

Good Influence

Jacob snapped to attention as the alarm on his phone went off. He flipped a switch on the treadmill, bringing it to a halt. It was almost time for his date. The lithe fox toweled off and confidently strutted across the house to the shower. He was the epitome of fitness and he knew it. He'd put in the work and it showed. Jacob cut a very lean figure, corded generously with muscles elegantly wrapping the contours of his body. He wasn't especially bulky, but his figure projected the idea of compact power and efficiency from his gently bulging biceps down to his toned rump.

It was nearly time to go. Jacob sent a quick text to his date to let him know he'd be there in a few minutes. It was their first time meeting, he wasn't sure exactly if you'd even call it a date at this point. Tonight he was meeting a cute otter named Will. His profile looked promising and he sounded like a pretty nice guy from the exchange they had. They found each other on a dating app and Jacob was allowing himself to be cautiously optimistic about the evening, but at the same time ready to roll with it if things didn't pan out.

Jacob checked the map on his phone. His date chose some greasy diner as their meeting place. Being so health minded, Jacob wasn't really familiar with the place, but Will seemed adamant about going there. He thought it was a strange choice, but maybe the restaurant was special to Will in some way.

The time had come and Jacob headed out the door. The restaurant was only a few blocks away, close enough to walk to, which he preferred to driving anyway. He checked his face one last time in his car's mirror on the way out, doing a few adjustments, and started making his way over.

Phil's Diner, as denoted by the flashing neon sign, looked like a pretty lively place. Jacob had to carefully navigate a few crowds milling around the entrance. The 50s decor seemed a little cliché, but at least it wasn't so loud that it wore out its welcome.

The fox found an open area of the floor and scanned the room for Will. He wasn't having much luck, when suddenly a paw clapped him gently on the shoulder.

"Hey."

A soft-faced otter was looking for his attention. Jacob turned around and took in the sight for a quick moment. The otter stood a few inches shorter than the fox, and a few inches wider as well. Definitely not what he'd call fat, but the slight roundness of his middle suggested a relatively inactive lifestyle. The otter's profile pictures had strategically omitted that detail.

"Hey yourself." the fox smiled.

"It's good to meet you! You look just like your pictures!" the otter gushed.

Jacob was suddenly a bit self conscious about his choice of attire. The form fitting shirt and jeans he had on left very little to the imagination. "I guess so. And you, uh too."

"Heh" The otter blushed and looked away.

The two of them flashed warm smiles at each other.

"So what made you choose this place?" Asked Jacob.

Will gazed into Jacob's eyes for a few moments before snapping back to attention. "Well uh, this was the first place I stopped at when I moved here. Just kinda nostalgic about it I guess."

"Makes sense." The fox nodded. "Want to grab a table?"

"Ooh yeah, we should do that probably. One sec!"

Jacob watched the otter bound off to the host, his stride cute and bouncy. He turned around and motioned for the fox to follow and they found a nice booth away from the noise.

The two of them sat down together. Jacob waited patiently for Will to break the ice, but he was just shifting in his seat instead. The fox took it upon himself to break the silence.

"Nervous?"

"Yeah. Is it that obvious?"

"Yup."

“Ah.”

“It's alright. It's kinda cute.”

The otter blushed. “Mm, thanks. You're not?”

“I'm not cute?”

“No! I mean, not nervous.”

The fox chuckled. “Not really. I put my all into everything I do. If it works out, great, if it doesn't, then it doesn't. No sense worrying about what other people think.”

“Wow. I don't know if I could do that. I get embarrassed pretty easily like when I-”

They only had a few moments to speak and glance over the menu before a portly rhino in an apron suddenly approached the booth. “What'll it be, boys?”

Will looked at the fox and piped up eagerly. “I'll have the double cheeseburger with steak fries and a vanilla shake please.”

Jacob raised his eyebrows a bit at hearing that, forgetting for a moment that not everyone keeps control over their diet like he does. He quickly dropped the thought and placed his own order. “I'll have the, uh, grilled chicken sandwich please. And just water with that.”

The rhino scribbled some words on his notepad. “Alright, we'll have that out for you soon. Thank you!”

