

## Jac and the Genie

By: Indigo Rho

Jac grunted as he lugged a shiny red air tank into the backyard and carefully set it on a table. The red fox breathed a long, panting sigh of relief as he caught his breath, paws on his knees. He didn't look forward to storing the tank later, but that was for future him to worry about. Present Jac was happy to admire his new acquisition.

Air tanks weren't exactly a common sight at thrift stores, so Jac had leaped at the chance to snag the tank that shone like it'd just come from the factory. The dirt-cheap price tag had only added to the allure.

"Doubt there's anything left in there, but I can at least check if the valve's rusted shut." Jac reached for the valve and gave it a firm turn.

A sharp hissing noise coming from the nozzle startled Jac into jumping back. Blue and white smoke billowed from the air tank. Rather than disperse into the air, the smoke condensed, shaping itself into a vaguely feline figure that grew more detailed by the second. They had the upper body of a tiger, with golden rings piercing its blue ears. A small blue turban covered their head, held in place by a ruby brooch. They had a blue sash wrapped around their waist, but everything below that narrowed into a blue wisp directly attached to the air tank's nozzle. Their entire body had the slick sheen of a well-polished balloon.

The tiger of the tank smiled broadly and bowed. "My endless thanks to you who unsealed me!" he bellowed with glee. "And for so graciously setting me free, please accept my wishes three."

Jac's jaw hung open as his brain struggled to comprehend what had happened. He feared he'd inhaled toxic fumes lingering in the air tank and was experiencing strange hallucinations.

The tiger's smile widened. "Ah, you've been stunned by my awe-inspiring presence. Take your time, mortal, but don't forget the wishes that await you. Many dream of receiving such a boon from Voyen, one of the greatest genies in all the land."

A hallucination wouldn't be so eloquent or clear. Jac swiftly realized the tiger genie had to be some sort of elaborate hologram. The air tank was simply a theater prop of some sort, left at the thrift store as a joke. Obviously someone was remotely controlling the hologram and voicing it, maybe for a prank show or dumb streamer gimmick.

The fox smirked. He wasn't about to fall for a silly prank, no matter how hi-tech and fancy it was. "Wishes?" he scoffed with a paw on his hip. "Magic isn't real, *Voyen*—it's all smoke and mirrors!"

Voyen smirked back. "Oh, a nonbeliever, eh?"

"Of course I don't believe you. You're as capable of granting wishes as I am of flying."

"If you're so certain of that, then try me," the genie said.

"Okay fine." Jac crossed his arms and thought of a wish so oddly specific, that no prankster could've possibly prepared for it. "I wish for...a normal, big, squishy red balloon. Oh, and filled with helium. Surely that'd won't be beyond the power of a so-called genie."

"It's rather mundane, but I won't deny my savior what he apparently most desires." Voyen snapped a finger, and a large red balloon appeared right in front of Jac.

"Woah!" Jac took a step back. The balloon was at least as wide around as he was tall, with a brilliant sheen and a long string attached to the knot in its neck. As it gently floated upward, Jac stepped on the string to halt its ascent. "That certainly is big!" the fox gasped as he stared at his reflection in the massive balloon. The balloon was real. Which meant magic was real. He suddenly felt very dizzy.

The genie lifted off the table with the air tank still attached to his smokey lower half. He looked upon Jac with a smug grin. "Satisfied with my work?"

Jac nodded eagerly. He squeezed the sides of the balloon and watched his paws sink into the soft latex. With well-practiced grace, the fox leapfrogged atop the balloon, straddling it between his thighs and pinning it to the ground. Latex stretched and creaked around him, as half the balloon pressed against his tail and back while the other half pressed against his chest. His paws sunk into the squishy material as he tried to brace himself.

"Oh...uh, this balloon may be a little too soft. It can't really support my weight. Would be nice if it was even bigger." Jac had plenty of experience with giant balloons, but none he'd owned had had so much give to them. He abruptly remembered he had more wishes, and impulsively blurted out his second. "I wish the balloon would inflate so it'd be tauter!"

