

astounding synchronicity

“We, the collective of Kro-BOT-Kin, hereby decree the banishment of humanoid 1798-3642-z from our association, effective immediately.”

For a billion voices speaking in unison, I thought, they have astounding synchronicity. Their calls boomed across the dome, an ominous sound reverberating in the air.

“I respect your decision, community,” (the standard response when the algorithm makes a judgment was announced to the still world which I was never to see again).

I hoisted my bag, stuffed with my collection of literature, gear, and all my personal effects, over my injured shoulder. It stung, of course, but I knew I would come to need these items shortly—or, at least, I hoped I would. I had never been out of the city before, let alone ventured out of the community.

I assume it’s my fault. Pretending to be a humanoid for 17 years is a serious offense—especially considering the worst offense committed in the prior ten years was a squeaky motor and that was fixed once bot 9873-3261-f refilled their oil cartridge.

The humanoids are a some-what unusual category amongst us—or the, I should say—androids. They have no variations from the rest of us, except their body reflecting that of a human. I was the only real human in the community. I still don’t completely comprehend what it means to be human. I didn’t even know I was one until I was 11 when I attempted to replace my visual sensor.

I was escorted by a mob of androids to the gate. None of the robots know what’s beyond this gate; it leads to Outside. I’ve never been Outside before. No one has; it’s forbidden to. As

the aforementioned wheel probably clued, Society takes order very seriously; if anyone participates in Forbidden, they would be banished.

I was the first to ever be banished. For a Millenium, banishment was thought of as a hypothetical, but I, now, provide the perfect example for anyone considering the performance of one of the Banishable Acts.

I took a final look at the world surrounding me and shamefully walked through the gate leading to Outside.

I exited the last set of gates, now entering Outside.

The first thing I noticed was the landscape; Inside had been “functional”, Bot Gang—a nickname I had for the non-humans I had filled the entirety of my existence with—had been insistent on functionality. Everything was practical; boring seemed a more fitting word to me, though. The landscape of Outside was beautiful; picturesque, colorful structures stretched over the realm, they rained on for every direction.

I walked towards one.

I was stopped by what I assumed was another android.

“Don’t touch that flower. It’s poisonous.”

“Poisonous?” I repeated the unfamiliar word.

Just as she—Alaska, I would later discover—opened her mouth to speak I heard a robust alarm blaring from the dome.

The alarm, similar to my banishment, had only been in place for a theoretical occurrence. The society functioned perfectly; it was only necessary to prevent speculation.

“Notice to all: we have concluded this new outbreak is rust. An ancient disease that effected many ancestors of our kind.”

What the announcement didn't tell, but Alaska did, was that rust cannot be treated in the dome. The only remedies that could be used to cure it remained in the Outside. She guided me to a building—her house—and showed me the treatment, a material named *Coke*.

“Here,” Alaska stated while handing me the container.

I stared at her quizzically.

“If you want to use it,” she started to explain, “it's yours.”

“It's enough to end all of the rust.”

I was infuriated at the population. I didn't want to give them the *Coke*. They deserved to all rust. They deserved their gears to rot and never turn again.

At this thought, I halted. It was all coming back to me; suddenly, I was 12 again. I had slid and collapsed in the downpour. I had hurt my leg and was in too much distress to walk. I begged one of my neighboring droids to assist me, but, assuming my personality chip (personality chips were the only thing in the community that we still needed to perfect, but as they were used so scarcely, the association contributed limited time on their development) was faulty, they denied to assist me. I sat in agony for what appeared like years. My hands clenched into fists as I thought of this, until I remembered what happened next.

“Are you ok, Mara?”

Jared helped me stand up. Jared was my best—and only—friend; he was an information bot with one of the aforementioned faulty personality chips. He helped me walk to the shed (our secret hiding place) and gave me a substance called medicine. According to Jarred, medicine was a pre-robot-era substance used on humans to cure disease or soothe the pain of an injury.

As we approached the entrance, Alaska asked me if I was certain I wanted to help the bots.

I nodded in response.

To my shock, the gate had remained open from my Banishment.

There was no visible change in the bots' appearances. I looked at Alaska quizzically.

She replied with the same look.

We approached the nearest bot.

The bot screamed, "Get away from me! You're infected!" She, then, ran into her house and slammed the door shut. Along with all the windows.

I spotted Jared coming towards me, and I waved for him to come to me.

"Why does everyone think they're rusted?" Alaska asked, without allowing me to introduce her to Jared.

"Probably a bug in the personality chips, distorting their visual sensors."

"So, no one's rusted?"

"Yeah."

"Should we —"

Jared interrupted me ere I could conclude my statement; "If we bring them in together and ask them if they're rusted, their lie detectors will reveal to them they aren't."