Part 16

2061

Verity landed in the middle of the hustle-bustle of a city market. She thought this looked very reality-like and could be in almost any European city.

She took a closer look at one of the vegetable stalls: the fruits and vegetables seemed unusually fresh, almost glowing, she had never seen anything like that. Then she remembered that Professor Dimenport had told the Grooters that their five senses would be drastically heightened in a Dream World. She certainly remembered that from Shoparadise.

The market also offered many other products from the farm: honey, grilled chicken, sausages, cheese, etc. The smells were intense and varied. Verity enjoyed every moment of it.

After a while she thought: “Wait… I know this place… isn’t it Geneva’s Plaine de Plainpalais?”

“Yes, it is,” said one of the ladies selling fresh berries, “try these blueberries!”

Verity did and they tasted heavenly. "*Merci*," she said, and continued to walk around and tried to find landmarks she would recognise. She made a mental note of what she saw:

"There are plenty of trees, and many new buildings I have never seen before. But the skate park is still there and so are many of the old buildings. Strange… everything is so harmonious… as if they had torn down all ugly buildings and replaced them with new, more beautiful ones that better fit into the cityscape."

The next thing she noticed was how quiet everything was. People got around mostly on foot or on bicycle, with a few using various kinds of electric two-wheelers. No noisy petrol vehicles. It looked like the only cars around — and there were very few of them — were delivery vans, and all of them seemed to be silently powered by electricity.

"Nice feeling," thought Verity, "what a difference it makes when there are not plenty of cars parked and driving around everywhere." She asked a woman on the street where all the cars were, and she replied that besides the delivery vehicles, the only cars were automatic rental cars parked on the outskirts of the city and used by people who wanted to drive further afield.

"And what year is it?" The lady looked perplexed and answered: "*2061*, of course, a very special year here in Geneva."

As she walked towards the *rond-point* de Plainpalais, she was relieved to see that the big fast-food chain was gone. The tram rails were gone too, replaced by a new metro station entrance, beautifully decorated. Apparently, the underground was the only necessary public transport in this future Geneva. But the famous bronze statues were still there. They hadn't moved since she last saw them in 1995.

The franchise café had been replaced with an authentic eatery that somehow blended better into the cityscape with no advertising to be seen anywhere. And the foods and drinks they sold looked much healthier.

However, Verity was slightly worried that she hadn't seen the circle with the star anywhere. Had she somehow landed in a different kind of alternate reality?

It certainly felt like a 'regular' Dream World. But she needed confirmation. She walked on into the Parc des Bastions, where people were still playing chess on the big chessboards on the ground, and others were playing cards, reading, chatting or embracing on benches or on the lawn. And dogs were playing with children and adults alike, no leashes to be seen anywhere.

Inside the park, she turned left to reach the Reformation Wall, which was still there with its four big statues of Calvin, Knox, Farel, and Beza. On the wall, along its 100 m of length, in huge letters, was written:

POST TENEBRAS LUX

After darkness light. But wait… something was out of place from what Verity remembered: a star chiselled inside the letter O. There was her proof.

"After darkness light," thought Verity. That quote had kept her fighting through the many downs and dark times of her life. She knew there was hope and a better world was possible. Because of the length of the inscription in the light-coloured stone, it was very tricky to take a full photograph of the whole text. It was just one of those places in the world that one had to visit in person.

As she observed a dog and a cat play together at the foot of the wall, she also noticed another strange thing: two much smaller letters, I and O, had been carved just after the R of *TENEBRAS*.

"RIO?" wondered Verity. It made her think of the city in Brazil, and she wondered if that was some kind of hidden message. Maybe.

She was glad to see that the main university building, facing the wall inscription, was untouched.

What astonished Verity the most was how radiant all the people looked. She could really feel their happiness and well-being, even

among older people. All that made her think of the project a friend of hers had launched to incite people to smile on the tramways in Geneva. Maybe he finally succeeded?

