

ADVENTURER: MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

..... TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue	1
Chapter 1: Party Cohesion	3

..... PROLOGUE

Sleek ducked into the elevator, but not quite in time. She jumped as the doors closed on her tapered tail, then yanked it free so the doors could close behind her. Fortunately the elevator was empty, and hopefully noone in the lobby had seen what happened. She was a little proud she hadn't cried out. As she rubbed her stinging tail, she was again glad to be scaly; fur would've gotten stuck, and the doors would've stripped off at least a few feathers on each side.

Just as she was reaching out to press button 22, the elevator lurched violently. Sleek's arms and wings snapped out in reflexive defense, her nerves still on edge, but button 9 lit belatedly. Someone had summoned it from above. Of course. She tapped button 22 with one claw, forcing herself to do it slowly and smoothly, then fell back into a more balanced stance. She had perhaps a dozen seconds for a short kata before someone else got on, and she refused to react like this for an audience.

When the elevator lurched to a stop and opened its doors, she was the very picture of calm, her wings wrapped elegantly around herself. A human girl, teenaged skinny and a bit taller than Sleek's seven-and-a-half feet, poked her head in timidly, then entered. Sleek's hand hovered over the buttons, and she raised one eyecrest and dipped her head, causing her muzzle to imitate a smile. She couldn't actually smile - all her lip muscles were at the tip of her muzzle, not the back - but it was useful to imitate the expression when dealing with humans.

"Uh... Twenty-two, please."

And their creations. Sleek noted as the girl's tongue markings revealed her as a golem. Probably emancipated, to be that timid. Wait, 22? "Then it seems we're going to the same floor." said Sleek nonchalantly, keeping her muzzle low in the fake smile.

"Oh. Uh, cool." As the doors closed the girl began rocking back and forth on the balls of her feet.

Sleek tried to recall for sure, but she thought humans were short... not that golem design had to be so literal.

The girl kept her balance as the elevator lurched. "So, uh, are you on the show?" She was still facing forward and rocking, showing no sign of addressing Sleek.

"Just applying for the new season, actually. Yourself?"

"Uh, same here." She slowed the rocking a bit. "You look, uh, like you'll get in."

Sleek cocked her jaw to one side in amused exasperation. "I dunno, Adventurer's especially popular with mammals, they tend to prefer mammal parts on their females." She fluffed the billows in the top of her dress. For a reptere, a top was impractical, so even the illusion wouldn't last long into the season; the top was suspended between her waist and neck, over a scaly chest flatter than a bird's.

She glanced over to see the girl blushing madly - fine craftsmanship in her skin - and crossing her arms above her belly, perhaps trying to hide her own "mammal parts" behind her slender biceps. "Uh, well there's always wings and tongues, ah, t-t-tongue..." the girl stammered.

Sleek barely contained an amused hiss, which made it sound enough like a mammal snicker she didn't worry about the girl understanding it. "Depending on how crude I want to get, sure." Sleek looked directly away and flicked her tongue out seductively, as her ancestors hadn't for two million years - since the long muzzle rendered it obsolete. Then she caught the girl's eye and repeated the flick, as the elevator glided softly to a stop, not noticed by either of them.

The girl blushed again and giggled.

Then an older female voice cut in, carrying through the open doors. "I want those two on the show. In S party." The old lynx who'd spoken was pointing two fingers toward the elevator, her gaze boring down into the young gander at her side. Both were in grey suits, and had apparently been talking with the strapping male tiger in the stonewashed jeans. Beside them a sign proclaimed "Adventurer: Middle Of Nowhere (working title)". The gander said something softly.

The lynx withdrew her pointing fingers, looked at the gander oddly, and asserted "They wouldn't be dressed like that if they were here to fix the fans. I saw ten limbs and a tongue. Go."

Sleek had drawn her longbow from Hammerspace and was holding an elevator door open, while the golem girl was frozen like prey. At the phrase "dressed like that", Sleek glanced over the girl's clothes. A white dress shirt and a long plaid skirt hardly seemed provocative to her, but it might've been something subtle. Perhaps the revealing shoes. Perhaps a mammal thing. She shrugged, and turned to see the gander scurry up with an overstuffed clipboard.

"A blitzer or a scout?"

"Scout."

He checked a box and turned to the girl. "And you Ms?"

She absently drew a wand from Hammerspace. "Mage. Green mage."

He checked a box. "Perfect. Right this way and we'll get the two of you signed up, apparently you're already in." Without a glance to see if they were following he skirted round the tiger's pile of equipment and disappeared into a nearby office.

Sleek and the golem girl exchanged glances, then Sleek shrugged. "Cool."

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