

As the meetings continued, Toby made it clear that a grand tour of the island was in order. "I want to see the wonders and beauty of this new world myself", he proclaimed. The 2 week tour was scheduled. 6 members of the committee, Toby, and 5 people from his entourage would travel in 2 of the ship's rovers, with stops in towns along the way. Toby was determined to make an impression, and people of the towns were encouraged to come out to meet him in the evenings.

It was a cool day when the group assembled in front of the Grand Hotel, with the rovers from the ship waiting. 3 natives and 3 visitors boarded each rover, and they set off over the bridge to West Laton, and then south of Lake Lia towards Visla. In the second rover, Godfrey Lipito was busy snapping photos and tapping words into his recorder. Toby, in the lead, was smiling as he thought about the opportunities this new land offered.

The road narrowed and hugged the coast of Lake Lia. A break in the usual overcast opened as they curved south, and the patch of blue sky shone on the placid surface of the lake as they proceeded inland. The few dwellings along the road dwindled to none until the path neared the inlet below Laton. A few small homes with piers behind them lined the shore. After quite a few more miles, they saw signs of more activity. A large brown warehouse sat by the road, and Nadia, acting the part of tour guide, told Toby that this was one of the fish processing facilities. Toby seemed unaware of how important the sea was to the economy of the island. Godfrey was curious to know if there were any particular fish that were particularly sought after at the markets. Were there any considered to be delicacies by the people? Nadia didn't have a good answer. She was happy to have whatever Joseph brought back from the day's sail. Susan the librarian offered that her favorite was the butterfish, but added that there were so many kinds of delicious fish in the ocean, and it was hard to pick just one. Godfrey typed some more into his recorder. Finally, the narrow rutty road widened and smoothed out, and the buildings of Vista appeared ahead. Along the side of the main street stood the one modest inn of the town, a somewhat weathered looking, two story unpainted wooden structure. The travelers climbed out of the rovers, and through the door to the cafe which was dimly lit by the dwindling light from the windows, and fires in the small fireplaces at each end of the room. Several tables had been pushed together at the center of the room, and the visitors took their seats as steaming dishes of fish, potatoes and leeks were brought out from the kitchen. Toby took his seat at the head of the table and invited Nadia and Susan to the chairs on either side of him. A tray of tall glasses of beer were brought out, and Toby quickly finished his and called for another. Nadia felt a bit uncomfortable about Toby's frequent glances her way as they supped. After the pie was eaten, Nadia and most of the rest of the tourers retired to their rooms upstairs, to prepare for the next day. Toby, now into the fourth of the local brews that seemed to get better with each round, stayed behind with Roberto and Godfrey, talking about restaurants and lavish hotels, and a bustling space port.

It was cool and windy by the time the group assembled for the next leg of the tour. Today's destination was Olla, the southernmost settlement on the island. The rovers rolled slowly out of Vista, with the sea to their left and the peak of Ollva Mountain to the northeast. The craggy peak of the Isle of Hald poked through the clouds that were being swept eastward by the breeze. Sheep grazed on the high grasslands that waved in the wind. The scenery did not change much as they lurched along the road that had dwindled to a dirt trail, and Toby was clearly bored. This time, he questioned Gary Gowin, owner of the foundry near Lango, about the production of metals on Ladla. The Lake Hills were abundantly endowed with iron, copper, and tin ores, and a variety of other metals, as well as with many veins of coal. The output of the smelting operation was fairly small, so the metals produced were rarely used in buildings. They mainly went into production of the large ships for travel to other islands, electric tractors and trucks for farming operations, and for expansion of the hydro and windmill based power distribution network. A lot of the metal was shipped by barge from the piers in Lisp to the shipyard at Olla. Toby wondered if the island had the resources to step up production enough to support construction of the rail line and space port. Nadia was glad that Toby was busy in conversation with Gary, as she had slept poorly last night, and the rocking of the rover soon put her to sleep. Finally, the rovers rolled into the town, near the shipyard whose piers poked a long way out into the sea. The largest vessel in the fleet was being constructed, to trade goods with Ovina and Ovino, the two largest masses of the Ovin Islands, hundreds of miles south over the ocean. Their home for the night was the Sailor's Inn, right by the shore. Once again, fish was featured on the menu. Toby's chef Pierre was hoping there would be some more variety to the islander's diet. On the second night of the tour, Toby was already becoming bored with the cuisine. He was acquiring a greater appreciation for the local beer, though, and again partook freely. The boat builders and sailors at the Inn were in awe of the emperor in their town, and were happy to tell tales of their adventures on the seas. Nadia quietly left the dinner to catch up on her sleep, before she could catch Toby's attention again.

