

Big Bull on Campus- Through the Wire

By Lupine

This was stupid. Seriously, seriously stupid. What was he doing here again, exactly?

Bradley had asked himself this question at least five times in the last seven minutes, and he *still* didn't have a good answer. Turning on his heel, he paced back along the chain-link fence that separated the unkempt jungle of long-grass from the pristine turf on the far side. Over on the very far edge of those manicured grounds, organised activity was just about discernible in front of the sports pavilion-thing (or whatever the heck it was they called it. Horrible design, anyway. Post-ironic, but without the irony). His long legs took him past a large, bulging dent in the wire-mesh barrier, and a few strides later he came to the end of the rut he'd worn. Self-consciously, the giraffe turned and paced back the way he'd just come. Again. His socks were starting to turn green.

Ok, this was *really* stupid. What if someone saw him here? Or worse- what if they thought he had a hankering to play *sports*? The college's basketball coach had been a constant pain in the neck for his whole first *year* at college- sheesh, couldn't that guy understand a simple *no*?- and if word of *this* got out it'd only encourage him to try again.

With a sigh of frustration Bradley abandoned pacing and leaned morosely against the fence, hands clenched through the links, the side of his face pressed into the wide mesh. A fly landed on the back of his neck, tickling his blonde queue of hair, before buzzing away desultorily. On the shorn baize just the other side of the fence white, empty track-lines stretched away into the distance, left to right, marking out a highway to nowhere.

Just what did he think he was going to achieve here, hmm? For instance, didn't he have that assignment on Pablo Porcasso to finish writing? Finding something- *anything*- new to say on that subject wasn't just to happen by *itself*.

Yeah, but... *this* was more important.

Ok, Ladysmith-Johansson, time-out. Seriously, *think* about that last thought. Have you totally lost your *mind*?

Bradley was seriously starting to wonder.

Just then, he felt it. It was like at the end of the Dry Season back on the Veld, and that first roll of thunder just before it finally, *finally* rained. It made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end.

*Thud, thud, thud, THUD, **THUD**...*

His ears swivelled, triangulating. Now he could hear it, too. Heavy impacts, over and over on the turf, getting closer, and then over that pile-driver thumping, laboured, weighty puffing. Despite himself, Bradley felt every muscle in his body clench. Entirely unbidden, his neck lurched around to left, craning to get a first glimpse of what was to come: the longed-for end to the drought.

And then... there he was, lumbering along the track. Calvin Boavida- in the flesh, and large as life.

Apart from his helmet, the big bull was in full football uniform. Emphasis on *full*. An Atlantean blue football jersey big enough for Bradley to have worn like a dress was stretched tight around Cal's chest, giving perfect definition to a pair of bull-udders bigger than full-grown watermelons, the number 50 stretched between them in white. These juggled and wobbled weightily atop a chocolate-brown belly that it seemed no item of clothing could ever fully cover, leaving his bellybutton permanently on display to the world, deep enough that you could stuff a can of coke- or a bottle of beer- into it. The jersey lost the battle with his titanic torso a little above his equator, the wrinkled hem obscuring the team's trident logo. The hem only made it that far because a stitch had popped in the white stripe that ran down his side from armpit to hem, the split revealing even more bulging bovine bulk to the world. Bradley had noticed that without their helmets most football players' heads looked small, thanks to the armour they wore under their uniforms. The 'padding' inflating *Cal's* jersey so immensely was all him- there wasn't room for armour under there too. The shoulders and sleeves looked ready to pop as it was, his upper arms bulging out so much that he had to run with his elbows stuck out horizontally. He was puffing and panting like a steam-train that

was out of water. A continentally-wide V of sweat had soaked the top of his chest and around the doughy rolls of his neck. With each wheezing lungful of air his moobs rose up nearly level with his snout, his jersey looking fit to burst at the seams every single time. The lower curve of that gigantic gut hung past his knees, and as he ploughed laboriously closer that supersized sumo-stomach was bouncing and rippling to its own sluggish pace, irrespective of the pumping of his prodigiously plump legs. There was no armour inside his white uniform pants, either- they were stuffed full with the bull's thighs and backside, so over-stretched they resembled lycra running shorts. His knee-length socks had wilted above his football boots, exposing the huge hams of his calves.

This was Atlantis U.'s 'star' player- or at least, the most recognisable. A little over 6 feet tall, Cal looked *spherical*, or slightly wider. He was *hee-yooge*! If some bulls were beefcakes, Cal was pure cheesecake. He was the most blatantly out-of-shape beast Bradley had ever laid eyes on. An utter butterbull. A Grade-A Chow-Cow. If you took an athletic, football-playing bovine and stuffed him silly with junk-food every single day for two years, he probably STILL wouldn't wind up as eye-poppingly obese as Cal. This bull was something *special*. A vast, over-ripe bull-berry. A literal blubber bull-oon. And now he was lumbering past at roughly the speed of an iceberg, so close Bradley could almost reach out and touch him.

