

A small sound interrupted the silence of the apartment- the sounds of keys jingling, metal clinking against metal, then a *click* so impossibly quiet that it wouldn't be possible for most creatures to hear unless they were focused. The door swung open, and in the doorway stood a tiger and a kobold. He ducked his head down so as to not hit the doorframe, his tall body taking strides across the apartment as his tail swung from side to side in excitement. The floorboards creaked as Thobi walked to his desk, setting down a thick and heavy book. The tiger sighed, feeling the weight of the book finally lifted off of his arms, the small burning sensation of his accidental workout finally came to rest in his biceps. "Why do they, *huff*, always make these spellbooks so... heavy?" In front of him lay the goliath of a book- an ancient book, one that has lasted centuries of age and tear, a collection of writings so powerful they could break entire empires down into nothing but rubble and ash. Thobi had gotten a copy of the book at a nearby library.

"The heavier they are, the more intimidating they look, right?" The small blue kobold replied, sitting down onto Thobi's bed. "Why did you want that book, anyways? I thought it was a fiction novel of some sort, disguised as a spellbook to add a layer of charm to it."

The tiger shook his head. "No, Dust- Have you never seen videos of people casting spells? They're a ton of fun, I think... I've never actually tried one before, so that's why I'm so excited and nervous about this." The tiger held his paws, fiddling with his thumbs. "I won't be doing anything dangerous though, I can handle myself just fine."

Dust chuckled a little, slowly getting up from the bed. "Well I get anxious easily, so text me when you cast whatever devious spell you're planning!" The kobold turned towards the door, walking down the hallway with an easy-going pace. "I'll catch you later, okay?"

"Goodbye Dust!" Thobi cheerfully shouted, waving his paw towards Dust. The kobold walked outside of the apartment, reached up to grab the doorknob, then gently closed the door shut. With a huff, the tiger leaned over his desk, eyeing the book. "Alright, let's see what's inside..."

Slowly and carefully, the blue tiger lifted open the strong, hard cover to the book, small traces of dust falling off and onto his desk. The first page was blank, but the second page had the table of contents, the giant list of spells spanning about two-hundred and fifty different unique spells to cast. Thobi's eyes darted around the different spell names- some were quite straightforward, such as the "Macro Growth Spell," while others were more complex, such as the "Slime Monster Transformation spell." The more a spell had to alter reality, the harder it would be to cast. Spells require a lot of patience and focus in the mind to cast properly- if cast improperly, a faulty spell could be extremely dangerous, and could leave a permanent curse on a person's life.

As Thobi looked through the spells, his eyes finally settled on the spell he had been looking for. "Helium inflation spell, page 156," Thobi said to himself, "Sounds easy enough, I just hope I can do it." Flipping through the pages, Thobi worked his way through the book, the thick pages scratching against his claws, although they felt comfortable to touch with his paw. Quickly, Thobi found the spell he was looking for.

"Helium Inflation Spell: Cast this spell, and the person of your choice will have their stomach inflate like a massive balloon, and gradually float upwards. Useful for disabling an enemy in combat, hunting feral creatures, et cetera..." His eyes drifted to the spell itself, the text beckoning to be read aloud. He could feel his heart beat faster as he opened his maw, ready to speak the words. A small panic formed within him, "*What if it fails? What if it doesn't work?*" But he pushed past it, taking a deep breath to calm his anxiety, and began to read the spell.

"With this chant, I cast a spell,
Those who I envision shall swell,
Their face bloats as their belly grows,
Leaving their new round fate unknown,
As their body continues to bloat,
Their swollen feet will begin to float,

Swelling, soaring far above the ground,

This balloon will grow ever so round!”

A spark of blue magic bloomed from the spellbook, illuminating the room in its aura. Thobi envisioned himself as a round blimp, floating off of the ground as he grew puffier and puffier. The thought of being a balloon made him flustered, which only worsened when he felt an odd feeling begin to blossom inside his belly. “O-Oh my, that feels- hhrmmff- really good~”

A bloating feeling began inside of the white furred belly of the tiger- something inside him felt like it pushed outward, slowly growing like a balloon. Cautiously, Thobi poked his bloated belly, and it pushed back at his claw, wobbling as it expanded. He was definitely growing. As he looked down at his belly, he began to feel a fuzzy tingling sensation in his claws, which began to spread down his arms as well. “Hrrmph, that was fast.” He remarked, walking over to his bedroom mirror. His normally muscular figure began to slowly pudge out- his beefy arms becoming more swollen and soft, his thighs becoming larger and fatter. His belly looked like a basketball inflating within him, growing bigger every second. To the common eye, you wouldn’t be able to notice the changes. He could easily go out in public and no one would bat an eye, until he burst out of his clothes, of course. Gently, Thobi rested his claws on his swollen belly, rubbing it in a circular motion. The sensation felt so soothing, so relaxing, the tiger let out a *squeak!*

Instantly, the tiger covered his snout with his claw. Slowly he put his claw down, hesitating before taking a breath. “Is my voice...?” He squeaked, his voice being a higher pitch than it had always been. “Oh, the helium.” He squeaked again, hiccuping a little. His claw started to puff out, and the tiger wiggled it around, feeling his puffy fingers try to move. They weren’t as flexible anymore, none of his body was. His belly continued to grow and expand as his body grew rounder and rounder, now his gut was the size of a yoga ball.

