

Fletch's Company - A Proper Chef

By: Indi

Nico's steps echoed through the dark stone corridors of the theatre. To the lean striped hyena it only seemed to support his fear: that the place was empty, abandoned. Frustration—and admittedly a slight bit of nervousness—were building in Nico. He fussed with his red mohawk, eyes darting from one shadowy doorway to another.

The only reason Nico had ventured to the damned desolate place on the outskirts of the city was because of a job offer. It'd been passed on to him anonymously as he finished his night at the tavern, but he was desperate for something better. And being the chef for a local theatre troupe *sounded* better. Of course now it all felt like an elaborate prank or maybe even trap. While the theatre didn't look rundown, he'd yet to see or hear a single living soul.

The need for answers drove Nico onward, though.

Eventually the corridor he was following led to what must have been the theatre's main stage. Again Nico found no one, just emptiness.

"Great, now I feel like an idiot," Nico grumbled, before turning around to leave.

One-by-one the torches lining the walls were suddenly ablaze. From all around a dramatic fanfare played, though no matter where Nico looked he couldn't see a single instrument or player. Then the kobolds swarmed in from every entry, like a hoard. They weren't dressed like warriors or bandits, but like servants, the kind a fancy mansion might employ.

Nico didn't know how to react to the turn of events, simply freezing in place.

"You must be Nico!"

The voice came from behind. Yet another kobold, dressed slightly more formal but otherwise no different from the others. He smiled and gave a bow. "I am Fletch, leader of the most talented troupe of minstrels and actors in the land." The kobold patiently awaited recognition that never came. "You *are* Nico, correct?"

Speechless, Nico just nodded.

Fletch approached, circling Nico and examining the confused hyena closely for quite some time. He didn't say a word—though he mumbled frequently—but Nico got the impression Fletch wasn't very impressed with him for some unknown reason.

"And you say you're a chef, Nico?" Fletch asked, very doubtful.

"Um, yeah. I've been cooking since I was young. I know a good deal of recipes, and learn new ones swiftly. My cooking has always gotten praise from the patrons at the tavern—and not just the drunk ones."

"Yet you're...I mean, everyone knows a proper chef should be, ahem." Fletch gestured with both arms, as if he was giving a hug. When Nico showed no sign of understanding Fletch stuck his flat middle out to mimic an exaggerated belly and gave it a slap with both claws. "Bigger of course!"

Nico wasn't any less baffled. "Bigger?"

"Yes, bigger! Round, corpulent, huge, blubbery, portly—bigger!" Fletch spoke every synonym with the utmost joy. "Remember those old words of wisdom—you can never trust a skinny chef! And Nico, you're as skinny as they get!"

Nico had had enough of the absurd situation. It *must* have been a prank, and a weird one at that. "Well clearly this just isn't going to work out. Sorry to have wasted so much time."

As he once again attempted to leave Fletch blocked his path.

"No no no, you misunderstand! The rest of your resume sounds stellar—your size is but a simple fix! We can get you in tip top shape in no time!"

Before Nico could protest or ask what Fletch was talking about, music began to play. It was a jaunty tune, soon joined by the humming of a chorus of some kind by the gathered kobold hoard. As it

steadily picked up Fletch burst into song.

“A chef must be plump and ever so jolly,
To reject this fact would be a terrible folly!
But rejoice! Be merry! A new life awaits,
And to think it’ll start with a few simple plates!”

From the crowd of kobolds came a handful pushing carts, each filled with plates and bowls of various foods. They encircled Nico and Fletch, creating a barrier. It took only a moment for Nico to recognize that all the food were appetizers.

“To fatten you up we’ll need a great feast,
So I’ve ordered the kitchen’s contents unleashed!
First are appetizers, they’re meant as a snack,
But you’ll eat them all, no holding back!”

Fletch grabbed a pile of potato wedges and shoved them into Nico’s maw. He held his claw in place until the hyena swallowed them. When Nico opened his mouth to growl it was instantly refilled. His eyes went wide with fear as the surrounding kobolds took turns force-feeding him.

