

## CRAVING CONTROL: THE AWAKENING

*Now in Comic Sans!!*

### CH1: FEEDING THE STATUS QUO

Wow, what a day. Jane got home from another grueling workday, parked her car, and went inside... to find her roommate eating. Again.

This was nothing new. As far as Jane could tell, Lalia NEVER stopped eating. In fact, ever since they'd become friends, she'd rarely spent a second without something in her mouth... a food item, or gum, or even pencils in a pinch. The girl had an oral fixation.

Tonight she was scarfing down nachos, slathered with steaming grated cheese, a bowl of guacamole to her right on the couch and a tub of sour cream to her left. With every enormous, greedy bite, several chips coated in salsa and *queso* disappeared down her chomping, smacking gullet. Jane rolled her eyes.

"Lalia..."

"I know, I know," Lalia said, looking ashamed. "I promised I wouldn't eat your chips. I'm sorry! They were just so good, and there was nothing else left..."

"Uh huh." Jane had heard this excuse before, maybe a thousand times. She dropped her grocery bags off in the kitchen of their tiny apartment, and sat down next to the redhead. "Lalia... You ever feel like we're in a rut?"

"Whaddya mean?" The redhead adjusted her sweatpants, currently pulled tight across the pudgy belly that was the only aberration on her tall, curvaceous frame. "I mean, I made a pretty big divot in this couch, but that's not my fault, I'm retaining water..."

Jane shrugged. "No, it's just... We finally moved out of my mom's house. I have a real job. But neither of us can get a boyfriend, or even new friends. Every time we go out together, it's just a series of wacky food-based mishaps, which—no offense—are usually your fault. I just feel like our lives aren't going anywhere, for some reason."

Lalia paused, her cheeks stuffed with chips. A smear of guac oozed out the corner of her mouth. "Jane, are you friend-breaking-up with me?"

"No! No, I would never do that. Probably." With her face full of food, Lalia resembled a chipmunk; Jane couldn't stay mad at that face. And yet, in the back of her mind, she was a little frustrated. Lalia couldn't hold on to a job; she couldn't spend five minutes without getting distracted by thoughts of food, where food might be found, and the possibilities of a bigger meal

once she had food. Jane knew she meant well, but Lalia's naïve, vapid personality didn't cut it in the real world.

"I'm just saying... Maybe we should try getting you some help, you know. For your eating problem."

Lalia stopped mid-chew, both her cheeks sagging with food. "Whaff eating problemff?"

Their phone began to ring.

Jane glanced at it; she'd forgotten their little house had a landline, and she couldn't even remember paying for it. "Huh. Wonder who that is?"

In the moment Jane's back was turned, Lalia had tilted the entire bowl of chips into her mouth and swallowed them, muffled crunching noises echoing from her stomach. "My next taco delivery isn't for like, fifteen minutes." She burped. "So it can't be him."

"Uh huh."

Jane left Lalia to her gluttony, and picked up the phone. A gravelly voice, heavily distorted, came through the other side. "Jane? We need to talk."

The hair on her neck began to prickle. "Who is this?"

"Someone with answers. But let's start at the beginning. Lalia's eating again, isn't she?"

Jane scowled. "Creepy! That's none of your business."

"Lalia eats a lot. Really makes you think." Jane struggled to try and place that voice as it spoke; it sounded so familiar, and yet so unsettling. "You ever wonder why your roommate can eat impossible amounts, and not die, or explode? Don't you question how you two manage to make rent, while she's spending everything on gigantic meals? How does she eat enough for twenty people, and just wake up skinny and beautiful the next morning? These things aren't *normal*, Jane."

She felt a queasy sense of dissonance. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"She's a parasite, Jane, a drain on your resources. Her stomach gets stuck in your shower. She knocks your family photos over with her ass. She's broken *eight chairs*. Any sane person would have thrown her out, yet somehow, you don't. Almost as if you *can't*."

"Who is this? Fess up, or I'm calling the cops!"

A menacing chuckle sounded. "Sure, go ahead. And when they show up, Lalia will distract them with hilarious high-jinks. Or perhaps they'll find her strangely attractive. The real world can't help you, Jane, not with *her* around." There was silence for a moment. "Come down to the abandoned cartoon studio. On Zaftig Avenue. We have work to do."

"What—" But the line had gone dead. Jane stared back at Lalia, confusion knotting the pits of her stomach. The fiery-haired glutton was currently working her way through a lasagna, Garfield-style, just scooping up entire handfuls and shoving them in her mouth. The dish looked

pipin-hot. Jane didn't even remember putting any lasagna in the oven; hell, they couldn't *afford* lasagna. Where had she gotten that? Where did she get *any* of that food?

"Was that the taco guy?" Lalia asked, through a mouthful of pasta. Behind her, old Warner Bros. cartoons played on loop. Lalia was a big Boomerang fan—mostly because she had the attention span of a large, gluttonous child.

"No," Jane said. For the first time, questions began to swirl in her head, questions about Lalia and why they'd even become friends in the first place. "No, it wasn't the taco."

## CH2 - "I Got Boxes Full of Pepe"

The abandoned studio was unexpectedly huge and menacing: Jane had to squeeze through a padlocked chain-link fence and under the wreckage of enormous fallen sign to get in. The sign read **MAROON CARTOONS** in big purple letters. The front doors were unlocked, and opened on a cavernous interior that echoed with the creak of swinging hinges. Dust coated the cubicles and drawing-boards inside.

"Hello? Are you there, creepy guy?" Jane crept into the dark lane between the cubes, using her phone as a searchlight. "I've got a taser, so don't try anything." She didn't, but it never hurt to put on a show of force. Lalia had enough stalkers that Jane knew how to deal with them... mostly.

Suddenly, overhead lamps clicked, illuminating a lone figure at the end of the room. He wore a long, tan trenchcoat and a detective's fedora pulled down over his face, though she caught the hint of a goatee.

"Hello, Jane."

Now that she had a target for her annoyance, Jane was less afraid. She marched towards the figure. "You! Asshole! I had a big exam tomorrow, I should be studying right now!" She grabbed the lapels of his coat. "What the hell is your problem?"

"Ah yes... For grad school." The man pulled a vape stick from his pocket and puffed on it. "What was it you were studying again?"

"Socio... economic..." For a moment Jane paused, astounded. She'd been neck-deep in thesis papers for weeks, so why couldn't she remember her major? "I... I can't..."

"It's not important to the story. Lalia's story. So you don't remember." He tilted back his fedora, and Jane had a shock of recognition.

"Trevor? Is that you?" She lost her temper. "You crazy idiot! I thought you and Lalia were done! Now you drag me out here—"

"Woah, woah, take it easy! This isn't about her." He looked skinnier than Jane remembered, more haggard. Or maybe it was the trenchcoat. It really was a fantastic piece of cosplay. "Not anymore. It's about us."

"Us? What do you mean?" Jane scowled at the smell of the vape-juice. "Dude, stop being cryptic. What's going on here? What's with the Sam Spade outfit?"

"You like? I had it custom-made. Seems to throw off pursuit." He glanced around, his eyes glittering in the dark. "You weren't followed, were you?"

