



ULTIMATE EDITION

Written by Iron-K and FyreFennec

Dedicated to Susi

**Without you, the Zoniverse would not exist.
The entire world is different because you're alive.**



PROLOGUE

Quinne opened her eyes and blinked in the unusual light. The bed smelled different from usual, and it took her a few moments to get her head together and remember she wasn't in her dorm room back in Ocean City. She was in a hotel room, and that meant...

"Yes! Industrial Zone today!" she squealed, punching her hands in the air as she sat up suddenly. A moment later, tiredness caught up with the fennec's initial excitement and she yawned, stretching her aching muscles to the point where her pink fur rippled.

She sank back into the bed and glanced over at the other side, whimpering when she saw it was empty. She wanted to go in search of Delta, but the hotel room's queen-size bed was far too comfortable and she wanted to get as much of a lie-in as possible before she had to leave. She lay back and tried to get back to sleep again, with zero success.

As it happened, she only had to wait a few minutes before her ears pricked up as she heard the electronic buzz of the door unlocking, and her tail unfurled as she sat up in bed again. She resisted the urge to wag it, and instead just lazily flicked it back and forth as Delta walked in carrying a tray. It looked exciting enough for Quinne's ears to immediately prick up and she flipped herself over, crouching at the foot of the bed.

"Oh hey, I wondered if you'd be up," said the snow leopardess. She was dressed casually, her white fur and rich blonde hair brushed neatly. But she could have said anything for all Quinne cared. There was only one thing on the fox girl's mind.

"Mwee! I'm going to be on Industrial Zone today!" she squeaked. She smiled brightly at Delta as she set the tray down and sat on the edge of the bed. The fox girl scrambled to

rearrange herself again – it was about the fifth time she'd changed position since she woke up, and the snow leopardess gently rested a hand on her head to calm her down.

"You looked so peaceful sleeping, so I went to get you breakfast in bed. It's all unhealthy so you should love it," said Delta.

"Thank you!" Quinne yipped and her ears curled backwards appreciatively. She grabbed a slice of toast and started chomping on it.

"Mfffh," she started to say, but Delta reached out and clamped her muzzle shut.

"Chew. Swallow. Speak," she said. Quinne nodded and ate in silence for a minute.

"What time do we need to leave?" she said eventually.

"You've got a few minutes before the cab arrives," said Delta.

"Pfft. Easy," winked Quinne. She idly wondered how much she could push her this morning.

"Just don't get indigestion," warned Delta. "Of course, if you'd gone to bed earlier . . ."

"I couldn't sleep!" Quinne protested. "How could I when I'm going to be on TV today. Or be on TV later but going to be on TV . . . you know what I mean!"

"Whatever," said Delta, rolling her eyes.

The bedside table vibrated and Quinne yelped, her ears fully pricked. She grinned at the name on the phone and reached for it.

"You don't have time to answ. . ." Delta began.

"Zaaaack," Quinne squealed into the handset. "Guess what I'm doing today!"

"Hey Quinne," said Zack at the other end of the phone. "Me and the guys just wanted to wish you good luck before you left." There was a pause and then a loud shout of "Hi Quinne!" from the other Fyrefox members and a lone female voice. Quinne guessed it was Reiko – after all, it was the tanuki who had pushed for her to apply in the first place.

"I can't believe you're going on Industrial Zone," said Zack when he had control of the phone again. "You're going to get totally slimed, you know that."

Quinne's stomach flipped as she started to think about it. "Who knows, I might be the only one to go on the show and never get gunged," she said with a slight whimper.

"Ha, whatever, girl – you just keep believing that," said Zack. Quinne chewed on her lip. If she was already this excited about it now, how would she feel on the show?

"Rei says she's very jealous of you for getting to go on instead of her," the arctic fox continued. Quinne grinned. The tanuki had applied to go on IZ every year that the show was on, although in truth Quinne always thought that Rei would hate the idea of not being able to take part in every single game. Rei had introduced her to the show shortly after arriving at college and now the two made sure to watch even the repeats, much to Delta's bewilderment.

"Is that Zack? Can I have a word?" asked Delta.

"Zaaack, your sis wants to talk to you." She threw the phone to Delta, who put it to her face with one hand while dragging Quinne out of bed and towards the bathroom with the other.

"Come on. You need to shower," said Delta. "Not you," she said to the phone.

"Whhhhy?" whined Quinne. "It's not like I'm going to stay clean for long today." Her voice became muffled as Delta pulled her top over her head and she squeaked as her shorts were pulled down. She flailed as she struggled with her top and fell face first onto the carpet.

"Urgh, don't remind me," said the snow leopardess as she helped Quinne get her t-shirt off. Delta threw the fox girl's nightclothes out of reach, pushed her into the shower, switched it on and shut the door to the bathroom.

Quinne squealed as cold water ran over her fur. She thought how much like a gunge tank the shower cubicle looked, and imagined what it would feel like if it were slime

rather than water that was flowing all over her body. She shook her head to get rid of the image. Now was a bad time to think about that. When she'd had about as much cold water as she could take, she padded out and towelled herself down before shuffling out of the bathroom.

Delta had finished chatting to Zack, and Quinne suspected that she had grabbed the phone from her simply to stop her from wasting time. Cheekily she tapped a finger against her muzzle as if deep now in thought.

"Now, what should I wear? I should think long and hard about this . . . mmfg!" she said as a ball of clothes hit her in the face. She held her arms out so they fell into them, and blinked down at what Delta had thrown her.

"I chose for you. Hurry up." Delta tapped her foot against the carpet as Quinne tugged on the jeans and tank top. There was a matching denim jacket, but after glancing down at the t-shirt she tied it around her waist rather than putting it on. She grinned, proudly displaying the leaf on her t-shirt as Delta planted a hand on her face.

"So much for first impressions. Never mind, it's too late now. Grab your shoes and let's go before the cab leaves without us."

Quinne smiled as she looked around for her tall platform heeled buckled boots. She distinctly remembered kicking them off her feet last night but Delta had clearly tidied them up somewhere. She huffed. Life was so less interesting when there wasn't a risk of falling over every few seconds.

"I left your sneakers out. I figured you could just wear... never mind," said Delta as the fennec found her boots and sat down on the bed to tug them on. She could feel Delta's eyes on the back of her head impatiently as she tucked her jeans into her boots, slowly and methodically buckling them up to her knees. When she finished she stood up, now just a few inches shy of Delta. The snow leopardess dropped a cap on her head and Quinne wriggled her ears through the gigantic holes.

"OK! Ready!" she beamed.

"Yes, finally! Leave! Now!" Delta shooed her out of their hotel room and rushed her downstairs.

The hotel clerk glanced up and frowned at the sight of a pink fuzzball being dragged through the lobby while violating half the hotel's dress codes, but the two of them were moving too fast for him to have a chance to complain. Excitement took hold of Quinne and she started running herself, ending up level of Delta as the two of them reached the revolving doors and ahead of her as she hopped down the stairs to a waiting car.

She turned and stuck her tongue out at Delta. The snow leopardess was more of a long-distance runner than a sprinter, and rolled her eyes at Quinne's ability to run in platform heels - a skill the fennec had picked up jumping about a stage holding a heavy guitar and mic. The two of them got in the cab and Quinne shuffled a bit to make herself comfortable.

"Um... Industrial Zone please!" she said, suddenly feeling sheepish. The driver looked at her blankly as Delta sighed.

"Pine Hill Studios, please," said the snow leopardess. She passed a neatly folded piece of paper to the driver, pinned Quinne to the seat and forced her seatbelt on her. Quinne folded her arms, planted a foot on the driver's seat and pretended to sulk as they drove to the studios. Delta ignored her, and only acknowledged her when the fennec threw her a grin to reassure her that she wasn't really mad.

In fact, Quinne was extremely grateful that at least one of them had a good sense of time and direction that more than made up for her haphazard approach to life. That didn't stop her wishing that Delta would occasionally just loosen up, though. It was the reason she had stuck Delta's name on the IZ application form when it asked her who she would most like to see gunged.

Her wandering mind was brought back to Industrial Zone as the car drove up to a large building Quinne assumed was the studios. She undid her seatbelt and was about to barrel out

of the cab when Delta rested a hand on her bare arm. Quinne turned to see a knowing smile on Delta's face.

"Good luck," said the snow leopardess. Quinne smiled. At least Delta understood why she was going on the show, she thought, as she got out of the cab and glanced back over her shoulder.

"And try not to get slimed!" the leopardess cheekily added.

Quinne sighed. Or maybe not. She stuck her tongue out again, turned on her heel and walked into the studio, waving her hand over her head.

The studio reception area caught Quinne off guard a little bit. She'd half expected it to be the same grimy setting of the Industrial Zone itself, but the atrium looked so modern that the bright IZ logo looked very out of place by comparison. Is this really where they filmed Industrial Zone?

She clomped up to the reception desk, very aware that her boots clunked loudly on the shiny floor with each step and she began to wonder if she should have taken Delta's advice. She reached the desk and glanced around for some sort of bell to ring, then cleared her throat to get the receptionist's attention. The receptionist, a black-furred male squirrel, looked up and peered over the desk – he raised in eyebrow at her outfit, although he didn't say anything. Quinne suddenly felt very self-conscious.

Oh well – at least she didn't come wearing a PVC catsuit.

"Hi! I'm Quinne," she said, overemphasizing her Northern accent and trying to put on an innocent smile. That just made it worse, but the receptionist did suddenly realize he was staring at her and snapped his head up to look at her face.

"Oh – hi! Quinne, was it?" he said, glancing back down at a list on his desk for a moment. "Why don't you take a seat, and someone will pick you up shortly."

He picked up the phone and looked away from her, even more embarrassed than her. Quinne shuffled over to a row of sofas but was too excited to sit down. She started shuffling from side to side as she looked at a row of photos on the wall.

Most of them showed shots of the Industrial Zone set, and there were a few that had either been taken during filming or set up to look like they were.

A few of the photos even showed teams as they were getting gunged. Quinne's eye was particularly caught by one of a squirrel boy and what could have been a cat girl – it was hard to tell, as they were stuck in one of the show's many gunge tanks and the photo had been taken as they were getting drenched in slime. The squirrel had been covered in thick, gloopy green stuff and was now leaning out, pulling the feline under the flow and obscuring her from view. They looked like they were having so much fun. Quinne shivered as she thought about it happening to her and her stomach twisted in knots.

"Ah! You could only be Quinne," a voice behind her made her jump. The fennec turned around and squeaked when she saw a tall red wolf standing in front of her – the same one that she had seen leading so many teams around the Industrial Zone games on television.

"You know, the health and safety people nearly vetoed your application cause your photo alone would set off a metal detector," he joked.

Quinne laughed nervously, claspings the back of her head with one hand as her ears twitched back and forth. "You should see how long it takes me to get ready in the morning," she said, and began to get over her shock as Alex grinned at her.

"Yes . . . thinking about it, maybe we should give you a head start in the changing room," he said. He waved for her to follow him into a roomy elevator. "Going down!" he said, pressing the lowest button. The fennec's ears began to twitch as the elevator started moving.

"Am I the last to arrive?" she asked as the elevator reached its destination. The door opened to a short corridor and Quinne yipped, standing in place as she was faced with a huge door with the IZ logo on it. In contrast to everything she'd seen so far, it was much more in line with what she imagined the Industrial Zone to be like.

Alex grinned at her, gently pushing the fennec out of the elevator before the doors shut again. He let her stand there for a moment, clutching her hands together in front of the imposing door. "Nah, you're fine. Isla and Becky are already here. Looks like we've got three girls and a boy today... I'm sure you're all going to get on great."

He led her through the door and into a small tiled room, and Quinne got her first glance of her teammates. One was a voluptuous lizardess with dark blue skin, and the other was a canine girl with neatly cut chin length hair and golden fur. She waved at them, then felt a bit foolish given how small the room was. She put her hand down.

"Hi! I'm Quinne," she said. She gave them a bright, if slightly embarrassed smile and the other two giggled.

"Hi Quinne! I'm Isla and this is Becky," said the lizard girl, jabbing a finger at the canine. The two were also dressed casually and Isla was pacing up and down looking eager to throw herself into the show.

"Right! You're safely here, I'm going to go back to see if Nyte's arrived," said Alex. "Hopefully he hasn't taken a wrong turn and ended up in the actual Industrial Zone."

He grinned and left the three to talk amongst themselves for a while. Isla immediately picked up on Quinne's accent and the two of them chatted about their home towns in Anglia. Quinne was grateful that her accent had softened slightly over the last year in Ocean City and her worries about not being understood were completely unfounded. After a few minutes the door opened again and a feline with gray and black fur popped his head round the door.

"Hey! Oh... sorry I'm late," he said, shuffling his feet on the floor. As he walked forward Alex came through the door behind him and slapped a hand on his shoulder.

"Yep, this is Nyte. We found him in the end."

Isla looked like she was going to jump up and down and Quinne could entirely understand why. Now that the four of

them were here the show could begin. The fox girl followed Isla and Becky in introducing herself to the feline, and Alex gave the group a minute or so together before pointing them in the direction of the changing rooms.

"All right, you guys had better go and get changed while we do a few last-minute checks here," said the wolf.

The three girls piled into the women's changing rooms and Quinne sat down to concentrate on her boot buckles, now regretting the time she'd spent getting them on. Although she rushed around everywhere, she had never gotten the hang of changing quickly, which was part of the reason why Delta was always complaining that she'd fallen into bed after a night out fully dressed.

Eventually she managed to unbuckle her boots enough to just skip the rest and pull them off. She squeaked a bit as she put her feet on the cold floor of the changing room. She heard a surprised laugh behind her and turned to find herself looking at Becky's shoulder. The canine and Isla were now looking down at her, suddenly realizing how much height her platform heels had added to her.

"Aw, you're so cute!" Isla grinned, putting an arm around her. Quinne laughed nervously and idly scratched her huge ears as the three of them started looking at the choice of clothing that had been laid out for them. Quinne frowned as she found herself faced with various styles of swimwear. While fun, they weren't her style and it wasn't what she was after.

"I guess everyone wears swimsuits or bikinis these days don't they," she swallowed. She'd meant to say it to herself, but the others were more than close enough to hear her.

"It's pretty common," said Isla with a broad grin as she picked out what looked to Quinne like black string. Becky selected a slightly more visible swimsuit and the two of them retreated to the benches to start changing clothes. Meanwhile, Quinne kept looking through the rack as she looked for something a bit different.

"Looking for something in particular?" asked Isla, making Quinne yelp. She had already changed and was now pressed up against her back, almost toppling the fennec forward.

"I remember when I started watching this show and everyone wore t-shirts and shorts," said Quinne, trying not to look over at them. "I thought I might wear something like that instead."

The lizard girl raised an eyebrow. "Aww, you want to wear a t-shirt? Trust me, you're not going to look bad next to us if you wear a swimsuit." Isla ruffled her hair reassuringly.

"It's not that," sighed Quinne. She swallowed and started tracing on the ground with her foot. "I used to watch shows like this all the time, but I never really got around to going on any of them."

"Shows like this? You mean..." Isla interrupted.

"Gunge shows," said Quinne, quietly and with an involuntary shiver. "They always used to make me so confused. I couldn't understand why anyone would want to go on when they were at risk of getting messy, even though I always wanted to go on them myself. Did you ever see Rodent's Revenge that was on a couple of years ago? With college teams competing against one another in that huge arena?"

Isla nodded, and Quinne smiled again at the confirmation.

My favorite part was when one of the rodent team got trapped in the empty tanks," she giggled. "You always had a chance to escape from the cats' team if you did but I don't think anyone ever managed it. You just got stuck there while they slowly walked up to you and activated it. I always wanted to go on that show but they cancelled it after one year so I never got the chance to apply," she sighed, trying to be as casual as she could about it. She felt herself blushing slightly and she wanted to clamp her hands on her ears to stop them from twitching nervously. "Anyway, contestants wore t-shirts and shorts there. I guess I just think of it as the natural uniform of a show like this."

Isla rested a hand on her shoulder reassuringly as Becky poked her muzzle into the conversation. Quinne jumped. She hadn't realized the puppy girl could hear them.

"Oh, don't worry, I understand! I think we get a chance to change half way through, so you can change your mind before we get too far into the game," Becky said. She had also changed and was now helping Quinne search for something in her size.

"Just as long as you're not hiding away!" said Isla.

"Ooh! Here we go!" said Becky. She had pulled out exactly what Quinne was after, a matching t-shirt and shorts with the IZ logo stamped on it in bright green. Quinne thanked her, shrugged off her jeans and tank top without too much trouble and tugged on the t-shirt and shorts. They were a snug fit and now that she was wearing them she felt a bit silly next to Becky and Isla. Still, like Becky had said, she could always change a bit later. No matter how much fur she showed, the lizard girl was going to have her beat.

"So . . . how do they feel?" said Becky. The canine poked at her clothes as Quinne adjusted her clothes to get rid of some of the creases.

"Comfy!" Quinne replied.

"Try saying that when they're covered with gunge," said Isla. The lizardess was now wearing a broad grin on her face, contrasting with a shiver from the puppy girl behind her.

The three of them returned to the hall and Quinne found herself sandwiched between Isla and Becky as they bunched up on the bench together while they waited for Nyte to reappear.

"So... what do you think of Nyte?" Becky said in a half-whisper.

"He's adorable!" said Quinne, stifling a laugh. "He seems just a little bit nervous though."

"Easy way to fix that," said Isla. "We should make him the team leader! Bit hard for him to shy away then - plus, we'll get to lock him in the tank at the end of the show," she smiled.

Quinne tapped a nail against her chin as she thought about the advantages of team leader. On the one hand, she didn't

want to have to decide who got gunged, she would be terrible at remembering who had been in games and she would have had to struggle against the urge to nominate herself every time. On the other, the team leader was usually singled out for a little bit extra. Most importantly they got to go in the giant tank in the final game, although they did miss the final game itself and Quinne was sure at some point she'd be stuck in a gunge tank anyway. Her butterflies returned as she thought about it.

"It's fine with me," she shrugged eventually. "What do you think Nyte would say to that, though?"

"I don't think we're going to give him much of a choice," smiled Isla.

"Ha, think he'll gunge us in revenge?" Quinne grinned. Becky shivered and Isla smiled.

Quinne sat back as they waited for Nyte to reappear. Thoughts were flying around in her head and the more they talked about it the more real it was getting in her mind. She was going to get gunged! There was no escaping it now. She was already wondering about how she'd describe it to Delta later. Oh well, that wasn't important now. She took a deep breath and waited to be told what to do next.

She knew, though, that whatever happened to her, it was going to happen very soon...



ROUND ONE

Nyte walked up to the door that led out of the changing room, his hands around his back to adjust his tail through the back opening of the swim shorts he had just put on. As he wriggled it through, he tapped one foot against the tiled floor, looking at the blank door in front of him and listening to the sound of a couple of voices chattering from behind it. Glancing down at his front as he brought his hands around to smooth down his gray-black fur, he became aware of how little he was wearing, and looked back over his shoulder, wondering whether he should put on one of the provided T-shirts as well. Eventually, he decided against it, and bounced on his heels once as he took a deep breath - forcing himself to step forward, he put his hand out and pushed the door open.

The girls were all back from getting changed already, sitting side by side on the bench on the opposite wall of the tiled room, and he caught Becky's eye as she looked up at the sound of the door opening. His eyes dropped down from her face for just a second despite his best efforts - the black IZ swim costume that she was wearing didn't leave much to the imagination, with much more of her light golden fur visible than she'd had before in her normal clothes. Knowing that any reaction would be embarrassingly obvious, he quickly looked to the floor and darted over to the other bench, smiling a little awkwardly as he heard a wolf-whistle from Quinne.

"Our feline's back," the muscular red wolf beside him said as Nyte sat down, and he clapped his hand on his shoulder. Nyte turned his head to look into the eyes of Alex, the show's presenter. "Listen, the girls had a bit of a discussion while we were waiting, about who they most wanted to see risk the big

tank at the end of the show - so they're ganging up on you and voting for you as team leader. How's that sound?"

Nyte raised his eyebrows as an image flashed into his head of the huge cylindrical gunge machine that the team leader was put into during the final game. "Yeah... sure, that's fine," he said hesitantly, swallowing and trying to put a confident face on, but already heard a couple of giggles from the other bench as he did so.

"Excellent - they were very eager to see the effect gunge had on that hair of yours..." Nyte nodded instinctively, then smiled as he realized the movement bobbed his spiny red and white hair a little. Alex looked towards the other bench, where giggles were coming up again. "But that also means that he's deciding how you three get slimed throughout the show, so... don't get cocky yet!"

The red wolf patted him on the back, then reached into his pocket for something, and Nyte forced his eyes up to look across at the opposite bench. He had been the last to arrive at the studio and had been introduced to his team mates a few minutes before going to get changed. The smaller pink-tinged fennec called Quinne had dressed a little more modestly than the other two girls and was wearing an IZ T-shirt and shorts. He swallowed nervously as his eyes went to Isla and the tiny swimwear the voluptuous lizardess had opted for, showing most of her smooth deep blue skin - Nyte stifled a whimper as she idly played with the string-like strap at the front of her bikini top, watching Alex pull a folded piece of paper out of his pocket and shake it out in front of him.

"Here's the Industrial Zone, everyone..." he said as he slapped the large unfolded paper on to the table between the benches, leaning over it to smooth it with both hands. Nyte stretched forward to see a wireframe map of the set like he'd seen on the show's between-round segments, and he glanced at the set of double doors that led into the main studio as he saw the changing room they were in at the bottom of the sheet of paper. "You've all seen the show before, haven't you?"

"Yeah..." Quinne was first to answer with an anxious smile.

"Good... I keep on hoping someone'll say 'no' then, so I can watch their face as I explain what happens!"

Nyte snickered a little as the red wolf leaned over the map. "So, you'll know basically what we'll be doing - the set's going to be a little different from the one from the last series we showed, but the idea's the same. We've got sixteen games set up in there, four in each of the four areas we go through. I'll be guiding you around between them, while Nyte here decides who takes the risk for each one..."

"So it's all really built just like that?" Isla spoke up, coming forward to wave her hand over the map. "I thought it was all, you know... cut together for TV."

Alex shook his head. "No, we play it pretty much like you see when the show goes out - you might see a couple of cameras following us around or up on the walls here and there, but you'll forget that they're there before too long. We try not to break the flow of it at all - unless I make a mistake, of course," he smiled. "When we're in each game room, I'll explain the rules before we start - just remember that you can stop me any time if you need me to explain something again or you're not feeling safe, even if I've said that there's a timer running or that something can't be turned off. We like to play things up a bit during the show, but you're never going to be in real danger!"

He looked around to make sure they all understood, before a smile spread across his face. "Speaking of the games... how are you all feeling about getting gunged?" he asked, his face breaking into a grin as he noticed a little shudder from Becky.

Quinne reached up to run her fingers along her tousled pink hair. "Gunged? And here I am with my hair done specially..." she joked, an embarrassed smile spreading across her face.

Isla smiled over at the fox girl, then turned to face Alex. "I'm looking forward to it," she grinned back, and Nyte glanced down at her swimwear again, swallowing as he imagined her dripping with slime. She looked at the girls on the bench next

to her as they both nodded slightly more hesitantly, with Becky bringing her hands up to comb through her dark brown puff of hair.

"Oh, some mixed reactions there," Alex laughed, and turned to face Nyte. "How about you?"

"Oh, I..." Nyte jumped a little as he was taken out of his thoughts. "Yeah, I'm... I'm fine with it," he stumbled, glancing over as Isla leaned over to whisper something into the fennec girl's ear.

Alex nodded. "You can show them how it's done - I'm sure that they're going to want to see you getting some of it yourself very soon," he said as he put his hands out towards the girls. Nyte shrank back a little but tried to keep his smile frozen as Isla whooped and clapped her hands together, leading on the others in a cheer.

"What else is there to tell you..." Alex drummed his fingers on the map in front of him, then looked to the floor. "Oh yes - the little studs you've probably felt on the tiles under our feet," he continued, kicking at them a little with one foot, "give us some grip on the floors, 'cause you'll quickly discover that gunge is slippery stuff. You might find them a little uncomfortable to walk on at first, but with all the running about we do, the last thing we want is someone falling - stay on those and you'll be fine."

He paused for a moment, and then looked up at the girls' bench, moving his stare from right to left then over at Nyte and back. "Well, our crew's ready for you..." he said, "...what do you say we get in there and have some fun?"

Nyte felt his heart jump a little again at the mention of them finally starting but looked down to disguise his expression as he got to his feet. "Yeah, let's do it," he said as he straightened, doing his best to sound confident. Opposite him, Isla sprang up from the bench and looked Alex in the eye before he turned to the door, with Quinne and Becky exchanging nervous grins as they got up as well. Nyte hung back as the muscular wolf pushed the double doors at the end

of the changing room open, letting the girls follow him first before swallowing his nerves and striding over towards it.

He put his arm out to take the door as the fennec girl held it open for him, still not quite able to believe that he was heading into the Industrial Zone set. As he dragged his fingertips off the door, he turned to look around the dimly lit space, rubbing his eyes to try to get rid of the glow from the much brighter changing room. Immediately he recognized the view that the show always started on - a large circular door on the back wall that was meant to lead to the final game, and a rickety-looking elevator covered by a metal grille to the side. He shifted his eyes to Alex as he moved away towards the back corner of the room, his red tail swinging behind him.

"Wow, it looks just like it does on TV..." One of the girls' voices came up from behind him, and he nodded in agreement as he began to jog to keep up with Alex. The wolf stopped next to the control panel for the cargo elevator and slid the metal grille across it aside.

"Okay, we start off with the four of you coming down on this thing - we're going to put you up there before we turn the cameras on, then I'll let you down and... we just play it how it goes from then on," he smiled.

"How long are we kept up there?" Isla asked, stepping past Quinne to get to the front.

"It's just a couple of minutes while I do the introductions - you'll be able to see me on the screen up there," he pointed up, and the four of them turned their heads to see a screen on the wall a few feet above them in the dark space the platform was going to take them into. "That OK with you?"

"It's fine," the lizard girl shook her head, bouncing on her feet anxiously as she looked up, stepping on to the platform after the others. "Come on, let's do it!"

"Okay, good luck, everyone!" Alex stepped back and drew the metal grille across them, and Nyte looked down as the platform gave a jolt as it began moving slowly upwards.

"You okay?" He turned around to hear Becky's voice as she put a hand on the lizardette's shoulder.

"Yeah, yeah..." She swallowed, still not able to keep still, and turned her head to look around at the four walls as the entrance disappeared below the surface of the platform. The screen at the back blinked to life as the platform stopped, and the four of them looked up at it as Alex began his piece to camera for the start of the show.

Nyte grinned as he looked at the on-screen elevator door in behind Alex, then glanced around as he realized the girls were looking at him. "It's... just like watching it at home, isn't it?" he said.

"Yeah, I can't believe it's us who are going to be coming out of there..." Becky added as Alex pointed over his shoulder towards the lift that they were about to emerge from. Nyte laughed a little as the screen overhead flickered into life, showing a polygonal face, beginning a scripted argument between Alex and the face of the base's computer.

"Hey, he's different from before..." Quinne pointed at the yellow face as it spoke.

"Yeah, they said that they were going to change him after the last series," Isla nodded during a pause in their conversation. "Hah, there's you, Becky..." she added as Alex moved on to introducing the team, with two photos of the canine from the front and side being shown on the screen. The puppy girl blushed a little at the sight of herself and looked relieved when her pictures were replaced with Nyte's. He avoided the stare of his own face from the photos, looking around at the girls as Alex introduced him.

"Nyte's the only boy on our team today, and he's also been 'volunteered' as the team leader. In his spare time he's something of a musician, and he's already been featured at a few club nights... personally I'm looking forward to seeing if that hair survives the Industrial Zone!" Nyte smiled a little at

the mention of it again, before the screen changed to the profile of the blue lizardess beside him.

"Next, we have Isla - she's from Anglia and she's in her second year of studying mechanical engineering. But I think the best part of her profile was down here, where she said she really wants to get gunged... I think we're going to give her more than she bargained for!"

Nyte looked sideways at the lizardess as the other two girls turned around.

"C'mon... you do as well, don't you?" She shrugged, but didn't disguise an uncomfortable grin as she looked at the floor to avoid their gaze, hugging her arms across her bare tummy.

"That's why I'm here," Quinne answered, clapping a hand on to the lizard girl's shoulder.

Nyte couldn't help but shudder again, and looked back up at the screen to distract himself as Quinne's photos appeared behind Alex.

"And finally, we have Quintessa, or Quinne - she's the youngest of our team, but she's definitely no less confident than the others - she has a whole list of hobbies, including cosplaying, motorbiking and being a guitarist and lead singer of local metal band Fyrefox..."

"Wow, really?" Nyte asked, looking over at the small pink fennec next to him.

"Yep!" she beamed. "Why, are you surprised?"

Nyte moved back a little, batting in front of him as she moved to poke him in the side. "Well... kind of. A little..." he smiled.

"Didn't the piercings clue you in?" she continued, grinning as she pointed to the row of holes in her left ear. Nyte remembered that she'd had a couple of bar piercings in her ear before she'd gone to get changed, and he was about to open his mouth again when the platform jolted under all four of them, taking them back down to ground level.

Curling his toes underneath his feet, Nyte turned and leaned down to look out of the lift as the noise over the speakers blended with Alex's voice from the doorway. "And they're arriving behind me just now - come on, you four!"

The grille across the elevator slid automatically aside, and Nyte froze for a moment. As Becky and Isla passed by, he snapped out of it and broke into a dash for the few feet over to Alex, changing direction as the red wolf skipped away a little and headed towards the closed roll-up door at the opposite side of the room.

"Okay - ROB!" he called the name of the base's computer, pronouncing the letters individually. "Come on, open the door for us," he continued as the wireframe face reappeared on the screen, looking around as if just having been woken up. "I've got another four players here, and this time I think they're going to make it..."

"You're still always so optimistic..." it sneered, then vanished. There was a click, and the door beside them began to hum open.

"Just ignore him - I'm sure you'll do fine, I've got a good feeling about the four of you," Alex said, waving a hand behind him as he ducked under the rising door. Nyte blinked as the light on the other side reached eye level - the door led into a wide white corridor with large decals of the show's logo on the tiled walls.

"Come on in!" Alex clapped his hands together and skipped a couple of steps in, then whipped around. "Oh, by the way... we've got four areas of the complex to visit, but where do you want to go first?" he asked, looking at Nyte. "Ahead of us, there's the research lab... the undersea level's beneath that, and on the wings of the base we've got the storage area and the hangar," he said, pointing in each direction as he mentioned it. "Where do you want to take the team?"

"The, er, hangar," Nyte answered quickly. He was still feeling lightheaded with excitement and it was the only one of

the list he could remember, but he tried to keep his face neutral, still aware that there must be cameras watching them from somewhere.

"Good, let's take the quick way in..." Alex moved to a barely-visible hatch on the wall, and swung it open, revealing a dark corridor behind a three foot square opening. "Go on in!"

Nyte was the first to duck inside, and closed his eyes as he moved from the light to the dark. A couple of purple fluorescent tube lights were the only illumination in the space, and he looked back at the square of light as the lizardette clambered through the opening. Slowly, she straightened up, her eyes bright in the darkness as she felt in front of her for something to hold on to.

After the other two girls came through, Alex ducked inside with them, hooking his hand around the hatch to shut it behind him as Quinne and Becky shuffled backwards to give him room. "Sorry it's a little cramped..." he said as he moved through the group, putting his hands on Isla's and then Nyte's shoulder to guide him along. "And we really need to get the lights fixed down here. If you fall into anything unpleasant, just shout for me..."

He tapped his fist on the wall, making a repeated thumping noise along it as he headed away. Nyte laughed, but kept his gaze down at his feet as his eyes adjusted quickly to the gloom, only half-convinced that it had been a joke. After about ten yards, they approached a ladder at the side of the small corridor.

"I think this should take us to our destination," Alex announced, dragging the ladder out by the base so that it formed a steep set of steps up to the brightly lit frame of a trapdoor in the ceiling. "Let me just check..." Nyte squinted up as he clambered up the way, shielding his eyes from the sudden light as the hatch squeaked open.

"Ah, here we are..." the red wolf called from above as his tail and legs disappeared up through the hatch. Nyte stepped

back as Becky put her hands on the rungs of the ladder, and as she ascended he tried to lean past her, taking his eyes off her bikini-clad backside to try to look up at the room. After waiting for the other girls to go up after her, he finally took hold of the ladder and scrambled up to the floor level.

His eyes widened as he looked around the room they had emerged into - the room was made up to look like a large hangar, with a walkway circling over them about seven feet off the ground, and various metallic doors leading off from the room on both levels. Standing next to them in the middle of the room was some sort of futuristic aircraft, gleaming white and mounted on rails that stretched to a large roll-top door behind them.

A heavy clunk took him out of his thoughts, and he turned to see Alex dusting his hands after closing the hatch on the floor. "This is the hangar, team - we're on the west side of the complex, where cargo was brought in and out by these things..." He walked over to the shuttle and slapped the side of it. "We've only got the one left and it hasn't flown for ages... although we've found other uses for it..."

Nyte nodded, hearing a couple of the girls giggle from behind him. He knew what they were thinking of - he'd seen games played in the shuttle when watching the show before, and they usually ended up with at least one contestant neck-deep in gunge as it filled up around them. He twitched a little as he remembered the clip involving a shrieking and giggling skunkette and squirrel girl that he'd watched a lot in private.

As the team looked up at the capsule, Alex walked away from them, beckoning with one hand as he made his way around the shuttle. "And just behind it over here, I think we'll use this for our first game..."

Nyte tried to keep his pace down to disguise his excitement as the team padded after the host, going past the shuttle towards a pair of double doors. As they gathered around him, he put his hand on the catch and turned around.

"Now, we usually try to ease teams into the messier stuff here, but you four don't look like you need a gentle start - what do you say?" the red wolf asked as he undid the catch across the two doors. Nyte smiled awkwardly and scratched the back of his neck as he looked at the floor, as Isla clapped her hands together and the other girls joined in a half-cheer.

"Great, then come in here and I'll show you..." Alex pushed backwards to swing both the doors aside, and spun round as he strode into the room. Swallowing, Nyte watched Isla fall into place behind the host, then padded into the room after them, knowing he was about to see an IZ game up close for the first time.

He shuddered as he instantly recognized something that he'd seen practically every time he'd watched the show - in a little recess on the right hand wall of the room, a six foot high clear-sided booth was set up with thick curved pipes running from its ceiling and the bases of its sides into the walls around it. A metallic chair was fixed to the back wall, right underneath the pipe on the ceiling.

"Oh my god, it's the Mixer..." Becky gasped, cupping her hands to her mouth. Nyte looked back at the puppy girl as Quinne smiled from behind her, then over at the tank again.

"That's right," Alex confirmed, turning to face the team as they stared at the booth, and he paced back towards the nervous puppy girl. Suddenly, he spun to catch her arm. "Come here, you're going inside!"

"Wh..." Becky started as she whipped her head to the side to face him, then squeaked, stumbling as he guided her towards the tank. Holding up a pocket computer in one hand, he pressed something on it and the door slid open to the side. Nyte swallowed as he watched the bikini-clad canine squirm, looking up at the tank's ceiling as she hesitantly stretched one foot inside. She turned around to sit down as the half-height door hummed closed in front of her, biting her lip in an anxious smile as she wriggled backward on to the seat, looking

down at her dangling legs before daring to glance up at the spout on the ceiling.

"Now, Becky, I want you to know that just because you're inside there just now doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get gunged..." - The canine eeped at the sound of the word, her eyes turning up to look at the nozzle above her again, as Alex beckoned to the other three team members. "But it's going to happen to one of the four of you! Come over here and I'll show you..."

Nyte glanced back at the gunge tank again, watching the nervous canine swing her legs back and forth, as Alex dashed to the opposite side of the room. Taking his eyes off her, he followed Alex and the two other girls to a slanted table at the far end. As he beckoned them around to the far side, he looked down at it to see that the surface was divided into nine squares, each softly pulsing with a light underneath.

"You're going to take turns to rescue each other from the gunge in this game," he started as he spread both hands over the control console. "What's going to happen is that you'll be shown a combination, like this..." He pointed down, and the squares at the corners of the surface flashed in sequence anti-clockwise, a tone being played as each one lit up. "And you've got to copy that sequence," he continued, punctuating his words by pressing down on each square in the order that they had lit up, "- to open up the gunge tank and let your friend out."

He pointed over his shoulder, and Nyte leaned around to see the door of the Mixer slide open in front of the puppy girl. Uncertainly, she put her arms on the chair's sides and began to get up.

"Don't get out of there just yet, Becky," Alex said, not turning around. The canine whimpered, smiling through gritted teeth, and settled back into the seat as the door hummed back in front of her to shut her inside again. Picking her feet off the floor, she settled back into the seat, tapping her hands on its arms as her eyes drifted upwards once more.

"But if one of your team completes a sequence once we start, whoever's in there gets to come out, and it's the turn of the one at the console to step in there and hope that they'll be rescued!" He paced to the middle of the room, and Nyte glanced to his sides, watching the fennec girl run a hand nervously through her hair. "There'll be ten combinations in all, and correctly completing each one will earn you ten points - but if you don't get them all within two minutes, the Mixer's going to start up!"

He jumped back over to stand beside the tank. "And to give you an idea of what happens then, if I can just demonstrate with you, Becky..." he said as he stooped down. Nyte couldn't help laughing a little as the puppy girl squeaked, her hands going up to clasp the back of her neck as she looked down at where Alex was pointing.

"When time runs out, a load of foam's going to be pumped into the tank through these pipes," he said as he gestured towards the nozzles on either side. Becky pressed her feet together, picking them up and pointing her toes down, then followed Alex's pointing finger up to the top of the tank. "And while that's happening, the vat of gunge overhead's going to open, and whoever's inside there is going to get completely covered..."

Shuffling uncomfortably, Nyte looked between the two girls next to him, trying to read their nervous but excited expressions.

"Hoping it's not going to be you, Becky?" the red wolf asked with a smile, leaning on the top of the tank as he addressed her.

"Kinda, yeah!" she giggled anxiously, flicking her eyes up to the overhead nozzle once more.

"Well, let's get you out of there - time starts now!"

Nyte gasped as a ticking noise started up, a timer being projected on to the wall in front of them as the room's lights suddenly dimmed. Isla quickly moved her way to the front and leaned over the console as four squares flashed at random, then

she firmly pressed on each one in turn, clapping her hands together as the confirmation noise played.

All their eyes turned to Becky, who was balling her hands into fists next to her chest as she waited for something to happen. As the door slid open in front of her, she yipped, sliding quickly off the chair and padding out of the gunge tank with a relieved smile on her face.

"Becky, that's you safe for now! Go and join the others - Isla, let's have you in here next..."

The curvy lizardette grinned over her shoulder at the others before slipping around the opposite side of the table, dashing over towards the booth as the canine came back to join the others.

"You or me?" Quinne's voice came from beside Nyte, and he looked down at the console as she pointed towards it.

"Uh... you go ahead," he said as he distractedly watched the blue reptilian look up into the spout above her as she squirmed back into the chair, the door humming closed in front of her. He glanced between Isla, Quinne and the rapidly decreasing timer as the fennec girl concentrated on the sequence of five lights being shown on the board, then she quickly tapped her hand over the same pattern.

Isla stared up into the nozzle again with a grin as the door opened in front of her, and got to her feet.

"That's two! Quinne, it's your turn in the gunge tank, and Nyte's going to be the one to save you..."

"Good luck, Nyte!" The fennec's pink hair flew out behind her as she turned to wave at him, already bouncing over to the other side of the room. He swallowed as he raised his hand in return, and then shook his head to clear it, coming forward to lean over the slanted table as he watched the fox girl step into the cubicle in the corner of his eye.

He felt his heart racing as the pattern of six lights played out in front of him, and followed them with his finger, pressing five of them and then hesitating, hovering his hand between two squares.

"That one," he heard Becky say as her golden-furred hand came forward into his vision, pointing down at the middle left panel. He held his breath before pressing it, and let it out with a relieved sigh as the correct bell sounded, before another wave of nerves came over him as he realized what was to happen next.

"Nyte, you saved Quinne - let's hope Becky can do the same to you!" The fox girl put her hands in the air as the tank opened to let her out. Swallowing, he looked her in the eye, and she grinned enthusiastically back at him as he stumbled over towards her.

Nyte dodged aside as Quinne bounced out of the tank, and looked down at the empty seat as he stretched one foot inside the booth. Turning around, he felt behind him for the arms of the chair as the door slid closed in front of him, and hoisted himself up into the chair, staring upwards. In the center of the tank's ceiling, right above his head, there was a nozzle in the shape of two semicircles side by side, blocked a little way up by a dark disc.

A harsh buzzing noise made him almost leap out of the seat, interrupting his thoughts as he looked over to his teammates - Becky had jumped away from the table, her hands clasped to her mouth.

"Oh, it looks like Becky made a mistake there," Alex chuckled as he paced a little over towards her, "but just keep going! You've got all the chances you need... it's getting trickier with seven lights in the pattern..."

The puppy girl nodded, and Nyte stretched up to watch as she leaned over the table, looking intently down at it as a new sequence flashed in front of her. This time, as Nyte tapped his fingers on the arms of the seat, he watched her deliberately press each one in turn, eventually looking up and then smiling as the confirmation noise played.

"Yes!" Alex encouraged as the door opened. With a glance back up at the nozzle, Nyte pushed himself up out of the chair and back out of the tank, looking towards the red wolf as he

pointed over at it. "But of course, that means you're going in again - Isla, feeling confident this time?"

"Yeah, no problem, Becky," the lizardette called as Becky tiptoed towards the gunge booth once again. With a laughing whimper, she glanced over at the timer, and Nyte spun around to look at it too as he retreated to the opposite side of the room - they had just over a minute left.

Nyte scampered back to the table as Becky took her seat, bouncing anxiously as the door slid closed in front of her and then stretching up in an attempt to see the table as the sequence of eight lights played out on it. Frowning in concentration, the lizard girl quickly tapped out the sequence before Nyte had a chance to think about it, and as the confirmation noise played, she quickly slid around to the front as the door of the booth slid open to release the puppy girl again. With a yip, she got up, and raised her arm to slap Isla's outstretched hand as they ran past each other.

"Very quick, Isla! And with just forty seconds left, I think that that's you safe from the gunge for now, Becky... but as for the others, who can tell!" Nyte twitched as the curvy lizardess wriggled on to the seat of the gunge tank, looking up excitedly into the nozzle as Quinne leaned over the table.

Nyte watched Isla shudder a little as she twisted around in an attempt to look at the timer, then turned to look him in the eye. Quickly taking his gaze off her as he knew she'd caught him staring, he looked back at the panel in front of them, where Quinne was halfway through the new sequence, hovering her hand across the board. Realizing he'd missed the sequence and couldn't help, he stayed quiet, his heart beating faster as she prepared to put her hand down on the middle panel.

Hesitantly, the fox girl pushed the button down and jumped back, her tail swishing behind her, but the press was met with no buzzer noise. After a second's pause, she came forward again, pushing the top right button three times, and clapped her hands as the door slid open in front of Isla.

"Make sure I come out clean!" the pink fennec said brightly, pointing at Nyte, before scooting off to the booth. Nyte watched her run across the room as the lizard girl sighed in what looked like mixed relief and disappointment, before she hauled herself up and stepped out of the tank, putting a hand out to encourage the small fox girl inside. She pointed her toes and stepped into the cubicle, clasping her hands on her lap with her eyes raised up to the chute above her as she sat down.

"Twenty seconds! Your team leader might just be able to do this if he's quick..." Nyte shook his head to try to clear it as Alex's voice reminded him that he was meant to be playing this time. Grimacing as he felt the girls' eyes on him, he looked down at the table, trying to concentrate as the sequence of ten lights flashed out. After he counted the tenth, he tapped out the first few lights he'd seen quickly, but couldn't help thinking of what it had looked like inside the gunge tank and imagining slime spewing out of the nozzle that he'd seen right above him, knowing that it was going to happen to him if he got this right. Glancing up at the rapidly decreasing timer, he looked over the table, then put his hand down on the bottom left square.

He jumped as a harsh buzzer sounded, and with his heart pounding, watched a new sequence of ten squares flash in turn. Totally unable to think about which one to press first, he hovered his hand over the table, then his head jerked up as he heard a high-pitched series of beeps. He caught the eye of the pink fennec girl as her mouth dropped open, her eyes widening as she twisted around to look at the timer flashing in red on the wall. As it hit zero, she gasped and looked back at the others.

"I'm sorry, Quinne, but time's up, and you're in the gunge tank!" Alex called above a rising mechanical whine as the fennec's surprised expression gave way to a nervous smile. She glanced up at the overhead nozzle again, then squeaked and looked down as there was a spurting noise and a mass of white foam spewed out over her feet and ankles from the pipes beside her.

Nyte twitched, feeling his heart pounding in his chest as he watched the thick pie foam beginning to fill the tank, creeping up the vixen's legs as she drew her feet in tighter, her hands drumming on her knees as she watched the white stuff bubble upwards. The whole team jumped as a loud blare from a klaxon joined the mechanical noise, making the fennec glance up for a moment before changing her mind and hunching her shoulders, eeping as she circled her legs in the rising foam.

The alarm sounded again, and the fennec girl squirmed upwards as the foam spilled into her lap and continued rising over her tummy. She opened one eye and looked back out at the others, eager but nervous with a shocked smile on her face as the foam glooped up over her hands on the arms of the seat. Nyte caught her eye for a second one more time, unsure where to look as he waited for the tank to open above her. The next moment seemed to drag on for a long time, before the white foam reached the top of the tank's door and began to spill over it, raining down to the floor in sticky blobs, the klaxon hooted a third time, and a column of yellow and dark blue gunge dropped from the ceiling of the tank and splattered outwards over the fennec girl's head.

Nyte tried to keep his expression still as saw Isla pumping her fists in the air, watching the gloopy mixture form a smooth dome over Quinne's face, her nose just visible through it before it spilled forwards and closed over it. After a second, her arms burst forwards through the curtain, catching the glop with her palms turned inwards as the colorful goo slid down around her forearms and into the foam, slipping thickly through her fingers as she hovered them in front of her. The dome twitched and splattered to the sides as she wriggled, waves of gunge slopping on to the walls of the tank as they spewed outwards from her head. As it slithered and dripped down the walls and the fox girl inside, it mixed into green and began to stain the foam that was still bubbling over the door of the tank.

As the slime from overhead began to ease off, the outline of Quinne's head became gradually more visible again

underneath the gungy downpour, the slop splattering on to her shoulders still peeking above the foam. She tilted her head to one side, flicking her slimy ears as she leaned a little out of the gungy downpour. Her face had been completely covered in a murky mixture of the blue and yellow gunge colors, with her eyes firmly closed but an awkward grin showing from behind the blobs of goo sliding over her face. With the glop becoming a drizzle on her shoulder, she put a palm to her face and dragged it down over her eyes and muzzle, leaving streaks of her fur color just visible underneath the coating of slime.

The gungy fennec girl sat straight again with a defeated smile, leaning forwards a little as the blobby remains of the gunge slithered down from the edges of the nozzle to splat on to the top of her head. She reached up and ran both hands down her messy hair, her shoulders shaking in giggles as the heavy slop dripped down on to them from her sodden ears and slithered down to gloop underneath the surface of the foam bath. With a smile, she dipped her head forwards, dunking her face into the thick foam and moving it from side to side for a moment before straightening up again, her muzzle coated in an off-white mixture that flew away as she shook her head.

"Quinne...!" Alex stepped forwards as the lights came back up, and reached around to the back of the tank where a small towel was draped over one of the pipes. Shaking it out, he dangled it into the tank, brushing it against her face and letting her reach her sloppy hands up to grab it. "What a finish to the first game - how are you feeling?"

"Ew," she said simply through a grin. Her eyes still closed as the mixed yellow and blue glop slithered down her head and dripped from her ears, she buried her face in the towel for a moment and then looked back up. Hesitantly, she opened her eyes, shaking her head and blinking a little, then squeaked and ducked forwards as another spurt of gunge splattered down on to her from the overhead nozzle.

Nyte breathed out and followed the other two girls towards the gunge tank, the lizard girl whooping and clapping

her hands together as the gungy fennec put her hands back underneath the foam, then raised one hand weakly out of it to wave back at her. "You're looking good, Quinne!" she laughed as she reached into the tank to ruffle the vulpine's soaking hair, then she pulled her arm away and smiled as she watched the glutinous liquid drip from her fingers.

"I always have to ask the first time - how did that feel, Quinne?" Alex asked, stepping past the lizardess to face the tank. Becky leaned in and looked worriedly at the gungy fennec inside, but broke into a giggle as she pursed her lips and blew foam and gunge away from her mouth.

Quinne raised her hands out of the foam again, putting them in front of her to catch drips of the thick slime as it poured in strings off her fringe. "You ever had a... big bowl of custard poured over your head?" she asked back, twitching her head aside to shake off the drops.

"No, and I hope to keep it that way!" the red wolf answered. "Let's get you out of there for now... I think you've taken enough for the first game..."

Alex stepped around the lizard girl and motioned for her to step aside, then opened the door of the tank again. Nyte shivered as he watched the slippery goo slowly slide down the walls of the tank around the sodden fennec, and distractedly put his hands out towards her as she stood up. She looked down at herself, not taking his hands as she stepped out back on to the floor, batting at her waist and legs with the towel and her other hand as the stained foamy mixture clung to her legs, her T-shirt plastered to her chest and tummy.

"You got six combinations before the Mixer went off, so that's sixty points for the first game - I think that's about as clean as you're going to get with that thing!" Alex stepped forwards and put his hand out for the towel, taking it by one corner with an outstretched hand, and turned around to toss it behind the tank again. Nyte gave a laughing grimace at the wet splatting noise it made as it hit the floor. "Nyte," - he dragged his eyes off the dripping fennec and spun round as Alex said

his name - "Quinne took the first one for the team, but we've got a long way to go yet - who do you want to take a risk next?"

