



*Walrus*

The chief officer was positioned at the Cornflakes box controls of the strange inter-planetary communications module, pushing sauce bottle tops and tuning marmalade jar lids. Captain Pimento had taken up the walrus sized silver foil inter planetary earhorn and aimed it carefully in the direction of the red planet Mars. 'Left a bit,' instructed the chief to the captain. 'No, the other way. That's it, I think we're getting something.'

First there was the crackling sound of static coming from the Professor's mouth and then, '...the views represented in the last article are those of the American government. There will be more news at the end of the half hour. Good morning, you are listening to Voice of America...'

The chief flicked a teaspoon switch to change frequencies, and twiddled a chutney dial, and the captain waved his silver horn at the sky. The sound of static continued to come out of the Professor's mouth, whilst the Martian that was sat on the head of the rabbit that was sat in the head of the Professor, pulsed a deep red as it stared at Mars. Then out of the Professor's mouth came, 'Hello... hello... Can anyone hear me? This is Mars calling the Divine Vessel...is there anybody out there?'

The captain froze when he heard the message, trying not to change the position of the silver earhorn receiver even a fraction. The chief officer pushed a milk bottle top button and signalled to the Martian know as the Commander to speak. The Commander's egg yolk centre came alive and bright firework like flashes of red appeared inside its sac of clear jelly. Replying through the voice of the Professor it said, 'We can hear you loud and clear. It is the Commander here on board the Divine Vessel.'

'Commander its good to hear your voice. We have

someone here who would like to speak to you,' came the reply and there was the sound of Martian bodies moving around and then, 'Hello Brian, it's Sheila.'

'Hello honey, what a wonderful surprise. How are you, how are the kids?'

'We are all well darling. Brian Junior got a merit at school the other day, and little Angela made her first tentacle.'

'Why that's wonderful news, honey.'

'Brian, we got a gas bill the other day, should I pay it or should I wait until you get home?'

'Best to pay it out of the household account. Perhaps you should hand the inter-planetary communications module handset back over to Control now. Bye honey.'

'Bye, and don't forget to take your tablets, you know what the doctor said. Oh, I've got to go bye darling...Commander it's Control here again, we are ready for your report if you have it,' came the voice from Mars.

'We certainly do,' said the glowing Commander through the mouth of the Professor, from where it was sent through the spaghetti wire to the machine the size of a small donkey, which converted it into an inter planetary signal which flowed down the toilet tube pipe to the walrus size earhorn which broadcast it in the general direction of Mars. 'Ten of us Martians are aboard the ship and inside commandeered bodies of a number of the crew. We had some...umm...slight operational problems with my original rabbit and human vessels, the exact cause of which we were unable to ascertain. However, I now have new replacement models that are both functioning perfectly. This has helped us to check the feasibility of using different varieties of rabbits for the bunny suits and transfer to them whilst on Earth. We have taken delivery of the new bunny suits that are required for the Martian army when they arrive on Earth. We have also collected the required amount of human vessels and we shall be finishing customising them in the next couple of days. We will be setting up the catch zone and the reception zone on the ship for the arriving army and I will fax you the correct procedure that each Martian should

follow to ensure a fast efficient transfer into their bunny suits and then into their human vessel upon landing on board. The Divine Vessel left Japan twelve hours ago, right on schedule. We are steering a course of one hundred and fifty four degrees, and at our present rate of fourteen knots we will reach the equator and be in the catch zone on the sixteenth of November at exactly midday. As you know Control, this is also exactly the time that Mars will be at its closest to planet Earth for the next eight hundred years. In short Control, everything is going to plan and is A ok.'

'Good work Brian, sorry I mean Commander. We will start sending the Martian army from the galactic catapult to reach you midday Earth time on the sixteenth of November, in about a week's time. And what about the rest of the ships crew, any problems?' came the reply from Mars.

'We have had a couple of cases of people sniffing about, but they have been taken care of. Now we are in open water and on our way the rest of the crew, the none Martians, are superfluous, so if any get suspicious we can easily take them out of the equation. In the mean time however their presence means less work for us.' As he was saying this the eyes of the Professor swivelled round to stare at Seth and Ruby as if the Commander had reminded himself that there was still a little problem he had to take care of.

'Good, good,' came the voice from Mars, 'and what about this New Zealand, you still sure that it's the best place to launch our plan of the domination of planet Earth from?'

'Absolutely certain Control,' said the Commander. The captain was waving two fingers at him indicating that he had only a couple more seconds left before Mars and Earth moved out of alignment for the evening and the signal would be lost. He was also signalling something else, 'Oh yes, and Roger sends his love to Sandra and the kids,' said the Commander realising what he meant and then seeing the chief officer jumping up and down with his hand in the air said, 'and Derek sends his love to Gordon and the dog.'

‘Thank you Brian, if that is all, this is Control signing off.’ With that the static noise resumed from the Professor’s mouth until Captain Pimento walked over and unplugged the cable that connected him the machine. The Captain then carefully picked up the phosphorescent jelly yolky thing that was his Martian Commander and helped ease him back inside the floppy eared rabbit’s head. The rabbit sprung to life, and with a flurry of button pushing and lever pulling the top of Professor Morello’s head smoothly hinged shut, closing with a click and leaving not the slightest trace where the join was. The Professor raised his shoulders and rolled his neck round producing a series of cracking sounds then slowly turned to Seth and Ruby and said, ‘Now, any questions?’

The couple didn’t react in any way, their mouths hung slightly open and their eyes were still wide in disbelief, looking like a pair of rabbits in front of a car’s headlights. Inside their heads were busy whirring, trying to process even just a bit of what they had just witnessed, but they both remained unable to vocalise any reaction.

‘Good then,’ said the Professor after a pause. ‘That leaves just one loose end to tie up this evening, or rather two.’

The Professor pulled a huge denture filled smile, his teeth glowing in the starlight, and waved at the captain and the chief. Before Ruby could react they had her tightly by both arms and frog marched her over to the railings at the side of the deck. The captain took hold of both of her hands, and the chief her feet. They then lifted her over the railings and dropped her into the sea, five decks below. When her body hit the water it made almost no splash and no sound was heard above the drone of the ship’s engines. She disappeared from view almost immediately.

Before Seth had quite realised what had happened the captain and the chief were either side of him pulling him over to the railings. The captain took Seth’s feet and the chief his arms. He squirmed a little but was still too stunned to put up any kind of struggle. This all seemed

so unreal that he was certain that he would wake any moment from the dream. As the two men lifted him over the railings Seth looked back and saw the Professor, still with that manic smile, slowly waving him goodbye. 'It was lovely to have made your acquaintance,' Seth heard the Professor say as the two sets of hands released him. 'Such a shame you have to get off,' were the last of the Professor's words that Seth heard before hitting the water and disappearing under the foamy brine of the ocean.