

The Berry Professor

By: IndigoRho

Professor Raf dared a glance at his watch as he waddled through the sparse halls as fast as his wide frame could manage. The hefty hyena *should* have been starting his introductory math course five minutes ago, but a poorly timed alarm had made him late, and Raf had barely been able to dress and tidy up his pink mohawk before bolting out the front door. Unfortunately breakfast had been sacrificed as a result, much to the annoyance of his demanding stomach. Out of desperation he'd dug through his bag in search of a snack—any snack—though all he managed to find was a brightly-colored pack of blue raspberry gum he didn't remember buying. Still, gum was better than nothing, and hopefully chewing on it would distract him from the hunger.

A single bite proved the gum's taste to be surprisingly vivid, reminiscent of chomping into a fresh fruit. He eagerly continued to chew, his mood marginally improving. As berry-infused saliva trickled down Raf's throat and into his stomach an unseen reaction kicked in. Potent raspberry juice began bubbling within, a shallow pool that seemed to deepen with every chew and waddle, causing the hyena's massive belly to gently swell more. His dress shirt and sweater vest grew along with him—being made of exceptionally flexible expandex—preventing the distracted professor from experiencing any tightness that might alert him to the concerning changes. Despite the extra wobble and slosh to his step Raf's expansion wasn't too obvious yet, easy to mistake for an overindulgent breakfast or normal weight gain, neither of which were unusual thanks to his constantly fluctuating size.

The sight of Professor Raf huffing into the full classroom dampened ongoing conversations amongst the students somewhat. There were a few disappointed sighs from those expecting him to be absent rather than merely late, which—much to Raf's annoyance—had already occurred a handful of times for a variety of embarrassing reasons; the hyena was just prone to getting immobilized. Raf hastily pulled out his notes as he set up at the desk at the front of the auditorium-style room, more than a few eyes on his jiggling gut. Not wanting to waste time on the topic of his tardiness, Raf abruptly dove into the day's lesson, chunky paw racing across the chalkboard as he wrote some basic equations, amongst them the volume of a sphere. The students were still a bit chatty while this was happening, but the moment Professor Raf turned back around everyone was stunned into silence.

Raf's middle was unmistakably rounder, gently wobbling for all to see. As the class' attention was drawn to their professor's sudden growth they gradually realized he was *still* expanding, though he appeared oblivious. Of course Raf had no reason to suspect the true cause of his pupil's intense focus, grateful the group of normally apathetic college freshmen were listening for once. Quiet snickers drifted amongst the students in attendance as the tip of Raf's nose shifted from dull black to an increasingly brighter blue, giving most the first definite hint of what was happening. More than a couple laptop cameras were turned on and cellphones silyly aimed, all prepped to secretly broadcast the Professor's inflation to the campus and the world. After introducing the lesson Raf returned to the chalkboard, jotting down sample problems that were coincidentally relevant to his unnoticed state. Even from behind the students could see the hyena's curved sides bulging outward further, his butt rounding out more as well. The blue coloration had spread around his head, staining the once-tan fur but sparing his mohawk.

Eventually Professor Raf's belly pressed into the chalkboard, swelling over its surface to a degree even *he* couldn't ignore. With a growing sense of dread he peeked down, glaring as he confirmed his expansion. He slowly stepped back, gut jiggling as he did, and sighed at the muffled sounds of liquid sloshing within. Raf was woefully familiar with a wide variety of inflation methods—having been the victim of practically every one imaginable—and the strong taste of raspberry lingering in his mouth combined with the sloshing was all the evidence he needed to assume he was in danger of becoming a berry. He spit the gum out into its wrapper and tossed it aside, not that it would stop the bloating. Aggressively avoiding eye-contact with the class, Raf grumbled under his breath as he

waddled back to the desk and his bag, his movements already unwieldy from the juice accumulating inside.