Nyte glanced quickly between the two clean girls as they looked back at him, waiting for his decision. Becky was wringing her hands behind her back, though she was trying to look confident.

"Isla," he decided. The blue reptilian raised her hands in the air then dropped them back to her sides as Alex approached.

"All right, Isla - are you ready for this?"

"Yep," she responded with an enthusiastic nod of her head.

"Then come with me - we've got one of our new ones just up the stairs for you..."

As soon as the lizardette took his outstretched hand he took off back towards the doorway and turned sharply away to the right. Nyte looked towards the messy fox girl, who was combing her fingers through her gunge-soaked hair and wiggling her feet in front of her one by one to get the foam off, before she started towards the door. Becky stopped to let her through first, and Nyte followed the two of them out of the room.

Alex and Isla were already on the gantry leading around the edges of the room as they emerged, and they headed for a nearby set of metallic stairs, waiting for Quinne to tread carefully up them before they rejoined the reptilian and wolf at the door at the far end of the room. Isla stood to one side, her hands clasped behind her back as she bounced on her heels, watching the wolf fiddle with the catch on the door.

"In here," he started as the others gathered around, "we've got one of the main pipes that led out of the complex. Or at least, we used to - all the pipes and channels that drained out of here still run through this room, but we've ripped out the main one and you're going to be put in there instead. Isla... you're going in the Gunkpipe."

Nyte glanced at the lizardette's wide-eyed expression as he said the word, and as he pushed the door open, she leaned

around the frame to see. He caught her arm, and tugged her a little forward - after a short skip, she eagerly padded after him.

He followed them quickly and took in their new surroundings as he walked across the room behind them. They were in a long, thin room, rectangular except for a semicircular alcove in the far wall that was a couple of yards across, with a metallic chair mounted on a swiveling stand in its center. In front of the chair, grooves in the floor and ceiling curved around to complete the circular shape of the pipe, and a clock display and monitor were mounted on the wall just to its left.

Nyte took his eyes off the contraption at the end of the room and looked closer to where he was standing - five box-like carts were attached to the ends of a set of twisting rails that ran across the length of the room, connecting with each other and curving among themselves, leaving some dead ends. At the far end, next to the pipe, there were five metal poles, each with a socket-like depression on the top.

"I think you can see your seat already, can't you, Isla?" he heard Alex's voice, and looked up, seeing the lizard girl nod vigorously as she was led to the seat at the far end of the room. Still holding Alex's hand, she turned around and put one hand on its metal arm, hoisting herself up into it and wriggling backwards as she put her feet on the rest at the front. Leaning back a little, she looked up to the ceiling and back wall, and grinned slyly as she saw an array of nozzles aimed in her direction.

"Okay, you three - this time you're responsible for Isla coming back out of there clean," Alex started, pacing away from the pipe and pointing both fingers down at the rails, raising them up towards the carts at the end of the room with the door. "You're going to be given somewhere between two and three minutes to bring all five of those carts over to this end of the room and connect them to these sockets," he said as he slapped the top of one of the poles next to the group, "therefore draining away some of the gunge above Isla. After you connect each one up, it's going to be up to Isla to decide

whether to go for another or not - the trouble is that she won't be able to see the timer, so she won't know whether she's giving you enough time or if she's about to get splurged," he finished, turning back to her.

The lizardette looked down at her feet, grinning to herself as she curled her toes around the footrest and then flexed them. She pressed her legs together, wriggling a little as she waited for Alex to continue.

"So Isla, we're going to put you away for now - you'll still be able to hear me over this," he said as he took a microphone that looked like a radio transmitter off its hook on the wall, "and we'll be watching you on the monitor - okay?"

The lizard girl bit her lip, looking down at the groove in the floor as she realized what was going to happen. "Yeah..." she nodded eventually.

"Okay, there's nothing to worry about - they'll be right here, and hopefully they're going to save you from being gunged..." Alex pressed the switch next to him on the wall, and with a mechanical clank, the front section of the pipe began sliding out of the wall, curving around with the grooves in the floor and ceiling. Isla tapped her forefingers together, jiggling as the shadow of the outer pipe fell across her, and Nyte leaned around to get a last glimpse of her before it boomed shut.

Alex turned to the monitor as it blinked on, showing a grainy bright green night-vision image of the inside of the pipe from the top - the lizard girl was sitting still and staring in front of her even though she couldn't see anything. "Okay, Isla," he called into the microphone, "we're going to give your team a random amount of time to complete the game..."

He looked up, and Nyte followed his gaze to the timer as it flicked between random numbers, eventually stopping on a time just below two and a half minutes. He looked to his sides at Quinne and Becky as they nodded among each other.

"Okay, and they're about to make their first attempt! You three, go over there and pick a cart - your time's going to start as soon as you move it."

Nyte turned and lifted his feet high as he walked among the rails on the floor, looking at how they connected to each other and trying to work out a route that would take one of the carts to their target. Quinne bounced on ahead, putting her hands on the handle of the middle cart, and shifted from foot to foot as Nyte dashed around to take it as well.

"Ready?" she asked. Nyte glanced over at the rail they were going to head along, then yelped as she jerked it forwards, stumbling to keep up.

Becky called encouragement as Nyte got his footing again and did his best to help the fox girl push the container along the rails. The canine beckoned over to her right as they approached a junction, and slowed down to navigate the cart around a tight curve before heading into a straight towards one of the pipes at the far end of the room. As Quinne sped up again, Nyte let go and dashed alongside her as she eventually slammed it into the stopper at the end.

"You've done it - connect the hose!" called Alex, and Nyte glanced down to the tubing hooked on to the front end of the cart on his side. He bent down to take it, looked at the top of the upright pipe in front of him, and then turned the hose upside down and slid it into the socket. He jumped back as it twitched, and with a spurting noise, he saw the container they had brought over filling up with slimy yellow stuff through the thin window in its side.

"Yes!" Quinne called, throwing her hands in the air. Nyte shared a grin with the fox girl, then looked to the timer, which was frozen at just under two minutes. Underneath it, on the night vision monitor, Isla was watching as a light in front of her blinked into life.

"Isla!" The lizard girl visibly jumped as Alex's voice suddenly came into the chamber. "Your team's just connected their first cart and got 20 points - do you want them to do another?"

"Er..." She rubbed her forehead, squeezing her eyes shut. "Yeah, I guess so," she nodded.

"Okay - you'll hear from me again soon!" He hooked the microphone back on to the wall. "Let's see if you can repeat that performance, you three..."

Nyte nodded, and looked around as he caught his toe on one of the rails in the ground. Shaking his foot a little, he jogged over to join Becky at the cart next to the space they'd just left.

He took one side of the handle as the puppy girl leaned forwards on it, looking like she was ready to begin a race. Nyte sidled in a little closer, and wrenched his eyes up the way to look at her concentrated face, then along to where Quinne was pointing at a V-shaped turn in the track.

"Okay, so we're going to that junction... then back the way, and along to the one at the far end," he pointed.

"Yep," Becky confirmed. "C'mon, let's go!"

This time, they pushed off at the same moment, and quickly made their way to where Quinne was standing, with Nyte keeping one eye on the timer. The fox girl jumped back as the cart ran heavily into the end of the rail at the junction, then quickly moved around to help tug it on to the other rail that ran backwards. She pulled it over the few feet to the other junction, then budged the cart over with her shoulder before leaving the other two to slide the container the rest of the way towards the pipe at the extreme left of the room. As they approached it, Becky leaned down to grab the tube, quickly pulling her hand out the way as the cart clanked into the pipe, then stepping around it to push it firmly down into the socket.

The noise of the slime spraying through the pipe started up again, and the puppy girl clapped her hands together as she turned to face the watching red wolf.

"Well, Isla, they've got a kind of violent way of doing this game," he grinned into the microphone, "but it seems to work! How much time do you think they've used?"

"I'm, um... not sure..." The lizardette shifted uncomfortably, shaking her head.

"Well, do you want them to carry on and do another?" Alex turned around and looked at the screen closely, lowering his voice a little as he watched her.

Nyte backed away towards the end of the room with the row of carts once again, squinting to read the expression of the lizard girl on the night vision screen as she looked blindly to her left and right.

"Er... yeah, go on..." she said hesitantly, rubbing the top of one of her feet with the sole of the other.

"Okay, you heard her, everyone - I'm starting the timer again!"

Nyte jumped forwards to grab the container as he heard Alex pulling the switch, and began to trundle it forwards as he turned around to work out the route they should take. This time, Quinne bounded over to take the other side to help him.

"Just keep on going straight," Becky called as she skipped sideways ahead of them. Nyte leaned over to look past the fennec as she bounded backwards, her hair flying out as she turned her head to look over her shoulder - this time, their route was much straighter, and they quickly made it to the other side of the room. After fumbling with the hose, Quinne pressed it down on to the socket with both hands, and they all stepped back, looking at Alex once again.

"Good!" he congratulated, and brought the microphone up to his mouth. "Isla," he called into it, "You should have three lights on in there now, and they've been pretty fast so far... but remember you're going to get gunked the instant time runs out. Whether you want to get out now or go for another... it's up to you," he emphasized as the worried-looking blue reptilian ran her hands over her head. Nyte looked over his shoulder, realizing that the other two carts were going to need to go all the way across the width of the room to fit into the last slots. He looked up at the timer, which was still over a minute and a half.

"Oh..." The lizard girl's toes curled around the footrest as she whimpered, staring at the three lights in front of her. Nyte

caught himself leaning closer, looking at her anxious expression as she tried to decide.

"No," she shook her head. "I'm coming out!"

"Sure?" Alex asked, and seeing her nod rapidly on the screen, he reached up to pull the switch back the way. "All right, let's get you out of there..."

Nyte and the girls watched as the whole front of the pipe hummed aside, revealing Isla again, who was breathing out heavily as she blinked in the light. She twisted around to look up at the nozzles behind her one more time and then reluctantly hauled herself out of the seat.

"Sorry, everyone..." she said sheepishly as she stepped down from the footrest, crossing the groove in the floor where the curved section ran. Becky came forwards with her arms outstretched, and she accepted the hug.

"It's okay!" she said from over her shoulder, rocking back and forth a little. Quinne moved to wrap her arms around the two of them as well, and Nyte was trying to decide if he should join them when Alex stepped forwards.

"Don't worry, Isla, you'll get another chance... are you feeling all right?" the red wolf asked as the girls broke off their hug.

"Yeah, I'm okay," she nodded, shivering just a little.

"Well, as you can see up there you still had about a minute and a half left," he said, pointing to the timer with his thumb over his shoulder, "so I think your team would have been able to do more... but importantly, you're out of there safely, and you get another sixty points for your trouble." The lizard girl smiled a little, and turned as she saw Quinne raising her hands up, clapping them together with hers.

"We'll have to make sure we get you later! For now, we've got two team members who haven't risked it yet, and both of them are going to have a chance of getting gunged..."

Nyte's ears pricked at Alex's announcement, and he felt his heart pounding as the red wolf turned around to clap him on the shoulder, walking forwards with the puppy girl on his

other arm as they headed back out to the door. "But we need a volunteer to play the game – Nyte, who's it going to be?"

Nyte leaned around Alex and met eyes with the canine. "Becky, you can choose," he said as he saw her unsure face.

"Um..." Becky picked her feet up high as they crossed the rails on the floor. "Does that mean he'd be getting gunged, or me?"

"That depends on how well you do..." the red wolf smiled.

The puppy girl gave a small whimper, and she looked back at the large pipe on the wall behind them as she thought. Nyte watched her face, waiting anxiously for her to answer. "Yeah... okay, I'll do it," she decided eventually.

"All right, you're giving your team leader an easy time so far - come down here and see what you've let yourself in for!" As the team emerged through the doorway on to the walkway around the hangar again, Alex let go of the pair of them and took hold of the handrails on both sides of the nearby stairway, sliding down on his hands to the ground level. Nyte stepped aside and let Becky follow him more carefully down first, taking the thin metallic stairs one step at a time. He swallowed as he watched her white-tipped tail swinging along with her hips, and dragged his eyes off it to glance around once again at the doors leading off from the large room.

Alex beckoned to them as they reached the ground, and led the team over to a gloomy corner underneath where they had just been standing. The end of a conveyor belt jutted out of the wall, with a dark plastic flap covering the hole that it led through, and beside it, the outline of a rusty metal door was just visible against the wall.

The red wolf put his hand out towards the door as they approached, and tugged it a couple of times. A tortured squeak came up from the hinges but the door only budged a fraction of an inch. He stepped back and shook his head.

"They must have locked it up since we were last here... it looks like we're taking the other way in!" He stepped aside and

over the conveyor belt, leaning one hand on the wall next to the opening as he pushed the flap covering it aside.

"Go on in," he encouraged, jerking his head towards it. "I think Nyte and Becky should go first, just to see what they're getting into..."

Nyte watched as the puppy girl stretched a foot up on to the conveyor belt, then crawled through the entrance on her hands and knees. He heard her gasp as she poked her head through, and moved towards the belt in an attempt to see what was inside. As he saw her get down into the area of the room behind the door, he crawled through behind her.

"Wow..." he said out loud as he swung his legs down to the ground, dusting his knees off as he got up. The puppy girl was looking down at the most prominent feature of the room - on the wall to the left of the door, a section of the floor was cut away to form a round pool filled with soupy-looking green slime. Another conveyor led out of a narrow corridor coming out of the wall behind it, and ended right underneath one of two pipes jutting down from the tangle on the ceiling.

Nyte stepped further into the room as Isla crawled through followed by Quinne. The room looked like it was done up as some kind of security station, with a bank of monitors and keyboards visible on the far wall. He saw that the conveyor that they had come in by and the one above the vat were two ends of the same one, running all the way around the edge of the room and dipping into the walls - on the exposed section of it to his left, a metal chair was bolted to one of its sections. Right opposite that was a clear plastic panel on the wall with a lever next to it, and another chair in the couple of feet wide space inside.

He looked back at the girls, who were nervously whispering and giggling to each other next to the gunge vat, with Isla reaching forwards to dip her foot into the green slop. As she pulled it out again, the smooth coat of slime slithering off it, Quinne dipped her toes in as well with a squeak, as Alex wriggled through the hatch behind them.

"Be careful of that, I wouldn't want any of you to fall in accidentally..." he said as he straightened up, walking up behind them to look down at it over their shoulders.

"Sure you would," Isla answered, shaking her foot and spraying the slime off it, eventually wiping it a few times on the bumped surface of the floor.

Alex smirked. "Well, maybe you're right, but... to keep things fair! We're going to give your friend Becky here a much better look at it..."

"Oh..." The puppy girl bounced on her heels nervously as she took Alex's hand again, and Nyte watched as the four of them came over, the red wolf heading for the chair on the conveyor that he had noticed.

"It's just up here - you're going to be taking a little trip..."

Giving another little whimper as she looked back at the pool, Becky stepped forwards with him and leaned down on one arm to steady herself as she clambered on to the belt. Nyte swallowed as he watched from behind her, looking from her to the vat as she wriggled awkwardly backwards to settle on to the seat and eyed the dark tunnel in front of her. Her eyes flicked up at a lever on the wall as the red wolf moved through the group towards it.

"Okay, Becky - enjoy the ride, we'll see you in just a moment!" He tugged the lever down, and the canine squeaked and jerked back a little as the conveyor started moving, drumming her feet on the chair's footrest as she was carried towards the tunnel. As she disappeared around the corner, Nyte felt his stomach lurch again as Alex turned around to point at him.

"As for you..." he began, then paused. "I think you've guessed where you're going, haven't you?"

"Yeah..." Nyte forced a grin and scratched the back of his neck as he turned around to face the booth set into the wall, eyeing another large lever mounted next to it. Feeling the red wolf's hand on his back, he moved over towards it, keeping back as Alex swung the door open for him.

With a gentle push from the wolf, Nyte stepped up into the booth, his eyes going up its the ceiling with the dark round circle in the middle covered by a plastic cap. He kept his eyes on it as he turned to sit down - beside it, two cylinders tipped by nozzles were aimed diagonally down at him. Shuddering at the thought of the gunge poised above his head, he looked out of the tank at the watching fennec, trying to imagine once again how it felt to be covered in the stuff.

He quickly jerked forwards to look as there was a scream from the left. Alex glanced casually over as well - the chair with Becky in it had stopped at the very end of the rail and was in position underneath one of the pipes on the ceiling. She stared up into it as she swung her legs back and forth a little, her toes an inch above the surface of the gunge vat.

"And I think that noise means that Becky's in position - so I'll see you later!" Alex stepped back and swung the door of the tank closed. Nyte took another look up at the opening looming over him as he was shut inside.

"Becky, how are you feeling up there?" the red wolf asked as he skipped around the edge of the vat of slime, pulling his electronic device from his pocket. The canine just whimpered, hugging herself a little as she looked down at her feet and the green surface just below them.

Alex laughed a little as the other two girls turned around from the gunge tank to watch them. "Well, we'll let you down soon, but it might not be the best landing... here's how you're going to try and save yourself!"

He raised the minicomputer up and tapped a couple of places on its screen. "I've got ten questions here," he started, and the puppy girl immediately cringed. "But don't worry, they're not hard - in fact, they all have very obvious answers that begin with the letter C." He raised his eyes to hers as she nodded. "You're going to have a minute and a half to answer all ten of them, but if you run out of time or at any point you actually give one of those answers that begin with C... you're going into that!"

He pointed dramatically down at the pool of gunge, and the canine yelped as a couple of bubbles popped on the surface, making the slime ripple slowly. Nyte grinned, enjoying watching her nervous reactions as she flexed and pointed her toes.

"The good news is that you'll earn the team ten points for every question that you get right, and if you manage to get all ten within the time limit, then we've got a reward waiting for you in the form of that inviting-looking lever next to your team leader..."

Nyte forced a smile despite his own nerves as the girls all turned to him, and Isla whooped as she clapped her hands above her head. The puppy girl gave a brief grin as well, nodding distractedly as she faced Alex again.

"Ninety seconds, Becky, here we go." A ticking noise began from somewhere on the ceiling before Becky could react, and she gasped but quickly fell silent as he read out the first question.

"What do you call a building made out of stone with a moat around it?"

The puppy girl cupped her chin with her hands, her elbows on her knees and her eyes up at the ceiling as she thought of how to avoid the obvious answer. "Fort," she said, looking over at the red wolf.

"Yes, you can have that - you've got the idea of this!" Becky smiled, one hand going up to flick a stray strand of hair nervously behind her head.

Nyte watched anxiously, his hands on top of the door of the booth and counting up the questions that she got right on his fingers. Quickly, he realized that she was never going to make it in time at the rate she was going, but he still couldn't help glancing at the arrangement of nozzles above his head.

"The name of a long, thin, crunchy vegetable."

"Er..." Becky closed her eyes, her hands hovering in front of her as she drummed her feet. "Leek?" she suggested after a few seconds' pause.

"Yes, I think that has all the requirements..." Alex raised the computer up again. "Pencil lead, diamonds and coal are all forms of what?"

Nyte thought about how he would answer the question as he watched his team-mate squirm on the dunk seat, her hands on her cheeks and shaking her head as she hurriedly thought. "Stuff?" she tried as she straightened up to face him, but she couldn't help giggling as soon as she'd said it.

"No, I'm not going to give you that!" Alex laughed. "Try this one - the name of a vehicle you might see parked in a family driveway."

"Um..." She wriggled again, kicking her legs a little as she looked down at the gunge. "Caravan," she decided with a nod, then she gasped and her hands flew to her mouth as she realized what she'd said.

"Ah!" Alex looked up and pointed at her, talking over her as she whimpered, moving her hands up a little to cup her muzzle. "Carefully avoided the most obvious one, but I'm afraid that answer quite clearly started with 'C' anyway - so you're taking a dip!"

Nyte had jumped when he had heard her answer as well, and he watched closely as Becky cringed, looking down at the thick green surface in front of her as she balled her hands into fists next to her cheeks. As a siren rang, the other two girls moved a little bit closer to the vat, Quinne glancing over her shoulder at Nyte for a moment before scampering around for a better view.

Becky whimpered and drummed her feet as lights flashed over her, closing her eyes and flattening her ears a little. Suddenly a wave of green gunge spewed out of the pipe above her head, and she yipped as it hit her, bowing her head further down as the thick liquid flopped forwards over her face. She picked her feet up from the footrest as the slop domed out to hide her from view.

Half standing up to see, Nyte saw the bottom of the chair slowly tip forwards underneath the glop, and the puppy girl

burst out of the curtain of slime as she fell forwards, her face screwed up and eyes tightly closed as she flung her hands out in front of her. She hit the bright green surface with a wet smacking noise, waves of the heavy gloop rippling outwards as she madly paddled her hands in front of her and craned her neck up the way so that her face didn't go underneath. As the last of the slop poured out of the nozzle on the ceiling on to the empty dunk seat, she got her footing and jumped upwards, squeaking as she bounced a little way out of the vat with a runny layer of gunge clinging to her fur and swimwear.

As soon as she'd got upright, Nyte saw the catch on the front pipe swing open, and a second flood of glutinous slime fell across the puppy girl, hiding her from view again underneath a sloppy dome. A shriek came up above the noise as the stuff fell into the vat with a thick glooping sound.

Becky stumbled forwards and poked her head out of the downpour, hunched over and with her hands clasped around the back of her neck. Wriggling as the goo splurged over her back, she raised her head - her mouth was wide open in shock but with the corners of her mouth turned upwards in a smile as the green slime clinging to her hair trickled down around her face. As the tank above her ran out, drizzling the last of its contents down into the center of the vat, she straightened and came out from underneath it in an unsteady bouncing motion. Drawing her hands inwards, she sloshed unsteadily forwards in the green gunk, hugging herself and squeezing her breasts underneath her folded arms.

"Becky, sorry it had to happen but you got dunked - how are you feeling?" She watched Alex pace past her fascinated team mates around to the edge of the vat, then looked down at herself.

"It's all thick and slippery, and... eugh!" She spread her arms to the sides and shook her hands and head, sending globs of the stuff splattering outwards from her fingers and hair.

"Yep. Looks like this stuff," Quinne agreed, holding her hand out in a claw shape in front of her and letting the gunge

on her slither off her fingertips. Giggling, she dipped her foot down at the edge of the vat again.

"Cold?" Alex asked. Looking up at him, the puppy girl nodded, wriggling from side to side in the glop. Drips of gunge drizzled from all over her green-coated upper body.

"I think it gets better the longer you're in there... or if you just dip under for a second..."

"What?" Becky sagged as the other two girls gave cheers of encouragement. With a glance down at the slop she was standing in, she giggled, hesitated for a few moments then closed her eyes and bobbed a little upwards, holding her nose as she dunked her head under. Nyte's eyes widened, stretching up to see from his position in the tank as she slowly came up again, her face screwed up and painted in a smooth uniform green color. The slop made a thick trickling noise as it slithered back into the vat from the back of her soaking hair, the goo sliding down her fur and forming little ripples that she began to brush away with her equally messy hands.

Alex crouched down next to the gungy puppy girl as she wiped her eyes and blinked them open again, the streaks of brown fur around them the only part of her normal color that was visible. "Did it help?"

"No!" She shook her head again, sending more specks of the light green slop out from her flying hair as she bounced up and down a little. He laughed and stood up.

"Let's get you out of there, then..."

Alex stretched his hands forward over the vat, and Becky wriggled forwards in the gunge, flicking more of the slime away from her hands before stretching up to grab his wrists. Slowly, he hauled her up and out of the pool, green stuff oozing and trickling from all over her fur as she was hoisted upwards. She kicked her dripping feet to find the side of the vat, and unsteadily got her balance again as Alex swung her over back on to the floor. Eeping, she let go and looked down at her green-painted fur, tentatively trying to brush some of the

goo away. She shook in giggles, visibly relieved the tension was over.

"Okay, you didn't escape clean, but you got six answers which earns you yet another 60 points - and Nyte stayed safe. Actually, just while you're in there..." Nyte shifted his gaze to Alex, trying to look like he hadn't been staring. "Can you tell us - do you want to go into the last game of this round, or are you putting Isla in?"

"Isla," he replied without hesitating as he knew how keen she'd been, even though he was eager to find out what being gunged felt like himself.

"All right," Alex nodded, turning around to the grinning lizard girl but then facing past her to Becky. "So while we've got the chance, Becky, do you want to gunge him anyway?"

Nyte's ears pricked, and he stuttered as his eyes moved back to the gungy puppy girl.

"Oh, definitely!" she exclaimed, more of the green slop dripping off her as she nodded. As Alex pointed, she began to dash towards the lever next to Nyte's tank, and he forced his eyes up from her bouncing chest to her eager face as she raised a hand up to brush her slimy hair out of the way.

Becky padded to a halt as she reached up to the lever, and Nyte shifted nervously in the seat, trying to stifle a whimper as he looked from the lever to the round gunge chute above him. Reaching up to the switch, the slippery canine grabbed the end of it with both hands and hauled it downwards with a tug of effort.

Nyte tensed as the siren that he'd heard so many times when watching the show blared into life around him, and closed his eyes, his heart pounding in his ears. He clasped his hands on his lap together a little tighter, wringing them as a couple of seconds seemed to drag past, then twitched as a thick wave smacked on to his head.

He bowed his head down under its weight as he felt it splatter outwards, the light from above dimming as the stuff domed over his face, and a moment later he yelped out loud as

he felt the cool gunge splash heavily on to his shoulders. Hearing the girls cheering delightedly from in front of the tank, he grimaced as the thick blanket of slime slid quickly down his hair and the back of his head, flowing on to his shoulders and down his back. As its push made him lean further forwards, he felt his fur bristle underneath the heavy wet layer, and hunched his shoulders as the stuff impacting on the back of his neck slid around to slither down his chest.

Frozen in his hunched position, he couldn't help grinning at the strange slick feeling of the gunge continuing to flood down on to him, shaking his head as he felt some blobs of it spilling over his head to drip from his fringe. With a little hesitation, he wriggled to lean back into the downpour, gasping again as the smooth slime caught the back of his head. At the same moment, two new cold waves slapped on to his shoulders, making him yelp out loud before it turned into a surprised laugh. He squirmed a little as the diagonal spurts played back and forward a little, and flinched to one side as he felt the tip of his ear go underneath one.

The streams from the top sides of the tank slowly moved outwards across his shoulders, leaving just the feeling of the ooze slipping down his arms and back. He straightened up as much as he could underneath the trickling remains of the flood from directly above him, shuddered and brought his hands up to wipe his eyes before shaking his head, opening one eye then the other.

His eyebrows rose as he saw the mass of yellow and blue gunge plastered over his front and clinging to the walls and floor of the tank, and he straightened up as he turned to see the expressions of the three girls watching - Becky had retreated from the tank a couple of steps and was standing in between Isla and Quinne, her hands raised triumphantly in the air as she bounced on her heels. The fennec girl beside her was laughing as she watched her teammate's enthusiasm, clapping her hands together with a smile.

"You've deserved that since the first game!" the fox girl called triumphantly. Blinking as a couple more thick dollops dripped down across his vision to smack on to his lap, he smiled back weakly, reaching his hands up to wipe his muzzle and then around to the back of his head - he squeamishly poked at the back of his hair, feeling it slicked down into a squishy mass underneath the layer of ooze drizzling from the scruff of his neck down on to his back.

"Our team leader finally gets gunged!" Alex's voice came up as he squeezed his way past the three girls to get to the front. Isla moved aside to see past him as he faced Nyte directly outside the tank's door.

"Yeah..." Nyte flinched, flicking his flattened ears a little as he felt the heavy slop drizzle from their tips, and raised his hands up from his lap as he looked down at the gunk he was covered in, the stuff having formed a thick pool across his lap and slowly sliding down around his legs. "Always..." He hesitated and covered it up by clearing his throat. "Always wondered what that felt like," he finished. He twitched a little again at the feeling of the gloop dripping in heavy strings from his hair and fur, and shook his head again as he faced the red wolf, twitching as his wet hair splatted on to the back of his neck.

"And it looks like you found out, but I'm sure it won't be the last time - come on, let's get you out of there!" Alex leaned forward and grabbed the top of the door, pulling it open and then offering Nyte his hand. Flicking his right hand to throw a mass of dripping gunge to the floor, Nyte stretched forward to grab Alex's wrist, and glanced up again at the still dripping trio of nozzles on the ceiling before hauling himself upwards.

As he got up he grimaced as the stuff on his lap poured off and slithered coldly down his legs, making a thick smacking noise as it hit the bottom of the tank. Getting his balance on the floor, glad of the little studs to help him keep his grip, he looked down at his hands again, smiling as he rubbed his

thumb across his fingers, the off-green gooey mixture slipping between them.

"Well, we've still got one more game to play here, and as it happens we've still got one more conspicuously clean team member..." Nyte looked up as the red wolf leaned towards Isla, who kept the wide grin across her face as he approached. "Let's see if we can do something about that!"

Nyte watched, blinking away another couple of drops of gunge, as the eager lizard girl took Alex's hands and let him lead her over to the door, followed by the other two girls. As his eyes shifted to the green-coated puppy girl's back, he heard the red wolf call back to him.

"By the way, Nyte, just behind you, you should see one of the card keys we're looking for... could you get that for us?"

"Yeah..." He turned around again, and looked at the large console on the back wall, seeing a neck strap dangling down from something inserted into the right hand side. Hearing the door being unbolted behind him, he reached over to take it in his slippery fingers, then gave a last look back at the gunge-splattered booth he had been inside, watching drizzles of the stuff still sliding down from the overhead nozzles. As he saw Alex holding the door for him, he dashed over to join the others back in the hangar area, looping the strap over his head and grimacing a little as he felt it cling to his slimy shoulders.

"Isla, you're going in another gunge machine..." Alex announced immediately, turning to catch her hand again and heading away from the door. The blue lizard girl, her excitement returning, practically skipped behind him as he moved to the stairs at the far end of the hangar area. "But this time, we're going to give you a clear view of the action..."

Nyte and the others followed Alex up one of the thin metallic staircases and around to a slightly wider section of the walkway at the end of the room, where a control panel stood to one side of a gap in the railing opposite the slightly domed front of the shuttle. Holding her hand, the red wolf leaned over the panel and pressed a couple of switches.

The team watched as jets of special effect smoke spurted from the sides of the blue translucent dome at the front of the shuttle, and it slowly raised up the way on a hinge at the back as the entire thing came forwards towards them. Nyte ducked to see inside as the front panel lifted away, seeing the back of a padded chair revealed inside behind a dashboard with a single joystick sticking up from its center among an array of buttons and lights. He straightened up again as the front raised further, looking at the prop readouts and dials that decorated the back wall of the capsule, and finally the wide chute looming over the chair on its ceiling.

"Feeling a little nervous, Isla?" As the movement of the shuttle stopped, leaving the chamber next to the gap in the railing in front of them, Alex turned his head towards the curvy lizard girl. She was looking intently at the chair, her hand up to her mouth, looking like she was disguising a wide smile. She just nodded in response. "Want to get in there?"

He stepped forwards without waiting for an answer, and she padded quickly over with him. As he raised the hand he was holding up to encourage her inside, Isla took hold of the waist-height outer panel and wriggled herself up the way to clamber on to the cockpit dashboard.

"That's right, if you just slide over there and make yourself comfortable..." Alex said as she crawled over and into the capsule, setting her feet down and then letting go of the dashboard behind her. She turned around to seat herself in the padded chair, grinning excitedly up at the round end of the pipe positioned directly over her head.

"Oh, look at her, she's keen!" Alex smiled as the dark blue lizardette bounced the spring-set seat a little. Nyte tried to look casual as he clasped his hands in front of himself, listening to her tapping her feet on the metallic floor of the gunge chamber.

"Isla, here's your challenge," the red wolf continued as he stabbed at the control panel again. He stepped aside and looked up at the wall behind them as a projected screen flickered into life, showing a green background with a crude

graphic of a small ship near the lower right corner. "We're going to run this... kind of cheap simulator for you, and your task's to get through five obstacle courses in it. You can move your ship there by turning the main control in front of you to the left or right - that's it..." he nodded as she leaned forward and grasped the joystick on the dashboard. "And you move forward by pressing the trigger. Just don't hit any of the walls, and you'll be fine..."

As the lizard girl slowly started guiding the ship around the blank screen, Alex turned to the others. "Now, here's where you three come in - Isla isn't going to be able to see any of the walls on that screen up there! Instead, she's going to be relying on your guidance to get her through there without being gunged - you're going to get three chances, but the third time she hits a wall, the sprayers around her will turn on and she's going to get very messy..."

The lizard girl looked at the nozzles placed around and above her, her mouth open in a smile, before she shuddered and faced the front again.

"So Nyte, want to take a look at the console and help Isla out of there?"

Nyte looked over to the control panel, which had a long screen in its centre that was showing something nearly identical to what was on the projected display. At the top right, unseen by Isla, there was a gap with an arrow indicating that he should guide her towards it.

"All right..." he started, leaning further over the control panel. As he moved, his slime-soaked hair slithered out from behind him and splatted on to his shoulders, making him twitch a little. "Isla, if you go towards the right wall..."

The ship graphic moved as Isla followed his guidance, and the other two girls leaned in on either side of Nyte to watch the screen. "And... yeah, you can just go up now," he nodded.

He glanced at the lizardette as she pressed the trigger firmly, moving the ship off the screen. As it went, the screen redrew itself, showing the ship on the bottom, still heading

rapidly upwards and heading for a line going most of the way across the screen.

"Stop there!" he called, "You're..." A harsh buzzing sound rang from somewhere overhead, and a couple of red lights flashed on and then off behind Isla. She jumped in her seat, slowing the on-screen ship down from where it had bounced off the invisible wall.

"That's one chance gone - you've got to be careful here!" Alex called from the side, and Nyte glanced over at him before looking back to the screen on the panel, seeing Becky lean in a little closer to watch over his shoulder.

"Um..." he started again. "Okay... turn... to the left, Isla," he said carefully, tilting his head and wincing as he saw another close call approaching. "Now move slowly over... a little more..."

"You can go all the way to the left!" Quinne interjected, wriggling a little further forward under Nyte's arm and grasping one side of the panel as she tried to get a better look at the screen. Lifting his arm, Nyte stepped around the fennec girl, glad of an excuse to step out of the spotlight, and he leaned on the handrail, poking his head in to see the screen as she had done. As Isla moved the ship into position underneath the nearby vertical passage, she held a hand up, and then guided her up the way.

Nyte watched tensely as the fox girl guided Isla through the screen and on to the next one, which was similarly maze-like but with much narrower spaces to move. He winced as the ship caught on a corner near the top, triggering the buzzer and the lights once again.

"That's the second time! Stay calm, but just remember it's gunge time for Isla the next time that happens..."

The lizard girl shuddered, but continued looking between Quinne and the screen in front of her as she was slowly guided around the corner they had hit.

"That's it!" Becky interjected as the ship drifted into place below the exit to the top of the screen once again.

"Yeah, Isla, you can go up now, and... omigod."

Nyte's eyes widened as well as he leaned closer and immediately saw what had prompted that reaction from the fox girl - on the new screen, three arrow-shaped obstacles bounced back and forward across the screen. Isla looked up, waiting for the fox girl to continue.

"Um... okay, Isla," Quinne started, grabbing at her hair and pushing it back over her shoulders, "I'm gonna tell you when to go, and I want you to go straight up for a bit and then stop. Okay?"

"Yeah," the lizard girl answered her, and Nyte watched as she hunched further over the joystick, watching the fox girl's eyes as she stared at the screen. He looked down at it, too, and nodded silently as one of the arrow shaped sprites passed by.

"Okay, go!" Quinne called, and Isla pressed firmly on the trigger. The ship graphic scooted forward across the screen, past the first arrow and directly into the line of fire of the second one.

"No, go back! Go back!" Becky and Nyte involuntarily joined in the frantic calling as the middle arrow rapidly approached the ship Isla was controlling. She slammed the joystick to one side, trying to turn it around, but wasn't quick enough, and Nyte jumped as a loud buzzer pierced the room for the third time.

"Sorry, Isla," Alex's voice came from the side as she slid her hand off the joystick, leaning back on the seat and covering her surprised mouth with her hands, "that's your last chance gone, and we're starting up the gunge!"

The lizard girl glanced up at the spout above her as a warning siren blared, the two rotating lights playing over her from the sides of the cockpit. Suddenly an arc of four yellow jets of gunge spurted from the top back of the tank and Isla yelped as they splattered on to her, ballooning outwards in splashes as they lapped against her sides and shoulders. Twitching her head to one side and grinning at one side of her mouth, she leaned forwards underneath their weight before

straightening up again. With her shoulders shaking in giggles, she looked out across at the others as she squirmed against the sprays, the bright slime creeping around her sides and slithering down her skin.

She closed her eyes as she heard a hissing noise from above her, and a cascade of white foam began falling in from the chamber's ceiling. It broke into dollops as it fell and splotted over her, piling up on her head and slumping down over her face. She brought her hands up to wipe her eyes, smearing the stuff down her cheeks and making the collected foam splat into her lap as she held one hand on her forehead to catch the rest of it. Another jet of yellow slime started up from just below the panel in front of her, and she squealed again and stuck her other hand out as it splurged on to her chest, leaving a dripping splatter mark as it eased back to pour on to her tummy.

As the klaxon hooted again the foam from the ceiling stopped and the spurts of yellow gunge began to ease back, making a thick slapping noise as the remains of the torrents splashed on to the floor of the cockpit. With most of her skin covered in the bright dripping slime, Isla tried to slither upright in the seat underneath the clumps of thick foam still dripping on to her, and she shook her head, sending specks of the stuff spraying outwards before she blinked her eyes open for a second, craning her neck forward. Kicking her legs a little to clear them, she looked down and dragged both hands up her face and over her head again, relaxing back in the chair and putting her hands on the seat's arms as she grinned out at the others.

Nyte heard himself gasp as the siren started up again, and he just saw the lizard girl's eyes widen a little before a heavy column of dark green gloop fell from the chute right above her, hiding her instantly underneath a twitching dome shape as it spewed outwards off her head.

After a second the dome broke away as Isla tilted her head slightly to the side, the stuff splattering outwards from one side

of her head and flying out over the other, with thick drips of it running down on to her shoulder and slithering over her chest. Her eyes were firmly closed but her grin was as wide as ever as she raised her hands up from the seat, holding them out upturned to catch some of the gunge splurging off her head.

Finally, the slimy dome folded inwards as the tank of gunge ran out, hiding Isla from view again for a second before it turned into a gungy drizzle from the edges of the chute on the ceiling. The mucky lizard girl stayed rigid in place except with her shoulders still shaking slightly in laughter, a shocked grin frozen on her dripping face as rivulets of the colorful gunge slithered down all over her, strings of it clinging to her chin and the corners of her mouth. Slowly, she turned her cupped hands downwards, letting the collected gunk slide out of them and splatter to the floor.

"Blue... no longer, Isla!" Alex coughed and shook his head as he walked up behind the other three, watching the gunge-covered lizard girl shaking her hands in front of her. "The cockpit's definitely given you a splash of color - are you okay?" He leaned over to the panel again and held down the switch, bringing the capsule slowly forward towards the platform - another streak of green slithered out of the top nozzle and drizzled on to Isla's head as it started moving.

Isla ran her hands over her head again, opening her eyes and shaking her head a little, leaning back out of the thin drizzle as she looked down at her gunge-coated body, her blue skin completely hidden by the mixture of green and yellow slop. She bounced forwards a little as the machine stopped moving, and the sudden stop made a couple of final green spurts drop from the pipe above her head. She wriggled a little down the way as they splattered over her, drizzling on to her coated shoulders.

"How are you feeling in there?" Alex repeated the question as he stepped forwards through the group, offering his hand out to her.

"Oh, brilliant," she said, and burst into laughter again. Nyte and the others did the same as she struggled to haul herself upwards under the heavy coating, standing up and grinning as she spread her gungy arms again before leaning over the dashboard to take the red wolf's hand.

Nyte twitched a little, his eyes on Isla's slippery breasts as she leaned further forward, slithering slowly on her knees as Alex guided her over the edge of the tank. She yelped as she slipped off and planted herself back on the ground, holding her hands out in front of her as Alex let go of her. As he fished the minicomputer out of his pocked, she watched the stringy drizzles of gunge fall from her arms.

"Okay..." he announced, stepping away and then turning to address them all. "That's us finished with our first area, we've played four games and nobody's escaped clean." Nyte reached a hand up to run it behind his ear, twitching as he felt the slimy stuff in his matted hair again and rubbing it between his fingers as he pulled his hand away. "You got through three out of the five rooms there, so you're our most consistent team ever - you've had 60 points for every game so far, so you've managed to get 240 out of a possible four hundred in this area. Not a bad start!"

Nyte smiled, and then yelped as the enthusiastic lizardess wrapped one arm around him to spin him round into a slimy group hug with the others. He looked over his shoulder as they all broke away, turning around to see Alex laughing.

"But we've only just started, and there are going to be a lot more risks to take ahead - what do you say we get you cleaned up a little before we carry on?"

"Yeah, sounds good..." Becky's voice came from behind Nyte, and the others looked at her still dragging light green slime off her fur, working one slippery hand over another. She giggled as she noticed them staring, and shuddered as she stood upright. Beside her, Quinne looked down at her hands, fascinatedly sliding the still wet slime through her fingers.

"Okay, I think we can arrange that - come with me, we're heading to the center!"

As he finished the sentence, the red wolf jumped through the group and started around the walkway to another rolltop door on the adjacent wall. Eager to see where they were to be taken next, Nyte and the girls took off after him.



ROUND TWO

Light from the hangar area fell across the floor in a growing rectangle shape as Alex leaned on the rolltop door control, slowly drawing the metallic ribbed door into the ceiling. Once again, Nyte stooped to look underneath it as it rose, grinning to either side as Isla and Quinne crouched down alongside him - after a few yards of dim corridor area with a railed-off elevator platform in the middle, a brightly lit circular room was visible, with a large three-legged spherical device on a small raised platform as the centerpiece.

Alex moved forwards, ducking under the door slightly, and the others got up as he beckoned them to follow. Halfway along the corridor, he stopped and turned to the side, taking hold of a handle on a clear door-sized panel in the wall.

"This is one of the little decontamination booths they had dotted around..." he announced, tugging the door open so that it was between him and the team. "If you'd like to step inside, we'll have a go at cleaning you up - I think that they used a water supply that hasn't been transformed..."

"You think?" Quinne retorted, and he smiled as she padded into the cubicle, looking up at the nozzles jutting out of the ceiling. Nyte did the same - in a square arrangement just overhead were circular flower-like metal nozzles that looked like sprinklers for a fire system.

He turned around as Isla and Becky followed them in, and whimpered as the slippery lizardess shuffled back away from the door and squeezed up against him for a second. He grasped his hands against the fur on his thighs as he glanced down the way, rocking back and forth on his heels. The puppy girl padded tentatively in last, looking unsurely at the sprayer she was standing under as Quinne pulled her a little inside.

Alex began to close the clear door slowly. "I'll start the cycle from out here... it's okay, it's only rain!" he smiled as he saw Becky creeping forwards out of the booth, and put his hand on to her tummy to push her gently back inside as he clicked the door closed in front of her. The puppy girl giggled embarrassedly, taking a quick look at the sprinkler above her before putting her hands over her eyes.

Nyte watched as the red wolf moved to the side of the booth and pressed a switch, and he couldn't help twitching as there was a spurting noise from above them. He blinked as a cone-shaped spray of water started up above him, hissing at the cold feeling at first but then relaxing as it quickly warmed up. A couple of squeaks came up from the girls as their sprayers turned on as well, and he reached up to his shoulders, brushing the rapidly thinning slime away from his fur as he tilted his head around underneath the water.

"I think we might even have some soap in here..." he heard Alex say above the hiss of the water, and looked to see him rubbing his chin with one hand, stabbing at the panel in front of him with the other. Suddenly, jets of white goo spurted at the four of them from the sides of the tank, and he yelped as one splattered on his side, turning away before realizing it was whipped-up soapy water.

As Isla turned around and cupped her hands in front of her, the soapy mixture splashing and slipping over her smooth tummy, Nyte closed his eyes, trying to think of anything but what was happening in front of him as he tilted his head up a little and let the water run over his face. He brought his left hand up to let the warm soapy torrent splash over it, then turned around slowly, wriggling against the warmth on his back and feeling his fur getting less heavy all the time.

The spurts of soap sputtered and then died out, the remains of them splatting on the floor. Nyte lifted his toes out of the soapy puddle, shaking them under the water from the ceiling one by one, then he ran his hands up and over his hair as the water turned off. He looked to his side as Quinne shook

out her fur, bringing her hands around to her back to wring out her hair and bouncing on her heels to shake drips of water off herself.

"Okay, I think you're looking pretty good! Come on out, and enjoy it while it lasts..." Alex pulled the door open and beckoned them out. Becky was the first to step out, spreading her arms and shaking out her fur and hair, spraying droplets everywhere. Nyte dragged his hand down the side of his face as he was splashed, and brushed more water out of his fur as Alex approached him.

"So Nyte, you've got a decision to make - we've got three more places to visit and each of them has a good chance of getting you and your team messy again. We could stay here in the research lab, go over to the storage area..." - he pointed past the spherical device at the end of the corridor towards a set of double doors opposite it - "or there's the undersea level underneath us. Which one's it going to be?"

"Um..." Nyte looked down the corridor distractedly, still scratching at a shoulder. "Staying here?" he said uncertainly, turning around between the girls and getting a couple of nods in response. "Yeah," he concluded.

The red wolf chuckled. "A decisive team leader's what we need in this situation... still, come over here with me!" He dashed the few steps over into the white circular room, leaving the others to catch up with him.

"This is the research lab, the center of the complex," he started as he paced around the room. Nyte watched him as he walked - various doors led off the outer wall of the sterile-looking room, with banks of large prop computer equipment around the walls in between them. "This is where they used to take the artifacts that they dredged up from the ocean floor to run their tests on them... and this was the biggest one they found!"

Alex leapt up on to the center platform and slapped the side of the black alien-looking machine in the middle of the room. Nyte knew exactly what it was - the Pod had been used

on every episode of IZ he'd seen. It was a dark sphere with an array of pulsing multi-colored lights around its surface, supported about five feet off the ground by three spindly insect-like legs. Beneath it, a chair sat below the circular nozzle jutting down from its base. He stared up at it as Alex stepped over one of its legs on his way back to the team.

"So let's start with this - who's going under?"

Surprised at the sudden question, Nyte hesitated again and turned around, but saw that all three of the girls were already pointing straight at him.

"Being team leader doesn't seem to mean a whole lot sometimes, does it?" Alex chuckled, and Nyte felt his hand slide under his arm, gently turning him towards the spherical machine in the center of the room.

"Heh... no, not... with this team..." he said vaguely, distracted by feeling his heart thumping as Alex walked him towards the device. He stepped up on to the platform after him and then ducked as he shuffled underneath the machine, carefully turning around and pulling his tail out the way as he seated himself. He twisted his hands in his lap, staring up into the wide dark spout inches above his head.

He looked to Alex again as he swung a keyboard down on two hinged arms from the top of the device, positioning it in front of the seat. Nyte gave a glance down at the alien-looking symbols across it, thinking about how often he'd seen this happening to other people, then he looked over at the fascinated girls, giving them a weak smile before Alex pointed at the wall above them.

"Okay, Nyte is seated underneath what we call the Pod - it's timed to open in one minute, when it'll dispense its goo all over your team leader," he started. Nyte shuddered, and noticed Isla grinning as she watched him. "To stop the timer, you're going to have to find the five correct buttons on that keyboard - if this thing ever turns on..."

He glanced back at the ceiling above Nyte, then back to the wall. "Okay, there it is," he continued as a projected screen

suddenly flickered into life, showing a view from a camera somewhere above and in front of Nyte. He withdrew his fingers from above the keys as he saw the large projected image of his hands, leaving the array of symbols visible. "You've seen this before, haven't you?" he asked, and smiled at the nods from all three of the girls.

"Yeah, I hope someone else is better at it than I am..." the fox girl responded.

Alex smiled back as he continued. "We'll see! Most of these keys have a pair somewhere on the keyboard, but five of them are unique. It's those five that Nyte's got to press, and hitting a wrong one will cost him five seconds." Nyte nodded distractedly along to the description, already studying the overwhelming set of unfamiliar lines and dots in front of him.

"So you've got sixty seconds to save him - let's start it up!"

Alex jabbed his pocket computer in the air as he pressed something on it, and Nyte felt his stomach lurch as a steady electronic ticking noise started from somewhere above him, a timer being overlaid on the screen. He reached one finger forward but then retracted it again unsurely, staring at the keyboard but finding it impossible to concentrate on any symbol and hoping with each second that one of the girls would break the silence.

"Up there," Isla spoke up, and he jerked up to look at the screen as she pointed to somewhere in the top row. "The..." She traced it in the air with a finger. "The two lines..."

"No, that's down here as well..." Nyte sagged, his finger halfway to the button as Quinne tapped on the wall, indicating an identical button on the bottom row. He looked back to the keyboard, staring at the one beside where she was pointing and then glancing around the rest of the board again.

"This one?" he called out, reaching forward to press it.

"Take your finger away..." Isla called back to him, and he quickly lifted his hand, his heart pounding as he waited.

"Go on," she said eventually, turning round to watch.

"Yeah," Becky confirmed with a nod. As he and the fox girl watched him, Nyte hovered his finger over the button, hesitated and then tapped it.

A harsh buzz rang out above him and he twitched back, seeing the girls all jump as well as five seconds blipped off the timer. Quinne rapidly span back to the wall to see the button he'd pressed lit up in red, with a matching one on the other side of the board flashing as well.

Isla growled, smacking her hand on top of her head as she saw the mistake. As Nyte hovered his hand around the keyboard, aware that they were rapidly running out of time, he noticed Becky staring up at the center. He looked back at the board in front of him and thought he saw the one she was looking at.

