

Kuya's Mana Swell

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The main research room of the luxray mage Kuya was a cluttered mess. Open tomes were scattered across tables, some buried under hastily scribbled notes while others appeared shoved aside in frustration for being of no use. Drained mana stones and empty potion bottles littered any spot that *had* once been open, remnants of failed tests. In the middle of it all was the mage himself. Kuya leaned over a table, eyes darting from books to notes and back again, his paws tapping the wood as he thought.

As one of—if not *the*—most skilled spellcasters in the land, Kuya was always searching for new ways to increase his power. He'd exhausted considerable amounts of mana while researching his most recent project, but he was confident he'd figured out a way to condense mana to such a degree that he'd never have to worry about running low ever again. Of course casting the spell itself would also require a substantial amount of magic.

A quick glance around the room convinced the pokemon he didn't have enough batteries to supplement his innate power, and Kuya wasn't interested in waiting for an apprentice to find and deliver one; instead he'd simply use himself. While crystals could store a reasonable amount of mana, they paled in comparison to living beings, especially those with considerable capacity like Kuya. In general the mage preferred using others as mana batteries—his apprentices tended to spend most of their time as taut, mana-filled balls—but he couldn't deny the joy he felt containing so much raw power.

Kuya plucked a blue bottle from his belt and gave it a quick shake, listening to the splashing of liquid within. He removed the golden topper and eagerly chugged all of the blueberry juice contained in the potion, smiling as the final drop landed on his tongue. A cool, tingling sensation filled his stomach, swiftly spreading outward like a gentle breeze. Suddenly the luxray's soft belly began to swell, the creases of his white shirt vanishing one-by-one. A faint sloshing noise was echoing from inside him as if he'd swallowed a fountain; in reality the juice he'd drunk was simply multiplying at a rapid pace.

The juice causing Kuya's middle to balloon was infused with magic, and the larger he grew the more powerful he felt—which only made him want to get even bigger. Long ago he'd discovered that those who'd been turned into berries made ideal catalysts for spells, prompting the mage to learn everything he could regarding berrification magic. Internal capacity and durability were undeniable limiters to the use of berried individuals, but if his efforts to condense magic worked then one berry could have the mana output of a dozen instead.

The mage's paws went to his belly as it rounded out further, blue fur peeking from in between the gaps on the buttons of his shirt. The splashing of juice was getting louder, but so was his energy, and Kuya began urging his own middle to grow faster, bigger, grander. Soon his chest and thighs began to swell as well, seemingly merging with his belly as his body took on a spherical form. Kuya's enchanted clothing stretched to handle his expansion for the most part, pants and belt growing along with him while his shirt showed some signs of strain.

Rounder and rounder Kuya got, the luxray adjusting his stance as walking became an impossibility. With effort he may have been able to waddle around, but even that wouldn't be an option once he reached his intended size. His grin widened as he felt himself overflowing with magic, mind occasionally wandering as he imagined how powerful any spell he cast would be.

Kuya's massive form expanded in all directions, his loudly stretching and middle sloshing. The table and chairs were knocked over and pushed away by his growing bulk, scattering tomes to the floor. He was too drunk on magic to care about the collateral damage inflating was causing, and as far as he was concerned a little mess was a small price to pay for power. His paws and head sunk slightly into his immense body, which by now was mostly a blue-and-black ball dressed in impressive robes. Still he needed more magic, though.

While flights of magical fancy filled Kuya's head, he hadn't forgotten about his original goal—he'd merely enhanced it. “When this spell succeeds no one will be able to deny my glory!” He boasted to himself. “Mages all over the land will beg for me to train them! Every magic college will have a statue of me in the courtyard, my very name will be synonymous with spellcasting itself! Maybe they'll even make me king...”

The massive mage's sides were starting to press against the walls of the room, furniture snapped to pieces beneath his empowered girth. Only when there was almost no space left did Kuya feel he had enough mana, and even then it took an incredible amount of willpower to not keep expanding until he toppled the walls over outright. Kuya wobbled, the magical juice within the luxray gently splashing as he began concentrating on his spell. His body was gradually surrounded by light, faint at first but growing brighter by the second, blindingly so. With a grin on his round face Kuya practically shouted the incantation

A deafening explosion violently rattled the whole room as soon as Kuya finished, heralding thick blue smoke that enveloped everything. For a few seconds there was only silence, but as the smoke started to fade the luxray was revealed to be laying on the floor, slightly disheveled but otherwise fine. He was no longer inflated, the lake of juice that'd filled him having been flash-evaporated in order to power the spell. Even though the blueberry-scented smoke continued to block Kuya's sight, he could *sense* an immense magical aura sitting in the spot he'd cast the spell, and he preemptively smiled in triumph.

Kuya stood back up and walked towards the fruition of his research, swatting away the smoke with both paws. To his surprise, though, no super-condensed ball of pure mana awaited him once the room cleared. Instead there was a large circle taller than he was hovering in the air, which at first glance looked to be a strikingly realistic city painted on an invisible canvas. Within seconds Kuya realized the truth: it was a portal.

The luxray stared through his creation with curiosity, the panorama becoming more and more unfamiliar the closer he looked. There were buildings of metal rather than stone, quite a few looking boxier than the more elaborate designs he was used to, but tall—*very* tall. Complex contraptions raced up and down what he guessed had to be roads, and he swore he saw one or two in the air as well, far stranger than any airship he'd seen.

Confusion swiftly turned back into glee. Even Kuya's failure had created a remarkable result, a gateway to a whole new universe that only *he* had access to. Once he stabilized the portal he'd be able to travel to the mysterious city whenever he wanted, free to learn everything they knew about magic and expand his own skills. As he considered the wealth of possibilities, his gaze drifted to a sign near one of the roads, and instantly Kuya knew where he'd explore first: Columbia State University...