

Burst Party

By: Indi

“This is so dumb, I really should’ve said no when you all invited me here.” Tycho took a drink of his unlabeled beer can and then glared at it. The lion could feel a slight buzz coming on, but already wished he were drunk.

The rotund owl next to him—Lane—slapped his back. “But burst parties are so fun! Live a little, dude.”

“If I wanted to live a little I wouldn’t attend a party where I’m gonna end up as hide scraps!”

“You’re not guaranteed to pop,” said his friend Indi, a chubby blue jay. “Not even guaranteed to inflate, which is kind of a bummer.”

The fourth member of the group—a goat named Levi—shrugged. “Heard they cut down on the inflation because drunks are way too burstable. I think I popped at least two people with my horns on accident one time.”

Tycho frowned and took another drink. Burst parties had become an odd fad on the space station recently. Everyone would drink from a selection of unmarked cans, one of which would contain beer that’d inflate you big and round in barely a minute. A set time later there’d be another round of drinking, and another boozy blimp. Anyone who ended up inflated would be rolled into a pen with energy field walls so the rest could gawk and watch.

It was referred to as the “Splash Zone”, and for good reason. The brew that blimped party goers up was incredibly volatile, and many who swelled up eventually popped before they could be deflated. Then again, that was the whole point of a burst party. Life was generally peaceful and lazy, so the risk of ending up as scraps—permanently—was exciting to some.

Tycho didn’t really share that mindset, but he was also easy to pressure into doing things if enough friends ganged up on him. “Ugh, popping would be such a dumb way to go, though!”

Levi grinned, which was never a good sign coming from the gloomy goat. “Don’t worry, if you explode I’ll record it from a good angle for us to remember you by~”

Elsewhere at the party, others were worrying as much as Tycho. “So the odds of inflating aren’t *that* high, right?” Wyatt asked. The fairly doughy zebra had already finished his mystery beer and started on a second that was guaranteed to not cause any bloating.

The two friends with him—a horse of similar size named Colton and a chubby rabbit named Kyler—grinned wide. “Afraid of blowing up like a big striped balloon and going boom?” Kyler teased.

“Well he’s already naturally been blowing up for a bit.” Colton poked Wyatt’s belly. “Almost caught up with me!”

“Laugh all you want, but if you both end up inflating don’t expect any sympathy from me!”

“Inflation’s not so bad,” Colton insisted. “And I hear being on the verge of bursting makes ya loopy. At least I tend to see a lot more smiles than frowns when the lucky blimps pop.”

The fact didn’t improve Wyatt’s mood much, so he guzzled the rest of his beer instead, relying on liquid courage.

Two hefty arctic foxes—nearly identical aside from the colors of their bodysuits—stood nearby with a plump tiger. “You’re totally gonna explode tonight, bro!” Noah told his twin.

“As if! You’re the one who’s overdue to be a party popper, bro!” Nathan said back.

“Nothing can pop hide as thick as mine!” Noah slapped his gut and smirked.

“You could weigh another three hundred pounds and still get popped by a sharp breeze!” Nathan laughed.

The tiger between them rolled his eyes. “I hope you both pop just so I don’t have to listen to this anymore. I can’t believe Niall went and burst while pre-gaming and left me alone with you two.”

“Well JD, you were the one who bet him he couldn’t chug an extra six-pack when he was

already creaking,” Noah said.

Nathan pulled out his phone. “Made some awesome footage, though!”

The trio began to watch the replay of a bursting goat, again and again, fondly remembering their friend.

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Tycho shivered, and in an instant he felt as if he’d chugged a whole keg, his head spinning slightly. The lion had begun to swell, rounding out in every direction, his purple bodysuit faintly creaking as it stretched. Bubbling and sloshing echoed out from his body, the sounds of rapidly synthesized fizzy beer. As Tycho realized he’d somehow ended up being the first one inflated that night he sighed, exasperated.

“Yeah, it’s *so* fun guys. Real eager to swell and swell and swell until I explode,” he told his friends. They all appeared far more amused than guilty.

“If you keep up that attitude you really will pop!” Levi hooted, unable to resist a few teasing prods of the expanding lion’s middle.

News of the first expander spread fast, and soon Tycho had an audience. He blushed, avoiding eye contact with everyone as he swiftly took on a spherical shape. His limbs swelled and sunk into his now-massive body. His hide tingled as it stretched thin. Tycho had never inflated to such an extent before, and the whole experience was disorienting. Dealing with the pressure pushing out from every direction was difficult, as was his practical immobility.

