

“Why did I have to be born a dragon?”

It was a beautiful day today, yet it was completely lost on Letty. Rather than enjoy the cloudless blue sky above, or look around the lush forest surrounding their path, the dragon would rather amble on with his head hanging low, barely even noticing the dirt road past his forepaws. Yes, he was just blindly wandering along this path at this point, and yes, he had bumped his head into a tree trunk; several, in fact, but so what! It only made sense for mother nature to despise him as much as himself!

Oh, just *why* did he have to be a dragon? Nobody even saw dragons as dragons in this day and age, only just the sum of their parts! Humans, dwarves, orcs, they all saw him as the sum of his parts, and nothing else. Yeah, his claws could be smithed into a weapon, his scarlet-red hide could be turned into some cool-looking gear while his creamy underbelly would make for an excellent welcome mat, with his ivory horns adorning the fireplace, perhaps. Maybe his teeth could be made into jewelry, like a necklace, and-

Gah! He was overthinking things again! Letty didn't know if it was the thought of someone actually wearing his teeth, or the mental image of himself without any teeth, but the red dragon turned green to the face regardless. The worst part of it all: He knew he wasn't exaggerating! The world was a terrifying place, full of terrifying people, and Letty, well, Letty was a dragon who was as timid as a rabbit. No, that's not true, he got bullied by rabbits back when-

“Is something the matter, Letty?”

The dragon paused, blinking his large green eyes over towards the elf beside him. “O-oh, uh, no, everything's fine, Dearia.” He stammered out, trying (and failing) to put up a smile. Man, even his *voice* sounded as un-dragon-like as possible. So high and squeaky, not at all like the deep, booming, and commanding voice his father had, or his family.

Heck, even walking on all fours, Letty was still a foot or so taller than the elf beside him, yet even so, he found it impossible to make eye contact with his adventuring companion the moment the elf narrowed his eyes at him. “Forgive me,” Dearia spoke softly. “But I find that hard to believe. Something is clearly bothering you.”

Letty sighed, looking away. “How can you tell?”

"Well, for starters, you're walking on all fours. I know you prefer walking on your hind legs."

Oh, right.

Rather than standing up to rectify this, however, Letty fully sat down. Hearing Dearia speak to him with concerns about his feelings made the poor dragon's heart ache even more. No, it wouldn't be fair to vent to his friend *yet again* on how he wished he wasn't a dragon, something that was even outside of the "Demon Lord's" power to change.

No, he couldn't complain like some petulant child, but sitting on his rump and looking away didn't look much better, did it? Closing his eyes, Letty took a deep breath in before facing the elf once more. "Dearia, am I hopeless?"

Dearia raised a brow. "In what regard?"

Letty groaned. He was hoping the elf would have just said "no." But, well, that would be lying, wouldn't it. "I-It's just... you've been so kind to me ever since we met. Most other people I've met either laugh at the crybaby dragon looking for a home, or try to chop me up into pieces to sell." He swallowed nervously at the last bit.

"B-but you've never once laughed at me, or said I was being silly, or called me names. You've worked really hard on trying to find me the perfect home, and I appreciate it a lot! You've shown me all sorts of really neat houses for me to live in, and... w-well, they haven't worked out. I-it's always back to square one, you know?"

"That's true" Dearia offered a half-shrug, hardly enough to ruffle his white robe. "But that's nothing to be ashamed of. It's only natural to want the best out of your living arrangements. This is *your* home we're searching for, after all. I'd rather you be too picky than too lax when it comes to your house."

"I mean... you're not wrong." Letty grumbled. "But what if there just isn't a home for me out there, a-and you're just wasting your time? How do you know I'll even like the next home you're taking me to?"

Dearia smiled. "I don't, but with all things, it's better to at least try and know for sure, than to worry about the 'what-ifs.' Besides, I'm sure you'll fit into this next home quite nicely. The cultists up ahead have been searching for a new deity to worship for quite some time, and what better deity than a dragon?"

“Y-yeah, that’s... that’s what I’m talking about.” Letty sighed. Dearia meant well, but sometimes his “Dark Lord” hobby bled into his real estate job. Forget pondering the ‘what-ifs,’ Letty knew *exactly* how this would play out. The cultists may have a space set aside to be the dragon’s new home, but they’d come bothering him for divine favors all the time, or deliver him some horrifying bloodied corpse as a sacrifice to his greatness.

Not to mention the heroes who would be eager to put a stop to any cultish behavior in the area. Ugh, when it came to pests, humans pretending to be heroes were the worst!

Letting out a high-pitched groan, Letty lowered his head into his claws. He’ll never find a home! He was doomed to waste Dearia’s time until they were both old and gray; well, grayer for the silver-haired elf. Maybe he should just flop over to the nearest human settlement and let them carve him up into a set of armor. At least then he’ll be useful to someone!

Through his claws, the whimpering dragon noticed his friend step over, a noticeably concerned look on his usually expressionless face. “I take it that becoming a cultist deity doesn’t appeal to you.”

“Not really.” Letty sniffled.

The dragon wiggled his snout when he felt a soft hand rub across it. “Very well.” Dearia smiled. “I believe we’ve seen enough homes for now. I know none of them have been perfectly ideal, but they at least possessed a few qualities you’ve found suitable, yes?”

“M’hm.” Letty nodded weakly.

“Then it’s time we’ve finally made use of all your house-hunting experience. Close your eyes and picture what you believe to be the perfect home. Spare no detail, I want to hear it all.”

“A-alright.” Letty did as he was told, covering his eyes with a claw. He didn’t see how this would help much; making a house out of scratch was also not one of Dearia’s abilities, or else they wouldn’t have had to go on such an adventure to begin with. “W-well... I still wanna live in a big cozy cottage. Big enough for me, of course. I want it to be kinda secluded too; I know you suggested scary traps to ward off heroes, but I’d rather just live somewhere they won’t bother me at all. B-but I want it to look nice too,

not a creepy run-down mansion. It doesn't have to be a mansion either, I don't need all that empty space, just someplace that makes me feel warm and safe just to look at, you know?"

"I see." Letty heard his house-hunting partner respond. "Are you opposed to roommates?"

"Not, not at all! I like having company! Just as long as they're not loud or scary." Letty found himself relaxing, a smile starting to spread across his muzzle. This was pretty fun, actually. Dearia's gentle snout rubs were also comforting as well; that elf always knew exactly where to pet him. "In fact, I want to live somewhere close to nature, like in a forest. Not in the middle of a wasteland, like the tundra, some place surrounded by *life*, you know?"

"Of course." Dearia agreed. "And what material would you like your cottage to be made of?"

"Huh?" Letty blinked open his eyes, looking up at the elf. "I thought all cottages were made out of wood."

"Not quite." Dearia smiled. "If you would be so kind as to follow me, I do believe I know of a location that fits the description you just gave me."

Letty found himself on high alert now as he followed closely behind the elf, his tail swishing excitedly. Dearia certainly caught his attention now, the dragon unable to contain his excitement upon seeing this new home. Or his anxiety. This was Dearia, after all.

"The forest is starting to get a little thick, Dearia. Is this some haunted cottage possessed by the soul of some evil druid who died there thousands of years ago?"

"Nope. There are no spirits who reside near the home, at least not any malevolent ones. The only resident of the cottage is very much alive."

"Oh, so there *is* someone living there already! Are *they* an evil warlord who will try to enslave me?"

"Hardly. She's an elderly cockatrice who wouldn't hurt a fly. And before you ask: No, she will not turn you into stone with her gaze. Her eyesight isn't what it used to be."

Letty opened his mouth, before closing it promptly. Ugh, not fair. Now he had to think of a whole new question. This was the only way to get Dearia to open up and reveal info about this home they were visiting anyways. Everytime Letty tried asking for more details, the elf would wave away his question. "Seeing is believing. You'll understand better when we arrive. We wouldn't want to form negative opinions on the new home before you've even seen it, right?"

Right, because *that* doesn't already make him form negative opinions!

The locale wasn't helping Letty's opinion much either. The path the pair traveled on had vanished hours ago, leading them to simply walk straight into the forest. A forest which was already quite thick to begin with; Letty had to drop back onto all fours once more, as his horns kept getting caught in branches. He was grateful there was still plenty of light left in the day; if it were getting close to night, the long shadows would have started creeping out the poor dragon. He *hated* long and spooky shadows!

Letty was about ready to voice his concerns with the elf when said elf suddenly spoke up. "We're almost there."

The dragon blinked. "How can you tell? Everything looks the same around here." He was certain they'd passed that purple mushroom three times by now.

Dearia glanced back. "Not by looks, Letty. By smell. I'm surprised you haven't noticed it already yourself."

By smell? Letty furrowed his brow. Truthfully, he'd been too preoccupied with the subtly-creepy locale, as well as his conversation with Dearia, to notice any unusual scents. But on the elf's advice, the dragon raised his snout, took a quick whiff, and-

"Oh, yeah, I smell something sweet! Are we by a bakery?" Letty couldn't imagine fitting a small town with a bakery inside such a dense forest.

"Not quite, but you'll see soon enough." Dearia responded in that frustratingly-vague tone of his. But, to the elf's credit, Letty did see for himself soon enough, as a large clearing soon came into view. Sure, it was only large enough for a single building, but just a glance told Letty it was the source of the sugary-sweet smell.

Given that the building itself was a sugary-sweet gingerbread house!

“Woaaaaah!” Letty gasped as he took in the sight, his wide eyes flicking from detail to detail. The soft grainy texture of the gingerbread almost made him believe it was all actually a giant slab of wood, were it not for the smell it produced. It was all held together by frosting too, given the white smudges leaking out from the various cracks where the ‘planks’ of gingerbread stacked up, yet seeing how it formed small ‘icicles’ along the rooftop shingles, Letty almost let out a small shiver despite it being a warm summer’s day. Ah, and those gumdrops looked *adorable* in place of roof tiles! Of course, they were the largest gumdrops Letty had ever seen; the size of his paw, in fact, and his paws were larger than Dearia’s head.

“Th-this is some kinda trick, r-right?” Letty mumbled, not taking his eyes off the gingerbread cottage for a second. “It’s d-dark magic, trying to look appealing, b-but it’s actually some cave where a giant monster is waiting to eat me!”

“No, that definitely is not the case.” Dearia sighed. “What you are seeing is, in fact, not an illusion, nor is it dangerous. This is the cottage you described to me, is it not?”

