

*This is a piece of cooperative fiction. Sosu Eliza wrote the introduction, then Hajene Zoe joined her and role played the part of the junct renSime while Eliza played the part of the gen.*

*As the role play was in present tense, but the story is written in past tense, a lot of editing had to be done. Hopefully all incidences were found. Please forgive us, however, if we missed spots.*

*This piece is set many years before the first Channel appeared.*

*\*see the end for Companions notes*

## **The road to Damascus**

*By Eliza ambrov Halwyn and Sectuib Zoe Farris*

### **Part One**

“I’ll take that one”

The tall sime pointed out a gen at random, and the gendealer pulled it out from the group. “A good choice, ripe, that one is.” He pulled out some tags and started to fill them out.

“I’ll also need a weeks worth of rations for it” the tall sime pulled out a wallet and started counting out the cost. “I’m on my way to Damascus. This is the last town with a pen, I’ll have to take it with me.”

“There isn’t much between here and Damascus! Taking a gen with you will slow you down. Why not take your kill here, early, and travel unencumbered?”

“I prefer not to change my schedule, I’ll put it on the pack horse, it shouldn’t slow me down too much.”

The gendealer decided he had done his civic duty and handed over the tags. “I’ll get some dried food for it.” He handed the tall sime the chain which attached to the gens collar.

While he waited for the gen dealer to return the sime took the gen outside to where two horses stood patiently waiting, flicking flies with their tails. He rearranged the load on one of the horses and, with a bit of augmentation, lifted the gen onto the pack horse, putting him in front of the packs.

The gendealer came out carrying a rather large bag. “Here is some dried food, it will last it a week and won’t go off. There are plenty of water sources along the Eyeway, you won’t need to carry extra water, but here is a canteen for its water, you won’t want to share yours. Also, here is a bag of gruel, just mix it with water and give it to it once a day. You will know when to feed it.”

He handed over the sacks and the canteen and watched as the sime arranged them behind the gen on the pack horse and mounted his own horse.

“Travel well!” he called out, as the two rode way.

During the morning gen was still groggy from the drugs in its’ system. Gens in the pens were kept drugged to keep them docile and calm. The drugs wore off quickly, however, so that by the time they were ready for the kill room they were alert and worth killing.

By midday it had started to take an interest in it’s surroundings, keeping a careful watch on the sime on the horse ahead. It made no noise to draw attention to itself, but the sime zlinned its’ awareness. He

ignored it, as long as it behaved he saw no reason to acknowledge it's presence.

However, it wasn't long before it started to broadcast discomfort. It was getting hungry, it was thirsty and a bathroom break would not go astray.

The sime sighed and pulled his horse up and dismounted. The gen flared fear.

"Don't be daft, you need feeding, we are stopping to feed you." the sime said, without considering if it could understand or not. After all, dogs and horses responded when you spoke to them, why not gens?

He took the gen by the arm, trying to ignore its' fear, and half pulled, half supported it off the horse. Then he opened the bag of dry food and scooped some out and handed the scoop to the gen.

"I'm not eating that, it's drugged" the gen said.

The tall sime jumped backwards, dropping the scoop of food.

"You can talk!" he yelled.

"Of course I can talk, as long as I'm not drugged. And I'm not eating that!". The gen replied angrily.

The sime looked at the gen in front of him, and zinned him again. He had purchased a prime kill and he hadn't even realised it. The gendealer had said nothing - maybe the gen had been drugged when he received him and he had been unaware of it himself. That was the only reason the sime could think of for the cheap price for a prime kill.

"Well, shut up. Either eat that or go hungry, it's the same to me."

The gen said "I don't mind not eating. You are only going to kill me anyway" He backed away a few steps, testing the chain attached to a collar around his neck.

The sime denied this "Not yet I'm not. Just eat and we'll get going now"

The gen stopped and looked at the sime fearfully "Yet?"

"Just stop that and eat"

"What's wrong?" the gen asked "Don't want to see me starve?"

"I don't care if you starve"

The sime can't believe he is still engaged in this conversation. He picked up the canteen and gave it to the gen "Here drink this."

The gen looked suspiciously at the canteen of water but took the canteen and took a small, cautious sip.

"Come here" the sime jerked the chain, making the gen lose his balance and spill water.

