

Adventure Kayngi: Donning the Fedora

The young feline typed furiously at her computer, a slight frown of concentration creasing her brow. This was it. This was the big paper. Her thesis. Everything else had been taken care of. This paper was all that stood in her way of getting her PhD. Doctor Kayngi Tunishi. She grinned to herself. She really liked the sound of that.

But this paper! Try as she might, her normal eloquence was eluding her. She was noted for being able to write excellent papers, being clear, concise, and creative at the same time. She growled to herself. She still had plenty of time to write this thing but at the rate she was going, she'd never graduate!

With a final exasperated snort, she saved her work and shut down her computer. "I guess I'll take another break," she muttered to herself. She grabbed her coat and left her apartment. She knew that if she just stared at her monitor, the words wouldn't come and she'd be even more frustrated. Far better to go out and relax. Hopefully it will inspire her paper!

She grinned. The least she can do is turn this break into a productive one. Kayngi walked over to the campus library. It was the beginning of the month. About time for the periodicals and peer reviewed journals to come out. She always stopped in to read through to see if anything particularly exciting had occurred in the archeological world. Who knows? Maybe it would help her with her thesis.

The library was nice and quiet, as it usually was. There were few students about. Kayngi preferred that. She hated midterm and finals season. The place would be crawling with undergrads and grad students who procrastinated. And they tended to get in the way or distract her from whatever it was she was doing at the time.

She ambled over to the help desk where a familiar raccoon worked diligently. She smiled warmly. "Don't you ever go home, Mike?" she teased him.

The raccoon looked up and echoed her smile. "This is my second home. Sometimes I think I'm more comfortable here." Without being asked, he waved his hand toward a small pile of periodicals. "I saved those for you. I know you usually come in the day those things arrive, Miss Kay."

She flashed him a grin of thanks and gathered the small pile. "Thanks, Mike! You read me like a book."

"I've had lots of practice," he said.

Kayngi walked away, chuckling and shaking her head. She settled herself down at her favorite table and began to peruse the journals. There was always at least one

article she would find fascinating. Some of them were just restatements of previously published work. Those she mostly ignored. And of course, there were the few bogus articles that slipped by the peers. Those she laughed at.

She made an excited squeak when she found that her favorite archeologist, Dr. Bradford Kingsly, had a new article in one of the journals. She quickly flipped to it and started reading.

After a few moments, she frowned. The article was about his recent find, the Flute of Kikipelli, in Arizona. But...Kayngi vaguely remembered reading about that very piece. When was that?

She wracked her brain, trying to remember. It was an older publication. She had only read it because it was by Dr. Kingsly, albeit one of his earliest articles.

Suddenly she brightened. She knew someone who could help her. She got up and made her way back to the help desk. Mike looked up as she neared. "Tired of reading already?"

She shook her head. "Nope, not a bit. I have a question for ya. I can't remember where or when I heard of an old find by Dr. Kingsly. Can you help me?"

Mike stroked his chin. "I may be able to. Dr. Kingsly, if I recall correctly, is only published by Modern Archeology. It shouldn't be too hard to look through archives in there. What's the find?"

Kayngi smiled. "I knew you could help! It's the Flute of Kikipelli."

Mike moved over in front of his computer and started typing. After a few moments, he shook his head. "Looks like the only mention of that is in his latest article."

Kayngi frowned. "No, I'm sure there was mention of it before. It was one of Dr. Kingsly's first publications."

Mike scanned his screen again. He tried another search, coming up with nothing. "I'm sorry but there is no other mention of it."

She moved over behind him. "Maybe it was listed under something else? Could he have called it something else?"

Mike shook his head. "I've tried different searches and I'm only pulling up that recent article. I'm sorry, Miss Kay."

She turned and started pacing. "I'm almost positive I saw it before!"

He turned to face her. "It's not showing up. You'll have to go through all the articles if you're going to find it."

She turned to look at him, her eyes wide. "But...he's written so many articles!" Then she frowned, stiffening her spine. "But I'll find it! I know it was an early article. I'll start at the beginning."

Mike smiled. "Sounds like a logical place to start. I'll go get the first batch." He left the help desk and was back in a few short minutes with an armful of bound sets of journals. "These contain Dr. Kingsly's earliest published work. We can get the next batch after we're done with these if what you're looking for is not in here."

Kayngi raised an eye ridge. "We?"

He smiled again. "We. You've got me curious now. I want to see if this is really in here. And it will go faster with two searching."

She smiled her thanks and got the earliest dated periodicals. Mike started with the latest of the first bunch. Kayngi quickly scanned each page of the periodicals, finding nothing in the first four.

Mike held out a page for her to look at while she was on her fifth publication. "This what you're looking for?"

She looked down where he was pointing and read the passage. "Yes! That's it!" she said, giving the raccoon a quick hug. "This site has yielded several small artifacts, many I believe to be fashioned for the local Goddess, Kikipelli" she quoted out loud. She scanned further down the paper. "Including pieces of jewelry, articles of what could be clothing, and what appears to be a musical instrument, either a pipe or a flute." She smiled triumphantly at Mike. "I KNEW I remembered that."

He smiled in return. "Congratulations."

Then she frowned. "But this doesn't make sense. This find is in New Mexico. His latest article said that he found the Flute in Arizona."

Mike shrugged. "Maybe he got it mixed up. New Mexico and Arizona are right next to each other."

Kayngi looked at him for a long moment then slowly smiled. "You don't understand archeologists. Every find is special to us. We remember the sites of all of our finds."

He nodded agreement. "I'm the same way with my favorite books. But when you get to my age, your memory isn't quite so reliable. I tend to mix up where I got what book. And this article was written almost 30 years ago."

She slowly nodded. "You do have a point," she reluctantly said. With a sigh she stood up. "Thanks for your help."

He smiled. "Any time, Miss Kay."

She left the library, lost in thought. It seemed like a logical explanation. But...Dr. Kingsly, getting old and forgetful? From what she understood about him, he always took complete and frequent notes about everything. He didn't seem the type to confuse at which site an artifact was discovered. Was it possible it was a simple mistake?

She shook her head. No, she was sure something was going on. Her gut reaction said that there was a reason for the switch in sites. But what could she do about it?

She checked her watch. It was still early evening. She could call her mentor, Professor Cirrel. At the very least, she wanted to talk it out so that she wouldn't get distracted by something that could very well be nothing.

Kayngi made her way back to her apartment and dialed the familiar number. As the call connected, she hoped that she wasn't disturbing him.

