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The 2nd Journey Home

By

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In deep space, their starship exploded. In their lifeboat, they raced free.

"Hang on!" Plummet told her. "Jump to lightspeed, now!"

The lifeboat's engines flashed and the stars fell behind. They were pushed into their seats.

"Where are we going?" she asked him.

"Nowhere," he answered. "Anywhere. I didn't have time to set a course. In a few minutes, we'll stop and figure out where we are."

"Like always," she replied. "And the answer will be the same. Like always, you won't know."

He ignored her like he always did when she talked like that. He touched the button that quit the star drives.

The sudden stop threw her forward in her seat. She was used to it.

Chris Plummett stared at their computer's star map. It was unfamiliar. The computer seemed to know which way to go, but he didn't want to trust it.

"Well?" Jean said.

"I'm not sure. I think it's taking us in the wrong direction."

She leaned forward to look at the computer screens. The stars there matched the ones outside the windows. The computers had drawn a course line through them that looked clear.

"It looks okay to me," she said. "'Chris, for once won't you please trust me? I know which way to go."

"No," he muttered, afraid.

He touched the star drive button and the ship leaped blindly ahead.

She sat fuming in her seat.

An hour later, they stopped again. The shock of it killed their computers and they were lost.

Like statues, they sat cold in the silence.

"I'm sorry," he finally said.

"You're stupid," she answered. "You did this. You made the choice."

"I was scared."

"Of what? Of me? Of the fact that all I ever wanted to do was love you? Oh, I tried! Over and over again, I tried. Every time, you ran. Or erected barriers. Did I ever tell you that I'm an expert at scaling the Empire State Building?"

"That building was torn down decades ago."

“Not for you. You kept rebuilding it.”

“I’ll get us out of this.”

“How? By killing us? Isn’t that what you really want? To die?”

“You’re wrong. I’ll prove it.”

The star drives fired again. Recklessly.

Hours later, they had to set down on an arid planet. She made them. They were still lost. The ship sat quietly underneath dark blue skies and a yellow sun as its computer spit out charts with traces of where they had gone. Silently, he watched it happen. She sat outside alone, staring at the horizon.

“We’re not gong to make it, are we?” she mumbled.

“Yes, we are. It’ll just take time.”

“No,” she said softly. “Time has run out.”

She got up and began to walk away.

He stared after her. He called to her, but she kept on walking. He yelled, but she didn’t falter. Screaming, he ran after her and stopped her, grabbing her arm.

“WHERE ARE YOU GOING?” he screamed. “WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU’RE GOING?”

She stared back at him.

“Away,” she said flatly. “Away...somewhere I should have gone long ago.”

“But you can’t go out there! You’ll die!”

“At least, I’ll be responsible for it,” she answered.

She jerked her arm from him and ran. He didn’t follow.

That night, he couldn’t sleep. She was out there somewhere. Maybe hurt. Probably hungry. She’d wander aimlessly until she died. And it was all his fault. She was right. All she’d ever done was love him. All he’d ever done was push her away. Love! All it ever did was kill you. Everyone he’d ever loved was gone. His mom. His dad. His best friend. Now, Jean. She was dead. Sobbing, he realized so was he.

Grabbing only a light, he followed her tracks into the darkness.

When the yellow morning sun rose, her tracks were leading right into it, marching to the horizon. He dragged his feet through the sand following them. Onward, no matter what. He would go onward until he found her.

As the day ended and the sun set behind him, he knew that he could not go much farther, and she could not have either. His lips were parched and his skin burned like flaming sandpaper. He was a fool not to have brought any water. He stumbled forward some more, stopping only when he realized her tracks had disappeared. Wearily, he backtracked until he found them and where they had turned. His eyes walked with them in a new direction. They led down a dune to a lone, metallic spire some three miles away. He blinked his eyes. The spire remained. He stumbled toward it.

“Hello,” he called. “Hello!”

He got no answer.

As he approached in the starlit darkness, he could see a blue glow from inside it. He thought he could see the outline of a door slightly left ajar. He pushed it open and went inside. The room was filled with artifacts, shapes that appeared to be without function. Their stillness frightened him.

“Hello?”

No answer still.

But there was something... He could barely hear it. Someone was crying soft, gentle tears. The sound was coming through a door also slightly open on the other side of the room.

The room emptied into another. A door with a hole in it separated him from a room that made the rear wall. He looked in and saw Jena crumpled against a far wall and sobbing.

“Jean!”

He beat on the door.

“Chris, no!” she cried.

There was someone behind him! He spun in time to see a dark creature with a metallic box pointed at him. The box flashed with light and he was stunned and pinned against the wall. He felt the thing pick him up like a rag doll and throw him into the room with Jean.

“Oh, Chris, what are you doing here?” she wept.

“I had to find you. You were my only hope.”

In the darkness they held each other and went to sleep.

In the morning as the yellow sun broke through a window, they were awakened by a hurricane howling across the desert sands. They looked out, and the sun washed their faces with golden light.

A yellow ship had landed on the dunes, and dark creatures were coming out of it toward them.

“Chris, I’m scared. Where are they taking us? To kill us? Where?”

He took her in his arms gently and kissed her.

“It doesn’t matter where they’re taking us,” he said, holding her. “No matter where they’re taking us, we’re going home.”

THE END.