"Cac-" the giraffe croaked, stopped, and swallowed hard- his throat had dried completely. He tried again. "Huh... H-hey, Cal! ...Cal?" His neck tilted over further and further as the bull steamed past, then he had to actually had to move to follow, though fortunately keeping pace was easy- he didn't even have to lengthen his stride. "Cal...!! *CAL...!!!*"

It took until the third step for his voice to finally penetrate over the sounds of the bloated beefster's own exertions. He saw the big guy's ears lift amongst that dark mop of curls, currently sagging with sweat, and the bull's stubby-looking snout turned a little in this direction, a flash of cream-white squashed in between cheeks the size of a basketball apiece, currently berry-red. To Brad's art-student eye it looked like someone had run a brush from the bull's nose, back along the top of his muzzle and up between his eyes to just beneath his eyebrows. The giraffe waved frantically, a slightly desperate smile fixed on his face. Immediately, Cal's 'pace' slowed further and, panting heavily, he strayed off the straight and narrow trackway and waddled up. Cal certainly didn't need much persuasion to take a break.

And he really *did* waddle- each lard-laden leg lifted like a lead weight and swung ponderously out to the side to get past his stupendous stomach, and each time his hooves hit the ground thighs the size of space-hoppers bounced and rippled inside the inadequate covering of his uniform pants. The bull finally wheezed to a stop a few paces from the fence, apparently unable to complete even that short distance.

“H-hey Cal!” The giraffe swallowed again, acutely aware of the muscles of his face locking into an almost-moronic grin- as they did every time he stole a conversation with this blubber-blown, butter-soft beefball.

“Uhhhh...” Cal grunted, those chubby lips of his creasing into a dopey smile, “heeey, Braaaad...” For some reason Cal always called Bradley ‘Brad’- and ‘Brad’ was absolutely, 100% A-ok with that. The bulging bovine tugged at his jersey’s neckline, making those mammoth bull-moobs jostle mesmerizingly with each pull. He was *steaming*. The giraffe could see the heat-haze rising off him, and feel the humidity on his face in the otherwise dry summer air.

Abruptly Brad realised he was standing there just *staring* at this colossal superchub of a cow. And Cal was looking back at him, those rather sleepy-looking brown eyes blinking behind overstuffed beefburger cheeks. Why, *why* did Brad’s tongue always tie itself in such a knot whenever he so much as tried to pass the time of day with this jumbo-sized jock?

“Ahem,” he coughed unconvincingly, “Ehhhhhh... s-so... uh... training today, huh?”

Duuuh! Brad cringed internally, cursing himself for being such a *dweeb*, but what *else* could they talk about? It wasn’t like he could start discussing the influence of Modernism on the 20th Century art scene, was it? They barely had a single class in common. The only reason he’d become friends with Cal was because of that little... incident, two semesters ago.

“Uhhhh... yeeeaah,” Cal responded completely seriously despite the fatuousness of the question. “Uhhhh... Cooooach is maaaaking me dooooo laaaaaps.”

Even when he wasn’t out of breath Cal spoke slowly, his voice a deep, rolling thing just short of an outright moo. It had deepened and slowed noticeably since his arrival at college two years ago, in clear correlation with his escalating- or some snarky students pit it, ‘exponential’- weight problem. As those same students pointed out, even his voice had fattened up!

“Oh... ehh-hh...” the giraffe bit his lower lip, unconsciously reaching to rub the back of his neck. Cal really, *really* wasn’t built for laps. What he was built for was sitting on his butt for a two-hour lunch in the college cafeteria- stuffing his face with enough fast food to burst any other two students you cared to name- or grazing gluttonously in the campus bakehouse, or sucking down a gallon-sized milkshake in the on-site ice-cream parlour (Open All Night!), or squeezing into the campus bar for a Team Night party, or plumping down on a couch in someone’s dorm-room, watching a football game on TV, being served with endless snacks by his snickering buddies. But not laps. “Eh, s-sorry to hear that, big felllllll...” He trailed off, eyes widening as Cal casually lifted one fat flour-sack arm and wiped his face on it, revealing a huge sweat-patch between his under-arm and the bulging roll of flab where his chest rolled into his side. Always sensitive to colour, Brad realised with a jolt that Cal’s jersey was actually a couple of shades darker than usual because it was soaked through with sweat. For patches to show up against that Cal must be absolutely *puddling* in there. As the colossal cow scrubbed at his sweat-drenched forehead with his upper arm like a window-cleaner with a stubborn stain, his whole body wobbled- moobs, belly, lovehandles, the lot. The giraffe gulped, the sight leaving him literally lost for words. “E-ehhhhh...” His eyes widened slowly. The tough fabric of the sweat-stained jersey imprisoning the behemoth bull’s blubbersome bulk quivered in duress, straining to its utmost under his armpit, and then with a muffled *pop* burst a stitch. The seam stretched as the bull’s ample arm expanded like a water-wing.

