

Levi's Game — The Feedbag Hike

By: Indi

The day was just cloudy enough to not be too warm or too cold, with large stretches of blue sky in the distance. It was an ideal day for a hike or being outdoors in general.

Dash looked up through the canopy of the forest and took a moment to enjoy the day. The white, speckled horse didn't go out of his way to hike—he preferred to kayak or simply jog instead—but the spontaneous trip had been well worth it. He finished off the last of his granola bar and tossed the wrapper on the ground. Colton was still eating, of course.

Beside Dash was a brown horse with a beer belly. Colton had a large bag of marshmallows in his hoof and was scarfing them down fast. An empty bag of chips lay at his feet, along with an empty bottle of soda. He'd left the remnants of other snacks up and down the short trail they'd traveled.

"Dude, you're gonna undo the whole hike in a single sitting at this rate," Dash said. He snickered as he looked at his friend's small belly.

"It's just a snack," Colton said between bites.

"A whole bag of marshmallows is more than a snack. And chips. And sodas. And everything else you stuffed yourself with the last couple hours." Dash kept his tone lighthearted. He'd watched his friend's eating habits get a bit out of control the last couple of years, but college did that to people. Half their frat was out of shape. Dash was happy staying thin and fit himself, while smugly seeing everyone else get plump. "At this rate you'll be as soft as a marshmallow soon."

Colton sent an angry snort Dash's way. "I can lose this weight whenever I want, bro. Just don't need to now."

"Didn't you say the same thing right before you got kicked off the baseball team?" Dash asked. A cheap shot, but he couldn't resist.

"They didn't kick me off, I quit," Colton insisted. "Practice and travel was a huge pain in the ass and Coach kept whining about making grades and other bullshit. Wasn't worth it."

Dash could've brought up the scholarship he'd lost by "quitting", but decided getting into an argument wasn't worth it. He'd gotten in enough teasing to satisfy himself.

Colton tilted the bag up and let the rest of the marshmallows tumble into his open mouth. He tossed the bag to the ground before he'd even finished chewing.

"It isn't nice to litter, you know?"

The voice came out of nowhere, startling Dash. He looked past Colton, back up the trail, and saw a short, chubby white goat. They wore a park ranger uniform that was snug around the middle, a couple of buttons strained enough for the white shirt beneath to peek through. The small nametag on his shirt read "Levi".

Dash couldn't understand how he hadn't heard the goat coming. Fallen leaves and twigs covered the trail. He didn't think it was possible to walk through it without making a noise. Chatting with Colton had clearly distracted him.

"All the packaging is biodegradable now, it'll be fine," Dash said. He didn't care for a lecture by a park ranger, especially one who looked like he'd spent more time hiking through a buffet than the forest.

"I don't think that plastic bottle is biodegradable," Levi said, looking at the garbage accumulated around Colton's feet. The goat didn't sound stern at all, still smiling wide. "Now I don't mind either of you having hearty appetites—I actually encourage it—but I would certainly appreciate it if you would properly dispose of your trash. And if space is an issue, I'd recommend buying party-sized snacks. They'll produce fewer wrappers while handling your immense hunger."

Dash saw Colton scowl and knew the goat was in trouble. "Are you calling me fat, shortstack?" Colton asked.

"There's nothing wrong with having a gut," Levi said, smacking his belly.

Dash snorted in amusement, while Colton only glared harder. The larger horse bent down and picked up the marshmallow package he'd dropped earlier. "Alright, I'm *sorry*. I'll make sure this finds the trash." He took a step toward Levi and impaled the package on one of the goat's horns. "There, all cleaned up!" The horse laughed so hard his belly shook.

Levi didn't smack away Colton's hoof or get angry or start yelling. He just kept smiling, as if there wasn't a marshmallow package hanging on his horn. "I applaud your creativity, but this isn't what I had in mind."

Colton scowled again, denied his victory over the park ranger. "Whatever. Let's get going, Dash. I'm tired of dealing with the shortstack." He started back down the trail without waiting for a reply.

