

## **The Swimmer's Fast Food Feast**

By: Indigo Rho

The rain poured hard in the college town of Troy. Angelo bolted down the sidewalk, sticking to what little cover he could find. A storefront awning here, a covered bus stop there. The lean cheetah was once again thankful for his agile form. Though more used to gliding through the water as part of the university swim team than running, he could still cover ground fast. He wore a loose tank top and exercise shorts, and kept his swim bag tucked close to his body. Nothing that wouldn't survive a soaking.

He dashed from a bus stop across the street to Bounty Burger, throwing open the door to escape the rain. He very rarely ate fast food—no sane athlete would ruin their diet with so much grease and calories—but there were few options for food so close to midnight, and swim practice had left him starving.

Bounty Burger was bright and welcoming. The place looked spotless, and soft music played over the speakers. No other customers were there, not even a drunk or two grabbing a bite to eat after hitting the bar.

Angelo walked up to the front counter, leaving a small trail of water in his wake. A plump, silver wolf manned the register, the only employee on duty. He wore a broad smile and a uniform that clung to his middle, showing off his every curve. According to his nametag, his name was Sheen.

"Welcome to Bounty Burger, what can I get for you tonight?" Sheen asked cheerfully.

"Just a plain hamburger," Angelo said. He needed something cheap and relatively low in calories.

"For only a dollar more, you could get our Jailbreak Combo! It comes with our signature Jumbo Bounty Burger, a large fries, and an extra-large drink," Sheen suggested.

Angelo rolled his eyes. As if he'd be interested in all that crap. "No, a hamburger's fine."

"Or, for only two dollars more, you can get the Outlaw Prize Combo! Two triple patty Bounty Burgers, twenty chicken nuggets, our special bandit sauce, and two extra-large drinks."

"Why the hell would I want even more?" Angelo pointed towards his

flat middle. “Do I *look* like I stuff myself all day with shit like that?”

“One combo meal won’t hurt. Why not treat yourself to a deal?”

Angelo still vividly remembered what had happened to Ivan, a sea otter on the swim team freshman year. He’d started getting take-out while studying for finals, then got addicted to fast food. Inevitably, he started packing on the pounds, and ended up getting kicked off the team when he couldn’t lose the weight. The last time Angelo had spotted Ivan, the otter had swelled so huge he was nearly unrecognizable. The rest of the team had gotten a good laugh at the cell phone pictures he’d shared later.

“Never,” Angelo said insistently, leaning over the counter. His eyes flickered to Sheen’s round middle. “I’m not a pig like you,” he added under his breath.

“Never say never.” Sheen smiled. He pulled out a wobbly silver band and swiftly slapped Angelo’s wrist with it. The band wrapped the cheetah’s wrist with a snap.

Angelo pulled his arm back and stumbled away from the counter. “What the hell?!” he growled. He grabbed the strange snap bracelet that’d been forced on him and tried to yank it off. Instead, it stretched like rubber. When he let go, it snapped right back into place. It appeared solid, somehow, without any visible clasp or hook to keep it on. “What is this thing?!” he demanded.

“Just a little token to help give you an open mind,” Sheen said.

The bracelet suddenly puffed up, before spewing white, liquid rubber. The rubber quickly coated Angelo’s paw and his arm up to his elbow. It stuck to him and only him, not dripping or splattering no matter how hard he swung his arm. As he stared in shock at the sight, he realized the rubber covering over his paw made it look like a hoof.

The rubber continued to spread, moving up his arm and across his chest. It covered his clothes and refused to budge, merely stretching and creaking whenever Angelo pulled. “Turn it off, turn it off!” He begged.

“Oh, don’t panic, it’s only a bit of rubber,” Sheen said from behind the counter. “With the weather like this, I’d say it’s far more preferable to fur.”

The rubber poured down Angelo, leaving behind a gleaming coat of white. When it reached his shoes, they morphed into black hooves. He was turning into a rubber sheep. “Stop it! Stop it or I’ll call the cops!” he croaked.

It was a poor bluff, since his phone had been in his pants pocket and now lay under a solid layer of impenetrable rubber.

Sheen strolled casually around the counter. His belly had a slight wobble to it. “Just give it a few seconds more and I’m certain you’ll change your tune.”

