

- A) "Not a problem! We'll go accept one right now... well, after this meal."
- B) **"We'll do you one better! We'll accept a request and you can come with us. You sit tight while we do all the work, so you know just how capable we are!"**
- C) "Oh we will! We'll talk with Theo right after this meal about what just happened here."
- D) ~~"Who cares what you think real dragons are? In my eyes, a real dragon would stick around and watch us have our eating contest!"~~

This time, it was Mar who ended up being the one who blurted out something brash and foolish. Even Kira looked appalled at the sudden suggestion coming from the feathered dragon, mirroring Grief's own expression.

They couldn't blame the two for looking surprised; it really was a foolish idea. Mar was well aware that themselves and Kira had grown incredibly rotund ever since staying with the Silver tongues. To think that when they had first arrived, Kira had assumed Grief was pregnant and that Theo was the fattest dragon they'd ever seen. Now if Mar wanted to see the fattest dragon, they'd just look at Kira, or at their own reflection. It was well within a dragon's inclination to become fat and greedy should they find the opportunity to do so; many of history's most powerful drakes ended up quite heavy in their old age. However, Mar and Kira had fully embraced their spoiled, pampered lifestyle while the two were still in their prime, hence why Mar could feel their feathery stomach brush against the grass if she lowered herself just the tiniest bit.

Still, the idea of submissively rolling over to Grief's taunts was a far worse fate than growing too fat to move on their own, and as such Mar found themselves trying to use their size to their advantage to intimidate the dragon. "Is there a problem with that?"

At last, Grief found his voice as he sneered right back at the obese dragon. "Of course there is. Why should I bother wasting my precious time watching two blobs pant and wheeze their way around Aqrane? I have my own missions to attend to."

Mar grit their teeth. "Because I know your kind well enough to know you won't let it go even if we return victorious. You'll start assuming we lied or had outside help and continue to harass us. If I'm ever to rid myself and Kira of your jeers, I need to take you along and show you just how capable we are, extra weight aside. Understand now? Or does this interfere with your 'precious' time of sitting beneath a tree and glaring at everyone who walks by?"

Mar's heart pounded fiercely in their chest as they spoke, not from any exertion they made, but rather from the excitement of their confrontation. It felt *good* to finally put this jerkwad of a dragon back in his place. They even noticed a bit of color flushing the male's cheeks, possibly due to frustration, or even embarrassment!

Taking a deep breath, Grief responded with a low growl. "Very well. I shouldn't be surprised you'd want me to accompany you. You'd need someone with proper experience to bail

you out of trouble. Let's get on with this, then. The sooner you humiliate yourselves, the sooner I can gloat."

"Mmmf!" Kira finally spoke up for the first time in this discussion; given how stuffed her cheeks were with chocolate, it was clear to see why. Swallowing her mouthful of chocolates, the dragoness cleared her throat. "Can we finish eating first?"

With a smirk, Mar turned back to Grief. "That's true. You interrupted our meal, you know."

The larger dragon scowled. "Make it quick. I'll be waiting." And with that, he finally turned to leave, bearing his fangs at anyone who dared make eye contact with him as he left.

Finally, he was gone! Mar allowed themselves a sigh of relief as they plopped their heavy, jiggling self back down. They were grateful the conflict didn't escalate into a full on fight, as though they were absolutely willing to battle for their friend's sake, they likely wouldn't stand much of a chance against a larger, fitter dragon. The threat of a fight alone was almost enough to make them lose their appetite.

Almost.

With the table full of chocolates nearby, Mar grabbed a large chunk of cake and stuffed it into their beak, scowling. "Who the hell does he think he is, anyways? Everyone else doesn't care what we do, so why is he making it his business?"

"W-well-"

Mar nearly leapt into the air; they might have actually done that, if they weren't weighed down with so much blubber. Goodness, that voice startled them! They'd completely forgotten about Klaus, the poor red drake having not said a single word since Grief approached. Had he been hiding this whole time?!

Equally as startled by the reaction he received, Klaus flinched slightly, before hesitantly continuing. "I-I, erh... Grief is... He's had a really, really rough childhood, from what I've been told. It makes it hard for him to socialize... Like, erh, I heard he was kicked out of every guild but this one."

Settling back down, Mar rolled their eyes. "You're supposed to learn from trauma, not let it define you. The fact he calls himself 'Grief' tells me he's still stuck in the past and doesn't know how to move on."

"It's harder for others, I suppose." Klaus looked away shyly. "You'll have to ask Theo what his problem is. He's the only one who knows; outside of Grief, obviously. I promise he is very dependable and honest, he just has... for lack of a better word, a really, really shitty personality."

Mar grunted at that. It was validating to hear others thought of Grief the same way, although hearing Klaus try to defend him was also somewhat interesting. Truthfully, neither they nor Kira knew what work Grief did to contribute to the Silver Tongues. For all they knew, he was working the hardest out of anyone there, hence his smug attitude.

In any case, Mar wasn't about to apologize to the male any time soon; and they *especially* weren't going to simply roll over every time he antagonizes them. Do no harm, but take no bull. With that, the feathered dragon turned to Kira and nodded. "Let's hurry up with our meal, then. We don't wanna keep Grief waiting now."

The two fat dragons proceeded to take their sweet, sweet time finishing their meal, before asking for another helping.

Perhaps that extra helping was one too many.

With the weight of all that chocolate in their stomach, coupled with the excess weight they'd piled on over their stay, Mar wasn't feeling too inclined to move. They weren't stuffed by any means, and could easily handle an extra serving or two, but they were noticeably full, and Mar's body had associated being full with being able to laze around while others rubbed their belly. In fact, it would have served Grief right if they did indeed just roll over and take a nap right then and there, but it would have also proved Grief right that they were too fat to contribute meaningfully to the Silver Tongues. Damn.

Even Kira looked annoyed at having to get up, the smaller gray dragon yawning as she stood up and stretched herself fully, her broad back arching up before flopping back down. "Mmmf, do we *really* have to do this now?"

Mar sighed, rolling onto their feet as well, their excess weight almost causing them to overshoot and roll onto their other side. "Mmmf. I'd rather be sleeping too, Kira, but you can't deny we've both gotten quite heavy."

"So?" The dragoness pouted, their chubby cheeks puffing up. "What's wrong with that?"

"What's wrong is that if we get much heavier, it'll be harder for us to move around on our own. You don't want Grief to assume we're just fat, useless blobs, right?"

Kira let out a quick whine at that, but said nothing more as they followed along. Mar could plainly see the effects of all their eating in full force now; their friend's stomach bouncing and swaying with their slow, lumbering steps, jiggling not just her gut, but her thighs, tail, brisket, even her chins! It wasn't often the two walked side by side anymore, but now that Mar could see

how their friend looked with all that weight, even they could feel their own body going through the motions of jiggling, swaying, wobbling... hurrf, a diet might actually be in order for the pair.

