

BIG BOXES AND BABES

Dana Davis

Amid the shoppers in the big box full of bright lights and noisy melodies, she stood observing the humans around her. She had seen busy places on other worlds but never with hardened faces pushing wire baskets in such determination. Near her feet, a human female placed a handled contraption. Inside the contraption was a tiny human, a saliva bubble forming near its mouth. The round eyes stared blankly at her and she stepped to one side. The tiny human kept eye contact, something that unnerved her a bit, so she dug into her purse and pulled out the small round mirror. She appeared as any other human female, ugly as that was, nothing out of place. The surgeons on ship had done a fine job. The tiny human hadn't moved its gaze from her.

She nudged her partner. "Watch this," she said in the native tongue of this region. "The eyes follow you wherever you go."

After she moved from side to side, her partner laughed and said, "It's just like that Haunted Mansion at Disneyland where the pictures follow you."

They had spent the previous week at the rodent's home. When the place first came up on their ship's screens, it took them three hours to realize that humans didn't have big ears and large white feet. They could joke about their mistakes now but the Senior Vice President of Offworld Relations was none too happy at the time. These humans had strange entertainment customs.

She moved back and forth in the tiny human's view, she and her partner chuckling at the round eyes that never left her. The adult human female gave them a sharp look, scooped up the handled contraption and stormed toward a shiny rack with clothes hanging from it.

"Guess she doesn't like us," her partner said. He scratched at his artificial nose.

She didn't think she could ever get used to appearing human and looked forward to tonight, when she would get her own features back. This was the last day of their explorations on Earth. "Humans are protective of those tiny squalling things," she explained.

Her partner, who spent most of his time studying plants and geo formations, leaned to her. "They're very ugly."

She chuckled. "I agree. But then, the fully grown humans aren't much better looking."

Both tapped their wrists together in their custom of exhibiting humor before realizing humans would think that behavior odd, and they switched back to laughter.

"Should we take one with us for study?" her partner said. His simulated blue eyes studied her.

"I don't think that's a good idea," she told him.

She pointed out the artificial, tiny human figures scattered around the big box. They resembled the live one in the contraption, though there were subtle differences like skin tone and hair color. Some sat above racks of clothes, while others were positioned on shelves next to what she had discovered were playthings.

"I think they make those whenever a tiny human goes missing," she said. "They put them in these big boxes so many people will see them. I saw a woman take one and purchase it, no doubt to locate the missing tiny human it resembles."

Her partner nodded. "You've studied these humans very well."

She gave him a human smile.

"Perhaps we should purchase one of the artificial tiny humans," he said. "At least we would have something to study."

She agreed and took up one wearing a pink outfit. There were three that looked exactly alike, missing triple births no doubt. Either way, the humans still had two others to use in their search.

The big box announced that it was closing so they made their purchase and headed outside to search for the primitive, metal transportation vehicle that sat among the hundreds of others between white painted lines.

For some reason, they always had trouble finding the thing.

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