

Inflation Date
By Angelus

Zaph was squeezed into the bathroom of his city condo, using the mirror to finish tying his orange braids as he got ready to go out with a friend for the day. The unicorn was wide as a door and built like a house; he was glad that his current accommodations were larger than average, affording him enough space to live comfortably with only minor inconveniences. His broad body was wider than most entryways, and he stood at an imposing eight feet tall, not including his horn. His ceiling had just enough clearance to keep his horn from getting stuck in it, but he had to duck to get through his own doorways.

"That should do it..." He slid gold rings onto the ends of his braids to keep them in place and add a bit more flair to his look. He was already dressed, wearing a tank top that failed to cover much of his chest, and that only managed to cover about a third of his stomach, leaving his fluffy keg-gut exposed. Custom order shorts and hooved boots covered his stout, muscular legs, and a pair of star-studded, leather straps were wrapped around his arms, just below the curve of his head-sized biceps.

Zaph checked himself in the mirror one last time to confirm everything was in order just as he heard the doorbell. Perfect timing. He ducked under his bathroom doorway, shuffling through it sideways to avoid blowing out the doorframe with the sheer power of his shoulders. The condo nearly shook with every footstep, and his shoulders brushed the walls of the hallways as he headed to the front door.

When he opened the door he was greeted by a familiar face; Holo was standing there, crouched down so that he didn't hit his head on the hallway ceiling outside Zaph's home. The dragon was dressed in a crop top that hung off one shoulder and shorts that only went halfway down his thighs. His red and yellow scales and various cyborg elements were on full display, as intended.

"Hey Zaph!" Holo leaned in a bit but didn't try to enter the condo; he had a slim build but was two feet taller than Zaph, so he barely fit into the building either.

"Hey Holo, perfect timing! I'm ready to go." Zaph stepped out into the hallway and locked the door behind him. "So, what did you have in mind for today? Something outdoors?" Zaph was hoping to get a chance to stretch his arms and legs outside.

"Oh yeah, I was thinking of going to the park for our date today, and I have JUST the activity in mind!" Holo moved his hands out from behind his back, showing off a rather tall helium tank he had been hiding behind his back. He leaned on the top of it and swished his tail expectantly as he gazed at Zaph.

"Uh." Zaph looked over the tank that Holo had dragged in with him. "What's that for... exactly?" He blinked slowly. They had enjoyed some mutual inflation sessions before at each other's houses, but never outdoors.

"For our date!" Holo said as if stating the obvious.

"You know that when I agreed to 'go out' with you I didn't mean a date, right? A-and you didn't mention anything about bringing that along!" Zaph scowled up at Holo, but the dragon wasn't dissuaded.

"Awww, but then I'll have carried this all the way here for nothing AND it'll go to waste!" Holo drummed his metal claws on the metal tank, tapping out a rhythmic, metallic percussion.

“Are you really gonna tell me you’re not the least bit interested? You know I know you better than that.” That toothy grin never left Holo’s face, radiating confidence that Zaph found equally annoying and dangerous. Holo grinned like that when he knew he’d get what he wanted.

The tapping of Holo’s claws on the air tank drew Zaph’s gaze to the tank again. It was a good “brand” of helium, so to speak, their usual favorite. This tank was obviously bigger than the one they usually shared too.

“W-well... Even if we did, we’d both just float away, did you even think about that, metal head?” Zaph knocked on the side of Holo’s head and Holo chuckled as Zaph’s knuckles knocked against his metal skull.

“I think sometimes! YOU’RE gonna be the one inflating! I’ll hold you down, like a big robotic paperweight!” The screen on Holo’s stomach flashed his weight to drive home his point. His largely metal skeleton made him nearly one ton heavy.

“J-just me? Now hold on, you can’t just drag me around the city like some kind of balloon!” Zaph protested even as his cheeks warmed.

“I can if you let meeee~” Holo dragged out the last word and leaned in uncomfortably close, making his presence intentionally oppressive.

“Guh-” Zaph stepped away to give himself some space.

“I even came prepared!” Holo dug into his deceptively deep pockets and pulled out over a dozen feet of rubber hose, and a metal muzzle that was made to accommodate said hose being inserted at the front.

“That looks custom made,” Zaph pointed out, eyes fixed on the muzzle. It was even big enough to fit over his face.

