

The Ample Lake Burster: Chapter 07

By: Indigo Rho

Abel twisted his upper body to crack his back. Putting the groceries away had taken more out of him than he'd expected. Bag after bag, cooler after cooler. Having Cody around might have helped, but Abel preferred having the opportunity to watch the leopard grumble out in the mess hall as he struggled to deflate himself. Grazing on marshmallows was nice, too. He'd already plowed through a bag and a half on his own—though he'd lied to Kevin that the half-empty bag in his paw was all he'd snagged. He doubted the stingy elk had kept inventory.

The frat boys had regrouped in the lodge, with the TV blaring in the background. Abel had to admit the place seemed cozy. He hadn't bothered looking at any photos beforehand, so his mental image of Camp Ample Lake had been far from flattering. Gaudy furniture that favored low cost over comfort. Appliances leftover from last century. Rusty pipes. Smells he never wanted to imagine. Instead, he'd been pleasantly surprised. Another win for pessimism.

Kevin did his clapping routine to quiet the guys. "Congrats, everyone, we managed to finish up the first day without causing a disaster. Thanks for getting everything put away and checked on. Luckily for us, it doesn't look like anything's broken. Let's keep it that way. Tomorrow's when the real work begins. We'll need to rearrange the tables and benches in the mess hall so it can be used as a dance hall, consolidate the picnic tables, carry wood to the firepit, and hang a few pendants with our letters on them."

"What's even the point of decorating?" Cody complained. "No one cares about that shit unless it's Halloween. And how many of us here don't exceed a ladder's weight limit?" His judgmental gaze bounced between the bellies in the room. "I'm not getting roped into hanging everything by myself." His tail restlessly flicked about. The earlier puffing had left the cat more irritable than usual, ready to snip and hiss at the lightest provocation. He looked cute, all riled up.

"If you're worried about ladders, we can just hook you up to one of the helium tanks and float you from spot to spot," Abel suggested, knowing full and well how Cody would react.

Sure enough, Cody crossed his arms and scowled at him. Yep, just as cute as ever. "Maybe I'll fill *you* with helium and tie you to the front gate to greet the guests."

“No one’s wasting helium on pranks,” Kevin asserted. “It’s for balloons only.”

“Anyone can be a balloon with enough puff.” Abel grinned.

“For *inanimate* balloons only. Inflate all you want, but don’t waste supplies in the process. And the reason we’re hanging our fraternity letters all over the place is to ensure everyone who sees pictures of the party online knows precisely who hosted it. We gotta remind campus that no one throws a party like Rho Theta Rho.” Kevin pumped his fist, but none of the guys followed him in celebrating frat spirit. Abel didn’t consider himself much of a cheerleader.

Kevin cleared his throat and moved on. “Anyway, we have a lot of work tomorrow, but then that’s the end of our obligations out here. None of you will have to lift a single finger to help after that. No cooking, no setting out food and drinks, no garbage duty, and no clean-up!” That finally perked the guys up. Clean-up was always the worst part of any gathering at the frat house. “You’ve all got the rest of the night off. Do whatever you want; just don’t create more work for us tomorrow.”

“I’m going for a swim in the lake while there’s still time,” Cody announced.

“Bro, it’s not like it’s going anywhere,” Berg said.

“No shit. I mean before it rains.” Cody rolled his eyes so hard his head nearly rolled off his shoulders.

“A nice relaxing dip sounds perfect,” Oscar said. “We should’ve brought floaties or a beach ball. Though I think I know a suitable replacement for the latter.” The grinning fox stared at Cody.

Cody let out a tiny hiss. “Do you even have swim trunks that fit anymore, tubbs? Or did you finally find a place online that sells them in circus tent sizes?”

“My trunks still fit! At least they did the last time I tried,” Oscar added. The fox’s gaze looked distant, as if he was frantically calculating how large his ass may or may not have grown recently.

Berg shook his head and deposited himself on the couch facing the TV. “Have fun with that gross lake water. I’m not missing the game for anything.”

Blake leaned against the back of the couch. “You’ll be less disappointed in the lake,” the crow said.

“Keep telling yourself that,” Berg grunted back.

“I think I’ll check out the lake, too,” Abel said. Swimming was better than sticking around and getting dragged into Berg and Blake’s endless baseball rivalry. There were times when the pair came off as archrivals rather than frat brothers. “Webb, you coming?”

“Sure,” the rabbit shrugged.

“First dibs on the bathroom!” Cody zoomed up the stairs as if his life depended on it.

