

“Nice n’ steady, guys, just like that. Easy now. You’re doing great! Easy, easy now...Shinden, it’s leaning towards your side a bit more. Push harder. Easy, easy. Easy now! Easy-”

Shinden thought biting his tongue would be enough to stifle any complaints from him. It wasn’t. His muscles tensed up involuntarily, and not just because he was pushing a massive wheeled vat of liquid up a steep incline, either. Despite his best efforts *not* to, the sabertooth wolf craned his head back and scowled.

“Ya know, Zag, screaming ‘easy’ like a goddamn parrot doesn’t make this any easier!”

He didn’t quite mean to sound so angry either, but dammit he *was* angry! Shinden was a pilot for crying out loud, not an Egyptian slave, yet here he was shoving this giant container up a ramp like Sisyphus’s boulder, through no fault of his own! His coworkers, through a baffling lack of logic, decided last night was the perfect night to host a Mexican food party in the freaking hangar of all places, with one over-tequila’d worker having broken the loading machine via too many chili peppers to the exhaust. How the hell anyone could do that on accident, Shinden didn’t know. All he knew was that it meant a half-ton object needed to be shoved into a carrier jet via his and a coworker’s own two paws, with the entire hangar smelling like spice. He wasn’t even at the damn party to begin with, yet he was still punished!

Shinden’s gaze must have been particularly piercing, for he could see the short gray dragon at the bottom of the ramp bring his claws to his muzzle nervously. “H-hey, I’m just saying to be a little careful. That stuff’s worth a lot of money and-”

“Then why don’t you come up and help us shove this thing up, then?” The wolf snapped back, taking an arm to wipe the sweat from his brow. He never really bothered to ask what it was they were supposed to be transporting, only recalling it had something to do with constructing weather balloons. For all he knew, Zag’s anxiety was completely valid; this could be something extremely rare and valuable. But to Shinden, he may as well have been hauling a giant vat of water.

Or, chili sauce, or something. God damn, the hangar reeked.

Shinden had hoped his outburst would have spurred Zag to scurry onto the ramp to help them, seeing as how it was just himself and his sergal co-worker pushing the damn thing, but alas the dragon stood his ground. “I mean, I’d love to, but- no wait, that’s a lie. I really don’t want to. But uh, there should be someone at the bottom to oversee the, erh, loading process. Make sure nothing goes wrong, yeah?”

“But you’re in better shape than I am!” Shinden fully turned, gesturing to himself. It was embarrassing to admit it, but the wolf had the physique of a weasel, his snout sticking out further than any other part of his beanpole body. Zag was a little chubby, sure, but surely the dragon had a little bit of muscle beneath the extra padding. Even Matt the sergal had more beef

on his body than Shinden, the teal sergal... the teal sergal's face looked awfully red for some reason...

Then it dawned on the pilot: he'd completely let go of the vat just now, hadn't he?

Cursing himself for his own blinded frustration, Shinden whirled around to try to catch the vat, but it was too late. Those few moments he'd wasted in comparing his figure to Zag's was too much for Matt, who could barely handle his own half of the container's intense weight, causing Shinden's half to roll and tip over. Even with the sabertooth wolf throwing his pitiful weight against the cast iron cauldron, there was no stopping it from tipping over, Shinden sliding back inch by inch.

And then the vat spilled.

Shinden didn't even have time to scream before a wave of viscous, dark liquid spilled forth, the weight of which was enough to knock him off his feet and send him flying down the ramp along with it! Head to toe, he was covered, flailing helplessly in what felt like tar, swept along with this strange and heavy substance until his back slammed heavily into the back of the hanger! Oddly enough, the lupine didn't feel any pain in his neck or shoulder from that impact, yet clearly there were more pressing matters on his mind.

