

## Frat House Party Popper

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Hashtag knew that at the biggest party of the year in the biggest frat house on campus, avoiding his biggest rival was an impossible dream. Still, amid the boisterous revelers and booming music, the small Geoffroy's cat found himself scowling as he saw a kangaroo gradually heading in his direction; Oz. The two had been dorm roommates their Freshman year and had never gotten along well, especially after they pledged for rival fraternities. Ever since, Oz had made a habit of teasing and bullying Hash whenever possible, often by either pinning down the cat or inflating him like a balloon and leaving him somewhere public to be humiliated. Sure Hash had managed to get back at the roo on occasion, but he was on the receiving end far too much to be satisfied.

Oz was currently sporting a rather round belly at the moment, the buttons of his green shirt showing faint signs of strain as a thin strip of tan fur peeked out below. Though Hash couldn't hear the sloshing above the raucous of the party, he was certain Oz's gut was full of beer, likely from the roo flaunting his ability to drain whole kegs at a time. He did his best to ignore his rival's presence and fake mingling with a group nearby, but Oz was getting closer and closer every second, and the grin on his face made it clear he'd spotted Hash too.

"Hash, *buddy*, I didn't realize you were here!" Oz chuckled, stopping close enough that his bouncing belly nearly bumped into the cat. "Course with how small you are you can't really blame me for missing ya!"

There was no effort to feign friendliness on Hash's part, the cat glaring at his bigger rival in disdain. "Being small means I can actually fit through doorways. With all the booze you're chugging you'll probably have to get rolled out of here!" He gave the roo a hard poke in the gut.

The comeback didn't seem to phase Oz in the slightest. "Well you know what they say, bigger is always better."

Oz took a few steps forwards, pushing Hash up against the nearby wall with his sloshing middle and pinning him in place. Hash wiggled and growled, the added weight of gallons of beer making the roo impossible to overpower. A few partiers noticed the incident, but none made any attempt to interfere; instead they were more than happy to simply laugh at the cat's bullying as they continued drinking and chatting. The triumphant Oz didn't say a thing at first, merely enjoying his rival's pitiful attempts to break free.

"D-Dammit Oz, let me go!" Hash hissed, his face turning red as he realized just how many eyes were on him, how many amused grins. Some were his fellow frat brothers, and he knew they'd never let him hear the end of it if he remained pinned for long.

"Hmm, only if you say bigger is better," Oz sneered, the tipsy roo plainly enjoying the chance to so easily tease his rival.

"Bigger is better!" Hash blurted out without hesitation, caring more about being free of his sloshed tormentor than his pride.

Oz didn't move aside, though. "It's not fun when you cave so fast little guy, obviously I was being too easy on you! Now you're gonna have to promise to grab me a fresh beer if you want free."

"No way, I already did what you asked, Oz!" Hash growled and struggled further, to no avail. "I'm not your waiter!"

The frat roo grabbed his balloon-like belly with both paws and squeezed, applying more pressure on the captive cat. "You're either gonna be my waiter or my cushion, choose wisely."

Hash hissed and grumbled, but he was in no position to negotiate. "Ok, ok, I'll do it!"

The Geoffroy's cat almost fell to the floor as Oz abruptly stepped back, a few laughs erupting from bystanders.

"Don't take too long, Hash," Oz warned. "Otherwise it'll be round two." He gave his belly a hard slap for emphasis.

Hash rolled his eyes as he hurried off in search of beer, furious at being embarrassed once again. As the cat made his way to the bustling kitchen he fantasized about all the ways he wanted to get back at Oz. Shoving a hose in his mouth and pumping him with water or air until he was an orb, watching everyone at the party roll him around and laugh. Forcing him to gulp down the contents of keg after keg so he'd be immobilized by his own wobbly bulk.

As fun as it was to dream, though, his odds of pulling off any such revenge were slim to none. He'd never be able to overwhelm Oz and fill him up, not while the roo was able to throw around that sloshing gut, and any tank would need to be both big enough and powerful enough to inflate him rapidly; otherwise he'd simply swat away the hose and turn the tables on Hash. Getting help from his fellow frat brothers was also unlikely, as most were too busy drunkenly enjoying the party to care about Hash's rivalry.