"Hello?" a male voice answered.

"Professor! It's me again," she said.

She could hear him chuckling. "Hello again, Kay. How's my favorite student? Shouldn't you be writing that thesis?"

She groaned into the receiver. "I'm really trying, Professor, but it just isn't coming!"

Cirrel made a sympathetic noise. "It will come. When it wants to be written, you'll know."

She nodded. "Look, I called for a different reason."

"Oh?"

"Have you read the latest Modern Archeology?" she asked.

"Yes, I have. One of the few journals I subscribe to. Why?"

"Did you see the article Dr. Kingsly wrote about the Flute of Kikipelli?"

"Yes," he said, his tone curious.

She sighed. "This could be nothing. I could just be getting it all out of proportion and everything."

Cirrel chuckled again. "You rarely blow things out of proportion, Kay. It's obvious something is bothering you. Now out with it!"

Kayngi smiled. "Thanks. I know that Dr. Kingsly found that Flute nearly 30 years ago...in New Mexico."

"You do? How do you know this?"

Kayngi started pacing. "I went through all his older, published articles. Nearly 30 years ago, he made a reference to a find in New Mexico, containing objects he felt the natives fashioned for Kikipelli, including a flute."

Cirrel paused for long moments. "I don't remember this."

"He didn't make a big deal out of it. He only mentioned it in passing while he was going on about some of the other finds at that site," she explained. "But now he claims to have found the Flute recently in Arizona!"

"Perhaps it turned out that the previous find was not the Flute," he said reasonably.

She sighed. "I know, I thought of that. Or maybe he misplaced it and just found it again while he was in Arizona. But...something's not right about this."

"Hmm. You're not given to fanciful notions. You've got a good head on your shoulders. If you feel there's something wrong, then I believe you. But what could it be? And what can you do about it?"

She slumped against a wall. "I don't know," she said, running her free hand through her raven hair. "If only I could actually speak with him. But...Dr. Kingsly is...well Dr. Kingsly! He's a very busy person, how would a student like me get to talk to him?"

Cirrel snorted. "Don't sell yourself short, my dear. I'm sure we can think of something. Actually..." She heard a shuffling of papers in the background. "I think I may have a solution. The good Dr. Kingsly has sent out a round of invitations to attend his seminar and press conference on the Flute. I happen to have such an invitation."

Kayngi gasped. "How did you pull THAT off??"

He chuckled again. "Dr. Kingsly is a fine archeologist but he also has an ego the size of Furry. He always sends out invitations to notable archeologists whenever he has a big find. I think it's so he can gloat about it, personally. I can send you in my stead.

You're my graduate student, after all. I'm the one you're getting your PhD from. I'll send my apologies."

She smiled brilliantly. "Thanks, Cirrel! But ... are you sure you want to let me go instead of you?"

"I was planning on missing it anyway."

"Thanks a million! If you were here right now, I'd kiss you!"

He made a few embarrassed noises. "You can pick up the invite any time. You'd better hurry though. I think the seminar is in a few days."

"I can pick it up now. I'll make arrangements to head out ASAP first."

"Very well, Kay. I'll have it ready and waiting for you."

Kayngi was able to fly out the next day. She rushed through packing, being thankful she always traveled light. She made sure she went back to the library to get a copy of both articles to take along with her. Then she was off! The trip went smoothly and uneventfully. She was able to check into the hotel/convention center with no problems.

She went to the convention center and walked up to the registration booth. A middle aged squirrel was writing on papers in front of him at the table. Without looking up, he said, "Name?"

"Kayngi Tunishi."

He looked over at a list before he shook his head. "You're not listed, Dr. Tunishi. This seminar is by invitation only."

"Oh, I'm not a doctor, not yet anyway," she said. "I'm a grad student."

The squirrel frowned and looked up. He blinked rapidly several times when he finally focused his attention on her. "Oh, er, um," he hemmed. "I'm sorry, miss. But, um, graduate students aren't on my list either."

Kayngi was mildly confused by the squirrel's sudden apparent discomfort and embarrassment. "Actually, I've been sent in my mentor's stead," she explained. She held out the invitation and offered a warm smile.

This only seemed to further discombobulate him. "Oh, um, ah, er, yes. Ahem," he said, trying to compose himself as he read the invitation. She wasn't sure, but Kayngi thought she noticed a flush on the squirrel's cheeks. Was he blushing? "Ah, Dr. Cirrel.

Well, if you're his student, I don't see any reason why you can't attend for him. I assume you'll be taking notes for him?"

She patted her attaché case. "Of course," she said with a grin.

The squirrel looked away, blinking. "Ahem, er, good, good. Did, did he have a list of questions for you to ask?"

This time Kayngi was sure the poor squirrel was blushing. "He didn't give me a list. But he told me he trusted my judgment and to use my head."

"Um, good, that's, um, good," he said, clearly flustered. He quickly held out a packet of papers to her. "Here you go. That's, um, everything you need for the, ah, the, ah, seminar, yes."

She took the packet and put it in her case. She held out her hand as she looked over at the squirrel's name tag. "Thank you very much, Dr. Nutworth. I'm sure I'll see you around," she said, smiling.

Dr. Nutworth hurriedly took her hand and shook it. "Oh, um, I'm, I'm sure you will. I am the coordinator, so I will be around."

She waved to him cheerily as she moved into the seminar. She fished the packet of papers out of her case and flipped through it briefly. On top of the packet was a name tag. She filled it in and stuck it on. The packet was surprisingly short. She frowned as she looked at the itinerary. The press conference was happening first, then there was a small break, followed by some lectures. Tomorrow had another media event in the morning, followed by a departing lecture. This would be a short seminar.

One thing she noticed right away was that she was the youngest attendee by at least a decade. This made her moderately uncomfortable. Was she the only grad student here? Then she noticed how few females were present. She got a few odd glances which furthered her discomfort. Was it even a good idea for her to be there?

Then she straightened her back. Well she may be the youngest there and a female to boot, but this was a golden opportunity for her! Gathered here were some of the big names in archeology and here was her chance to meet them. While she was here, she could establish some good contacts, begin networking for the future. How many grad students could do THAT?

With a grin, she set about looking for the room for the press conference. She wasn't sure if she would be able to attend but it never hurt to try.

Kayngi soon discovered that the map of the convention center left much to be desired. She had no idea where the press conference was. She tapped the shoulder of a

large bear, smiling apologetically when he turned around with a scowl. “I’m terribly sorry to bother you, Doctor, but I wonder if you may help me?”

