

Dragon Brew

By: Indi

A nervous sheep navigated the busy tavern, sliding in between chairs and past drunks as they balanced a large tray filled with drinks. The place was packed, filled with the usual bunch of adventurers, merchants, guards, and less-than-subtle thieves. Amongst the rowdy bunch, the table of kobolds managed to stand out.

The sheep lowered their tray on the table and passed the mugs of ale around to the half-dozen kobolds, before rushing off to handle more orders.

The kobolds accepted their drinks but barely sipped on them. They weren't at the tavern to celebrate, but to drink their worries away.

"Life without a master is so...boring," one of the kobolds said, staring down at their mug.

"There's nothing to do. No one to pamper. No one to cook for!" another lamented, before downing half their drink in one gulp.

"I can't believe our old master would fire us. We worked so hard!" a third sobbed.

"Don't worry, I know we'll find a new master soon," Zel—the leader to the bunch—said. But it was easier said than done. The kobolds specialized in serving dragons, caring for their many needs and performing whatever duties were necessary. Unfortunately, the last dragon they'd served under had sent them away for being too enthusiastic about their duties. Zel guessed the reason was that their excellent cooking had left the dragon so fat his belly dragged along the ground as he waddled through his lair—at least the parts of his lair he could still fit in. It was a shame the dragon hadn't been able to handle the pampered life Zel and his fellows provided him.

"There aren't that many dragons in the area, though," a kobold said, dejected.

"Perhaps. But we can always make one of our own." Zel grinned and pulled out a potion bottle. The contents looked like shimmering, liquid gold. "We just need to find a candidate worthy of our service."

The other kobolds stared at the potion, hope shining on their faces.

"Yes I'm sure I want two more roasts! And a pie, as well!"

The boisterous voice drew the attention of the kobolds, who all turned to face the source. A brown lion with a curly mane was seated alone at a nearby table, which was covered in plates and pitchers. Though lean, he sported a bulging belly that looked ready to burst the buttons right off his purple vest. He guzzled half a pitcher of ale before speaking with the sheep server again.

"Paladins are trained to defeat any foe—including feasts!" The lion laughed, his gut jiggling. "Oh, and I'll need a couple more pitchers as—*uworrrrrrp*—well." The sheep hurried off, and the lion returned to ravaging what little food remained on his table.

"Luck's on our side, boys. I think we've found our next master." Zel smiled wide, and the kobolds followed suit.

Tycho couldn't have been in a better mood. The lion had won big gambling earlier in the day, and was celebrating by treating himself to all the booze and food he could handle. And the paladin's appetite was nearly bottomless. If only he could afford to stuff himself every night, and not just on rare occasions. Then again, he'd be enormous if that were possible.

Putting down another emptied pitcher, Tycho found his table surrounded by six smiling kobolds. They looked almost giddy, and he couldn't fathom why. "Uh, anything I can—*braaap*—help you with?"

"Please excuse our interruption of your wonderful meal, Sir Paladin," one of the kobolds said. "We just wanted to offer a humble gift in thanks to your service." They held out a mug. The liquid within looked like gold.

Tycho knew it wasn't wise to accept free drinks from strangers, especially in a crowded tavern that didn't have the best reputation. But he was also rather drunk, and more than willing to ignore common sense for the sake of liquor.

"You're too kind!" Tycho said, happily accepting the mug. He swirled the contents a little, watching the golden liquid splash about. He found himself lost in the glimmer of the drink, its golden shine. Hopefully the taste matched its exquisite appearance.

"I recommend you drink it all in one go to get the most out of the flavor," the kobold said.

The paladin didn't need any encouragement to guzzle booze. He pressed the mug to his lips and tilted it high, chugging the drink. It was cool, the taste sweet, and reminded Tycho of fresh apple cider. None of his other drinks that night had been bad, but the gift from the kobolds overshadowed them completely. Within seconds he'd drained the entire mug, slamming it down on the table as he let out a sigh of delight.

"That might be the best cider I've ever—*hic*—had!" Tycho said. He shivered as a chill surged through his body, then another. The lion snapped to attention, all weariness gone. He felt like he'd plunged into icy water. With a start he stood from his chair, a wave of dizziness coming over him. "That was—*hic*—strong. Really—*urrrp*—strong."

Tycho's gut began to wobble, before swelling four times bigger in a matter of seconds. His belly burst right out of his vest and landed on the table with a thud and a crack, smashing it in half. The instant increase in weight nearly toppled the paladin over, causing him to stumble as he grabbed his belly to balance himself.

His middle was huge, covered in bronze scales rather than brown fur. Tycho looked like he'd gained the belly of a lizard...or a dragon.