“Thank you.” the fox and the otter said in unison.

“So tell me more about yourself. You're a software engineer?” Jacob asked.

“Yeah. Been working on a project lately that- ooh!”

“Here ya go!” The rhino plopped a pair of plates heaped with food onto the table.

Jacob was taken aback. “That was fast.”

The fox looked at the chicken sandwich in mild amazement. It was humongous. He pulled the bun off and started carving into the chicken with his knife. Gotta watch his carbs, after all. Meanwhile, Will dug right into his double burger with gusto. Jacob couldn't help but notice the sheer passion with

which the otter was enjoying his meal. He seemed to savor every morsel and nugget as if he were reverently celebrating the act of eating itself. The fox couldn't help but find it adorable.

Jacob looked down at his bunless chicken. It seemed kind of sad by comparison. His mouth watered at the scent drifting over from his date's plate.

Will sensed the situation. "Want some of my fries?" he asked.

"Er, no thanks, I don't usually eat that sort of stuff."

In an act of betrayal, Jacob's stomach chose that moment to gurgle hungrily. Will grinned.

"C'mon, just a couple?"

"Well... alright, a couple." The otter scooted his plate over. Jacob gingerly grabbed one and brought it to his maw and bit down.

He was overcome with a storm of intense flavor, the richness of the oil, the perfect seasoning, the savory sensation, all of it was nearly too much for him to handle. Had he been missing out on this his whole life? Is this what everyone else experiences all the time? The fox blissfully drifted off into his own little world of gustatory delight.

"Jacob?"

"...mmm?"

"You alright?"

"Mmf, yes, why?"

"You kinda glazed over there for a second."

"These fries are really good!"

Will grinned. "I know! That's why I keep coming back here. Have all you like." He pushed his plate closer.

"I think I will." Jacob helped himself to another pawful of fries. Somehow, they were even more delicious than before.

"Mmmm." The fox was in heaven.

“Wow, you *really* like those fries.”

Jacob shook his head as if breaking away from a spell. “These are dangerously good. I need to stop.”

“Heh, if you say so. Just one more though.” Will picked up the last fry and gently placed it on the fox's waiting tongue.

“Mmm.” He grinned.

The two of them finished their meal and continued to really hit it off. When the bill came, Jacob insisted on picking up the tab. The fox and the otter made their way back outside.

“Well I had a good time tonight. It was nice to finally meet you.” said Jacob.

“Me too! Great to meet you too. And to share my favorite place.”

“Want to meet up again next week?”

“Sounds good!”

The fox grabbed Will's paw and gave it a firm squeeze. “Give me a call when you're ready.”

During the walk home, Jacob couldn't stop thinking about how cute that little otter was. And oddly, he also couldn't keep his mind off those fries. He rubbed his belly and wondered what else the culinary world might have to offer...

The next few days went pretty normally for Jacob. He followed his usual routine of a morning treadmill workout, healthy meals and a quick gym visit. But one day, something popped into his mind that threatened to alter this daily ritual. He thought of the great time had with Will, and specifically his experience with those fries. The fox decided to try something different for dinner tonight. It had been ages since he had takeout, so he decided to go for a walk and pick up a burger combo from a nearby restaurant. He reasoned that he had burned off an excess of calories working out today and deserved a little treat for it.

Jacob returned home and kicked off his running shoes, excited to get at that food. The smell had been driving him crazy along the whole walk back. His stomach rumbled impatiently. He quickly

plopped down on the couch and started digging in. The greasy, meaty, savory burger was almost supernatural in its deliciousness, and the fries were exceptional too. He could barely keep himself from wolfing it all down in seconds, but managed to retain some amount of dignity. He slumped back in his seat in a blissful food coma.

~Buuuurp!~

The fox blushed at the involuntary outburst and gave his stomach a little pat. He got up to throw out the trash and suddenly felt a bit guilty for pigging out like this. He made a mental note to not eat this kind of thing too often.

He checked himself out in the mirror just to be safe. He took a look from multiple angles and lifted up his shirt to check his belly. Yup, still got that lean figure, abs and all. He felt quite silly for even worrying about it. What harm could one little indulgence do? It's not like he'd make a habit of it.

