

An Ordinary Balloon-Man: Object Actor

by Selph

Will rose to greet the day with a stretch. He rose both arms over his head and then wiped the sleep from his eyes, scanning the room for a pair of boxer shorts and socks. They were clean enough, only worn for a few hours yesterday, so they would do for now while he went about his morning ritual. There was no point putting on clean underwear before showering, cleaning himself, to put on yet another clean pair. It would add more effort to his washing, and among the few things Will deigned important enough to put more than the bare minimum into, laundry wasn't included.

He fumbled for a light switch; the Autumn morning too dark for the curtains being open to make a difference. Will didn't consider himself a slob although the current mess of empty soda cans, loose clothes and the odd errant sock might give someone else that impression. He set about tidying up, putting everything back in its proper place, finishing just shy of eight o'clock.

"Better start getting ready," he said to himself. Will wasn't expected at his work until twelve, but he had to factor in time for a shower, time for preparation, and travel across New Grandir's busiest district.

Will brought his thumb to his mouth, bit lightly around the tip, and blew. The pressure which was meant to flow out from his mouth backed up and pumped back into his body. His fat body swelled up in record time, rounding out until his love handles stuck out to give his globular body a side-to-side width of nearly four feet. He wanted to keep puffing, but then he wouldn't be able to fit through his apartment. The doorways were snug, he found that out the hard way on his first night when he overinflated and got stuck in the bathroom frame, but he had found a comfortable size where that wouldn't happen. He wasn't fully inflated, not fully taut. The give to his inflated shape meant he could squeeze into his shower.

He turned the knob and the faucet. Hot water warmed his skin, trickling down the curvature of his belly. The rest of him had inflated too, he swung a little bit on the soles of his air-filled feet, but his stomach was the main star. Showering might have taken less time if he did the deed uninflated, but then he wouldn't get to clean and polish himself to a mirror sheen and catch the sight of his smiling face in the reflection. "Looking good," he said to himself. When he finished cleaning up, he air-dried, checked his emails, and dressed himself once his skin was no longer slippery.

Will straightened his tie. He wore a simple button up in a Grandir 10XL, the cotton had been treated with a special process to allow maximum comfort and stretch. He buttoned his trousers and belted them OVER his waist, Will preferred the look. Some liked the way their grand stomach,

weighty or airy, had an overhang. Will preferred the maximum sphere look himself. He squeezed out of his front door and made for the train station.

New Grandir, the ocean-dwelling city created by Biohazard Ben and Scalebreaker Jack. It was described by the greater world as both a perverted paradise and a utopia of body-positive thinking. It was no secret that the two supervillains who made the city were also the public heads of the city's leading companies, but they possessed enough combined might to ward off intervening superheroes, military attacks, and more. Super-powered people lurked among the populace, living barely concealed lives. The other oddity of New Grandir, and its drawing point, was the way people were free to exist as largely, and as colourfully as they wanted.

A couple, a man and a woman, walked along enjoying a set of freshly made crepes the size of a large dog. They were fatter than anyone Will had seen in the outside world, their stomachs swaying with their hips, dressed in form fitting fashions which definitely didn't exist outside of New Grandir. In Will's home city, they would probably be gawked at. People would be throwing insults at them, or people would be stopping them in the street, asking them if they had considered the health risks and the moral obscenity to their existence as such huge, fat objects in a thin-worship space. Here, they smiled and greeted their acquaintances with a jolly wave of their thick arms. Will wondered if he should work towards the same level of fatness, or if he should keep to the temporariness of being a balloon.

He felt a little small. Will put his thumb between his teeth, sealed his lips, and inflated larger. Still not big enough for his own liking, but big enough to enjoy and still get on a train. He made for the station, bounding along. He didn't weigh much, being full of air and all, a perk of pumping he enjoyed immensely.

Will arrived on set with an hour and twenty minutes to spare. He was constantly surprised by how much mobility he gained through inflation; he had practically bounced along the pavement after leaving the station. He had been tempted to blow himself up bigger as he travelled, like he always was, but too much air could ruin his gait. There was a risk he would cancel out his downward momentum if he became too light. Will settled on remaining at his current size, even though he could feel the mental itch tugging at him to keep inflating. He paced around until someone noticed him standing near the hangar shutters, their hair pinned back by a headset buzzing with the chaos of TV production.

"Will, Object Actor, for..." the runner checked their tablet, frowning a brow. "Mm. Right, sorry. It's been chaos all morning, something about gas percentages and things not being where they should be. You've worked for us before; you know what it's like."

"Uh-huh," Will nodded along.

“Alright. You’re going to be the bomb-actor for High-Rider Episode Twenty-Four, High-Rider versus Doctor Bomba. Just head to hair and makeup, they’ll get you ready.” The runner handed Will a lanyard, gave him a set of loose directions, and sent him on his way.

