

Digesting Friendship

"**No.** You are being ridiculous!" Revox rebukes.

"It is the only way you are getting me to go out there." I state, looking out the window of our ship. There is a large green sign, surrounded by a slick white wall. *Welcome to The Starlight, Research and Tradeship of Zenith Corporation! Enjoy your stay.*

"But you said you were going to be with me on the station!" He paces between our desks.

"Correct. I will be with you, but I did not agree to go to a major corporation. Do you understand how dangerous this is for me?"

"Ohmygod. You are being a baby! There's nothing to be afraid of."

"I am not a child. You have no measure on how a 'baby' of my 'species' would act. I do not see why you are so opposed to this."

"**Because it's weird.** Why would I want to eat you?? Literally just follow me around! I'll hold your hand if you're *super scared*. It's the outskirts of Zenith anyways, everyone here is weird!" He mocks my concerns.

I sit down in my chair heavy. "I will be here if you need me... Clearly I misjudged you once more. I apologize once again for my misunderstandings, but I do not trust Zenith in any capacity."

"You are such an ass! I can't believe you. **Unbelievable!** Truly unfathomable—FINE. You win! I'll eat you. I said it, happy now you dorky goof?"

I perk up happily. "You will!? Excellent! What would you prefer consuming?" I can hardly contain my excitement, standing up quickly.

"Well, I'm not even hungry. If you had informed me earlier, I would have skipped breakfast, but now you'll have to deal with that." He pauses for a moment. "I don't know? Something small? Not a bug—or parasite, nothing too gangly. Wasn't there a tiny mouse on Tezrik?" He puts his paw over his face, and stares at the floor.

"Skipping breakfast would skew my research! And yes, I can become that if you wish!" I inadvertently blurt out my plan.

"*Whoa whoa whoa*—**Research?** Now hang on there bud, you're trying to research me?" He glares at me.

"I—uhm. Well." I shapeshift into the tiny little mouse creature. Such a small thing we found nestled in a colony inside of a tree stump. Orange fur with a tail longer than its body. Four ears, but surprisingly has bad hearing. I stare at him with my black beady eyes.

He walks over and roughly snatches my tail, lifting me to eye level. The rapid ascension makes my stomach turn. "You fit the part you little rat! Everyone always said shapeshifters were shifty. I really hope you don't taste how you look." His hot breath reeks of sugar and milk. He sets me on his long hairy snout, and walks towards his mini fridge.

I grip his fur tight, holding onto tufts of blue and white. He opens a desk drawer and pulls out a small plate. From the fridge he grabs a container of some white condiment. After a few obnoxious, sputtering poots, the plate is splattered in the goop. He grabs my tail again, pulling me from his snout. Slowly, I am lowered towards the pungent goop, what I remember he refers to as "ranch". I plunge face-first into the dressing, feeling it seep under my fur. He rolls me around with the thick goo using my tail, thoroughly drenching me with the artificial smelling mess. *Plenty of predators loved the taste of this species without needing anything like this.* My thoughts are cut off when he suddenly dabs me up and down three more times in it.

He messily lifts me up, gobs of glop plop off my body as I scrape it off my face. "There. Everything's better with ranch! I can't believe I'm actually doing this... You owe me." We share funds, so I do not understand what payment he desires.

I watch as he closes his eyes, lifting me up and over his head. His blue and white jaws split open to a sight of glistening pink flesh. A long strand of saliva spans from his ridged palate to his long, coffee-stained pink tongue. He covers his nose with his other paw, lowering me towards his maw. *Is his taste linked to sense of smell?* Huffing wafts of throaty air reek of warm milk, but ultimately overpowered by the potent stench of ranch. A glob of white detaches from my fur, colliding with his tongue, making it twitch spasticity for a half second. He closes his maw and lifts me away. *No! do not take this from me now!*

He looks me up and down as another glob of the thick dressing splats onto the metallic floor of our ship. "I can do this... What's the worst that can happen, right? Just casually eating my weird shapeshifter friend who wants to research my body. Nothing strange or abnormal about that! Just get it over with." He talks to himself, letting out a long winded sigh. *So much thought process behind simple decisions. Consumption is a most basic and thoughtless process. How strange!*

He brings me back to his maw, gaping it back open. This time, he tosses me inside with a slight cringe to his lips. *Splat!* I land on his pulled-back tongue in a pool of saliva. A slight huffing exhale billows from his throat when I make contact. A quivering ripple of muscles laps at the gooey ranch coating my fur. He closes his jaws, locking me within a cage of vulpine teeth. Slobber oozes all around, taking me by surprise that he has not gulped me down right away.

