

Thirsting for Friends

By: IndigoRho

"This is so dumb, I never should've let you talk me into this," Raf grumbled. The obese hyena was futilely attempting to readjust his white dress shirt, which refused to keep his hefty gut in check. Focusing on the shirt at least made him a little less self-conscious about the goofy cape he had on.

August, the brown-and-white goat beside him, simply smiled back. "You don't get out enough and a little costume party with friends is something you desperately need."

"Friends, sure. Really looking forward to my brother spending the whole night mocking me and finding some way to make me immobile." Raf gave up on the shirt. "And I feel overdressed. Why is your devil costume just a pair of fake horns and a goofy tail!"

"Because it's a casual thing," August said with a sigh. "Besides, you're pretty much just wearing a cape and nicer pants than usual, aside from that fun brooch I found for ya."

Raf had nearly forgotten about the "gift", an old, plain looking metal pin shaped like a bat that August had bought from a random antique shop. The hyena hadn't wanted to wear it, but caved after a quick minute of nagging, pinning it to his pink tie just to quiet his insistent friend.

"I hope you didn't pay too much for this junk, it's kind of—ow!" Fussing with the brooch had earned Raf a prick on his finger, which he swiftly brought up to his lips once blood started trickling.

He winced at the taste at first, until an odd chill pulsed throughout his body. His head spun and he stumbled, fierce hunger pains abruptly hitting him. August rushed over to make sure he didn't fall over, concerned. Raf tried to mumble he was ok, but an intoxicating scent flooded his nostrils as soon as August came near, one that made his stomach rumble in anticipation. The sight of August's neck was suddenly making his mouth water, and an uncontrollable instinct compelled Raf to lunge at his friend and sink his jaws in deep.

August let out a stunned cry of pain as he felt his neck pierced, Raf's claws digging sharply into his shoulders and keeping him in place. The wound grew numb, but a terrible wave of burning cold pulsed from it, causing the goat to shake and gasp. He was quickly becoming too dizzy to understand what was happening.

Raf, meanwhile, was in heaven. With his fangs embedded in August's soft neck, he greedily chugged the delicious blood seeping through, no care for the effects his attack was having on his friend. Each gulp tightened Raf's already-strained shirt a little more as his belly filled with fresh blood. A small taste wasn't enough for the hyena, he needed more, he needed everything August had. The goat's eyes grew distant and his limbs limp, his whole body shutting down as his blood was drained to the very last drop.

When Raf finally released his jaws, August crumpled to the pavement, lifeless. Small lines of blood trickled from Raf's lips and down his chin. His gut was bloated and sloshing, threatening to pop the buttons of his shirt with every deep breath. The only attention he paid to his now dead friend was to callously shove the goat's body into a nearby hedge, before turning towards the apartment complex ahead. There were others there, much larger than August, much *juicier* than August. Maybe they could quench his thirst.

The hyena waddled along the path to an apartment he'd visited numerous times before, his mind thinking of little more than feeding. A hefty giraffe in a toga answered his aggressive knocks, and Raf had to resist biting into him then and there once the wonderful aroma of blood rushed over him again.

"Didn't think you were gonna make it!" The giraffe leaned in and gave Raf a firm hug, unknowingly testing the hyena's temptations. "Should I assume you're late cause you nabbed a snack?" he jokingly poked at Raf's swollen belly.

"Yeah...yeah, Alec. Needed a snack. Still hungry," Raf muttered back.

Alec gave his friend an odd look. "Huh. Oh, where's August, I thought he was the one dragging you hear to begin with?"

Raf's eyes darted towards the ground. "He wasn't feeling well. Didn't make it."

"Damn, that sucks. Well come on in, there's still a few people lingering around." Alec motioned Raf in, closing the door behind him. "Indi's grilling more hotdogs out on the balcony cause he ate everything else, Mattei's busy making out with a bong, and Michael's...um...here."

