

## Puffing Up the Captain

By: IndigoRho

Being the most junior ensign on a spaceship was often far from ideal, and no one knew that better than Has. The small geoffroy's cat felt like he was always cleaning, moving, or filing something. He'd signed up to see the stars and have an adventure, not be a glorified lackey. The only reason he hadn't quit was his complicated crush on Captain Rho. While the Captain was the primary source of menial tasks, Hash also couldn't resist the allure of the zebra's round middle. His gaze drifted to it at every opportunity, and he frequently daydreamed of what his captain would look like bigger...rounder. Rho himself never shied away from flaunting his middle, which certainly didn't help matters.

The uniqueness of the situation was why Hash had opted for a rather odd prank to blow off steam. Captain Rho was particularly fond of puff pastries, regularly replicating two or three multiple times a day. Hash's plan would make the desserts finally live up to their name. He'd just finished uploading an alteration to the usual recipe in the food replicators, sneaking in new ingredients that would cause the eater to fill with air.

A private test on himself the previous night had resulted in the cat's middle swelling well over two feet, big enough that he could barely waddle around his tiny quarters. Hash had been a blushy mess the whole while, and he couldn't wait to see the effects on the already-sizable Rho. In a couple hours the Captain would drop by for his usual pre-lunch treat, and Hash would watch the wonderful spectacle unfold on security cam feeds—taped for posterity of course.

Thoughts filled with inflating zebras, Hash grinned widely as he strolled through the ship. He doubted anything would be able to sour his mood. If anyone tried he'd be sure to recommend the puff pastries to them.

Hash entered a lift, but before he could speak his destination an unexpected guest slipped in with him: Captain Rho. The ensign instantly stood at attention, already admiring the way Rho's skin-tight bodysuit emphasized the orange-striped zebra's belly. It was just such a delightful ball, a strangely-taut...swelling...ball.

Hash finally looked up, just in time to witness the Captain pop a puff pastry right in his mouth. His eyes widened a little, but he managed to disguise his shock well enough. The cat had compiled *weeks* of the Captain's replicator habits, and there was no way Rho should've been grabbing anything that early. Rho obviously hadn't noticed anything was amiss yet, but Hash didn't want to be nearby when it happened. Well, he *did*, but being at the scene of the crime was a surefire way to get caught.

"Anything troubling you Ensign Hash," Captain Rho asked, smiling as he licked a couple stray crumbs from his lips.

The cat stiffened. "Of course not Captain! I mean...I think I may have forgotten something in the mess hall so I should really get going!"

Unfortunately for Hash, the Captain was blocking the exit. The lift doors shut before he could move more than a couple steps towards it, trapping him in with his expanding captain.

"Ah, sorry about that. Sometimes I forget how much space I take up!" Rho laughed. "Though I just came from the mess hall and don't remember seeing anything lying around. Couldn't resist sneaking some pastries before heading back up to the bridge. I know three is a bit much, but they can be rather addicting."

Hash's heart sank in his chest. *Three?* That many prank puff pastries were guaranteed to make the Captain enormous, and fast if he'd eaten them in quick succession.

"Don't think I've ever tried the puff pastries before." Hash gulped, actively avoiding eye contact with his captain's ballooning belly.

"Odd, I swore you were praising their taste just the other day while rearranging the furniture in my quarters." Rho's eyes narrowed slightly, a stern expression on his face interrupted as the pressure in his middle grew too great for him to shrug off.

When Captain Rho looked down he jumped a little, belly wobbling up and down. He poked the steadily growing dome with a hoof and frowned.

“Oh no Captain, w-what's happening!” Hash sputtered, trying to act innocent as his mind raced with the potential punishments for getting caught tampering with the Captain's food.

The faintest hissing and creaking could be heard coming from within the zebra's middle, which had doubled in size with no signs of slowing. Rho didn't seem to be at all concerned, though, his attention still firmly on the ensign with him.

“Well *Ensign* Hash, I'm very obviously filling up like a balloon, and since my voice isn't as high as I am wide it's probably air in there,” Captain Rho said. He was taking up a third of the lift on his own, Hash having backed against the wall opposite him. “I'd guess my beloved puff pastries are to blame, but despite the name that's not a normal side-effect. So the real question is: who illegally sabotaged the food replicators to turn them into the dessert-equivalent of an air tank?”

Hash couldn't help but cower some as the expanding captain loomed over him. His careful plan was falling apart before his very eyes, and he was looking guiltier and guiltier by the second. Even worse was his gut instinct to swoon over the zebra's belly.

“M-maybe it was just a glitch in the system, sir!” Hash lied. “No one would dare inflate you!”

Rho's chest had been enveloped by the rest of his middle, which was starting to take on the spherical form his whole body would inevitably be. His arms and legs were swelling as well now, growing rigid. Hash would've had no trouble running away from the Captain had they been in a corridor, Rho guaranteed to end up rolling or stuck. The lift, however, allowed Rho to weaponize his transformation into a living blimp.

“I don't know, I've been led to believe there's at least one crew member on this ship who'd prefer to see me bigger,” Rho grinned menacingly. “Someone who'd be more than willing to spike a snack they know I enjoy in order to pump me up. Someone who's always ogling my middle.”

Hash's face turned bright red. Captain Rho was closing in, having swelled into three sides of the lift. Seconds later Rho's taut hide pressed into him, pinning his whole body below the neck against the wall and prompting an elated squirm. He could feel the light vibrations of the zebra's inflation, and the pressure—oh the pressure! He had to bite his lip to avoid smiling in joy.

Despite being an immobile, lift-filling balloon, Rho maintained an air of being in complete control.

“So what was your big plan, ensign? Were you just going to admire me from a distance as I became a wobbling ball?” Rho asked. His cheeks had become massive orbs on their own, pressing into his muzzle just like his belly was Hash. “Or maybe you were going to be bold and hope I slipped into a daze, sneaking up on your poor, blimped up captain and prodding his taut sides. Rolling me around, listening to my hide creak, seeing if bounce.”

Every new scenario forced a fantasy to play out in Hash's head, ensuring he couldn't stop blushing. His excitement was impossible to hide.

“N-n-no, I'd never—*hrrrmph!*” Hash moaned as he lifted his chin in an attempt to stay above the swelling mass of the Captain.

“Well whatever your original plan was, you seem to be rather enjoying yourself down there, ensign,” Captain Rho chuckled. “Simply enveloping you probably won't serve as much of a punishment then. It's the best I can do for now, though.”

Hash's mouth was buried, saving the cat the trouble of coming up with another weak excuse or plea. And thankfully muffling further moans of joy.

“Goodbye Ensign Hash. It could very well be hours before I'm deflated enough to free you, so try not to wiggle *too* much.”

Hash's eyes widened right before he was sealed away completely. Effectively alone, Captain Rho let out a sigh. The zebra coincidentally loved inflating—though preferably in more open areas—so being immobile and puffy didn't bother him much at all. He was certain the rest of the bridge crew

would act suitably worried once he arrived, but enough bad jokes would lighten the mood swiftly enough. As for Ensign Hash...well Rho was already considering various ways to repay the favor—most of which involved using the cat as an air mattress...