

The town of Sunnyvale was a warm and peaceful one, as its name would imply.

Built into the valley between two large mountains to the North and South, Sunnyvale enjoyed plenty of its namesake sunshine from early morning to late dusk, as there was hardly much horizon for the sun to hide into. With a constant, reliable water supply in the form of a generous stream that divided the town in two, on top of plenty of fertile farmlands, the town had little to no worries of drought or famine. There was always enough produce to go around to keep everyone full and happy. And then some.

A thriving economy such as this would typically lead townspeople to be wary of strangers or travelers, for they could be thieves or robbers in disguise; people who would take advantage of such a wealthy town. However, for Sunnyvale, that couldn't be further from the truth. It was customary for townsfolk to greet each other with a friendly smile and a wave should they cross paths along the cobblestone road; whether they knew each other or not was irrelevant. Many friendships have started when two anthros decided to talk about dinner plans just out in the open, with one inviting the other to try their cooking.

As expected from a village with plentiful crops, Sunnyvale's repertoire of meals was just another facet of such an extraordinary town. Meats from the plumpest livestock, freshly dug vegetables, hand-picked fruits; all went hand in hand to form banquets that could be smelled from miles away. All the town lacked was its own spices, but given how popular of a stop Sunnyvale was with travelers, it was not hard for them to procure some from passing merchants. Just as it was tradition to smile and wave at friends and strangers alike, it was also tradition to invite foreigners to the town to a feast or three, ensuring they left the village with their belts several notches more loose than when they came in.

And there was one such foreigner who took great advantage of this.

His arrival could be felt within the town long before he even came into view. Ripples would form in the cups of those sitting outside for an afternoon tea, followed by the ground lightly thumping and shaking in a rhythmic pattern. Finally, the trees themselves would shuffle about, with older leaves falling right out of their perch.

Only then did the dragon's massive head loom into view.

And just like the townspeople, the dragon himself wore a bright smile across his face when he stepped into the village, taking care not to smother any building or fur beneath his titanic self. "Helloooooo, Sunnyvale!" He called out cheerfully; more out of

habit than anything, as he knew the entire town was well aware of his presence.

But it was cute watching the furs crowd out to gawk at him, hearing them shout “helloooooo, Felix!” Seeing each and every little anthro looking up to smile at him made his heart flutter, and seeing the wonderful dishes they carried in their arms made his stomach do the same.

Felix wasn’t sure when he became the guardian of Sunnyvale. He never signed any document stating he was, or entered any verbal agreement with the villagers. The large drake was just minding his business one day when he smelled the most scrumptious smell, and was curious enough to investigate the source of it, despite a dragon’s presence typically causing mass terror. However, to his delight, his appearance was as welcomed as any anthros, and Felix was offered an impressive spread of food; not as a bribe to let them live, or as an offering for their protection. They fed him because they liked him!

And he liked them back, very, very much. Of course he couldn’t stop at just one meal with these friendly, food-skilled townsfolk, could he? He stopped by again and again, happy to sample their cuisines and chat about whatever interesting little bit of news happened in this otherwise sleepy town. Some even regarded Felix as the very icon of Sunnyvale itself, given the dragon’s light-blue scales and bright yellow underbelly could be viewed as the very sky itself in draconic form. He loved the people here just as much as he loved their food.

Boy, did he love their food.

Perhaps a little *too* much, as Felix found it difficult to stop moving even while standing in place! Carefully padding into town had become a chore once the dragon’s knees began digging into his heaving, swaying underbelly, the barrel-shaped belly impeding his legs as easily as it weighed down on his torso. Keeping his tail from dragging along the ground had become quite the chore as well, and despite walking as carefully as possible, Felix could tell his footsteps were making imprints into the ground as of late, as though the hard dirt were as soft as sand.

Ah, but he couldn’t think about a diet now, not when there’s food to be had! With a breathless sigh (“pew, this town is getting farther and farther, I swear), Felix lowered his head down to sniff at the various platters on display, before opening wide to gobble them down. Thankfully, his lengthy neck still allowed him that luxury, but even that may soon come to pass, as the drake felt his chins bunch up quite heavily.

“A fine morning to you, Felix,” an older tabby cat smiled, sensing the dragon’s limited neck movements and holding up her platter higher to compensate. “How are you on this fine day?”

