

Small World

Chapter 1: The Passing of a Legend

Forty Ferren years later...

{A furry bipedal rodent-like figure with large, round ears and a long bushy tail was running frantically in a random direction amongst a crowd of other panicked figures of similar appearance. However, seeing another figure of much taller stature and lacking a tail or large ears suddenly standing in front of it, the rodent creature instantly froze in fear. Moments later, the taller, ominous looking figure drew and aimed a metallic device that consisted of a handle connected diagonally to a long, narrow, hollow cylinder at the smaller creature. Recognizing the object, the rodent figure closed its eyes tightly shut, and braced itself for its inevitable fate.}

'BANG!'

A figure awoke with a start. Upon hearing the familiar beeping noise of his inter-link transceiver, the figure, who was another grey furred Ferren, only with cream coloured fur on the tips of his feet and forepaws in addition to his tail-end, reached for a pair of rectangular lensed, frameless glasses on the desk beside his bed, only to accidentally knock them onto the floor, and hear them crack on impact. Frustrated, the male Ferren climbed out of bed, and bent down to pick up the now slightly damaged eyewear, before blowing the dust off them, and fitting them onto his face. After letting out a slightly exasperated sigh, the grey and cream furred Ferren finally picked up the small inter-link device, depressed a button on it, and spoke into its receiver, "Doctor David Gray, here. May I ask what the issue is?"

"Doctor Gray? It's about your granduncle..." a female voice replied somewhat sombrely through the device's speaker from the other end. "I'm afraid there may not be much time... You might want to get down here, and hurry..."

A short time later, David, now clad in a green and blue horizontally striped top in addition to his cracked lensed glasses, stepped off what looked something like an above ground subway car made of a durable material similar in appearance to plastic, and began quickly scurrying out into a bustling city environment filled with hundreds of other Ferren civilians of all different sizes and fur colours, some wearing articles of clothing

and some not. After a few minutes of brisk walking, the grey furred scientist came to a large, white, dome shaped building which appeared to be made from a similar material to the rail car. Briefly checking the sign above the front entrance, which read in one of the common Ferren text forms '*Dos Mosina District Medical Center*', David quickly pushed upon the door, and made his way inside.

As soon as he reached the designated floor, a blue and white furred female Ferren in a pale green nurse's gown instantly pointed David in the direction of one of the ward rooms. Upon entering the room, and seeing a familiar elderly and sickly looking male Ferren with grey fur that was now starting to fall out in patches lying in a hospital bed, hooked up to a life support system, David quickly ran up to the patient's bedside, and whispered sorrowfully, "Uncle Anthony..."

After a moment, the frail old Ferren, Anthony, slowly turned his head towards his visitor, and asked weakly, "David...? Is that you...?"

"Yes uncle. It's me." David affirmed reassuringly, clutching his elder relative's paw in his.

At that moment, Anthony seemed to notice something, and commented in a raspy, laboured voice, "David... You broke your glasses..."

"Oh, don't worry about that, uncle. It's nothing a trip to the lens shop won't fix," David dismissed with a small smile.

"Nonsense. Take mine," Anthony insisted, reaching over to the tray beside his bed to grab hold of a pair of round lensed, black framed glasses, and handing them to his grandnephew.

"Uncle, I can't take these..." David refused, gently placing the glasses back in his granduncle's frail paw. "You've had them since you were a youth..."

"Take them," Anthony continued to persist, shoving the antique eyewear back towards David and chortling softly. "It's not like I'll be needing them for much longer, anyway..."

"Don't talk like that, uncle..." David pleaded, placing Anthony's glasses back down on the tray. "The doctors said... that your condition was uncertain... That you might pull through... for a little while longer, at least..."

After a brief pause, Anthony decided to change the subject, "So... tomorrow's the big day, isn't it...?"

"Yes. Yes it is," David nodded quickly with a slight smile.

"*'International First Contact Day'*, or whatever the heck that politician at the time called it," Anthony chuckled weakly, before letting out a couple of loud, hoarse coughs. "David... tomorrow is going to be your big day... I've already had my fair share of mine... I've taught you everything I know, and then some... The people of this world and possibly even another are going to look to you to inspire them, now... I want you to give it the very best you can... I want you to make me proud... Are you up to the challenge?"

"Yes uncle... I promise... I won't fail you...!" David assured determinedly, tears beginning to moisten the fur below his eyes.

"Thank you, David... I know I can count on you..." Anthony wheezed, managing a weak smile. "And remember... you are... who you choose to be... Don't let anyone... ever... tell you any different..." After letting out one last, long breath, the famous Ferren scientist, Professor Anthony Gray, finally fell limp on his death bed, the beeping noise from the life support machine confirming the diagnosis.

"I won't fail you, uncle... I promise you... I won't fail..." David cried in sombre resolve, clutching his deceased relative's paw tightly in his own for one last time.