Later, his thoughts turned to physical activities, as they were wont to do, and he came up with an idea. He invited Will to go swimming together at the city spring, a popular spot this time of year. One text exchange later, they were both on their way.

As soon as Jacob set foot in the park, Will bounded in quick for a hug, catching the fox off guard.

“Hey, you” said the otter.

“Hey” smiled the fox.

Jacob slyly took in the nice view for a brief moment. The otter was wearing a pair of blue swim trunks that complemented his fur nicely. His round little tummy pooched out a bit over them, which Jacob found quite cute for some reason. His eyes traced down his body all the way to his ever so slightly plump rump and thick tail. He estimated the otter had about twenty or thirty extra pounds hanging off his middle, now that he'd had a good look at it. Maybe he'd want a gym partner?

Jacob wore a tight fitting, extra short pair of trunks that put all of his athletic body out on display. Will drank deeply of the imagery, taking in all the curves and bulges of the fox's musculature.

He gulped when he saw Jacob noticing the long stare.

“Ah, umm... Sorry” The otter said sheepishly.

The fox grinned warmly. “It's alright, I was checking you out too.”

Will blushed a deep crimson and shifted his weight from side to side. “Umm, want to get a snack? I saw a hotdog stand over there.”

“Already? we just got here”

“I missed breakfast.”

“Aw man, it's not good to skip breakfast.”

“I know, I know. I'm still hungry though. Wanna go?”

“Sure.” the fox shrugged.

As they approached the hotdog cart, the scent of roasted meat and condiments wafted through the air. Jacob realized this was yet another treat he had not allowed himself to have for years and years.

~Guuuurgle~

The fox's stomach picked up on the trail immediately and made its demands clear. Will grinned and gave him a gentle pat on his flat, firm belly.

“Sounds like you're hungry too.”

“Maybe just a little.”

“Two hotdogs, please, with extra chili!” asked the otter. He turned to Jacob. “What would you like?”

“The second one isn't for me?”

“I always get two. You don't see good franks like these everyday.”

“Huh. That's not overdoing it?”

“Nah, live a little! You can afford to, I'll bet.”

“Hmm.”

“C'mooon” the otter egged him on.

“Oh alright. Two dogs for me too.”

The hot dog vendor happily complied.

The rest of the date went swimmingly. Jacob felt a bit bloated with those two giant hotdogs in his stomach, but took to the water anyway. The two of them had a good time having impromptu races, floating gently together, and then sunning on the banks.

As the sun began to set, they said their goodbyes and went their separate ways. For some reason, on the walk home Jacob's stomach let out a low gurgle. He was hungry again already? He felt a little wiped out from all the swimming and socializing and not in the mood to cook anything when he got home. On the walk home, he spotted a good looking fast food burrito place that he'd never noticed before. One more little meal couldn't hurt...

~Guuuuurrrrgle~

One gloomy morning, humid and foggy, Jacob broke with tradition and didn't feel like going for his morning run. Instead, he decided to take a cheat day and pick up a giant bag of breakfast tacos. They were unfathomably delicious, and the fox had no trouble packing away the entire collection in one sitting, leaving him with a slight bulge in his middle.

One extra hot day, Jacob thought he'd pick up a few burgers for lunch, but the heat was almost unbearable. Even though the burger place was in easy walking distance, he decided it was better to drive there this time. The next day, this happened again. And again. Now, more often than not, his healthy prepared lunches were being replaced with fast food.

Days and weeks passed. Jacob and Will went on many dates and adventures together and began to grow very close. And bit by bit, Will's eating habits were starting to rub off on the fox. Jacob's daily runs began to get shorter and shorter. More and more meals were getting replaced with fattening takeout and snacks. Sadly, Will had a new contract to fulfill, and would have to move away for about six months until it was complete. They made plans to reunite as soon as he returned. In the meantime, Jacob promised to loosen up a bit and experience more of what the world of food could offer.

All this eating was starting to take its toll on the fox's body, despite how athletic it was. It started one day when Jacob put on his work jeans one day and found them a little tighter than he remembered. They took a bit of extra effort to pull up around his rump and doing up the button left him feeling a bit of a pinch on his middle. The fox was confused a bit, but didn't give it much more thought. It must have just shrunk in the wash again.