A roaring cheer erupted from across the field, making the giraffe flinch guiltily. Blinking, Cal lowered his arm, face marginally drier and sleeve significantly more sodden, then swung around to stare back towards the disturbance. A tiny-looking thing- a football?- was sailing in an arc through the air towards the far side of the field, a fact which the distant figures seemed to feel needed celebrating, if the whooping commotion was anything to go by. It reminded Bradley of a pack of feral hyenas, but it was only Cal’s team-mates. The bull’s fat face tilted to follow the football as it sailed towards the distant edge of the field, and Brad watched an almost hungry expression cross Cal’s chubby countenance. His attention seemed to be magnetised by that funny-shaped little ball.

Brad’s wasn’t- not when he was being given this most amazing opportunity to observe Calvin’s physique at such close quarters. What was it that he found so engrossing about this

load of bull? Was it that swollen second chin that softened his features into such approachable, appealing friendliness, the planet-like parabola of his pachyderm-sized paunch? Maybe the Rubenesque roundness of his limbs, dimpled elbows and all or- revealed in all its glory as he turned side-on- that humungous bulldozer of a butt? That much rump-steak in one place was almost indecent, especially with a good double-handspan of its curvature hanging out above the overstretched waistband of his uniform pants, a blue trident emblazoned across the rear ‘pocket’ like a brand. Each glute was the size of one of the beer barrels kept in the college bar. He spied the tuft of Cal’s tail sandwiched in the deep crease between them. It twitched a couple of times- though whatever body language it was trying to convey was lost, swollen into the *lingua flabba* of a seriously supersized Fat-Boy. As Cal twisted a little further to follow the football’s flight, Brad saw that bulging bull-neck bunch into a new configuration of doughy rolls like a stack of finger buns, mussing his sweat-slicked hair even further. Across his barn-like back, the printed number ‘50’ was stretched to over twice the width it was meant to be. You couldn’t even read his *name*, it was so creased and wrinkled with the lines of tension in his top

He’s... so... BIG...

Oh, man, this crush of his was getting really, *really* bad. And on a *guy*, too! I mean... the heck? But in fairness Cal had crushed on *him* first- quite literally, when he’d accidentally backed up on him that day in the locker room. One moment Bradley had been bending down to tie his shoelaces in preparation for his usual keep-fit run, the next- all he could remember was this feeling of irresistible pressure and... weight, and... *softness*, even as he was rammed unceremoniously into the lockers and found himself folded up like origami.

Maybe he’d banged his head harder than he’d thought.

A piercing whistle cut through the air like a knife, rudely breaking Brad’s reverie. The commotion across the field ceased abruptly too as a figure strode into the melee, angrily castigating the ringleaders of whatever hijinks had been going on.

“Uhhhh...” the habitual, fog-horn like exhalation Cal made whenever he was about to say something surprised Brad: he didn’t think he’d ever heard the big, bloated doughbull speak up on his own volition before. If the unkinders students on campus were to be believed, this

was because Cal almost never had anything resembling a thought (outside of food) in his fat head to share. Others put it down to his mouth usually just being too full for him to get a word out edgewise. But a frown was slowly beginning to furrow the big bull's usually imperturbable, placidly plump features. For once, he plainly had something on his mind. He even glanced over one swollen shoulder- or at least as far around as bulk constraining his neck and shoulder allowed- as though worried there might be someone else to overhear him out on this far, unfashionable edge of the football field. "I doooooon't geeet iiiiiit, Braaaaad," he complained. He scratched a plump, perplexed finger between his horns, which now looked so small in comparison to the rest of him that you could miss them entirely at first glance. "Why dooo I *aaaalways* haaaave to doooo *laaaaaps*?!"

"Eh... *uhh*..." Brad licked his lips dryly as he tried not to gawp at the grossly obese, airship-sized 'athlete' on the other side of the fence. It was the worst-kept secret on campus that Cal's team-mates had fattened him up, apparently for no more reason than 'because he was there'. From various photos he'd seen, Bradley knew that Cal had arrived from high school as a sturdy but not unreasonably hefty specimen of a bull- and a good enough football player to have gained a scholarship to play for Atlantis U. And now... *this*. Cal was a prank that had snowballed out of all proportion, and it seemed the only two people who weren't in on the joke were Calvin's coach, and Cal himself. The results of Cal's weekly weigh-ins in the locker-room were a closely guarded Team secret- even from Cal himself- but the rumour-mill had it that he might be pushing 800lbs. 800! And according to the same rumour-mill the Team weren't done with him yet, despite their coach having apoplexy on an almost daily basis. Bradley's eyes tried to skirt the stitches that had plainly popped in Cal's uniform since he'd last seen him wearing it, testament to the fact that this big-bull was *still* blowing up like a pooltoy on a pump. There was talk of Cal pushing a tonne by graduation- the smart money was on him being rolled into the ceremony. If he didn't burst before then.