“Yeah, I ordered it to fit!” Holo tossed it toward Zaph, and he caught it reflexively. He turned it around in his hands, checking the craftsmanship on the muzzle. It had a sturdy, metal exterior, and the interior was lined with a bit of fabric padding to keep it comfortable.

Zaph sighed in defeat. “You really put that computer brain of yours to work for once huh?”

Holo nodded. “So, gonna do it?”

“...Yeah, fuck it, may as well. Hook me up.” This outing wasn’t shaping up to be the kind of stretch Zaph had in mind, but it would do just as well, if not better.

A huge grin cracked over Holo’s muzzle, showing off his big, sharp teeth. “With pleasure~” He took the muzzle from Zaph and hooked everything up.

Zaph slipped his snout into the muzzle and fit the length of hose between his teeth, pinching it slightly. He snorted as he felt Holo tug on the straps to fasten it behind his head where Zaph couldn’t easily undo it, owing to the bulk of his muscular arms.

“How’s that? Gimme a thumbs up for good and a thumbs down for bad,” Holo said.

Zaph grabbed the muzzle with both hands and gave it a few tugs firm. The straps held fast, and the muzzle didn’t budge more than half an inch from his pulling. He felt like he could probably snap it off if he used his full strength, but he wasn’t interested in ruining the thing. Satisfied with his testing, he gave Holo a nod and a thumbs up.

“Great! Let’s get started then.” Holo tucked the helium tank under one arm and turned the valve, letting air flow freely. The hose went rigid, and Zaph felt the rush of cold air fill his mouth, making his cheeks puff out. The air hissed down his throat and into his stomach, and he could feel a pocket of buoyant gas start to build inside of him.

“Mhrrpph?” Zaph was surprised Holo was starting the flow already; they still had to get out of his condo complex, and he could already feel his stomach getting rounder.

“What’s the matter? If you don’t hurry, you won’t fit in the elevator down~” Holo tugged on the hose like it was a leash to pull Zaph down the hallway. The unicorn narrowed his gaze and snorted at Holo through the muzzle, but hurried after the dragon. There was little time to spare; they’d both barely fit in the elevator together at their current size.

They passed the closed doors of a few of Zaph’s neighbors’ rooms as they moved down the hall. Holo and Zaph both had heavy footsteps, but the people living on this floor had grown accustomed to the sound of heavy hooves stomping up and down the hall a couple of times a day. Natural light poured in through wide windows set at each end of the hallway, and the carpeted floors and plain painted walls were crisp and clean, clearly regularly maintained.

Holo punched the down button on the elevator, and the doors slid open. He ducked down and crouched into a corner of the elevator cab, and Zaph squeezed in after him, taking up much of the available space by himself. It was a few floors down to the lobby. The gentle elevator music was drowned out by the hissing of air from the huge helium tank.

Zaph could feel his stomach growing by the inch, taking up more of their already limited space. His arms were getting pushed up by his sides, and he kept having to widen his stance as his center of gravity shifted with his decreasing weight. He had his chin buried in his chest as he tried to keep crouched, but he could feel his stomach trying to push him upright as it ballooned out. It bumped the doors and wall, so Zaph stepped back, only to press Holo against the back wall with his rear.

Holo let out a snorting chuckle, having completely expected this. He braced one hand against Zaph’s back and pushed, shoving Zaph against the front of the elevator. He was able to hold it for only a moment. Zaph pushed back with both arms, and Holo didn’t have nearly enough strength to resist. The dragon was pressed into the back wall with a wince and a groan, and Zaph smirked under the muzzle.

The elevator let out a little “ding” as it passed each floor. Zaph counted the dings to the bottom as the elevator ran short on space. He was pressing against every wall and swelling into the corners, and he could feel Holo pressed against his back and rear. His body was feeling lighter too, though it was hard to enjoy the sensation in such a cramped space. As usual, Holo hadn’t thought about this beyond the fact that it would be entertaining.

Just as Zaph was certain he was going to dent the interior elevator walls, it arrived at the bottom floor, and the doors slid open. He felt his stomach bulge out through the doors and bump into a couple of bystanders, causing them to stumble away and marvel at the white-furred dome that was blocking up the elevator. He tried to push himself out, but he was struggling to get traction with his legs now that he was so much lighter. He felt like he was trying to pilot a blimp as he shoved at his sides and kicked at the ground to try and get the leverage he needed.

