

Cider With a Side of Cat

By: IndigoRho

Ceejay sighed as he stood behind the register at work, bored yet again. The day had been painfully slow, and the chubby cat had spent more time looking at his phone than ringing up customers. The end of his shift couldn't come fast enough. He skimmed the same handful of webpages out of sheer force of habit, but when the jingle of the front door reached his ears he immediately looked up in anticipation. Dealing with customers wasn't necessarily the funnest, but at least it helped pass the time.

His eyes widened and he adjusted his glasses as he saw who had just entered, though. The gray lion was absolutely massive, with an enormous round belly and a face to match. Ceejay guessed he couldn't be a pound lighter than five hundred. His body jiggled as he waddled, his sides nearly brushing against the displays on either side of the long aisle that led straight towards the register. The store was frequented by plenty of hefty customers—from ball-gutted frat boys to doughy businessmen—but the lion was on a whole different level.

The closer the lion got the larger he seemed to get, and Ceejay had to prevent himself from instinctively cowering a little once the customer was right in front of him. The lion's belly spilled over the counter quite a bit, like slow-moving tidal wave threatening to overwhelm the clerk.

“Uh...how can I help you tonight?” Ceejay said, still taking in the massive feline before him.

His imagination was running wild with guesses as to how much liquor a person of his size would buy. He'd probably be getting cases of the stuff, or maybe even kegs. Ceejay suspected the lion could have guzzled down the store's entire inventory and not been satisfied.

“Just wanted to grab a quick cider for the road, the blueberry one right behind ya.”

For a moment Ceejay was stunned by the simplicity of the request, though he quickly regained his composure and turned around. Up on the shelf was a somewhat pricey bottle of blueberry cider, some seasonal local brand that came in a large size. As he worked to retrieve the cider the customer started chatting.

“So, how's the night been—Ceejay?” the lion asked, having glanced down at the cat's name tag.

“Oh, good. Quiet, but good.” Ceejay wasn't about to admit to the utter boredom the last few hours.

“About the same for me. Name's August by the way. Been driving all day, passing through on my way back north after a trip,” August said. “But don't worry, I walked here from the motel so I'm not getting into a car buzzed!”

Well that explained why Ceejay hadn't seen the large lion around before. Even in a big city someone that huge wouldn't go unnoticed. “Were you on vacation then?”

“Yeah, visiting some old friends, even helped one of them move into a new cozy place,” August said, giving his belly a couple pats as he did. “Course the traveling's just as fun, since I enjoy sampling local cuisine along the way.”

“Eaten anything good on this trip?” Ceejay continued to make small talk as he rung up the cider.

“Was blessed with a filling meal at a rest stop yesterday—had a real *kick* to it.” August chuckled and grinned in a way Ceejay couldn't but find a little unnerving. Not that he exactly knew why. “I've got a good feeling tonight's dinner will be even better, though.”

Ceejay nodded, not realizing the lion had been staring quite intently at his chubby middle the entire conversation. “The neighborhood's got a great selection of food, lot of nice restaurants and hole-in-the-wall places.”

“Ha, I wasn't thinking of anything nearly so fancy,” August admitted. “Just something quick and easy, like takeout. Fortunately I know the perfect local food to go along with cider—Liquor Store Cat.”

Ceejay stared blankly up at August as the receipt printed, convinced he'd misheard. Or perhaps the lion was trying to make an awkward joke. Then August's stomach rumbled loudly, and suddenly Ceejay wasn't so sure.

A large paw reached across the counter and grabbed Ceejay by the shirt collar, pulling him a few inches closer.

“Yes Ceejay, I think you'll do quite nicely.

Ceejay froze in fear as August's maw opened up, wider than the cat thought possible. Darkness overcame him before he could even begin to think of how to react. There was a pull soon after, something wrapping around his shoulders and pinning his arms to his sides as steady bursts of warm air hit his face and fogged up his glasses. He was being eaten alive.

The cat struggled wildly, which mainly amounted to kicking at the counter he was slowly being pulled over. August had him greatly outmatched in size and strength. The sheer ease of which he was consuming Ceejay only made him feel more and more like an actual snack. Then again it was hard not to feel that way compared to the immense, gluttonous lion.

Each powerful gulp pulled Ceejay deeper into the lion, whose gut was swelling ever-so-slightly from its latest acquisition. Ceejay was a rather modest meal compared to some of the others August had indulged on during his trip, especially the doughy crow he'd snagged at the rest stop the day before. Even so, the cat was proving to be delightfully delicious. He could've benefited from a bloated belly full of booze, but August unfortunately hadn't had the time nor patience to fill Ceejay up that night. Oh well.

A few swallows later and all that was visible of Ceejay was the flailing tip of his tail, which was quickly slurped up.

August took a step back to let his gut settle. Despite Ceejay's best efforts to struggle and squirm he made only the faintest of bulges, buried beneath thick layers of belly fat. If another customer happened to wonder in they likely wouldn't have realized August had even eaten the unlucky clerk. The fact would benefit August greatly during the short waddle back to his motel. And if the lanky, tasty-looking receptionist manning the front desk there ended up noticing August's gut had mysteriously grown then the lion would gladly show him why.

“You're customer service is excellent Ceejay!” August bellowed, his cat-stuffed belly wobbling as he did. “Don't worry, I'll make sure to fill out a comment card so you get the recognition you deserve.”

As Ceejay kicked and punched and shouted to be let out, August casually grabbed one of the nearby comment cards and started writing, narrating everything so his meal could hear. “Ceejay was amazing. Went down smoothly with a bottle of cider and ensured I left sated. Girth could use improvement, though.”

August laughed some more as he abandoned the comment card on the counter and grabbed the bottle of cider, twisting the cap off and taking a long swig. Ceejay squirmed even harder, and August rewarded the cat by kneading his belly with a free paw and taking a few more drinks. The front door to the store was a bit of a tight squeeze, but inevitably August managed it. He politely flipped the Open sign on the door to Closed before he left.

Back at the motel August would be able to spend the rest of the night relaxing in bed, and come morning he'd have a few fresh layers of belly fat to remember the city by—and maybe a pair of glasses.