

Sehh'Remma and Roger

"If you go down to the woods today ..."

By Mike (The Old Gray Raccoon) Regan

The day could only be described as 'perfect'. The cloudless sky a deep azure, the sun warm but not too warm, the lush grass soft to lie upon. All around, the plethora of brightly colored wild flowers did their best to imitate the view through a kaleidoscope; their delicate perfume wafting on the gentle breeze.

Butterflies flitted here and there, stopping at a flower now and then. One lit on Roger's nose tickling and he waved to shoo it away but it came right back. He waved at it again only to have it return yet again. This time he swatted and scratched his nose while opening his eyes to deal with the troublesome insect.

When his eyes focused he found himself still in bed and looking up into a feline face wearing a mischievous grin, holding the tip of her tail just above his nose.

"Get up sleepyhead," Sehh'Remma purred, "we have to meet Rrsh'Dhana for the mid-day meal."

"Just another hour of sleep," muttered Roger groggily.

"Another hour? It's nearly mid-day now!"

Roger opened his eyes again and looked to the window, seeing that it was indeed late and he needed to get moving. Well, it had been a nice dream while it lasted.

Roger threw back the blanket and slid his legs over the edge of the bed sitting up. He stretched a bit and scratched his head, yawning widely.

"It always amazes me how a creature with such a small mouth can manage to open it so wide," Sehh'Remma teased. "Sometimes it looks like the whole top of your head is going to fall off."

"Sorry." Roger apologized.

"Maybe I should send a message to Rrsh'Dhana and change to another day? You were up most of last night worrying. You didn't get to sleep until after our talk."

"No, that's alright. I'll wake up once I start moving around some. Where were we supposed to meet again?"

“We’ve been invited to have lunch with Rrsh’Dhana at her father, Rrsh’Ghanar’s, home.”

“OK, let me get a shower and we can go.”

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Lunch had been good. Roger had tried some local dishes Rrsh’Dhana was sure he would like if he was anything like Anthony. They seemed familiar to him, yet different. Now Sehh’Remma and Rrsh’Dhana were chatting together while Roger was having a discussion in the next room with Rrsh’Ghanar about some point of hyperspace.

“<You know, at first I couldn’t figure out what attracted you to someone like Roger. The two of you are so different. But after a bit more research on humans I think I understand now.>”

Sehh’Remma looked quizzically at Rrsh’Dhana, “<And what did you learn?>”

“<Humans would call someone built like Roger ‘mousey’,>” she replied, “<They call us ‘cats’ because we look very similar to one of the native Earth animals called by that name. I have found that a favorite prey for cats to chase would be a mouse. Humans even give cats imitation mice to play with. So you chasing Roger is only natural.>” Rrsh’Dhana grinned at Sehh’Remma and could barely keep from laughing out loud.

Sehh’Remma threw a pillow at her and shook her finger in admonishment for the bad joke.

Roger chose this moment to re-join them as Rrsh’Dhana began to serve some of the tea they had brought back from Earth and he took in the ‘innocent’ looks. “My father once told me that there are times when it’s best not to ask what’s on a woman’s mind. I think this is one of those times,” he sighed as he sat down.

“Your father was very wise ... for a human.” Quipped Rrsh’Dhana as Roger adopted a ‘Why me?’ look.

After the trio was able to compose itself from the uncontrollable bout of laughter, the conversation turned to the usual small talk. Roger had been continuing his studies of the Rraen’Rhagh language, and the two femmes kept the subjects as simple as possible when speaking in their own language, stopping when needed to help him with a word or phrase he didn’t understand. The visit was enjoyable, especially for Roger who didn’t socialize much on Earth. Nerds were not at the top of anyone’s ‘must invite’ list, and the time passed quickly.

Roger was facing Sehh'Remma and being instructed in some of the finer points of grammar when a shadow loomed over them, and he felt someone sit on the couch behind him. He turned to properly greet the new arrival and found himself looking UP at a two meter tall, very large, very shaggy black and white bear.

After a bit Roger's mind decided to re-visit reality and his eyes opened on an unusual sight. He was on the floor looking up at Sehh'Remma sternly lecturing the larger bear over frightening him so badly that he had fainted. The bear, whose name he later learned was Masmah, was looking very ashamed. He couldn't get most of the words but was certain they were probably not the kind to use in polite conversation. Seeing Masmah's contriteness did much to relieve his fear of her size. Rrsh'Dhana noted Roger had come to and helped him off the floor, making the introductions. Masmah was a good friend of hers and came from a race called Mhargh.

Masmah had come by to hear all about Rrsh'Dhana's adventures on Earth and her treatment after being shot down and captured but the Mhargh was surprised to see an actual human. The conversation became animated again with Rrsh'Dhana giving Masmah some tea and telling her about the feral Earth animal called a bear. Some bears would eat humans and that was the reason for Roger's reaction. She also told Masmah she had some photographs of Earth bears and would show them to her later. Rrsh'Dhana and Sehh'Remma took turns translating for Roger and Masmah. They also promised to get Masmah the tapes so she could learn the human's language, along with some private lessons on human idioms.