“As if I need a bathroom to change pants,” Abel smirked as he headed up himself.

The frat boys dug out their swim trunks and got changed. Cody and Oscar opted for the privacy of the bathroom, while Abel simply dropped his pants and casually slipped into his trunks, unafraid to flaunt his ass in front of others. He caught Cody staring and knew his odds of getting a booty call from the frisky feline later on were guaranteed. The cat never could resist a good ass.

More clouds had gathered on the horizon, but the sun continued to shine bright on Camp Ample Lake. Abel wondered if the weather reports might be wrong. No rain meant no mud, and the arctic wolf didn’t want to trudge through mud doing final party preparations tomorrow.

Cody orbited Oscar like a sassy moon. “Those trunks look painted on, dude. Are you sure they aren’t cutting off your circulation?” he snickered.

“I swear they fit fine last time,” Oscar mumbled. Abel saw the flustered fox suck his gut in occasionally, clearly thinking thin thoughts. “I must have grabbed the wrong pair by accident.”

“Or—and hear me out—you got fatter!” Cody slapped Oscar’s rotund butt, causing the fox to jiggle and jump. “You start packing on that winter weight earlier and earlier each year.”

“I just get fluffier. It’s a completely natural thing that all foxes do when the weather gets cold,” Oscar insisted.

With all eyes on the bickering pair, Abel stealthily adjusted his swim trunks. They felt tighter around the thighs than he remembered, though the pair might have been an older one he’d grabbed by accident. He’d done all his packing at the last minute.

“You’ve gotten rounder recently,” Webb said. The rabbit’s gaze had been away from the action at the worst possible moment. “Maybe you should cut back on the marshmallows.”

“I don’t give a shit about my weight,” Abel replied, keeping his voice low so the others didn’t hear. “There’s no reason to fuss about it since it runs in the family. Dad’s fat. Mom’s fat. My siblings are fat. Hell, all my cousins are fat, too. The obnoxious one who’s a theatre major apparently has to take roles where he spends most of the play fully inflated because the department doesn’t have costumes for a wolf of his girth. Knowing him, I’m sure he enjoys it.”

Last Christmas, his cousin had sent the whole extended family a video of him singing carols while blimped up and dressed like a Christmas ornament. It

was only slightly less cringe than the Halloween video of him as a giant, creaky pumpkin.

“But has your dad stopped bugging you about your weight?”

“Of course he fucking hasn’t,” Abel said through clenched teeth.

“Everyone else gets a pass on their weight but me, because I was stupid and showed a *hint* of promise at swimming.”

Abel had dodged his family’s fat genes for most of his life. He’d actually been fit in high school, in part because he took up swimming. He’d even joined the swim team and placed well at a few meets. No delusions of Olympic medals had filled his head, but he took pride in the swimming scholarship he snagged.

Then he’d joined a fraternity because everyone else on the swim team had. Rho Theta Rho had offered him friends and parties. And beer. And weed. And junk food. Indulgent vices had battled the strict dietary and exercise needs of professional swimming and won a decisive victory. Abel hadn’t been able to keep up with the rest of the team, anyway, so he didn’t see the point of exhausting himself for the sake of a scholarship.

Dad didn’t discover he’d quit the team until after he’d spent a semester plumping up like a normal freshman. The ensuing argument had been short but infuriating, as Abel’s dad concluded his gains were the result of laziness and depression, and that he wouldn’t be happy until he slimmed back down. Which was real rich coming from a professor who wore 4XLs and often downed a dozen donuts over the course of the day’s classes.

Aside from his dad being a fucker, Abel had enjoyed every minute of shedding the obligations of physical activity and letting loose. He didn’t have to count his calories or plan his day around trips to the gym. He could swim whenever he wanted to—for fun—without worrying about how fast he completed laps or whether his form was impeccable. Sure, he’d ballooned a bit after adopting a more sedentary lifestyle, but if that had been his fate all along, he didn’t see a reason to delay the inevitable. And a round ass had gotten him way more action than abs ever had.

“Your old man will get over it one day. Just keep riding that wave of academic success to spite him. I mean, you’re still getting straight A’s, right?” Webb asked.

“Straight A’s and sitting cozy on the Dean’s list. Not to mention all the scholarships throwing money my way,” Abel cackled. The wolf had a way with numbers, and his accounting major rarely challenged him. He doubted he’d get much joy out of an office job, but the pay would be good and the work easy. Maybe Dad would back off when he started wearing business casual and complaining about office politics, like Mom.

