes and grasses parted as he forced himself through the undergrowth, quickly snapping back in place and obscuring his path. Unfortunately, he was not versed in the art of moving quietly in this terrain. He watched with disappointment as potential sources of fun skittered away before he could react, letting out a sigh with every sign of retreat he inspired. Regardless, he pressed onwards. Eventually he would find something that had lost its fear of anthros, something that would make the effort of wading in the foliage worth it. He wasn't sure how long it took him to reach the next clearing – it felt like hours but it could have very well been only minutes – but when he peered into the open space he couldn't help but grin.

Grazing in the middle of the wooded ring was a glorious stag, either oblivious or indifferent to the unicorn's presence. Vesryn watched with bated breath as the paragon of majesty grazed, taking careful note of the animal's measured movements. Every motion was an act of biological perfection, from the way he pulled grass from the earth to his elegant steps between outcrops. There was no alteration that could improve this creature, and for the first time that day the equine found himself truly at a loss for options. The cervine's body was Mother Nature's masterwork, and the addition of any more fat or muscle would detract from her vision. Of course, there was nothing stopping the unicorn from simply scaling up what was already there. "Yes, that's what I'll do," he murmured under his breath. "Such flawlessness should be seen by everyone."

Vesryn grinned as an arcane glow coalesce on the uncaring stag, but after a moment of total inaction his anticipation became confusion. In all prior instances, the light gathered and dispersed in a matter of seconds, but this shattered the pattern. Minutes passed as energy continued to converge upon the deer, stoking the light to an intensity that forced the unicorn to shield his eyes. The ground around the cervine began to smoke and char as he became a miniature sun, but he went on with his routine as if nothing was amiss. He was forced to migrate across the space in pursuit of edible grass more often, but otherwise paid no mind to his radiance. Finally the superheated bubble surrounding the burst in a grand thunderclap, an event that shook the ground and rattled the trees.

Vesryn's smirk returned as his arms dropped from their protective position, the effects of the spell gradually revealing themselves. The stag's growth started slow, to the point the unicorn had difficulty noticing it, but the rate of expansion was definitely increasing. Little furrows of earth bowed up around his hoofs as they increased in size, enlarging to better support an inflating frame. The deer's signature antlers stretched into the lowest branches of the surrounding trees as inches became feet, dwarfing any other animal that called the woods home. The clearing seemed to shrink over the ensuing moments as the creature reached elephantine proportions, forcing the unicorn to step back into the trees. This appeared to be only an overture to a full concerto, and Vesryn was determined to see this to the finale.

The arboreal pillars yielded to the cervine's relentless growth as he surpassed the size of any natural creature, straining the bark-clad monoliths with his raw mass. Vesryn was forced to backpedal as the stag's expanding hoof matched his walking speed, sending him into a blind sprint a few seconds later. The rapidly approaching chaos of splintering oak motivated him to keep fleeing, but he soon realized this was a race he could not win. The wall of soft tan fur pursued him with increasing speed, eventually catching up to the equine and lifting him from the ground. His grip on the animal relaxed as the force of acceleration pinned him to the deer's pelt, allowing the unicorn to relax and enjoy his high-speed tour of the forest.

The thrill of his ride was short lived however, quickly being replaced by fear as wooden pillars raced towards him at ever higher speeds. The sound of snapping trees grew to deafening levels as impacts grew more frequent, eventually running together in a ceaseless cacophony of falling forest and crumbling earth. The unicorn was forced to call upon his magic to escape the front of the stag's destructive growth, warping to the animal's back and bringing his lardy skunk companion to him. The thunderous crackle was only a dull roar from his new perch, but he had acquired a lasting appreciation of what he (and the deer) was capable of. Vesryn finally calmed as the distance between him and the forest floor increased, allowing him to slump back into the familiar softness of the black-furred bed and drink in the sights presented to him.

Mountains in the distance sunk out of sight as he curled into the warmth of the largely immobile skunk, shrinking away as the titanic cervine became more so. The curvature of the planet became more pronounced as the stag's antlers pierced the heavens, highlighting just how

large the deer had become and how quickly he reached this point. Oddly enough, the deer continued to graze as if the world wasn't shrinking beneath him. The only difference between this turn of events and his normal day was the substitution of fully grown trees for blades of grass, but overall the principle remained the same. The earth trembled with the buck's every step as he moved from patch to patch, compelled to acknowledge his legendary size, and to a lesser degree the equine reclined atop his back.

