

The red phone rang itself off the receiver. In the sky, searchlights crossed paths, forming the shape of a flexing bicep against the cloud coverage. A falcon dove in through the open window, dropping a rolled up parchment with an imperial seal on the desk. "You've got mail" announced the computer in the right hand corner where the falcon was currently perched. The pager on the desk vibrated so fiercely it rocked itself along the wood until it fell on the floor. A kitten meowed from the top of a tree.

Buff grumbled as he picked up the phone. "What's the emergency?" he growled, trying to sound more determined than bored. The feline's ears drooped, his tail twitching at the end. "Ma'am, your child going to school for the first time is not an emergency, nor does it require the response of our agency. Please only use the line in the mayor's office for emergencies. No, ma'am, being the mayor's assistant boot licker does not give you the right to use this phone at your leisure. Goodbye." He slammed the phone down on the hook, the whole thing shattering into red plastic bits. The desk yawned open, swallowing the debris. A fresh phone dropped down from the ceiling, clattering as it landed.

The brown house cat turned to the window, watching the lights continue to move across the sky. Whoever was operating the spotlights was doing shadow puppets, the bicep symbol replaced with a jumble of fingers that probably looked like a dog to somebody. To Buff, it was just a garble of information and a waste of his time. The lights were only to be used when people needed help, not when somebody felt like using the sky to practice their fingering skills. He turned away, the chair he sat in groaning beneath the weight of the feline.

The wax seal on the scroll broke in half when Buff sliced through it with his claw. He unfurled the parchment, eyes narrowed as he read the missive. It was another request for him and his partner to come join the military, where their services would be of greater use to the country. The writer, one General Puff n' Stuff, assured that there would be fighting a plenty and enough action to keep any seeker of adrenaline interested. Buff crumpled up the scroll and tossed it over his shoulder. The paper ball bounced off the rim of a garbage can, landing on the floor among all the other shots that had missed. He wasn't particularly interested in serving for a country that was half way across the world.

He rolled over to the computer, the broken wheel on his chair protesting with every inch he moved. The e-mail was nothing more than spam, just an advertisement that promised to increase his size in bed if he was willing to share his banking information with the prince of Nigeria, who promised women and drugs galore as long as Buff's IQ was higher than a famous pop star who had solved the problem of aging in six simple, hilarious steps. The e-mail was summarily deleted without opening the attachment with which it had come.

Buff stood up to get the pager, the incredible musculature of his body forcing him to waddle. His thighs mashed together as he attempted to roll his hips, the best way for him to manage something of a walk. Bending over required him to squat, pushing out his rump and straining the integrity of the jean shorts. The pager continued to vibrate in his hand as he squinted to see the

tiny number on the miniscule screen. 1-800, and he didn't care about the rest. It was probably a collection agency or a survey wondering if he read the Morning Glory news. Buff was half tempted to crush the thing in his hand.

The kitten in the tree continued its pitiful cries for attention. Buff wasn't anywhere near it, however, and so he didn't know about the firemen who had been called to rescue the kitten. Had he known, and had he been called to take care of it, Buff would not have been happy. It would have been a total waste of his time.

"Buff, Buff! You gotta see this." The feline's companion busted into the room, an equally massive fox with a black stripe across his tail and face. The vulpine couldn't exactly run into the room, what with the mobility problems he shared with Buff, but the new comer managed to quickly close the distance, his pecs heaving as if he had run a mile. In his right hand, he clutched a tabloid paper, the cover accusing the current president of actually being a space alien from Neptune. Buff groaned and slumped back into his chair. It collapsed under his weight, the feline crashing to the ground. "There's no time for that, Buff. Come on, read this." Thrust into his face, Buff had little choice but to read the article that was pressed against his nose.

"Locals at the Fish Market report sightings of an otter, unrivaled in brawn, terrorizing shop owners for free samples." Buff read the rest of the article in silence. Apparently the otter was causing quite a scene, destroying shops that refused his requests, or downright stealing the cargo of ships that were bringing in fresh catches. He wasn't taking one fish at a time, either. The otter, as demonstrated in the blurry picture the tabloid sported in the left hand corner of the page, was holding an entire crate's worth of fish in each hand.

"Seems kind of fishy, doesn't it," the fox said. "I'm surprised he's only recently been cod on camera. A guy that big is sure to tuna few heads now and again. How come we are only herring of him now, you think? Pike it up to bad media, that's what I say." The black striped tail of the vulpine swished with alarming speed.

"Oh my gawd," Buff whined as he stood up, "if you make one more fish related pun, Fluff, I swear I will hurt you." Buff tore the tabloid in half before tossing it to the trash, missing once again. "It's just a bunch of rubbish, that's all it is. If it were actually a problem I'm sure we'd have heard of it, or at least seen the guy before. But come on, have you ever heard of an otter getting that big?"