By morning time, the sun was shining dimly through the thinning clouds, and the fog in the harbor was thinning, revealing a calm mirror like ocean. The rovers went north, directly towards the peak of the Ollva Mountain. The grasslands gave way to forest as the path continued to rise. The forest thinned, and the drivers slowed the rovers around steep switchbacks along the mountain side. In the distance to the west, more fog was lifting from the lakes and bogs of the Great Marsh that extended to the sea. They stopped for lunch at the peak, under almost clear skies, with views of ocean to the north and south. Godfrey was once again snapping pictures and typing furiously on his recorder. The sun was starting to set as they rounded the last of the switchbacks and descended

through the woods on the north face of the mountain. They arrived in Vial as darkness fell. The travelers settled into 2 homes in the village of Vial. Pierre slipped into kitchen of the home Toby was to stay in, and had a whispered conversation with the owner before Toby entered the house. He learned that Jack was a hunter, and had a very successful harvest of the deer that often wandered down from the woods. They distracted Toby with beer, bread and cheese while they conspired to produce a feast. Nadia and Susan were relieved when Pierre and Jack emerged from the kitchen with steaming venison steaks, squash, and fruit, which Toby attacked with great enthusiasm. Pierre took another huge platter to other house, and was met with surprised delight. Godfrey enjoyed the repast as well, and even managed to get some pictures under the dim lights, and took some more notes. It was late by the time all of the feast was consumed, so Toby, full of beer and deer, took his leave first, as the plates were cleared away.

The next destination was relatively close, so they all took their time getting up and getting ready. The rovers hugged the shore of Liaville Harbor, finally heading north away from the shore to meet the Lia Road, where they turned west. In the second rover, Henry, Laton's town engineer, was fascinated by Roberto's knowledge of the technology behind space flight. Henry was known for his ability to build machines, including generators and windmills to create power, water towers to store energy, and batteries to power the boats and land vehicles. Space travel was far beyond what could be accomplished on his island. He had been experimenting with flying machines, but the bulky batteries he created were far too heavy to power such a thing for any significant distance. The idea of rockets, the enormous power of fusion reactors, and ion drives was revolutionary. He had helped the visitors install the equipment that enabled communications via the few cellphones they had provided, and had an idea of how the stations communicated with the satellites, but did not understand how they really worked. Computers and electronics were like magic. He was thirsty for knowledge, and was curious about what would be taught in the schools Toby had talked about creating. Toby's aide Thomas told him that Toby was looking for advisors on where to site the school, and how to find and train teachers, and recruit students. Henry was excited about helping to get the school started, and to learn more about alien technology. The day's travel was soon over, and they rolled up to an elegant brick building in Liaville, Ladla's westernmost harbor. One of the residents of the town had become quite prosperous from his shipping business, and graced the town with the finest hotel on the island. Electricity from the large dam on the river was plentiful, and the lights on the chandeliers in the lobby were sparkling brightly. The party was delighted to have their choice of fine entrees, and even Pierre the chef was impressed. Godfrey was delightedly taking more pictures, and putting more notes into recorder. He shared his happiness with Toby, who was starting to feel that maybe this was not such a primitive place after all. Dinner was accompanied by

wine from the vineyards that flowed down the hills above the harbor. Toby was in a playful mood, and flirting with Nadia in a not particularly subtle manner. She managed to sneak away when he turned to consult with Godfrey again.

