

The Lion, the Goat, and the Birthday Bloat

By: Indi

The scene outside the city's largest bakery was one of confusion, a strange sight for a place that was usually rather quiet. A small crowd of passersby was forming, rumors and assumptions spreading through it. In front of the entrance stood Nico, a hyena with a red mohawk who served as the head baker, along with a lion and a goat. He glanced over his shoulder frequently, as if expecting something to come barreling out the bakery's entrance. The lion and goat followed his gaze each time.

"Thank goodness you both were walking by when you were!" Nico exclaimed. "This is a mess! A big, dumb, ridiculous mess! We were preparing for a massive birthday celebration, the biggest order we'd ever received. But just as we'd finished all the baking and decorating everything went to hell. A spell went out of control, and all our hard work got animated. The donuts, the cream puffs, the cookies, the cupcakes, the cake—*everything!* We were barely able to flee once the desserts started feeding themselves to us!"

Both the lion and the goat looked down at Nico's round, bulging middle, which jutted out from beneath his tunic. A few other bakers were still nearby, resting on the ground and cradling sizable bellies of their own. That was one question answered, at least.

Nico lifted his gut up slightly and let it drop, frowning as it bounced. "It's a miracle no one ended up immobile considering how much was in there. But trust me, if the rest of it's not dealt with soon the street will be filled with the engorged. Please tell me you can both take care of the problem?"

The lion grinned and flicked one of the curls in his mane with a paw. He was lean, dressed in a purple vest and white tunic with a sword at his side. His name was Tycho, and he was a paladin and gambler. "Defeating some magic food will be a breeze. If you give me a few minutes, I'll have all your malicious pastries slain and no one else will have to worry about outgrowing their wardrobes today."

"A sword alone isn't going to solve this delicious disaster," the goat—Syc—said. He was a bit short and fairly plump, with wide hips and white fur. He was a spellsworn, and focused Nico's attention on a raised hoof, which glowed faintly with magic. "Leave this to me, and you'll all be back to baking in no time. Or at least once you've all napped off those desserts."

"He probably just wants a snack, and will end up waddling back out after having his fill," Tycho suggested.

"And I bet he'll come crawling back in seconds with a tummy ache after the first forced bite!" Syc countered.

Nico was baffled by the unexpected back-and-forth. "Well I'm sure you're both very capable, so just think of how much easier it'll be if you work together?"

Unfortunately the stuffed chef's plea for unity was ignored. The two adventurers scoffed in unison, and then marched towards the bakery's entrance. They were side-by-side as they reached the door, neither letting the other pass. It was no surprise when they swiftly became wedged.

"I'm sure this is a common occurrence for you!" Tycho said as he tried to pull himself forward, wiggling.

"Just try not to fall through a crack in the floorboards!" Syc bleated.

They both came unstuck simultaneously, falling to the floor in a pile. Back outside, Nico sighed. Perhaps it was best if he called for additional help...just in case.

Tycho and Syc recovered quickly. Swords were out and defensive stances taken, but the predicted onslaught of desserts didn't arrive. The lobby of the bakery was actually peaceful.

Small splatters of frosting and cream were on the floors and walls. A few dented serving trays lay abandoned. Some chairs had been knocked over as the staff had fled, potentially by their unwieldy, stuffed bellies. But of course the most noticeable thing about the room were the dozens of pastries floating around. They seemed aimless, as if caught in a gentle draft. The sudden arrival of Tycho and

Syc didn't cause them to spring into action. It was impossible to treat them seriously as a threat.

"Well they certainly don't appear too menacing," Tycho chuckled, watching a cupcake slowly spin through the air nearby. "This is going to be even easier than I thought.

"I bet the aggressive food already got eaten, leaving me with the docile treats to deal with." Syc eyed a pair of donuts orbiting each other with amusement. "You're free to watch me clean this mess up, though."

Their tones had softened some, especially now that they weren't directly competing in front of Nico for the job. In truth both Tycho and Syc were simply new arrivals eager to make a name for themselves in the city. Friendly competition was to be expected.

