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Tache Noir

by Sho Botham

The waves washed her body clean as it lay on the water, hidden in the depths of the swell. She was only 19. A hint of a smile shone from her teenage face. The vibrancy of her green eyes, were now dull and black having surrendered to tache noir, a condition normally attributed to death. But Corona was very much alive, enjoying her ability to let the water carry her safely as long as she wanted it to.

The weak sunshine was failing in its efforts to push the silvery grey clouds apart, in the skies above her. Intermittent, light from the sun, picked up glistening threads of her swimming costume.

On the beach lay a neat pile of colours. A bright orange towel folded into a rectangle. A floral dress in tones of yellow, green and pink was scrunched up in a ball on top of the towel. Bright blue sandals sat carefully placed side by side covering a small shiny leather purse with an attractive chunky zip. A baseball hat in lime juice green completed the contents of the pile.

Corona liked to give the impression of being human but even with her powers she sometimes slipped up. The emergence of tache noir being the most obvious example. In reality she didn't need clothes but since being given a human-type skin covering, she quickly discovered that real humans were not fond of the naked body, preferring to cover it up, for some unknown reason. She had yet to work out why some parts of the body had to be covered and others could be left bare.

A young boy's bottom lip was quivering and tears were rolling down his red cheeks, as an angry woman in a sensible bathing suit, scolded him. She told him off for kicking sand onto the pile of colour, putting the lime juice green baseball cap on his head of unruly brown hair and hiding the small shiny leather purse with the attractive chunky zip, in the pocket of his beach shorts. The only thing he managed to say between gulps of air, was, I can't explain why I did these things. The angry woman got even more angry and shouted at the boy to put everything back where he'd found it.

Corona's tache noir did not reduce her incredible eyesight and she watched and listened to this scenario unfolding on the beach, from her hidden position at sea. As long as her connecterpod was safe under her orange towel, she didn't mind if the dress, sandals and shiny purse were taken. The connecterpod was what she needed, to get back onto her speedship where she would be updated for the next day of her life on earth. She needed to complete 19 human days before her updates could be done remotely. There was nowhere in her swimming costume that she could keep her connecterpod, so she buried it under some shingle on the beach covering it with her orange towel which acted as a marker.

Pastel golden light from the setting sun, bathed Corona's body in the waves and she knew it was time to head back to the beach. Disappearing under the waves, Corona seared through the water in human seconds. The orange towel was visible in the fading light. She slipped a hand underneath it to search for her connecterpod. But there was nothing. Kneeling on the pebbles, on the almost dark beach, she used both hands to search. She couldn't get back onboard the speedship without it.

In desperation, she closed her eyes focusing on a visualisation of the connecterpod and felt it materialise in her hand. Now, she would have to own up to using her powers when she got back to the speedship.