“I-I mean, I didn’t think it’d be made of candy!” Letty strolled up towards the front porch of the cottage, taking a quick whiff of the gingerbread floorboards. “How is this possible? I-I mean, wouldn’t a building made of food, like, collapse beneath its own weight?”

“Were it made of normal food, yes.” The elf stepped onto the floorboards, and gently rapped his knuckle against the peppermint support beam. “But as you can see, this is anything but normal. A fair bit of magic is infused into the food Jennifer uses with her construction, enough to keep everything stable, but not enough to alter the taste, as she insists.”

Letty blinked. “So... she wants it to taste good, even if it’s her home?”

“Of course.” Dearia turned to smile at the dragon. “Give it a try. I’m sure she’d love to hear your feedback.”

“U-uh, sure.” Letty wasn’t so sure how to feel about eating someone else’s house, specifically a house that might end up being his. If Jennifer ended up being his roommate and the one who built the cottage, he wouldn’t want her to think he was some mindless glutton. But, if Dearia insisted, then maybe it wouldn’t hurt to have a sample lick. The elf may occasionally omit important details, but he’s never outright lied before.

So, the dragon stepped closer towards the peppermint pillar, and gave it a quick lick. “H-hey, not bad!” He expected it to taste a bit dusty, given it was pretty much sitting outside, but no, it was as though the peppermint was just unwrapped! Swishing his tail, the red-scaled drake gave it a few more licks. It tasted pretty good! What if he were to wrap his jaws around the peppermint beam and-

Letty’s goat-like ears snapped up as he heard the front door open, an unfamiliar voice calling out. “Oh, it’s about time you got here, Dearia! I was starting to think you two would never show up!”

Gah! That must be Jennifer! With a yelp, Letty tugged his head back, only to realize in horror that his teeth had gotten stuck to the softened peppermint. Whimpering like a dog that had just wronged its owner, the poor dragon yanked and yanked his neck back, before finally prying it free, albeit with a loud *crack*! Oh no, he chipped the peppermint, and now a piece was stuck to his tooth!

“A-aaah! I’m tho thorry, mith! That wath an athident!” The drake whined, frantically trying to lick the peppermint off him in the middle of his blubbering apology. Great, talk about a terrible first impression. How was he supposed to recover from that?!

But to his surprise, the cockatrice didn’t yell, but rather let out a soft chuckle instead. “It’s quite alright, dear! Was it to your liking? Was it sweet enough? I could add more sugar to the next batch.”

“O-oh, it, uh... it was pretty good.” Letty smacked his lips clean of the lingering peppermint. Dearia had mentioned she was a harmless cockatrice, but hearing her gentle laugh actually made the dragon believe it. For someone considered ‘elderly,’ Jennifer’s feathery plumage looked as bright and vibrant as any other cockatrice Letty had seen before, all bright hues of red along her head, down to orangish-yellows the lower down her body, all ending with a green-scaled tail and wings. At a glance, she looked to be in her prime; it was her soft and gentle voice that told Letty she was, as opposed to the typical shrill shrieks their species tend to have.

But really, was Letty the one who should be judging how someone should be acting in accordance with their species?

“Letty,” Dearia spoke, gesturing to the cockatrice. “This is Jennifer-”

“Just Jenny is fine. Or Jen!” The avian smiled.

“Right.” Dearia continued. “She has built and maintained this cottage on her own for the past 50 years now. I reached out to her in advance, and she agreed to let you stay with her to let you get an understanding of what her living situation is like. She’s open to roommates, so if you’d like to stay and make this your new home, that’s perfectly acceptable.”

“O-oh! Ok!” Letty perked up. The fact that Jennifer was much calmer and friendlier than her species let on made the dragon like her that much more. The two were kindred spirits, in a way. “I-it’s nice to meet you, Miss Jenny! I’m Letty, and I’ll make sure I won’t be in your way too much.” The dragon held out a claw. Letty was quite clumsy, which wasn’t so “cute” when you’re the size of a dragon.

But Jenny let out another soft chuckle, clasping that claw in both wings. “You’re fine, sweetie! Gosh, Dearia told me he was bringing a dragon, but I didn’t expect such a cutie! I can tell we’re gonna get along like peas in a pod.”

“O-oh, uh, thank you!” Letty smiled shyly. No fear or laughter at how undragonlike the dragon was! That made her the second person he’d met to do so, the first being Dearia, of course.

Speaking of, the elf nodded as they shook hands. “I’m pleased to see you two hitting it off so quickly. If everything is in order, I shall make my leave. I’ll be sure to check in on you in one week’s time to see how you are liking your arrangements-”

“Give him a month, Dearia! I could really use the extra company, and I wouldn’t want to stress him with a time limit.”

Dearia paused, glaring right at the cockatrice. They didn’t speak for a moment, and while the elf maintained his typical neutral expression, Letty felt a slight shiver run up his spine. There was some subtle iciness in Dearia’s stare, so subtle that Jenny must not have noticed, given she continued to look right back with that warm smile on her face. Or maybe she did notice, and was simply trying to counteract that iciness with her own fire.

She must have won, as Dearia closed his eyes and sighed. “Very well. A month it is, if you have no objections, Letty.”

“U-uhm, not at all.” The dragon blinked. Dearia had never left him to a new home for a week before, let alone a month. The longest Letty had been left alone was for three days, and that was the Dark Lord’s method of trying to toughen up the dragon.

Obviously it failed, but Letty learned his friend had been watching him the entire time so he'd never been in any real danger. If the elf was willing to leave him for a whole month, well, it must mean he really did have nothing to fear. A bit odd, sure, but also reassuring in a way. Thus, he was able to smile and wave as the elf took his leave. "See you in a month, then!"

Soon, he was interrupted at a gentle tug on his arm, the dragon looking down to see his new housemate gesture inside. "Come in, come in! You know Dearia isn't fond of sappy farewells. You should let me show you around instead."

"O-oh, sure!" Letty smiled and nodded. That's true, he was dying to know what was inside! Flicking his tail eagerly, the dragon shuffled after the cockatrice, padding inside the cottage and-

"W-wow!"

Letty had heard of places being bigger on the inside, but this place really was bigger! He had his fears when he found out his roommate would be a species averaging 3 feet in height, but there was so much room the dragon could actually stand on his hind legs again, even spread out his wings. Already, this looked like the perfect interior for a dragon.

And this was just the beginning!

Incredibly, everything inside was made of sweets, yet that wasn't even what stuck out to Letty. The interior just felt so much *warmer* than outside. Not temperature wise either; the dull and dreary lighting of the dense forest paled to the bright and vibrant interior. Everything had some kind of warm glow to it, as though it were reflecting some invisible light source. Dearia had mentioned the building was made structurally strong with magic; was it that same magic that made everything so vibrant?

"Like what you see?" Jenny chuckled as she strode into the foyer. "I must have made a good first impression."

"Yeah, it's amazing!" Letty quickly realized his jaw was agape, but he was too stunned to care! Everything looked so pretty, he was even afraid of stepping on the candied rug. He wanted to sit on those soft marshmallowy couches and read, or laze beside the chocolate fireplace- obviously it wasn't lit, as having an open fire there would perhaps be a bit disastrous, but with how *warm* everything felt, Letty could have easily

been fooled. Gosh, and the smell of everything just now reached his brain. It was all so sweet and yummy and-

Letty blushed, hearing his stomach gurgle loudly. That excited look quickly dropped to one of pure terror. "A-ah! I-I'm sorry, Miss Jenny! I-I won't eat your house, I promise!"

But Jenny just laughed at that flustered face. "Oh ho ho! It sounds like you *really* want a nibble though! Well, you're welcome to try some of the interior if you've still got room after dinner."

Letty blinked. "Dinner?"

"Yes, dinner!" Jenny happily trotted off. "Come along, dear. With any luck, it's still warm."

"O-ok!" The dragon rushed after. Jenny was just too nice! She didn't sound bothered by Letty wanting to nibble on her home, in fact it sounded like she encouraged it! Well, maybe after dinner, like she said. Letty might very well have room for more; a meal for a tiny cockatrice and a meal for a large dragon were two entirely different things, after all.

Yet, Letty found himself stopping to gawk once again as he entered the kitchen doorway. That wasn't a meal, that was a *feast!*

That table could have fit five men on each side, yet the entire thing was nearly covered in platters of food! Warm bowls of pudding, fresh donuts sprinkled with powdered sugar, delicious looking kiwi and strawberry tarts, and soooo many different pies, ranging from key lime to coconut cream! It was all so overwhelming, Letty felt ready to faint.

But Jenny didn't seem to notice the dragon's stunned expression; even without her ability to turn others into stone, she'd done an excellent job of freezing Letty in place. "Well don't just stand there, dear. Dig in!" She exclaimed, pulling out a gingerbread chair.

"U-uhhhh." Letty swallowed back a wave of saliva. Between that, and the cockatrice pulling out a comically small chair for the dragon, he didn't know where to start. "This is... it's so much food, Miss Jenny! Are you sure?"

"Of course! I wouldn't have made so much if I wasn't." The cockatrice laughed, now settling into her own seat. "It's not often an old nut-job like myself gets to have guests over, let alone someone who's thinking of moving in! If I'm gonna win 'em over, I gotta put my best foot forward, right?"

"Th-that's my line," Letty mumbled. He still felt a tad overwhelmed that someone would go so out of their way for him, but it's not like he could see this wonderful feast and *not* take part in it! Shyly, he shuffled towards the opposite end of the table that Jenny sat at, but decided to sit on his haunches as opposed to using the chairs. It'd be humiliating if he broke Jenny's furniture right in front of her! "S-still, this is so much food... wouldn't you want to save some for later?"

"Pffft." Jenny waved a wing dismissively. "Everything's better fresh, I always say. I have *plenty* of food, hun. You couldn't eat me out of house and home if you tried, although you're certainly welcome to."

"O-oh." Letty nodded.

"Plus," Jenny continued. "I made some for Dearia too, if he were to join us. Sadly I can never make him stick around long enough for him to try my cooking. If you could eat his portion too, I'd be much obliged."

"O-oh!" Now that caught Letty's attention. He was being asked to eat more? Normally, when it came to others offering food, the dragon was requested to eat *less*! He swallowed back another mouthful of saliva, finding his willpower quickly fading in the presence of such a request, yet he couldn't help but ask one more time. "A-are you absolutely sure?"

"Yes!" The cockatrice exclaimed, almost in exasperation. "Nothing warms my heart like seeing someone enjoying my cooking. Please, clear the entire table, if you must!"

