

The fox Blake was excited; thrilled to the point he was actively chuckling when his thoughts strayed too far. A 'borrowed' object sat to his left while a purchased box sat on his right. The latter contained a set of closed zippers, not attached to anything, with an adhesive strip on one side to apply them and a protective strip on the other so that they didn't come undone before they were situated. The former object was what had allowed him to find and acquire the box; a technologically advanced remote, able to manipulate reality and open the way to other parallel dimensions.

Between the objects sat the meticulous notes that Blake had taken after helping himself to the device, an invention of his friend, the dragon, Nick Saint Nyck. Blake himself saw Nick as more than a friend, Nick was his destiny and with the tools he'd gathered, he was going to ensure that he met his idol in as many manners as possible. All while also fulfilling one of his private dreams... The thought made him shiver.

He looked over the remote again and compared it to the sheets. The power reserves it had meant that if he was doing this in one round trip he'd had to be certain of each use he made. He had curated the list well. He could visit each planned dimension and still have enough power to compensate for any single mistake before heading home.

Each dimensional trip had been condensed into a single page, with the face of that dimension's Nick in the corner. Blake's thumb traced the two-dimensional cheek of the first one he would visit,- a fox, like himself- with genuine affection before steeling himself to begin. He had spent his time memorising the values to dimension hop and without looking at the sheet, twisted the remote to line up with it.

A crackling of purple-blue electricity sprung into the air, then a shimmering rift followed as though viewing the surface of a disturbed pool. Blake grabbed the box, tucked it under one arm and leapt through.

He was hit with a wave of cold, emerging into a dark evening, blessedly out of sight of anyone as the portal contracted and vanished. Now he just had to find this foxy Nick-

"Nmmhhh!! Plllllhs!" A muffled voice cried, the speaker had been putting their all into screaming it out.

A darker, cruel tone replied. "Haha, finally we see the begging stage, all that defiance failed so now you're turning cute? That just makes me even more enthused."

Blake peered around the corner, his spine tingling at what he saw, it was something out of the fantasies of the Nick he knew, yet something the draconic version kept strictly to fantasy. Fox Nick, or at least the silhouette of him, squirmed in shining black rubber, only his head on show, with a long hose peeking out between the lips. Below the head was a thick fursuit, with stubby limbs to trap and restrain the already imperilled fox.

His attacker was veiled by the dark shadows yet as Blake watched, he shoved Nick's head into the suit's mask and swiftly drew it shut. A shovel sat beside them both, standing out of a hefty pile of dirt to the side of a deep hole. Blake drew closer, the attacker's attention was entirely on Nick, allowing Blake to lift the shovel. This close, he could hear Nick's whimpers being redirected down to the end of the hose and the antagonising figure's taunts.

"Just a shame that the concrete is already set over your friend, or I'd let you join him. Still, you'll both be together in spirit." The figure turned Nick's head toward the deep pit, arm bracing to push. Blake swung the shovel, the metal clanging against the figure's skull. He dropped, still breathing but not moving or groaning, knocked out in a single hit.

Blake's fingers moved to the suit before he got too distracted by what he saw to carry out his own plan. Fortunately neither it nor the rubber suit below had been glued or locked on. He wrenched the masking mass off Nick's head, grinning as he confirmed it was the fox he was looking for.

"B-Blake?! How? I'm-" Nick stammered, looking around, seeing his fallen captor and sighing. "I don't know how you got out but I've never been so happy to see you."

"The feeling's mutual." Blake replied. "Here, let me help." He said, rolling the suit down Nick's shoulders, exposing enough of his back.

"I really thought that was it for me..." Nick replied. Blake had paused in undressing him and he heard the other fox rooting around in a box. "Hey, what's- gah!" He started, interrupted as a cold chill hit his back, sticky wetness with metal below.

Blake brushed over it with his fingers, smoothing the zipper down the middle of Nick's back and unzipping it immediately. As he did the other fur before him deflated, shrinking and becoming hollow, turning into a suit of himself formed of a neoprene-rubber mix. Blake let out a slightly manic chuckle, eyes lighting up at the success. His foot stomped on the outer suit that Fox Nick had been stuck inside as he pulled the newly made shell out and stuffed his hand down the arm.

It creaked as he pulled it over his body, stepping into it, shimmying it up his legs and over his hips. The stretching material covered his head as he zipped it up behind him. Blake purred, he'd done it, he'd become his idol! Up until this moment he'd still doubted it would work and now he'd succeeded.

He fell back onto the floor, cushioned by the double layers of the fallen garments as his arousal hit a peak. He couldn't keep his hands away, having a need to brush over his front, his chest, even to the now smoothed stretch below the waist. His push reached in until he could touch what lay below. Letting his mind wander in his excitement, he shut his eyes and dragged his hand sensually across his cheek.