"Hey! Cut that out!" exclaimed the gen, uncomfortably aware of the unbreakable chain. "it's bad enough you keep me chained like an animal, you don't have to drag me around as well".

"Gens are animals". The sime picked him up and dumped him on the back of the pack horse.

"Really? Gens are just animals, are they? If I can prove to you that gens aren't animals, will you let me go?"

The sime smirks "You can't prove the imposable."

Give me the chance. Give me something to hope for - and it will give us something to talk about.

The sime turned the horses back onto the Eyeway. "Well, if you really want to talk I guess it I can't stop you."

The Gen settled down, he had a chance, even if it were slim.

## Part Two

For awhile they rode along in silence, the sime thinking about his destination, the gen formulating his thoughts into an argument that he hoped would convince the sime that gens were not animals for the slaughter.

The gen pointed to the area they were riding past. Much of it was covered with large slabs of artificially hardened earth which had started to break down and showed new, but stunted plant life. "They say this all use to be a city once, a city so vast that it would go on for weeks."

The sime showed little interest. "That was a long time ago. There is no city here." He thought for a moment "Where did you hear about that anyway?"

The gen answered in an animated fashion "The Ancients were gens, we know that because of the images we still have of them. Simes are the mutation. Therefore Gens built this city, and many others.

"I don't know where you heard this, but gens are not ancients, they all died so long ago. You are gen and that is all"

The gen asked in surprise "Simes don't have images of the ancients?"

The sime nodded "I have heard of some, taken from archaeological sites."

The gen continued "Pictures of the ancients show that they have no tentacles - obviously they were gens. So if the ancients were gens, and built cities of this magnitude and the great Eyeways, then how can gens be animals?"

The sime thought about this. "How many pictures? Just because some where found looking gen like doesn't mean that there are no pictures of simes."

"In all the findings we have never found a picture of a sime. That can not be a coincidence, and even today, our technology is superior to yours."

"Bullcrap!" The sime was getting annoyed.

"We have machine you lack, like guns" the gen wished he had one with him now. "And our medicine is more advanced,. AND we don't kill humans to live!"

The sime turned around and glared at the gen "We? what we, are you talking about? You're a gen. I bought you from the pens, who taught you this nonsense?"

The gen looked surprised. "Who taught me? Listen sime, I come from a city larger then any your people have built, I went to a university to study my speciality. I was captured...."

"The only universities I know of are in SimeTerritory"

The gen stopped and thought for a moment before replying "Gens have universities, Gens have families, Gens have jobs, they go to work, they earn a living, they come home, make love to their wives. Gens look after their children, talk to their neighbours, and try to live a good life."

The sime suddenly realises that all this time they had been talking it was in Simelan. "How did you learn to speak Simelan?"

The gen replied "I speak several languages, I studied ancient civilizations and the fall"

The sime had a hard time imagining gens living like simes in organised communities.

The gen says something in a language that the sime doesn't understand and laughed.

The sime scowled "What? You just made up some stupid words, that is not a language."

"That was one of the languages that the ancients spoke - they had several. That was English, which is closest to my own language."

The gen was getting tired of arguing, tired of ridding the stupid horse, and just tired. He was also hungry from not having eaten all day.

The sime was feeling very edgy. More than one language? He didn't know anyone who could understand more than one language, although he had heard that some simes understood the language that gens speak. "So how many languages in Eglis were there?"

The gen explains patiently "English is a language, it seems to have been spoken by most of the Ancients, although they had many languages, depending on where they were geographically located. I also speak some Sian, and some Fren"

The sime was bored with that topic of conversation "OK, whatever you say."

"So, you still think that I'm an animal? Animals speak multiple languages?"

"Who knows what animals speak. We are going to stop and rest the horses. You can sleep if you want, or not, I don't care". The sime dismounted, pulled the gen from the pack horse and tied his chain around a tree, bolting the ends together.

Feeling despondent, the gen slid his back down the tree and sat on the ground.

## Part Three

The gen woke up with a jerk.

The sime sat some distance away, around the other side of the fire, looking at the gen.

For a moment the gen was unaware of where he was "Where...?" He coughed, his throat is dry from the dust he slept in. He caught sight of the sime and remembered where he was, and why.

