

Dear Journal

Been looking forward to this camping trip for a while. No thoughts about work, no one else around. Just myself, some books, my fishing and camping gear, and food. I've needed this escape for a long time.

At night, storm clouds rolled in. Strange; wasn't in the forecast. My tent is waterproof, so I'm not really worried about that. Gonna try to sleep and hopefully the campsite won't be too muddy tomorrow.

Day 1

I am incredibly confused. There were some bright flashes of light as I slept, but I managed to shut them out. It was just lightning, right? But the moment I left my tent to check the campsite, everything was different. The sun was shining and the world seemed more vibrant. More... colorful? The trees, my tent, even the rocks I had used for a small campfire last night all had this strange, glossy sheen. I tried touching them and they felt like rubber; like a tight, stretched balloon. Even the air smelled different; the strong scent of latex and rubber, though not as bad as new tires or a hospital ward.

What's happening? Am I dreaming? Dead? Did one of those lightning bolts hit me? Ugh, it's too confusing! Going to lay down for a bit and hopefully wake up out of this.

Think I was asleep for an hour or so. When I got up, nothing changed. The sun was higher in the sky, but the world was still vibrant and squeaky. I know I should have stayed where I was, but I'm just too confused. Too curious. I packed up my tent and supplies into the pack. Just like when hiking out here, there was a path carved into the dirt ground. I followed it, hoping it would lead me back to the base of the campgrounds. Hopefully I could find someone to figure out what was happening.

After hiking the path for hours through these weird, rubbery woods, I found a building. It also reflected light like latex; it seemed like everything in this world did. "Squeaking Spires National Park Visitor Center" read the sign out front. The door squeaked open, like two balloons rubbing past each other.

"Welcome friend!" A cheerful voice greeted me as I entered. Said voice belonged to what I can only describe as a short, anthropomorphic porcupine standing behind a desk. Their face and body were a light tan while their quills were a dark brown. And like seemingly everything, "What can I help you wi—" They stopped speaking as soon as they looked at me. "A- a human..." Their voice cracked and stammered. Before I knew what was happening, they grabbed me by the arm

and dragged me down a hallway. There was a loud, rubbery squeak with every step the porcupine took. Did everything here make noises like that? I accidentally pressed against their quills while walking, but they weren't sharp at all. Honestly felt kind of soft and squeaky? It was weird, but so was everything.

After being dragged down the hall, the park ranger brought me into a room with little more than a bed, a desk, some chairs, and a separate bathroom. They asked a lot of questions; my name, where I'm from, and the like. I said what I could, but explained that I was still completely clueless as to where I was or how I got here. They seemed as confused as I was, but tried to explain a bit about this world. I was asked to wait here while they made a call and agreed, still heavily in the dark.

Some time later, there was a bang on the door. Er, more of a hollow thump, like if someone had punched a very full, sturdy balloon. It squeaked open and in walked the rubbery porcupine as well as a shiny, squeaky black and white-feathered hawk and a very tall, green dragon. The group tried to explain a bit about this world and how, like I figured, everything and everyone was some kind of rubber or latex material (the park ranger specified they were a Pooltoy? Not sure how there's really a distinction) and that it, the world I mean, was just called Vinyl.

After speaking a bit, we went outside, though I didn't have much choice. Out of nowhere, the dragon grabbed me and held me tight. His wings flapped (with loud squeaking, obviously) and before I could process anything, we were flying. Actually flying. I looked down and felt hella dizzy; it was a long way to the ground. Didn't think much, just held onto the dragon as tight as I could. And now that I'm not in fear for my life, thinking back, it may have looked like I was hugging him as he held me. He didn't seem to mind.

We landed in a large city, full of squeaky skyscrapers and wide streets. It was already late, so the streets were pretty empty. Or walkways, I guess? Didn't look like they were paved for vehicles. Walkable city? We went into a large building that looked like a doctor's office. Very... beige. I was led to another bedroom, gave me some food (A salad. Probably the only thing I've seen that wasn't rubber), and explained that they would need to observe me for a while and to get some rest tonight. Still don't understand why or how, but at least everyone I've met is super friendly.

