

JULIA'S RECORDS

They waited in a stone-cold silence while Danziger programmed the gear set to take a reading of the surrounding land. Walman strapped Julia into her cot, just to be on the safe side. It had been Bess' idea to use the gear set as a way of finding out where Julia had taken Morgan... and of seeing if he was still alive. It would take several minutes to jury-rig, as Danziger had to connect the resonance scan readings into the gear set to create a fake representation of the land surrounding the camp. It wouldn't be a perfect virtual landscape, but in her drug-induced state, Julia might not know the difference, and hopefully, she would lead them to where she had taken Morgan.

Just moments before, Yale had used the cybernetic enhancements in his eye to read the highlights of Julia's log entries at an incredible speed, allowing him to piece together within seconds what she had done. The truth of Julia's presence was shattering. Already, Devon could see her vision of New Pacifica disappearing before her eyes, and she wondered what else there might be about the group that she did not know. What other dangerous secrets would pop up from nowhere to obstruct their journey? And whose secrets would they be? Would they be Danziger's? Morgan's? Alonzo's? Her own?

Alonzo was sitting on a crate on one side of the tent, looking more sick than Devon had ever seen him. Bess was pacing back and forth, her rage visibly spilling out in all directions. Danziger was squinting at the delicate wiring within the gear set, dealing with other people's troubles in his usual way of getting lost in his work and keeping quiet. Yale was still scanning through Julia's records at a lightning pace when he suddenly whispered, "Oh, my God..."

Devon was at his side instantly. "What?" she asked, dreading the worst. Was it something to do with Morgan? She felt that if her stomach were to twist itself into knots any more, she'd be standing upside down.

"I can't believe what I'm seeing!" Yale said, still scrolling through information far too fast for Devon to read. "This is incredible!"

"What is it?" Devon asked, beside herself with anxiety. "It's...it's..."

[End of Doug's part]

"It's... it's... What date is it today?" Yale asked urgently.

"Uh, I don't know..." Devon answered. "It's our fiftieth day on the planet. Why? What do you see?" "

"There's no time to explain now, Devon. I need to know what date it is back on the stations. Danziger!"

"Uhuh?" the mechanic answered absently, still engrossed in trying to recreate the camp's surroundings in VR.

"Danziger, the TransRover has a build-in calendar system that keeps track of Universal Station Time, regardless where it is, right?"

"Uh, yes, why? What's suddenly so important about knowing what date it is today?"

"I'll explain later. Come on, quickly!" and Yale rushed out of the tent, followed by a rather bemused looking Devon and John Danziger, leaving Bess and Alonzo to keep an eye on Julia. Neither of them seemed very interested in what all the commotion was about anyway.

The trio quickly moved to the Rover and John climbed in the cabin. A few moments later he called down "It's the 25th of April back home."

Yale, uncharacteristically, cursed and said, "I guess we're lucky we caught it today..."

"It?" Devon asked. "Don't you mean 'her'? What's going on? What else has Julia done?" Devon silently braced her for the worst. What else had their doctor done to their son? Wasn't it enough that she'd been spying on Eden Advance and performing unauthorized procedures on the small boy?

"Devon, this has little to do with Julia. I was just lucky I caught it when scanning through her files. Danzinger, we need to disconnect all the systems! We need to power down all vehicles, monitors and gear communication systems. And we need to do it now!"

"Wait a minute," Danziger said. "It'll take hours tomorrow to restart everything if I shut it all down. I'm not gonna do that just because you say so!"

"John, I'm afraid we've been infected with a computer virus. If we don't shut down all the systems, they will be wiped out the second the date changes to the 26th! We'd lose everything..."

"What?!", "But how...?" Devon and John asked simultaneously.

"Never mind the 'how'," Yale urged. "Just go ahead and shut us down NOW!" Danziger hesitated a second, but one look at Yale told him the tutor was serious, and seriously

worried.

"Baines, Walman, Alonzo, I need some help here!" he yelled.

While the men worked to shut down all computerized equipment and maintenance systems, Devon walked back to the medtent with Yale. "Yale, what is going on? What has this computer virus to do with Julia spying on us? And what are we going to do about Morgan? If we can't use VR, how are we going to get her to tell us what she did to him?" she worried.

"Devon," the tutor said, stopping and looking her in the eyes. "Eden Project will survive this, no matter what. Julia has done a lot of things wrong, but the virus isn't one of them. I doubt she even knows about it, seeing she's more geared toward human viruses. As for Morgan, once all the systems are shut off, we can risk using one VR gear-set to try and find him."

oOo

Later that evening most of Eden Advance sat around the campfire. Alonzo still looked extremely miserable, but Bess was glowing with her arms tightly wrapped around the rescued Morgan. Devon stared at the fire, looking pensive. The silence became oppressive, only broken by Bess's and Morgan's quiet mutterings of endearments to each other. Then the medtent-flap was pushed aside and a tired-looking Yale and Danziger walked out. Devon rushed towards them, grabbing Yale's arm and walking him back to the fire. "Okay, Yale, would you mind explaining to us what's going on?" Devon asked, accompanied by nods from Baines, Walman and the rest of the group.

Yale sighed, sat down and began his story. "I guess you could say we were fortunate that Julia spied on us," he started.

"What!" Morgan interrupted. "The woman hit me unconscious and left me tied to a tree last night!"

"Shhh," Bess motioned him to quiet.

"Yes, we were lucky." Yale continued. "If we hadn't caught her, I would never have scanned her files the way I did, looking for things that were out of the ordinary. And then I'd never have noticed the virus until it was too late..."

"Yale, you mentioned a computer virus earlier today. But how could we have caught one on this planet? Don't viruses pass from one system to another while communicating? We haven't been communicating with anyone off planet... only Julia did." Bess wondered

out loud.

"Yes, Bess, you're right. Computer viruses are like human viruses in that respect. They need to be in close contact to infect one another. But it seems that someone else has been communicating off planet while in VR..." The whole group threw suspicious glances around, but no one noticed that Morgan Martin, usually the first to complain, kept quiet and stared at the ground.

"What are you talking about, Yale?" Devon asked. "While I was scanning Julia's files, I found a message that came from old earth. Julia has access to most of our comm systems, so that's probably how it got in her files. The message was directed towards a group of people that exchange fictional stories they write about actual VR-shows. The message was from one of the group members, warning the others about a possible virus hidden in a file she had sent out recently. This virus activates on the 26th of each month and wipes out complete systems. It seems this file was also sent to G889 and infected all our systems. Danziger and I have been trying to find a way to get rid of it."

"And did you?" Bess asked.

"Yes, we did. We had to use Morgan's VR gear though." Danziger answered, looking darkly at the man. But Morgan didn't respond, instead he kept looking at something seemingly very interesting right between his feet.

"So," Devon said, "all is clear now?"

"Yes," Yale answered. "We can restart are our equipment again safely."

"Good," Devon said. "So now we only need to decide what to do about Julia..."

Disclaimer: This story is based on the Amblin Entertainment/Universal Television series Earth 2. The original creators own all original characters. The story is meant for entertainment purposes only and does not have the intention to infringe on any copyrights.