

Jim Henson's Dinosaurs: Life Grows On...

By Lupine

Humid, Cretaceous-era sunlight shone through the rocky kitchen windows of the Sinclair household, the interior of which was even steamier than outside thanks to the stove as Fran, Earl Sinclair's wife, prepared breakfast for the family. The relative quiet of chinking cutlery and shuffling furniture was broken by a concussive THUD from upstairs, hard enough to rattle the crockery and set the Food in the fridge yammering. The sound of a ponderous saurian bulk hauling/rolling itself out of bed was followed by heavy, slow footsteps, milling somnolently for a while before, presumably lured by the wafting aromas of food, they moved inexorably to the staircase. The descent of those thunderous feet caused further shaking of unsecured items, and triggered ripples in the water-jug as it vibrated across the table.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.

Thud-thud-thud-thud-THUD...

The kitchen door, already half-open, was shouldered wide to allow the ingress of a dishevelled, sleepy-looking male dinosaur practically as wide as he was tall. Squeezing into the room, tail dragging slug-like across the floor behind him, he yawned expansively, head tilting back and arms stretching above his head. He finished his prodigious yawn and called out to Fran with his traditional greeting:

“Hey Mom, what's for breakfast?”

Robert Mark Sinclair (better known as Robbie) slowly lowered his beefy arms from above his head, pausing their descent briefly to scratch under an armpit, before lumbering sluggishly across the room to his seat at the breakfast table. Correction- seats. The hefty teenaged Hypsilophodon lowered his sizeable behind onto the two wooden stools, a cheek settling comfortably across each. Once sat, all that could be seen of the stools were their legs, their seats overwhelmed by the sheer volume they were being asked to support. They creaked in protest at this cruel and unusual treatment, as they did every morning these days. Robbie ignored this and with a habitual grunt squirmed slightly to get comfortable, bulbous butt jiggling as it was sandwiched between unyielding wood and the tonnage of Robbie's torso settling above it. His bloated tail hung heavily between them, whilst chubby, tree-trunk-like

legs braced his trademark red-and-white sneakers against the floor, helping take the weight of the sizeable stomach that swamped his generous lap. Despite having pushed his 'chair' a good foot further back from the table before sitting down, the pale frontal scales of his belly still rolled over its leading edge. It was a losing battle between the discomfort of this and pushing his chair even further back, which would put food on the table beyond his reach.

"Morning, Robbie dear," Fran replied imperturbably from her customary station at the stove. She smoothly slid a bowl onto the table in front of her son, who had to lean over the curve of his stomach to get a clear view down into it. His expression faded from one of hopeful expectation to one of resigned disappointment.

"Oat-bran?" The harmonics in his voice spoke volumes. He picked up the bowl with chubby fingers and tilted it sideways, regarding the meagre contents critically. "Again? Mom, you know this isn't going to keep me going until lunch. I'll barely make it past breakfast!" Nevertheless, he had already picked up a spoon and began to eat listlessly, enveloped in an aura of dutiful gloom. After a moment or two Fran suppressed a small sigh and shook her head. She ran a hand distractedly down her son's head-crest, fingers bumping along the soft terrace of rolls bunching around the contours of his thickened neck.

"I'll fix you something filling to follow, dear."

"Thanks Mom. You're the greatest." Robbie's plump features dimpled as he beamed in thanks, his natural good cheer restored, and he began to shovel the brown mush in front of him down with more enthusiasm. He glanced up at the other occupant of the kitchen table, who scowled at him accusingly as he tucked in. "Hey, sis."

Charlene's glower intensified, and she shifted in her seat to turn away and look at Fran, who was back at the stove, plating up.

"You shouldn't give him anything else, Mom."

"Now, Charlene..." Fran began patiently. She slid a large plateful of fried food in front of Robbie, savoury steam rising from piled-high helping. Her daughter bristled behind her coffee mug.

"*Mo-om!* Stop feeding him! He's already a complete Fat-o-Saur!" Robbie paused with his first large mouthful of fry-up half-chewed to scowl at his younger sister, before he pointedly resumed chomping, spearing a whole Archaeopteryx egg in readiness for his second forkful. Absent-mindedly his free-hand tugged on the side of his (4XL) black-and-white striped t-

shirt, which was riding back up his middle and sides, hugging the generous contours of his figure tightly. The glare Charlene shot back had the intensity of molten lava, with none of the former's retiring nature.

"Now, Charlene," Fran repeated chidingly, moving to stand behind Robbie and rest one hand on his plump shoulder while he carried on eating stolidly. "Puberty's not an easy time for any of us. Remember that little talk we had? About how we all need to *support* your brother as he gets through this growth-spurt." And it was true- in the last year he had grown considerably, and was now taller than Fran herself. And was now also easily twice the weight of his sister, if not more. Charlene snorted with disgust.

"He's not growing UP, just OUT!" She reached over and poked her brother sharply in his bulbous belly where his too-small t-shirt left it exposed, setting it wobbling gelatinously against the table. The ripples spread and shook the bloated curves of a chest that strained the taut fabric containing it, making the garment creak in response.

"I think we should all just be glad that we're alive," Fran continued firmly, turning to look out through the sunny window. "We survived that awful winter a couple of years ago- a lot of our neighbours didn't." She looked fondly at the pair of them. "I remember you two hugging when it looked like we really might not make it." As Fran smiled nostalgically out of the window, Charlene and Robbie shared an appalled glance and pulled similarly disgusted faces. Charlene shuddered.

"I wouldn't even be able to reach to either side of him now!"

"And then there was that meteorite last year," Fran continued obliviously, "The news anchors were saying just the other day that if it had come a few miles closer to the Earth, it might have *hit* instead of doing that fly-by and we'd all have been in big trouble."

"Don't worry Mom," Charlene put in nastily, "if it HAD come down, Diplo-Doughball here would have just EATEN it." Robbie, who was doggedly continuing with his breakfast, deliberately stuffed a laden forkful of sausage and bacon into his mouth that bulged his chubby cheeks out even more roundly, then put his hands to the sides of his expansive, scaly stomach and wobbled it at his sister, a gesture which was a sure-fire way to enrage her.

Predictably, Charlene took the bait. "MOM!" She half-rose out of her seat. "Make him stop being such a totally disgusting Hog-o-Saurus! He's embarrassing me!" Her snout wrinkled, and she sniffed suspiciously at her brother. "Haven't you showered this morning?"

"Hey, I just got up." Robbie replied, gulping his bulging mouthful hurriedly in order to do so. He immediately refilled it and continued chewing, a plump second chin bobbing and swaying as he did so.

“And you couldn’t wait to stuff your face so you skipped washing? Ew! I’ll bet that’s not a clean t-shirt you’re wearing, either. And I thought it was bad enough just having to walk past your room, Swamp-o-saur!”

At that point, Earl Sinclair emerged blearily into the kitchen, fumbling with the buttons of his habitual plaid shirt. It was still a little looser than it had been in his heyday, but no longer by much.

“Gruhh... morning all.” The porky, middle-aged Megalosaurus blinked as he absorbed the frigid animosity evident between his two teenaged children, and looked nervously at Fran for support. “Am I interrupting something?”

“We were just having a *calm, sensible* discussion about Robbie’s figure, dear.” She gave her daughter a pointed look. Earl glanced apprehensively at the pear-shaped chunk of dino-bulk that was his son, who at the age of 18 was now both taller and wider than him, currently working his way methodically through an appetisingly-piled plate of chow. A distinctly hunted expression hovered on Earl’s features. Intuition told him that any moves by his wife to encourage his son to lose some weight would soon see *him* being pressured to ‘set a good example’, entailing a draconian exercise regime and... diet. The thought alone was enough to bring him out in a cold sweat. Torn between desire for a cowardly retreat to safety and an increasing need for breakfast himself, self-preservation instincts he barely knew he had hurriedly kicked in.

“Why, what’s wrong with him? The boy looks perfectly healthy to *me*.”

“Dad!” Charlene protested volubly, “come ON! He’s blowing up like a bronto-balloon!” A look of vindictive triumph crossed her face as she played her trump card. “The latest scientific research suggests that it’s *really* unhealthy for dinosaurs to get fat.” Fran looked distressed at this revelation, but it triggered a contemptuous eruption of scorn from Earl.

“Doctors?! Hah! Load of quacks, the lot of them! Look at our one! He had a fancy duck-bill and everything! All that education didn’t save HIM from the Big Chill.”

“But Daddy-!”

“That specialist we had that talk with *did* say it could be a psycho-somatic reaction to near-starvation that winter,” Fran reminded Earl in a worried undertone, glancing apprehensively at her son’s broad, bulging back, “He said they were seeing quite a rise of Post-Glaciation Stress Syndrome in teenagers these days.”

“Experts! What do THEY know about anything? Our ancestors got to the top of the evolutionary volcano by being bigger and better than anyone else, THAT’s what led to

today's Saurian Supremacy. There's absolutely NOTHING unhealthy about being Big." Earl pronounced firmly. He regarded Robbie's rounded rear elevation as the boy sat with his back to them. Certainly it was getting hard for him to imagine a bigger example of modern dino-hood than Robbie- his son's current dimensions were roughly the same as the refrigerator, if not larger.

That problem successfully dealt with, Earl cheerfully took his seat on the third side of the table and rubbed his hands together in expectation of breakfast.

"I don't see what you're making such a fuss about, Fran- I'm just relieved the boy's finally acting NORMAL for once."

"Thanks, Dad," Robbie commented laconically, pushing another forkful of fried food into his chubby snout. Earl shot him a slightly nervous look, and stood up rather abruptly to fetch himself some coffee from the counter. He still wasn't used to having a dinosaur larger than him around the house. Apparently oblivious, Robbie picked up his own mug and took a swig, washing down a mouthful of hash-brown with a voluble *schlurp*. You could have etched glass with Charlene's look of appalled disgust. By the counter, Earl sidled closer to Fran and added in a whisper that could be heard clean across the room.

"Besides, remember the *last* time Robbie got into working-out? We *don't* want that again!" Robbie's cheeks flushed a deep mauve- he had never gotten around to giving his family the full ins-and-outs of his little misadventure with getting 'buff'. It had taken MONTHS for those thorns to stop poking up, and in the most embarrassing places, too. He hurriedly stuffed in another mouthful to cover his mortification, and his stomach gurgled uneasily at the reminder. He was certainly cured of *that* particular urge- now even the prospect of working-out made him want to bury the impulse, deep. And food seemed pretty good at that. "No, dear," was Fran's only comment.

"And then there was the time he thought he might be a... a *herbivore*!" Earl's whisper became hoarse with appalled recollection. Robbie pretended he hadn't heard, and focussed on liberally applying brown sauce to the remaining food on his plate.

"Well there's no danger of THAT these days, Dad," Charlene threw in sweetly, with a saccharine smile aimed at her brother. "Nowadays he doesn't just eat anything, he eats EVERYTHING." Robbie stolidly ignored this too, and carried on eating.

Realising that the laws of sound had unfairly betrayed his confidences, Earl grudgingly sat down at the table again, trying not to look at either of his chronically warring children. Fran put down another steaming plateful in front of him.

