

Costume Shop
Second Identity Story 1: Dragon suit
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“Come on, I know you have even better costumes than these!”

The old man looked up from the book he was reading and let out an irritated sigh before replying, “And you know that I’ve told you this before: the only things I’m selling are on display in this room.” He gestured to the racks of costumes that were lining the store’s wall before continuing. “If you want something else you can do a special order or you can go to another store.” Normally the shop owner was a somewhat friendlier person, but it seemed that Ryan was starting to irritate him.

“Come on, you said yourself that a special order wouldn’t be ready for halloween, and after seeing those costumes in your back room there is no way I could go anywhere else!” Ryan pleaded. He wished that he could just go to another store, but nothing could match the sheer realism of the costumes that this shop had on display, let alone what Ryan had seen hidden in the back. “Can’t you just sell me an extra one?”

The man gave Ryan a piercing look, and shook his head. “And I told you that wasn’t possible. The costumes in the back aren’t for general sale, they are either special orders that I’m holding for specific customers or experiments that I don’t sell to normal customers.”

The word ‘experiments’ just intrigued Ryan even more. “You mean you’re finding new ways at making costumes? When will stuff like the ones I saw be out for general sale?”

“That depends on a lot of things. Just because a costume looks good doesn’t mean it is fit to be worn. I can guarantee you though that I won’t be putting out anything new before Halloween, it is only a week away after all, so you might as well just pick out something else before another customer picks out the costume you would have wanted to use this year.” With that the crusty old shop owner dismissed Ryan with a wave of his hand and went back to reading his book.

Ryan sighed to himself, and replied in a saddened voice, “Like I said before, that reptile costume you had disappeared while I was saving my money for it. I don’t see anything else that I’m interested in, so I was hoping there was something in the back that I could use.”

The old man raised an eyebrow and his face softened a bit with sympathy. Then he looked Ryan in the eyes, “I see. Now tell me, what is it about that costume that made you want it so much?”

Ryan felt uncomfortable, and somehow unable to look away from that intense gaze. “Well, it was the closest thing to a dragon costume. I’ve always wanted one of those.” Why was he saying this?

“Is that because you wanted to feel a little of what it was like to be a dragon?” Ryan found himself nodding in reply. Why was he doing this? He never told anyone about his dragon obsession, so why would he do so now?

The old man smiled and looked off into space as he pondered this. “Well, maybe you do deserve one of my ‘special’ costumes then. I may not have anything that will work for you now, but I suppose I can rush things and get it ready for you Halloween night. In fact, I’ll make it for free I’m just happy to find a suitable...owner for one of my creations.”

“Oh, thank you!” Ryan said enthusiastically. He had never, ever seen a good looking dragon costume, but if anyone could do it this was the man who could. They discussed the details about the costume a bit, and Ryan left the store happy.

However, it didn’t take long for him to start thinking about the stuff that he saw through that door. Sure the costumes in the main room looked great, but unless he was crazy the

stuff in the back actually looked real. Soon he had made up his mind that he still had to take a look back there, one way or another. It wasn't like the place seemed to have a security system after all, so all he would have to do is get back in the store and hide until it was closed down.

That night, Ryan smiled as he heard the shop door's lock click as the old man left. It was almost too easy; he had snuck in behind another customer and hid while the owner wasn't looking. He waited a minute to make sure that everyone was gone, and then came out from behind the costume racks.

He went up to the door to the back room, expecting to have to pick the lock. It was a little trick he had learned to impress his friends, but he had not actually expected to have to use it this way. However, to his surprise, he found that it was already cracked open. "Man, that guy really doesn't care about thieves at all." Ryan muttered to himself. He wasn't intending to steal anything, but he had to wonder why no one else had tried it before.

