

Geral noticed the small wooden yellow door that had been inserted into the larger locked door and on it was the number one hundred and fourteen. He turned the handle and, bending low, stepped through and into the garden. Inside it was sunny and warm and a tiny path lined with old Victorian slate edging drew him in. Beside the path was a wall of runner beans ready to be picked, all growing up ancient branches that had been placed in the ground. Through them he could just make out a small yellow cottage with a tin roof. He silently walked along the path, and onto the open lawn. Nasturtiums wound around the lawn edges and pink and red rose bushes grew up the ancient apples trees, the flowers cascading from their branches as if coming from the trees themselves. Large blue Himalayan Poppies exploded from the verges and enormous orange flowers adorned huge marrow's and pumpkins growing out of the grass. Geral sighed, he never felt so calm. In the distance was a greenhouse and through the leaves of the tomato, melon and aubergine plants growing inside he could make out the figure of a naked man dibbing his pots. The man paused and looked up at Geral and smiled. He appeared at the door of the greenhouse and beckoned to Geral to join him. Entranced, Geral began to walk over...

‘Commander, Commander, wake up.’

‘Where am I?’ groaned Geral, as he slowly came to out of deep and pleasant sleep.

‘It’s alright Commander. We have you in a hotel room near the port of Osaka,’ said Andre Valov.

Geral groaned.

‘After you collapsed the Captain decided to dump you off the ship. Lucky for us that he didn’t decide to send you to a doctor or they might have found out our

little secret. We had the two Filipino crew secretly bring you here. You've been unconscious for nearly twenty four hours now.'

Geral groaned, he felt terrible.

'We are thinking we know what is the problem Commander.' Geral could make out the voice of Oddbjorn Ballengrud, though couldn't see him as his eyes were stuck fast with crusted mucous. 'There seeming to be something very very wrong with your rabbit, it seems to have malfunctioned in a way that we have never seen before, these malfunctions are being passed on from the rabbit to your human form, leaving you unable to function either.'

'What can we do about this Chief Scientist?' asked the commander from inside Geral's body, addressing the space where he thought the human form of Oddbjorn was standing. 'As you know, it is essential that I get back on the Divine Vessel.'

'The first thing must we do is get you up and out of the human. It appearing to have nearly had it, and if it is dying you will be dying afterwards soon. If I can be speaking frank Commander you have come so very very close to the death. So very close. You are looking terrible, really disgusting, liking a mouldy sack of potatoes. And the smell, wow, it is making me want puke. But now everything will be alright, everything is ok.'

'Alright, enough Chief Scientist. The pair of you get me out of here before things get even worse,' said the commander. And with that Oddbjorn and Andre knelt either side of Geral's grotesque head and carefully lifted the Velcro flap of skin at the back of his neck and depressed the pulsing blue broad bean sized button underneath. There was a long drawn out hissing sound and a hairline crack appeared in the skin around the top of Geral's skull from which tiny jets of steam escaped. And then nothing.

'It must be sticking,' said Oddbjorn, and they took a firm hold of the top of Geral's scalp and with a, 'One, two, three,' gave a firm yank, pulling a neat circular section of hair, flesh and bone away from the rest of the skull. Inside the head, in a spacious cavity that had been

created by the removal of the majority of the Geral's brain, was a very sick looking white rabbit. The rabbit sat strapped into a padded bucket seat behind a rudimentary looking control panel of levers, pedals, buttons, a couple of monitors, and a joystick. This console was connected to the remaining small blob of the brain by numerous coloured wires, rods and pieces of string. From where it sat the rabbit, under normal operating conditions, it was able to control Geral's actions and thoughts in whatever way it wished. With a tweak on its joystick it might make him veer left, and with a push of a peddle make him empty his bowels. With a combination of the three green buttons on the left on the console and two orange buttons in the arm of the chair, when pressed at the same time, the rabbit could make Geral kill a man. Whilst with two green and three orange he would fry an egg. The tiny blob of Geral's brain that had been left was enough for Geral to function autonomously on a day to day level, freeing the rabbit the drudgery of overseeing and controlling every tiny task. This blob of grey matter also retained enough memories for Geral to feel like the person he used to be, remaining more or less unaware that there was a rabbit sat in his head, able to make him do, say or think anything it desired. The rabbit was also able to override any emotions or reactions that Geral might feel to performing any out of the ordinary tasks, and replaced these feelings with positive emotions of achievement and success.

The rabbit itself was showing many of the same symptoms as the Geral who's head it was sitting in. Its white fur was matted and dirty, covered in a partly congealed layer of the same custard yellow mucous. Some areas of its fur were grey and sooty from a small cabin fire that had started from a short circuit created by the discharge. Its ears drooped down its back, red and sore from the swellings and lesions. The pustules around its eye sockets had burst leaving them raw and covered by newly formed scabs and its bleary bloodshot eyes just peered out under heavy lids. The mucous had set hard around its paws, gluing them to the control levers it had been holding when it had made its last attempts to

control Geral's movements with that pan of boiling broth. Its breathing was shallow and irregular and swelling around its mouth made it hard for it to breath. With the greatest effort it made a combination of pedal pushing and joystick wiggling that made Geral's mouth whisper 'How'd I look?'

Oddbjorn and Gregory had to suppress a laugh. It was the sorriest looking rabbit they had ever seen, and certainly not a suitable vessel for their Commander. 'Well Sir, you are not winning any 'Best Kept Pet Prizes' I am thinking,' said Oddbjorn. 'However, we have being shopping and bought you a replacement. Now it might not be what you are used to Commander, but we are thinking it would be serving the purpose.'

With a nod from Oddbjorn, Gregory, with a small flourish, pulled out of small brown cardboard box a fat brown and white Japanese flop eared rabbit. As it dangled by its ears from Andre's lardy fist the Commander inspected it through the encrusted eyes of his present rabbit.

'It's a bit big isn't it?' he ventured.

'Not to worry Sir. Your next human is an American, and they always have plenty of space. I am sure we will be able to squeeze it in,' reassured Andre.

'And who is this human to be? You know it is essential that I get back on board the Divine Vessel as soon as possible to continue operations.'

'Again, nothing to worry about there sir. We have it all sorted out. There is a passenger scheduled to join the ship later today here in Osaka, an American music professor by the name of George R. Morello. That will give us plenty of time to make your transfer to this fine Japanese bunny,' said Andre lifting the kicking animal a little higher, 'and fit out this Professor Morello and get you inside.'

'And the good news is,' went on Oddbjorn, 'that, right now, our Professor Morello is soundly sleeping in the hotel room right next door to this one.'