Jane sighed. She didn't have the patience to deal with another of Lalia's spurned lovers right now, but she did feel bad for the guy. He looked like a mess. "No, Trevor, it's just me."

"Right. Good. Unless they suspect we know, the two of should be safe, for now." He took a deep breath. "Jane... You know Lalia's always been a little, well, special. Not mentally handicapped—she got good grades—but kind of oblivious. Right?"

"Sure. But she's always been that way. Trevor, who's 'they'?"

He spun the fedora in his hands, looking over the ruined studio. "This is gonna sound nuts. And it's really hard to explain. But after she broke my heart..."

Jane grunted. "Trevor, you two dated for a month. Don't give me that 'dames and horses' crap."

"I need you to listen." The fear in his voice was so total, that Jane couldn't help but flinch a little. "I got a little upset, yeah. I started looking into Lalia's past to see if she had any family, anyone I could talk to about her after she blocked me on social media—"

"Oh my god." Jane facepalmed. "Of course you would be *that* guy."

"I stand by my actions," he said, a little defensively. "Anyway, I couldn't find anything. No home town, no phone number. But I did manage to track down her friend Christina's address."

"You went to her friend's house?" Jane would have facepalmed again, but her forehead already hurt. "Dude, that's so sketchy!"

"Maybe I wasn't thinking straight," he admitted, and dropped the noir-detective attitude for a moment. She caught a glimpse of the awkward, shy, mop-headed guy he'd once been... before Lalia got bored with him and moved on to the next shiny object or snack in her path. "But that house was abandoned, Jane. No one had lived there in decades."

There was a muffled thud, from the back of the studio. Both of them jumped, and Jane began to get that creepy-crawly feeling... like they were being watched. "Okay, so you got the wrong house. Big deal."

"No! I didn't. That's just it. The next day, I went back to look for clues ... and the place was brand new. The lights were on. Christina was doing calisthenics next to her kale garden, in the side yard." Trevor pulled out photos, and though Jane was still disgusted with him, she was also

fascinated. The first was of an abandoned shack, clearly in ruins. The next, it was a brightly painted one-story ranch home with a hybrid car in front.

"That makes no sense." There was another thud from the rows of cubicles—closer this time. "Get to the point."

"The point is, the house didn't exist. Christina didn't exist, until she was *important* again—connected to Lalia." He pulled a pen from his pocket, doodling on the back of a photo. "This is Lalia's timeline. Now, normally you and me are like this." He drew two more lines, parallel to the first. "But if Lalia veers off... goes on a cruise, or the moon, or whatever weird shenanigans.." He drew an X on the end of the second line. "If we're not important to Lalia... We cease to exist."

She stared at him. "You're nuts."

"No, I'm not! This is real—it's all real!" There was a wet plopping sound; Jane and Trevor turned to see an inkwell had turned over onto a drawing board. The ink spread like blood over the page. No one else was in the room with them; the windows were closed, so it hadn't been the wind.

*What the hell is going on?* "I'm sorry for you, Trevor. I really am. Just... Just keep me out of this. I'm leaving." She turned for the door, and all hell broke loose.

The ink dripping onto the floor was rising, coalescing, *forming* into something. It grew and grew, rising up impossibly from the floor.

"It's *them!*" Trevor screamed, flailing back and dropping his fedora. "They're here!"

"Who's them? Oh my god, what *is* that?"

It was clearer now, gaining resolution, like a TV signal flashing forward through the decades. The shape was lanky, disfigured, draped in a blue lab-coat and with oversized gloves. The bright, almost neon-yellow skin of the thing shone pale and hideous in the overhead lights. Its head was an oversized bulb, its nose a long jaundice-colored arrow.

What was worse was its flatness: Jane almost couldn't comprehend it, because the *man-thing* was two-dimensional, standing up. Flat as a piece of paper, yet alive and hideously mobile. It giggled at them, holding up a hack-saw and a set of handcuffs as flat and goofy as the rest of it.

**"Why, you pigs haven't eaten dinner yet! Come here! Bua-ah, hah-hah!"**

Trevor grabbed Jane and they both fled, terrified, into the studio.

### CH3 - Witness Protection

Meanwhile, Lalia was eating.

Lalia was eating a lot lately. She'd once had goals, hopes, aspirations, but these had largely vanished; the discipline and structure of college was gone, and she didn't see any point in working for herself when she could just stay home and relax. It wasn't *her* fault, of course. She had a *problem*. Exactly what that problem was tended to change, depending on what excuse she needed: she had a thyroid issue, her childhood had left her with unresolved traumas, her stomach had a mind of its own. But really, what it came down to was that she loved to eat—really, genuinely loved it. In the back of her mind, sometimes she worried that was all she really cared about.

A fist-full of lasagna disappeared down her throat as she mindlessly binged-watched her favorite TV show. "Get 'em, Longmire! Urp." She put a hand to her mouth, her cheeks bulging. One of these days she was going to re-learn her manners. She was a classy girl, deep down, and she wanted to stay that way. *Whoops*—her lace thong was sinking into her ass-cleavage again. She plucked the slinky fabric out of her rear, tugging up her sweatpants.

There was a knock at the door. "Jane, can you get that?" she mumbled through a mouthful of cake. Where she'd gotten the cake, she couldn't really remember. She'd had already ingested two or three helpings of dessert, on top of several dinners, and there was no way in hell she was gonna try standing up now. Her stomach spread out on her lap, a rosy-pink globe of bouncy flesh. The knock came again.

"Jeez, girl's gotta do everything for herself around here... OOF!" She heaved herself off the couch, her stomach making a watery **GA-LOOSH** sound as it wobbled, sagging and swaying off her svelte frame. Well... Sort of svelte. She felt puffier and jigglier than she had this morning; her arms seemed fluffier, her rear heavier and marginally more bootylicious. Probably just the humidity, making her bloated. Yeah, that was it. It would be the fifth time she'd made an excuse regarding the size of her ass today, and she'd become very efficient about it.

Shuffling to the door, she opened it, blithely ignoring the fact that it was eleven o'clock and no one should be out at this hour, much less paying her a surprise visit. There was a stranger on her doorstep. This would have alarmed her, except he was oddly handsome, and Lalia couldn't get enough of handsome men. They were the only thing that successfully distracted her from eating.

The man was short, fit, and wore a dull-gray suit. He had quiet, watchful eyes, a boyish face, and a sweep of dirty-blond hair.

He looked a hell of a lot like Brad Pitt.

Lalia raised an eyebrow. "Can I... help you?" Her stomach bobbed between them, sloshing, and the man's eyes were drawn to it before he straightened and cleared his throat.

"Detective Frank Harris, ma'am. I'm from the C.W.P.D. I've been sent here on protection duty. My agency believes you may be..." He paused, glancing around at the darkness. "In danger."

"Gosh, the what-PD?" Lalia was more interested in his rakish good looks than his words, but she did have enough brains to be curious. "Is that, like, a special investigations unit? I didn't think our town had that many crimes..."