It was a warm day and proved a bit uncomfortable for Masmah with her shaggy fur. Sehh'Remma suggested they all go to her house by the river for a swim, to which Masmah quickly agreed.

Rrsh'Dhana gathered the remains of their meal into a basket to take along, and Sehh'Remma said she had some large blankets at home they could get to lie on.

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Following the ride to Sehh'Remma's house they collected the blankets and walked the short distance to the river, spreading the colorful cloths under some trees.

At the sight of the water Masmah left a trail of items behind her and jumped right in. The others arrived and when Roger saw her standing there dripping wet he could not resist a hearty chuckle. Masmah got an evil-looking grin, Roger's eyes went wide and he tried to run but it was too late; she shook. Water went everywhere, and when it was over it was hard to tell whether she or Roger was wetter.

Later, after a swim, they were lying on the bank in the shade, letting the warm breeze dry them. Masmah and Rrsh'Dhana sat talking more about her time on Earth.

Roger was sitting, using a tree as a back rest, while Sehh'Remma lay on her back with her head in his lap.

Roger was munching a sandwich when he noted a tiny movement near by. Looking closer he chuckled to himself. *Of course, what's a picnic without ants?*

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“<I have been watching those two over there Rrsh'Dhana, they seem to like each other. Are all human's that accepting?>”

“<No. I met quite a few that were, but some definitely were not. In fact they made their dislike very plain. They were in the minority though.>”

“<That's good. For a race that defeated the Wrragh'Wi they seem a bit puny looking though,>” Masmah observed looking over at Roger again.

“<Most of the males are larger than Roger, but as a race their skill and determination can be amazing.>”

“<I'm surprised you survived to be captured. With the war going on I'd have thought they would have destroyed your fighter on sight. It was a Wrragh'Wi craft after all.>” commented Masmah.

“<There were some humans who would have done so but many more who would only kill if they were forced to do so. I got the feeling that Anthony, my captor, prided himself on 'bringing them back alive' to use one of their terms. He did not use undo force, even before he knew I wasn't a 'wolf' .>”

“<Wolf?>”

“<That's the name they use for the Wrragh'Wi. They have a feral animal by that name; I have seen them and it does fit rather well. My kind they call 'cats' for the same reason. Many humans keep cats as companions. It's a long-standing practice. From what I saw of the Wrragh'Wi they would not have treated any humans they captured as well.>”

“<What was it like in the prison camp?>”

“<I wasn't taken to one. In fact I had almost free rein; they didn't even have me under guard. I'm sure there was one not far away, but they were not standing over me as I would have expected, being a prisoner.>”

“<That’s certainly unusual.>”

“<Yes. I learned a great deal on my Winding Trail. I saw myself returning victorious to the cheers of my comrades-in-arms. Instead, they treated me like the fool I was, but I was too blind to see it. They used me as bait. After being captured, the enemy treated me with far more respect.>”

Masmah sat pondering what she had been told. “<It sounds very confusing.>”

“<It was at first, but as time passed I began to understand them some. They are very complex beings and are basically social in nature. If you come in peace they will greet you as a friend. But as can be seen from the Wrragh'Wí, make an enemy of them at your own peril. I think in my case, that I did not attack to escape is why I am still alive. Later, Anthony discovered I was not Wrragh'Wí, and later still that I was female. I can still hear Anthony telling my father of his ordeal. My father kept prodding him for tales of *glorious* battle and so Anthony told him! The pain of it was almost too much to bear. The loss of friends, family, burying his wife and newborn son. Why he didn’t kill me before I could get out of my downed fighter I don’t know. Knowing what he went through, I would not have blamed him. Then, after the Phoenix returned from the attack on the Wrragh'Wí home world; to see him cry in sorrow for the deaths of the ones responsible for his family’s deaths. I have never encountered a race like them. They do not seek the destruction of those that attack them but for them to see the error and to become friends. I was able to study some of their fantasy and legend. It’s often full of hope, trust and forgiveness as the lesson it conveys.>”

Masmah sat back in silence, digesting all she had been told about this unique race of beings, and weighing it against what she had seen of Roger’s behavior. The only sound was the rustling of the soft breeze through the leaves. She looked over at the most unlikely pair, each contentedly enjoying the other’s company, and she, too, began to believe.

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Roger leaned back, closed his eyes and reflected on his past. He wasn’t all that old, but the war had taken its toll on him and he had felt very old. All he’d had to look forward to was just surviving from day to day; he’d felt his life was over.

Now, here he was in a strange new land, far from where he had been born. He was listening to a strange new language and beginning to understand only the tiniest bit, and he felt young again. He thought about the journey to get here, about his relationship with Seh’h’Remma, her trust in him and his in her, the faith that neither would knowingly hurt the other, and a large smile broke on his face. “All it takes is faith and trust, and just

a bit of---” picking up a hand full of dirt he let it trickle out between his fingers and blow in the breeze as he finished “---*pixie dust.*”

With those happy thoughts Roger let his spirit fly free.