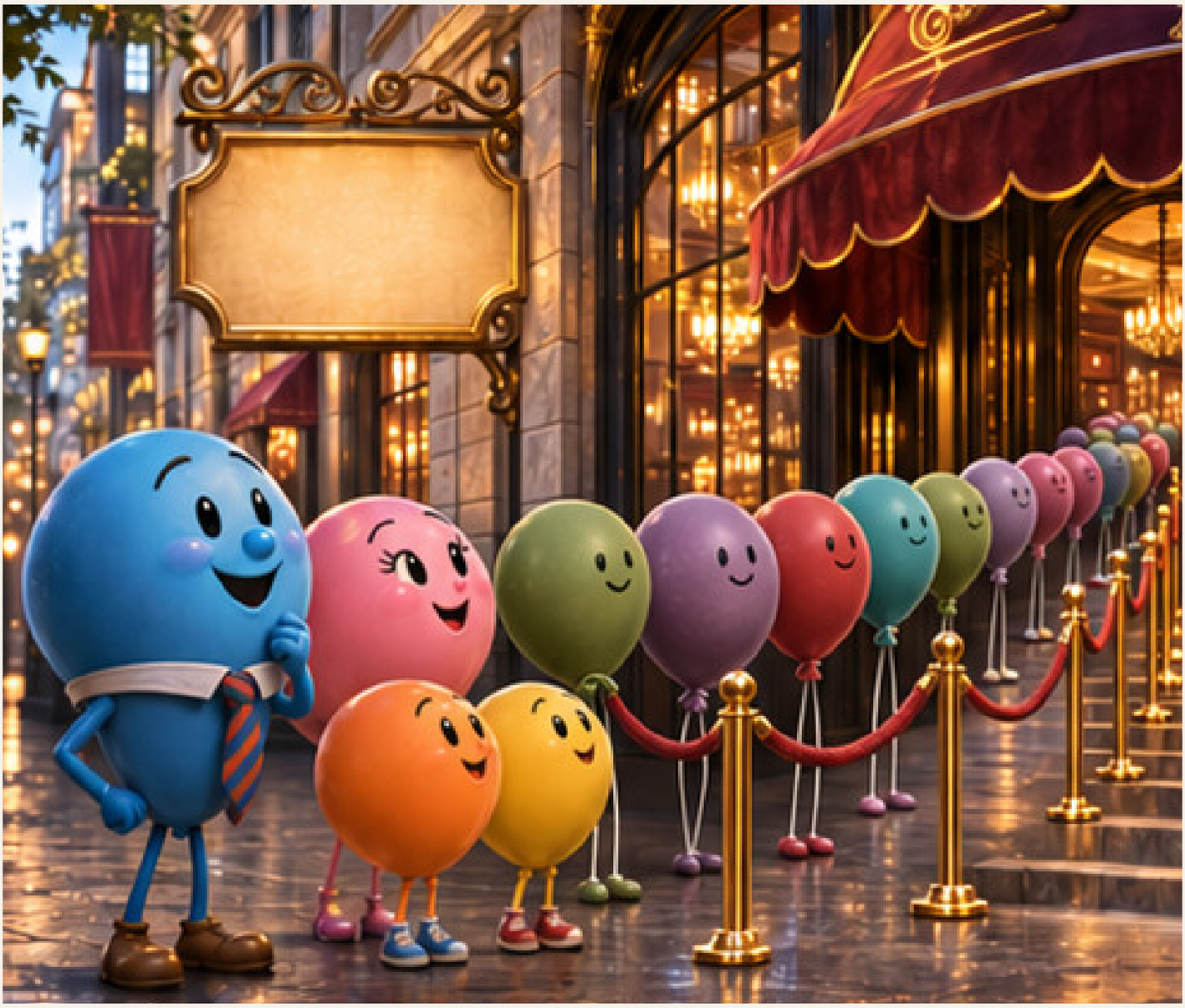
Dad Balloon

A story by Pierce O'Dell



Comic adaptation + complete original story



01

The Dad Balloon had one goal. A steak.