Having almost given up, Hash was struck with a devious idea as he spotted something next to the fresh beer in the fridge. Barely able to resist cackling, Hash pulled an unlabeled mini-keg out, its silver sides marked only by a roughly scribbled "H" in thick print. Helium ale was a novelty meant for pranks, party bets, or self-indulgence. The carbonation-heavy beer was infused with helium, causing anyone who drank it to swell up like a balloon over time. A solid chug was guaranteed to make you round and lift you off the ground. Unlike an air tank or standard keg tap, the helium ale could be used to turn someone into a blimp stealthily with ease; perfect for a petty bout of vengeance.

With a spring in his step Hash raced back to where Oz was, quickly finding the roo in the crowd and trying to hide his glee with a fake frown. "Here, a whole mini-keg so you don't bother me for the rest of the night."

Initially surprised by the unexpected gift, Oz rather swiftly became smug, silently congratulating himself for triumphing so clearly over his rival. "If the stuff's good I'll consider." He snatched the keg from Hash and immediately started guzzling the contents.

A brief smile crept onto Hash's face. "Oh, I get the feeling you'll find it swell."

Oz kept the keg to his lips until every last drop had been drained, eager to show off his capacity. Within his stomach the new beer sloshed and fizzed, causing the roo to swell a little. When he stopped chugging, though, his middle didn't stop growing. The overactive carbonation tickled Oz and prompted a belch, but he didn't realize anything was amiss right away. Hash noticed, of course.

That beer was more bubbles than booze, figures your frat would keep low quality stuff!" Oz declared, garnering some drunken support from a few of his own frat brothers nearby.

Hash ignored the taunt, though, his gaze instead locked onto his rival's bloating belly. The gaps in between Oz's shirt buttons were growing by second, more and more tan fur being exposed. He wasn't sober enough to notice how tight his shirt was getting, and the tell-tale bubbling within was drowned out by music, remaining oblivious until the first button finally failed and flew off.

Oz looked down in confusion, letting out a yelp as he saw how much rounder his belly was. He pushed down on his middle in a futile effort to contain its expansion, but jostling it only seemed to speed up the process, two more buttons sent skipping across the floor. By then others had started to become aware of the roo's inflation, gradually turning Oz into the center of attention.

"W-What was in that beer!" Oz demanded, the bite lost from his words as he stumbled a little.

"Well you kept insisting that bigger was better, so I decided to help make you the biggest one here!" Hash snickered, keeping a safe distance from his swelling rival.

Oz's belt buckle creaked from the strain, the roo wincing as it became unbearably tight, but his belly was too big for him to remove it on his own. Just like the buttons before it, the buckle inevitably snapped off, bouncing his gut and making him expand even more. He could barely walk anymore—only awkwardly waddle—and he was leery of moving too much for fear of blimping up faster.

"I swear Hash—" Oz instinctively covered his mouth with both paws once he heard his own voice, which had gone up a pitch, undoubtedly due to the helium ale.

Hash burst into laughter, having forgotten one of the best side-effects of the prank. "Oh wow

Oz, the new voice really suits a balloon like you!”

The inflating roo glared at Hash right before his belly became too unwieldy to handle, and Oz was forced to prop himself up with his thick tail to ensure he didn't tumble. As his thighs and chest began puffing up along with his middle the seams of his clothes tore, ripping apart little-by-little. Filling with helium was far more disorienting than regular inflation, Oz struggling to remain standing as he grew lighter and lighter the bigger he got. His arms, legs, and tail all puffed up with helium, becoming more rigid and difficult to use. He had no way of knowing when he'd stop expanding, but he suspected his rival's goal was to make him spherical.

“Enjoy it while it lasts, Hash,” Oz's squeaky voice was utterly unthreatening. “Cause once I'm deflated I'm gonna turn you into a balloon and carry you all around campus in between classes!”