In any case, at least they managed not to be out of breath once they reached the request board within the coliseum part of the building, Mar silently grateful that they didn't need to go up a flight of stairs to find it. Laying just beside the board was Grief, eyes closed with his head resting on his crossed forepaws. Upon the two fat dragons' arrival, the male opened his eyes to look up at the pair, scowling. "I see that urgency has no meaning for you two."

Kira shuffled her wings awkwardly. "We wanted to finish eating first."

Grief chuffed. "I can also see that as well. You two look like bloated tics."

"And you look like an overgrown pony." Mar retorted, noting Grief's long, bushy tail and mane. Not much of a comeback, but anything to get the male off his high horse, no pun intended. "Now if we're done throwing around insults, we'd like to take a look at the request board."

The larger dragon snorted, then rose to his feet, stepping to the side. "Be my guest."

Marching forward, Mar carefully examined the request board, their eyes darting from flier to flier, looking for the perfect job the two could accomplish while also getting Grief off their back.

- A) A strange building appeared overnight in the outskirts of the forest? That shouldn't be too hard to investigate.**
- B) Strange, humanoid creatures have been spotted on trade routes attacking people? Mar and Kira may be fat, but surely they could deal with a few monsters!
- C) A slime infestation in a nearby mine? Slimes were weak to breath attacks, a perfect job for dragons!
- D) A dispute with a bakery and their supplier? This sounded familiar...
- E) Two nobles are feuding and require an outside source to settle their qualms? Seems like a misuse of a guild's resources, but this couldn't be too hard, right?
- F) An academy requesting dragons to volunteer for an anatomy lesson? Hopefully they weren't too, erh, outside the realm of normal dragon proportions to help with that.
- G) None of these sound right. It might not be a bad idea to ask Grief what he thinks. Even if he is a jerk, he does have much more experience than them.

Mar gently took the flier from the board, looking it over while reading out loud for Kira. "A mysterious structure has appeared this morning near the west path leading out of Aqrane, some 20 kilometers out or so. Witnesses have reported feeling a strong sense of unease when approaching it, as though being watched. This request is to investigate the mysterious structure and fill out a detailed report to better ascertain the origin and functionality of it, or to demolish it should it prove to be a threat."

Kira tilted her head. "So, there's a big scary house and we gotta destroy it?"

"If it's dangerous." Mar clarified. "Our main goal is to investigate and write up a big report on it. Someone else could be sent to deal with it if we can't."

From beside them, the dragon could hear Grief snicker. "You two could simply climb on top of it. No structure in the entire kingdom could contain your weights."

"If your ego had any weight to it, you'd weigh as much as the two of us put together." Mar spat back. Maybe taking Grief along was a bad idea.

The male snorted. "Was that your idea of a comeback?"

Mar sighed. "Look, I'm not really in the best mood to banter with right now, thanks to you. Yes, Kira and I are quite fat, but we're doing this quest because *you* practically demanded we prove ourselves, or whatever. As pleasant as your company has been, I'd rather we keep the snide remarks to ourselves. It's hard to be effective with you berating us the whole time."

The larger dragon raised a brow, tilting his head at the request. Mar could practically see Grief trying to sum up some smarmy response directed at their weight yet again, but thankfully he simply shrugged his shoulders. "Very well. I'm just meant to be the spectator for your quest. I shall wait until after we return before criticizing how absurdly obese you two are."

Mar rolled their eyes.

It was rather fortuitous that the Silver Tongues guild was right beside Aqrane's walls, with an exit not too far away, as Mar and Kira couldn't help but feel how... cramped the city had become since.

Even in the wider streets, the two dragons felt more comfortable walking in single file. Using both Grief and Kira as benchmarks, Mar could tell the two of them were easily as wide as two dragons, possibly even a little more, thanks to their bulbous flanks and hefty stomachs. They moved through the streets at a slow, careful pace, moreso to avoid bumping into anything than due to their weight slowing them down. Even so, it was rather embarrassing to have to take such gradual steps, slowing down the pace of traffic quite a bit. Mar and Kira found themselves stepping to the side for those who wanted to attempt to squeeze past them, those Mar in particular embarrassed at the shocked faces of those who saw how large they were as they pressed their flabby selves against the buildings to give them ample time to pass.

Grief may have been silent through the whole ordeal, but Mar could feel the dragon's smug grin staring at the back of their head.

Mar and Kira may have needed to step through the gate one at a time, so as to not end up wedged, but thankfully that was their last hurdle before leaving Aquane. Finally, some room to spread out! Mar sighed in relief, letting their stomach surge back down after sucking it in for what felt like hours, stretching their wings and tail out to the maximum. Before them, they could see Kira leaning forward to stretch as well, her stomach brushing against the floor.

"I know I said I wouldn't say anything regarding your weights," Grief spoke up. "But we are behind schedule. Depending on how dangerous this structure is, we might not return until after dusk if we don't increase our pace. Especially given neither of you will be flying."

Mar growled loudly at that last comment. What a poorly disguised jab at their weight! Not to mention how rude it was to remind Kira of her inability to fly. They didn't know if Grief intended to be as vile as possible to make them hurry up and finish their quest, but it was absolutely working. The hefty dragon marched forward, nodding towards their friend. "C'mon, Kira. It'll get easier from here, I'm sure."

"Alright!" Kira chirped, following right behind. "There'll be more chocolate when we get back, right?"

Mar's ears folded back, looking straight ahead. They didn't want to answer that, but hopefully there would be...

Five minutes into their hike, and Mar was craving chocolate.

How was this even possible? The two of them had just eaten a bellyful of chocolate before starting this mission. In fact, they'd been eating almost exclusively chocolate since joining the Silver Tongues. Why were they now just thinking about the dark little snacks? They should be getting sick of it, like everyone else! At the very least, they should be able to go an hour without practically drooling over it!

Alas, as their hike continued, Mar found themselves daydreaming about returning back for more. This was meant to be the start of their diet to at the very least slow down their alarming weight gain, yet Mar couldn't help but picture a bountiful feast of chocolate eclairs, chocolate cakes, chocolate donuts, chocolate pies, chocolate truffles... hrrrrrf...

Was it too late to turn back? Oh, Mar wanted to turn back now. The only issue was they'd already walked so much as is, and the dragon didn't want to turn back now and walk the same length back. As much as they hated to admit it, their legs were actually starting to feel a tad sore. The only reason they hadn't asked to pause and take a break was that they didn't want to give Grief a chance to speak at all. Despite this, they could hear Kira panting heavily beside them, looking over to see the dragoness swallowing back saliva.

Oh, she was absolutely thinking about chocolate too.

To think in the past they could walk for hours on end from town to town, with no issue whatsoever. Now, a walk that lasted less than an hour left them sore, out of breath, and craving more sugary food. Maybe Grief had a point...

Not that they'd admit it, of course. Even as they strayed off the dirt path to trudge deeper into the forest, dealing with bushes and brambles bumping into their bulbous bellies, Mar would rather keep their mouth than complain.

But as they started hearing Kira start to whine and grumble, the three dragons finally stumbled upon their goal.