And of course being filled with beer was making him obscenely drunk. His gaze drifted and he smiled as much as he frowned, struggling to concentrate. When he belched it shook his entire body, causing it to wobble and slosh.

The creaks of Tycho’s hide started to overshadow the ones of his bodysuit, prompting some onlookers to take a few steps back just in case. The lion remained intact, though.

It was Lane who had the honor of rolling his bloated friend towards the designated splash zone. He listened to Tycho gurgle and grumble, and felt him swell ever-so-slightly. “I’m sure you’ll hold together, though try not to wobble too much.”

“Should’ve just—*uorrrrrrrrrrrp*—stayed home,” Tycho mumbled. He giggled as he was nudged through the energy field that made up one of the splash zone’s walls. He was left there upright, the party now converging on the area so they could watch Tycho’s progress.

His friends lingered nearby to keep him company. “He’s pretty creaky,” Levi said. “Probably a goner.”

“I creak a lot too when I’m round,” Indi said. “As long as someone with antlers or horns isn’t rolled in there next I bet he’ll be fine.”

“Bet it’ll be Levi, then,” Lane snorted.

The second round of mystery drinks were had. As the friends chatted—and listened to Tycho’s drunken grumbling—a fox on the other side of the room swelled up. Even from a distance they could see him quaking a bit as he was rolled over, clearly struggling to hold together. He had just entered the splash zone when he grunted and swelled, bursting with a splash and a bang.

Beer foam ran down all four energy fields, along with some scraps of hide. The fox’s emptied bodysuit lay crumpled in a corner. Tycho had been soaked. He only seemed vaguely aware someone had popped, too busy dealing with his own internal pressures to care. He’d been expanding very slowly ever since he’d been rolled in, his paws now half-way sunk into his body, his head angled a bit upward. Regulars were starting to take bets on how much longer he’d last, not *if* he’d last.

A short while later, Indi started belching up a storm. “Caw-urrrrrrrrrp!” the blue jay let out as he became the third one to inflate that night. Indi actually liked to inflate, and was all smiles as he grew

rounder and rounder by the second.

“Sweet, was hoping a bird would explode tonight,” Levi said as he poked Indi’s taut middle hard. “The poof of feathers is just fun to watch.”

“Well if you wanted to see feathers then you should’ve hoped for Lane to be the borbloon!” Indi struck a pose that was quickly undone as he swelled up more. He remained confident for the most part, at least until he got really round. The pressure was a tad bit more than expected, and he couldn’t deny the strain.

Levi gave his blimpy friend a less-than-gentle shove onto his back, causing the blue jay to groan and wiggle and swell some more. “Guess I’ve got bomb escort duty. Try to hold off on becoming a cloud of feathers until you’ve at least said hello to Tycho. I’m sure he could use the company.”

The journey was short but rough, Levi more than willing to tease his helpless friend recklessly. Indi was creaking and moaning, dipping in and out of a daze depending on just how hard Levi pressed into him. He was relieved to finally enter the splash zone, ending up right across from Tycho.

Tycho’s paws had sunken into his body completely, the lion looking totally out of it. “Getting kind of big there—*mrrrrmph*—aren’t ya?” Indi chuckled, nervously. The only response he got was incoherent mumbling, and he doubted it was specifically aimed at him. “Uh, since you’re probably gonna blow, is it too late to say sorry for bugging ya into coming?”

The spherical lion expanded another inch, a long and loud creak coming from his body that seemed to last forever. In a flash Tycho was gone, burst apart by the immense pressure within. The force of the explosion shook up Indi, who abruptly began inflating again.

“Oh! Oh shit!” Indi wobbled as his talons were enveloped, his beak pressing against his terribly taut hide. So many points digging in, so many ways to pop. He tried to stay still, hoping to avoid any slight scratches, but such a task was herculean. Indi cursed his poor luck a second before he ended up as a beer-filled borbsplosion. Feathers went flying, and his beak ricocheted around the energy fields before skidding to a stop near the edge.

Lane and Levi watched their friends reduced to scraps with disappointment. Luck just hadn’t been on the group’s side that night.

“Shit!” Levi exclaimed. “I forgot to record it! A double explosion would’ve been so sweet to have. Crap.” He’d have to hope someone else at the party had gotten footage of it.