"As you wish." Voyen snapped his fingers again.

The balloon beneath Jac wobbled and hissed. Slowly but surely, he felt the balloon fill with more helium. He rose out of the indent he'd made, regularly adjusting his position so he remained atop his new precious balloon. His paws no longer sunk into the latex like quicksand, instead only making slight dimples. And as the enormous balloon grew rounder, it gently lifted off the ground.

"The wish worked! It's actually lifting me up now! This is perfect!" Jac's tail wagged back and forth in glee. He'd never had a balloon big enough or strong enough to rise off the ground with. In the heat of the moment, the giddy

fox didn't consider how high the balloon might climb or how he'd safely get down. He just indulged in his unexpected wish come true.

But with the balloon barely a foot off the ground, a series of ominous creaks reached Jac's ears. The balloon was taut alright—too taut—and it wouldn't stop swelling. There was only one fate for an overinflated balloon.

"Oh no," Jac squeaked, helpless in the face of the creaky inevitable.

The balloon ruptured across its circumference with a horrendous *pow!* Jac plummeted, landing face-first on a floppy expanse of latex as balloon scraps rained down around him. The fox groaned. He sluggishly sat up, paws gingerly held against his aching snout. "That hurts. Why'd the balloon burst?" he whined.

Voyen floated over to the fallen fox and rubbed the back of his head. "Well, you *did* wish for the balloon to inflate so it'd grow taut enough to support your weight. You simply neglected to request the balloon be durable enough to handle that growth when you made your wish."

"That should've been assumed," Jac scowled up at the genie.

"You know what they say: assumptions make a...well they make a fool out of you and me," Voyen chuckled. "You gotta be very specific with things like wishes. But at least you have one last chance to get your wish perfect, right? So, your last wish. What will it be?"

The painful culmination of Jac's first two wishes had soured him on the smug genie. He wasn't about to let himself get duped into a backfiring wish, not when he only had one left. He'd outwit Voyen and make the perfect wish without a single possible loophole to be abused. Then he could banish the genie back to his air tank and send it off to a junk heap.

"I-I wish..." Jac's snout still throbbed from the fall.

"Do you want another balloon?" Voyen teased.

"I w-wish!"

"Come now, I'm about to burst from the suspense."

"I just wish you'd make me a balloon!" Jac snapped.

"Remember to be specific! There's no take-backs once you've made the wish, after all." Voyen gave Jac a toothy grin.

"I *was* before you interrupted me! Make me a balloon—a big squishy latex helium balloon."

"It's gonna be hard to puff a balloon like that up."

"And make it so my balloon will fill to the brim on its own, ready to burst at the slightest touch."

"Going with just the one balloon again, eh?" Voyen steepled his fingers and raised a brow at Jac.

"I'm still going," Jac growled. "And when my balloon pops, it'll re-form."

“Smart choice. Can’t go wrong with a one-size-fits-all balloon, I see.”

“A-and when it re-forms, it’ll inflate a little longer than the last time, and become bigger than the last time, so I can really enjoy the inflation as it goes on!”

“Don’t overdo it, now,” the genie chuckled.

Jac knew he had the genie right where he wanted him. He just needed to layer on a few more specifics and his ideal wish would be complete. “I want to feel myself lift off the ground as the balloon fills with helium.”

“Still eager to go airborne, even after that last faceplant? It looked like it hurt.”

The genie’s taunts only helped Jac shore up the holes in his wish. “*And* when the balloon does burst, I want to fall softly to the ground, like when the balloon scraps fall like confetti.”

“A real banger of a wish you’ve got. Without that last bit, a sharp pop would be certain to smart in the right spot!” Voyen cackled.

“That’s why I’m gonna be able to enjoy it all over again—I have to enjoy all of it! The inflation, the stretching, growing too big to handle, going past the limit, and the popping—yes the popping!” Jac cackled maniacally right back at the genie, confident in his victory.

