

## FUN WITH HOLES

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“Humans really do this?”

Peridot looked down at the plate in front of her. She poked at the mashed potatoes with her fork.

“Sure! It's a blast!” Amethyst said, grinning. “Pretty much all human entertainment involves either television or shoving stuff in holes, and the food hole is way up there near the top of the hole rankings. You gotta try it!”

“Humans eat because they need to do it to survive,” Pearl said, grimacing. “Why Amethyst feels the need to imitate their...unsanitary...lifestyle requirements is beyond me. You don't need to do this unless you really want to, Peridot.”

“She means you don't need to do it if you're *lame*, Peridactyl,” Amethyst corrected. “But if you're cool like me, you've totally gotta at least try it.”

“I'm cool,” Pearl muttered, holding up the sticker Steven had given her just that morning. It was puffy and said *Cool Dude* in balloon letters. “See?”

Peridot scooped up a pile of the organic glop and put it into her mouth. “Lff thiff?”

“Yeah! Now you swallow it!”

“Swfffw?”

“You make a hollow space around here and suck that stuff right down into it.” Amethyst pointed to her middle.

Peridot shapeshifted her insides around until she had an empty hollow, then forced the contents of her mouth down inside herself.

“Great! Haha, usually humans don't eat the fork, but whatever,” Amethyst said. “Congrats, Peri, welcome to the joys of cramming your face full of food.”

“Ugh. 'Joys,’” Pearl sniffed, turning to leave. “I can't watch this any more.”

“Now what?” Peridot asked. The sensation of warm potatoes resting in her insides was...odd. She wasn't sure if she liked it or not.

“Now you just stick more stuff down there!” Amethyst, picking up the tureen of potatoes and emptying it into her mouth. When her cheeks bulged like balloons, she swallowed the entire mass, her neck and chest swelling as it traveled downwards.

“Is that why your midsection is so large?” Peridot asked. “To accommodate more food?”

“Well, it sure doesn't hurt,” Amethyst said. She patted the thick roll of excess matter around her waist. “For humans, having some extra down here is like a sign that says 'I like to EAT, yo!'”

Peridot looked over the table. There were still lots of dishes to try. She picked one up.

“Organic muscle tissue layered between processed seeds,” she said. “Is this also...food?”

“That's a ham sandwich! Put it in you!”

Peridot stuffed the sandwich into her mouth, pushing hard to get it all in.

“Use your teeth to crush it up,” Amethyst recommended. Peridot did, and found it was much easier to push down her neck. She tried a disc of plant matter next.

“That's called a cookie,” Amethyst said. Peridot took another.

“This...'eating' is interesting,” she said. “It is more pleasurable than I would have assumed given its disgusting appearance.”

“Oh, lots of stuff that looks disgusting turns out to be fun,” Amethyst said. “But we'll learn about *that* when we move on to *advanced* hole studies. In the meantime, you've got some eating to do, girl!”

Peridot swallowed an animal limb coated with a heated paste—Amethyst had called it *fried chicken*—and looked down at her middle. It was starting to stick out from all the things she'd shoved into it.

“I think my food sack is almost full.”

“It's called your stomach, Peri-Beri, and it's not full until *you* decide it's full. You're not ready to be full, are you?”

“I don't...think so. I'm...I'm enjoying this.”

“Then show that sucker who's boss! Really stretch it out!” Amethyst hefted another dripping hunk of animal flesh—a ham—opened her mouth enormously, and engulfed it whole. Her stomach ballooned. She grinned, and then she opened her mouth again and made...a noise.

“What was that?” Peridot squawked.

“It's called a burp. See, you get a lot of air in your stomach, and you gotta push it out. The louder, the better!”

“Because loud burps are more...efficient?”

Amethyst snickered. “Because loud burps annoy Pearl.” She flopped backwards into a chair. “Oh, man, that was good.”

She rubbed her distended stomach with obvious relish. She'd gotten so big that her body was bursting out of her surface decorations—her *clothes*, they called them. *Am I supposed to eat that much?* Peridot wondered. She wasn't sure if her new stomach would stretch that far.

But she wanted to find out. Eating was *fun*, and she wasn't ready to stop having fun, not yet. Not until she had to.

Amethyst stretched. “Okay, I'm gonna go walk around a little to shake this up and then go sleep it off. There's nothin' like going to sleep with your stomach completely full. You gotta try it when you're done.”

“Perhaps,” Peridot said. Sleeping was a completely different sort of challenge. Maybe she *would* try it when she couldn't fit any more food inside herself. She nodded a farewell to Amethyst and turned back to the table. She worked her way steadily through all the different types of food the more experienced Gem had set out for her—*bread* and *juice* and *tablecloth* and *carrots*—until she'd finished every one.