“G-good,” Felix smiled as brightly as he could, but the blue dragon couldn’t hide his huffing and puffing as he inhaled the fresh batch of cookies. “I think I’m starting to sleep longer. Hope I didn’t keep anyone waiting.”

Next in line, a younger squirrel, shook her head. “Oh, not at all! We were just worried something happened to our big, brave protector. We’re just glad to see you’re as healthy as possible.”

Felix snorted between bites of peach cobbler. “Heh, yeah, maybe a little too healthy.” He raised a forepaw to press it deep into his overhanging paunch, letting the villagers watch it engulf his paw nearly up to its wrist, before releasing the gut to let it *bwurf* back to normal. “So healthy, in fact, I may soon end up wedged within my own cave entrance.”

It was embarrassing to admit he had a bit of a weight issue, but Felix felt comfortable in divulging that little fact with the villagers. Not because they would encourage him to diet and exercise to lose weight, but the opposite. “Oh, phooey to your cave! Live by our town, Felix. We’d love nothing more than to care for you!”

Felix’s yellow cheeks reddened. “I-I couldn’t. I’d only get in the way. Both metaphorically and, well, literally.”

Even before the extra pounds, erh, tons, Felix was still quite a massive dragon. At 17 meters from feet to horns, the pudgy drake towered over every building in town with ease. Even the tallest bell tower only made it up to the dragon’s flabby neck. Settling outside of town would make for quite the hassle for travelers and traders to get around the enormous dragon. Not to mention how much worse his weight problem would become should he be encouraged to never have to get up again, letting the villagers come by and feed him more and more... he’d fill the valley by the end of the year!

No, he couldn’t have that; he wouldn’t dare inconvenience the kind people who’d done so much for him already.

Felix smiled gently. “Don’t worry about it, really. It’s my problem to fret over, not yours. I’m sure everything will even out soon.”

He could see on the villagers' expressions that they weren't fully convinced of this. Truth be told, Felix wasn't either. All of this weight, which he had accumulated over many months of feasting, wouldn't simply vanish just because he wished it to.

But the blue and yellow dragon didn't want to trouble himself or the kind townspeople of his little dilemma. Nor did he want to think about his widening midsection, standing in a town *renowned* for its food! So, he stopped worrying about it, simple as that. Instead, Felix allowed himself to mingle peacefully with the villagers while enjoying all of their breakfast offerings.

All thirty-two of them.

It wasn't all food for the guardian of the town; the dragon allowed himself to lower his head to the ground for the younger, more timid children to rub his snout, happily teaching them about dragon safety. Felix could barely feel their little hands along his scales, but that could be because he was more interested in the small treats they offered.

Later he would play hide and seek with the older children (with him doing all of the seeking, for obvious reasons). It was always a joy, watching the young'uns squeal in mock terror as he'd loomed in from above, before offering him candy as a 'peace offering.'

Ah, and then lunch time came soon after many hours of playing and snacking. A bit winded after carefully romping through town, Felix opted to lay on his back in the town square. Not that the locals minded an enormous drake covering much of their village; in fact, they were all too happy to once again offer up platters of food straight into that smiling, open maw of his. The issue of space was quickly resolved as well, for the town's residents young and old all loved clamboring aboard that gigantic domed stomach, feeling it rise oh so subtly with each and every meal.

But lunch was just the halfway point in the dragon's busy day! There was still pastry sampling, beer and wine tasting, hotdog eating contests, and a wonderful feast to end the day off, not to mention dessert...

"Goodbye, Felix! See you again tomorrow!"

Felix heard the townspeople cheerfully see him off as he lumbered out. He wanted to turn his head to smile back and state how he looked forward to the day, but the dragon didn't trust himself to open his maw. Not without blasting an enormous belch.

Sheesh, they stuffed him *good!* Felix could feel his heaving belly swaying beneath with each step like a massive pendulum, threatening to brush against the dirt road should he bend his knees just a tad bit more than usual. The bloated stomach groaned and gurgled, sloshing in time with its rhythmic swinging, its creaking and grumbling only overshadowed by the muffled belches Felix was forced to make. He was no mammal by any means, yet the dragon felt certain that this sensation must be close to how pregnancy feels.

Ugh, and he had to lug his food baby all the way back to his cave?!

