

The Vinyl Kingdom. A world of wonder. A world of rubber. All was made of vinyl, rubber, latex, or some other balloonable material. From the trees, to the mountains, to even the denizens. It was a world of toys and magic; of fun and whimsy.

But there were always some who misused the world's magic. Those who would wring the wonder for their own personal gain. Villains. Some were in it for wealth. Others for the pursuit of power, with complete dominion over the toy world as their end goal. And some did it simply for the fun of it; dark magic was still magic after all. And if they didn't cause any harm to the world or its puffy people, then why not?

One such villain, a malicious Dark Lord, had recently risen. In one major city, they had cast a Deflation curse, causing one random citizen to deflate every hour on the hour. Thankfully, reversing such a problem was as simple as casting a spell, hooking up an air tank, or even a powerful puffkiss. More of an annoyance to randomly lose all the air in one's body and become a limp toy than particularly dangerous. Even so, it was something that needed to be stopped.

Multiple parties had all volunteered to take down the Dark Lord, but none had been successful. Those who failed were magically whisked back to the city's hospital, deflated and possibly in need of patching. But that did not discourage them from trying again, nor others from attempting to defeat the target and free the city.

One such group was in the middle of the trek to the castle. The party of three was headed by Leven. The proud Kitsuleo sported a shiny red back with a gray underside. What was most impressive at first glance was his long, proud mane that shone a brilliant white color and his large, powerful nine tails. They waved to and fro proudly with each step. He walked with power in each step and an air of nobility, befitting the PSI Knight title. A burly combatant, Leven was the team's front line; he could take a lot of blows and grew stronger as fights drew on. When on all four paws, he stood four feet tall. But when on his hind legs, reserved solely for combat, takedowns, and hugs, he towered over his teammates at nearly ten feet tall. Leven may have had size and power, but wasn't that quick on his feet, nor was he a strong strategist.

Flanking the kitsuleo was Ferros; a tall, squeaky Icedrake. The anthro dragon's glossy, rubbery skin shone with a brilliant, cold blue hue, as did the mystical bow she carried. Though an icedrake, Ferros had the innate magical ability to channel different elements and channel said elements into the enchanted arrows of her bow. That came with the side effect of changing the color of her rubbery skin. She carried a quiver to store it, but no arrows; instead able to conjure magic ones when firing. Ferros was an Archer known throughout the Vinyl Kingdom. Partially for her skill with the bow, partially for the color-changing, and partially for her permanently playful personality. She was a welcome asset on any team.

Trailing slightly behind the other two balloonies was the third and final party member. Petra, the diminutive, purple Magebun, stood in stark contrast to her squadmates. For one, she was significantly shorter than both, just under five feet tall. The other major difference is that she was clothed in more than just a supply bag. Befitting of her magical nature, she wore a large, black witch hat and dark robes just short enough to not drag along the ground. Her long, purple ears drooped behind. Her purple hair curled over her face, covering one eye. She may have seemed aloof and distant, but there was no denying her power. Petra's weapon of choice was a squeaky book of spells that seemingly never left her side. It, much like the magebun, her robes, and the rest of the Vinyl Kingdom, was also made of rubber. Each sheet was extraordinarily thin and made a tiny, rubbery squeak when flipped through.

The trio were currently in a dark, dense wood quite a distance away from the city. They had been trekking for hours at this point. "Won't be much further now, my friends!" Leven thought aloud. His voice boomed through the forest, just as boisterous as ever. No signs of fatigue.

"Awesome! Can't wait to give this Dark Lord a taste of their medicine!" Ferros smiled and held up the bow. Her rubbery hide turned a brilliant yellow as she drew the string back, nocking an Electric arrow. She didn't let it fly though, instead stocking the bow away. Her hide remained the same golden hue though.

"hmpf..." Petra mumbled beneath her breath. Unlike her party members, she wasn't particularly enthused about a long journey to take down a fiend. But it was something that had to be done. She had a personal reason for taking this one so seriously. The deflation curse struck at random, and the magebun had notoriously wild swings of luck. The curse had been cast only three days ago. She had ended up the victim four times, despite the population being over 200,000 toys.

The trio continued along the bleak path. It was eerily quiet. No wild bird songs or anything; only the sounds of their squeaky footsteps. Leven and Ferros chatted a bit, telling stories of their other grand adventures and previous Villain attacks. They tried to engage Petra, but she didn't speak much. Her few replies were short and soft-spoken.

