

Threads of Fat, pt. 7

by Cerine Hero

The Fire and Flames Club wasn't exactly what she was expecting. Well, it certainly had a *theme* in all the decorations, from the fake torches on the walls to the fire-themed seats at the tables, but it was the structure of the place that surprised Stella. She was picturing something more like a big auditorium and a huge stage covered in skulls and flamethrowers. That's what metal bands did, right? This place felt more like a jazz club. It was a smaller venue, barely lit except for dim light fixtures on the tables and the stage lights. There was a bar at the back wall, with red lights back lighting the alcohol bottles. The only thing that made the place look different from a poetry jam club was that many of the tables had been moved away from directly in front of the stage.

Oh, and the stage had chain link fencing all the way around it. Stella raised an eyebrow at that and her mind could only wonder if that was more functional or decorative.

There were maybe fifteen or so people altogether in the club, with a few more filtering in, and even with that many it was barely crowded. But it was a little crowded wherever Stella went, since she was the size of four people, and it was a little hard maneuvering her large body around the small space. She picked out an empty table near the back of the venue. Vera had suggested it to her if she wasn't used to very loud music. The skunk moved an extra chair over to spread her weight across both of them, but they were relatively small, so she ended up having to stand and grab a third, sliding it underneath her widened rump.

Stella was really beginning to feel her growing size and weight in the past week. This morning, she'd stepped onto the scale in her bathroom and adjusted the weights until the bar balanced at over seven-hundred-and-sixty pounds. The skunk's body didn't look much different with an extra fifty or so pounds since the first day, but she was already a balloon of wobbling dough, what else was she going to become? If anything, her breasts and her belly hung a bit lower and her ass took up more space, but that was all. The roll under her muzzle was probably thicker, too.

But more so than looking fatter, she was starting to feel a lot fatter. Stella's wardrobe was a few sizes out of date now, and she was overflowing these tiny chairs. Vera told her to dress casually, so she did, wearing a black, low-cut top with an offset zipper that couldn't quite close around her fuller chest. Stella stuck a safety pin under it to shore it up. She had on one of Vera's black caps and her silver hair up in a ponytail. The skunk's midriff bulged out of her top and over her lap no matter how often she tugged on her shirt. There was especially no winning with her sat down, with her belly pushed up and out by her thighs.

Walking from the car to the club, and heading down the narrow indoor ramp to the underground venue left her out of breath. She inhaled deeply, taking in the slightly stale air as her chest swelled over the top of her shirt. The skunk was a little red in the face and she relaxed her weight on her seats, sitting as close to the table as her belly allowed. Her chairs squeaked and groaned under her girth, drawing a little attention from the nearby patrons. A raven with a pierced beak and a arced plume of bright red feathers on the top of his head squinted in her. It was hard to tell if the other people in the club were looking at her because they recognized her, or because she looked out of place. She certainly felt out of place.

The bartender appeared beside Stella's table, wearing all black on top of black fur, so she barely stood out against the dim light in the club. Stella was just a little taken back by her sudden appearance and put one paw on her chest.

"Get you something?" the wolfess asked, her paws crossed behind her back. "You look stiff."

"I probably am," the skunk replied, reaching up and rubbing her neck. "Uh, I'll just take whatever you've got. Price isn't an issue."

"Don't worry about it," the bartender told her. "Vera told me to keep an eye out for you, so it's on the house."

Before Stella could insist on paying, the bartender was already turning and heading back to the bar. Biting her lip, the skunk reached into her purse and pulled out a fifty-dollar bill. She slipped it underneath the table centerpiece so that it could be found later. She smiled a little to herself at what the bartender said. Vera was giddy about Stella coming to see her show, and apparently couldn't keep it to herself. Her band must have played here a lot if she was friends with the bartender.

Cheers rose up from the scattered audience and Stella glanced towards the stage to see the host walking out with a microphone. He attempted to spin up the crowd a little, getting hardly any more excited hooting than the first round. With a grin, the piercing-decorated leopard raised the microphone up to his mouth. "Alright, I know you've been waiting, so let's get this show going tonight! First things first, let's have a big welcome for our opening act – our very own Redwheel Turning!"

