

[NSFW] Two Gay Furies Kissing in the Backrooms

WeirdlyHotPepper · Oct 8, 2025 · [backrooms](#) [furry](#) [gay](#) [liminal spaces](#) [original](#) [plot before porn](#)
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Two men, transformed forever, meet in the ultimate liminal space. Watch them fall in love, watch them live happily ever after.

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2.2k

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2.1k

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...

7.6 - And This Will Be~! The One Moment That Matters~! (Fritz)

New

Words:
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Tuesday at 13:56

7.7 - system (Terry)

New

Words:
2.1k

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7.8 - It Just Ain't Living~! (Fritz)

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Threadmarks: 1.1 - return (Terry)

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Oct 8, 2025

🔗 📖 #1



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

Foreword: This story will, eventually, have smut and explicit sexual themes. However, this is a plot-first, long form, slow burn romance/slice-of-life story. It's 'plot with some porn eventually', so to speak. When smut/lewd happens, it will be relevant to the themes and plot.

This story is proudly made WITHOUT AI.

You can read 20 (!) advance chapters on my Patreon if you become a supporter: <https://www.patreon.com/cw/WeirdlyHotPepper>

Updates every weekday, taking weekends off. That's over 10k words a week!

1.1 - return (Terry)

Terry's apartment has grown a tail, and it extends as a hallway where once was the outside.

The impossible passage would be expected if only it were built with intention. It's as if his apartment is larger: the same peeling paint on the walls, the droning of the AC, the carpet trampled down by decades.

But this isn't his home. This is something new.

Terry has grown a tail, and it extends from his tailbone where once was nothing.

The impossible appendage would be expected if only because it fits the



rest of his body. It's as if he were always an anthropomorphic fox: twitching ears atop his head, a snout protruding under his eyes, bright red and white fur adorning him...

But this isn't his body. This is something new.

The change must have occurred while sleeping. Reality was normal the night before, and now he walks as a fox-person through absurd architectural growths.

His old backpack is packed with rations and those useful things he could find in his home--duct tape and the like. He's prepared for a journey, and he doesn't expect to return.

Earlier, his first foray into the impossible space lasted twenty minutes. Yet there was still plenty to explore, twists and turns and intersections implying enormity beyond sense. He had to return, to stock up for the journey.

He would stay in his apartment, but he predicts his food will run out quickly. The logic, then, is to use what he has to fuel himself in search of more. If there is more.

With a measured pace, he walks, flip-flops clip and clack against his soles. Human shoes aren't built to fit anthropomorphic fox feet, with their claws and off shape. These flip-flops only barely accommodate him as is. He considers going barefoot, but decides not to risk it.

Somehow, he's taller than before the change. Enough to notice, enough to make his alien body stumble and trip all the more. He wears old sweatpants, pilfered from the darkest corners of his closet, hitched up to just under where the tail comes out. A once-loose shirt strains against his chest, and his jacket refuses to fully zip.

If he still needed his glasses, he would have been in trouble: the wrong ears for the temple tips to rest on, snout too wide for the bridge to accommodate. But his transformation cured his nearsightedness. Lucky, for sure, but concerning all the same.

What happened to him? How? Why this form and not another?

Is he the only one?



He turns the corner to reveal more hallway, carved with the same tools that built his apartment. Where's all this from? Why base it off something as ridiculous as his run-down one-bedroom? This kind of thing doesn't happen randomly, and yet there is no explanation forthcoming.

Is it a general process, and he's just caught up in it, or a targeted attack on him personally?

The lack of doors adds to the hair-raising effect. For as long as the hallways are--and they are quite long--there are perhaps a twentieth the number of expected doors for the size.

He opens each of them, peaking inside to find empty rooms. Some are too large to be useful, some so small the door can't complete its inward swing, some thin like truncated hallways.

Once, behind a door, there is a lamp. The shock of it stuns him with its simple absurdity, but inspection proves it to be a simple desk lamp resting on the carpet. The wire embeds into the wall, as if it wanted a socket to be there and forced the issue when it couldn't be found.

For all this place seems to grow from the seed of his apartment...

He doesn't recognize the lamp.

A brick weighs in his pocket. A smartphone, his phone, dead. Dead like his laptop, like his smart watch, like his old phones, and his PC.

Technology has gone dark. But some remains: the AC still cools, the light bulbs shine, his microwave heats, the faucets pour water...

But if something's too advanced, if it can be used for communication, it's a brick. Useless.

Terry doesn't know what that means yet.

Hours, and finally a room has furniture: a single reclining chair of unfamiliar make, facing the far wall, back to the door. The room is too long, bent like a rod of cooling metal. He has almost come to expect the uncanny, thrown off more by the chair than the room.



Moving the chair back from the wall is simple, sitting not so much. The tail connected to him bunches up uncomfortably against the back, sending unnatural jolts of lightning up his spine. Carefully, he moves the offending appendage so it somewhat wraps around his waist, then does his utmost to ignore it.

He's been walking for hours and hasn't eaten more than a granola bar since awakening. Yet, he isn't hungry. He forces himself to eat another bar anyway, the inhuman mouth shape making him itch while chewing.

The silence of the droning AC is deafening, for all his hearing is improved by his new physiology.

How can he feel trapped in such a large space?

It must be the lack of outlets. Every turn, every door, reveals more fractal depth. The window of his apartment--the only window he's seen yet--revealed only a flat wall beyond. He keeps expecting to exit the building, and never does.

Is he going in circles? He doesn't think so. He makes marks on the intersections with his pocket knife, and he has yet to pass one again.

He feels lost anyway.

Things change, slowly. He passes a hallway with a ceiling a head taller than normal, a room with no door, a sharp curve in the path instead of a hard angle.

The build warps. He navigates an intersection of four hallways, making a star shape with the choice of seven directions, not counting where he came from. Later, a close copy of his own desk, in the hallway, but black instead of brown.

There's relief alongside the dread. It won't be the same monotony forever. Even this place can change if he travels enough.

The strategy is simple: go straight. If he has to take a turn, he will, but he prioritizes moving forward in the same general direction.

Maybe, if he walks far enough, he'll escape. Maybe he's already lost. His



only compass was on his smartphone.

He's lucky that he kept his old mechanical watch, a gift hidden in his closet in favor of more modern pieces. It's the only functional, portable timepiece he's been able to find. The chain pinches the fur on his wrist, so he instead carries it in his pocket.

A frown pulls odd angles along the snout of his face. Nearly five straight hours of walking, and there is no muscle strain, no hunger pangs, no dehydration, and nature hasn't called.

Is his changed body not giving him the proper signals? He knows he still feels pain, a pinch trivially confirms, but deeper matters may be more complicated.

Not wanting to collapse at random, he forces another break on himself. Sitting in the hallway would spike his anxiety, so instead he sits in an empty room, on the floor. The snack cake is sweeter to his new tongue than it ever was. The smell of it is nearly sickening in its intensity.

Finishing his meager meal, he procures a pen and notebook from his stuffed backpack. He may as well record his thoughts.

Terry is used to being alone with his thoughts. With nothing else to do, all his normal entertainment locked behind nonfunctional technology, he must lean on this experience.

The main topic spinning in his head is, of course, 'what happened?'

He considers if he might be insane, experiencing a mental shattering intense enough to confuse his attempts to see past it. If he is, then he is doomed. If he cannot trust his own mind, then how can he trust his conclusions? He hopes that if he is simply mad, that his madness doesn't excessively torture him.

Though if he were to be blunt, he doesn't feel insane enough to be truly worried about the possibility.

A dream appears at first glance to be more likely, but is overwhelmed by evidence to the contrary. For one, he's never once had a dream be so clear. For another, he recalls materials on lucid dreaming, and understands how to check for being asleep. If he is dreaming--and he does not think he is--then he'll soon wake up and be done with the mess



regardless.

This, tragically, leaves the hardest to answer possibility: What happened to suddenly make this reality?

The tail lashes on its own, responding to his agitation. At least he gets experience in walking, what with the changed balance of a new form.

Whatever process did this, it has to have enough precision, power, and knowledge to change him so completely. The neurological issues of growing a tail, the improved senses, his being taller, everything. The complexity of doing such a thing boggles the mind, doubly so with how quickly it was done.

No mere gene therapy could cause this in that time frame. Not that such technology exists to do it even slowly.

It is, at least, suspicious that his apartment and body changed in the same night. It doesn't necessarily confirm correlation, but he would be stunned if they weren't at least somewhat related in source or cause.

What kind of power can cause this? What strange process decides to connect it so completely and arbitrarily to his own apartment's aesthetics? Is this something truly out of context, or an act of something within what he thought he knew physics to be capable of?

Not for the first time, he speaks out loud. He's not one for prayer, to put things lightly, but he does not consider this to be so.

"If anyone's listening," he says, alien mouth forming the words despite its shape, "if there's someone watching me for an experiment or game, or something less understandable... I'm confident that my cooperation would be more useful than my ignorance. I can be more entertaining with direction or more focused on your results with guidance. You doing this implies I have something you want, and we can trade my actions for your information. Contact me in any way you see fit. Please."

There is no answer, as there never is. He prepares different wording for his next attempt, knowing it to be futile.

The longest Terry has gone without speaking to someone is, perhaps, a week. He's a known shut-in and not particularly ashamed of the fact. But even during those most anti-social days, he still knew people were around: the bumps and knocks of his upstairs neighbors, the cars driving



up the road, the recorded voices coming from his speakers.

For all his habits, Terry very rarely feels lonely. Alone, yes, but not lonely.

Today, he feels lonely.

The feeling creeps up as if to mock him with its ferocity. From one moment to the next, he wishes to hear another voice, to know that there exists another soul in all the world but him. He's long been alone, but never uncertain of the presence of others before this.

He would even take an animal companion--preferably a dog or cat. Just anything, anything whatsoever alive. It's a deep, itching instinct to interact with something more complex than a doorknob.

And that primal longing warns him of danger: shadows, blind corners, the churning of the AC. If there's nobody around, not even a lowly insect, then surely there is a reason.

Is it paranoia, or prudence? Could he tell the difference?

Terry feels tired. Not physically--he feels he could walk forever--but mentally. He's yawned twice now, and his mind is sluggish.

Looking at his watch confirms it: he needs sleep. The thought of being so vulnerable in this place is haunting, but it would be more so if he fell from exhaustion.

Several hours ago he passed a room with a small bed (too small, too thin), but hasn't seen one in reasonable range since acknowledging his exhaustion. There's nothing for it, he'll sleep on the floor and use his extra clothing as bedding.

It takes too long to find a room with a light switch. When he finds one, he decides he doesn't like the darkness here. He sleeps facing the door.

Despite knowing better, he can't help but wish tomorrow will make more sense.

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Oct 8, 2025

#2

**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.2 - Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes~! (Fritz)

Fritz can't stop (won't stop) his random giggles.

It's like something out of one of *those* fanfics. He can practically smell the over-exclamation'd description: *Fritz thought it would be a boring plane ride, but suddenly a bright white flash knocks him out! He wakes up transformed into his fursona! Now lost in the airport Backrooms, he must survive and thrive! Will he find civilization? Will he be hunted by monsters designed by grade schoolers? Will he discover the secret, suspiciously wealthy furry conspiracy? Tune in to find out!*

It'd have a half-ironic clickbait title like '*What if I Were a Gay Furry in the Backrooms?*' or something. Five million words, half of them run-on sentence fragments.

The liminal airport terminal he's stuck in is, big surprise, weird as fuck. It's just one long terminal, stretching as far as his eyes can see in both directions. One side has the standard boring-to-a-fault boarding gates, the other has the normal scam terminal shops and fast food joints.

Though the shops all have generic names like 'Fast Burger' and 'Chicken Bucket'. Guess even the Backrooms is (are?) scared of McDonald's lawyers.

The huge-ass airport windows are huge, like his ass. There's flat, dark concrete behind them, because, of course, it can't be that simple to leave. Good thing he's hardcore and not spooked by that at all whatsoever. Nope. Everything's chill; he just needs some lo-fi liminal beats to relax and ignore that to, and he'll be set.

He poses in front of one of the windows, showing off for his reflection. A cute blue anthro cat femboy grins back at him--and giggles, because that's basically a tag list. It is-- *he* is his fursona, right down to the black highlights on his tail (TAIL!) and face. Those bright cotton-candy pink eyes shine back with mirth and *euphoria*.



Oh, how he cried, cried for hours, when he woke up in a body he loves. There are no words.

Casually flicking his tail (TAIL!) just for the hell of it, he skips off down the direction he's going: keeping the scam shops on his right, gates on the left, and riding the moving walkways like they're going out of style.

He's not stupid, though, just wacky and high on *pure fucking joy*. He knows what the words 'survival situation' mean, and figured out pretty fast that he's in one.

So, before he left the airplane he woke up in, he stole the biggest, ugliest puke-green suitcase and stuffed it: armfuls of airplane peanuts, clothes that actually fit his new body (kinda), random crap from people's luggage, and a single bottle of airplane wine.

If he's going to get tragically conceptualized by the Headless Soccer Mom, or whatever entity haunts this level of the Backrooms, he's going to at least chug some overpriced booze while running.

It's like everyone got raptured, piles of clothes left on the ground and everything. Probably for the best he was left behind; Heaven couldn't handle his fuzzy blue ass.

A generic airport bookstore has, surprise surprise, books. Rifling through them, though, shows that they're all blank from cover to pages.

Fritz sighs, tail (TAIL!) flicking in agitation. It's time to admit it: he misses his phone.

Seriously, how's he supposed to record generic Backrooms found footage without his personal attention-vampire (and attached camera)? Oh, *sure*, he *has* his phone, but it's about as useful as a glass brick with a battery. The raptured people left behind their own phones, but those don't work either. No laptops, tablets, nothing. He's been cut off.

And then the bookstore doesn't have anything.

Is this the real slim Fritz? Is this the true price of the internet? It's been less than an hour after he regained enough sense to think through the *joy*, and he's already itching for stimulation.

...Anyways. It's one thing for tech to stop working, but having books with



nothing in them? It's weird, really weird.

Weren't there books on the plane? The ones left behind by those psychos who read physical books on flights? He remembers seeing the covers while stealing their stuff.

It's an hour's walk back, according to the clocks at the boarding gates. It'll suck, and undo his exploration, but it might be the only chance he gets to have real books...

"...Fine!"

The things he does for content.

He leans on a rail of a moving walkway, letting it carry him without walking--because he can. He glances around, shifty-eyed, and then yells:

"It sure is booooring around here!"

...Nothing. Guess that proves this place doesn't run on plot contrivance. Looks like he's going to have to make his own entertainment.

"...*the A~ to the S~! When we play you shake your ass~!*" Fritz sings, holding his tail so the tip is like a mic. He dances on the moving walkway, downright *reveling* in the pitches his voice can reach now.

"*Shake it shake it shake it girl~! Make sure you don't break it girl~!*"

Fritz... is lost. All the boarding gates look the same, and it doesn't help that every one's labeled 'Gate 34'. Real subtle, Backrooms, real subtle.

He has no idea where he is--and singing every song he can remember on the moving walkways hasn't helped. In his defense, his singing voice is *stellar* now; if he were still in reality, he'd make a killing as the first real furry idol... if he managed to avoid getting experimented on by Government-chan for being too damn hot.

The stores might help, but he's already noticed the pattern: they repeat, the same shops in the same order, over and over. There's just not enough hints, even if he could remember the exact stores in front of his gate.



If he left some sort of breadcrumb nearby, he could look for that. Sadly, he's been stingy with his supplies because, duh, survival situation. That bookstore might've been the best hint, but it was a while from the gate, and he's *stupid* and put the books *back on the shelves* instead of throwing them on the ground, Lonely Island style.

So, yeah, lost.

Someone else probably stole his brain cell before getting raptured. Asshole.

...Now what?

He decides to just keep going. At worst, he loses a couple of hours of progress; at best, he'll feel the Aura of Content wafting out of the gate as he passes.

This time, he makes sure to put down breadcrumbs: throwing random shop knick-knacks on the floor, tipping over those awful waiting chairs, and so on. He makes each 'mess' unique, so he can tell one from the other, and *not* just because he's bored out of his gourd.

His new furry body must be in great shape. He's been walking, dancing, singing, posing, throwing, walking, randomly bursting into happy tears when he sees his reflection, and walking for a while now, and he feels like he's in perfect form. He's not secretly ripped under the fur or anything, he checked. Probably a furry thing, or his specific furry thing, or something.

How the Hell's he supposed to know?

Actually, that's a good point; he's not *hungry* either. Like, not even a little, despite the fact that he's usually a goblin demon if he goes too long without eating. He's always a goblin demon, honestly, but this time it's not because of hunger.

He rubs his chin in thought-- if it's even called a 'chin' on an anthro cat face. Fuck it. There's no internet to correct him, so it's a *chin* damnit.

He rubs his chin in thought, and considers the possibilities:

One, there's something wrong with his body, and he's gonna die a horrible, grimdark death as the very thing he loves about his new form



betrays him in the most cruel way possible.

Two, he has furry superpowers.

Okay. It's the superpowers thing.

He's been sprinting at full speed for over thirty minutes now. Full on, no holding back *sprinting*. The only breaks he takes are turning around so he doesn't lose his suitcase.

As anyone who's ever sprinted can tell you, this is like level 100 divine stamina. What's crazier is that he's not tired, not breathing heavy, not sweating like a greased-up anthro pig, or collapsing as the muscles in his legs mutiny. He feels like he could do this forever without any real effort.

There's limits, of course. He's faster than he was as a human, but this feels like the 'stupidly healthy human' kind of fast and not 'dodge bullets and taxes' fast. He's also still completely capable of falling on his face if he doesn't pay attention--though his body's light enough now that it barely hurts.

Stopping at his suitcase, feeling right as rain despite the impossible workout, he reflects on things.

"Man. That's rad."

He nibbles on an airplane peanut, swallowing only a tiny bit of it. Waiting for a few minutes, he doesn't feel like his stomach's about to cave in, so he eats a bit more. Going on like this until his patience runs out, he finishes the small bag of peanuts.

Well, he feels 'fuller' in the sense that there's food in his stomach, but he doesn't feel any more *satiated* than he did before the peanuts. So he can probably eat just fine, but maybe doesn't need it? That'll take longer to test out, but them's the breaks when nothing makes sense anymore.

Water goes down fine, the sinks in the periodic bathrooms still pumping that smooth H₂O despite being in the Backrooms. It doesn't *quench*, though, since there isn't any thirst *to* quench.

He tries to engage a toilet in heated debate (so to speak) but gets nothing; maybe it'll be more open to negotiations when he's finished



talking it out with the peanuts and water? Not that he feels any need...

And yes, he's becoming a bit vain. Turns out bathroom mirrors reflect him better than those creepy not-windows. Finger guns! Try not to cry in joy. Spin!

Ahem.

So, to recap: if he has a stamina limit, it's high enough that he'll get bored of running before he gets tired of it. And if he needs food and water, it's such a tiny amount that he can last at least... ten hours without feeling anything, if the terminal clocks aren't lying.

Jesus. He's been at this for ten hours already? Admittedly, it was mostly spent crying on the airplane he woke up in, but still. Time flies and also stands still when you're a gay furry in the backrooms.

...Now that he thinks about it, where's the liquid for his tears and saliva coming from? It's not like he was drinking water before he suckled the bathroom sink, and he's still not feeling dehydrated. More furry magic bullshit, probably.

That's really what this all is: furry magic bullshit. Why the Backrooms? Furry magic bullshit. Why his fursona? Furry magic bullshit. Why everything else? Autocomplete.

With one last wink at the mirror, he strolls out of the bathroom and continues on his journey.

It's the silence that gets to him.

He gives it the good college try: singing, screaming as loud as he can for no reason, screaming as loud as he can for good reasons, stomping his bare feet (paws?), throwing things, even breaking a couple of those freaky windows, and being too scared to touch the concrete behind them. But it's all *him*, any noise that isn't the droning of an empty airport is *him*.

Where *did* everyone go? No joke. He wants to talk to someone. He wants to get out of his head for a bit. Just a few minutes would be enough.

It takes some debate about cliches and uselessness, but the silence wins out. Knowing there'll be no answer, he sometimes calls out to the void.



"Hello?! Is there anyone here?!"

"There's someone here!"

"Hello?!"

"Yell if you can hear me!"

It's a relief when he realizes that he's tired. Not body-tired, but brain-tired. At least the furry magic bullshit isn't going to take away the last reprieve: napping the problems away.

Deciding it's time to call in the night--not that there's any sunlight here--he goes into one of the restaurants: '*Taco 2day*'. Inside, there's no food, cooked or uncooked, just the lingering aura of minimal wage depression.

The darkest place he can find is a supply closet in the kitchen. He drifts off, lying in a nest of stolen clothes.

His last thought is a vague hope for tomorrow.


A- A Patreon plug?! In this chapter, in this footnote, with this

reference, with 20 (!) chapters ahead?! Yes! And you may see it, if you become a supporter:

<https://www.patreon.com/cw/WeirdlyHotPepper>

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 8, 2025

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Threadmarks: 1.3 - include (Terry)

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Oct 9, 2025

  #5



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

1.3 - include (Terry)

Dreamless sleep gives way to instant alertness. For one horrible moment, in the space between waking and understanding, Terry fears the worst. Then he blinks and finds the same room, the same tail, the same backpack.



Checking his watch confirms time has passed, nearly five hours. He knows he should sleep more, but the thought of trying is absurd. It isn't like the rest will be at all invigorating, regardless.

It's surprising, in hindsight, how much he relied on the sun peeking through the curtains. The lack of environmental change unsettles, unbalances, as if he's slept incorrectly or not at all.

The silence wraps around him like pressing fog.

A creature of habit, Terry's morning routine has been iron-clad for as long as he's lived alone.

He grimaces, spitting the toothpaste's foamy aftertaste into the room's corner. Rinsing with a mouthful of water, he reflects on how his routine must change--to his low disdain.

Obviously, and most starkly, if he's to keep traveling, he will not have a consistent location to wake up in. No setting things up in the perfect spots, no blind groggy stumbling through familiar paths, and no place to call 'home'. Perhaps he'll find a place to integrate himself with, if civilization springs up in these halls?

There's no shower here--a loss he feels acutely, as he's always found the falling water meditative. A quick sniff with his over-sensitive nose doesn't reveal any significant odor. Still, he wipes himself down with a rag wetted with minimal water. This makes the fur feel strange, sticking at odd angles and pressing in bizarre ways. He ignores it, to some success.

Far more immediately concerning, however, is his complete lack of need to relieve himself--a common morning habit. Combined with his non-existent hunger, it makes for a truly unnatural sensation. Without a physician to consult, he can only guess as to the cause. For now, he will have to keep a close eye on his body and hope that things aren't already catastrophic.

He eats a small meal of granola and dried fruit anyway. Precautions.

The hallways welcome him back with the same dreadful monotony and silence. Intersections beckon and tempt, but he keeps the course of going straight. Without a compass, he has no clue whether he's truly



moving away from his apartment, but he tries.

Would a compass work here? What do the magnetic fields look like in this place? No hallway he's found yet is long enough to see the curvature of the Earth; for all he knows this could be a flat plane.

Oddities break up established patterns: He'll pass hallways with fresh paint, or with ceilings tilted at the slightest slanted angles. Doors will be too wide by inches, or knobs made of sharp edges. The deterioration of his apartment is one thing--he did not do much maintenance living there--but this decay of consistency is of a stranger kind. It's like losing something.

Losing what he cannot place.

Terry runs his hand over the vent, feeling the cool air blowing out of it. This particular room has, he counted, sixty-four vents embedded into the walls; only the walls, none on the ceiling or floor, and none on the walls connected to the hallway outside. Due to the small size of the room, more wall is made up of air vents than peeling paint.

He frowns in thought, taking in the milieu. They're positioned as if at complete random, the only apparent consistencies being no overlap and no rotation. Each vent is identical in make, color, shape, and size--the same rectangular model that appears in his apartment, to be exact. Each one expels air at the same speed, with the same sound.

It's unusually cold, which only raises more questions: Why is the temperature bearable in rooms and stretches of hallway without vents? Why make an exception for this room? Why did it take something this blatant before he noticed the temperature discrepancy?

Imagining the possible configurations of air ducts behind the vents is an exercise in frustration. The air blows at the same speed from each, so it cannot be a single tube--the first vent in the sequence would blow harder if that were the case. And yet... a sixty-four duct system, each with individual airflow, is absurd.

Could it be like a tree, and the air is branching off close to where the vents terminate into the room? It would need to have... some sort of device to partition the air for consistent flow between the ducts, but perhaps?

It is in situations like these that he regrets not being educated in literally



everything. Thus is the nature of specialization, he supposes. His skills in computer programming are still useful, as nobody becomes a decent programmer without comprehending basic problem-solving, but it's unfortunate that the skill is not directly applicable in this bizarre hallway place.

Shaking the tangents out of his head, he turns back to the door. He's fixating on trivialities again and needs to get moving, if only for the sake of progress.

He stares at the poster. It hangs innocuously on a hallway wall, mostly black, the illustration of a yellow smiley face with 'X' eyes under the bold yellow text 'NIRVANA'.

It's obviously referencing the famous band, but what is it doing here? It's such a massive break in the 'nature' of this place, and yet here it is.

Curious, he tears the poster off the wall, careful not to rip the material. Behind it is more peeling paint, undisturbed as if the poster were added with care not to scrape. The tape used to mount it is simple and clear, and the back of the poster is plain white.

With care, he mounts the poster back. Taking several looks back, he walks away until the face is out of sight.

The posters have grown in frequency, perhaps one per every fifteen minutes spent walking. Their placements can be off, but generally follow the rule of being near or above eye level.

Many of them are for bands, and no doubt some reference musicians that he knows nothing of. Others have flowery illustrations of Pokémon, or stock pictures of beetles--not the Beatles, the band, but the armored insects. There's even, to his surprise, a 'Hang in There' kitten poster, as if taken out of a movie set.

He finds the posters comforting--when he doesn't feel like they're watching him, that is. The ones with faces, human faces, unnerve him the worst. Why aren't they changed like him? Is he the only one?

Using a... claw? Finger nail? Using it, he taps the strange rectangle. It lets loose a metallic clinking.



This is no poster, but a sign, a robust sign made of metal, bolted to the wall. It's a familiar design: a green arrow pointing, a large green 'P' followed by smaller 'arking' text, white negative space where needed. Directions to parking, here of all places.

And it points down an unsuspecting offshoot hallway.

Should he go the direction it points? As a con, the hallway does not appear to be special, except for the sign itself. It also leads away from what he suspects (hopes) is still 'forward'. As a pro, it might lead to something new, where vehicles are common, which implies the outdoors, implying an exit.

There is not much of a choice.

The 'parking hallway' is normal--for a certain definition of the word--until the new doors.

Terry stares, wide-eyed. Double doors, made of transparent glass, behind which is a parking garage.

It seems to be the type of parking garage that one might find in a high-traffic city or near a stadium. It's a gray build, and the concrete ceiling implies it to be tiered. Faded yellow lines match those of parking spaces, and pillars of concrete perforate the area, obviously as supports.

For all his hope, he did not truly expect to find something like this. However, he does not think it to be an exit; there are no cars, no windows. The only illumination is from light fixtures in the ceiling.

But it's new.

He opens the doors and steps in.

The parking garage echoes. The sound of his flip-flops bounce off the concrete construction, making his alien ears instinctively twitch to catch the noise.

It is arranged in a square shape, an open plan only broken up by the support pillars. There is no signage, no floor number, no windows, just concrete and faded yellow paint. The size does not appear unusual for a parking garage.



There are stairs, concrete things without railings, two of them. One goes down, the other up, either at opposite ends of the room from the other. A peek at each shows another garage floor above and below, and a quick glance at those floors reveals more stairs.

If he's to travel this garage--and he intends to--then should he go up, or down?

Down seems the obvious choice, as it would take less energy to move down. It would go faster, too.

But he feels trapped underground. There's nothing behind his apartment window. He wants to see the sun again.

He goes up.

After several hours, and several dozen floors, he has fallen into a rhythm: go up, walk straight to the stairs, up, walk, up, walk...

He takes note of the pillars. As is becoming common, they are placed without any eye for practicality. Some floors have them spread out, some have various 'clumps', and one even has them packed neatly into one corner.

Whatever process places them does not care about blocked parking spaces. It's as if the yellow lines are decoration. Perhaps they are; there are no cars to fill them.

Counting the pillars reveals nothing of note. The number is random, but averages about a dozen per floor.

It's new and interesting to have such open space, but he still notices how well the columns break lines of sight.

He is enveloped in the garage's unique silence.

Then.

While halfway up a set of steps.

Terry hears it.



"...you..."

Liquid nitrogen freezes his bones in place, his heart stutters, then pumps adrenaline into his soul, his ears prick up to catch the faintest sound:

"...you... to... me... hold... truth..."

Singing. Sounding from the floor above. Getting closer.

"...No party... sad... city~"

Through the rush of panic, the hope, he has one insight: This is English, here in this place, sung by something moving.

Is it a trap? Another like him? Friend, foe, something else? Can he afford to be wrong, whatever his guess?

"Ain't no party in a sad sad city~!"

Sheer primal instinct hurls his feet down the stairs two at once, bolting behind a nearby pillar, drawing the pocket knife from his jacket, fumbling it open--

"Well roll the dice~! Pay the price~! Dance with wolves in a pack of lies, the blood we crave shall drive us all insane~!"

Is it truly so close, or an illusion of this place's echo? Should he run? Should--

"Yeah outer space, it's a lovely place~! A long-lost love in a flower vase~! Layin' on the floor shattered and battered and bruised~!"

No, no illusion. It's closer now, probably at the top of the stairs, going down--

"Well I~! Need you~! To want me to hold... me to... tell me the truth...?" the voice trails off. Then, "What the fuck?"

What does that mean? What--

There's a crashing sound, as if heavy cloth crashing down the stairs, causing him to flinch. It's followed by the noise of feet--claws--rapidly pattering down concrete steps.

Silence for moments. Can it--



"HEY! IS ANYONE HERE?!" Waiting, then softer, "Fuck, how old's this scent? HELLO?! ANYONE?! SAY SOMETHING IF YOU CAN HEAR ME! Damn it..."

The voice's owner can smell him, his scent. Even if it isn't a trap, it's clearly motivated to follow him now.

But... there's a chance, a good chance that this is another victim of this place. He must act.

Steeling himself, he steps out from behind the pillar.

"HEY--" The voice stops cold when he's revealed, and Terry gets his first good look at...

A blue anthropomorphic feline--probably a cat, or tiger if the facial marks and tail stripes are a hint. They appear androgynous, short height pronounced by his own transformation's increased height. Behind them, at the foot of the stairs, lies a large green suitcase, probably dropped by the person in front of him.

Their wide rose-pink eyes glance at the pocket knife, then back to his eyes. They take a step back.

"...Hey..." They say, voice also androgynous. They raise their hands in clear surrender and speak slowly, "I'm Fritz. I'm not gonna attack or anything. You're the first person I've seen since... all of this. Do you know what happened?"

Terry stares.

They fidget. "Do... you speak English? Habla español? Uh... Fuckin'... Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu?" They wave a hand in greeting, "Hello? Please don't be an entity..." They take another step back, eyes flicking towards the nearby stairs.

Slowly, carefully, Terry closes the knife and pockets it, making sure this person can see him do it. After two nerve-calming breaths, he speaks.

"Hello, Fritz. I am Terry Cooper. I'm glad to meet another person as well. Unfortunately, I am also unsure what has happened."

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Oct 10, 2025

#9



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.4 - Your Flowery Description's no Better Than His~! (Fritz)

In the immortal words of Squidward Tennisballs: *OH NO, HE'S HOT!*

With that smooth baritone voice, those piercing baby-blue eyes, and how *tall* the red fox is... After the whole 'don't stab me bro' thing is cleared up, it's suddenly hard to ignore.

And, hey, Fritz isn't going to die alone in the Backrooms! Maybe. And there's the big fat revelation that there's other furies in the Backrooms, which makes Fritz wonder if *he's* the one who's been raptured, ready to be taken away by a tall fox angel.

So, sue him, he's flustered. That too-tight shirt...

No! Focus! Don't say anything stupid!

"So they furry'd you too, huh?"

Fuck!

The fox--Terry, he said--blinks in surprise, then tilts his head. One of his fox ears twitches just a titch. *Cute*. "So you're a transformed human too?"

Fritz grasps the question like a pink pool noodle in a tornado. "Yes! I mean, yeah. That bright light knocked me out, and I woke up as my fursona in a Backrooms compilation video. Normal Thursday, amiright? Hahah...?"

Please, God, ROB, anyone, strike him down where he stands. It's time for him to go; he's seen enough.

"...I was asleep when it happened. There was a bright light?" Tall-and-fox says at length.



"Mmhm," Fritz nods. Deep breaths, Fritz.

"What did it look like? Did it make a sound? Anything significant about it that you noticed?" Terry asks quickly, one after the other.

"Uh... It was bright, white. Didn't make any sounds, I think? I wasn't paying that much attention. I was..." Reading furry web comics, "distracted."

"Right," Terry nods, frowning in thought. "I was asleep, like I said. I woke up transformed into," he gestures at himself, "this. All the electronics that I could use for communication were nonfunctional. My apartment was fine, but outside it was long hallways and strange rooms. I decided to pack up and travel, since I would run out of food. I found this parking garage and started traveling up, then you found me."

Fritz blinks. "Food? I don't think we need it. Haven't you noticed?"

"I've still been eating and drinking water, just in case. But even with my small rations, I'm still not hungry or thirsty," Terry says. "It's strange--and also violates the laws of thermodynamics."

"I know, right?" Fritz chuckles, tension loosening. "I've only had a bag of peanuts yesterday, and I'm fine. Lemme guess, you can run forever too?"

Terry raises a brow, handsomely. "I haven't actually tried running, yet. But I feel like I could walk forever, if I didn't need sleep."

"I tried," Fritz says. "Running, I mean. I sprinted for, like, an hour without stopping. Didn't even need to breathe hard."

Which is kind of weird, since his heart felt like it was going to burst out of his chest for a bit there.

At least the conversation's calmed him down some. This is a person, a hot fox person, sure, but still just a guy. Cool your jets, Fritz. Deep breaths.

"Hmm..." Terry hums. "No dizziness, random falls, nausea, light-headedness? Anything?"

"Nope! I'm a healthy anthro cat boy," Fritz says, exaggeratedly buffing his claws on his chest. "Got my shots and everything--" he blinks, "wait, do we need shots again?"



"I cannot even begin to guess at that," Terry answers, giving him a weird look. "Best not to get bitten by any rabid animals, though."

"Yeah, I guess," Fritz frowns. "What's with the look?"

Terry blinks, then looks away. What? "I apologize. Your transformation is... androgynous. But calling yourself 'cat boy' has cleared up the confusion, I hope."

"I--" Fritz falters. Oh, *wow*. Oops, all euphoria! It feels *nice* to have that acknowledged. "I'm he/him. And don't worry about it; totally normal question." Damn right it is!

Terry nods, looking relieved and awkward. "That's good..." Those beautiful baby blues flash behind Fritz, obviously looking to catch a wild topic change. "Is that your suitcase?"

"It--" Fritz freezes, then whips around to look. Sure enough, the asstastic puke-green suitcase is laying on its face, the big disgrace. He fumbled the damn thing down the stairs when he picked up Terry's scent--a *crazy* experience--and now... "Shit!"

Rushing over, he practically tears open the butt-ugly zipper to check on...

"Oh, thank fuck," He sighs in relief. The glass bottle of wine didn't explode, thanks to him wrapping it in a bunch of old socks. Fritz is a genius.

He can hear Terry walking up behind him--better hearing for the win--and ask, "What is that?"

...There's no real good way to put this, is there? "It's a bottle of wine-- but I'm not an alcoholic!" He says quickly, "I was just worried it would break and get everything in here wet!" He pauses, then says again, "I'm not an alcoholic. For real. This is my only bottle." Probably not the best way to say it, but it's out there now.

Terry blinks, his focused, curious gaze practically digging into Fritz's soul. Then he smiles, and Fritz knows his approaching doom.

"Of course. That is an entirely reasonable reaction to losing your last bottle of liquor."

Fritz places the sock-covered bottle down (gently) and double face-palms. "Don't."



"Don't what?" Terry asks in a perfectly normal tone. Damn this fox. Damn him. "I'm agreeing with you."

"Are you?"

"Yes."

Fritz groans into his paws, and for the first time gets to hear Terry laugh. It's a soft, measured thing, restrained but steady. Fritz laughs too, with relief at finding someone else alive, at having something to laugh about, for *hope*.

And if Fritz's laugh has some salt mixed in? Terry doesn't bother mentioning it.

Yeah. It'll be fine.

With the ice broken by his goblin tendencies, Fritz finds it easy to ask.

"Hey, so... we should probably travel together, right? I was feeling kinda crazy with nobody around back there."

Terry nods easily. "I was going to say the same thing. The sensory deprivation was getting to me, too. There's also power in numbers, if something were to go wrong."

Fritz shivers. "Yeah. Lucky that you got a knife. I woke up in a plane; damn TSA."

"A plane? I'm guessing it didn't crash?"

He... hadn't thought of that. "Oh shit. No, we didn't take off yet. People were still boarding when the light lighted up."

Nodding, Terry gestures to the suitcase. "If we're traveling together, we should tally up our combined resources."

With all their stuff spread out on the concrete--except the clothes they're wearing, obviously--Fritz feels... under prepared.

"I was on a plane," he says for like the fifth time.

But really. Compared to the random garbage, peanuts, clothes, and (only



one bottle of!) wine, Terry's stuff is great. There's the knife, yes, but there's also fucking *duct tape* in there. He has a screwdriver! Two of them! There's a pot; the crazy fox actually brought a cooking pot into the Backrooms. Don't forget the lighter and flashlight. It's just a bunch of useful stuff you might find in a house--except the computer parts, who knows what those are for.

Oh, and tons of paper and pens. Guy likes to write, apparently.

But best of all is the watch. Not being able to tell the time in the parking lot was making his brain loopy... more loopy... more loopy than usual... more loopy than usual with all this crazy stuff going on. Yeah. That.

"So you said," Terry replies. "Where were you flying to?"

"I was coming back home from a convention," Fritz says. "Chicago Fluff Con. Just a small con, mostly people who know each other. That kind of thing. It was fun."

Silence.

"Yeah," Fritz says, trying to fill the silence, eyeballing Terry's pocket dictionary. Who even has a physical dictionary these days? Fox angels, apparently. "Never thought this is how it'd turn out, you know?" Still no reply, comment, or anything. "...Terry?"

He turns to Terry to find him staring into nothing, eyes unfocused in deep thought. "You okay over there?"

Terry blinks, then asks slowly. "What did you say? What con?"

"Chicago Fluff Con? What's wrong with that?" Fritz asks, feeling a little defensive. If this guy really--

"Chicago? You said Chicago? Illinois?"

"...Yeah. What?"

Terry frowns, eyes narrowed. "My apartment is in Nevada--should be, was, in Nevada. I don't know the right wording anymore."

Huh.

Now, he could say 'whaaaaat?' and get in a big 'wow the Backrooms be whack yo' conversation, or...



"So you're from Nevada?" Fritz asks. "Near Vegas, or out of town?"

The fox gives him an 'are you serious?' look, and Fritz resists the urge to giggle. His troll instincts have brought him trouble before, but they're too hard to resist. It's like an ancient ancestral curse to fuck with people.

And anyways, he needs to get revenge for the wine thing.

"That's... not even close to the most interesting thing about what I just said," Terry says slowly, "You were in Chicago, right?"

Fritz nods, "Yep. Right about to leave. Airports are like that."

"...Right. And you don't think it's strange that neither of us could have walked the distance between Chicago and Nevada--anywhere in Nevada--in the time we had?"

"Nah."

He has to use every little bit of willpower he has to keep his face straight.

"...'Nah'?" Terry asks, flat-footed. "Just 'nah'?"

"Awesome, you agree!" Fritz says, smile innocent. He claps his paws and points to all their crap strewn everywhere. "How about we pack up and get a move on? I'm thinking we should go down, since I don't want to climb any stairs, and parking garages usually have exits at the bottom, and I'm asking nicely," he says with one long breath.

"What...?" Terry mutters, disoriented by his bullshit-fu. "I- sure? Okay?"

"Great!"

The poor sexy fox man doesn't know why Fritz starts laughing so hard.

Score: Fritz 1, Terry 1.

To Terry's credit, he eventually figures out the bamboozling and gracefully concedes the point with an eye roll.

They walk side-by-side. It's totally different, going through this place with someone else, instead of alone. He feels like he's floating.

Clack, clack, clack...



Rooooooooole

Flop, flop, flop...

Fritz's claws clack against the concrete, the suitcase rolls, and Terry's flip-flops flop. Why's Terry wearing those things? That can't be comfortable, right?

"Sooo..." Fritz draws out, "Who are you?"

"What?" Terry asks, blinking and giving him a side-eye.

"I mean, I know your name. But what do you do? Who do you work for? Your supplier? Are they the lizard people? I bet they're the lizard people."

Ah, yes, the 'is this guy serious' look. One of Fritz's favorite meals.

"Am I being interrogated?"

"Yep!"

Terry huffs, sounding close to a laugh (*cute*), then shakes his head. "I'm a programmer. What about you?"

"Eh, I'm a NEET," Fritz says, shamelessly.

"Really? How do you finance that?"

Fritz tries not to stumble. Damn. Already? Ugh, just get it over with.

"Life insurance."

"That--" Terry pauses, then connects the dots. "Oh. My condolences."

"Don't mention it," Fritz waves him off. "It's been a while. Anyways, programmer? What do you make? Secret government stuff?"

It's a deflection, but Terry takes it in stride.

"I work on open source projects, and live off donations and sponsorships," Terry answers. "My main project is a debugger called 'Open Debugger'. It's basically the industry standard." He sounds proud.

"That's pretty cool," Fritz nods. "Just one thing, though."



"Yes?"

"The Hell's a debugger?"

"Ah-- it's..." Terry collects his thoughts. "Programming is hard, and it's easy to make mistakes. A debugger is a software tool made to help you find and fix programming mistakes. That's about the simplest explanation, though it's far more complicated than just that."

"Huh. So you're like a programming big shot, then?"

"Not to the level you're thinking," Terry says, shaking his head. "I'm respected in certain fields, and I've given a few successful talks, but I tend to keep to myself. A debugger isn't glamorous and is made for programmers, not end users. I'm well known enough to make a living, though."

"Wait, wait," Fritz holds up a paw for 'stop', "you're giving *talks*? Like, going on stage, PowerPoint up, crowds, the whole shebang?"

Terry nods.

Seriously, who *is* this guy? Not a big shot, Fritz's tail! "When?! Where?! About what?! How many people were there?!"

"Over the years, at developer conferences, about my work, and it varies."

Groan. "I'm gonna need some details, man. *All* the details."

Terry shakes his head in exasperation, then speaks.

The silence lifts, banished by easy chatter.

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 10, 2025

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Oct 13, 2025

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WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.5 - goto (Terry)

Terry does not usually interact with people like Fritz.

The high-energy, friend-of-all chatterboxes have a tendency to clash with Terry's less overt disposition. Not to say that he hates them, or even truly avoids them, but the natural motions of social groups, and his shut-in nature, mean he's not so experienced in their arts.

He's lucky, quite extremely lucky, that Fritz doesn't seem to hold a grudge about being threatened with a knife. At the time, the weapon felt sensible, but in hindsight he realizes that it could have gone very wrong.

In fact, Fritz went so quickly from 'weary' to 'enthusiastic' that it convinced Terry to tease about the wine bottle. Normally, he'd wait even ten minutes before acting so friendly, but something about Fritz caused him to drop his guard. It proved to be the correct play, at least.

Now, though, Terry must face the consequences of his actions. Namely, actually interacting beyond practicality and probing boundaries.

It's an improvement over the silence.

"Yeah, their clothes were all just dropped on the ground, like those cringey rapture movies," Fritz says. "You know what I'm talking about, right?"

"Yes," Terry says, frowning at the image. "I woke up in my clothing, though. Did you?"

"Had to crawl out of them like a butterfly hatching," Fritz says. "Er-- is it 'hatch', from a cocoon? Because that sounds like the butterfly's coming from an egg or something."

"I don't know," Terry answers honestly. He'll probably check his pocket dictionary when they stop next; he knew it would be useful.

They descend into a sort of silence, though this one is not so loud.

Fritz beside him has to take swifter steps on account of their differences in stride. The blue of his fur is unnaturally bright compared to blues in nature, and his tail hardly ever stops moving. He radiates mischievousness, as if at any moment he will burst into a choreographed dance routine about concrete pillars.



From the comments Fritz has made, it's obvious that he's part of the furry community. Terry remembers him mentioning transforming into his fursona, and is quite happy with the change.

Terry envies that. Fritz, though surprised, is at least pleasantly so. Conversely, Terry feels violated, lost in his own body--at least, when he isn't willfully ignoring it.

On the brighter side, the weight of the change feels lighter with Fritz's unquestioning acceptance of it. Fritz seems to celebrate it, even. It's normalizing in a way Terry never expected to have, when he dared look into his bathroom mirror.

