



To Serve (One Thousand) Ferret(s)

By Buddy Goodboy

Picture if you will, dear readers, Maple Street. Every town has one, and they all are as one Maple Street. Families grow up together, young people meet and fall in love. And sometimes, just sometimes, the strangest things happen on Maple Street.

It was a warm night when Frederick Joseph Ferregut, a young adult black-footed ferret, found himself dozing off in his recliner. Frederick was a fairly typical example of his species, with a thin, lanky tube of a body, and short little limbs that kicked reflexively as he snoozed. Freddie slept in a thin tank top and boxers. A ceiling fan pushed the hot air around, and the breeze from the open window helped little. The blue light of the flatscreen TV cast an eerie pall over the scene.

Gradually, a green light from outside grew and shone through the window. The light reached out and cast itself over Freddie's foot, and *pulled*. Freddie's foot let itself be pulled by the light, closer to the window. With a *thump*, Freddie's body fell to the floor and dragged along. He awoke as he was pulled through the window into the maw of a flying saucer, shaped for all Freddie could tell, like two pie tins smushed together.

Inside was larger than he could have imagined.

A call came: "Fear not, Earth mammal! You are among friends!"

Freddie watched as the wall separated, and two figures slugged forward. Both wore hats with silvery antennae. Both were, to Freddie's anthropomorphocentric eye, extremely fat. One looked like a pear-shaped otter, with hips and a rear which could buoy him, while the other was a more apple-shaped raccoon, lifting his flabby paunch to allow his short legs room to move. Some grunts and heaving breaths later, they spoke together:

"We come from the moon of Bigulon!"

Freddie crouched and tried to cover his underwear. "I—My name is Freddie. Of Earth."

The Bigulons looked at each other, then back to Freddie. The otter offered Freddie a chunky paw. Freddie shook it, to the delight of the Bigulons. "Freddie of Earth," said the otter, "We come bearing great gifts. However, we fear our gifts are not yet ready to present to your people."

"Indeed," grunted the raccoon. "We hope you may help us."

Freddie blinked. "How can I help?"

The otter nodded to the raccoon, who hefted his gut again and shuffled off purposefully. The otter said, "We intend to help the peoples of Earth to improve their healths, extend life spans, and end scarcity."

The raccoon returned, fatigued, with a cubic foot of transparent blue gelatin. "Programmable, self-replicating food matter," he wheezed. "Able to match any dietary requirement and palate."

“But we do cannot program it for Earth mammals without further research. May we ask for your assistance, Freddie?”

Freddie’s stomach rumbled. “I could go for a midnight snack.”

The Bigulons frenulated happily. “We thank you, Freddie of Earth!”

Freddie was offered the cube. It extended a pseudopod and separated it into Freddie’s paw, giving him a small sample. He sniffed it, then put it in his mouth. It tasted pleasantly of not much.

They experimented with flavor first, approximating blue raspberry, before tackling dietary requirements. When asked the daily caloric requirements of Earth mammals, Freddie said, “Two thousand kilocalories.”

Readers, at this time, I must interject to present scientific context. A thermochemical calorie, equivalent to 4.184 joules, is the basic unit of thermochemistry. However, the nutritive value of food is measured in large Calories, with a capital *C*, which are equal to one thousand small-*c* calories. We return to the scene.

“Two thousand kiloCalories,” said the otter.

The raccoon chuffed. “Daily?” He hoiked his silver shorts back up over his belly. “Respectable.” The cube wobbled and rippled before thickening and separating a baseball-sized glob of itself into Freddie’s awaiting paws.

“Please,” said the otter with awe. “Eat.”

Freddie sucked the ball into his mouth, savoring the tart, sweet raspberry flavor. He rolled the mouthful around before swallowing in large gulps. His stomach was pleasantly full.

Readers, 3600 big-*C* Calories consumed in excess of a mammal’s base metabolic rate converts to roughly a pound of fat. Freddie had just consumed 2,000,000 Calories.

Freddie’s stomach began to roil. He put his paws to his stomach, which pushed back against him, plushly. Very plushly. Freddie pulled up his tank top and saw that his belly was starting to fill out with pounds upon pounds of fresh, marshmallowy fat.

And it didn’t stop there. He clapped his paws to his cheeks in surprise to find that they, too, were starting to swell and bloat under his touch.

His belly sank and spread out and forward as more and more blubber formed. It pulled his boxers down, and Freddie strained to keep them up—until his rear began to pork up too, keeping his dignity temporarily intact as it swelled and stretched his boxers like a ship’s sail under high wind.

Freddie watched as he grew fatter and fatter and fatter. He quickly lost the lithe shape of a ferret, and then sight of his feet, and then sight of his belly as his chest plumped up, and his cheeks and chins began to push his face up. His belly flopped against his knees, and began to brush his short

shins. His cheeks crept into the bottom of his vision, when he noticed the rush of fat start to slow. His body continued to bloom outward, but slowly.

Freddie guessed he must weigh seven hundred pounds. He outsized each of the bloated Bigulons by a hundred pounds, easily.

The Bigulons clapped their paws. “We dared not mention your apparent malnourishment. We are delighted you are finally of an appropriate size!”

“H-how many calories was that?”

The otter chittered. “Two thousand kiloCalories. If you prefer, 8,368,000,000 joules.”

Freddie moaned around the still-digesting mass in his stomach. A thousand days’ of food, in one slurp. Despite this, his massive stomach growled. “...Any chance of seconds?”