"Please don't mention local details, you'll endanger your central narrative." He brushed her aside, speaking into a walkie-talkie. "This is Harris. No suspicious ink on the premises. No genre warping, either. Everything looks canon."

"Hey, you can't just walk in here... Don't you need like, a warrant?" Lalia blushed as the Pitt-lookalike surveyed the wreckage of her most recent meal. Her stomach gurgled loudly, demanding more, and she gave it a gentle slap to quiet it. Its pale mass bobbed up and down with an impolite **wubb-wubb** noise. "You said I'm in danger?"

"Yes. I ought to level with you." He turned over an empty pie tin, examining it; the marks of her greedy fingers were still smeared into the leftover filling. "You're in 2-D witness protection. I don't have time for the whole story, but you had your narratives wiped years ago and reassigned to this one. For your own safety." He took out a fountain pen, sweeping it through the air as if searching for something. "Does anyone else live with you?"

"Yeah, my roommate Jane..." Lalia shivered. "2D... narratives? A-am I in trouble?" A soft, nervous burp escaped her.

"Right, your straight-man roommate." Harris was prodding Jane's laptop with his pen, and turned around, surprised. "And no, miss. It's not your fault. You're being targeted by obscure characters. Washouts. We're just here to make sure they haven't gotten into the—"

**KRASH.** A cartoonish, spherical black bomb smashed through the window, its fuse hissing and sputtering. Lalia shrieked and fell backwards onto the couch, which promptly cracked in half under the sudden impact of her ample ass. Harris kicked the bomb out the open door, shut it, and winced as smoke rushed under the doorjamb, with an audible **WHOOMPH.**

"Miss Lalia," he said, his hair askew, "we need to leave! Now!"

#### **CH4 - Pigs Isn't Pigs**

Back in the abandoned animation studio, Trevor and Jane continued running for their lives. In their panic they'd darted away from the door; now they cowered in a side-room, a break table and ancient refrigerator covered in mold nearby.

"Okay, Trevor, start talking." Jane grabbed his ear and pulled him close. At this distance the smell of Red Bull and corn chips was palpable. "What the fuck was that thing? What's going on?"

"One of them," he explained. "Things from other dimensions. I don't know what they are, but—" There was a crash and an insane giggle from the storyboarding room, and they both flinched. "But they seem to be after Lalia," he said. "They started stalking me after I took those photos."

"Okay. That's insane. But I can deal with insane, I live with a human food disposal unit." Jane frowned. "We've got to find a window or something. Get to the front door..."

"No!" Trevor grabbed her sweatshirt as she started to stand. "They're cartoons, Jane, they stretch. If we go out in the open, its arms will zoom out, or it'll bounce after us like a rubber ball. Trust me, I've done my homework."

"Right, your internet conspiracy theories..." She groaned. "Guess I don't have a choice. Well, if we can't go outside, we'll have to fight it."

He shook his head. "That won't work either. It's not flesh and blood. Crushing it will just flatten it for a bit. Bullets will chase it around for a while, and then zoom back at you for comedic effect." Jane peered around the doorway. She saw strange machines and metal tentacles emerging from the old drawing easels; ink gushed onto the floor in spurting flows and then re-shaped into frightening devices wielding ice cream cones and custard pies. "There's rumors that paint thinner or white-out can do it, or something called Dip... But we don't have any of that." He pulled a medallion shaped like Mickey Mouse from his shirt, and kissed it. "Our Walt who art in Florida, hallow be thy copyrights, may they never be infringed..."

"Oh shit, it saw us!" She pulled him up. "Come on, we've gotta move!" The egg-headed mad scientist entity lurched towards their hiding place as they sprinted up the stairs into a series of show-rooms, old projectors and film reels sitting silent under dust.

"Jane! Help!" Trevor's leg was caught in a comically exaggerated metal claw, which hauled him down the stairs and out of sight. "Nooo!..."

"Trevor!" She thought of going back for him, but couldn't bring herself to do it. Somewhere out there, Lalia was in danger—and if she didn't get out to warn her friend, no one would. She and Lalia hadn't seen eye to eye lately, but she still cared about the big greedy dope. Also, Trevor kind of sucked, and was a pretty forgettable person to begin with. She doubted her trauma would last long.

"Shit, shit, shit..." She sprinted down the long hallway, past focus-group meeting rooms and closets stacked with ancient reels. When she turned the corner, the bizarre yellow monster was right in front of her, a pie in each hand.

**"Time for supper, piglet! Doh-ho-ho-ho!"**

"*Stop calling me a pig, it's very triggering!*" She punched him in the face... and his whole face collapsed inward. Horrified, she pulled her fist back—she didn't even go to the gym, how had she done that? But then, as if it was hooked to a bicycle pump, his face popped back out again.

**"You're a feisty little piggy! Wah-hah-hah!"**

"*Miiiike!*" She turned to run, but the madman grabbed her, hauling her down the hall towards the stairs. "What do you want with me? Let me go!"



He shoved her face-first into a pie. Custard filled her mouth and nose; panicked, she blubbered into it, thrashing. "Want do I want? I want you to eat, you little turkey! Nyeh-heh!"

She kicked and scratched, but the thing's skin was like rubber: her blows just bounced off. Trevor had been right. She was helpless, utterly lost, and had no choice but to submit.

And so, panicked and thrust face-first into a pie by an insane two-dimensional monster, Jane began to eat.

## CH5 - Use the Flubb, Luke!

Harris led Lalia to his car, a gorgeous and clearly ancient Buick with white-wall tires and custom fins. "Hey! Hold up, mister. I'm not going anywhere with you."

"Someone just threw a class-3 slapstick prop through your window. We can't stay here." He paused. "Look. I know this is all very sudden, and hard to accept. But your world isn't what it seems. It's an illusion, created to contain people like you."

"People like—Hey!" She simmered with indignation. "Just because I'm looking a little husky today, doesn't mean you get to stereotype me!"

"I'm not talking about your character design." He sighed. "Look, you need to trust me. Please."

Lalia thought about it. He was weird, but he seemed earnest and kind... and he was also super hot, and she wasn't doing anything tonight. So, why not? She could handle a ride in a weird antique car with Brad Pitt. It was more exciting than just sitting on the couch and eating. "Fine. Where are we going?"

"Somewhere safe." He pulled a large, oversized cap-gun from his pocket; the tip was bright orange and it was clearly plastic. "Lalia, what's your gag?"

"My... gag?" She slipped into the passenger seat, her stomach nudging gently against the glove compartment, flesh flowing over the wood-paneled dashboard.

"Your routine, your bit. What do you normally do, in stressful or awkward moments?"

"Well..." She blushed, despite the situation. This man was a complete stranger, but he *had* just saved her from a very goofy explosion—she might as well be honest. "I eat. A lot. Maybe a little too much."

He stared at her stomach, deadpan, as he started the car. "You don't say."

"Yeah, it's kind of like... I dunno, food just gets me, you know? Like, on a spiritual level."

"Right." When he gunned the ignition, a dark shape detached from the bushes around Lalia's house. It was too dark for her to see, but it appeared to be massive, quadrupedal... and it had large, white horns.

"Holy Hostess cakes, what is that?!"

