

The Disappearing Stone: The Robot Twins

By Michele Dutcher

“For the seven thousandth two hundred and forty second time – a magnetic field is the most important thing for a planet's retention of an atmosphere capable of sustaining life forms.” The lime-green robot, no more than three-feet tall, looked away from his tubes and fingernail-sized energy sources long enough to basically roll his eyeballs at his twin.

“...refraction of solar radiation interacting with an atmosphere?” asked number 35 to number 36 hopefully.

“No,” # 35 answered flatly, turning back towards his work.

“...ozone layer?...”

“Important yes, but not the number one factor,” mumbled #35 under his breath.

“...but, but, but...”

#35 stopped what he was doing and looked over at his only companion. He eased up, smiling a little at the little imp's insatiable curiosity, turning on his chair to face him. “I know how difficult our existence has been over the past 65 million years, especially after that unfortunate crash during entry, but I know you can remember what caused the death of our world.”

#36's eyes seem to brighten a bit. “Yes, yes, I remember now – it was the loss of our magnetic shield – that's right.”

“...and that led to...”

“...the atmosphere being stripped away by the solar winds and then all the water went into the polar ice caps.”

The robot sitting at the lab table knew his little friend would forget in a week or two, but he was pleased to once again be able to have Rit's mind at ease. Rit was the only companion he had with him, besides the holograms that appeared at regular intervals.

“When will we be done, #35? Soon?”

“As soon as possible, 34. As soon as possible.”

Suddenly a bright light appeared at the back of the small laboratory, and a harmonic voice filled the area. “We see you have chosen to use some of our DNA to alter a new-world species.”

The twin robots were momentarily awestruck. They both knew this was just a picture, geared in to appear at different stages of their progress, but the image brought back memories of the planet they had left behind.

“Indeed, Isis – we accessed a small creature processing grasping claws, and eyes which are located on each side of its head. These creatures spend a lot of time on the lower branches of the trees in this area – and their species appears promising.”

“And what do you hope to achieve in this experiment?”

“By splicing in portions of your DNA, we'll be able to move the eyes closer to the front of the face to give the creature three dimensional sight. We're also beginning work on the opposing thumb scenario.”

“We are pleased that your journey is on course and on schedule. Thank you for your efforts and your patience, Ret and Rit.”

The two lime-green creatures smiled, edging towards the hologram. The female, six feet tall, bipedal, with soft green skin and purple eyes held out her hands in obvious gratitude. The two robots briefly entered the hologram's field of light and were rewarded with pleasant sensations covering their bodies, all the way from their tiny four-toed feet to their huge black eyes.

“Remember, my little fellows, the package must be given up of the creature's own free will.”

“We remember Isis,” they repeated in unison. “We remember.”

“The three beings, separated by time and space, smiled in each other's virtual presence.

Egypt 6000 BC

“For the 6 millionth two hundred thousandth six hundred and thirty third time, it's the magnetic fields!” shouted #35 at #36. “Thoth, maybe you can have a go at explaining it to Rit!”

The regal Egyptian leaned forward, taking the 3 foot creature onto his lap, understanding Rit's limited mental resources, and began to gently explain how a planet could lose it's magnetic shield, and the disastrous result that would have.

In the background builders could be seen pushing huge blocks of stone into place, aided by small 'pebbles' which made the stones hover, enabling the workers to simply steer them into place. These pebbles, of course, were gifts of the two small creatures who had taken it upon themselves to, once again, give history a nudge.

“Magnetic Shield!” shouted Rit finally, confidently jumping off Thoth's lap to run towards one of the women sitting along the fertile banks of the Nile.

“The style of the structure you're building is very pleasing,” said Ret, watching his twin as he happily began to play by the river.

“I got the idea when you talked about your home. It was just a step away then to construct a structure to thank you for your amazing tutoring. Astronomy, architecture, science, mathematics – when you revealed yourselves to me, it was amazing to finally have a discussion with another being with similar interest and capabilities.”

“As much as I care about my twin, I too was relieved to have someone with whom I could have an intelligent conversation.”

The magnificently arrayed Egyptian stood for a moment, nodding to the south. “I'm not sure I understand your intentions with the stone altar you created, however. Certainly my people would be appreciative if it gave them things, but to make objects disappear? - it's a clever magic trick, but why?”

Thoth's only response from Ret was, as always, a hopeful smile.

Within the lab that was nestled inside the cone of the great mountain, Isis smiled to her husband. “We have received a carved shaft of wood through the portal.” She held it out proudly.

He allowed the holographic equations and formulas he had been studying to fade away, smiling at his wife. “Well some kind of creature carved it. Those little buggers are doing their job. We'll just have to wait and see.”

The End