"Haven't seen any enemies or minions? Hmm, quite lucky indeed!" Leven said with a hearty laugh.

"Please don't say that word..." Petra visibly cringed. Her wild swings of luck only seemed to start when someone else mentioned that word. And luck swung like a pendulum. Good fortune begets bad, and vice versa. How would the wheel of fate turn today?

Grrrrr...

As if on cue, a menacing growl broke the silence. A trio of balloon wolves walked onto the forest path. Their beady red eyes narrowed, their fangs bared. Were they minions of the Dark Lord, sent to stop the heroes? Or simply wild creatures attacking those who trespassed on their land. It didn't matter either way; they were ready for a fight.

"You just had to speak up..." Petra sighed and pulled down her hat.

"Fear not, friends! We'll make short work of these monsters!" Leven bellowed. The group of wolves howled in response. With a burst of speed, the massive kitsuleo dashed over to the pack, tackling one and pushing the others out of the way.

"He's occupied! Let's do it! Like we practiced!" Ferros's voice was giddy with excitement. She loved any opportunity for combat. The icedrake's smooth, rubbery hide changed to a brilliant, light blue as she nocked a crystalline Ice arrow in her bow.

"Right." Petra muttered while flipping through her book. She stopped quickly; the page with her desired spell glowed brightly. "*Hydrius rocen duos*" Two powerful jets of water flew from the magebun's free hand, both flying directly towards the two unoccupied wolves. The water forced its way down the maws of the shocked creatures. And with more coming, they were forced to swallow. Their gray, rubbery bellies quickly filled and distended from their middles. Petra's powerful spell provided enough pressure to keep them from shutting their mouths; so they were forced to fill. Bloating up like a pair of water balloons.

Each wolf's gut swelled to nearly two feet large. Big enough to press against the floor. Enough to immobilize them. Petra shut her book; the stream of water immediately ceased flowing from the magebun's hand. Without a word, Ferros spun off to the side. The currently blue-skinned rubber dragoness dramatically drew her bow. She drew the string back, forming an icy blue arrow, and took aim at the pair of water ballooned wolves.

Fwip!

BANG! POP!

With but a single arrow, the two wolves burst; orbs of water fell to the ground, soaking where they once stood. Scraps of their gray, latex hides fluttered about.

Leven, meanwhile, was still wrestling with the third wolf. A proper finisher was usually the fastest way to take down an opponent. But the kitsuleo needed to brawl a bit before he could

reach the level of power needed to perform that. While his teammates were taking them down, he was working up to said power. But now he had the enemy wolves down and pinned. Leven stood up on his hind legs, towering over his opponent. The large kitsuleo lunged forward, swinging his massive, squeaky paws on top of the snarling wolf.

BANG!

The noise was slightly muffled, but the wolf popped beneath Leven's paws. Nothing more than a pile of gray, rubbery scraps remained where the wolf once stood.

"Come, friends!" Leven said with a joyous laugh. "Let us be off before these wild creatures reform! They surely will not take too kind to their defeat." Popping was a fairly regular occurrence for all denizens of the Vinyl Kingdom. Sharp objects, constrained spaces, or just plain overinflation; all part of the squeaky toy life. And reformation was just a part of that natural cycle. A popped toy would eventually reform into their original shape. Said process could be accelerated through the use of magic as well.

"Wait, don't Wolves usually hunt in packs of four?" Ferros asked, sheathing her bow.

"GAAAH!!"

Leven and Ferros immediately turned around to the scream of pain. Another wolf, the fourth and final member of the pack, had Petra's arm in its mouth. The rabbit's arm squeaked as it bit down. Leven immediately leapt to her rescue, grabbing the rabid wolf and popping it with a quick, powerful suplex.

"Petra! Are you all right?" Ferros immediately ran over and helped her back up.

"I think so... It didn't puncture." Petra looked over at her arm. Her robes were torn, but her arm was still intact. Only a few bite marks. "It'll heal. Let's continue." Petra mumbled. Leven and Ferros nodded, and the trio of heroes continued down the path. The forest remained as quiet as ever. No other creatures attacked.

But as they continued, Petra's step slowed. A massive headache formed; one bad enough to cause her vision to blur slightly. Likely from that wolf's bite; wild balloon animals were known to cause various effects. The longer they walked, the worse the headache got. Her vision grew more faint.