His stomach bounced on the other side of the door, and Zaph could hear some confused, mumbling chatter from the other side. “Mhhph ahmmvr!” He tried to warn them, briefly forgetting that he couldn’t speak. He crossed his eyes to stare at his muzzled snout. His cheeks were already creeping into his vision and pressing against the muzzle.

All of a sudden, Zaph felt Holo’s hands and both of his feet press against his back. Before he even had the chance to look back, Holo pushed with all his limbs, shoving Zaph out of the elevator and throwing him into the hallway. The people who had been waiting for the

elevator were bowled over by the inflated boulder of Zaph's stomach, and the unicorn half stumbled and half floated away, stopping just short of hitting the opposite wall. He'd hit the end of his rope, or rather, his hose, as it pulled taut, stretched between his mouth and where Holo was getting to his feet in the elevator.

The dragon stepped out without so much as a glance at the people he had used Zaph to knock over. They were both fine, just stunned and laid out on the hallway carpet. Holo gave Zaph a push to hurry him along. "Come on blimp, get a move on or you'll get stuck in the hallway before we make it to the lobby~"

Zaph grumbled and waddled toward the lobby, his steps awkward and bouncy as his weight decreased further. His tank top was stretched around his broad chest and no longer covered any of his stomach. His arms and legs were thickened with air, further complicating his movement while also straining the legs of his shorts. His steps were wide, swinging out to his sides as he teetered left to right to make sure his feet could touch the ground. With every step, he felt his body lift off the ground and float back down. It was only by an inch, maybe less, but it was a far cry from the lumbering, nearly ground-breaking steps he was used to.

Hands with sharp claws pushed into his back, nearly tipping him over. Zaph scowled and tried to turn his head to shoot a dirty glance at Holo, but his cheeks got in the way, blocking his vision. He did his best to pick up the pace, but felt like he might fall over at any moment, or worse, finally lose his footing and float to the ceiling.

He was hurried into the lobby's main area, where a couple of the building's other residents were loitering. Their conversation came to an abrupt halt as Zaph bounced towards them, leaving them staring wide-eyed and opened-mouthed at the helium-filled unicorn. The wall of the lobby that faced the road was all glass which let in a lot of lovely natural light, but it also meant that passersby were stopping on the sidewalk outside to gawk at Zaph. A few of them pulled out their phones to take photos before hurrying on with their business.

Zaph's puffed-out cheeks lit up with an embarrassed blush, and he instinctively tried to shout at them to delete the photos, but his mouth was muzzled and his words were an incoherent mumbling at best.

"I thought you liked the attention, what with how flashy you dress sometimes," Holo purred as he nudged Zaph's side making his skin creak. It was true that Zaph's outfits were often ostentatious. Combined with his bright pink and orange hair he often drew a lot of looks, but the attention he was currently getting wasn't exactly the kind he wanted.

His current outfit was getting close to its limits. As he struggled to move his legs and reach the lobby door, he popped some of the seams on his shorts. His tank top was barely clinging to his chest, and the armholes were stretched to their maximum width. Even his boots and the bands around his arms were feeling tight as air flowed through his body and into his limbs and extremities.

He flattened his stomach against the lobby doors. They were double-wide to allow furniture to be moved in and out of the building with ease and were also automatic, but they didn't open as Zaph approached them. He no longer weighed enough to trip the pressure sensor on the floor.

"Looks like you'll have to work for it!" Holo grinned and stood as far away as the air hose would let him so as not to trip the pressure sensor himself. The hose was pulled tight between Zaph's muzzle and the tank Holo was still hauling around under one arm.

Zaph frowned at Holo. He was losing weight and mobility by the minute, meaning that each attempt would be more difficult than the last if he didn't succeed first try. Holo knew this, of course, and he was watching with anticipation to see what the ballooning unicorn would do.

He tried the obvious thing first. He lifted one leg as best he could and slammed down on the pressure plate with his boot-clad hoof. The automatic doors slid open... but Zaph bounced himself toward the ceiling with the recoil. He tipped over in midair so that his stomach was facing the ceiling, and he landed on his back with a bounce. The doors shut before he could right himself, and he could hear Holo chuckling in amusement.