His tongue laps at my fur, pushing me around his mouth. The goopy ranch paints his pink flesh, becoming translucent as it messily mixes with his saliva. My tail is plastered to his spongy tongue. He roughly tastes along my fur, pinning me against his ridged upper palate. Drool pools, I am swished around all of a sudden, pushed into his left cheek, then to his right. Bits and pieces of masticated crumbs from breakfast break off the plaque of his teeth. I have watched him eat before, a soup of milk with the addition of multicolored balls of sugar.

A resounding *Glup* echos from his throat as he swallows down a slimy trail of ranch, leaving me in his mouth. *What is he doing?* He smacks his lips noisily, slapping me with his tongue. "You know—*smack schlap*—not actually that bad." His voice carries the stench of his lungs.

Vigorous tasting continues, I am an easy fit for his esophagus, but he holds me in his maw. *Perhaps he does not know how to swallow a living mass?* I try to scamper along his tongue towards his throat, but he pushes me up against his front teeth. His tongue lifts and crashes down on me, holding me beneath the pulsing muscle. "This is kinda fun." He huffs out. "You aren't done researching my mouth yet." *I have gotten all I need?*

His jaws part, I cannot see what he is up to underneath his tongue. The smell of ranch-infused potatoes enters his mouth, a slimy chew comes with an oddly satisfying crunch as his maw closes. He pushes me up to join whatever he is masticating. Fries burst open, spilling the cold, mushy interior into my fur. He rubs the greasy gunk around, producing even more saliva while he chews. It creates a pasty mess, noisily chomping and squelching between bites. *He said he was not hungry. I do not understand this bizarre behavior?*

The starchy mess cakes into my fur, squishing uncomfortably onto my skin. My whiskers are slicked back against my face, but are pulled around by his invasive tongue. He pushes my tail into a gooey glob of mush, and gives a hardy swallow. The strong suction tugs me towards his throat, sucking in my lengthy tail. *Glrp!* I slide along his tongue, being pulled slowly into his throat. His jaws part as I start to slip over the back of his tongue, revealing a glass of water pressed to his lips. *That seems unnecessary.*

Liquid surges in, followed by another strong suction as his tonsils flex with another crushing swallow. *Glurp—Glup!* The rushing water pulls me past his epiglottis, joining my tail inside his tight throat. Water slurps around me, careening down with the potato mush. Smooth rippling peristalsis takes over, shuttling me down slowly. He takes a deep breath, coughing slightly, which squishes his esophageal muscles even more. I pass by the hard lump of his larynx. Squirming solely by instinct, a slimy squeeze schlucks me from outside. *He is rubbing me through his neck? What a strange phenomenon.*

I watch the folded muscles shuttle me down, bits of fries soaked in diluted ranch made a mess on the way. His throat flexes up and down all of a sudden, chewing noises come from above. Hastily, he swallows again, I smell the drool-drenched starch before it arrives. The sloppy bolus catches up to my slow moving body in his esophagus, squashing over my face to

push me down quicker. I feel the remnants of his first swallow messily strewn around the sphincter to his stomach. A small pool of water and mush awaits entrance. My tail swishes around the mix for a second before my rear squelches roughly into the resisting valve.