“Tasty,” she said to herself, standing up. “That *food* was very satisfying!” She wobbled. Her center of gravity was different now, lower and further forward. Her stomach felt so full and tight. She ran a hand over it. It was so...*round*, so *inefficient*. She felt bloated and sluggish. All the other Peridots were slaving away to advance the cause of Gemkind, and here she was, a useless lump, weighing herself down with excess matter until she could barely manage a slow waddle. The rebellion of it sent a shiver of pleasure through her body.

Not that it was all great. For one thing, it wasn't very comfortable to be stretched out of shape like this for so long. Her body kept telling her to relax and shift back into her normal shape, but she couldn't.

She thought she might be able to eat more, though, if she pushed herself.

She gathered up everything she could find in the cupboards—boxes, cans, bottles, everything—and lugged it upstairs, next to the television. She did a quick inventory. There was a lot.

“I'm going to consume *all* of this!” she said, grinning. She pushed the television activation button and flopped back onto Steven's mattress. She ripped open a package of cookies and dumped them into her mouth. A show about a human family with a tiny servant came on. Peridot crunched up the cookies and forced them down into her stomach.

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Amethyst waddled down the boardwalk, picking her teeth and enjoying the heavy feeling of dozens of pounds of food resting in her belly.

“What's that, stomach? You want me to jam even *more* stuff into you?” She grinned and snapped the band of her leggings. “Heh,heh, heh, if you insist. Time to get *biiiiig!*”

She looked around at her options. Seafood, fries, donuts...all-you-can-eat pizza buffet...

“Pizza,” she said, licking her lips. Then she noticed the poster in the window depicting her with a slice of pepperoni hanging out of her mouth, over the words BANNED FOR LIFE. Next to it was a long line of posters depicting various other purple women, men, animals, vehicles, and abstract shapes, all of whom were also BANNED FOR LIFE.

“Ugh. Okay, I guess I have to get creative. Who haven't I used yet?...”

She rubbed her hands up her lumpy body, smoothing it out in a smear of blinding light. A moment later, a lavender copy of Pearl stood on the boardwalk.

“Ugh, *tight*,” she grunted, holding her still-bulging middle, which was even more noticeable on Pearl's slender frame. “Sheesh, no wonder she hates eating. She's got no place to *put* it. But that ain't gonna stop *me!*” She licked Pearl's thin lips and swept into the restaurant, looking down her long nose at the other patrons, just as the real Pearl would have.

“One all-you-can-eat stack of pizzas, please, heavy on the *literally everything*,” she cooed.

“Oh, no you don't,” Jenny Pizza said from behind the counter. “My parents said not to sell any more all-you-can-eats to *anything purple, period.*”

“Oh my, what shocking racism!” Amethyst said, putting the back of her palm to her forehead. “It's too much for my fragile nerves to bear.”

“Now, hold on,” Mayor Dewey proposed, sidling up to her. “I'm sure that on this special day—the day on which I, as mayor, have been summoned to officially declare this new soft drink machine open for business—we can make an exception, can't we?” He set his giant pair of ribbon-cutting scissors down against the counter and gave Amethyst a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

“Whatever,” Jenny said. “If she wrecks the place, you're paying.”

“My hero!” Amethyst said, leaning against Mayor Dewey. “My lots-of-pizza-for-me-buying hero!”

“M-m-Ms. Pearl,” the mayor stammered, looking down at her swollen abdomen. “I hadn't realized you were, ah, that you were planning on starting a family in our fair city.”

“What, this?” Amethyst patted her round middle. “That's—uh—that's right! I totally have a baby in here!...In fact, it's YOUR BABY!”

“Whaaaaaat?” Mayor Dewey's jaw dropped. “B-but that's impossible! I just want to assure all the voters within earshot that that is absolutely impossible.”

“Oh, it's possible! It's real possible! For Gems, the power of love is the most important thing in the world, and your love just zooped around in the air and then WHAMMO! It pregged me all up!” Amethyst nodded. “Yup! Now do your fatherly duty and *buy* me some *pizza!*”

“A-all right,” the mayor said. “Just please, keep your voice down!”

Amethyst plopped down in a booth. “Man, carryin' all this baby weight around sure is makin' me hungry!”

“Here, we can split this pizza and discuss—oh.”

Amethyst hoisted the gigantic pizza like a wet tarpaulin, rolled it up neatly, and put one end in her mouth. She proceeded to swallow the entire thing like a boa constrictor engulfing a pig.

“Ohhhh, yeah. That hit the spot.” She belched, sinking further into the booth, her belly pushing up against the polished wood. “More!”

“Er, you've had quite a bit already—”

“I'm eatin' for two, man, do you want your baby to *starve?*”

The mayor sighed. “More pizza.”