Stella joined in with the scattered applause, but her heart sank a little bit for Vera. She knew being an independent band was tough, but... wow. Of course, the fox had a regular day job, so she probably couldn't tour. Doing local shows was probably the extent of things. Not that the skunk was going to judge her; she had a regular job back in her old life and no energy to do anything else, so she was actually impressed a bit by Vera's tenacity.

Red spotlights shined on the curtain, displaying a rotating wheel with eight spokes. The image was a little distorted because it was shining through the chain links. With the logo in place, the band walked out onto the covered stage, led by a pair of twin ocelots – a guy and a girl – in overdone costumes. Their presence took up most of the stage, and they bowed like a couple of stage performers who had just finished a production. There was a little bit of scattered groaning. Then the musicians emerged from the curtain to pick up their waiting instruments, and the cheering was back. Several of the guests got up from the tables and headed down to stand in the open space in front of the caged stage.

Even from her seat at the rear of the venue, Stella was able to spot Vera clear as day; the white-furred fox was gleaming even in the dark. Well, she was still *mostly* white-furred. The fox had painted her fur with large, black circles around her eyes and all down the jaw of her muzzle to simulate a skull, and her fauxhawk was tipped with bright yellow and orange, like a flame. She was wearing a wreck of a gray top, held together mostly by thick stitching and pins. It was ripped off just below her bust, so her entire, slender midriff was showing. Dark jeans hung around her hips, held up by a silver-studded belt. The jeans looked like they had been hacked half to death with a hand saw, with thick, white vulpine fur puffing out through the ragged tears.

Stella felt her heart rate pick up as Vera looked towards her and waved. The skunk waved back and bit her lip. Several people turned to see who the fox was waving towards, their eyes falling on the fat skunk at the back of the venue. She blushed, but no one really gave her any mind. As the musicians got their instruments ready, the bartender appeared again and set down a glass swirling with soda, ice, and presumably alcohol. Stella nodded at her and the wolfess gave her a nod before returning to the bar and helping another guest.

The skunk sipped her drink, tasting the undertones of rum with the soda. It wasn't one of her favorites, but she drank it to help calm some of her nerves. Then the music started, and Stella immediately took the drink and finished the whole thing. Both of the ocelots immediately howled into their microphones as the band began to play. It was definitely not Stella's style of music.

Or rather – the music was fine, if loud and heavy. The singing was something else. It became clear a few minutes into the second song that this was far less of a concert and more of a metal opera. The ocelots were acting as much as they were singing, and the music followed the "story." Stella couldn't make out a single thing the singers actually said, so she let her attention drift off towards her fox instead. She watched Vera play the guitar, head held down and bobbing along with the rhythm. Her claws picked at the strings while her other paw glided effortlessly along the neck. Stella tried to tune out all the other sounds and focus on just the guitar, but it was hard with how loud everything was.

The music slowed and one of the ocelots was laying on the stage, covered in red ribbons pulled

from inside her costume. Apparently Stella missed *something* in the story line. The male ocelot fell to his knees and delivered a long, purple soliloquy before lifting up his sister and departing from the stage to the sound of trailing-off music. Everything was quiet for a couple minutes before the rhythm guitarist, a porcupine, propped up a microphone stand and slapped in a cordless mic she'd been keeping on the back of her belt.

"Okay, are we ready to get going?" she asked, and she was met with a round of excited cheers from the guests. "Alright, Tim, kick it!"

The drummer led the band into another song, one that sounded like an actual musical piece. The audience was on their feet and most everyone headed down to the cage to dance and be with the band now. As they broke into the freer and more energetic music, Vera came to life, moving to the front of the stage and bouncing with the beat. Stella sat up straight as she watched, smiling and waving her bushy tail back and forth.

