

A shared struggle was one of the best ways to build up friendship. To know a kind of pain that most don't and then bask in mutual suffering was what built up a lasting relationship. The harshest of vows were forged in the fiercest fires... although what Riz and Tao were experiencing was more akin to a small ember of a lighter in terms of intensity.

"Ngh, how do you not get sick of this? It's happening every month now, and I think I'm gonna go crazy at his rate!"

Tao's whining persisted as he fruitlessly continued to try uniting the two ends of his fly. He would pull and moan as he tried moving the push the pair of segments together, only for his strength to dwindle and for everything to go back as it was; buttons undone and his pair of Gundam-themed undies available to the naked eye.

"You'll get used to it. I know from experience."

Acting as sort of a mentor, Riz was more than willing to help Tao navigate his brand new life as a meat addict. To prevent devouring while still *relishing* in the elation of carnivorous meals, every step of the way needed to be done with precaution and care. Anger and stress were bound to unlock the beast inside every predator—and sloth was the perfect counter to such emotions.

"I didn't expect it to last so *little*. I know that I'm kind of getting bigger, but still. Shit's rough." Sinking down on his overused beanbag, Tao could at least take comfort in the freeing sensation of not having his jeans constrict and compress his bulging, doughy stomach. Letting out a sigh of relief, his belly rose up and down at a slow, calm rate. "Dunno how you look so chill at the time. I mean, ever since I started getting into streaming, I've gotten super cranky whenever something bothers me."

"Still better than Cherryton, though."

"Mhm. Still better, I guess."

As Tao's playlist blared out of his shitty speakers, the two of them kept looking at the ceiling—littered with glow-in-the-dark stickers. Their churning stomachs joined the cacophony every few seconds as they tried to digest the thousands of calories ingested in one single binge—all of them in the form of *meat*; chicken wings, breasts, and legs for tonight's meal.

"How's everyone doing?"

For the first time in a while, Riz was caught completely off guard. He sat up straight—ears skyward—the facade of dotted eyes falling for his wide, small pupil look that struck fear into most people.

"I mean, I know that I burnt that bridge after the arm thing. I don't look at their socials either, fucks me up." The panther's ear drooped at the thought. "Just curious. Well, mostly Kai and Kibi... although Kai's probably the only one that still thinks about me. Wouldn't blame Kibi for trying to just forget about everything that happened."

Arms behind his head, the feline seemed to linger in melancholy. His tail swooshed side to side slowly like a barely active compass.

"I dunno. Sorry that I brought that up." Tao said before Riz could even begin to muster a response. "Wanna get some dessert? I have a chocolate cake in my fridge."

Riz nodded, still silently deep in thought. There was just *something* about Tao's words that gave him food for thought. He could tell that the panther was liberated by his new diet, but Riz alone wasn't enough to keep him in check.

Maybe... *he could afford to share his passion with other people.* If not for him, at least for the man that he wrapped around the meat's tantalizing spell.

"Yeah, let's go."

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Kai was small. *Very* small. Even by mongeese standards, his petite stature made him stick out in a way that he *dreaded*. Every time that he pushed past the doors and was met with classmates twice his height, the scorn on his expression was written clear as day—everyone simply chose not to bring it up to stoke his already boiling anger.

Riz—the silent but attentive watcher that he was—could always tell when Kai was more irritable than usual. Today was one of those days if the constant huffing and grunting were to go by, yet the most remarkable aspect of his behavior was that he was seemingly keeping silent about his frustration, at least as silent as someone as Kai could be.

Kai almost never hesitated to hold back his sharp tongue for the sake of others—much to the chagrin of everyone else. To see him wandering around the rehearsal hall with his lips sealed was to see the anthesis of the person he was.

Bottling it all in; a tactic that Riz was *intimate* with.

Remaining atop the catwalk—eyes focused on Kai as he wandered across the room—he patiently hung above his target and waited for everyone to exit. He didn't want any witnesses, after all. The costume department folks were always the last to leave, so Kai was ready to be served to him on a silver platter.

The sound of the door opening and closing came up over and over again. The sound of chatter lessened—only leaving the sound of humming, old lights, and two hard workers.

"Are you sure that you're okay with me leaving? You look like you need some help." Dom asked one last time, leaning down to match Kai's eye level. "If you need me to stay, just say the word. I don't mind, seriously."

"I told you I was *fine*. I need to be alone anyways. Shit's sucking lately."

The sharp tone pierced Dom. With a sigh of defeat and a feather above his expression to hide it, the peafowl admitted defeat. "Fine. If you change your mind, I'm always a call away!"

“Mhm...”

Dom—arms crossed and beak forming a grimacing scowl—walked away from Kai. He gave the mongoose one lengthy gaze before finally slamming the door behind him.

It was time to strike... At least it would've been if Kai hadn't made a break to the dressing room as Dom closed the door. He moved so fast that he appeared like a brown blur—a long, thick tail flopping in the air. Peeping out with his body inside, Kai looked around to see if the coast was clear—unaware of the fact that Riz had been looking over him for hours now.

