

It was the dead of night, yet a thief was on the prowl.

Caleb glided through the grassy yard, his footsteps not even rustling the leafy blades. Using the surrounding trees as cover, the limber fox darts from shadow to shadow, a blur of darkness barely perceptible to even a trained watchman's eye. Years of training and experience had honed his skills of stealth and subtlety, skills he would certainly need to pull off this heist.

For tonight's target was a legendary wizard, whose fame and power were well known throughout the entire country: Aleksandr Delmire, Master of the Arcane.

Even with the adrenaline of the heist coursing through his veins, Caleb couldn't help but to pause, just to admire the manor. The massive brickwork was truly impressive, considering the fox thief had to crane his neck back just to take it in its entirety, even though he was still a good ways from the building itself. Any wealthy lord would have been jealous of this home, considering it rivaled the size of a small castle! Everything practically oozed elegance, considering how clean and kept the manor was, but that was to be expected, he figured. After all, Aleksandr was known for winning battles singlehandedly against armies of hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of warriors. A few cleaning spells were more than simple enough for the powerful mage.

Despite being fully aware of the consequences he may face for breaking into such a mighty spellcaster's domain, Caleb couldn't help but to wag his brushy tail about. If Aleksandr was the greatest wizard in history, then successfully stealing from him would make Caleb the greatest thief in history!

A few more dashes, and the dark-clad fox was within a stone's toss of the manor. He was thankful Aleksandr had so many trees built near his home; the moonlit shadows they provided proved to be invaluable to the master thief. Most nobles' manors were built in large clearings, specifically made to deter would-be thieves from even attempting to rob them. Perhaps Aleksandr assumed his name alone would be enough to dissuade any robbers?

Well, Caleb was more than happy to take advantage of the wizard's arrogance.

With one quick leap over a tall fence, the thief was finally at the manor's side, peering into the many surrounding windows. This late at night, he wasn't surprised to see every window completely dark; Aleksandr should have resigned to his quarters by now, after all.

Still, he couldn't be too careful. Approaching the nearest window, Caleb slowly leaned his head against the glass pane, lifting his pointy ear. He stilled his breathing, closing his eyes, focusing *everything* he had on his hearing and hearing alone. He had robbed a good number of mages in his life, and nearly all of them performed a simple ritual on their windows and doors to notify the mage of an intrusion. The telltale sign of such a spell being a faint humming, barely louder than a hummingbird.

But Caleb heard nothing.

"Someone's awfully confident," the fox grumbled under his breath. Either that, or Aleksandr performed the ritual masterfully, without leaving any sign that such a spell was cast. Either way, there was only one true way to find out.

Heaving a deep sigh, Caleb reached into the cuff of his black rubber glove, and produced a simple shiv. Carefully, he slid the thin metal object beneath the window, aiming for the locking mechanism. A bit of fiddling around, and soon he was rewarded with a click. Satisfied, wiggled his fingers beneath the-

*"HOOO! HOOO!"*

Caleb's heart stopped in his chest, his blood ran cold. His entire body painfully tensed up at the sudden sound, every strand of fur on his body standing up on edge. He couldn't breathe! Yet, he dared not move, even if his body screamed at him to leave, to make a break for it now.

Eyes wide and unblinking, he stayed perfectly still, as if willing himself to blend into the manor's shadow. He didn't even breathe, trapping the air in his lungs as long as possible, even as his chest cried out in pain. *"I'm not here. I'm not here. I'm not here..."*

Silence. Finally, Caleb allowed himself a shaky breath in, feeling a bit lightheaded from the whole experience. Carefully, he turned around to face the source of the noise...

*"HOO! HOOO!"*

Were the situation not so tense, the fox would have let out a chuckle. "Damn owls."

Sure enough, at the closest tree to the manor, Caleb noted the glowing cat-like eyes of two owls, watching him with mild interest. That was some joke they played, trying to terrify the thief. Obviously, they weren't the wizard's familiars, or else they wouldn't have alerted Caleb to their presence.

Unless they were familiars, trying to warn Caleb not to enter the manor.

The fox shook his head. "Really need to calm down. My damn imagination's getting the better of me." Taking a deep breath, Caleb composed himself before attempting once more to lift the window pane. Thankfully, it slid open without any more interruption from the owls, and the thief was free to slide into the manor.

And what a manor it was! Even in the incredibly dim light, Caleb could make out dozens of priceless baubles and fancy artwork, each of which practically smothering the room in its splendor where simply having one on display would have been enough to decorate the room.

This wizard really was a king in his own right, Caleb figured. Were these all spoils of war, or was Aleksandr just a thrifty spender?

In any case, Caleb ignored the fancy jewels as he carefully padded through the room, carefully avoiding the floodboards which may squeak when stepped upon.

He wasn't here to steal money or jewels. Caleb had plenty of wealth stored away from his own sneaky exploits over the years; taking something that was obviously just bait to track down a thief wasn't worth it. The thief was great, but he wasn't perfect; Aleksandr could find out something was missing, and it would only take a few simple incantations to trace the fox back to his hideout.

No, Caleb was here to steal the wizard's food!

The vulpine's muzzle split into a grin just thinking about it, even as he padded his way into the carpeted hallway. The perfect insult to the supposed "Master of the Arcane." Sure, he could live the rest of his life comfortably off the money he would get just from selling one of the wizard's magic tomes off the black market, but why do that when he could *really* piss off the mage by emptying his larder instead? It'd be enough for Aleksandr to notice he'd been robbed by a superior being (Caleb) without incurring the wizard's wrath to make the fox's life any harder.

The perfect crime!

Although, Caleb was starting to have doubts that Aleksandr even considered the notion that anyone would steal from him. As he tip-toed his way through the hallway, the fox heard raucous snoring erupting from one of the doorways; the only doorway illuminated by a fire, to be exact. Perhaps this was the mage's study, and Aleksandr fell asleep by the fireplace reading a good book? Caleb didn't dare peek his snout in to confirm that theory. Instead, he was silently grateful; all that snoring was perfect for covering up his footsteps. He'll be in and out in no time!

Alas, in his excitement, Caleb briefly forgot to take into account the sheer size of the manor. He didn't have the floor plans of the building on him, unfortunately, which led the fox to losing his sense of direction on more than one occasion. Hallways that looked promising would lead into sudden deadends, or right back the way he came, as if he'd gone in a circle.

Maybe Aleksandr did put in some effort to stop robbers after all; or he just liked living in a house that appeared larger than it really was. With how needlessly complicated this house was, it was reasonable to assume magic had to be involved. Having been through the same hallway three times, Caleb was starting to wonder if he'd need to lay down a metaphorical breadcrumb trail in order to even find his way back to the window once he made off with the food.

Just as Caleb was considering reaching into his gloves to pull out some rope, the vulpine finally stumbled onto the entrance of the larder. With how strongly it smelled, how had he not noticed it earlier? Stepping into the room, the fox was nearly overwhelmed by the scents before

him. Fresh pastries, baked bread, warm meat...goodness, was that roasted ham he was smelling? Caleb kept opening drawers upon drawers, and in each of them he found food perfectly preserved and ready to eat, as though they were right off the oven.

