

## Threads of Fat, Chapter 9

by Cerine Hero

“Miss Mitchell, it's your line.”

Stella was busy trying to readjust herself in her way-too-narrow seat. The heavy skunk was at least half-again as wide as the chair they gave her, and there was only so much her fat ass would compress. The other people weren't being mean, it was pretty much the biggest seat in the studio, but it had square, upholstered armrests that wrapped all the way around her middle. Stella tried to fit herself awkwardly at an angle, but she was sure she came across as looking like a beached whale.

She was at a script reading for *All the Mighty*, the movie she told a nationwide audience that she was going to be playing a secret character in on Rose's talk show. This was probably one of the easiest things she'd had to do so far. Everything was relaxed – chair size issues aside – and there wasn't any dressing up and makeup to do. She'd still fixed herself up before coming, of course, but it was nice not to have half a dozen preening makeup artists fussing around her for once. The skunk wore a green thigh-length top over a pair of leggings, feeling them stretch and pinch as she shifted her weight. She also had a scarf wrapped around her shoulders, in the hopes that it would distract from her neck.

Her bracelet was reaching insatiable levels, and it was getting much harder to keep the bizarre thing happy. Almost-daily stuffing sessions with Vera were needed just to make headway against the reddening glow. The skunk was generating an embarrassing amount of trash every day from having takeout delivered to her home. And all the eating was compounding her issues with her size. She wasn't fitting into the chair too well because she'd gained another fifty pounds of belly-hanging, ass-wobbling, boobs-too-big-to-anything-with fat. It was a miracle she could still fit into anything at all. Getting into Jackie's limousine had become an almost impossible task, as her hips were too wide to squeeze through the doors, so she'd ended up being a little late to the script reading because the tigress had to come back with a larger vehicle.

As the script supervisor reminded her that it was her line, Stella was pinching a danish in her muzzle. She'd moved the snacks table to be beside her seat, and no one had really raised a fuss, since she reminded them all she was putting on weight for this role – a role she still barely understood. There was some solemn nodding, and Stella idly gobbled up practically everything on the table. She'd at least eaten enough icing- and cheese-covered breakfast treats to make her bracelet dip from a vulgar orange to a chartreuse yellow-green.

Stella crammed the rest of her danish into her mouth and swallowed, patting her stomach. She looked around the gathered group of other actors, lead crew members on the movie, and the director. Blushing, she flicked her script – actually, they called it a “side” when they gave it to her, and she didn't want to look dumb asking what that meant – and peeked at where they had left off.

“Oh, um... what was the last line, again?” she asked, peeking bashfully over the top of her stack of papers.

The mustang sitting beside her looked at his script again. Stella glanced at him. She had no idea who he was, but he was handsome. “Lady of the West, I have brought the amulet.”

“Neither was the limo on the way here,” Stella muttered. There were some chuckles among the cast. She looked for that line on her page and then read her response. Clearing her throat, she said, “So you have, dear knight. You have traveled to lands far and deep places beneath, and I would reward your mighty accordingly.” This felt like reading plays in high school all over again, and she was getting into the spirit of overacting.

She reached for another treat and started eating while the other actors read their lines, moving on to a scene she wasn't in. Stella was about as lost in this script as she was trying to figure out *Star Ranger*. It was based on a years-old fantasy novel, and apparently her character was some kind of fey queen. She'd never read the book, so she didn't know why the Lady of the West needed to be played by someone over eight hundred pounds, but whatever. Saying she was gaining weight for the role was a

good cover for how fast she was inflating. Her bed at home had a bent frame now, which was significantly pronounced when Vera climbed into it. The poor fox sank right down into the deep well where Stella's weight had crushed everything.

The readings continued, with them running through each scene before Stella realized it. It was a fantasy action film, so a lot of the dialogue was just yelling and noises, so reading the script without all the extras didn't take very long at all. So the group started from the top, and Stella waited for them to get back to her lines.