Amethyst glugged her way through a parade of pepperoni, sausage, olives, and pound after pound of sticky, stringy cheese, bloating out Pearl's skinny frame until it was ready to burst at the seams. Finally, she licked the last few burned bits from a deep-dish pan and dropped it with a loud clang.

“Oh, man, sooooo full,” she groaned.

“Ms. Pearl, are you—are you all right—?” the mayor asked.

“I can't...can't...hold it!” Amethyst gasped. Her skin stretched and rippled, and then, with the sound of dozens of water balloons bouncing against each other, Pearl's body bloated out into Amethyst's

rotund frame, stuffed so full of pizza it was almost as round as a ball. “Ohhhh. *Phew*. That was killin’ me.”

“Y-you’re not Pearl!” Mayor Dewey cried. “You’re her good-for-nothing sister!”

“Yeah, told you she wasn’t allowed in here,” Jenny Pizza said with a shrug.

“Hahaha, sorry, man, but thanks for the pizza!” Amethyst laughed. “I’m out of here!”

She struggled to get out of the booth, but she was wedged in so tightly that she couldn’t move. She pulled and and struggled, hauling at the vast rolls of purple flesh bulging above and below the table, but to no avail.

“Uh-oh,” she said. She tried to shapeshift into something else, but she was so full and tired that she couldn’t manage anything useful. Her stubby fingers scrabbled uselessly against the lip of the table.

“I’m calling the cops!” Jenny Pizza said from behind the counter. Amethyst grunted and struggled harder. She wasn’t afraid of any human jail, but if Pearl found out about it, she’d never hear the end of it.

The door swung open, and a statuesque figure stepped into the restaurant and planted her gauntlets on her wide hips. “Hello, Amethyst.”

“Garnet! You—you don’t need to—ugh, I can rescue myself if you just give me a second!”

“No, you can’t.” The maroon gem seized Amethyst by the shoulders and pulled. There was a loud crack and the sound of wood splattering, and both Amethyst and most of the table popped out of the booth.

“Sorry,” Garnet said, jamming the table back onto its splintered stump. “I’ll be taking this one.”

She jammed Amethyst into the door, where she stuck until Garnet put an elbow in her back and forced her through. The purple woman rolled out into the street and came to a stop lying on her back like an incredibly overstuffed turtle.

“All right, all right, thanks for rescuing me,” Amethyst admitted. “I guess once again your future vision saved my bacon.”

“It’s a lot of bacon,” Garnet agreed. “But I didn’t need future vision to know you’d be stuffing your face somewhere. Let’s go home.”

She grabbed one of Amethyst’s stumpy legs and slung her over her shoulder.

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“Ugggh,” Peridot grunted, feeling around in the sea of empty packages and cans. This was a problem. She’d crammed down everything she could reach. If she wanted any more, she was going to have to *move*.

She looked down at herself. Maybe she *didn’t* want any more. She was so big it was hard to hold herself together. Every part of her body was puffed up from the pureed matter she’d packed into it, until her projected form wasn’t much more than a bloated balloon, barely holding it all in.

She opened her mouth and squeezed herself inward, forcing out the excess air in a loud belch.

“Ugggh,” she repeated. “Bleeck. I think...I think...I ate...too much.”

She belched again, spitting up a tuna can.

“Well, now what?” she asked, irritated. She hadn’t had any luck trying to go to sleep. For the last hour, she’d seen less and less of the television as her belly slowly eclipsed the screen. What was she supposed to *do* with all this *stuff* inside her? Amethyst never told her what happened next.

She supposed she could spray it all out of her mouth again. That didn’t seem right, though. Amethyst and Steven ate all the time, and they never did that (not unless something was seriously wrong, anyway.) And it would make a huge mess that Pearl would probably force her to clean up.

She put her fingers on the taut flesh of her abdomen and pushed, feeling the food mooshing around inside her. Maybe she could at least squash herself into a less inefficient shape. She grabbed her stomach with both hands and tried to push it out of the way.

“Urrrrrrgh,” she grunted. “*Heeeeeavy!*” Well, that wasn't going to work. She let her arms flop back down next to her sides. What was she going to do now? Just lie here feeling huge?

“Are you tired of being overweight?” asked a chipper voice from the television.

“Yes,” Peridot said. “It's getting boring.”

“Want to lose a few extra pounds?”

“It's more than a few!” Peridot snapped. “Can't you see that, you clod?”

“Well, get ready to shake that flab away with Zimbo Salsa—where weight loss is a cool dance *PARTY!* Over the next half hour, we are going to trim, tone, and have a whole lot of fun *PARTYING DOWN!*”

“This proposition is acceptable,” Peridot said. “Tell me what to do.”

