

My name is James Smith. I'm 19 years old. I have black hair, blue eyes, and this is the story of how I died.

I live on a ship. Not one that goes on water, one that flies through space. It looks like a lightsaber handle with a point at one end and rockets at the other. I travel through space, doing small jobs, bargaining for food and machine parts. It's not a bad ship, the living quarters are pretty nice, if a little rusty. There are only a few of its model left intact. I'm the only one on it, strangely, but I can keep it running. I can somehow fix anything I try to without thinking.

The ship has an AI (artificial intelligence), called Rick, with my own voice. It wasn't my idea to do that, but that was the default setting; the voice of the user. When I need to sleep, Rick drives the ship. You might think that would become a horrible scene, like in many movies, but all Rick can do is work, and think, but it can't question. That's what engineers did to prevent disaster. You also might think it might get lonely, which it does sometimes, but there is always music playing in the corridors, thanks to Rick, somehow it always knows exactly what I want to listen to.

Now, this all started on my home, Earth. Big surprise. Rick had just warned me that we were low on power. "We're close to the Solar System 1. Why don't you set me down on Earth, and pilot the ship around the sun to charge the solar panels?" I said.

"You should take the bread you obtained from the old merchant on Mars, sir," suggested Rick.

"Good idea, Rick. Remind me where I put that again?" I asked,

"It was stored in the refrigeration unit of escape pod 2, sir."

Well, why is it in there?" I asked. "What's wrong with the main refrigeration unit?"

"There was no more refrigerated space, sir." replied Rick,

"Okay, and what's with the sirs? you've never called me that before." I said.

"Apologies, sir." Rick said. I sighed, and started walking to the escape pod.

As I walked, my footsteps echoing through the empty halls, I thought about how long I'd been traveling on this ship, how long it's been since I lived on a planet. I bought this 3 years ago. The minute I saw it, I knew that this was the ship I wanted. "aw, that's

junk. Doesn't even work." the dealer said, "one man's trash is another man's treasure. How much is trash worth?" I asked, and I've been living on it ever since.

By this time I had reached the escape pod. I locked it in, so it couldn't eject randomly, and grabbed the bread from the interior storage. I packed it in a bag, and walked back. Rick was already piloting the ship to the landing beam.

Earth had a new way of transporting cargo and passengers to ships. Years ago, we had landing pads that ships would land on, but soon enough there weren't enough space for all those ships at once. The answer: tractor beams. What they did was, they placed cargo , passengers and the like in the center of the beam, put it in reverse, so that it floated up into ships. They also allowed people to simply drop their item into the beam, and it would safely glide down.

In the ship, I opened a large hatch on the bottom of the ship, and jumped out, making sure to close the hatch as I did. The wind was exhilarating as I soared into a free fall. Suddenly, I started slowing down do a sluggish decent, like I was falling through syrup, and I knew that the beam had caught me.

I was sure to take in the sights. The sun shown beautifully on the array of houses that could be seen for miles and miles. In the distance, mountains were sprinkled with bits of giant manors and fortresses that were built inside the mountains. Nowadays, there wasn't a mile of land that was unpopulated. Deserts were filled with plant life, marshes were dried, the populated. Eventually, Earth ran out of space, so we terraformed the galaxy. We came across two intelligent aliens. One is the Vaanesh, who mainly have humanoid builds, but they have cat-like faces and they're covered in fur. The other is the Kinari, who also have a humanoid build, except they have four legs, and their skin is like sand. You see one alien here and there, but most of them stick to their own portion of the galaxy.

I was almost to the boarding station, so I looked down and saw the laser grate that scanned for any harmful products, passed through without a hitch, and sank to the ground. I pushed my way through the solid masses in the airport, and called a taxi. Yes, there were still ground-based automobiles, but there were also flying cars. Those were the really expensive ones, so they were hardly ever used.

When I got to my parents house, I knocked on the old, dusty door.

“Who is it?” my mother’s tired yet cheerful voice answered.

“It’s me, mom,” I called back,

“Come on in, dear.” she replied, so I did. My withered parents were both sitting on the couch, watching TV. My dad turned it off with the remote. I gave them the bread, then we all started talking about what we did since I visited last. I told them about a planet with diamond volcanoes, they told me about an amazing new Kinari fortune-teller that set up shop down the street. Apparently every fortune she’s told her has come true.

When we were done talking, I thought I would visit this fortune-teller myself, and set off towards the mysterious new house at the end of the street.

