

Chapter 2

Rick answered his phone to find Nate on the line. “Wow! You work quickly,” Rick exclaimed. “You only took my measurements three weeks ago.”

“Well, we only have the head done,” Nate paused a moment. “Well, partially done. Jim wants to have you try it on before he goes any further. Are you available sometime this week?”

“I can be down tomorrow afternoon at 2.”

“Great.”

Rick arrived at the promised time and was ushered upstairs. Nate didn’t say much. Good thing as the fursuit head sitting on a workbench drew Rick’s full attention more so than the goggles had on his last visit. The feral squirrel head looked realistic. The top of the head was a dark maroon/brown blend. The cheeks were a medium brown and the neck was a cream color. The colors were a bit bizarre if one wasn’t familiar with the colorful Malabar giant squirrels of India. He could see it wasn’t complete, but it was close. For instance, there were no chisel-like incisors in the front of the mouth.

Rick walked to the bench the head was propped-up on. “I’m very impressed. You’ve done an excellent job on this.”

“I can’t take credit for how it looks. We have excellent staff in our cosmetics group. But wait until you try it on,” Jim bubbled with pride as he lifted the head up and held it close to Rick, with one glass-like eye pointing at him. “As you can see, the cameras are in the eyes as planned.”

Rick nodded.

Jim flipped the head over. “In addition to the goggles, you’ll also note the earbuds. There are microphones in each ear of the head. The jaw is articulated and will open and close with your own mouth. There is a small microphone and speaker within to project your voice. With this head, nothing you hear or say will be muffled by the padding.”

“So, what do I need to do? Anything different from when I first tried the goggles on?”

“Like before, sit down and close your eyes. Slip the head on and once you feel the goggles are in place, press the hidden button on the right side here,” he pointed to it behind and below the right ear. “The cameras and microphones will power on. You’ll know when to open your eyes after that. You might be slightly disoriented when you do so.” Jim paused a moment, “of course, I warned you of that last time.”

Rick did as he was instructed. He put the head on and pressed the button hidden in the fur. He felt the earbuds insert themselves, which was slightly disturbing to him. There was a low chirp and then a computer voice said, “Activated.”

Rick opened his eyes. He was just as impressed as he was the first time. He turned his head slowly taking in the whole room. "Vision is just as clear as before."

"Excellent. Is the cursor there?"

"Yes, I'm accessing the menu. Custom, Ears, Earbuds, Voice....how do I make a selection?"

"Stare at your choice and blink rapidly twice. Ears will let you wiggle your squirrel ears. Earbuds lets you raise and lower the volume of those, which will be handy in a crowded room. Voice lets you raise or lower the volume of the speaker in your mouth."

Rick made a choice and the squirrel head's ears twitched. "Cool!" he uttered as he watched his ears twitch in the mirror Jim held-up. The head's jaw opened and closed as he opened and closed his own. As he glanced at the mirror, he could also see the edge of the ears in his vision. "You went all out on this. This is way beyond what I was expecting."

"We're trying to push the limits of the technology. The more impressed others are when they see you in suit, the better it will boost inquiries about our suits and hopefully that will lead to sales. On the menu, custom won't work yet. That will involve an app for your phone. You'll be able to preprogram in some effects. For example, if you wanted to swirl your tail and twitch your ears at the same time, you could create that combination in the app and make it a custom choice."

"Seriously?"

"With this product line we'll be aiming for those with deep pockets," Nate stated. "As such, we got to make sure it'll be worth what we ask for it." He waived around the room. "Let's have you walk around the room again. I know you were able to handle it with just the goggles. Let's see how it feels in the full head. Again, Jim will be right at your side in case."

Rick and Jim made a circuit of the room. "This head balances better than the goggles did alone. It feels like most of the weight is on my shoulders instead of my head." The ears wiggled again as Rick laughed. "I can't get over that. It's so cool."

"Excellent. Hold still a moment." Rick did so as Jim felt around the head and checked this and that. "It looks like it's a good fit. That's all I need you to do for now. Time to take it off."

"Let me guess. Close my eyes, tap the button and wait, right?"

"Bingo."

Rick closed his eyes, tapped the button, and heard the computer voice utter, "Powering down." He felt the earbuds pull away. He waited an extra few seconds to make sure, and then pulled the head off with ease.

Rick opened his eyes and needed to blink a few times as a wave of dizziness hit him again. "Just like last time, I think it's more disorienting to go back to normal vision."

“Really? That’s concerning. You still want to go this route? It’s not too late for me to retrofit this with a camera in the nose instead.”

“No. I actually like the larger field of vision, believe it or not. And you said you wanted to push this tech to the limit as your company will be giving me the suit in the end. The least I can do is help you push it as far as you can.”

Nate cut in, “Jim, would it be difficult to rig-up a third camera in the nose and have a choice in the menu to allow him to swap back and forth?”

Jim thought for a moment. “No. It shouldn’t be too hard. I’ll work on that this afternoon.”

“Excellent.” Nate turned to Rick. “I’ll show you out. We’ll call you again when we need you to do another test.”