And... finding another with an anthropomorphic transformation is relieving. Terry's not some outlier, he'll have at least one ally, he won't be singled out, mocked, abandoned for--

Enough of that thought.

There is no obvious path to changing back--though if he finds one, he won't hesitate to take it. So, if he's trapped in this form, then he may as well adjust in increments. He might never feel normal, but if he can feel anything whatsoever without losing his nerve, then it'll be a start.

A single intentional flick of his tail makes him shiver.

"You okay?" Fritz asks, having caught the tremor.

"I'll be fine." Perhaps.

"Huh. I saw some weird pillar stuff on the way down, but this takes the cake," Fritz says, amusement plain.

They have arrived at the floor with packed pillars in the corner--going down means they'll pass the floors Terry has already gone up through. The pillars are grouped so tightly that there's no gap to see the two walls meet.

An unexpected benefit of a traveling companion is external confirmation that things are, indeed, weird. Terry is not insane, or at least no less sane than Fritz, who agrees that this pillar arrangement is odd.

"I agree."



"How close are we to your apartment hallway thing?" Fritz asks.

"An hour?" Terry guesses, pulling the wristwatch out of his pocket. "I would be surprised if it were two. Unless there are delays, of course."

"Sweet."

The drama plays out, same as the last times they approached the stairs: Fritz sighs, collapses the handle of his suitcase, and prepares to carry the bulky thing down by the strap. Unfortunately, Fritz's suitcase is enormous, and leverage is a commodity due to his stature. Each trip down becomes an adventure, doubly so due to the lack of handrails.

After seeing the struggle so many times, Terry's had enough. Knowing it will damn him forever to the task, he asks, "Do you want me to carry that down?"

Fritz smiles wide and expressive, inadvertently exposing the sharpness of his teeth, and says with no small relief, "I could hug you right now."

"No thank you. Just give it here."

Fritz, giving him a weird look, shoves the suitcase into his hands. With that, Terry becomes the designated suitcase wrangler for all eternity.

Though the unwieldy thing is given back to Fritz as soon as the stairs are cleared. Terry has limits.

As they're walking, Fritz makes yet another non sequitur, a clearly favored hobby of his.

"You know, it's kinda weird you're not an anthro raccoon."

...What?

"What?"

"You said your last name's Cooper," Fritz offers as explanation, as if that settles the matter.

Terry glances at Fritz, who smiles back benignly.



"What do you mean by that?" Terry asks, supping deep from the well of cosmic patience.

"You never played the Sly Cooper games? I bet that guy was someone's furry awakening," Fritz answers.

"I'm guessing that this character is an anthropomorphic raccoon?" Terry asks.

"Yep."

"And because he has the last name 'Cooper', that means I should be similar?"

"Well-- you can be whatever you want, but I keep thinking of Sly when I think of your name," Fritz says.

Terry spends several moments pondering this profound wisdom, coming to the only reasonable conclusion:

"You're messing with me."

Fritz laughs--loud and unapologetic--and pinches his forefinger and thumb together, "Just a little."

Which implies that reality itself will fracture whenever he gets the urge to mess with him 'a lot'. How comforting.

"I see," Terry eventually says, "and what's your surname?"

There is a nigh imperceptible faltering in Fritz's step. "It's not important."

Interesting.

"It's only polite. You have mine, after all," he presses.

Fritz looks away, saying quietly, but not quietly enough, "...Bing."

Terry smiles.

"Don't say it," Fritz Bing says.

"I didn't say anything."

"Good."



They walk a few steps, and Terry strikes.

"Like the search engine?"

"Ugh... No, like the sound of something bouncing off something: *Bing*. You know?" He says, making hand motions for added effect.

"That makes sense," Terry nods. "Though I can't help but think it's strange. Why aren't you an anthropomorphic search box?"

Fritz looks up towards the concrete roof. "What have I done?"

"It's just that your last name reminds me of the popular Microsoft search engine, is all, so it must fit you too."

"This is my fault. I did this."

"Wait!" Fritz yells without warning.

Terry stops, whipping his head to check corners, cataloging blind spots, every pillar--

"How old are you?"

"..."

"Why're you looking at me like that? You think I know how to tell how old an anthro fox is? It's not like you got gray fur or fox arthritis or anything."

Terry closes his eyes. Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth. "Twenty-five."

"No way! I'm twenty-five," Fritz says. "What month? Actually, what's your birthday?"

He opens his eyes, marginally more relaxed. "I was born November first, two thousand."

"Yes!" Fritz pumps a fist, "I've got July thirteenth. Respect your elders, young fox. Damn whippersnappers walkin' around in my front parking lot."

He stares for a moment, then silently turns to continue towards the far stairs.



"Hey-- wait! Fukin'-- tall people. How do you walk that fast?!"

"Twenty-five," Fritz delivers the line in a very specific, familiar tone and cadence.

Terry snorts.

They're here. The door to the apartment hallways looms, transparent glass construction revealing the peeling paint and dirty, trampled carpet beyond.

Fritz, of course, barrels forward, calling over his shoulder, "Let's take a look!"

Hesitating, pushing down the slithering anxiety that the hallways apparently conjure, Terry follows.

The change in scent is significant. Even if he were blind, deaf, and without any other sense but smell, he'd still tell the difference. The parking garage tower smells of cold, unforgiving concrete, while the hallways sing a musty, rotting tune.

Moreover, the temperature, the humidity, everything. It is like walking into another world, one on the other side of a thin glass door. He'd noticed before, leaving it for the parking spaces earlier, but it's more apparent now--the suffocating gestalt of the hallways presses in, and he wants to leave.

"So, what's all in here?" Fritz asks, glancing to both sides, as if he could see past the turns at the ends of the hallway.

"This is most of it," Terry explains, attempting to steady himself with speech. "Things might change, like the color of the carpet, and there are rooms every so often, but it isn't interesting."

Fritz looks at him for a few seconds longer than is strictly comfortable, eyes narrowed, before nodding. "You want to keep going down?"

"Yes." Please.

"Well, what're you waiting for? Let's go!"



Terry doesn't know how to communicate his appreciation. He hopes Fritz understands anyways--a good chance, considering he was savvy enough to pick up on his mood in the first place.

It is new territory for both of them now. As expected, the tower of parking garages continues down, deep into the depths--or perhaps they are already in the depths, and only Hell awaits.

Terry pushes the thought of brimstone from his mind. If this place were such a location, he'd have woken in flames on that first morning.

He carries the blasted suitcase--designed, no doubt, to be as unappealing as possible--down another set of stairs. Handing it off to Fritz in their easy pattern, they head off towards the far end, the next steps down.

"Alright: favorite movie," Fritz says.

"That's a complicated question," Terry answers.

"That's what they all say. But you gotta pick one."

"What's yours? If you're asking the question, you must have an answer lined up," Terry stalls to think.

Fritz rolls his eyes, "*Birdemic*."

"The... infamously horrible movie?" Somehow, Terry isn't surprised.

"Yep! Watched it with friends once, and I laughed so hard I cried," Fritz looks wistful. "Good times. Don't watch it alone, though. It's crazy bad."

Terry nods. "Mine is '*The Grand Budapest Hotel*'."

Fritz blinks, then gives him his full attention. "Really? Isn't that the one with the really pink hotel? Ah... what's that director? Damn it, where's the internet when you need it?"

"Wes Anderson," Terry answers.

"Yeah! Him! Why that movie?"

With a shrug, Terry says, "It's a story. A simple, well-told, engaging story. Movies are too short for overly detailed narratives, in my opinion. Have



you seen it?"

"Nah, never did. Just saw the trailer, or a clip, or something."

"That's too bad."

"Yeah... But I bet you've never seen *Birdemic!*"

Terry shakes his head. "My loss. The cultural impact alone--what a thing to miss."

"Damn right."

"Favorite color."

Terry sighs. "You'll laugh."

"It's red, isn't it?"

"Yours is blue, isn't it?"

Fritz's laughter echoes down the lot.

It isn't all conversation, thankfully for Terry's social cache. Talking with Fritz is shockingly easy, considering, but the breaks are still appreciated.

At the moment, Fritz walks backward, eyes closed. He's trying to, quote, 'use his cat sense to feel the Force'.

Terry knows he's just bored.

It's strange--more strange than his new normal, that is. It's quite impossible to miss the almost spicy scent Fritz has about him; Terry's new olfactory system seems particularly sensitive to the smell. It's not unpleasant, at least, though he can't help but wonder what his scent is to Fritz, as he seems nose blind to his own.

They've been walking for nearly an entire waking day, now, and Terry can practically feel the friendship slot in place. Would they have met, let alone tolerated each other long enough, before the inciting event? Almost certainly not. But now that they have met, it's amazing just how quickly they've bonded. Then again, most new friendships do not begin with ten hours of conversation in a stressful, isolating survival situation



The self-proclaimed cat boi ('That's B-O-I, Terry'), for all his quirks, is someone Terry can appreciate the company of. Perhaps, when they find other people, they'll still stay in contact despite the lack of immediate need for company. That would be nice, but Terry won't keep his hopes up.

Fritz trips on nothing, stumbles but doesn't fall, then says, "I'm okay!"

"Did you find the cat Force?" Terry asks, deadpan.

"Nope. Found the back of my eyelids though," he yawns, jaw practically unhinging, "and I'm tired now. Yay."

Before he can catch it, the yawn triggers Terry's own yawn. They've been up for a while, according to his watch. "It's almost midnight, Pacific Time."

Fritz yawns again, though this time Terry manages to suppress his own. "Daaamn. And what, we're just gonna sleep on the cold, sad concrete?"

Terry looks around. Indeed, the concrete floor looks chilly and depressed. "Make padding out of your spare clothing," he ignores Fritz's groan, "should we sleep in shifts?"

"What? You scared an entity's gonna sneak up?"

"...Yes."

"Oh. Yeah, we'll be fine," Fritz smiles, more comforting than mischievous, "if something's here, we would've seen or smelled it. It's not like we're being quiet."

With furrowed brow, Terry nods. There's a certain logic to it, though he doesn't expect he'll be sleeping deeply tonight, regardless.

"Let's go make camp in that corner! We can tell spooky not-campfire stories and roast each other instead of marshmallows!"

Terry follows, a small smile creeping up his snout.

Yes, he was quite lucky in finding Fritz.

 Report

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Oct 14, 2025

#21



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.6 - Wake Up~! Grab a Brush and Put a Little Make Up~! (Fritz)

Fritz sits in a big nesting pile of other people's clothes, watching Terry like he's a really weird tropical bird. His eyelids droop, and he wants to sleep a million years.

"What're you looking for?" Fritz finally asks.

Terry's ear twitches (*cute*) and he looks up from the pocket dictionary. "I'm looking for the word 'cocoon'--I want to see if it has anything about using the word 'hatching', like you talked about earlier."

He remembered that? "You remembered that?"

"Of course," Terry says, turning back to the book. "I can't find it, though."

Well, that's an invitation if Fritz has ever pretended to hear one. He scoots over, wanting to look over Terry's shoulder, but he's *smol* now and doesn't want to stand up. He looks in from the side instead.

Terry's soft, warm scent makes his tiredness even worse, and that buttery baritone doesn't help. Push through, cat boi!

"It should be in there, right?" Fritz asks. When's the last time he's ever even looked at a real dictionary? He kinda remembers learning how to use one in... first grade? But after that, phones happened--or were happening?

He yawns.

"Yes, but look," Terry points, claw resting right under a word, "There's 'cacophony'," he moves up to point under the word right above it, "and there's 'cackle'. Cocoon should be between these two, right? C-A-C-O-O-N."

"Maybe they forgot to add it?" Fritz asks. "Or, they're racist to



caterpillars? Guess that's what you can expect from *bookworms*."

"They have 'cacao', but not 'cocoon'?" Terry asks, ignoring Fritz's second (and way better) idea. "I don't think that's right."

Fritz yawns. This is what he gets for getting almost no sleep last 'night'. "Why'd you even pack a dictionary?"

"Information density," Terry says, still glaring at the little green book like Webster himself personally shat in his cereal. "There's more information, per cube inch, in a dictionary than almost any other book--and I had one at my apartment. It seemed like my best choice, since technology is unlikely to work here."

"Neeeed," Fritz teases, blinking sleepily. "Listen, I'm gonna get some shut-eye. You should too. Don't need you falling down the stairs because you decided to read the entire 'C' section--heh, C-section."

Terry blinks. "That's actually a good idea."

"Nope! It's the worst. G'night, fox news."

"Sleep well," Terry says, placing the book down with a sigh.

Fritz pounces on his nest, rolling around to get comfortable. His last sight, before drifting off, is Terry staring into the distance, deep in thought.

Cute...

Fritz wakes up first.

After the most satisfying stretch of his life--and learning that he can fucking *purr*, like, for real--he glances over at Terry's little clothes nest and snorts. The anthro fox is sprawled out on his back, his 'bedding' thrown around everywhere, arms and legs at hilarious angles, tail twitching. Looks like hurricane Terry hit them.

Fritz looks away quickly, though. It's morning, and Terry's about to wake up, and he's a (fox) man... Ahem. There's no need for Fritz to be a creep, no matter *how* hot Terry is. He doesn't go in for that kind of thing.

Still, that bulge tho.

Puttering around, his eyes eventually land on the dictionary. It's on the



ground near where Terry's backpack is propped up, bright green cover slightly torn. Information density. Not that he's wrong or anything, but Terry thought of it right away, before he even left his apartment.

Just how lucky is Fritz? Somehow, he found a wanderer that can take a joke, can dish out jokes, is wicked smart, and doesn't *hate him* for being... himself. It's that last one that really matters. Fritz isn't stupid; he knows how some people just can't deal with him. He tries not to let it get to him, but he's only human-turned-anthro-cat.

But Terry? Terry just takes it in stride, actually engages with Fritz's special five-pound goblin-themed discount brand cereal bag of madness. Sure, he gets annoyed--that's kinda the point--but it's not a bad annoyed, as much as Fritz can tell. And that... that's important, a special thing Fritz has only found in a few people in his life.

It's just so damn easy to talk to Terry, like they've been friends for years instead of a day. And coming from Nevada, aaaaaall the way from fucking *Nevada*? Fritz isn't really of a 'threads of fate' guy, but meeting someone like Terry, in the weirdo-Backrooms, the day after waking up as his fursona, even though they were so distant and the chances of meeting so tiny? Hmm...

A sudden, sharp gasp makes Fritz's ears shoot straight up, tail lashing. It takes a moment, but he calms down when he realizes it's just Terry waking up.

"Ugh..." Terry groans, propping himself up on an arm and squinting around. "What time is it?"

"Gooooood morning sunshine, the Backrooms say, 'Hello!'" Fritz grins.

That earns him a bleary-eyed, squinting, slow blink. Flopping over, Terry digs his paw around in his jacket pocket--which is almost out of reach after being thrown--and stares at the watch he pulls out.

"Huh... I slept well," Terry says, yawning. Those teeth tho. "Good morning, Fritz."

Fritz laughs--he just feels like laughing--and asks, "What're we doing today, Brain?"

Terry pauses for a moment, eyes distant. "That's a... *Pinky and the Brain* reference?"

"Yep. You gotta say the line, though."



"...We're doing the same thing we do every day, Pinky: taking over the world," Terry says in the least enthusiastic delivery since the storks went on strike.

"No, no, I'm pretty sure it's 'trying to take over the world'," Fritz says. "Say it again."

"No thanks," Terry rubs the weariness out of his face. Though it looks like he expected his snout not to be there, so it's more like he palm-boops-into-rubs the weariness out.

Terry crawls over to his backpack, pulls out a notebook and pen, and starts writing in it.

"What're you doing?"

"I'm recording how many days it's been, and my thoughts," Terry says. "Keeping our sense of time is going to be important--people who lived in caves without clocks struggled with it. I forgot to write in it last night, so I'm doing it this morning."

Nerd. "Nerd."

Terry just rolls his beautiful baby blues and keeps writing.

Though they don't need to eat ('probably' says the voice of Terry in his head), they still snack on some of their stuff. Fritz gets to have a honey bun, and Terry chomps down on some gourmet airplane peanuts. No wine, though--Fritz is saving that for a special occasion, whenever that happens.

"I wish we had access to a shower," Terry says, after spitting out his foamy toothpaste-spit behind a nearby pillar. Gross.

Fritz, at least, has a bunch of toothpaste and toothbrushes--something about traveling makes people want to pack those things, who knew. He didn't get any used toothbrushes; he's not *that* insane.

He didn't wake up with the normal 'my mouth is a breeding ground for horrible smells' feeling. More furry bullshit? Eh. He's still going to brush, at least until they run out or something.

"You don't smell bad," Fritz says. It's true, Terry smells exactly the same-



-that soft, gentle, warm scent.

Terry sniffs at himself, under the armpit, making Fritz faux-gasp. "Don't believe me? I'm hurt."

"This gets stranger every day," Terry says. "Do we even need to brush?"

Fritz shrugs. "Dunno. I'm gonna wait until we're out of toothpaste, or our fangs annihilate the pathetic, sad bristles. Cowards."

"What part of that makes them cowards?"

"The people making the brushes are cowards. They can't handle the truth of the furry agenda."

Terry shakes his head, holding back a smile. "They couldn't predict the so-called 'furry agenda', let alone handle it."

"Which makes them cowards," Fritz nods. "Anyways, we going or what?"

"Are we?" Terry asks, brow raised.

"Uh... yeah?"

"You're leaving all your stuff here?" Terry gestures to the ground.

Fritz freezes. Oh, right, he's gotta pack. His eyes narrow at the crafty fox, "You win this round. *But I will have my revenge!*"

"That makes even less sense than usual."

Fritz has to fold up all the clothes he took out of his shit-case. Trust him, he tried stuffing it all in without folding; Terry's 'wtf' look nearly made it worth it.

"Oh, I'm stupid," Terry says out of nowhere.

What? Is he finally going to ask if he can help--

"Look," Terry points at the dictionary he's reading. "It's not C-A-C-O-O-N, it's C-O-O-C-O-O-N. With an 'O'. And it doesn't even have anything on hatching."



Fritz bursts out laughing. "Wha-- seriously?" He laughs even harder at Terry's loathing look.

Terry grumps, "Unbelievable. Who designed this awful language?"

"Oh man," Fritz says, struggling, "Oh man. That's *great*. I can't believe you missed that."

"Don't blame me, blame the entire planet for accepting this sub-standard so-called 'language' as acceptable."

Fritz snorts. He has to keep poking, he *has to*. "Aren't you a programmer? Just use a programming language."

"What--" Terry stops, then glares. "I know you're messing with me, but that's still one of the most incorrect things I've ever heard."

"That's all I ever wanted to hear, Terry," Fritz says, paw over his heart.

Yessss! A facepalm! Ten points!

...Back to folding.

"Sooo..." Fritz says, "You gonna help with this folding or what?"

Terry blinks, then nods. "Sure."

"Why's it incorrect?" Fritz asks. The folding's going a lot faster now that a certain fox isn't sticking his snout into the only book for a hundred miles.

"What?" Terry asks, carefully folding a shirt like he's watched three YouTube videos about it and chose the best one...

That's probably what he did, isn't it? Terry seems like that kind of guy.

"The programming language thing."

That gets him a suspicious look. It's almost like Terry expects to be messed with or something. "You wouldn't care. It's technical."

Fritz might not care about the 'technical' stuff, but he kinda wants to hear anyway. Terry's obviously pretty passionate about his work, and it's always fun to hear someone talk about their passions... Especially if



they're hot as Hell and have the voice of a radio host on downers.

"I wanna hear anyways," Fritz whines. "C'mon, pleeease?"

"You want to know why it's so wrong to compare programming languages to normal languages?" Terry asks, sounding baffled.

"Mmhmm!"

Terry sighs, getting that 'hold on, I'm thinking about how to dumb this down for goblin people' look. Fritz can tell, because his ears twitch like they're bouncing on his thoughts. *Cute*.

"Okay. A computer is a machine that takes a list of instructions and does them in order. A programming language is that list. It's not a language, it's just a list of instructions," he pauses. "Everything I just said is a massive simplification, by the way."

Fritz is already lost. "Tell me *more*."

Terry huffs, but continues, "Things like English and Spanish are made to communicate between humans, one brain to another; there's room for interpretation. A programming language is made to give instructions to an unfeeling, unthinking machine. Humans can still read it and get the intent, but the main point is getting the computer to do what you want.

"If you speak English to a computer, it'll just be a slab of silicon. Teaching a language to a computer is... technically possible, I guess, but absurd," Terry frowns like he's confused, then shakes his head like it's full of cobwebs. "Yes, it's insane. But anyways, do you get it?"

"Yep!" Nope.

"Oh? Then explain it to me, in your own words," Terry smirks.

It's *so on*.

"Yeah, I learned that computers are *stupid*," Fritz says. Take that!

"Yes, they are. I guess you do get it," Terry says, dead serious.

"Wait, what?"

"Computers are stupid. It's the same way addition is 'stupid'--it's just a dumb process that does the same thing every time, like two plus two always making four. I'm glad you understand."



Fritz squints. "You're not fucking with me?"

Terry shakes his head, looking amused, but earnest. "Ask any real programmer, they'll agree."

Huh. "Okay... so..." Damn it, all his momentum's lost. "Cool."

Terry nods. "Cool."

With the morning mourned, lost, buried, and folded, they're ready to head out. Terry, with his backpack packed on his back, and Fritz with the eldritch horror that has decided to take the mortal form of a suitcase.

"Onward! Downward!" Fritz says, marching towards the stairway that'll take them deeper into the depths. "Don't you wanna see what Hell's like?"

"Assuming that we are not already in Hell," Terry muses. "I would wager even odds on it."

"Deal," Fritz says instantly. "You can't handle my gambling, Vegas boy."

"Neither of us even have things to bet with," Terry sighs. "And I don't-- didn't live near Vegas. Too expensive."

"Sure, we can bet, just gotta be creative. Not like money's--" Fritz freezes in place, before laughing his little cat heart out. "Hahahahah! Take that, government! I don't have to pay taxes anymore! HAHAHAHAH! HA! Suck my shit through a silly straw, thieves!"

Terry chuckles, rolling his eyes.

The two travelers continue their journey, laughing and bantering like old friends.

Sometimes, you just *click* with someone.

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Oct 15, 2025

[🔗](#) [🔖](#) #23**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.7 - int (Terry)

Terry walks. Not in silence, like he once did, but inundated with such varied and nuanced noise.

"Pfffft."

Indeed, this is the height of existence. To be near someone, to know communication is to be had, to hear them back when they continue to blow raspberries for the previous five minutes.

"PPPPPPFFFFFT!"

Finally, Terry parts with his own vocalizations, to dance that eternal game of socialization.

"Dare I ask what you're doing?"

"PPPt--?" How Fritz makes that noise inquiring, Terry does not wish to know. Some understandings are beyond mortal kin.

"Please do not tell me that you're communicating with that noise."

Fritz snorts--thankfully a different noise--and says, "Fine. I'm trying to whistle."

Terry turns his head, one eye on where they're walking, donning his best side-eye deadpan. "Really?"

"I aaam!" Fritz protests. "But it's not working! I'm supposed to be good at whistling."

"Your mouth is shaped differently, your lips are different, your tongue too," Terry points out. "Of course it's going to require different technique."

"That's--" Fritz opens his mouth, poking at his sharp incisors, "--that makes a lot of sense. Damn. Guess I'll have to learn how to whistle again. Worth it."



"It really doesn't," Terry says, "make sense, that is. You can talk just fine, despite the change in facial structure."

Why make it so arbitrary? Did whatever did this give up after converting Fritz's ability to speak? It's a hint, but Terry can't put together what the hint is for.

"Huh. Yeah. Weird," Fritz says.

A moment, a blip in the void, then...

"PppppFFFFFT."

"Look at that pillar," Fritz points at a pillar near the center of the lot.

It's an innocuous pillar: the exact same cylindrical shape as the others, same diameter, forming a ninety-degree angle with the floor and ceiling, et cetera. It does not stand out.

"What about it?"

"That same pillar's been there for the last few floors," Fritz says.

"You mean there's been a pillar in the same spot?"

"Yeah."

Terry tilts his head, but he can't recall. He wasn't paying that much attention. "I don't remember."

"Keep an eye out. Maybe it'll be on the next floor."

Sure enough, on the next floor, there's a pillar in the same spot near the center. Terry moves back up--after giving back the suitcase--and compares the two floors. It's in the same spot, or so close that he can't tell the difference from nearby stairs.

"You see it, right?" Fritz asks.

"Yes. It's been there for the last few floors?" Terry asks.

"Mhmm."



A closer inspection, performed after walking closer to the offending object, reveals nothing of note. It's just a normal pillar.

Seven floors later, and the pillar is still positioned in the same spot.

However, suddenly, on the following floor...

"Wait, where is it?!" Fritz gasps. "It's not there!"

Terry hands back the suitcase and considers. "Perhaps it skipped a floor?"

"Lame."

Even more floors later, and the pillar hasn't returned.

Fritz is in a funk.

"It's just a pillar," Terry reasons.

"It's just--?! But it was so cool!" Fritz says, throwing his hands in the air. "Why'd it just stop? No warning or anything."

"The pattern also started without warning," Terry reasons.

"That's not the same."

"Isn't it, though?"

"Hmph," Fritz harrumphs, "It just feels pointless."

Terry shrugs. He's seen stranger things in the hallways. "Does it need a point? This place seems to be built on arbitrary rules."

Fritz slumps, tail hanging limp. "I guess... I thought it was cool..."

The cat looks low, sad. Terry's mouth moves before he can stop it.

"I suppose it was cool."

"Really?" Fritz asks, looking up. His eyes sparkle--somehow. Does he practice that? A biological effect?



"Not that cool."

"Awww!"

Another set of stairs, another hand off of the abominable suitcase.

"How deep do you think we are?" Fritz asks.

Terry frowns. "Is there a surface to be under?"

"Uh..." Fritz trails off. "Maybe?"

Looking up, Terry says, "We could count how many floors we go down. They're the same height, I think, so it'll be easy to multiply their height by our count to get how far we've gone."

"Gross. Counting," Fritz exaggerates a groan. "What's next? Math?"

"Counting is math."

"Yeah, but it's easy."

"Then you can easily count the floors, right?"

"I lied. It's crazy hard. Never counted anything in my life."

"That explains so much."

"Hey!"

"...Pffffty."

Terry sighs, barely cringing at the way his ear naturally flicks at the noise.

"What?" Fritz asks.

With a helpless wave of his hand, he says, "I know I heard you vocalize an 'E' sound at the end. I also know whistling doesn't involve vocalizations. Or consonants. Or so much spit."

"Actually, I whistled while talking once," Fritz says, putting his fist on his hips and puffing out his chest--his other hand drags along his suitcase.



"That is a serious medical condition. Did you get help?"

Fritz glares.

"Poooooffft."

"Now you're not even trying."

"Oh, look! The pillar's back!" Fritz points.

"Take this back," Terry says, thrusting the accursed suitcase back to Fritz.

Walking towards the pillar takes time, during which Terry confirms that it's in the same position, at least so far as he can tell. It isn't as if he's taking precise measurements.

Soon enough, they're upon it, with Fritz gazing at it with wide eyes, jaw open.

"What do you think it means?" Fritz whispers.

"It means that there's a pillar here," Terry says.

"Woah..." Fritz breaths. "There is..."

"We are mere days into this situation. Are you going to make a cargo cult already? Even as a joke, I have to protest."

Fritz places his hand onto the cold stone. "It's speaking to me..."

"No it isn't."

"Touch it! You'll see!"

"Hear, you mean?" Terry asks rhetorically. "And touching it isn't going to do anything but make me look like a fool." He leaves the obvious implication for Fritz to pick up.

Fritz whirls around, pointing an accusatory finger at him. "Non-believer!"

Terry barely manages to restrain his flinch. Releasing a sigh, he asks, "What's it saying, then?"



"It's saying... to keep going down."

Terry doesn't dignify that with a response.

Terry has to argue Fritz out of calling the pillar the 'Divine Rod'. The compromise name--which Terry still isn't sure is any better--is 'Stone Cold Steve Pillar'.

No, he didn't laugh. Fritz is a fraud, cheat, and scoundrel for implying otherwise.

"That's five floors of Stone Cold Steve Pillar," Fritz says, practically skipping.

"You'll count the pillar--"

"Stone Cold Steve Pillar."

"--but you won't count the floors?"

Fritz has the audacity to nod shamelessly. "It's worth it, for him."

Terry shakes his head, more impressed than anything at the black hole conversational singularities Fritz is able to conjure at whim. It's a skill, truly.

"You are something else, Fritz."

Fritz just grins at him.

"Pfffytoo."

"Seriously?"

They pass the pillar--Terry will not speak its name--and Fritz brings up a new topic.

"Alright: Favorite book."

"Fiction or non-fiction?"

"Fiction."



Terry doesn't have to search for the answer. "*House of Leaves*, ironically enough."

"Never heard of it," Fritz says. "Why's it ironic? Is it about furrries? A were-house? The holy book of Stone Cold Steve Pillar?"

"No," Terry doesn't even sigh. He's numb. "At one level, it's a book about a house that's bigger on the inside than on the outside. The house grows into a gigantic, impossible space, like a labyrinth of house-geometry. That's why it's ironic, since we're in a space like that."

"Huh," Fritz hums, then asks, "at one level? What's level two? Sewers and goombas?"

Terry takes a deep breath. It's time.

"It's a book about a man who found a book written about a man writing about academic research talking about a documentary recorded by the residents of a house that's bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. I think. There's also the notes from the 'editor', the weirder footnotes, Truant's mother's letters... there's a lot going on in it."

Fritz stares at him. "You're serious."

Terry smirks. "Yes. I probably missed something, too. I had a copy, but it was too big to justify packing with my limited space."

"Man, and I thought mine was weird," Fritz says.

"What is it?"

"Some *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* fanfic. I read it a while back, but I couldn't find it again."

"I see," Terry says. "Maybe it was taken down?"

"I think, yeah," Fritz sighs.

"What do you remember about it?"

"Err... Charlie--the kid from the book--takes over the factory and invites a bunch of new kids to explore the new factory. There's some craziness about a girl that vapes, I think? I dunno. I just really remember liking it."

"And it's your favorite? Even if you can't remember it?"



"Yep!"

Terry shakes his head. He should have expected that.

A few floors later...

"Why would Stone Cold Steve Pillar abandon us?" Fritz asks. Terry half expects tears.

"It's clearly a test of faith," Terry says, voice laced with, perhaps, a slight tinge of sardonic nature.

"You're right," Fritz says, switching to focused seriousness in an instant. "I will be strong, strong like a stone pillar."

"Will you be cold and Steve like a pillar as well? Or is that a different sect?"

"We don't talk about those freaks," Fritz says. "They can whistle; sinners."

Terry sighs. "Of course."

"Pft. Pfffff."

Terry twitches. It's funny, in a sense, but the noise is beginning to fray. Not badly, but this game has been on and off for hours.

"Perhaps try a different technique?" Terry bargains. "How did you whistle before your transformation?"

"I dunno," Fritz shrugs. "I just did it."

"A natural talent for producing loud, shrill noises?" Terry asks. "I am shocked to my core."

"I know, I'm awesome like that."

"You got any games on your phone?" Fritz asks, as they stroll across another floor devoid of a central pillar.



"What? No?"

"Just asking."

"What if every pillar is actually Stone Cold Steve Pillar?" Fritz asks.

Terry resists the urge to facepalm. "Are you ascribing omnipresence to a pillar?"

"Nah, just omni-pillar."

Not every moment, not even most moments, are filled with speech. There is only so much to speak about before topics run dry, and so companionable silence is--

"Pfft."

--is...?

And so companionable silence--

"Pfftpp."

Terry shakes his head. "It's not that I hate web fiction, it's just that most of it is bad. I can read better, published works that have actual editors behind them, easily."

"But!" Fritz chirps, "where else are you gonna get a story where every character, even Dumbledore, is a horcrux?"

"Is that an actual story you've read?"

"Probably."

Terry wonders, truly, how things have gotten this way so quickly. Fritz and him work, like two interlocking puzzles. It's almost uncanny, a near-total subversion of his life experience in making friends. Then again, he hardly spends such long hours with people right after meeting them, and



they're hardly ever so outgoing.

"Pffffff."

However, there are limits.

"Pppppppppppp."

"Fritz."

"Hmmm?" Fritz drags out the hum.

Terry sighs. He hopes that this won't cause unnecessary friction. Not knowing a subtle approach, he can only explain himself honestly and hope.

"I appreciate your humor," he says, "but please stop with the repeated 'whistling' attempt noises. It's gotten old."

Fritz slows in his walking, and Terry matches the pace. He can't read Fritz's expression, but it's lacking the usual smirk or smile.

"Sorry, I'll stop. I was just... Thanks for just telling me instead of," Fritz gestures to nothing, "you know."

"I don't know," Terry says. He really doesn't. This is not the reaction he expected; he thought he'd have to fight through layers of joking, at least.

"I mean, thanks for not..." Fritz visibly searches his mind for the words, "You don't want me to leave, or shut up, right? Just sick of the whistling thing?"

Terry nods, feeling rather lost. "Yes. Did I overstep?"

"No, no!" Fritz says, waving his arms in front of him. "I'm just being silly, I guess. Thought you'd gotten sick of me already, or something..."

Where'd he get that idea? What is happening in this conversation? "No. Of course not. It's only the whistling bit that's lost its charm. There's no need to generalize beyond that."

Fritz stares at him, eyes searching for unknowable truths. A small, slow smile adorns his face again, and something small unclenches in Terry's chest. "Yeah, you're right. Just keep telling me if I'm getting annoying again, okay? I'll trust you on that."



"Okay," Terry promises, still lost.

The following couple floors are somewhat subdued. Nothing overly tense, let alone antagonistic, but there's still a contemplative silence that feels too solid to break without good reason.

So it's as if by--ironically enough--divine intervention that the next floor has the central pillar.

They spot it at almost the same moment. Terry sees Fritz perk up, open his mouth to produce a no-doubt absurd comment, then glance at him, and stop.

Is... he nervous? Looking for permission to be quirky? That can't be right, Fritz is too self-confident.

Terry hands him the awful suitcase and prompts, as a test, "It's here. Your faith's been rewarded."

Even to Terry's somewhat atrophied social skills, he can easily see how Fritz's whole demeanor lights up.

Well, that proves it. He was nervous, nervous of Terry's opinion, despite the matter of the whistling being settled. At least Terry improved the mood with his bumbling?

"Stone Cold Steve Pillar always comes back," Fritz says, practically skipping as they begin walking across the floor. "Didn't you know?"

"So I've been told," Terry says, unable to keep the smile off his face.

"Can I call it the 'Divine Rod' now?"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves."

His friend's laughter bounces around the space, filling and fulfilling.

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VincentR, ScreenWatcher, Weenboom and 41 others



Oct 16, 2025

🔗 📖 #26

**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.8 - Domino, Domino, Domino all you want~! (Fritz)

Fritz knows he can go overboard sometimes. It comes with every purchase of being Fritz; no refunds. He also knows that people sometimes... react a bit explosively when he's being too annoying.

So, he maybe, kinda, maybe has a little bit of a complex about people telling him to shut it. He tries to keep it under control, but sometimes...

And, because Fritz is a disaster, Terry telling him off about the whisling thing flared up those insecurities like seasonal allergies.

But Terry's actually nice and not out to get him (duh). Blah blah blah, exposition, and now Fritz can trust him to tell him *before* everything blows up! And *that* means Fritz can stop worrying--mostly. Win/win, really.

So, yeah, Terry's basically Fritz's new best friend. What a time to be alive.

"Come on! Just put your paw on it once," Fritz says, goading him into touching Stone Cold Steve Pillar.

Tall, fox, and handsome tilts his head (*cute*) and asks, "Paw?"

"Uh, yeah? Your paw," Fritz brings his up, making grabby motions.

Terry looks down at his paw, flexes it, then looks up. That look... this is gonna turn into a *thing*, isn't it?

Bring it.

"This is a hand, Fritz."

Fritz rolls his eyes as hard as he can, moving his head with it for the style points. "Furries have paws. It's the paw law."

"A paw, with slender articulated fingers?" Terry asks, eyes already



resigned, but Fritz can see the small smirk anyways. "Paws aren't grasping appendages."

"Furry paws are," Fritz counters. He'll destroy this nerd with facts and logic.

Terry sighs. Yessssss. "Then, what do you call this?" Terry points up.

Looking up, Fritz says, "The ceiling."

"No, I mean what I'm pointing with," Terry says, only baffled for a second. Damn, he's getting good at this.

"That? Who cares what that's called?" Fritz shrugs.

"I do. In fact, I care about what you call it, specifically."

Fritz can see the future, and it's gonna make him bust a gut. He lines up the shot...

"It's a finger, duh."

"A paw finger," Terry deadpans.

"Yeah. Finger," Fritz says, smirking like he's won. He kinda has, though.

"Do I even need to say it? Paws don't have fingers."

"Oh?" Fritz raises a brow, crossing his arms, "Then what *do* they have, mister smart guy?"

"They--" Terry cuts himself off, eyes narrowing. Critical hit! "...Have nubs?"

"Nubs," Fritz deadpans, a 10/10 impression of Terry.

"The rounded, short, segmented pads?" Terry says/asks. "I'm not sure what they're actually called, but you know what I'm talking about."

"You mean fingers?" Fritz asks.

"No. Fingers are more slender and longer than... paw nubs," Terry says, eyes shifting.

It's time for the killing blow. Finish him!



"Yeah? Prove it."

Terry opens his mouth, seems to freeze, not even breathing, then closes it. He glances around like he's going to find something to prove it with, but there's no humans or animals around, just them furries.

Fritz makes sure to look as smug as possible.

But suddenly, Terry's panic turns into steely determination, and Fritz's heart skips a beat. What is...?

Like he was born for this moment, Terry takes off his backpack, crouching down to open the front zipper. The fox reaches his *paw* inside, pulling out a small green book--the pocket dictionary.

"No..." Fritz mutters, uncrossing his arms. "You can't."

Terry's smile is the smug one now. He stands up, flipping through the dictionary pages. His mouth moves, silently whispering the ABCs as he finds what he's looking for.

"Finger," Terry says, smooth baritone clear and formal, "noun, 'any of the five jointed parts extending from the palm of the hand, especially any one other than the thumb.'"

Not pausing for Fritz to try shooting back, he turns deeper into the dictionary. It takes a little bit--damn dictionaries--but he finds it.

"Paw, noun, 'the foot of a four-footed animal having claws,'" Terry recites.

Terry's smile grows, then, like a balloon deflate-farting around the room, it falls. He looks utterly shocked, eyes wide, and whispers, "...What?"

"What?" Fritz asks, surprised. Terry *never* switches emotions that fast. It's gotta be a big deal. "What's up?"

Terry just blinks at the dictionary before handing (pawing?) it to Fritz.

"Read it."

Since it's open to the right page, it's easy to find 'paw'.

The first definition's there, like Terry read, but it has a second definition...

"Two," Fritz says, voice starting to overflow with joy. The only thing holding back his laughter is the promise of seeing Terry's *face* when he



says it, "...a hand'."

Terry looks like Christmas was canceled early.

Fritz has to lean on Stone Cold Steve Pillar to keep from falling down. He falls down anyways, but he stays standing for long enough to point at a face-palming Terry.

"It has to be slang," Terry says.

"Uh-huh."

"An informal term."

"And we're so formal."

"...It's a hand."

"Paw's better."

Bantering, hell, just *talking at all* with Terry is awesome.

Like, just watch:

"Hey Terry," Fritz pipes up, sniffing the air, "does it smell like updog in here?"

Without missing a beat, Terry says, "I need more information about this 'updog' phenomenon before I can answer."

See? Awesome.

"Nothin' much, how about you?" Fritz asks, like the joke actually landed.

"Smooth."

"Thanks," they're coming up on another set of stairs, "can you...?"

Terry sighs and takes the demon suitcase. Yeah, Terry's the best.

Fritz catches Terry checking his watch again.



"What's the time?"

"About eleven in the afternoon," Terry says, tucking the watch back into his pocket. "Probably about time to consider setting up camp."

"We *have* to set up near Stone Cold Steve Pillar."

"For its divine protection?" Terry asks, sounding pained. Thanks for the food.

"Yep!"

They keep walking, under the forever-bright lights of the parking lot.

"...I miss the sun," Fritz mutters.

"So do I."

Luckily-- no, ordained by divine edict, Stone Cold Steve Pillar shows up when they're starting to yawn and slump. And yes, they do set up near it.

Terry's writing in his generic weird-supernatural-thing-happened diary. Maybe one day it'll show up as spooky out-of-context exposition for researchers to be nerds about; Terry'd probably like that.

Fritz is bored.

There's nothing to talk about with Terry focused on his writing, and there's no games or (fun) books or music...

He gets the impulse to try whistling again--actually try, and not just be a goblin--but shoots it down. If there's a time to try, it'll be later, away from Terry, just in case.

Single player I Spy? Nah, he always loses. Dancing like nobody's watching? He's too tired. Singing? Tired, and it'd annoy Terry probably.

Why didn't Terry pack a deck of cards or something? It's all boring *practical* stuff. Fritz ignores that he has the same problem with his own packed stuffs; at least he's got the excuse of being stupid.

Actually...



He grabs one of his (honestly too many) bags of airplane peanuts. Opening it, he scoots back and starts throwing them at Stone Cold Steve Pillar.

It takes a few more throws than Fritz would've guessed before Terry has to ask, "Are you making an offering to the pillar?"

Sticking out his tongue, Fritz tosses another one, "Yeah. I'm trying to get them close to Stone Cold Steve Pillar, but not touching. No bounces."

"I see."

Fritz throws a few more, eyeing Terry. Give it a minute...

Terry wraps up his super important exposition crafting session, then gets up to sit next to Fritz. They're close, but not that much, just near enough for Fritz to be covered by Terry's soft, warm scent.

Fritz hands (paws?) him the peanuts, and Terry tosses one with zero style.

"Not even close," he teases. "You aiming for a different pillar? Maybe a couple floors up?"

"I just need practice," Terry defends, covering a yawn.

"Here, I'll show you how it's done," Fritz says, taking the peanuts back, accidentally bumping his elbow into Terry's arm. Terry leans back a bit from the contact, which, yeah, makes sense; Fritz has already picked up on Terry's *thing* about touch. A real 'personal bubble' kind of fox.

Fritz tosses another peanut, this one bouncing off Stone Cold Steve Pillar and landing near them. Oops.

"Is that how it's done?"

"Yeah, duh," Fritz defends, handing back the peanut bag.

There's no score, no ending, just sleepy back-and-forths and littering. They play for a bit too long, basically passing out onto their clothes nests late into the 'night'.

According to Terry's beautiful, amazing, perfect watch, they slept in. Not that there's really a schedule here, or anything to wake up for besides



each other.

Their morning routine goes basically the same, though Fritz has to pick up the gross floor peanuts and stuff them back into the peanut bag. Terry made the good point that they 'might as well save them for later downtime'.

Bullshit furry magic's here in great form, too: there's no rank ass morning breath, hunger, anthro femboy BO, thirst, soreness from walking all damn day, or gross things that need toilets.

"I kinda feel like a statue with a heartbeat," Fritz says, doing some hops in place once they're all packed up. He flicks his tail a few times, just to revel in the feeling. It'll be a sad day when that gets old. "A cute as hell statue, but still."

"That is a very good way to put it," Terry comments.

Fritz freezes, then manually unfreezes. For a second there, he thought Terry was talking about the 'cute as hell' thing.

Still... "You think I'm cute?!" Fritz gasps, exaggerating as hard as he can without cracking up.

"No comment," Terry says, not even looking. "Ready to go?"

"Yeah, yeah, hold your horses."

Why's Fritz disappointed all of a sudden? Does he really miss shitting that much?

Going down some more steps--thanks, Terry, for being a good mule--Fritz spots Stone Cold Steve Pillar, then...

"Terry! There's a door!"

He hears Terry rush down the steps, stopping beside him, eyes locking in on the door on a side wall.

"Let's go see it," Terry says, already power walking.

Fritz has to jog to keep up. Stupid tall, sexy Terry.



They stand in front of the door. It's glass, like the other ones Fritz saw.

It leads into an office-looking place. Cubicles and slow-burn desperation.

"We going in?" Fritz asks.

"I vote yes," Terry replies, and that's that.

"After you," Fritz steps forward, opening the door for Terry with a grin.

"Bye, Stone Cold Steve Pillar! No, Terry-- say bye! Terry!"

Stepping into the office space is wild. It's still so surreal to just... have a place like this appear out of nowhere. Where's it all coming from?

It's beige. Beige carpets, beige walls, beige-ish cubicles. The ceiling tiles are those popcorn ceiling design, more white than beige, thankfully. Fritz can already feel his soul calcify into vague loathing at his non-existent boss.

The droning of the awful office lights make his sensitive ears flick. Damn Backrooms. At least the carpet feels better than concrete for his bare... feet? Paws? Hmm.

Cubicles. Fritz hasn't been in an office like this before, but they look normal to him. Except the computers, those are the old, bulky looking, fat-screen ones. Antiques, basically.

