

## CHAPTER 10

"Back again, are you?" said the small, rectangular piece, a smirk on his unattractive face.

He was sitting in his usual position, refusing to fall into place as was expected of him. Nothing would convince him that his was a worthwhile endeavor; and in fact, maybe it *wasn't*!

That, however, was not exactly the point.

Care had tried language after language, none of them would accomplish what she wanted: to communicate with that one *specific* rectangular part in a way that proved to be beneficial in swaying him. She assured herself that this was the only problem - that somehow she could not get through to him, that he didn't understand the big picture of what she was doing. There had to be some language out there that would allow her to convey this idea precisely, and if such a language did not exist, then maybe this was all hopeless.

She almost couldn't comprehend that possibility. But more than one problem existed, and if *any* of them got in the way, then this would be over. Perhaps it already was.

For that moment, though, she decided to ignore all of those problems and focus on the easy stuff - putting the engine together with the pieces that she had.

"You could be doing better things right now, you know," said the piece, lying down on his giant sofa as Care worked. "Please reconsider; I almost feel embarrassed for you already."

"Shut up," Care said, concentrating on the hundreds of pieces lying before her.

They were all very similar, though unique at the same time.

They were similar because they were all parts of the same thing - the happiness engine that Care had designed years ago and set off to build. It was a tough project, and thus would probably take countless years to fully complete. However, she had already spent five years on it, how much longer could it have taken?

The pieces were unique in that each was an entirely different shape than the last. You couldn't even begin to compare them, such a comparison would be a waste of your time and money (yes, money would be necessary).

You could describe the languages in which they spoke in the same exact way. If somewhere out there was a machine that could receive the shape of any object as input, analyze it, and generate a language based on that information, than these languages that Care spoke could possibly have been the output of that machine.

The piece watched as Care completely ignored him. She wasn't even trying this time.

"Look," he said. "I'm being stubborn for a reason. It's because *I'm right*. And the sooner you figure that out, the better."

"Stop talking," said Care. She wasn't quite in the mood that night. The piece turned around and tried staring at the ceiling (which didn't actually exist) for a little while, but soon grew bored of this and looked at Care again.

"Come on. You have to give up on me, Care." it said.

"Yes, I agree," she responded.

"Youâ€¦ you agree?"

"Yes."

The piece didn't know quite what to say to that. He seemed to have gotten what he wanted, only to find out that he didn't actually want it that much. It definitely wasn't as satisfying as he had expected.

"You win this time," he said, in a grouchy tone. "But I'm still not letting you attach me to that damned machine."

Care didn't respond. She was busy having a conversation in a completely different language.

This new piece was flat and triangular. His language consisted of simple three-letter words and 180 unique symbols, all of which represented the same sound but required a different number of eye blinks. It took a long time to communicate in this language, which literally drove the rectangular piece insane - he was currently in the need for a little more attention, but didn't feel he was getting it.

Care started laughing, as did the triangle.

"Hey," said the rectangular piece.

They continued to laugh, louder now.

"Hey!" he repeated. "What are you laughing at?"

The laughter continued. The rectangle stood up from the sofa and walked toward Care angrily.

"I'll have you know that I am *no* fool," he said. "You are not going to persuade me."

Care still didn't listen to a thing he said. The laughing wouldn't stop.

Somehow, even as life *outside* of the tunnels grew worse and worse, when she was *inside* of them she could still manage to sit

down and laugh at a good joke. And it was a *really*, really good joke. You couldn't even begin to imagine.

The triangle happened to speak a language very well suited to jokes. This was the exact opposite of the rectangle, who had absolutely *no* way of expressing a joke in his language, and thus had no idea what a joke even was.

The rectangle felt completely excluded, but he *knew* that they were talking about him. He was certain.

"Hey, you guys betterâ€¦" he began.

He watched as the triangle, delighted and excited, was placed flawlessly into its spot in the happiness engine, like destiny had brought him there. It was all that the rectangle could take.

"â€¦um, wellâ€¦"

The laughter continued, the triangle was inserted, and an entire section of the happiness engine lit up - a milestone had been reached.

And at that, in complete awe, the rectangle sat down and stopped talking. Care stood up, proud of herself and the work that she did.

*It was half way done.*