

"You know, all in all, I think that was a pretty good choice." Matu said as he put down his coffee cup. "That car handles well and it certainly wasn't expensive."

"No, it wasn't." Sendi agreed. "I was a little leery about buying a used car, but it seems to be in really good shape. Low mileage, too."

They both looked up as the front door slammed and Rexx entered the kitchen. He crossed to the table and dumped an armload of what looked like some kind of brochures onto it.

"What's this?" She asked, fishing one out of the pile.

"Maps!" Rexx said. "While you were filling out the paperwork, I asked the insurance company if they had any travelers aid suggestions. Turned out they had lots. I put these in the trunk to go over later." He shrugged. "Well, like now."

"Do we need this many?"

"Well, all of the maps we had went back to the company with their itinerary. And, since we're on a journey to find a new home...I figured, well, the more variety, the better."

"Yeah..." Matu mumbled. "...destination unknown." He sighed.

"Come on, Matu, you like adventures." Sendi chided.

"Yeah, I know." He nodded. "Sorry, I just get dragged down when things don't go as fast as I want."

Rexx poked him in the ribs. "Well you don't always get what you want...but, maybe, sometimes, you get what you need."

"Hey, that's a song from my time!"

"Well, I guess it stuck." He laughed. "We remembered the saying."

"Well, I guess we're pretty much ready to head out. Is everything loaded OK? I'm leaving the key where the landlord said." Rexx said. "In a way, I'm kind of going to miss this sales way of life. Guess I kind of got used to a sort of secure life on the road."

Matu nodded. "Everything's in the car." He added.

"I understand what you mean." Sendi acknowledged. "It was nice having a guaranteed income, you know, covering all of the expenses, with not a lot of work involved...except for all the traveling." She paused. "But, I think we learned a lot during the traveling...learned about people...and learned how the world is in some ways the same, and in some ways really different. I know I've learned a lot about how to cook with simple ingredients, and in less than, well, ideal conditions...and, I guess, a lot of different ways of thinking about what we eat, why we prefer certain foods, and how we flavor them."

Matu went silent, standing quietly while looking down at the ground.

"Matu?" She questioned.

"I'm just wondering...did we have to do all of this traveling to get to where we are now...I mean, this state of mental awareness...hmm...maybe, I don't know...is it part of beginning some new spiritual awareness?"

"Hmm." Rexx commented. "Interesting comment."

"Well, I can say that I learned things." She nodded. "But, I don't know if I had to do all of this to learn them. But, then, maybe I did. Maybe, I had to take the time to see different perspectives in order to open myself to new ways of looking at learning...and, I guess, understanding...accepting what seemed different as just something new and easy to get used to. A lot happens when you're in a new place with different customs that you

don't realize at first. You're too busy just coping with the new surroundings. The new stuff has to sort of settle in so that you can sort it all out later when you've gotten used to it."

"Hmm...true." Matu continued. "If we didn't have to go through this...whatever you want to call it...maybe, indoctrination...learning process...something...he would have just put us where we would be happy in the first place. Don't you think? I mean, it's the old 'suffering for your art' kind of thing."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"If things come too easily, there's no appreciation of them. No personal responsibility for the efforts involved to get to a better place."

"You mean being able to say, 'it was hard work, but I did it and it made me a better person'?" Rexx asked.

"Yeah! Exactly! When we first came here, we didn't think it was unusual to suddenly have a new job to learn and things to do that would all be a part of normal life things. We sort of expected that there would be stuff like that. He gave us just enough background to work from and not too many challenges to overcome all at once. It was gradual enough to get used to and accept. But, with enough short pauses that we could begin to question things. After time, that's when I began to question what I really wanted out of life. I didn't want an endless job or traveling. That all seemed meaningless. I wanted to touch the earth, to touch people, to make relationships, to belong."

Sendi nodded. "Yeah, I get it."

"Yeah, I wanted reality. Sure, I could have stayed in the mountain, married someone and had kids...but, somehow...I don't know. When I met you guys, I found a type of friendship that I never had before...you became a family to me. And, now, I want more, I want a family of my own to add to what we have here. And I want land that's open to the sky, without walls of stone bearing down on me. I want to breathe fresh air and feel the freedom of wide open spaces."

Sendi quietly stared at the ground. "Me, too."

Rexx glanced down at her. "I love you. Be part of my world."

She looked up, smiled, then hugged him.

"Yeah, that's what I want." Matu said softly to himself."

As they settled down in the car, Rexx fumbled through the pile of maps in the back seat. "So, which way? Any thoughts?"