"I'm trying to think of one," Fluff began, "but just imagining an otter that thick is making me clam up." Buff punched the fox in the stomach, the vulpine reacting just in time to flex his six pack. "Oh come on, Buff, a little humour to lighten the mood never hurt anybody. I say we go check it out, unless you've got something better we can do. That falcon over there looks like it could use a feeding." The bird of prey was trying to eat the letters off of the keyboard. "Let's head off to the riverside, and see if we can fish something up." Fluff quickly turned and ran as best he could towards the door, the snarling Buff hot on the fox's tail.

They arrived at the fish market to find the shops in disrepair. Broken crates were scattered across the docks with a fish slime making the footing treacherous. A wall leading into one store had a thick hole in it, like somebody had taken a battering ram and broken right through the brick. Debris lay every which way they turned, with nobody else around to come and clean up the mess. Buff nudged Fluff in the side as he pointed towards a ship, the deck littered with more splinters.

“You really think one person could have done all of this?” Fluff asked as he scratched behind his ear, making his bicep swell up nearly as large as his own head. “This is a whole lot of damage for just one person to cause, even if he is that big.”

“Seems like the most likely explanation though,” Buff replied as he picked up a brick from the ground. He crushed it in his hand, glad to finally have something he could turn to dust without having to worry about its value. “Gangs don’t do this kind of thing. This is the work of a man bent on getting what he wants. Terrible. This is going to cost a fortune to repair. We’ll have to make sure this otter pays for the damage.”

“Actually, sirs,” came the trembling voice from the window. Buff and Fluff jumped, their combined landing causing a tremor that made the entire wharf sway and creak. “we’re just having a very bad day at the docks. Lots of accidents and spills and slips, and all because nobody wants to clean up after themselves and admit that they spilled their fish guts on the ground right in front of everybody, Oliver.” The businessman had raised his voice through his speech until he was shouting.

Somebody from the end of the street called back. “Oh this is not my fault, Davis, and you well know it. At least I didn’t blame somebody else just so I could cover up for my responsibility. No, I take full credit for the fact that your store is now missing a window and a corner. You should have swabbed up if you didn’t want to have a pole smashing through your shop.” The two increased their volume, with various heads popping out of windows and from behind barrels to watch the pair bicker.

“Where did they all come from suddenly?” Fluff, beyond bewildered, was now scratching at his head with both hands. “It doesn’t even make sense that we didn’t see them before now.” Business on the docks returned to normal as the argument continued, the interest in it gone the moment somebody walking with a barrel full of fish slipped on the ground, the contents of his cargo flying into the air. Buff watched the fish go up, the majority of it splattering on the brine soaked wood. Some of it landed in the open arms of an otter.

Buff rubbed his eyes to make sure he was seeing properly. There, at the other end of the dock, stood an otter with such an impressive build that the feline worried his own size would be small by comparison. The otter gnawed at the fish in his arms, gobbling it up, making a mess along with the din of his eating. Once the otter was freed from the delicious burden, Buff could see clearly the size of the aquatic mammal, how the light brown pelt of the otter was pulled tight over

his biceps, skin stretched so thin that one could even see the veins through the fur. The otter took a step forward, and the dock swayed on the water beneath it.

“Who do you two think you are, anyway?” the otter announced, his tone like the sound of a car driving over gravel. He had to turn his whole body to see them, his neck locked into place by the thickness of his traps. The cat and fox had trouble walking, and they wondered how it was possible for the otter to even take a single step with the way his thighs bulged and squished together in the middle. The otter shuffled towards them, his arms locked at a forty five degree angle, incapable of resting at his sides thanks to the expanse of his lats. “This here is my territory. I get all the feesh.”

“Why do all otters say it like that, anyway?” Fluff whispered.

“You aren’t here to steal my feesh, are you? These folk work hard to make sure I get feesh, and you two are disrupting their work. I won’t stand for this, I won’t. You’re going to get on out of here, or I’m going to throw you to the river so you can sleep with the feesh. But don’t eat them when you’re down there! Those are my feesh, you hear me? Mine.” The otter snarled, his whiskers twitching, little strands of hair that brushed over the tops of his pecs. His body swelled larger as he flexed, preventing him from saying anything more for a moment, as the thickness of his chest clamped his muzzle shut.

“Actually, sir” said the mousy shopkeeper from before, “we do business with the fish that we catch, and it is our livelihood, so if you could kindly stop taking it for free we really would appreciate it, though as I understand it some of us are happy to give you everything from our stores, why I know a fellow down the street by the name of Oliver who would be more than willing to give you everything he has to see you happy.” The otter relaxed and turned to the store owner.

“You have feesh for me?” the otter said.

“Damn right he does!” called Oliver from across the way. “Davis would like nothing more than to see you eating him out of house in home, and maybe then the rest of us could go back to working a normal job where we don’t have to worry that our legs are going to be broken because somebody spilled fish guts on the floor and is still refusing to admit he did and clean up after himself like an adult.” Davis marched away from the otter to go yell some more at Oliver, the shouting match of the two men ignored in favour of the confrontation of three overly muscled males.

“Listen here... do you even have a name?” Buff looked to Fluff for an answer, but the fox just shrugged his shoulders. “Well listen here, otter. You can’t just come barging into town and expect everybody to cow to your whims because of how big you are. That’s not how things work here, and I know because I tried. If you want to buy the goods, you have to pay for the feesh. I mean fish. Damn it, it’s pronounced fish.”