The sime tossed the water canteen over to the gen.

"Thank you" He sipped the water

"You haven't told me where we are going, or why" as he handed the canteen back.

"You wouldn't have heard of it, but I'm headed to Damascus"

The gen nodded. "I've heard of it, big place for potatoes so I hear. Why are we going there?"

The sime looked at the gen in surprise "We aren't going there, \*I\* am going there."

The gen is pretty certain that while that chain is on, anywhere the sime is going, he is going too

“Now you wait there while I get ready.”

“Right. Didn't realise I had a choice”

The sime ignored him and started packing up the camp while the gen leant against the tree he was tied to and watched.

“You needn't pack that food - I'm not going to eat it. May as well lighten the load.”

The sime left the bag of food where it lay. “If you insist. It's not like I'm going to want it.”

“You know, if you didn't drug gens you would find that more of them were able to talk. Not the poor creatures that are born in the pens, but there were other gens I've met since I've been captured who were from my side of the territory.”

The sime looked surprised “Why would I want to talk to gens?”

The gen gave a short laugh. “You are talking to me now, aren't you? You never know, you might find you have more in common with us then you think”

The sime feels uncomfortable with this line of conversation. He untied the chain and led the gen to the pack horse, grabbed him by the upper arms and lifted him onto the horse.

The gen grunted as he landed unceremoniously on the horses back. “You know, I can mount a horse by myself! A saddle wouldn't go astray, however.” he tried to find a more comfortable spot - with less backbone.

The sime ignore the gens comment “What could I have in common with a gen? Really.”

The gen sighed. “As I mentioned yesterday, gens have families, education, language - how are we different?” He couldn't help feeling that, even for a sime, this sime was not too bright.

“If you are so bright, how come you are here, sold and chained?”

The gen explained as if to a child “As I said, I'm a Professor of Ancient Civilizations - I was captured while digging for artefacts.” He would have, in fact, loved to stop at some of the less crumbled parts of the Eyeway to see what was there.

The sime mounted his own horse “What would gens want with these old things anyway?” He kicked his own horse into motion and the pack horse followed.

“Knowing where we came from teaches us more about ourselves - and about you, simes in general.”

“Simes? how can you learn about simes. And what is to learn about gens, they are for selyn, that is it, no more.”

The gen became more animated as he got into lecture mode. “For example, it appears that simes were developed as a type of "supersoldier", one that could destroy the enemy without damage to buildings or technology.”

The sime is really confused at this idea “What are you talking about?”

The gen continued, ignoring the interruption “But it seems that they didn't take into consideration the appetite of the sime, and rather than winning the war, it actually exasperated it, causing huge fatalities on both sides and brought their civilisation to a screaming halt. Of course, that's only one theory. Another is that it was a natural mutation, but that doesn't really seem to fit the fact as we know them as well.”

The gen continued. "Another one is that it was bought about by geneticists - do you know what genetics are?"

The sime was annoyed "Of course I know what they are." he didn't want to admit that he had no idea what the gen was talking about.

The gen continued "Well, apparently the ancients were doing experiments on what they called the "human genome" They were trying to make people live longer with less disease." He laughed humourlessly. "It didn't work"

"Oh?"

The gen waved an arm at the ruins that surrounded them "Well, obviously"

The sime was very sceptical "You are trying to tell me, that you - gens - know what the Ancients were doing?" He couldn't believe this.

The gen nodded. "We have some books from the Ancients, although they are very rare. They also left records engraved on metal, so that records would survive."

The sime turned to the gen "Don't tell me you can read as well as talk. I can't believe that."

The gen is annoyed "Of course I can read. I told you that I went to university. As well as speaking 5 languages I can also read in two others, although pronunciation has been lost with time. Klingon and Strine."

The sime pulled out an old pamphlet from the last auction and hands it to the gen.

"Ok then, read that."

The gen squinted, without his glasses his eyesight was not good, and he has no idea what has happened to his glasses.

The sime can barely read himself.

The gen read "Prime goods at discount prices." He continued with a list of stock, most of the words making no sense to him at all. "and there is the address at the bottom". He hands the sheet of paper back.

The sime is surprised "What do you think the "goods" are?"

"It's obvious that is a pamphlet from a gen auction." He shuddered, feeling horror and a tinge of fear. He felt the need for a change in topic.

