

The Bleating Blimp

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A small gust of wind caused the sign in front of the inn to gently rock back and forth, chains creaking. Bright white lettering read “The Bleating Blimp” at the top, right above a painting of a grinning, spherical goat. Just the sight of it was enough to make the hefty frowning hyena outside let out a frustrated sigh. Raf was—unfortunately—acquainted with the inn's proprietor, August. Though he usually went to great lengths to avoid him, Raf didn't have a choice that day, and he already eagerly awaited leaving the inn.

Another gust rustled Raf's pink mohawk, and the hyena begrudgingly stepped through the front door.

The Bleating Blimp was lively but not really bustling. Only a few tables were occupied, their rowdy occupants laughing and chatting more than drinking. Most of the noise was coming from the far side of the spacious main room, where a crowd was gathered.

Beyond them was an over inflated ram, his stretched tunic doing a poor job of covering his spherical form. He was smiling and wobbling slightly, obviously either oblivious to his condition or actually enjoying it. Whatever the case he was definitely drunk. Hanging from his neck was a worn dart board, positioned right over his middle.

As Raf approached, a dart launched towards the ram, embedding into the board's edge; an inch to the left and he'd have likely been punctured and turned into scraps. Rather than seem frightened, though, the ram let out a boisterous, triumphant laugh.

“Ha, you aren't gonna win throwing like that, August!” The inflated ram bellowed.

Across from him was a slim, black-and-white goat in a vest, a dart in one hoof and a mug of beer in the other. He gave an exaggerated frown.

“Keep that up Graham and I'll start aiming for you rather than the board!”

“You'd just end up putting holes in the wall!” Graham snickered back, right before another dart hit the board with a hard *thunk*, wobbling the ram.

As August took a drink he turned, spotting Raf in the crowd. The game forgotten, he pushed through the others and embraced the large grumpy hyena.

“Raf, it's been too long!”

“Not long enough,” Raf grumbled under his breath, accepting the hug awkwardly.

“Finally taking up that offer for free drinks big guy?” August gently elbowed Raf in his doughy gut, much to the hyena's obvious annoyance.

Raf glared at August but made no real effort to discourage the goat's teasing. Trying would be futile, and a pain. “Of course not, everything you sell would turn me into a blimp!”

“Oh c'mon now, that's an exaggeration,” August insisted with little conviction. “Besides, you always looked great spherical and creaky.”

Raf scowled and blushed, a plethora of embarrassing memories running through his head. “Whatever, not what I'm here for. I was sent to purchase a few kegs of *normal* beer for a celebration, and unfortunately they insisted on you as the supplier.”

“Well I'm honored to have been chosen. Why don't we grab a table and discuss this over a drink or two?”

Without waiting for an answer August wrapped an arm around Raf's shoulder and nudged him forwards, his guest reluctantly following along.

“I'm fine, anything you'd give me would be spiked,” Raf replied.

“Raf I'd *never* do such a thing to a customer!” August said as he guided the hyena to a table with chairs that had clearly been reinforced. “And you can't just buy liquor blind, you have to sample the offerings so you can select what best fits your tastes.”

The chair Raf chose still creaked under his bulk, again causing him to blush. “I'll just let you

choose, doesn't matter to me.”

August whispered a quick order to a nearby server, and a minute later two fresh mugs were placed on the table. The goat gladly accepted his while Raf merely stared at the other in disapproval.

“Still suspicious?” August chuckled. He took a hearty drink from his mug, then grabbed Raf's and tasted it as well before returning it. “There, I've drunk from them both, convinced it's not a trap now?”

Raf's persistent frown implied he wasn't, but a few more seconds of badgering were enough to make him give in. He sipped cautiously to start, but soon the hyena was unconsciously taking longer gulps. It didn't taste any different from regular beers at least. August kept the liquor flowing, making sure both of their mugs were always full.

While August kept Raf distracted with meandering stories and questionable facts about the different beers available he leaned forwards somewhat to disguise his middle. Normally flat, it had begun to round out during the conversation, swelling as the beer in his stomach fizzed to an extreme degree. The same swelling was occurring to Raf, but August knew just how to keep the hyena's attention off his gut. By the time Raf realized what was happening he'd be far too late to do anything about it.

In contrast to Raf, August adored growing big. Inflating was a passionate hobby of his, something he indulged in frequently and based his inn around. He always enjoyed seeing others blimp up—willingly *or* unwillingly—and Raf was one of his favorite targets.

The goat dared to sneak a hoof off the table and onto his hidden belly. He grinned a little wider as he prodded and poked it, feeling the pressure building from the rampant carbonation his signature bloat brew caused. His self-teasing inevitably provoked a loud *uorrrrrp*, which he politely excused himself for.