"Alright, so, again," the script supervisor told her, "you'll enter the scene by emerging from the flower of the Yub-um Tree, and Derek's character will be kneeling before you in obeisance."

The director nodded, rubbing her paws together. "The Lady is very arch and dignified, so let's see some upturned muzzle and deigning to address his presence. I mean, really deign on him. You'll be walking down the petals of the flower to stand before him, so you're looking down, really lordling yourself over him because he's just a little insignificant speck to you."

"I don't know what all that means," Stella said, grinning sheepishly.

The mustang beside her snickered. "She means to act like a bitch." There was more laughter among the group and Stella joined in. She nodded along and looked at her sheet.

"Okay. Let me stand up for this." The huge skunk held out her paw towards the mustang – Derek – and he helped her stand up. It took a minute to haul all of her up and off the seat. Her belly swayed underneath her clothes, barely restricted by her snug leggings that were pulled up and over it. Huffing, Stella put a paw on her chest to catch her breath. There wasn't a lot of room in the middle of the circle of seats, so she squeezed her way between her chair and the mustang's to get out into the open space in the rest of the room. Consulting her papers again, she asked, "So just, like... really sarcastic, right?"

"Yes, let's see that," the director replied. She pointed at the skunk and the horse. "Action!"

Sarcastic Stella could do, certainly. That would barely even be acting. Re-reading her lines again, she waited for the mustang to get down on one knee and deliver his line about bringing the medallion. This was very different from trying to stumble her way through the other movies, when she'd just shown up in the middle of everything. There wasn't a vice of pressure around her head and heart. There were no cameras or crew members staring from every angle. The actors were all testing lines and deliveries, and the script supervisor was making notes and listening to the actors' thoughts on how to play. They were working, but it felt a little more... fun? Smirking, Stella decided to just overdo it. She could do arch.

Holding her script like a fan against her chest, the obese skunk tilted her nose up towards the ceiling and waddled a circle around the horse. "So you have, dear knight," she said, glancing down at the other actor past the circumference of her chest. She checked the script again for the rest of her weird line. "You have traveled to lands far and deep places beneath, and I would reward your mighty efforts accordingly."

Stella laid the sarcasm on thick, and several people, including the mustang, chuckled at her excessive performance. Smiling, she kept going, "What boon – is that right? Yeah, boon. What boon would you ask of the Lady of the West? What treasure is equal to the task of returning my precious amulet? What would a mighty warrior desire?"

Derek put one hoof on his chest and raised his other arm, matching Stella's faux enthusiasm and theatrics. "I would ask for my lady's greatest treasure, in return for her amulet."

The skunk came back from the snack table. She went to fetch another blueberry muffin while the mustang was doing his line. "The greatest treasure I possess is none other than the amulet you already carry, little knight." She grinned and reached over to tap the kneeling horse on the nose with her finger, making them both laugh. "But I could offer you something in equivalent exchange. Perhaps-" she turned away, and put her paw on her blubbery hip "-an evening with the Lady? Could that fill the fancy of your little knight- I mean, fuck! Not that. I mean, fill your fancy, little knight. Oh

my god.”

Everyone in the room burst out laughing at the mortified skunk's slip. “That's really good,” the script supervisor said, shaking his head, “but I think that would hurt us trying to get the PG-13 rating...”

Stella hid her face behind her script. Gosh, what was she thinking? She'd been right in the mustang's face, and he really was quite handsome, and she was just letting things roll right off her tongue and being loose with her acting. So it naturally just blurted right out of her mouth. She looked at the horse, who had stood up and was wiping off the knees of his pants with a grin.

“I'm sorry,” she whispered to him.

“No, it's fine,” the mustang replied, smiling. “Not every day Stella Mitchell makes a pass at you.”

She blushed even worse and returned to her seat, squeezing her rump in awkwardly between the armrests. The rest of the session went relatively well, all things considered. They did the scene with the Lady of the West and the knight once more, except the director told Stella to cool off her ham-fisted acting a little bit. She wasn't sure how to really hit a mid-point between just reading it and really going full speed, but she tried, and it seemed to satisfy the director. While the rest of the actors ran through the parts of the script that her character wasn't present for, Stella polished off the remaining treats on the snack table. She licked her fingers clean and pat the top of her stomach while the rest of the group wrapped up for the day.