The puppy girl ran her hands tensely through her hair as she looked up at the button. "Yes!" she exclaimed, bunching her hands into fists as she saw Nyte's projected finger come forward to press it. This time, a lighter bell sound played, and the button lit up in yellow.

Nyte breathed out heavily as he uncurled his toes, jiggling one knee involuntarily as he saw Alex pace around the room out of the corner of his eye.

"You finally got one! But you're going to have to speed this up..." the red wolf announced, nodding at the timer as it ticked past twenty seconds.

"There," Isla pointed confidently up as soon as Alex had finished speaking. Nyte quickly put his finger forward, and as the lizardette nodded, pressed down more firmly than before, smiling as the sound of the bell played again. His expression turned into an anxious grin as the sound of the timer changed, counting down the last ten seconds with a more urgent alarm sound.

"This one! The bottom left," Quinne suddenly shouted above the noise, bouncing up and down and tapping on the wall at the peak of her jump. Nyte glanced up at the screen then back to the keyboard, putting his finger over the button.

Knowing there was no way to avoid what was about to happen, he took a breath and pushed down on it.

He gave an involuntary wince as the buzzer sounded one more time, this time followed by an alarm bell. The keyboard swung up and away from him on its arms, and he followed it with his eyes just before there was a snicking noise above his head, a cold wave splashed over him and a dome of green stuff splurged down across his vision.

Nyte yelped, closing his eyes and putting his hands up instinctively just in time for the cool gunge to splatter across his hands and forearms, the slippery stuff feeling like cold water for just a second before it began to slither thickly down his fur. He hunched his shoulders up instinctively as he felt the thick ooze creeping down his back and around his neck, the noise of the klaxons above him mixing with the continuous splatting sound as the gunge pushed his ears flat.

He tossed his head aside out of the downpour and turned his palms up the way, rubbing his slippery fingers together, then gasped as the wide column of gunge spewed heavily on to his chest and lap. Drawing his hands in to protect himself, he smiled as he felt blobs of the heavy slop splashing up on to his already coated chest.

Eventually he felt the ooze slowly easing off, the column twitching as pockets of air came out of the nozzle above him. He yelped as it caught his muzzle, then straightened up underneath it again, feeling the stuff splash outwards wildly from the top of his head for a second before it folded inwards, slopping down on to his shoulders and then pouring gently over the top of his head and oozing down around his ears. He bowed his head forwards, his gungy hair spilling over his shoulders as he felt the last drizzle slithering down his head, dripping from his soaked fringe into his lap.

He stayed hunched over with his hair in front of his face for a couple of seconds, smiling to himself as he heard the girls cheering from somewhere in front of him. He opened his eyes and saw his front completely slathered in thick green stuff, an

opaque drizzle of it still pouring off the front of his hair. With a small laugh, he put his hand underneath the trickle, turning it over as the ooze poured over it.

"Well, I don't think I need to announce the result of that game - Nyte looks like he got the message..." At the sound of Alex's voice, Nyte reached his hands up underneath his gungy hair and pushed it back up and over his head. He twitched as the collected slime he'd pushed off dripped down his back, and blinked in the rain of slippery drops still splatting on to him from the nozzle above his head.

"I'm afraid that you only found two out of the five... but at least you got some! I thought I was going to have to give you your first zero there..." Alex came up on to the platform, stepping carefully among the spilled slime, and Nyte dragged his feet through the slippery green layer that was spreading across the floor. "Still," he continued as he offered his hand to Nyte, "you've broken your streak of sixties - that's forty points for the first game of this round. Let's see if you get above sixty next time instead..."

Nyte smiled sheepishly as he was led down from the platform, feeling all three of the girls' eyes on him and realizing that his swim shorts were plastered firmly against his lap with slime. As the red wolf let him go, he tried to subtly pick them away again, looking down as Alex approached the fox girl.

"Quinne, I know you were getting panicked at the end, but that last guess was right next to its pair..." He indicated up at the board showing the last wrong press that Nyte had made as time had run out. "You didn't do that just to gunge Nyte, did you?"

The fox girl laughed in response, then realized that her hesitance to answer made her look more suspicious. "Wait... no!" she protested as the others looked over at her, her eyebrows raising and hands out in front of her before she shrank back embarrassedly.

"Nyte," Alex continued, spinning round to look at him, and he quickly took his hands off his shorts, shaking his head to

clear his fringe of the dripping slime. "I know I might have framed the question here, but who do you want to play the next game?"

He smiled as he looked past the red wolf at the vulpine, who folded her arms, pouting playfully as she skimmed one toe on the floor. "I didn't gunge you on purpose, honest..." she said sweetly, but failed to stop her shoulders shaking in laughter.

"Quinne," he confirmed with a nod as he smiled over at her.

"Okay!" Alex drew out the word as he turned around.

"Quinne is the one..." He paused as he put his hand on the fennec's head, and she whimpered from underneath it.

"...Who's not going in a gunge machine in the next game," he continued, smiling at the vulpine's shocked expression. "No, this time you're entrusting your fur to her - come on and I'll show you!"

He slid his hand down to take the fennec's, and pointed towards a third corridor at right-angles to the other two as he encouraged her towards it. As they jogged a few yards down the passage, Nyte realized it was the same one they had come in by before they had gone through the hatch - this time, Alex came to a sudden stop at a double door to the side, letting go of the fox girl and putting his hands on both halves of the swinging doors.

He looked back over his shoulder with a grin. "You're going to just love this one," he said, before pushing sharply on both doors, swinging them forcefully open. The fennec ducked under his arm to be the first one inside, and Nyte caught one of the doors as it came back, following her in to the room.

The first thing he noticed was a rectangular alcove cut out of the middle of the short wall on their left, about as tall as he was and wide enough to contain a blowup couch that looked like it had barely enough room to seat three people. A large lever was mounted on the wall next to it. Opposite the enclosure, the other end of the room was divided into three

sections by two low soft blue barriers, about twelve feet long, and on the wall at the end were three tall thin vertical displays, each with another lever next to them.

"Okay, let's get you into here first of all, and I'll explain what's going to happen to you..." Alex moved to the opposite side of the alcove and unlatched the slightly curved door on the front of it, swinging it open and beckoning the team over. Nyte and Quinne came over ahead of the other two girls, and he ducked as he walked in front of the booth, seeing three circular spouts jutting slightly out of its ceiling. "Not you, Quinne - you're staying safe and dry for now..."

Alex put his hand on Nyte's back and guided him around the door, and he stepped carefully inside, his eyes still on the nozzles as he sat down on the clear-pink plastic surface. Yelping as it buckled down a little further than he had expected, he bounced himself over to the far end in a sideways shuffle as Isla came in next to him.

He squeaked under his breath as the smooth lizardess squeezed up right next to him to allow the puppy girl to follow her inside, reaching up to take her hands as she hesitantly ducked into the alcove with her eyes on the ceiling as Nyte's had been. Carefully, she turned around and wriggled herself on to the seat as Nyte flopped back to look upwards.

"Actually, Nyte..." He glanced back at Alex, who was still poised to close the tank's door on them. "I think as the team leader, we should get you to be a gentleman and take the messiest seat for the sake of the girls..."

The red wolf stretched his hand over the door towards him, and Nyte took it, hauling himself upwards and glancing over his shoulder, stooping awkwardly as Alex nodded to the middle of the couch where the lizard girl was seated. Eagerly, Isla scooted over to the end of the seat as Nyte stepped over her legs, then he squeezed himself in between the two girls as he sat down, Becky yipping and twitching a little aside as his gungy leg touched hers.

Brushing a strand of wet hair out of his face, he leaned back on the seat again to look up at the nozzles - there was now one directly above each of them, circular ends of black pipes that jutted down about an inch from the tank's ceiling. As the door was closed on them, he whimpered a little as he shifted his eyes to the left and right at the two bikini-clad girls he was sitting between, drawing his arms in slightly tighter and clasping his hands carefully over his lap.

"Okay, Quinne, we've got your teammates in position, and here's what you're going to do..." The red wolf put his arm around the fox girl as he faced away from the booth, pacing her towards the other end of the room. "Your job for this game is to try and stop the gunge tank from going off above any of your friends back there. Each of the pipes above them is going to increase slowly in pressure, like this..."

He stepped out of the way so that the others could see the middle display that they were standing next to - Nyte felt the girls leaning slightly closer to watch as it slowly filled with a green bar, which eventually faded into yellow as it approached the middle. "And you can drop the pressure by pulling the lever next to each of these bars, like this..." He took hold of the handle next to it, and hauled it downwards, holding it in place as a loud hissing noise played and the counter dropped to nearly empty.

"You'll have to watch all three of them, because the moment one of those bars fills, the pipe above Isla, Nyte or Becky's going to open, and they're going to get a bit of gunge. And I said that Nyte had the messiest seat earlier because I don't think he's going to avoid getting splashed if either of our two girls end up getting it..."

He laughed as all three of the team members inside the tank looked up to the nozzles simultaneously, and Nyte flicked his eyes to his left and right, trying and failing to disguise a shudder.

"I said 'if'!" Alex moved to touch the fox girl's shoulders again, then left her as he dashed to the lever next to the booth.

"But it's going to be up to Quinne to save you... feeling confident, Quinne?"

"Uh..." The pink fennec glanced over her shoulders at the levers at the end of the room. "Yeah, I suppose..." she shrugged with a grin, and jumped from foot to foot in a slow jog on the spot. "I could never really understand pressure, but I can just about handle running!"

Alex smiled back at her before turning to face the three team members in the booth. "Okay, I'm going to stay off to the side, 'cause I think it's going to get quite gungy in there..." Nyte took a deep breath, trying to keep himself still. "Quinne's got ninety seconds - I'm starting it up!"

Nyte shuddered at the mechanical clunk as Alex pulled the lever, and with a blipping noise, all three counters at the far end of the room began to rise. Quinne bounced from her left foot to her right, watching the middle and right bars filling faster than the one on the left, then dashed straight ahead, reaching the lever and wrenching it down the way to empty the display. As soon as she let go, she turned around and jogged back the way, Nyte leaning over to try and see how full the bar on the right was getting. He felt Isla bouncing at his side as the fox girl ran towards her lever, just making it before the pressure counter reached the top.

Becky whimpered, and Nyte glanced to his left to see her clasping her hands over her muzzle as she stared at her bar. He glanced over at it himself, seeing it slowly rising to the top as his own approached the middle again. Quinne looked at them both as she quickly came back towards the center. "Get Becky's!" he encouraged with a point, and the pink fennec broke into a dash across the room, only getting halfway towards it when it turned red to the accompaniment of a buzzer noise.

Nyte whipped around to look at Becky as she quickly put her face in her hands. Above her, the black nozzle snicked down an inch, releasing a column of murky orange gunge that splattered over her head with a wet smacking noise. He leaned

away, grinning and closing one eye as the slime domed out towards him, and heard the puppy girl give a high pitched squeak as he felt the orange slop spew over his left shoulder and side.

After a second the nozzle clicked back up again, stopping the flow and leaving Becky shaking her hands in front of her face, drumming her feet on the floor as the gunge dripped down from her hair and fur. Nyte put a hand out to steady himself, catching her knee before shifting it quickly to the slimy plastic surface, then he looked up to see Quinne at his lever again, watching the bar on the right as she pulled the middle lever twice.

With shouts of encouragement from all three of them, the fox girl sprinted around the barrier to go down the right hand side of the room, the blue lizardette next to Nyte practically shrieking as she watched the counter rapidly rise. As she skidded to a halt and put her hands on the lever, the buzzer sounded again, and Isla squeezed her eyes shut with an excited grin just before her nozzle clicked and splurged dark green gunge out on to her head.

Nyte put his hands up instinctively, the slimy wave splattering through his fingers and on to his chest and lap as the pretty blue lizardess squirmed under the gunge, leaning on the back of the sofa and letting the last of the downpour splash on her front. As the pipe snicked shut, she raised her arms and wriggled upright again, and Nyte gave a small whimper as she brought her hands around to shake the gunge out from her bikini top, his eyes dropping to her slippery chest.

He forced himself to look away, turning around to glance at Becky and then looking out to Quinne again. She had her back to them in the center of the room, unsure where to go as Nyte's counter neared the top of the display, with Becky's not far behind it. She took a step towards the center lever, then shook her head and took off to the side, sprinting down the left side of the room as Nyte gasped and looked at the nozzle above him.

As he heard the buzzer, he closed his eyes and faced the front, smiling nervously as he heard the click above his own head. He yipped as he felt the thick, heavy gunge spew on to his head, and then grinned from underneath the downpour as he felt the two girls leaning away from the sloppy dome splattering out from him. He shook his hair out as the gunge nozzle shut off, making them squeak again as they were sprayed with the slime dripping from it, then he heard the alarm again and twitched as he felt another slimy wave splurge on to him from Isla's side of the booth.

He dragged his free hand across his eyes before blinking them open, glancing down at the slop splattering across his right side as he leaned away from it, then following the wave of slime with his eyes as it came inward, pouring over the lizardess's head as she squirmed in the seat next to him. She brought both hands up as the spout clicked up again, pushing the gunge off the back of her head and shaking with giggles as she opened her eyes to look out again.

"Come on, Quinne!" she encouraged as she saw the fox girl slowing down, going towards her lever from Nyte's at a jog and pulling it down just in time to stop the counter again. Looking over at the other two bars, she saw the one on the left starting to reach past the yellow area, and jogged for it wearily. Nyte looked as the puppy girl next to him shouted encouragement, her hands wiping at her messy hair, before her calls turned into a high pitched shriek as the buzzer went off, her hands clasping over her eyes as the gunge nozzle snicked down and she disappeared under another sloppy orange dome.

Nyte shook his head as the slime splashed on to his cheek, raising his arm up into the wave as the canine wriggled under the downpour. As it shut off, he watched the glistening slime slither down the puppy girl for a moment before shuddering and looking back out to the front, where the pink vulpine was turning away and heading back to the center.

"Behind you!" he called suddenly as Becky's counter started rising rapidly from empty, and Isla joined in the shouting as

the fox girl turned around, too late to get back to the lever. Becky whimpered as she heard the buzzer again, and dodged to the side by leaning over Nyte, who gasped and put his hand on the canine's slippery shoulder as the gunge from the nozzle poured down on to her side, splattering out over the tank's door as she shrieked through her laughter.

The puppy girl put her hand up into the column of gunge, sending orange drops spewing over Nyte and Isla just before it shut off, then she straightened up again, looking down at her slime-coated front as she adjusted her swimsuit top. Nyte squeezed his eyes shut, faced the front and then opened them again to see his own counter heading into the red zone. The fox girl, hovering at the barrier between his lever and Isla's, suddenly took off to the right and gave a last sprint to pull Isla's lever.

Nyte watched the bar opposite him reach the top, a grin spreading across his face as he tapped his feet in the puddle of gunge that had collected on the floor. Quinne was walking back from Isla's lever as she watched it, but shook her head as it neared the top. Nyte closed his eyes and flattened his ears a little as the buzzer rang, and he twitched down as he was covered by the cool gunge again, tilting his head from side to side underneath the smooth sloppy downpour to splash it out towards the girls.

With a click from the nozzle, the gunge flow turned into a couple of heavy drips, and flicking his head to the side to get his sticky hair out his face, he blinked his eyes open as he heard a rising series of electronic beeps. Wiping his eyes, he looked up through his dripping hair to see the three bars at the end of the room all rising rapidly, then flicked his eyes to Quinne, who was shifting from foot to foot, unsure of where to go. With a sudden click and lowering humming noise, as if the power to some large machine had suddenly been cut, they all froze just before reaching the top.

"Quinne!" Alex called as he pushed himself off the wall, striding towards the exhausted fennec girl as she put her hands

on her knees. He gently took her arm, guiding her over to sit down on the top of one of the barriers. "You made a great effort there - I'd say they got a little bit slimy, but you've done enough to earn your team 65 points for the game."

Tiredly bringing a hand up to flick one side of her hair back behind her shoulder, the fox girl closed her eyes and nodded, a small smile on her open muzzle. "Yeah, that was... tougher than it looked..." she panted.

"But there's still..." He looked over to the tank, and Nyte looked down at his slimy fur and the two completely gunge-coated girls he was sitting between. "...as difficult as it might be to believe, there's still a load of gunge up there, and the pipes are ready to burst over all three of them - do you want to set them free, or earn another twenty points by emptying the vat on to them?"

"What?!" Becky looked up from combing through her hair, and Nyte watched the pink fennec's face carefully as she grinned, pinching the top of her muzzle.

"Oh..." she hesitated, laughing as she stared over at her three slimy team mates. "You'd do the same to me, wouldn't you?" She grinned as Isla nodded decisively, then looked down to her feet as she shuffled them on the floor. Nyte swallowed as he watched her, then his ears pricked as she spoke again. "Yeah, I'll turn it on," she decided with an embarrassed laugh, turning back to the red wolf.

"Then go over there and pull the lever!"

"Oh..." The puppy girl sagged, her eyes going up to the gunge nozzle above her again as a streak of slime dripped off her muzzle. Nyte nodded, having guessed what the response would be, then yelped and jumped as he felt a slimy hand drape around his shoulders. He glanced at the grinning, gungy lizardess as she budged up a little closer to him, and then at Becky's nervous face as she crawled her right hand around his back to join in the hug. Swallowing, he took his hands off his gunge-soaked lap, hoping it was coated enough to disguise his excitement, and raised both his hands up to put them around

his team mates' sides, whimpering as Isla's slippery hand slithered down to his chest. He looked up at the fennec girl, who was reaching up to the large switch next to them.

"We're gonna get you for this, you know," Isla said cheerily from the opposite side of the tank, and grinned out at the fennec as the cringing puppy girl nodded along with her. Quinne sagged and giggled, supporting herself with her hands on the lever.

"Yeah, I know," she grinned wearily, and then tugged the lever down. Nyte twitched as the sound he'd heard before played in reverse, the three bars at the other end of the room filled all the way, and there was a blare from a klaxon overhead.

His ears flicked as he heard a rushing sound from his back, and ducked forwards as a wave of gunge splurged out of the grille at the back of the tank behind them, streaks of bright green spilling over his shoulders as it coated his arms around the girls' backs. He shivered as it slithered down him, tightening his grip on the two of them a little as he felt them both squirming, their movement making the blowup seat buckle a little underneath him.

The klaxon sounded twice more and then gave another prolonged blare, before all three of the overhead nozzles snicked down. Nyte yelped as he felt the heavy gunge envelop him again, seeing the overhead lights dim through his closed eyes as the slime splashed out over all their heads, waves of goo splurging on to his shoulders off Becky and Isla. He held his breath, a grin frozen on his face as the flying gunge completely surrounded him for a couple of seconds, before he felt the slime from the squirming puppy girl's side gradually beginning to ease off.

Becky slithered away to lean to the other side as the gunge above her slowed, leaving Nyte and Isla hugging each other underneath the gunge. As the continuous splattering noise went on, he realized where his hand was and hastily slid it a little further down her slippery skin, grinning to himself as she

grabbed it and held it over her tummy. Tentatively, he reached his free hand over to clasp it on top of hers as the gungy downpours slowly eased off to drizzles, and he shook his head to get the heavy strands of his hair out of his face. Opening his eyes, he smiled weakly as he caught the eye of the gunge-coated curvy lizard girl he had his arm around, her blue skin now completely covered with a dripping green coat. With a fiendish grin, she reached her gungy hands up to his hair and slithered them around, making him jerk his hands off her as they shot halfway to his head. Holding his hands up beside him, he squirmed underneath her slippery grasp.

As she ran her hands down the sides of his face, his heavy ears pricked as there was a hissing noise, and he gasped as jets of foam started up above them, slopping from side to side and quickly sticking to their gungy skin and fur. Hearing Becky squeak from behind him, he closed his eyes again, the blobby foam and gunge mixture slithering down over his face as he bowed his head down and shook the end of his muzzle.

Feeling the foam above him finally sputter to a halt, the last blobs drizzling down the back of his neck, Nyte raised his arms, twitching at the feeling of the gloop sliding around them and dripping from his fur. He brought his hands together and pushed his soaking messy hair up and away from his eyes, slicking it back over his head and twitching his ears a little as messy strands of it fell back to pour streams of slime into his lap. His head still bowed, he flicked his eyes up to look at the grinning red wolf.

"That," Alex said through his laughter, "has got to be one of the best ones ever - you three look amazing! Quinne, come over here..."

As he turned around to beckon the laughing fennec girl over to the front of the tank, Nyte flopped back in the seat, looking from side to side at the gungy girls next to him. Isla looked down at herself and slipped her hands over her tummy, leaving swirls of her blue skin visible underneath the gloopy layer, while Becky shook herself out opposite her, squeaking as

the slime kept slithering down into her fur. Hastily, he returned his hands to his lap, then slid one off awkwardly, trying to look as nonchalant as possible but already hoping the cameras weren't trained on him. He looked out over the gunge-streaked door of the booth to see Alex grinning as widely as he'd ever seen him, and at his side, the fox girl stood hunched over, a hand over her mouth with her eyes wide above it.

"You definitely got a result there, didn't you?" the red wolf asked as he put his hand on the pink fox's near shoulder, and Quinne nodded, slowly dropping her hand away and smiling nervously at her three messy teammates. "Quinne chose to gunge you in the end, but she did a fair job of keeping you clean until then, and all of that's earned you 85 points!"

Nyte weakly raised his arms up, hand in hand with the girls on either side of him. "And, as pointless as I think this question might be..." Alex continued, moving around to the nervous-looking fennec's back and putting his hands on both her shoulders, "who do you want to get extremely messy in the next game?"

"Her!" Isla called, jabbing a finger out of the tank, off-green slime dripping from her fingertip. Quinne looked embarrassedly at the floor, quivering with nervous laughter.

"No tricks this time?" Nyte smiled, shaking his head and squirming a little towards the lizard girl as he felt a blob of foam slithering down the left side of his face. She bounced with the movement of the inflatable couch, and looked towards him, bringing her hand up and splatting it down on to his head to ruffle his gungy hair again.

"No tricks," Alex grinned. "Come on out, back to safety..."

He reached forward and undid the catch at the side of the tank, using two outstretched fingers to swing the slimy door open. Nyte twitched again as Isla wiggled herself up from the crowded seat, her hand pushing down on his shoulder as she stooped out of the tank, and he looked at the glistening fingers of green gunge slipping down her bare back as she got out and stood up. With a glance back at the streaks of gunge sliding all

down the tank's walls and the slime-drenched puppy girl beside him, he reluctantly slipped across the seat away from her, and felt the stuff ooze between his toes as he put his feet down on the floor once again.

Alex closed the door behind Becky as she came out of the tank, her hands claspings her orange and green-coated hair with thick drops of the stuff splatting down from her elbows. As he watched, she parted her hands, squeaking as she looked down at herself and shook with nervous laughter.

"Are you okay?" Nyte grinned at her, crouching down to look up at her and catch her eye.

"Yeah..." She bit her lip, throwing globs of gunge off her hands to the floor. "You're not looking much better!"

"I don't suppose saying 'sorry' would help at all?" Quinne's voice came from behind them, and Nyte looked over his shoulder at the pink fennec, who had her hands clasped behind her back, attempting a cute and innocent smile again.

"I don't think so - come on, we've got some payback to do!" Alex called as he crouched down, coming up behind the fox girl. He straightened up from a stoop, catching her across the back of the knees with his hand and sweeping her up to carry her in front of him. She yelped and kicked her legs in surprise at first, but settled down, clinging on to his shoulders and looking towards where they were going as they headed for the door.

"I think we'll put her in the game over in that room," the red wolf continued, nodding towards a door coming off the circular wall of the main chamber. He led the way to it as Quinne looked over his shoulder at her gunge-coated teammates squelching behind them, then he spun round and stopped next to the couple of steps leading up to the door.

"Can you just get this for me, Nyte, I've got my hands full..." he said, lifting the fox girl up a bit as he spoke. "It's two... nine..."

Hurriedly, Nyte caught the handrail on the steps and leapt up them to the panel, tapping in the code as Alex read it out to

him. With a confirmation beep, the door hummed open, and as Alex came forward behind him, he took a couple of steps into the room on the other side.

He looked up immediately as he came in - in front of him, several wide pipes came down into the large room from the ceiling, finishing at just above head height with chains dangling off the closed caps. Below the pipes, a set of crumbling barriers, discarded rusty-looking mechanical parts and other debris were strewn around, forming a twisting course that led underneath each of the pipes in turn and ended at a large cluster of them in the far corner.

Nyte looked back as Alex came carefully through the doorway, twisting sideways to carry the fox girl through. Quinne looked off to the side of the room as he turned, and Nyte almost laughed out loud as her eyes widened, her ears pricking up with a near-scream as she instantly worked out what was going to happen. Up against the wall was a clear plastic tank mounted on wheels, a few feet long and reaching up to waist height, and inside it, a couple of pads were arranged to form a reclined seat.

"Oh, no no no no no!" She put her hands up around the wolf's neck and nuzzled her head into his chest, her shoulders shaking in helpless laughter as she was carried towards the vat. Isla and Becky came through the door behind them, both giving wide grins as they watched Alex wriggling the fennec girl away from him as he leaned down to place her inside. As he straightened up and beckoned the others over, she put her hands up on to the tank's sides to wriggle herself slightly more upright, looking over at the entrance to the course and the first pipe looming down from the ceiling.

"Do I need to explain what's going to happen here?" the wolf smiled. Nyte shook his head as the pink fennec winced, moving her hips up to adjust her tail behind her and then pulling down her T-shirt firmly as she lay back. She clasped her hands and squeezed them between her thighs, looking up at her team mates' faces as Isla and Becky came in to grab the

handles next to her head and feet. As she looked down to face her, Becky twitched and slicked her gungy hair back behind her head.

"All right - as everyone already knows, then, what you're going to have to do in this game is guide the vat underneath the gunge pipes," Alex continued as he walked away and pointed up with both hands at the large props hanging above the course laid out over the rest of the room. He turned as he put his hand up next to the chain dangling off the nearest one. "When it's underneath one, just pull these chains," - he mimed tugging downwards - "and you'll release the slime inside. The more gunge you get into that vat in two minutes, the more points you'll get. Sound good to you, Quinne?" he asked as he took a couple of steps back towards the group.

The fox girl gave a theatrical sigh and folded her arms in front of her, but Nyte could see the eagerness in her eyes as she looked upwards. "I... guess so," she said, and looked around at the faces of her three teammates staring down at her. "You guys aren't going to go easy on me, are you..."

"No, I told you we'd get you back!" Isla grinned down at her.

"You did... but I don't think she was counting on it being quite so soon! Quinne, I can't lie to you - you're going to get covered in gunge, but just how much is up to these three. And they've got two minutes - get going! Go on!" He clapped his hands together and struck a pose as he pointed over at the first pipe, and Nyte almost had to leap out of the way as Isla wrenched the vat towards herself, looking over her shoulder as she skipped backwards towards the course entrance.

Nyte straightened up and dashed after the lizardess and stumbling puppy girl as the fennec in the tank wriggled and put her hands out to keep her balance. He saw her tense as the first pipe approached, and Isla stretched around behind her with one hand to yank the chain as she passed underneath it. The cap on the end of the tank burst open, releasing a stream of purple gunge that splattered out over Isla's head briefly before

the fox girl tensed, squeaking as her legs went underneath the slop. She twisted to the side as she came through the gunge stream, the gloop splashing outwards off her and painting the sides of the vat, and Becky dodged aside, hunching her shoulders as she squirmed past the thinning column.

"Oh, that's a very quick start..." Alex laughed as the lizard girl shook the fresh slime away from her head, still running determinedly away across the room. "Quinne, that was just the beginning - your next one's coming up very soon!"

Nyte blinked and ran forwards to catch up with the girls, putting a hand up against the continuing drips as he padded through the slime on the floor. As he approached, the two girls were pushing the tank up against the far wall underneath another pipe. The fox girl, who had a stripe of purple stuff up her legs and one side of her T-shirt, clasped her hands over her face as she was maneuvered underneath it, and he leapt forward to pull the chain away from the cap above her.

He twitched as he heard the thick liquid spew out of the end of the pipe, a flood of yellow goo splattering out over the young fox girl's tummy as she squeaked from behind her hands. As the smiling Becky nudged the vat a little further forward with one finger, making the slop splurge on to Quinne's chest, the fox girl took her hands off her face and raised them up into the gungy downpour, and Nyte twitched aside as a lick of the gunge caught him on the chest.

"Yes! You're well on your way to filling it now, but you've got to get it going again..." Alex encouraged from behind them, strolling down the track towards them and sidling carefully past the purple gunge still dripping from the first pipe. As the smooth gloppy column slowed to a drizzle, the fox girl looked down at her yellow-coated front with an open-mouthed smile. Isla budged the tank forwards from her side, and Nyte scampered around to help with Becky's side as she tugged hard on her handle. Quinne squeaked as a wave of the collected gunge sloshed up towards her face as they took the vat down another straight path lined with diagonal pipes coming out of

two large tanks at the sides, this time with Becky and Nyte at the front.

Nyte turned halfway around, keeping one hand on the vat as he looked down the passage ahead of them. Skittering his feet on the floor to slow the vat down slightly, he took hold of the chain dangling off the first pipe at his side and tugged it as he straightened up. He held back a grin as the fennec girl twisted to one side, putting her hands up as bright green gunge spewed over her from the diagonal pipe, dripping in thick dollops from her outstretched hands. As Becky opened the pipe at the other side, another darker stream splurged right into her face, and she yelped, shaking her head rapidly as she wiped at her eyes.

Quinne put her hands underneath the four-inch-deep gunge to wriggle up in her seat again as Nyte and Becky emptied two more gunge pipes on to her from the sides. The girl grinned with her eyes firmly closed as the green slime splattered over her shoulders, fingers of the stuff slipping down over her soaked T-shirt and plastering it further to her chest. She stuck her hands out in front of her to let the last drizzle flow down her arms as she was carried past the pipes, then shook them into the vat and wiped down her muzzle as she opened her eyes and cringed at where she was heading next.

The team struggled the vat around another corner, and Becky visibly ducked as she walked under a pair of pipes coming down from the ceiling. Hurriedly, she tugged the vat past them, reaching up to grasp the chain on one as Nyte took the other. He looked down at the fennec girl, who kept her head bowed, smiling from underneath the thick slime dripping from her face. As he saw Becky pull her chain, the pipe burst open above the fox and a column of orange gunge splurged down into the vat over her lap, making a thick glooping noise as the thick liquid in the tank rippled slowly outwards.

Nyte tugged down as well, and a deluge of dark blue gunge burst from the left hand pipe, making the fennec squeak

from behind the pouring slime. She eeped as the vat filled quickly up to her tummy, the two colors of gunge mingling into a murky green as the stuff sloshed from one end of the vat to the other with her squirming. As the downpours slowed, Isla put her hands on her end of the tank again, pushing the fennec forwards into the remains of the gunge, the drizzles slopping over her shoulders and then dripping over the lizard girl's head as she passed underneath them.

"Okay, you're coming up to something different now..." Alex called from somewhere behind them as they pulled the vat back towards the other end of the room. Nyte looked over his shoulder to see a row of metal frames above the next straight section of the course - each frame had a rectangular box balanced on the top, each with a strip jutting down off their front that ended in round sections painted to look like targets.

"I'd get out of the way at the front," Alex continued, motioning to his sides as he chased after them, "and just let Quinne go under there herself...!"

The fox girl wiped her eyes and gasped as she looked at where she was heading, and Nyte let go, jumping aside with Becky as Isla gave the vat a last shove. Quinne shrieked as the vat hurtled towards the first target, hitting it with a clank and flipping it upwards as the first of the boxes tipped towards her. Nyte twitched as a wave of translucent green slime spewed out of it, the fennec hunching down as the gunge splattered on to her chest and face.

Nyte wiped at his shoulder, where he'd been caught by the massive wave, as he watched the three other tanks tip down into the covered section of the track, the pink fox shrieking and laughing as she was coated with three more colors of the jelly-like slime. He looked back as Isla whooped, pumping her arms in the air, then ducked and scurried after the vat through the rain of gunge dripping from the edges of the tanks.

The nearly full tank had stopped against a thick pad on the wall of the room. As he straightened up, he grabbed the tank's slippery handle and leaned around to look at the fox girl - she

was holding her arms above the sloppy liquid she was sitting in, stringy drips of the stuff slithering off her fur to gloop on to the surface. As he took hold of the gungy handle and turned the vat around, she yelped and dropped her hands to the bottom of the vat for balance, thick splashes of the gunk splashing up from where she dipped her hands in.

Isla emerged from the tunnel ahead of Becky, and Nyte shuddered as she straightened up, her smooth skin glistening under the coating of slippery slime. She bounded forward to grab the opposite handle of the vat, and as Becky joined his side to help push the tank around the last section of the track, Nyte moved his eyes up to the ceiling to try to keep them off the chest of the gungy lizardess opposite him. They were now one corner away from the end of the course, where a cluster of seven pipes came down from the ceiling above an enclosed space with extra nozzles visible on the floor. He looked back at it as they approached the final U-turn, but then yelped in surprise and frustration as the front wheel caught on the near corner.

"Come on! You've got about fifteen seconds left..." Alex called over to them as Isla gritted her teeth and wrenched the front of the vat aside. Quinne yelped as she clung on to the sides, the gunge-drenched shoulders of her T-shirt visible above the mixed slime as she wriggled out of the slop. Nyte was almost pulled off his feet as the lizardess leaned back, hauling the tank forwards again, and Becky let go as he stumbled around the wide circle of the corner after her. With a final tug, Isla pulled the tank towards her and dodged aside, and the fox girl shrieked as its momentum carried her under the pipes to stop with a thump against the padded back wall.

"That's it, you made it," Alex shouted quickly above the urgent noise of the timer, "now pull that lever and get out of there!"

Nyte's eyes flicked to the lever next to him as Becky stretched her leg over the debris that formed the last corner, and he lunged in front of her to grab the black and yellow

striped handle. Pulling it sharply towards him, he looked up as the fennec turned around to face her team mates, the gunge in the vat swirling around her. With a mechanical grinding noise, the lights in the room dimmed, leaving her spotlighted underneath the pipes.

The familiar industrial siren blared above them, and Nyte skipped back in surprise a couple of steps as a mixture of orange, brown and green gunge spewed out of the pipes above Quinne's head, crashing into the vat around her and swallowing her in a thick mucky downpour. Becky squeaked and scampered behind him, grasping his hand as the slime splashed outwards from the fox girl to smack against the sides of the vat and the floor. The downpour bulged as it splurged away from her, and all the team could see of her were her arms poking forwards out of the gungy flood, then a slime-coated leg shooting up from the depths of the vat as she slipped forwards and dunked her head underneath.

As the glutinous downpours slowed, the fox girl's head burst back up through the murky-colored gungy surface, her mouth open in shock with streaks of gunge dripping from its corners, and wriggling her shoulders forward away from the thin drizzles of slop still spilling into the vat around her. As she moved, curtains of slime dripped from all along the edges of the full tank, breaking away thickly as they smacked to the floor.

The fox's soaked ears flattened further as a hissing noise came up from around her, and she cringed down as three jets of foam shot up from the nozzles on the floor around the vat, peaking above her and then falling on to her head in a blobby, gooey rain. Nyte squirmed uncomfortably as he watched the stuff play over her soaked chest and face, the foam staining to the gunge colors as the overhead pipes continued to drizzle over the young fennec. She pulled her hands out of the gunge bath, the thick murky slop dripping from her fingers, before clasping them on her head, wiping down her muzzle but quickly disappearing behind a layer of foam again.

The alarm finally wound down as the foam sprays sputtered to a halt. Nyte looked behind him and grinned as the puppy girl finally let go of his hand, then glanced to his side to see Alex clapping his hands, bracing his foot on top of a low barrier then hopping over it towards them.

"I'd say you got your revenge pretty well," he said as he approached, looking down at the drenched fox girl in the full vat of slop. "And as you got right to the end, you've earned your first hundred points for the game - feeling good about that, Quinne?"

Quinne gave a small whimper in response, her eyes invisible under her tousled, gungy hair but an open-mouthed smile frozen on her muzzle. She nodded and put her hands up to her face, dragging the stuff away from her eyes in both directions and leaving finger-shaped ridges behind in the foamy slime mixture.

"Let me help you out from under there..." He stepped forward and took hold of the dripping near handle of the vat, pulling it and Quinne gently out from underneath the cluster of pipes as the rest of the team shuffled aside. The fox girl ran one hand over another and wiped at her eyes again then finally blinked them open, her shoulders shaking in giggles as she looked down at the chest-deep gunge surrounding her. "How does having a bath in gunge feel?"

"I dunno, it's kind of nice when you get used to it... I might start taking baths like this more often!" The fennec squirmed down in the tank a little more and grinned as she sank up to her neck, but quickly put her arms back on to the sides of the vat as she felt herself slipping further down. With difficulty, she wriggled back up, and Alex dodged backwards as her kicking legs sent more gunge spilling out to the floor.

"It might not help get you clean, though... I think it's time to get you out," he chuckled as she slipped again, rolling around on to her front to push herself upwards and flicking her soaked tail to the surface. Walking carefully over the spilled slime, he took hold of her sides and gently helped her stand

upright. She came out of the gunge with a heavy slurping noise, heavy curtains of thick slime falling away from her arms as she raised them out in front of her. She turned around and crouched down slightly, hovering her hands over the edges of the vat.

As she stepped unsteadily forwards, the slime sloshing around her knees, she put one hand on Alex's shoulder and reached her other hand down to Nyte. Looking up at her, he shook his head to clear it of the image of being in there with her, and reached up as she slithered her slimy hand down to his shoulder. Tentatively, he put his hand on her back, wincing as he felt the sodden fabric of her T-shirt squish beneath his fingers, then tensed as she put her weight on her hand as Alex lifted her to the floor.

She squeaked as she almost slipped, then got her footing and took a couple of wobbly steps forward as the gunge oozed and trickled from all over her fur. Seeing Becky's anxious expression, she held her hands out and lunged playfully towards her, making the puppy girl squeak and step away towards the wall. Giggling to herself, she reached down and pulled her T-shirt down by its waist, stretching the slimy top out before letting it splat back on to her.

"Shall we get going again?" Alex asked. "We've still got one more game to play here..." He pointed and headed back towards the door, and Nyte followed him, scrambling over the makeshift barriers that formed the course and looking over at the slippery trail that they had left behind around the room. Slime was still dripping lazily out of some of the overhead pipes, with a huge splatter mark on the floor around the filled vat in the centre.

He turned as he approached the couple of steps up to the door, and watched the red wolf jump down to the floor on the other side in one bound, spinning and motioning for them to gather round. He laughed and shook his head as Nyte stepped down the stairs. "Look at you all...!" Nyte turned around as the girls came through the doorway, treading carefully down the

steps with their skin or fur slick with slime - Isla grinning under the still dripping splatter of purple slime that she'd got during the game, Becky treading carefully behind her, and Quinne looking up over their shoulders, her heavy T-shirt and shorts clinging to her fur and virtually none of her pink color visible underneath the murky mixture.

"I almost want to give you a break from the gunge and let you have a game of... I Spy or something for the last part of this round," the red wolf said as the three girls lined up next to Nyte in front of him.

"Why stop now when we're so good at it?" Quinne said back, getting a laugh from her team mates as she held her dripping arms slightly away from her body.

"We could always put Alex into something," Isla added, grinning at the noises of encouragement from the others as she wiped the still wet gunge down the back of her head.

Alex held both hands up with a smile. "Hey, I said 'almost'! No, I know just where we're going - we've still got to get our card key from this area. I know exactly where it is, and hopefully, you won't get too much more gunge trying to get it. Come on over here!"

He pointed to his right, and Nyte shook his hair out and heaved himself into motion again despite his tiredness. He followed at a jog, realizing they were being led the long way around the circular room to head down the corridor opposite the one they had come in by. A few yards further down, Alex leapt over to the side to tap out another combination on a door panel.

"This is where we can get that access card," the red wolf said, turning back to the team as the door slid aside. Nyte leaned back to glance inside the room, catching a glimpse of a couple of cubicles as the others caught up. Isla headed inside immediately, and the puppy girl stepped in behind her, a giggle coming up as she saw the inside. "We're just going to have to lock ourselves in here for a bit..."

Nyte stepped through the door behind Quinne as Alex ushered them inside, and his eyebrows raised as he saw the full contents of the short, wide room. Up a small step from the floor, there was a row of ten cubicles, with circled numbers stenciled on the lower halves of their doors from one to nine with a zero on the right hand side. Each of them had a large covered section on the top with a fluorescent light on the front.

As he heard the door close behind him he turned around, and saw Alex at another panel next to the door with a small screen at eye height. He put in a combination, and it gave a humming noise as it closed, followed by a set of heavy-sounding locking noises.

"Okay, hope nobody wants out in the next while..." Alex said. "Now, we're going to need the computer's help... hey, ROB!" he shouted. Nyte laughed as Alex tapped his knuckles on the screen, which buzzed into life, showing the yellow wireframe face squeezing into a corner as if dodging aside from the blows.

"Stop that," it said quickly, and returned to the center again as Alex drew his hand away.

"Sorry," Alex said back to it, shaking his head. "We just need a new random four-digit code for the cubicles and the door - can you do that for us?"

The computer's face managed a reproachful look back at the group, and despite being drawn without eyes, Nyte was sure it was rolling them.

"I've got more processing power than the space shuttle in every room in this whole place. Yes - I can give you a random four-digit number." A series of electronic beeps came up from behind Nyte, and he looked over his shoulder to see the lights above the cubicles blinking on and off randomly before turning off again.

"All right, we're set!" Alex announced, putting his hands on Isla and Becky's shoulders as he squeezed past them and then turned around to face the group. "Here's how this is going to work... we need to get the card key out of there and unlock the

door," he said as he pointed back to the panel where the computer's face was still staring over at them. "You're going to take turns answering questions, and when you get one right, ROB will unlock the cubicles and you'll have to choose one to enter. Now, four of those cubicles have a number that match numbers in the code for the door," he pointed over their heads again, "but the other six are going to gunge you. Whether you get slimy or not, come back down here and join your teammates again, and once I get through everyone else, it'll be your turn again. Sound good?"

The red wolf grinned at the nervous nods he got in response, all of the team glancing over towards the row of numbered gunge cubicles. "Who's going first?"

Nyte felt a hand on his back pushing him to the front of the group immediately, and twisted around to see Isla smirking as she marched him forwards. He smiled nervously over his shoulder at her, then turned to face the red wolf as he pulled his minicomputer out of his pocket.

"Okay, team leader - your time starts now! Digital clocks show numbers, but what's the name for a clock with a face?"

Nyte opened his mouth immediately, then hesitated as the word escaped him for a moment. "Er... analog?" he responded.

"Absolutely right - go and pick a cubicle!"

The red wolf swung his arm over to the back of the room, and Nyte turned, jiggling on his feet as he took a couple of steps forward and looking down the row of gunge booths and back. He hovered as he tried to decide, then realized he was wasting time, and hopped up on to the raised platform to pull open the door of booth number 2.

He looked up at the round nozzle on the ceiling of the tank as he stepped into it, holding his breath and turning around to look at the watching girls as the door slowly fell closed in front of him, shutting him inside. He gripped the sides of his shorts with his hands and closed his eyes as there was a clicking noise above him, then flinched and flattened his ears as an electronic bell rang above his head.

"You're fine, Nyte - get yourself back down here!"

At the call from Alex, he opened one eye then the other, his ears pricking up again as he looked to the nozzle. Breathing out heavily and swallowing to try to stop his heart pounding, he put a hand out to push the door open again.

As he stepped out of the booth, he saw Isla dashing up to the tanks at the opposite end of the row. Watching her as she opened one of the doors at the far end and squeezed around it into the booth, he almost fell over on the step as he waited to see what happened.

The lizard girl waited with her hands clasped behind her back, curling her toes on the tank's floor as the door closed on her. She blinked, then gasped as the bell sound played again, and the white light glowed on the front of her booth.

Alex looked up as Quinne gave an answer. "And you're in the clear as well! That's numbers two and seven in the code. Quinne, let's see if you're as lucky - I promise there's some gunge up there somewhere..."

The fennec girl, still dripping with slime from the vat, hauled herself up on to the platform and headed for the booth on the far left, next to the one that Nyte had been inside. He held his breath as she scampered into it, flexing and balling her hands as the door closed in front of her.

"Going for cubicle one... have we had a lucky streak of three...?" Alex asked, then visibly flinched as a loud siren rang out from the booth. "No!" he shouted above it as a flood of dark green slime spewed out of the tank's ceiling, smacking on top of Quinne's head and sputtering on to her shoulders as she tilted her head to one side, making the gloop fly upwards from her head before breaking into a gloppy rain. A small smile was visible on the end of her muzzle as the streaks of dark green stuff ran down her chest and upper arms, and she half-closed her eyes as the ooze slumped over her face.

"Becky..." The brown canine looked around quickly from staring at the fennec, and kept on glancing over at the booths as the gunged fox girl poked the door open with her finger and

stepped out of her cubicle. The puppy girl sagged half with relief as she got her question wrong, and met Nyte's eyes for a moment as she returned to the back of the line with Quinne.

"Okay, Nyte - let's see if you're luckier! In golf, how many holes are there on a course?"

Nyte flattened his ears, and glanced down, knowing he didn't know the answer. "Ten?" he guessed.

"Sorry, it's eighteen..." Alex shook his head, and Nyte turned away. As he headed to the back of the line, he watched over his shoulder at Isla stepping eagerly up to Alex.

"Isla, what's the collective noun for a group of fish?"

"School," she said back immediately.

"Yes! You're right - get back up there! Remember you've got a bigger chance of getting splatted this time..."

The blue reptilian grinned as she stepped forwards, looking up and down the row of booths again. After a couple of seconds, she headed for the eighth cubicle, next to the one that she had been in the last time. Nyte held his breath as he watched her step into the gunge tank and wriggle on her feet as the door clicked closed in front of her, his heart thumping as he waited.

He grinned as a column of yellow gunge splashed down on to the waiting lizardess, and the alarm sounded again as the glutinous downpour domed smoothly off her head, hiding her reaction from view. Nyte looked her up and down as the smooth glop poured over her face and dripped from her snout and chin, the stuff flowing down her arms and shoulders and over her chest. As the tank above her ran out, the downpour broke into a gloppy rain which sputtered down on to her, and she shook her head, a grin visible underneath the helmet of gunge on her head. Ducking forwards, she stepped out of the falling slop to push the door of the booth open, leaving a slimy yellow handprint on the clear plastic.

Quinne had answered her question while Nyte had been distracted, and he saw the fox girl head for the fourth cubicle as she ran one hand over her gungy head. As she put her hand on

the vertical handle on the booth's door, she hesitated, then changed her mind and moved to the one next to it instead. She pulled the door a little way open and squeezed around it, then turned around and waited with her eyes closed, her shoulders hunched and her hands up next to her chin.

Alex looked over as the bell noise played again, and the white light on the cubicle's roof came on. "You're safe! No gunge that time for you - and you've only got one more to find..."

Nyte looked along the row of numbered cubicles as the anxious puppy girl bounced on her feet beside him. Half of the cubicles hadn't been entered yet, and cubicles two, five and seven had the white lights on the top showing that they had been safe. He shuddered as he looked between the first and eighth along the row, with their doors painted in arcs of gunge and heavy dollops of the stuff still visible dripping down from the nozzles inside them.

"Yes!" Alex announced at Becky's whispered answer to his question, and he put an arm around her to turn her towards the gunge booths. "So it's finally decision time for you, and you've done it at a good moment - four of those are going to gunge you!"

Nyte shivered once again as the puppy girl gave her cute high-pitched whimper, padding uncertainly up on to the platform as she looked between the five remaining cubicles. After a moment's decision with her twisting her fingers in front of her tummy, she turned herself towards the leftmost free one with the number 3 circled on its door.

The puppy girl tugged the clear door open and tentatively stepped inside on her tiptoes, drumming her heels as she looked back at the team through the closing door and glancing down occasionally at her feet. Finally the door shut on her, she cringed with a grin as the harsh siren rang, and yipped as she disappeared underneath a dome of bright green gunge from the cubicle's ceiling.

"Nyte, back to you..." Alex's voice came up from beside Nyte, and he glanced towards him but his gaze drifted back to the struggling puppy girl as her cringing, giggling face poked out of the gungy downpour. The thick slime licked over her shoulders and back as she leaned forwards with her palms propped on the corners of the tank. "What sign of the zodiac is represented by twins?"

"Um..." Still distracted, he ran the question through his head again as the puppy girl raised her hands in the air and shook them up and down, throwing globs of green slime to the floor as the last of the sloppy downpour spluttered over her back. "Twins... Gemini," he said finally, turning back to him as the gungy canine put her hands out on to the booth's door to open it.

"That's right! It's your turn to find the last one - thanks to Becky you've got a three in four chance of getting gunged..."

Nyte nodded, yelping as the lizardess behind him placed her sloppy hands on his shoulders, smearing slime down his arms. He rolled his shoulders to make her hands slither off them as he stepped forwards, then looked up at the remaining booths - the pair on the far right, and numbers 4 and 6 both next to safe cubicles. Hopping from foot to foot, he decided to run for the one at the end of the row on his right, but changed his mind by the time he got there and caught the handle of booth nine before hauling it open.

He stepped nervously into the gunge cubicle, smiling wryly up at the round nozzle in the middle of the ceiling before turning to watch the door close, watching Isla glancing over at him as Alex asked her another question. Swishing his tail behind him, he clasped his hands behind his back and closed his eyes as the door clicked shut.

He jumped and flattened his ears down further as the siren blared, and then yipped as the heavy gloop smacked on to him, pushing his head down under its weight. He grinned at the familiar weird splashing feeling as the cool slimy liquid flowed down off the front and back of his hair, slipping down his back

and with drips falling on to the fur on his shoulders. He brought his palms up in front of him, feeling the thick gunge pour from the front of his hair through his hands, making a heavy slapping noise as it splatted to the booth's floor.

