

Cherry Bomb

By: IndigoRho

Professor Trevor Hall snuck a glance at his watch as he listened to a student in his Berries in Theater course contribute to the day's group discussion. They weren't necessarily presenting their view on the Second Act's mass berrification scene, but at the very least they were *trying*, and that was enough to please Hall. The somewhat hefty tiger leaned against an empty desk while he waited, ignoring the faint creaks of complaint from the furniture...and the grins from his class. Though the Professor was undeniably doughy, his swollen, sloshing belly always made him look even larger.

Long ago—during his own college years—Professor Hall had been afflicted with permanent berrification, specifically of the grape variety. His body was perpetually producing a dark purple grape juice, which caused him to swell up throughout the day if he didn't regularly juice himself or take ample suppressant medications. If he allowed himself to get too large he ran the risk of popping, a rather embarrassing ordeal the tiger preferred avoiding when possible; re-forming good as new a few hours afterward didn't take away the sting of others seeing you explode like an overfilled water balloon.

Fortunately the Professor's condition wasn't exactly a rarity. There were literally hundreds of ways to end up a berry permanently—from allergies to spoiled drinks to the contagious juice of someone who'd already become a berry—so life for the tiger wasn't agonizing, merely...frustrating at times. Columbia State University itself was also notorious for a higher-than-average berry population, as evident by the handful of berry students in Hall's class. They were easy to spot thanks to their ball-bellies of various sizes, not to mention the handful whose fur was in the process of changing color to match their affliction. His own orange and white fur had a purple tint to it at the moment.

With time nearly up, Hall took the lead on the discussion again. “Nicely put. Alright, for next class you'll be reading Act Three, and there'll be another talk to go along with it. Class dismissed!”

As the students all began to pack and head out, the Professor stealthily eyed a particular black feline who'd obviously been admiring his gut that day—and every day to be honest. Compared to his classmates, Aster took his time leaving, purple hair bobbing about as he put away his notebook. When he finally stood he revealed a wobbling middle as well, neatly contained within his pink hoodie.

If Professor Hall remembered correctly Aster was a cherry, and an allegedly volatile one at that. His internal juices were apparently almost guaranteed to make the drinker swell up, and the rate of the effect being permanent was far above average. The feline had embraced his condition fully, though, and the Professor had heard rumors Aster enjoyed turning others into berries. That willingness—combined with his contagious nature and clear crush on Hall—made Aster perfect for what the Professor had in mind.

“Mr. Malaqui, can I speak with you for a moment?” Professor Hall called out to the cat.

Aster stopped in his tracks and turned to his Professor, his belly wobbling slightly from the halt. “Y-yeah!”

Professor Hall quietly waited for the rest of the class to file out, ensuring the pair had privacy. “Alright, how would you like a little extra credit opportunity?”

“Oh, wow! That'd be awesome Professor Hall!” Aster answered. “What's it involve?”

“Nothing too difficult, just splashing Professor Ellison with some cherry juice,” Hall grinned and gave his student's belly a poke.

At first Aster was confused, but slowly the cat started to piece the “extra credit” together. He knew Hall and Ellison—a deer who headed the History Department—had been rivals since they were students. Both professors made a habit of trying to berrify each other's students, a big reason there were so many green and purple grape berries in the English and History majors at CSU. If Hall wanted Aster to splash cherry juice on Professor Ellison, there was only one way he intended it to happen.

“You...you want me to burst on Professor Ellison?” Aster asked, somewhat shocked.

“On, near, above...wherever will make sure that obnoxious deer ends up swelling with cherry

juice and exploding in front of his whole class.” The tiger was grinning in a way Aster had rarely seen before. “You’re not afraid of a little popping, right?”

The student quickly shook his head. “Of course not Professor! Comes with the territory.” Aster gave his belly a pat, causing it to swell ever-so-slightly as the juices within sloshed about. He was rather fond of filling up, and actually loved bursting—especially if the end result would lead to others becoming cherries just like him.