- A) The structure was a... gingerbread house? It was so colorful too, and smelled richly of sweets and candy.
- B) The structure was... just a house? If Mar hadn't been told it'd just sprung up out of nowhere, they wouldn't have thought anything about it.**
- C) The structure was a strange, dark obelisk that jutted out from the trees. Mar could definitely feel something was wrong here.

Mar slowed to a halt, not just instantly stopping as their weight and momentum made that impossible. Really? This was it? Mar had seen several cottage-style houses like this on the outskirts of much larger towns. They had even passed by a few on their way out from Aqrane. This house wasn't much different; the wooden furnishing was clean, yet well worn; the windows clear, even without any lights on inside; the porch nice and quaint, although highly unlikely to handle the weight of either of the three. It was just a cozy, ordinary cottage.

The issue being that it was in the middle of the forest, with no real path to or from the small clearing it was.

Kira was the first to step towards it, forming rolls on the side of her neck as she tilted her head. "This is it? It doesn't look strange to me."

Mar nodded. "It's definitely strange if this appeared overnight. There's no easy way to transport the lumber and other equipment needed to build something like this. Magic is definitely involved."

Again, Kira's head flopped to her other side, as though looking at the house from a 45 degree angle would make more sense. "Is using magic to make a house a bad thing?"

Mar shrugged. "That's what we're here to find out."

They stepped forward as well, trying to take a closer look at the house, yet the more they tried to find anything abnormal, the more evidence they found of the contrary. Circling the

building, Mar saw it really was just a boring, ordinary cottage. There was just the faintest trace of magic they could detect, but it was very mild, mundane magic, the type Mar would sense around someone casting a levitation spell, for example. The dragon's sixth sense never kicked in, they didn't sense any hidden spike traps or fireball-launching runes. Could someone really have built themselves a cottage this far into the woods with no ulterior motive other than to live a more secluded lifestyle?

Mar wasn't so sure. It was the fact that this building was so inconspicuous that made them more suspicious.

The feathered dragon might have circled the building all evening were it not for Kira's voice piping up. "Well, why don't we knock and ask the person inside?"

Mar paused to turn at their fat friend. That was such a straightforward idea, so much so than looking for hidden runes or other sources of magic. It was a much simpler and easier idea as well, one that they themselves would be willing to try out.

Grief, however, scoffed at the notion. "And trigger every trap hidden on this cursed building? You'll be lucky to walk away the same as how you arrived."

Kira's tail flickered. "Do you see any traps, Grief?"

The male snorted. "No, but that doesn't mean there aren't any."

"Then I say we knock!" The dragoness smiled brightly. "Or are you scared that Mar and I will get hurt?"

Mar made sure to remember the expression Grief made for the rest of their life. That mixture of shock, bafflement, and frustration was the perfect face for someone as rude and obnoxious as he was. "Watch your tone with me, whelp! I care not for your safety, but it's my responsibility to oversee you two so you don't ruin this mission. How you go about endangering yourselves is your business."

With that, he settled himself on the edge of the clearing, arms folded across his chest.

Kira looked between the entrance of the house, then back at Grief. "So I can go knock on the door, then?"

"Suit yourself." Grief grumbled. And then, a moment later. "Shake your tail if you feel endangered. I'll come to assist."

Huh. So Grief did have a heart.

With a happy, carefree expression, Kira trotted straight to the front porch, with Mar following close behind. Grief may have said he'll help if things went awry, but the feathered dragon only trusted himself to properly save Kira should this end up being a trap. Gods forbid it is a trap; they were far too heavy to do any proper running or escaping.

Seeing as how flimsy the front porch looked, Kira instead decided to wrap her knuckles against the wooden handrails instead, the sound just loud enough to echo through the surrounding trees.

- A) Moments later, an elderly woman steps out, looking as sweet and innocent as can be.
- B) The door slams open, and the single fattest anthro Mar had ever laid eyes on peeks out. Goodness, they can't even fit through that door!**
- C) A strange energy envelops Kira; before Mar's eyes, she starts to gradually shrink!
- D) A strange energy envelops Kira; Not only does her body shrink down, but her proportions change as well. Is she becoming an anthro?!
- E) The doors open, but no one steps out. Instead, a set of magically-activated ropes shoot out, entangling Kira!
- F) The doors open, and a strange fellow marches out, and another, and another... wait a moment, were these people made of *cookies*?!

"Well, howdy there! I wasn't expecting visitors!" The bear chuckled loudly, his hefty paunch bouncing against his heavily strained overalls. "What can I do ya for?"

Mar couldn't think of a response. They had imagined a broad selection of characters who would live inside an isolated, magically-constructed house out here, from powerful warlocks to artificial creations, but a normal anthro living here was the last thing they thought of.

Well, "normal" wasn't entirely accurate, as this bear must have weighed 700 pounds at the minimum. That enormous stomach hung heavily before them, easily reaching past his knees even while held up by overalls and suspenders. His arms alone were not enough to wrap around such a colossal tummy, he'd have needed a second or even third pair of arms for that! That cavernous navel was easily visible beneath that thin shirt as well, a miracle that said even did manage to contain so much fluff and blubber.

It was rude to stare, yet Mar really couldn't stop themselves from glossing over every fat-filled detail of this ursine, from his puffy gopher cheeks to the complete lack of a neck beneath those chins. No, they had no right to judge given the size of their own wobbling paunches, but seeing all this weight on an anthro was something else. The size, the shape, it was completely different!

They could hear Grief growling behind them. "Oh great, there's more of them."

Kira was the first to finally address the enormous bear. "U-uh, I'm sorry sir. We just, uh, wanted to investigate, and, uh..." She blinked. "How'd you get so fat?"

"Kira!" Mar hissed.

Thankfully, the dough ball ursine laughed that question off, lifting his thick arm to wave an arm. "Ah, I understand completely! How did this house appear out of the blue, and how did this fatass critter squeeze inside? Well, ya see-

- A) "I was cursed after I stole food from a witch. I'm not to leave this house until I've slimmed down enough."
- B) "I was the one who sent this request to any guild that would listen. After I did, I peeked my snout in, and... well, next thing I knew, I lost sight of my feet completely, haha!"
- C) **"It's hard to live out my gaining desires in town, not where everyone can stare and gawk and laugh at me. I'd much rather spend my days out here, eating and growing to my heart's content."**
- D) "I needed a secluded area to *really* ramp up my chocolate-making. It's hard to practice creation magic in a crowded town, ya know."
- E) "This is the only place in the whole forest that isn't overrun by those chocolate monsters. I'm surprised you three even made it here without encountering any!"

This time, Mar couldn't help but blurt out their response. "Wait, you *intentionally* got fat?!"

"Why of course!" The bear laughed quite loudly, once again testing the strain on his suspenders. "Can't imagine anyone can get to our size by accident, right?"

Mar and Kira slowly exchanged embarrassed, knowing glances. Maybe it was best they not say anything about how they got to their size.