The first steakhouse had a two-hour wait. The second steakhouse had a three-hour wait.

His family kept apologizing. "Sorry." "It's okay." "We wanted today to be special." "It's okay."

The steak was nice. But he already had his favorite people.



02

The sign simply said: TUNNEL STEAKHOUSE $5.99

"$5.99?" he said. "That either means we found the greatest restaurant in history..." He paused. "...or we're about to be featured in a documentary."

Naturally, they went inside.



03

Eventually they reached a round hibachi table. The room looked normal. Bright lights. Friendly chef. Menus. Water glasses.

"See?" he said. "Perfectly normal."

The water arrived. The menus opened.



04

CLUNK. The entire table dropped through the floor.

The family screamed. The Dad Balloon screamed. The chef screamed.

Nobody knew why the chef screamed. He worked there.

The table plunged through darkness. Past flashing lights. Past giant gears. Past a monkey riding a bicycle.



05

Then the table landed. Everything stopped. Silence.

They were sitting in the middle of a gigantic underground circus.

A giraffe wearing sunglasses. And off to the side sat a massive bear.

The bear looked up for exactly two seconds. Then went back to eating honey. The Dad Balloon respected that.



06

Then a giant banner unfolded from the ceiling. SURPRISE! HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!

Then another banner dropped. DINNER IS ON US!

Suddenly food rolled in from every direction imaginable. Steak. Potatoes. Steak. Dessert. More steak. A suspicious amount of steak.

The Dad Balloon smiled. "Thank goodness."



07

"What?" he said. "I've been chasing this steak all day."

The chef pointed dramatically toward another steak. The Dad Balloon nodded. "That's the kind of leadership I like."

The meal lasted for hours. The circus performed. The crowd celebrated.



08

Later that night, the family headed home. Everyone was exhausted. Everyone was happy. The kids fell asleep. The house got quiet.

His favorite part had been the same thing it always had been. Being with them. Being Dad.

"What a great day." "What a great day to be a dad."

The complete original story

The following pages preserve the original edition unchanged, including its closing material. Its page numbers and format belong to that original edition.

The comic uses selected original passages. The complete prose remains the authoritative text.


BALLOON WORLD
SPECIAL EDITION
The Dad Balloon
A story about steak, surprises, and what really matters.
TUNNEL STEAKHOUSE
← $5.99 →
IF YOU CAN READ THIS, YOU'RE TOO CLOSE.
STEAK. DARK. DELICIOUS? PROBABLY.
Sometimes the best days start in the most unexpected places.

The Dad Balloon had one goal.
A steak.
That's it.
Not a boat.
Not a watch.
Not a new grill.
Just a steak.
A good steak.
Medium rare.
Maybe a baked potato.
Maybe.
He wasn't picky.
The problem was that apparently every other balloon in town had the exact same idea.
The first steakhouse had a two-hour wait.
The second steakhouse had a three-hour wait.
The third steakhouse had a line so long nobody could even find the front door.
His family kept apologizing.
"Sorry."
"It's okay."
"We wanted today to be special."
"It's okay."
"We can keep looking."
"It's okay."
The Dad Balloon meant it.
He wasn't upset.
The truth was he would have been perfectly happy eating cheeseburgers at home.

The steak was nice.

But he already had his favorite people.

Still...

A steak sounded pretty good.

Especially after driving around town for what felt like seventeen years.

Then they found it.

A tiny building squeezed between two larger buildings.

Half the lights on the sign worked.

The other half looked retired.

The sign simply said:

TUNNEL STEAKHOUSE

$5.99

The family stared at it.

The Dad Balloon stared at it.

"$5.99?" he said.

"That either means we found the greatest restaurant in history..."

He paused.

"...or we're about to be featured in a documentary."

Nobody felt better after that.

Naturally, they went inside.

The tunnel started immediately.