“Dibs on Indi’s beak!” Lane shouted, before bending down and snatching it. He held it up like a prized trophy. “Blue beaks are really rare. I’ve been eyeing a spot on my shelf for Indi’s for a long time.”

“I’m just glad you don’t collect horns. Otherwise I’d be worrying about ‘accidentally’ swallowing a helium tank around you or something.” Levi gave Lane a playful punch in the gut, causing the owl to hoot in surprise before both started laughing.

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“Look, it’s a ferret this time! Real lanky one too.” JD pointed Nathan and Noah towards the rapidly rounding ferret, who seemed too drunk to take the situation seriously.

“Not for long,” Nathan and Noah said simultaneously. They bopped each other in the arms and belly, a little ritual they did whenever they accidentally echoed each other.

JD ignored the dumb act. “Wonder if he’ll even last a minute in the splash zone. It’s been a real pop-happy party tonight.”

“Might be a bad batch.”

“Or a lot of newbies who haven’t stretched themselves well enough to hold together.”

“Isn’t belching supposed to help relieve pressure or something?” JD asked. “I haven’t heard much burping so far. Not like last time where it sounded like a damn belching contest was going on.”

The ferret did last longer than a minute, and showed few signs of strain as he gently wobbled in the splash zone amidst the scraps of three previous occupants. The three friends watched the blimp intently as they talked. Nathan and Noah were taking bets on how long the ferret would last and how big the next person would get and a dozen other pointless things. JD doubted either was genuinely keeping track.

JD turned to grab a fresh beer, but quickly stopped and snorted. “Wow, I can finally tell you two apart now.”

The twins looked at JD with confusion until Noah let out a muffled burp and blushed. Without even realizing it he’d blimped up considerably, well on his way to becoming a sphere.

“Ha, you *are* gonna burst, bro!” Nathan had a smug sense of superiority on his face. “Better transfer those creds before you’re too puffy to. Course I’m just gonna dump your whole account into mine soon anyway.”

“Pfft, as if! When I wobble out of here tonight sloshed and intact, my account will be fatter than you are!” Noah boasted as he bloated. “Triple or nothing I survive this.”

“Bro you’re gonna go out losing big!” Nathan accepted the bet as he rolled his round twin onto his back and towards the splash zone. He contemplated shaking Noah up a bit to increase his odds of winning, but he doubted he’d need such an advantage. The other arctic fox was creaking a fair bit already, and he felt how taut his hide was. Noah was already confetti—he just hadn’t accepted it yet.

“I’ve never come close to popping!” Noah insisted as he fought back the pressure. He was inside the splash zone now, on the opposite side from the ferret. “As long as I’m still and calm I’ll deflate enough to be perfectly safe!”

But very slowly he was filling up with foam from the pool of beer within him. It was a long bloat, his paws vanishing from sight little-by-little, even his head going under towards the end. Nathan heard a boozy, muffled curse right before his twin became a perfect sphere. For a few seconds Noah was nothing but an orb, his species indistinguishable thanks to his bodysuit. He managed to hold together almost until the next guest was set to inflate. Then he popped with considerable force.

The ferret was soaked but survived, as beer, foam, and hide rained down on the splash zone. Nathan appeared unaffected by his twin’s demise. “Told him he’d pop! Huh, now I won’t get mistaken for Noah anymore.”

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After Noah a wolf was added to the splash zone. Along with the ferret he shuffled around without issue, and party goers were beginning to wonder if the popfest was over. There was still plenty of party left, though.

Displays flashed to tell everyone someone would start inflating soon, and heads turned to spot the “lucky” pick. Kyler exaggerated a glance down at Wyatt and then smiled. “Is it just me, or are you looking a bit rounder Wyatt?”

Colton caught on to Kyler’s prank right away. “Oh dude, you’re definitely rounding out!”

Panic came over Wyatt as he frantically patted his belly with both hooves. To his surprise it felt just as soft as ever, no hint of bloating at all. He frowned at his friends, who burst into laughter. “Not cool!”

As they laughed, though, Wyatt realized Kyler was wider than he should’ve been. The rabbit was clearly swelling. “So Kyler, how’s it feel being a bunny balloon?”

“What are you—*braaaaaaaaaap!*” The rabbit’s expansion was too far along to ignore anymore, and he stumbled as he blimped up. He’d merely been buzzed before, but the rapid onslaught of beer got him drunk in a flash. “Whoa, this stuff’s—*uorrrp*—strong.”