"Sheeeeeesh!" The vulpine couldn't help but to sigh out loud, picking up a wedge of cheese. Cool and spongy, the fox took a big bite, eyes widening at how strong the flavor was. "Maybe I should pick up sorcery if it means eating like this every day." Caleb grinned. No wonder Aleksandr snored so loudly. It would be hard *not* to eat himself into a food coma with food as perfectly preserved as this constantly around.

Stuffing the rest of the cheese into his maw (why steal half-eaten food), Caleb brushed the crumbs from his whiskers and got to work. His first item was a pristine bearclaw, warm and moist, just begging to be eaten on the spot. Alas, that would have to wait, as the fox bent his wrist forward, pulled on the cuff of his glove, and slid the pastry in...where it seemingly vanished on the spot.

Smiling in satisfaction, the fox reached for the next piece of pastry, with it too vanishing in much the same way. Within the thief's repertoire, nothing came close to being as handy (no pun intended) as his gloves. Much like a bag of holding, each of them could store an entire treasure chest's worth of contents within them without weighing down the user, which was perfect, considering there was an entire treasure trove of food to steal!

Rubbing his paws together and licking his muzzle, Caleb crammed every pastry he could find into his right glove, then moved onto the meats for his left glove, his tail flickering behind him as he did so. Oh, he was going to eat *great* tonight!

Thankfully, the owls from earlier had left their perch sometime within time Caleb was inside the manor. The fox didn't hear any "WHOO"ing as he slid out from the window, closing and locking it with his trusty shiv as though it had never been disturbed.

And with that, he simply jogged back to the gates. Everything worked out so perfectly, Caleb figured there wasn't any danger to begin with! Once back to the iron bars, it was merely a simple climb over, and then he was home free.

At last, he could breathe easy. With a sigh of relief, the thief slumped against the iron gates, grinning as he saw a familiar face peek out from the shade of a nearby tree.

"D-did you do it? Th-the heist, I mean."

Caleb chuckled. "No Dmitriy, I'm smiling because I got caught and captured."

"O-oh." Dmitriy's ears folded.

The fox rolled his eyes. "Yes, I did the heist, dummy! Get over here so I can prove it to ya."

Caleb smirked watching as his friend came running over, eager to see the spoils of the robbery. Dmitriy was a tiny little thing; at two feet tall, he couldn't even reach the five foot Caleb's waistline. Even now, it was hard for the larger orange fox to *not* compare the tiny gray fox to a small child, the way he excitedly peered around the taller vulpine. "Show me!"

Happy to oblige, Caleb slid his fingers into his left glove's cuff. With a single tug, he felt something warm press into his wrist. Another tug, and the air was filled with the rich, savory scent of meat. One more, and Caleb then produced a large plate of marbled ham!

"W-woah!" Dmitry's dark eyes widened, big enough for Caleb to see the reflection of the ham within them. "Did you...was he *just* about to eat that, and you just swiped it from him?!"

"Naaah" Caleb chuckled, shoving the plate of ham back into his glove. He'd never tried stuffing his gloves full of food before, and was grateful to see none of the glazing made a mess inside. "His larder's filled to the brim with food like that. I could feed a family for a week with how much food I've got in just one of these gloves."

"Wow..." Again, that childlike wonder in Dmitry's voice made Caleb question if he really was speaking to an adult. However, soon the tiny fox's brow furrowed. "Wait a moment. How do I know you're not Aleksandr in disguise now? He's supposed to be a master at illusionary magic, ya know."

Caleb scoffed. "If I was, I wouldn't have wasted my time tricking you. You'd be captured and delivered to the authorities now, wouldn't you?"

"Yeah...I guess you're right." Dmitry chuckled awkwardly, scratching behind those oversized ears of his. "Well, a deal's a deal, I suppose. Gonna miss those twenty gold coins, but-"

"Keep em!" The orange fox held up a paw, grinning. "I got enough food to last me a month! Hell, I'm in such a great mood, why not head back to my place so we can enjoy a big feast from yours truly, courtesy of Aleksandr, of course."

"Hey, that sounds great!" Beaming, Dmitry stuck to Caleb's side as the two foxes sauntered home, munching on a pair of pastries along the way...

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Caleb paused, frowning. For some odd reason, he was getting a real strong sense of *deja vu*.

He knew he hadn't done this heist yet, but somehow everything felt so familiar. The cool night air brushing his whiskers as he dove from shadow to shadow, the crescent moon illuminating the night sky, the looming manor before him...somehow, he believed he'd pulled off this same caper before.

But that couldn't be right. He'd *know* if he had stolen from Aleksandr Delmire, Master of the Arcane before, right?

Taking a moment to reflect, Caleb tried to think on why he could be having this moment of *deja vu*. He hadn't pulled off a heist quite like this in quite a while; in fact, he distinctly remembered earlier today lounging at a tavern, telling tales while guzzling down ale, when a tiny gray fox named Dmitriy placed a bet on him that he couldn't make off with the great Aleksandr's food storage. To which, of course, he accepted; that's why he was here, after all.

He shook his head. He'd pulled off various heists like this; skulking around a lord's manor, sneaking in and out of a window. He was just recollecting those moments, that's all.

Reassuring himself, Caleb darted to the side of the manor, peering into the many windows. He noticed quickly, however, his own heavy breathing fogging up the nearest window. His nerves really were getting to him if he was out of breath from that quick jaunt.

Caleb slowly leaned his head against the glass pane, lifting his pointy ear. He stilled his breathing, closing his eyes, focusing *everything* he had on his hearing and hearing alone. He had robbed a good number of mages in his life, and nearly all of them performed a simple ritual on their windows and doors to notify the mage of an intrusion. The telltale sign of such a spell being a faint humming, barely louder than a hummingbird.

But Caleb heard nothing.

This didn't surprise him, of course. He had a feeling Aleksandr was the type of overly confident wizard to leave his house unguarded from a burglary. The fox had no issues with

exploiting that, of course, as he swiftly produced a shiv from the cuff of his glove. Carefully, he slid the thin sheet of metal-

*"HOOOO! HOOOO!"*

Caleb's heart nearly skipped a beat! That noise completely caught him off guard. He knew there were owls around, yet still the sound was so loud and sudden, it damn near gave him a heart attack. "Stupid owls," he growled to himself, continuing with his shiving.

*Click!* The window was unlocked, and slid open without any further incident. Casting one last hateful glance at the two owls outside, Caleb swung one leg around into the window frame.

And he winced. When had his pants gotten so tight?!

The fabric painfully pinched at his upper thighs and rear as he swung his second leg inside, the fox gritting his teeth silently at the sensation. Once inside, Caleb couldn't ignore the fact that his thieving outfit was significantly tighter than he remembered it being, his ears drooping down as he pieced together why that may be.