Enduring so many pranks over the years had prompted Raf to actively prepare against the obnoxiously inevitable as best he could. He always kept a bottle of juice-suppressant, which would halt the creation of juice so he could remain mobile until a proper draining could take place. The idea of teaching with a noisy bouncing belly was far from ideal, but the alternative was worse. His face was entirely blue by the time he reached the desk, and his chest and forearms were visibly puffed up, his watch popping off his wrist while his pink necktie was subtly undone by his swollen neck. Searching through the bag with plump fingers proved more difficult than expected. He cursed as he came across everything *but* his essential medication, painfully aware his expansion was on the verge of being more than simply inconvenient. Unfortunately Raf's quest was doomed from the very beginning; the small bottle of juice-suppressant had rolled out of his bag and under the desk during his haste to start class, well beyond the blimping hyena's reach.

The Professor continued searching until the moment his limbs became too stiff from juice build-up to properly use. He growled as he stumbled away from the desk, arms outstretched and body bloated to the point of vaguely resembling a balloon. The fact his clothing was still able to adequately contain him provided little relief. All his fur had turned into the same bright shade of blue as his treacherous gum, the taste of which had actually gotten stronger since spitting it out. Raf was too far gone to properly walk let alone leave the classroom, able to do little more than await the inevitable completion of his transformation—and hope that didn't mean an explosive end. Re-forming a day later didn't matter if it meant getting a reputation as the teacher who splashed half his class. Then again, if he were volatile then bursting might spread the condition to some of the students chuckling at him right now.

Every small movement caused the juice within him to slosh and crash about, creating heavy waves that threatened to topple him over. His limbs swelled to a ridiculous degree, gradually becoming wide domes atop his spherical body that had come to dominate his form. Though his hide was well-stretched by previous inflations there was still the occasional *creeeeeeeak* as his internal pressure increased, Raf's ears twitching at each one. His cheeks were as round as his middle, squishing the scowl he was trying to make and shaking somewhat as he grew. There was a band of purple above his snout from blushing non-stop.

Raf's hide was nearing its limits and the juice running out of places to fill. He shuddered as he felt a cold, wet sensation around his barely exposed belly-button, a trickle of blue leaking from it. Soon his cheeks were sporadically swelling as juice tried to force its way up his throat, streaming from in between his clenched teeth. The berry professor feared the leaks would herald the first full rips or tears, and the desk digging into his sensitive side only fueled the worry. Creaks were louder and more frequent, Raf's eyes darting about frantically, the hyena unsure of his fate. Meanwhile the whole class had quieted again, some students in the front rows beginning to realize they were in a potential splash zone and clumsily standing to flee.

Fortunately the deep bubbling ceased, leaving Raf terribly taut, but intact. An awkward silence persisted for a couple minutes until everyone grew confident the Professor wasn't going to explode and flood the whole room. Raf couldn't resist breathing a muffled sigh of relief, though he knew very well his ordeal was just beginning. As a berry he was in no position to call for help himself, and he doubted any of his students would take the initiative and aid him. Throwing around threats was a good way to get popped, begging would only add to his humiliation as his plight was obviously being recorded, and he sure as Hell wasn't gonna let class out early on account of “berrification”; even doing that once might inspire future pranks to secure days off. What he *could* do was stubbornly continue teaching as if everything were normal.

With a considerable amount of effort Professor Raf successfully waddled until he was facing most of the class, the sounds of his splashing juice loud enough for the whole room to hear. Thankfully he didn't roll over or pop, though the whole process was rather undignified. He cleared his throat and

let out a sharp growl that seemed to generally bring the students into line. After that class continued as normally as possible considering the teacher was an overripe berry. Unable to move much on his own, Raf chose pupils at random to transcribe formulas and practice equations for the rest to work on, relying on memory and general knowledge in lieu of the impossible to follow through with lesson plan. Somehow the plan actually worked, though the chalkboard being in his blind-spot led to a few unflattering doodles depicting the grumpy spherical professor.

When the top of the hour finally arrived no one was more thankful for class to be out than Raf, who sped through the next week's assignment before aggressively encouraging them to scram. As the room became a cacophony of slamming notebooks and scooting chairs, the Professor timidly remembered to ask for an ambulance, not that many of the responses he got seemed genuine. Quite a few students took the opportunity to stealthily prod and pat their bloated professor while he couldn't fight back, the hyena grumbling up a storm as some of the rougher pokes nearly rolled him over. Eventually everyone cleared out, leaving Raf alone to his thoughts and the faint splashing of juice. It was going to be a very, very long day...