

Over the Limit

By: Indi

“I think it’s time to test my luck again,” Tycho said. The lean lion smirked and stood up from his seat. He wore a purple bodysuit with a nice sheen to it, a favorite of his. The word “Capacity” was displayed on his chest, and below it was “91%”.

“Are you sure?” Vex asked. The gray snake remained seated, a sly smile on his face. He wore a bodysuit like Tycho’s, but it was dark green instead of purple. Similar words were displayed on it, but the number on his read “96%”.

“What, you expect me to give up and let you win?” Tycho scoffed.

“I expect you to be smart and not pop yourself,” Vex replied. “I like winning, but I also like having a boyfriend and not a pile of scraps.”

At the moment, the couple was actually almost fully inflated. The bodysuits they wore could compress their bodies down to a normal state, disguising how much they’d swelled. They could still feel hints of their inflation—a distant pressure, and a subtle stiffness as their limbs would normally be puffed up to the point of being useless. The display conveniently told them how close they were to reaching their capacity. An important feature, since uncompressing after exceeding their capacity would result in them popping.

Tycho and Vex had used the feature of the bodysuits to create a risky game. They competed to see who could inflate the most over two hours. Instead of inflating with a pump or air tank, they used Regal Swell, a novelty soda that caused a random amount of swelling. There was no way to tell how much you’d inflate before you drank. It could puff you up only a tiny bit, or bring you to the brink of bursting.

Which was what had happened to their friend, Lane.

The owl was wobbling gently, a near-perfect sphere. He hadn’t been taking part in the game—and thus wasn’t compressed—but wanted to blimp up anyway. A single can of Regal Swell had blimped him up so fast the others were convinced he was going to pop. He probably would’ve, if not for the fact he’d increased his capacity by inflating so often. He’d spent the last couple of hours grinning and blushing, his attention split between his friends and the euphoric sensation of being fully inflated.

The three had played the game many times, with plenty of close calls. Tycho in particular had become notorious for miraculously avoiding certain doom and ending up just below his max capacity. But the luck had fueled his cockiness.

“You don’t need to worry about me popping,” Tycho insisted, walking up to the counter where fresh cans of Regal Swell were arranged. “Lane’s the one who’s a hard slap away from being a borb bomb.”

“Birds were meant to blimp. We’re nature’s balloons,” Lane said. He laughed, then moaned as loud creaks echoed out from his body. “Cats are the party poppers~”

“Don’t make me come over and poke you a few times on ‘accident’ until you

blow,” Tycho said. “We could stuff quite a few lovely pillows with your feathers.”

“Won’t be able to pop me while you’re busy being a scrap pile yourself,” Lane said.

Tycho scoffed. “It’d be nice if *someone* had a little faith in me. Bet I won’t even reach ninety-nine percent. In a few minutes, I’ll be enjoying a victory swell while my beloved boyfriend sends me a hundred bucks.”

Tycho looked at the selection of cans and plucked one up at random. There was no need to put too much thought into it, not with luck on his side. He pressed the soda can to his lips, tilted his head, and chugged the entire thing in one go. When he was finished, he tossed it into the recycling can nearby and belched. The lean lion looked down at himself.

The number ticked up a percent. He felt his middle tighten. Another percent higher. Than another. And another. When it surpassed Vex’s ninety-five percent he grinned in triumph. “See? Another easy win.”

“It’s still rising, hon,” Vex said.

Ninety-seven. Ninety-eight. Ninety-nine.

Tycho waited for it to stop so he could continue his celebration. When it ticked over to one hundred percent his eye twitched. He was still safe, though. One hundred percent just meant he’d be a bit creaky when he uncompressed.

One hundred and one.

Tycho stared at the number, as if the suit might be mistaken and would lower it.

One hundred and two. One hundred and three. One hundred and four. One hundred and five.

The number finally stopped increasing. The color of the display had turned red, and a warning alert popped up, advising Tycho to deflate as soon as possible. He silenced and minimized it.

A mixture of hoots and laughter from Lane broke the silence. “So much for your luck!”

“It might be malfunctioning!” Tycho hissed. He ran a diagnostic on the suit, but the number didn’t change. Still red, still advertising his potential doom if he were to uncompress.

“We could always call off the game,” Vex said. He had a stern look of disappointment on his face. “You won’t have to owe me anything.”

Tycho’s face scrunched up, and he bit his lip. Backing out just because he might pop would be terribly embarrassing. Vex might not bring it up, but Lane would tease him about it forever, until either of them actually did pop. He took pride in sticking to the rules, even when they stopped being in his favor.

“Oh no, you’re not getting out of the bet that easily!” Tycho declared.

Vex snorted. “Me? Hon, you’re literally a ticking time bomb right now. Just take the L so we can play video games or something.”

"I'll be fine. I'm only a tiny bit over my limit, and the suits aren't always accurate. Worst case I'll end up in a pressure daze," Tycho said.

"No, worst case is I have to run the vacuum to collect all your scraps." Vex smiled. "I was hoping to get a few more years out of you."

For a split second, Tycho thought about giving up. Then he noticed how much Lane was grinning. "Being sentimental won't get you out of paying up."

Vex rolled his eyes. "Alright, have it your way. Just let me record everything so I'll have something to remember you by besides scraps." The snake brought up a small holographic screen on his wrist and poked at it.

"You go first, hon," Tycho said. "Can't risk you trying to burst me to win the bet." He winked at the snake.