His...downtime at the bars had done a number on him, it seemed. His thighs were a tad thicker than he last recalled, now just barely brushing together when standing straight up. The fox's rear was also a bit more prominent than he remembered, leaving little to the imagination in his outfit now. However, what made the fox wince was the sight of his belly; lifting up his dark shirt revealed a starter gut that Caleb was *certain* once contained a strong set of abbs. He knew he shouldn't be surprised; a few weeks of hanging around taverns would cause anyone to put on a few extra pounds, yet he never figured he'd let himself go *this* badly. Gingerly, he placed a finger on his exposed middle, watching his tum squish inwardly even while he tried to flex. Perhaps after this heist, he should work on getting back into shape.

Well, it may take a while. He was here to steal food, after all.

Caleb dropped his shirt back down, tugging on the helm so that it would cover his middle. There, now no one would notice the extra weight. He'll just have to take a little extra care in traversing the mansion, so as to not disturb the creaky wooden floorboards.

Ignoring the priceless artifacts lining the room, the not-quite-fit fox padded his way through, slipping into the hallway without making a sound. He let loose the breath he was holding when he came across a lone illuminated door further down the hallway, the sounds of raucous snoring filling the air. Aleksandr must have fallen asleep by the fireplace, no doubt, and by the sound of that heavy breathing, he'll be out cold for quite some time.

Unfortunately, even after confidently passing the room, Caleb soon ran into another hurdle; not having a clue where the larder was. The manor was huge, and the fox didn't have the floor plans on hand, meaning it would take some trial and error before he'll come across the

room he was looking for. Hopefully, he could manage without stumbling upon any traps Aleksandr may have placed.

Yet, as he continued down the hallway, a small voice in his head told him to turn back, as he was heading the wrong way. He had no clue why his conscience would be warning him of this fact, but as the fox continued on, he found himself looping around back to the start of the hallway. Was it his natural thief's intuition, or had he robbed a similar manor in the past?

Regardless, just from listening to his inner voice, Caleb was able to find the larder far quicker than he expected. Really, he should have used his nose to guide him rather than his eyes; the entire room smelled like a freshly cooked feast! Fresh pastries, baked bread, warm meat...goodness, was that roasted ham he was smelling? Caleb kept opening drawers upon drawers, and in each of them he found food perfectly preserved and ready to eat, as though they were right off the oven.

"Heh...not sure I can carry all this out with me," Caleb chuckled to himself. There was even more food than he expected a manor to have in a single room, especially since said manor only had a single inhabitant. Maybe Aleksandr had let himself go a bit since the last time anyone had seen him? Caleb hoped so; that would mean the two of them had something in common.

Smirking at the thought of a pudgy wizard filling the armchair back at the illuminated room, the fox got to work in stashing away as much food as he could into his magic gloves. Pastries on the left, meats on the right. In the middle of storing a large platter of ham, Caleb noticed a fresh wedge of cheese just behind it, his snout twitching. Not because he was particularly hungry (although he was admittedly a bit peckish), but more so because he couldn't help but feel as though he'd eaten something similar recently.

Yet, he couldn't remember when.

Gloves loaded up, Caleb backtracked through the manor, escaping back out the window with little issue (even if he had to pause to unstick the fabric from riding up around his rump). This had gone way too smoothly; the fox didn't even feel the need to lock the window behind him! With a smug grin, he casually jogged back to the iron gates, which were cleared in a relatively easy climb.

All that was left to do was to rub it in Dmitriy's face.

Soon enough, he saw the tiny gray fox poke out from a nearby tree's shadow, wide-eyed. "D-did you do it? The heist, I mean."

Caleb rolled his eyes, then rolled back his sleeves. "See for yourself."

With a single tug, he felt something warm press into his wrist. Another tug, and the air was filled with the rich, savory scent of meat. One more, and Caleb then produced a large plate of marbled ham!

“W-woah!” Dmitry’s dark eyes widened, big enough for Caleb to see the reflection of the ham within them. “Did you...was he *just* about to eat that, and you just swiped it from him?!”

“Sure did,” Caleb grinned wider. Hey, he was in a good mood, why not embellish the truth a little?

“Wow...” That childlike wonder in Dmitry’s voice made Caleb question if he really was speaking to an adult. However, soon the tiny fox’s brow furrowed. “Wait a moment. How do I know you’re not Aleksandr in disguise now? He’s supposed to be a master at illusionary magic, ya know.”

Caleb scoffed. “I think you’d know by now if I was an all-powerful wizard, dummy.”

“Yeah...I guess you’re right.” Dmitry chuckled awkwardly, scratching behind those oversized ears of his. “Well, a deal’s a deal, I suppose. Gonna miss those twenty gold coins, but-”

“Keep ‘em!” The taller fox held out his palm, grinning. “I got enough perpetually-fresh food to last me two weeks! I mean, it’s gonna throw a wrench into my diet plans, but whatever. Since I’m in such a good mood, let’s head back to my place where we can enjoy a big feast from yours truly, courtesy of Aleksandr, of course.”

“Hey, that sounds great!” Beaming, Dmitry stuck himself to Caleb’s side as the two foxes sauntered home, munching on a pair of pastries along the way...

Well, Caleb ended up having two before making it home. All that running around left him pretty hungry!

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It was the dead of night, yet a thief was on the prowl.

Caleb glided through the grassy yard, his footsteps loudly rustling the leafy blades. Using the surrounding trees as cover, the fox darts from shadow to shadow, a blur of darkness barely...well, actually fairly perceptible to even a lax watchguard’s eye.

Surely, Caleb hadn’t let himself go *too hard*, right?

Yet, the proof was in the pudding, or rather his pudding-like paunch as the fox finally made his way to the manor's wall, huffing and panting. Try as he might, now amount of fussing about could lower his shirt enough to cover his stomach; hell, the hem couldn't even make it to his belly button, at least not without the fox feeling a sudden draft on his lower back. Try as he might, there was just no covering that fluffy white orb of fox tummy.

"This is ridiculous," he hissed at himself, grabbing at the squishy ball of pudge before him. For some odd reason, he remembered his thief garb fitting him just fine earlier, yet now it simply couldn't contain his bountiful body. Why? Caleb may have let himself go just a tad over the past few weeks, but this was simply too much!

It's not like he suddenly put on all this weight overnight, right?

Even with the threat of getting caught looming over his head, Caleb couldn't help but to trace his claws along the beach ball belly he sported, grumbling in frustration. He most definitely surpassed the 200 pound mark, and was rapidly approaching the 300 pound mark at this rate. The button on his pants may be invisible with his overhang covering it, but he knew he'd have an impression of it in his blubber for the next few days, with how tightly it was digging into his waist! Simply breathing too deep ran the risk of having that button burst off of him with enough force to shatter the window before him. Suffice to say, that wasn't an ideal opener to his heist.

Yet, Caleb knew he sported more than just a significant beer belly. His leggings were practically painted onto him, with how tight he felt, the poor fabric stretched to its limits as far down as his damn knees. His sleeves as well were quite stiff and tight; it was wishful thinking to believe that was due to any amount of upper body muscle he may have put on. Just seeing his reflection in the mirror, the vulpine could see a much fuller fox face than he was used to, with thick cheeks leading down to an even thicker neck.