"Alright, if you say so!" Letty licked his lips, gripping his tiny graham cracker fork and knife tight enough to almost crack them. "I'll eat until I can't take another bite, then!"

"I-I can't, hurrf, take another bite!"

Letty groaned weakly through his mouthful of coconut cream pie. Phew, this was easily more than he'd ever eaten in one sitting before. The table almost looked like a battlefield, with platters full of crumbs and half-eaten delicacies. It was a battle, for sure, and given how delicious that mouthful of food was, Letty considered himself the victor.

Or, maybe it was Jennifer, for upon hearing the dragon's exclamation, carefully trotted along the table, carefully stepping her talons through the various platters littered about, to pick up one with several bites still remaining. "Oh, don't be modest! There's some more donuts here, if you'd like!"

The dragon whimpered, holding up his hands. "N-no, really! I can't, urrrf, I'm too full!" He patted his stuffed stomach for emphasis, the cream-scaled surface now swollen like a balloon. It was so taut to the touch, too; one prick from a needle, and it'd be game over!

The cockatrice looked crest-fallen, as her head crest had drooped slightly, before perking right back up. "Fair enough. What's important is that you enjoyed it, right?"

"Oh, for sure!" Letty nodded softly. Really, he could hardly remember details of the feast itself! One moment, his brain was overwhelmed at the sheer sugary sweetness entering his mouth at breakneck speeds, the next he was too stuffed to even breathe properly! "I-I'm no gourmet, hrrf, but everything... it was all so good!"

"That's wonderful! You have no idea how happy that makes me." Jenny chirped. She could have simply left it at that, but to Letty's surprise, the cockatrice leaned forward to gently rub the bridge of the dragon's snout, much like how Dearia would. "You did such a good job, dear, eating as much as you have. Thank you for making this silly hen's day."

"D-don't mention it." Letty blushed. He shyly turned his head away, more for Jenny's sake than his own; one unexpected belch might send the poor flightless bird flying! The snout rubs were a little odd, but they definitely weren't unappreciated; the dragon slowly closed his green eyes, letting out a few relaxed sighs between his brief grunts.

"Heh, you look ready to fall over, hun." Jenny teased, tapping the edge of Letty's nose. "Would you like to call it a day? I have your sleeping arrangements all laid out if you'd like to see."

“H-huh?” Letty grunted, forcing himself to rise up. Oof, his aching stomach. “N-no, I’m alright, Miss Jenny! I should, hurf, at least help wash the dishes.” Besides, he could tell through a glance out the (sugar) window that there was still some light out. Wasn’t it too early for bedtime?

But Jenny just chuckled and shook her head. “You were practically snoring just now, Letty! I prefer doing the dishes on my own anyways; I have a flow I like to get into, and I’d rather not have a big dragon in my kitchen getting in the way, no offense.”

Her smile suddenly turned a touch sinister. “Buuuut, there is one way for you to help clean the plates, if you insist.” The cockatrice lifted the half-full plate of donuts towards Letty’s snout once again.

Letty’s eyes went wide at the implication, the dragon quickly scrambling back. “Gaah! A-alright, I’ll go to bed!” He whimpered. Sheesh, if Jenny made him eat even more, she’d have a much bigger mess on her hands!

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The dragon knew what to expect at this point when he saw the guest bedroom, yet even so, he was still surprised. The room was quite large and comfortable, but what stole the show was the bed itself. It was made of the same marshmallow-y substance as the couches he saw earlier, both mattress and pillow, with bedsheets and a blanket made of thickly woven cotton candy, all while resting atop a chocolatey frame. Honestly, it looked adorable; Letty could imagine seeing something like this at a much smaller scale at some sort of bake sale.

Seeing one large enough for a dragon like himself to comfortably sprawl on made it all the more impressive! It was almost enough to make him forget about his overwhelming fullness from dinner. Almost.

“W-wow,” Letty muttered, squeezing the side of the squishy mattress. He turned to look at the cockatrice smiling smugly in the doorway. “Is this bed-”

“-Edible? 100%!” Jenny beamed. “Of all the furniture you’ve seen here, the beds are my pride and joy. You’ll never have to get up to find a midnight snack!”

“I-I was gonna ask if it was sturdy enough for me.” Letty’s ears folded back. He only *almost* forgot about his fullness from dinner.

Still, the dragon realized quickly it was a rather silly question. The floorboards were made of similar stuff, and they haven't given out beneath him, right? Heck, Jenny looked confident earlier when she pulled out a seat for Letty. It was hard to remember that appearances were deceiving here, and that everything was more structurally sound than they looked. A large bed could even fit an overfed drake, after all.

Only one way to find out. Letty carefully pressed his forepaws into the cushiony surface, before dragging himself on top. The chocolate frame creaked softly, but otherwise held firm. The dragon let out a content sigh as he felt himself sink softly into the marshmallow mattress, hardly bothering to bring the rest of himself up, his hindlegs and tail draped over the edge. "Mmmfwrarf!"

"What was that, hun?"

"I-I said it's cozy!" Letty rumbled in delight, finally worming his way onto the bed properly, face-planting into the pillow. "I never knew how nice it'd be to lay on top of a giant marshmallow. I just... mmmf!" Bit by bit, the dragon could feel his muscles relaxing further into the bed; a reminder of how exhausted he was from not just the feast, but the long walk here as well. He could already tell he would get an incredible night's sleep.

Letty barely even managed to roll onto his back in time to find the cockatrice flutter onto the bed. Grabbing the edge of the cotton candy blanket in one of her talons, Jenny carefully marched forward with it, draping it atop the laying dragon. "That's wonderful, dear. Would you like anything more before you hit the hay? A warm glass of milk, perhaps?"

"N-no, that's fine!" Letty whined, although he didn't do much to protest. The blanket was so warm and fluffy, and not at all itchy like he assumed it would be. How the cotton candy didn't melt against his body heat was beyond him. Fire Dragons had high internal temperatures, after all. "Really, you've been so wonderful and kind to me, I don't know how I could ever repay you."

But Jenny quickly shook her head, waving a wing. "I've told you before, dear, you don't have to worry about repaying me. We can discuss rent and whatnot after your month is up. This is your free month to get used to living with a crazy ol' coot like myself. Think of it like your own little vacation away from home, only with it possibly *becoming* your home!"

"R-right." Letty nodded softly, pulling the covers up closer. Honestly, he couldn't think of a single reason why he *wouldn't* want to live here right now. Even the tummy

ache of food felt strangely nice on his body now that he was tucked into bed, the extra weight in his middle strangely comforting.

The dragon watched as Jenny fluttered off the bed, strutting out the door. "You have a good night's rest, hun. If you need anything, I'm only a holler away."

"Alright, a-and thank you, again!" Letty smiled as he closed his eyes. He should really think of some way to thank Jenny by the end of the month, even if he doesn't end up staying for longer, as unlikely as that sounds. Alas, it was a bit difficult to think properly as the food coma gradually overtook him. Soon, he was lost in a wonderful dream of soaring through the air, flying through puffy clouds and taking big bites out of them.

Maybe it wasn't all a dream; Letty woke up to find several large bites taken out of his blanket, along with a very sticky muzzle.

Despite Jenny's insisting otherwise, Letty couldn't help but feel like he was taking advantage of the cockatrice's generosity.

For days now, he'd been trying to be a more receptive guest, to ask about herself, the house, everything! Yet, he failed to do so every time. The morning after his first night, for example, he came into the kitchen to look for Jenny, only to find yet another enormous sprawl of food for him to try! Thankfully it wasn't quite as massive as last night's, as Letty was actually able to finish it all with Jenny's encouragement, yet the dragon felt so bloated afterward he couldn't do much more than vegetate on the couch, dozing in and out of consciousness. Eventually he was roused from an impromptu nap, but no sooner did his feet touch the ground did Jenny call him in for another meal.

And, well, the cycle went on.

But Letty was determined to break that cycle!

Ignoring the heavy grumbling coming from his stomach (those breakfast crepes were *amazing*), Letty forged on past his desire to nap in search of Jenny. The cockatrice excused herself midway through their morning meal, perhaps now confident that the dragon would finish it all without her insistence. Well, sure enough, he did, and he couldn't wait to tell her the fact!

Problem was: He didn't feel too comfortable exploring someone else's cottage without them. Letty didn't want to accidentally poke his snout into random doorways that might be off limits, such as in Jenny's personal room. Calling for her to give him a tour just sounded rude as well, not to mention the possibility that he might not even call her name, but instead a loud, accidental belch. Yeah, that'd be infinitely ruder!

So maybe he could peak around somewhere he wouldn't get in trouble for looking, such as the back porch?

Nursing his bloated belly with one arm, the red dragon hobbled towards the back door, carefully opening it. Having spent several nights in the magic gingerbread cottage, Letty had assumed he was fully prepared for any strange or unusual sights he might find.

He was wrong.

The dragon stood still in the doorway, jaw hanging open as he peered outside. The clearing was *far* larger than he anticipated, for he saw an enormous, beautiful garden before him that must have stretched nearly a kilometer out! It was a beautiful, colorful masterpiece, yet there wasn't a single flower to be seen. Fields of raspberries, blueberries, black berries; orchids of apples, pears, plums; even fields of wheat and sugar cane! Well, this certainly solved the question of where Jenny got the ingredients she needed for her cooking, as well as for how said cooking managed to taste so fresh and delicious. And here Letty assumed it was all magic!

Well, at least that assumption was half correct.

What was perhaps equally as impressive as the garden itself was the method in which it was all harvested. Hoes tilled the earth, watering cans moistened the plants, wheelbarrows carried plots of dirt, all without anyone to move them around! Everywhere Letty looked, he could see farming equipment floating around, tirelessly working on the garden itself. Even some of the fruit itself seemingly had a mind of its own, leaping from their vines or branches to fall into the floating wicker baskets. It was all so... mesmerizing.

"Oh, there you are, Letty! Finished with breakfast already?"

“Eep!” Letty flinched, looking over his side. He didn’t even notice Jenny sitting at the edge of the porch, looking over the autonomous garden. “O-oh, uh, yes. It was delicious, like always. I’m, erh, not bothering you, am I?”

“Not at all! You’re never a bother, hun.” The cockatrice smiled warmly, patting the spot next to her with a wing. “Have a seat. You looked like you were enjoying the view.”

