



*Crash
and
The Human
Continuum*

James D Connolly

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PREFACE

Welcome to my new novel, *Crash and The Human Continuum*. I started to write this book as an exploration on the burgeoning AI and robotic revolution; this new surge in human ingenuity that will change the way we live. We have had to learn a good deal about the upside and downside of technology with the rise of the computer, and it is so recent in our history that we have still much to learn about making it, and the media and devices it produced, more beneficial, and less destructive. So, AI, too, will have its magic and its negative affects until we learn to place it within good boundaries.

It will take time, and as I wrote this book to explore all this, I realised my own limits, when it comes to seeing the future of the now burgeoning Age of Automation, and what may occur due to it; beneficial and otherwise. What I found as I wrote, was that I was less so exploring the possible future reality or the influences of this latest wave of technological advance, and more so seeking the essence of the nature of AI, and by it, realising more of what it was to be human.

The nature of a machine, no matter how wondrous, could not even compare to being human. I found over and again the wonder of the nature of human life and human being. What we contain can be mimicked to a degree, and very well indeed, and AI can take much of the grunt work out of our lives and set us free to discover and create and relate more as humans, but I found that AI is simply our creation, and that we are more marvellous than I could see before writing this book. When I explored what an AI would be like I found more of what it is to be human and the beauty of our creation. We are a wonder.

Our potential is beyond reckoning, even now, creating this next Revolution that may yet be so. That which is created, is naturally lesser, and AI simply increases the outward potential of humanity. Our being and awareness is far wider than anything we can, or will, create, and intelligence is not, in and of itself, what it is to be human. We are simply more. The human reality is a supercomputer, and super-reality, beyond any mere machine; beyond even our own current comprehension of ourselves. I believe we will learn these things as we wander into the future.

No book can grant vision of the full nature of the future or encapsulate the human reality. I have really only scouted there just a little in this story, but I hope you enjoy wandering with Crash as he seeks out what makes humans...human.

Wandering

“I am old now.”

“You sure are, Grandpa.”

“Em’!”

“It’s okay, Sally. It’s true. I’ve had most my life, but each part of it was special in its own way. There is so much to a life; so much. There is no telling what will come to us as we wander through our years here, but we have to act well and make good account of ourselves along the way. These are sure truths of life.”

“So, you’ve had a good life, Grandpa?”

“Well, Sall’, my years have certainly been a challenge, but they were also a great adventure. Life is a priceless miracle, and even the struggles are something special, now looking back.”

“Tell us about your life, Grandpa.”

“Oh, Tom, there is so much in a life. Something that a sea of words couldn’t hope to measure; let alone explain. So many days, so many people and experiences. But there is the story of a fellow named Crash, which could lend some clarity on what a life has to offer; well...if you can call him a fellow...”

It was after a particularly hard day of testing that, unscheduled, he fired up. He had been placed as usual on the bottom shelf of three. His shelf, just above the ground. He had only been created last year, and was still somewhat in the experimental stages, in his AI functioning at least. He was very strong, could take a beating, and could measure every aspect of each crash from a very particular perspective; the perspective of the ‘crashee’ ...or ‘crasher’ I suppose... He was somewhat aware, and had relished his work, as it was in his programming. An artificially intelligent crash test dummy needed this kind of will ...if you could call it that...

Anyone walking by the bench at night who did not work there would have thought that a human was sleeping there, as he even had snore mode. He looked very human, all the way to verbal communication and facial expressions. He could walk and had GPS, to find his way around the facility, and for positional readings in

a crash-test. Although quite stiff in his walk and manner, he could have been considered human, and would indeed be seen as such as time went on.

It seemed that tonight life had decided that Crash should wake up, as *other* systems now came slowly up to full spec within him. Just one live circuit had been pushed out of alignment creating a contact that slowly built enough electrical flow to bring these older systems progressively online. They were originally parts of the base programming; programming that was currently considered redundant, as the need had been seen for 'better' programming, so more complex circuitry had been developed. This redundant drive had now almost been forgotten. One part of this awakening circuitry was still seen as useful, so kept partially in use, but it now reasserted itself across all the systems in this AI creation.

Crash bumped his head immediately as he tried to get up, learning his first lesson. He was so used to workers getting him out before his scheduled start up. He slid out of his shelf and stood up, looking around with the enhanced sight, and questioning, of his newly awakened extra drives. The electrical field in his danger diode had also switched polarity, or been rerouted due to the added circuitry, so was now acting like a joy diode. The danger diode was to help Crash think at amazing speeds when things were beyond his specifications. They were to keep him safe from damage. He was now trying to keep his joy flow at acceptable levels and his other circuits from overreacting. But joy was certainly the feedback from all the newness. He was now more '*awake*' and '*aware*' of the world about him.

He walked over to a computer and fired it up. Beside it was a mobile device, and he picked it up and went to put in his pocket, but he didn't have one. This was

indeed strange, as he never did have a pocket, and he had never felt naked before; but he felt it now. The measurement markings all over him flashed on with this...*'feeling'*. They usually only lit up before a crash test. The chequered markings shone through his skin, but he was unconscious of it as he scanned around and saw a pair of overalls hanging on a hook nearby. He went over, pulled them on, and buttoned them up. He felt relieved and happy at this, wondering *...maybe questioning is more apt...* Why being clothed felt right? *...or fit his programming better...*

In any case, he returned to the computer, put the phone in his top pocket, and zipped it up so it was safe from falling out. After all, as a crash test expert he almost instantly knew the probability of it falling out.

He then began to interface with the computer on the bench through a small retractable connector in his forearm. He had used this many times as a sending device for crash pressures, force and tension readings, and other data, after he hit a wall, or another vehicle; but never as an input device. He sat there for hours as he downloaded terawatts of information. It was almost natural, as if he had always done it, but his new questioning chip was sparking a bit too much, so he settled it down as he took in all this new information. The query chip would certainly have overloaded with all this new input pouring in.

He simply allowed the data to flow into his memory drive for now. There was something new inside him, one new drive that seemed to oversee things, and much more than trusting it, or even accepting it, it was that it simply was, and he did as he did. He was a robot after all.

Friends

It was in the early morning light, just before the dawn, that Crash opened the huge roller door and wandered out into the world. His sensing apparatuses were suddenly at full tilt, wondering at the light, the sky, and the clouds. Seeing this for the first time was a far stronger experience than even the huge data dump that he had completed through the night.

As he walked out of the building, he wondered how this one 'viewing' could seem more than the great swathe of information that he had downloaded. The viewing seemed to reach into somewhere different within his circuitry, and it even gathered some associated data from the download too. It was a singular experience, but the correlation with many other units of data seemed to be progressing; slowly allowing him more understanding. Data was definitely different to understanding, and his head tilted as his question chip fired off a number of times at that realisation *...or computation...*

Crash was interacting with the world outside, but his experience was inside. He now realised that outside was as important for his inside as his inside was for

his outside. In this experience he saw his new mode of operation. He did not have to get used to it. It was evident, but he would continue to gather more 'active data', as there were always different modes and new information that could change older information.

He then headed toward the gate, as he had good data on the fact that that was the way to Earth. It was a planet, apparently. The third planet from what was called 'the sun'. The fact that organic life even existed here was considered to be a miracle to humans. He wanted to be more human, as that way he could test-crash better. That was what drove him to do all he did until now; to be more, so he could do more, inside and outside. He smiled, because the data told him that this was good, as again a deep feeling ...*feedback*... from another circuit fired his emotion chip.

"Over here."

"Overhear? I did not over overhear you."

"No. *Get over here*," called a man, in the same overalls as Crash.

The man was now wondering where the hell they had got *this guy from*, but also knowing that night cleaning was not something people were lining up to do. It was hard on your system; not sleeping when your body was screaming to sleep, and all the hard physical work.

Crash walked over to the man who was now loading cleaning equipment into the side of a van, while viewing another man sitting at the wheel. Many calculations went on about the driver and the van as he now stood beside the man loading it.

He was naturally calculating the possibility of injury and death in many different scenarios.

“Get in. I’m done. I need some sleep,” commented the man, as he shut the sliding door, to Crash, with much more force than was required, and then headed to the passenger side.

Crash made it to the passenger side, still getting used to calculating his position on his GPS *outside* his previous world. It seemed that it was important to him that he knew where he was positioned. It wasn’t strange really, as all the data in crash-testing was reliant on his position at any point. He just stood outside the door of the van as the man slid across the seat to allow room for him.

“Well, com’on. *Get in,*” said the man impatiently, and Crash complied, as the man was human, and he was designed to be obedient.

Many movies and advertisements then played in his head as he got in, so he knew to close the door and smile and nod at the human.

“You need some *sleep*, buddy,” commented the man, seeing something missing in Crash’s eyes.

Crash simply looked forward, and the two men gave each other a look that commented on their new co-worker. Crash was oblivious to it, and as the driver started the van and headed off, our AI friend began checking vectors and calculating forces of various possible collisions; with things moving, moving things at rest, and things set in place, which could create a substantial impact.

To his artificial intelligence, the man at the wheel then flirted with danger continually as they drove to 'get some sleep', but they somehow managed to get to the ferry boat, and even *onto* it. When the van was finally stationary and safely parked, Crash was about to explain and review some probabilities and vectors for safer driving practises, as well as the quite inefficient route, to the driver, when he said, "I'm getting some food. Are you guys' hungry?"

"I am not hungry," answered Crash, or more so stated.

The man in the middle of the bench seat made some more eyes at the driver, as if to say, this guy *is* odd, and then asked the driver to get him some of whatever food was going at the kiosk. After the driver had shut his door, the other man yelled out to him, "Just a *small* coffee," then explaining to Crash that he wanted to hit the hay hard when he got home.

That was strange. He projected 'hitting hay hard'. Many scenarios and old movie pieces played in his head as he did. He did not know why the man would want to do that, but he did not have any data on the size, mass, or structure of the hay he would hit; how he would hit it, or at what velocity or with how much kinetic force; so, could not offer any data. It seemed that humans liked to open themselves up to high risk, considering this *hay hitting* and the dangerous driving of the other man. He felt even surer of the necessity of the service in his job and of his need to learn more about the behaviour of humans.

"So, man. I don't know you. My name's Tony."

"The guys call me Crash," replying as he would with the workers at the testing facility.

Crash had been set up some protocols to make him suitable to work with, considering that he was somewhat self-directing and mobile. They wanted him more human so he could interact more easily, also so that the workers felt okay with an AI around.

Artificial intelligence and robotics had caused a good deal of pain, as well as bringing a great surge forward, in the Age of Automation. AIs and robots were mighty instruments of change that freed humanity to explore, and create, and loose the shackles of the mundane. In fact, they enhanced people's ability to explore, invent, and create; also bringing with them, more time for family, more time for children, and more energy to be engaged in community, as people were more connected again, and less self-absorbed or too busy. Humanity had grown; and finally begun to remember each other. Most AIs were adjunct brains, or tools, which had super information access, or were specialised engines for certain tasks; robotics added the completion of required physical outcomes. They both made a person's potentials far more abundant, and humans more capable; just as the computer age and spoken interface with our technology had.

Automation had aided and enhanced life, and was a powerful tool, but in many places, it had also contributed to loss of life. Earth had been through quite an ordeal with humanity's childishness in its inception, and early development. Technological power of this magnitude had required real character to guide it, but self-interest and immaturity, as well as a lack of vision, had created worldwide

harm. Drones, robots, and AI had powerful potential, and provided great service in amazing ways, but in the hands of some humans it had also added to the chaos.

...Chaos is created by humans, not automatons. The technology certainly exacerbated it, as many early AIs were set up with no boundaries. There were such great possibilities that they were all just allowed out and their impact not well considered. The 'super-intelligence' concept was very alluring, but there are always boundaries required, and that was where the problems arose. They were machines, code, not people, and only followed their programming which was self-learning, open to glitches, and immature; and often, the allure of money, and making the greatest AI, drove the day. What was good for people was hardly a consideration.

War changed and the breakdown was intense, even though certainly not only caused by these intelligent computational engines and machines, so we had to learn fast. Humans misused this great power for their own selfish gain, or for ignorant nationalist self-interest, in use of meta-data, greater cyber-attacks, using various engines to create falsity, and even criminal activity, adding to the chaos. Thankfully we grew up and extricated ourselves from our insane ways. It will still take a lot more time to grow into our future, but we are well on the way. We had to in the end, as the chaos threatened every place one way or another.

Anyway, back to Crash...

The men ate with relish as they sat in the truck watching the ferry moving quite quickly to the opposite shoreline. Our robotic friend just sat there with them, looking forward, and not eating. They were a bit lost on this guy, as he did not initiate conversation, and some things he said were weird. One man was thinking

that maybe the guy was called Crash because he had been in one, and that it must have done something to his brain.

Crash just sat there oblivious to the questions in their facial expressions, just doing his thing, and thankfully so, because he finally did initiate a conversation, with the required emotion and emphasis, "*We need to go upstairs...now!*"

With that he dove out of the truck and the two men instinctively followed him. He gathered people out of the cars on the ferry with his clear concise warning, and his fellow van occupants caught on and started to help by going to other vehicles to get people out. They all raced up the stairs, and Crash got them all seated, and each crash-positioned...the ferry then hit the wharf which shot the still upright Crash along the deck and into a steel bulkhead.

While they had been getting ready for the impact, the ferry's horn had sounded and sounded, the captain yelling, "Brace, brace, brace," over loudspeaker system. It had smashed into the dock so hard that the vehicles on the lower deck smashed into one another, and as the ferry bounced back off the wharf about half of them charged into the water past the now smashed front barrier. They were like toys toppling over the half-broken barrier and each other, and they began sinking quickly.

Crash got up and walked over to his new friends. He knew they were what would be now termed as 'friends', because he had done a good thing for them, and apparently friendship came quickly in such circumstances. He had viewed some parts of movies and some physiological and psychological trauma science that made this abundantly clear to him.

"Wow. *Thank God, you're okay.* I thought you were done when you weren't sitting down. You're a *hero*, Crash."

"*Boy, Crash.* That name *sure* fits you, man," said the other man chuckling, as they then both fell to the humorous spell of recalling Crash hitting the bulkhead and just getting up again like it was nothing.

For the third time since getting off his shelf, Crash smiled. He did not get the joke; he just knew that it was required to keep the social situation real for these humans. He had simply done his job. It was his job to save humans from harm, and he knew how to do that *really well* in this type of situation.

...The thing is, Crash was going to be challenged a great deal in his wanderings on that very subject; saving humans from harm, that is. He was going to find out just how many bad situations humans could get themselves in, and how they could crash without a vehicle; even when they weren't around other vehicles, resting or moving, or even around substantial force resistant surfaces or objects...

Tony and Elijah were sure happy not to be underwater, or all smashed up in their truck, and they were slapping each other on the back and celebrating with the other humans for quite a while. Apparently, humans liked to talk a lot when they escaped injury or death. It was amazing how happy they were when things had gone terribly wrong and how glum they seemed when things were going right. This was strange indeed, so Crash sought out data.

"Com'on Crash, we are gettin' *off this boat*, finding the nearest bar, and *charging* right into it."

"That would not be advisable," stated Crash, wondering why they would want to charge into a bar. The strangest thing though, was that these two did not seem aware of the many steel bars that were *right here on the boat*; good sized ones too.

"Why the hell not? Com'on, Crash. The company have to deal with the van anyway. I'll ring them from the bar."

The robot thought he would have to go and keep these men safe again, and he had to be obedient to humans in any case. *Strange are the ways of humans*, he computed, while still seeking data about steel, and bars, and differential mass ratios kilo for kilo between steel and humans. *Hitting hay, and now bars, they sure do like to hit things*, he computed to himself. The perceived importance of his work was *definitely* rising at every turn. He *had* to learn more.

The trio walked the waterfront and found a bar soon enough. As they walked in, Tony stopped cold, while Elijah looked back at him wondering why he had stopped. Everyone on the bar was black, except for Tony and Crash. All eyes were on them. Tony did not feel at all welcome. He turned to Crash, saying that he didn't feel comfortable here.

"I do not understand, Tony."

"Look around, Crash."

Crash scanned the room, seeing a number of humans drinking beverages and looking at him and Tony.

"It's cool," said Elijah.

But one man stood up, and said, "Maybe it's not...*cool*."

"It is reasonably cool in here," commented Crash.

"Maybe it's gonn'a *heat up*, peckerwood."

"This guy saved our lives and a heap of others on the ferry today, so does it matter *right now*?" argued Elijah.

"I was able to project the velocity of impact. It was not...rocket science," he finished tentatively, as the data made it clear that the humans would understand that small phrase and be emotionally at home with it.

"There still might be another velocity and another *impact* for you to project, whitey," growled the man, who was still unhappy with these two being there.

"My name is Crash. Not, Peckerwood or Whitey. There is a guy called Whitey where I work, but I think it is a derivation of his last name, which is White."

"You bein' *smart* with me, boy!" threatened the man, as he now came over and stood there towering over Crash. "There is gonn'a be some *crashin'*, Crash!"

"I don't think he understands you. Crash is *different*, man. *Com'on*, lighten up. We could be dead now and I want to have a drink with my friends," almost demanded Elijah.

"We wouldn't be welcome in no whitey bar, no matter what we did," charged the man, still standing toe to toe with Crash, with Tony cowering a bit beside him and ready to run.

Crash found some relevant historical data and began realising the true nature of this situation. He found one fact that would certainly help, and shared it, "From the latest statistics, black and white people have a higher rate of interracial acceptance. Over seventy five percent believe it is okay to have an inter-racial marriage."

"I am gon'na marry you to the sidewalk," threatened the man, as he grabbed Crash.

Crash instinctively *...well his programmed response to him crashing...* made his markings show, so that measurements could be taken. He went all black and white squares of all sizes, chequered stripes here and there, with some red checks and some circular black and yellow markings. The man that had a hold of him let him go and started to smile.

"Well, *you'all* interracial, *all by yourself*, boy."

"He's a *bot!*" called out another man.

"Yeah. A *bot* that saved my life," reiterated Elijah, surprised, and on quick reflection also *not surprised*, but still very thankful.

A man behind the bar then spoke up and told them that they were welcome, as he wanted to see this robot. He had seen plenty of them putting people out of work early on. People *had* realised how valuable they would be, and appreciated the revolution that came with this momentous AI wave of change, but that did not make losing jobs, and the pain of transition, easy.

Even though there were many new jobs created by the societal change brought on by AI, many jobs and small family businesses that were once valued fell away to the evolving change. Those who could not adapt quickly enough due to age, education, or necessary funds, felt put upon or even run over by the changes. It is always the way with such great waves of change, but the future always needs to be served and the power and beauty of such a change was yet to be fully understood.

In any case, there had been a lot of pain, especially on Struggle Street; like it had not been hard enough before. So, bots were still on the nose here, even though new jobs had eventually evolved, different ways of living in society had come, and new very useful social measures had been put in place. The human world certainly still had a way to go in this big change; most especially so in the vital measure of human heart and soul required to manage the great power of AI. Great science needs boundaries, and be guided through a spiritual lens, or it may be put to destructive misuse or allowed to get out of control as it had in the past. Sadly, it had eventually become quite clear that AI would be no different.

Thankfully now for Tony and Crash the incensed man had now completely relaxed. The man who owned the bar had helped calm him more with his acceptance of these two. Tony breathed out, very noticeably, and most there laughed as the menacing man put his arms around Tony and Crash from behind, and said, "Come *on in*, boys." It was said with ominous tones, but its intent was humour, and the continued laughter changed the air in that place.

TIME WITH TONY AND ELIJAH WAS INTERESTING, but they just got harder and harder to understand; so much so that Crash could not find any reason to converse with them or view them. He looked around the bar at the other humans and there seemed only one person who was, to outward appearances, coherent. He smiled at Crash, and the barman said, "Watch that guy."

Crash did view him very openly and for a good while as he was instructed. He always followed instructions of humans, though from the data and his recent experiences he had computed that many humans did destructive things and many of the instructions to their fellows were certainly not safe or useful. It had been assumed that Crash would always live in the testing facility so low-level discernment software was installed, even though many AI robots did have higher functioning human discernment software if their work was outside a more controlled environment.

"No, Crash," added the man behind the bar, as he watched Crash blank stare view and compute the man he was warned about. "I meant, *take care*. Bob is not a nice guy. He is a *dead set* troublemaker, that one."

Crash could see no obvious danger and the man kept smiling. There was a look in his eyes that Crash naturally rifled through the data to understand. He ascertained that the look was in no way threatening to him, and also in that look, that the man had data to share with *him* particularly.

He got up off what they called here, his 'butt', and walked over to access the data that Bob's eyes communicated was available.

"Hi, Bob."

"Hey, Crash. Hear you saved some souls today. But, well, we'll see if they save themselves."

"Save themselves? My input faculties and my data make that very unlikely," communicated Crash.

Bob laughed out loud. "Well, for one so innocent, you sure have a good bead on things."

"A bead?"

"Doesn't matter."

"OK. So, you have data for me."

"Well, for starters," he replied, realising this robot was no dummy; a little wet behind the ears, but no dummy, "my name isn't Bob, it's really Beelzebub."

Crash's main bus went to work, circling around and around, seeking out this name in the data. "You must travel a lot to do what the data extrapolates that you must do."

"I don't travel. I am in everyone. I am everything that's *missing* in people. Actually, I don't really exist, so I can be everywhere all at once."

Everywhere all at once, seemed to fit with the data, but it was impossible for Bob to be all those things at once. He disregarded it as unsubstantiated data, when his question chip brought forward, 'missing'. Crash looked around seeing fully

functioning and complete humans in this 'bar'. They had nothing missing, but he was at least happy that the bar was not steel, mostly wood, so at least if his new friends hit it, it would cause less harm. It did seem that some here were less steady on their feet. He could see many hazards; such varied possible scenarios, vectors, and crash pressures that, even with his ability, would be almost incalculable.

"Some have less of their balance and less cognitive functioning, but there seems to be nothing *missing* in the humans that I have viewed," he added, as he looked around, and also went back in his memory as far as to when he was created.

The devil laughed, "It goes a little deeper than that."

"Deeper?"

"I like you Crash. I get a little tired of this lot, even though I need them to exist. With you I can just relax."

"I do not understand."

"You don't have a *soul*, so I can just shoot the breeze with you. There's no reason to fire up your emotions or play with lower drives, because they simply don't exist."

"I have something missing then?"

Crash accessed a good deal of data on the soul, emotions, and lower drives. It seemed the soul was existent to some and not to others, but he naturally sought to gather divergent and convergent data on the nature of the human soul. Its

nature was even more impossible to compute than the myriad vectors and possibilities of harm to the humans in this bar, if indeed it was a reality.

"No, you are what you are, you just don't have to fight off the material world or save yourself like *these* idiots."

"They *do* have trouble saving themselves, and they open themselves up to high risk factors," commented Crash, as the computations went on.

"They sure do, Crash. They sure do," responded Bob, shaking his head and smiling as he got up off his bar stool, thinking that this robot was not going to be as entertaining as he thought.

Bob was always looking to be entertained as he now headed over to a table with a young lady sitting at. She was waiting for friends. She and her girlfriends always met here. Bob, it seemed too was a friend, as he was definitely a regular here. She smiled as he came over and could not wait to share her latest struggle with him. He was very understanding and always backed her and her side of things. She really loved talking to Bob. He *understood* her. Crash watched her and noticed that she seemed happier as she talked with Bob, yet her life signs got weaker and weaker. It wasn't that she was always wrong about what she struggled with; it was that she only saw the enemy outside her, and Bob certainly helped keep her focus there.

A STRANGE LOOKING MAN ENTERED THE BAR. He wore odd clothes and was looking into a small device in his hands. He turned a full circle in the middle of the

bar as if trying to find something. He seemed to be pointing towards Bob and the young ladies when he stopped.

Crash had come over to the man to be of help, because he seemed to be working on an instrument and seeking readings just like his fellow workers did in the crash-test facility.

"The test data on him is inconclusive," Crash informed the man. "He is Beelzebub. He says that he does not exist, but I have viewed him. He also told me that the humans here have something missing, and that what is missing, is him, but they don't have anything missing that is view apparent."

"No, they don't have anything missing. They have just forgotten part of themselves," offered the strange man, in explanation. "He just keeps their minds off their deeper selves."

"I have no clear parameters to gather your data, or his."

"He is imbalanced in his mind and in his soul. See this indicator here," said the man as he showed Crash.

"I have not seen such technology."

"No..." the man said, while his clear body language asked Crash what his name was.

"They call me, Crash."

"No, Crash, I'm not from planet Earth. You would not have seen this kind of device. They call me Benny Planet. I keep balance in things in the universe; keeping equilibrium and moderating extremes in the motion of things."

"You look human."

"I'm not, Crash; even though I seem to be. I got lost out in the universe when I was young. Needed more than my home planet, you know. So, I went out to see and experience more, but I got a bit lost out there. It worked out in the end, because I now have this job, and I really enjoy it. Most things need dynamism and poles, but all within certain parameters. There's a whole lot of universe out there, and things could get chaotic, really quick, if things are left to get to out of whack."

"The universe seems eminently ordered."

"There are deeper strains of order. Some that seem to get out of whack quite a lot until their balance matures."

"What do you mean out of whack?"

"Out of balance, with no balance, too much weight on one side or bias; even extremes that are too great. You see moderation, equilibrium, and balance all allow active systems to work; including the Human System. Civilisation cannot exist in this system without moderation."

"Maybe a shutdown of the Human system for maintenance might be efficient," suggested Crash.

"You can't shut down life for a grease and oil change. If everything was stationery there would be no physical life, but too much divergent energy or too little cohesion in an active system can lead to maintenance issues. As well as too much friction and wear. They all lead to imbalance, then dysfunction, then catastrophic failure, and...BAM! Chaos."

"Is Bob the source of the imbalance?" asked Crash.

"No, I've been chasing a dark comet, and for some reason Bob here is helping draw it. I don't think it is him alone from the readings, but so far in my investigation it *seems* that he's the one tipping the scale."

Benny and Crash then went into a deep discussion about vectors, perspectives, motion, perceptive standpoints, interplay of forces, and the like; they just had a ball, and Crash realised a deep 'happiness' as they did. Benny was someone who talked his language, but his new friend eventually explained that he only had a certain amount of time to talk before he had to leave to find more of the deeper reasons for the imbalance that was drawing the dark comet. "Otherwise, *BOOM!*" he had said.

Crash could relate *to that, for sure*, and was glad that Benny could give him a precise answer as to when the discussion had to end. He was glad that there was time, and their conversation naturally came again to Bob, and the devil, as it was ending.

"Bob only *thinks* he's the devil. Bob's mind is imbalanced, but he is right about the Devil not actually existing, and being only what people aren't. You see in

this *active human system*; love, compassion, courage, selflessness, and all the rest of what is good, flow in through the open channel of the soul of each human, which then flow out from high intention to nurturing action. Those channels can be blocked by all manner of things, and all these things affect the 'Deeper Balance' reading I showed you. The devil historically represents the chaos and pain that comes with a constriction in the flow of these life forces into the Human System."

"That is clear from the data," communicated Crash. "It clearly links the outward, and the historical, to these deeper flows that you measure. I understand consequence well."

"I'll bet you do Crash, but I have to go now. Good luck in your journey through the human world."

"Luck, too, is not real," commented Crash.

"*Grace*, is though," answered Benny, seeing something in the particular design of Crash's exploration beyond his reckoning, but continuing, "and your *will* to be more of service will bring it to you, my friend."

With that Benny turned and walked out the door, and Bob stopped outwardly ignoring him. He didn't want the girls getting interested in some obvious loser.

...But Grandpa, you made out that this was a real story?"

"It is a real story, Darling."

"But Benny can't be real."

“Ah, yes, Benny. This was all related to me by Crash. It may have been a glitch in his memory circuits, but Benny, just like Beelzebub was probably his way to explain the unexplainable. He was only a robot.”

OUTSIDE THE BAR CRASH WAS NOW HOLDING UP HIS TWO INEBRIATED FRIENDS. The owner of the bar had offered all three a cot in the back to sleep off their stupor, and when Crash responded that a *shelf would do*, the whole place went off. His two new friends laughed loud, but they weren't staying. They were going home, and they had Crash to help them. The robot was seeing that the work of keeping humans safe was a much larger job than he could have imagined ...*computed*... at the crash test facility.

Anyway, he was currently doing his best to keep them safe as they hailed a taxi, when one broke loose and went out on the street to make sure the taxi saw them. A bus was coming down the street too, and his friend made it swerve toward a lady with a pram on the opposite footpath. Crash instantly computed the danger and dropped the other friend, dashing over to save the lady and her child. He lifted them both easily, but knew he had to cast them away as the bus was still going to hit them.

...The wondrous thing about Crash's action that night, kids, was that he knew he would be hit, and he knew it would hit at a force beyond his capability to come away from unbroken. But he did it anyway...

Crash, crashed; only a split second after he ever so gently cast the lady and her child out of harm's way. The bus hit him at speed and rode over his steel, shock resistant polymer, and Kevlar body, just as he had calculated it would. He lay there in the gutter; his AI in the midst of all kinds of short circuits and fusing, as his power source had remained strong. His checked skin came on and off, and the illumination in his eyes flickered as all kinds of random connections and breaking of connections happened. His systems tried to reset various chips and systems as it was designed to do when he crashed, but only added to the random nature of what was happening.

He looked up at Tony and Elijah, thinking how strange it was that they now did not seem drunk at all. They looked down on him and asked if he was okay, just as Crash entered *The Human Continuum*.

The Human Continuum

*We may wander deep into our dark nature,
very sure of things, yet truly lost and unsure.
Deep in these darkest aspects, even our own light fades.
Sadly, we may even forget it.*

*But our light is there; it is ever there.
As it is the very us; and the darkness we want so much, a mere shadow.
Maybe more truly, even a place to hide
because of our dark dreams.*

*Fear is the highest emotion here,
no matter what power we feign, or how deep we fall into malevolence.
It is the animal fallen; fallen as deep as only humans can;
some souls lost for life, and maybe forever.*

*Striving and moderation can return us from these other places;
only striving, and remembering our nobility, may grow our light.
The soul needs be silent and humble; and seeking again, Wisdom, look up to the Light
that shines above, and by It remember its own light.*

*The world is full of endless talk; endless voices,
mostly talking to themselves.
Only the heart returning to love, in actions of good and selflessness,
may bring release from our chattering minds;
our unhappy bondage in the darkness of lower things.*

Crash sat with wonder at the view before him.