“Maybe it wouldn’t hurt you *or Robbie* to think about cutting back a little sometime soon, dear.” Neither dinosaur made eye-contact with her. The fry-up in front of Earl was very noticeably smaller than the one his son was still shovelling down. Earl blinked piteously first at Robbie’s half-empty plate, then at his own, then back again.

“But... b-but...” he stammered ineffectually.

“Mom’s right, *Dad*,” Charlene chimed in with another pointed glare at her bloated brother.

“And neither of you should be eating fried food!”

“What?! Garbage!” Earl grabbed his plate protectively, as if to ward off the prospect of it being taken away from him. “Fried food is one of the four basic food-groups, EVERYONE knows THAT!” To his alarm, Fran was now giving his much-beloved breakfast a very concerned look. “Shouldn’t you two be getting to school?” Earl deployed his last-ditch defence tactic. He fervently believed that every middle-aged male dinosaur had the right to a quiet breakfast without being harassed by his bickering offspring. Or if he was, then it certainly shouldn’t impact on his daily ration of carbs.

“DAD!” Charlene rolled her eyes. “Du-uhh! It’s VACATION! It has been for over a month. And Robbie’s *finished* school!”

“He has?”

“Yes dear,” Fran said evenly, “we went to his graduation, remember?”

“They had to put a wide-angle lens on the camera to take his photo.” Charlene put in, nastily. Earl, meanwhile, was still absorbing this information with mounting horror.

“You mean... you’re stuck at home *all day*?” he asked brokenly. “Education- I ask you! What are we paying them for if they aren’t going to keep you out from under our feet?!”

“I’ve got a part-time job, Dad,” Robbie broke off from eating long enough to reassure his father, who had taken refuge behind his morning paper. He mopped some of the grease on his plate up with a piece of buttered-toast and popped it between his jaws. Charlene snorted.

“What as, a garbage-disposal? You come back from it FATTER each day!”

“Hey!” Robbie protested, stung into replying. “Pangaeon Pizza pay good money! And I’m leaning a tonne about the food industry.”

“Then use it to buy some deodorant! And a few more breakfasts like *that*, Grease-o-Saurus, and you’ll be a tonne by yourself! You won’t even be able to squeeze through their doors!”

They had had this same argument every morning for two weeks, practically word-for-word. Impervious from endless repetition, Robbie took another gulp of coffee, and tugged at his top again, scattering crumbs from the broad shelf his chest had temporarily created. Charlene sighed theatrically and, placing her forehead in one hand, shook it in despair at the fat, unfashionable slob her brother had become. He was obviously beyond help through her gentle corrective comments.

“You. Are. So. Gross! You are never, ever going to find a girlfriend looking like *that!*”

Robbie glowered at her, two spots of angry red appearing on his cheeks. That was something *else* he definitely didn’t want to discuss in front of his parents.

“Now Charlene, that’s not true,” Fran remonstrated hurriedly, placing a reassuring hand on her son’s wide back. “There are *plenty* of girls out there who’ll be attracted to a charming, hard-working dinosaur with a... a fuller figure. Look at your father and me.”

“Mo-OM,” Charlene dismissed the argument with a roll of her eyes, “I’ve seen the photos. Dad only let THAT happen to him AFTER you two were married! And it happened when he was already ANCIENT.” Earl’s newspaper rustled feelingly.

“It could be worse, sweetie,” Fran said, almost pleading with her daughter. “Look at Robbie’s friend Spike. Poor boy, just lately he looks practically skin-and-bone.” Robbie stifled a grin with another mouthful of food. Yeah, his best buddy Spike was skinny as a rake these days, for all that he had gone through a growth-spurt like his. Well, almost like his.

“At least skinny is *fashionable* these days! Slim is *in!*” His sister ruined the mood.

“Just because something rhymes doesn’t make it clever!” Robbie retorted around his mouthful.

Charlene carried on, adopting a wheedling tone. “I’m only thinking about what’s best for Robbie, Mom, honestly. If he’s a Ball-of-Lard-o-Saur NOW, what’s he going to look like when he gets to DAD’s age? IF he gets that far.” Robbie stabbed his fork into another small stack of bacon, egg and mushroom, and concentrated on shovelling it into his mouth. “He could just keep blowing up fatter and fatter until he EXPLODES. It’s TRUE!” she protested as her mother gave her an exasperated look. “Mindy heard it from Marlene who heard it from Macie that it happened to this fat guy who used to go to their school. They call it Bulge-Itis!”

Scowling at his plate, her brother stubbornly continued chomping down on his breakfast. Meanwhile Fran surveyed her sizeable son with a troubled expression, visibly torn.

Eventually she applied her most motherly expression and laid a maternal hand on Robbie's chubby upper-arm.

"I think what Charlene is *trying* to say, dear," she began gently, "is that maybe it *would* be a good idea if you tried losing a little weight sometime soon. We love you just the same, of course, *whatever* you look like, but you never know, you might actually prefer to be a little slimmer than you are just at the moment-"

"MOM!" Cheeks flushed with embarrassment and exasperation, Robbie, threw down his fork with a clatter and lifted both hands in surrender. ANYTHING to stop the mortifying monologue. "Alright, already!" He made to stand up from the table, feet sliding further apart, legs quivering and knees pushing outwards to either side of his belly as he laboriously heaved his backside from its comfortable support atop the two stools, hands braced on the tabletop as he did so. His t-shirt creaked again as the dino-flesh it contained shifted heavily, swinging forward as gravity pulled at him. A deep grunt of effort escaped him as he stood. "Rrrf... I'll go for a jog or something!"

"Thank you, dear." Fran took her hand away. Still standing by the table, Robbie turned back to spear one last mouthful from his plate with his fork. Of necessity it was quite a large, messy mouthful, splattering greasy brown sauce stains onto his t-shirt. Still not satisfied, even at her moment of triumph, Charlene pulled a face.

"A *jog*? You won't even burn off that breakfast! Mom, put him on a diet and make him sweat his butt off on a treadmill until people stop mistaking him for the Dunkin' Donut-saur!"

Robbie finished his stolen mouthful in ominous silence, staring fixedly down at his abandoned plate, hands resting to either side of it, and then finally looked up at his sister.

"At least," he told her, quietly and levelly, "*I don't get spots.*"

There was a moment's hesitation, then Charlene gave a brittle laugh.

"Nice try, 'big' brother!" Her laugh died away as Robbie kept looking at her steadily. "...I DON'T have spots!" she declared hotly. She glanced at her mother and father for support, but neither would meet her in the eye. Hurriedly she grabbed the inevitable make-up bag from its place on the table beside her, pulled out a compact mirror and scrutinized herself neurotically. With the exception of Robbie, the world nervously held its breath. "AUGH!" she shrieked, loud enough to crack Earl's coffee mug. "A SPOT!" Yes, there *was* an

unfortunately large, green-and-purple pimple on her chin, which had separated a couple of scales as it pushed through. It seemed to pulsate gruesomely as they all stared at it. “I’m HIDEOUS!” Charlene wailed in fashion-crisis-fuelled hysteria, “My whole life is RUINED! I can’t ever leave my room EVER again! WHY WON’T YOU ALL JUST LEAVE ME ALONE?!” Shoving bodily past her big-bellied brother, she fled the kitchen, howling. Somewhere upstairs a door slammed.

“Robbie,” was all Fran said, wearily. With an unrepentant shrug her son turned and left the kitchen more sedately, plump tail swinging with each step. Half way through the door he only part-stifled a deep BURRRP. Fran, slowly sinking into her place at the kitchen table, nearly dropped her coffee. Eventually, Earl lowered the top of his newspaper, to his relief found that the coast was clear, and without making eye-contact with his wife he began to eat his steadily-congealing breakfast.

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In the upstairs bathroom, Robbie grudgingly inspected himself in the nearly-full length mirror as he changed in preparation for this jog. Having said he’d do it, not following through would only led to yet more cringe-worthy Supportive Talks. Thank goodness Mom hadn’t got *Dad* to give him one of those yet- the embarrassment might be fatal all round. Frowning, the rotund young dinosaur stood face-on to the glass and pressed both hands flat against the sides of his bulging stomach, shaking it softly up and down. *He* couldn’t see what everyone was making so much fuss about. So he’d put on a little weight, big deal. He didn’t look ‘fat’, or anything- quite a lot of this was just breakfast filling his stomach out, right? He tugged on the hem of his t-shirt as it insisted on riding up again, then turned side on in the mirror, one hand unconsciously rubbing up and down the front of his belly. The thick black and white stripes were pulled taut, distorted by the curves his body put into the fabric. Besides, what was *wrong* with being a little beefier than he had been? He tugged on his shirt again, which flatly refused to keep his middle covered, and the tension in the pulled fabric set his chest wobbling. Ok, so it wasn’t *all* muscle, but it was still *bulk*, right? He flexed one arm, watched it thicken gratifyingly, then blushed a little as the bulge wobbled flabbily, like a jelly piled up beneath his scaly hide. On impulse he dug his hands into the sides of his stomach and squeezed. A big, doughy roll of scaley blubber jiggled in his grip as he shook it, his lower belly bouncing against his thighs. Some of his self-righteousness began to leach away. Maybe he HAD got a little... rounder... than the typical teen-o-saur, but that wasn’t *bad*,

right? He flashed himself a half-smile in the mirror, which stopped in a hurry as his cheeks actually dimpled. Woah, when had his face got quite so...well-fed-looking?

He quickly transferred his attention elsewhere, reaching back to press his hands against his backside. He tried to ignore the fact that, to see the entire depth of his backside, he had to step forward so much that the front of his stomach disappeared off the far side of the mirror. His tail hung like an overstuffed sausage behind him. Hmmph, so maybe his butt had gotten a little big lately, but it was better than being skin and bones, right? He could still recall his reflection from that winter, when his hide had been stretched over scrawny cheeks with his hip-bones poking through. He'd even been able to see each and every one his ribs! Robbie lifted both arms above his head with a small grunt of effort. A couple of rolls of excess flesh shifted and stretched beneath them, plumping his frame out and cushioning him reassuringly. He'd rather look a little padded than look downright scrawny with a toast-rack chest. Just thinking back to that, when his old t-shirt had hung off him, when he'd been perpetually cold, and when there'd never been enough to *eat*... he shivered slightly, and his stomach let out a disturbed gurgle. The thought of it was enough to make him hungry again, no matter how allegedly 'gross' the breakfast he'd just eaten. He'd *been* hungry once upon a time, thank you, and he didn't want to go back there. Ever. And, hey, if that kind of situation could suddenly happen to you, why *shouldn't* you have seconds when they were on offer, to make sure? Nowadays he made sure his appetite stayed well-and-truly satisfied, even if that was taking more and more to achieve just lately. He couldn't believe how he'd once used to pick at his food. *Everything* tasted great to him these days. Chowing down was now one of the things Robbie was most interested in doing- Spike had even called it his hobby...

