

Adjustment Phase, pt. 2

by Cerine Hero

It was a bit of a snug fit in the changing room. The room wasn't even that big just to begin with, and once it was packed full of one fat girl and one fat girl's tail it was almost completely packed. Seven feet of fluffy, blonde-and-black tail was just too much to work with in the small confines, even looped around her legs, so Rienne opened the door a bit and wedged her muzzle through the crack. Nobody was coming or going down the narrow hallway outside the changing rooms, so she shut the door again and fed her tail mostly through the gap beneath the door so she had some room to stand. And see herself in the mirror.

Rienne looked at the fox in the mirror in front of her. The reflection was playing tricks on her. If she squinted a little and ignored her wheat-colored fur, she could definitely see Erin in her cheeks and muzzle pudge. Her longer hair, now spilling onto the shoulders of her black hoodie, also gave the impression that she was mid-transformation into being the chocolate fox. All she needed was a braid over her shoulder, but her hair wasn't quite long enough yet. And she wouldn't do it, anyways; that was Erin's thing.

The heavy golden fox grabbed the bottom of her hoodie and began peeling it up. It slid up over her thicker, chunkier frame, leaving her white t-shirt half-cocked over her middle. The faintest, translucent outline of a black sports bra under the fabric was visible. Rienne didn't bother with fixing her top, as she was partway through grabbing it and taking it off, too. Her sports bra, definitely too small, sagged under the size and weight of her bigger breasts, and the band of it sank into a roll of soft fat that encircled her torso. The shoulder straps were digging in half an inch into her thick, plump shoulders where her trapezius muscles used to sit, but they were long buried at this point.

Even after meeting up with Erin and Cerine and admitting that she was gaining weight, Rienne hadn't really changed her habits. She was enjoying herself, and she really didn't notice she was getting any bigger – even though she'd piled on another fifty pounds since October. Cracking three hundred pounds, the obese vixen had swelled up all over, particularly in her breasts, arms, thighs, and ass. She still gained around her waistline but put little weight on her belly. But with a hundred spare pounds, her tummy was beginning to show a bit over the top of her waistband as a spare tire. It was less a muffin top and more an inner tube, and her whole middle jiggled and rippled as she unbuttoned her pants and slid them off. The fat vixen huffed and rubbed her bare stomach as she stood back up, admiring her bare fur and big body in the changing stall mirror.

She gave one of her breasts an experimental squeeze and jiggle. Those were getting... big. Idly, she wondered if that had anything to do with, well, being connected with Cerine. The dairy fox had monster udders the size of beach balls. Rienne didn't want hers that big. Probably. Maybe. She could try it out, anyways. Not like it would hurt if it was temporary or whatever. Half the reason she was here shopping was because she was outgrowing her bras. Between her boobs and her general girth, she couldn't stay in any of them! Or her pants, for that matter.

Rienne squeezed her claws in underneath the bra and peeled it off over her head, letting it dangle from one set of claws while she ran her other paw through her hair and brushed it back. Sandy-blonde hair fell down around wheat-colored fur across her broad shoulders. She looked to the side, to the stack of clothes she'd picked out to try on. The vixen hadn't really looked at the sizes, she just grabbed things she liked that she eyeballed were around the right size. If she had, she probably would've been surprised at the number of Xes.

She spent a while squeezing into and then back out of some of the clothes, from bras to shirts to jackets and pants, sorting them into a “fit” pile and “don't fit” pile. Rienne was out of breath and puffing out her plump cheeks as she held up a New Year celebration t-shirt. The bursting fireworks behind the letters had sparkling glitter mixed into the colors, and the top, as a whole, was pretty kitsch. But Rienne had to wriggle her muzzle to keep from tearing up at the thought she was going to get to

celebrate it *with* a couple of someones now.

Smiling, she folded the shirt up and set it on top of the “fit” pile.

The hallways and doorways at work seemed to contract with the cold, because Rienne recalled walking side-by-side through them when she first started. Now there was barely room for her hips and shoulders. That went double for the tiny break room, which barely fit all the counter tops and appliances in the first place. Once a round and heavy vixen was added in, loading pizza slices onto her paper plate, everyone else had to wait their turn. The bear-sized fox squeezed her way back out of the break room, adjusted her carrying case strap on her shoulder, and headed down to her shared office – squeezing through that door, too.