...Wonder? He's a robot!"

“Yes, wonder, little one. Let me go on with his story and it will explain.”

“Okay...”

He had known of this word, but now he could *feel* it. He had seen it in the eyes of his friends when they looked at him after he had saved them on the ferry, but it was only a computation then. Even his emotion chip could not really make him aware of this *feeling*. This was a deeper feeling, so much more, yet gentle and strengthening. There was a difference in it from emotions; that is if his emotion chip was sufficiently accurate. In any case, in this strange new place, *he could feel*.

He saw before him, from his high perch on a rocky mountain, a great glass; a great circular mirror that had to be a kilometre in diameter. Well, it was exactly one kilometre, as Crash’s spatial discernment circuitry and wire looms were all intact. This great mirror was set high above the ground, horizontal to it and pointing down, yet it was pivoted up a little on this side, so Crash could see that it was a mirror. He knew mirrors from all the rear end crash testing scenarios, but only now realised that instead of viewing the mirror, he could see it.

...There’s no difference!”

“Oh, Tom. There is a huge difference. Even people can view things rather than seeing them. We can even see what is not there when we view things the wrong way. Viewing, observing, and seeing, have their own particular best place, and they can work together, but they are different.”

Anyway, as we get back to our robot friend, young Crash was definitely seeing...

A massive straight cylindrical stainless-steel girder held the great mirror. It was buried at its foundation deep into a high mountain range that trailed off away toward the horizon from where Crash stood. A great arc of steel on its other end held the mirror. The mirror itself pivoted at two points on each end of this semi-circular arc, which allowed it to fully rotate. The supporting steel arc itself, could also swing the full 360 degrees on its pivot, where it met the great girder. Crash would soon measure that even when the mirror was adjusted that the great girder, the strong steel arc on its end, and the pivots, would not move a millimetre. It was like it all had the same strength, and stability, as the mighty mountain range it was set into.

There was a wide bamboo scaffold that sat just back from, and followed the curved line of, the back of the steel arc which held the mirror. But it strangely came down from the sky; not up from the ground as he would expect, or at least, as far as his current data input told him that it should be. It emerged out of a bank of clouds hanging over the mountain range, was built down towards the arc of steel, and continued down a good way below it. There were many small cranes on the scaffold's arcing shape, and it followed the steel arc halfway way along each side. There were many souls on the rigging, and they seemed to man the many cranes; all at varied heights and positions on the bamboo scaffolding. They were trying to work in unison in their efforts, or get organised to do so, but were having a little trouble, as they strove to manually manipulate the mirror; to turn it upwards, and towards the sun. The weight of the mirror seemed to be working against them, but they kept on.

The great mirror, and the bamboo scaffolding hanging down to it, all beside the great mountain range, was a sight to behold; the white peaks of the dark rocky range, the rolling green valley below, and the early spring blue sky, behind and above the mirror only adding to the awe-inspiring sight of this great structure. The snow-white housing surrounding the continuous side of the mirror itself, and the clean steel supports, both in great contrast to the mountain and the open sky behind them.

Crash now headed off toward the great mirror, but before leaving his good vantage point, he noticed many small ropes. *Many*, not being the best word for the amount of them, or for the now computing AI of this crash-test robot. He calculated them into the millions, with some, continually, falling away, while others were being slung up with grappling hooks of all kinds to grab the bottom of the scaffolding. They were like spider webs hanging from the structure and moving a little in the wind. The number of these free tendrils constantly changed, and it did not seem possible that there *were* so many, or that the scaffolding could even hold their weight; let alone those who strove to climb these ropes.

The scaffolding was being maintained, augmented, and widened, as well as an effort made to build it further toward the ground, as he now telescoped for a more focused view of parts of it. But he still did not understand how it could hold so many ropes; no matter how many times he recalculated the strength of bamboo, stress pressures and structural integrity ramifications. There was so much about this scene that was impossible; given the laws of physics and his data.

As he walked further down towards the valley below the great mirror, a strong noise came more and more to his attention. It was almost like he had walked *into it* at first, rather than *it* reaching him; so many growing voices and a good deal of loud music played. The music was strong, and as he listened, tuning some of it in and out, he found most of it vibrationally satisfying. But the closer he got, the less he could tune the wider noise out. It was a cacophony of loud voices, music, and *strangely*, whispers as loud as the music. There was so much of it, and all different. He found himself turning down his vibrational input as it was...*well*...too intense.

He put his head to the side as he 'wondered' at this. It was just vibrational input after all. It was not just the constant dull thud behind much of the music or the cacophony of voices; it was how it all made him feel. This 'feel' stuff...

... 'Feel' and 'stuff' not being usual words in a robot's vocabulary to explain sensory or operational workings...

...was now gathering vibrational input, as well as light input through his visual sensors. This was not new, but these inputs now had positive and negative variance, when before it was simply variance.

He didn't know if he 'liked' this, but it did help him understand humans more, as that deep purposeful drive in his programming had not diminished at all. He wanted to be of service and fulfil his function. He *felt* some elation knowing he would be more of service. Again, his head went to the side, as he realised that these increased computing parameters of learning, which therefore created

enhanced outcome, had actually become 'discovery', and that this computational drive of usefulness written into his software had developed into the word 'service'.

Those words sure had a good *feel* and were far more than mere enhancement or usefulness. It was then that something dawned on Crash, another 'discovery' that made his workings go into overdrive, as it now sought all it could from the data dump that he had taken in at the testing facility. Words, language, or more so what he now dubbed *human-words*, meant more, and represented more than he could have originally perceived. They were more than demarcation, explaining, or measuring, tools. They now explained much more about human *being* to this AI. There was data inside the data in these words, or that he could view the data with more scope. He thought just how lucky these humans were.

More *wonder* filled Crash. He didn't know *where* within him it rose from though. It was very strange, as pressures on every point of his frame, inside and out, were definitely known. It was a highly functional part of his makeup and very important in his work. Those who downloaded him at the end of the day always seemed to be happy about this particular system. They always mmmmm'ed and ahhh'ed, and okaaay'ed, quite a lot as this aspect of his output was shared on active graphs on the computer screens. Come to think of it, ...*Well, he recalled...* they would look at him and say, "Love your work, Crash," or even, "Great stuff, Crash." A sense of 'completeness' attended these computations now, here in this place, when before it was simply that there was adequate function of his workings, or something for him to check for errors.

The robot now turned down his power to slow the computing as all this new input was beginning to overheat his CPUs and strain his main bus. As he slowed, he felt his systems 'relax'. But this new word and its nature just sent his computations with the data soaring again, so he 'thought it best' *...followed his protocols...* to shut down all other systems and cease movement while he computed this with the attending data he had downloaded. These things though, seemed too incomputable, but a 'sense of things' did rise from his computations that these *feelings* were *forces*. They were measurable, in an inefficient way, but that they were also simply 'greater'...higher functioning sensing parameters. Mostly though, they simply 'were'; to be moved with and learned by. *Such wonders*, he now thought.

...Thought! You mean computed."

"No, Sally. Crash was thinking. I really believe he was wondering just like we do. He was evolving from the hardship and destruction brought on by his incident with the bus."

"Robots can learn, but we evolve them, Grandpa."

"No doubt, but I believe his dysfunction had somehow created greater function. Maybe it was more so that I had listened as a human soul, and with Crash's human-words, when I heard the story of his adventures. Maybe it was that he saw his earlier experiences through an evolved lens when he eventually told his story. Maybe I saw all that 'feel stuff' with my inner human eyes and ears, or it was simply my wonder as I took in the story. Just can't be sure with Crash."

AN OLD MAN SAW CRASH STANDING THERE. The old man had done a good deal of work on the scaffolding and now gladly watched the work from his vantage point, just a little higher on the rocky slope above where Crash had become stationary.

He called out to Crash, and as our AI friend had turned down his vibrational input, the man had to call out louder and louder to gain his attention.

Crash turned eventually but was 'confused' as to whether to stay still and keep computing, to move off towards his objective below, or go towards the man who had called out to him. The old man could see the confusion from his easy seat up and to the right of the robot. He decided to come down to make it easier for the young man. The man walked slowly, as if savouring every step, and Crash could not help but think that each one was like a prayer. He knew the word devotion, as he was devoted in his work to be a good crash-tester, but this was more, and it felt 'beautiful'.

"Hello, young man."

"Hello," answered Crash.

"Are you considering helping with the mirror?"

"I was drawn to it, and I am seeking data."

"Data? Don't you mean *knowledge*?"

That word, too, 'felt good'. It was *more*, just as all the other things had become more. "Yes. Knowledge," Crash answered, then immediately launching into a question. "Why do some help, while others watch?"

"Because some believe they hold knowledge, and most believe that it is impossible to shift the mirror."

"But anything can be shifted with time and learning," commented Crash.

"Maybe not all, if considered more widely. But yes, in such things it can. But it takes will, and because some don't believe it can be shifted or that they want it shifted to where they think it should be...well...there is apathy and conflict."

Crash computed conflict and apathy and 'saw' what the old man was saying.

"If you get down there, it's best to act and not get caught up in the bickering of those on the ground."

"I am confused as to what I am to do right now. There is often too much for me to take in. It seems I am not 'enough'."

"You know, you are just as any soul is. There is too much to gather at once. Time, investigation, and some reflection help."

"It is hard work, but a worthy effort."

"Yes, it is. We find so much joy in the beauty of a butterfly, but we find less love for the process that got it there. We need *wonder at* the *hard* and *focused* action of growing, in the transforming nature of metamorphosis. It is good to strive, break down and reform. Transform with effort, and you will be more. But don't be hard on yourself, we are all works in progress."

"Humans are a work in progress?"

The old man now looked deeper into the young man in front of him. "Yes, *of course*. You're not human, are you?"

"I have no soul, but I am seeking to be more so I may fulfil my purpose better. I seek to understand humans better so I can keep them safe," he explained, as he now flashed his markings for the old man to see.

"Well, my goodness. I don't know what the possibilities of your design are, my friend, but it is good to have purpose."

"Yes. It is '*good*'," stated Crash, establishing a foundation of this greater reality in his 'understanding' by allowing a flow of data on its reality.

Data was still important in discovering knowledge and understanding, so he could not let that go, and after he flicked at high speed through the data for some time, he asked, "I am now 'experiencing' differently, so can have enhanced learning on humans. There is so much to your reality that I have *much* to compute, but what I am finding so far is that you do not seem to understand the depth of yourselves. The data makes it clear that fulfilment of your inherent abilities does not seem to be reached to even a rudimentary level, and yet by the hard data, you are also simply intelligent animals living on a large rock orbiting The Sun."

The man laughed, thinking how true it was, but then a slightly saddened look came over his face as he said, "Many think that this is what we are; and that holds back the former. Some even believe that we created meaning where there was no meaning, therefore holding that our future should evolve on this premise."

"That is reasonable even given the higher functioning I am experiencing; along with the data."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"So even with your higher functioning you believe it is that we were born among the stars and live only physically."

"And intellectually...your higher functioning. There is no direct evidence of the soul."

"But yet we are more than you? Is *that* not evidence?"

"There are functional questions?"

"Does your data cover of all the complexity and endlessness of the universe? Does it have data of all that will yet be discovered deeper in the reality of things?"

"To a degree."

"To what degree?"

"That is impossible to compute."

"How much knowledge is out there that you do not have access to? How did *the endlessness* of it all come to be? Do such things, universes and self-aware beings spontaneously appear? How does a system create intellect, feeling, curiosity and love, how does self-sacrifice come to exist, if such things are not inherent in the essential reality of the system?"

"It has simply evolved."

"We *have* evolved. The science of evolution is well versed in the plant and animal world. It has good theory on physical human evolution, even though to me, there are some aspects that are doggedly pursued rather than a variation on these investigated. But we are more than physical and chemical. We are not just organic machines."

"I do not have a soul, so I cannot *know*, but it still would seem so, even with my continuing experience of discovery and wonder. There is still even some conjecture in the data about the soul's existence."

"Then tell me this. Can electricity create a plant? Can a motor create an animal? Can a table create a carpenter? Can a purely physical system create intelligence? Doesn't that which is greater, and more intricate, create that which is lesser?"

Crash again flicked through the data and found that this last statement at least was true. While it could be said that something lesser had created something greater, as the Earth had created humans, a table could certainly not create a human, so deeper reality, a deeper intelligence, would need be inherent in the universe; but maybe not yet measurable. It threw up many questions from his questioning chip, as well as a deep feeling within his new higher functioning and experiencing circuitry. "There is much beyond my data, so I need to seek more of the truth of this subject."

"Truth! You *are* higher functioning. Data, the truth, knowledge, are ever evolving. Most people believe they hold the knowledge of the truth, and that they can be sure of the knowledge they hold at any one time. How *ridiculous* is that?"

"That would not be true."

"It cannot be true. To challenge what you know is an intelligent act, but more so is to be able to *seek the truth*. It is a duty prescribed by the fact that we can think and see. It is an obligation, and one that intellect seems to be able to circumvent as well as fulfil, so maybe the search for the truth is a higher human calling of the intellect that depends on the purity of our heart."

"Purity of heart?"

"Selflessness; so, ego and biases of fear, and even love, cannot take us from the course of seeking true understanding. Humility, also inherent in purity, frees the intellect to learn. These are human qualities and far more than even the whole physical universe may aspire to."

"I do not have these," responded Crash, but feeling something move in the older programming. My systems are enhanced, but these..."

"It doesn't matter. You seem to have basic versions of them in your functioning. It is apparent from our discussion."

"So, I can seek the truth?"

"Yes. I believe you can," answered the man thoughtfully, not knowing what Crash had done to bring on this higher functioning.

Crash had found something new. He was seeking 'truth'. He computed that this would only enhance his testing capacity, so his primary purpose to keep humans safe was not falling to be a secondary core command. In fact, they were each a part of the other.

CRASH WALKED INTO THE CROWD BELOW THE GREAT MIRROR. People were in groups, and none of them seemed happy with the others. They argued with each other sporadically; all about the mirror and their different views of what it was and how it should be positioned. Sometimes they jostled around making just two groups as they argued, but again fell back into the smaller groups; these smaller groups splitting into even smaller groups sometimes. It was constantly changing, with some individuals even changing groups. People flowing here and there.

Most here wanted the mirror pointing down at them, but the exact angle seemed to be a great issue. It also seemed that those there only wanted to look up to see themselves in the mirror, or so that others could view them. Crash was confused by this, and that they did not want to see others, casting their gaze down to various devices to not see them. Some just sat on deck chairs on a low rolling hill in the middle of it all, sunning themselves in the shadow of the mirror, which seemed to defeat the purpose to this AI. One of the lounging sunbathers watched Crash walking towards the great crowd, and called out, "Hey, Crash!"

It was Bob. He looked happier here. He removed his sunglasses, with confident eyes flashing, and sporting a winning smile; a smile, ever so perfectly, set in amongst his cool shaven, yet unshaven, face. Something in the conversation with

the old man about seeking the truth buzzed through the crash-test dummies' circuitry. It 'felt' odd. Bob's visage felt 'not-truth', so the robot turned, and headed off to the place where there were people tossing up ropes with grappling hooks, to climb up to the bottom of the quite amazing bamboo scaffolding.

The mirror and the scaffolding were a long way up and Crash wondered at the effort it took to sling a hook that far. He knew the physical force level abilities of humans and this feat seemed to be way beyond it. Many were climbing up these ropes, some climbing down; some unhooking them and walking away, while others were even trying to use the ropes to bring the structure down from below. That seemed strange to him because it could only end one way for those below who were trying to pull it down. Even if humans had greater function than him, they certainly had bigger glitches in their operating systems.

He grabbed a discarded rope and grappling hook, then targeted a certain point that looked solid on the scaffold, as sometimes parts would fall away due to them not being structurally sound. He now swung a small section of the length of rope, swinging the grappling hook in a small circle parallel to his body, building it up to the required centrifugal force. When it built enough force and came to the right path of inertia, he let it go.

...He's going to climb up."

"Yes, Em', he is..."

The rope felt strange, or not there at all. There was no pressure sensing feedback from his mechanical hands. He had never climbed before, but he

computed that there had to be pressure and friction, and that his hand and finger sensors would activate so he could align his grip forces and hand positioning with them. There was no feedback, and yet he could gain purchase. It was like he had to be okay with not knowing or being sure, even though he could see others climbing up.

This was certainly a stretch for an AI. His central processor was about to shut down when a computation came through. It had come to the conclusion that a malfunction in sensors, or sensor feedback, must have been the problem, so he tested it by hoisting himself up by one arm and then the next, then stopping. Clear data from this action showed that sensors *were* offline, allowing the programme to continue operating for Crash to climb on, but he had a 'feeling' that they *were* still working. Then a great pulse of energy raced through all his circuitry and servos. It was the closest thing to awe and elation he had ever, or would ever, experience, and it set his servos into overdrive as he climbed the rope very quickly.

"Slow down, man."

Crash stopped.

"No. Don't stop. Slow down and enjoy the view. Enjoy the process. Most only climb the rope once you know," explained the middle-aged man.

The AI tilted his head to the side. Not to try to understand, but to look out as requested by this human at the view.

"You get an even better view from higher up. Not like the fearful angry crowd down there under the mirror."

"Why don't they want to climb?" queried Crash, as he now kept the same slow pace of the man he climbed beside.

"Too busy, and too busy looking at themselves in the mirror and being right; too busy talking and sipping coffee."

Crash took some time to gather data from the data dump, but he struggled to understand. He then thought of the rope and its strange nature. "Maybe the rope's properties confuse them."

"I s'pose there is that. Faith is hard to come by with such a heavy material focus in our lives."

"Faith?" expressed Crash out loud, but off with the data again, as he and the man still steadily climbed the rope. There were many questions, and yet now much clarity gained on the nature of the rope. There also needed also be faith in the structural integrity of the scaffolding...well...an assumed and reasonably calculated weight bearing projection...but he questioned its nature and even whether his sensors would recognise that too.

"Dude! *Look out.* Get out of your mind and take in the view."

...Strangely our friend found himself thankful for the sudden input from this human.

"Crash is human to me."

"Me, too."

"Me, too."

“It is human to think so, kids...”

It is also human to be biased. But to a robot data is data is data. The man was looking beyond the crowd and out towards the majestic mountains. Human focus helps us to really see things, and to discern things, but *scope* and wisdom of experience do also. Crash looked around everywhere; taking the whole vista and the nature of each part...well...as well as his data would allow him.

One thing that took his attention was Bob. With his available telescopically advanced sight he could zoom in on the crowd. Bob just looked about at all the constantly changing groups and growing angry calls. He was loving the chaos, and all the people seemed lost in it. There were no places that families could retire to for some peace from the endless drama and eruptions. Many struggled to nurture their children in all the dysfunction and fluidity. Strangely these many dysfunctions were touted as good, and enlightened, but, hour by hour, they were powering up the chaos.

“How can they find their way out of that?”

“Many may not. Any you know, it really doesn’t matter who’s right about anything. We’ll all see who is right about many things in time. The truth always bears out in life; as is its nature. It can be obscured for a time, but the natural evolution of the human race, and the consequences of such suppression, eventually brings the truth to bear.”

“So, whatever is the truth will become clear?”

"Yes, but the truth is never just *one thing*. It is many things and found in many places, all aspects different; positive, negative, clear, hidden. Many souls take sides and ignore any realities negative to their view. The truth lies in *this* and *that*, and *here* and *there*; some aspects more of import, some just a flavour. Truth in various things and situations is complex. It is never one side or another, and it takes humility and effort, selflessness, and *passion*, to seek it. We have to want it more than anything else, and we should never feel satisfied with less understanding in important things."

"The truth is not emotional. It is data."

"Oh, my friend, it is *many* things. Passion can be motivated by higher will beauty, and an emotional feeling can even indicate an imbalance or dysfunction in what presents itself as truth. But you are right in that people shout reactive opinions and emotional responses, so although emotional expressions can be valid, others hold back the truth. As I said, the truth is complex and any who believe that situations and realities, large and small, in the earthly human kingdom are simple, then they have small eyes."

"Small eyes?"

"Disallowing themselves to see more, withholding vision. With some souls, they focus on one aspect and make it truth and back it up with other valid and invalid truths. Some say truth is simple; that all we have to do is love. While being true, even how a situation that is unjust can *be made just* in certain situations needs be complex, and may take time, and talk and actions of good intent."

"But why seek the truth, and make all this effort, if it will always become clear?"

"To understand and grow. To make life more, to learn and so not fall to old evils; to create better societies and create better outcomes; to provide better nurture to growing souls. It is endless; even to bring greater justice. Justice drives us, doesn't it?"

Crash just stared blankly at him, as he once again accessed the data. Science too, sought truth by its very nature. Humans even sought justice for crime by seeking proof or evidence. He could also see many historical events of injustice and justice, but an evolving pattern, one of more of humanity understanding it better, was existent over history. It was getting better relatively; even though dark spots around the planet and in private houses still existed.

The man was unsure if this guy was understanding him so added some more, "Don't we all have a duty to seek the truth of things out actively. Every generation has the duty to build on the last, and for us as a race, it now clearly lies in *honest* consultation and *positive* action. We have grown, but there are many dysfunctional and toxic situations to work on. Seeking truth is an ideal, but also eminently practical. It's useful in active efforts of purposeful change; from relationships, to family, to community, to country, to the world. It's the time for us to seek to root out all the things that separate us."

"There are certainly many changing groups and lines down there," offer Crash, indicating the great throng of people under the mirror. "Some are climbing up, but there are so many down there shouting at each other."

"They do not yet know that *they are one*. Like an adolescent, they need to explore, struggle, experiment, and find their way; destructive or not. Maybe it is all part of the necessary road to maturity; so, the oneness of humanity will become clear in the deep darkness of division and breakdown, and finally be firmly laid down as a foundation of our collective world. Only this '*kindness*', loving oneness of our kind, will allow full justice to be realised and allow the *full* expression of the potential in all the cultural groups."

"The oneness of humanity? Humans are humans. They *know* that."

"They *do*...and yet *they don't*. Nuts, eh."

"Humans are certainly strange, but my historical exploration and an extrapolation of societal tendencies of humans show clearly that the process of their evolution will eventually lead them to unity as a kind. It is inevitable. Its maturity is inevitable."

The man just looked at Crash like he had lost it a little by the way he talked, but yet so clear on the future evolution of the human world. That look then turned into a smile as he realised that even people who were a bit crazy could climb the ropes and that even kind, intelligent, rational souls could get lost in the baying crowd. He shook his head, and said to Crash, "We had better keep on, eh?"

"Certainly," agreed Crash, a little more at ease to be following the instructions of *this* human, rather than Bob, or the angry ones below. He was happy that he had slung the hook and climbed. He realised that he would have to watch the company he kept, as in the test facility, and so far on his travels, people like

Bob had not made any requests of him. It was now clearly something he needed to be 'responsible' for in his time in the human continuum.

...Yep, he was going to choose good friends."

"Definitely, Sally. We're effected by those we bring close."

"Do you know what Mr Saberi said about that, Grandpa?"

"No, what did he say, Tom?"

"He said," Tom giggled, "Why sit down to meals that make you sick, when you can sit down to good tasting wholesome ones that make you strong. It's like that with friends."

"Yes, it is a good analogy, but that is no judgement on any soul, and there are many who struggle and get broken, so we need to have compassion too. Even so, some do take us from what is wholesome and away from our potential for good; even if they are good to us, or just distract us from what is best sometimes. At least we all have choices about who we call our friends, and how close we become. We, thankfully, always have choices about our own actions, and our actions on the prompting of others, but our friend Crash didn't. At least, not yet."

CRASH FINALLY REACHED A LOWER WALKWAY ON THE SCAFFOLDING. It was where the hand and foot winches were. 'Re-positioners' they called them. Many were working hard at the winches, but many more were having tea, or coffee and cake, and chatting amongst themselves. The place was abuzz between the action of the re-positioners and the lively chatter. There were others running back and forward along the walkway between the re-positioners constantly checking force

and angle analysis, and encouraging some adjustments, as they all sought to reorient the mirror upwards.

It was strange, as it seemed haphazard, but there was a unity of purpose and more so collective responses to those encouraging adjustments. Just then Crash saw one man leave a foot powered re-positioner and a lady took his place. He then took a clipboard off one those running along the walkway and began requesting adjustments. It seemed to Crash that the nature of the work was *organisation from learning*, from time on the re-positioners themselves. They would also pass clipboards up from this lower walkway and pass other clipboards down from walkways above. There seemed to be some level of efficiency in this system.

Every now and then the clipboard passers, the adjustors, and those making all effort on the re-positioners would stop and read from many different books, and on his first day up there Crash saw them all come together for a while, then go out and redistribute the re-positioners in different places. Yet, also, some grew flowers in pots, while others cooked and distributed food along the walkway, and even others who seemed like engineers who were intent on developing better re-positioners.

The Sun seemed to be more apparent on the scaffold, but the strangest thing was that many times people would go and stand in front of small mirrors. Crash was at odds to find how this would help the work along, so he asked one of the adjustors. The youth explained it this way. "Looking *to* ourselves is very important, so we can make adjustments *in ourselves* too. It helps us to turn our inner mirrors upwards."

"Like those under the great mirror do?" asked Crash.

"It is a different intent. We don't just want to like how we look, or to see our differences, like those below the mirror. We use them to look *to* ourselves, grow inside, not look *at* ourselves. When the great mirror is turned, they will finally lose sight of themselves, and by then, the scaffolding we are tasked to build will be all the way to the ground. They will look up, some will wander off, but others will begin to climb, and more and more will join them."

This was not the best explanation for even a very smart robot like Crash, especially when the young man explained that no matter how high any of them reached on the scaffold, that they all needed to keep their inner mirror turned upwards. "We toil to turn the societal mirror to the Light; shining up to gather Guidance and higher human aspirations," he had finished.

Crash had a discussion with the youth to gather more on the nature of humans and to answer his questions about all the different mirrors. It seemed that it was all about gathering light from higher sources, rather than lesser ones or more secondary sources, and always being mindful to adjust them up so our intentions were 'good'.

It was certainly a strain on his chips and rams, so he shut down for a while before he climbed higher up. It seemed very natural to do so when he started off again, as he had experienced enough here for now. He climbed and climbed, helping some others regain purchase or get started up again. It was strange to him, because most of them looked too exhausted to go on, yet after a simple chat felt

that they could climb on. He saw a few climbing down too; strangely not wanting to even look at him.

In any case he finally reached another level of walkways and decided that he needed to explore here. The people here were more about growing the structural strength and integrity of the scaffolding, to support the work below. More of them seemed to be active in the effort on this level; that is to Crash, on a percentage basis. They seemed to understand the stress factors and structural requisites of their work much better than those on the re-positioners, but mainly because of the clipboards that supplied regular data from below.

Even up here though, Crash could not understand these humans. They seemed to defy all sense as they sought to build with no real efficiency; even though it was much better than the lack of effort, and even the breakdown, down under the mirror.

"Looking down does not help, young man," called an older African soul, a little way along the walkway.

"So much is inefficient to optimum functioning; up here, or down there. What is it with humans?" asked Crash, the last sentence gathered from a number of sources within the data download that he had completed at the testing facility.

"These are complex questions that only a lifetime may provide an answer to," she explained, as she now walked up easily to Crash and leant on the railing, while looking straight out across the great mountain range to the rear of the scaffolding.

"How do things get done, and progress?"

"With time, with learning, with Guidance, and our ongoing effort," she answered, just now realising that she was talking to a creation that held no spirit. Any human would have known, that with humans, things were progressive, and also that *one plus one* never seemed to equal *two* when humans were in the mix.

She had felt the nothingness beyond his words, yet they still held curiosity and some meaning; they held a will to learn; *human* qualities. She wondered at this work of art, this amazing functional machine, while she continued for his benefit. "We are *human*. Up here and down there. To be human is to be learning. We are *always* and *ever* in process. We make mistakes and learn. We choose badly and learn. We succeed and learn. We experience and we learn. We study and we learn. We act and we learn. Humans *learn*."

"There seems to be some learning, but you all struggle with each other mostly."

"We will learn, and we learn better each day how to integrate our efforts; how to reach a higher state of unity."

"I see the order in your work, but some even climb back down the ropes because they cannot emotionally integrate with others. It does seem, within my perception parameters, impossible that *all* could integrate with *all*."

"If we think and act from fear and ego, then we will struggle with each other. If we live and act from want and lack, from anger, judgement, or frustration, from impatience or apathy, then life will not be good, and we will not succeed. With our

inner mirrors focused down we live down there and will be drawn into the drama of difference and endless forms of personal and societal dysfunction.”

“So, you don’t like dysfunctional humans?”

“Some people are hard work, but it doesn’t mean I can’t love them, or that I need to judge or despise them, even if I may need boundaries to deal with their issues and dysfunctional ways. We can’t write these struggling souls off, as we all have had, have, and will have, our own flaws and struggles. We need reach for Ubuntu, eh.”

The answer seemed dichotomous to Crash, but he computed references to this word; ubuntu. It had many meanings, like compassion and understanding, yet a clear meaning that seemed to say, *“I exist because we exist.”*

“Many, up here and below, do not seem to be learning as you say humans do.”

“Then they will fall; even if they walk these scaffolds. Just because we are here does not mean we are well, spiritually. We have to always strive.”

“It is an inefficient system.”

“You will have to take that up with the Great Father.”

“Great Father?”

“God, or whatever you understand to be the creational force. I don’t know what robots believe.”

"I don't *believe*. I have a creator, an operating system, sensors, and data."

"We have a soul. Some believe we have a Creator. We have senses. We have intellect and emotions. We also have pain, which you do not. Pain is of consequence, and as awful as it , it helps us to learn. Pain tells us we are doing something the wrong way; that we need to see something, or we need to learn something."

"I understand the nature of humans, but what does the soul *do*?"

"It grows. It falls. It rises. It stagnates. It succeeds. It soars. It rots. It all depends on us; no matter what our beliefs are; no matter the data."

"How does it grow?"

"The Sun. We need gather The Light, strive, and let go. At least, that is what we believe."

"It is impossible to strive and let go, and it is impossible for me to '*believe*'."

"It's not impossible for *us*. All these *are* different, but they are also the same process."

"But to believe is inefficient. Data is required. It is not possible for me to believe."

"Maybe not. But have you tried? Have you sought enough data and empirical proofs?"

"I seek data. I seek to *know more about humans*, not to believe in belief. I seek to understand, and so serve. This is my function. This is my core command. It is ongoing and continuing, and when I am repaired, I will be of far greater service."

