

They drove without speaking for what seemed like a long time. Matu concentrated on his driving. Rexx studied the maps and occasionally advised directions. Sendi kept staring at the distant mountains.

Finally, she said. "I think I can hear them."

"Huh?" Matu said.

Rexx looked up from the laptop, glanced around and said. "What?"

"I can hear them...you're right, it is a song. A very beautiful song about life and love and, oh, I don't know how to say, but all the beautiful aspects of life...it's about wonderfulness."

Matu and Rexx exchanged a glance. Rexx asked. "What song?"

Sendi blinked and looked at them. "The mountains, of course."

"Oh." Matu said, then as an afterthought. "Sorry, I lost track...guess I've been concentrating on driving."

"Matu?" After a short pause, Sendi added. "You OK?"

"Yeah." He said absently.

"No...you're not. You're passionate about the mountains. What's wrong?"

"OK...my song...it changed slightly." He paused. "There's a melancholy note...something sad...really sad...almost...dark."

"That's not good." Rexx commented.

"No, it's not. Can you elaborate?"

Matu sighed deeply. "It hurts inside...it makes my soul want to cry." He paused. "Something's dying. I don't know what or who, but something's wrong."

Sendi went quiet for a few moments. "Yes." She said. "I think I can feel the change. There's something coming from the West."

"Do you want to change course...go somewhere else?" Rexx asked.

"No!" Matu answered emphatically. "It's calling me. I have to go there." He paused. "Maybe, I need to help...whatever...whatever's wrong. Maybe, I don't know. But, I've got to go."

"I've got you." Rexx nodded. "We'll go."

"Yes. Of course." Sendi echoed.

"What do you think is going on?" Rexx continued.

"I'm not sure. Maybe something's being attacked...or...some natural disaster...or...oh, I don't know."

"I guess we'll find out."

They all went quiet for a few minutes.

"Uh..." Sendi started. "Do you have any feelings which it might be? I mean, you seem more in touch than either of us."

"Really?!" You way outdid us in understanding what the entity was all about."

"Well, OK, but I was motivated in that direction. You're more motivated towards the mountains."

"OK, that's true." He sighed. "What I'm getting is an attack of some sort." A pause. "And, I've got to go defend." Another brief pause. "It's like it's my homeland and I've got to help. Maybe it is. Maybe it's where I'm going to live."

"Where we're all going to live." Emphasized Rexx.

Matu nodded. "Yes."

"Our home." Sendi added.

Matu sighed and nodded. "Yes...our home."

"Any idea what we have to do?" Rexx asked.

Matu thought for a moment. "No. Don't know if it's physical defense...or verbal...like talking down propaganda...or what...don't know. I just have the feeling that I have to be there to help...in any way I can."

"I understand." Sendi said. "We didn't know what to do against the entity either, but we overcame that. We'll do it again. Because we know we could and now we can."

Matu and Rexx exchanged a glance and nodded. "Yes, we can." Matu said softly.

After several minutes, Sendi said. "How long?"

"Huh?" Matu replied.

"How long 'til we're there?"

"Driving time...hours, I'd say." Rexx volunteered from the back seat. "It's pretty straight forward from here. But, once we start climbing...well, there's a lot of switchbacks and that can slow things down. Plus, the road narrows going through smaller towns."

Matu sighed. "And, we don't know where in those mountains our destiny lies. Maybe...even...beyond them."

"True."

"Any feelings?" Sendi asked.

Matu thought for a moment. "I get the feeling that's there's a valley between hills that we are heading towards...don't know for sure...just a feeling."

"Hmm, I think I see it, too. Foothills, sort of a valley, a river running through it...something like that?"

"That sounds like a nice place." Rexx said.

"Uh, huh." She added.

After a while she added. "I wish I felt like I belonged."

"What do you mean?" Rexx asked.

"This sounds like a beautiful place. I love it. It feels like home. But, I don't feel like I belong here."

"Why?"

"That's just it...I don't know. I don't know where I belong. In my old life, things just sort of fell in...I just did what presented itself and it felt right at the time. The question of belonging never came up." She paused. "But, now, here...I just have this weird feeling like I haven't done something that I need to do to belong. Does that make any sense?"

Matu nodded his head. "Yeah. I can relate to that. We've got this new life...out of the blue...which none of us could ever have imagined. It's kind of way beyond culture shock. And, yet, we're not shocked at all. The culture is just the same old human way of life. The fact that we are in a new and different life hasn't really bothered us."

"I guess it's like new shoes. You've got to wear them a while until they feel comfortable." Rexx smirked.

Sendi turned and glared at him, paused, and then nodded. "Yes. You're right." She sighed. "OK. We're trying to learn the language...slowly...agonizingly slowly, it seems...but trying...but, that doesn't help with the fitting in." She paused a moment. "How do we, how will we fit in? We're strangers here. We're looking to settle in a small remote village and become

locals. We can't just proclaim that we are here to stay...can we? How would, or could, we do that?"

"Well, we are who we are." Rex said. "What that means...well, it's up to how they see us. All we can do is be ourselves and hope that what we are is acceptable to the people we want to live among."

"But, I still have the feeling that there is something that I need to do."

"Beyond learning the language?

"Yes." She looked solemnly. "I don't know. It's not about loving the land...not about liking the people...not about local culture...learning to farm and all of that...it's about learning about how to touch these people...idea to idea...heart to heart...soul to soul."

Matu smiled. "Yes. That's what we have to do...every day...day to day...now, and from now on."

"Slow." Rexx added. "Slow...bit by bit...eventually we will get there."

"I hope." Sendi said.

Matu suddenly veered off the main road and slowly turned down a dirt trail.

"What's up?" Rexx asked.

"Don't know."

"What?"

"Something's calling me...something's down here that I need to see...do...something."

Rexx glanced at Sendi, who shrugged.

"What do you feel?" She ventured.

"I...I think I hear a voice calling me...not sure what it's saying...just that I need to answer."

"What kind of voice...I know that's not a good question, but, is it asking, pleading, desperate...you know what I mean...like, what's the tone, uh, urgency, in the voice?"

He hesitated briefly. "Soft...sad...lonely...longing for home...not really sure, but I feel I need to find the caller and do something...I don't know...something...maybe, to help...maybe...I hope."

He drove slowly down the trek, then pulled over near the edge of the river and stopped. Matu got out of the car and walked toward the water. He stopped and stood staring out at the water.

Rexx and Sendi watched quietly from where the car stopped. "Any thoughts?" He asked. She shook her head.

Matu stooped and scuffed the dirt with his hand. He dug down and came up with a small metallic plate. He stood and stared at it. Rexx and Sendi approached.

"What is it?" Rexx asked.

"Not sure...I think it's a military identification tag." He showed it to them. "Sendi, can you read it?"

"No, it's pretty corroded...I can't make out the letters."

"Then it must be old." He shrugged and poked a little more in the dirt. "There's some bits of uniform here and some old bones...a lost soldier, I guess." He went quiet. Then, he started to gather some stones around the site. Rexx and Sendi helped. When they finished, Matu said. "I don't know who we could tell, but, at least, it's a small memorial." He laid the tag on top of the mound. "Maybe someone will find this and know who to notify." They all stood in quiet for a moment.