

A Blueberry Santa

By: IndigoRho

In a quiet living room on Christmas Eve, the twinkling lights of a beautifully decorated tree bathed presents and furniture alike in their gentle glow. Some stray bits of ash sprinkled into the cold fireplace as something stirred within the chimney, a pair of shiny black boots soon lurching into view. A second later they were joined by red pants and a bushy, spotted white tail that practically filled the whole fireplace on its own. With a muffled grunt a hefty snow leopard squeezed his way into the room. Not a single speck of dirt or ash marred either the red fabric of his outfit or his white fur, despite the fact a feline of his girth should've been scraping the sides of the chimney all the way down. Staying impeccably clean was important, even if no one was supposed to see Santa Claus. He was tired yet still undeniably jolly, his round middle bouncing as he waddled over to the tree to leave presents for the last stop on his journey. His bag was emptied in a flash, and just like that Santa was already heading back to the chimney.

Treats left on a side table along the way caught his attention, though. A plate with blue frosted sugar cookies and a glass of what could only be blueberry-flavored milk sat beside a simple note reading: For Santa. The combination was definitely odd—not to mention far from conventional—but at that point in the night Santa welcomed the change. He tore through the cookies with impressive speed and chugged the milk in one go, letting out a content sigh as he set down the glass. The strong taste of blueberry lingered on his tongue, unsurprising since the frosting turned out to be that flavor as well, but the snow leopard thought nothing of it as he slid back up the chimney and onto the roof.

Deep within Santa's stomach something began to faintly bubble, masked by the sounds of crunching snow beneath his boots. The pool of blueberry milk grew darker and more vibrant...and deeper. Santa himself was oblivious to the changes, overlooking the way his belly sloshed as he settled into his sleigh and ordered his reindeer into action. As far as he was concerned he'd just completed another successful Christmas Eve night, eager to relax a bit until the next holiday season. Meanwhile his gut was continuing to gradually swell, growing taut as more and more juice accumulated inside. His whole outfit was designed to have give—a necessity considering Santa's occasionally fluctuating weight—and it stretched to accommodate his bloating middle a little too well, ensuring he remained blissfully unaware even longer.

Beneath his coat and shirt the snow leopard's bright white fur was turning blue, starting around his navel and spreading outward in all directions. Santa's belly continued to get rounder and rounder, the jolly spirit of Christmas too focused on returning to the North Pole to notice. Only when he leaned a bit forward on happenstance did he realize something was off, his middle pressing against the sleigh. He jumped in surprise at the sight of his beach ball of a gut, feeling the heavy splashing of juice as he did so and confirming right away he wasn't simply imagining things. Santa shook his bloating belly in confusion. Sure he'd drunk a lot of milk that night, but he definitely hadn't looked so massive at the last house, and that wouldn't explain his continued expansion.

As he dwelt on the worrying situation he gulped, and the taste of blueberry struck him once again. Suddenly Santa had a guess as to what was happening. Whatever had been in that odd milk and cookies was rapidly turning him into a giant blueberry, and even he couldn't do much to stop the transformation while in mid-flight. He fumed at the unexpected betrayal, his thick black belt popping right off as his middle swelled past the three foot mark, exposing his white undershirt and the pair of suspenders digging lightly into his taut hide. By then his limbs were starting to fill with juice as well, growing stiffer by the second as the snow leopard went from merely round to outright spherical.

Fortunately there was just enough room in the sleigh to hold its inflating occupant. His bloating sides wedged neatly in his seat, securing Santa in place so he didn't roll right out and plummet towards the ground far below. The reindeer grumbled in protest as they were forced to deal with Saint Nick's considerably increased weight. Santa's once-white face had turned blue, as had his tail, which flailed

wildly in frustration and fear. With his limbs and head starting to sink into his sloshy body, Santa could only look on and hope the juice flow would cease before his creaking hide gave out; ending the night as a blue drizzle would be beyond embarrassing. His suspenders were stretched to their absolute limit, on the verge of snapping right off and flying off into the distance when the bubbling within him halted.

Santa was quite a sight. If anyone were around to see him he likely would've been mistaken for a dangerously over-inflated lawn decoration with a loose coat. Only his dutifully durable outfit had prevented him from looking like the juicy berry he was. Every slight bit of turbulence caused the juice within him to splash loudly, creating internal waves strong enough to rock him around at times. Larger bumps would cause him to cough up some of the juice, leaving behind blue speckled stains on his white shirt and dirtying him where even ash, oil, and dirt had failed. At the very least he wasn't leaking anywhere else.

He tried not to wobble much out of concern he'd tip the sleigh, the normally cheerful snow leopard frowning in dismay as he realized everyone at the North Pole would witness his bizarre return. He could already imagine the mixture of shock and laughter, how the elves would need to dislodge his bloated form from the sleigh and roll him back to the toy factory to be juiced. They'd probably have to repurpose one of the machines to do the job, since there'd never been the need to drain anyone before. Worse yet, what if the condition was permanent! No one would take a blueberry Santa seriously. For the spiteful Santa there was only one certainty: whoever had dared spike his treats was going to suffer the same ordeal in return, and he'd ensure they stayed swollen and ripe for the rest of their lives. As Santa soared over the horizon, the jingling of sleigh bells and sloshing of juice could be heard, heralding a very berry Christmas.