

Hexproof Water Balloon

By: IndigoRho

August held the transparent waterskin up to a candle, watching the light shine through as he shook the contents within. The gray lion didn't seem very impressed. "So...it's water?"

Beside him a hefty giraffe rolled his eyes. "It's not *just* water, it's hexproof water!" he explained—again—with obvious exasperation. "It's immune to all but the most powerful spells, so you don't have to worry about it being tampered with. No more wondering if your glass of water's gonna turn you into a lizard or a blimp or whatever."

"Ok, but does it actually taste like regular water, Alec?" August asked, still eyeing his friend's prize with doubt. "Most enchanted water tastes, I dunno, weird."

"It tastes fine, you're free to take a drink if you'd like," Alec said somewhat insistently.

After a moment's thought August removed the waterskin's cap and took a tiny swig of its contents, just enough to wet his tongue. To his surprise the water was remarkably refreshing, some of the best he'd ever had for reasons he couldn't quite put into words. It was colder than expected, and while not noticeably flavored he felt a persistent urge to consider it delicious. He swiftly took a second, longer drink to enjoy the water more fully.

"Wow that's *really* good water!" August admitted, sneaking another swig.

"Well aquamancy is my specialty, creating good water is a breeze." The giraffe raised his palm up and formed a small sphere of clear liquid before dispersing it with a flick of his wrist. "And feel free to have your fill, the waterskin's got a compressed interior so there's about a lake's worth in there."

August didn't need to be told twice, greedily gulping down more of the water. "I'm gonna have to get a waterskin of this stuff from ya, it'd be a life saver during long research sessions; I swear the fountains near the library are always lukewarm."

"Shouldn't be a problem as long as you can make a few deflation charms for me or something. I'm sure we can work out the details," Alec said, keeping an oddly close eye on exactly how much his friend had drunk. Eventually his grin widened, the giraffe apparently satisfied.

As August remained obsessed with the addictive water Alec sneaked around, silently preparing something that made his hoof glow faintly before giving the lion a hearty slap on the back. The surprise from the sudden strike disguised the tingling sensation that surged through August's body alongside it, just as Alec had hoped.

"Though I should probably take that off your paws before you guzzle it all and fill the place up with your wobbly self," Alec snatched the waterskin from August, who was visibly disappointed at losing his delicious drink.

"Yeah, having to explain a sloshing gut to the professor wouldn't be all that fun either," August admitted, still looking towards the waterskin longingly. "He'd probably turn me into an *actual* water balloon for reasons, I guess."

The chill lingering within August's body was still being ignored, though Alec spotted the expected changes almost right away. He'd always had nearly a foot on the lion heightwise, but August was clearly even shorter now; he was shrinking.

With practiced ease Alec kept August distracted, negotiating the trade for more waterskins and asking him about what spells he'd been working on lately. Thankfully August could zone out to a ridiculous degree. As the lion gradually shrunk his middle seemed to round out, Alec's gaze constantly drifting to the delightful sight while trying not to be too obvious. The charade couldn't last forever, though, and inevitably no amount of chatter could prevent August from realizing his robes felt tighter...and Alec looked taller.

August let out a panicked yelp once he noticed his brand new pot belly straining his usually-loose outfit. A quick jiggle resulted in faint sloshing, and the lion initially assumed the water he'd guzzled was enchanted to multiply within him. If that was true, though, then why was he getting

smaller?

“Damn it Alec, what kind of spell did you cast on me!” August shouted, doing his best to look intimidating despite having to look up at his devious friend.

“Nothing complicated, just a basic shrinking spell,” Alec grinned back. “The real fun is that it won't have any effect at all on that hexproof water you chugged.”

The lion starred at Alec in confusion for a moment before his eyes widened at the realization. “Whoa whoa whoa, if I get small enough then I'll burst! Undo the spell now!”

“Oh you'll be fine. I kept an eye on how much you were guzzling, and based off your usual durability you *should* hold up. Unless all that popping has made your hide weak,” Alec teased, prodding August's swollen middle with a finger.

August growled, but getting frustrated wasn't making him shrink any less. He'd already lost two feet in height, and though he was half as tall as Alec now he was nearly as wide around. The buttons of his vest burst off one-by-one, the lion's outfit unable to handle his ballooning belly. The smaller he got the heavier the water felt. August was forced to brace himself and rest one paw beneath his gut just to stay standing.

“Well if I have to be round, you do to!” August shouted, preparing to conjure an illusory pump to get revenge. Blue light fizzled from his paw, but nothing else happened. He looked at it in confusion.

Alec burst into laughter. “What, forgot you're full of hexproof water? It's immune to magical tampering and also disrupts the drinker's magic, too. With how much you're lugging in that belly of yours you wouldn't be able to cast even the simplest spell.”

August gulped, completely out of ideas. His increasingly taller friend circled around him slowly, gleefully jostling and prodding his balloon belly as he continued to shrink. The force of the pokes seemed to be intensifying, though it could very well have been another side effect of how small he was getting. The shrinking lion wobbled and stumbled, barely managing to hold up his immense middle with both paws.

Inevitably the weight became too much, and August fell to his knees once he passed the two foot point, then onto his belly.

The pressure was harder to ignore, his hide stretched a great deal. August thought he could hear the faintest creaks in between the louder sloshes, but it could very well have just been his imagination. He groaned as he felt tauter and tauter, until thankfully he stopped shrinking.

In the end August was only half-a-foot across, and more belly than lion. He looked like a melon, paws sticking out along the top of his bloated sides where his arms had mostly been enveloped. When he looked up he couldn't even see Alec's face beyond the curvature of the giraffe's moon-sized belly.

Suddenly the giant closed in, two enormous hooves grasping August by the sides and lifting him into the air. Alec's chuckling made his whole body wobble.

“You really are the perfect size and shape now.” Alec shook the bloated lion a little, causing him to yelp and burp. He tossed him into the air and caught him like a ball, much to August's dismay.

“Sturdy enough, too! Nice to know you'd make a serviceable waterskin or potion bottle if necessary~”

“Not cool!” August whimpered. The pressure was threatening to put him into a daze every time Alec jostled him. “Please turn me back to normal, or at least drain this dumb water out of me!”

“Oh you'll be drained of all that water soon enough—once I've dropped you on a professor.”

“What? N-No, I'm not a damn water balloon!” August insisted, wiggling in protest. “I don't wanna burst! And I'll get in huge trouble once they realize who the scraps belong to!”

Understandably, Alec didn't seem to have a problem with either outcome. “Just tell the truth and swear you're an innocent victim and you'll get off light. Of course, if you tell them who tossed ya I'll claim you were in on it the whole time. Then we'll *both* be stuck as blimps for a month or however long they decide to punish us.”

“Damn it Alec you're the worst! I'll get you back for this!”

“I'm sure you will. And then I'll find an even funner way to tease you.” Alec laughed as he

carried August away. “Hope you don't mind heights...”