

Free Refill

By: Indi

There were plenty pleasures in the world, and Alexi was never one to resist their temptation. The somewhat hefty unicorn was sitting at a tavern table, kept company only by a trio of emptied mugs and the decimated remnants of a three course meal.

Tipsy and full, Alexi had nothing to complain about—aside from how tight his shirt felt. He was certain he'd cast a spell of elasticity on it so it could keep up with his indulgences. Perhaps he'd used it on his pants instead? Oh well.

On that night the unicorn had mostly kept a low profile, but he'd flashed his magic enough elsewhere for many to recognize him as a mage. Two such patrons were heading his way now, unnoticed until they were right in front of him. They were a black-furred cheetah with white spots and a white striped hyena with a red mohawk.

"You're a mage, right?" the cheetah asked rather bluntly. "Overheard you chatting up the barkeep about it the other night."

Alexi looked up from his mug, considering what to say. The pair of strangers seemed harmless enough. "Oh yes, I—ahem—dabble in the arcane arts." His tone reeked of false modesty.

"Incredible! See Nico, I told ya he was a mage!"

The hyena shrugged, clearly uninterested. "Didn't say you were lying Jet."

"What kind of magic do you know? I've heard unicorns are some of the most powerful mages!" Jet continued.

Flattery would get a person everywhere with Alexi. He perked up a little, puffing out his chest to better match the imposing reputation Jet had given his kind. It didn't disguise the strained buttons of his vest at all.

"Well I...hmm, I wouldn't know where to begin! I've studied under dozens of different schools and mentors, scoured countless tomes in pursuit of the art!" Alexi was bending the truth so much it was on the verge of snapping in half.

Jet had just enough of a buzz going to be persistent. "Could you show us something? Doesn't have to be fancy, whatever you want!"

Presented with such an easy opportunity to impress others, Alexi agreed before he even considered what spell he could possibly use. Making the plates float would work, but also require concentration, something he wasn't in the mood to deal with. Inspiration hit when he noticed Nico had just finished off his drink.

"Ah, of course! You friend—Nico, was it? Nico's next drink is on me. That mug will be full again in a flash!"

The unicorn mumbled a few phrases, and his horn started to glow. Alexi tilted his head towards Nico, and a prismatic ray of light shot out from his horn.

Unfortunately drinking had worsened Alexi's aim, and the ray missed the mug and hit Nico in the chest instead. There wasn't any force to it and Nico barely felt the slightest tingle. No one even realized the spell had missed.

All three stared intently at the mug, awaiting a bubbling brew to come forth. Nothing happened.

Jet took the mug, looking right in it and even tipping it over, as if a command was needed to activate the spell. "Huh, did it not work?"

The spell had indeed worked, just not in the way Alexi or his admirers had expected. Nico's stomach was steadily filling with fresh ale, causing his flat middle to round out more and more with each passing second. The creases on his tunic were smoothing out as it stretched tight over his new gut. The mystery of the empty mug kept him distracted enough not to notice, however.

"My spells never fail, that mug should be overflowing with beer by now!" Alexi insisted.

The broken table was further crushed beneath the spreading mass of inflating hyena. Chairs were either pushed away or wrecked, and more tables were in danger of falling victim to Nico. With all the creaking of wood it was impossible to hear the creaking of his hide.

Fortunately Alexi's spell performed just as promised, and the ale stopped flowing the second Nico was full. So full a single sip would likely have been enough to burst him. At least the odds of someone offering him another drink were slim.

"Thanks for the—*buworrriiiiiiiiiiiip*—ale," Nico managed, a miracle considering he was under the influence of pressure and liquor.

"I'm glad *one* of you is appreciative of my gift," Alexi said.

Jet finally heard the creaks coming from his friend, and frowned. "Oh man, Nico sounds like he's gonna pop! We gotta find a way to get some of that ale out of him before he ends up as scraps!"

"Rest assured he'll be fine." Alexi rested a hoof against Nico's terribly taut side, causing the whole hyena to quake faintly. "People are far more durable than you give them credit for, and don't just burst at the slightest hint of pressure, right Nico?"

Alexi turned to look at Nico, but unfortunately neglected to take into account his pointy horn. The tip punctured the blimpy hyena almost instantly, Nico's eyes widening in surprise right before he exploded with a resounding *Boooooooooooooom!*

Ale splashed in every direction, soaking half the tavern as striped hide scraps rained down. While Alexi had managed to stay standing, Jet had been thrown to the ground by the blast, the cheetah groaning.

Alexi decided it was well past time for him to take his leave. He finished off his beer and made for the exit with haste, fearful he'd hear the sounds of pursuit behind him. For some reason his reputation always seemed to take a hit when a spell had an explosive finish...