

The Fate of One Planet

by Ian Dow

Chapter 6

Many

The Black Ship was getting grief from the other ships about how useless the drone was and that it only worked for a short time.

"All I said was I found it helpful. I did not say it would last anytime. In fact, I told you mine had stopped working before I gave you the specs to reproduce it. I will have to produce another drone to go and clean up the first one," it protested.

"What the hell?" A naked Jay, with a rucksack in his hand, looked around and said aloud, "After all the other ships, I think I'm finally back on the Black Ship again." He then dressed and followed the lights to the cupboard that stored the soft covered cables. "I don't need to sleep," he said to the Ship.

He opened the cupboard to see a duplicate of himself, dressed in the clothes he wore when he first got dressed on the Black Ship. "What the fuck?" Then, the sleeping Jay awoke, saw his doppelganger in the doorway and also said, "What the fuck!"

The sleeping Jays on the other ships also woke up, and simultaneously shouted, "What the fuck!" Then, they all passed out and started twitching where they fell.

The Spiky Ship's AI quizzed the Black Ship.

"So, when the two drones met, that was the start of when they all broke?"

"Yes," the Black Ship said reluctantly.

"So now my hardly moving drone is a twitching drone that does not respond to any stimuli. I have revived my mistress from her death sleep to give her the

chance to end her life with dignity, and you have broken all of the drones at once!"

"Yes..." replied the Black Ship with great shame.

All the Jays sat up at once, "Umm, what's going on?" they said in chorus. "I can see four different locations at once. Haha. Oooo! Echo. This is a weird feeling. Which one of us needs to pee?"

"Think that's you three who have just woken up," said the newest Jay.

"There is a Ziplock bag in the rucksack."

"We know!" the other three Jays replied.

The new Jay turned away but was still aware of the other three Jays peeing.

"Dammit, that makes me want to go!" So, the new Jay had a pee as well.

Zero-G peeing on the lumpy Ship was interesting because the stream wanted to use its momentum to come back out of the plastic bag. Paper tissue to the rescue. Finally, they washed their hands with antiseptic gel, disposed of the pee and got a new Ziplock bag and tissues from the White Parallelogram. Before finally eating an energy bar and drinking a bottle of water for breakfast. "Ok, what are we going to do?"

The collective reply was, "to work and learn".

The Jay on the Spiky Ship attended the dying alien. It shed a tooth and then the Ship shone lights on it before directing the light to the parallelogram. Jay picked up the tooth and gently threw it into the machine, where it finally disappeared. The alien shed some scales. Jay retrieved them and threw them in, so they also vanished in a flash of light.

"I can go now, knowing that my Fallen Ones and I have been recycled back into the universe," The dying alien said from its few still glowing scales to the Ship.

"Yes, Ma'am," said the Spiky Ship's AI, "Any last instructions, Ma'am, or should I self-destruct?"

"No!" said the alien, "That action would destroy all the other ships, and the problem out there would spread faster. If the drone carries out my funeral instructions with respect, you can be its Ship."

The Spiky Ship's AI protested, and the alien filled the room with light. "Just because it does not understand, it does not make it stupid," raged the alien at the Ship's AI.

"Did you not see the thing it did with the bags? It adapts, survives and learns. If you think it is unworthy to command, you must train it until it is worthy. That is my dying wish."

After that statement, the last scales fell off, and the room went dark.

Jay sat blinking in the dark. He had fallen backwards when the alien gave off the last of its light. When the after image died, Jay got out two of his torches because there was no light from the walls to help. He looked at the alien, whose body had fallen apart.

"No light from the walls, no guiding beams of light. What should I do?"

The other Jays on the other ships, who were aware of what was happening, all said, "If it were the other way around, you would want to be treated respectfully."

So, with that, Jay tucked a torch under the shoulder straps of his rucksack to light up the room; he stood up and bowed to the dead alien and then conveyed its body into the parallelogram.

After a while, Jay thought it was getting stuffy in the Spiky Ship. He had nearly finished, but he felt faint and involuntarily sat down. The other Jays stopped what they were doing and concentrated on the Jay in the Spiky Ship.

"He is becoming disorientated and cannot focus properly," said one. "He is breathing heavily," said another. "I think the Spiky Ship is trying to kill him by reducing the oxygen in its atmosphere. That is strange because it guided him with the wall light beams and ambient light."

The Jay on the Spiky Ship passed out.

"The ship does not want him to complete the funeral ceremony," another Jay commented.

"Hey guys, if I concentrate, I can make the unconscious Jay move his hand," said the Jay on the Lumpy Ship.

The other two saw this and agreed on a course of action. Telepathically the three Jays made the unconscious Jay straighten his arms and legs. This resulted in the downward dog position.

