

The Alter Collar

By: Indi

Indi held his bottle of blueberry cider nearly vertical, the plump blue cheetah steadily chugging it down in one go. On the couch nearby his roommates—a gray lion named August and an orange-striped zebra named Rho—watched with quiet amusement.

At last Indi lifted the bottle from his lips, gasping for breath. He shook the bottle a bit to prove it was empty before placing it on the side table beside him. “See, drank the whole thing and I’m not turning into a—*hic*—blueberry!”

“Well you’re still almost as round as one,” August insisted, taking a modest sip of his own drink. “Though with how much cider you’ve been downing I’m more surprised you’re not a keg yet.”

Indi snuck a glance at himself, as if worried he actually *was* transforming into a keg somehow. “Nope, just a regular old cheetah, not turning into anything at all, ever!”

Rho started laughing, but stopped as he remembered something. “Well if we’re talking about turning into things, I’ve got the perfect item for the job.”

The zebra opened a drawer and pulled out a thick metal collar. He showed it off to his two roommates but only August seemed to have any inkling as to what it was.

“Wait, no way,” August muttered. “Is that seriously an alter collar?”

“Yep! Completely legitimate and capable of transforming the wearer into all sorts of delightful things. A friend owed me a pretty big favor and I was pleasantly surprised to receive this as repayment.”

Indi was already giving the collar a disapproving look. “Aren’t those kind of illegal here? And dangerous?”

“It’s only illegal to force them on someone unwillingly. And I guess you’re technically supposed to register them but I’m sure it’s fine if it’s only used in the apartment,” Rho added. “So...why don’t we give it a little test run?”

August agreed without hesitation, but Indi remained skeptical. “And who’s gonna be wearing it?”

“We’ll just choose at random to be fair and promise to turn them back later. Give that bottle of yours a spin and we’ll go from there,” Rho said.

The introduction of chance bolstered Indi’s courage, and he relented to the test. “Just don’t claim I rigged it when it inevitably ends up pointing at one of you two!”

With that the bottle was spun. Three sets of eyes stared intently at the bottle, heart rates speeding up slightly as it began to slow. Expressions changed from worry to relief over and over until finally the bottle came to a stop—pointed at Indi.

“Oh c’mon!” the cheetah scowled.

“Looks like luck wasn’t on your side tonight,” Rho shrugged with a grin.

“That thing’s dangerous, I don’t wanna transform!”

Rho wagged a finger. “You agreed to it Indi. And the bottle chose you, fair and square.”

“No take backs Indi,” August chimed in.

Indi pouted, begrudgingly relenting after some further browbeating from his friends. He stood up, grumbling as Rho replaced his regular collar with the alter one. The feel of the cold metal sent a chill through his body, and it was just heavy enough to be somewhat uncomfortable.

“So glad this has an official app, makes it nice and easy to figure out what the brand new Indi should look like!” Rho chuckled as he poked around the app, making sure Indi couldn’t see the screen.

“The *temporary* me, not the new me! And why don’t we just make me something simple, like a jaguar or a leopard.”

There was a loud scoff from Rho. “Rearranging your spots would be a waste of this wonderful

piece of technology! Let's go all out and try rubber drone~”

“Rubber drone! No way, no way!”

Indi immediately started struggling with the alter collar, but it was clamped tight around his neck. A button on the app was pressed. Liquid latex poured from the collar, Indi's paws jolting away from it in surprise. His clothes and any exposed fur were quickly coated.

The cheetah tried in vain to shake off the unwanted substance, which stubbornly clung to him even as it worked to cover up everything. It dried instantly, leaving no creases or lumps. In the end Indi looked like he was wearing a rather glossy wetsuit.

What he felt was far different. As the latex solidified Indi realized he was getting lighter. The usual jiggle in his step was gone, his belly rigid and rounder. He swayed some, in a constant state of unbalance as he was forced to adjust to a new weight each second. Eventually Indi gathered the courage to pat his gut with a paw, chirping in fear when a sound like a drum being hit echoed back.

He was hollow.