Raf managed a snort of disapproval through his daze. Alec was the sole overlap in the twin hyenas' social circles, and he better than anyone else knew how volatile their interactions could be. Being Michael's boyfriend only complicated matters.

Both Mattei and Michael were relaxing on the couch, an Alec-sized gap in between them. Mattei—an overweight yellow axolotl—was dressed in a simple, glow-in-the-dark skeleton onesie that did little hide his pudge. He had just taken a deep puff from his bong, and gave Raf a hazy nod. Raf's twin brother was dressed in a toga similar to Alec's. With his frosted-tip mohawk and a persistent smile, Michael was rarely mistaken for his twin, something both were thankful for.

Michael zeroed in on Raf's wobbling gut almost right away, seizing on the easy opportunity to annoy him. "Nice costume bro. I'm gonna guess, vampire who only feeds on burgers?"

Raf growled as Michael laughed, but his overwhelming bloodlust was just slightly stronger than his desire to argue with his brother. He didn't say anything back, instead cursing under his breath and hurrying onto the balcony. Food was there. Alone.

The sliding glass door screeched as Raf made his way outside again. The balcony was long and narrow, with little of it actually visible through the doors. Hotdogs sizzled on a tiny grill, but their scent went unnoticed by Raf. His attention was more on the large blue cheetah lazily attending them. Indi was a friend of August, and Raf couldn't admit to caring much for him, which only made his cravings easier to indulge in. The cheetah barely had time to register the new arrival before being shoved into the wall by Raf, jaws clamping so tightly around his neck he couldn't breathe let alone scream for help.

The cheetah's bounty poured down Raf's throat, his belly slowly ballooning outward once again. Indi was well over twice the size of August, and Raf was overjoyed to discover he had far more blood inside him, too. One-by-one the buttons of his dress shirt popped off, clattering onto the balcony and freeing his demanding, bloated gut. Draining Indi didn't take much longer than August, as Raf was becoming more accustomed to gulping blood. And more willing.

Indi spasmed and gargled for a minute before fading out completely, Raf's fangs still sunk into his neck. The vampire's snout was stained red now, his tongue constantly flicking across his lips for an extra taste while his nose sniffed for the next feast. Without a second thought, Raf laid Indi atop the balcony's railing and tossed the fat cheetah over the edge, the body landing hard amidst the dense underbrush of the greenbelt behind the apartment complex. He only needed the corpse hidden from the other courses, after all.

Gorging on two people had left Raf's gut grossly distended, a swollen sphere filled to the brim with loud, sloshing blood. The thirst wasn't diminishing, though, only growing in intensity. Three drinks were left.

Luck was on Raf's side, as only Mattei still remained in the living room once he returned. The bathroom door at the far end of the hallway was closed and in use, and the muffled sounds of video games were drifting from a bedroom. If he moved swiftly, his next victim could be drained without interference, and then he'd only have to deal with two more. Mattei was obviously deep in his high, relaxed and somewhat oblivious to his surroundings. He merely giggled when Raf plopped down on the couch right next to him, amused by stray thoughts. The axolotl had been Raf's roommate and friend throughout college, and though occasionally odd he'd always been kind and willing to listen. There was no hesitation as Raf bit his neck.

Just like the others before, Mattei's struggles and cries for help were quickly and brutally doused by the bitter chill and spinning headache. His inebriated state made the attack even more confusing for Mattei, who was already out of it to begin with. Soon his color and sight were fading, and the last thing Mattei ever saw was Raf's belly steadily expanding from another feast.

Raf sunk back into the couch, moaning, as Mattei slumped over, dead. His belly wobbled over his lap, unmistakable evidence of the horrors he'd committed against others. For the first time in his life, Raf *didn't* despise his gut. Gorging normally left him exhausted and ashamed, but this...this left him feeling energized, alive, proud even! He felt like he could easily drain others to husks till his belly filled the entire room. The hyena didn't know what had caused such a dramatic change, and plainly didn't care. For whatever reason, he'd been blessed.

