

5 COME CRUISE WITH US....

Part Five.. I AM TWO .. and... ONE

I punched the elevator button to the Bridge. I needed to find a place to think. My beautiful Marta had turned out to be just another model of machine.

I needed time to gather myself. I must be strong. I must act like the Captain I was.

Standing watch was my First Officer, John. He had become my "rock" guiding me through the first trials as a new Captain. I needed to find a spot to be alone and John would have the answer.

"It has been an exhausting first day for me. I need a place to recuperate. Could you show me to my quarters? "

He smiled, gave an affirmative nod and pointed to a doorway in the aft bulkhead of the Bridge.

"That is the Captain's Suit, Sir. All you need will be laid out for you in there. Rest well Captain. I'll see you in the morning. "

The compartment was surprisingly plush. Tastefully done wood and brass nautical fixtures were everywhere. There were three rooms. A lounge office area, a smallish sleeping cubby, and a spacious bathroom.

Setting on the desk was a small bar. Next to it, a plate of snacks. I poured an inch of Cognac into a crystal tumbler, and downed it one swallow. Its warmth ran through me. The brace of liquor releasing emotions that overwhelmed me.

I was totally done in. An ache of disappointment still pinching my brain. I sat on the edge of the bunk, pulled my tie off, slipped out of my shoes. Then, fully clothed, I stretched out and faded into sleep.

A light tapping at my door awakened me. I called out "Yes". Opening the door was a server Delta holding a breakfast tray. It set the platter on my desk, bowed and backed out of the room.

The smell of fresh coffee lifted me out of my sleepiness and I poured a large cup from the carafe. I only took some fresh fruit and toast from the tray. It was enough to satisfy me.

Slipping on my shoes, I made my way to the bridge. There was John, steady John, in control of the ship.

"I want to apologize to you, John, for my poor performance last night. I received a bit of a shock and I lost full control. I am ready now to assume command. John, I do have one question I must ask you. Do you have any idea how many "Beta" Machines acting as people are scattered among the passengers? Last night I met the most beautiful woman I've ever known. But I discovered that she was merely a piece of machinery "

John looked at me, frowned and then brightened again. He smiled and said....

"Why Captain, ALL of our passengers are Betas. They all look different because there are many models of a Beta. Some advanced, others simply variations."

I must have looked shocked, because John put his hand on my shoulder and spoke again.

"Captain, You appear to be distressed. Any time I feel perplexed, I stand out on the Bridge Wing. The fresh air often clears my mind and refreshes my thinking. Why don't you step outside ? "

I took John's suggestion, opened the Bridge door, and stepped out onto the Starboard wing. The sea air was warm and smelled like it did when I first awoke on the aft deck a day ago. As John predicted, I began feeling much better.

Standing there I could watch the ship's evolutions. The huge metallic square "Sails", moved, twisted and Tacked bringing the monstrous vessel to a different heading. This thing I was on, was incredibly large. I guessed it to be nearly 1/3 rd of a mile long and as wide as a football field. Suddenly, I realized that ..I ...was THE Captain of a gigantic cruise ship, sailing to some unknown destiny.

Refreshed, I stepped into the wheelhouse. John was as usual, sitting in the command chair. The bridge was quiet except for the sound of androids moving about.

"John, thanks for your suggestion. It helped a lot. I must say I'm still confused. Here we are on a huge cruise ship that appears to be sailing somewhere with passengers that aren't really human."

John's face clouded over with a cold angry look. Sharply he replied, "Sir, what do you mean, aren't really human? "

'Well", I answered. "Last night I fell in love with a machine and today you tell me that all of the passengers are machines".

In a voice I'd not heard from him before, he spat out, "Betas , Sir... Betas..... They're Betas and quite human. As human as are YOUR officers."

He rolled up the left sleeve of his coat,

"Sir, look at my arm ! I am Beta Slash Beta Slash Superior Slash Zero Zero Five . All of your deck officers are Beta slash Beta Slash Superiors ". His eyes flashed with anger.