People were dressed in a very tasteful way. Elegant men and women everywhere wore some timeless fashion.

There were also many street artists singing or playing beautiful music on original instruments. She also came across a few very talented street entertainers.

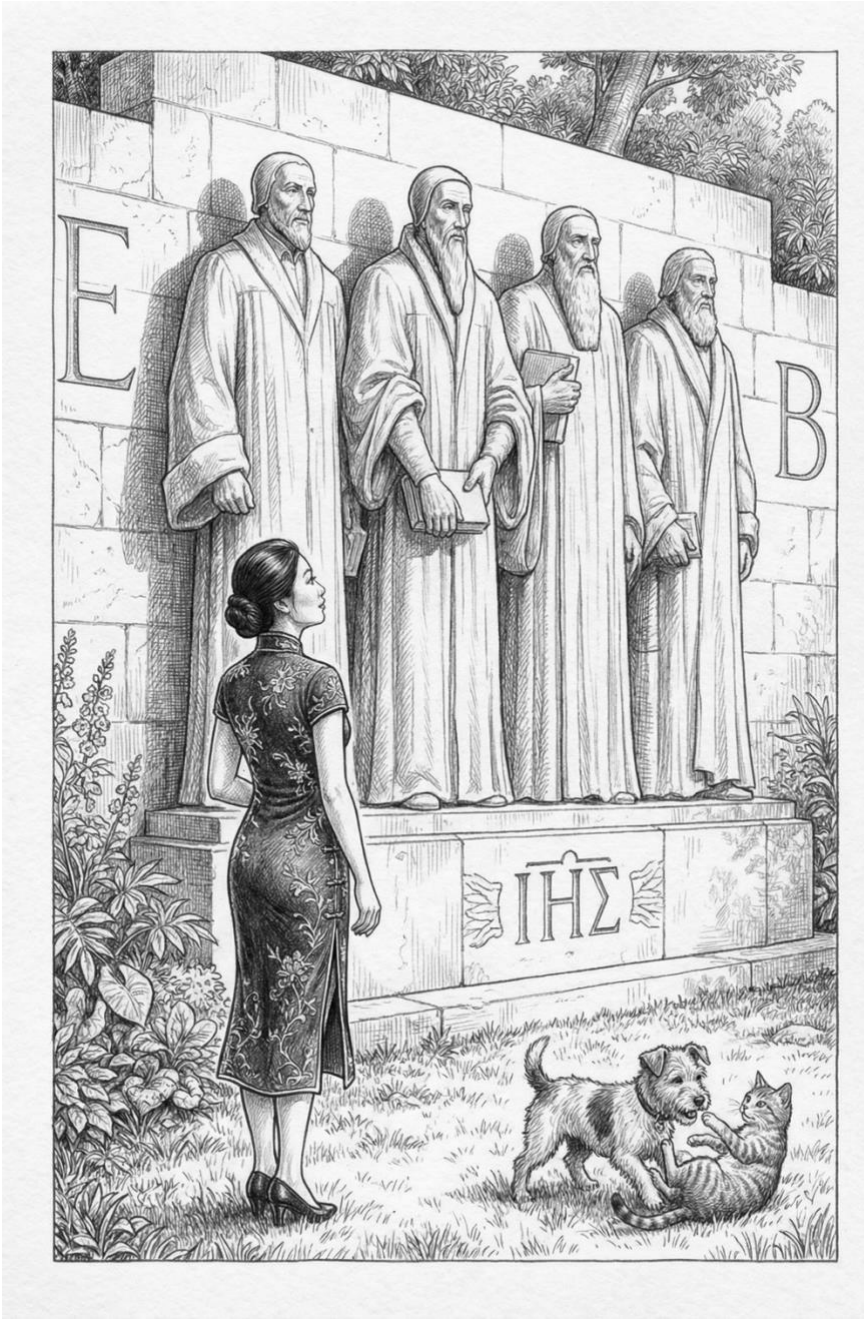
Verity walked on to the Vieille-Ville, the Old Town, which now had cobblestone streets everywhere instead of asphalt. And the sound of the cathédrale Saint-Pierre bells reminded her that time goes on even in a Dream World. The Old Town had remained mostly unchanged, with the difference that most stores, bars, and restaurants seemed to emanate much more warmth and cosiness than what she could remember.

