

EIGHT

"Paul, wake up, the morning is dawning, and we have much work to do. Paul, wake up."

"Take it easy, Owhindamon! I'll be up in a second. You must be a lot better at using the blue cloud than the rest of them, I didn't even smell it."

Paul braced himself on one elbow, and turned in the direction he thought Owhindamon's voice was coming from. He was quite surprised to find no trace of Owhindamon.

"Where did you hide. The game's over, come out now."

"I am not hiding, I am sending to you. People are more receptive to sendings in the morning and evening when first learning. I'll be with you in awhile; I have some unfinished business to attend to."

"Hey Owhindamon, you mean you were talking to me telepathically," blurted Paul out loud. "This is great! Hey Owhindamon, why don't you answer?"

Several hours later, Paul was talking to himself (or Owhindamon) in the den. An acrid blue cloud formed and Owhindamon stepped out.

"You know Paul, it never ceases to amaze me. After someone receives their first sending, they go off blabbering like a fool for several hours afterward. I guess they think that by talking loudly and without any apparent coherence, that they are communicating telepathically. Actually, they're just talking to themselves. Oh well, you wouldn't know anyone in such circumstances, would you?"

"Hey that's not fair. I don't know how this works and I was testing a few theories. Can't blame someone for experimenting, can you?"

"Of course not. But can you blame someone for being amused at watching another person talking to plants and walls and chairs?"

"No, I guess I look pretty silly."

"Very."

"Well how about if I stop talking to walls. Where did you go last

night."

"Borneo. Nice rain forests there. Plenty of Orangutans, too. They are rather like myself in general appearance. Very friendly, too. I had one of the best nights sleep I've had in quite awhile. And how was your sleep?"

"Pretty good. Say, did you 'send' to me last night just as I was falling asleep?"

"Yes, I did. I didn't want to disturb you, so I waited till just before you went into deep sleep."

"Yes, I remember it more distinctly now. Its amazing that you could time the sending like that."

"Its not very difficult; just takes practice. Have you thought about our discussion of last night?"

"Yes, I think I'll take you up on it. I don't really like the alternative too much. Owhindamon, when will I receive the sendings of the People who died in the last day."

"Not until I think you're ready to receive them."

"Well, when do we begin?"

"We already have. You've received two sendings already, and you've communicated to me several times already. As a matter of fact, you called me here yesterday but probably didn't realize it."

"I called you here? I sure don't remember calling you."

"I assure you, you called me. Don't you remember that you wanted someone to talk to. Well, I had been watching you for awhile. I heard your call and came here."

"Well, I can tell you it was'nt a conscious act on my part."

"I know."

"What do you mean, you know."

"It would'nt have worked if you consciously tried to send to me. When

you're just beginning, you cannot consciously send. Sending works best at daybreak and before sleep for novices. That is because they are in a state of pre-consciousness. The conscious mind blocks out sendings. It knows that sendings can't happen, so it does not allow them. We must teach the novices to disregard their conscious mind when telepathically communicating. It is difficult at first, but with practice, proficiency is gained."

"How do you learn to send if you cannot use your conscious mind?"

"It's not so much learning as acceptance. The ability is there; you must accept the possibility of telepathy and believe that it can be done. We send every night, and encourage novices to converse with us in the mornings. After awhile, acceptance comes, and more rigorous excersizes are attempted."

"That does 'nt sound too tough."

"It isn't difficult; for some. Others lack the faith necessary for sending. You still look bothered by something, Paul."

"I am, Owhindamon, but it's got nothing to do with telepathy. Nick told me that all real estate documents were recorded at his home planet. If that were the case, we would have to log all the multiple transactions at the same place. They would be able to find the phony transactions immediately."

"Do you have any idea how many stars there are in the Milky Way alone? Oh, yes, of course you do: how silly of me. Do you know how many galaxies there are in the universe? The latest estimate is in excess of several billion. Do you think that all those stars could possibly be recorded in one location? Of course not. Actually there are several hundred thousand planets where deeds can be recorded. All we need do is transmit the sales data to one of the other locations. There is a catch, however. All data is updated for the various locations at least once a year. The multiple deeds will be discovered at that time. Of course, the multiple deeds will be discovered long before then, when two people claim the same property."