Goodness, he had gotten *fat*.

Dammit, he was going to steal *food* too!

Maybe this was all just a prank from Dmitriy, who bet the large vulpine couldn't make off with Aleksandr Delmire's food, not from a lack of thieving skills, but from an abundance of chub. Well, Caleb will just have to show that pint-sized runt that he was more than capable, even with a *bit* of extra girth.

Grumbling to himself, he produced a shiv from his gloves and ran it along the bottom of the window, picking at the lock. It wasn't too reassuring to see that his gloves were the only article of clothing he wore that still fit him fine, considering said gloves could magically contain a treasure chest's worth of objects in them. Each. All the more reason for him to successfully pull off this heist without anyone noticing; it'd be bad for his reputation if word got out the legendary fox thief had nearly doubled his weight, after all.

Thankfully, no amount of additional poundage could damper the fox's natural talent, as he had the window unlocked in record time. All that was left was to lift the window up, and he was free to

*"HOOO! HOOOO!"*

Caleb froze briefly, before snarling. "Damn owls," he spat over his shoulder, cursing at the two pairs of glowing eyes he knew were staring at him from the nearby tree.

With a grumble, the fat fox lifted the window up with ease, giving one more look around to make sure he was all alone. Finally, he began to lift his leg-

*RIIIIIIIP!!*

Caleb paused, a crimson red blush spreading across his soft cheeks. He stayed stock still, frozen, as if mentally trying to rewind time to prevent *that* from ever happening. But there was no preventing the cool breeze he felt on his plump rear and upper thighs; he had most definitely split his pants. Fortunately (if he could call anything about this situation 'fortunate'), his ample waist was enough to keep his pants secure on him; having his undergarments now on full view only furthered his determination to not get caught by *any* means.

Praying no more damage befell his poor clothes, Caleb once more swung his leg around the sill, dropping into the room at last. He completely ignored the roomful of artifacts, instead hastily stepping towards the hallway.

Alas, the hefty fox soon ran into another dilemma; every step he took, no matter how well calculated, always resulted in the floorboards squeaking beneath his feet. It didn't matter if he stepped carefully, or on the carpeted rug; even sucking in enough air to lift his shirt up higher around his white belly wasn't enough to pause the creaking. With a frustrated sigh, Caleb knew that if he was to go on any further heists, he'd have to really invest in a crash diet.

Thankfully, the squeaking proved to be a nonissue, as Caleb soon heard the rattling snores of whom he presumed to be the wizard himself, dozing off in the only lit room in the manor. How lucky; this heist would be the perfect comeback for the out of shape thief!

Even more lucky, perhaps, was how quickly Caleb found the larder. He knew the mansion of a wizard would be rife with false passages and dead ends, yet the fox somehow managed to avoid nearly every single one. A part of him just knew that instead of relying on his eyes, Caleb should use his nose to find the food instead. A bit strange, perhaps, as surely preserved food wouldn't have much of a scent, yet somehow the hefty vulpine caught a strong whiff of roasted meat almost immediately once he started sniffing, and was led straight to his destination.

Upon arriving at the larder, Caleb wasn't sure how he couldn't smell it from outside. The room was huge, as big as any other room in the mansion, in fact. He didn't even need to open the drawers to know they were full of fresh food; most of them were already partially pushed out, showing off the baked goods inside.

There was even a table laid out in the large, spacious room; full of platters of meats, cheeses, stews, pastries; a feast for a king! Suspiciously, there were no chairs laid out around the table, leading Caleb to wonder why there was a table so full of food to begin with. Was all of this made in preparation for a future feast Aleksandr planned on holding with company? Or perhaps the wizard knew he was about to be robbed and decided to save Caleb the trouble. "Here you are, fatty. I know you're after my food, so I made it easy for you. Hurry up and take it before your growling stomach gives you away."

Well fine, he'll do just that! And when he loses the fat belly, he'll come back and take everything of value from the wizard's home!

Grumbling, Caleb got to work stuffing his gloves full of food; meat in the right glove, pastries in the left. Anything that didn't fit in either of those categories, such as stews, dairy, or beverages, he simply consumed on the spot. Yes, he knew he was playing into the fatass stereotype by guzzling down entire goblets of cordial on the spot, yet the fox knew he had no reason to leave anything behind. He was pretty hungry, admittedly, and the last thing he needed was for his rumbling stomach to give him away.

Even if he did end up eating enough for his waistband to dig even tighter into his middle, despite the large tear in his pants.

Wiping his muzzle of crumbs and stifling an embarrassingly large belch, Caleb retreated back the way he came, his magic gloves fit to bursting with as much food as they could store. He may have bitten off a tad more than he could chew, no pun intended, as his stomach now churned and gurgled for an entirely new reason. Some thief he was; any other heist, and he would have been caught ten times over by now. Aleksandr really was an overconfident fool to let someone like the fat fox get away with this heist, wasn't he?

Well, no matter. Caleb made it to the window without anything further going wrong, even if he heard another, albeit quieter, tear as he stepped through the opening. Whatever, he was done with this heist, who cares if his rump and half of his legs were visible at this rate? Huffing through the yard, the fox made it back to the iron gates and...

Crap, he had to climb this thing, didn't he?

The thief groaned as he looked at those towering metal pillars, regretting his earlier meal even more so. He could easily scamper over and vault the gate during his prime, but he wasn't so sure of himself now, laden with so much food and even more chub. Honestly, he wasn't so sure how he managed to get over it so well earlier; his memory was a bit foggy before the heist.

No beating around the bush now. With a sigh, Caleb leapt onto the metal bars and pulled himself up, already grunting and wheezing before he made it halfway. Crap, his extra weight made it hard for his hands and feet to keep traction with the smooth gate; it took way too much energy just to prevent himself from sliding down. Not to mention the cool shiver he felt from having his exposed belly rubbing against the cold metal. Yet, despite his arm muscles burning and his pants riding up even *further* along his rump, the heft fox climbed higher and higher, at last sliding over the pointed tips-

*RIIIIIIIP!!*

"Ah shi-" Caleb screamed every swear word he knew before he finally hit the ground, dazed and pantless. For just as he leapt from the top, the spike had caught his pants, completely tearing them off the pudgy fox in his descent.

"A-are you okay?!" He heard Dmitry's soft, timid voice as the small fox scrambled over.

Caleb groaned. "Rather fantastic, actually. Don't...suppose you know a good chiropractor now, do you?" The tubby fox hauled himself upwards, huffing.

"I-I don't, sorry." Dmitry responding, the little gray vulpine looking even shorter than Caleb remembered. Or maybe Caleb was just bigger than he remembered. Yeah, the latter sounded more likely.

Shuffling awkwardly, Dmitry continued to look up at the thief in wide-eyed awe. "Did you get the...the food? Or did you eat the-"

"No, I didn't eat *all* of it! Gosh!" Caleb retorted defensively. He noted the hesitant look the smaller fox gave his wobbling gut. To prove his point, the thief reached into his glove, and with one swift motion produced an entire platter of ham, holding it out for his friend to see.