The office itself goes on for a lot longer than it probably should, hotdog style, before turning a corner out of sight.

Terry beelines straight to the nearest computer. Fritz chuckles, should've expected that. The fox pokes at the buttons on the tower and screen, messes with the keyboard and mouse, but nothing turns on.

With laser focus, Terry opens up the tower, looking inside. "There's the motherboard, CPU, RAM... everything looks in order..." He looks behind, following the wire to a socket, "...and it's plugged in. Unless I'm missing something, this should work. Or at least boot."

As he speaks, Terry starts looking droopy: ears low, fuzzy fox tail hanging limp, frown deep. He stares at the computer like he's lost something precious.



Must. Protect. Fox smile.

Ask gentle, like hamburger.

"What's up?"

Yeah, just like that.

Sighing, Terry says, "Don't worry about it. I'm just wondering why this place breaks things like this."

Hmmmmmm... Deflection? "You sure?"

"Yes."

Totally a deflection.

"You know," Fritz says, walking up to stand next to Terry, looking at the compooterator, "if anyone can get a computer to work here, it'd be a famous, awesome programmer. One that's given a bunch of talks."

"I'm not famous," Terry shakes his head, but his body's looser, less tense already, "and who says I'm trying to get a computer to work?"

Fritz just raises a brow, pointing at the dismantled tower.

"I didn't expect that to work," Terry says. "I'm just... investigating, I suppose. Confirming some of the nature of the problem."

"So what would work?" Fritz asks.

It's magical, seeing the exact heartbeat that Terry goes from 'this is making me sad' to 'this is an interesting problem'. His eyes *literally* glaze over, like literally literally, and he looks like he's trying to dig a hole through the Backrooms with his stare.

They stand there, Fritz staring while Terry thinks unknowable computer magic thoughts. Who knows what's going on in that fuzzy red head?

To be fair, it takes a few minutes, instead of a few seconds, for Fritz to crack.

"Sooo...?"

Terry jumps and turns to him. "Pardon?"



"I asked: what's up?"

"I..." Terry says, looking back at the computer's guts, "I have some tests to run--for a dramatic overnumeration of the word 'some'."

"Like what?" Fritz asks, smile growing. This sounds more like Terry; good.

Terry's eyes *shine*. "Like everything. I've been negligent with my curiosity."

...And *that* sounds like something an evil scientist would say before blowing up the moon for the cheese.

Double Good.

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Oct 17, 2025

  #31



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.9 - for (Terry)

What looks like an outdated, enormous office is, in actuality, a silicon graveyard.

The computers within are old in make and model, and completely dead to the world. They're buried in place, entombed in sterile cubicles and beige carpets.

It strikes a surprisingly deep blow for Terry to see. It's a reminder that his life's work, from very early childhood, has been tied to computers, their storage, their methods. His pride as a craftsman of the computational, destroyed by mysterious, arbitrary seeming means.

Not to say that computers are all he knows, obviously, but he's specialized enough to feel the loss like a hole in his heart.



But Fritz makes a good point about fixing them, one Terry should have realized far sooner. He blames his fraught emotional state and worries of survival for missing it:

He knows how computers work.

Not just the shallow understanding of a novice, not just the surface-scraping understanding of so many who call themselves 'coders'.

Terry is a computer scientist. He has never pressed his own silicon wafers, true, but he knows the deep mathematics of computation itself. He's read the words of Turing, Von Neumann, even Babbage, and comprehended them.

It is madness borne of dismay to look at the problem of computers failing and say, 'My skills are now useless'. Computation is more than electricity flowing through transistors; his skills are deeper than trite knowledge of how the Windows kernel works.

So, then, what is he to do about it?

There are two obvious goals: discover the cause of the mass failure, and get computers working again. Both goals complement each other, though either could technically be solved before the other, depending on various details.

Is the failure a singular event or an active effect? If he were to, somehow, create a new computer from total scratch, would it spontaneously fail?

Depending on the nature of the failure, what is the decision process for causing something to fail in the first place? Does/did it target only silicon-based transistor devices, or would a vacuum tube computer have also failed? If the human brain is a very advanced, inaccurate computer, then why wasn't his destroyed?

There are small hints, bits of information, everywhere: electricity still works with the lights, switches still work for light switches, air conditioning still flows, his mechanical watch still ticks.

He wishes he had a basic pocket calculator to see if it would work. It'd be a silicon-based computer, but it's much more simple in scope than most computers. If it worked, it would lead clearance to his early theory that communication technologies were targeted specifically.

If he--



"...o?"

Terry's thoughts stutter-step, and he remembers that he's in the presence of his friend. "Pardon?"

"I asked: what's up?" Fritz asks, looking pleased.

"I..." Terry begins, staring at the old-model CPU, the motherboard, the RAM, "I have some tests to run," he almost chuckles at the absurdity, "for a dramatic overenumeration of the word 'some'."

"Like what?"

"Like everything. I've been negligent with my curiosity."

It's time to ply his craft towards a new goal: tearing answers out of sanity's cold, twisted remains.

Terry consults his list, then solemnly adds a peanut.

The table has been cleared of everything: the monitor, tower, empty paper racks, and so on. On its surface, Terry used his Sharpie to draw a line of squares.

He consults his paper, then moves the pencil over one square to the right.

"Okay," Fritz says, from his side where he watches, "I gotta ask. What the flying fun are you fucking doing?"

"Simulating a Turing machine," Terry answers, checking his list, removing a peanut, and moving the pencil to the left.

"Yeah, cool, cool," Fritz says, "but what's that got to do with the price of grain in China?"

Putting down the paper containing the machine's state table, Terry turns to Fritz. "It's a very simple, easy-to-visualize computer. The squares are 'cells' of a 'tape', the peanuts are marks made on those cells, and the pencil is where the machine is 'at' at the moment."

Fritz blinks at him rapidly. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

Terry sighs. That's fair, honestly. "You don't have to understand its



intricacies. Just know that this," he points at the mess, "is, technically speaking, a computer. And this," he points at the paper, "is the instructions given to that computer. It's me doing the interpreting and execution of these instructions, but it's still, technically, a computer."

"Peanuts are computers?" Fritz asks, tilting his head, one ear flicking, "But nobody told me."

"No," Terry says, controlling his instinct to facepalm, "peanuts are not computers, surprisingly enough. It's the process of adding, removing, and positioning those peanuts, according to the instructions, that makes 'computation'. If I had infinite space, infinite peanuts, infinite time, infinite patience, and the right instructions, I could compute anything a modern computer could do with this setup."

"Okay..." Fritz says, very clearly not getting it, "Why are you doing this to yourself?"

"It's a test," Terry explains. "Something broke the computers, and I don't know what. Being able to simulate a Turing machine means that, at least, the phenomenon doesn't actively prevent technically functional, but functionally useless computers from existing."

Fritz stares, blank-faced. "You're the nerdiest person I've ever met. Like, this is some next-level shit, Terry."

Terry is... reasonably sure he isn't being insulted. "Thank you?"

"You're welcome," Fritz nods, then smirks. "Now, how can I help?"

Terry blinks, twice even, then smiles. For some reason, this seems to cause Fritz concern. But then, why would he volunteer only to be worried? Strange.

"So, we're gonna test all of these?" Fritz asks.

Before them, resting on the carpet, are organized piles of various computer parts: CPUs, RAM sticks, hard drives, power cords, motherboards, et cetera. After teaching Fritz how to disassemble the computers, they both went off to collect parts for a while, reconvening here near the glass door entrance.

The idea is simple: all the computers here are exactly the same make and model, which makes all their parts easily interchangeable. He might-



-and it's a rather large 'might'--be able to get something working by exchanging parts. Perhaps the failure phenomenon was inaccurate, and broke random parts, instead of uniformly?

To be clear, Terry doesn't expect this to produce a working computer. But, in this early stage, it's important to check assumptions. He'd feel like a moron if this were all he had to do, and he skipped it because of vague, no doubt biased, intuition.

"We won't test every permutation," Terry says. "That would take... I don't think we'd have to worry about the heat death of the universe, but the sun would eventually become a problem. Assuming the sun even exists anymore, of course."

Fritz laughs, unrestrained. "Sorry, Terry. I'm gonna have to pass on that one."

"I have to agree," Terry smiles. "What we're doing instead is taking random samples."

"Oh! Can I pick?" Fritz bounces on the balls of his feet. "I can be super random."

Terry doesn't bother explaining how human brains are awful at randomness. He just gestures to the piles and says, "Be my guest. One of each, to start. Two of the RAM sticks, though."

With enthusiasm, Fritz skips into the piles, bending over to make his choices; Terry forces himself to look away.

"Hmmm... This one, and... this one! And this one!"

Terry looks back, only to see Fritz all but shaking his hips in an impromptu dance, tail lashing--

He turns, walking into the cubicle, breaking line of sight.

"...And this one. Ter-- Terry? Where'd you go?"

As expected, the random samples don't work. Whatever causes/caused the problem, it's uniform enough to subvert this test's best wishes.

"That's the last one we need to do, I think," Terry says after pressing the power button to no effect.



"So... now what?" Fritz asks. "Gonna Google the answer?"

"If only," Terry laments. "My next thought was to test if the sockets are actually getting power. But I'm not sure how to do that without electrocuting myself. I don't have a multimeter, and I'm not an electrician, regardless."

"Gonna stick a fork in it?" Fritz smirks.

"I was thinking my knife, since I actually have one of those," Terry answers, pretending the question is a normal, reasonable one. "But it has the same 'risk of death' problem."

"What a shame," Fritz says.

"Shame, yes, that is what I would feel, along with the electrical burns." Terry blinks, an idea coming, "Have you seen anything plugged in that actually works? Anywhere, not just in the office area. Maybe it's just a power supply issue."

Fritz points straight up at--

"I don't mean lights," Terry clarifies, "I mean something plugged into a wall socket that still works."

"Uh..." Fritz rubs his chin, exaggerating a thinking pose, "Nope!"

"I don't..." Terry pauses, "Actually, yes. My fridge, in my apartment. It was still running. As was my desk lamp, now that I think about it. I wish I packed it; I could have used the lamp to test other sockets."

"Is your refrigerator running?" Fritz asks.

"Yes, I just said--" He blinks and resists a facepalm. "...Okay, you got me. Congratulations."

Fritz giggles. Terry rolls his eyes.

Terry has half a mind to physically restrain Fritz. He would, too, if he thought for a moment that doing so would actually convince Fritz to stop.

Fritz unplugs the power cord from the socket, then plugs it back in slowly. He repeats this pattern, barely blinking, such is his focus.



Somehow, Fritz got it into his head that 'testing for power' meant 'try to get the electricity to arc by plugging something in wrong'.

Yes. Really.

"Stop," Terry says for what is probably the seventh or eighth time, "you'll get hurt."

"You've never plugged something in and gotten a spark?" Fritz asks, tail twisting in concentration. "It's spooky, but won't hurt."

"That's if you get lucky," Terry reasons.

"I'm the luckiest sunuva bitch alive."

"Fritz, no."

"Fritz, yes! Always wanted to say that."

"Wh--"

pop

"Hah!" Fritz cheers, "I got it!"

Terry stares at the electrical socket in a mixture of dismay and appreciation.

"Just because you were right, does not mean you were right," Terry finally says.

"You're just jelly," Fritz sticks out his tongue.

"Jealous of what, exactly?"

"Of my epic level science skills, duh."

For a childish moment, he considers mentioning the other sockets they could test. In the end, though, he decides to err on the side of imprudence and work with a sample size of one. Let it be known that Terry Cooper is merciful.

Fritz starts dancing in victory, proclaiming himself 'the best around', with assertions that nobody will ever bring him down.



So very, very merciful.

Using the tip of his knife, he finally unscrews the top of a hard drive--the tiny screw being too small for his screwdrivers. Prying it open reveals what's expected: a completely normal hard drive disk, no clear damage to any of the mechanisms.

Which isn't to say that there isn't any damage, obviously, only that there isn't any apparent with informed eyeballing. Though a computer should at least boot even without a hard drive, a broken drive would not cause this level of bricking.

"What's the verdict, doctor?" Fritz asks, acting like he's preparing for life-altering news. "Will it ever play piano again?"

"Unfortunately, nurse Fritz, the patient has suffered a terminal case of death," Terry replies with faux seriousness. "Cause currently unknown."

Fritz holds the back of his hand to his forehead, "Nooooo!"

Tuning out the obligatory antics, Terry considers. What other easy tests could he do before having to take longer, more complex actions?

Randomly trying to turn on computers while exploring this office space area? Yes, but that's longer term. What else...

"Fritz," Terry says, interrupting his friend's dramatics, "can you think of any easy test that can be done right now?"

"Hmm... We could bring a computer to Stone Cold Steve Pillar," he points to the nearby glass door.

"Thank you for your input."

"Any time!"

Okay. What does he want to test in the future?

The big goal is finding what happens when a larger computer is made and run. He's not delusional enough to think he could craft a modern CPU from scratch--doubly so with his lack of resources and tools. However, making an autonomous kinetic computer, such as with falling water or marbles, might be possible.



Assuming minimal errors--and thorough testing--it would be flabbergasting for such a machine to nonsensically fail. Still, trying such a thing would be the next step, since it would be orders of magnitude more 'computer-like' than his pitiful 'Turing machine'.

Getting any of these vintage computers working seems like an exercise in futility. Whatever is wrong with them, it's something that cannot be fixed by simply replacing parts or diagnosed with his eyes. He very likely doesn't have, and might never have, the specialized tools to fix them.


Then it's settled. He'll think things over, keep an eye out for materials to build a primitive computer, and fiddle with computers he finds when he comes across them.

"What'cha thinking about?" Fritz asks from his side.

"This may be a lifelong project," Terry answers, smiling.

In the back of his head, he vaguely acknowledges his tail moving, but doesn't bother to care; his mind is too focused on the delightfully intractable problem before him.

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Oct 20, 2025

  #37



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.10 - You Told Me to Buy a Pony but All I Wanted Was You~! (Fritz)

He's wagging his tail.

Fritz stands perfectly still, not wanting to break the magic moment. Terry's smiling softly, looking at the guts of the computers he's taken apart, deep in thought, *wagging his tail*.

Over the last few hours, Fritz watched Terry come to life. There's a spark



in his eyes that just wasn't there before. That passion... Fritz can't look away, even if he wanted to.

Being the one who set the whole thing off? He feels warm and fuzzy--and not because he's literally warm and fuzzy now.

So what if Terry's going on his mad (computer) scientist arc? Fritz is *here for it*. Like, seriously, who makes a 'computer' out of peanuts? What does that even mean? Some weird voodoo shit? It seemed to make sense to Terry, but fuckin' hell...

wag wag wag

This is the cutest thing ever. Terry doesn't even realize he's doing it--he'd totally stop if he did--but he's comfortable enough with Fritz to do it unconsciously, obviously.

"So wholesome..." Fritz whispers.

"Huh?" Terry asks, his tail... stopping.

Noooooo! Fritz ruined it!

"Are you okay?"

No! He's not okay!

"What are you doing?"

Fritz vows, to the Heavens and the Earth, to the moon and the sun, to the Backrooms itself, that he's going to get Terry to wag his tail again. Somehow.

So swears his fuzzy blue ass.

"Why are you staring at my rear?"

He--

...Oh.

Fritz's gaze shoots up to Terry's face. His mind twists in embarrassed panic, and he shouts, "Nothing!"

"...Nothing?"



It's a fucking miracle that the fur on his face covers his blush.

Oh god. *Is* it covering his blush? Or is it working under weird furry bullshit rules and it's showing?!

"Yep! Nothing. So what're we doing next?" Smooth, Fritz. Ten outa ten.

Terry stares, brow raised. "Okay...? I'm basically done here. If we come up with any other tests, we can use the computers we find later in this area--if we're going deeper into it, that is."

"Yeah, deeper, totally," Fritz says on total autopilot, calming his heart. What the hell's wrong with him? Deep breaths.

Terry looks a little disbelieving at that, but drops it.

"Right..." Terry says, looking nonplussed. "Let's go?"

Fritz nods, trying to look normal.

He could run for hours without breaking a sweat now, but somehow that conversation set his heart beating like a breakcore drummer. Why's he so flustered recently?

Shaking himself, he picks up the pace to keep up with Terry's longer steps. The office complex they're in is basically one long ass room, cubicles in the center, and walkways on the side.

It takes a little bit to walk to the end of the room, which gives Fritz's soul time to (mostly) re-enter his body. At the end, it takes a sharp corner to the right, leading to another long ass room with more cubicles.

"Yeah, that's about what I expected," Fritz says. "Wonder if it's gonna be like a 'you turned right four times but you're in a new place' kinda deal."

"That could work, so long as it makes a spiral pattern," Terry says, "or moves vertically."

"Or... it could be freaky Backrooms magic," Fritz says, wiggling his fingers at Terry, "Ooooo spooky~!"

"First," Terry says, smirking, oof, "*House of Leaves* did that 'freaky Backrooms magic' first--I think. Second, what makes you think this is the Backrooms, and not its own phenomenon?"



"Uh... because it's a giant liminal space?" Fritz asks. "And it's indoors? And, uh..." Damn it, why's Terry smirking? Foul! "Offices?"

"Sure," Terry nods, "and I don't know a lot about Backrooms lore--I was never interested in it--but I'm certain you 'noclip' into them, right? And it doesn't transform you into anthropomorphic animals; it'd be far more niche if it did."

"Maybe it's a special furry Backrooms level?" Fritz guesses. Honestly, Terry's got a point, but there's no way Fritz is just going to admit that.

Especially with how Fritz wants to kiss that smirk off his face--

Wait.

"One that only manifests with a bright light that knocks you out, leaving your immediate surroundings the same and growing the liminal space around it?" Terry asks, oblivious to Fritz's late-stage internal freakout disease.

"Uh, yeah, totally," Fritz says, mind on a different planet.

Okay. Okay. It was just a totally normal, impulsive urge to platonically kiss his new best friend. His tall, sexy, kind, smart, funny, awesome, great smelling, probably hugable, please whisper in Fritz's ear with that smooth buttery baritone, super great anthro fox friend...

"Oh shit."

"Hm? What?" Terry asks.

Fritz freezes, digging deep into his emergency fund of deep-fried bullshit, "Uh... I left my refrigerator running. At the airport."

Terry stares at him, looking down with those curious, piercing blue eyes--and *when exactly* did that start making his traitor heart skip a beat?! Why wasn't he warned?!

Well, okay, maybe the signs were there, but--

"Did you really?" Terry asks, drawing out the question in a 'is this cat serious' kind of way. Terry stahp. Terry pls.

"Yep!" Fritz chirps, keeping the screams firmly locked inside the smooth, rotating gas station hotdog he dares call a brain.



Through a miracle of Stone Cold Steve Pillar, Terry looks away, obviously chalking the whole thing up to 'yet more Fritz madness'. Yay.

Meanwhile, in Fritz HQ, his super-obvious-in-hindsight crush is yelling 'MORE WEIGHT'. Because it's a crush? Ahahahah...

Fuck.

After some Stealth 100 breathing exercises, Fritz is... more calm. Not really. But also yes. He's pretending he's more calm, and he's stupid enough to believe it sometimes.

So... A crush on Terry, huh? How quirky. lol.

Looking back, he never stood a chance. Fritz, lost, confused in the Backrooms, finding the one hot guy who just so happens to like him for who he is? Yeah, no fucking wonder Fritz latched onto him like a monkey that only knew a wire mother. The fact he held out for *days* instead of *hours* is going to need eyewitnesses to believe.

And Fritz very much does have a crush, he can't deny it. Once the thought was acknowledged, it's gotten stuck in his head popcorn-kernel style. His brain-tongue keeps poking at it, reminding him that it's there.

Still, for all that he's zen-mode accepting his feelings and yadda yadda, there's the teeny, tiny, little itty bitty problem of...

What the FUCK does he do?!

AHHHHH!!!

No. He's calm. Rational. Fucking *terrified* at what Terry's gonna think--

Deep breath, Fritz.

The big question is, of course, if he should do anything about it. If he does bring it up, and it doesn't work out, Terry will *hate*-- might not react well. Things'll be awkward, weird, and all that great stuff. The fox is already skiddish about being touched, how'll he react to a possible relationship? Especially this early? Ten bucks says Terry's a 'take it slow' kind of guy.

Not to mention, Fritz doesn't even know if Terry's gay or not. Kinda



important, that.

He could suppress it, ignore the crush until it goes away. But--and there's always a non-fun but--he's going to be around Terry nearly 24/7 for the foreseeable future, surviving a close-quarters all-out social duel with him in the spooky back-asswards Backrooms.

All that stuff about Fritz standing no chance? Nothing's changing there. And consulting his crystal 8-ball... yeah, he's not going to be able to hold it in. If he can't hold it in, then that means Terry'll figure it out eventually, and wow, would you look at that, it's panic o'clock, time for reason's shift to end.

So, no, the only real option is to try. Best case? New boyfriend, they live happily ever after, have the cutest gay furry wedding-- breath, Fritz.

Slightly worse case? He gets rejected, but things don't get too awful from that, and their platonic thing still goes good.

Worse case...? Fritz hides his flinch well enough at the thought.

Terry's too nice to make it the worst case. Hopefully.

They silently turn a corner--this time going left--revealing yet more office space to quietly break down and study to.

At least Terry is the ultimate world champion grandmaster of the whole 'companionable silence' thing. Seriously, the guy could probably go all day without speaking a damn word if Fritz let him. What a crazy talent.

As much as Fritz would love/dread just confessing outright, right now, no hesitation, he's going to have to (*gasp*) exercise some actual self-control. Things are too likely to blow up if he just rushes in, right? That's not just nerves speaking, right? Hahahaha...

The first thing Fritz needs to do is figure out if Terry has the gay. Because... duh? If Terry's not into dong and dong accessories, then everything else is dead in the water.

Fritz's gaydar is rough on his best days, let alone when he's pining after the target, so his best bet is to just ask.

Just... ask.



Are you gay? Are you gay? That's all Fritz has to ask, three simple words and a little lilt for the question mark.

But... will Terry see through the question? It's kind of a weird thing to ask out of nowhere, right? Or is Fritz freaking out for nothing? Oh god oh fuck is he being stupid?!

"Where do you think the power's coming from?" Terry asks.

Fritz blinks, jostled out of his spiraling thoughts. "Huh?"

"For the AC and lights, I mean."

"No, what was that first part?"

"Where do you think the power's coming from?"

Violently shifting gears, Fritz, by pure troll instinct, says, "Uh... It's furries in hamster wheels, running forever."

"That--" Terry pauses, then considers. "Actually, we do violate the laws of thermodynamics by existing. It's not unreasonable to suspect this place has other methods to do so. I hope it isn't people, though, that would change my priorities quite a bit, and be maliciously inefficient."

"Ha ha, yeah..." Fritz says, mind elsewhere, "totally."

Shit. He's not gonna be able to do it, is he? Too many nerves, too many unknowns, too much at stake.

Well, fine. Fuck it. If he can't ask outright, then he'll be subtle.

Fritz. Subtle.

Fritz.

Subtle.

He's doomed, isn't he?

They come up on an actual intersection this time. It's not a left or right choice, though, it's...



"Straight, or diagonal?" Terry asks, turning to Fritz for his well-informed opinion.

"Uh..." Is the Backrooms trolling him right now? What even is this? "Diagonal?"

No way he's picking 'straight' with the state his mind's in right now.

"Okay," Terry nods, taking the path that goes at an odd angle, carving an arrow into the wall with his knife (what?). It just leads to yet more long office, though there's some empty corkboards on the walls here and there. Whatever.

Now's the time to extract Terry's sexual preferences... which, honestly, is maybe the worst way that's ever been put. Still, having thought about it, he has an idea of how to do it without making everything awful forever.

"You know," Fritz says, feigning casualness, eyes glued onto Terry's every little expression, "this place kinda reminds me of my ex-boyfriend."

Smooth as a marble--his brain, that is.

Terry blinks, tilts his head just so, then asks, "Really? How?"

No, you beautiful, silly, implicitly accepting fox. You're supposed to ask about the boyfriend thing, not the other part. And now Fritz has to bullshit some way a boring ass office space reminds him of his ex.

Good thing Fritz is awesome at improv. "Because its only redeeming quality is that it's unusually long."

Terry snorts, then laughs, totally caught off guard, "What-- okay, I'll admit, I didn't see the setup." He chuckles again, "Good one."

"Thanks," Fritz says. He's smiling so hard it almost hurts. He loves seeing Terry laugh, and loves more being the cause of it--

Wait. It's wholesome, for sure, but Fritz is supposed to be playing a bigger game here. Now, how to bring the conversation back to the point...

Ah! Yes! He's a genius.

"You got any weird relationship stories?" Fritz asks.

Terry frowns--oh no--and says, "Not particularly. I don't do romance well."



"Oh? No guy out there meet your standard?" Fritz acts teasing, but inside, it's all paws on deck.

Terry scoffs. "You could put it that way, I suppose. Though, 'guy'?"

Fritz's focus narrows down to a point. This is it. "Yeah, I assumed...?"

Shaking his head, Terry delivers his verdict.

"I'm not homosexual."

Oh.

...*Oh.*

Well, shit. That's--

"I'm bisexual."

...

...Ahem.

eeeeeeEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!


We're in the money~! We're in the money~!

Step aside, everyone, Fritz 'The Stealth Genius' Bing is in the office! Thank you, thank you, leave your applause for the end of the show. Ah, fuck it, you can clap, go on.

Operation: *(Eventually) Kiss that Fox Boi* is a GO!

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 20, 2025

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Oct 21, 2025

  #41





WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.11 - argc (Terry)

Snap!

Using the blunt end of a hammer, one he packed from his apartment's tool drawer, Terry destroys a CPU, covering his eyes with his free arm. Its chunks fling themselves, some landing on to the carpet, others merely bouncing and clacking on the tabletop.

"Did you fix it?" Fritz asks, supersaturated with sarcasm.

"No," Terry answers. He picks the largest chunk, inspecting it. Being more on the mathematics and software side of computer science, he doesn't know exactly what a CPU's innards are supposed to look like, but what he sees doesn't seem overly suspicious. Another datapoint.

Fritz's hand appears in his vision, grabbing for the hammer in Terry's hand. "Alright, my turn! I wanna smash stuff too, you know?"

Feather light, faster than he can react, Fritz's hand brushes against his, before the hammer is gone and the thief is skipping to a fresh cubicle. What--

"Don't break the monitor!" Terry calls, a spike of anxiety affecting his volume.

Fritz freezes, obviously winding up to do just that. "What? Why?"

Looking over the cubicle walls--his height allowing it easily enough--Terry explains, "It's an old CRT monitor. I don't know the exact mechanics, but I remember that breaking CRT technology is quite possibly lethally dangerous."

Staring, Fritz looks from the old monitor, to Terry, back to the monitor. Of course he's considering it.

"Don't do it. I don't want you to die," Terry says, dead serious.

Fritz blinks, then grins. "Awwww~! You say the nicest things, Terry. I don't want you to die either. Like, a lot, actually."

A strange way to put it, but that's within standard Fritz-level tolerances.

"Thank you."



"Can I break the other stuff though?"

Terry nods. "Just be careful. You don't have eye protection, and I don't have a lot of first aid supplies. And unplug everything first, also."

Fritz, mature and rational, sticks out his tongue and--after unplugging the system--takes a hefty swing at the computer tower.

CRASH!

...Which falls to the floor, ready for an anthropomorphic blue cat to pounce on it, laughing like a loon.

The cubicle wall is probably adequate cover. Terry primes himself to duck anyways.

"One thousand degree knife versus the Backrooms," Fritz says.

Terry's hand trembles, suppressing his mirth as he carves an arrow symbol into the wall of an intersection. This office-themed area is as if hallways and offices were combined--long, long straight paths of cubicles, wide areas, and endless useless computers.

"I haven't thought of that trend for years," Terry says, continuing his work.

"Yeah."

Terry finishes, folding the knife and putting it back into his coat pocket. Before he can turn down the marked path, however, he feels a gentle poke on his arm. Terry's minuscule step away is so instinctual he doesn't realize he made it until after it's done.

It's Fritz, asking, "Why are you using the knife? Don't you have a Sharpie?"

Terry nods, having thought of this before. "Two reasons: first is that I have a limited amount of ink to use unless we can somehow restock, second is that ink can be wiped off. In the unlikely case that something is acting against me, it would be harder to remove a mark carved into the wall than one written onto it."

"But... won't your knife get dull?"



"I can sharpen it again," Terry replies, "I cannot reclaim lost ink."

"What if you can't cut the wall? Like, it's brick or something?" Fritz asks, looking amused.

"Then I'll use the sharpie and make smaller marks," Terry shrugs.

For some reason, Fritz finds that humorous, if his chuckling is any hint.

"Only you, Terry."

"Thank you?"

Terry is getting somewhat better, at least incrementally. The dull roar of horror at his transformation has become an ache: noticing his extended snout produces a pause instead of a flinch, he barely tenses when his ears flick and turn, the pulling and tugging of his fur is slightly less overwhelming, and he doesn't try to clamp down on the movements of his tail nearly as much.

It's not to say he's accepted it, or even likes it, but necessity, practice, constant exposure, and Fritz's presence have dulled the edge. If given the chance to change back, he would still take it--under conditions where he wouldn't starve to death, of course.

Still, practice is a must, he thinks. It's with that intent that he finds himself manually twitching and swiveling his ears, committing their range of motion to memory and instinct. Although not as alien as moving his tail, the sheer flexibility and control is still astonishing.

One ear up, the other lowered as far as it can... then swap, then swap again. Repetition, focusing on the sensation instead of mentally flinching from it, almost meditative, slowly getting used--

"Pfft! What're you doing?" Fritz snorts, laughing while walking at Terry's side.

"Ah," Terry says. It's a rare day indeed where he feels truly embarrassed, but it seems that time has come. "I'm practicing."

"Practicing?" Fritz asks, as if the word is new to him, "With your fuzzy wuzzy fox ears?"

At length, Terry stares, before saying, "Not... the wording I would use, but



yes."

Fritz nods, a subtle bounce appearing in his step, "I like it."

"Is that so?"

"Mhmm," Fritz smiles, then tilts his head.

Terry glances away to check where he's walking, and when he looks back, Fritz's ears are lowered. They then raise, then lower, repeating a few times. Meanwhile, Fritz's expression becomes one of concentration and, perhaps, frustration.

"Agggh! I can't do it," Fritz pouts. "How do you do the one ear up and one down thing?"

"I just do it," Terry shrugs. It's true, it only took a few attempts to get it right.

"Jerk."

"I apologize."

"You should be sorry."

"Then I've acted properly, good."

Fritz laughs, and Terry joins.

"We should make a secret paw shake," Fritz says, as if presenting a new million-dollar idea.

"You mean 'handshake'?" Terry asks on argumentative reflex.

Fritz gives him a seconds-long impudent glare, then continues, "A paw shake."

"And why, exactly, do we need a secret handshake?"

"Well, what if there's a furry skinwalker around and the only way I can tell which one is the real you is our secret paw shake?" Fritz posits.

"A passphrase would be easier, faster, and less dangerous," Terry replies without hesitation.



"Yeah, but where's the fun in that?"

"I think, in that circumstance, I wouldn't care much for fun."

"Party pooper," Fritz pouts. "Do you really not want to make a paw shake? It's something to do, at least."

Fritz has a point, Terry thinks. As default conversational topics get used up, the potential for boredom rises. Finding things to do is not only engaging, but an important survival strategy to stave off unnecessary interpersonal friction and bad ideas borne of boredom.

And there's Terry's... reluctance towards physical contact. But he could handle a handshake, especially if it's forewarned and not overly excessive. He's functional, no matter how far his unasked-for transformation reopened old wounds.

Still, he has standards.

"Only if you call it a 'handshake,'" Terry offers, smirking.

"Never!"

Terry shrugs, exaggerating nonchalance, "I suppose we won't, then."

Fritz pouts twice as much, going so far as to manually lower his ears, looking like a sick kitten. It would pull at his heartstrings, if Terry didn't keep them in an iron grip in regards to guilt tripping.

Though maybe 'guilt tripping' is too harsh. This is Fritz, not--

Iron grip.

Blinking away the mental tangent, Terry says, "I made my terms clear and fair."

"Fair?!" Fritz asks, looking aghast, hand on his chest in shock, "What's fair about making me say something silly? What if you think I'm weird?"

Terry stares, trying to communicate his opinion on the matter with body language alone.

Fritz holds out for several seconds, but eventually cracks up, doubling over in laughter. As always, Fritz's mirth is unrestrained, full, and contagious; Terry chuckles along, feeling relaxed by the camaraderie.



When the moment passes, they pass into companionable silence again. However, it doesn't last, as the issue of the hour is still hot.

"So..."

Terry sighs. "How about a compromise name? Neither paw nor hand. Something new, better."

"Hm... " Fritz rubs his chin, then grins. Whatever it's going to be, it'll be an instant denial, guaranteed. "Stone Cold Steve Pillar shake."

"No."

"You didn't even think about it!"

"I didn't have to."

"Alright, smart guy, what's your idea? The Computer Shuffle?"

For a split moment, Terry considers jokes about sorting algorithms--the word 'shuffle' triggers a deeply ingrained instinct--but dismisses them as too esoteric for the non-programmer Fritz.

Anyway, presenting an actual idea might actually move things along.

"Since it can't be a 'secret handshake', what about a 'surreptitious greeting'?"

Fritz snorts. "What? No. No way. That sounds like you're a secret agent or something."

Hmm... "Clandestine regards?"

That makes Fritz bark a laugh--perhaps a poor use of words, considering he's an anthropomorphic cat. Meows a laugh? But that doesn't work either...

"You're fucking with me. Right?"

"Actually, no. I was just substituting synonyms," Terry replies. "You don't like the ideas?"

"Eh..." Fritz shrugs. "I'm not feeling it."

Terry decides to make a joke suggestion, mostly giving up on sensible



compromises, "How about... a secret grasping appendage shake?"

"Deal."

"Wait. What?"

"Our secret grasping appendage shake," Fritz nods, grinning. "I like it."

"Of course you do."

Designing their... sigh... secret grasping appendage shake is almost exactly the debacle that Terry expected it to be.

"How do we do this, then?" Terry asks, standing awkwardly across from Fritz. He's never made a secret handsha-- grasping appendage shake before. Fritz could tell him it requires the answer to Busy Beaver twenty, and he'd almost believe him, if only out of shock from Fritz knowing what that means.

"Well, a secret paw shake's gotta be more than just a shake," Fritz says, bouncing in place and looking up at him.

"I thought we agreed on 'secret grasping appendage shake'."

"Yeah, that."

Terry valiantly doesn't facepalm. Barely. "Okay. So more complex than a mundane shake, that makes sense."

"It's also gotta be a two player thing. You can't just stand there and look cu-- can't just be a statue," Fritz says, stuttering midway through for some reason.

"Okay."

"And... that's it, I guess."

"Never write a technical document, Fritz. For the good of the world."

"Well, now I want to," Fritz says, then shakes his head. "Whatever. Later. The big question is: how do we start the... grasping appendage shake? Fist bump? A 'Dillon, your sonuva bitch' level thing?"

Terry blinks. "I have no idea."



"Hmm..." Fritz hums, then holds out a clenched fist. "Alright, how about we start with a fist bump?"

With only a small amount of trepidation, Terry gently returns the fist bump. The touch only lasts an instant, before Fritz pulls back his hand with a, "Booosh~!" Imitating an explosion.

"You gotta do the boom too," Fritz says.

"Really?"

Fritz nods, smiling.

Sigh. "Boom."

Fritz giggles, then asks, "Okay, now what? Our paws are way back here," he wriggles his fingers near his shoulder where his hand 'exploded' back, "so you choose."

Put on the spot, Terry fumbles for an idea before saying, "A high five?"

A delighted gasp, and Fritz's pink eyes somehow literally sparkling again, "Yes!"

The high five is predictably one-sided, Fritz all but slamming his palm into Terry's, while Terry holds out his hand like it's approaching a bonfire.

Smack!

The impact stings the animalistic pads on his hand. Fritz lingers with the touch for a second longer than Terry expects, long enough for Terry to notice just how much larger his own hand is.

"Then, we shake," Fritz says, grasping his hand and shaking it in a traditional handshake. Letting go, he grins, "So, what do you think?"

"That's it?" Terry asks, baffled.

"What? You want a longer secret paw-- secret grabbing whatever shake?" Fritz asks, amused brow raised.

"Actually, it's perfect," Terry says quickly. "Exploding fist bump, high five, then normal... shake."

"Paw shake."



"We went over this, Fritz."

Fritz giggles, looking up at Terry with an enigmatic, but probably joyful expression.

"Now we gotta practice it."

Terry sighs, but smiles.

They do, in fact, practice. Dozens of times. Exploding fist bump, high five, shake. Dozens.

It gets to the point where Terry has to put his foot down.

"I think we've got it, Fritz," Terry says, hand stinging from the constant enthusiastic palm slaps. "And cramming isn't a very good memorization strategy. It'll be better to space out the repetitions on a logarithmic curve, if only to spare my hand."

"Paw."

"Same difference."


Fritz rolls his eyes, then relents, "Alright, alright. I guess you've had enough."

Terry sighs in relief, not bothering to hide the action. Fritz continues to be a mystery; he can't begin to fathom what goes on in that brain.

At least he's fun to be around.

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 21, 2025

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Oct 22, 2025

  **#42**





WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.12 - Stop, Hammer Time~! (Fritz)

Fritz should have expected it. He should have gone into *the Plan*[™] expecting it.

Terry's the densest thing in the Backrooms.

Seriously. Fritz already nearly slipped up like five times, and half those times he probably could've gotten away with it due to Terry's sheer lack of fucks to give.

The random flirtatious touches make some sense, at least. Terry's *thing* about contact is still, surprise surprise, a *thing*, and that's not going to change just because his scent fills Fritz's head with cotton candy. Still, Fritz tries it, but gently, always backing off when Terry looks too uncomfortable. He's trying to strike that balance between 'pushing too hard' and 'Terry won't even notice'--a razor thin line.

Which makes Fritz super proud of the paw shake idea. So much paw-to-paw contact, and Terry looked totally fine with it! Maybe because it didn't come out of nowhere? Hm...

He still sort of wants to cut the knot and confess. But no, the best thing to do is to take it slow. Build up the pressure, until even Terry can pick up on it. Then, when the iron's hot, *that's* when he'll confess. After all, it's only the first day of trying--hell, the first half-day really--he's got all the time in the world to brine the turkey.

Just stick to *the Plan*[™]. It'll be worth it.

Hopefully.

God, Fritz is going to cry like a bitch if it doesn't work.

Yawning, checking Terry's watch over and over, and generally slowing down. These are the signs that it's night time in the Backrooms. Who needs the sun when you've got Terry's half-lidded eyes? Mmmmm yes.

What?

Right. *The Plan*[™].



"You ready to check out for the night?" Fritz asks after yet another jaw-cracking yawn.

"Hm?" Terry asks, then nods, "Oh, yes. I am. I stayed up too late again..."

Fritz chuckles. "I get you. Sleep schedules are for the weak. Let's set up in a cubicle."

He says it all casual-like, totally normal.

"Okay," Terry agrees easily. Score!

Fritz half expects Terry to figure it out, as they set up their little clothes nests in the cramped cubicle, but he doesn't say anything. They're not sleeping *together*--even Fritz knows they're not even close to that (yet)--but the cubicle forces them to be close enough that they could reach out and touch, if life suddenly becomes ten times more romantic.

Terry conks out as soon as his head hits the 'pillow'. Fritz, for his end, manages to smile and whisper, "I'm a fukin' genius," before passing out.

They do their little morning routines, but with Terry writing in his exposition diary because he forgot to do it last night again. They share a bag of (clean) airplane peanuts, even though they can survive on pure furry bullshit.

Terry doesn't bring up the cubicle--probably didn't even notice, to be honest--and Fritz doesn't mention it. Sloooooowly boil the frog. Except it's a nice boil, a romantic boil. With kissing, hopefully. Will Terry turn into a prince if kissed...?

They say the first sign of madness is torturing metaphors. Fritz is going to go crazy. Patience isn't his strong suit--and he's never done well in suits anyways.

Getting all packed up, they step out of the cubicle, but Fritz stops Terry with a gentle poke to the side.

Terry jumps, just a little, and turns to see Fritz's extended fist.

"Really?"

Fritz nods, grinning.



"I thought you forgot about the secret grasping appendage shake," Terry says.

Oh right, that's what it's called. "Nope! Now c'mon!" He shakes his fist, "Don't leave me hangin'."

With a put-upon sigh--but a small quirk of the lips giving him away--Terry returns the secret paw shake.

Every so often, Terry will veer into a cubicle and try turning on the computer in it. When Fritz asked, he said it was to test a 'random sample' of computers. Nerd.

"So, like, how *are* you going to fix these things?" Fritz asks while Terry pokes at another one.

"What?" Terry asks, distracted, then seems to remember the question, "Oh, no. I'm not going to fix them."

Fritz gives his best 'are you shitting me' look. "Huh?"

Terry moves out of the cubicle, walking down the side path again, and Fritz follows at his side.

"All those tests, especially the random sample of computer parts, proves that I probably can't fix them," Terry explains, waving his paw for emphasis. "I simply don't have the tools, and I'm more of a software specialist anyway."

Nerd. "So... What're you gonna do?"

"Right now? Think of other easy tests I can do while surrounded by computers, and keep an eye out for materials."

Evil scientist nerd. "Materials for what? A rocket to blow up the moon? A moon to blow up a rocket?"

"I'd have to find the moon before doing anything with it," Terry says, "but no. I need a lot of tiny moving parts and easy to adjust things--vague, I know. Things like marbles and Lego, or something of that nature."

"...And then you'll blow up the moon?" Fritz asks like he's asking for a second scoop of ice cream.



"And then I'll make it into a very basic computer," Terry says. "Probably just doing binary addition, or equivalent."

"Didn't you do that with peanuts already?" Fritz asks. Peanuts. Freaky voodoo programmers.

"What I'm planning is a big step up from moving peanuts around in a specific order."

"Huh. Cool."

Fritz will keep an eye out for... marbles?

Yeah, he doesn't get it.

Despite Fritz's unstoppable blabbermouth, they actually do spend a lot of their walking in silence. There's just not that much to talk about, and it takes time to come up with ideas. Not even they can talk nonstop for twelve hours straight, no matter how awesome their weirdly great chemistry is.

Fritz walks alongside Terry, standing closer than usual but not touching. He wonders if he's being manipulative with *the Plan*[™]. What's the line between 'flirting with the densest thing since steel' and 'manipulation'? It's not like Fritz can ping his friends on Discord for advice...

Man, he misses those assholes. They better be doing well out there, the fuckwads.

They casually walk past a door--

"A door?" Fritz asks, stopping and staring. It's a pretty normal 'office door', if that's even a thing. It's wood, with a little window of that useless glass that blurs everything, bronze doorknob, and...

"Manager?" Terry asks, reading the inscription. "Strange."

"Let's check it out," Fritz says, grabbing the knob and twisting--

click

"...Locked? *Locked?!?*" Fritz shouts, shaking the knob. The Backrooms don't have locked doors, do they? This is evil! He should sue!



"Is there a keyhole?" Terry asks.

"No," Fritz pouts. "Can we get the hammer and break the glass?"

"What if it's locked for a reason?" Terry asks. "A dangerous reason, I mean."

"What if there's people in there?" Fritz asks back. He doesn't think there is, but it sounds like a good excuse, and he's *curious* damnit.

Terry deadpans at him, then knocks on the door.

"Oh right. That's a thing."

They stand there, side-by-side like dorks, waiting for some entity or ghost or something to jumpscare them through the door.

But nothing happens.

"Alright, get the hammer," Fritz says when he's had enough. He reaches for Terry's backpack, only to have the fox side-step away. Whoops.

"Wait just a second," Terry says. "That glass probably isn't crumble glass--it'll make sharp shards, and a cut could get infected. We need to be careful."

Fritz groans. "You should work for OSHA."

"Because I don't want to get an infection when stranded from modern medical care?"

"Yes. Exactly that."

Terry rolls his eyes and gets ready.

The plan (not to be confused with *the Plan*[™]) is simple: Terry will wrap a bunch of clothes and stuff around his paw and arm and break the glass as gently as he can with his hammer. Fritz offers to do it, but for some *insane* reason, Terry doesn't trust him with the hammer anymore. Wonder how that happened.

Fritz stands back--at Terry's insistence--and watches. The first swing at the small glass window is...



clink

"Dude, Terry, really?" Fritz asks, paws on his hips, "You couldn't swat a fly with a whack like that. Are you trying to massage it or something? Cuz' my shoulders are feeling a little stiff."

"I'm starting small and escalating the force, so it doesn't explode in my face," Terry answers, rolling his beautiful baby blues. "I rather enjoy having eyes."

"Uh-huh. I'll give you that, they're *great* eyes," Fritz says, just to see if Terry will even notice.

Terry raises a brow, says, "Thanks?" Then he goes back to his work.