In no time at all the once-chubby rabbit had become a ball, his cheeks as puffy as the rest of

him. Wyatt and Colton circled him, teasing his taut hide and prompting more than a couple belches from Kyler, who was blushing. Wyatt volunteered to take Kyle to the splash zone, if only to tease him some more for tricking him earlier.

"I bet all that booze is gonna go right to your gut once you've recovered. You'll finally be as fat as us!" Wyatt snickered.

"I'm a chubby bunny, not a blubber bunny!" Kyler insisted, just barely aware he was talking to Wyatt. "And I bet you'll be next!"

Wyatt shook his head, but his attention was quickly drawn to the ferret still in the splash zone. They'd swelled some since he last saw, and were struggling. Another explosion was imminent. Despite the energy field, Wyatt took a step back on instinct as he watched the ferret pop. Kyler was rolled forwards by the blast, bouncing against the energy field and onto his back. With the beer within him shaken up greatly, he too began to bloat up.

"N-Not fair!" Kyler squeaked, and a second later he was nothing but scraps.

Wyatt jumped as Kyler's bandana smacked against the energy field and slid to the floor. His previous glee had washed away. "Shit. Shit! I shouldn't have teased him, now he's gone!"

"Oh Kyler knew what he was getting into," Colton said. "And just remember: he was teasing you even more before he ended up being the booze bomb!"

"I guess so." Wyatt *did* feel a little better. He'd miss Kyler, though.

The pair remained close to the splash zone through the next round, when an already massive bear blimped up and was rolled over. The wolf from before exploded minutes later, adding a seventh emptied bodysuit to the collection cluttering the floor.

Colton gave the popping a quick glance before turning back to Wyatt. "I'm kind of bummed everyone's been so fragile tonight. It's a lot more fun when the splash zone is just packed full of blimps waiting to blow. Leads to some crazy chain-reactions. Especially when there's a lot of beaks and horns involved!"

"Probably not nearly as fun if you're a blimp trapped in there when it happens," Wyatt said. He'd had a few more drinks to calm his nerves.

"Well there was this one time I was in there with three birds who all burst around the same time. It was a rush having beaks whizz by me!" Colton laughed and sighed, remembering the chaos. Then he noticed Wyatt was inflating. "Oh, you're blimping for real this time, dude."

"Oh no, not falling for that again!" Wyatt said before groaning and wobbling. Nervous whinnies followed as he expanded, dropping his beer in the process. "I'm gonna pop, I'm gonna pop, I'm gonna pop!"

Colton grabbed the blimping arms of the flailing zebra and held him still. "Everyone's gonna laugh at ya if you manage to burst yourself before even entering the splash zone. Just chill and swell and enjoy being drunker than ever in a few seconds."

Wyatt reluctantly calmed down, and sure enough he was soon too drunk to really care about being a faintly creaking balloon. He was still nervous as Colton gently rolled him into the splash zone, trying his best not to shake the zebra up since he was already jittery. He gave him a teasing poke before leaving, and hung out near the energy field to keep him company.

Fortunately Wyatt wasn't swelling further. He relaxed a little, talking with Colton about work as a snake was rolled in next, bringing the blimpy population of the splash zone up to three.

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"Guess it's borb time for me!" Lane said with a smile as he began to rapidly inflate. The owl widened his stance in anticipation, ballooning up like a natural.

"I'm gonna have a lonely walk home the way things are going," Levi joked. "But at least I'll get

a couple sweet beaks out of it.”

Lane scoffed. “I’ve spent more time in the splash zone than out of it, I’ll be fine! So don’t bail early cause you’ll be the one rolling my round ass home tonight!”

“I’m sure Indi thought the same way,” Levi said as he snatched the blue jay’s beak from Lane before he dropped it. “Hmm, bet I could stuff a pillow with all the feathers you’ll leave lying around~”

“Keep that up and I’ll—*bworrrrrrrrp*—free up some shelf space for a pair of goat horns.” Lane tried to grin menacingly, but was interrupted by a drunken giggle as the booze overwhelmed him. He let out a few burps and hoots as he became spherical.

“Good luck with that. And when you pop try to let out a really loud belch—it’d be hilarious!” Levi rolled his friend in next to the zebra, fairly convinced Lane would be nothing more than a pile of feathers before the end of the night. He was sure the owl wouldn’t be too opposed to such a fate.