“O-oh, sure!” Letty nodded, carefully positioning himself next to his host. Hopefully she didn’t mind the soft grunts he did to readjust himself, or the creaking of the ~~wood~~ gingerbread beneath his weight. Urf.

The cockatrice must not have minded, as she gently placed a wing on his leg. “I like to come out here once in a while to unwind a smidge. It’s fun listening to the tools at work, but you’re more than welcome to come join me out here as well. I’m sure a big dragon like yourself must feel a little cooped up in my tiny little abode.”

“Not at all, Miss Jenny! It’s the perfect size for me. I prefer small spaces anyways; they make me feel cozy and safe!” Letty smiled brightly. “Still, I’ll definitely take you up on the offer. I could sit and look out there for hours.”

Letty hadn’t even thought of taking in the sound, as the sight alone was mesmerizing enough. However, once he attuned himself to the gentle pricks of spades or hoes digging, the snips of sheers and sickles, or even the plucks of fruit freeing themselves and landing into an empty basket, well, it was genuinely serene. It was like watching a well-oiled machine at work, without the well-oiled machine.

“Miss Jenny?” Letty asked after a moment, shyly tilting his head. “I-I know Dearia said you built the cottage, but did you- I mean, are you also making the garden, uh, do all of this, too?”

The cockatrice let out an amused hum. “That I am. I’ve been doing this for years, dear. Long enough that I can, and still do, work in my sleep.”

“That’s amazing!” The dragon sat upright, his tail swishing behind him. “How did you learn to make this? Was it hard learning?”

“Not quite as hard as you think.” Jenny let out a soft chuckle. “A long time ago, perhaps around the time you started hatching from your egg, I met a mighty warlock who offered me a very enticing offer. He’d grant me the power to create the home of my dreams, and in return I’d grant him something only I could offer.”

Letty nodded along. He didn't mean to pry, but his curiosity overtook him. "What did you give him?"

Jenny laughed as she turned to look up at the dragon. "My eyes, of course!"

The dragon blinked. He had seen the cockatrice's face several times by now, obviously, but this was the first time he paid close attention to his host's eyes. Sure enough, her yellow eyes had a noticeably cloudy haze over them. Letty assumed her failing eyesight was the result of her age; to think the eyes he was looking at weren't even Jenny's own...

"Oh, don't give me that look! I can still see well enough to tell you're feeling bad for me!" Jenny let out a loud chortle, her head crest bobbing up and down. "Honestly, it was a win-win deal for me! I could create the perfect home for me, and also lose the one defining trait that made cockatrice's so feared? It was exactly what I wanted! The warlock must have given me a good deal, since I doubt no other cockatrice would have taken that offer. That might be why my family hasn't spoken to me since."

"I-I see." Letty nodded. He didn't want to sound, or look, like he was pitying Jenny, but that last sentence hit close to home for him.

The avian continued, turning back to look at her field. "I'd do it all again, too. It was so much fun, having humans visit to try my food and keep me company. The compliments to my cooking only made it all the more enjoyable; I do love it when they'd try brown-nosing me for more treats, hah! My cottage was seen as some whimsical, exciting land, and I couldn't have been happier."

Jenny let out a soft sigh, her gaze lowering slightly. "Ah, but all good things come to an end. Rumors about me soon began spreading like butter melting on a warm window sill. People started calling me a witch. Not exactly inaccurate, as there's hardly anything normal about me or these powers, but once a rumor starts, it's hard to stop it. I started getting less and less visitors, human or otherwise, until soon they drove me from their land. I had to start all over here in this neck of the woods, although the only visitors I get now are those who are *very* lost, or from those who are well informed like our friend Dearia."

Well now Letty was *absolutely* pitying Jenny after hearing that, and he wasn't afraid to show it either! He lowered his own head as well, looking past his round tummy and onto the floor. "I'm so sorry, Jenny. I don't have good luck with humans, either. It's

either 'aaaah, don't eat me!' Or 'foul beast, taste my sword!' If I hadn't had Dearia with me, I would have been turned into plate-mail armor by now, or-or fastened into jewelry. S-Some humans have even said they wanted to roast and eat me!"

At that, Jenny snapped to attention, her yellow eyes wide. "How awful, Letty! I should be the one saying sorry to you! I can't believe humans would dare try to eat a nice dragon like yourself, even if you did have melt-right-off-the-bone ribs, or tail meat that marbled beautifully when cooked over an open flame."

"R-right..." Letty felt a tad nauseous. He knew Jenny was trying to reassure him, but those descriptions were making him a bit uncomfortable. Her mind must constantly be on 'cook' mode.

At least he didn't need to say anything for Jenny to gasp and hold a wing to her beak. "Oh dear. TMI, huh? I'm sorry, Letty, I didn't mean anything by it. Talking about humans reminded me of the meat they used to bring. Ooh, how I miss it."

"I-it's ok, Jenny, really." Letty nodded. The mention of meat did bring up a point. With how much sweets, treats, fruits, and so on the dragon had eaten up to this point, he was starting to crave something a little different. "You don't get meat often?"

"Heavens, no. I'm strongly against farming, and I'm not exactly much of a hunter. Didn't think that one through when I traded in my eyes, did I?" Jenny laughed, tapping the side of her head. "No, meat's a very rare commodity for me. But I believe I'll be getting some veeeeery soon."

"Really? How soon?!" Letty perked up. Despite feeling so bloated a moment ago, he suddenly felt ready for seconds!

"It'll be ready by the end of the month." Jenny winked. "That's why I wanted Dearia to let you stay longer than just a week. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to enjoy it!"

"O-oh, wow! Thanks, Jenny! If you're cooking it, then it's bound to be amazing." Letty could feel himself start to drool already, the dragon licking his chops. "B-but really, I know I keep saying this, but thank you so much for being so kind to me. You've been nothing but amazing, and I really wanna repay you in some way. Anything you want, and I'll do it!"

“Yes, yes, and you’ll keep asking me until I give you an order, right?” Jenny let out another chuckle, before standing herself up. “Your company and kind words are payment enough, silly dragon. But if that’s not enough, then how about this: I’ve been thinking of a new lemon bar recipe lately, and I’d love for someone to try it and tell me what they think.”

Letty blinked. “M-more food?!” There was just no off-switch to her, was there!?

The cockatrice ruffled her feathers and smiled. “Only if you’d like, of course. I’d have you sample all my recipes if I could, but not if it leaves you aching or sick. I know I tend to be a bit overbearing when it comes to food, so please don’t hesitate to stop me if I’m pushing you past your limits.”

Letty tilted his head. Truthfully, he was still hard-wired into thinking that eating someone else’s food meant he was indebting himself to them. To repay a debt *by* eating food felt like such a foreign concept to him. But Jenny genuinely wanted him to eat. Now that he thought about it, she always looked so delighted watching the dragon stuff himself. She rarely ate, herself!

The drake smiled and stood up, ignoring his stuffed stomach. “Sure! I’d be happy to eat whatever you make for me!”

Urf, he should have signed a contract when he agreed to that.

If Letty thought his previous portions were massive, then he was in no way prepared for the barrage of food foisted upon him! It looked as though that full tour of the cottage was just not going to happen; it often took all of the poor dragon’s power just to escape from the table! Even then, sometimes he’d barely make it a few steps before collapsing onto his back, with Jenny fluttering on top of his drum-taut stomach and holding out two platters of brownies to his muzzle, asking “which one tastes more tart” or something along those lines.

And of course Letty couldn’t stop at just one! Jenny hated food waste, and those treats were just so, so, so addictingly delicious!

Despite his bellyaching, both literal and metaphorical, Letty did enjoy their exchange quite a bit. The drake struggled with self confidence, so it felt great to know he was helping someone doing the one thing he couldn’t mess up- aside from the time

he nearly choked on a raspberry tart. It was worth pretending he wasn't as stuffed silly as it was to sneak in a few extra bites if it meant giving a good word to Jenny. She definitely deserved it, the way she'd stay by the lying dragon's side to rub along his swollen stomach should he not make it to the bed, or offer him some tonic water to ease his belly pains. It was a strange relationship they shared, sure, but Letty hardly minded it all. He got a cozy house and as much food as he could ever want, and Jenny got a taste tester who could eat more than any human. Where was the problem?

The answer: Letty was starting to put on weight.

In hindsight, that sounded obvious. Of *course* he was gonna put on weight! All that eating and sleeping with next to no exercise would do that to anyone. Perhaps in his mind, he simply assumed it wouldn't, that the magic used to make food structurally sound enough to be used as building materials would also prevent anyone from gaining weight from eating it. Jenny wasn't fat, after all. Well fed, perhaps, but hardly in the realm of chubby.

But Letty? Well...

The dragon couldn't stop blushing as he squeezed at the belly that had most definitely not been there when he first arrived, feeling the cream-colored scales squeeze so easily between his claws. To think he didn't see this coming, that any other sign could have been easily explained away. Feeling lethargic and heavy? Well, that was from all the heavy eating, obviously. Feeling his gut bump against his arms or legs? Just a food bloat from the food!

Oh, but this wasn't a bloat. Bloats don't squish against his claws, or jiggle when he walks, or make *wobwob* sloshing sounds when shaken with both paws. This wasn't a bloat.

No, this was fat. Letty was getting fat.

As if to remind him it wasn't a bloat, his belly let out a loud gurgle that the dragon could practically feel against his claws. This was one of those rare moments where it wasn't stuffed to the gills, only now that draconic gut was getting accustomed to it, to the point where it was now demanding sustenance! It called for breakfast, yet woke up Letty far too early for breakfast, seeing as how the sun was only starting to rise from the window.

Oooh, what should he do? He was barely a week into his stay with Jenny, and he already felt so plump! If he kept this up, he'd be a *whale* by the end of the month?

Maybe Jenny would know what to do?

With a whimper, the dragon waddled out from his room, now acutely aware of feeling his belly jiggling with every step, not to mention the floorboards creaking. It was quite early in the morning, but surely Jenny must be up by now. After all, how else would she have time to make those enormous breakfast feasts?

Sure enough, he ran into the cockatrice right outside the kitchen. Jenny had one talon in the doorway, before turning to look at her approaching houseguest. "Oh, you're up early!" She chirped. "Don't worry, hun. I'll have breakfast out soon."

"W-wait!" Letty whined, stopping the cockatrice before she turned around. "U-um, before you do, c-can I ask a question?"

Jenny smiled and fully turned around, shutting the door behind her. "Of course! Unless the question is today's special. That's a secret."

