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The Bureaucratic Stuff Before We Begin

Rein looked to her surroundings for a way out of this place. There was nothing. Nothing but green grass as far as the eye could see, save for the giant oak tree that miraculously emerged from the ground. Not to mention the little desk next to it without even a speck of dirt on it.

The most perplexing thing of all was the cat. This normal looking feline with the everchanging rainbow fur that could talk. When she thought of it that way, Rein was sure of where she was now. There was no other logical answer.

“Am I dreaming?” Rein asked the cat.

The feline shook its head with a curt smile as it sat on the stool behind the bureau. Its tail was waving next to its feet gently, as if amused by Rein’s confusion.

“Come. Sit.” The cat nodded to the chair by the desk.

It seemed odd taking a request such as ‘Come’ and ‘Sit’ from an animal, but Rein obeyed, nonetheless. What else could she do? Run? But to where? At least the cat seemed friendly. And it did mention something about guiding her back home. Rein sat in the velvet-lined chair and sank into it slightly.

“Good. Now, Reinier, are y—”

“Call me Rein, please.” Rein said, sharply.

“Ah yes. My apologies.” The cat cleared its throat with a little cough. “Now then, I need you to sign this form before we begin the guided tour.”

As the cat spoke, a few slivers of the tree bark shaved off from the trunk and floated onto the desk as three individual pieces of paper. The contents of the form were just inked paw-prints all over the page, with a dotted line at the bottom.

“What is this?” Rein asked, looking up at the rainbow cat.

“This is just a contract stating that you accept me as your guide and that I am not held responsible if you go missing.” The cat indicated as it licked its paw and wiped its ear.

“If I go missing?”

“Well, Rein, Eden is a big place and if you decide to go running off to a place I can’t find you, then I can’t be held accountable. Simple as that, really.”

There was a silence for a few seconds. Rein didn’t know what to say and the cat looked as though it had no more to say on the matter. Rein’s head was reeling. None of this made sense.

“You look pale.” The cat said. “Here, have some water.”

A branch poked out from the tree beside Rein and stopped about a foot from her face. It grew leaves and flowers, but at the end of the branch; a cool, perspiring bottle of water blossomed from a bud.

“No thanks! I think… I think you should just take me out of here now, please.”

The cat nodded and gestured to the form with a paw. A quill of very ostentatious feathering appeared in Rein’s hand. She thought no more about it and applied her signature to all three pages.

As Rein set the quill down the pages floated up to eye level with the cat. It looked at the forms briefly and purred.

“Everything seems to be in order, then.” It remarked.

The two pages on either side of the middle one floated into the centre, merging all the forms. There were three, but somehow also two less all of a sudden. Another branch reached out. The end of this one looked like a hand as it slowly and gently took the form away and stowed it out of sight among the bushy leaves.

Before Rein could say any more, a red wooden door faded into view just behind the cat. Golden light spilled out around the frame and thought he keyhole.

“Are you ready to go, Rein?” The cat asked with a wide smile.