Over his face the transformed fox's eyes and solid, printed-on lips twitched, moving, showing it had a vague sign of life, of awareness, yet the suit couldn't do anything further. The Fox Nick was now converted to a near inanimate thing, forced to endure Blake's suggestive self-stroking.

Blake snapped himself out of it when he heard a groan to the side, the interrupted villain was rousing. For a second Blake thought about stuffing him into the now abandoned rubber and fursuit, yet he didn't want to risk failing; in this light the attacker would just turn on Blake. Reaching for his remote, he cleared his head enough to remember the next code he had to put in. Energy crackled, parting the air again before he slipped through, abandoning the world behind.

This new world was in broad daylight, setting Blake strolling down a road. Windows showed the reflection he'd been waiting for. A perfectly fitting suit of Fox Nick stared back at him. Blake was able to open his jaw and the suit was forced to mimic the motion, displaying rubber coated teeth, when he shut his mouth again the line disappeared, making it look more like a suit. A perfect disguise that would be needed in this world; one filled with humans.

As he turned to continue strolling, his target came into view, the human Nick had his counterpart's green eyes and blue hair, even styled the same as the dragon. This Nick stopped for a moment, startled to see a vaguely shiny, assumed fursuiter flaunting what he had out in public, then was even more compelled and confused by the insistence in the back of his mind that he was looking at himself.

"Are you... are you who I think you are?" He blurted out, closing the distance and talking quickly before anyone else got within earshot.

"If you think you're looking at a distorted reflection of yourself then hell yeah I am." Blake replied, the suit's face remained unmoving beyond the eyes that seemed to stare wide eyed.

"Oh I've got to hear about this." Nick insisted, moving to a discreet alleyway and beckoning the other Nick to follow. "I knew there were other dimensions! That's what's happened, right?"

"I should have expected myself to be quick on the uptake!" The disguised fox said, running along with the deception, when they were far enough from prying eyes that it was safe to bring it out, he flashed the remote. "I'll confess, it wasn't me, specifically, who invented this device. But I can introduce you to the Nick who did."

"Well, I did have places to be but what the hell, when am I going to get another chance showing up like this?" The human said.

Blake held the remote out, demonstrating in one hand how to adjust the dials, carefully setting up the next world while his other hand found another of the zippers. He slapped the

human's back in a warm, friendly way, disguising the zipper's application, before hugging him around the shoulders. "Here, hold it, feel the weight of it." He offered, letting the man take the remote. "When you're ready to leap, push the middle button."

All his smoke and mirrors worked to hold Nick's focus, one step back, one to the side, and then Blake seized the zipper, pulling it down, transforming the human as the fox had changed before him. An agile hand shot forward, catching the remote before it dropped.

Meanwhile, for the former human, his look of entertained wonder froze. With not even a second's worth of warning, he was fully ignorant of what had happened, keeping his expression light and joyful even as his awareness was contained to the barest twitch of his face.

Blake wasted no time tugging the newly made suit free of the clothing on the ground then slipping himself into it, the fabric stretched and pinged back, layered over the top of the fox suit. When the newly stolen skin was in place he dressed himself with Nick's discarded attire. At the very least it would be a souvenir to keep once he'd finished his work, for now it would be the cover he needed to get to the next world without appearing to be a streaker.

"Damn, hugged by two Nicks at once. I wonder if the foxy face can see out as well as I can, or if either of you can still hear me. Weird things, these." Blake mused, chuckling as he brushed his hand under the shirt, massaging the two suits over his belly. Seemingly neither layer impeded his own senses, even the sensation of touch stayed strong. "No less hot though. If you can hear me, I will introduce you as I promised... eventually. I've got a few more stops to make first."

He pulled himself out of the reverie, lifting the remote, glancing at it and pressing go. The light seemed brighter thanks to the dark alley. Blake picked himself up and passed through before anyone else glanced by. Two down...

He was immensely grateful for the human disguise as he stepped into the next world. It was another world dominated by humans. This wasn't right at all!

Damn! The human Nick must have adjusted one of the dials. "That's what I get for not checking." He mumbled to himself having ended up in a suburban backyard. His eyes looked around and he smirked. "Well, it's not the dalmatian I was planning on but it is still a dalmatian." There was still a Nick here, one he hadn't planned on chasing with his limited budget of energy. Yet given he was here now he might as well.

The sleeping canine lifted his head, ear flicking. He was black and white as might be expected though he had unusual blue spots on his left ear. He'd been left to sit in his kennel while the family that owned the house was out and he had welcomed their absence. It gave him some time to think and doze to himself, which was rare, usually such quiet moments were inevitably interrupted by the next caper.

“Wh-whah!” He gasped as his eyes turned up to see someone leaning forward over the fence, peering down at him. Quickly correcting his speech and trying to pass it off as a soft bark.

“Hey there, Nick.” Blake said, casually, ignoring the name on the kennel.