Eyeing himself all over in the mirror, Thobi failed to notice how puffy his feet-claws and thighs were getting. They were getting much more fat with air than his arms were- in fact, they

were getting a little too full. The tiger could feel himself getting lighter and lighter, his claws loosening their grip on the ground below. His cheeks were beginning to puff out as well, and opening his mouth only let out a burst of air like an open air valve, thus making the tiger unable to open his mouth without causing a rush of air to come out. His legs, as puffy as they were, began to sink into the ever growing belly, making the tiger look less like a tiger and more like a sphere. Thobi was a tiger no longer- they were a balloon now.

Being filled with air gave Thobi an idea- push-ups must take little to no effort at all! Grinning at the idea, he began to adjust his position, his belly and legs swollen so big that it was hard to move them around. Slowly, he bent his legs, and lowered himself onto the floor with caution. He leaned forward to try and touch the floor with his paw- almost there, leaning as far as he could- then his weight shifted, and with a swell FWOOM, Thobi fell onto the floor, bouncing up and down as his belly jiggled. The blue tiger was unable to stop the bouncing, all he could do was try to grab the floor, and eventually, the bouncing got slower, and slower...

"Urf, that felt oddly good," he squeaked, his voice even higher pitched than before, "With how light I am, this should be easy!"

The large and rotund cat stretched himself out, forming a plank position on the floor. His belly flattened, his legs thickened, and in one sudden move, he lifted up- a push-up so grand and powerful, he flew into the air! His feet-paws floated into the air, rising above the rest of his body. "W-Woah, that's not supposed to happen!"

His belly continued to grow bigger and bigger, rounding out his body- but his arms remained thin and not sunken into his body. "Huff, this is getting out of hand!" He squeaked, looking over at the spellbook. If he could reach the book, he could reverse the spell. Slowly, the tiger pawed himself forward, trying to move one step at a time. His entire body was floating upwards, and it was getting harder to grab onto the floor. Thobi looked to his left, seeing his bed frame within reach. He could grab onto that and push himself towards his desk, all he had to do was push left, then the bed would be within his reach.

Bracing himself, Thobi bent his arms as best he could, and pushed! He floated towards his bed, reaching out a claw to grab it. His belly pushed against the bed, but very quickly Thobi was able to grab the frame, holding on with a firm grip. His belly wobbled and groaned as he floated in place. He leaned into the bed, feeling himself rise off the ground completely- he was lighter than air! Squeaking in excitement about his balloony fate, Thobi was reminded of the peril he was in when he felt his paw start to slip off of the bed frame as he swelled even bigger.

The balloon tiger eyed his desk, preparing himself for the final push. "Okay, this should be easy, right? On the count of three, I'll go for it." Thobi braced himself, pushing himself backwards a small amount. "One," he could feel his arms being raised up by his ever growing belly. "Two," his feet-paws were so high in the air, he could almost touch the ceiling. "Three!"

Thobi launched himself forward, floating through the air like a balloon without a string, flying without friction. The tiger got closer and closer to his desk as he continued to rise above the floor, almost being too high to reach his desk. As the balloon started to slow to a stop, Thobi used all of his strength to reach down and grab the desk with his paw, clinging onto it as best he could. "W-Woah!" He squeaked, trying to hold his bloated body in place, but failing. His belly continued its momentum, bouncing into the wall behind the desk. Thobi tried to hold on with all his might, but failed- his belly was in control now. As his paw slipped off of the desk, Thobi began to float back towards his bed ever so slowly, huffing in dismay. He was still facing downwards with his head towards the ground and his ballooned ass in the air.

Squishing his paws into himself, the tiger huffed at how amazing it felt to be so big and full of air, like a small parade balloon. In the end, he got what he had wanted. "T-This isn't permanent, right?" He stuttered, thinking over the spell that he cast. Nowhere in the rhyme did it mention it being permanent, yet nowhere did it mention that it would undo eventually.

Suddenly, a *bzzz!* Sounded across the room- the buzz of Thobi's cell phone disrupting the squeaks and groans that had previously filled the room. *Bzzz! Bzzz!*

[Call transferred to voicemail- please leave a message after the tone. *Beeeeep!*]

“Hey Thobi! It’s Dust. I, uh, forgot my wallet at your place, haha. I know it’s a stupid thing to forget, but, y’know, obviously it’s super important, so I’m heading back to your apartment right now. I hope you’re still there, since you didn’t answer my call or anything. I’ll be there in a couple minutes, so, um... yeah! See you soon! I hope you didn’t get up to any trouble with that spellbook, haha!”

[One new voicemail]

“O-Oh...crap.”