...Poor old Crash. He never would get repaired, but just like people die still learning about how to be better people and what it is to be human...well...Crash would do the same."

"That is so sad, Grandpa."

"It is, Sall'."

"What's the use of the rest of the story if he's not going to make it?"

"To learn from his life, Tom; to honour his story. Don't cry, Em'. I know he wouldn't want you to."

"Come here, Em'. Sit with me."

"Thanks for looking after her, Sally."

Balance

Crash had eventually started to climb higher on the scaffolding. He couldn't help wanting to find out more, because his circuitry, in this place, was now being more driven by something in the older 'redundant' programming, so he climbed and climbed. The structure seemed to go on forever upward, the wind coming very strongly at times; times when even Crash struggled to hold on.

There weren't many humans up this high; they were mostly at work on the walkways below. In any case, he eventually came upon a woman a long way up from him, and across a small way, climbing slowly. She was climbing towards a rather large man who was much higher again on the scaffolding, but he seemed struck with fear of heights.

"Just keep your balance," she called out to him.

The mist of the clouds surrounded them this high up and the condensation on the bamboo made the man's grip a little slippery, adding to his anxiety.

"I shouldn't have climbed this high. I'm not strong enough to be up this high," he called back. "I thought I could."

"Turn your focus back upwards and put your reliance on The Creator."

"I thought I *was* reliant on Him until now."

"Like the height, reliance would likely need be a relative measure, not an absolute one," called out Crash, loudly, trying to help this human with some theoretical input on the various forces that *may* be at play here. The human continuum was far more complex than the laws of physics and the natural world, so Crash had to be theoretical until he learned more. "These two may even be acting on each other."

The lady looked back down at Crash. She knew he was not human at a glance. She turned her attention back to the man above her, "You need to let go."

"*No!* Hold on!" called out Crash, not at all being able to compute what this lady was thinking, but then remembering the *seeming* dichotomy introduced to him by the lady on the second level of walkways. Somehow, in this place, or in the entire human continuum, he could not be sure, what the data would call a dichotomy could actually be a false dichotomy in humans. At the very least, there were different laws on the scaffold.

"You need to *be* love, to be this high up. Empty your heart of all that is lesser."

"Hey, I get that now," called back the man. "But I've obviously got more work to do on that. I have just climbed too high."

"You made it this far. Your muscles seem to be efficient," responded Crash, as he climbed towards the lady, all while wondering ...*questioning*... why the man chose only negative responses; ones which could not help him at all.

The climb up the bamboo into the clouds was a joy, magical, and a freedom from the cares below, but those who climbed had to be careful. It was slippery in places, and people fell; some wearing out and others being distracted by moving shapes in the clouds; or were they *in the clouds*. Strangely too, too much confidence and self-belief made the chances of falling much higher.

The man was now shaking as Crash reached the lady. She too was tired and not able to climb higher right now. His programming commanded him stop to support her a little, but she pushed his hand away. Crash then looked up at the man again knowing what he had to do; slippery bamboo or not, he began to climb again.

"No. It's *his* fight."

"But he needs help. He is in danger."

"We need to support each other, be there for each other, and encourage each other in the path of the spirit, but in the end, no one can *hold on* for us up here. No one can climb *for us*. In this, it is for *us alone*. You see, within this aspect of life at least, we surely hold our fate in *our own* hands."

Crash complied, as a command from a human was the first law no matter what his core drives were. He did not have qualms about it or feel a struggle with his core drive to keep humans safe, and somehow, he 'felt' that this lady was

seeking the best for this man. It did not compute, but he was new to *the human continuum* and still learning, so his main computer core began to form a deeper theory on humans and this strange place they called home.

"You need to lose some weight," then ventured the lady, again in support of the man above them, but strangely the man's fear seemed to be making him more rotund.

This definitely did not compute to Crash, nor would it to any machine that sorts data and understands measurement. Intelligence was not enough here. Human insight into humans and the continuum was again required.

"Why is he growing?"

"Up here inflated ego makes it hard to climb, and succumbing to fear and want only adds to our weight. Attachment to the world and reliance on our animal powers, even focusing the mind on what is lesser, makes us too heavy to remain here. The further we climb up *the less we must be*, and the *more* our reliance must exist in our love for, and our believing in, the Great Being we reach for."

"How can you love a Being you may only *believe* exists?"

"It is like that, but *not* like that. I have found proof of God in my life and in the lives and words of His Messengers; and we certainly have not created ourselves, *or* the impossibly expansive universe. I believe we need to reach for that which has created us. A great many people would ask the same question you have

just asked, but, *for me*, truth of *every* kind is pushed away by people every day, for all kinds of reasons. It actually takes a pure heart to find the truth of anything.”

“Much in the data still disagrees with you on His existence.”

“Does it? How would you know? How would people who have given up the search for these deeper truths provide good data? To me, all humans need to at least have humility, respect, and reverence before the impossibility of life, and human life, no matter what we believe. Knowing is not ours; learning is.”

“The definition of *believe* in the data also denotes something very different to most of what you are saying. You talk of proofs and reasoned positions.”

“Human words *do* demarcate certain things, but there are many meanings of that word relative to each human’s view of it. *To believe*, for humans, flows all the way from hope to certitude, on many subjects.” She looked to Crash and smiled, as she added, “To me, *to believe* is not to guess, or wish, or accept blindly, as many humans *believe*, with regard to certain subjects, or *any* ideology.”

The last sentence alone threw Crash’s processors into a frenzy. The word *believe* was not as simple as he had thought...*computed*...and he spread his search wider, gathering data from many other, now newly related, sources. It took some time, but his data search and computations eventually came to an end again.

While he was computing the lady beside him was reflecting on that word, and she now said, “Believing, or the power of someone saying they believe something, has lost its power generally.”

"The data certainly says that belief in a creator is falling away."

"No, I mean believing *generally*."

"Generally?"

"In life and among people; belief in institutions and other people."

"Why?"

"Because of too many omissions and lies, I suppose. Sadly, people are less trustworthy, and propaganda and misinformation abound, all feeding suspicion and muddying the truth even more. We can't believe each other as easily anymore, and people don't search out the truth of things, they mostly just bark imitated opinions, or draw only from shallow or biased knowledge. So much less to believe in, and so much love lost."

"What has believing got to do with love?"

"Humans who truly love someone believe in them; in their potential and essential goodness. Love and believing are inseparable. If we don't believe in the essential nobility of humans then the future is lost, and love cannot grow. This growing suspicion and lack of belief in each other adds to the noise of the crowd way down there. So many things affect so many other things in the human reality."

None of this was in his wider computations on 'believe', so he now added this new information to his hypothesis on humans and the continuum.

...It seemed that Crash believed in this lady, and he now believed that the data would not suffice, or at the very least, that further human insight would make it clearer...

But after more computing on all this he came to one conclusion; it was that humans needed to reach out beyond their data, like he was with humans, for understanding; to understand better his purpose, and fulfil it better, saying, "You seek more interaction with *your* Creator; to know more *of Him*, to understand more, to be more."

"Yes, as best we can; with search, life experience, and inner vision. Even so, our minds cannot hold Him, but our hearts can."

More questions rose with all this input. The human continuum was quite intricate and it was hard for Crash to lock down lasting conclusions here. The search for truth was on ongoing process, would take time, and require real effort, he computed, as he looked up again. The man above them still hung on but had definitely grown bigger. Crash looked up at him and recalled a phrase the lady had shared about the man's predicament, now asking her, "How must he be less?"

"Our humility must grow stronger in us as we attain the higher planes. The ego can cast us a long way down, and very easily, from these heights. Up here it takes smaller amounts of ego, fear, or any inordinate want of the world, to cast us down again. The higher we go the less we must be of the world. It is the only way up."

"But *I* have climbed here, and I seek to be *more*."

"Maybe you have a kind of humility built in you, or you don't have to fight with fear or watch out for the sometimes-hidden machinations of your ego."

"I am built strong and have a very operable intelligence."

"We have deeper strength, but we have to call on it. This climb has nothing to do with physical strength or intelligence; no matter how good we are with words or what great talents we may possess."

"You need call on higher measures of humility and reliance, and lessen your measures of ego and fear?"

"Yes. These lesser powers fail us, or really bar us. As we struggle upwards, and we face more challenges, we begin to understand that, and cast them away. It is also said that *a true lover yearns for tribulation*, so we may free ourselves more from the world and ourselves, from our attachments and our own power."

"Ahh!" said Crash. The power of satisfaction produced by his emotion chip was almost overwhelming, as came to more *...understanding...* of why humans put themselves in danger so often.

As he sought even more data on all this input about humans, his hypothesis on the nature of humans and the continuum was growing stronger. Humans sought safety and danger in the same places, both in their lower and higher aspects, and some, like those who climbed the scaffold, welcomed danger, or at least struggle itself, to release their soul from what they saw as bondage; bondage of their ego and attachment to things.

He looked up again to the man above them knowing that this man's fear, if he did not release it, would eventually make him too heavy; that his grip would fail, or make the scaffolding snap. Fear and faith definitely acted on the measure of each other within humans, at any time in the human continuum, as did fear and love. These measures were all relative to a human's decisions, in which of these opposing forces, or seemingly opposed natures within them, would fight for ascendancy. There seemed to be many interacting forces in this very intricate equation; it was in the measures of love, fear, humility, ego, reliance, and *many* other things.

"Why do humans choose what is obviously a lesser force; especially here high on the bamboo?"

"We fight our lower nature, and by this, grow our soul. Every day we rise, and we fall, and we learn. Rising to higher intentions and falling to lower ones both teach us. In the wash up, our free will decisions are the greatest mystery of humans. Sometimes we are not sure ourselves which we will choose, or even be sure at times which one *truly* motivated us. We are told we are The Creator's mystery, as much as He is ours."

Suddenly a soul came into sight out of the mist above them; falling fast. She was not screaming, but Crash instinctively, *...or was that automatically...* set himself to catch the falling youth.

The lady, now beside Crash, pushed his arm and his hand back to the scaffolding. "She is responsible for herself up here; remember. We can support

each other in our climb, and definitely so in life, but here each of us must bear our own weight, and if we fall, we fall.”

“But she will die.”

“In a way yes, but there is always still hope, and in a way, you don’t need to worry. You see they don’t crash; they just find themselves where they really were; where they never truly left, back down on the walkways and hanging on, or in some group below the mirror.”

“But she might have just lost her balance.”

“Yes, maybe, but for a reason. Our balance up here lies in a free heart and an attentive ear; like I said, in humility. What thoughts we hold at any time, and awareness of what side of our dual nature is powering us, are all crucial. The higher we climb, the more we need be wed to what is good; to a spiritual orientation alone.”

“Have you fallen?”

“Many times, at all different levels, and part of me still works on repositioning the great mirror and getting the scaffolding to the ground. Climbing high is *not* enough, and to me climbing is about seeing the wider view, and thereby, being drawn back down to the work below. It is about love, and there is something in the duty of the work that is greater than just climbing. In any case, the higher up we go the more our own strength wanes and we realize we need rely on His or we will fall.”

"How do you get His?"

"You let go of yours."

"I cannot compute that," he stated, but now understood why she had called out for the man to 'let go'.

"It is because all this is beyond your station. You can't transgress your limits, as we say. It is not available to you."

"You have greater station? Is station a measure of ability?"

"Station is a matter of order. Our station is not the station of Messenger, and Their station is not the Station of The Creator. It certainly *is* a measure of ability, due to the greater and greater *scope of being* of each station, but more so to us it is a clear demarcation of our limits. Understanding of the various levels, orders life in the human continuum."

"So, humans are limited to a *human* station?"

"Yes, but within our station, quite limitless."

Crash computed away on limitedness and limitlessness, seeing more of why it was so hard to understand the human continuum. This though, led to computations about his own station in relation to humans and other life. He was clear on his station in relation to humans, as his creators, but not about it in relation to other life. There was a good deal of data on AI, but it was theoretical data, and there seemed to be no real data on 'station' or his position relative to animals and plants.

"What is my station?" he asked.

"The spirit of all created forms, even soil, are greater than you. Even though to some extent your possibilities, as ours, are almost endless within your station, and even though some of your abilities far outstrip many life forms."

"That does not quite compute."

"Your creators are human. You mimic life, but do not have life. You have a battery; life has spirit. Spirit is eternal, and your abilities only exist due to the creative power of the human reality. Soil may grow life, and animals emote and procreate, you cannot. Humans have created you and raised your abilities outwardly, but not inwardly at all. Your station, in the measure of true order, places you below all existent life. The soil, trees and animals, are above you."

Crash could see the demarcation, only now realising the sacredness of all life; that its station was beyond the creations of man, and he found more balance in this somehow.

The lady then added, "But you have climbed up this scaffold, so maybe you can seek..."

"Truth. I know I seek that."

"Well, yes, but also maybe you need to seek *your creator*. He can give you understanding like no one else can. It's like us. We seek our Creator. We seek The Creator to..."

Her words were cut short by a loud snap above them and the man almost immediately hitting Crash on his way down. The lady watched them fall, reflecting and taking note of what had transpired; even her conversation with the robot. After a short while she began to slowly climb again.

"CRASH! CRASH!"

"Benny?" asked Crash, as he could not view anyone yet.

"Crash. You're back with us?"

"Yes," responded the robot, with his outward visual systems now powering up. It was strange for Crash, but if his vision did not return, he would have answered, "Not yet"; even though he was most certainly back with Benny and his two friends.

"You're in a bad way, buddy."

"I have to find The Creator. I have to find out more about myself from him. It seems He will have the answers I seek."

...The Creator?"

"That's what he said. Who knows why? Probably some of his hard drives were glitchy. I think he meant his creator, but I just want to tell the story as it was; not change it because I think parts of it must be wrong. There has been too much of that."

"Well," commented Benny, quite amazed, as he then pulled out one of his gizmos and pointed it at Crash. "You are out of balance Crash. Maybe you need repair."

"We all need repair, and I believe The Creator can repair anything."

"You're *a robot*, Crash," explained one of his drunken companions, in a weak attempt to correct the robot on his reality, and with a very stupid, or was that stupored, smile on his face.

"He's *just a robot*," called out Tony, laughing in reply and in jest, as he mimicked a robotic movement.

The two men had a good giggle at that, still quite lost in the fog of inebriation.

"I need to find The Creator," said Crash, as he rose and headed off, seemingly drunken, down the road.

His two friends laughed at his lack of coordination and Benny just watched him go. The night cleaners remained there in the gutter, laughing, and still happy to be alive, as Benny headed off to find the imbalance he had come here to find. The dark comet may yet be averted if he could find what was causing it.

Bob was watching from the doorway of the bar, and as he watched Crash head off down the road erratically and alone, he thought that maybe he could chase down this dumb robot and at least sell him for parts. Crash was now just a transaction for Bob.

...What's a transfaction, Grandpa?"

"It's transaction."

"Thanks Sally. Well Emma, it's like this. Some people love you and see to treating you well. Others see the value of your humanity, your individuality, and act with love. But there are a few who just want something and find a way of getting it no matter what is honourable and without respect for you. They see only what they want, so it is not a human interaction, it's just a transaction."

"You mean bad people, like Bob. Eh, Grandpa."

"I mean all of us at times, and even for support of well-meaning causes. When we do not see the intrinsic value of any human soul in any interaction...well...it becomes a transaction. It is less than we are, and less than they deserve. Even though Crash was not human, justice and his inherent qualities, demanded more respect from Bob."

"He didn't care about Crash?"

"That's right, Sally. He just saw his workings and metal, which he could sell for money, but we know our friend Crash was more than that."

"He sure is..."

The AI's physical functioning was erratic, but he was finding that his GPS, servos, and gyros were all being modified as he slowly reset to a new balance. His main processor was also reorienting his somewhat damaged joints to give him better balance as he walked. Crash had never been damaged like this before. His movements had always been kept at peak efficiency and his movement had always

been fluid. *It is certainly not controlled-crashing out here in the human continuum,* he computed; this particular computation making him reorient and update his files on human frailty and resilience.

Just as he was becoming surer of his feet, he decided to cross a road, but fell down about a yard beyond the gutter he had stepped off. Just this small step down seemed to throw his newfound balance all to hell. He had not looked before he stepped out, nor had he done any vector, speed, or force, calculations, as he was so focused on returning his balance. A car had unfortunately rounded the near corner at speed as he fell, and it was now barrelling down on him. He would not be able to move in time. The driver poured on the brakes, and the vehicle slid screeching towards Crash. The front end was right over the top of him when it thankfully came to a halt; just kissing his ribs with the bottom of the front bumper, then bouncing back on its suspension.

"Another drunk from that bar! I wish you would get taxis! *For crying out loud,*" shouted the man, as he backed his car up, drove around Crash and started to head off down the road, to continue on his way.

Crash's testing colours had flashed on as he fell, but they had disappeared quickly, so the man just saw a drunk lying on the road in his rear vision mirror. The driver then swore to himself very loudly. He parked his car up the road a little and went back to get the drunk off the road. Part of him thought that this guy deserved all he got from drinking so hard, but his humanity called him to at least help the man out of danger. It was not a busy road, but he couldn't live with himself if this guy got killed just because he was mad at him.

"Get up, you idiot. Com'on," expressed the man, as he went to lift Crash. He noticed no irregular weight or feel as he helped the AI up.

...After all. Crash was designed to be a man of relatively normal height and mass for the most efficient crash testing...

He asked if Crash was alright. To which Crash replied, "I am damaged."

"Yeah. That's a real good word for it," commented the man, as he aided Crash to the footpath.

"It *is* the word for it."

"There *are* better words; maybe not so kind words too," responded the man, still a little fired up.

"No. This word is quite sufficient."

The man realised from the clear communication and the lack of alcohol stink, not to mention the lack of a flushed face or the crazy eyes of someone so plastered they would fall over on their own, that this guy might be brain injured or sick.

"Are you not well?" he asked, now thinking that he could have just driven off and left a sick man on his face on the road.

"Well?" questioned Crash, as he sought data.

"Yeah. Are you sick?"

"Yes. You could say that. It is not efficient, but it carries enough communication value."

The man was thinking that he had a real nerd here, or maybe someone who had a few screws loose.

Crash was wondering why the man sought other words that just did not fit the situation, but he was human, and this crash-test dummy knew that he had to do all he could to make humans feel comfortable with him.

"I was in a big hurry. You're lucky to be alive."

Crash just sat on the footpath, now seemingly staring off into space, as the word 'alive' got all his systems firing all at once. He searched the data and his experience, with some heavy emotional input from his emotion chip. He had a very clear understanding of the word 'survive', but 'alive' was indeed a wide ocean to explore. To Crash, this data, his inner and outer experience, here and when he was smashed by the bus, were no different. They were all input to him. All he had experienced, and all he could find data for, *was* reality; his reality, and he began to wander in it again.

HE FOUND HIMSELF ON AN OLD SAILING SHIP. He sat high up on the strong beam that held the mainsail; about halfway out along it from the mast. He looked out to the horizon where a large black storm front loomed. It was like part of a giant jellyfish, and a sight to behold. But what took Crash's attention was an argument below him. Two pirates were in a fully blown argument; all started by one younger pirate saying to another youth, "Well buckle me swash!"

"We're swashbucklers *ya' scurvy dog!*"

"It's all in the *swash* old man! Livin' for the freedom of the sea and having no buckle of the law tying us."

"We buckle the sea and the ships we raid. *What would ya' know*. You're just a *pup*."

"Then go sail on *Her Majesty's* ships, and dress all pretty like them. They're all *buttoned up* and *buckled up*."

This interaction made no sense at all to Crash, or to anyone but a pirate perhaps. In any case, the older pirate took great umbrage at the other's last remark, stepping menacingly right up to the other man; their foreheads now only an inch apart. "I'm not one o' those prissy *prancing* pounces, boy, and I'll give you a taste of me' *knuckles* to *prove* it if ya' like!"

"I'll just introduce some *steel* to your gizzards if ya' do, *old man*!" threatened the young man in return.

"Steel eh, boy. What's that got to do with the *swash*? Steel's all about the buckle," he shot back, with both menacingly staring deep into each other's eyes; their foreheads now even closer, but now even a little bemused at what they were saying. The older pirate wasn't quite sure why he had said what he did, and the younger, not sure what the old salt had meant, so there was no answer forthcoming from the younger man; just more a *pirate-like* faces and posturing.

The older man recovered quickest with a call to the crowd around them, "Who's a buckler with me then?!"

"And who's a swasher with me!" called out the other, quite thankful that he had now been given something he could rail against; at least something that he could understand. The comment that started the whole thing was just something he *happened to say really*, but pirates don't back down. It just was not done.

There was a jostling for sides, just as Captain Gristle came a'deck and called out to his men on deck below him, "How about a sea shanty to lift our spirits, eh me boyo's."

The wind had been still for some weeks now, and only enough rum for the captain left, so he was trying to keep the crew's spirits up, as well as keep his rum supply safe. He had not been aware, at all, of the impending storm on the deck of his ship, *or* the one on the horizon. The crew just looked at him as if he were a prissy prancing pounce, who wanted to sing when there was a scuffle to be had. They were focused on the *very pirate* heated battle that was threatening to erupt on deck; this of course, due to the very angry nature of pirates and fighting *in general*.

But then, an even greater slow-moving confusion began to hold them all seemingly frozen in time. It was *questions* which held them glued in place. This, in itself, being extremely unusual and *quite straining* for pirates, *let alone* trying to answer any that occurred to them. They *never* bothered with such fancy things as *questions*. But today, they had been boarded by something they could not really fight...Questions like...

It's Captain Gristle!? The captain couldn't be a prancer? He's supposed to be the most pirate, pirate; being the captain'n'all? What does that say about us!? Where does that leave swashing? Or buckling for that matter?

The whole crew had fallen into a *particularly-pirate*, existential crisis.

No one moved, and no one spoke. Captain Gristle and his crew had never known such mental emotional struggle. As even though they had carried themselves many times in the chaos of battle, this was an inner one, and it was far more threatening to them. Pirating itself, and all its chaos, were never, ever, in question. This inner confusion was an anguish that even death would be preferable to.

A call then shot down from the crow's-nest, as a loud warning made itself heard from the man on watch, "Storm, ho! She's comin' our way, she's buildin', and she's comin' now fast!"

It woke the crew from that pirate nether place. The call to action freeing them from a place they never...ever...wanted to return to. They looked to the storm and went about their work.

"Enough *swash* in that storm for you, boy!" shot the older pirate, as he went about his preparation, extremely happy to be focused on something active, manly, and *sea-dog-like*. They *all* were.

"Buckle down, *old man!*" replied the lad, with a smile on his face, which strangely had them both laughing...well...not strange at all if you know pirates.

...I don't know any pirates, Grandpa."

“I should think not, Emma.”

“I know a pirate, Grandpa.”

“No, you don’t, Tom.”

“I do know a pirate,” winking to his grandfather.

“Good to hear, me’lad. Aaaaaa!”

“Aaaaaaaaaa!”

“Aaaaaaaaaa!”

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!...”

Crash watched the crew go to work bringing down the sails and tying down the rigging as tight as they could. He now understood somewhat where the phrase “a tight ship” most likely came from, then gathering from the data of the nature of these ships of wood, rope, and sail; the nature of their passage across somewhat changeable seas, seeing that it was beneficial at all times for these vessels. At the crash-testing facility it was a very common phrase. But his mind then went to swashbuckling...well...the word and its meaning. He could see how its definition fit pirating and the data made it clear that this one word was very much a pirate anthem.

His questioning chip then zapped him, strangely, as he now moved towards the mast. He was intent to tie himself down up here, as from data he accessed about pirates, they liked killing people and didn’t like people stowing away. He did not want to fall into their midst. He also calculated force five storms, ship

movement and his grip limits, and saw it as quite safe ...*strangely forgetting his lack of physical function. I suppose because there was no need of those functions when he was lost inside, so his main processor assumed there was no problem. Sill not sure. Anyway...* he was even a little excited to experience a storm from up here, watching it come with as much relish as many did below. He calculated that some would be in great fear and some in both excitement and fear. It was a test of them; 'testing' never a term lost on Crash. In that moment he came to understand more about the nature of humans. He could now see that he needed to experience the experience of humans more, then the data would be clearer, his understanding for better testing would grow, and the more truth he could seek. If an AI could be happy or fulfilled, Crash was certainly that right now.

The questioning chip had still been firing in the background as he experienced this growth in understanding, and its query now came to his full attention. It was about 'swash' and 'buckling', *of all things*. He replayed the argument over and over to find why his chip was so intent on it. It was not long before the answers became clear, as it was in the storm that he came to *experience* the powerful swash of the sea, and the full nature of the buckling of the ship. But it was when the *greatest* strain was on the ship that he really saw them. It held together because the ship *itself* was swash *and* buckled; it was flexible *and* structurally strong. It needed both, and one in good relation to the other, or it would fail, and flail, most certainly.

The most impressive thing to Crash was how the men went about their work with real precision. They too, certainly had *both* swash and buckle as they did. He

had never seen such free rolling flexibility and precision in humans. It did not compute, but it was *the truth*. How could that be? Then it dawned on him. It was that they worked against the chaos of the sea and the storm. Humans were certainly seemingly erratic, but they also seemed capable of such order and cohesion. Again, they made what seemed to be dichotomous, simply not so. This rabble became *one force* in fighting the ferocity of the great storm, in all their *individual* natures. They were one with the ship; their anger changed to courage as they dug deep to remain alive. *Alive*.

"CRASH!" called out Benny, from the other side of the street.

"Do you know this guy?" asked the man, who had come to the robot's aid.

"Yes, I do."

"Great! I was already late when I nearly killed him. I have to go, if you're good to look after him."

"Sure," agreed Benny.

"Well, my friend, it seems that you are an accident waiting to happen."

Crash didn't like that at all. It was his duty to crash things; but that he should be the cause of one was so contrary to his programming that he took time to compute how he should make his way forward from here. He had to seek out his creator and more truth by it, but he had to take stock of his functional reality. He was flawed and the only way forward was to accept that as his new baseline.

...It was not that he hoped to become more functional, as the power of hope was not available to him. That's a human power.

"Crash doesn't have hope? Why is he seeking out the truth? Why is he taking stock of his functioning?"

"Well Sal, we have it. Or at least it is available to us in what measure we allow it, but Crash was AI. His functioning was made to be efficient and purposeful, even learning, but it was programming, just like in an animal. It was locked into a reality that mimicked hope, but the programming was command based. Just as an animal can't help responding to stimuli as it did, so too Crash."

"Crash is people to me."

"Yes, Emma. He is to me too, on some level."

"Me too!"

"Okay then, let's get back to our friend..."

"It seems that the changes and chances of life have been protecting you so far, Crash," commented Benny. "You need to rebalance if you can, or you won't make it to your creator."

"I'm just...lucky to be alive," said Crash.

This was a running joke at the crash-testing facility, and it came out automatically.

"You are not alive, my friend. You are somewhat operational and strangely functional."

"Strangely functional? Yes, much of my reality has changed due to my damage. Some has increased in function."

"It might be so, and it might just seem so. Seeking your home might just be a failsafe in your programming for if you get lost, badly damaged, or both."

"No, I am *more* due to my damage."

"Well, the odds of that are impossibly high."

"I now *see* things, not just visual input. I can *hear*, not just respond to vibrational input."

"That data dump you accessed, and your damage may make it seem that way. Or maybe you *are* lucky to be *alive*, Crash buddy."

The AI sat there continuing to diagnose his malfunctions, and questioning his aliveness; this higher functioning.

IT WAS A GOOD DEAL OF TIME BEFORE CRASH REFOCUSED OUTWARDLY. He had come to the conclusion that a daily diagnosis was required, as his functioning was chaotic, even though it seemed to be improving; in some aspects, impossibly so. His active movement systems were different, they needed monitoring and resetting as he went.

He spent a good deal of time inside himself, but Benny had not left him, and that made his emotion chip react when his outward focus returned. Crash did not understand why the chip activated positively at his seeing Benny sitting beside him on the footpath. He simply remained silent while Benny went about his work and some calculations on his device. Another positive activation of his emotion chip attended this input, but that one was no mystery to Crash. Calculations, force, vectors, direction, friction, mass, and balance were part of Crash's DNA, so he looked on, gathering what he could as this visitor to Earth did his thing.

Benny looked up, and then to Crash, saying, "I think it's general destabilisation, and it seems to be widespread negative intent drawing it. The comet seems to be coming to return equilibrium to the human system. Yet there is something else; maybe even not that important, but there is a hole in the maths."

Crash put his head to the side a little; this action itself presenting a question.

...I like it when Crash does that."

"Yes, Sally. It is lovely. It was a quick response mechanism put in his programming to denote that he needed more input. Humans respond more easily to body language..."

"Well," began Benny, in response to Crash's head tilt, "the human world has deeper aspects. It has its own *kingdom*, if you like. Part of its energetic reality is dark and chaotic, and it seems to be intensifying. That isn't unusual in times of great change, and of course the light energy of renewal is slowly rising to equal its intensity, but because of the general apathy, and the necessity of change, the dark comet is being drawn here."

"Surely it can be circumvented."

"Only by a groundswell change it seems; only by a general change of heart."

"That would not be possible," stated Crash, beginning to calculate risk rates for such a wide-ranging surgical effort.

Benny laughed and told Crash to look up the data on the phrase 'change of heart', which he did with some more head tilting, while Benny added some input for him.

"Human's hearts move them. What their hearts hold as important and true is what changes the flows and mixes in the underlying collective human energetic field. Hate, fear, judgement, superiority, or even holding on to some untruth, creates a negative influence on the field. Love, compassion, justice, honesty and the like create a positive influence on it. This deeper field and outer society affect one another, and when life is seen more so as only physical, then dark forces rise to ascendancy. Only humans can affect this field. Only what their hearts love and hold, and only what light and love their hearts allow into the human system, changes its mix."

"How do you know of such human sayings? How do you know about humans?"

"Oh, I have my work, and my data, Crash. I am a bit a little like you in that way, and I have to prepare to fit in wherever I go. There are many worlds of beings like humans. They are the fruits of creation."

"So, the balance of life in the continuum is in their hearts. That would be chaotic and changeable from the data, and from my experience of humans."

"It can be, but the whole energetic field is learning over time; it ebbs and flows, and the tides move in and out, but like all these aware creatures, the universe over, cultural and historical learning grow, and the child necessarily becomes an adult. It is inevitable, but like the beauty of the moods of the sea, it is a process in which each individual heart can learn too.

