

## Kelvin\_A Future Story

“Wh-where am I?”

I woke up from my sleep, felt my head swimming. I was in a lime green astronaut-like suit. The name tag on my left chest suggested that my name was “Kelvin Clipping”. Regaining consciousness, I found myself in an interior of something, something barely fit me and looked metallic. I pressed the red bottom which looked like an exit button and stepped out of the entrance of my craft.

After seeing a strong bright light, I found myself in a hanger. The wide road was empty, anything can fill it. The grey floor a few feet underneath the white ceiling had a few pods half sank into the ground. I tilted my body to see where I emerged out of. A metal ball, with a few antennas pointing upward. On the left arc of the ring surrounding the front side of my pod read “Dr. Epoch” followed by a tiny digital screen which displayed the number “2523”. Knowing restart this machine would end in vain, I marched forward. I didn’t know what would be waiting in front of me. I expected scattered crowds of people, recognize my appearance. But as I advanced, what laid in front was just a corridor of nothing. The grey floor and the white walls and ceilings still continued on and on. I saw signs, tattered and worn out by time, what should be illuminated lost its light. From the old signs, I could barely distinguish the overhead board with an arrow pointing forward read “Arr...vals” and “Ba..age r...aim” but the rest were worn out that they could never be identified.

Found myself sweating, I took off my helmet. A cold breeze blew from above, it felt artificial and was extremely dry. There was a peculiar scent of rusty iron, or was it blood? I glanced out once the white walls were gone and a gigantic piece of glass took its place. I could see the cloud on the yellowish sky, dull orange for a reason, covering the light brown

illuminating object. Judging from the visible heatwave, it must be a scorching sun, but its brightness was no match for the sun. It must be a moon, but the moon wouldn't be that bright. The land has a few bird-like metal frames, parking alone from each other with their wings still spreading, tails still standing. As I marched on, I saw a glass door. I ran forward and pushed it. Once the door was opened, invisible fire penetrated my suit and scorched my skin. The air, hot as peppers, itch as feathers, disabled my nose for a second. Instinctively I closed the door. Those few seconds already made my skin darken, some of my hair dropped. My whole body was dried off at that very moment.

I supposed the only thing I could do was to stay indoors. I just left the wide corridor I was in, and found the main hall in front of me. "Hello?" shouting to a lot of grey silhouettes, hoping that they would respond. But none of them even listen.

"Hello, I am Kelvin Clipping, I came from the past!"

They still didn't move or look. I scanned the huge interior, mechanical beings of all sizes and shapes lining up, moving to different directions. Over the crowd of robots, I searched a shape I recognized in the far front. Behind a desk, I saw a being with head, shoulders, hand, torso, hip, legs. Finally a human! I rushed towards her, cut the line through some 1-meter tall walking vacuum cleaners, nearly bumped into a burly behemoth, ran past some beeping cans. The shape became clearer and clearer in front of an information centre. But I lowered my speed once I got close enough. There was no skin and flesh covering her. Her body was a dark tone of silver. The gold collections of curves seemed to be hair. The face had eyes but without iris, had a nose but without breath. The blue female uniform with a white tie was just another cover over the non-shining metal. Her name tag on her suit read "Athena".

"Athena," I unintentionally muttered her name.

"Hello master, how may I help you?" She responded.

Not knowing where to begin, I started with a “What year is it?”

“It is 2523 A, D., twenty years after the Third Nuclear War.”

“Human” felt my head swimming, I spit out this word.

“These are searching results of ‘human’. An intelligent species once occupied most of the land. Their highest number recorded was ninety trillion in 2409. It is now an extinct animal.”.

I was a bit shocked. I knew one day we would disappear because of our own deeds. But I did not expect that it would end this way. I remembered a name, “Doctor Epoch”

“These are the searching results of Doctor Albert Epoch. A scientist specialised in time travel since 2201. Dedicated to sending fellow co-workers into different timelines. His fate was unknown after his last journey set to Jurassic worlds in 2234”.

My dried tongue suddenly reminded me of another important thing.

“Water!” I said.

“Sorry, I don’t know what you are talking about”.

Thought of another term, I tried again “Hydrogen Dioxide”

“These are the searching results for hydrogen dioxide. It appears in air, liquid and solid form. It once takes up...”

“No, Where is it!” I tried to interrupt but she went on,

“...70% of the Earth. In 2025, the largest area of its solid form known as the polar region completely disappeared due to the rising temperature. In 2496, the First Nuclear War vaporised 30% of its liquid form known as ocean. In 2503, only 20% of this substance covered the Earth in liquid form.”.

