

Bursting in the New Year

By: IndigoRho

The crowd of assorted party guests watched a list of names rapidly cycle on the big screen in the room, everyone waiting to see who would be the lucky one chosen to help ring in the New Year with style. After a few tense seconds the names gradually slowed, until finally it stopped at one: Tobias. Congratulations and some disappointed sighs sprung from the onlookers as all eyes turned to chimera who'd won. Tobias was slim with black fur and a dark red mane, a wide grin on his face. He'd been one of the first to add his name to the raffle, and had to resist jumping up and down in joy at somehow being the winner. After all, Tobias was one of the few people who actually *enjoyed* being inflated and popped.

Rho—the party's host and Tobias' boyfriend—approached with a small canister in his hoof. The orange-striped zebra knew very intimately how much Tobias liked blimping up, and was already looking forward to the show. “Alright, I'm pretty sure everyone heard me the first time, but just in case here's what's gonna happen. Tobias will swallow this delightful party popper here,” he waved the canister for emphasis. “and at about ten minutes till midnight it'll start filling him with air. If all goes according to plan, he'll go boom right as the new year begins!”

More cheers rose up, the partiers almost as excited to see the chimera blow as he was.

Tobias took the canister and swallowed it without hesitation, cringing as he felt it drop into his stomach. “Hopefully I make a good impact!”

Plenty of laughter and teasing ensued, and Tobias returned to enjoying the party as he waited for the big finale to occur. He tried to spend as much time with Rho as he could, knowing that after he popped they wouldn't be able to hang out until he re-formed again the next day. Missing the party wind down was going to be unfortunate but worth it. Time passed swiftly for the chimera, and before he knew it the clock had reached eleven-fifty, an audible hiss springing from within him.

Tobias looked down as his flat stomach started rounding out slightly. Displays flickered to life across the white bodysuit he was wearing, showing off both the time a slowly increasing percentage gauge to represent his internal pressure. One-by-one the revelers gathered, gazes locked on the chimera who would soon become a massive balloon. As he toyed with his bloating belly Tobias moved to the center of the room, as far from sharp furniture corners as possible to avoid any potential accidents. Bursting early would've killed the mood.

At first the air concentrated in Tobias' middle, giving him the impression of gaining a goofy beer gut that remained taut and rigid. He drummed on it so the others could hear the hollow sound ringing out. The air within him demanded more room, though, and once his belly was a bit bigger than a beach ball the rest of his body began to swell, too. His chest and limbs puffed up ever so slightly, growing rounder and forcing Tobias to constantly adjust his stance to remain standing. Even a little inflation was enough to have a considerable impact on the lean chimera.

The wobbly ball that was his middle quickly dominated his form, growing to engulf his thighs, waist, and chest. His limbs had grown completely rigid by then—bloating beyond practical use—and every attempt to move risked toppling him over, essentially immobilizing the chimera for good. Despite the strange changes and building pressure, Tobias retained a gleeful smile the whole time, blushing at being inflated in front of so many. The bodysuit had stretched dutifully along with him, making the countdown to his inevitable explosion larger and more visible. With only minutes left before midnight animated decals joined the timer and percentage display, making the blimping chimera more festive.

Tobias' head sunk somewhat into his body as he finally became almost completely spherical, more balloon than chimera now. His boyfriend strolled over, giving Tobias a few pokes and teasing the possibility of rolling him a bit, chuckling the entire time. Instead he merely rolled him forwards just enough to plant a kiss on his swollen cheek. “Thought I should probably say goodnight before you

become confetti Mr. Party Popper.”

“Very sweet of you to kiss the balloon that's about to pop, hon,” Tobias said, his face flushing red. “Though you might want to step back, I can feel my hide about to give out, and it'd be a shame if you got tossed across the room cause you couldn't stop cuddling your volatile boyfriend.”

Rho grinned, gently patting the chimera's taut sides. “Have fun!”

Only a minute was left on the clock, and Tobias' internal pressure was registering as ninety-eight percent. The chimera was obviously feeling the strain of holding so much air inside his overstretched body, wincing at every long creak and not wobbling at all. Onlookers cautiously backed away from the ticking time bomb, suddenly worried about being caught up in the show themselves. Some even shielded themselves with friends or furniture, just in case. At ten seconds everyone started chanting the countdown, Tobias' heart racing in anticipation, still smiling.

“...five...four...three...two...one!”

At the stroke of midnight Tobias felt a tear open up in his massive body, one that spread in a flash across his surface to join additional rips. He heard the thunderous sound of his own explosion and a brief sting before instantly losing consciousness. The noise drowned out the shouts of “Happy New Year!”, scraps of hide and a torrent of streamers erupting from where Tobias had been and raining down upon the celebration. Toasts and cheers rang out as the crowd celebrated, most shrugging off the occasional black-furred strip of chimera confetti spiraling around. Tobias' bodysuit had survived the explosion intact, springing back to its standard shape and landing where he'd been wobbling only seconds before.

Rho finished his glass of champagne and returned to what little was left of his boyfriend, smiling at the discarded bodysuit and scraps. He regretted not being able to burst the chimera himself, but the timer made for a much better spectacle. Recordings of Tobias' bursting would likely be shared often throughout the upcoming year, and Rho was already planning on using the footage to tease him the next time he decided to inflate the chimera. With a smirk he raised his glass to the pile below. “Happy New Year, hon.”