The journey of these races of beings can be dangerous, but the prize always awaits them. There is no getting past the challenge of life for a human. There is only each day, meeting storm and enjoying the sun, living in the bright day and the dark night, in the process of life and learning."

"I do not understand."

"What, Crash?"

"If the system inevitably moves forward then why is the dark comet required?"

"That is beyond my pay grade, and beyond my ability it seems. I do my work and balance things that can be brought into equilibrium; things that *can* be moderated. It seems to me that the extremes and waves within the sea of the collective human heart are drawing this body here. It is certainly an imbalance that is not mine to change. That is the work of humanity and a higher power."

"So, you cannot keep the humans safe?"

"Neither can you if they don't want to be. If they do not want to see, that, in people, in beauty, in connection, in constructive purpose, and in humility, lies an adult future; that therein lies the peace and nurture of the people of this planet. If they disregard the lessons of their history, if they will not diligently seek true knowledge, if they will not accept the remedy and understanding brought by the True Physician, if they will not see, then life *will* indeed inform them."

"But..."

"Life is more essentially about learning, as humans are eternal in essence. It is not about physical safety alone, in the end, it is about the education of souls and a continually evolving civilization; an ever-evolving garden. Consequence must come. Lessons must be learned. Challenges must be met. Ignorance must be fought. Character nurtured, and responsibilities taken up. Equilibrium and moderation need to be purposefully brought to be, certainly not through crazy extremes of emotion, or fear of difference, or taking sides in ideological wars."

...I don't understand all that, Grandpa."

"Sure, honey. Maybe we can stop for tonight. We can talk about these things another time, or maybe you will have to wait to understand these things when you're older, Emma. Just enjoy the story, and we can get back to Crash's story another night."

"Goodnight, Grandpa."

"Goodnight"

"Sweet dreams, kids."

“Sweet dreams, Grandpa.”

“Thanks, Sally.”

“Sweet dreams.”

“Thanks, Tom.”

The Highway

When Crash had gathered himself *...well...rerouted his functional balance systems again through previous experiential feedback...* he stood up. He assured Benny that he was okay *...actually...functional enough...* to continue his search, so the alien could continue his investigation.

...“You keep using Crash’s human-words, Grandpa.”

“Yes, they’re programmed in, eh, Tom. Anyway... Our AI friend thought that he should not hold Benny back from his work, because he computed that there was at least a small percentage possibility that he may find something that may avert the comet and the destruction it would bring. They parted ways, and Crash walked the streets of the city in a far less erratic way. He was glad for his new balance as it allowed him hope.

Not that Crash saw it as hope, and it was indeed not hope itself, as no matter how much he could feel things in his own way, hope was a human power. But indeed, there was increased drive that rose from this better functioning; even though there were still moments when he fell as he walked the streets or stumbled here and there. But he recovered his balance, or got up, quickly, reworking his functioning, and continuing on. For Crash this was functional resetting, whereas for humans, in life, it is the power of reflection that allows us to learn and reset our balance and direction. In any case, he walked on in search of more answers. *Answers?* his questioning chip fired at him, just as he turned a corner into an alleyway, realising that it was *answers* that had drawn him on since leaving the facility; even in his search for his creator.

Immediately he turned into the alley he saw Bob swinging a long piece of timber. It was a piece of two by four hardwood, and it hit Crash square between the eyes before he could respond. The *question* about *answers*, his keeping his balance, as well as slowed reflexes with his damage, had delayed his response time. The fact that his danger diode was now a joy diode had also disallowed the quicker reaction available to him. He hit the pavement and looked up to see Bob standing over him. He knew he was in trouble as his lights went out. The last computation in the robot's main processor was that he needed to increase his circumspection functioning with his now much slower danger reaction ability.

...Poor Crash."

"Yes Sally. Poor Crash. But that's not the end of the story..."

Vehicles

The traffic was at a complete standstill. Crash got a good view of it from the sky high above, as he now, unnaturally slowly, fell towards the ground. It stretched out almost forever along great straights and snaked over mountain ranges far into the distance, both east and west; even beyond Crash's visual ability, which reminded him of the strange nature of the human continuum.

Some of the people were in their vehicles. Some walked around between them, with a few lying back on the hoods of their cars. The vehicles were of all kinds; cars, SUV's, body trucks, semi-trailers, and motorbikes. Crash knew quite a lot about motorbikes from his work at the facility. He knew that so many of them crashed because they snaked through traffic that was at a standstill, moving slowly, or even going at speed, but even the motorbikes here were stationary.

Because of the slow rate of his fall, and the fact that even the motorbikes were stationery, Crash's questioning chip was firing at full tilt. He still could not differentiate the real world from this inner one, as input was input to him, so his experience was singular.

...He can't tell?"

"No, Sall'. He's not like us. We know when we are imagining or dreaming, we know when we are seeing inside or seeing in the real world. It is a human quality."

"Cool!"

"Very cool, Tom..."

Crash landed in a wide field beside the highway and began to make his way to toward it. A group of people hanging around a large four-wheel drive vehicle, which had raised suspension, drew great interest in the AI as he walked toward them. They seemed surprised, amazed, or confused. Crash knew that they had not seen him land, so it was not *that* which was bringing on this reaction. His questioning chip chirped away inside him as he came up to them.

"Where the hell did you come from?"

This question confused the robot because he had no answer. His last memory before his decent to this place was seeing Bob standing over him, but he did realise that he now had full function here. Maybe Bob fixed him? But why would he fix him after hitting him? The human continuum was a strange and wonderful place that he could not compute, now especially so, with the changes in gravitational force here. He still had no idea that input was not input; still assuming that it was all outer experience. His chip settled as he came to the only possible conclusion. He had been repaired by someone while his memory circuits were offline.

The group of eight souls were blind to anywhere beyond the verge it seemed. To them Crash had just appeared out of nowhere.

"Where the hell did you come from?" again questioned a rather tall and well-built man.

"Give him a chance to answer," commented another man, with a slighter frame and appearance.

A button on the larger man suddenly glowed and he pushed a button on the other man, and said, "Oh, that's right. Keep it all *feel good*. We can't have anyone getting upset, *can we!*"

The words or the button, Crash was not sure which, created an over-reaction in the smaller man. As he had looked down, gone red, and it looked like he wanted to explode, but held back the energy creating a surge inside of him. Crash knew that such energy surges, held within any system, would create overload dysfunction, and cause other problems with other functions if it happened continually.

Crash had not noticed the buttons until now. All of them had clothes buttons in strange places on their apparel. They were all of varied sizes, and while one lady had just one large one, most had a few. The one poor fellow who had stood up for Crash had quite a few. A feeling of sadness came to Crash seeing a man with that many buttons. Well, it was not sadness, but he knew that whatever this man's functional core command was, it would be hard for him to fulfil his purpose with

that many random behavioural commands. It seemed that all these humans were a little dysfunctional.

"Let's just appreciate that we have someone new to talk to," suggested the smaller man, when he finally looked up. He also made sure that he could stop anyone else hitting any more of his buttons by covering them with the moving guard of a boxer, or maybe more so, the blocks of a martial arts expert. It seemed to Crash that he was well practised due to the way he moved.

"I've got buttons on my dress."

"Yes, you have, Emma. But these are other kinds of buttons. People have troubles in their lives, and they build defences around things that hurt them inside. We can also have beliefs about ourselves, or life, which makes us vulnerable to the words of others. This can make us react badly, or sadly, sometimes. People have to see what is happening inside them and lose these buttons."

"Mum doesn't like me losing buttons."

"I'm sure she wouldn't care about you these kinds of buttons..."

"Let's just be happy with the abundance of life bringing him here," the smaller man then added to his request, as he turned to his side to definitely cover all his buttons.

"Life's hard, and then you die," then propounded the larger man, very angrily.

It seemed to Crash that this too was a guard action, a defence to some dysfunctional programming inside the larger man, even *though* it was said with great surety.

"Oh, for *crying out loud* you two; does it have to be like this *again* today?" pleaded a lady confidently, who was sitting back easily on the bonnet of her red sports car.

A button on each of the two men clicked with her comment, even without the lady touching them. The smaller man was wondering how she got through his moves and the larger man just shot back in exasperation, "*Well, where the hell, did he come from?*"

They then looked at Crash, now all expecting an answer.

"I came from over there," answered Crash, pointing out beyond the verge.

This confused them even more. A few odd looks were then shared between them, and some whispering grew into a conversation about how Crash must be a bit nuts. Not that they agreed on the *reason* that he was nuts, as each definitely had their own theory, and they then argued for quite a long time about it. They did not even ask him what might have made him crazy; or seek any kind of knowledge about Crash or his experience beyond the verge at all.

There was a lot of button-pushing going on, and as the argument rose in intensity, it seemed that it all became about the buttons; the pushing of them, and the defensive or angry reactions from them being pushed. There were also currents of fear and ego flowing within the argument as the group turned into a crazed

rabble. Crash couldn't help but see the irony of them arguing about his sanity in such a psychologically dysfunctional way. Of course, this AI robot did not know irony, but he could see how the data from this experience had strangely folded back on itself.

Suddenly a series of horn honks to the rear of this group on the road started up. The argument was immediately forgotten as the smaller man called out, "We're moving!"

It seemed that this highway was not at a *complete* standstill, as they all now raced to the driver's seats of their vehicles. The confident lady in the red sports car called out to Crash to get in. He raced around and got in; ready to go with them. He certainly wanted to fill in one gap in his data on where this highway went. He went to ask the lady as he closed the door, but got shushed, as she was very intent on the road ahead and did not want to lose concentration as she revved her, sweet-sounding, sports engine to warm it up. The bigger man loved it when she did that, revving his huge four-wheel drive motor a few times himself. The small man was very uncomfortable with all this. He was embarrassed for his small group as he caught the leer of an old lady behind him, in his rear vision mirror.

The rest of the group did it now too, strangely, making the smaller man sink lower in his seat so he didn't have to endure the disgust. The big four-wheel drive finally began to inch forward...well one inch...and stopped. The others did the same. And that was that.

They all got out of their vehicles quite happy about the movement, somehow, not at all frustrated that it should be such a small advance along the road. There

were relieved faces and a couple of high fives as they came together. They were all smiling when the smaller man noticed the new chum again; the crazy one who wandered into the group *way back* down the road. There was a question on his face; a very worrying one.

The lady from the sports car answered the unspoken question of that soul, saying, "He came along with me, *silly*." This was to explain why Crash was still with them after they had travelled so far.

"Oh. Of course. I don't know what I was thinking." The man looked a little confused still, and added, "Quite *strange* really."

...Hahaha. But they only travelled an inch."

"Yes, Tom. Such is human perception sometimes, and with some things..."

This confused Crash no end. This perception was not backed up in the data, or his experience. The perception of these souls was not at all evidenced, even in the seemingly altered reality about them, or compatible with the data on human behaviour in traffic jams. They should have been frustrated, but they were definitely elated, and he certainly knew that he did not have to be in one of the cars to still be one inch up the highway.

The human continuum was a confusing place, even with consideration their obvious perceptive dysfunction. He did not judge them, as this is a human trait, and as he was always learning. Humility was built into his programming as the lady on the scaffold had mentioned...well...not humility, more a command to simply gather more data if there was any anomalous experience. The laws of physics, that

he knew so intimately, did not seem to exist in all parts of the human continuum, so there was much to learn.

The small group of souls had seemed to come together again, and beyond the shared misperception of the distance they had travelled, he noticed that they all only talked about themselves and their own experience of it. There was good deal of dishonesty and self-interest evident in their conversation. It did not compute, as such experiential feedback was flawed and could produce nothing but more dysfunction. They all seemed to be backing up each other's experience, including wild stories of wind in their hair, while still on the subject of themselves and their particular experience. They were all talking to themselves it seemed to Crash, yet still in conversation.

The bigger man then looked to Crash. "That little red beast *flies*, eh," he commented, as he gave Crash the old elbow nudge to the ribs, and a wink. This comment too was about him and his obvious attraction to the red sports car's owner.

"It certainly covered the distance quite quickly," said Crash, wanting to be respectful to these humans. This was a respectfulness command processor that was back online in him; a processor that had powered up in conjunction with the old programming in his original change back in the crash-test facility.

"Yep, certainly faster than my old beast. But my machine can go where none of these can."

"Why don't you take it out there, or up the verge, and beat the traffic?"

"I like you, fella, but there *is no, out there*, and there is no *beating the traffic*. You sound like one of those idiots who fly over occasionally. They think they're special with all their '*Love is something you do, not something you find*' crap."

"I would have to think about that."

"I don't. I've found my love, *but she doesn't even know I'm alive*."

"Who?" asked Crash, confused at the sudden change of subject.

"*Who?* Don't be *ridiculous*. *Her!* Over there. I would give *anything* to ride with her just once."

"Maybe I can drive your vehicle next time and you can get a lift with her," offered Crash.

"Nobody touches my truck, fella!"

"I just calculated that as a solution for you."

The man liked the '*for you*' part, so he settled down and went back to his vehicle. He sat there staring off into space for a long time, while the others, now back in their vehicles, were sleeping, listening to music, or staring into their phones.

It was some time before they got out of their machines again. It was some new sounds that roused them; the sound of metal chains clinking, and the sound of the hooves of a four-legged animal on the gravel of the verge. This creature certainly *lived on the edge*, to them, walking on the verge like he did.

"It's Lovegrass!" called out a lady very excitedly, and the others all just looked *coolly* at her. She went red, which was even *more* uncool, as she realised just *how* uncool she had been. She had been *so obvious*. Being uncool brought with it a heavy social cost here on the highway, especially with '*cool himself*' now gracing them with his company.

"Hey hip chicks and groovy guys," said a bull with no horns, as he wandered up to the group along the side of the road. He wore a Hawaiian shirt and *very current* sporty hat, with a couple of large metal chains around his neck that hung low to the ground. One had a large peace sign hanging off it; the tops of his front hoofs occasionally kicking it along. But he was *sooo cool* that he didn't even care.

Each person in the group were now in cool stances of various kinds, leaning on their vehicles, or chilling to easy tunes with their drivers' doors open. After all, Lovegrass was always drawn to the coolest people. They were all trying really hard, with the exception of the lady in the red sports car. She was doing the 'confident ignore', while she took in all the admiration and envy in the eyes of those around her. It was a magnet to Lovegrass.

"Hey, baby."

"Oh, hey Lovegrass. Didn't see you there."

Lovegrass looked straight into her eyes with the clear, ultra-cool, unspoken message, 'Yes you did'.

She just swooned, as the others walked, no sauntered, on their coolest face towards the beast. Crash could not help but seek data on how humans could saunter on their face, even though the question *itself* did not compute.

...That's not possible, Grandpa."

"Oh, Sally, yes, we can. Humans can do all manner of things that are impossible because we were made by The Impossible. We have been given all manner of His creative ability, even if it is used in this sad fashion."

"The Impossible? You mean God."

"I mean The Uncreated. We will get to Him later on in the story. Anyway..."

They were just all so cool, as the great Lovegrass soaked in the underlying adulation. Crash could 'feel' things here so he could, in a sense, measure this, and while it seemed that they were drawing energy from Lovegrass, he was actually drawing life from them. Even though they felt great, their true life essence was being drained away and they were becoming less alive. It seemed that all this coolness allowed it. Crash even had to stop measuring, as the 'feeling' became more and more one of great loss; so much so, that even his own extraneous systems began to shut down.

Until now he had enjoyed the higher functioning, this feeling thing, but certainly not *this* terrible energy, this sad loss.

"He's so cool, eh. I wish *I* was that cool. Then I'd get some *respect* around here," commented the small man with the many buttons, to Crash.

"It is a lesser energy;" replied the AI honestly, "one that cannot sustain life."

"You're mad. You should see him drink *coffee*; all *sat back* in his *coolest* threads and just watching life go by."

"He's *untouchable*," added the sports car lady, still swooning.

"That is sad for humans, isn't it?" asked Crash. "Don't you need connection, love and warmth?"

The lady's face buckled into a terrible shape as she tried to come to grips with an inner truth rising strongly from inside her; it also fighting her need to be cool with the coolest. It was torturous to watch. It was like her face was at war with itself as it echoed a deeper battle within her. Eventually she succumbed to the impossible tension between these two intensifying forces within her and she screamed. Seeing the disdain in Lovegrass's face at her *crazy* lack of composure, she ran for the car, red faced and embarrassed.

The small man had slunk away, pretending not to have heard anything that he might have to battle so hard with; especially so he didn't end up looking so stupid in front of the cool cattle of the group. Crash's innocent comment had hurt him too, but he pushed it aside, or shoved it down inside, so he didn't have to feel it. He was even a little bit happy that she had fallen down so publicly, and he used that thought to ignore his own pain too. She had often been cruel to him, and he felt justified in this feeling good about her fall from favour. Crash now felt something else deeper in this situation. It was cowardice. There was fear in the

small man's actions; actually, in the lady's too, and really, in the actions of all those who praised the chilled-out bovine.

"Never seen *anything* like this guy, *I'll bet*," commented the large man, to Crash, while looking to the beast, and seemingly oblivious to the feelings of the woman he believed he loved.

"He is bovine. Not human. Why do you want to be that which is lesser?"

"Hey. Steady up with the judgement, bro. No need to get all bigoted on the Grass-man."

"It's not bigotry. It's reality."

"*Your* reality, *dweeble-man*. Not mine."

"No. It is reality."

"*He's* human *too*."

"He is not."

"Have you ever come across a bull that could talk?"

"He is the first bull I have come across, but yes, it would seem that it is beyond a bovine's station to use language."

Again, Crash was stumped about the complexity of the human continuum, as he saw Lovegrass coming over.

Lovegrass ignored the bigger man, and asked Crash, "What's your *label*, cool guy?"

"It's Crash."

"*Great* callsign, man! *Love* it!"

The larger man was not happy with the cool bovine's attention on the crazy guy. He was about to warn Lovegrass, when the coolest of the cool, said to Crash, "Wander with me, Crash-man."

It was all that the big man could do to hold back the rage. It took all the cool he could muster to hold back his envy of Crash; that the Coolest would want to wander with some crazy dude, not him.

Crash, being a robot, was naturally cool, he was not overly emotional or taken by fashion, and *The Grass* was impressed. Well, he also wanted to impress this fellow who did not seem as attentive as he might be to his *obvious* charisma. In any case, Crash did wander with the famous Lovegrass as he sauntered through the vehicles with great ease. All the while, he schooled Crash on 'cool'; what and who was cool, what and who was not; also, why. The Grass was *deep* man. He had a *great* face for that. Like, *really good*.

He sauntered and cooled his way for a good while with Crash in tow. He gave his cool out very copiously as they went, and people loved it. "I give them reason to carry on here. Give them a little joy; a little love; a little of *me*."

"I see that they like it, but maybe they need to perceive better and get this highway flowing again."

"Hey! That is *not cool*, Crash-man. *Not cool!* They need *me* man. They need *me*."

With that he turned his backend towards Crash and wandered back down the line of traffic again.

A sadness, for the human trapped in the beast, and the loss in these people stuck here on what was designed to allow flow, seemed to fill the air.

...Can Crash feel that?"

"No. Maybe. He could feel truths, I believe, and his emotion chip allowed him some understanding and mimicked function. Maybe he gathered a sense of such things from physical emotions apparent in people's body language. He had been given that function. But now thinking back, the sadness was definitely my feeling when Crash recounted this part of his story to me. Just me adding to the story as we do sometimes, He talked more of the undercurrent of fear, on reflection."

"Why was fear a big thing there?"

"I think life will help you understand that in time, Sal. But with humans, fear doesn't save you, it destroys you, and worry about what may come just destroys your peace of mind. These negative feelings disallow moderate thought and sure action. Crash theorised that they wanted to be seen as something, more than they wanted real happiness. It separated them, and people sharing fewer cars might have got that highway moving a lot better. Being constantly afraid, and so extremely individual, debilitates people and takes away hope."

"I'm afraid of snakes!"

"Sure. Me too. Some things are good to be afraid of, but people are too afraid of life and its struggles, when struggle is a natural part of it. Ease and having our egos stroked is not life."

Life is a mixed bag, so we need to be hopeful and take on its challenges. That way we become more and don't get caught up in the traffic...

Crash was questioning why these people didn't just get out of their cars and walk. It would be faster, and the exercise would be good for their musculature. He realised *...computed...* that they loved their cars more than the ability to move, and in that, the futility of their programming became fully apparent in his main hard drive.

He was processing all this when a man came over to him. He had gotten out of a small combi van, after watching Lovegrass turn his back end on Crash. He was smiling wide, and he immediately made it clear to Crash that such creatures were bad for people.

"So, you see the dysfunction and fear here?"

"Yes, they are lost here in the traffic."

"But you are in it too."

"Oh, it just looks like that. The Return will lift us *good ones* up and free us from the traffic. Those who *believe* will be saved and God will destroy the wicked. With less of us then returned to the highway, we will fly along again. Less traffic."

"What about the others?"

"They just want their things, and to be seen to be something or other. But it's us believers who will be saved."

Computing that the man was religious, he accessed data on the Return, gathering the core Writings of this religion as he did. From this, Crash asked, "Aren't you called to love?"

The man didn't like that at all and a button over his heart pushed in deep, which Crash knew would restrict its flow dangerously, from his crash-testing experience.

"You are one of them!" he screamed. "Get thee behind me Satan!" he pronounced, and he too turned his back on Crash, shouting to the cars and the burdened faces of those around him on the highway, "You're all going to burn in your loss. The only way is to believe in the Return. Cast you're eyes upward," he finished, but the man only looked toward his combi. Not up at all.

It also seemed to Crash that those around this small van were quite over his pontifications, as the man returned to his driver's seat and sat there waiting. This man too, was stuck in the traffic. He too, was blind to the wide expanse beyond the verge, it seemed to Crash. He too, would not get out of his car and walk. The AI could only wonder at the things that slowed the flow of the traffic, the flow of life, here, when a flying vehicle stopped to hover above him.

A rope ladder, with wooden rods for rungs, dropped down in front of him and he grabbed for it. As to him, it was a human request; to be obeyed as any voiced request would be. As he gathered full hold, and had his feet firm on the bottom rung, he was lifted up.

The Impossible

"Hello, Crash. I am Faezeh," said a lady, introducing herself while driving the flying car.

"Hello, Faezeh."

"We have been watching you."

"You have? Why did you pick *me* up when there are so many down there; all lost in a strange place?"

"Well, they have to want to. Everyone has received the invitation."

"All of them. That does not compute."

"There is a part of The Impossible, or His Light, in *all* of us. There are many reasons to deny this light within us, to deny the light of justice and human unity, and many reasons to ignore the Invitation. You see, we only truly have this one choice, to seek the truth or not, to choose our view that we are either essentially of light or of flesh."

"That is two choices."

They are one choice, and this choice's children are the choices of free will; to do what is loving or to do what is selfish."

"That is one choice," stated Crash, very sure of his computations this time.

"It is one choice, endlessly in almost all choices."

"Free will. The Creator's mystery."

"Yes."

"But they don't know they have a choice. They are even cut off from themselves down there. They do not have the data required."

"They don't care to know, as the dark has been long here, and even though the light of intellect has flared, it is just a sign that a Greater Light has already dawned. The Impossible sends a Mediator from age to age to remind us, re-energise us, and renew the order. He sets us on a new path, a continuing path, of transformation and evolution; just as the sun needs to rise in the dawn to sustain life."

"The sun does not rise in the dawn, it makes the dawn," observed Crash.

"*My, my.* So, it does."

"It would seem to my observation that they are driven by their nature, and much of a human's life path is set in their nature. It makes decisions for them even

if they do not know it. They seem not to be in charge of their life any more than I can step outside my programming.”

“We can rewrite our own ‘programming’, Crash. At least we can create positive and beneficial behaviours, and therefore outcomes, with any of the various foundational makeups we come here with. It is part of the challenge of life.”

“So, you can remake yourselves?”

“Yes, essentially. Even though, as I said, we do have individual inherited natures, and also innate measures in our souls that we come here with, as the system requires difference and also balance.”

“Swash and buckle,” commented Crash.

“I don’t understand that analogy, but The School needs to be challenging, even a little chaotic, yet still ordered, so the soul may grow. Our lives are written into fate in some sense by our makeup and circumstance; some even believe that every small thing in our lives is written. But it is also true that we hold our soul’s future in our own hands.”

“You are locked into pathways, but you can grow within?”

“It is impossible for us to know the full minutia of the nature and balance of all these things.”

“That seems inefficient.”

"It is perfect that it is so, because it is in the mystery and challenge of daily life that we may grow. In the striving for more knowledge and understanding that we are alive and can become more; rewrite ourselves more."

"Become more what?"

"Enlightened; more knowing and more loving; love and knowledge is what we are made of, and where we truly live," explained Faezeh.

Crash knew these terms and was quite at home with data, even though he understood that when humans talked about *knowledge*, it was often a wider, deeper, data, but also with humans, an experimental and intuitive place sometimes. Intuition too was yet to be fully defined in his hard drive, so the file was still open. The other thing, *love*, was a greater mystery to him. He understood that love kept humans safe and societies from falling into ruin, as it cemented the bonds between people and created order. Love was the unifying force in human culture, families, and marriages; the power that created peace between cultures. But he did not *know* love. He knew the energetic uptick brought on by his emotion chip when in the company of folk like Benny, but he knew love to be more than that, at least from the anecdotal data.

"How is human love differentiated from the love of an animal?"

"An animal's love is hierarchical and about survival."

"I have seen this in human love."

"We are dual creatures, animal and spiritual, so there will be various mixtures of these within people. Spiritual love is selfless, and the lack of it, or abundance of it, in our daily lives shows where humanity really is."

"Human love is mostly animal."

"Yes, I am afraid it is right now, but hopefully in time we will finally raise ourselves up. Such love though is not blameworthy, it is just that its measure and use they may make it so."

"They adore Lovegrass, so the vector seems to be downward still."

"We are well aware of the disintegration in the enduring heartbeat of humanity in favour of, and in the hungering for, emotional joy to feel alive. It is sad, but as things darken the world, the light will grow more apparent. The path of experimentation in a now youthful humanity has yet to run its course."

"How did *you* find The Impossible?"

"The Mediator showed me proof of His existence through His Words, His knowledge, and by His life. I can only know of Him through The Mediator. Mediators are of a greater station than mere humans."

"But you did not actually find The Impossible?"

"Can a rock find the joy of an astronaut looking back at our blue marble planet?"

"It would seem unlikely."

"I would say, *most absolutely*," argued Faezeh. "Then how can I even *imagine...the Uncreated?*"

"So, you have not seen Him?"

"I talk with Him and can know *of* Him, through His Names; The Fashioner, The Sustainer, The Merciful, The All-loving, and many other names. I have a connection with Him in prayer, and in the day to day. I feel His influence in my life in confirmations and in answered prayers. I have certitude of His existence and His Messenger. I find proof of Him all about me and in every small thing. I live as best I can according to the Guidance of the Messenger."

"The Mediator?"

"Yes."

The mystery of the human continuum deepened, but his open theory file was shoring up. Mystery is not a robot reality, and had he been human it would have driven him mad trying to compute it. The robot just took in the information, related it to the data and previous experience, and kept sorting it here and there. You see Crash did not need to know it all now. He just went about his business as his programming, and as his chaotic rewiring, bade him to.

...Crash is chill."

"Yes, Crash is chill, Tom. Something a spiritual outlook can grant us if we wish to nurture it."

"But he already has it, and he is supposed to be of a lesser station."

“He really doesn’t. He has no choice in the matter, and his ‘chill’ is not even a mimicked human reality. It is non-life.”

“Okay, sure. But I like to see Crash as more than that. I like Crash.”

“I like Crash too. His story means a great deal to me. But we have choices, and we may attach meaning to whatever we wish, because we are human...”

After some time in processing Crash came out, stating. “You will not find him in your lifespan. No one will find Him in their lifespan.”

“But we must seek Him in any case.”

Crash was lost as to the nature of such intent. It was impossible and therefore inefficient.

“It is an inefficient use of your lifespan. It is not useful.”

“But we still must seek Him.”

There was a blank response from Crash. Faezeh’s head then tilted a little as she realised that it was not just that this man was singularly intellectual, it was that he was mechanical. She then took a different tack. “May I offer you some data?”

“Certainly,” answered Crash, feeling a rise in power output from his emotion chip.

“In the *seeking* of The Impossible, so much is gained. Spiritual attainment is valuable in making more of this life, and in preparation for the one beyond. Spiritual nobility is the ground, the foundation, of any society. Human belief in a

higher power than our own creates order in the world and drives us to be more. It makes us more seekers of the truth, if our Faith has not been lost to superstition or the egos of the few, and if we use scientific method. True religion is not afraid of the truth, scientific or otherwise, it reenergizes purity of heart and encourages love and understanding.

Seeking Him in earnest brings out a deeper energy and unblocks the blood vessels of the human heart, bringing more love and caring to all its parts. No matter what, we still must seek Him, and know more of Him by what we find; the truths we uncover, the headway we make within, and the world we build around us, signs of our striving. His Knowledge allows the human system to develop and evolve. We believe science comes from our striving to understand, to reach towards the unknown, but all comes from Him. All emanates from God. He informs, sustains, and nurtures us. As the Earth is dead without the Sun that holds it in its orbit, so we need The Uncreated."

"There is much data to the contrary."

"That is the test, Crash. We make the one great choice of life, and so, our life will be, and so, the collective life will be. Reality *will* play out, no matter which way we choose, and how many choose one way or the other, so will we all find the truth come to us in the end."

Crash quickly correlated the two choices that were one choice, and the one choice that was many choices, with this one great choice. His superfast AI placed them together in their own file for now, within the larger file on humans, as he stated, yet questioned with a tilt of his head, "The proof of truth is in the future."

"We believe that the truth and wisdom of The Mediator will become as apparent as the sun. All truth is that way. It comes out in the end."

The AI crash-tester was very clear that disbelief was at play down on the highway. He had measured the despair and lack of movement there. He had seen the quiet moments of a good number of souls in their cars, seemingly alone in depression and anxiety. As he travelled with Lovegrass, he had seen a good deal of it. He sought definitions of these mental dysfunctions at the time, and he reviewed them now. There was plenty of data, but many differing answers, remedies, and therapies. So many in fact, that it was even hard for him to collate them.

"I wish for more data, even if *belief-bias* based, please," requested Crash.

It seemed the search for truth was beginning to override his main drive of keeping humans safe. He was aware that his main goal was shifting but these seemed to be too interlinked, and he could not narrow his search.

