

Columbia State 35: Zeke's Shortcut

By: IndigoRho

Zeke breathed a sigh of relief amidst labored panting. The obese otter was half-way through one of his longer treks between classes, and was taking a quick break on a convenient bench to catch his breath and ready himself mentally for the next leg of his journey. As a hefty student with a timid personality, Zeke was especially concerned with being targeted by the countless preds on the campus of Columbia State University, a fear that tightly effected everything he did. He never lingered in classrooms once the bell rang, always rushed from one building to another, and avoided the more densely traveled paths like the plague. While many would've considered his precautions paranoia, Zeke was convinced they were the only reason he wasn't just another anonymous layer of pudge on a peer. Besides, Zeke had discovered quite a few quiet, almost-relaxing corners on campus thanks to his route planning, including the winding tree-lined corridor between the library and a couple old gyms he was resting at now.

For a moment, Zeke let himself forget about the stresses of school and closed his eyes, enjoying the light breeze and echoing chirps of birds. A rare lapse in his guard, and a costly one.

"Damn, it really is my lucky day."

The unexpected voice caused Zeke to jolt back to his senses, his eyes snapping open as he squeaked in surprise. A seal was standing right in front of him, grinning. He was large—though not as fat as Zeke—with a round gut expertly contained behind a purple and gold shirt marked only by the initials of the University. The seal's belly expanded and contracted with every breath, and the shirt seemed to follow suit. There was no doubt in Zeke's mind that the stranger was wearing expandex clothing, and the only people who bothered to pay for that were preds.

Zeke's fight or flight instincts kicked in, and the otter made a frantic attempt to slide off the bench and flee. Unfortunately, the seal had expected such a move, lurching forwards and using the weight of his gut to pin Zeke against the bench. He loomed over his squirming prey, tightly grabbing Zeke's wrists and holding them in place, the grin on his face growing.

"It's been months since I stuffed myself *really* well, and damn if you aren't making my mouth water!" The seal taunted. Nick had been planning on a relaxing hunt after his boring study session was over, but fate had practically handed him a delicious-looking meal on a silver platter.

"N-no, please don't--"

Zeke's pleas were cut short as the seal pulled him from the bench and hurled him snout-first into the pavement below. He let out a staggered cry on impact, pain throbbing from his knees, elbows, and palms. A weak attempt to stand ended with him slipping almost right away, scraping his arms even worse in the process.

"Oh man, this is just stupidly easy!" Nick knelt down hard across the otter's legs to hinder escape, before pulling off Zeke's backpack almost spitefully rough and tossing it aside. He was delighted when a closer look confirmed his suspicions of his prey's shirt being normal fabric. With a flipper pressed against the back of Zeke's head, Nick grabbed the otter's shirt collar and tugged enough to cause a small rip, then a large tear. As Zeke sobbed and squirmed Nick shredded his shirt, throwing it away to expose the bulk of his meal's savory flab. The sneakers and socks were removed with similar harshness, though Nick ignored the shorts out of laziness, barely bothering to snag Zeke's wallet, phone, and keys. Those were at least useful for getting the seal easy spending money, along with tracking down potential future prey.

"P-please...please let me..." Zeke muttered in tears.

His body stung all over, and every twitch of resistance seemed to provoke vicious retaliation from the seal attacking him. He'd had numerous close calls with preds over the years, lots of threats and tastings, even a rare grab at times, but Zeke had never been beaten like this before. While no part of him had been gulped up yet, the otter was already convinced he was dead. Maybe his fate had been

inevitable. His mind raced as he wondered how long it would take for his friends and family to realize he'd been eaten, if the pred would alert them via cruel texts with his own phone, or if they wouldn't know for certain until his bones were unceremoniously dropped off at a clinic. The thoughts alone were enough to nearly shut Zeke down.

With lunch prepped, Nick casually moved around till he was crouching behind Zeke, grabbing the otter's ankles and pulling them straight into his eager mouth. The feeling of saliva and hot breath hitting his footpaws led to a renewed burst of panic in Zeke, who meekly tried crawling away from Nick. He was far too weak, though. Nick gulped swiftly, dragging Zeke across the course pathway and into his gullet, overjoyed by how well he was overwhelming his prey. His last few meals hadn't been pushovers, fighting tooth and nail till the very end and very nearly turning the tables on him at times. He didn't mind the adrenaline rush from those close calls, but the bruises and cuts that followed were obnoxious. Besides, he still needed to study at least a *little* bit once lunch was over.