“Well, you certainly showed me! I told you to be specific, so I can’t really weasel myself out of this one.” Voyen shrugged, though his grin persisted. “Any final additions?”

“Yeah! I want the balloon to start deflated each time so that I can feel myself sink into it as it grows larger than me.”

“Very well. Your incredibly, wonderfully detailed wish is my command.” Voyen snapped his fingers.

Jac stood up and dusted himself off. He crossed his arms tight and turned his back on the genie, giving him the cold shoulder while he waited for his new magical balloon to appear. “Did you actually grant me my wish, because I’m not seeing my balloon yet,” the fox grumped.

Sparkles danced to life around Jac’s tail, and a white balloon knot sprouted from its tip. The sparkles gradually spread down Jac’s tail from tip to base. The fur they passed over flattened and shined, transforming into latex.

Voyen floated on his back with a fist resting against his cheek, unfazed by Jac’s mild disdain as he enjoyed the show. “You made a very specific, very long-winded, very big wish. The sort of wish that takes time to come into being. Surely you can grant me a little patience.”

“Patience?” Jac rolled his eyes. “You want my patience after the stunt you pulled with the first two wishes? Why are you so eager to antagonize me?”

He didn't care to play the genie's games anymore. He wanted his last wish made reality so he could be done with magic for good.

Distracted by built-up frustration, Jac didn't notice the strange transformation steadily afflicting him. Once his entire tail had turned to latex, the sparkles went to work on his waist and legs, giving the lower half of his body the perfect sheen he'd adored in all his balloons. Even as shine extended up his chest, the disgruntled fox remained oblivious.

"You misunderstand my intentions, sir," Voyen claimed with a great deal of snark. He floated around Jac until he was right in front of the fox. "I just want to make sure you get exactly what you desire."

"Exactly what I desire? Then where's my balloon?" The latex shine creeped up Jac's chest and neck. His cheeks and ears rounded. Even his hair gained the tell-tale sheen of freshly-minted latex.

"Patience, fox, patience—I'm granting you just that. I'm making you a balloon!"

"And taking them away before I can enjoy them properly, too," Jac grumbled as the end of his snout turned to latex, completing the fox's transformation. He was a balloon from head to toe, and he hadn't even realized it yet.

"Oh now, don't get grumpy. You look just about ready." Voyen firmly poked Jac in the nose, causing the balloon fox's latex snout to squish and bulge out with a creak.

Jac's eyes widened in shock. He ran his glossy paws over every inch of his snout, confirming the change wasn't just a brief tease by the genie. The shine of his paws swiftly caught his attention, and soon the fox was looking over his entire latex body in disbelief. He felt strangely light, and even the slightest movements provoked faint creaks from his hide.

"What did you do?!" Jac demanded, hardly able to believe his eyes. He was a balloon. An actual, living balloon. Thinking about it made the fox dizzy.

"I granted your wish and made you a balloon, of course."

"But...but this isn't what I wished for." Jac slowly clenched a fist, and watched as his air-filled fingers creaked and bulged from the slight pressure.

"Oh?" Voyen rubbed his chin with a paw in mock confusion. "Ah, I guess you caught me slacking off. Very well, then, I shall grant you the rest of your long winded wish."

Voyen grasped Jac's squeaky tail and flicked the knotted nozzle at the end. The nozzle sparkled with magic, and a faint hissing sound emanated from Jac's body. The fox's body quivered, and his flat middle puffed out. He was filling with air.

W-Wait, this feels weird!” Tiny spouts of air escaped the nozzle at the end of his tail in a steady *pfshshshsh*, but not nearly enough to counter the swelling. “I don’t want to be a balloon—I didn’t wish for this!”

Voyen patted Jac on the shoulder and smiled. “On the contrary, that is exactly what you wished for. I warned you of the importance of being specific with your wish, and you made a brash one anyway. Now I have no choice but to grant your final wish word for ever-filling word. But trust me, you’ll enjoy the ride.”