"R-right." The dragon felt his mouth go dry. This wasn't helping. Neither were his nerves coming up to bite him at the last minute; if he was getting fat, then Jenny might start feeling responsible, wouldn't she? That wouldn't be very fair at all!

He took a deep breath through his nose, feeling his belly expand out, before sighing through the mouth. Time to rip this band-aid off. "M-miss Jenny? D-do you think I'm... g-getting fatter?"

Jenny blinked, squinted her eyes, then leaned forward. Cocking her head to the side, the avian finally gave a casual shrug. "I dunno. Are you?"

Not helpful!

Letty's goat-like ears pressed firmly against his head. Of course, her eyesight wasn't very good. Maybe he didn't look too fat at all! Still, he should say something before his weight issue grows out of control. "W-well, uh, I mean..." The dragon gripped his belly again, giving it a soft shake. "I'm, uh... s-starting to jiggle. I didn't use to before..."

"I see." Jenny nodded, rubbing her beak. "Do me a favor, dear, and drop to all fours so I can get a better look at you."

"O-okay." Letty did as he was instructed, though he wished he did so a little less... heavily. The *thump* rattled the furniture, as well as bounce his pot belly about, before it settled into a gentle sway. On all fours and on hind legs, Letty felt fat either way.

To Jenny, 'a better look' meant seeing with her wings, apparently. The cockatrice strode up to her chubby houseguest and, to Letty's embarrassment, began pressing her wings against the side of his belly, feeling the squishy scales for herself. "M'hm."

It didn't end there. If Letty thought the weight gain was primarily on his stomach, he was quickly corrected. She gave his thighs and upper arms both a squeeze, both now soft and yielding despite how tense the dragon felt. His tail had also thickened up as well, with the underside of the base being particularly soft. She even had Letty lower his head to give his cheeks a good squish, the dragon noting they were starting to grow a little rounder, as well as how thick his neck had grown... Goodness, when had the underside of his muzzle gotten soft?! Was that a *thing* that happened with fat dragons?!

Letty felt ready to faint from embarrassment, but he held strong. It was just a little bit of weight, he told himself. The last thing he wanted was to make a bad impression on Jenny, right? Well, soon enough she'll stop finding parts of his body to squeeze.

Eventually.

Letty's growling stomach must have been the timer Jenny waited for, as the cockatrice finally stopped to take a step back once it made a noise. Anxiously swallowing, the dragon looked down at his host. "W-well."

Jenny shrugged. "I'd say so. You've definitely grown plump, hun. I'm not surprised, given how much you've been eating."

So blunt! Letty wanted to fall into a hole and hide forever. A hole big enough for his fat dumb body!

The cockatrice continued. "That's not a bad thing, dear, not at all! When I first saw you, I thought you were a bit small for a dragon, and that can only mean you're not eating enough! Actually, don't dragons like to pride themselves on their size, being the biggest and baddest and what not?"

“Y-yeah.” Letty nodded. “B-but this might be considered cheating.” He couldn’t bear to show his face to Jenny, hiding his face behind a wing. He already had enough troubles as is being a dragon; but being a *fat* dragon... oh dear. He heard enough people yelling “don’t eat me” in front of him, but now he’ll be hearing “don’t eat all our food” instead! Not to mention how many more ‘heroes’ would be coming after him. His hide would be worth more if there was more of him!

But worst of all, and he genuinely meant *worst* of all; it meant he wouldn’t be able to enjoy more of Jenny’s wonderful cooking, and seeing her smile while eating it.

“U-Um, M-Miss Jenny?” The dragon sniffled, sneaking a peek through his wing-goodness, was even *that* getting chubby too?! “D-do you know how I can... lose weight?”

The cockatrice sighed, stepping over to gently rub that snout. “Hun, I promise it’s not that much. I may not be the right cockatrice to say this, but you look fine. The extra softness just makes you look as cute and sweet on the outside as you are on the inside, that’s all.”

“R-really?” Letty’s chubby cheeks flushed slightly.

“Of course.” The avian smiled. “I’ll tell you what. I may not know much about diets and weight loss, but I’ll try and change up my menu just for you. It’ll be a fun little cooking challenge for me! I was planning on making some blueberry muffins for breakfast, but now I’ll add a little less sugar and butter into them, make them a bit less fattening. We’ll call them ‘diet blueberry muffins,’ heh. How does that sound?”

Letty perked up, raising his head. “Y-you mean I can keep eating your cooking, and I won’t get fatter?”

“Something like that!” Jenny nodded.

The dragon smiled so wide, he didn’t mind the dimples in his cheeks. “That sounds great! Thank you so much, Miss Jenny!” It sounded more than great, it was perfect! Even his stomach roared in agreement, happy as long as it got fed. Of course Letty felt a bit bad in asking Jenny to tweak her menu to suit his needs, but if the cockatrice didn’t mind, then everything was great!

With that, Letty was free to enjoy a large helping of diet blueberry muffins, along with diet pancakes, diet waffles, diet hashbrowns, diet crepes, diet oatmeal glazed cake...

Jenny was such a good cook! Even though they're healthier, the food still tasted the same!

To think, Letty had been here for nearly two weeks, and only now did he notice the bookshelves by the couch.

That was because the couch was typically for Letty to crash on after an intense meal if he couldn't make it to his bed. Jenny's food might be less fattening now, but that just meant she had ever more recipes for the dragon to try. It wasn't enough to stuff him silly at mealtimes, now. No, the cockatrice left out bowls of fresh brownies, tarts, and other finger food for her guest to enjoy 'at your convenience.' It sounded like a silly idea for the drake, who was often left panting and wheezing as though every meal were a marathon, but everytime he passed by one such bowl, well, he couldn't help but to lighten its contents just a smidgeon. Why not?

After all, he didn't have to worry about his weight anymore with Jenny taking care of him.

Sure, he wasn't really losing any weight either, since there was only so much healthy food could do. He still felt his belly bounce on his hindlegs or sway when on all fours, or feel rolls bunch up when he turned his head or swished his tail, or feel the doorways start to feel a smidgeon narrower than he felt they should be. But hey, this was supposed to be a vacation, right? Jenny said so herself! If this didn't work out, then his travels with Dearia would surely help melt the fat right off his body.

Although truth be told, he found it difficult to find a reason *not* to make this place his new home!

He was even starting to get used to these intense meals! This last dinner wasn't different from the rest, as Letty found himself waddling away as full and bloated as ever before, to the point where it felt cumbersome moving around his spherical belly! But while he was certainly full, he wasn't stuffed silly, nor did he feel the need to pass out. In

fact, when he saw the bowl full of cookies on a nearby dresser, he didn't take just one or three, but rather the entire bowl itself! They were still warm, after all.

This was where he discovered the bookshelf. Surely it had been there the whole time; Letty just never noticed it in his near-comatose states. Now, however, he was eager to see what fantasy worlds lay beyond those covers. Reading had always been one of his favorite pastimes, and what better place to read than inside a warm cottage, with a plate full of cookies and a tummy full of food?

The answer is inside a warm cottage, with a plate full of cookies and a tummy full of food *on a couch*.

Letty paused when he looked down at the couch. For some odd reason, he felt a little hesitant to lay on it, but why did he? That couch was obviously big enough for a dragon his size; he flopped on it countless times ever since coming here. Well, it was a little creaky, maybe even a bit more than creaky as of late, but that's just something all of Jenny's furniture did!

Then why was his brain ringing alarm bells? Why was he so apprehensive to lay on it? And why were these cookies *so darn good*?!

Prying himself away from the bowl long enough to set it down by the floor, Letty carefully crouched down by the couch. It was made of the same stuff his bed was: A chocolatey frame with marshmallow cushioning. Outside of sounding absolutely delicious, it was sure to hold him up fine, and the only way to get this anxious tick out of his head was to sit on it himself.

With one hand leaning against the backrest and the other the armrest, Letty awkwardly raised his leg so that his knee would rest on top of the cushion, ignoring the rolls forming along his hips as he did so. What he couldn't ignore was his stomach almost immediately pressing into the cushion far sooner than he anticipated, drawing out a sudden *BWUWRRP* from the dragon. Oops, hopefully Jenny didn't hear-

"Nice one!" Jenny's voice sounded from across the cottage.

Letty blushed.

Alas, the couch was creaking quite loudly. Letty was used to this kind of creaking, but hearing it while having the majority of his weight resting on the leg that *wasn't* on the couch wasn't a good sign. Again, his brain signaled alarms to get off, but Letty was

determined. This might end up his permanent reading spot; he *had* to know how comfy it would be! Gritting his teeth, the pudgy dragon geeeeeeently lowered himself. Yeah, yeah, easy does it. Alright, so far so good. No, that wasn't the chocolate splintering, that was just, uuuuh-

SNAAP!

It was the chocolate splintering.

Letty didn't even have time to yelp before feeling himself lurching against the couch as the legs snapped off. The fall wasn't great, yet it forced the large dragon to throw his entire weight against the poor piece of furniture. That prior *SNAAP* was just one of many, as Letty flinched at what sounded like a gunshot going off in the living room! The entire base of the couch had shattered beneath his weight, not to mention the backrest being torn in half. Even the armrest had a massive crack in it after Letty's chubby head slammed into it. No, he wasn't hurt at all; if sharpened arrows couldn't pierce his hide, then a few splinters were hardly an issue.

But that didn't stop him from sniffing regardless, the poor dragon quivering in place, and not just due to his large body sloshing back and forth.

"Letty! What's wrong?"

Letty could hear Jenny flutter her way through the room, and soon felt those reassuring wings rub his side. "What happened?!"

"I-I-I broke the c-couch!" Letty whined loudly, his vision going blurry.

"I'm so sorry, dear. Are you hurt?"

"N-no." Letty sniffed. "B-but I broke it! I broke your couch!"

"Letty, it's oka-"

"I broke it!" The dragon wailed, covering his face with his claws. "I-I tried so hard not to break anything, c-cuz I'm a big dumb dragon, a-and I did so well too, b-but now I broke the couch!"

"Letty-"

“-and now you’re g-gonna yell at me, and say I c-can’t live with you no more, a-and not make me yummy food-”

“*LETTY!*”

The dragon flinched, eyes suddenly wide. All this time, he had forgotten that cockatrice’s tend to have loud, piercing voices. Apparently, Jenny had been hiding hers all this time. The startled dragon turned to look at the avian, and found himself feeling somewhat fearful looking at the frilled-up chicken.