Angelo whimpered as he felt the rubber creep up his neck and the right side of his face. His right eye was enveloped, the pupil changing from a round feline’s to a rectangular sheep’s. His whole muzzle was warped. The intense desire to flee overcame him, but he couldn’t bring himself to move an inch.

Sheen leaned in close, his eyes staring right into Angelo’s. “Now why don’t you be a good sheep and follow the rest of the flock. They all *love* fast food. They can’t get enough of it. They eat and eat until their bellies grow too heavy to handle and furniture is crushed beneath their weight. Don’t you want to eat like that, too?”

Angelo tried to shake his head, but instead, he nodded in agreement. The wolf’s words brushed aside his own thoughts and concerns. A nervous, creaky frown spread across Angelo’s face as the rest of him was completely covered in rubber. Where the cheetah had once been, a rubber sheep now stood.

“I’ll eat,” Angelo bleated submissively.

“Wonderful.” Sheen wrapped an arm around Angelo’s back. “Now take a seat while I grab your order.”

Angelo’s legs obeyed before his mind had even a moment to dwell upon it. He sat down at the closest table. As soon as he did, Sheen slid a massive tray overflowing with burgers and fries before him. It was the sort of excessive, unhealthy feast he normally would’ve balked at.

“A good sheep needs to eat, and I *know* you’re a good sheep,” Sheen said with a chuckle. Angelo bleated in affirmation. “Good. Feel free to dig in. And don’t worry, there’ll be plenty more once you’re through.”

Angelo unwrapped the first burger and crammed it into his mouth. He ate with giant bites, caring only about filling his stomach. When the first was gone, he immediately picked up a second. He devoured burgers left and right, not caring how many patties they had or the hundreds of calories within them. In between, he scarfed down handfuls of fries, only slowing to

douse them in sauce.

Sheen surrounded the tray with large cups of soda and milkshakes. Angelo didn't remember the wolf ever leaving. He couldn't find the energy to care. Eating was what Sheen wanted him to do, so that's what he did.

The feast of fast food caused Angelo's flat middle to swell out. It grew rounder and rounder with every bite, spreading over the rubber sheep's lap. He was only vaguely aware of it, unable to take his eyes off the food he felt compelled to consume.

Sheen came up behind Angelo and leaned over his shoulder. He wrapped his arms around them and placed his paws on the sides of their ballooning belly. He slowly rubbed and squeezed their middle, wandering over its entire surface. "See what you've been missing all this time?" His whispers echoed through Angelo's head. "What's the point of starving yourself thin, when you could be indulging in every culinary delight the world has to offer? Pig out on fast food. Stuff yourself with snacks. Gobble up any and all desserts. You were meant to eat, not run."

The words seeped into Angelo's brain, purging any hint of resistance to the wolf's will. He began to eat faster and chug more. Whenever it seemed like the tray was running low on food, the feast would replenish in a flash. The more Angelo ate, the hungrier he felt.

Angelo's bloated gut pressed against the edge of the table. It creaked whenever he leaned forward in search of more food, shaking the table. Sheen pulled Angelo's chair back, giving the engorged sheep more room to grow. He continued groping Angelo's middle, rubbing and wobbling it with glee. "Good sheep eat," he reminded them. "Glut until you become a food balloon."

Angelo nodded enthusiastically. The need to consume consumed him. In the far, distant back of his mind, a voice demanded he stop, rambling on about things like "calories" and "fat" and "abs". It was so quiet, so easy to dismiss. He needed to do what Sheen told him to, to be a good sheep.

Every possible permutation of every possible item on the Bounty Burger menu passed before Angelo and into his maw. He guzzled gallons of soda and milkshakes. He didn't attempt to stifle any belch that escaped his lips, not wishing to waste time that could be spent grabbing something fresh to gobble up.

The chair groaned beneath Angelo, protesting his mindless gluttony. He ignored it, like everything that didn't have to do with eating. His gleaming, white belly spilled over his lap in every direction. Sheen didn't even have to lean over to squeeze his gut. They paced around him, running a claw along the taut curve of their side. If Angelo slowed down the slightest bit, Sheen would rejuvenate his relentless appetite with an encouraging whisper.