Tell me, what happens to your children that become gen? Genetically it should happen once with every third child."

The sime resisted the urge to frighten the gen some more, just to feel the thrill of it. He went tight lipped at the question, not wanting to think about his own past. "Some that can take their kids to the border. It's illegal, but some still do it. Mostly they become gen they get to work as breeding stock on gen farms or get sent to the pens."

The gen's nager fills with horror. "You Kill your own children?"

The sime turns the attack back on the gen "Then what do you do with your children who change over?"

The gen looked shamefaced. "I admit that usually we have no choice but to destroy the child before it kills."

The gen argued again "I really don't understand how you can consider gens not to be people when one

in three of your own children become gen. What is your definition of "human"?"

The sime shrugged "Simes are people, gen are not, that is the way it has always been. "

The gen seethes in frustration at the stupidity of the sime and again indicates the ruins around them. "Obviously it is not the way it has ALWAYS been!" He thought for a few minutes "What would it take to prove to you that gens are human?"

"There is nothing, gens just aren't human. You might look a bit like us but..." he held up his arm and extended his tentacles.

The gen asked quickly "What about religion?"

The sime growled "What about it, you can't be telling me that you have religion?"

The gen was a little uncomfortable about this subject, as he isn't religious. "The largest religion, at least in the area I come from, is the Church of Purity, but there are others, that are more open minded, I believe."

"You are a part of this church?."

"No... as a scientist I find that most religions tend to over complicate simple scientific events." He paused. "How about we leave religion... What about art?"

The sime doesn't think much of religion either and is happy to leave it. "Art, I can't draw a straight line, but we have a gallery in the South Minipily that would knock your socks off. Went once."

"Well, we paint, sculpture, create - that's a human thing, right?"

The sime can't believe he just agree on a topic with the gen. "There are birds that make special nests using only one colour, and insects that sculpt their nests into different designs from their fellow insects..."

The gen is seriously annoyed "Don't be obtuse!"

The sime wondered what that meant

"We are talking about art, not birds nests. What about literature?"

The sime growled "What about it?"

"In the last hundred years or so many wonderful novels..."

The sime starts to think that this gen talks far to much and wishes he hadn't left the drugged food behind. "How did gens get a hold of books anyway?"

"I'm talking about books written by gens, for gens"

The sime looks at the gen and zlins for the truth of what it is saying.

"Books, poetry, plays"

"You believe this don't you?" said the sime in amazement

"Believe it? Of course I believe it! Why is it so hard for you to believe that Gens live their lives just like Simes - only without killing!"

The sime sneered "Of course you can't kill, your gens, but you do murder your children that changeover."

The gen replied quietly "That's a matter of self defence."

"So, you are telling me that gens in.." he waved his tentacles towards gen territory "live in houses, in communities and go to school and work and read and love and...."

The gen nodded, thinking that maybe he has finally got through. "Thats what I've been telling you!"

The sime sidles his horse right up beside the gen's "If we are the same, both human, then how can I do this?"

Reaching out at sime speed he grabbed the gens arm and lashed his tentacles around it, and quickly pulled the gen towards him.

The gen yelled in shock, and flaired fear and pain as he falls to the ground, pulling the sime on top of him.

Freed from their riders, the horses bolted along the road.

The sime grabbed the gens other arm and pulls the gen up to its feet. "Hold still if you want to live!"

The gen cowered

The sime tried hard to resist the fear. He thinks he proved his point well. "Don't move" he warned and slowly released his grip on the gen.

The gen is too scared to move. He can't believe that he is still alive.

"That is why you are not like us."

"What? Because we don't grab at people, pull them off their horses letting the horses bolt?" He rubbed his arms where bruises were forming. "I'm not sure what the hell you think you proved! Other then the fact that simes have NO impulse control! Why the hell did you do that? Did you even THINK what the consequences would be?"

The sime can't believe that a gen would have the hide to talk to a sime in this way. "No control??? I could have killed you ther and then!"

The gen took a big step backwards.

"I wanted to prove to you that you fear us just as any other prey fears the predator, I just didn't realise you would flare that much fear. I am used to gens that have been drugged."