But the cockatrice quickly took on a more apologetic look. “I’m sorry I had to shout like that, hun, but you’re acting hysterical. I promise, I’m not mad at all. I know I just yelled, but it was just to get you to listen to me; I won’t kick you out of my cottage, and I *promise* I won’t stop cooking for you. May I sit with you, dear?”

Letty sniffled. The sudden shriek had nearly caused him a second panic attack, truthfully. But Jenny wasn’t a liar. He nodded softly, before lowering his head between his arms like a dog.

Soon, he felt the cockatrice step over to sit against his side, her small body sinking slightly into his broad neck, while giving the top of his head a gentle rub. Mmmm, those always felt nice. He expected Jenny to start speaking soon, but instead the cockatrice continued rubbing his snout, patting his cheeks, and even began picking debris out from his squishy neck folds. She wouldn’t be feeling guilty for yelling at him, would she?

Soon, however, she spoke up. “Do you wanna know a secret, Letty?”

Letty nodded softly.

“That couch was one of the first things I built when I made my cottage here. And unlike my cottage, I never thought to replace or reinforce it.” She smiled, nuzzling her head against the dragon’s puffy cheek. “Honestly, I’m surprised it lasted this long.”

Letty sighed softly in relief. Thank goodness, and here he thought he was somehow growing fatter.

The gentle rubbing continued, as did the cockatrice’s speech. “I should be thanking you, hun. If it hadn’t broken beneath you, it might have beneath me, and I don’t have a big strong body like yours to handle a fall like that uninjured.”

“O-oh?” Letty felt his cheeks head up against Jenny’s praise, his tail slowly swishing behind him, ruffling the debris.

“M’hm.” The cockatrice continued, even giving that chubby cheek a quick peck. “But even if that’s not the case, it’s not the end of the world if something’s broken, dear. Everything here is made of food, and as you can see, that is something we’ll *never* run out of.” She winked, her eyes casting a quick glance towards the dragon’s broad belly.

“So don’t worry about a thing! You could break a hundred couches by the end of the month, and you’d still be my good dragon.”

“I-I am?” Letty perked up slightly, his tail swishing even faster.

“Yes, sir.” Jenny picked up a cookie from the long-forgotten bowl, holding it out to his muzzle. “And good dragons get plenty of treats!”

That sealed the deal. With a warm smile, Letty accepted the treat, even giving Jenny’s wing a gentle lick. He wanted to apologize again for causing such a commotion and making Jenny raise her voice, but he had a feeling he didn’t need to. He was a good dragon, Jenny said, and good dragons get plenty of treats. That’s why the cockatrice continued to lay by his side, feeding him cookie after cookie while rubbing his side, praising him with every bite. She even offered to feed him part of the broken couch, if he wanted to help clean up the mess he caused. Letty knew he wasn’t obligated to, but he happily did so anyway, as he was a good dragon! The bookshelf was left completely forgotten by Letty by the end of the night; *this* was more important, after all.

Later, Jenny made Letty a big batch of brownies, and even let him lick the bowl afterwards. He was a good dragon, after all, and good dragons get treats.

Letty was thankful he and Jenny had that conversation that day, regarding feeling guilty about breaking her couch. He couldn’t even *begin* to imagine how guilty he would have felt otherwise by the following week!

That couch was just the first to go, it seemed. From that day on, nearly every furniture Letty sat on seemed to shatter beneath him. Other couches, rows of chairs, even his own bed; nothing was safe from his mighty rump, it seemed. It was quite

remarkable; really. Letty had never caused this much destruction in someone else's home before.

Maybe it was because this was the first time he felt so *comfortable* in someone else's home?

The big dragon had stopped worrying when he'd broken something new; in fact, he secretly enjoyed it, as it meant Jenny would rush over to make sure he was ok. After confirming he was completely unharmed, the cockatrice would still rush to the kitchen to make a snack for the 'poor poor dragon.' Once she returned with whatever sweets were on hand, she'd make sure to hand feed Letty every single one, rubbing his cheek and praising him all the while. Of course, it wasn't enough for Letty to be a good dragon, he wanted to be a *great* dragon, thus he'd offer to help eat up any debris to make it easier for Jenny to lug around. Jenny would be thrilled, and reward him with even more praise, even more rubs, even more treats. By then, it'd normally be time for Jenny to start making her next meal for Letty, and if he finished everything off, he'd get even *more* praise, rubs, treats!

Lately, Letty wouldn't even find himself getting up from his own destruction. The two of them would end up in some sort of feeding and praising loop for hours and hours on end, well into the night. At which point, the two would be too exhausted to even return to their own beds! Thankfully, Letty didn't mind laying on the ground; it was surprisingly comfortable, really.

And Jenny enjoyed laying on top of his nice round tummy, her smile persisting into her sleep. Letty would copy that smile at seeing his caretaker fast asleep on top of his big round gut, rising and falling with each of his heavy breaths. She seemed to think he made a pretty good bed. Maybe it wasn't so bad to get a *little* fat.

Just a little. Just enough to make the ground rumble when he waddled, or leave him slightly winded when going from room to room. Yeah, no more than that.

It was during one of these ground-rumbling, slightly-winded walks that Letty found himself caught in a new dilemma. His head was too full of thoughts for him to see straight, too busy wondering what sort of furniture he would be praised for breaking next.

The doorway was the last thing he thought of.

Letty grunted as he was suddenly brought to a squishy, wobbling halt, the sudden prevention of movement causing him to flop onto all fours. H-hey, what gives? Well, he himself wasn't giving; he tried tugging at the ground, only to feel his spherical body dig even deeper into the doorway pinching at his sides. Hrrrwarf?!

The dragon tried craning his neck back to look at himself, but it was no use. His neck met too much obstruction, folding in upon itself until it dug into his shoulder, not to mention his chubby cheek starting to smoosh into his face. Now, it made sense for furniture to lose durability as they age; after all, Jenny was rather old, and her failing memory made it hard to recall when every chair or couch was built.

But did that apply to doorways? Did an old doorway get smaller? Weird, because Letty seemed to recall being able to squeeze through it just the other day, with a bit of effort. In fact, he swore he recalled the doorway being positively roomy on his first day here...

Better call for Jenny. "U-uh, Miss Jenny?" He called out meekly. "I-I'm stuck!"

"Stuck?" Despite having poor eyesight, Jenny certainly made up for it with her hearing! The cockatrice quickly fluttered out from the kitchen, her cooking apron already covered in flour, as she examined the situation. "What's wrong, dear? You can't move anymore?"

"N-Not really." Letty huffed. He wasn't even sure he could squeeze back out the way he came, either. Leaning back just puffed out his front even further, his head seemingly receding into his own neck and chin fat. "N-not without *Bwuwrp* breaking something!"

To his confusion, the cockatrice let out a loud chuckle. "Letty, dear, I told you! You're still a good dragon, even if you break some things!"

"I-I thought, hrrf, that only applied to furniture." The dragon's ears fell back. Breaking part of a wall down felt much, much more severe than just a couple chairs. Or maybe a bed. The bed that was currently in ruins not too far from his plump rump, for example.

But Jenny just shook her head and clicked her tongue. "This house is stronger than you give it credit, hun. It's *magic* after all. A broken wall won't bring the whole thing crumbling down, I assure you. So show me what a big, strong dragon like you can do!"

Letty's cheeks turned crimson. Big *and* strong? Those weren't adjectives to describe him at all! He was used to being just a good dragon, maybe even a goooooood dragon if he ate a particularly big meal.

What kinds of meals did big, strong dragons get to enjoy, then? Only one way to find out!

Planting his feet firmly on the ground, Letty grunted and shoooooved himself forward. He could hear the entire doorway, along with the wall itself, start to creak and groan loudly, even bending beneath his force. Urrrf, this was *much* harder than just sitting on a couch, but Letty was determined! That wall was going to go!

Harder he shoved, steam puffing out of the dragon's nostrils. He could feel his back-half start to accordion-out against the wall, his round chubby back rising as high as his horns. That pinching sensation was as unbearable as ever with the door firmly wedged between his hips and waistline, but a little pinch wasn't going to stop him! With a muffled roar, Letty threw himself into one last push.

And successfully shattered the doorway, along with a good portion of the wall!

"You did it!" Jenny squealed, running forward to pat his snout. "I knew you could do it! That's my big, strong dragon."

"I-I did!" Letty beamed, his heart pounding in his chest. That felt... that felt amazing! He'd never broke something on purpose before! W-well, the couches, sure, but this was a big wall! Was this what most dragons felt like when they burn down houses and swat away nasty humans? Oh, what a rush! He felt on top of the world! He felt-

"You must be exhausted after that, huh big guy?" Jenny coo'd, pressing the dragon's big cheeks together. "That was *such* an amazing job. You deserve a nice, long rest after that, huh?"

Letty blinked, looking at Jenny past his cheek-smooshed vision. Tired? Him? After hitting his stride as a proper dragon? Well... perhaps a little, yes. He nodded.

The cockatrice grinned. "Wait right there, big guy. I'll get something just for you."

With that, Jenny quickly scrambled off, leaving Letty a tad confused. Couldn't he just lay down where he stood? It wasn't the first time he napped on top of debris before,

even if there was much, much more of it than ever. He just had to remember to get up and shake it off of him when he woke up. Otherwise, he'd have chocolate planks planted against his scales and buried into his folds for hours!

Soon, Jenny came back with a bright pink marshmallow mattress, the same kind she used for her couches and beds. But strangely enough, she bapped at Letty's snout when he leaned forward to take a bite. "Uh uh uh! That's not for eating, at least not yet. Good dragons are patient, remember?"

Letty frowned. He was a good dragon for *not* eating? What were the rules anymore?!

But Letty was a good dragon, and that meant he waited for Jenny to bring out more and more mattresses, soon resembling a pile larger than Letty's (currently broken) bed, and even draped a large cotton candy sheet over it. "And theeeeere we are. A new big bed for my big big dragon! Go ahead, try it out!"

The big big dragon blinked, looking it over. A part of him felt sad he wouldn't really be able to *break* this one, but the other, much larger part of him knew that Jenny would still find ways to call him a good dragon. With that, he carefully lowered himself down, rolling right onto his back on the pile of mattresses.

"Well?" Jenny looked over his head. "Whatcha think?"