Jac’s belly and hips billowed out as he became a bottom heavy balloon. He pushed down on his middle as hard as he could, provoking a chorus of creaks and squeaks from the latex. The pressure only seemed to make the rest of his body puff out more as the air within him was shifted around rather than banished. His legs were wider, his cheeks rounder, and his ears stiffer. Despite being lighter than ever, the balloon fox felt hefty, as if he’d spent all Summer feasting at a sushi buffet.

“I feel so soft,” Jac muttered as he continued pushing at his expanding belly in vain. He couldn’t help but remember the first balloon the genie had created for him. “This is so w-weird. I’m starting to feel kind of f-full already.” Could a balloon even feel stuffed?

“You did say ‘make me a balloon—a big squishy latex helium balloon,’ remember?” Voyen wrapped his paws around Jac’s puffy tail and gave it a playful squeeze, making it squeak and creak as air hissed from the knotted nozzle. “And as your wish is my command, you’ll be a big, soft, and extra pliable balloon all the way till the end.”

Hearing the words of his wish repeated back at him only brought Jac dread. No matter how hard the fox pushed and squeezed, he couldn’t deflate—he couldn’t even hold back the rush of air coming from within. His latex hide gained a hint of transparency as it stretched, allowing him to see straight through himself in places. He was, as expected, completely hollow.

With Jac’s ballooning belly widening his gait, the simple act of standing became a chore. His legs were so puffed up, he could only manage an awkward waddle.

“Uh, I’m starting to feel really light. I’m losing my grip on the earth!” Every step proved more difficult than the last, requiring all Jac’s strength to make contact with the ground. Against the odds, he now knew what it felt like to be an out of shape balloon. “Oof.” A tiny hiss of air came from his mouth. “I’m still filling up. I feel like a small blimp already, *urf*.”

“I did make you a balloon, after all.” Voyen tapped Jac’s rounding middle, producing a delightful pair of *thumps*. “And you *did* say you wanted to feel yourself lift off the ground as the balloon—which is you—filled with helium.

Jac took another step, but his foot refused to return to the ground. “H-help!” the fox squeaked as he started to rise into the air.

Voyen swooped in and firmly pressed his paws down on Jac’s swollen middle.

“Oof!” Jac grunted as he was pinned to the ground. Every part of the fox puffed out at once, forcing air from both his mouth and the nozzle on his tail. The omnipresent hissing ballooned him in all directions until he was wider than he was tall, more air mattress than fox. Only the teasing force of the genie’s paws kept him from floating off.

“Oops, gotta keep you grounded for a little longer!” the genie cackled. He kneaded Jac’s latex belly like it was dough, grinning wide at the torrent of creaks. “Getting a little too big to handle now, eh?”

“T-too big,” Jac groaned.

“At least I didn’t turn you into a *literal* balloon, even though I had every right to interpret that grand wish of yours that way.” The genie smirked and pressed his paws harder into Jac’s middle. The fox’s eyes spun from the pressure. “If I’d done something mean like that, then you wouldn’t be able to enjoy all this inflating and growing and stretching you’re doing.”

“P-pressure.” Jac had to force the word from his mouth between puffs of air. The intense fullness rattled his thoughts. Being a balloon almost felt right. The size, the pressure, the squeaking—he wondered if more of everything would feel even better.

*N-no! Mu-must resist*, he ordered himself. His circumstances were dire, and the last thing he needed was to embrace being a giant balloon.

“Alright, *now* you’re ready for lift-off,” Voyen said before releasing his tenuous grip on Jac.

No longer held down by the genie, Jac wobbled and rose like a hot air balloon. He frantically wiggled his arms and legs, but they’d swollen so much he could barely make them move. Creaks, squeaks, and hisses echoed constantly from the giant fox balloon.

Jac looked down at his partially transparent blimpy middle and watched the ground getting further and further away. Fear of floating off couldn’t compete with the invasive sensation of pressure that threatened to dominate his every thought.

