

Indi and the Salamander Suit

By: IndigoRho

Indi was beyond bored. The hefty midnight-blue cheetah was stuck watching the entrance to some ancient Allagi ruins while his compatriots got to actually explore and investigate; not that he was at all qualified for such duties. Unfortunately he'd been unable to convince the others he could be of use, instead stuck pacing around as he overheard their chatter on the comm line. After barely half-an-hour Indi had managed to exhaust every bit of distraction available to him, and had resorted to simply poking at whatever random metal outcropping he could find, eager to make some kind of discovery out of spite.

Of course the cheetah had little luck, until by sheer chance he kicked a wall in just the right spot. A seamless panel screeched open, the noise causing Indi to leap back and chirp in fear, expecting a trap to go off at any second. He blushed in embarrassment when nothing further happened. Thankful his friends were nowhere near, Indi carefully approached the hidden compartment he'd discovered and took a look inside. There were no fancy control panels or sparkling riches within, but there *was* something neatly folded reflecting the sunlight. Indi pulled the mysterious treasure out and unfurled it a bit carelessly.

In his paws was some kind of spandex bodysuit, vaguely similar to the one he was already wearing. Most of the suit was a dark blue color—a near perfect match for his fur—marked by large light blue spots. The material had a bright sheen and felt smoother than the standard fare, though he'd seen plenty of latex bodysuits to know it was occasionally in style. What really confused Indi was the presence of an attached hood that reminded him of a lizard; those were far less common outside of sleepwear.

Eager to gloat about his find to the others, Indi tapped into the comms with a thought. “Uh, I'm pretty sure I just found an ancient space suit guys! I noticed a hidden panel and opened it up with ease, totally contained an artifact.”

The voice of Rho, the captain, was the first to respond. “Indi we're engaging in very serious work here, you can tell us all about the garbage pile you unearthed later on.”

Another voice piped in. “Rho stop lying, we're just trying to pull Raf out of the hole he got wedged into.” August, the ship's pilot.

“I'm not wedged I'm just bracing myself!” Came a growl over the line.

“Keep telling yourself that jumbo,” Rho chuckled.

Indi frowned, having expected nothing but praise. “I'm being serious! There was a bodysuit in a secret compartment, looks brand new and doesn't resemble anything I've seen before. It's gotta be Allagi!”

“Ugh, you'd better be telling the truth Indi, otherwise you're gonna be on Raf-freeing duty for the whole month,” Rho grumbled.

“That's not a thing, stop pretending that's a thing!” Raf interrupted.

The captain continued on as if nothing had happened. “I'm heading back to check your find out, so put it somewhere safe and avoid messing with it.”

Indi muted his comm and grumbled to himself, displeased at being treated like a simpleton. If he could figure out how to use the suit before Rho arrived maybe the captain would give him the recognition he so rightfully felt he deserved. Throwing caution to the wind, the cheetah wasted little time squeezing himself into the stretchy bodysuit on paw a time, delighted to learn it was more than capable of handling his considerable girth.

Once the cheetah had wiggled into his prize he looked himself over, trying to find a control panel to activate whatever fancy computer system he assumed it had. All his poking and prodding proved in vain, though. Indi pouted, frustrated the suit wasn't turning out as impressive as he'd hoped and worrying that he'd end up getting laughed at for finding useless junk once Rho arrived. On a whim

he decided to fuss with the hood, putting it over his head and hoping for a miracle.

Suddenly the hood clung tightly to the top half of Indi's face, the blinded cheetah's paws immediately rushing up to pull it away. He stumbled about, hissing and chirping in confusion as he battled the suit, regretting his recklessness. The material of the suit started to extend, his paws, footpaws, and tail getting covered completely by the latex, followed inevitably by the rest of his face. Being engulfed by the bodysuit only made the cheetah panic more, and he nearly fell over in the process.

As a strong tingling sensation surged throughout Indi's body the surface of the suit rippled and shifted slightly. His paws morphed to be slicker, and his tail thickened and extended. Indi's face grew longer until it properly resembled that of a salamander, just like the hood of the suit. A hissing sound echoed from within the enclosed suit, and its already-hefty occupant started to puff up some, disorienting him further.

The cheetah's vision was very slowly returning to him, though at that point he was more worried about why he was feeling lighter and lighter by the second. Small patches of transparency appeared on the suit's surface, revealing Indi to be hollowing out, gradually taking on the form of a salamander pool toy. By the time Indi could clearly see again he'd transformed completely, practically unrecognizable.

The thick material of Indi's new body creaked and squeaked as he looked himself over in confusion. He was a pool toy. Or at least something resembling one. Being nearly weightless was disorienting, and the former cheetah was left constantly feeling like he was going to float off after every step. His feline features had been replaced by those of a salamander, though the coloration of the suit that'd transformed him ensured he didn't feel like a *complete* stranger in his own body.

Indi had expected to find a valve where his naval had been, but instead there was a hard plastic cylinder, like a miniature air pump. He eyed it nervously, as if it might spontaneously turn on and blimp him up out of spite. Thankfully it remained quiet.

The new pool toy's immediate concern was finding a way to remove the alien suit and turn back to normal before Rho arrived. If he failed he'd be berated into oblivion by the captain and his crewmates. Unfortunately there weren't any zippers for Indi to mess with, the suit having merged seamlessly with his body while turning him into a pool toy. By sheer luck he was able to activate a built-in computer, and while the menus translated flawlessly into a language he could understand, none seemed to hint at a way of undoing anything.

He fumed and stomped in frustration, squeaking up a storm and even trying to let out an angry chirp at one point that merely sounded like a cough.

"Oh son of a...you really couldn't wait a whole ten minutes!"

Indi cowered slightly as he spotted a zebra heading over to him. Captain Rho.

"It...uh...um, it attached itself to me while I was trying to guard it!" Indi lied.

Rho rolled his eyes in response. "Sure. Or you tried wearing it to show off and did something dumb."

Rho circled Indi, looking over the pool toy salamander and trying to make sense of what had happened. It definitely didn't appear to be a mere inflatable suit, and Allagi artifacts were rather notorious for transforming interlopers. Still, he'd never heard of bodysuits being found.

"Well the suit *might* have been worth something if it weren't fused with you, and unfortunately we can't just sell *you* to the highest bidder," Rho grumbled.

Indi let out a whimper.

"Until we get back to port and have you properly examined I'm treating you like a dangerous artifact, so it's off to the cargo hold with you!" The zebra didn't necessarily smile, but he wasn't frowning anymore either.

"N-no fair, I don't want to spend a week cooped up in—whoa whoa whoa!"

Rho had lifted the inflatable salamander into the air and begun stomping towards the ship. Indi flailed and complained, but he wasn't in any position to properly resist someone with actual weight to

throw around. Pouting and grumbling, all Indi could do was wish he'd never bothered with the dumb bodysuit in the first place—and hope he found a way to turn back to normal sooner rather than later...