

Chapter 20

Saturday, January 19, 2002

Home Planet

MQ thought he felt a voice. At first he wasn't sure, but he wanted to believe. Yes, it was certainly SJ, but he couldn't hear the words.

"SJ? SJ?"

He thrust his tail with all of his available energy, executing a tight turn in the warm water to pivot his body and scan the area. There she was, approaching rapidly from below.

"Yes, MQ. I'm glad to find you. Find you."

The feel of her voice was always enough to bring MQ out of his desperation. His mood could change in an instant with SJ nearby.

"Have you heard anything about the signal? No one here seems to know. To know," said MQ.

"The signal has been sent. Been sent," said SJ. In her voice there was excitement and pride.

"Of course," said MQ. "I knew it would work, and it will be received by our vehicle. Our vehicle."

"I hope you are right, but I have my doubts. It was such a big effort for all of us. I've been looking for you. For you."

"I'm glad. I've had my beacon set for you. Did you hear it? Hear it?" MQ was sometimes overwhelmed by the size of the sea, but life concentrated in certain pockets. Those lost could be found again.

"I heard it many times, but there is so much confusion. The water is so crowded. Maybe there is too much thought. Maybe on land we could handle so much more. Much more," said SJ.

She was intelligence just short of the Great Minds. They were no different from her, or from MQ for that matter. It was all a matter of definition. But to be a Great Mind would leave no time for living. SJ enjoyed living, and she enjoyed being with MQ.

"We will go to the land," said SJ. "For more than a moment, for more than the time it takes to launch a vehicle or build a tower. But for now, our place is here. Is here."

"Yes, SJ, it is true. But I wish it were otherwise. We need to know so much more. It is our way to survive. To survive."

SJ and MQ were headed for the surface, swimming in close formation, nearly touching. Darkness had fallen in the atmosphere above this water, and it was time to enjoy their cherished sea. And their cherished air. As they approached the surface, MQ flexed his tail, although there was little noticeable movement. As he swerved to the right, SJ immediately followed. They were speeding upward now at their very best momentum. MQ was growing excited in anticipation of the feel of the waves above. He felt SJ trying to talk to him, but it was not easy to concentrate on her voice. Just above them now was the surface, the tumbling waves, and the air of the night. That boundary between sea and sky was their playground, and now sensations of playful harmony took priority over everything else. It even took priority over thinking.

And so as MQ broke the surface of the sea, he knew that SJ was talking to him. He did not feel her voice directly, but he was sure that it was there. Her presence and the darkness of the night was enough to allow him to feel total harmony with his emerging world. MQ had the sea and the air and the night. And they broke through the surface of the sea together, in perfect unison, right near the top of a breaking wave. They plummeted out the side of the wave into the night, and for one passing moment, they were pivoted near the crest of that wave. And the moment seemed to hold, as MQ looked all around at a world captured by his giant eyes. Eyes of intelligence. Eyes of need. Eyes of hope.