While the threat wasn't shallow, Hash simply couldn't take Oz seriously with his helium-altered voice. “Oz you should be worrying less about the future and more about the present. Maybe a song would help?” The cat felt confident enough to get closer. “*Oompa Loompa doompadee doo, what do you do with a blimp of a roo!*”

Hash gave a firm shove to the round roo's middle, the helpless Oz falling backwards and bouncing some. The fall made him even more spherical, his limbs sinking into his body almost entirely as the tattered shreds of his clothes fell to the ground.

“*Oompa Loompa doompadah dee, you roll him around and cackle in glee!*” Hash did indeed laugh at his own clever taunt, even if only him and Oz could hear it.

Another shove sent Oz rolling into a group of his own frat brothers, though they were enough drinks in to play along with the “game”, sending the roo right back to Hash rather than help him out.

“Y-You're gonna be an air mattress Hash, you'll spend a whole week fully inflated, no a whole month!” Oz continued, his comical voice only managing to draw more attention to himself.

A small crowd was forming, paws poking the roo's taut sides from all directions. Oz wobbled in place and tried to shoo them away, but there was little he could do to fend them off, the roo nervously realizing no one was going to take orders from a balloon seriously. Out of desperation Oz simply asked, then begged for help, though he was still received with laughter. His paws and head were the only things sticking out of his ball body by then. Faint creaks drifted from within him, but they went unheard.

“T-This isn't funny anymore!” Oz pleaded, wincing at the pressure building uncomfortably inside him, every prod feeling sharper. “Hash, I'm...I'm sorry, I'll never mess with you again just deflate me!”

Hash basked in the begging, delighting in how Oz's look of once smug superiority had shifted to worry on his puffy face. “But Oz, you're the *big* hit of the party, why would I ruin everyone else's fun!”

Inevitably Oz started to lift off the ground, flailing in the air as he rose towards the thankfully-low ceiling. The partiers couldn't resist toying with the roo balloon, bouncing him around as if he were a beach ball and leaving him frustratingly flustered as even other members of his frat ignored his frantic requests for help. Eventually their teasing prompted the roo to cease begging altogether, though he still let out the occasional high-pitched whimper.

Oz had been caught in inflation pranks before, but never any quite as public as what Hash had unleashed upon him. No doubt the roo would be forced to see footage of his humiliation for months, maybe even years to come, a fact that made him blush up a storm and whine. In a matter of minutes he'd gone from someone who commanded respect to an oversized beach ball, and soon all of campus would know about it. Whatever he did to get back at Hash would need to be ridiculously more embarrassing.

As Oz obsessed over revenge and embarrassment and whimpered at the drunks prodding and teasing him, he neglected the pressure within him that hadn't ceased increasing. His hide was getting tauter and tauter, each bump and nudge sounding like a strike on a hollow drum. The creaks were getting longer and louder, though still disguised by the general noise of the party. While Oz was no

stranger to inflation, every body had its limits, and he was on the verge of exceeding his.

The bloated roo's mind grew fuzzy as the pressure became overwhelming, wincing and whining at even the slightest touch. As Oz hovered in the air he finally reached the breaking point and his eyes bulged as he felt the inevitable upon him. There was a sudden, thunderous *Boooooom!* that shook the whole house as Oz popped, the sheer force of the blast knocking Hash onto his butt as tan and brown scraps rained down upon the party. Though the music continued there was a sudden hush amongst the party guests as they registered someone had exploded, but the relative silence was brief.

Cheers and hollers erupted as the drunks celebrated the unplanned shower of confetti, treating the bursting as an odd stunt and not concerning themselves with where the scraps originated from. Hash stayed quiet for a moment longer, having not intended for Oz to pop when he'd tricked him into drinking the helium ale. The sheer amount the roo had drunk—combined with all the roughhousing—had caused him to inflate larger than expected. In the end, Hash merely shrugged. He carefully got back up and brushed off a few scraps, happy to no longer have to worry about his obnoxious rival anymore...