"West...I think." Matu replied. "We're already pretty far East and the coast doesn't really appeal to me." He pointed to the distant mountains. "Something intrigues me about those mountains. I mentioned it when we were finishing up that last demo...you know, when you found me sitting on that bench just staring at them. There's some majesty in them."

Sendi looked long at the mountains. "Yeah, I think I see what you mean. They are kind of grand...huge, you know."

"Any chance they're reminding you of your mountain?" Rexx asked. "...you know, the mine?"

Matu thought a moment. "I donno. Maybe. Maybe, they're talking to me."

"OK, then West it is. That OK with you, Sendi?"

"Sure." She smiled.

Driving down the roadway, Sendi was just quietly staring off into the distance. Matu glanced over at her and asked. "You OK?"

"We passed a shop, a short while back there, in that small town...they had this sort of cabinet in the window. It was a table with a couple of drawers and a cupboard or two. It looked old, not antique, but just used, lovingly used, it was nice...something I would like to have in my house...someday...maybe. Something I'd like to keep nice dishes in...not fancy ones, just everyday ones that are somehow special...you know, memories of special times." She glanced at him. "You know what I mean?"

"Yeah." He smiled. "Keep that thought. We'll make that happen."

"Yes. We have a lot to do to make it all happen." Rexx added. He smiled and nodded. "And, though it may be difficult, we will do it."

"I wonder why I like older things...things that have been used." She mused.

"Maybe you're looking for history...you know, to understand how things came to be here." Matu replied. "How other hands touched them, loved them, when they were part of their lives, and gave you understanding of how they were handed down. Sometimes there's a break in the chain. Someone dies, or moves away, or some other circumstance happens, and the thing becomes homeless, then you find it up for sale. And someone who needs that abandoned love comes along to claim it. Like, maybe, you."

She just stared at him and then smiled. "Matu, sometimes, you are so deep."

"Well, we have a lot more clicks ahead of us on this road, maybe you'll find the source of that depth in you on that journey."

"Are you our guru?" She queried.

He laughed. "Only if you're seeking that wisdom outside of yourselves."

"What do you mean?"

"Look inward first, then question outward." He winked at her.

"I'm not sure I know what you mean."

"Know where you are, who you are, and what you are. Most of us can't answer that question." He paused. "I know I can't. Some teacher said that to me. I don't know if he could answer that either."

"Considering where we have been and what has happened since then, I'm not sure I could answer that either."

He laughed. "I guess that's part of our journey."

Rexx interrupted from the back seat. "Speaking of journey, there's a crossroad coming up. The map suggests a left turn to continue going West towards the mountains."

"Thanks!" Matu responded. "Needed that. Getting out of the deep and back into the shallows."

"Huh?" Sendi asked.

"Sorry...just trying to bring us back to a lighter conversation. I thought we were getting...oh, I don't know, too heavy for traveling. Though, maybe not, who's to say?"

They were all silent for several minutes. Then, Rexx asked. "Matu, you seem to have had a very broad education and many skills, especially in the spiritual realm. Why were you only working as a guard?"

"I guess part of it is why I'm here." He paused. "You see, I don't get along with most people. I feel like I never seem to know the right things to say. So, being a guard left me by myself...I could work out things in my head without the tension of being social, so to speak."

"But, we haven't had any trouble talking with you. You seemed perfectly at ease with us. Right, Sendi?"

"Yeah." She nodded.

"But, you see, that's why I'm here...with you guys. You seem to understand me. When you left, the loneliness became unbearable. So, when the Time Police offered me the chance to be with you, I leapt at it." He shrugged. "That's just the way it is."

“Oh...” Sendi breathed.

“Gee...” Rexx said. “I hadn’t realized. I’m so sorry...I guess we should have paid better attention. We just thought that because we we’re strangers, well, really strange strangers, and that it was part of your job, you know, that you paid so much attention to us.”

“Yeah...he’s not really saying enough...we really did connect with you. That’s why we hung out so much with you. We wanted to, we liked you. Oh, I’m not saying this well enough.”

“It’s OK, Sendi.” Matu patted her hand. “I know. A lot of our friendship was based on non-verbal communication.”

“Yeah...” She sighed. “You’re right.”

Rexx nodded. “Right, indeed, we have become family...really close family, no, more than that...really, look at what we’ve been through together.”

Matu laughed. “A lot more than most people, I’m sure of that!”

“Yeah.” Rexx shook his head. “What a long strange journey.”

“I have a feeling...” Sendi sighed. “It’s not over yet.”