"Hopefully you don't have to find out!" They peeled away, the dark shape pursuing them. "So food, huh? I had a feeling about that. Check the back seat."

She did, and found several camping coolers, all loaded with snacks. Sandwiches, fruit, soft drinks, chips even beer, all ready to eat. "Wow! You moonlight as a caterer, huh?"

Harris smirked. "Heh. Nice material. They told me you'd be funny—I guess it runs in the family. Quick, eat something! We need to get your narrative back on track."

"My what?" The clapping of hooves sounded behind them as the hulking shape grew closer, illuminated by streetlights. To her shock, it appeared to be a massive bull, snorting and bellowing, a large brass ring flopping in its nose. "Oh my god, why is there a *bull* chasing us?"

"He's a reject, from the Hunky and Spunky cartoons. But don't worry about that! You need to follow the logic of your narrative!" He grabbed a double-stacked tuna melt from the cooler and shoved it in her mouth. Lalia blinked, confused; she could have sworn there was a plastic bag around the thing, but it had vanished as he moved it towards her face. Now she dug in, and wait a minute, how was it still warm? Piping hot, even. As if it were fresh off the griddle.

"Mr. Harris, I'm kind of freaking out!"

"Don't stress the details. Just do what comes naturally!"

"The last time a guy told me that, I ended up taking his v—Augh!"

They swerved as the monster behind them smashed through a fire hydrant with ease, water showering over their windshield. "This is your world! Your desires control it—they always have. Let the food *flow* through you, Lalia!"

"Uhh, I think you mean 'force'?" But nevertheless, she took a bite and chewed. And swallowed. And suddenly, things began to fall into place. "Wow, it's... delicious!" Her fear slightly calmed by the presence of food, she began gobbling it down, crumbs showering her cleavage as she reached for another. "Mmm, is that provolone? Needs some ketchup..." When she pulled her hand out of the cooler, she was clutching a bottle of ketchup. "Perfect." She squirted it on a plate that had suddenly appeared in her lap, which bounced as the car screeched around a corner. A side of fries and a pickle with a toothpick bounced with it. "Wait, where did that come from?"

"Keep eating!"

"Not like I was gonna stop, bro." She chowed down, polishing off the tuna melt, fries and pickle in moments. Next came the chips: she ripped open the bag, grabbing fistfuls and guzzling soda to wash it down. Her hair, long and luxurious in the wind whipping through the open window,

somehow never landed in the food or in her mouth. Her panicked thoughts subsided into a steady, gleeful simplicity: grab, chew, swallow, grab, chew, swallow...

She'd emptied an entire cooler before another minute elapsed. Just in time, they rolled up to the window of a drive-through. "What'll it be?" asked the freckled, buck-toothed girl in the window, whose nametag said HORTENSE.

"We'll have six jumbo burgers, four orders of nuggets, a Big Girl Shake, and one of those meals with the toys in 'em," said Harris, confidently. Lalia froze, utterly confused as to where they were.

Hortense waved them on. "Next window, please."

"But... There isn't even a drive-through in my neighborhood," whispered the red-head, tuna smeared on her lips, as they rolled under the golden arches. "And what the heck is a 'Big Girl Shake'? That doesn't even sound real."

"I told you. This world responds to you." Harris took the food from the next window, which was manned by a slim brunette whose name tag said ELISE. "Your whole life revolves around food, doesn't it?"

"Hey, that's kind of mean." She groaned as her newly swollen stomach oozed over the glove compartment, nudging the window lock. "But... accurate, I guess. **Urrph.**"

"I'm just stating facts." He peered behind the car. "Okay, the narrative's reasserted itself. I think we lost him."

"Who's 'him'? And why does the world revolve around me, exactly?" She slurped on her Big Girl, which tasted like someone had mixed all the McFlurry flavors together. There was a logo of a fat girl, stamped on the front. It was, Lalia thought, extremely offensive. "I mean, I kind of always suspected that, but Jane said I was being a narcissi... a narc... Arrogant."

"It's because you're the prime mover and shaker, in this storyline. The big cheese." Harris snuck a fry from her pile of goodies, nibbling on it thoughtfully. "And you might just be the most powerful web-comic entity I've ever been assigned to."

"Web-comic?" Lalia rubbed her forehead as brain-freeze and metaphysics hit her both at once. "Wait. You mean I'm a... We're in a..."

"That's right," said Harris, shaking the French fry at her. "Yer a cartoon, Harry."

## CH6: "Know Her? I Barely Meta!"

**"Dohohoho!"**

"I really wish he'd stop laughing," Trevor said. The two of them were strapped into mechanical chairs on hydraulics; the dome-headed cartoon scientist was quickly constructing more frightening machines around them, all equipped with gloved hands to deliver more food. Jane had been stuffed full of custard, her stomach poking out from under her sweatshirt, and Trevor had gotten a similar treatment. But they were alive.

"I don't think he *can* stop," Jane said. Despite her trauma and the aching fullness in her gut, she'd been studying the terrifying two-dimensional madman and had realized something through the haze of fear. "He keeps repeating the same things over and over, like a record stuck halfway through a track."

"I noticed that. I'd been researching the Enemy's minions, and this guy is in some old cartoon about force-feeding... It was pretty creepy." He paused. "But also kind of hot, if that makes sense."

"Ugh, you're such a perv." Jane kicked and writhed. "Why is always eating-related, when Lalia's involved..."

Trevor shook his head. "This is my fault. I should've warned her!"

"Don't be like that." Jane had managed to choke down enough bonbons that the hand seemed satisfied, and buzzed away on its jointed metal limbs. "Lalia and I lived a normal life... well, mostly normal, for a long time. It's not your fault."

"I knew this was coming. I should have said something. But I was too embarrassed to talk to her..." Trevor retched as a hand on springs tried to shove pizza into his mouth. "Ugh! I was on a diet, too."

"Can we not worry about your self-image, right now? We need to get out of here." Jane struggled against her bonds, her belly squashed against the restraint belts. "I've been playing fantasy games for years—the monster's always got a weakness."

"I told you. We're doomed. Nothing we do matters." Trevor kicked at a levitating hose-and-funnel on a propeller, which dripped with custard. "We're just bit players, in Lalia's story."

"Hey, that's not true! We would have disappeared into the background by now, if she didn't want us around. Like that Kim girl from college." Jane blinked. "Which is kind of fucked up."

"She doesn't care about me. She never did!"

"Oh my God!" Jane sighed. "Look. Lalia cares. She cares about *everyone*—she's so sweet and saccharine, it drives me nuts. But for her, food comes first. It always has." She leaned over, her

stomach bulging between the straps. "She's never gonna love you more than food, Trevor. It's not gonna happen."

"Dammit. You're right." He slumped in his chair. "Might as well eat up, I guess."

"Wait... that's it." She took a bite from a passing plate of pie, blueberries dripping down her chin. "The cartoon guy is doing a bit, right? His original routine, from wherever he came from."

"Yeah—the forties or something, I think. Why?"

"We can do it, too. No one ever dies in cartoons—we can eat our way out!"

"That's insane! We'll explode!"