"Wowee!" Dmitry exclaimed in childlike wonder. "Did you...was he *just* about to eat that, and you just swiped it from him?!"

"Hmmm?" Caleb grunted, mouth full of ham. Yes, this wasn't helping his image well at all, but after how horrible that heist bruised his ego, the large fox deserved some comfort food! Swallowing his meaty bite, Caleb continued. "U-uh, yeah sure. Let's go with that."

"Wow..." Again, that childlike wonder in Dmitry's voice made Caleb question if he really was speaking to an adult. However, soon the tiny fox's brow furrowed. "Wait a moment. How do I know you're not Aleksandr in disguise now? He's supposed to be a master at illusionary magic, ya know."

"Dmitry...don't ask stupid questions." Caleb sighed. He didn't have enough energy to explain why he wasn't Aleksandr right now.

"Sorry..." Dmitry chuckled awkwardly, scratching behind those oversized ears of his. "Well, a deal's a deal, I suppose. Gonna miss those twenty gold coins, but-"

"But too bad." The larger thief turned to grab his hanging, shredded pants from the iron gate, scowling all the while. He knew it was unfair to take out his foul mood on Dmitry, yet the vulpine didn't have anyone else to vent his frustrations to. Even with Dmitry's child-like innocence, Caleb couldn't help but feel as though this were all his fault somehow. "It's gonna cost me double that to find a tailor to fix my pants. Now I don't want word of what happened tonight getting out anywhere, you hear me? Or else it will be *you* hanging by your pants atop the highest flagpole in town!"

He regretted saying those words the moment they left his mouth, as Dmitry's eyes widened with terror, before glistening in sadness. Immediately Caleb was struck with a sense of guilt that rivaled his embarrassment. Dammit, can't *anything* go right tonight?

Sighing in and out, the chubby fox gestured for his tiny companion. "C'mon, let's not hang around here anymore...a deal is a deal, but there's no reason we can't celebrate a successful heist, right? Let's head back to my place so we can enjoy a big feast from yours truly, courtesy of Aleksandr, of course."

That seemed to do the trick; Dmitry's quivering muzzle soon parted to form a grin as he followed alongside his heftier pal. Soon, the two foxes were on their way away from the manor, munching on a pair of pastries along the way.

Well, Caleb scarfed down three more before they arrived back home. Honestly, why not indulge a little? It's not like he ever had a reason to go back to the manor...

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It was the dead of night, yet a thief was on the prowl...

---

It was the dead of night, yet a thief was on the waddle...

---

It was the dead of night, yet a thief was breathlessly shuffling along...

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It was the dead of night, yet-

“Yaaargh, my side!”

Caleb whimpered as he staggered forward, grasping at his plush side firmly. He was not cut out for dashing from tree to tree anymore, the voluptuous vulpine catching a side stitch from even that brief bout of exercise. Taking a moment to breathe away the pain, the thief patted himself down and continued his trek through the manor, jogging at a far slower speed than his already sluggish pace.

He had *really* let himself go. Big time.

That was all Caleb could think as he finally stumbled onto the manor walls, his belly pressing against the wall before his paw could. It was a short jog from the property gate to the building itself, yet the fat fox had not only pulled a stitch, but also had been forced to pause and take a break partway through.

He had really, really, *really* let himself go!

The pudgy fox didn't even bother trying to wear his usual thieving garb, seeing as how he doubted he could fit his fat face through the neckhole, or a single one of his massive thighs through the waist of his pants. Instead, he opted for clothes that were far more comfortable (and stylish, because let's face it: He's most likely gonna get caught, so he may as well appeal with his charming good looks should it happen). Alas, he couldn't help but notice that even *these* clothes were starting to grow a little tight on him.

For starters, his sleeveless red duster, despite what the name implied, was uncomfortably taut by his armholes. It appeared even clothes meant for exceptionally fat foxes reached their limit for arm sizes once said forearm surpassed the size of his own head. Fortunately, the back portion of his duster comfortably reached all around his back, even though the article of clothing in mention could be used as a blanket for a normal-sized fur.

Beneath his duster, the pudgy vulpine wore a gilded burgundy waistcoat, where only a single button was properly slotted. The rest of his waistcoat draped along and around his *very* prominent belly, with no hope of ever getting the two ends to meet. Instead, Caleb used two

straps to keep his waistcoat pressing against his figure; one running diagonally across the thief's plump chest, the black leather strapped between those two pillowy moobs; the other wrapped around the widest portion of his belly much like a belt.

Or rather two belts tied end to end, as that was how Caleb managed to get it wrapped around his immense self. He was thankful Dmitriy was there to help tie it around his middle. Well, he didn't explicitly remember Dmitry tying it around himself, but Caleb couldn't imagine himself doing it; there was no way in hell he could ever hope to reach around the entirety of his immense stomach, which alone looked large enough to fit an entire other fur inside of it, should they curl up tight enough.

Finally, beneath all of that, there was his simple sage-green undershirt, which matched his green breeches. Surprisingly, the breeches did a fantastic job in supporting all of that tum, holding it up somewhat so it didn't bounce too hard against his thighs while he walked. While it made moving much easier, it also made the fox feel even fatter than he was everytime he glanced down to see how far his gut stuck out. Goodness, with his belly hoisted up like this, he must have been nearly as wide as he was tall!

While he maintained that no one should ever feel ashamed of a little extra weight, Caleb couldn't help but wonder if perhaps he should start laying off the extra helpings. From looking at his reflection in the window, the fox could see just how much stubbier his muzzle looked, thanks to those large, puffy cheeks of his. Heck, he never even realized that he had been partially squinting *because* of those chubby cheeks pressing into his face like that! Ironically, they looked as though they were crammed full of food, yet one touch would reveal them to be soft, squishy, and yielding. And with the bottom of those pudgy cheeks merging with his flabby second chin, the fox effectively had no neck to speak of. If he squinted his eyes, he could just barely make out how he used to look, without the dozens upon dozens of fluff and lard piled onto him...

Caleb snorted, shaking his head. "Whatever. I look good no matter what size I am."

He pressed his palms against the window, not even bothering to pull out a shiv to try and unlock it. Something told him he wouldn't even need it. Aleksandr was probably some overly pompous wizard who left everything unlocked since he thought his notoriety was enough to deter burglars. Smirking at that logic, Caleb lifted the window and-

*"HOOOO! HOOOO!"*

"Shut up!" Caleb shouted without looking behind. Damn owls, so annoying. He heard that cry more than enough times to know for a fact those were normal, non-familiar owls. How, he couldn't say. Thief's intuition, if he had to guess.

Whatever, with the window fully open, all Caleb had to do was lift his leg...

The fox grunted, bracing against the window. Lift his leg...

He grunted again, sweat beading along his brow. Lift. His. Leg.

He was too fat to lift his leg.

