Avery Anderson had always been kind of a fat kid at heart.

At some point, *right* around the time her parents got divorced, Avery had internalized this idea that her diet really was the only thing that she could control in the world. That hadn’t stopped her from doing her best to brute force her best friends since childhood, Brooke and Cheyenne, into doing things that *she* wanted to do.

Spending weekends laid out on the couch watching movie marathons, tempting them with promises of delicious takeout over healthy home-cooked (and money-saving) meals, and even some occasional underhanded tomfoolery to ensure that they didn’t replace her with somebody “better”. Avery didn’t actively think of herself as a bad person or a bad friend, but she would have been lying if she said that she didn’t occasionally feel a twinge of guilt for getting in-between Cheyenne and that gym instructor who had a crush on her…

Suffice to say, Avery *might* have been a not-so-great person, but she was *definitely* a bad influence.

Which was probably why she and her friend Mel got along so well. They liked all the same stuff right off the bat! Star Wars, Harry Potter, meatball subs and drive-thru marathons across town. She was stylish and blonde with a keen eye for dressing well at any size, not to mention the fact that they just *looked* sort of similar. Mel was like the sister that Avery never had, and they just… *ran into each other* one day, out of the blue, while Avery was getting coffee.

They had the same *drink order*. Can you believe it? Avery sure couldn’t.

Obviously Mel’s had a few alterations; ones that Avery really liked, actually! Instead of 2% milk, Mel got her latte with half and half and double the pumps, so now Avery got hers that way too! And the little scones that Avery had always wanted to try but always seemed to forget to add to her order? Mel had been gnoshing on one when they both reached for the same drink! They got to talking, Avery decided to park herself at the table Mel had been studying at, and…

Well, the rest is history!

Ever since, Mel and Avery had been fast friends—she was a nice little bastion outside of the occasionally frustrating company of her childhood friends, and Avery definitely appreciated another big girl that didn’t let anyone tell her she was anything but beautiful.

But boy oh boy was she big.

And getting bigger.

The more that Avery hung out with her new friend Mel, the less that it surprised her that she was so big. Mel led every day with her best foot forward and her stomach a little further out than that—she ate what she wanted, when she wanted it. And that kind of positivity, especially considering the uphill battle that had been getting Cheyenne to accept the fact that she was fat, was exactly what Avery had thought she needed.

But the longer that this little platonic girl crush went on, the more certain people in Avery’s life began to think otherwise…

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“Cheye… c’n you… gimme the…”

“Avery are you seriously getting tired from *sitting up*?”

“Nuh… *ugh*… no…”

For as long as Cheyenne had known her, Avery had always been fat. But ever since she started hanging out with that one girl, Mel, she’d been getting so far past fat that it was almost kind of hard to believe that there’d been a time when she could fit through the doorways of their apartment. It had taken her all throughout high school to reach two-hundred and fifty pounds where she leveled out not much further past two-eighty. But it had taken a fraction of that time for her to nearly double in size since then—at four hundred and eighty pounds, Avery was officially the biggest person that Cheyenne had ever seen in her *life*.

And she included herself in that statistic too; she wasn’t a small girl either! She’d had a period where she had tried to lose some weight, but finding out that you were your personal trainer’s fixer-upper pet project (at least, according to Avery anyway) would have demotivated anyone’s weight loss journey. Cheyenne had spent some time backpedaling, slipping back into the old habits that had made her so fat in the first place to the point that she was bigger than ever.

But Avery was like… ***big***big.

“Juss… a li’l sleepy…” Avery smacked her lips from behind her turgid acreage of tum, “Me’n Mel—”

“Lemme guess, you guys went out to eat again?” Cheyenne huffed, putting her purse down on the counter, “She’s a bad influence on you, Ave—we’re gonna have to start buttering you through the doorframe every morning if you don’t stop letting her force food down your throat.”

“She doesn’t… haghh… she doesn’t *force* me.” Avery’s lower lip pooched upwards in the slightest little pout, “Mel’s my—”

“I know, she’s your *fat* friend.” Cheyenne scoffed, reaching for the bag of sour cream and onion chips that Avery had been pathetically gesturing for, “But just because *she* goes hog wild doesn’t mean that *you* should.”

“But it’s so *funnnnn*…”

Avery had said it with a winded little laugh on her breath, chunky wrist buried in the bag of salty snacks as she prepared another fistful of chips to push past her still greasy lips. She’d tucked her medium blonde bob behind her ears at some point, so one side resting on the plush reach of her chunky cheek made her look a little more disheveled than she probably thought. Cradling her enormous gut with one hand and drip-feeding chips with the other despite being so full that she was getting ready to pass out right there on the couch had become such a common occurrence that it was only fairly recently that Cheyenne started to see it as a sign of things to come.

It already took all of her big ass to help even stand Avery up—what happened when it took her *and* Brooke?

Would they even be able to get her out of the apartment by then?

“Stop… bein’ such a buzzkill.” Avery waved dismissively, her puddling bicep never leading her fleshy side, “M’gonna cut back soon.”