"Hold on, give me juuuuust a sec." The enormous bear pressed himself against the entrance of his home, his chub squishing through the front door. Mar couldn't believe it; he wasn't trying to actually fit through that narrow opening, was he?

Well, apparently he was, and he was doing a damn good job of it, not due to how malleable his chub was (although that did play a factor), but also due to the doorway itself expanding! Right before their very eyes, the entrance had doubled in size, allowing the doublewide ursine just enough room to step out onto the creaking porch.

"Phew, magic sure is convenient, ain't it?" He chuckled again, extending a pudgy paw. "Call me Rupert, dears. Come now, don't be shy; I promise the porch can hold you two."

After witnessing the doorway stretching like rubber, Mar was ready to believe anything. Hesitantly, they stepped onto the wooden porch. It creaked loudly beneath their weight, but held out surprisingly enough. More confident that they wouldn't just suddenly collapse through the

floorboards, the dragon offered their paw in a shake, before shuffling to the side to let Kira do the same.

“Wow!” Kira exclaimed, shifting their weight between their forepaws and hindlegs, their middle swaying back and forth. “It really isn’t breaking! Did you make this house, sir?”

Rupert laughed once again, squeezing Kira’s claw before letting it go. “Oh, heavens no! I don’t have enough magic in me to do squat. This was all constructed for me through the work of the kingdom’s mightiest mages. Sure cost a pretty penny.”

“I can imagine.” Mar nodded. What a fascinating building. “We’re, erh, really sorry to bother you. We’re with the Silver Tongue guild, and we received a request from someone who spotted this house one day. They’d never seen it before, even though they visit the area fairly frequently, and asked for us to investigate.”

The big bear nodded his pudgy, fat-filled head. “Is that it? You just need an explanation?”

“If you wouldn’t mind.” Mar was honestly mainly asking from their own curiosity, not just for the sake of the quest.

Thankfully, Rupert smiled a bright, dimpled grin at that. “Very well, I’d be happy to explain! Come on in, we’ll chat over tea.”

Mar’s jaw dropped as far as their chins would allow. Nu uh, no way, that just wasn’t possible! Them?! Three overweight dragons, fitting in a cottage meant for a single anthro?!

Kira and Grief must have given similar reactions, as Rupert was nearly beside himself with laughter, leaning forward enough to make Mar worry he’d start rolling over and wouldn’t stop. “Oooohohoho! Ah, the look on your faces! I told you, it’s a magic cottage! We could probably fit a quarter of Aquane in here if we wanted to! Come in, see for-”

“I think not!” Grief suddenly bellowed out, causing Mar and Kira to flinch. The male drake forced himself between his two obese companions, pushing past their broad and flabby flanks to glare at the bear. “You take us for fools! How dare you assume we’d willingly step into your magic house? I know a trap when I see one, you bloated dolt.”

Rupert raised a brow at Grief, hardly put off by the larger dragon’s intimidating presence. “I can see why you would be hesitant. My sincerest apologies sir, I didn’t mean to offend. My intent was to extend my hospitality, as well as doing a little showing off of my very impressive, and *very* expensive home, heh. If you’d rather stay outside, then so be it. I suppose I can’t really prove to you that I mean no harm.”

Mar thought this over carefully. Rupert sounded nice enough, and he even acknowledged that he himself might not be able to fully convince them of his harmless

intentions. However, Grief's logic was very sound; this could all be a trap. Even Kira lowered her head beneath Grief's neck to look at them better, waiting for a response.

After a moment, Mar nodded and looked back at Rupert.

A) "Actually, we'd love to come inside, if that's even possible."

B) "We'd feel more comfortable if you were to tell us your story here, if that's ok."

"Maranai!" Grief hissed at them, not unlike how Mar had hissed at Kira mere moments ago.

Mar sighed. "We're supposed to investigate the building, right? Obviously we'll learn more if we search the interior and make our own conclusions."

The male dragon bore his teeth, ready to counter that argument in an instant, but before he could, Kira suddenly chimed in. "I wanna go in!"

Rupert smiled at that, and slowly shuffled towards the door. "After you." He nodded, opening the door, as though gesturing for a much smaller, daintier drake to step through.

And she did! With no hesitation, Kira lowered her chubby head through the door and began to squeeze through. Just like with the bear, the doorway stretched out as though it were made of rubber, widening further and further, enough for the dragoness to step through, even at her widest. A few steps in, and the entrance slowly snapped back into place, just wide enough for Kira's tail to slide through.

Rupert turned to the pair. "Well, I don't hear any screaming. I think it's safe to assume there's no trap." He chuckled, much to Grief's frustration.

"Well..." Mar swallowed heavily. Here goes. Following suit, they nudged their way through the door as well, feeling the wooden sides brush heavily against their flanks, squeezing their tubby self. It still felt like a tight fit, yet sure enough they did manage to shuffle through just fine.

The house was *huge!*

"Bigger on the inside" didn't even begin to apply to this cottage. Every room was gigantic, each one could be the size of its own house! The living room they stood in, for example, was incredibly spacious, enough so that Mar wasn't sure they could reach the ceiling if they stood on their hindlegs. If they could still stand on their hindlegs, of course. No wonder Rupert felt confident enough to invite the three dragons inside. There was room for all three to gallop side by side, if they wanted to! Outside of the sheer size of the rooms, it still looked like a normal anthro's interior. Carpeted floor, pictures hanging on a wall, plenty of furniture for

relaxing. It was such a cozy vibe, Mar couldn't help but feel envious of every anthro who got to live inside a building like this.

"Oop, on your left!"

Mar shuffled awkwardly as they felt the fat bear squeeze past their flank, both fat creatures squishing from the contact. Rupert didn't seem to mind, as he just grinned up at the dragon before shuffling towards the nearest chair. The chair was clearly meant for a person of normal proportions; Rupert would have crushed it like a house of cards if he even attempted to sit on it. Yet sit on it he did, and like the doorway, the chair itself suddenly stretched out to accommodate his ample bosom.

"Wow..." Kira swallowed loudly. "I think I like it here."

Mar nodded slowly. "Y-yeah, I think I- YEOWCH!"

A sharp pain in their rump caused them to stumble forward, almost falling splat onto their front. Turning around, they watched as Grief's angry face peeked through the door, the rest of him slowly crawling through. "My horns wouldn't have poked you if you'd just move from the doorway!"

Mar narrowed their eyes. "What are you even doing in here anyways, if it's such an obvious trap?"

"Someone needs to haul the two of you out should this fat oaf prove distrustful." With that, he glared at the seated bear. "Spill your secrets, now!"

"I'm gonna, I'm gonna!" Rupert sighed, pinching his brow. "I planned to from the start. I was going to offer snacks, but I suppose if I did that, I'd start being accused of poisoning you."

Kira sighed, lowering her head. Apparently she would have loved some snacks, not that Mar could blame her. "He's mean like that."

Clearing his throat, the obese bear sat upright, his entire body wobbling like jelly. Sure enough, his stomach did spill past his knees even while sitting, filling any space between his two enormous thighs and then some. "In that case, I'll get right to it.