They got an early start in the morning, heading out into a day like most on Ladla. Overcast, but warm, with a gentle eastward wind. They turned north from the harbor, following along the east bank of the Listy River. The grasslands visible to their right were divided into fields, with farmhouses in the distance, and sheep, cows, and llamas grazing. As the Listy Mountain appeared in the distance, they crossed the long stone bridge over the North Listy River, and followed the southern branch west, with the mountain out the right side windows. Sally Freud, riding in the back of the second rover, was starting to feel more comfortable with the tall, pale, thin people of this place. She herself was taller than most of her companions from Tobus, so maybe the natives felt a bit more comfortable with her as well. Elvin, the innkeeper of the Grand Hotel, had a sincere love for the rivers and hills around Laton, and seemed to know everybody in the town. Shad Hills was a builder who appreciated the stones and trees that covered most of the land, and knew how to use them to create beautiful and practical structures. Both of the men seemed a bit wary of the changes Toby had in mind, and Sally had a good understanding of how easily they fit in with the slow evolution of life on the island. She wasn't so sure that Toby understood. Lode turned out to be a small, fairly rustic village nestled at the edge of the woods at foothills of the mountain. The welcoming committee in the town had started large blazes in the open fireplaces at each side of the village square, and were grilling sausages and fish, and serving up pitchers of the local brews. The tourists sat at long tables with the townspeople, talking and laughing until the fires dwindled and the night cooled down. They retired to rooms in some of the humble houses of the village.

Pierre had been piloting the lead rover on the tour, but Toby was restless, so he was allowed to take charge on the road to List. They started out with a lurch that threw everyone forward from their seats, but Toby quickly mastered the controls, and they lumbered slowly up hill towards a valley on the side of Listy Mountain. A plume of steam became visible, and as they approached they saw that the South Listy River began where a hot spring bubbled up from the volcanic roots of the mountain, and emptied into a small lake that fell down a waterfall into the river. Godfrey got some more pictures of this scenic area for his collection. Pierre, freed of his duties as pilot, told Elvin the innkeeper about Toby's culinary predilections, and about his ideas on how to prepare the many unique ingredients available on the island. They proceeded west along the other bank of the river, towards more fields and grazing land. A number of large sea birds glided overhead as they approached List, the westernmost settlement. As they drove down the hill towards the harbor, they could see the vast array of ocean before them, and several ships being loaded

for passage to the Isle of Laila. Nadia had never been to this part of her land, and was awed by the expanse of the open sea. List was a quiet place, and dinner was relaxed and satisfying.

The sea was calm in the morning, as they had an early breakfast with smoked fish, bread, fruit and coffee, in the cafe overlooking the harbor. They would be traveling a long way today. Toby was curious about the history of the people of the area, and asked Susan the librarian about that. As they rolled away from the sea, through the foothills of the mountain, Susan gave the speech she always gave when people wanted to know about history. "It is clear from ruins on the island, and old books that have been discovered, that once a more advanced culture occupied the land. Our ancestors were able to create the tools and other things we use now, based on artifacts that were found. Not so long ago, we were all hunters and fishermen, making do with what we could find. Once we settled down into villages, and started farming, life became easier, and people were able to spend time creating books and art. We discovered how to use electricity to make our lives easier, and we started building dams and windmills to power the tractors and trucks and boats that we depend on. The one library in Laton is small, but contains much of the knowledge we have amassed over the years." Toby told her that he would ask the people back on Tobus to bring books from home on the next visit, to enrich the library with the culture of his planet. The road continued up hill, heading east around the mountain and finally wound into the woods along the side. The pine trees thinned out, and ended where the small town of Comton clung to the side of the rocks. The twin dishes and tall antenna of the communications facility poked through the clouds at the top. Toby was impressed by the view, and thought that a little place in the woods would be a wonderful place to get away from it all. Comton itself was not particularly picturesque, having been built only as a base for the communications equipment. The windmills and water storage tanks on this part of the mountain were purely a practical consideration to power the station. Dinner was modest, and they slept in the dormitory built for the crew of islanders and Tobus visitors who built the facility.