"*My head...*" Everything around her started to look unfamiliar. Blurry. The trees melted together. "*Where am I? Where am I going?*" Petra wondered. She could see greenery, but not

much else. Focusing straight ahead, she saw two figures. Dark, blurry shadows ahead. *“Who are they? What are they?”* Friends? Foes? She couldn’t tell. The headache grew worse. “Urrrgg...” Petra groaned aloud, drawing the attention of the two shadowy figures.

“Petra?” Ferros turned to the magebun.

“What ails you, my dear friend?” Leven asked with his usual pomp.

But Petra didn’t hear that. Everything was a growl. A snarl from some creature. Something dangerous. And now their attention was focused on her. They were threats.

“No... no! Stay back!” Petra held up her free hand as a warning. Leven and Ferros exchanged confused glances, then turned their attention to the trembling magebun.

“Petra, what’s wrong?” Ferros asked with a look of worry.

“Friend, what do you mean? We are teammates!” Leven said as well.

Howls. Ferocious growls. Dangerous enemies. That’s all Petra heard and saw. And she wasn’t about to fall victim to them. Her purple eyes widened in fear. Petra flung open her spellbook, its pages flipping through rapidly. Petra was in full survival mode. She wasn’t about to fall to these strange, shadowy monsters.

“I SAID STAY BACK!” Petra yelled. Yet still the monsters drew near. Leven and Ferros exchanged another worried glance. It wasn’t like her to raise her voice.

“It has to have been the wolf bite!” Ferros exclaimed upon hitting that realization. Those words were still lost on Petra, who only heard a loud, piercing howl. The magebun’s book shone with a radiant white light.

“GAOTH BALUMBO!!” Petra recited the glowing spell from her book and held her hand towards Leven and Ferros. A spell’s strength grew in power with the emotion and passion of the caster. But Petra was already an exceptionally strong mage, despite her aloof nature. Yet there was definite emotion behind that cast. Fear. And a lot of it.

It was a spell they’d seen many times before. A wind spell. But not one that projected the wind. The wind roared; but the forest remained still and silent as ever. No, this spell directly affected just the pair. Ferros looked down and, much to her dismay, saw her light blue belly quickly ballooning before her eyes. The icedrake’s mouth hung ajar as she watched her midsection swell, just like a rubbery balloon. It hadn’t been flat before, but had already blown up

to the size of a basketball. And if her previous experiences of inflating had taught her anything, this wasn't going to stop any time soon; she still had a ton of growing to do.

It was the same case for Leven as well. The squeaky kitsuleo could feel his stomach and chest start to swell up with air. It was a very fast filling due to the strength of the magebun's spell. The large, red quadruped could already feel his rubbery gut stretch and squish against the ground. Given his normal height, that meant his underside had already blown up three feet round. Leven's ballooning body forced him to adjust his stance to stay standing.

Petra continued to glare at the two monsters, her arm still outstretched. Unwavering. Unflinching. One must focus to continue channeling a spell. Should she stop now, there was no telling how they would act. The shadowy figures continued to grow, swelling like a pair of balloons from her magic. She wasn't taking any chances with fiends like these.

Ferros bit her lip. Her belly had blown up nearly three feet large; bigger than some beach balls. Truthfully, it felt amazing. Inflating into a giant balloon was something of a common activity among VK denizens. And the icedrake enjoyed it just as much as others. But now, it wasn't just her belly blowing up. Her upper half started to push outwards as well. Like a balloon attached to an air compressor. It wasn't long before her entire front blimped outwards, giving her a much more rounded figure. And judging by her previous experiences inflating, there was still so much more room to grow.

Leven wasn't holding up much better. His belly and chest pressed against the ground, forcing his four paws out to the side. He quickly started to rise up on his growing gut, like an overinflated air mattress. The massive kitsuleo was also fond of inflation, but not when there was a job to do. His front and rear legs started to stiffen; filled with air like the rest of his body. He could barely wiggle the puffy appendages, severely limiting any movement. Not like he could move anyway; his inflated belly, now nearly five feet large, prevented his paws from reaching the ground. "Petra, please cease this spell at once!"