Joesh was already there, and he stopped mid-typing as the sound of fabric brushing against metal reached his ears. There was also the shadow of a three-hundred-plus-pound fox that fell over him and his desk, and he watched in both curiosity and excitement as his office-mate squeezed between him and the door and made her way to her own desk. The tabby cat sat stiff in his chair as she walked behind him, and he gave a quick tug on the collar of his pink button-down as he heard her huff and set her plate and napkins down on the desk beside her keyboard. Her “start the day” snack was four slices. She'd gotten progressively more slices of pizza over time as there was progressively more of her.

The cat tried to get back to work, but it was proving difficult. As Rienne sat down in her old, worn-out seat, the aluminum frame creaked and groaned. Joesh paused to see if this would be the month that old thing finally crumbled under her. He only saw her once a month, and the formerly fit, muscular fox had gained at least fifteen or twenty pounds a month. Literally, every single time he saw her, she was heavier. And he really couldn't deny that as gorgeous as he thought she was on the day she met, watching her explode in size was *really* something. The cat peeked over his shoulder at her and saw that the chair was holding her up. Barely.

Rienne had on a black hoodie and some dark jeans. She usually had on jeans. He thought he saw her wearing tights once, but he may have been misremembering. As she woke up her computer, she ran her paws through her longer hair, letting it spill loose over her shoulders. He thought she looked really cute with longer hair. It suited her new build. Rienne munched down one of her pizza slices while her computer booted up. Once she was done, she tossed the crust into the trash can nearby like she was playing basketball. And out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Joesh watching. A sly grin crept over her face as the cat turned back towards his monitor.

The day stretched on, and it was warm in the cramped corner office, with two furs and two computers and outdated air circulation. It felt like heat had no trouble being pumped in, but then it had nowhere else to go. After an hour, Rienne had enough, and she began to shimmy her way out of her hoodie. She peeled it up slowly, exposing her extra-solid waistline, and then squeezed her thick arms through the sleeves, getting it all bunched under her head before pulling it off. Joesh couldn't resist another peek. The vixen had on a gray tank top under her hoodie, leaving her wheat- and salt-colored fur bare on her arms and neck and, at least when she was sitting, around her middle. Though Rienne still didn't have *much* belly to speak of, even as she got this big, it had started to bulk out when she sat down. Her compressed torso squished out mostly forwards on top of her thighs, pushing her shirt up slightly and letting a strip of soft fur atop softer tummy go free. Rienne seemed to know about it, at least subconsciously, because as she finished her pizza, she cleaned her paws and then drummed her palms on her broad, chubby stomach, making her skin jiggle like jelly.

Her chair creaked and groaned under her with every single motion she made, drawing Joesh's attention. The tabby cat turned around again, and the tip of his tail curled as he laid eyes on the belly bulging out of her top, and her supersized arms wobbling lightly as she ran her paws over her head again. She was so wide now that her hips hung easily over the sides of her poor seat. The cat swallowed hard as Rienne dropped her arms back down and leaned forward over her desk as she read some of the small text on her screen. Her belly squeezed slightly further out of her undersized top.

Joesh turned back around before he got himself in trouble, feeling his heart up in his chest. His paws were quivering with nerves and adrenaline, and he accidentally pressed some key combination on his keyboard that made a weird screen appear over his work. The cat froze and leaned back, unsure what he did. He wasn't really familiar with this computer at all; he used it once a month, and it wasn't the same operating system he normally used. Now a bunch of text and numbers were scrawling across the screen at him, and he had no idea how to fix it or get back to his spreadsheets.

His cheeks went red as he realized he'd have to ask for help. Not that he actually disliked asking for help... he just felt a little conflicted after ogling her weight gain. But she probably wouldn't mind. Turning around in his swivel chair, Joesh swallowed and said, "Uh, Miss Ahlmir?"

Rienne blinked and turned her head in his direction, a confused smile on her face. She laughed incredulously and raised one eyebrow at him. "What? Why are you being all formal? You know I hate that."

"I know," he replied, clearing his throat. "Just figured, since apparently I've broken something." He hooked a thumb over his shoulder at his computer. "Could you come take a look?"

"Sure, no problem," Rienne replied, heaving herself up out of her seat and walking over to him and his desk. "As long as this isn't a cute way of getting attention or something," she said.

Joesh turned himself back around to face his screen, and he was about to say something to that when he felt the vixen's belly bump into the back of his head and shoulders. He wasn't even sure she did it on purpose – he couldn't see her face from down here because of her bust – but if he made a wild guess, she was teasing him after she caught him staring. She had, after all, caught him staring multiple times, but now she had an excuse. Her middle felt like a warm, soft pillow behind his head and shoulders, and he definitely could not deny enjoying it.

