

Cornucopia Station

By: IndigoRho

“Docking with Cornucopia Station will commence in five minutes. Please proceed to your designated terminal in preparation for arrival.”

Kai's heart raced at the announcement, despite having heard similar ones for the last hour. He'd anticipated the day for months, but even as he saw the massive space station looming beyond the observation windows he couldn't believe it was real. The koi/eastern dragon hybrid had jumped at the opportunity to work at one of the most distant outposts in existence—even if potentially only for three months—just so he could experience being on the frontier. Getting there had taken a month, and he'd only be able to send simple messages back home rather than the video calls he was used to. Sure, he'd still be a baker aboard a station with modern amenities, but the adventure would be a welcome change of pace. Besides, he'd be living with his old college roommate again, Kyler, whom he hadn't seen in a couple years.

At long last the ship was secured and the doors opened, Kai filing out along with a crowd of other eager new arrivals. He scanned the terminal, trying to spot the orange-and-white rabbit who was supposed to greet him. Picking out an individual amongst the masses was difficult, though, and Kai was beginning to worry there'd been a miscommunication until a familiar voice shouted his name from behind.

“Kai, yo Kai! Over here!”

The koi dragon turned around, his grin shifting to a stunned look of confusion almost immediately. Before him *was* an orange-and-white rabbit, his ears held down by the green bandana he'd had forever, but the familiarities ended there. Kyler had always been lean, a fellow member of their college's baseball team and a decent track runner; this rabbit was the opposite. He wore a bright green jumpsuit that accentuated every curve of his body, from his bubble butt to his rotund middle. His cheeks were round and he sported a prominent double chin. Even back in college Kyler had avoided the Freshman fifteen, teasing friends who ended up chubbier from the excessive amount of beer and cheap campus food. Kai had been jealous of him then, having put on quite a bit of weight that he wasn't able to lose until after graduation.

Kai suddenly became aware of how rude his silence and staring must have been, and did his best to recover. “D-dude, it's great to see you!”

Kyler swiftly embraced his smaller friend in a warm bear hug, the koi dragon blushing as he felt himself sink into the doughy gut. “It's been too long!”

“Y-yeah,” Kai managed, still somewhat speechless. His attempts to act casual failed miserably, and his friend quickly recognized the surprise.

“Ha! I'd totally forgotten how different I must look!” Kyler laughed, his gut jiggling as he did so. “Why don't you follow me to our quarters, I'll catch you up on things.”

The koi dragon nodded in response, grabbing his suitcase and heading after his waddling friend.

“Cornucopia Station has been wonderful to me, but I guess my metabolism took a hike the moment I moved here!” Kyler said. “Doctor mentioned something about the way our bodies handle prolonged periods of artificial gravity I think. Honestly after he gave me a clean bill of health I didn't really worry too much about my size.”

“That, uh, that makes sense.” Kai found his gaze drifting constantly to the rabbit's wobbling belly, still having trouble accepting how fat he'd become. “I guess I don't have to worry about how the food tastes out here at least.”

The mere mention of food seemed to brighten Kyler's mood even further. “It's crazy good, trust me! Because the station oversees all the orbital farms and planetside fisheries we've got access to *everything*. Food replicators are unlimited use, and the station itself is filled with restaurants and bakeries all taking advantage of the local ingredients.”

“The replicators are seriously unlimited use?” Kyler's considerable gains were becoming more and more understandable.

“Yep! Being able to eat whatever you want, whenever you want without worrying about the cost is amazing.” There was genuine passion in Kyler's voice. “And these are pretty good quality units, too. It honestly doesn't taste like the usual automated fare back home.”

While Kai had known Cornucopia Station provided a significant percentage of food for the Home Sector, he hadn't realized the station itself would benefit as well. “I could...I could get used to that. So are the restaurants just for when you want something with a personal touch?”

Kyler nodded. “That and socializing. Quarters are small and not great for hosting, so if you're getting together with everyone it usually involves eating out.”

As they continued walking Kai began noticing something peculiar. The further away they got from the arrival terminal the...heftier people seemed to be. No matter the species, gender, or apparent role on the station, everyone was sporting a gut of some sort. Many were about as heavy as Kyler, and a few slightly less so, but overall Kai felt like he was nearly a hundred pounds lighter than even the smallest Cornucopian. To his great surprise some were even larger than Kyler, including a hyena with a bright pink mohawk who must have been twice as wide as his friend. Such widespread obesity was unreal to Kai. For a moment he imagined himself that fat, with a round gut that wobbled at the slightest movement; the ridiculous thought actually made him blush.

For the remainder of their journey Kyler chatted about his office job, food, the recreational facilities on the station, more food, the best places to view the ocean world below, and most of all: food. Apparently unlimited options had expanded his palette as much as his waistline, and he was eager for Kai to sample a bounty of new dishes. Admittedly they all sounded good to the koi dragon, though he was privately adamant about keeping an eye on his weight, hoping to avoid taking back pudge as his main souvenir once the three months were over.