And- here was the kicker- the massive meatball just did not seem to realise how freaking *fat* he had gotten. Not even now he had to squeeze to get through most doorways.

"Ehe," Brad said weakly, looking for something- anything- to say in the face of this monumental but unspeakable truth. "They're, eh... probably just, eh... r-resting you up so you, eh... you're fresh for the next... match?" Did they call it a match? But his suggestion seemed cold comfort to Cal, who's frown was slowly deepening into an outright scowl. His

nostrils flared and he let out an emotionally-charged snort, and for the first time the giraffe glimpsed how... intimidating this normally-docile doughbull might just be if he ever got truly riled up.

“Thiiis is stoo-HOOO-pid! I waanna plaaay foo-HOOOOOT-ball!” the big bull bellyached, actually mooing in his vehemence. Bradley blinked and bit his lip as yet more bits of his brain shorted out with a thought closely approximating to ‘*Fnaaah!*’. Such... *bestial* behaviour was a biiiig social no-no in polite circles of society, especially the circles *he’d* grown up in back home. He’d been sent to the best school money could buy- a fact he’d worked hard to keep buried from his fellow college students- and boy had they been *strict* with that kind of thing. Maybe that was why he found it such an illicit thrill to hear it from Cal’s lips now- that and the big boy’s belching.

“They wooon’t even leeet me dooooo taaaackle praaaaactice aaaany more! Nooooot even aaaas the duuuuummy!”

Bradley blinked again.

“Oh... ehe... w-well...” The way *he’d* heard it, Cal’s last practice tackle had wound up with the other guy almost going into orbit. But there was no stopping the stampede now. The behemoth bull snorted even more deeply, his hands bunching into fat fists. He looked on the point of stamping a hoof.

“It’s no-HOOOOT fair!”

The giraffe just gulped, trying to tell himself he was being a Good Listener by letting his big buddy get this off his chest, even as his well-developed imagination busily painted a graphic picture of the exact consequences that colliding with this hugely overfed ball of beef would entail. The thump of contact with that gargantuan gut, then sinking into all that bovine blubber as momentum carried you unstoppably onwards- for the first time in his life Bradley actively cursed the long-necked inheritance that barred him from anything as dangerous as full-contact sports. Wouldn’t it be worth the risk to have just one charge at Cal?

“Eh... w-well... M-maybe *I* could-” Brad disbelievingly heard himself begin to say, but - thankfully- Cal suddenly wasn’t listening to him anymore. His attention was riveted on the

carrier bag he'd spotted dangling casually by the giraffe's side. *Finally*. Brad had been starting to wonder if he should wave it about or something. Wordlessly, the big bull took a lumbering step closer to the fence and his nostrils flared, sniffing. This close, all Brad could now smell was Cal- grass stains, sweat, and a deep beefy undertone topped with a cologne of onions and cheese from the cafeteria's lunchtime quesadillas. But the big bull's snout was obviously built of stronger stuff- and it was well-proven on campus that he could sniff out a chocolate bar from over a yard away.

Through the fence's mesh, Cal's brown eyes slowly lifted from the open bag to meet Brad's, and the giraffe saw a *new* kind of hunger in there.

"Ehe, I... I..." Brad thrust the carrier bag forward, feeling the entire length of his neck turning red, like a giant thermometer. Even with one button undone the collar of his shirt suddenly felt much too tight. "I just... y'know... new recipe... tried it out... thought you might, ehe, m-maybe..."

He realised he was babbling incoherently, his face blushing as pink as a petunia, but Cal didn't seem to notice, thank God.

"Uhhhh... heyyyyyy, *thaaaaaanks*, Braaaaaad!" The big bull's full features instantly lit up like a sunbeam. He actually lunged forward in his eagerness, the giraffe flinching back instinctively as that sumo-sized stomach surged right at him, only to smack up against the wire fence with a '*clink!*' of metal. Cal grunted in annoyance, and Brad's eyes grew wider as the big bull just pushed harder, tongue stuck out of the corner of his mouth, arm outstretched as he determinedly but futilely tried to push a hefty hand through one of the fence's chain-links. "Uhhhh... Hgngggghhhh....!"

"Eh... H-here, l-let me!" Brad hurriedly pulled an extra-large muffin out of the bag and- his own hand and its cargo slipping easily though the gap between the wires- pressed the still-warm snack into Cal's plump palm. The bull's meaty mitt shut like a podgy Venus fly-trap, and he immediately brought the freshly-baked goodie to his snout and chomped, practically biting it in half. His cheeks bulged as he munched heavily, and he swallowed almost before he could even have possibly registered the taste. But Brad could see when he did- Cal's eyes widened until almost fully-open, and his ears flap-flap-flapped as though they were suddenly trying to take off.