Riz could feel himself salivating. The situation was eerily similar to his first time; a tiny animal with a fierce demeanor without anyone to bother him. God, his brain simply wouldn't let him stop thinking about Tem. He had to rub circles around his stomach just to calm down his ravenous hunger.

“Calm down. You'll get to bond with so many other people if you just wait a little. Not worth it for one big bonding session if we end up in jail...”

Climbing down the ladder, Riz's steps were almost wholly silent. Even as someone with a herculean frame, his movements were made with restraint and grace. Despite how much he cursed himself for being born a bear, the evolutionary gifts that being one brought came in handy.

He peeked through the door's window. In all honesty, Riz was expecting something raunchy to match Kai's personality—even something as crass as masturbating. What he certainly *didn't* expect was to see him... doing stretches in workout clothes that were clearly too big for his tiny frame.

No way...

Riz had to suppress a laugh. This truly was *too easy*. Eating and cooking the mongoose whole would certainly give him quite the pounds, but that was nothing in comparison with another wonderful target for his lifestyle.

Tao needed a friend, after all. He kicked the door open, ready to begin.

Kai let out an ear-piercing shrill as he scurried to the back of the room. He dug his petite, barely sharp claws into the crevices between the wall tiles as he heaved like a cornered animal. “W-what are you doing here?!”

“Oh, sorry. I guess I just got...” He had to actively suppress the urge to lick his lips as he gazed back at Kai. “...*Interested* in seeing you working out. I didn't know that you did it.”

“Well *no one* was supposed to know, asshole! What are you doing here, huh?! Stalking me like the goddamn weirdo you are?!”

“Hm, stalking?” Riz tilted his head, a bit of drool almost leaking out of his mouth right before he scooped it up with his tongue. “I do my homework from the catwalk. I've done that ever since last year. You guys just never notice me.”

Just as he hoped, Kai fell for the bait. The guilt of social rejection struck hard with the mongoose—as told by the almost immediate change from his vengeful scowl to a regretful grimace. Swallowing harshly, he let out a single word.

“Oh.”

“Are you really working out just like that?” Riz asked—this time, mockery slipping through despite his best efforts. “No warmup, no food, and no water?”

“W-well, I don’t need that crap! That’s just filler to make people feel better!” Kai whined as he kept trying to pull up his baggy shorts. As soon as he stopped clutching the band, it would all go down. “N-ngh, you don’t know anything! You’re just making fun of me, aren’t you?!”

“I never said anything like that, Kai. I can teach you how to get *big*.” The last word was spoken as a deep growl that made Kai shrink on impulse. “That’s what you want, right? You’re tired of everyone looking down at you, *literally*.”

“SHUT UP!” Kai cried out. His face was on the verge of turning crimson with the amount of blood rushing up it. “Shut up, shut up, shut up! You’re just pretending to care cause you’re big enough to not give a shi—”

The mongoose’s incessant complaining stopped. His still open mouth pressed against Riz’s furry, brown belly. So up close, he could hear the hundreds of calories worth of food being churned inside like a trash disposal making shreds of everything inside. The sweat trapped underneath the fur dripped outside, landing in Kai’s mouth with an overwhelmingly *salty* flavor. The proximity prevented him from closing his mouth, and the sheer *tension* felt in the air as nothing but his own whimpers filled the melody of the dwindling light and Riz’s deep breath joined the suffocating cacophony didn’t let him bite down.

“Sorry about that, little bud. I guess I just didn’t want you to spiral...” Riz explained with coyness. “Juuust did the first thing I thought of. This body right here? Benefits of bulking up, Kai.”

Finally letting go of his head, Riz saw as Kai stumbled away from him with a stupified expression. It wasn’t just bewilderment—it was the expression of someone who just had their entire world turned around in the span of a few seconds.

“I. What. Why did you...” Kai popped his lips continuously, as if he had to constantly taste the slaty flavor to believe that what he just experienced was real. “I just... I was insulting you, and then you...”

“I made you quiet. I think it’s clear enough what happened.” God, seeing him squirm was like the *life* itself of every piece of meat that he had ever consumed was flowing through his veins and urging him to grow even bigger with one big morsel. He had to control himself, of course, but the temptation was downright *alluring*. “Now, are you willing to hear my advice? I am the *biggest* guy in the club, so I probably know better than that silly cat boy Bill.”

The mention of the tiger immediately seemed to struck a nerve. Of course he took advice from the striped idiot.

But even with his decency erased and shame thoroughly spiked, Kai couldn't bring himself to vocalize his longing. He could only nod while staring at the floor. His fists clenched and legs trembling, the small carnivore looked as tantalizingly weak as Tem once did.

*I'll enjoy helping you grow into something more beautiful...*

His stomach gurgled at the sight. Ever since he had roped Tao into his lifestyle, his gluttony had grown even more inconsolable. Muscle was being lost under more and more adipose tissue, but Riz could care less. He was still standing taller above everyone—looking down at them and their meatless existence like a bird of prey looking over an unaware, pitiful insect.