“Muscleid,” the otter rumbled.

“Pardon? Did you mean mustelid?”

“My name is Muscleid. And I will eat all the feesh I want, and puny cat isn’t going to stop me from eating my feesh. It’s my feesh. It came from the river, so it’s mine. My feesh, not yours, not theirs, not any other otter’s. All mine.” The otter roared, a much deeper sound than his species should have been capable of producing. Fluff shielded himself from the spray of spittle. Buff was not quite as quick on the draw, and ended up with a face full of saliva.

Buff wiped the liquid from his face with a grimace. “Alright then, we’re taking you down. Fluff, get over here, and do your thing.” The fox nodded, face set in stone. Side by side, the pair posed, Buff with one foot off the ground, his fists ready for action, and Fluff beside him, the orange and white fur becoming puffier as the fox stood still. “Since I refuse to say your name as it’s a freaking pun, I’m just going to say you. You are going down, you.” Buff sprung into action, his feline agility only marginally hampered by his musculature.

The cat slammed into the otter, but the larger of the two stood still, unphased by the bullet of brawn that had been thrown at him. Fluff rushed in afterwards, paws pushing into Buff’s backside, the two of them attempting to push the otter backwards. He laughed at their attempt, raising his arms into a double bicep pose. “You’re both puny, puny and weak. It’ll take more than two chumps like you to keep me from my feesh.” The otter thrust his hips, his abs bouncing Buff and Fluff away. They skid to a halt, leaving long furrowed gashes in the wood of the dock.

“So we can’t out muscle him,” Buff said as an aside to Fluff. “What else do we have?”

Fluff pointed to his fur. “I’m very soft and snuggly?”

“So we can’t out muscle him,” Buff said as an aside to himself, “and I have a partner with fuzz for brains. Alright, we’re going to have to out maneuver him. He must be slow and unsteady on his feet if he’s that big. Fluff, get me a rope, let’s see if we can trip him up.”

“I can hear you, you know,” the otter stated.

“And I wasn’t paying attention, Buff. I was distracted by the softness. Just feel this fur, it’s so gentle to the touch.” Fluff stroked his fingers through his own pectoral fur.

“Enough of this foolishness. You’re both going to be feesh food now.” The otter stomped towards them, each step taking a laborious amount of effort for the otter, who had to swing his leg out wide to circumnavigate his quads. The dock quaked beneath them. Workers scattered, hiding behind barrels and one another. Buff took a fighter’s stance, bent at the knees and fists up, while Fluff continued to coo about how soft he was.

The otter threw a punch which Buff caught in his palms, the force of the blow sending the cat backwards. A ship exploded, fiery wreckage raining down on the battlefield. "Sorry," cried one of the sailors. "We tried to tell him, but the captain always did refuse to keep his TNT collection away from the boats. We'll clean this up right away." Somebody blew a whistle. Sailors poured onto the deck, dressed in white and blue horizontally striped clothing. They swabbed the decks, cleaned the floor, and put out the fires. "And we got rid of the fish smell, too," declared a boy of no more than 15. "Somebody really should clean up after himself here."

"I told you," screamed Davis.

"Your fault," declared Oliver.

With their arena clear, the trio resumed the fight. Their stances wide to accommodate for their bulk, Buff, Fluff, and the otter walked around in a circle, sumo wrestler style. Pounding steps caused the wood to crack and creak beneath them. Barrels filled with fish rolled over, undoing all the hard work of the sailors. Fluff made the first move, charging at the otter. The mustelid sidestepped the assault at the last second, Fluff carried forward by his own weight. The fox crashed into a post with an oomph before falling on his back. The wood splintered, cracks spreading across the weakened flooring.

Buff stomped the dock. The floor split beneath his foot, locking him in place. The otter saw and took advantage of the situation with his own charge. Not three steps forward, the dock broke again, a gaping hole that plunged the otter into the river. His arms flailed at the surface. "Help," he shouted through splutterings of water, "Help, I can't swim. Don't let the feesh take me." His waving arms damaged the planks around him, the gap in the dock growing wider as he continued to struggle to stay afloat.

"Whoever heard of an otter who couldn't swim?" Fluff mused as he leaned over to watch the otter slowly sink deeper into the river. "Must be all the muscle density. Should we help him?"

"I don't think so," Buff replied. "He's going to be just fine once he sinks to the bottom and realizes that he can walk to shore. It's not a very deep river, after all."

"And yet we've established an entire fishing industry around it."

"Probably best not to dwell on that part too much. Come on, Fluff. We've done our work here for the day. It's time we go home and enjoy a nice rest."

"I thought you had otter plans for tonight. Weren't you going to see that new movie, the one everybody is hyping as this year's new otterageous comedy?"

"Fluff, if you keep on punning, I will destroy you and everything that you love."

“You otter think about that before you follow through with such an ill advise plan of action. Beside, I love you like I love no otter, so you’d hurt yourself. Buff, don’t punch me ple-”.