Kyler's quarters were as cozy as he'd said, dominated by a main room that could rearrange to serve as a kitchen, dining room, or living room. There was a small bedroom of course, but also a tiny office where Kai would be staying. As soon as they'd entered Kyler was hovering in front of the food replicator, producing a few bowls of snacks and a couple drinks, both of which Kai politely accepted. For hours the two friends just sat and talked, making up for lost time and reminiscing about college, all the while grazing on food. Kai was so caught up in the moment he didn't realize how often Kyler was replacing snacks, or even how much he himself was overeating.

Only after a string of unexpected yawns did Kai notice he was rather stuffed. He felt heavy, and the faintest curve had appeared on his normally flat stomach. Kai *should* have been embarrassed by his unusual gluttony, but Kyler's significantly greater girth and gorging actually encouraged him to shrug it off. After all, pigging out once wasn't going to hurt him, and he was confident in his abilities to slim down if the need arose. The koi dragon would repeat that claim with decreasing seriousness over the weeks that followed.

At first, Kai was a stranger on Cornucopia Station. He solved the problem by being relentlessly social, accepting practical every offer to eat out given to him by coworkers and friends of Kyler. Pasta, seafood, burgers, pizza...they all had favorites they insisted the koi dragon try, and out of respect he forced himself to sample everything offered. Kai would always order a modest meal for himself, but inevitably plates and bowls would be pushed his way, followed by a sincere declaration that “he *needed* to try this”. They were only small mouthfuls, but they added up quickly, and when it came time for dessert Kai would be almost painfully stuffed and full of regret. Unfortunately a little peer pressure was all it took for him to also indulge in dessert after.

Kai wasn't safe from overeating at work, either. The bakery he was at turned out to be the largest and most popular on the entire station, creating mountains of fresh bread, donuts, and pastries each day. His palette was praised so much he became the unofficial taste-tester, which ensured he was constantly snacking on treats throughout his shifts. He couldn't bring himself to turn down their

requests for help, regardless of how full he was, and on most days found himself groaning as he made his way home.

As the days passed a rather gluttonous routine set in, and the impact on his waistline was immediate. The slight curve that once only showed up after meals became permanent, then grew. After only a week he realized he looked and felt slightly softer. Kai promised himself he'd start visiting the gym, but his schedule was so busy from work and hangouts he never found the time, only managing some light jogging that did nothing to counter his ridiculously increased caloric intake. Every pound he gained strengthened his appetite a little more, allowing him to take a few extra bites at dinner or lounging with Kyler in their quarters.

Though Kai recognized what was happening, he didn't consider it much of a priority, too focused on impressing his superiors at work so he'd get to remain on Cornucopia Station. As a result, the gains escalated. After four weeks he'd gained fifteen pounds, putting him at a solid one hundred forty-five total; chubby, but still half the size of the vast majority of his peers. However, by the second month his passive gluttony had truly kicked in, the koi dragon putting on twenty more pounds. His last month had similar results. Kai's initial reluctance to indulge gradually faded, in part thanks to playful encouragement from new friends and the confidence no one would be in a position to mock him for getting a bit flabby. He still promised himself any added weight would be temporary.

Two weeks before his trial period was to end, Kai got the wonderful news he was being kept on for a full year contract, earning the right to his own personal quarters in due time. A celebration was quickly organized at the one buffet Kai hadn't been to yet, with Kyler insisting on paying—and ordering—his friend's whole meal, refusing to take no for an answer. When the day finally arrived Kai found himself ushered to the center of their cozy booth and simply told to sit back and relax. He was slightly worried Kyler might get carried away, but his mood was so good he decided he could enjoy a cheat day.

Of course the rabbit returned with two overfilled plates, sliding both right in front of Kai and eagerly explaining just how amazing each dish was. While Kai doubted he'd be able to finish everything he'd been brought, his hunger sure tempted him to take on the challenge. The rest of his friends piled into the booth, the group packed in so tight bellies and thighs were pressed against each other. The koi dragon ended up with two doughy armrests thanks to the hefty duo flanking him, though he did his best to resist using them as such; he'd admittedly been enjoying just how soft all his new friends felt, but didn't feel appropriate being open about it.

Amidst the distracting conversations Kai's plates were steadily emptying, the koi dragon grazing without even really realizing just how much he was eating. His chubby belly rounded out more from the bounty of pastas, sliders, chicken, and fries, all washed down with an endless stream of soda that was refilled before it ever reached half-empty. Anything from the buffet that hadn't been on his initial plates was eventually slid to him—as usual—and Kai maintained a delighted grin on his face thanks to the amazing taste of the food.

A chocolate ice-cream cake was brought out for dessert, the biggest slice reserved for Kai. Despite being thoroughly full at that point he dutifully dug in, not wishing to waste his companion's generosity. His dedication received teasing cheers from the others. Little-by-little he whittled away at the cake, not letting a single crumb or smear of icing escape, continuing even when he felt on the verge of bursting. After considerable effort he took the last bite, practically sinking into the seat cushion as he leaned back, groaning faintly. Kyler gave his taut middle a playful rub, congratulating the koi dragon on finally finding his appetite. Too stuffed to talk, Kai could only think of how wonderful life on Cornucopia Station was going to be...and how fattening.