“Oof. I feel s-so f-full.” Jac struggled to press a squeaky paw down on his massive middle. “But I’m not that t-taut yet, either. Oh, n-no...how b-big am I gonna get?! I d-don’t want to float away!” Jac’s arms puffed and stiffened, reducing his flailing to squeaky wobbling. “The p-pressure’s still...increasing. L-losing mo-mobility. M-make it stop—*mmph!*”

Voyen spun in the air and landed atop Jac's middle as if it were a vast cushion. "No can do, big guy! You haven't even reached your full size yet. I'd say there's much, much more room left to fill in here." He thumped on the balloon's belly, *pon pon*. "A life-sized fox balloon should have a lot of stretch in him! Certainly getting that rise you wanted, aren't ya? You'll just have to get used to this and enjoy the ride!"

Hisses, groans, squirms, and creaks filled the air as Jac grew rounder and rounder. The dazed fox looked more like a blimp with each passing second, with puffy arms and legs slowly sinking into his predominant ball of a middle. His tail stuck straight out, nearly as round as he was, the strained nozzle at the tip spewing a constant stream of air. Jac barely registered his surroundings. His eyes were half-lidded, and wisps of air escaped his lips between moans.

"Ge-getting ha-harder to think. S-so many pu-puffy thoughts. Fu-full...so full. C-Can't take m-much more...so taut. Too b-big." Thoughts tossed about like clothes in a dryer, Jac had to force every word from his mouth. He knew if he slipped into the pressure daze, there'd be no coming out. He wiggled his paws the best he could, clinging to any action that might keep him thinking of something aside from pressure. "F-full...yet still soft. I'm si-si-sinking into myself—*urf*—so full."

Voyen orbited Jac like a tiny moon, patting and prodding the immense fox all over. "Ah, you're just about there, I'm sure of it. You just gotta let it all sink in first, let that pressure *really* get to you. Feel everything just pull you nice and taut!" He laughed as he thumped on Jac's middle. "Don't think I don't see all that wiggling you're doing. Your paws probably feel like overblown latex gloves, since you clearly can't close them anymore. Not much longer now."

"N-No," Jac groaned. "Go-gotta...gotta..*mmph*." The fox's thoughts finally scattered as he descended into a deep, soothing pressure daze, where his only worry was being the biggest and best balloon he could possibly be.

Jac's arms and legs sunk fully into his spherical body, leaving only uselessly puffed-up paws sticking out. His tail was a hissing, creaking ball behind him, a balloon in its own right. His head sunk partially into his soft latex body. Big cheeks squeezed his snout, and his eyes were glued shut.

The creaks that'd accompanied Jac since the beginning of his transformation rumbled ominously. Stretched-thin latex loudly protested against the endless flow of air.

Voyen gave Jac a cautious thump and then floated back. "Oooh, looks like we have our first banger! Doesn't matter how much air you puff out now, it won't be enough to provide relief. Can you handle even a little bit more of that precious pressure? Because you look just about done, if you haven't passed



your limit already.” He placed his paws over his ears in anticipation of the big one.

The monumental fox balloon quivered and quaked. Leaks sprang all across the great expanse of his taut middle. Latex failed and tore. Jac burst apart with a deafening *boom* that sent scraps of latex—both small and large—flying in all directions.

“He’s really going to feel that one. What a rush!” Voyen cackled.

As the bulk of Jac fluttered to the ground his latex body sparkled and mended. Holes sealed, and overstretched latex snapped back into place. He landed softly on his back, deflated but intact. Blissful thoughts spun around his head.

Voyen floated down and loomed over Jac, paws on his chin and a smile on his face. “Aw, looking well spent already. But alas, there’s no time for breaks.” He shook his head. “Rise and shine, blimpy!”

*Fwisssh.* Faint hissing returned. The tip of Jac’s tail twitched and sparkled. Air filled the flattened fox’s tail, steadily puffing it up. Little by little, the rest of the balloon puffed up, returning some semblance of shape to the fox.

