

There wasn't a lot he could do to satiate that immense, gnawing beast that his stomach had turned into, but Woz could certainly try regardless. It was a fool's errand, one that wouldn't end anywhere but in misery once he ate his way through whatever was left of his food supply, but it was either that or stand around doing nothing, and the alligator just wasn't going to suffer that sort of fate. Thus, right after he felt his gut grumbling again, Woz turned around to face the ruined remnants of what used to be his home, a slight twinge of pain crossing through him as he realized that he was effectively homeless; big, fat, and certainly as massive as he'd always dreamed of being, but at the cost of anything resembling a roof over his head. Mercifully, the food pantry had actually survived mostly intact, perched precariously atop a half-floating chunk of flooring that hadn't been taken by the waters yet; likely a result of his bed having been on the opposite side of the house, sparing his actual snacks the pain of being smothered underneath a burgeoning gator belly of absurd proportions. Not so mercifully, the pantry itself was still sized for what he *used* to be, not what he *was*; he might've certainly wanted to fatten himself up, but he *had* been several times smaller than before he took the potion, so rather than gorging himself on nigh-limitless quantities of food, scarfed down with abandon... he got a few bites in, after which he ran out of snacks to nibble on. Granted, they were still delicious, and deliciously fattening as well; his metabolism was so out of whack thanks to the witch doctor's chemical concoction that, rather than having to wait for digestion like everyone else, Woz found that all he needed to do was take a bite out of whatever he wanted and it would almost instantly be added to his frame! It was certainly a welcome surprise, so much so that the alligator barely noticed as he burned through what was left of his foodstuffs; one moment he had his head shoved inside his pantry, the next he was staring down at an empty spot in space, having devoured not just the *contents* of the pantry, but somehow the pantry itself, leaving him with a mouth full of curiously painless splinters. Still, it felt like there should've been more, or at least he was so hungry that he felt he *deserved* more; certainly, him having fattened a couple of pounds almost instantly after scarfing down a couple of weeks' worth of food was nice and all, but that was just it: those were a couple of week's worth food, and not a single ounce more. Looking around him, all Woz could see were the chunks of wood that used to make up his domicile, no longer enough to hold a body that was so massively oversized for it; no sustenance, no snacks, no unhealthy amounts of delicious cooking to delight himself with, just the dreadful emptiness of an empty larder and an even emptier stomach to remind him of how close he was to just ripping out some trees and eating *those*; it didn't help that his body immediately reacted to this emptiness by having yet another gas bubble form inside his stomach, releasing in a burp that was, while still powerful enough to bend trees around him, *mercifully* not nearly as long-lived as the first one. Thankfully for him, a distraction was well on its way; a burp like the one he produced after his transformation was finalized couldn't possibly go unnoticed, especially not during a lazy Sunday afternoon, leaving the whole bayou wondering just what the hell had made such a loud noise. Everyone, from the lowliest insect to the largest of the colossal gators that made the swamp their home, converged on Woz's location, slowly coming to realize that's where they were headed; a few began wondering if the whole thing wasn't a prank on the smaller alligator's part, as surely a