The belch only distracted the hyena more, and August could already see Raf's huge belly bloating a bit. Soon he'd feel his clothes getting tighter or his gut wobbling when he burped. That's when things would get really interesting.

Raf was bored beyond belief by August's endless sales pitch. At least that's what he assumed it was. It was a lot of talking that didn't seem to go anywhere and Raf simply wasn't able to sneak a word in at any point. The odd bout of burping that'd suddenly come over him made the whole ordeal even worse. As the hyena shifted about in his chair in an attempt to settle his stomach he felt his gut press against the table despite the fact he'd purposely sat away from it.

Confused, Raf looked down. His eyes widened as he saw how unnaturally round his belly had become, his hide noticeably taut and stretching as he watched. He looked from his belly to his beer to his “friend”, growling.

“*Exactly* what I said would happen!” Raf growled.

He made a lazy attempt to stand but the awkwardness of his bloated gut caused him to fall back into his chair immediately, letting out a thunderous *braaaaaaaaaap* in the process that left him flustered. The eyes of practically everyone in the inn were upon him now.

August gave a mock look of shock. “Oh no, I'm swelling up like a balloon too!” He revealed his growing middle and slapped it playfully. “I swear this wasn't my doing, Raf. One of my employees must have decided to play a little prank on me and got you as well.”

Raf didn't believe the goat for a second, but he wasn't about to give August the satisfaction of playing dumb as they continued inflating. He hadn't thought to bring anything that might negate a prank beer, shortsightedness he was greatly regretting. He'd hoped to have been in and out of the Bleating Goat before August could strike. That certainly wasn't the case.

While Raf struggled to escape his chair August happily slid out of his, still playing with his beach ball of a belly. The clothes he wore were enchanted to stretch along with him, so the buttons of his vest didn't appear strained in the slightest. He merrily shook his gut, which sloshed and fizzed and swelled in response. Even just being a little inflated was a delight, an experience he'd indulge in all day

if possible. In a few short minutes the euphoria would be even grander.

By the time Raf finally managed to stand back up he was nearly too wide to move. His limbs had already begun puffing up a bit, and he knew he'd never have been able to waddle out the front door in time. Not that he'd *want* to be seen blimping up in public; the audience in the inn was bad enough. The seams of his tunic ripped little-by-little, tattered strips of fabric gradually falling to the floor and exposing his tan body to all. Raf's expression was rapidly shifting between embarrassment, frustration, and rage, neither of which seemed to discourage August from enjoying the spectacle.

The pair swelled and creaked, their limbs steadily getting enveloped by their round inflating bodies. August spun and waddled, embracing the experience and laughing along with the crowd. Meanwhile Raf did his best to stay perfectly still, the massive hyena not eager to end up rolling across the room if he toppled over.

"August if I could pop you I would!" Raf growled as he felt his head sinking into his body, his cheeks puffy and round. It was impossible to be intimidating as a blimp.

August laughed so hard he bleated and belched, his puffed up hooves wiggling at the end of his inflated form. "Unless you're planning on bouncing onto me I don't think you'll be able to burst me today ya blimp!"

Utterly defeated, Raf simply went back to pouting and grumbling. The pressure within him was impossible to ignore but not uncomfortable, merely a persistent reminder that he was massive.

When Raf felt himself stop inflating he wasn't particularly surprised. He knew August would prefer him intact for teasing rather than as a pile of embarrassed scraps littering the inn. The hyena refused to act grateful for the "courtesy", though, and continued scowling in August's general direction.

The goat blimp who'd tricked him was cheerfully humming and rocking back and forth on his round middle, reveling in the pokes and prods of others. August encouraged the onlookers to press hard against his taut sides to provoke burps and bleats, and of course many decided Raf was also as willing for such treatment.

Despite plenty of growls and grumbles Raf was incapable of fending off those eager to have fun. They drummed on his sides and rolled him around, discussing how much softer he felt than August because of his considerable blubber. With great effort a group managed to lift the disgruntled blimp a couple feet in the air, before letting go to see how well he'd bounce. Raf's eyes bulged as he impacted with the floor, ripples of force spreading across his taut form. He held together, and bounced a few times much to the joy of the others.

Eventually Raf was rolled straight into August, narrowly avoiding the goat's pointy horns—much to his annoyance.

"See Raf, isn't this fun!" August said, wobbling against the hyena. "Now why don't we finish figuring out that order before we have someone roll ya home."

The idea of not being deflated before he left prompted a long, exasperated sigh from Raf. He vowed never to enter the fiendish Bleating Blimp again...