~Guuuuurrrrrrrgle~

One fateful summer morning, the fox was awakened from his slumber by a roaring growl from his middle. He declared it a personal emergency and immediately sought out the cure: a giant breakfast. "Give it your all" was his motto, after all, doing things halfway just wasn't his style. So he ended up eating out at a pancake restaurant and ordering a colossal stack, along with reams of bacon.

The afternoon went similarly. Just as he was thinking about going for a run, a subterranean growl rumbled out of his belly, commanding him to pick up lunch. He took the initiative to try a new hamburger place in his never ending quest to experience new flavors. He ordered three triple burgers and had no issue consuming every last bite.

~GUUUURGGGLLE~

The burgers somehow didn't hold him over for long. "How am I hungry again already?" he wondered. The solution presented itself when he noticed an all-you-can-eat sushi restaurant opened up nearby. After a quick drive, he took a seat at the restaurant and began his feast. He absolutely demolished plate after plate after plate of sashimi and tempura, interspersed with bowls of hot soup and steamed dumplings.

He ended up having to loosen his belt after the meal to relieve some pressure. His belly happily bulged outward to take advantage of the extra space. He wobbled unsteadily home, cradling his overtaxed stomach as it made a cacophony of gurgles and growls. When he reached home, he flopped right into bed. It was then that he realized he had spent nearly the entire day snacking, eating, or preparing to eat. He knew that if this happened once, then it's easily possible for it to happen again. At

the same time, the unbridled pleasure of eating was not losing the slightest bit of novelty and continued to drive him.

The next morning, the fox checked himself out in the mirror after his morning shower. To his dismay, it looked like all that delicious food he'd been shoveling down had to go somewhere. He gingerly squeezed at his middle. His abs were long gone, and now he had a slightly convex tummy pooching out over his waist. His shape resembled Will's now. He checked out his face and saw that his cheeks were just a tiny bit fuller and less sharp. He gave his rump a little squeeze and blushed a bit at how soft it was. It was subtle, but those round cheeks were definitely a little bit bigger.

He grumbled to himself about losing control, but quickly got over it. He noticed that he was now about the same shape as Will was, with just a hint of fat hugging his middle. Average build these days, he supposed. "I can work this off, no problem. Nothing to worry about"

~Guuurgle~

"In the meantime, let's see what's for breakfast..." The fox pat his little belly and made his way to the kitchen. He had picked up some extra large sausage rolls at the grocery store that he was dying to try...

Weeks passed like this, the fox gulping down pounds upon pounds of fattening food, and they were really starting to have an effect on him. Over time, Jacob's belly began to bulge wider, bit by bit. Initially he wrote it off as just bloats from the big meals, but that excuse started to fall flat when the bulges started sticking around long after the eating was done.

One day, it finally happened. His jeans were untenable. After a valiant effort of pulling them up around his now plumper rump, the buttons may as well have been miles apart. No amount of grunting and struggling could bring them together. The soft little soccer ball-sized gut was just refusing to cooperate. He ended up having to wear some spandex jogging shorts that clung tightly to his curvy form.

If this had happened a few months earlier, it would have set off alarm bells in Jacob's mind and

sent him on a vigorous workout regimen that would grind him down to the bone. Yet oddly, now that he knew the real value of all the delicious food in the world, it seemed like a very distant priority.

Another month had come and gone. Jacob had made a habit of trying a new restaurant everyday for lunch. One day it would be tacos, another it was lasagna, then noodles or steak. He often chastised his stomach for getting full before he was done tasting everything, though with practice he was slowly adjusting to bigger and bigger meals.

The fox still made occasional visits to the gym, but they were growing shorter and more infrequent. He didn't want to miss happy hour at the sushi place or breakfast service at the cafe. The weight he was putting on could be worked off later, he reasoned. Right now, he wanted to catch up on all the wonderful tastes he had been missing out on.

Walking to the grocery store, he felt a chill running along his lower abdomen. It took him a moment to realize that his gut was pressing his shirt away from the waist of his pants, making an opening for air to flow in from below. He tried to tug it down to no avail, the roundness stubbornly keeping its shape. Eventually he gave up and shrugged, and went to the bakery to pick up some nice doughnuts.