As the song faded out and they prepared for the next, Vera waved towards the skunk, beckoning for her to come on down. Stella blushed and pushed herself up from her seat, making her way clumsily between the tightly-packed tables with her wide hips. She almost knocked over several chairs, not used yet to how much wider she'd gotten in the past week. The crowd around the cage parted for her so that she could come all the way up to the fencing, looking up as the white fox plucked away at the electric guitar. The speakers were deafening up here, and all she could hear was a wall of sound.

Vera winked at her and stepped up to her side of the fence, kneeling down and winking at Stella. The skunk fanned her ears backwards and wrapped her fingers into the chain links, leaning forward until her body pressed against the fence. Fat squished through the gaps. Vera pushed her long, slender muzzle through one of the holes and kissed the skunk. Stella felt her heart leap into her neck and she pushed back into the kiss, her shaking paws rattling the fence. The shoe finally dropped for many of the guests and they clapped for the two of them, cheering.

The music had subsided for a moment while they kissed. Stella glanced around, finding all eyes were on her and Vera. The porcupine raised her mic back up and shouted, bringing things back into the music. Vera winked towards the skunk and then leapt back to her feet, pounding out notes on her guitar. Stella remained right in the front for the rest of their set, surrounded by the metalheads. She bounced, both on her feet and around her middle, along with the music, lost in watching Vera play.

"Okay, so tell me. What's with the fence?" Stella pointed down towards the stage and Vera followed her finger. The fox's fur was thick and clumped with sweat after the show and she leaned forward onto the table next to the skunk. Between the two of them, they were taking up all four chairs.

"Oh, yeah," Vera replied, nodding. "It's a s-safety thing. Like, not for tonight, because everybody is local, but when there's touring bands coming in, and there's out-of-towners, s-s-sometimes things get rowdy. I've had beer bottles thrown at me and drunks try to get on s-s-... through the f-f-fuck."

"I gotcha. But holy shit."

"It's part of the deal," Vera replied, shrugging. "But everybody handles it quick."

It was well into evening now and the show was over. Stella and Vera sat at her table in the back while the staff swept and cleaned, and the other band members from both Redwheel Turning and the headliner relaxed. The pair of ocelots were nowhere to be seen.

"So where'd your other singers go?" Stella asked. "The twins?"

"Oh," the fox grinned and looked down at the table. Her white fangs shined against the dyed black fur on her chin. "They take off when they're done. It's a lot of experimental prog stuff they're wanting to get into, so we play along and let them have their time. Keeps the peace."

Stella nodded along. "I see," she lied. Lifting up a paw, the skunk cupped her chubby fingers around Vera's chin and lifted her face up so she could look at the makeup. "You've really got the spooky skull look down," she giggled. "Did you do it yourself?"

“I did.”

“It's kind of weird seeing you like this. Well, not as weird as seeing you wear *my* face, but still a little weird.”

Vera couldn't hold back a laugh. “Oh, god, I haven't thought about it like that before...”

The skunk felt her stomach rumble loudly. The only thing she'd had to eat or drink all evening was her rum and soda a few hours ago. Vera heard the gurgle, too, and she slid her paw underneath Stella's top, secretly rubbing her fingers through the fur and pressing softly on the plump flesh. Stella blushed and glanced to see if anyone was looking. They were all minding their own business; and they knew the couple were off being alone, anyways.

“Hungry?” Vera asked, her gray eyes twinkling from inside the empty “sockets” painted on her face.

Stella glanced at her bracelet, and the black stone was glowing with an intense orange. She inhaled deep and nodded. “Yeah, I'm starving. I honestly need to eat a ton...”

“Need my extra paws again?” Vera gave the fat skunk's belly a tease and Stella felt a tingle under her fur. The skunk looked up and met the fox's playful gaze.

“I think I will,” Stella replied, leaning her shoulder against the fox's. “That's your thing, isn't it? Feeding?”

Vera blushed, her unpainted cheeks turning a bit rosy through her fur. “Mm-hmm. Always have been. Kinda hard f-finding people who like it, though.”