"I've literally been trying to do the opposite, you dope." Vex laughed and shook his head. "But fine."

Vex got up and walked over to Tycho. He hugged the lion, then gave him a quick kiss on the cheek, before heading to a clear spot with enough room to grow. Once he was certain he wouldn't be expanding into anything with sharp corners he spoke the command to uncompress.

The snake began to swell instantly. His flat middle rapidly ballooned outward. He chuckled at the sensation, inflating larger and larger by the second. His limbs puffed up, sticking outward as the rest of his body took on a round shape. The bodysuit had no difficulty stretching to handle the inflating snake. The belt on it stretched at a slightly slower rate, just enough to dig faintly into his increasingly spherical body.

Vex's limbs sunk into his body, leaving only his claws jutting out. His chin rested on the curve of his chest. The pressure was pleasurable, but distracting, though he remained coherent.

He rocked himself back-and-forth, letting out delighted sighs in between the occasional creak.

"Are you still gonna be a dummy and go through with this?" Vex asked. The snake knew the answer, but wanted to give his boyfriend one last chance to remain intact.

Tycho grinned. "Uncompress," he said, without hesitation.

The lion expanded as swiftly as his boyfriend had. He kept smiling, even as his lean body ballooned into a sphere and his face puffed up. He couldn't wait to see the looks on their faces once the swelling ended and he was perfectly fine. He'd make sure to replay the video any time either of them doubted him ever again.

Tycho reached Vex's size, becoming a purple-clad orb. The inflation didn't stop, though. He twitched as he felt his paws getting sucked into his swelling body. The pressure was building, disrupting his thoughts. His hide creaked in protest as it stretched further than ever. The balloon of a lion started to feel uncomfortable.

"S-See? I'm fine," Tycho said with a grimace.

"No, you're not," Vex said, and sighed. "Your paws just got pulled in; you're

starting to look like a giant plum.”

“People get this big all the time, it’s—*mmmph*—no big deal,” Tycho insisted. His head was sinking in, his body still blimping without end in sight. He clenched his fists and held his breath, willing his body to hold together. Just a little bit more, he could do it.

“Ever seen someone’s head sink in and not end in a bang?” Lane asked.

“Nope,” Vex replied. The snake watched Tycho’s chin tilt up, only able to see half their face. “It was lovely having you around, hon. I’ll make sure to get a nice jar for your scraps. Love ya!”

“I’m n-not—*mrrrmph*—gone yet—*mmmmph!!*” The rest of Tycho’s muzzle was enveloped, encasing the foolish lion in his own spherical body.

Tycho’s thoughts were jumbled. He felt like he was being pulled in every direction. With his hide stretched thin, even the slightest movement led to a pleasurable tingle. All he could think of was the overwhelming pressure. He forgot about the game, his boyfriend, and everything else in the outside world. In darkness, with creaks and groans echoing into his ears non-stop, Tycho couldn’t even begin to fathom his impending doom.

Vex watched the orb that would soon be his ex-boyfriend quake for a couple of minutes straight. Tycho was holding out far longer than he’d expected, but he didn’t have hope for a miracle. Instead, he admired how round the lion had become. Given the chance, he might have actually kept Tycho that round forever. A taut, wobbly ball to play with whenever he wanted. At least he’d have good footage of it.

The explosion of Tycho occurred in an instant. A long, groaning creak heralded the end. Suddenly the lion was reduced to a shower of hide scraps. The escaping blast of air rolled Lane onto his back and wobbled Vex. Little bits of hide pelted the furniture. The purple bodysuit worn by Tycho snapped back down to size and fell to the floor, various error signs displayed on the front as it tried to register the sudden lack of a wearer.

Once Vex regained his balance and stopped wobbling, he looked upon the mess. All that remained of his boyfriend were scraps. He sighed. He already missed the lion.

Moping would do the snake little good, though. Tycho had made his decision—as stupid as it was—and Vex simply had to accept that. It was an unfortunate, but fitting end. He’d cherish his memories of him, all the pictures and videos they’d taken together. Vex already knew the recording of Tycho popping would be his favorite, the one he’d go back to more than anything else.

“Well that was an easy hundred bucks,” Lane said, the owl rocking as he laughed.

“Dude!”

“What, it was.”

“I mean, yeah, but I’m trying to mourn here.”

“You’re thinking about watching him explode in slow motion, aren’t you?”

“Am not!” Vex said, laughing. “Okay, maybe. Want to watch it after we deflate?”

“Duh! I need to see him become a balloon bomb from every angle,” Lane said. “Shame he wasn’t a deer, like August; watching those antlers bounce around the room and explode into shards is the best.”

“Just remember those shards also popped three other blimps.” Admittedly the only reason Vex even remembered their friend August popping so well. It’d been one Hell of a party. “If Tycho had had antlers, horns, or even a beak, either of us could’ve ended up as scraps as well.”

“It’d have been worth it.”

Vex rolled his eyes. “Speak for yourself. I’m rather fond of not joining the confetti pile.” He glanced down at a few of the scraps. “No offense, hon.”

The excitement of the explosive finale to the game began to fade. Vex was now available again, after a wonderful three-year stint with Tycho. It’d be a good excuse to hit up more parties and see if he could find another handsome blimp to take the lion’s place. Hopefully, they’d be a bit more durable. But if they weren’t...well, Vex didn’t mind a relationship ending in a bang.