"I'll go first, I *insist*," Tycho replied. He unsheathed his sword and carefully approached the cupcake. Before he could get within reach it reacted, pointing itself right at Tycho and launching towards him. With a thought Tycho used his powers to nudge good luck his way, and a swing of his sword cleaved the flying cupcake in half, sending it tumbling to the floor in pieces. More desserts began turning their attention towards Tycho. He dodged and diced every one, not even breaking a sweat in the process. Soon he'd taken out a dozen on his own.

Syc pulled out his sword and started concentrating on a spell. "Alright, my turn!" A jug of chocolate milk went on the attack, sending its contents at the goat. From Syc's free hoof a wave of cold flew forth, turning the milk to slush and coating the jug in ice. It fell to the floor, shattering. He made a preemptive strike on another pair of jugs, bursting them with ice magic and creating a colorful snowfall of chilled drinks. When some cream tried to sneak up on him from behind, he deftly sliced it with his sword, freezing it on contact.

The two adventurers grinned, each convinced they'd outshined the other. Both failed to notice their supposedly defeated foes returning to life.

All the pastries Tycho had sliced rose from the floor, flying towards Syc at high speed. At the same time, the slush of the frozen drinks rushed Tycho. Syc's bleat of surprise was muffled as cupcakes and donuts and cream puffs forced their way into his maw and down his throat, one after the other. Tycho was similarly caught off-guard, a torrent of milk, juice, and cream pouring into his mouth.

Syc could feel his belly swelling, robes gradually tightening as they clung to a middle that was growing rounder and rounder by the second, filling with dessert. But he didn't attempt to close his mouth or use his magic. All because the taste of the food was beyond delicious. He'd never had anything quite like it, and he found himself desiring more just from the quick tastes he got in as it rushed into his stomach.

Meanwhile, Tycho was feeling the same way. The swirling smoothie was incredible enough to make him overlook how the buttons of his vest were starting to strain and creak. His normally flat middle ballooned more dramatically than Syc's plump one, though they were consuming roughly the same amount.

Two satisfied sighs echoed out as the food finished feeding itself to Tycho and Syc. They bore twin grins of delight, the wonderful tastes still lingering on their tongues. It took a moment for either to remember they were supposed to be defeating the food, not eating it.

"Seems to me like all you did was turn the desserts into convenient bite-sized portions!" Syc said, licking his lips and muffling a small burp. "Were you hoping to fatten me up so I couldn't finish the job?"

Tycho grasped his round belly with both paws, giving it a squeeze and blushing. "Throwing such accusations around when you were the one turning all those drinks into slushies rather than harmless ice? Clearly you saw how good I was at dodging the food and wanted to slow me down by having me stuffed!"

Neither were willing to admit they'd enjoyed the stuffings, though both were eyeing the remaining food far more than each other. Yet as delicious as it was, they couldn't just eat all of it—not if they wanted the glory of liberating the overrun bakery.

Each began clearing one half of the lobby, taking on the magic food with glee. They sliced and blasted dessert after dessert, only barely slowed down by their swollen middles. With so much food, though, it was impossible to dodge everything. Occasionally a pastry or drink would get gulped down. Individually they were anticipated treats, but as time went on they added up to a hefty feast.

Robes and tunics were straining, bellies swelling. As Tycho and Syc ducked and darted their middles wobbled, faintly at first but steadily increasing to a full on jiggle. Seams ripped, buttons burst. Bouncing, furry bellies were freed from the confines of far too small clothing. For all the effort Tycho and Syc were putting into battling the food, it all inevitably ended up filling their stomachs.

Gulping down the last half of a donut that'd eluded him, Tycho groaned and waddled the last few steps towards the kitchen entrance. His gut had burst through both tunic and vest. It was a taut, cream-colored ball that shook with every step. He held it up with the one paw not holding his sword, in order to avoid toppling over. With how thin he was he looked comically stuffed. He'd never eaten so much in one sitting before, yet the taste made him regret not a single bite. If anything he wanted *more*.

Syc was right beside him, the bottom-heavy goat having less trouble carrying his even rounder belly. His middle resembled a snow-covered hill, which he happily patted with a hoof. Like Tycho, he found himself craving more of the desserts, and took a quick look around to make sure none had been missed. Though from the look of his rival's gut he doubted any had managed to escape.

