

Imposing Gains

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Even in the middle of the night, the city of Towashi on the plane of Kamigawa shone brightly with neon lights. The nocturnal folk went about their business in steady numbers, while the kami darted around. The city's outskirts were marginally calmer, and that was where Dusksfang found himself roaming.

The gray-furred nezumi grinned as he pushed his hoverbike to its limits, zipping around the few vehicles he came across. His jacket and tail both flapped in the wind. The night had been uneventful and boring for the most part. Earlier he'd wrestled with some other members of the gang at their hideout, losing as usual. Being the scrawniest in the gang didn't help. Afterward, he'd vented by knocking over guide-bots in the city center. Their stern yet toothless warnings had only cheered him up a little. He needed a distraction, but the city denied his cravings.

Dusksfang turned off the main road and looped through side streets just for the change of scenery. They were even quieter, so much so that he felt more alone than ever before. It was a strange feeling for one who'd spent his entire life in a city that seemed eternally active.

He clutched the brakes hard and his hoverbike rattled as it slowed. Some sort of robotic beast lumbered ahead, taking up half the street. Curious, he settled up next to it. The robot resembled a giant lizard and stood a foot taller than Dusksfang. It waddled sluggishly on four legs, its thick middle swaying gently. Brilliant screens and holograms on its sides advertised desserts of every sort, from donuts to pies to entire cakes.

It took a moment, but Dusksfang realized the lizard was a robotic vending machine, which he'd started seeing everywhere lately. They wandered set routes in search of customers and were usually shaped like creatures to draw attention. He'd never seen one so huge, though. It looked more like a full-blown bakery than a vending machine.

"What are you doing all the way out here?" Dusksfang asked aloud, not expecting an answer. The machines tended to simply repeat advertisements or corporate slogans. The lizard remained silent, aside from the heavy clanking as it trudged along. A screen had been cracked and a few of the

holograms flickered. Graffiti marked the back of the machine, nothing more than a hasty tagging. Either the machine had a very ambitious route, or something had messed up its programming and sent it on an aimless journey.

Boredom had worked up quite the appetite in Dusksfang. Of course, he wouldn't pay for something he could easily get for free. He hopped off his hoverbike and waved a paw to get the lost machine's attention. It stopped, thankfully, and happily advertised its goods to him. While it rambled on he dug into a pocket, pulling out a small robotic snake only a few inches long. He held the device up to the banknote slot and nudged it until it slithered inside.

Dusksfang tapped his foot as he waited, wondering if the hacking device had gotten jammed. He'd bought the thing cheap and secondhand, after all. But soon the vending machine shuddered and the credit display changed from zero to a few billion. He snorted at the absurd amount the hack had given him, surprised no alarms had been tripped. Perhaps the owner was more ambitious than cautious. Or the hack was better than expected.

With no limit to what he could buy, Dusksfang happily skimmed the menu. Donuts were the first thing to catch his eye, and they came by the dozen. He tapped in the order. Within seconds, a door slid open to reveal a fresh batch of a dozen donuts. The wonderful aroma of fresh dough and chocolate poured over him and made his stomach rumble. They were warm to the touch, the frosting not yet hardened. They tasted as good as they looked, prompting a delighted squeak as he finished the first. He scarfed a second one down without hesitation, then a third. They were better than anything he'd had from a vending machine before. He struggled to think of even food stalls that compared to it. He'd only planned to eat three or four and be done with the machine, but he couldn't bear to stop at that. The rest of the dozen quickly vanished down his throat.

He looked at the empty tray and the menu screen, still showing off the wide variety of donuts available. When had he last treated himself? The credit display remained bountiful. He punched in a second order without thinking.

The next dozen didn't disappoint. He'd never been one to glut—unless

he was about to dine and dash—but the donuts were irresistible to the point of being addicting. His tail snapped back and forth in delight as he gobbled up the pile of pastries, licking the frosting off his fingers in between each one. The last one came and went too swiftly, leaving him wanting.

“*Bworrp!*” Dusksfang only partially muffled the belch with a paw. He rubbed his middle with the other, which had puffed up a little from the gorging. Despite everything, he didn’t feel particularly full, and he had a whole mobile bakery at his disposal.

His fingers bounced across the menu, selecting a large milkshake and a wide selection of cookies. The cookies were so fresh they almost melted in his mouth, and the milkshake washed them down in thick gulps. He browsed the menu while eating and set up more orders, not bothering to consider if he could finish it all. Why should he care when it was all free?

After finishing his fourth milkshake, the once-lean nezumi sported a taut ball gut full of sweets. The gray globe jutted out from beneath his shirt, softly wobbling when he moved. He looked at the result of his unrelenting gluttony and found he felt no shame. Being stuffed felt good. Or maybe just being bigger in general.