Robbie reluctantly began to peel off his t-shirt. The thin, clingy fabric hugged his upper body in constricting ruckles and folds as though it was reluctant to let go of him, tight circles cutting around his chest and arms as he hauled at it. His head finally squeezed down through the neck-hole with a juddering pop, and he squirmed the rest of the way out of it. Arms over his head, still trapped in the folds of his top, his nose alerted him to something. He paused and sniffed at one underarm, and winkled his snout. Ok, maybe that aggravating, shallow sister of his had *SOME* sort of point. But there was no point in washing right now if he was about to go out for a jog, was there? The t-shirt finally cleared his arms and restored his view of the bathroom. Robbie conscientiously shook out the tentlike-folds of his top. It was still good for one more wear- he'd only worn it for the last couple of days and it wasn't like he

worked up a sweat in it... much. He grudgingly conceded it *was* getting a little bit snug under his arms these days. Maybe it was time to quietly buy a replacement in the next size up, and hope Mom didn't notice when it came to the laundry.

Setting the t-shirt aside, Robbie surveyed his reflection in the glass once again. He straightened his back and breathed deeply a couple of times, trying not to notice how his body rippled with each small movement. His eyes were soon drawn to the thin leather strap hung around his neck, normally hidden unobtrusively beneath his top. He reached for it almost guiltily and hauled up the finger-sized sliver of rock that dangled from the end. It almost looked like a large stone tooth with a small hole drilled through the thick end to take the leather. He wasn't sure what kind of stone it was- allegedly it was part of that meteorite that had gone past. Apparently a chunk of it had broken off and come down somewhere, only WESAYSO were Hushing It Up. It was certainly heavier for its size than most rocks Robbie had ever picked up- not that he'd ever made a habit of *that*. It had been slightly rough when he'd first started wearing it, but it was now as smooth as a beach-pebble. Tiny sparkles glittered under the dark red, polished surface, and to him it always seemed to give off a faint, pleasantly tingly warmth. To start with it had swung and bounced reassuringly against his modest chest, now it habitually nestled in the cleavage between his bulging pecs. He closed his chubby hand around the rock, squeezing it tightly. The tingling increased, although it could have been his imagination. After a few moments he let it drop back down. Grinning sheepishly, he caught his eye in the mirror and ran a distracted hand through his head-crest. Damn, even that was looking kind of... chunky, today. What *was* it with this mirror?

Robbie rolled his shoulders and neck a couple of times to warm them up, ignoring how they bunched and creased with chub in his reflection. Better get on with this jog, that comment about Charlene's spots wouldn't keep her locked in her room forever... With a sigh Robbie picked up the faded grey sweatsuit piled on the bathroom chair and began to struggle into the top. It had once been his dad's, but Robbie had effectively inherited it now- the last couple of times that he'd been forced into reluctant exercise it had been the only thing he could find that was loose enough to be comfortable. Dad had been more than happy to not have it back. Funnily enough- Robbie's head popped through the snug neckline and he shoved his arms into the sleeves- he hadn't got around to buying himself a replacement. Tugging the baggy hem down over his stomach, Robbie turned to the sweatpants. Putting the shapeless cotton togs on involved gymnastics in itself, inserting his tail and one leg into the appropriate holes

and then hopping on that foot as he tried to get his OTHER leg into the pants as well. It didn't help that he'd neglected to take his sneakers off. The fittings shook a little during the several attempts he made to get his chunky legs through the holes, and then he pulled them up around his waist to meet the top. But Robbie was surprised to meet resistance from them when they were still only part-way up his thighs. Huh? They'd fitted just fine previously (i.e. a little over a month ago). Grunting, he tugged irritably on the waistband- which was probably just snagged on a scale somewhere- then finally resorted to HAULING on it. He was acutely aware of the fabric hugging at his thighs and rear as it slid upwards, the weave stretching to accommodate the... volume of its owner's derriere. The greatest tightness was around his tail, however, the material struggling to accept a tailbase about two sizes too round for it. Robbie flushed, sweat breaking out on his forehead, and kept on pulling, instinctively sucking in his stomach. The sweatpants finally made it all the way up, the waistband coming to rest at the deep crease where lovehandle rolled into hip. Nervously, Robbie slowly let out the breath he held, letting his middle relax back to its normal size. It bulged forward and the waistband rolled down a fraction, but then came slowly to a wobbling halt.

The plus-sized dino-lescent heaved a small sigh of relief, then did a double-take in the mirror. Last time he'd worn this tracksuit, the two halves had met easily, with only the occasional sliver of scaley flesh glimpsed if he *really* bent or contorted, stretching the fabric out. NOW, the top only came about two-thirds of the way down his stomach, reaching his roundest point but not going beneath it, while his underbelly pooched out over the inadequate waistband of his pants. This left a nearly foot-deep slice of Robbie's gut on display the entire time, the gap widening and shrinking minutely-but-perceptibly in time with his breathing. Elsewhere the situation was only slightly improved- the pants and top *almost* met at his back, with a hand-width gap visible. The hem of his top rolled upwards if he so much as shrugged his shoulders, whilst the waistband had buried itself in a deep crease just above his rear. Speaking of which, the pants now almost redefined figure-hugging, only loosening their skin-tight grip part-way down his calves. Elsewhere they left nothing to the imagination, and the material looked strained around his tailbase. Jeeze, and these had fit even his dad alright...

Blushing, Robbie avoided his reflection's gaze, rubbing the back of his head (which only made the clothing issue worse). Mom must have put it in to wash at too high a temperature or something, no way could he have put on *that* much 'bulk'. And, it did still fit... technically speaking... Besides, it really wasn't like he had a lot of options. It'd probably

loosen up when he actually did some exercise in it. But first... gingerly, Robbie did a couple of trial squats, knees bending out as he lowered himself slowly down, but apart from some quivering as the stretched fabric stretched still further in one direction, the pants held out. Getting upright again, Robbie let out a relieved sigh, wiping his forehead. Puffing already, he started out of the bathroom, then realised that one shoelace had come loose in all the exertions. Automatically, he bent down to re-lace it.

RR-RIP!

Robbie shot bolt upright again, eyes wide. Taking an anxious squint over his shoulder in the mirror, his shoulders sagged a little as he saw that the slit opening for his tail had now made itself a little more roomy by splitting down the vertical seam. Fortunately, the slack was taken up fully by his tail, so apart from a few loose threads and a slightly ragged edge you couldn't really tell he'd just burst his pants at all. And- he wriggled experimentally- they did feel noticeably more accommodating. Robbie lowered himself again to re-tie his lace- more carefully this time- and no more stitches popped. Satisfied and with some relief at the extra wriggle-room, he heaved himself back upright and headed for the front door.

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His departure wasn't the stealthy affair he'd hoped. Charlene had emerged from her room, albeit with a comically large sticking-plaster slapped across her chin.

"Ew, didn't those like... used to fit DAD? You're even more of a whale-o-saurus than I thought!" Robbie ignored her, but to his silent despair, his mom had also come to the door to see him off.

"Have a nice run, dear." She kissed him on the cheek. "And be careful of the potholes."

"MOM!" Robbie appealed for mercy, wiping his plump features hurriedly. Charlene sniggered.

"Yeah, they're still left over from the LAST time you went on a jog. Go easy on the road surface, it can't take THAT kind of pounding."

Cheeks flushed before he'd even started running, Robbie left in a hurry, picking up the pace as he bounced blessedly out of sight of the house. 'Bounced' was the operative word- the hefty dinosaur's arms windmilled as he suddenly found himself fighting for balance against

his own momentum, his gut bodily lifting up and thumping down again with each laboured step, his knees colliding repeatedly with its underside in glancing blows that shoved both his leg out and his stomach in the opposite direction, the side-to-side swing nearly pitching him into the roadside ditch. Added to this was his rump, which jiggled heavily with each thudding pace and then started to sway to its own rhythm, dragging his centre of gravity even further out of line. Probably the only thing that stopped him was his tail, acting as something of a dead-weight. He managed to bring himself to an unsteady stop, already sweating freely. He mopped his brow and looked back the way he'd come. He felt like he'd run miles, and was disappointed to discover it was truthfully only yards. With a resigned wheeze he set off again, at a more 'sustainable' pace. Though in a few dozen more yards he came to another halt, wheezing and panting, head up and tongue lolling as he gasped for air. His legs felt so *heavy*... like the sweatpants he was wearing were made of solid lava, or as if he was wading through a tar-pit. It didn't help that, even walking, he was now uncomfortably aware of his thighs pressing together. Adjusting his stance, the sweating saurian set off for a third time, trying unsuccessfully to hit a rhythm above a stroll that didn't set him bouncing, stride shorter as his legs swung out to give each other room, tail wagging behind. As for his arms, they had to be held out a little from his sides, elbows swinging wide, to give his chest room.

Five minutes and a subjective lifetime later, Robbie's jogging speed was practically down to a plod, the waistband of his sweatpants squeezing tightly every time he wheezed in, and he kept having to pull his sweat-top back down to stop his belly bouncing clean out of it. Both items of clothing were living up to their names. Even his sneakers were starting to feel tight around his ankles. How was that even possible? Reaching a fork in the road, Robbie puffed to a stop and looked around guiltily. When he'd set out he HAD meant to take a right here and just keep running in a loop round and eventually back home. Honest. But... casting another furtive glance around for witnesses, he started up again and shuffled down the left hand fork, now with a different destination in mind. Or rather, stomach. His nose picked up a familiar scent, and his stomach rumbled approval at him- 'good boy'...

The door to Swampy's Café swung open with a jangle to let Robbie practically fall through it. He was greeted by a savoury gust of steam combining coffee, chocolate and assorted baked goods, and he let out a little involuntary moan of relief, which was fortunately lost amidst the bustle of the other customers. He made unsteadily for the counter, his legs feeling as though they were made of rubber.

“Robbie!” Swampy, the plesiosaur proprietor, head-chef and chief-waiter all in one, welcomed him warmly from his usual place behind the bar. Breaking off from cleaning glasses industriously with a dish-cloth in one flipper-like arm, he took in the full extent of this new customer as the doubly-doughy teenaged dino lumbered to the counter, puffing, steam rising from him in clouds. “Whoah, better take it easy, Big Guy! You look like you could use a drink.” He picked up a large jug of ice-water and handed it across. “The Special?”

“Thanks.” Nodding, Robbie grabbed the jug with both hands and began to chug from it, cheeks and throat bulging rhythmically as he downed it in one. With about a gallon and a half of cold water inside him, Robbie let out a deep, steamy sigh that was only just not-quite-a-belch and plonked the drained jug back onto the counter, his body temperature dropping back to somewhere beneath ‘volcanic’. With relief, he straddled a padded bar-stool and sank onto it, taking the weight off his protesting feet. Speaking of volcanoes, just then Swampy’s coffee machine set up a deafening din amidst a cloud of pale-brown steam. The background scent of chocolate in the air thickened noticeably, and despite the fact that Robbie’s stomach audibly sloshed with water when he shifted his weight, he found himself licking his lips thirstily.

