

A Ride to the Inn

By: IndigoRho

Helios Spiritstorm pushed open the doors of the tavern and stumbled outside, smiling as he heard the laughter and boasting fade behind him. The charr mesmer had been happily overindulging in the local festivities of Meatoberfest, an infamous celebration of eating and drinking in excess, and had finally decided to head back to the inn so he could sleep on a relatively comfortable bed rather than a bar floor. An endeavor easier said than done. Revelers filled the streets as well, boisterous vendors trying to part Helios with his coin and convince him to consume far more than necessary. While he considered himself strong of will, he also knew he wasn't in the best state to resist the peer pressure, and found himself struggling to resist temptation.

Eventually the charr realized he needed to take somewhat drastic measures to ensure he actually made it to the inn before sunrise. He snuck into an empty alley and around a corner, until he was convinced he had privacy. With all the concentration he could muster, Helios used his skills as a mesmer to create an illusion that mirrored his appearance perfectly. The clone before him wore the exact same robes in the exact same way, his white-striped mahogany fur indistinguishable from his own. To the casual observer they could be twins.

No one was going to see them together, though. "Alright friend, I'm feeling pretty darn lazy and a ride to the inn would be lovely," Helios said, the clone dutifully listening to his orders and smiling. "I'm just gonna crawl right into that hollow gut of yours while you waddle to our room at the Ironpowder Inn, got it?"

The clone nodded in approval, but Helios swore it gave him a brief funny look in the process.

"Open wide. Hope you're ready to carry your weight in, uh, me."

Helios' clone complied, and the crafty mesmer slipped both paws right in without hesitation. The illusion fortunately wasn't too perfect a replica, no saliva or sweltering breath greeting him as the clone made the first of many swallows. He snorted as he felt his paws pulled in further, entering his clone's soft gullet, the fake charr gently gripping his sides. Soon he was in past his elbows, and Helios experienced the odd sensation of feeling like he was being eaten by a reflection. The clone's maw opened wider before stretching over his head completely.

The clone took a couple more gulps, his neck bulging from his "meal", then carefully lifted Helios off the ground to continue. Helios' paws entered the clone's stomach as his chest entered its mouth, the tipsy charr fairly amused by the situation. Swallow after swallow the clone's belly began to balloon outward, his illusory outfit stretching with ease to contain his master. His middle bounced and wobbled as Helios emptied into it inch-by-inch, the mesmer gradually shifting into a less awkward position over time. He impatiently flicked his tail around while waiting for the clone to finish gulping him down, until finally he felt jaws closing around his footpaws, followed by a strong swallow.

With a bounce of his belly the clone stood triumphant, having swallowed his master whole. Illusion or not, there was no way for the clone to disguise how comically huge his gut was, or that he'd obviously eaten something a tad larger and more lively than the usual festival food. Instead he'd simply have to keep to himself and hope he didn't gain the curiosity of too many onlookers. Putting on a look of confidence, the clone waddled out of the alley and back onto the street, his belly full of charr swaying with each step.

Almost immediately the clone felt the eyes of others on him, or more specifically, on his distended middle. He avoided direct eye contact with most, occasionally flashing a smug grin at any who's gaze lingered too long, hoping to intimidate them into minding their own business. None confronted him, thankfully. The further he waddled unhindered, the more confident the clone became, growing less and less concerned about bystanders witnessing his apparent gluttony. Maybe they didn't care about the fate of his meal, or just didn't want to add to his waistline, either way the clone was glad to not be bothered.

Within the stomach of the clone, Helios was surprisingly comfortable. The fake stomach walls were softer than expected, and the clone constantly swallowed fresh air to ensure his compartment didn't get too stuffy. Sure he was a bit cramped, but at least he had a fair bit of privacy, the celebrations outside muffled to a more manageable degree. He was gently rocked back and forth as the clone waddled, eyes growing heavy as he resisted falling asleep on the spot. Helios wasn't sure his clone would hold up if he started snoozing, and wasn't eager to test anything out tonight. The joy couldn't last forever, though.

“Ha! Found yourself something a bit more filling than a meat skewer, eh?”

The clone froze in place as a firm paw slapped him on the back, nervously turning around to face the voice's source. Behind him was a rather stout charr with jet black fur, his round belly jiggling as he laughed. Even Helios' clone could tell he was drunk.

“N-no, just regular old meat in here. Won an...uh, eating contest!” The clone stammered, giving his gut the gentlest pat.

“Sure ya did. Was your opponent the grand prize?” The charr let out another boisterous laugh.

Helios' clone was beginning to realize the stranger wasn't interested in freeing whoever was in his belly, and switched gears from denial to cockiness. “Perhaps not originally, but I was still hungry for more and he hit the spot rather well.”

“Glad to meet a charr with similar taste!” The stranger wrapped his arm around the clone's shoulder and gave his bulging belly a teasing poke, causing it to wobble in response. “You cleave someone in two in a duel and you get praise, but if you cram them into your gut instead they scowl and yammer on about how it's not as honorable, pfft!”

“They're obviously just scared *they'll* end up on the wrong side of your gut one day!” The clone tried to keep up. “Hard to have a serious toast in your honor when the whole room knows you're a few layers of flab on another charr's belly.”

As expected, the stranger laughed. “True, true! If you hadn't already had your fill, I'd suggest we hit a couple taverns and see how many of our lucky compatriots we could introduce to our stomachs. Hard to find others who share my passion.”

“Well, um, unfortunately I'm on the verge of a food coma myself. Gotta head back to my inn and sleep off second place here!” the clone chuckled, jiggling his stuffed gut in a way he hoped wasn't uncomfortable for Helios.

“I know that feeling well. I'm staying at the Smokescreen Inn myself, on the other side of town. You should pay me a visit some time tomorrow, after you've handled dinner of course.” The stranger gave the clone's middle one last slap for the road, before stumbling off into the night.

Helios' clone breathed a sigh of relief as the other charr left. Not wanting to attract any more admirers, he picked up his pace and waddled to the inn, grunting as he maneuvered his wide belly through the doorway. The innkeeper gave him an odd look as he entered, but didn't press “Helios” about his suspicious gut, allowing the clone to slowly make his way up the stairs to his room. Again the clone struggled to squeeze through the door, this time receiving a few drowsy complaints from his occupant. As soon as he was safely in he fell backwards right onto the bed, shattering into a swarm of rapidly dissipating pink butterflies, his job complete.

Helios himself was left curled up in a ball atop the bed, already half-asleep. He giggled at the fall and rolled onto his side, before passing out, barely aware of the new friend he'd made on the way home.