

Summer at the Berry Farm

By: IndigoRho

August squinted in the bright sunlight, already wishing his sunglasses weren't buried deep within his bag. The plump gray goat was far more used to cloudier weather, though the warmth was a nice change. He was certain he'd get used to it by the end of the Summer. Having just graduated from college barely a couple weeks before, August had been encouraged by his father to spend the Summer helping out at his uncle's berry farm. He was reluctant at first, but the promise of steady pay and getting to hang out with his cousins had eventually won him over.

Above August a large wooden sign read "Bleatberry Farms", which prompted a small snort from him; his uncle *did* have a bit of a silly side.

"Hey Aug, you finally made it!"

Just ahead a pair of goats were making their way towards August, and he greeted them with a smile and a wave. In the lead he recognized Titus, a cousin the same age as August. He was light brown compared to August's gray, and a fair bit slimmer. The goat right behind him was undoubtedly Cody.

Cody was just a year younger, sporting a ball gut larger than August's modest middle. Of course his most noticeable feature was his dark blue color. In the past he'd looked similar to his brother Titus, but then Cody had fallen victim to berrification. Not an uncommon affliction, considering how many ways there were to spontaneously swell up with juice.

Those turned into a giant berry as a prank sometimes found themselves stuck in the form long enough for it to become permanent. Even after being drained their body would still produce more juice in time, the speed of buildup varying from person to person. August was under the impression Cody's case was rather extreme since he remained blue at all times, but his cousin had apparently taken his berrification in stride, even embraced it to a degree.

"Oh come on, I wasn't *that* late!" August laughed as he walked up to his cousins. "Besides, it takes a while to get out here."

"Only if you don't know the shortcuts!" Cody said.

There was a faint sloshing from Cody's belly as he laughed, though not as loud as August had expected considering his size. He'd originally thought Cody's gut was just full of juice, but up close he realized his cousin had simply gotten a lot fatter since they'd last seen each other. August *had* heard that berrification could lead to weight gain because of the high amount of calories in the juice.

"Alright Aug, let's get your stuff inside, then maybe grab a bite to eat after," Titus said, leading the way.

August hadn't eaten anything more significant than a snack since leaving that morning, so he wasn't about to turn down lunch. It'd been about four years since he'd been out to the farm, but the house still felt familiar to him. His luggage was left in the guest room he'd call home for a few weeks, and soon the trio were heading into the spacious kitchen.

Titus opened the fridge and retrieved a plate and a bottle, placing both on the table near August. The plate had half of a blueberry pie which made August's stomach rumble slightly. The bottle was apparently blueberry soda, the label bearing the logo for the farm along with a depiction of a grinning goat's round, bloated face. After a few seconds August recognized it as Cody.

Cody smiled as he saw the realization on August's face. "Bleatberry Fizz is a bestseller! Apparently the juice I produce has an unbeatable taste, especially in soda form." He gave his middle a proud slap.

"Wait, it's *your* juice in there?" August asked as he picked up the bottle and looked it over. He hadn't seen many blueberry sodas before, but it looked a shade or two darker than what he was familiar with.

"Mhm! I produce so much of the damn stuff that it would've been a waste to not use it for something," Cody said. "I get a good chunk of the profits, and can brag about being the face of a

popular soda brand. We're looking into making a cider as well, now that I'm legally allowed to drink."

August felt the slightest tinge of jealousy. "Damn, that's really awesome dude! I'll have to bring a case back home with me or something."

"Maybe you'll be able to bring bottles of your own personal brand home instead," Cody chuckled, receiving a sharp elbow to the side and a quick glare from his brother for his efforts. "Hey, I'm just teasing him!"

August himself didn't think anything of it.

"Well the soda might be courtesy of berry bro here, but the pie is all natural from the farm itself," Titus said. "It'll take me a bit to get a real lunch prepared, but feel free to have this in the meanwhile."