pipsqueak like him would never be capable of belching with *that* amount of power. It wasn't until eyes were firmly on him, and his brand new pudgy self, that Woz's transformation was actually revealed to the world, just about at the same time as Mama Josephine began cackling before turning her music back up, satisfied that her magic had worked the wonders it was meant to. Not that she intended for things to have gone *that* far, but hey, the gator was owed a little bit of a break after so much time wasted with no results, so why not let him have some fun? He certainly had his work cut out for him, given the amount of people converging on his location; Woz was still reeling from the sudden bloating *and* from the complete lack of any appreciable amount of food to make the beast in his belly shut up for five seconds when he was practically *mobbed*, dozens of the bayou's residents popping out of the destroyed treeline hoping to catch a glimpse at the monster responsible for the devastation. What a wonder, then, that they would be seeing Woz standing in the middle of it all, looking so radically different than usual that most of those who first laid eyes on him genuinely believed they were experiencing some sort of visual hallucination. It wasn't until the massive gator turned around a couple of times to try and greet everyone, then promptly slipped and fell down with a massive splash of water, that everyone agreed: yup, that was Woz. No one else could be that endearingly clumsy, not to mention the frantic nonsense words that came out of his mouth as he struggled to get back up and failed miserably; a couple of the larger alligators standing nearest to him walked past the crowd, wading through the debris-covered water to give their newest brother-in-size a good pull. It wasn't every day that they got to watch one of their own grow to such absurd sizes, and that wasn't even taking into account the fact that it was *Woz* of all people, the pipsqueak who barely even managed to put on half a dozen pounds even when he gorged himself on a regular basis. To see him so immense that he actually *towered* over everyone present, well... it was quite obvious that something was out of the ordinary there, and a few even guessed correctly when they thought about the possibility of voodoo magic, but no one bothered to say anything about it; regardless of how it was achieved, Woz was *big*, and that was all that mattered. They made sure to let him know as much, with a large crowd of gators all rushing to give the now-biggest among them a series of pats on the back and encouraging words, congratulating Woz on finally getting to see his dream come to fruition. It was overwhelming, in a sense, for him to be so accepted so quickly; resorting to Mama Josephine had left the alligator genuinely believing that everyone else would push him aside, decry him as a faker who only achieved his size by illicit means rather than being naturally born that way, or working his way up the size ladder properly. Yet instead, he was on the receiving end of playful ribbing and a handful of fat jokes, not unlike what the other gators did to one another; for once, for one delightful moment, Woz was part of the group, and no longer had to worry about fitting in with the big boys... until *he* showed up, of course. Woz berated himself for having forgotten about them, the one person who could be given a house full of gold and still find *something* about it to complain about, and, quite unfortunately, the only one who still gave a damn about maintaining the "proper" hierarchy. Then again, one could easily understand why: as the biggest alligator around, Antoine *used* to be the prime example of what a true heavyweight should be like, never mind the fact that most of the people

around him couldn't even begin to stand his presence, let alone enjoy his company. It was just hard to avoid him; at ten feet tall and heavier than a long-haul truck, Antoine liked to act as though him being the biggest of the big somehow gave him the right to lord all over everyone else in the bayou, and with strength to match his stout physique, not a lot of people could think to match him blow for blow if it came down to it. This went a long way to explain the crowd's warm reaction to Woz's inexplicable fattening: he might be colossal, but surely he was still the same Woz as always, the same placid soul who wouldn't hurt a fly even if it were to save his own life. Granted, there was a lot of damage done to his environs, but one couldn't blame him for failing to contain his growth spurt; by sheer contrast, Antoine often went out of his way to be destructive, claiming that because no one had "dethroned" him, then he could do whatever he wanted with the bayou and no one could do anything about it. It made it entirely unsurprising when he pushed his way to the middle of the crowd, where the large group of alligators had surrounded Woz, only to cross his arms over his immensely rotund belly and then stare his kin down like they were naughty children.

"Honestly, no manners!" he loudly bellowed, addressing the crowd around him as if they cared in the slightest about what he had to say, "The rest of us spend years working hard, you decide to take a shortcut and now you're asking for the same recognition? *Surely* you *must* be kidding, little man."

It apparently didn't occur to Antoine that Woz hadn't asked for anything, nor that he'd reacted to all the attention with a very obvious blush that still hadn't gone away. Perhaps the now-second-smallest gator didn't care; perhaps he was simply too oblivious to notice.

"Well, I say that you have *not* earned the right!" Antoine declared, dramatically pointing a finger towards the much taller alligator he fashioned his newest rival, "Not until we've decided who among us is the *real* biggest eater... in a contest!"

Woz was about to say something when he felt someone slap him on the gut, causing it to wobble and slosh. It had been one of the smaller gators in the group shushing him before turning to face Antoine themselves.

"I think that's a *fantastic* idea, Antoine" - the tone couldn't be more sarcastic if they wanted it to be, and yet somehow the interloper still failed to notice - "In fact, I think I speak for all of us when I say we would be more than happy to finally settle, once and for all, who's the *real* biggest gator in the bayou, wouldn't you say so fellas?"

A round of murmuring from the rest of the reptiles assembled around Woz, who just then realized what was actually happening. He never expected to be at the center of a scheme to get Antoine to either screw off or at least learn some humility, but he had to say, he quite liked being part of the gang, so he quickly learned not to say anything that might endanger the plan.

"Excellent!" the self-proclaimed lord of the bayou replied, swishing his tail as he performed an overly theatrical about-face and began walking away, "I shall see you by Mama Josephine's place in three days' time; bring all you can eat, and we'll see how long you can last against a *real* giant, little man. 'Till then!"

