“Steady with the pipette, Max. We don’t need another accident.”

Max grimaced as he held his shaky paw over the beaker, carefully squeezing the tube above it, watching with unblinking and bloodshot eyes as he carefully squeezed the pipette. The mixture inside slowly emerged in the form of a green viscous solution, building up near the edge of the pipette before falling into the aqueous solution below. For the briefest of moments, the liquid changed into a dazzling emerald hue, before fading back into its original clear color.

Max continued this process multiple times, taking careful measures to release the smallest amounts of reactant possible while his partner recorded the reactions. With every additional drop, the solution’s color change lasted longer, even if none of the green lingered afterwards. It was frustrating work, considering how long they had been working on this little project together for nearly a month, and while the reward for this accomplishment was certainly worthwhile, the amount of stress from titration with only a single pipette was starting to accumulate.

The foxcoon’s gloved paw started shaking nervously as he knew he was approaching the equivalence point, the substance below starting to retain just the faintest tint of green. The plan was find a way to cheaply and effectively add vital vitamins and minerals to any form of water while also cleansing it of pollutants. Not only would it be able to easily filter out all sorts of pollutants, but it could also serve as a new popular drink for consumers. In this case, Max decided to add artificial apple flavoring to the test batch, although he had several more flavors in mind. While this “Miracle Water,” as it was being marketed, certainly sounded like any mega corporation’s wet dream, the problem was finding the right balance between the concentration of water and the chemicals needed. Too much water would dilute the chemicals completely, making it nothing more than flavored water. Too much reactants could result in a number of unwanted side effects that neither Max nor his dragon companion wanted to put much thought into. Nevertheless, the perfect ratio was near impossible to achieve it seemed, as both scientists have failed and failed again, evidenced by the countless vials of green goo surrounding them.

“Wipe my face, Verdori. I don’t want any sweat to fall into this,” Max muttered as he noticed how damp his forehead had grown, his heart pounding in his chest. The solution before them looked pale enough, yet they both knew from experience that the tiniest drop too much would ruin the entire batch. All they had to do was find the equivalence point themselves and store the info. Once that was finished, they could easily program even the simplest of machines to mass produce the Miracle Water, but that was later, and this is now. Max squinted his eyes, his vision narrowing to the pipette in his gloved paw as he squeezed with as little pressure as possible. Almost there, he thought to himself as the green goop slowly, oh so slowly, started to form. Almost there… Almos-

\*RIIIIIING\*

Verdori’s eyes shot wide open as he felt the vibration from his lab coat, horrified that someone would call him now of all times. The green dragon quickly fumbled in his pockets to silence the device, yet he knew it was far too late. Startled, Max had gripped the pipette too tightly, squirting the last of the substance into the solution, staining it bright green. They had failed.

“Freaking heck!” The foxcoon exclaimed as he slammed his fists into the table, rattling the glass beaker. “We were this close too, I could feel it!”

“Hey hey hey, relax man,” the green dragon tried reassuring his lab partner, yet still stepping back awkwardly. “We’re starting to get closer at least, right? I can titrate instead if you want.”

Still seething with rage, Max completely violated safety protocol and threw off his goggles, followed by his gloves. “Heck no, the last time you tried you dropped the entire freaking pipette into the beaker! Gosh, my wrists hurt so much they feel like they’re about to fall off!”

“Um… maybe you shouldn’t be pounding the table so hard th-“

“Shut up!” The hybrid shouted again, whapping the counter so hard it produced an echo. “I just. Want. That. Freaking. Prize already!”

Verdori sighed. “Let’s just call it a day, Max. We’re all getting bent out of shape. How about we grab some taquitos or something and head home?”

The dragon stood by and waited for his lab partner to regain his composure, using food to bribe Max. The two had grown quite addicted to stopping by different food joints after a long day full of failures, even if it meant sporting rounded bellies that pushed their lab coats outwards. Normally, the foxcoon would jump at the idea of savoring some delectable Mexican cuisine to drown his sorrows in, but instead, he turned towards Verdori with a very pale expression. “Um, before we go, can you go grab the first aid kit?”

The chubby drake’s jaw dropped to the floor as he saw Max’s outstretched paw, a massive glass splinter wedged into the exposed limb. “O-oh shit!” He stammered, hopping from one foot to the other in blind hysteria. “S-stay where you are, I-I’ll get help!” And with all the grace that a fat scientist would have, Verdori bolted from the lab room, leaving Max alone to stare at the gaping wound.

Max sighed as he casually leaned against the counter, keeping his paw held out like he was some sort of Frankenstein monster. He expected himself to be wailing in pain at this point, yet interestingly enough he only felt a mild itching sensation. Soon, however, that itching sensation started to dissipate, and before Max’s very eyes, he watched as the glass shard sunk into his paw, the wound closing up around it. As one would expect, the foxcoon screamed in shock and flailed his arm around, as if trying to shake out the glass shard from within. As if things couldn’t get even more weird, Max couldn’t even feel the shard inside him at all, leaving him to wonder just what the heck was going on.

Until he remembered that the glass shard originally belonged to the beaker that held the green reactant, which was now splattered around the table, his paw, and, most likely, his bloodstream at this point. That strange feeling in his paw soon spread out to the rest of his body as he found himself feeling rather wobbly, in a very, very literal sense. Deep within his body, the chemicals were fast at work with augmenting any liquid they came to contact with, picking out the unwanted particles and replacing them with more of itself. As a result, the foxcoon found himself bloating outwards from the increased pressure within, slowly turning into a goo-filled balloon.

In a burst of panic, Max lunged for the doorway as if leaving this accursed lab would wake him from this nightmare, yet only managed an awkward stumble as most of his body refused to cooperate with him anymore. What had started with his blood turning into slime swiftly escalated into something more as his muscles starting following suit, leaving his bloated body useless. As a result, the foxcoon was stuck in a semi-standing position, forced to watch his stomach fill out his lab coat inch by inch, the spherical mass pressing against the strained material until the buttons popped off one at a time, revealing a massive green paunch that rippled like a bowl of jelly. Likewise, the rest of his uniform was swiftly ripped to shreds to make room for the expanding blob of foxcoon, his dark orange coloring blending into a bright emerald green. Soon enough, even his fur started to melt along his skin, the last signs of his original form finally shedding away.

Max blinked slowly once the ordeal was done, surprised to find his heart still pounding in his chest. He shouldn’t be alive; all the liquid in his body had turned into the abominable substance he had been working with for the past month, and yet here he was. He was still standing, breathing, living, as if nothing had ever happened. Testing his luck even further, the big green blob slowly lifted what he considered to be his leg, feeling the limb dig deep into his hanging underbelly to the point where he was afraid the two had congealed, but with enough force he managed to separate the two by slamming his foot back into the ground, feeling it spread along the floor and sending ripples along his constantly-shifting body.

“This is great,” he whispered softly, a big grin spreading across his gelatin muzzle. He felt no pain, stress, fear, or anything. Max was almost like a super hero, with an epic backstory and everything! Sure, he was still a big lumbering ball of goo, but he could still squish through any narrow door with ease whereas a fur with a similar girth would need the aid of a friend to squeeze through such a door! Best of all, he got to experience the delightful taste of apples on his gooey tongue! With a garbled laugh, the blobby foxcoon waddled towards the beakers of failed Miracle Water that littered the room. After all, they all looked appetizing, and after having a taste of what it meant to be invulnerable, he wanted more.