But all Petra heard was a fierce, menacing roar. Her gaze hardened; the words on the book shone even brighter. Both Leven and Ferros felt the immediate increase in power. Ferros stifled an excited giggle as her belly ballooned past the size of a yoga ball. It had swollen so large that it pressed against the ground, nearly five feet in diameter. Much like Leven, her arms and legs also started to fill with air; stiffening and causing the icedrake to drop her prized bow. Ferros wanted to reach down and grab it, but was rendered completely immobile from the magebun's spell. Her back and shoulders started to push outwards, giving her a much more rounded, orblike shape.

Leven snickered a bit as he glanced over at the orbbed dragon, but his situation wasn't much better. The kitsuleo's back rapidly puffed outwards, filling up like a party balloon. Even his nine tails started to bloat up. Swelling and stretching. Creaking and squeaking as the latex appendages grew and rubbed against each other. They looked like a large bouquet of balloons. Under normal circumstances, Leven would have absolutely adored this. He loved blowing up to massive sizes; it made for better combat and hugs. But any sense of enjoyment was overrode due to his concern for Petra. The noble PSI knight always put his friends first. He bit his tongue in silence; finally wising up to the idea that Petra wasn't hearing anything he said.

Petra never broke her gaze or focus. The magebun continued to stare at the two shadowy monsters, channeling the spell. Each one was a massive, round balloon now. She could have easily stopped now and left them; two immobile blimps like that posed no threat at the time. *"No... they'll deflate and track me. They need to be gone!"* She hardened her resolve. She wasn't going to stop until they were nothing but a pile of scrap.

Her two party members were utterly enormous now. Ferros had blown up so much that her body was twelve feet in diameter; twice as big as the icedrake normally was tall. But she was utterly entranced; there was something so appealing about being so big. A brilliant blue blimp towering over the miniscule magebun. Leven was even larger, though he had a noticeable size advantage prior to inflating. The rubbery red and gray kitsuleo was absolutely gargantuan at almost twenty feet round. His blimpy body rose high above the forest treeline, with his overinflated pack of tails hanging even higher. He had never been this big before and certainly wouldn't mind doing it again, but under more controlled circumstances.

But then both Ferros and Leven, the utterly massive blimps, heard something off. The squeaks and creaks of their ballooning bodies sounded more hollow. Strained, even. Though they couldn't see, and neither could Petra since her mind and vision were still corrupted, their rubbery skin was stretching thinner and tighter. Their bodies were almost translucent; one could see the forest through them. Both knew that they were rapidly approaching the end of this inflation session. Ferros was giddy with excitement, eagerly awaiting that euphoric release one could only find when bursting. Leven was less than enthused. He wasn't afraid of going boom, far from it actually, but he feared for Petra's safety. How long would the status affect her? Would anyone be able to help her? And what if something else attacked her? Those worries kept running through the kitsuleo's head, overshadowing the ominous creaks from his body.

BANG! BOOM!

The pair of blimps burst simultaneously. The thunderous explosion reverberated throughout the otherwise silent forest. Petra was knocked back slightly from the force of the

popping balloons. A shower of red, gray, and icy blue scraps fluttered about the forest path, gently fluttering to the ground.

“They’re gone... good.” Petra gasped for breath. Though the monsters were gone, she was still suffering from the delusion-causing headache. Some of the rubbery scraps fell on top of the magebun. She brushed them off quickly, but then noticed something; a tear in the sleeve of her robe and some light bite marks on her arm. “Those monsters must have done this. Well they’re gone now.” Petra flipped through her squeaky spell book until she found the page with what she needed. “Kuremih!” The words glowed green; she too was bathed in a soft, green light. The bite marks quickly vanished, though her robe remained torn.

As the green light faded, so too did her headache. Her vision quickly started to clear as well. “Huh? Where am I?” Petra asked in confusion. “Where are Leven and Ferros?” She looked around and saw the forest, but no one else. She was completely alone. “What happened? I remember balloon wolves attacking, but then nothing.” She wondered aloud, trying to make sense of what happened. Nothing, her mind was a total blank after that last combat encounter.

Petra shut her eyes tightly and shook her head, trying to clear her thoughts. Upon opening her eyes, she finally noticed; the forest floor was littered with latex scraps. Red, gray, and blue. And lying among those scraps was a bow. Ferros’s bow. It was then that she realized what had happened. “Not again...” Petra sighed disappointedly. “I hope they can forgive me.” She muttered and began flipping through her book once more, trying to find a Reformation spell.