Letty wanted to wait until his body stopped sloshing and wobbling before he made a decision. Eventually, he grew impatient and pressed his palms into his rising belly, forcing it to at least slow down to a more manageable degree, before looking up at Jenny. "It's perfect! I love it!" Far better than laying on debris, admittedly.

"Wonderful!" Jenny leaned forward, giving Letty a quick peck right at the edge of his snout. "You're more than welcome to stay there for as long as you like, dear. You can stay there for the next week, if you want! At least until it's time to make you that big meat feast I've been telling you about."

Oooh, he couldn't wait! Letty's stomach let out a noisy gurgle, already looking forward to the day. "M-miss Jenny?"

"Yes, good dragon?"

"C-can I have some breakfast please?" It felt so strange, having to ask for food.

Thankfully, Jenny wasn't offended by the slightest. In fact, she came in for another quick peck. "You don't even have to ask! I'll get to work making a great big breakfast for my great big dragon. If you finish that, I'll make you a nice bowl of caramel cookies and some butterscotch. And if you finish that, then I'll have to make you an extra special lunch!"

Letty's smile grew wider and wider with every word spoken, along with his stomach's growling. All of that sounded so delicious, he couldn't wait! As Jenny turned to leave, however, Letty already began reaching for whatever debris was within arm's reach of him, greedily stuffing it into his face.

He wasn't satisfied at just being a *good* dragon, after all.

Knock, Knock, Knock!

"Mwarrf?" Letty blinked, his mouth full of donut. That was a strange noise he heard just now. It didn't sound like anything breaking, like the couch, wall, or the floorboards. That last one in particular was still fresh in his head; it only happened yesterday, after all.

With what constituted a shrug, Letty tossed another donut into his mouth. He couldn't be bothered with weird noises now. He had all these donuts to eat first. If he ate all these, he'd surely be called a good dragon again; maybe Jenny would bring him more donuts and climb on top of his tummy to feed him, rolling them down his gut and right into his mouth. He was good at that!

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Again with that noise! Letty grumbled, shoving the rest of the donuts into his gullet. It was louder this time, enough for him to realize it was coming from the front door. Even if he couldn't exactly see the door from his position, or the wall opposite of him, for that matter! But hardly anyone ever showed up to this house; Jenny said so herself! The only ones who did were people lost in the forest, or-

Letty perked up. "Oh! Dearia! Come in!"

He was answered with the sound of the door opening and shutting. Well, while he waited for Dearia to walk around to see him, Letty began devouring the empty platter. Jenny never liked doing the dishes, so he was being a good dragon by eating the sugar disk for her!

Soon enough, he spotted the elf approaching from around his stomach, the elf's brow raised as he glanced from the dragon's head, to the top of his belly. "Hello, Letty. I see you've made yourself at home here in my absence." While his tone was the same neutral tone he'd always spoken in, the elf spoke a bit slower, as if trying to pick his words.

Letty just grinned to see his friend again. "Uh huh! This is the best home yet!" Licking his claws clean, the large dragon reached for the platter of candied nuts next, eating entire fistfulls while talking to his friend. "It's so, *mff*, warm and cozy, *omf nomf*... Better than I, *bwurp*, could ever ask for!"

"I'm glad to hear it." Dearia's expression didn't change. Instead, he glanced around the room. "I'm assuming you're getting along with your housemate, then?"

"Oh, of course!" Chomping on that platter, Letty reached for the next platter full of brownies... only to come up short. Ugh, he *really* didn't want to have to get up to grab it, either. "H-hey, Dearia, do you mind-"

The elf clapped his hands, and the platter glowed a faint green before sliding into the dragon's grasp.

"Thanks!" Letty stuffed three into his mouth before speaking. "Mff, she's the best! Omf nomf, she, huff, makes me lots of food every day, calls me a good dragon, rubs my tummy... I couldn't ask, *bwurp* for a better roommate!"

"That's excellent news, Letty." Dearia nodded. The dragon reached out for another platter once again, and without a word wasted, the elf magically adjusted it into his friend's chubby clutches. "I take it she's in the kitchen, then?"

"M'hm!" Letty nodded, now chowing through butterscotch. "She's, hormf, preparing the big meat feast for me! *Gulp!* She said, ormf, I'll be prepared when I finish *all* this! Then I'll be a good dragon!"

"I see..." Dearia glanced at the platters of sweets still surrounding the dragon's head. "That's quite a lot of food left to go, Letty. Will you be able to handle it!"

“Of course!” Letty grinned, licking the crumbs off his cheeks. “I’m her good dragon, and good dragons get lots of treats! That’s why she made me this nice nest!” He shuffled in place, rumbling in delight. “See, it used to be a bed, but since the floor gave out, it’s now more like a-”

Dearia let out a sigh. “Oh good, we can finally address it!”

The dragon blinked. “Address what?”

“Your weight.” The Dark Lord’s tone was much sharper, cutting straight to the point. “Letty, you’ve put on a substantial amount of fat.”

Letty blinked again, pausing midchew.

Before letting out a hearty laugh, one that shook his entire body! “Hah! Well duh! It’s hard *not* to get fat from eating this much! Jenny said so herself! That’s why she started making her food healthier so I wouldn’t grow so much.” He patted the front of his gelatinous stomach, feeling it slosh and glorp about.

“Well... that’s very kind of her.” Dearia muttered, glancing up to see the top of that belly still jiggling long after. “And that’s something you’ve come to terms with?”

“Mhm!” Letty burped. “Although, maaaaybe I’ve put on a few too many since I’ve laid here. See, I decided I was gonna use the big meat feast to give me enough energy to go jog a few laps around the cottage, enough to work up a nice sweat. That should help me get back into shape-”

“I highly doubt that.”

Letty paused, mouth half-open. “W-what?”

“Letty, at your current size, I’d be impressed if you could even manage *standing*, let alone running.”

The dragon’s mouth hung open a little wider. “W-what do you mean?”

The elf sighed and pinched his brow, shaking his head. “I knew this would happen. Don’t move, Letty, I’ll show you what I’m talking about.”

Letty wasn't sure he had much choice in the matter anymore.

The food around him lay forgotten as he watched his friend walk to the end of the room, still within vision of the backbound dragon. Setting down his leather bag, the elf reached in with both arms and began pulling. Letty knew from experience that bag held far, far more than what appeared possible. The dragon assumed it was a magic bag, its name starting with the letter H, but Dearia had assured him it was "just a bag."

Well, from this "just a bag," the elf produced a massive mirror, as large as himself, in fact. It had been a while since Letty had seen a mirror at all, as Jenny believed she didn't need one with her failing eyesight. In fact, this was the first time all month Letty saw something *not* edible enter this house. Speaking of, maybe he should get back to eating-

But when he looked at the mirror, *really* looked at it, the dragon let out a stifled squeak, all thoughts of food completely removed from his mind. "D-D-Dearia...?"

"No, Letty. This isn't a funhouse mirror. This is actually what you look like.

"O-O-Oh..." Letty could both feel and see the color leave his face. No way, this couldn't be real! It had to be a trick. He was *GIGANTIC*! He looked like four or five red dragons, all melted into one big BLOB! His cheeks must have been the same size as his head; b-bigger even! Sheesh, he was just now noticing them in his peripheral vision; how long had those been there! Oh, and his poor neck; it'd already been broad before, but now it looked utterly massive, a big series of rings growing larger the lower down his body he looked, like the very same stack of pancakes he shoved down.

And his *body*! Letty wasn't a dragon anymore; he was a **BLIMP! A WHALE!** Letty would have thought all that fat would collapse a bit beneath its own weight, yet even so, that cream-colored dome rose higher than he himself would be standing up! He looked like a flan! A mound of jello! A big scoop of ice cream! Ugh, his mind was so food-focused, he couldn't even think of non-edible comparisons! He must have gotten used to how much he jiggled and sloshed to not notice it as much anymore, but a glance in the mirror told him that, yes, his body still wobbled and bounced even while laying still. A perpetually jiggling mountain of dragon.

Dearia was right: He would be lucky to stand, not just because of how heavy he must be now, but due to how unlikely it was he could even reach the ground! His forearms were so doughy, looking almost comical how inflated they were with chub, thick enough to even cover his elbow, for goodness sake! His legs were at least a tad

better, due to at least being able to tell where his knees were beneath all that lard, with how thick and heavy they were with dragon blubber, it'd be more than just cumbersome trying to bring them around each other, or rub them against that scaly blob of belly!

It was all so much to take in at once, and this was just the parts of his body he could *see*! How did his rump look, buried deep beneath him? Or his wings? Or tail, for that matter? Surely even that had blown up with blubber as well.

"G-Goodness, gracious." Letty muttered to himself after some time. He was feeling a lot of things right now: Faint, shocked, horrified, confused, and worst of all, hungry.

And to top it all off, he just realized Jenny had been calling to him.

"Is my good dragon ready for his big meat feast, yet?"

"H-huh?" Letty mumbled, still light headed and bewildered.

"Well, you better hurry, then! It's aaaaalmost ready, and we can't start without you, ya know." Jenny called out cheerfully.

It was then that something snapped within Letty, who let out a loud and horrified shriek. "WAAAAAARGH! Y-YOU'RE GONNA EAT ME!!"

Why?! Why, why, why, *WHY* hadn't he realized it sooner?! Not just the fattening, to which he was still mentally kicking his fat self, but also *this*! No wonder Jenny had been feeding him so much, trying to stretch his stomach out as much as possible. She wasn't preparing him to eat the feast.

She was preparing him to *be* the feast!

Yelping and howling, Letty squirmed and shook as much as he could, desperate to escape. Everything made sense now: The fattening, the lack of any meat, the strange way she talked on her back porch weeks ago, *EVERYTHING*! The comment she made about not owning a farm was a lie! This house *was* the farm, and he was the first livestock delivered to her in a very, very long time!

The obese dragon continued to roll and shift his bulk around, his sloshing body making as much noise as his scream, but it was all in vain. The rut he was in prevented him from properly rolling over, his body left sloshing and wobbling against the edge. If

anything, it might even be widening beneath all his movement, leaving him further stuck on his back like a plump and juicy cupcake on a tin- GAH! Now even HE was starting to compare himself to food! He knew he shouldn't have trusted Dearia. Stuff like this **always** happened with the homes the elf showed him.

His terror only grew as he noticed Jenny rush in from his peripheral vision to his side. "Letty! What is the matter?!"

"Nooooooooo! I-I don't wanna be fooodd!" Letty sobbed, trying to shrink his head away from the cockatrice, but only succeeding in bulging out his neck rolls even further. "I-I don't wanna be... don't wanna be..."