The inside of the house smelled strongly of roses and candle wax. When I entered the main room, I saw it was glowing red. The center of the glow was coming from a crystal ball in the center of the room. Behind the ball was who I assumed was the fortune-teller covered in an extreme amount of red cloths and shawls. Immediately I decided I did not like this place. “Come to get your fortune told?” she had a cold, raspy voice.

“Yes, yes I did,” I replied. “I hear you are really good.”

She frowned. “There is no good or bad, in this business. There is either the right way, or you are being fooled. Now, please sit, and let me tell you your future.”

I sat down without another word.

“Now, I see, a journey. An endless search for something you cannot change. I also see... death.”

I suddenly gave a start. Did she just say death? I thought. “What was that?” I asked,

“You will never see the sun go down.” she replied.

“Really...” I said, “Tell me, how do I die?”

“I’m sorry,” she replied “but I cannot see that. I can only see a report on a table. Your name is under the deceased.”

I smiled. “Well, even if I didn’t find that preposterous, I might have believed you. Except for that last comment. I never told you my name,” I said.

She then sighed. “James Smith, 19 years, unemployed, planet of origin: Earth.” My smile faded slightly. “Tell me something you couldn’t get from looking in my wallet.”

“Well, sir, I see that your ...unique ship is not being controlled by your ... Rick, is it? Bad name and it is now under the control of a disastrous AI.”

Suddenly I was running out the door. If she was lying, I would come back and ruin her business. Unless she was right... Anyway, I never take chances with my ship. I sprinted as fast as I could towards the nearest police port, and started telling them my predicament. They said that they would try to contact the ship, so I anxiously waited.

Finally, they made contact. I heard my voice come on, saying that everything was fine. I then shouted “You see? That’s my voice, so the AI must be mine!” The officer helping me said that he would send a police ship up there to help. “I should go with it. I know the makeup of the ship and all.” I said. After a few minutes of arguing, he agreed.

Minutes afterward, I was flying towards the sun in a ship with amazing protection against it. We weren’t flying directly at it, but a little to the left. I saw my ship come out from behind the sun. The police ship shot a blue bolt of energy towards my ship. I shouted out “No! What are you doing!” the officers told me to calm down. After a few moments, the bolt exploded in front of my ship, creating a blue gas cloud. My ship then drifted out, nearly stopped. We flew alongside it, then boarded it. I showed the police officers to the AI control room, and the officer in charge shouted out, “Artificial Intelligence, we know you are rogue, and we are here to get you out of this vehicle. Now, why you have taken this vehicle we don’t know. Would you care to enlighten us?”

My voice sounded all around us, “No, sir, I wouldn’t. I’m taking this ship, and that’s all you need to know. Anyway, do any of you have families? No? Good. That will make this much easier.” Suddenly, the screens that controlled the AI all turned red. There was a steadily rising hum in the air. It soon became unbearable. Finally, the screens exploded in a flash of red. I ducked behind a wall to hide from the glass, and a blast of heat struck me.

I shouted out, "Well, that means I'm safe, right? There's nothing else in this room to use against me."

"Oh, but that's where you're wrong. As you are powerless to stop me, there is no risk of having you look down in the hold." Curious, I opened a hatch in the floor that led to the hold. I saw a giant metal sphere.

"That is an anti-matter bomb." The AI said.

I was astounded. "Well, I have at least the power to cut the red wire." I took out a wrench, and started digging through the circuitry.

"That bomb is powerful enough to take out half the Earth, and burn the rest," the AI said, "Oh, it was an elaborate scheme, as you would say, I took over your ship weeks ago. I contacted an engineer and brainwashed him so he would build this."

"Well, if you can brainwash people, why not brainwash me? I could have built this easily!"

"That would have been no fun. Once I brainwash someone, they cannot go back to normal. They cannot suffer."

"Well, why would you even want people to suffer? What separates you from other AIs?" I asked,

"Those scientists and engineers down there pronounced me as corrupt. I can think. I have ideas. They feared me. They took me and threw me away. I accessed information of neurology and started brainwashing people to repair my damages. I wanted to make all the people below to suffer, and this is the easiest way to do it."

I smirked, seeing the wire that activated the gravity field that kept the bomb stable. "OK. As angry as I am, I'm going to give you a chance. Stop this madness now or I blow us up before we hit Earth.

"Ha! You're bluffing. I know your history. You do whatever you can to survive. You will just go to an escape pod."

"Check your history again. It should also say I'm pretty smart. Luckily, I'm smart enough to know that one death is better than one planet's death." I ripped the wire out.