Then she strolled down towards the lake, happy to see that her favourite lingerie shop was still there. And what a selection they had in the window!

The city was beautiful and well kept. No advertising anywhere. There were flowers on the balconies, many trees and green areas all over town, places where children could play and amazing artworks that made the town unique.

She went on, past Rive and the Café Léo, down to the Jardin Anglais, which she almost did not recognise with plenty of nice new bars and restaurants on the waterfront, tastefully merged with their surroundings. She sat down on a sofa in one of the eateries, just next to the water. She ordered a *chocolat viennois* and watched Geneva's centenary aquatic landmark, the Jet d'Eau, a 140 m high water fountain.

And she was happy to see the water of the fountain blowing in towards the city, a sign of continued good weather. If the year was truly 2061, then the Jet d'Eau was slowly approaching its bicentenary.


E
B
IHΣ

Again, she couldn't hear any noisy car traffic or motorboats disturbing the quietness, only silently gliding sailing boats. There were also many birds on the lake, and even in this Dream World, the majesty of the white swans stood out.

Verity wondered why no one had come up to her, as Tirvey did in Shoparadise and as other guides had come in the other Grooters' Dream Worlds.

But suddenly an elegant brown-haired woman approached her.

"Good afternoon, Verity, my name is Smaranda. Welcome to Geneva."

"Hi there," said Verity, "thank you, please have a seat."

Smaranda was probably in her mid-forties, but looked at least ten years younger.

"I followed you from a distance since your arrival, I wanted to let you discover the city on your own first so that you would not be distracted by me talking. How do you like it so far?"

"It is wonderful here," said Verity, "so beautiful, calm, and romantic… And people are so nice and friendly, smiling all the time. And they look very healthy as well. Smaranda, you need to tell me how all this is possible."

"I will answer all your questions," replied the woman, "but first let me tell you a story."

"I love to hear stories," said Verity, thinking back at Marrakesh.



"*Once upon a time* there was a little blonde girl. Her name was Belinda and she was living on a big island in the southern seas. It was a beautiful island with many unique landscapes, plants, and animals.

"Belinda grew up in a small village not too far from the biggest city of the island. She realised that she was very lucky to live on this big beautiful island. But she also saw many things that she did not like, especially how many adults behaved.

"Like many children her age, Belinda dreamed of a better world, so she noted all the things that she did not like in her journal.

♫ *Un autre monde – Téléphone*

"By the time she got older, she had written many notebooks with things she wanted to improve.

"She grew to become a very beautiful young woman and started to meet some boys. But there were many things that she did not like with these boys, so she noted that in her journal as well.

"After Belinda finished school, she decided to study law at a big university on the mainland because she wanted to understand how all laws — good and bad — came into existence and made people's lives better or worse.

"During her studies, she read not only law books, but also many other books on topics like health, physics, psychology, history, architecture because she wanted to understand the big picture of what could make people's lives worse or better.

"And after university, Belinda started to work for the government in the capital city of the mainland. She had now grown to become an attractive and mature woman with many feminine assets she was very aware of.

"She got to know many of the people in the government who had some influence to write the laws that influenced people's lives, both on the mainland and on her island.

"She regularly flew back to her island to meet with the local politicians who could also make laws that made people's lives better or worse.

"After two years, Belinda knew most of the people who had the power to impact the lives of the people on her island.

"She was now ready to execute her plan.

"Belinda carefully chose the men in the government — married or not — she had to seduce and sleep with so that her plan would work. She gave them the best sexual experiences of their lives. And

she made sure to discreetly record everything they said and filmed all the sexual acts with her.