A loud *Glorp* sounds on the other side. Suddenly, the sphincter opens around my tail, sucking it inside, but also pushing out a large load of air. *Glarble!* His throat hollows with bubbled gas. The stench of his innards was muted by the water and ranch fries. A foul fetor of curdled milk and sugar, mixed with a concoction of watered down hazelnut coffee and acids. He was already full, the muted belch splashes up a load of slushy mush into his throat. Chunks of softened cereal and thick fluids surge against the flow of my fur, fully introducing me to his morning meals. A quick swallow sucks me right into his stomach with the nauseating gastric reflux. *His behavior is very unnatural, he is skewing my data!*

Glurgle! His belly complains at my addition, the pink flesh is bloated trying to churn the additional mass. The thick milk has mixed completely with coffee, making a light brown fluid. Once multicolored cereal has faded into the mix, soaking up the liquids like a sponge. Curdles of coagulated mush bubble around creating a noisy atmosphere in his humid gut. The fries integrate immediately, dispersing the bolus, getting lost in the overwhelming amount of food packed inside. His belly rumbles to his voice, but I cannot make out his words, simply the inflection. *He is saying something snarky.*

I never would have expected the messiest belly I could be in was Revox's. His stomach is adjacent to many animals, but filled with a strange concoction of foods. Milk is not consumed by adults in the wild, coffee is not brewed in nature, cereal is an artificial creation and potatoes are not cooked! I feel out of my element, slimy churns rub the unnatural mixture into my fur, pulling at my tail. His heart is pounding at an accelerated rate. *Is he okay? The physical activity was not that taxing.*

The stench is unnatural, making me dizzy. Milk digests into a sour curdled cream, giving off a woefully potent fetor. Rough churns consolidate bubbles of gas to the top of his stomach, rumbling noisily. Unlike a normal animal, he keeps the air inside, refusing to let it out. The fumes glorp and gurgle up his gut, making milk bubbles that pop between squeezing wrinkles. A swallowed-whole artificial marshmallow glues itself into my fur, colors seep off, and the artificial smell is almost toxic. A minute feels like an hour, stuck in a churning vat of regret. *How can it be this foul inside the fox's body?! Is this what the civilized world is like?! How uncivilized it smells!!*

I get over myself, remembering to take in every detail to figure him out. I hone in on his footsteps, jostling the gastric chamber with each bipedal movement. His heart rate fluctuates, uneven breaths, as if manually breathing for some odd reason. *What cognitive process would dictate breathing away from the autonomous function?* He is chewing on something while walking, but only saliva sops in from above. For some reason his spittle carries the strong stench of peppermint. The influxes of swallowed saliva pumps more of the pungent odor into his stomach, mixing horribly with the rest of everything. *The overproduction of saliva would indicate he is eating something, but why is he not swallowing it?*

He is on the move, walking around, changing directions at random. A few times it feels as though he stumbles, followed by mumbling murmurs. His meal digests loudly, at times I can tell outward pressure is applied to his stomach. Occasional talking, short and concise with gleeful inflections that turn to neutral, abruptly ending. His heart rate changes during conversations, same with his breathing. *Are they linked to emotional state? It coincides with the way he talks.*

The scent of peppermint has faded, but his drool still carries hints. An awkward swallow comes from above after he holds his breath briefly. A wad of strange blue rubber plunks down into the chymey gastric goop. It gets churned into my body. The hot substance sticks to my fur! I try to push away from the stuff, but my feet get trapped too. *Why would he eat indigestible rubber?! Why is it so sticky—it smells fairly of peppermint!? Is this what he has been chewing??* It integrates to my body, pressing uncomfortably against my belly, a slimy squeeze drags a portion of it to my back and along the base of my tail. *Unbelievable! Is this a prank?!*

His stomach only gets worse. Breakfast becomes an absolutely appalling mess. Sugary wads of artificially flavored cereal congeals with all the milk, creating a webby thick soup inside his belly. He never burps out the fumes, which build up and bloat his gut. The reeking gas festers, getting churned and worked over by his pink flesh. The rubber substance further spreads into my fur, continuous grinding clenches from the walls thoroughly ingrains it against my skin. It collects grainy materials, getting hard bits of stubborn cereal lodged into its pale blue interior. His intestines occasionally slurp up portions of the soiled milky stew, but never takes me with it.

A slow hissing belch finally voids his stomach of gas, released quietly over a few seconds. The walls wrinkle up and condense over all the chyme left inside. His stomach can finally knead over its contents properly, and it does. *If not for his blatantly conscious decisions, I imagine his stomach would be much more efficient.* It grinds hard, shoving me bodily into a churning fold. Wrinkles encapsulate my tail and squeeze while my body is treated like meat. Instead of prying off the uncomfortable rubber, it further smushes it up to my neck.

