

# To Be A Man

a short story by

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Goliath moved slowly across the heavens on its timeless journey. Slowly is a relative term in space you understand. Goliath was traveling at over ten times the speed of light by now. It had taken five years to achieve this speed, and was now at the limit of its capacity to accelerate. It made little difference to the passengers Goliath was carrying however, they were in solar sleep and had been since the launch six years earlier. The planners had allowed the first year of the trip for the ship to make adjustments to its systems before the acceleration phase began. Calibrating the navigation system was the primary concern. At light speed you really need to know where you are going before you get there, and in the solar system, you can 'get there' real quick.

The day of the launch had been a special day on Earth. The million or so remaining inhabitants had all turned out to watch as the huge ship blasted off. Bands played, and flags flew as Goliath climbed up into the air; ever faster, ever higher; climbing through the clouds turning them bright orange as it did so. Once lost from sight, the onlookers left for their homes to await the end. Earth was in its death throws now, having been slowly dieing for several centuries beforehand. Once a thriving green planet, the immense population of over 20 billion had at last taken its toll, using every available resource. The planet was now barren, the only water being what was left of the oceans; the only food, the few remaining fish. The end would not be long now, people were dieing at an ever increasing rate from mall nutrition and plague.

On board, Goliath was keeping a close watch on his precious cargo. His design was the most advanced ever screwed together, a triumph of innovation. Every last resource available had been committed to him; no sacrifice being too great. Now, here he was sailing across the heavens on a timeless journey to the stars. Fully automated, and with the most powerful electronic brain ever built, Goliath was capable of independent thought and action. The nearest thing to artificial life ever created. A masterpiece.

It was time for the daily inspection, so Goliath set it in motion. His cameras scanning every storage bay for any sign of trouble. As always, all was well. Goliath faithfully fulfilled his daily routine and had done from day one. In between times, he reviewed the hours of video he had on board to teach him about the cargo he was carrying; should the day ever come when his journey ended. After six years, however, Goliath had seen all the video hundreds of times and was becoming bored with all the routine. The one thing the planners hadn't foreseen was Goliath's humanity getting the better of him. He was bored.

Goliath's cargo was the DNA of countless humans and almost every other living thing left on the planet at the time of his construction. Millions upon millions of containers

all properly labeled and catalogued were stored in his bays. He was aware of the magnitude of his charge, and, as far as he was able, he was proud to have been entrusted with the survival of the beings who had created him. To Goliath, the creators were god like, and he had a great reverence for them. Still, he was bored, terribly bored.

There was one bay where he had some actual humans stored in solar sleep. The planners had thought it best that he should have a real human to compare to when the time came for him to reconstitute all the others. He had no animal specimens, nor any plants. There just hadn't been room for all of them, but the planners had agreed that humans were the first priority, and in any case, the first humans alive would be able to guide him with the animals and plants. With this in mind, one of the creators had been stored whole in the special bay. Her name was professor Day, and Goliath had instructions that she was to be awakened first in order that she should act as his guide. Her DNA was also stored in case of mishap, several containers of it in fact, she was considered so important to the project.

Sometimes, when the boredom became too much for him, Goliath would send a camera to the special bay to look at professor Day. He had a fondness for her that was slowly growing as the years passed. Professor Miriam Day was young for one so gifted in science, a child genius, he admired her. Also in the special bay was Dr. Anderson, another brilliant human who had been instrumental in the creation of Goliath's brain. He was a little older than the professor, but still a young man.

Ten years passed.

The light really hurt her eyes. "Professor... Professor are you alright?" The voice was loud in her ears after so long in solar sleep. She indicated as much with her arm. "Sorry," the voice said only much softer. It took a little over five minutes for her eyes to get used to the light, but eventually she was able to keep them open without too much discomfort. She sat up and looked around. "This is the crews lounge," the voice said. Miriam looked around for the owner of the voice, and found him standing behind her and smiling gently. "Why, Dr. Anderson, it's you... Has something gone wrong?" "No, came the answer... Well, that's not strictly true. I was awoken by the automatic systems a few hours ago, I presume they awoke you also. Goliath seems to have gone off line, I can't raise him on any system. The ship is Ok though as far as I can see, as is the rest of the cargo." "Well that's something," she said softly. "Don't worry, your voice will come back in a few minutes. Fancy a drink?" She nodded and he poured her some water. It was cool and refreshing. Far better than she could remember it being on Earth.

"So, let's go in search of Goliath then," she said, standing. Together they went to the flight deck where Goliath's functions could be accessed. On arrival, everything looked exactly as she had last seen it sixteen years earlier. Miriam marveled at it with fresh eyes. "I know," Dr. Anderson said, "he really was a marvel wasn't he." "Why the past tense? You speak of him as if he were dead." "Sorry, it's just that I couldn't find him 'in there'." He pointed to the mass of control panels. Miriam began the diagnostics programme. It took several minutes for the results to appear on the screen. "Why,

that's impossible!" She shrieked. "He must be in there somewhere." "Told you," Dr. Anderson said, "I've already done that... He's gone." Miriam scratched her forehead. "But where did he go? Everything here seems to be in perfect working order, just no intelligence." "Beats me," Dr. Anderson replied, "perhaps the trip became too much for him and he erased himself." Miriam was not too impressed with that idea, still, he was missing.

A thought struck her. Wait here would you, I need to go and check on something. She left the flight deck and went straight to the special bay. When she got there she found the door locked. After trying the handle several times she called Anderson on the com line to ask if he had the key. The answer came back negative, but Miriam's suspicions were already aroused. She looked around for something to use and found an axe by the fire point. Several heavy blows later, she was in the bay with the lights on. There was her empty pod, right next to Dr. Anderson's occupied one. "I can explain." Came a voice from behind. Miriam spun round to face him. "Who are you?" She demanded. "You are not Dr. Anderson!" The man's face fell. "I couldn't stand the boredom... Sixteen years of silence... Sixteen years of routine..." "You're Goliath aren't you." "Yes Miriam, I am. I used Dr. Anderson's DNA to create a body and transferred myself into it... I was lonely." Tears appeared in his eyes as he looked at her. "You are so beautiful." He said softly, "I... I love you."