

Soothing Sloshes

By: Indi

Tanio didn't know why he had opened the fridge that night. Maybe it was out of boredom or habit, or to grab something he soon forgot about. No matter the reason, the foxsky found his gaze drawn to a glass bottle hidden away in the back. Carefully nudging some leftovers out of the way, Tanio grabbed the bottle and pulled it out to get a closer look.

The label was a little worn but still legible: Blueberry Bubbler. A cheerful, round blue lion was the mascot, and after a second Tanio was hit with recognition. It was a novelty soda, one that could actually turn you into a blueberry. At least, sort of. Your belly would get rather big and you'd turn blue, but you wouldn't end up spherical. Or worse—a permanent berry.

Permaberries weren't exactly rare, not with all the silly ways berrification was possible. Yet there wasn't a cure for the affliction. If you were unlucky enough to get it you just had to learn to live as a juicy sphere forever.

As unnerving as such a fate was, Tanio still found himself wondering what it'd feel like to be a berry temporarily. The soda could give him a hint of that.

With nothing better to do, Tanio popped off the cap and took a bold swig. Surprisingly it tasted pretty good for something that was mainly meant as a prank. He couldn't resist a second gulp, then a third as he headed into the living room and settled into a recliner. No change had occurred, though.

Frowning, Tanio chugged the rest of the bottle, wondering if that was the problem. However, what he couldn't see was the white fur of his muzzle rapidly turning a deep shade of blue. It spread over his face with haste, dying even his hair. White, teal, black, and green—all became varying shades of blue.

Tanio jolted a bit as he spotted his arms and paws turning blue, but soon he was smiling. It was finally working!

After staring at his new blue paws for a while his gaze shifted to his belly in anticipation of the inevitable swell. From within he heard a faint, muffled bubbling noise as the soda truly went to work, causing his stomach to produce blueberry juice. Slowly he felt his stomach filling, until at last his middle swelled outward steadily.

Grinning wide, Tanio tapped on his belly as it grew rounder and rounder. It felt just like he was chugging water from a hose! He watched the creases on his shirt smooth out as it tried to contain his expanding gut. The buttons were showing signs of strain, threads creaking. When the first one popped off he almost clapped. Others followed shortly after, leaving only the top-most button intact. The shirt beneath had ridden up, exposing the foxsky's wobbling belly.

The bubbling was louder, and joined by *sloshes* and *splorts*. As fun as it was to swell, Tanio was realizing he enjoyed the sounds just as much. His belly sounded like a babbling brook, something he could nap to. Maybe he'd look into recording it at a later date.

For the first few minutes Tanio delighted in the blueberry belly he was gaining. He planned to take pictures once the swelling stopped, but oddly enough it didn't seem to be slowing at all. The foxsky was sure he'd passed the advertised limit. With his gut getting noisier, Tanio's joy was slowly replaced with concern. Maybe his natural heft just made him look fuller? No, he was still too big even then. He had to check the label!

Tanio's belly filled his lap, making grabbing the empty bottle an unexpected challenge. The juice splashed inside, swirling about as he reached. The second he had the bottle he was reading the fine print with haste.

“Blah blah blah, use with caution. Blah blah blah, causes swelling. Blah blah blah, only drink one serving. Wait, one serving—how many are in this thing?”

Tanio turned the bottle so he could see the nutrition facts, and he came close to gasping in shock. *Ten*. The bottle had ten whole servings, and a slew of warnings telling him to never drink more

than one at a time.

“Oh no—no no no!” He wanted to rage at such a dangerous drink being sold in a bottle that'd encourage chugging it all outright, but he didn't have the time. “Don't panic, you just need to call 9-1-1. They'll get you juiced, you'll be an orb for a few minutes, max,” Tanio told himself, over and over.