The director and other important people quickly discussed another meeting time later in the week for more pre-production business on the film, and then they dismissed everyone. Beside her, the handsome mustang rose out of his seat and stretched, and Stella tried to do the same. But she didn't go very far, feeling the snug embrace of the seat around her hips. The skunk leaned back, her eyes opening wide, and she rocked forward again, trying to get enough momentum to roll upwards onto her feet. Once again, she didn't get very far before the whole seat shifted with her ass. The chair thumped on the floor and several people turned to see what the noise was.

Stella shrank under their gazes. She coughed and tried once again, with significantly more effort, to wrest her massive body from the chair. The skunk gripped her claws into the armrests and pushed down as much as her legs tried to lift her up, but nope. She fell back again.

“Do you need some help?” Derek asked, offering his hoof. Stella blushed and took it, letting him help pull her up. She got up on her feet and waddled a bit under her own weight – and the weight of her chair.

“Are you fucking serious,” she groaned. The chair was *still* stuck to her hips, now clinging to her rump like a parasite. She tried to shake her body and get it loose. The chair just swung wildly back and forth as her huge hindquarters jiggled. Two more people came over and grabbed the back of the chair and started to tug. It slipped inch by inch while Derek pulled on Stella's paws. All at once, everyone involved put in a herculean tug, and the skunk popped free from the chair. Unfortunately, her momentum carried her forward, and she bowled the mustang to the floor. Stella's soft body completely enveloped him, jiggling heavily from the sudden surge of motion. She was nose-to-nose with Derek in what was surely a compromising pose.

“Are you alright?” Stella asked. She thought her face was going to burst into flames. “I really wish that was the first time that's happened...”

“Yeah,” he wheezed, nodding. “Kinda felt like getting hit by a wrecking ball covered in jelly...”

A few people helped her to her feet, rolling her off the stunned horse. Stella excused herself, gathering her things and running away as fast as she could fit herself through the door. She was still blushing fire engine red as she wobbled down the hallway.

The office building where they were meeting to do the script reading on the studio lot was relatively old, and the hallways were narrow. Stella was barely able to leave enough room for other people to squeeze around her as she walked, and her hips kept bouncing off the walls – to say nothing about the water fountain she had to twist sideways to get around! She passed by other rooms and

offices, where studio managers and other figures were having meetings. By the time she was at the elevator at the end of the hall, she was out of breath and leaning her belly against the wall beside the call button. The skunk jabbed it with a chubby finger. Both elevator doors slid open immediately.

She squished into the elevator, taking up more than half the space inside. It was small and cramped, and hard for Stella to turn back around to face the control panel. As she reached to touch the button for the ground floor, where her ride was hopefully waiting for her, she heard a voice calling and asking to hold the door. Stella dipped her finger down and pressed the button to keep the door open, waiting for the other rider to catch up.

A tall maned wolf in a fine suit stepped into the doorway, and Stella craned her neck back to look up at him. Her jaw almost dropped.

"Hello, Stella," Chris said to her, surprise lighting up in his eyes and a smile curling his lips. "I had no idea you were in the building." The leggy wolf squeezed into the elevator with her, taking up the corner of the elevator opposite to her. "I haven't seen you since."

"Filming *Oceanview Terrace*," she finished, nodding absent-mindedly. That was right, she hadn't seen him since she fainted on the movie set. She remembered the sweltering lights, trying to get used to her newly-fattened body, the nervous apprehension about being somewhere completely out of her control... but she also remembered his paws pulling her close, grabbing rolls of blubber around her dress, and pushing into a firm, passionate kiss.

And she remembered how the kiss, at least from his side, was fiction. And that the last thing she felt before crumbling to the floor like a jelly mold was her dream bubble bursting when he brushed her off so completely as soon as the director called cut.