Despite the long trek ahead of him, Felix couldn't help but slowly halt himself, craning his roll-studded neck back towards the village. Once again, the temptation to just plop right down and let the townspeople care for him emerged. He was simply getting too fat to make the same trek every day, and the massive meals residing in his gut weren't helping at all. What should happen if a calamity were to strike poor Sunnyvale, and he couldn't do anything to help due to getting wedged in his own cave?

Even worse, what if the calamity *was* Felix himself? It was getting harder to control his own momentum thanks to the added tons of bulk on his flanks. All it'd take was a simple misstep for him to shatter a building or three, and with it any and all goodwill he'd built up with Sunnyvale!

What was he to do?

With a heavy sigh knowing he had no answer, Felix lowered his head and continued forward back to his cave.

Only to pause in place, seeing three figures standing right before him.

Felix jumped in shock. Well, "jumped" in heavy quotations. In reality he stood a bit more rigid, enough to bounce his flabby midsection as he regarded the three strangers gazing up at the dragon. "O-oh, hello! Sorry, I didn't see you down there."

The trio said nothing; nothing to Felix, at least. Instead, they leaned towards each other and began muttering away, their whispered tones too faint for the dragon to pick up on.

The more he looked at them, however, the more uncomfortable Felix felt, a knot forming in his stomach. These three wore large, heavy cloaks around themselves; a bit strange, he thought, given there wasn't a cloud in the sky today. Only now did the dragon even realize these three were foxes. Even more worrying, Felix noted the icon of a fiery staff embroidered into the strangers' cloaks; the symbol of a mage. Were these foxes mages, or did they steal those cloaks from mages? The dragon wasn't sure which answer he would have preferred.

Finally, the fox in front turned away from her comrades and stepped forward, staring straight into the drake's green eyes. "Are you who they call Felix? Guardian of Sunnyvale?"

"The one and only." Felix nodded, his expression unchanging. Just as he suspected, these three were outsiders. Would he have to throw around his title of Guardian now to make sure they were up to no good? It wasn't exactly uncommon for mages to let their power get to their heads a little, after all. Thankfully, dragon scales were quite resistant to magic, so he would have little difficulty fending off these intruders.

Although he *really* hoped it wouldn't come to that. He'd get one *hell* of a stomach cramp if he had to chase these three out.

Thankfully, that appeared to not be the case. Much to the dragon's surprise, all three vulpines kneeled before the looming drake, their heads bowed. "It is an honor to meet you, sir. We've come to offer you a tribute in your name."

"A tribute?" Felix tilted his head. He'd never felt so conflicted before. To the pudgy drake, tributes were typically large quantities of food, and right now he wasn't sure he could fit in another bite without his scales popping off.

And yet, despite his stuffed stomach, his greed won out in the end as he inquired further. "A tribute of what?"

"Water." The vulpine looked up from her kneeling position, smiling when she noticed Felix's ear frills lift in interest. "The finest, freshest, most delicious water we can provide. So fresh, in fact, that we invite you to come with us to drink it straight from the source. Alas, it's a bit of a trek, but—"

“Perfect! Then let’s get going!” Felix blurted out. His chubby cheeks formed dimples, he was smiling so wide. This really was perfect! Water had no calories so he couldn’t get fatter off of it, and a small walk would be great for working off some of his excessive pudg.

The female fox looked taken aback by the dragon’s enthusiasm. “A-ah, I see! You are far more trusting than we had anticipated.”

“Well, this way I can keep an eye on you lot, make sure you’re worthy of entering Sunnyvale,” Felix retorted, smirking. Ok, it was a little fun throwing around his ‘Guardian’ role from time to time.

The fox chuckled. “Then let us be off. If we keep at a good pace, we’ll arrive well before sundown.”

“That’s grea- sundown!?” Felix cast a glance towards the sky, his ear frills drooping. The sun still had quite a ways before it reached the horizon...

Maybe this wasn’t his best idea?

Only ten minutes into this journey and Felix was having second thoughts. He’d already walked the distance from Sunnyvale to his den, but there was still much more to go, according to the fox. This would be so much easier if he didn’t have to deal with his swollen midsection swaying with every lumbering step. Gosh, were the rocks actually *cracking* beneath his feet? Sheesh, some guardian he was!