"Owhindamon, I'm not worried about several months from now. I have an appointment with Fleshrender tomorrow. If I don't have a planet to sell him, I won't have to worry about learning telpathy, unless I can send from the grave."

"As I indicated to you yesterday, we will sell the planet to an enemy of the Panteraan. I cannot decide whether we should sell to the Mantodeii or the Ursinae. Either choice would keep the Panteraan at bay."

"Look, Owhindamon, do you think that if we sold to either of these two

NINE

Paul turned off the ignition and pulled on his gloves. The first accumulation of snowfall lay on the ground. He walked briskly up to the front door and fumbled in his pocket for the housekey. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of the crescent moon burning with a silver fire in the black night sky. He opened the door and walked inside.

After he hung up his coat, he walked over to the computer to see if anyone had sent a message. None. It had been a long day. He had encountered no problems in getting a housing for the machine built. Getting the circuitry assembled was quite difficult, however.

Paul was no technical wizard, so he compensated by developing friendships with people who were more mechanically inclined than he was. One of his friends opened a computer store a few years before, so Paul stopped in for some help with his machine. The problems began with the memory chips called for in the blueprint. These chips were 256K each, and thousands of them were required. Since the technology for the production of this chip was quite new, they were in short supply and commanded a premium price. The large number of chips required generated a great deal of heat, and only one fan was included in the design of the machine. Another, more serious problem, was the inadequacy of the power supply. The unit was originally designed to require much less power, and extensive modifications had to be made. All the problems were eventually overcome, but the cost of the machine was phenomenal. Paul was expecting to see Owhindamon when he walked in the door, or at the very least, to have a message from him waiting on the computer."

"Well, it looks like I'll have to sell Fleshrender a planet tomorrow. I wish Owhindamon would have been here to lend a hand. At least I have the printouts listing the possible sites for a game preserve. Damn, I hope nothing goes wrong tomorrow. I'd better get to bed early; it will probably be a long day tomorrow."

groups we could just walk away and all would be forgotten? For starters, the Panteraan would be mad as all hell with me, and whoever else we sold the planet to would probably come after me. I don't think this scheme will work."

"You have a point about the Panteraan. They are not likely to forget quickly. I hope that they will be too pre-occupied to take immediate action. The final selection of either the Mantodeii or Ursinae will depend on which of them can more effectively forestall the Panteraan as well as which would place more credence in the idea of a forged title by the Panteraan."

"What makes you think either of these two groups could stand up to the Panteraan?"

"Both would do well against the Panteraan, at least for a short while. The Ursinae are much stronger than the Panteraan, and closely resemble your terran bear. They are somewhat larger than a earthen bear, standing nine feet tall and weighing nearly one ton. They are quite intelligent, and are very gregarious. They do not take to fighting with any great zeal, and are slow to anger. Their dislike of the Panteraan could be used to provoke them into battle, however.

"The Mantodeii on the other hand are a race of predatory insects. They share the Panteraan love of the hunt, and often compete with the Panteraan for game preserves. They rival their feline counterparts in their ability to conduct warfare. In many ways they are better warriors than the Panteraan, since they act almost almost instinctively rather than through reason. They too, have cause to seek revenge against the Panteraan."

"In any event, our plan will be useless if you can't get the machine built. I'll tell you what: you concentrate on getting the machine made, and I'll decide to whom we should sell the second deed. Well, I'm off to Borneo."

"You will be back before tomorrow. I have no idea of what I'll say to Fleshrender."

"You'll think of something. Bye."

"Goddamn. I've got people zipping in and out of this house constantly; the whole place smells of ozone, and my eyes can't take the blue glare. By tomorrow, I might be the main course for an overgrown alley cat. Oh well, I'd better get over to Al's to see if he can build the housing for this machine."