

Berry Breakdown

By: IndigoRho

August stretched as he left the bridge of the freighter *Zephyr*. The slim gray lion was thankful for a break now that the ship was docked at station, and already planning what he would do for the few days they were there. Behind him was the ship's captain and August's boyfriend, Rho. Rho was twice August's size, and wore a gray bodysuit that contrasted with August's much shinier silver one.

"You really do look great in silver, hon," Rho said.

The lion blushed and bit his lip. Normally he wore a yellow bodysuit, but unexpected...circumstances had necessitated a wardrobe change. Still, the color was growing on him.

"Maybe I'll keep a couple silver ones—*maybe*."

"Well if you had another blueberry pie or two you wouldn't have to get rid of them at all~" Rho said with an unseen grin.

August hated how red his face had become. "Oh no no no, I'm taking an indefinite hiatus from pies! You can have them instead and enjoy the fancy silver suit yourself!"

There was a loud groan as the door to the cargo bay failed to open automatically. August waited a few seconds before cautiously reaching for the panel. With a click the door began to slide open, but August's paw shot away from the panel as a shock surged through him. Holographic displays briefly flickered on and off across his bodysuit, though the lion was too distracted from the discomfort of the jolt to notice.

"Can we *please* get that dumb door fixed while we're here?" August asked with a frown. "I swear the damn thing jolts me once a week at least."

"Oh it's not *that* bad. And getting the food replicator checked on seems like a higher priority to me—just so we don't have anymore accidents."

August scowled and blushed simultaneously, mouth opening as if to respond but quickly closing again afterward. Instead he merely grumbled under his breath as he entered the cargo bay.

Following right behind, Rho's attention was drawn to an odd blue stain on August's left paw. The longer he stared the bluer the stain became, until Rho realized the lion's entire paw was blue—and so was the other. He recognized almost immediately what was happening, but neglected to inform his boyfriend. It'd be funner letting him find out on his own.

"I still don't understand how a food replicator could possibly add the contents of the ship's botanical database to its own," August said, oblivious to the deep shade of blue his mane and face had become.

"Well to be fair *you're* the one who requested a blueberry pie with a berry you didn't recognize. And you're also the one who ate in a single sitting and passed out in the mess hall." Rho smiled, reminiscing. "I was rather surprised to find a snoozing lion berry wobbling in the room!"

August was completely blue when he turned to face Rho. His flat middle had begun to swell. "It's not my fault I haven't memorized every volatile berry in the galaxy! And of course I got stuck with the one that takes months to fully treat. If it wasn't for my suppressant suit I'd be a giant berry twenty-four seven thanks to how fast the juice is produced!"

As August gestured in frustration he froze, finally spotting his blue paws. His gaze reluctantly drifted down to his stomach—and the growing pot belly he was sporting.

"Damn it Rho why didn't you tell me!" August growled, frantically poking at his bodysuit. There was some static of a screen, but nothing permanent. "Ugh, the shock must have fried it! I told you we needed to fix the door!"

Steady sloshes echoed out from the lion's middle as he grew rounder and rounder, his bodysuit thankfully stretching dutifully. Without the suit's specialized systems activated there was no way to halt or even slow down the juice. August was simply doomed to continue swelling until he was round and ripe.

“Wow hon, you're inflating just like a balloon! I knew you were volatile, but this *has* to be a record of some sort.” Rho was already prodding the lion's large belly, delighted to hear muffled splashes.

August's face was purple from blushing. His cheeks were puffing up as much as his body, which had taken on a spherical shape. Moving was basically impossible as his arms and legs were rapidly enveloped. The strong taste of blueberry filled his mouth. Though the bodysuit covered most of him, August could still see his paws gaining a noticeable sheen, a trademark of his particular affliction. In the end he truly would resemble an oversized blueberry.

“This—this isn't fun when you're not in control!” August whined, hide creaking all around him as he swelled. His paws were just barley jutting out from his body, his tail a flicking tuft. His head was starting to sink in.

“Well it's certainly fun for me,” Rho snickered as he pressed a hoof against August's taut side. The slight spike in pressure made the lion moan and blush—then glare. “We could always upgrade the ship to be berry-friendly so you could stay like this forever~”

“You can't fly the ship with a berry for a pilot so don't even think about it!” It sounded closer to begging than a threat. “Now could you please roll me over to the tailor so I can get this suit fixed and properly juiced?”

Rho pretended to ponder the request for a tense minute before nodding. “Sure, but I've got a much more leisurely way to move you around, berry boy.”

The zebra walked out of August's limited line of sight. He wobbled in place nervously, eyes widening as he heard some kind of machine starting up. Suddenly a pair of clamps came into view on either side of him. They gently pressed into the berry, prompting squirms and wincing as they gained a firm grip. August felt his immense body lifted off the ground, juice sloshing about in protest.

“You can't use the hoverlift, I'm not a damn crate Rho!”

“Well you're wider than most of the crates we transport, but aside from that it seems to work perfectly fine,” Rho said. “Crowds are more likely to part if I'm driving this, too. Reduces the chance I'll bump into anything pointy and make you go boom~”

Once again all August could do was grumble.

The journey through the station involved far more gawking and laughing than August would have liked. He was impossible to miss, a big blueberry held up by a distressingly noisy hoverlift and paraded down corridors. August felt like produce being delivered fresh to the store, ready to be rolled onto the shelf and sold. At least no one was able to poke or tease him without risking getting run over.

Every stop caused August's juices to splash with a loud *swisssssssh* that made him blush. Station lights were reflecting off his face just as much as his suit, turning him into a beacon.

The specialty tailor shop wasn't too far from the docks, but to August the trip felt like an embarrassing eternity.

A tall, lean deer looked up from the counter as August was hauled into his shop and lowered. He appeared disappointed, but not particularly surprised. “Looking for a new suit? Or perhaps repairs on your existing one?”

Rho slid out of the hoverlift and walked up to the counter. “The berry here managed to short circuit his suit. I told him he looks perfectly fine but I guess he prefers being mobile for *some* reason.”

Without even leaving the counter the deer lifted up an arm and started tapping away at a computer on his wrist. The flickering holographic screens returned all across August's immense body.

“Hmm, pretty substantial damage. Might need to wipe and reinstall a lot of key programs once the hardware's been repaired,” the deer muttered. “I could probably have him all fixed by morning, though.”

“Perfect! Well August, have fun—and behave yourself!” Rho gave his boyfriend a pat goodbye before returning to the hoverlift and backing away.

“W-Wait, don't just drop me off like merchandise!” August yelled, paws flailing. “Only the suit

needs to be fixed, I can still be juiced while that's going on!"

The lion's pleas were ignored both by his boyfriend and the tailor, who was already pulling out his tools. "Alright sir, if you'd please remain as still as possible to reduce the chances of bursting. I'd prefer not to deal with cleaning up after a juice flood."

August let out a pitiful whine. It was going to be a very, very long night...