“Hydrogen dioxide, where!”

“These are the locations of hydrogen dioxide. The Pacific Pond once held the largest amount of hydrogen dioxide in liquid form. The North Pole ocean...”

Couldn't stand her information, I left Athena. I only felt thirstier, fainting with hunger. I unintentionally grabbed something cold and hard.

“Hello, I am Rhodey, where do you want to go?”

It was a car, or was it humanoid? No, It had a human body and seats with wheels as legs. I have met centaurs, and this must be a motor version of them.

“Where do you want to go?” he asked again.

“Water and food” I almost lost my voice.

“Do you mean ‘Water and Wood Monument?’”

“Substance!” Yes, I thought that was what robots understand.

“Do you mean ‘Substance Cafeteria?’”

In a weak voice I said “Yes”.

I rode on its back.

“Searching coordinates, proceed.”

It drove itself across the area until it reached its destination.

“You have reached the ‘Substance Cafeteria’”

I struggled to open my eyes, it was not what I wanted. At the front, robots of all shapes, mostly humanoid, pouring the yellowish liquid into their mouths. Some seemingly advanced ones plugged a line into themselves. On my right, several robots queued for metal polishing baths. A cafeteria serving robots only? How would that be possible! I wished to call Rhodey back, but he was gone for his “drink”. I couldn’t feel the moisture in my mouth. My stomach alarmed me to get refreshment. I found a corner to sit, hoping I would last a few more hours.

Hopeless, I was tired and frustrated. I started to remember how good it was when humans were here. Just a few weeks before I started my journey, I bid farewell to my friend

Antony McDonald, whom, despite a few years older than me, I viewed as my father after my parents died in a car accident when I was 17.

“I still don’t understand Anthony, what makes you decided to suffer twice.”

He answered, “because it is Dr.Epoch’s program, the future! You have lived with me for ten years, you shall know how excited I am about the future.”

I protested, “but the survival rate is single digit!”.

He responded, “just because they didn’t return, it doesn’t mean death. They might be enjoying a new life!”

Seeing me baffled, he patted my shoulder,

“think about it, Kel, the future. I bet somewhere in the future, we will reach the pinnacle of technology. The apps on our phone will take human shape. Siri would replace the lady standing in information desks, Google Map would develop wheels to get people around.”

I disagreed, “Don’t be silly, it is impossible.”

“Boy, let me show you something.” He pulled out his drawer and took out a metal doll. “Don’t blink. Show information of Donald J. Trump!”

The little doll spoke in a feminine voice, “Donald J. Trump, born 14, June 1946, died 4 July 2023. 45th president of the United States of America. During his days of ruling, complaints...”

It suddenly shut down. As Anthony tried to fix it, I exclaimed,

“Wonderful robot! Is that the reason why you stay up all night recently? Does it have a name?”

He answered, “I haven’t decided yet, I want her name to start with an ‘A’. Hopefully, I can handover her development to the Procore Technologies after I go and see what they will make.”

Leaning to my sofa, I predicted, “I bet she would be the most annoying being on Earth.”

“Yes, just like you always do.”

Oh, how I missed the old days.

A hand patted my shoulder twice, waking up, the first thing in sight was a palm facing towards me. I traced that hand, first saw a black leather jacket on top of blue jeans, then pink face with blue iris and blonde long hair.

“Are you okay? You look tired.”

A fluent, non-robotic female voice sent out of the moving lips. There is a smell, not rusty metal or machine oil, but a slight smell of sweat and perfume. Without me asking, she handed me a bag of colourless liquid. I instantly grabbed it and drank it. The water, despite tasting a bit like dust, was sweet to a thirsty man.

“I am Eve, Eve M Delen.” She introduced herself, reaching out her right hand to shake.

I violently gulped my water, grabbed her hands,

“I am Kelvin Clipping. Nice to meet you.” I said to her “You are a human.”

“Well, obviously.”

“Is there someone else?”

“What, you want more? Sadly,” she sighed “I am the only one left.”

She glanced out of the glass, where the glowing globe was still there. Sorrow filled her eyes.

She turned and walked away from me. I caught on,

“Wait, what happened?”

“Have you met Athena? She might have already told you all you shall know.”

I asked her, “but I still don’t understand, all humans are extinct?”

She held her head low, “Um...let me think. Either burnt under the sun, or died of old age, or...” she silenced herself for several seconds. “Let’s go get you dinner!”

Touching the buttons on her wrist, two Rhodeys drove towards us. She mounted one and ordered, “Rhodey, Chilli Chilla, North 201, East 32. Proceed.”.