"My full name is actually Rupert Breckenridge. I used to live in Belmond, not too far from our King's own castle, as the... third wealthiest noble?" He tapped his many chins. "Fourth? I'm pretty sure it was third, but I don't want to be wrong."

"Does it matter?" Grief growled.

Rupert shrugged his mighty shoulders. “No, I suppose it wouldn’t. Back on the topic at hand, I grew up in the very lap of luxury itself, and was privileged enough to never know what it’s like to go hungry. I dined on all manner of exotic, delicious, scrumptious meals my whole life much like my whole family; issue was, while they were content to eat until fullness, I found myself never truly satisfied until I was on the brink of falling over from exhaustion. I *lived* to eat.”

Mar found themselves scratching awkwardly behind their fat neck. That sounded familiar.

Rupert continued. “Ever since I was a cub, I’ve been rather plump. This wasn’t uncommon for noble offspring to become rotund, as we were all spoiled, rotten brats, yet my parents hardly did much about it. ‘You’ll grow out of it’ they said, as though expecting my appetite to correct itself over time. Well, over time, I did grow... a lot, in fact!”

The enormous bear laughed at that, slapping the top of his immense middle. “Oh, it wasn’t quite this bad; not yet, at least. I remained quite heavy, but I thought little of it at first. It was only when chairs became an issue that I realized something would have to be done. A diet was surely in order, correct? After all, if I allow my indulgent nature to go unchecked, I’ll find myself too heavy and lazy to move on my own anymore!”

Mar’s neck was becoming quite ruffled, how much they were scratching it. This sounded very, very familiar.

Rupert grinned wide. “Oh, I tried dieting. I cut off sweets entirely, began jogging and all manner of exercises every morning, anything to shed those pesky pounds. Alas, after weeks and weeks of this horrid, tortuous treatment, nothing changed. All I accomplished in doing was making myself hungry, irritable, and embarrassed. My wealth and influence meant nothing when others saw this fat fool waddle through the streets huffing and puffing. Many rude comments were thrown at me, much like the type your friend here makes.”

Grief snorted indignantly at that, but otherwise stayed quiet.

“Eitherway, I started to wonder why I was doing this to myself in the first place. Who was I trying to win over? My parents had passed away, I had no heirs to call my own. My wealth was mine and mine alone, I could cease this pointless display immediately and just... Well, give in. And that’s exactly what I did!”

Rupert raised his thick, flabby arms up, gesturing to the house. “It cost everything I own, but I gave the mages guild everything to ensure I could live a comfortable life out in the countryside, far from any prying, jeering eyes. A magic house that could grow along with me, a boundless source of food that never depleted, along with plenty of staff to take care of me.”

“Staff?” Mar’s eyes widened. “You have servants here?”

“Oh yes! But they’re not what you’re expecting.” Rupert laughed. “They’re inanimate objects given form and function, not living beings. They exist to serve me. Alas, they make for poor conversationalists, ohohoho!”

Mar couldn’t believe how good this nobel had it! Money really did buy everything, didn’t it? A house full of never-ending food, with servants to care for him for the rest of his years. It sounded too good to be true!

“Now then.” Rupert shifted in his seat, his thick rolls bunching up. “The mages assured me this was far enough secluded to not bother anyone, but I never expected to scare anyone. My sincerest regrets, my draconic friends. You won’t have to worry about me much longer; I doubt I’ll be able to walk soon.”

Again, Grief snorted at the anthros words. “I suppose it’s hard to mistake a wideload who can barely stand on his own as a threat.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment.” Rupert chuckled. “For my more pleasant, heavier guests: Would you like to stay for dinner? I assure you, there’s plenty to go around.”

- A) “We really shouldn’t. We just came to investigate for our quest.”
- B) “That sounds lovely. A meal here would help us fill out a more accurate report anyways.”**
- C) “For dinner? Rupert, can we stay for life?!”

Mar only felt obligated to add that addendum specifically to stop Grief from complaining. In fact, they could feel his eyes boring into the back of their head right now. To stop the yellow-maned dragon from saying something rude, Mar spoke up again. “I’m assuming your, erh, ‘staff’ are the ones preparing the meal? Would it be ok if we could meet them? We just want to make sure that they aren’t capable of harm.”

Rupert’s grin widened. “Ah, you can’t fool me. You wanna see if you can ask them for extras without me hearing! Don’t worry, you don’t have to worry about that.”

Mar tilted their head. Rupert really did believe themself and Kira were both gainers, huh. While the thought of intentionally eating specifically to gain weight was a bit odd, the pudgy dragon didn’t feel the need to correct him. They can go along with it for today... just for the mission, of course. And maybe the food. There was no way they could make it back on an empty stomach, now.

With that, the enormous grizzly brought two pudgy fingers to hips lips and blew, a sharp whistle erupting from his mouth. “Come out, lil darlings! We have guests!”

A flutter of wings alerted the three dragons towards the next room over, and Mar's jaw completely dropped. They couldn't believe their eyes; Rupert had dragons living in his house! They were incredibly tiny, far smaller than any dragon Mar had ever seen. Even as a newborn hatchling, the feathered drake was never that small. The ones that flew towards Rupert were the size of hawks, perhaps even smaller, but what they lacked in size they made up for in dexterity. They had plenty of room to fly about in the house's large interior, yet they expertly swerved to a halt before their master without so much as ruffling a fur on his fat face. Some continued to slowly circle around the ursine's head, others looked towards the much larger dragons.

It was then that Mar noticed their faces for the first time, and held a paw to their mouth to suppress a shriek.

They had snouts, but they had no nose, no mouth. What looked like eyes were in fact two large buttons sewn into them. Each miniature dragon's body was literally patchworked together with what appeared to be cloth, their colorings ranging from bright pinks to darker blues, all down to their velvety wings.

While Mar shrank back in silent terror, Kira leaned forward to inspect them curiously. "They're dolls?"

Rupert nodded, reaching over to gently pet the nearest one with his finger. "I've always loved dragons. Used to love riding them when I was younger, back when I could still properly swing my legs around 'em, heh. I figured if I'm gonna isolate myself from society n' whatnot, I may as well make sure I'm in the company of dragons at least. I'm still trying to assign names to them, but unfortunately I'm terrible at that."

He turned his attention to the little dragon he was petting, rubbing over that patchwork back. "Meatloaf, can you let the others know we have guests? We'll be quadrupling tonight's dinner, if you don't mind."

Meatloaf the doll nodded its head before flying back towards the room it came in from, assumingly the kitchen.

At this, Grief tilted his head. "Quadruple? I thought I wasn't invited."

"Who said you were?" Rupert smirked back.

Mar had to hold their mouth shut again, this time to stop themselves from laughing.

It wasn't much longer before Mar could smell the kitchens at work, their stomach letting out a low gurgle. How long had it been since they last ate? The dragon's thick legs wobbled; they were so hungry, they felt ready to collapse!

