Puffer Fish in the Infinite Laboratory

by Shawn Misener

They put me in charge of developing a drug that stifles fear.

This has got to be the most elaborate laboratory in the history of the pharmaceutical industry; it goes on for miles, towering silver silos and bubbling beakers connected like hamster mazes that stretch to the horizon. An endless warehouse with just me in it, white lab coat two sizes too tight and something spiny in the pocket that tears at my thigh.

I could use an assistant but it becomes clear that I am alone. Unless you count the puffer fish I find in my coat. I yank him out fully inflated. He's bright turquoise and asks me with a Canadian accent for a glass of water.

“To drink?” I ask.

“No you hoser! Put me in it.” He pokes my hand for emphasis.

So I begin my trek down the infinite laboratory, looking fruitlessly for a glass and a tap, allowing my mind to consider the solution to fear. In both quests I am hopeless, resigned to watching the foaming solutions and beeping monitors as I pass by, dying puffer fish cradled in my palm.

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