There was a nice view of the harbor above Lima as they rolled down from Comton. Fishing boats were leaving the port, leaving long wakes as they headed out beyond the large island that protected the harbor. They followed along the bank of the North Lode River, and crossed over the large stone bridge, heading east towards the fishing village. They had traveled about half way around the island now. Lima was much like the other fishing communities, and they stayed at a small hotel, where they had fish grilled over the fire. The island did have electricity, but not everywhere, so candles for lighting and wood burning fireplaces were still in common use.

The northeast corner of Lima was open to the harbor, but much of the town was

darker, along the edge of The Great Forest. The tallest trees in the land loomed overhead, and closed in around the rovers as they continued along the Great Forest Road into the heart of the forest. The trees became taller as they made their way, and it was clear that much of the woods had been untouched for centuries. Godfrey was jotting in his tablet again, thinking that this would be an appealing destination for tourists. Roberto, driving the second rover, was startled to see a very large animal suddenly cross the narrow road into the forest as he approached it. Henry, in the second row of seats, didn't see it at all. He was busy wondering if Anna Tilden, at 162 Tobus years, the island's oldest resident, would have any good tales to tell. She lived at the Hilltop Inn in Great Forest, their destination for the evening. The trees grew even taller as they drove on, surpassing the height of the largest ones on Tobus. They topped a long hill, and then took a turn to the right, towards another hill that loomed up over the trees. The Inn, a large square building of red brick, stood at the top of the hill. As the sky turned red with a stunning sunset, they entered to find a large fireplace, with venison steaks grilling, and a large wooden table set up for the visitors and the people who made the Inn their home. Anna Tilden sat in a large armchair along one side of the table, and greeted the travelers as they seated themselves. She was tall and fair as were most of the population of Lad, and her eyes were bright and shining as she introduced herself to the tourers. The meat, squash soup, and pitchers of beer were served, and the room was quiet as the diners feasted. Toby had a smile on his face as the berry pies were served, and he refilled his mug once again. Nadia had told him about Anna, and he asked her to tell a story of past times on the island. Anna began, "When I was young, the generators and power plants had not yet been built, and our land was very much the same as it had been for generations. I was born in Liaville, in a fishing shack by the water, to a modest fisherman and his wife. My brother and I would swim in the harbor on the warm days, and sometimes we got to go out on the small sailboat with our father, to watch him fish. Few of us travelled very far from home, but we would take the horse drawn carriages to Lima and Laton to visit our cousins, several times a year. The cousins in Laton told tales of a man who had discovered old buildings in the woods at the base of the Lake Hills. Strange machines were found in the buildings, and it seemed that maybe we were not the first people to have lived here. Many years later, we were amazed at the electric lights in the streets of Laton. It seemed like magic that there was light in the night time." She was wary of these new developments, now more than a hundred years in the past. She had been living at the Inn, where life was still much like it was when she was young, for the last 50 years or so. She had more stories, such as the ones about the creatures living in the forest, and went on until the fire had faded, and so had the visitors.