He opened his eyes again as he felt the ooze drizzle to a halt, and smiled at the curtain of his yellow-stained hair in front of him. He leaned forward and twitched as the movement made another wave of the custard-like stuff slop forwards across his vision, then brought his forefingers up to part his hair and tuck it as best as he could behind his ears, kicking his feet in the slop as he moved forwards to push the cubicle's door open.

As he stepped back outside, Isla was up on the platform trying to decide between the remaining booths, and ran her hand over her own slimy head with a grin as she saw Nyte emerge. As he stepped down from the platform, she dashed forwards, and Nyte distractedly shouted some encouragement as he held his gungy hair away from his face, turning and staring at the streaks of yellow gunge down the blue lizardess's back as she headed for the booth Quinne had nearly gone into earlier.

"Booth number four... Quinne only just decided against that, let's see if she would have been all right...!" Alex said as Isla tugged the door open. The blue lizardess stepped inside and stared out at the others through the plastic door, her mouth hanging open in a nervous smile as she held her hands in front of her.

There was an audible glooping noise as the gunge tank poured a column of dark green slime over Isla, covering her face underneath the heavy dome before she poked her head out of the sloppy stuff. As the siren hooted again, she looked down at herself and then back up to the others as the slippery gunge ran down the sides of her head to drizzle on to her shaking shoulders and creep down her slippery chest in gooey fingers, mingling with the yellow ooze from before. She shook her head a little, and heavy strings of the stuff flew outwards as she

brought her hands up to her tummy, catching the thick drips of it falling from the curve of her bikini top.

"Oh, three in a row...! There's one more in there somewhere, but it looks like you used up all your luck at the start..." Nyte nodded at Alex's announcement, still looking at the gungy lizard girl as she stayed in the tank, looking up at the drizzles of thick green slime still dripping on to her from the edges of the nozzle and squirming her shoulders around underneath them. "Quinne, it's your turn again - if you're arachnophobic, what are you afraid of?"

"Spiders," the fox girl answered confidently.

"That's right - you've only got cubicles six and zero to go, so no matter which one you pick we'll know the last number... we just need to see if you get messy..."

Quinne dashed up to the booths and headed for tank zero as Isla pushed the door of her booth open, stepping unsteadily out as the mixture of gunge dripped and slithered from all over her skin. She watched and cheered the fox girl on as she ran for the booth on the far right, tugging it open and quickly slipping around it to position herself under the gunge nozzle, her eyes squeezed closed and an unsure cringe on her face as she hunched over underneath it. Nyte held his breath as there was a pause, and with a loud beep, the light on the front of the tank turned on.

"That's it, you've done it - that's all four digits of the code! Now get over there and punch it in - it's some sequence of those four numbers..."

Nyte looked over his shoulder at Alex, and then along the row of booths as Isla turned around and made for the panel next to the door. He jogged over behind her and leaned over her shoulder as she looked at the grid of numbered buttons, only just resisting the temptation to put his hand on her gungy shoulder as she leaned forwards. He jumped back a bit as she suddenly looked up over his head at the cubicles, and he turned with her.

"Two, five, seven, zero..." he said half to himself as she put in the numbers in order. As a buzzer played from the panel, she reached her finger forwards and tried the same digits in reverse order.

"If you keep two at the start..." Nyte began, and yelped as he felt Quinne bumping him from behind as she skidded to a halt. He glanced behind him and caught the small fennec girl's eye as she grinned up at him, then turned back to the door panel as the card slid out of the slot with a confirmation beep, the door humming open slowly beside it.

"Very quick indeed!" Alex called as he approached them, clapping. Isla put both hands in the air and whooped, bouncing on her heels, and Nyte twitched as the slime from the gunge tanks continued to slither down in glutinous strings from her raised arms. He raised his hands in front of him in an unsure hug gesture, and had nearly dropped them to his sides again when she lunged forwards, wrapping both arms around him. He squeaked, becoming aware of her slimy breasts slipping against his chest fur and tentatively putting his hands on her slippery back just before she broke off the hug and wriggled away from him.

Alex stepped forward, and pulled the card out of the slot with a flourish as he turned back to the team. "We've got the card - you did it in just over two minutes, you only gave a couple of wrong answers and you didn't set off one of the gunge tanks... so, I don't know. ROB, what do you think they should get?" he asked, looking over his shoulder to the panel's screen.

"Give them fifty," the wireframe face answered grumpily.

"I'm going to give you eighty," Alex said as he spun round, and Nyte laughed as he turned the screen off with a jab of his minicomputer. He looked back at the team, and almost burst out laughing himself.

"Well, you've... had quite a round," he said through a wide grin as he turned between the four gungy team mates. "But you've earned..." He glanced down at the handheld device.

"305 points, it says here, for your trouble, and you more than deserve them!" Nyte nodded along with the others, grinning to himself and twitching as he felt the slime still trickling through his hair and fur, coming down from the excitement of the game.

"But we're still only halfway through - you're on 545 out of 800 in total, with eight more games to play... and I think it's time we rewarded you with a shower," he smiled as Quinne nodded vigorously in agreement, looking down at her clinging T-shirt.

"Come on, I'll take you to get cleaned up - and I'll see you all back here afterwards!"



QUEST GAME

"That was incredible!" Isla crowed as she burst into the changing area, her hands in the air as Nyte hurriedly put his arm out to catch the rebounding doors. "Can you believe we're on this?" she asked as she turned around, beaming at her team mates, and stretched upwards happily on her toes.

Nyte swallowed, wincing as he glanced downwards, watching the lizard girl's slime-coated breasts bounce as she dropped back to her heels. She opened her eyes and he hurriedly tried to arrange his face into a friendly grin, looking down and scratching at the soaked back of his neck idly as the two other girls squeezed through the door past him.

"I think I got the message, yeah..." Becky replied as she took a couple of steps into the room with her arms out to her sides, the contents of the last gunge tank still drizzling from her outstretched fingers. Looking up through the drips of slime from her fringe, she clasped her hands together and dragged them over her head, then headed towards the door to the women's shower area.

"Hey, you're not going in there yet!" Isla called after the canine, dashing over after her and giving her tail a gentle tug. The brown-furred puppy squeaked as she stopped, then watched as Isla sat herself down on the bench and patted the space next to her. "Remember what Alex said - he's doing the special guest right now..." She jabbed her finger towards the TV monitor that had been set up on the table in the middle of the room, the screen facing away from Nyte. "I can't wait to hear what she's in there for..."

Nyte's ears pricked, even though he simultaneously twitched at the thought of watching another gunging with the girls beside him. Still hovering on the opposite side of the

room, he took his gaze off the bikini-clad lizard and puppy and looked towards Quinne instead, trying to think of something else to say as he watched her bat uncomfortably at her slick T-shirt.

"Isn't that the thing we were all just in a couple of games ago?" Becky broke the silence as she sat down and looked at the screen.

"They got it cleaned up quickly, if it was!" Isla answered brightly. "Hey, Quinne, is this how it looked for people who didn't get gunged in it?"

The fennec laughed a little at the friendly jab. "I think I've got enough of that stuff in here..." she said with a grimace, looking down at her front and stretching her sodden T-shirt out in front of her by its waist. She let it drop back, and squeaked as it slapped heavily against her tummy, then twitched as she picked at the gungy material uncomfortably.

Nyte swallowed as the fennec girl squeamishly reached down and began tugging her slime-drenched top off, then averted his eyes as she looked towards him. Glancing between the puppy and lizard girls as Isla continued to chatter excitedly about the show so far, he distractedly wandered over to the water fountain at his side of the room. He took a cup from its underside and staring at the wall as it filled, and feeling his heart slowly returning to normal.

"Time to change shirts for the next half?" Isla asked, and he heard the fox girl snicker in response.

"Actually I think I'll stay like this!" she said back. Nyte nearly squashed the paper cup he was holding as his hand twitched, but he tried to keep his composure as he stood upright and sipped at it. Doing his best to appear nonchalant, attempting to hold his hand to block the front of his clinging shorts in a way that looked natural, he padded his way around to the bench the girls were sitting on. He smiled down at Quinne as she slipped to the side, letting him sit down between her and Isla.

As he lowered himself on to the bench, holding the cup of water steady above his lap, he looked up at the screen for the first time. He recognized the gunge booth that he and two of the girls next to him had been put in during the last round, with the multiple wide nozzles on the ceiling and the long grille that ran around the back and side walls near the top. This time, there was a dark brown-furred feline seated on the blowup couch inside, with short slightly darker hair and prominent white ear-tufts. She was wearing only a black Industrial Zone bikini like the girls beside him, and a pair of large hoop earrings.

"Tina!" The catgirl jumped, looking up from her lap at the sound of the voice and of a door bursting open from off-screen. As the team watched, Alex strolled into view of the frame, smiling in greeting. "I hope we haven't kept you too long - how are you doing?"

"Uh, good, I guess..." Tina put her hands on the front of the seat next to her and wriggled upright, staring up into the large nozzle looming above her head.

"Great - let me just introduce you, then I'll be right back with you..." Alex turned towards the camera, pointing back over his shoulder. "This delightful feline..." - he glanced back over his shoulder to see her reaction - "...is Tina, she's twenty years old, and she's a student living with several housemates... who nominated her to go in here!" He turned around to face the catgirl again as she swished her tail nervously. "Can you guess which of your friends wanted to see you gunged?"

"No - why don't you tell me," she replied, leaning forwards and propping her face in her hands with her elbows on her knees. "I never got Tatiana to admit to it..."

"Well, she was right to deny it, because we received an email that was signed by both Tanya and Todd..."

"Todd?" she repeated back, her eyes wide. "Oh, man, I'm gonna..."

Alex produced a piece of paper from his pocket, and she tailed off, trying to crane her neck up to see as he unfolded it

with one hand. The red wolf cleared his throat as he held it up in front of him. "They say that you're always taking walks in the mud and trailing it back into the house, where they're left to clean it up while you're taking up the bathroom..." He crumpled it up and stuffed it back into his pocket. "Would you say that was true?"

"No, I..." The feline growled, and hesitated. "Well, maybe one time..." she sighed, crossing her legs as she sank back into the seat again.

"They seemed quite sure of it - and for that, you might be about to get a much messier kind of bath," Alex continued, indicating the nozzles on the ceiling of the cat girl's booth as she looked upwards. "To stop this thing from going off and giving you our unique all-over spa treatment, you're going to have to play one of our games - and your friends helped us again by providing us with a couple of photos..."

"Photos...?" she repeated back, raising an eyebrow.

Alex stopped with his handheld computer held up in front of him, and wagged a finger at her. "I'm not sure what you're thinking, but... no, you don't have anything to worry about! Well, no more than most people have when they're in that thing, anyway." With a wave of his hand, he turned and looked up to the far wall. Tina blinked and looked up as a projected screen came into view.

"During one of these walks, we got them to provide us with some photos of your shoe collection," Alex grinned as a few pictures of shoes flicked past, photographed in pairs on a bedroom floor or laid out on the bed. "Which is pretty substantial, I should say... and as you're such an aficionado, we wanted to test your knowledge of the ones you own..." Tina sighed, and slumped against the back of the plastic couch, putting her arm up along its back and tapping her fingers.

"We've got ten pictures - you're going to get one minute to give me the brand and the name of each one," he said slowly, watching the feline twitch agitatedly, her ears flattening slightly as she listened to the rules.

"Urggh..." she groaned, already clawing at her hair with her free hand, then straightened up once more. "Okay, let's get this over with..."

"All right - I'm starting the timer!" Alex skipped backwards, and the screen showed a flurry of photos, eventually settling on a picture of a pair of tall boots.

The feline ducked forwards, as if trying to look at the photo in front of her from another angle. "That's the, um..." she started, her fingers tapping on her knee, "'Journee', Jester."

"Yes!" Alex called back quickly. "Here's the next one..."

As the first photograph slid off the screen to reveal another picture, this time of a pair of very high heels, the catgirl grimaced, clicking her tongue slightly behind her teeth. "Don't know," she shook her head.

"That's okay, we can come back to them," Alex said, gesturing in the air as the picture was replaced by another. Tina smiled a little in recognition as the new photo came up.

"Uh... Mary-Jane..." Tina clicked her fingers, closing her eyes. "Demonia Concept", she said quickly after a moment's thought.

Nyte leaned back from the screen. "How the hell can anyone know so much about shoes?" he wondered aloud, unconsciously jiggling one knee as he watched the feline's face intently, waiting for her time to run out as she struggled through the next few photos. He yelped as his question was met with a poke in the ribs from Isla's elbow, and looked to his side, meeting her eyes as she flicked her tongue out at him. Rubbing his side, he turned back to the screen as Tina got another one right, and watched her lean further forwards as she concentrated.

Alex's voice came from the side as the next photo came up. "You've just got two more, you've got about fifteen seconds..."

"Ah...!" The feline whimpered, drumming her feet on the floor as she stared up at the picture projected in front of her. "It's Demonia... um..." She tapped her fingers on the side of

her head, her mouth opening as she looked for the name.
"Stripe? Wedge?"

"Someone's gonna get it...!" Isla sang gleefully, her hands balled into fists as she watched Tina's expression. The catgirl shook her head as the noise of the timer got slowly more urgent, and yelped and clasped her hands to her head as a harsh buzzer rang around the room.

"Well, I'm sorry, Tina..." Alex's voice came from off camera before it swung back to face him. "You got so close, and you got all of them but two in the end - these ones are Demonina Sin..."

"Oh, c'mon, I said..." The brown catgirl leaned forwards, her hands held up in front of her in protest. She stopped as Alex shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry - you did quite well, but you ran out of time..." Alex took a couple of steps back from the tank, and the industrial siren began ringing, making the feline's hands shoot to her ears. "And that can only mean one thing!" he called above the noise, holding his hand out towards the booth.

The catgirl screamed and flinched downwards as two wide columns of dark green gunge flooded in from the ceiling nozzles on either side of her, splattering over the edges of the seat and off the tiled floor as they tilted around in slow circles. She wriggled backwards on the seat as she looked from side to side with her mouth open in surprise, watching the ooze splatter off the edges of the couch next to her and begin to fill the tank up. Lifting her feet off the floor as the thick slimy liquid splurged over them, she hunched inwards and gave another shriek through her closed lips, ducking a little forward as the two streams came inwards to lick over her shoulders, leaving a smooth layer of gunge slithering down her arms and sides.

A dirty klaxon blared from the ceiling, and Tina jumped at its sound, then cringed, closing her eyes as she realized what was coming next. She sat upright and wriggled a little from side to side, her hands clasped between her legs, before screwing her face up and bowing her head forward. As the

alarm sounded again, a nervous grin spread across her face, just before a flood of orange gunge dropped in a wide fan shape from right above her, breaking over her head and splurging on to her shoulders as the slime slumped forwards over her face.

Her hands jerked upwards before the falling orange dome hid them from view as well, and for a moment all that was visible of her was the faint outline of her head, her flicking ears poking a little out of the upturned bowl shape of the gunge. Squirming to crane her neck further forwards, the front of the dome broke away and spewed out in front of the tank, making Alex dodge backwards as the catgirl's open-mouthed shocked smile became visible again, the goo rolling down the sides of her head and dripping from her chin. Blinking as streaks of the orange gunge fell across her eyes, she watched him dash aside, then bowed her head further down and shook it, putting her hands up to the sides to catch the slime falling from her hair as the dome of gunge spewed out over her back.

The two green streams tilted inwards to join the orange stuff, hiding the squirming feline from view again as the sloppy mixture slithered down her back and around her neck, the colors mingling into each other as they glooped over her fur and dripped down into the rising gunge pool. As the fan of orange gunge began to ease back, the thick dark green slime played back and forth a little over her, slopping from her shoulders up to her head and back before parting again.

As the torrents from either side flicked back to vertical, continuing to fill up the tank, the last of the heavy orange slime sputtered over the catgirl in the middle of it. She gave out a shriek that turned into a helpless laugh, shaking with her hands held in claws in front of her as the thick colorful liquid slithered down her fur, dripping in heavy blobs off her outstretched arms and the tips of her fingers. Shaking them out in front of her, she brought her hands up to her eyes and wiped from her muzzle backward, blinking them open and then

giving another yelp as the level of slime in the tank crept up to spill into the blowup seat around her.

Tina slipped backward on the slimy plastic surface, watching the drips of orange from the nozzle above her splatting down into her lap as the green stuff finally bubbled to a halt, the gunge bath now up to her tummy. As she rubbed her hands around her face, her ears flattened at another spurting noise, and two waves of translucent yellow slime began pouring from the grilles at head height on the tank's sides.

With a gasp, she flinched aside as the wave of yellow goo smacked on to her shoulder from the left, then yelped as the same happened from the right, the wide fans of gunge pouring heavily into the mixture in the tank and leaving just her head visible above the translucent slime flying at her from the sides. She poked her hands up through the slippery curtains, holding them still for a moment as blobs of goo rolled down her fingers, then clasped them to her forehead to keep her messy hair out the way, revealing a squeamish half-smile through the shock on her face. She ducked once more under the weight of another green wave spewing out the grille behind her, then wriggled and sat upright against its weight, her shoulders shaking a little as the slippery stuff slithered over them and down into the chest-deep pool.

The waves of gunge sputtered and then eased back, revealing the catgirl's messy head and shoulders poking out above a deep bath of slime as the stuff continued to creep down the walls of the tank. With her eyes still closed, she wriggled upwards in the gunge, sending a wave of the stuff slopping forwards over the booth's door, and opened her mouth, speechless as she felt the ooze glooping around her. Suddenly, she yipped and hunched her shoulders up once more as there was a hissing sound from above her, and grimaced slightly as she felt two jets of thick foam spurting on to her head. As the white stuff piled up on her head, sticking to her gungy hair, it began to break off, the green-stained blobs rolling off and

smacking on to the gungy surface where it was swept forwards to drip down the tank's front.

Alex clapped his hands together as the feline slowly blinked her eyes open, straightening herself up and batting at the blobs of foam sliding down her face and head. "Tina, I hope it's some consolation if I say that was probably the best set of reactions we've ever had from anyone in there..." He lifted his feet high as he stepped through the foam and slime on the floor, watching more of the stuff slither and drizzle down the door of the gunge tank. The cat girl, only just visible underneath the layer of glop coating her hair and fur, shook her head in response, then pulled her arms out of the gunk to try to clear her face. The gunge around her rippled slowly from side to side as she moved. "Are you all right?"

"...God," she started as she took her hands off her face, holding them awkwardly above the bath of gunge and looking to her left and right at her arms as the glutinous mixture dripped thickly from her slippery fur. "I think I preferred the mud..." She flicked her arms to send a cascade of gunge slapping on to the surface of the chest-deep gloop.

"Well, I haven't seen mud get quite that deep, I'll give it that..." the red wolf smiled back at her.

"You should see some of my spots..." Tina ducked her head down as a pile of foam slumped down into her face from her plastered hair and drew her hands up from her muzzle over her head, leaving finger-shaped furrows in the gungy mixture. "I'd sure show you them up close, after this..."

Opening her eyes again, she wriggled upwards, sending more of the gungy mixture sloshing over the top of the tank's door as she put her hands out as if to hug him, with curtains of slime dripping from all along her arms. The red wolf smiled and retreated a couple of steps from the spreading slimy pool on the floor.

"Well, I'd take you up on that offer, but I'm going to have to go back to the team now," he said. "I left them in the showers,

so if you're lucky, they'll be nearly out of there and we can give you the chance to get yourself cleaned up, too..."

"Great..." The catgirl sighed as she carefully sat down, putting her hands under the surface and squeaking as the glop swallowed her up to her chest again. She twitched as another streak of orange slop sputtered out of the ceiling nozzle on to her head, dipping once more as the thick goo rolled down over her face.

"Okay, we'll leave you in there until then, and I think it's bound to run out eventually..." the red wolf chuckled, slapping at the wall above the booth and watching the thin green drizzles slither down from the ceiling nozzles on either side of her. "Thanks for coming on, Tina!"

Nyte swallowed silently as Alex left the room with a wave, leaving the catgirl to roll her eyes and then laugh slightly to herself as she pulled her gungy hands up again and looked down at the slime dripping down them. He jumped as the silence in the room was broken by a whoop from Isla.

"You think that'll happen to one of us next?" the lizardess asked with a mischievous grin, and turned to look at the other two girls as Becky winced, covering her smile with both hands.

"Oh, yeah," Quinne nodded. "The show always just got messier from here on..."

"Yeah, and I know another kitten that needs to get more gunge..." the lizard girl continued. Nyte twitched but tried to laugh it off as she put her hand on his matted hair, scruffing it around to rub the slime around his head.

"Do you want to get cleaned up first?" Becky's voice came from beside them, and he turned his head to see her already halfway to the door of the women's shower area, flicking at the slime in her own hair. Quinne nodded and got up to walk around the other side of the low table, her drenched T-shirt draped over her arm.

"Yeah, I suppose," the lizardess answered, and hauled herself up from the bench, shaking her hands and flicking

specks of slime to the floor as she turned around to face Nyte.
"Want to join us?"

Nyte's hands gripped the bench tightly as he looked at the slime-slicked tummy of the curvy blue reptilian next to him. He forced his eyes up to her face to see her grinning down at him as she brushed some of the goo away from her forehead, and tried to find any words at all as he opened his mouth.

"Hey..." Quinne called after her before Nyte could speak.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding..." Isla put her hands up and turned away, stepping after the fennec as she scampered through the door after Becky. Nyte let his eyes drop to Isla's slippery hips again as he watched her walk away from him, taking the swinging door as Quinne held it out for her.

As the changing room door flapped closed after her, he breathed out heavily, closing his eyes and slumping back to rest his head on the wall behind him. As he leaned back, he felt the slime on the back of his hair squish against his head and jerked forwards again, wincing and then laughing a little to himself as he combed his fingers up through his slippery hair. The stuff didn't dry at all, and still felt like a heavy wet blanket coating his fur, slowly trickling down through it.

He heard a laugh that he thought he recognized as Isla's voice from somewhere beyond the wall behind him, along with the spray of water hitting tiles. He half-turned towards it, wondering if he was being talked about in there and getting a sudden mental image of her under the shower. With a shudder, he took another deep breath, then slowly hauled himself up from the bench and stumbled towards the opposite changing room.



INTERLUDE I

The door swung shut behind Isla as she trudged into the changing rooms, and as she shook her head she splattered globs of slime on the door, the floor and her two teammates. Quinne shut one eye and twitched as the blue lizard girl giggled at her. The fox girl didn't envy whoever it was who cleaned up after them. A squeamish groan from Becky as the canine looked around the mess all three of them were making suggested she felt the same way.

Now that Quinne was standing in the shower room with her and her teammates completely covered in gunge, the craziness of the situation suddenly dawned on her. She looked across at the other two and couldn't resist the urge to laugh. Hearing the fennec chuckling, Isla turned to Quinne and poked her in the arm.

"Hey! Did you have to pull me away? I was having fun!" she smirked.

"Oh, you're such a tease!" said Quinne. She threw her T-shirt into the corner where it hit the tiled floor with a loud wet splat.

"Oh yeah?" Isla drawled, doing her best to sound innocent as she stepped across the floor, leaving a mixture of slimy green and yellow footprints where she stepped. The fox girl grinned and stuck her tongue out at Isla.

"Never mind," she said, scratching the back of her head nervously. Wearing her shirt hadn't protected her from the gunge, but there were patches of pink visible in the slime coating her. She stepped gingerly across the cold floor, leaving her own gooey prints as she moved towards the showers. Becky was already there, looking eager to start washing some of the gunk away.

"There aren't any cameras in here, are there?" she said. She had paused with her top half off and was eyeing the corners of the room suspiciously.

"Oh! I completely forgot about the cameras," said Quinne. She put one hand to her mouth. "I haven't been swearing, have I?"

"Even if you have, I don't think anyone would understand you," said Isla with a grin.

"Hey, my accent isn't that strong, is it?" Quinne protested, her ears flicking mischievously.

"Nah, it's fine," Isla reassured her. "Nothing I haven't heard before."

The lizardette held out her arms and let the stringy goo ooze down onto the floor of the changing room. "You know, I once read an interview that said the gunge got a bit gluey after a while, but it feels just as slimy as when I first got covered in the cockpit. I love how it feels different sometimes, though. The variety is amazing!"

"I guess they've got guys who do this for a living. Weird job, huh?" said Becky. She wrinkled her muzzle again as she pushed at the slime covering her. It was hard to tell which of the three of them was slimier.

"That was so cool when you got dunked. I was totally jealous of you!" said Isla.

"It's . . . so icky," said Becky. She looked down at the floor. "It really started to feel real when I was sat there in the Mixer and Alex was explaining what was going to happen to the one who got, you know..."

"I know what you mean," said Quinne, dryly. She bent down, wriggling her slimy shorts down her legs and kicking them off. "I'm sure I've still got stuff from the Mixer on me somewhere."

"Oh, that's right. They never normally get you that messy in the very first game!" said Becky sympathetically. "You did look great afterwards, though..." she added with a sheepish grin.

"Yeah, no thanks to Nyte! It should have been him sitting there," said Quinne, shaking her fist playfully.

"Aha! I knew you screwed up the Pod on purpose," Isla grinned.

"I didn't! I really didn't!" Quinne protested. Her ears deflated and she looked down at the floor, trying to stop smiling too much. "I felt really guilty about that."

"So guilty you gunged the three of us?" said Isla, putting a gooey hand on the Quinne's shoulder. The fennec trembled a little.

"Hey! You'd have done the same to me, wouldn't you?" said Quinne, grinning as Isla nodded vigorously.

"I certainly would now," Becky muttered with a mischievous glare.

"Hey! You got your own back," said Quinne, pulling a string of multicolored slime away from behind her ears.

"If you say so," said Isla mischievously. The lizard girl shrugged playfully and Quinne stifled a whimper.

"Well, you'll have to wait. It's not like I can get any slimier at the moment," said Quinne, throwing her arms open to demonstrate her point. There was a slightly uncomfortable pause from the other two.

"Um, do you want to get in the shower?" said Isla. She was smiling curiously, and it was only after Quinne looked across at a slightly uncomfortable Becky and down at herself that she remembered that she'd already gotten undressed.

"Oh, sorry," she said, blushing. Quickly and quietly she stepped into the middle shower cubicle and thumped her hand on the button.

Becky didn't say anything but just got into the stall next to her and switched it on. Isla stepped into the other neighboring stall and stood there for a moment.

"Nice tattoo, by the way," she said cheekily.

The fox girl threw her a look, reached across the divider and pressed the button in Isla's cubicle. The lizardette squealed as cold water smacked into her, bursting into giggles as she got

used to the high-powered jet. Quinne shivered and stood back under her own shower. It did feel good to move without sending slime slithering all over her body, but she did feel sorry for the slime as it finally dropped away from her in sticky clumps. Most of it formed a watery pool of goo about an inch high, but some grabbed onto her feet as it fell down her furry body.

After a minute or two the water to the showers was cut off. Quinne looked up in surprise. They hadn't spent that long messing about and as far as she knew there wasn't a time limit on them cleaning themselves up.

"Aw, I wasn't finished yet!" said Becky. She jabbed the button a few times, and eeped as the lights suddenly went out. After less than a second three smaller lights turned on illuminating nothing but the shower stalls and the three of them nervously standing inside them.

"Did the..." the puppy girl began, and then her eyes suddenly widened. "Wait, no!"

Quinne had realized the same thing, and glanced across at Isla. The lizard girl met her gaze and her smile broadened into a wide grin.

"Ohh no!" they groaned together.

A high-pitched alarm sounded and a spray of translucent yellowy green slime sprayed out from above them.

Becky yelped as she felt the slime slide over her fur and started batting above her, trying to figure out how to stop the flow. Quinne suppressed a giggle as she held her hands out to catch some of the sticky slime. She had seen this happen on a previous episode, but at the moment she had no clue whether they were being filmed or not. She pressed her hands together and watched fascinatingly as it left a stringy web between them when she pulled them apart. Isla watched the pair of them with amusement as her blue skin started to glisten under the flow of slime.

As quickly as it had started the slime shower shut off. Quinne glanced up, her fur shiny with slime.

"Well that was a surpr..." she began, before she was interrupted with a second, deeper alarm.

Becky blinked again and clamped her hands to her face as twin streams of black and white gunge splurged over each of them. Quinne squeaked and just had enough time to shut her eyes as the gunk smacked into her face, splattering the fennec's pink fur before running heavily down her neck and dripping onto her bare shoulders.

She heard a squeal from the stall next to her and blinked the goo away from her eyes to see that the weight of the slime had pushed Isla's head forward, quickly covering her blue skin with goo. The lizard girl raised her head up as the dual columns of gunge circled over her, creating a swirly pattern of slime that slithered over her face and mixed into gray as it dripped down over her shoulders and arms.

Becky pulled her hands away from her face, the thick black and white rivers of gunk ran down her face and she squeezed her eyes shut as a heavy wave oozed over her golden fur. She futilely tried wiping gunk away from her eyes only to have it slither down over her face again, and the canine gave a short, embarrassed laugh at her predicament.

Isla grinned across at her. She had gotten over the initial shock and held her arms out in front of her to catch the slime, rubbing what she collected over her glistening body as if it were regular shower gel.

Quinne saw what she was doing and flicked her ears a bit, also getting used to the gunge. She reached behind her and pushed the slime that had collected on top of her head down her hair and over her shoulders. Giggling, she leaned forward and let the gunk flow wetly down her back before moving back so her head was under the flow once more.

As the twin streams slowed a third alarm sounded and three syrupy streams of gunge dropped down on them, each a different color. Becky's was bright blue, and she just shook her head from side to side as it oozed slowly over her.

Quinne felt the huge wave of dark green gunge smack on top of her head, her ears flattening at the feeling and the weight of the gunge. Helped by the slime already covering her, the thick, sticky goo slithered faster over her fur than it otherwise would have done and as she grimaced as she pulled thick stringy globs away from her face.

Isla blinked as a thick red stream glopped on top of her head and pooled there. She reached up to help the gunk drop down over her and shivered as it clung to her skin. By now the silvery slime had slithered down over her legs and she wiggled her toes as globs dropped down onto her feet.

Finally, the flow shut off and the lights came back on again. Becky put a slimy hand to her mouth and gasped as she looked at the state Isla and Quinne were in.

"You're not looking any better," said Isla, laughing as she tried to wipe her face clear of slime. Quinne nodded.

"Ew," said the fennec simply as she looked down at herself, lifting up a leg as a clump of slime dropped into a pool at the base of the shower.

"Sorry girls!" Alex's voice came through over a hidden intercom. "I reckon we only do this once each season, and both times we did it before it was in the guys' changing rooms. Despite Blue's protests even she had to admit that it was your turn."

Becky nodded, her grin returning. There were squeaks from the three of them as a last blast of slime spurted down onto them and there was a joint glare towards the sound of Alex's voice.

"Besides, at this rate you were going to be done before Nyte had even started. We figured you had time to spare," he continued. Quinne heard chuckling from over the intercom and cocked her head to one side, wiggling her ears in an attempt to shift the thick gunk from them.

"Oh, ha ha, Alex - very funny," said Isla

"Can we have the water back now?" said Becky. Quinne nodded weakly. At this rate, she'd forget what color her fur really was.

"One second! I think this switches the shower back on." There was a pause. "Okay, there we go. Just let me know if it's not water coming out now..."

"We'll let you know!" said Isla as she pressed her button.

Thankfully, water spurted out over the lizardette almost immediately and Quinne and Becky quickly scrabbled at their own buttons. The two of them sighed happily as warm water sprayed over them, pushing the honey like slime away from their bodies.

"Okay girls, I'll leave you to finish up."

There was a click from the intercom and the girls were left in silence as they worked the latest coating of slime off their bodies, and fur in Becky and Quinne's case. Even though the surprise gunging had left Isla almost completely slathered in the thick, sticky slime, the extra challenge for the fennec and canine meant that Isla was the first to finish, happily leaving the filthy shower as goo continued to ooze down the walls.

Quinne finished second and left the shower with her mussed up hair plastered over her face. She blew on it a few times to help clear her eyes of pink tendrils and went to grab some clean clothes. She pawed through the different kinds of sportswear hanging up in the changing room. She paused to pick up a few things as Becky left her shower. The puppy girl was stepping carefully to avoid treading in a patch of the slime that covered the floor of the shower room.

Quinne sat down on a bench and pulled on a fresh pair of short sports shorts, before wriggling into a sports bra that she had chosen after some thought. The sports bra was comfortably in her size and felt completely different to the t-shirt she had worn earlier, the black nylon shining as her still wet fur soaked through the material. The cool air felt strange as she stood up and she hugged herself and wiggled her tummy for warmth. The IZ logo was printed on the sports bra and her heart was

already beating fast again, the butterflies in her stomach doing somersaults as she thought about getting gunged again.

"Wish I had a chance to grab a cigarette before the second half," she said to herself.

"Ha! Much better!" said Isla, suddenly wrapping her arms around her from behind. Quinne squeaked and the lizardette ruffled her hair, sending a few stray water droplets flying over the pair of them.

"Heh, you think?" Quinne glanced down at herself, a little unsure.

"Yeah! It's not like you can't pull it off," said Becky.

"Thanks guys," said Quinne, smiling. She mock saluted and burst into giggles. Isla put her arms around Becky and the fennec, pulling the two of them close for a group hug.

"Ready to get back to the game?" the lizard girl asked.

Quinne glanced across at Becky and seeing the canine nodding her head nervously, she grinned once more and punched her hand in the air.

"Bring it on!" she said.



INTERLUDE 2

Nyte pushed the door of the changing room open with one finger, leaving a green streak behind on it as he slipped through. He smiled as he saw the room he'd been ushered into shortly after he arrived at the studio, thinking about how he'd been changing into his swimming shorts and trying to imagine what gunge felt like only about an hour before. Now covered in the stuff, he let out a small laugh as he looked down at the shorts plastered to his lap with the heavy slime, grabbing a handful of it from his chest fur and rubbing the thick, slippery substance between his fingers as he walked slowly towards the shower area.

As he watched the slime slowly dripping to the floor from his hand, his thoughts turned to the girls, picturing them squeaking and squirming as they'd been gunged right in front of him. He shuddered as he remembered being covered in slippery stuff by the booth with Isla and Becky squeezed in beside him, and quickly moved his other hand to tug at the waistband of his shorts. Glancing back at the door to make sure it had closed, he tugged them carefully down off himself, feeling his fur bristle at the wet, slimy feeling of the material as he wriggled them down his legs.

Kicking the sodden swimming shorts off his feet, he left them behind and walked naked through the archway to the shower area. He had taken a glance at this section of the changing room the first time that he'd been in it - to the right were a couple of enclosed cubicles for privacy, but in the area of the room to his left was a slight alcove, with a large sprayer in the ceiling and two more mounted on the walls to the sides. A blowup pool chair had been left underneath them.

He energetically batted the chair aside, wanting to stand upright underneath the sprayers at first, and glanced after it as the light air-filled seat skittered a couple of feet across the floor before tipping over on to its front. Moving to the back wall of the alcove, he pressed his palm on the button on the wall, and then dodged backwards, watching the water sputter into life from the sprayers at the top and sides. He stuck his hand in it to feel it as it warmed up, then hesitated, running his other hand down the green-plastered fur on his shoulders and once again enjoying the weird gooey feeling of the slime clinging to him.

Remembering that there was little chance of him staying clean for long, he closed his eyes, smiled and stepped forwards, ducking his head under the powerful warm spray and feeling his soaked fur instantly getting lighter as the clinging gunge thinned out and slapped heavily on to the tiled floor. He wriggled his shoulders as he turned around slowly, letting the jets at his sides spray under his arms and holding his breath as he turned his face in to one of them. Just as he'd begun to relax, the image of the bikini-clad lizardess getting covered in gunge from all the sprayers in the cockpit swam back into his mind, and he flinched as he listened to the smacking sound of the thinning gloop, imagining it splattering against her skin.

He opened his eyes to distract himself and looked down, glancing to the thinned gunge forming swirling patterns in the water at his feet as he blinked against the spraying water. He whimpered at the thought of trying to keep acting nonchalant in front of the girls for another two rounds, thinking once again about what might be being said about him in the opposite shower room.

Leaning forwards slightly as he looked to the archway, as if anybody else could have come into the room without him hearing, his hand slowly drifted to wrap around his extended length. With his hips already twitching, he closed his eyes again, swallowing as he brought his other hand around as well. Stroking his shaft up and down, he tugged a little rhythmically

at his tip with his other hand, and allowed himself to get lost in his private thoughts.

Wriggling his back against the warmth of the spray from above, he purred and half-opened his eyes as the light changed slightly in front of him, then he yelped and jumped back as he saw a blue reptilian face watching him from just around the corner.

"Uh... Isla..." he stuttered, his hands quickly moving around to cup himself with his length pressing painfully against the palms of his hands. Behind him, the shower button popped out and the flow of water stopped. Shivering a little, he tried to twist around to turn it on again with his elbow while not letting his hands slip. The lizard girl's sly smile grew a little as she glanced down for a moment, then drew her eyes up to his face again.

"Thinking of someone?" she asked mischievously, pushing herself up from her leaning position against the wall and dragging a hand over her messy head. "Quinne's in our big shower, I thought you might like some company..."

Speechless, Nyte swallowed as she stepped forwards, wiggling her hips from side to side exaggeratedly with each step. She was still covered in gunge from head to toe, the slippery liquid slithering down her and slapping on to the floor as she walked. In a daze, he tentatively reached his hands out towards her as she approached, half stepping back as she came right up against him. He gasped as she grabbed both his wrists and slapped his hands on to her hips, then jumped again as she wrapped her arms around the back of his neck and tugged him forwards to kiss him firmly on the lips.

He opened his eyes wide and squeaked in surprise, the sound muffled as the lizardess pressed her snout to his muzzle, feeling her grinning as she slowly rocked from side to side. After twitching his fingers against her hips for a moment, he relaxed, sagging as he closed his eyes, then tentatively slid his hands over the material of her bikini bottoms and up her smooth sides.

He ducked back a little as his hands reached her shoulders, and blinked his eyes back open. "I... think you need to get your messy swimsuit off..." he stuttered, looking into her eyes as he dipped his hands slightly over her shoulders.

"Yeah, that'd be good..." she said softly, drawing the last word out as she pressed him further towards her. His fur bristled as her slippery skin came up against him, feeling her breasts squash against his chest. Trying to stand on tiptoe to see over her shoulder, he slipped his hands down the gunge on her upper back, working his fingers underneath her bikini top and trying to pick apart the hooks with his other hand.

After a few seconds, he felt Isla shake as she giggled, and she shook her head. "I'll show you," she said as she pulled back, then kissed him on the neck and stepped away from him as she reached her hands around to her back. Quickly undoing the hooks, she pushed her bikini top off her shoulders and tossed it behind her, arms outstretched. "See? It's not that hard..."

"Y... yeah..." Nyte responded, completely failing to raise his eyes above her chest. He whimpered as he watched her bare breasts bounce slightly with her movement as she came forwards again, hooking her thumbs into her swimsuit bottoms and tugging them down to let them drop just as she reached him.

He put his arms around her again as she came forward and put her mouth to his, twitching as he felt her slippery breasts slide against his chest fur. She gasped a little as he unconsciously thrust his hips forward, sliding both his hands down to her bottom and tracing slow circles with his fingertips.

With a sly smile, the lizard girl slithered around in his grasp so that she was facing away from him, and raised an arm above his head to put it around his shoulders as he slipped his right hand between her legs. She squeaked, and he smiled as he dragged his fingertip along her cleft, rubbing back and forth a little as he nuzzled into her neck. Feeling her shake again, he opened his eyes and looked at her face to see she was laughing.

"What?" he asked, concerned.

"Nothing, it's..." The naked lizard girl wriggled against his hand a little to encourage him to carry on, his length rubbing over her backside. "This has got to be the weirdest place I've ever done it..."

Nyte nodded silently in response and was about to speak when she looked to the left and pulled away.

"I know what we're doing..." she said over her shoulder as she took a couple of steps to the side of the room and spread her arms to pick up the overturned blowup seat. Glancing down at his hardened length and rubbing himself a little as he became more conscious of being naked again, he watched as she moved to the far shower stall, bumped open the wide door, pushed the barely-fitting chair down inside and looked up into the opening on the ceiling.

"You know one of these was always actually a gunge cubicle?" she asked. Nyte padded over to join her, nodding his head - he'd seen a few contestants fall victim to another of the Industrial Zone traps on the early episodes, making them unwittingly gunge themselves one last time before the water came on for them to clean up.

"Well, I bet it's this one," she said, pointing up to the ceiling. Nyte looked up, and not seeing anything out of the ordinary was about to ask how she knew, but she suddenly turned to grab his wrist, pulling him forward.

"Sit down," she grinned, spinning him around to face her and then shoving him with both hands on his chest. He yelped as he tripped backwards and flopped into the seat, quickly straightening up and looking above him to the button just behind his head.

"Hey..." he started as the blue lizardette leaned forward with her hand outstretched as if going for the button, but stuttered and fell silent again as she curled her hand around to the back of his head and kissed him again, rolling their heads together a little as she scruffed the back of his neck.

After a moment, Isla pulled her head away, then dipped further down, and Nyte gasped as he felt his shaft slip between

her hanging breasts. She bumped his chin with the top of her muzzle as she planted a kiss on his neck, then chest, tracing her hands down through the fur on his tummy. He felt his heart pounding in his chest as she realized where she was heading, and gripped the arms of the chair tightly as she gently wrapped her fingers around his length, making him feel its throbbing as she gripped it. He squeezed his eyes closed, tensed himself, and then gasped out loud as he felt the tip of his penis being surrounded by a warm, soft feeling.

Nyte trembled in the seat as the lizard girl continued to slide her lips down the way, then whimpered as she stopped and began flicking her long tongue around him. Whimpering with each move she made and doing his best to keep still, he shook his head, blinked his eyes open and looked down at Isla's face. Her eyes were turned up to meet with his, with the corners of her mouth turned up in a smile as she gently moved her head up and down, tugging at his shaft with each thrust.

"Aaah..." He panted again, making incoherent noises as her tongue moved lazily around his shaft and tip, feeling himself getting close to climax already. Blinking again to try to clear his head, he gasped one more time as the lizard girl squeezed her lips together, running her mouth up his length one more time before finishing with a kiss as she turned her face to his again.

"Never done this before?" she asked.

"No..." He shook his head, licking his lips to try to relieve his dry mouth, still thrusting against the air as he whimpered.

"How about the other way round?"

Nyte's eyebrows raised as the lizard girl's face came closer to him, walking the fingers of one hand up his chest. He was about to lean forward and kiss her again when she hoisted herself up the way, pushing her breasts into his face as she wriggled up on to the seat facing him.

"Mmf..." He squeaked and raised his arms as his face was buried in her soft chest for a moment, and kept looking upwards at them as she wriggled herself up the way, her knees pushing his arms away to rest on the arms of the chair.

Carefully, he moved his elbows out to the sides and squeezed her thighs gently with his hands, taking his eyes off her breasts for a moment to glance down at the cleft now hovering right in front of him. Shaking, he looked back up to see her bright green eyes staring down at him, one of her hands balanced on the back of the chair and the other reaching for the button on the back wall.

"C'mon!" she ordered, bucking her hips forwards into his face. "Remember I've got a tank of gunge waiting for you up there..."

Nyte raised his eyes up to the ceiling, his tongue running over his lips again. Panting and blinking against the water still dripping from his fringe, he struggled to lean forwards a little, his eyes fixed on the smooth notch between her legs before he put his lips around it. Slithering his hands up to squeeze her backside and draw her closer, he dragged his tongue upwards over her wet skin as she shuddered and wriggled against his mouth.

He flicked his tongue over her, making her squeak as he found her clitoris and drew the tip of his tongue back and forward. Pressing his mouth against her, he stared at the gentle curve of her tummy and the beads of watered-down gunge slipping down her smooth skin. He slid his hands away from her bottom around to her hips, then upwards, eventually reaching up to squeeze her gorgeous rounded breasts. The lizard girl purred as he moved his hands in slow circles, gasping a little as he drew his hands back to take hold of her nipples with his fingertips, running his tongue up and down more quickly.

With a twitch he became aware of her hand wrapped around his hardened length again, and she tugged up and down a little, leaning backwards as she ground against him. As she gasped with each flick of his tongue or fingers, he turned his eyes upwards to look at her face, grinning to himself as he saw her mouth hanging open in a smile.

As he watched, she twitched with a sudden gasp, silently wriggling harder against him, then slowly moved back again. She took her hand off the back of the chair and batted his fingers away from her nipples, and he gripped the arms of the chair again as he wriggled himself forwards to keep his face between her legs. He slowed down his licking as she breathed deeply for a moment, then gave her clitoris a final kiss, leaned back and looked up at her as she blinked her eyes open and stared down at him.

With a smile, she put her hands back on the back of the chair and slowly slipped down the way, unfolding her legs from underneath her so that she was sitting backwards on the chair, her entrance hovering just over his shaft as she rocked her hips from side to side. Nyte stared up at her face, panting as she waited for a moment, her face frozen in a horny smile. He gasped, wriggling his hips involuntarily upwards as he felt the warmth against his tip, then thrust harder as she finally slithered slowly down to take him inside her.

"Ngh..." He let out something between a grunt and a whimper as the lizard girl stopped halfway, rotating her hips around again and closing her eyes. "Are you okay?" he whispered, grasping her hips and instinctively pushing down to guide her.

"Yeah..." she nodded, wriggling herself a touch upwards and then eeping as she allowed herself to be lowered down again very slowly. She looked him in the eye and grinned. "You're kinda... big..."

Nyte pricked his ears in surprise, and gasped as at the same moment his length finally slipped fully into place inside her. Looking down between her legs and then pulling herself forwards closer into his lap, Isla began rocking gently back and forwards, making the chair bounce underneath them both as he thrust in response.

"Isla..." He closed his eyes, whimpering at the warm feeling around his shaft as the walls of her entrance rubbed and slipped against him. He reached his hands up to tweak her

nipples again, but she caught them and slapped his palms against her breasts.

"Yeah?" she asked between deep breaths, bouncing harder against him with her hands guiding his as she rubbed them around and over her slippery chest.

"I'm... aah!" Unable to hold himself back any more, Nyte squeezed the beautiful lizard girl's breasts with both hands as he wriggled his hips up the way, twitching rapidly up and down as he felt the growing tingle at the base of his penis. She squirmed against him as her breathing became short and quick, leaning forward to slam her palm on the button.

Half-aware of the alarm ringing around them, Nyte felt a wave surging out of him as the lizard girl screamed from above. Suddenly a cold wave of yellow gloop spewed down on to his head and splashed outwards to splatter over the naked lizardette's chest and tummy, making her skin even more slimy underneath his hands. He snapped his eyes open and felt a second pulse coming as Isla leaned forward to dip her head under the gunge flow, her sloppy breasts right in front of his eyes as he slithered his hands quickly down to her circling hips, and shot into her again as she gave a scream stifled by biting her lip.

He let out a growl as well, twitching wildly and wriggling his hips up the way, grinding himself roughly against her as he pressed their bodies together tightly through the last seconds of climax. As the intense pulsing around his entire body slowly ebbed, leaving just the thumping of his heartbeat in his ears, Nyte slumped down the way as he took a couple of heavy breaths. He shuddered as a wave of calm came over him, replacing the pent-up tension from over the last hour, and he kept his head bowed and eyes closed as he took a few seconds to enjoy the feeling. Exhaustedly, he panted one last time and opened his eyes.

He was alone kneeling on the floor of the open shower, his slowly retreating length held in both of his hands. Swallowing and breathing deeply to clear his head as the fantasy faded, he

unsteadily got to his feet, hauling himself upwards. Turning around, he bumped his elbow into the button for the shower and stepped back to clean his hands in the falling water. As the spray turned off, he shook himself out one last time, and then walked dazedly through the archway to get changed.



Nyte pushed the changing room door open and was met with a familiar sight - the girls were already waiting for him, seated in fresh outfits. He jumped as he caught Isla's eye, and quickly looked to the other bench to avoid her gaze. His eyes instead fell on to Quinne, and he immediately twitched a little again as he saw she had got changed out of her T-shirt into a sports top that left her light pink tummy bare.

The fox girl waved back at him as he hesitated. "Good shower?" she asked.

"Yeah! Yeah, fine..." he answered quickly. He sat down heavily on the bench next to her, closing his eyes and making a show of combing both hands up through his re-fluffed hair in an attempt to delay making eye contact with the girls.

Alex leaned forward from the other end of the bench. "Yes, you're all looking nice and clean now... we like to give people a break sometimes, so that we can start on you all over again in the second half!"

Becky gave a small, whimpering giggle, brushing both hands up through her just-cleaned hair, as she glanced sideways at the grinning lizard girl.

"By the way, I know you've already been up close and personal with this stuff, but we always give our contestants a chance for a calmer look at it..."

Nyte leaned around Quinne to watch as Alex produced a small plastic bottle from his pocket, the gunge inside sloshing thickly against the sides as he moved it. Getting up, the wolf headed to the water cooler near the entrance of the changing area and pulled four cups off the dispenser, then set them down in a row on the low table and took the cap off the bottle.

"Strangest round of drinks I've ever served," he laughed as he tipped the bottle over and poured back and forward over the row, splashing the dark green gunge into the cups and spilling more of the stuff over the table around them. Nyte glanced up at Isla, who was watching the liquid gloop out of the bottle fascinatedly. Alex turned and gave the first cup to her, then handed the rest to the other team members. As he stepped back to his seat, Nyte raised his up in the air with a smile and then mimed tipping it forward to his mouth.

"You can!" Alex smiled. "It's just thickened water and coloring, it should taste like... really awful custard."

Nyte looked down at the off-colored liquid in front of him again, tilting it a little and watching the thick liquid fall back slowly from the sides of the cup. "No," he grinned, shaking his head.

"What's it made of?" Quinne stared curiously down into her cup beside him with a small smile, poking one finger in and slopping the stuff around.