The ‘Special’ was Swampy’s own-recipe hot chocolate, double thick, extra cream, sweetened with the resin of some tree or other. It had the consistency of lava, had been known to melt straws, and was probably the most fattening thing known to dino-kind. The only reason that there weren’t marshmallows included on the top was that there wasn’t room amongst the pile of whipped cream and froth and chocolate shavings without the extra downward pressure spilling the contents all over the floor. Robbie had been hooked on them since the very first time he’d tried one, and now he drank this guilty pleasure whenever absolutely none of his family were around. Luckily, the mottled-green café owner had a very... understanding attitude about that kind of thing, and had never mentioned it to his folks. To his surprise though, when Swampy swung back to the bar, instead of the usual tall glass he plonked a supersized stone tankard about a foot high in front of him, with a handle either side to help you lift it. It looked like it could hold about a gallon of drink at a time. It *steamed* chocolate into the air.

“I figured you looked ready for the supersized version today, big guy,” Robbie vaguely heard Swampy say as stared at the enormous drink in front of him. He gulped slightly. He’d only

ever seen *seriously* big dinosaurs drinking the supersized. “That ok? No extra charge...” Swampy said. Robbie finally blinked, shaking his head slightly. The smell rising from the lakelike drink was practically hypnotic.

“Uhh... sure. Thanks,” he said weakly, reaching forward to claim the drink. The granite tankard grated across the counter surface as he struggled to lift the thing. “Hnff...”

“You want a snack to go with that too, sport?” Swampy asked winningly, “Give your energy levels a boost?”

“Uhh... yeah... please...” Robbie’s reply faltered as his eyes were magnetically drawn back to his drink. His free hand, squeezed uncomfortably into one pocket, broke the spell. He blinked, then blushed as he had to fight to get his fingers back out whilst clutching a handful of change he’d surreptitiously pocketed for just this ‘emergency’ pit-stop. The fabric creaked a warning at him- ‘there ain’t enough room for you AND your hand in these pants, Pardner’. Looking again at the ludicrously large drink in front of him, the tubbed-up teen experienced a momentary qualm. “Uhh... actually, m-maybe I should just stick with...” he trailed off as Swampy placed a large plate in front of him on the counter, with a pile of assorted, gooey, intoxicating-smelling pastries oozing onto it. He let out a little whimper, and his mouth finished lamely, “W-well, I guess just this once really can’t hurt...” even as he handed over his cash. Licking his lips, somewhere at the back of his mind he acknowledged that he should still be full from breakfast, but he *had* been jogging, after all...

All self-restraint fading, Robbie greedily stuffed half a pastry into his mouth and chewed, lubricating it with a swig of his hot chocolate to get it down faster, then followed it with the second half. Wow, his drink somehow tasted even better when you could practically swim in it! His stomach suddenly felt like some deep crater that he needed to fill up. Leaning forwards for another pastry, he discovered that when he did so his stomach smooshed out against and over the bar, the stool beneath him creaking, unable to scoot back thanks to the screws nailing it to the floor. At the same time he was uncomfortably aware of the fact that his backside seemed to be sliding off both sides of the padded seat at once, the top of which was gradually sinking deeper into *his* well-padded seat as he... spread. With a grunt of discomfort Robbie shuffled, then turned, hoisting himself off the stool and reluctantly settling back down onto two, leaning his back and one arm against the counter, food and drink to hand whilst his backside amply filled the gap between the stools and the bar, and between the stools as well. Actually, he had to admit that sitting like this *was* a lot more comfortable.

By the time Robbie's tankard was a third empty, the plate of pastries had wound up balanced on his chest- well, it saved him having to squirm round to see where he was reaching. He tried to keep going slow, but it was all just sooo good... giving in to temptation, Robbie grabbed he tankard by both handles and took a deep, satisfying swig of his chocolate, tilting his neck and head back as he did so.

“Woah, nice *show*, Chunk!”

A hand unexpectedly patted the bare front of Robbie's stomach where it protruded from his tracksuit. Robbie's swollen cheeks quivered and he spluttered a little, only just stopping the pastries from launching forward.

“Jeeze, Spike, don't sneak UP on me like that!” He twisted sideways and scowled at his erstwhile best buddy. Wearing one of Swampy's aprons in addition to his habitual leather jacket and bandana, the gravelly-voiced ankylosaur and-part-time-help just shrugged sardonically and leaned on the broom he'd been pushing.

“Yeah, well, there's plenty of you to hide behind these days, Chunk.” He prodded one finger into the spare tyre swelling out from underneath Robbie's sweat-top, sinking in up to the second knuckle. “Great new exercise regime, by the way- didn't these things used to fit like... a couple of weeks ago?”

“They shrunk in the wash.” Robbie replied hurriedly, trying to secretly hitch his pants little higher as he shuffled on his 'seat'. Spike nodded to himself sagely.

“Yeah, that's got to be it. And I guess that also explains why all the labels on your t-shirts have all mysteriously changed from 'M' to '4XL'. If I were your mom, Chunk, I'd get a plumber in to look at that dryer pronto.”

“Quit calling me 'Chunk'!” No matter that Robbie was now definitely the bigger of the two- even sitting down like this, the ankylosaur's head was only just above Robbie's- Spike's one-liners still managed to make Robbie feel small. It was a good job they were such close friends.

“Hey, you outgrew 'Scooter' some time back.” His friend cocked his head to one side and made a show of inspecting Robbie, pastry crumbs and all. “And how. Didn't I see your *dad* fitting into those once?”

“Don't *you* start.” Robbie rolled his eyes, and took another drink from his tankard- making the conscious effort to sip, this time.

“Well, it’s not like it seems you’re ever going to *stop*.” Spike replied reasonably. “I think we may have a case of Bulge-itis on our hands.” He put both hands under Robbie’s lap-filling belly and, with a grunt of effort, jiggled it up and down, setting that sizeable scaly stomach a-ripple. Robbie flushed, and grinned uncertainly.

“C’mon, I’m fine! There’s no such thing as ‘Bulge-itis’. *You* told me it was just a dumb made-up story to justify the health-and-fitness industry.”

“Looking at you, I’m starting to believe!” Spike took a step back, as if to fit all of Robbie into view. “You’ve blown up bigger every time I see you nowadays, Chunk.”

“Jeeze, it’s just a little extra weight!” Robbie’s easygoing good humour and friendship were starting to fray at the edges. Spike’s eloquently raised eye-ridge made him uncomfortable enough to add. “I’m on top of it, ok?”

“Yeah, that’s how you’ve managed to get through *four* pastries in the time I’ve been talking to you.” Robbie blinked, and with some effort looked down to find just one solitary pastry on the plate sitting on his chest. Had he really eaten...? “Here, let me help this diet of yours.” Spike reached across, expertly nabbed the remainder from under his friend’s nose and scoffed it in three quick bites.

“Hey! I’m not on a *diet*!” Robbie could feel the heat from his own blushing cheeks against his snout.

“Thanks, I’d already spotted that, Chunk.”

“So I’m a...” he struggled for words, “a little on the big side-”

“Yeah, I guess I’m seeing your ‘big side’ right now,” Spike pressed a hand against Robbie’s scaly side where it bulged out from beneath his sweat-top, and hefted it, making his bulging buddy’s torso slosh sluggishly. Squirming, Robbie suddenly got *angry*.

“Oh yeah? Well, have you looked in a *mirror* lately? *You* look like a hat-stand!” He regretted the words as soon as he’d said them. They’d both grown a lot taller since 9th grade, but whereas Robbie had found himself growing up *and* out, his pal had just sort of... stretched. That winter hadn’t helped, but even now that leather jacket hung loosely off his shoulders. And he knew Spike didn’t like it being noticed. His friend lost some of his smirk, and drew himself back a pace.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but they’re gonna have to dig *deep* to find any of yours in there!”

“Will you just... get off my BACK?” Robbie exclaimed, now completely exasperated.

“Hey, I’m still your friend, Chunk,” Spike said with stiff dignity, “and if you’re *happy* this way, I’m happy for you. Just don’t expect me to start shoving on your overblown butt when you wind up stuck in the door, *Fat-o-Saur*.”

Robbie’s ‘buddy’ moved off and got back to work, pointedly keeping his back to him as he did so. Robbie took a defiant slurp of his drink, but his heart wasn’t really in it- he couldn’t decide if he and Spike had actually just had a fight or not. By the time he’d finished, guilt was making him morose. Putting the heavy tankard down, he caught Swampy giving him a sympathetic look from behind the bar.

“You two kids ok?” When Robbie shrugged, a little helplessly, the big green plesiosaur added kindly, “Don’t sweat it, big guy.” Robbie twitched, but it was better than ‘Chunk’.

“Just give him a little time to get over it. It can’t be easy for him, y’know, to feel so jealous.”

“Yeah, I gue- wait, *what?!*” He tried to swivel on his seat to gape at Swampy, but mostly just managed to squeeze his suddenly-too-big torso up against the bar, making the counter *creeeek*. A lot of questions flashed through his mind, but in the end all he managed was:

“Huh?”

Swampy shook his head slightly.

“I’ve seen the looks he gives you when you come in.” He leaned comfortably on the counter, stretching his long neck towards the suddenly bewildered dino-lescent. “I’ll bet Spike used to be bigger than you when you were youngsters, right?” Still a little dazed, Robbie nodded.

“Yeah, I thought so. It’s gonna take him some time to get used to you being the bigger guy, but trust me, he’ll get there.”

“But... *jealous?*” Robbie repeated, treading unfamiliar water up to his neck. “Of *me?*”

“Yes, of course you, and of what you’ve got.” The plesiosaur reached over and patted Robbie’s bulging side, making him blush. “He can probably forgive you for getting taller than him, but I’d say he’s struggling with you getting all the bulk and him getting none. Let’s face it, kid, next to you he’s got to be feeling pretty puny.” He shook his head again,

“There’s a kid who needs to take a leaf out of your book when it comes to eating right.”

Robbie flushed and cast a quick glance at Spike, who was on the far side of the crowded room, then put his hands curiously on his own stomach. He really didn’t know what to think right now.

“Uhh... thanks. I think.” Robbie shuffled heavily on his seat, and began the long process of standing up, even as his legs protested. “I uhh... should really get going.” He gestured rather unnecessarily at his stomach. “I’m meant to be *losing* some of this ‘bulk’.”

“Here, kid, have a couple for the road.” To his surprise, Robbie found himself being handed a paper bag, with yet more pastries in it. His limit had always been under four until today... well, call it six.

“Uhh... I...” Feeling every ounce of his weight at that moment, Robbie dithered over temptation. “I... I *really* shouldn’t...” but another glance in Spike’s direction- and the accompanying pang from deep inside his stomach- helped change his mind. Hauling himself to his feet, he took the bag. Robbie turned and lumbered sheepishly to the door, brushing pastry crumbs from his chest. Just then he didn’t really care WHAT Spike thought of him.