It wasn't even because of his tight clothes; Caleb could not physically lift his fat hamhock of a leg high enough to breach the two foot high window sill. His flabby belly simply got in the way every time, and there was only so much give those rolls of blubber could give before it simply couldn't squish any more.

This was it. The great fox thief Caleb, defeated by a window. Perhaps this was a good thing, Caleb mused to himself to help ease his pride. The pantry could be on the top floor of the manor for all he knew, and there was simply no way he could climb a flight of steps without making a ton of noise. Heck, he'd probably fall right through the floor and end up stuck by his belly if he even attempted; at that point, Aleksandr wouldn't even need magic to catch him. Yup, this was it for Caleb! There was no way he was making it through this window, unless...

Well, unless he tried diving headfirst through.

Caleb's ears folded, glancing first at the open window, then back at himself. Was he *really* going to try diving through a window?

The fox's thick arms rose over his head. Yeah, he was!

Deep breath in, deep breath out, Caleb took a step back before waddling towards the door. Summoning any amount of acrobatic ability he may have buried beneath his blubber, the big thief launched himself into the opening-

*Fwump!*

He was stuck, having not even made it up to the widest part of his belly...

Caleb never wanted to heist ever again! Sure, sneaking into a dangerous location and making it out with a small fortune was the type of heart-pounding thrill that couldn't be replicated, but the fox had long, long outgrown his role as thief. He'd built up quite a stash of wealth in his career as a rogue anyways; he had no reason to go out stealing for more! The blubbery fox would rather spend his days hanging out in taverns, enjoying his fill of meat and ale while chatting with his friends and sharing stories. In that respect, the extra blubber was actually beneficial! He came off as disarming and cute, as someone who gave incredible hugs. And there was no better time to swipe someone's wallet than during a hug with them.

But alas, here he was: Stuck in a window trying to rob from Aleksandr Delmire, Master of the *freaking* Arcane! Why he agreed to this heist, he'll never know. Maybe it was because Dmitry mentioned it'd involve food, and his fatass self could never say no to that. Maybe he just

wanted one more story to tell at the tavern to any travelers stopping by, who would need convincing that fatter folk were just as capable as thinner folk.

Caleb still believed that notion, but sheesh, there was a limit. And Caleb had long, long surpassed that limit.

He sighed heavily as he pondered his situation, one paw supporting his pudgy head, the other one tapping its claws along the rim of the window where he was stuck. In hindsight, he should have noticed the window was a bit too narrow for him. Now, he had to silently wallow in humiliation as being suspended like this. Hopefully Dmitriy couldn't see the thief from his position, with Caleb's massive ass and legs sticking outside of the house.

Pushing himself back outside would have been the logical choice, but Caleb wasn't quite sure how he could manage that. There wasn't anything for him to push against, nothing to give him leverage. On the other hand, with his arms inside the room, he could plant his palms against either side of himself on the wall, and push until he finally popped through. It would be a painful and excruciating process, to be sure.

Yet it still beats staying wedged inside the window until morning.

Bracing himself, Caleb pressed his paws along the wall and puuuuuuushed, gritting his teeth. Goodness, it was even more painful than he thought, having his fat pinch itself along the window frame, hearing it creak ominously. Yet he made notable progress; the plus size of being plus sized was having all that bulk be so squishy and malleable.

With his orange face turning a few shades redder, Caleb was able to inch his way further in, albeit at a snail's pace. His belly continued to gradually flood into the room, and with a big of wriggling, he even managed to get his lower strap in without shifting it too much. With his belly fully inside, his hips were all that remained, although Caleb noted it was harder to reach the wall. Damn fox anatomy, giving him a long torso but shorter limbs. But, he could still reach the wall if only barely, so with one good push, he-

*Plop!...THUUUD!*

-he finally pushed free, only to collapse onto the floor with enough force to shake it-

*CRAAAAAASH!*

-along with the podiums holding up priceless artifacts, causing them to fall over.

This was it, Caleb thought to himself, lying flat on his back along with the shattered remains of what he assumed was a vase or three. There was no way Aleksandr didn't hear that. Any second now, a magical spell will bind him in place until local authorities would arrive to

arrest him, with all of them audibly wondering how the tubby thief could fit through such a narrow window.

But as the moments ticked away, no such spell occurred. Caleb even moved his arms about and found them unimpeded. Well, as unimpeded as arms thicker than a watermelon could be. Finally, Caleb decided to haul himself upright, huffing from the process. Sheesh, Aleksandr was as heavy of a sleeper as Caleb was heavy of a fox for him to not wake up at that! Talk about absurd. While the obese vulpine was shocked that he somehow hadn't been caught yet, he was grateful that his first heist with this weight was the manor of a narcoleptic wizard. Talk about luck!

Brushing himself off, Caleb carefully waded his way through the room, taking care not to step on any broken glass, seeing as how he couldn't see his own feet. With his hips rubbing slightly against the doorframe, the doughy fox strode into the hallway, quite literally filling it.

Again, he was amazed at how he was getting away with this so easily. The thief even stumbled upon the only lit room in the house where Aleksandr himself lay sleeping, yet the fox's own weighty footsteps alone drowned out the wizard's snoring. That wasn't even factoring in the squealing of the wooden planks threatening to give out on him on a moment's notice. Despite his thunderous waddling, Caleb never disturbed the wizard's slumber. Maybe Aleksandr drank a little *too* much earlier and would be out cold for quite some time. Caleb can't say he couldn't relate. Thankful of his immaculate luck, the obese thief still had the arduous task of locating the larder within the giant manor.

Or he could find it on his first try.

It was like Caleb was hard-wired to the location of the mansion's stash of food, as though every fatty had an innate talent of locating calories. Then again, as Caleb stepped into the larder, it was hard not to find the larder.

The room was *enormous*, easily the biggest room in the manor by far! Drawers upon drawers hung upon every wall, each so full of food they couldn't even shut. Yet even that paled in comparison to the centerpiece of the room: an enormous table nearly filled said room from end to end, and laden with so much food, it was a miracle it hadn't cracked in two from the weight!

It was a wonderful sight indeed; Caleb found himself drooling just from looking at it. That wasn't even to mention the smell of so many roasted and baked treats, the sound of sizzling meat; the air itself tasted rich and delicious! Was Aleksandr planning on inviting the freaking king and half the castle over?

His fluffy white belly gurgled, a look of pure greed spreading across the fox's fat face. Stealing food meant for the king would make him the most notorious *and* fattest thief to date! Half of that title was appealing, and that half was enough to spur Caleb on with his heist, swiftly

waddling towards that table. Meats in the right glove, pastries in the left glove, and everything else into his maw!

*Bwuaaaaawrp~!*

Caleb didn't feel the need to cover up his belch, instead silencing himself with another greasy bite of turkey leg. Why should he try silencing himself at this point? Aleksandr was still asleep; Caleb confirmed it when he waddled by the wizard's room, that telltale snore continuously erupting from within. He had nothing to fear as he stomped through the hallway.