The too intelligent eyes caught, showing that the quadruped knew he was being addressed. “Ugh, now what? Huh?!” He blinked, usually he could only talk around a select few people, as if the world itself stifled his noises, turning them to growls, barks and whines, for the general public. That he could talk was cause enough to make him suspicious, on top of which the newcomer felt strangely familiar. “Are you involved in all this madness?”

“No more than you are, would it be weird if I told you I’m you from another dimension?”

The dog sighed, slapping a paw against his forehead and drawing it down his muzzle. “It’d fit.” He said weakly. “You’re not stuck here like me, are you?”

“Nope. In fact, I have a way to get you out of here.”

“Yeah, that sounds too good to be true.” The canine Nick replied. Whatever he’d met in this world had turned him even more cynical than usual.

“Think of it as one Nick helping another, I’ve had some weird scrapes of my own.” Blake said, pulling on the arm of the outer suit, showing the way it stretched.

The dog blinked, taken aback. “Uhhh. That doesn’t look right.”

“Yeah, exactly and I’m gonna fix it, I just kinda accidentally passed through this dimension on the way and thought, why not do a rescue while I’m at it?” Burying the improvised tale in a layer of truth would hopefully sneak through the dog’s suspicions.

Nick sighed, looking at the house. “I ... guess. I dunno, I’d feel weird running away without saying anything.”

Blake had already done enough to lower the dog’s guard enough that his clambering over the fence was ignored. He stopped listening as the dalmatian spoke at length, musing on how to break the news to those he knew here. Blake meanwhile subtly prepared a zipper, putting it on Nick’s back and brushing over him as though petting him.

“Wh-what are you doing that for?” The dog asked, tail wagging involuntarily.

“Sorry, couldn’t resist.” Blake said.

“Ah fine, whatever.” Nick replied, shutting his eyes to enjoy a bit more. He heard the creak of the zipper opening and then he too had been converted.

Blake scooped up the quad-suit dalmatian, but rather than trying to put this one on and figure out how to move, he just folded it neatly and buried it in the box. “Right, let’s go see the *right* dalmatian.” He said, smirking at a joke only he got.

He set the remote, double checked and leapt through the portal.

“Hey, are you the Nick of this world?” Blake asked brashly to the anthropomorphic dalmatian before him.

“*The*’ Nick? It’s a common name you know.” The dalmatian replied, rolling his eyes and then his breath caught looking at the human in front of him. “Uhh... something tells me I am. How exactly do I know that?”

“Dimensional travelling is weird. Don’t ask me, it’s how I recognised you, too.” Blake lied, adding an extra falsehood by opening the box where he’d stashed the most recent suit. “Look, I’m not gonna waste your time. Another Nick wanted me to deliver something to you.”

He pulled out the folded Nick from the previous world, proffering it.

Nick’s lips had opened to ask further but they were quietened as he took it, unfurled it and then blushed. “There’s no way in hell you just handed me a quadsuit version of myself.” He stated flatly, denying it as though it would change it.

Blake just shrugged, smiling slightly. “Look, I should book it before any of the other anthros in this world spot a human and go ‘what the hell is that?’ in my direction.”

“Hang on. You can’t slap all that info on someone and not expect to be asked for a follow up.” Nick said, looking up.

Blake smirked knowingly. “You want to see how the suit was made and if there are more.”

“Just answer me this. This isn’t some cursed suit that’s gonna spring to life and trap me, right?.”

Blake laughed, shaking his head. “No no, the suit won’t do that.”

Nick relaxed, looking it over before he caught the turn of phrase. “Why did you mention the sui-”

He was interrupted by the zipper being slapped on, Blake grinned. “Because I’ll be the one doing that.” The fox noted, now he had multiple samples that each of the suits bore some resemblance of the expression they bore when transformed. “Hopefully I can iron that out.” He

mumbled. “Ah well! It may only have been an hour or so, but that’s already too long since I wore another Nick. Come here!”

“God, damn, it.” Nick sighed when seeing what the time was. “Typical that the one time I actually get more than eight hours of sleep is when I just meant to rest my eyes.”

The blue scaled dragon rose to stand, sighing as he stretched out. He looked over his lab. As he recalled he’d been entertaining Blake here, showing him a few things. He wasn’t sure if the fox had fully understood any of what had been said, yet he was an avid listener. He got up, tidying away some of the items that he’d been tinkering with and showing off. His hand paused over a conspicuously empty segment on the cluttered table. What had he put there?

“Oh he better not have...” Nick grumbled, accusing Blake passively. He just had to figure out what was missing- something that came to his attention when he saw the numerous notifications on a monitor he’d set up to record uses of some gadgets. It was meant for simple analyses yet it showed that someone, almost certainly Blake, had taken- oh god he’d taken the dimensional portal control! And from the numbers he saw he’d been busy as hell with it even up until a few minutes ago.

