

Blueberry Slime

By: IndigoRho

Scattered glow stones dimly lit the cellar, casting shadows all around. Once the room had been filled with ingredients and product for the alchemist's shop above. When the last owner had retired he'd cleared almost everything out, though, leaving behind only a few odds and ends. Now the new owner hoped to find a treasure or two amidst the junk.

Rho Taliesin was—first and foremost—a scholar, but the orange-striped zebra had become skilled at alchemy over the years as well. He specialized in potions and the mimicry of spells through scrolls, some more practical than others. Friends like to claim he had an excessive amount of concoctions that could turn a person into a massive balloon, but he tended to pretend he couldn't hear them over the loud sounds of creaking.

The zebra scanned the room. Since buying the store the cleanup process had been seemingly endless. Though the cellar was nearly clear Rho still guessed he had a full day's worth of work left ahead of him. The weight of his armor was suddenly far more noticeable, and Rho began to regret heading over immediately after getting it re-fitted.

Rho sported a hearty appetite and the gut to prove it. As he made for a rather sizable target he preferred the protection of full plate while exploring dangerous areas. Removing the armor would take some effort, so Rho decided to wait until he got to the more labor-intensive cleaning to take it off.

Lazily strolling past dusty shelves and tables, Rho took note of what needed attention most. Furniture could use replacing, better lighting would be nice, broken vials should be swept away. As he adjusted a glow stone on a shelf his hoof brushed against his back, resulting in a loud *click*.

To Rho's surprise a panel creaked open, revealing a hidden compartment. A small wooden box was tucked away within it. Rho pulled out the plain-looking box and looked it over, giving it a gentle shake to see if something was stored inside. There wasn't a clank or clatter, though the zebra was convinced he felt *some* kind of weight shifting around. Perhaps it was powder, or simply well-padded. There was only one way to find out.

The clasps of the box opened easily enough. Within was a small, translucent blue orb that shimmered in even the dim light. It looked like glass...wet glass.

“Now what do we have—*mmmmph!!*”

As soon as Rho's mouth had opened the mysterious sphere had launched straight into it and down the zebra's throat. It was clearly gelatinous, and its brief journey across Rho's tongue had left behind the strong lingering taste of blueberry.

Rho coughed hard a couple times but it was far too late to be of any help. Whatever had been in the box was now in his stomach and out of reach. He hadn't gotten a very clear look at the stuff and wasn't capable of examining it magically. There was a *chance* it had been some kind of slime, but it'd been smaller than most slimes he was familiar with. His primary worry was that the slime was toxic. At least he had some anti-toxin potions already stored in the shop above.

Lost in thought, Rho was utterly oblivious to the slime's immediate effects. The orange tip of his nose turned a dark blue, as if paint had splashed on it. The color spread, white hide shifting to a slightly lighter shade of blue that left his stripes faintly visible. Within seconds Rho's entire head was blue, even his messy mane. The lingering blueberry taste abruptly intensified as his mouth changed, like the zebra was swishing on fresh juice.

The taste was too vivid to ignore, and Rho raised a hoof just in time to spot it turning blue. For a moment he was startled, but the confusion passed quickly. He was—for better or worse—fairly familiar with what was happening to him. He was about to turn into a blueberry.

There were dozens upon dozens of ways to be transformed into a wobbling, overripe berry, and Rho had compiled a significant amount in his *Berrification Compendium*. It was one of his favorite methods of inflation to inflict on others, be they friend or foe. Rho hadn't heard of any slime causing

berrification before, though. A grin came across his face as he thought of the prospect of adding an entire new chapter to his work.

Once Rho's entire body had turned blue, the real transformation began. His round middle wobbled gently, then started swelling. For most the second stage of berrification was the most frightening, but Rho's fondness of expanding made it a rather pleasurable experience for him. He was no stranger to being spherical.

As the zebra's belly ballooned outward his breastplate creaked loudly in protest. Fortunately when Rho had gotten his armor re-fitted he'd also had it enchanted, allowing it to magically stretch to handle unexpected growth spurts. Rho wasn't entirely sure it'd hold up to him becoming a berry, though.

Rho's berrification was occurring at a rapid pace, too fast for the zebra to grab an antidote for. He doubted he'd be able to make it halfway up the stairs before getting stuck, which would dramatically increase the chances of him bursting apart. Popping wasn't the most enjoyable sensation—and neither was being resurrected—so Rho had little choice but to stay where he was.

The swelling zebra waddled towards the middle of the room, nudging aside tables and anything with sharp edges that might end up being an issue in the coming minutes. Moving around made Rho realize there wasn't the usual sloshing or bubbling echoing from his stomach that was a trademark of berrification. The substance within him was thicker, and whenever it shifted it threatened to topple him. Rho did his best to remember every little detail of the transformation for future reference.

An open space was cleared just seconds before Rho became effectively immobile. His belly was massive, the plates of his armor having started to separate after stretching out as far as they could. Armor straps dug into his bloated hide, amplifying the growing pressure within him. Rho's arms and legs puffed up as he continued to expand, his cheeks swelling as well. The zebra's body was growing rounder and rounder.

Curiosity was slowly turning into concern. Rho had expected his armor straps to snap early on, freeing him of his restrictive plates so he could inflate comfortably. Instead they were stretching a little *too* dutifully, creaking but not tearing. Rho's armor looked comical on his mostly spherical body, breastplate clinging to his chest as metal bands struggled to cover even a fraction of the domes that were his arms and legs. Straps and plates were poking his taut hide all over. If he didn't lose his armor soon he'd pop for sure.

Ominous *creeeeeeeaaaks* filled the cellar as Rho wobbled in place. The pressure was becoming unbearable, his head spinning. He was acutely aware of every edge of his armor, every stretched-thin strap. There were so many spots on his body that could rupture he couldn't keep track of them, didn't *want* to keep track of them. With how durable his hide was he probably could've expanded another few feet and been perfectly fine, but even he couldn't endure something actively trying to burst him.

When the inevitable occurred Rho didn't have time to react. His eyes bulged alert as his breastplate finally dug in too much, and in an instant a barrage of blue hide and slime exploded all over the cellar. Rho's armor was thrown into the air, bouncing off the ceiling before skidding across the floor and colliding with a wall, scuffed but intact.

Dust had been blown away and shelves knocked over, but silence soon returned to the rattled room. The blue globs of slime that had just recently filled Rho to the brim now began to wobble and roll, gathering in the center of the cellar. Every last bit of the blueberry slime found its way back, gradually merging into a single, massive form. It was as spherical as it had been when it was originally in the small box, just far larger thanks to incubating in Rho.

When all the slime had been collected it simply stood, surface shifting occasionally, waiting for Rho to resurrect and return. At least the zebra would get a chance to study it...