

“He literally pestered me to smile more, Lloyd. What kind of waiter *does* that?!”

“Dude, it wasn't *that* bad. And at least the food was awesome!”

Greg sighed and gave his boyfriend a tired smirk as the pair strode down the sidewalk, eager to get back to their apartment after a rather disappointing weekend lunch date. The waiter had been chipper—obnoxiously so—something that Lloyd loved, but Greg hated. For the entire time the pair had known each other, Lloyd had been the upbeat ray of sunshine, while Greg had been the notoriously stoic grouch. Their opposing dynamic somehow worked, though neither of them could quite explain it.

“In any case,” Greg said, “right now I just wanna get home, flop down in bed with a bag of potato chips, and do absolutely nothing for the rest of the—”

“HAHAHAHAHAHA! Woo-hoo-hoo! Oh man, that's a riot! Heeheehee!”

Greg and Lloyd whipped their heads around to see a strangely hairy man approaching, laughing his head off. Before they could do anything more than stare, the man grabbed Lloyd's left wrist and laughed in his face.

“Hey!” Lloyd said, jerking his wrist free; “What's the big idea?!”

“Wah-ha-ha-ha-ha! You gotta see this, it's amaaaaaHAHAHAHAHA!”

Utterly freaked out by the obvious lunatic, Greg and Lloyd hurried off as the stranger bent over, laughing even more uncontrollably. A few blocks later, they arrived at the stoop of their apartment building, the encounter fading from their minds as the relief of home replaced it. Sadly, the relief didn't last long under the silent, bitter glare of their landlady as she stopped them on the stairway to their apartment.

Lloyd, for his part, recovered quickly and made an exaggerated bow with a big grin. “Gooooo afternoon, Ms. Archer! Don't you look radiant today!”

“Cut the fake flattery,” huffed the sixty-year old, her frown only deepening in direct proportion to Lloyd's smile. “Your rent is due tomorrow; you better not have spent it all on whatever you two do when you go out.”

Lloyd chuckled, unconsciously scratching at his left wrist. “You know, you really should smile more. It only takes a few muscles!”

This earned him another glare from Ms. Archer and an eyeroll from Greg, who'd heard those exact words from the waiter earlier that day. Archer, absolutely done with the conversation, pushed past the two, lightly pushing Lloyd aside.

“Wow,” Greg said with a shake of his head, “and people call *me* grumpy. It's like she gets worse every day.”

Lloyd simply chuckled at Greg's remark as the two continued their way up the stairs, the former continuing to scratch at his wrist; upon arrival, Lloyd immediately sat down onto their sofa and flipped the TV on. “You sure you don't wanna sit with me for a bit, watch a cheesy movie together?”

Greg sighed as he grabbed a bag of chips out of the pantry. “Maybe later. I just need some quiet time for now.”

“Ha! Well,” Lloyd said with a hearty laugh, “make sure you save some of those chips for me! I’ll be here when you’re ready to have fun!”

Rolling his eyes at his increasingly upbeat boyfriend, Greg entered their bedroom, opened the bag of chips, and flopped onto the bed, taking his phone out to browse the internet for a bit. A few minutes later, his browsing was interrupted by an emergency notice popping up:

PUBLIC SAFETY ALERT

Bizarre infection spreading rapidly through city; symptoms include uncontrollable laughter, rapid hair growth; citizens advised to stay indoors

As if on cue, Greg heard a chorus of laughter from outside the window; throwing it open and looking out onto the street, he stared in shock at the sight of people laughing hysterically, telling each other jokes, and pointing and giggling at the slightest thing. But the most frightening part was the bizarre metamorphosis that occurred as they howled with laughter: their hands shifted to paws, their ears slid up their heads, and their faces elongated into snouts; those who had fully turned sported a hunched-over posture, their bodies now permanently halfway between biped and quadruped. As impossible as it was to believe, people were turning into anthropomorphic hyenas.

Something clicked in Greg’s mind; panicking, he barged into the living room, praying that his hunch was incorrect. To his horror, he was greeted by the sight of Lloyd practically rolling on the floor, his shoes bursting off as his feet became paws.

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! HEEHEEHEEHEHEHEHAHAHAHOHOOOHAHA! It’s all so funny! Woohoo, babe, you gotta—haha! You—hehahahoo, look like you need a tickle to brighten your daaaaayAAHAHAHAHAHA!”

