

The Berry Elixir

By: IndigoRho

Raf squeezed his portly belly with both paws, a permanent scowl of dismay glued on his face. The terribly self-conscious charr had been trying to lose weight for months now, after unintentionally becoming the test subject for a rapid weight-gain elixir made by his friend Vitruvius. He still shuddered at the embarrassment of needing a whole new wardrobe custom-made just to handle his excessive girth. While Vitruvius *had* produced another potion that aided in weight loss, the effects were unfortunately not as instant as the one that'd caused Raf's predicament. Of course the charr's persistent snacking wasn't doing him any favors.

Satisfied with his hourly pudge pouting, Raf waddled over to the crate he'd been storing the elixirs, fishing out one of the few full vials remaining. Removing its cork, Raf took a quick whiff of the elixir and frowned even more, the strong scent of mint singing his nostrils. For a few seconds he readied himself to swiftly chug the contents, until changing his mind and deciding it was finally time to try mixing the concoction with something more to his liking. Shirtless and with his gut exposed to the world, Raf cautiously peeked out the door of his room to ensure no one was around, before hurrying off to the nearby barracks kitchen.

Fortunately the place was quiet at the moment, though Raf wasted little time pulling out a fresh bottle of his favorite fruit cider, along with a bag of bright blue cranberries he'd noticed had been sitting unclaimed for a while. The grumpy charr had a soft spot for the berries, and wasn't eager to see such juicy looking ones go to waste. With a bit of work Raf crushed the cranberries and added the elixir to the result, then poured it all into the cider to make a hopefully palatable drink. A nervous swig later Raf was delighted to discover his plan had worked. The mint of the elixir had been mostly drowned out, and the cranberries had complimented the original cider quite nicely.

One sip turned into a longer gulp, Raf quickly getting carried away. Soon the bottle was empty, and the charr let out a small belch of surprise at having cleared it so fast. A little cider wasn't going to wreck his waistline, though. Uneager to linger around the temptations of the kitchen for long, Raf cleaned up after himself and began the careful trek back to the privacy of his room, still hoping to avoid being spotted by other members of his warband.

As the charr waddled, though, his belly steadily sloshed louder and louder. Raf's sagging middle was slowly rounding out, the concoction within multiplying all on its own. Without a shirt on, Raf lacked an easy way of realizing he was swelling up, and he shrugged off the feeling of being heavier as merely his mind playing mean tricks on him. Eventually he tried leaning around a corner to ensure the coast was clear, nearly losing his balance and suddenly becoming *very* aware of his situation. Raf let out a distressed yelp as he stumbled about. He'd overeaten and been stuffed an embarrassing number of times in the past, but the only times he'd seen his belly so perfectly round was after draining an entire keg on his own.

Sure enough, a good shake of his gut produced an audible splashing sound, and the tell-tale feeling of liquid swirling within him. At first he assumed his new drink had caused some extreme bloating, but that didn't explain the increased weight of his middle. Any attempt at calmly addressing the issue ended once he noticed his belly was still expanding, and rapidly. Raf desperately pressed down on his gut with both paws in an effort to force out gas, or even just keep it at bay, only managing to belch a little in the process. A trained elementalist, Raf also tried controlling the swelling brew inside his stomach as if it were water, also to no avail.

Panic and dead-end solutions had cost Raf valuable time, and the charr's body had rounded out considerably when he finally decided to seek out Vitruvius' help. He could barely even waddle anymore, on the verge of falling over with every step as his arms and legs began to puff up as well. To make matters worse, the normally tan fur of his belly was slowly turning a light blue color, just like the cranberries Raf had so happily mixed in with his drink. Had he not been so understandably stressed out,

he may have made the connection.

Inevitably waddling became simply impossible, and Raf whimpered as he found himself immobilized in the middle of a distressingly narrow hallway. His arms had become so bloated they were extended straight away from his sides, resting upon the gradually engulfing curvature of his body. Raf swore he could hear his hide creak as it stretched, the pressure within building more and more with each passing minute, fears of bursting suddenly creeping into his mind. He could feel the immense weight of the liquid bubbling inside him pulling him forwards ever-so-slightly, until finally he rolled over onto his blimped up middle.

Raf was already a brilliant shade of bright blue as his body neared being completely spherical, his puffy flailing paws sitting at the ends of the domes that'd been his arms and legs. Even his normally pink eyes and mohawk had shifted to blue, guaranteeing the charr resembled a giant berry. He winced as his curved horns pressed gently into his bloated form, breathing a brief sigh of relief that they weren't in a position to pop him. The charr had swollen so much he'd essentially blocked off the corridor, expanding till not even a crack was left. Creaks and groans were painfully common, and Raf assumed every louder-than-usual sound was the herald of an explosion. Fortunately he was wrong.

The expansion finally ceased, not that the immobile charr was particularly thankful. He growled and grumbled and whined as he mused over what to do. At his size, though, his options were limited. For nearly an hour he fumed alone as he clogged the hallway, unsure if he actually *wanted* anyone to stumble upon him. He would have no such luck. There was a sudden, curious poke at his bloated back, and Raf wiggled as best he could as he felt more prodding, along with faint laughter. Soon a couple more members of his warband showed up on the side his head was facing, leading to a frustrating bout of teasing and threats before Vitruvius was finally retrieved to handle the situation.

As expected, Vitruvius wasn't much help either. The inquisitive engineer eagerly examined every inch of his round friend, pressing into his taut sides with a prosthetic claw uncomfortably often for Raf's taste. "Incredible, I assumed you were just filled with air, but this feeling, it must be liquid instead. Seems like an odd place to practice your water magic, though."

"This isn't my magic!" Raf growled. "Your dumb weight-loss elixir did this to me!"

"Hmm, its never caused swelling like this before, did you take anything else with it?" Vitruvius asked.

Raf twitched as someone else prodded him. "Just cider and some berries. Nothing magic about them though!"

"Berries? You mean the bright blue ones, right, the cranberries?" Vitruvius looked deep in thought.

"Yeah. No one was eating them so I assumed they were fair game," Raf mumbled.

"Interesting. I knew they had some sort of odd properties to them, but I didn't expect them to be capable of replenishing liquids," Vitruvius said.

Raf seemed far less amused. "Why'd you leave mystery berries in the damn kitchen where anyone could eat them, especially if you knew something was weird about them!"

"My workshop has less than ideal conditions for keeping fruit, I wanted to make sure they'd stay fresh." Vitruvius wasn't sure what the big deal was.

Raf started to reply, but quickly devolved into a series of frustrated grunts and growls. He'd been friends with Vitruvius long enough to realize when to give up.

"This is an incredible discovery, though!" the engineer grinned. "If the elixir maintains its potency and hasn't been diluted, then production costs could be reduced drastically! Not to mention how much we could make selling cider like this. There'd need to be some further tests to see if drinking the resultant brew causes the same swelling phenomenon, though."

"Stop trying to find ways to profit off using me as a distillery!" Raf shouted. "I could burst at any second!"

Vitruvius shook his head. "You'd be surprised at how durable the body is, honestly. I ended up

just as big a while ago while testing out a jumping elixir. That involved air rather than cider, but there shouldn't be a major difference.”

Raf was too annoyed to feel relieved, and again returned to ignoring his friend. All he could think about was how long he'd be stuck as a bloated charr berry, and whether he'd regain his natural color once he was drained. *If* he could be drained. Thoughts of being permanently stuck as a wobbling sphere now overwhelmed his mind. The next few hours weren't going to be fun...