

28 Plays Later – Challenge #15

Let's write a saga...

Massive, huge stories that span over years and years.

Many characters,
several generations.

The bigger - the better.

Oh, and whoever has the most characters (all speaking and all well-rounded) wins a Brucie Bonus!
(although nobody is going to check or verify... or indeed hand it out)

RED SAND, HOT COFFEE

By

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

At rise the lighting is blue, as if the room we're in is in some kind of low power mode.

A café, one that's clearly not yet open. The floor, and all surfaces are covered with sand. Upstage right, is the entrance, basically a human-sized Habitrail tunnel with an airlock.

Stage left is an accordion-style airwall - it's currently pulled shut.

LIEUTENANT and KAREN enter through the airlock. They are both wearing coveralls and re-breathers so their breathing sounds a lot like Darth Vader's.

LIEUTENANT

Here we are, ma'am.

KAREN

I'm not old enough to be a ma'am. Call me Karen. (a beat) It's awfully dark in here.

LIEUTENANT

Let me just activate the system for you, ma'am.

LIEUTENANT flips a switch on the wall.

COMPUTER (V/O)

Power system, activated

LIEUTENANT

It takes minute to juice up.

The lights slowly rise to 'normal' indoor lighting, slightly cool, like fluorescents.

COMPUTER (V/O)

Air filtration system, activated.

KAREN

Can we take off the masks now?

LIEUTENANT

Not just yet. The system will tell you.

COMPUTER (V/O)

Oxygen mix, optimum. You may now remove any breathing devices.

LIEUTENANT

(stating the obvious)

It's safe to remove your mask now ma'am.

KAREN

Gee, really? (she removes her mask) Never would have guessed. (a beat) Wow, the sand just gets everywhere here. Shouldn't it be redder?

LIEUTENANT

The sand's pretty pervasive ma'am. As to the color...

KAREN

Yes?

LIEUTENANT

Everybody asks about that. (beat) Anyway, the air system's working. You're hooked up to the communications net, and we tested the water earlier. Here's your key-card. Ping us if problems. (hands her the card)

KAREN

That's it?

LIEUTENANT

Were you expecting a brass band and a ribbon-cutting ceremony?

KAREN

Well, not the band. But, I don't know, someone saying "Welcome to Mars" would've been nice.

LIEUTENANT

I knew I'd forgotten something. (dryly)
Welcome to Mars, ma'am. Good luck with your business. (he replaces his rebreather and exits)

KAREN

(toward the exit) Thank you for coming. Have a nice day. (to herself) I wonder if they left a broom in this place.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE TWO

The café, sometime later. It's still sandy, but the chairs have been removed from all the tables. As the lights come up, Karen has ditched her coverall, and is wearing black turtleneck and jeans. She is sweeping.

COMPUTER (V/O)

Incoming message for Karen Rossi. Do you wish to accept the call.

A VIDEO SCREEN DESCENDS. AS KAREN IS SPEAKING, THE IMAGE OF AN OLDER WOMAN - ELEGANT, REFINED, APPEARS. THE IMAGE SHOULD BE A BIT GRAINY.

KAREN

Sure. I'll take it. (too cheery) Rossi's Red Sand Café, how may I help you. (beat)
Oh. Hi, Mom.

KATHERINE

Is that how you plan to dress to greet customers? I know Mars is supposed to be casual but, really, darling.

KAREN

Mom, opening's two days away. I just got off the shuttle, and haven't even checked in with Housing yet. This is how I dress to take stock.

KATHERINE

(grimacing) What's that stuff all over the floor?

KAREN

Sand, mom. Everything's covered with it. (gestures with her broom) I'm in the process of sweeping.

KATHERINE

Sand. Really. Shouldn't it be redder?

KAREN

Apparently, everybody asks that. (beat) Was there a point to this call, or are you burning up extra comm minutes before the month changes?

KATHERINE

Can't a mother check on her only single daughter when she's moved so far from home?

KAREN

Mom, it's been less than a week since we've seen each other. Mold takes longer to grow.

KATHERINE

Watch your tongue, Karen, dear. Morgan won't visit you up there if you're not welcoming and sweet.

KAREN

Morgan broke up with me before he took off on his last shuttle run. By video-phone, I might add.

KATHERINE

Break-up, schmake-up. He loves you, Rennie, I know it. He's just confused about what he wants.

KAREN

(annoyed) Well, what he *doesn't* want is a girlfriend who's busy running a business. On Mars. And don't call me 'Rennie.'

KATHERINE

Darling, I'm your mother. I can call you whatever I want. (softer) But I'll try to remember. Now, don't forget to unpack as soon as you get to your apartment. And make sure you pass my regards to Uncle George when you see him.

KAREN

(alarmed) Uncle George? Mom, Uncle George isn't on Mars, is he?

KATHERINE

(pretending that the signal is degrading) I'm sorry, darling. What did you say? I can't make out the words...

THE SCREEN GOES BLANK

COMPUTER (V/O)

This transmission has concluded. Replay is available for three days.

Karen makes a rude gesture at the screen, then resumes sweeping, continuing until the lights fade out. As everything goes dark, we hear her mutter:

KAREN

Red sand, hot coffee, sweeping, and comm-calls from my mother. Why did I even bother leaving home?

END