The bear seemed mildly confused. “Help you? What can I do to help you?”

“I’m looking for the Goldenrod Room. These maps are…”

The bear chuckled. “Crap. That they are indeed. You want the press conference? I doubt if they’ll let you in. It’s usually media only.”

She nodded. “I guessed it would be. I was hoping I might see it, though. Could you point me in the right direction, Dr…” she paused to look at the name tag. “Mossburgh?? You’re Dr. Mossburgh!” She recalled reading a few of Dr. Mossburgh’s articles. He really was an impressive archeologist. Not like Dr. Kingsly but still good. She grabbed his massive paw and shook it heartily, grinning. “A real pleasure to meet you, sir!”

Dr. Mossburgh smiled back at her. “A pleasure to meet you, too. Who are you?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I’m Kayngi Tunishi, I’m not a Doctor yet,” she said, pointing to her own name tag. “My mentor is Dr. Cirrel. I’ve come in his place,” she said, still holding onto his hand.

“Ah, new blood. You’ll be joining our ranks soon enough,” he said. He gestured to a skunk in front of him. “This is Dr. Bloomington. I imagine you’ve heard of him as well.”

“Of course!” Kayngi said, wracking her brain. She really had no idea who Dr. Bloomington was, but she wasn’t about to let this chance slip by.

The skunk looked over at her in a very arrogant manner. “Of course, you’ve heard of me and my finds. They still talk about the Goblets of Gomundi in classes.”

Kayngi nodded vigorously. She had never heard of the Goblets but she wasn’t about to say so. “Yes, indeed! Fascinating. You’ve a brilliant mind.”

Dr. Bloomington smiled at Dr. Mossburgh. “I normally don’t condone having mere graduate students attending these lectures but I do believe I’ve found a lovely exception.”

The bear smiled in return. “It’s so rare to find respectful students nowadays. Dr. Cirrel is most fortunate.”

The males’ haughty airs grated on Kayngi’s nerves but she was still all smiles. “You are too kind, Dr. Mossburgh, Dr. Bloomington.”

Dr. Bloomington looked up. "Ah, here is someone else you must meet, young lady. I'm sure you also know of Dr. Kingsly," he said, waving someone over.

Dr. Kingsly! She turned around, doing her best not to be too starry eyed. Standing before her was a large lion, mane shot with gray. He was past his prime but he seemed to be in peak physical health. His hardened exterior didn't match the good natured humor in his eyes. "Jeff, George, what have we here? I don't recall sending out an invitation to this young lady. I would remember meeting such a lovely visage," he said, gently taking Kayngi's hand.

"Bradford, this is Kayngi. She's Cirrel's student. He sent her along instead of him," Dr. Bloomington said. "She's a remarkable student."

"So polite and properly respectful," Dr. Mossburgh said.

"Honored to meet you, my dear," Dr. Kingsly said, kissing the back of her hand.

Despite herself, Kayngi blushed. "The honor is all mine, sir."

Dr. Kingsly smiled at the bear and skunk. "You're right. Remarkable young female." He turned back to Kayngi. "What part of the seminar were you most interested in, my dear?"

Kayngi's tail swished once in agitation. She was not expecting Dr. Kingsly to be so charming! But she wasn't here to gape like a teenager at her favorite movie star. "I'm interested in it all, Doctor, but at the moment I was trying to find the Goldenrod room."

The lion blinked. "You wished to attend the press conference? Well, they usually only let media in. Let me have a word with my publicity advisor." He turned and looked around.

She hurriedly shook her head. "Oh no, I don't want to be any trouble."

Dr. Mossburgh chuckled deeply. "She doesn't want to be any trouble. You are a delightful change from the students we normally deal with."

"Most students generally fawn all over us and make a general nuisance of themselves," Dr. Bloomington sniffed.

Kayngi rather doubted that anyone would be "fawning" over the portly skunk but she didn't let that sentiment show on her face. "I can only imagine," she murmured. She turned her attention back to Dr. Kingsly who was talking to a fox. "It really is okay. You don't need to let me in. I was only curious."

"No, I like it," the fox said. "Student gets to ask the Doctor a question in the interview. Good publicity."

Dr. Kingsly smiled back at Kayngi. “You do have a question for me, don’t you? Most students do.”

She nodded slowly. “Yes, I do have a question for you but I don’t think you’d want me to ask it in the middle of a press conference.”

The lion’s eyes roamed over her before he smiled suggestively at her. “Is it of a ... personal nature?” he asked, his deep voice a low purr.

Her eyes widened. He thought she was about to proposition him! She blushed yet again as she shook her head vehemently. “No! It’s nothing personal.”

Dr. Kingsly looked disappointed. “Then it should be no problem for you to ask it at the conference. Come, my dear.” He placed his hand at the small of her back and gently steered her forward.

Resigned, Kayngi allowed herself to be propelled forward. She turned to look over her shoulder at Dr. Bloomington and Dr. Mossburgh. “It was an honor to meet you, sirs!” she called. Both the bear and the skunk waved back at her and continued their conversation.

She looked behind her at the lion. “Dr. Kingsly ...”

“Please, call me Bradford,” he said, grinning.

She offered a small smile back. “Bradford ... are you sure you want me in the press conference?”

He nodded. “I wouldn’t ask you if I didn’t want you there, my dear.”

The fox touched her shoulder to get her attention. “He’ll answer a few questions from the general press. Then he’ll get to yours. Understand?”

She nodded, her heart rate speeding up. Was this really happening to her? Was she really about to be let in to the press conference because Dr. Kingsly himself wanted her there? She pinched herself on her side to make sure she wasn’t dreaming. Nope, she was definitely awake. The real question was, how was Dr. Kingsly going to react when she asked him about the Flute?

The lion and the fox led her through the general press and to a spot where Dr. Kingsly could see her. “Stay right here. I’ll call on you for your question toward the end of the conference. Perhaps I may answer your question by then.”

“Perhaps,” she murmured. Though she really doubted it.

Dr. Kingsly moved up to the front of the room. He took a leather jacket from his publicity advisor and slipped it on. Then he took a leather hat, a fedora, and carefully placed it on his head, running his thumb along the edge. After he deemed himself ready, he moved behind the podium. All the gentle murmurs died down as everyone's attention went up to the lion.

Flashes started going off around the room. Kayngi had to admit, he cut a very dashing figure as he stood there. Pity he was twice her age. She shook herself to rid herself of such thoughts. She was here to concentrate!

