

Small World

Chapter 16: A Starry Night

Somewhere in the Nevada Desert...

After a few more minutes of driving on the desert highway, the trio of fugitives came to a small, one story building with a large sign labeled '*Motel*' in bold, Earth English lettering above one of the several doors facing the road. Pulling her pink car into one of the lanes in the paved lot marked on either side by painted yellow lines, Jade turned to her two furry passengers, and instructed calmly, "Now, remember the routine, guys. You're plushies that I bought at Space Con. So not a twitch until I give the all clear. Got it?"

With simultaneous affirming nods, David and Jack relaxed their postures, falling limp in their seats.

With that, Jade got out of the car and made her way towards the door of the building that was positioned directly below the sign. A few minutes later, the two Ferrens watched in still silence as the human girl re-exited the building, and began walking back towards the car. Opening the vehicle's back-right side door, the girl picked up David, Jack and her laptop. Re-closing and locking the car door, Jade carried her two companions and the laptop towards another one of the doors to the building, which had the number '12' inscribed in Earth English numerals above it. The girl then opened the door with a small metal key and entered the room inside.

As soon as Jade re-closed and locked the door behind her, David and Jack for the second time that evening both breathed out a long sigh of relief. "Who knew just sitting still and pretending to be a ragdoll for twenty minutes could be so hard...?" David complained tiredly.

Hopping down out of Jade's arms onto the floor, Jack scanned his eyes over the sparsely furnished room, before remarking, "Only one bed? What kind of motel room has only one bed?"

Following suit after Jack, David scurried over to the small bed in the far corner of the room, and began to bounce on it a couple of times. "Well, at least it's comfortable," the Ferren scientist commented, shrugging.

"You two go ahead and make yourselves comfortable. I'm going to have a quick shower. It's been a long day," Jade informed with a tired yawn, before stepping into the small in-suite washroom.

As he climbed his way up on top of the single bed, Jack couldn't help but watch from the corner of his eye as Jade began slowly stripping off her top.

Quickly seeming to notice this, the girl promptly slammed the bathroom door shut and turned the knob to the locked position.

Later that night, David was staring out of the motel-room window at the starry night sky in silence. Noticing this, Jack rolled over in the small bed to face him, and asked quietly, "Can't sleep, kid?"

Turning his attention from the window for a brief moment, David murmured, "Oh, yeah... It's just...ever since I was young, my granduncle and I would stargaze at night, trying to see if we could spot this planet's star in the sky. And now, here I am, on that very planet, trying to find my own home-world's star..."

"Hey, we'll get you back there, kid. I promise," Jack assured calmly, as he crawled out of the bed to stand next to his grey-furred friend.

"Don't make promises you can't keep, Jack," David lectured, flashing his comrade a small, weak smile.

After a long moment of uncomfortable silence, Jack decided to change the subject. "So what do you people do for fun on your home planet, anyway?"

"Well, first off," David began, "ever since we first discovered those transmissions from your planet, our people have been trying to reproduce a lot of things we've seen your people do over the last several years. We've even mounted expeditions to our planet's two moons, and in recent years we've begun working on missions to other nearby planets in our solar system. Funny, a lot of us really expected your people would have already explored and colonized half your system by now. I mean, without any help from other aliens, of course."

"Yeah..." Jack snickered, "humans for the most part did sort of lose interest in the whole *space exploration* thing after the seventies. Most of us would rather play with our smart phones and MP3 players now than learn about the universe."

"Also," David continued, "most countries on Ferrina have a much lower crime rate than here. As you might have guessed from back in that military base, Ferrens never really use guns as you know them. We prefer to use nonlethal methods to apprehend criminals."

"You mean like tasers and pepper spray?" Jack inquired.

"Something like that, yes," David nodded. "In the past several years we've made great strides in stun weapon technology." After a brief pause, the grey-furred Ferren added, "...We...do have a few terrorist organizations, though..."

"Oh...? What...kind of terrorist organizations...?" Jack inquired, a hint of unease creeping into his tone.

"Well...some very...*isolationist* Ferrens. Ones that want to go back to the way things were before all of this *Earth* hype started," David responded. Turning away from the window once again, and seeing his comrade's head lowered in silent sorrow, he asked concernedly, "Is something wrong, Jack?"

"Oh, nothing...it's just..." Jack muttered, "Remember when I told you that my parents died a long time ago? Well, I never really told how they did..." Letting out a long sigh, the former commando began, "One day, when I was a kid, my family and I went on a trip to New York City. It was just cruel irony it seems that on that very same day, a terrorist attack was mounted which destroyed a couple of major landmarks in the city. My parents...were in one of those buildings when it collapsed..."

"I...I see..." David whispered, looking down at the floor.

"Ever since that day, though, I vowed to myself to devote my life to avenging my parents' death, and help prevent anyone else having to go through the same pain I did. That's why I signed up for Canadian Secret Service." Chuckling, he added, "I guess that kind of makes me a bit like Batman, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, I suppose it does," David agreed with a warm smile.

"*I'm Batman!*" Jack then bellowed in a deep, forcefully gruff voice.

After a brief pause, the two Ferrens erupted in lighthearted laughter.

Just then, Jade's voice was heard mumbling quietly from the bed, "Nyan Cat...why are you eating my pizza...? That's my pizza... Go get your own pizza..."

Another short moment of awkward silence ensued, before Jack finally suggested, "Um...maybe we should try and get some sleep."

"That would probably be a good idea," David agreed, as he and Jack slowly climbed back into bed beside the sleep-talking Jade.