

SOLITUDE

Solitude lies at the lowest depth of the human condition. Man is the only being who feels himself to be alone and the only one who is searching for the other.
Octavio Paz

Solitude is as needful to the imagination as society is wholesome for the character. James Russell Lowell

*When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world and droop,
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude.*
William Wordsworth

It is with a certain amount of trepidation that I am writing this chronicle into my space journal. Each day I make an entry, not knowing whether it will be my final one. It seems that I am the last one of my kind in existence. Over the past while we have been exterminated, both from our planets and our space ships by an alien enemy against whom we appear to have no defence. I may be the ultimate hope for our kind.

I am and have been a space explorer for all of my professional life. My ship is the latest of its type. It is a prototype featuring the most innovative of modern technology. It is equipped with means that do not allow any unwelcome intruders. A variable force field protects the ship. By choice, I have no regular crew and that may have allowed me to survive so far with the weaponry available to me. It is unbelievably powerful and has been able to withstand any attempt by the aliens to destroy my ship. I suspect that my co-space explorers attempted to negotiate with them, with unsuccessful and fatal results.

I have always been a loner. On my early trips to space, I was obliged to have a co-pilot, whose name was Luke. He also served as a maintenance engineer. He was superb in both categories. Luckily he was a most taciturn fellow whose responses to any query I had was usually nothing more than, "Yes Sir", or "No Sir". I quickly learned to completely trust him so that he had just about total freedom to do whatever he felt was needed. I would have been quite willing to have him as my partner in space indefinitely. Unfortunately he had been a space explorer for longer than what had been mandated. After a number of years together he was obliged to retire. His legacy was that I became the top ranked space explorer and was allowed to choose my partner and my space ship. I elected not have a partner but a robotic android instead. I was also always provided with the most up to-date space vessels.

I was now alone on my ship with the exception of the one robotic android. There was no real interaction with it. Because of its phenomenal memory and analytic ability, it was able to provide me with all the necessary data required to safely travel anywhere and to hold off hostile entities.

One might ask whether, prior to my current circumstances, I had ever had a life threatening situation during my years in space. The answer is, not really! Actually the only quasi traumatic event occurred on an occasion when I was required to return to the

home base for debriefing, rest and relaxation. I slipped and fell in my bathtub while taking a shower, and broke my nose. That was the only physical harm that ever befell me.

I was now truly alone. Any interaction with those of my kind was no longer possible. It was a condition that I found most enjoyable. I never could interconnect with others like me. I was my own best company. During the time when I was not engaged in fighting the enemy, I read, watched all sorts of entertainment and engaged in esoteric activities with virtual, holographic females who provided me with all the pleasures I desired. However, the time I enjoyed the most was listening to music and unsuccessfully trying to compose a symphony. How I envied Beethoven.

My robotic android was always alert to the enemy's attempts at incursion into my ship and promptly warned me. Then I would use my lethal weapons to kill as many of them as I could. I have no idea how many I have already destroyed. I must admit that I got a perverse sort of pleasure when engaging the enemy. Perhaps it was because it added an enormous amount of spice to what, for the most part and while interesting, has been mainly staid scholarly research into the various life forms and environments in our universe.

As I am writing today's entry into my journal, I am interrupted by a voice calling out to me.

"Dear! Your dinner is on the table. Please come and join me."

"Yes Dear!" I reply.

"I know how much you enjoy using your imagination while playing virtual games on your computer. Don't you think that you should spend less time at it and spend more time in the real world?"

"Yes Dear!" I reply.

"After dinner there are a few chores I would like you to do, such as clean up the garage, oil the squeaky door hinges and try to get the TV to work properly."

"Yes Dear!" I reply.

After you are finished and if you are not too tired, I would like you to come to bed.

'YES DEAR!' I REPLY.

Author's Disclaimer: Any resemblance to anyone is purely unintentional. Nikki invites me to bed before I do the chores.

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