

The alarm sounded on the full-body scanner at the Topos spaceport entry queue.

Joss wondered if some unwanted critters had hidden in their trousers from that trip to the beach. Topos was very strict on bio-security, as it was one of the few planets in the sector that still had its own original life forms, rather than commercially licensed ones.

“I’m afraid we don’t allow personal portable communicators here,” said the security officer, as a display highlighted Joss’s shiny new IBCNU2. “You can store it here and collect it before your return flight, but you can’t take it through security.”

“But that’s crazy,” said Joss. “It has all my contacts in it. How will I keep in touch with home while I’m away?”

“Don’t worry about that. We have plenty of call stations you can use. We just don’t allow anyone to use communication devices that can be moved from place to place. Except for the emergency services - they have radios.”

“*Radios?* Those things from the ancient police shows we saw in history lessons?”

“Yes. After we decided to ban portable communicators, we got some practical historians to make some old-fashioned walkie talkies.”

“You used to have portable communicators, and then you *banned* them?”

“Yes. There was a referendum, and the Ban side won. It was a low turnout, and there were protests afterwards because some Keep voters said that not being allowed to vote on their personal communicators was discrimination and made it unfair. But people soon got used to it. Popular with tourists, too. In fact, some visitors like it so much, they don’t even collect their communicators on the way back out.”

Joss couldn’t imagine getting used to being without their communicator. They’d had one for as long as they could remember.

“if you could just put your communicator in this security pouch, and then go back through the scanner,” said the security officer.

Joss took out their communicator, and hesitated...