Occasionally, Felix craned his head behind him to glance towards the setting sun, using it as his metric for how much further this camp of theirs really was. He didn’t want to bother the nice fox and look more pathetic for asking how much further this special water was, but-

“Is something the matter, Guardian Felix? Have you left something behind”

-but, damn, guess there was no hiding it.

The dragon’s pudgy blue cheeks turned violet at having been called out, swiveling his head to look forward quick enough to jostle his pudgy chins. “O-oh, it’s

just... well, I shouldn't leave Sunnyvale unattended for long, you know? Guardian duties, and all."

The vulpine smiled. "Your devotion to your role is admirable. If you're concerned, we could pick up the pace some and jog the rest of the way."

Felix blinked. "On second thought, I'm sure they'll be fine without me for a couple hours."

She didn't respond, although the dragon noticed a smile on her pointed muzzle before turning forward again.

Felix sighed. He's already embarrassed himself, so there was no point in hiding his anxiety any longer to save face. "E-excuse me, miss...erh..."

"Maya." The fox nodded, still looking forward. "Call me Maya."

"Maya." Felix repeated. "Can you tell me a little more about this water of yours?"

The fox turned to look back at Felix, another playful grin on her face. "Wouldn't you rather see for yourself?"

Felix bit his lip. "Normally I would, but... phew, I think I need something to picture, to motivate myself further. I'm just not built for hikes." He wasn't sure he was built for hikes several hundred pounds ago either.

Maya chuckled softly at that. "Very well. With Spring having arrived, the snows atop the Twin Peaks here have begun melting, forming a stream near here made out of pure glacial water, nice and cool. Even more fortunate, this stream runs through a variety of fruit trees, whose leaves and flowers fall into the waters. As far as we know, this is the only place in the country where you can drink fresh glacial water, with flavors enhanced thanks to the flora floating atop it."

"I... I see..." Felix tried to hide his disappointment. "I-I mean, it sounds wonderful, but, erh, wouldn't this just taste like chilled tea?"

"Normally, yes." Maya raised her finger; to Felix's shock, the tip of her claw began to glow, visible even in broad daylight. "But that's where we come in. A little bit of magic enhances the flavor tremendously."

“Oooh!” Despite his weary state, Felix couldn’t help but wag his tail. “You’re Flavor Mages!” Out of all of the schools of magic Felix knew, those who studied the culinary arts were the ones least likely to use their powers for nefarious means. Many had stopped by Sunnyvale during Felix’s tenure of Guardian; and of course they were kind enough to let the enormous drake sample their wares. So these foxes *were* trustworthy all along!

Maya nodded enthusiastically. “We sure are! We’ve heard tales of this fabled Sunnyvale and its incredible yearly harvests. It’s been our goal to stay in this town to learn its secrets for cultivating crops, and impart our knowledge of the culinary arts in return. Of course, we can’t consider ourselves worthy of entering without first appeasing the guardian dragon, could we? That is why we’ve invited you out here, guardian Felix, to try our most flavorful beverage straight from the tap, so we may earn your blessings to enter Sunnyvale.”

“That makes sense to me!” Felix smiled, dimples forming in his cheeks. These mages were a bit formal, sure, but they seemed nice enough. He didn’t have the heart to tell them they didn’t need to appease him to gain entrance to Sunnyvale at all; he was too eager to try this drink! A low calorie, delicious beverage that could fill him up, and hopefully prevent him from putting on even more weight. Oh, how fun!

He was a little lost in thought, yet Felix still heard the tail end of a hushed conversation between Maya and another fox, this one leaning his head close towards Maya’s. “Are you sure we need to go through with this, Maya? He already seems fat enough to-”

“Shush!” Maya snapped at her fellow vulpine. Ah, but Felix had heard everything...

Actually, he only heard a few choice words. “Fat” being one of them.

The dragon could also pick up on the other fox’s skeptical questioning, and quickly put two and two together. Obviously, this fellow thought Felix was too fat to make the rest of the trip! The drake wasn’t offended; after all, he actually had to arc his back a bit to prevent his scaly stomach from brushing against the ground. If he wanted to, he could furl in his legs and rest atop his beanbag belly to rest his weary feet.

But Felix was determined to not let it come to that! The proud dragon huffed and stood tall, looking as strong as determined as a dragon quadruple the average body weight could. “Don’t worry about me,” he spoke strongly, trying to invoke powerful “town

guardian” energies. “I’ll make it there just fine. Nothing will stop me from sampling your delicious water, and giving you my blessings!”