Jane grinned. "I've seen Lalia eat her way through a ten-course meal without so much as a stomach-ache. If we're part of some weird, food-fetish world where nothing really matters—her rules also apply to us!" She leaned back as an entire toureen of soup was emptied into her mouth. Although it was uncomfortable, she kept swallowing and swallowing... and one of the belts popped off her stomach. "URP! That's what I call a belt-buster!" Far off in the distance, there was a faint crash of cymbals.

"Omigod, we're gonna die, we're gonna die..." Nevertheless Trevor opened his mouth and the goofy machinery around them descended, one hand squirting a banana out of its peel and straight down his throat. "Gllp..."

"Say something funny while you eat!"

"Like what?"

"A pun, or something!"

"Um... Oops, that was... bananas?" The cymbals grew closer. The Mad Scientist turned around, a turkey baster in his hand, and shook a fist at them. "Jane, what's that noise?"

"We're hijacking this bitch! We're funnier than he is—he's just an old film reel, and we're fresh paint! Metaphorically speaking. *Mmmf!*" Jane's lips were muffled as a squeeze-tube of icing was stuffed into her face. She'd never felt more bloated, and yet the stretching sensation was... kind of pleasant, in a way. She'd always suspected there was something unnatural about Lalia: her optimism, the physics of her breasts, the fact that Lalia's only friend was Jane despite her large bust and beauty. Now it was all coming full circle.

"This is such a deus ex machina," Trevor complained, chowing down on a shepard's pie spinning on a centrifuge axis.

"We're not real, we're allowed to have those! Keep it up!" Another three belts popped off her as her stomach, incredibly pallid and white from years of playing Overwatch in the dark, flopped into her lap.

"You pigs aren't half full!" the Scientist screeched, running up to them. Jane took a deep breath—and the last belt popped off, smacking him in the forehead and knocking him into a vat of custard.

"Is that all you got? Recycled—urph—lines?" She heaved herself out of the chair, staggering as her newly expanded gut wobbled and heaved. She was sweaty and red-faced and could practically feel the calories being converted into fat... but she was free. "We've got a buddy-cop dynamic, fourth-wall humor, and a best friend who knocks down walls with her ass! What've you got, asshole?"

"Piiigs..." moaned the evil caricature as it sank beneath the custard.

Jane hiccuped. "That's what I thought." She unfastened Trevor's bonds, and he groaned as he staggered off the chair.

"Oh god. I look terrible."

"Chill out. If you're right about everything, we'll probably just revert to our normal character models anyway." Jane struggled to waddle towards the door as all the machinery, abandoned by its creator, began to melt back into ink and paint. A single red glove floated on top of the custard pool. "Come on—we have to check on Lalia." A quick ride-share and later, they were back at Jane's house.

"Shit! We didn't change back... we just gained weight between scenes!" Trevor gripped a new beer-belly, shocked by his rotund frame. "I hope Lalia's into chubby guys..."

"Lalia's into *all* guys." Jane had similarly "developed" into a frumpy, broad-bottomed parody of her former self. "She's not here. And our front lawn looks like a bomb hit." She checked inside one more time, just to be sure, before joining him on the sidewalk. "Think we can fit in my car?"

"We can try." Trevor tried to button his trench-coat and gave up. "This is it. I'm officially a lardball. Why even live?"

"If Lalia can do it, you can. Now you know how *she* feels." It was a tight fit, but they both managed to squeeze into her old wood-panelled station wagon. Jane's belly flopped up against the wheel and Trevor's added weight strained the car's shocks, but they were in.

"Jane, do you have a plan? More of those things could show up any second, and we're not... exactly combat-ready." He poked the pudge of his happy-trail, barely visible over his overstuffed pants.

"Exactly. We need a gear upgrade." She backed the car out, the front fender scraping the gravel from their combined weight. "Strap in... if the belt can fit around you. We're going to the hardware store."

## CH7: "WE GO TO PANCAKES HOUSE."

"So let me get this straight," said Lalia, as Detective Harris placed a heaping platter of pancakes in front of her, slathered with syrup and with huge pats of butter slowly melting on top. "You were from a story called Cool World, which crashed and burned because it sucked. It was forgettable, so you only survived on the internet as a footnote. Then you found your new purpose, policing other cartoons." She stuck a fork in one of them, relishing the **squish** of soft fresh-cooked batter around the tines. "And now some mystery characters are trying to kidnap me?"

"I'm surprised you followed all that." Harris sat down, smoking a cigarette despite the NO SMOKING sign on the wall. "You're smart, for a gag character."

"Hey, I had a 4.0 grade average once. Before my appetite... got in the way." She tossed the fork aside and simply scooped up the stack of pancakes, folding it into a roll and shoving it down her throat. The syrup greased their passage, and the S.S. Pancake sailed down into the sloshing seas of her gut with a heavy **GALOOMPH**. "I was an English Lit major, with a minor in culinary. But the minor was mostly for free food." Underneath the table, the bean-bag-sized mass of Lalia's gut churned and sloshed, slowly digesting the dozens of fast-food meals she'd eaten as they'd driven through town. "I pro'ly should have focused a bit harder. Then I wouldn't have become... this."

"Hey, you were pretty popular for a while! For a comic about boobs and food, that's not bad. Trust me, there are worse worlds out there." He shuddered. "One time, I had to do a case in a diapers-fetish comic. I still wake up screaming."

"I guess being eye candy is better than *that*. Hey, can you pass me the syrup?" He did, and she guzzled from it, syrup slopping all over her chin and running down into her enormous cleavage. Harris coughed, and tried to avoid resting his eyes on those mammoth tits. *Keep it professional. She's just a client.*

"You're taking existential crisis pretty well," he said, watching as Lalia waved down the waitress—a gray-haired woman with glasses and a striped apron—and ordered a fresh round of food. In the parking lot, the EXTRA THICC PANCAKES sign began to flicker. *Stay alert. If you get caught up in plot exposition, she's a goner.*

"Eh, my life was unpredictable anyway. And now I have no reason to hold back! I'm like, the chosen one, or whatever! I can eat what I want!" She pulled a plate of waffles towards her, and began forking them into her mouth whole, one by one. Her plump red lips expanded to take the load of sugar and carbs every time, jumping to six inches wide and then shrinking back again. **Gulp. Glurrrp. Gurkk.** So what happens now?"

"Now? Now, we radio in my backup. I think we've shaken off your pursuit by re-setting the narrative, so..." He reached in his pocket. "My fountain pen! Where's my fountain pen?"

"Looking for this?" The waitress leaned on Lalia's side of the booth, spinning the golden pen.

"Inga Bittersweet. I should've recognized you from that shitty cartoon. How many episodes did you get? Just the one, right?"

"And it was a *great* episode! Shut up, flatfoot!"

Harris scowled as Lalia, sensing an action scene approaching, began to stuff churros into her cleavage for later. "You're working for *them* now, I take it?"

"Stop talking and get out of the booth." Inga drew a rectangle in the air; it filled with ink, which oozed over Lalia's loafers and puddled around her vast gut. It was chilly and sticky, and seemed to writhe around her skin. Inside the square, space seemed to contort, stretching and extending. "I'm taking the protag, Detective, and you can't stop me."

