

## Station Welcoming Committee

By: IndigoRho

“Well what about him? He looks tasty enough,” Beckham said, pointing towards a plump deer across the way.

The large polar bear was hanging out at the space station's terminal with his friend and frequent accomplice, an even larger boar named Blane. Eating oblivious travelers and selling anything of value they belched up was the closest thing to a job they had—at least aside from gifting people at pool. Their considerable girth and insatiable appetites made them rather successful at their “jobs”.

“I'd be hungry again before dinner if I ate a runt like that,” Blane scoffed. “Besides, antlers are such a pain to deal with. If you don't snap them off properly the nubs can scratch your throat on the way down.”

“Yeah, but antlers sell well. People love dumb trinkets like that,” Beckham shrugged.

“Well if you want the cash that badly then *you* can eat him,” Blane said. Suddenly the hippo's eyes lit up and he nodded at something that'd caught his attention. “Now *he* looks filling enough to be worth my time.”

Beckham followed his friend's gaze, settling on an orange-striped zebra who'd just gotten off a transport. He was certainly doughy, probably close to three hundred pounds if Beckham had to guess. He wore a white bodysuit beneath a white jacket that looked a size too small at least. More of a fashion statement than practical wear. Though Beckham couldn't deny how appetizing the zebra looked, he also knew perfectly well the real reason Blane was eying him up.

“Oh you're so predictable dude! When was the last time you ate someone who *wasn't* wearing glasses?” Beckham teased.

Blane blushed and scowled. “Not my fault there's so many nerds visiting the station lately! And glasses make good trophies anyway!”

“Sure, sure,” Beckham laughed. “Just remind me to stick with contacts if my sight goes bad. If I showed up with glasses I'd be half-way down your throat before I could say hello.”

“You know what, I've got a meal to snag. I'll meet ya back here once I've got that zebra settled into his new home.” Blane left in a huff.

The boar wore a somewhat poorly-fitting uniform meant to pass as official while not getting him in trouble with the actual station authorities. Visitors to the station didn't know any better, and most would blindly follow Blane down secluded corridors under the assumption something needed to be checked on. Once away from the crowds they'd inevitably be gobbled up, Blane patting his bulging belly as he waddled home. If anyone doubted the ruse he'd simply use his brute strength to put an end to questions. The zebra would surely be a pushover.

“Excuse me sir, would you kindly follow me?”

The zebra turned to have a look at the unexpected arrival, a confused look on his face. “Something wrong?”

“Oh, nothing major I assure you. Just a little issue with your luggage that should be easy to clear up.”

The zebra looked over Blane again, then gave a friendly smile. “Well alright, lead the way.”

Blane had to resist snickering as he directed his lunch to a quiet corridor lined mainly with storage rooms. There were times when he couldn't believe how easy it was to trick someone into his stomach, but he wasn't about to complain. If food wasn't smart enough to avoid becoming food than that wasn't his problem.

Chatter was kept to a minimum—less likely for Blane to slip up and create suspicion that way. He couldn't keep his stomach quiet, though, its eager rumblings loud and practically impossible to ignore.

“Missed lunch?” the zebra asked with a chuckle.

Blane grinned wide, realizing they'd traveled far enough for there to be no interruptions. "Oh no, I was just about to treat myself actually. Been a while since I've indulged on something striped."

In a flash Blane struck the zebra right in the gut with a fist, which should have sent him sprawling. Instead his fist just sunk right in as if his intended prey's middle was quicksand.

"W-What the hell!" Blane said as he tried to retrieve his fist. Pulling only managed to distend the zebra's gut, which refused to let go.

"I was worried I'd have to waste a lot of time looking for a post-flight meal, so it really was my lucky day when you showed up." The zebra was the one smiling now. "Pork is a favorite, and I doubt there's any place else on the station I could get some as fat and juicy as you are."

Blane felt his fist sinking in deeper, and pulling at it with his free hoof only led to it getting trapped as well. He saw the zebra's hide and clothes gaining a noticeable sheen. They were jiggling all over as he struggled, too, like they weren't solid.

"Let me go, let me go!" Blane demanded in a panic.

"Sorry, gotta sate this hunger. I'm sure you understand."

Suddenly the zebra crashed over Blane like a tidal wave, becoming pure goo as he enveloped the terrified boar. Blane stumbled backwards into the wall as he fought against the goop weighing him down. His arms and face pushed at the mass, which stretched with ease. Slowly the goo tightened around Blane's body, curling and condensing him, until there was just an orange-striped mound wobbling wildly on the floor. The shouts from within were growing more and more muffled, the jiggling weaker. Eventually they ceased completely.

Once Blane had quieted, the mound began to re-form. It rose upwards, taking on the shape of a zebra. Gradually detail returned to the zebra. Clothing appeared, along with eyes and a broad smile. The zebra's mane went from a rubbery mass to individual hairs. A small depiction of Blane's face appeared on the belly of his bodysuit, along with text reading: "stored".

Though plainly recognizable as the zebra from before, they were also noticeably fatter, now looking close to three hundred and fifty pounds. Aside from the picture there wasn't a single trace of Blane, no belly bulge or bounce. He'd been completely absorbed.

The zebra—Rho—couldn't help but laugh. "Being delectable is a great way to lure in fat, delicious wannabe preds~"

Rho gave his rotund gut a happy slap, watching it jiggle wildly before his body returned to its normal, solid state. Thanks to his suit he could transform into goo on a whim, which allowed him to easily overwhelm and digest large prey. No having to worry about being immobilized or lugging around a massive squirming middle. No accidentally getting stuck in doorways or attracting unwanted attention. Eating others wasn't rare, but lots of people tended to make a fuss about it—especially if they were the one getting swallowed whole.

*Buh-urrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrp.*

Blane's fake uniform came flying out of Rho's mouth along with the belch, hitting the floor with a wet smack.

"The local cuisine is already proving to be quite fattening. I may have to show a bit of restraint this vacation, otherwise I'll end up doubling in size and too fat for the ship!" Rho laughed, his gut shaking as he did. "Course the best part about vacation is adding to my collection."

Rho gave the picture of Blane on his middle a gentle tap, causing it to disappear. As he waddled off he burped out the boar's pants, and soon after both of his boots. The strange trail would simply be cleaned up and discarded later, Blane becoming just another anonymous meal...