The extra pastries helped to cheer Robbie up quite immensely on his way home, although he couldn’t run *and* eat. Reduced to a slow, distracted walk, by the time he’d finished them, he was almost home. To his chagrin, as he was eating, in amongst the deep foot impressions from the larger dinosaur species on the path he also spotted some imprints of a pair of sneakers, forced deep into the mud by someone *heavy*. His ‘snack’ sat leadenly in his stomach and he puffed lethargically, aware that he should be running but reluctant to exert himself further right now. He really shouldn’t have had that last pastry- he felt *stuffed!* But he couldn’t very well just walk up to the front door like *this*... Stuffing the paper bag deep into his pocket, he forced himself back into a belly-bouncing jog just before he came into view of home. Fortunately, by the time he went inside, he’d already worked up a convincing sweat again.

* * *

Robbie entered the house through the kitchen, lumbering through as he made a bee-line for the lounge and the comfort of the couch, tail wagging sluggishly behind him. His sweat-suit clung stickily to him as he moved. Phew... maybe he’d overdone the fake-out running. Robbie found Earl already in residence on the family three-seater, watching TV.

“Hey Dad,” he said perfunctorily, and sank heavily down onto the opposite end. “Oof!” The cushioning squashed and sank alarmingly beneath him, the whole piece of furniture creaking from the load. Earl’s eyes widened as the cushions beneath him suddenly lurched upwards.

“Uh... sorry,” said Robbie weakly, slumped half against the back of the couch, and half against the arm, the thick tyre of one swollen, scaly lovehandle swamping it. He was now sitting several inches lower than Earl, who was perched rather ridiculously on high, propelled by the protesting couch-springs. Maybe he’d sat down a little too ‘heavily’...

Robbie shuffled a little more upright to get more comfortable, and put his feet up on the footstool, though with his knees bent outwards to give his aching thighs some personal space. With some struggle, he managed to kick his sneakers off one at a time, letting his feet finally ‘breathe’. They certainly seemed to swell a little once freed, the top of his socks squeezing at his tree-trunk ankles. Jogging hadn’t done them any favours. He wriggled and flexed his footsore toes, feeling a welcome breeze on his right foot through a hole in the bottom of his sock. He really, really hoped he wasn’t going to go up yet another shoe-size. As it was, he was wearing the biggest pair of his favourite sneaks that they had in stock. He’d have to start buying in Big n’ Tyranno after that...

The teenager’s tonnage sank back into the couch’s cool embrace with a relieved groan, one that was echoed by the furniture- minus the relief. Earl looked across at him uncomfortably in the silence that ensued.

“Uhh... good jog, Robbie?”

“Uhh... yeah, Dad. Great...” Still puffing, his son raised a hand weakly in acknowledgement, then rubbed it through his head-spines, spilling more sweat as he did so. Tugging at the top of his sweatsuit, a small cloud of steam puffed up from the neck-hole. Sitting down, his son looked wider than ever. Earl, who was no small size himself, he would freely admit, amply filled one of the couch’s seat cushions. Even then, they had used to be able to squeeze the entire family on here for a snapshot. Robbie now half-filled the three-seater by himself, with his bulging backside spilling over from one cushion and occupying a sizeable minority of the next. His bulging sides had further annexed the space like a sluggish lava-flow, and one plump arm was flopped heavily across the back of the couch. Earl was suddenly aware that his personal space was growing more... cramped with Robbie around. The boy was certainly taking up a lot of house-room, these days. And the lounge was already feeling a couple of degrees warmer, thanks to the bodyheat he was exuding.

They both looked up in surprise as the TV abruptly changed channels.

“Uhhh... You got the remote, Dad?” Earl glanced around.

“Yeah, I put it down he- oh.” He looked at the slim canyon of space between him and Robbie, which now sloped decisively down to disappear beneath his son’s sizeable behind. He and Robbie looked at each other for an excruciating moment.

“Oh, uh... I got it, Dad...” Robbie shuffled uncomfortably and slid a hand down behind and beneath him to hunt for the control. Unfortunately, that was now quite a large search-area. “Nghh... are you SURE it was here?” he asked Earl. “Maybe you left it over by th-” However, as Robbie shifted his weight the TV abruptly changed channel again. They both glanced at each other again, then tried to pretend that neither of them had noticed. After a few moments more searching, in which they saw snippets of several daytime TV shows, Robbie reluctantly took his tired legs from the footstool and tried to heave himself upright. Breaking out in another sweat and with his cheeks going red, he managed to lift his backside briefly on aching legs, couch cushions rising with him, but then sank back down again with a wheeze. It was interrupted by the distinct ‘crunch’ of something plastic breaking, curiously muffled. Robbie’s expression changed, and he shifted uncomfortably.

“Uhh...” he managed to finally fish out the remote, which now looked much flatter than it had before, and had developed a distinctly rump-like curve. “...Sorry, Dad.” Robbie said, his face going red. He pressed on a few buttons, but they all seemed to have been pressed pretty terminally, and there was no reaction from the TV.

“Uhh... th-that’s ok, son,” Earl said, his post-breakfast Talk with Fran about ‘positive reinforcement’ still ringing loudly in his ears. Self-consciously, he reached over to pat the boy on his ham-like upper arm, the flesh of which jiggled upon contact. “Accidents happen...”

“Oh hey, look, the Discovering Food Channel!” Robbie said hurriedly. Mutually glad of the distraction, they both settled back to watch. But Earl found his attention constantly wandering to his son lounging lethargically beside him, like the boy had developed his own gravity or something. Even the close-up sight of the glamorous Nigella Lanzhousaur sinking her astonishingly big and pearly-white smile into a huge hunk of devil’s-food cake wasn’t able to hold his attention. Seen sideways-on, Robbie’s belly filled his lap like an overfull garbage sack, the front pressing out to beyond his knees and his sides rolling heftily over the waistband of the pants he was still wearing. His whole torso seemed to swell and sag in time with his breathing, like a tide going in and out. Now propped back on the footstool, Robbie’s feet were stuck wide apart thanks to the generous bulk of his thunder-thighs and their

constant fight for space against his stomach. Even by Earl's own standards, he had to admit that his son was getting pretty 'plump'. Absent-mindedly, Robbie sweatily tugged his rumpled sweat-top free from under his voluminous chest and pulled it down over his middle. A couple of tugs pulled the material taut over his midriff, but as soon as he let it go it slid ineffectually back upwards to let most of his bare belly hang out. Robbie didn't really seem to notice. Sitting, the boy's neck had sunk into two flabby rolls atop his shoulders, jostling for space between his bulging chest and his second chin. Sweat still glistened on his cheeks as he gazed at the telly, apparently spellbound as yet another cake was produced from the oven.

"...And the one thing you want to avoid is a soggy bottom..."

Robbie shifted uncomfortably on the couch as he tugged at his sweatpants, a movement that made the couch-springs bob up and down, taking Earl with them. When it did so, there was a familiar rustling sound from behind him. Robbie blinked and looked across at Earl, TV forgotten, and Earl reluctantly fished out the half-full jumbo-value bag he'd been trying to conceal. Robbie grinned roundly, and his stomach let out a muffled gurgle, like a Tyrannosaurus rex bellowing in a distant volcano crater.

"Hey, chips! Great idea, Dad."

"Shhh!" Earl hissed frantically, the talk with Fran having included quite a long monologue criticising his own lifestyle- particularly his sitting on the couch eating chips all day like a couch-tuber. He glanced furtively up the stairs. "Don't tell your mother!" Robbie thought about this for a moment, then shrugged,

"Sure." He extended a hand towards the bag, expectantly.

"What? Oh no, you wouldn't like these," Earl said hurriedly, clutching the chips more closely to him, "They're... umm... sour cream and swamp-celery flavoured! Horrible!" He pulled a couple out and crunched them down, shuddering theatrically. "Urgh! See?"

"...Uh-huh," Robbie said, disbelievingly.

"It's true! I got them two-for-one at the grocery store by mistake, but when I took them back that snotty sales-assistant with the glasses and the bun and no sense of humour wouldn't give me a refund so we're stuck with them, but, y'know, waste not, want not...ehe" he trailed off under the deadpan look his swollen son was giving him. Then the boy sighed and leaned sideways (the couch lurching unsteadily beneath him as he did so), tilting to look up the stairs.

"Mom?!"

“SHHHhhh...!” Thoroughly defeated, Earl shoved the packet at Robbie, who grinned and took it from him.

“Thanks, Pop...” Earl’s swindling son took a large, greasy handful, and started munching.

A few minutes later and Robbie was down to the last few crumbs in the bottom of the foil packet, which he upended expertly to chute them directly into his open snout. As he did so, both he and Earl heard Charlene coming downstairs. The two larger-than-life male dinosaurs shared an alarmed look of understanding. What Charlene saw, Fran would hear about. With a panicked grunt Robbie looked around for a place to hide the incriminating evidence, but there was nowhere suitable within reach. Glancing down, desperate inspiration struck. Robbie scrunched the packet flat, pulled the neck of his overstrained sweat-top out, and posted the foil down to nestle invisibly between his pecs. Earl had to admit, he was impressed at the boy’s quick thinking. And not a moment too soon- as Robbie let his neckline twang tautly back into place, Charlene walked into the lounge, where she found her father and brother both sitting on the couch, staring with rapt attention at the TV and radiating innocence. She put her hands on her hips.

“Back *already?*” she asked acerbically, raising one eye-ridge.

“Uh-huh,” Robbie deliberately kept his eyes on the TV screen.

“That was fast! What did you do, run to the nearest bakery and back?”

“Hey!” Robbie glared at his little sister, uncomfortably aware of how red his cheeks must be going. “I ran all the way round the swamp!” Charlene folded her arms across her chest, unimpressed.

“And now you’re going to spend the rest of the day vegging out on the couch, watching TV? You’re never going to lose weight this way! You should be out in the yard doing jumping jacks or something- except that you’d probably bring the house down, Tub-o-Saur!”

“Keep it down, Charlene!” Earl cut in wearily, gesturing at the television set. “Can’t you see your brother and I are trying to concentrate?”

Charlene leaned over to peer curiously at the screen.

“You’re trying to concentrate on the *commercials?*”

“...Yes.” With years of debate with Fran under his belt, Earl knew to never, ever back down when caught out. “You never know when they might advertise something really useful, after all!”

“Ugh, *dull!* Why don’t just you change the channel? Where’s the remote?”

“The battery’s flat,” Robbie said with absolute honesty, shifting in his seat uneasily.

“Then-” she broke off as something crunched under her foot. “Ew!” she lifted her sole and inspected the crushed remains stuck to it with distaste. “What’s an old chip doing on the floor? I though Mom hoovered in here just this morn-”

“Look, Charlene, your brother and I are trying to spend some quality time together this afternoon, male-to-male.” Earl announced firmly. “Isn’t that right, Son?”

“Uhh... yeah, Dad, that’s absolutely right.” Robbie smiled at his sister, then leaned towards Earl and dropped a chubby arm across his shoulders with a damp ‘plap’ sound. There was a faint, incriminating rustle from Robbie’s corpulent chest as it jiggled from the impact, but Charlene seemed too disturbed to notice. Pressed up against his son’s side, Earl’s smile briefly became a wince, and then with visible effort he put *his* arm around Robbie’s shoulders. Or, at least, as far around them as he could manage. Robbie lifted his other arm and gave the horrified-looking Charlene a hefty thumbs-up. “I feel like we’re really *bonding*, here.”