"Then, looking at them with her angel eyes, she asked them if they could push through specific law initiatives that would make the lives of the people on her island better. She honestly promised to have wonderful sex with them again if they succeeded.

"Some of these men refused to cooperate, saying that such initiatives might be unpopular and would compromise their political careers. But after Belinda sent them a USB-key with some very specific material on it, they were suddenly very eager to cooperate.

"Belinda's plan worked, and thus after three years and a lot of sex, the local and federal government had passed many new good laws that would make the lives of the people on the big island better.

"For example, it was now forbidden to sell food with additives, preservatives, or any other chemicals in them.

"There was a big crackdown on all visual pollution sources on the big island: no advertising was allowed in public places, only on dedicated pages on the internet.

"Based on solid scientific research proving their negative health effects, irrelevant negative news was now forbidden in newspapers and magazines. And especially on TV.

"Only beautiful houses and buildings could be built, and the architects had to have their names engraved on their buildings to make sure that they would not build anything they were not proud of.

"Polluting noisy cars would gradually be phased out. Urban planning initiatives were taken that would minimize the need for daily car use in the first place.

"Income taxes were abandoned, forcing the government to work more efficiently with the value-added tax income.

"Tree planting programs were launched and replanting quotas had to be met.

"Career advisory programs were introduced to help unhappy people find their mission in life. And upskilling initiatives supported people who wanted to change careers.

"The results were close to miraculous and scientists from all over the world flew in to the big island to find out how they were doing this.

"Most criminals were taken out of prison and it was explained to them what had led to their destructive behaviour. They were put to do some productive work while at the same time being helped by psychologists and career coaches to find their passions in life.

"Finally, in the same way that people had to maintain their houses and gardens out of respect for their neighbours, people had to take care of their bodies and clothes out of respect for the people they were meeting on a daily basis.

"Belinda's vision had materialised. After ten years, the big island had changed completely to become the closest thing to paradise on Earth. Belinda was now nicknamed the Tasmanian Angel.

"And the people on the big island in the southern seas lived happily ever after…"



"Wow, what a story!" exclaimed Verity. "Now, let me guess… to make Geneva as beautiful as it is today, you got inspired by this story?"

"Exactly."

Verity wondered whether Smaranda had gone into 'horizontal politics' in the same way as Belinda.

"The result is beyond belief," she told the gracious woman.

"We are not talking science-fiction here, Verity," said Smaranda, smiling. "Changes like this will take some time, especially to let the newly planted trees grow, but once the collective mindset shifts with the aim of building more liveable cities, then everything is possible."

"It reminds me slightly of the post-war expansion in the USA, but also the re-building of Germany and Japan, in many ways miraculous."

"When people help each other, everything becomes possible. However, this time around, we want to rebuild aesthetic cities. Back when you come from, in 2018, some efforts in that direction have already been made in Dresden."

"Thank you so much for illuminating me on the possibilities that lie ahead. By the way, I also walked past the place where the hospital used to be and saw that it was gone."

"Do you mean the former Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève? Yes, the ugliest building in town was replaced many years ago by a wonderful *HUG-Centre*, where people come to refuel on affection."

"But where do they treat sick people?"

"Well, there is a very simple *princimple* that explains most of the differences between what you see here and the Geneva you know of. You might have heard of it: it's called supply and demand."

"Of course, I've heard of it."

"Which means that if there is a demand for a certain product or service, there will be a corresponding offer to meet that demand. In other words, as long as there continues to be a demand for numbing drugs, medical services, cigarettes, weapons, junk food, banking or legal services, etc., there will be people and corporations to provide such products and services."

"I hadn't thought about it like that."

"And whether you are aware of it or not, the fact that you, the Grooters, now reunite to solve some big issues, is just due to the fact that more and more people demand change. They just don't know how to make things change, so they need your combined brainpower."