"Just don't hurt her." He nodded at the ink-portal. "Lalia, looks like we're up a creek. Do what the lady says, or we're both inked."

"Aww... I'm not done eating, though!" Lalia eyed the waitress, pouting. "Fine, jerk." She made to stand up... and paused. Her stomach, which had expanded underneath the diner table, had wedged itself so completely against the wall and the table legs that she couldn't get it out. "Oops! Sorry. I think I **blurrrp** overdid it a little."

"For crying out loud..." Inga scribbled all over the table and it melted into ink. Lalia's belly was now coated in the stuff, and she dipped a finger in it, curious. "Don't eat that, girl! What is *wrong* with you?"

"Sorry, sorry!" Lalia heaved herself up, her belly wobbling, and waddled towards the portal. Inside, a city of pure darkness glimmered and wavered. "Well, I guess this is it. Goodbye, pancakes house... I'm going to miss you." She bit her lip. "Can't I say goodbye to my friends? Maybe write an ode to lost meals first?"

"Fat chance, fatty." Inga jabbed Lalia's ass with the dull side of the pen, and her cheeks wobbled, heavy with pale meat. They were slowly but surely bursting out of her sweatpants, and the sudden motion finished the job: the seat of the pants, with PINK stenciled on it, burst apart and Lalia's ass flopped out with a liquid **ga-blorp**.

"Even her sound effects are ridiculous," Inga said, pushing her again. "Get in there."

"I'm going, I'm **hic** going!" Lalia leaned forward... and an awkward, balloon-like squeaking sound announced she wasn't going anywhere. Her massive, bloated gut had grown so incredibly stuffed that it wouldn't fit through the portal. Her momentum arrested, she flopped forward onto it, halfway through the square rift in space. Her elastic, food-filled body flopped and squeezed, but she couldn't do it.

"You pathetic blob!" Inga slapped her ass, trying to panic her into motion, but it just made the girl jiggle even more. "Move it, you piggish slut!"

"I c-c-can't!" Lalia whimpered as her flabby ass was smacked around, her gut sloshing beneath her. Her torso, breasts and half her gut dangled over a hellish city-scape as Inga shoved



and pinched her. "S-stop it! That **BURRRP** hurts! Oh, hey, my churros..." Having rediscovered the treats in her cleavage, she resumed eating.

Inga went ballistic. "Of all the greedy, stupid, zeppelin-chested—" Harris' fist cracked her jaw and she fell over, stunned.

"I had a one-liner ready," he said, panting, "but I forgot it."

"How about 'Eat this'?" Lalia looked over her shoulder, cheeks stuffed. "Get it?"

"Yes."

In the same moment Jane and Trevor burst through the door of the restaurant, brandishing squirt-guns of paint thinner. Both of them looked exhausted... and extremely out of shape. Jane gasped and staggered as she marched over to Harris.

"Hands... up, creep!"

"Hey, I'm the good guy here. Tell 'em, Lalia!"

"Jane? **BWURRP**. Is that you? Don't hurt Young Brad Pitt, he's my friend!"

"Lalia!" Jane ran over and was nearly knocked down as a ripple in Lalia's fat wobbled through her. "Wow, what happened? I never see you like this, unless it's Thanksgiving."

"Yeah! I'm the Chosen One, isn't it great?"

Harris tucked the pen into his pocket. "I never called you that..."

"Um, hey Lalia," said Trevor, nervously pulling his sweatshirt over his gut. "You may not remember me, but..."

"Shy dude!" Lalia wiggled excitedly. "I remember you! We banged once! Sorry, I must look pretty weird to you right now."

"Uh... Actually, kind of you look great." Both Harris and Jane looked at him, but Lalia seemed ecstatic.

"Really?"

"Yeah!" Trevor blushed. "I sort of have a thing for inflated girls, so..."

"Of course you do," said Harris, bitter. "How convenient for the main character." He explained to the two of them what had happened, and how close they'd come to disaster. Jane in particular seemed fascinated, running her eyes up and down Harris' movie-star physique.

"Exposition, exposition," he finished. "So now all I have to do is figure out how to close this portal, without cutting her in half."

"In half?!" Lalia squeaked.

"Uh, guys?" Trevor pointed at Lalia. "It's not like I've been staring at her ass this whole time, but, I have. And..."

There was a slow, bass **grrrrrwl** from inside Lalia. The redhead's thighs and calves were thickening, her hips widening, her belly sagging and flattening.

"She's digesting!" Harris said, grabbing her leg. "Quick! Grab her, before she shrinks down to status quo mode!"

Jane leapt for the other leg. "I *knew* she didn't have a normal metabolism..."

Trevor, without a leg to grab, panicked and sank his hand into Lalia's ass-cheek. It was soft, pink and rubbery, like a balloon loaded with warm Jell-O. Lalia blushed and squirmed. "Unh... Whoever did that, owes me dinner!"

Trevor immediately sank his other hand in. Jane smacked him. They struggled to haul her out, but most of Lalia's new fat had landed squarely in her tits and gut—turning her into a deadweight. Screaming, all four of them were dragged through the portal, and into the dark depths where forgotten, raunchy cartoons were imprisoned for all eternity.

## CH8: "SHE WOULD IF SHE COULD"

They plunged down through a smog-choked crevasse into a twisted alley full of anthropomorphic trash cans and banana peels with googly eyes. Harris dusted himself off. "Fuck," he said. "Thought I'd blown this town for good."

"Wh-where are we?" Lalia said, struggling to stand. It wasn't easy, as her bean-bag-belly-full of food was already turning into soft, jiggly fat. Her pajama pants were nothing but shreds now, and her top was a stretched parody around her slowly expanding bosom. Trevor and Jane steadied her as they took in the horrors around them.

The city of Cool World was grotesque, surreal and almost pointlessly Giger, with buildings that had mouths for doors and windows through which lecherous eyes stared curiously. Nothing moved in the dark corners of the greasy two-dimensional slum: nothing bounced or rolled or guffawed. The place was abandoned.

"I think I had an acid trip like this, once," said Trevor dimly.

Harris was about to come up with a witty retort when an anvil dropped on his head from three stories up. Instead of meeting a gory end, though, he simply flattened. Lalia screeched as the anvil improbably bounced towards her—but it ricocheted off her enormously fat stomach, the rolls deflecting it and sending it crashing through a window. "Omigod! Mr. Harris, are you okay?"

"He's fine," said Jane as Harris waved at them weakly, circular and crushed. "I would pick him up, but I can't bend over."

"You and me both." Lalia leaned against a wall, wheezing. Now that her gorge-fest had digested, she looked easily three hundred pounds—a sharp jump from her usual thicc-licious 200

and change. And she felt it. Cartoon or not, being fat was exhausting, and with every step she took a tuba sounded in the distance. Her asscheeks were enormous blobs of flesh that swayed behind her, her gut was a doughy apron of flab that poured over the front of her thong and obscured her crotch, and her thighs and breasts wouldn't have been out of place on badly Photoshopped internet porn. She was a walking cliché, complete with shredded clothes and disheveled hair.