The transformation into a rubber drone spared Indi's head, a conscious decision on the part of Rho. He wanted his friend to enjoy the experience for as long as possible, after all.

“I...I feel funny!” Indi whined. He found moving his new body to be difficult, as if he were being restrained.

“Well yeah, being almost entirely made of rubber is gonna be weird,” Rho said nonchalantly.

“I don't wanna be rubber!” Indi tried to throw up his arms in dismay but only managed to stiffly raise them. The creaking and squeaking of his rubber form made him blush in embarrassment. “You got to turn me into a drone, now turn me back!”

Rho smiled and shook his head. “But Indi, we haven't even tested one of the funnest features of a rubber drone—on demand inflation.”

Though Indi didn't see Rho press the button, he certainly heard the hissing noise coming from the alter collar. And *felt* the swelling of his rubber body.

With haste the rubber cheetah began to blimp up, every part of him rounding out. His limbs stiffened further as they puffed out, trapping Indi in a t-pose. His rubber hide creaked as it stretched out. It wasn't a pleasant noise to hear, rousing fears of popping. Of course he still had a long ways to go before he'd be in any actual danger of bursting.

“S-Stop inflating me, I'm not a balloon!” Indi insisted while his roommates laughed. His blushing had only intensified. His body had already rounded out considerably, giving him the appearance of a large shiny ball with limbs.

August ventured closer, giving Indi a firm prod that nearly pushed the deceptively-light cheetah over. “It's like poking a really thick beach ball.” He poked and prodded his roommate some more, ignoring the chirps and comical attempts to wobble him away. Eventually he gave him an outright squeeze, delighted to hear Indi's body creak and squeak in response.

Rho eagerly joined in. “You're right! I bet he's already pretty bouncy—too bad we don't have the room to test it out.”

“Don't you dare bounce me! Or roll me either!” He chirped angrily at the zebra drumming on his side. “Stop that! If you want a rubber ball to play with then turn August into one. I'm done being rubber!”

“Actually there's a bit of you that still hasn't been transformed yet. Thanks for reminding me~” Rho made sure Indi could see him press the button this time.

To Indi's horror more liquid latex erupted from the alter collar, but from the top. It swirled its way up Indi's chin and the back of his head. He winced as it seeped into his mouth and ears, deafening and silencing him simultaneously.

A daze abruptly came over Indi. His thoughts were jumbled, and he rapidly began to forget, well everything. When the latex passed over his eyes they were aimless, confused.

Through the latex Indi's memories were transferred into the collar, while a subservient drone

program took their place.

The rubber drone's eyes glowed bright, solid white, and a grin formed on his face. "Wow, thank you for inflating me sir, it's wonderful!"

"I think I could get used to Indi being this cheerful," August snickered, still teasing the increasingly spherical drone. "So Indi, do you want to be an orb?"

"If that's what you'd like then of course I do! I'll be as big and round as you need me to be, for as long as you need me to be!" The drone spoke with genuine enthusiasm, as if becoming a ball were his lifelong dream.

Rho's grin broadened. "I was honestly just gonna keep him like this til morning, but it could be fun having our own personal rubber ball for a few days...or maybe weeks~"

The drone's arms had almost entirely sunk into their body, leaving only puffy wiggling paws behind. His face was much rounder than normal, cheeks and neck inflated. Their smile was eternal, though.

"Whatever you need, I'm here for you!" the Indi drone proudly proclaimed. "And don't worry about me deflating—the collar will pump me up when necessary to ensure my internal pressure remains constant! I could stay inflated forever!"

"Well we don't need you around for *that* long," August said, though it was clear he was imagining such a scenario. "Though a few weeks sounds delightful—for a start."

"For Indi's sake he better hope we don't start preferring this rubber version of him." Rho pressed both hooves on the taut rubber drone and gave him just enough of a push to make him roll over.

The drone laughed and meowed happily, enjoying the experience even more than Rho and August. Soon they were laughing as well. Their little night in had taken a wonderful turn—though the Indi stored away in the collar likely would've disagreed. He'd have to wait a long, long time to express that discontent...