"Of course I fear you! You kill gens every month! I'd be stupid if I didn't fear you!" He swore under his breath, in Klingon. "I don't know what you were thinking of, but I'm not taking one step without the horses!"

The sime looked around for somewhere sheltered and insulated to put the gen while he goes to find the horses and dragged the gen by the chain to a bunch of rocks which formed a rough intersection of two crumbling walls.

The gen stumbled as the sime pulled on the chain, there was no choice but to follow. As they enter the enclosure made by the two walls he became fascinated by his surroundings.

"You should be safe here while I fetch up the horses." The sime realised that if he has to augment too far after the horses he will have to take his kill earlier then he wanted to.

The gen has lost all interest in the sime as he examines the walls. "This looks like an excellent example of a pre change ancient building!" He looked closer at the crumbling walls, running a hand carefully over them, feeling for changes in the surface.

“There are some carvings here...” he started to brush the dirt away from the wall, gently, wishing he had his brush.

Meanwhile, while the gen is occupied with what to the sime appears a piece of rock, the sime augments slightly to lift a lump of rock and puts the end of the chain under it, and leaves to get the horses.

“It’s text, scratched into the surface” he brushed away more of the surface dust “This is interesting! Very similar to some we have on our side. It’s English “Kilroy was here”. Apparently Kilroy was an explorer, signs like this have turned up from one end of the territory to the other, and here they are in sime territory as well, which definitely indicates that, as we thought, Kilroy predated the change by some time. There are even stories that Kilroy travelled across the sea. It would appear that the Ancients travelled much more extensively then....”

He suddenly noticed that he was alone. Quickly he checked the chain, following it to its end, under the rock. He tried to lift the rock, but it was too heavy. Sitting down, he braced himself and pushed at the rock with his feet. It moved slightly. He pulled at the chain, but it was still wedged tight. Again he put his feet against the rock and pushed. This time the chain came free. He was FREE!

He took off diagonally from the Eyeway.

Meanwhile the sime had found the horses not too far away, grazing at a patch of grass. They looked at him innocently and waited for him to pick up the reins. He mounts his horse and leads the pack horse back to where he left the gen.

As he closed in to where he left the gen he finds that he can’t zlin its field. This close to need he certainly should be able to

“Shen and shid, someone stole my kill!”

He kicked the horse into a canter and rushes up to the now vacant corner. A great absence of gen greeted him. Panicing, the sime zlined as far as he could in all directions. He thought he could zlin a faint field and rides after it, expecting to find that another sime had taken possession of the “abandoned” gen.

The gen jumped a small creek, ran through some bushes that have come up through the broken concrete, and jumped into a ditch, hoping that it will stop the sime sense that they have for finding gens.

The sime rides across a creek and slows the horses to a walk so he can zlin the bushes.

The gen tries to stop breathing as he hears the horses.

Even though he can’t fully zlin the gen, he knows he is there somewhere. “Ok, come out. I know your here somewhere. Don’t make me come down there!”

The gen stayed very still.

Noticing a criss cross of ditches the sime realises that the gen must have gone to ground, as the dense earth would help to hide his field.

“You know I will find you!”

The gen rather hopes not.

“I know where you are now, so you might as well come along, save me any more trouble. It will be easier for you if you do.”

The sime sure hoped the gen believed that, and would come out from the hiding

The gen hears the horses coming close and pushes himself further into the ditch.

The sime was sure the gen was in the large ditch and got off his horse and walked toward the lip of the cement overhang. "Are you going to come out or do I have come and get you?"

The gen sighed and gave in "I'll come up." He climbed up - onto the other side of the ditch. He watched the sime anxiously.

"Look at you. Dirty and scratched up. Anyone seeing you would think I was cruel to my gens!"

The gen was angry at the reply "Firstly, I'm not "your gen". Secondly - what do you call jumping on someone and knocking them off their horse if not cruel?"

"I'm not making the horses jumop this, you come back this side."

The gen can't think of an alternative "First, promise you won't do that again?"

"I promise that I won't pull you off the horse again - will that do?"

The gen thinks that it is far from perfect, but he really can't think of an alternative. Getting away while the sime is awake and watching him would be impossible. He can't believe it, but he walks, somewhat unwillingly, back to the sime.

In silence they mount the horses, and in silence they rode on.

