

Replicators and Cravings

By: Indi

“So, what do you think?”

Indi looked from his friend to the large, rectangular machine now built into their wall. It was pink-and-tan, the colors of the Gaines Global megacorporation; they owned plenty of popular restaurants, food brands, and—apparently—also in-home food replicators. Their old one had been half the size and not nearly as...shiny. “It’s huge,” the blue snake said, eventually.

Beside him, August rolled his eyes. “Well yeah, but that’s because it has ten times the menu options of our last one! Not to mention at least a dozen more features,” the gray lion added.

“I mean, that’s cool, but did we really need to upgrade?” Indi couldn’t deny liking the extra meal options it’d provide, but it still felt excessive.

“I had to do something to celebrate my big promotion, and expanding our diets felt like the best way to do that,” August said.

“Or you still had food on your mind after scarfing down that zebra who was also in line for the position.” Indi grinned.

“Wyatt’s better off on my waistline.” August gave his soft middle a proud pat. “He was so convinced he was guaranteed the promotion he didn’t even bother questioning why I’d ask him to a bar and pay for all his drinks. Just imagine the chaos such negligence would’ve caused at work!”

“Such a selfless act on your part. I’m sure you didn’t enjoy gulping down every inch of him.” Indi gave his friend’s belly a poke. The lion had been lean for so long, and Indi hadn’t quite gotten used to him being chubby.

“Hey now, I missed out on a lot of donuts taking the day off to digest him! Speaking of which.” August started using the replicator’s touchscreen, quickly delving into menus and selecting an order. With how fast he was going, Indi assumed he must’ve spent some time already checking it out.

A soft jingle played, and a door on the machine slid open, revealing a plate piled high with donuts. Each one was coated in white glaze with black stripes, like a zebra print. August grabbed the plate and scarfed down the first donut right away, smiling in satisfaction after. He immediately started on a second one, then a third, happily stuffing himself with the fresh pastries.

Indi couldn’t remember the last time he’d seen August gorge in such a manner—aside from the various times he’d eaten people, of course. But that wasn’t gorging, that was just indulging. Otherwise he was as guilty himself.

“If you start eating like that from now on you’re gonna get fat!” Indi teased, in part just to see how his friend reacted.

August chowed down on another donut and shrugged. “No way. I know how to hold back. That’s why I’ve always been thinner than you.”

Indi blushed. True enough, the snake was on the plump side. A mix of frequent snacks

and filling strangers had softened him up over the years. Long ago he'd been incredibly slim. He doubted he'd ever look that way again, and was happy for it. The extra bit of heft made him happy.

"Well that might change if you eat entire plates of donuts for dinner," Indi said. August had already finished off his feast of desserts, and returned the plate to the replicator for processing. He quickly ordered a large glass of chocolate milk next, taking deep gulps of it.

"Maybe I'll gain a couple pounds at worst. You'll see."

Indi tried his best not to moan as the squirms of the cheetah in his belly picked up again. His orange jumpsuit was stretched tight over his bulging middle, his belt digging in a little—not enough to be uncomfortable, but the extra pressure was noticeable. On the center of his bodysuit a smiling face shot of the cheetah was displayed, along with the words "Occupant" right above it. He rubbed his middle with a claw, blushing at all the wiggles below.

The cheetah had been an impulse meal, there was no denying it. Indi had been on the way home from work, waiting for the train like usual. The faint hunger pains he'd been feeling grew stronger once he'd spotted the chubby cheetah nearby, swaying to music on their headset and oblivious to everything else around them. Their soft middle had been jiggling.

Sneaking up on them had been a breeze. Indi had grabbed them from behind and coiled them in his tail, swallowing their head so swiftly they only got out a brief shout of confusion. The train had arrived just as the cheetah had emptied into his belly, and Indi had waddled on, sated.

"Ugh, I can't make a habit of this. My waistline would just balloon!" And yet the simple thought made him smile.

Indi pressed his keycard against the reader outside his apartment, entering as the door slid open. He blushed harder once he saw what awaited him.

August was on the couch, the tray beside him loaded with burgers. The plump lion's belly was swollen, and it was clear to Indi that he'd been stuffing himself for quite a while. *Again.*

In the two weeks since they'd gotten the new food replicator, August had spent most of his free time eating. And eating. And *eating*. He ate everything in excess, from breakfast to dinner, and even guzzled soda, cider, and juice seemingly by the keg. Every day his portions were getting larger and his meals longer. And of course his belly was getting rounder. The pair now weighed about the same—or at least they would, once Indi digested the cheetah.