Like how he couldn't. Freaking. *MOVE!*

Grunting and huffing, Shinden could barely bend and wiggle his limbs, yet that only served to further entrap him in this strange substance. Good god, it really was like tar; was he really about to go out the same way as the mammoth? With every frantic wiggle, he felt the strange goo stick further onto him, seemingly bypassing his fur to latch itself onto his very sensitive skin until he was trapped head to toe. Any burbling cries for help were abruptly silenced as the goop coated the insides of his mouth, his nose, and-

Oh god, the *smell!* Shinden would have taken the stench of chili pepper any day over whatever *this* was! It was pungent enough to bring a tear to his eye, this intense rubber smell, as though he'd pressed his snout against a melted balloon.

Was *this* what latex smelled like?!

Right as Shinden's movements began seizing up for good, the wolf felt two pairs of paws reach into the goopy mess and grab his shoulders. With one strong shove, he was *heaved* out, the pilot gasping noisily for breath as he stumbled away from the viscous ooze before collapsing onto his knees, huffing and puffing.

"Are you ok, Shin?! Are you hurt?" He heard Zag and Matt cry out beside him, crowding concerningly over his prone body.

The lupine's ears wilted. Dammit, that was stupid of him. His carelessness almost got him killed, and if it weren't for his coworkers helping him, he'd be... well, he didn't want to think about that. Taking a moment to catch his breath, Shinden finally nodded his head. "Yeah, just...catching my breath. Sorry about that."

With one more huff, he finally brought himself back onto his feet, shaking his arms. Dammit, he was completely coated in that stuff, not a strand of his gray fur or spec of his brown uniform visible beneath the layer of latex-smelling goop that covered his body. He tried brushing it off his arms at least, but to no avail; the viscous liquid had dried up completely on him.

Well, whatever. He can shower this stuff off later. For now, he turned back to his coworkers, still scratching at his arm. "Thanks for the help, guys. Really."

"Of course, Shin." Matt smiled weakly, the sergal scritchng at his ear. "Bit of a shame, though. Feels like we keep screwing up, ya know? First yesterday's party, now this. Management's gonna be pissed."

"Nah, don't worry about it. I take full responsibility for this. I'll let them know you guys had nothing to do with it..." Shinden frowned. His voice sounded awfully nasally just then. He'd been breathing so heavily through his mouth until now, the wolf didn't realize his sinuses were completely clogged, not to mention itchy. Huffing, Shinden rubbed at his nose, even grabbing his muzzle to give it a tug.

And his muzzle stretched with his tug, further and further, until he'd pulled it as far as his arm could reach!

"Holy-!" Shinden released his muzzle, wincing as it flew back into place with a very noisy -SNAP! Wide-eyed and horrified, the wolf couldn't help but to pull on his muzzle again and again, hoping it'd harden up and turn back into a proper muzzle. But no, it just continued to grow with a stretched, rubbery sound again and again. And it snapped back in place again and again

And his friends screamed in terror again and again!

His heart racing, Shinden slowly turned to the dragon and sergal, noting their equally horrified expression. He raised a shaky finger towards the door. "I-I-I think I'm g-g-gonna go to th-the infirmary f-first."

Matt and Zag nodded fervently in perfect sync. "S-sounds like a great plan..."

“Ok, now say ‘aaah?’”

Shinden had been saying ‘aaah’ all the way to the infirmary. Well, more like screaming it while running down the hall and flailing his arms, but for now, the wolf opened his mouth to let the nice eastern dragoness poke inside with a tongue depressor. Man, even the wooden tongue depressor tasted like rubber.

Well, everything would taste like rubber, with a tongue made of latex.

“Hmmm.” The sky-blue dragoness hummed as she reached in next with an oral swab, rubbing along the inside of Shinden’s cheek. The wolf’s ears flattened as he felt his cheek stretch out over twice as far as it should. Satisfied, the medic walked back to her desk with the swab to examine it further.

Leaving Shinden alone on the table.