"Are you doing alright?" he asked her while the elevator doors slid closed. "They told me you were okay, but I haven't gotten the chance to ask personally."

"Ah... yes, I'm fine," Stella replied, trying to squish herself as far into the corner of the elevator as her butt would allow. This whiplash was killing her. Here was her celebrity crush for years, but she'd dismissed him as an asshole after their meeting. Now he was being friendly and warm, and standing just inches from her. Swallowing hard as she waited for the unbearably slow elevator to start, she said, "They ended the shoot after I passed out. Did everything... go okay?"

Chris nodded and adjusted his sleeves. "Yes. The director ended up liking that take. Your expressions were so visceral. Just superb. Last I heard, the editor was able to scratch together some other clips to finish out the scene, so it's gone on to post-production. We should hear more in a couple months."

"Well, I'm glad I wasn't an inconvenience to anyone, then," she muttered. The skunk wrung her paws together and turned her gaze up towards the floor display above the elevator's control panel.

A paw came to rest softly on her shoulder. "Are you alright? You look pretty stressed-out."

Stella inhaled deep and shrugged, offering the wolf a glance. "Well, I flattened one of my co-stars. Again."

Chris covered his muzzle and tried not to laugh. "Oh, dear. Well, it happens to all of us. I was doing an on-location shoot with Tawni, and we performed a stunt. I did it wrong, rather, and I dislocated my shoulder. Put production back for two weeks. The producers chewed me out good for that one, but--"

The elevator suddenly lurched and came to a stop, nearly knocking Stella over and sending Chris into the wall. He pushed himself back up and checked on the skunk, who was wobbling unsteadily. They both stood in silence and listened, waiting to hear any unsettling noises from the elevator cables, but there was nothing. The car had just stopped. Stella tapped the ground floor button again, wrinkling her muzzle when nothing happened. There was a panel underneath the main set of buttons, and she flipped it open to find the emergency call button – as well as a pasted note listing the elevator's weight limit of nine hundred pounds.

Well, that was why.

She pushed the call button and huffed. "Guess we'll be waiting."

They stood in the elevator for a while, with Stella trying not to freak out and Chris looking calmly bored. After a few minutes, the maned wolf sat himself down in the corner. Stella decided to do the same to get her weight off her feet. Chris held out his paw and helped her sit. On the floor, her hips pushed against both the wall and against the maned wolf at her side.

"So there was something I wanted to ask you, since we've got time to kill," he said. Stella looked towards him, raising her eyebrow. "You seem different. Compared to what I've known of you, at least. Pretty much from when the day you fainted onward. Has... everything been alright?"

Stella felt her breath catch in her throat and she rubbed her thumbs together. Good grief, how was she possibly going to answer this? How well did they actually know each other? She got the impression, way back on that first day, that she and he were at least acquainted from his reactions. "How do you mean?"

"Well..." Chris rested his head back on the burnished wall of the elevator. "I saw you on Rose's program the other day, and you just seem more guarded than usual. A little uncomfortable, I suppose. I'm sure you have people to talk to-"

I do not, she thought. Not one damn soul. Not Vivian or Vera, not about this.

"-but I thought it would be worthwhile to ask, all the same."

Stella exhaled and shook her head. "You can tell all that? How close are you watching?"

"I'd like to think I wouldn't have to watch too closely. Sorry if that sounded crass. But I figured... one professional to another, we go through a lot of the same issues."

But Stella still didn't actually consider herself an actress. She lived it, but it wasn't her life. This was Other Stella's life, and Other Stella's problems. She had her *own* problems, which were only tangentially related to being a famous starlet. Stella wondered how much she even could try to explain to him. He really felt sincere. Maybe she judged him a little too quickly back on that first day of shooting. She'd been confused and vulnerable, so his acting performance had hit her right in the heart.

"You're right," she replied, sighing heavily. She glanced at the bracelet on her wrist. Yellow again already. "But it's not really something I can get into. I suppose I'm just... worried. In a general sense. Maybe not something specific," she lied.