He thought back to wrestling with the gang. They flipped him around time and time again, no matter how much faster he was. Quite a few in the gang had earned their respect by literally throwing their weight around, and he envied them. No one would snicker about him being his back if he was heavier. And if they did, he could flatten them with the very weight they dared to make fun of.

Flashy ads continued to dance across the side of the vending machine. They encouraged him to eat more and try everything, and he gladly complied. Fattening treats filled the machine, perhaps enough to transform him into the biggest, most unstoppable member of the gang. He just had to prove he had the appetite to match his ambition.

Dusksfang ordered the first thing on the menu, along with a drink to wash it down with. He was determined to empty the entire vending machine of stock or pass out trying.

The pies came pre-sliced, in a dozen flavors that teased his taste buds and had him licking his lips. He scarfed them down in giant bites, engaging in a one-rodent eating competition. The cakes were compact and loaded with

icing. Each one flashed before his eyes, his attention solely on gorging so he missed out on the varied decorations. They all looked the same in his stomach regardless. Large glasses of milk followed, cascading down his throat and readying him for the next bout of gorging.

With every bite, Dusksfang imagined the glorious future that awaited him. No longer would he be tossed around or pushed aside. He wouldn't be a scout or a scrawny, overlooked punk. His massive belly would command the attention of everyone in the room, and the loyalty of those who knew what it was capable of. Any who opposed or doubted him would be squished. He'd wield his gut like a wrecking ball, crashing through obstacles and pinning fools down. Those left in his wake would swear they'd been barreled over by an ogre or a demon. There'd be no bigger nezumi in the gang, or in the entire city for that matter.

The torrent of pastries and desserts dutifully swelled Dusksfang's belly. It ballooned bigger and bigger, bouncing with every ravenous bite and passionate gulp. His paw drifted down at times, exploring the growing curve. He reached beneath it, feeling the weight of his unending gluttony. He gave it a nudge and made it sway, thinking of the power behind the pounds he was destined to gain. The fantasies only drove him to eat faster.

Cupcakes, fudge, chocolates, pudding. He didn't care what came out of the vending machine, only that it ended up in his stomach, ready to churn into fearsome layers of pudge. He ignored the inconvenient fullness that nagged at the back of his mind and insisted he stop pigging out. His stomach was at *his* mercy, not the other way around.

His gray gut bulged past his knees and against the side of the vending machine. Dusksfang had to awkwardly sway his heavy belly out of the way so he could reach his feast. Every belch rattled his middle. The vending machine continued to spit out food, so he continued to devour it.

Eventually, his legs buckled. The nezumi grunted as he slid down to the ground, back against the vending machine and belly overflowing his lap. With considerable effort, he could still grab food, while voice commands handled the orders. Though his eating slowed, determination drove him on and he ate with dreams of future glory filling his head.

Sometime later, a solemn jingle came from the vending machine. "I'm sorry, but I am now out of stock. Eat well, and have a nice night!" the

machine said. The ads switched off and the screens went dark. The vending machine closed its eyes and lay down, conserving power as it waited to be restocked.

Duskfang let out a slow laugh that ended in a burp. “Nothing will—*urrrp*—stop me now,” he mumbled, eyes half-closed. He rubbed his paws over the boulder his belly had become and fell into a deep, satisfying food coma.

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The sun hadn’t been up long when Duskfang waddled out of the small clothing shop. He smirked when his wide belly brushed against the sides of the door. He’d never struggled to fit anywhere before, but now everything would need to make room for him.

As hoped, he’d ballooned in size due to the decadent dessert feast. His massive gut jutted out, hanging well over his belt. His rump was huge and his smug grin pinched doughy cheeks. Every part of him had grown thicker and more imposing, even his tail. The powerful pudge he’d gained overnight had ripped his old outfit to shreds, sparing only his jacket. He’d replaced the rest, choosing a shirt a little too small so it’d highlight the curve of his new gut. The jacket he kept, both because he adored it and because he believed it made him look even fatter by virtue of being so blatantly small on him. Besides, it’d serve as a nice reminder of how small he’d been and how much bigger and stronger he’d grown.

Duskfang smacked his belly and watched it wobble, feeling the power behind the blubber. He’d break it in soon enough, and maybe the bones of a few gang members who always gloated about beating him at wrestling.

He hefted himself onto his hoverbike. Leaning over to reach the handles, he practically rested upon his gut. The bike could barely contain him. Good.

He revved the hoverbike up and rode off in search of a breakfast big enough to sate his increased appetite. If his gains treated him as well as he believed they would, he might hunt down the vending machine to have another feast. One could never be too big, really.