Trevor was literally drooling at the sight of Lalia; Jane had to shut his mouth for him before the comically exaggerated waterfall of saliva filled the alley. She smacked him until the hearts on his face changed back to regular eyes. "Wow. We're a lot more 'cartoony' down here. Be careful, guys. We wouldn't want to get—"

"Iced?" An ambulatory ice cream cone, carrying a baseball bat, stepped from the shadows.

"I was going to say 'whipped,'" said a cartoon whipped-cream can with legs. It wore a leather bandolier.

Trevor snorted. "Who says 'whipped'? That's not a thing."

"I'm whipped cream, I do what I 'can' with what I got. *Getit?*"

"Oh my god, SHUT UP." Jane pried Harris from the ground and rolled him up like a newspaper, shaking him at the creatures. "If I have to hear one more goddamn pun I'm gonna sit on all of you."

"Fat chance," said a literal tub of Acme Lard from behind her. "You're surrounded."

Lalia licked her lips. "Jane, would it be murder to eat these guys?"

Trevor frowned. "Well, according to Descartes—" Jane glared at him. "No, I guess it wouldn't."

"Did we not mention you're surrounded?" A large beet wearing sunglasses brandished a switchblade at them. "Come with us, now, before we have to lay a—"

"Say 'beet-down,' motherfucker," Jane growled, hefting Harris. "Say it."

"Jane, maybe we should do what they say," Lalia whined. "This one that's shaped like a banana keeps poking me in the butt..."

"That's not a banana, Lalia."

"Oh ... Wow. That's kind of hot."

"Oh my *god*, Lalia."

The beet was right; they were surrounded, and had no chance but to surrender. They were marched through winding corridors of brick and ink, many of the buildings partially collapsed. Old cardboard signs saying AVOID THE NOIDS blew through the streets. The army of walking, talking food led them to an enormous, glitzy building with a cornucopia on the front. The neon sign below

was too damaged to read, but the flashing boobs around it made a clear statement. This was a den of sin and depravity.

Inside, they found themselves in an old cabaret club, with a catwalk stage and two huge buffets flanking the sides. Food, anthropomorphic and otherwise, filled the room. "Don't even think about it," Jane said as Lalia reached for a passing leg of mutton, which was doing the Michigan Rag.

A pair of velvet curtains opened, and an enormously fat blonde woman in knee-high white leather boots emerged. Once upon a time, her corset must have fit, but now it was bursting at the seams with flesh. Her long eyelashes and plush lips were set in a face bordered by jowls and an impressive triple chin. She was clearly a cartoon, but she gave Trevor a very real boner as she jiggled down the catwalk.

"Impressive, aren't I?" She sucked on a cigarette. "Your audience is going to love me, when I get up there."

"Up where?" Lalia was as clueless as ever, but Jane was catching on.

"Your world, carrot top! I'm gonna be the main attraction

A lightbulb appeared over Jane's head. "So that's what this was all about—taking your place." The boards of the catwalk groaned and creaked. "She's certainly put some work into it..."

"You down there, Frumpy Fran. Are you sassin' me?" Holli waved a ballpoint pen identical to Harris', and Jane's face turned blue. "There. Now you're a blueberry. It's a big hit with the pervs, on this new-fangled In-ter-net. You'll be a star."

"Trevor had to step in as Jane swelled up, her lips too plumped with sloshing berry juice to speak. "How exactly are you gonna do that?"

"By being the BIGGEST, sexiest thing on the menu, of course! And the most hilarious. Aren't I funny, boys?" The animated food murmured to each other. "Ain't I?"

"Oh, yes, Holli."

"A real laugh riot!"

"You're so funny I split my seams," said a walking pair of jeans.

"Oh, stop, I outgrew you years ago." Holli sat down on the edge of the catwalk; under her massive weight, the other end ripped clear out of the floor and lifted into the air. "I'm gonna be the head honcho, Trevor, my guy. The bee's knees. I'm gonna get the limelight I always deserved, even after that pencil-dick Harris got in my way."

"That wasn't my fault," mumbled Harris. "Cool World sucked, Holli. It was just a bad movie."

"It was artsy, god dammit!" Holli snapped, throwing her cigarette at him. "It was just too ahead of its time fer you t'appreciate! Philistine!"

"Excuse me," Lalia said. She'd found a wheel of cheese, somewhere, and was nibbling on it. "You can't have my job."

"Yeah?" Holli sneered, picking a donut out of her cleavage and chomping at it. "Why not, small fry? What you gonna do about it?"

"It's all I have." Lalia gestured at her friends with the cheese wheel. "I'm not super smart, because I wasn't written that way. I'm not allowed to get a real job, or... have a real relationship." She glanced meaningfully at Trevor. "Because my life is always gonna revolve around being hot, and eating food, I'll never be *really* popular. In my world, or out of it. But I've got my friends, and my food, so... I don't really care." She spun the cheese wheel in front of her mouth, and there was a noise like a chainsaw; cheese gratings flew everywhere, and suddenly the cheese was gone, and Lalia was a little bit larger. "I'm not letting you take my life away, you jerk."

"Your life is a lame, pervy joke!" Crumbs sprayed from Holli's mouth. "You should be *thanking* me!"

"Yeah? Well it's my lame, pervy joke. So try and take it."

"You poorly shaded spank-bank reject," hissed Holli. "I've been more obscure than you could ever imagine. You wanna see who deserves it more?" She grabbed a living chocolate bar and bit it in half. "I'll show you what your audience wants! When I'm the biggest and the sexiest, they'll love me!"

The race was on as the two titans scrambled to prove their piggishness. Trevor barely had a chance to dive out of the way as Holli dove off the stage, crashing into one of the buffet tables. Food flew high in the air, and she swallowed all of it, simply craning her neck and letting it fall down her throat. Zany music warbled as Lalia, not to be outdone, grabbed a pitcher of margarita mix and sloppily downed it. Hiccuping, she tore into the mass of militant foodstuffs keeping them hostage.

"Trevor! Get—[hic](#)—get Jane out of here!"

Nodding, too aroused to respond, he shoved at Jane's round blue rear, picking up Harris as they made for the door. "She's too big!" Jane wedged in the doorway like a cork, feet wiggling in panic.

"Then help me eat! I gotta show this—urrrp, low-res harpy who's boss!" Lalia's stomach had begun to expand outwards again as she gobbled up everything she could get her hands on. Trevor understood, intuitively, that if they didn't succeed they were all out of a job. Worse, he might end up as Holli's lucky, and he suspected the red stains on her high heels weren't just from tomato juice.

Struggling to run with a boner, he hurried to the buffet table and began lobbing things into Lalia's open mouth. Holli, furious, jiggled over and belly-bumped him into the wall. Lalia responded by shoving an entire roast pig in her mouth, and then simply sitting on the middle of the table, snapping it in two and letting the food slide towards her. Trevor picked himself up—unharmful, because of course normal physics didn't apply in here—and grabbed several bottles of soda, upending them into Lalia's eager lips.