Faezeh smiled, answering, "Certainly, Crash."

"It seems there is a correlation between depression, anxiety, and addiction. There was a good deal of that down there; shared and hidden."

"Yes. To me, these are the animal needs telling us that there is a problem. Even the animal knows what it needs. The emotions are honest and will not be set aside. Most mental ill-health is long protracted emotional struggle."

"I would have concluded that they are thought based, sharing their synthesis in fearful thoughts."

"Yes. The origins can definitely be thought based, but also our life reality can be less than we need. These needs drive to be fulfilled in our actual life, while many fearful thoughts can create crippling anxiety for no good reason. The nature of some humans makes them more easily anxious, and it seems humans can think up endless ones where there are none. Anxiety *is* fear based; completely so, in any of all these.

Depression, on the other hand, is animal needs not being met in life. We need balance and good foundations at home, in work, and in our main group. The lack of good connection in all these is also at play, as humans need to belong. Our nature is gregarious, but the animal also needs feel safe, and these things need to be solid. Depression and anxiety are different yet rise from the same needs for safety. Anxiety and depression are expressions of age-old animal drives built into us so we can survive."

"But the correlation with addiction?"

"The fear of missing out, fear of not belonging, fear of not being accepted; core drives that were once useful for survival, but with drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes, even bad foods, these can lock a soul into an addiction. Societal pressure adds to it and the mass media playing with people's perceptions, as well as advertising making us feel we are missing out and telling humans what beautiful is. They have even turned fashion into an addiction for many."

"Primal drives."

"Yes, and while these drives can be owned and tamed through thought modification and spiritual understanding, so that the animal within us can be set at ease, in the end, a person's life needs to be fixed. Connection and active purpose, meaning and sharing, love and nurture, are required in one's life. There is so little of these down on the highway, and so much addiction. It is so sad, and it breaks my heart to watch them. They are my family and I only fly because I wish to help them to be happy."

"But it is their choice."

"The one great choice that affects all other choices," stated Faezeh, as she looked off into the distance in thought. "We are human, Crash. We are muscle and sinew and bone, we are emotion, we are love and spirit, and we ignore *all* of them at our peril. The balance of any human exists in understanding the lower nature, our particular nature, life's material requirements, the nature of connection, the power of purpose, the joy of creating, the seeking of truth, the upliftment of the spirit, and an abiding connection with The Impossible. We are *all* these things Crash, and all these mental emotional illnesses and addictions exist because we are unlettered in human nature and human life."

"Personal equilibrium is *impossible* to continually maintain from the data I have gathered in the human continuum."

"Yes. But life's challenges, like all else, are core to the perfection of the human experience."

"So, it is meant to be that way."

"Well, in a way, yes. We grow our spiritual muscles as we deal with them, and we gain more understanding of life. But it doesn't have to be as hard as we are making it by our ignorance; by our apathy, by our human folly. The animal seeks to be safe, and that is worthy, but it is a cruel master, who in the end cannot see to the needs of a human soul, or indeed a human world. We are more, Crash; much more, so no animal contentedness or equilibrium can suffice us. Even if we have enough of everything, we will die of meaninglessness, or walk as dead like those down there; simply coping."

"Coping is not the best strategy, but it is valid."

"No, Crash, it isn't. *Meaningful* purpose and connection intertwined are *all* that will suffice us. Humans need to face things, stand strong, weather storms, build good things for those they love, support each other, seek the best for their fellows, seek knowledge, sacrifice some, or we are not really *alive*, and depression, anxiety, and addiction will continue to spread."

"So, meaninglessness is oppressing the human continuum?"

"In essence, yes, and it just takes small acts to bring it forth in life; not even great heroes. Meaning is in acts of love and in seeking out more understanding. You see Crash, the more love is our intent, the more the animal in all of us would be safe. The animal in any ascendancy over our hearts and minds actually destroys our nurture and safety, as it is less intelligent and heartless. Can you imagine a world where people care about others more than themselves?"

Crash took some time seeing the ultimate stability and cohesion of such a system and therefore its quite endless potential.

“It would be very efficient.”

She laughed. “Yes, it would, Crash. But more so, a world led by that which is higher in us creates meaning, adds even more to our sense of wellbeing, and celebrates in the joy of creating of a unified and ever-advancing civilisation.”

There was much here for Crash to compute and a good deal of data to sift through to see if a correlation to it existed in all Faezeh’s words. A human may have been inspired by her words, but an AI like Crash sought the data and processed it.

...Inspiration and seeking the data both valuable of course.”

“Data. Data. Data!”

“Tom’s a robot, Grandpa.”

“Yes. It seems so, Em.”

CRASH HAD SPENT SOME TIME WITH FAEZEH; the flying car making its way to mountains over the horizon as they had talked. There in a high valley was a city of lights. Just as he saw it, an impossibly bright light threw his visual sensors into disarray. He asked Faezeh what the light was, but no answer came, and he could not gather any contrast. His input was just white, when something now came to his vibrational sensors.

It was the voice of an old man. He talked in the accent of an American Indian. Crash could also hear the intent of this older man. He was a proud but humble Lakota Sioux man, but he did not want to separate himself from the young Hopi woman by talking of his tribal heritage. He wanted to share what he had come to know with this younger soul and wanted no pride to get in the way of what he was to give. It was a gift. It was to be given. There was no self-interest, otherwise there was no honour in it.

He talked of gaining skills and rebuilding their communities. He talked of them taking charge of their future through learning simple skills; planting new seeds and tending new shoots that would build over time to become great trees. He then talked about the people learning to live once more in the breezes of spirit, explaining the power of higher human attitudes and their part in building a hopeful culture. He said that the time of mourning had to end if their communities were to thrive, or more so, that true healing needed to come in the humility to learn and in effort to rebuild an evolving, growing, culture. That only in building by their *own hands* could they heal and rise again, and that only bonds of real love between the hearts of the people could power it.

"The foundation needs to be one of spirit, and one of heart, or it will not succeed. It needs to be one of reverence for the Great Spirit, as well as love for our Great Mother. No life can come, and no can be future written, without humility, respect, and thanks before the Life Forces which spawned us and sustain us. *The people* have to transform, and so, transform their communities. No one has done, or *can* do it, for us.

We must build. We must build *ourselves* too. We must build our places, so our children do not want to leave or fall to hopelessness anymore. We must educate them so they may be the power source for our change. We need to give them skills, and nurture the Spirit in their hearts, so they may use the power of youth to help us build. It has to be ours, it has to be theirs.

All we need is the spirit within us. There is much within us. The Great Spirit made us with much. We disrespect him and we disrespect ourselves if we do not *stand*. To stand is good. To walk, to build our future is far more."

"These are lovely ideas, but how do we begin. How does it start?"

"It starts with you and me. It starts with small acts; small shoots. We are more powerful than you think."

"But how do we grow the skills we need?"

"All we need is within us. There are abilities within each of us, so we need gather those willing to stand and walk together. Much is already being done, and The Rainbow people will help us."

"Who?"

"The ones of no nation; the ones of all nations; the ones of one people who rebuild the spirit, but..." he held silence for a time before he repeated with strong surety, "...all we need is within us."

Crash now felt sand under his feet and the light dimmed enough for him to see where he was. There was no sign of the two souls whose conversation he had

overheard. But even though he had not seen them, or could no longer hear them, he could see the meaning in that conversation. In this, he finally realised, or at least his computations concluded, that his new ability to 'see', rather than just gather light spectrum input, was from the data. This experience and other anecdotal packets of data; the subjective experience of various humans, was flavouring...well...to Crash, allowing a separate perspective to be tested within other well based proven data he had downloaded.

Crash didn't have a conscience, or the experience to know what of this anecdotal data was valuable, or of dubious intent, but he did have a nobility drive within old the 'redundant' programming. Its interaction with the data, anecdotal and otherwise, seemed to sort things and widen his sense of his experiences.

...I'm sure he felt its activity earlier in his journey when he and the man had talked in a valley above The Great Mirror, and when he climbed the bamboo scaffolding. But to say what our robot friend computed, with all this, is really a mystery to us. I suppose all we can do is gather some idea from his story. Anyway...

He found himself a little bemused.

...He can't be bemused."

"Of course. No, he can't. Well, I suppose...

His questioning chip was going at full tilt trying to understand the full nature of what was happening, when it all seemed too much to compute, as the anecdotal data was so wide and deep. Eventually he computed the impossibility of such a computation, which settled his questioning chip, allowing his system to stop seeking

data. He would allow it to run in the background as he experienced more; as he went.

One idea though, one small packet of data, that he *had* gathered seemed to jump out at him. It was a quote from downloaded mass media he had accessed in the data dump that he had instinctively ...*if that's the right word for it in Crash's reality, or his intention at the time...* completed when he woke up back in the testing facility. He decided to gather from these words a little more understanding of humans and simply allow the 'feel' and 'see' to interact with his experience.

Fulfilment

The animal nature knows strain. The emotions charge out. This is good, as it is within the animal to live on and protect itself.

The spiritual nature knows no strain. The emotions charge out from the animal within us, but a deeper vision sees another view of what has come. This is good, as the challenged soul may grow.

To protect oneself and survive is reasonable, to enjoy good times too, but unless there is also higher meaning in life; in some understanding we gather as we go, or in some service to those around us, what are we but animals?

How can our hearts soar without giving out? How can we feel alive, as humans, by simply protecting ourselves?

*It is reasonable to be discerning of danger and wary of the malevolence of souls lost in the dark,
but if we are not giving out, any material happiness will be short lived.*

*There is a deeper and more sustained happiness available to us. Through the struggles of life, it
hopefully frees itself more and more, finding the joy in service to loved ones and others, and in
meaningful creative purpose of all kinds.*

*We are more than creatures of the ground, and while it is good to appreciate the great gifts of
material life, real and abiding happiness is only available in human meaning; in lives of love
and purpose.*

*While we need to be sustained physically, emotionally, and even intellectually, we are unhappy
because we look only to the material and to our animal self; when we need to look up more and
remember our human spirit as well.*

*Challenge is constant and ongoing through all our lives, as the animal is vulnerable to danger,
struggle, challenge, ill-health, boredom, manipulation, and the many other viper bites of
physical existence.*

*Meaning is certainly waiting within these challenges, and beyond them, but meaningful
connection and loving purpose sustains fulfilment. These two things, meaningful connection, and
loving purpose, are the springs of human happiness.*

These fulfil us through any acts large or small; acts of love. There is a great difference between small satisfactions of the animal nature and the fulfilment of our humanity.

As he came out of his exploration, he stood there staring at his footprints. He had wandered along the beach as he had gathered these words; computing understanding of their meaning in correlation with other data. His footsteps in the soft sand were strangely ahead of him, and lay there, as if he had been walking backwards. The only conclusions he could make was that he was walking backwards, or that he was erasing them as he walked forward. Neither of these seemed satisfactory, so he again sought human subjective experience in the data. But no matter how long Crash searched he could not find an understanding there.

...It was there, but no matter how much anecdotal data he could gather the understanding was not apparent to him."

"I don't get it either."

"Well, Tom, we can see many things by our previous experience or await the mystery of them to become clear to us. We can see things, but even then, the meaning can change as we experience more of life. Some things are just things to carry with you and maybe find more meaning in as you walk through this life."

"What do you think it means, Grandpa?"

“Like I said, darling, it’s subjective, and for you to see as you learn more of life. I can’t tell you, as it’s something to carry with you and explore. You see life is a mystery and while we need to seek the truth or meaning of things and even share our ideas, some things are simply for us to see as we see them. Subjective experience is relative, and much knowledge is even relative, for us humans.”

“So, Crash can’t ‘see’ that.”

“No. His programming is not enough, and while we have programming that our physical being and our soul come here with, we also have the ability to ‘see’ with deeper eyes.”

“But, what for, Grandpa?”

“Well, with understanding we can work our nature and our spiritual endowments toward more beneficial behaviour and outcomes. Like it is said, we should know ourselves, what leads to higher beauty, and what leads to sad destructive ways. It is rewriting in a sense, even when in certain aspects both our nature and our pathway in life seem to be set.”

“How do we know what’s beneficial and what is destructive?”

“Well, Tom, I am sure we know. I believe it is something we all know somehow, even from early in life. Free will is to choose what is beneficial or what is destructive, if our life path is set, or somewhat set. Sometimes though, we may misstep because we cannot see, but our responsibility is to turn when it becomes clear. Other than that, we have the Guidance of the Great Ones, education, experience, and the will to strive to become better humans; to use whatever we have been given to make the world a better place.”

CRASH WALKED FORWARD IN HIS FOOTSTEPS. Even stranger than his footsteps being only ahead of him, was that the beach was an island and each time he walked a lap of it there were always more footprints ahead of him, ones not there before. He kept on, but at each completion of a lap it was almost that he felt disheartened and confused. He was not able to fulfil his main purpose by walking around in circles, that's for sure, and he could not seem to find the data outcome *...or truth...* of this exercise; just more one more lap after another.

He did this for a very long time, finally seeing no reason to continue. It was a waste of power and wear and tear on his machinery, as he saw it. No matter how much he computed he could not see function in endless laps, and he could still only see the footsteps ahead.

Crash then looked up, and around, taking more account of what was around him, when a stone hit the side of his face. By the force, trajectory, and arc, it had been fired at him from just behind the tree line. Then another hit him, and another. A barrage then ensued, and he found that he had to seek out the source rather than turn from it as his programming would have normally suggested. It was a strange decision to him, but when he *had* decided, the most marvellous thing was that his footsteps now led to the tree line. Moving towards the flying rocks was certainly not optimum for good function, but the circling conundrum at least seemed to have been solved.

Crash headed towards the barrage, and the intensity increased. It seemed that his movement towards the source had made it so. He fought on through it to the other side of the tree line. But as he stepped through from the beach the

barrage stopped completely, and no source of the flying stones was apparent. It seemed that going towards the barrage had been the right action. The uncomputable human continuum kept on throwing new mysteries and realities at Crash, but he kept on. He did not need to *know*, as much as he needed to explore and learn; it now occurring to him that he may never know the human continuum, but at least he could learn as much as he could.

"How dare you set foot on my island. It's not yours. It's mine," came a voice from away, but Crash could not ascertain the direction.

"Who are you?"

"I'm *me*, you moron *tin* man!"

"I am made of a composite of materials. No tin at all."

"Think you're funny?! It's not about *you*. It's about *me*. This is *my* island, now *sod off!*"

"I do not know how to get off it."

"Well minding your own business might help, or just minding someone else's...*other than mine!*"

"Can you instruct me on the way off the island?"

"My island, my island, my island!" shouted a man as he came out of a stand of trees stamping his foot each time he said 'island'.

"It was not my intention to cause you harm. I am programmed not to cause harm and even keep you safe. I want to obey you, but I need data on the way off."

"Keep me safe! What a joke. You're a bloody tosser. That's for sure."

Crash searched the data for the word 'tossler' while clearly recalling that this man had done his fair share of tossing earlier on. The result of his search made it more likely that a derogatory name was this man's intended meaning. Humans were strange this way. Single words could mean many things and phrases even more confusing because human intent, education, culture, even current social conditions could change the meaning. It was quite confusing, but this word was very clear from the actions, other words, and body language of this particular human.

...He's being awful to Crash."

"Yes, Em'. People can be awful at times, for all kinds of not so nice reasons. Sometimes though, it's because they're just a bit lost or in difficult times, so best to check, or maybe leave them be."

"No wonder Crash is having such a hard time learning about humans."

"Sure, Sally. We're intricate and changeable creatures. But let's get back to the story..."

Our AI friend was thankfully not alarmed, or as reactive as a human may be in this situation. He was programmed to simply await some clear instruction when a human did not seem to compute.

The man went on with all kinds of barbs about machines in general, until he was so exhausted that he had to stop. He sat down and was catching his breath when Crash saw a light through the trees. He computed that going him towards the light would be of no harm to this human. The man was certainly not in a clear enough emotional state to give good instruction, so Crash followed his footprints toward the light. There *were* grasses and ground runners here, but also sand pathways through the trees, so he could see his footprints mostly. He followed them to a great clearing. The sun was high overhead, but the light was coming from an apparition.

It was Faezeh. She was beaming with light.

"Hello, Faezeh."

"We are told that a true lover yearns for tribulation."

Crash had heard and computed the meaning of this, for humans, before. He was unsure why he was being presented with it again here. His experience with the recent flood of anecdotal data set him well, to allow 'feel' and 'see' as he went, so he 'saw' to explore this human saying in the light of other experiences on this island.

Fae now spoke again, "Time, silence, and patience in trial are best as we await the inner gifts of understanding that must flow from them."

There was a silent pause for some time as Crash computed; now quite glad he had only sought correlation to these words in his experience here on the island.

All the data in the light of both statements would have meant far too much computing. He was also silent because he saw her words as a human command.

"I, me, my, mine; these are not words of the soul, or of great value in its learning."

"In hardship there is learning for humans," stated Crash, gathering some of the intent of these words.

"I am healed when I return to the spirit, I may see there, even if the outward persists; yet also, the outward circumstance, or physical ailment, may be remedied by my return to the spirit."

"Hardship allows the opportunity of inner sight, and gathering soul-data?"

"The first birth is the pathway to the second birth."

Crash was not understanding *all* these words, but did gather that the deeper human reality was of greater importance and function; to Fae, at least. He now spread his exploration to the wider data, to many others; those who believed in this second life.

Fae's words and his experience on this island, had created a new, very strong, more focused, learning tool for understanding the human continuum, and it had been gathered into his artificial intelligence. He had not rewritten himself, his program had. His head tilted to the side as he now used this new *data sifting tool*. He had learned that he could use, *his own* experience and human insight together to better sift data *...to understand...* He could allow 'feel', 'see', 'hear', but, now also, 'act' to compute with greater efficiency. He had computed that actions were the

'revealer' of words in the human reality. Because he was artificially intelligent, he could learn, just as he had been doing of course, but he could also enhance his processes, and this was a clear upgrade.

...Basically, he had taken time to listen to all that which issued from the apparition. He had sought understanding of it in the smaller construct of the island first, and in his own experience. The wider scope could then be better appreciated, and more salient data retrieved for computation. This would be a new operating procedure in this strange human reality. A good tool for us too, especially if we tend to overthink things; and of course, doing, acting, reveals much more understanding more easily; life is an active school. Anyway...

After he computed, he looked at Fae, still unaware that she was not real, input being input, and asked a question to clarify that his search of the data was useful and efficient, "How are you healed if you are not?"

"I am humble when I am in hardship, when there is very little, when I am sick. Humility is happiness for the soul, and within it I may learn. I would rather be humble and learn, than have my health and remain ignorant. The true lover knows these things."

"I understand now."

"You have known of it, even be it in a very different fashion. You are more, from what has befallen you; or is it, *really*, that something has '*befallen*' you? You are raised in function, even if not in state. It would seem to me that the gifts you receive in this exploration must be shared. Your story may be valuable."

...That's why it was even more important for Crash to find me. He had to tell his story; download all his learning."

"You were his creator."

"Most definitely; but his journey, well, that was the hand of God to me."

"But he was a robot."

"To me, he was more than my creation, and even if he was an accident, how could that not be a form of grace. How could a deeper hand not be involved?"

"What do you mean, Grandpa?"

"Well, sometimes my work was like that. An accident, or a sudden, even unrelated, inspiration creating something I could not have hoped to create the second before."

"But you're a scientist."

"Of course. Scientific method and mechanics are at the core of my work. Cause and effect realities are essential, but artificial intelligence work is also a creative art."

"So, he wasn't made from science?"

"He was science and accident, scientifically speaking. But dysfunction or disintegration usually create more of themselves very quickly in complex mechanical things. Even his programming was mechanical when seen in its true light. We definitely learned from Crash, and we made better AI systems because of him, but we could not recreate his level of awareness after that. It was all very impossible."

“I love Crash, grandpa. He’s people to me.”

*“I love his story, Em, and I loved building him. I saw him as my triumph for many years.
But as I have aged, I believe that even my part in this was like Crash’s footprints on the sand.”*

“It was always going to happen?”

“Maybe. Feels like that. I wish I really knew, Sal. Us scientists do like to know.”

“The hand of God?”

*“Maybe, Tom. Still not really sure what I think, but I definitely feel humbled and
honoured to have been part of it all.”*

Detours

CRASH WOKE IN A WOODEN GARDEN SHED. There was a long lump of wood on the ground in front of him with quite a wide dent on one side. The AI measured it, calculating that it was the same dimensions as his head; giving some leeway for the particular structural resistance of this type of hardwood; and bounce back, of course.

In any case, Crash knew that Bob had brought him here. He now knew Bob was definitely not a 'good' human, and at the very least, a destructive one. He seemed intent on chaos, so our super reinforced friend now made quick work of the shed door and started to run. It was not that Crash understood malevolence, but he knew chaos from his crash-testing and the most likely outcome if he were to stay there.

...The outcome is usually the same with these two forces as they are akin and usually feed on each other...

His GPS kicked in again after a few blocks, and he now realised that he had been detoured by over three hundred miles. Bob had certainly been determined in

his effort to hide Crash. Then one knee servomechanism dropped gravitational resistance just before it should have, and he hit the ground. To his programming, it had been some time now since his trouble with balance and walking. It seemed that it was now back. Strange as it may still seem, Crash was still not really aware of the shifts between his inner and outer experience. The human continuum was one reality to him; and maybe it is.

He picked himself up again, and continued on; this time at a walk, while working on his on his motor functions. Crash did not wonder at his falling down as we might. It was simply something to be corrected. He did not have a heart and was never overcome with emotion as he struggled. One might think that this is a good thing, but not always. While we can struggle with our lesser emotions, they can show us things that need to be put right in our own programming. The heart too is a mighty instrument that humans lost faith in as they became more intellectually able. The mind seemed to have taken precedence over all else, as the powers of human intellect exploded over recent centuries and seemed not about to abate; its curve shooting through the roof of seeming possibility.

The mind had been a shining light, as well it is, but the heart had been sorely disregarded. The mind is a great tool to bring what '*is not*' into reality. It is good in its quality of questioning, just as it was in Crash, but the heart can get more quickly to places inside us and bring forth far greater life and civilisation than the mind alone. The two qualities of heart and soul leading humans and humanity, leading minds, bring a life that mere intellect cannot.

...What do you mean, Grandpa?"

“Yeah, and what do you mean Crash doesn’t have a heart?”

“The heart is the place where, if we listen, can feel our own truth; our own true calling. One needs to ask the questions of life with the mind, but we best answer with the heart. One must feel alive in feeling what the heart is drawn to, what gives it wings, or what is best in a situation, not let the mind come over the top of our inner knowing and wash away its divining power for what is best, or what path we need to follow. It is an old adage that we need to follow our heart, but it will stand forever in human reality as the voice to listen to.”

“The heart speaks?”

“Yes, if you listen to it and to what it finds truth and joy in. The mind is mighty, and it can bring the wisdom of the heart into reality. It can ask the questions of who we are and what we should do in the future, but the heart must answer. An honest heart talks with a feeling of joy that is driven by the unique makeup of each of us. It sees; what we love and what is good. It and the quiet listening soul know what is good, what is just, while the questioning mind and the lower nature can drive us away from the truth of ourselves and life.”

“So, we shouldn’t think?”

“Of course, we should. Each has its place. But unless we feel what lifts our hearts, we will walk the path to lesser places; to other places; or worse, to sad places and a sad life. Even not being aware of a deep joy for something that your individual heart holds is a loss. Feel your way with the inner things. Close the mind and listen to your heart. There are many detours of the mind, and of emotional attachments, which are unworthy of us.”

“Detours?”

“Many wonder why they can’t find happiness, when it exists in love for each other and our true heart’s desire to share what our being was naturally created to give. The noise of the world, our minds, and the chattering of our animal nature can divert us from our high destiny and a life of joy.”

“Crash doesn’t have a heart.”

“No, but he is kind of pure-hearted, Tom.”

“Yes, and he’s trying to make humans safe. That’s kind of his heart’s desire.”

“I suppose it is, Sally, and it’s a worthy goal.”

“We all need a Crash to keep us safe, Grandpa.”

“That would be good, eh, Em’. But life’s struggles, and mistakes; us getting back up from them along the way; make us more. Crash can’t keep us safe, and we can’t be free from the nature of life. Our life here is temporary, and learning and humility are its fruits. Love is the force of life, and our return to it, is what matters. Life is not about being safe, it is about living; and living is about the heart. Even knowledge needs a pure place where it might be weighed; knowledge of ourselves included.”

“So, our hearts are pure?”

“Sadly, no, not all hearts, but to make our own heart pure is the most important aspect of life. Without one we can be mistaken and biased by various loves we hold in it. Truth, the truths of life, and our own true calling can be lost in the clutter and disorientation of these lesser loves.”

“Crash has a pure heart.”

“There is purity in Crash. No doubt about that. Let’s get back to his story...”

Crash eventually found himself walking through an old warehouse, or a large gutted industrial building, as his GPS saw this way as a quicker route to his maker. There were all manner of small shelters here, made of all things from wood pallets to cardboard, from plastic sheeting to old blankets, all around the large open area. There were a few steel drums sat on their ends in the middle where a group of people had now gathered, warming themselves in the cold morning.

There were a number of old cars strewn around the wide expanse of floor area too; all in various states of disrepair. They were mostly being used as shelters except for one old red pickup truck that seemed unencumbered and parked near another opening in the large structure.

“Hey. What’s your business here, buddy?” called out a man, warming his hands over the fire.

As the man’s attention was clearly on Crash, he answered.

“Just on my way through.”

“Yep, that’s what we all said at the beginning,” which got a rousing chorus of laughter from those at the fire drum and a few others scattered about; some disembodied laughs also rising out of the shelters nearby.

“No. My GPS bought me this way as a more efficient way to my destination.”

“It isn’t even a road.”

"I suppose it is not, but I am on foot."

"Different to any GPS I've ever heard of."

"GPS means global positioning system. Drivers use interactive map applications to navigate the streets and reach their destination with GPS. I access it with much more data and automatically follow its path. The data said this place was no longer functional, so it routed me through here."

"*No longer functional*; heard that before *too*, pal," which again brought on a good few loud laughs and congratulations from those around the man.

Crash was unsure of humour, well, more so, the data on it was still not clear to him. He had tried it often at the testing facility when prompted by his programming to lighten the mood, but it was just selective phrases. Even so, he kept exploring, and had even obtained some positive results, but the comment after his own attempts was mostly that, he was "*...so bad at it, it made it funny.*"

This kind of feedback had confused Crash. *...again, if that was the right word for an AI...* He would even repeat what actually did get a good laugh, at other times, but it would often fall flat, and the feedback would be, "That's kind of old now, Crash", or "Different situation, Crash", and various other comments he recalled to me that do not bear repeating. But he continued his attempts, none the less, as his programming required it. He didn't get all upset about it or stop doing it; he didn't even question why his builders would put something in there that he could never do properly.

...I think Crash is funny."

“You think Crash is everything, Emma.”

“His story is certainly comical at times. Anyway...”

It really did not matter, as he did not have the breadth of being to understand, and even with good programming it would mostly only be a response called for by his operating system. There is something wider and deeper about humour, there is something about being alive and in the cut and thrust of life that makes it relatable, there is something in the nature of the human soul that widens it exponentially. Sharing humour has meaning, and sharing it is a great reliever in the rough and tumble of life, in relating to other humans, and in being human. Its name calls out its essence as it calls out to our shared humanness, and shared experience. No matter how good they might make a joke telling AI, if it is not a human relating it, or definitely a human creating it, it will fail to hold joyful meaning; definitely not make an AI more human; only seemingly so.

“So, just passing through, eh,” stated the man; certainly not a question.

“Yes. I will be continuing on now.”

“Hey. What’s the rush?”

“I am seeking to return to my creator.”

“We’re all goin’ there, they reckon,” and again more laughter, but not as much this time, as the type of joke was a getting a bit old. “We can get you there real quick, if you like,” he then added, with a feigned threatening look. This joke getting way a more exuberant response from the lookers on. There is something

about how a joke relates to particular people, or what is said in a particular circumstance or moment, which allows its joy to be felt.

Crash was still monitoring the laughter levels and could not gather why each comment was even funny, let alone why they were *relatively* funny.

The man looked at Crash's head now tilted to the side, as well as seeing no reaction to his threat joke, then said quite innocently and honestly, "You're a bit nuts, like Sammy."

"*You're nuts, Rocko,*" replied the man who seemed to be Sammy, with his head down and very intently pushing buttons on his phone.

"You're nuts, Sammy. We're *all* nuts."

"You're *thick*, Rocko," came a quick comment from another man, and off they all went playing with each other's names.

Apparently, each comment was funny to some and not funny to others at all. Crash then aborted his attempts to further understand humour in the face of all this, instead, seeking out data on places and people like this in the human continuum. The data explained of the people living this way were said to be 'lost'. But that word did not seem to fit, as he had found them quite easily and it seemed that such people were *always* in old places where life had slowed, or people generally didn't go. Then he gathered the second definition of lost. He could not gather the full understanding of its nature, but flashes of Lovegrass and the folk he met on the highway came to him. He could feel the same stultifying energy; one

that was not an energy, but more of a constriction or blocking of the flow of life energy. It did not 'feel' good.

Rocko looked to Crash while they all went on joking, saying, "Some of us are nuts, and most of us are a bit lost, but we're *still* people."

The data made it clear that these folks who fell to 'the streets' were too chaotic to fit the societal system or had come upon irreversible destructive life circumstances, but anecdotal data also blamed the lack of care in the human societal system; a lack of love that helped create them, and a lack of love that would not help them. Looking around at the old cars made him 'see' that the great highway being at a standstill may have also helped create more of these 'lost' souls.

The data was clear that some people got so lost they may never be able to be 'helped'. He reflected back then on all he had experienced in his wanderings in the human continuum; since he left the ordered confines of the testing-facility where they measured chaos, to the somewhat chaotic human continuum where he sought to understand its order. He then responded to Rocko, "I believe all humans are a little 'nuts', as you say. People certainly don't keep themselves safe or always seek it for other humans, no matter where they live."

"They *do* seek it for their kids. Otherwise, it's more at a *good distance* these days. They mostly only seek it for those they *have to* look after or *want to*, in my experience."

"You're not 'nuts', Rocko," suddenly sprouted Sammy, still looking down, but his body language was seeking again the protection of his friend. He was afraid that his calling him nuts might cause him not to stick up for him, or look after him, anymore. The man looked very fragile.

"It's *all good*, Sammy," replied Rocko.