Indi discreetly turned off the suit display of the cheetah's face before August could get a good look at it. The text above changed from "occupant" to "storing" just before he did.

"We have this amazing replicator at home, and you still can't resist scarfing down strangers? Or did you run into someone we know who you had a prey crush on?" The lion snickered in between bites of his current towering burger.

Indi's mouth twisted. "I just missed lunch and needed to sate a craving, that's all." A partial lie. "And with how much you've been pigging out at the replicator, I'm surprised there's anything left for me to nibble on."

“That thing will never run low—it’s top of the line!” August said. He grabbed a pawful of fries and shoved them into his mouth, washing them down with some sort of milkshake.

“A fact you’ve certainly been testing lately. Dude I think you’re addicted to it—look how fat you’ve gotten!” Indi hoped his words came across as casual rather than gleeful.

The ravenous lion stopped eating for a moment, but quickly continued. “So I gained some weight. I just really wanted to sample the menu, see what all it has to offer.”

“And you’ve managed to sample a hundred of everything, from the looks of it.” Indi’s gaze drifted to the burgers, but returned back to August’s wobbling middle within moments.

He’d found himself lingering on his friend’s belly a lot recently. And his rump, and his round cheeks, and his love handles. And every time he did, his stomach rumbled a little.

August was starting to look appetizing, plain and simple.

In the past he’d favored rodents and equines when it came to live meals—he couldn’t even remember having a feline before. Now he felt himself craving them...craving August.

The real reason he’d snagged the cheetah on the way home was to prevent himself from being tempted to eat August. He doubted he would’ve acted on the urges—he’d been friends with August for years after all—but it didn’t hurt to err on the side of caution. And coming home to find the plump lion stuffing himself, unable to fight back...

Indi pulled his gaze away, instead staring at the wall.

“Hey, these are all different burgers!” August insisted. “Two patties, three patties, all sorts of cheeses and condiments, various sides—I can’t figure out which one’s my absolute favorite if I don’t try them all.”

“And how close are you to doing that?” Indi asked, not sure what he wanted the answer to be.

“Might need a couple taste tests. Maybe even three.” August spoke with smug satisfaction, proud of his excuse for his gluttony, and utterly unaware at the vaguely hungry looks his friend was giving him.

Indi’s first thought was of how much fatter the lion would get from so many burgers, and he bit his lip.

A month later, and Indi still hadn’t gotten the hang of snacking at work enough so he wouldn’t be hungry on the commute home. Exasperating the problem was the fact his appetite had increased as he’d put on weight. He was pudgy rather than plump now, with a modest belly that wobbled as he walked. Even his tail was thicker. He’d learned cats could be as fattening as they were delicious.

There hadn’t been any easy prey on the train that day, and Indi’s belly was grumbling at him as he entered the apartment. To his relief, August wasn’t gorging for once. Instead he was sprawled on the couch, chugging some soda. The lion had gotten so delectably fat in recent weeks. Far fatter than Indi. His belly was doughy and his rump round. He had a slight wobble to him whenever he moved, which only made him look more appetizing to Indi. And he’d grown frustratingly fond of waddling around the apartment shirtless.

“I see you avoided getting eaten at work again, congrats,” Indi said. August had gotten

too big for him to resist teasing, and he was convinced it helped distract him.

The lion rolled his eyes. "Everyone knows what happened to Wyatt; if they mess with me they'll end up joining him on my waistline."

"At this point they'll mainly be joining the donuts and burgers and milkshakes and pies, honestly."

August blushed. "There's zebra in there, too!"

"Buried down way deep." Indi's stomach was rumbling louder, the hunger pains fierce. He started thinking of ways to gobble his friend up, how he could probably just grab his feet and start swallowing. August wouldn't have much leverage, and once his paws were snatched it'd be an almost guaranteed meal.

The hungry snake shook himself free of the fantasy. Thoughts of consuming August were getting more frequent, invading his dreams. He'd gone as far as to create a little VR program to act it out, hoping it would be enough to keep him from wanting to eat the real August. It hadn't worked.

"Oh whatever. Being plump doesn't stop me from being on top of the food chain." August finished draining another soda bottle, and belched. "I could be twice as fat and I'd still be able to turn the tables on anyone trying to eat me."