With that, Antoine barged through the outer perimeter of onlookers before vanishing into the depths of the swamp, only the ripples on the surface of the water visible where he swam through... at least until his dumptruck of an ass eventually surfaced. Everyone around Woz gave it a couple of minutes to let Antoine get out of earshot before they turned back around and resumed congratulating the newest biggest gator around, that time around making it clear that they weren't so much *expecting* him to win as much as they knew that whatever happened, he'd *already* won. And that was the case, wasn't it? All Woz could think about, as he was surrounded by familiar faces all beaming at him, was how much more colourful everything looked, like a filter had been taken out from in front of him and he could finally see the world for what it was. So what if he still had an eating contest in front of him before he could finally rest easy? He was *famished*; having an entire event where he was expected to do nothing but scarf down as much food as he could physically shovel down his throat wasn't just something that he *wanted* to do, it was something he knew he *had* to do as well. With his new body being so much better at absorbing calories, clearly the best way of taking it out for a spin would be to force it through a stress test and see just how much it could consume before begging for mercy... and, given just how heavily his stomach was rumbling at the mere thought of the contest taking place, Woz doubted he'd ever actually *stop*. Not that he mentioned this little titbit to anyone around him, of course; best if they didn't know just how deeply his new hunger ran, best if they kept believing he was *merely* big enough to stand several feet taller than everyone else around him. Best if he presented himself as being nothing short of giddy and enthusiastic for the contest taking place (not that this was exceptionally difficult), even offering to help with whatever was needed before being courteously turned down. He spent the ensuing days travelling from place to place in the bayou, crashing at a myriad of people's places while he waited for the inevitable showdown; no one really gave any thought as to what would happen to him afterwards, nor what would have to be done to ensure housing, it being far more convenient to only consider the actual event itself, and think of the consequences... never. What mattered was that Antoine was about to be put in his place and reminded that the swamp belonged to no one, and if they needed to then worry about *another* ravenous gator ready to ravage the local food supply, then that was a good enough trade-off as far as most of the residents there were concerned. Mama Josephine even offered to provide music for the contest, provided they didn't actually hold it anywhere near her place; in her words, the last thing she needed was a "pair of handbags" rolling over her home when they "forgot their table manners". Not the most elegant of ways to put it, but not exactly *wrong* either, especially not when one considered just how little any of the alligators currently cared about maintaining the most basic level of decency when eating; one could only imagine what Antoine and Woz would be like when they truly cut loose and brought their full ravenous hungers to bear. Indeed, by the time the contest was supposed to begin, both of the alligators had already parked their wide rears in their assigned spot for a good day or so, having chosen to stick around and wait for the final preparations in a way that let everyone else build the whole thing around them. There was a significant amount of work that had to go into it, after all: from procuring the food itself, which seriously strained not just that section of the bayou itself, but the larders and stocks

of several of the towns around it, to building the tables on which the food would be served, which not only had to be tall enough to rise above the swamp waters, but sturdy enough to survive the inevitable bloating and mindless gorging. A full day, whereby Antoine kept glaring sideways at his supposed “usurper”, while Woz was blissfully unaware of the stink-eye being directed at him, preferring to think about how *delicious* all those meals being cooked smelled. Everyone living in the bayou pitched in to some degree or another, with most of them being assigned to kitchen duty; everyone’s homes were effectively turned into factory lines designed exclusively to pump out as much cooked food as possible, while the rest busied themselves with both assorted construction and whatever random tasks needed to be done outside the checklist. The whole swamp was taken up in a frenzy of activity, and Woz marvelled as the empty clearing that was picked for the contest was slowly transformed into something that wouldn’t look out of place in Mardi Gras, from the lavish decorations, to the endless hubbub of the hundreds of little ones scurrying about, and the *food*. Heavens above, the meals themselves looked and smelt so delicious that both Woz and Antoine were, at one point, joined together in a common goal: forcing themselves not to rush forward and start eating. It was hard, hard enough that plenty of the other gators suggested the two should be physically held down, but through a combination of iron discipline, endless flattery on Antoine’s part, and the promise of a double portion for Woz, the two contestants just *barely* succeeded in keeping themselves in check; they even managed not to start gorging when the day of the contest rolled around and the meals themselves were placed on the immense banquet tables built just for them, their muzzles *dripping* with drool as the two didn’t even try to hide it anymore. Sure, most of the delicious cooking itself was reheated, thanks to the immense logistical effort that went into producing that much food in the first place, but that hardly mattered so long as it was just as delicious as before; in fact, Mama Josephine had even gone out of her way to “spice up” some of the dishes with a few sprinkles of what she assured everyone was just paprika, though no one believed this for even a second. Regardless, with Antoine ready to devour his way back to the position of leadership he thought he had, and Woz just being outright famished, barely a microsecond passed in between one of the other alligators declaring the contest to have begun and the first bite being taken, so quick in fact that the announcer hadn’t even finished his word properly before having his back be sprinkled with an unhealthy amount of sauce. After the initial shock wore off, however, the assembled crowd burst into cheers, all calling for the name of their favoured contestant... which just so happened to almost entirely be Woz, since even those who actually *wanted* Antoine to win knew better than to make this known amidst a crowd who would settle for nothing less than the second-biggest reptile in the bayou being taught a lesson in humility. It had already started, to be fair; a whole day of the two of them sitting together had left Antoine feeling increasingly pissed off at the fact that Woz was just so *big* by default; with a good six feet of difference between them, not to mention the amount of pudge that the bigger gator had on him, Antoine had convinced himself that the only thing he *actually* objected to were the *means*. Petty jealousy didn’t square with his own opinion of himself, since clearly he was the undisputed top dog (top gator?) around those parts, so *obviously* he couldn’t just be jealous of someone. No, what he