Soon later, I found myself in the middle of a dim restaurant. A servant droid, silver body covered by his waiter suit, put a plate of some white blocks in front of me, accompanied by a dark orange sauce. She cut a small piece, dipped the sauce and chewed it.

“Um... that’s new. Watson, please thank Culin for the dinner.”

The waiter bot dully spoke “Appreciation acknowledged,” then turned away.

“Who’s Culin?” tasting my own, I asked her, hoping he was a human.

“The chef here, he too is a bot.”.

Recognizing my disappointed face, she said “This is the latest of all culinary technologies, at least before the scientists were gone. It is able to collect protein and carbohydrate from the only tree in the basement, mix it with preserved meat and 3D print the meal you are having. This sauce too is made from artificial raw material. But, let’s put food aside. Is there anything you want to ask?”

“Yes, where are all the humans?” I asked, and she responded,

“They...um...” Looking away from my eyes, she answered, “They are all concentrated in a nation...” I laid down my knife and fork, ready for the answer.

“You know what, imagine-nation!”.

I let out a short laugh then stopped knowing it must be a painful joke to both of us.

“Oh come on, continue laugh! I told this to many robots around me but they gave no response. But, [sigh], they all gone, shortly after the third patch of nuclear bombs dropped. Can’t believe that was twenty years ago.”

Her tears dropped into her sauce. Just when I found no appetite to eat, she put her hand on mine,

“Let’s put aside this topic. Do you know how to dance?”

I responded in a shaky voice, “well, that depends on what kind of song is it.”

She summoned Watson and typed something on the keyboard on his chest. Moments later, the light was much dimmer, tables and chairs automatically moved away. Gentle Waltz music started from somewhere. She said to me,

“Come, grab my hip with your right hand and...”

“Oh, I know this.”

Doing so, I grabbed her hip with my right hand, and held her right hand with my left hand, and took steps according to the slow beat.

“I thought future people will dance in a crazier rock and roll style.”

She responded, “Well, my lungs, brain and all organs are too weak for such dance. The radiation handicapped us.”

I remarked, “It must be painful being alone.”

Agreeing, she said “It is not easy.” she sank her head onto my shoulder and continued, “especially when you have been with humans before and they are all gone.”

She dropped a few tears on my left shoulder, we changed from dancing slowly to hugging still, comforting each other as she shared my feelings.

The clock pointed at nine, “Come on,” she excitedly grabbed my hand, “I must show you something!”

She gave the coordinates and we rode Rhodeys again until we arrived where that brown shining ball appeared. It was less bright and less high since I first saw it a few hours ago.

“Sit down, here.” She sat on one of the cosy benches facing the Sun, leaning her head on my shoulder as I reached my right hand onto her shoulder. The sun reflects itself in her iris, she exclaimed,

“This is my most favourite part of the day. The only thing I know since young, reminding me that some aspects of the world would never change.”

I replied, “Well, I think...”

“Shh, just shut up and appreciate.”.

The Sun sank downward and downward until the last of sunlight disappeared in the far West. The sky turned from yellow to orange and then dark blue. Snorting happened just next to me, she was as asleep as dead. Making sure she was finally asleep, I decided to take an adventure on my own. There must be humans around here, she couldn't be alone. Slowly moving away, I got down from the bench carefully, making sure I didn't make a sound.

The smell of rusty iron became more and more obvious that those were blood. Tracing towards the end of the hallway I found a slim, black door on the left of the area. Guarded by two burly robots, wearing mediaeval armors, standing completely still. I tried small steps, observing when they would activate. At a certain distance, their eyes started to glow red, giving signal to me that I shall stand back. I got two bags of water with me. I adjusted my aim, recalling my days as a discus player, I threw one of them precisely on one of the guards' heads, water split and entered its head. It didn't go down, but its eyes now turned bright red.

“Unfriendly engagement detected. Target confirmed hostile!” Alarmed the two guards and rushing towards me head-on with their spears pointing ahead.

Fell down, I found a device on the floor sparkling, that must be their remote controller. I squeezed the bag of water above it and it let out a few blue sparks. I turned back and nearly touched the point of one spear.

