

Cinco de Mayo 2062
by Lesley L. Smith

Orson carefully maneuvered himself into the sweet spot, and let go. He grinned as he floated in the middle of the vent-shaft. "See, I told you there's a zero-g spot in here."

Still hanging on the ladder, Chris grunted and stuck out his tongue. "Move! I wanna try it."

"No way. Finders, keepers." A smirk crept across Orson's face.

Orson's comm chimed. As he slapped his wrist to answer it, his hand smacked the side of the shaft and in reaction his body moved to hit the opposite wall. "Ow!"

"Ha!" Chris scrambled to capture the now-empty spot.

When Orson tried to answer his comm, he discovered it had been smashed when he hit the wall. "Shoot. It broke. That's the third one this cycle."

"You're in for it now." Chris giggled.

Orson shrugged. "My turn! My turn in zero-g!"

The boys started wrestling.

Chris' comm chimed. "Chris, where are you?", his mom said. "Are you all right? There's a red alert out for Orson Gomez. He's missing and not answering his comm. Have you seen him?"

Orson gulped. "Uh oh."

Chris toggled his comm. "Yeah, Mom. I'm fine. I know where Orson is."

"Where is he?" she asked.

"Here with me. Uh, in the vent-shaft."

"I told you a thousand times not to play in the vent-shafts" his mom said. "They're too small; you're going to get stuck one of these days. You get home right this instant. And tell Orson his family's waiting for him for some Cinco de Mayo celebration."

"Yes, ma'am," Chris said, toggling off his comm. "It looks like we're both in for it." As the boys started down the ladder, he asked "What's a sinko dah my-o?"

"Just a dumb family thing," Orson muttered.

When Orson arrived at his quarters, Abuelo Gomez rushed him for a hug. "Hijo! Mi Dios; we were so worried."

Abuelita Gomez was right there with him. "Si. We're glad you're all right."

Orson suffered through the dual indignities of being squished in his grandfather's arms and having his cheeks pinched by his grandmother. But under his mother's watchful gaze he forced a smile.

His mom stepped forward. "If you ever ignore a comm signal again, I'll skin your hide, young man."

"But it wasn't my fault!" Orson said. "I couldn't help it."

His mom stared him down. "What did I tell you about making excuses, young man?"

"You said don't make excuses; take responsibility." Orson looked at the decking. "Sorry, Mom."

"Apology accept, Hijo." She smiled. "Abuelo and Abuelita brought some tamales for the party."

Orson scowled.

"Hijo, I thought they were your favorite," Abuelita said.

"I like tofu-dogs now," Orson said, looking up, "like my friend Christophe."

"What kind of name is Christophe?" Abuelita asked. "Is he French?" She turned to Orson's mom. "You better not let my grandson play with some frog-- especially today of all days."

"Madre Gomez!" Orson's mom said.

Orson imagined Chris with green skin hippity-hopping along the vent-shaft and giggled. "Grandma! That's silly."

"What your Abuelita's trying to say is, Christophe is French," Abuelo Gomez said.

"No he's not," Orson said. "He was born on the ship, just like me."

"His people are French," Abuelo Gomez continued.

Orson shrugged. "I dunno."

"Like we're Mexican," Abuelo Gomez said. "That's why we celebrate Cinco de Mayo, remember? Come here, Hijo." Abuelo sat down and patted his knee.

Even though it was for babies, Orson went and sat in his grandfather's lap.

"Orson, Cinco de Mayo is a celebration of a famous battle that took place two hundred years ago in which the brave Mexicans defeated the evil invading French."

"That's laying it on a bit thick, Padre Gomez, don't you think?" Orson's mom said.

"I remember, Abuelo," Orson said. "You said the Mexicans were brave and we should be proud to be Mexican even though we left Mexico and now we're traveling to another star."

Abuelo Gomez hugged him. "That's right, Hijo."

"But I don't understand why that means we can't be friends with French people," Orson said.

There was a knock on the door of their quarters. As the door snicked open, Chris and his mom were revealed.

Orson jumped up.

"I hope we aren't interrupting," Chris' mom said. "but Chris has something he wanted to say. Chris?"

"I'm sorry I got you in trouble, Orson." Chris scuffed his slippers.

"Well, I'm sorry I got you in trouble, too," Orson said. He glanced at his Abuelita Gomez in the kitchenette, and then back at Chris. "Are you guys really frogs?"

Chris' mom gasped, but Chris giggled. "No. But turn around. I heard you have a wet back."

Now it was the Gomez' turn to gasp.

Orson turned around, trying to look at his back. "Nope. Don't think so."

Chris examined Orson's back. "So, you older people all used to live in water, like in the shielding tanks?"

Chris and Orson both looked expectantly at the adults.

There was a very loud silence as the adults didn't meet the boys' eyes.

"Well, well! What do we have here?" Orson's father arrived at the their quarters. "The Renauds?"

"Daddy, can the Renauds stay for tamales?" Orson asked.

Orson's father caught the uncomfortable vibe in the room.

Orson continued, "I mean, I guess we used to be frogs and they used to have wet backs or something like that, but we're all just colonists now, right?"

I smile snuck onto Orson's father's face, and then he started guffawing.

Soon the rest of the room joined him.

When he caught his breath, Orson's father said, "Sure, why don't you guys join us? Help us celebrate Cinco de Mayo."

And so they did.