Jac groaned as he sluggishly regained his senses. He sat up, one paw pressed against his head. “I had the weirdest dream,” he muttered. “I...I wished I was a balloon and I...I felt so full.”

Voyen swooped in behind Jac. “Was it a good dream?”

“It felt g-good.” Jac blinked. Who was he talking to again? “W-wait a minute.”

The swelling hadn’t stopped. Jac already sported a slight beach ball of a belly, and the rest of his was gradually rounding out.

The genie darted above Jac. “So you *did* enjoy it! You might even consider it a good dream come true! Then I’m sure you’ll enjoy what comes next.” He poked Jac’s squishy snout, causing the fox balloon’s cheeks to puff out.

“Wh-what’s next? Wait, what happens now?”

“Guess,” Voyen said, and patted Jac’s expanding belly.

“I’m...I’m still a balloon? I’m still inflating! Ma-make it stop!” Jac begged. Once again, the desperate fox attempted to squeeze the excess air out of his swelling body, finding no better luck than before. Every time he pushed down, the soft latex rebounded a few inches wider.

“Have you forgotten your wonderful wish already, sir? Not that I can blame you, with how immense a wish it was. But as a refresher, you wished the experience would never end, so that you could enjoy it again and again and again!” Jac winced every time the genie repeated the word. “You wanted to re-

form after popping and blimp right back up. And of course, you insisted each time be longer and bigger than the one before it.”

Jac’s belly dramatically ballooned out. He already resembled a giant yoga ball, rocking back and forth on his puffy rump. His tail bobbed behind him, wagging from the force of the air escaping the nozzle. “*Mrmmp!*” he whined as he tried to push back his incredibly soft middle. He’d waited too long to stand, and was thoroughly grounded. The pressure had begun to nibble at the back of his thoughts, tempting him with the joy he’d experienced after giving into the daze.

“Ah, looking quite plump already! You’re a natural balloon, you know that?” Voyen grabbed Jac’s sides and gave the helpless balloon a wobble. “I’d savor every bit of clarity while you can, though. The ride’s only gonna get longer and longer, and that pressure’s never gonna lessen. But hey, you wanted more bang for your buck, so clearly that release from the daze will be well worth the wait!”

“Bu-but I don’t...I don’t want to—” A hard pat on Jac’s back jumbled his train of thought. He’d spent so much time catching back up with his situation after exiting the daze that he was already back on the verge of falling into it once more. His middle spread outward like a weather balloon, quivering as it awaited its chance to ditch the ground for the air, where balloons belonged. “St-stop.” The plea came out as a gust of air. Something wasn’t right, but Jac couldn’t collect his thoughts to figure out what. He stared at the sky in confusion, round cheeks wobbling as more spurts of air hissed forth from his mouth. Something felt good. *Really* good.

Voyen hovered above the half-dazed fox. “And there we go again, already getting lost in that pressure daze. Didn’t put up much of a fight this time, did you? I’m glad you’re starting to accept this boon I’ve granted you,” he giggled in triumph. “Oh, looks like you’re just about ready for lift off.”

Jac groaned in response and wobbled off the ground, lazily rising in the air. The balloon wiggled weakly, sinking fast into the pressure daze that washed over him.

“And we have lift off!” Voyen cheered. “Bon voyage! Enjoy your trip! Be sure to write feedback about me when you ‘pop’ back around! Take all the time off your feet you need—no pressure! Oh, who am I kidding? The pressure will really start to build now, so why not embrace it?” He waved the ascending blimp off, grinning wide as Jac floated off for another round of blimping and bursting.

Voyen crossed his arms and sighed. “They really do blow up so fast,” he snickered. “I’ll miss him, but he’s got a packed schedule of ballooning to get to. Enough to keep him busy for an eternity, one might say.” He glided off in

search of his next adventure, cracking a smile when he heard the inevitable boom far behind him.