"Wow, how'd you do that?" she asked, putting her paws on his shoulders and leaning in slightly to see the screen, burying Joesh in the process. Now that was unintentional. "Looks like you got the diagnostic mode up. Uh... now how did that work again?" She reached past him and pushed a couple key combinations on his keyboard. All pretense of teasing was forgotten, and now the cat was bearing about half the weight of an obese fox on his shoulders. He began to wonder, as her chest enveloped the top of his head down to his muzzle, if she actually knew how big she was. Smart money guessed no. Hopefully she couldn't hear the pounding of his heart through her belly fat. And he could definitely feel tension building up inside him as he dared not budge an inch underneath the heavy vixen, but he had a desperate need to intensely vibrate in satisfaction. The two forces couldn't coexist, and his legs and paws clenched as he struggled to let this moment prolong itself as long as possible.

"Here we go," she said finally, leaning up and giving his shoulder a friendly pat. Joesh felt the pressure built up under his skin venting like steam as he exhaled. Rienne didn't seem to notice. She was pointing with a black paw at his keyboard, with her hefty arm brushing against his cheek. "You hit Function-D, that turns diagnosis mode on and off."

"Thanks," he wheezed, adjusting himself and sitting upright in his chair once again. His spreadsheets were back on the screen; everything was right with the world. Fixing his tie, he said, "I appreciate it."

Rienne picked up her plate from her desk and brushed past Joesh as she squeezed her bulk towards the door again. "I'm gonna grab more pizza," she announced, looking down at him. With a fangy grin, she added, "You don't mind, do you?"

"No, uh... of course not," he answered, looking up at her. Rienne squished her hips through the doorway and then turned to head down the narrow hall, with the sound of her denim-covered butt brushing against the walls echoing back down to the office.

She absolutely did it on purpose.

The winter solstice came, and the days got short and dark. Cold weather moved into the region in force, bringing with it thick blankets of snow and frozen ponds perfect for ice skating. The week

between the solstice and the new calendar year was a quiet, contemplative time, and for Rienne it felt strange. Maybe it was this odd new world, or maybe it was just because she was adjusting to life in a much smaller city, but it was finally hitting her that things really were different. She experienced real snow again for the first time since she was young, before the sky was obliterated.

For her, New Year's Eve was always just another day. She'd go to work, then head home and watch whatever corporate prerecorded nonsense was on the projector – if she cared enough to bother watching it. It was a holiday for families, and she didn't have one. There was always special holiday eggnog food gel, at least!

So she was understandably excited as the sun went down, and the golden light behind the drifting snowflakes faded into violet darkness.

“So when are we opening presents?” Rienne asked. She was sitting in front of the living room window, watching the snow fall down onto the foot-thick carpet that was already there. Cerine's car was barely visible in the driveway with its fluffy, white coating. Even the tracks where Rienne had trudged her way up the sidewalk to get to the door were beginning to fill in.

Behind her, the buxom dairy fox reclined into her corner of the couch, forearms propped on her humongous boobs as she looked down at her phone. She had on a lightweight t-shirt, barely hiding the outline of a heavy-duty bra underneath, as well as a pair of short pajama shorts. The pink fox had one leg draped over the other, idly kicking the air as she scrolled through something on the screen in front of her. Her glasses reflected some pictures on a shopping site.

Rienne always thought that the big-breasted vixen, even dressed casually and with her snowy hair a mild mess around her head, had a regal air about her. She was usually distant and distracted, but she was also kind and sweet, and sometimes even playful if the moons aligned just right. The pink fox didn't wear her emotions as openly as her counterparts, but Rienne was learning how to read her.

Cerine set her phone down on the curve of a boob and brushed her hair back with her other paw. Black fingers ran like blades through white hair. “Uh, I don't know. Erin and I didn't do presents last year. Before that, well, I haven't really done it since I was little.”

“Me, either,” Rienne said, shuffling around on her side of the couch and facing Cerine. The whole frame of the couch creaked from her weight. Their tails lay in a large tangle on the floor. They'd moved the coffee table out of the room for the night so they'd all have room in the floor later to sit. “Is it just gonna be us? Is Zaress coming?”

Cerine shook her head. “Nah.”

“Still being a butt, huh?”

“No, she hibernates. She'll be back around in March or so.”