"Haaahahah. Ah, that was good, I figured you'd launch yourself you overblown muscle-blimp. Come on, let's go before you outgrow the doors." Holo had gotten his amusement and was ready to proceed, so he grabbed Zaph in both arms and squeezed him through the doors and out onto the street.

Zaph bounced onto the sidewalk and only avoided floating into traffic thanks to the air hose leashing him to Holo. The dragon followed him out onto the sidewalk as Zaph's outfit groaned under duress, strained quite to the limit by Zaph's increasingly large circumference. His top barely covered his chest, and it was tearing around his arms and bloated neck. The straps around his arms were pinching into his stretched skin and straining to stay on as his arms grew thicker, merging with the larger curve of his body. His shorts were coming apart at the seams, letting his stretched, white-furred thighs bulge through the gaps. His boots were coming apart as well, with the sole peeling away from the rest of the boot as the leathery material ripped from top to bottom.

He had lost contact with the ground as well. He was floating a few inches off the sidewalk and rising slowly, no longer in control of his mobility. Zaph grunted as he felt a heavy hand press into his neck tire and pin his round body against the ground.

Holo held Zaph down with one hand and pressed his face between Zaph's cheeks to be sure the unicorn could see and hear him. "You know, I think for as big as you're going to be, I should add one last thing to you before we head down the street." Holo's grin turned into a sneer that made Zaph sweat with worry.

The unicorn shivered as he felt a broad, wet brush meet his stomach and slide over the fur. Holo was writing something on his stomach, though he couldn't tell what it was just by the feeling of the brush strokes. He grunted some half-hearted protests to Holo and wobbled his uselessly ballooned limbs, unable to bend them more than a few degrees. The attempt pushed his already tattered outfit past the limit, and the remaining seams all split with a discordant tearing sound.

His shirt snapped across his chest and around his arms and flung itself off of his back. His pants and boots burst off of his legs, and air flooded the previously constricted limbs, making them just as uselessly puffy as his arms. Even the bands below his biceps failed under the pressure, snapping at the buckle and bouncing off of his broad sides before hitting the ground.

The muzzle attached to his head was still holding on and showing no signs of weakness. The airflow was still steady as that oversized helium tank pushed gallon after gallon of gas into the blimp.

"Almost done... There!" Holo finished what he was painting and took his hand off of Zaph. Without Holo to hold him down, he lifted off the ground and floated several feet into the

air. His body was now totally buoyant, and the only thing keeping him from floating into the stratosphere was the air hose tethering him to the heavy metal tank. He was floating upside down, making his braids hang down and giving him a view of the street below. People were gathered around Holo and looking and pointing up at Zaph, with many of them taking photos of the spectacle.

"Hrm hrmf!" Zaph demanded to know what Holo had painted on his stomach. His grunting was now accompanied by a hiss of pressurized air seeping from his nostrils. The former creaking of his clothes was now replaced by the creaking of his body.

"Oh I'll tell you in a moment, after people have had some time to take more photos~ You'll like it, I'm sure. Now let's get going!" Holo tugged on the hose to make Zaph bounce in the air before he started to move down the street with his balloon in tow.

Holo dragged Zaph down the street, carrying the air tank under one arm and letting Zaph bounce against the side of buildings as he trailed behind on the end of the hose. Zaph grunted from the rough treatment, wincing as the occasional sharp corner struck his tight skin. The reaction of people on the sidewalk were varied. Some of them stopped and gawked, others hurried to cross the street, and others frantically fumbled for their phones to take photos and follow the one-blimp parade.

Zaph's tiny following was growing like he was now that he had been dragged out into such a public area for his and Holo's "date." He wouldn't readily admit to enjoying it, but every click of a digital camera shutter made him blush brighter. "Hey, you're getting popular. I guess we must look good together~" Holo mocked Zaph in that familiar, flirty tone. "Though you seem to be getting most of the spotlight! I knew painting your media tag on your gut would pay off!" Holo grinned with his big crooked teeth, revealing to Zaph that he'd painted his social media tag on his stomach upside down earlier. Now that Zaph was a large balloon, hanging upside down, it made sense.