Outside of one instance, all the numbers seemed different to the point he wouldn’t be surprised if Blake had been spinning it at random... assuming he’d not had the device stolen once he’d left. “When he gets back here...” Nick growled, tone angry, prepared to have to yell. Yet inside, he hoped his friend would find his way back safely. He’d not got around to programming a ‘go home’ button.

An electric buzzing filled the air behind him as a new entry popped up. He wheeled, turning to face the portal head on. He expected Blake, he didn’t expect a donkey version of himself. “What’s going on? What are you doing here?” He asked, eyes narrowing.

There was something odd about the build of the Donkey Nick, like it was thicker all around and had more trouble bending at the joints. That extended to the weird way the face was slightly twisted, like the corners of the mouth were in a resting smile but were being wrestled down and the eyes twitched like two different minds were trying to control them.

“Heya, other me!” The donkey said, trying to sound affable as he approached, yet the light in the lab was sharp, making the hide shine and not in the sheen of fur.

“Oh no you don’t, first you stay back, then you tell me where you got *my* device and how you brought it here.”

“Dumb luck?” Donkey Nick said with a chuckle.

Blake wasn’t as patient as he thought he would have been, he had come so far, so many layered versions of his idol adorned him, just one more, the last one, the one he’d shared years

with. It was too much anticipation to maintain his self-control. He took one more step, noticing Nick raised his guard, then he pounced.

“Gah!” Nick backed away but not in time for him to be knocked further, failing to recover his balance. Landing on his back, his leg swung for the remote holding arm. It flew free, skittering on the floor. The donkey flinched but then dove forward, leaping, something in his other hand. Nick dodged back, at a disadvantage physically. He didn’t want to know why his other self was attacking him. Instead he assumed that, quite typically, Blake had managed to find some evil Nick in a darker dimension.

Another kick at the donkey’s chest gave Nick time enough to scurry and grab the remote, flicking random dials, preparing to send this thing to any other place and then worry about it later. It beeped in error. Out of energy... “God damn-”

Nick caught a swiping motion out of the corner of his eye. Catching Donkey Nick’s hand in mid swing he saw what looked like a detached zipper. He grimaced, piecing together a theory.

He grappled with the donkey, managing to throw him to the side once more as he sprinted for a bench. He grabbed open a drawer, reached a hand inside-

“Got you!” The growl came in his ear as the hand struck him on the chest.

“No!” Nick groaned, swinging his fist for the Donkey’s head.

Blake twisted, seemingly just enough to avoid the punch, feeling at most a single finger graze the back of his neck.

He grabbed the zipper clasp firmly between his fingers and pulled. “Surprise Nicky, it’s not you, it’s me, Blake.”

“Bla-” and then the zipper opened, the shiny scales of the dragon converting into the neoprene-latex like the others had before him.

Blake had done it. His eyes were manically wide and he grabbed the final suit, hugging it to himself, rolling around without grace on the floor, pressing it to him, rubbing himself through it, even pinching it between his thighs. “Yes! Yes, yes!”

He’d pulled it off, he’d actually succeeded. He could think of nothing else left but to put on the final suit. He took all the time he could for that one, due to having put the zipper on the front it also meant the simple act of putting it on was different, he sat within the suit, sliding his legs into position. The scrunched up material soon smoothed out as his legs descended.

The trouble of the Donkey suit was that it had covered his paws to turn them into hooves, making the draconic claws look a bit flatter but that was a matter for later, besides, it’s not like he’d always be wearing all of the suits. Once he was done breaking them in, he’d pick the Nick to suit his mood and leave the others at home.

He lay back, lying on the folded fabric, rolling his arms into position then inserting them in the sleeves. As he shrugged the suit up over his shoulders it reformed around him, by focusing he was even able to make the wings twitch! He'd have to revisit the dimension that sold the zippers and see what else they could do.

For now though. He pulled the head up over his own, the hollow fabric stretching out. His body squirmed as he lowered it down, plastering it over his own head, forcing his snout into position and slowly, very slowly drawing up the zipper, letting each metal tooth click on the way.

"Mmmh, perfect." He sighed, brushing his hands over his body, kneading until he could feel the touch of his hand on himself underneath it all. It felt strange, different, yet he was loving that oddity. His hands explored all over himself, the tightness of all the layers was exquisite yet it also made it a challenge to get much feeling in some spots.

He lost himself when he found the mirror in Nick's bedroom- no, *his* bedroom, now. He was Nick, he could forget about being the boring old Blake. As he got more into it, he noticed the outer layer had adapted, when his toes curled, so did that outer shell.

He let his face relax, if any of the suits were aware and could see, he'd let them have a glance before he took over. For now, he had all the time he wanted to enjoy it.

It was a few days before Blake ventured outside, after spending the weekend within all the Nicks at once he concluded they'd not be changing back on their own.