"Let us begin the general questions," Dr. Kingsly rumbled. A multitude of hands shot into the air.

It was rather exciting to Kayngi. She had seen press conferences on TV but to actually be IN one was a different experience all together! There were many different questions about the Flute of Kikipelli, of the site, and what it all meant. None of the questions were like hers, however. Her stomach started clenching in nervousness. Should she really question the find in front of everyone? But ... Dr. Kingsly did say to ask it and he did bring her in here. She did ask if he was sure, giving him ample time to back out and leave her out of the conference.

After a good half hour of questioning, Kayngi began to wonder if he would call on her. Just then, he held up his hands, getting everyone quiet. "I believe now is a good time to inform all of you my plans regarding the Flute," he said.

"That's what we've been waiting to hear," a canid near the front shouted.

A general titter of laughter spread throughout the room. Dr. Kingsly also chuckled deeply. "I gathered as much. You are all curious and I'm sure you have heard the rumors by now."

Kayngi's eyebrows shot up. Rumors? She hadn't heard any rumors regarding Dr. Kingsly. She noticed that while some reporters in the room were nodding their heads, most looked as surprised as she felt.

"Rumors of my retirement," Dr. Kingsly was saying. "And I'm here ... to confirm those rumors. I am indeed retiring from the field of archeology."

At that statement, the media rose in an uproar. Kayngi felt her head spinning. Dr. Kingsly? Retiring? How could this be? He wasn't that old. She knew of other famous archeologists that were far older.

"Dr. Kingsly! Dr. Kingsly! What made you decide to retire at this time?" a reporter shouted out after the uproar quieted down a few notches.

The lion smiled. “It was actually my latest find that prompted me to think about retiring. The site where I discovered the Flute of Kikipelli spoke to me, reached me in ways that no other find did.” He paused for dramatic emphasis. His eyes took on a faraway look. “It was a beautiful place. So ... I plan to settle there.”

“What will you do there once you’re settled?” another reporter shouted.

Dr. Kingsly smiled. “I’m glad you asked that. Saves me having to just come right out and say it. I plan ... to open a hotel/resort/convention center. It will be dedicated to serving the archeological community and being a center for great minds to get together and unravel the secrets of time.”

Another reporter waved his hand wildly. “How did you get the idea for this center?”

“I was inspired by the site and my find,” he said smoothly. “It will be called ... The Flute.”

The fox publicity advisor stepped forward holding up his hands. “We have a student in the field of archeology here with us. We’d like to give her the opportunity to ask Dr. Kingsly her question at this time.”

All attention suddenly shifted to Kayngi as the fox pointed her out. She gulped nervously at all the attention. She had another stab of doubt about asking her question so publicly.

“Go ahead, Miss Kayngi,” Dr. Kingsly said, smiling encouragement. “Truly, a remarkable student.”

Taking a deep breath, Kayngi cleared her throat. “Dr. Kingsly,” she started softly. “Your recent publication said that you discovered the Flute of Kikipelli in Arizona. I’ve discovered an earlier paper you published, stating that you found the Flute in New Mexico. My question is ... how did you find the Flute twice?”

Silence met her remarks. All media attention swung back to the podium. Dr. Kingsly stared down at Kayngi with an expression of disbelief. After he blinked a few times, he nodded slowly. “A truly interesting question. I actually don’t recall this early paper you speak of.”

She opened her attaché case and pulled out her photocopies. “I have both articles right here,” she said, holding them up.

The lion drummed his fingers on the edge of the podium. “Well, ah, obviously ... I must have misplaced my notes about that particular find, which explains why I wrote my recent paper about the Flute.”

Another reporter's arm shot up. "Dr. Kingsly, you're very well known to have meticulous notes about everything. How do you explain this mix up?"

Dr. Kingsly's tail twitched behind him. Kayngi wondered if the other reporters noticed. The lion smiled over at her, though his eyes were cold. "I can't explain it at this time. Something must have happened to my notes."

"So which is the real Flute, Doctor?" another reporter asked.

"I will have to look into this ... very carefully," he said. He looked to the fox, who stepped forward.

"No more questions," the fox said. "Thank you all for coming."

The reporters all tried to ask more questions but Dr. Kingsly and the fox left the podium. Kayngi turned and started for the door. A few reporters asked to see the articles she was talking about. She smiled and said she would ask the hotel to make copies for them. She weaved through the crowd and slipped out.

She started looking for Dr. Kingsly and the publicity advisor. They weren't immediately visible. She slowly walked further into the seminar, keeping an eye out. They had to be around somewhere.

As she passed a small room, she heard voices, one raised. She took a few steps back and peered inside curiously. Dr. Kingsly and the fox were in the room, talking to each other. Well, Dr. Kingsly was talking calmly but the fox looked more than a little irate. Kayngi silently moved closer to the room without being observed. Now she was able to overhear what the pair inside were saying.

"...an't believe this! If you would stop thinking with your crotch for a few minutes, maybe you wouldn't have insisted on bringing her into the conference!"

"Hey, she's a beautiful female. Can't expect me to ignore that."

Kayngi blushed furiously. So, Dr. Kingsly did find her attractive. And apparently that was why he got her invited to the press conference.

"Come on, Greg," Dr. Kingsly's voice sounded far more reasonable than the fox's had been. "How was I to know she would question the authenticity of the Flute?"

Greg the fox growled. "What a mess! And right after you announced the project! This will be smeared all over the papers! Your reputation is on the line! That little whore! She'll ruin everything!"

She growled to herself. How dare he call her a whore! She encouraged Dr. Kingsly in no way! Then she frowned thoughtfully. Ruin everything? What was going on?

A deep chuckle floated through the door. “Now now, Greg. She didn’t want to ask us that question in there. I could see it in her face. We both pushed her into it. You liked the idea of having a grad student in there. She asked us several times if we were sure we wanted her in there.”

“She could have told us that it wouldn’t have been a good idea! She could have given us a hint as to why she didn’t want to ask her question in front of everyone. That was perfect timing for her to throw a wrench into our plans! She **MUST** have been sent here by someone. Who could have known about this and what do they want?”

Dr. Kingsly chuckled again, darkly. “Now you’re getting paranoid. No one knows anything except us. She can’t have been sent by anyone.”

“How can you be so sure!” Greg demanded.

“I can’t,” came the matter of fact reply. “I also know that the Flute was planned in private, away from prying eyes and ears. I didn’t breathe a word about the hotel. So, if the Flute was leaked, it wasn’t from me.”

