

An Ale for Digestion

By: Indi

Gage had swallowed the cardinal minutes ago, but the taste of the delicious bird still lingered. He gave his bulging, scaly gut a squeeze and a jiggle as he waddled down the street. The plump anaconda appreciated few things more than a large meal—aside from some good ale, perhaps. Fortunately both were easy enough to find in the city. His bouncing belly carved a path through the crowds of the market, most smart enough to avoid him. They were likely more afraid of getting knocked into a stall by his gut than eaten. At least by him. He'd stuff himself in an inn or the guildhall if given the chance, but he wasn't about to sleep off a two or three course meal in the street. Even *he* had standards.

There was a particularly hard kick from Gage's unwilling meal. "*Uworrnnrrrrrrp!*" Gage's belch startled those closest to him, as a handful of red feathers flew from his open mouth. He grinned and gave his belly a pat. "Sorry, dinner's not quiet agreeing with me."

After a couple more minutes of waddling, Gage finally arrived at his favorite tavern. He pushed the door open with his gut, his heavy steps echoing through the room. They were mostly drowned out by the fiddling of a bard and the loud conversations of the patrons. The place was as busy as ever—though perhaps a bit more voracious.

The bard was a rotund fox, his fiddle resting atop his wobbling gut. Half the servers were lugging around stuffed bellies, including a few Gage rarely saw thicker than stick-thin. Chairs were creaking beneath engorged drunks, and more than a couple pairs of flailing legs were sliding down throats. There was a large deer sitting on the remains of a crushed chair, maw open wide, pouring a pitcher of ale into the mouth of some feline who was a swallow away from being dinner.

A couple patrons eyed Gage up as he strolled up to the bar, but responding with hungry ogling of his own dissuaded any from trying to put snake on the menu. He'd found that entering a tavern with a meal already in his gut tended to make him less appetizing to all but the most ravenous of preds. No one wanted to bother paying a "boarding fee" to the barkeep to spend the night on the floor.

Gage chuckled as he spotted the barkeep behind the bar. The blue-striped unicorn was resting on top of his belly, which was rocking from side-to-side thanks to the struggles of multiple prey. He guessed two or three, unless he'd scarfed down a bunch of rowdy kobolds again. Though immobilized, the unicorn had no trouble filling up mugs with his magic and passing along orders to the cook in the back.

"So what is it this time, Argus?" Gage asked as he leaned against the bar, his gut pressing hard against it. "Drunks or servers?"

Before the unicorn could say a word his cheeks puffed up and belched. Gage had to duck to avoid a metal helm that clattered across the floor. "Guards, actually."

"I'm beginning to think you just like snacking on armor," Gage snickered. "Just another reason for me to avoid wearing mine around here."

"If I ever decide to eat you, you'll be so full of booze any armor would've snapped off long before the first gulp," Argus said. He let out a brief moan as his gut shook harder, but quickly regained his composure.

"I'll have to avoid downing too many kegs, then. But more importantly: got anything new for me to try?"

Argus took a moment to think, even trying to look behind his back at the rows of kegs and bottles before giving up. "Hmm, I *do* have a new infused drink you might like. I combined a rapid digestion spell with ale and some squirts of lime. A full mug is guaranteed to turn a

meal into fat in less than a minute. Pure fat, though, so you'll lose out on any loot."

Gage much preferred to naturally digest his prey, if only to enjoy the heft and wiggling longer. He grabbed his gut by the sides and lifted it some, feeling how heavy the cardinal was. Then he let it drop, grinning wider as it swayed. The cardinal had been an unexpected meal, and there were a few others in the tavern who were making Gage's stomach growl. A bit of rapid digestion would let him have a second course without the hassle. "Tempting. Very tempting. Though why haven't you guzzled some yourself?"