Oh, if only he felt as confident as he sounded...

“Hurf...haaf...horf...bwauhf...”

That “confidence” barely lasted him thirty minutes.

Felix was grateful dragons couldn’t sweat, because he was certain he’d be a disgusting mess by now if they could. It was a chore just lifting one chunky leg after the other, his gait having become increasingly clumsy and shaky. He’d no longer even attempted to stop his bloated gut from dragging across the ground anymore, his stomach creasing the grass and making a thick path through it. Gods above, this was tough, especially on his poor joints! And he was supposed to make this trip *back* too?!

The dragon was tempted to call it quits and turn around, or even better, flop onto the grass and pass out. It felt so soft and cool along his bloated belly anyways. So much so, Felix was already envisioning laying down when he heard it. A wondrous, beautiful sound that once more filled him with just a little bit more determination to keep him going.

The sound of running water.

He pushed himself further, huffing and puffing like a locomotive train. As they rounded the next bend, Felix let out a rather undignified squeal as he came across an incredible sight.

A rather large clearing had been made, with plenty of ox-pulled wagons and tents set up. Apparently, this Flavor Mage group was far bigger than just these three foxes. Granted, it was nearly deserted, with only a handful of stragglers around to tend to a fire or care for the oxen. Were the others out hunting or gathering food, perhaps? Maya did say plenty of trees along this stream were fruit trees, but there shouldn’t be any fruit on these trees if their flowers were falling into the river, right?

Ah, but who cared about any of that?!

Felix's attention was almost entirely devoted to the flowing stream just up ahead, the enormous drake letting out an excited trill. He didn't even care about the enhancements Maya promised; that long hike had left him parched, and pure glacial water sounded like a perfect remedy. Heck, there was even a large tree rooted by the shoreline of the stream, a perfect place to settle his bulk to hide himself from the sun.

And that was exactly what he did.

With a very unceremonious thump, the pudgy dragon flopped onto his stomach beneath the tree, rustling the branches. Urf, it felt so good to finally rest his weary legs, giving the pudgy limbs a good big stretch out in all directions. Screw his cave, he'll stay right here for the night if the mages didn't mind.

He craned his fat neck back towards the fox. "This is the right stream, right? Please tell me it is." The dragon asked, praying he didn't just flop next to the nearest body of water.

Coming up on Felix's right flank, Maya chuckled and, to the fat dragon's relief, nodded. "Indeed, this is the very stream. Shall I enhance it for you?"

But Felix barely heard her; it was hard to hear with his head engulfed in water, after all.

Glug glug glug. The dragon's throat bobbed with each greedy gulp of water that passed through his lips. The ice-cool water felt great on his throat, sore from his heavy panting, not to mention refreshing for his warm face. Heck, even with hardly any debris in the crystal clear water, Felix could actually taste a bit of fruit mixed into it, just like Maya said. He was about to come up for air to let the nice fox know he approved of the wonderful liquid.

But that was before it was enhanced.

The dragon was about to come up after holding his breath, but suddenly tasting *that* was like a breath of fresh air in of itself! It was like the water had been replaced with a rich fruity cocktail or a smoothie, thick forest-y flavors dancing around the drake's tongue and made their taste and presence known long after he'd swallowed the mouthful! It tasted so rich and heavy, as though it should have been a milkshake drunk through a heavy straw, yet it continued to flow freely into his mouth without any sort of viscosity slowing it down!

And no brain freezes either!

At last, Felix pried his head out from the water with a very audible gasp, panting not from exertion for once. Wiggling his earflaps to shake them of water, he slowly craned his fat head towards Maya, eyes wide. “That is... *hrrrp* something else.”

Maya chuckled. “I take it the water is to your liking?”

“It’s to my *loving!* I-I mean I love it! I had no idea water could be this tasty!” The dragon licked his lips, tail swishing happily. “I’m just worried I’ll end up drinking the entire stream before my friends at Sunnyvale could get a chance to try it. I, erh, struggle with self control, heh.”

The vulpine waved a finger. “Don’t worry about it. We’ve bottled plenty of the water to redistribute at Sunnyvale, so you’re more than free to drink the entire stream. As improbable as that is, of course.”