Dash shook his head and followed. He felt Colton's response had been excessive, but he'd still found it hilarious. The park ranger should've been worrying about fires or something, not a little bit of garbage. A few wrappers weren't going to ruin the whole forest.

"Hope you both have a swell waddle back to your car!" Levi shouted shortly after they'd left.

Colton snorted and turned around. "Go to—"

When he abruptly stopped, Dash turned to see what had happened. Levi was gone. The goat wasn't back where they'd left him, or further up the trail, or even off to the side of it. It was like he'd vanished into thin air.

Dash saw the shifting looks of confusion and annoyance on Colton's face. His gaze darted around and he frowned. "Screw it." He turned back around and kept walking.

Dash followed, but took a look back a few times to make sure he hadn't missed

the park ranger hiding somewhere. Nothing.

Five minutes later, Colton felt his stomach rumble. He slid off his backpack and rummaged through it, barely keeping an eye on where he was going. The bag had been full when they'd left on the hike, but he'd plowed through almost everything since. Luckily there was still a bag of marshmallows left. He didn't remember buying two, but he wasn't about to spurn his good fortune. He quickly tore open the bag and began tossing marshmallows into his mouth.

They were good. Really good. Better than the last bag by a mile. He switched from eating one at a time to eating two at a time, then three. As wonderful as they were, he wasn't feeling any less hungry, though. He assumed the hike was to blame. His body needed to replenish the energy he'd lost and he was certain marshmallows would do the trick.

Hunger pains began to hit Dash as well. Colton chomping down on more snacks had made him hungry. He slid off his own pack to search for another granola bar. Instead, he found a bag of donut holes. He rolled his eyes at Colton. He guessed his friend had snuck them in after running out of room in his backpack. They had a lot more calories than the granola bars, but he'd managed to run out of those somehow. Oh well, a little dessert wouldn't hurt him. If anything he'd already preemptively walked off the calories during the hike.

Dash opened the bag and ate a couple of donut holes. A couple became four, then six, then ten. He couldn't stop eating them but was oblivious to his gluttony. In his mind, he'd still only eaten a couple.

The two horses continued to glut non-stop, neither aware of the sheer amount they were consuming. Dash's flat middle slowly swelled out from beneath his shirt, a growing dome of white with black splotches. Colton's belly was even bigger, the horse having had a head-start weight-wise. No matter how much they ate, their hooves never scraped the bottoms of the bags. There was always more to stuff themselves with.

Eventually, Dash's gut grew big enough to bounce as he walked down the trail, wobbling with every step. The weight and movement were impossible to ignore forever. Confused, Dash looked down. The sight of his swollen middle made him freeze on the spot. He looked like he'd swallowed a balloon, or maybe a beach ball. He poked it with a hoof and felt it wobble. He couldn't have eaten enough while walking to look so stuffed, it didn't make sense. He didn't even believe he could eat enough of anything in one sitting to get so round.

Dash turned to Colton, and his confusion only grew. His friend had an even bigger gut. It jiggled as he crammed marshmallows into his mouth, eating so furiously some inevitably tumbled from his hoof and onto the ground. Dash saw a line of marshmallows

leading up the trail, more than a bag's worth.

Something was very, very wrong.

"Dude, you're huge—we're both huge!" Dash said.

Colton raised a brow as he looked at his friend, and then himself. There was confusion in his eyes, but he didn't stop eating. Dash realized he hadn't, either, donut holes still steadily making their way into his mouth.

"I can't—*mmp*—I can't stop eating!" Dash said. His gorging was almost mechanical. His hoof would grab donut holes without any input from him at all, and his mouth would open automatically to accept them. He couldn't even stop chewing or swallowing.

"Oh good, you've finally noticed!" The voice of Levi filled Dash's head like a particularly boisterous thought. "I was beginning to think neither of you ever would."

Dash looked all around for the source of Levi's voice and saw Colton doing the same. At least they were both hearing it. But where was the goat hiding?

"I'm not hiding! Well, maybe I am since I'm lacking corporeal form right now. But in that case, I can't be blamed for your lack of extrasensory perception." A small laugh echoed in Dash's head. "Colton, such language! Are your thoughts always a string of curses?"