Fritz wants to laugh, facepalm, and kiss him all at once. Damn, he's got it *bad*. Too bad it's bad for the second coming of the dense anime nerd protagonist...

Or is it Fritz that's the protag, trying to get the dense guy? Maybe both? Both is good.

clink

He giggles, earning a glare. He just giggles harder.

Really, though, why even make glass if it's just going to be all blurry? Fritz never figured that one out.

Blurry or not, though, it (finally) shatters under the force of Terry's hammer. It only takes like ten 'careful escalations' too. The fox steps back quickly from the falling shards, but Fritz is more interested in what's *behind* the glass.

"What do you see?!" He asks. He's careful not to step his bare feet anywhere near the shards--he's not *that* stupid--and stands on his tiptoes to try seeing into the room.

"I can't see that much--it's a large room, lots of desks, well lit..." Terry says, squinting through the tiny hole.

Fritz stands even higher on his toes, lifting his chin for those few extra inches. Stupid fun-sized body being the source of so much stupid euphoria.



"We're going in, right?" Fritz asks/demands/begs.

"If it can unlock from the other side," Terry says, eyeing the shattered glass, "and we safely clean up all this glass, and I break the remaining glass in the window so I can reach the knob on the other side without shredding my arm. But yes, I think it would be interesting."

Yessss!

"Let's get started."

Ughhhhhh.

They both use clothes--Fritz with a sock he found--as extra padding when picking up the shards. It's a good idea, especially when he makes Terry groan out loud with a sock puppet singing the Song that Never Ends.

Terry makes it end with an 'okay, this is getting actually annoying' level glare.

Joke's on him, though, Fritz is like ninety percent sure he saw Terry glancing at his ass when he was picking up some shards. Knowing Terry, though, he's probably just imagining it. So... Maybe a little less than ninety percent.

With everything said and done, Terry uses his tall-person cheat codes to turn the knob on the other side. The door swings open without any boiling pots of oil or blood explosions, so that's good.

Fritz grabs his suitcase and bounds into the 'manager' office, taking in the sights...

Then remembers...

...One time, long ago, when he was but a little kitten, he read a creepypasta about Hell. It described a bunch of desks in a huge room, where you sit with your hellmates and think of ways to torture people; the demons use the best method on everyone at night, but if *you* come up with the best method, you get the night off. Diabolical.

There's no people here, or demons in suits, but holy fuck does this room bring back that core memory. He never did find that story again--he's half



convinced it was a dream.

This room's fucking *massive*, bigger than a football field at least, ceiling included. There's wooden desks with chairs everywhere, evenly spaced out. Each desk has a lamp and nothing else. He can practically hear the desperation, the unfairness of it all.

Fritz shivers.

"Huh," Terry says, walking up behind him. "I didn't expect this."

"Yeah, you think?" Fritz asks, trying to shake the weirdness out of him-- the not-fun weirdness, of course. He doesn't usually psyche himself out like that. Maybe it's all getting to him a bit... He *has* been in the Backrooms for days now, no sun, no wind...

"Do you see any doors or outlets?" Terry asks, glancing around. "Because I don't. This might be a large dead end."

That'd be nice. Then they could leave.

"There must be over ten thousand desks here, maybe more," Terry says, tilting his head and glancing around. "And why is the ceiling so high? It's like a supermarket, almost."

Wait. This isn't part of *the Plan*[™], Fritz can just say how he feels without ruining everything.

"Hey Terry? This room's giving me the creeps. Let's go?" He asks/says, looking up at those painfully curious eyes.

Terry blinks. His expression goes from curious, to confused, to worried, to understanding. "Of course. Do you want to leave right now?"

Fritz nods.

"Let's go, then."

Fritz is going to rock this fox's world when the time's right.

It takes a few minutes for Fritz to really calm down. Just something about that room... It was probably nothing, but all those desks just activated the wrong brain cells.



Terry just walks beside him, a steady presence.

"Thanks," Fritz says, when he finally feels (mostly) normal again.

"For what?" Terry asks, sounding genuinely confused.

Fritz softly pushes his arm, not even enough to move him, and says, "For being nice, doofus. I don't know what that room was, but it was freaky."

"The manager room? It was rather surreal," Terry agrees in his own way. "And anyway, you left the hallways when I was uncomfortable; it would have been rude to push with the situation reversed."


Fritz blinks in surprise. He'd almost forgotten about that. A warm smile grows on his face, and he walks a little closer, almost touching, "Aww. Thanks."

"You're welcome."

This fox. He's lucky he's cute.


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Oct 23, 2025

  #43



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.13 - malloc (Terry)

This place--not just the office area, but the whole edifice--continues to baffle and boggle the mind.

Terry will admit, in his own head, that he would have liked to explore the gigantic 'manager room' with more than a glance--especially with all the effort required to open the door. However, for Fritz's sake, he'll swallow that curiosity.

"You got the time?" Fritz asks, walking beside him, dragging that awful suitcase behind him.



Checking his watch for probably the fifth time in the last hour, he says, "It's four fifty-five PM."

Time is strange here. It feels like they've been walking forever since waking up 'today', yet it feels like no time at all. Their little conversations, long stretches of comfortable silence, the half-baked comments about whatever new variation this place takes on its themes, it all sums to an almost... eldritch experience.

Terry can feel it seeping into his heart. His mind practically tingles with its adjustments to this place's arcane rules. Is this what nature is, now?

His luck is beyond unreal in finding Fritz. How would he have fared, even in these early days, without him? The thought sickens and disturbs.

"Ugh," Fritz groans, proving his point, "I'm bored. You got anything to talk about?"

Terry hums in thought. Might as well lead with a joke. "I could lecture for days on the intricacies of designing a debugger--especially the perils of porting it for different operating systems."

Fritz glances up at him, "...Let's save that one for later."

"Of course," Terry nods. "What about hobbies? You claimed to be a NEET, but I doubt you stared at the wall all day."

"Hey! Walls are great!" Fritz defends, "But yeah, you're right. I've got tons of hobbies. Loads."

"Like?"

"Weeeeell," Fritz drags out, "you're looking at a famous author."

Terry's surprised, to say the least. "Truly?"

"Well... It's fanfics, but still!" Fritz backpeddles.

"Ah," Terry says, that tracks. "What did you work on?"

"...s..." Fritz mutters, looking away.

"I'm sorry, what was that?" Terry asks. Fritz must be adjusting to their better hearing if he's able to mutter something so quietly.



"Smut. Like, a lot of smut," Fritz says, rubbing the back of his head. "Like, millions of words. I'm kinda a degenerate. I know, big surprise."

"Oh."

Terry ponders that for a while, and decides there's only one proper question to ask.

"Was it at least high quality?"

Fritz doubles over, such is the suddenness and forcefulness of his laughter.

"...their swords break, and they're like 'wow, we're kinda the worst, huh?' And they live happily ever after, the end," Fritz finishes, giving a theatrical bow while still walking.

To pass the time, Fritz decided to explain the entire plot of an anime he watched, one that Terry has never seen. It's an interesting story, though Terry suspects it's rather more engaging when seen in picture.

"Really, that's it? The credits rolled right after that?" Terry asks.

"Nah, there's stuff about them--ugh--going their separate ways," Fritz sticks out his tongue, "but my head canon's that they got married and--well, you know the kind of stuff I write."

"Your head canon," Terry says slowly, "is that they get married. Two men. In feudal-era Japan."

"It's an AU," Fritz refutes.

"I'll say," Terry mutters.

"Well, fuck, am I just supposed to write about discrimination and all that horrible shit in a fluffy smut fic?" Fritz asks. "What's the point of 'realism' if it just sucks all the time? Might as well watch a documentary if I wanna be miserable."

"You have... a point," Terry admits.

"Damn right. Anyways, your turn."

Terry, somehow, didn't think he'd also recite a story from memory.



Though, in hindsight, it is a good time waster. He might as well go along with it.

"I'm sure you've read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*," Terry says.

"Actually, no," Fritz answers.

Baffling. "Really? It's excellent absurdist humor--something I imagine you'd love."

Fritz shrugs, "Eh. I only really read stuff online."

"Huh. Well, it starts with an alien invasion--though calling it an 'alien invasion' is like calling a road paving team 'invaders' to an anthill in their way..."

"So, wait, that's where the 'forty-two' thing comes from?!" Fritz asks, eyes wide.

"Yes?" Terry says. "You didn't know that?"

"No?!"

What kind of strange rock does Fritz live under? "Now you know. Anyways, after the oracle explains the number..."

"Woah..." Fritz says, eyes wide at the end of the tale, "How'd I miss a story like that?"

"Your self-proclaimed tendency to only read web fiction?" Terry asks rhetorically.

"Har har. I got a question though: if it's so crazy important to have a towel, why didn't you bring one from your apartment?"

Terry touches his shoulder, where there should, in horrifyingly clear hindsight, be a towel. How could he have possibly missed something so important, so relevant?

"I have failed in my duties. This is a disgrace."

"There there," Fritz says, patting his upper arm reassuringly, sounding either on the verge of tears, a heart attack, or a laughing fit. "It'll be okay."



We can find towels... maybe. And I'll be here to tease you the whole way."

"How reassuring," Terry deadpans.

"You're welcome."

In another slight variation on the office theme, they've stumbled on a generic wall clock. Beyond Terry's own wristwatch and the clock on his microwave, it's the first functional timekeeping device he's seen since this all began.

It has a circular, black edge, white face, and a distinct red second hand. It's a clock that anyone would expect to see in an office, then not think much about after getting the time.

tick tick tick tick...

"So, what, we're four hours off?" Fritz asks.

"Not exactly. My watch and this clock are about four hours off, relative to each other. We don't have any real absolute reference, like the sun, to sync the time," Terry explains.

"Time zones," Fritz growls like he's speaking the name of a sworn enemy.

"In a way, with us syncing our sleep schedule with my watch, we've made our own local time zone," Terry points out with some amusement. "If someone were synced with this clock, they'd be sleepy four hours before us."

"Huh, didn't think of it like that," Fritz muses. "What should we call our time zone?"

"Pacific time."

"Nah, that's lame," Fritz dismisses, "it's the Fritz and Terry time... so FT time? Or--" he perks up, "TF time! Because we were TF'd into our fursonas!"

"You were," Terry corrects on instinct. "I'm not a furry."

tick tick tick tick...



The silence stretches for seconds too long, the easy rhythm of their bantering offset by a missed beat.

"What?" Fritz asks, sounding... strange. Worried? Perhaps confused? Terry isn't so great at reading body language to tell.

Terry wants to facepalm, then perhaps hide for hours. It isn't a truly massive secret, but he still wanted to keep it just in case it upset Fritz. But now, he's blurted it out, lulled into security by how shockingly easy it is to speak with Fritz.

"I'm sorry," Terry says, deciding the honest truth to be the best course of action, "I have nothing against the furry community, obviously, but I've never been part of it. I like being human. This is... strange to me, to say the least."

tick tick...

That expression. Is Fritz truly so upset? It seems overblown, even to Terry's pessimistic expectations. Terry braces himself for the worst, another apology on the tip of his tongue, another justification percolating in his hindbrain.

"You're telling me," Fritz says slowly, tense, almost angry, "that you didn't want to transform--ever? It wasn't an awesome surprise?"

Terry twitches. Those first hours, upon awakening... 'Awesome' is about the furthest from the truth as it could be.

"No," he says, controlling himself. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you angry. Whatever I've done, it wasn't in malice, just ignorance."

"Angry..." Fritz whispers, expression turning more grim than Terry has ever dared imagine on the normally jovial face. "I'm not... Oh Terry, I'm so sorry..."

What is happening? Terry shuffles his feet awkwardly; the intensity of Fritz's gaze unbalances him. He can't meet those eyes, and so turns away.

"I don't understand," he says.

"I thought... you were like me," Fritz says, sounding hollow. "I hated my body, and waking up like this was the best. But... you didn't want it, did you? You never wanted this..."



Terry's muscles feel heavy, his skin prickling under his fur. This isn't how this is supposed to go, and he has no idea how to respond.

"I'm adjusting," Terry says, pleads really.

tick tick tick tick...

"That's... good," Fritz finally says with a gentleness usually reserved for funerals. "I don't... I don't know what to say, Terry. I'm so sorry this happened to you. I'm sorry I didn't notice. It's-- I'm here if you... need to talk, or vent, or something. No judgment, promise."

Terry wants this conversation over. There is no way he's going to take up that offer.

"I'm fine."

"Are y--" Fritz cuts himself off. Terry still isn't looking at him; he can't. "I mean... Okay. That's-- Okay."

tick tick...

"Let's keep going," Terry says, turning around completely, walking with deliberately measured steps. He isn't running, he isn't.

"Y-- Yeah. Let's go."

The wall clock's ticking fades behind them in the heavy silence.

tick tick tick tick...

It's amazing, Terry thinks, how a single mistake can ruin something. One undeclared variable, one unfree'd allocation, one iteration too many in a loop...

One offhand comment.

He was right, in a way. Revealing the 'furry thing' to Fritz did, in fact, cause Fritz distress. His only error was in the cause of said distress. Somehow, Fritz has zeroed in on Terry's... predicament regarding his transformation.

But Terry's fine. He's fine, and Fritz doesn't need to look at him like he's



going to fall apart. He's already deliberately adjusting, making strides, even using mental language such as 'his tail' instead of 'the tail'.

It's only a matter of time before this too is behind him. He's overcome things with similar levels of emotional toll--perhaps more, if one looks at it from a certain angle.

The silence, as they walk side-by-side, isn't mean, but it is heavy. And it's, predictably, Fritz who breaks it.

"Did I... push too hard?" Fritz asks, sounding small.

Terry sighs, and he catches Fritz's flinch in his peripheral vision. He still can't bring himself to look. "You did not. It makes sense that you'd be worried. But I truly am adjusting, and I think one day I'll be comfortable again. You do not need to make a bigger deal out of it than it is."

"That's..." Fritz almost whines, a pitiful, wrenching sound, "Terry... You shouldn't have to do that at all. It's horrible. Evil. Getting that forced on you..." He takes a deep, shuddering breath, saying, "I want to help, but I don't know how. Is there anything I can do? Anything? Please?"

Terry carefully ignores the feelings evoked at having his unwilling transformation called 'evil'. As for the... reverse plea for aid, Terry decides on honesty again.

"You are already helping, tremendously so," Terry replies. "Continuing to be yourself is the best I can imagine you doing. Making too big a deal out of it would make it too big a deal, I think."

Having every conversation colored by this one mistake? It would sting worse than any pinching fur.

Suddenly, a hand grips his arm--not hard, but enough to startle. Terry stops walking, turning to Fritz to see--

Fritz crying. Tears streak rivulets down his cat-like face, eyes watery like cotton candy stardust--

"Really?" Fritz asks, shaking, "That's what you need? What I need to do?"

Even Terry, with his social apathy, can see the hope, the desperation, the need to do something, to help. The grip on his arm is nothing compared to the sudden vice around his heart.



Terry nods. He can't find words.

"All-- alright," Fritz lets go of his arm to wipe at his face. Like a magic trick, Fritz's shaking breath lifts him: his ears rise, his back straightens, his tail moves once more. "Alright," Fritz looks Terry right in the eyes, revealing a previously unknown steel, "then I'll be the best damn Fritz you've ever seen."

The sincerity and absurdity of the promise forces a single shocked laugh out of Terry, which he shuts down just as quickly. He doesn't want Fritz to think he's mocking him... but judging by the wry smirk, it's exactly what Fritz wanted.

Something warm pools in Terry's chest, beginning a dangerous quest to drive away the cancerous darkness.

"Can I hug you?" Fritz asks out of nowhere.

Terry freezes, thoughts thoroughly derailed.

"I mean--!" Fritz waves his hands in front of him, eyes wide, "You don't have to! I just felt like I need one and-- uh, you might like one too? I'm a great hugger, promise."

Does Terry want a hug? When's the last time he indulged in something like that?

"Yeah, sorry, I'll just--"

"Okay," Terry says, the agreement cutting through his indecision without conscious say-so.

"...That's a yes?" Fritz asks.

Terry nods, feeling rather foolish. "Just a short one. I don't..."

He's not even sure what he's saying, but it's what comes out of his mouth.

"No, no, I get it," Fritz says quickly.

Terry nods again, not sure what to say. He half wants to take it back, but knows doing so would hurt Fritz.

It happens quickly. Fritz steps forward and wraps his arms around Terry's middle, gently, like handling precious spun glass. Due to his

height, Fritz's head just so happens to rest right at Terry's chest.

It's soft.

It's over in a second.


"It'll be okay," Fritz whispers into his chest, then steps back, smiling gently, eyes still wet.

Terry didn't even have the chance to move, let alone a chance to process.

He very nearly pulls him back.

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Oct 24, 2025

  #47



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.14 - Embrace the Day With Your New Shape~! (Fritz)

Fritz is many things: an absolute goblin person, a furry, a little bit too into internet culture, gay, and...

And a *fucking idiot*.

Terry didn't want his transformation.

Terry. Lovable, max-level arch-nerd Terry, suffering in silence because *Fritz* couldn't pick up the obvious signs. Terry. Who *doesn't* want to be anything but human. Terry. Who didn't get the word 'CHANGE' branded into his soul with his first *Animorphs* book.

Fritz understands, with sad, sad experience, what it feels like to hate your body with all your heart. He understands what it feels like to be made right in a moment.

And, because he's *stupid*, he thought Terry could relate.



Well, yeah, maybe Terry can relate.

Backwards.

Idiot.

Just keep being himself. That's what Terry wants, what he thinks will be the best help with the... everything.

Fritz isn't so sure it'll be that simple. Actually, he's basically certain. Still, he's not going to push the issue when Terry's obviously still reeling and uncomfortable--a *totally* fair thing to feel, given the horror of it all.

So, for now, Fritz'll take that step back and keep a *very* close eye on things, just in case.

And that's all fine and good, a nice plan that will hopefully help Terry through this. But there's the other problem:

The Plan™.

Is it okay to pursue Terry right now?

Terry's one of the hottest people Fritz has ever met, and he's not going to pretend otherwise--at least in his own head. Fritz has his tastes, and that's not going to change easily.

But Terry might not be ready, might *never* be ready, to think of his new body like that, as desirable.

When he was human, Fritz struggled to accept that some people thought he was attractive. He felt disgusting, broken, and he couldn't believe that others might see something different. It was one of the biggest reasons his past relationships failed, if he's being grimly honest about it.

There's only so much kind words can do when you can't lift your head in front of mirrors.

If Terry feels like Fritz did, back then... Then, yeah, a relationship might be completely unworkable, no matter what Fritz tries.

But, and there's always a not-fun but, he *doesn't know* if that's how Terry feels about it. For all Fritz knows, Terry's actually right and he'll be fine



after 'adjusting'. Or maybe it's worse, somehow, and he's going to have a breakdown in five minutes. Fritz just doesn't know.

And... Fritz worries what Terry thinks about cute, blue, anthro femboy cats. It's a pretty specific taste, even for furies, let alone someone not a furry. Being denied like that would be a kick in the teeth after hyping himself up so much.

Is that vain? Or, no, it's perfectly healthy for someone to want their crush to think they're hot... right?

Fritz really wishes he could ask someone for advice. His smut (and life experience, he guesses) didn't prepare him for this.

Asking Terry? He already did, and the answer he got was 'it's fine, be yourself, don't make a fuss'. Which he's going to do as best he can.

Laying everything on the table and hoping for the best?

...No. He can't. Not when the thought makes his stomach jump like that.

Fritz sighs. He's going to have to think about this.

He watches Terry carefully while they walk down the endless office space.

"I spy with my little eye... something beige," Fritz says.

Terry looks around, brow raised. To Fritz's eyes, he seems... fine? He's not trying to claw his fur off, or crying, or anything like that. Though that's a pretty low standard for 'fine', and Terry's scary good at hiding his emotions when he wants to.

"Almost everything here is beige," Terry says.

"Yeah, that's what makes it fun," Fritz snarks.

With a huff--that *sounds* and *looks* genuine--Terry asks, "The carpet?"

Damn, it was the carpet. Time to change the answer. "Nope."

Terry rolls his eyes. "Can I have another hint?"

"That's not it either," Fritz answers. "Weird guess, though."



The glare is normal for Terry. "The cubicles?"

"Nuh-uh."

"The computers."

"Nah."

Well, just because Terry looks okay right now doesn't mean he's *okay*. Obviously. But Fritz can probably drop his guard a little, at least. Maybe.

"I give up, what is it?" Terry asks.

"The mice," Fritz points at a passing cubicle. The computer mice are beige, and not something Terry guessed. Easy point for Fritz.

"Huh. Okay."

Fritz smiles, trying not to imagine how nauseous he would feel if he were in Terry's flip-flops; a sick kind of empathy.

He hopes with all his soul that Terry is doing better than Fritz worries he is. Nobody deserves that fate.

"Wait," Terry holds up a paw-- hand-- paw-- ugh!

Terry holds up a *paw* (not that Fritz is going to say that out loud right now, it'd be in bad taste).

"Yeeees?" Fritz asks.

"She goes to fight the Leviathan?" Terry asks, sounding annoyed. "With bug powers? How does that make any sense?"

Terry's never read *Worm*, which shocked Fritz into telling the whole damn story, start to finish. Just a wholesome, fun story to cool off with before they get too tired to walk.

Though at the rate he's going, it'll be 'night' before he's even close to done. It's a long webfic, and Terry has *opinions* on it.

"Well, yeah, but you're forgetting one thing," Fritz says.



"And what's that?"

"She's Taylor Hebert," Fritz says. "Of course she's gonna fight Leviathan."

"That..." Terry says, trailing off. "I suppose that matches her established character. It's still suicidally stupid, though, which also matches her character. I'm still not sure why she doesn't just use subterfuge--direct attacks don't make sense with her abilities."

"You said the same thing for, like, everyone's power," Fritz chuckles.

"Well, of course. Really, if I had superpowers, I wouldn't fight with them. What a waste," Terry shakes his head. "Anyway, what happens next?"

Fritz clears his throat.

"The rain picks up..."

Fritz can't sleep.

Maybe it's a mixture of things. The lights being on 24/7, the stress of everything, the thoughts swirling around in his poor, poor noggin... Whatever it is, it's keeping Fritz up even though he *feels* tired.

Who knew. Even furry magic bullshit can't cure insomnia.

They've crashed for the night in another cubicle. Fritz didn't suggest it this time, but that's how it worked out again. Terry lies on the other side of the cramped square, under the desk. He's got a shirt wrapped around his head, covering his eyes from the lights.

"Terry...?" Fritz whispers. "Terry...?"

No reply. The fox-- the *man's* out cold.

Fuck it. Fritz gets up as quietly as he can, tip-toeing out of the cubicle...

It's quiet.

Somehow, his silly little pea-brain expects it to be *dark* when it's nighttime. Like he'll find a window, and the full moon will be peeking behind some clouds.



But no. The office is exactly the same as it was during the 'day': the lights, the droning of the AC, the carpet, everything.

He turns around, looking at Terry still sleeping in the cubicle. It should be dark...

Shaking his head, Fritz walks silently away. The carpet muffles his steps, and he hardly even breathes. He doesn't want to wake up Terry. He wants to be alone right now.

For all he likes Terry, they've been right next to each other for like... a week? Shit, how long's it been? He'll have to ask Terry in the morning. It feels like a week.

Anyways, there's been no real breaks, no alone time, and it's kind of driving him loopy. Fritz needs to think without his thoughts being poked by Terry's presence.

The cubicle he stops in isn't far, but it's far enough that he probably won't wake Terry up with a tiny noise--so long as he's not too loud.

Flopping into the swivel chair at the desk, Fritz... decompresses.

For a while he sits there, looking up at the bright ceiling lights, thinking of nothing at all.

Then he lets in thoughts. He catches them for a bit, looking at them, before letting them go: Will he ever see the sun again? He hasn't jacked off in like a week. He's horny. Did the raptured people die, or something else? If he finds the person who hurt Terry, he's gonna kick them. Did his furry friends at least get good transformations? He misses the internet. Will he ever see the sun again? Will he ever listen to music again?

With a deep, slow breath, Fritz sucks in all his worries, all the doubt, then... breathes it out. In, worries, out, nothingness. Repeat. Again. Until he's ready, and not a breath sooner, just like Mom taught him.

More centered than he's felt since the bright white light, Fritz asks himself the question.

What should he do?

Well, it's obvious, at least a little. No matter what happens, he wants to help Terry through this. Relationship, no relationship, it doesn't matter; Fritz wouldn't be able to live with himself if he ignored that kind of suffering.



And the best way to help is, probably, doing exactly what he's been doing. He's no therapist, but having a good friend that doesn't rub salt into your wounds, who looks out for you, is *probably* good for mental health. Fritz will be that for Terry, and hopefully it'll be better than nothing.

Fritz exhales again, shoulders slumping, muscles loose and limp.

But that's not what's tying him into knots, is it?

Closing his eyes, he remembers that brief, desperate hug:

"It'll be okay," Fritz whispers into Terry's chest.

It feels right. Terry's warm scent, his presence, his heartbeat, the contact. It feels like Fritz was made to be close to this person.

The willpower it takes to let go is something Fritz didn't know he had. He wishes he were weaker, if only to have an excuse to hold for a second longer.

"I never stood a chance..." He whispers to the dead computers. "What do I do, Mom?"

Do what's right for both of you, he knows she would say.

"How?"

How indeed?

Fritz drifts off, thoughts dancing between nothing and everything.

"FRITZ!"

Fritz jerks awake like a taser was shoved up his--

Last night-- sneaking off--

He glances around, fuck, he left Terry--

He left Terry alone with no warning. In the middle of the Backrooms.



When there's nobody else around. Shit.

"FRITZ!" Terry's baritone carries across the office space, louder than he's ever heard him.

He gets to his feet fast enough to nearly do a front flip. "I'm here, Terry!" He jumps up and down, waving, hoping Terry will see his paw over the cubicles...

Actually, he should move out of the cubicle, huh?

"Over here!" Fritz calls again, still jumping and waving.

It takes a minute or two of shouting, but eventually Terry rounds a corner, spotting Fritz.

Fritz sprints up to Terry, using that infinite furry stamina to... sprint up to Terry.

Up close, Terry looks *fretful*.

"What happened, Fritz?" Terry asks, like he's trying to sound collected, but keeps getting poked in the cheek with needles.

He'd feel flattered if he didn't feel so damn stupid.

"I'm so sorry," Fritz says, "I couldn't sleep so I went for a walk and then I fell asleep and I should have told you but I didn't think and it just happened--" Fritz takes a deep breath, "...Sorry."

Terry sighs, rubbing his face, eyes closed. Fritz can see the tension leaving his shoulders.

"I see," Terry says, looking at him with some witch's brew of exasperation and relief. "You're your own person, Fritz, you can do whatever you want. But I'd... appreciate it if I had warning the next time you run off, leaving all your things behind, in the middle of the night. I was afraid something happened to you."

"Yeah, that's fair," Fritz says, slumping, looking away. Fuck, Fritz would *freak the fuck out* if the same thing happened in reverse. "Sorry."

Terry sighs again and says, "I forgive you. It's not as if you did it maliciously. And it was easily resolved."

"Yeah... thanks."



They stand there in awkward silence for ten billion years, give or take a few seconds.

"You know," Terry says at length, making Fritz look up, "for all I know, this could still be a crisis."

Fritz knows Terry is joking, but... "What?"

"It's unlikely, but maybe you're a... what did you call it? A 'furry skin walker'?" Terry narrows his eyes at him, "If only I had a way to verify that you're the real Fritz."

Fritz blinks. Is Terry trying to cheer him up?

Stopping his grin is flat-out impossible.

The secret whatever shake goes just like they practiced. Exploding fist bump. High five. Shake. Fritz is smiling, Terry isn't looking panicked, it's good.

But something feels like it's missing.

"Well, I suppose that settles it," Terry says, smiling. "A bad actor couldn't possibly fake that."

Fritz laughs, poking at the missing feeling. It's almost like--

Ah. Right.

Do what's right for both of you.

Should he...?

"Hey Terry," Fritz's mouth moves before his brain can catch up. He doesn't bother stopping it. "Totally okay if you don't agree, but I think we should add a little more to our secret whatever shake."

"Oh? What did you have in mind?" Terry asks, head tilted.

"A hug."

It's so *obvious*.

Terry's eyes widen, and he stares.



Fritz just has to let *Terry* take control. Give him the *choice* if he wants to escalate things. And Fritz can take that slowly, until it ends in Terry setting hard boundaries, or something more. That's it.

Fritz really is a fucking idiot.

"A... hug?" Terry asks, like the word is new.

"Yep!" Fritz nods. "Cards on the table: I think we could both use more hugs these days. Freaky ass Backrooms and all that. But!" Fritz holds up a finger, "Don't agree just to agree. I only want to if you want to, got it? I *mean it*," He glares, playful and serious.

"Uh..." Terry is statue-still, eyes narrowed, hardly breathing. "I... suppose that's... good?"

"Mmhmm, but do you *want to*?"

Terry goes silent, thinking hard about things Fritz can only guess at.

It takes all his patience, waiting there, but Fritz is rewarded with a nod in the end. When he side-eyes the silly nerd, he gets another nod, this time firmer.

Fritz extends his fist. Boom. Smack. Shake.

Step forward.

Hug. This time Terry returns it.

It's soft.

Report
It's over in a minute.

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Oct 27, 2025

#50





WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.15 - mktime (Terry)

"...it's fucked, like crazy bad. She called the thing 'Hack Job' because, well, you get it. Then, that's when shit really starts to hit the fan..."

Terry listens. Like witnessing a natural disaster, the outrageously grim story somehow continues surpassing its previous standards for dismay. Fritz tells it well, with enthusiasm and tangents, but Terry can't help but wonder what kind of sadism compelled the original writer to create such a work.

But his attention isn't fully on the retelling of *Worm*. One ear points towards a new memory:

Fritz molds himself against Terry, as if his body were made to slot into place against him.

His companion's spicy scent swirls and eddies in currents, surrounding him, tickling his nose, bolstering him with bright blue cloud stuff.

Terry hesitates for only seconds before returning the embrace.

The hug was... good. Far better than their first abortive attempt by a large margin. Terry, even now, hours later, feels lighter, less tense, less cornered by expectation and environment. It was a healing thing, he'll admit, and he won't argue if Fritz decides to continue with the practice.

Not to mention, it helped alleviate the last of his early-morning concern; thinking he'd lost his friend to an unknowable, unguessable fate was harrowing, to say the least.

Oddly enough, Fritz hasn't brought up the hug since. Terry remembers Fritz's joyful expression, so he's sure he didn't hate it, but perhaps he doesn't consider it so impactful? Fritz's ability to normalize the new is truly inspiring... or maybe it's a case of being more used to physical contact?

Sometimes, Terry must lament his social skills. His ability to joke without excessive offense is his one true success in that field, hard-won as it was, and even then it's more of a bandage than cure. Alas.



He shakes his head. He's fixating on trivialities again. Now, what was Fritz saying?

"I'm confused. Wasn't Dragon actually a failed clone the whole time?" Terry asks. "Or is that a facade?"

"Nah, it's canon. She got messed up bad from it, though. Can't really do orders well, so she hides away in her lab and doesn't talk. That kind of thing. She tries to hide it, though."

Truly, the depths this story goes. Terry can't stop listening.

Terry stares in incredulous disbelief. "They have a woman with the power to do almost literally anything physically possible, a man with the power to have almost any power he wants, a supernatural mathematics savant, teleportation anywhere they want within the bounds of the multiverse of Earths, and everyone else as a hammer."

"Yep."

"And yet, somehow, they're losing."

"Yeeeeeep."

Terry is beyond consoling. "Are you sure the real aliens aren't these things claiming to be humans? Because this is not at all how people would actually optimize those kinds of advantages. Unless they have actual, literal, severe brain damage."

Fritz laughs, long and hard.

"...The end."

There's a pause, silence between the endless walls and cubicles.

"So, what'd you think?" Fritz asks, smirking up at him.

Terry takes his time answering, ensuring he's conveying his thoughts on the matter properly. "That was an enthralling story. Please, never tell it again."



Fritz snorts. "You know, that's valid."

"Thank you."

Conversation dulls at that, as it tends to between them after a topic is exhausted.

Despite walking through the office space for days now, Terry still feels cold surprise at the sheer, unapologetic scale of it. The quiet dread of walking through what appears to be a building, but never finding an exit is... Well, he is glad to have good company during the journey.

They walk down a side 'path'--though in the miles-long room/hallway, it's more of a long stretch of carpet on the side, cubicles in the center. Terry, with his height, can see over the cubicle walls, where he spots a familiar shape.

"There's a water cooler on the other side," Terry points.

Fritz stops, standing on his toes to try for a better view. "Ugh. I can't see. Wanna check it out?"

"Yes."

Luckily, the cubicles are perforated with paths, ostensibly to allow access to the center cubes. They don't have to climb the walls to reach the other side, something he imagines Fritz would joyously do. Terry keeps the thought to himself; he doesn't fancy mending a broken ankle.

Soon enough they stand before the water cooler. It is, shockingly, a water cooler. The fact its tank is filled with water is perhaps the only truly stand-out part about it.

Terry is struck, in that moment, by the absurdity of it all: through sheer deprivation of stimuli, he's come to find even innocuous water coolers worthy of in-depth investigation. It's like a hunter-gatherer finding a unique rock, pointing it out to a friend, and them both poking at it until they get bored.

Though, to be fair, a water cooler in this place is inherently more interesting than one within a mundane office.

"Oh, cool, look, they've even got the little Dixie cups," Fritz says, grabbing one and putting it under the faucet. With a pull of the lever, the liquid--probably water--pours out easily.



"Should you drink that?" Terry asks. "We might want to boil it first, at least."

Fritz pauses, lips almost at the rim of the cup. "How the hell are you going to boil it?"

"I have a metal pot in my backpack and a lighter," Terry says. "If we found something flammable, like the materials of the cubicle walls, maybe we could make a fire."

Fritz gives him a strange look. "You'd burn this place down... to boil a pot of water? That we don't need?"

"I would make sure the fire is controlled," Terry defends.

"Uh-huh," Fritz says, then shrugs. "Eh," then he takes a sip. "Woah!"

"What?" Terry asks, almost concerned, but suspecting...

"It's water!" Fritz faux gasps.

"Truly, a revelation for the ages," Terry deadpans. "On an unrelated note: I wonder what dysentery feels like for a creature incapable of dehydration. Or defecation, for that matter."

Fritz pauses in his bid for another quaff, eyes narrowing. Slowly, he places the cup on top of the water cooler's tank, turning to glare at Terry.

"Not cool, man. I was drinking that."

"I think you 'drinking that' was the problem," Terry says without a hint of shame. "You're welcome."

"I had water from the Hell Terminal," Fritz says, pouting.

"I am Terry's complete lack of surprise."

"That--" Fritz perks up, "That's a *Fight Club* reference! I knew you could make references!"

"What are you talking about?" Terry asks, straight-faced.

"You know, *Fight Club*. The first rule of..." Fritz trails off. "You're fucking with me."



"If I knew what you were talking about, I would be quite foolish to speak of it," Terry says, smiling innocuously. "Though the dysentery part was serious. Please don't make me deal with that."

Fritz snirks, rolling his eyes. "Alright, alright. Fine. You win."

"Thank you."

Terry holds out his hammer and a granola bar, one in each hand, arms extended and at equal heights. Letting go of both objects simultaneously, he watches carefully as they fall.

They hit the ground at the same time. As expected.

"Huh," Fritz says. "So, what, physics is the same, then?"

"No, obviously not," Terry shakes his head. "We disprove the laws of thermodynamics by simply persisting. But, this proves that, whatever is happening, it at least emulates some things we thought were true--like objects falling at the same speed, so long as wind resistance isn't a factor."

He's no physicist, obviously, but he has at least a surface-level understanding of the bare-minimum basics. Enough to realize that he should have been doing tests like these for a while now.

What kind of new physical laws would explain all the seeming contradictions? The way the parking lot was heated despite there being no mechanism to do so, his own body's seemingly limitless energy, the supposed normality of gravity...

The more Terry considers, the more bizarre it all becomes. If only he had a warning, he could have prepared his studies to properly investigate and theorize. As it is, he has to start from nearly total scratch, armed with what he has and nothing else.

Assuming they don't get extremely lucky and find a physicist in their wanderings.

"Yeah, that's kinda weird," Fritz agrees. He bends over at the waist to pick up the dropped hammer and granola, Terry turning away for politeness's sake. "So, now what?"

Terry turns back to see Fritz grinning, sharp incisors exposed in easy



mirth--typical of Fritz, dancing to his own beat. He holds out the objects, bouncing on his feet.

"Thank you," Terry says, taking his things back. "I'm not sure, to be honest. I don't know enough of physics to guess the correct course. Do you have any ideas?"

"Pft, nah," Fritz snorts, "no way. This is way above my pay grade. Unless you wanna break more stuff, then I'm down for that."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"Sweet!"

Terry rolls his eyes, an easy smile adorning his face.

They continue to walk, as they often do, Terry's eyes narrowed at their surroundings in thought.

The largest physical contradiction by far, if he ignores their transformations, is the environment. Places like offices are things built with intent, planning, and modern construction practices. Yet, there is no sign of a rushed job here, as if it's all been conjured, fully complete, out of thin air.

Going further, it also overtakes the expected: nature, roads, and the outdoors. How could such a thing be built in a night? Where did the material come from? How could Fritz and him have met so soon, despite being so far from each other initially? It must have been blind luck, considering how they've yet to find any others.

He would expect, at the minimum, some dust from--

"Wait," Terry stops.

"What?"

He walks to a nearby cubicle, running his red finger over the top of the wall. Pulling it back, the soft pad at the fingertip segment has no hint of dust.

"What?" Fritz asks again, appearing at his side, brow raised.

"There isn't any dust," Terry says, showing him his finger.



Fritz stares, eyes widening in realization. "Oh, shit."

"Indeed," Terry frowns. "I know dust is mostly skin particles, but I'm not sure of the ratio. And regardless, there's enough airflow from the AC to move other particulates around. There should be dust here, even after a week, but there isn't."

"Freaky..." Fritz says, turning to look behind himself, ears perked up to catch the slightest sound. "So something's cleaning it?"

"Or there isn't any dust due to some new physical law, or somehow this place is self-regulating without outside maintenance, or any other number of explanations," Terry lists. "Though... I'm not so sure of the chances of any of those theories."

They trail off, looking around as if an explanation will take this moment of burst through the walls.

It's silent.

"What do we do?" Fritz asks, breaking the moment. He sounds nervous.

"Not panicking is usually a good start," Terry says. "We've been living with strange dust rules for a week now, and noticing it doesn't change any of the facts. We were fine then; it's likely we're fine now."

Fritz scoffs, though it lacks his usual energy, "I guess. Still freaky."

"It is," Terry agrees. "Have you seen any dust since the white light? Anywhere?"

"Uh..." Fritz hums, tilting his head, tail twitching. "No, I don't think... no."

"I remember dust in my apartment before I left," Terry says. "Though that might be an exception--something left over from before, like our food."

Fritz exhales a deep breath. "Damn it. Now I'm going to be looking for some spooky ass janitor entity or something. I hope it's friendly."

"It doesn't have to be a single entity," Terry ponders. "Too bad I don't have a microscope."

"What, why?"

"Because they have to cover such a large space. Of course, there'd be



more than one--conditional on them existing at all."

"No," Fritz corrects, "the microscope part."

"Oh. Well, if there's more than one, why not billions? Microscopic bacteria or the like, invisible to the naked eye, on most surfaces, that eat dust. It seems possible for something like that to exist, especially here where conservation of mass is a suggestion."

Fritz, still as a statue, looks to be lost in another realm.

"Fritz?"

"Terry."

Terry blinks. "Yes?"

"I'm gonna repress what you just said so hard they'll have to use a spoon to dig it out," Fritz says, deathly calm. "And then we're never gonna talk about it again. Sound good?"

"The... microscop--"

"Yes. That."

Terry is confused. Does Fritz not know how common microscopic lifeforms are in everyday life? How would a theoretical dust-eater be different?

"Uh..."

"Terry, please."

Is Fritz a germaphobe? That's the only explanation Terry can fathom for this behavior. But that doesn't track with his behavior.

Well, it's an easy enough request to fulfill. No need to make his friend uncomfortable--without good reason, that is.

"Okay. I'll refrain."

"Great!" Fritz beams, instantly switching back to his normal self, making Terry jump. "So, like, we just keep going and keeping an eye out, or something?"

Terry stares, mentally on the back foot.



Fritz stares back, tail flicking behind him, smiling benignly.

With a sigh, Terry lets the microscope topic drop. There are higher-priority things to discuss. "We could. There's also the option to stay in one place for a few days, to see if our presence makes dust accumulate or not. Because most dust is skin particulates and the like. And if something is cleaning it, we might find out by letting it build up."

"That--" Fritz pauses, considering. "That's actually a good idea."

"I have my moments," Terry says. "Are you open to trying?"

"Yeah, it could be like a sleepover!" Fritz smiles up at him, eyes sparkling again. That must be a biological effect--subconsciously activated, perhaps?

"Unlike the other sleepovers we've had since meeting?" Terry asks sarcastically. "I suppose."

Fritz cheers, pumping a fist, "Yeah! Sleepover! Spring break!"

"It's December."

"Winter break!"

Terry facepalms, his snout protruding too far to cover his smirk with the action. It almost doesn't make his stomach twist.


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Oct 28, 2025

  #53



WeirdlyHotPepper

1.16 - Ayy Macarena~! (Fritz)

Fritz and Terry walk back to the water cooler. It's pretty close by, and if they're going to chill in the same spot for a few days they might as well do it near the most interesting thing for miles.



Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

And anyways, it's a good excuse to hang out in a new way. Walking was getting boring.

"Today," Fritz puffs out his chest, swaggering like a fresh prince, "we shall make dust!"

"When we get there," Terry says with negative zero inflection.

"When we get there!"

They come up on the water cooler after a little bit of walking (when did an hour-long walk become 'a little bit?'), and Fritz snorts, seeing the little Dixie cup he left at the top of the cooler earlier. He'd forgotten about that already.

"What?" Terry asks, eyeing the water cooler. "Please, don't tell me that you're reconsidering drinking that water."

Fritz cringes, remembering Terry's comments on the whole dysentery thing. "No, no way. Ugh. I think you ruined water for me forever. Thanks, I guess."

Terry rolls his eyes, stopping in front of the water cooler, looking around, being handsome, that kind of thing. "Okay. So, we should stay in this general area. Remember, the theory is that something is cleaning the dust, but if we build up dust while staying in one spot, then we know it's only doing it when we're not around."

Fritz tilts his head, making it go as far as he can because that's silly. "What if there's no dust, Professor Cooper?" He asks, blinking his eyes rapidly, trying to look as innocent as he can without literally asking 'what is that bulge, Prof--

"That--" Terry pauses, narrowing his eyes at him, then shaking his head. Score! "That would mean one of two things: either we don't produce dust, somehow, or the process that cleans isn't something we can notice with a casual level of awareness."

Don't think about microscopic worms eating your skin, Fritz. Don't think about it.

Stop thinking about it!



"Makes sense," Fritz says, smiling... maybe a little too wide.

"Why are you smiling at me like that?" Terry asks, looking confused.

"No reason," Fritz looks around, tail flicking--he *still* loves that feeling.
"So... now what?"

"Instead of walking, we stay here for a few days," Terry shrugs. "It's not like we're unused to entertaining ourselves. For such a strange situation, it's surprisingly boring."

"Yeah..." Fritz trails off. "I miss the internet."

"It was quite the stimulating thing," Terry agrees, eyes distant, probably thinking weird programmer thoughts.

Fritz sighs, then gathers himself back together. He pulls up his horrible, no good, very bad suitcase, saying, "Alright. Wanna set up in a cubicle or something? Best part about this'll be not lugging this thing around."

"Okay."

"Hummmm..." Fritz hums, eyes closed, cross-legged, sitting in their cubicle. He's got his fingers in the 'OK' gang sign, resting on his knees.

It looks like he's meditating.

But actually, he's Terry fishing.

"Humm..."

Terry, sitting across from him, is already bored enough to start reading the pocket dictionary, cover to cover. Ten bucks says he's actually excited to try it.

"Hummmmmm..."

There's a sigh, and Fritz resists the burning urge to laugh, grin, wriggle, peek, or anything else.

"Humm..."

Another sigh. The Terry is on the hook, the bobber bobbing...



"Hu--"

"What are you doing?"

Catch! Reel 'em in!

Fritz, eyes still closed and all that, makes his voice breathy, like a monk or someone having an asthma attack. "I'm thinking dusty thoughts..."

There's a pause.

"Okay."

...

What...?

That's it?!

Fritz has to peek. Opening one eye, he sees Terry reading the pocket dictionary. He's ignoring him, only the twitching of his bright red ears giving anything away.

Well, that just won't do, will it?

"You're not being dusty enough, Terry."

Terry turns another page, not looking up. "That's unfortunate."

Fritz stares, then slumps. "Terrrry~, I'm boooored~."

With a huff, Terry closes the dictionary--without using a bookmark, Fritz notices--and finally looks up at him. "And the solution is, of course, to accuse me of, quote, 'not being dusty enough,' end quote."