“You’re suggesting that I messed up,” the fox snarled.

“What does it matter now? What matters is that we have some very curious people about to poke into our affairs. They’re going to want answers.”

Greg snorted. “YOU come up with the answers. You always do.”

“Trust me,” Dr. Kingsly said. “I’ve never led you astray before.”

“Until now,” Greg muttered. “This was all YOUR idea in the first place.”

“And you liked it! Don’t try to put this all on me. You knew the risks. We took every precaution. Nothing ever goes as planned, you should know that by now. This is a pothole in the road. We’ll deal,” the lion growled.

Kayngi gulped. She didn’t like the sound of that. What plan? What was going on? Her gut instincts were right. There WAS something going on but she still had no answers. How was she going to get those answers and emerge in one piece? If things came to a head, she had no doubt that Dr. Kingsly could tear her limb from limb.

She straightened. There were two options open to her. She could keep her distance and attempt to untangle this mystery from afar. Or ... she could continue on her present course, staying right in the thick of things. One was much safer but would take

longer. Not to mention, it would probably make Dr. Kingsly suspicious. Greg was already suspicious so it didn't matter what she did when it came to him.

There was no real choice. She was going to figure out what this plan was. And what the Flute had to do with it. Now ... how to go about doing it ...

She smiled. Dr. Kingsly found her attractive. He probably wouldn't mind talking to her. She just had to make sure the fox wasn't anywhere around. Her eyes lit up. She had an idea.

Kayngi stepped away from the door and adjusted herself. She let some of her hair down and she unbuttoned the top button of her shirt. She never really thought of herself as that attractive. But apparently some males liked the look of her. She may as well start learning how to use that to her advantage.

She strode purposefully to the door and rapped politely before she entered, a properly contrite expression on her face. "Dr. Kingsly? I'm sorry, I really didn't mean for that to happen. I was only curious."

The lion looked up at her arrival. Greg glowered darkly at her and said nothing. Dr. Kingsly smiled at her. "Bradford, please, my dear. And don't worry your pretty little head about it. It was partly our fault. You were kept asking us if we were sure. You tried to warn us."

She twirled some of her hair around her finger as she looked up, widening her eyes in what she hoped was an alluring manner. She thought she was going a bit over the top but if Dr. Kingsly responded to it ... "I still feel sorry. I didn't realize there was going to be so many reporters there. And I didn't know you were going to announce your retirement and the hotel. I want to make it up to you, Dr ... Bradford," she said with a shy smile.

The lion smiled at Greg. "Oh, well now, what were you thinking?" he asked.

She cocked her head up at him. "Perhaps, if I'm not being too forward, I could take you and Greg here to dinner?"

Greg's eyes narrowed but Dr. Kingsly beamed down at her. "Well that offer is most kind. However, my publicity advisor has dinner plans this evening. I have plans too, unfortunately. But I can get out of them."

She smiled up at him. He did as she thought he would, make sure Greg wasn't going to be there. She was polite to include him in her invitation. That should cover her bases. "You don't have to go through any trouble just for me..."

"Nonsense," Dr. Kingsly said, dismissing her protestations with a wave of his large hand. "My prior engagements do not hold the allure you have."

“Then the hotel restaurant this evening? Say seven?” she asked.

He nodded. “That suits me fine.”

However, Greg was not about to leave quietly. “How did you know my name?”

She blinked as she turned to look at him. “Excuse me?” Her mind raced. She slipped up badly right there. She knew that they had never been properly introduced. How was she going to explain this?

“You called me by name. I never told you what it was and Bradford didn’t have time to. So I’ll ask you nicely once more. How did you know my name?” he asked, a growl underlying his words.

She looked away in embarrassment. That at least she didn’t have to feign. “When I was trying to find where Dr. King ... Bradford ... had got off to, I heard you two talking in here just now as I was walking up. I heard him call you by name.”

Dr. Kingsly guffawed loudly. “Were you trying to trip her up on something, Greg? Leave her alone. She’s harmless. Now I must go, my dear,” he said, taking a hold of her hand. He kissed the back of her hand. “I shall see you at seven.”

“I look forward to it,” she murmured. She offered a smile at the fox before she turned and left. She heaved a big sigh of relief. She had no idea what she was going to do, but she had some time to think about it. She checked her watch. It was still early afternoon. Good, she would need the time to come up with something.

She stopped to think for a moment. Should she push her luck by eavesdropping further on Dr. Kingsly? She found that she was already drifting back to the door. Shrugging, she poised herself to flee if she had to.

“..n’t worry, Greg. It’s just dinner.”

Greg was still growling. “Just don’t mess this up. We can still pull this off.”

“Of course. Trust me,” Dr. Kingsly said. “I won’t let anything get in our way for the hotel.”

That sounded like the end of the conversation so Kayngi quickly walked away before the two of them could see her.

Her mind whirred along as she walked. They kept mentioning the hotel, not the Flute. So, did that mean this whole deal wasn’t about the artifact? Was it about the hotel that they wanted to build? If that was the case, why the deception about the Flute of Kikipelli? Dr. Kingsly had a big enough name to pull off a hotel/convention center. Especially if it was dedicated to the field of archeology.

Kayngi stopped by the front desk and asked them to make copies of the articles for the press. Then she went up to her room to think. She needed to get Dr. Kingsly to talk. Well he seemed pretty full of himself. Getting him to talk about himself shouldn't be too much of a problem. It's getting him to talk about the Flute and the hotel.

She eventually sighed. She just wasn't coming up with any ideas. She would just have to play it by ear.

Seven rolled around and Kayngi went down to the hotel restaurant. She dolled herself up, something she rarely did. Hopefully it would help get Dr. Kingsly to relax and talk more.

The lion was sitting at the bar, a glass in front of him. He smiled when he caught sight of her. She smiled shyly in return. "Punctual as well as beautiful," he said, standing up. "Shall we, my dear?"

Kayngi slid her hand on his arm. "Thank you, kindly," she murmured.

They settled into a small booth near the rear of the restaurant. Dr. Kingsly flirted outrageously with her during the course of the meal. She was surprised by how much she enjoyed the attention. She generally didn't have time for dates, though she'd been out a time or two. She was far too busy with her nose in a book or in front of a computer working. This was a refreshing change.

Finally while they were on their dessert, Kayngi was able to steer the conversation to the hotel. "I think it's a fabulous idea," she said. "We need a place to call our own where all of us can get together and share our finds."