“Ew,” Charlene recoiled, presumably from the saccharine display of father-and-son affection, but then she wrinkled her snout in disgust, “Sweat-patches! Robbie, you didn’t even change after your ‘run’! That’s *gross*.”

“Charlene,” Earl wheezed, his syrupy smile still in place “how about you bring your old man a cold beer to drink, huh?” He was starting to break out in a sweat, too. He patted Robbie’s far shoulder fondly. “And maybe a bottle of soda for your brother, too?” Charlene’s expression of disgust became one of active hostility, and she took another step backwards. Earl persevered, voice now a little croaky, “And there’s *plenty* of room on the couch for my little girl as well...”

“EW! No way! I don’t want to wind up smelling like *him!*” Charlene finally fled the room. Robbie and Earl grimly held their pose until they heard the front door slam safely shut, *then* they relaxed, heaving identical sighs of relief.

“Uhh... thanks, Dad,” Robbie said, finally removing his arm. Earl leaned away from his supersized son, coughing over the far arm of the couch.

“No... no problem, my boy,” he choked, face a rather funny colour. The shoulders and back of his plaid shirt had been left with a damp imprint of Robbie’s arm. The tubby teen cautiously lifted his arm over his head, and sniffed.

“I’ll, uhh... just go and... and... change,” he said sheepishly, hauling himself upright with audible effort and a crackle of concealed packaging. The couch retained a deep, deep imprint of his butt, and the squashed cushioning didn’t seem inclined to fill back in. With another grunt Robbie bent down to retrieve his sneakers from the floor. He tried to ignore the sound of *another* stitch popping in the seat of his sweatpants when he reached the limit of his swing.

“Rrf...I’ve... y’know... got to get ready for work.”

“Right, son” Earl gasped, fervently wafting fresh air towards his face with his hand. “You... you go do that.”

Robbie retreated upstairs as nonchalantly as he could, under the circumstances.

* * *

Probably the biggest indicator to Robbie of how he’d... ahem... grown... was how long it took him to shower nowadays. It was certainly harder to make sure everywhere was clean, there were just so many extra nooks and crannies to soap up. And then to get dry again, afterwards. His old habit of holding the towel behind his back and briskly sawing it back and forth across it produced a distressing amount of wobble, both in his sides and out front. Besides, he was sure the towel had shrunk as it got older...

Wiping down his somewhat-stretched hide as best he could with the now-sodden towel, he squeezed back into his customary striped t-shirt, only to have it stick to his still-damp scales. With a growl of frustration he wrestled it down over his chest, where it clung on as though vacuum-packed. He then took his red-and-white jacket (another quiet replacement in the next size-or-two up) from the peg behind his door and had trouble with *that*, too- stuffing his arms back into both sleeves, he met resistance around his thickening forearms. In no mood to lose another argument with clothing today he hauled his arms through anyway, and a couple more stitches popped (as they’d been doing the last few times he’d worn it), both in the cuffs and one somewhere around his back. Anyway, it was on, at least, even if the sleeves were getting a little short on him again. And the body. Looking in the mirror he sighed slightly, and tugged on the edges. He was realistic enough not to even try doing the poppers up. His belly

hung out of the front of it like a doughy meteorite. He settled for restyling his still-damp head-crest instead, trying to ignore how much thicker his spines (and fingers) felt these days as he ran one through the other.

Robbie plumped down heavily on his bed (to another loud creak of protest). He still had a little time to kill before he had to get to work. Needing to vent some serious emotion, the now undeniably overweight dino-lescent reached for his faithful guitar and slung the strap over his head. Yeah, a quick jam on his axe would... nph... make him... ngh...! feel better...

It finally dawned on Robbie that he was having trouble getting his six-string below his chest. He gave another experimental tug, and felt the strap squeeze diagonally across his shoulder and back. Oh, come on! He'd already loosened it as far as it would go last time he'd played! He looked down, only to have an arm of his guitar's star-shaped body poke him in the chin. He... he *couldn't* have put on *that* much more weight! With a building rumble of frustration he stood up, sturdy legs apart, tugged his riding-up clothes back down with the deliberation of a samurai warrior preparing for battle, took a deep breath, sucked his stomach in mightily and then *hauled* down on the guitar. This time the strap moved, and his axe slid into its accustomed position across his now much-reduced middle. Now THAT was more like it. It must have just got hooked up or something. Stomach still sucked in, he surveyed himself approvingly in the mirror. Yeah, baby, he could make this work... He took up his preferred 'Rock God' pose and struck a chord. It was then that it dawned on him he'd forgotten about the tedious necessity of breathing. In the mirror he could see his cheeks turning purple. Nevertheless, he persevered doggedly, gulping in a few more tiny breaths on top of the huge one as he tried to riff out a tune, fingers fumbling with the somehow too-small-seeming plectrum. He made it through 6 bars before his lungs ran out of room for any more air, and by the time he hit verse two his quivering cheeks and snout had turned *blue*. He finally lost the fight and let out a deep wheeze, gasping for air. As he did so he momentarily lost control of his abdominal muscles, and his compressed middle bulged ou-

Creeeeek-POW!!

Robbie's guitar jumped forwards unexpectedly, and he only just caught it. He picked up one ragged end of the strap, which was now dangling loose, and inspected it in disbelief.

“*Burst?! Aww, maaaaan...!*”

At least, Robbie concede with a reluctant sigh, cheeks burning bright red, it *was* more comfortable now, and he could still play, right? He assayed a test-scale with this unfamiliar grip, supporting the weight of the guitar solely in his arms (not to mention held quite a lot further forwards):

BLUNG-BLONG-BLORM-BLOONG-GLONG...

“What the...?!” Staring, Robbie held the guitar up in front of him, one ham-like hand around its neck. It now sported a noticeable curve along its length in an arc that exactly matched the contour of his stomach, like a horseshoe bent around an anvil. No wonder it had fitted more comfortably! It wasn’t broken (as such), but all the strings must have been stretched when it happened. And re-tuning took him ages.

“Woah,” Robbie said in a slightly awe-struck voice as he witnessed the destructive power of his own gut, then with a jolt realised that his humiliation was pretty much complete. Now even his *guitar sounded fat!* Fuming, he let the traitorous instrument drop onto his bed, and tried to banish the mental image of Spike wetting himself with laughter over this.

He really, really ought to get to work...

* * *

Pangean Pizza *was* a great place to work, no matter what Charlene thought. He’d started delivering takeout for them on Saturdays over a year ago to get some spare cash, and was now working in the restaurant kitchen three evenings a week. Robbie liked getting paid, he liked having some free time too, and it turned out he really, really *loved* pizza- even making it was kind of fun, and there were *always* leftovers at the end of the night. He usually tried to get there early, but the walk seemed to be getting longer and longer, so in fact this evening he only just made it in time.

Ironically, part of the uniform was a black-and-white striped top, which had turned out to be far more elastic than his own. In the little locker room at the back of the kitchen he hurriedly tugged the clean top down over (most of) his stomach, pulled on his black-and-white check pants and then fumbled to get the monogrammed apron tied around his girth, arms struggling to reach back far enough.

“Here Spud, lemme help you with that!” A large pair of hands grabbed the apron string from him and cinched a bow tightly in the middle of his back.

“Oof, th-thanks Brent!” There was no mistaking that deep voice. He turned around to find the locker room now seriously crowded by the bulk of the pale green apatosaur, one of the full-timers. Emphasis on ‘full’: it wasn’t just that his head brushed the ceiling, he made Robbie feel stick-thin when standing next to him. Weighing in at more than even his species was supposed to, Brent Bronto chuckled good-naturedly and then turned around slowly, sausage-like tail swishing across the floor, to present his mountain-range-like rear-view.

“Mind returning the favour?”

“Uhh, sure.” It was a stretch, but Robbie managed to grab both apron strings at once and reel them in across Brent’s bulging back, though there was very little free material to play with.

“C’mon kid, nice and tight, no need to be a sissy about it!” Flushing, Robbie tugged ineffectually on the strings a few times to no effect, then as a last resort planted a sneaker on Brent for purchase and hauled. The big fella grunted in satisfaction. “Ahh, thaaat’s more like it!” The bow tied and holding, Robbie took a step back. Two rotund lovehandles now overhung Brent’s apron strings like boulders on a clifftop, but he refrained from mentioning this. The hugely doughy dinosaur chuckled and turned around, patting his stomach. “Good job Doyle and North are already changed, huh Spud, or it’d be a REAL squash in here!” He winked, grinning, and Robbie, rather at a loss, grinned sheepishly back. He didn’t quite know why he’d been given the nickname ‘Spud’, but it seemed to have stuck with the guys.

The other dino clapped his meaty hands together once.

“Right, we don’t wanna be late. Let’s go make some dough!”

It was a long, busy shift, and by the end of it everyone in the kitchen was steaming- quite literally. Even with four dinosaurs working at once they were constantly busy, and between the ovens and the dishwasher it was like a volcanic steam-bath. Robbie found himself glistening quite quickly. It wasn’t just the ovens, the lack of space that afternoon didn’t

really help. Brent certainly took up more than his fair share of the room, but Doyle (a tubby triceratops) and North (a frankly sumo-sized stegosaurus) couldn't exactly be called slim, either. Neither was built on Brent's scale, but each was significantly rounder than Robbie, even though he was now a head taller than Doyle. It had made getting around the kitchen pretty... snug, and in their haste there had been a few collisions.

“Good job some of us are well padded, hur hur,” had been Doyle's response as he'd squeezed his big blue butt past Robbie to get at the cheese rack. Robbie hadn't really appreciated the remark. He normally had a ball at work with these guys, but he was feeling that he'd had a long day, and his row with Spike earlier kept coming back to haunt him. ‘Fat-o-saur’, huh? He should get a load of the guys Robbie worked with! *Then* he'd see who was... big, and who wasn't. With Spike hovering metaphorically over his shoulder, he'd decided today to resist the temptation to snack on the job. Not that he ever did that *normally*, of course, but the guys here set a pretty bad example. Doyle typically got through about a pound of pepperoni every hour, North usually made sure that each batch of garlic doughballs ‘was cooked right’ and Robbie had seen Brent shamelessly make and cook himself entire spare pizzas as ‘a perk’. Some of the orders they ‘delivered on their way home’ probably went the same way, too. Robbie, on the other hand, only ever took an occasional bite of an ingredient to check their freshness. Or if it got dropped on the floor for a moment and couldn't be used. Or if it was one of those crunchy, cheesy bits that got burned in the oven. Or if his energy levels were running low and he needed a boost... ahem...

Luckily, they could drink all the free soda they wanted. Robbie felt the need to rehydrate quite a lot.

Another reason for not snacking today (and for his less-than-ideal mood) was that his work-pants didn't fit. He'd been in such a hurry to suit up that it hadn't really registered at the time, but spend a few hours in too-tight pants and you really notice it. He just couldn't understand it, they'd fit just fine last shift! Sheesh, he'd noticed lately just how roomy they still were. And now... he wriggled uncomfortably as he topped yet another pizza, then tried once again to hitch his pants up a little more, as a breeze from the ceiling fan let him know that the waistband was riding down again. The cotton fabric pulled uncomfortably, glued damply to his body by perspiration. Even his sweatpants had been more comfy than this.