“First, we're going to do some stretching,” the voice said happily. “Stretch with me. One. Two.”

“I did that part already,” Peridot grumbled.

“One. Two. Doesn't it feel so good to stretch?”

“No! I'm sick of it! *Tell me how to unstretch!*”

“Now we're going to do some Salsa Squats. Follow along with me. One! Two! One! Two!”

“Wait!” Peridot said, craning her head in a futile attempt to see around her mountainous belly. “I can't see you! You have to describe them!”

“One, two, one, two, and you can feel the pounds just melting off, can't you?”

“My mass is still in solid form! Ugh, *wait!*”

Peridot flopped back on the bed. She remembered something Steven told her—“*Even when the television's talking to you, it's not really talking to you. It's like a recording, even when it's live, so you can't talk back to it.*”

“Oh, right,” she told herself, embarrassed. Of course the human on the TV couldn't respond to her! She should have remembered that much earlier. All that food must have dulled her wits.

“Come on! That's the way!” chirped the human. “Now, here's the perfect exercise to trim your waistline and lose that gut! Ready? Here we go!”

*That's the one I need!* Peridot thought. *I have to lose my gut. But I can't learn how, because my gut is in the way! It's...it's an impossible conundrum!*

There was only one solution she could see. Only one way out of the problem.

As much as the thought sickened her, she was going to have to sit up.

“One,” she said, taking a deep breath. “Two. And—*hrrrrrrnnnnnnrrrrnnnghggggghhh!*”

With a mammoth effort, she hoisted her bloated body up an inch, then two inches, then a whole foot, but she knew she couldn't go any farther, and propped herself up with her arms before she collapsed. Success! She was now technically sitting up, sort of! She could even see a sliver of the television screen over the crest of her stomach.

“A little more,” she told herself. “Just a little—bit—*more!*”

With renewed effort, she pushed herself forward, inch by inch. The cheerful blonde dance instructor came into view like the sun dawning over the horizon of Peridot's belly. She was hopping around, waving her arms and legs rhythmically.

“That's it! Are you ready to kick it into high gear?”

“No,” Peridot moaned. Just sitting up had practically killed her.

“Great! Let's do some Salsa Blasts! Just put your left hand here—”

She put her left hand on her slim waist. Peridot tried to imitate her, but she couldn't find her *own* waist anywhere, so she just laid her arm on her side.

“—and your right arm here—”

She lifted it over her head, which at least Peridot could sort of do.

“And now *blast* that crunch!”

“I don't think I can,” Peridot whined. She didn't even care anymore that the woman couldn't hear her. She tried to follow along, she really did, but she was so heavy with food that she couldn't do much

more than wobble her way through the various exercises. She wobbled a little to the left. She wobbled a little to the right. She wobbled a little back and forth.

She wondered how long this was supposed to take. It had taken her about an hour to eat, so logically working off the food should take the same amount of time, but instead she seemed to be staying the same size. It must be because she wasn't able to move like the human woman on TV.

Peridot resolved that she would make herself do the next exercise, no matter what it was. She would find a way. She *swore* she would find a way.

“Now, we're going to touch our toes!” the woman said with a big smile.

Peridot looked down. “Oh, you've *got* to be joking.” She couldn't even *see* her toes! But a vow was a vow, and if she didn't do something, she would be this big forever.

She leaned forward, everything inside her shifting and gurgling. She tried to bend at the waist, which in her current state was about as easy as folding a watermelon in half.

“Almost—” she grunted, her hands just managing to brush her thighs. “Almost—almost—”

She toppled forward, the weight of her own stomach pulling her off the bed.

“Aarrgh!” she cried, and landed on the floor with a meaty thump, face first. With the last of her strength, she managed a long, slow, cement-mixer roll over onto her back.

Now she was back where she started, except on the floor instead of the bed. She felt like she wanted to cry.

The door opened on the lower floor. Peridot turned her head, her eyes blurry with tears, to see a tall, reddish figure with a heavy sack slung over its back. She remembered the legends Steven had told her of a magical warrior who lived in a frozen wasteland and constructed trivial entertainments for immature humans as a hobby.

“Santa Claus?” she asked.

“Ho ho ho,” Garnet said flatly. She shrugged Amethyst's blimped-up body off her shoulder and dropped her on the carpet.

“Hey Peri-Beri!” Amethyst said. “Yeah, we bring gifts of chewed-up pizza for all the good boys and girls!” She blinked. “Wow, you got big, girl!”

“I am ready to be small again,” Peridot said, quickly wiping away her tears before the other Gems could see them. “How do I accomplish that?”

“Ha!” Amethyst chuckled. “That's easy. Let me grab a quick nap, and we'll move on to Body Holes: The Intermediate Course...”