

FROM THE LOGS OF BASIL RATHBURN

(BASIL = Basic Synthetic Intelligent Lifeform)

Setting: *Officer's quarters on a spaceship. Think of the Enterprise-D from Star Trek: The Next Generation, only less cruise-ship and more military. There is a sofa along one wall with a coffee table in front of it, and on the opposite side, with the chair facing the audience, there is a computer console. BASIL walks in from near the upstage end of the console. He is human in every obvious way, except that his skin is silver, and people in the front seats can see that his eyes are glowy sapphire.*

He strips off his uniform jacket to reveal a tight-fitting black t-shirt, and then sits in the chair. After pressing a few buttons, he looks into the monitor (actually, he looks over it so he's addressing the audience) and begins to speak.

BASIL: (to computer) Computer, begin recording.

COMPUTER V/O: Ready to record. Please begin.

BASIL: Executive Officer's Log, 4th December 2369. The *Cousteau* has just completed a humanitarian mission to the planet we refer to as Aquaria Three, though the native population – a race of sentient marine mammals not far removed from the Terran cetacean species – has a different name for their world. The organic beings among our crew have been unable to reproduce the name, but I have managed a close approximation that the locals told me was 'close enough for krill.'

BASIL emits a series of sounds that sound like a random string of pops and clicks.

BASIL: Our mission was to bring a vaccine for the influenza-like epidemic currently attacking most of the member planets in the Coalition of Aligned Worlds. As a synthetic life form, I am, of course, immune, but many of my colleagues and friends have contracted the disease, though our CMO, as a member of the team who created the vaccine, has ensured they all survived.

BASIL takes a beat, then continues.

BASIL: We do not yet have enough evidence to present to the Coalition Counsel, but my captain, our CMO, and I believe that this virus is not an organic evolution of the Ridallian Flu, as it initially seemed, but a form of chemical warfare initiated by the Coprenium Empire, a body of worlds with which we have had contentious relations for over a century. It is my hope that we, and the other ships of the Coalition Star Navy will be able to deliver the vaccine to all of our member worlds in time to inoculate most, if not all, of the population at risk. To that end, we will be rendezvousing with our sister ship, the *Ballard* in seven standard days, to pass on the vaccine and the code to create it, as well as to exchange information.

BASIL addresses his next lines to the computer.

BASIL: Executive officer's log complete. Save and end recording.

COMPUTER V/O: Acknowledged. *(pause)* Recording saved.

BASIL stands up, goes around his console to a wall slot. He waves his hand over it, then places an order.

BASIL: Tea service for one, please. Peppermint-tarragon blend, pot of honey.

There is a pause and then a tea tray appears from the slot. (Handed through slot from backstage) BASIL collects it, then returns with it to his console.

BASIL: Computer, begin recording.

COMPUTER V/O: Ready to record. Please begin.

BASIL: Personal Log, Executive officer Commander Basil Rathburn. 4th December 2369. It is Thursday night, and we have just completed a successful humanitarian mission. The population of Aquaria Three is grateful for our assistance, but it is not the mission that is foremost in my thoughts this evening, but my girlfriend, Zoe. As an avid swimmer and surfer, she is fascinated by water-worlds, and I regret that she was not aboard the *Cousteau* during this assignment. Instead, she is in the middle of a theatrical performance on the planet Winter, where I will be joining her to celebrate the Terran holiday of Christmas.

BASIL spoons honey into his tea, watching it drizzle into the liquid.

BASIL: I must confess, I am concerned about this... trip. First, I am worried that her father and extended family will not accept me, or our relationship. Zoe's mother served with me here on the *Cousteau* for several years, and it is with her permission – even encouragement – that we first became friends, and then more. But her father resents his ex-wife's career in the Star Navy, and it is my position as an officer, as well as the fact that I am synthetic, that gives me pause. Zoe assures me that her family will accept me because they love her... but I am still... concerned.

BASIL stirs his tea, then sips from it.

My second point of contention is that I am planning to find a moment – the 'perfect moment' to propose marriage to Zoe. She is in a place in her career where work is stable, and I am in no danger of being reassigned or PCS'd unless it is done at my request. I have purchased a ring, and we have had several conversations about marriage with intentionally vague details, but it is another matter to know that one's partner may still decline. In this, I believe I am no different than any organic being in a similar situation.

BASIL pauses, sips more tea, then sets the cup down.

BASIL: I share a similarity with other organics in another respect as well. I miss my girlfriend. Our relationship has changed me. Where before I only ate or

drank to be polite in public, now, I sip Zoe's favorite tea partly because I enjoy the flavor, and partly because it reminds me of her. I was programmed with basic emotions, but since meeting Zoe, I have catalogued far more than the basics – roughly seven hundred thirty-three distinct emotional states – and while I try my best to live in the moment, and simply experience these things, I cannot help but record my... feelings... for later analysis.

BASIL: But I digress. Marriage is a significant step for organics, and it is no less significant for me. While Zoe and I have discussed the fact that I do not appear to age, we have not discussed that a permanent affiliation with me will rob her of her chance to experience motherhood in all its aspects. I cannot sire human children. She knows this, but we have never discussed the implications.

BASIL opens a drawer in his desk, below the monitor, takes out a black velvet box, opens it, stares at the ring inside, then snaps it shut, and puts it away.

BASIL: I have no option but to trust my connection with the woman I love and hope that she perceives the same connection I do.

(addresses computer)

Computer, save recording and end.

COMPUTER V/O: Recording saved.

BASIL toys with his cup for a few seconds, then drains the remaining tea. After setting down the cup he addresses the computer again.

BASIL: Computer, place subspace call to Zoe Lauren Harris, Crystal City Inn, Crystal City, Winter.

Blackout.