Even if every step he took was enough to rattle the paintings along the wall.

Gosh, what a feast! Caleb couldn't think of a single time he'd ever stuffed himself like that before, his stomach gurgling loudly while it attempted to digest its incredible haul. That really was a feast meant for a king, wasn't it? The obese fox was perfectly content with simple tavern food, yet this was something else! Pristine cuts of meat that melted in his maw, bread as fresh as physically possible, drinks as tasty and refreshing as they were appetite stirring; Caleb ate and ate and ate until he couldn't eat anymore!

And yet, he still felt the need to munch on a roasted turkey leg as he strolled through the hallways. He had planned on handing it to Dmitriy when he met up with the shorter fox, but the thief had decided otherwise. Before he even left the larder, to be specific.

That wasn't to say Caleb wasn't carrying any other food on him. On the contrary, the vast, *vast* majority of the food within the larder was now stored within his gloves. The fox pushed the carrying capacity of his magic hardware to their very limit, cramming as much food into them as was physically possible, and then some more, until food practically spilled out from the helm! Now, each of those gloves carried enough food to last even Caleb several days, and they showed. The material had stretched outwards, bloated round, the sight of which made the tubby fox chuckle. "Even my gloves are fatter."

With one last bite, Caleb tore the rest of the meat off the turkey leg, discarding the bone onto the floor without a second thought. With a loud gulp and a louder burp, the tubby fox grinned as he patted the sides of his broad belly, rubbing it in circles. Oh yeah, he was definitely waking up a few pounds heavier tomorrow. The space between his undershirt and his breeches widened noticeably, revealing even more of his cloud-like belly. The black strap wrapped around his belly was now even tighter, digging noticeably into the fox's expansive gut. Caleb couldn't wait to get home and unclasp that belt, letting his stomach surge forth.

Really, he couldn't wait to get home and enjoy the spoils of his heist! Sure, he had thought about dieting earlier, but that was when he struggled to squeeze through the window.

Now, having tasted and stolen the lavish feast within the manor, the fox couldn't wait to make a pig of himself all week! Surely his waistline would suffer the consequences...

Alright, he had a plan. Spend the week glutting, enjoy a much needed break, and then work off the excess poundage...or maybe not! It's not like he planned on ever doing a heist again.

Alas, the sight of broken glass caused Caleb to stop in his tracks, his eyes wide with terror. Unintentionally, he had walked right back the way he came, right back to the room with the dreaded window.

The pudgy thief bit his lip as he squeezed his way back into the room, looking at the comparatively-tiny rectangular aperture. He could barely wiggle through that thing on an empty stomach; there was no way he could get through now, his stomach bloated and taut full of food.

Caleb's ears folded, awkwardly turning to look back the way he came. Was it worth it trying to find the front door in this labyrinth of a manor? No, it couldn't be. He'd been here far longer than he should have anyways. It was only a matter of time before Aleksandr woke up, and that was a wizard he did *not* want to encounter after eating/stealing his entire stash of food. Even if he could find the front door, there was still the chance of it being rigged with a magical alarm. Admittedly, it was silly to be afraid of magic traps now, but it was still a valid concern.

No, the window was his only escape method, and there was only one way he was making it.

Shifting the glass with his feet, Caleb cleared out a large path before bracing himself against the wall. He was crazy, absolutely crazy, for even *thinking* of attempting this, but desperate times call for desperate measures. And boy, was he desperate to make it out of here in one piece and tell this story to everyone at the tavern.

Deep breath in, deep breath out. Caleb charged forward with all the force of a rhinoceros towards the window. Mere steps away, the pudgy fox closed his eyes, lowered his head, and jumped!

...

Well, that worked better than he expected.

Slowly opening his eyes, Caleb was both surprised and delighted to see the night sky above him. Good, he wasn't in there as long as he thought he was, *and* he managed to make it out in one piece! Sure, the fox felt ready to vomit, as that impact had disturbed the contents of his stomach, but who cared? He was free!

Alas, he couldn't quite get up, as the window sill was still wedged around his enlarged abdomen, even if the window sill was no longer attached to the manor.

Grunting, Caleb pushed and clawed at the attached object wedged into his stomach, fully aware that round objects don't fit through square holes. Thankfully, he didn't need to push too hard, as the broken sill fell apart in half, already weakened from the impact. Brushing aside the debris, Caleb took a moment to brush dust off himself before sloooooowly rolling back upright, huffing and puffing...

And then cheering. He'd done it! As a 600 pound fox, he broke into Aleksandr's manor and made off with his entire food supply, with his only mark being a single bone in the hallway, broken vases in some random room, and a cannonball-sized hole in the corner of the house. But he made it out in one piece, without Aleksandr ever knowing...well, he may have woken up from that sound.

Yes, he *definitely* woke up from that sound. Caleb should get the hell out of there! Pumped up with adrenaline, the obese fox broke off into a waddling jog as he hustled his jiggling, sloshing self towards the gate, where he knew Dmitriy waited for him.

Before repeating this heist once more.

Despite the risk of getting caught, Caleb slowed to halt, and not because he was out of breath. Where the hell did that thought come from? No, he wasn't coming anywhere near this manor ever again. He wasn't doing *any* heist ever again.

So why did he think he would?

Lost in thought, Caleb slowly waddled towards the iron bars. He didn't bother trying to scale it, instead striding straight to the gate itself, which opened with ease. Yet another strange occurrence that roused his suspicion. Why was it so easy to rob from the supposed strongest wizard's manor?

More importantly, why did he remember being skinny recently? He's *enormous* now, and to get to his size would require months, or even years of living a greedy, hedonistic lifestyle. And yet, Caleb's last heist wasn't any longer than three weeks ago when he stole from a wandering caravan just outside the city, and he distinctly remembered being thin enough to drop into the carriage from an overhanging tree branch without rustling the carriage.

If he were to do that now, well, the tree branch couldn't even hope to hold him up; and even if it could, he'd shatter the wagon from even the slightest drop!

What happened? Was his metabolism just *that* terrible, that a couple weeks of food, drink, and parties was enough to devastate his waistline?

"D-did you do the- woah!"

Caleb blinked, pausing. So lost in thought he was, that he didn't notice his pint-sized pal approaching him until after Dmitry bumped against his swollen stomach. Blushing, the pudgy vulpine stumbled back awkwardly until he could properly see his friend. "U-uh, yeah. Yeah, I did."

Dmitry hardly looked bothered at nearly being flattened into a pancake. The tiny fox's face was smiling brightly when it finally came to view beyond Caleb's horizon. "Show me!"

"Yeah..." Caleb lifted his arm, prepared to pull out a piece of food to prove his thievery, when an entire cut of ham plopped out and smacked him in the cheek. Out of reflex, the tubby fox caught it with his muzzle, slowly chewing on it. There was no way he was squeezing that back in there, even if he was already stuffed to the brim with food.

"W-woah!" Dmitry's round eyes widened, big enough for Caleb to see his equally round body within them. "Did you...was he *just* about to eat that, and you just swiped it from him?!"