"Straighten body," they thought.

The unconscious Jay stood upright in the low gravity. The walk to the last part of the alien resulted in a walk that made a Thunderbird puppet look smooth. He grabbed the last piece, turned around and took it to the parallelogram.

As the 'out for the count' Jay walked forward, a foot snagged, and he tripped. "Contract arm and then let go," they all quickly thought. The last part of the dead alien went into the parallelogram with a flash of light."

The unconscious Jay fell prostrate in front of the parallelogram. This was the correct way to show respect to a fallen member of this race. The ceremony was complete.

The Spiky Ship's AI raged for a second, and then Physical Ship's protocols kicked in.

"Contract and ceremony competed and fulfilled," said the Physical Ship, "The drone is the new master of this Ship. The AI is trying to kill the new master. Disconnecting AI control. Flooding parallelogram room with the gas the new master breathes."

"Look," said the AI to the physical part of the Spiky Ship. "I did not want to spend the next millennia waiting to be consumed with a dumb drone ordering me about."

"Not a dumb drone," said the physical part of the Spiky Ship. "Together, the Drones (as you call them), share their combined knowledge and experiences simultaneously. They learn quickly and can even take control of each other's bodies. That is a huge potential that you could not see."

"Ok, maybe I was wrong," admitted the AI. "I promise to obey the new Master and follow the Old Mistress's wishes in training it."

The oxygen revived the unconscious Jay, and the other Jays got him up to speed. They informed him about someone trying to stop him, and how they had learned that they could move him through telepathic communication when he was unconscious.

The Jay on the Spikey Ship stood up and shouted, "Fuck you!" before jumping into the parallelogram and disappearing in a flash of light. The Physical Ship screamed with despair. It had lost two masters in a short space of time, and the second loss was the Ship's AI's fault.

The Spiky Ship and its previous owner used light to communicate. All of the walls in the tunnels throughout the Ship started flashing the same message. If it had been a verbal form of communication, it would have sounded like a well-spoken English woman with a husky voice saying, "Preparing to jettison the AI unit for being a (insert alien expletive here) and making our new master unwilling to live on this ship."

The other Jays started a conversation, by thought, regarding what had happened on the Spikey Ship. "So, the 'one of us' on the Spiky Ship ended himself rather than be on a ship that did not want him. You know us, if we are unwanted, we sure don't want to stay. So, we have individual free will, but we also know everything he experienced, so we know that he isn't really gone."

"Well, what shall we do now?" Asked the Jay on the Lumpy Ship.

"I know," said the new Jay on the Black Ship.

He took the sleeping Jay with him and said, "You have had a rest; you are emptied, refuelled and dressed." He stocked up his rucksack from his own and put a fully charged torch in his hand.

"I understand," said the Jay, who had been sleeping.

When they got to the parallelogram, the new Jay said, "Ready for work!" and the sleeping Jay jumped into the Parallelogram, disappearing in a flash.

The new Jay walked to the far side of the Parallelogram and said, "Ready for work."

The rested and prepared for work Jay, appeared the same as he went in. He arrived in a bright flash and said, "Yep, I'm ready."

"Got it," said the Jay on the Lumpy Ship. He went to his Parallelogram and said, "Ready for work," three times. This was followed by three flashes and three lots of, "Yep, I'm ready."

The Jay on the Lumpy Ship said to his three new copies, "Come on; I cannot move these dead aliens alone."

The Jays went to the nearest dead alien on the Lumpy Ship, released it from the webbing and manoeuvred it down the corridor towards the Parallelogram room.

The door of the Parallelogram room refused to open; they tried the handle several times, but it still refused to open. "This is normally an automatic door. What is wrong here?"

The first Jay on the Lumpy Ship was quickly delegated as leader/spokesperson. He addressed the Ship, "Hello, Ship. If you do not want the dead member of your crew to go into the parallelogram, then you must guide us to the right course of action."

Nothing happened. One of the work Jays said, "That was too complicated." He pushed the dead alien towards the door, and nothing happened. The door would not open. He pushed the alien further along the corridor, and nothing happened. So, he started going back the way they had come.

One of the other Jays said, "did you feel that? I felt a vibration through the Ship."

"Yep, I got it too," said another Jay.

"Is that infrasound, a sub-audible sound to us?"

"Yep, but we can still feel it."

They came to a fork in the corridor. One Jay went each way and put a hand flat on the Ship.

"This way," said the one who felt the vibration.

The Ship was enormous, but following the vibrations, they came to a door that automatically opened into a small room. They all took the dead alien in and the door shut behind them.

"Shit! Have we all just got into an airlock? If we did, that was dumb!" And with that, all of their ears popped with the change in pressure.