

Small World

Chapter 10: A Suburban Getaway

The next morning...

David awoke to a loud '*kra-smash!*' sound echoing in the distance. Soon hearing familiar sounding, slightly muffled voices accompanying the noise, Doctor Gray instantly sprung up from his bed, and began to exclaim in alarm, "They're he-!" However, the Ferren scientist was suddenly silenced by a brown furry paw clasp over his mouth.

David quickly turned to see Jack crouching next to him, large round ears twitching attentively. After a moment, the former human commando whispered, "They're close... I'd say roughly two or three blocks away... We need to get moving..."

"But how are we going to escape? It's not like we can just outrun them..." David asked quietly as soon as the paw was lowered from his face.

"You just leave that to me." Jack replied, as he crept over to a nearby small glass window in the room, which just happened to still be intact. Carefully sliding the frame of the window open, Jack nimbly climbed up through the opening and hopped down to the ground outside.

Seeing no other alternative, David quickly scurried over to the window, and crawled his way out after his reckless comrade.

Outside, the two rodent-like creatures discreetly made their way over to a nearby, smaller house-shaped structure. Following Jack into the building through a partially open door in the side, David suddenly skidded to a stop, eyes wide in amazement at what he saw. Sitting before him inside the otherwise empty abode was a large, dark red panted metal vehicle with four wheels, a black rubber tire on each one. The fully enclosed cockpit in the center housed two padded seats in the front and three in the back designed for fully grown humans, had a control board in front complete with large a circular shaped handle on the left side, and was surrounded on all sides by glass windows. Recognizing the vehicle, David gasped, "Is that an actual automobile?!"

"What, you don't have cars on your planet?" Jack quipped sarcastically.

"Well, no..." David answered somewhat sheepishly, "At least, not ones for driving in the urban areas. You see, on Ferrina, ninety-five percent of our land based transit is in the form of what you might call trains, and-"

"Look kid," Jack interrupted, as he withdrew a small, jagged, pointy tool from his belt and stuck it into the key hole on the front-left side door of the car, "I'm sure you have a lot of interesting things to tell me about your home planet, but right now let's focus on getting some distance between us and that search party." After wiggling the tool around in the keyhole for a moment, a soft '*click*' sound was heard, and the door swung open. "They often use these cars for high speed chase training exercises. This model is almost half a century old, so it shouldn't be too hard to hotwire."

"Um, Jack... there's just one problem..." David pointed out awkwardly, "How are we going to drive it?"

After kicking down the door of one of the thousands of houses in the military training suburb, half a dozen black clad gas mask wearing troopers stormed inside. "Okay, guys, standard procedure," one of the troopers instructed with a hint of weariness in his slightly muffled tone. "Search every room, and report back to me if you find anything. We just have about two hundred houses left to go..."

All of a sudden, a loud '*kra-SMASH!!*' sound was heard, followed by the rev of an engine and the squealing of tires.

"Lieutenant, they're trying to escape in a nineteen ninety-four Corolla!" another trooper reported from just outside the door.

"What?!" the first trooper, the lieutenant, demanded in shock.

"Brake!"

"Which one's the brake?!"

"Left is the brake, right is the gas!"

Inside the car, David was squeezed down below the driver's seat, feet on both the pedals, while Jack stood tiptoe atop the seat with both paws on the steering wheel, his head barely clearing the dashboard. As the car skidded to a stop just a couple meters

short of a large tree at the end of one of the lawns, Jack shifted the gear stick into the reverse position, and shouted, "Punch it!"

"Punch what?!" David asked.

"The gas!" Jack barked.

Almost immediately after hearing the news of the stolen vehicle from their comrade, all five of the other troopers rushed back out of the house and onto the street to investigate. Seeing the vehicle in question several dozen meters down the road suddenly begin to back up at high speeds directly towards them, the lieutenant exclaimed in alarm, "INCOMING!!"

Just as the six troopers dove out of the way of the rapidly approaching threat in every which direction, the car drove past the squadron, barely missing one of the lieutenant's legs with the rear-left tire. Seconds later, the car sped forward past the troops once again down the empty street. As soon as he returned to his feet and regained his bearings, the lieutenant ordered, "Open fire!"

Hearing a familiar '*Rat-tat-tat!*' sound coming from behind, accompanied by the occasional '*Pang!*' sound of metal hitting metal, David yelled in alarm, "They're firing at us!"

"Don't worry about it! Just keep your foot on that gas pedal!" Jack attempted to reassure.

"But what if the gas tank explodes?!" David asked worriedly.

"What have I told you about believing everything you see in movies?!" Jack scolded.

As the dark red coloured car turned around the corner at the end of the street and out of sight, one of the troopers turned to the lieutenant, and asked urgently, "Shouldn't we go after them?"

"It's too late, Corporal. They're already beyond the boundaries of the base," the lieutenant responded bleakly. "If we were to send a military task force after them now,

the public might be alerted. Agent Jefferson wanted this to be a clean apprehension with no loose ends."

"So, what do we do now?" the corporal asked.

"We report back to Agent Jefferson..." the lieutenant replied with a hint of dread in his tone. "The targets have escaped... again..."

As the vintage sedan speed away from the military base down a long road with desolate desert landscape stretching out on either side, Jack informed in a reassuring tone, "We're beyond the military base boundaries. I highly doubt they'll be able to continue the pursuit now. Not without raising the attention of the public."

"So what's our next step, then?" David inquired.

"Well first off," Jack began, "we need to unlock whatever secrets the flash drive I'm carrying holds. If we do that, we may just even be able to figure out how you ended up on this planet, and how to get you back home. In order to do that, however, we need to decode the encrypted files. And in order to do that, we need a computer. One in a place where we can relatively easily blend in without attracting too much attention."

"What place did you have in mind?" David asked.

"David, we're going to the city where anything can happen."