Free Refill

By: Indi

There were plenty pleasures in the world, and Alexi was never one to resist their temptation. The somewhat hefty unicorn was sitting at a tavern table, kept company only by a trio of emptied mugs and the decimated remnants of a three course meal.

Tipsy and full, Alexi had nothing to complain about—aside from how tight his shirt felt. He was certain he'd cast a spell of elasticity on it so it could keep up with his indulgences. Perhaps he'd used it on his pants instead? Oh well.

On that night the unicorn had mostly kept a low profile, but he'd flashed his magic enough elsewhere for many to recognize him as a mage. Two such patrons were heading his way now, unnoticed until they were right in front of him. They were a black-furred cheetah with white spots and a white striped hyena with a red mohawk.

"You're a mage, right?" the cheetah asked rather bluntly. "Overheard you chatting up the barkeep about it the other night."

Alexi looked up from his mug, considering what to say. The pair of strangers seemed harmless enough. "Oh yes, I—ahem—dabble in the arcane arts." His tone reeked of false modesty.

"Incredible! See Nico, I told ya he was a mage!"

The hyena shrugged, clearly uninterested. "Didn't say you were lying Jet."

"What kind of magic do you know? I've heard unicorns are some of the most powerful mages!" Jet continued.

Flattery would get a person everywhere with Alexi. He perked up a little, puffing out his chest to better match the imposing reputation Jet had given his kind. It didn't disguise the strained buttons of his vest at all.

"Well I...hmm, I wouldn't know where to begin! I've studied under dozens of different schools and mentors, scoured countless tomes in pursuit of the art!" Alexi was bending the truth so much it was on the verge of snapping in half.

Jet had just enough of a buzz going to be persistent. "Could you show us something? Doesn't have to be fancy, whatever you want!"

Presented with such an easy opportunity to impress others, Alexi agreed before he even considered what spell he could possibly use. Making the plates float would work, but also require concentration, something he wasn't in the mood to deal with. Inspiration hit when he noticed Nico had just finished off his drink.

"Ah, of course! You friend—Nico, was it? Nico's next drink is on me. That mug will be full again in a flash!"

The unicorn mumbled a few phrases, and his horn started to glow. Alexi tilted his head towards Nico, and a prismatic ray of light shot out from his horn.

Unfortunately drinking had worsened Alexi's aim, and the ray missed the mug and hit Nico in the chest instead. There wasn't any force to it and Nico barely felt the slightest tingle. No one even realized the spell had missed.

All three stared intently at the mug, awaiting a bubbling brew to come forth. Nothing happened.

Jet took the mug, looking right in it and even tipping it over, as if a command was needed to activate the spell. "Huh, did it not work?"

The spell had indeed worked, just not in the way Alexi or his admirers had expected. Nico's stomach was steadily filling with fresh ale, causing his flat middle to round out more and more with each passing second. The creases on his tunic were smoothing out as it stretched tight over his new gut. The mystery of the empty mug kept him distracted enough not to notice, however.

"My spells never fail, that mug should be overflowing with beer by now!" Alexi insisted.

"Something must be interfering with my magic—I'll just have to give the spell a boost."

More phrases were spoken, the unicorn's horn glowing again. It gave off a prismatic pulse to empower his spell.

Nico's stomach bubbled loudly before ballooning rapidly. He let out a belch and staggered, the magic booze hitting him like a brick. Jet and Alexi both turned towards the suddenly drunker hyena, their eyes immediately shifting to Nico's round middle.

Out of curiosity Jet gave Nico a poke, prompting a muffled slosh and a sloppy *uorrrrrp*. "Is he…is he filling up with ale?"

"Hmm, certainly seems that way. Clumsy fellow must've been holding the mug crooked—threw off my aim!"

No longer sober enough to be worried about swelling up, Nico mumbled an apologetic "My bad".

"Uh, you can undo it, though, right?" Jet asked.

