

Alexandra: Raging sand
Tales of the Stormthrower

Before the mirror she was fitting the half dress. All white, covering all of her body. Used some air to test the fit, in the end opting for a slightly smaller size. Again, tested that one, and agreed with the lady, it fitted like it was made for her. Tried the straps on her ankles and wrists, hood and mask, waiting for the fitting room to get back to its quiet self, before opening the door and checking out.

The urgent message had mentioned food and drinks would be provided for, so she just hailed one of the float cars on the adjacent square, and let it whisk her off to the edge of town. Underneath the desert gate, she paid the driver, and sat down, enjoying the last of the shade, she would be granted for a long while. Opened an eye, when a welcome was growled at her. Recognized the four sand cats, lay down again and continued the conversation, in pictures, their language.

The weather forecast was worrisome. The report told her, they were going deep into the desert. Possibly closing onto the great sand mountains protecting the sea. The cats had scoured the neighboring desert grounds for the lost group of explorers. Had dug out all known hiding pits, filled by the raging storm running from the sea down and over the cities of both sand cats and elves. Never found any trace them.

The authorities had therefore called on any mage in the vicinity to join the search party. A red picture warned her just in time to stand up and greet the approaching city mages. Not really caring for half the group, but waited, holding her tongue. Was singled out by the magistrate, arriving next, thanking her for helping to find his daughter, who joined a snake hunting party, looking for rare poisons. She bowed gracefully, always glad to accept this kind of job, finding all life precious, and worth saving.

The magistrate had brought a abundance of horses, and encouraged everyone to choose one. Still not sure about the setup of the group, she chose one of the young horses, and used the hustle to get close to one of the older mages present. A raised eyebrow, enough to make him grin. Unnoticeable shaking his head. The gesture with his hand, meaning she had to wait, and they all said their goodbyes to the magistrate, promising to leave no stone unturned.

Riding into the dust, the sand cats were walking point, heading directly into the heart of the dust cloud. Being the shortest route to any unsearched sand. When dust started to fill all creases, still present in her new suite, she emptied her hood, blew the remaining sand out of it, and pulled it far over her head. The experienced mages followed her example not much later. Still the wind picked up, and just when she started thinking she needed the mask too, the remaining mages started complaining, they needed to go and seek shelter. The sand stacking high on their breast.

One of the older mages, high in rank, now was fat up with the charade, demanding they needed to go through the storm now, if they wanted any chance in finding the exploration team. Thought any who were scared, better head back to the city, than hold up the search. She stepped away from the discussion, knowing the fame it would give, to bring back the magistrates daughter. This however was not for the faint hearted. Not even for the inexperienced. Started to remove anything weighing down on her horse, feeding it all she could not carry, and watched it dig itself in, to ride out the storm as learned when she was still a tiny foal.

The discussion had stopped, watching her. She shrugged her shoulders, thought it did not have the skills to keep up with their trackers, following the storm. When no one reacted on the remark, if she could keep up walking. Something finally dawned on the speaker, making his eyes widen, and decide he'd better watch over the safe return of the horses.

All knowing what was to happen took what they could carry, and handed their horse over to someone staying behind. She linked up with one of the sand cats, and began weaving a screen,

continuing to build on it as the wind and dust began to play with it gaining speed, until her shadow down below told her she was flying fast enough. Scanning the areas she drifted over, she found lots of dug in wildlife. No exploration group however, and feeling the sand rise, she cut the screen, and rode the wind down to meet up with the sand cat below. Gave a loose description of what she had seen, then followed him out of the dust cloud. The raging sand thinned out, and soon she could remove her hood, focusing on the sand to use some air to glide over the loose sand giving her friend an easier time as he now would not have to touch the hot sand as long.

Small specks came closer as they neared the meeting point. A negative picture from all, meaning they had to take to the air. She started the updraft, finding some rocks, and nodded to the cats, as it got the right angle. Jumping into the wind, they stretched out, and rode it like a bird, finding the raging winds high up circling wider to make room for the next. With all but one mage up in the sky, the last took over the updraft, adding to it, as she heated up the air, just above the rocks. Counting down when the heat started to crack some boulders. Jumping both as one, interweaving a screen to shoot them up in the air. Cutting it when the updraft dissipated. Gliding on her own screen, she searched for natural rising wind jumping now and again to gain height faster, until her screen coughed the lower reaches of the high up torrent.

Riding the winds they crossed the dessert, keeping in communication distance, but only just. Scanning all down below until one of the cats dived down, circling over an area with sand dunes linked together. She followed suite, only weaving the breaking screen very close to the ground. Cut her screen, chasing over the sand, to catch the young mage. Still highly rated, but just running out of talent and luck.

The other mages had pinpointed a dig site, and twisters scoured the dunes even before they had landed, until the cats jumped in. Digging out a storm shelter, containing two of the members of the expedition. Both too sick to move. Indicating the direction the other two had gone, to get help. Pictures of the sea danced through her head. She nodded, nominated the young mage to stay, and take care of the sick expedition members, gladly accepted. Then went on the slow, and tiresome route, gliding through the sand, against the winds. Laboring on even after the darkness made them trust on each other's senses. Keeping their straight, dead on track for the mountain dunes.

Suddenly an indicator. She dug in deep changing her trajectory instantly towards the caller. Little lumps of coal from the now close by salt trees, indicating a recent fire. Soon more were found, leading them up into the mountain dunes.

Every time they managed to get up to a higher level, she scanned for life signs, jumping to the next level, she hurled herself back down the sandy slopes again, revealing a lone standing stone column. Immediately recognized by the cats as a refuge signal. Together they dug at the sandpit, until the daughter of the magistrate pushed her head through the sand, thanking them so much for finding her, and her sick guide.