## **Part Four**

The gens hunger pangs were starting to get on the simes nerves. He fossicked in his pack and held some dry, white, fibrous chunks out to the gen "Here eat this."

The gen took it and looked at it suspiciously.

"It's dried Jundies - it's good, eat it.:"

"Jundies?! Are you trying to poison me?" The gen dropped the food as if stung by a bee.

The sime gets another piece out of his pack and bites into it, although food is the last thing on his mind. "See, it's not poisonous, and it's not drugged. Your hunger is making me feel sick." He held the new piece out to the gen.

The gen watched in amazement. "Jundies are poisonous!!! At least, to gens they are. It seems that is something you can eat that we can not. Interesting." He cringed as another wave of pain/nausea from hunger hit him.

The sime looked at the Jundie with interest "They are? Hmm, never knew that." He opened the bag and showed the gen the contents. "Is there anything in there that you can eat?"

"Is that dried apple?"

The sime felt like a waiter, serving a fussy diner. But anything to stop the annoying hunger that the gen was feeling. "Yes, apple"

The gen took the few slices of apple that were there and nibbled at them slowly, trying to make them last. His stomach tried to reject the food, but he forced it to stay down. He took a sip of water from the canteen.

“Thanks, that helps a bit.

The sime took a bite from the Jundies, due to the nearness of the hungry gen. “Good. here you can hold this and pick out whatever you can eat.” He handed the gen the food pack.

The gen reached for it “Thank you.” He looked in the pack and picked out a few nuts. He worried about the lack of food. Unless he goes back to not eating, it is not going to last long.

The gen looks in the pack again. “You know, you should eat more protein. Your refusal to eat meat is totally illogical.”

The sime feels repulsed. “Well, there is one good proof of gens being animal“

“You eat fruit, carbohydrate and fibre - but very little protein. It makes no sense, you "live" on selyn, right? But you need to eat protein to build body tissue, and other than maybe a little in a few of these nuts.....”

The sime laughed “I can’t believe it. A gen telling a sime how to eat. I wish Merve was here to hear this. “

Having been reminded of the sime's main dietary requirement the gen suddenly realised he had no idea of when the sime would need to “eat” again. “When - how long can you go without killing?” he can feel the fear returning.

The sime didn’t answer directly “If you know so much about us you tell me how long I can live without selyn.”

“I know you need to kill every month - but when did you kill last?” He REALLY needs to know...

The sime thought about it “By my reckoning I’ll make Damascus in about three days. Let’s just say It’ll be past a month when I get to where I’m going.”

The gen starts to panic “You really can't wait?

Not wanting to panic the gen into forcing him to kill him prematurely the sime replied “Maybe - I can try.”

The gen felt his panic subside slightly. Perhaps he would get out of this alive.

The sime quickly changed the subject. “So, tell me about those ruins, what did you see back there that was so interesting?”

“What?”

The gen is still thinking about how much time he possibly has to live and is taken aback by the change in topic

“You said you saw things, back at those rock wall.

“Oh, Kilroy - a famous explorer from the days of the Ancients. His picture is found everywhere”

“Kill Roy? So that was a sime thing. But why did they talk about killing someone?”

The gen explained “No - it's his name, nothing to do with killing.”

“Was he the fist gen or something?”

All this talk of killing has made the gen nervous again

“So why was this Killroy so famous?”

“His picture appears in so many places, along with the words "Kilroy was here" and that is all we know about him.”

“ I see. He left a sign that he had passed by. Odd thing to do.”

“ Strange? I don't know, what is more strange then killing people you have been talking to and getting to know for days?” The gen felt scared and angry. He doubted that he was getting through to the sime at all.

The sime feels uncomfortable. Of course he has never “got to know” a gen before he killed them. Usually their company was of a very short period. This gen seemed intelligent, and the sime's mind was fighting the fact that he feared that it was more intelligent than he was - which went against everything he had ever been taught, or ever observed himself.

He attempted to smoothly change the subject

“What other things do you know about the ancients?”

“Why this sudden interest about ancients?” the gen was thrown by the sudden change in topic.

“Just interested, something to talk about.” The sime never thought that he would be seeking out conversation with a gen, but as it was determined to talk anyway, may as well keep it from thinking about more awkward things.