For a time, it feels normal. I never get used to the strange and unnatural stench, but his belly works like a normal gut should. Annoyingly, this rubber will never come free from my fur! Conversations outside are beyond my range of hearing, but the way he talks suggests it is going well. Surprisingly, his stomach garbles and growls as if demanding food. The talking ends and he walks again. *There is enough sustenance in here that it should not be groaning. Is the domestication of a stomach possible?*

I sit heavily in his gut, still filtering out the milky morning mess. A slight conversion leads to more growls inside. I feel him sit, sloshing me through slimy curdled chyme. His heartbeat pounds harder, he swallows a load of saliva. *Glrk glrk. Fzzz.* What sounds like fluids flood down his throat. Bursting through his esophageal sphincter is a noisy brown liquid. I have seen the stuff before, but never understood what it was. It pools in, creating bubbles along the surface

while it integrates with everything else. For a moment I panic when it touches me. *Why does it tingle? That smell is carbon—so much sugar!* It begins to bloat his gut with carbonated gas that stings my nostrils, forming tiny bubbles all around his gut, and in my fur.

He releases a quelled belch of the fumes, collapsing the gastric sac for only a moment. *What is the purpose of this? It looks to have hardly any nutrients. It just produces gas!* He is chewing again, but at least a bolus of actual food plops in, rather the rubber that is stuck to my fur. A multicolored blob disperses into the vast sea of liquids. With it comes the smells of vegetation, meat, and bread. Masticated green lettuce, red tomato paste, unnaturally yellow cheese, and cooked meat. He swallows more and more, Stuffing himself beyond the necessary nutritional need for a meal. His stomach bloats, and then he adds even more, consuming tomato covered fries. It all mixes poorly together, yet somehow he has conditioned his stomach to handle it all. He punctuates his meal with a gargling belch, quickly muting the second half, muttering something aloud.

His stomach audibly sloshes as he stands, carbonation has already begun to aerate his gut again. It all integrates with his still-digesting breakfast, ruining hours of work. *How am I ever going to leave if he refuses to let his stomach empty! He makes no sense! Has he forgotten I am here??* I rustle around, shoving into the stretched walls of his gut. A slight giggle comes from outside, followed by a few inaudible words. I thrash and squirm, fizz bubbles up even more, bits of new mush slop about when his gut sloshes. A hearty belch blows out loudly, followed by a slap to his stomach and an angry inflection.

Time continues moving, and so does he. There has been a pause of his movements for a while, and a lot of back and forth talking. His stomach churns uncaring to what happens outside. It is focused solely on digesting everything inside. Thankfully, his drink finally calmed down, allowing his digestive system to methodically grind up all the mush he stuffed himself with. My fur is caked with meals indistinguishable from each other. A layer of grease is pushed around from the overcooked meat. The fetor of his gut still reeks of breakfast, long overdue to leave his stomach, held hostage with his lunch. His heartbeat accelerates during his conversation; excitement in his voice.

The fumes of his lunch stink, compounded by his breakfast. Digesting meat is warped, bread soaks up into a spongy mess with carbonated sugar, and the starchy mess of additional potatoes with pasty tomato sauce is dizzying. It is all churned together, mixing with watery acids, yet still remaining painstakingly thick. With all the additional space from stomach gas, it cascades in slimy strands along his pink flesh. A different pattern forms with each sloppy churn, balling up the fetid mass. Water would work wonders breaking up the semi-solid slop, but he hardly hydrates. Sticky slaps of slimy flesh rubbing against conglomerated mush fill his gut. I have to dig my way out each time his walls close down, occasionally rolling off and down a pocket that forms between gas and the bolus his stomach made.

I focus on staying above it all, but a hard squeeze pushes me off the side, sliding me under the mass into a small pool beneath it. The semi-solid lump breaks apart, burying me

beneath the chunky surface. He stands up quick—too quickly for me, inducing a gut churning vertigo. I slam into the lower section of his stomach, pushing hard against his pyloric sphincter. My face squelches through, and by the sharp shift in his muscles, I was not supposed to. A long winded *guurgle* groans from his gut. His body clenches, but I wiggle and worm my way further into the hole. It begrudgingly opens, slurping me into his intestines with a gush of digesting brunch.