Metal creaked, and the chair finally gave in. Angelo bleated in surprise as his rump flattened the chair. His gut bounced up and down and he belched up a storm. But after a moment of shock, he began reaching for the table above, his thoughts never far from food.

"Let me help you with that. You've still got so much to eat, sheep." Sheen moved the tray on top of Angelo's gut. From there, the rubber sheep could practically shovel food into his maw.

Angelo glugged and swelled, glugged and swelled. His belly pushed over the table and buried his legs, blimping until he resembled a giant, bleating snowball. But there reached a point where he could no longer reach the tray. He held his arm out, hoof groping for a burger he was sure existed beyond the peak of his belly.

Then the tray vanished.

"Congratulations on expanding your horizons along with your middle," Sheen said, pushing a paw deep into the beached sheep's belly. They bleated and belched. "As much as I'd love to see you eat for a few hours more, I'm afraid I have to close up the joint, and I'm not approved for overtime. So why don't we get you mobile again? Relatively speaking," he cackled.

Sheen smacked Angelo's belly, sending a ripple across its rubbery surface. Angelo's belly wobbled, then began to rapidly shrink. As it did, every other part of him began puffing up. His thighs grew thicker and his rump widened. His face rounded out and multiple double chins formed, softening his features further. He watched in stunned silence as his obscene feast digested in a matter of seconds, converting into rubbery fat.

Once the shrinking and swelling ceased, Angelo had been transformed yet again, into a blubbery rubber sheep nearly as wide as he was tall.

Sheen reached down and yanked Angelo back onto his feet. The sheep

wobbled and swayed, a stranger to his new girth. Sheen's grin widened. "Heft suits you, sheep. You'll no longer suffer as a twig. You'll be able to eat to your heart's content, unbound by silly things like diets and exercise. I can't promise you'll ever be sated, though, not with how monstrous your appetite has no doubt grown."

Angelo simply nodded, lacking any independent thought of his own.

Sheen nudged Angelo along to the exit. He opened the door, letting the cool night air and the sound of the pouring rain wander in. "Enjoy your night, sheep. I'm sure I'll be seeing you again."

A shove forced the bulky sheep forwards. He soon became wedged in the door. Another shove squeezed him through, and the door slammed shut behind him.

Angelo stood in the rain, unsure of what to do next. Raindrops ran down the slick, rubbery surface of his body. Clear drops gradually turned white, the rubber washing away. The sheep melted away, exposing the cheetah beneath. The pounds remained, though. Angelo's tank top clung to his doughy chest, while his shorts had ripped down the sides. His senses slowly returned to him, mixed with tremendous confusion. He sort of remembered overeating, and a voice egging him on.

The befuddled cheetah looked down, and his eyes widened in disbelief. His heart pounded and his belly jiggled from his heavy breathing. He looked himself over, staring at every bulge and curve. "No. No no no," he muttered to himself. "How, how could this happen? It was one meal, it was only one meal." He shut his eyes and opened them again, but his blubber remained. No amount of pinching, shouting, or pleading brought back the lithe body he'd prided himself in.

"Sheen. He did this to me, somehow. He can turn me back, he has to!" Angelo turned around, wincing at how every inch of him now wobbled. The lights in the Bounty burger were out. No shadows moved within. The chair he faintly remembered crushing was in perfect condition. It was as if he'd never even gone inside.

Angelo's ears flattened and he let out a sorrowful sigh. He didn't know how he'd gained so much weight so fast, but he did know his swimming days were over. He wasn't even sure he could complete a single lap in the pool anymore.

“I...I can lose the weight. I just have to maintain my workout routine.” If he could even fit on half the machines at the gym anymore. Or jog as long as he used to. “I’ll diet. I can’t stay this fat forever.” There was little conviction behind his words.

The massive cheetah’s stomach rumbled. Despite everything, hunger had already managed to creep up on him. The diet could start tomorrow. For now, he needed to at least nab a snack. There was a twenty-four-hour food mart on the way home. Surely they’d have something decent to eat.

Angelo slowly lumbered away from Bounty Burger, cursing his lack of umbrella as the rain soaked him through. He unconsciously rubbed his doughy belly. Thoughts of food drifted into his head. On the wind, he swore he heard distant laughter.