Rienne rubbed under her muzzle, feeling the plushness padding the underside of it. “Okay, good, 'cause I didn't get her anything.” She glanced over to the pile of wrapped gifts under the twinkling midwinter tree in the corner of the room. The shining white globe on top, representing the charting moon, caused the foil on the packages to glitter. A couple of the gifts were neatly and gracefully wrapped. The rest looked like some kind of rabid animal had gotten to them and tried to wrap them itself. Two of those were Rienne's, because she had never needed to gift wrap anything before in her life. The other two, if she had to make a wild guess, were from Cerine. The two vixens were alike in often unexpected ways, and the cow-fox had a pair of udders that probably made wrapping gifts more difficult. Regardless of how the presents were decorated, however, Rienne was giddy. The plush fox grinned wide and pat her paws together. “But I'm excited! I think I got you both something really good.”

Cerine smirked and the tip of her tail wiggled subtly down on the floor. “Well, now I'm curious,” she answered. The pink fox picked up her phone and heft herself up onto her feet before stretching. Her shirt lifted up in front of her trim middle as the fabric was tugged tight by her swollen bust. Almost subconsciously, she grabbed the hem of her top and tugged it back down, like it was a routine thing. It probably was. “We'll probably do presents closer to midnight.”

“That's *hours*.” Rienne melted backwards onto the couch cushions.

“If you need something to keep you occupied, go see if Erin needs help,” Cerine told her. She adjusted her bra's straps and then pat her palms against the flanks of her massive peaks. “I'm gonna go take care of these.”

“I thought you looked bigger than usual,” Rienne commented as Cerine began to walk away.

As Cerine's long tail disappeared down the hallway, she called back, “If I had a nickel...”

Rienne huffed and instinctively looked at her watch. Still broken. The purple band was sinking deep into the meat of her black-furred wrist, too. Rienne stood up so she could get her paw down into her pants pocket and retrieve her own phone. It was just becoming eight o'clock. Yeah, seeing what Erin was up to was a good idea, she thought.

The chocolate fox was a busy bee in the kitchen, wearing a green apron over her festive snowflake top and skirt. She was multitasking a large meal together, with appetizers, an entree, and a dessert all going at once. Rienne's mouth watered as she smelled it all muddling and mixing in the air like a sweet and savory sauce pumped directly onto her taste buds. New Year's was the biggest feast of the year, and Erin was putting her back into it.

Rienne padded up behind the chocolate vixen and wrapped her heavysset arms around the tubby, brown fox. Like always, Erin's fling with being thin hadn't lasted, and she'd returned to her regular curvy, chubby programming – and maybe with a little extra. Erin squeaked at the sudden hug from behind and smiled as Rienne rest her muzzle on top of her shoulder. She plucked one curled, pink crustacean from the serving dish on the counter and held it over her shoulder like she was feeding a pet parrot. Rienne gobbled it up.

“Those are good,” the golden fox purred, drumming Erin's belly before letting her go.

The chocolate fox giggled and gave Rienne's stocky love handle a poke back. “It's shrimp tail. You'll have to try the cocktail sauce in a bit, too. I made some up but it's in the fridge until we're ready.”

“That's shrimp?” Rienne asked, pointing at the almost-complete ring of seafood. “Wow, I had no idea. Sometimes I saw pictures of actual food in books or on the screens, but I don't think I ever saw shrimp.”

“Well, good!” Erin snuck Rienne another one and smiled. “I'm happy to get to show you even more foods.” The chocolate fox winked at her and pinched her tummy. “It's showing.”

Rienne danced out of reach, smirking while still chewing on the second shrimp.

“That's a really cute top, by the way,” Erin told her, going back to her cooking duties and checking on the roast in the oven.

The golden-furred vixen looked down and adjusted her holiday top she'd gotten at the store the other day. The glittery fireworks sparkled from the overhead light in the kitchen. “Ah, it's dumb, but I thought it'd be fun.”

“It's not dumb,” Erin told her, gesturing threateningly with a slotted spoon as she grinned. “I love all your silly outfits.”

Rienne wriggled her muzzle and peered at the food Erin was still preparing. “Well, Cerine sent me in here to see if you needed any help, but-”

“But I know how talented you are in the kitchen,” Erin finished for her with a smile. “Nope, I want y'all to both go somewhere else while I finish this up. There will be plenty you can help with once it's all eaten.”

“Fair deal,” Rienne told her, heading off to find something else to distract herself with and kill time until the festivities were ready.

