

## AIRBORNE AUGUST

# 1. Anomaly

It was a normal day at the park; the occasional jogger ran by, a group of people were sitting under a pavilion a ways away, and someone was sitting under a tree, a tube of bubble solution in one hand and its loose wand top in the other.

They swung the long wand around, forming quite a few bubbles. To them, it was something nice to do in downtime, just sit out, blow some bubbles, and watch them float. The whole experience was calming, seeing the bubbles flutter and wobble around in the wind, reflecting everything around it with a shiny, rainbow gleam over it all. It was kind of trance-like in a way. They could spend a good hour or two just sitting there, forming bubble after bubble and watching it dance in the air.

By then, all of the bubbles they had just formed had popped. They dipped the wand back in about three times and pulled it out, the bubble film on the wand shining just like a bubble. However, this time, it seemed a bit more... viscous? They couldn't quite put their finger on it, but it just looked off in a sense. They shook their head and thought, "Must be my eyes playing tricks on me."

Another swing, another pack of bubbles to gaze at. They began thinking about the life of a bubble, flying around for a few seconds just to pop into drops of liquid soaps just as quickly as they were formed. They thought of how the bubbles floated around, how it would be nice to be one, just floating around with no consideration of the outside world. No more responsibilities, no more worrying about the next day, just bubble.

It was then that they noticed that the bubbles weren't as wobbly as before. "Hmm, odd... maybe the wind died down or something," they thought to themselves. They much preferred the wind making the bubbles fleet and fly, so they got up and moved to a different tree, this time with a bit more airflow.

Sitting back down, they pulled their bottle and wand back out, got some more film on the wand, and waved the wand in a big, arcing motion. Quite a few bubbles came out, immediately starting their dance in the quicker winds, fluttering every which way. They were sure these bubbles were a bit bigger, but that must've been from the larger winds.

They got back to their bubbly daydreams for a bit, watching the bubbles as if it was a screensaver on their desktop at home. They dreamed about flying high as a

bubble, watching life continue from a mile away, the people milling about as their day continued. They thought about how fun it would be to be in a bubble, getting to witness the world while protected by the same rainbow sheen they were watching oh so passionately. They thought of what texture the bubble would have, how it would stretch like rubber, how it would...-

They returned back to their world for a bit, realizing that the bubbles were still there. Sure, a few had popped, but many still remained. They poked one and realized that it gave a bit of resistance before popping. Strange, bubbles would usually pop as soon as something touched it, yet this one seemed to wait just a bit before bursting. A few more bubbles around them pop, and they poke yet another. Same thing, just a bit of resistance before popping. And it wasn't just like their finger was going straight through the bubble, either, no. The bubble was indenting from each press.

They gave these anomalous bubbles one more go, just to see what would happen. Into the bottle the wand went, and after a bit, out it came. They put the wand up to their face, wanting to try to blow the largest bubble they can with this strange soap. They began blowing into the wand, each puff growing the bubble larger and larger. The bubble grew, grew until the wand began curving like it would snap with any more force put onto it. They issued one last puff before the bubble blew off, staying more or less still in the calmer winds.

They poked the bubble once again, and this time it seemed not to pop from their pokes at all! They gave it another poke, and another, and yet another. Each time it just indented slightly and rebounded back as soon as their finger was lifted. They pushed in with a hand, same result. They patted the bubble on the top repeatedly, same result. They even gave the large bubble a good kick, and other than it floating off a bit, same result. The bubble just wouldn't pop!

Before the bubble ran off and they couldn't play with it anymore, they grabbed it with both their hands, wrapping them around the bubble in a sort of hug. They pulled the bubble back down and gave it the ultimate test. They leaned their whole body against the bubble, wrapping their legs to secure it even more while retaining that hugging grip from their arms. The bubble stretched in quite a ways, holding up well against their squeezes from all over. They tightened and tightened their grip, but the damn thing just wouldn't pop!

Just then, the wind began picking back up again. The bubble was returning the hug, pinning them between its soapy walls and the tree behind it. Tighter and tighter it

pressed, mimicking the hugs from the person now trapped within a hug of their own. The person blushed more and more, not expecting the bubble to return that affectionate display. Just when they thought they couldn't get even more squished, the pressure just... stopped.

They thought the bubble had popped, finally freeing them from that especially tight return hug. However, when getting up to walk back home, they realized that a stretchy surface had kept them from fully standing up. Looking around, they saw the world tinted just the same as the bubble from before. The bubble hadn't popped, no, it had absorbed them.

They stretched the bubble out from the inside, more a prison than a playful sphere. However, this was no use, the bubble just ignoring each and every stretch as if the person inside wasn't there. They tried fighting their bubble, punching, kicking, tackling, even biting, but nothing was working. The bubble was victorious, its captive trapped inside, exhausted and laying face-down on the ground, separated from the green grass by the wobbly, soapy surface.

Just when they thought it couldn't get worse for them, the bubble started floating up. The surface wrapped around their body, stretching down as they extended their hands, touching the soil for the last time in a failed attempt to stay grounded. The person watched as the ground fell away from them, as they floated above the trees, above the park, and eventually above the city. They became captive not just to the bubble, but to the winds, the clouds, and the eternal blue sky.

As they floated away, they remembered their daydreams from earlier. No longer did they have to live the woes of a normal life, they could just float away peacefully. They blushed a bit from the prospect, knowing that this bubble would be their only home from now on. No more responsibilities, no more worrying about the next day, just bubble.