**Desert Ring**

**Part 11**

**10/07/20201**

/\* Okay, been a while since we worked on this. Started Nix novel since, and then wrote WriterData to handle keeping notes, etc. Now I’m ready, at least I think so, to finish the first draft of this. Adding the characters to WD(WriterData) but not using the scene and sequence features yet.

I’m rescinding my prior decision to remove the Arbiter story line. After re-reading it after all this time I like the added details and complexity that it adds.

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“I’m not sure,” sputtered Dunzin, spitting dirt as he struggled to his feet.

Jarwan, checking as he did so that Denise looked okay, got to his feet. Reaching down to help the Doctor up he turned his eyes to the sloped mound of rubble that stretched out from where the wall used to be. “Looks like something else let go,” he glanced to the increased amount of water at his feet. “And the water level is worse. We’ve to get those guys out of there!”

Dunzin already back down on his knees feeling around for the for bore scope quickly found it. He said, “I’d say that one of the sides fell in. Hopefully it didn’t crush those guys. Ah, here we go.” Pulling the end of the scope out of the water he wasted no time pressing the eyepiece back to his right eye. Getting up from the now four inches of water, he adjusted the focus ring as he did so. Then he was still for a second trying to make out what he was seeing.

Jarwan made sure the others were okay, before asking, “well?”

“Nothing, it still looks the same. I need more cable.” He picked up the remaining slack with and pushed it into the sloped bank that had been the wall. “Give me another extension.”

Jarwan was surprised to find that he still held the extra cable and quickly passed a five-meter section to his second in command. Dunzin quickly linked in the new section and rapidly pushed more of it into the debris. Realizing that he couldn’t advance the cable and look through it at the sametime Jarwan grabbed the Eye piece and took over. At first, the only thing he saw was a grey-brown out of focus blur, but as Dunzin’s initial fervor pace slowed focus returned and he was able to make out articles in the dirt as the cable passed them. Fortunately, the cable was constructed to keep going forward unless directed otherwise. Soon he was once again catching glimpses of open space in the cables feeble lighting. “Slow down Dun, is there a way to crank up the light on this thing?”

Dunzin looked around, seeing that Jarwan now had the eyepiece. “Sorry, not with this model. It wasn’t made for this kind of thing.”

Jarwan nodded, “it’ll have to do then.”

Denise, her eyes searching the wall of dirt, asked, “Do you see anything?”

“Not yet, but we’ve crossed a couple of small open areas, so things didn’t completely collapse.”

Dunzin said, “they may not have been affected. We should be getting close, of course if they’re off to either side we might miss them.”

Jarwan laughed, “I wouldn’t worry about that, Sam’s looking me right in the face.”

“Let me see,” said Denise. After getting a look at her son she asked, “Okay, now how do we get them out?”  
 Jarwan glanced at the wall of dirt and then back at the colonist behind them. The group of four, five if you counted the twelve-year-old girl, had already equipped themselves with shovels and picks. “Dunzin, how long do you think?”

Dunzin, resting his hands on his hips as caught his breath, gave the sloppy mess in front of him and at his feet a careful examination. “Well, we’re going to end up with this crap halfway down this ramp but I don’t see anyway around it. The question is, do we run an air line in or just dig as fast as possible. It’s possible that running a line in could give us more time. On the other hand it’ll take half an hour or more to rig up something. We’re probably better off just dragging this stuff down the tunnel until we clear enough space to get to them.”

Jarwan nodded to the four men with shovels. “You heard the man, start moving dirt. Polly, your take the tail and drag what they move further back, give them room for more dirt.”

The four moved quickly to work, the girl happy to have a roll in her brother’s rescue started dragging dirt down the tunnel with a vengeance. Her mother, Jarwan and Dunzin moved to get our of their way.

Denise started down the tunnel, “I need to get somethings they’re going to need.”

“Right,” said Jarwan, “blankets, food, water whatever. You just stick your head in and tell them what you need.” He watched as she made her way down ramp to the turn before turning to Dunzin. “We’re going to have to put a stop to this mess somehow.”

“Yea, I was thinking at the next turn. I don’t see anyway to save this level. That’ll leave us two more levels to serve as a buffer.”

“Great, what do you have in mind for a stopper?”

The second in command looked thoughtful for a second and then said,”grain bags.”

“Excuse me,” said Jarwan. “Those bags of grain may be what we eat six months from now.”

“I know,” said Dunzin. But we’ve got a lot of them and they’re the closest things to sand-bags that we have.” He got a funny look on his face. “Of course, we’ve got empty bags and we’re surrounded by sand, the trouble is.”

“I know,” broke in Jarwan, “we need dry sand and we’ve got no place to get it. Unless of course, you want to dig out under the warehouse.”

“No, that wouldn’t be my first choice. We should be okay with the grain bags. Don’t need that many of them and even if the grain gets wet it’ll dry out.”

“If, it every stops raining,” said Jarwan.