Day 2

The bed was basically just a giant balloon. Fitting and surprisingly comfy, but a little hard to get out of. The door squeaked open and in walked the same hawk from yesterday. Dr. Hauc, as he finally introduced himself, went a little more in-depth about the world. A lot of magic and stuff I really didn't understand, but what I did catch is that I wasn't the first human to arrive in Vinyl. Some went back to our world, but others ended up staying. But since it hadn't been used in a

while, it would take a few days before they could send me back. Not the ideal situation, but it's whatever for now.

For now, Dr. Hauc decided to show me around. Said it would be a good chance to observe me too. Not sure what he meant by that, but sure. Beats doing nothing. While walking around, he explained a lot more about the city. The streets were much more active today; full of various anthro inflatables of all species and colors. As Dr. Hauc led me around, I noticed a lot of them were staring at me. They all seemed shocked to see a real human, which makes sense, I guess. Some even wanted to take pictures with me. Kinda weird, but I didn't mind.

We spent most of the day walking around, talking to others. Dr. Haux spent a lot of time taking notes, which I presume were about me. Didn't bother asking what he was writing though since I was having too much fun speaking with everyone. Felt like I was a mini celebrity. Little embarrassed if I'm being honest.

After getting some food (Rice bowls with a lot of vegetables. Pretty good), we went back to the doctor's office and brought me back to the room. As he left, I heard the hawk mention 'no changes,' but I have no idea what he meant.

Day 3

Today started with Dr. Hauc taking me to a coffee shop (It's been 3 days since I've had coffee. Damn, how I've missed it. Apparently coffee is a huge, sacred tradition here since it's one of their God's favorite foods. Probably should've questioned that further.) But that wasn't why we were here.

Someone else walked in and sat down at our table. She introduced herself as Kay, and just like me, was a human who somehow got transported to Vinyl. Emphasis on the Was. Because sitting in front of me was a tall, very pretty red-furred kitsune. She explained that she'd been here for about twenty or so years. Yes, she could have gone back to our world all those years ago, but she chose to stay because she fell in love with the world and its toy inhabitants.

But I did have to bring up the obvious: She was so clearly not a human. I mean, really? Fox ears, muzzle, nine flowing tails? She just laughed at my reaction. It turns out, after some time living in Vinyl, humans will change into toys (Dr. Hauc chimed in and said it can vary person to person.) Something reflective of their personality, like a spirit animal. It was such a wild concept, but so... fascinating? Can't help but wonder what I'd be...

Anyway, after our morning coffee, Dr. Hauc had to fly off somewhere, leaving me alone for the rest of the day. The city had a really nice park, so I just went there and spent a few hours. Saw a

lot of toys playing in the middle of the day. Some even took the time to talk with me. Everyone seemed so friendly. Maybe it was just because I'm a human in a world full of toys and therefore the odd one out. Or maybe everyone here really is that friendly. It sure seems like everyone here is happier.

One thing I noticed with Dr. Hauc is that it didn't seem like he paid for anything. When I saw him again, I asked about that. He just laughed and explained that there was no such thing as money. Toys only worked if they wanted to. Some, like Hauc himself, really enjoyed what they did. As someone whose entire adulthood seemed focused around money, the concept of this was just wild. It seemed like such a peaceful, enjoyable way to go through life. No strife, no struggle, no competition. The more I see of this world, the more I'm conflicted.

Day 4

I witnessed something... horrific today. I was walking around the city by myself when I heard some kind of arguing. Two toys, a purple rabbit and a black & red dragon, were fighting on the street. Then they started slinging spells and magic at each other (I've been told magic is very common here.) I stayed far back from the light show, as did many other toys watching.

Eventually the rabbit got hit with a blast of blue light. And then she started to grow. Er, swell I guess. Her middle puffed outwards, followed by her chest, then her back. All within a minute of being hit by the spell. And everyone was cheering for some reason? Was this a show to them? I wanted to run out there and help her, but I couldn't make my legs move. Yet I couldn't look away. She was a huge, round, purple balloon! It was crazy to watch, and somehow enthralling. The round rabbit swelled bigger and tighter; at least fifteen feet round and taking up most of the city block. Then she started floating, like a balloon full of helium. I remember hearing loud creaking sounds and the cheering of the toys watching. Then a thunderous boom.