"Precisely what I was thinking," Bradford said. "We've needed a convention center dedicated to archeology for a long time. Now I can realize that dream."

Dream? She latched onto that word. So Dr. Kingsly had been thinking about this for some time. It wasn't the find that brought it on. She took another bite of the chocolate cake she ordered. "And the Flute?" she queried.

He smiled. "The site is a perfect spot to put the hotel. That's when I decided I wanted to build it there."

She cocked her head at him. "Build on an archeological site? But ... what if something was missed? And preserving the authenticity of the area?"

Bradford waved his hand dismissively. "I never miss anything. As for preserving the site, this area has been practically deserted for many years. No one will care if we build on it. It will bring in more tourists, create jobs ... That's what they'll care about."

Kayngi focused her attention back on the cake. “So ... did you see the articles I dropped off? The first Flute and the recent one?”

The lion downed his drink. “I did. I can’t believe I forgot all about that. I must be getting old.”

She ignored the obvious compliment fishing comment. “Which one is the real Flute of Kikipelli, then?”

Bradford eyed her for a few moments. “The second, of course. The first ... can not possibly be the true Flute. I was still fresh in the field. I was not the distinguished gentleman I am now. I was not sure of that first Flute. I am sure of this second.”

Kayngi detected a note of coolness in the Doctor’s tone. She couldn’t risk putting him off. So she smiled brightly at him. “I’m sure you are,” she purred.

The lion beamed. She decided to try her luck yet again. She scooted just a bit closer, with what she hoped was a coy look. “Is there any chance I would be able to see the Flute?” she asked quietly as she toyed with the remains of her dessert.

Bradford stroked his chin as he considered. “You realize it hasn’t been revealed to the press yet? I was going to unveil it tomorrow after most of the others had left.”

She frowned in puzzlement. “Didn’t you want the other archeologists to see it? I know I’d want to show it off to everyone.”

He winked at her. “Normally I like to do just that, show off my finds. But today I decided to be ... secretive. They’ll get to see it when the pictures are published.”

Secretive? Kayngi caught herself before she snorted. Most archeologists were not secretive about their finds at all. They wanted to show them off for all and sundry to see. For Dr. Kingsly to not want to show off the Flute sent up a red flag in her mind. Now she really wanted to see it. She scooted still closer to him and widened her eyes. “Please, Bradford?”

Slowly, Dr. Kingsly put his arm around her shoulders. “Well, I think I may be able to get you to see the Flute. It’s in my suite upstairs under lock and key. Come on, my dear Kayngi.” He stood up and held out his hand to her.

She smiled up at him and allowed him to help her to her feet. She felt mighty uncomfortable going up to his suite alone. But if she was going to see the Flute ... she could always make her excuses after she saw it.

The lion led her to the elevator and up to the top floor. “It’s no penthouse unfortunately,” he said as he moved to his door at the end of the hall. “But it suites me just fine.” He chuckled at his own joke.

Kayngi managed a polite chuckle in response. Inside her head, she rolled her eyes. Great, a comedian, she thought to herself. But once she stepped inside, she felt her breath catch in the back of her throat. The suite of rooms was beautiful! The carpets were lush and welcoming, the furniture was overstuffed and begged to be sat upon, and the artwork was actually tasteful. “This is lovely!” she cried.

“I’m sure you think so. I’ve stayed in some places far better than this. Then again, this is a far cry from a tent in the field.” The male walked to the living room where a small stand was set up. On the stand was a clear plastic box. Inside the box lay an old artifact.

Her eyes immediately went to the Flute. She studied it from afar. It definitely was a flute. But under the plastic, she couldn’t tell much beyond that.

The lion unlocked the small padlock on the side of the box and lifted it off the stand. He carefully picked up the artifact and held it out to Kayngi. “Here it is.”

She stepped closer and let her eyes roam over the Flute. It looked to be in good condition. She reached out and hesitated before touching it, her eyes on Dr. Kingsly, questioning. He nodded his encouragement. She ran her fingers over the ridges of the Flute. She felt the rough surface and dry particles of grime and grit. She pulled her hand back, rubbing her fingers together to get a better feel of the grime. It felt ... smooth. Very smooth for grime. She looked at her fingertips, finding that they were smeared in a reddish dust.

Dr. Kingsly smiled and held the Flute out closer. “Go ahead, you can handle it. I know you’re aware of the need for caution.”

She smiled up at him and took the Flute from his outstretched hands. She turned it over in her hands as she examined it. She may not have an expert eye but it certainly seemed real enough. She ran her thumb along the lip, feeling her claw catch on the edge. She didn’t show any outward sign of it. She carefully made a show of turning the Flute over to continue her observations, taking a closer look at the lip. She noted the small nick her claw made. Under the reddish exterior was white. White? Plaster? That would explain the gritty feel.

She sighed as she handed it back. It was a fake. She knew it. That was why Dr. Kingsly didn’t want the other archeologists to see it up close. They would spot it right away. But ... if they only saw pictures of it, media pictures, they probably would never know. It made sense now. Dr. Kingsly published the paper on the Flute of Kikipelli because his name was so well recognized. No one would question him. With the paper comes the seminar and the announcement of the hotel. It was all about the hotel.

She managed to smile up at him. “Thank you very much, Bradford. You’ve been too kind.”

He chuckled. “Don’t let any of the others know I let you up here. They’ll never let me live it down. Besides, there’s no need to get them all jealous of a grad student.”

She shook her head. “Don’t worry about that. I know tact.”

“I’m sure you do, Kayngi. Would you care to join me for a drink? A nightcap?” he asked with a suggestive smile.

She sighed. She guessed he would ask her something like that. She smiled apologetically. “It’s very nice of you but I’m rather tired. I do need to get to bed. Besides, Dr. Cirrel will want a report of today’s events before I turn in. I’d better get to work on that.”

Bradford looked very disappointed but he sighed as well. “That’s certainly understandable. I remember being a grad student, being at the beck and call of my mentor. Best years of my life but I don’t envy you one jot. Go on then. Perhaps you can have breakfast with me in the morning.”

She smiled as she nodded slowly. “I think I can do that.” She turned to go. “Good night. Thank you for a lovely evening.”

Bradford kissed the back of her hand again. “The pleasure was all mine, Kayngi.” He put the Flute back on the stand and set the cover back on. Then he turned to walk her to the door.

Her sharp golden eyes noticed something as they headed to the door. Dr. Kingsly didn’t lock the cover! What an opportunity ... But nothing she could take advantage of at the moment. She would need to think on this that night. She bid him a good night and went down to her room.

