

"Well, we got the replacement device without a lot of problems." As Rexx set the box on the floor. "And not a lot of time to spare either. What with the demo in only a few days."

Sendi was sitting quietly at the table staring at a large glass enclosed candle softly burning.

"What's this?" He asked.

"I found it at the store while I was shopping."

"What is it?"

"Some sort of, I think, religious candle."

"What's it for?"

"I don't know, maybe a prayer or a remembrance of the dead, don't know...something."

Matu picked up the candle. "There's a portrait and something written below it. I think it may be in Spanish." He paused a moment and set the candle down. "Isn't that kind of odd? I mean we're in Africa...Spanish? I didn't think there was that much influence."

Sendi looked up. "There were several of them...similar style, but different kinds...different pictures and different words."

"All in Spanish?"

"I think so. I didn't pay a lot of attention."

"Why did you buy it?" Asked Rexx.

"I'm not really sure. It was set apart from the others by a little bit. I think it looked a little lonely."

"Spanish, huh?" Matu repeated. "Was there a sign?"

"Uh, I think so...not sure."

"What did it say?"

"Um..." She thought a moment. "I think something about some upcoming religious festival or feast day or something."

"But...Spanish?"

"Why are you so concerned? Could be some Spanish speaking missionary settled here."

"I...I'm just afraid the time lines have altered."

"Oh...I see what you mean." Remarked Rexx. "Doesn't mean much, though."

"What do you mean?" Matu became defensive. "But, we are reliving history, my history...your ancient history. Isn't that important?"

"Are we? We don't know. And would it matter if we did? Remember, your history was different from what our time tour recording said it would be."

"Oh...you're right." He slumped in a chair. "I guess it really doesn't matter after all. We're starting from where we started and going from there with no real idea of the future."

"Yeah." Snickered Rexx. "Just like real life."

Matu glared at him.

Rexx looked back at Sendi who was still quietly staring at the burning candle. "So, does this have some religious meaning for you?"

She looked up at him. "Um, I really don't know. Some of my relatives were religious and I kind of remember going with them to church services when I was little and while they were babysitting me. But, I don't think I understood much of what it was all about. Why?"

"Well, it's just that you seem so pensive...what are you thinking about?"

She sighed. "Oh, I don't know. Life...memories...people I'll never see again. I always thought that when you died you would be reunited with loved ones, both people and pets that you had lost...or so I was told. But, we didn't really die...we just sort of drifted from one place to another. And from what the Time Police was saying, we sort of just keep going and doing stuff to get better at whatever we are and are trying to be. So, do we ever get to see our people again...or, is it just an endless ride over each new abyss?" She paused. "I guess it's those kinds of thoughts. Maybe it's why I bought the candle. Maybe it's a memorial to beliefs that I once held. Maybe..." She sighed. "I don't know."

Matu held his silence a moment. "But, as you just said we didn't really die. And we talked a lot with the Time Police. He's another person that we knew and spoke with even when we were physically alive on Earth. So, we were seeing someone we knew. And, when we asked him about the fog, he said it was to prevent distraction. It seems to me it's a little soon to dismiss any of your beliefs...or mine, for that matter." He paused. "There's just way too much that we don't know about anything." He thought a moment. "He did say that personalities do linger in peoples memories. So, maybe we do get to see our loved ones when we die. I don't see why not. Love is a strong bond."

"Yeah, I guess so." Sendi agreed.

"So, where do we get our beliefs from?" Wondered Rexx.

"I guess, from our parents and other adults when we were little...you know, like Father Christmas, our Guardian Angels...things like that." Sendi ventured.

"And, the Time Police said those were some of our guides. There's some merit in those beliefs, no matter how simple or unrelated they may seem." Reminded Matu.

"So what is it about candles...?" She turned back to the quiet flame. "I just felt the need to buy it and light it." She thought a moment. "It's kind of like a gentle friend. Someone to warm and comfort my thoughts."

"The wax that supports the hive, the fat that supports life...the flame is the life we burn through all of that." Matu spoke softly as he stared off into the flame of the candle.

They all went quiet.

"And...why are we here...I mean in this particular scenario." Rexx asked. "Mining stuff...OK, you and I have some background...but, Sendi?"

"Hey, I just cook...isn't that it?"

"No!" Rexx emphasized. "You're much more than that." He sighed. "I think you're our anchor. You keep us balanced."

She sat still for a moment. "Isn't this just a distraction? The mining stuff...we could just be sitting around discussing the state of the universe...no, we had to be distracted by doing this demonstration stuff with something we could really care less about. So, why are we being distracted?"

"I told you that you were our anchor."

"Well...it is something to do...this mining stuff." Added Matu.

"Huh?"

"It keeps us from getting bored." He paused. "And, well, it gives a new perspective for the next time we're sitting around discussing the universe."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, so far, it offered us the opportunity to realize that there are more than one type of person that benefits from owning a mine. And, that we have some control over how those benefits can be put to better use. So, yeah, there is some merit here."

"But, in the grand scheme of things does it really matter? I mean, we've seen these huge injustices against humanity...I don't know, it seems kind of meager in comparison."

"I think any good deed counts."

"Yeah...good deed...we're not just deluding ourselves that it really is a good deed, are we?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it's like the Time Police talks about 'point of view'...we may think we're doing a good deed, but, are we? From our point of view, it's good, but are we really hurting someone by it?"

"I think that's beyond our ability to know." Rexx commented. "We can only see from our point of view."

"Well, from my experience..." Matu began. "The one that's getting least benefit should be the one that gets our help."

"OK, I guess you're right." Conceded Sendi.

"Maybe..." Rexx said. "When we're following the direction of our point of view, we'll learn more about other points of view. We'll speak our minds and hear what others have to say. Maybe we'll change our minds, and maybe we'll change theirs. Who knows, unless we try. After all, we've had a small chance to observe life from a less involved view. Maybe, just maybe, the experience will have imparted a bit of wisdom."

"Well, I'm not sure I feel any wiser." She commented.

"Me either." Matu added, then he laughed. "But, you're right that the experience did give us the chance to observe without being involved. I could have been much more emotional and judgmental if I were more attached to the dramas that played out before us."

"I guess...me, too." She nodded. "So, maybe we have learned a little discretion. Hope that stays with us as things progress. We haven't really had any intense interactions with anyone outside of us since we got here."

Matu thought a moment. "No, I guess we haven't."

"Well, I'd better get this thing unboxed." Rexx commented, as he moved the box onto the table.

As he lifted the device out of the box, an envelope slipped off of it and dropped to the floor. Matu picked it up and opened it.

"What's it say?" Asked Rexx.

"Um...'missing power supply'...'ship separately'...'arrive by courier by the 22nd.' Well, I certainly hope it doesn't get delayed. We need that for the demo."

"Couldn't we swap out the one from the enhanced unit?" Sendi asked.

"Hmm, I don't know." Rexx said. "I'm not sure what parts actually got enhanced, but, I'm willing to bet that the power supply is somehow a lot better that it was supposed to be."

"Yeah." Added Matu. "We really don't want to be influencing this unit."