Inch by inch Zeke was swallowed up by Nick, the otter crying, begging, and struggling the whole time. He'd never heard of a pred showing mercy half-way through a meal, and random bystanders rescuing prey was almost unheard of on campus, but his instincts refused to let him give up completely. His toes pushing into the seal's stomach and into a pool of stagnant digestive juices didn't help, either.

As Nick's lips passed over the otter's waistline, he grabbed a hold of Zeke's lovehandles and squeezed, delighting in the feel of the soft pudge as much as his prey's horrified squeaks. His gut was already squirming and stretching, growing to contain the overindulgent meal Nick was having, and the thought of Zeke's massive belly stuffed in there only made the seal's mouth water more. He ran his tongue across Zeke's middle in between every swallow, slathering it in saliva before it was even pulled into his throat. The otter's arms were still eluding him, Zeke desperately trying to crawl out of the pred with what little strength he had left. Any progress was swiftly undone by even the smallest swallow, though.

Within minutes Zeke's head and forearms were all that remained exposed to the outside world, the rest of him a giant bulge in Nick's belly. He could no longer muster the will to plea, only cry, as a strong gulp sucked his head into Nick's mouth, and a second into the constricting gullet. His twitching paws lingered momentarily, before being slurped up themselves. Nick's gut swelled out a final time as the last of his lunch was emptied into his cavernous stomach. Despite Zeke's pitiful fight, eating him had still been somewhat exhausting, and Nick had to resist passing out atop his stuffed belly, which wobbled and lurched constantly.

Nick gently rubbed the sides of his bulging gut, which his shirt had easily stretched to cover. His meal's struggles were generally weak and inconsistent, though he'd expected as much with how rough he'd treated the otter. While squirms *could* be a nice finale to a successful hunt, they could also upset a pred's stomach just enough to lead to an escape, something Nick understandably wanted to avoid.

"Seriously dude, you couldn't wait a few hours more to gorge? I picked this place to meet-up to prevent you from sneaking in a snack."

Nick twitched momentarily at the unexpected voice, but calmed down once he finally recognized it. "Kyler, you would've done the same damn thing in my place. The guy was too tasty looking to resist!"

An orange-and-white rabbit walked up to the grounded seal, eyes rolling as he watched the movement in Nick's bloated belly. "Sure. So delicious you'd risk getting eaten by Professor Lang if you fail this test? Kind of hard for us to study when you're fucking immobile!"

"Oh my God you're such a Freshman. Missing one measly study session won't make you fail class," Nick grumbled, a short belch escaping his lips. "This is my second time taking that stupid class, Lang's all bark and no bite. He'll just eat someone pissing him off and hope it motivates everyone else."

"Well I still don't want to fail the class!"

“Fine, fine. I can totally still waddle to the library, I just need a couple minutes to get back up and adjust while lunch settles in.” Nick braced his knees and flippers on the pavement and tried standing, though the weight of the otter in his stomach was far more debilitating than he'd expected. “Ok, maybe like five minutes. Hey, do me a favor and grab lunch's phone for me. I'm thinking about updating all his profiles with a pic of my gut.”

Kyler wasn't in the mood to argue further with the seal. While Nick and Kyler were both in rival fraternities, no one else in class had been willing to study with them for fear of being eaten. Of course, the fact that Nick *had* actually eaten his first study partner did wonders to legitimize those concerns, ensuring the voracious duo could only rely on themselves.

Picking up the discarded phone, Kyler had the strangest feeling he'd seen the case before, though he brushed the thought away quickly. After all, cases weren't exactly unique. Like the vast majority of phones, the one belonging to Nick's mystery meal didn't have a lock screen—few wanted to pay the absurd fees required for them—and Kyler had access at the swipe of his paw. He was about to click on the camera when curiosity got the better of him, and the rabbit decided to peek at the phone's gallery first.

Nothing caught Kyler's eye immediately, just a few shots of campus, some food, a couple blurry pics of a hyena with a pink mohawk. Then he spotted one of two otters that looked vaguely familiar. Focusing in, Kyler confirmed his suspicions, recognizing the pair as his friend Xander, along with Xander's older brother Xavier. Frantically swiping through the next few photos on the phone, Kyler saw more of the two hanging out, until finally he came across what must have been an accidental selfie taken by the phone's owner. The round face and striking resemblance to Xander were unmistakable: Zeke.

“Fuck. Nick who'd you eat!” Kyler demanded, his heart racing.

Nick was still trying in vain to overcome the fidgeting mass of his gut. “Meals don't get names. He was just some fat otter.”

“Shit shit shit, that fat otter is my friend's brother you ass, let him out!” Kyler dropped the phone and rushed to Nick's side, pressing his paws on the seal's gut to feel for movement. The faint squirms were somewhat reassuring.