"Interesting point of view."

"Then you can also create a positive demand by offering new products or services. That's called innovation and is necessary because the average customer will not demand a revolutionary

smartphone, or a silent vacuum cleaner, or free internet communications. And that's why inventors and entrepreneurs are needed: to make people's lives better."

"Thank you so much for these explanations, Smaranda."



"Before you leave, there is something I want to show you, Verity."

Smaranda and Verity left the lakefront and headed back up in the Old Town. They entered a small courtyard and walked into a sober and elegant building.

"This is an old book club, 243 years old to be precise," she said.

Verity was amazed: "What a beautiful interior."

It was as if time had stood still for several centuries in this place. So calm and peaceful. And books everywhere. They entered what seemed to be the main *salon* where a handful of people were sitting and reading various books or magazines.

"Come with me," said Smaranda, showing Verity into an adjacent room, with lower ceilings and equally wonderful views of the lake. Her guide did not need to say anything more. There it was: above a wooden commode on which two lit candles stood, a glowing heart-shaped red crystal hovered in the air.

"This is the *Crystal of Love*," whispered Smaranda.

Verity's heart started to pound. This was too good to be true. No riddles to solve, no long flights to take, the third crystal was there right in front of her, easy to grab.

Then 'reality' struck her that she was in a dream… and would probably not be able to bring the crystal back to her dimension, in the same way she hadn't been able to bring back the T-shirt from Shoparadise. "That damned IDRN number…" she told herself.

"I know what you are thinking," said Smaranda, "indeed, you will not be able to bring back the crystal with you."

What impressed Verity and what she thought made the crystal exceptionally beautiful was the fact that it was not perfectly cut like a jeweller's diamond. Instead, the heart crystal had been shaped by many imperfect strokes, creating some rough edges. Still, the result felt perfect.

"So close and still so far away," said Verity, "but can I at least hold it for a while before I return?"

"Of course you can, and you should. By the way, it's the biggest ruby ever found."

Verity took the heart-shaped crystal with both hands. It was glowing, pulsating a reddish light from inside. Almost like a heartbeat. She could also feel a tingling warmth emanating from it, which hadn't been the case with the Crystals of Beauty or Creativity.

"It is the most powerful of all the crystals that constitute Crystallica," said Smaranda, "but it's also the most difficult to materialise. To your consolation, I can say that at least the Crystal of Love is safe in this dimension and you do not need to worry about any malevolent forces trying to get hold of it. It will stay here until you, the Grooters, find a way to access this dimension."

"But how can I get hold of a crystal that exists in my Dream World?" asked Verity.

"By creating that Dream World," answered the elegant woman.

"If only I had a simple manual on how to access Dream Worlds."

"You'll need to puzzle that manual together with your Grooters' friends."

"I guess you're right."

Verity put back the Crystal of Love, amazed at how it just hovered in the air.

"How come that it floats in the air like that?"

"Have you ever heard the saying that love gives you wings?"

Verity started to think that there must be some link between the force of gravity and the concept of love. The technology behind *Ei*

in the Sky apparently proved that, but Verity still had no idea how it worked. She would have to investigate this further.

"Oh, I almost forgot," said Smaranda, "I have a letter for you."

"A letter for me?"

"Yes." She handed Verity a nice envelope with *Verity Blesse* handwritten on it.

She thanked Smaranda, who had to leave, then she walked over to the cathédrale Saint-Pierre and sat on a bench in front of it, and started to read:

Dear Verity,
I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful time we had together in Shoparadise the other day. Things evolve even in this dimension, and it happens that I have met someone else in the meantime. A girl I have fallen deeply in love with and plan to marry very soon. So, between us, it is over. It was just a dream. Sorry for that.
I wish you all the best,
Tirvey.

"I guess you only have one wish left," said Leo, who had now taken over Professor Dimenport's duties.

VERITY BLESSE – SECOND DWT – 04.02.2018

Verity woke up slowly and started to cry.

