

## Eating the Pride: Part 3

By: Indi

A series of terraced pools made up the swimming complex on the starliner *Columbia*, with slides and waterfalls connecting each tier. A digital starfield made up the ceiling, giving the impression the whole place was exposed to an exceptionally bright night sky.

Its beauty didn't brighten Raf's mood any.

The blubbery lion slowly waddled his way into one of the pools, overly conscious of how much his body jiggled with each step. To his dismay he'd gained almost fifty pounds in just four days, something he hadn't thought possible. Of course there was food everywhere he went on the starliner, and the majority of it was free. It felt like every few feet some waiter was offering him a sample or a plate, and Raf never had the energy to turn it down. And then there were the buffets, and the endless drinks, and the bottomless appetizers, and...

Raf scowled hard just at the thought. And at how his brand new swim trunks already felt a little tight.

Eventually he made it into the pool, keeping as much of his bulk below the water as possible so his massive middle wasn't so exposed. He was in stark contrast to August, who was practically flaunting the large belly he'd cultivated during the trip.

"I'm so glad I was able to snatch that hippo last night at the arcade. He really gave an extra oomph to my waistline." The chimera shifted onto his back and let his soft gut rise above the surface like a doughy island. A swift slap made it jiggle. "I'm beginning to think I should make this cruise an annual thing. I haven't enjoyed hunting this much in ages."

"With how things have gone so far, you might not have anyone left to go with next year," Vex snickered. He still hadn't gained an ounce, but didn't mind being the thin friend. "Sure you didn't add Tycho to your waistline yesterday when no one was watching?"

"Hey now, it's been at least a couple years since I last indulged on a friend!" August insisted, though there was amusement in his tone.

"*Friends*. Plural." Vex swam around August, giving his middle a few teasing pokes. "Three roommates in one night is pretty damn impressive."

August smirked. "We were drunk, I was hungry, and their luck was worse than usual." He missed them, but the memories of his three course feast were good enough that he still kept photos of the night on his phone.

"Tycho's luck probably ran out, too," Raf grumbled, frowning at how crystal clear the water was. Even the rippling surface couldn't disguise his belly much. "Wonder if he got drunk while moping about Rico and Stelios getting eaten and ended up meeting the same fate."

"There's still a chance he's just sleeping off another big win," Vex said. "I know some casinos have VIP rooms for that. Bet he'll come waddling back safe and sound later tonight as fat as August and complaining about how hard it'll be to lose weight."

None of the lions were actually that optimistic, though. When friends went missing they tended to only reappear as some belched up clothing or a teasing display on a jumpsuit hugging a soft belly.

"But for now, I'm gonna find the lazy river and just relax." Vex swam off. He didn't see his friends wave, but he could hear August pestering Raf to try out some of the slides with him.

From a lounge chair nearby, Indi kept watch on the trio. Like Raf, his trunks were new, a pair decorated in cartoonish zebra haunches and designed to stretch a fair bit. And like August, he did nothing to hide his heft. The zebra had been eyed up by a few preds already, but returning their gaze

with a grin and a lick of his lips was enough to convince them he wasn't helpless.

Indi hadn't expected to see all three of his future meals at the waterpark. As August and Raf were still fattening themselves up nicely, Vex looked to be the lucky lunch of the day. He wouldn't be as filling as Tycho had been (oh sweet, delicious Tycho), but at that point Indi cared less about the weight he'd gain and more about devouring six whole lions.

The hungry zebra lifted himself off the lounge, middle jiggling. He thought of the three felines who'd helped make it so bouncy, and the three about to add to it.

Since Vex was taking his time, Indi had no trouble tracking him through the park. The gray lion eventually reached the long lazy river that meandered around the whole place, and slipped in on one of the free innertubes. He didn't notice the zebra sneaking in after him.

Indi patiently waited for the right conditions to make a move. Gradually other swimmers in the river departed or drifted further away, until the portion Vex and Indi were on was sparsely populated. Vex himself grew less and less on-guard, zoning out as he enjoyed himself. That's when Indi finally slipped out of his innertube and made his way towards Vex's.

He wasn't an expert swimmer, but Indi was able to shorten the gap without making too much noise. His muzzle was practically touching the innertube when he sunk beneath the surface. Vex's innertube was above him, the lion's rump poking into the water as he'd slumped a little.

Once Indi was convinced he had the space to maneuver he darted up, grabbed Vex by the waist, and pulled him down. At the same time, he opened his mouth wide, swallowing his prey butt-first.

Vex let out a startled yelp as he was suddenly snatched. In an instant he was folded in half, his legs and arms jutting up at uncomfortable angles. He couldn't grab ahold of anything, and a second later he was pulled deeper. He felt the maw working around his body, the warmth of the gullet. By the time Vex truly realized he was being eaten, a third gulp had nearly yanked him through the center of the innertube completely.