When they finally had dinner, there were three stuffed foxes. Rienne lay on the side couch in the living room, feeling the mountain of food churn in her gut. The feeling gave her *deja vu*, but so did every visit to her sisters' place when Erin was cooking. She had gorged herself on shrimp, meat, vegetables, and finally cherry pie with ice cream. The vixen barely managed to save enough room for New Years' cakes, which Erin had prepared with different fillings for different blessings in the next

year. Rienne's had been cherry, which meant she'd find love. Cerine got lemon, for wealth. Erin's had blueberry, and Cerine helpfully explained that blueberry wasn't one of the traditional fillings, so it just meant a round of laughter from the three vixens.

Once they had some time to recover and watch some of the concert on television, Cerine finally gave in and agreed to do presents. The three of them sat in a triangle on the floor in the middle of the living room. In the distance, they heard the occasional crack and boom of fireworks going off as some lunatics braved the blizzard to ignite gunpowder.

Erin handed out the first set of gifts. Rienne had one from Cerine. Feeling her heart thump in her chest, she pulled the wrapper away and opened up the cardboard box inside, finding a slick little folding knife with a carbon handle. She held it up, eyes sparkling in delight. While she was busy admiring the blade and the tiny parts holding it together, Erin shot Cerine a look, who just shrugged.

"It's gorgeous," Rienne breathed, looking towards Cerine. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," Cerine replied, leaning over her prodigious chest to rest her muzzle on her palms. She gave Erin a told-you-so grin, and the chocolate vixen just rolled her eyes with a smile.

They took turns opening the rest of the presents. Cerine got two copies of the same game. Erin opened up a thick, warm scarf from Cerine and a sparkling silver bracelet from Rienne, which she immediately put on after giving the teddy-bear-sized fox a high-velocity hug. Finally, Rienne had the last box in her thick lap. It had the neatly-done wrapping paper with Erin's hallmarks all over it. Cheekily, the gold fox used her new pocket knife to open the second package and then flipped open the lid. Inside was a folded-up pair of warm winter pajama pants. Rienne smiled as she held them up by the waistband and lifted, but her smile twitched a bit as they just kept unfolding. They were very, very large.

"Oh, these are cute," she said, looking at the space and galaxies pattern on them. By cute, she meant dorky, which was admittedly her thing. Rienne leaned around the pants as she held them out, grinning awkwardly. "But, uh, a bit *big*, aren't they?"

Erin and Cerine shared a glance at one another. The pink fox straightened her back and sat upright, but just pulled a face that said: *it was your gift; you do it*. Erin gulped and looked back at the fat vixen across from her. "Rie, honey... you're big."

Rienne blinked, lowering the pants down into her lap. "Okay, yeah, I know, I've put on some weight. But I'm not *big*. These are, what are they..." She held the tag up to her nose. "...3XL?"

Erin folded her paws in her lap. "Rie, remember when we talked about you getting heavier way back in the fall?"

"Yeah."

"Well, back then you weighed about what I do now."

Rienne canted her head, looking at Erin. The chocolate fox was what could loosely be called her "normal" weight, about two-hundred-and-fifty pounds or so.

"You've, well, you've just kept getting fatter since then," Erin explained, shrugging apologetically. "I just kinda assumed you were enjoying it, because you're, um..."

"You have to be over three hundred," Cerine added.

The wheat-gold fox flattened her ears down. Was she? No, that couldn't be right. She lifted up her fireworks shirt and poked at her belly, intending to prove it was still reasonably flat to the others. But she was sitting down, and her paw got filled with a chubby, jiggly fat roll. She gave it a pat and felt the ripple slosh through her whole upper body, from her waist and love handles up to her boobs and around to her back, where she had some growing saddlebags.

She had no clue that she had actually gotten bigger than Erin.

"Well, fuck," she hissed, deflating a bit. Erin got up from her spot and sat down beside her, wrapping her arms around the gold fox's huge shoulders and upper arms. "I mean, my tummy is kinda small, so I figured..."

"You gain like I do," Cerine explained, patting her own stomach. "Everything gets fat *but* belly,

so that's not a good metric. Of course, I can't hardly gain much at all these days..." She shot an accusing glance down at her cleavage. "But if I drank a potion, y'know, I'd look like that."

Rienne looked down at the pajama pants in her lap. Licking her nose, she closed her fists around them and then heaved herself up to her feet. She carried the pants with her to Erin's room and bumped the door shut behind her. Off went her regular pants, and she stepped into the pajama pants. Erin had a good eye for sizes, because they fit her perfectly. Rienne turned the light on in Erin's bathroom and found the scale. Her heart beating loudly, she willed herself to step onto it and wait for the number to pop up and blink. She had to lean a little to see past her bust.

Three-hundred-and-twenty-five.