Everything became hazy after that; I think I blacked out. Did... did I just witness a public murder? Came to shortly after some kind of toy brought me back to the lab. Still feeling awful every time I think of it, so I'm just staying here for now. She looked kind of cute, so big and round, but popping like that is going to haunt me for a while.

Day 5

No sleep last night. I kept having nightmares of exploding balloons; like all the toys around me kept popping. Dr. Hauc came and got me, explaining that some toy had brought me back to the lab. I told him what I saw, that the poor rabbit just exploded right in front of me and that the dragon had to be caught and tried. But he just laughed, like he couldn't believe what I told him.

He brought me down to a seemingly underground lab. Dr. Hauc grabbed what looked like a scuba tank from a closet, attached a hose to it, and put the other end in his beak. And just like the rabbit, he immediately started to blow up. His white-feathered belly quickly stretched and swelled, pushing out past his lab coat. A big, round orb jutting from his midsection. I couldn't look away. He motioned at me, asking for me to feel it. And I just couldn't help myself; it was like a huge, soft balloon. I could feel it swell and press into my face as it grew even larger. It was... bewildering. Exciting even.

After his belly was nearly three feet large, Dr. Hauc stopped the tank and started explaining. Inflation was extremely common in this world. Some toys did it for fun. Some did it to test their limits. Others did it as a harmless prank. I went off at that; I just watched a rabbit explode. How could that be harmless??

But Dr. Hauc just smiled. He grabbed a pen off the desk, and much to my wide-eyed horror, jammed it into his bloated belly. There was a massive bang as his gut exploded; the force of it turned the bird toy into a pile of scraps. I stood motionless. Dumbfounded. What the hell did I just watch?

Then I noticed something. All of the white and black rubber scraps that used to be the doctor started to pull together. By themselves, until they formed a neat pile. There was a bright flash of light that I shielded my eyes from, but once that light faded, Dr. Hauc stood before me, as though he hadn't just burst apart at the seams.

I think I had to physically pick my jaw up from the floor. Dr. Hauc went on to explain that inflation was common and popping was also a common occurrence. And the latent magic of the world would cause the popping victim to reform, good as new; though it would usually take longer than he did since the lab was designed for fast reformations.

All of this left my head spinning. I walked to the elevator and went up to the lab's lobby before he could stop me. As I wandered the city streets, I saw her. The same purple rubber rabbit from yesterday, sipping a coffee at a cafe and typing away at a laptop. I started talking to her without thinking, saying that I saw her inflate and explode yesterday. The rabbit seemed confused at first, then noticed I was a human. But she also gave a similar explanation as the doctor; that blowing up and bursting was incredibly common in this world. Some, like herself, even enjoyed the pop.

It really was a surreal experience, but at least it took a lot off my mind. I went back to the lab and kind of just needed to zone out for a while.

Day 6

Dr. Hauc came to get me again this morning. He explained that they finally had everything ready to send me back to my world. It had taken a few days to get all the materials to properly cast the spell. I needed some time to process everything.

Don't know how, but I ended up in the city's main park. There were so many toys and inflatables around. Playing, hanging out, working for fun. Everyone just seemed so happy; so full of life. It was a pleasant sight to see.

The more I thought about it, the more conflicted I felt. What did I have waiting for me back home? I don't have a family or pets. I was basically just a pencil pusher at work. Is there anything really worth going back for? Some toys stopped to talk with me. Maybe because I was the only human they'd ever met; maybe they felt like I needed someone to talk to. And the more we spoke, the more comfortable I felt. It felt like the denizens were genuinely friendly and happy. It was something to think about.

After some more time in the park and getting some really good coffee, I went back to the lab. It had gotten kinda late, but I'd made up my mind. Dr. Hauc welcomed me back and asked if I was ready to go back.

No. I wasn't. I wanted to stay here.

Dr. Hauc at first seemed surprised, but then he laughed. Hard. As it turned out, he had half-expected that I wouldn't want to go back. And he had prepared for this. I followed him out of the lab again and down a few city blocks. We went into a different building with a well-furnished lobby. A pooltoy rhino greeted us and gave Dr. Hauc a pair of keys and told us to go to the fifth floor.