“Wonderful!” Professor Hall chuckled and checked his watch again. “Ellison should be in the middle of a class right now. We’ll head over there right away, get you big and juicy, and then roll you into the room like an oversized cherry bomb!”

With no time to waste the pair swiftly headed towards the building Professor Ellison was teaching in, a relatively short walk away. Their bellies jiggled and bounced as they did, Aster’s volatile juices steadily multiplying from the momentum as well as his own eagerness to become huge. He likened the odd reaction to an adrenaline rush, his body dutifully producing juice to appease his desires and hasten his goals. It’d taken a while for the cat to adjust to those feelings, and while he was usually able to keep them in check when necessary, he couldn’t completely suppress his nature. Not that he ever wanted to.

When they finally arrived outside Ellison’s classroom, Aster’s middle was nearly twice as round as before, a conspicuous beach ball impossible to ignore. He adored the way he was forced to waddle thanks to his belly’s size, and how much sloshier it’d become. Of course Aster would need to be *even* bigger to pull off the prank.

“Alright Aster, time ripen you,” Professor Hall said, smiling.

The tiger placed both paws on Aster’s wide belly and began to shake it. Aster’s fur had already faintly gained a reddish hue on the walk over, but now his face was even redder from blushing. He tried to hide his gleeful grin as best he could, a daunting task considering his crush was jostling his gut so aggressively. Every hard shake resulted in a muffled splash followed by a noticeable swell.

No matter how much the cat expanded his pink hoodie and black jeans stretched to handle him, both being made of wonderful expandex material. Such an outfit was essential for permaberries like Aster, ensuring he’d never have to worry about clothing ripping to shreds when he swelled. They were also guaranteed to survive a popping intact, which meant Aster could retrieve them later once he re-formed.

The red coloration of Aster’s fur grew more prominent along with him, though it still remained on the darker side of the spectrum. His magenta hair shifted too, turning pink to match his hoodie. A lingering cherry taste teased his tongue, as if he’d just gulped down some refreshing juice.

Professor Hall continued shaking his rapidly expanding pupil, watching the cat begin to resemble a berry more and more with each passing second. Aster’s limbs had become rigid, swollen with juice, and his body was gaining a rather spherical shape. Even his cheeks were rounding out, squishy spheres pressing against his muzzle. Light creaks joined the constant sloshing as Aster’s hide stretched, growing tauter and more sensitive.

As Aster’s arms and legs were slowly enveloped by his massive berry body the building internal pressure finally started hitting him. When a berry neared its limit they always had to deal with the immense feeling of pressure overwhelming them, dominating their thoughts and preventing them from thinking coherently. While practice could make you resistant to a degree, no one could avoid the pressure daze forever.

Aster’s gaze lost focus, eyes drifting aimlessly as he tried thinking of anything *besides* how swollen he was. He was vaguely aware of Professor Hall giving him encouragement, every other word lost as his mind obsessed over the tightness of his hide or the weight of the juice or how deep breaths made him feel like he might burst. The daze wasn’t painful—not in the slightest—but rather...euphoric. A wavy grin grew across the cat’s face and he began to purr, his whole body vibrating in joy. Soft meows and moans escaped his lips, Aster effectively lost in the pressure.

Only then did Professor Hall take a step back to admire his volatile cherry bomb. Aster was huge, a dark red ball that wobbled in place and creaked ominously. If left alone the cat would've popped in a minute or two all by himself, turned into confetti and a juice puddle through his purring. Thankfully the Professor had a much more rewarding way for the student to go out.

With great care Professor Hall maneuvered Aster to the opened doors to Ellison's class, eyeing the perfect opportunity; a triumphant shove then sent the cherry bomb rolling right in. Professor Ellison's classroom was a small auditorium, with an aisle of steps descending straight from the entrance to whiteboard the deer was writing on. The aisle had been designed with berry students and staff in mind, so there was nothing to impede Aster's progress as he tumbled down the steps at full speed.