"Preposterous! Once you've set a spell in motion you can't simply take it back. One would need to cast the, um, the antithesis of that spell to counter the effects. But why would anyone ever want to create a spell to evaporate liquor!" Alexi hoped his rambling would come across as common knowledge.

"B-But...hmmmph!" Jet's frustration was brief, as he quickly shifted to being thankful *he* wasn't the one becoming a living keg. With no clue as to how he could help his friend, the cheetah simply watched with begrudgingly growing fascination.

Seams ripped as Nico's belly blimped out of his tunic. It was unwieldy enough that he was forced to hold it up with both paws. His formerly dour expression was replaced by a drunk, goofy grin, the bloating hyena amused by what felt like a giant water balloon in his grasp. *Braaaaaaps* and *buhurrrrrrrrps* were frequent as he belched up a storm.

Normally adverse to such attention, Nico was so plastered he was only just barely aware there was anyone else in the room. He was mesmerized by how massive his middle was, how it just kept growing and growing and growing. Nico drummed on it, watching the surface ripple as he let out burp after burp.

As sturdy as the table was, Nico's keg gut was getting overwhelming. It creaked and groaned in protest, tipping slightly towards the hyena. Everything on it slowly slid off, Alexi snatching his mug before the ale left in it was wasted.

Inevitably the table snapped right in half under the weight of the gallons and gallons of ale inside Nico.

"When is he gonna stop filling up?" Jet asked somewhat nervously. "I mean, the spell *is* gonna stop?"

"Of course, of course! It'll stop once the enchanted container is full, plain and simple." "Nico's way past full, though!"

"He seems to still be happily swelling up to me. His capacity's rather impressive, actually." Alexi nudged Nico's wobbling side. His hoof sunk in a decent amount, the hyena's hide not yet taut. Then in a whisper he added: "Though thanks to my bolstering spell he'll be refilling for a couple days, maybe more."

The attempt to put Jet's worries to rest failed utterly.

While the two were arguing, Nico wasn't getting any smaller. Beached atop his immense belly, the hyena gently swayed and cackled and belched, lost in a drunken bliss. At times he'd try to join in on Jet and Alexi's conversation. His incoherent sentences were promptly ignored.

Bigger. Rounder. Sloshier.

The broken table was further crushed beneath the spreading mass of inflating hyena. Chairs were either pushed away or wrecked, and more tables were in danger of falling victim to Nico. With all the creaking of wood it was impossible to hear the creaking of his hide.

Fortunately Alexi's spell performed just as promised, and the ale stopped flowing the second Nico was full. So full a single sip would likely have been enough to burst him. At least the odds of someone offering him another drink were slim.

"Thanks for the—*buworrrrrrrrp*—ale," Nico managed, a miracle considering he was under the influence of pressure and liquor.

"I'm glad *one* of you is appreciative of my gift," Alexi said.

Jet finally heard the creaks coming from his friend, and frowned. "Oh man, Nico sounds like he's gonna pop! We gotta find a way to get some of that ale out of him before he ends up as scraps!"

"Rest assured he'll be fine." Alexi rested a hoof against Nico's terribly taut side, causing the whole hyena to quake faintly. "People are far more durable than you give them credit for, and don't just burst at the slightest hint of pressure, right Nico?"

Alexi turned to look at Nico, but unfortunately neglected to take into account his pointy horn. The tip punctured the blimpy hyena almost instantly, Nico's eyes widening in surprise right before he exploded with a resounding *Booooooooom*!"

Ale splashed in every direction, soaking half the tavern as striped hide scraps rained down. While Alexi had managed to stay standing, Jet had been thrown to the ground by the blast, the cheetah groaning.

Alexi decided it was well past time for him to take his leave. He finished off his beer and made for the exit with haste, fearful he'd hear the sounds of pursuit behind him. For some reason his reputation always seemed to take a hit when a spell had an explosive finish...