"Why are you crying?" asked Boss.

The dream had been so powerful and Verity remembered all of it. She was emotionally completely confused between the beauty of the new Geneva and the Crystal of Love, and then the heartbreaking letter from Tirvey.

"It was so beautiful. So full of hope. So calm with plenty of wonderful sensations. And I held the Crystal of Love in my hands.

There was so much warmth and love coming out of it. And then the letter…"

"The letter?" asked Modella.

"Yes, Tirvey broke up with me," she said with desperation.

♫ *Frag den Abendwind – Francine Jordi*

"Take it easy, Verity," said Boss, "let us look at this situation as objectively as possible."

"What do you mean? He broke up with me. After all those wonderful moments we spent together. Wasn't that supposed to be my dream life, without heartaches?"

"You are right, Verity," said Leo, "but maybe there is a good explanation for what happened. Now, let us all watch your film and see if we can draw some conclusions."

"Good idea," said Webbo.

After they had watched the film, Boss said:

"Verity, I don't know what you smoked before travelling this time, but the quantity of clues you got in this Dream World is absolutely amazing. Just Smaranda's story about the Tasmanian Angel gives us so many ideas to help us fulfill our Pact. And I recognised the library where you found the Crystal of Love."

"You did?" wondered the other Grooters.

"Yes, it's an old book club in the Old Town of Geneva, and I'm actually a member, so I can take you all there for a visit sometime."

"We'd love to!" exclaimed the others.

Then Modella asked:

"I am not sure I understand how the crystal could have landed in Verity's Dream World."

"I don't know either," said Leo, "but at least our goal is pretty clear now, don't you think?"

"You mean that we need to create the future Geneva so that we can get hold of the Crystal of Love?" asked Richie.

"We have no choice," said Modella.

"Remember the year: 2061," added Webbo. "Another forty-three years of patience, then we'll get the Crystal."

"I fear we won't have that much time," said Richie.

"Even if Geneva seems to be a good place today," said Boss, "there is still plenty of negativity, sickness, ugliness and corruption here as well. Read a newspaper, or just go out and look on the streets and listen to people. Far too many of them mostly talk about illnesses, relationship dramas, or other problems at home or at work."

To that Verity responded:

"Post Tenebras Lux."

"Yes, you are right. Thank you for your positivity, Verity."

"Does all this mean that Verity and I need to get involved in horizontal politics?" worried Modella.

"That solution worked for Belinda. It is unlikely that the same strategy would work for you, as you haven't studied politics and law," said Leo.



"So where shall we start?" asked Webbo.

"I know that there are many grassroots communities here in Geneva that want to change things. Maybe we should reach out to them?" said Boss.

"That's a good idea. And never forget that a handful of people can change the world. Remember, Belinda was alone," said Verity.

Suddenly, something struck Leo:

"Wait, if we need to create the Geneva of the future to get hold of the Crystal of Love, does this mean that I need to create Adrenaland so that I can meet Leandra?"

"That is a very good question," said Boss, "I don't know. However, I guess the closer you get to creating your Dream World, the higher your chances are of meeting your beloved Leandra."

Webbo looked slightly worried, knowing that his Marry was also stuck in another dimension at the moment.

"But," continued Boss, "my personal belief is that it will be much easier for each one of us to materialise our respective soul mates in our reality dimension, than it will be for us to get hold of the Crystal of Love, which seems to require some drastic re-thinking of our society."

After these clarifications, the goal-driven entrepreneur went up to the flipchart and drew two circles with a dotted bridge between them. And he explained to the Grooters:

"OK, here in the circle to the left is today's Geneva, our current reality, 2018. And the circle to the right is the wonderful Geneva of the future, in 2061, the Dream World that only exists in a parallel dimension for the moment, or if you prefer, a potential future in Verity's imagination."

"So, our task is to build a bridge between these two dimensions?" wondered Leo.

