

Puffed Up in Paradise

By: Indi

The clear skies and gently rolling waves put Rye at ease. The yellow and cream lion sat on the warm sand and simply took it all in. He was all by himself, far away from the major beaches the rest of the tourists frequented. It was exactly what he needed at that moment.

As wonderful as the beach was, Rye found his thoughts drifting towards something else. He opened up the pack he'd sat on the sand and pulled out a small block of metal the size of a matchbox. The device was an attachment for his rather hi-tech, midnight blue bodysuit. It didn't add storage space or extend his comm range or project holograms, or any of the things normally considered helpful. Instead it was a very personal, pleasurable addition.

When attached to the belt buckle of his bodysuit, it'd act as an air pump, allowing the lion to inflate. Rye was rather shy about his love of inflation, and tended to only indulge while in private. And indoors. But the thought of puffing up on the beach was too tempting to resist. No one was around to witness his fun, and he'd only be inflating a little—just enough to feel bigger. Who knew when such an opportunity would appear again?

After looking around yet again to make sure he truly was alone, Rye attached the inflation module. It clicked into place, quickly integrating with the computer system built into his suit. Rye was free to begin.

“Start inflation, level one,” Rye said, quietly.

A gentle whirring came from the attachment, and suddenly Rye's flat middle was swelling. His inflation was slow and steady, as relaxed as the world around him. He smiled as he watched himself grow, bodysuit creaking lightly as its material stretched. It was an incredibly durable outfit, with little chance of tearing apart even if he ended up a sphere. Not that he was planning to.

Within a couple minutes Rye looked like he'd swallowed a beach ball. He drummed on his taut middle, hearing the hollow thumps echo outward. He loved how perfectly round his inflated belly was, and the light pressure from within. The sensation of rubbing his paws over it made him blush. He smiled, then let out an unexpected, somewhat squeaky giggle.

Inflation always made Rye happy, but for some reason he was feeling overly jubilant. His anxieties had dwindled, along with all worries about getting caught indulging. Rather than stop inflating as he'd originally intended, he actually commanded the device to go up a level. Instantly the swelling intensified.

Unbeknownst to the loopy lion, a stream of warnings were being displayed across his expanding middle. A glitch in the attachment was altering the air being pumped into Rye, turning it into a strange gas.

Rye, of course, felt perfectly fine. In fact, he was more relaxed than ever. When he laughed there was a higher pitch to his voice, which only made him laugh more. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other to wobble his belly, and was delighted to realize he was feeling lighter for some reason.

“Increase inflation to level three!” Rye ordered with glee. The whirring grew slightly louder, and the lion began to truly blimp up.

Rye jumped up and down, getting a little higher each time as he continued to swell. It reminded him of being in a low gravity environment. The fun and the debilitating effects of the gas prevented him from noticing just how much he was filling up.

The lion's whole body was bloating, limbs included. He wobbled around the beach, growing rounder and rounder with each passing second, his form starting to resemble a sphere more than a feline.

“Increase inflation to level five!” Rye shouted. “I—hehe—look just a balloon,” he giggled.

“Gonna be big and blimpy and round. Gotta be—hehe—round.”

New alerts were popping up on Rye’s suit, which had plenty of space to display them. They went unseen, though in his delirious state he likely would’ve ignored them anyway. All that mattered to him was expanding. He didn’t want to be a lion, he wanted to be a balloon, as round as round could be. And he was almost there.

Rye’s limbs had swelled until they became domes atop his ball-like body. He was still wandering around the beach, bouncing and wobbling, almost too light to stay on the sand. His midnight-blue bodysuit held firm, the sun shining off its surface. Even the belt around his waist had stretched to fit, now a black ring around his circumference. It dug ever-so-slightly into his taut hide.

At last even Rye’s limbs were sucked into his blimpy body, with only his paws and head left sticking out. He was too round to even wobble, and rolled forwards, laughing the whole time.

The inflated lion was euphoric. His body tingled as his hide stretched to comedic proportions. He felt his sheer size, the pressure pushing outward in every direction. Becoming spherical wasn’t uncommon for Rye, but thanks to the mysterious gas it felt incredible on a whole new level.

Rye didn’t notice when he became weightless. One moment he was rolling along the sand, the next in the air. He was rising slowly, his paws still able to brush the ground at times. There wasn’t any fear or nervousness as the distance between him and the sand below gradually increased. He didn’t think about how he’d get back down, or just how high he’d end up. All that mattered was he was a balloon.

By chance Rye decided he was big enough, and managed to mumble out “Stop—hehe—inflation.” The pump turned off, sealing tight so none of the gas could escape. Small creaks came from the inflated lion’s taut hide. The intoxicating gas was joined by the overwhelming pressure of being inflated to his limit, trapping him in a powerful, unbreakable daze.

His mind was filled with thoughts of inflation, and nothing else.

Rye was blushing nonstop, his gaze drifting as aimlessly as he was. The balloon of a lion was at the mercy of the wind, which nudged him along the coast. He’d let out the occasional laugh or moan. Sometimes he’d wiggle his paws just to feel the spikes in pressure. His inability to do much else was blissful.

Eventually he reached the resort. A few tourists spotted Rye up above, but from their point of view he was just an oversized blue balloon, probably an advertisement that’d got away. He was a curiosity, something to point out before returning to the fun on the beach. As such, he was allowed to float away, higher and higher into the sky, further and further out of reach of anyone able to deflate him back down to normal.

Fortunately for Rye, he was in no condition to panic about his predicament. Everything was perfect to the lion balloon in a daze. There was no problem with being spherical forever. It was actually rather ideal. And the sky wasn’t so bad. Maybe he was just meant to be a balloon, and nothing more.

Such thoughts would pass through Rye’s mind often in the long, long months ahead of him up in the air.