Abel's fur warmed up as they arrived at the docks. "Sun feels good," he said, stretching his arms.

"Don't stay out *too* long," Oscar jokingly warned. "Otherwise, you're bound to start puffing up like a marshmallow in this heat. And I don't want to have to clean up the gooey mess if you pop."

"Ha. Ha. Ha. It gets funnier every damn time you say it," Abel groaned.

Cody sprang up beside Abel and leaned in. "Want to know an easy way to turn the tables on Oscar?" the leopard asked in a conspiratorial whisper.

"I don't need your smack talk advice, *kitty*," Abel snipped.

Cody's snout scrunched up momentarily. "It's got nothing to do with smack talk. Just huff and puff and turn that smug wide load into a fox floatie."

Puffing up others *was* an easy task for Abel—and an enjoyable one. Watching Oscar inflate Cody earlier had put him in the mood for inflation, so it only felt right that the fox helped him with his pent-up desires. "It'd be fun to remind him who the real blimp is. But I'm doing this for me, not you," Abel said the second he saw Cody grin in vengeful triumph. He wouldn't let the cat consider him a minion.

Abel fell back and crept up on Oscar. He quietly drew in a massive, belly-swelling breath that got him looking like he'd gulped down a beach ball. His incredible lung power had been his greatest asset on the swim team. The rest of his teammates had him beat at speed, but no one could remain underwater longer than him. His round cheeks pressed into his snout, full of air ready to escape. When he was certain he had a powerful first breath ready, he tapped Oscar on the shoulder.

Oscar turned, and the fox's eyes immediately went to Abel's swollen middle. He glanced up and let out a nervous chuckle. "N-Need me to grab Cody?" Abel shook his head. "Well, damn."

Abel placed his paws on the fox's shoulders and leaned forward, pressing his lips to Oscar's. He blew with all his might, expelling his one huge breath directly into his frat brother. Oscar stiffened in his grasp. The fox's round belly blimped out like he'd swallowed a cartoon bomb, swelling to twice its normal size in seconds and leaving him dazed.

Abel swiftly blew another powerful breath into Oscar, jolting the fox into a t-pose as his body ballooned into a slight pear shape and his limbs puffed up. It'd only taken Abel two breaths to render Oscar helpless; the fox would be capable of little more than awkward wobbling if released. He cherished the power his lungs provided and vowed to turn Oscar into a ball in two more breaths just to prove he could.

With Oscar going nowhere fast, Abel could toy with the rotund fox all he wanted. "Well, well, well. A couple quick puffs, and you're already looking ready

for the Thanksgiving Day parade. It doesn't take much to blimp you up, does it, dude?"

"Just one of my many talents." Weak wisps of air hissed out of Oscar's muzzle as he joked.

"Keep up the good work," Abel said before slowly inhaling his next breath. His tail wagged as his belly swelled against Oscar's. The puff he unleashed on Oscar made the fox's middle balloon against the ground and partially envelop his limbs. But Abel wouldn't stop until his frat brother resembled an enormous beach ball more than a person, and he was certain a final, monumental breath would accomplish that.

Oscar didn't protest or whine as he watched Abel inhale again, accepting the inevitability of his complete inflation. Abel preferred his blimps fussier—Cody was a delight when he started hissing—but having someone realize there was no escaping the wolf's fearsome huffs and puffs brought its own special joy.

Creaks echoed all over Oscar as he ballooned from the fourth and final breath. His limbs and neck sunk into his taut spherical body, reducing his movement to mere wobbles. His muzzle was squished between two round cheeks, twisting through various degrees of embarrassment.

"What do you know? Looks like foxes swell in the heat faster than marshmallows." Abel grinned at his blimpy handiwork. "Though I'd watch out if I were you. I hear balloons sometimes pop when left out in the sun. Something about air expanding when it gets hot." He snickered at the flash of unease he spotted on Oscar's face.

Cody swooped in and circled Oscar, bearing the widest, smugest smile. The cat periodically flicked his helplessly bloated buddy with a finger, rocking him back and forth. "Who's living the big life now?" he cackled.

Oscar's eyes darted frantically, trying to track the mischievous cat. He opened his mouth, but only flustered babbling came out.

"What was that, Oscar?" Cody asked, holding a paw to his ear. "Sounds like those big balloon cheeks of yours are making it impossible to talk."

"Are not!" Oscar managed to respond.

