Consent and Vore

The Vore community has a major problem with consent.

What do I mean by this? I mean that certain attributes, roles, and especially stereotypes are forced upon people based on the chosen species of a character. I mean that people will treat someone as either pred or prey, regardless of their preferences or wishes, based solely on the "natural" role of their character in popular fiction or reality: Mice and bunnies become fodder, wolves and dragons are apex predators, etc. In the more extreme cases, this results in someone either talking down to the other person, or even treating them as someone less deserving of respect simply because they are a prey species.

I'm switching the format around for this series, as mentioned in the description. I do not want to be the sole decision maker here, but I want to present what the problem is, and have people openly discuss solutions to the issue at hand. I'll try to be brief, but I want to get across what I've experienced; not to mention, based on initial responses, what a lot of other people have to deal with as well.

The Prey Problem

Vore scenarios always have a pred and a prey. How the scenario plays out heavily depends on the people involved, but in general, vore relies on power dynamics between the two (or more) participating groups. The pred is usually "in charge", and takes what they want from the others. They are, in essence, the dom in this situation. The prey, as the sub, works with the dom to ensure what they decide on doing is agreeable to both of them, that the idea is something they will both enjoy. This scenario can be either consensual or non-consensual in nature, which is perfectly fine in a fantasy setting so long as both parties (the owners of the characters involved) consent to the situation as presented. There is communication there that *must* occur to ensure it is mutually beneficial. The problem arises when people extend this dom/sub relationship into interactions with other unwilling participants outside of a specified image, story, or roleplay.

It's a generalization, but prey are treated as inferior to the pred in a vast number of interactions. They're only food, right? They exist for the pleasure of the pred, to fill them, to satisfy them. Giving yourself completely to someone can be an intoxicating experience, but it is also one built on trust. Without that trust, what do you have? Easy: A bully, an abuser. Someone who treats you worse than you are for no other reason than self-gratification. There is no understanding or attempt at understanding or at mutual enjoyment. All mice are food, all bunnies are belly fillers, all foxes are good for one thing only, etc. Anyone who's been around long enough can tell you that this stereotyping is a larger problem with the furry community as a whole, but I'll try to stay focused on the Vore community for the moment.

In any case, because of this treatment, many people become "pred-only"; in essence refusing to participate in a prey role due to treatment as outlined above. Because prey characters are treated in a worse manner than predators, they understandably no longer wish to be seen as prey. It is an appalling situation to see that anyone would think it necessary to do so, simply because people treat even complete strangers with this level of contempt due to using a prey species. The prey problem is one of enforced stereotypes and roles in the wider vore community.

Now, what does this actually look like? I've been speaking in generalizations, but how does this affect normal, everyday interactions? I can list quite a few examples. People you do not know message you to tell you how much they want to eat your character. They tease, they imply, they outright say what they want to do to you, unsolicited and most likely, unwanted. In chatrooms or servers, it is constantly implied that you are food, how you shouldn't pretend to be a pred as they could easily gobble you up, how delicious you look to them. They express a desire to see your character in a prey role despite that not appealing to you in the slightest; how they want to "Put them in their place" when seeing your pred only, prey species character; how appetizing that full belly makes them, in the rare pred pictures you make of a character. Even when attempting to break into a new role as a predator for fun, prey species are teased back into their "rightful position" as a sub, without any concern for the person behind the character or what their feelings are on the matter.

But...This is all teasing though, right? What's wrong with all of these interactions?

A Lack of Consent

The problem is an assumption, based on a species, that someone wants to be treated this way. Instead of asking or even looking around to find out how they prefer to be treated, they are instead shoved into a sub (prey) role immediately, with no prior knowledge of them or their character. It's entirely self-serving and uncaring, and shows a distinct lack of genuine interest in the other person. I could draw parallels to how self-centered men do the same to women they do not know, and this is not to diminish the difficulties women face in these situations and the degrading way in which they're treated, but hearing very similar statements from complete strangers ("If you didn't want to be treated as food, you shouldn't dress so appetizing", "all bunnies are food, they just don't know it yet", etc.), it's hard not to imagine this as an extension of such a toxic attitude.

This goes beyond social interactions as well. Posting/sharing artwork or stories of someone in a role they do not approve of, pred or prey, simply because you want to is not right in the slightest. And yet people do it. It's impossible to police every possible avenue of creation for such things, what with private servers and chat groups, and there's no such thing as the thought police, so I admit that someone keeping such things to themselves honestly does no harm in the long run. It's the desire to share in this with others and publicly post and pass around such creations that

causes issues. To be seen as "the one that finally ate that pred", or "the one meal for that prey-only person". To be added to some exclusive club that doesn't, and shouldn't exist, because that's not what the owner of that character wants. It's not right. These characters are not public domain, they do not exist for your personal enjoyment. It is important to realize that behind every cute or sexy character you see is a real, live person, with thoughts and feelings of their own. By abusing their characters, you are abusing them as well.

When in Doubt: Ask

I hope my thoughts on this are obvious to everyone. My stance is one of empathy; no one likes to be treated this way, to be framed in such a manner against their wishes. We've all put thought and care into our characters, our creations. To have someone else force their desires and views on your own creations is not only rude, it's a personal offense. It has driven numerous people I know, and others beyond that, from ever taking on a prey role. The sort of behavior outlined above is *actively changing the layout of the vore community for the worse.*

It takes minimal effort to not do this. Do not walk into a chatroom or server and declare everyone your food. Do not forcibly portray someone how they do not want to be presented. Do not assume everyone knows you're teasing when you speak with them, especially if this is your first interaction. If at all unsure, just ask for someone's preferences. Look at what they post, with who. Do not assume that just because they portray a character in one or two pieces a certain way, that they are welcoming or accepting of everyone they meet treating them that way.

Ask if things are okay. Communicate with the other person. Do not just take their likeness and use it for your own self-gratification, sharing it around in order to score pred points or whatnot. It does not make you awesome or deserving of respect. It makes you selfish and uncaring.

It's not hard to be someone who actually cares about others.

I've not covered everything, and a lot of this is colored by my own experiences in the community, so please, feel free to speak of your own experiences and note any helpful solutions you can think of. This is going to be an actual "discussion" series from here on out, and everyone's input is just as important as my own.