

Sehh'Remma and Roger – Introspection

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The small house was dark and quiet. The only illumination in the room came in through the window from the nighttime sky. Being on the outskirts of town, no lights were close enough to spoil the spectacular view of the stars. The faint glow outlined the silhouette of a figure sitting at the table, staring out the window, periodically lifting a cup to its lips.

The restlessness had been getting worse since they'd arrived seven days ago, and now, Roger couldn't sleep at all. He'd lain in bed long enough to be sure Sehh'Remma was asleep before coming out here and making a pot of tea.

When working he mostly drank coffee; he found tea, however, relaxing and it was his drink of choice when he was in a thinking mood.

Tonight he *needed* to think.

He was beginning to see a problem.

He realized now that it had been the same on board the ship - just not as obvious. When the humans had first come onboard they were given a wide berth until Rrsh'Dhana had talked to most of the crew and told them the propaganda of the Wrragh'Wi was false; humans were tenacious fighters but not all vicious killers. Gradually the crew relaxed and became very friendly. Even the engineers had taken a few days to get used to him.

The problem now, as he saw it, was not “humans”, but one human. Him.

More precisely it was his involvement with Sehh'Remma.

They had gone to a restaurant earlier in the evening to have dinner and in the manner of a gentleman he held her chair. She had thanked him and he bowed kissing her hand in return. The couple at the next table got up without being served and walked out.

This was something he knew all too well.

Racism.

The “*They're alright to have around, but would you want your sister to marry one?*” mentality.

While not a minority himself, he had seen enough of it on Earth to recognize it and had never been able to understand or abide it. His concern was not so much for himself, but what this might mean for Sehh'Remma's future if he were to remain with her.

That thought, *If I were to remain with her*, brought others to mind. He liked Sehh'Remma, a lot, but were his feelings for her that deep?

How could he tell?

It was true that he had never felt this way about anyone before, but then he had no past experience to draw on. He was the nerd the girls avoided.

He remembered his first and only crush. In fact, it had started all this. He'd been dreaming of her when Sehh'Remma had entered his cabin that first night. But this felt different in a way he couldn't put his finger on. Still, he had to wonder if this was just another crush and not the real thing.

Then there was her job. He didn't know what a body guard did on this world, but on Earth it was a very dangerous profession. They might have to place themselves in the line of fire to protect their charges. What if she was injured or even killed? Could he handle that? The possibility was not pleasant to think about, but he would have to.

Then too, he would be returning to Earth when the negotiations with the clan were finalized and the ship loaded. Would she remain behind or come with him? Would it be right of him to expect her to live on Earth - to leave her homeworld and everyone she knew to stay with him?

Every new question he asks himself only leads to more questions.

So he sat, sipped and tried to rein in his runaway thoughts.

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Sehh'Remma was tossing and turning, her sleep anything but restful. She awoke and saw the time; it was still the middle of the night. What had disturbed her? She rolled over and saw the reason at once, Roger's side of the bed was empty and the cold sheets indicated it had been so for some time.

She did not like the feeling of waking up alone. Since that first night they had shared a bed aboard ship he had always been there. Now his absence affected her more than just an empty bed. She missed him.

Rising she slipped on a robe and went to search for him. It was not too difficult; she could smell the tea from the kitchen. Coming through the doorway she could see him with his back to her, looking out the window.

Roger never took his eyes off the view of the reflection of the twin moons in the river. "I'm sorry if I woke you," he said.

"I sensed your absence and awoke," Sehh'Remma replied. Her English was now excellent. Roger hoped he could do as well with her language once the teaching tapes were complete.

She came up behind him and placed a hand on each shoulder. They watched the night pass in silence until she asked, "What's the matter? You seem very quiet."

He turned his head and placed a hand on hers. "I've been doing a great deal of thinking and I believe we need to talk."

Sehh'Remma came around and sat in another chair at the table to face him. Roger got up and brought her a cup for some tea. "Tell me, how do your people feel about mixed pairings?"

"They're not exactly embraced; some 'accept' them while others are offended by them. They will usually leave the room when a mixed couple enters. Does this have anything to do with the couple at the restaurant?"

"Yes, I noticed that they left when I kissed your hand. On Earth sometimes a mixed couple can result in violence. I'm concerned for your safety."

"Roger; there are a few cross species pairings but none have instigated violent opposition for many generations. And I am highly trained. You need not worry."

"That makes me feel better, but I'm still concerned that you'll be outcast for it. You could find it difficult to get a job or service in a shop or restaurant."

"Don't worry, Roger; it's not as bad as you think it is. Let's leave the subject until you've seen more of my world, and then we can discuss it further if you still have reservations."

