

Rats, this place was so wet! How on earth had she found herself in such a place? She'd liked it better when the ground was hard and dry under her feet, even if the scrape of her claws against the concrete had made her bones itch.

Silvercloud was a young and proud utah with a penchant for getting herself into trouble, but she was smart enough to be able to find a way out of that trouble just as easily. In this specific case, she had been warned repeatedly to turn back, that the dangers that awaited her were no small feat for someone of her stature...of course that had just convinced her that she needed to see them for herself and face them. Nothing was going to stop her, not even facing the large herbivores that lurked among the enormous leaves and vines here.

She had seen one of those spiked herbivores use its huge tail to slam its spines into a large vine that ran along the ground and drink from the water that gushed from the wound, so she wasn't concerned about finding water, and she had seen mice and rats scurrying about in various rooms she'd passed, so food wasn't a concern either. Now that she knew she could double back for either resource when the time came, she felt confident about descending the stairs she had found and hopefully entering a new level of this labyrinth.

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The deeper they went, the colder it got, it seemed. Even with their full coats of feathers, the odd chill of the labs nipped at Royal and Rorschach's toes. Thankfully they were fleet enough to get past most of the dangers in this strange cave, but before braving the biggest residents again, the two headed back to the staircase up. It was a bit warmer at the bottom of the stairs, and they wanted to rest for a bit and warm their feet before heading back into the cold, dimmer depths.

The two settled in near the bottom of the stairs, cuddling in close to share body heat, making sure their cold feet were covered by their or their partner's feathers, tails wrapped around one another to complete the circle of blue and white fluff. They rested a while before the noise of something just up the stairs caught Rorschach's attention. Was it another outsider coming down? Or was some brave local seeing what lied below them? Rorschach held Royal a little closer, staring unblinking up the stairs, yellow eyes shining in the dim light.

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Silvercloud's feet were swift on the concrete as she charged toward the stairs, but she pulled up short when she saw the flash of round pupils in the dim light. She stiffened as her feathers stood on end, her teeth clacking together in warning as she tried to look bigger than she was.

"Who's there?" she challenged, unable to see well with the light difference. If she walked into the gloom she would be able to see the stranger better, and if the must of the plants behind her hadn't clogged her nose she would have been able to smell them. As it stood, she really didn't

like the idea of something unknown staring up at her, especially if it could be something faster than her...

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Rorschach's eyes narrowed briefly as he considered the shape at the top of the stairs. Royal perked her head up to see who was there, two blue eyes joining the yellow ones in the shadows. Rorschach tilted his head to one side, still thinking, but Royal spoke up to answer the voice.

"Ah, songful..! Greetings..!" She chimed, recognizing the bird-like tone of a fellow utahraptor. "Please, come down so we can see you; so we can greet each other properly."

Rorschach sighed, but smiled a little. At least it wasn't a threat at the top of the stairs. He and Royal both detangled themselves from each other and stood to greet the newcomer once they were close enough to see.

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Silvercloud stood at the top of the stairs as one set of eyes became two, but she too recognized the sound of the responding calls and felt herself relax a little. They may still have been strangers, but at least they weren't strangers in kind.

She trotted halfway down the stairs, still a little wary but willing to investigate these new faces and what they may have to share with her. She leaned down to sniff them and realized rather quickly that she was smaller than both of them. That didn't settle her nerves much, but she was confident that if she needed to she could flee without much issue. She'd spent ages in the jungle-like land above them, she would easily be able to find a place to hide where they couldn't get to her.

"I'm Silvercloud," she introduced herself. "I'm from the far away coast, I heard rumors of this place and wanted to see it for myself."

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Royal greeted the younger yoot with a smile, chirping and trilling the customary greeting as only a raptor would understand it. "From the nest of <Lupine> and <Divine>, I am Just-gracious-queen, and I greet you with the song of the First Chorus." She nudged her mate lightly, motioning for him to follow suit, and a bit begrudgingly Rorschach also sang his greeting. "From the nest of <Pongo> and <Carrion>, I am Friend-brave-stone-lion, and I greet you with the song of the First Chorus."

Speaking normally again, Royal gave her 'normal' name, simultaneously introducing her partner. "I'm Royal, this is Rorschach. It's good to see another songful down here." She hummed. "Has your journey treated you well? This place is dangerous, but full of so many curiosities."

"Dangers indeed." Rorschach huffed lightly, "Especially the ones down here. They may be few, but they're huge."

"Indeed. Thankfully they aren't all too bad. Some are personable enough." Royal noted, nodding a little. Turning back to the newcomer, Royal spoke again, "It's good to meet you, Silvercloud."

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Silvercloud watched with wide eyes as the two introduced themselves with such intricate trills, a little lost but simply fascinated by the pair. It had been so long since she'd interacted with others of her kind, but she was eager to spend some time with this pair.

"It's good to meet you too," she agreed with a little excited bob of her head. The last of her feathers had smoothed out as they introduced themselves, but they puffed right back up as she climbed the rest of the way down the stairs and realized how cold it was down here compared to upstairs.

"I haven't been down there yet, I got tied up watching the spiked ones up there, they're fascinating! I learned a lot. Now I'm ready to see what's down here. What do the big ones look like? What are they doing down here? I've so many questions!"

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"The big ones? They look a bit like the first big ones above, on the first layer- but bigger. So... so much bigger. Less of a crest and twice as many teeth." Rorschach answered, his tone not fearful, but with a healthy dose of respect as he recalled the huge carnivores lurking the labs.

"but there aren't too many of them down here." Royal added, keen to not scare off the youngster. "Most of what is down here is the strange things like in the stone jungle. Left by whatever came before- the small ones. I don't know much about them or their things, unfortunately- but it is interesting to see. Some of it has even come to life with whatever made the silver vines hum and the forests burn." She recounted thoughtfully, looking back towards where they had come from, deeper in the labs.

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Silvercloud shuddered visibly at the thought of something bigger than the albertos she'd met in the first level of this place. They'd been large enough, but something bigger could be vastly more dangerous. That fear wasn't going to keep her from exploring though, she just resolved to avoid putting herself in situations where they could corner her. If he had an out, she could squirrel away and survive, she was certain of it.

She considered the cold as well, her feathers ruffling until she had to give them a shake and a quick licking preen to get them to settle correctly. The frigid temperatures might be something difficult to deal with alone...winter is difficult enough in a lonely burrow she'd dug far away from where she'd been born. Sickness had torn her pack apart when she was young, and she'd had to quickly learn how to exist alone.

"Well...if you two wouldn't mind, I'd love to join you as you explore down here, if you weren't on your way out, that is. I've only just arrived, and I'd be grateful for the company." Not only that, but she'd be grateful for an extra couple sets of eyes to keep on a swivel to help her avoid unfriendly teeth..