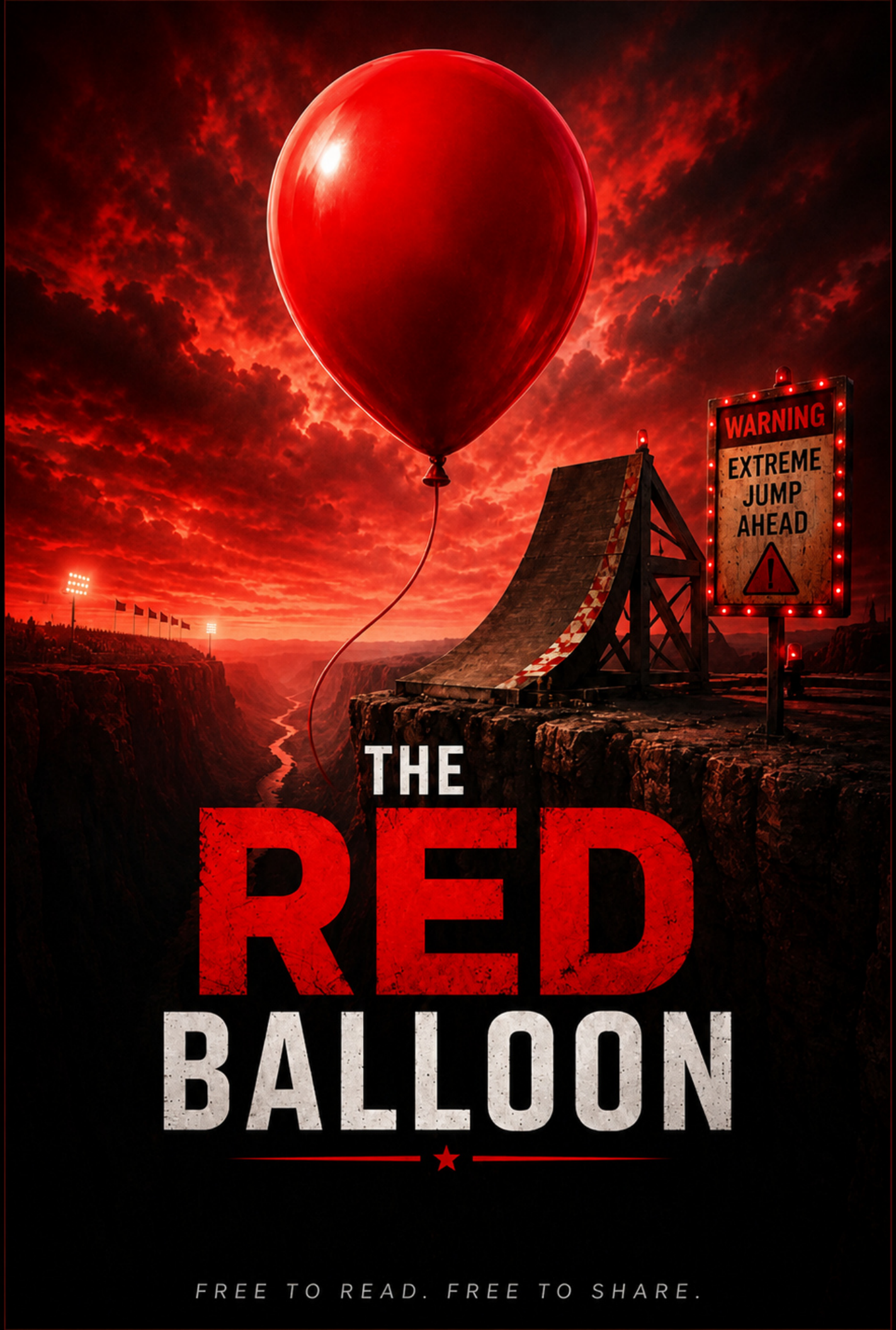


THE RED BALLOON

FREE TO READ. FREE TO SHARE.

The Red Balloon loved bad ideas.

Not terrible ideas.

Not mean ideas.

Just the kind of ideas people said no to before he finished explaining them.

He liked rooftops.

He liked ramps.

He liked warning signs.

Especially warning signs.

They made things feel official.

One morning, the Red Balloon floated past a playground.

Near the back was a small wooden bridge.

It crossed over a dry creek bed.

A sign hung across it.

BRIDGE CLOSED

DO NOT CROSS

The Red Balloon stopped.

The bridge was not very long.

The creek was not very deep.

The sign was very serious.

That combination interested him.

He floated closer.

One board in the middle was missing.

The Red Balloon stared at the gap.

Then drifted back a little.

Then forward.

Then back again.

He was not crossing.

Not yet.

He was measuring with confidence.

A breeze moved behind him.
The Red Balloon leaned forward.
The gap waited.
The sign waited.
The creek bed waited.
Even the wood chips seemed interested.
The Red Balloon floated back one more time.
Farther this time.
Then he launched forward.
Across the bridge.
Toward the gap.
Over the missing board.
Past the warning sign.
For half a second, the Red Balloon felt incredible.
Then he remembered something.
He was a balloon.
He had floated over the gap.
Not jumped.
Not leaped.
Not risked anything.
Just floated.
The Red Balloon looked back at the bridge.
Then at the sign.
Then at the gap.
That was disappointing.
The Red Balloon did not like being disappointed.
Especially by physics.
He floated away from the playground.
Past a sidewalk.

Past a parking lot.

Past a fence with another sign.

KEEP OUT

The Red Balloon stopped.

Now that was better.

Behind the fence was a small bike ramp.

Not a professional ramp.

Not a safe ramp.

The kind of ramp someone built with plywood, bad math, and too much belief.

A kid on a bike stared at it from ten feet away.

The kid shook his head.

"Nope."

The Red Balloon understood.

Some ideas were not for everyone.

The Red Balloon floated over the fence.

The sign had said keep out.

It had not said keep up.

Which seemed important.

He drifted toward the ramp.

The plywood creaked in the breeze.

A loose nail stuck out near the side.

The Red Balloon noticed it.

That made the ramp feel more official.

The kid on the bike watched from the sidewalk.

"You're not really gonna do that."

The Red Balloon floated to the bottom of the ramp.

Then slowly backed up.

The kid stepped closer.

The Red Balloon backed up more.
The kid whispered, "No way."
The Red Balloon liked the sound of that.
Then the wind came.
The Red Balloon shot forward.
The Red Balloon shot up the ramp.
The plywood shook.
The loose nail waited.
The kid held his breath.
The Red Balloon rose higher.
And higher.
And higher.
For one perfect second, he was not a balloon floating over a bad ramp.
He was a legend.
A daredevil.
A tiny red Evel Knievel with no motorcycle and absolutely no plan.
He cleared the ramp.
He cleared the fence.
He cleared the kid.
Then he drifted down on the other side.
Perfectly.
The kid stared.
The Red Balloon floated very still.
Then the kid shouted.
"That was awesome!"
The Red Balloon bobbed once.
Which was the balloon version of agreeing completely.
The kid looked at the ramp.
Then at the Red Balloon.

Then back at the ramp.
"I'm still not doing it."
The Red Balloon turned slightly.
Just enough to look back.
The kid was still staring.
Not scared anymore.
Just impressed.
The Red Balloon floated a little higher.
The sun was dropping behind the trees.
The warning sign moved in the breeze.
The ramp sat there quietly.
The Red Balloon drifted away like he had somewhere dangerous to be.

THANK YOU FOR READING.

If this one made your stomach jump, feel free to pass it along.

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