

They were driving down a lonely road during a heavy rainstorm. Sendi looked out at the downpour. "Is this normal weather for here?" She asked.

Rexx typed at the laptop keyboard. "Seems to be normal. But, it's occasional."

"Occasional?"

"Yeah...OK, sometimes heavy, but normally, not."

"So, is this normal, or not?"

Rexx stifled a laugh. "How should I know?"

Matu's stifled laugh burst through his clamped lips.

"What?!" Sendi complained. "I just want to know if this is what we should be expecting."

"Sorry, Sendi. We just don't know what's ahead." Rexx said. "I'm only going by what the weather channel is saying."

"You know..." Matu added. "...this is not the first time we drove into a flash downpour or a sandstorm."

"Yeah, yeah, I know...just hoping for some sense of normalcy."

"Let me know when you figure out what normal is." Matu sniggered.

She paused for a moment, then turned to look at him. "So, what is normal?"

Matu thought for a moment. "Hmm, I guess it's when the same thing happens at the same time on a regular basis. Does that make sense?"

She looked solemn, then said. "I guess." She paused. "If this is a physical inconvenience, that's one thing, but, if it's a mental inconvenience, that's something else."

"What do you mean?"

"Are we in a hurry to get somewhere, and this, the rain, is slowing us down? Or, are we slowing ourselves down, and inviting the rain, because we don't want to get there just yet?"

After a minute or two, Matu pulled over to the side of the road. He turned to Sendi. "Why did you say that?"

"Well, I just want to know what our intentions are. We're sort of following your path, this mountain that intrigues you, and you are driving, I mean you are in control of our direction, our destination, and I admit we are in agreement with that decision, but, is there any hesitation on your part? Is that why we're being slowed in our progress? That's sort of my question."

Matu blinked and paused. He sighed.

"What's your feeling, Sendi? Are you slowing down? Do you want to get there later?" Rexx asked.

She cocked her head to one side. "Well, yeah, maybe, I don't really know. I'm just getting the feeling that I want to savor the small towns, villages, that we are passing through." She paused. "Maybe, I want to assimilate some of the culture along the way. Yeah, I know, we want to find our home and grow our future, but, I think, well, don't know for sure, but, I want to learn what the local people think and learn what their culture has to tell us. We need to know what that is if we want to live here."

"Well, we do have the problem, that we don't speak the language...OK, other than knowing a few words and phrases, here and there.

"Yeah, I understand, but lack of language hasn't really stopped us in the past. People are people...we got along, and even became friends with people we had few words in common with."

"So..." Matu added. "We should pause along the way, and socialize with the locals?"

She nodded. "Yeah. I think so. But, I don't have any particular guidelines on that."

Rexx suggested. "So, just play it by ear?"

She nodded. "Yeah, I guess so."

Matu agreed. "OK, I can understand that. And I agree that we should be getting to understand the local culture. We want to live here. We should acclimatize...become one with the land and its people." He nodded solemnly. "I want to have a family. I want it to be part of the native culture. I don't want to be an out-sider...one who's just come in for convenience."

A short while later Matu slowed the car to a stop.

"What's up?" Rexx asked, looking up from the laptop.

"There's a museum ahead...a war memorial."

"Is it important?"

"Yeah. I think so." He pulled the car over to the side. "I want to stop and take a look."

"OK, why?"

"Well, I guess, just because."

"Huh?"

"You see, it was a long time before I was born, but it was a very important time." He paused. "I think it might be hard to explain. This war was very important to personal freedom. It was about the oppression of those rights and needs." He paused. "And, about...genocide."

"Genocide?" Sendi whispered.

"Yes." Matu said softly. "Let's go have a look."

As they walked through the exhibits, a lot of children were running about, playing with the military equipment and taking photos of themselves. Matu just shook his head and slowly walked on.

Sendi watched him quietly, then finally asked. "What's wrong? Everybody seems to be enjoying themselves here."

He looked back at her. Paused, then spoke. "It's not about pleasure...fun...it's about the pain that was endured so that we could live without this torment. It's a reminder...don't forget."

She looked around slowly. "Oh."

Rexx also looked at the exhibits, then nodded. "Yes...the Alcaad wars..."

Sendi looked at him inquisitively. "Alcaad? I'm not sure I understand what you mean."

"Yes. What they went through, escaping the persecution on their home planet and then having to endure another war here. Pain...memory." He paused. "I hope some day we meet our friends again."

She went quiet for a moment, then. "Yes, I see." She paused. "Sorry, I almost forgot. It's interesting how time, the experience of events, and distance fogs the memory."

Matu was also quiet for an even longer time. "This is a healing place."

Cocking her head toward him. "How"

He looked at her quietly for a long moment. "Remember...then, begin to release...then, begin to heal."

She nodded quietly. "Yes...I see."

Rexx said: "It's starting to rain again."

Sendi looked up at the sky. "Yes."
They walked quietly back to the car.

Sendi opened the back door, grabbed the laptop and handed it to Rexx. "You ride up front, I want to rest for a while."

Rexx took the laptop and said. "Oh, OK." He then settled into the front seat.

As they drove off, Sendi settled in for a nap. Rexx and Matu chatted quietly for a while as they drove on.

Sendi feigned napping while deep in thought. After some time, she touched the back of the front seat. "Rexx?" She asked softly.

"Yeah?" He responded absently.

"When we first met..." She paused. "I liked you. You were fun and interesting and I was attracted."

"Yeah, and..."

"And then, when we were stuck in between time and I asked you to marry me...I think I was being desperate...panicking...you know. Sorry.

"Hey, it's OK."

She sighed deeply. "But, now..." She paused. "I think...I think I do love you. You seem to be the right person in my life...oh, I'm not saying this right.

Matu interrupted. "Should I not be listening to this conversation...it seems very personal?"

Sendi shrugged. "No, I don't think it matters...you know us...we're pretty much family, you're pretty much my brother at this point...anyway, who else do we have?"

Rexx sighed. "Sendi, I think I really do love you. I was attracted at the beginning, but, as we lived through stuff together, I realized that we belonged together. I want, really want to be with you.