“Uhhhh... mmhhhhhhhhmmmm...!”

“Eh... th-they any good, Cal?” Brad asked as innocently as he could. But Cal had already stuffed the entire remainder of the muffin between his lips in one go- surprise vanilla cheesecake centre and all. The bull chewed voraciously, his chubby chops wobbling, and then he gulped it down greedily. Brad saw it sliding down the bull’s thick throat in a bulge, then disappear into his chest with a *glop*. The size of the swallow left the bull panting. Then, he *looked* at Brad.

“Ehe... y-you... eh...” Brad gulped, feeling his grin widen involuntarily, “w-want *another*, big guy?”

“Uhhhh.... mmhhmmmm!” Cal nodded emphatically, the tubby tyres of his second and third chins bunching under the button that remained of his actual jawline. He even wiggled his colossal caboose from side-to-side like a puppy over-excited at the prospect of a treat- talk about adore-a-bull! How could you say no to *that*? Brad certainly couldn’t. He obligingly passed another muffin through the fence, and Cal grabbed it. The bull guzzled it down just as greedily as the first. Then another. Then *another*...

Brad stood entranced as Cal pigged out in front of him, his belly still resting up against the fence. The big boy ate like he’d been on a starvation diet for six weeks, rather than only having finished a belly-busting lunch two and a half hours ago (Brad had watched him from afar). He just couldn’t seem to *bear* to have food in front of him and not be eating it, which meant he was starting on his next muffin before he’d even finished swallowing the first.

“Uhhhh... theeethe aaaare goo-HOOOG!” Cal exclaimed indistinctly, showering the giraffe’s shirt with sticky crumbs through the fence. More crumbs cascaded into the valley formed where his jersey stretched between his bulging bull-udders. A little light-headedly, Brad noticed that sundry other miscellaneous food-stains were starting to show up as the sweat evaporated from the material. Barely pausing long enough to suck down a big, panting breath, Cal dove straight into his next ‘snack’. “Uhhhh... thaaaaa-URP-” he stifled a burp, more-or-less “-Bwaaaaaad.” There was another spray of crumbs.

“Ehe...” the giraffe gulped, his blush redoubling even as his smile threatened to split him ear-to-ear. “N-no problem at *all*, Cal!” His free hand tugged convulsively at his crisply-ironed collar- suddenly it was waaay too hot out here. He felt a sweat break out all the way down the back of his neck. “A-after all, us ‘bro-vines’ have got to stick together, right?”

Oh, said his self-respect, looking up from where it lay, gently weeping on the floor. *So you finally regain the power of speech just so you come out with lines like THAT?*

“I *m-mean*-!” Brad amended hurriedly, pressing another muffin on Cal a distraction, “we gotta keep you match-fit, right? G-gotta keep your blood-sugar up, Champ!” Oh dear God have mercy, now he was sounding like one of Cal’s *team-mates*!

“Uhhh... yeaaaah....” But both of the big beefball’s hands were now full of food, a situation clearly just too irresistible for him to eat *and* think at the same time. Brad gratefully took the opportunity to shut up and just watch the show. As he spectated, Cal took a bite out of one muffin, then, with his cheeks still bulging, a bite out of the second. Mwaaah... What a *glutton*. Just... look at him.

Yes, just look at him. Part of Brad- the coldly reptile-rational part, the bit of his psyche he’d taken to labelling as ‘the Killjoy’- suddenly broke in on his inner monologue. *Seriously, what the hell is wrong with you?*

Shut up! he told himself sharply.

He’s a pig. A big, fat, out-of-control pig. And you want to be ‘friends’ with THIS? You should be HELPING him, not feeding him!

I AM helping him, Bradley thought furiously, trying to keep his outward expression tightly under control. He watched himself pass Cal yet another muffin to consume, the bull beaming between chipmunk-chubby cheeks. *See? He’s happy. I’m making him HAPPY!*

You’re making him FATTER...

And Brad didn’t have an answer for that one, because it was true. Every little extra treat, every little smuggled snack, every pack of salted peanuts generously passed the big bull’s way at a party wound up adding visibly to his waist. Or his chest. Or his butt. Calvin seemed to put on weight as easily as most people breathed, and *certainly* more easily than he did laps. Practically every time he ‘bumped into’ Cal, Brad spotted a new fold of flab under the bull’s arm, or an extra roll of dough on the bull’s voluminous sides, or another inch of

padding plumping out his tremendously thighs. And every single time it made Brad's heart leap into his throat to see him *bigger*...

