

## **The Toy**

"It's a very good toy. It hardly ever makes any mess and can do a lot around the home."

The two aliens stood and watched the toy, which at that moment was sitting and looking at the view plate. This was showing a large and well-kept garden with pale orange sunlight highlighting the vibrant looking blue grass. A small fountain was in one corner and the purple water was flowing in a gentle curve into an ornate silver bowl. Sensing their glance the silent figure turned and looked at them for a moment before turning back to the scene.

"It's very good with children. Last week it played with the child from next door. A real shame that she ran away." The two moved back towards the alcove and their voices receded into the distance. Leaving the human alone in the room with her thoughts.

Some hours later, the girl went out and started to dig in the garden. Carefully moving some rocks and redesigning the pathways round the strange plants, which moved in the soft early evening breeze. As it got dark, she stopped work and stared up at the twin moons, which were rising in the evening sky. Then she turned and entered the house. There she was met in the reception hall and told to prepare the evening meal for them.

The young woman went through a mirrored door into a large and well-equipped kitchen. Some utensils were lying on top of shelves in the triangular shaped room and in one corner a large green bag lay half open with some orange grass half falling out of it. She went over to this and lifted some out. This had a slightly oily smell, like seaweed and she started to sort through it. After a while of this she opened a drawer and brought out a large serrated knife, which she used to chop the vegetable. After about 30 minutes of hard work it was all cut and she tested edge of the knife with her finger briefly before putting it in the radiation cleaner. In a cupboard she found some blue horses tails, which she carefully dipped in some thick golden liquid spice until at last she was done. She arranged all the food that she had prepared on an ornate gold dish, which had some blue gems inlaid in it, before carrying this through to the dining room. This was set on the long, black table. Since it was very dark now, she switched on the automatic lighting and the walls began to glow with a soft green internal light. She then went back quickly to the kitchen and got some kraals. These were small wraithlike creatures and had a sharp pungent smell. She took these through in their cages to the dining room and placed them within easy reach in the centre of the table next to the dish. The kraals let out small cries and ran around in their cages. With a last, lingering glance she left the room and heard the two aliens entering behind her. They began to help themselves to the vegetables and the kraals, lifting up the struggling animals and lowering them gently down their expanding throats. There was silence for a while, apart from the sound of them eating, until the worst of their hunger pangs had been driven away.

"So tell me, Xainthorpe, where did the toy come from? Can you get more?"

Xainthorpe laughed.

"I knew you would be curious. It was after the expedition last year. You know... when we liberated that little planet called Ground, or something like that, by the natives. They stopped trying to fight us eventually. Of course we had to show them how to have respect for civilised people."

"What did the expedition do?"

"They took some away as pets. There is a large demand for them now. I was very fortunate to get one. Of course, they don't last long here."

"Pity, they are such a novelty."

They finished eating in silence.

In a small room the girl was crying softly, her hair falling forwards across her face. She was looking at a photograph cradled in her hand of a family standing together. Her room was bare with only a small pile of clothes in one corner and a dirty and torn blanket in another. It was very quiet when she finally stopped sobbing and sat huddled in one corner with a small diary on her lap.

After the two had finished, Xainthorpe rang a small bell and led the way out. The girl then came back to the dining room and with a sigh of distaste began to clear up the remains of the meal. The next day the girl went out early into the garden. In one corner a recently planted red bush was growing tall and had already started to produce some small green flowers which smelled like marzipan. The aroma of these filled the air and the girl sat for a while on a small stone bench, which she had built nearby recently. Her peace was broken by the sight of Xainthorpe, who was coming down the small winding path towards her.

"Was this yours?" Xainthorpe asked, holding out a small gold necklace with the letters Jane hanging from it by a small loop. "I found it on the path and thought it would do for a present when I go to lunch today." She stood and looked around at the bushes and trees that were nearby. "You have done well with the garden. Everything is growing very tall for the time of year." She turned and walked back the way she had come.

Meanwhile the girl had moved her head forward so that her hair was covering her eyes and was sorrowfully feeling for the lost chain. Xainthorpe left the dwelling later for lunch at her neighbours who lived about 30 miles away. Meanwhile, Jane wandered around the garden before re-entering the house.

She became aware that she was being watched and quickly turned round. In front of her she saw a small alien girl wearing some red and black clothes, which seemed to glow in the light. They watched each other warily for a while before the small girl finally spoke to her. "I want you to play with me!"

Jane nodded quickly and then looked around. She hesitated a moment, before turning and walking towards the kitchen. The girl went after her to the door and then waited whilst Jane entered. After a few moments she came out and beckoned the youngster, who followed as she went down the passageway towards a small storeroom that was lying empty and unused. Standing by the open door, she smiled and beckoned the youngster to enter. Thrilled to be playing like this, the alien entered. Behind her Jane looked both ways down the passageway again before removing the knife from her belt and entering the room as well. Three hours later Xainthorpe returned to the house. She found Jane carefully digging in the garden, turning over the earth. Jane stopped work as she became aware of Xainthorpe's gaze and looked boldly back. At last Xainthorpe seemed to come to a decision and called out. Two

large robots came out into the garden and pulled the unresisting human away.

That evening a large party was held in Xainthorpe's home with many quests coming to try the new food, which she had tasted for the first time earlier that day. Sweet and Sour Human.

**Excerpt from a translated script found and now in the Museum of alien contact at Karoon.**

**(SEE REF. 1222.33 FOR DESCRIPTION OF ORIGINAL PLANET)**

*... It was Spring when I killed my first child. Chance had given me the opportunity and I had taken it eagerly. I felt exhilarated afterwards and buried her in the garden. The bushes then grew tall and strong and I realised that this was a sign from God... During the next few months I killed others but it became difficult to find more sacrifices... It was whilst I was out searching one day that the Aliens came to Earth and I was captured. It was never the same again.*

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