At that, the now nearly-full-hyena Lloyd leapt up and attempted to grab at him; with speed he didn’t know he had, Greg dodged out the door, shut it behind him, and locked it, hoping that would hold his former boyfriend. *Oh Lloyd... I have to get away! I have to find help!* Practically flying down the stairs, Greg nearly fell flat on his back as he reached the lobby in time to see a fully-transformed anthro hyena crashing through the door to Ms. Archer’s apartment; in an instant, he knew that this was Archer herself, even though she was nearly unrecognizable with a massive toothy grin on her muzzle as she leapt at him, grabbing him on the shoulders.

“Haha! I never—whoa-hohoho, never knew how much funnnnnahahahaha it was to laugh and laugh and smile and laaaaaugheehchee! You should—hehehehehe, hoohoo, try it! Be happy-happy-ha-ha-ha-ha-haHAHAHAHA!”

Shoving her off, he charged past her onto the street... right into the middle of a group of hyena people, who turned to him with equally-joyous smiles and raucous laughter.

“Heh...”

Greg stopped himself, putting a hand over his mouth. *Touch... it’s spread by touch! And Archer touched*

me!

Before he could do anything else, he felt a pair of pawlike hands on his side, and a familiar voice from behind:

“Tiiiiickle-tickle-tickle! Heeheeheehee!”

“Haha—no, Lloyd! I—heh, I’m not ticklish!”

“Why not, grumpy guts? Hahahaha! Ohohohoho!” The voice of Ms. Archer joined the chorus as Greg whipped around to see his former landlady approaching, Lloyd waving the barely-dextrous digits on his paw-hands with a giggle.

Greg felt a giggle and a chuckle rising out of him; marshalling up his willpower, he tried to fight it, putting his hands to the sides of his head in an attempt to block out the sounds of laughter... only to find that his ears had moved up to the top of his head. Looking down, he saw his pants and shirt beginning to stretch to their limit as the changes continued.

“Wh-ha-ha-hat’s the matter, kiddooooohoo? C’mon, you-hoo-hoo can tell us—like you, we’re all EARS!! HAHAAHAHAHA!”

“Oh man, what a great joke! Hahahaha, babe, I got one, I got onehahahahaha! This guy, heheheehoho, this guy was walking down the street when—whe-he-he-ha-HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA!”

“Smile! Laugh! It’s soooooho-ho-ho-ho much fun! Heeheeheehahaha!”

I have to resist... even if the jokes are... hehehe... kind of funny—no! Resist, dammit! Greg struggled to contain his growing urge to join the growing pack of anthro hyenas, to let go and laugh and jest and jape and joke and smile with the rest of them; his shirt ripped, revealing spotted fur covering his chest; his pants and shoes were starting to go as well, a loud popping noise as toe-claws poked out of the front of his sneakers and the sides of his jeans ripped. Giggling more and cursing himself internally for it, his face began to stretch—still bare but not for long as the fur spreading from both his ears and up from his neck—and half his mouth was in a grin, the other in a truly forced frown that he desperately tried to maintain. Finally, his shoes could take it no more, exploding off to reveal full-on hyena hindpaws.

“Whoo-hoo-hoops, babe, looks like those are ruined! At least you won’t nee-hee-hee-heed them anymore! Hahaha! Ain’t that a riot?! HAAHAHAHAHAHA!”

“Oh, there goes the pa-HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA-hants! Might as well lose that shirt, too-hoo-ho-hee-hee!”

The laughter, the jokes, the removal of the last vestiges of humanity, all of it was suddenly too much for Greg; unable to stop himself, he let out the biggest guffaw he’d ever had as his face finished turning, marking the completion of his transformation—and like a dam bursting, it was followed by an absolute flood of wild, manic, unhinged and uncontrollable laughter, rolling on the ground, clutching his stomach. “HAHAHAHAHAHA! AHAHAHAHAHAHA HOOHOOO, HEEHEE, HAHABA!” *It’s all so funny! I can’t believe I was so grumpy! Ohohohoho, this is grea-heheheheheheheat!*

His restraint completely gone, the new member of the pack joined the rest of his happy hyena friends to

spread the joy of laughter to the rest of the world.