"I am certain, whatever it is, you'll be able to overcome it," he told her.

Stella's eyes were still fixed on the bracelet in front of her. "Not this one. But thank you. For your concern. Everything will be fine, you're right." She offered a tight smile that soured quickly as she swore she saw the glow in the bracelet become slightly more orange.

Chris changed the subject. "So speaking of Tawni, you're starring with her in *Star Ranger*, right?"

"Yes, I am. She's actually... the first co-star I squished."

"Oh my. Well, the premiere for the movie is next week." Chris reached out and gently brushed back a lock of her silver hair from her face. Stella's eyes widened a bit and her heart thumped in her chest. "Have you arranged a date yet?"

Was that something she needed to do? Stella stumbled over her words for a moment before answering. "Ah... no, not yet."

"I'd be happy to escort you on the red carpet. My manager got me a pass from the production company."

Stella swore her heart locked up as tightly as the elevator car. A voice in her head was screaming. Dream come true! But another part of her was telling her to wait and think it over. She thought about Vera, and shook her head. "I, um... well, the thing is-"

The elevator doors slid open, revealing that the elevator had gotten caught halfway between floors. A handful of firefighters were standing on the floor above, kneeling down and peering into the elevator car. Chris and Stella climbed to their feet. The maned wolf placed his paw on Stella's back and led her forward, trying to help her out of the car as gentlemanly as he could. Stella took the firefighters'

paws and they pulled while Chris pushed, his paws squishing into her rotund backside. Her thick middle completely filled up the gap between the floor and the top of the elevator. She blushed as all four firefighters grabbed her paws and elbows, tugging firmly. Slowly, the thick skunk slipped through the narrow space, and she was helped to her feet. She grimaced and rubbed her sides where she'd been squeezed, feeling even more embarrassed now for needing a rescue. Chris climbed out after her, fitting through much more easily.

The building manager, appearing from behind the firefighters, apologized to them both profusely. He offered favors and gifts to keep them happy, but Stella shooed him away, heading towards the stairs.

"So, about the date..." Chris was saying, following alongside her.

Stella smoothed down her clothes and tried to give Chris a pleasant smile, but it just came off as strained. "Actually, I really think I'm going to get out to my ride. I've embarrassed myself plenty today and I think I am through."

"Ah. I see. Well, if you change your mind, you know how to contact me. I would enjoy spending a night with someone as beautiful as you."

The skunk stopped at the top of the stairs and looked back towards the maned wolf. He simply smirked at her playfully, his paws in his pockets. She tried to think of something to say, but her muzzle just hung open like a loose hinge. Stella closed her mouth and smiled tensely before walking away, descending the stairs as quickly as her weight and size would allow.

Outside the building, Jackie was waiting in the circle with the stretched SUV, the only vehicle they could find to fit Stella into now. The sharply-dressed tigress peered at her watch as Stella walked through the doors.

"You're quite late-"

"Don't."

Jackie nodded once, turning and opening the rear door to the SUV. "Bad day. Noted."

She helped push Stella up and into the car, and the skunk found herself squeezed through somewhere small twice within five minutes. Stella gripped the handles to help haul her heavy weight onto the bench-sized seat, which she completely covered as she sat down. She exhaled sharply and rest her head back against the rest while Jackie climbed into the driver's seat and started the excessively loud engine. Great, another thing she could barely fit in and out of.

How much longer could this even go on? She couldn't just keep gaining more weight. But if she didn't, it would be over. She didn't even want to think of that. She pictured Vera, standing in front of her in her pool, gray eyes sparkling at her. Then an image of Chris sitting beside her in the elevator, reaching out to brush back her hair, pushed it out. Stella dropped her head into her paws, her nose pressing into the top of her abundant cleavage.

The tigress looked back at Stella in the rear mirror. "Everything alright?"

"No. I don't know." She shook her head. The glow from her bracelet filled the inside of her paws. Now it was orange. "Stop by someplace with take-out, please."

"That kind of day," Jackie replied.

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