

SPACE QUEST 2

HIDDEN PLANET

Chapter 3

by James Gelsey

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Leep activated the door at the rear of the bridge. It opened with a soft “hssssssss.”

“Who’s there?” asked Leep as she rolled forward. “Hello? Is anybody therrrrrrrrrrre--” Leep lost her balance and fell off the edge of the bridge into the darkness.

“Leep!” exclaimed Sivah.

“I’m all right, I’m all right,” Leep called. “Just forgot to activate the docking platform. Oh, thank you. That’s very kind of you.”

Who was Leep talking to? The cadets ran over to the door and looked down. They saw a group of short, pale-looking creatures

helping Leep stand up. More of the creatures stood around the pod. Their hairless bodies were not much different in shape from Zale's or Sivah's, only smaller. They wore glowing, glass-like vests that provided the only light inside the dark cavern. They blinked at the cadets through rich blue eyes. One of the creatures stepped forward and motioned for the cadets to come.

"I am Yalco, leader of the Huheets. We must go," it said. "Mok-Ri travel in twos. You glazed only one." He pointed to the crystallized remains of the creature.

"You mean there's another one of those things around?" Sivah asked nervously.

Yalco nodded. "Did the Mok-Ri damage your ship?"

"It cracked the view shield," Bey said. "And in the process of crystallizing—I mean—glazing the Mok-Ri, we drained two of our fuel cells."

"Your ship will be safe here," he said. "Please, come with us to safety."

Sivah, Zale and Bey looked at each other. Not wanting the Huheets to overhear, they communicated through their telepatches.

What should we do? Sivah asked.

If there really is one of those creatures flying around somewhere, I don't want to be here to see it, Zale 'patched in reply.

I agree with Zale, Bey said.

Sivah looked at Yalco and nodded. "We'll come with you."

A ladder unfolded from the doorway and the cadets climbed down. Four Huheets encircled each cadet, creating a ring of light to guide Bey, Zale and Sivah. They walked through a series of stone archways and stopped before a solid, shimmering crystal wall.

"Through here," Yalco said. He pointed to the wall.

"That's solid rock," Zale said. "What, does it open like a door or something?"

Yalco smiled slightly. He turned and stepped right through the crystal wall, the front of it billowing out like a silver curtain. The cadets were stunned.

"Blastin!" Zale exclaimed. He reached out and found he could put his hand right through the crystal. "Come on!"

Zale, Sivah and Bey stepped through the crystal and found themselves inside another large cavern. The sides were carved out like

giant steps with large openings dotted the walls. Huheets stood outside the openings and stared down at the strange visitors.

I feel like I'm marching in the annual Endio Day parade, Zale patched to his fellow cadets. Sivah smiled, but Bey was too new to Endio to get it.

“A little help please?” called Leep. The cadets turned and saw Leep stuck halfway through the crystal archway. A team of Huheets pulled from one side and pushed from the other. Finally, they got Leep over the threshold and into the cavern. Yalco led them

to the edge of a softly glowing pool in the middle of the cavern.

“We need your help,” Yalco said solemnly.

“What can we possibly do?” asked Sivah.

“Our planet gets its light from within,” Yalco began. “But for some reason, our light source is dying. See how low the pool is? This is just one of many that are just as low.”

The cadets looked down into the shimmering waters. They thought they could see tiny spots of light darting beneath the surface. The Huheets took off their radiant vests and tossed them into the pool. As the

vests hit the water, they slowly dissolved, releasing tiny drops of light.

“Huheets can live in light or dark,” Yalco continued. “But the Mok-Ri can only live in darkness. Strong light instantly glazes them, as you just learned. But without light, they multiply rapidly. We sealed off the craters to keep them on the surface. But if one or two made it below the surface with you, there could be more.”

“So what’s this got to do with us?” Zale asked impatiently.

“These smaller pools are connected to a central crystal pool deep within the planet.

We think that pool has become blocked,” Yalco answered. “We could use your help to get there. Then we can restore the flow of light. But we have to act fast and fix the problem before all the light goes out and the Mok-Ri come for dinner.”

“Why, what do they eat?” asked Zale.

“Huheets,” Yalco sighed.

The cadets quickly understood the seriousness of the situation.

“Can you give us a moment, please?” asked Sivah.

Yalco nodded as the cadets and Leep huddled together.

We've got to do it, Sivah 'patched. We have to help them.

Why? Zale challenged.

Because it's the right thing to do, Sivah answered. Because it's the Endion way. It's our way.

It might be your way, Zale said. But I was born on Alron, and Bey was born on the Solar Moon.

Remember a little thing called the Endion Credo, Zale? Sivah asked.

I, for one, would like to see this crystal pool, Bey said. What do you think, Leep?

I think Dr. W would approve, Leep said.

Since I'm outvoted, I guess my opinion doesn't matter at all, Zale said.

"Did I mention that once the waters are flowing again, we can provide you with crystal-powered fuel cells for your pod?" Yalco called.

Zale's eyes lit up. "Fuel cells?" he repeated. "We'd be happy to help."

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