When he came back home after his latest venture he decided it was time to change out of some of them, to fold them away for later, after all he'd hate to accidentally stretch them, if that were a risk or concern.

The dragon suit fell off his back, then he moved to the donkey suit, letting it drop off his arms. He let out a light groan as it slid off, the change in pressure noticeable after the time cooped up within.

"Ah, there you are, thought I heard you. I let myself in the back." A voice came down the hall, making Blake stiffen.

A black and purple figure rounded the corner, the wolgon Cobra stopping mid sentence and staring at the cat version of Nick standing amidst the fallen shapes of two other suits. Blake leapt up, grabbing the first thing he could, the Donkey suit and sprinting to Cobra.

The wolgon was too stunned to react as Blake shoved his arms into the rubbery coating's sleeves. "Get off me!" Cobra shouted, struggling and fighting at last, though too late.

Adrenaline had kicked in for both of them yet Blake won out. Forcing Cobra's head into the mask and then wrestling his legs in before he could struggle them out. "What the hell, Nick?" He yelled, the face not seated right and blocking his sight by its misalignment.

Blake tugged the zipper up, closing it behind Cobra, then he dropped his fingers to the corner of the zipper, peeling it up. His hand ripped, the zipper coming off with it, leaving the suit's back entirely. It left behind a smooth seam, sealed shut with no way to pull it open, while also leaving the donkey trapped as a suit.

He fell still for a moment, flopping limply forward. Cobra himself was not in control, he couldn't move his arms, his legs, even his jaw was frozen. As though the suit itself were pressing down and quieting him. The grazing punch Blake had felt much earlier in his scuffle with the final Nick hadn't been a miss. A small panel shaped gadget had been stuck to the suit and was now active, a gift from the Dragon Nick as his final gambit.

"What? Get this off me!" 'Cobra' grunted, the Donkey Nick had been restored to his consciousness and was acting the part of the trapped wolgon. Pulling, tugging at the suit, it stretched yet it didn't detach, nor break, nor warp in any way, snapping back into position.

Cobra would have been able to struggle harder, yet Donkey Nick threw the fight that followed. Letting Blake grab him in a headlock, feigning unconsciousness and being dragged to the corner. For the long plan to work, Blake had to think he was ahead.

"Nothing personal, Cobra, I just didn't want you to freak out." Blake apologised to his fallen friend. First things first, he'd get out of all the Nicks, then he'd find somewhere he could lock Cobra up. Nick probably had some devices that were more toy than tech, after all...

Off came the layers, each one making him tingle as he set it down and laid it out gently on the floor for now. His hand traced the zipper of the foxy suit, the last one to remove, the first he'd claimed. His hands pulled it down and slowly he slipped it off the shoulder.

Donkey Nick held his eyes open just a crack, enough to watch. His stomach lurched in surprise as the final layer fell away, yet, rather than the fox he was expecting to be below it, a bleached white mannequin emerged. The mannequin seemed just as shocked, fingerless, mitten-like hands rising to its pointed but smoothed off face, rubbing over the surface. The hands brushed all over, flustered and panicked. The torso jerked as if the figure was trying to talk! Then flapping at its ear-shaped points as though it had been deafened.

"Alright." Donkey Nick said out loud. "I don't know what the hell is happening here but it looks like we have a moment."

Within the suit, Cobra realised that the controlling suit was talking to him!

"I can fix all this, I'm sure we can and I'm sorry for taking such total control. This is a lucky development though. I'll give you the cliff notes, I'm from another dimension, I think all of those suits are me from even more different spots. If the Blake here is anything like he is in my

world he asked for this and if the Nick here is smart enough to make the controller thing and whatever it was that woke me up and let me steal possession of you... he'll have a way out. And I think I know just the way to get it."

"Here's how it's going to go down. I'm going to do one last thing then give you back full control, I need you to pull off this little doohickey," he gestured to the nape of his neck, rubbing it to be sure Cobra could feel it. "which will remove all my ability to move you. I then need you to slap it on the back of your Nick's neck."

"Mmmhh." Cobra mumbled, seemingly understanding.

Donkey Nick moved forward, gently pushing the now blank featured Blake back, the motion making him sit almost instinctively when his legs hit the bed. Next he picked up the dragon suit, sliding it over Blake's legs. With him converted to a mannequin like this the strength he had was greatly diminished too. Donkey Nick had very little issue pulling the suit over the top and then zipping it shut once again.

The way that Blake pawed at his face and body still showed that even putting a layer back on hadn't restored his senses as well as they had been before. "Here we go." Donkey Nick said as a warning, before leaving his control behind.

Cobra nearly toppled, the sudden return causing a lack of stable balance. His feet found the floor before that and he sighed, testing his motions, all was as it should have been again.