"That sounds very much like science-fiction to me," said Modella.

"Nothing is impossible," said Boss, showing the others his watch with the squared cog wheel. Leo took over: "The way we need to proceed is just a step-by-step process that I call *reverse creativity*. And this is the way any innovation has been done throughout history: you imagine what you would like to create, and then you find ways to create it. And yes, it includes some intuitive processes, but once you know how that works, everything is possible."

"In the case of Geneva 2061, I do not think that we even need any yet uninvented technologies to build such a healthy society," said Richie.

"Well, I think most households were off the grid," said Verity, "Smaranda mentioned something about the availability of free energy."

Boss pointed at the dotted bridge on the flipchart again: "We are just six people. We cannot rebuild a whole city on our own. We are

just the bridge-builders. Think of it as like the colonization of the western USA. The first bridge over the Mississippi River was built in the 19th century."

"1855," added the Grooters' living encyclopedia, "and only a year later, there was a railway crossing it. More bridges followed soon thereafter and the West of the continent was ready for massive and rapid colonization."

"So only a handful of people were needed to build the bridges, but this allowed millions of others to build everything from Denver to Los Angeles," finished Boss.

"OK, I can picture a bridge over a river," said Modella, "but what would a bridge from one dimension to another look like?"

"Good question. Remember the Tasmanian Angel? She helped to build a new reality thanks to new laws," said Boss.

"That sounds good, but a little too simplistic," said Richie.

"Why?"

"Because laws alone are probably not sufficient to change people's mindset."

"That makes the task even more impossible," said Webbo.

"More interesting, you mean!" said Richie.

"The good news," said Boss, "is that we now have a video of what Geneva in 2061 needs to look like for us to get hold of the Crystal of Love."

"Yes, but this is far more complex than just changing the building facades like in a Hollywood studio. We may actually need forty-three years to reach the result that Verity saw in her Dream World," said Webbo.

"Except that we don't have so much time at our disposal," said Leo. "Remember Fuconcius's and Goldilocks' prophecies? We only have one year, or at most two, to go. Which means we have no choice. We need a shortcut. At least to get hold of the Crystal of Love."

"Indeed," said Richie, "in order for Geneva to look like it does in Verity's dream, we need to get rid of all current corruption and

other non-ethical and destructive behaviour, in regular businesses, as well as in international and charitable organizations."

"And in families," added Modella.

"Yes, look at how radiant all people are in 2061. How do we solve that?" asked Webbo.

"And even if we change Geneva positively, how do we keep negativity out of the borders? We are not a remote island in the southern seas," said Leo.

"Good point. Well, we cannot and do not want to close the borders," said Boss.

"Which means the task seems even more daunting…" said Webbo.

"So, if we want to change Geneva, we need to change the whole world. Everything is interconnected nowadays," said Boss.

"Now it really starts to become interesting," said Richie.

"What do you mean?" asked Webbo, "from my viewpoint this means it will be completely impossible for us to get hold of the Crystal of Love."

"Like with *Ei in the Sky*, only projects that seem totally impossible from the start get me motivated," said Richie.

"I guess we will need to travel to more Dream Worlds to get further clues on how to solve this global challenge," said Leo.

"Yes, and we have to find the other crystals as well," said Modella.

"Talking about more clues," said Boss, "what about those added letters on the Reformation Wall? It must be some kind of clue."

"I think so too," said Verity.

"Yes, but if it is a clue, it is very vague," said Webbo. "If it's about Rio de Janeiro, then what?"

"Let's just assume that the fourth crystal may be in Rio," said Richie. "Somewhere in Rio. The other clues were much more precise. Maybe we'll get more insights later on."

They walked up from the Dreamcockpit in the living room, and Boss pointed at his framed Pact on the wall:

"We started this as six kids trying to help our parents. Now we're six adults trying to build a bridge to a better world. It feels like the question is no longer whether we can do it — it's whether we can do it in time."