The energy fields muffled the noises of the party while within the splash zone. Lane actually found it rather relaxing. All he could hear was the bubbling of beer and foam, the creaking of hide, and the occasional drunken groan from someone else nearby. He welcomed the pressure, blushing at how huge a borb he’d become. Being big was the best part about inflating, even if it did come with the drawback of being comically fragile.

Then again, the tension also tended to get Lane pretty excited.

Even drunk, Lane could tell the bear and snake were close to popping. Limbs were sunken in far, faces stuck in a look of dazed obliviousness. Their creaks were loud and ominous, their hides quivering from time to time. But they lingered for a bit, neither eager to end up as scraps despite the fact they’d likely cheered the previous burstings. No one went to a burst party *expecting* to explode. They all thought they’d be the ones watching the action.

Lane privately bet the bear would blow first as he looked more out of it. But as the bear started to lose control so did the snake, the pair swelling up again simultaneously, as if they’d planned it. The twin explosions threw a wave of foam at Lane, and drew cheers from the crowd. The zebra with him let out a whine and a groan, before going back to mumbling about something to a horse outside the field.

A rat was the next one in. He was as relaxed about the situation as Lane was, and clearly enjoying being a blimp about as much. He shuffled around the splash zone blushing as he felt the pressure spike with every slow step. It was an impressive feat, one Lane was fond of doing while sober. While drunk he preferred to wobble in place.

More calm, and an orange dragon was rolled in. He busied himself by showing off to the crowd of partiers, flexing and bouncing as best he could considering he was an orb. At first Lane was impressed, but eventually he saw the dragon’s boasting was causing him to swell slightly. If he kept it up he was bound to pop as well.

Sure enough, with less than a minute left in the party, the dragon found himself panicking. He lost balance and rolled onto his back, shaking up the booze in his belly and sparking another round of bloating. His horns were angled in such a way they dug right into his taut hide. They pressed and he wiggled, and then they pierced.

Lane’s eyes followed the horns as they struck the floor hard and skidded in two different directions at high speed. He shuddered as he felt one hastily brush against his body, but remained intact. The second horn came close to hitting the rat but also missed. No chain reaction after all.

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“If that dragon had still been standing the horns totally would’ve burst that owl and rat!” There was clear disappointment in Nathan’s voice.

“Dude if you really want to see someone pop again that badly I can just find a hose so you look like Noah again,” JD said.

“Or I could make a tiger balloon and see just how far those stripes can stretch before coming apart,” Nathan countered.

The pair left, making constant friendly threats to inflate and pop each other eventually.

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“Wyatt, you’re a natural at being a blimp!” Colton said as he carefully rolled the drunk zebra out of the splash zone and towards the exit. “You kind of stayed calm, didn’t freak out, and didn’t end up as a scrap pile like Kyler!”

“So—*braap*—big,” Wyatt groaned. “Too...big.”

“No such thing! You’re still a bit creaky, but I think your hide’s adjusted some to being stretched out.” Colton mused as he felt his hooves press against the drum-like surface of his round friend’s body. It was hard to resist the urge to tap on it. “You know, if we kept you this way for a night or two it’d probably improve your durability. Might help ya survive the next burst party as well~”

A whine came from Wyatt, but he was too dizzy to complain in detail. Colton took that as acceptance of his plan, all the while pondering if he should keep Wyatt like that for a whole week instead, or maybe longer.

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“I swear you’re more balloon than bird.” Levi had recovered Lane from the splash zone, and now had to deal with the borb being smugger than ever.

“If you became a bloaty goaty more often you’d be the same way!” Lane hooted with glee, then belched as Levi pushed against him slightly harder than necessary.

“Call me a ‘bloaty goaty’ again and you’ll be a ‘bursty birdy’, got it? Remember, the night’s still young, and there’s a lot of ways for you to accidentally pop on the way home, blimpo.”

Lane frowned. Of the three friends he’d gone to the party with that night, Levi was by far the most likely to pop him for fun (and a beak). He bet his odds of getting home in one piece were fifty/fifty at best, and that was if he *didn’t* taunt the goat too much. Though if he *was* going to be popped, then a friend being to blame wasn’t so bad.

“If I end up as scraps I’m gonna haunt you!”

“Sure ya will. Now that I think about it, I *have* been wanting a new pillow recently as well...”

Lane let out a nervous hoot as he was rolled away, quietly lowering his odds of remaining intact that night.