His words were bitter and I froze.

With all my will, calmly, I spoke to him,

" Please accept my apology. I misspoke. I will retire to my cabin and take a moment to collect myself",

The words stuck in my throat.

A look of sadness came over his face. Slowly he formed the words...

"Sir, Please forgive my burst of anger. I had forgotten that you are our new Captain and perhaps are not yet aware of the mission of the....*msv ATTIS*. I hope you will not hold my outburst against me. "

"Of course not John. I will have to take some time to gather my thoughts. I will be in my cabin."

I retreated to my cabin, more confused than ever. There had to be answers to this growing mystery I've found myself in.

the Captain's quarters, was sanctuary and, for the first time I had time to take in all of its space. The main lounge held what one might expect in a Captain's cabin. charts, desk, navigation equipment, writing paper , pens and pencils and a cabinet holding dozens of technical manuals.....

An extensive library of books and 3 ringed manuals. I scanned the titles, noting that most were the standard publications that ocean going vessels are required to carry. Rules of the road (Colregs), International code signals (Pub 102), stacks of Notice to

Mariners, Several Captain's Personal Logs. I made a note to myself, later, I would read some of what my predecessors had written.

Near the bottom of the library shelf, above the desk, was a large red leather bound book. No title on its spine. I pulled it down and placed it on the desk. Large gold letters filled the front of the book. They read.....

- ***MSV ATTIS*** -
Mission Statement

The next 4 hours I spent poring through page after page of that publication. Each page, in technical terms, explained each part of the ship. As well as the technical, it detailed every individual whom I had made contact. There were many more I hadn't. Each page detailed who they were, and what their duty was. It made me aware that I had seen only a small part of the vessel in my travel. There was so much more. Every individual, whether a simple working robot, android or sentient being, had their purpose. They all fit together to complete the mission. They relied on each other. All sustenance, organic for humanoids or non-organic nutrients for robots, were being produced on board. The ship is self contained and needed no Ports of Call in which to resupply.

It was unbelievable! Each being was powered, either by wired connections or wireless induction, All energy came from those very generators I'd seen at the first deck. The generators that HAD to be huge to supply not only the vessel's needs, but, the living power to the thousands of beings aboard, as well !

There was a purpose to all this. A desperate purpose !
Everything I'd read, everything I'd seen, all of the robotic and not so robotic beings, were part of a mission.

There, written in large golden type..... On the frontispiece of the manual,
.... It began.

"

STATEMENT OF MISSION

TO THOSE WHOM SHALL READ,...

***In the earth year, 2131, This , Motor Sailing Vessel " ATTIS", begins its voyage.
Its mission and charge, is to carry and preserve the true essence of humanity.
Earth had become foul with the sewage of greed.***

HISTORY ...

2120 ...The World Congress of Preservation, began funding construction of this vessel and saw to its launch this year, 2131.

***2129... Selection of peaceful, creative and productive individuals was completed.
Those selected were moved onboard and digitized .***

***2130... Earth sterilization completed. All remaining planetoid human existence
....Terminated.***

STATEMENT OF ACTIONS:

"Attis" will be the receptacle of the sparks of knowledge and creativity of the new peoples of the new world.

This ship will continue its voyage, without cessation, until such time as the earth and its resources will have been restored.

Management of this vessel, ATTIS, and the judgment as to when the voyage is to be completed, shall be the responsibility of the ship's officers.

Final decision regarding the restoration of life on the new lands of the earth, shall be that of the Captain alone. He may seek council of his fellow officers, but his decision must be THE uncontested word.

If, in the event a Captain be rendered incapable of performing his duties, a replacement shall be awakened from the Aft Hibernation vault.

Candidates are to be awakened by seniority. A period of adjustment for newly awakened Captains, is to be expected. All active passengers and crew, will see to it that the Captain's journey to learning will be a pleasant one.