"Ghrrrrff!" Zaph practically blasted steam from his snout at the revelation. When they had gone out and gotten big before, they were a pair of familiar but anonymous balloons. Now everyone would know who Zaph was, at least, and would likely be able to connect any previously taken images to him as well. He went red in the face at the thought. He'd seen plenty of pictures people had taken of him before that were uploaded to the internet, but he'd just chuckled at them, enjoying being popular but unknown. Things were going to be very different now.

"Man, anyone searching you online is gonna see nothing but photos from today for WEEKS. I do hope you enjoy the reputation, helium tank." Holo tugged on the hose to make Zaph bounce in the air. The unicorn was generating a lot of lift with all the gas inside of him, and the hose was pulled taut between his muzzle and the tank. An average-sized person would have been in danger of getting lifted away with Zaph, but Holo's size and metal composition kept them both grounded.

Zaph was well immobilized by his own body at this point. His limbs were sunken into the white orb his body had stretched into, rendering them immovable. He couldn't even flail enough to bounce in the air unless Holo gave him a tug by his air hose-turned-leash. He was at the mercy of every building collision and alleyway breeze. On occasion, he would turn far enough to see the buildings on the opposite side of the street, and he could clearly see his own bloated

visage reflected in the glass facades of the skyscrapers. He was a bright white orb, almost blindingly so when the sun hit him directly and reflected off of his snow-white circumference.

Zaph snorted at the image, but felt a bit of pride welling up with his internal pressure. Holo was right, he did look good like this, even if he was getting so full it was almost sickening.

The buildings downtown gave way to shorter buildings, and soon to greenery and foliage. Even from his limited, downward vantage, Zaph could see the sidewalk give way to a dirt path through the grass, and he realized they had reached the big park not too far from where Holo lived. He wondered why he hadn't guessed this destination sooner; it was almost notorious for being Holo's go-to place to cause trouble.

Holo crossed the grass and stopped when he found a good spot, and Zaph drifted to a stop just overhead, looking down at the mop-top of Holo's hair. "Alright... This is a good spot!" Holo used his arm to drive the air tank halfway into the ground like a piledriver, rooting it firmly in place. Zaph floated about twenty feet or so overhead, casting a large shadow over the dragon as his equine hide creaked from the pressure trying to escape his body.

"Yeah, that's looking good." Holo tugged on the hose to make sure it was secure, making Zaph bob around in midair as he felt the metal muzzle pull on his puffed-up face. Holo laid down in the grass under Zaph's shadow, sighing with relief as he slid his arms behind his head. "Thanks for the cover, I'll enjoy it while it lasts~" Holo teased as Zaph's body groaned.

The dirigible unicorn was at his limit, he could tell. He was barely stretching anymore, but the pressure that filled his body was intensifying. His hide was rock-hard from all the air pushing out against it, making him so stiff he couldn't even twitch his fingers. The pressure was pushing out in all directions, and he could feel it throbbing against his head, limbs, tail, stomach, and even his back. He was a great white sphere more than twenty feet wide, unable to do more than float in midair and bounce around on the end of the hose that tethered him to the ground.

"I suppose you're lucky," Holo cracked open an eye to watch Zaph above him. The unicorn was having trouble hearing the dragon over the creaking of his own body rattling in his ears. "The tank I got is almost out, so I'm really wondering if you'll hold together or not!" Holo let out a snorting chuckle and reached back to flick the pressure gauge on the tank. It was nearly empty and having trouble pushing the last of the helium into the equally-pressurized Zaph. "Won't need more than a few minutes to find out at least. I do hope your audience brought earplugs, for their sake."

A light breeze slowly turned Zaph, around, letting him peek at his surroundings from between his ballooned cheeks. The entourage that he had attracted as Holo dragged him through the city was still very much following him, now standing closer than ever now that he had settled in one place. Cameras clicked and video rolled, with some people even live-streaming his expansion to their audience. He would have groaned if he was able to, but he couldn't take in enough of a breath to make the sound.

The sound of his body creaking echoed all across the park. He felt like a million needles were pressing into every point of his body, trying to coax him to burst. He knew he only needed to last a few minutes more, maybe even just a few seconds. He could feel Holo's stupid smug grin on him from below, and he was determined to show that dragon he could take all that air like a champ. He used all the willpower he had to keep together, and the needle on the pressure gauge ticked down to the last...