disliked was the way that Woz achieved their size goals, which was, as far as Antoine was concerned, nothing more than cheating. A magical shortcut, taken because the pretender couldn't be bothered to do things the proper way, leaving him so much larger that they were left with a serious need for an attitude adjustment. It clearly wasn't because he was jealous of Woz's size, that was just ridiculous, and he would prove it by not just outcompeting them, but by *outgrowing* them as well... at least, in proportion. Meanwhile, Woz remained entirely ignorant of Antoine's thought process, being slightly too concerned with his own hunger to really do anything else; he'd been fed during the wait, of course, but nothing really seemed to *fill* him, at least not to the degree that he wanted to be. It felt as if, no matter how much food he ate, no matter how delicious or heavy, he always craved for *more*, always more, even though eating anything at all was a recipe for disaster given how quickly he fattened up even with the smallest of snacks. In fact, this was one of the reasons why Antoine was so interminably angry: not only was Woz bigger, but he grew larger with every mouthful, something that couldn't be said for anyone else. Of course, the gator giant didn't see it as cheating as much as just a reflection of who he truly was; the only reason he hadn't already become as gigantic as he was then was thanks to some unfortunate freak accident of genetics that granted him a metabolism that seemed unwilling to put on any weight at all, so now? Now that his true potential had been unlocked and he no longer had to worry about whether or not something would fatten him? Now he could focus entirely on scarfing down as much food as he could muster, almost literally shoveling it into his mouth as he moaned his way through a feast that anyone else would've thought big enough to serve multiple people, yet for him was little more than an entrée: roasts, stir frys, baked goods, even simple stuff like scrambled eggs, everything was present and accounted for, and if he didn't have it in front of him at any one moment, he could be certain that all he needed was to wave at one of the many people moving plates around for them to bring him even more delicious food to mindlessly consume. It was enough that even Antoine, though he tried his best to focus on eating as well, couldn't help but occasionally glance sideways at the absolute monstrosity of consumption that Woz had become; perhaps the worst aspect of it was that, as much as he'd like to think that this was something novel, Antoine *knew* that his competitor had always been that ravenous, and it just so happened his body had never gone along with it. To see someone like that, sitting just mere feet away from him, the fraction of their body submerged under the swamp waters growing increasingly smaller as their form *bloated* far in excess to what it should, left Antoine feeling genuinely terrified for the first time in his life. Not for what might happen to him, seeing as Woz wouldn't squash a mosquito if it was gorging itself on their blood for weeks on end, but because of what all that growing *meant*; while it was easy for him to keep acting as if he was the ruler of the bayou, Antoine had to admit, he could see this fantasy slipping away from him with each bite that Woz took, with every inch the other alligator's body grew, becoming ever more gargantuan as they ate through their side of the stockpiled meals with such gusto that one would be forgiven for thinking they hadn't eaten in weeks. Woz was scarily efficient at doing so as well, though mostly thanks to his immense size making it easy for him to consume increasingly large quantities of food without having to go through the trouble of chewing on them; all he needed

