

Moonchild

“Mom, can I go to the lab now?” Orchid asked.

“But why Orchid? You don’t have any tests scheduled for today.” Trisha said.

“Yeah I know, but there are so many interesting things going on there. Did you know that Nyla works with plants too? There is an entire room full of plants, and she does all kinds of experiments with them.”

“Don’t you rather want to play with some of the kids from school? Someone your own age?”

“Nah, they’re so childish.”

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It was a hot day as it usually was in the Valley of Stars in the summer. A lone figure was travelling through on horseback, his goal being a place that was very sacred to his people. He was wearing skin footwear and pants but his torso was bare and fully exposed to the sun. His name was White Buffalo and like so many others he was on his way to take part in a very rare and special event. His goal was more than a day’s ride from his current position so he would have to camp for the night somewhere in the valley. He knew this of course, and in fact had already decided a while ago where to camp. Most of the valley was bare ground and rocks so for comfort he needed to find an oasis in the middle of this desert landscape.

White Buffalo rode for many hours and it was late afternoon when he spotted something green in the horizon. He steered his horse towards it, and it was not long before he arrived at his destination. The oasis was centered around a hill with some rock formations. Artificial structures and lighting revealed that these rocks were inhabited, but he knew that of course, and he also knew who lived there. Everything around the hilltop was green, consisting of trees and other plant growth, and streams of water flowed down the hill and through the landscape, contributing to the support of all life in the oasis. In one of the treetops he spotted a falcon, and as it flew off towards the hilltop he knew that it was no ordinary falcon.

As White Buffalo was making camp he heard the footsteps of someone approaching. He turned around towards the little familiar woman figure who addressed him with a “Greetings White Buffalo”.

“Greetings Little Stream,” he said, smiling.

“You know you are welcome to stay in my guesthouse, but I’m guessing you’d rather camp here as usual.” She smiled back.

“I prefer sleeping under open sky where I can see the stars. Indoor dwellings make me claustrophobic.”

“Then perhaps you won’t mind me joining you out here? It’s been a while, and I enjoy your company.”

“I don’t mind at all. Are you going to the Great Powwow as well?” White Buffalo asked.

“Of course I am. If for nothing else then because She is coming. It’s a rare event.”

White Buffalo lit up a fire and prepared supper, and the two of them started to eat in silence. Then White Buffalo broke the silence: "So you are looking forward to our rare guest visiting us from the stars? What do you think of her?"

"She is The Great Giver. She gave us this world. She is an inspiration to us all."

"Her gift was justice long overdue. Our lands and our culture were taken from us, way back in time. And this is just compensation, true justice would be us waging war on Earth, killing most of the inhabitants and taking their lands. That's what I think."

"You can keep your justice, I don't want it. It was justice that caused us to lose what we did in the first place. Not our justice, but their justice. Give me compassion and give me empathy, give me life and give me joy, but justice I have no use for. Justice starts wars and cause rivalry, suspicion and dark feelings. It does not make the world a better place, it is a source of destruction. If you are good with words you can justify anything. Compassion never lies."

"I don't know if there is great wisdom in your words, or great naivety," White Buffalo said.

"Are those mutually exclusive?" Little Stream asked innocently.

"Don't know," White Buffalo replied, smiling, "but one thing I do know: It is time for me to go to sleep. Good night."

Little Stream and White Buffalo arrived at the Great Powwow together. Apart from being a ritual experience this gathering was also a trading event. Everything from technology, handicraft and other goods to knowledge, wisdom and stories were being traded, and the area was full of activity. They quickly split up to pursue each of their interests, and spent their time learning and sharing until the sun began to set and the drumming and dancing started. The area was lit with fires and artificial lighting but still so dark that a great number of stars were clearly visible. The drumming and dancing went on for a while and when it finally subsided everybody started to look up at the sky in anticipation. Faint drumming still went on in the background.

It was a little while before a faint light could be made out somewhere high up. The light gradually grew in strength until a human figure could be made out inside the light. And eventually as the figure descended towards the ground in front of the half-circle of people sitting on carpets that was the high council it appeared to be that of a woman enshrouded in a pale light. When finally she set foot on the ground and stood in front of the council one of the council members spoke:

"Welcome to our world, Moonchild," a woman said. "A place where you are always welcome."

"Greetings Dakota," the Moonchild responded. "And thank you. It is nice to be here again and to stand amongst such fine people. Tell me again, how have you been faring?"

"Life is good," Dakota said. "We keep thriving and growing as a society, and we are advancing in fields such as architecture, biology, arts and material science, to name a few. We are also reaching out to settlements on neighbouring planets to assist those who struggle and to offer our friendship. Your gift is being used as a force of good in the galaxy."

"I should very much hope so, otherwise I would just have to take it away. In fact from now on it is either my way or the Milky Way." The Moonchild looked at the council members in front of her with a stern face. Then she and the whole council burst into laughter.

“No, a gift is not a true gift if it comes with conditions. What was given is yours to keep, and what you choose to do with it is your choice. But I must say it warms my heart to see that you are thriving and that you are using your skills and good fortune to reach out and make friends. And now for a more urgent matter: I have heard tales of someone here having developed a new brew based on flower and herb extracts that will make the stars sing to you. I was hoping to have a taste.”

“You shall taste that and much more, and you are also invited to participate in our dance. The night is still young, let’s celebrate.” The faint drumming started to again grow in strength, signaling what was to come.

It was a tired Orchid who entered the spaceship that night (or early morning rather). Galath was awake and smiled at her as she entered the living room.

“It seems you had a good time down there. You are practically glowing.” Orchid turned off the moon glow effect, returned his smile and then went straight to bed, falling asleep with a warm feeling inside.

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“We were so close,” Orchid said, “we were making progress on the cell therapy and had cut down the number of steps in the genetic transformation to about half. But so many things in her body started giving up at once and in the end our systems couldn’t keep up. Maybe if we had..”

“Orchid stop, it is over. There is nothing more you can do,” Danel said. “You need to let go now and start living your life. Go travelling, make new friends, and maybe find someone to share your life with? Your mother is dead but her love lives on in you. You need to go out and share it with the world.”

“But it’s not fair,” Orchid said, and teardrops started forming in her eyes.

“Life was never fair to begin with,” Danel said. “Life is a miracle, wonderful, magical and horrifying, and it’s up to us to make the most of it. And remember: Memories are fleeting, cultures rise and fall, and at times it seems everything you knew and relied upon has gone. But love goes on forever.”