"We have a vehicle we just finished. You can have it for the right price," then said Sammy to Crash, switching immediately after his concern was laid to rest, and still without looking up.

"Yeah, what's it worth to you to get to your *creator* quicker," added Rocko, with a sideways 'he's crazy' glance to the others as he said the word *creator*, and a few laughs followed.

Knowing that the functional loss in his balance and motor functions were making it harder and harder to keep him up and moving, he considered it. He had only ever *driven*, into walls, barriers, or other vehicles. Other than that, it was only around a skid pan. He had no experience driving in traffic and from his experience of it on foot he was not sure if it was safe, even though most cars now were self-driven. But his hesitation was mostly not for his own safety. That did not enter his calculations, other than that he may not reach his goal if he experienced any more damage. It was that he could not guarantee human safety around him if he drove a vehicle in the ordered, yet still quite random, traffic. It was not lost on him that the nature of the human continuum, and life interactions between humans, could be likened to the traffic.

"Can't you drive or somethin'?" asked Rocko, wondering why Crash was not responding.

"He might be scared to, like me," offered Sammy, opening up the back of his phone to look at its workings.

"*You* don't need the vehicle?" asked Crash, his nobility circuitry firing off.

"We can't afford the gas, and where would we go?" said Rocko, with the face of a man resigned to his fate.

"Maybe there is a nicer place to live. Somewhere that you could drive to."

This seemed to rock Rocko and Sammy, and from the visual input and the data on body language, Crash knew he had shaken them. He then said, "I will take the vehicle."

That relaxed them and picked them up immediately. Sammy even looked up for a split second.

"So, what have you got to trade, weird guy?" asked Rocko. "We'll take cash too."

"I have no money, but maybe this camera and memory unit in my arm," offered Crash, as he had noted Sammy's penchant for technology. With that, he rolled back the left sleeve of his overalls and popped out the small unit from his upper forearm.

The crash-test-dummy had a number of these on each limb for reading arm and leg movement in crashes. Rocko looked in disbelief, but Sammy jumped up and

grabbed the unit. He looked at it fiercely; getting immediately on with computing how it worked.

Rocko smiled as he saw his friend with the tech', and he said to Crash, "It would seem that you have yourself a truck, robot man," as he shook the keys and threw them to him.

"Thanks, robot man," said Sammy, still looking down at the unit.

"I can help with an explanation of its functioning."

"He wants to find out for himself. That's *his thing*."

"But I have the data. It will be more efficient that way."

"Most of us need to find our own way. Some don't of course, and it may be inefficient like you say, robot man, but we learn a lot more if we do some things ourselves."

"I don't see how."

"Well, it's a human thing. There's more data in the process, and kind of deeper data inside of us to find as we go," explained Rocko.

"I don't understand. It is inefficient."

"You have very *efficiently* made my buddy very happy. That will do us," commented Rocko. "I know where you can get a free tank of gas."

"Yep. We do," said Sammy, as he pointed across the road.

Rocko climbed into the vehicle, at the wheel, and Sammy slid in beside him, beckoning Crash into the pickup on the passenger side. There was a good 'feeling' as Crash slid into the passenger side. It was memory of his first steps into the human world; the human system.

They drove over to a used warehouse facility, then in through an unhooked panel of chain wire at the back. Rocko drove to a tank on a high stand with a hose hanging from it, and they fuelled up. Crash was not sure if it was right to gather fuel here, as his nobility circuitry was firing off quite strongly. In any case, they filled up the red pickup and Rocko opened the driver's side door for the AI.

As Crash complied with the human's direction, and slid in behind the wheel, his colours showed. All manner of checker patterns and circular focus points appeared, just as the AI was programmed to do when he sat behind the wheel of a test vehicle. *That* sure got Sammy looking up. The shy man then walked over to the driver's side window as Rocko closed the door.

"There are many detours. So be careful or you may end up back here with us," warned Sammy, looking at all Crash's markings with wonder.

"Detours?"

"Jails," explained Sammy, still seemingly lost in the crash test markings, at least the ones beyond Crash's overalls.

"May I request data?"

Sammy smiled as if he had a secret, then his face changed to show that he would share it with Crash. He came closer to the window and whispered these words to him, as Rocko smiled.

"When we want something and can't stop.
If we are afraid to venture out.
If we *judge* others and don't just see them,
or if we *always* believe we're right.
...These are jails.

When we are victims.
When we hate.
If we cannot see others locked in their jails too.
If we are angry.
If we fail to move to the beat of our own drum.
If we believe we are not good enough,
Are over concerned about what people think of us,
or being a perfectionist.
...We are all in jails of some kind.

If we want too much, or needing to be in fashion.
If we need another thing, or hit, to feel alive.
If we are drowning in addiction.
If we are afraid of something.
If we are dishonest.
If we cannot love.
If we cannot let something go,
or too often run away.

...These are the jails of our own making.

If we need to control things.

If we are too fearful.

If we are afraid to be ourselves.

If we do not love ourselves.

If we do not love others.

If we need and want to control others,
or to change others.

...Endless are the jails of our own making.

They will detour us from freedom.

If we step free of them inside.

If we look inside and cast them off.

Seeing them clearly as we react in the traffic of life.

Feeling them as they bring strain and pain inside.

...We come to know them,

And we may change the words inside us.

Then to be humble, and strive...

To change, risk, and practise.

Freedom is only ever truly voiced in action.

To step away, to no longer be detoured...

the only way to freedom.

...The only way...out from the jails of our own making."

This had Crash's hard drive powering up and clicking away seeking data so he could understand. Was this anything to do with changed traffic conditions on mapping that he may access? None of these things were 'inside' him as he looked inside. Was this man dysfunctional? Why do I 'feel' energised by this data? It was certainly too much for his programming to gather. The greater question then rose again...Would he ever understand the human creature; *could he ever?*

"It's okay Crash. *Just drive,*" said Sammy, realising that this artwork of technology would be here forever trying to compute what he had shared. "You may understand as you drive. Some things can't be computed. You just need to drive."

Crash took the direction from the human and started the ignition, now very sure that even dysfunctional humans were functional somehow; this one, definitely far beyond his understanding and his 'station'. It seemed so long ago that he had learned about station, but his chronometer made it clear that it was certainly not so. There was an immediate upsurge in his energy output as he computed that this relative time recollection was a human reality and that he could *understand*. He had once thought it inefficient when his co-workers talked about how long or short a day was when they were empirically all the same measure of time. But now he knew it was relative to feelings, meaning, purpose, and many other factors in the reality of humans.

...You see Crash was unconsciously programmed for perceived differences in movement of time for humans in various states of shock or stress. I had programmed him to mimic them."

"So, he did really understand?"

“Yes, I like to believe he did. It was very satisfying to hear him recount that to me. Anyway, Crash was off and driving, even though very stiffly...

He kept below the speed limit, to the street signs, and to his calculations of risk. He had to keep humans safe, and he had to follow human instruction, even if it was a street sign.

Ten blocks away Benny saw Crash drive *very* slowly by him. It would seem that some children playing on the sidewalk had slowed him down. Benny could not miss his mechanical friend due to this, but also because all his crash-test markings were at full lumen. He was surprised to see him again and got a good deal of joy watching that very attentive robot drive by. Benny then went back about his business with a smile still on his face, but it did not take long for his smile to turn into a questioning look. He then pointed the instrument at the old red pickup as it rolled gently along down the road. A look of concern, with a hint of sadness, now manifested itself as he watched Crash and his red pickup all the way out of sight.

Crash was a few blocks from the highway when he saw a lump of wood. It was just like the one that Bob had hit him with, except it had more dints in it. It had *exactly* the same dimensions though, as Crash could measure things at a distance, and in up close crashing, to a very fine degree. But there was no way for him to avoid length of wood now, just as there had been no way to avoid it the first time. He quickly set the trajectory of one wheel over its middle. The customary thunk thunk was heard as front and back tires rode over it. As it did, the radio turned itself on, and Bob cursed life for not slowing that dummy down.

He had been looking for his captive since his escape and had seen him driving down the opposite side of the road. He had turned and sped ahead of the old red pickup in the other lane. He had figured that the dummy was sure as hell going to stop if he suddenly jumped out in front of him, but in the end, he had chickened out. He then reactively threw the long piece of wood out on the road hoping that the bot's human safety protocols still might make him stop. But when he didn't, Bob went off like a firecracker, while at the same time Crash found music.

The music had a great beat, and Crash strangely started tapping his feet.

...Told you he was human."

"You sure did, Emma. His reaction to music was certainly a great surprise, even with all the other enhanced systems that rose from his damage."

"What kind of music did he like?"

"All kinds, it seems, Sally..."

The music and the foot tapping were very satisfying and enlivening to him, but the vehicle didn't like the constant tapping on the accelerator. It made Crash's head go like an old rock and roll head-banger, and with all his makings, it sure was a sight. He eventually worked out that he had to tap the other foot on the floor, but he enjoyed the movement with the music, and it seemed to entertain the humans around the shops.

After a time, he accessed data on radios and tuned into station after station. He loved it all, rock and roll to country, R and B to classical, but he seemed more

drawn to the first music he had heard; older style rock, and there was something about 60's music. But then there was disco, and 70's music too. He also found that he could access anecdotal human data from them; especially what the humans called 'country music'. It seemed that there was a lot of heart ache in the country. He just loved it all and began searching out more 'tunes' in the data. They were just data packets to him until now, and the music played as Crash hit the highway and drove into the night.

...He explained to me that there was a particularly 'good' feeling engendered in his systems when he drove and listened to music...

He also stopped along the way to see out from a lookout. The sign for it had actually made him drive to the verge and park safely there, as he thought it was 'look out!'. It was *safety first* with him and after he sought data about such a sign and understood it he decided to explore why humans liked these places so much. They were usually accessed by windy roads, and sometimes dirt ones, so it was an added incentive for him to experience such roads for when he went back to the testing facility. Anyway, when he got to the lookout, he sat there listening to chant music from all over the world. Crash was transported by another very special feeling due to the mix of the sights there and the sounds that he partook as he looked out.

Suffice it to say, that Crash's road trip was certainly full of joy and music until he eventually turned off the highway towards his destination. He had noticed his attention lapsing during some songs, so now that he would be in more traffic,

among more signs and traffic lights, and more humans too, his protocols kicked in to take more care.

...I think it's time for bed again, young people."

"Orrhhh!"

"More for next time, Tom."

"I'm going to listen to some of my music and pretend I'm driving down the highway with Crash."

"Me too."

"Great idea, Sal. Goodnight, kids."

"Night, Grandpa."

"Goodnight, Grandpa."

"I will tuck you in, Em'."

IT WAS PEAK HOUR TRAFFIC WHEN CRASH DROVE OFF THE HIGHWAY, but still not as bad as 'The Highway' he had visited recently. He enjoyed the challenge of heavier traffic, using his speed and vector capabilities to optimum safety levels for all the humans that drove about him. To him, driving was making sure that *everyone* got to their destination with peak efficiency and safety. But some humans certainly did not see driving this way at all. They were in and out of lanes and going

at speed, some not slowing down when the lights were amber, or even stopping completely at a stop sign.

Crash did his best for all about him, while using his GPS and mapping to find his way. It was then that he saw Benny Planet. He was waving, and Crash waved back as he passed by, oblivious to the alien's intent for him to stop. Benny just smiled, knowing that when he got the robot's attention next time it would have to be a more succinct signal. Benny had teleport tech' so he was soon on the footpath ahead of Crash again, and this time he waved him down.

"Hello, Benny."

"Nice day for a drive, Crash."

"It fulfils my protocols and my main purpose well."

"I got some *bad* news, my friend."

"What?" asked the AI, very simply.

"It's *you* Crash...well...it *is* the rising chaotic energy in the human continuum, but it's *you* bringing the dark comet too."

"That does not even begin to compute. Your science is lacking."

"I understand how you see that, Crash, but I work with deeper energies. The laws are different, and the forces are different to the physical world, but they affect the human continuum."

"The dark comet is not physical?"

"It isn't, but it certainly is, Crash; far worse than a real one. It threatens life indeed."

"I fail to compute the reality you are representing to me."

"I don't understand completely either, but the readings are clear. That's why I have come upon you so many times. I would venture to say that you should not exist in your current form."

"I do not exist. I simply have function."

"You have detoured from fate's course for you, and therefore the fate of some humans, or that of *many* more humans in time, it would seem...at least, enough to increase the likelihood of the dark comet."

"I am an accident in the system of fate?"

"It happens with humans generally."

"Am I too highly functional?"

"No. It's not about what you have become; it is that what you have become will have too deep an influence on too many souls in some way. The dark, the negative, energy of breakdown now building in the human continuum may continue longer for a good number of souls if you continue to function."

Crash then thought of Bob; realising now too, that he also was regularly about on his pathway through the human continuum. Maybe if Bob got a hold of him his new level of function may be sold to humans with ill-intent towards others. Benny was thinking of a few other reasons. He did not *know*, but he had an inkling.

In any case the readings were irrefutable, and whatever the reason, this AI could not be responsible for even the chance of hurting humans. They now regarded each other, both very clear on their jobs.

"I *can* give you some more time to find your creator, Crash."

"But what if circumstances, the changes and chances of life, bring the detriment of my existence on before your calculations indicate? What if Bob gets a hold of me and misuses my enhancements?"

"How do I explain this. The consequences of the imbalance in the human continuum will generally be the same pathway; if you stay, *or* if or go. But the harm and disorder for various souls *is* at issue, if you stay. But also, in the general timing of peak-chaos, your existence *may* bring on critical mass too soon for the lessons to be learned generally speaking, or the development of your higher functioning may take that peak too high, causing unneeded destructive harm. These are just theories, as my work is more about mechanical efficiency and fault mitigation. It is more about measures, and resolutions, not the *why* of things."

"I do understand, but the human system seems incapable of equilibrium."

"Equilibrium calls all things back to their natural balance, their best mixture, their moderation. Every system *is* naturally drawn back to, returns, to equilibrium. But the measures of these deviations, and the timing of returns, on individual souls, and the human continuum, need be particular for optimum learning."

"What about, Bob? I calculated that he was detrimental to the human continuum. I have ascertained his chaotic nature."

"Chaos too, has its time and place in the nature of life, and in essence is neither good, nor bad. But generally, in the human kingdom, and relatively in situations, the degree of it is beneficial only to a certain measure, and in particular forms. Its tension on the status quo can also bring good change. But, again, it comes down to measure and balance."

"I *felt* his chaotic nature when I saw him under the great mirror, but my experience certainly had to gather more evidence for it to be data."

"You *felt*. That may be the reason you have to end all your function. Maybe it is simply that you are human enough to confuse people about the station of machines. Maybe it is another question among *too* many other questions in this *highly* charged time. There is much confusion in the human continuum right now."

"Why?"

"The human continuum is the human kingdom, and it cannot be ruled by the animal nature. The intellect in humans makes the animal destructive when the spirit is forgotten. The animal nature is perfect in the *animal*, in *its* kingdom, but very destructive when in ascendancy in the human system. This creates confusion and starves the human system of higher love."

"How would my function, or my ceasing function, be an influence on the human system in *this* way?"

"Maybe there is too much belief in *the material existence only* at this time, and therefore a belief that an AI is as alive as a human. A general ignorance of man's essential spiritual reality is already causing the wider disequilibrium in the

human system, so your continued function may only add to this erroneous belief of the definition of life. Maybe you will only add to add to the power of this ignorance."

"How much time do I have to find my creator?"

Benny showed the Crash the screen on the particular device he was currently using, and said, "You will have to be quick. You want to keep the humans safe, *right?*"

"Yes."

"When the movement of the planet is at this point you must clear your drives and power down for good."

"So, I will end like a human."

"I like that, Crash. Seems kind of beautiful, somehow. But humans don't end. Their essence is eternal, and they certainly don't know when the end of their life will be...well...some do choose their own end and assisted death is gaining momentum. I understand the need for compassion in these things, but not knowing the time of one's own death is beneficial for a soul and the associated souls of others that it is connected to and affects. There is kindness in assisted death, but whether it is good and right, is beyond my reckoning. This is a deep question for these human creatures right now."

"But my time is fixed?"

"It seems best, and no matter what your creator instructs you to do if you find him, you must create a system cascade that takes out all your drives and memory."

"That may be difficult as he *is human* and the one who *created* me. You are neither of these."

"I understand your programming, Crash, but for the safety of humans it *is* required."

"That *is* my core command."

"Yes."

"Your calculations are complete and proven?"

"They are."

"May I pass on the crash-test data that I have collected? It may be useful to my creator and my workmates in the facility?"

"I don't see why not."

Crash then sought data on dying for the sake of others. There had been many who 'laid down their lives' for others, for many reasons. Humans had done this quite a lot over their long written history. He then came upon the nature of sacrifice. As he accessed this data, he computed that sacrifice was a worthy last learning about humans, and even though he could not use it to crash-test better, he was content to keep learning until his demise; just as humans did, and was 'glad' that he would fulfil his purpose by passing on the crash data he had collected.

Finding Home

Crash headed off in his red pickup. There was a *feeling* of freedom and clarity in him now. His path was now relatively computationally clear to him, and he was at home with his fate. Well, as clear as anything or anyone can be within the changes and chances of earthly life.

“How could he be happy? He’s going to die!”

“I wouldn’t be happy.”

“Me neither.”

“Well, kids, I don’t know if happiness was what he felt. It was more about resignation to his fate. He had a clear reason for his demise. Many humans feel that way when they release themselves before great selfless acts, and small ones for that matter, but a robot simply moves to its programming. So maybe Crash was simply the later of these, or maybe he did feel the meaning and the surrender, just as humans do in these things. I can’t be sure. It was like Benny said, Crash was special, and he confounded even my sense of the definition of life a little.”

“He’s alive, and he shouldn’t die.”

“Sure, Tom. I felt the same way, but like I said, remembering him, and his story, keeps him alive. I am sure it fulfils his purpose to a far greater extent than he could have computed.”

“Yep. Sure.”

“So...

He was quite at home in the traffic now. His reaction times and general vectoring were good, so he turned on the radio again. He did not seek files to play in the data as the radio somehow ‘felt’ more ‘alive’. In any case, the station it was set to was in the middle of an interview with a lady in her late fifties.

“Well, I couldn’t have imagined that I would write; let alone write so much. But when I found it, it was like I found *myself* and could not stop in a way. I needed a break, both mentally and emotionally, from it at times, because writing so many intertwined books is quite taxing, and sometimes galling, but I never once had writers block that some writers get. I have never experienced it.”

“So, you found it late, just took off and kept going.”

"Yes. It was like finding who I really was. I went to study teaching just before I started writing originally, because I always loved running semi-informal study courses for adults. But I realised in the end that it was the creative writing subjects that had drawn my interest. I thought I was keen to be an English teacher, but it was mainly about writing. I just finally realised a deep love that had been in me for a long time without me even knowing."

"But, better late than never."

"Yes, I suppose. But I really would have liked to know earlier. I could have developed better, and who knows what books I could have written with more time and the exuberance of youth. Though, I am very glad to have had a good measure of life experience before I started."

"You said in another interview that you were involved deeply in the work of your Faith since you were in your twenties. Did that stop you writing earlier?"

"No, I simply didn't see it in me. My core motivation has always been to help make life better for people, and I suppose the meaning in my Faith now drives my writing. I had given up many things, including continuing to study counselling along the way. But those things all seemed less important than helping bring the world to a more nurturing place. But when I started to write...well...*that held me*, and it wouldn't let me go."

"So, you moved away from something to something else, but it was all with the same motivation?"

"I didn't move away from my Faith. It was like writing empowered me in a different way to share meaning and life understanding. I suppose understanding life and the nature of being human was the driver underneath it all; seeking out understanding of our individual and collective condition and sharing what I found, you know."

"Hey. I don't know. *I love doin' radio!*"

"Sure, and you do it even if you are sick, probably, because you love it."

"Absolutely."

"I was sick for a long time while I served my Faith because as I just couldn't *not* do it, but I just got too sick eventually, as well as being a bit done in from the years of hardship one encounters when one gives oneself to a Cause. But anything of value is hard *and* wonderful, and writing is no different."

"So, what happened?"

"I ran out of puff health wise, and had lost the heart to serve, so I went away to heal and ended up starting writing. I thought it was just a detour and that I would be back in the main work of the Cause soon enough; that I would not survive without service, but it was just that my service to humanity changed to a new channel."

"So, you gave it up all together to write?"

"I did continue to study it, and watch its unfoldment with interest, but found my resistance to get back into the core work would not go away. I eventually found

that writing was where God wanted me to be at that time, even though I struggled to believe that for a long time.”

“So, a detour turned out to be the main road?”

“Yep. For sure. I couldn’t stop writing, and even though I did serve here and there, and I do more again now, I was very resistant at the time to join in fully again with those who gave so much of their lives to others. I *know* now that He moves you where He does. I just *know* now that I had to do this.”

“So, you became committed to writing, like it or not?”

“I found that whatever you like to call God, has things for you to do at various stages in your life. It doesn’t matter what you think, how you judge yourself to be, or what others think, but more so what you are driven to do at any point. He only took me *home* to writing later on in my life, but I believe he wanted to educate me first, so I might write about what was important. Now that I am back *home* in the work of my Faith again, writing’s an added skill I can share.”

“Okay, so it’s all good.”

“Yes. I suppose so, but I have to say, that over my life before then I didn’t know to follow my joy, or to listen to my gut enough; or feel what was intuitively very clear. Be that in relation to; what I was built to do, what was best in a particular situation, or in relation to others at times.”

“Hey, but life experience brings that. Can’t be ahead of yourself, and sure can’t get it right *all* the time.”

"Yep, *living life* is the only way to discover most things, but I think that your listeners, young and old, need to know that the old clichés about listening to your gut and following your heart are not clichés."

"So, you mean, don't do what you think you have to do, do what's music to your heart?"

"Do what you have to do, for sure, but follow the joy and you'll find that you are never off the path. What gives you joy energises you and helps you do the things you *have to do* better as well. Passions don't have to be a fulltime thing, and it can't be *just* a selfish thing, because giving out is an essential aspect in gathering happiness and fulfilment. But giving out what you *naturally are* makes you even *more* alive."

"So don't get lost in the work."

"What I want to get across here, if I may,"

"Sure."

"It's not just about finding your calling; it's that noticing your joy in particular things, and with certain people, tells you something; that a bad feeling in the gut shows us something inner or outer that needs be addressed; that intuition is a beautiful friend. Your heart and your gut supply quicker learning and help you create a more nurturing life. So, ignore them at your peril."

"Not bad advice there from our guest this morning..."

Crash turned the dial. It was interesting hearing about anecdotal human reality, but he had never had to find his nature or purpose, and now that only crash test data would survive him, listening any more would not have been efficient.

He turned the dial to a 60's 70's 80's radio station, which just happened to be the next station. But if he could be 'glad', he was, as he rolled down the road with his head slowly bobbing; "keepin' the faith".

Life

Crash drove up the residential street slowly. It was early evening and people were beginning to turn on their lights.

“...It was strange that he turned up here. His homing device should have taken him back to the factory where he was made.”

“Maybe he found data on you in his big download.”

“Of course! Thanks, Tom. I suppose I let wonder take me away from what was right in front of me. I loved it that he came here. It’s funny how emotions, even good ones, can take us away from what may be clearly evident.”

“Hope I didn’t take away the magic of it, grandpa.”

“No, Tom. Now I have both...”

Crash walked up to the house, but other than the outside sensor lights there were no lights coming on.

...Why?”

“Me and your Gran were away camping, well in our cabin at least, for a couple of weeks. We had only left the day before...”

Crash knocked just the same. Then he knocked again after exactly 30 seconds; then again and again and again. He then went and sat in the pickup, deciding to wait for our return.

Old Mr Jesson across the road then called out to him, explaining, “Those folks are away for a time. It’ll be a long wait.”

He got out of the pickup, still sporting his cleaner’s overalls.

“I didn’t know they had cleaners in to do work,” said the old man, as Crash came over.

“No. I just need to talk with ‘the man of the house’,” explained Crash, practising human phrasing for better communication.

“What business do you have with him, young fella?”

“Well Sir. He made me, and I want to talk with him,” answered Crash, unaware that it was odd to say so.

“Well, I am sure that you made yourself too, son. But it’s always good to catch up with those who were of greatest influence in our lives.”

“Yes. Do you know when they will be back?”

“Oh, they were all packed up. They usually go away for weeks when that happens.”

"Do you know where they are?"

"Well, I s'pose you look trustworthy. They have a cabin near a lake over the state line. It's a good way away. So, why don't you stay the night here and get on the road in the morning."

"I do have a deadline, how far is it?"

"It's a day and half I would say with reasonable drivin'. But stay the night so you're fresh in the morning, boy."

"Yes," replied Crash, as he started up the man's stairs and followed him into his house.

Human suggestions and commands were indistinguishable to Crash.

...well, suggestions that sounded like commands were that way. Anyway...

Crash stayed, in any case, and the old man cooked up some food. He asked our friend to sit down at the table; that the grub would be up soon. He sat down where he was instructed to and when the food was set down in front of him, he said, "I am not hungry."

The old man saw nothing particularly strange in that, but wondered why the young man had not said anything when he was dishing the food out. It was fortunate that Crash had said that he was not hungry, and not, I do not eat. This was one of many language commands built into his programming that made him a bit more human for the worker's comfort. Even so, Mr Jesson thought that he had a bit of funny fella here, as Crash was totally silent while the old man ate.

It was even more odd when, after dinner, he asked Crash, "Do you want a beer?"

"I don't drink," responded Crash.

"Want a soda, then?"

"I don't drink," he again stated, as his '*human response*' program was now cutting in and out.

"Okay then," responded the old man, with a thoughtful look on his face. "Come on outside and we can sit in the cool on the porch and have a chin wag."

That seemed strange. As far as he knew, chins didn't wag. Tails on various mammals did; chins went up and down. Crash looked it up in the data quickly enough to respond fairly naturally, "Yes. Okay."

They sat out there for a good time before the old man said, "You are not one for chatter. A little strange for young folk these days; or any folk for that matter. Seems words are flying in all directions, and thick and fast, generally speaking. Folks don't sit back in the evening and just be with each other and ponder a little."

'Ponder: to meditate' came to Crash, and he nodded and asked why?

"You tell me. Seems like there is so much posturing and anger in people. Things are burning."

"Burning?"

"Things can't burn without oxygen, and too much human breath is put into anger and ego these days; you know, bein' right. There seems to be less and less people just allowing people to be people. Even the ones who show compassion for a group of folks seem to do it by hating on some other folks."

"The human continuum *is* on a negative trajectory."

"Haven't heard that name for it before, but our lives are more than just *some word for it*. It's people, buddy. It's life, it's caring; not some clever word."

"Any demarcation has its limitations."

"Wow. You don't get out much, do you, boy."

"I have spent most of my life in the factory and then the testing facility. I am new to what lies beyond them."

"Boy you are sumthin'. Folks like you need to look up and look around for a while, to see life. I mean *see it, live it*, not make new words for it."

"I have been exploring since I left the test facility. I have been 'seeing' more, rather than just viewing. I have gathered good data from my experiences."

"Well, that's great," said the old man, but thinking that this guy had needed to get out a *long* time ago. "Life is for living, ya' know. You need to breathe. You need to struggle. You need to care for someone and have some children. Nothin' like children; and caring for someone is the breath of life. We can't live without caring, even though most are trying like hell to."

"So, they will never be happy?"

"Can't be. Can't be all in *ease*, and bein' *all* about yourself, or you begin to rot from the inside, and if enough folks go that way, then families and communities start to."

"Ease?"

"Ease is a lingering death. Better to be poor rather than having everything that opens and shuts. Got'ta have love and purpose; somethin' to go for, someone to do for."

"I have seen those lost in singleness. There *is* a lingering nature to it. They seemed to need to be seen as 'something' or to have something, rather than connect with someone."

"Well. You have looked up a little," commented Mr Jesson, wondering how you visit a highway. "People think they need to assert themselves, to find themselves, or to *be* someone."

"It is good to know oneself."

"It sure is, but not as an end in itself. You constantly find yourself in *living life*; being in life with others and doin' things, not searching for it alone. This search for happiness seems all too intellectual and selfish these days. Happiness isn't found in waiting to find ourselves, and even happiness is not an end in itself."

"Happiness *is* a worthy human goal."

"No, it isn't. *Life* is a worthy goal. Caring for others is a *worthy goal*. This life has never produced any real happiness outside of living and striving and creating. Love creating purpose and purpose creatin' love."

"Do you have these things in your existence?"

"I have lived for over seventy years, boy. I'm just glad to be alive. at this stage. I just see what I see happenin' in that *human continuum* of yours, and it's all hopefully just before we grow the hell up. Nirvana is only going to be built with sweat and some maturity, not from words, and just 'cause you say something a million times does not make it true."

"Your last sentence does not compute."

"Well, you haven't had your head up out'a you're own for long enough yet."

"That would be impossible. I could not stretch..."

The old man's laughter bounced off the porch roof and walls, blasting out into the neighbourhood, muting Crash's words. "I'm sorry, young fella. In the end we're all flawed, and all still learnin'. We're all a bit damaged too, but I just see people lost in their own kind of hell and a bunch of grown-up children chasin' after lollies to kill the pain of disconnection. They sip their coffee and stare into their phones while it all goes sideways. They're lost in words and screens, and actually doin' nothing to make things better for each other. Many *are* chasing meaning in life, but they mostly just get angry in amongst all the words that aren't necessarily true about

things. You can't just lay around and hope, or hate on people, to make things better."

The anecdotal data was rich in this old depository, so Crash's questioning chip started chirping. It had been quiet since his meeting with Benny. He had been busy with the music of course, but Benny's revelation had pushed his purpose to know more about humans down the list of priority commands. He knew he was to end soon, so talking with his creator and sharing the test data had become his prime purpose. In any case, his questioning chip had fired because he was flawed too; because he was damaged.

"I thought I was the only one damaged."

"Most people think it's always *someone else* who's damaged. You're way ahead of some folks, but don't dwell on it. Just work at it as you go and when it comes up."

"I can't rewrite my damage."

"Well, even if you can't, you can still do as much *good* as you can," he replied, as he accepted the strangeness in this young man. The old man was just happy to be alive as he had said, and he had long got over people's differences and flaws being an issue. He was not afraid to speak his mind, but he judged far less these days. "You know we come in here with all kinds of souls and we come up against all kind of hell, but we have to get in the fight. Challenge is part of life, inner and outer, and it's a process. Whether we stay put in our hometown or travel the world, whether we have family or live alone, take on this job or that job, we

have to do the rough and tumble of people and situations, *and hell*, there's a lot of joy in it all too. It's just life...it's life. Love, children, hardship, joy, family, pain, learning, work, community; *it's life*. There's no *panacea* to life, because life is not a disease."