Thankfully, they didn't have to wait much longer as the dragons appeared once again from the doorway, two of them being used to carry an enormous platter of roasted ham surrounded by assorted vegetables towards Rupert. While the bear did swallow down a wave of saliva, he instead shook his head, gesturing to Mar and Kira. "They're our guests. They eat first."

Silently, the two dragons carried the platter before Mar, then two more came for Kira. The dragoness had no problem collapsing onto her round middle to begin eagerly stuffing her face, but Mar had some reservations. Damn, it smelled delicious, though. "I-is it ok? To just sit and eat here like this? I'm, erh, not used to anthro homes, but don't you normally eat at tables? I'd hate to make a mess in your lovely home."

Rupert snorted loudly. "Do I look like a normal anthro? Don't worry about making a mess, my friend. If you do, my staff will take care of it lickity split." And then, he turned his attention to Kira. "Darling, you don't have to feed yourself. That's what the staff are for! Go ahead and relax now, let them do all the hard work."

Kira tilted her chubby head. "Eating's not hard work," she mumbled matter of factly. However, the dragoness did as she was told and rolled onto her side, letting her rotund middle spread between her limbs. The moment she did so, a group of four little dragons fluttered by to attend to her; 1 offering a large bite of food, while the other three went to massaging her, digging their little plush arms into her big round body. Not even 10 seconds in and Kira began purring loudly between bites, a big smile across her face.

"Aaaaah, I miss that sound." Rupert hummed, his own platter resting atop his incredibly broad belly. "Nothing sweeter than a dragon's purr. Sweeter than cake, that's what it is. Please, feel free to relax now and let my staff do the work. You need anything, you just say so."

There would have been a time where Mar would be doing what Grief was right now; standing back in caution at the overwhelming hospitality. Alas, that version of Mar was buried beneath many, many layers of chub; and many, many weeks of pampering. Sure, being fed by living dolls was a bit strange, compared to actual people, but the large dragon was willing to overlook that due to their own hunger. Besides, the dolls actually did look kind of cute... in a strange sense.

With that, Mar allowed themselves to roll onto their side, letting the flock of small dragons flock over to them. One began offering up large, tantalizing pieces of meat, while the others fluttered around their side and middle. Oof, for being so little and made of fabric, the dolls were quite strong, digging deep into their flabby middle and sides, squeezing the chub around. It was yet another reminder of how far they'd let themselves grow out, feeling these little creatures jostle and quiver their bulk.

But hey, they could be shameless gluttons for one night, right? It was for the sake of the mission, of course!

With that, Mar soon fell into a similar pattern as Kyra, the feathered drake purring loudly as they eagerly ate the rich, decadent meat. It had been so long since they'd had a proper meal without any chocolate in it, and the taste was absolutely sublime! Sure, they were still craving their usual mountains of dessert, but this was certainly the next best thing. Curling and uncurling their thick tail, Mar closed their eyes and rumbled slightly, their own claws digging into their ponderous paunch. A few extra pounds wouldn't be noticeable, right?

Of course, no good thing could happen without Grief coming to ruin it, the maned dragon growling. "You should be ashamed, the both of you. Letting the enemy crawl over you like that while you lay on the ground like maggots."

Kira chuffed loudly at that. "You can just admit you're feeling left out, Grief."

Indeed; raising an eye, Mar could see Rupert happily partaking in his meal as well, his head slumped back and open wide to accept his portions while the tiny dragons squeezed at his own lap-spilling paunch. The bear snickered at that last jest. "I could invite you as well, Grief, if you apologized for your poor manners."

Of course Grief snorted indignantly at that. "My *sincerest* apologies if me being the only logical, cautious one here of the group coincides with your definition of ill-mannered. I'm content to stay here while you gluttons act like the swine you are. One of us needs to be prepared to act when your trap is sprung."

Rupert rolled his eyes. "Suit yourself."

Mar couldn't care less whether or not the male dragon actually was trying to protect himself and Kira, or if he was simply spiteful, jealous, and stubborn. No doubt the latter, but still. The feathered drake had no qualms of their situation, even as more dragons continue to surround them. Squeezing up the base of their wings, scritch along the spine of their tail, kneading those poor overworked legs, massaging their rapidly filling stomach, and of course, feeding them copious amounts of food. Satisfied that the mission was proceeding as smooth as butter, the dragon fully relaxed their muscles, letting the smaller variants do their work.

- A) One hearty meal later, and Mar and Kira were as stuffed as can be. Talk about one satisfying meal!
- B) The dragons were beyond full, but the food just kept coming. In fact, it was rapidly increasing to the point where Mar couldn't even speak! Something wasn't right!**
- C) The food, the cozy atmosphere, everything was just too much. Without meaning to, the dragons fell asleep midmeal...
- D) They were interrupted, however, as Grief suddenly dashed in and snapped at the toy dragons. Had his jealousy finally won over, or was he protecting them from an unseen trap?!

It took a lot for Mar and Kira to end up well and truly stuffed, given how often they fed each other to the extremes as of late. As such, Mar didn't question the feeling of their belly slowly rising with each additional bite, the heavy slab of blubber rounding out into more of a dome shape. Any larger, and they could fit another doll on to massage that blubbery belly, Mar thought to themselves with a snort. Still, they continued to greedily chow through their delicious meal, until they were too full to eat another bite.

And then they ate some more.

Mar's eyes shot open, a quiet, muffled whimper escaping their mouth. What the heck was happening? They wanted to close their mouth, shake their head no, yet all the pudgy dragon was capable of was opening for more, swallowing without a moment's notice. This wasn't right at all! They wanted to yell out, demand the little dolls stop feeding them, but no noise came out, save for a few pathetic whines.

From beside them, Kira let out a few whines of her own. She was trapped too?

Mar tried moving their arms, their legs, *anything!* Alas, she was well and truly helpless, unable to move at all. How could this be? Were they truly this gluttonous in spirit, that they would subject themselves to eating this far beyond their limits, even as their stomach groaned and gurgled?

Not, it was the dolls! All of that kneading and rubbing had numbed their muscles to a ridiculous degree. They were well and truly helpless, forced to continue eating while those little bastards numbed their body further. What the heck was happening?! Was Rupert aware of this? Damn, they couldn't even turn their head to look.

From behind them, Grief let out an annoyed snort. "Have you two finished your vile display of gluttony yet? I'm in no mood to roll the two of you back to the guildhall."

Despite the direness of the situation, Mar couldn't help but roll their eyes. Of course Grief would still continue to be a jackass, even while they were stuck in this predicament... wait, he didn't know they were in trouble! The helpless dragon closed their eyes and grunted, willing their body to move. Just enough, please...

Their tail tip lifted, spasming, then fell back down. Dammit, that was all they could do. The little dragons had quickly flocked over to it, squeezing and kneading the thick limb to ensure it wouldn't go back up again. Would Grief get the message?

Apparently so!

They felt a rush of air as the male dragon suddenly leapt over them, landing heavily before them. Mar couldn't turn to see, but they heard Grief's snarl as he confronted Rupert.