"As lovely as the weight from these three idiots would be, I'm using them to fuel my spells instead." Argus tapped a hoof on his belly. "I'll be able to enchant a small fortune's worth of liquor tonight thanks to them." There were a few muffled shouts from inside the unicorn, along with faint clanking. He really had swallowed them, armor and all, then.

The anaconda continued to think about the drink. Argus' magical infusions were always pricey. While the digestion drink might not be as expensive as his kegs of liquid silver and gold, or the rum that added a few feet to your height, it'd still be a bit of a luxury. Maybe after his next job he could afford to throw the gold around.

Suddenly there was another kick in Gage's gut, forcing another long belch. He winced as something went up his throat and out of his mouth, landing on the bar with a jingle. It was a pouch, soaked in stomach acids and filled with coin. A few red feathers surrounded it. "Looks like this round is on dinner. Sure, I'll try this drink of yours out and free up some space."

Argus nodded. His horn glowed briefly, and a mug hovered from behind the bar. It floated towards one of the many kegs on the wall, which emptied a bright green liquid into it. As the filled mug floated back a heavy mist poured out. Nothing out of the ordinary for a drink infused with magic.

"Alright, I'd recommend chugging it all in one or two gulps," Argus said. "Works better that way."

"As if I've ever held back on the booze!" Gage laughed. "Looks like it's your lucky day, bird. You get to be added onto my waistline right away!"

Gage guzzled the entire contents of the mug in one go, without hesitation. His dinner was struggling harder than ever, having likely heard just enough of Gage's conversation with Argus to realize the dangers of the drink. His renewed fight only made Gage gladder he'd ordered the drink. Once he was finished, Gage slammed the mug on the bar, mist drifting from his mouth. "Lime was a nice touch. At least I think that was the lime I tasted. Either way, it was good!"

"Glad to—*uorrrp*—hear." Argus briefly covered his mouth with a hoof. Used a couple servers as taste-testers to get it right. I'm sure they'll be delighted to hear their immobility paid off in the end. I might even reconsider eating one of them in thanks."

"Slap the butterball's belly in thanks for me," Gage said. A light chill surged through his body, the magic of the drink likely kicking in. His gut began to wobble aggressively...and shrink. As it did the rest of him grew thicker. He watched new layers of fat being added to his arms, felt his pants grow tighter as his rump filled out. Even his tail was getting thicker, becoming more a club than ever.

"Working like a—*bworrrp*—charm." Gage's laugh was interrupted by another belch, red feathers flying. "Kind of—*uorrrp*—gassy, though—*braaaaaap!*" The anaconda was burping over and over, so much he could barely speak. Feathers were going everywhere, and for once he actually clamped his snout shut with both claws. The force of his belches soon forced them away, to his great frustration.

Argus was laughing at him. "Forgot to mention that part. Be lucky whoever you ate wasn't *really* big. The enormous hyena I stuffed a server with caused him to burp over tables and rattle the walls. Thought the whole tavern was going to cave in!"

customer wouldn't save him from Argus' hunger—a fact Gage could appreciate as a fellow glutton. After all, his best friendships were the ones where either were a rumbling stomach away from ending up a meal. A claw drifted to his belly, rubbing it as he thought of all the fond memories he'd added to it over the years.

“Well have a good night, Argus. Thanks for once again being the most fattening tavern in the city.” Gage slapped his gut with glee. He loved to feel it jiggle, especially now.

“And thank you for only glutting on my good customers *some* of the time! Have a good night yourself.” Argus waved, before starting to tidy up the tavern a bit with his magic, joined by the few mobile servers remaining.

Gage lazily waddled towards the exit, giving himself time to adjust to his dramatically increased heft. After a day or two he'd feel like he'd been that fat forever. Until then he'd feel every bounce and wobble of his heavy steps quite acutely. He tossed a coin to the bard, smiling as it landed on the fox's belly. Thankfully the exit was wide enough to not be too tight a squeeze. Gage headed for home, the massive anaconda vaguely thinking about breakfast already...and trying not to hungrily ogle the few people he passed in the night.