Indi's tail was wiggling, his stomach growling. He quickly took out his phone and ordered a pizza from the closest restaurant, barely paying attention to what he was actually ordering. Then he loitered just outside the living room, aggressively finding ways to keep himself busy.

The doorbell rang only twenty minutes later, but it'd been the slowest twenty minutes of Indi's life. He hurried to the door, ignoring how much more August had rounded out in the brief period.

The plump horse on the other side of the door was just about to greet him when Indi lunged. The pizza box fell, but Indi didn't care. It wouldn't have quieted his hunger the way a real, live meal did. Surprising even himself, the snake practically crammed the horse down his gullet, his belly ballooning outward rapidly as it filled with the panicked delivery guy. Afterward Indi leaned back against the doorframe, panting. He cradled his gut, enjoying every kick and squirm, pretending it was paws doing the fighting, not hooves. When a muzzle bulged outward he swiftly pressed it back down, just so it wouldn't ruin his fantasy.

Indi turned back around and waddled inside, leaving the fallen pizza bag behind.

"Geez, you make fun of me for indulging a little, and meanwhile you're slurping up pizza boys like you haven't eaten in weeks!" August said. "If anyone in this apartment is a glutton, it's you."

Indi passed by his friend, belly swaying wildly. "Oh whatever." He wished he could tell the lion just how close he'd been to getting ate, but Indi worried he'd start craving a second course if he lingered. He had a horse to digest.

"Braaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaap!!"

August's belch echoed off the walls and through the apartment, jiggling his gut. The

blubbery lion licked the frosting off his fingers as he set aside the empty platter, adding it to one of the stacks next to him. He'd felt a sudden need for cream puffs and pies that afternoon, and of course the food replicator had been happy to oblige. After a dozen pies and piles of puffs, he was positively stuffed.

The lion grunted as he shifted in his seat, his taut belly gently shaking. It felt as heavy as a boulder—though over the last few weeks it always had after a successful meal. In fact, August had begun to consider a meal to only be great if it left him barely able to move afterward. Or completely unable to, like now.

“Can't blame this tank for needing so much fuel to keep me going. Nothing wrong with a healthy appetite.” August belched again, grinning in delight. Despite everything, he wished he could reach the food replicator and make a few more snacks. Maybe just a cake to top things off. Unfortunately it was just out of reach. Oh well.

The door to the apartment slid open, and August lazily looked towards it. Indi was home. The fat snake stared right at him, eyes widening a little. No doubt he was about to make a fuss about his weight again, how he should cut back on all the sweets. And if he did, August would just counter with how the snake should stop eating people once or twice a week. It was so strange how voracious his friend had become in the last two months. Perhaps August's own consumption of Wyatt at work had inspired Indi to glut more.

“Didn't eat anyone today?” August asked. He couldn't resist teasing his friend.

“Wanted to wait until I got home,” Indi said. His gaze was fixed on August as he strolled through the room. August noticed the snake looked excited.

“Ah, so another delivery guy. Personally I'd rather pick my prey out than get them at random. Though I suppose there's some fun in a mystery meal,” August said.

“I know exactly what I'm going to eat tonight,” Indi said. He'd reached the food replicator, punching something in before pulling a hose out from behind a small panel. August wondered if the snake was going to guzzle some soda with it—he'd done so himself quite often.

“Well, don't leave me guessing! What wonderful meal have you picked out tonight?” August asked, genuinely curious.

Indi grinned. “Overstuffed lion.”

The hose was in August's mouth in an instant, followed soon after by something soft pouring down his throat. He tried to sit up, but Indi's fat tail quickly pressed against his chest, pinning him in place. His belly was beginning to swell, taking him well beyond full. His eyes narrowed at the pressure.

“You've been growing fatter and fatter every day, ever since you bought that food replicator,” Indi said. One claw held the hose up to August's mouth, while the other began to tease the engorged lion's middle. “And every day I come home, my stomach rumbles as soon as I see you. It was faint at first, easy to ignore. I kept telling you to watch your weight, to slow down, but no, you just kept pigging out, day in and day out. Just fattening yourself up.”

August squirmed harder, but the combination of Indi's tail and his own massive gut made moving feel impossible.

“So I tried eating big cats when I could, to fend off the cravings. But they were never as

plump and juicy as you, never so eager to grow.” Indi’s smile was getting wider, and his eyes were locked onto August’s ballooning belly. “I *really* wanted to avoid eating a friend. Fortunately you’ve just been looking like food lately, dinner.”