The elevator squeaked as it rose. It exited into a single, wide hallway with only a single door on each side. Dr. Hauc passed me the keys and told me to enter. Still unsure what was going on, I did as told. Inside was a large, sparsely decorated room. There was a kitchen off to one side and a door that led to a bedroom, complete with inflatable bed and a separate bathroom. Dr. Hauc looked at me with the biggest grin on his beak.

"Welcome home."

This apartment was mine. Completely and totally mine. Dr. Hauc had spent most of the day setting this up, making sure I'd have a place to stay; to call my own. When I asked what the rent was, he just laughed and reminded me that there was no currency here. I was shocked. Completely, totally shocked. Giving me a completely free apartment. I still don't believe it. I'm planning to get some furniture tomorrow. It's been an overwhelming day. I know he'll never read

this journal, but I'll forever be grateful to Dr. Hauc. He's truly given me a new chance, a new lease on life. Tomorrow is my first day as a true denizen of Vinyl, and I'm excited to see it.

Day 7

Last night was one of the most restful sleeps I've had. Maybe because of the peace of mind over deciding to stay here? Or maybe it was just due to the really comfortable balloon bed. Today was stupid busy though. One of my neighbors on another floor (Reyne, a shiny pink and black dragon. Really cute honestly) invited me for coffee as a bit of a welcoming party. We talked for a while, and it just reaffirmed my belief that almost everyone here is genuinely friendly.

Once that was done, I left for a furniture store. Picked out a rug, table, couch, some cooking equipment, and some artwork to fill out my home. But I was so engrossed that I completely forgot that I didn't have my pickup, so I didn't have a way to bring it back. Sadly that dawned on me as I was checking out (since I didn't have to pay anything, they really just scanned my stuff to see what they needed to get more of. Interesting.) It wasn't super heavy since it was all made of balloons and such, but it was really bulky. Out of nowhere, a pair of large, brown balloon bears leapt up behind me. Once my heart stopped feeling like it would break out of my chest, they offered to carry some stuff. There's no way anything like this would ever happen back on Earth. I graciously accepted and they grabbed the large furniture while I took the rest.

They left with big smiles after dropping everything off at my place. Spent the rest of the day building the furniture (inflating it mostly) and deciding where to put everything. Took a lot out of me, so going to sleep early.

Day 8

Felt kind of strange when I woke up today. Then I checked the bathroom mirror and saw why: My skin was completely black. Like, matte black. The color of paint. And it was shiny and rubbery, just like everything else in this world. Still the same human face and body, but just a shiny, black balloon now. I absentmindedly rubbed my arm; my 'skin' let out a soft squeak, like two balloons rubbing against each other.

What the hell??

I raced out of my building faster than I've ever ran before. I was so damn confused. Panicking, even. Luckily, I remembered where the lab was. Nearly crashed into Dr. Hauc as I barged in. Even he barely recognized me like this! We went to an exam room where he checked me out, but he didn't seem concerned at all. Said it was part of becoming a true denizen of Vinyl. Did— did he mean I was becoming some kind of animal toy? Or inflatable? Or however they classified it?

I tried to push the doctor further, but he kind of just shrugged it off. Claimed to not know how long it would take or what I was transforming into. That I was just going to become my 'spirit animal.' There really wasn't anything he could do about it, nor was there anything to do. All I could do now was wait. But he told me not to worry since this was the case with all the humans who wound up living here.

I left the lab in a daze. Seems to happen a lot. Maybe it'll be better once this is over and I really get used to it? God I hope so. Ended up in the park again, just wandering about. Still a lot of smiling, friendly faces. Some toys who I'd met before chatted with me a bit. And even though I looked very different (Or at least, I felt like I looked different) they all recognized me. And more importantly, recognized that I was transforming. I tried to ask if they could tell what I was turning into, but they were all tight-lipped. Apparently it's a tradition to let humans be completely surprised by their new form. Fair, I guess.

As the day went on, I started to feel something odd. Itchy. At first it started on my chest, but then spread everywhere other than my head, hands, and feet. I got the clearest look on my arms; large, white circles had formed. They weren't raised or bumpy, but they were there. I'm praying that they're part of the transformation and not like, a fungus or something.