"Release them from your hold at once, or the last thing you see will be your meal splattered on the floor, along with your innards!"

It was faint, but over the sound of their own eating, Mar could hear the fat bear tut-tutting. "Your manners are as appalling as ever. What will it take for you to relax? Why not try a bite or two of-"

"Enough!" Grief's roar echoed throughout the house. "Your servants have paralyzed my comrades, and I won't stand for this! I don't know what your angle is, but you *will* release them!"

The fat bear let out a hearty chortle. "Oh, my angle? You see, my rude guest."

- A) "It was dragons that mocked my figure, dragons that claimed they were too pure to put on an inch of fat. Even if they aren't the same dragons, I will have my revenge!"
- B) "This house is built upon gluttony and hedonism. They will be released once they've finished every last bite of their meal."**
- C) "I could sense their true thoughts. They don't enjoy their fat bodies at all! Well, I will *make* them want to be fat!"
- D) "I crave companionship. As I've said, these dolls make for terrible conversationalists, and I'd hate for my only guests to be able to leave on their own."
- E) "Don't you want to see just how fat a dragon can grow? Aren't you the slightest bit interested in just how impossible obese I can make these two? It'd serve them right for being so rude to you, right? Why not help me out?"
- F) "For this house to operate, it requires indulgence of the most severe degree. Everyone who accepts a meal here must eat until they're on the very brink! And if these two stay, this house's power will grow ten fold!"

Mar could easily picture the smug grin atop the obese bear's face. "Of course, it may take a while for the effects of my staffs' massages to wear off afterwards. But that's no problem; they're free to stay the night, and I'll even offer them a complimentary breakfast when-"

"Stuff it!" Just as easily, Mar could imagine Grief's snarling, angry expression. Not like his face ever changed from that anyway. "I care little for your strange food obsession. Release my two idiots, or else!"

Rupert let out a heavy sigh. "Grief, I know you're rude, but I didn't think you were also an idiot. Your 'or else' comment doesn't phase me when my servants quite literally have your friends in their hands. Now sit tight, these two still have more eating to go."

Grief did anything but; Mar could feel him pacing up and down anxiously, stepping by the doughy duo. "You told me this house has infinite food. Are you trying to make them burst?"

“Heavens, no!” Rupert genuinely sounded aghast. “The food is infinite, but not the meal! They’ll be free once it’s over, you have my word. I just want to make sure these two lovelies leave here with more than what they arrived with, if you catch my drift.”

Oof, Mar was certain that wouldn’t be an issue. There was something about being stuffed full of chocolates and desserts that was relaxing and soothing; enough to make them fall asleep even while still being fed. While the massages were as calming as they could be (perhaps a little too much so, hence their current immobility), the food itself was... what was the right word here? Jarring? The flavors were much more intense and vibrant, each one a jolt to the senses. It was delicious, but it wasn’t something to fall asleep eating to. Mar was more awake than ever, and felt fatter and more stuffed than ever before. They weren’t certain they would be able to even stand properly on their own anymore, or if they could without their stomach pressing against the ground. Walking back while dragging this thing was going to be an absolute pain!

Mar blinked when they noticed Grief’s footpaw land right before their muzzle, the male dragon’s grumpy face soon lowering itself to greet them. “I’ll lecture you later on how this is your fault. Right now, I’ll try to help out if I can, even if you don’t deserve it.” There was a huff of superiority from Grief, one that made Mar roll his eyes. Jackass.

The drake continued, his voice much quieter. “Blink once if you think you can finish this meal, blink twice if you want me to try freeing you.”

- A) Mar slowly blinked once, confidently. They didn’t need Grief’s help for this, they ate their way into this mess, they’ll eat themselves out!**
- B) Mar grumbled, but blinked twice. This was just too much, and while they didn’t want to be rude to Rupert, it might be time to try something desperate.
- C) Mar stared straight at Grief, unblinking. How about *he* eats some of this food instead? He was the one who was rude to Rupert to begin with, it’s not fair he gets to go unscathed!
- D) Mar was about to blink their response, when Rupert suddenly spoke up. “Instead of whispering amongst yourselves, I could offer you two a nice potion to relax and expand your stomach capacity. There’s still much, *much* more to go, after all!”

The male dragon snorted. “Suit yourself. I should have figured you two would be into this... weirdness.” With that, Grief marched two paces backwards before settling himself down, head resting on his arms. At least he was still watching closely, even if the sight of him did ruin their enjoyment of their meal.

Yes, Mar was enjoying themselves. Being unable to move was a little stressful, but at the same time, being so helpless, yet well taken care of was... liberating. They didn’t need to worry about when to stop eating if someone else was in charge of it, right? In a sense, this was the ultimate relaxation. No wonder Rupert wanted to fully embrace this lifestyle away from others.

Mar admitted it was a strange sort of enjoyment they got out of this. It wasn't anything they could explain to Grief, or any dragon they knew, for that matter. Maybe Klaus, although the red dragon was rather timid, and probably wouldn't want to more or less force feed them to such an extreme...

In any case, they believed what Rupert said, and as such fully submitted themselves to the feeding. The pudgy, feathery dragon learned to once again enjoy the multiple little dragon paws squeezing and kneading at their bulbous flanks, their soft chubby cheeks, their round cylindrical legs, and of course that stomach that continued to swell like some big party balloon. Each bite forced past their beak only further added to the enjoyment of the rubs, particularly towards their middle, feeling the skin tighten considerably the rounder it grew. Gods, they were so big! Absolutely bloody massive!

Truthfully, it felt rather good.

How much longer this feeding went on for, Mar lost track. There was feeling pregnant, and there was feeling as though there was a Grief-sized chunk of food within their stomach. Breathing was laborious and heavy, to the point where they wished the tiny dragons could automate that for them. Instead, they were left panting and wheezing on their own, their reddish blue gut slowly rising and falling, a monument to their gluttony...

Mar blinked. They were breathing from their mouth? Then the feeding was over!

Oooof, their stomach! This was by far the fullest they've ever felt in their life, an incredible feat given how hedonistic their past few weeks had been. Mar wasn't sure they'd ever fall back into a "not laughably obese" weight ever again, the hefty dragon letting out a soft gurgle as they rubbed their stomach, wincing at just how drum taut it was. Oof, a single needle's prick would be all it would take to...

Wait, they could move!

- A) They would need help from Grief, but the two could finally stand back on their own. Hopefully that doorway would accommodate their rounder size...**
- B) Not even Grief could help haul the two back onto their feet. As embarrassing as it was, they might need to ask Rupert for assistance.
- C) There was no moving them. Mar didn't even entertain the idea. In fact, they could hear Kira start to snore beside them. A quick nap and they should be good to go...
- D) Rupert's voice once again cut through the air. "Come now, you can't be full already. The second course is on its way!"

"Hrrrrf..." Breathing was laborious before, but now it was a real challenge just to force air into their lungs, which were heavily compressed by their incredible stomach. How did Rupert eat

like this every meal?! No wonder he was so obscenely fat. Even getting up was next to impossible, the dragon's limbs shaking as they attempted to push at the ground, struggling to fight back against their own weight and stomach.