And then it was finally closing time, and all there was left to do was to clean up, wipe down, change and head home, and definitely *not* eat any of the leftovers this time. Robbie grimaced as his stomach growled insistently at him- it had felt like a *very* long day.

“Hey Spud, you feeling alright, buddy?”

“Huh?” In the locker room, Robbie looked sweatily across to North calling through the kitchen doorway in his surfer-dude accent.

“Only you’ve been pretty quiet all day, and I’ve barely seen you attack the mozzarella at *all*. Normally you get through at least a ball of the stuff.”

Robbie blushed, and, turning away, tried to cover his embarrassment by struggling out of his apron. Jeeze, when Brent tied a bow he tied it to last...

“No, I-I’m fine, just, y’know...” He finally got the bow undone and hauled the too-hot apron over his head, having to peel it off his t-shirt, which was now so damp it was practically see-through.

“Your pants haven’t shrunk in the wash or anything like that?” The too-innocent tone of voice caught Robbie’s attention, and he spun round to find Brent, Doyle *and* North all standing in the doorway, grinning at him.

“What the...?!”

All three burst into uproarious laughter.

“I told you!” Doyle gasped at North between gusts of laughter, “I *told* you he’d make it to the end of the shift without tumbling! That’s five bucks you owe me!” For Robbie, the penny finally dropped with a thud.

“You guys swapped my *pants* for a smaller size?!” Well, at least that made sense. “*Guys!* I can hardly BREATHE in these things!” But that only made them laugh harder.

“No!” Brent guffawed, clutching his aching sides. “We... oh, this is priceless, haha...! We... we swapped your pants *back!*”

“You WHAT?!” Robbie squawked, bewildered, feeling his face growing redder and redder. He tugged suspiciously at the pants he was wearing, but there was so little give he could barely get his fingers between him and the waistband. Brent finally subsided, wiping tears of mirth from his eyes.

“Hee hee, you... you’ve been... haha... wearing a spare pair of *Doyle’s* pants for the last month!”

“I... I have? But... but...” Doyle smirked, twisted side-on and gave his prodigious backside a swipe with one clawed hand, making it wobble gelatinously. It was something of a running

gag that the pear-shaped triceratops' rear was officially 'huge'. The only other backside outsizing it on the staff was Brent's. "But... they *fit* me!" Robbie gulped disbelievingly. He twisted and tried to examine his own backside, but the pants he was wearing creaked alarmingly. Robbie had always been able to sneak a look at the tubbed-out triceratops and think at least he wasn't *that* big. The powder-blue herbivore was so round his arms were nearly out horizontal, and his horns and frill looked increasingly stumpy compared to his increasingly-fat features.

"Haha, they sure did by the *end*, Spud!" Doyle winked at him evilly. "Welcome to the Big Leagues." Brent grinned, folded his arms across his hugely chubby chest and leaned comfortably against a locker with a crunch, denting it irreparably.

"Damn, kid, didn't you even notice how big you've been getting? We sure have- it's been kind of hard to miss! When we traded you up, we never thought you'd actually *fill* those pants." Both Doyle and North snorted back another attack of laughter.

"NOT funny, guys!" Robbie said heatedly, fumbling ineffectually with the button on his own, too-tight pants. "Soooo not funny *at all!*"

"Woah, haha, lighten up Spud! Whoops, heh, bad choice of words-"

"I get it, ok!?" Robbie gave up trying to undo the button imprisoning him in these pants- it felt like even a deep breath would probably pop it anyway. He squirmed hurriedly out of his uniform top, and then tried to haul his normal t-shirt over his head and down in one go. It stretched, then rebounded stubbornly up to around his chest, and he finally gave up. Robbie stared down at his big belly bulging out from under it, unable to look at anyone else in the eye. "I'm... I'm FAT." There, he'd said it.

"You sure are," Brent agreed, shifting his weight comfortably. "Welcome to the club."

"Now will you all get off my *back*?!"

"Woah! Easy, Spud, it's just a joke. We're ALL fat, in case you hadn't noticed. None of us are saying that's BAD!" For emphasis the swollen sauropod hefted his huge belly, shook it and then let it drop with a cutlery-shaking BOOMPH. "C'mon, we weren't picking on you, we've all been hazed, it comes with being the newbie."

"You should have seen the deal they made out of *my* colossal keister after I'd been here a while," Doyle chipped in, grinning. "You guys kept shrinking my pants in the dryer until one day I bent down and blew the seat right out of them, remember?" North snorted in amusement.

“Hate to tell you, dude, but we actually only had to shrink them *once*.” His flabby, armoured tail-tip swung heavily, thumping against Doyle’s belly, “You did the rest all by yourself.”

“Oof! Heh, I’ve gone up a few uniform sizes since *then*.” Doyle commented, unabashed. Robbie gaped slightly, and the jumbo-sized triceratops gave him a sympathetic look. “Hell, if you’re worried about *that*, kid, they’re *used* to giving us the next size up. *Everyone* who works here winds up packing on weight. Geeze, when stego-stomach here first started he was *buff*.”

“Heh, ‘occupational hazard’,” North put in.

“Besides, if they can find something to fit Bronto-zilla here *you’re* gonna be *easy*!”

“What’s up, kid?” Brent asked, more kindly. “We sure didn’t think you’d erupt like that.”

Robbie sighed, to an accompanying creak from his too-tight uniform.

“It’s just... my sister keeps calling me a Fat-o-Saur, my folks look at me like they expect me to pop or something, I can’t fit even into *any* of my clothes any more, my *Dad’s* clothes are getting too tight for me, I think I broke the couch earlier, I can’t seem to stop myself *eating* all the time and my best friend is acting like he hates me because he’s skinny and I’m not!”

Robbie’s three co-workers winced in unison.

“Ouch!”

“Damn. Tough break, dude.”

Brent said nothing but looked thoughtful, stroking his three chins, then glanced meaningfully at Doyle and North. The pair looked at each other, then back at the bloated brontosaurus.

“Y’know, sounds like we need to introduce our Spud here to some of the *perks* of being a Fat-o-Saur...” he opined in a slow, ripe tone, a smile slowly spreading on his fat face. Both the stegosaurus and triceratops started to grin too, and they all looked at Robbie. He instinctively backed away, but found numerous chunky hands gently gripping at his upper arms before they eased him back into the kitchen.

“Uhh... g-guys? Guys?”

“Normally we just keep this just between us full-timers, Spud,” Brent commented conversationally, still herding Robbie towards the middle of the kitchen-space, until the other three dinosaurs were in a rough triangle around him, “but we’re definitely starting to think of

you as part of the family...” Brent’s grin widened. “Perk number one, Fat-o-Saurs get to eat as much as they *like!*” He looked over Robbie’s head to the two dinos behind him. “I think we’re gonna need a few *extra* pizzas this evening, guys, seeing as Spud here is still so downright *skinny*. The kid’s got some catching up to do!”

“Heh, don’t worry dude, the ovens are still plenty hot.” Robbie risked a glance over his shoulder at the grinning stegosaurus as he said this, but then Brent advanced by another waddling step, holding a whole mozzarella in his hefty hand.

“In the meantime...”

Robbie tried to take a step backwards, only to come up short as he unexpectedly bumped into what felt like a warm, scaly wall of jello. His three outsized co-workers closed in around him like the fattest pack of velociraptors you’ve ever seen, Doyle’s and North’s guts pressed against his back and sides as they overlapped their arms around him, holding him in place, Brent’s gargantuan one squashing up against his stomach and chest.

“G-guys..?” he repeated uncertainly to the plump faces pressing in around his, wriggling slightly against his yielding but impenetrable pizza-y prison. He felt *very* small and skinny all of a sudden.

“Perk number *two*, the bigger you are, kid, the more weight you’ve got to throw around!” Eyes wide, Robbie tried to lean back as the much, much bigger dinosaur pressed forward, but as he did so there was a muffled ‘pop’, and his pants suddenly felt less constricting. Behind him someone sniggered a little, and Robbie felt his face going even redder.

“Don’t worry kid,” Brent winked encouragingly, bringing the cheese closer. Then he paused thoughtfully. “Say what, why don’t you see if that skinny friend of yours is interested in getting a job here? We’ll soon... improve his attitude to big guys, huh?” Robbie gawped at him, round-eyed as the others chuckled. “Heh, but for now, all you’ve gotta do is relax, and *open wide...*”

As Robbie spluttered, the whole ball of mozzarella was pressed into the heavyweight teen’s mouth.

* * *

It was quite some time later, well after the sun had set, before Robbie was stumbling unsteadily home. He swayed with glacial slowness, t-shirt splattered in tomato sauce stains

and stray strands of melted cheese and his jacket dangling loosely over his shoulder, secured in one numb fist. Each teetering step made his straining belly wobble, and he had to repress a small moan. He. Was. So. STUFFED!!! He was beyond 'full', and had now reached that paradoxical state on the other side where it felt like he was having to concentrate to keep his feet on the ground, otherwise he might float away like a balloon. He couldn't even focus on where he was or the view ahead, he just kept taking small steps and tried not to make his stomach move about. He didn't think it would have been possible for him to eat... *everything*... like that...

A little while later he blearily recognised his family front door. Pushing at it weakly, Robbie staggered through into the kitchen, trying not to breathe too deeply against the planetoid that seemed to have appeared in his stomach. He was dimly aware of his family as blurry outlines seated at the dinner table against his squinted eyes. Conversation seemed to stop dead as he appeared, though it was hard to tell. Fran's voice seemed to float from a long way away, somewhere beyond the surf pounding in his ears.

"Hello, dear. We didn't think you'd be out this late. Was it a long shift? I thought you might be hungry, so we've saved you some dinner..." Nobody commented on his stomach, which he was sure must be at least twice the size it had been. After a couple of aching breaths to gather his wits he opened his mouth to reply- an effort in itself after all that chewing- but a subterranean belch overtook his speech.

"BWUURRRP! N-no thanks Mom, I'm... oof... I'm... I'm good." His voice came out oddly squashed, having to squeeze past his stomach as it pressed against his lungs. "I think I'll... unff... skip dinner t'night, thanks..." He continued to lumber zombie-like through the kitchen even as he spoke, and by the time he'd finished he was already half-way out the door, leaving his astonished family staring at one another in his waddling wake.

He didn't know how he managed the stairs, but he must have done somehow, because next thing he knew he was in his room, and all he wanted to do ever again in his life was to lie down, except that bending turned out to be physically impossible. And weren't you meant to do stuff before getting into bed, too? Oh, yeah... he got so far as lifting the hem of his t-shirt when a splitting sound left him unsure if stitches had burst in the shirt or in *him*. Ugh, whatever... Abandoning any further attempt at undressing, he took aim at the bed swimming back and forth in his vision and just half-fell, half-rolled backwards onto it with a deep grooan. An answering groan told him that he'd scored a direct hit, but he was so dizzy he

could hardly tell that he was laying down. Another huge burp welled out of him as his stomach settled on top of him, pinning him irrevocably to the furniture. Right then he couldn't have got up even if he'd wanted to. He couldn't even summon the strength to kick his sneakers off- not that he could get his feet anywhere near one another at the moment, spread-eagled as he was across the mattress.

