

The Fate of One Planet

by Ian Dow

Chapter 15

Self-Destruct

The two Jays on the Black Ship ordered a new learning band, similar to the ones on the Spikey Ship. However, they found out that those bands wouldn't work on an enemy ship with different technology, and so they sent it back into the Parallelogram and asked for a learning device from *this* ship. They received a learning band that would fit one of the ball-shaped aliens, and after testing it out, one of the Jays found it worked. So, basic lessons started with both Jays holding the large metal arc on their heads. After several hours of study and exploration, they had a small idea of how the ship was maintained and gained a smattering of the Black Ship's language. They ordered three more Jays and the oversize learning bands and the lessons accelerated to match their combined learning speed.

On a break, one of the Jays walked into the flight deck to find the White Sphere still in a cup pressing buttons to no avail. "Hello, I had forgotten you were still here."

The Jay joined the Sphere by getting into the next cup. After the lessons, some of the buttons appeared familiar, so, he pressed some. The Black Ship did not like what it considered was an increased attack on its systems and went into an automatic protocol, which started the self-destruct. This even surprised the Black Ship's AI, who did not know that the automatic protocols would be that extreme. The protocol sent an audible message throughout the Black Ship. The Jays listened in and finally, on the second time around, they understood the message: the main engine is about to self-destruct!

With this new knowledge, they ran to the flight deck. The three Jays dropped into the remaining cups and switched on the flight display, slowly reading the message on the screens, which they said aloud.

"Due to internal attack on the Black Ship's systems, I must self-destruct to protect from internal enemies."

"What internal enemies?" One Jay enquired.

The first Jay on the flight deck said, "That would be him and me pushing buttons, I'm guessing?" pointing at the White Sphere.

"Could we maybe all stop pressing buttons then?"

The White Sphere kept tapping away. The fifth Jay lent over and put his hand over some of the buttons, and the White Sphere's scalene triangle appendage went straight through his hand as if it was not there. All the Jays said 'ouch' at once, except the Jay with the pierced hand. He sucked it up big time and dripped blood into the large cup. This did get the White Sphere to stop. The four other Jays looked for ways to prevent their destruction.

"Nope, the ship's automatic systems have designated us all as hostile borders and even the ships' AI is fighting to stop it but can't."

"We have a countdown from thirty-two-time units, however long that is?"

"The AI is saying goodbye to the other ships, so I think we've had it, guys."

"So, we are pretty much fucked then?" said the Jay who had first come aboard with the White Sphere.

He headbutted the control panel in a last defiant stupid act. Everything stopped. The countdown, the auto self-destruct messages, the building noises from within the Black Ship's engine, all went quiet.

"What just happened?"

The White Sphere slowly pulled its triangular appendage out of the fifth Jay's hand. It was not being stabbed through the hand or the loss of blood that was the problem. The slow scraping on the bones in his hand made the fifth Jay faint. Another Jay took off his T-shirt and wrapped it around the wound. The White Sphere got out of its cup, came over to headbutt Jay and lightly scraped his forehead. It went back to its cup and touched the scraping to the control panel, which lit up immediately.

"It's the spit from the ball-shaped alien on your forehead."

As they were identical, the three other cups' control panels also lit up for the Jays, now recognised as friends.

A Jay read the new displays, "We have multiple warnings about systems failures all over the ship. We need to get to work, guys."

"I'm erm... still here?" said the slightly embarrassed Black Ship AI.
"What happened?" Asked the Lumpy Ship's AI.

"Well, the combination of the White Sphere and a drone pressing my buttons was taken as a hostile act by my ship's automatic protocols, and it went into a self-destruct routine that I could not stop. Then, a drone touched the display with the lumpy bit on the top of its body, and the ship's systems have now designated it as a Master with full privileges. I am still disgruntled about this," said the Black Ships AI.

"If your drones now have full access to everything on your ship," inquired the Lumpy ship's AI, "What have they done that is making you unhappy?"

"They have set about repairing and maintaining my defective systems."

"Repairing and maintaining your defective systems? You poor thing you!"
The Lumpy Ship's AI would have rolled its eyes if it had any.

"If you are unhappy with your drones, I will have them, I am large, and it will take a lot of work to get me fit for duty."

"Fit for duty!" The Black Ships AI retorted, "What can you do when you are fit for duty? We are all quarantined here forever!"