"It's an industrial food thickener," Alex replied. He paused, then a grin grew on his face. "Actually, you know the sauce you get in frozen meat pies from the supermarket, where if you've got leftovers, it gets all congealed as it cools down? It's the same stuff..."

"Urgh, it is!" Becky laughed through her grimace as she dipped a couple of fingers into the gunk and raised them up, rubbing them together as the glutinous slime dripped down from them. "I'm never going to see those in the same way again now..."

"So how do you make it?" the fox girl asked again. She raised the cup to eye level, swirling it around in a circle, and eeped as a lick of it flew out and splashed on her knee. "Do you just order a tankerful of the stuff?" Nyte leaned forward as she did the same, also having had that question in mind since he'd first seen gunge on television.

"It's made from a powder, just like cornstarch," the red wolf replied. "We mix it slowly in water, and add a dye to it for the

color - we've got a couple of huge mixing vats just off the set entrance that I'll show you once we're finished!"

"Any chance of giving us some to have a go at home?" Isla smiled across from the other bench, and she grinned as Alex nodded.

"Yes, we give a pack out to our contestants at the end! We're actually thinking of getting the network to start selling our own branded gunge packs, as well..."

"Awesome," the lizardess cackled. "I know so many people who need to have that happen to them..."

Nyte jumped as he felt an elbow poking him in the side, and turned to look at the pink fennec who was grinning into his face. "What d'you think, Nyte - how about setting up a gunge tank at those club nights you do?"

He paused, trying to keep his face neutral as he remembered telling the girls about the nights he'd DJ-ed at his university. "Yeah, that... could work," he said carefully, but he was already thinking about how he really could include one. "You know the text requests for songs - you could do the same for nominating people in..."

"I know I'd come along if you had that!" Isla enthused. Nyte whimpered as he suddenly pictured himself pulling the lever on her on stage.

"A young gunge-master in the making," Alex grinned, and Nyte felt his face heat up, the image still not having left his mind. He watched as the red wolf swung himself to his feet and moved to the head of the table. "So let's give you another lesson from the professionals first!"

He put his hand on the doors to the set, and looked back over his shoulder as the team got up and gathered around behind him. "You haven't had enough, have you?" he asked with a grin.

"Oh, no way," Isla smiled. Nyte shook his head as well, not stopping the smile from spreading across his face as he imagined what they were about to face in the second half.

"Come on!" Alex threw his hand over his head in a sweeping beckoning gesture as he leapt through the doors, with just a glance backwards to make sure the team were keeping up as he hurtled back down the corridor towards the circular hub of the set. Nyte ran alongside the girls, smiling over at the still-dripping platform with the Pod on it as they passed through the chamber, then he scooted to a halt as Alex stopped at the mouth of a corridor they hadn't been down yet, with a set of double doors leading away from the circular room and a hatch with a circular handle set into the wall.

"Okay, everyone!" he started as they caught up. "We've still got two wings of the compound to explore - where do you want to go first, Nyte?"

Nyte twitched his eyes away from his teammates and looked up at the wolf as he slapped the hatch on the wall behind him. "This leads down to the undersea level - or we've still got the storage area to explore," he said as he moved his hand to point down the corridor towards the set of double swinging doors.

"The... storage area," he repeated quickly, gesturing towards them.

"Good, we can leave the really messy stuff down there for our finale..." Alex clapped his hands together, then jumped and turned to hit the ground running towards the doors. As Nyte took off after him, the wolf put his hands out and ran into them at full tilt, making them burst open and flap closed behind him.

Nyte slowed down as he reached them, hearing his teammates scamper up behind him as he pushed them both open, glancing over his shoulder as he held them for the girls. Seeing their expressions, he looked in front of him again to see a tiled section of the corridor, lined with multiple nozzles at head to ankle height along both walls.

"Come on!" Alex was already on the other side of it, waiting at a T-junction and holding both hands in a beckoning gesture to encourage them through. "It's just a rinser, there's

nothing to worry about - it's only gone off accidentally two or three times..."

Nyte forced a laugh, brushing a strand of his hair off his forehead, then took a breath and stepped forwards on to the tiles. Shrinking his shoulders a little inwards, he hurried through, half-closing his eyes and jumping at a sudden noise that he quickly realized was just one of the girls stepping up behind him.

After just a few steps, he let his breath out, smiling as he stepped out of the range of the nozzles, and looked around as the other three stepped out of the raised section of the corridor and gathered around Alex. This area of the set was decorated to look less futuristic than the others, with stone-textured walls leading up to a slightly curved ceiling. Lights hung from beams above them, a couple of the bulbs flickering erratically.

"Okay, team..." Alex started. "I know we gave you a hard time right from the start, but it's not going to get any easier from here - are you feeling nice and clean after that?"

He looked towards Becky as he said it, and the golden brown puppy girl nodded, her nervous smile breaking into a grin as she shuffled her feet.

"Well, I hate to do this," Alex grinned through a blatant lie, "but we're going to have to put one of you in danger of getting gunged again - come over here!"

He leapt away from them, taking a couple of steps backwards along the right fork of the corridor. Nyte came forward with the girls, glancing at the few metallic barred doors that led off from the main corridor around them, before he felt the fur on the back of his neck stand on end as the red wolf turned to put his hand on the latch of a door on the corner, decorated with a triangular warning sign and bordered by black and yellow striped tape.

"We've got something very special in here," their host grinned as he undid the latch, pushing the door slowly open with a rusty squeak to reveal the gloom beyond it. "I just hope we get a volunteer..."

"Oh, I'm sure we will!" Isla said brightly, sliding a hand through Nyte's hair as she passed by, leaning around him to stare into the room. As Alex stepped inside, she was the first to go in behind him, and Nyte swallowed the lump in his throat, images of game rooms that they hadn't been in yet flashing through his mind as he dazedly followed the rest of the girls into the dark room.

He stared silently in front of him as he crept forwards beyond the sweep of the door. The room had been changed a little for the new set, but he instantly recognized the flickering green glow of the booth set into the wall in front of them, along with the pulsing of the lights and switches on various electronic props around its back and walls. A metallic door covered the lower half of the booth, with the back of a curved chair poking above it, and a small lip on the ceiling disguised whatever was above it.

There was another scraping noise from the door, and he snapped out of his thoughts and looked over his shoulder to watch as Alex swung it closed. The rectangle of light on the floor narrowed away until the only light in the room was the ominous green from the tank in front of them.

"I think you know what's going to happen here..." grinned Alex as he stepped forwards past the row of contestants, heading for a switch sticking out of the wall near the top left of the tank. He reached up and tugged it down, producing a sudden mechanical noise as the door of the tank slowly lowered into the floor. "This is what we call the Hotseat, and whoever gets put on it is at risk of getting very gungy indeed - who's going to step up and take it?"

Nyte shuddered as the metallic tank door gave a clunk as it opened fully, the top of the door nearly level with the floor. He glanced over his shoulder to see Becky grinning nervously with her hands placed next to her mouth, taking a step back into the gloom, and pictured her cringing and giving her cute squeaks as she was covered in gunge. Suddenly, his heart jumped as he

realized the girls would be clamoring for him to be gunged again if he didn't speak up.

He turned around, half pointing to the puppy at the back of the group, but stayed silent as he saw Quinne clap both her hands on to Isla's shoulders in front of him. With a gentle push, she walked the reptilian forward further into the circle of green light, clapping her hands together as she stepped back and left her beside Alex.

"It looks like we have our volunteer," Alex smiled, as the lizardess stretched up then let herself drop back. Even though Nyte couldn't see her face, he saw her shifting her weight from foot to foot excitedly.

"Isla... I think you're going to enjoy this," the red wolf grinned as he reached forward to grasp her hand, tugging her eagerly forwards. After nearly being pulled off her feet, the lizardess scampered a little to keep up, and looked over her shoulder back at the others as she was led towards the booth.

Nyte shifted uncomfortably, already imagining slime spurting over the blue reptilian in the same way that he'd seen happen to people in the infamous gunge machine on television. As Alex encouraged her with a wave of his hand, she turned around and sat down, and Nyte's eyes dropped to the slight swing of her chest as she wriggled herself backward into the curved seat.

"Ready for this?" Alex asked her. She raised her hands up in a nonchalant shrug, despite the smile on her face, and clapped them on to her knees.

"I suppose so," she said, and twitched a little at the mechanical grinding noise as the door of the tank began to rise back into place in front of her. Alex hopped a couple of steps back to join her watching teammates, and brought his minicomputer out of his pocket, holding it up in front of him.

"Okay, Isla - I'm sure that you've seen this game before. All you have to do is answer three questions - if you get any less than all three of them correct, the Hotseat's going to start up and you're going to get covered in all the gunge and grime

from the pipes around you," he said as he waved his hands down through the air. "How are you feeling just now?"

Isla jumped as the door of the booth clunked into position in front of her, and squeezed the arms of the seat as the pulsing lights from the walls slowly played over her. "Er, pretty good," she answered through a laugh, her eyes flicking between the two nozzles aimed at her from the front sides of the tank.

"Okay, well, we'll see how long that lasts! You've got a choice - do you want to answer the questions yourself, or do you want your team to try to save you instead? Which I should remind you didn't work out that well the last time you were in one of these things..."

"Yeah, I'll do it this time," she said. She blinked under the lights as Alex nodded, then her smile cracked into a grin again as the light from the top of the tank narrowed, leaving her spotlit in green. From just behind the red wolf, Nyte watched her intently as she waited for the questions to begin.

"Your first question, Isla..." Alex started. "What was the first name of the astronomer Duke, after whom Duke's Comet is named?" Nyte looked from Alex to the curvy lizardess, having no clue and waiting to see how she responded.

"Um..." She squirmed from side to side in the seat, looking up once again at the nozzle above her, then dropped her eyes to the floor again with a giggle. "I don't know..." she said with a nervous grin, looking back at the red wolf.

"Well, we can come back to that one if you like," he said, looking back down at his minicomputer. "Rossi Lombard has presented which evening chat programme for more than two decades?"

This time, Isla nodded as he read it out. "Friday Night Party," she said immediately. Nyte glanced at Alex's face, but couldn't read his expression as he moved straight on to the third question.

"In Roman numerals, what is the number 969?"

The lizardess slumped against the backrest, exhaling heavily. She stared up into the mechanism above her for a moment, blinking in the green light. "CM..." she started reciting, then paused as she thought. "D..." She gave a lopsided nervous smile as she guessed. "IX."

"Okay," Alex nodded as he flicked his thumb on the scroll wheel. "Let's go back to this one again..." Alex pointed as he read the question out slowly. "The first name of the astronomer - someone Duke?"

The lizardess whimpered through her grin, and Nyte heard her tapping her toes on the floor of the gunge tank as she thought.

"Can I pass?" she asked, biting her lip.

"No, no passes allowed in this game!" Alex grinned back as he watched her squirming, drumming her hands on the arms of the seat, then a cheeky grin crossed her face.

"I'll take my top off," she offered, pointing down at her bikini. Nyte only just stifled a yelp in reaction, and heard the other two girls beside him tittering at his sudden jump.

"Well, you could..." Alex said through a laugh. "You still wouldn't get a pass, though..."

The blue lizardess sighed, and Nyte breathed out heavily, relaxing his pricked-up ears.

"I don't know," she repeated, rolling her shoulders and budging herself up a little in the seat. "John," she shrugged.

"That's your answer - John?" Alex asked back, his thumb hovering over the screen.

"Yeah," she said with a final nod, then bit her lip again and slumped back to stare up at the chute above her.

"Okay..." Alex started. "You've answered all three questions..." Despite herself, the lizard girl leaned forwards a little as he paused, and Nyte found himself curling his toes nervously even though he was sure she wasn't escaping. "And you only got one right, so you're getting gunged - and here's the man who's going to do it."

Suddenly, he turned around and thrust the minicomputer into Nyte's chest. He yipped, clasping his hands to it instinctively as he stumbled backwards a little, then glanced up at the red wolf's eyes, just visible in the darkness.

"Wh..." he stuttered, looking down at the screen with a large glowing "GUNGE" button in its centre, and then up to the smooth, clean, attractive lizardess in the slime tank in front of him. He raised his arm up to hand the device back, but brought it slowly back to his face as Alex stepped away to watch with the other two girls.

"It's all up to you, Nyte - sometimes as the designated team leader, you've got to do some tough things..." the red wolf chuckled as he put a hand on the puppy girl's shoulder.

"C'mon Nyte, gunge her!" he heard Quinne add delightedly, poking her head over his shoulder.

"Er..." He looked up at the reptilian again, trying to think of what to say. "Sorry, Isla..." he tried, a sheepish grin forming on his face.

"Oh, I'll get you back," she replied calmly, twisting one finger in the strap of her bikini top.

"I'm sure..." he said under his breath, glancing down to the button again. He took a deep breath, gritted his teeth as he looked back up at Isla, and then slowly pressed his thumb down on the screen.

He jumped as the gunge tank siren rang around the room, and Isla closed her eyes, jiggling in the seat with her smile frozen on her face, giving a small whimper as she waited for the booth to start up. Suddenly, two jets of translucent green slime spurted at her from the front corners of the tank, and she yipped as they slapped against her sides and tummy, globs of the glutinous liquid tumbling to splatter noisily on to the floor.

Nyte watched transfixed as the spurting gunge angled up slowly, the lizardess craning her neck up as the slime slapped against her breasts, falling in gloppy curtains down into her lap. She brought her hands inward from the arms of the seat, catching the stuff and letting it slip through her fingers, and

tossed her head to the side as one of the jets twitched up towards her face. She shook her head, strings of ooze flying outwards from it as she wriggled against the streams.

With another blast from the industrial hooter, there was a clunk from the ceiling, and the main nozzle spewed a glistening column of bright orange and yellow slime down on to the lizardess's head, hiding her underneath a shining dome that broke up as it caught on the green spurts still flying towards her. As Isla dipped her head forwards, Nyte caught a glimpse of her open-mouthed smile before the thick gunge slumped down over her face, the outline of her head and shoulders just visible underneath the sloppy downpour. As she was enveloped, he was half-aware of Quinne bouncing up and down right behind him, pumping her hands in the air.

Isla's fingers poked out through the gloop, catching again on the green streams still slithering up and down her from the sides, and she shifted her head a little to the side as the opposite spurt came up to her face. The bright gunge from above splattered down on to her shoulder, flying out to splurge against the walls of the tank as she screwed up the side of her face it was hitting, drawing her arms in to hug herself as the slop slithered down her.

As the green streams sputtered and slowly came outwards, drizzling across Isla's lap, she ducked down again and clasped her hands together to slide them over her head, pushing the thick yellowish gunge away and grimacing as it slithered down her back just before the thinning downpour from above glopped over her face again. She bowed her head forwards as the ooze drizzled and sputtered to a halt, and blinked her eyes open for a second to see her skin completely coated in the sloppy mixture. Nyte stood frozen, feeling a crush in his swimming shorts despite the shower minutes before, as he watched the thick colors of gunge slither and ooze over the curvy reptilian, the last blobs of the slime from above slapping on top of her head and dripping down the sides of her snout as she gave a helpless, giggling squeak.

The hooter sharply dropped to a lower tone as a column of black gunk poured down from the ceiling, and Nyte took a step back as it splattered wildly around the tank for a second, a streak of it flying over the door as Isla yipped and covered her eyes. The lumpy ooze spluttered over her head as she held her hands to her face, settling into a heavy dome that poured from her head down on to her arms and shoulders, pushing the bright orange and yellow gunge away and mingling into a sickly off-green as it slipped down her curves. The long blare from the siren shut off, and Nyte twitched as he listened to the thick dripping and splattering noise as the lumpy gunk slipped down her and splotted into the pool of gunge at the bottom of the booth. As she tented her hands over her eyes, revealing a streak of the thick gunk slipping down her snout, the black stuff slowed to a series of blobby drips, and the lizardess shook in relieved laughter, sending the globs of the stuff on her shoulders slithering down her chest and back.

Isla slowly pushed her clasped hands backwards over her head again, grimacing at the thick smacking noise as the wave of gunge dropped to the bottom of the tank, and she opened her eyes slowly, their bright green color showing up starkly against the dark ooze coating her head. She looked down at herself again, her hands at her chest as the black and off-green drips continued to slither from her chin and cheeks, then caught Nyte's eye as the corners of her shocked mouth turned up in a smile. He swallowed and forced a grin back, then they both looked up to the red wolf as he stepped forwards, clapping his hands together.

"Isla, I'm sorry that... he did this to you," he said, pointing back over his shoulder at Nyte. The gungy lizardess nodded with a knowing smile, holding her palms out in front of her and watching the thick slime drizzle through her outstretched fingers. "Are you feeling okay under all that?"

"I'm... aah!" She yipped as the green streams from the sides spurted back into life, making a gloppy splattering noise as they smacked on to her, washing away some of the murky

mixture on her tummy. She shook her hands as they sputtered back again, bowing her head as another streak of black slopped down from the nozzle on the ceiling to splurge against her head. She ducked down, wiping her hands back and forth against her calves as she jiggled in the gungy chair, then brought them up to her eyes and twisted around to look at the slime-coated walls and back of the tank. Nyte grimaced as he caught a glimpse of the black gunge mingling into green as the blobs of it slithered down her yellow-coated back.

"Well, you're not looking too great at the moment, but... that's what happens to people in there, and you did earn your team 25 points for the one right answer. I think it really is empty now, so let's get you out of there..."

He skipped back over to the lever and tugged it, starting the mechanical grinding noise again as the door of the gunge tank rolled downwards into the floor. As it clunked open, the gunge-coated lizardess raised her legs up to look at her feet in front of her, wriggling her toes as she watched the murky green mixture of goo drip slowly in strings from them. Nyte shuddered as his eyes moved up from her feet, at the layer of slippery green and yellow gunge coating her upper body, the dark splatter on her head and shoulders dripping in fingers through the bright slime.

"Come on out - sorry that you didn't stay clean long..." The red wolf offered his arm to the reptilian, who put her hand in his, running her other hand over her head and leaving finger-shaped furrows behind in the thick slime. As she budged herself forward off the slippery chair, she brought her hand back around, watching the unpleasant mixture of gunge drip off her fingertips. Nyte realized what she was thinking just as she came forwards towards him, and yipped as she thrust her hand forward to splat it on to his head, rubbing both of her hands down his back as she smushed herself against him in a close hug.

He shivered as she pulled away quickly, feeling the cold goo hanging on his fur, and looked at the satisfied grin on her

face, trying to keep his eyes there instead of on the mixture of green slime slipping in blobs down her chest and tummy. He opened his mouth, trying to find something to say, when he was interrupted by a loud squeak as Alex pulled the door open again.

"Well, that didn't go as well as it could have - especially not for this unlucky lizardess..." the red wolf motioned toward the gunged reptilian as he took her hand and headed out the door. "But we've got a long way to go yet - our next game's just back the way we came. Nyte, you're not escaping this one, but we're going to need one of the other girls as well - who's it going to be?"

"Uh..." Distracted by the sudden thought of being gunged again, Nyte looked behind him as he stepped out into the corridor. Becky was right behind him, and he opened his mouth to say her name just as she spoke up.

"Quinne's going to do it!" she said, pointing behind her at the small vulpine and stepping out of the way as she came round the door, blinking in the light.

"Ah, Becky volunteered you first! Are you okay with that?" Alex asked as he looked to the pink fennec.

"Well..." the short fox girl replied with a defeated laugh, "I guess I do still deserve it..." She smiled to herself, looking at the floor.

"Oh, don't give them that," Alex said, wagging his finger behind him at her as he led them down the corridor away from the door with the warning sign. "You know this team would take any chance you give them..."

Nyte smiled and nodded, looking distractedly at the gunge slipping down Isla's back as he walked at the back of the group. They were passing the branch of the corridor that they had come in by, and Alex glanced to his left at the nozzles in the wall. "We can give you a quick cleanup if you want, Isla..." he said, but stopped as she shook her head.

"I'm just going to end up back like this, aren't I?" she said.

The red wolf grinned back at her. "Good point! I wish I could say something more reassuring, but... take a look at this."

He pointed ahead of him as the corridor took a sharp turn toward the left, and Nyte's eyes widened as he saw what was around the corner. Most of the passageway beyond a few feet down was in darkness, but right in front of them were two spherical tanks, about five feet in diameter, standing side by side in the corridor. They were made up of two domes each - a blue metallic lower half with a few struts stretching from its lower curves to bolted panels on the floor, and a clear upper dome, through which he could see a round seat in the centre in the tank on his right. Directly above it, a pipe led from the ceiling to poke down a little through a hole in the top of the dome. The sphere on the left was open, the upper dome having been raised up a couple of feet along the pipe.

"We never worked out what these things were for, but I've heard some of the restoration crew calling them the 'splatterdomes'..." Alex said happily as he lifted the curved top half of the sphere on the far side up so that it was open like the other one. "And these two are going to find out why, because they're going inside!"

He turned around and stepped back, ducking down to scoop Quinne up in his arms in one movement. She squeaked, her long ears pricking, as the red wolf gently carried her over and put her on the seat inside the curved device.

Nyte padded over to the other one, putting his hands on the lip and looking down into it - the inside of the bowl was slick with gunge. He braced himself on the side and jumped up to try to get in, ending in an awkward position with one foot on the seat on the inside of the bowl-shaped tank, balanced on the edge of it with his hands.

"Let me just give you a bit of help, too, Nyte - I wouldn't want you to enjoy being inside here any less...!"

He watched, staying still as the red wolf dashed over to him and put his hands around his waist. He gasped as he wrapped his arms around him, then tried to disguise his

surprise at how easily the muscular canine was able to lift him up, and folded himself into a sitting position as Alex put him down on the seat.

He looked down at the interior wall of the bowl in front of him, streaked with a layer of blue and green slime, and dragged both his feet up through it, shuddering as it oozed up between his toes. A change in the light above him made him duck down, and from his hunched position he looked up sideways to see the clear top dome of the device being lowered into place around him.

The two halves of the sphere settled into place around Nyte with a click, and he shivered, rubbing his slimy feet together as Alex moved to Quinne's device on the opposite side of the corridor. As he waited, he looked at the nozzle pointing down off the end of the pipe above him - it looked like it was divided into two circles, with a main chute in the center and some sort of sprayer around its edges. He blinked and squirmed backward a little as a thick dribble of light blue slime slithered down from it, spattering a couple of paint-like drops into his lap.

He heard a click from the other side of the corridor as Quinne's dome was closed on her, and saw the pink fennec nervously looking up as he had done. He caught her eye, giving her a weak smile, as Alex put his arms around the two remaining girls, walking them slowly forward between the spheres.

"Okay, you two..." he started, looking back and forth between the puppy girl and the gungy lizardess as he moved them between the two trapped team members. "In this game, it's going to be up to you to save Nyte and Quinne from being gunged. Those two nozzles are going to fill the domes up with slime again in just a couple of minutes... unless you can transport enough slime from them to the chutes at the other end of the corridor."

The lights further down the passageway buzzed and flickered into life as Alex pointed forwards. A few feet in front

of the domes, a five foot wide channel of green slime stretched from an opening at one side of the corridor to the other, a couple of flimsy foam bridges floating on the surface. Beyond it, the floor of the corridor was made of a ribbed inflatable material, going for several yards and ending at a wall with a couple of rectangular receptacles sticking out of it diagonally. Isla nodded, running a hand over her slimy head, while Becky gasped and clasped her hands over her nervous smile, keeping her eyes on the thick green surface of the gunge in front of her.

Alex stooped down to pick up two plastic buckets from the floor, and handed one each to the two girls beside him. As he did so, there was a loud click from somewhere in the ceiling, and both Nyte and Quinne hunched down instinctively before looking up as the pipes above them slowly moved up and forwards, swinging out from the tops of the spheres and moving into position just in front of them.

The red wolf put his hands on Becky's shoulders, holding her in place as she whimpered under her breath, her eyes fixed on the gunge nozzle as it moved into position right above her, between the sphere and the lip of the channel of slime. He patted her arm before straightening up again, standing between the spheres, and she tiptoed a little out of the way of the pipe.

"All you have to do is hold your bucket underneath these pipes to turn them on, fill them up, and then get yourself over to the other wall and pour it in there," Alex pointed. "You can concentrate on one of your team mates at a time, or do one each, if you want to save Nyte, Isla..."

"Nah, he got me like this - I want him to get gunged," the lizardess answered immediately, flashing a grin over at him. He felt his heart jump as she made eye contact.

"Remember I had nothing to do with it, Isla!" the fox girl in the other dome called quickly, craning her neck up.

"There's such a thing as protesting too much," Alex chuckled. "All right, so... Becky, you take Nyte's side of the room, Isla can try to keep Quinne clean... we'll look at how

much of the stuff you managed to carry over there when the time runs out... and we'll see who gets gunged. Oh, and... keep your eyes on the ceiling, too," he finished, pointing up with a knowing smile.

From inside the tank, Nyte grinned at the last comment, looking at Becky shuffle her feet as she faced the corridor in front of her, ready to enjoy watching the girls as he tried to swallow his nerves. Alex stepped back between the two spheres, and a harsh klaxon hooted as he jabbed a button on his pocket device.

Nyte folded one foot on top of the other as a timer at two minutes was projected on to the opposite wall. After a jump at the sudden noise, the puppy girl stepped in front of him, a timid expression on her face as she held the bucket underneath the pipe above and in front of her with outstretched arms. With a click, a thick stripe of blue gunge spewed out from it, splattering into the bucket below and making Becky squeak and tip forwards, her head going under the flow for a half second before she righted herself. As the gunge pipe shut off, Nyte watched the puppy girl shake her head, sending the blue slime flying out from her fringe before she turned around to squeamishly step down into the channel.

On the opposite side of the corridor, Isla leapt on to the plastic bridge floating on the gunge and made to bounce forward off it, but toppled forward with a squeak as it shot out from underneath her feet. Nyte winced as the lizardess slammed into the inflatable surface, her bucket of slime falling and spilling underneath her, and he pushed himself up in the seat with his hands, looking over at her concerned as she lay dazed for a moment.

She rolled over on to her back, and he was relieved to see that she was laughing. As he lowered himself back into his seat, she hauled herself up, looking at the bright splatter of gunge dripping down her chest and tummy, and wallowed the couple of steps through the channel to get back to the overhead nozzle.

"Come on...!" The fox girl bounced inside the spherical gunge tank as Isla held the bucket up again, twitching back and lowering it down as the yellow goo spilled into it. "I'm so going to get you back if this thing gunges me..."

"What, and get me messier than this?" As the level of slime in the bucket neared the brim, Isla leaned around the column of gunge to grin back at the fox girl, then turned on her heel, deliberately putting her head under the slowing slime nozzle to catch the end of the downpour before stepping forwards more carefully into the gunge in front of her. Quinne budged herself forward and pressed her muzzle and hands to the plastic of the clear dome, watching her intently.

Nyte looked back to his side of the corridor, where the puppy girl had already got to the end and was bounding back towards him, her hair and ears bouncing with each leap she took. Suddenly there was a burst of pink from the ceiling and she yipped, clasping both hands to her head and curling up in mid-air, as a torrent of gunge splurged down just behind her, painting the air-filled floor with a wide splatter mark.

With a glance behind her, an embarrassed smile on her face, the canine dipped her toe into the green gloop again and waded across, putting one hand down to help herself slither out on her knees as the thick puddle of slop around her oozed back down the curved lip back into the channel.

Nyte gave her an uncertain clap of encouragement as she shakily got to her feet and positioned herself under the nozzle again, hugging the bucket against her chest with her head turned away as she waited for the gunge pipe to start up. As it clicked, she flinched, then disappeared behind the sloppy downpour, stepping back and keeping her face away as the goo came down in front of her. She squeaked as the stuff spilled over the lip of the bucket, painting her forearms in blue, then shifted her hands to grip the handle and shakily stepped back down into the knee-deep gunge river.

As Becky bounced away, he watched her closely, her tail swishing behind her as she ran on the soft surface with an

awkward hip-swaying motion, off balance with the weight in front of her. As she reached the gungy puddle from earlier, she slowed herself down a little, carefully planting her feet in the ribs of the floor as she walked over it. As she stepped away, she put one hand out to grip the edge of the chute as she poured the bucket into it, making sure not to spill any, then turned around, pushed herself off the wall and slithered through the pink slime - suddenly her feet shot forwards and she landed on her bottom, flopping backward as the bucket flew away in front of her.

Isla glanced over from her side of the corridor, and yelped as a canister of white gunge burst open above her, splattering off her face and chest and making her stumble to her knees. With a breathless smile, Becky flopped herself back into a sitting position, then grimaced at the feeling of the pink slime running down her back. Spying the bucket a few paces in front of her, she flipped over on to her knees and struggled forwards to retrieve it, then shrieked as another container of gunge spewed down on to her, the yellow glop fanning out and splattering on the blowup surface around her as it fell.

Nyte flinched and shifted in his seat as the puppy girl became visible again, her hair soaked and hanging over her eyes and her mouth open in a shrieking laugh. She flicked her hair back with one hand, sending yellow strings of goo flying out behind her as she folded her legs around to dip them into the gunge. His eyes flicked to the timer behind her, then to Isla as she scooted towards the channel as well. He held his breath as she made a jump for it, and at the same moment a spray of green gunge crashed down from the ceiling right above it. The lizardess shrieked as it caught her on the head in mid-air, landed with her feet halfway up the opposite lip of the channel, then twisted sideways and toppled fully into it.

Nyte's mouth dropped open as he craned his neck up again, and he grinned to himself as the lizardess bobbed her head and shoulders up above the deep green slime. Sheets of the stuff glopped back into the channel, slowly trickling away

to reveal the outline of her head again, the mixed colors swirling around her as she turned and slowly dragged herself to her feet. He whimpered as he watched the green slime ooze down her shapely curves, blinking at a burst of light blue from his right as Becky stood beneath the gunge pipe once again.

As the puppy girl bounced away, he looked back at Isla as she positioned herself under the gunge pipe, and put his hands over his lap as he watched her hug the bucket to her chest, the yellow goo splashing down into it and rebounding out to slap against her breasts. His ears pricked as there was a squeak from his side of the corridor, and he looked as Becky flailed her free arm, her feet skittering over the gungy surface below her as she tried to stay upright.

He smiled as he watched both girls struggle more slowly back to the end of the corridor, Becky eventually shuffling forwards on her knees as Isla skated through the film of gunge on the inflatable floor. As the timer hit zero, a harsh buzzer rang around the room, and he shuddered, kicking his feet on the slimy surface in front of him again, as the gunge pipes swung back into place above him and Quinne.

"Okay, stop!" Alex called as he stepped forwards between the spheres, looking around at the splattered corridor and letting out a laugh. "All right, I'll give you that..." he added, as Isla quickly stumbled to the chute in front of her and tipped her last bucketful in. "You really gave it everything you had there - you've made this place a lot more colorful, and you two look almost as messy as what'll happen to Nyte and Quinne if these things go off..."

Quinne whimpered and giggled, staring up at the hole in the dome's ceiling as the pipe clunked back into place above her. After a glance at the pipe above his own head, Nyte looked to the puppy girl, who was smiling to herself, leaning on the wall breathlessly and flicking her slimy hair back behind her ears. She looked down at her feet, shaking one then the other to try to get the thigh-high coating of smooth green slime off.

"Speaking of which, I think it's time to see how you did - let's see how much Isla managed to get in first..."

Nyte and Quinne both straightened as he pointed toward a vertical counter at the side of the receptacle at the end of the corridor, which slowly began filling with bars of light, an electronic beep playing as each one turned on. Peering out through the curved plastic top half of the tank, he looked from the counter to the wide-eyed fennec girl and back, watching her face as she mouthed encouragement to it. She flattened her ears and balled her fists in front of her tensely, watching each section turn on slowly in turn with a beep, before the second to last bar lit up in red with a harsh buzz.

"Oh...!" Alex called above the noise. "Almost there, but not quite - Quinne, it's starting up!" The buzzer sounded again as the fox girl gasped, and she only just had time to bow her head forwards before a huge column of yellow splurged over her, enveloping her in a torrent of gunge.

Nyte stared at the other sphere, squirming nervously and glancing between the nozzle above his head and the dome of yellow gunge in the other sphere. The tips of the fox girl's ears were just visible as she wriggled underneath the gloopy downpour, the glistening slime twitching from side to side as small pockets of air bubbled out of the pipe. A lick of it splattered against the clear plastic upper dome, and he tried to stretch to the side to watch as the steady column broke into a blobby drizzle. The fennec ducked down as the heavy drops smacked on to her, running down her face and soaked hair.

He jumped as the hooter sounded again, and several ribbons of orange gunge burst from the edges of the nozzle, fanning out and splattering into the rising slime pool. Quinne wiped at her eyes and opened them again, twitching back a little as she watched the goo pour down, swirling in the yellow stuff and filling up the tank around her. She yipped and hunched up as they began to ease off, making the diagonal streams fold inward and splash off her head and shoulders in a sloppy cascade.

The drizzles of orange slowed to drips, revealing the gungy fox girl underneath sitting in a waist-deep pool of bright slime, the last visible patches of her fur being covered as the goo crawled down her in thick blobs. As soon as she moved to clear her eyes, a wet hissing noise started up, and the fennec yelped and clasped her hands over the rest of her face instinctively as jets of white foam spewed at her from the sides of the dome. Slowly, she relaxed as the streams played over her, putting her arms down below the gungy surface and giggling as she allowed her face to be covered. Nyte shuddered as the creamy white substance splatted on to her, clinging to her gungy fur and then dripping slowly away as it piled up, floating out on the lazily rippling slime bath.

The streams of foam sputtered and died out, leaving a large white blob in the middle of the dome. Slowly, two arms became visible at its sides, and the fox girl underneath it clawed handfuls of it away from her face, giggling helplessly as she tried to clean herself off a little. With a smile, Alex strolled over towards her and drummed his fingers on the top of the dome.

"It looks like you haven't had much luck with the slime baths, Quinne..." the red wolf chuckled, and the fennec twisted round in the seat to face him, still wiping her eyes with her palm.

"Nope." She shook her head and dipped both her hands quickly back into the gunge, making a thick glooping noise as the surface closed around them, then brought them back up again, sending gunge splashing out in front of her. "But you got the temperature just right this time...!"

She wriggled from side to side, watching the streaks of colored gunk ripple and swirl. "And with me in a new top, too..." Nyte leaned a little to the side, trying to see past the streak of gunge on the side of the dome as she brought her hands up to her sports top, squeezing inwards and sending a wave of yellow slop oozing out over the top of it.

Alex turned away from her, his smile unwavering. "Isla, you were the one responsible for keeping her clean - how do you feel, seeing this?"

The lizardess just grinned, sloshing through the gunge channel and then stumbling up the other side. She leaned over slightly to face the gungy fennec, who was gathering up the foam around her and piling it on to the top of her head, trying to craft it into a mohawk. Isla glanced over her shoulder at Becky, who removed her hands from over her mouth, revealing an awestruck smile, and as Nyte watched, she suddenly glanced over to him.

"That's right, Becky..." Alex said, noticing her gaze. "Now we've got to see if you saved Nyte from the same experience!"

Nyte took a breath and looked to the counter at the other end of the corridor on his side, trying to lean to the side as Becky stepped between it and his sphere. He gave up and closed his eyes, listening to the steady beeping as the counter filled and feeling the fur on the back of his neck stand up as he waited all the time for the buzzer. Suddenly, the sound changed, and he jumped as a final higher-pitched beep played.

"Nyte's been saved!" He pricked his ears up again in surprise as he heard Alex's voice again, and twisted around to look as the wolf stepped forwards. "Becky, you did it - you got enough slime in there to turn the dome off, so your team leader stays clean." He turned around and leaned on the top of the tank opposite Nyte, looking down at the gungy fennec girl inside it, who was now holding her sloppy hair out of her face with both hands, twitching as globs of yellow and orange gunge continued to dribble out of the nozzle above her. "Are you pleased to hear that, Quinne?"

She pursed her lips and blew some of the slime away before answering. "No, not really..." she said back, wriggling in the slop surrounding her.

"Well, you know what - as he threw the switch on Isla last time, I think it's only fair for her to get her own back now," Alex said. The lizardess whooped and raised her hands up as

the red wolf beckoned her over, and Nyte grinned, having expected this to happen, as she pointed at him with a malicious smile. He felt his heart quicken as Alex led her over to a junction box on the wall near him, squeaking it open to reveal a handle and gesturing for her to take hold of it.

"The manual override," he smiled as she reached up to the lever. "Have you got anything to say to him before he gets it?"

The lizardess reached up to grab the lever, and Nyte gripped the seat underneath him as he watched her hand carefully, occasionally glancing up to the nozzle above his head and the messy dome opposite him, already imagining the feeling of the gunge pouring over him, this time with the tank filling up. As he looked back at the dripping reptilian, he saw her staring right back at him.

"Just that I hope this is as good for him as it was for me," she grinned, and slammed the wall switch down.

Nyte flattened his ears at the sound of the valve opening above him, then suddenly felt them pushed down by the front of the gungy downpour. The stuff spewed outwards crazily for a moment before settling into an upturned bowl shape, and he grinned to himself as he felt the stuff smack heavily on to his shoulders and slither down his back, quickly coating his fur in a heavy wet layer.

He wriggled a little as he felt the slime on his back ooze down to the band of his swimming trunks, flinching as the downpour sputtered and twitched above him and holding his breath as it splattered over his muzzle. Surrounded by the glooping and splashing noises of the gunge hitting him and the surfaces of the tank around him, he flicked his head to the side a little, dimly aware of the stuff creeping up past his ankles as the tank began to fill.

The alarm rang from the ceiling again, and Nyte hunched his shoulders as the second wave poured in around him, feeling more gunge splash on to his knees as the thick spray started up. He stretched his arms out in front of him, flinching as he caught the slime in his hands and it began splattering off

them on to his chest and tummy. As its weight pushed his hands down to his knees, he pushed his head a little forwards, letting the slowing drizzle of slime from above splat on to the nape of his neck and slide down his back.

Hesitantly, he opened his eyes, seeing curtains and blobs of bright blue gunge dripping down across his vision, with a soupy green mixture splattering down around him and into his palms. He smiled down at them as he watched the streams of viscous liquid forming small wells in his hands before rebounding off to splatter on to the sides of the sphere. After a few seconds, he gasped as his lap disappeared underneath the mixed turquoise gloop, wriggling at the cool, wet feeling of the gunge swirling around him as it continued to pour in.

Nyte looked up between the streams of green, blinking against the blue droplets dripping from his soaked hair, and caught Isla's eye as she grinned in at him, her hands clasped behind her back as she looked down into the gunge machine. Suddenly, the falling slime around him folded inwards as the tank ran out, and he spluttered, pulling his hands out of the gloop and closing his eyes as the last remnants of the goo trickled down over his head and shoulders.

Feeling a shiver as the cool gunge poured down his head, sticking his hair to his face, he heard the alarm again and pricked his ears as he remembered the tank's last feature. He clasped his hands to his face, blowing slime away from his nose as he heard the hissing noise of the sprayers, then smiled as he dimly felt the light foam spray on to him through the thick gunge coating his fur. The jets quickly got stronger, and he held his breath as one of them sprayed up into his face for a moment before going back down to his chest, feeling the stuff pile up against his fur before large blobs of it tore away.

He heard the jets shut off around him as the alarm wound down, and stayed still in the cocoon of foam for a moment, stifling a laughing whimper as he felt another cascade of heavy drips from above splat on to him and slither down his head, making a clump of foam slump over his hands in front of his

face. Bowing his head down, he shook himself out and ran both his hands up over his hair, grimacing at the slick feeling of the slime.

"Are you under there somewhere, Nyte...?" Alex leaned forward and knocked on the side of the sphere, and Nyte opened his eyes for a second, then closed them again as the blue gunge continued to drip down across his vision. He nodded his head, twitching as the movement sent more blobs of gooey foam slithering down his neck and shoulders.

"Yeah, I can't wait to see what this looks like..." he smiled, running his messy fingers through his hands in front of him.

"You look pretty much exactly the same as Quinne - I don't think we can see much difference...!"

He heard Alex's footsteps as he paced away, then a clunk as the sphere beside him was opened. He brought his hands up to wipe at his eyes again, and looked through the slime-stained clear plastic around him to watch as the red wolf dragged the foamy fox girl out of the pool of gunge.

Becky eeped as she poked a toe into the channel of gunge between her and the rest of the team, sinking her foot in slowly up to just past her knee and then quickly stepping through before clambering up the other side, shivering and shaking her feet as the thick green stuff slid down her calves. As Alex set Quinne down on her feet, the puppy girl giggled nervously as she watched the drizzles of multi-colored ooze slithering down from the fennec's fur, then laughed as she tackled Isla in a hug, making sure to slide her gungy arms over as much of her as possible.

Bowing his head down to keep the drips from his messy hair falling into his eyes, Nyte swept his feet from side to side under the surface of the slime, grinning as he felt the colorful thick liquid resist his movement and swirl lazily around him. He heard the sphere being opened, and hauled his hands out of the gunge, watching it pour and then drizzle in glutinous strings from his fingers back on to the surface before he raised them and half stood up to let Alex help him out.

The red wolf leaned over awkwardly to grab Nyte's wrists, and pulled him upwards. As his waist came up above the surface, the heavy gloop yanked the back of his swimming shorts down, and he yelped, struggling to keep them on with his tail as Alex shifted to catch the back of Nyte's knees, carrying him over the lip of the tank with him pressed to his chest.

"You okay, Nyte?" he asked with a smile, setting him down on the floor. "You and Quinne aren't looking at your best just now..."

"Yeah," he said as he took hold of the band of his heavy shorts and hiked them back up, still shuddering as the slippery gunge continued to drip and ooze through his fur. "Thanks for the rescue," he grinned back.

"The least I can do..." the red wolf chuckled, repeatedly batting at himself with one hand to wipe the streak of gunge off his chest fur, and he looked around to where Quinne was now chasing Becky around with two handfuls of foam.

"Okay, everyone," he announced, beckoning them back to him. Becky stopped and looked up, then squealed as Quinne caught up with her and smushed her foamy hands on to her tummy. "I'll give you ninety for that game, because Becky did save Nyte even though we covered him in gunge anyway, and Isla was nearly there..." He looked back at the messy corridor, then around at the four gunge-covered team mates. "I'm going to take you for a quick spray down before our next game, just so Quinne and Nyte can actually move about!"

He pointed down the corridor as he led the way, and Nyte looked over his shoulder at the slime-filled half-spheres and the gunge-splattered corridor one more time before he followed the group. Alex turned back to face him as he caught up, beckoning him to the front of the team.

"I've just realized, Nyte, that means all three of these girls have thrown the switch on you now..." the red wolf said with a smile as they rounded the corner, putting a hand on Nyte's shoulder.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand before answering, trying to clear his face of gunge. "Does that mean it's my turn to get back at them?" he asked back, running the same hand over his slime-drenched hair.

"Hey, I never said anything about that..." Alex chuckled as he turned to the girls, encouraging a reaction from them. "I think you might be outvoted three to one!"

Nyte felt his face heat up a little as they cheered, feeling a reptilian hand pat him on the shoulder from behind. Despite his embarrassment, his heart was still racing at the thought of Isla gleefully tugging the switch to gunge him.

As they reached the raised section of the corridor, Alex stepped to the side and turned a circular handle jutting out of a pipe on the wall. Nyte watched as a set of cone-shaped sprays of water at chest and hip height sputtered into life, sending a mist of droplets floating up from the tiled surface.

"Let's give our messier team members the chance to go in first..."

He nodded to Quinne, who eagerly stepped up into the sprays of water. She gave a squeak as the gunge and foam on her fur rapidly began to break up and slide off, splattering heavily to the corridor's floor. Isla followed her, brushing her hands over her head as she ducked into the jets.

With his eyes on the beads of watered-down gunge slithering down the lizard girl's back, Nyte stepped up into the corridor as well, hissing at first at the cold feeling of the water despite the high temperature the set was kept at. He wrapped his arms around himself, hesitantly turning a little from side to side to let the water flick the worst of the gunge off his fur and lifting his feet and shaking them off as the colored water collected at the bottom of the device. Becky came into the sprayer area in front of him and turned around, wriggling and running her hands through her tail as she shook her legs one by one. Catching himself staring down at her swinging hips, he closed his eyes, concentrating on the feeling of the water running through his fur.

After a while, he heard a squeaking noise as Alex spun the valve shut again, and the water sprayers began to ease off slowly. The red wolf stepped forward and took Becky's hands as she shook herself out, helping her to step down off the raised section.

"That wasn't so bad, was it?" he smiled, then turned towards a clear panel in the wall slightly further down the corridor, behind which was a brightly lit cubicle a couple of feet square with a horizontal panel forming a bench at knee height. "Let's just give you the first turn in the dryer here..."

"Oh, no..." The puppy girl gasped, then giggled helplessly as he leaned forwards and pulled the door open, putting one arm around her and turning her to face the entrance as she looked at the floor.

"Come on, it won't take a minute..." The wolf grinned, and slid his hand down to her back, giving her a gentle but firm nudge into the obvious gunge tank.

Nyte watched as the puppy girl put her hand out onto the frame of the door and hesitantly stepped inside, looking up to the ceiling of the booth and feeling behind her as she seated herself. As Alex closed her inside, she yelped and flailed her arms as there was a sudden hissing noise, then clasped her hands to her head as jets of air from the bottom of the tank made her hair fly up. Laughing as she tried to calm herself, she smiled nervously down at her feet and swung from side to side a little in the warm air, the jets ruffling her fur and drying off the excess water.

Alex clasped his hands behind his back, wandering nonchalantly away from the clear booth. After dipping his head into the receding jets of water one more time, Nyte looked up curiously as the red wolf leaned against the wall, stepping a little to his side as if getting himself exactly into some position.

"Turn it on, ROB," he called.

Nyte heard squeaks from the girls around him as the sprays stopped and the corridor was plunged into darkness, and he turned quickly to the cubicle, where Becky was sitting

behind the plastic door with her eyes closed and face screwed up, her face illuminated by a white light from above. As she realized nothing was happening, she opened one eye, looking carefully up to the ceiling of the tank, and then relaxed a little, shaking out her hair. She and the rest of the team jumped as with an electronic humming noise, a network of criss-crossing blue lasers sparked into life, pointed in irregular diagonal patterns in the corridor leading back the way they had come. He watched as a couple of them began slowly sweeping back and forward, and laughed to himself, recognizing a game he hadn't seen played on the show in a long time.

Alex pushed himself up from his leaning position on the wall, turning to the side slightly to squeeze between two lasers next to his left and right shoulders. Carefully, he made his way out to the middle of the corridor.

"All right, you three - our third game this round's something that we thought up when we were looking at this place's old security system," he called to them, ducking down to his side carefully and weaving away from them along the laser-lined corridor. "You'll have seen these in the spy films - of course, they were arranged more sensibly before we got hold of them, but this way you might have a chance of squeezing through..."

Nyte stepped down from the raised corridor as the red wolf moved away from them, glancing over his shoulders as Isla and Quinne came out to stand beside him, their faces lit by the eerie blue glow. Becky watched Alex's every move intently from inside the tank, occasionally glancing up to the ceiling above her.

Alex stood up after ducking below the final laser across the corridor, and the puppy girl sagged a little. "Now, these things are totally harmless to you, but if you break any of the beams by touching them, then the alarm will go off, and then... well, Becky's going to get a surprise..."

Nyte grinned widely as he looked over at the gunge tank, where the blushing puppy girl shook her head and closed her eyes, her shoulders twitching in a giggle.

"Yes, that drier's got a lot of ways to pump gunge through it - hopefully with your help, she won't find out what too many of those are..." Alex cleared his throat, doing his best to remove his own smile from his face, and beckoned to the three free team members. "Come on! Do you want to show them how it's done, team leader?"

"Er... yeah," Nyte said after a moment's hesitation, and he twitched as he felt Quinne pushing him forward from behind. Isla stepped aside to let him through, and clapped her arm heavily around his shoulder as he passed by. Dimly stepping forward and shaking the girls off, he glanced at the canine's face and then looked towards the obstacle in front of him.

A blue laser ran across the corridor at knee height, with two vertical ones behind it a couple of feet apart. Stepping forwards, he looked up, reaching forward a little to look at the blue glow on his hand as he peered up toward the ceiling. Unable to see the source of the lasers in the darkness, he looked back at the low beam, and tentatively picked one foot up to step over it.

As he was about to step over, he changed his mind, and he heard a gasp from the puppy girl as he unsteadily hopped away on his back foot. Instead, he crouched down, unfolding his legs behind him to lie flat on the floor, and carefully wriggled through, keeping as low to the ground as possible and trying not to think about the girls watching him. Just as he thought he was clear, he flinched as a klaxon blared, and he slumped down, resting his head on the floor and facing towards the gunge tank, smiling a little guiltily as a splash of purple slime spewed out of a diagonal pipe and glooped over Becky's head and left shoulder.

The canine squeaked as the stuff smacked on to her, wriggling away and putting her arms up to defend herself. The stream of gunge splattered outward from her hands, forming

brightly colored streaks on the walls and door of the tank before it subsided, a streak of it drizzling down the wall next to her. Becky rolled her shoulders as she sat straight, her head bowed as she watched the purple gloop drizzle from one side of her hair down into her lap.

"Mind that tail, Nyte," Alex chuckled as Nyte slithered forwards. He flipped himself over and got up carefully, checking above him for unnoticed beams. As he straightened hesitantly, he saw Quinne stepping forward off to his right, nimbly picking her way over the low laser as she began to follow him.

Becky ran her hands up and over her head, pushing her hair back behind her ears, and clasped her hands in front of her face, peeking out between her fingers as she watched her teammates contort themselves past the blue beams. She breathed in sharply as Nyte leaned back and shuffled his feet to get awkwardly through a near-vertical pair, but relaxed when he got through without touching either of them.

Nyte faced forward again, taking a breath in an attempt to slim himself as he stood inches away from a pair of beams that were sweeping up and down, crossing each other in the middle of the corridor. He was suddenly distracted by a noise from behind him, and he glanced over his shoulder at the fox girl, who was happily humming a spy theme to herself as she darted between the lasers.

