

Small World

Chapter 15: Mouse Trap

On route to Houston, Texas...

As the bright-pink Volkswagen Beetle drove down the highway at high speeds towards the city of Houston, David began explaining his theory, "First of all, after having some time to observe your world's current level of technological advancement, it seemed highly unlikely that your species alone would have the resources to construct the spacecraft that intercepted my home world."

"So... you're saying those '*men in black*' had some sort of outside help from more aliens? Like, other than the giant space-mouse variety?" Jack inquired with a raised eyebrow.

"That's my theory, at least," David nodded, "When I was scrolling through the encoded files, I noticed one diagram that unmistakably resembled the craft that invaded Ferrina. But many elements of the design looked to be far beyond the capacity of any organization native to either Ferrina or Earth."

After a moment, Jack asked, "But that still leaves the question... What's so significant about Houston?"

"Well, you see..." David began, only to be interrupted by the sound of wailing sirens from close behind.

"Oh, great..." Jade muttered in exasperation as she peered into her rear-view mirror, to see a blue and white car with flashing blue and red lights mounted on the roof tailing her vehicle. After carefully pulling her car over to a stop on the side of the road, Jade turned to her two passengers, and instructed quietly, "Okay, guys, listen carefully. I need you to stay absolutely still for a couple of minutes. Don't move an inch, even to blink, until I give the all-clear. Got it?"

The two furry passengers nodded silently in agreement.

Rolling down her window, Jade watched as a tall, white-skinned man clad in a light-blue top; black pants; and large, beige, round-brimmed hat stepped out of his own vehicle and made his way over to hers. As soon as he reached the pink car, the man

bent down to the driver-side window, and requested calmly in a slight southern drawl, "License and registration, please."

Jade promptly reached into a pink bag that was resting between her and the passenger seat, withdrew from it a small black booklet containing a card with her picture on it, and handed it to the man.

Taking the booklet from the young woman to examine it for a moment, the man inquired, "You do know the speed limit is seventy here, right? Do you have any idea how fast you were going?"

"Um... ninety...?" Jade responded with a sheepish grin and innocent shrug.

The man let out a small sigh as he nonchalantly withdrew a small black device from his belt and began typing commands into a keypad on it. Taking a glance into the other seats in the car, where sat the motionless Jack and David, the man asked with a raised eyebrow, "Who're your little friends here?"

"Oh, those? Those are just a couple of plushies I bought at Space Con earlier today," Jade replied, straining to keep the nervousness out of her tone.

"Space Con, huh? Is there a reason your stuffed animals need to wear seatbelts?" the man inquired with a chuckle and an amused smirk.

"Well... I suppose you could say I just like to treat my toys with respect," Jade answered with a slightly nervous smile.

A brief moment later, a small paper slip was slowly fed out the bottom of the man's device. Tearing off the slip and handing it to Jade, the man said, "Let this be a little warning. Make sure it's paid off by the end of the month. Drive safe now." After lightly patting his hand on the roof of the car a couple of times, the man casually strolled off back towards his own vehicle.

On the signalling gesture from Jade, David and Jack both let out a long sigh of relief. "Why is it that traffic cops in the states always like to target the Canadians?" Jack muttered sarcastically.

Turning to Jade, David then asked, "How much farther is it to Houston?"

"Well, if we stay below the speed limit the rest of the way, I'd guess about an eighteen hour drive," Jade responded casually.

Glancing out the window, to see the sun beginning to set in the horizon, David remarked, "It's going to be dark out soon. We should find a place to rest for the night before we make the rest of that long trip."

"I think there's a motel just ten miles ahead of here," Jade mentioned.

"Sounds good to me," David agreed, before pointing his finger forward, and exclaiming, "Engage!" However, seeing the unamused glares both Jack and Jade cast him at that moment, the nerdy Ferren asked with a sheepish grin, "What?"

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston...

A man with pale skin, messy white hair, and clad in a long white lab coat was sitting at a workstation in a large laboratory. As he tinkered with a small pile of high-tech machine parts of some sort on the desk with a devious grin on his face, the man heard a repeating, slightly robotic-sounding cackling noise. Reaching into one of his lab-coat pockets, the man retrieved from it a small, black, rectangular device. Pressing his thumb down on the device's screen, ending the cackling noise, the man greeted into it in a thick German accent, "Vhy hello, Mishter Jeffershon. Vhat may I do for you?"

"Doctor Stein," the cold, calculating voice of Agent Jefferson began through the device's speaker, "I have an important task for you. Three individuals; a pair of those interstellar vermin and a girl who looks to be in her late teens; may have uncovered our plans. At last report, they were heading your way in a pink Volkswagen Beetle. I need you to intercept and neutralize them by any means necessary before they can interfere with our operations any further."

"Vhy, no problem, Mishter Jeffershon! Conshider zem neutralized!" Doctor Stein assured confidently. "Az shoon az zey arrive, zey shall be, as you shay, trapped like mishe in a cage!" With a maniacal cackle, the German-accented scientist thumbed the device's screen once again to end the call.