"Ugh, what the heck. I have no idea what any of this is. Remind me why I get involved in your antics again?" Cobra grumbled. "No, that's not fair, looks like it's less Nick's fault and more your's, eh?" He said, sticking a jabbing finger into Blake's chest.

"Well, as much as I don't understand this body snatching and wouldn't wish it on many people, it's entirely your fault, genius." He berated Blake. Reaching to where he was directed, he found the small gizmo, tugged it off and then slapped it onto Blake's neck instead.

The blue rubber of the dragon suit quivered, like a minute ripple, the twisted face becoming more normal again. "God damn." Nick said, the Nick Cobra knew. His fingers and toes flexed. "Weird to be able to feel myself again, though I'm dimly aware of what's been happening, so you've no need to fill me in too much. Oh, by the way, hey Cobra."

"Hey. Not that it's uncomfortable but how do I get this suit off?"

"Don't be too rough with him. He's an alternate and still quite alive version of myself." Nick said, stilling Cobra's tugging. The dragon got up, looking into a mirror as he started to turn the lash of his tongue on Blake. "You see? This is why you don't just pilfer weird experimental things from someone's lab and then combine them with whatever else you found!"

"Any bright ideas on how we're going to fix this?" Cobra cut in.

“I’ll work something out. First up, let’s get all these suits back to the lab. We can find something of use there. If Blake hasn’t stolen those or broken anything there, too.” The last sentence delivered in an angrier tone.

Upon arriving at the lab, Nick directed Cobra in one direction while searching a drawer in another. He returned to the suited wolgon’s side and muttered lightly under his breath. “Sorry about this, it’s just two heads are better than one and a half.”

“What are you saying back there?” Cobra asked before feeling a press at the nape of his neck. A fresh copy of the controlling devices took hold, restoring the donkey suit to control, suppressing Cobra within once more.

His jaw was contracted, his shocked muffled grunt fading out to silence.

“Sorry, Cobra.” The donkey suit repeated the dragon’s sentiment. “Now, I guess we figure out a way to solve all this first.” He said, getting straight down to business.

“And then when we know a method out of it, we can work on giving Blake some payback.” The dragon replied, the two Nicks smirked at each other, they were going to get along just fine.

“What even happened to him? I have my theories but you’re the inventor so...”

“If I had to guess, I’d assume it was more to do with the costumes, which I want to state, quite definitely, I did not make. I guess he wanted to become me... or well, us, so bad, that he lost himself? Sounds poetic, or maybe the dimensions scrambled him bit by bit until he ended up where he is. Let’s hope none of the suits are affected...” This dimension’s Nick mused.

“For real. I’m not sure what they can puzzle out but perhaps we can figure out a way to get them up and running.”

“I feel bad enough tricking Cobra into serving as my backup, I don’t really want to go grabbing strangers or even my other friends.” He replied. “Still, if we can figure out how to rejuvenate them we can skip such a thought entirely.”

They tried several things together, finding that at the very least they could slap the strange zippers Blake had used back on after pulling them off. It did nothing to revert the transformation but at least proved they could get Cobra out of the suit when it was time to, and also that they could seal Blake in to ensure he stayed out of trouble.

Further attempts followed with them even taking a risk by travelling to the original dimension of one of the Nick’s and removing the zipper there. No dice. Blake had also managed to remove the history of where he’d picked up the zippers, either intentionally covering his

tracks or blundering with the remote, so going back to the source and discovering anything about them was a no go.

Eventually the pair had to concede, it was going to take some time to get this sorted.

“Well, at the very least we can try to make sure that we keep them safe and clean.” Donkey Nick asserted.

“I’ve got something that might work with a bit of modification, I wanted to save it for after we’d restored the suits but it would tie into our ‘teaching Blake a lesson’ plan. Follow me.” He took him to a machine, one with a bay larger than a full person with multiple dormant arms and even folded materials.

“What am I looking at?” The donkey asked.

“This is a machine I was building to help with putting on certain things, especially solo...”

“More suits?” Donkey Nick asked, smirking.

Dragon Nick shrugged with a telling grin. “At any rate, it has storage bays for the suits. We can put them here.”

“I’m getting another idea, it’s even got a mannequin slot.” The donkey said, pointing to the main bay.

“That’s not w- ohh.. Yes, a few modifications would allow that. You know, I think we’ve cracked it.” Dragon Nick replied. “A way to be fair and rotate each of us out...”

“Plus, more fresh heads would allow more perspectives to figure this all out.”

Without needing much discussion the pair jumped to making the modifications, manipulating the station for something new. Programming the arms to interface with the zippers and use the suits.

“As a sign of good faith and to make sure it holds Blake, I’ll go first.” Dragon Nick said. “Can I leave it to you to fill in any gaps for what happened to each of us?”

“You’ve got it. Just ... is Cobra going to be alright with this?” He asked.