"Well, yeah," Fritz teases, grinning. "Look around! There's no dust."

"It's been an hour."

"Our what?"

"Hour one."

"Well, at least ours won."

"What are you even talking about right now?"



Fritz sticks his tongue out at him.

"Quite."

Giggle. Sigh. "Can we, like, do something?" Fritz asks, dropping the games. Because honestly? He's *really* bored, for real. "I'm gonna start going coo-coo," Fritz makes a circle gesture next to his head.

"Ominous," Terry deadpans. "We could play the quiet game."

"Nah, I always lose."

"I bet."

"Oh!" Fritz perks up, "Alright, I got one: I say a word, then you say a word that's close to that word, then I say a word close to that... and we see where it goes."

Terry tilts his head, "An associative word chain?"

Nerd. "Sure. I'll start: banana."

"Man."

Fritz blinks. "What?"

"Who."

"No, I meant, what's 'banana' gotta do with 'man'? I mean, besides dick jokes. Was that a dick joke?" Doesn't seem like Terry's style...

"The 'banana man' is a common comedy archetype," Terry says, "usually coupled with the 'straight man' as a duo: the banana man is the wacky one, and the straight man is the serious one. The contrast makes for good comedy setups."

Fritz stares at him, then down at his paws. "Oh my god..."

"It does sound rather familiar, doesn't it?" Terry chuckles.

"Are we... *cliche*?!" Fritz gasps. "Terry, I don't wanna be a cliché!"

"It's too late," Terry says ruthlessly, "we've already succumbed to our archetypes. Soon, even TV Tropes will have us categorized."



Fritz grabs his head and yells to the heavens, "Nooooooooo~!"

"Chocolate," Fritz says.

"Milk," that's Terry.

"Cow."

"Udders."

"Uh... 'Milking'?"

Terry sighs.

"What?"

"I just said the word 'Milk'."

"Well, I put 'ing' at the end, so it's different!"

Terry shakes his head. "Fine. My next word is 'pasteurization'."

"You really don't make this easy, do you?"

"Have you given up?"

"Never! I choose you, go, 'pasteurizationing!'"

Terry facepalms.

Fritz giggles.

"Mammals."

"Fur!"

"Paw."

Fritz points, "Ha! You said it!"

"I'm allowed to say the word 'paw', Fritz."



"But you said it! I win!"

Twenty questions with Terry is... twenty questions with Terry. Really, that should explain the whole thing.

"Is it a physical thing?" Terry asks his first question.

"Yep."

"Is it something more common than grains of sand?"

"...No?"

"Is it something more common than cups?"

"Uh... I-- no?"

"Is it animate?"

"Yes. God damn it, Terry."

"What? Is it something we've encountered since the bright white light you described?"

"Yes."

Terry nods. "Is it one of us?"

"No."

"Is it something we have?"

"Yeah."

"Something animate that we have... is it a body part?"

"Fuckin' hell, Terry, already? Yes, it's a body party."

"Is it something a normal human has?"

"Damn it. No."

"It's a tail."



Fritz slumps. "Ugh! I thought I'd get you with that one."

"Really?" Terry asks, smiling. "Unless you pick something outstandingly specific, you almost never need more than twenty bits of information to narrow down a search, even when searching through all imaginable things. I was hopelessly inefficient, even, compared to perfect play."

"Just take the complement," Fritz glares halfheartedly.

"Of course. It was very kind of you to say that you'd 'get me'."

Fritz groans.

The secret whatever shake (with added hug) is a massive success. Terry seems down for it any time Fritz offers it up, and always looks a little dazed when the hug's over--which Fritz thinks (hopes) is a good thing.

Not that Fritz is any different. There's something *crazy intoxicating* about being near Terry. Maybe it's the scent, or something? Even with his exes, he's never felt this level of 'pls be near me' before.

Damn, he's got it bad.

Patience, Fritz.

Fritz stands in front of Terry, who's sitting on the ground watching him intently.

He holds his paws out, elbows at his side, holding his fingers like he's groping something, and walks forward with his mouth open.

"Rock climbing?" Terry asks.

Fritz shakes his head, trying a different thing.

"A velociraptor?"

Fritz points, Terry's close!

"Hm... a type of dinosaur, then? A Tyrannosaurus rex?"

"Yes!" Fritz jumps. "Told you I was good at charades!"



"I think my guessing skills had something to do with our success," Terry smirks.

"Sure, sure, it's a team effort," Fritz waves his paw. He plops his fuzzy blue ass down beside Terry, facing the water cooler. "Your turn."

Terry blinks. "My turn?"

"Uh... yeah? Duh?" Fritz gives him his original 'wtf' look, donut steel.

"Somehow, I failed to see that coming," Terry rubs his eyes. "Could I convince you to spare me?"

"Nope!"

"Could I bribe you?"

Fritz narrows his eyes. "With what?"

"Name your price," Terry says.

Some *very* dangerous thoughts flash through Fritz's brain cell at that--ones he'll save for later, if *the Plan*[™] works out--but he says, "Nah. I wanna see you do it."

"What threats do you respond the best to?" Terry asks.

"Terry," Fritz stares, a beautiful thought forming, "are you *embarrassed* to do charades?"

Terry looks away.

"You are!" Fritz laughs. "That's so cute--" He chokes on the word, but not quickly enough. Shit.

"Cute?" Terry asks, turning back to him, looking baffled, and maybe a little offended.

"I didn't mean it in a bad way," Fritz waves his paws in front of him, digging the hole even deeper. "I mean-- ugh. Alright, let's back up."

"...Okay?"

Deep breath, Fritz. "I mean it *is* cute," Fritz says, quickly following it with, "but in like, an endearing way! You're always so controlled, so seeing you



embarrassed is fun! Wholesome fun! It's not bad, promise."

God damn it. Fritz is such a fuckup. Just bury him now.

Terry stares at him like he's grown a second tail.

Fritz can feel it, how he's starting to curl in on himself. "Sorry. Are you mad?"

"Mad? No," Terry says, sounding earnest enough. Maybe. "I was just surprised, is all. Your explanation makes sense, though."

"It does?" Fritz asks, uncurling.

"Yes."

With a sigh, Fritz tries to untense. Okay, maybe he overreacted a bit... But this kind of thing's important to him. Is it really an overreaction if it's important? Don't answer that, secret evil second brain cell.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome?" Terry asks, sounding confused.

Fukin' Terry ass answer. Fritz snorts, feeling a small smile. "Damn right I am."

"I'm at least eighty percent sure that isn't an appropriate answer to a 'you're welcome'," Terry jokes--that's definitely a joke, Fritz can tell by the way Terry's smile quirks.

Fritz chuckles, unclenching fully. Yeah, it's Terry, he's fine. And Terry's so damn dense that he doesn't care about what the 'cute' thing implies.

"You don't have to do it if you don't want," Fritz says, because it's the right thing to say. "Just thought it'd be fun, you know? Not like we've got anyone around to be embarrassed by. Except each other, but I don't care if you're silly, and you know *I* don't care if *I'm* silly... So, like, only you care, which is kinda silly, right?"

"That is surprisingly solid logic, ignoring the dozen fallacies backing it up," Terry sighs. "Fine. I'll give it a try. Try not to mock my performance too harshly."

His heart glows a little brighter, and he grins, "I'll prolly laugh, fair warning. But it'll be fun laughing, not evil bully bullshit."



"I'm overjoyed," Terry deadpans.

Terry stands, side facing Fritz, arms low, backing up like he's pulling something.

"Uh... You're raking leaves," Fritz guesses.

Head shake. He does the pulling thing again, pretending like he's struggling.

"Oh! You're hoeing the ground!"

Shake. Damn it.

"You're holding a garden hose and spraying the wasp hole in your back yard to see the little shits freak the fuck out, but you have to back up so you don't get stung."

Terry stops, giving him a stare.

Fritz giggles. "What? Never did that?"

Facepalm.

"Oh, I know! A facepalm!"

Double facepalm.

Fritz giggles harder. "Maybe try something different?"

Terry sighs, looking around for inspiration. Shrugging, he takes a leisurely stroll to their cubicle, rummaging around in his backpack, and comes out with a shirt. He rolls up the shirt so that it almost looks like a rope, and hands (paws?) one end to Fritz to hold. Then, Terry pulls on the other end.

"What-- Oh! It's tug o' war!"

"Yes," Terry says, relieved. "What was that wasp thing?"

"Don't worry about it," Fritz waves it off. "So, have fun?"

"It was more enjoyable than I expected," Terry admits, sounding



surprised.

"Victory!"

And it is. Terry's loosening up around him, a little bit at a time. Maybe one day, he won't be so guarded.

Do what's right for both of you.

Fritz will try, damn it.

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"My turn now."

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 28, 2025

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Threadmarks: 1.17 - strlen (Terry)

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Oct 29, 2025

#54



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.17 - strlen (Terry)

He's not positive about the accuracy of the figure, but Terry once read that a brisk walk paces about four miles per hour. Not having any other reference, and assuming that it wouldn't be too far off from the truth, he uses it as a baseline.

Seven days of walking, at four miles per hour, with breaks for sleeping, going to sleep, and waking up. He'd guess that they walked an average of fifteen hours a day each of those days.

Simple mental math says that's four hundred and twenty miles, total, give or take a hundred or so for error margin.

And yet, no exit.

There are, in fact, indoor spaces that exist in the 'real world' which take up that kind of walking distance without excessive turnarounds or detours. Underground railways immediately come to mind. But even those places usually have regular, obvious outlets, or obvious ways to reach said outlets.

He hadn't noticed it, the moment he'd given up. It must have happened



silently, in increments, in one of a million steps. It passed him by, only for him to crash into it at the moment of curious calculation, the miles rendered into stark clarity.

What person, with hope in their heart for an exit, would stay put for absurd tests like dust accumulation? Terry didn't even think about it at the time, pleased as punch to try a new experiment in this strange new reality. But he feels it now; he cannot ignore it, that sinking feeling.

He wants to go home. The need to leave burns, snuffed by the sick certainty that it shall not come to pass.

Cruel, unusual, Terry's mind conjures a vivid image: Finding a door, opening it, his eyes squinting at the natural sunlight, the sounds of tires rolling over their roads, the people bustling about, an insect buzzing past his ear, the smell of cut grass, the blissfully uneven ground under his feet...

He's trapped. Not in a cage, but a maze. Not in a maze, but a place. Not in a place, but... something. Something unnatural, wrong, an imperfect pastiche of natural law, natural body, of--

"Terry? Hello? You in there?" A blue hand waves in front of his face.

Terry blinks, shaking himself instinctually. He looks over to his side, where sits Fritz. They're playing a game of peanut toss, but both of them have stopped, Fritz surely in reaction to Terry's own pause. Terry receives a look full of open, earnest concern, pink cat-like eyes fixed on his own.

"Yes?" Terry's voice is perfectly level.

"You okay?"

For a moment, he considers sharing his thoughts. But, no. There would be no point. As always, it is better to keep such things strictly internal.

"I'm fine," Terry smiles.

Fritz isn't impressed, if the quirked brow and frown are any hint. "You sure?"

Terry nods.

"...Right," Fritz says at length, seeing through Terry's defensive blandness. Will he push? "Okay. You can talk to me whenever, about

whatever, you know?"

"I understand," Terry says. "I'm fine."

"Alright..." Fritz says, turning back to their game and tossing a peanut again. They've both grown in skill at the art, pushing each other with their casual competition.

Terry sighs as subtly and quietly as he can, settling back into the default, ignoring the new gnawing at the throat of his flight instincts.

It's almost inevitable, in a way. Fritz is too savvy, far, far too caring, to let Terry's dropped mood rest without attempts to lift it. It's a unique kind of pain to know that he must contend with a friend's worry like this.

As it is, the results aren't awful... Though Fritz isn't exactly subtle, using the secret grasping appendage shake as an excuse for many extended hugs. Then again, Terry isn't exactly subtle in his apparent inability to curtail it.

Perhaps that is one of the deep secrets of socialization? An unacknowledged lack of subtlety? Either that or it's dysfunction. Terry cannot begin to fathom a guess. He's always had to learn these things from scratch and is frequently wrong in surprising ways.

They disengage from yet another hug. Terry subtly shakes the cotton out of his frontal lobe, unable to stop his smile at Fritz's pure grin radiating up at him.

"Feeling better?" Fritz asks, tail slashing and twitching with its own mind.

He is. Against the odds, he is. It's not often he gets cheered by an external source. It's nice.

But he won't ever forget today's insight.

"Yes. Thank you, Fritz."

Fritz pumps a fist, "Yesss," then segues into a jaw-unhinging yawn, his surprisingly pink tongue lolling within the cat-like dentation. It's lucky--or perhaps intended--that Fritz's face doesn't activate Terry's uncanny valley sense. Yet another piece of evidence that this whole situation is, in some way, designed.



Terry can't help his own sympathetic yawn, one hand reaching for his pocket/wrist watch, checking the time. "It's about time to sleep, I think."

"Dusty sleep."

"Dusty sleep," Terry agrees. "Though..." he frowns in thought, "have you had any dreams since the inciting event?"

Fritz opens his mouth, pauses, crosses his arms, and tilts his head up. "Hm... I don't think so?"

"Neither have I," Terry says.

They stand there and ponder--or, that is to say, Terry ponders and Fritz starts bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Is it a consequence of their transformations? Some sort of survival instinct that makes their sleep lighter? Terry just doesn't know enough about sleep to guess. Yet more intractable mysteries for the pile.

Fritz yawns again. Terry follows.

They sleep, dreamless and simple. At least there are no nightmares.

"...rry."

Terry shifts, wakefulness coming in fits and spurts.

"Terry."

He groans. Something is moving his shoulder.

"Wake up."

There is another instant of delightful unthinking, then Terry's instincts crash back to the fore. He transitions from sleepy to awake fast, violently, a habit learned from early life and taken unwillingly into adulthood.

"Huh? What? I'm awake!" Terry says, tearing the light-blocking shirt from his face, mind clicking its disparate pieces back together: tail, snout, office, cubicle, Fritz, there's Fritz crouched over him, looking... concerned?

"Sorry," Fritz says--that isn't concern, it's an apology. "You said to tell you



if I go out at night..."

Terry props himself up on an elbow, blinking deliriously. The lights of the office blaze as bright as ever, no hint whatsoever as to the time except his own exhaustion.

"...What time is it?"

Fritz shrugs, one hand rubbing the back of his head. "Dunno. Sorry. It's been like an hour? I couldn't sleep."

"Fritz," Terry says, flopping back down into his pile of clothes, "I'm going back to sleep. Goodnight."

"Night. I'll..."

Terry passes out before he can hear the rest.

The second time Terry wakes up, he's far better rested.

He immediately notices Fritz's scent, remembering being woken up earlier in the night. It seems Fritz has returned to their claimed cubicle and is sleeping at the opposite end, wrapped up in his own pile of clothes.

Though...

Terry sniffs.

Fritz's scent is a constant in his life now, his nose immensely sensitive to it. But it's never changed from its subtle spiciness, not until now.

Another sniff. Is that... a hint of cinnamon? But that's impossible. Unless, somehow, Fritz found a perfume or equivalent. Terry knows nothing like that was packed in Fritz's demonic suitcase--they'd shared their resources when they first met.

How odd.

By the time Fritz wakes up, the mystery of the cinnamon scent still remains unsolved. Terry's all but given up on figuring it out, opting instead to wait while finishing the 'A' section of his dictionary.



Who knew egg whites were called 'albumen'? Terry didn't until recently.

Fritz stretches awake, eerily cat-like purr escaping his throat as his eyes blink open.

"Oh hey--" Fritz yawns, finishing his stretch and getting up. "Mornin', Terr."

"Terr?" Terry asks, taken aback.

"Yeah, you know," Fritz waves a hand, the other rubbing the sleep out of his face. "Terr. Like a pet--" he straightens up suddenly, "nickname. I said nickname, right?"

"...Yes?" Terry asks, confused. "Terry is already a nickname for 'Terence', though. Why shorten it further?"

"Wait, wait," Fritz says, fully awake now, "your real name's 'Terence'?"

"That is what is on my birth certificate, yes," Terry says. "I much prefer Terry, though."

"Right, yeah, that's fine," Fritz says. "So... a 'no' on the 'Terr' thing?"

"I'm honestly not sure how I could stop you if you insisted."

"No, then. Got it, Terry," Fritz says, smiling softly. "Anyways, what's up? Any news from the Backrooms Daily paper?"

"No--" Terry starts, then pauses. "Actually, yes."

Fritz leans forward, eyes shining with interest. "Tell me."

"Your scent," Terry says. "It's usually an ineffable spicy smell, but right now it has a hint of cinnamon in it. Do you have any idea what might have caused that?"

If there's any evidence for them not being totally biological anymore, the way Fritz freezes in perfect stillness would be added to the list. Not that Terry actually believes that theory, but it's an interesting thought all the same.

"Fritz? Are you alright?"

Like a windup toy jerking back to life, Fritz moves again. "Uh..."



Watching closely, Terry is baffled. If he didn't know better, he'd almost assume Fritz is... embarrassed by something. But that is flatly impossible--he's half convinced Fritz literally cannot feel shame, like someone not feeling fear due to brain damage.

Fritz fidgets for a while longer before sighing and slumping like a wet rag, literally burying his face back into his clothing pillow.

"...Fritz?"

The words are mumbled and muffled, but Terry's vastly improved hearing picks them up clearly enough to parse.

"You know how we've been traveling together for like a week?" Fritz asks his pillow pile.

"Yes?" Where is he going with this?

"And... how I left last night."

"I distinctly recall the event," Terry says, level. "Maybe next time leave a note, as an aside."

"Yeah, okay..." Fritz mumbles, face hidden. He seems to curl up even more into his makeshift bed, saying almost too quietly to hear, but enough gets through, "...a litt... pent up..."

Pent up--?

"Oh," Terry says, piecing it together.

It's understandable, honestly. Inevitable, really.

Fritz groans, very much in embarrassment, much to Terry's quiet amazement. Even the greats can bleed, it seems.

"And it fucking smelled like cinnamon!" Fritz decries into the cloth, tail completely limp. "Fucking. Cinnamon!"

Terry's inherent, deeply ingrained curiosity wars with his hard-earned, beaten and bloodied good sense. In the end, he just repeats, "Oh."

This, naturally, elicits an even more despairing groan.

Looking around, covertly sniffing the air, Terry asks, "Do we... need to move cubicles?"



"Nooooo..." Fritz buries himself deeper into the pile. "It's like, far away..."

"Oh. Good." At least Fritz has some sense of foresight.

The silence returns, awkward beyond the mere capacity of description. Fritz lies there, consumed by his despondent mood, and Terry knows he has to do something.

Unfortunately for both of them, this is so far beyond his skill set that it may as well be hockey.

"It's... uh... going to be okay?" Terry tries.

Another rending pause...

Then, Fritz snorts. The snort evolves rapidly into giggles and into full-belly guffaws.

Ah. This is good, right?

Fritz's laughter grows in volume as he finally turns over, laughing at the sky-- ceiling, eyes closed, the beginning of mirthful tears in his eyes.

Terry feels his own smile grow in empathy at the sight. It is a rather bizarre situation, isn't it?

They laugh the embarrassment and oddities out of themselves, grateful to have someone to do so with.

Even an hour later and the scent of cinnamon still lingers on Fritz-- though less intense than earlier. It must have clung to him.

Fritz, admirably recovering from his embarrassment at the hands of his understandable desires, has all but moved on from the thought. Though Terry has to admit, there's a new... lack of tension in his friend, the source of which is rather obvious if given two seconds of thought.

The whole situation sticks in Terry's mind like a stub function.

Before this, he's had week-long periods where he hasn't, to put it politely, tended to his needs. It's not exactly common--he's twenty-five, not seventy--but it's happened.

However, he's feeling the pull all the same. He has been for days now.

If he were to follow Fritz's example--finding a secluded space while the other sleeps--then that would probably be the end of it. Maybe he'd have to endure some light teasing, but it would not be particularly horrid. It isn't like either of them are unaware of masturbation, nor the feelings involved in performing the act. They are grown adults, and there is nobody else around to say they must act like children around the subject.

There are no purely physical issues with the matter, either. Terry's new body has nerves to feel, and he's very much noticed it, having the obvious reactions to certain stimuli--thoughts and otherwise. It is, in fact, quite difficult to ignore, unsurprisingly.

No, the issue is mental, as it always seems to be.


To be refreshingly blunt in the privacy of his own head: he feels a low dread, a kind of horror-anticipation, at the idea of orgasming as an anthropomorphic fox-thing. He is not, by his own estimation, ready to feel so intimately connected to his transformed body in that way, despite how his libido is trying to convince him otherwise.

It should be easy, then, to step back and keep to his slow adjustments. In fact, that is exactly what he intends to do...


If only he could forget the smell of cinnamon.

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 29, 2025

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Oct 30, 2025

  #62



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.18 - Ordinary Days~! (Fritz)

So... Yeah. Just to rip the band-aid off: Fritz's cum *apparently* smells like cinnamon now.

Furry magic bullshit at its finest.



Though, somehow, it's still less surprising than how it *felt*...

Fritz stands, gasping, in an out-of-the-way cubicle, claws digging into the desk so hard he carves holes into the cheap wood. His other paw holds his dick.

The orgasm is insane. Insane. He can hardly breathe. His vision goes in and out, exploding stars fireworking in his face. It's all he can do to stand, even with leaning on the desk. Every muscle in his body feels like it's on pleasure-fire, the nerves melting away into nothing.

He can't think. Is he moaning? He hopes he doesn't wake up Terry--

Mmmm... Terry...

...It lasts minutes. Minutes.

Or, at least, it feels like minutes. Not like he's got a clock. Not that he'd be able to pay attention to one.

Either way, by the time he can put more than two thoughts together again, he's panting and almost at the verge of tears. Not sad, or angry, or anything, but from so much emotion. He feels like his muscles have become figgy pudding.

The mess is crazy, and forces a choked laugh out of him. Did he accidentally get the hentai protag package along with the furry thing? Fuckin' hell. At least his dick is still a normal size...

Then the smell of cinnamon hits him.

Fritz shudders at the memory. It was good--very very good--but he just wasn't ready for it to be that good. It was at a totally different level.

Still, pretty great. Who doesn't like feeling pleasure, right? Aaaaand it's pretty hot, if he thinks about it too long.

The smell clung to him. Enough for Terry to smell, and that... Ahem.

Anyways!

"Couldn't of packed a deck of cards or something?" Fritz asks. They're having yet another of their 'what the hell do we do' conversations.



"I did not have a deck of cards in my apartment," Terry says. "And if I did, I might not have packed them. I was more focused on practical matters--admittedly a little short-sighted, in hindsight. I would have at least packed a tennis ball if I'd known."

Fritz gives him a look, "You had tennis balls but not cards?"

"I used the tennis balls for physical therapy," Terry says, "to stave off long-term damage from typing on a computer keyboard all day."

Terry flexes his fingers, looking at them with a distant gaze.

Fritz resists the urge to ask if Terry's okay. Fritz knows exactly how 'okay' Terry is right now--a stark reminder of the line he's trying to walk. Instead, he gently says, "That makes sense."

"Hm?" Terry asks, eyes locking back onto him. "Oh, yes. I find it frustrating, though. There should be endless opportunity for conversation, but I can't seem to pick something to do. I know for fact that we haven't begun exhausting everything."

Feeling relieved that Terry wasn't about to start spiraling or something, Fritz grins. "We could do another story. It's your turn to tell, I think."

"I don't know..." Terry says, frowning.

"What about that House of Whatever book you talked about?" Fritz asks.

Terry barks out a laugh, catching Fritz off guard.

"That proves you have never read *House of Leaves*. Anyone who's read that book would never suggest telling it orally."

"Huh?" Fritz asks, tilting his head as cutely as he can, because he can.

Terry sighs, shaking his head. "*House of Leaves* is built around the idea of it being a book. It literally relies on the fact that it's a book to convey itself. Telling it orally would be like trying to describe a song with smoke signals."

Fritz giggles. "Then it'll be fun, right?"

"I..." Terry trails off, "Hm. I feel a strong resistance to the idea. I do not think I want to try."



"Ugh..." Fritz slumps. "Then what *are* we gonna do?!"

"Ladies and gentlemen~!" Fritz says, holding his tail in front of his mouth so the tip's like a mic. He's putting on his best 'announcer voice'--which is kind of hard when his voice is so much higher now, but them's the breaks for femboys, he guesses.

He stands in front of the water cooler, grinning at his audience of one guy. "Geeeet ready~! For the Peanut Toss World Backrooms Championship match~!"

Terry claps, looking both amused and dead to the world. Fritz snorts before continuing.

"Buuuut first, a word from our sponsors."

"A sponsor?" Terry asks.

"Mmhm!" Fritz gestures to the cooler behind him. "Today's sponsor is none other than the world famous Suspicious Backrooms Water!"

Dead silence.

"Psst. This is where you clap," Fritz stage-whispers.

"I'm not clapping for an advertisement."

Fritz gives him his best kitten eyes. Pouting and everything. He's almost ready to start purring to really sell it, but Terry cracks first.

"Fine."

One single clap.

"Yes! Alright! So, for the low, low price of whatever's in the water, you can quench your non-existent thirst!" Fritz launches back into his sales pitch. "But that's not all! It also comes in 'water cooler' flavor. Ooooooo~."

"Fascinating."

"And now, we will take live questions from our audience," Fritz skips up to Terry. Holding out his mic-tail, he asks, "Sir, what do you think about Suspicious Backrooms Water?"



Terry's lips twitch, like he can't decide if he wants to smile. "I find it suspicious."

"You heard it here first, folks!" Fritz turns around, going back to the cooler, "And now, back to your regularly scheduled program..."

Terry wins the Peanut Toss World Cup--the cup being that one Dixie cup Fritz left on top of the cooler a billion years ago. Fritz gets second place, though!

But now, it's back to everyone's favorite show: Fritz and Terry trying to entertain themselves.

"Alright," Fritz says, lying on his back near the water cooler, "if you could wish for anything, what would it be?"

"Anything?" Terry asks. "Is this a monkey's paw situation?"

Fritz smirks, opening one eye to see Terry's reaction. "Wouldn't it be 'monkey's hand'?"

Terry closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. "No. It wouldn't."

"Hmph," Fritz huffs. "I don't know. Guess you'll have to find out."

"Then it would be better not to make a wish," Terry says. "As I only get one wish, I can't test with a simple wish first to see if it's a trap."

"Ugh..." Fritz groans, "Fine... It's a monkey's paw. But a fun paw. Work with me here, Terry."

"Okay. A fun paw?" Terry muses. "I suppose I could wish for... omnipotence."

Fritz stares.

"Seriously? Omnipotence?"

"I'm intrigued at how the fun monkey's paw would make that fun," Terry answers.

"It makes you omnipotent, but only in your dreams," Fritz says, rolling his eyes.



"That isn't very fun."

"...Let's find a different game."

"Favorite *non* fiction book," Fritz asks, tossing a sock filled with peanuts at Terry.

"*Gödel, Escher, Bach*," Terry says instantly, tossing the sock back.

Fritz facepalms, catching the bag with one paw. "I can't even pronounce that."

Toss. Terry catches it. "It's a very nice book."

Toss. Catch. "Yeah? Let me guess, it's the ultimate programmer book."

"Sort of," Terry says, catching the sock. "It's more of a thesis on how the brain can be conscious while being made of non-conscious matter, which necessarily has thoughts on programming and math."

Fritz misses his catch, letting it *bop* off his forehead. This guy...
"Seriously?"

"Well, yes," Terry says, smiling. "It's also the source of one of my favorite heuristics: Hofstadter's law."

"Which--" Fritz throws the sock a lot harder, causing Terry to have to scramble to catch it, "which means...?"

Terry gives him a small, level 10 glare for the throw. "It always takes longer than you expect, even when you take into account Hofstadter's law."

"That--" Fritz thinks about it for a second, "pfft!" He snorts. "Yeah, okay, I get it." Fritz remembers writing his smut, always thinking he'll have enough time...

"It's humorous and useful," Terry says, giving him a gentle toss back. "Though, if taken literally, it says that everything will take an infinite amount of time to do."

Fritz tilts his head, "What?"

"It's recursion," catch. "If you take into account Hofstadter's law, and



Hofstadter's law takes into account Hofstadter's law, then it's self-referential, taking into account an infinite chain of Hofstadter's laws-- since there's no exit condition to the recursion."

"Nerd."

"Thank you."

Toss. Catch.

"Are you sure you should be doing this?" Terry asks for the gazillionth time.

"Yeah, it'll be fine," Fritz waves him off. "And I'm gonna start slow anyways. No way am I trying a full-on cartwheel right off the bat."

"A shocking amount of foresight," Terry mutters, rubbing his forehead. Silly Terry, anthro foxes can't get headaches... right?

"You gotta help, though. I'm gonna start with a hand-- *paw*stand, leaning up on the wall, but you gotta catch me if I start falling."

"I'm going to be very upset if you break your neck," Terry says.

"Aww~! Thanks!" Fritz smiles. He knows Terry didn't mean it *that* way, but it's still nice. "Let's do this!"

Before Terry can try talking him out of it again, Fritz swaggers up to the wall, kneels down, and tries a paw stand.

It's...

Really easy.

"Huh," Fritz says, supporting himself with his arms like he weighs as much as paper. He doesn't even need to lean on the wall.

"You seem stable... somehow," Terry says, staring down at him in surprise. Luckily--or not, depending--Fritz tucked in his shirt before trying this, so he's not giving Terry a front-row view to his belly.

"I'ma try walking-- er, is it walking when you're hand-- *paw*standing?"

"I don't know. Maybe don't escalate that quickly...?"



"Nah," Fritz says, moving his paws like he's walking with them.

It's...

Also really easy!

Fritz giggles, walking on his paws like he's made to do it. "No fukin' way! How's this so easy?"

"A consequence of your transformation, I'd wager."

"Well, yeah, duh," Fritz says, moving onto one paw. The feeling of being so light, so agile... Fritz can't help but laugh out loud.

He 'walks' around a bit more, reveling in it all. Then, with a move that would have snapped his old human back like a bad churro, he leans back onto his feet, standing up straight, arms in the air like he just don't care.

Grin~.

"You're going to try cartwheeling next, aren't you?" Terry asks, already exasperated--a great meal.

"You know me so well, Terry."

"Don't break your neck."

Fritz crosses his arms, fake-pouting, "Fine! I guess!"

"Owww...." Fritz rubs the base of his tail.

"Is it broken? Can you still move it?" Terry frets.

Yeah, *frets*. Apparently, Terry is a bit of a mother hen when it comes to getting hurt. It's so fucking cute.

So, maybe, Fritz hams it up a little bit. Sue him.

The cartwheel was going great, up until he fell on his back, right onto his tail. Fucking. Ouch. Not even his dump truck cushioned the fall... that much. He's got a lot of cushion, to be fair.



"What if I'll never tail again?" Fritz asks, eyes wide.

Terry stops his fretting, eyes going from worried to deadpan. "You're fine, aren't you?"

"Aww, come on," Fritz whines. "It really did hurt, but..." He flicks his tail, and there's a little twinge of pain. "I'm prolly fine."

"Don't move it too much until it feels better," Terry commands, stern and imposing and tall and... Where was Fritz again? Oh right.

"Okay, sure. That. I'll do that."

Terry stares at him. "What did I just say? Repeat it."

"Uh..." Shit.

"We have no idea how to do proper medical care of a tail," Terry says slowly. "So our best bet is to wait for it to stop hurting and not move it around too much."

"Right. Yep. Got it," Fritz flicks his tail on pure instinct--he's kinda gotten into the habit--and winces. "Maybe my tail doesn't, though."

Terry sighs with his type two 'what am I going to do with this idiot' sigh. Fritz is getting really damn good at telling apart Terry's many varied sighs. Though he's still getting surprised by new facepalms. Gotta pump those numbers up.

"Hmm... You think we could break down some of these cubicle walls to make a *super* cubicle?" Fritz asks while they sit around waiting for Fritz's tail to recover.

Terry looks around, considering. "Maybe? Here, let me test it..."

Fritz watches as Terry gets up to inspect the cubicle wall. He pokes at it, looks into the corners, and pushes it a bit. Classic Terry caution, really.

"You gotta put your back into it!" Fritz backseats.

Terry pushes harder on the wall. "It feels solid. I don't think we'll be able to easily break it down without risk of injury."

"Use your hammer," Fritz suggests.



"That would make it worse, I think."

Fritz sighs. "When my ass is back to being cash, I'm totally gonna try."

"Of course you are."

Luckily, by the time an hour's up, Fritz's tail is back to perfect order. At least it feels that way, and that's what matters.


The cubicle walls won't go down. Terry's smugness can be seen from outer space.


Fritz sighs, sitting on the cubicle desk, kicking his feet. "I'm bored."

"As am I," Terry says, staring into nothingness. "We need something more to do, something that's more complicated than small games. Something... iterative."

"Like what?"

Terry crawls over to his backpack, pulling out some paper, scissors, and pens. "Do you remember any board games?"

Fritz blinks, then grins. Leave it to Terry to come through.  Like  Reply

 ScreenWatcher, KingCabbage, thebobbit and 37 others

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WeirdlyHotPepper Oct 30, 2025

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Threadmarks: 1.19 - va_copy (Terry)

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Oct 31, 2025



#66



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.19 - va_copy (Terry)

Terry doesn't play chess, much to Fritz's mirth. Apparently, according to his friend, Terry 'should', for his 'nerd cred'.

Regardless, Terry doesn't play chess, but he knows the rules. He knows what pieces there are on the board.



He doesn't, however, know the dimensions of a chessboard from memory, nor the exact starting placement of pieces on the board.

But, he can reverse engineer the game from the information he has: One king, one queen, two of each rook, bishop, and knight, all lined up at the bottom. That makes eight pieces at the bottom row, meaning that the board has to be eight tiles wide. And since Terry is fairly certain a chessboard is square, that means it's eight by eight.

The pawns, of course, go above the pieces at the bottom. And the tiles are alternated in color in a simple checkerboard pattern.

The only issue is the ordering of the pieces at the bottom. He knows the king and queen go in the middle, for example, but does not know if the queen goes on the left of the king or the right. He knows the other pieces are mirrored on either side of the board, but he isn't sure of the order.

Truly, the lack of easily accessible information is felt like a pulled tooth. One simple search would solve this issue without effort, and a thousand more like it for games they know even less about.

Fritz doesn't play chess, though he seems fairly confident that the order from the middle is: bishop, knight, rook. When Terry sketches the setup, it looks correct to their untrained eyes. They decide to try testing both possible positions for the king and queen while playing, to see which is more fun.

Then comes the crafts. Terry didn't pack a ruler--mostly because he didn't have one--but did pack a pocket dictionary. Making a mark on the binding, he's able to use that mark to set a standard width/height for each tile on the board, which is drawn onto a loose sheet of paper. The paper is college ruled, so the light blue lines can be used to help keep everything level and aligned.

Meanwhile, Fritz wields a pair of scissors to cut their pieces out of slips of paper. Terry was, understandably, weary of giving Fritz access to the scissors, but Fritz made a good point: he has sharp claws and hasn't poked his eye out yet. Still, Terry keeps a close eye on it.

When all is said and done, they have a bespoke chess set. All that is left is to play.

"Just so you know, I'm literally the worst at chess," Fritz says as they sit across from each other, setting up their pieces.



"As am I," Terry commiserates. "I never found the time for the game. It's probably a good thing that we're inexperienced. It'll give us more to learn and explore."

They place their pieces down, Terry smiling at the designs. Fritz, instead of doing the classic black versus white, has gone above and beyond. Fritz's pieces contain sparkles, flowers, and other joyful doodles, while Terry's pieces are drawn to be blocky and industrial.

Terry thinks it's nice. Endearing, even, if only in the privacy of his head. He should have expected the like of it from Fritz, but is glad to be pleasantly surprised.

"Let's do this," Fritz says, leaning forward, clearly happy to have something to do.

"Let's."

"I believe that's checkmate," Terry says after moving his bishop.

It's a surprisingly close game, all things considered. For all his eccentricity, Fritz is no idiot, and they both seem to have a similar level of inexperience in the art of chess play. Terry has no doubt that a better player could crush either of them in a few moves.

"Fine. Rematch!" Fritz says, revealing a surprising competitive intent.

"Of course," Terry is happy to oblige.

"HA! Checkmate!"

Terry blinks, then sees it. How did he miss the rook? He'll have to remember to keep an eye on every one of Fritz's pieces before he makes a move, and visualize what those pieces might be able to do. Actually, that's probably a good heuristic that most decent players use, now that he thinks on it.

"Well played," Terry compliments, and Fritz's joy seems to double. "Would you like to--"

"Yes."



Fritz is already setting up another game. Terry chuckles.

Terry makes a move that is probably decent, given the situation, and Fritz exaggerates a loud sigh.

Unfortunately, their pieces are loose, small slips of paper. The airflow from the sigh blows several of them off the board and moves others to strange spots.

"Oh-- shit," Fritz groans. "Sorry. Didn't mean to."

"It's fine," Terry says, frowning down at their disarrayed board. "I certainly don't remember the positions. Should we call this game a dud and start over?"

"Yeah, I guess," Fritz pouts. "Don't breathe too hard when playing chess, I guess."

Terry chuckles. "We could get some duct tape to weigh the pieces down, maybe."

"Oh!" Fritz perks up, "Yeah, let's do that!"

Terry nods, moving towards his backpack. He's reminded of the various jokes he's heard about the universal applicability of duct tape.

He pauses. "Ah, of course. We should have made the pieces out of folded duct tape in the first place."

"Damn it."

"It was my mistake. I didn't consider the breathing problem. Do you want to add weight to our current pieces, or make new ones out of duct tape?"

"Add weight," Fritz says. "I like the cute little things."

Terry smiles, of the same mind. "Okay."

Folding up the tape so that it'll stick to both the piece and the board wouldn't be wise. Not only would the adhesive quickly go bad, but it may tear the board when moving the pieces.

Instead, they layer a few small pieces of tape on the bottom side of the



pieces, the non-adhesive sides facing down. After some testing, five layers proves plenty to subvert any sighs that aren't deliberately attempting liftoff.

It's almost like making a piece out of tape, except the adhesive side is covered by a paper facade. The best of both worlds, as it preserves Fritz's designs and makes them properly heavy.

"Checkmate," Terry announces his victory.

"Ugh! I should've seen that coming," Fritz bemoans. "You're mean with those bishops."

"Thank you."

There's no question, they both set up a new game without hesitation.

To both of their delight, they're evenly matched. If they weren't, it wouldn't be nearly as enthralling. One-sided stomps are rarely ever fun for either side in a game like chess--at least not long-term.

The score is seven to six in Fritz's favor, earned over the course of nearly three straight hours of play. When there's nothing else to occupy their minds, things as stimulating as chess suddenly draw focus like they never have before.

Fritz has proven to be a formidable opponent. Where Terry's attempts to rationalize and systematize the game allows him to stay competitive, Fritz has an almost uncanny sense of what moves to make. When Terry asked, Fritz said he merely does 'what feels right'. A creature of instinct, through and through.

The time for chess has ended, however. Even with their endless physical stamina, their minds still need rest alongside stimulation. In that spirit, they lounge near the water cooler, sharing in easy conversation.

"We could do checkers," Fritz says, tossing the sock filled with peanuts into the air, catching it, then tossing again in a repeating pattern. He's lying on his back, staring at the ceiling.

"Is a checkers board the same size as a chess board?" Terry asks, sitting up against a wall. If he maneuvers his tail correctly, he's able to lean against a wall without it bunching up too horribly. But he will never be able to press his tailbone flush with a wall again.



"Uh... maybe?"

Terry sighs, looking at his pocket dictionary but not actually reading it. "It would be worth testing, I suppose. We could reuse the chess pieces."

"Aren't there more checkers pieces though?" Fritz asks.

"Are there? I can't remember," Terry asks, trying to visualize a checkers board. Perhaps? It sounds right, at least.

"I'm pretty sure."

"Then we can make more pieces," Terry says.

There are minutes of calm, companionable silence. The only sounds are the droning of the office milieu and Fritz's casual tossing game.

Then, conversation sneaks back in, as it always seems to after long enough quiet.

"I really wish we had cards or something," Fritz says. "But the chess idea was great."

"Thank you," Terry accepts the compliment. "I don't think we could make cards that are uniform enough with the tools we have, but perhaps it'll be possible to whittle dice? Though there would be risk of injury, since I don't think either of us have woodcarving experience, especially with a pocket knife."

"Eh... let's save that one for later."

"I agree." Terry thinks for a moment. "Did you pack any coins?"

"No. Didn't think I'd need 'em. You?"

"No," he shakes his head. "I never paid with cash, let alone coins. I was thinking, if we wanted games of probability, we could have flipped coins."

"Yeah, that'd be the day. We really fucked up with packing, huh?" Fritz asks, smiling in his direction.

"My decisions felt right at the time, though I didn't expect my main challenge to be boredom," Terry defends.

"If you knew this would've happened, and you had like a week to prepare,



what would you do?" Fritz asks, resuming his tossing.

An interesting question. "Is this hypothetical assuming that I know there is nothing I can do to stop it?"

"Sure."

Some consideration, and Terry has his answer: "I would attempt to convince as many people as possible to stay in the same room when the event occurs." Saying it out loud reveals a flaw, "Though, perhaps that wouldn't work, considering that those on your plane disappeared. Would I be allowed to know that in advance?"

Fritz chuckles, his eye roll obvious. "Alright, let's try again, nerd style. You know you'll meet me and no one else, you know that we're gonna be bored out of our skulls, and that we don't need food or anything. You've got one week to get ready. What do you do?"

"Hm," Terry hums, thinking. "What would you do?"

"Shit, I'd get a huge ass duffel bag and pack it with a million board games. Yahtzee, cards, chess, all that jazz. Then I'd get a tape player and a bunch of tapes, and hope that old school stuff like that works. I haven't heard any music in over a week..."

Terry nods. "All very reasonable--and I agree on the music."

Fritz props himself up on one arm, facing Terry with an oddly intent look. "Really?"

"Uh... yes?" Terry asks, confused. "If you don't need survivability, and communications are cut off, packing entertainment potential is very practical."

"Nah, I mean the music thing. You want music too?" Fritz asks, still oddly intense.

Terry answers, not sure what Fritz's game is, "Of course. I used to listen to music often while working, to help me focus."

Fritz sits up completely, staring at Terry, unblinking. "What about singing?"

"Singing?" He asks on reflex, mind starting to connect the dots.

"Mmhm," Fritz nods, leaning forward, still staring. "Singing. You know,



making music with your voice?"

"I..." Terry feels a sick feeling in the center of his chest. He pushes it away with practiced ease. "I'm sorry, I'm not one to sing. Ever."

That seems to knock Fritz out of his intense focus. "Oh. I-- sorry. I didn't mean to push."

Terry sighs heavily. "It doesn't matter."

"I does--" Fritz closes his eyes, then opens them, seemingly determined. "Sorry. You don't have to sing. But are you okay if I do? I promise I won't annoy you... too much."

The coil loosens in his chest enough to speak clearly. "That's fine. Just not the song that never ends. I don't think I can bear that again."

Fritz snorts at that, finally leaning back. "Deal. Any requests?"

"Not particularly," Terry replies. "I don't know what songs you know."

"Alright!" Fritz's grin grows, and his eyes shine. It must be involuntary, that shine. It has to be. "I've got a good one."

"I await with bated breath."

It begins with a slow, almost mournful humming. Terry, expecting something bombastic and, to be frank, Fritz-like, reels in surprise.

Fritz sits, eyes closed, devilish grin turning somber, composed. The humming sloughs off the mischievousness, the layers of mirth and humor, leaving something... raw.

Terry can't look away.

The humming trails off, a single breath, then...

"I set my sail~, fly, the wind it will take me~. Back to my home, sweet home~."

Involuntarily, Terry sucks in a sharp breath. He can feel his ears perk up, maximizing his attention.

"Lie on my back~, clouds are makin' way for me~. I'm comin' home,



sweet home~."

Terry can't believe it. Even with the evidence before his eyes, worming into his ears, he can't fathom it.

Fritz is a fantastic singer.

And Terry... Terry hasn't heard music in over a week, except twice: scared out of his mind in their first meeting, and Fritz's rendition of the song that never ends.

Nothing like this. Nothing like...

"I see~. Your star~. You left it burning for me~. Mother~, I'm heeeeeeeeere~."

Something deep loosens within Terry. Nothing so base as physical, it's a mental loosening, a subconscious unclenching. It's a fist held tight for long years, and the fingers being pried open with painful caring.

Without thinking, without the slightest effort to stop, Terry closes his eyes. He leans back and listens.

"Eyes open wide~. Feel your heart and it's glowin'. I'm welcome home, sweet home~."

For the first time, it doesn't matter. He doesn't feel his betrayed body, the lost hopelessness of the world around him. There is only the singing, so haunting and sweet.

"I take your hand~. Now, you'll never be lonely~. Not, when I'm home, sweet home~."

A genuine gift.

Terry.