She'd gained well over a hundred pounds while only barely noticing. Turning around, Rienne looked at herself in the mirror, and pulled her fireworks top off so she could look at her figure. For the first time, she actually paid attention to the fox in the reflection. Her face was round and soft, her arms hugely fat and beginning to wobble under her triceps, her boobs were huge, and even though she didn't have much belly fat – at least while standing up – she sported a thick and round waistline. She turned sideways and laid both paws on her enormous ass, too. Her hips were wide, and she had a prodigious bubble butt. She honestly never paid it much attention, especially since it was either under or behind her. The fox looked every ounce of how big she was, now that she'd been shocked into actually looking. It was almost like she blinked and her mental image transformed from a plump muscle girl to a huge butterball.

"Holy shit," she whined, playing with her belly some more. It filled her paws when she dug her fingers in just a little and wobbled like warm, soft dough in her paws. As she ran her paws around her middle, she could identify a distinct roll of tubby fat all the way around the top of her waistband. If she gained any more, it was probably going to start plunging over her pants. Or maybe even if she just wore something tighter or too small. Rienne twisted sideways and pawed her ass again before looking at her extra-broad back, with her sports bra's band sinking slightly into the chubby weight just underneath her arms, pushing out a couple plump rolls of squishy meat above and below it. She could have had muscles as big as Zaress's and not a single one would show right now.

There was a knock on the bedroom door. "Rie? You okay? Can I come in?" Erin asked.

"Yeah, it's fine."

Erin slipped in and shut the door again behind her, even though it was just Cerine out there. She stepped into the bathroom with Rienne and stood quietly as the vixen finished processing this revelation. After a minute, she shifted her weight onto another foot and said, "The pants look cute on you, though. The navy blue goes nice with your fur."

Rienne tugged on the waistband and let it snap back against her waist, feeling her fat jiggle from the impact. "Would it be rude to say I don't want your gift to fit?"

"If it makes you realize what you really want, then I'd say it's a perfect gift," Erin told her, smiling.

Rienne gave her stomach a couple more pats and sighed. "Well, I mean, you were kinda right... I don't really *mind* being a little heavier. If I did, I guess I would've done something about it months ago. I just didn't realize I had gotten this big. I still don't have a scale at home."

"I guess I have to take some responsibility for it, too," Erin admitted. She sidled up against the gold fox and gave her love handle a tease. "I've been feeding you a lot, big girl. But again, I thought you were actually having fun with it. So you... don't like this size?"

The blonde fox looked at herself in the mirror again, green eyes fluttering across her huge curves, thick middle, wide hips, and so forth and so on. The initial shock had worn off now. She let her mind blank and simply waited for an opinion to form as she drank in how big and heavy she'd become. And, as she looked at the thick, soft cleavage spilling over her bra, and the pudgy gut-in-waiting beginning to spread out over her waistband, she actually liked it. Maybe it was because Erin likened her to a teddy bear, or maybe it was because she associated it with how much she liked real food – as

fattening as most of it was. She liked being big. But this kind of big wasn't who *she* was.

"I think I do," she said, squishing her belly fat between both of her paws as she gave Erin a glance.

The chocolate vixen swayed in place a little and ran one paw across the braid on her shoulder. "You can be honest," she said. "You won't hurt my feelings if you don't like it."

"No, I do," Rienne insisted. "I kinda thought I'd hate it, but... no, I really don't. I kinda like this size. I just... I think I'd rather get back to being me, you know? Letting myself go has been fun, but ah, maybe it is time to put the brakes on this before I really *do* get bigger than I'd like."

Erin smiled. "And I'll help as much as I can. But, you know, if you wanted to be this big again for a weekend or something, you could just ask Cerine for an elixir or two..."

Silvery-green eyes went wide in the mirror. "Oh, shit, I forgot about that..." Rienne picked up her shirt and pulled it back on, letting it hang over her new pajama pants. She ran her paw through her long hair before tipping her black ears back up and inhaling. "Well, I guess I know what my resolution this year is."

From the other end of the house, they heard Cerine call to them: "Ball's dropping in two minutes!"

"Come on," Erin said, taking the fox's paw and tugging. "We'll go make it official."

Since it was difficult to get into a gym the first week of January, as everyone jumped on their New Years' resolutions with aplomb, Rienne and Erin started out with jogging around the central park in town. They invited Cerine, too, but got little more than a firm glare over the top of her rimless glasses.

Now Rienne realized how out of shape she was, and became intimately familiar with the bounce and heft of her bigger body. An extra hundred pounds made a difference – and so did her lack of real exercise over the autumn and winter. Rienne started out telling herself that a hundred wasn't much; she bench pressed more than that! But she quickly found out that a long jog was very different from a set, and she couldn't just set her ass on a rack when she was done.