Laughing under his breath and shaking his head, he glanced at Isla making her way down the other side of the corridor then turned his attention to the moving beams again. As they swept up to the ceiling, he lunged forwards, second-guessed himself, froze and then ducked as he tried to get out of the way. As he stood up, the buzzer went off again, and he groaned, looking towards the booth.

Becky closed her eyes, and gave a shriek as a wide spray of gunge began from the ceiling of the booth, the green dollops making a thick splattering noise as they rained down on to her. Nyte watched as the puppy girl's hair darkened under the

slime, the translucent goo slithering down either side of her head and sputtering down over her hands covering her face. As the ooze began to ease off, she parted her hands, gasping in a laugh as she looked down at the glutinous slime trickling down from all over her fur.

"I think that was Quinne...!" Alex called, pointing at the fox girl as she hurriedly stepped around another group of beams. "Nyte, you're not out yet, but you escaped those ones without giving Becky another shower..."

"Sorry, Becky!" Quinne called over to the booth as Becky clasped her forehead, wiping some of the slippery stuff away. "Hey, at least you don't look anything like I did five minutes ago..."

The puppy girl shook her head, slime spraying off her hair and sagging ears, and she returned her hands to the bench, rocking back and forth as Nyte turned back around to face Alex. He was only a few feet away now, on the opposite side of a set of beams in a pattern that gradually slanted from straight across to vertical. Carefully, he shuffled his way to the right hand side of the corridor, ducked and began to squeeze through them, but jumped as the whole arrangement began to spin towards him. He instinctively pulled back away from them, then stumbled and threw himself through, curling up in mid-air but seeing a brief flash of light as the last couple of beams touched his face.

He collapsed on to the floor at the other end, quickly drawing his feet forward and getting to his knees. He panted to get his breath back, but couldn't help smiling as he heard another squeak from Becky above the thick gooey splattering noise.

"Oh, a very dramatic finish, Nyte..." Alex laughed as he reached a hand down to help him, and he looked up at the red wolf's face as he got to his feet. "It would have been even better if you hadn't caught that last one..."

He nodded and looked back to the tank, where the canine was leaning forward out of a subsiding drizzle of orange slime,

a smooth helmet of the stuff painted over her hair and dripping from the tips of her floppy ears. She pushed her fingers up through it, sending streaks of gunge spattering to the floor, then flinched again as Isla stumbled into one of the beams next to her.

The puppy girl screwed her face up and closed her eyes, her hands still clasped to her head as she waited for the splash from above, but she yelped as a set of sprayers started up from the floor of the booth, spewing more of the translucent green ooze on to her feet. As she lifted them up, her scream turning into a ticklish giggle, she watched the jets getting stronger, spraying up her legs, then closed her eyes, looking up instead as they tilted up to splash into her face. She shook her head rapidly as the stuff splattered over her, streaks of green gunge flying outwards everywhere and dripping down the already slippery walls of the booth around her.

The green cascade eased back down again, revealing the puppy girl's open-mouthed smiling muzzle before the curtains of gunge slid away to show her face again, her hair plastered to her head with slime. The lizard girl stood still and watched with a grin as Becky brought her sloppy hands around to her front, half-heartedly cleaning the gunk away from her face and spitting it off her lips. She opened one eye then the other, shuddering and looking back at Isla with an embarrassed smile, her slippery fur glistening under the booth's light.

"And Quinne's through!" Nyte tore his eyes off the slimy puppy girl as Alex stepped across the corridor, watching Quinne dash through the last array of rotating lasers, dipping down to crouch under the last one at the end and holding her long ears down with both hands. "Which means that any more gunge Becky gets will be up to you, Isla..."

Becky shook her head as the slime on her hair began dripping over her eyes again, sending more gooey droplets spraying outwards. Slicking her hair back with both hands, she called encouragement to Isla as she picked her way around the last half of the laser-lined corridor.

Nyte flinched and hissed through his teeth at a couple of near misses as the lizardess made her way slowly and clumsily towards them, with Becky alternately covering her eyes and leaning around to watch her. Eventually, with no further sounds from the klaxon, Isla straightened up and faced the last set of rotating beams.

She watched them for a few moments, tapping her foot as she looked for a gap, then caught Nyte's eye with a grin. Spreading her arms, she just walked quickly forwards through them, with an audible gasp from Becky just before she touched a beam with one arm and walked through the final one tummy-first.

They all turned toward the gunge tank as the alarm hooted twice, the cringing puppy girl cupping her hands over her ears. As they watched, a thick stripe of cream-colored gunge dropped from directly above her on the ceiling, and Becky ducked, giving a shrieking laugh, as it smacked on to her head and hid her from view behind a dome of slime.

Isla put her hands in the air with a grin as they watched the glutinous downpour splatter over the canine, the edges of her arms just visible as the cream slop poured over them. A burst of yellow spewed from a pipe in the wall beside her head, mingling with the ooze as it poured on to Becky's shoulder, and she twitched away from it, one hand going instinctively up to block the new downpour as she held her gungy hair away from her eyes with her other hand. She looked up at the team with a shocked smile, just before she bowed her head again as the beige stuff slumped down over her face.

Alex pressed something on his handheld device, turning the lasers off and bringing the lights in the corridor back up again. With the passageway clear, he walked slowly back down towards the gunge cubicle, looking up to its ceiling as the column of thick slime slowly began to subside. Beneath it, the cream-painted canine slowly became visible again, thick drops of the slippery gunge drizzling from her hair and through her fur. As she looked back at him, she managed a squeamish grin

as she rolled her shoulder against the yellow stuff pouring on to her from the side, raising a hand to catch the last of the glop as it eased off as well.

"You made it!" Alex called back to the team as he put his hand on the handle of the tank's door. "And you only broke six of the beams between you, which is a decent result - what do you think, Becky?" He laughed as he opened the booth, fully revealing the gunge-coated puppy girl inside. She brought both hands up and wiped down her face, ducking as the trickle of blobs continued to splat down on her head.

"Yeah, they did great..." she said with a wrinkle of her nose, and slithered forward off the bench to stand up. Alex extended his arm and let her take hold of him as he guided her out of the cubicle, then watched with a smile as she let go and bounced on her heels, shaking some of the mixed slop off her fur. Her hair was painted in a smooth dome of cream-colored gunge, with her hands held in front of her in claw shapes, translucent green goo dripping from her fingertips.

"Okay, you've earned yourselves another seventy points - and like I said earlier, we've got one more game to play here before we send you down to the undersea level," Alex announced. Nyte looked up, expecting to be asked to nominate someone again, but turned to follow the red wolf as he led the dripping canine past them. "This is a new one, and it's for all four of you!"

"A new one?" Nyte repeated, grinning over at Isla as they were led to one of the other metal doors that lined the dusty corridor. He felt his heart skip as Isla returned his smile for a moment, before facing the front and standing on her tiptoes to try to get a look through the barred window in the top middle of the door.

"Do I have to do it, too?" Becky asked as she dragged her fingers through her gungy hair, getting a laugh out of Alex as he undid the bolts at the top and bottom of the door.

"Yes, I'm sorry, you're going into this one as well - but at least this time you'll be able to share some of the mess with your team mates... you're all going on to this!"

Nyte stretched up on his tiptoes as Alex swung the door open, pricking his ears as he heard the noise of machinery inside. He let the girls through the door in front of him first, nervously smiling at their gasps before stepping through.

Most of the room was taken up by a huge gear prop, placed horizontally in a slight circular well in the floor, which was making a continuous rusty squeaking noise as it rotated slowly around. It was a few yards in diameter and about four feet high, with a mobile set of steps off to the side providing a route up on to it. Four blowup pool chairs were placed at right-angles on four of the eight teeth of the gear, facing outwards away from each other, and just in front of the arrangement, a podium stood on the floor with a large red dome-shaped button on its top.

"Okay, you four - on to the Gunge Gear with you!" the red wolf encouraged as he moved to a lever at the side of the room, tugging it towards him and slowly bringing the rotating prop to a halt. "Lead the way, Nyte..."

Nyte glanced over his shoulder at him and then headed for the metallic steps, listening to the girls' footsteps behind him. As he ascended and stepped on to the surface, he looked up at the other obvious feature of the room - suspended from the ceiling, above where three of the chairs had stopped, were a set of clear spherical tanks of gunge, with long pipes stretching down to head level, looking like upside-down long necked potion bottles. He shuddered as he looked at their brightly colored contents, filling the pipe portion of the tanks and going up to halfway up the spheres.

He stepped aside as the girls came up behind him, and moved to the fourth chair which was facing Alex, looking up carefully to the ceiling but not seeing any sort of gunge mechanism above it. He slipped around it and sat down,

grasping at its arms as it flopped down a little more than he had anticipated, tilting him back a little to face the ceiling. The domed red button that he'd seen from the floor was now just underneath his feet.

He looked over his shoulder at the girls, grinning as he watched them look around and decide where to sit. Isla was the first to move, and Nyte watched her head away from him towards the opposite seat underneath the tube of yellow gunge. Disappointed that she was in a position where he wouldn't be able to see her, he twisted around and watched her sit down, eyeing the nozzle above her head, as the other girls took their seats - Becky nervously looking up at the green gunge on his left, and Quinne bouncing into the seat underneath the purple gunge on his right.

"Okay..." He turned as Alex got their attention again, dashing over to drag the stairs away before he returned to the lever. "Taking that seat was a sensible decision on the face of it, Nyte, but you're not going to be staying in those positions for long - let's set you going..." The red wolf tugged the lever back a little, and Nyte jumped at the jolt as he and his team mates were carried around as the gear slowly rumbled into life again.

"When the gear stops, one of you will find themselves above this trigger here," he said, stepping forward to slap it and looking up as Isla's dangling feet narrowly missed him. "When you're in that position, I'm going to ask you a question - all you have to do is answer it, then push the button that you'll find underneath your feet. If you've got it right, the gear will move around again and bring the next one of you to the front." Nyte nodded, lifting his feet a little as he passed over the red dome again.

"If you haven't given the right answer before you push the button, though... the tanks are going to open up instead, and you're going to gunge all of your team mates," he smiled. "And with what's happened on this team so far... I don't think that's something you want on your conscience!"

"You'd better keep us clean, Nyte!" he heard Quinne call happily beside him.

"You know he's not getting away if he doesn't," Isla added with a sly grin, leaning back and to the side to face her.

"See what I mean?" Alex smiled as he stepped back over to the lever. "I'm going to give you two minutes up there... Becky, you're the one covered in gunge just now so we'll give you a break from the it first." As he spoke, he put his hand on the lever again and the gear slowed down. Nyte looked at the puppy girl to his left as her chair stopped just above the large red dome, and a timer counting down from two minutes was projected on to the wall behind Alex. He looked above his head, and shuddered as he found himself staring up at the long tube full of purple gunge.

"Okay, to keep your teammates clean, if you want to..." Alex added with a smile. "What are the two letters to the left and right of N on a computer keyboard?" He smiled as he made a show of covering the surface of his handheld computer, where she couldn't possibly see it.

"Um..." Becky paused, looking down and carefully lifting her feet so as not to touch the red dome. "M and... B?"

"Sounds good to me - let's see if you're right, hit the button!"

Nyte twisted to his left to watch as the puppy girl looked unsurely down at the large dome beneath her, carefully dropping her bare feet down to press it. As it went down, a buzzer went off, and she squeaked as she shot them back up again and returned to a curled position on the chair.

"That's right!" Alex's voice came, and Nyte jumped as the gear began moving again, turning all four of them slowly one position around and bringing him to the front. "So everyone's safe, but it means that you're going under the gunge nozzles now - let's hope your teammates can do the same in return!"

Nyte bounced in the seat a little as it stopped suddenly with him facing Alex, resting his feet on the dome below him.

He glanced down at its red surface, now stained with half a sloppy footprint.

"Nyte..." He wriggled and sat up as Alex prepared to read out his question. "Staying with computers - how many bytes does the prefix "kilo" mean? And I'll give you a clue, it's not a thousand..."

He cringed, putting a hand to his head. "Agh, I know this..." he muttered, twisting to look over his shoulders, where he saw the fox and puppy girls looking intently back at him, and trying to pull together his vague memories of how to work it out. "A thousand and... forty-two?" he asked, letting go of his forehead.

Alex put his hand out in front of him. "Let's find out - push that button...!"

Taking a deep breath, Nyte dropped his feet back down and pressed on the dome. He half curled up instinctively as the buzzer sounded, then his stomach dropped as he heard the snick of valves behind him.

He snapped around again, just in time to see Becky disappear underneath a stripe of dark green slime from the pipe above her, squeaks and shrieks going up from her and the rest of the girls as the paint-like gunge slapped on to their heads. As the flow of ooze twitched and splurged down into her lap, the puppy girl brushed it away with both hands, leaning out of the thinning downpour as the remains of it trickled over her head and down her back.

He turned to look at the other girls' chairs, seeing the top of Isla's head painted in smooth yellow with fingers of gunge slithering down the back of her seat below it. On his right, Quinne reached up to part her hair, sending flecks of purple slop spraying outwards as she flicked it behind her head.

"Oh, the girls might be the messy ones but I think you're in the worst position already, Nyte," Alex chuckled, and Nyte grinned back at him sheepishly. "You had the right idea, it was a thousand and twenty four. Never mind, you can still turn it around - what was..."

"What, I get another one?" he interrupted as he raised his eyebrows.

"Yes! You're not escaping until you get a question right - or you can pass to move yourself on, but it means gunging the girls again..." Nyte swallowed, feeling the girls' eyes on him as the question was read out to him. This time, he breathed out as he realized he knew the answer. He pushed down on the button with both feet, and sagged back in relief as the gear moved again, before his heart quickened as he caught a glimpse of the green pipe he was now headed under.

"And Quinne enters the spotlight!" Alex grinned at the purple-splattered fennec as the gear stopped, her dangling feet swinging a little with the jolt. Nyte leaned around and watched her closely as she sat up to listen.

"Quinne, splash of color there..." He laughed as the fox girl brushed her hand over her head, sticking her tongue out at him. "Chemicals in the Periodic Table can be written as one- or two-letter symbols. What's the two-letter symbol for iron?"

Nyte watched the fox girl tilting her head from side to side as she thought. "Ir?" she suddenly asked back. He gasped as she pushed her feet down to press the button, and faced the front, gripping the arms of his chair tightly.

He hunched down a little at the click of the valve above his head, closing his eyes just as he felt the wave of thick liquid splurge out on to him. Smiling to himself underneath the sloppy dome as he felt it bulge out and soak his arms and lap, he tossed his head to either side, twitching as the cool slime slithered over and around him. After a couple of seconds, he felt it ease off, a couple of heavy dollops of gunk still smacking on to his head as he shook himself out and pinched his muzzle to wipe the gunge away.

"Wrong answer, Quinne - I think Nyte saw that coming!" Alex announced with a smirk, watching her as she nervously peeked over her shoulders at her gunge-coated team mates. "Try this one - what are the names of the two universities who take part in the famous annual boat race?"

Nyte stretched up and twisted around in the blowup chair, his gungy arm slipping off the back of it before he managed to wriggle upright. As Quinne thought about her answer, he looked over at what he could see of Isla, the mixture of purple and yellow gunge oozing slowly over her head before she clasped her hands together and brushed them over from her forehead.

He gripped the back of the chair harder as the fox girl pressed the button after getting her question right, and kept watching the lizardess as the gear moved her into position opposite Alex, with him underneath the yellow nozzle at the back of the gear.

"Isla... you're looking nice and colorful - so much for staying clean!" The red wolf shook his head as she came to the front, and Nyte sagged into his seat, clasping his hands back over his lap as he imagined the sight of the mingling colors of slop dripping all over her.

"Okay, Isla, to save your team mates from getting even muckier, how many milliseconds make up one second?"

"A hundred," Nyte heard her say, followed by the buzzer as she pressed the button.

He heard the gunge bubble above him as the valve snicked open, and ducked under the yellow slime's weight as it flooded down on to him, the new coating pushing its way through the stuff on his fur and mingling into a lighter green. He closed his eyes as the dome flying out over his head folded inwards, twitching at the squeaks from the girls on either side of him as he imagined the same thing happening to them. As the last of the yellow gunge dribbled over his head, he brought two fingers up to part the hair that was dangling over his eyes, and shook his head as Alex spoke again.

"Sorry, Isla, it's a thousand! An easy mistake to make, although I don't think your team appreciates it..." He glanced back as the lizardess groaned, leaning back and crossing her legs. "Here's another one... what's the scientific name for the main part of the brain?"

There was a pause, and Nyte looked down, watching the thick yellow drops of gunge dripping from his soaked hair as he heard Isla kick her feet against the front of her chair in thought.

"You can always pass..." Alex reminded her, but he looked up to see Isla shaking her head.

"Cerebellum?" she asked back.

"Well, let's find out...!"

Nyte squeezed his eyes shut in readiness as the buzzer sounded, but still jumped at the click above his head and the feeling of the cold, slippery gunge pouring down on to him. This time, he leaned back, turning his head to the side as the thick slime splashed out from his chest, flowing down into his lap and pooling around him in the slightly tilted chair.

He held his breath as the downpour of gloop slowed to a trickle, wriggling upright in the mess surrounding him. With his fur heavy with slime, he leaned around, putting his elbow on the back of the seat, as he looked at Alex.

"It was 'cerebrum' - you were so close, but that's two wrong, Isla! Do you want another question, or...?"

"No, I'll pass," she said, holding a hand out in front of her.

"I think that's probably a wise decision at this stage - but you know what that means for your team mates...!" Alex called as the valves clicked again. Without thinking, Nyte looked up above his head, and gave a muffled screech as he got a faceful of the yellow gunge.

He slithered back around in his seat and hunched over, breathing out hard and spitting gunge away from his lips as the latest downpour splurged down around him. Panting, he opened his eyes and gave a breathless laugh, seeing his lap and most of his fur completely hidden by a smooth, slimy bright yellow covering, hardly able to feel the stuff pouring down on to the back of his neck but seeing it ooze around his shoulders and down his chest in thick blobs.

"Isla... I don't need to tell you where you're going now," Alex said, and Nyte leaned around the back of his chair to see him pointing off to the side. "Yes, you might be getting some of the green stuff - let's hope for your sake the others do better..." Nyte yelped and flopped back into a sitting position in the pool of slime that had collected around him as the gear finally started moving again, taking him back to where he had started underneath the purple tube.

"Becky, we're back to you - oh, Becky, I'm sorry..." Alex broke into a laugh as the gear stopped, and Nyte looked around at the puppy girl, who was now barely recognizable and plastered to the seat by a huge splatter of purple gunge. "Isla, I think you're going to have a lot to answer for once she gets down from here..."

Wearily, the puppy girl hauled herself up and blinked her eyes open, hiking her bikini top back up her shoulders. Nyte twitched at the bounce of her slippery chest, trying to relax and concentrate on the wall in front of him instead, and running his fingers through his slime-soaked fur as he waited for her to answer her question.

He hunched down as the buzzer sounded, but the gear jolted again and he tried to wriggle up among the slop he was sitting in as he was carried around to the button in Becky's place.

"Nyte... also looking like you've got a bright new coat of paint!" Nyte grinned through the glop dripping off his face, thinking about what he'd look like on camera. "'Tsunami' is the word for a large type of... what?"

"Er, a... tidal wave", he answered with a nod, then remembered about the button in front of him. He looked at it as he stretched down, its surface now stained with multiple footprints and streaks of slime - his foot slipped over it before he finally succeeded in pushing it down.

The gear started up again, and he found himself laughing under his breath as he was moved around towards the green

nozzle again, looking ahead at the others he was going to have to pass under before he escaped.

"Quinne, looking gorgeous in green..." Nyte leaned towards the front of the gear, looking at the huge curtains of green slop dripping from the edges of the inflatable chair, and the soaked and gungy fennec girl in the middle of it. As Alex looked down at his device, she brought her hands up to her ears, dragging the slop off them and flicking them upright, then she growled and reached forward with her hands in claw shapes, holding them up and laughing at the green glop dripping off them.

"And what an appropriate question! What's the name of the substance that gives plants their green color?"

The fox girl stayed silent as she thought, and Nyte watched a trickle of green slime drip slowly from the end of her muzzle. She took her hands off the edges of the slippery chair, clasping them together in front of her and breathing out heavily.

He flopped back into his seat and looked up at the round nozzle above him, which had streaks of green gunge now clinging to the edges of the covering of the slide valve. There was a quiet whimper from his other side, and he leaned around to see the purple-stained puppy girl looking up into the yellow nozzle in the same way.

"Oh - chlorophyll," Quinne said suddenly, and Nyte gasped as the buzzer went off, then tried to calm down once again as they were all moved around once more.

"Isla, we've not got a lot of time left - let's hope this goes better than last time!" Alex announced as the lizardess was brought to the front. Nyte cringed as he was carried underneath the yellow nozzle again, looking around at the splatter of bright gunge he was sitting in, but this time Isla immediately got her question right, bringing Becky to the seat opposite Alex.

"Becky again! This is starting to go better," the red wolf announced as he looked down at his pocket device. "The purity

of gold is measured in karats - how many karats mean pure gold?"

"Um..." Becky picked strands of her gungy hair away from her forehead as she thought, her eyes on the timer on the wall behind Alex. "Twenty?" Nyte heard her answer, followed by the sound of the buzzer.

He cringed as the valves clicked once more, and slithered down under the weight of the purple gunge flooding down on to him. With his hair and fur already matted with slime, he could hardly feel the new downpour as it rebounded off his head, but as it folded inwards, he bowed his head down and watched the thick fingers of purple gloop sliding around his neck and mixing with the yellow stuff on his chest to form a sickly off-green color.

As a trickle of purple continued to drip down on to him, he put his hands to his head, pushing his hair back as he glanced at the display on the wall, seeing that they'd nearly run out of time. He saw Becky bounce a little as she dipped her feet down to press the button in answer to another question, and smiled as he was carried to the front position once more.

"Nyte -"

The timer hit zero and an alarm blared from the ceiling, drowning out the rest of Alex's words. Hearing a chorus of giggles and shrieks from behind him, Nyte flipped himself over and got unsteadily to his knees, gripping the back of the seat as he looked around at the three gunge reservoirs, the level of slime in the tubes overhead descending rapidly and leaving slippery streaks behind on the inside of the plastic as the three girls were all enveloped by huge, opaque twitching domes of gunge.

He gaped around at them, twitching at the continuous slapping, splattering noise as streaks of the stuff spewed out from all three of their heads, splashing against the surface of the gear behind them as well as smacking messily on to the floor below. He yelped as his knees slipped outwards in the slime, bracing himself against the armrests of the chair and

clawing his way upright on the chair's back as he twitched at the feeling of the gunge on his swimming shorts oozing down the backs of his legs.

As the gunge in the pipes above the girls ran out, the flow from the nozzles broke into streams of blobs sputtering down on to their plastered heads. Becky squirmed forward, doing her best to clear her hair and face, as Quinne shook her head slowly underneath the slowing drizzle, her eyes firmly shut as the glop sputtered over her. Isla stayed leaning relaxedly back in the seat, and put both fists up in the air, her arms colored entirely yellow with gunge trickling from all along them.

"Did I forget to mention what happens when time runs out?" The fox and canine blinked and looked toward Alex as he spoke again, and Nyte slithered down into a sitting position to see him grinning widely. He moved to the lever and started the gear gradually turning again. "I think I love this game already... are you all okay after that?"

Nyte twitched as the dregs of gunge from the green pipe splashed over him, and nodded weakly, smiling at the whoops he heard from Quinne and Isla.

"Let's get you down from there..." Alex came forward and walked around the side of the gear, picking his way carefully through the puddle of green slime on the floor, then took hold of an inflatable ramp at the back of the room and budged it over so that it was next to the gear. "Come on, this'll catch you..."

Nyte looked to watch as Becky was moved over the ramp, and he heard her squeak as she pushed herself off the chair, landing on the inflatable surface and slithering to the flat section at the bottom. As Alex helped her up and back on to the floor with his hand, he got ready to push himself off his chair, and leaned forward, using his arms to propel himself as he passed over the middle of the ramp. He landed on his behind, yelping as he slid rapidly against the slippery material, and scooted around as he slipped to the floor, crashing into the inflatable guard at the end.

He smiled tiredly as he saw Alex's hand in front of his face, and grabbed it to get unsteadily to his feet, joining the puppy girl just as Quinne came into view above them. The drenched fennec slithered forwards off the chair and squeaked as she bounced on the ramp, sliding down head first and flopping on to the flat section. She got to her knees to lean against the crash barrier, smiling brightly up at them through the mass of purple gloop on her hair.

Finally, Isla was carried around into view, and Nyte tried to cover up his shudder as he grinned up at her. She and the seat she was sitting in were completely painted in the yellow gunge like he had been, with just the faint outlines of her swimwear visible underneath the slippery gloop. As she faced the team, her shoulders shook in laughter, and she wiped her eyes and blinked them open as she looked down at the ramp. Struggling forwards, she let herself fall off the chair and bounced to collapse into a heap below.

Alex smiled as he leaned down towards her. "You okay, Isla?" he said, and grinned as she raised a single gungy fist. She unfolded herself, getting to all fours before straightening up to her knees and finally to her feet, her thumbs hooked under her bikini top to shake it and spill some of the gunge out.

"You got me so messy!" Quinne called, pointing a finger towards the lizardess and sending a splash of mixed gunge flying up from her hand. Isla looked her up and down, a wry grin on her face. "It's okay for you, some of us have fur!" The fox girl spread her arms, looking down at the ooze trickling all over her, then reached up to try to fluff her soaked hair.

"Well, I've got to say, I've been doing this for a long time now," Alex started as he helped Isla off the landing mat and on to dry land with the rest of the team again, "but that's got to be one of our messiest ones ever! You four really took a punishment up there, but eight right answers gives you 80 points for the game, and that's..." He paused as he fished his

pocket device out again, looking at the total on its screen. "265 for the round - you're doing really well!"

Nyte smiled around at his team mates, one hand up underneath his heavy fringe as the ooze continued to pour and drizzle from his hair. He yelped as Isla stepped off the ramp and lunged for him, wrapping her slippery arms around his chest, and he squirmed away and shuddered as she wriggled down to push the top of her head against his neck, dragging it against him and wiping the mixed gunge on to his fur with a playful grin.

"All right!" Alex laughed as Isla let Nyte go. "I think we'll stop off at the sprayers again first, and then we're heading down to the undersea level, where someone's going to get a surprise..."

He clapped his hands together and stepped over the slippery ramp back towards the door. With a look back up at the dripping pipes, Nyte swallowed as he remembered putting one of his friends' names down for the show's upcoming guest section, then turned to follow his dripping team mates.



ROUND FOUR

Nyte was the last to step down from the tiled section of the corridor, putting one hand on the wall for support as he watched the slightly off-colored water drizzle from his soaked fur on to the stony floor. As Alex spun the wheel on the wall to shut the sprayers off, he looked around at Quinne and Becky brushing some of the water out of their fur. On the other side of the group, Isla ran her hands over her head as she closed her eyes, smiling as she shuddered a little, and Nyte swallowed as his eyes fell to the beads of water on her chest before quickly averting his eyes as she looked back at him.

"Everyone clean and safe?" the red wolf asked, clapping his hands together as he led them through the swinging double doors, holding them open as they came back into the center of the set's white tiled environment.

"Yeah, for now," he answered, and smiled to himself as he got a laugh out of a couple of the other members of the team.

"Good answer! You might not stay like that for long, but we've just got one more place to go..." As Alex turned to the wall, he pointed towards the hatch where he had stopped them earlier, and the four of them followed him as he put his hands on the rusty wheel on its center. He gave it a tug to free it, then leaned back to speak over his shoulder as he spun it around with one hand.

"As you can tell, team, the undersea level hasn't seen much use since the place was abandoned," he said. "So you might find that things have got a little... grimy down there..."

Nyte shuddered as Isla gave a wide grin, claspings Becky's shoulder and stroking it a little as she squeezed her eyes shut with an anxious giggle. Quinne scampered around to their

other side and leaned over to look as Alex swung the hatch open.

"And of course... the lights are another problem," the red wolf said as he clunked the door of the hatch against the wall. Nyte nodded with a shiver as he looked inside - all that was visible was a small rusty corridor with a ceiling that was slanted sharply down, rapidly fading into black just a few feet away from them.

"Now, for my own sake I should send one of you down ahead of me..." Alex continued as he rubbed his chin, staring into the darkness. "But as I'm supposed to be responsible for your safety and everything, just this once I'll make sure it's okay..."

"We'll be right behind you if you get gunged," Isla said, patting him on the back.

"Oh, I'll make sure you're right in front of me if there's any danger of that!" Alex leaned through the hatch, flicking a switch on the wall as he did so. A bare light bulb on the wall flickered into life, dimly illuminating a set of cross-hatched metal stairs descending into the darkness, and he ducked as he stepped fully through the small hatch and took hold of the handrail. Nyte put his hands on the edge of the hatch's frame as he watched the wolf carefully descend the stairs.

"Come on, leader," Isla spoke up, and Nyte half-turned to her before yelping as she playfully swatted his behind. He turned to her for a moment, trying to find an answer as he looked at her attempt at an innocent smile, then swallowed and stepped down the stairs after the red wolf.

Pricking his ears instinctively in the absence of light, he turned his head as he sensed they were descending into a large room, but couldn't make out more than indistinct shapes in the darkness. Startled as he reached the end of the stairs, he whispered a vague warning over his shoulder as he traced his hand along the left wall, turning a corner and straining to keep his eye on Alex's tail, stopping suddenly as the red wolf turned around.

"Okay, are we all here?" he asked. Nyte looked over his shoulder, just able to make out the shapes of the girls as they gathered around.

"Yeah, we're... aah!" Becky squeaked as Quinne came up behind her and put her hands on her shoulders. She wriggled around in the fox's grasp, her hand clasped to her chest as she panted, and then ruffled the pink fennec's hair.

Alex smiled as he shook his head. "Careful not to make any of the team collapse from fright before we've started the round, Quinne..." He turned and grasped a handle jutting out of the wall as the fennec grabbed her hair to push it up in two bunches with a playful growl. "We've reached the master power switch for the undersea level, but I just wanted to say before I turned it on that we've got a surprise for one of you waiting here! Take a look..."

There was a sudden buzz as Alex hauled the switch down, and Nyte screwed up his face as the room was illuminated in harsh light from fluorescent tubes in the walls and ceiling. Blinking a couple of times, he squinted as the room came into focus.

Opposite them, a knee-high circular chainlink fence surrounded a large vat sunk into the floor, with its surface coated in a smooth layer of foam. Above it, a snow leopardess with neatly-cut blonde hair was seated on a chair supported from a pillar on the back wall, suspended with her feet dangling above the pool's surface and the opening of a large pipe looming just above her. Nyte looked to his left and right to see who among the team recognized the guest player, and smiled as he saw Quinne with her jaw wide.

"A friend of yours, Quinne?" Alex took a step towards her and put his arm around her shoulders as her look of shock gradually turned into a delighted grin.

"Yeah!" She spoke up after a pause. "It's... it's..." She stumbled over her words and put her hands on her cheeks, bouncing on her feet. "I made sure you'd really left when you

dropped me off, and everything..." Nyte looked between the two girls as the feline looked down at her friend with a smile that looked calm, though she was tapping her fingers together on her lap, her arms drawn in close to her one-piece black swimsuit.

"Well, I'll introduce you," the red wolf said as Quinne broke into another laugh, looking up at the leopardess girl and pointing dramatically down at the vat below her. "Say hello to Delta, everyone - who's been Quinne's roommate for the last few years..."

The leopardess nodded with a slight cringe, gripping the underside of the dunk seat. "Hi, everyone..." she answered as she looked around at Quinne and her companions.

Alex stepped to the front of the group. "Delta, we're glad you could make it - how are you doing?"

The leopardess rolled her eyes, then looked down at the foamy surface just below her feet. "Fine... got a good view from up here..." she answered.

"Good, good... we'll see how long you stay there! Quinne, why do you want to gunge her?"

The fox girl took a breath, then stopped to think. "'Cause she's always trying to organize me," she said as she grinned up at her once more.

"She needs it!" Delta protested with a point of her finger. "If it wasn't for me, she wouldn't have got here this morning..."

"Well, in that case, you've got yourself to thank for being seated above that vat of gunge now!" Alex clapped his hands as he approached. "How are you feeling about being dropped in there?"

The feline folded her arms, looking down at the pool beneath her with a hint of a grimace as she brushed through her white fur. "...Just as long as I get her in here with me," she said.

"Oh, she's seen this show before - she knows exactly how this works!" Alex laughed as he moved to a hatch in the wall below the stairs they'd come down, and tugged it open.

"Quinne, you've got the chance to drop Delta in the gunge - we actually had a talk with the rest of your bandmates and they came up with a game especially for you..."

Quinne scampered over towards the wall and stood on her tiptoes to see into the hatch past him as he leaned down and grabbed something from inside. Her eyes widened as he turned around again, holding up two pairs of yellow rubber boots that were just under knee height.

"They said - as we could tell when you came in - that you were a fan of boots, though perhaps not this kind..." He held them up and turned them as he looked at them, then set them down on the floor next to the fox girl as she looked at them curiously, scratching behind her long ears. "Your task is to use these to hit all five of those targets over the next minute and a half," he said, pointing up at the wall behind the team, and Nyte took a couple of steps away to see a row of large circles marked in faded red paint along the back wall, about a foot above head height. "But just to make sure you do it the way we intended, we're not going to allow you to use your hands..."

He reached into the hatch again, and Nyte's ears perked as there was the clatter of something loose and metallic being dragged out of it. He couldn't help smiling as the red wolf moved back to the fox girl brandishing a pair of handcuffs, linked by a couple of inches of chain.

The fennec stared at them, raising one brow but putting her hands behind her as Alex moved to her back. "So are those your handcuffs or ours?" she asked over her shoulder as he clicked the cuffs closed around her wrists. Behind her, Delta cringed embarrassedly, her cheeks reddening. "I didn't know you were into stuff like this..."

"Honestly, neither did I," the wolf answered as he fiddled with them. "I think some of our game designers have a thing they're not telling us about..." He let her arms go, and the fox made a show of trying to tug her fastened arms apart as he put his hands on her shoulders.

"If you just stand over here... you're going to have to fling them from this spot," he announced, pointing down to another small red circle marked on the floor. "So your teammates are going to have to retrieve the boots you throw and deliver them back to you... but there's one more little detail!"

Quinne blinked as he stooped to pick up two of the boots and drew them away, stepping back towards the gunge vat and holding them above it. With a smile, he allowed them to drop, and they hit the surface, pushing the inch-thick layer of foam aside as they splashed into the slime.

"Oh, you've got to be kidding me...!" The fox gasped, her eyes wide as she curled her toes against the floor.

"I'm not! We're only going to count it as a hit if you get any gunge on the wall within those circles," he grinned. "So, you three - prepare yourselves to deliver some slimy ammunition to Quinne..."

Isla was the first walk over to the vat, and Nyte and Becky followed behind her as she crouched down next to it, her hands on the top of the small barrier. A couple of patches of luminous yellow showed up in the foam as the boots bobbed up to the surface, brightly colored slime dripping off their waterproof material, and Alex scooped up the one nearest him.

"I'll give you a free one to start off with," he said, setting the boot down in front of the fox girl. Nyte turned and watched with a shiver as she picked her bare foot up, flexing her toes and then eeping as she dipped her foot into it. After a couple of inches, she withdrew it again, giggling at the sight of the purple glop slithering from the tips of her toes.

"Oh, yuck...!" Becky said under her breath, clasping her hands over her nervous grin.

"How's that feel?" Isla asked as the fennec wriggled her gungy toes.

"You should try it!" she said back, still staring down at her foot with a squeamish smile.

"Are you ready?" Nyte blinked and shuddered as Alex spoke up again, taking his eyes off the fennec's slippery foot

and looking up at the leopardess again. "For every target you hit, that pipe above your friend's head will turn on - so Delta, I would prepare to defend yourself if I were you..."

The leopardess rolled her eyes, hefting one leg up and crossing it over the other, shifting a little in the precarious seat and glancing up once again at the gunge pipe inches above her.

"Quinne, I'll start the timer when you throw that first boot, so get ready..."

With a high-pitched squeak, Quinne dipped her foot back into the boot, giggling with a couple of disgusted noises as she wriggled it back and forth to hook her foot under the toe. Lifting her fastened arms and swinging them to put all her weight behind her throw, she kicked her foot forward and the boot scooted rapidly across the floor, leaving a broken streak of purple gunge behind it.

"Oh, you're going to have to work on your technique..." Alex said as Becky tiptoed forward to pick up the slimy upturned boot with one finger and thumb, quickly scampering out of the line of fire.

"That was hopeless!" jeered Delta from behind them.

Alex wagged a finger up at her. "Isla, give her another - there's still plenty of time, so don't look too pleased yet, Delta!"

Nyte swallowed as Quinne plunged her slippery foot into a second boot positioned by Isla, and turned away, remembering about the other pair of them. He grabbed them both and dashed over to the vat, leaning over the low fence and sinking them into the foam, pushing them down below the surface of the heavy liquid and feeling the fur on the back of his neck stand up as the goo sank into them. Behind him, there was a sudden thud of something hitting the wall.

"Yes!" he heard Alex call, and he looked up just in time to see a burst of green stuff spew out of the pipe sticking down from the ceiling. He drew back quickly as the gunge smacked on to Delta's head and spewed outwards, hiding her behind a sloppy dome as she gave out a yelp. The thin curtain of slime

splattered heavily into the vat beneath her, staining the foamy surface and making it ripple slowly.

Nyte watched transfixed as the dome folded inwards and the slippery gunge crept down the leopardess's white fur, dripping in thick fingers and pouring off her dangling toes. Parting her hair, she hunched her neck and smiled defeatedly through her grimace as she looked back down at the pink fennec, who grinned up at her over her shoulder, putting both thumbs up and raising her arms as far as the handcuffs would allow.

"I'm going to get you for this...!" the feline growled playfully, shaking her head and looking down at herself as streaks of slime trickled off her. Another thump on the wall made Nyte jump, and he turned quickly around, seeing a gungy streak stretching from just below the row of targets to a boot with a puddle of gunge around it on the floor. Twitching as he clasped the gungy boots to his chest, he scooted up behind the fox girl as she twisted to look over her shoulder.

"This one!" Quinne wiggled her left foot, curling the toes of her gungy right foot against the floor, and he moved awkwardly around her to push one of the filled boots underneath her. The mixture of purple slop and blobs of foam fountained upwards as she rammed her foot into it, fingers of the gunk dripping down its rubber sides as she wriggled her foot further into the ooze. Putting her right foot forwards, she swung her leg in a wide arc and sent the boot sailing across the room, narrowly missing the target furthest to the right and making Becky screech as some of the arc of flying gunge splattered on to her head.

"Almost..." Alex encouraged as Nyte shuffled forwards and lined up another boot for Quinne. Staying in the same spot she was standing, she tried the same technique again, this time sending the boot straight into the center of the target and leaving a massive purple splatter mark behind on the wall as it thumped to the floor.

The fox girl looked over her shoulder and tittered as Delta ducked under the new onslaught of green slime, wriggling to the side to get her face out of the downpour and sending the gunge flying out to the side as it splashed on to her shoulder.

"She..." she started, spluttering and turning her face away, then straightening up as the gunge slowed to a drizzle. "She wasn't on the spot!" she protested with a point, her other hand on her forehead to protect her face from the drops of green gunge slipping over her hair and drizzling from her fringe.

"Yes, but it's my show..." Alex said with a smile as the leopardess sat back and folded her arms. They watched as Quinne flung another boot that thumped on to the edge of the same target as before, and she stood hopping in place, squirming her hands behind her for balance as Isla positioned another one for her.

Nyte turned around to see Becky tentatively leaning over the fence around the vat, holding on to its top with one hand and scooping the opening of one boot along the surface to collect some of the gunge. He ducked to pick up the other boot that she'd discarded beside her, and stretched his arm down to dip it in, pulling it towards him.

He straightened up and shared a smile with the nervous puppy girl as she handed him her boot, then twitched as a memory of her in the green gunge vat flicked across his mind. Feeling the slime against his thumbs hooked around the tops of the boots, he turned on his heel and dashed to put the two of them down next to Quinne as Isla came forward with a third one.

"You've not got a lot of time left... you're going to have to make these count!" Alex said as Quinne dipped her gunge-coated foot into the first of the three boots. Nyte held his breath as she wound up for another fling, but sagged as it fell short of the wall. The second went the same way, leaving a bright stripe of purple gunge down the wall from just under the target she had been aiming for, as Becky scrambled to retrieve one of the other discarded boots.

Nyte watched the fennec plunge her gunge-coated leg into the last boot as Alex began to count down from five, and took a couple of steps backward as she spun around to face the vat. With a glance over her shoulder, she leaned back, swinging her foot up and flinging the yellow boot up and over her head as she tucked herself down to fall on to her back. Nyte held his breath as it turned cartwheels in the air, spraying its slimy contents in all directions, before it hit the dead center of the target in the middle of the wall.

Becky was dashing to line up another boot for Quinne as a klaxon sounded, and she slowed down, panting for breath and putting the boot on the floor next to her as she wiped her hands. Twitching at the continuing glooping noise of the gunge falling into the vat behind them, Nyte looked over his shoulder to watch as the leopardess cringed under the dark green downpour, wriggling her shoulders as the slime slithered down her back and wiping the stuff off her fringe before looking down at the horizontal fox girl with a grin.

"Goooa!" the fennec cheered, flexing her feet in the air and clapping them together in place of her hands. Alex came forward, extending a hand to help the pink fennec, but stepped back as she swung herself up into a sitting position and then struggled to her feet.

"Wow... Quinne, what a finish!" The red wolf ducked again as the fox girl quickly stuck her foot into the boot Becky had left and flung it forwards anyway, her ears flattening as it just skittered across the floor. "With a performance like that, I hope the IZEP football club get in touch with you soon..."

He took her by the handcuffs as she looked down at the floor, slipping her gungy feet against it, and turned her around so that she was facing the vat. Above it, the dangling leopardess sat with her hands forming a tent over her forehead, thick blobs of the latest splash of green gunge slithering off them as the final drizzle continued to pour down on to the back of her neck.

"Unfortunately you didn't quite manage to send Delta into the dip," he said. "But at least you got her covered in gunge - you'd been wanting to do that for a while, hadn't you?"

"Oh, yeah," she smiled. "That was worth it!" She hunched over, panting as she tried to catch her breath. "I'm used to moving in handcuffs, aren't I, Delta?"

The snow leopardess flinched again, wiping her hands over her head. "Gunge her - right now!" she called down with a point as the pink fennec giggled up at her.

Alex moved to her back and released the handcuffs, but then put one hand on her tummy to keep her from escaping. "You know, Quinne... we might have to take her up on that..."

Quinne's long ears pricked as a worried look crossed her face, then she yelped and squeaked as Alex swept her up in his arms, dropping the handcuffs behind him as he strode to the edge of the vat.

"Get her arms!" he said quickly, and Nyte fumbled as Alex pressed the fox girl towards him, taking her by the wrists as the wolf stepped back and held her by the feet. With Nyte unsurely following Alex's lead, the two of them moved to the side of the vat with the fox girl dangling between them.

"We didn't have another seat, but this is the next best thing," Alex said, smiling as Isla cheered them on. "Nyte, on three!"

Nyte swallowed, looking down at Quinne's upside-down face as she stretched back to face him.

"I'm gonna get you back for this!" she said, sticking her tongue out, before squeaking as Alex swung her legs out away from the vat.

"One!" he called as he swung her forwards again, Nyte followed his movements, stepping a little to the side as he did so to make up for the wolf's much greater strength.

"Two!" He felt the fox girl shaking with giggles as they swung her back and then forwards again, this time in a much smoother arc, finishing with her almost sideways above the pool of gunge. She glanced down at the foamy surface, then

they swung her away from the vat one last time, and Quinne gave a whimper and closed her eyes as Delta and even Becky joined in to finish the countdown.

"Three!"

The fox girl squeaked as Nyte and Alex let her go, her arms flailing as she reached the crest of an arc, turning around in mid-air and taking a deep breath just before she hit the surface of the gunge vat with a wet, heavy smacking noise. A mixture of brightly colored slime and white foam splashed up into the air around where she'd fallen in, the surface of the heavy liquid heaving up as the ripple reflected in from the sides of the vat.

As Nyte watched the white mixture drifted away from the vaguely Quinne-shaped purple hole in the foam, the fennec shot up through the surface a couple of feet away with a thick splash, bobbing up before finding her footing on the floor. Her fur was caked entirely in a sickly mixture of purple and green gunge, with a pile of foam sitting on her head and slowly breaking apart to slither down both her shoulders, her long ears twitching as streaks of gunge slithered from their tips. The gunge swelled as she brought her hands to the surface, the thick slime cascading down off them as she raised them a little to shake them clean.

Alex walked around to the side of the vat as Isla and Becky came forward to stand beside Nyte, the lizard hooting with laughter as Quinne wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. The puppy girl stood with one hand over her mouth but with a smile visible in her eyes as the fox girl shook her head from side to side, the gunge swirling thickly around her as she moved.

"Sorry about that, Quinne..." Alex started, and she turned her head to look at where his voice was coming from, holding her hands up as long strings of purple goo fell from them and then bringing them back up to her head to get the gunk out of her eyes.

"Ugh..." The fennec girl looked down at herself, her hands in claw shapes as gunk dripped from them. "I look like something that just crawled out of a swamp!"

"You do," the red wolf agreed with a grin. "You earned sixty points for the team for those three targets, though... Delta, do you think she deserved to end up looking like a lost sea monster?" He called up to the leopardess, who was looking down at the gungy fox with a wide grin.

"For putting me up here - definitely!" she called down.

"Well, you deserved the gunge for making me do your laundry and wash your gym clothes..." Quinne said back.

"I'm sure that we can even things up more here," the red wolf continued, crouching down and putting a hand on the fennec's shoulder to guide her to the side of the vat. "Because I'm sure that Delta knows that in this place, there's only one way down..." A laugh crept into his voice as the feline gasped and put her hand over her eyes, and Nyte's eyes widened as a burst of green gunge dropped from the pipe over her head.

Delta shrieked as the slime ballooned out around her, quickly facing forwards again and putting her hands over her eyes, bowing her head down as the gloop fell across her face. After a couple of seconds there was a mechanical click, and the sloppy bulge dropped down as the leopardess was tipped out of the seat, giving a high pitched yelp as she plunged into the center of the slime vat.

Nyte shuddered as the surface of the gunge buckled down where the feline had fallen in, blinking as a couple of drops from the huge splash fell on to his face. As he wiped his forehead, the gloopy surface burst upwards again as Delta emerged from the slop, her mouth open in shock with fangs of slime dripping across it as she felt the ooze slithering through her fur. She waded a couple of stumbling steps forward in the gunge, and squeaked again as another downpour crashed down into the vat from one of the pipes in the ceiling. She turned her face away as it caught her on the shoulder, and

twisted so that the gloop splattered over her back, hunching her neck and shaking in a helpless squeamish laugh as her messy fur was painted in green.

As the gloop from the ceiling slowly eased back into a drizzle, Delta bounced forwards, still eeping as the thick liquid lapped up and down against her waist with every movement she made. She brought her hands up to her face and blew out heavily, tucking her gungy hair back behind her ears and then tentatively wiping at her eyes.

Nyte became aware of his mouth hanging open, and turned his expression into a grin, flinching back a little as yet another pipe on the ceiling sprayed a green downpour into the vat. This time, it missed both the girls in it and splattered down into the middle with a rich glooping sound, making Delta squirm again as it caused the glop to ripple even more around her. As she stumbled towards the side of the vat, she slipped, nearly dunking her head under before struggling to her feet again with the mixed colors of slop pouring and trickling down through her fur from her shoulders.

Putting both her hands under the surface, she hauled them forwards and sent a wave splashing towards the fox girl, who barked as she put her hands up to defend herself. Turning her face away, she paddled her own hands in the slime, heaving it back towards Delta as she approached and eventually sliding her gungy hands over the feline's face. Shaking her head, Delta ducked around Quinne's hands, and the fox screeched as she gave her a passionate lick on the cheek.

"That's better," Alex said calmly as he came forward, crouching down to open a small gate in the fence that bordered the vat. He tapped the grinning fox girl on the shoulder, and as she turned around, she dipped a hand into the gunk to playfully splash a last wave of it behind her at the leopardess. Taking both Alex's hands, she squeaked as she was hauled out of the vat, gunge pouring thickly off her in an opaque, gloopy curtain as he lifted her up and set her gently upright on the

floor. Letting go, Quinne bounced on her heels, stretching her arms out and delightedly watching the ooze slither from her fur as Delta bobbed up into position at the gap in the fence, waving her hands at Alex to be let out.

"No, you're staying in there!" he laughed, swinging the gate shut slowly and bumping her hands out the way. The feline sagged and dipped her hands back under the surface of the gunge, then looked back up at the giggling fennec, shaking her head to get a gungy streak of hair out of her eye. "Thanks for coming on, though - you've helped this team earn sixty points for the round, and if they manage to turn on the purifier at the end, there should be enough water for you to get all that gunge off..."

The slime-painted leopardess laughed helplessly, pulling her hands out of the gunge and watching the thick slime pour out of her palms, weakly acknowledging the fennec girl as she waved and stuck her tongue out at her. Suddenly there was a shriek, and Nyte half-leapt away as he saw Isla had crept up behind the fennec and emptied one of the last filled boots over her head, the purple mixture of gunge and foam slipping over her already drenched fur - she turned around quickly and scraped her hands over her shoulders, flicking handfuls of the gunk at the lizardess as she backed away with a grin.

"I'm going to... steal your shoes so you have to wear these home...!" she said, reaching forward to grab the slimy boot out of Isla's hand and tossing it to the floor.