The wolf sighed loudly, propping his head on his fist. With the dragoness out of the way, he was left staring at the mirror of himself on the wall, wincing. Except for his eyes, which remained a glowing yellow, his entire body was a strange, diluted hue of grayish-black. Even his uniform, from his brown jacket and green pants to his combat boots, were now reduced to the same shade as the rest of him, virtually indistinguishable from his body. Hell, for all he knew, his clothes may as well have *become* a part of his body, as he couldn’t even remove his stretchy hat from his stretchy head!

So, at the very least he was somewhat *modest* in his strange, abominable rubber-like state, right?

The more Shinden was left alone with his thoughts, the more unsettling they became. Prying himself from staring at the sad, wiggly wolf in the mirror, he turned his attention back to the nurse; Eryn, he recalled her name being. “So, am I...?”

“Are you what?” She asked, still looking over his saliva sample.

“Am I... you know...” Shinden didn’t want to ask if he really was made of rubber. Just saying that out loud sounded absolutely ridiculous.

“About that.” Eryn cleared her throat. “Have you ever considered becoming a scientist?”

“A what?” Shinden tilted his head.

The sky-blue dragoness turned back to him, grinning. “A scientist. You could work with three other superpowered heroes, call yourself the Fantastic Four-”

“Quit it!” Shinden whimpered.

But Eryn just laughed at her joke, dimples forming in her soft cheeks. “Alright, alright. Well, on a more serious note, your body is like nothing I’ve ever seen before. They’re clearly made of rubber, but I can easily make out your cells in a microscope. They still function and move on their own, just like any healthy cell would, but if I didn’t know any better, I would have thought these cells were a moving Latex sculpture, not... something off of a living organism. What is it you covered yourself with, again?”

“I told you, I don’t know!” Shinden exclaimed in exasperation. That wasn’t what he wanted to hear at all. “I just...it had to do with making weather balloons, that’s all I know.”

“Some synthetic material that’s supposed to bind itself to whatever material it comes in contact with?” Eryn brought her paw to her chin, musing. “Interesting how it didn’t affect the container it was shipped in, nor the ground or wall when it spilled out. Only you and your clothes.”

“It was an accident!” The wolf squeaked. The longer this medical examination went on, the more worked up he felt himself becoming. “Can you fix it?”

“I’m actually not sure. This isn’t exactly a common case you’d come across in a medical profession.” Eryn shrugged, making poor Shinden’s heart drop to his stomach. “I’ll need clearance with your supervisors to learn more about this strange rubber goo you’ve been moving around, to see if they have any record of someone accidentally getting into contact with it and how to reverse the effects. If not, I’ll need to send your samples to a lab so we can develop an antibody, a process that could take weeks or even months to develop.”

“*Months?!*” In a groan of desperation, Shinden slammed his paws into his cheeks, squeezing them inward and causing his face to stretch vertically before it wobbled back to its default shape. “Am I gonna even last until then? Am I gonna... am I gonna...?”

Shinden looked down at himself, now seeing the wide-eyed, panic-stricken face reflection from his own torso.

Clearly, he looked more horrified to someone other than himself, for soon he saw Eryn walk into view, a look of concern spreading across her face. “Tell me, Shinden. Does anything hurt?”

“Hurt?” He echoed, looking down at himself. “Erh...my heart is racing, and I still can’t breathe through my nose...I think that’s it.”

“Your heart is racing from stress, and your stuffy nose could be anything from a side effect of the goo to simple seasonal allergies. For now, I diagnose you with a clean bill of health.” The dragoness smiled.

“W-wha?!” The pilot frowned, gesturing to himself. “But, I’m clearly *not* alright!”

“But you’re clearly not unhealthy either.” The medic continued, folding her arms. “Your body is good at discerning any problems it may have. If you mostly feel fine, then it’s safe to assume you simply *are* fine. To panic and worry about the unknown is just adding more unneeded stress to your body. I promise I’m not withholding any information about you just to make you feel better. If we learn anything, you’ll be the first to know.”