A warm breeze was blowing as the tour descended the hill in the morning, with Anna Tilden sitting in rocking chair on the Inn's porch, waving goodbye. As

they descended back down into the tall trees, they were all on the lookout for more of the strange creatures lurking in the forest. Movements in the trees were all just squirrels or birds, but the travelers were nonetheless disappointed at not seeing any mysterious wildlife. Godfrey was again writing in his notebook, adding the Inn to the list of attractions. Maybe it could be expanded and modernized to make it more appealing to tourists. He knew the head of SpaceTour Corporation would be disappointed if he did not come home with plans of how to sell space tours to their wealthy clients. They emerged from the trees at last, and the road ran along the small fishing villages on the north coast, and the grazing land on the other side, between the ocean and Lake Adia. The rovers continued beyond the fields into the low grasslands, and the land around them narrowed, so they could see both the ocean to the left, and Lake Adia to the right. A beam of sunlight broke through the clouds, and Godfrey managed some good shots of the sparkling lake and the ocean, with a fishing boat sailing into the harbor of Olean. This time, the travelers separated and stayed at houses of several fishing and farming families.

Toby was starting to get a bit weary of life on the road by the eleventh day of the journey. He was anxious to get back to his suite in Lango, with his chef and aide at his service, and get back to his plans for this place. The trip was giving him ideas of where he would like to his own home on the island. Would it be best to have a quiet retreat in the mountains or the Great Forest? Or would it make more sense to have an estate near Laton, to keep his finger on the pulse of the place? He was pleased with his plans to hire the farmers the facility would displace as workers on the port, and how their lives would be improved by living near the gleaming port. It was a fairly short leg of the tour, going south next to the bay, and over the river. Alia turned out to be another fishing village much like the others. He was in better spirits as he drank up his beer, and was happy to be seated next to Nadia again, to expound on his plans for this land. Her slender and fair figure made him wonder if there really was something about this place that kept people healthy into old age. He wondered if she was really much older than she looked. He really would need a second home here if he was going to live a longer life than he would have on Tobus.

The next day, Toby rode in the second rover, so he could talk with Shad Hills about building a home, and Sally took his place in the first of them. The shiny rovers looked out of place as they rolled along the narrowing road, back over the stone bridge over the river, and along the foothills of the Lake Hills. Toby asked Shad for advice about what kind of structure could be built that would be worthy of a man of his stature. It should be large, of course, and fairly modern. And what did Shad think of the sites Toby was thinking about? Shad pondered for a few minutes as the rover lurched along the rutty road. "If you are looking for a spectacular site, the side of Listy Mountain would be

perfect. The home could include a tower with a view of the mountain top, the river, and the ocean. I don't know about a shiny modern looking house. I like to use natural materials, and I would design the building to blend in with the stone of the mountain above, and the woods below. If you wanted the modern amenities, you could build them inside the structure, and nobody seeing it from outside would know. On the other hand, if privacy and relaxation is your goal, an oversized wood and stone cottage in the woods would be best. Surrounded by trees, you would be able to enjoy the peace and solitude of nature. I don't like the idea of a place right near Laton. Too many neighbors, it wouldn't be a peaceful retreat at all." Toby wasn't so sure he agreed with that assessment, he kind of enjoyed being the center of attention. In the first car, Nadia got to know Sally Freud, who talked about her interest in history, and how she got to be a member of the crew on the journey from Tobus. Nadia was impressed at how easily Sally had gotten used to the quiet, agriculture life on the island. She seemed to have a sincere appreciation of the relationship between the people and the land and the sea that they took for granted. The rovers soon rolled up to a modest inn at the farming and fishing village of Logo. There were large building visible down near the piers, and his guides explained to Toby that this is where many of the crops and fish harvests were processed and preserved, for trade with other islands in the system.