At last Indi plucked the hose out of August’s mouth, the lion celebrating the end of his force-feeding with a hearty belch.

“This isn’t—*urrrp*—funny, Indi!” August said as he wobbled. Indi’s tail lifted, but August found himself immobile. “I joked about eating you *once* back in college—but at least I didn’t stuff you with...with...what did you even stuff me with!”

“Cream filling,” Indi said. “Thought you’d taste best as a puff pastry, one just about to blow.” The snake poked August’s belly with a claw, prompting him to groan and whimper.

August was beginning to realize Indi wasn’t joking. “Wait, Indi, we’re friends. We’ve known each other for, what, a decade? You can’t just eat someone you’ve known for that long, it’s rude!”

“Better for you to get eaten by someone you know than a stranger, right?” Indi said, as he groped the lion’s middle more eagerly. “Plus I’ve heard friends taste better~”

Something August had heard before as well. And even tested out, way back in college. He hoped Indi didn’t remember him mentioning eating another member of the baseball team. “I’m sure it’s just an urban legend. Why don’t I order you a nice delivery guy instead?”

“You want a side to accompany you, main course?”

“No! I want someone else to be the main course!” August fumed. “I’m not food, damn it, I’m your friend! And your roommate! You’d have to replace me!”

“I’m sure it won’t be that hard.” Indi pulled out his phone and started typing. “In fact, I’ve already got a notice up asking if anyone’s interested.”

The phone was turned to August. Sure enough, it showed a listing for a roommate, for their address, posted seconds ago. It’d already gotten a few views.

“Oh come on, Indi, this isn’t cool! I just got that awesome promotion, I don’t want to become snake pudge!” August’s heart was racing. He kept hoping Indi would reveal it was all a dumb prank, but he knew the hungry look in the snake’s eyes wasn’t a lie. His friend *really* wanted to eat him. He was regretting investing in the food replicator. Or at least not noticing Indi’s cravings before it was too late.

“Food never wants to become pudge, but it always grows to enjoy it in the end. Just think about it, you’ll be able to happily wobble from my waistline forever, not a care in the world. No more deadlines or business meetings or worrying about a coworker gobbling you up in order to swell up the corporate ladder.”

“That’d be way better than having an obnoxiously gluttonous friend pig out on me!” August said. Not much better, but better. He’d have had a chance to fight back, then, instead of getting caught on the couch like a damn stuffed treat. Why had he insisted on gorging so often!

Indi’s phone buzzed, and he took a look at it. “Heh, Tycho’s asking why I’m suddenly looking for a new roommate. Wanna say goodbye to him?”

As soon as the phone’s camera was turned towards August he began to struggle. “Tycho he’s gonna eat me, help!”

Indi clicked a button, then laughed a minute later. "Tycho says I shouldn't eat so much junk food. Also he says you still owe him dinner."

August's jaw dropped. "Really? His good friend is about to get eaten alive by his other, not-nearly-as-great friend, and he cares about me stiffing him on dinner one time? Ugh, I thought I had better taste in friends!"

"If you'd like, I can eat him later. I get the feeling I'm gonna gain a fondness for lions after eating you," Indi said. The snake didn't look the least bit remorseful for what he was planning to do. Instead he looked the happiest he'd been in months.

"That won't...actually, yeah, eat that jerk for me! That'll teach him to not come to my rescue." August didn't feel that much better about the possibility Tycho might get eaten by Indi as well eventually, but it was a relief knowing he might not be the only one gobbled up by the gluttonous, treacherous snake. It'd make him seem less foolish, at least, and that was looking like the best legacy he could hope for. "Though I bet if we teamed up we could make him twice as fat as me, and then you'd have an even better meal. That wasn't me. Your good, wonderful buddy August who definitely has never thought about eating you." Not while sober.

"Nice try, tubbo, but your fate was sealed a couple hundred pounds ago." Indi squeezed August's gut with both claws, forcing a belch out of the defenseless lion. "I'm tempted to tell you how many calories you are, and exactly how much weight you're likely to make me gain, but I think I'll be nice and keep you guessing. After all, normal food can't read the calorie counts on the packaging, so why should you?"

August blushed. "You're never this chatty with prey, that means you still think of me as a friend and won't go through with this!"