His intestines are like most animals, but reeking with artificially processed foods. Pink wriggling villi pulsate and tickle at my fur, pushing along with peristaltic ripples. To my dismay, the nubs are not enough to yank off the obnoxious elastic material glued to my fur. Wet burbles plague the mess around me, still infused with so much carbon. *At the rate at which he ate, I will catch up to his breakfast before it even gets released.* I can hear it tricking further along, winding through divots and bends. It left a milky trail in its wake, gooey strands of chyme stained mucus and bile line the path ahead.

His conversations are distant enough that I only get vibrations. The small intestine is tight, constantly blanketing me in pulsating flesh. Every slight movement I make elicits a muscular flinch from outside, sometimes poking at my position. Down the line I hear the slick suction of built up gas, but like his stomach, he never let's it leave. *This is not going to be pleasant...* His digestive system is a glorpy mess. Unnecessary air is held inside for no natural reason. He has so much manual control over his actions, but his methodology does not make sense. *Come to think of it, he never releases anything around me. Is it a social custom? Why?*

I trickle along, being sucked at by his intestinal walls. Salty bile mixes in with other enzymes to absorb the sopping mess. It is all a congealed brown, disgusting against his pink flesh. He has quite possibly the noisiest gut I have ever been inside, muted by all his fur and clothing. There is never any silence, always a gurgle, burble, or some sloppy air being squelched around. Carbonation still persists slightly, forming pockets of gas around me. *There should not be this much air in the upper gastrointestinal tract.* His intestines whine in agreeance.

His walking movements slush me through his tight tubes, sucking me around stubborn bends. Tickling villi fondle around my tail, tugging it into tighter crevasses. My legs are pinned, moving them around seems to make him uncomfortable. The annoying rubber has spread into a thin layer, getting stuck around my backside and groin. His digesting meal is inescapable, growing thicker and more foul as time continues.

I hear him give a heavy sigh, his body seems to relax. A loud exit of gas gets immediately quelled with a tight clench of his body. I feel pressure at my location as his body bends awkwardly. Through the gastric noises, I swear I hear him apologize through his flesh. *So it IS a social custom. He'll have to get over that since I am currently in his gas.* He walks for a few seconds, then spins around and sits after bending down awkwardly. A sputter releases gas from his rear, but his body clenches again. I can tell by the muscular shifts that he is trying to hide his bowel movement from me. *This is maddening! Just do it!*

I shove my paws into his intestinal flesh, making him flinch hard enough that a loud exit of flatulence bursts out. He smacks my location angrily, but sighs heavily. Finally the sounds of scat exiting his rectum sounds through his guts, though he still attempts to mute the copious amounts of gas gargling through. Shortly after, a slimy squeeze releases urine from his bladder, completing his natural process. *If I understood he was this embarrassed about his bodily functions, I would have operated differently. Such a strange phenomenon to reject natural instincts.*

He stands up after some more awkward movements, shunting me forwards slightly. It has been a few hours, he walks over and lies down, flipping my world. I feel him rubbing over my position, I imagine he is back on the ship if he is doing that. *Screalch.* I wiggle and squirm within all the messy chyme trying to get a reaction out of him. He rolls with laughter, slushing everything into chaos while gripping me with tight rolling clenches. I stop, and his noises die down. He gives me a few pats, pushing me through yet another bend.

He lies there for a while, but he is not sleeping. The smells have all gotten much more foul the deeper into his system I become, the heat is sweltering. I catch up to the tailend of his breakfast, smushing into the curdled mess. Spoiled milk has gotten more pungent, picked clean of almost all nutrients, mostly indigestible due to his age. I never get used to the feeling of the damned sticky material caking my fur.

He rolls over and stands up once more, squishing me fully into his breakfast. The sugary mess coats my fur again, now much more processed than before. It swallows my face and upper torso, villi tug me into it more. I feel the congealed mush slush over my fur, clogging my ears. Even muted I hear a familiar sound ahead: waste being sucked into the large intestines. *One last step to the journey! I have never wanted to be out of a creature this badly...*

I am halted at the entrance, suckled at a few final times while the woefully thick mush shuttles through. *Schlurp!* The pink valve swallows over my head, gripping the sticky rubber ingrained in my fur. I get stuck for a moment, ooze seeps past me while I am gummed at by his intestinal sphincter. After a moment of awkward stalemate, his gut sucks in with clenching muscles, and I slide through. Everything but my long tail enters the pouchy sac of his cecum. The valve shuts tight before it all comes in.

