

50 cekklicks or roughly 30 Terra minutes later, Aldin had worked his way back down to the floor. Dr. Hanter insisted on checking his arm, but found Aldin hadn't jarred anything loose. He sat back on his cushion. Mara was back on her cushion, having returned from the restroom to cry some more and wash her muzzle.

The remnants of Aldin's lab coat had been delivered. He spread it out in front of him. He was amazed any of it had survived. It was shredded and singed. Much to his delight, the side button pocket had survived along with its contents. He pulled out a silver-color metal disk a little smaller than the diameter of his head. Using both paws, he handed it to Mara to look at.

"Terra human credit money. They still use fiz-i-kal money. This coin not very popular. Humans prefer," Aldin shook his head not knowing the word he needed, "pressed wood fiber, though metal last a lot longer. This given to me as gift from human friend. I keep as shiny luck piece, though a little heavy for me to carry around. Must have worked or maybe I would have died in explosion instead of land here." He forced a giggle(chitter).

"On one side, you will see a large predator bird landing on Terra moon, symbolizing that humans have done so about 50 years ago. Small circle above left of bird is Terra. Bird big enough to crush me in one foot." He shuddered. "Top words are English writing for name of human country it iz for and bottom the amount disk iz worth, one dollar, their basic money unit. On the other side iz a head of a human. Above human's head iz English writing for 'liberty', mean like free. Below head iz number date system when coin made. Date system is religion-based. Some humans believe Creator Son come to Terra try and save them from warring ways. According to those who believe, humans kill Creator Son, but regret it and now they worship Son just like Creator. Date system lists year Zee-ro as year Son come to Terra. Year this coin made same year my grandfather was born wild cousin, year one-thousand, nine-hunnred, seventy-nine, thirty-eight years ago Terra time. So, iz special to me."

All four of them gazed at both sides of the coin. It was a strange looking creature. The bird looked similar to one in their world. They handed it back to Aldin, who tucked it back in his tattered lab coat pocket as they watched.

"Well, it not like I have anywhere else to put it."

"So, before our break," Mara chimed in, "where were we?"

"You had asked me how I learn so fast. It because I still have most of the thoughts of a wild cousin up here," he tapped his head with his tail tip. "And then I got side tracked and hurt you up here," he pointed at her head with his tail. "I'm sorry about that. When we hugged, I sniffed you so I could force myself up here," he pointed to his head with his tail tip, "to know you iz 'friend' and not predator." He tapped a foot on the floor. "See, no print, not as scared as before. Work a bit. Anyway, you asked me how I learn so fast. Terra wild squirrels live in an area," he

paused, "I think you wood call ter-tor-E. I need to convert length units if you want to know size of it."

Mara shook her head in the negative. "Not necessary." Aldin paused for Orlan to explain necessary. Orlan used 'not need' in (chitter)speak. Aldin nodded.

"Well, they live in this small ter-tor-E all their lives. Ter-tor-Es of other squirrels intersect theirs. A squirrel must learn and remember where everything iz in their ter-tor-E. Every rock, tree, water source, when/where which plants and trees produce food. If something look out of place, it might be predator. Notice that little difference may mean live 'nother day.

"Where I live, winter can last 5 to 6," he paused again, "sorry, your months are not same length. We have twelve to your ten. Humans measure them 30 to 31 days each compared to your 35, so easier to say close to half the year. So, squirrels need to gather a LOT of food to store for the winter. Up here," he tapped his head with his tail tip, "they remember were they've store nearly every tree nut they've gathered and hidden for the winter months. They must in order to live through winter. That is several THOUSAND tree nuts and seeds. And other animals including other squirrels will steal the food if they see where you hide. So, you must be tricky and fool them. Make them look one way while you hide nut elsewhere." He pulled his Terra dollar out from under his pillow as they stared at him, the dollar, and the coat.

"You record this. Some who watch will see what I did, but you did not." He tucked it away again and showed them it really was in the lab coat this time. "So, if I study my surroundings, I remember them. Wild squirrel thoughts say I must do so to survive. If you go up to the large flat panel and look on the back on the left side, the connecting wires top to bottom are red, blue, yellow, blue, green and the yellow one iz not pushed in as far as the others."

Orlan walked over and confirmed what Aldin had said.

"If I take that same part of my mind and instead concentrate on listening to Common and learn the meaning of those words, I can treat them like those nuts and remember them. Store them my 'virtual' ter-tor-E so to say in same place as English word. It is one of the reasons, I sometimes have to pause and think. I have to find the right nut. And if I talk funny it iz 'cause sentence structure not same between Common and English." He drooped his tail. "Iz also why I so scared of you at first, Chancellor as the only English reference I had was a Terra predator."

Mara shook her head in disbelief. "That's incredible."

Aldin shrugged. "So, now you know a little about my world and how I learn fast 'cause how I think up here," again he pointed to his head with his tail. "But that still leaves what happens to me now."

“That’ll be up to parliament. Also, how do we explain you to the general population? Would they believe this parallel universe theory?” She paused a moment, “I think that’s the word you were looking for instead of ‘guess’. A theory is a way to pose a question about something you don’t know and then try to prove or disprove it.”

“Yes, that the word then.”

“Okay. So, parliament will need to decide whether or not we tell the truth. Would it cause a panic when people learn there are other worlds out there? Especially, if we tell them about your humans,” she shuddered, “and if not, then what do we tell them? If we don’t tell them anything, you’re stuck here,” she waved about the room.

“You’ve got a bigger problem, Chancellor,” Orlan interjected. He pulled-up parliamentary rules on the large flat panel.

Mara read through the rules that no one in the current session had had time to thoroughly review yet. She sagged her shoulders a bit. “I had less than two weeks left,” she mumbled.

“You’ll have to explain,” Aldin replied. “I haven’t found time to learn written Common yet. Thought more im-por-tunt to learn speak Common. Might be faster for you to explain then for me to use earpiece and ask blind reader to read.”

“In times of emergency, all sessions of parliament will be made available for live viewing to all.” Mara read aloud and sagged her shoulders some more. “Those who chose to do so, have already been watching us. I suspect the numbers will grow when I present this interview tomorrow. And I suspect the numbers will continue to grow when we call you before the parliament.”

“Steamy pile tame canine scat we step in,” Aldin muttered as the others looked at him. He drooped his tail. “Sorry, not sure what you use for cuss words. Need cuss words for this. That translation of one from English. Can you delay showing them our discussion today?”

Mara shook her head in the negative. “I’d love to, but they know I’m here today. We’re to meet and discuss tomorrow. You can be called in any time after that.”

“A couple more days would help me prepare and answer better. Would they be willing to wait?”

“I don’t know,” she drifted off in thought briefly. “However, I’m Chancellor. I’m going to wield the power they gave me. They’ll have to wait. I’ll make sure you have at least those two days.”

Aldin nodded and turned to the other three. “I owe you so much already. I need a little more help. Please.”