Bread sticks, rolls, meatballs, even soup. No matter where he turned Nico found food being crammed into him. And all the while the kobolds in the back sang a chorus celebrating his stuffing.

“Yes plumper and fatter, oh when will you see?
Being bigger will fill you with so much glee!”

As small as the dishes were, they were great in number. Soon Nico’s flat middle was bulging outward. The hyena could feel his tunic tighten as he gained more of a belly. Putting an end to the feeding felt like an impossible task, though. For every kobold he pushed away two more would be ready to force something into his mouth. They didn’t restrain him, they simply overwhelmed him. If he took a few steps back he’d get nudged around, the next two steps undoing what little he’d accomplished.

But the worst part was that Nico was slowly beginning to enjoy the food.

Being stuffed was a nightmare, and the sheer amount he was eating terrifying, but the taste? Everything was incredible, obnoxiously and addictingly incredible! Nico found himself having favorites, and whenever the kobold wielding them would swoop in he’d avoid dodging them. It was an almost unconscious act. Of course every last morsel was going to end up in his belly eventually.

The once-full carts were emptying as the bounty of appetizers were gobbled and gulped by the captive Nico. His tunic had ridden up, exposing a comically round pot belly that wobbled with every half-step. He let out muffled yelps and blushed as he felt claws squeeze and jiggle and rub his new gut to the tune of their song.

“Why look at you now, getting so round,
In time that gut will touch the ground!
But silly me you must think I’m the worst,
I’ve offered nothing to quench your mighty thirst!
Water perhaps? Or juice, maybe ale?”

Just chug it all till you're as big as a whale!"

The moment the appetizer carts were cleared new ones took their place, each carrying pitchers and jugs and kegs of various drinks. Despite Fletch's mention of water they mainly seemed to contain far less healthy liquids. Nico's brief break ended once the tip of a jug was put up to his lips and tipped, forcing him to guzzle the juice within. Each gulp made his belly bounce and bloat.

When the first jug was empty Nico barely had time to belch before an even larger one took its place. Then another and another. Juices of all kinds, cool and refreshing, as wonderful to drink as the appetizers had been to eat.

Nico had nearly forgotten about the kegs until a hose was snuck into his mouth, allowing ale to freely flow into him along with the juice. His middle was ballooning up. Gallons filled the hyena, who found it harder and harder to move. The ineffectual dodging came to end. He was utterly at the kobolds' mercy.

The ridiculous overconsumption was also causing Nico to feel sluggish. The booze blunted his mind until his ordeal was on the verge of feeling like a dream. And maybe it was? It was all so absurd—being stuffed silly by a theatre troupe as they sang of how huge he'd be. At least the tune was catchy enough for him to tap his paw to. Yet he couldn't quite deny it was real.

He didn't notice when the last hose was yanked from his mouth and the carts were hurried away.

"The first course is done, you've had a taste,
But we've got a ways to go to expand that waist!
I see you're round, but you could be much, much bigger,
So let's move onto the main course with renewed vigor!"

Fletch gripped Nico's bulging belly from behind and gave it a squeeze and shake, prompting a cackle and endless blushing from the hyena.

Without warning Nico found himself scooped up into a well-padded chair wider than any he'd ever seen before. His middle shook and sloshed, groans and burps escaping his lips as he settled in. The chair was lifted up by kobolds who rocked it to the beat of their chorus.

"Yes plumper and fatter, can't you see it's ideal?
Being bigger is the secret to cooking a perfect meal!"

A thundering got Nico's attention. His eyes opened in fright as he saw large tables being carried onto the stage, all covered with massive quantities of food. There was just so much—*too* much! To him, every plate would've been a full meal, and he couldn't even begin to count how many were in sight.

Nico made one last attempt to slide off the chair and possibly waddle away, but he was effectively pinned down by his own belly. And he was about to get even bigger.

"The main dish is the heart of every meal,
But to choose only one is a great ordeal!
Don't worry, though, you'll be quite alright,
For you'll be eating every last one tonight!
Pork chops, fine steak, and pastas galore,

After just a few bites you'll be begging for more!"