Pandemonium ensued as Holli began grabbing and eating her own cartoon food soldiers. The washouts from old Little Lottie and Orphan Annie reels met a horrific demise in Holli's snapping jaws, added almost instantly to her waistline. Lalia had to admit, the woman could eat—and in a primitive sort of way, she respected that. She'd finally met someone almost as greedy as she was.

Almost.

"Trevor, I'm getting a indigestion," she said as the mixture of food and booze in her gut sloshed and **gurrrrr**gled. "Belly rub, maybe?" She didn't have to ask twice as Trevor kneaded and massaged her stomach, her shirt tearing off as her ludicrous breasts burst their bonds. Next went her overloaded bra, and Holli scowled as Lalia's more impressive bosom jiggled free and unhindered. "Damn, that feels good!"

"You blimp-titted cow," Holli snapped, gasping a little as she shoveled down a plate of Flash-animated cupcakes. "You don't have what it takes to be a star! I'll have your fans eating out of my belly-button!"

"That's both creepy, and kind of demeaning!" Lalia objected, squirting frosting into her mouth.

"Hot, though," Trevor added.

"Keep eating, Boobs McGee," growled Holli as the two crashed to the floor, swiping at food within range to feed their massive bellies. "Let's see which one of us pops first!"

"A competitive sport that gets me off? I'm down." Lalia moaned with delight as Trevor uncorked bottles of champagne and began dribbling them into her open mouth.

But both titans of gluttony were equally stubborn... and equally elastic. Almost an hour later, as far as time could be measured in this strange and thematically inconsistent realm, Lalia and Holli were still neck-in-neck. By now their massive bodies had burst all the bonds of logic and sanity, and their fat forms filled the cabaret hall, crushing seats and empty plates alike. Wedged up against one another, with Holli conjuring food with her ink-pen and Trevor feeding Lalia entire platters of cake, truffles and roast beef, the pair had become absurdly bloated sacks of fat. Holli's fat was a little paler and had fuzzier lineart than Lalia's shiny, fresh new blubber, but they were both equally useless.

Her hands sunk in roll upon roll of her own flesh, Lalia waved at Trevor. "Trevor... **BWURP**, lover-boy, I think we need to call a truce. **HIC!**" She was quite sleepy from all the hedonistic treats, and all that champagne had gotten her hammered.

"Give up... skank! **HWORRRP**." Holli was in a similar state, her blonde hair disheveled, her white gloves split from the ends by fat. Her legs were buried under her gut and her meaty face hung in the center of a pool of white flesh. "I'm gonna be **blurrrp** popular again... and I don't care who I have to squash, to do it!"

"Man, this is pretty fucked up," said Harris, de-flattened, from the sidelines.

"You said it." Jane, smaller but still blue and bloated, shared a flask with him as she contemplated the nature of her reality. "Wish I had a joint right now."

"You don't have to *hic*, kill anyone! Why is that even your first *hwurrrrph*, choice?" Lalia nudged her opponent with a flabby, atrophied arm, her colossal breasts jiggling and coming close to suffocating her newly doughy face. "I've got... an idea. A way we can both **BWORRP** be popular."

Holli, wheezing, heard the creaking of her own skin as she fattened some more, and paused in her gorging. "I'm... *blurrrf*, listening, Tits."

Trevor, wedged in between Lalia's titanic bosoms, listened as they came to an agreement. He was glad the whole thing was being resolved without violence... but his boner was really starting to hurt. One of these times, he promised himself, he was going to actually get laid.

*Oh, well*, he thought as one of his crush's burps nearly knocked him flat. *Maybe next time.*

## CH9: THE AFTERMATHENING

It was another beautiful day in Lalia-land. Lalia woke up, she ate a ridiculous and excessive breakfast, she accidentally gave Jane a concussion with her tits when she turned around too fast. Life was as normal as it ever could be, for her.

She had a hard time squeezing behind the wheel of her car—she'd kept a lot of the weight since the "Incident," despite all her attempts to ret-con it all away. But she'd gained more than just a new waistline: she was back in school, she was eating a little healthier, and she was even seeing Trevor on the regular. (Since he'd become genre-aware, his depression had vanished.) And best of all, she had new goals in life: new reasons to face each hazardous, food-filled day. Her intelligence, stemmed only by her lust for all things edible, was finally being put to work. When there wasn't food within reaching distance, of course.

Pulling up at grad school, she jiggled out of her car, accidentally honking the horn with her boobs. On the way in, she got wedged in three doors, lost the seat of her pants to a leaf-blower, and bumped into six hot classmates—male and female—by nudging them with her blubber. Once the inevitable flirting was out of the way, she finally made it to class... and she was hungry again.

Taking a Go-Gurt yogurt pack from her back, she struggled to open it without attracting the teacher's ire. The new culinary professor was a legendary bitch, a transfer from New York whose temper was as crazy as her libido. Finally, Lalia got the yogurt open, and leaned forward with her tongue to taste its sweet sugary secrets...

**"LALIA!** Are you paying attention, you big chubby bimbo?"

"Eek!" She squeezed the yogurt pack, and the pink liquid splurged all over her considerable chest. Laughter erupted, and she blushed... but she smiled, too. Some gags never got old.

"Jesus, pay attention. You're never gonna be a master chef if you keep spilling crap all over yourself." Professor Holli Would pushed up her glasses, turning around to give the class a view of her enormous ass crammed in a too-short skirt. "Now, who can tell me the best way to cook brisket? Anyone, anyone?... Blimp-tits, do I hear you volunteering?"

Lalia sighed, and stuck her finger in the yogurt, before sucking it dry.

Life was pretty delicious, sometimes.

## CH10: THE LEGALLY-MANDATED POST-CREDITS STINGER

Agent Harris walked into the office, slid the folder with "Craving Control" on it across his desk. The woman sitting behind it was wreathed in smoke. "Case closed, Boss. She's safe now. Narrative's stable, with one new character. She's... Well, she's fat, but happy."

"I'm glad. You did well, Agent Harris. Pity about the reject."

"She did steal your gimmick," Harris conceded. "So is that it? Are we really not gonna tell her?"

Jessica Rabbit leaned forward across the desk, her ample assets spilling across the mahogany. Sequins sparkled in the dark. "Please, Harris. That girl has enough problems... without knowing she's my daughter." She slid a different folder across the table. "I've got another job for you. Another fetish character. This one's more your style—smart, bitchy. Colorful hair."

"Another fetish comic? Dammit... I get all the worst assignments." He frowned at the dossier inside. "What the hell is a 'slimy thief'?"

His boss reclined in her chair, legs laced elegantly on the desk. Jessica was a little older these days, a little plumper... but she still posed like a queen. "Don't worry about it, Detective. Just shadow her, for a while."

"Why? What's the angle?"

Jessica blew smoke at the ceiling. "All the characters like me, made for men's enjoyment... They're delicate. Vulnerable. Every time they're in some awful fanfiction, it degrades them a little more. If we can protect them, even a little bit... Don't we owe it to them?"

Harris shrugged. "Sure, whatever. It's your dime, boss."

"Oh, before you go..."

"Yeah?"

"Be a dear, and bring me a snack."