Bacterial fermentation comenses on the vegetation he consumed. Slowly with shifting grinds of muscular movements, my tail slurps though with some more slop. Secreted enzymes make the pasty waste even thicker, making webs of mucus that sticks to my fur like the elastic rubber. His body shoves me along, talking the sludge with me. What remains is a disgusting slurry, rancid smelling with sulphuric and methane undertones. What is most overpowering is the remnants of milk and sugar. *No wonder they do not release this toxic gas around each other!*

The fermentative process builds up plumes of digestive fetor, bubbling around noisily in his guts. Among the burbles fluttering around, I hear him eating again. His usual dinner prior to

bed, not giving an ample few hours for digestive efficiency. The thickening waste smears with mucus secretions as he lays down to rest. He rubs me over a few more times, dislodging pockets of gas inadvertently, but he holds it all in. Gastric gurgles rumble his bubbly guts, vibrating to his voice. I cannot make out what he says, but it sounds calm, unlike his stomach churning over its newest meal.

He falls asleep after a while. His bowel movement slowly dehydrates as his colon absorbs the moisture. He tosses and turns in his slumber, mumbling incoherent speech. Gas sputters out autonomously, no longer held back by his stubborn customs. His body turns into a normal functioning system when he gives up control. Each sloppy roll sops me around the messy mush. His colon is very slow moving, clenching down with peristaltic muscles soaking in water and other liquids. I pass along his stomach, churning its contents hard into a liquified chyme. His guts heat up along this section, groaning gurgles remind me of my journey.

Stench ridden fetor ripples past my solidifying pile of fox scat, getting clogged at the bend ahead. It reeks like boiled milk, stinging my senses with the addition of his lunch slithering behind me. It all piles up in the slow moving pipe. The sweltering gas keeps coming, pushing out if his rear in muted releases from his fur. I sink deep into his buttery waste, getting pulled back because of my tail. Clawing my way back to the front so I can to monitor my journey. Rugged waves of muscles push it all along, giving slimy squelches with each pass.

Slimy ribbed walls clamp down around the brown mass, hardened enough to be gripped thoroughly. My body sits messily inside the creamy interior of his shit. Indigestible rubber remains integrated to my fur, helping stick me to the passing pile. I have been so used to having scales. Wet cement cakes under my fur, solidifying on my body. His bowel movement is abhorrent, filled with artificial waste from overprocessed foods. Easily digestible materials still litter around, getting random seeds that came from the bread, and bits of lettuce to clump around my neck. My tail has been compacted in the compost.

Flatulate releases happen all through the night, his fermentative process creates the foul fetor. Disgusting ripples of the reek wallow heavily around my pile. The waste has become a solidified mess, encapsulating my body. His omnivorous diet creates a fibrous bowel movement, consolidating it all together in lumpy logs. His ribbed colon walls scrape over the mass, crinkling over the solid lumps. Mucus lubricates the waste, hard peristaltic pulses facilitates its movement.

A loud release of gas makes him suddenly shift. I am pushed forward quickly, spilling into his rectum. The squishy flesh folds and holds the scat in place, but is pushed further in by his colon. I press against his tight pink anus, which gives a squelching flex. A long winded whine comes from him. I have heard it a number of times when I had to wake him up early. I sit expecting to be released, but a hard manual clench of his soft rectal flesh shunts me back into his ribbed colon. *I know you are awake! Get up and let me out already!!*

I shift and thrash in my pile, nearly breaking free from the baked mud. It pushes back into his rectum where I continue to squirm. I bump heavily into, what I can only imagine is his prostate. He gives a strange moan, and shifts around slightly. *This will get him out of bed!* I continue to batter around his rectum, which clamps and squeezes with my thrashing. Instead of getting up, this strange series of up and down movements. It becomes chaotic in his anal cavity, and I cannot fathom why. Bouncing back and forth within his hardened scat, I slush with his manual muscular movements. They become quick, his heart rate and breathing have both vastly accelerated with whatever he is doing.