Shinden looked up at the smiling healer, and took a deep breath. She was right, there was no reason to freak out. She sounded relaxed and confident, surely Eryn had a plan to reverse this weird-ass condition of him. “Yeah... yeah, I getcha. Thanks, Eryn.” Shinden smiled, his snout wiggling.

He frowned. “Ah.” His nose was itchy. “Aaah.” His eyes were forced shut, his chest puffing out. “ACHOO-*fwuuurmp!*”

Aaaaand he was back to panicking! Rather than sneezing properly, the sabertooth watched the edge of his snout inflate outwards like a balloon, before ricocheting towards the back of his head, snapping it back. Grunting, Shinden was forced to swallow that big chunk of air, hearing a sudden loud creak emanate from his stomach. “Uh oh...”

He didn’t look down. He didn’t *want* to look down. Instead, he carefully pressed his paw against his stomach, noting how much more bulbous and round it’d grown, as though he’d swallowed a basketball.

“Fascinating!” Eryn showed more interest in Shinden’s beer belly than she did with the rest of his predicament, leaning forward to observe it closer. “With your sinuses fully clogged, any air that leaves your lungs is forced back into your stomach instead! Can you burp it out?”

“I-I’m trying!” Disregarding the lack of manners he’d display in belching in front of a lady, Shinden did his best to work up a hearty burp, feeling the clump of air in his belly bounce a bit. But alas, he couldn’t get it to budge, not even by attempting to squeeze it up manually with his arms. He really was stuck looking as though he’d gone through a carb-heavy week off work.

Eryn suddenly stood up, sketching on her clipboard. Were her cheeks a few shades redder than before. “W-well, I, erh, would advise against sneezing in the foreseeable future then. Granted, Latex is a very durable material, so even if you were to sneeze, I doubt you could reach a size that would risk, erh, popping you.” Yeah, she was *definitely* blushing.

“G-good to know.” If Shinden had any color left to him, he’d be blushing too. With folded ears, the creaky wolf hopped off the bench, feeling his inflated potbelly bounce and wobble in front of his torso. “If it’s all the same with you, doc, I think I’m gonna head out.”

“Sounds good to me.” Eryn nodded. “I’ll call you up if I learn anything. In the meantime, take a vacation, destress a bit. Why not grab some friends and go sailing, maybe become King of the Pirates by discovering the One Piece-”

“Stop it!”

The strange, squelching sounds of his rubbery footsteps echoed through the hall, distracting Shinden from his thoughts. He ran over the conversation he had with Eryn again and again, about how he should take some time off to relax until the situation was resolved. While he agreed that would be the best course, the problem was that flying *was* relaxing for him. Having to sit around at home while they worked on a cure would just make him antsy and anxious all over again. He *liked* working, and even if he did have little spats with his coworkers, they were nothing more than friendly banter.

The wolf shook his head. This latex stuff was supposed to be used on weather balloons, right? So surely it could handle him flying, not like his cabin would be depressurized for any reason. Yeah, he could still work for sure; maybe even get out of having to do actual heavy lifting for a while! He was fiiiine! Just no more sneezing-

“Aaaachooo- fwuuuurmp!”

Dammit!

Having been distracted with his thoughts yet again, Shinden was unaware of the sneeze sneaking up on him until it was too late. A repeat of the events from the infirmary ward yet again, the wolf felt that rush of air rebound from his nose straight into his stomach again, augmenting it from beer belly to straight-up gut! Were his clothes not also rubberized to him, they surely would be riding up along his spherical middle by now, much to his chagrin.

At this rate, he wouldn’t even get the choice to fly today. Not much he could do behind the cockpit if he can’t even reach the controls!

He sighed carefully through his mouth, paws placed on his stomach. No more sneezing. Alright, he can do this, as long as nothing surprised him-

“Shinden! You’re okay!”

Dammit!