“You guys are the best!” The dragon gave one more chirp, before once more sliding his head beneath the water, gorging away. Yet again, he was astonished at just how much flavor was packed into something as plain as water, his pleased rumbles bubbling out of his nose through his gulps. Amusingly, if he tried hard enough, he could discern specific flavors of fruits within the water. Raspberries, strawberries, apples, pears, blueberries... Like eating a massive fruity feast!

It was also just as filling as a feast.

It didn’t take long for Felix to notice a weird feeling in his belly, the water literally pooling up in his stomach. Shortly after, the big drake could feel his tum start to gurgle and slosh, expanding ever so slowly as it filled like a big water balloon. Of course that was bound to happen, Felix thought to himself in between gulps. He was drinking a *lot* of water, more than he ever had before in a single sitting, so it made sense he’d be bloating out a bit with a heavier stomach.

So why was the rest of him feeling so heavy as well?

Why was his waggy tail suddenly feeling slow and lethargic?

Why was it hard for him to lift his legs even just to reposition himself slightly?

Was he getting fatter?

No, of course not, that's absurd! This was water, after all, quite literally the lowest calorie substance possible to consume. His limbs weren't getting *literally* heavier, it was all just his lethargy catching up with him, that's all! Felix was finally relaxing, he figured, which meant his weary muscles were finally taking a break to rest. Tomorrow his bloated middle would vanish, and he'd wake up feeling as fit as a fiddle. Yes, there was no reason to stop drinking.

So he didn't.

"Hey, Maya? He's not going to drown himself, is he?"

"He won't, although it'd save us all a lot of trouble." Maya scoffed at her subordinate's question, crossing her arms. "Dragons like him have great lung capacity. He could be under there for an hour if he wanted to."

If only it were that easy to deal with a dragon that way, the fox thought to herself as she gazed at the gorging dragon. Of course Sunnyvale just had to have some dragon protecting their village. Any other creature would have been easy to deal with, as nothing was as resilient to magic as dragon scales.

Thankfully, dragons didn't have scales inside their stomachs.

Alas, it was difficult for Maya to enjoy her victory over Felix when she was constantly reminded of the incompetence of her own henchmen. Despite having gone over the plan numerous times with these idiots, she could still see the look of hesitancy on the other fox's face as he rambled. "Will he really keep drinking until Craig and Tyler's groups return?"

"Maybe, maybe not, but that's not the point." Maya pinched her brow. "The point is he drinks enough to grow too fat to pose a problem with us. Immobilize him beneath his own weight, so all he can do is hurl fire at us, which shouldn't be an issue if you put up the flame wards like I asked you to."

"Oh I did! For sure!" The other fox nodded his head so quickly, Maya could picture his tiny brain bouncing around inside his hollow skull.

She rolled her eyes. “Well, proceed with preparations and make sure not to break anything. We leave for Sunnyvale at nightfall, and I want every mage present to loot this town dry.” They’ve had it too good for too long, and it was high time they took matters into their own hands to redistribute all that wealth.

Maya’s lacking-in-brains lackey nodded again and shuffled off, and the vulpine ringleader turned back to Felix. And she grinned.

Felix was right, he really didn’t have an iota of self-restraint. The dragon looked far fatter now than when she last looked at him even five minutes ago. His bright yellow belly swelled out beneath him, spilling out between his limbs like dough. Not like his limbs were faring any better, having grown to the shape of tree trunks with none of the firmness associated, his knees all but vanishing beneath the pillars of pudge. Even that tail was starting to develop even more rolls than what Maya remembered the dragon having; what was once an excitedly-wiggly limb had been reduced to a few slow movements towards the tip.

And still Felix drank, seemingly unaware that each sip was playing further and further into Maya’s hands!

The mage couldn’t help but laugh at her good fortune. At this rate, it didn’t matter if her idiot henchmen set up the flamewards around their camp or not. The glutton was likely too fat to even turn around!

“Mmmmbwaaah! Haaf! Hurrf!”

With a noisy gasp, Felix finally lifted his head out of the water, huffing and puffing. How long had he been in there? Thirty minutes? Fourty? The stream was so tasty, the dragon had completely lost track, having been so absorbed in, well, absorbing as much water into himself as possible.