The next morning, she got up early, a very rare thing, to get ready. She came up with a plan of sorts. She wasn’t sure how well it would go. It mostly depended on luck, something that seemed to hold out for now but could fall out from under her at any moment. But there wasn’t much else she could do.

She went over the itinerary once again, familiarizing herself with the rooms where the day’s events would take place. She studied the map, doing her best to understand the layout. When she thought she had it down, she purposefully made her way back to Dr. Kingsly’s room.

This was a tricky part. Getting inside the room wouldn’t be easy. She hoped she timed it right. It was before the next media occurrence so both Greg and Dr. Kingsly should be getting prepared. Hopefully they would be too busy to notice her.

Outside the room, she hesitated. She knew this was NOT a good idea. If she was wrong, having Dr. Kingsly as an enemy would be devastating to her career. She had a few moments of doubt.

Before she could talk herself into or out of her current plan, Greg came up behind her. “What are you doing up here?” he growled.

Well, too late to back down now. She offered a winning smile to the fox. “Good morning! I know you and Bradford are going to be very busy today. I hope I’m not intruding too much on your time.”

He scowled at her. “I’d say you did enough damage yesterday,” he said coolly.

She nodded apologetically. “Yes, I know. I truly am sorry, even if you don’t believe me.”

He waved his hand irritably at her. “That doesn’t matter now. What is it you want?”

She looked away coyly. “Well, Bradford took me up here last night. I’ve forgotten my purse in his room. I was about to retrieve it before today’s goings on.”

Greg frowned. “Figures,” he muttered under his breath. “Well come on but be quick about it!” he said, opening the door. “We need to get downstairs.”

She smiled gratefully and ducked inside. She watched as Greg moved to the bedroom calling for Bradford. Her eyes found the padlock on the cover. She felt her heart speed up. If Dr. Kingsly locked it, then there was nothing she could do. She eased closer to the stand. The padlock was only hooked on it wasn’t locked.

Breathing a huge sigh of relief, she quickly and silently lifted the cover and took the Flute. She took her purse out from under her shirt and slipped the Flute into it, then set the cover back again. She wished she had something to put in its place but there was nothing available.

She slung her purse on her shoulder and purposefully strode out of the room. She had to get downstairs and fast. If her luck was still with her, Greg and Bradford wouldn’t even notice that the Flute wasn’t in its case.

She was at the elevator when she heard a bellow of rage. Turning to look behind her, she saw both the fox and the lion running down the hallway toward her. Cursing under her breath, she looked at the elevator. It was only midway up. There was no way it would get to her in time.

She looked around wildly. Finding the stairwell, she dashed for it and pelted down the stairs. She ran down the flights as fast as she could. She could hear the sound

of pursuit above her. She didn't waste her time or energy looking behind her. She had a rough idea where they were from their footfalls. She was not happy with how close they were. And it sounded like they may be gaining on her.

Growling in frustration, she started to leap down the stair flights. It was definitely faster than running each step, but it was a precarious descent. If she slipped or tripped, it would give her pursuers time to catch up. And she had no idea what they'd do to her if they caught her. She'd rather not find out.

She could feel herself slowing down as she continued down the stairs. Her breath came in ragged gasps as she moved. She didn't dare duck into a level, knowing that Dr. Kingsly and Greg would find out soon. She would not allow herself to be trapped.

She could hear the labored breathing of the two males. Good, at least it wasn't just her. She knew that Dr. Kingsly was in good shape, he had to be, but what about Greg? Her legs were tiring and grew heavier. Kayngi swore that if she got out of this situation, she would start working out properly. She thought she was in decent shape but this mad dash was really testing her.

Finally the first floor loomed up and she threw open the door. She paused briefly, looking about wildly to orient herself before she took off again. There were furs all around the lobby and the convention center. She ducked and weaved between them, muttering apologies whenever she ran into anyone.

Kayngi heard loud protestations behind her and risked a backward glance. Dr. Kingsly had emerged from the stairwell and was barreling through the crowd. Greg was nowhere to be seen, yet.

The dark feline looked around the convention center as she ran. Where the hell was the media room?? Hearing the lion closing in on her, she went into the first room she came across.

It was a gathering room with refreshments on one end. Various furs were inside talking to each other. Kayngi walked through the room quickly, weaving in and out of the crowd. She found two familiar faces and headed to them. "Dr. Mossburgh, Dr. Bloomington, good morning to you two," she said politely. She ran her fingers through her hair and tried to catch her breath as she kept her eye on the door.

"Why, it's that nice cat from yesterday," Dr. Bloomington said. "A good morning to you as well."

"You're up early. That's good for a grad student," Dr. Mossburgh said.

"Anything wrong?" the portly skunk asked as he noticed her disarrayed state.

She started to shake her head when she noticed Dr. Kingsly enter the room. She turned as if to go, then turned back. “Yes actually, there is. I can’t explain now.” She stepped closer and took the Flute out of her purse out of Dr. Kingsly’s line of sight. “I promise I’ll tell you everything later. Hold onto that for me. Look it over if you wish. I need to go!” She thrust it into the bear’s shocked paws and took off.

She turned her head and watched Dr. Kingsly’s progress. He must have seen her with the two archeologists. She dashed off to a door, hoping that he wouldn’t stop to talk to the pair.

Inside the next room, a large group of furs congregated. She stopped in surprise. This was the media room. She rolled her eyes. Those maps were of absolutely no use to anyone.

At her entrance, some of the reporters looked up. A few looked away again but some remembered her from the other day. They approached her. “That was a very good question you had yesterday. I’m very impressed you found that earlier reference to the Flute,” one said.

She grinned her thanks as she tried to move deeper into the room, away from the door. “So you were able to get the articles from the desk, then?” she asked.

He nodded along with the others. “Oh yes. Very helpful.”

Another reporter stepped up. “How did you know about the earlier reference?”

She turned to look at the speaker, a ferret. She smiled. “I read that article a long time ago. I just remembered it when I read Dr. Kingsly’s recent article about the Flute. It wasn’t too hard to find it again.”

Dr. Kingsly barged into the media room, looking around. Kayngi was thankful she was surrounded by reporters and cameras. She was less visible but it wouldn’t take long for the good Doctor to find her.

With a menacing growl, the lion strode up to her. “You little thief! Give back the Flute!”

The reporters all stared at her. She met Dr. Kingsly’s furious gaze with a calm expression. “I do not have the Flute.”

