

Small World

Chapter 9: Illegal Aliens

A few kilometers outside the Area Unknown military base...

After what seemed like an eternity, the jet engine propelled rail car finally slowed to a stop in the middle of a grassy field. After taking a moment to recompose himself from death-defying experience, Jack slowly turned towards David, and muttered flatly, "Remind me never to follow any of your '*bright ideas*' again..."

Ignoring Jack's remark, David unbuckled his safety harness, and stepped down off of the vehicle to take a thorough look at his surroundings. Noticing the sun was beginning to set in the horizon, as well as a large collection of small buildings a short distance away in the opposite direction from which they had come, the scientist mentioned, "It's starting to get dark. The days are shorter here than on my home world." Pointing towards the buildings, he continued, "There appears to be a small settlement of some kind a short distance that way. If we lay low, we may be able to hide out there for the night."

"Great, more advice from the space rat..." Jack huffed sarcastically, rolling his eyes. "Two talking furry animals from outer space running around in a suburban neighbourhood. I suppose if any of the residents spot us, we'll just get down on all fours and knock over some garbage cans so they'll think we're raccoons, right?"

"Raccoons? I don't-" David began to inquire confusedly, only to be interrupted by his comrade.

"Never mind. Let's just get going..." With an exasperated sigh, Jack began slowly walking towards the residential area in the distance, followed closely behind by David.

Upon reaching the suburb, and noticing the dead silence in the streets all around him, David commented, "I don't get it. This is a residential area, right? Shouldn't there be some people around?"

Coming to a conclusion of his own, Jack replied, "That's because it's not a real residential area. This is a military nuclear test facility." Seeing the alarmed look appearing on David's face, Jack assured with a light chuckle, "Relax, kid. They haven't

been testing nukes in this area for over seventy years. I highly doubt they'll start again now. Besides, this may work to our advantage. All the background radiation left over from those tests in the fifties will scramble any long range scanning devices. Those troops will have to search each house individually to find us. We'll probably be safe here for the night."

"And... what happens if and when they do find us?" David asked concernedly. "And even if they don't, where are we going to go afterwards? It's not like we can just find a nice place to settle down anywhere on this planet and try to live normal lives..."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," Jack said reassuringly. "For now, let's just pick a house to crash in for the night. Preferably one of the more inconspicuous ones."

With that, the pair began their search in the eerie abandoned military training suburb for a suitable house to hide out in for the night.

A few minutes later, the two fugitives came to a stop in front of a small, desolated house. The two story abode was covered in a thick growth of vines, the burgundy brick walls were significantly cracked, and many of the windows were shattered. Observing the dilapidated condition of the building for a moment, Jack commented flatly, "Well, this is an inconspicuous house if I've ever seen one."

"It'll do. Come on." David decided slightly unenthusiastically, before slowly making his way towards the partially open front door, with Jack following suit soon after.

As soon as he and Jack entered the house, David began carefully sweeping aside some of the broken glass and other debris on the floor with his tail to ensure that it wouldn't be accidentally stepped on. As the grey furred Ferren scientist busied himself with this task, Jack slowly walked over to a tall mirror mounted to the wall at floor level in one of the bedrooms. In the mirror the ex-commando saw the reflection of a roughly four foot tall, orange-brown furred mouse-like creature, with brown coloured fur on the ends of his feet, forepaws, and three foot long fluffy tail. In addition to this, the creature had a pair of large, blue eyes, a small black nose, a small cat-like mouth, and two large, curved ears that came to points at their ends, with dark charcoal coloured fur covering all but the inner cavities. After just staring in silence at this image for a moment, Jack spoke up blankly, "This is really happening, isn't it?"

Turning his attention from his cleaning job to look towards his comrade, David responded with a hint of bitterness in his tone, "At least you're still in familiar territory."

Look at me. I'm stranded on an alien world, with no idea how to get home, or if anyone I know is even still alive, and now I'm a fugitive, too."

"I guess that makes us illegal aliens, then," Jack chuckled, managing a small, lopsided smile.

"Illegal aliens? What does tha-" David began to question, only to be cut off by Jack once again.

"Never mind. Let's just find a couple of beds and get ready to pack it in for the night." Brushing the dust off his fur, Agent Spader quickly made his way up the stairs to the second level of the house in search of a suitable bed to sleep in.

Later that night, after they had found a bedroom containing two separate, small beds, David and Jack were lying under the covers of each bed, trying to get comfortable. After several minutes of tossing and turning, with still no success in falling asleep, David rolled over towards Jack's bed, and whispered quietly, "Hey, Jack... You still awake?"

"Yes..." Jack groaned tiredly in response, not bothering to turn over to face his comrade. "What is it?"

Pausing for a moment, David began, "When my granduncle first discovered the radio and television broadcasts from your planet, my people sent out a transmission of our own in response to it. By our estimates, that signal should have reached this world roughly twenty-four of your Earth years ago... I was just wondering... was that message ever picked up? What ever happened to it? Do you even know?"

"Well," Jack began to respond, "twenty-four years ago, in the summer of twenty-fourteen, some fat guy in his garage claimed he had made contact with aliens. Less than a day afterwards, the guy's house was swarming with CIA agents like flies on a fresh pile of manure. The next day, all the agents cleaned the house out, the government told the media it was a hoax, and the fat guy was never seen or heard from again.

"But a few years later, rumours started going around that the government was hiding something big from the public. Before you know it, people are going around with picket signs and tin foil hats yelling '*E.T. walks among us!*'"

"The authorities did eventually manage to quiet the commotion down a little bit. But then, a little under a year ago, some suspicious info leaked out about a massive black

ops project going down somewhere in Nevada. So, that's when my organization began an operation to uncover what kind of dirty secrets this country's government has been keeping. That's why I was sent to infiltrate that military base."

After another brief moment of silence, David asked, "...Jack? Do you have any family? You know, people who might miss you if you suddenly weren't around for them anymore?"

Hesitating for a moment, Jack replied, "...No, not really. The only close family I ever really had were my parents... and they... died quite a long time ago."

"I'm... I'm sorry..." David sympathized. "My granduncle died the day before those human invaders abducted me. He was... someone I really looked up to all my life."

Another few moments later, Jack asked, "What about you? Do you have anyone who might worried about you back home?"

"Well, I don't have a spouse or any kids," David began, "but I do have a brother and two sisters, as well as a slew of cousins and other relatives. All of them are extremely bright, and are at the top of their current fields. Maybe, if we ever get out of this mess alive, you can come back with me to Ferrina, and I can introduce you to some of them."

Jack let out a quiet, lighthearted chuckle. "Maybe. It's not like there's anything left for me on this rock, anyway." Yawning tiredly, he then suggested, "We should probably try and get some sleep. We need to get on the move again first thing in the morning."

"Right," David agreed. "Goodnight, Jack..."

"Night, kid..."

After another few more minutes, the pair slowly drifted off to sleep.