Tense with anticipation, Ryan pushed the door open and flipped the light switch on. As the room lit up, he gasped as he saw the dozens of costumes that were hanging inside. Some were incomplete, but they were all amazing. It was as if the skins of actual creatures were hanging from those racks. He could pick out a werewolf, an anthropomorphic tiger, an alien-ish creature... anyone who wore them would probably look like the real thing.

It seemed like this was where the old man built his costumes, though the array of tools was certainly odd. It looked like an odd combination of a workshop and a lab, and Ryan could even see a few things that would be more likely to belong to a wizard than a costume maker. The walls that weren't lined with costumes or equipment had shelves and shelves of old books. How the heck did he make these things anyway?

He also noticed that there was a small stairway leading up... possibly to a bedroom. If there was a bed here did that mean that the geezer would be back that night? Ryan decided that he had better hurry in order to avoid the risk of drawing attention.

Ryan got to work looking through the costumes. At first he didn't see anything he was interested in, but it didn't take long for him to pick out a familiar reptilian shape. He practically ran over to the hanging mass of blue rubber and started unfurling it so he could see it. His hands tingled as he handled it as if there was some sort of static build up on the thing. It was obviously reptilian, with a scaled underbelly and a long lizard tail. However, upon further inspection, he found that the mask had horns and that there were two wings hanging behind it.

"A dragon!" Ryan gasped. It was a wonderful dark sapphire blue color which glinted in the artificial light with lighter blue scales flowing all the way from the neck down the underbelly belly to nearly the end of the tail. The mask was perfectly formed, obviously

made so that it fit properly around its wearer's head so that the eyes and jaw would match up with his own while hiding the shape of the human's head. The medium sized wings seemed to have movable joints within them, and when he tested them he found that they were strong and stayed in any position that he put them into

It was the most amazing dragon costume he had ever seen! Ryan imagined that if a real dragon was shifted into an anthropomorphic shape that this is what it would look like. Even if the old man was making another costume for him there was no way he could leave without trying this one on. The costume seemed like it would be a tight fit, so he quickly undressed down his boxers so it would fit comfortably.

Ryan took a look at the hanging costume to try and figure out how he would get in it. He quickly found a seam along its belly, and easily pulled it open. Just as he was about to pull it off of the rack, the odd tingles going through his hands got stronger and he yanked them back. Something didn't seem right; was that really static? After dismissing it as just his imagination he reached out to grab the suit, but yelped in surprise as one of the costume's reptilian hands reached out and grabbed his arm!

Then, the costume suddenly seemed to start 'filling'. It had been empty and flat before, but now it looked like it was inflating like a balloon. Ryan couldn't see how it could holding its shape in the first place since the front seam was open and nothing was inside. He tried to pull the dragonic claws off of his arm, but it didn't budge the slightest, despite the fact that it wasn't gripping him that tightly and didn't seem to have much mass to it. He took another look at the suit and froze in shock when he realized that the thing was actually *looking* at him. There were eyes in the eye holes now!

Without warning, it yanked Ryan's arm to the side, turning him around, and pulled his back against its open underbelly. Ryan tried to pull himself away, but suddenly found himself actually being lifted up off the ground by the seemingly living costume.

Not having any idea of what the heck was going on, Ryan cried out and flailed, trying to get away, but felt something encircle his legs, and then one of his arms. Rubbery material closed in around his skin, and restricted his movement. He looked at his legs and saw that his feet were now inside the costume's dragonic feet, and that the rest of the costume was opening up and enveloping the rest of him. The same thing had happened to his right arm, though his left arm still simply being restrained by a hand around his wrist. The costume was actually still hanging from the rack, which was creaking under Ryan's weight. His body was basically being suspended above the ground by the parts of the costume that had already enveloped him.

Soon his left leg had been almost completely covered, and he felt his legs get pushed apart as the dragon suit's reptilian tail was inserted between them. Within moments strands of the costume had wrapped around his waist, and he could feel more of the suit opening up to envelope his body. Escaping seemed completely impossible; the suit was all around him it holding him still with seemingly invisible muscles. It was as if he was

stuck inside a living anthropomorphic dragon, and that when he tried to move it could just use its stronger muscles to hold him still.