Shinden barely turned into the hanger before being assaulted by Zag and Matt, the sergal/dragon hug combo enough to practically sweep the rubbery wolf off his feet. He was helpless in their combined grasp, their overly-affectionate embrace squeezing him quite heavily

around his poor, inflated middle. “We were so worried, Shin!” Matt practically sobbed into his chest, the pilot briefly terrified that the sergal’s pointy face would pop him. “We-we thought you were poisoned or something, and-and a bunch of guys in hazmat suits would come, b-but you’re walking around all fine!”

“Y-yeah...f-fine!” Shinden squirmed. He felt bad for any of the rubber pooltoys he played with as a pup, having now experienced their dilemma first hand. He couldn’t break out from their grasps, his bloated body creaking and groaning. “G-guys, please. I’m getting squished!”

Thankfully, he was released, the tar-black lupine huffing and puffing. “Thanks for the concern guys...” Shinden wheezed. “But damn, Zag, you *definitely* could have helped push that vat. I thought I was gonna pop, with how hard you hugged me, sheesh!”

“Sorry,” the gray dragon shyly scratched behind his head. “I’ll, uh, help next time. To be honest, I thought you could have used the exercise more, given your weight issue.”

“Weight issue?” Shinden frowned, before rolling his eyes. Of course, they didn’t see what happened to him when he sneezed. “The bloated belly is just a side effect from the weird goop. Trust me.”

“I wasn’t talking about your stomach.” Zag tilted his head.

Puzzled, the wolf glanced down at him, before gasping in terror.

Zag and Matt’s squeezes were powerful indeed, for they shoved all the air in Shinden’s stomach to *other* parts of his body. Namely his barrel shaped thighs, hips that’d bump against a narrow doorframe, and an ass that, well, was quite literally a bubblebutt! Whimpering in terror, twisted and turned to examine himself, before bending over to squeeze at his thighs. “Dammit! I preferred the belly!”

“You’re telling me!” He could hear Matt whistle, realizing too late that he’d basically turned around and mooned the sergal. “You free later tonight, Shin?”

“*Shut up!*” The rubbery lupine yelped, shooting straight up to hide his big behind (which led to the wobbling of his curvaceous thighs and hips). “This is all temporary! My nose is clogged, so whenever I sneeze, air builds up inside me instead.”

Zag frowned. “I... don’t think that’s how that works.”

“Well it is, and-” Shinden gasped, and suddenly sneezed. *Hard*. He saw the amazed look on both of his friends as another blast of air was sent into his stomach, pumping it out to make his figure much more proportioned. Frustrated, the pilot reached for his stomach before pausing half-way, not wanting to accidentally shove any more air into his hips.

Another whistle erupted from Matt, his tail swishing. "That was cool, Shin! Do that again."

"Matt, I swear to-" Shinden gasped, and suddenly sneezed. *Hard.*

What was going on?! He couldn't smell, but suddenly the area where his nostrils should be was burning! Even with that second sneeze, his stomach now larger than ever before, the lupine felt a third one coming on rather quickly! Whimpering, he clawed at his nose, hoping to find the cause of these outbursts.

It was hard to focus, however, with Matt's laughter. "Oh damn, that's something else! Just gotta fill out your arms and face a bit and you'll look like a proper fatass!"

"Shut up!" Shinden hissed, pulling his paws back. Something red and powdery was on them; it couldn't have been from a nosebleed, or else it would have been fresh, and Eryn didn't mention him having one while in the infirmary.

Slowly, the pieces put themselves in place, and Shinden gasped. "Is this chili powder!?"

Zag grimaced. "Sorry, Shin, I didn't mean to get any in your nose. When you were in the infirmary, I tried getting the loader working again by cleaning out all the powder stuck in it, and I guess some got on my-"

"*AACHOO! AAACHOO!!*" Shinden couldn't hold it in anymore! His stomach audibly bwumfled and creaked as it rapidly expanded outwards, sticking out a full two feet in front of him. His eyes were watery; rubbing at his nose only served to smear it in further! "W-water! I need water!"