But *why*? Why was he so... *infatuated* with this blob of a bull? It wasn't just his size- Bradley had gone to school with elephants back home, and he'd never felt so much as a twinge of interest. No, he'd gradually realised- and each time he thought about it, was more sure than ever- it was precisely because Cal *wasn't* supposed to be this big. The bull had gotten this way through pure, unadulterated gluttony and self-indulgence- even if it had been at the hands of his team-mates. On some level he'd *let* it happen, accepting all those second helpings pressed onto him, then thirds, then the countless snacks that found their way into his possession day in, day out. He ate *everything*, and mooed for more. Football and food were the twin obsessions in Cal's life- and his need to stuff his fat face just seemed grow stronger and stronger as he let himself go more, and more, and *more*. He blatantly couldn't stop himself- didn't seem to *want* to stop. The sheer... excessiveness of Cal's ballooning body made Brad's head spin.

Bradley couldn't remember a single excessive moment in his life. Self-control and moderation had been inculcated into him since childhood, to the point where he couldn't imagine any other way for him to live. He'd never gotten drunk- like properly, can't-see-straight drunk- never seen the point in taking drugs, and stopped eating the minute he felt remotely full. Anything more was *greedy*. He wasn't even really sure he *liked* food that much- plainly not as much as Cal did, to the extent that he'd stuff more down his aching throat, his belly already distended in front of him from a marathon gorging session, just because it all tasted so *good*. That and a regular workout routine had left Bradley fit and well-built, not because he particularly *wanted* to look like that but because it was just... the healthy, sensible thing to do. He wasn't too bulky, wasn't too skinny. The only thing that had ever made him stand out was his height- and he felt vaguely embarrassed about *that*, and all. He wasn't sure if he was *capable* of excess. Even having the top button of his (clean and ironed) shirt undone nagged at him with ingrained guilt about letting his standards slip.

And here was Cal, who quite literally let *everything* hang out. He was a parade-balloon of a bull, and still getting bigger by the week. And he'd just eaten eight- no, make that *nine*- muffins in a row without breaking a sweat.

Cal, Cal, he's our bull! If his pants aren't splitting, he's not full!!

Brad's face flushed as a part of his mind pranced gleefully in full cheerleader's costume, pom-poms and all. (Seriously, *pigtails*?!) As he watched, the bull opened wide and hogged down yet *another* muffin, pushing it all the way into his snout until his plumped palm bumped up against his lips.

Groooooooooow, CAL!!!

Because Brad had realised, he wanted more of this. He wanted Cal to *keep* indulging his excesses, to see how fat this butter-bull could get when he *really* let rip.

That beautiful blimp of a bovine was *still* unashamedly stuffing his face. He'd stopped sweating, and his hair was resuming its habitual style- meaning, it looked like he had just rolled out of bed. And when had he last washed his uniform- were *all* those food stains really from today? A thick smear of vanilla buttercream was splashed up the side of his snout and onto one cheek. As Brad admired him, this huge, sloppy, slope-shouldered, sumo-sized student obliviously stuffed a further muffin into his mouth, cheeks bulging out even bigger, cramming even more calories into his chock-a-block system. The chain-link fence actually creeeked as his weight rested against it, hand-sized squares of cow-hide bulging towards Brad between the plasticised wires. The giraffe could have reached out and squeezed-

"Ahem," Brad said hurriedly, "So, ehh... y-you got any plans for the summer, Cal?"

"Uhhhh..." the bull grunted distractedly, still chewing, "baaaaag hoooooobe wiiiith myyy fooolkth, uhhh... I gueeeth..."

"Eh... heh... s-sounds nice."

Come on vacation with me! Brad hollered inside the privacy of his skull. His parents owned a holiday home within striking distance- ok, it was actually a pretty long way from Atlantis, but it was the right continent, at least! And his dad had already airily agreed he could use the place if he liked- *he* was too busy with a business empire to run, and it'd do the old shack good to get an airing more often. It was up in the mountains, nice and quiet, and it had its own pool and everything. A couple of weeks there, just him and Cal, that's all he asked. They could hang out together like proper, honest-to-goodness buds, and they could really get

to *know* each other. And... and for those couple of weeks he could make sure this Stay-Puff'd Marshmallow Bull got *everything* to eat that he desired...