Relaxes.

For a single minute, he's fine.

"I see~, your star~. You left it burnin' for me~. Mother~, I'm heeeeeeeeere~!"

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Nov 3, 2025

  #72**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.20 - So They're Finally Here, Performing for You~! (Fritz)

The red light's turned green, the floodgates have been thrown open.

Fritz can *sing*, and Terry *likes it*.

"That was wonderful," Terry says, sounding... happy. Actually happy. When Fritz looks, he sees a Terry that's relaxed and comfortable--he didn't even know he's been seeing Tense Terry this whole time...

...If he actually tries to sing well. The song that never ends is on eternal hiatus.

Which, fair. Totally fair. Fritz also feels pretty on board with the 'sing good' idea--three guesses for why.

Anyways, now that he's got permission from tall fox and handsome, the music has taken over his soul.

"Of your eyes, begonia skies~ like a sleepy-heaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad~!"

It's been a couple days of playing chess and trying to make dust for some insane reason. Chess is the big thing, though. Terry's a freaking genius--yeah big surprise--and Fritz has to use his entire smooth brain cell to stand a chance. The score's still pretty damn even: Ten for Fritz, twelve for Terry.

"Sleepy-heaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad~!" Fritz wraps up the next song he's singing, keeping a close eye on Terry's reaction.

It's subtle, but Terry's acting different. He's smiling more easily, he's not as tense, and it's been *hours* since his last session of eye-glazed staring into nothing, mindlessly rubbing the fur on his arms.



Something that Fritz is doing is dropping the walls Terry's built up. It's amazing and terrifying, since it means the moment of truth is coming closer and closer with every breakthrough.

It's not perfect, of course. Terry hasn't once initiated a hug, and he still flinches at contact sometimes. And there's the million little hints that there's some deep *hurt* in Terry's heart--though, who doesn't have some of that, right?

Fritz feels a warm glow of satisfaction anyways. Why?

Because Terry's actually getting comfortable with Fritz. It's in small ways, but it's the real deal.

The Plan[™] is coming together. Fritz has to resist cackling like some budget supervillain.

"Check. Mate," Fritz puts the knight down with the force of a million smug cat bois. The world shakes with the sheer force of it. "That's eleven me, twelve you."

Terry smiles, and it seems looser than just a day ago. There's a fondness in his eyes, a smoother curve of his lips, the line of his shoulders less rigid. "That was well played."

"Thanks," Fritz chirps, then playfully glares. "You didn't let me win, right?"

"Pardon?" Terry asks, doing that 'blink and tilt head' thing he does when he's surprised.

"You're not letting me win so we can be neck and neck, right?" Fritz asks. "Taking it easy on me?"

"Of course not," Terry sounds a little offended. "I wouldn't insult you like that. If I handicapped myself, the score would reflect it."

"Hmmm..." Fritz leans forward, staring into Terry's eyes. "Okay!"

Terry huffs, shaking his head in exasperation. It's something he's done plenty of times, but now there's a smoothness to it, like it's something casual. Or is it more relaxed? Or... Well, Fritz isn't a mind reader. Maybe he's just seeing things, but he's pretty sure he isn't.

He has to go slow and steady, giving Terry the room he needs to push back or not. It's *hard*, Fritz wants to rush *so bad*, but damn it if he isn't going to try to do this right.

It'll be worth it.

Terry's smile is softer, comfortable, as they set up their next game.

So, so worth it.

"What's your favorite song?"

"It doesn't have lyrics, unfortunately."

Fritz facepalms. "Then what's your favorite *with* lyrics?"

"Hm... Not something I've thought about. Would it be too normal to say *Bohemian Rhapsody*?" Terry asks.

"Hell no it ain't!" Fritz grins, grabbing his tail-mic for the best damn cover of *Bohemian Rhapsody* the Backrooms has ever seen. Heard. Whatever.

"*Is this the real life~? Is this just fantasy~?*"

Fritz runs his finger over the top of a cubicle wall. He has to stand on the desk to do it, because he's fun-sized.

"So... we ready to admit that there's no dust?" Fritz asks, showing Terry his dustless finger.

Terry frowns, eyes narrowed in thought. "I suppose that's right. Waiting a little longer will confirm it better, but I don't actually expect dust to show up now either."

"Sweet," Fritz says, hopping down from his mighty perch. He saw no gods up there, let alone dust. "Guess that means we're heading out?"

"I don't have any objections," Terry says, eyes distant.

"...But?" Fritz asks, seeing Terry's look. There's gotta be a 'but' in there-- probably not the fun kind either.



"But, I think it would be nice to have breaks like this, every so often," Terry suggests, eyeing Fritz. "Traveling is nice, but only resting for sleep gets exhausting. Mentally, of course."

"Yeah, I'm down for that," Fritz nods, smiling up at Terry. "Let's pick a nicer spot to stop next time, though. The water cooler's fun, but..."

Terry's return smile makes Fritz's heart skip a beat. Ugh, he's got it bad. "I agree."

"Coolness," Fritz says, looking around. "You wanna stay another night, or just get packed up and get the hell out?"

"I have no particular preference one way or the other."

"My feet are itching to go," Fritz decides. "Let's pack."

"Okay."

They're all packed up, they hugged it out again (thanks, excuse-for-a-hug shake!), and they're ready to--

"Wait!" Fritz shouts, dropping the suitcase of no return.

"What? What's wrong?" Terry asks, looking around.

But Fritz is already at the water cooler. Without hesitating, he tears the tank off the... whatever the water tank sits on, and stumbles a bit with the weight. Water *blurp blurp blurps* out of the tank and all over the goddamn floor.

With a heave, "Hhhhya!" Fritz tosses it, watching in pride as the thing flies, water going *everywhere*.

He turns back to Terry, grinning. "Alright, *now* we can go."

Terry's face is perfectly expressionless. And wet. "Indeed."

Fritz giggles.

"*On the road again~.*"



It's good to be moving forward again. Chilling out was great and all, but Fritz has chronic 'need to move or I'll go fucking crazy' syndrome, and it somehow didn't get better when he was given infinite stamina.

The whole 'boring' problem gets way worse when they can't break out a chess match while walking. Or, they could, but it probably wouldn't go too well...

"Hey, Terry. You think we can MacGyver up a way to play chess while walking?" Fritz asks.

"I'm not sure it would be wise. What if we trip?" Terry points out.

"Yeah, but what if we did it anyways?"

Terry thinks on it for a couple minutes. It's gonna be a good one if Terry's thinking that long.

"I think we'd have to play it vocally--at most making short notes on paper. I don't know chess notation, but we could come up with our own easily enough. The hard part would be preserving the state of the board, since neither of us has an eidetic memory..." Terry glances at him, "Unless you do, and never said anything?"

"You mean like a perfect memory?" Fritz asks. "Nah. If I had that, I'd just waste it on song lyrics. And smut."

"Then the bottleneck is preserving board state, even when it changes rapidly," Terry says, not even blinking at Fritz's comment. "If you can find a way around that, we could play chess while walking and not risk tripping."

"Huh..." Fritz trails off. "Yeah, I got nothin'."

"Neither do I."

"We should be crossing over where we turned around about now," Terry says, glancing at his watch.

"Into the great unknown," Fritz makes his voice sound all breathy and wide-eyed.

"An adventure for the ages," Terry says. "Perhaps we shall even see a



cubicle."

Fritz gasps as loudly as he can. "No. Way!" He points, "There's one right there!"

Terry doesn't even look. "Wow."

"Airplane."

"A real pin," Terry says crazy fast.

"How do you *do* that?!" Fritz asks. They've been doing anagram games, and apparently Terry can spit out an anagram faster than a zookeeper spits out a bullet into a gorilla.

Fritz snorts. He'll have to save that one.

"I like anagrams," Terry shrugs. "It's the same with any skill; I learned it through practice."

"Alright, give me one," Fritz says. He'll show this nerd.

"Albumen."

Fritz slowly turns to stare at Terry. "What?"

"It's the whites of an egg," Terry explains. "A-L-B-U-M-E-N."

"Why," Fritz says slowly, "would you pick that word?"

"I read it in the dictionary."

"You--" Fritz snorts. "Okay, you know what? Sure. How did you spell that?"

Terry spells it out again.

"Hmm..." Fritz's brain becomes a battleground. They would dig trenches in it, but both sides agreed to preserve its perfect smoothness. "Uh..."

And that's basically how the anagram game goes. They don't play it very long.



They talk, walk, and pass a couple intersections here and there.

Sometimes, the size of the Backrooms gets to Fritz. Not in a bad way... okay, maybe a little bad, but still it's more like craning his neck to see the top of a roller coaster; vertigo from being near something huge.

The office just goes on and *on*. It's crazy.

It's not all repetitive beige, though. Well, the beige is still there wherever he looks, but there's also other office stuff. Clocks, corkboards, and so on. No more water coolers--the Backrooms probably learned its lesson with the last one.

And, sometimes, there's even more interesting things. Like a corkboard with something tacked onto it. The paper was blank, but still!

It's crazy how boring a magical place can get. Ugh.

"You know any other word games?" Fritz asks.

"I'm sure there's some I'm missing, but I can't recall any others at the moment," Terry answers.

Fritz groans. "Alright. I'll tell a story." He needs to do something, anything.

"Okay."

"But what to tell...?" Fritz ponders ponderously, staring over yonder wondrously. "You've probably seen *One Punch Man*, right?"

Somehow, Terry shakes his head. "That's an anime, right? The only anime I've watched was *Death Note* as a teenager."

"Are you even a nerd?!" Fritz throws his arm in the air--the other one pulling the suitcase that shall not be named. "I mean, really. No web fics, no anime, barely any games, nothing! What did you even *do* with your free time?"

"In descending order of time spent, I: Worked, studied, read published fiction books, and irregularly watched movies," Terry answers, completely serious.

"Studied? You were in college?"

"No. I just like learning."



Fritz's shoulders slump. Terry's over here making everyone else look bad. "I *guess* I can tell you the plot to every anime ever... Alright. Get ready for the strongest bald motherfucker to ever punch another motherfucker."

"Then, *bam!* The bike guy throws his bike at the sea king!" Fritz makes a throwing motion. "But... it doesn't do anything! Because of course it doesn't do anything. Bike dude gets his shit rocked in front of all the civilians, like, 'he might be dead' kind of rocked. Everyone can smell what that rock's cooking, and it's blood flavor. And the sea king is being a dick about it too, bragging and showing off and all that."

"I think I get it now," Terry says, looking toward the ceiling, eyes thoughtful. "I was curious how a good story could be told with such a powerful protagonist. The answer is to limit information about immediately concerning things to the protagonist, but have the reader know about it. The tension is 'when is Saitama going to show up', not 'will Saitama win'."

"Well, yeah," Fritz says, feeling a little confused. "Duh?"

"Ah, I apologize. You've written a lot, from what you said, but these things aren't as obvious to me," Terry waves a paw.

Fritz laughs. "Yeah, I wrote *smut*."

"Did people enjoy your work?" Terry asks out of the blue.

"I--" Fritz remembers some really nice comments he's gotten, "they did, but..."

"Then I'm not sure what the issue is. Even if your experience is in something like pornographic writing, it is still experience. I doubt you gave literally zero effort. I think I know you well enough to predict at least that," Terry says, like it's the most normal thing in the world.

Ouch! Fritz's heart! Oh no!

"You're a pretty great guy, Terry," Fritz says, smiling, blinking a bit rapidly for *no reason*.

"Um... Thank you?"



This fox... Deep breaths, Fritz.

"Anyways. *That's* when Saitama shows up! He's holding bike dude in his arms, and is like 'You've done well'. The rain's pouring, and the sea king..."

"...is like 'you were too strong', and Saitama has this look on his face like 'wow I have to roleplay having a good fight and you fucking blew it at the end-of-fight respect-between-warriors banter part'."

Terry huffs a small laugh. "That is a very specific emotion to convey through animation."

"Yeah. I'm totally not making it up or seeing things," Fritz chuckles. "Anyways, nobody believes Saitama did it, blah blah blah, season ends."

"Quite the climax," Terry says. "That's a nice story. I regret not seeing it in animation."

"It was pretty great," Fritz agrees, eyeing a calendar with no month or day squares on a wall. It's just some papers in the shape of a calendar. What the hell?

The conversation naturally dies down at that, the endless cycle of talk-then-chill moving to its next step.

Fritz tears his eyes away from the not-calendar, looking towards yet more office cubicles. This is his life now, isn't it? This isn't going to stop. At least they'll find new places eventually...

He looks towards Terry, walking beside him.


It isn't *that* bad, at least.

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  #73





WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.21 - memcpy (Terry)

They walk, because the alternative is not walking.

The office area changes with the distance. Perhaps corkboards will become more common, or there will be a side room with computer towers stacked sideways on a desk. The desks in the cubicles might change their wood color, or the lining of the cubicles could be darker for a while.

There seems to be, to Terry's pattern recognition, two distinct types of changes. It's a pattern he's found through the whole edifice, what Fritz jokingly calls 'the Backrooms'. At least, Terry assumes it's a joke.

First is the one-off surprises. Anything as simple as a random water cooler, to as shocking as the 'manager room'. These experiences stand out due to their suddenness and one-off nature--the pattern is that there is no pattern.

Second is the gradual, overarching changes. The way the apartment hallways changed color, or how corkboards became more common here in the offices. These changes can still be obvious and sudden, but they become the new normal through repetition.

Terry's first, basic theory is the obvious: As they travel further from the 'entrances' of an area, the stranger that area becomes. It would be possible to design things to follow the rule: 'things are more normal the closer one is to an entrance, and less normal the further away one is'.

But that probably isn't correct. The entrance to the apartment hallways, the one connecting to the parking lot, was quite strange. If it followed that rule, Terry would have noticed things returning to baseline before finding the glass door.

His next theory is far more sound, in his opinion: there is a consistent, general amount of gradual changes over long distances, and one-off surprises have a general probability of happening.

This theory would neatly explain the feeling that things become stranger the further he travels in an area, while still allowing for his other observations.

For example, he enters the office area, walks in it for a few days, and gets used to the general aesthetic. However, because there are gradual



changes over long distances, the area begins subtle changes. This change feels strange, because he's already been anchored to think the things around the entrance are 'normal'. In actuality, it's him favoring the first aesthetic he found of a new area, then bemoaning that he has to adjust to a new one.

And the one-off surprises would become more 'frequent' over distance in the same way that flipping a coin a hundred times would make heads more frequent. It's mere chance, is all.

Assuming the theory is correct, of course. For all he knows, the rooms could be designing themselves right before they turn every corner, like a procedural level generator. But the theory he has right now feels the most likely.

They're deciding which path through an intersection to take, though the decision is rather obvious.

"I wanna go to the popcorn ceiling place," Fritz says.

Terry, looking up, agrees. The temptation is always there to travel towards areas with new stimuli. Maybe that's a factor in the increasing strangeness phenomenon? A satisficing heuristic search based on what 'feels interesting'?

He considers testing what would happen if they deliberately went down 'boring' paths. But trying to explain the line of logic leading to the thought would be cumbersome, and he's nearly certain Fritz would convince him to go down the interesting path regardless.

Doubly so if he does the 'kitten eyes' act again. May as well prune that possibility altogether.

"Let's go."

"You think we could scrape some popcorn off? I always wanted to do that."

Terry sighs, though it's fond. How does Fritz get the energy? "We don't have a ladder."

"I could stand on your shoulders," Fritz proposes.

"You still wouldn't reach, the ceiling is too tall," Terry pauses, "and it



would be too dangerous."

"You'll have to toss me," Fritz grins.

"I feel like that's a reference to something... and it'd be too dangerous. And you wouldn't have time to scrape off any popcorn before you fell back down."

Fritz starts laughing in response.

tick tick...

They pass another clock, the second one they've seen in the office area. The design is the same as the previous, but...

"The clocks aren't synced up," Terry says. "The last one was four hours ahead of ours; this one is... roughly one hour and twenty minutes behind."

"Huh," Fritz intones. "I guess they're random, then? There's no mythical Backrooms time?"

tick tick tick tick...

"Well, it's more likely to be random, at least," Terry considers. "It could also be that the clocks are slow or fast compared to my watch, but only noticeable over a long period of time."

"We're not gonna stand here for days and watch the clock, right?" Fritz asks.

Terry shakes his head. "I don't think so. I would rather take another rest somewhere more interesting."

"Oh thank fuck. The ticking would drive me batty."

tick tick tick...

"Yes, me too."

"Moon," Fritz says.

"Cheese," Terry answers, much to Fritz's amusement.



"Cheddar."

"Shredded."

"Protein."

"What?" Terry asks, then understands. "Ah, like exercise shredded. Clever."

"Thanks!"

"My next word is 'folding'."

"What?"

"Like protein folding," Terry elaborates.

"Some of us read fanfiction, Terry."

Suppressing his mirth, Terry thinks about how to explain without getting lost in the details.

"It's a thing that proteins in the body do. They fold. It's a famously difficult thing to predict--it's hard to find what a protein will fold into unless you've seen it do it already."

He resists the urge to start explaining the P versus NP problem. It's a heroic effort.

"Huh. Sure. Origami."

"Paper."

"Drawing..."

Rare though it is, there are sometimes doors and rooms in the office spaces. None of them have been locked like the manager room, at least, and all of them are dead ends in one way or another.

One of the rooms they enter has an interesting fixture.

"Is that a window?" Fritz asks, moving aside a plastic potted plant to get better access. It's covered by curtains, though there's faint light leaking



through the thin material.

Terry doesn't want to get his hopes up, but the light eerily reminds him of sunlight leaking through.

"Bet there's like, bricks behind it," Fritz says, moving the curtains to reveal... "Oh, shit."

It isn't the outside, matching Terry's expectation and disappointment.

"A tunnel?" Terry asks, standing back near the door. 'Tunnel' is the only real descriptor for it: illuminated by the same lights as the rest of the office, it is as wide and tall as the 'window', and continues for quite a while before turning into the unknown. It's big enough to crawl through, but not enough to stand, even for Fritz.

"I'm gonna level with you, Terry," Fritz says, staring past the window glass, "there ain't no fucking way I'm going in there."

"We are of the same mind," Terry agrees.

He walks up beside Fritz to get a closer look--

Then flinches. The window glass shows his reflection.

He instinctively tries to look away, only to rigidly stop himself. If he's to adjust to his new form, he cannot avoid this forever. He's not looked at his reflection since his apartment, and he's certainly in a far better headspace to try again.

With willpower, he forces himself to gaze into the looking glass.

An anthropomorphic fox looks back. Its-- his eyes are bright blue, almost Fritz blue, irises shaped like an animal's. His fur is bright red, a red so bright he'd assign it (255, 0, 0) on the RGB scale. Snow white highlights adorn him inside his ears and under his chin, trailing under his shirt. A thin, long snout protrudes into an animalistic nose, and thin, almost invisible whiskers twitch with his instinct to recoil.

A worried blue anthropomorphic cat standing beside him asks, voice unusually soft, "Claustrophobic?"

Terry blinks, and the fox person stays the same. Terry speaks, and the fox person's mouth moves in time with his own, "No. I'm attempting to accustom myself to my reflection."



"Oh."

There's a silence at that, only Terry's heartbeat truly noticeable. The window is big enough to catch some of his tail; he flicks it, confirming that it moves in the reflection as well.

This is him. He has to repeat it, make it feel real. He can force the connection, the sense of self, if he tries hard enough. This is him. This is--

"You don't have to push yourself," Fritz says, putting a hand on Terry's arm, pushing gently.

Terry stands firm, forcing himself to adjust, as he must. "I do, though." His voice sounds distant, alien. Another thing taken from him.

Fritz's push becomes more firm, insistent. "Maybe. But not all at once, Terry. Come on. Let's step back."

The red fox person is shaking-- Terry realizes he's shaking. Why is his heartbeat so loud? He's being pushed?

With the firm hand on his arm, he steps to the side, ripping his gaze away.

Instantly, Fritz hugs him, and there is no handshake pretense to it.

"I'm sorry," Fritz says into Terry's chest.

Terry has no reply but to hug back, taking strength from it, from Fritz's certain presence.

Minutes pass.

When they walk out, Terry doesn't glance back. Can't.

It's an awkward, heavy silence that covers them over the next indeterminate length of time. Even their steps seem quieter, subdued. Terry knows Fritz is worried for him--even he can see it--but he doesn't know the proper words to make things good again.

Still, he will try.

"I apologize," Terry says, making Fritz jump. "I had no intention of



worrying you."

"You--" Fritz seems to choke on nothing, "Terry. You have to know that none of this is your fault, right?"

"I know," Terry agrees, feeling... unsortable feelings at the admission, "but it's my responsibility to adjust. There is no other acceptable alternative. Unless you've seen a better solution?"

Fritz's face contorts into an unreadable mess. "Terry..."

Terry feels cold.

Fritz's eyes close, and he looks away, straight forward to where they're walking. His voice is measured, "No. I don't know how to make it better."

He feels that slick dread, the itching that he's said something wrong, even if he cannot tell what. More of an instinct borne of a thousand failed conversations than anything innate.

Scrambling for the basics, Terry's mind presents the idea of reassurance. If Fritz gets worse from this, then Terry will be truly lost. "You did help, though. With your hug, and pulling me away. Thank you."

"I did?" Fritz asks, slowing down and giving Terry another unreadable look. Someone with more social acumen might be able to parse said look, but he has no such guardrails here.

"Yes," Terry nods, pushing himself to speak clearly, to communicate his intent properly. "Your presence in general has been the most important thing in all this. I know for fact I would not be so composed without it."

It's the truth, he knows, but will Fritz believe it?

Fritz stops completely, staring into Terry's eyes, pink orbs piercing the core. He opens his cat-like mouth once, twice, then seems to decide something. A small smile adorns him, layered and nuanced and utterly beyond Terry.

"Thank you," Fritz says, sincere, at least to Terry's interpretation. "I promise I'll be here, okay? You can always count on me."

The words are infused with such raw purpose, such meaning, that it staggers Terry.

How to respond? Where to even begin? There is no pattern to lean on,



no joke he can conjure.

Fritz chuckles, looking up, eyes shimmering. "Anyways. I bet you want to move on, huh?"

Terry blinks in surprise, shock at being so understood. "Uh..."

"Yep, called it," Fritz says, still sounding oddly gentle, despite the words. "How about this? I'll do a few songs, and we can keep it chill for as long as you want, 'kay? I think it'd be good to cool off some."

When did Terry's eyes start burning? He nods.

Fritz nods back, turning to continue their walking, setting the pace. Terry follows a half-step behind, mind whirling and entirely empty.

"Wake~, from your sleep~..."

Fritz keeps his word. Not that Terry expected him to break it. The next hour is filled with soft voices, quiet, and the occasional cover courtesy of Fritz.

They pass a potted plant--plastic and green, with fake dirt--and Terry takes a deep breath.

He feels... better. More centered. His gratitude for Fritz's understanding and restraint is tremendous, and he tries to convey it with his tone.

"Thank you, Fritz."

"Hm?" Fritz hums, glancing away from where he's poking at the fake dirt. He smiles, and it's a soft, kind smile. "Glad to help."

Terry nods and reiterates, just to be sure. "I'm glad. I very much appreciate it."

Fritz laughs, and it's his normal laugh, high and clear and without a shred of restraint. "Trust me, Terry, I'm just as happy to help. Now, I don't know about you, but I want to throw this plant against a wall and see if it survives."

The comment brings out Terry's own laugh, and another stone falls from his shoulders. "The wall or the plant?"



"Take a wild guess."

Terry laughs again, and things feel... not so bad.

Also, the plant fails before the wall.

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WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.22 - And a Hundred Percent Reason to Remember the Name~! (Fritz)

Fritz wakes up, doing his normal amazing stretch with complimentary purr with every *purr*chase--ha!

"Good morning," Terry says, already awake and reading that dictionary.

"Hey," Fritz yawns, stretching again and finally getting up. "Any plot twists?"

"In a dictionary?" Terry asks, brow raised. "In a shocking turn of events, the 'A' section ends and the 'B' section follows it."

Fritz holds the side of his face like the *Home Alone* kid and gasps. "No way!"

"It's true," Terry says, dead serious. "I don't think it's good storytelling, personally. It's too much tonal shift. But obviously people enjoy it, considering how popular this work is."

Dissolving into a joyful little pile of giggles, Fritz asks between breaths, "What's up with the dictionary anyways?"

"What do you mean?"



"Like," Fritz gestures to the thing; it's bright green, worn looking, and no bigger than Terry's paw, "who actually has a dictionary lying around? Didn't you just use Google?"

"I do," Terry says, closing the book without placing a bookmark. What a power move. "This dictionary is actually from my childhood. It somehow survived, probably because I could never justify not having a dictionary, just in case. Though I rationalized it as the power going out, not... this."

Fritz scoots forward until he's sitting right across from Terry. With his eyes as wide as he can make them, he says, "You have to tell the story. Tell me *everything*."

A chance to hear about Terry's childhood? Hell to the fuck yes. Fritz is eating good today.

"The... story of how I came to have a dictionary?" Terry asks, looking baffled (*cute*).

"Yes."

"It really isn't that interesting," Terry says, frowning.

"I wanna hear it anyways."

Terry sighs, closing his eyes and rubbing them. "Okay. I was very young, earlier than ten at least, probably much more than that. I wanted a dictionary for my birthday and so--"

"Wait, wait!" Fritz says, grinning. "You wanted a *dictionary* for your birthday?"

"Yes," Terry nods, eyes distant. "I believe my request was for a dictionary and a label printer."

"A-- a *label printer*?" Fritz asks, becoming one with the universe to stop himself from exploding. "Terry, please don't take this the wrong way, but you're such a fucking nerd."

A dictionary for his birthday... Fritz's smile has breached containment, code red, code red!

Terry's distant gaze snaps back to reality (oops there goes gravity), and he smiles fondly. "I cannot argue with that. To continue: I got this dictionary for that birthday, and it's been on my various bookshelves ever since. You can see, I wrote my name on the side of it."



Fritz takes the passed dictionary, looking at the pages on the top side. Sure enough, in thin pencil, there's a faint 'Terry' written on it.

"Aww~..."

He can't help it, imagining a tiny little Terry running around super proud of his bright green little Webster's, saying things like 'albumen', giving everyone heart palpitations. Ten outa ten cute, can't compute.

Terry rolls his eyes and takes the book back.

"So, that thing's like twenty years old?" Fritz asks, reviving from his early-onset cuteness death.

"Perhaps?" Terry thinks. "I'm not sure the exact year I got it..." He opens the dictionary, looking at the very first page. "Copyright... two thousand and three. So yes, this book is twenty-two years old. What a strange thought."

"Yeah," Fritz nods in sage wisdom. Time isn't real; everyone over twenty knows that. "Isn't it outdated?"

"It is," Terry says, "but it's still, probably, at least ninety-nine percent correct. I never got around to getting a new edition, partially out of nostalgia, partially because there was no real point."

Fritz shrugs. "Eh, yeah, fair enough. Wanna play a chess game before we blast off again?"

"Of course."

More walking, more talking, more hours spent with more beige office bullshit.

And Fritz is curious. Their morning talk about the dictionary activated something in his soul: what was Terry's life like? Besides the programming.

"So..." He breaks the comfy silence, "got any fun stories from your life? We can share."

Side-eyeing, Fritz can see the small frown on Terry's snout. "My life is a combination of uninteresting and not worth telling."



"It doesn't have to be anything private," Fritz says, giving Terry a small nudge with his elbow. Terry doesn't flinch at the contact--progress! "Just small fun things like the dictionary story."

"Oh, I see," Terry says. "If we're sharing, then it should be your turn, right? I started with my dictionary."

Damn, he's got a point there. "Hmmm..."

They walk for a while while Fritz searches his memories. A tiny corkboard with a single red tack in the corner passes them by.

"Oh! Yeah, I got one. I was at the state fair, really little, like four or something. And I got *lost*," Fritz gasps, making Terry smile.

"I assume you found your parents again and nothing interesting happened?"

"No, worse," Fritz says, all drama, "something interesting happened!"

"Shocking."

"Nah, I didn't get tased," Fritz shakes his head, "but I did become a part-time carnie before my parents found me."

Terry gives him a look. "Somehow, I'm unsurprised."

"Mean," Fritz sticks out his tongue, then continues, "but yeah, totally. Basically, I was walking around, scared out of my little mind because I couldn't find Mom and Dad. I wanted to ask for help, but I was right at that age where I knew not to talk to strangers, but didn't know that you should sometimes."

Terry nods, following along.

"So, I saw a magician doing a road show with a bunch of people watching," Fritz smiles fondly at the memory. It's vague, but the story is fresh in his mind from how often it's been told. "And I, being the smartest four year old to ever do it, figured: 'if I can't *talk* to strangers, I can get a bunch of attention without *talking* to them.'"

Suddenly, Terry starts laughing. He tries to stop himself a few times before giving up and throwing his head back to laugh full-bellied. It's the fullest, most unrestrained laugh that Fritz has ever seen from him. It's totally unguarded, and it's beautiful.



"You didn't," Terry says, smiling wide.

"I did," Fritz grins back. "So, for a magical ten minutes, everyone around watched in awe at the one and only D-- *Fritz Show!*" Fritz makes jazz paws with one paw, because something something suitcase joke.

Terry laughs again, shaking his head in wonder. "You would do that."

"Yeah, nothing's really changed, huh?" Fritz is almost skipping. "There was only one act in the *Fritz Show*: the *Where's my Parents* dance, featuring vocals by, well, me."

Shaking with mirth, Terry puts his head in both paws.

"The best part? I actually got like ten bucks in tips. I had *so much* 'thank fuck our kid is just an idiot' cotton candy."

They have to stop for a bit to let Terry recover.

"I started programming at age six," Terry says, like that's a totally normal thing to say.

"Were you like, one of those prodigy kids? Did you hit college at age ten?" Fritz asks, incredulous.

"No, I never went to college, and I'm certainly no prodigy. At best, I was able to support myself with programming since age fourteen, where I filed for, and received, emancipation."

Fritz's jaw moves, and no words come out.

Terry sees this and gives a small, sad smile. "That's a story for a different time, however. As I was saying, my first attempt at programming was at age six. I was pressing every button on the keyboard to see what it did, and found that F12 on a web browser opened up an HTML editor. Though fiddling with the cached HTML pages hardly counts as 'programming'."

Shaking himself, Fritz puts his thoughts back together. "Right. I could have told you that."

"Really? You worked with website markup?" Terry asks, sounding excited.



"Ah, no. That was a joke. I have no idea what you're talking about."
Whoops.

"Oh, yes, sorry. I missed the tone," Terry says, turning back to look where he's going. "Like I said, it's hardly programming, but it put in my mind the idea that I could cause things to happen with a computer by typing in the right things. I only had small chunks of time with my father's computer at that age, and all of it was spent narrowing down how to make computers do things."

Fritz nods, "Yeah. I remember my first computer. Those were the days, the wild west of the internet..."

"Indeed," Terry smiles. "But at the time, I didn't even know the word 'programming', or any of the associated words like 'software' or 'text editor' or 'compiler'. So when I say I had to narrow down what programming was, I mean I had to start from total scratch."

"But you figured it out," Fritz says, shaking his head, amazed.

Six. Age six. Terry's on another level.

Terry nods. "Yes. Eventually, I stumbled onto a video tutorial for setting up a Java development environment." Terry grimaces. "Java is a truly awful language, but at the time I didn't know any better. Luckily, I was too inexperienced to fall into the trap of object oriented slop, and by the time I understood I was beyond it."

"Yeah, totally. Fuck coffee," Fritz says, smirking, trying to wrap his mind around it. What the hell had *Fritz* been doing at six? Throwing up because he had to eat a cauliflower?

Rolling his eyes, Terry goes on. "But with finding Java, I had a keyword to search for more advice and tutorials online, and those things revealed more to me, allowing me to refine my understanding in a feedback loop. It took a long time before I could even pretend to be decent, but I figured it out. And that's how I learned to program."

"Huh," Fritz says, still taking it all in. "You're crazy. Like, in a good way."

"Thank you?"

"Yeah, my mom taught me," Fritz says with pride. Sue him, he loves



being complimented. "She always said, 'One day you'll have to sing your own lullabies'. We used to sing everything together..."

"She taught you well, then," Terry says. If there's one thing Terry's straightforwardness is great for, it's honest compliments. +1 warm and fuzzy feeling. "She sounds like a nice mother."

"She was," Fritz says, wiping his eyes and manually shifting his gears. "Anyways-- wha... what the *fuck*? no *way*!"

"What?" Terry asks, looking where Fritz is already running.

"Look!" Fritz dashes into a cubicle, suitcase monster left on the ground where it fucking belongs. He grabs his prize and dashes back out, showing Terry, "It's a stapler!"

Terry stares dumbfounded down at the beige--of course it's goddamn beige--stapler. "How did you notice that? It's practically camouflaged."

"No idea," Fritz says, grinning. "Maybe we missed a lot and this is just the one we found?"

Terry blinks, then smiles. "That's a very good point. Well spotted," He holds out his paw, "may I?"

Fritz slam dunks the heavy thing down, making Terry stumble. He recovers quickly, though, and barely even eye-rolls.

"Let's see..." Terry opens the stapler, reminding Fritz of a kindergarten teacher for some reason. How many times has someone taller than him opened a stapler in front of him? Weird. "It's empty."

"Awwww, come on!" Fritz throws his paws in the air, turning around and kicking the air.

"Are there any staples in the cubicle you found this in?"

Fritz checks, even looks under the keyboard and the beige (always beige) computer. Nothing.

"What are we gonna do with it?" Fritz asks.

"I have some room in my pack to hold it, since the food's been running out," Terry says. And what a life Fritz lives, where that's not a scary thing to hear. It'll be a little more boring without food, but not *deadly*. "But if we find something more useful, it'll probably be the first thing to go. Unless

we find staples, that is."

"Sweet," Fritz nods. "I'll keep an eye out."

Fritz keeps an eye out--by holding his paw above his brows, leaning forward, and pretending to be Steve Erwin talking about 'the wild stapler in its natural habitat'. Terry's chuckles are better than any food.

"Check... mate?" Fritz asks.

"No, just check," Terry says, moving a knight to block his rook.

"Damn. Didn't think of that."

Yes, it's been yet another day of walking, talking, shooting the shit, ignoring the existential dread, Fritz said he's *ignoring it*, and very gently trying to poke Terry into being more affectionate. The usual Backrooms furry experience, honestly. Couldn't they think of something less obvious?

Shoutouts to chess for being fun, though. Fritz would've never played it if they weren't trapped without computers, but it's pretty great now that he's gotten the rhythm of the game.

And, maybe, he feels a little smug about being able to keep up with Terry at it. Who wouldn't, though? Guy was programming at *six*.

The score's sixteen Terry, sixteen Fritz--

"Checkmate."

Make that seventeen Terry.

"GG well played," Fritz says, leaning back and staring at the ceiling.

"Thank you. You played well, as well."

Fritz snorts, still looking up. "Thanks. Hey, you think we could take one of those lights down?"

"Could? When there's a will there's a way. Should? Absolutely not."

"I guess..." Fritz yawns. "I'm pooped. Let's set up for the night?"



"Sure. I'm not feeling very tired yet, so I'll probably wake up after you."

"Yeah, yeah," Fritz waves him off, pulling out his clothes and laying them out in his favorite nest style. A nesting cat. What a time to be alive.


He snuggles up into his clothes pile, stretching one last time as his eyelids feel heavier and heavier. "G'night~."

"Sleep well, Fritz. Thank you for everything."

"Mmm..." Is all Fritz can get out before the sandman takes his due.

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  #79



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.23 - long (Terry)

Terry sits in silence, reading his pocket dictionary. He's working his way through the 'C' section. Reading through a dictionary is surprisingly interesting; he almost wishes he'd set aside the time to do it before the white light. Though, of course, before all this he had access to far more fun things. Truly, he was spoiled.

Across from him, in the cubicle, Fritz falls into a deeper sleep. He's seen Fritz be serious, calm, excited, and so on, but there's still a surreal feeling in seeing him so... still. Some part of him almost expects Fritz to talk in his sleep, or dance a jig, or some other manner of nocturnal eccentricity.

He's had the thought many times, but his luck is otherworldly. In all his life, he's never met someone quite like Fritz: a near-perfect storm of kindness, humor, intelligence, and outgoingness. To find someone like that, here, in this situation? It's lucky enough to be suspicious, making Terry weary that it was planned somehow--not by Fritz, of course, but by whatever team or thing did all this.

Designed or not, though, Terry is glad for it...



And now he's read the 'circumstantial evidence' entry half a dozen times. With a sigh, he closes the book, admitting that he's too distracted to do the task justice. He wants to concentrate on reading the book, since it's so information-dense. The dictionary is, in fact, not a light read.

Of course, now unoccupied with the book, he's suddenly confronted with Fritz's sleeping form once more. The blue anthropomorphic cat is lying face down, back facing the ceiling, clothing nest more of a clothing mess--the rhyme makes him smile, imagining Fritz giggling at it.

Terry considers himself a man of focus and will. Not comic book levels, of course, he's long come to terms with his inability to be Batman, but one does not lightly program the things he does solo. It takes a certain kind of executive function--he dares even call it a touch of madness--to build a useful debugger for three disparate operating systems, working for two different CPU architectures. It's enough to make a seasoned veteran's blood run cold.

Which makes it all the more embarrassing when Terry's eyes keep sliding towards Fritz's generous rear. To be unusually fair, Terry's been long 'pent up' as Fritz so eloquently put it during the cinnamon incident. But that's no excuse, especially with Fritz asleep, especially with his friend.

Deciding that enough is enough, he closes his eyes. They cannot mutiny if they cannot catch the light reflecting off Fritz's--

But, of course, Terry's visual imagination summons the exact image into his mind anyway. He almost wants to laugh at the absurdity, but is too busy swatting the thoughts away. Sadly, his efforts aren't enough, and he feels a now-familiar stirring in his groin.

Fine. Terry is just going to lie down and force himself to sleep. Ignoring the hot, pulsating feeling that he's definitely not thinking about, and ignoring the clearly enhanced sensitivity that he's not concerned about, he prepares his own nest and lies down.

He faces away from Fritz, for obvious reasons.

...It isn't working. His mind is too wired to sleep, his thoughts too busy, his focus fried by the burning hot rod pressing against his thigh.

It's amazing, in a way, how quickly his mind will find justifications: He



doesn't feel emotionally ready? It'll probably help him adjust. Fritz? He's asleep, and wouldn't overly judge either way. The smell? Terry can admit he's a little curious what his will smell like. His thinking is compromised? What a shame.

He isn't watching his clock, but his internal clock suggests five minutes. Five minutes for him to crack.

With a thrill of dread and exhilaration--to this mild surprise--he gets up. He carefully digs in his backpack for a paper and pen, writing a short note:

I'm nearby. Call out if you can't find me. -Terry

Which he places on his 'pillow'.

Pointedly not looking at Fritz, he exits the cubicle. He leaves his flip-flops behind to minimize noise.

Heart pounding, he walks for a while, alone. How far will be enough? Five minutes of walking? He'll do five minutes.

Trying to get his thoughts in order is a fool's errand.

Terry sits on the desk in an out-of-the-way cubicle, paralyzed in indecision--he tried the chair, but his tail kept bunching up on the back.

Is he truly going to do this? In some way, it feels like if he does, there will be no going back. Back to what, he cannot well define, especially not in his current mindstate, but it feels irreversible.

But he's already made the decision earlier, and turning back now would, somehow, feel worse. Either that, or it's his libido rationalizing things again.

Without any true conscious thought, his hand finds itself lightly moving towards the bulge in his pants. He hisses at the sensation, the strange over-sensitivity of his new body making him simultaneously flinch and push forward.

He wants this. He realizes it with a mental lightning strike. Against his better judgment, he actually wants this.

With a deep breath, he slowly lowers the waistband of his sweatpants.



For the second time since his transformation, his privates are exposed to open air.

For minutes, maybe longer, maybe less, he sits and stares at his erection. A strange disconnect forms in his mind, watching it twitch in time with the sensations reaching his brain. A strange unreality. Something deeper than mere disbelief or rejection.

It's a humanoid penis, with accompanying testicles. He feels glad for that, in a distant way. He would be far less... composed, if it were canine, like a true fox's. If he can even call himself composed at the moment.

But that's where the similarities end. Most obvious is the color: it's black, or shades of black, a similar black as his nose. His testicles are covered in bright white fur, the white highlights stretching from his chin to his stomach, and ending there. It's a significant, glaring contrast, seeming to highlight his shaft, framing it.

And, beyond all defiance of logic, it's larger. Significantly larger. Before this madness, he was exactly five-point-seven inches--something he measured once after puberty and never bothered with again. Why would he care, beyond knowing that he falls within a single standard deviation of the norm?

Now, with his eyeball estimation, he would say he's well over nine inches. Perhaps even more.

Of course, he's felt himself erect after his transformation. It's not exactly an uncommon occurrence for a healthy man his age, and that didn't change because of his new body. He knew it was larger before seeing it so clearly now.

No, his shock comes from a twisting vortex of contrasting emotions. There is, of course, the inevitable pride. There are very few men out there who would be fully dismayed at such a change, and Terry is not among their number. But simultaneously, this is very obviously not his original genitalia, and that's disconcerting, to undersell it.

Alas, he knows he's stalling. Having acknowledged such, he cannot abide by it any longer.

Things, naturally, escalate quickly from there. A tentative, cringing touch reveals a lance of fiery pleasure far beyond the norm. The feeling



encourages more bold action, which produces greater pleasure, producing less restraint, and so on.

It is, without a doubt, the most pleasurable thing Terry has ever felt. It is so astounding, so all-complete, that he can't begin mustering affront at yet another unasked-for bodily change.

And the release. The release is utterly beyond. To put words to it is to assume a natural, mutual understanding for communication. If one has not felt it, one cannot understand. Words flatly fail to convey, even when trying to convey how useless they are for conveying.

Terry tries to keep from shouting his orgasm, knowing the noise would awaken Fritz. So, instead, in the long minutes the pleasure crushes him, he growls. An honest, canine growl. It would concern him more, but it's all he can do to keep his mind from unraveling.

It is only after he can feel again, see again, think again, that he notices the veritable deluge left in his wake. It is astounding, and, he thinks somewhat hysterically, clearly violates conservation of mass.

With his sense of smell coming back online, he's assaulted with the answer to his 'scent' question. He can barely muster surprise.

Butter.

Terry's journey back to the cubicle is a shaking, ponderous, introspective thing. It is as if his limbs have become old springs, weary with the weight of his body and his sudden exhaustion. Of course, the only way to physically tire him has to be sexual in nature. Of course.

The primary question is: Does he regret it?

No. He doesn't. It was--is--concerning, overwhelming, disturbing, and strange, but he cannot find regret. After all, everything about his transformation is overwhelming, except this time he's been allowed unapologetic, tremendous pleasure from it. In a sick way, he's glad for it, glad that it isn't all bad.

His thoughts churn in sluggish circles. Will this help him adjust? Will he do it again? What will Fritz think? What's been lost, that he feels can never be recovered?

Their cubicle welcomes him like a warm home. Fritz's spicy scent



tickles his nose, the last thing he notices before crashing like a bad allocator.

Terry wakes up and immediately notices the difference.

He has always associated the feeling of orgasm with that of relief. It is, he thinks, the closest sensation, a near synonym in his mind: relief of the body, emotional relief, mental relief, et cetera.

And relief, he's always felt, always comes from a loosening of tension-- it's almost exactly the definition.

So, when Terry says that he feels relieved upon awakening, it means in the way one might feel relieved after a great burden is lifted.

"Gooood morning, sleepyhead," Fritz says. Terry turns, bearing witness to a very, very intent cat person. "Sleep well?"

Terry sits up, if only to buy himself time to think. There's simply no way Fritz hasn't picked up on the butter scent clinging to him, and there's no way he hasn't put together where it's from. There are only so many possibilities.

Fritz knows. Clearly.

"Yes, I did," Terry says honestly. It's the best sleep he's had since the day everything changed. "How about you?"

"Oh, you know, the usual," Fritz says, grinning from across the cubicle. "So... Butter, huh?"

Sighing, Terry closes his eyes to spare himself from... all that.

Though, what is the issue, really? They are both adults, and Fritz clearly isn't disgusted by any of this. Why bother with a cultural taboo on sexual matters when, clearly, it isn't relevant?

"Indeed," he says, keeping his face placid. "It's baffling, to be honest. What biological function could that possibly serve?"

Fritz's expression becomes one of naked surprise, which quickly refines itself into... something more intent? Perhaps. Terry's ability to read facial expressions has limits, even with someone he's come to know as well as Fritz.



"Damn. Thought I'd get you all embarrassed. But I like this better, so whatever," Fritz says, leaning back, eyes still locked on Terry. "It was crazy, right? Felt like my brains were gonna leak out my ears."

Terry shakes his head. Of course Fritz would switch gears so quickly. And of course he'd try to embarrass Terry. "It was rather... intense."

"Ha! 'Intense,' he says," Fritz laughs.

"It's the truth," Terry says, knowingly underestimating.

