

Belly's Up, Bum's Down

by

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The door to the tavern opened, and as soon as it did, all the tankards and glasses in the place were shaking.

“Belly’s up, bum’s down Gentlemen!” bellowed Buford Bull. “Move from the bar! Sit... all of you! I have important news from His Royal Highness’ very own pasture. Pay good attention; unless you want to be placed in a very unfavorable position.”

“Belly’s down and bum’s up!” they all yelled back jovially.

The large Bull smiled, and tossed his felt tricorne hat to the polished bar. Hanging his dark blue cloak next to the door, he turned back to the room. Out of habit, he traced a finger over each of his silver colored horns which were his pride and joy. Placing his hands behind his back he began to pace back and forth in front of the long bar. Those who’d been sitting there quickly took their bucket sized tankards and moved to the tables.

Buford was a Moo Colonel and in charge of the King’s Personal Guards. He was a Bull’s Bull and one to be reckoned with. He was a warrior, and very much respected by all of them. At the very least, he was the loudest Bull in the entire kingdom. This was the very reason he’d been appointed Lord High Town Crier and Personal News Bearer to the Queen. Had he a mind to, in the confined space of the pub he could easily have broken all of their ear drums.

When all was still again he picked up a tankard, and held it aloft. “To the King!” he mooed and dust fell from the rafters. There was an immediate responsive roar from the thirty some voices, as they all drank.

When it was still again, he told them seriously, “The King has sired another daughter!”

To this there was an immediate groan. There was no male heir as yet, though the old boy had been through twenty five wives, and all full blood Guernsey stock at that. Rumor was; he was a steer and his daughters were a contrivance.

“We will be going to war,” Buford told them when they were still again. “I know all of you will be wanting to settle your affairs; so you now have until tomorrow morning. Should you be sober enough to raise an erection, perhaps you will leave more males behind... all for the good of the Kingdom I’m sure.”

“Bollocks,” one of them cursed.

“What’s that, eh?” asked the Lord High Crier.

The culprit looked about guiltily before standing. “I don’t understand the wisdom of the King, sir. That’s all.”

“Wisdom indeed, Lieutenant.” He looked at the youth, his eyes narrowing slightly. “It is true wisdom; the King has a daughter and we go to war. It is a time honored tradition, and it keeps our neighbors trembling. Even the Red Robes have advised our sovereign a heifer is a sign from the heavens. Certainly the Old Bull can’t thrash his wife for having failed,” he chuckled, “So he picks a substitute and there by gains more lands for the Kingdom. That, my fine fellow, fills your feed trough.”

“So whose it to be this time?” asked another of the soldiers from the back of the room. “We busted up the Horses last time, and the Lions time before that... Gar but that bunch put up a bloody good fight they did. I still limp from the bite I got afore I could gore the bastard what had me by the leg.”

Buford picked up another tankard and drank half of it as he waited for the grumbling voices to fall off. Before he could tell them their Liege’s order of battle, however, the door to the pub burst open. A Cow, not much more than a teen, came in and hurried to his side. She pressed her lips to his ear with some urgency.

“Damn,” he whispered back; but as loud as he was, the secretive exclamations were heard clearly by everyone in the room. “Ya don’t say... my my my... this is incredible news. And the calf has silver horns? What a strange coincidence.”

The girl giggled, and then kissed him on the cheek as he patted her on the bottom. She then ducked back out the door through which she had come.

Turning to the expectant room, Buford again raised his tankard. “Queen’s Health lads; t’was a boy after all!” he bellowed. He drank the tankard straight down and banged its bottom upon the bar.

Everyone present drank with him and then cheered until they were hoarse. When they were done, he smiled, and told them as quietly as he was capable, “Go home lads... screw the missus. Then find your men and fall in at sunup. Tomorrow I’spect we’ll be preparing our defenses against an attack by all those we’ve beaten down. They figured the old boy to be passing soon and they were content to wait. With an heir born... well lads... all bets are off.”

“Fuk’d either way then,” someone offered, and they all laughed.

“Would seem so,” the Crier told them jovially, “Would seem so.”

Taking his cloak, he threw it back over his broad shoulders. Picking his hat up from the bar, he placed it back on his head. His silver horns stuck out handsomely from the sides.

With that, and not another word to the Bulls, he exited the establishment. As soon as he left, they could plainly hear his voice yelling out the news... "HEAR YEE HEAR YEE...THE QUEEN HAS HAD A SON! FANTASTIC NEWS... THE QUEEN HAS HAD A SON!"

The young Lieutenant looked at his table mate, the one who had received the Lion's bite. "Do you think he told the old girl 'bum's up, belly down'?" he asked softly.

This older bull snorted, and covered his mirth by sticking his face into his tankard. After a good drink, he gave sage advice to this youngster. "Best you keep thoughts like that to yourself, Calf, less'n you want to find yourself on the very point of the front line next battle, eh?" He clinked the youngster's tankard with his own. "Fine enough for me that we ain't going into another bloody war cuz a fuk'n heifer was born."

"But the King..." the youngster began to protest.

The older soldier cut him off. "Who the bloody hell do you think runs the kingdom, eh? The King is a doddering old fool. He's got a handmaid to wipe the drool from his mouth when he eats for God's sake. Learn a lesson here, mate. Belly's up, bum's down. Drink your fill and go home... make some babies of your own. There ain't going to be no war; and that's fine enough for me."