The gen was never more comfortable than when in lecture mode. He quickly got excited about the subject. “It's strongly suspected that they had machines that allowed them to fly, and to travel faster than any horse possibly could. From the ruins we can calculate that their buildings were thousands of feet high. We even calculate that the population was hundreds, maybe thousands of times larger than it is today. Vast areas were given over, just to the production of food - hundreds of square miles!”

“Let me get this right. You're telling me that there used to be buildings the size of mountains and machines faster than horses.”

“Yes, that's right”

The sime tried to picture such a large population of people.

“And you say that they weren't sime, but they weren't gen either or they would have no use with selyn and no one to use it.”

The gen looked surprised at this line of reasoning. “ So? People in my territory have no use for selyn, but they still produce it.” He thinks it was a cruel trick to play on the human race, to split it down the center in this way and make it impossible for the two sides to ever live in peace.

“Believe it or not” he continued “there are towns many days ride from sime territory where people might live and never see a sime and they live perfectly happy lives.”

The sime looked uncertain “Gen territory ain't that big. Is it?” He had never really thought about such things before now.

“ From what I can gather it is many times larger than sime territory - it would have to be. Think about it mathematically for a minute. One sime kills 12 gens a year, or there about right? So you get a town with 1000 simes, you need 12000 gens per year...”

The sime's head clouds over when numbers appear.

‘ If sime territory had been larger to start with, you would have run out of gens in a very short time.’

“Even taking pens into considerations - it takes 9 months to make a baby, and then 13 or so years of

feeding and looking after before you even know if it IS a gen. It's the most wasteful farming I've ever heard of."

Despite the subject matter the gen has dissociated himself from the subject and continues the lecture. "Eventually, of course, what will happen is that the last gen will be killed - and then what will the simes do?"

"Oh I know where your going. Don't tell me those myths are even known to gens?"

"Myths? It's not a myth. Unless something is done to stop them, simes will destroy our civilization - as they did with the ancients."

The gen is distracted by the sight of a small gnarled tree growing beside the Eyeway. "That's a guava tree! Can we stop and see if there are any fruits ripe? It's early, but maybe..."

The sime is annoyed by the distraction from the conversation, and by the hunger the gen is feeling. He pulls the horses off the Eyeway and lets them graze on the sparse grass. He didn't want to get too close to the gen, he was closer to need than he had planned to be, due to the unexpected augmentation after the bolting horses.

"Hop down then, pick your own, I'm not touching it."

The gen gratefully dismounted, his thighs definitely sore from the unaccustomed ride bareback. He walked over to the low tree and searched among the hard green fruits to see if there were any early ripened ones. The sime sat on a rock, keeping an eye on the gen, and wondering how much longer he could go without killing it.

"I use to pick these with my sister, although mostly we just fed them to the chickens".

The sime hadn't thought of the gen as having a family "You have a sister? I had a sister..."

"Yes, Marie, last I saw she was pregnant. I hope that she is ok." He realised what the sime had said "Had? What happened to her?"

The sime kicked his foot against the rock. "She turned gen, the stupid bitch."

"What?! Your sister is a gen? Then how can you think that gens are animals?"

"WAS gen" the sime corrected. "Naturally she is dead now. But I know gens are animals because of the difference in her afterwards. Before, she was a normal kid, after, she was terrified, couldn't think straight, nothing in her eyes or nager except fear..." He stopped, lost in his own thoughts.

The gen forgot about food in his anger "So suddenly she is food to you - and you don't expect her to fear you? How stupid can you be?"

Without thinking he took a threatening step forward

"You even kill your own family?"

The sime watched the gen step toward him, shocked at the field change.

"And you don't murder your own?" he said, in defence.

"Not in cold blood, never in cold blood - only when it's in self defence!"

The sime took a step back from the angry gen, his foot slipping in a crack. With sime grace he twisted, trying to right himself, but the ground was too broken and he went down. He felt a sudden intense pain in his leg as he fell.

The gen's first impulse is to go forward and help, his second impulse is to take his chance and run. He hesitated.

The crack in which the sime tripped was behind the large rock on which he had been sitting. As he had fallen his foot had gone deeper into the crack, and the rock, unbalanced by the old cracked surface crumbling around it, had rolled into the crack, on top of the sime's leg.