Will found hair and makeup after a few wrong turns. He was giddy, he was going to be on television and inflated no-less. He was sat into a chair while makeup artists and hair stylists did their best to clean up his messy blonde birds nest and smooth out his skin. He blinked at the mirror, noticing that he didn’t look all that different. He just looked shinier. “Uh, is this it?”

The makeup artist laughed. “Oh honey, we can only do so much. Object actors like you come into their own once wardrobe is through with you, we just need to make sure you’re all smoothed down. Now along you go.”

Will was foisted into a large open area, with costumes large enough to fit giants hanging from equally giant hangars and the like. Literal giants, macros, people who enjoyed growing but wanted to retain their proportions as they blew up, were moving about the hangar space getting things ready. One such giant came and squatted down next to Will, smiling. “Hey, you’re the bomb, right?”

Will blushed. “Uh, I think so.”

“Let’s get you set up.” The giant pulled out a giant bike pump, and handed a smaller nozzle to Will. “Plug that into your belly button for me.”

Will did as he was told.

The giant pumped. Will went dizzy, his point of view shifted. He was inflated asymmetrically in an instant, his left arm and leg and head all blowing up to mammoth proportions. With another depression of the plunger, a globule of air pumped up Will’s other half to match. The giant kept going, until Will couldn’t see anything over the horizon of his own stomach. His limbs sunk into divots where his shoulders and hips used to be, his head sinking into a crater of light peach rubber that used to be his neck. He sighed contentedly, finally a sphere. His clothes slowly began to tear, and the giant went “oops,” as they couldn’t undress him before they pinged off.

“Sorry, I thought you were wearing something with more tensile strength.”

Will sighed dreamily. "No problem."

The giant wrapped Will from head to toe in a black rubber suit, it was thick and stuffy but there was something about the way the world became muffled as his ears were covered by the full-body hood that helped sell the fantasy of being transformed into a balloon.

It was time for recording.

Will was propped up on a set modelled to look like a city street. He was wedged between fake buildings, the way they pinched and threatened to pierce his taut, pumped up body at the corners was thrilling. Will was no stranger to popping, he relished it. It was a shame that, according to the giant in wardrobe, he would only inflate to NEAR bursting.

The hero, a spandex clad lad with a weather motif, spoke his lines. "You can't get away with this, Doctor Bomba," he delivered his lines with the right amount of cheese for an afternoon superhero show.

"That's where you're wrong High-Rider!" The bushy bearded, moustached villain with a lab coat and bomb aesthetic laughed. "Once my blimp-bomb reaches critical mass, everything in the city will be rubberised, and then it will swell til it pops. I will take my revenge on this damned city, by filling it to capacity with the same pride and hubris which led it to reject my inventions!"

"No!" High rider called out.

That was the cue. The stagehands activated the hose which secretly fed into Will's mouth and navel under the suit. He moaned in delight, as his body came alive with the electric thrill of inflating beyond his capacity. He swelled up with gusto, pushing the fake buildings apart. His body trembled like a soap bubble seconds away from bursting, he had been instructed to wobble like that, to make himself seem more dangerous. To the rest of the set, he was a featureless shiny black balloon.

"I'll stop you, with my new ability!" High-Rider called. "Hi-yah!" Will felt the man impact his belly. "Release pressure!"

Will kept inflating.

High-Rider spoke again, "uh... release pressure?"

Doctor Bomba stammered. He was surprised too, and broke character. "Isn't the guy meant to be deflating, what's going on?"

"Shit!" an assistant called out. "It's the wrong gas, this is for the explosives division. We've pumped him full of Biohazard Ben's flameless bomb-gas!"

"WHAT?"

Will became loopy and drunk on the gas. He sucked it from the hose, as if that would make it pump faster. Even when the flow stopped, he felt himself growing at a hectic speed. His right side blew up bigger, until his left overtook it, then his head swelled up until everything equalled out. A chemical reaction was taking place inside of him, one that would level the entire set. Will was oblivious to why or how it happened, he just wanted to grow. Bigger, bigger.

Will felt a sharp sensation near his belly button. An overturned table leg punctured him.

And in a hot, sweaty, blast of warmth. He burst apart in hundreds of directions as featureless scraps of rubber, tearing the suit he was into pieces.

When the dust cleared, he was naked and staring up at the open sky. An assistant loomed over him, "oh well." They said, casually. "This happens from time to time, wouldn't be surprised if the big B man himself planned it... we got enough footage to put a cut together."

Will was too drunk on post-kaboom bliss to reply. He just gave a thumbs up.

"Looks like you're not too upset, guess this means we're not going to get sued. Come on, get up. We need you back in costume for the next show."