Really, the dragon only brought his head back out to give himself a quick gasp of air, as well as to praise Maya further. He was so excited to bring this back to town with him, show off its delicious properties to all of his friends at Sunnyvale. Finally, he had a chance to pay them back for all of their generosity they’d shown him over the years! He was about to move away from the spring, still a bit worried about accidentally drinking the entire body of water, when he noticed a few... problems.

Not just that his limbs felt impossibly heavier than before.

Not just that the ground beneath his feet had been replaced with his squishy, supple, scaly stomach.

Not just that he could barely even turn his head or bend his limbs.

It was the water's reflection that threw Felix off.

The dragon's eyes widened dramatically at the image of himself, his jaw dropping to bunch up his impressive multitude of chins. He'd always been fat, and lately had been getting a little fatter than he admittedly should, but now he was absolutely humongous! He had puffy cheeks before, but they'd never been so big as to actually force his eyes into a squint before! Goodness, each of his spherical cheeks looked to be as large as his head used to be, the way they just sagged down onto his neck.

And goodness, his neck! What was once just a puffy cylinder was now an entire series of rolls upon rolls built up upon one another, like a whole stack of donuts growing larger and larger the lower down the drake's lengthy neck it went. Even if he couldn't see back there, he could feel the amorphous mass of flesh bunch up and squish against his equally-impressive torso. Gosh, even the back of his head was puffy and fatty, actually pressing into the back of his horns!

He'd been tricked. There was no way this was all just a water bloat. Clearly Maya intended to trick the dragon into drinking until he was a fat blob, but for what reason? To get him out of the way of Sunnyvale? How awful! He had to stop her.

He had to... he had to...

Felix dunked his head back into the water. Immobile as he was, the massive drake couldn't bring himself to tear his head away from the delicious concoction before him. Yes, he was aware that this was only making his situation worse; higher and higher his hindlegs rose, lifted up by his rapidly expanding stomach. But darnit, he couldn't help himself. It was so good, and the water was just *right there!* Right in maw's reach! Why *wouldn't* he drink from it?

As he drank away, and felt layers upon layers of blubber deposit themselves across his body, Felix realized he wasn't exactly filling up either. It was as though the water was being metabolized straight into fat the minute it landed in his stomach.

Perhaps he should be worried about this fact, as every gulp of water he took would leave him stranded on his belly for even longer.

He thought about it as he drank, and drank, and drank...

“M-Maya! Miss Maya! We have a problem!”

The fox closed her eyes, forcing herself to take a deep breath in through her nose, then out her mouth. A simple breathing technique to calm her nerves, so she wouldn't incinerate the idiot who dared shout into her tent without permission. “Have Craig and Tyler's groups run into any issues returning here?” The vulpine asked sternly, not even bothering to face her lackey's direction.

“N-no, not at all. They're actually not far from here.”

“Then there is no problem.” Maya scoffed. Outside of the might of the kingdom's army itself, there was very little that could stand in the way of an entire camp full of mages.

Yet, this loudmouth outside her tent seemed to think so as he continued yapping. “B-but Maya, ma'am. It's about Felix! He's fallen into the stream!”

Despite being quite frustrated at having been alerted over something so trivial, Maya couldn't help but to snort loudly. “You mean to tell me he's been drinking this entire time?!”

Maya laughed loudly before her lackey could even respond. What a gluttonous oaf! Did he ever realize he'd been tricked by Maya into becoming a useless blob of lard? Last she saw of Felix, he looked incapable of so much as bending his limbs, and that was hours before she retired into her camp! If he'd been drinking this whole time... Oh, she had to see this for herself!

“Alright, let me see.” Maya crawled towards the entrance of her camp, shoving the reporting fox out of the way. She stood up and scanned the area where she'd last seen Felix...

Ah, so *that* was the problem!

A large crowd had formed in front of the stream, yet she could see Felix quite easily through them. How could she not? The dragon was *immense*, a mound of pure blubber more closely resembling oversized stacks of pancakes than an actual drake. Those pudgy limbs were virtually unidentifiable, buried beneath rolls upon rolls of scaly blubber. Heck, it would have been telling which side was the belly and which was the back were it not for the bright blue and yellow scales. There was fat, and there was whatever step was above that, and THEN there was Felix!

But that wasn't what had caused Maya to start cursing. No, it was the fact that he was growing *rapidly*! He swelled out like the world's biggest water balloon, swelling further by entire feet per second! The crowd that had formed around Felix was constantly back-peddling, to avoid being engulfed by the 20 foot high wall of flesh expanding closer to them. Alas, while the furs could move back, the wagons and tents could not, until-

CRUNCH!!