Relieved, I took a second to remember my goal. I entered the door, or say a long, slim corridor. The scene shocked me. The sparse red light radiated from the light tubes placed parallel on the ground on each side of the corridor. Standing vertically perpendicular to the lights were glass walls of human organs, organs preserved in lime green liquid. A scent mixing alcohol and blood flooded the air. On my left, I could see whole flayed human skins placed side by side. The face, with no eyeballs and bones to support it, became familiar with one of the screaming horrors in my nightmares. On my right, as I walk along, I could see pink brains, lungs, stomachs lined in collections of glass containers. At the end of the road, a constantly bumping olive-shaped red thing was in front of me, I had no idea what it was, but I could feel the same thing bumping in my chest, the synchronised beat occurred in both. Under the glass box which contained it, a drawer could be opened. Please, God, don't let it be another source of nightmares, don't be cut limbs, don't be darn disgusting jars of blood. With a deep breath, I opened the drawer. Nothing but a stack of wrinkled lime green suits. On top of them was a uniform, blood-stained on the neck with the name tag "Anthony McDonald". Staring at it, I was shocked. My friend who first volunteered to travel to the future, dreamed a lot about the future, enthusiastic about coming events. What he got, in the end, was sliced in the head once he opened the hatch excitedly. His organs placed away from his body. What kind of monster would do it?

Punching the uniforms, I shouted, "Who needs these anyway!"

"What are you doing here in my organ vault?" Eve caught me.

In anger, I pressed her on the wall and roared "Your organ vault? You did all these? You owe me an explanation!"

I dropped her on the ground. She started breathing heavily, and rose,

“Look, kid, you leave me no choice.”

Her blue iris suddenly shone red. The skin and flesh of her right face burnt and revealed metallic bones. She stared directly at me, yelled in a half-angry half sorry tone,

“My lungs are failing me, and the important organ in my left chest requires replacement. I only found one. But now, with yours, I can secure my survival.”

She pulled out a pistol, but before that, I punched her now worn-out lungs and she fell down. Inhaled and exhaled slowly, her organs were failing her. She glanced at me with an innocent face, but my empathy was off-duty today. I gave another punch to her face and raced to the exit.

Dashing through the halls, I pushed down a few robots on the way. I rode on Rhodey.

“Move” I shouted.

“Where do you want to go,” he asked dully.

“Away!”

“Please enter a coordinate.”

“Forward!”

He finally moved, but turned around at some point and rushed to the organ vault. Frightened, I shouted “No, the other way! Turn around.”. My shouts were in vain. I dropped myself from him and fell in front of an information centre. I gasped and stood up. I was running out of strength.

“Hello master, how may I help you?” It’s Athena again.

Gasping, I said, “Eve M Delen”

“Do you mean Lilith Medusa Hunter?”

I was shocked when hearing a new name.

“These are the searching results of Lilith Medusa Hunter, disguises herself as Eve M Delen. Convicted in hunting human organs and was arrested by the government in 2519 but escaped and continued to hunt humans till...”

Suddenly Athena’s eyes turned red, the same thing happened to all mechanical beings around me. They formed a half circle of barricades. I had no chance to escape. A giant robot grabbed my arms and legs and injected some liquid into me. I felt sleepy and numb. The last thing I saw was Lilith, standing in front of me, showing a satisfying smile with a pressed button in her hand.

I woke up again, finding myself tied vertically on an operation bed. Lilith was there, looking up to me. Her breath was slow and she now looked as white as paper.

“Um... I told you before, survive is no easy thing. And,” she inhaled, “I really need a new breathing organ.”

“Madam,” it was a medical droid, “his respiratory system is fully operational, there is a 98% chance we can keep his vital organs intact.”

“Prepare,” she said to the droid and typed something on the droid’s keyboard. Only she and I were in the room now.

She asked me “Um.. you are dying anyway, is there anything you wish to know?”

“Is that how you talk to your other victims too?”

She squeezed her mouth, not tending to answer. I continued,

“Come on, there is only you and me. I wish to know how did you kill your first victim.”

She replied with a shaky voice, “Maybe I just got used to killing.” She was staring at the hologram in her hand, the face of a man.

“First kill?” I asked in a cold, teasing tone.

She sat down with her back facing me. At this very moment, the medical droid came in, lowered my bed and pushed me away. On the way out, I mumbled to myself,

“Why didn’t you kill me once you discovered me.”

My ride halted upon this question. She came close to me, in a sorry tone she said,

“Because you looked exactly like him, Samuel Barns, my boyfriend.”

Then she gave me a kiss on the forehead, dropped a tear on my face for goodbye.

It was now moments from the operation. On the way to the operation room, I was again alone. My organs would soon join Anthony and other humans, contained in an interior without me seeing it. If my brain was still thinking, my lungs still breathing, my jumpy organ in my left chest still pumping, but not in my body, would I still be alive? Am I still “Kelvin Clipping”?

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