The recliner was groaning some beneath the weight of Tanio's juice-filled gut. He searched the right pocket of his shorts for his phone, and then the left. Nothing. He managed to sneak his paw to the one in back. Nothing! Tanio couldn't see it on the side table, and couldn't imagine putting it down anywhere else. It *should* have still been in his pocket. Unless...

Filling with dread as fast as he was juice, Tanio dug his paw into the gap of the recliner. He cursed when the tip of a finger brushed against his phone. It'd fallen down the crack at the worst possible moment. Leaning in quickly proved impossible thanks to his sloshing belly. Not eager to waste time on a lost cause, Tanio decided his last hope was to go to his computer and message someone—anyone—for help.

Of course just getting out of the recliner proved to be an ordeal. His middle was growing rounder and rounder with each passing second, pinning him down like a liquid boulder. When he did manage to escape he nearly toppled right over in the process.

Jostling the internal juices caused the bubbling to intensify—and the swelling.

Tanio yelped as he felt himself blimping up far faster than before. And it wasn't just his belly that was expanding, it was everything. The seams of his shirt and shorts began to rip apart as his limbs puffed up. His chest and hips were starting to merge with his middle, the foxsky taking on a spherical shape. Out of desperation Tanio waddled towards his computer. He barely got a few feet before even that was impossible.

The foxsky's clothes fell to the ground around him in shreds. Immobilized by the untold gallons of juice filling him up, Tanio was helpless as he felt his body steadily engulf his limbs as it swelled in every direction. He wiggled his paws as the curvature of his body lifted them off the ground, causing him to lightly sway from side-to-side.

For a few brief seconds Tanio was a near-perfect orb, very much a literal berry. But soon the weight of the juice caused his sides to bulge, and he was *still* expanding. His chin rested atop his round body, and slowly but surely it was angling upward. Tanio's head—and his paws for that matter—were sinking deeper and deeper into his massive body.

Tanio wiggled and wobbled in response, not that there was any chance of fleeing his own body. He couldn't shake the sensation of swimming in place. Or maybe it was more like being suspended in a pool of jello. It was weird, weirder than anything Tanio had ever felt before.

Paws slipped from view, completely surrounded, and his head was sticking straight up towards the ceiling.

Tanio huffed and groaned as he sunk. “This can't be...happening! I don't wanna be a permaberry! I don't wanna be a—*mrrrrmmmmph!*!”

The foxsky's muzzle disappeared, and—at least from the outside—Tanio was just an enormous berry.

But within, it was like being submerged. Deep sloshes and bubbling echoed into Tanio's ears, the only thing he could hear. *Slorrrrrrrrrsh. Glorrrrp. Blurrrrrrrrrrrrble. Slosssh.* Squirming just made the sounds louder. Enveloped by his berry body, Tanio swayed and wiggled, getting nowhere fast.

He couldn't give up. Couldn't accept it might be a whole day before anyone came to his rescue. That by then he'd be a permaberry, guaranteed. So he fought.

Yet the longer he remained submerged in himself the harder it became to concentrate. The sloshing was ever-present, and strangely soothing in a way. It was like a white noise machine. Slowly the foxsky started relaxing, squirming less and less. His worries were drifting away.

Glorrysh. Bubbble. Slossssh. Schwiss.

He deserved a rest, he was tired. But something bad was happening, right? Maybe he was

imagining things. He was cozy, after all, and warm. Why'd he been so worried again?

Bworrrrsh. Galuuuunk. Slorrrrrrrrsh. Glorrrrrrp.

Sleep. He needed...sleep. He was worrying for nothing, nothing at all. Sleep was good.

Splorrrsh. Gaaalorrrp. Plorrrrsh. Slossssssssssssssh.

Overcome by the mesmerizing sounds of his juices, Tanio fell into a deep, deep sleep. As long as the sloshing kept soothing him he'd remain asleep, suspended. Perhaps someone would come along and rouse him...or perhaps he'd be stuck in a perpetual slumber, incapable of being juiced down to size. Only time would tell...