A trick, it has to be a trick, Dash thought. Park rangers couldn't read minds. No one could.

"But I'm not a park ranger, and this isn't a trick," Levi's voice said. "I'm merely a passerby interested in playing a fun game, one that'll sate your bottomless appetites in the process."

A game?

"Yes, a game!" Utter glee filled Levi's voice. "To win, all you need to do is reach your car. If you do, you'll finally stop eating. And if you don't," another chuckle, "then a feast is still a lovely consolation prize. It's a very simple game, I know, but I didn't have much time to throw it together. Sometimes the simpler games are the most fun!"

Dash and Colton were still eating, their bellies still slowly getting rounder. It was absurd to think Levi was somehow behind their uncontrollable gluttony, but it was the only explanation they had. Playing the game certainly wouldn't make things worse.

"I knew you'd both accept!" Levi's voice rang out within seconds of Dash thinking he had no other choice. "I'll even make things easier and let you eat hooves-free."

The bag of donut holes flew out of Dash's hoof and over his muzzle. He felt it tighten, closing his jaw until he had only enough room to chew. He grabbed the sides of the bag with both hooves and pulled with all his strength. The bag stretched in his grip but continued to cling firm. No matter how hard he pulled, he couldn't move the bag an inch or rip it in any way. And all the while, a steady stream of donut holes were pouring into his mouth and down his gullet.

Dash looked to Colton and saw the same fate had befallen him. The larger horse

didn't have any more luck removing his bag than Dash.

"Every horse deserves an endless feedbag. Now I know those snacks are delicious, but you should probably get going if you don't want to end up as blobs!" Levi's voice said. "I won't judge you if you purposely throw the game, though. Heft is hard to resist~"

Shit. Shit! Dash thought. He gave up on trying to remove the bag and started sprinting down the trail, his belly swaying wildly from side-to-side. He heard Colton stomping after him.

Rushing down the trail with his heart pounding and his gut swelling, Dash forgot all about the nature around him. The pleasant weather, lush forest, and stunning views—compared to the feel of his belly growing heavier and heavier, they were nothing.

Dash frantically tried to remember how long the rest of the trail was. His belly was a timer, counting down the minutes and seconds until he was too stuffed to move. He lifted weights at the gym but had no clue as to how many donut holes he could hold up. Every forced gulp filled his stomach up further and slowed him down the slightest bit.

He felt his middle bouncing more, throwing off his rhythm as he ran. He grabbed the sides of it with his hooves, holding the swelling mass in place so it didn't knock him over.

Every once in awhile Dash would dare a glance behind him to make sure Colton hadn't fallen behind. Despite being a few inches rounder, the other horse seemed to be handling the bulk fine.

Dash winced as he felt his gut being to spill over his shaking hooves. He feared he soon wouldn't be able to hold it up anymore.

"Hmm, you're both already starting to slow down." Levi's voice had returned. "I'd hate to accidentally make the game too hard and unwinnable." Dash swore he heard genuine sincerity in the goat's voice. "Ah, I'll just redistribute the load! You can both thank me later."

A tingling sensation spread throughout Dash's entire body, nearly causing him to stumble over. Once it vanished, his belly stopped swelling. The horse wanted to celebrate, but donut holes were still pouring down his throat. If they weren't ending up in his stomach, then where?

The truth came to Dash gradually. A tightening in his sleeves. Pressure around the waistline of his pants. The feeling of his thighs brushing against each other. Instead of growing fuller, he was now growing fatter. A *lot* fatter. He confirmed it by looking back on Colton. His friend's face was rounding out and his sides were getting thicker. Colton himself had likely figured it out too, just by watching Dash's ass get bigger.

Before, the snacks he gorged on had represented only excess calories, a promise of a few unwanted pounds but nothing devastating. Now they represented numerous trips to the gym, weeks of jogging, months of strict dieting. The consequences of the

game finally struck Dash.