"It means you're an extra special treat and I want the recordings of my meal to be as juicy as you are~" Indi squeezed the lion's blubbery cheek.

"Don't record it, too! Please, I'm begging you, don't share this with our friends!" He couldn't bear the thought of his pitiful attempts at avoiding ending up in Indi's stomach being shown on repeat at parties and hang outs.

"I'm getting it in 3-D, too, so I can see it from every angle." Indi looked elated. "But I've left you sitting on your plate for long enough. Gotta gobble you up while you're still fresh."

August watched his friend crouch down in front of the couch, vanishing from sight. He yelped as he felt his feet grabbed, warm breath pelting them unseen. Then they pressed against the soft back of Indi's throat, and the first swallow was made. Indi was actually doing it—he was eating him.

The lion immediately began thrashing about as best he could, not caring how ineffective it was. He wouldn't be a willing meal, not even to a friend, not even when he had zero chances of escaping. If people were going to watch his embarrassing demise, he was going to remind them he went out fighting. Struggling felt better than just sitting back and doing nothing, anyway.

"Indi, you can still cough me up, I won't hold a grudge against you if you do!" If anything he'd praise him. "I can stay with friends while I lose the weight and you kick that lion addiction you've suddenly got. Sounds reasonable, right?"

There wasn't a reply, of course, but Indi swallowing him up to his knees made August

suspect the snake wasn't interested in his suggestion.

"Uh...think of how fat you'll get by eating me! You'll be big and blubbery and easy prey, just like I was. Definitely too risky, you should just stop eating me and stay safe," August hoped he didn't sound *too* desperate. Oh he was, he very, very much was, but his reputation was on the line. But he didn't want to get digested—no one did. He didn't want to think about everything he was going to miss out on if he kept sliding down his friend's throat. TV shows he hadn't finished watching, a sequel to his favorite action movie that'd just gone into production, coworkers he'd been thinking about eating. It wasn't fair!

August felt Indi's jaws stretch around the large dome of his belly, squeezing the pudge. His left paw was abruptly grabbed and fed into Indi's maw. He frantically tried to keep the right one away, but Indi responded by aggressively prodding and poking his exposed sides, prompting the lion to instinctively bat at him. Soon the paw was snatched and gulped, ending the bulk of his struggles.

August gulped as he saw Indi's jaws stretch over the horizon of his gut, steadily swallowing him whole. He stared into Indi's eyes, and saw the glee in them hadn't faded at all. If anything the snake looked euphoric. Was he really that delicious? August wondered if he should be proud of that fact. He probably would've been if it weren't about to doom him.

"Know what, I hope Indi eats whoever's watching this later!" August whined. "Bet you'll be laughing it up, talking about how awesome I tasted, and then that chunky tail will coil right around you and dunk you into his maw! At least he'll probably remember me, since we were friends!" August glared extra hard at Indi, but the snake's pace didn't slow. Guilt trips didn't work on voracious gluttons. "If you don't put my skull on your shelf I'm haunting you!"

One claw was placed on August's head, then another. He felt them push down, sending him into Indi's dark, wet maw. He couldn't think of any cool final words, merely whimpering as Indi's jaws gently closed behind him.

Indi wasn't sure how he was going to feel the next morning. The immediate aftermath of cramming August down his gullet had been lovely, at least. He'd massaged his belly and toyed with it for a solid hour, making his friend-turned-meal know exactly how delicious he'd been and how unfortunate there was only one of him to eat. At some point he'd passed out, and the recording proved his belly wobbled for quite a while before digestion kicked in.

When he'd woken, he'd felt immensely satisfied...and just plain immense. According to his suit he was close to five hundred pounds, and the snake didn't doubt it. He was thick and blubbery, with a lumbering waddle for a stride. It would take time to adjust to his new heft, and the way his heavy tail dragged behind him, more a club than a whip now. But overall, he believed the changes were worth it.

Eating August had been a great decision.

He did miss the lion a little, the living room quieter than ever, but his feelings towards August were already nostalgic—happy memories to look back on. Not to mention watch, thanks to his extensive recording of the feast.

After replicating a massive breakfast of eggs, bacon, toast, sausage, and waffles, Indi sat

down and played the recording, which began just as he'd arrived home. He grinned as he saw August on the couch, so wonderfully stuffed. The sight made his stomach rumble, which mouthfuls of eggs could only slightly quell. Perhaps Tycho would like to come over for dinner sometime soon.