The Office Party

 It was time for another monthly drinking party with the accounting department, and everyone was having a blast…well…except for Haida. While everyone else was already contentedly drunk, he was still nursing a light buzz on his second beer. He wistfully turned towards the empty seat beside him that he had saved for Retsuko, but she must have been running late—very late. He quickly snapped out of his dazed state when Ookami sat down beside him. “Hey! Y-you know I’m saving that spot for Retsuko!”

 “Relaaax~.” The fox stifled a belch as he slung an arm around Haida’s shoulders. “I’ll move as soon as she gets here! Meanwhile, you need to get in the spirit of this drinking party and *drink*!” Ookami clinked his glass on Haida’s and downed the last of his drink, letting out a satisfied exhale. The hyena looked down at his own glass in deep, somewhat inebriated thought when he could hear a voice say, “Haidaaa~, it’s meee!~ Retsukooooo!~ Enjoy yourseeellff~, don’t wait for meee~!” Haida looked up at the fox who was whispering straight into his ear with a high-pitched, spooky voice with annoyance until a determined look lit up his face.

 “You know what? You’re right!” Haida picked up his mostly full glass and, to Ookami’s amazement, downed it in just a few seconds. With a hearty clack, he brought his glass down and let out a heavy belch. “Retsuko wouldn’t want me moping around at a party! She’d want me to enjoy myself!” The fox gave a cheer as he filled Haida’s glass with more beer, which he quickly drank like the last one.

 Ookami could not help but laugh as he poured another glass for the hyena, emptying the bottle very quickly. “Hell yeah! That’s the spirit! Let’s drink this place out of house and home!” The fox whole heartedly raised his glass yelling a cheer as the rest of the room joined in, even though most of them likely did not know what they were toasting to.

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 As Manamaru made his way to one of the bar’s private rooms for the sales department drinking party, he checked his phone to see a message from Resasuke saying that he was going to be a little late and to head on in. Sliding his phone back into his pocket, he went into one of the private rooms—apparently the wrong one. Ookami was the first one to notice him, yelling over to him, “Heeyyy~, what’s happenin’ Manamaru?~” As he waved him over, the fox picked up a bottle and poured another glass of beer for the drunk hyena next to him.

 “Oh, I thought I was in the right room! The sales department is actually having a drinking party, too. So…what’s his deal?” The big cat pointed at the hyena who just threw back the beer poured for him as if it was a shot of water. The hyena’s shirt looked very restrictive, his belly looking bloated enough that he almost looked pregnant.

 Ookami slapped a hand on the hyena’s back, eliciting a belch. “Haida here is just showing us how it’s done! I don’t think I’ve seen anyone drink as much as him! He must be on his…” the fox counted out on his fingers, writing a few equations into the air that were probably meaningless, “Twelfth beer!”

 “Twelfth?” Manamaru’s eyes widened slightly, almost impressed by the number—almost. “That is impressive! Although, that Retsuko girl you guys have could probably drink any of you under the table!” Haida’s head perked up.

 “Re…Retshuko?”

 “Yeah! That night at the mixer, I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone throw it back like she does!” The cat let out a hearty laugh, sitting down on the other side of the hyena. “I bet she’d be impressed with anyone that could drink her under the table!”

 “R…really?”

 “Hell yeah! I bet she thinks it’s like a sign of manliness if someone can drink a keg dry!”

 “More beer!” The hyena suddenly interjected, raising his glass up in the air. At least three bottles raised as well, each offering to fill it.

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“More!”

“More!”

“More!”

 Ookami and Manamaru could not believe the spectacle before them as they watched the hyena guzzle down glass after glass with no letup. Sitting on his lap was the pinnacle of a beer gut, just barely contained by his shirt. As he slammed down his empty glass once more, he let out a raucous belch as a button finally popped free from his shirt, letting some brown fur come out into the open. The scene was met with cheers from the two sitting next to him which was echoed by the crowd who was only cheering for the sake of cheering at this point. “This guy’s an animal!” Manamaru gave the hyena’s gut a light hit with the back of his hand, laughing as it bounced back. “Hey, Ookami! You think we should see if this place has any kegs on hand? I bet he can take it!” Suddenly the lights went out in the room. Then the door slid open as fog poured in.

**\*CLACK\* \*CLACK\* \*CLACK\* \*CLACK\* \*CLACK\* \*CLACK\* \*CLACK\***

 As the fog cleared, a small cat who may be familiar to some readers stood in the hall holding a pair of wooden blocks. The room was filled with an awkward silence as all eyes were on the mysterious cat lady. “…Did someone order a keg?” She then kicked the door open a bit more, showing a large keg that was almost her height. The room erupted with even more cheering as the lights went on and Manamaru hefted the keg up, bringing it to Haida.