“Uh-huh.” Cheyenne cocked an eyebrow, placing one hand on either side of her massive ass, “I’ve heard that before.”

“Typical Cheye—fitness fuckin’ freak.” Avery scowled tightly, “Why can’t you just… ugh… let me live my life? Goddamn.”

“I’m not doing this right now.” The brunette blimp threw her hands up, “You wanna eat yourself into the Whale Exhibit at Sea World? Fine by me. But don’t say I didn’t warn you—that Mel chick is a *bad influence*.”

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“Well that’s not how *I* would have phrased it, but you’ve got a point.” Cheyenne’s boss leaned back into her big fancy chair behind the big fancy desk that her father had bought for her, “You’ve got every right to be worried about your friend…”

Cheyenne’s job as a front desk attendant had thankfully been one that hadn’t lasted long. After only a few months, she was a step above that—front desk *manager*. Which in practice actually meant more time sitting on her ass behind the counter, but in practice meant…

Well, not much more than a pay raise and the occasional check-in with the boss.

But luckily, for a hotel heiress, Mrs. Hammond seemed pretty down to Earth. What she was doing here, *running* one of the hotels that her dad owned, was evidence enough of that. She’d actually been the last interview when Cheyenne had been applying for her “speedbump” job behind the counter—she liked her enough to go over the hiring manager’s head, at least. And now they were…

Well, Cheyenne hesitated to call them *friends*. But they were definitely gossip buddies.

“That’s what I’m saying.” Cheyenne scoffed, a little dollop of chili plopping down from her burger and onto the shelf of tummy that sat up front in her acreage of lap, “Like I’m not trying to be a bitch or anything, but Avery’s getting like *really* big.”

“How big are we talking here?” the heiress cocked an eyebrow, leaning in ever so slightly, “I mean, no offense but…”

It was the silent acknowledgements of Cheyenne’s own size that cut the deepest. She knew that she’d fallen hard off the wagon—her brief year at just over two hundred had been a one-time thing, apparently. And it was these little tiny comments that her boss made that kept her on her toes around her. Hannah never said it in a *mean* way, but it wasn’t like the skinny brunette behind the counter could say anything regarding size in a way that wouldn’t at least sting. She was *perfect*, and Cheyenne was so…

*Fat.*

“Anyway.” Hannah smoothed the small pause between them over with a quick sip of her black coffee, “*Whomever* this Melanie Carlyle person is… she sounds fun. Have you two ever…?”

“What, like… hung out?” Cheyenne made a face, double chin rolling out as she took a guilty glance downward, “W-Well no, but… you know… she’s really more *Avery’s* friend, and—”

“Are you worried that she likes Mel *better* than she likes you?”

“Wh- *No* I just…” Cheyenne tugged her mouth to one side contemplatively, “…well… *maybe*…”

“So it’s not that Avery’s weight is bothering you, it’s—”

“I mean that’s still bothering me.”

“—it’s more that you feel like your roommate is replacing you.” Hannah barely even acknowledged Cheyenne’s supplementary point, “Do you feel like you’ve made an attempt at seeing where she’s coming from, sweetie? Maybe if you made an effort to be more accommodating, she wouldn’t shut you down the way that she does.”

“I…uh…” Cheyenne had raised a plush hand to help argue her position, but let it slump back down onto the armrests that were the breadth of her legs, “I guess you… kind of have a point there…”

“Cheyenne. *Honey.* I work in hospitality.” Hannah shrugged in a gesticulated sort of way, “If there’s one thing I know how to do, it’s *people*. You should go out with your friend! Y’know, Mel *really* likes Italian food, you should—”

“Hey wait, how did you know that Mel likes—”

“I was speaking hypothetically.” Hannah’s patch-job was filled with another slurp of black coffee, “But from what you tell me about them—*both* of them, actually… it’s not hard to imagine that going to one of their favorite restaurants would be the fastest way to get one their good side.”

“Yeah… yeah I guess you’re right.” Cheyenne sighed, “When I was on my diet and exercise kick, I’d shut her down just like she does me, so… I guess this is just the opposite of that, huh?”

“It’s like the slogan outside our pastry case says—the quickest way to someone’s heart is?”

“Through their stomach.” Cheyenne admitted sheepishly, a good mood being dragged out of her after a corny line like that, “And the bake case never lies. It’s incapable of it.”

“So you tried the Boston Crème, finally?”

“It’s *so* good, Mrs. Hamm… er… *Hannah*.”

Cheyenne’s job as a front desk manager might not have been the most *physical* job in the world, but it kept her active enough that her weight wasn’t blowing out of control like Avery’s. And it was pretty cool that her boss liked her so much. Helping her out with her stupid little problems that should have stayed in high school, hiring her when the other manager had made it clear that she wasn’t interested…

She’d even gotten a promotion that gave her unlimited access to the bake case in the lobby!

But she’d been so focused on her work, she’d kind of neglected her home life. And if Ms. Hammond said that hanging out with Avery and her new friend Mel was going to help Avery get her appetite under control…

“You want my fries? I don’t want to get grease on my suit.”

Cheyenne didn’t really have a reason *not* to believe her!