

New Earth

A thousand years have passed. The two Saskias are still there, still going forwards on their long journey through time. They still need to use their powers to help people - even when the people are light years away!

One

The phone was ringing. For Saskia and myself, this always presents a small problem. Normal people use normal, implanted phones, but not us, oh no. *We* can't be fitted with such clever stuff. Look at it this way, if bullets and rockets can't penetrate our invulnerable bodies, how were the phone systems ever going to be injected. Still, we had our methods. First thing, see who the other end wanted to speak to. Saskia spoke to her phone, fitted inside her ear.

"Phone, who is it?"

"It is the ESA."

"Now what do the European Space Agency want?" I groused. Although the phone was deep in Saskia's ear, I was easily able to hear it thanks to my super hearing.

"Who do they want to talk to?" asked Saskia.

"It is a call for the twins. They are sending visual."

"Hm. Need to change," said Saskia. "Nobody's about."

Quickly Saskia and I changed from the Saskias to Kyra and Katya, the SuperTwins. Not in the full little costume, just in the black one piece jumpsuits and boots we called our 'civilian' clothes.

"Phone, connect call. Send visual."

Although Saskia and I were standing in a park, the projected image of a man appeared in front of us, apparently sitting at a desk in an office. Not for the first time I wondered how Voice, our unseen guide and mentor, managed the nuts and bolts of this. Our phone systems were so old, actually some hundreds of years, that they weren't capable of such things - at least on their own. As far as the other end were concerned it didn't matter. They couldn't tell. The man in his office would be seeing an image of the two of us standing on the grass of the park. He was speaking.

"Good morning, Kyra, Katya."

"Good morning Mr. Evans. What can we do for you today?"

Saskia knew his name from the data information superimposed on his virtual picture. Handy. Made things easier when you knew who you were speaking to. We also knew that aforesaid Mr. Evans was the Head of Orbital Movements - whatever *that* was. He was about to enlighten us.

"We have a shuttle flight stuck in orbit."

"So what's happened to it?" I asked.

"We're not sure. The AG system has failed in some way. The shuttle is part way through re-entry so we can't dock with it."

"You mean that docking would have to be done with the rescue craft under power?" asked Saskia.

"Yes. It's too dangerous."

I sighed. "So you'd like us to go up and fetch it for you?"

“Please. If you wouldn’t mind.”

“Oh, we don’t mind,” said Saskia. “Where is it?”

We’d done this enough times before for the ESA that they knew just what we needed to know. Nothing so crude as right ascension and declination, or even latitude and longitude.

“It’ll be over New York in about twenty minutes.”

“And it’s coming from ...?” I asked.

“Transit B at L5.”

“And you’d like it where ...?” asked Saskia.

“At the port in Brussels, please.”

“Ok. The things we do for you. Make sure it has its navigation strobes on so we can spot the damn thing.”

“I will. Thank you, girls.”

“You’re welcome. Phone, disconnect call.” Mr. Evans and his office vanished.

“Come on, Twin. Not got long.”

“Twenty minutes - oodles of time. Could go home for a hot chocolate first.”

“But we won’t do that, will we? Then we’d have to go so fast we’d look like meteorites. Remember what happened *last* time we did that?”

“How could I forget,” I laughed. “Come on, then. Already Kyra and Katya, let’s get on with it.”

We both lifted into the air. We’d only gone a little way before Saskia changed from her black jumpsuit to her little top and skirt. The little super costume is as indestructible as we are invulnerable. I changed as well, and we accelerated towards the north west and New York, some thousands of miles away.

“I thought the Transit B station was at L4, Twin.”

“It was,” I said. “But somebody figured out that the gravitationally stable point at L5 was better in some way, I think there’s less rubbish collected there, so they moved it.”

“Typical.”

Transit B was a huge space station parked in the stable Lagrange point of L5. This is where the gravitational fields of the Earth and the Moon cancel out. It’s easier to keep it in one place there apparently. Don’t ask me about orbital mechanics, we just aimed at where we were going and got on with it.

This ‘getting on with it’ had us over New York in less than fifteen minutes. Not that we could see it without super vision, we were about three hundred miles above it, hanging about - literally - waiting for a passing shuttle.

What will have become apparent by now is that Saskia and I are super girls. We have all the powers of the comic book Supergirl, plus a few more thrown in for good measure. The powers had been given to us over a thousand years ago now by an unseen being we came to call simply Voice, a Guardian of Reality. Voice is in charge of making sure things happened as they should. This includes things in the past as well as the present - and occasionally the future as well. We’d been sent back in time on many occasions to fix something that was causing problems further up the timeline. This wasn’t in that category at all, just a straightforward orbital rescue - the Lord knew we’d done enough of those!