"I'd be happy to watch this for ages, but... shall we move on?" Alex smiled. "We've got three more games to go, and we're heading deeper into the undersea level to get to them..." He beckoned to the others as he walked the fennec away from the vat, heading for a bulkhead door with a round window that was hanging slightly open at the side of the room. Nyte glanced back at the leopardess watching them before joining the group as the red wolf tugged the door open.

As Alex stepped through in front of the group, Nyte peered into the rusted corridor and watched the dirty tube lights

flicker near its ceiling. A trickle of yellow gunge poured from just beyond the door, as if it had sprung a leak - Becky wriggled to one side of the door to avoid it, before Isla stepped straight through behind her. He cupped one palm and looked down at the opaque yellow slime pouring into his hand as he followed them, but jolted and nearly lost his balance as his next footstep landed awkwardly - the corridor was built at a slight angle, as if the entire place had tilted to one side.

With one hand on the wall, he followed the girls and Alex through the passageway in near darkness, until they reached a small open area with angular rusty walls, various watertight doors like the one they had just come through, and some vague half-broken pieces of machinery scattered around. The light was dim, but just enough to see by as his eyes adjusted to the gloom.

"Welcome - if that's the word - to the main hub of the undersea level, team," Alex said, seating himself on one of the larger overturned parts. "As you can see it's survived a little less well than the rest of the building, but we do what we can - we have to keep the pumps running all the time to stop it flooding, so just let me know if you feel like you're sinking..."

He looked around at the team, then pointed around to the doors. "So we've got three more games to play down here - and they're going to be quite messy," he grinned. "Nyte - three of you are still clean but we need two volunteers for the next game - who do you want to gunge first?"

"Becky and Isla," he said quickly, pointing over at the two of them. Becky sagged in a giggle, while Isla stretched up with a grin.

"He's not wasting any time, is he?" Alex rocked backward a little and then sprang to his feet, heading over to one of the bulkhead doors behind him. "But I think Nyte knows exactly what you three are going to do to him after he's the only one left clean..."

"Yeah, I do..." Nyte nodded hesitantly, getting a laugh from the girls as they gathered around the door. Alex spun the

valve open with one hand and stepped aside as he hauled it open, letting him step through.

As he ducked through the door, Nyte reflexively looked up, chuckling to himself as he realized how natural a reaction to a new room it had become. This time, a pair of square industrial hoppers were suspended from the ceiling, painted in bright green and yellow colours that stood out among the gloom. Their long spouts were pointed down at two targets placed inches apart in a section of the floor that looked like a sunken inflatable paddling pool.

"Looking up's the first thing we do now, isn't it?" His ears pricked as Isla said exactly what he'd been thinking, and he turned to see her staring up at the huge reservoirs as well. Beside her, Becky put her hands over her mouth and shook her head, as Quinne bounced up and down to see as she was the last to come in through the door.

Alex came forward and nudged his way between the puppy and lizardess, pushing them a little apart by knocking them with his hips as he put his arms around their shoulders. "You know where you're both going, don't you?" he said as he looked between them, and Nyte shuddered as he looked from the girls to the huge hoppers and back, already picturing what was going to happen in the next few minutes. He could see Becky wriggling squeamishly as Alex walked them on to the painted targets and stepped out from between them.

"So Isla, if I can just line you up here..." The lizardess held her hands out as Alex took her by the waist, and she sniggered as he made a show of walking her slightly to the left then right, looking up at the nozzle above her and drawing a line in the air down to her head with both hands. After finishing with her, he stepped around and took Becky gently by the shoulders.

"Come on, Becky, let's get you into position as well..." He slipped his hands down to her waist as her shoulders shook in laughter, her hands going up to her face to disguise her embarrassed smile as she shook her head. "Although I'm not sure you're going to stay put - Isla, can you take care of her?"

"Oh, yes." The lizardess grinned delightedly, and reached forward to take Becky's hands, bringing them down to hold them firmly at their sides. Alex stepped back and looked at the pair of them as he stepped out of the pool.

"Actually, you know what... I can't let this chance slip past," he said with a broad smile. "Nyte, do you want to come down here instead?"

"Um..." Nyte stuttered incoherently for a second, looking between the two girls as Becky enthusiastically nodded her head and the bikini-clad lizard girl turned to him, letting go of the canine and beckoning with both hands.

"If you go under the spout this time, we've got a gunge tank waiting just around the corner that I'm sure Becky wouldn't mind going into for the next game..." The puppy girl whimpered as Alex patted her on the shoulder, and Nyte laughed nervously, bowing his head down and scratching the back of his neck.

"S... sure," he decided, his eyes meeting Isla's for a second. As Alex nodded and stepped fully out of the sunken area with Becky, he swallowed and put his foot tentatively down on the surface, doing his best to appear casual despite his bristling fur as he shuffled himself over to stand on the second target, face to face with Isla. Not knowing where to look, he glanced around the rest of the room and up at the dark square spout above him, eventually blinking and looking straight at the lizardess in front of him. He felt his eyes quickly dropping to her large chest a couple of inches away from him, and he disguised it by bringing a hand up to rub his forehead then turned to watch as the red wolf spoke again.

"Okay, so Becky and Quinne, now..." Alex led the two other girls around to the back of the room, where a slanted container was mounted on the wall. "As you can see, this room's been closed off for a while and some of the pipes aren't in great shape." He swept his finger around at the walls, where various lengths and widths of dented pipes jutted out of the walls, running vertically for a foot or so before bending back in.

"In this game, I'll be awarding you points for repairing them - all you have to do is pull them out of their sockets and replace them with the correct length of pipe from this parts bin." He reached behind him and rummaged around, eventually holding up a length of pipe and letting Quinne and Becky see it before tossing it back in with a clunk.

"However..." he continued, moving forwards, "the gunge is still going to be flowing through some of these, and when there's an active pipe broken anywhere in the room, the excess is going to be pumped out above your friends here." He reached up and tapped the side of the square spout above Isla, who looked up with a confident smile. "Hey, don't look at me - I didn't put it together!" he added as he saw Quinne looking at him with her eyebrow raised.

"I'm just looking forward to running around with all this stuff on me..." she said back, running her fingers along the slime on her tummy and holding her hand up towards Alex as heavy drips of gunge slid from it. He retreated back a step with a smile.

"Oh, I'm sure it'll be easy once you get going..." He moved to the side of the room as the lights dimmed, and Nyte whimpered under his breath as Isla's eyes shone in the gloom. "Becky and Quinne, are you ready? Going to keep these two clean?"

Isla and Nyte looked at the two of them as Quinne nodded, already running in place, with Becky looking much less sure of herself. Alex gave a small laugh as he stepped out of the way.

"I hope you're ready to get messy, you two..." Nyte swallowed as Isla nodded, listening to Alex count Becky and Quinne down to start the game.

His heart jumped as a harsh spotlight came on above him and Isla, illuminating them along with the hoppers. He looked to the parts bin as the fox girl scampered over and hauled herself halfway over its lip to grab a pipe, with Becky hovering behind her and waiting for her to get down before tentatively reaching in herself. He leaned around the lizardess to watch as

the fox ran to the wall behind Isla, holding the pipe up against the lengths on the wall to compare them before she reached forward with her other hand to grasp it.

He held his breath as Quinne pulled the pipe out of the wall and glanced up for a second, just before seeing the mechanism move on the hopper right above him. He faced the front and grinned through his gritted teeth as he felt the stuff pour gently on to his head for a second before the flood started. The cool, smooth texture splashed suddenly around him and he gasped as he felt his head being pushed down by the heavy slime, hunching instinctively as the stuff slapped on to his shoulders and oozed down his back.

There was a yelp from behind him, and he twisted around to look as Becky jumped away from a lick of green slime that had spewed out of the wall where she had taken a pipe off, blinking as a curtain of drips from the edge of the hopper splattered on to his face. He watched as she tried to fit the pipe she was carrying on to the wall in its place, then jumped again as he heard Isla shriek.

He whipped his head around and flinched as a wave of gunge splurged into his chest, blinking as Isla was covered in a dome of dark off-green slop right in front of him. He twitched as she leaned slightly forwards to reveal her open-mouthed smile, the slime dripping in thick fingers from the coating on her shoulders. The flow subsided and she straightened up with a shake of her head, then gave a laughing scream again as it burst back into life. Nyte swallowed as he watched the gloppy curtain splatter off her head, following it down and watching it slither down the sides of her face, drip on to her chest and pool slightly in the front of her bikini top.

"Come on, Becky - make sure you get that replacement in quickly...!" As Alex called above the noise of the falling slime, Nyte tore his gaze off the lizardess's chest and looked around again, watching her pulling a third pipe off the wall and trying the replacement in the sockets left behind before finally thumping it into place. As she turned away, he spluttered as he

was hit by another yellow burst, closing his eyes and holding his breath as he felt the stuff mat his hair down and slither over his face.

As the flow of gunge above him eased off, he faced the front again, bowing his head down and letting it pour off the front of his hair before flicking it up, pushing it back behind his head before opening his eyes. He suddenly found himself face to face with Isla, and breathlessly did his best to return her sly smile as he watched the trickles of gunk continue to fall on to her, a thick streak going down the front of her head. He looked up, half-closing his eyes as he turned his palms up, still catching the blobs of yellow that were raining down on to him from the spout.

Shouting some vague encouragement to the girls running around them, he watched carefully for the next pipe being pulled off the wall, and smiled as Becky made sure to stand to the side before tugging at one, releasing a wave of bright yellow slime. He closed his eyes in preparation and broke into a helpless laugh as another wave spewed over him, soaking into his already drenched fur, and he ducked forwards, aware of the stuff splattering crazily out from the nape of his neck. He curled his toes as he felt the stuff ooze between them, nearly slipping on the collected slime despite the grips on the pool's floor.

He looked up at Isla again as he felt the slop easing down to a trickle on his back, just in time to see her close her eyes as she was gunged by the green hopper again, this time in a gentler flow that let the thick slop pile up slightly on her head before slumping down over her face. She twitched to the side with a grin, shaking the slime off her head, and held her arms out to the sides before looking down at her completely green-painted top half. Nyte's eyes were fixed on her as she brought her hands inward again, and she took hold of the bottom of her bikini top, lifting it away from her chest for a fraction of a second and giggling as a wave of gunk splashed out of it. He whimpered under his breath as he caught a glimpse of the

gunge slithering down to cover the last visible patches of her deep blue chest, and twisted to the side to half-cross his legs, aware of his soaking swimming trunks clinging uncomfortably to his front.

He panted for breath as there was a pause in the waves of gunge from the ceiling, looking around as Becky and Quinne ran around with the pipes, and feeling the yellow slime ooze and trickle through every inch of his fur. He looked around to count the number of pipes that they had successfully replaced, seeing five or six of the more brightly-colored ones dotted around the room. He watched as Becky hoisted herself up on to the lip of the parts bin to lean in and reach towards its bottom, the view of her backside not helping with his excitement as he watched her wriggle as she stretched down.

Gasping as yet another payload of the green gunk suddenly splashed down on to the lizardess in front of him, he put his hands up to defend himself as the goo splattered out from her on to the top of his chest. Suddenly, Isla's gungy hands came forwards out of the downpour, and with an involuntary squeak she swung him around, his feet skidding in the ankle-deep gunge pool as his head went under the green downpour. He quickly ducked his head down as the curtain of slime enveloped him, watching the dark green fingers cutting through the bright yellow slime already clinging to his fur as the stuff splashed over him, flailing his legs underneath him to keep his balance. Suddenly he felt himself slipping forwards, and reached out, instinctively grabbing for Isla's sides - she quickly braced one foot against the back of the pool and put her hands on his shoulders to support him, just as his head came forwards and his muzzle smushed firmly into her chest.

Nyte gasped and quickly turned his face away, trying his best to make himself vertical again with his feet still slithering in the ankle-deep slime. Stammering as he lifted himself up to face her again, he saw her giggling helplessly as she shook her head, just before it turned into a shrieking laugh as the hopper

snicked open and she was covered by a cascade of bright yellow gunge.

He stood speechless with his heart thumping as he watched the lizardess squirming and giggling underneath the new downpour, the gooey stuff breaking into thick streams as it slapped down on to her head and slithered in long fingers through the green gunge on her skin. She hunched her head down with a grin and then suddenly disappeared from his view, slipping and crashing down on to the soft floor of the pool.

Nyte gasped and looked down at the slight bulge in the yellow downpour as it slowly subsided, relieved to see Isla still laughing as the remains of the gunge shower poured on to her and into the rising pool around her. Her shoulders shaking as a solitary drizzle of yellow continued to ooze down on to her head, she bowed forwards and drew her knees up to hug them, rolling her head between them.

She looked up at Nyte with a helpless laugh. Twitching at the sight of the yellow and green slime dripping from all over her face, he smiled back down at her, reaching forward to offer his hand and help her up. He ducked down slightly as he came forwards, then grasped her fingers for just a second before his own feet slipped out from under him as well - his free hand plunged into the inches-deep gunge pool, splashing slime into his face and making him turn away and splutter as he collapsed sideways into the cold goo.

He heard Isla laughing again as he hoisted himself up, one eye closed and grimacing as he felt the slime dripping down the side of his face and soaking into one side of his chest fur. He yelped and closed his eyes as another payload of the stuff pushed his head down, the thick slippery liquid splattering off him in a cape before it settled to slither around his neck. He hunched his shoulders up, laughing helplessly and flattening his ears as the stuff poured over him, hardly able to feel the last drizzle of it under the blanket of slime on his head. He opened his eyes to see the stuff pouring in a thick green curtain off the

hair hanging in front of his face, then gasped as Isla slithered forwards, pushing his hair back over his head with one hand and leaning in close with a grin.

Suddenly a klaxon sounded from the ceiling, and the gungy lizardess pulled away and looked up as Becky exhaustedly slowed to a jog, panting as she watched Quinne continuing to try to fit the length of pipe she was holding to the wall. The yellow hopper gave a final click and drizzled a rain of bright drops of gunge from its edges, and Isla blinked as they splattered down on to her.

"Okay, stop! Time's up - no, stay where you are!" the red wolf said through his laughter, the lights in the room brightening a little. Nyte breathed out heavily, half with relief as he watched the yellow blobs sputtering and dripping on to Isla's gunge-covered head. She looked to the side to watch, large beads of the slop dripping in long strings from her face as the red wolf came forwards and crouched down beside them.

"Come over here, you two... have a look at the results!" he said as he looked up to Quinne and Becky. The puppy girl walked forwards, curling her toes as she stopped just short of the large splatter mark on the floor, while the pink fennec exhaustedly sat down on the edge of the shallow pool, dipping her feet into the collected gunge next to Nyte.

"So, Nyte and Isla... just out of interest, based on how the pair of you are looking just now... how do you think they did?" the red wolf asked, turning his head between the two of them.

Nyte opened his mouth to speak, but it turned into a laugh instead as Quinne spoke up. "I bet we're getting top marks for that!" she said as she looked between him and the gungy lizardess sitting in the pool with him.

He brought one hand up to his head, squirming as he moved to slick his hair back - it felt spongy and matted underneath the layer of yellow and green goo covering it. He bowed his head down again to look down at himself, his shoulders shaking as he saw the dark green stripes on either

side of his chest almost obscuring the neon yellow from the first tank he'd been under.

"Oh, we're just perfect," Isla spoke up as she dragged her hands up and out of the pool and let the sloppy liquid slither back into it through her fingers, prompting a round of exhausted laughter from the other three.

"I know - you're looking pretty slimy, but the good news is that they actually managed to repair eight pipes, meaning that you're getting eighty for the game!"

The lizardess whooped and put her hands in the air, shaking her head as more of the slop dripped across her eyes. Nyte clapped his hands once as well, leaning back on the wall of the pool and then flinching as he felt his hair being tugged. Opening his eyes again, he looked up and saw the fennec girl grinning as she ran his gunge-coated hair through her hands, spiking it into a messy mohawk.

"Come on out of there and we'll be on our way..." Alex extended his hand to the lizardess first, and Nyte took a few more breaths as he watched her hauling herself out of the pool of gunge. He shuddered at the sight of the slippery liquid dripping across her skin, the outline of her bikini just visible through the swirls of colored gloop.

With his cheeks burning despite the cool slime dripping over his face, he unsteadily got to his feet, twitching at the sound of the gunge pouring off his soaked fur. As his swimming shorts came clear of the pool, he felt them plastered heavily across him and giving no disguise to his excitement. Shuddering as the goo oozed and trickled through his fur, he dared to look over at Isla, certain that he saw her eyes widen just a little before she brought her gaze back up to his face.

He staggered over to the edge of the pool and stepped the half-foot up to the floor, the slippery gunge clinging thickly to his fur and trickling off him to leave a trail behind him on the ground. He gasped as Quinne stepped forward brightly to wrap her arms around him, holding his hands out to the sides for balance as she giggled and bounced against him. After a

moment she shuffled her feet back to avoid brushing herself against the front of his shorts, grinning knowingly at him before she withdrew. He put his hands down and looked down at himself for just a second, then twitched as Isla came up to hug him from behind, trapping his arms and leaving yellow streaks across his tummy as she dragged her hands over him.

"You're looking pretty exhausted after that... we've still got two more games to go, but they're not going to involve running around. In fact, right now there's a seat that needs filling..." Alex turned and clapped his hand on to Becky's shoulder, and the puppy girl giggled through a whimper, her ears pressed against her head as she looked at her feet and tapped her toes on the floor.

"Yes, Becky's going in the gunge tank! Come right this way..."

He turned and hugged Becky a little closer as he walked her over to the door, Quinne following close behind as he pushed it back open. Slowly and breathlessly, he shared a glance with Isla and then took off after them, eager to see the timid puppy girl experiencing what she'd just put him into. As they came out the door, the red wolf turned sharply to the left and pointed down the dingy corridor ahead, and he saw the place for the next game as soon as Alex started leading Becky towards it.

The wolf laughed, rubbing his hand on the puppy girl's shoulder as she cuddled into him, as the group approached a six foot high booth against the wall of the corridor. Around it, several pipes and flexible tubes jutted out of the walls, dangling loosely or draped around the cube on the tank's ceiling, a clear reservoir of bright purple gunge. Next to it, a long-handled lever jutted out of the floor, with an indicator arc on the wall behind it with three sections painted in green, yellow and red.

"You're getting the best seat for this one, Becky - it's a nice and simple game this time, because sometimes we enjoy these too in between all the lasers and running about and stuff..."

Alex opened the door for the brown canine as the rest of the team gathered around, and gestured to encourage her inside. Distractedly tugging at one side of her bikini bottoms to straighten them, she padded inside, and Alex closed the door as she seated herself, staring into the round valve separating her from the gunge reservoir above her head.

Alex walked nonchalantly around the tank, and she nearly screamed as she suddenly saw him reaching for the lever beside her. Nyte covered his mouth to disguise his smile, then twitched and blew slime away from his lips, flicking more of the stuff to the floor from his fingers.

"It's okay," Alex laughed, holding one hand up as he grasped the handle of the lever, and she panted with a nervous smile, holding her hand to her chest as she kept her eyes on his fingers. "This switch isn't going to gunge you right now - but it does decide how much gunge you're going to get. You see, you've got the choice between three difficulties for this game, and they also limit the maximum score you can get..." He pointed to the colored arc on the wall. "If you go the easy route, you only need sixty points to get out of there clean. On medium, you need eighty points and you'll be playing to avoid getting a foam bath as well..." He paused as the canine squirmed, looking down at her feet. "Or we can crank it all the way up to a hundred, where there's a bit of a surprise should you fail to stop the gunge tank..."

"Easy! Can I take 'easy'?" Becky interrupted with a nervous smile, looking at him and then back to her team-mates. She cringed and laughed as Isla put her hands up in front of her, beckoning at the ceiling, and Nyte joined in the encouragement, holding his hand up and letting the puppy girl see the gunge dripping from his fingertips.

"C'mon, Becky - go for 'hard'!" Quinne called above them. "Just look at how much gunge you got Nyte covered in!"

Nyte watched Becky looking him up and down as she thought for a moment, biting her lip, then she nodded. "Easy," she repeated to Alex as she turned back to him.

"All right - 'medium' it is," he grinned back, tugging the lever upright into the yellow zone.

"Oh...!" The puppy girl whimpered as she buried her face in her hands, drumming her feet on the floor of the gunge booth as Alex reached to the wall, stretching one of the tubes dangling off it and connecting it to a socket on the side of the tank. Her hair spilled forwards over her hands, and she dragged them back up and over her head, her shoulders shaking in a defeated laugh as the rest of the team cheered for her. She grinned anxiously as she watched Alex walk around and connect the tube on the opposite side as well, then looked up at the ceiling of the booth again as he took a few steps away from it.

"Okay, Becky - you know the rules! Once the timer starts, you're going to have to get up to 80 points to escape without getting gunged." The puppy girl nodded, clasping her hands between her thighs, as Alex stepped away from the tank and brought his handheld computer up to read from it. "I've got a set of puzzles here - if you give me the right answer, you'll earn twenty points, but if you answer wrongly, you'll slip twenty away from that target instead... so ideally, you'll give me four right answers in a row and everything'll be fine..."

He smiled as Becky shuddered, her short brown hair flying out to her sides as her head shook. "And it's all up to you - your team mates can't help you here, even though I'm sure they'd like to save you from the gunge..." He held his hand out to the group, and Nyte laughed as Isla looked to the ceiling, pursing her lips and nodding unconvincingly. "Are you ready?"

"Okay." She shivered one last time and then straightened up, breathing out heavily as Alex read out the first question.

"Here's a classic to start off - if you have a drawer with three colors of loose socks in it - blue, green and red - how many socks do you need to pull out before you're certain of getting a pair?"

"Um..." Becky pursed her lips, shaking her head.
"Three...?" she guessed, her eyebrows raising as Alex drew his breath in.

"Sorry, it's four - you could pull out three different ones, but the next one would have to match. You're staying on zero for now..."

The puppy girl glanced over her shoulder at the timer as he read out the next question. "Why are 1967 dollars worth more than 1966 dollars?"

Becky's brow furrowed as she mouthed the question again, before speaking up. "Uh, because there are 1967 of them...?"

"That's right - I think that was meant to be a trick question, making them sound like the year - maybe it works better written down..." Alex shrugged as the display below the timer flicked to 20. "Oh, here's a good one - if a tank, much like the one poised above your head, holds sixteen gallons of gunge... how much would a tank hold if all the sides were reduced to half their size?"

Becky looked up to the base of the reservoir above her head and winced, then clasped her hands to her head as she thought. "Eight gallons...?" she asked unsurely, then closed her eyes and sagged as Quinne let out an exasperated groan and Alex shook his head.

"No, every side comes down to half size, so it ends up being an eighth of the large one and you'd only get two gallons in there..."

Becky whimpered as the score display flicked back to zero, and took a worried glance at the timer before leaning forwards with her hands on her knees, concentrating as Alex read from the minicomputer again. Nyte watched tensely as she managed to get two right in a row this time, and kept one eye on the timer as she listened closely to the next one.

"A glass is filled to the brim with water, with three ice cubes floating in it. As the ice melts, will the level of water go up, down or stay the same?"

As the puppy girl paused, Nyte looked at the others' faces, seeing Isla looking up at the tank of gunge with a smile. Opposite her, Quinne was practically jumping up and down, her hand over the end of her muzzle as if physically having to stop herself from bursting out with the answer.

The puppy girl gave a high pitched whine as she grasped her hair at both sides of her head. "Down!" she guessed desperately, a flicker of a smile appearing on her face as Quinne leapt up and punched the air.

"Yes - water expands when it freezes, so as the ice melts the level goes down... you're on sixty points, and it looks like you're going to have to get this!" Alex glanced at the timer as it went down past twenty seconds. "Two children were born to the same mother on the same day, but they are not twins. How did that happen?" He held his hand out to Becky, who cringed down, rubbing her temples as she shook her head.

"Were they... born in the same year...?" she hazarded.

"Same year, yes - just a couple of minutes away from each other..." He looked back at the puppy girl, who cringed down in the seat, her ears flat against her head as she closed her eyes. Nyte felt his heart thumping in his throat as the red timer ticked down the last few seconds, and he was surprised to catch Alex tapping his toes on the floor out of the corner of his eye as well. Suddenly, Becky sat bolt upright and pointed straight at Alex.

"Triplets!"

"Yes!" Nyte ducked back in surprise as Alex threw his hands up, and Becky gasped, twisting around in her seat and looking delightedly at the timer as it froze on two seconds and then flickered out. "Yes, that's right - they were part of triplets, or quadruplets, or whatever you like... Becky, you've done it - you've earned eighty points for the team, you've saved yourself and that vat of slime stays closed..."

"Can't you gunge her anyway?" Isla interjected with a grin, watching the puppy girl as she clasped her hands to her mouth, shaking her head as she closed her eyes. Alex laughed as he

suddenly paused, and he rubbed his chin as he looked up at the tank of slime poised above the canine's head. He met her gaze with a smile as she opened her eyes wide, pushing her lower lip a little out as she tried not to laugh.

"You know the kind of person I am! Normally I would, but..." He paused as the puppy girl drummed her feet on the floor. "No," he said eventually, and Becky threw her hands up as she began to get up, leaning awkwardly forwards to open the tank's door before stepping out of it. She smiled around at the rest of her team, then gasped as Isla advanced towards her with her gungy arms outstretched. She retreated and hid behind Alex before looking up at him as he put his hand around her shoulder.

"Now, Becky - you did really well in there, but you should know that the reason you're still clean is that I knew you wouldn't escape for long..." He chuckled at her giggling whimper as he led the team back to the angular main room, and headed towards a hatch in the far corner which was highlighted from above by a flickering, dirty tube light.

"Because even though I know you're not as messy as some other people in this round, I guarantee this'll even things up!"

Alex let go of the puppy girl and fumbled around with the hatch, tugging and wrenching at the valve in the middle and eventually putting a foot up on the door. Suddenly there was a bark as he shot backwards, and Nyte and Quinne leapt out of the way as he scrabbled his feet on the floor to barely keep his balance. Nyte looked down at the wolf's hands to see that the circular valve handle had come clean off.

Dazed, Alex silently looked from the piece of rusted metal in his hand to the socket on the door and back, scratching the back of his neck with his free hand. "Hmm." He tossed the valve to the floor with a clank, and approached the door again. "This place is falling to pieces faster than I thought..."

Nyte sidled closer to Isla as the red wolf tugged on the short protrusion of metal left on the door. "Was that meant to...?" he started in a whisper, but stopped as she shrugged

with a smile, her eyes fixed on the gloom beyond the door as Alex led them inside.

"Now, follow me closely," he said over his shoulder, his eyes glinting in the darkness, and he held up his minicomputer to provide a light. "There's an emergency light switch around here somewhere - apparently they didn't think of just putting it at the door..."

Nyte twitched as Isla grabbed his hand from behind, and looked behind him to see the lizardess holding on to Quinne with her other hand with Becky joining the chain at the back. As he followed the glow from Alex, he suddenly felt the texture of the floor change underneath his footpads, and stopped as the red wolf signaled with his hands. As the girls gathered around, he strained to see as Alex stepped to the side of the room. There was the sound of machinery starting up, and Nyte rubbed his eyes as the ceiling lights slowly warmed up.

"Welcome, everyone, to the pumping room," Alex started as the darkness lifted, and the four of them blinked and looked around at their surroundings. "As you can see, it's a complex arrangement of pipelines that used to collect excess water, move it around and prevent this place from flooding..."

Nyte nodded as Alex continued, his ears flat as he looked distractedly around the machinery around them. Alex had stopped them on a circular metal pad a couple of meters wide that was slightly sunk into the floor. A tangle of pipes covered most of the walls and ceiling, with a whole layer of them visible through the chain-link floor around them. At the back of the room, a huge container jutted down from the ceiling, with a thin tall window on the front which showed a small amount of bright green slime inside it. He gave a nervous smile as his gaze dropped - the nozzle at the bottom of the container pointed down to a blowup pool chair right underneath it on the edge of the circle.

Two pipes stretched from the sides of the tank on the ceiling, ending on the ceilings of two clear plastic booths that stood ninety degrees around the circle from the chair. On the

fourth side of the room, another similar chair was positioned underneath the opening of a large flexible pipe that snaked off into the twisted maze of pipes on the ceiling.

"Wow," Quinne broke the silence as she gaped around at the mass of pipes. "Someone's really gonna get it in here!"

"Yes, you could say that," Alex chuckled as he moved back to the group, putting his hands on Quinne's shoulders before she wriggled out of his grasp and turned to face him. "This is our last game, and we always try to give our teams a big send-off - so this is going to be very simple. We've got four seats placed in the biggest drop zones for the icky stuff running around the pumping system - and when I pull the switch at the side of the room..."

"...it's going to become a massive gunge machine with us inside!" finished Isla as he pointed dramatically at the lever.

"Correct," grinned Alex, looking around at the other team members' expressions as they looked nervously between the booths and chairs. "So all you have to do is decide who you want to splurge... you'll get the full hundred for this one if everyone goes in, but you can sit out if you want to deprive your team of a quarter of the points..."

"I'll just watch..." Becky spoke up as she raised her hand, making to step off the circle.

"You're staying!" Isla casually reached over and hooked her hand into the top of the puppy girl's bikini bottoms, and Nyte shuddered as she stretched them off her as Becky tried to walk away. With a shriek as she scrabbled behind her bottom with her hands, she caught hold of her swimwear again and turned around, looking in stuttering disbelief at the lizardess as she smiled innocently back at her. Nyte raised his eyes far too late for her not to notice, awkwardly trying to shield his lap from view once again.

Becky looked up to Alex as he approached. "I know... I'm sorry, Becky, but they all really want you to share the experience... do you want to come and have a seat in here?" Nyte's heart jumped as he turned around, his arm around her

waist as he led her towards the nearest plastic booth, opening it up with his other hand.

"Oh, I only just escaped this..." Becky looked the cubicle up and down, and clapped her hands over her mouth as she stepped inside the tank almost identical to the one she'd left five minutes before.

"I know, I know... but I've got to ask... when you came into the Industrial Zone, what exactly were you expecting?" Alex laughed as the golden-furred canine seated herself, brushing her short hair behind her ears.

"I thought you said we didn't have to do this..." she continued to giggle helplessly, looking up at the pipe above her head as she was shut inside.

"I definitely said you didn't have to do this - she had other ideas!" Alex pointed towards Isla as he turned back to the group. "But she's not going to escape either - Isla, where do you want to sit?"

"I'll take this one!" she said as she made for the blowup chair nearest the entrance, and flopped down into it, the air-filled seat bouncing underneath her as she wriggled herself upright in it and looked up into the tube poking down from the ceiling above her.

"Nyte..." Nyte quickly stood upright and perked his ears as his name was mentioned, taking his eyes off the curvy lizardess as she bounced anxiously in the seat, but whipped his head back around to her as she spoke up.

"Put him in the gunge tank!" Isla called out, gesticulating at the other empty booth. Nyte shuddered at the sound of the words, remembering his experience inside a couple of the classic gunge machines earlier in the show. He whimpered through a grin as Alex put his hand around his shoulders, but his eyebrows rose as he was turned around to face the other inflatable chair below the massive tank on the ceiling.

"Actually we've got a special place for the team leader - and you'll find out why very shortly!" Nyte looked up at the reservoir above the chair, feeling that he already had some idea

why he was being put there as he settled himself into the seat. He felt Isla's eyes on him, and nervously looked up to Alex as he joined the last remaining team member, who was looking into the empty gunge tank, leaning on its door with her tail wagging behind her.

"Quinne, feel free to step inside - I know you've had sort of an unlucky run with these things over the show, but doesn't everyone..."

Nyte tuned out Alex's commentary, watching the pink fox's back as her long ears twitched excitedly. The red wolf came around and opened the door for her and put a hand on her back to encourage her inside. She spun around, running her hands over her backside to smooth out her shorts, and sat down on the high stool, looking up into the end of the pipe above her with a wry smile. He did the same, seeing a round opening with a valve cover across it, a small metal tab holding it closed for the moment.

"Okay, then!" Nyte looked down as Alex called out, clapping his hands together. "So you're all ready... the pumps are ready... and I seem to be in the middle..." Alex looked down at himself and hastily stepped away from the center of the room, and Nyte laughed nervously under his breath, looking up at the spout above him and gripping the arms of the inflatable seat a little more tightly. He glanced around at his three team mates - Becky with her fingertips touching her face, Quinne smirking confidently at Alex as he retreated, and Isla grinning knowingly across at him. He swallowed as Alex turned around, putting his hand on a giant lever on the wall with caution tape wrapped around its handle.

"Good luck!" Nyte felt his fur stand on end as the red wolf tugged on the handle, plunging the room into darkness for a moment before a mechanical rumble started and a red light slowly grew in intensity from the ceiling, rotating warning lights turning on behind him and on top of the cubicles at either side of the room.

Nyte ducked as there was a thick sloshing noise from the tank above him, gasping as the wave that he had anticipated didn't come. As the gloopy pouring sound continued he twisted hesitantly to look up at the capped nozzle above his head, convinced he could see the machine vibrating a little, and the fur on the back of his neck stood up as he imagined it filling with slime.

He twitched as he saw a streak of green from the ceiling, and turned to look in front of him, grinning as a pair of thin jets of slime poured from rusted holes in the pipes on the roof, angled to splash on to Isla's head. As the gloop impacted on her head and shoulders she gasped, her shocked expression becoming a smile as she leaned forwards with the bright gunge splattering out in arcs around her. As a splatter mark grew around her chair, the thick slop played back and forth across her head, and she turned her palms up to catch it as fingers of the stuff slithered down her back and chest.

There was a clunk from the right hand side of the room, and the hunched puppy girl suddenly disappeared under a dome of yellow gunge which twitched outwards as she threw her hands up with a yelp. Wriggling forwards, she clasped her hands to her head, biting her lip and closing her eyes with her mouth open in a laughing screech as the slop fell in a wide column from the ceiling and spewed out over her. As she twitched in a fit of giggles, the gooey liquid splurged off her shoulders, the slow wave of slime painting the back wall of the tank behind her.

Quinne balled her fists as a siren rang from the ceiling, looking between the flood of gunge enveloping Becky and the drizzles of green stuff slowly parting to reveal the messy lizard girl. Looking up at the pipe that ended above her head she rolled her shoulders, moving her hands back and forth in a nervous dance as she waited for it to go off. Nyte's eyes drifted to Isla again as the streams above her slowed to drizzles pouring on to the arms of the chair, leaving the slippery lizard girl dripping with green stuff, goo trickling from her

outstretched fingers as she looked down at herself. Shaking her head, she looked up across at Nyte, then at the sound of another mechanical click she turned around to watch as the fennec's ears flattened in readiness.

The pink fox gasped as she waited for the gunge to fall, but squeaked as the pipe running across the floor in front of her shot a spray of white stuff up into the tank and hit her in the face. Across from her, Becky ducked out of the drizzles dripping from the edges of the gunge nozzle above her and grinned, putting her hands on the door of her tank as she watched the thick, creamy foam stick to Quinne's face, thick blobs of it slithering down and splatting on to her chest. After putting her hand instinctively out to block it at first, the fox girl slowly relaxed, her mouth opening in a barely visible smile as the spray subsided, painting a white streak down the front of the tank. Raising her hands carefully to her face, she dragged her forefingers across her eyes and opened them again, the pulsing warning lights making them glint underneath the thick layer of white foam on the rest of her face.

The flexible pipe above Isla twitched, and Nyte gasped as a torrent of the white foam spewed out from it, making the lizardess yelp as it enveloped her. The thick foam fell in huge clumps down from the wide pipe and splashed lazily out as it impacted on Isla's head, breaking into blobs that made her squirm and wriggle as they slithered over her slimy skin.

Nyte braced his feet on the floor as he squirmed in his seat, awkwardly adjusting himself and drawing his legs closer together, then he jerked upright, scrabbling his feet as he felt the ground begin to move. He and the girls all leaned forwards as a split appeared in the round metal pad in front of him, a bright light shining from underneath before it subsided as the two halves of the cover slowly parted. He squirmed up as a plume of green special effect smoke drifted up from underneath it, and blinked as it swirled around his face, suddenly finding himself staring down at a vat of dark green slime just below his feet.

"Oh, no..." he groaned under his breath, but broke into a grin as he felt his heart racing. He looked up at the three girls, seeing Isla wipe the foam from her eyes and then clap her hands together enthusiastically, pointing at him and then the vat as he smiled through an embarrassed cringe. The next thing he knew, he was engulfed in a flurry of white sticking to his face and fur.

He spluttered, thrashing in the seat for a moment before bringing his arms up to defend himself from the unseen sprayers and shaking the stuff off his face. He breathed out heavily, blowing a blob of the foam off his nose before feeling the sputtering foam subside, leaving thick globs of it slithering down his fur.

He opened his eyes, still trying to clear them as he heard a whimpering squeak from his right, and he watched as the puppy girl looked down, clasping her hands to her cheeks and kicking her feet as yellow foam began being pumped into her gunge tank. The two other girls watched as she glanced back at them, Quinne cheering through her laughter as she watched the canine wriggling in the knee-high foam. Suddenly the fox's laugh became a squeak of surprise as a fountain of gunge erupted from the base of her own booth, wide dark and light green ribbons of opaque slime splashing on to her feet with one shooting up through her legs to splatter on her chest and tummy. She yipped and squirmed as the stuff tickled the soles of her feet, lifting them away and watching the slime swirl together as the booth began to fill up around her.

Sharing a glance with Isla, he looked between the two booths, twitching as blobs of the slippery foam rolled down his fur and imagining what Becky was feeling as the stuff bubbled up around her. The puppy girl's whimper gave into a laugh as she wriggled upright in the seat, stretching herself up away from the surface as the bright yellow stuff reached waist height, and she looked up then immediately closed her eyes and bowed her head down, clasping her hands over her ears as there was an industrial siren from above. A mixture of yellow

and dark green gunge dropped from the ceiling of the tank, splashing out in a dome over her for a second before settling to pour smoothly over her head, the colors mingling together as the slime flowed down to her shoulders, slipping around the curve of her bikini top.

Nyte tensed up as there was another siren, hunching down but opening his eyes again as there was a yelp from the other booth, and he looked just in time to see Quinne being engulfed by a downpour of slime as well. She poked her muzzle out of the gloopy yellow and green dome, a slight smile visible on her face as she turned her hands over in the curtain of gunge in front of her, letting it slip and slither through her fingers. As the gunge filled the booth to waist depth, she brought her feet up and pressed them against the door, her footpads visible on the plastic among the swirling mixture.

He grinned as he looked between the two booths, but his smile faded again as he became aware of a repeating alarm above his head. Sure that it was going to be him this time, he closed his eyes and hunched down as the loud industrial siren hooted above the noise.

The gunge burst over him in a huge wave, and he let out a yelp as he bowed his head down, feeling the thick slop splatter out from the back of his head and smack on to his arms as it domed outwards. He heard Isla cheering above the noise of it pattering on to the plastic seat around him, and laughed helplessly, shaking his head to get his wet hair out of his face and picturing the flood of gunge viewed from the opposite seat. He cringed and sat upright underneath the flow as the clingy, heavy liquid slithered down every inch of him, the smooth slippery flow twitching and splattering away occasionally as air pockets bubbled out of the tank.

Just as he felt the ooze from above easing off, he gasped and scrabbled instinctively to get a grip on the armrests as the back of the chair began to tilt upwards. Letting out a whimper through his tightly closed mouth, he took as deep a breath as he could manage as his hands and rear started to slide against

the gungy plastic surface. As he slipped forward, he felt his feet sliding into the cool thick glop - he raised his arms as he plunged down, and the next thing he knew he was completely submerged in it, his hands following his head under the surface.

He flailed his feet to get his balance as he felt the gunge lazily swirling around him, slipping and dropping to his knees before he felt himself bob to the surface. Planting his feet on the floor of the tank, he slowly raised himself up, shuddering as he felt the thick slime oozing through his fur and pouring slowly away from his face. Breathing heavily against the gunge rippling around him, he dragged his slimy hands up and over his head, slicking back his matted hair and blinking his eyes tentatively open to see the chair that he'd been tipped in from, strings of gloop still dripping into the vat from its edges as the pipe above continued to drizzle slime on to its back.

He turned around, twitching at the feeling of the opaque gunge swirling with him and lapping against his chest, and he smiled back at the girls as he saw them looking down at him, Quinne cheering from the slime-filled booth with her hands in the air. Becky was squeamishly pushing the yellow foam out over the booth's door, slowly revealing her gungy fur as the green and yellow stuff continued to drizzle on to the back of her head and down her back.

He heard the siren blare for a fourth time and he quickly looked to Isla, blinking rapidly and shaking his head as strings of green slithered and dripped across his vision, to see her hunching down with a grin. The girls in the gunge tanks beside her watched intently as they waited for the pipe above her head to go off again, but she yelped, raising her feet as the chair she was sitting in began to move forwards on a hidden rail instead.

Nyte smiled delightedly as he saw exactly where she was heading, and raised his arms out of the gloop, letting the slime drip from his outstretched arms. With her shoulders shaking in laughter, Isla covered her mouth with her hands, looking to the

gently rippling surface of the heavy liquid in front of her, then yipped as a spray of dark green gunge erupted from the ceiling, sputtering down into the pool. Nyte heaved himself back in the slime, feeling the stuff lap against him as Isla was covered in the gunge, globs of it spewing out from her bowed head as the seat advanced over the edge of the pool. As it stopped, it tipped forwards, and the blue lizardess gave an excited shriek as she slithered forwards and plunged fully into the gunge vat.

"Yes...!" Nyte grinned, turning his face away as the huge wave of green stuff smacked against him, feeling the slop buckling crazily as the ripple reflected off the edge of the pool. He stepped forward as Isla slowly found her footing, poking her head above the surface of the gunge and then wriggling upward so that it was up to her neck, the glop pouring thickly off her skin and leaving her painted in green.

The lizardess grinned back at him as she tried to hoist herself into a standing position, squeaking as she slipped forwards. Nyte half-caught her instinctively, then gasped as he realized where one of his hands was and let go. The lizardess toppled forward against him, and he screwed his face up as they both fell back under the green surface.

Nyte spluttered and then held his breath as he tumbled over, feeling the slime ooze around him and into his ears. Not knowing which way up he was under the slime, he put his hands out, grabbing at the first thing that came into his hands and bracing against it to haul himself upwards. He coughed as he felt his face come to the surface, shaking his head to get the viscous dripping slime out of his eyes before opening one of them, seeing Isla's gungy face right next to him. He smiled and let go of her shoulder, letting her stand up and watching the ooze trickle over her as she stood up, the top of her chest just poking above the surface of the gunge vat.

"Becky... you avoided this happening to you in the very first game, and when you beat the booth just a few minutes ago - I'm sorry you couldn't escape it forever..." Nyte did his best to

wipe his eyes with his palms, blinking the slime away as he looked up, seeing Alex leaning around the gunge tank to talk to the mucky puppy girl inside. She was dragging both her hands over her soaked hair, leaving foamy streaks of yellow and green behind as she tried to clean herself off, pinching her ears and giggling helplessly as even more of the slop sputtered down on to her from the nozzle. As she moved, blobs of the thick yellow foam spilled over the door of the tank and slithered slowly down the outside in long, slimy fingers.

"Quinne, are you okay in there?" he called across to the other booth, where the fennec girl was wiping her eyes, her head and shoulders completely painted in bright gunge and a transparent ring of slime visible just above the surface of the filled cubicle. She blinked and nodded brightly, poking her fingers under the gunge and scooping some up with her hands, letting a stream of it pour back into the tank as the nozzle continued to drip long strings of it down on to her head.

"And you two!" The red wolf grinned as he turned away from Quinne and leaned over to face Nyte and Isla. Nyte yelped as the lizardess swung a gungy arm up to clap it around his shoulder, and he stumbled as she drew him closer to her. Regaining his footing and standing up straight next to her, he tentatively returned the sideways hug, twitching as his hand slipped over her slimy skin, and brought his other hand up to slick his soaked hair back. "Everyone on this show needs to end up in a gunge vat at least once, and you two did it in spectacular fashion - I can barely see you under there! How does it feel?"

Nyte shuddered as he became aware of the gunge swirling around his fur once more. "...Eugh," he managed to say, laughing as Isla nodded beside him.

"I thought so... but at least it's over now - are you ready for this?" Alex looked around at the four of them with a smile, bringing his minicomputer out of his pocket. "You've got a hundred points for this game - thanks for helping out with that, Becky..." He paused as the gungy puppy nodded, still looking

squeamishly down at her hands as they dripped slime and foam. "So that's 320 in total for the last four games, and we double that up to 640 as it's the last round... and that brings you up to 1450 as your final score!"

Nyte jumped as there was a whoop from behind him, and he slithered himself around to see Quinne pumping her hands in the air, clapping them above her head and spraying slime on to the plastic walls around her.

Alex smiled back at her. "At least somebody's got some energy left...! And you're going to need it, because once we've got you hauled out of there and cleaned up, you're going to be taking on our last challenge..."



FINAL

Nyte showered and changed much more quickly than the last time, and had a spring in his step as he approached the door that led back out of the changing room. He adjusted the waistband of the third pair of black IZ swim shorts he'd worn that day, slicking his hair back and smiling as he thought about the low chances of him and the girls staying dry during the final game.

As he pushed the door open, his eyes met Quinne's as she came out of the girls' changing room at the same moment. He froze as he looked over her head, catching a glimpse of Isla's back through the open door as she stepped into a new pair of bikini bottoms. Trying his best not to look like he'd noticed, he forced his eyes down to look at Quinne again, and she opened her mouth to say something but then looked to the side and gasped.

The snow leopard they'd seen in the previous round was already seated on the benches, sipping from one of the cups of water taken off the cooler at the side of the room. As she looked back at the excited pink fox bouncing on her feet, she began to get up, turning towards her.

"No, don't - " she began, but had the air knocked out of her as the fennec leapt through the air towards her, stumbling back on her feet as Quinne wrapped herself around her in a leg-encircling embrace. The cup clattered to the tiled floor, and Nyte looked around aimlessly as the fox planted a huge kiss on the leopardess's mouth, running her hands through her hair and over her ears.

"I can't believe you came on and got gunged and...!" Quinne enthused as she broke off the kiss, her broad smile right up against the feline's face. Delta took a couple of breaths

as the ecstatic fox continued to gush excitedly, putting her hands on the Quinne's shoulders and slowly prizing her off her. She breathed out and smiled as the pink fennec giggled, unable to keep still.

"Yeah, just... remember I'm not going to make a habit of it or anything..." she said, brushing her hands through her newly clean hair and sitting down on the bench.

"No need!" Quinne flopped down next to her and took her by the hand. "When this goes out, I'm recording it so I can watch that bit over and over..."

The snow leopard cringed and sighed. "She really will!" she said across the table as Nyte sat down on the opposite bench. "She watches every other episode so much - this one's going to be on all the time..."

The fennec cackled as she let Delta go, drumming her feet on the floor before clapping her hands on her knees as if to keep them still. "So Nyte, who's going to be watching you getting gunged?" she bubbled.

Nyte looked up, surprised at the sudden question. "Er," he started, "Just... friends from uni, you know... I don't know how many of them watch this." He suddenly felt a growing sense of anxiety as he thought about who might be seeing him, especially not knowing just how much the cameras had picked up over the last couple of hours.

As he suddenly pictured the lizardess tumbling into the gunge vat in front of him again, the changing room door opened and he did his best to keep his face motionless as Isla emerged in a fresh bikini. She was closely followed by Becky, who brushing down the short fur across her tummy as she padded out of the changing area. The puppy girl smiled at Delta as she recognized her, and took her seat next to Quinne.

"I'm feeling a bit nervous here..." Nyte smiled as Isla sat down on the near end of the bench, the other three girls budging up to give her room. "Like I'm facing an interview panel or something..."

"How many interviewers have you had dressed like this?" Isla grinned as she tugged on one strap of her bikini top, then she leaned forward and looked down the row, missing Nyte's reaction. "Hey, judges - how many of us think this kitten needs to be gunged in the IZ final?"

Nyte watched with a small laugh, his cheeks beginning to heat up again as four hands went up in front of him, Isla raising Becky's for her before she relaxed and held it up herself.

"Hey, do you remember that on Sat-AM?" Quinne spoke up as she looked back and forward between the other girls. "They used to have a group of people who voted on who to put in the gunge tank..."

"Yeah, they had a few games like that..." Becky nodded. "There was one where they had the kids sitting on logs, and they had to jump down into the swamp when they reached the end!" She shivered, a faint look of disgust coming through her grin as she remembered. "I'm kind of glad we didn't have to go into anything like that stuff..."

Certain that his blush was getting more obvious by the second, Nyte raised one foot to cross his legs, clasp his toes and gripping to massage them as he listened to the girls eagerly exchanging memories. He'd seen most of the games that they were talking about at some point, either with the volume down on weekend mornings or by discovering them online much later.

"My favorite was the game on Massive where they would gunge 'em under the giant nose," Isla grinned as she joined in, shifting round on the seat and leaning forwards over the puppy girl. "They used tons of slime on that - everyone came out looking like... like Becky did when she got tipped into that vat..."

The puppy girl wriggled, clasp her knees as she gave a small laugh, then brought her hands up and brushed them through the clean, sleek fur on her shoulders. "Urgh, and we're all going to look like that again soon..." she said with a nervous

giggle. "Have you seen the final? If we lose this we're gunged up to our necks!"

"Hope you're looking forward to that, Quinne..." Delta said, singing her partner's name as she ruffled the fox girl's hair before she wriggled out of the way. Nyte shuddered and nodded - he'd seen exactly what happened to all the teams that failed to complete the final game.

Isla's grin got wider and she started to answer, but all of them looked round as there was a sudden sound from the doors to the main set. Alex poked his head around one of the doors, then pushed it open all the way, holding it as he let the brown catgirl from earlier through in front of him.

"I'd like to introduce you to Tina," he said as she casually held her hand up to acknowledge them and strode over to take a seat on the bench next to Nyte. "Fresh from the wetroom, and none the worse for her experience..."