"I must admit, you're far more gluttonous than I thought! You could probably swing that gut around instead of your sword now," Syc said with a snicker.

Tycho blushed. He slapped his belly with the flat of his sword. "Well looks can be deceiving—sometimes. You look about ready to roll right into battle with how much you've stuffed yourself with already!"

"Jealous of how much more of the food I defeated than you?" Syc said, sticking his middle out in triumph. "I guess I do have quite the heroic appetite."

"You were plumper than me to begin with--there's no way of knowing you've actually eaten more!" Tycho insisted, trying to make his own belly jut out a little more. "And there's still the kitchen to clear out."

Their competition renewed, Tycho and Syc both waddled through the kitchen doors, one-at-a-time. The sight awaiting them made their mouths drop open and their stuffed stomachs rumble. Swarms of desserts swirled around the room, in far, far greater quantities than the lobby had had. Whole platters of cookies. Fully baked pies of all sorts. Towers of brownies. It was as if they'd made enough dessert for the whole city.

Thanks to their earlier gluttony, fleeing wasn't the most viable option. Not that either wanted to miss out on the delicious—albeit aggressive—sweets.

The battle between gluttons and food reconvened with gusto. There was slicing and freezing and biting and gulping. Tycho and Syc were still more than capable of fending off most of the desserts, but their desire to was waning with every incredible taste. They were starting to open wide whenever a favorite treat swooped in, making no effort to dodge it. The food was simply too addicting to resist.

The desserts in the kitchen were infused with more volatile magic, which became readily apparent once they were eaten. They were digested almost instantly, causing Tycho and Syc to fatten up all over. Pants, sleeves, and collars were tightening, new seams ripping. The gains were impossible for either to miss—but they were easy to ignore. If they had to gain a few dozen pounds to claim victory then so be it!

In between a few token jabs with his sword, Tycho would take a peek at how fat he'd become, blushing every time. His taut ball gut had become a doughy mound, topped by a pair of soft moobs. Whenever he took a step forward or even just turned he felt his middle jiggle, ripples passing through his new pudge like waves on a turbulent sea. His thighs and rump shook as well, emphasizing the sheer extent of his growing bulk. He caught glimpses of his round face and second chin in the reflective surface of platters. The lion had more than doubled in size, and there was still a seemingly endless

number of desserts left to finish off.

The part of Tycho's mind that insisted he should make a hasty retreat lest he end up immobile was soundly overridden by the part that wanted to keep eating until nothing remained.

While Tycho had gained most of his weight in his round gut, Syc was gaining mostly in his hips and rear. The goat's pear shape was more apparent than ever, especially once he'd gorged enough to start shredding his pants. He blushed and bleated as he felt them failing to contain his thick thighs and waist, but still he ate. And ate. And *ate*. Syc stood in place, letting the wonderful desserts come right to him, growing softer and fatter with each passing second.

There's nothing wrong with a spellsword being a bit big! Syc told himself, over and over, on the verge of being too blubbery to even waddle. *I don't have to be mobile to cast spells, after all.* His logic was questionable but technically right, ensuring he made no effort to stop eating.

"You're beginning to resemble a giant snowball. Or perhaps a scoop of ice-cream?" Tycho said, right before chomping down on a slice of chocolate pie.

"And you're the roundest sand dune I've ever seen!" Syc created an icicle and impaled a trio of pastries on it, all of which he devoured in seconds. "But just like a snowball I'm gonna keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger as I gain momentum and scarf down all these desserts before you!"

Syc was certainly boasting, but his actions backed his words. He was outgaining Tycho noticeably, and despite being shorter he still looked heavier. As their competition had rapidly transformed from beating the food to eating it, Tycho decided to give himself an edge on the gorging goat. He nudged a bit of bad luck Syc's way.

A dessert dove at Syc with more force than usual, causing him to tilt off-balance. His eyes widened and he waved his flabby arms in an attempt to stabilize himself. Another bout of directed bad luck foiled his efforts, though. With a long, nervous bleat the Syc fell backwards, landing on his massive rump, which thankfully cushioned the fall. Seams tore like fault lines across his clothing from the impact. He tried to stand back up once he'd recovered, only to discover it was impossible. Syc was simply too fat to stand on his own anymore.