The Captain's final decision and vessel's touching land, will signal the AndroMed, "Charlie/ Beta Prime" units, to begin the Restoration downloading to all humanoids. As well, they will see to it that childbirth from those units, proceeds as rapidly as possible. All sentient beings, will procreate. AndroMeds will, at each birth, initiate the process of transferring to the newly birthed children, the life essences', now digitally stored in robot, android IE; all non-sentient beings',

It is estimated that in approximately 100 earth years, a society of productive and creative humans will be established and flourish on the lands.

Individuality will be encouraged and belligerence will not be tolerated.

Be it known:

ALL essences' currently held by humanoids at the highest ranking, as well as having been installed in the descending ranks, down to, an including, "ZULU/Minus ZULU" levels, shall be, whether by DNA or digital downloading... transferred to human children as soon as they are born. Proportioning that essence equally to all.

Be it further known:

Once an essence has been transferred from the robotic or android units, those devices shall continue as common workers, to the benefit of the community, but no longer act as receptacles of human thought.

Prime Directive:

Humans will build a democratic Proto community and perform as productive citizens as well as caring parents of the children born to them."

" May the Earth be , once again, a garden of knowledge and beauty "

My mind raced. Less than two days ago, I had gained consciousness on the after deck this ship. Not knowing where I was or what was in store for me. Now, not only was I the Captain of the ship, but I held a major role in the reestablishment of people on the earth. I was a modern day Noah, guiding a Digital "Flying Dutchman" !

I hadn't the knowledge or skill to make such far reaching decisions as yet, But I knew that it was in me, somewhere. I'd have to spend a great deal of time and energy learning . On a positive note, I have the loyalty of tested officers, to help me find my way. One thing will be for sure, I'll be reading all the Logs, manuals and texts that are setting on the shelves running around the Captain's compartment.

I WILL make the right decision.

I WILL find that landfall, wherein humanity can begin again.

I collapsed on the small sofa beside the desk, reflecting on my fate. Sitting there in quiet thought, I heard my stomach rumble. I'd forgotten to eat and my body was telling me it was past time. I pushed a button on the desk, and called for my Android Steward, "Charlie Slash Delta Slash 3726 Slash/ Stew'd ."

"Please have some dinner brought to the Captain's cabin". I ordered. He affirmed my request. I thought perhaps, I should have a shorter name for him, and I laughed to myself,... "Perhaps, Chuck".

In a short time, there was a light tapping at my compartment door. "Enter" I said.

The android shuffled in, holding a tray of food. The food smells were delightful. My stomach roared.

"I'm going to call you Chuck. Is that satisfactory with you?" I asked.

The Android bowed and said, " Sir, I will answer to that designator. Sir, It is my duty to remind you, that you haven't changed your uniform as yet. May I suggest a shave and a shower and uniform change before dining ?"

He was right, I felt scruffy and a cleanup was needed.

" I will lay out your toiletries, a fresh uniform and take my leave. I will be at the ready for whatever you require, Sir ".

I thanked him and told him he could leave.

I shaved my ragged beard, then stepped into the shower. A clean shaven face and the shower's warm water, flushed away my weariness . In a fresh uniform, and having consumed the sumptuous meal, I was more comfortable than I'd been since the beginning, two days ago.

Still.....There was one thing that troubled me.

An important question had arisen while I was standing in the shower.

One that needed an answer as soon as possible !

Perhaps my First Officer, John, would know how to go about checking the passenger manifest. That massive list of passengers living now on the "*ATTIS*" I needed to locate a single individual out of the thousands of passengers.

I MUST find Marta !
I had to tell her just how much I wanted to be with her.
I could say those words NOW !

In the shower, as I lathered up I saw ...
on the inside of my Left arm,
...Tattooed black and green letters

"Alpha slash Alpha Supreme slash Alpha Zero Zero Two"

Fini

r. ahseln 10/30/2016