The sergal perked up. "Good idea, Shin! We can turn you into a mobile aquarium. People would pay hundreds to see you-"

"No!" Shinden sneezed, yelping again. Matt and Zag had always been a couple inches taller, yet now the wolf found himself a full head higher than the two of them. Was he growing taller? No, his torso was just stretching him out further. "I need water to wash this crap out of my nose!"

Like a bowling ball, Shinden practically crashed through his two coworkers as he made his way across the hanger, storming off towards the nearest bathroom he knew. As determined as he was, he lumbered off at a near glacial pace, alas. While not necessarily much heavier, those thick thighs of his made running a real chore, reducing his gait to an ambling waddle. Not to mention that even with a larger torso, his legs were still the same size, meaning it was *real* easy to be thrown off balance. Not to mention-

"*Aaaachoo!*"

-he still had that to deal with, didn't he?

The sneezes didn't stop, the poor wolf unable to even catch his breath as he ambled forward. Rounder and rounder he grew, each sneeze feeling like a bike pump shoving air into him, his frame creeeeeeeaking and groaning. His arms were forced higher and higher until he couldn't even pump them when he ran, leaving them forced to rest atop his ballooning midsection. To his horror, his bloated upper thighs started to congeal in with his massive torso, rounding him out even further. On the rare occasions Shinden could see past his sneezing snout, he'd find the top of the doorway lower and lower, his hopes that he could squeeze through dropping like a lead weight. But he had to try!

He had- "*ACHOO! ACHOO!*" to try "*ACHOO! ACHOO!*"

And try he did, though he didn't necessarily succeed, as one powerful sneeze was enough to finally knock him off balance. Still, he made his way towards the doorway... just not on his feet anymore.

He rolled. He rolled, and rolled, and sneezed.

Shinden tried everything to get him to at least stop tumbling forward, but his arms and legs were completely buried beneath his massive middle, leaving only paws and feet that could do little more than claw at the ground whenever it was in reach. Not even his tail, which miraculously escaped most of the blimpage, was any help to him here. Maybe if he timed his sneezes right, it could get him to stop, Shinden thought, but with how disoriented he became, the wolf gave up quickly on that plan and just allowed himself to roll.

Thankfully, the collision with the wall was well padded; Shinden squished into it slightly like a rubber ball, before slowly morphing back into his default spherical shape. Dazed and dizzy, the pilot couldn't even tell if he was facing up or down, left or right. All he knew was that he was well and truly stuck on himself. A monumental black orb he was, eight feet wide in any angle at the very least, he reckoned. Every heavy breath he took, he could feel himself rising and falling, his rubbery hide groaning further with the slightest stretch.

At least the sneezing finally stopped. Maybe all the spinning threw off the last trace of the chili powder?

With his vision slowly returning, Shinden noticed a figure before him. Had Zag or Matt run in front of him to try and help squeeze him through? A bit late now, he thought, but the notion was appreciated, at least. But as the figure cleared up, the wolf's rubbery ears began to fold back, the tips of which he felt pressed into his inflated back.

It was his boss, standing in the doorway.

"M-Mr. Fergus, sir!" Shinden gasped, attempting a very pathetic salute.

“Mm?” The ferret raised a brow, not even looking up towards Shinden’s head. “Oh, don’t mind me. Just admiring my reflection on your hide, is all. I figured if the \$400,000 experimental goo can’t even be carried properly to its destination, I may as well use it while it’s still here. Gotta make the most out of bad situations.”

“F-f-four hundred *what?!*” Shinden couldn’t breathe. Oh, he was boned! Forget being the size of a human hamster wheel, he can kiss goodbye to every paycheck he’ll ever receive just trying to pay off his mistake.

Well, at the very least, he should admit it as *his* mistake. “I’m so sorry, sir. This whole thing is my fault, and-”

“I know.” Fergus nodded. “Matt and Zag told me everything earlier, how you argued with them and didn’t notice the vat slipping until too late.”

“Oh.” If only he could turn his head to glare at his coworkers. Jerks. He sighed. “I’ll get to work paying it off as soon as I deflate, sir.”