Vesryn petted his fattened bed as his view of the planet become more complete, the cities and oceans hiding just over the terrestrial arc emerging to greet him. The nearest metropolis was little more than a set of steel and concrete toothpicks rising from a fine grey mesh from his vantage point, a sight that brought another smirk to face. No doubt the entire region could see his creation. The thought of furs being jarred from their routine in the face of the cervine colossus gave him an odd sense of pride, which swelled to a god complex as he imagined the parades and festivals thrown in his honor. Such a masterful display of power is something to be admired, after all. Perhaps even worshipped.

The unicorn's string of thought was severed as he was carried into a cloud, a blatant reminder of the heights his stag was reaching. A shiver lanced up his spine as he brushed the frigid pearls of water from his vibrant pelt, but unfortunately it did little good. Droplets adhered to him faster than they could be removed, and their collective chill was beginning to seep into his skin and beyond. His faithful skunk wrapped its fat-laden paw around him in an effort to shelter him from the sudden change of scenery, a gesture that earned the creature a rub of affection. Fortunately, the deer's rate of growth had accelerated to nearly unthinkable speeds, and the cuddling pair only had to endure the sky-bound ocean for a few moments.

Vesryn shaded his eyes as he was greeted by unfiltered sunlight, unprepared for the exposure of the upper troposphere. More pressing to him however was the interrupted view of his kingdom. The unicorn's brow furrowed as he cursed the opacity of the clouds and considered his next feat of might. Sure, he could simply will the obstruction away, but that struck him as ham-fisted. Besides, it was about time he took in his creation from a new perspective. Just as easily as he mounted the towering stag, he made his way back to the ground, appearing on the edge of the formerly distant urban center with a simple utterance. His plush familiar tagged along with him, arriving an instant before his equine master and ensuring he never touched the ground.

Only from this new angle could the unicorn truly appreciate the scale of what he had set in motion. The stag dominated the landscape like nothing else, and as far as Vesryn could tell, the deer was nowhere near finished growing. A single hoof was enough to stamp down the better portion of the forest, placing it on the order of miles. The pillars of the cervine's legs rose deep into the clouds beyond sight, obscuring his true height to all but his creator. The earth beneath the deer strained and cracked under his unimaginable mass, opening chasms and raising hills in his wake. The tremors of the cervine's movement could no doubt be felt across the continent, and soon enough the entire world would be subject to his instinctual whims.

Vesryn granted his favored mount the strength to bear their combined weight, allowing the affectionate skunk to carry him to the center of town. The city's residents poured into the streets with mixed curiosity and panic, only to be greeted by the unicorn as he paraded through the confusion. With another declaration the equine began to grow before their eyes, his mount enlarging in tandem to suit his expanding needs. He did not attempt to match the size of the stag, instead aiming for a stature much smaller and more practical. The self-proclaimed king still desired a figure that set him apart from his subjects however, opting to grow to about twice his original height with some relatively minor alterations.

The unicorn's arms and legs bulked up with rippling muscle over the course of a few moments, endowing him with uncanny strength should the need for physical force ever arise. His core was given a similar treatment, but his freshly chiseled abs were soon buried under a growing layer of pudge. Royalty lived a life of leisure after all, and they should have a body that reflected that privilege. Vesryn's emerging decadence did not stay limited to his person however, and as his waddling skunk reached a small park, his motivations became clear. A luxurious temple rose from the ground at the equine's command, adorning the previously open space with gilded statues in his likeness and a glittering dais in the middle of it all. The wobbling mustelid took his seat on the cushioned platform, once again taking his place as the god-emperor's throne.

The majority of the awed population immediately recognized their new ruler after the spontaneous creation of his palace, but to their surprise he issued no edicts. In all honesty, Vesryn was fairly content with how his world ran before his intervention. He only wished to be acknowledged for his greatness, and perhaps make a few minor changes. With the messenger of his rule stomping his way around the globe, the former would be achieved very quickly.