To Nico's dismay his mouth was already watering, his packed stomach rumbling. Wonderful aromas had drifted his way, and despite knowing what they'd do to him he still craved a taste.

The kobolds paraded Nico over to the closest table, twirling him around as they sang. He was lowered and the table raised so that the food was right in front of him, tempting him with both sight and smell.

Kobolds scrambled atop each other's shoulders to reach the furniture held aloft. The topmost ones grabbed plates, forcing spoon and forkfuls of food into Nico's mouth. Their movements were precise and coordinated. Nico was always eating, always swelling, and often groaning. He hated how amazing it was. And not just the taste, but the actual sensation of growing larger.

Nico had been thin his whole life. He'd never wanted to be fatter, never even considered it for a second. But now doubts were creeping into his head. Was it just that he'd never indulged to such an extent before, or was the kobolds' song just really convincing?

"Yes isn't it great? Oh isn't it grand?
To eat and eat until you expand!
That belly of yours is a sight I must say,
Yet it's merely a fraction of what you'll soon weigh!
So stuff yourself, pig out, and indulge,
Don't you want to make that belly bulge?"

Nico nodded instinctively, and for once he grabbed some of the food on his own and willingly ate it. He didn't know why he was eating. He wanted to tell himself to stop, but instead he ate faster. Eating was all he wanted to do. But no, it was the last thing he wanted to do! The confused hyena was fighting a losing battle with his self control, and the cost was inches added to his waistline.

The helpful kobolds never stopped feeding Nico, of course. They leaned in to feed him as he went for fresh bites, kept him hydrated with an excess of fresh ale, and massaged his swelling middle whenever they could. Nico was practically being pampered, which only made it harder and harder to resist the food.

"Yes plumper and fatter, you're accepting your fate,
Being bigger is better, so it's time to gain weight!"

And with that Nico's body did just as the song told. His belly gently jiggled and started to shrink. However, the rest of him began plumping up in response. All the food and drink Nico had been forced to consume was being magically converted to fat. Hips and arms grew softer, face and rump rounder. Every sharp feature of the hyena began to fade under pudge.

Nico felt what was happening to him, but it was in the far back of his mind and difficult to focus on. He'd panic for a second, then return to gorging. There was simply too much food left to eat for him to waste time worrying about a pound or two.

But it wasn't just a pound or two, it was dozens.

As dishes were cleared and kegs emptied, Nico began to fill out the chair that'd once seemed absurdly wide. It felt cozier and cozier, even as his immense belly filled his whole lap and interfered with his ability to grab food on his own. That just meant the plates came to him, something always kept within reach. His poor-fitting clothes ripped apart at the seams as he outgrew them, scraps tossed away.

Slowly Nico's reluctance to eat disappeared completely. Every concern and fear about getting

fat was gone. The kobolds were right. A proper chef had to be big and doughy, capable of eating everything on the menu in a single sitting. How had he not seen that before?

While finishing off the main course of the feast had appeared to be an impossibility, Nico managed it thanks to the endless encouragement of the kobolds. Nico expressed dismay once it was over, but this time it was out of a desire for more food rather than how huge his gut had become.

Nico's belly finally had time to fully shrink down, though he certainly wasn't thin afterward. The hyena's belly had become a mound of soft dough topped by round moobs. His cheeks jiggled as he looked for more food. His butt had become a cushion. If it weren't for his red mohawk he'd have been completely unrecognizable; he'd more than doubled in size.

And no one looked more pleased about the transformation than Fletch.

“Nico my dear, you've become quite the glutton,
Your desire to be thin now long forgotten!
As round as a hippo, as big as a bear,
A hyena of your heft is incredibly rare!
Yet I see you still hunger, you crave a lot more,
So get ready for a dessert you're sure to adore!”

From the upper levels kobolds swung by, passing along funnels and carefully wrapped bundles. Once placed on the tables they were revealed to contain a multitude of desserts. Pastries, cookies, pies, cakes, muffins. There was less food than the main course that had preceded it, but it was still a feast in its own right.