“Deflate? Now why would I want you to do that?” At last, the ferret looked up to Shinden with a sly smile, tapping a claw against the wolf’s wobbly tum. “What if I told you you can fix your mistake by staying a blimp?”

Shinden went wide-eyed. “B-but sir, I’m practically useless! I can’t move an inch!” To emphasize his point, he wiggled his wrists and ankles as much as possible, barely able to jiggle his body.

But Fergus simply tut-tutted and shook his head. “Au contraire, Shinden. Recall that the goo you’ve coated yourself in was to help mass produce weather balloons. And, well, seeing as how you’re now made out of the same material weather balloons are...”

Shinden sighed. “I’ll get to sneezing, sir...”

To the pilot, there was nothing more relaxing than flying. To leave his problems literally thousands of feet away, gliding along the clouds, not having to worry about traffic or commute—at least, until it was time to land. Still, there was no greater joy to Shinden than being able to fly in his plane.

A shame he had to fly without one, then.

The only comfort Shinden was allowed was knowing no one could see him like this. Sure, many coworkers watched the wobbly wolf get rolled out hanger, with Matt singing Oompa Loompa songs the entire time. And many more were around to watch the wolf quite literally have a hose inserted into him that pumped him up ten times faster than sneezing ever could, but no one could see him *now*, right?

Right?!

Shinden honestly wasn't so sure. He felt absolutely immense, a whopping 30 feet across, and apparently still growing, if his ear-numbing creaking had anything to say about it. Most weather balloons didn't grow larger than 20 feet, although Fergus insisted Shinden needed to be blown bigger than normal to account for his extra weight. Honestly, the wolf felt this was a form of punishment, or perhaps just an excuse for everyone to get a laugh at how goofy and silly he looked. "A shame Thanksgiving is so far away, you'd make an *amazing* float!" He heard Matt exclaim several times.

At least he could move his wrists and ankles while still grounded, but as he rose higher, with the decreased atmospheric pressure swelling him out further than ever, Shinden wasn't even allowed that anymore. His hands and feet no longer bulged out of his frame, but rather bulged *in*, his surrounding body seemingly swallowing up his poor nubby digits. The same could be said for his face, the lupine almost felt as though he were in a cave of his own body, his glowing yellow eyes all that could be seen past himself.

With the influx of air, however, Shinden's tail finally inflated into a proper ovoid shape, although he couldn't move it as well. Thanks to the extra-bloated limb, most of the air shoved inside of him ended up towards his lower half, which meant he was quite literally floating ass-up.

Well, it wasn't so bad, Shinden reckoned. Thanks to his strange position, he was free to gaze down at the ground thousands of feet below him, a luxury not often afforded to him while flying. His ears were buried within himself, so the harsh winds blowing against him weren't quite as annoying; he just had to deal with the constant creaking, but he could tune that out like he would his own airplane's engine. Hell, even the intense pressure he felt in his middle wasn't too bad, like eating an extra-large meal. Yeah, he could get used to this; just take an extra long nap and call it a day when it was time to deflate.

He'd still rather be in his plane, however.

A crackling noise brought the wolf out of his stupor, and soon he could hear Zag's voice in his ear. "Alright, Shin, the radiosonde tells me you're in position now. You should stop rising now."

Shinden blinked. It was hard to tell he'd stopped rising, but he believed it. Everything was relative, after all. Not like Shinden could take a look at the radiosonde attached to his body.

Zag continued. "I know it's probably really boring up there, all by yourself. I asked Fergus, and he allowed me to talk with you the entire time, don't worry!"

Oh no. Shinden grunted, but couldn't make a noise; his damn muzzle was forced shut thanks to his aforementioned head-cave.

"Alright, the weather's looking nice and steady now. Should be easy up there, Shinden. Real nice weather. Beautiful, even. Just take it nice and easy, Shinden. nice and easy."

So much for his nap.