

The Mouseberry

By: IndigoRho

After a week of hard work, Indi was eager to be lazy. The chubby, midnight-blue mouse was relaxing on the couch, doing little more than vaguely paying attention to what was on TV. When his roommate August walked in he gave a nod of recognition but his gaze swiftly returned to the screen.

“Yo Indi, want to be productive today?” the gray lion asked as he strolled over.

“Depends.” Indi sprawled out a bit more on the couch, as if already answering the question.

“You’d be a big help in getting me a good grade on a research project for class. Also you get a snack.”

August tossed a little bag of blueberry trail mix at the mouse, who caught it by simply laying still and serving as a landing pad. Having neglected lunch, Indi greedily tore open the bag and started to dig in. He failed to notice how happy August seemed.

“Can’t say science is my strong suit, so I don’t know how useful I’d be,” Indi admitted in between bites, sliding off the couch. “What’s it about, anyway?”

“Pretty straightforward, just something about chemical reactions. Requires a second set of paws, but you practically wouldn’t have to do a thing. Almost less effort than watching TV.”

Distracted by food and August’s explanation, Indi was utterly oblivious to the changes occurring in his body. His fur was turning a slightly brighter shade of blue, starting from the tip of his snout and quickly spreading all over. The difference was somewhat subtle. August might not have noticed himself if he hadn’t specifically been expecting it.

The sudden swelling of Indi’s belly was a fair bit harder to miss, though.

“Alright, I guess I’ll make time in my busy day to help.” Indi finished up the bag of trail mix. “So when do we start?”

“We already have!” August chuckled and gave his friend’s belly a poke.

Indi looked down, and nearly jumped as he squeaked in confusion. He watched his middle growing bigger, the tank top he’d been wearing tightening around it. Then his glance shifted to the empty bag of trail mix. With a curse he threw it away.

“Dude, I swear you can’t go a week without trying to turn me into a blueberry!” Indi’s belly bounced and sloshed as he fumed, making it impossible for the blimping mouse to be taken seriously. “What if one of your pranks ends up being permanent one day!”

“But this isn’t a prank! I wasn’t lying when I said I had a research project I needed your help on, I just neglected to mention it would be all about how berries react to different stimuli. And that you’d be the berry.”

By then Indi was already sporting a rather sizable ball gut. His tank top had ridden up, a couple small tears on the seams. The light chill of the juice bubbling within him was starting to spread to his limbs, which had become faintly puffier. If something wasn’t done soon he’d be a round berry mouse within minutes.

“Well you’re just gonna have to find someone else to be your berry—maybe even someone willing! Good thing I keep a stockpile of juice inhibitors in the medicine cabinet because of you.” The expanding mouse headed towards the bathroom, his belly bouncing with every step.

As Indi waddled by, August grabbed ahold of his tail, easily halting him and almost causing him to topple over. No matter how hard Indi tugged, August’s grip remained firm. While Indi had stopped his swelling hadn’t, and the mouse was only growing bigger and rounder by the second.

“No fair!” Indi whined, struggling in vain to swat at August. He finally backed up a little and managed to yank his tail free, waddling as fast as he could to the bathroom.

Unfortunately the delay had been a costly one. Indi became wedged in the doorway that led into the hallway, the mouse too full of juice to squeeze by.

Indi squeaked and wiggled, but he was only getting more stuck. The frame was starting to dig into his sides, just enough to make him aware of the growing pressure inside him. If he remained there either he would break the doorframe...or the doorframe would break him.

“You should really consider storing that medication somewhere with fewer places to get stuck,” August chastised, leaning against the wall. “I guess if you’re bound to burst I should look for a new berry. Someone more durable.”

Indi was too worried to be annoyed. Escaping on his own was proving impossible, and if he didn’t act quick then having help wouldn’t do him any good, either. “Pull me out August, I don’t want to end up as a puddle!” He received a shrug and silence in return. The doorframe groaned. “Ok, ok, I’ll be your berry, just get me out!”

Satisfied, the lion steadily freed Indi by pulling on his tail. Indi wobbled backwards, holding out his arms to maintain his balance. Once he was steady he realized his arms were too stiff and puffy from juice to put back down again.

The mouse had become comically rotund, his clothes long shredded and his sides so round he looked like an inflating balloon. Or a blueberry. At that point juice inhibitors would’ve been pointless. Indi was about to become a giant blueberry whether he liked it or not.

August did nothing to disguise his amusement at the mouse’s predicament. He couldn’t help but prod, squeeze, and nudge Indi from all sides. He even outright shook him at one point, muffled splashing audible from within.

“Round’s a really good look for you Indi. Course I always think the more mouse the better, and you becoming a berry certainly provides that!” August snickered, even more so when Indi blushed. “That hide of yours is already taut as a drum, and with how fast your limbs are sinking in you’ll be down to a pair of wiggling paws soon~”

Cheeks as puffy and round as the rest of his body, Indi frowned and whined. The weight and pressure of gallons upon gallons of juice was constantly on his mind. Getting turned into a berry so often had helped him grow accustomed to the odd sensations, though he didn’t know whether to be thankful or annoyed by the fact.

Inevitably the swelling ceased. Indi had become a massive, helpless blueberry.

In celebration August sung a rather uncreative tune. “What do you do with a spherical mouse? One who’s as wide around as a whole house!” It was enough to prompt further blushing from Indi.

“I’m actually feeling generous today,” August said once his song was over. “If you can somehow shuffle all the way over to the big double doors that lead outside I’ll reconsider making you the star of my research project. I’ll even make sure you get juiced in a reasonable amount of time. Of course if you can’t make it then I’ll be rolling you through them anyway so the experiment can begin!”

Indi knew his chances of making it that far were slim, but he was willing to try anything to avoid being stuck as a berry for longer than he absolutely had to.

With considerable effort Indi managed to shuffle a few inches forward, then a few more. It was exhausting work, but the blueberry mouse was maintaining a steady—if painfully slow—pace.

“Impressive, impressive!” August said without any sarcasm. “Didn’t think I’d ever have to worry about you running away as a berry, but it looks like I’ll need to keep a closer eye on you in the future.”

Indi did his best to ignore the lion, focusing entirely on the doors. He was halfway there when August finally decided to end the charade. He casually walked up alongside Indi and elbowed him just hard enough to knock the berry off-balance. With a frantic squeak Indi rolled over, his paws and tail wiggling wildly.

“Oops, clumsy me~” August crossed his arms and rest them atop the immobile berry. “Such a shame I can’t give you a second chance.”

“You cheated, you knocked me over on purpose!”

“A matter of opinion. Guess you’ll just have to deal with helping me out on this semester-long

project.”

There were more squeaks of dismay from Indi, who’d expected a few days at best.

“I’m sure you’ll have plenty of fun at the communal greenhouse with all the other berries, though. You might even make a new friend or two while you’re there! And remember, you won’t have to do anything but stay big and round. It’ll be like a vacation~”

“But...but I’m practically guaranteed to end up as a permaberry if I’m stuck like this a whole semester!” Indi whined.

“Then I look forward to the lifetime supply of blueberry juice we’ll both get to enjoy!”

August placed his paws on Indi’s sides and firmly shoved, building momentum so the massive blueberry mouse would roll. As he pushed Indi through the doors he began to hum to the tune of the song he’d sung earlier, joined in by the occasional nervous squeak and slosh...