Robbie lay on his back like a beached pliosaurus, wheezing and panting as his stomach seemed to stretch by yet another impossible inch. He moaned weakly, and wriggled ineffectually beneath the dead-weight. He felt like he'd been blown up with some kind of pump. His hands started to scrabble blindly across the taut, swollen surface of his belly, scales stretched almost to popping point, but the pleasure/agonny this sent searing along his nerves almost made him faint. Instead his hands quested upwards, at first fumbling unconsciously to grip the sliver of meteorite squashed deep between his pecs somewhere under his t-shirt, then giving up and just pressing the sides of his chest so that the mounds of scaly flesh squeezed against it more firmly. That constant, familiar warm tingle grew, and seemed to swell and spread throughout his entire body, finally centring on his gut, pulsing in time with his laboured breathing. An aching, stuffed smile spread dreamily on his stubby snout, and the tubby end of his tail twitched. He struggled to keep his eyelids open, but suddenly each seemed to weigh as much of the rest of him combined. As the world went hazy his brain felt like it was riding a ferris wheel, but the only word going round and round with it was:

Fat-o-saur... fat-o-saur... fat... o... saurrrr...

Robbie's eyes started open, and looked around. He was standing in the familiar hallway of Bob LaBrea high school, lockers lining the walls between the doors, but he couldn't remember getting there. Did he have class to get to or something? Suddenly worried that this was one of those anxiety dreams where he turned up at school naked, he looked down at himself. Phew, fully dressed in t-shirt and jacket. The only downside was, he was also still fat. Gloomily, he guessed this wasn't a dream, after all.

A glint of something shiny off to one side caught his attention, and he lumbered over to investigate. Huh, a full length mirror in the hallway? That was a little... weird.

Nevertheless, he took a moment with it to adjust his head-crest to its optimum angle, then took a step back to check it in context.

“Hey, *fat-o-saur!*”

Robbie’s belly let out a subterranean rrrumble, and he... *grew*. It was hard to describe, it felt like he’d just had the biggest sneeze of his life, except he hadn’t sneezed. He blinked down at himself. He... he was *vast!* Standing there, he must have taken up more than half the hallway, with a belly the size of a mountain range hanging out. He could feel it rubbing against his knees. Looking in the mirror, *all* you could see was dino-gut. Mind you, he was having some trouble seeing past his bloated, chubby cheeks, which now bulged up into his field of vision. His straining t-shirt was struggling even to cover his chest, and his jacket, stretched across his back, felt like it barely hung down below his shoulderblades. The rest of his bare torso hung out, bulging all around. Even at rest, his upper arms (each now rounder than a giant tree-fern) stuck out almost horizontally from his sides. His tail felt like lead as it sat on the floor behind him. With a laborious waddle, he managed to turn and look over his shoulder into the mirror. Oh man, his butt must be as big as Brent’s! He was a whopper-saur!

As all this streamed through his head, part of him was vaguely aware that he should be feeling aghast or something right now. But, funnily, he wasn’t. He felt *great*.

Footsteps approached down the hall from the direction of the gravelly voice, and he turned heavily to see Spike standing there, looking at him in amazement.

“Woah, Chunk! You’re BIGGER than ever!” Robbie oofed as a finger poked him in his enormous belly. “What did you do, eat the *football team* or something?” Another poke.

“We’d better get the school nurse to deflate you before you pop, fat-o-saur!”

Robbie suddenly felt a big smile stretch his fat, fat face. What was perk number two again?

“Ahh, can it, you squirt!” Stepping towards Spike, Robbie swung bodily and belly-bumped his friend backwards into next-week, or at least the lockers across the hallway. A couple more steps and the uber-rotund reptile was squashing Spike against the metal, all the bandana-wearing loud-mouth’s breath wheeeeeezing out of him. Grinning sweatily, Robbie

planted his fat hands on the lockers either side of Spike and just leaned there, the locker doors bowing inwards under the pressure. All that he could see of his buddy was his head, comically small and squashed between his moobs. The rest of him was squeezed between Robbie's gargantuan gut and cheap metal. The ankylosaur struggled, pinned arms trying to shove Robbie backwards, sideways, anywhere, but he just smirked and stood there, completely immovable. Blue face slowly turning purple (and half-muffled by Robbie's rolling chest), he tried to speak.

"Mfflphhrglmph harglgffflml glmph-itis!"

Robbie grunted as a shiver ran through him, and he felt himself swell a little larger, much to the distress of the lockers and the unfortunate Spike pinned between them and him.

"Hmmp!" He sank further between Robbie's moobs. The teenaged behemoth's clothing straiined, then relaxed as he felt stitches popping in his t-shirt and jacket. He giggled.

Suddenly this felt so *good!*

"Hehe, better watch that mouth of yours, Spike, one of these days it could get you into... *big* trouble!" He swung round on the spot, dragging the luckless Spike with him- who now had a couple of bits of locker impaled on his back-spines- then wrapped his blubbery arm fondly around his buddy's neck in a pneumatic headlock that made Spike look like he was wearing an oversized green life-preserver.

"Glaak!" Spike wheezed, slowly returning to his normal colour. He hauled backwards, but couldn't pull his head through the collar of flab Robbie held it firmly in. The supersized dino chuckled and squeezed playfully, pulling Spike even closer against his rolling side.

"Y'know man, I *am* sorry you feel so bad about being skinny and all, but don't keep taking it out on *me!* You're gonna have to get used to me being Large and In Charge around here, ok bud?"

"Fmg!" Spike slapped at Robbie's rolling acreage of lovehandle, but only managed to set the scaly flab sloshing.

"I *said*, 'ok, bud'?" Robbie squeezed meaningfully.

"Unff! O-ok!" Spike panted, struggles subsiding in the shadow of Robbie's enormous, saurian-sumo bulk.

"And no more name-calling?"

"S-sure thing, Chu-uhh... Scoot-errr... Robbie..." There was a new tone of respect in Spike's voice. The humungous hypsilophodon grinned down at his best friend and shifted his

arm so that it draped companionably across the ankylosaur's bony shoulders. It swamped him in arm-chub almost as much as the headlock, and half-buried him against Robbie's belly. "Heh, thanks man. Maybe you'll even pick up some tips about how to put on some weight." The two-tonne teen smiled and slapped a hand fondly against his own blimp-like belly, which wobbled and then growled loudly. "Woah, how about we get some lunch from the cafeteria? I'm starving!" He set off, nearly dragging Spike with him for the first couple of steps. He was a total, utter humungo-saur who was bursting out of his barely-surviving clothes, the lockers all shook and trembled down the corridor at his stomping footfalls, and his stomach swayed enormously with each step. He couldn't stop grinning. "Wh-whatever you say, Robbie." Then he felt Spike press his free hand deep against Robbie's huge, bare, rolling monster of a gut, and jiggle it shyly. "Uhh... whatever you wanna eat, I'm buying, Big Guy... Big Guy... Big Guy..."

Robbie's eyes opened to gaze blearily at his bedroom wall where late morning sunshine was illuminating it, snout resting on the sleeve of his t-shirt where it cinched his chubby upper arm. He grunted in surprise, lay there for a moment, then gave a slow, sleepy grin of recollection before lifting his head up. He was still sprawled on his back, but at least he no longer felt like he was about to split like an over-ripe fruit. In fact, he felt kinda hungry already. Glancing at his clock, his eyes widened slightly at the time. Woah, no wonder, he'd slept in half the morning. Talk about heavy sleeping. He struggled to sit up, but found that next to impossible, so instead he rolled out of bed and unsteadily onto his feet, stumbling a couple of paces. Huh, he'd slept in his sneaks? And his t-shirt. He glanced at the bed, and his eyes widened. And on top of his guitar, which he'd dropped on the bed before going to work yesterday...

Robbie gazed at the several broken pieces of his crushed guitar strewn across the heavily dented bed, then shrugged to himself and headed for the door.

He inspected himself thoughtfully in the bathroom mirror before heading downstairs. He definitely looked bigger than yesterday. All over. He hefted his belly in both hands, then turned sideways on and gave it a shake, before squeezing up a roll of flab on his bulging side. Yeah, he was getting to be a big boy alright. He couldn't help the chubby grin he gave himself in the mirror. Last night seemed to have altered his perspective a little. Stretching his arms sleepily behind his head, he spotted that both seams of his t-shirt had popped stitches

under his podgy arms, letting his scales peek through. His smile took on a hint of pride. A BIG boy...

His stomach rumbled a pointed reminder about breakfast. He growfed at himself in the mirror, then hauled tail out of the bathroom. He almost collided with Charlene on the landing outside as she waited to use the bathroom, complete in dressing gown, anti-spot exfoliating face-pack, cucumber eye-slices and frill-brace.

“Ew!” Lifting a cucumber slice, she gave his stained, sweaty, slept-in t-shirt an appalled look, then wrinkled her snout. “You’ve been in the bathroom ten minutes and you didn’t even *wash*? Keep away from me, slob-o-saurus!” She started to walk past him, then did a theatrical double-take. “Have you got even *fatter*?! Bulge-itis lives, Tubbo-saur!”

Perk number two...?

Robbie swung his ponderous slug of a tail, catching Charlene across her torso as she tried to stomp past him, sending her cucumber slices flying as she stopped dead. They slapped wetly against the far wall. Almost casually he got her in a ‘playful’ brotherly headlock, snout pressed up near his armpit. She squealed and struggled, but the sound was muffled by his blubber.

“Heh, y’know sis, you’re right: I AM a fat-o-saur! But just remember, no matter *what* size I am I’ll always be your big, BIG brother! Gimme a *hug*.” Charlene’s muffled squeal of horror was a big brother’s joy.

Robbie released his hold and she dazedly struggled upright, face-pack smeared everywhere. Still grinning, he ‘casually’ herded his sister against the wall until she was trapped by his expansive bulk.

“I’d really appreciate it, sis, if you could stop worrying Mom about my weight. I’m *fine*.” He pressed a little closer, making her wriggle in disgust. His grin widened slightly. “And if I have got Bulge-itis, better hope I’m not *contagious*, huh?” Charlene’s eyes widened, and she gave him a look combining sisterly disgust, loathing and outright fear. She hurriedly slid along the wall, squeezing past his big, soft gut. Robbie let her get most of the way, then added quietly.

“Don’t make me *sit* on you.”

Charlene took one look at her blubbery brother’s rotund rear, squealed again and ran for her room. In the echoing silence that followed the slammed door, Robbie grinned contentedly, then headed for the stairs. He’d give Spike a call later, and see if he wanted to hang out with his fat friend this afternoon. And maybe earn some extra dough at Pangaeon Pizza.

But first, breakfast!

Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud.

Thud-thud-thud-thud-THUD...

“Hey Mom, any chance of some bacon sandwiches this morning? I’m *seriously* hungry for some reason...”

Fin.