"I think I felt the whole room shake when you fell, jumbo! Don't worry, I'll indulge on enough sweets for both of us while you take a break. I guess luck's on my side!" Tycho's laugh was swiftly interrupted by a half-dozen cookies.

Syc scowled, only to smile seconds later as a particularly scrumptious muffin found him. He suspected Tycho was to blame for his fall *somehow*, and wanted payback. His feline foe was still waddling around, though his pace was sluggish and his gut blocked his view of the floor below him. Snickering, Syc cast a spell and created a small slick of ice right in Tycho's path.

The cocky lion stepped right onto it.

Yelping, Tycho fell right onto his big butt, his whole belly jiggling like jello on impact. He wasn't any more mobile than Syc. Now both butterballs were beached. Fortunately the food was still more than willing to come to them.

A steady stream of sweets soared into the open mouths of both adventurers, blimping them up like never before. Bellies spread over laps and butts over floors. Arms and thighs were growing wobbly and thick, hard for either Tycho or Syc to raise. Their cheeks were getting rounder and rounder, as jiggly as their soft middles.

And yet no matter how huge and massive the pair got, they both continued to be insatiable. The powers they'd once pretended to use to fend off the food were now being used to lure even more in. Tycho gave himself as much good luck as he could, diverting larger treats his way. He also hit Syc with bad luck, causing pastries to miss the goat's eager maw and bounce off his belly instead. In return, Syc would create barriers of ice to block food from reaching Tycho, or just spear them with icicles and reel them away like he were fishing.

The creative attempts to gain the upperhand managed to cancel each other out, with Tycho and Syc fattening up at relatively the same rate. It wasn't long before they'd swelled right against one

another, their blubbery bodies also starting to push against counters and walls. But before anything could break beneath their immense bulk, the food ran out.

Tycho and Syc looked around the kitchen, the disappointment in their faces clear. The desire for more lingered in their minds, a craving they could no longer please.

“Such a shame they made so little,” Tycho said. The blubbery lion was unrecognizable as his former, lithe self, now resembling a furry hill.

“And there wasn’t even a cake!” Syc exclaimed. With his white fur he’d become a snow-capped mountain of a goat. “I was looking forward to that the most—it’s actually my birthday today.”

As soon as Syc mentioned the word “birthday”, the doors to the kitchen pantry rattled, then flew open. A towering cake squeezed through them, floating forwards. It was imposing, a feast in of itself, and it seemed to have its sights set on one person—Syc. As it neared, the cake expertly split apart into dozens of slices, which spun like a decadent tornado. In awe, Syc’s only reaction was to open wide.

Slice after slice shot towards Syc’s mouth, each one practically swallowed whole. The goat was swelling again in almost every direction. Wood creaked as pudge pressed into it, and Tycho felt himself getting squeezed slightly by his expanding rival. Every last inch of the goat was getting doughier, from top to bottom, the snowy mountain growing. Syc’s body wobbled as he plumped up, a soothing sensation almost as wonderful as the cake itself. Almost.

By the time the last slice of cake had found its way into Syc’s stomach, there was no doubt as to who the fattest of the two adventurers was. Syc let out a bleating belch in victory.

“Told ya I could handle this! Though I suppose you helped a *little*,” Syc admitted. Getting stuffed silly had been exhausting, and the desire to snooze was rising.

“A little? This isn’t just a pot belly, ya know?” Tycho laughed and yawned as he wiggled his arms at his massive gut, before pressing them into the pudge. “I have to concede you ate more, though that’s just because I went easy on you seeing as it’s your birthday.”

Syc snorted and wobbled. “You didn’t know that until the very end!”

The playful back-and-forth continued even as the doors behind them cautiously opened. A loud, exasperated sigh rang out.

Nico looked upon the two blobs filling his kitchen with disbelief. He thought of chewing them both out, of asking how they had managed to get so utterly immobilized, but lacked the energy. Instead he left the kitchen and closed the doors. He’d worry about getting the enormous gluttons out later—for now he had to inform his client their desserts wouldn’t be ready due to “magical mishap”. Hopefully his own wobbling middle would be proof enough.