

Temporary Bursting

By: IndigoRho

August strolled around the potion shop, glancing at the labels of the various bottles, vials, and powders. They ranged from healing brews to concoctions that implied they could add or take a few feet off your height. One brightly-colored powder claimed it could make a person glow.

As wondrous as some of them seemed, the gray lion was certain they all did exactly what they said. Of course he was also sure some came with questionable side effects. It was exactly the sort of thing Indi—his friend who owned the shop—would do.

The door to the backroom swung open, and a plump blue cheetah walked out carrying a bottle. “Sorry about that delay. I had so many failed attempts in there it was hard to find the newest one!” Indi said. “I know you wanted to show me some new spell, but would you mind trying out my new mana potion first? I’d love to see if it enhances your spells.”

“As long as it’s *actually* finished. I don’t want to end up turning purple or something.” August eyed the bottle with some suspicion.

“Don’t worry you’re not going to become a grape lion.” Indi held out the bottle.

August took the potion and gave it a closer look, sniffing it just to make sure there wasn’t any aroma of citrus. Satisfied, he took a test sip. It tasted just like water, with a hint of flavoring he couldn’t quite place. A few quick gulps finished it off, and he returned the bottle back to Indi.

“So, what do you think?”

“Taste’s not too bad, feels oddly light. I don’t feel like I drank anything at all, honestly.”

“Good, that means it’s working!”

August’s ears perked up as he heard a muffled hissing sound suddenly start up. He looked around in confusion, before his gaze finally drifted to his belly. To his surprise it was rounder than usual, and swelling rapidly before his eyes. He was inflating.

Within seconds the lion was sporting a sizable ball gut, taut and seemingly empty. It was as if he’d gulped down gallons of air.

“Really, Indi?” August asked. He wasn’t necessarily surprised—Indi had tricked him with potions before—he was just disappointed. “I’d better not be filling with mana or something so that you can claim you technically weren’t lying about the potion.”

“Oh no, that part was definitely a lie,” Indi admitted, cheerfully. “It’s my liquid gust potion! The power of a gust of wind in liquid form. Of course if you drink it all that wind ends up stuck inside you with nowhere else to go. It’s proving to be my fastest inflation potion yet!” There was a great deal of pride in his claim, the cheetah practically beaming.

“Don’t you—*ooph*—don’t you have assistants to test this stuff out on?” August grumbled.

He was forced to widen his stance, his body having already taken on a round shape. Limbs were puffed up and nearly useless, cheeks round. August was astonished by how swiftly he was blimping up, faster than any pump could’ve managed. It was on par with some of the more powerful aeromancer spells he’d seen in action. If he weren’t the one inflating he might’ve been impressed.

Of course Indi didn’t really care much about August’s opinion on the matter. Success was all he was interested in, and so far everything was going delightfully. He couldn’t resist prodding the swelling lion, hearing the faint creaks that echoed from August’s stretched hide. Each time he poked him he felt a little bit tauter.

“From a stick to a sphere in barely a minute!” Indi grinned. “And it looks like the pressure’s starting to get to ya.”

Sure enough, August’s gaze looked a little aimless, drifting away from Indi frequently and not looking at anything in particular. It was an effect of the immense pressure that’d built up within him as he magically filled with air. Though his hide had remained intact and he hadn’t burst, it was still an

overwhelming sensation. It dominated his thoughts, making it hard to concentrate at all. To make matters worse it was also fairly euphoric, and he was left permanently blushing.

The hissing faded, and suddenly the only noise in the shop was the gentle creaking of an overinflated lion. And Indi's triumphant chuckling.

"Took quite a while, but *finally* I've got a dose that inflates the drinker without outright bursting them! You'd be surprised by how much trial-and-error is required with an inflation potion." Indi pressed a paw into August, smiling as his friend groaned in response. "Unfortunately I really can't have you taking up half the shop like this! Hard to make money when the customers can't reach the product—or know one of the most common undisclosed effects."

August didn't give any coherent reply, barely aware of Indi's intentions. The cheetah flashed the claws on one of his paws before slowly digging them into August's side. There was a loud creaking of hide as it was pushed beyond its limits, and suddenly Indi felt his fingers push through.

The bursting was instant. Where a spherical lion had been there was only an explosion of hide scraps, along with a *boom!* that rattled the shelves and bottles. It was a miracle none got knocked over and shattered in the blast.

Indi had twitched as the gush of air flowed over him, barraged by scraps. When he did open his eyes he did so with a smile.

"Popping people never gets old—especially friends~" The cheetah let out a sigh, looking at the mess his fun had created. Oh well, sweeping up some hide scraps wouldn't be *too* bad.

Before Indi could move, though, the scraps began to glow. They rose into the air a few at a time, spinning slowly as they floated. Frozen in place, Indi didn't have a clue as to what was happening. His potion had never done anything like this before.

All at once the scraps moved, flying directly towards Indi. He chirped in fear, but none of the scraps ever hit him.

Instead they massed together, forming a round shape that swiftly resembled the lion they'd once belonged to. Trapped in the middle of it all, Indi's cry of surprise was abruptly muffled as the shape solidified. August had been re-formed.

Still round and inflated, August lazily opened his eyes and yawned, exhausted. The pressure was a little less than before, and the lion didn't struggle nearly as much to think. As he felt something banging against his bloated sides from within he grinned.

"Ah, so my new spell *does* work! I've been popping so often, I thought it'd be smart to come up with a way to re-form instantly instead of having to wait." He wobbled about in place, testing just how mobile he was in that form. Not much. "Guess I shouldn't be surprised the spell returns me to my exact form before the bursting occurred. Being spherical is better than being scraps, though."

"Let me out of here!" Indi shouted, shoulder-checking the fleshy walls of the cavernous stomach. He managed to roll August over but the lion didn't pop.

"You just burst me. Why should I let you out?" August laughed. "Besides, I was getting a bit peckish. Thanks for being such a good host and offering yourself up as lunch~"

The punches and kicks that followed only caused August to burp a little, much to his amusement. It might take a while for him to fully deflate, but at least he was going to have fun in the meanwhile...