"No!" Maya shrieked. That wagon was *filled* with priceless artifacts they'd looted over the course of years, and now it was dust beneath an ever-growing, ever-gorging dragon.

All because he fell into the damn water!

She stormed forward, growling. Felix overflowed the waterway and then some, but the creek forming behind him had completely dried up. Not a single drop of water escaped him, and glancing at his front could show why. The dragon had grown so enormous, his own facefat spilled out further than his own muzzle did, an intricate series of chins and cheeks that formed a funnel. All that water rushing its way into his gaping wide maw without the dragon ever having to slurp and swallow.

How the hell was she supposed to stop that?!

She turned back to her lackeys, hissing. "Don't just stand there you slack-jawed dimwits. *Stop him!*"

The night air was filled with an explosion of color as every mage unleashed their most powerful spells at that advancing wall of blubber. Alas, each one failed to so much as put a dent in that hide, with many spells quite literally bouncing off that squishy gut like rubber. Soon, the mages had to duck and hide as their own abilities were being sprayed right back at them, setting fire to tents and wagons alike.

“Ensnare him!” Maya commanded, raising her fingers. With her subordinates' help, she managed to erect an enormous wall of vines from the Earth, hoping to halt the dragon's blubbery advance. Alas, it merely delayed the inevitable, as Felix's squishy rolls spilled through the many openings within the vines, causing them to creak and crumble before finally bursting out.

By that point, the 20 foot high wall of blubber had risen to 30 feet, well on its way to reaching 40 and above.

It was like staring down the walls of a castle, mighty and imposing, unbreachable. And ever growing. There was nothing that could be done but to retreat, to run away while listening to the sickening crunches of their supplies being destroyed by Felix's bulk one after another. Treasures, magical focuses, even their food and water supplies, all buried beneath yards upon yards of pure lard. Without any of that, Maya and the others wouldn't be able to make it back to their homelands; they would have to beg the very town they planned on pillaging for supplies.

As she watched the entire campground get flattened beneath millions of tons of fat, Maya couldn't help but recall Felix's concerns earlier about drinking the entire stream. Maybe she was the incompetent one after all, not her henchmen...

The town of Sunnyvale was a warm and peaceful one. Thanks to Felix's efforts, it continued to remain so.

The villagers woke up the next morning without any idea that they had narrowly avoided an encounter with robbers and thieves. To them, it was just another ordinary day in their boring, quiet town.

Although there was a bit of a stir at the sudden appearance of a new mountain.

Felix felt a tad guilty for his actions. He'd been afraid of growing too fat due to getting in the way for Sunnyvale's residents, yet here he was with his head quite literally in the clouds, his body completely filling the valley between the North and South mountains from side to side. Surely he couldn't be taking up more space if he wanted to!

Well, as it turned out, he'd done the town a big favor! Scaling the rocky cliffs into Sunnyvale from either the North or South mountains was quite difficult thanks to their sheer steepness, yet Felix provided a perfect bridge between the two landmasses, making it easy to cross over from one side to the other. On top of that, while his squishy, flabby body proved quite difficult for vehicles to drive through, most able-bodied furs could easily ascend or descend the multitude of folds encompassing Mount Felix, cutting travel time in and out of Sunnyvale drastically.

Somehow, Felix helped Sunnyvale's economy and tourism immensely by being as much in the way as possible!

Much like Felix, Sunnyvale grew several times larger over the following years as people flocked to this more easily-accessible town. And of course, everybody who came by way of scaling Felix made sure to offer tribute to Sunnyvale's Guardian with plenty of food.

At last, the dragon could finally live out his dream of staying stationary and letting others care for him. He never had a shortage of visitors, as there was always a line of furs carrying entire carts full of food to offer the mighty mountain. Felix couldn't have been happier with this arrangement. It didn't bother him that he literally had no idea where his own limbs were within his own body, or that he could feel hundreds of feet or wheels on him at any time. He was constantly being praised and cared for, offered food by the tons while villagers rubbed his snout or patted his cheeks.

And he could still see Sunnyvale beyond his own cave-like structure of chins and neck folds. Together, the two continued to grow out and out, guardian and town alike, forever watching over each other.