He gives a muted groan, the squishes and squelches grow with my pile being slurped inside his rectum. It seems to be waking him up more, so I keep pressing against the lump where his prostate would be. Each time elicits more noise from the fox. His whole lower gastrointestinal tract is bouncing around, causing a bursting release of flatulence, but he does not seem to care at all. I push heavily against the spot, trying to break him from his trance, or whatever he is doing. His whole body tenses, tightening his muscles. I hear a thick liquid pumping from his body in strange spurts as his movements become silenced. He gives a long sigh, and I suck straight against his sputtering anus with another release of gas.

Revox tenses up, I feel him roll out of bed while muttering something to himself. His bipedal walking shuffles me left and right into his rectal flesh, sometimes sticking to one side due to the uncomfortable rubber attracted to my fur. He sits rather quickly, his pucker hole slowly opens. Down through the sphincter, I see the water of our toilet below.

A puff of fetor begins his bowel movement's release. I slowly get pushed along, his anus smothers my face with anal slime. It caresses my fur, gumming me over until reaching the lumpy scat cocooning my body. The hair around his butt gets squeezed out of the way, but some gets caught up in the foul rubber that has plagued me the whole journey. Strands snap as his sphincter creases over the lumpy waste, getting caught in his fur like mine. He works over the girth of my pile, which begins to slide out quickly. The release is slimy and slick, leaving with another flatulate burst that fully pushes me out.

Splash! I land into the cold water. It comes nearly as a shock, but feels nice after a second of trying to escape my tomb. Another chunk of scat plops down, landing atop my pile, and another. Once his anus shuts tight, he begins to excrete liquid waste from his other organ. The first little pulse is off white, mixed with pale yellow. A gob of the strange slime pushes towards me in the swirling liquids of the bowl. *Is that seminal fluid? Why would that be released with urine?* A gob of the goo pushes into my fur, reeking of animalistic pheromones. The torrent grows larger after the first awkward moment, gushing out the pale and cloudy urine. *He did not hydrate enough.*

The bowl fills with additional liquids, turning the clear water into a foggy yellow. By the time he pulses the last remains of urine, I have freed myself from the logs. The torrent broke up some of the fibrous mounds, making the whole bowl a cloud of debris. He takes paper and wipes off his smudged behind, getting it stuck on the rubber substance. He picks at it annoyed,

mumbling something, but stands once he has been cleaned off. I am filthy, swimming in the rancid sea, covered in scat and liquid wastes. The synthetic rubber covers most of my body, sticking clumps of dung to my fur that I cannot get away from.

He turns and looks at what he made, wearing a pair of gloves. I see his eyes lock onto me, and a smile comes to his foxy face. "Let's get you out of there, please don't move all that much." He gingerly reaches in with a cringe to his lips, plucking my tail. I am freed from the bowl, dripping plunks litter the water below from my body. Revox is naked, not as if he ever wears clothes all that often on the ship with me. He takes a bundle of toilet tissue and hovers me above it while ushering me to the sink.

"Sorry about the gum, it's a bad habit, you aren't supposed to swallow it. Oh man, fur was a bad choice, are you ever going to get that out?" His voice comes with this embarrassment, and sounds really uncharacteristic. I have not heard him speak in this manner before. There is a strange musk to the air as he plops me into the waist-high sink, but the sputtering spout of water washes it away.

I shift into a slick skink, the normal waste washes off easily from my scales, but the gum remains. I try another few forms, finally changing into a newt that secretes a gooey slime from its skin. The rubber slowly slides off, and I back away from it. Revox snatches it from the sink before it clogs the drain. "You're so cool. Have I ever told you that before? I've never been so fascinated by something in my life!" I hop out of the sink and turn into an anthro fox nearly identical to him.

"Were you purposely acting strange during my transit? There were a lot of instances that made little to no sense. Why do you eat beyond your nutritional necessity? Why-" I start to spew out, but he interrupts me.

"Ah! I agreed to eat you, not get a full digestive review of my body. I acted as I always do on a station, and that's as far as I'm going. Well—actually, the first bit was because you were being an ass." He states.