Aster let out excited meows as he bounced, oblivious to everything but the pressure, the wonderful, wonderful pressure. There was no time for the students in class to react to the cherry cat zooming past them, and even Professor Ellison himself was only able to turn around after hearing the initial entrance. When he did, he was face-to-face with a giant berry bouncing directly at him. The deer let out a gasp that was swiftly interrupted by Aster slamming into Ellison's antlers, the bane of any taut berry.

The swollen cat grinned wider than ever as he felt his internal pressure reach its peak, meowing loudly just before bursting apart with a thunderous *Boom!* Desks and chairs rattled as dark red scraps were hurled all over. A cherry tidal wave soaked the whole front of the room, including the first few rows of students, as juice rained down upon the rest. Professor Ellison had been knocked against the whiteboard from the force of the blast, coughing and gagging as his mouth filled with juice. Aster's hoodie, jeans, and sneakers had been tossed about in different directions, wet but otherwise in perfect condition.

Over in seconds, Aster's explosion left the whole classroom in an uproar. Students were wiping juice from their clothes and faces and trying to shake off, some complaining about how their fur was stained. Quite a few mentioned they couldn't get the taste of cherry out of their mouths, too. Professor Ellison still wasn't sure exactly what had happened or who the bursting berry was, but a rumbling in his belly gave him a clue as to what would come next.

Ellison looked down upon his round middle and frowned; he was expanding, and fast. Already rather full of his own green grape juice, the deer's gut sloshed and wobbled as it swelled further, fueled by Aster's volatile brew. He tried to rush to his bag where some juice-suppressants were kept, but waddling only seemed to hasten his growth dramatically. The deer nearly lost his balance as his massive belly swayed, his expandex dress shirt containing it with ease. His normally gray hide was turning red, just like the berry he'd popped.

Elsewhere in the classroom, most of the students were experiencing the same predicament. Everyone who'd been in the first few rows were sporting large round bellies already, some still stuck in their chairs. Any who tried making a run for it found themselves too big to move before ever getting far. Those who'd only been rained on by juice were smaller, but unnecessary movement practically guaranteed they'd be huge within minutes as well. The worst off were the students who were permaberries, a couple well on their way to being spherical already.

With the class in chaos there was no way for Professor Ellison to counteract his swelling, so all he could do was await the inevitable. He fumed as he felt his limbs puff up to uselessness, his body rapidly becoming a ball. The deer didn't care much for cherries, and now it was all he could taste—and all he could see as his class became them. Through sheer determination he held back the oppressive pressure within him, creaks filling his ears. Then he saw someone standing at the back in the entrance to class: Professor Hall.

Hall had a smile on his face and was plainly laughing, and Ellison had no doubts as to who was responsible for the berry intrusion. Anger interfered with his concentration, Ellison barely able to curse his rival before losing himself to the pressure daze and moaning instead. Soon after the room was shaking for a second time as Professor Ellison burst, spraying even more cherry juice onto the class, his

antlers clattering as they skid across the floor.

One-by-one the students from the front row began to explode, clothes and juice hurled everywhere. Any who'd escaped Aster's initial explosion were unable to avoid the many that followed, leaving every student swelling out of control. Complaints and whining filled the room in between booms, though each explosion made the class a little bit quieter. Professor Hall remained at the entrance the whole time, gleefully watching each and every student of Ellison's ripen into taut berries and explode, safely avoiding the juice himself.

Just minutes after Aster had been pushed into the full classroom, all that remained were cherry juice stains and scattered clothing. Juice dripping from the ceiling, walls, and furniture provided a rather relaxing ambiance of drizzling, not that there was anyone aside from Professor Hall to enjoy it. Overjoyed at how effective his prank had been, the tiger triumphantly closed the doors to the room and waddled off.

He couldn't wait to read whatever furious text message Professor Ellison would send him upon re-forming, and learning just how many of those students ended up as permanent cherries thanks to Aster's volatile juices. Of course he'd make sure to give the cherry cat a delightful bit of extra credit—even though Aster had been doing fine grade-wise—along with a hearty congratulations once he was back in class. Considering the astounding success, Professor Hall even contemplated unleashing the cherry bomb on other peers who'd irritated the tiger. The number of cherry students at Columbia State University was about to increase dramatically...