“It’s fine, don’t worry or dwell or overthink it.” The dragon replied. “It’s not like it’ll be forever and we can look after him for a bit. Besides, if he got free he might want to go back anyway!” Or he might want to resist which would make it all more complex, something both Nicks thought about, thus, hearing what they both wanted to hear, the donkey and dragon proceeded.

“Alright, first test and we’re doing it live.” The donkey said when at the machine’s controls.

Arms creaked forward, sliding to grasp the dragon, they lifted his limbs, stretched out his legs and then stretched out a zipper. Rather than the chest, again, it pressed the transforming object into his back. The control gizmo was left attached, with another made ready for the replacement suit.

Slowly the dragon was peeled off from Blake's mannequin form, revealing the smooth white once again. When the machine detached the suit it swiftly seized Blake, pinning him down in the groove, preventing his confused squirms from achieving anything. It could also be locked and stopped there, forcing him to be its captive until interfered with.

"Oh chill out, Blake, you wanted to be us so bad, now you get to be all of us for an extended period, with us showing you how to really play the part!"

It was still uncertain if Blake could even hear them.

The machine carefully and gently pulled the dragon suit away, selecting a feline form of Nick from the collection and then carefully pulling it into place. It was all manually controlled by the donkey who made sure each time the machine moved Blake it was as rough and tight as could be, stuffing him into the suit, zipping it shut, peeling the escape away and then reattaching the controller.

The machine had an automated function, which would be slightly more hurried for the suits and slightly less rough with Blake, Donkey Nick just needed to get it out of his system first.

The Cat Nick was dazed, disoriented and then highly concerned at being bound by a machine. Donkey Nick was quick to shush and soothe and get him down. Quickly filling him in on what had happened. From his testimony, he wasn't even aware of the other Blake's existence. He'd been dozing in bed one moment, then long confusing pieces of information that he assumed was a prolonged persistent dream had followed.

And so it went for each suit in turn, given their moment to stretch and move, a brief period for explanations, catching up and a brief quiz for any ideas they might have. Together they established an agreeable rota before finally it was the dragon's turn to be brought back. "Yikes, yeah, I think I prefer not having a controller on me when put away. The fuzzy, blurred sleep I was in without that is definitely preferable to how weird it feels being put away while aware."

"Alright. We'll start this rota off then, I'll give you a few more notes that the others shared and we can begin working on fixing Blake's mess."

The wolf, Metro, walked alongside a lion called Ashari. For the last two weeks, possibly even longer, Metro had noticed a distinct lack of his friends Blake and Cobra in the online world.

On top of it all, Nick had started acting differently. Oddly frisky and pushy compared to the usual.

Concerned by this, he'd enlisted Ashari's company in dropping by to visit, to see if anything had gone wrong. It wouldn't be the first time, which is why he took company for safety, to at least increase the odds one of them could get out of it intact.

"This is the place?" Ashari asked, looking the building up and down.

"Yeah, that's where Nick's living. Are you ready for this?"

"Hopefully, not like much is gonna happen right?" Ashari said, smiling, to him it was just a routine house-call. Meanwhile Metro felt there could well be something more to it.

They entered the building, the door was kept unlocked and passively welcoming them in. Together they heard Nick's voice bouncing down the halls and were slightly more at ease, even though it sounded like he was talking to himself. "Hey, Nick, it's Metro, I'm coming in. Ashari's with me!" He called out.

Nick's soliloquy continued, he hadn't heard them. Metro entered the room first, freezing and stopping at what he saw. Confused, Ashari crept behind him to peek around. Two eerily familiar strangers were talking to each other. A dalmatian and a donkey, both had Nick's exact voice.

Metro saw the odd machine in the background, noted the zipper down the back of one of the Nicks and then just stepped back. "You know what, never mind. Something is going on and this time I'm not gonna end up in the middle of it."

"What? Just like that?" Ashari asked.

"Yep. I'd suggest you follow me too, before they see- ah heck." The dalmatian had stopped, pointing to them and the donkey had turned too.

"Hey... you two." The donkey leaned over and whispered. "I recognise Metro but-"

"Oh, that's another of our friends, you'll probably meet him sooner or later in your own world." The dalmatian replied.

Metro had taken a wary step back but relaxed when it looked like neither of them was going to give chase. "You know what, I'm gonna take a stab in the dark and guess what, or who is to blame for this." the wolf started. "Blake?"

"Blake." Replied the dalmatian with a nod.

"Figures...." Metro responded.

“Don’t suppose either of you know anything about dimensional travel or magical suit-zippers, huh?” Donkey Nick called out to them.

“Uh, yeah, that’s a big nope from me, I barely know half of what you’ve made in your lab... assuming one of you is the Nick I know.” Metro replied. “It looks like Nick... both Nicks... cripes there’s going to be more, aren’t there? Both Nicks are okay. So I will definitely be following my earlier words and leaving before I get roped into this.”