"There was so much illogical behavior, and-" He cuts me off again.

"Stop! It's only illogical to you, because all you study are mindless beasts! Think of the complex layers of thoughts you have, others have their own ideas of life. It's not illogical, just a different mindset, and way to live. They may seem like predators to you, but the truth is: none of that applies to people." He cracks a smile, but covers his nose.

"Are you calling me ignorant?" I ask, frustrated by his interruptions, and refusal to explain his oddities.

"Obviously! You quite clearly didn't understand the process that happened, and I imagine it's driving you crazy. If you ever *actually* walk around with others, it would make more sense,

hopefully. You can't learn everything about us sitting on the inside." He makes an obnoxious point.

"What were you doing prior to my release? You woke up-" He cuts me off again, though this wave of embarrassment overtakes his tensing body.

"I—uh. Well. Just a morning ritual is all, lots of movement gets the heart pumping, y'know..? Uhm. I was going to hop in the shower, but clearly you need it more." His deflection is intriguing, but the action described does not make any sense. Alas nothing he does brings rationality with it.

"I can wait if you would like. I do not want to disrupt your morning rituals or customs." I offer.

"Well—no, they aren't like, serious or anything. Do you... maybe... want to shower together? I got us new soap, and an extra set of paws might clean you faster? I made the mess after all..." *An odd request. Is this some potential prank?*

"It would conserve water. You've never offered to bathe me before, I thought it went against your customs?" I question.

"Most people don't like being touched, especially when wet and naked. Well—most of the time." He stammers out, clearly acting strange. The concept of clothed versus being normal is still hard to grasp.

"I imagine it is mentally a vulnerable state. Instinctually parental species would bathe their youth. Adults sometimes pick out bugs and the sort, but do not participate in liquid soaking. At least, not physically interacting with one another when such an occurrence does arise."

"It's not like that, usually people only do it with others they consider *very* close friends." His offer becomes more intriguing. *He considers me such a being?*

"You deem me a very close friend?" At this point I have to know.

"Forget I said anything. I'm sorry—I'm being weird—I don't know what I'm going on about. It's been a strange trip, and there's a lot on my mind, and I still have to buy stuff, and it's just been pretty stressful on this station, and you're-" This time I cut off his rambling.

"I was not aware becoming clean with another was such a strange anomaly, but I would partake if you so wish. Your mind is running, clearly this would mean a lot to you?" I take a guess.

He turns on the shower, or at least tries. After a minute of fiddling, the water sputters out. "We should really get this fixed. I'm working on getting us a contract with Zenith. It'll cost us a lot

to enter the program, but we have to spend money to make it!" He backs away. "It's fine. You can go first. I'm just overthinking things is all. I really shouldn't impose anything on you, I know you're impressionable. This isn't normal behavior, and I shouldn't be doing these things with you." He certainly is acting strange.

"You certainly are intriguing. It is not because of something I did that made you change your mind? I hope my actions have not damaged our—" He wraps his arms around my body, tugging me close to him, resting his head on my shoulder for a moment. I have never been touched in such a way, I have no idea how to respond to the bizarre gesture. It feels... comforting, my muscles relax, and a tear comes to my eye. *What is this feeling?*

He backs off, putting his paws on my shoulders, looking into my eyes. "I could never imagine a world where your goofy, awkward analysis could possibly damage our relationship." He gives my right shoulder a pat, before retracting his arms from my body. "Get yourself clean. You can stay on the ship if you really don't want to go out there. I'm sorry I keep pushing you, I just want you to be comfortable around me is all."

I extend my arms and grab his body in a similar manner, he gives a surprised yip, so I back off. "I am sorry—did I perform the action wrong—was it unwarranted?" He laughs at my remark, pulling me back into him. I try to mimic his actions, taking note of how soft his fur is.

"It's what people do when they want to show someone they care about them, or to comfort them: a hug. I really want you to know how special you are. No matter what you read on those terminals, I believe you're a friendly goofball, and nothing will ever change my mind." He squeezes me tight. A smile comes to my vulpine face, a feeling of acceptance comes to mind. I see myself in the mirror, and for the first time, I feel myself.

Maybe I'm not a monster. His paws feel nice on my fur.