They rolled out of Logo, with the Lake Hills in the distance to the west, along the grasslands, on a day with warm rain that intensified as they drove on. The narrow road was dotted with an occasional small farm, and traffic was limited to a few small electric tractors hauling the harvest. As they reached the end of the grasslands, the road rose above a small lake on the Lower Lin River. The morning's rain dwindled by early afternoon, and they saw many pale, naked children swimming and laughing in the lake. Their webbed feet propelled them swiftly around the swimming hole. Shad told Thomas and Sally about how just about everybody on this wet planet loved swimming, and learned to be comfortable in the water at a very early age. The road bent to the right, and they saw the large waterfall at the end of the lake. The Lower Lin River Road widened and smoothed out as the shape of the lander glowed in the distance, and soon they approached a group of large buildings gently billowing steam into the atmosphere. This was the foundry where the abundant ores mined from the Lake Hills were processed to produce the metals used on the island. A road crossed the river atop a dam, and a large truck could be seen slowly heading towards the foundry. Water cascaded below the power plant below the dam. It was clear that Lango was an industrial town, as large warehouses and other buildings dominated the landscape. The industry gave way to comfortable looking homes, and finally to the modern hotel overlooking the waters of Lake Lin. The travelers were efficiently treated to a well prepared meal, and Godfrey was certain to put in a note about this luxury establishment in the gritty town.

The group slept late before the next short leg of the trip, and proceeded south from Lango, and around the southern boundary of Lake Lin. It was a cool day, but they could clearly see the craggy stones of the Eagle Rock island through the mist, not too far from the shore of the lake. Today Toby was getting a tour of Joseph and Nadia's farm, south of Laton. They arrived at the small cluster of houses, of Nadia's family and of the several other families who helped farm the land, early in the afternoon, and shared a light lunch. Then the group boarded several wagons towed by the farmers' electric tractors, and headed out to the fields. They stopped at the large barn shared by the farmers, and saw that it was well stocked with fodder for the the goats and cows that spent the evenings there. They passed by the fences of green fields where the animals grazed. Further away were the crops, in various stages of growth. With temperatures that stayed pretty much the same all year round, plants would simply grow until they were ready to harvest. The lack of real seasons made the farm work relatively easy. Circling back along the road, behind the houses, they saw the small pond, several windmills, and the water towers used for irrigation, and for power generation as the water flowed down from the towers. It was a remarkably self contained operation, and the visitors were impressed with how efficiently the farmers used the resources at hand. The light was fading as the tourists got off the wagons and the tractors were stowed in the barn. They all gathered in the large living room of Nadia's home, where her grandmother and several helpers were bringing trays of venison sausage, corn, and beans to a table. Pitchers of beer, and warm bread was added to the table. The guests filled their plates and mugs, and settled into chairs gathered into a circle around the large blazing hearth. Sally was a bit chilled, and took a seat closest to the fire. As they started to eat, the door opened, and Nadia's brother entered, dressed in his fishing overalls. He took some food and beer, and settled into a seat on the other side of the fire. Sally noticed that he was a little shorter and darker than most of the natives in the room. Nadia introduced him to the travelers, explaining that he preferred the fisherman's life. As night set in, and Toby quaffed more rounds of beer, conversation turned to what he thought of life on the island, now that the tour was almost done. He was animated and laughing, recalling the sights he had seen over the last 2 weeks. The diners departed a few at a time, to sleep in the houses of some of the other farmers. Sally was fascinated by Joseph's story of how he came to become the sole fisherman in the family of farmers, and he seemed equally interested in her tales of interplanetary travel. He was the first of the family to learn to swim, and his love of the sea was inspiring. She was absorbed in their conversation, and didn't notice that the rest of the guests had departed. Finally, as the fire had faded down to coals, they got up, and Joseph escorted her to her room. She realized how tired she was, and was soon asleep, after thoughts about regretting that the tour was finally ending.

The sun broke through the nearly constant overcast the next morning, and they

aimed the rovers up the road back to Laton, seeing Joseph's tractor slowly roll towards the ocean. Nadia stayed behind to go back to work on the farm, and Toby seemed to be sorry to see her leave the tour. They soon arrived back at the Grand Hotel. Toby retired to his suite, and the rest of the travelers disbanded, some happy to get back to their regular life, and some sad that the little adventure was over.