Ashari turned to look at Metro. “You’re gonna dip?”

“Yeah, I guess they aren’t dangerous if you want to stay, I’m just not risking it, especially if it’s something Blake caused. Okay Nicks, call me if anything comes up and you’ve exhausted your options!” He said, waving and then stepping back from the doorway, exiting at a slightly faster than casual pace before this latest nonsense could overtake him.

That left the lion looking between the two of the slightly shining figures. “Okay, what exactly is going on here? And is one of you the Nick I know? Blue dragon? Penchant for handstands?”

“He’s around, still. We can show you.” The donkey said.

“Yeah, you’re not going to be too fazed by this, I think. Short version is, we’re living suits now, as is the Nick you know. It’s not even our fault this time. We’re working out how to fix it but in the meantime Cobra’s lending us some help.” He said pointing to the donkey suit. “And Blake’s in a timeout.” He gestured to himself.

“Well, that certainly sounds different. I wish I knew anything that could help.” Ashari stated, following along.

They directed him to the suit changing machine, reaching to the storage, Donkey Nick pulled out the familiar shades of blue. Revealing the dragon suit. “We’re on a rota, I’m not going to skip any turns though so you’ll have to wait if you want to hear it from the dragon’s mouth.”

“Well... that’s unsettling but he looks okay. I guess.” While the lion had been inspecting and shown around by Donkey Nick, Dalmatian Nick had snuck to the machine’s controls, pressing a couple of things, preparing it for something. Perhaps it was some mean streak of Blake’s that had been transferred either from the fox’s dimensional travels, or was leaking out now but an impulse came over the dalmatian. He shoved Ashari square in the back toward the machine.

Donkey Nick stumbled back in surprise while the mechanical arms gladly accepted the lion, twisting him in the air. “What- what’s happening?” Ashari squeaked, surprised and tugging in confusion, then in growing panic. “Uh guys?”

“What are you doing?” Donkey Nick said to his counterpart, striding to the controls, though he was blocked off with the dalmatian staying in his way.

“Think about it, a third consecutive Nick head means more of us figuring this out and then we don’t need to worry about it.” He said.

The machine’s whirring warred with the lion’s panic drowning it out as it started picking out a suit, forcing the neoprene-rubber over the target, zipping it shut, pulling the zipper away.

By the time the Donkey got to the controls it was already done, both of them blinked in surprise at the result. A second dalmatian, the quadruped, now stood before them, using the hapless lion as its frame.

“It’s about time!” The quadruped yelled. “Forget anyone?!” He said, grumpily.

The two bipeds shared an embarrassed look. “It must have slipped the dragon’s mind.” Donkey Nick said. “Look, I barely know the guy but the person inside you isn’t Cobra or Blake-uh. Do you think you could...?”

“Release control after I’ve been trapped inert for weeks? No way!” The dog said. “Until I see real progress or see the dragon adding me to the rotation in front of my eyes, I’m not relaxing for a moment!”

“Uh... whoops.” The bipedal dalmatian at least felt some guilt there, hoping to have made the third Nick as leverage to encourage the lion to stay, not force him into it. “In fairness you haven’t *really* let Cobra out, yourself. Just keeping the zipper on the back isn’t enough.”

“I’ve given him time to browse and catch up on things in quiet moments!” Donkey Nick objected, a blur shot past as he spoke. “Wait, where are you going?!” He said, to the fleeing shape of the bounding quadruped. “Get back here!”

The newest Nick ran out of sight, making the Donkey sigh. The bipedal dalmatian patted him on the shoulder. “Probably just went to get it out of his system. He has been cooped up after all.”

“So much for your brilliant idea for a third thinking head.” Donkey Nick replied wryly.

“He’ll be back, then we can adjust the rota and sort things out. Hopefully Ashari won’t be too mad at us. Meanwhile... maybe we should think about who else Nick knows that might make fitting hosts and help speed up the process.”

Donkey Nick pinched his temple with a sigh. “Back on that already? I’ll admit it’s slower than I thought but two of us in one dimension is risky enough. Three will hopefully not break it, I’m not sure we should tempt fate with a fourth.”

“Well, look at it this way... if we don’t find a way to return to our old forms... maybe we can all just uh.. Convert new friends for the long haul? It’s a plan B, at least.”

The donkey shook his head. He wasn’t about to admit he’d thought similar, though he would at least try to work out if their proverbial plan A would succeed. “We’ll see. Remember, the only one who’s to blame though is Blake so we should try to minimise what we ask of everyone else.”

“Agreed, and hey, he might well be enjoying it, if he’d go to those lengths to become us, maybe one of us could stay as a suit to ensure he gets to live his fantasy indefinitely.”

The donkey shook his head, turning back to take a seat. The problem still awaited them and at the very least it would take a few more tries to be completed.