A strange sensation on his feet and hands momentarily distracted him. He looked at his covered hand and saw that scales were forming on the material. Then he felt the odd, but somehow not painful sensation of his middle fingers merging into one, and then his skin merging with the suit. As it finished, it lost its rubbery sheen and all that was left were sapphire dragon scales. In fact, it didn't feel like the suit was there anymore, it was actually part of his body now!

"Wha...is it really turning me into a dragon?" Ryan wondered aloud. Sure he wanted to become one, but there was no way to tell what he would be like once the costume was done with him. It wasn't like he had a choice though. The material was all over his legs and right arm, and was almost done with his chest. Some of it was traveling up his other arm and it was merging with the rest of his body as well. He tried moving his arms and legs, but even though they weren't really inside the costume anymore he didn't seem to have complete control of them.

He felt the costume let go of his uncovered arm and reach behind itself. It pulled itself off of the costume rack, dropping them both on the floor. Ryan landed on his knees and kept his face from hitting the floor by stopping himself with his uncovered arm. The "dragon's" arm quickly moved back over his remaining human arm and enveloped it.

Next, Ryan felt things pressing into his back and spine. Despite continuing lack of pain, he cried out again as his entire body spasmed uncontrollably as the wings and tail fused into him and connected to his spine.

The costume had completely covered Ryan's entire body, and was almost done merging with him as well. He felt movement behind his head, and realized that it was about to envelope that as well. He tried to reach back and stop the thing, but he found that he couldn't move his arms. It was as if his own skin was stopping him.

The underside of its jaw opened up and slid over his head from the top down. For a moment he couldn't see or breathe, but soon thing's mouth and eyes lined up with his. Then his head begun to reshape itself, and merged with the dragon's mask. He also felt an alien presence push itself into his brain, and he felt dragonic instincts fill his mind.

The merging was finally over, and Ryan found that he had control of his body again. He even had full control over his tail and wings, and his skin was covered in living dragon scales. Somewhere in the back of his mind though, he knew that the "costume" was still alive and aware. Who knew how much control it had over him? Ryan wondered how such a thing even existed....

"So, you choose a dragon costume after all." Ryan recognized the shop owner's voice, and looked up to see that he was standing in the doorway. "I told you to not come back

here. I would have gifted you a proper dragon transformation suit to fit your desire to become one, and now you're stuck with that one instead because of your foolishness. That one has too much of a free will; a rather undesirable trait in something meant to be worn I believe." A smile had formed across the old man's wrinkled face as he spoke. "Though, I suppose since I was unwilling to destroy it since it is a living thing...letting you have it will at least clear up some space."

Ryan glared at the man and made a deep rumbling growl from his reptilian maw. "I don't understand what you're talking about, but how do I get this thing off of me?!" His voice was completely different now, it was deeper, and more...serpentlike.

The old man's smile grew even wider, "It isn't that simple. You will have to convince it to separate from you since forcing it off is dangerous, painful, and perhaps even deadly. I suppose that I should also warn you that this one was one of my earliest creations and has another unfortunate flaw: now that you've worn it once, you'll never quite be able to live a healthy life without it. You'd best come to good terms with your new companion and hope that you can convince him to let you out every once in a while."

Ryan's mouth hung open in shock as he absorbed all that. How could this be happening? "I have to ask it to come off? How? And how did you make this thing anyway?" He replied in a frustrated voice.

"How I made it is a secret, and you wouldn't understand my craft anyway. And as for how to ask it to get off...that is your problem. Now, I suggest that you get out before I actually get angry and make your situation even worse. You are trespassing and I have no sympathy for your predicament." The old man smiled. "You can keep the costume free of charge though, I'm glad to be rid of it. Have a happy Halloween."