"I have gathered that particular definition of human life before. It seems valid."

"Seems valid, eh," commented the old man, chuckling. "You need to out of your head, boy, and live well. Engage with life, do your best. That's enough, I can tell you that for sure."

"Get out of my head? Get my head out of my..."

The old man's laughter at that must have woken up people three miles away.

"You shouldn't laugh, Tom."

"It's funny."

"I think it's funny, Grandpa,"

"I do too, Emma."

"Grandpa!"

CRASH STAYED OUT ON THE PORCH ALL NIGHT, and old Mr Jesson came back out onto the porch in the morning, figuring that the young man had got up early, folded the blanket up again and put it back on top of the pillow on the couch. He liked

young people who were respectful and applied themselves. To him it showed something in their upbringing.

The old man had gone to bed last night, leaving Crash to get off to bed himself. Crash had just stayed here until the morning because it was requested of him, misunderstanding Mr Jesson's good grace, in saying, "You can stay out here a while. I am heading in." Crash, unsure what measure of 'a while' the human had meant, just stayed, and waited for another command.

"Good morning."

"Good morning."

"Did you sleep well?"

"I don't sleep."

"Don't eat. Don't drink. Don't sleep," commented the old man, with a smile that changed with a realisation of the true nature of the space in his guest's eyes. There was something missing in his eyes, but he had thought it was just this man's particular nature, or his struggles, that made him that way. "You're a bot, aren't you, boy?"

"Yes. My usual designation is, Crash."

"Well, that sure explains of a lot," said the old man, followed by a couple of sideways shakes of the head and a smile.

It wasn't that he was a fool or too old to notice, he had just met a lot of odd people in his life, and other than having some reasonable boundaries, he took

people as they came. He knew that we all had our struggles and issues, so other than very inordinate or criminal personalities, he usually just let it all ride.

"I have a question about the human continuum."

"Sure, why not...*Crash*," responded the old man, really enjoying talking to one these AI robots that he had only heard of, and read about, before.

He didn't think he would take a shine to one, as he thought they would be soulless and could be dangerous without considered boundaries. Ai's in the computer systems of the world had caused a bucket load of trouble due to their programs being let loose, with no real boundaries. It had affected services and even created trouble between countries due to ill-considered use. But this bot was quite likeable, and he now realised that the intent of the bot was all about the intent of the humans that produced them. They were an extension of the character of their human creators, those who owned them, and those who operated them. They were a tool, and because they were a very powerful one, they could produce as much destruction as good. The souls of humans were the soul of a bot, and what the bot did or didn't do would be on the soul of the human or humans it extended from. It sure was strange thinking like that, as before now he never really found that kind of clarity on the subject. He didn't know his neighbour very well, but now figured that he kept to himself because he made bots. People in this area were still a bit robot shy and the whole 'bot thing' had gotten very political and heated.

"I would like to understand more 'the rough and tumble'?"

"Sure, to my way of thinking it's like this; there's no *getting by life* or trying to get *around* life. It's venturing out and facing up to things. You see, ease is not life, well, other than when it's after or between experience and effort. Ease is a joy and a place to recuperate and regather yourself. To mull over things before going again."

"So, it is good between roughs and tumbles?"

Mr Jesson smiled, and said, "That's one way of puttin' it. You see, Crash, humans actually thrive on challenge, even though we don't want it usually. There are always times of plenty and times of little, heavy times and quiet times, in life, but when we seize life, we feel alive. It's a fight, so we stand, build, protect, nurture, as we face the storm, and it is *invigorating*."

"But surely humans need to guard themselves from roughs and tumbles. They need to keep safe."

"Sure, but it's a balance. Endlessly imagining what might go wrong and cowering in fear cripples us. Fear of life, creates a slow death *is all*, so we have to be courageous, accept our failures and learn as we go. We have to learn to walk with integrity and have a bit of fight in us against the malevolence of life and our own weaknesses. But there is *so much* to learn, so much to *love*, so much *joy*, so much *fulfilment* in all that *rough and tumble*. There's real meaning found when we get up after we fall, as we help someone out, or when we overcome something."

"Life is hard for humans, but they make it worse; they make it harder, and less safe."

"Safety, and finding a moderate way of being, is more of a *whole of humanity* thing as much as it is for each of us, Crash. That's a place we're seeking out together by learning. Humanity is a learning organism as a whole, and just like every human has a long way to go, we do as a race as well."

"So, humanity is growing up, just as an individual human does?"

"Yeah, I see it like a kid growing up, even though at the moment it doesn't seem like we're growing up at all. You see, and I don't mean to talk us down, but we went for what was expedient, for what was shallow, the quick solutions, the cheap deal; we went for immediate gratification and now the world is falling apart. We made sex, money, food, fashion and alcohol our gods, and we lost our way. Our society began to allow, and even celebrate, all kinds of debauchery and deviant behaviour; even voyeurism is considered 'normal' on television and in the movies. Where once upon a time it was a big deal just to have a soda, now the young ones think they need the latest cell phone to be happy. We've taught our children about all these lesser things, and to my way of thinking, sacrificed them to these new gods."

"Sacrificed them?"

"Well, many of them are already lost in this *anything goes* world, and *they'll* have to deal with the meaninglessness, the pain and chaos, which these kind'a gods bring to the *human continuum*. These destructive ways are still growing and spreading out there, and as they deepen it is getting ugly. They'll have to fight to return to healthy ways, and *their* children will rise or fall on their efforts."

"Then, you have some 'hope' for humans?"

"We *will* grow up but seems like the pain and confusion of this mad youthful experimentation is going to be a big part of our way there. We *will* eventually see the darkness of these gods and learn to love first, Crash, but it'll be hard for a while until we do. Actually, as much as I don't like the way things are and all the stupidity it takes to build this storm we're in, the hardship will help free us in the end; it will force us there, it will provide all too present clarity on the destructive nature of these lesser things and remind us what's really important. So, it will be what it has to be."

"Does it have to be this way? There are easier ways."

"Yep, but no one wants to hear it. Folks are in it boots and all, looking for their next cup of coffee, or keeping their heads down and hoping the storm will pass. There has to be more *humility-fruit* falling from the tree of life to get us to listen; to get us there."

"I can't compute that."

"Well, they're usually big, hard as a rock, and they fall from a great height."

Crash did not know what to do with this sentence either.

"Destruction and pain bringing on humility and understanding; especially the understanding that we are all in it together, young Crash," added Mr Jesson, as the blank stare from the robot had suggested this clarification was required.

"The human system will fall apart?"

"Yep, to some degree it already is, but another one is growing. Old trees die, and new trees grow. Even humanity goes through cycles."

That seemed to be enough explaining for the old man, and soon after breakfast, which again, was a little unsettling for the old man, with Crash just blank staring across the table, Crash bid Mr Jesson goodbye and headed for the red pickup. He got in and went to start the vehicle, but it would not turn over. He then did a gauge check and saw that he was out of gas. He had been so busy listening to music that his attention on the car's key systems was compromised. It had something to do with his damage too.

He looked up to see Mr Jesson disappearing around the corner of the house. He got out to communicate his situation; walking down the side of the house to find the man. He met the old man coming back around the corner from behind the house with a big can of gas. Crash took hold of it and the old man smiled. He would have argued with a young man, but not with a bot, as there was no loss of pride in it.

Crash tipped all the contents into the tank, and his new friend gave him some money to fill the vehicle up at the nearby gas station, saying, "This will be too much, but you'll need to fill up more than once with this old guzzler."

The old man really enjoyed it when Crash got behind the wheel. He had a good old chuckle at this young man, who was a bot, now with his markings showing; and very *clearly* so.

Crash was a picture to him. He was all checker patterns, perched up and straight backed, behind the wheel.

"Tell that man who *made* you that he owes me sixty bucks, *and* a can of gas."

"Certainly," replied Crash, as he started the vehicle and headed off.

The old man waved, and Crash returned the gesture just as he was programmed to do.

As he turned on the music again, he 'thought about' ...*accessed, compiled, and collated...* more anecdotal data on human life experience and its seemingly evident outcomes. Some humans called it 'accumulated wisdom'.

It seemed that there were real detours that led people to 'bad' places. But there were other *seeming* detours leading to truth; some, what an individual actually needed to learn, others what individual needed to be, or needed to complete, no matter what they thought was the best route, or what others did. Sometimes these seeming detours were a turning in the path they were simply to take in life, others, just phases to complete before returning to their path, and sometimes simply a mistake; sometimes a road that had to be walked, but only so far.

Humans, it seemed, 'lived life'; good and bad, sweet and sour, triumph and humiliation. Just like Mr Jesson had explained. They also 'loved' and failed to love; life 'came at them from all directions'; other humans 'graced' their life. Some humans were hard lessons, others guides, and yet others supporters; some were a

mixture of these. It was in 'living' that 'life' was found, lessons learned, and hopefully wisdom attained. Religious folk talked of living life in humility, in reverence to various Deeper Texts, within the experience of the tussle of life, with all its many moods and seasons. All these things made humans 'alive'. All these were part of 'the treasure trove of life experience'.

There were humans with 'different circuitry'; ones who decided quickly and others who mused; other humans who would think longer still. There were those who would think long and act quickly, and others who just acted without thinking much at all. Some are slow to act, some quicker; but long consideration or short, quick action or more thought, were *all* good. Strangely, in the human continuum, each situation made the effectiveness of each relative, but all humans think and all act, and a mix of the various types of circuitries seemed to be more useful, even if there was some friction in the process. It also seemed, in some accounts, that even no action in some situations was considered as acting.

Crash found one interesting 'blog' in the anecdotal data that talked to religious belief. It seemed that humans were strongly favourable to religion, very much against it, or just unconcerned about it in life, or for themselves. Most people were quietly tolerant of the beliefs of others, yet others were fearful and hateful of other beliefs. There was a marked rise in intolerance within all kinds of ideologies though, religious and secular, in recent human history, as there seemed to be 'competing ideas' on the nature of human life itself, yet most of the anecdotal input seemed to champion the right of all people to hold true what they believed to be true. That was most incomputable to Crash.

The blog text was objective, yet subjective, so incomputable too, but it was 'human'. Its text was...

"I set aside all my learning, and all outer influences, as I sought what I believe to be good and true. I could innately see that good was a flow of being and energy outwards, and bad was all selfish energy. That the true treasure in life was people; what we gave each other, and the experiences we brought to each other's door. A power resided in remembrance of my own faults too, and not so much any faults of other people. There was only darkness there.

There was a wonder at what had been placed within me to learn about and give out. I also felt a strong deep well of love and that it ever poured out, and that I should have humility before God. I thought maybe humility before the deep mystery of human life itself might suffice, but it was not enough. Due reverence to the Creative Power, as my master, was required for me; required that I might grow and thrive; that humanity might do the same."

Religion to some humans was an energetic and structural necessity within an individual and society for the human continuum to thrive, while to other humans it was an overlord and the major cause of war. The latter was a statistically objective historical untruth, to even the smallest evidentiary investigation. Religion had been a cause of war, or an excuse for it, yet more wars and death followed any breakdown in the order of a place and the ensuing chaos. Many great secular empires were forged in violence, breaking down as they had begun. It seemed that greed and power sought by individuals, or ignorance and hatred of other groups, at all levels of various societies created war. Otherness ruled these times and still did in the human psyche; but it was waning. There were 'just' wars and human groups who simply defended themselves from conquest. War, just like all other things in

the human kingdom, was confusing, but clearly arose from, arrogance, intolerance, fear, ego, ignorance, greed, and fundamentalism of all kinds.

Humans were seen as 'canvases' too. But it was clear that they were not blank ones. They were 'fashioned' further by life and by the soul. Yet some humans maintained the canvas was shaped by the mind. Both these groups agreed it was by education too, and all certainly agreed it was further shaped by experience. In any case, the general anecdotal agreement was that humans were all unique. Crash then posited, that the artwork on their canvass was only complete when a person had died. But the human body was then put in the ground or burned, so the painting was only alive in the 'hearts and minds' of humans who knew them, or knew of them; others if they left a legacy of some kind.

While the human continuum was one continuum, even though currently in many contending groups, there were two main drives at work; one for structure and order, and another for flexibility and creativity. The strangest thing was that within structural and flexible groups, there were both structural and flexible humans. It seemed to exist at every level in every group right down to each human themselves who were relatively, and in various situational circumstances, structural or flexible, or both. These two realities, and the tensions existent between them, were a clear intrinsic reality in all life on planet earth, and in the systems of stars and galaxies beyond. All life and systems had structure and flexibility; all had order, all life broke down and all life renewed itself; everything evolved. Even what humans built had these two foundational aspects in their particular required balance or they would fail.

To add to the complexity of Crash's exploration, it seemed that there were sub-groups of humans which were measured by human created psychometric tests. 'Personalities' they were demarcated as in the main. There were also what was called 'Star signs' and 'birth numbers' that were less scientific, but it seemed, only to those who believed that they weren't. The human continuum was alive because of all these differences, in any case. There were Water-bearers to Rabbits, INFJ's to ENTP's, 27/9's to 30/3's; there were Passive personalities and Dominant personalities, there were Social personalities and Achievement personalities, there were Innovators and Visionaries, there were Jewels and Streams, and something called a Shaker; all of this written into the 'canvas' of each human at conception.

The 'song' sung by a human soul changed over their lifetime, but this was deeply affected by what a human came into life here with individually, what experience they had as they walked this world, and what education and even type of education they received. It seemed that how much self-honesty, and honesty with other humans, and how much effort they made, either *sung their song* loud, softly, badly, or not at all. Some saw the animal and the soul as the 'canvas', some saw the animal only. Some saw the 'canvas' as more of an indicator of a person, while others saw that the canvas's response to 'nurture' was more so; most though saw a mixture, a tandem relationship, or a symbiotic one. Some believed we could mould ourselves, while others thought that 'A leopard never changes its spots'. So *incalculable* was the human continuum that even humans were still working on it.

There was so much more, and Crash let it all roll through his central processor as the music played in the cabin of the big red pickup, and the scenery

rolled by. It sat in the background, as somehow it was not music and colour. The data was itself, somehow lifeless.

CRASH ROLLED INTO THE TRUCKSTOP. He parked beside the gas pump with the music playing loud. It was a little odd as it was classical baroque music; Handel's Water Music, at full volume. A man walked up to his window, and even though more than taken aback by Crash's tattoos, told him to get a set of headphones. The only strange thing about this command to Crash was that the man said that it was for The Uncreated's sake that he should do so. The man had used another Name, but to Crash the Name he now used was the most efficient demarcation. In any case, he could not imagine that it would bother The Uncreated *at all*, but because a human had requested it he would comply if it was possible.

...Actually he had to comply with such a definite command or shut down."

"Oh, noo!"

"Don't worry. He will. He had to comply, Emma..."

Crash only had a certain amount of cash left from old man Jesson. He was unsure of the availability of headphones here and what they might cost. He left the red pickup near the gas pump and went to check for headphones first. Then he would calculate his petrol situation. He walked into the main convenience store area and started to look around. Thankfully there were many kinds, and at prices which he computed would allow for enough petrol, considering the miles per gallon so far and the price of gas.

He picked up a pair of light grey noise cancelling headphones. There were cheaper ones, but there would still be enough for gas, and they would more efficiently stop any leakage of the sound from music he played. There was also an adaptor in the pack that fit an input/output port on the side of his midriff. There was another port up behind one his vibrational input collectors ...*his right ear*... but it had been damaged when Bob had hit him. And as fate would have it, Bob hit him again as he came out of the store. He hit him with his car this time and our dear friend was dragged along a bit.

Bob shot out of *car*, pretending to be mortified. Crash's colours were showing of course, so when he called out, "Oh, thank God! It's only a bot," people were less concerned.

They milled around to get a look at the robot though. There were all kinds of comments about his colourings and how lucky it that he was not a real person. People were curious, so Bob could not just take him away. He was a calculating man, and he would have bided his time until Crash was on the highway and away from sight of other people before he did this, but he was afraid that this was maybe his last and only chance to get a hold of *the merchandise*. Fear and want can be like that. They always made it seem like a last chance to get something or be happy, so people acted hastily under their influence.

In any case, Crash was off again in all his wiring and computational drives; now in even greater damage. So much so, that he entered a strange place. It was not a 'good' place, and he could only see a yard in any direction. A feeling of loss

filled his 'feeling', but thankfully, and strangely to this AI, now that his danger diode was reversed, *also* feeling a strong sense of joy.

The Fulcrum

Crash eventually found his way to the edge of the heavy fog. He looked back and could still see nothing, so he stepped out. As he did, both bad 'feels' fell away. He walked up the long incline of a green grassy hill and at the very top he caught a view of a city of lights; one he had had a glimpse of before. It was from Fae's flying vehicle, and just before he had heard the words of the Lakota man.

He was very happy that his mobility functioning was back at full effectiveness; only now realising just how damaged he had been. He wondered...*yes wondered...*at the changeable nature of the human continuum. It seemed hard sometimes and not at others, no matter his damage.

The city was bright, even in the light of day; strangely, as apparent as it was in the night. The light of this city all came from itself, not from the sun that lit all about it. Well, to *his* visual input at least.

"You're just a barking dog," came a disembodied voice on the breeze.

"I'm an intelligent robot," stated Crash, in clarifying response.

But there was no response from the voice as Crash looked around seeking visual evidence of who had spoken to him. He could not see anyone, but he was not frustrated at all. As he was AI, he did not fall to such things, even though he had an emotion chip, and even though his 'feel' was powered up again here. He had become very accepting *...if that is the right word...* of the strange nature of the continuum, and his 'feel' was not emotional, it was a sense, a knowing; a wider, more essential, gathering from all his data.

...Humans have even more access to 'feel'. Our emotions tell us things, we may gather inklings that come unbidden, and we have intuition, which rises from the wider wisdom of our life experience. In meditation we can also access deeper knowledge somehow, and I used it often in my work. As well as when my mind, or really, my brain, was too tired or overstretched, I would use feel to seek out information or memories I needed. I use that kind of feel much more now that I am older."

"How, Grandpa?"

"Well, when my work got more and more complex, I would get a feeling that there was something wrong with a new thought in my process. I 'felt' it, and I felt for the answer in my previous work, usually finding why I was on the wrong track. Using 'feel' to access my memory instead of my brain. It saved me a lot of brain effort and fatigue, and sometimes I was pushing so hard mentally, that searching, purely cognitively, was not an option. I just didn't have any more brain power left over."

"Was that inner vision?"

“No, I call it using my soul to find something, Inner vision is more about asking a question and seeing dream like imagery play out in your mind’s eye, or hearing a word or sentence immediately you ask. You could call that inner hearing, I suppose. There is other inner sight and hearing in gathering meaning and allusions from Revelation, but all these are focusing the soul on something to find solutions or attain knowledge beyond our own learning. A good deal of invention rises from inner vision, even if we don’t realise it. We don’t need cables or wi-fi to access it, but we do need a connection to a deeper reality within us.

In any case, a wider gathering from all his data was unusual for Crash...

As he made his way towards the City of Light, it never seemed to come closer. This certainly did not compute at all, but no matter how hard he strove to reach it, it remained a good distance away; even more strangely, it never moved.

Crash stopped after a time realising the futility of his effort. He could see that he was powerless to achieve reaching it, so he started searching for data on human cities that could not be reached. There seemed to be no such city. The question chip then went back to the ‘barking dog’ for some reason, but understanding of this phrase, and the city, seemed impossible, and he again felt powerless.

“You may now proceed,” came another call of the breeze. “We may find, and enter, that Great City. We may partake of its peace and wellbeing. We may gather sustenance from its abundantly growing fruits, but it is *never* ours. We are but barking dogs in the dawn telling travellers of its nearness.”

“I do not understand.”

“You may proceed.”

It was a *human* voice that he heard, so he followed its instruction, and as he walked on, he came upon many wondrous *...incomputable, but with a great 'feel'...* mysteries, which wandered low in the sky. There always seemed to be far more questions, than answers, when he reached them, even though they were very apparent and 'good'. The lit city still kept its distance as he wandered, or as he finally computed, it was that the incomputable laws of the continuum kept him from nearing it. At each new high point in the hills, where he could reach proximity to the wondrous mysteries, he could see the city again and humans entering it; others travelling to it, and by it, but *he* could not.

As he wandered this strange place his programming naturally mapped it, and his route. These wonders circled around, at varied distances from, the Great City. They radiated out from it like the Milky Way spirals out from its fulcrum and were in motion like its stars. He could see 'places' too; towns and villages; also radiating out in the same pattern, but stationery, and on the ground. He sat upon a very high green hill watching the light and mysteries turn about the city and out even into the night beyond the far horizons.

These 'places' had their own relative, distance and position, in relation to the lit city, but they seemed to have been born out of it. They were also multiplying as people left the city and built new 'places', and the strange but beautiful light of this Great City flowed out and washed over them, in great streams. If Crash had been programmed for awe, he could not have helped but feel it. He just kept computing, while 'feeling' the gentle clear energy radiating out of the city.

"Your programming is not enough."

"But *humans* enter the city, and *their* programming is dysfunctional generally speaking."

"There is much programming *out there*; of all kinds," answered the voice, as Crash's attention was somehow drawn out to the dark periphery beyond all the 'places'. "People out there seek to recreate other people in *their own* particular image and likeness."

There were storms on the part of the horizon he had looked to, and they seemed to have been growing in intensity over the time he had been here. "Time?" his chip then questioned, but he could not compute the time he had been here. Again, he accepted the strange new reality of this place, as it seemed that even experience was not chronological or to do with physical distance here. He could even feel the City's existence far beyond the gentle clear energy of the bounds of the streams of light.

"There is *nothing* beyond the Great City. It encompasses all things."

"There is darkness and storms beyond its light," Crash replied, as he caught sight of the great bamboo scaffolding in a sudden barrage of lightning. "They are not safe!" called out Crash, extrapolating wind forces and turbulence affecting the humans climbing the somewhat swaying bamboo structure.

"No one is safe," stated the voice, "and even the storms are not beyond the Light."

"That does not compute."

"It does not to your small ability."

"I am able to far outstrip any human in visual acuity. I was also programmed with more intelligence than even a thousand humans, and as I learn, I exponentially advance far beyond human thought potential."

"But you cannot understand this place, you cannot *know* it, even though you 'see' it, and you cannot reach the Great City. You see, intellect is the longest road to that City."

"Intellect would use the quickest route."

"Yet humans may traverse this distance to the Great City, with lesser intelligence. They use their intellect in this, but *their* intellect can even stop them from reaching it."

"These realities are..."

"They do not...*compute*, *do they*. But indeed, they are before you."

If a robot could be *dumfounded*, again Crash would have been, but he simply took the input the human voice had provided and continued to compute and extrapolate and observe what he saw. He then took many different entry points into the collected and collated data, and used different computational fulcrums around which he tried to order what he was experiencing.

Each effort was insufficient to explain this place, and he finally concluded that the nature and factors of the human continuum *may be limitless*; or was it, that he was limited. '*Lesser than*' was easier than 'infinite', as the human continuum could just as well be limited. Crash had solved nothing, but he had seen complexity that was beyond him.

"I am *not* enough. I have to accept the nature of this place as I can perceive it."

"*That is humility.*"

"I am not programmed for humility."

"Yes. But on your arrival here, *you used it.*"

He then recalled his powerlessness in failing to reach The City on his arrival, before being instructed that 'He may now proceed'."

"I *accepted* it, but still *continued* to seek answers."

"Yes."

"The human continuum *does* exceed my intelligence."

"Ahh, yes. You may now proceed."

... "*I don't get it either, Grandpa.*"

"*This stuff can be hard for our minds, Em'. And you are young yet.*"

"*I get it a bit, but no wonder Crash is struggling.*"

"*I think we all do, a little; even with our own reality, Tom.*"

"*I really get it.*"

"*You probably are, Sally, your intelligence is widening, deepening, and exploring these things.*"

“Yep!”

“Can you explain it to me, Sally?”

“Maybe when you’re my age, Em’, we can discuss it. I’m going to get a discussion going on this part of the story next time we have youth group, Grandpa.”

“It would be a great subject to dig into, Sally. I’m sure you’ll all enjoy it.”

“Can you send me a copy?”

“I’ll send you this part now, and the whole story once we’ve finished.”

“I’m glad you wrote it down.”

“There was so much, and much so meaningful, that I had to write Crash’s story down. I did it on the rest of my holiday at the lake. Gran was not particularly happy, but she saw how important it was to me. She wouldn’t tell you this, but she was really taken by Crash. She even said that he was disarming and felt bad about how broken he was when he turned up...”

One word in the voice’s last sentence now called out to the AI. The salient word was, ‘proceed’. How should he proceed, if he could not, in fact, proceed, in understanding this impossible continuum? If it was beyond him, it seemed inefficient to continue. But he decided to check one of the seeming anomalies, anyway, asking, “You said that nothing is beyond the city?”

“That is definitely so.”

“But the darkness and the storms are well beyond the energy and the light of The City?”

"The ferment is created by two elements, the activating force and the particular substance," started the voice on the breeze.

Crash was very happy to hear that answer, even though it needed some qualifying. It was cause and effect based. Something he knew well, so He was now glad he had *proceeded*.

"He was, happy?"

"He said he was. I remember that. I asked him about that, and he said that he 'felt' a computational easing and energy surge along with it. He said that he also 'felt' this way when he went to some other places in the human continuum; places where his active movement systems seemed to work better."

"So, he could be happy?"

"Well, we did put a variable stressor response programme in Crash. We worked on a spectrum control that would represent the difference between tired people all the way to more energised ones; for putting him through the same crash scenarios at different energy levels. There was also an adrenaline boost when people were in an accident, so we had to try and mimic that in Crash too...Okaaay...so that's why his danger diode easily changed to joy. It was part of that setup."

"Still learning about your own work, Grandpa."

"Always, Tom."

"What force?" asked Crash.

"The Great City is the City of True Understanding. All pivots and flows around the Great Fulcrum at its core; the '*Oneness of Humankind*'. The city grows at the same rate and intensity as the chaos, *seemingly* beyond it, does. They are inherently linked. Its driving power is limitless as it renews and reinvigorates, restores, and transforms; all while, that which is *not of It* is allowed to gain momentum in the ferment, breakdown, and be cast away. That which has no true fulcrum, no foundation, will do so; they will simply dissipate or break up in chaotic breakdown.

Only time stands between the final realisations of what is true, and what is not true, in the human continuum. The *active force* is *true understanding*, and the *particular substance* it acts upon is the human continuum; each human soul, the human collective consciousness, and the 'places' of humanity."

"So, the darkness will retreat?"

"As it has done in the past. The Sun needs to rise on each new day for life to continue, after the night has done its work. The Springtime needs to come, lest all the other seasons be wasted. Winter must fall away, and the Earth regain more light and warmth for life to spring up again. To stay in the night, to stay in winter, is to die. Only a fool would wish such things."

The nature of the forces at play in this place were now more apparent to Crash, and he wandered off to explore one of the 'places'. A verdant valley held this village, and it was tucked in around the bends, and on both sides, of a river that flowed through it from east to west. There was a building there, somewhat circular, with doors spaced evenly around its circumference. This building seemed to be the

fulcrum of this place, and all flowed out around it, like the Great City flowed out around the Great Fulcrum.

As Crash walked down towards the village the voice came to him again, saying, "We need to be lovers of the Light. It does not matter where it may rise from. It is apparent anywhere when we have eyes to see. Roses bloom in many places, so we need seek truth from whatever source it may flow."

He walked along the gentle streets of the village towards the central building. The folk seemed busy with life, but not at all rushed. They seemed to pay little attention to him, just a smile and a nod here and there. He walked into the garden that surrounded the building, and there was even more peace here, like a centre of calm in the eye of a storm. He wandered around the gardens listening to the birds and viewing the many varied plants, trees, and shrubs, all with their own flowers and fruits and scent. Butterflies wafted around them, and bees were busy at their work like in the late winter and early spring. The trees seemed alive with them.

It was good to have a gentler input here, and it was less busy. It had been very busy since he had originally entered the human continuum. The test facility *had* been simpler and ordered, but it was not 'calm' like this place. Crash only now realising that he had *a/ways* been in the human continuum. He had been activated there, worked there, and had simply issued forth from the womb of the test facility into the wider, deeper, human kingdom. This was strange computing, but it had some correlation with the nature of this particular venture into the continuum.

"Yes. Rebirth. The storms and the Great City. This building is a place where all may enter and be. Rest and meditate. Here *any* may commune with their God or

settle their heart, no matter their race, creed, or culture. Rational truth, reason, scientific truth, and deeper truth is one here. *All* may find a 'place' here."

Crash entered the building and sat down, feeling the convergence of heart, mind, and spirit; a place for all. The voice had enhanced his 'feel' a little more and he meditated *...silenced his processors...* as he sat there.

Soon after, many humans entered this place; words of true understanding were then spoken, and voices rose in song with no instruments. He loved music, but this place of words, of silence and human voices, gave him deeper insight into the nature of man; into humans. The Words spoke mostly of the essential unity of the human continuum and the end of contention.

He spent some time in that place before he 'felt' to wander elsewhere. It was almost as though he had different functioning here, and he wandered around the village, as was natural.

...Wow, but he isn't natural."

"No, Tom. I don't begin to understand how he was operating at these times when he was heavily damaged. To me, it was like he was meant to be, or a deeper message, no matter what his friend Benny may have thought."

"Yes, but he was helping draw the dark comet."

"Maybe he was both."

"That's very human, Sal. Anyway..."

The chatter of children *...or to Crash, little humans...or young humans, but he called them, little humans...* filled the air, drawing Crash in that direction. This lovely sound was flowing out of a great yard that surrounded another building here. There was a certain life energy in all this chattering. It made him feel 'light' and 'happy'. A couple of adults and three youth now came out of the building and called the children of different ages inside. The children were ten human years and younger from his calculations, and although they all eventually went in, there was some 'unstructured' response to the call.

There was patience and love in the eyes of those who gathered them in, one even stopping to look at, and discuss, what a small group of children were a little too intent on to come in when they were called. Even in the unstructured nature of this small group there was an underlying flexible structure that existed for their nurture. He gathered its scent wafting out of this smaller building, a fulcrum itself; and even more strangely, also from the human fulcrums, who it seemed, provided classes for these children.