But apparently Erin could. The first day, Rienne and Erin went shopping for some sports wear for the bigger fox – Rienne reminded herself that she held that title now – and Rienne noticed that Erin was picking out something in the much smaller range. It took her barely three days to fit into it. Erin now stood on the pavement of the pedestrian trail in the park, paws on her slender hips, panting lightly as she looked down at the other, fatter fox laying like a lump on the snowbank. Despite the snow and frigid January wind, the foxes were kept reasonably warm by their fur, so Erin had no issues wearing a green track top around her still-hefty chest and a snug pair of bike shorts. Her flat, toned tummy was bare for everyone to see, and she swished her long, brown tail across the concrete behind her as she waited for Rienne to catch her breath.

"I hate you right now," the still three-hundred-plus vixen wheezed, laying on her back in the snow as she looked up at the perky and fit chocolate fox. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. I know you don't like being skinny."

Erin swayed her shapely hips and shrugged. There was actual muscle tone underneath her fur. It looked *weird*. "I mean, I don't hate it. It's okay. I just think it feels weird." She rubbed her paws up and down over her washboard stomach. "My paws keep wanting to stop several inches before I actually find my belly. Anyways, come on! We gotta do one more lap then we can go eat lunch."

"Guh." Rienne struggled to get up, and Erin took her paws and pulled. "Why does all the food that's good for you taste so bad?"

"It's not bad, you just got spoiled on salt and sugar," Erin reminded her. "And you said anything is better than processed food goo."

"You're right."

Under Erin's coaching, and Cerine's occasional compliment and encouragement, Rienne

dropped her weight. She stuck to a strict diet at first, with Erin teaching her basic cooking at her townhouse apartment. It sucked, but she kept at it, and before long the pounds melted off. In February, she'd already gone a good way to un-jiggling herself, and she was able to find herself a proper gym she could actually enjoy. It was a smaller, family-owned place, not so slick or over-designed as the corporate chain gyms, but full of heart and charm. The mood was pleasant and genuine, something she never thought she'd find back in her own world. Rienne settled in easily, and the fat girl at the gym soon proved what she was made of.

By March, Rienne was donating her bigger clothes to a local charity. Most of them. She kept an outfit or two for fun. Sliding back into slimmer shorts, the pudgy fox kept up her intensity at the gym, and she built her old strength back up with bench presses and free weights mixed in with cardio to shed pounds. The extra fat served as good fuel for building her muscles back up – and then some. It wasn't long before she could flex a thick, padded arm in the mirror and actually see the bulk of the bicep underneath straining to come out.

Now that Rienne was at a gym, Erin wasn't working out alongside her anymore. So after a brief stint as a tiny fox, she let herself blow up in size once again, and just for fun, regained double her lost weight. Rienne teased the balloon-sized fox, but she also spent more than a few weekend afternoon naps after an exhausting workout and modest meal with her face sunk half-into that big, doughy belly. Erin was supportive slim, and she was extra-supportive soft.

As time rolled into April, Rienne changed her diet to start promoting her muscles rather than losing weight. She had some hip and rump pudge left, but it would be gone pretty soon. The vixen was feeling like herself again. She could do long reps on the pull up bar at the gym and, and she soon passed her bench press record. In just a few winter months, the fat fox who walked in through the gym doors was now a fit and muscular queen. Muscles rippled underneath her back and shoulders as she did a set of squats with a weight bar across her shoulders. The round, metal weights to either side of her were huge, and the bar was bowed slightly from the pressure. Rienne finished her set and then eased the bar back onto the rack behind her with a substantial *clang*. For a couple moments, she felt weightless, and she hopped up and down on her paws with a grin.

The fox in the mirrors in front of her was exactly what she wanted: swollen, powerful muscles with a healthy layer of weight on top of them smoothing them out. She flexed a bicep and strong shoulder, watching them pump and swell under her damp, golden fur. Across her middle, there was a faint impression of abs, especially if she twisted and exhaled. She didn't really want any more than that. The vixen liked a flat tummy. At least now she knew she'd always have one.

Rienne did her cool-downs and finished her workout, saying bye to the manager and his wife on her way out the door. In the spring breeze, she pulled her hair tie out of her shoulder-blade length hair and the wind immediately whipped it into her face.

A good suggestion of where to head to next, she thought.