“Liar! It was in my suite before Greg let you in. And after you left, it was gone! Care to explain that to me? Or to the authorities? Greg is getting them now.”

Kayngi shook her head. “I will be very happy to speak to the authorities. The question is, how do you feel about it?”

“What’s going on here?” the ferret asked, digging out a notepad.

“Nothing, nothing’s going on, gentlemen,” Dr. Kingsly said, his eyes never leaving Kayngi’s face.

“You just called her a thief and a liar,” the first reporter said.

The lion looked at the group of reporters that were encircling them. He grinned in triumph. “Yes! I did indeed call this young female a thief and a liar! She’s stolen the Flute of Kikipelli from my room.”

Kayngi held out her hands. “I do not have the Flute. Go ahead, search me.”

Dr. Kingsly quickly ran his hands over her pockets, then rummaged in her purse. He scowled darkly when he turned up nothing. “She must have hidden it somewhere!”

She rolled her eyes dramatically. “Hide it? Where? When you were chasing me all over the hotel?”

He narrowed his eyes. “You must have handed it off to someone then.”

“The only people I spoke to were Dr. Mossburgh and Dr. Bloomington,” she replied.

Dr. Kingsly narrowed his eyes. “You can’t have ...” he said, his voice much quieter, almost incredulously.

“There is a very easy way to solve this,” she said to everyone. “Let’s go find them, shall we? We can ask them about the Flute.”

“That will not be necessary,” he said hurriedly.

“Why not?” another reporter asked.

The lion turned irritably to the reporter. Before he could respond, Kayngi turned and headed back to the gathering room. The Doctor called, “Stop thief!”

None of the reporters moved. They could sense something was going on and they were going to witness it through.

She smiled sweetly at Bradford and continued on her way. She returned a short time later with the portly skunk and bear. “Gentlemen, this is Dr. Bloomington and Dr. Mossburgh. I’m sure you’ve heard of them,” she said with a grin. The reporters all murmured the affirmative. “Doctors, Dr. Kingsly here believes I handed you the Flute of Kikipelli.”

Dr. Bloomington snorted. “Flute of Kikipelli?” He held up the object in question. “This can’t possibly be the Flute of Kikipelli.” Dr. Mossburgh nodded in agreement.

“What makes you say that?” the ferret asked.

“It’s plaster,” Dr. Mossburgh said. “The real Flute should be made of ceramic.”

Just then, Greg stormed into the room leading two police officers. “There she is! Arrest her!” he cried. Dr. Kingsly tried to make negative motions at Greg but the fox did not see them.

The police officers moved over to Kayngi. “Ma’am, this gentleman says you stole something off his compatriot.”

She quickly took the Flute from Dr. Bloomington. “You mean this?”

“Yes! That’s it! The Flute of Kikipelli! Arrest her!” Greg said.

The reporters in the room all broke out muttering and began to scribble notes down. Dr. Bloomington and Dr. Mossburgh stared at Dr. Kingsly as if they’d never seen him before. “You debase the field of archeology, Bradford,” the bear said, shaking his head.

Greg looked around him in confusion. “What are they all doing? And why aren’t you taking her into custody?” he demanded of the officers.

Kayngi smiled at the fox. “I did not steal the Flute of Kikipelli. Dr. Bloomington and Dr. Mossburgh here just confirmed that this is a piece of plaster, something the indigenous folk did not have! So I am no thief.”

Greg stared at her in disbelief then whirled to face Dr. Kingsly. The lion was slumped in defeat. “You fool! We were so close!”

“Shut up,” Bradford grumbled.

“Ever hear of fraud, gentlemen?” Kayngi asked the police officers.

The officers looked at each other then to the fox and lion. “We’re a little confused,” one said.

“It’s so simple,” a reporter said. “And what a story! Famous archeologist fakes a find to open a hotel. Plot revealed by a graduate student attending the seminar!”

Nodding, the officers stood behind Bradford and Greg. “Sirs, I think you should come with us.”

Greg whirled to point at Kayngi. "I'll get you for something! Breaking and entering! When you took that piece of crap, you broke into the suite!"

She laughed at him. "You can't even do that. You invited me in! And the cover was unlocked, in the middle of the room."

One officer eyed her. "That's walking a very thin line, ma'am."

She nodded meekly. "Yes, sir. I know. But I had to prove this plot."

The other officer winked at her. "Good job."

Dr. Kingsly walked ahead of the police officers with his dignity intact, head held high. He paused when he passed by Kayngi. Slowly, his broad face broke out in a grin. "Very nicely done, my dear. Very nicely done. I am most impressed. I really underestimated you. To be honest, I'm pleased to have been found out by you."

"Let's go, sir," the first officer said.

The lion shook his head. "Give me a moment." He turned back to Kayngi. "Please let me give you some advice. I can see you'll do well in the field. But ... don't do like I did. Don't let it get to your head. Then it starts to become all about you, rather than the find. I thought I was infallible. And look at me. Caught ... by a graduate student." He shook his head with a wry smile. "I really believed I could get away with the hotel scheme."

"Dr. Kingsly?" she asked hesitantly.

"I've asked you many times, my dear. Please call me Bradford."

She smiled sadly. "Bradford then. Why did you want to put up a hotel?"

He shrugged. "I am getting on in years. Before I went into the archeology field, I always wanted to run my own hotel. This would have been my dream place."

The police officer tugged on his arm, impatient to go. Bradford smiled once more at the young feline. He took off his fedora and plopped it on her head. "A little something to remember me by. I'll do my best to keep tabs on you. I must admit, this was quite a nice little adventure, Kayngi." He nodded to the officers and allowed himself to be led away, Greg following behind mutely.

The reporters all turned to her. "Can we get the full story from you?"

She slowly nodded. "I can tell you all I know."

“What did he call you? Adventure Kayngi?” the ferret asked as he scribbled on his note pad.

She shook her head. “No, I’m just Kayngi Tunishi.”

“Adventure Kay, I like it! Catchy,” another reporter said as he continued writing. The other reporters all agreed.

“Suits you, if you don’t mind me saying so,” the ferret said with a grin. “I’d keep the hat. Really good look for the pictures.”

With an exasperated frown Kayngi looked around the room but all of the reporters were busy writing. She caught sight of her reflection in a mirror. The hat actually did look pretty good on her. She ran her thumb along the brim of the fedora with a grin. Adventure Kayngi was she? Hmm ... well, it DID suit her. She could live with it. For now.