Greed and necessity fueled Indi. He was practically speed-eating Vex, straining both his jaw and throat as he swallowed with ferocious haste. He couldn't hold his breath forever, and the longer his mouth remained open the more water poured in. His belly was ballooning rapidly, filling as much with water as lion.

Another gulp and only Vex's paws and legs were left sticking out. Indi paddled upward as he finished swallowing his meal, sliding his arms through the center of the innertube and wrapping them around it. Pulling himself through took considerable effort thanks to his gut weighing him down, but he managed. He gasped for air as his head broke the surface, leaning into the innertube. Everything below his chest was still beneath the water, but he was buoyant enough to float along.

The zebra's bloated belly wobbled underwater, so round he merely looked inflated. Sporadic bulges disturbed the surface, but never for long. Vex was curled up in a private pool of his very own, his head just barely above the water. Everything had happened so fast that he was left stunned.

Indi was panting. "That was...woo...that was a bit more work than I'd expected." He smiled and shook his head. "But damn it was worth it. I kind of feel like a water balloon. Probably look like one too. Unfortunately for Vex, though, I won't pop like one."

The persistent wobbling in his stomach made him grin wider. He took a moment to look around, not noticing any real stares from people either along the side or in the river. Had his snack somehow gone unseen?

In a world where the casual consumption of others was commonplace, the thought of stealthily eating anyone was surprisingly delightful to Indi. As long as he was in the water, no one would know someone was trapped in his belly. He was just another random swimmer, not a successful predator. He blushed, and immediately felt silly about it.

In truth, his entire feast so far had been secretive to an extent. None of the lions had realized he was the one responsible for their friends vanishing, aside from Stelios in the seconds before his consumption. He guessed they were attributing it all to bad luck, not the determination of a single

voracious zebra.

He wished he could tell Vex about it, but without his jumpsuit he couldn't chat with his meal. And the lion wasn't likely to hold out until he'd gotten dried and dressed again. Indi would make sure August and Raf were aware when the time came, though. His intentions weren't to be mean—he just liked gloating.

For the next hour Indi simply relaxed, letting Vex tire himself out as he stewed a little. From time to time Indi would spit out some water, trying to shrink his belly some so he'd still be able to waddle back to his cabin once he was finished. Being immobile while wearing only swim trunks was dangerous, as he'd look extra enticing to many preds.

When the struggles in his belly had been reduced to faint shifting, Indi felt ready to leave. He lugged himself out of the water, feeling more and more of his belly's weight with each step. There was still enough water in his stomach to make an audible sloshing sound. It was sort of round, but also a little lumpy, and there was no denying he'd eaten someone.

Indi grasped the mass of his middle with both hooves and gave it a sharp shake. Vex bounced around inside, only weakly attempting to stabilize himself. "Time to find a cozy, reinforced lounge chair to dry off in. After that we'll return to my cabin so you can get to work settling into your new home on my waistline~" He didn't speak loudly enough for Vex to hear, but the one-sided conversation pleased him nonetheless.

He took his time waddling back towards where he'd started, wanting to indulge on the sensation of a full, wobbling belly. And of course to see the reactions it got from others. Along the way he spotted Raf, and almost laughed.

The pink-maned lion was on his back, his belly like a mountain. It swayed from side-to-side, the imprints of multiple paws pushing at opposite sides. There must've been at least two people in his stomach, possibly three considering how immense he was.

August loomed over him, also full of someone, though in a much happier mood. "Wow, hell of a catch, Raf! Didn't think you had it in ya." The chimera snickered.

"It was a—*braaaaaaaap*—damn accident!" Raf fumed. "Got wedged at the end of the slide and the two idiots behind me went early." He turned towards his towering middle and gave it a hard thump. "Why couldn't you have followed the rules!"

"Well I think ending up as lion pudge is a proper punishment for their fiendish rule breaking." August was actively rubbing Raf's belly, the grump's swats unable to reach him.

"That punishes me as much as them! If a certain *someone* hadn't eaten the lifeguard heading my way then maybe I could've spit them out and not been doomed to get even fatter." Raf thought about smacking his middle again, but couldn't be bothered.

August smiled innocently, and gave his gut a happy pat. "Blame the gator on duty for being plump and juicy looking, not me. And with how he'd been eying you, I might've just saved you from a one-way trip into a gator gut."

"Ugh, maybe Vex will wander by before my stomach gets to work," Raf grumbled and scowled.

Neither paid any attention to the engorged zebra waddling past them, unaware their friend was closer than they thought. Indi smiled, unable to disguise the sheer joy he felt knowing how much more fattening his last two meals would soon be.