But that begs the question: What am I becoming? Completely black skin with white spots? Dalmatian? Spotted Owl? No idea right now.

Day 9

Only new change I saw when waking up was that my hair looked longer and was a shiny, glimmering white. Same exact color as the spots on my body. Those hadn't changed though.

Reyne invited me in for coffee again. I was more than a little embarrassed by the changes, but they insisted. We spoke very casually, enjoying each other's company. Turns out they really wanted to speak with me to make sure I was OK, going through these massive changes and all. I mean, I feel a little weird, but otherwise fine. It was still sweet of them to check on me though.

As I was leaving though, I started to feel something strange. Right above my rear. It didn't hurt; more like a soreness. Reyne noticed it and we both looked on curiously. She had some idea, but stayed quiet; I still had no idea what was going on. A small bump appeared in my pants. Right at the base of my spine. That bump stretched and lengthened, poking out of the top of my pants. My skin squeaked and creaked loudly; like a balloon filling with air. The soreness eventually waned though, but I still felt something on my lower back, rubbing against my ass. I managed to peer over my shoulder and gasped.

It was a tail. I had a tail. It was a bright, shiny white (Same colors as my spots. Weird to call them that. MY spots) and a few inches long. I didn't say anything. I couldn't say anything. Literally speechless. I had a tail now. I have a tail. Amazingly, it feels completely natural. Like I've always had it.

Reyne watched and giggled at my sheer shock. They even pointed out that it was swishing back and forth; like an excited dog. I could feel myself blushing, but they just found it even cuter. I really had no idea what to say. How to react. It was so strange. And I still have no idea what I'm changing into. My guess is still on a dalmatian, especially now that I have the tail.

Much later in the day, a few toys and I went to a concert on the other side of the city. Turns out they have Toy Trolleys in the city and they only operate on special rails. Makes sense. Not everyone can fly and not everything can be walkable. Group was called Pop Rocks (Do they have that kind of candy here?) The music was good, but what really shocked me was that the main singer inflated throughout the show. And by the end of the show he was a massive, round blimp that completely filled the stage. Upon finishing their set, the singer popped.

The rest of the crowd cheered and applauded. I was still a little uncomfortable, but since I know he'd be fine, I guess it was ok? My friends did tease me a bit about my new tail wagging when it happened though. It's a sign of happiness, right?

Day 10

No changes on waking up again. It was raining this morning, so I stayed in and brewed some coffee. Just watching the rain come down on the shimmering, squeaky city. Hitting the balloonie buildings. It was all so peaceful. Back in my world, I'd be getting ready to drive through this rain and traffic to go sit at a desk for hours. But here, I can just take in the tranquility.

At least, I did before starting to feel strange again. My feet started to tingle, like pins and needles after sitting down for too long. But far more intense. I looked down past my legs and just watched. Nothing should have surprised me at this point, not after sprouting a tail, but I still couldn't believe it. My feet were completely changing shape. I was expecting them to turn to paws eventually, but no. My toes melded together, becoming a single round oval. And then the front of them split open, creating two distinct toes. Took me some time to realize that these weren't feet. Or even paws.

They were hooves. My first thought was what the hell? Hooves? Why do I have hooves? It wasn't so much out of shock at having hooves now; more that I still didn't know what I was

changing into. Really thought I was going to be a dog, but maybe some type of horse? A donkey maybe? People have called me an ass before. Man, even writing that down made me cringe.

I felt the same tingling in my hands too. My fingers squished and melded together into a single solid mound. Then just like my new hooves, they separated into three digits on each hand. It was such a strange feeling; Seeing something so different attached to me. But they were mine. Completely and totally mine. And it felt like I had them forever. I was still able to pick up my coffee mug just as usual. And a pen. Doesn't even look like my handwriting was affected, for better or worse.

The rain eventually stopped and I went out for a walk. I used to complain about having to break in new shoes, but now I have to break in my new hooves? Hah. Note to self, don't do standup. I half expected to stumble like a baby colt while walking, but no. My new hooves felt completely natural as well. Like I'd always been walking on them. This entire situation, my new life, is so bizarre, but I really don't mind it.