They sat in silence sipping tea while Roger mulled it over. The reflection of the two moons had moved to the other shore of the river, tomorrow night with their different orbital periods they would most likely overlap and appear as a single moon.

After a bit Roger came to a decision of sorts.

"I'm still a little worried, but you do have a point. I'll try to forget about this problem for now," he smiled at her.

She tilted her head to one side and looked quizzically at him. “You said *this* problem. Does that mean there are others?”

She got up and went to the cold food storage unit, took out a bowl of Mh'Tok berries and returned to the table.

“Aren't there always?” he replied with a half-hearted grin, “but only two more are of immediate concern to me.”

Sehh'Remma reached out and took his hand, “I'm here if you wish to talk about them.”

“Well, the one is hard to talk about because I don't know if I have a problem at all. I know I feel something for you but ...”

“You don't know if it's true love you feel for me,” she finished for him. She herself knew the answer to that; his concern for her above himself was all she needed to be certain of it.

“Yes. That's the problem. How can I tell?”

“Haven't you ever been in love before, Roger?”

“No, and that's the whole of it right there. I did have a crush on a girl once in college but she didn't even know I was alive. I often dreamt about the two of us together.” Roger blushed. “She would come to my room, get into bed with me and we would have wild sex.”

“Ah, you were having that dream the night I first came to your bed,” Sehh'Remma stated, understanding now.

“Yes.” Roger blushed even redder.

“Roger, love is one of the most complex emotions I know. The human female Sharon and the human male Edward, they are a bonded couple I believe?”

“Yes, they have been married for fifteen years.”

“Perhaps you should talk with them. It might be that they can guide you to the answer you seek.”

“It could take some time to find it,” he warned.

“I am willing to wait, however long it may take. You must be as sure as you can before you act.”

He smiled and gave her hand a gentle squeeze.

“That’s two. What is the third one?” she asked.

“I was hoping you would forget to ask about that one,” he replied self-consciously.

“Am I to assume that this has something to do with me?”

“Not you exactly; more your job.”

“My job?”

“You are a body guard. I don’t know what that means to your people, but to mine it means that you will defend your charge against all threats. Dying if necessary by placing yourself between them and the weapon of an assailant. I don’t know if I could handle knowing that you could be killed at anytime. It’s rather selfish of me, but I worry if I could stand to lose you like that and not go insane.”

Sehh’Remma looked at Roger with deep sympathy. She could understand how he felt, having lost a close friend that way.

“A body guard’s first duty is to prevent being in that situation to begin with. I cannot deny that it happens though. I lost a good friend that way. The opposition had set a plan of revenge in place by sending a young male to live and grow with the target. In time he became one of the body guards and distinguished himself enough to be assigned to the personal staff. One day when he was alone with his charge he struck. My friend happened to enter to deliver a message and managed to throw himself between them and kill the attacker before dying himself.

“Roger, my current job is not a dangerous one; in fact it’s most pleasant. Rrsh’Ghanar has hired me to be *your* body guard. He is aware of our feelings for each other and felt that I would have extra incentive to protect you.”

“But you said that your people were not prone to violence.”

“That is true, but other beings come here and not all the Wrragh’Wí were on their home world when Earth attacked. Although nothing has happened yet, some may want revenge, and there are beings who will do anything for money. If they learn you are here ...”

“I see, and you are right. Still I can’t complain *too* much about Rrsh’Ghanar’s choice,” he smiled.

“I have made enough at this job to buy this house and have a good amount of credits saved as well. Actually I have been thinking of retiring from it for a little while; you may just be the push I need to ‘get me off the fence’. You humans have such strange

sayings but if looked at in the right way they make sense.” Silence prevailed again as they watched the stars through the window, both quietly munching berries.

At length Sehh'Remma yawned. “We should try to get some sleep. We are supposed to meet with Rrsh'Dhana for lunch tomorrow, remember?”

Her yawn made him yawn as well and he checked the time. “You mean today. It seems we have been talking so long tomorrow has snuck in on us. Yes, I feel more at ease now that I have told you my concerns. I think I can get to sleep.”

He decided to wait until later to bring up the last question. If this did turn out not to be love, then it would not matter who would move to be with whom, but in his own mind he felt sure that it would need to be discussed.

Rising, he offered her his hand and helped her to stand, then hand-in-hand, their fingers intertwined, they proceeded to the bedroom to get what sleep they could.

The words from a Broadway play Roger had seen years ago before the war drifted through his mind as they walked.

“If you touch me you'll understand what happiness is;

Look; a new day has begun.”

Yes, a new day, a new future. It would be filled with problems, hopes and dreams. One thing Roger was feeling surer of now than anything else; it was a future he would no longer be facing alone.

(‘Memory’ from the Broadway musical ‘Cats’, copyright Andrew Lloyd Webber.)