was to open his mouth wide, dump a whole gumbo in there, and then delight in the sensations that came with having his gut bloat further, his fat multiply as the more he ate, the bigger he became in real time. Unfortunately, the fatter he turned out to be, the emptier his stomach became as well; with him being capable of absorbing every nutrient in every bite in every snack, he never truly felt *full*, not even when he had several meals' worth of junk food stuffed down his mouth; as he grew larger, so too did his gut's capacity improve, leading to him entering a downward that spiral could only truly be fixed one way: though it pained him to debase himself in such a manner, Woz eventually stopped eating altogether, giving Antoine a brief moment of respite and an inkling of hope... before loudly asking the other people come "help him out", then throwing his head back and opening his mouth as wide as it went. It was obvious what he wanted, and though the other alligator *wanted* to complain about it not being in the rules, the crowd around them, by that point stoked by Woz's continuous gluttonous transformation, couldn't care less about what "rules" were. Instead, they rushed forward, grabbing whatever dish they could before doing their best to climb over the larger gator's immense, bloated form, finding it surprisingly easy what with how *soft* their pudgy self had become. Once on the top, they'd drop a whole plate's worth of food into Woz's mouth, then throw themselves into the bayou's water, to grab another dish and restart the whole process all over again; for Antoine, who hadn't even finished everything on his own table, seeing this left him unable to take another bite... though mostly because, despite his bluster, he was already feeling stuffed even before wanting to ask for fourths, while Woz seemed perfectly happy to pick up the slack and devour *everything* that had been prepared for the two of them. He wasn't thinking anymore either; as far as the larger gator cared, so long as he felt the delicious twinge of flavour move down his gullet every second or so, as long as he had *something* being given to him, then he was in heaven. He was there, finally able to grow fatter and pudgier on his ravenous hunger alone, surrounded by so many people who were all so wonderfully willing to enable him; he couldn't ask for a better personal paradise, not even when his frame bulged out over Antoine and the gator was left wanting to apologize profusely for getting so close into their personal space. He couldn't help it though; past a certain point, Woz's body had become so fat, so unbelievably heavy, that he literally couldn't move anymore, at least not without external assistance. He felt his gargantuan rear take up so much space down below that nearly all of his body was above the waterline already, his legs and arms vanishing underneath an avalanche of bloating pudge; he was turning into a colossal lard ball, and while others might have objected to this, Woz only wanted it to go faster. He *wanted* to feel himself vanish underneath himself, to feel the heft of his fat burying him beneath so many stacked folds that he wouldn't be able to do anything on his own even if he tried... since, after all, this meant that he could reasonably ask for others to keep feeding him and they would *have* to do it, just like they were then, just like they were so eager to do. And by the end, once the final meals were delivered to him and Woz felt the last vestiges of flavour leave his tongue, by the time that his body had become so *vast* that it looked more like a collection of soft green spheres than anything else, by the time that his head was so thoroughly surrounded by neck fat that the only thing keeping him breathing was his snout, poking up from amidst an ocean of blubber... he

finally felt satisfied. Not full, never full; at no point would he actually feel like he couldn't eat anymore, because that just wasn't the way things worked. He could always take another bite, consume yet more of his body weight in whatever random junk was thrown his way; but still, for the time being... he was fine. More than fine, in fact, as he felt the familiar sensation of what was unmistakably a burp forming deep within him; thankfully for everyone involved in the fattening process, this created enough of a rumbling all over Woz's pudgy self that they knew to get the hell out of dodge. Not so thankfully for a certain someone, the sheer amount of quaking that came with the incoming explosion, certain to be far more potent than any other that *any* denizen of the bayou had ever experienced, was enough to get the immense alligator's body to start rumbling and physically shifting, unable to hold onto itself as one gigantic, flabby ball. As if ordained by fate, poor Woz ended up falling sideways, the shockwave creating a concentric mini-tsunami that washed away anyone not careful enough to either brace themselves or run away... and leaving him firmly pointed at Antoine.

The former "king" of the bayou had maybe a second or two before they saw their competitor's mouth, the only part of their body that he could see, open wide; one more second before the burp came out, so vastly overwhelming that Antoine didn't actually *hear* it. Rather, one moment he was sitting there, and the next he no longer felt the ground beneath him, his entire form lifted into the air by the updraft created by a belch of such unimaginable proportions that, by the time it was over, a good forty or so minutes later, the whole clearing had been *flattened*; even the water was pushed out, leaving Woz alone at one end of a hundred-yard long, cone-shaped disaster area where *nothing* but the barren dirt beneath him remained, Antoine naught but a twinkle in the sky, on his way to falling down in some forgotten swamp a few miles off.

But still, Woz finally felt satisfied.

If a bit peckish.