

SPACE QUEST 2

HIDDEN PLANET

Chapter 5

by James Gelsey

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The explorers ran through the darkening tunnel. Around a narrow bend, Yalcof stopped.

“We’re here,” he said.

In what little light remained, the cadets looked around.

“I don’t see anything,” Zale said.

Bey slowly scanned the tunnel with his night bulge.

“All I can see is a crevice in the wall here,” he said.

“That’s it,” Yalcof said.

Zale put his hand out and felt the crevice.

“Don’t tell me we’re going to slip through

a crevice like we did those big crystals?” Zale said.

“No, these walls are solid stone ,” Yalcof said. “We need to open the doorway. All of you, lean against the wall right here. You too, Leep. We’re going to need your help the most.”

Leep and the cadets took their positions.

“PUSH!” Yalcof ordered.

The cadets strained against the stone wall with all their might. Leep braced her rolling-tread feet against the tunnel floor and added extra pressure to her hydraulic arms. The wall started moving slowly inward. Leep did most of the work, but the cadets kept up

the pressure. They heard a loud clacking sound, like two rocks smashing together, and the door remained open.

“We did it!” Yalcof exclaimed. “We opened the door!”

Now I see why they needed us, Zale’patched to his friends. *It would take an army of those little guys to do what Leep did.*

The cadets followed Yalcof through the stone archway and into an enormous crystal cavern.

“Wow,” Zale gasped. “I’ll bet you could fit ten of those Huheet cities in here.”

A vast pool filled the middle of the

cavern. A soft, yellow glow radiated from the water. Six skinny hourglass formations reached from the pool all the way to the cavern's ceiling. As the cadets approached the water, Sivah noticed the same darting dots of light that she saw in the Huheet city. They reminded her of Endion minnows.

“What are those little light spots?” she asked.

“Those are the source of our planet's light,” Yalcof said. “They're called dagoreems.”

“How do these little fish provide light for your entire planet?” Bey asked in disbelief.

“No one's quite sure how the dagoreems

make light,” Yalcof said. “All we know is that they produce a very intense light that heats the water and forces it up these pipes.” Yalcof pointed to the hourglass formations. “These pipes then distribute the water throughout the planet.”

“Where the crystals then reflect and intensify the light even more,” Bey said.

“This is worse than I feared,” Yalcof said, studying the pool. “The problem isn't that something's keeping the light from going through. The problem is that there aren't enough dagoreems making light. They're disappearing!”

“Is this the only pool of dagoreems?”

asked Leep.

“This is where the dagoreems hatch,” the Huheet leader answered. “But many dagoreems get caught up in the flow and end up in smaller pools around the planet.”

“Like the one in your city?” Sivah asked.

“That’s right,” Yalcof said.

“My sensors detect an intense energy source with a frequency signature similar to this pool,” Leep said.

“Show us, Leep,” Bey said.

Yalcof and the cadets followed Leep as she rolled around the edge of the crystal pool.

Leep stopped in front of a rock formation taller than her.

“This is it?” asked Zale, reaching out to give the rock a light tap. “Yeow! This thing is burning hot!”

“I’m not surprised, considering the amount of energy inside it,” Leep said.

“Leep, is there any way we can get into this rock?” Bey asked.

Leep reached out to check the rock’s heat and mass. As her robotic arm touched it, the rock formation opened up like a giant book, revealing a large green cube inside. A narrow pipe extended from the bottom of the cube and

disappeared into the ground.

“It looks like the water is flowing up the pipe and into the machine,” Sivah said.

A glowing, diamond-shaped receptacle stood on top of the machine. It radiated a powerful yellow light.

“This thing is drinking up our dagoreems!” Yalcof said.

Zale studied the machine and suddenly recognized it from one of his father’s old military manuals.

“That’s a Wistar Generator!” Zale said.

“Scientists on Alron designed them for the War. But they were never produced. At least

not by the Alronians.”

“Why not?” asked Bey.

“Because the Navan’ods invaded the planet and took over everything,” Zale said.

“Which can mean only one thing,” Sivah gasped.

“Correct,” a strange voice said from behind them. “This is a Navan’od generator.”

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