He'd been trying to pop the question for about the last month, but whenever he managed to steer the conversation towards this topic his nerve always failed at the last minute. After all, he had enough trouble holding a simple conversation with this big-bull, how exactly did he expect to cope with two weeks one-on-one? And- an icy thought wormed forward from the back of Brad's brain- what the heck made him so sure Cal would even *want* to spend quality time with him? When he got down to it, wasn't he just kidding himself? The big bull vaguely recognised him as a fan but, friends? Face it, Cal was one of the most popular guys at Atlantis U. and- as far as their fellow students were concerned- Brad was a nobody arts major. Boooore-ring! Sure, he'd baked the bull some snacks, but so what? *Everyone* on campus fed Cal. The big guy couldn't get across the lawns from his dorm room to class without someone slipping a chocolate bar into his back pocket- giving that enormously distended derriere a pat for 'luck' as they did so- or lobbing a bag of doughnuts onto his chest as he passed, or bear claws, or, yes, muffins. (According to the rules, you scored bonus points if they got stuck between his moobs and the over-stretched neckline of that yellow hoodie he wore so often). *Brad's* offerings were just a drop in the sugar-and-butter ocean washing down Cal's throat on a daily basis. Five minutes after they'd been gulped down, the big obese ox probably couldn't even remember what it was he'd just eaten, let alone who to thank for it. And Brad only managed to talk to Cal maybe every couple of days- at best- whereas Cal spent almost *all* of his time hanging out with the Team and other assorted jocks, and they kept him *stuffed*. Seriously, what chance did Bradley possibly have of winning Cal's friendship against competition like that?

A rustle of plastic made him glance down. His hand was rooting around in an empty bag. *Damnit!*

"Eh... uhh..." he looked up to see Cal still watching him expectantly. "S-sorry big guy, that's the last of them."

"Uhhh... ohhhhh..." the bloated blubber-bull blinked, even as the number 13 started to clang inside Brad's head like a church bell. Thirteen! Thirteen double-sized vanilla cheesecake muffins! Cal had inhaled a full baker's dozen in under five freaking *minutes*! He was a *machine*!

But... chow-time was over, folks.

The giraffe watched as with a slow grunt Cal took a small step back, belly dropping slightly as its weight lifted from the fence. A large, bulging dent remained in the wire where it had been stretched out of shape. Bradley flushed, glancing guiltily at the couple of other incriminating bulges along this stretch of fence that were evidence of the other times he'd snuck Cal a little 'snack-break' like this. He was going to wind up in sooo much trouble-

"Uhhhh..." Cal's voice interrupted him. The big beefball shuffled a little on his cleated hooves, and Brad could have sworn the ground creaked underneath him. "Uhhhh... cooould yooooou maaaaybe maaaake some moooooore?" Now it was the giraffe's turn to blink, dumbstruck. Insofar as Cal's fat face ever had much expression, he was looking kind of embarrassed, his chubby cheeks slowly turning red in the face of Bradley's stunned silence. "Uhhhh... they were *reeeeeal* goooooood..."

Brad's head spun in frantic calculation. If he *ran* to the store...

"I can have them for you by the end of practice."

"Uhhhh..." the bull blinked a couple of times, possibly in surprise, possibly not, "You *cooould*?" Brad felt his face going red again in a hurry.

"Ehe! I mean, eh... I m-mean..." What *did* he mean, eh? Explain yourself out of *this* one, 'superfan'. He gulped again. "I mean... I guess I *could* whip up some that quick, haha, i-if you liked them *that* much..."

"Uhhhh..." Cal scratched a fat finger between his horns again, "weeee've gooooot a Teeeeam niiiight after praaaactice."

"...Oh." Inside, Brad felt a little bit of himself sink as though dropped into a deep, icy pool. 'Team nights' were the stuff of legend on campus. They could go on until two in the morning, and if the rumours were to be believed Cal would be stuffed with food for every last minute of it.

"Uhhhh... It's, uhhhh.... gonna be a baaaarbecue," Cal added, as though that explained everything.

"Ehe..." Brad really *focussed* on maintaining a smile in the face of disappointment, but he wasn't sure how well he did. "N-no problem, big guy, I, eh... I understand." He swallowed

around the lump in his throat, smiled wider, feeling the muscles in his face stretch oddly.
“M-maybe some other time.”

In five minutes, those muffins would be all but forgotten...

“Uhhhh...” Cal took a step back up to the fence. His stomach let out an audible gurgle. “I... uhhhh... coooooould stooooop by your doooooorm-roooooom *aaaafter*, if, uhhhh.... thaaaat’s okaaaaaay...?”

“YES!!! I mean, heh...” with an effort of will Brad forced his arm, risen of its own accord for a spontaneous fist-pump, to change course and instead rubbed the back of his neck. “Ehh... y-yeah, th-that’s, eh... that’s cool, I, eh... I guess.”

“Uhhhh... I miiiiight be... uhhhh... kiiiiinda laaaaate...” Cal began, hesitantly.

“Anytime, big guy! Anytime!” Cal blinked at Brad again. “I mean, I’ve eh, got an essay I’ll be working on all night, so, eh... anytime you want to stop by, I’ll, eh... be ready and waiting.” With *two* dozen muffins this time, he added in the privacy of his own head.