At the far end of the hall the bathroom door finally opened, and Alec stepped out. Despite the distance, the giraffe was able to spot Raf's massive middle right away, and curiosity got the better of him.

"Damn Raf, did Mattei convince you to bloat with the bong again?" He chuckled and got closer, not aware of the danger he was in. "I know he swears it gets you high faster, but I think he just...whoa, where did you find all that fake blood?"

Raf grinned, something Alec had seen so rarely it actually made him uneasy. Only then did he spot the small lines of blood running down Mattei's costume. A greedy paw grabbed a hold of Alec's toga and tugged hard, causing the giraffe to fall almost face-first into Raf's gut, which sloshed and rumbled on impact. Alec tried to brace himself and push away, but Raf's grip was unnaturally strong. He got a horrifically clear glimpse of bloodied fangs before his shout for help was silenced in a flash.

Alec was just as much a feast as Indi, and Raf couldn't help but grin as he sucked the blood straight out of his terrified friend's veins. He swore he could actually *feel* his belly swelling as he drank, fueling his needs. The squirms and whimpers of his victim were ignored as Raf treated him like a walking keg rather than a slowly dying person. Alec's mind raced as everything grew numb, unable to comprehend why or even how Raf was killing him. He realized in dismay that August had likely met a similar fate on the way to the party. Fortunately, he didn't have much time to reflect on the betrayal before the world went dark.

Without remorse, Raf tossed aside his most recent drink and let out a loud, proud belch. He patted his bloated gut with both paws, shaking it around to feel the heft added by his feasting. The thirst was gone, but Raf was more than willing to add one last course to the menu. With surprising ease Raf stood up from the couch and stepped over Alec's fallen body, waddling towards the back bedroom with a sinister grin on his face. The door was cracked open and the game still blasting, allowing Raf to creep in without being noticed.

As expected, Michael was busy playing video games. Raf's mouth watered as he slowly approached his prize, but the lingering stench of blood reached Michael's nose and alerted him to his guest. Michael snorted, then laughed outright as he saw how comically large Raf's belly had swollen since last seeing him.

"Seriously, do you just get fatter by breathing now? Or did you lose a bet and have to drink from the faucet again?" Michael tossed aside his controller and gave his twin's middle a taunting prod. "I still can't believe you don't wear clothes that stretch, especially considering all those times I've turned you into a wobbly, immobilized blimp! Just can't accept you'll always be big and round, eh?"

"Oh, don't worry bro, I actually like getting bigger now." Raf's fangs bared in anticipation, the vengeance he never knew he needed close at hand. "I can't wait to see how large I am once I've finished drinking you dry!"

Raf lunged at his twin, headbutting him before sinking his fangs into his neck. Michael yelled and struggled, but just like the others before him he was horrendously overpowered. A numbing cold spilled over him, and he could feel his brother's gut sloshing, swelling. The vampiric hyena guzzled blood without restraint, eager to fill his stomach once more. His twin had spent years antagonizing him, belittling him, humiliating him, and Raf had never had the patience nor prowess to get him back equally. Sure, there had been moments when he'd managed to infuriate Michael, but they were always fleeting. This, though, this was a lasting victory.

Michael's persistent look of smug confidence was reduced to one of terror as every last drop of

blood was sucked from him. The bane of Raf's existence became nothing more than dead weight, pushed away as soon as he'd finished licking the final trickle of blood from Michael's neck. Euphoric, Raf dropped to his knees, gently laying against his bloated gut as if it were a giant pillow. The muffled sloshing and aroma of blood were wonderfully relaxing. He wasn't sure how much of his temporary girth would remain once digested, though he hoped to keep at least a small memento of flab from his delightful drinks in the end. For now, though, Raf would rest. His actions would be discovered eventually, and by then he needed to be far away, planning his next feast.