Nico looked upon it all with nothing short of pure joy. He licked his lips and drummed on his belly in anticipation. With no hint of reluctance the hyena opened his mouth wide, gladly accepting the first funnel. Donuts were dumped into it by the dozen, Nico barely bothering to chew them as he glugged.

As much as Nico appreciated the treats for their taste, he was starting to crave them more for their calorie count. A proper chef needed to be huge, and he wasn't about to let anyone doubt his skill. He'd become the fattest chef in the land if he had to—and at that point he simply *wanted to*.

Nico was rapidly blimping up from the wonderful sweets. No matter how heavy he grew or how much closer he got to filling out the chair, the kobolds holding him up didn't miss a line.

“Yes plumper and fatter, you know it's true,
Being bigger is clearly what's best for you!”

If he weren't so busy eating Nico would've at least nodded in approval. His belly had grown so massive half the kobolds were simply rubbing and squeezing it. Claws sunk into pudge as soft as cookie dough. The gentlest of shakes would cause his blubber to ripple like water. He'd passed being merely fat a few verses ago.

Nico moaned in between bites, in a state of bliss. He was blushing from the food, the attention, and the weight-gain in general. Opposing the musical stuffing felt like a lifetime ago. That was the old Nico, the foolish Nico, the *scrawny* Nico. The Nico who had yet to realize his true calling.

Even if he didn't get the job as the theatre troupe's chef he'd return to the tavern more confident than ever before. And about three times as big the way things were going. Fitting through the door might be a problem, but it was one he surprisingly looked forward to. A chef so fat the staff had to squeeze him through the kitchen door to talk with patrons? Now *that* was ideal.

The rest of dessert was spent daydreaming of how he'd show off his brand new girth and

literally throw his weight around. While not timid to begin with, being rotund would certainly discourage a few annoyances in his life.

For Nico the final pastry came too soon. For the chair he was squeezed into it came just in time. The doughy hyena was only a few pounds short of being too fat for it now, big enough to feel how much he filled it out while not being dealing with discomfort. The kobolds couldn't have arranged it any better.

“Your fattening has sadly come to an end,
It was not long ago you were thin my friend!
Now your belly's so wobbly and incredibly big,
All because you saw fit to eat like a pig,
But before we accept you as our new cook,
I must squeeze and prod and have a good look!”

The rest of the troupe crowded around Fletch and the still-sitting Nico, singing the last of their chorus.

“Yes plumper and fatter, he looks great to us,
Being bigger has proven to be such a plus!”

Fletch brushed the hoard off in a dramatic fashion.

“Hey I'm the boss here, not any of you,
And I say our song of feeding is through!”

With a flourish the music and singing both came to end, Fletch and his troupe all taking a bow.

Nico shook his head, as if he were just breaking free from a daze. His outrageous gluttony hit him in an instant, exhausting him so he slumped back in his chair. The unending hunger had ended and he felt quite stuffed. His newfound love of being huge didn't wane in the least, though.

At a gesture Nico's chair was lowered so that Fletch could examine the prospective chef again. This time he looked nothing short of impressed, nodding constantly while squeezing Nico's pudge in various locations. The hyena cackled every time, blushing but clearly enjoying it.

“Now this...*this* is what the perfect chef should look like!” Fletch exclaimed. “I could believe you'd eaten everything on the menu a thousand times over, maybe even right before waddling out to my table. A chef of such girth obviously loves cooking all the time and taste-testing his recipes until they've reached perfection. And I take it you're pleased with your dramatic transformation?”

“Of course! Thank you so much for fattening me up, I've never felt better!” Nico answered, truthfully.

“Then you're hired!” The rest of the kobolds let out a boisterous cheer. “With you leading our kitchens our meals will be even more fattening and delicious, and our performances all the more impactful. Take our friend Nico to his new room so he can enjoy a well-deserved rest.”

The kobolds gleefully carried Nico off, introducing themselves to the blubbery hyena one-by-one as they did.

Fletch was left alone on center stage brimming with pride. “And so concludes another swell performance~”