He tried to focus on reaching the car and the hope Levi was telling the truth about stopping the feeding. Ignoring his ballooning body proved an impossible task. As his clothing grew tighter, he thought of how he'd need to replace his wardrobe. Shirts, pants, boxers, coats, hoodies—everything. As his pace began to slow from the pounds piling on, he thought of how much harder exercise would be. He'd need to adjust so he didn't get winded on jogs or in the weight room. The long walk from the frat house to classes suddenly felt daunting. He'd often laughed at his heftier frat brothers complaining about scaling hills, but with how much trouble the trail was giving him he now feared he'd do no better.

Dash hadn't based his life around being in shape. He wasn't a jock and didn't live at the gym. He just had a fairly active lifestyle. But as he felt the jiggle of a second chin for the first time, the once-lean horse worried pudginess would now dominate his life.

The sprint of the horses had reduced to a strenuous jog by the time they'd cleared the forest.

Dash saw the car in the distance and wanted to jump for joy. All that stood between them and victory was an empty dirt parking lot.

Colton lumbered past Dash, not stopping to savor their possible victory. Dash saw the seams of his friend's clothes starting to rip as he swelled out of them. He didn't want to think about how he couldn't have been much lighter than Colton. He'd doubled in size at the very least; he might even be around four hundred pounds. The reality of his new, heftier size made him dizzy.

Closer and closer, fatter and fatter. The mad sprint out of the woods had exhausted Dash. He was running on fumes and adrenaline, and neither would last forever. Past the half-way point, he felt about to collapse. Colton was getting ahead of him. He realized he could very well end up as the fatter of the two by the end.

Less than forty feet from the car, Dash stepped on a discarded chip bag. His foot jerked a little to the right, causing the horse to stumble. He flailed his arms as he fought to maintain his balance, losing control of his wobbling gut. It bounced up and down, sending Dash toppling over.

His doughy gut partially cushioned his fall. He let out a muffled belch on impact that caused the bag over his muzzle to momentarily inflate. The fall left Dash stunned. He shook his head and tried to stand, but his arms and legs were wobbly from pushing himself to his limits. With terror, he realized he was too fat to get up on his own.

Dash shouted to Colton for help, his voice garbled by the bag and desserts. His friend stopped and turned around. He waited for Colton to rush over and lift him, but the other horse simply stood there and stared. Colton looked over his shoulder to the car, then back to Dash. He turned around and continued running.

No! Don't leave me you bastard! Dash yelled in his head. He couldn't believe his friend had abandoned him when they were so close. Dash desperately tried to stand

again, but he'd only gotten fatter in the seconds since his first attempt. He felt himself ballooning outward, his belly spreading across the ground, becoming too heavy to lift. He collapsed atop his gut, beached.

Colton wasn't going to end up immobile. Having a beer gut had been fine, despite the sporadic shit talk from his frat brothers. He'd even entertained the possibility he might get fatter in the future, but he'd never imagined gaining more than a couple dozen pounds or so. Being too fat to move terrified him. No more parties, no more bar-hopping, no more football games—just stuck at home trying to convince the pledges to do another burger run for him.

Dash had fucked up, so he was on his own.

Colton fell against his car when he reached it. Still swelling, he shoved his hoof into his pocket and pulled out his keys. He smashed the unlock button on the key until he heard the click of his doors unlocking. The massive horse had to enter ass-first, the car groaning as he squeezed himself in. The driver's seat lunged back once he found the release, but even then it was a tight fit. His gut pushed against the steering wheel and his side nudged the stick. He slammed the door shut, shaking the whole car.

Once the door closed, Colton let loose a loud belch and the marshmallow bag flew free of his muzzle, empty.

"Congratulations, Colton—you won!" The sound of Levi's voice in his head made Colton wince. "And not a minute too soon. Who knew marshmallows could be so fattening?"

Colton wasn't listening. He jammed the keys into the ignition and started the car. Gravel and dust flew as he peeled out of the parking lot and hit the road. He caught a quick glimpse in the rearview mirror of the round, swelling mound Dash had become, and averted his eyes immediately.

"Not my—*uworrp*—problem!" Colton said, hooves gripping the steering wheel hard. Someone would find Dash eventually. Anyone else would've done the same thing in his situation. No friendship was worth becoming a blob over.