Work's hallways had gotten roomier again. As she walked past the other offices in the refurbished building, Rienne got a number of comments about her physique from her co-workers, mostly affirmations that she was doing a great job. She offered winks back at them, and hefted the shoulder strap of her messenger bag up a little higher as she walked. Rienne had on a new, purple halter top, tied snug around her neck and hugging her waist, and she wore a black sports bra underneath that went only about half-covered by her top. She had on the same half-ripped jeans she wore on her first day at the office last year, with her new folding knife in her front pocket and her hat clipped to her belt. Rienne ran her claws through her short, spiky hair once more as the scent of pizza drifted over to her from the break room. She snatched a single slice up and munched happily on it as she slipped into her office.

It was Joesh's last day today. The contract with his parent company was up, and Rienne's boss had decided to hire someone on staff to work their taxes. The tabby cat was, like always, already at his

desk. He looked up from his work as Rienne stepped in, and he smiled. He'd watched her go from fit to fat to even fitter over a little more than six months now, and he allowed himself an open stare as Rienne set her bag down beside her desk, her broad, muscular back half-exposed in his direction. She was *pumped*, and for spring she was showing her figure off, with bare, well-muscled arms and shoulders and a little strip of fur around her waist.

"More pizza?" he asked her, turning his chair around as she got settled on her own. Rienne's seat had been replaced early on in the year, after it finally couldn't hold any more of her up. It was replaced by a larger, sturdier one – that was now too big for her, and she sat cross-legged atop it.

"I'm not giving this shit up," she told him, finishing off the piece and then wrapping the crust in a napkin to toss into the trash. "If I have to do more reps to pay for eat better-tasting food, fine by me."

Joesh smiled. "Well, with results like those, I think that's a plan. And your haircut looks great, by the way."

"Look who's being a charmer today," Rienne teased. "Last day lit a fire under you? You know, you really should have opened with these lines months ago."

The cat shrugged sheepishly and rubbed his paws together before looking away. "I don't know. I've always been slow on everything."

"Better late than never," Rienne told him.

The workday was uneventful; just another day. Rienne finished up with writing and compiling a new sales routine for the company and spent her last half-hour sneaking in some time with a game on her phone. Joesh finished up the month's tax information. They didn't talk too much more, just some pleasantries and the occasional heads-up.

At five, Rienne shut down her workstation and gathered up her things. Hefting her bag up onto her shoulder, she wished her boss a good evening and headed outside. A spring shower was drizzling lightly from a small, slow-moving cloud up above. Amber sunlight glowed all the way around it, giving the world a bright but wet sheen. It looked unreal but beautiful to Rienne. Unclipping her hat from her belt, she pulled it on over her head and started to walk home.

As she passed through the parking lot on the way to the sidewalk, the vixen caught a glimpse of Joesh at his car, umbrella unfurled above his head as he put his things away in the back seat. Rienne smirked and adjusted her path, heading directly towards the tabby cat. He saw her coming, straightening his back and blinking. He nudged his car door shut and then waited beside it for her to come up to him, whereupon he extended his umbrella out slightly to cover them both. Then he held out his paw, looking up at her.

Rienne didn't take it. She just looked at him, listening to the tinkle of rain against the roofs of the cars beside them. Slowly, Joesh lowered his paw back down to his side and raised an eyebrow.

"Jo," Rienne said, wrapping her tail around their feet to keep it out of the rain, "now that we're officially not co-workers as of three minutes ago, anything you want to say?"

The tabby cat smiled and licked one of his fangs, lowering his gaze down and nodding before looking up at her again. "I've been trying to figure out what to say for months. Just like me to stumble onto it on the last day, huh?"

"Better late than never."

"I mean, I really don't know what to say to a woman who could rip me in half"

"I sincerely promise I'm not going to do that."

Joesh laughed. Rienne smiled and took another step towards him and found herself between his paws as he grabbed her waist. He wasn't a really *small* guy, but she probably had eighty pounds on him between height and muscle, so even though he pulled her in, he wasn't ready when she planted her paw on his chest and pressed him against the car door, her lips locking with his. His lips vibrated against hers as he purred out of control, claws sinking into her thin waist.

Rienne leaned out of the kiss but kept him pinned to the door, feeling his heart beat under his damp shirt. She grinned wide, showing off lots of fangs. "I'm curious," she whispered, "were you more

into when I was fat or now?”

“As good as you look now,” he panted, “watching you get fat was a dream.”

Rienne reached one paw into her messenger bag and pulled out a glass flask with a cork stopper. Inside the bulb swirled a rich, green liquid. “Well, lucky you.”

* * * * *

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