He gasped, noticing for the first time what it was his caretaker was carrying. "S...Sausages?"

"Y...Yes?" Jenny nodded slowly, glancing down at the tray in her hands. She was indeed holding sausages, still sizzling and steaming right out of the oven. The cockatrice was even wearing her licorice oven mits. "Did you... want some, dear?"

"Sausages." Letty repeated breathlessly. "Those are sausages... a-and they're not made out of... me?"

"*What!?* Goodness, no!" Jenny's eyes widened, appalled. "Where did you ever get that notion from?"

But Jenny would have to wait to hear the response, as Letty quickly found himself losing consciousness, his head flopping back onto the mattress. This was all too much excitement for one day!

Letty had never felt so embarrassed waking up before, and that's coming from a dragon who accidentally took a nap on top of a rabbit's den and woke up to the critters jumping angrily on him.

To start with, he had no idea how to apologize to Jenny. He thought he was done with emotional outbursts ever since he broke that first couch, but unfortunately that clearly wasn't the case. The dragon didn't even know where to begin when it came to making it up to his generous host, but figured he could at least start with explaining the chain of events that lead his mind to that conclusion.

Which was made all the more awkward due to him floating helplessly in the air.

Dearia's magic knew no limits, it seemed. Even lifting a dragon as massive as Letty out from the floor looked trivial to the Dark Lord's powers. The green light glowing off of his body was a tad distracting, but not nearly as distracting as, well, everything else.

For starters, his butt kept bouncing against the roof as though he were some party balloon. Urf.

Not only that, but he could see the massive crater he left in the ground, his puffy cheeks visibly glowing in his peripheral vision. Sheesh, that thing was huge, nearly as long as Letty stretching himself out from horn to toe. Well, before he put on all the weight, of course. It was as though a meteor had come crashing through the cottage.

A red-and-cream scaled meteor.

Even while technically lighter than ever before, looking in the mirror didn't do Letty any favors. Weightless, he really was just a series of spheres vaguely resembling the shape of a dragon. Well, maybe his belly was a bit more oval-ish, with how it drooped slightly towards the ground, along with the folds on his neck and tail. The rest of him, however, definitely spheres. His cheeks, his arms, his legs, even his head, all spheres with stuff poking out of them, such as his toes or claws or horns. Alas, he could finally see his tail from this angle, and noted all the thick folds along the sides, noticeable even from a distance. Gosh, it looked even more like a sausage than even Jenny's sausages! His wings, now no longer buried beneath his bulk, were clearly fattened as well. The membrane not so much, but the arm of his wing looked so puffy and cylindrical, like a big squishy tube.

Or like those balloon animals before the guy, uh, twists the big puffy balloon into those shapes. Letty didn't know what those were called; he wasn't invited to parties often-

"E-erh, Letty? You trailed off there, hun."

Oh, oops! Letty got distracted again. Grunting, the dragon flapped his wings in an attempt to better angle himself, an exhausting motion, given how hard it was to even beat his wings! For the most part, it simply wobbled and shook his body from head to

toe, but soon he was able to twist himself to face Jenny. At, but he did manage to catch one last look at the mirror before doing so, looking to see if his rump-

Yup, his rump was *definitely* spheres. More spheres atop the sphere dragon....

Taking a moment to recollect his breath, Letty continued from where he left off. "I-I think that about does it. It was the vague comments, the way everything just seemed to align... I'm really, really sorry."

"Please, don't be, Letty." Jenny frowned. "If anyone should be sorry, it should be me. I wanted to be a little vague to try and keep the meat feast exciting. After all, I was excited too! It's only once a year that my hunter friend gets to visit, and this year he brought such a wonderful boar! I wanted to introduce you to him, but you were fast asleep when he arrived, and I couldn't bear to wake you up. You have the cutest snore, you know!"

"T-thanks." Letty looked away, huffing. He'd never heard his snore be called cute before. Loud, sure, but not cute. Heck, it was probably louder than ever before with all this weight.

"I share some blame for this miscommunication as well." Dearia lowered his head to apologize, although Letty didn't see the gesture until he awkwardly flapped/rotated his way over. "I was aware something like this would happen, I just never foresaw it being this drastic. That's why I had initially planned for Letty to only stay a week. By then, he would have surely noticed his weight gain to the point where he could come to a decision on whether the risk of gaining more was worth taking, or if he'd rather back out while it was still manageable. The request to extend his trial period to a full month caught me by surprise, but I assumed nothing terrible could happen, given this is one of the safest homes I could think of for Letty. Alas, there was a lapse in my judgment, and for that I take full responsibility."

Letty couldn't help but giggle softly at Dearia's explanation. Yeah, things like this always tend to happen with him. The Dark Lord would show him a property with something or another that would terrify the poor dragon, only for that something to come out and reveal itself to be quite friendly, to remind him that the world wasn't as scary as it appeared. A lesson Letty really struggled to take to heart, apparently.

Just as how he struggled to properly orient himself midair like this. "C-can you please let me down, Dearia?" He muttered, his voice muffled as his face pressed into the ceiling. Great, this was where his butt rubbed against, wasn't it?

The dragon let out a muffled yip as he found himself lowering. He instinctively shot his legs out to catch himself, only for his belly to make contact with the floor first. Whimpering, he felt his gut spread out across the ground, slowly overtaking it before his feet finally reached the ground. Urf, he had to straddle his arms and legs pretty far just to reach something that *wasn't* his own fat! It would be so easy for him to tuck his arms and legs in and rest atop his own blobby belly, as though it were his own personal beanbag chair.

"Don't worry, Letty." Dearia muttered. "I'm still holding you up, partially. Otherwise, you might make more holes in Jennifer's floor."

"O-oh, thanks." Letty groaned. All that, on top of the fact much of weight was resting *on* his belly, yet the rotund dragon still felt so heavy! That crater-bed of his was looking cozier by the moment.

As did Jenny's warm, smiling face. The cockatrice carefully stepped forward and, after receiving permission from Letty, carefully brushed the dragon's pudgy cheek. "Well, I guess we *all* get to feel a little guilty, huh? And if everyone's feeling guilty, then no one should be, right? That is, I forgive you, and hope you're willing to forgive me, good dra- I mean, Letty."

"Of course!" Letty warmly nuzzled his snout against his cockatrice host, even giving her a big affectionate lick, something he almost never did, even with Dearia! "I had so much fun with you, Jenny! You made me feel so cozy and warm, not just with you, but with myself! I've never been so happy to be a dragon before!"

Jenny nodded, smiling sadly. "But you don't want to stay, do you?"

"I do want to stay! Just... Not right now." The dragon rumbled, gesturing down at his enormity. Oof, to think he actually used to be able to *wag* his tail! The darn thing may as well be a big flabby log attached to his rear at this point. "I still gotta work on myself a little more, ya know? On my self confidence, my self control... H-heh, I might actually eat you out of your house and home if you let me!"

Seriously, her food really was addictingly delicious! What if Dearia never came back, and Letty was just allowed to stay here and live like that forever and forever? How big would he be in another month? Two months? A year?! He could easily imagine his entire body *filling* that living room from corner to corner, his fat face sticking out into the doorway leading into the kitchen, perfect for Jenny to dump all of her cooking straight

into his mouth the moment she finished something. He'd never move again, and be in the exact position needed for maximum treats, as well as kisses, hugs, boops, praises...

Wait, that didn't sound too bad, actually...

Jenny chuckled softly. "Looks like you've grown a little, Letty, and I'm not talking about your figure. You're the first person to ever try my cooking and actually turn it down."

"Really?" Letty blinked. Not that he was surprised, but-

"Oh yeah. Humans would gorge themselves silly on it whenever they visited." The cockatrice gave a wide grin, her sharp teeth visible from her fangs. "Ooh, there's nothing more delicious than an oven-roasted human. Their plump flesh just *melts* on the tongue, mmf! Scrumptious!"

Letty felt himself getting nauseous. Maybe he was right to be a little concerned about Jenny.

But the cockatrice quickly changed expressions, back to her usual sweet self. "Oh, but that's in the past, and I'd never even think of eating a cutie like you, Letty! If I could, I'd spoil you rotten until the end of times! Ah, but maybe that's a sign I need to learn some self control too." The cockatrice giggled.

"Still, you're more than welcome to come back anytime. Oh, but before you go, would you like to stay for the meat feast? I've been teasing you about it for weeks now, it only seems fair to at least let you try it."

"Oh, do I?!" Letty licked his lips, readying himself to waddle forward. Question was, he still wasn't quite used to moving with all this... all this *him*. Just standing there, he was practically swimming in his own scaly blubber, and each step he took brought with it the fear of accidentally stepping on top of himself. He could try bringing himself up on his hindlegs again, but sheesh, his belly would stick out so incredibly far if he did that! It'd be extremely cumbersome, not to mention exhausting. At least his tail would make for a nice anchor to counteract his wobbling stomach, but even with Dearia's help, it sounded like it'd be such a chore!

And unfortunately, it seemed as though Dearia had no intention of helping as he lightly rapped his knuckles against Letty's side, jiggling his flank. "Absolutely not."

“Whaaaaaa?!” Letty whimpered. “But why?”

“Did you already forget about what you just said about learning self control and trying to shed weight? Partaking in that feast will likely do the exact opposite.”

Letty groaned. “W-well yeah, but I’d still end up back to normal by the next chapter, right?”

“Unfortunately, no.” Dearia shook his head. “This is a non-canon fanfiction, not another chapter in the manga serialization. Have you noticed the lack of pictures?”

Letty blinked. It seemed he failed to notice a lot of things, lately.

The elf continued. “If you want my advice, you’ll need to limit yourself to lean cuts of meat and steamed vegetables for meals, and very meager portions at that. Not to mention the sheer amount of cardio needed to burn off all that fat. I’m talking jogging distances as far as from here to the outer edge of the forest, *daily*. With another persistence, you should return to a manageable weight by next year, in which case you may-”

He was silenced, however, by Letty’s snarling stomach. It was quite the growl too, louder than any dragon Letty had heard before! “C-come on, Dearia. Just this once?” The pudgy dragon groaned, doing his best to put on a poor puppy-like face and praying the accentuated fat on his cheeks helped.

Maybe it did. Dearia glanced from him, to Jenny beside him, back to the dragon. Finally, the elf gave a slight smile. “Very well, Letty. I suppose I don’t see the harm.”