 “Alright! Let’s see how much you can handle!” Haida barely groaned a complaint that he should slow down as Manamaru pushed him up to lean him against the keg for support, but the cat was not having that. “Come on!~” I bet Retsuko would go head over heels if she came in just in time to watch you polish this thing off!” Haida’s eyes perked open as his flushed face grew even more red at the thought, and as he was about to express his agreement, a hose was shoved into his mouth as the keg’s tap was opened. His mouth then quickly filled with beer which he just as hastily swallowed. The beer’s carbonation already had a more than evident effect on his gut, but the effect was increased as he chugged from the hose, not getting a moment to breath and belch out any extra gas. At first, the effects were audible, his belly gurgling as the gas began to make itself at home in his stomach, and then visible as his belly started to rapidly swell, making the rest of his shirt buttons creak before popping off one by one. As one would expect, his belly was feeling amazingly full, but since he was keen on impressing Retsuko, he powered through it, rubbing his belly to ease the aches and pains of a bloated gut.

 A small crowd began to form around the hyena as they all watched him drink the keg like his life depended on it. A chant began to grow in the room as quickly as Haida’s belly: “Haida! Haida! Haida! Haida!” All eyes were trained on the swelling hyena; everyone cheered him on as his belly grew to the size of a yoga ball, the hyena practically obscured by its girth if you were watching from right in front of him. A sputtering sound made the crowd grow silent, wondering if he might have finally overdone it. It became evident, though, that the sputtering was actually coming from the now empty keg he was leaning on! Manamaru quickly took the hose from Haida’s mouth and gave his cheeks a little clap to knock him out of his drinking rhythm. “Hey! Hey! …Are you alright?”

 Haida was dazed, cradling his giant belly in his lap as he let out a moan. Suddenly, his cheeks puffed up, and before anyone could theorize whether he was about to throw up, he let out a loud and cacophonous belch. After a moment, everyone was quickly back to cheering, obviously easily entertained, as they stood him up, everyone rushing to congratulate him, some with words, some with belly rubs, and some with even more beer. As the crowd let him be, going back to their own little groups to chat and drink, Haida could see a certain red panda standing at the door. “*hic* Retshuko! He-*hic*-heeey!~” The hyena waddle his way over to the door, sloshing all the way. “Shorry I didn’t wa-*hic­*-wait for ya!~ I figured you’d want me to enjoy *urp* myshelf anyway, heh!~ And enjoy I did!” Haida hefted his huge, beer-filled belly in his hands, letting it slosh back down with a heavy bounce. “Yep!~ Got a whole kegsh worth in here, plush more!~ Pretty *hic* manly, huh?~” The hyena feeling much bolder than usual pressed his gut into the red panda, letting them get a good look at their ‘manliness’.

 The red panda rubbed a hand over Haida’s belly, a blush forming on their cheeks. “Cool…”

 “I’ve got a sheat shaved for ya ri-*hic­*-right next to me, if you wanna…if you wanna…good *hic* night.~” The hyena suddenly fell forward, practically squishing the red panda underneath himself as people frantically rushed to roll him over. After a night like this, they might need to start imposing a drink limit.

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 As Haida made his way to the accounting department at work, he groaned as he rubbed his still sloshy, basketball sized belly. Looking at it underneath his ill-fitting shirt only served as a lesson in restraint as he silently reminded himself to never drink like that again. He could not remember much of what happened that night, but he did remember falling on Retsuko. He hoped that he did not hurt her. Entering the office, he could see her at her desk, and his face grew flush. Awkwardly, he walked over to the red panda. “Hey…sorry about last night.”

 Retsuko looked up, “What do you mean?”

 “I didn’t mean to fall on top of you at the party last night. I really should’ve been watching my drinking anyway.”

 “But I wasn’t at the party.”

 “…What?”

 “I didn’t go. I just wasn’t feeling it last night, so I just stayed home.”

 “Then…who?”

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 Resasuke laid in bed with a cold compress on his head for his headache and his arm in a sling for his sprained shoulder. Thinking back to last night, he pulled out his phone and opened his photo gallery. In it, he scrolled past several pictures of a hyena, each picture looking focused on the hyena’s growing belly. Then he got to a video which he played, showing the hyena walking to the camera and shaking his belly. The hyena then drunkenly said, “Yep!~ Got a whole kegsh worth in here, plush more!~ Pretty *hic* manly, huh?~” The red panda started to blush furiously.

 “…Cool.”