"Uh-huh," Fritz says, rolling his eyes, then, thankfully, dropping the subject. "Anyways. Wanna play some chess?"

For all Terry's fine with ignoring the taboo, there's still a strange feeling in his gut when talking about something so intimate with Fritz. Probably cultural baggage, if he were to guess. But what is culture when there are only the two of them? That'll change when (if) they find others, he supposes, but for now, they decide the mutual rules and expectations.

Regardless, that conversation went basically exactly how he expected it to. A good sign, and another small weight off his back. If it went horribly wrong, somehow, he'd probably swear off trying something similar again.

He gets out the chess set, a small, relaxed smile on his face.

They're exchanging chess moves when Terry has a thought.

"Oh, actually, I had a question."

"Yeeeeesssss~?" Fritz asks, starting to grin for some reason.

Raising a brow, Terry explains, "Your scent is a vague spicy smell. But I'm nose blind to my own. Can you describe it?"

"Besides the butter?" Fritz asks, winking. Actually winking.

"Yes?" Terry says, confused. It must just be Fritz being Fritz.

"It's a... soft smell. Warm, I guess," Fritz says, eyes sparking, nose twitching. "Yeah, soft and warm. I know soft doesn't really have a smell, but fuck the rules."



"No, I understand," Terry nods. "Yours isn't like I'm smelling a spicy food, or capsaicin, but the concept of spiciness, almost."

"Wait, that's how you say that word?"

"Spiciness?"

"No. Cap-say-whatever."

"Yes. How I said it, that is. The word does not have 'whatever' in it."

Fritz snorts, rolling his eyes, turning to focus on their game.

Terry, feeling some measure of contentment, focuses as well.

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  #82



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.24 - You Taste Just Like Sundays~! (Fritz)

Butter.

Pffft--!

But, seriously. Fritz is happy for Terry. The poor guy must have been on ascension levels of pent up, especially with how relaxed he looks this morning.

And the big surprise for the day: *Apparently* Terry doesn't even bother being embarrassed by that kind of thing. No fucks left to give, if he even had any to begin with. What a mad lad.

Honestly? Fritz is down for it. The whole 'sex shame' cultural thing has always felt weird to him, even if his silly emotions played along with it most of the time. But if Terry's not going to play those games, Fritz isn't



either. Who's gonna fucking stop them? Some crazy ass keyboard warrior entity clutching its liminal pearls?

It's not open season, though. Asking questions like 'how long's your dick' or something would *probably* be too far too soon. Though the look on Terry's face if he did... No. He can't. Yet. Bad Fritz.

Whatever. The point is that Fritz can use this. He's already cranking up the flirting. Not that Terry notices. The fox is so dense scientists everywhere are convinced his skull's a black hole. They've even given it a fancy science name: Absolute Terry-tory.

Honestly, if it weren't for Terry's non-consensual transformation disaster, Fritz would've confessed by now. Even with it, he's still one slip away from spilling his guts. But... maybe normalizing sexual talk will help? Fritz isn't a therapist, shocker, but he doubts it'll go horribly *wrong*. Hopefully.

So he's going to keep ramping things up until Terry tells him to fuck off, or is bending Fritz over one of the desks. Give the man room to choose and time to adjust--that's the motto. It's hard, but it's the right choice.

But the hope's real. Terry wouldn't be this trusting if he weren't... well, trusting of Fritz. The Terry he first met wouldn't have talked about jacking off in the Backrooms. It makes Fritz all warm and fuzzy inside to know he's getting through to him--when he doesn't want to giggle because it's about them beating their meat into some beige ass cubicle corners.

The Plan™ feels more possible every day.

Muahahahahah--!

"Checkmate."

Damn it!

They're nearly ready to go walking again, and Terry's finishing up in his exposition diary.

"Hey, Terry," Fritz says. "How many days has it been? You've been tracking it, right?"

Terry blinks, looking up for a second, before flipping to a different page in his notebook. "...From when the white light occurred, or when we met?"



"When we met," Fritz says instantly. Does he even have to ask?

"It's only about a day's difference regardless..." Terry mutters, counting under his breath, before speaking up, "It's been thirteen days. This will be day fourteen, two weeks."

"Holy shit..." Fritz says, feeling strange. It's not exactly horror, or surprise, but... Two weeks. *Two weeks.*

"I agree with the sentiment. If I'd not been tracking it, I wouldn't have believed it. More than half of that time has been spent in this office area-- it seems rather larger than usual, and we did that dust test as well."

"Yeah, I'm getting real sick of beige, not gonna lie," Fritz says, shaking the oddness out of himself. Two weeks. Two. "I sure fuckin' hope this office ends somewhere."

Terry nods, flipping back to the page he's working on. "It could very well be endless. What we care about is an exit to a different area. Which--" Terry freezes, eyes widening. "Which could very well not exist. We haven't seen any area thresholds except at the parking lot, right? What if that's the only place where areas change, like a sort of hub?"

Fritz puts his head in his paws and groans. "Noooooo... Please don't say shit like that. It *has* to go somewhere else. I don't wanna backtrack."

"Neither do I. But we could do it, so long as my intersection marks are preserved."

"Ugh... Let's just keep going forward. Please."

"Of course. I'm not convinced of the hub theory regardless."

"Oh thank fuck."

Terry finishes up his page of exposition, and they take off into the wild beige yonder.

"So..." Fritz says, grin positively shit-eating, "Did we pass it yet?"

"Pass what?" Terry asks, oblivious and hot. A dangerous combo.

"The *evidence*," Fritz says, pitching his voice lower, going for 'husky' but coming out more 'head cold'. He'll have to work on that.



Points to Terry, he doesn't stumble. He *does* blink, twice, then sigh. "Yes. We passed it."

"I bet some creepy ass Backrooms entity is going to make one creepy ass report to its creepy ass boss," Fritz jokes. "But sir, it smelled like butter, I swear!" He makes a funny voice.

Terry tries, but a snort escapes anyway. More of a fake cough, but it counts!

Fritz puts on a different, more gruff, but still very silly voice, "Then why didn't you bring it here?! It's evidence!" He goes back to the first voice, "You don't understand, sir!"

Face in palm where it belongs, Terry's already chuckling. The iron's hot, time for the killing blow.

"I understand that I have to do *everything* around here! Now where was it?!"

Terry starts laughing, not even trying to hold it back. Fritz laughs right along with him.

"Alright... how about..." Fritz looks around for inspiration, finally looking up, a certain kind of ceiling above them, "popcorn."

"I could make a corny joke, but it wouldn't pop," Terry says instantly.

"There's a kernel of truth in that," Fritz shoots back just as fast.

"Hm," Terry thinks, "Ah. I have this one in the bag."

"Nice," Fritz says, frowning in concentration. "Uh... Oh! If you throw popcorn, someone could get *snacked* in the face!"

The next one takes Terry like a whole minute. Not that they have any time limits for this game. They tried, but it's more fun this way.

"I love popcorn, but I cannot stand snapcorn, let alone cracklecorn," Terry finally says.

"Pfft--!" Fritz snorts when he gets it. He had time to think of his own, so he says, "Alright: If I wanna make popcorn, you better get out of my



microwayve."

"I see. Luckily, I prepared another: I faced litigation from a popcorn person for a-salting them."

"Fuck, that's a good one." Fritz has to think for a couple minutes to get it, but he throws something together, "I always make thirty-four popcorns any time I eat them. It's because I'm addicted to corn-ography."

"Clever," Terry compliments. "Unfortunately, the only remaining puns I have all involve butter in some form. It would be... in poor taste."

Fritz blanches, then *breaks the fuck down* laughing. They have to stop for a few minutes, and every time he thinks about it too hard, the laughter starts again. Literally rolling on the floor.

Butter.

Pffft--!

Thus, the pun war game is cemented as one of their favorites.

The day flies by.

They talk. Little silly meaningless stories, about games they could copy or make, ideas, jokes, nothing at all. There's the silent moments too, where they just walk and enjoy each other's presence.

Fritz sings. Sometimes it's only a few verses, or sometimes entire songs. He slowly learns Terry's preferences, what kind of songs make him smile that soft, grateful smile.

Walking, walking, walking. And the walking means exploring. They find plastic potted plants, corkboards, cubicles with computer screens facing the wrong way, and a dozen other tiny things. One time, there's a dark hole in the ceiling where there should be a light, and they walk and talk about that for a bit.

It's a good day. Fritz has had a bunch of good days since this crazy shit's started, but somehow this one feels... actually good, no asterisk. Is he getting Stockholm syndrome'd? Just getting used to things? Does it matter?

They choose a cubicle and set up for the night. A few more games of



chess for the chess god, checkmates for the checkmate throne. Terry's at twenty-two, Fritz twenty-one.

And when Fritz falls asleep, it's with a smile on his face.

It happens the next day, after a little bit of walking to warm up for, believe it or not, yet more walking.

The door in front of them says 'SUPPLIES'. No useless blurry window though, so that's nice.

"Alright," Fritz says, "I bet the next chess game's first move that the door's *not* locked."

"Most of the doors here weren't locked," Terry says. "But only this door and the manager's door have actual typography... Very well, I'll take the bet."

"Sucker," Fritz grins, reaching out to turn the handle. It... turns! "Ha! First move here we... go... whoah..."

Fritz throws the door open, walking in with wide eyes. His [redacted] suitcase's wheels go from silent to a low *whrrrr* as he crosses from carpet to hard tile. His feet (paws?) feel the same transition, the cool tile sapping some warmth out of the pads.

"Huh," Terry says, walking in behind him. "This disproves some theories I had."

"Nah, really?"

It's a... convenience store. There's no real way to put it. The ceiling's way lower than the office place, there's cramped aisles made of those short shelves, there's colorful things *on* those shelves, fridges in the back with yet more shit, and... is that a cash register?

With a surreal feeling, Fritz turns to take it all in. It's like he's walked into a freaking gas station. Even the lighting is exactly right. The only thing missing is some soulless pop music played over shit-tier speakers--and the people, he guesses.

Terry walks up to one of the shelves, eyes with that hyper focused 'I'm here to chew bubble gum and get answers' look. He grabs a chip bag and is poking at it when Fritz walks up beside him.



"Wha-- Seriously? It's just 'COOKED CHIPS'?" Fritz asks, looking at the 'brands'. They're all things like 'TRIANGLE SNACK' and 'HEALTHY'. "This place really can't do real life stuff, huh?"

Terry grabs another bag, a different brand called 'CHEESE CRUNCHY', and frowns. He puts it back and runs his finger over the bags on the shelf. "They're all empty."

Faster than greased lightning, Fritz gets his own bag--'BALL CHIP'--and groans when he feels it. "Come on! That's such a scam--even more than normal chips! I wanted to pig out!"

"I wonder--"

Fritz crushes the chip bag, making it *POP*. Gremlin mode: activated.

"Woah!" Terry yelps, jumping. He recovers fast, though, shaking his head. "Oh, yes. I suppose I should have expected that. As I was saying: I wonder if all the brands are like this."

"First guy to find real food wins," Fritz says, dashing off.

Behind him, he hears, "That excludes the food we have packed, right? And he's gone. Okay."

'BAR OF CHOCOLATE' is actually a thin block of wood. 'JERKY: BEEF' is rubber--he checked. 'BROWN SODA,' along with making Fritz giggle like an idiot, is just water in a brown, see-through bottle. No, he doesn't drink it, damn it Terry.

"GIMME ALL YOUR MONEY!" Fritz shouts at the empty air behind the cash register. He points a finger gun, one of his shirts tied around his face like a discount bandanna.

Terry, deadpan, walks behind the counter, standing like he's a true blue (red) joyless service worker. He says, dry, "Would you also like to sign up for our rewards card, sir?"

Fritz snorts, breaking character. "Damn it Terry. We could've been great bandits. Where were you all my life?"

"Programming. And it's rather easy to commit crimes when there isn't any law enforcement, or people who care," Terry says. He opens the



register, and his eyes widen, "Look here. There's money."

He places some bills and coins on the counter for Fritz to see. "Ooooo," Fritz says, amazed, "these are worthless~!"

"Indeed, but look closer," Terry says, pointing at a...

"Wait, that's not a dollar." It *looks* close to a dollar, green and with some wrinkly old man's face--not a furry weirdly--in the center, but everything's... off. The face isn't George Washington, but some random old guy. The design is all weird, with the font and numbers and everything strange.

"It's stranger the more you look," Terry says. "For example, I cannot find the name of the country on this anywhere."

"Wait, really? Do dollars have the USA on it?" He should *know* that. Why can't he remember a dollar exactly? Never paid attention, he guesses. Ugh.

Terry nods. "I'm almost sure of it. I wish I had cash to compare. I brought my wallet, but I always used cards."

"I left my wallet on the airplane," Fritz says. "Don't ask."

They look through the money, joking and pointing out the little differences. The quarters are a little too large, the pennies are too thin and have an eagle on the back, the twenties have a *dog* as the face, super cute by the way.

And nothing whatsoever mentions the United States.

"Well," Terry says, when they've looked through it all. "It may have no monetary value, but it still has value to us."

"What? Gonna start paying me for my songs?" Fritz asked, smirking.

"No. I mean these coins. We can use them for coin flips in games."

Fritz cheers and immediately starts playing 'heads or tails'.

There's a door in the convenience store. Fritz finds it while sniffing around for anything, turning a corner to find it hidden in a little nook.



Behind the door is... Another convenience store.

"Oh fuck. Okay. Hey, Terry! I found another one! No, I mean another store. Let's go check it out!"

Looks like they're in the convenience rooms--or whatever it's called.

It's new, and more importantly *not* eighty percent beige. Like Reply

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#90



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.25 - volatile (Terry)

Before they commit fully to exploring the new store area--that they will explore it is not in question--Terry takes a short detour back to the office area. There, he pilfers a hard drive, storing it securely in his backpack.

A hard drive is small enough to justify packing, and if he can get it to work, its contents may be of interest. In the worst case scenario, he can discard the drive if it becomes a burden.

Similar logic was used at his apartment, packing the drives he had there: from his PC, laptop, and an external storage. Though, of course, those are SSDs, not disk drives. Not that either has any more or less chance of being useful, considering everything.

Ready to go, Fritz and Terry begin to plunder new stimuli, a new area catching their refreshed attention as easily as flies in honey.

Terry's isn't particularly surprised that area transitions don't have to appear on glass doors.

He also isn't very surprised that area transitions can appear outside the parking lot tower. He was rather sure of that already, but it's good to verify, especially when it's something as unprecedented as this labyrinth.



More interesting is the shop area's layout. So far, the areas have nearly all been open spaces: the apartment hallways being long, the wide parking lots, Fritz's reports of the endless airport terminal--

Wait. "Fritz."

"Hmmm? Yes?" Fritz asks, looking away from his artistic endeavors with the frosting on a fridge's glass door.

"Did you see the curvature of the Earth in the airport terminal? It's probably the furthest either of us have seen in one direction so far."

Fritz tilts his head, ears twitching, "I... don't know?"

"When walking, if it were curving, it would have seemed like you saw the tops of things in the distance before the bottoms. If it weren't, then the vanishing point would have shrunk into a pinprick in the far distance."

Frowning, tilting his head the other way and making his ears bounce, Fritz ponders. "I wasn't really paying attention... I think it was the pinprick? Sorry."

"It's fine," Terry reassures. "We'll hopefully get another chance to verify if we're on a sphere later."

"I'll keep an eye out," Fritz says, smirking. He turns back to his drawings--penises, of course. What else would Fritz Bing draw in an ostensibly public place, in a spot he ostensibly shouldn't, but very much can anyways?

To continue the thought on layouts: The stores are arrayed in a seemingly normal way for convenience stores, with proportions normal enough not to stand out. But they are like links in a chain, one leading to another, to another. So far, they've not found any branching paths, and they've walked well over a dozen stores in the last hour.

It reminds him of the parking lot tower in a way, except horizontal instead of vertical.

More interesting are the brands. Again, Terry has to readjust his expectations about the design detail the labyrinth allows. It's one thing to have no brand marks--such as the computer parts he investigated--but another thing entirely to make pastiches of existing popular products.



Doubly so for making them in such large variety.

What kind of mind could do that at such a scale? There has to be intent, intelligence behind the process that made this place; the actual creativity required for this would be proof enough, if he weren't already convinced.

The lack of food is strange as well. Every brand they look at is subverted in some way. At most, they'll be able to get water--the only liquid in any of the drinks--but food is a nonstarter. Why have they only found food in their starting locations? Another mystery.

Again, Terry must reluctantly admit a strong positive for their transformations: the ability to forego sustenance. Their food supplies are running low, even if they're only eating every few days for pleasure. Soon, they might not have food at all, a surprisingly concerning thought, despite the lack of danger.

There's more than food. For example, one of the shelves in one of the stores had generic BIC-style lighters, branded 'WIK'. Surprisingly, the lighters actually work, so they stock up on them, adding to Terry's lighter from his apartment.

"Oh, right, you had a lighter already," Fritz says. "You smoke or something?"

"No, of course not," Terry says, feeling a little offended. "It's for starting my gas stove, since the igniter stopped working."

"Huh. Kinda ghetto, but okay."

In fact, there are several lucky breaks when it comes to resupplying: Functional flashlights, batteries, paper towels, aluminum foil, plastic wrap, more writing utensils, paper, and other minor things that might be found in similar-seeming stores.

They both stock up with a careful eye towards entertainment: craft supplies for creating games, regularly shaped small objects, and the like.

Terry also keeps an eye on things that might help in making a kinetic computer--he hasn't forgotten about his long term goal.

They walk into a new store, and it's immediately obvious that it's modeled after a pharmacy.



"No, Fritz."

"What? I didn't even say anything," Fritz says, eyeing him.

"You aren't going to take random pills," Terry says, keeping his face straight. "Not only are they untested, but your body might react to them differently. I would hesitate to use an ibuprofen outside of an emergency, let alone..." He glances at a shelf, "'NOT PAIN PILL.'"

Fritz stares at him, mouth agape, blinking rapidly. "Terry. Are you for real right now?"

"I am quite real, despite any evidence you may find to the contrary," Terry doesn't twitch a muscle in his face.

"What-- seriously?! You think I'm gonna pop random ass Backrooms brand pills?" Fritz asks, incredulity clear as glass. "What the actual fuck do you think goes on in my head?"

"My best guess? Looping carnival music." Terry glances at a nearby shelf while Fritz sputters. "And you're not allowed to drink any NyQuil either-- though it's called 'VERY SLEEP' here. I would not trust 'VERY SLEEP' with my life, Fritz, so please control yourself. In fact, we should skip this room entirely."

"You-- You're fucking with me," Fritz says, eyes widening. He lets go of his suitcase handle, turns around, and throws his arms in the air, "Awww, damn it! I fell for it!"

"The fact you thought I had real cause to be concerned is concerning enough," Terry says, not bothering to keep his smile contained. "Though, yes. I was jesting. Mostly."

"Aaahhhh!"

It turns out to be a moot point, because the pills are literally carved from wood, and any liquid is probably water--though neither of them are brave enough to taste it.

"Actually, if every liquid is replaced with water here, how did the lighters work? Or the batteries for that matter?" Terry asks.

"Guess not everything's water," Fritz shrugs.



"I suppose."

"Oh," Terry realizes, "I see the oddity, now."

"Really? Is it the everything, or everything else?" Fritz asks from the aisle over. They can't walk side-by-side through an aisle, as they're too narrow, so they've begun taking separate routes through the stores. It allows for a more thorough investigation while keeping the same speed of progress--parallelism at work.

"There aren't any security cameras. Or curved corner mirrors, for that matter."

"Shit, we better not be on camera," Fritz says, appearing at the end of Terry's aisle and waving. "Can you imagine someone watching us like it's some shitty web novel? Ugh..."

"The horror," Terry says, rolling his eyes. Fritz's imagination is an enigma.

Something impacts the back of Terry's head, making him spin around. It's Fritz, grinning from across the aisle, hands crumpling a box of foodstuff pastiche.

Terry dodges the next throw.

"What are you doing?"

"Snowball fight!"

"A snow-- Oh, I see," Terry says, glancing down at the 'snowball'. In his moment of distraction, another crumpled box hits him in the forehead. He picks it up off the floor, then looks back at Fritz.

"What? Gonna give up before we start?" Fritz sneers, already crumpling two boxes at once, one in each hand.

Terry blinks at the taunting tone and expression, head tilting in confusion. "Pardon me? Where is this coming from?"

Fritz sighs, slumping a bit. "Okay, fine. Timeout. Wanna have an awesome snowball fight war? Like, why not, right?"



"What are the rules?" Terry asks. He refuses to agree to something like that in ignorance.

"Uh..." Fritz seems to flounder a bit. Of course he didn't make a ruleset. "Don't be an asshole? It's just for fun. And stop if we want to... and you have to play the part...?"

Terry nods in understanding. "So a sort of roleplay, then?"

"Role--" Fritz says, seeming to choke on the word. When was the last time either of them coughed, actually? He can't recall if it's happened. "Yeah! Like... roleplay. Yep. That. Us. Roleplaying."

That reaction is, in a word, strange. "Are you okay?"

"Yep, I'm perfect," Fritz says, smiling like nothing happened. "Anyways, you in or...?"

A good question. On one hand, this involves Fritz, and such will very obviously spiral out of control into something either concerning or amazing enough to be concerning. On the other hand, Terry's resistance towards unabashedly enjoying himself around Fritz has been softening... and it does sound fun.

"We should store our supplies in the next room, and have a rule where we cannot take the... snowball fight war out of this room," Terry decides.

"Whoohoo!" Fritz cheers.

Two combatants, the last left of their respective sides, stand across from each other. One, the blue, grins, eyes glinting. The other, red, stares in what he hopes is an impassive, prepared gaze. He's never been one for acting, unless it's being a gray stone.

The first shot is fired, from the hands of the blue one. The red one dodges with an easy side step.

"I hope you understand that this means war," Terry declares, as is only polite in such matters.

"Oooo~, I'm soooo scared~. Why dontcha put that money where your mouth is, huh?" Fritz taunts, eyes glittering. "Unless you're an anthro chick-en! Bawk bawk bawk~! ...Is that racist?"



It is, as they say, on.

The supreme art of war is to win without fighting. Unfortunately, Fritz has not internalized this advice, and everyone else must suffer the consequences.

The first thing Terry tries is the obvious: bunkering. If Fritz cannot pelt him with 'snowballs', then Terry either wins by default, or they develop a stalemate and Terry wins when Fritz gets bored.

It is also the first mistake Terry makes. He learns the hard way: it's difficult to build defenses in the middle of an active war zone. It quickly devolves into a tense game of hiding and seeking.

His ears stand straight up at maximum alertness, twitching at every tiny noise, imagined or not. He is too tall to stand straight and be hidden by the low convenience store shelves, so he must crouch. Already, he's abandoned his flip-flops, opting for his bare feet to better sneak--though he must be careful, since his claws easily clack on the tiles.

Somehow, Fritz is able to move with flawless silence. Because of course he can.

The mind games have begun in earnest. Information stands as the primary currency of every exchange. Is he following a true scent trail, or did Fritz double back? Can he afford the noise of crunching together another 'snowball', or will the two he has be sufficient for now? What cheesy one liner will Fritz spout on his next successful hit?

Out of nowhere, from above, a 'snowball' bounces off Terry's shoulder. His frantic search is cut short by a giggle, one from the other side of the shelf. In amazement, Terry realizes that Fritz landed a blind throw over a shelf.

"They never look up, Terry!" The giggling trails off as Fritz moves away--almost certainly a trick... or is he actually going where the sound implies as a double bluff?

Terry is, he's realizing, not quite cut out for active combat. And if that's the case, maybe he can take a more specialist role.

The biggest problem with their 'snowballs' is their heft. They do not have much weight, on account of being crumpled cardboard snack product



boxes, and so a good throw is not feasible.

In reply, Terry soaks them, using the water from the refrigerators lining a far wall.

He waits at an advantageous corner, eyes and ears focused on both possible places Fritz could approach from, keeping a portion of attention on the sky as well.

There! A flash of blue!

"Oh, Terry--!"

splat

"--!? Ooooooh~!" Fritz's voice is eager. "So that's the kind of game you wanna play. Alright, General Terence, let's get wet! HA-hhahahah!"

The battlefield is devastated, nature destroyed by the heinous acts of war wrought upon the land.

Water makes slick the tiles, litter dots and piles and soaks in the spilled fluid. Entire shelves have been toppled, their contents discarded or pilfered for the campaign.

As combat wore on, both sides have come to the same understanding: to fight a war against that which cannot tire is to fight forever. Thus, the only option is diplomacy.



The two warriors meet in the middle, the ever changing no man's land, to discuss terms.

"That was awesome!" Fritz gushes, eyes sparkling. "We have to do that again!"

Terry smiles, fur and clothes soaked to the bone, and not caring in the slightest. "Indeed, on both accounts."

They laugh, share their insights and jokes on the matter, and conclude the Great Snowball War with a hug.

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Nov 11, 2025

#93

**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

1.26 - Don't, Don't, Don't Ever Disappear~! (Fritz)

Note: Due to stupid real life reasons, this chapter comes out a little earlier. Oh no. What a shame. Enjoy!

Drying off is... actually pretty easy considering the whole 'covered in fur' thing. It doesn't tangle or mat or anything like that--Fritz is *so fucking glad* they don't need to brush it all the time. More furry magic bullshit.

They use some spare clothes to dry off. The stuff they wore during the 'war' is already wet, so they decide to take an early day and let everything dry.

The just one tiny little itty bitty problem: Terry only has one pair of pants.

No, really. Yes, Fritz laughed for like an hour.

To hear Terry tell it, his transformation made him 'significantly taller'--his words--and the clothes he had in his apartment don't fit well, or at all. That's why his shirt is so tight (*hnnng*) and his jacket looks so small on him.

Apparently, the only pants he had that fit are some old sweatpants. Even better-- ahem, worse is that none of Terry's old underwear fits either.

Which is how they find themselves sitting down to play chess, Terry with a couple shirts wrapped around his waist.

And no, Fritz didn't see anything. Terry changed behind a door.

"Yet more reason I should have brought a towel," Terry sighs, adjusting the shirt-thing he's got going on. "Though it would have still gotten in the way of my tail..."

Fritz twitches. Terry doesn't *look* like he's having a body dysmorphia moment... Either way, it's time to change the subject!



"I go first, right?"

"No, it's my turn to go first," Terry says, eyes snapping back into focus.

"Nope. I won that bet with the door, remember?"

"Oh, right. Go ahead."

Fritz grins, and the game's on.

"Tails," Fritz decides, watching the coin like a hawk.

Terry lifts his paw, revealing...

"Aww! Come on!"

With a satisfied smile, Terry takes back his lost peanuts--what they're using for bets. It's a simple game of heads or tails, but it's fun enough to cool off before bed.

"Alright, the next two are going to be tails," Fritz says.

"Then that would be a four to one bet," Terry replies, playing the role of casino table guy.

"Vegas boy," Fritz teases.

"I have literally never gone to a casino in my life. It would have been an idiotic waste of money."

"Ve. gas."

Terry rolls his eyes. "How many peanuts are you putting on your bet?"

"All in!"

"We literally don't have enough to pay you if you win."

"Sounds like a casino problem."

Fritz loses.



"What would be the odds for three tails?" Fritz asks.

"Eight to one," Terry answers without thinking. "And before you ask, if you want the odds for further iterations, keep multiplying by two. They're powers of two: two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-four, sixty-four, one hundred and twenty-eight, two hundred and fifty-six, five hundred and twelve, and so on."

Fritz gives him a *look*. "There's no way you did the math that fast. You're not actually a computer, are you?"

"Any programmer that doesn't have the powers of two memorized up to at least two to the sixteenth isn't worthy of being called such."

"Pfft!" Fritz snorts. "Never knew you were a programmer elitist."

"I'm not. I just actually know what I'm doing, is all. An uncommon trait in the field, unfortunately."

Terry looks confused when Fritz laughs harder, which makes him laugh *even harder*.

Sleep is sleep--though not 'VERY SLEEP', Fritz jokes to himself--and waking up is waking up. They're camped behind a cash register counter. They've both silently agreed that they don't like sleeping in open places; the parking lots were rough.

Stretch, purr, feel weird because it's still bright 'out', etc.

He glances over at Terry--

And freezes.

Quick backstory: Terry's a fitful sleeper. He's always waking up with his clothing nest thrown around. It's honestly kinda cute.

Why does that matter? Well, because Terry's tossing and turning loosened up his silly little shirt loincloth thing.

Terry's morning glory is bared for all (Fritz) to see.

For a long, endless moment, Fritz stares, heart stopped.



Then, very carefully, he tears his eyes away, lies back down (facing *away*), and closes his eyes.

But the image is forever burned into his brain. And while pretending to sleep, the only thought he can manage is: *Holy shit. That thing's gonna tear me in half.*

Fritz doesn't fall back asleep, but at least Terry wakes up pretty quickly.

"Hm? Oh, of course..." He hears Terry mutter to himself, then the rustling of fabric. Then, wielder of *fuckin' Excalibur* gets up and walks to where their clothes are drying, draped over a shelf. "Well, it's mostly dry..."

He waits until he can hear Terry sitting down, pulling out his little exposition diary and scribbling in it. Fritz finally 'wakes up', stretch, purr, all that.

"Mmmmm, good morning, Terry," Fritz says, trying to sound natural. One eye peeks open, and then both do; Terry's dressed in his slightly soggy sweat pants again. "Loving the new pants."

"Thanks," Terry deadpans, not looking up from his writing.

Right. He doesn't suspect a thing. Phew.

Though...

Would Terry care? He's barely cared about the butter-smelling cum thing, and Fritz could use this...

Fuck it. Worst comes to worst, he can pivot into teasing or something.

"I saw your dick."

"Huh?" Terry asks, looking up, baffled. "Pardon me?"

"Earlier," Fritz says, forcing himself to sound casual, "your shirt thing came apart and I woke up and saw. I didn't stare or anything, but I thought you'd want to know."

Terry stares at him like he's transformed *back* into a human, then became a duck. Not an anthro duck. Just a duck. "That... okay? I... apologize? It very much wasn't my intent."

"Eh," Fritz shrugs, "it was bound to happen one of these days. Kinda crazy we went so long without one of us catching a glimpse."

"...Right," Terry says, still utterly flummoxed. "But why bring it up at all?"

Because Fritz is trying to flirt with you, you dense, beautiful fox man.
"Just thought I'd bring it up. You should be proud, honestly."

"...Proud? That you saw my genitalia?"

Fucking hell, Terry's 'wtf' look is going to be Fritz's death; he knows it. It'll be a good death, though, honorable, like a stoic samurai cracking his shit at the last moment.

"I think you know what I mean," Fritz says, and winks. Let him dense himself through *that*, ha!

Okay, maybe Fritz is getting a little impatient. Sue him.

Terry lowers his head into a paw, closing his eyes. "I have no words."

"'Thank you' could be a start," Fritz offers, giggling. At this point, it's just silly. How far can Fritz push before Terry realizes that Fritz wants the D. And paw holding. And cuddling. And--

"You are an enigma, Fritz," Terry says into his paw, clearly not getting it.

"You'll figure it out. Maybe."

"That's more in line with what I expected."

Fritz strolls through one of the aisles, lazily glancing around, when he sees another silly brand: 'MICHAEL AND ISAIAH'--an obvious ripoff of Mike and Ikes.

He stops and picks up one of the boxes, smiling softly. HateFarm would've *loved* this...

Oh, joy. The feeling's back. He's been doing so *well* too...

Unless he gets crazy lucky, he won't be able to see his old friends again. It's pretty obvious. Sharing stupid shit in their little friend group Discord server just... isn't going to happen again.



HateFarm--real name 'Mike'--would've given this stupid Backrooms brand a 'lol' at least. Maybe even a gif of an inside joke--like the one with the bird dancing...

They called him 'Mike from Hate Farm'. Mike loved it so much, he made his Discord avatar 'Jake from State Farm' but with MS Paint horns and red eyes. That joke went on for *years*. Mike wasn't even trying for a State Farm reference; he's just that good at trolling people, so he called himself 'Hate Farm', a farm for hate.

God damn it, Fritz misses those idiots. They were dumber than bricks, every single one of them, but they were *his* bricks, and he fit right in.

"Are you okay, Fritz?" Terry asks, standing at the end of the aisle. "I was waiting at the next door, but you didn't come."

"I'm--" fine, he wants to say, but... No. This is Terry. He'll be open. He wipes his eyes and doesn't bother hiding it. "I miss my old friends."

Terry walks up to him, concern clear. "I see," he glances at the 'MICHAEL AND ISAIAH' box, then back to Fritz. "Do you want to tell me about them, or would it be better to drop the subject? I cannot tell myself, so I'll defer to you on the matter."

"Um..." Fritz says, looking down. What does he want? No, he knows what he wants. It's just that he knows it'll hurt to get. "W-- Well, there was this one dumbass, Mike..."

Fritz hiccups into Terry's chest again, his sobbing finally dying down into something less body-shaking.

He's never going to see them again, anyone he knew, again. And it all just sort of came tumbling out all at once.

Terry, being the GOAT (fox), didn't hesitate to hug him when he started breaking down. The first time he's ever initiated a hug with Fritz, and it's to comfort him.

Fritz squeezes tighter, sniffing. "...Sorry..."

"I do believe," Terry says, rock steady, "that this is one of those situations that does not warrant an apology. I suggest you correct it; you wouldn't want to commit a social faux pas, right?"



He makes a stupid, breathless giggle, half mad and half sad, and presses himself harder into Terry. Without time to stop his mouth, he voices another one of his fears, "Do... you think we'll meet anyone here? Is there anyone left?"

Terry freezes in Fritz's embrace, then says, baritone ticking his ear, "I'm not sure that's a conversation we should be having right now."

"I want to hear," Fritz says. Terry's smart, he'll probably have some smart thing to say. "I need to know."

"If you insist..."

Fritz nods, Terry's warm scent stitching him back together.

"Very well. The most honest, but incomplete answer is that I don't know. Just like how I don't know if a coin flip will land heads or tails."

"Mhmm."

"But evidence is still useful, even when you're uncertain," Terry says slowly, obviously thinking carefully about what he's saying. "And the biggest piece of evidence is us. We met, barely a day after the inciting event. The longer we go without meeting someone else, the luckier that meeting gets... and it's been over two weeks."

"So...?"

"So, I don't know," Terry says. "Your fellow fliers disappeared, leaving their clothes behind, but you are here and real. That could be evidence that we are the only ones, or part of a special few, or some other third option like teleportation--remember, we were too far to meet with that amount of walking."

"That," Fritz swallows, "sucks ass."

"Quite a bit, yes. But, personally, I think there almost has to be others. Because we aren't special."

Fritz snorts, then sniffs. "Wow, thanks."

Terry chuckles, and it rumbles Fritz's whole body. "I don't mean it offensively. I mean that, for all our traits, we aren't nearly special in a global sense. If some process or thing or person wanted to only have two survivors left, don't you think they'd choose two people more qualified for the... dubious honor? At the very least, they might choose a

man and a woman, for obvious reasons."

"So... we're not gonna meet anyone else?" Fritz asks.

"The chances get lower the longer we go without doing so. We could try traveling in directions we expect others to travel in... but we are already doing that by traveling in directions we want to anyway." He feels Terry sigh, "Currently, I'm not very hopeful we'll find anyone anytime soon. I'm sorry."

"You're a pretty smart guy, huh?" Fritz says, smiling a little despite everything. Leave it to Terry to have it all figured out.

"Thank you for the compliment."

Silly, dense Terry.

He doesn't really want to end the warm hug, but he can feel Terry starting to squirm a bit. So, sadly, he untangles himself and backs up a step. Terry looks down at him, eyes focused and worry clear.

"Thank you," Fritz says, wiping the last of his tears, eyeing the huge wet spot on Terry's shirt. "I'm glad we met. I couldn't have done this without you, big guy."

"I could say the same. In reverse, of course... selectively reversed so I'm referring from me to you, that is." His eyes narrow, "And... 'big guy'? Is this another nickname?"

"Yep! You get three guesses why~," Fritz teases, because fuck it. Terry'll either tell him enough is enough, or figure it the fuck out. Subtlety is for people not named Terry, clearly.

"Really?" Terry deadpans at him.

"I'm dead serious, *big guy*," Fritz grins, eyes half-lidded because, again, fuck subtlety.

Terry shakes his head, rolling his eyes. "Unbelievable. Anyway, are you ready to continue, or do you want to take a small break?"

Fritz double facepalms.

"What? Why are you laughing?"

Nov 12, 2025

#97



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.27 - ferror (Terry)

Surrounded by oddities, transformed into an aberrant fox person, a totally upended lifestyle, an endless list of questions, and a hundred thousand ways to consider the problems...

And yet, Terry's mind returns to the same topic again and again:

Fritz is acting weird.

Now, to be forthcoming, it would be weirder if Fritz stopped acting weird; it is just who he is. But it is the type, the ephemeral flavor of the weirdness that has caught Terry's attention.

For example, while walking through the stores, they frequently separate into different aisles, due to them not being wide enough to walk side-by-side. However, recently, when they do reunite in intersections or at doors to new shops, Fritz is... smiling more? But Fritz smiles all the time, so that probably isn't it.

And the hugs. Of course, Terry isn't totally hopeless; he noticed Fritz using the 'secret grasping appendage shake' as an excuse for hugs. But recently, Fritz has dropped all pretense, or even warning. At any moment, Terry could be in embrace. He isn't upset about this--he's long accepted how nice Fritz's hugs are--but it feels relevant.

There are a hundred little things as well: Fritz is more free with his compliments, gives Terry significant, indecipherable looks, speaks candidly and without prompting on some sexual things, touches and pushes him often, and is in general more... affectionate? Carefree?

The obvious theory is that Fritz is homesick, or missing his friends, and is pouring that into Terry. But he's been acting like this since before his moment with the Mike candy; it's only more prominent now.



Is this, perhaps, just how Fritz shows deepening friendship? It takes all kinds, and Terry doesn't have any other examples of how Fritz acts towards others--besides Fritz's own accounts, which are naturally suspect and biased by perspective.

Whatever it is, it's... concerning? Terry doesn't know, exactly. And that is the concerning part.

"It's like being in the ocean, water everywhere, but you can't drink any of it," Fritz says, showing Terry another silly brand name: 'CHOCOLATE AND PEANUT BUTTER THING', a pastiche of Reese's, it seems.

"At least we don't need it," Terry says, taking the 'THING', Fritz's hand brushing against his own, almost seeming to linger. "I wonder what comes up with these names? It has to know English, at least, and probably some cultural context, not to mention modern design sensibilities..."

Fritz lightly pushes his arm, smiling. "Nerd."

Terry sighs and shakes his head. "I refuse to see that as an insult."

"Trust me, it's not one."

There it is again, that look. It's not teasing, exactly, but it isn't mocking, but it isn't... Terry just doesn't know. It almost looks familiar, but doesn't, like nostalgia for a place he's forgotten.

"Shall we continue?" Terry asks, gesturing to the next shop door.

Fritz cackles, rolling his eyes, and takes the lead. He almost struts forward, swaying his hips for some unfathomable Fritz-reason. Terry doesn't look... after his first involuntary glance.

Continuing in its strange pattern, the labyrinth presents yet another one-off surprise.

"Please don't be just water," Fritz says, staring at the slushy machine, "pleeeeeease don't be just water."

"Well, it has blue and red flavor," Terry says. It isn't an exaggeration, or trying to downplay a cherry versus blueberry flavor; it literally says 'RED FLAVOR'. "And my concerns about pathogens continue to be relevant."



"Fuck. That. Noise," Fritz says, grabbing a cup--the biggest size, of course--and choosing 'BLUE FLAVOR'. The machine groans its iconic slushy-pouring sound, and the liquid begins filling the cup. "Oh hell yeah. I can smell the blue flavor. This is the real deal, Terry."

Terry can smell the flavor too. It's rather strong and/or his nose is too sensitive now. "Fritz. Please, at least drink it slowly?"

Fritz pulls back his cup, a cup nearly bigger than his head, and grins. "Fine~. You're such a worrywart. I drank that airport water and I was fine."

Reluctant as he is to admit it, Fritz does have a small point. Not that it's wise to generalize from a single example. "It isn't like I can stop you."

He stabs a plastic straw into the slushy, immediately taking a sip. "Mmmmm~! Oh god, this is great. Terry, you gotta try this."

"I'll pass, thank you," Terry says, eyeing the proffered drink wearily.

"How about this, if I don't keel over after drinking this, you gotta try red," Fritz bargains, taking another sip.

"What? Why would I agree to that?"

"Because, doofus," Fritz rolls his eyes, "if I don't get hurt, then you'd have no excuse not to try it. It's not like we're walking tightropes, unless you think you're gonna choke on it... But then it'd melt, right?"

Terry stares at him while he takes another sip--no, a full-on gulp, throwing all caution to the wind. The entire time, Fritz maintains eye contact, eyes sparking with mischief.

He looks towards the swirling 'RED FLAVOR' in its drum in the machine. He imagines what it'll taste like with his new taste buds.

"...Fine. I cannot believe you've made me agree to this. Let's stop here for a bit to see if your organs begin early necrosis."

Fritz laughs around the straw.

It's hours later, and three--that must be emphasized, three--'LARGE' cups of 'BLUE FLAVOR' have been consumed by one blue flavored



anthropomorphic cat.

Fritz has not had a seizure, begun vomiting blood, spontaneously died, had a stroke, gone into shock, had his fur fall out, or any other horrible worry Terry's conjured.

"Checkmate!" Fritz cheers, then immediately begins interrogating Terry again, "Ready to try red? C'mon, it's pretty good, and you promised."

"You haven't tried 'RED FLAVOR' yet," Terry points out with a tired sigh. "And there could be long-term complications."

"Really?" Fritz raises a brow, "I'd say you're grasping at straws here, but there's actual straws here and they aren't being grasped. Like, four out of ten arguments, Terry. Just try it, it'll be fine."

"I feel like a vulnerable child in an anti-drugs PSA," Terry mutters.

That, at least, distracts Fritz. Laughter can be weaponized; Terry will have to remember that.

Terry stands, hand holding a half-filled, 'SMALL' size cup. The red slushy smells unique, with perhaps a hint of cherry. A wide, white straw protrudes out, ready for Terry to consume the beverage.

Fritz stands right next to him, eyes sparking, staring into Terry like this is the most important moment of his life. He wants to believe Fritz is exaggerating, but there is always doubt when it comes to Fritz.

"Do it."

"As you say, Emperor Palpatine," Terry says, sighing. Angling his snout to the straw is a novel experience, as he's by far more used to having a flat face. The reminder and sensation make his skin crawl, but not nearly as badly as it would have weeks ago. There's a spark of hope at that, the feeling that he truly can adjust, and with it, he finally takes a sip.

It's... sweet. Very sweet. It tastes, to his private dismay, red. As in, the very concept of red, like how Fritz smells 'spicy'. The dwindling foodstuffs they've packed, even the snack cakes, do not compare to the intensity of the flavor. It's almost too intense, but still short of overstimulation.

"So...?" Fritz asks, leaning forward nearly to the point of leaning on him.



"What'd you think?"

"I wonder if it's possible to contract type two diabetes with our new bodies," Terry replies.

"Does that mean you like it?!"

Terry closes his eyes and nods, unable to bear the inevitable smug look.

"WHOOHOO!" Fritz cheers, and Terry feels the ballistic impact of yet another enthusiastic Fritz hug.

"I'm... glad you're happy?" Terry says, awkwardly returning the hug with one arm, the other holding his drink. "Though I'm not sure why."

"Cuz it's fun," Fritz says, skipping back and smiling, that unknowable look in his eyes again. "Duh."

"Duh," Terry agrees, smiling back, something warm glowing in his stomach... that hopefully isn't a precursor to slushy-borne parasites.

"I say we stay here for like a day," Fritz proposes while they sip (Terry sips, Fritz gulps) on slushies, sit, and chat.

"For the slushies?" Terry asks.

"Yeah." Fritz takes another huge gulp.

"How many of those have you had?"

"I dunno, like... five?"

Terry closes his eyes. "For your health, I have to disagree with the idea. That's an inarguably unhealthy amount of sugar, Fritz."

"What? No! I can stop whenever I want!"

He waits for a few seconds, eyes still closed in dismay, then says, "You're taking another gulp right now, aren't you?"

"Mmm?" Comes the muffled reply. "...I mean no. Totally not."

"Fritz, you can't stay here. I'm not going to be able to guard the slushy machine twenty-four seven," Terry pleads, opening his eyes again, inner



strength restored. "In fact, we should leave right now so as not to tempt you further."

Then Fritz tries it, the kitten eyes act. His lower lip quivers, his eyes wet, pupils widening to max, ears lowered, tail drooping. "B- But Terry..."

Closing his eyes again, this time as a defensive measure, Terry hardens his heart and says, "If you drank five large slushies in an hour with a normal human body, I would legitimately consider getting your stomach pumped. As it is, I'm amazed you haven't vomited yet. It's time to stop."

They are sitting side-by-side, which is why Fritz can do what he does next: namely, leaning on Terry, head resting on his upper arm due to the height difference.

