

# SPARK OF LIFE

## PART TWO



I'VE NEVER REALLY GIVEN A TOUR BEFORE, BUT I FIGURED I'D LEAVE THE BEST FOR LAST. DEAR GUESTS, I GIVE YOU MY LATEST DISCOVERY...



I CALL IT A **RED STAR RING!**


FOR, UH, FAIRLY OBVIOUS REASONS...

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I HAVE NO RECORDS OF SUCH A PHENOMENON.

IT'S PRETTY.



ITS PROPERTIES ARE NEARLY IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF A REGULAR RING... THOUGH THE POTENTIAL ENERGY OUTPUT MAY BE **MUCH** HIGHER.





SO COOL...AND IT CAME FROM THE LAKE OF RINGS HERE ON THE ISLAND?

YEP. THE LAKE USUALLY PRODUCES A MAGIC RING ON A DAILY BASIS.

OVER A WEEK AGO, IT WENT DORMANT, AND I THOUGHT IT HAD DRIED UP, SO TO SPEAK.

I DON'T YET KNOW WHAT CHANGED, BUT AFTER A FEW DAYS OF NO ACTIVITY, IT--

Erm... LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?



THERE'S NO FOOD IN THIS FRIDGE.

THAT'S A SERVER ROOM, BIG. IT KEEPS THE COMPUTERS COLD.

Oh. I DIDN'T KNOW COMPUTERS COULD GO BAD.

Uh... AS I WAS SAYING...

I HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT *WHY* THIS RING FORMED. IT MIGHT HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE RECENT DARK GAIA ENERGY\*, BUT I HAVEN'T EXAMINED ALL THE VARIABLES YET.



\* THE ENERGY AND MISTS SEEPING OUT FROM WITHIN THE CRACKED PLANET--Editor



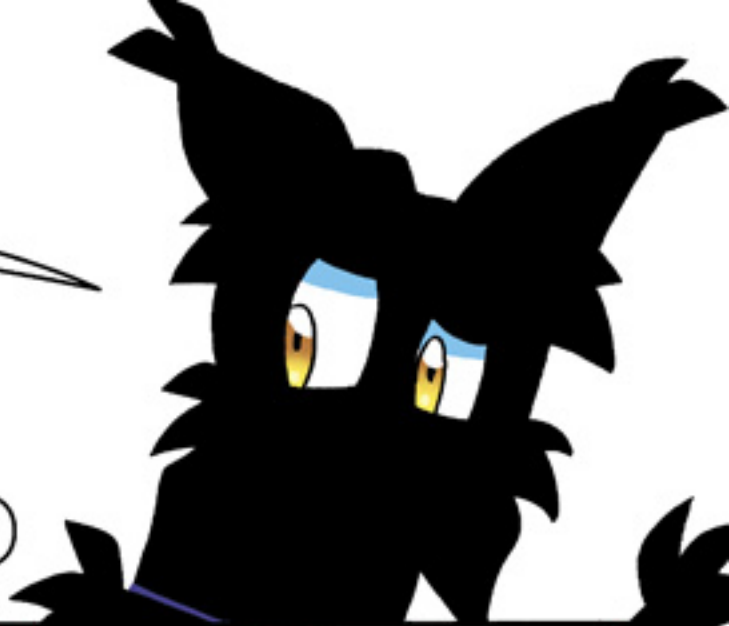




STILL, THE POTENTIAL...! IF I COULD RE-CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT MADE THE RING...OR EVEN SYNTHESIZE IT...

THAT COULD BE GREAT FOR NICOLE!

...Eh?



NICOLE IS ABLE TO PROJECT HER PHYSICAL FORM THANKS TO RINGS, RIGHT? BUT THE ENERGY IS USED UP PRETTY QUICKLY, SO WITH A MORE POWERFUL RING...



Oh, I SUPPOSE... IN THEORY...



Uh, MAYBE...



WOW! NOT ONLY DID YOU CREATE NICOLE, YOU DEVELOPED ALL THESE NEAT USES FOR RINGS!

IT'S KIND OF A SHAME YOU COULDN'T KEEP WORKING FOR SALLY'S DAD.

YES, WELL, NO POINT IN DWELLING ON WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN.

ANYWAY--





SINCE THE RED STAR RING APPEARED, I'VE HAD MY LITTLE ROBOT BUDDIES--Erm... THE REPROGRAMMED BADNIKS--MONITORING THE LAKE OF RINGS. IT SEEMS TO HAVE GONE DORMANT AGAIN.

SO IT MIGHT BE MAKING ANOTHER RING!

RIGHT.

UNFORTUNATELY, YESTERDAY I LOST THE VIDEO FEED FROM THE LAKE.

MAYBE THE BADNIK STATIONED AT THE LAKE WAS DAMAGED OR DESTROYED BY THE DARK GAIA CREATURES.

THING IS, IT'S STILL SHOWING AS ACTIVE IN MY SYSTEMS. I TRIED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK VIA THE DIGITIZER, AND, WELL... YOU KNOW HOW *THAT* WENT.\*


OTHER FEEDS HAVE SINCE GONE OFFLINE, TOO.

\*SEE LAST ISSUE

IT COULD BE A HARDWARE ISSUE. I'D BE HAPPY TO TAKE A LOOK AT IT!

ACTUALLY, DOCTOR, I WANTED TO DISCUSS THIS EARLIER...





WHEN YOU DIGITIZED YOURSELF, YOU ENDED UP **TRAPPED** IN THE DIGITAL WORLD. FURTHERMORE, YOU CAME UNDER ATTACK. EVEN IF YOUR PHYSICAL BODY REMAINED HERE, **MENTALLY**, YOU WERE AT RISK.

I BELIEVE THIS WAS ALL A DELIBERATE ACT OF AGGRESSION.

**SOME-THING** IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER YOUR SYSTEMS.




»SIGH«

I'D LIKE TO ARGUE THAT MY SYSTEMS ARE IRONCLAD, BUT I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE.

AND I GUESS IT FITS...



HEY, NO WORRIES! NICOLE AND I CAN HANDLE THIS!



AND BIG AND I WILL GO INVESTIGATE THE LAKE OF RINGS IN THE MEANTIME.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE A VEHICLE...?



Heh... I'M NOT *THAT* MUCH OF A RECLUSE.