To their surprise, however, Grief quickly came around to nudge his snout beneath their arm, using his weight as a leverage to help roll Mar up. "Don't worry, I'm here." He muttered seriously, in an almost compassionate way. "Tell me, how are you feeling?"

Mar groaned. "Like I just ate an entire horse."

"Ditto!" Kira hiccuped; no doubt she'll need assistance as well. At least she was smaller than Mar, in terms of height that is.

Mar didn't feel much better standing up. Their stomach was in constant contact with the ground, adding further pressure to their poor middle. Before, their belly was soft and malleable, now the dragon's legs were forced to straddle along the side of it. They'll be moving at a snail's pace to get back now. How long until they returned? The next day? Maybe several? Would their belly shrink enough after digesting this incredible load to make walking any easier?

One thing was certain; it was *definitely* diet time.

"O-oh, you're leaving?"

Mar looked up to Rupert, the obese bear genuinely looking crestfallen at seeing his guests make preparations to leave.

Grief, however, either did not catch the bear's expression or simply did not care for it as he hissed back at the anthro while assisting Kira back up. "Of course we are! Look at the sorry state you put these two in."

Ignoring the loud dragon, Rupert continued to look down at his own overflowing paunch, avoiding eye contact. "I... believe there was a miscommunication on my end. I assumed you two were gainers, much like myself, and subjected you to a feast specifically designed to help you two put on as much weight as possible. I'm very sorry if my assumption was wrong."

As bloated and in distress as they were, Mar couldn't help but feel bad as well. "I'm sorry, Rupert. As embarrassing as it sounds, we actually put on this weight by accident. Kira and I have a hard time turning down delicious food."

"Y-yeah, hrrrf." Kira grunted, now finally upright. Goodness, it looked like the fat dragoness was laying on a bubble, her belly was so large! At least her feet could reach the ground... barely. "We really did have fun though, Rupert! Your house is neat, and the food was super yummy! One day, I wanna come back and help you name all your dragons."

She smiled, nuzzling a pink-polka dotted purple dragon doll. "This one's Beanie!"

Rupert's melancholy look melted at that, looking up with a slight smile. "I still feel as though I should reimburse you for your troubles. In fact, I think I know the perfect gift."

- A) "A small bag, containing a portion of my infinite food... you know, a part of infinity is still infinity."
- B) "A special rag to tie around your bellies, so they won't end up dragging everywhere you waddle."
- C) "A potion to help make you lighter. It's how I manage to get around now, anyways."
- D) "A potion that makes you MUCH lighter... we may need to attach some strings to you until it wears off, but your rude friend here seems capable of making sure neither of you fly away."
- E) **"A potion to increase your appetite, should you two ever decide to abandon your mobility and bask in the pleasures of hedonism." Rupert winked. "Or, to slip in someone's food, if you wish to play a little prank."**
- F) "A financial donation to your guild. The Silver Tongues, was it? I still have some gold laying around that I won't need anymore that could go to a worthy cause."

Mar's ears folded back. That sounded like the complete opposite of their problems right now. If the two of them got any hungrier, they'd end up the size of this house, for crying out loud!

But, the dragon still smiled in appreciation. Never look a gift horse in the mouth, right? "Thank you, Rupert. I'm sure this will come in handy in the future."

Grief snorted. "Doubtful."

With a whistle from the bear, four more dragon dolls flew in to meet the pair, four of them carrying an end to a satchel. They split into two to fly towards Kira and Mar, wrapping the leathery piece of equipment around their flabby arms, right beneath their Silver Tongue bands. Peeking inside, Mar could see a single vial within; a glass container the size and shape of an apple, full of a deep crimson liquid.

Apple, huh? How fitting; Mar was certain they'd look like an apple if they were an anthro, given the size of their belly.

"There you are! You two are all set now." The obese bear smiled. "Take care, my fabulously flabby friends. I wish to see you two again, but without any unnecessary baggage."

Grief snorted at that. "Doubtful. These two have only been growing fatter since I've met them."

"I'm referring to *you*, mean one."

Mar and Kira exchanged grins, trying their best not to giggle.

Walking. Was. Such. A. Chore!

Sure, the doorway did somehow widen enough for the pair to leave (although Mar suspected it was even tighter around their middle than before), but that wasn't even the beginning of their problems. Both themselves and Kira had an entire forest to trek across before returning back, now laden down with what must have been over a hundred pounds of pure food within their stomachs. Each step was slow and agonizing, both dragons forced to awkwardly maneuver their limbs around their massive, bloated middles, dragging their poor bellies across the ground and carving up the grass in the process. A good thing stealth wasn't required to leave; the two were practically leaving a path behind them! Just taking one step now required the effort of taking ten steps just earlier today, and they tired out quickly then as well!

Hell, the clearing had barely left their line of sight before Mar and Kira had to stop, panting and heaving. "G-grief... slow down..."

Grief turned back to glare at the doughy duo, sizing the both of them up and down. "I hope the both of you are happy. You two just couldn't say no to a meal, could you? Especially one from the enemy."

Kira whimpered. "Rupert was really nice to us, Grief!"

"*Nice?!*" The male spat. "Look at yourselves! You two look like grapes that sprouted limbs! It might actually be easier for you to tuck your legs in and have me roll you then have you two amble forward like ice cubes sliding on a slick surface."

Kira blinked. "What?"

Mar sighed. "He's calling us fat and slow."

"Oh."

But Grief wasn't done. "You two clearly can't be left to your own devices. The guild is busy enough as is, it doesn't have time to enable you two to become blobs. From now on, I'm in charge of trying to pry the dragon out from within your flabby shells."

Mar waddle-stepped forward, growling. "Lay off! Kira and I are more than capable of managing our own weights!"

Grief scoffed at that. "You two can't even manage 20 paces without begging for a rest. Soon it will be 10, and then 5, and then you won't wish to walk at all anymore. You need guidance, and I'm the only dragon with the decency to fix you! You eat what I tell you to, or else-"

He paused, mouth hanging open.

Mar let out a gasp, their eyes widening. A feathered needle suddenly appeared in the side of Grief's neck. They didn't even see the projectile lodge itself in there; it's as though it simply materialized! Was it a tranquilizer dart, or worse?!

Grief's eyes slowly drifted towards his neck, one arm reaching up to try and snatch at it. Alas, lifting that arm had sent the rest of his body toppled over, and the male dragon flopped unceremoniously onto his side, tongue hanging out.

"Grief!" Kira cried out, before letting out a high-pitched yelp. Mar had just enough time to look over before seeing their friend collapse with an enormous thud, enough to shake up dirt and rustle the trees. Three needles were sticking out from their side.

Oh no, they felt a prick on theirs as well. Make that four!

Immediately, Mar's vision became woozy. This was incredibly potent, whatever these darts were laced with. Grief went down with just one of them, and Mar... Mar was... urrrergh...

Mar didn't even feel the impact of the ground.