There was no need for further encouragement. August cut himself a slice of the pie and began to dig in. The crust was wonderful and the filling superb, and every bite left August wanting more. Out of curiosity he cracked open the blueberry soda and took a swig. It was just as amazing as the pie. Unknowingly the goat found himself lost in the dessert presented to him, steadily eating and drinking while ignoring his cousins. He was oblivious to the fact that Titus hadn't actually started making anything, and that Cody was constantly on the verge of giggling.

A few short minutes later August went to grab another slice of pie, only to find nothing but crumbs remained. Initially confused, he blushed as he realized he'd eaten half a pie all on his own, along with draining the entire soda.

"Oh...uh—*buhurp*—oops." August let out a nervous laugh. "Guess I was hungrier than I thought."

As mildly embarrassed as August was, his cousins didn't seem to mind in the least. They were just as cheery as they had been since he'd arrived.

"No worries," Cody said. "Titus tends to avoid sweets and I can't eat anything with blueberries in it because it'll cause my juices to act up. I'd be sloshing and creaking right now if I'd had even a bite."

August breathed a sigh of relief, though his reaction would have been very different had he been in front of a mirror. The goat's entire face had turned blue, and the rest of his body was rapidly following suit. He was starting to resemble Cody.

As the oblivious goat continued to change shades, a sudden thought came to mind. "Wait, you said blueberries cause you to make more juice, and I drank soda made from your juice, so—*huic-urrrp!*"

The revelation came just in time for August to feel his belly begin to swell. He bleated in surprise as he saw his hooves had turned blue as well, gaze nervously locked on his middle as it steadily ballooned outward. A curious poke prompted a muffled *splorrrrrrrsh* as his stomach filled with juice.

"Wh-what the heck guys! Where are the juice inhibitors, I need to take one before I end up as a berry!" August was frantically pressing down on his growing belly, as if that would slow the production of juice somehow.

Cody put his arm around August's shoulder. "Don't freak out dude, being a berry's an important part of your job on the farm this Summer!"

"Yeah, gotta make sure you get big and ripe," Titus said, prodding August's wobbly middle.

August looked between his two cousins in confusion, eyes frequently darting to his gut to see how much bigger it'd become. "How does being a berry help at all!"

"Just follow us and we'll explain it to ya. Unless you wanna end up crammed in the kitchen with the sharp counters digging into your sides." Cody gave his cousin a bit of a nudge, prompting August to start waddling forwards after Titus. His face flushed red at the *glorshes* and *glorps* that accompanied every step.

"See August, we didn't think you'd do so well at the labor intensive stuff on the farm, so we had to find a good role for you to, uh, *fill*," Titus said as they headed outside, walking in the direction of a

barn. “Didn’t take us long to decide that you’d probably make an excellent berry!”

Waddling was getting harder and harder for August as he swelled, the weight of the juice swirling within him threatening to topple him over. “Guys this is ridiculous, I don’t want to be a berry! Please just juice me!”

“You’ll be getting juiced plenty, August,” Cody said. “I mean, we can’t turn all that juice into profitable soda if it’s stuck in you the whole time!”

“Course the riper you are the better the juice is, so you’ll have to spend the whole Summer immobile,” Titus added.

August stopped in his tracks. His body was already fairly round, the seams of his shirt and pants long ripped apart so they were on the verge of falling off completely. The goat’s limbs were puffy and somewhat rigid, which had made waddling exhausting.

“But if I spend all Summer as a berry it’ll end up permanent for sure!” August whined. He was hoping his cousins were merely playing a prank on him.

“Well it’s not guaranteed. Being berries has been our Summer role on the farm for years, and I’m perfectly fine,” Titus insisted. “Sure Cody got berried, but that was a bit of a fluke. Plus he’s fine with it now.”

“Mhm, best thing that ever happened to me! And don’t worry August, I’ll be hanging out with ya during most of it while my new cider’s being worked on. Bloated berries can still have fun.” Cody gave his swelling cousin a slap on the back, snickering when he heard him slosh in response.