“Uhhh... .” Squashed between his chubby cheeks, Cal’s plump, pouting lips stretched into a slow smile. “Saaaaaaay, thaaaaanks buuuuddy!” Brad’s spirit soared to the skies on wings of quicksilver. “Uhhhh...” the bull’s brow began to crease slowly again. “Where is your doooooor-?”

“N-number 303, Ridge Hall!”

“Uhhhh... thaaaaanks.” The bulging bull absent-mindedly smacked his lips, finding a few stray crumbs around them. “Uhhhh... so you waaaaanna haaaang out after claaaaaass tomorrow?”

Bradley gulped. After all this time hoping, *longing*, and Cal made the offer sound so casual with that bloated deadpan voice of his, like they always hung out together...

“Eh... ehe... y-yeah... th-that’d be cool, I guess.” The giraffe was fighting desperately to retain any last vestiges of ‘cool’ he had left- right then he felt like rolling over in front of this half-tonne of beef teriyaki and wriggling around on his back. “Maybe I could, heh... b-buy you a milkshake or something?” Totally carried away, Brad stretched a hand through the fence-wire and patted the side of Cal’s bulging belly, his hand catching and cupping that colossal captivating curve for the merest heartbeat. He was so warm and soft, just like he

remembered, and... so... freaking... *BIG-* getagrip Bradley, *getagrip!!* With a mental flinch he pulled his hand away again.

“Uhhhh... yeaaaah,” Cal was still saying slowly, a smile still on his snout. “I’d liiiike- uhh... thaaaaat.”

As Brad’s palm momentarily pressed stretched cow-hide that deep, mooing voice stumbled, and for a split-second he saw the bull’s eyelids flicker, and there was the faintest hint of his nostrils flaring. Had he... *enjoyed* tha-?

“CAAAAAL-VIIIIIIIN!!!!”

Bradley froze as if hearing the call to Judgement Day. Cal merely blinked and slowly turned around. On the far side of the turf an indistinct figure was plainly dancing with fury, clipboard in hand. The bellowed words issuing from Cal’s coach were impossible to make out at this distance, but his wild, hair-tearing gesticulations made it clear in no uncertain terms that he wanted the bull to get back to running, right *now*!

“Uhhhh... I gooootta go,” Cal grunted. “Laaaaaps.” To Brad’s ear there seemed a noticeable lack of contrition in the big bull’s voice, and was that just a *hint* of weary resignation?

“Ehe, sure thing. Hey, d-don’t forget about those muffins tonight, huh, big guy?” he dared to say as Cal backed away from the fence with the speed and grace of a dumper-truck reversing. “Y-you wouldn’t want them to go stale, right?” The bull’s sloshing, wobbling belly let out a subterranean grumble in response. He even licked his lips again.

“Uhhhh... nooooo-”

“BOAVIIIIIDAAAAA!!” Cal’s coach sounded ready to go off like an atom-bomb. The blubber-bloated bull rolled his eyes.

“Uhhhh... see you laaaater, buuuuddy...” He huffed as he started jogging again, heading back for the tracks lined on the field as he slowly lumbered back up to ‘speed’.

“Ehe, y-yeah- uh, Cal? *Cal!*” But it was too late- the bovine balloon was already chugging off down the tram-lines, an incriminating smear of frosting still on one cheek. Oh well, too late now.

Fingers curled through the wire, Brad stared blissfully after the bull’s retreating figure, his heart hammering in his chest as though he was the one doing the running. Had he just imagined that truculence over training? Cal plainly loved both eating and sport, but could it

be that maybe, just *maybe* inside that fat head the Chow-Cow was starting to win out over the Foot-Bull? Brad knew which side *he* was rooting for. Especially when he was getting such a perfect perspective view of that juggling, bouncing rump, those massive cheeks distorting doughily every time his hooves hit the ground, and the plump creases at the back of those downright chubby knees-

“*JOHANSSON!!*”

The giraffe flinched guiltily- he kept forgetting how unique his silhouette was around here. Cal’s coach was doing another jig.

“MY office, TWO hours!” By now a few of Cal’s distant team-mates had stopped what they were doing and were also looking in this direction, shading their eyes suspiciously. Ducking his head to avoid recognition (for all the good it would do), Brad beat a hurried retreat.

“Johansson??!! *JOHANSSON...!!!!*”

I can’t hear you, I can’t hear you... Brad sang to himself as he scurried away from the football field. The Coach’s authority went as far as that fence, and no further. At least, he was pretty sure that was true, right? Besides- the giraffe summoned up every shred of his embarrassingly-privileged background as his pounding heartbeat slowed towards something like normal- a football coach? That was basically a glorified games-teacher. A groundsman, even. That made him *staff*. Bradley had been brought up to be polite to his family’s staff, but- importantly- you didn’t ever actually have to do what they said.

Thank you, Dad...

Sure, he might get into a little trouble over this but, *snrk*, totally worth it.

Right now, he had a bull to bake for...

FIN