The skunk's eyes slid towards her bracelet again. Blubbery back to the wall, Stella would have said that she didn't find the actual act of being fed as exciting as Vera wanted it to be, she was sure. But neither did she dislike it; it was an excuse to have the fox resting up close and personal with her, and share some intimacy with her. Plus the bracelet seemed like it was getting harder to keep sated; she was eating a lot, but still, the device was glowing orange. If stuffing sessions with the vixen were the way to keep this world going, then that wasn't too bad.

They were making her gain tons of weight, though, but that was going to happen one way or another, wasn't it? A choice between fatter skunk and no fox was an easy one.

“I'm thinking about a lot of food...” Stella teased, smiling. Vera's white eyebrows popped up and she rubbed her thumb around the skunk's navel. “And I want you to pick it all out for me.”

Vera's eyes twinkled and she ran her free paw through her fiery hair. “That sounds fun. When you thinking?”

“Tomorrow good? I can pick you up and we'll go shopping.”

“That s-s-sounds perfect. But let's get you dinner right now, okay? Lemme check if Kimmy can whip up s-some nachos...”

Stella's belly pushed against the back of the shopping cart while she walked. She could feel the fat wobbling from side to side in front of her with each step, dragging her half-exposed tummy against the wire panel on the cart. The two of them should have gone clothes shopping first, but now they were in the frozen foods aisle, with the skunk feeling the draft of cool air against her waistline. Vera stood with the door open, looking at all the ice cream brands.

“Which is your favorite?” she asked, smirking over her shoulder. The fox had washed her fur clean overnight, so her face and hair were a stark, snowy white once again. Behind her were stacks of ice cream cartons filling up the freezer.

The skunk wiggled her nose and pointed at the pink ice cream cartons. “Strawberry.”

With a smile, Vera grabbed three of them and put them in the already over-loaded shopping cart. There were tons of foodstuffs in the cart already, mostly sweet and salty things that were ready-made and the fox could easily feed to the skunk. Packages of cupcakes, donuts, bags of chips, and now ice cream. Stella would have preferred a little more moderation, but she promised Vera got to pick it all out. Plus, the fox told her she was bulking up for her new role, and Stella didn't have a good excuse to

fight back against that.

"This isn't all one meal, right?" she asked, raising an eyebrow at the pile of food in the shopping cart. "I mean, my belly is huge, but I'm pretty sure my stomach is regular-sized..."

"We'll f-find out!" the fox replied, grinning. Her white tail swished back and forth in the air behind her. "If not, we can make it two."

Stella scrunched her nose, but then she took a look down at the bracelet sinking into her chunky wrist. After *several* plates of nachos the night before, the glow was down to a yellowish-green. Don't argue, she told herself, just let her stuff you to bursting. Then belly rubs. "Grab another carton."

Vera's tail shivered in delight and she stacked a fourth strawberry ice cream carton into the cart. She led the skunk down to the other end of the aisle and looked around at the frozen apple pies and other desserts. Stella leaned her weight from one foot to the other, puffing for breath. Getting around the grocery store was harder with her weight than it was being a celebrity. She'd noticed a couple glances of half-recognition from other shoppers, but maybe it was a banal occurrence to see movie stars at the grocery store around here. At the same time, she wasn't dressed up, but how many obese, cinnamon-furred and white-haired skunks were there in the city?

Stella leaned forward, resting her breast weight on the push bar on the shopping cart now that it was loaded down with food. She tried earlier and almost tipped it. Vera loaded another box into it and then took stock of the whole feast she'd collected so far.

"I think... this is good," she said, rubbing her paws together. "Check out?"

"Yes, please," Stella replied. "The quicker I can lay down, the better."

"Paw massage going on the list."

Stella knew she was in love for a reason.

They headed for the front of the grocery store, and picked out a checkout aisle that wasn't busy. Stella stopped in front of it, judging the narrow width between the two dividers covered in candy and magazine racks. No way her hips were fitting through there. She motioned for Vera to go ahead and gave her a handful of money to pay. The fox began to unload the cart onto the counter.