Antigravity - AG - is all very well, but if it fails, you tend to have a problem, usually in the falling-out-of-the-sky department. Saskia and I could fix that.

“Here it comes. Flashing its little lights for all its worth”

“Blimey. It’s going a bit. They haven’t managed to shed any of the speed at all.”

“Come on. Let’s catch it before it digs a big hole.”

We turned to be in line with the shuttle and accelerated after it. We'd been stationary, *it* was travelling at about six or seven miles per second. Despite this we caught it up within a very few minutes. Then it was just a case of pushing against it until it more or less stopped.

Now it should have dropped straight down out of the sky. Of course, that didn't happen. Saskia happened instead. She flew up beneath the huge shuttle and held it up. Good so far, but now we had a shuttle stationary about two hundred miles up and three thousand miles from where it needed to go.

While Saskia held the shuttle, I changed to be holding the little GPS unit we kept in the cosmic cupboard where everything we changed not be holding was stored. We had no real idea where this was, but the stuff had to go *somewhere*, so it was as good an explanation as any. This was a far more sophisticated version than the original one I called Bertie. We'd had to retire Bertie when the GPS system was updated totally in around 2355.

The thing beeped and told me which way to go. At least it *would* have beeped if there'd been any air to carry the sound. No air, no sound. Didn't bother Saskia and me, when we couldn't talk to each other, we used telepathy. Neat really. This was supposed to switch off again when we were back in air, but there was enough ability left to allow us to communicate with each other at a level so low that nobody else heard us.

With both of us carrying the shuttle, we gained speed again towards Brussels. It took about half an hour. They were obviously waiting for us at the port, flashing lights and stuff indicated where they wanted us to park. Since the AG was the only thing that wasn't working, the shuttle was able to let down wheels and stuff and open doors. Passengers spilled out onto the tarmac. We were surrounded in moments.

Of course we could have simply flown away, but a thousand years of doing this sort of stuff had taught us that that would make us seem as if we didn't really care, as if it didn't matter to us one way or the other. Nothing could be further from the truth. We let ourselves be surrounded.

It didn't last long, the immigration people rounded up all the passengers and herded them away, leaving just the crew behind - and one man who'd obviously been allowed to ride in the cockpit, although equally obviously not one of the regular crew.

"Thank you, girls," said the pilot. "Could have been interesting."

"What? You mean you making another crater somewhere?" grinned Saskia.

"Something like that," the pilot grinned back. Then he sobered slightly. "Girls, meet Professor Starkey. He's just down from the big telescope on Lunar Farside."

The professor stuck out his hand. I shook it, then so did Saskia.

"You must be important if you get to ride with the driver," said Saskia.

"Mm. I've been trying to find out why the New Earth colony has stopped communicating."

"How on earth can you find out from here?" asked Saskia. "They must be all of ten light years away."

"Eight and a bit actually," the professor grinned. "We've been integrating observations over the last six months to try to see if the laser is still in orbit. As far as we can tell it is."

"*Laser, Twin?*" asked Saskia in a combination of whisper and telepathy.

"*Yeah. Ultraviolet laser, umpteen terawatts of power. They take six months to charge it, then discharge it in a matter of seconds. It makes a beam of coherent light easily visible as brighter than their sun. They modulate it with six months worth of*

messages. Takes eight years to get here but - hey - it's communication. Or at least it was."

"Of course. Now I remember. There's one in orbit here as well."

"Messages both ways. Clever really - provided it works."

While this super speed conversation had been going on, the professor was still speaking. "We thought the laser had been damaged. There's always the possibility it's exploded or something, the energies it uses are *huge*. I need to get to the ESA."

"Do you mind if we come with you?" I asked. "We need to make contact with them anyway, and, who knows, we may be able to do something."

"By all means. Here's my transport."

'Transport' was a standard limousine - 3013 style. No wheels, it used more of the ubiquitous AG. Back in 2013, we'd probably have expected such cars to be able to fly. This turned out to be impractical. It was bad enough ordinary people coping with moving in two dimensions, let alone three. There *were* cars that could fly, but they were under very strict AI control, and Artificial Intelligence had come a long way since 2013. Despite having to remain ground-bound, we were soon at the ESA building.