“Bullshit! You just want me to throw him up so you can have your dumb study session!” Nick growled, trying to swat away Kyler's paw.

“I'm not fucking around! That phone is Zeke's, I'm not letting you digest him!”

Nick still wasn't convinced, and wasn't about to give up the amazing meal he'd stumbled upon. “I don't give a shit who he is, he was dumb enough to get eaten so he's seal flab now!” Nick let out a long, messy belch, purging his stomach of air in order to reinforce his position.

Kyler's mind was a jumble. He didn't know Zeke very well, but the thought of just letting the brother of one of his closest friends die in front of him was too much to bear. The rabbit knew he needed to free Zeke somehow.

With little forethought, Kyler drove his elbow down on Nick's head, scrambling the seal's mind and nearly knocking him out. Kyler forced open the stunned pred's jaws and shoved his paw into the moist mouth, frantically attempting to provoke gagging in whatever way he thought possible. Purely by luck he managed to press on a spot that made Nick lurch, and kept pressing until the seal began dry heaving aggressively.

Zeke, who'd barely been conscious after the stomach was drained of air, suddenly felt his head sucked back up into Nick's gullet. Breathing was even more difficult in the tight, fleshy tube, sending Zeke into a panic as heave after heave pulled him upwards, until the fresh air of the outside world finally reached his lungs again. He gasped for breath as Nick slowly threw him back up, coughing violently and squinting in the harsh light of day. Kyler grabbed the heavy otter's chest and helped pull him out completely to ensure Nick didn't gulp him back down on instinct. Nick was still in a daze after the attack, in too much pain to be furious at the rabbit yet.

Kyler quickly checked on Zeke to make sure he was breathing and not visibly marred by stomach acids, before turning again towards Nick. Assaulting the seal and forcing him to release Zeke would have consequences. Nick would want revenge, either by hunting Zeke down later or simply targeting Kyler, maybe both. In most situations the simple solution would be to eat the seal then and there. However, fraternity politics made that equally as dangerous. The vore-centric frats on campus were very serious about their members leaving each other alone whenever possible, and knowingly or maliciously eating someone from an opposing frat could easily lead to the culprit being consumed as punishment. Another Tau Tau Psi brother had already been dealt with a couple months before for feasting on members of Nick's frat, so even if Kyler explained his reasons there was a chance he'd suffer the same fate just to ensure vengeance feedings didn't break out.

After a moment of pained thought, Kyler made his decision. A second blow to Nick's head knocked the seal unconscious for good, and Kyler wasted little time in stuffing his former study partner's head into his mouth. He didn't linger to taste Nick's blubber or enjoy the live meal like he usually did, only eager to swallow him before anyone stumbled upon the scene. Nick didn't struggle or plead or squirm, his entire body limp as it was hastily gulped up. Kyler groaned as his gut ballooned out from the overweight meal, one of the largest he'd ever eaten, and he worried for a moment just how difficult it would be for him to waddle back to the frat afterward. He reluctantly kept the seal's tasteless sneakers on—not wanting to leave behind potential evidence—cringing as the worn soles passed through his mouth and down his throat.

Kyler huffed and belched as his risky meal settled in. He'd broken one of the most fundamental rules of the fraternity, but he never would've forgiven himself if he hadn't freed Zeke. Covering his tracks was essential now, though. He'd have to tell Zeke to lie a little, claim his attacker was a different species and definitely not part of any frat, that he'd been ambushed somewhere else and Kyler had coincidentally stumbled upon them. Anything of Nick's he threw up later he'd hide and toss in a dumpster blocks away from frat row, and once digestion was complete and the seal reduced to a pile of bones, Kyler would drop them off at a clinic on the other side of the city. The chances of someone thoroughly investigating Nick's consumption were slim, but Kyler wanted to be careful.

Kyler sighed. The next few days were going to be far more stressful than he'd expected.

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From a window of the neighboring library, hidden by the glaring sun and a budding tree, a gryphon grinned as he continued recording the scene below with his phone. Derek had wandered to the library on a simple whim, and had considered the trip a success after cornering an unobservant Freshman and gobbling him up with ease. While teasing his still squirming gut he'd spotted Nick eating Zeke in the pathway outside, and recorded the entire meal with glee, knowing full and well who the victim was. Kyler showing up had only peaked his interest, though the rabbit freeing Zeke was disappointing. Seeing Kyler start to swallow Nick, though, changed everything.

“Damn, today just keeps getting better and better,” Derek smirked, giving his belly a hard pat and provoking whimpers from the prey within. “Hope you're having fun in there, tasty, cause I'm thinking of popping digestion inhibitors the rest of the afternoon.”