Stella waited, drumming one paw on the push bar of the cart and the other on the curve of her belly. She looked around, glancing at the rows of magazines available for impulse purchase at the register. Her brain was off somewhere else and not actually stopping to think about what she was looking at, so when her eyes fell on a beautiful, round, brown-and-white face framed with silver hair, it took her a moment to recognize it.

That was *her* face. She was on the cover of the magazine she did a photo shoot for. And she was gorgeous. The green and black dress they had her wear was to die for, even if it had sheer strips showing off her belly fur and the top of her chest through the fabric. That just made Stella think of all the tape they stuck on her bust to keep her stuffed inside it...

She couldn't believe the magazine was real, even if she was there when they shot the pictures. It was too surreal for her to handle, looking at herself with her hair beautifully coiffed and falling elegantly around her face. Every blemish was airbrushed away, but it was hard to tell if they'd digitally altered her figure any. She doubted it, actually. This world was weird.

Stella tore her gaze away and looked at the cheaper publication right next to the glossy gossip magazine. It was a paper tabloid – and she was on it, too. "Stella Mitchell overeating at a business lunch!" read the headline, next to a photo of her at the bistro a couple weeks ago, fat hanging over the edges of her chairs. It was a far less flattering picture than the professional magazine cover. "Inside scoop: Gaining weight for new film? That tummy pops out, more pix on page 4!"

"Not as cute as I pictured," she muttered, remembering teasing the paparazzi way back then. She'd be a little more careful in the future.

"Oh my gosh, it is you!" someone whispered. Stella's eyebrows rose and she lumbered her weight around to look behind her and see a young mouse standing behind her. The girl was practically bouncing off her feet and levitating.

“Hi, there,” Stella replied, smiling awkwardly. She looked back to see if Vera was done getting the groceries paid for.

“You’re Stella Mitchell, right?” the mouse asked.

“Yes,” the skunk replied, but she put a finger up to her muzzle. “But shh, kinda busy and don’t really want to get swamped, you know?”

“Oh, I’m so sorry! I just... I never thought I’d meet you. I’m a huge fan of everything you do and all your movies and I’m really, really looking forward to *Star Ranger* because I know you’re going to kick it out of the park and it’s really empowering to see you playing Princess Callandra and-”

“Um, thank you so much,” Stella said, intruding into the stream of consciousness. She wiggled her nose and tried to fight down the butterflies in her belly as the fan gushed at her. “That really means a lot to me. And, uh, it was nice to meet you, but I’m here with my, uh...”

Her mind went blank and she turned to look at Vera. The white vixen was helping bag the groceries and load them into the cart. Stella racked her brain, trying to think of what the fox was to her, and only one word actually made sense. She swallowed hard before turning back to the mouse, and she felt her face heating up.

“My girlfriend.”

The mouse gasped and fanned her paws. “Oh, okay! I don’t want to keep you, but, um, if it wouldn’t be too much trouble, could we, maybe, get a picture?”

“Oh, absolutely!”

The mouse squished against Stella’s side and held her phone up to arm’s length, snapping a photo of her and the skunk smiling together. Stella snuck a peek at the result. Wasn’t like the magazine cover, of course, but it also wasn’t as awkward or embarrassing as the paparazzi pic of her butt smothering a pair of bistro seats. Stella waved goodbye to her fan – Other Stella’s fan, rather, she hadn’t done anything yet – and turned back towards the checkout lane. Vera was watching her from the other end of the aisle, resting her elbows on the loaded cart and grinning knowingly. The skunk’s heart fluttered and she shifted her weight on her feet a bit before gesturing that she’d go around.

Vera was waiting for her at the automatic doors when Stella finally waddled her way around the checkout lanes. “That was cute,” she said, pushing the overloaded cart through the opening doors.

“Well, I try to be nice,” the skunk replied. She didn’t actually know what kind of reputation Other Stella had before now. But she’d be nice if she could help it.

“When do I get an autograph?”

“You are getting *so* much more than an autograph.”

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