"Terry," Fritz whispers, and it's a low, slow whisper. A begging thing. "Just one more? Please...?"

Terry shivers. He doesn't look, knowing it would break his resolve.

"Fill your cup, then we leave."

"Yes! Alright!" Fritz cheers, bouncing up and leaving Terry a confused mess on the floor.

Yes indeed. Fritz is acting different.

They do eventually manage to escape the event horizon of the slushy machine, much to Fritz's vocal displeasure.

"...Coulda filled like ten cups!"

"They would have melted," Terry says for the third time.

"Cups don't melt, silly!"

"Everything has a melting point, and you know what I meant."

Fritz rounds the corner of one of the aisles, clearly having dashed forward to make sure they can see each other. With gusto, he sticks his tongue out at him, about faces, and marches forward--or, more like swaggers forward.

It's a huge effort not to flick his eyes downward. Whatever transformation



process worked on Fritz, it clearly left him with generous, almost feminine curves in the hips and rear areas...

Terry's going to have to 'relieve' himself again soon--he's getting pent up again. Perhaps a day or so. Fritz would not appreciate such thoughts directed his way, doubtlessly.

"I stand wildly corrected."

"We'll go back, then?!"

"No."

"Good night," Fritz says, stretching over his clothing nest. The stretch is, Terry dares say, sensual; Fritz all but poses, hips flared out, showing off his shocking flexibility-- "Take a picture, it'll last longer."

"Ah, my apologies," Terry says, looking away quickly.

He hears a snort, then a yawn. "Don't worry about it, big guy. Seriously, I don't mind."

And there's the 'big guy' nickname again, which Fritz has all but confirmed refers to Terry's... enhanced genitalia. An awkward, but ultimately inconsequential situation. Fritz was right, that seeing each other like that was bound to happen one day, what with how much time they spend near one another.

"Good night, Fritz," Terry decides to say, unsure of how to reply.

"Yeah, yeah..." And Fritz begins to doze off.

Good. Now he has time to think.

Sitting further away, but still within the same store, Terry considers the problem: what, exactly, is it that Fritz is doing?

He's seen the searching look in Fritz's eyes and deduced that it is, probably, a searching look. Assuming that's correct, that means it's something intentional, and thus is searching for a reaction out of Terry.

Is it what Fritz affectionately refers to as 'trolling'? Is he looking for Terry to 'call him out'? To what end, though? Fritz's brand of trolling is not so...



whatever this all is.

It's a sustained campaign. Terry can imagine, and easily believe, that Fritz would sustain a joke for years, let alone weeks. However, again, this does not have the same tells as Fritz's jokes. That could be a diversion, or good acting, or poor social skills on Terry's part...

Look at it from a different angle. What rules, what mindset, produce actions consistent with Fritz's?

Expectant looks, prolonged eye contact, increased physical attention, generally more affectionate, nearly intimate even.

Hmph. If Terry didn't know better, he'd pattern match Fritz's behavior to...

...To...

He pauses, freezes.

There is no way, no possible way whatsoever, that Fritz has romantic feelings towards him. It is not only unprecedented, but--

But--

"...Shit," Terry whispers a rare curse, eyes widening, staring into nothing.

But what, exactly?

Fritz would not be physically attracted to him? Not only is Fritz self-admitted to be homosexual, he's a self-admitted furry. It is entirely possible that Fritz truly does feel some attraction.

Fritz would not be emotionally attracted to him? To be cynical, they are trapped, alone together, in a stressful, isolating situation. Fritz could 'latch on', so to speak, to the nearest available person--Terry in this case. To be far less cynical, Terry has acknowledged their unprecedented synergy on several occasions, and Fritz has said so himself... while wearing that look.

But...

But it's impossible. He must be mistaken.

Nobody can like Terry Cooper in that way. It's a fact he's burned into his mind a thousand times, a dozen examples and humiliations searing it in with brand and scar.



Hammers and granola bars fall at the same speed, the halting problem is incomputable, and Terry Cooper is unlovable. It is immutable fact.

But. Fritz's actions do, without doubt, match such patterns. Terry is no fool, and he's read enough, seen enough to know the signs, now that he knows to look.

He wants to believe it's more than a cruel prank. Hateful, shadowed memories, from a time he thought long left behind, whisper that if it's happened twice, it could happen thrice.

And-- Terry leans forward, wrapping his arms around himself, staring into the tiled floor. That thought. He wants to believe. Wants to. It can't be easy, can it? He wants Fritz to be earnest in this. He wants it, damn it all.

Like noticing a light in the distance, he suddenly feels sick with hope. The cancerous desire burns his veins with creeping hoarfrost. The poison of wishes wails its siren song: *What if~? What if~? What if~?*

Fritz is kind, intelligent in an interesting way, and, he'll admit, attractive if he ignores the animalistic qualities. If there's a chance, a true chance...

Through a lifetime of experience, ruthless practice drowning in the deep end, he stamps the feeling down, down, down.

It takes minutes, an hour, but he does not weep. Weakness now would be unacceptable.

Terry is a rational, logical man. He will investigate, come to a conclusion, and then he will confront Fritz with his findings.

Either way, he will have his answers. He prepares himself for disappointment, pain.


What if~? The hope whispers under his boot.

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WeirdlyHotPepper Nov 12, 2025

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**WeirdlyHotPepper**

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

1.28 - "Hope" Is the Thing With Feathers (Both) (Part 1 Finale)

Yawn. Guess who's awake first~?

Fritz stretches, purring as is good and proper for a cute as fuck cat boi like himself, and glances at Terry. Still asleep, nest thrown everywhere. No show today--there's pants this time--but that's fine.

And who cares? Terry was totally checking him out last night! Like, for real, barely able to take his eyes off his ass, checking out. Which is good because obviously... and also pretty great for his ego, thank you very much.

No, Fritz isn't relieved. He wasn't worried at all, no sir.

The Plan™ is coming together. He just needs to keep escalating until something happens.

Terry keeps only one eye on their chess game, mostly due to its unique nature.

Their kings--plus Terry's bishop--have danced around each other for a dozen moves or more. The score is thirty-two to thirty-two, a gratifying number for a programmer such as Terry.

"I believe that we should call this a tie," Terry says, keeping a careful eye on Fritz's disposition. He does not want to give in to confirmation bias, however...

"Damn, guess there's a first time for everything, huh?" Fritz asks, smirking. He's lying on his side, propped up on one arm. When taking the position, he referenced the *Titanic* movie, mentioning 'French girls' and drawing, that inscrutable look in his eyes.

Confirmation bias is a problem, but sometimes things truly are obvious once one knows to look. Still, Terry will be careful.

"Indeed."



He shall not give in to his racing heart, nor the dread.

Something's *off* about Terry. Not even really in a bad way? But something about him's off. Like the normal Terry rhythm's skipped a beat, or the melody's changed.

"You okay, big guy?" Fritz asks when they meet at another intersection. "If you wanna, we can take a break or whatever."

Terry pauses, then shakes his head. "I'm fine, Fritz."

Oooo, that's Terry for 'back the fuck off'. See the way his eyes are narrowed? Classic defensive Terry.

"Alright," Fritz smiles easily, frowning inside. "Anyways, think we'll find another slushy machine? I'm feeling *thirsty*," he leans forward, staring right into the nerd's eyes with the word 'thirsty'.

Terry stares right back (*oof*). "You and I both know it's impossible for you to feel thirsty."

And there it is again. That off-beat. What *is* that?

Fritz sticks out his tongue, then prances off, making sure to walk like a runway model--as much as he can with the big bad suitcase. If Terry likes looking, then Fritz sure as hell likes showing it, wink wink.

Terry's mind rotates, spins, a cycle of denial, hope, shame, hope, confusion, hope...

For all his intent to investigate, he is still blocked by his own lacking social skills. Not to mention, he must be hopelessly biased about the situation, so badly that he cannot predict exactly which direction he may be biased.

It always comes back to the dichotomy: is Fritz joking, or is he earnest? Fritz seems amused, even when taking actions that could be misconstrued as hinting at romantic intent. Is that amusement due to a successful ruse? But why work at it so long?

Frequently, in his thought spirals, Terry has to remind himself of Fritz's nature. For all his mischievousness, he does not seem to have any malicious intent in anything he does. In fact, Terry would call him



unusually kind, caring, and attentive to others' needs and desires. A rare kind of individual. It would be against his nature to do something so obviously cruel as Terry fears.

But, says the cycle of doubt, Fritz has demonstrated a propensity to go too far, even without explicit, knowing malicious intent. Perhaps this is another case of the same? One does not need to be evil to cause hurt, though it certainly helps, as Terry knows too well.

Terry does not know what to do. And so he flounders.

Okay, so... Terry's going pretty quiet. He's thinking hard (or hardly thinking, hur hur hur) about something, glancing at Fritz with a seriously unnerving, calculating look.

It feels like being picked apart.

Fritz isn't exactly the world champion of picking up on cues, but he's pretty decent, he thinks. And, honestly? There's like three things that could be getting Terry this worked up: computers, his body dysmorphia, or...

Or he's figured it out.

A thrill climbs down Fritz's spine, all the way to the tip of his tail. What if? What if Terry really has figured it out, and is... trying to decide what to do next? Maybe?

What else would it be, to get Terry looking at him like he's a problem to be solved? And not a 'damn it, Fritz is drinking another slushy' kind of problem either. Like a serious problem with serious consequences.

Shiiiiit. Shit fuckity fuck. He *has* worked it out, hasn't he? And because he's Terry, nerdy quiet-until-proven-prompted Terry, he hasn't just sat their happy asses down and talked it out...

Like Fritz didn't do for literally over a week. Shit. Fuck.

Alright, game face on. *The Plan*[™] is in its final phase. Fritz just needs the right moment to cut through the bullshit. It'll come up, he's sure of it.

Procrastinating? Him? Nah. No way. Fritz doesn't afraid of anything.



Just... give him a bit.

A companionable silence has descended upon them, as they often do.

Though probably due to his overactive imagination, Terry considers if he might be perceiving some tension in said silence. Alas, Fritz still smiles, his tail still flicks like a writhing snake, and so forth. As far as Terry's abilities can tell, he is merely being paranoid.

It is, however, strange that Fritz hasn't made so much as a side remark over the last hour. Strictly speaking, though, it's not unheard of.

They meet again at yet another store door, the novelty of a new area having worn thin. He opens the door--

--in behind Terry after hearing him gasp. Terry doesn't gasp without a damn good reason. He bumps into Terry, but...

"What? Wha-- Woah..."

Goddamn. These are--

--stumble forward, but not trip. They both look up at the stellar sight.

It is a convenience store, that much is true. There are shelves, registers, and the like. However, the similarities end at its immense scale: perhaps as wide as a large backyard, and impossibly, insanely tall.

The ceiling is so far up, so high, that the lights adorning it are but mere pinpricks in the distance. This leaves the floor below in near darkness, illuminated only by the glow from the refrigerators and other minor light sources.

But the ceiling lights, so far away; they aren't regularly placed, they're scattered, like milk flicked from the fingers, like--

--stars.

Not real stars, but... Fuck. They're beautiful, in their own way.



"Ho-ly *shit*."

"Agreed."

Fritz keeps looking up. How could he stop? "Terry. We're staying here a few days."

"Again, agreed."

"Good."

Standing beneath the false stars, neck craned to take it in, Terry feels a measure of peace. For all his worries, for all that is lost, even this abomination of a place, this labyrinth, can be beautiful.

Finally, lowering his head, he looks towards Fritz in the gloom. Fritz's petunia pink eyes reflect the meager light, similar to a cat's; his blue fur stands out even in the simulated night.

Fritz takes longer to look away and smiles softly at Terry.

"Shall we set up camp?" Terry asks.

"Y- Yeah," Fritz says, blinking and looking away.

A stammer? Another oddity.

But, Terry resolves, he will have answers. It will be like cutting out his own tonsils, bloody and painful, but enough is enough. He cannot function in this uncertainty, and so it cannot be abided by.

What better place to do it than here, amidst the stars?

Camp-ification is slow going. And silent. They push around some of the shelves to make a sort of circle thing. Terry calls it a something-gon, 'with an edge removed, of course'. Stupid beautiful nerd in the starlight, making him freak the hell out...

So, real talk. Fritz is out of excuses. Wait for the best time? Well, it's here cat boi! Now he's just anxious. What's Terry thinking? Is he mad, and that's why he's been so quiet? Ahhhhh!



He just has to fucking do it. Rip it off like a band-aid.

They sit on mats made of folded clothes, on the floor, in the center of their makeshift camp. They are side-by-side, close, but not touching.

Terry looks up at the false stars again, thankful for something to see besides Fritz's face.

It's time. With a final mustering of courage, he speaks.

"Fritz--"

"Terry--"

Fritz jumps. Fuckin' hell, his nerves. *Why?! "You go--"*

"Please proceed--"

Fritz giggles, looking down. It's a nervous giggle, the kind he makes when he sees something horrible and doesn't know how to react. It's not that he thinks it's funny, but it's just so much at once...

Aaaand Terry's actually waiting for Fritz to say something. What the *fuck* was Terry going to say, though? Ahhhh!

Okay, he can do this. Deep breaths. Out-- wait no, it's *in* first-- Ahhhh!

Fritz must be feeling polite if he's truly waiting so long for Terry to speak first. He wishes he wasn't, however, the mustering of determination has fractured in the chance to instead stay silent...

In the end, however, it's Fritz who breaks the silence.

"Terry..." Fritz swallows. His mouth should be dry, but furry magic bullshit has something to say about that. "You... uh... doing okay?"

Wow. Fucking ten outa ten, Fritz. Give him the goddamn award right now: Best Confession Ever. They'll never see it coming. Ugh.



No, damn it! Fritz is a confident guy! He can do this! It's only the biggest crush he's ever had with the literal only guy left in the entire fucking world, is all. No pressure.

"What I *mean*," Fritz forces out in a squeak, then takes a breath. "What I mean is... are you... mad?"

Terry looks away from the false stars in surprise and is struck dumb by Fritz's expression.

It is, in a word, desperation, clearly written as if it's a notarized document stamped on his forehead. Desperation.

"Mad," Terry says, unable to look away, "about what?"

"I-," Fritz can't look away. Those beautiful baby blues, how can Terry make them so piercing? It's like the whole world falls into numbers and theories in front of those eyes. "I wanted to give you all the time you needed... I know you're struggling with... everything. But I got impatient... So I pushed a little too fast, I guess..."

Terry has a theory and seeks to confirm it, as is natural. His thrashing heart is irrelevant. It is. "Impatient with what, Fritz?"

The question pierces straight through Fritz. "I..."

"Yes?"

And beneath the false stars in Bumfuck Nowhere, Backrooms, a blue anthro femboy cat confesses romantic intent to a red anthropomorphic fox.

"I have... the biggest, most insane crush on you."

And there they are, the words the fox dreaded, hoped for, and thought



impossible. He expected them, knew they were coming, and yet, now hearing them, he is frozen, struck down by speech.

Taking the silence as a cue, the cat begins to blubber it all out, spewing his feelings into the open air between them.

"And-- and this isn't like some stupid ass high school crush, Terry," the cat--Fritz--says, courage growing. "*I like you*, like, *like like* you. You're funny, smart, nice... and I know you're working through some serious stuff, but damn it, you're the hottest man I've ever met."

The fox--Terry's--mind spins 'round and 'round, a loop without an exit condition. This is impossible, and yet it's before him, but it can't happen, but it clearly isn't a trick, but--

A paw finds a hand. The hand flinches, but not violently enough to let go.

Fritz speaks, firm and fragile, vibrating struck iron, intent crystallizing, "I-- I want to do all the big stupid romance stuff with you. Hold hands-- *paws*, kiss, cuddle, go on silly Backrooms dates... and when you're ready, *more*. I want us to be a couple. I want *you*."

But Terry cannot find the words, overwhelmed by the sheer unrepentant emotion of it all, the unreality. It can't be. It's too good to be true. It's a trap, doomed to fail, a dream, a mad aberration...

"I'm so sorry for pushing too quickly," Fritz says, eyes shimmering. "I know this is a lot for you, but you need to know I mean it, one hundred percent." He swallows, but doesn't look away. Those blue eyes grind his every word into powdered meaning, something unknown behind them. "I-- Terry. What are you thinking? Please... say something. Anything... Even if you *hate* me, I'll--"

"No. I don't," Terry says, the words bypassing every filter, every block and toll in his mind. A second later, he approves the words retroactively, for all the terror they inspire in his heart. "I don't hate you."

A silence unlike any other hangs between them from a spiderweb line.

And, somehow, it is Terry who breaks it.

"I don't hate you," he repeats, to himself, to Fritz, to nobody. "You are a wonderful individual. But..."

A vice grips Fritz's soul, and he wants to cry and scream and beg and--



"But I don't understand..." Terry's words are soft, a black and angry bruise. "I don't... understand..."

He does understand, though, with stark mad clarity. But he wouldn't understand a flying pig, either, for all its wings flap above him.

The paw squeezes, and the hand takes solace in its presence. The paw holds on for dear life.

"Take your time," Fritz says softly, taking a conversational step back. "I'm not going anywhere. Promise."

For a while, eternity in a bottle, they sit and stare into each other's eyes. Their respective digits grasp each other's, neither willing to entertain letting go.

Eventually, it becomes too much. Terry must know. "You mean it." It's a statement, not a question.

Fritz's heart skips like a stone. Shoving as much conviction and honesty as he can into the word, he says, "Yes."

Terry's head wants to spin again, to reject the hope again, to run forever and hide again. It's safe, away from it all. It's only a dull ache when he retreats from the world.

But "hope" is the thing with feathers, and it's perched in his soul.

What if~?

"I don't--" Terry pleads, "I'm not-- good at... this. Relationships."

Fritz shakes his head, a soft thing that makes his little furry heart cry. "You think I care about that?"

"You should," Terry argues, though what for he cannot place. They are merely words that must be spoken before the hope can sing. "I always ruin it. I say the wrong thing, or don't reciprocate correctly, or... or it just falls apart, and I don't know why."

"So? We'll work it out together. Easy."

"Will we, though?" Terry accuses, the hurt and doubts bursting like pustules. He's heard similar things before, before he gave up completely. "No matter how hard I try, I just can't play some social games, Fritz. My mind is not built for it. Will you actually tell me, flat out, without



qualification, if I'm ruining it? If I misstep?"

"Yep!" Fritz chirps, a small smile forming. "But only if you promise for me, too."

That stops Terry short. "Pardon?"

"What, really?" Fritz teases, his momentum back, heart soaring. There's a *chance*. He can *do this*. "You think you're the only one here who's worried? Shit, Terry, I'm an impulsive idiot! I'm more annoying than... than something really annoying! If anyone's gonna ruin it, it'll be me. So you gotta promise too."

Terry's jaw works, hinging in naked shock. "You truly feel that way?"

"Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye," Fritz says, pointing at his eye and grinning. It's a real promise, for all its irreverent words. "Believe it or not, I want this to work. If we need to be honest and, bleh, *communicate*, then that's what we'll do. Promise."

Objections fall away like stones in a pond, and Terry can hear the song, the tune without the words:

What if~? What if~?

Terry wants it. He wants it so badly it hurts like a physical thing. A hook pulling at his solar plexus, taking his breath, dragging him from his safe bunker.

One more try. He has one more try in him, he thinks. If it's with Fritz, he can try once more. And when it dies, like the rest, he'll at least know for sure it's all for naught.

Fritz begs with his eyes. Just say it, he yells in his mind. Just say it, you stupid, sexy fox.

"I... promise as well," Terry breaths, less than a whisper.

A leap.

"Really?" And Fritz catches him. "*Really?!!*"

A fall.

"Y-es," Terry chokes out, barely managing to cling on. "I'd be open to... to try."



A blue missile slams into Terry's chest, and he's knocked to the ground on his back.

"Teeeryyy~!"

Fritz wails, rubbing his face and whiskers into Terry, blubbering and laughing and purring his heart out.

Terry returns the embrace to the best of his abilities, body feeling light, like the drop from a roller coaster.

Fritz overflows, overwhelmed with relief, joy, vindication, anticipation, and a bazillion other things.

He should take it slow. Terry's a sensitive guy...

But, at least he can do *this*.

Terry feels the kiss on his cheek and freezes.

"Thank you... *boyfriend*," Fritz purrs.

The giggling echoes about the false stars, joined eventually by a deep, thoroughly stunned chuckle.

Just what have they gotten themselves into?

Whatever it is, it's together.

And they live happily ever after.


TWO GAY FURRIES KISSING IN THE BACKROOMS

END OF PART 1: "Hope" Is the Thing With Feathers


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PART 2 BEGINS NEXT CHAPTER

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WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022

Messages: 352

2.1 - Make Me Love Myself So That I Might Love You~! (Fritz)

Fritz lies on Terry, head on his chest, heart glowing like a handful of fireflies.

He's done it. It was hairy there for a while, but he's done it.

He and Terry are, officially, a couple.

EEEEEEEE~!

They lay there, Fritz feeling Terry's heartbeat go from 'get this man to a hospital' to 'get this man to take some deep breaths'. Fritz isn't much better, honestly.

It's only been a few minutes after... all the shit went down at once, but jeez, give them a break.

But...

Minutes pass.

Terry's arms, wrapped around him, fidget a little.

Fritz feels like reality is starting to come back. There's other stuff besides the grand moment. Other things to think about. Ugh.

Guess there's always a dismount.

"You know," Fritz says, smiling, glowing, "this would be a great time to fall asleep in each other's arms. Really romantic. But it's like, what, four PM?"

Terry twitches, letting loose a single, strangled laugh. "Roughly that-- probably later, though." His voice is... overwhelmed. Shit. Alright, time to back off a little.

Fritz sighs, taking in Terry's warm scent one more time, then rolls off him. He lands on his back, facing the weird ass Backrooms star thing going on.

Next to him, Terry slowly sits up, moving robotically. His eyes are unfocused, distant.



"You okay there, big guy?" Fritz asks, sitting up himself.

"Hm?" Terry hums, turning to Fritz and blinking. He looks like he's seeing Fritz for the first time. "Oh, yes. I'm just... processing is all."

"Yeah," Fritz giggles, some of his own nervous energy fading with it. The giggles turn into chuckles, and the chuckles turn into full blown laughter. He closes his eyes, throws his head back, and *laughs*.

The worries, the stupid ass *Plan*[™], the crazy high level of emotions. He laughs and knows it's better now.

He's really done it. *This is real*.

"Uh..."

Oh, right, Terry. Fritz calms himself down, though he still giggles a little here and there. "Sorry-- sorry. I'm just... really happy. And all these emotions... Yeah."

Terry stares at him. His eyes are still calculating, but it's Terry's default look this time, not whatever menacing pick-Fritz-apart look he had earlier.

"...Indeed."

Fritz sighs a happy little sigh, getting his giggling under control. Terry's clearly shut down a little, so it's probably best to calm things down a bit. Poor guy, but he's *Fritz's* poor guy now, which makes this his responsibility.

"So..." Fritz says, "You look like you need some quiet time to process and whatnot. You want to, like, take ten or something and just chill?"

Terry stares at him in shock. He opens his mouth--

"I knew what I was getting into, believe it or not," Fritz rolls his eyes. "It's fine, big guy. Really."

--and closes it, a ghost of a smile on his snout. "I think I would like that, yes. Thank you."

Fritz nods, smiling back. "Sweet. Three-second warning: gonna hold your paw. Here it comes."

Terry blinks. "What?"



"Too late," Fritz snarks, taking Terry's paw into his own. It's warm, and way bigger than his. "You want me to sing, or just be quiet?"

"...Sing?"

"Knew it."

They sit there, paw in paw, staring up at the weird star lights.

There's always a dismount. But Fritz doesn't mind. This is just life, with all its little quirks and moments.

"Oh, who, is she~... A misty memory~... A haunting, face~... Is she a lost, embrace~...?"

It takes a few forevers, singing and holding paws, sitting on the cold Backrooms floor, but Terry... relaxes. Kinda. If Fritz can call going from 'robot' to 'lowkey panic' relaxed.

Honestly, it's really cute. Who knew Terry could be *shy*?

"Feeling any better?" Fritz asks, gently rubbing his thumb over the back of Terry's paw.

"I... am," Terry says, voice soft, subdued. He doesn't meet Fritz's eyes, looking away, tense.

"You know I'm not gonna bite, right?" Fritz says, soothing. He has to fight to stop himself from saying, 'unless you want me to'. This isn't the time.

Terry slumps. "I know that..." He frowns, still not looking at Fritz. "I just... You meant it when you said we can just... talk about things, without games?"

Not the *exact* promises they made, but Fritz isn't about to play semantics with Terry motherfucking Cooper. He's learned that lesson already.

Unless it's the paw/hand thing. Fritz will die, resurrect, and isekai on that hill.

"Lay it on me. What's eating you?"

With a heavy sigh, Terry speaks. The words are slow, like he's forcing



them out. "What, exactly, do you expect from me now that we're...?"

"A couple?" Fritz asks, smiling.

"Yes." He can hear the disbelief in Terry's voice.

"Well..." Fritz squeezes his paw. "Would 'just be yourself, but more romantic' work?"

Terry huffs, something between a scoff and a laugh. "What does that mean, in this context?"

"Thought so," Fritz teases. "But that's the idea. Just be Terry; I fell for *you* after all. The rest of it comes down to..." He struggles for the words. He's never had to *explain* this before. "It's a two way street. I push a little, you push back or accept, or the other way around, and we set our own pace like that."

Closing his eyes, almost deflating, Terry sighs. "But what do you expect from that push and pull? Should I work to be proactive? Should I give ground at a certain pace? What of the details, the little things? Every relationship is different, and I want to know the rules of this one."

Fritz giggles, causing Terry to open his eyes and look at him in surprise. Fritz smiles, saying, "That's such a Terry way to look at it. I'd tell you just to relax, but that wouldn't work, would it?"

Those baby blues search him. "Almost certainly not. I'm sorry."

"No, no sorry. You're fine," Fritz says, squeezing his paw again. "How about this..." He thinks hard for a little bit, trying to find the right way to say it. "We can't just set rules for ourselves like that, not this early. We're still learning each other. Part of the whole thing is figuring each other out. If we feel like things aren't going the way we like, *that's* when we talk it out."

Terry frowns his deep-thinking frown, eyes looking beyond Fritz.

"We can do whatever we want, even if that's taking it slow," Fritz says with confidence. "Everything else can go fuck itself."

Blinking out of his nerd-stupor, Terry asks, "Pardon?"

"I mean," Fritz grins, brain *finally* spitting something useful out, "We decide the goals together, we work towards them together, and all of that is something we learn from each other as we go. It's just trust. That's



why it's so hard."

Terry looks down, where their wrapped paws. He still looks confused, but it's not despair-confused anymore. "Oh."

"Yeah, it's a mess," Fritz agrees. Weaponized troll factor, go! "Wanna play chess or something?"

He would rate Terry's look a 10/10, would baffle again.

Fritz is moving one of his knights when the thought hits him, making him burst into laughter out of nowhere.

"What?" Terry asks, surprised and, maybe, a little concerned.

"I was just thinking, you fucking pulled a knife on me during our meet cute," Fritz says, laughing again. "Oh man--I wish I thought of that one..."

"Meet cute?" Terry asks, tilting his head. "You mean when we first met? I already apologized for that..."

"I know," Fritz waves him off, shaking his head. All the smut he could've written, if only he thought of *psychotic-seeming misunderstanding meet cutes*. Sigh. "It's a writing thing, or a movie thing, or whatever. In a romance story, when the two people first meet, it's called a 'meet cute'."

"...Right. I suppose I should apologize again."

"Nah, it was funny," Fritz says. "Well, scary at the time. Funny as fuck now."

Terry gives him a baffled look, then turns back to their game.

Fritz is really going to have to work on Terry's worries, isn't he? His new boyfriend (*squeee~*) is walking on glass eggshells. The shyness is cute, yeah, but the fear is giving him an icky feeling.

Well, one step at a time.

"Checkmate!" Fritz cheers. "In yo *face!*"

"Well done," Terry compliments, smiling softly. Yeeeeee boi.



"Aww, thanks *boyfriend*," Fritz says, purring the word.

Terry freezes for a split moment, like a video buffering... How long has it been since he's seen a *video*... Ahem. Anyways. When he unfreezes, he dons an expression of exasperation, before dropping it for *nothing*--creepy--before it turns to exasperation again, though it's restrained, almost cautious.

"I suppose I'll have to get used to that," Terry says, eyeing Fritz, looking for his reaction.

Fritz giggles, "Oh no," he says, packing in the sarcasm, "what horror," he leans forward, purring again, "*boyfriend*".

This time, Terry's exasperated look is a lot more Terry-esque. Actually, there might be some relief in there, too. Win! "And that, too, I should have expected."

Fritz sticks out his tongue, then grins. "Like I said, we're still the same people, just romancing. Don't go stressing yourself out, big guy."

Terry purses his lips in a small, tight, thoughtful frown. "You have a point."

"Damn right," Fritz buffs his claws on his chest, "I totally know what I'm talking about."

Fritz has no idea what he's talking about.

"Mm..." Terry hums, eyes still thoughtful. Though Fritz doesn't miss the way some of the tension leaves his shoulders.

Maybe it's that conversation, or time, or a mixture of everything, or invisible fucking space aliens massaging their brains, but Terry's finally coming to. Not totally his old self, but he's at least willing to *banter* instead of *worry*.

"Candyland," Fritz suggests.

"I recall that game being for three year olds," Terry answers. He's staring at their pile of random crap, both of them trying to figure out what the hell they want to do with it.

"Yeah, and?"



"And thus it would be entertaining for a few tries, then be a waste of materials."

"But we could always come back to it. Chess is great and all, but variety is super duper," Fritz says, making sure to say 'super duper' like it's a serious, formal word. He flows into the familiar rhythm with Terry. It's like putting on a nice pair of shoes--it fits just right. But now the shoes are romantic. Or something.

"Do you even remember Candyland enough to design it from memory? I don't."

"Can't be that hard," Fritz shrugs.

"Does Candyland have dice or cards?" Terry asks, giving him a side-eye look.

"Uh... Well, shit, you got me there. What's it got?"

"I don't know. Both feel plausible in my mind. And both are things we cannot make with proper accuracy right now."

Fritz rolls his eyes. Damn Terry and his good points.

Actually... He's got a pretty good reply to that now, huh? He scoots over on the floor, sitting a bit closer, and grabs Terry's paw.

Terry jumps in surprise, looking at him, paw squeezing once. "Ah."

"Gasp!" Fritz says out loud, not gasping at all, "Paw holding? So lewd~!"

"I believe you initiated it," Terry says, giving him a look with a serious cheese board of emotion. Fritz would need some good fucking luck to figure those out.

"Yeah, and who's keeping it going?" Fritz accuses.

"You."

"You can let go any time you want, big guy."

Terry narrows his eyes at him. With visible reluctance, he turns his head back to the crap pile. He doesn't let go.

"Ahem," Fritz clears his throat, causing Terry to close his eyes and sigh. "As I was saying: Gasp! What would my fellow smut writers think?! I'm

an *innocent* cat, Terry!"

Terry's smile injects pure, distilled joy straight into Fritz's heart.

"Ugh..." Fritz groans. "When did you become a world champion at checkers?"

Seriously. They've done like five games, and Fritz hasn't won a *single one*. How can they be evenly matched at chess, but not checkers?

Terry shrugs, "It's a very simple game, comparatively speaking. I just make sure my pieces are blocked so that they can't be jumped over."

"Yeah, duh," Fritz waves a paw at the board, where *almost all* Terry's pieces are still there. At the end of the game. "I'm trying to do that too."

At least the pieces are super cute. They're reusing their chess board, but Fritz insisted on drawing new pieces--duct tape weight and all. It was worth it to see Terry's little smile at all the hearts on his.

"You move your front pieces forward without backing them up with pieces further back," Terry says.

"But you have to move the front pieces first!"

"Indeed, but you can think two or more moves ahead so that moving the front piece doesn't immediately put it into danger."

Fritz glares. "Rematch."

"Are you sure?"

"Did I stutter?"

Terry snorts, then, like magic, almost all the tension leaves him. He slumps a little, face looking... pleasantly confused. He glances up at Fritz, something light behind those beautiful baby blues. "You truly are fine with my... unsuitability at romance."

Surprised, Fritz laughs. Not mocking or anything, just a laugh. "Terry--come on. You've been wooing me from the start without trying. 'Unsuitable' my blue fuzzy ass."

There's a shocked pause, a genius red fox processing that.



And Terry starts laughing with him, and all feels right in the world.

...Or would, if Fritz could win *one fucking game* of checkers! Agh!

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#117



WeirdlyHotPepper

Is it weirdly hot (spicy), or
weirdly hot (sexy)?

Joined: Dec 21, 2022
Messages: 352

2.2 - true (Terry)

There's a certain feeling: when one gets a new computer, a new home, a new update on something they've used for years. It's a familiarity, yes, but mixed with the unknown. Change.

It is with an adjacent, though not quite identical, feeling in which Terry continues his interactions with Fritz.

Because Fritz is still Fritz--irreverent, kind, spontaneous--but...

"You're good at this, boyfriend~," Fritz purrs, literally purrs, as if from a large cat. Said cat leans on his arm, watching as Terry does his best to sketch the false stars above them.

...But there is new context to Fritz, a change that cannot be ignored.

"Thank you," Terry says. His voice sounds distant to his own ears, though not nearly as bad as earlier. Some incredulous part of Terry wordlessly mouths denials and prophecies incoming doom. It is only Fritz's relentless presence, his implicit acceptance of Terry's neurosis, that keeps the voice mostly muted.

A partner, a romantic partner. He promised himself he'd given up...

Fritz yawns, rubbing his cheek on Terry's upper arm. It's cute, and he feels a tiny thrill at the thought; he can think such thoughts without reservation, now. They would, perhaps, even be welcome, if he is at all



reading Fritz correctly.

"Mmmm..." Fritz hums. His eyes close, and he leans more heavily on Terry. "I'm tired."

Ah, and, of course, the other side of the coin: figuring out what in the blue blazes he is to do about this, about any of this.

To be clear, Terry is no fool. He understands, explicitly, that romance leads to escalating intimacy, and eventually, if it escalates in the right way, sexual intimacy.

No, his issue comes from interpretations.

Take the current situation, for example. Fritz could merely be sleepy, and they will set up their clothes nests and sleep as normal. Or, perhaps, Fritz could be trying to quietly hint that he wants to sleep close to, or with, Terry. Maybe Fritz is just being Fritz, and reveling in his newfound ability to be so close to Terry. Fritz could even be acting this way with the explicit intent of probing Terry for his thoughts on the matter.

Relationships, especially those romantic in nature, are guessing games. Terry is excellent at guessing... so long as it isn't guessing other people's actions and thoughts. There are too many variables, too much random-seeming variation, to properly get a grip on it.

Terry does know one thing, learned from past failures: For all Fritz's advice about 'being himself', he will assuredly begin resenting Terry if even minimal affection isn't reciprocated. Terry has, more than once, been called 'cold', no matter what his emotions on the matter truly are.

There is a single difference, though. Fritz might not be like his past failures...

"...It's just trust. That's why it's so hard..."

Can he speak his worries here, without ruining the 'mood'--that ephemeral concept relating to, for some unfathomable reason, everyone but Terry's emotional state? If it were anyone but Fritz, he'd dismiss the thought out of hand, but Fritz...

Fritz might actually be different. Terry's almost certain that he accepts Terry's lack of romantic acumen, after all. Or at least has a shockingly



high tolerance for it, in these early days.

Terry decides, as he frequently does, to perform an experiment.

"Fritz," he says softly, causing his friend-- his partner's eyes to flutter open.

"Huh? What? I'm awake!"

Smiling despite himself, Terry says his piece. He has to force the words out, but he will try, and observe the effects.

"I am concerned about expectations again. When you said you're 'tired', were you trying to imply anything?"

Fritz blinks up at him, before smiling. "Well... I wasn't. But I'd be fine with anything you're comfortable with, big guy. Even if it's just sleeping like normal."

A loaded comment. Typical--

No. Fritz promised that they could skip the games. Try.

"And that," he says, "what does that imply? What do you expect of me, in this situation?"

"It's not like that Terry," Fritz shakes his head, small smile still in place. "It's about what you want too. So... what do you expect?"

Terry blinks in surprise. Leave it to Fritz to ask something surprisingly pertinent.

What, exactly, does Terry expect from Fritz? Does he even have the right to expect anything? Ostensibly he does, but he's already a travesty at romance, which probably uses up most of the slack he's been allotted. Even Fritz's forgiveness of that failing will have limits...

In the spirit of the experiment, and because he very suddenly wants to say it, Terry says, "I don't know."

Fritz nods, smile shifting into something even less interpretable. "Let's work through it, then. Do you just want to take it slow, and sleep like we normally do?"

A trapped question, if Terry's ever heard--



No. He will try.

"I apologize if this comes across as rude, but is that a trapped question?" Terry asks, suddenly unable to meet his eyes. It seems he's already ruining it, already too comfortable--

"Terry, look at me," Fritz says, pressing himself closer against Terry's arm. "It's okay. Just look at me."

Looking back is difficult, but when he does, he's taken aback. Fritz's expression is... something, but it doesn't seem upset, or furious. But it isn't happy, either.

"I'm not," Fritz says slowly, staring directly into his eyes, "ever, ever going to give you... fuckin' trapped questions. Like, what even the fuck? That's not a healthy thing, Terry. Why would I want to hurt you like that?"

Terry swallows. Something in that look, it makes his stomach curl. "It doesn't have to be with overtly malicious intent. To my understanding, a trapped question could be used to gauge my level of commitment, or catch me in a lie, or keep my on my toes, or--"

A hug interrupts his explanation. It's awkward, as they sit side-by-side, but Fritz's unusual flexibility allows it with some frankly concerning levels of turning. Terry's arm almost automatically wraps around Fritz's shoulders, his partner's face burying itself into the side of his chest.

"Fritz?"

"Whatever assholes you went out with before," Fritz's voice is muffled, and he squeezes the hug even tighter, "they didn't deserve you."

Of all reactions, such a thing wasn't close to being in Terry's considered possibilities. He's surprised, to put it bluntly. "Uh..."

Fritz squeezes tight once more, then disengages. The look he gives Terry seems almost determined, steely. "Alright. I get it a bit better now. So let me just spell it all out, okay? This isn't some jerkwad game I'm trying to play; I want to actually, for real, no joke, be happy with you, and for you to be happy with me. That's not a trap, or a lie, or a trick or... fucking anything but what it actually means. Got it?"

Terry's mind immediately tries to see the catch, but instead catches on nothing. The gears whir, and he says, "...Okay?"

Narrowed pink eyes stare into him, "Okay. So, again, do you want to just



sleep like we've normally been? Fair warning, I'm gonna want to sleep with you--like, actually sleep no euphemism--eventually, and eventually axe that 'no euphemism' thing too. But it doesn't have to start literally tonight. It's probably best if we take it slow, right?"

A thousand and one thoughts flit through his head, and he grabs one at random, "You're serious about this."

Fritz's expression is the textbook picture of incredulous. "Yeah? Obviously? Aren't you?"

"Of course," Terry says at once, because he knows that, at least, is the unvarnished truth.

With a yawn and nod, Fritz says, "Good. Listen: sleep on it, okay? We're fine. You're fine. I'm happy. And we can make our own rules." He stretches, not even bothering to pretend he isn't showing off, letting his shirt ride up-- "G'night, big guy. Boyfriend~."

"Sleep well," Terry says, mind exhausted, yawning. Perhaps Fritz is right, sleep might improve the situation.

They move to separate clothes nests.

Falling asleep is surprisingly easy. If it's because the false night, or the weighty emotional anchor pulling him into unconsciousness, he's too tired to care.

Terry groans as consciousness seeps back into his psyche.

"Hmm? Oh, shit. Ahem. Hey you, you're finally awake," a voice says. "You were trying to cross the border, right? Walked right into that Imperial ambush..."

Bleary eyed, Terry sits up, blinking stupidly at the source of the voice: a grinning Fritz. "A reference to...?"

"There ain't no way you've never played Skyrim," Fritz says, aghast. "Say it ain't so, Terry; say it ain't so."

"I will plead the fifth," Terry mutters, rubbing the sleep out of his face. He stretches, and an involuntary, low growl builds in his chest-- before he halts it cold like a segfault. Glancing over at Fritz... yes, he heard.



"Honestly?" Fritz says, staring at him with wide, slightly dilated eyes. "Kinda hot." He blinks and shakes his head. "Sorry, I know you're still... working through all that... Shouldn't have--"

"It's okay," Terry says, not sure how to receive the compliment, so he simply doesn't. "I need to adjust regardless."

"...How's that going?" Fritz asks, softly. "If you're okay with saying, I mean."

Taking a quick mental inventory, Terry says, "I'm better than I was, but not nearly perfect." He frowns and looks around. The refrigerator doors are somewhat reflective. He's been avoiding looking into them closely, but perhaps it's time to push more. The thought makes him shiver, but needs must.

Fritz crawls over, rear in the air and quite distracting, as is the thought that Fritz almost certainly wouldn't mind his glance. He sits down, smiling, and grabs his hand. "Alright. Don't go pushing yourself too hard, okay? And I'm here to help."

Terry opens his mouth to deny, but stops short. They are a couple now-- a thought that's surprisingly easier to think, after sleeping. Perhaps... he could try reciprocating some of Fritz's trust. He needs to make sure he isn't too 'cold'.

"I was considering using the refrigerator doors as mirrors. Would you be okay helping me? I could use your support."

Fritz's smile grows into one of pure delight. "Of course I'll help! But... later? It'll probably be better to do it at night, so you can sleep after, right?"

He nods, unreasonably surprised at how easily his vulnerability was accepted. What did he expect otherwise? Scorn? From the likes of Fritz? "That makes sense. Thank you, Fritz."

"Anything for my," Fritz purrs, "boyfriend~!" He devolves into giggles.

"And that, I think, is more of what I expected."

That seems to double, nay, triple the giggling.

"And here's were I'd put your checkers pieces," Fritz gestures to his



side, having badly lost another game, "if I had any!"

"I think, perhaps, it would be better to play something else," Terry suggests. "We are more evenly matched in chess, for example. Or we could play word games."

Fritz pouts--almost certainly exaggerated--and huffs. "What? Not gonna take it easy on your boyfriend?" He teases--probably.

"Unfortunately," Terry says, banking on his 'teasing' interpretation, "I can only promise not to explicitly attempt to improve against my boyfriend."

Fritz opens his mouth to no-doubt snark back, then freezes. A frankly stunning, shining smile grows on his face, eyes sparking once more. "You. Said. It!"

"Pardon me?" Terry asks, taken aback.

"You called me your boyfriend! Yessssss~!" Fritz cheers, doing a small, sitting dance.

Thinking, Terry has to admit that Fritz is right. Terry did say that--and so casually to boot. Still, "And that warrants such a reaction?"

"Yep!" The smile doesn't fade a single inch.

Terry rolls his eyes, if only to try hiding how warm he suddenly feels. Seeing Fritz so happy is... wonderful, he admits, enhanced only by the fact that it's his own actions that caused it. He's felt like this before about Fritz, but the flavor of the feeling is new in their changed context.

Situations like these are why he agreed to the relationship in the first place, despite the worries and portents of doom. It is the connection, that mutual work towards shared happiness, that he craves. If Fritz and him can truly have it, if this small moment is a hint at a possible future... then that is something happy.

"EeeEEEEeee~!" Fritz suddenly squeals, his joy somehow, impossibly, growing. "No way! No way!"

"What?" Terry asks, baffled, amused, and smiling. Whatever it is, it's bound to be... Fritz, through and through.

Fritz collapses onto his back, staring at Terry with sparkling pink eyes. "Tail..."



"...What?"

"He's wagging his tail again..." Fritz says, utterly past the point of no return, almost delirious. "Hehehahah..."

...Tail? Wagging--

The logic blooms in crystalline clarity: Canines often wag their tails when excited or happy, foxes are canines, he's an anthropomorphic fox, they've both demonstrated certain minor behavioral traits of the animals they resemble, he was very happy just a moment ago, therefore it's completely reasonable for his tail to wag, practically speaking.

With something akin to mortification, Terry manually stops the offending appendage, which has somehow kept its wagging up to this point. How did he miss something so obvious? Or, no, perhaps it's because he was distracted, and it wouldn't happen otherwise due to his usual self control?

Then, another thought hits Terry, another chunk torn from his frayed disbelief.

"...'Again?'" He quotes.

The question seems to deliver Fritz an electric shock, who twitches, jerking upright and staring with wide eyes.

"Oh. My. God. Terry."

"...Yes?" Terry dares ask.

Fritz just stares, raw joy in his eyes.

"...Right," Terry says at length, looking away. "Regardless, perhaps we should... continue? With the game?"

It's a diversion, but one Terry would gladly welcome at the moment.

Mercifully, Fritz sighs, though his smile doesn't abate. "Fine, fine... Still cute as hell though."

Terry blinks. "Cute? That's the second time you've called me cute."

Fritz merely giggles as response, setting up the next checkers game. Terry makes sure to win as hard as he can, for no reason other than



impulse.

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