The larger he grew, the more complete he felt; arms that had a *jiggle* to their movement—his stomach becoming less like a perfectly spherical orb and something more doughy and shapeless that let life and digestion flow effortlessly through his system—a rounded-out behind that his ball-like tail adorned.

Kneeling down to Kai's eye level, Riz snatched the phone off his hands. The mongoose whined when it was taken away, but no words were left as thoughts kept racing in his troubled mind; inferiority—ambition—longing—jealousy—embarrassment—*lust*—sensations that didn't even have proper names. They all danced carnally in his soul, leaving him a petrified shell that Riz was free to toy with.

“Turn this crap off. It's bad for you.” With a single squeeze, the screen *cracked* into pieces and the incessant tips and reminders of a douchy-sounding carnivore in the video ceased. “Come to the shower room. One in the morning. I'll let you know what being *massive* takes.”

“O-okay.” Kai whimpered.

With his tail between his legs and hand over his crotch to hide the tent, he scampered away. Riz looked on as he escaped, his body clearly screaming for more.

“Two makes a pair, three makes a crowd,” He felt himself grinning. “And feasts are to be shared with the world...”

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Legs crossed—hands joined together—eyes closed; Riz remained completely still as he let his breathing run steady. The cold, tiled floor of the shower room felt cold against his naked legs. Meat and the calories that it carried stimulated his mind like a drug, but it could at least be contained with enough focus.

He wrapped his large fingers around the honey bottle carefully, trying to not break it with his titanic strength. Leaving his maw hanging, he let the thick, sweet liquid drizzle down his tongue and flare up his taste buds. The lingering salty, savory flavor left by the meat clashed with the overly sweet tang of the honey.

“Mmmhm... I really gotta get around making that honey-glazed ham recipe.”

Before he could get lost in thought, the shower door’s clicking brought him out of his daydream. No steps were heard—a telltale sign of who was the one rummaging behind him.

“You can come in.”

“Shit, sorry. I just didn’t know if you still wanted to...” What were they doing? Riz didn’t tell him anything beyond to come to see him, now that he thought about it. “Well, if you still wanted to do whatever, I guess.”

Riz patted the spot on the ground beside him while continuing to pour down honey.

Kai, without thinking, obeyed and sat down. He couldn’t dart his eyes off the belly that rubbed against his face and left him speechless. Even now, simply looking at it made his brain shortcircuit. He couldn’t help but despite the fact that Riz had been born with such a body, yet fawn over his massive frame as well. Digging his claws into his own legs, he felt like he could barely breathe.

“Am I going to be okay?”

Riz opened his eyes. “Well, I wanted to show you why you can’t seem to get bigger, but I doubt you’d be willing to do what I ask somewhere public.”

Kai gulped. “What... do you want me to do?”

“Well, you already got rid of those horrible clothes you were wearing. That’s the first step.” Riz said in a congratulatory manner. “The second... well, you need to have some bulk before you start working out. You’re not gonna get anywhere if you don’t have anything to *define*.”

Rummaging through his backpack—so big that it matched the size of Kai’s torso and head added together—Riz pulled out a Tupperware container filled to the brim with what appeared to be stew.

“So, you need to build up more body mass. The best way to do it is to *eat*.” Riz had to consciously keep reminding himself to not put too much pressure on the container either.

Microdosing was a dangerous but efficient game; too much and you drive the person wild, but too little and they can easily identify the effects. If you *did* manage to strike a balance, then it would make for something truly magical.

Riz hated tofu, at least he started to do so after bonding with Tem. The taste and texture were simply just *wrong*—like the food equivalent of a face taken straight out of the uncanny valley. The only thing that it was good for was having something to pass meat off as in a dish.

“Is that... all for me?” Kai asked, incredulous at the container the size of his own head. “I can’t eat all that!”

He was playing hard to get. No matter, Riz could work with that. All it took was placing his paw on Kai's pathetically slender leg for him to clamp up again.

"Oh, you can. It's just a matter of attitude." Riz was firm. He wasn't going to allow room for doubt in the mongoose's brain. "Or are you saying that you want to give up? Guess you don't really want to be big like me then—"

"I WANT IT!" Kai screamed, lunging for the container and practically ripping the lid off its hinges with how ferociously he took it off. "Gimme the spoon! I'm not a pussy like everyone thinks I am!"

"Oh, settle down, bud." Now he had to reign him in. Ironic if not funny. "How about you let me help you? I didn't get this big on my own either."

"I don't—"

"No buts. The stew *is* mine. No help, no bulking up."

"I—" He pressed his lips together and puffed his cheeks out before uttering a sigh of defeat. "FINE! Just... do whatever you want to do. I'll wait."

"Good."

Riz gently pushed him to the ground and retrieved a large wooden spoon from his backpack. Kai reluctantly opened his mouth—seemingly understanding what Riz wanted to do, although he certainly didn't understand the *why*.

"Open up, bud," Riz said with a toothy grin.