The gen took a few steps away, catching the sime between the pain in his leg and the movement of the selyn field.

The gen realises that the sime is trapped, he can grab the horses and make a break for freedom.

"Don't go! Help me!" The sime's cry for help stopped him in his tracks.

"Help you..." The gen looks at the sime uncertain what to do.

"Shen - it HURTS!"

The gen can't believe that he is even considering helping the sime, when he could be making a run for it. He turns towards the horses and takes a few more steps away.

"If you leave me here, I'll die!" the sime begged. "You won't survive out there alone!"

"Am I more likely to survive with you?"

The sime groaned in pain. He tried to push at the rock but doesn't have the leverage from his prone position to move it. He cried out in pain.

The gen sighed. "Oh hell. Hold still then!"

The sime can't believe what he is seeing. The gen is willingly coming to help him.

"Is it broken?" the gen asked, running his hand down the sime's leg under the rock.

"I don't think so, but it's pretty cut up. I'm losing blood and se..."

The gen looked at the rock "I think I can move this top rock, but it's going to hurt." He pushed at the rock, and it moved a fraction, but rolled back to its previous position on the sime's leg, bringing forth another cry of pain.

"Hold on, I'll need a lever" The gen moved off, looking something solid enough to take the weight of the rock.

"No! don't leave me." the sime cried in dismay as the gen moved further off.

The gen found a branch that was green enough and seemed strong enough for the job at hand. He returned to the sime, much to his relief. The gen picked up a smaller rock, straining to take the weight, and put it near the large rock to use as a fulcrum.

"This is going to hurt, are you ready?"

The sime nodded.

The gen pushed down on the end of the stick, lifting the rock. "Quick, pull your leg out!" The sime had no sooner pulled out his leg when the stick broke, dropping the rock back into place.

The sime was shaking, realising that his life had been in the hands of a gen.

The gen knelt by the sime "Let me see your leg". He checked the damage. It was bleeding and bruised,

but did not seem to be too badly damaged.

“This isn’t too bad. Let me see what we have to dress it with.” He got up and started to return to the pack horse.

“NO! Don’t leave me!” the sime cried as the gen moved away.

“I’m not running away, I’m just getting something to wrap that leg with.”

“Alright - but move slowly - I don’t want to be triggered into attacking you.”

The gen moved slowly back to the horses, his heart lighter than it had been for days. He had got through to the sime! Finally. The act of kindness, of not running away and leaving the sime to die, had paid off. He found a cotton shirt and returned to the sime with it, and with one of the canteens of water. He ripped the shirt into pieces and used the water to soak one of them.

“This is going to hurt, but we have to stop the bleeding, and I want to get it clean.”

The sime nodded, just glad to be within the field of the gen once again.

The gen put the wet cloth against the worst of the mashed flesh, then used a longer bit to tie it on.

“How does that feel?”

“Still hurts, but not as bad as before” He tried to stand, and almost fell. The gen quickly put his arm under the sime’s shoulder, supporting him while he stood.

The sime feels until rising at the closeness of the gen, and fights to get it under control. With the help of the gen he makes it back to the horse.

“Can you mount by yourself?” the gen asked

The sime nodded “I think so. He augmented a little to make the leap.

The gen stood back, making no movement to get onto the pack horse.

The sime indicates the horse. “Come on, get up, we have to get moving again.”

The gen shook his head. “I don’t think I’ll be coming with you any further.”

The sime has come to the same conclusion. “I think you might be right.”

“So you agree? You will let me go?”

The sime jumped back off his horse, feeling no pain in his leg now that he has allowed his until to rise.

The gen backed away. “Come on! I helped you! You would have died if I’d left you there!”

“I know, I was surprised you came back.

The gen continued to back away “You can’t still mean to kill me! I’ve proven to you that gens are intelligent - you KNOW that I’m as human as you are!”

The sime reached out and grabbed the gen

“I know. But I don’t care.”

**The End**

\*Companions notes: It is very unwise to role play scenes like this when your Channel is past turnover. I dare say that it is unwise to do so at anytime. I spent a lot of time, once we had finished this, lowering Zoes' intil.

Just a warning I thought I should add. I'd hate for there to be any accidents because someone followed our example.

Eliza ambov Halwyn