All conversation in the tavern ceased, patrons and staff alike turning to see what had caused the commotion. The sight of a lion sporting an enormous reptile gut created plenty of confusion.

"What's—*hic*—happening to me?" Tycho said, unable to look away from his strange belly.

"That's the drink kicking in!" Zel said. "Just relax—the improvements should only take a few minutes to complete."

Before Tycho could ask any more questions, his tail began to transform. It thickened

considerably, starting at the base and extending outward in a flash. As it did, fur became scales. The massive, draconic tail smashed the table behind Tycho, sending the patrons at it fleeing as they dodged flying mugs and plates.

Tycho looked over his shoulder, watching with fascination as his large, bronze tail wagged at his command. He could only nudge it a bit in either direction, the tail far too heavy to flick around like his old one. It weighed him down as much as his gut, while at the same time keeping him balanced so he didn't fall over.

The unexpected and dramatic changes caused conflict in Tycho. There was fear, but also excitement. His gaze shifted between his belly and his tail, the paladin uninterested in anything else.

Amongst the patrons, confusion had turned to unease. Everyone close to Tycho had stood up and backed away so they wouldn't get caught up in the transformation. A few had already headed towards the exit. The staff didn't know what to do.

Tycho yelped as his left leg blimped out, tearing his boot and pant leg to shreds as it outgrew both in a flash. The leg was blubbery, that of a bronze dragon, and a good foot longer than his original one. He let go of his gut and held his arms out, teetering to one side. Seconds later his other leg transformed. An arm shifted, fur flattening into shimmering scales, followed by the other. From the neck down the lion was a doughy dragon, at least four times fatter than he'd been before guzzling the free drink.

A growth burst hit Tycho again, the paladin's head striking the ceiling. He shouted in pain and fell forwards, destroying another two tables and quite a few chairs. His new bulk cushioned the fall, though he was left winded.

The tavern rapidly cleared out as the remainder of the patrons fled, tripping over each other to escape the transformation. The kobolds stayed close to Tycho, clapping their claws in glee as they looked upon the growing paladin.

"This is far better than I'd hoped!" Zel exclaimed. "My potion transforms people into a dragon that reflects their inner desires, so I'm never quite sure what the result will be. Clearly you've got the heart of a glutton considering how much you've ballooned in size. You're exactly the kind of master we've been hoping for!"

"Fatter! Fatter! Fatter!" the other kobolds chanted, jumping up and down.

Tycho blushed at the adoration, right before his snout distended and his cheeks puffed out. His curly mane receded to nothing as scales covered his whole face. Two short horns grew atop his head. All traces of his original feline form were gone.

But the transformation wasn't complete.

Tycho grew in bursts in every direction, pushing away any furniture he didn't outright crush. The pounds were rapidly piling on, his belly swelling outward as his tail thickened. He felt his hip expand against a support beam, pushing at it until it cracked and snapped in half.

The dragon started smiling. His new form was beginning to grow on him. The sheer size of it made him feel powerful, even if he had far more blubber than muscle. He could probably defeat any foe he came up against with a well-timed belly flop. Arrows were bound to bounce right off his blubbery scales, while weapons would simply sink into pudge. Before he'd relied on his reflexes to avoid danger; now he could absorb any attack tried on him.

“Bigger...” Tycho said, grinning. “I must get bigger!”

The kobolds cheered his declaration.

Two more beams were destroyed. A single sweep of Tycho’s tail annihilated a row of tables and chairs, before splintering the bar and smashing the kegs behind it. His back swelled against the ceiling, causing it to creak and bulge. The entire tavern groaned, window panes cracking and boards warping. The kobolds sprinted out to safety, still overjoyed.

Tycho let out a bellowing laugh as he grew right through the ceiling, the remains of the tavern collapsing all around him. His impressive expansion came to end, much to his dismay. He breathed in the fresh air and shook the debris off himself. The dragon plopped down on his side, letting his belly spread outward and into the wall of the building next door, tilting it slightly but not knocking it over.

The kobolds all formed up before him, with Zel in the lead. They bowed before Tycho. “Master, your transformation was a marvelous success! Please, give us the honor of becoming your faithful servants. We will ensure you receive all the pampering and care a dragon of your stature deserves. And of course we’ll also keep you growing bigger and bigger, until you’re the most massive and majestic dragon in the land!”

The promise of gaining even more wonderful heft was all Tycho had needed to hear. “Yes! If you can provide me with endless feasts then I’ll let you serve me forever. Food and booze—enough to supply an entire kingdom. I crave it. No, I *demand* it! I’ve earned the right to glut and gorge and grow!” The dragon’s cackling wobbled his belly and shook the surrounding buildings. As the kobolds danced below him in celebration, he thought of the mountains of treats he’d be able to stuff himself with. From then on, life would be one enormous feast.