With all the big meals, the pounds kept creeping onto the fox's body. He felt a twinge of embarrassment each time he moved up a belt loop, but not enough to reverse course. He had a mission and he had to stick to it.

On his rare gym visits, he started drawing puzzled stares from the regulars there. They knew him as a diligent gym goer who never missed a workout. Now he was a decidedly pot-bellied fox who literally drank heavy smoothies while on the stair climber. He didn't even seem to notice that his workout clothes weren't fitting as well as they used to, riding up and exposing a bouncing crescent of belly fur.

The desire to try every edible in the world kept growing stronger. Unfortunately for the fox's waistline, the city had a plethora of cuisines to sample. From the standard three meals a day, he

occasionally made an exception and had a fourth. Or a fifth. Or a sixth. Jacob had his stomach full to the brim, more often than not. He felt he wasn't experiencing enough if his gut wasn't round and taut at all times. If there was still room, it meant he wasn't using his time wisely enough. He learned to relish the gurgles and groans of his overburdened belly struggling to process everything he consumed.

Eventually, Jacob ceased exercising entirely. It was eating into his eating time. Besides, there was always time later to get in shape. Nevermind that he couldn't see his toes anymore, or that his bed was beginning to creak ominously under his weight, there was more food that needed sampling!

Months more passed. Will would be moving back into town again soon. Jacob was excited to see him. The fox had had to completely replace his wardrobe to accommodate his new heft. He had somehow put on more than a hundred and fifty pounds since he met the otter who opened up this new world to him.

The day finally arrived and he got a text from Will. He wanted to meet up again at the springs for a swim. Jacob looked from his phone to his body and shrugged. He'd have to bite the bullet at some point, may as well be now. He agreed.

It was a bright, sunny day, still quite warm for this late in the year. Good for swimming. Will was sprawled out sunning on the river bank when the fox approached him. Will must have been working out all this time. His figure had leaned out into a powerful, fit looking swimmer's build. The otter turned his head and was taken aback at the sight.

“Who are... Jacob?!”

Jacob blushed, shifting his weight on his legs. The once trim, athletic fox had grown into a real butterball. His belly bulged out in front of him more than one and a half feet, about the size of a large beach ball. It bowed out in a glorious curve, forming an elegant rounded shape that drooped below his waist. Thick love handles crested outward, winging his hips. His thighs were thick and meaty, rubbing together when he walked. His gut had grown unwieldy and forced him to walk with a bit of a waddle. His plump rump jiggled with every step, each cheek now a smooth, wide curve the size of a large

cantaloupe. All in all, a far cry from the svelte figure he cut just a few months ago.

“Yeah, uh, I put on a bit of weight.”

“I can see that!”

The otter cupped a mass of the fox's belly in his paws and lifted it up and dropped it, sending it falling and jerking heavily into a wobble.

The otter was remaining oddly quiet, with an unreadable expression on his face. Jacob broke the silence. “You're looking good. Lost some weight?”

“Yeah.” Will flexed his biceps, which were now quite sizable. “You inspired me and I was following your example. Worked out every day, cut out the bad food, started seeing results.”

“I see.” The fox checked out Will's figure more closely, particularly enamored with the powerful abdominals he had developed.

“And you, umm...”

“I took your advice about trying new foods to heart.”

“Sure looks that way.”

“You know me. I go whole hog on anything I do.”

“Emphasis on hog.”

“Heh...”

The fox blushed, almost ashamed. “Um, I understand if you don't wanna... I mean, if you want to call this off.”

Will shook his head. “Are you kidding? I love a guy who knows how to eat.”

“Really?”

“It's true.” The otter stepped closer and cupped a paw on the front of the fox's massive gut.

“Kinda hot, honestly.” He grinned.

“Oh really?” the fox said in a teasing sultry voice.

The otter reached around behind the fox and gave his fattened rump a firm squeeze. “Mhm.

How about we retire to my place?"

"Sounds good. Got anything to eat?"

The otter grinned. "Oh you have no idea."