While on my walk, I felt something else. It felt like I was bloated. Or more, bubbly? That might be the best way to describe it. The white spots, which at this point, were covering most of my body other than my face, hands, and hooves, felt like they were stretching. I could hear a slight creaking noise as they started to gently puff outwards. It didn't feel like I was inflating, like so many other toys I'd seen. More like, filling out to a shape.

The white spots bubbled up, almost completely encasing my body. If I hadn't been used to weird changes, I'd have been panicking by now. I peered down my shirt and at my arms; it looked like I was engulfed by shiny soap bubbles. Or a cloud. Huh. Hooves and an animal that resembles a cloud? I think I've got an idea what I'm changing into. Will keep this log updated.

Day 11

While out and about today, I started having a really bad earache. Like a stinging sensation. Haven't had anything like that since I was a child though. I instinctively reached out to rub them, and it felt like they were shrinking in my hands. Assumed it was just part of the transformation, so I tried to remain calm. They quickly vanished entirely though, leaving nothing but smooth rubber beneath my shiny hair.

As soon as they vanished though, I started to have a slight headache. I could feel two distinct points of tension near the top of my head, slightly off to each side. Beneath my hair, I could feel two small bumps starting to form. Two round mounds quickly sprouted with an audible pop. Ears. My new ears. Two round ears that both ended in a sort of point. I could still hear everything

around me just as well as before. Even though I'm going to be some kind of balloon animal, it looks like my body is still going to function as normal?

That wasn't the only thing. After getting some dinner and heading back to the park to watch the sunset, I started to feel some tightness in my face. Like something pulling and pushing. Right on my jaw and nose. I crossed my eyes to try and get a better look; it looked like my nose was stretching. Despite everything, it was still incredibly strange. I ran to a nearby fountain and tried to get a good look at myself. And I wasn't losing my mind; my face was changing shape, right before my eyes.

My nose started to flatten, taking on a much different shape. It then started to pull outwards, like it was made of firm putty. My jawline also started to stretch and morph, growing to match up with my nose. Squashing, stretching, and pulling. It felt like the world's weirdest massage. As I kept watching (and trying to suppress a scream) my face started to grow into a more recognizable shape. I didn't have a distinct human nose anymore; I had a long, rounded muzzle. It's weird to describe, but my nose is now at the tip of it, as is my mouth and jaw. Doesn't jut out that far, but it's such a difference from what I'm used to.

I'm pretty sure that's everything, but I'm too delirious from the excitement today to check.

Day 12

When I looked in the mirror this morning, there was a sheep staring back at me. No, staring at itself. At myself.

A sheep. I'd completely transformed into an inflatable sheep. My rubbery skin was still matte black, but surrounding most of it was my shiny, latex, white wool. I have a sheep's muzzle, ears, and hooves. I couldn't believe it. I still barely believe it. I'm a sheep. And it feels... right.

I decided to head to the lab again, but Reyne stopped me as I was leaving. They immediately recognized me despite my brand new body. Before I could react, they gave me a tight hug. Hearing our rubbery bodies squeak against each other was... euphoric? Something I could easily get used to. They wished me well and I left in a dizzy, happy state; not before hearing them say that I looked really cute.

Dr. Hauc was in the lab as usual. As soon as I walked in, the hawk greeted me by name; he recognized me as well even though I looked completely different from just a few days ago. He asked a few questions about my transformation, and I tried to explain what happened and how strange everything was. He kept nodding while taking notes. Then he said he was right; that he'd predicted I'd be a sheep due to my fairly easy going nature. Thanks, I guess?

I left after answering a few questions. Some of the toys I'd become friendly with recognized me as well. They all congratulated me on becoming a true denizen of Vinyl. And for the first time, I really felt at home. Like I fully belonged. That's the first time I've ever felt that anywhere.

Oh yeah, I got a job today. Went into a coffee shop and there was only one fox manning the counter. They looked really overwhelmed. I asked if there was any way I could help. They looked incredibly grateful and showed me what to do. All the customers were patient and kind; far cry from customer service in my old world. And for the first time ever, I enjoyed working. It felt like I was doing something meaningful. Something enjoyable. Worthwhile. Going back tomorrow and actually looking forward to it.

I don't know what else is happening in my old world. And I don't care. I've finally found my place. As a soft, inflatable sheep toy living amidst a world of Vinyl.