Stone walls.

Lanterns.

Strange shadows.

The kind of place that looked like Batman should already be investigating it.

The family followed the tunnel deeper underground.

Past old doors.

Past mysterious hallways.

Past a sign that simply said:

DEFINITELY A STEAKHOUSE

That somehow made everything more suspicious.

Eventually they reached a round hibachi table.

The room looked normal.

Bright lights.

Friendly chef.

Menus.

Water glasses.

The Dad Balloon finally relaxed.

"See?" he said.

"Perfectly normal."

The chef smiled.

The family sat down.

The water arrived.

The menus opened.

The Dad Balloon leaned back in his chair.

For the first time all day, he felt like he might actually get his steak.

Then-

CLUNK.

The entire table dropped through the floor.

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

Down.

Down.

Down.

The family screamed.

The Dad Balloon screamed.

The chef screamed.

Nobody knew why the chef screamed.
He worked there.
The table plunged through darkness.
Past flashing lights.
Past giant gears.
Past a monkey riding a bicycle.
The Dad Balloon was pretty sure he saw that.
Then the table landed.
Everything stopped.
Silence.
The Dad Balloon slowly opened one eye.
They were sitting in the middle of a gigantic underground circus.
Lions.
Elephants.
Acrobats.
Jugglers.
Fire breathers.
A giraffe wearing sunglasses.
And off to the side sat a massive bear.
The bear had honey all over his face.
Honey all over his paws.
Honey on his chair.
Honey on things that should not have had honey on them.
The bear looked up for exactly two seconds.
Then went back to eating honey.
The Dad Balloon respected that.
Thousands of balloons filled the arena.
Everyone was staring directly at them.
The Dad Balloon looked around.

"Well."

Nobody had a response to that.

A spotlight suddenly hit the center ring.

Music exploded through the arena.

Trumpets blared.

Confetti launched from somewhere.

Then a giant banner unfolded from the ceiling.

SURPRISE!

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!

The entire arena erupted.

The crowd cheered.

The elephants cheered.

The acrobats cheered.

The giraffe adjusted his sunglasses.

Even the honey bear raised a sticky paw before returning to his honey.

The Dad Balloon just blinked.

Then another banner dropped.

DINNER IS ON US!

Now they were speaking his language.

Suddenly food rolled in from every direction imaginable.

Steak.

Potatoes.

Steak.

Dessert.

More steak.

A suspicious amount of steak.

The Dad Balloon smiled.

"Thank goodness."

Everyone laughed.
"What?" he said.
"I've been chasing this steak all day."
The chef pointed dramatically toward another steak.
The Dad Balloon nodded.
"That's the kind of leadership I like."
The meal lasted for hours.
The circus performed.
The crowd celebrated.
The giraffe kept wearing sunglasses indoors.
The honey bear continued doing whatever honey bears do.
And the Dad Balloon finally got the steak he had been chasing all day.
Later that night, the family headed home.
Everyone was exhausted.
Everyone was happy.
The kids fell asleep.
The house got quiet.
The Dad Balloon sat down in his favorite chair.
For a moment, everything was still.
He thought about the tunnel.
The circus.
The screaming.
The giant banner.
The honey-covered bear.
The suspiciously cheap steakhouse.
He shook his head and laughed.
"What a weird day."
Then he looked around at his family.
And smiled.

The truth was, he would have been happy eating burgers at home.
The steak was nice.
The circus was weird.
But none of that was really the point.
His favorite part had been the same thing it always had been.
Being with them.
Being Dad.
The Dad Balloon leaned back in his chair.
"What a great day."
"What a great day to be a dad."

FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL

The Dad Balloon

Happy Father's Day

To every dad out there - the strong ones, the tired ones, the goofy ones,
the quiet ones, the patient ones, the dads still figuring it out,
and every dad somewhere in between.

Thank you for showing up. Thank you for loving your family.
Thank you for being Dad.

What a great day to be a dad.

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