The further Colton got from the parking lot, the calmer he became. He felt his head clearing up. Still roaring over the speed limit down the road, Colton clumsily adjusted his seat again, pushing it as far back as it could go. His gut jiggled as he moved back, now just brushing against the wheel instead of pushing at it. He didn't know why the seat had needed so much adjusting. It was usually as perfect as it could get considering his size.

Colton's vision blurred for a moment and his head throbbed.

Dash must have been at the wheel before him. The damn twig of a horse loved to gloat about how tiny he was in comparison. But hadn't he been getting fatter lately?

Colton's mental image of his friend shifted about, getting heavier but also less distinct. It was a fuzzier and fuzzier recollection he couldn't quite pin down.

No, Dash couldn't have been driving. Colton hadn't seen them in a while. Days? Longer than that. Months, he guessed. Trying to remember gave him a headache. It didn't matter. Dash was off doing his own thing and probably having a good time in the process. His friend was steadily pushed further and further into the back of his mind, becoming a mere memory.

Colton began to slow down. He took a quick look down and saw his gut exposed and his shirt clinging to his chest, seams ripped. He blushed. He guessed he couldn't hold off on buying new clothes anymore, not if he was literally bursting out of his old ones. Breakfast must have finally put him over the edge. Sating a five hundred pound appetite required hearty meals, after all. He was bound to outgrow a shirt now and then.

The horse's memories were gradually molded. There'd been no hike, no meeting with the mysterious white goat. He'd never run through the woods while being stuffed by an endless bag of marshmallows. He'd certainly never been forced to play a terrifying and fattening game. Nothing out of the ordinary happened during his lonely drive back to college. Nothing at all.

Back at the parking lot, Dash gently wobbled as his weight continued to soar. His belly was like a boulder of pure fat, growing softer and wider by the second. He imagined himself resembling a giant mound of cookies and cream ice-cream. His arms and legs had gotten so thick he could barely move them, and his neck was a series of rolls. The weight of his immense body made moving in any meaningful way impossible. Even turning his head was difficult.

Levi strolled into view out of the corner of Dash's eye. "Unfortunately you didn't win this game, Dash. But you should be proud of how close you came!" He slapped Dash on the belly. The horse felt himself finally stop growing, the donut hole bag falling from his muzzle.

"Please, let me go. I don't want to be a blob!" Dash begged.

"Don't worry, you'll get used to it. They all do, eventually." Levi grinned.

Dash wished he could gain comfort from the fact others had fallen victim to the goat's fattening games before him. He wondered if Colton had truly abandoned him, or if he was just going to get help.

Levi shook his head. "Your friend isn't coming back for you. Since he won, I rewarded him by making all the changes that'd occurred during the game the new normal. He'll be convinced he got incredibly fat through years of gluttony, not magic. And everyone else will believe so as well. Prevents a lot of awkward conversations about

how he gained weight. It's the least I can do." The goat paused for a moment, as if waiting for praise from Dash for his generous deed. When none came he continued. "As for you, my new, blubbery friend? You'll be somewhat forgotten."

"What...what do you mean?" Dash asked.

"Well, we can't have people wondering why you vanished. Instead, you'll slip into the background of the thoughts of everyone you know. They'll all assume you've gone somewhere else to do something of some sort. They'll never question why they can't think of specifics, or why they never get around to contacting you directly. Less stressful, that way."

Dash feared being forgotten as much as he did being a blob. He whimpered, unsure of what the goat planned to do with him now.

Again Levi answered the thought. "Don't be so worried, you'll be fine, I swear. We're just going to have fun and play more games until I grow bored and let you go. Though I must admit, I've rarely gotten tired of any players in my collection. And you'll be delighted to know you've inspired me to have more fun with hikers! I've been needing to get out more and fit players tend to offer more of a challenge." Levi leaned in and gave Dash's gut a rub. "They also tend to provide the best results, win *or* lose."

Dash gulped, wondering if he'd ever regain his mobility. Levi didn't answer the silent question, he only grinned mischievously.