"Still nonsense." Cody tapped Oscar's middle. "Nice and taut, like a real beach ball. Now let's make sure you float like one, too!" He placed his paws on Oscar's side and rolled him towards the dock, whistling a taunting tune the whole way.

"Careful...with...those...claws!" Oscar yelped as his world spun.

Cody brought Oscar to a stop at the end of the dock, then hip-checked the fox balloon into the lake. Oscar yelped and wobbled, floating in circles on

his back. Cody grabbed Oscar by his fluffy tail and pulled him close to the dock. "Permission to board, Blimp?"

"What? Wait, don't you dare, Spots! You're too grabby; I'll spring a leak!" Oscar flailed his puffy paws in a desperate attempt to float away from his feline friend and part-time tormentor. The *S.S. Fox Blimp* was not a nimble vessel, though, and his efforts were doomed from the start.

Cody let go of Oscar's tail and scrambled up the side of the bloated fox, perching atop the curved, creaking peak. He lay back with his paws behind his head and his tail flicking about. "Foxes really are nature's floaties," he snickered.

"Watch it up there," Oscar groaned. The fox continued flailing his paws, as if he'd magically obtain the reach to swat his friend off him. "You're heavier than you look."

Cody lazily rolled onto his stomach to face Oscar. "I'm light as a feather compared to you, so deal with it. If you complain anymore, I'll pump you into a daze so all you have to worry about is the pressure. How's that sound?"

"You're, uh, feeling lighter already. My mistake." The round fox's head bobbed in an assuring nod.

"Thought so." Cody rolled again, and Abel swore the leopard poked and prodded his wobbling floatie as much as he could in the process.

"Oscar gets to have all the fun," Webb lamented. "Wait, dude, can you puff me up next? I wanna go for a float."

Abel wasn't the least bit surprised the bunny wanted to bloat. "Sure. But if I do, I'm using you as a floatie." He didn't need to intimidate his friend but stood up straighter and flashed a wicked grin anyway. Habits were tough to kick.

"Hell yeah! Just make sure I'm big enough. It'd suck to sink because you're too fat or something." Webb commented on Abel's weight not in a teasing tone but as an unintentionally blunt matter of fact.

"Don't worry, bunny boy, I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll make you big and round."

Abel breathed in and out to prepare his lungs for the next pumping. Typically, the wolf could fill up to three people with his lung power alone before he needed to rest. One day, he'd manage even more, until he could leave a whole room bloated and creaking at his leisure.

Excited to create another blimp, Abel took the deepest, longest breath possible. The arctic wolf's belly swelled up like a balloon hooked to a pump. It was bigger than a beach ball after the first breath. He took a moment to rest, then sucked in more air, inflating his middle to the size of an exercise ball. The third breath got his hips, belly, and chest smoothing out into a bulging ball as

his body tried to adopt a rounder shape to accommodate the vast quantity of air he'd taken in.

If Abel had desired it, he could've inflated himself as large as Oscar with nothing other than his own breaths. It was a rare skill he knew Webb was jealous of but that he personally cared little for. Hazing on the swim team had guaranteed the wolf would never get an ounce of joy from being inflated. Upperclassmen on the team had a tradition of blimping up the new guys and tossing them around the pool for hours at a time. He'd narrowly avoided throwing up while serving as the oversized ball in a rough water polo game.

After quitting the team, he'd vowed to avoid letting others inflate him as best he could, with respectable success. He was the one puffing others up more often than not. But blimping up a bit was worth it to show off the overwhelming strength of his lungs.

Abel took two slow, deliberate steps forward to disguise the awkwardness of his swollen body. Webb awaited him, one foot rapidly tapping in anticipation. The rabbit was such an adorable sucker for inflation, a balloon trapped in the body of a frat boy. Leaning in proved a slight challenge, but Abel put his practice to good use, creaking only faintly as he pressed lips with Webb.

The bloated wolf exhaled like he was trying to put out a raging inferno. His billowing gust had nowhere to go but inside Webb, whose middle blimped out in every direction. Out of the corner of his eye, Abel watched his friend swell like a weather balloon, going from chubby to rotund in a flash. Abel kept blowing and blowing, resolved to expel all the air within him in a single, immense breath. His round belly swiftly shrunk down as Webb's expanded.

When Abel's lungs finally emptied, the results made him grin. Webb had grown into a wobbling ball of gray and white. His limbs were somewhat puffy but hadn't sunk into this body yet. He shifted from one foot to the other, bobbing left and right.

"Dude, that might be a record!" Webb giggled. He drummed on and squeezed his massive belly.

