

MAUDE MOLD

#31

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THOT COFFEE

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The Disk And Executive MONitor woke him. His respirator crowned the pink sand, a replica mountain in miniature, monument to a monumental labor with no one left in charge. Somewhere beneath all this lay our protagonist, cursing the lack of signal strength in his adept's blind. TAB2 had secluded himself on the mountain for thirty years, and now he couldn't get back on the network.

Tiny quartz crystals twinkled up at him from the surrounding sands. He scooped a handful into his pocket, dust still falling out of his eyebrows and partially obscuring his already compromised vision. Assuming this wasn't just frost, he might be able to trade some of it for useful and sundry from whatever remnants of civilization still troubled the Martian desert in this ássforesaken year of 1996. Then again, depending on how bad things had gotten while he was laid up, maybe the locals would even buy frost from a stranger.

He stumbled into town before sunset, not too late for an espresso from Thot Coffee.