

Holo pulled the shoes onto his feet and rolled his ankles, testing the way they fit. His huge talons made wearing shoes impractical under normal circumstances, but these ones had been specially designed to fit his clawed feet.

"How do they feel?" Cavi asked as he pressed his pen to the papers on his clipboard. He was ready to take down any notes Holo might have about the shoes so he could make the necessary changes as quickly as possible.

"They're a bit claustrophobic, but I think that's just because I've been barefoot for a millennium," Holo noted with a shrug. Cavi nodded and made a note anyways.

The shoes that the red and yellow dragon was currently wearing were not special only for their accommodation to his clawed feet, but because they were the newest product of Cavi's labs. The gray and white Maescreean had been inspired by a pun involving "pumped up kicks" and had produced a suitable product within hours.

The top portion of the shoe was unremarkable, looking much like a normal walking shoe. The bottom portion however, looked like an accordion-style air pump that raised the shoe off the ground a half foot. The shoes had been mounted to these modified bellows, and a length of hose had been attached to the back of each pump. The two hoses fused into one halfway up their length, and the end of the hose was made to be inserted into the mouth of the person wearing them.

In this way, every step someone took would pump approximately one half of a cubic foot of air into their gut. Cavi figured it would be perfect for the busy inflationist on the go, but before he sent them to mass production, he needed them to be properly tested. A previous attempt on using them himself yielded great results, but he became too bloated to work and move without assistance, limiting his research ability. Holo, he knew, was better equipped for being bloated to massive sizes, and would be better able to test the durability of the bellows against long-term use.

Holo stood up out of the chair he had been seated in, and the pumps under the shoes depressed, wheezing out a gust of air from the unattended hose end. "Oops, almost forgot." Holo grabbed the hose and popped it into his mouth, biting down gently on the end of it. He gave Cavi a thumbs up.

Cavi nodded and led Holo to the lab entrance. The shoes hissed with every step and squeaked against the waxed floors. Cavi looked back every few steps to watch Holo's slender stomach round out with each brisk step he took. Cavi grinned, already hopeful about the results. He pressed a button on the wall and the glass double door slid open, letting the already bloated dragon exit with ease. As Cavi watched him go, he could already see Holo's yellow stomach bulging out past his shimmering red sides.

Holo walked down the street as though he was a fashion model in brand new heels, and he may as well have been with all the attention he was getting. The looks he got ranged from excitement, to disgust, to curiosity, and he took them all in with a wide grin. His wings and tail helped him to balance, as the springy, collapsing platforms the shoes were mounted on made his gait unsteady. More than once he found himself having to flap his wings to full liftoff to keep from toppling over, and his landing would shove another cubic foot of air into his body.

It wasn't long before Holo's yellow stomach was as wide as the sidewalk. He waved politely at the passerby that stepped off the curb or into a shop to avoid him, apologizing for the

inconvenience he was causing. A pedometer dangling from his belt loops kept track of the number of steps he was taking, and a gauge attached to the hose tracked the amount of air he had so far consumed. He didn't bother to check either of them though, deciding to leave the data collecting to Cavi. The leisurely walking pace had grown dull for him, and he broke out into a jog. The pumps wheezed under his faster, more forceful strides, and he could feel the air rushing up the hose with greater force and speed. He grinned, making his cheeks puff up.

Holo's increasing size soon made him visible from a block away, and pedestrians began to cross the street in anticipation of his ballooning form barreling down the sidewalk at jogging speed. Holo picked up the pace as his growing stomach made it harder to push through the air, which seemed to become a wall as his width increased. The breeze started to affect him as well, pushing and pulling him as it swept down the streets between the buildings. Holo growled, and broke into a run, fighting the wind and his own sphere of a stomach.

The run only lasted a few seconds though, as he realized that the pumps didn't have time to fully inflate between steps at that speed. He slowed to a walk again to catch his breath, and pulled his phone from his pocket to text that note to Cavi. His stomach was already bloated out to several feet in diameter, but it wasn't nearly enough for him. His scales still had far more stretch, and the shoes hadn't had their endurance tested at all. With a smirk, the dragon decided that he'd walk until the shoes broke outright, however long that might take.

He was tireless in his efforts, as Cavi had predicted. Being the weird monster that he was, Holo had no joints or muscles to tire out, so he had no need to take a break as he paraded his swelling form around the city. He moved into the road as his gut began to bump the sides of the skyscrapers. His stomach rose up like a wall in front of him as it scraped the ground and rose up over his head, blocking his vision. His middle filled the roads, forcing traffic to divert to avoid being smothered by a ceaselessly advancing wall of widening yellow scales.

Holo was having effort moving on, not due to his size but his location. He had made it to an intersection where the roads ahead narrowed by a factor of two vehicle lanes, and try as he might to shove against his bloated stomach, Holo could not squeeze between the buildings. Walking backwards seemed perilous as well, as it would take just one misstep to topple him over and pin him underneath his building-size belly. He stood in place, thinking of a solution as a crowd gathered around, murmuring and taking photos and videos. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

The idea hit him all of a sudden, as he felt the small puffs of air from his shifting weight. He lifted his feet, and began to march in place, almost sneering at his own brilliance. He worked the pumps with tireless diligence, pumping up both himself and his step count. His stomach squeezed forward and out to the sides, bulging out of the intersection in all four directions. He could feel himself starting to slide backwards every few steps as his round stomach was compressed into a squashed "plus" shape by the towers that bordered the intersection's streets. The windows of the gleaming towers started to crack from the pressure being exerted against them, and their foundations creaked and leaned. The street behind Holo was swallowed in shadow as the sun set below the horizon of his stomach.

All at once, his footsteps felt heavy, less springy than they should. Air no longer pumped through the hose, and he frowned as he removed it from his mouth and lifted his legs to look at his feet. The bellows attached to the shoes had torn, rendering them useless for any further

inflation. Holo sighed and huffed and pulled out his phone again, calling Cavi to come and get him.

The maescreean needed no directions, able to see the taut mass of yellow from the top floor of the building he owned. He squeezed into his car and drove over, neatly avoiding the traffic his friend had caused.

“Wow, you sure know how to generate hype for a new product!” Cavi said with a grin as he squeezed through the crowd. “I couldn’t have advertised them better myself!”

“I do try my best. Though, they gave out! You might want to try a more durable material for the bellows.” Holo said as he lifted his foot to show Cavi the damage. He nodded and checked the air and step monitors he had attached, removing them both to collect the data for later.

“Noted, though they did last quite a while from the looks of it. Still, gotta make sure all products are quality products,” Cavi said as he placed the meters in his passenger seat. “You gonna be up for testing model 0.2?”

“Oh hell yes! Just be sure to paint a proper ad on me for next time, and I think you’ll have yourself a best-seller,” Holo added with a wink.

Cavi snorted and smirked and made a note of that on his phone, his mind already loaded with ideas for the improved model.