August hadn’t exactly been convinced by their spiel, but he wasn’t in any position to turn down his new job. He was already well on his way to turning into a berry, and rolling away simply wasn’t an option. He also needed his cousins around to make sure he didn’t accidentally burst. His uncle had likely either given the pair permission to berrify him—or suggested it in the first place—so August doubted he could be a source of rescue. Even his own father would be more amused than annoyed. Becoming a berry was just his fate.

The blueberry goat’s body finally began to envelope his swollen limbs. August’s cheeks had puffed up to resemble orbs, refreshing blueberry juice dripping from his maw. As his arms and legs were squeezed they turned into domes, as did his neck. There was a loud *galuuunk* as he wobbled, the goat resembling an enormous water balloon more and more with each passing second. Within his body the pressure had increased considerably, gallons of juice pressing against his stretched hide on all sides. August winced at every creak, suddenly worried he was on the verge of popping from being overfilled. He wiggled and bleated in distress, nearly rolling himself onto his middle in the process.

“I’m...I’m gonna burst!” August shouted, his head sinking a bit into his bloated neck.

Cody shook his head, though. “Dude you’re not gonna blow. It’s *incredibly* rare for the body to produce enough juice to rupture itself, but if you’re not used to swelling it’ll definitely feel like it’s too much. Took me a whole week to adjust.”

“Yeah, you’re not even that taut.” Titus gave August’s massive side a slap, causing the goat’s whole body to ripple and slosh. “It’s all in your head. Though I don’t hear any bubbling anymore, so I think it’s time to roll ya to your *real* room for the Summer.”

As startling as the slap had been, August couldn’t deny it’d proven a point. Though the pressure was still constantly nagging at him he certainly hadn’t exploded at the slightest touch. He wasn’t ready to be entirely accepting of the situation, though.

Titus and Cody pressed their hooves against their massive cousin and gently rolled him onto his side, ignoring his bleats and wiggles. Then they shifted positions and started to slowly roll him forwards. There were plenty of *glorps* and *ploomps* and *blubbles* as the sloshy blueberry was brought to the barn, along with a particularly rattling *bub-urrrrrp* as August belted out a final belch. He was blushing non-stop just from the sounds his body was making.

The door to the barn was more than wide enough to handle August, and he soon realized why. Instead of being filled with hay or animals, the barn was actually covered in tiles and drains. It almost

resembled an odd locker room. There were open-air showers for cleaning berries, and a handful of wide stalls for them to idle in comfort. Industrial juicers were at the ready, their tubes leading to refrigerated storage tanks connected to the barn's back. One side appeared to have been converted into a den of some sort, with a projector screen and plenty of space for both berries and regular folks.

"This place has everything a berry could dream of!" Cody said as they situated August in the middle of the space. "You can watch movies and TV, even play video games if you've been drained just enough for your hooves to not be puffy. Sure you gotta rely on others to roll ya around everywhere, but there'll always be a couple tenders nearby to handle that."

"And Cody will be all big and sloshy with ya soon enough." Titus chuckled and gave his brother's gut a nudge. "Heck, I think dad's gonna make me spend a couple weeks in here, too. He thinks I'll make a good apple." The goat blushed momentarily, obviously not very enthused about the possibility.

August was frowning less and less. The berry barn *did* look comfortable, with a decent amount of amenities. Before he'd envisioned himself having to wake up early every day and perform exhausting labor on the farm, but now it seemed like he was getting the opportunity to be lazy instead. While it came at the cost of his mobility, it was actually fairly appealing.

"I guess this isn't too bad," August reluctantly admitted. "I mean you could've just *asked* me, though."

Cody laughed. "No way you would've said yes! Everyone gets all weirded out about berrification. Personally I think spending time as a berry would do people a lot of good."

"Cody I'm sure you'll convert your friends to the berry life eventually," Titus teased before turning towards August. "Bro's been hoping his buddies will all become berries like him so he'll have more company during bottling season. So far he's only convinced a couple."

"I just think it's fun being big every once in a while!" Cody said.

The silly back-and-forth between the brothers managed to put August at ease. Summer was guaranteed to be strange, but at the same time it was looking to be fun as well...