"We were rooting for you to stay clean!" Quinne called, making Tina smirk.

"Sure you were..." she shook her head.

"She got her reward - she was watching the four of you being gunged in the other games," Alex said, turning away for a moment as he stepped into the corner. He dragged a chair up to the head of the low table between the benches before sitting down on it heavily.

"Yeah," Tina said, eyeing them each in turn. "But I don't think any of them got it like I did..."

"Oh, I promise - they will!" Alex grinned and clapped his hands together as he looked at the team. "How are you all feeling - ready to face the gunge one last time?"

"Yep!" the fox girl said brightly. "We were just talking about the other shows like this we used to watch..."

"How about you?" asked Isla. "You must have watched this stuff when you were growing up - did you have any favorites?"

Alex put his hands behind his head, a hint of a smile on his face. "Yeah..." he started, and Nyte was surprised to see him hesitate, clearing his throat. "My parents never liked them,

though - I always had to go round to my friend's house down the street to get my fix on Saturday mornings."

"Thank god they managed to keep you away from them," Delta smirked, and they all laughed as Alex nodded.

"Yeah... that didn't work out so well!" he agreed. "I've never asked them what they think of where I am now..."

"Hey, getting to run around with half-naked girls all the time... I'd say you were doing pretty well!" Tina said, leaning back on the wall as she folded her arms with a smile.

Alex smiled back at her and nodded. "I never thought this was what people would know me for, but I can't complain...!"

"So what was your favorite show?" Isla pressed, leaning forwards and propping her head up with one arm on her knees.

"Well..." Alex leaned back as he thought, rocking the chair a little on its rear legs as he put his foot on the low table.

"You're probably all too young to remember this one, but when I was in early school there was a section they did on Sat-AM where they put everyone from the losing team in a... cell in a cave and poured out masses of green gunge into it from a tip-tank in the ceiling..."

"Oh, I've seen that on the net," Nyte realized, then stopped as the girls all looked towards him. "It was called, uh, Dungeon of Doom or something..." He tailed off, looking around the others and hoping one of them would also have seen it.

"There was something I used to watch that had a slimy dungeon as well..." Becky said in the brief pause. "They picked kids out of the audience and got them to play the games - I used to be dead scared of it..."

"It looked to me like you still are!" teased Isla, leaning over and putting one hand down on Becky's head, spreading it out over her hair.

The puppy girl nodded, shivering as Isla ran her hand down to her neck and down her back, keeping her in a hug.

"Yeah, but... in a good way! It's like being on a rollercoaster or something..."

"A rollercoaster with slime - sounds like something I'd spend all day on!" exclaimed Quinne as Delta nodded behind her.

Alex smirked at the remark. "A lot of people say it's like that," he nodded as he pointed at Becky. "It's not something for everyone, but... you know, every single time on that dungeon game, there were at least a couple of winners who wanted to go in, too! That made me realize... they must be enjoying it, even though the show played it up as something to be scared of."

The others nodded. "And now you're doing exactly the same thing to people who watch IZ," said Isla with a smile.

"We are!" Alex took his foot off the table, tipping his chair upright again. "You know, they designed a couple of these things to make even the people who want to be gunged squirm a bit... if you remember the Gunkpipe from right near the start this morning, I think that even Isla was a bit nervous of that one...!"

"Huh..." Isla folded her arms, but visibly shivered as she tried to smile confidently.

"And there's the sludge cube..." Tina volunteered with a shudder which Nyte felt as well.

"Hey, we didn't get that!" Quinne suddenly remembered, whipping her head round to face Alex. "Are you not doing that anymore?"

"Shh...!" Becky hissed worriedly from beside her, whimpering as a couple of the others laughed at her nervous display. Alex just smiled and nodded.

"It's still around... we could put you in there after the final if you'd like..."

"Um..." The fox girl hesitated unsurely, and folded her arms as there was renewed laughter, followed by applause from Delta. "But..." she said as it died down again, and pointed at the catgirl opposite her, "Why wouldn't you like that one? Didn't he say that you do mudbaths?"

Nyte looked to Tina, who hesitated, looking suddenly embarrassed.

"Mud... walks, yeah," she replied. "But it's different when you have this big ol' pipe dumping it down on to you..."

"Yeah, that's an experience you don't get anywhere but here," Alex laughed. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a tightly folded piece of paper. "Is anyone hungry, before we do the final? The canteen's just upstairs, or we can wait until afterwards..."

Nyte looked to the clock above the door, surprised to see how much time had flown past since he had arrived at the studio. "No, I'm fine," he said out loud as the girls shook their heads.

"Okay, good - that's probably just as well, because you're not meant to eat right before going swimming...!" Nyte smiled as the girls leaned forwards on their benches, watching the red wolf unfold the large sheet of paper and spread it out on the table in front of them.

Nyte came forward and knelt down next to the table, realizing he was looking at a plan view of the final game room. It looked more or less like he had seen on the show before, where the final game had been based around a large pool of water - he twitched as his eyes were drawn to the right hand side, where a circle marked the position of the large gunge machine that the teams had to go into if they failed to complete the challenge in time.

"Well, you can see Nyte's spot already," Alex said as he tapped his finger on the circle, and Nyte felt his cheeks heating up as he girls all looked at him. "Our team leader starts trapped in there, and the other three of you will start at the other side - two of you have to go through these obstacle courses at the sides, and one of you will have a swim to rescue him..."

"So this whole area's the pool?" Isla asked, jabbing her finger down into the wide open space in the center of the drawing.

"That's right," Alex nodded. "Although we've improved that a bit for this year..."

He looked around at the team members as he watched their reactions, smiling back at them. "Actually, I'll explain the rest when we're in there - want to come and see what I mean?"

Nyte smiled and hauled himself up again as the red wolf straightened and turned back around to the entrance doors. He fell into line next to Isla, glancing sideways and sharing an excited smile with her just as Alex pushed both doors open.

"Okay... main team, come with me - Tina and Delta, we'll get you in there after I've got them to their positions!" This time, Alex headed straight across to the large round door on the other side of the room, waiting for the team to gather around before thumping on the door with a force that made Nyte jump.

"ROB, we're back - come out here!" he called to the ceiling.

The polygonal yellow face faded into view through a haze of static on the screen above them. "What now?" it responded sharply, tilting down to stare directly at Alex.

"We're ready to try activating the purifier," the red wolf said as he looked up, stepping backwards away from the team to face the monitor. "This bunch got 1450 points, they're ready for the final and I've got a really good feeling about them - can you open the door for us?"

Nyte stretched up to look at the face as it tilted down to look at the four of them, nearly laughing as Quinne stuck her tongue out at it. "Don't you have the keys?" it asked back as it faced Alex.

"Oh, I knew I forgot something!" He clapped his hand theatrically to his forehead and dragged it down his face. "No, I think I got two of them and then I left them somewhere..."

The face sagged down with a withering sigh. "Aren't they the whole point of you going in there?"

"Well, sort of." Alex stepped forward again, squeezing between Isla and Nyte and putting his arms around both their

shoulders. "But honestly, I concentrate more on getting this lot covered in gunge..."

Nyte laughed to himself as the polygonal face nodded, then felt a nudge on his other side and looked down to see Quinne poking him with her elbow.

"You're the team leader - maybe we should send you back through the gunge machines to find them..." she said in a giggling whisper. "I'd come with you..." Nyte laughed under his breath and shook his head slowly as Alex continued to argue with the face on the screen.

"All right, all right," it said eventually. "I'll let you in for a couple of minutes - but only out of pity."

The screen blinked off and the team faced forwards as a pneumatic hiss sounded from the large door in front of them, special effect smoke jetting between the metallic halves as they began to move apart.

"He's in a better mood than usual today..." Alex said as the doors parted, walking Nyte and Isla forwards and into the room beyond. As the smoke dissipated, Nyte's eyes widened as he took in the room in front of them.

A few feet ahead of where they were standing, the floor of the room was taken up by a huge vat of gunge the size of a swimming pool, stretching nearly all the way to the far wall. An inflatable ramp rose up out of the pool at the other end, going up a few feet and ending at the base of a cylindrical enclosure embedded in the opposite wall.

"Oh, my... god." He glanced at Isla as she spoke, a huge smile on her face as she gaped at the massive gunge pit, stepping forward to put her hands on the back of a pool chair that hung slightly out over the edge of it. She looked up, and Nyte followed her gaze to see a hopper like the ones they had been under in the last round suspended from the ceiling above it.

"Yes, it's pretty impressive, isn't it?" Alex said as he glanced around at the other girls' expressions. "Looking forward to taking a swim, Becky?"

The canine giggled through her cringe, looking down at the murky green surface as she wrung her hands behind her back. In front of her, Quinne stepped forward and put her hands out for balance, stretching her foot over the soft border of the pool and poking her toe into the gunge.

"How's the water?" the red wolf asked, and she squeaked as he put his hands on her shoulders, hopping back with him as a single drizzle of green slime slipped from her foot. "Don't get too far in just yet - we want to capture your reaction when you're tipped in!"

He turned the fennec around, and she giggled, her ears flattening as she faced the inflatable seat at the edge of the pool. "So that's where I'm sitting...?" she asked.

"That's right - for now!" Alex offered his hand, and grabbing his arm for balance, she clambered over the side of the chair and flopped down into it, looking down at the pool of gunge in front of her and bouncing in the seat. "We'll get back to you later and explain exactly what's going to happen to you..."

He reached up to the long spout of the hopper a couple of feet above the pink fox, and slapped its side. Nyte smiled as he watched her ears twitching down and then perking again as she stared up into the nozzle, then he twitched as Alex turned towards him.

"So let's get the rest of you to your positions! Becky and Isla, if you could pick a tunnel each..."

He pointed with both hands to the sides of the room - along the two side walls were two areas sectioned off with plastic panels, full of an assortment of obstacles blocking the route towards a pair of pits of white foam in the far corners next to the ramp. The lizardess gave Becky a confident smile before she headed towards the opening at the start of the right-hand tunnel, and Alex took the puppy girl's hand as he led her over to the other one.

"Think you've got enough energy left to get through all this, Becky?"

"Looks like a... an obstacle course in a fun house," she said as she looked along its length, pointing at a cluster of balloons between two inflatable barriers. She twitched as she held on to the frame of the tunnel's doorway, instinctively looking up.

"Yeah, we took some inspiration from them - but added some of our own touches!" Alex smiled as he saw where she was looking - a slightly dome-shaped red protrusion with openings around its edges was visible on the ceiling of the tunnel above the starting point, looking like a large showerhead. She laughed through her whimper, then stepped into the tunnel, brushing her fur down and looking forward at the course ahead as Alex closed the door on her.

Nyte swallowed as Alex turned around and approached him again, then looked at the fennec vivaciously kicking her heels against the front of the dunk seat beside him. As he watched her, she pointed up at the large cylindrical tank on the opposite wall of the room, then straight at him with her other hand as a huge grin spread on her face.

Alex spoke up as he put his hand on Nyte's back. "I think that the girls have been waiting a long time to see this, Nyte..."

Nyte nodded, whimpering a little under his breath as he looked up at the cylinder, and the foot-wide curved pipes running from the wall into its ceiling. Alex pointed as he led the way towards a set of steep metal stairs in the corner, and Nyte glanced back at Becky and Isla, his eyes widening as the lizardess blew him a kiss before he turned to follow the wolf.

The stairs led up to a suspended walkway that ran around the edge of the room, with a section running across the pool halfway along. As Nyte poked his head above the level of the walkway, he suddenly noticed another massive device suspended from the ceiling - a slightly angular metallic tank decorated with strips of caution tape was hanging over the far half of the pool, with wide nozzles pointing down towards the surface and curved windows on the side and base showing the same murky green slime inside.

He held tightly to the handrail, looking down at the surface of the gunge eight feet below as Alex led him towards the back of the room, where the walkway met the wall and formed a small bridge to the side of the clear cylinder. As they approached, a panel in its side hummed open, forming a doorway.

"Step inside..." the red wolf said as he held a hand out, and Nyte squeezed around him to face the entrance. "Just don't touch that key yet, whatever you do..."

Nyte hovered with one foot inside the tank, seeing a card key swinging from a strap hooked to the ceiling of the tank and then looked out beyond it at the view of the game room, still amazed at the size of the gunge pool that was now at the bottom of the ramp in front of him. After a few moments, he jumped as he felt Alex's hand on his back and gasped as the wolf gave him a gentle push inside. Feeling the cold surface of the bottom of the tank under his footpads, he staggered forwards, then half-turned around to face Alex as the door slid closed to trap him inside. With a nervous grin, he took a couple of steps into the middle of the cylinder and stared up at the opening of the gunge chutes and sprayers that were now poised above his head.

He watched as Alex strode to the center walkway, and his ears pricked as the red wolf drummed his claws on the handrail to get the attention of the team.

"Okay, listen, everyone! This is what you've been working for - we've loaded up the purifier with a payload of gunge," he said as he slapped the side of the massive tank next to him, "and you've just got our last obstacle course in the way before you turn it on. Scoring 1450 in the games gives you just about two and a half minutes on the clock..." Nyte looked as he pointed at the blank wall beside the cylinder, and he walked over to the side to look as a large red segmented timer was projected there, its digits frozen at 2:25.

"It's protected by a sequence of card keys, and someone did far too good a job at making them difficult to get your hands

on..." He looked up at the ceiling, where three more keys were suspended on long metal poles with claw-like grips on the end - two above the pits of foam at the ends of the obstacle tunnels and one near Quinne's seat. "When Nyte takes the card from the inside of that tank, the room's failsafe power will come on - Isla and Becky, that's your cue to escape from your gunge cubicles and get to the other end of your tunnel as fast as you can. And if I can just introduce my two assistants at this point..."

Nyte looked up as the figures of Delta and Tina came out of the shadows on to the walkway at the other end of the room, and Quinne gave a gasp as she and the snow leopardess made eye contact. Delta gave her a wave with a grin, pointing to the row of small levers placed on the walls at intervals on each side of the room.

"As we gunged them earlier, we wanted to give them the reward of making things a little more slippery for you..." Alex continued as Tina moved to the walkway above the lizardess. Nyte watched as Isla nodded, raising her eyes to the wide sprayer poised above her head, and Becky hopped from foot to foot anxiously, biting her lip as she ran her fingers through the fur on her shoulders as she looked at the corridor ahead.

"Anyway, once you're at the other end, you'll have to pull the switches on the wall simultaneously to release the keys from the ceiling. Quinne's will drop into the pool in front of her, and the other two are going to fall into the foam pits. It's up to the three of you to find them from there..."

He paused, and Nyte felt his fur stand on end as the red wolf looked across at him. "It's sounding easy for you so far, isn't it, Nyte?"

"Y... yeah..." he said back, glancing at the sides of the tank he was trapped in.

"I think so, too - but don't forget that pipe above your head! After they've found all three keys, the girls have a slippery climb up the ramp to free you - and if they don't unlock that

thing within the time limit... you're going to get the gunging of a lifetime as the tank fills up."

Nyte grinned nervously and shuddered, knowing the girls' eyes were all on him. His heart thumped in his chest as he looked up at the main nozzle above him, the card key swinging gently from its strap.

"Of course, girls, if you do manage to get him out of there..." Alex continued with a laugh, "he's also going to get the gunging of a lifetime as he slides down the ramp and gets his turn in the slime vat. All he has to do once free is wallow, swim, do whatever it takes to get through the slime and put that final card into the slot that's right below Quinne just now."

Quinne curled around to lean forwards, and Nyte twitched as she parted her legs and lifted them up, looking at the card slot on the edge of the pool just below her seat. She relaxed into a sitting position again, a small grin on her face as she looked up at Nyte and pointed down at it. He breathed out heavily as his gaze drew back across the huge slime vat and to the inflatable ramp in front of him leading down into it.

"Everyone know what they're doing?" Alex called, pointing at each team member in turn and getting a nod from them.

"Just one last thing... Delta, could you just give me a hand with this?"

He beckoned the snow leopardess over, and gestured towards a large switch at the side of the walkway, pointing down at Quinne. The fennec looked up with a brow raised as the feline gripped the handle, and Nyte looked to the ceiling as there was a burst of color from a pipe above Quinne. The pink fox girl squeaked, her hands flying to her head as the column of orange gunge splashed down into the hopper above her, and she slowly unfolded herself again as she realized that it wasn't going to drop on to her yet. The splattering noise rose in pitch for a few seconds, then the downpour from the ceiling shut off, leaving strings of gunge drizzling from the corners of the hopper as Quinne blinked underneath them, stretching one foot to the side to turn it over underneath the slime.

"Okay, that's that set up...!" Alex grinned as Delta returned to her position at the side of the room. "Becky and Isla - just be careful of the square orange pads when you're pushing your way through those obstacles... you'll find out why!"

He paused as the fox girl looked up and stuck her tongue out at him, bouncing up and down against the inflatable seat as she looked up to the cap on the container of gunge above her. "I'll get you both back if you get me gunged!" she called, turning her head between the lizardess and canine. "Somehow..." she added, staring down at the gloopy surface in front of her and gripping the arms of her seat to budge herself upright.

"Nyte... you can start our final challenge by taking that card key, whenever you're ready."

Nyte stepped back and focused on the card swinging from its strap in front of him. Realizing that he was gripping the side of his swim shorts, he let them go and brought a hand up to catch the card in his hand, and with a deep breath, he tugged it downwards, his ears flattening at a faint electronic beep from the ceiling.

He swallowed as there was the noise of machinery starting up, and the ceiling lights swung around to darken the room. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw the projected timer beginning to count down, then he ducked to watch as the nozzles above Becky and Isla sputtered into life, gently showering them with translucent green gunge.

The puppy and lizardess both yelped as the slime started pouring over them, leaning forward and looking at the keypads in front of them. Nyte and Quinne looked between the pair of them, Isla concentrating and pressing slowly while Becky tapped rapidly at it to try to find the combination to get out, her other hand clasped to her forehead to shield her eyes from the gunge shower. After looking on nervously, he smiled as a panel near the bottom of Isla's tank slid open to let her into the large round pipe lying in front of her, and the fox girl bit

her lip nervously as she watched the lizardess crawling into the area with the gunge triggers.

As Isla emerged from the low tunnel, Becky managed to open her hatch as well and Nyte watched as she leaned over, her tail swishing in the air just before she disappeared from view into the tube. Suddenly, a buzzer sounded, and the fox girl gasped just before she disappeared behind a curtain of orange gunge poured from the hopper above her.

"Oh...!" Alex called as the slop sputtered over the giggling fox, the flow slowing to a drizzle as she bowed and shook her head. "I don't know who that was, but Quinne's already messy - and it doesn't look like it's going to get any better for her..."

Before he had even finished the sentence, there was another ring from the buzzer, and the thinning orange downpour bulged again, spraying off Quinne's head as Becky gave a frustrated yelp. Nyte looked down at her and saw her quickly taking her hand off a fluorescent panel hidden on the back of a low inflatable wall. She quickly climbed over it and visibly held her breath as she swivelled herself between a cluster of hanging punch-bags, stretching her hands up above her head in an attempt not to touch any hidden triggers and hesitating as Delta pulled the switch to send a spray of gunge falling on to the surface in front of her.

He looked to the other side of the room, where Isla was climbing a set of low steps to the edge of a pit full of balloons. After hovering at the edge, she jumped down into it and there was a yelp as she disappeared right underneath, a couple of the dark purple spheres floating into the air behind where she'd fallen. The cluster swelled and she poked her head out again, wiping patches of foam from a couple of burst balloons off her chin.

Nyte whimpered as she put her hands out to the sides and waded through the pit, yipping as a couple more popped against her and sprayed her with thin slime. As she neared the end, one bright yellow one was jostled to the top of the pile, and the lizardess grabbed it and held it in the air as she looked

back at Quinne. Grinning widely as the gungy fennec gave a gasp, she squeezed hard and burst it, cackling as the alarm rang again and Quinne was enveloped by another slimy downpour.

Nyte tried to stand in a way that didn't reveal his excitement as he watched the lizardess slither her way through the remaining obstacles, yelping occasionally as the catgirl above her pulled a switch to cover her in gunge from the sprayers. Eventually she burst through a wall of crash-pad blocks at the end of the tunnel and stumbled towards the large lever on the wall, turning around to see where the canine was.

"Hurry up, Becky!" she encouraged as the puppy girl kept her eyes on a sprayer in the ceiling, walking a thin line between two large fields of triggers with her hands out for balance. As it suddenly burst into life, she dodged to the side instinctively and screeched as the buzzer sounded again, hopping quickly out of the gungy shower and looking back at Quinne with an apologetic smile as the fox girl leaned forwards, a cape of gunge splattering out from her back as two streams of it slithered down around her neck.

Nyte looked to the timer, surprised that only a minute had gone past, as Becky made her way over to the lever. She half-collapsed against it and tugged it down at the same time Isla did, and the four of them looked up as the mechanical claws on the ceiling clicked open, dropping the card keys.

"Whoa!" A sudden shout from the other end of the room made Nyte look back down again, and he half-laughed through a gasp as he saw Quinne's chair tipping slowly forwards. Scrabbling her arms instinctively against the inflatable surface to try to find a grip, the fox girl tucked her feet up and curled them against the seat. As the back of the chair rose higher, the hopper above her opened again, and she was briefly covered by a dome of orange gunge just before she burst through it as she fell forwards into the vat of slime.

Nyte's eyes widened as he saw the gunge in front of the chair bulge and ripple as Quinne thrashed in it, finding her

footing. As she bobbed upright, covered from head to toe in a sickly mixture of murky gunge, she held her card key high in the air, wiping her eyes with her other hand and wading forwards as the thick slime rippled around her, lapping up and down against her waist.

He looked down at the two foam pits at the sides of the room, where the lizardess and canine were crawling around, already covered in the opaque white stuff with even more of it being pumped in from pipes placed high on the walls. Seeing Isla suddenly stretch up with the card in hand, he looked down at her foam pit as she waded forward and flopped against the inflatable barrier between it and the gunge pool. He bounced on his heels as he watched her struggle and half-turn around, kicking her way over the barrier, then he twitched and shuddered as there was a burst of gunge from the ceiling, splattering over her and making a thick glooping noise as it poured into the vat. With a yelp, she lost her grip on the slippery inflatable surface and plunged sideways into the pool of slime, flecks of gunge-stained foam drifting away from where she'd fallen in.

Nyte didn't hold back his grin as he saw the lizardess slowly haul her head and shoulders out of the pool, shaking her head as strings of ooze slipped from all over her skin. She turned around and blinked her eyes open slowly, bringing one hand up to run it over her slippery head as she bounced towards where Quinne was now struggling to get up on to the ramp towards the cylindrical tank.

He watched, shouting incoherent encouragement down to the two girls as Quinne grabbed one of the ropes lying along the length of the ramp and hauled herself up on to the surface, smiling as Isla butted her with her shoulder to push her up. As the lizardess tried to lift herself on to it, the fox girl got up on to her knees, going hand over hand up the rope to shuffle herself slowly forwards. She squeaked as a curtain of blue gunge splattered down in front of her, wobbling and then slipping

against the gungy ramp but continuing to crawl slowly towards him.

"Come on, Becky, get in there!" Nyte looked across at the puppy girl as Isla breathlessly called over to her. Nyte glanced across at her, seeing just her back and head above the foamy white surface, her face tilted up away from the bubbling stuff as she walked randomly around searching for the card. Turning back up to face Nyte, Isla finally hauled herself on to the ramp, hunching her shoulders up as another burst of yellow gunge from the ceiling splattered over her back. He gasped and then clapped his hands together with a grin as she dug her toes into two of the footholds and slowly stood up, walking carefully against the surface and overtaking Quinne.

"How are you doing?" Isla called to him through the plastic front of the tank, and he grinned back at the gungy lizardess as she flopped down to kneel next to the card slots. Keeping firm hold of the rope with one hand, she leaned around to offer her other hand to Quinne, who tried to reach forward but overbalanced and collapsed against the bouncy surface with a squeak.

"Sod it, just leave 'im in there..." she laughed breathlessly, stretching her arm forward to pass Isla the second card. Nyte leaned around to look at the timer, tapping his toes on the floor of the cylindrical tank as Isla stretched forward to insert the two card keys into the slots below him, then she turned to look as there was a shriek from the foam pool to his left.

Struggling under a mass of white foam, Becky was holding her arm stretched up in the air, the card just visible at the end of it as she waded forward, wiping her eyes. She wobbled as she passed under the cascade of foam being pumped in from the pipe on the back wall, yipping as the thick cream-like substance slithered down her.

"Throw it!" Isla yelled over to her, holding her hand up. Nyte tensed up as the puppy girl took a few seconds to wipe her eyes, and pulled her arm back before tossing the card up towards the ramp.

Isla gasped as the card turned over in the air, foam spraying off it, and she stretched herself up, just missing the card as she tried to grab it in the air and then throwing herself to the side to trap it as it bounced off the far barrier of the ramp. She screeched in frustration as the slippery card slid out of her grasp, then whooped as Quinne dived to grab it and handed it back up to her.

"Yes!" She held it up triumphantly, then swung her hand over in an arc to jam it into the last remaining slot. Nyte glanced over his shoulder to see the projected timer tick down past thirty seconds, then swallowed as the front panels of the tank hummed open, realizing the spotlight was now on him.

"Go, Nyte!" Isla yelled, scrabbling for the other rope and swinging herself to the side to clear the path for him as he looked down the splattered ramp towards the pool of gunge. He stepped forward and hovered as he looked down with his toes curled over the lip of the tank, trying to see how best to drop himself on to the vinyl inflatable surface.

Hearing shouted encouragement from the girls, he took a breath and stepped out into space, folding his legs underneath himself and then landing on his backside. Immediately he began to slide uncontrollably down the gungy ramp, flailing his arms instinctively and grabbing on to Isla's ankle before slipping off. He tried to stay upright but fell on to his back, drifting around so that he was sideways, and Quinne yelped as his legs caught her, almost knocking her off the rope she was holding on to. Nyte's eyes widened as he saw a wide curtain of blue gunge drop across the ramp from the ceiling, and closed his eyes, screwing his face up as he passed headfirst underneath it before sliding down into the vat of glop.

The thick slime suddenly blanketed around him, cool and heavy against his fur, and replacing the sound from the surface with a glooping in his ears. Turning himself over and trying to get upright again, he gasped as his head burst back through the surface, shaking rapidly to get the worst of the slime off. Knowing that he was losing time, he waded forwards with his

hand out but felt the ramp in front of him, then turned around and wiped the gunk away from his eyes, listening to the girls cheering him on as he blinked and squinted through his gungy hair draped across his vision. Seeing the slot at the far end of the pool, he panted as he waded through the heavy liquid, his feet slipping madly against the bottom of the vat.

As he reached the center of the pool, he twitched as another downpour crashed into the vat in front of him with a thick glooping noise, almost stopping but feeling his momentum carrying him forward underneath the yellow slime. He twitched as he felt the heavy gloop pour on to his hair and then down his back, but smiled as he looked down, watching the gunge swirling heavily around him as he walked through it.

The fur on the back of his neck stood on end as he heard an electronic voice counting down from ten, and he dived forwards, almost slipping and putting his face under the gunge as he paddled his hands in front of him and bounced the last few steps. Falling against the housing of the card slot with his heartbeat thumping in his ears, he scrabbled furiously to reel the card tied around his wrist up into his hand, juggling it in his slimy fingers before finally pushing it firmly into the slot and hearing a confirmation beep.

Nyte fell backwards as there was an explosion of colour in front of him, and lay half-floating in the gunge, panting and staring up as jets of yellow and blue foam shot up from nozzles at the edge of the pool, flecks of them splitting off and drifting gently down to land on his face and the surface of the slime around him. He smiled exhaustedly as he realized that the final game was over, and slowly rolled himself around in the heavy liquid to stand up. He looked across to the ramp just in time to see Isla slide into the gunge pool with a large splash, emerging slowly from under the surface with her arms held in the air as the off-color gunge dripped slowly down from them.

"You've done it!" Alex yelled from the gantry, and Nyte turned his head up to face him as he wiped his eyes, then followed his pointing finger to the tank on the ceiling, where

jets of water were swirling through the opaque slime inside, the colors slowly evaporating to leave the contents clean. "Nyte, Isla, Quinne and Becky... with just a few seconds to spare, you're our first team to manage to turn on the purifier and restore the water!"

He paused and leaned over the handrail, looking down at the team as Delta and Tina came around beside him, the leopardess giving a smiling shudder as the gunge-coated fox girl waved up at her. "Although, looking at you just now... I think we're going to have to use just about all of it to get the four of you cleaned up after that..."

Nyte sagged and laughed, slowly wallowing back through the gunge towards the ramp as Quinne began to lower herself down hand over hand. She squeaked, slipping and flailing her legs against the slimy vinyl surface as she plunged into the slime as well, holding her hair away from her face as she bounced upwards out of it.

"Becky, I think you're the only player who's ever avoided going in the gunge pool..." The team's heads all turned to the puppy girl, who was leaning on the inflatable barrier between the slime and the pit of foam, barely visible under the pile of white fluff sticking to her fur. She giggled embarrassedly at the attention, hunching her shoulders as the blobs of thick foam slithered slowly down from her head to her shoulders, and wriggled to shake dollops of it off her fur.

"But never mind that - pull yourselves out and get up here! ROB, where are you?"

As the face of the computer materialized on the large screen near the ceiling and Alex began a conversation back and forth with it, Nyte joined the girls, skimming his hands over the surface of the slime as he looked around at them with an exhausted grin.

"Ohmigod, we did it!" Quinne bubbled, lurching forwards in the gunge to give him a hug. He shuddered as she wrapped her gunge-coated arms around him, feeling their soaked fur slip against each other, and tentatively put his hand on her

back as Isla looked at the two of them, spreading her arms along the lower lip of the inflatable ramp as she leaned back on it. As the fox girl let him go, wriggling and cackling delightedly as she ducked back to dip her shoulders under the gunge, he shared a grin with Isla, exhaustedly raising his heavy arms up to slap his hands together with hers.

"Come on!" He turned as there was a call from next to him, and saw the foam-coated puppy girl excitedly beckoning them over to a ladder that led out of the pool. He nodded and let the two girls go first before wallowing towards it, his fur nearly standing on end despite being heavy with slime as he felt the stuff slosh around him.

He watched the girls haul themselves out of the gunge bath in front of him, the slime dripping away from them in thick sheets and drips as they climbed the couple of feet back to the floor. As she straightened up, Quinne walked forward with her arms stretched out towards the puppy girl, who squeaked and backed away, yelping as the fox girl put her hands on the wall on either side of her head to pin her in place. The canine grimaced and gave a laughing shriek as Quinne closed in for a hug, staining the white foam with murky green as Isla leaned around to rub slime on the top of her head.

Nyte pulled himself out of the slime, one hand on the back of his swim shorts to anchor them in place as his waist came free. Laughing through a cringe as he felt thick blobs of it running down the fur on his legs, he curled his toes against the floor and watched a splatter mark spreading on the floor around him as the slime dripped from all over his fur. Looking up, he saw the breathless puppy girl squirm out of the others' grasp, and point up to the walkway overhead as she led the way towards the set of stairs leading up to it.

"And here they are at last!" Alex announced as the four of them climbed up on to the walkway next to him. Delta and Tina looked back and stood to the sides as they gathered around behind him. "I always said that I had a good feeling about them..."

The face of ROB didn't react as he turned away from it and addressed the team. "All of you - congratulations! How are you feeling after that?"

"About as good as we look..." Isla spoke up, running a hand over her head and leaving gungy furrows behind with her fingers. Becky grinned beside her, shaking her head.

"Well, as our first winners of the series, you each get our little memento here..." Alex reached to the wall and opened a hatch, and as the girls and Nyte leaned forward to see, he reached in and took out something from inside. Nyte grinned as he held it up in front of the team - it was a gold-sprayed trophy in the shape of the show's logo. "As well as getting to keep your IZ swimwear, if you can get it clean again after that, you're each going home with these... small rewards for braving the gunge..."

"Yeah, about that..." the polygonal face interrupted, and the red wolf turned around, putting the trophy back inside the hatch. "The reserve tanks are still full - team, do you want to get even?"

Nyte watched as the side door to the cylinder slid open again, his eyes widening as he realized exactly what that meant. He barely had time to react before Quinne gasped, then threw her hands up and leapt forwards, hugging Alex from behind and pushing him towards the entrance.

"Oh, do I have to...?" Alex stepped forward slowly, pretending to resist Quinne as he held on to the frame of the cylindrical plastic tank. "You've got six people out here it could happen to..."

"Yeah, but I think it's your turn - don't you?" The wireframe face turned towards the group on the walkway, and Nyte laughed as Quinne nodded rapidly. Suddenly, she turned around, looking him in the eye with a huge grin as she shot one hand out to grab his arm. He stumbled for a step, but didn't resist as she tugged him towards her, bouncing on her heels and hugging him excitedly as she pushed him into the gunge tank with Alex.

"I think we're going to get everyone in anyway..." The red wolf smiled as Isla put her slimy arms around Delta and Tina, walking them towards the entrance and leaving no room on the walkway for Becky to escape past them. With a giggling whimper, the puppy girl tiptoed over the entrance, blobs of white foam still dripping off her fur as she cuddled under Alex's outstretched arm. "Come on in and make yourselves comfortable..."

Nyte caught Isla's eye as she slipped her hands around to the felines' backs, pushing them gently inside before she stepped into the gunge machine as well. Half-turning around, she jumped as the entrance hummed closed by itself, then walked around to his other side, draping her arm around his shoulder as he gently put his hands on her and Quinne's hips. Delta moved around to Quinne and hugged her from behind as the brown catgirl came around to Isla's other side.

With a defeated smile, Alex breathed out heavily as he watched the team cluster around him, then raised his head to address the camera. "That's it from us in the Industrial Zone... next time, I'll be leading a new team around, and hopefully they'll end up in here without me..."

He paused to take a breath, and looked down as Quinne pushed against him, nudging him right under the large pipe above the center of the tank. Nyte smiled, glancing up at Alex's face before hunching down again.

"Good ni..." The last half of the word was drowned out by the blare of the gunge tank siren, and Nyte flattened his ears as he heard the huge valve open above them. He closed his eyes and heard a shocked bark from Alex just before he felt a wave of gunge splash over his face.

He bowed his head down so that the dome of heavy green slime splattered into his hair, half-opening his eyes and keeping his arms tightly around the girls next to him as he watched the gloop pour into the bottom of the tank, swallowing all their feet under a smooth green layer. He grinned to himself as he listened to the whoops and shrieks all

around him, feeling Quinne bouncing under the stream of gunge pouring on to her head and shivering as more of the slime dripped down his back from Isla's arm.

Cringing as the gooey stuff slipped against his fur, he gasped as a cold wave of slime slipped over his hand on Isla's hip. He flexed his fingers and grasped her a little more tightly, whimpering as his hand slid against her smooth slippery skin. After a moment, he felt her beginning to walk forwards out of his grasp.

"Hey, wait..." he began to say as his hand slipped off her, his voice drowned out in the noise of the siren and the gunge splattering all around them. He looked up, holding his gungy hair out of his face with one hand as the curvy lizardess stood in front of him, gradually backing away through the knee-deep glop and pointing at the ceiling. Wriggling against the curtain of slime splattering across his back, he glanced upwards to see the opening of a smaller pipe above her head, and met her eyes again as a new siren joined the cacophony. The lizard girl looked up as the nozzle burst into life, spewing out a column of darker green gunge, and she only just had time to close her eyes and hunch her shoulders before she disappeared underneath it.

Nyte looked around him as the sloppy deluge continued, seeing five or six of the new streams pouring into the tank around them, and hearing the puppy girl shriek as one of them caught her on the shoulder, splattering outwards in an upturned bowl shape as she wriggled underneath it. He looked again at the bulge in the column of gunge in front of him, seeing Isla's green-coated fingers reach through the dome as she caught the gloop in her palms.

He grinned as her face poked out of the dome as well, none of her blue skin visible underneath the dripping green coat of slime. As she came forwards with her arms outstretched, he tentatively raised his hands to return the hug, but yelped as she leaned forward and planted her hands on his chest, pushing him roughly backwards. He splashed his feet in the gunge to

stay upright as he stumbled away from her, and he felt a sudden cold on his back, giving an involuntary squeak as he stepped backwards underneath another gunge stream.

He closed his eyes as he felt the slime slump over his face, and hunched over, his hands going up to wipe at his eyes as he blew it off the end of his muzzle. As he felt the heavy gloop smacking on to his shoulders, his shocked expression gradually became a grin, and he dared to straighten up underneath the downpour of gunge but quickly bowed his head again as it glooped over his face, sticking his hair to his forehead. He jerked his hands up as his fingertips touched the surface of the slime, and slowly wallowed forwards out of the flow as the slime rose to waist height.

Looking around through the drips of gunge sliding across his vision, he saw Quinne under another of the gunge streams, her hands behind her head and looking up as if showering under the gloopy downpour. She shook her head and opened one eye as she looked around for Delta, then cupped her hands above her head and threw handfuls of gunge towards her as she backed away through the glop with a yelp.

The downpour from the main pipe in the center of the ceiling finally began to thin, bulging a couple of times as air bubbled out of it. Underneath it, the bright green sloppy dome gradually folded inwards, revealing Alex's shape again. Having been under the huge downpour the whole time, his red fur was completely plastered with gunge, with thick rivers of it flowing down either side of his neck to settle on the waist-deep surface. As he took a slow step out of the drizzling rain of slime from the overhead pipe, Quinne whooped and clapped her hands in the air, looking him up and down triumphantly as long strings of gunge dripped from his muzzle and chin.

Nyte gasped as Isla clapped a hand on his slippery back to push him over to join the wolf, and he stumbled forward through the gloop as Alex wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. Seeing Nyte coming towards him, he smiled and put his

hand on his shoulder, turning him to face the outside wall of the tank.

Shaking his head to get the worst of the gunge away from his eyes, Nyte listened as the siren faded out, and became aware of noise from the lower floor of the room. Straining to see out past the slime-streaked plastic, he smiled as he saw the show's crew filing in through the main door, cheering and applauding as they lined up next to the gunge pool. He grinned nervously at the attention as Alex raised both his hands up in a victory pose, and broke into a helpless laugh as Isla wallowed up beside him and raised his own hand in the air.

He glanced back at the tank behind him, gasping as he saw it completely transformed under a coat of bright green, with the other slime-coated girls wiping their hands over their fur to clean themselves off while Quinne dipped her hands into the pool and splashed them with more gunge. As Isla turned away and dragged both her hands through the slime to splatter the fox girl from behind, Nyte glanced at the gunge-soaked wolf next to him, then scooped his hand through the slime preparing to splash it towards Isla.

A sudden knock from the direction of the walkway made him stop and turn around, and he saw another blue lizardess waving at them through the tank's slime-streaked entrance door - she looked similar to Isla but with lighter skin and closer to Alex's age. As the red wolf wiped his eyes, he made his way around to her, leaning on the wall for support, and pressed his muzzle to the plastic surface as she did the same from her side. Quinne whooped as she noticed the kiss, and Alex turned to look back at the team, a slimy handprint left behind on the tank's wall as he let it go.

"I'd like to introduce you to Blue, everyone..." he said, closing one eye as a small curtain of gunge slipped over his brow. He wiped his forehead with one hand as he held out the other towards the grinning lizardess. "Our floor manager since the show started, and the one who got me into all of this..."

"It wouldn't be the same without you," she called through the plastic wall, looking the slime-coated red wolf up and down.

"I'm flattered," he deadpanned, then cringed as Quinne's slimy hand came up to slide across the back of his neck. "For now, though, do you want to think about getting us out of here?"

Nyte slowly wallowed towards Alex as the gungy girls around him took a couple of steps towards the door, but he stopped as Blue held up the minicomputer that Alex had been carrying around throughout the show.

"Yeah, but not through this door - we're going to let you out the fast way..."

She pressed something on the screen, and the seven occupants of the tank all jumped as there was a twitch somewhere under the surface of the gunge. With a gurgling sound, the stuff began draining out of the tank, leaving a thick green film behind on the plastic as the surface lowered around their waists.

There was a gasp from Becky, and Nyte looked out the front of the tank as she pointed - the gunge was pouring out just below them and forming a thick, glistening cascade down the inflatable ramp, pouring stickily into the vat below. Nyte laughed under his breath, nodding and reaching his hands up to clasp the back of his neck as he saw exactly what their escape route was going to be. With the gunge at ankle height, the front panels of the tank parted, letting the stuff pour out over the lip as well.

"Come on down!" The lizardess's voice came from floor level, and Nyte looked to see that she'd returned to the side of the pool. She pointed emphatically downwards as a couple of other crew members came around next to her, dumping a stack of large towels on the floor and spreading a few out next to the vat.

"I think she means you!" Isla said as she put her hand on Alex's back, a broad smile on her face as Tina and Quinne

joined her in tugging the red wolf over to the gap. Alex smiled from underneath the gunge still dripping over his face, looking out over the ramp as he stood at the tank's exit.

"Just think of how many other people you've sent down that slide!" Blue called above the whoops and cheers of encouragement that were beginning to come from the far side of the pool.

"How could I forget..." He shifted his weight back for a moment and then jumped forwards, holding both hands in the air as he hit the ramp in a sitting position. The girls clustered around the frame of the door, laughing and hugging each other as the wolf gave a shocked yelp, scrabbling his hands and feet against the ramp as he slid uncontrollably down and splurged into the gunge vat, a huge wave of green slime billowing up from around where he'd fallen in.

As he launched up from the bottom of the pool, painted in a new layer of green, Tina clambered out and lowered herself down on to the ramp after him, sliding down with her hands against one of the edges. Alex waded over to catch her as she neared the bottom, taking her feet and slowing her down as she gently glooped into the slime. Nyte stood on his tiptoes to watch as Becky hovered at the lip of the tank, realizing that she was the next in line.

"I'll do it with you, Becky," Quinne said, squeezing past the puppy girl as she tapped her on the shoulder and taking her hand as they faced the door together. "C'mon..."

She counted down from three, and Nyte stepped to the front as the fox girl leapt off the platform, tugging the hesitant Becky into space along with her. To a soundtrack of nervous and excited whoops and screams, they slithered down the ramp hand in hand and splashed into the mucky pool next to Alex.

"Get out there, you..." Nyte twisted round as there was a voice in his ear, and jumped as he saw Isla's face right up against his. She butted gently against him, then he jumped and stumbled forwards as she grasped his bottom with one hand,

flailing his arms as he lost his balance and tumbled forwards on to the ramp.

He screeched involuntarily and braced himself as he fell on to the surface, but bounced upward again and managed to slither into a rough sitting position. Scooting down the slippery material, he closed his eyes as the gunge rushed towards him, and just had time to take a breath before he plunged into it.

The world went dark as the surface of the gunge pool closed over his head once again, and he pushed down with his hands as he broke to the surface, twitching as he felt gunge running off the tips of his ears. Slowly, he hauled himself upwards again, stumbling as he found his footing - without the timer going, he relaxed this time and took in the feeling of the smooth, slippery blanket enveloping him, shuddering as he felt blobs and rivulets of it trickling through his fur.

He flinched as a large ripple in the surface of the gunge made him bob up and then down, lapping lukewarmly against his tummy as Isla and then Delta tumbled into the slime after him, and opened his eyes to see them both bursting back up through the surface, Isla wearing a huge grin as she bounced in the pool and watched the slow ripples. He sidled up to her, his hand poised just above the surface of the gunge as he wondered if she would appreciate a return of what she'd just done to him at the tank's entrance, but then he whipped it away as she slithered around to hug him.

He stumbled backwards a step, bracing himself with one foot and grinning exhaustedly as he wrapped his arms around the gungy lizardess. He awkwardly tossed his head to one side to flick a gungy strand of his hair away from his mouth, trying to keep the rest of himself still as he hugged her close, aware of her slippery breasts sliding against his fur.

Eventually, he felt her hands sliding off his back and he straightened up again, combing his hands up and over his head to slick his hair back and tuck it behind his ears. He balled his fists and watched the slime slither out between his fingers, then blinked as Isla reached over and took him by the wrist.

Breathing out heavily to clear his nose, he wiped his free hand down his muzzle, and wallowed slowly with her over to where the others had gathered.

"Oh, I've been waiting so long for a team to win this year," the lizardess at the side of the pool said with a grin, and Nyte smiled back as she looked around at the figures bobbing in the gunge. "Do you realize what we go through in the recording booth, waiting to see if he's going to get it...!"

Slime slipped from Alex's shoulders as he laughed, flexing his arms out to the sides. "We need to do a crew special some time," he said. "You, me... who else do you want to see gunged?"

"Oh, not me!" The lizardess held a finger up and waggled it at him. "I did that last year, remember?"

"You should present it!" Nyte looked to Quinne as she spoke up, spluttering gunge away from her lips and dragging both hands through her green slime-soaked hair. "Then you'd really get to gunge him..."

A grin spread across the light blue lizardess's face as she nodded. "Sounds like a good deal," she said back. "I'd have to make sure the team lost so I didn't end up in there with you..."

The team laughed a little as they looked around at each other. Quinne slid over to stand next to Delta, putting her arm around the slightly taller feline's shoulder in a sideways hug.

"I thought you said you weren't going to make a habit of looking like this!" she said as she swung around to grin into her face.

"Urgh..." The green-painted leopardess shuddered, flecks of slime spraying out from her fur as she reached up to comb some of the stuff out of her hair. "At least you can't see this part on television..."

"I'm sure we can take some photos or something..." the lizardess called from the bank, then looked to the cluster of crew members at the head of the pool, many of whom were holding their phones out to film the gungy wolf in front of them. "I think the rest of the guys have already..."

"Blue." All their heads turned as Alex cleared his throat, coming up to the edge of the pool and folding his arms on the inflatable ridge that separated it from the floor, next to the lizardess's feet. "Very important question - did you leave your phone on the desk?"

"Yeah, why?" The blue lizard crouched down to face him. "Have you -" The sentence ended abruptly with a scream as Alex's arms flew up to embrace her, and her shriek got higher in pitch as he stepped backwards, falling back below the surface of the gunge with a large splash as she toppled into the vat after him.

Nyte raised a hand to shield his face from the wave as the gungy surface billowed and rippled crazily, glancing around at the five surprised and delighted faces around him and hearing the roar of approval from the show's crew before a green streak shot back up through the surface. As huge streams and curtains of gunge came pouring away from the figure, the outline of Blue slowly reappeared, her skin completely painted in green with her shirt sodden and clinging to her shoulders. As she stood still with her mouth open in shock and her hands out to her sides, Alex bobbed up from the gunge as well, shaking his head and grinning as he slowly hauled himself back into a standing position.

"You...!" she spluttered, pointing one finger towards him then retracting it as she pawed at her head, wiping her eyes multiple times then shaking herself, sending blobs of slime streaking out from her head. Starting to stutter something else but giving up, she thrust her hands into the gunge in front of her and sent a huge wave splashing towards Alex, hitting him in a stripe right across his front as he turned his head away and barked through his laughter. Quinne came forwards with her hands cupped and bobbed up to pour the collected slime over Alex's head, and soon the rest of the girls had joined in to splash Alex from all angles.

Nyte hesitantly joined in as well, watching the goo splash across the wolf as he turned his face down, shaking his head as

heavy streaks of gunge fell away from it. Alex raised his hands in the air with his fists clenched, then opened his palms, and Nyte and the others eased back as he waved in surrender. Nyte took a step back, shuddering again at the feeling of the slowly rippling gunge vat as the stuff poured and trickled from all over the green-painted wolf in front of him, his red fur completely invisible under the gunge.

He shook his hands and then clasped them together to drag them over his head, visibly shuddering as he opened his eyes and panted for breath. "Completely worth it," he grinned, his white teeth showing up starkly as thick strings of gunge dripped across his mouth.

"I can't believe I didn't see that coming..." Blue muttered as she held her hands up in front of her face, then lowered them to pick at her soaking shirt, stumbling as she almost lost her balance again.

Alex's grin stayed as he glanced around at the others during the moment of silence. "Well, the water's nice but I think it's time we headed back to the showers..."

"Aw..." Quinne groaned with an exaggerated pout as Becky nodded behind her. The fox girl dipped herself down in the gunge up to her shoulders, then flopped forwards to submerge herself, just the tips of her ears poking up above the slime. She shook her head as she bobbed up again, curtains of ooze slithering over her face, then stood up fully, holding her hands out and watching the slop drizzle from her outstretched arms with a tired smile.

"Come on - we'll show you around upstairs, show you your best gungings on screen - and I think we have someone here who has a bit more cleanup to do than she expected..."

He laughed, raising an arm to defend himself as Blue dipped both hands into the gunge again and pushed a wave of it towards him. As she came forwards, Alex held his arms out and she lurched forwards to hug him, making him grin as she smeared her hands around over his head and face. With a smile, Nyte ran a hand over his hair and then turned away

from them, raising his hands as one of the stage crew reached over to haul him back out on to the floor.



EPILOQUE

Nyte stood in front of the shower alone once more, still dripping with green slime after the brief walk back to the changing rooms. He stared at the cascade of water in front of him and then looked down at himself, rubbing his slippery fingertips together and trying to fix in his mind the weird feeling of being covered in gunge. Breathing out sharply, he decided he was ready to return to reality, and stepped forward into the stream of water.

He closed his eyes as the slime on his hair dissolved away, leaving it quickly feeling much lighter. As he slicked it back and faced up into the stream, he smiled as the games he'd been in over the last few hours flashed back through his mind, trying to imagine what they'd look like when he saw himself and the girls on screen. With his heart still beating fast from the excitement, he began running his hands over his shoulders, working the gunge out of his fur as he tapped his feet rhythmically against the tiles at the bottom of the alcove - he wanted to shower quickly so that he could catch Isla outside. Telling himself that he'd get up the courage to ask for her number, he started to sing the first few notes of a song that came into his head, then nearly screamed as a pair of slippery hands grasped him firmly from behind.

"Hi, Nyte...!"