"Not really. I think he was preparing for visitors, or something." Caleb heaved those broad shoulders into a shrug. This conversation felt very familiar, now that he thought about it.

"Wow..." Again, that childlike wonder in Dmitry's voice made Caleb question if he really was speaking to an adult. However, soon the tiny fox's brow furrowed. "Wait a moment. How do I know you're not Aleksandr in disguise now? He's supposed to be a master at illusionary magic, ya know."

"I..." Caleb paused, his eyes widening, his pupils narrowing. He felt as though a lead weight just entered his stomach on top of the dozens of pounds of food. What Dmitry just said resonated far too closely with Caleb's worries. "No way..."

"Huh?" Dmitry tilted his head. "Is something the matter?"

Caleb slowly raised a quivering finger, pointing it at his tiny friend. "It's...it's you!"

Dmitry blinked. "What's me?"

"You're...Y-you're Aleksander!"

Dmitry didn't respond immediately, continuing to look up at Caleb with a vacant, blank expression. The obese fox's heart thudded loudly in his ample chest, hoping upon hope that the tiny vulpine would let out a playful laugh and ask if Caleb was pulling a prank.

Soon, Dmitriy did break out into a soft laugh, but not the kind Caleb had been wishing for. The little vulpine instead chose a quiet and sinister snicker, before breaking out into a malicious cackle, that child-like innocence melting off of him like butter. "Well, look at that! He finally figures it out!"

Every strand of fur on Caleb's body rose in fear, every instinct within him telling him to turn around and flee, even if it was hopeless to think a lumbering butterball like himself could make it very far. Yet, it was all he could do just to back away from the sinister little being before him.

Dmitriy raised a paw, and Caleb couldn't do that anymore, his foot stuck where it was! So sudden that was, it completely caught the tubby fox off balance, who collapsed onto his padded rump with a loud thud and louder "Yip!" He didn't even attempt to stand back up, if anything he leaned back further as the little fox hopped on top of the larger vulpine's belly, looking down on the thief for once.

And carrying one of Caleb's gloves.

"I'd commend you for figuring out my ruse, but honestly I'm more impressed you managed to even pull off the heist. When I saw your big rump sticking out from the window, I thought for sure you'd call off the bet and waddle off defeated, yet you betrayed my expectations most wonderfully. You've stolen from Aleksandr Delmire, Master of the Arcane, proving that you are still a threat as a thief even at the size of a baby hippo. Don't get me wrong, that's very impressive!"

The little fox's grin widened. "But it also means you're still far, far too skinny!"

Caleb's ears splayed back further. "A-aleksandr, wait! We can work something- Mmf!" He was silenced, startled as the glove the tiny fox carried was now securely wrapped around Caleb's muzzle, forcing it shut.

And forcing him to eat.

The obese fox whimpered as he felt the same pastries he'd been craving earlier now pressing themselves against his maw with great force, preventing him from opening it without inhaling large bites of the sugary food. He couldn't move his arms to take them off, bound tightly by the wizard's dastardly spell. With a reserved whine, Caleb was finally pressured into conceding when he opened his maw for air, grunting at the influx of food piling inside, forcing him to take bite after bite after bite!

"There is no Aleksandr!" Dmitriy teased triumphantly, staring down at his captured prize. "There never was one! Yet, one simple but creative spell was all it took for you to assume there's always been some great and powerful wizard living here. This decrepit manor has been run down for ages, restored by yours truly *just* to capture a greedy thief!"

Caleb was struggling to listen along, letting out muffled groans between bites. His poor stomach was already so, so full; he couldn't bear to eat another bite! Yet this cruel wizard was forcing him to eat more, more, and more; the belt digging excruciatingly tight into his rotund, drum-taut dome of a stomach. Any more and his innie would become an outie!

Yet Dmitriy continued on. "Now don't say I didn't give you any chances to figure it out on your own. You never wondered how convenient it became to steal from the manor? Or how the snoring never stopped? If you'd just peeked inside that room, you would have noticed it was empty. I told myself that I'd let you off the hook if you figured out it was a trap, but that changed about three loops ago. Now, I just want to see how *fat* I can get you!"

By this point, Caleb was starting to pass out. Too much food, too little tummy. His head swayed, and his eyelids lowered, the intense pain of his stomach slowly turning into a warm, dull ache. He was passing out!

"Oh dear, filling up already? Well, I suppose it can't be helped; you did help yourself to quite a few snacks while skulking inside the manor, haven't you?" Dmitriy's eyes once more lit up with mischief, sitting down to pat the bloated mass beneath him. "D'awww, it's so taut! Let's help the fatty foxy, hmmm?"

With every pat, Caleb felt the pain lessen bit by bit, despite the influx of food never stopping. Grunting, the enormous fox began coming too, although the sight before him made him wish he'd passed out.

His stomach may not have been growing, but the rest of him sure was!

Right before his eyes, Caleb's body was swelling outwards, rising like yeast in an oven. Every inch of him was filling up with more plump, heavy, furry blubber. The armholes on his sleeveless duster gradually tore apart, making room for his growing arms. Tears he had made in his waistcoat and undershirt were growing as well; some of which spawned from when he crashed through the manor wall, now widening as the fox they struggled to contain grew, grew, grew!

*Ping!*

At last, the single button on his burgundy waistcoat flun right off, the momented also causing his belly strap to burst forth as well. Caleb gasped loudly as all that pressure finally released itself, his tummy surging forward to completely flood past his legs, pressing heavily into his feet. If he wasn't considering a diet before, he was *definitely* considering one now.

Yet, the fox only grew fatter, as though stuck in a time lapse where he did nothing but eat for entire days straight! Whimpering, he looked up at the tiny fox sitting atop his stomach, watching Dmitriy rise higher and higher, like a king sitting atop a grand, fluffy, cloud-white

throne. “We’re going to keep doing this again and again, as many times as we need to, until you either give up or end up stuck inside the manor until morning. I need you big enough to never pose a threat to anyone with a narrow doorway ever again! Only then can the people of this town sleep easy, knowing the great thief Caleb is no more!”

Caleb couldn’t imagine doing *any* heisting at this rate, and he was still growing fatter! His green breeches had finally given up, tearing apart to reveal two titanic orbs of fox butt, both of which easily the side of his stomach some one or two loops ago. The tearing continued along his thighs, with his leg flab finally releasing into the air. Well it would, if it weren’t for his titanic stomach in the way, now smothering the ends of his foot paws instead of simply reaching it. Caleb growled in frustration, still swallowing entire mawfuls of pastry a second. How was he going to find clothes to fit him now? He’d need a team of people to get him dressed accordingly!

Obviously, Dmitriy didn’t look as concerned about this issue. “Oh, not to worry, thief. I’ll make sure to widen the windows and doors of the manor before your next venture in. Can’t have you fail your heist on a technicality now, right? Now, hurry up and finish off the food in the glove. There’s still another glove’s worth of food you need to eat.”

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It was the dead of night, yet a thief couldn’t make it ten steps without stopping to catch his breath.