"I'm pretty sure I've gotten you too bloated to move before. Though maybe you were just too stoned to move. Who knows?" Abel shrugged and poked Webb's taut middle, making the rabbit sway. Balloons were so comically easy to toy with. "Time to finish pumping you up." He walked behind Webb and slapped his friend on the back with just enough force to roll him onto his swollen middle. He grabbed Webb, spun him around, and lifted him off the ground.

"Pump! Pump! Pump!" Webb chanted while pounding on his blimpy body.

Abel started inflating him again just to quiet him. He switched to quick and steady puffs, the same he used to blow up regular balloons. Precision was needed for the finishing touches to his living floatie. Too much air would send Webb babbling into a pressure daze, and he didn't want the rabbit to talk his ears off when he was supposed to be relaxing.

Webb's arms and legs gradually stiffened as Abel pumped him up. His body grew increasingly spherical, swelling and creaking and enveloping his limbs. Abel watched his friend transform from a rabbit into a ball with bunny ears and wiggling paws. He admittedly had a little more fun when his chosen balloon was unhappy with their situation—their furious wobbling was hilarious—but he still enjoyed pumping others up in general.

Abel squeezed the giant rabbit balloon between his paws, testing the pressure. There was a bit of give and some creaks. While Webb had a dopey grin and giggled sporadically, he didn't appear to be in a daze. Another round masterpiece completed.

"I'll never get why you crave this, dude," Abel told his friend. He walked onto the dock and headed towards the end. Cody and Oscar drifted in the gentle current of the lake, teasing each other.

"What's not to love about being a balloon?" Webb asked. "No obligations—just being really, really round."

"I usually just turn on music and crash on my bed when I don't want to do shit, but whatever," Abel said. Webb would always have his mysteries.

Abel held Webb over the water and dropped him. The inflated rabbit bounced like a beach ball on the surface, swaying from side to side as he found his balance. Abel pulled him in and steadied him. He wasn't as agile as Cody, but he had enough upper body strength to haul himself onto Webb without tipping the rabbit over and sliding into the lake. Webb creaked a lot more under Abel's weight than Oscar did under Cody's and briefly giggled gibberish before returning to his senses as he adjusted to the pressure of the fat wolf.

Abel lay on his back with his arms dangling over the curves of Webb's taut sides. The sun warmed his front while Webb's soft fur warmed his back. His balloon felt more comfortable than any innertube or lounge chair he'd ever used. "Damn, dude, you're cozy. I should use you as a floatie more often. Or an air mattress. All I'm missing is a beer."

"I'm blimped for your comfort," Webb said before breaking down into a snorting fit.

Somewhere near but out of sight, Oscar yelped, and Cody cursed. "Stop wiggling like that, or you're gonna capsizel!" Cody hissed. Abel heard the thumps of the leopard smacking his misbehaving floatie.

"Something bumped my underside!" Oscar said.

“You probably floated over some seaweed or whatever,” Cody dismissed his friend’s complaint.

“Plants would’ve tickled me, and this was a lot more substantial than a tickle.”

“Then it was a fish.”

“It was bigger than a fish!”

“Underwater log.”

“I’d know if it was a log.”

“Then you probably imagined it. Now settle down like a good floatie. I might try to brace myself with my claws if I start to slide off, and I don’t want to have to explain to Kevin why you got yourself popped,” Cody said.

“We need to get you kitten mittens so you’re less of a menace to innocent foxes,” Oscar said.

Webb giggled and rocked beneath Abel. “Woah, something poked me,” he said, with none of Oscar’s concern.

Abel leaned over the edge of Webb and stared at the water. He didn’t see a thing. No wiggling plants or drifting debris. He rolled onto his back. “It’s gotta be a fish. I bet it saw your tails twitching in the water and thought it’d found a snack.”

“My luscious tail isn’t a fishing hook. Those fish better not get any strange ideas and start nibbling on it,” Oscar pouted.

“Just nibble back if they do,” Cody suggested. The leopard persistently tapped on his floatie, drumming a faint beat. “I’ll roll you over, and you can go bobbing for lunch. Switching to a seafood diet will keep you from wrecking the party food.”

“You wouldn’t dare!” Oscar laughed, but there was a nervous air to it.

Abel did his best to zone the squabbling pair out and enjoy the lake. He closed his eyes and focused on the sound of the water and Webb’s infrequent chatter. Neither he nor anyone else on the water noticed the ripple heading past the dock to a sheltered spot by the shore.