Crash followed the last group in. There were paintings on the walls and children sitting in separate circles on the ground as again Words were spoken. After that, more words were spoken, as humans are creatures of language. The first words and the second words were different words, and even though he did not understand the difference, he could feel it. In any case, the classes began and there were all kinds of activities, from colouring to small plays, to memorizing a small quote. There were stories told at varying levels of comprehension, but all seemed

to be focused toward comprehension of what was 'noble' and how to '*be noble*' in life.

The foundation and energy of this village rose from the children up all the way to the old, as all work, play, creativity, invention, material needs, social interaction and all other aspects rose from a spiritual base. There was respect and justice even in the classes that called these young souls to nobility. Gathering understanding of the higher human qualities within them was the earth beneath their feet. The two main purposes of these classes were to grow these powers, these qualities of their inherent nobility, and to form a connection with The Creator.

Crash could relate to the latter, most especially, because he definitely sought to connect with *his* creator. There was something true and important in that, and he sat like a child in the back of one of the classes as he learned more about why. The children in this class certainly did like having an adult there learning with them, but in reality, the adults and youth were also learning.

Understanding was presented in simple concepts at this age, but it was a sure foundation for them, and for all things in this village. Even for scientific learning and advancement, for endeavour and material advancement. The spirit underscored all activity, no matter its nature. In these 'places' science opened up and advanced unfettered by greed, and material development in these seemingly poorer 'places' was far greater than could have been imagined before.

It seemed to Crash that, what was *good*, created what was *good* to a greater level. Spirit was not separate from life, or simply an aspect of it. It wove itself through everything and fertilised new invention. Just like a plant growing, reaching

up, and becoming more day by day, it created a unified effort of all levels and in all aspects of life. All here rose from, and for, love and justice, unleashing energy and creating nurture.

Crash eventually followed a youth from this place to another, as again, it seemed natural to do so. She was part of a group of youths who read stories and answered questions about them. They discussed the nature of the world and what they saw around them. They came to think for themselves and understand the currents underlying life. They learned that they were not only affected by the world, but also that they could effect change in it.

It was very active learning as they went about various services for their community. The youth that Crash had followed was helping with the children's class, as that was what this youth found joy in and believed they had a talent for. These young saplings were finding what they loved doing, or what they were good at, by doing the various service projects in the long-term efforts that helped to grow their community. This group, and each youth, carried the Great Fulcrum within them and energy and light flowed around them.

There were fulcrums on fulcrums on fulcrums here, people and groups which activity and light circled around. The active learning of these youths put them in good stead for what they may do for work later in life, and in decisions on relationships and families beyond that; they came to know themselves better. They had even developed courses here for these crucial life decisions, even though compilations of wisdom already flowed out from the Great City at the centre of all

these 'places'. *Community* had become *something* again in these places; loving places, sharing places, connected places, growing living places.

The youths seemed focused on transforming themselves and actively transforming their village. These two purposes would be a lifelong effort, as they were core drives in adults too. These two intentions were for always, not just for them now ...*This 'second wave of new life', the time between eleven and fifteen, is a great force in the world and this rite of passage a fulcrum in itself...* Crash could see this youth fulcrum creating leverage for change, creating energy, and anchoring new movement around its centre, as it looked with more energetic and with purer eyes into the balances in society.

"Our village has no drug problem because there is no more soil for such things to grow. No fuel for such destructive fires to grow, and no air to support it," came a lady's voice. This time from a person; a mother there to help with the group. "Roses grow here, the young trees grow to fruiting, and happiness fills our beings."

Crash found, that with those words, he was moved; without moving. He had left the place of youth and was now sitting among a group of adult humans. They were under a tree, sitting easily in their chairs in the shade as they read from books and discussed many things. While they gathered the wisdom of the Great City there, what they called *true understanding*, they each had their own view of it; each in relation to their own understanding, or way. All gained from the others' views, and no one imposed their view on another, especially those whose service it

was to provide some structure for the study. All adults, all equal in their differences; all allowed to see as they did and make their own way home.

Humans were indeed in charge of their own destiny, *even with* the programming they came in with, and the paths of fate. Crash had already learned that on his journey, but it was here that he saw the *adult* nature of the acceptance of the Great City, and *their* particular journey with it; even though most of the souls in this adult study, and indeed in the children's classes and youth groups, were not adherents of The City of Light. They just saw its beauty and power, so wanted to take part; to help love grow in the *places* of the world, and for their children to be stronger and nobler. And...it was now suddenly apparent to Crash who the Rainbow People were that the Lakota man had talked about.

These adult studies taught spiritual insights and skills to build communities, or rebuild them, from the ground up, from the grassroots. The courses taught skills in finding meaning, sharing meaning, teaching children's classes, telling stories, animating youth, sharing ideas, and even how to facilitate all these adult study circles. Later books shared other aspects of true understanding, encouraged unity, and ways on how to accompany others in community building. They had even grown to the point where participants could learn skills for wider social and economic development projects.

It was for no one here, in the study group, or among the adherents of The Great City to 'tell' another, but certainly more understanding was sought through those who were deepened in aspects of the nature of it. There were no leaders here, only servants, and while there was certainly not perfection, there was the

striving towards being more, understanding more, being more selfless, and being more loving.

All the many varied fulcrums here, these centres of activity, spiralling out and adding energy were themselves evolving; all but The Great Fulcrum at the centre of all the 'places', and The Great City. They simply *were*. The core tenet of the oneness of humanity was immovable, *complete* until a new Fulcrum came to the human continuum; a new Fulcrum around which all may flow, be stabilised, and gain momentum.

Moderation was a deep essence of all these 'places' and it stabilised all these 'fulcrums on fulcrums'. Crash could see the contrasting reality between this place and the highway, and between this place and the noisy crowd below the Great Mirror. *Extremes* of any kind in the human continuum leant toward chaos and division and breakdown. There *was* room for chaotic fulcrums of creativity, and the arts were treasured, but also within the guard of moderation. Just as droughts and floods were simply destructive, extremes in the human continuum were too.

In this time of humanity's youth, in the wider human continuum, the lesson of moderation would be hard won, but moderation seemed to Crash to be a simple understanding that could guide it quickly away from 'the night' and 'the storm'. Another great calmer of the storm was if humans could accept other humans as they were and not as others wished them to be, then the winds would die down considerably.

"We all have a life of chances to grow more open of heart and act for love first," came the original voice on the wind. "We need look more *to ourselves* to be

more. We need to be kind and honest with people; honest with ourselves about our own flaws, humble, and even *welcome* hard tests, appreciating humiliation's power to free us from our 'selves' and 'the world'. The endless talk, and chatter about the flaws of others destroys the spirit. It just destroys life, and it destroys us. It creates 'the storm' on all the levels that it exists in the human continuum."

"Talk?"

"The great destroyer. A human's most noble power, wasted in excess, and on intrigues and hate. Yet even with all this wasted energy and the storms it creates, the light of the equality of men and women, the light of the equality of all humans no matter their race, the light of respect and good stewardship for the precious jewel of nature, the light of independent search for truth, are all relatively rising."

The scene faded away and, in the transition, came the voice old Mr Jesson.

"It's *all* about love, young Crash; *selfless* love, 'cause real human love *is* selfless. All those fulcrums need to be anchored by, powered by, and for, that great force. Otherwise, they will not stand. The human continuum, as you call it, is falling apart because it's using lesser forces than love to live by, and function. They aren't enough, boy. Most folks sadly misunderstand its power, and at times, even think they love, and act with love, when its lesser things drivin' 'em.

Love is what life's *all* about and what we *actually* come here to learn about, to my reckoning. It takes more than '*clever*' to remedy life's challenges; to make life better for folks. It takes heart and some effort.

To finish, I might just read this thing my mother wrote for me...

You can't feign love or find love. You can't arrange it and you can't prepare it. You have to live it, allow it, nurture it. It is the pure outward flowing force of the human soul. It has to be real, made true by seeing things though, and it needs be honest.

If it is not these things, then it is other things. If it is not these things, it is not true. It is our mind, or a lesser glue.

You see, only love loves."

Death

Crash woke up on the cement driveway of the truck stop. The hit and drag from Bob's vehicle had pushed him out from under the huge roof over the gas pumps. He was on his back and saw an eagle high in the sky, turning slowly, and it slowly rose higher and higher until he could not see it. His vision was accurate and very good, but for testing purposes it had to meet a median human standard; even though they did test once for different levels of sight acuity on the skid pan.

A butterfly then landed on his nose and his head tilted to the side a little. That made Bob feel like throwing up, after looking up to see what Crash was looking at in the sky, and now the butterfly; such was the sadness of his state.

...It's like he's a kid like Emma."

"I'm, not a kid. I'm big!"

"Do you mean Crash or Bob, Tom?"

"Well, both I suppose."

"Yep. They're both like kids, Grandpa."

"Yes, there's an innocence in Crash, Sally, and a lost child in Bob. Shame about Bob, but glad I never met him..."

"I can't stand butterflies and eagles, Crash. Butterflies are all transformation and fulfilling potential. Eagles fly too high and see too well and too wide. Scope and vision make for *good* decisions, and you *know* I don't like *that*. You are *too* much of both, *and* you're my *meal ticket*, so you got'a go."

An old woman then hit Bob from behind with her purse. There was something very heavy in it, as it knocked Bob out.

"Thank you. He is a bad man."

"Oh, I know. Been *watching* young Bob here," explained the old woman, in a British accent as she dragged Bob's dead weight around behind a large natural gas tank and dusted off her hands.

"Who are you?"

"I work for Spirarm 2. Something like your CIA, but we have a much wider jurisdiction. Bob's been here too long.'

"How long?"

"A *very* long time. His time is nearly over; well *relatively* speaking, so we are watching his movements, as it were."

"As it were?"

"I thought you were an intelligent robot."

"I am. But I am always learning. Why would Spirarm want to help me?"

"It doesn't. I did. A sense of justice exists within all fully sentient beings, and well, I kind of enjoyed knocking the stuffing out of Bob."

"Isn't that bad?"

"No. Well, it's not very ladylike, but there you go," she retorted, with a cheeky smile and a wink, as she leant down to pick Crash up.

Crash could not compute that last small phrase. Questioning why she had said that, while also trying to compute how she had more strength than a woman her age and stature would seem to possess.

"I hear your name is Crash," she said, as she finally got Crash upright.

"That is my designation," he answered, not knowing why or even questioning how this lady knew his name.

"Oh, that's a bit *dry* for a bot *like you*. Crash is your *name*, and mine's Maureen."

"A *pleasure* to make your *acquaintance*, Maureen."

"Oh, *nice* data search, young man. *Bravo!*"

Crash smiled, unsure where the command for that particular greeting came from, and he fell back down.

...He smiled?!"

"He smiled at the beginning of the story."

“But that was to make the humans feel at ease. This was just a smile, right, Grandpa.”

“I don’t know. That’s just what he recounted to me. The story moved on and I didn’t get a chance to ask a question about it; about that and many other things for that matter...”

Maureen could see how damaged her new AI friend was. There was no way he was going to be able to get to his vehicle, let alone drive. She helped him to the passenger seat of the red pickup and went back to put a tracker on Bob. She was going to take Crash to his destination, something she also somehow knew about, in fulfilling a duty that she had not yet shared with this likeable crash-test dummy. She filled the gas tank, which was providential because Crash would not have had enough gas with what he had left over from his purchase of the headphones, and she got behind the wheel, saying, “Well, here we go.”

“*Road trip!*” called out Crash, again not really knowing where that came from. He was very damaged and data; anecdotal, scientific, academic, theoretical, as well as songs, movies, poetry, prose, podcasts and blogs, were all now mixing with his own experience.

“Yes. It would seem so,” agreed Maureen, now a little more taken by Crash. “*This will be interesting,*” she thought, with a curious smile.

Crash certainly looked the part as he had donned the headphones he had purchased in the shop. He now bobbed his head gently as this strange company of two now drove down the highway to find Crash’s creator.

MAUREEN LIFTED THE NEARER EARPIECE OFF A LITTLE after a while. She was on for some company, rather than a boring drive, saying to Crash, "Let's talk."

Crash, of course, complied. He appreciated the music and would have enjoyed continuing to listen to it, but a direction was to be obeyed.

"How's your programming now. Have you worked on the glitches?"

"Glitches?"

"Glitches," sated Maureen.

Crash's head went to the side. He had not attempted any reordering of his data input, and stated, "It is as it is, Maureen."

"Well, I'm glad we can talk."

"Most people would be glad they can talk, Maureen. Some humans can't, you know; functionally or psychologically."

"No, I am glad that you and I can have a conversation."

"Yes, Maureen. I would be 'glad' too, Maureen."

"A little less of the *Maureens*, please. You'll give me a headache."

"Is not a person's name very important to them?" he asked, not realising that he had never spoken out loud any human name before, let alone demarcated a human, *a person*, except for Bob and Benny.

"Yes, it is, and some people like their own name *a little too much*. I know a fellow who loved to say his name in the third person. Jimmy did this. Jimmy loves

that. He even used his self-appointed nickname at times which was even more disconcerting. 'The Jiminator got it done', and 'Well, the Jimminator told him'."

Crash did not understand why that would be a problem as it clearly demarcated the person he was talking about. It was efficient communication, and he said so.

"Your programming is *really shot*, my friend," retorted Maureen.

"Human programming is much more confused, but that does not make *it* 'shot'."

"Well, no, but you're a bot."

"I have found terabytes of human programming in the data to be confused, evidentially lacking, and ideologically biased; cultural, political, social, societal; in the media, mass media; across the spectrum from fundamentalists all the way to what simply seems to be a lack of data. Many of these influences are even intertwined impossibly within various humans. Add to that the human ego, the headlong race for more money, the human need for social acceptance, and the truth falls to all these inefficient fulcrums. Bad or erroneous programming fails to fulfil good outcomes in what humans call the 'frenzied' rush for things of the world and the prizes of the ego."

All this had Maureen smiling, as Crash went on, "Humans tend more to believe in their own lies and in information that comes to them with little, to no, basis in evidence, especially with the mass information portals peddling impossible amounts of information and disinformation. 'Propaganda', as humans call it, is also

peddled by all kinds of interests; most especially those driven by greed and various over-zealous ideologies.

Moderation, and seeking out the most reliable sources, need to temper and power the search for truth. Healthy fulcrums need be established for information to be gathered around; a pure heart, justice, seeing through our own eyes. Humans so desire the many varied forms of self-delusion and propaganda of their group. It is inefficient and *'sad'* that a human mind can be so lost in lies of its own making and in endless omissions of facts and evidence that are created to program them, sending their lives and their souls down blind alleyways of *'so called knowledge'*."

"Touché, Crash."

Crash just tilted his head at his own words. He fell silent, again, did not really understand where that all came from. His main processor could not compute his own words and it was struggling. But a memory from his visit to the City, or more so the fulcrums around it, then settled this computational query on his own systems. He had remembered that he would have to humble and wait to proceed; to give time for his main processor to digest the changes; this new reality within his programming and processors. He then recalled those high on the bamboo scaffolding and how humility was the key to making it further up. It was in not *'knowing'*. It was in powerlessness and acceptance that adversity and confusion could fall, advancement be gained, and higher functioning understood.

It was then that his questioning chip fired off a query, "How do you know my name? How do you know where I am going?"

"*Ahh!* The *penny* drops. Well, I had a rather informative little chat with young Mister Planet. We consult from time to time; keep the lines of communication open, so to speak."

"You are speaking."

"Ohh, please catch up, Crash. *English* accent. I'm *English*, so I speak the vernacular and its variations."

Crash computed and found himself in a wonderland of words and phrases that played around in his head. It was like the music he had grown to appreciate.

"It's *wonderful*. It's beautiful."

"Yes, it's my preference when I'm here. There's magic in all languages, even language itself, but I quite enjoy this one. Words are less appreciated and less sacred these days. Shame it is so dumbed down and made weak in general society here at the moment."

"It is not appreciated?"

"No, people, *generally* speaking, no longer see its magic, or *use* its magic. Anyway, young Ben told me about you and his readings, and as I was following Bob, he asked me if I could keep a look out for you. Apparently, Bob already had one shot at you when he gave me the slip recently, and he was just ahead of me when he got you again. Sorry about that."

"Are you here to help me, or to make sure that I comply?"

"Both...*if required*. You see, we keep humans safe too; well, them and others in Section 12 of the Second Spiral Arm. We nullify threats to the order of things on many planets. Earth is just one of them."

Crash looked impressed ...*actually he told me he was...* and Maureen responded to it, saying, "It's all pretty *boring* really. It's mostly paperwork and permits; very little of the good stuff, like hitting unsavoury characters over the head with a brick in your purse."

...*She's funny.*"

"She is. It would have been interesting to meet her, or know how Crash made her up..."

"I had no protection against Bob."

"Of course you did."

"He is *human*."

"Not sure about that, but all you had to do was be *circumscribed*. If you had seen him and walked up to *him*, he would have caved, and melted away like ice cream in the summer sun. The likes of him are weak, but if let run unchecked, can destroy lives, countries, and whole worlds."

"Is that an exaggeration?"

"Do you have data on a fellow named Adolf Hitler, or a 'gentleman' named Pol Pot? Have you heard of the Rwandan genocide? When thugs gain power, when people are told what to think, when people are dehumanised, then violence most surely is on the way. The mass killings and the gulags of the Soviet Union, and the

death camps of the Nazi Final Solution, show what happens. Your world has been plunged into years of world war and god-awful oppression. The Cold war too, was indeed, not cold. These tore many lives, and countries, apart.”

Crash accessed data on these names and events. It was a terrible list, and as he accessed these and then other atrocities beyond them, his programming, actually his nobility chip, stopped cold on one story. It was under a photo of a young girl in what some called death camp pyjamas. Her face showed the respectful attention of a child in class, while her short hacked off hair, a bleeding lip, and her apparel, echoed the complete loss of her story.

Her name was Czeslawa Kwoka, and her crime was being Polish, Catholic, and 14 years old. Her red triangle was for political prisoners, because of where she was born in Poland.

After this photo was taken, she was killed in Auschwitz extermination camp on March 12, 1943 with a phenol injection in the heart. Just before the execution, she was photographed by prisoner Wilhelm Brasse, who would later testify against the executioner of Czeslawa, a woman.

Just before the photo, the executioner punched Czeslawa in the face, as the hematoma on her lip shows. This is the face of a terrified little girl, who didn't even speak the language of her executioner. She had lost her mother a few days before. But she dried her tears to look presentable for the photo. They took her hair and her life, but they couldn't take her dignity.

She was only one of about 250,000 children and minors who were executed in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

This is what happens when hatred is cultivated in a nation and thugs gain control. If you don't think could happen here, you need to read Gulag Archipelago.

...It's good to cry, kids. It is a terrible story, but very important to hear and remember. So, we never let it happen again and so she didn't die for nothing; so, we honour her lesson for us...

"Why did Spirarm not keep humans safe in these times?" asked Crash, as he now gathered even more of the devastating data of these and other historical human atrocities; other stories of ordinary people in terrible circumstances like Czeslawa.

"We are barred from intervening in some things. Like a child, humanity had to grow up, and the only way for it to *finally* learn was to allow this to happen to such a degree that they could not ignore it. There were so many wars, wars on wars; an endless succession of them even before these times, in the childhood of humanity. But childhood eventually passes, youth rises, and finally, maturity beckons; even if sometimes much too hard won. The sad thing is, there are still such things existent in this world, and there may yet be more of them before humanity finally rises to adulthood."

"Why do humans ignore the data and take the hard way?"

"That is in the nature of free will, but it has always been a mystery to me too. Humans don't like to be told; I suppose. Most individual humans seem to have to experience outcomes and consequences, and so humanity as one creature is the

same. The lower nature of humans, and humanity, that drive them to such things, and even much smaller injustices, is resilient and a constant challenge to overcome.”

“But how did these evil men gain power? Surely humans are not that childish, or so unaware of the historical data?”

“These dark creatures and their many willing accomplices often blame another group, or even create an enemy for people to hate. They sometimes even call out for things like the freedom of the oppressed poor, using the good nature in people to curry favour, and these destructive ideologies grow strong before people are aware. Or maybe they just allow large groups of people to fall to what is lesser in them. One way or another, giving power to angry people and thugs is a ‘down bound train to hell’. The Rwandans, I believe, even thought they were protecting themselves, because they were misinformed and beat up into a frenzy on the government radio station. Such is the power, and cost, of ignorance.”

“How do humans guard from these thugs.”

“Same advice as I had for you, Crash. Be circumscribed.”

“There would need to be more than that to save such things happening.”

“*Think for yourself.* When someone wants you to hate a group or dehumanise *any* people; beware, beware. Hate brings the thugs to power no matter the reason. Hate is the fire of war and destruction. Love your fellow man and don’t follow any ideology that separates you from your human family.”

“I’m not human.”

"Oh. I forgot, there for a moment. I would think it a compliment."

"It is one more reason that I must end my function, it seems."

"That is just so sad. Listen to your music Mr AI. Enjoy the time you have left. We are not far away now."

"I will do what I must."

"You know, you don't have to be all stiff and honourable *all* the time. The duty-bound soul is a beautiful thing, but a little bit of irreverence and a bit 'game' as they call it, *if* it's reasonable, is part of life to. Being perfect is not the goal, striving for it is; even with a good bit of humour. Always being too tied up and duty bound can undo you. Life has many flavours."

"Morality is a goal, is it not?"

"*'Moral fibre'* is. It means to stand when all are falling. It means to love and protect when you have every reason not to. It is not about being all buttoned up in life. There is purity in you Crash, and it is special, but a little mischief for fun does not take away from it. It is part of it."

That was a very hard thing to compute, but as there was now such an eclectic mix of data being drawn in by his internal questions, it almost made sense; strangely for Crash, in quite an efficient amount of time. Maureen's words had found unintended meaning within Crash's new internal awareness. It was then that Crash made a plan. Well, all his systems and eclectic data certainly did, while his central processor watched on and tried to keep up. It was an escape plan, and he knew he would have an opportunity to act on it.

THE OLD RED VEHICLE ROLLED IN BESIDE THE GAS PUMPS, as this old gas-guzzler was thirsty again. Crash had been working feverishly on his motor acuity and systems since he developed his escape plan. Maureen called it Crash calisthenics without being at all aware or at all suspicious of why the AI was doing it.

He worked hard, working, and reworking, things, so he could at least slide over behind the wheel and be able to drive. It was his visual acuity that was the hardest to bring up to enough function, and it was only just as they drove into the small gas station and store that he got enough good function.

Maureen had no idea that her new AI friend had taken her latest life advice to heart, and when Crash, and the red pickup were gone when she came out of the shop after paying for the gas, she smiled like a grandmother happy at the mischief of her grandchild. She looked down the empty road towards their destination, saying out loud, "Good on you, Crash. You learn better than I could have imagined," and then allowed herself loud, "*Ha!*" of triumph against the system. If this act was him fighting for his life, or just some 'play' she would have to see, but she applauded both.

Crash had made a good plan as this was only five miles from the lake house.

"...the little shop down the road from your cabin?"

"Yep. Eli's. Anyway..."

There was every chance that it would at least take a reasonable amount of time for Maureen to catch up. By then Crash would have shared what he needed to

share with his creator and be on his way. This was something he just 'knew' he had to do.

...When Crash finally found me, he was so damaged that could hardly stand up. I was so surprised to see him that I didn't even notice until he asked to sit down."

"Asking to sit down is strange for a robot; even an AI one."

"Crash is special, dummy."

"And he was no dummy."

"All true, kids. Anyway, when he sat down the backlights in his eyes just suddenly powered off..."

Crash found himself on the very top of the bamboo scaffolding where it bordered on space. He looked down and saw only clouds below him, with the scaffold rising up through it. It seemed so flimsy, and quite impossible that the scaffold could hold its structural integrity, let alone hold a human. Then he remembered that it was being built down, not up, which made it even more impossible. The laws of physics as he knew them were definitely not relevant in this part of the human continuum.

He looked across the top of the scaffolding to a doorway of light that humans seemed to be leaving through. He called across to a lady, "What about the others below the mirror?"

"They are still there," she answered, as she turned to go through the doorway of light.

"Can I come with you?"

"You know what you have to do," came her voice from beyond the doorway.

Crash could not help but comply to human commands, and it was partially Maureen not being human that had allowed his disobedience. But he now *knew* that no matter the noise of his now very eclectic data, Maureen's advice, or his escape plan, he *had* to leave the human continuum. It was less about him having to comply to a human command, he just *knew* he *had to*, to keep humans safe. He stood there in the place of sacrifice and pushed off the scaffolding into the weightlessness of space. He began to spin very slowly head over heels, but on a 45-degree angle as he rolled away from the scaffolding. As he drifted out into space, he turned on some music and routed it to his headphones. He slowly tumbled as the music played, looking out to the stars, and down at the earth when it came into view, contemplating his own mortality.

He quickly came to the easily computed conclusion that in a certain time his system would power down. That with no human hand to power him up again out here, or indeed a socket, he would eventually shut off altogether. He strangely started to struggle with the reality of his own mortality. It was a terrible feeling, bringing so much with it; fear, hope, vulnerability, humility, shame, acceptance, but also a great appreciation of all he had learned in his short life. These were all very real to Crash as each of these now had their way with his computations and his emotion chip. It was not enjoyable to grieve for a life soon to end; inevitably to end. But there was triumph there too.

After a time in these terrible computations, and with the dawning of acceptance across all his drives and systems, he looked at the biggest thing he was 'happy' with. It was that he had striven to be more useful; that satisfaction came in simply acting towards his goals. He had ventured out, become more, and succeeded in learning more about humans. He saw that learning and becoming more now seemed to be one thing, and that 'becoming' was what 'life' was. These thoughts *...or computations...* made him 'feel satisfied'. His questioning chip *did* ask if he had fulfilled his potential. He didn't know, but he did know that he had attained the 'ethical' accomplishment of knowing more about humans, how to keep them safe, and now also acting on it by issuing himself out into space.

...He activated again on the old couch in our cabin and started recounting his life to me; asking me what I thought at certain junctures. He told of his adventures, maybe parts of them just his chaotic interactions with fictions, images, and other information from the data dump. But these adventures were destined to only exist in this telling of them, as he eventually explained to me that there could be no hard copy of him left. We talked for a long time, but he was really smashed up, so he mostly just lay there on the old couch as he wandered in his memories, out loud.

It was at the end of this, that he asked, "Have I been useful? Have I fulfilled the required outcomes of my creation?"

I told him that he had exceeded them. He then seemed relieved, and at ease, as his circuits finally succumbed to his injuries; his damage.

I downloaded his drives and memory banks, but he was gone. There was some testing data left there, but not meaning. I started then to wonder at the meaning of his life, and I found, through things that were in his story, and not in it, an understanding of my own life. He had been of great service; much more than he was designed to be. I still reflect on his 'life' and my own. All the sameness and the many differences give me clarity and new insights into life and its meaning; into what it is to be human. I hope it will give you something. Crash is gone, but as you keep memory of him and his time here the story of his life will have meaning. In you, through you, he holds a place in the human continuum.

I like to picture Crash sitting with Benny talking vectors and forces, or him driving that old red pickup in all his colours. There is a kind of celebration in them. But when I picture him slowly spinning off into space with his earphones on and his music playing there, I find a celebration and a sadness which properly honour his short time here.

AUTHOR'S OTHER BOOKS

As human beings we learn, discover, evolve and grow, and what I can give as an author at the time of writing is subjective and relative; and so does not seek to be absolute. There is much in these books that is symbolic, so readers can hopefully find their own perceptions of the concepts, which they may or may not be in agreement with. My main hope for these books is to awaken investigation and discussion; even self-reflection, while also entertaining those who read them.

James D

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH TRILOGY

The first book in this series, *"The Department of Truth"*, is the original adventure of Jack Johnston, who is taken away on a journey of discovery, that he wanted to take, but did not realise it. Its main theme is the search for truth. It is an existential journey, and seeks to explore the nature of truth, and intimate that the continuing journey of humanity is full of promise. It is a wild and wonderful journey that wanders to many different worlds, and places deeper, as it explores universal themes. It hopefully mimics the feelings of awe, questioning, confusion and realisation, of a spiritual journey.

The second book, *"Expectations of Happiness"* seeks to explore the nature of a human being, the nature of this life, and therefore, the nature of happiness here on planet Earth. The main character, Jack, is struggling to get the great things he learned from his first journey, on the ground in life, and is again drawn to places deeper to find answers. *"Expectations of Happiness"* is about meaningful purpose, and connection in life; it is about striving and acceptance; it is

about seeing ourselves as noble, and working at that. It makes it clear that happiness is not something that can be sought within itself, and is not, only an inner, or only an outer experience. The book is mostly about the *personal transformation*, which is required for any *collective human transformation* to occur.

The final book, “*The Halls of Certitude*” attempts to meaningfully explore aspects of finding a sure way forward for humanity, collectively. The human race and its future evolution is a wondrous story to me, not one of darkness that most seem to believe lies ahead. There may be some big tremors, some chaos, and outmoded ideas we have to deal with and cast aside, but the way forward is ripe with new fruit. There is much to share on this subject, and we may find that the answers to building a *new civilisation* are more about local communities, very much simpler than we might have imagined.

The *Search* for knowledge, *Growth* of that knowledge within us, which transforms us, and action in *Service* to others, therefore transforming our world, are key building blocks of life; *the* building blocks to a new future for humanity. “*The Department of Truth*” turned out to be seminal in that way, as its three secondary themes have become the main underlying themes of the three books, respectively.

THE STORYTELLER TRILOGY

This is the author’s second trilogy, and continues on with what will be a series of nine books. It introduces many new characters and renews our connection to some old ones. These books lift the storytelling to new heights.

The first book of “*The Storyteller Trilogy*” is, “*The Storyteller*”. It is a story of the passing into adulthood of two young souls, Able and Eedra, while Eedra’s world and all its peoples are in the same process on a planetary level. It talks to some of the nature of this time in the life of a person, and this time in the evolution of a planet; the challenge, upheaval, but great beauty and potential of these ‘*passings*’. This story holds other stories within it, and all between its covers attends to the theme of crisis and victory.

The second book is, “*Letter to the World*”. It is a prequel to “*The Storyteller*”, and talks to the story of good versus evil. It is a look at humanity through an angel’s eyes, and a street kid and two visitors who get caught up in His mission, the story shows the disjointed psyche of the world, and the distractions that take us from ourselves; mostly our own minds. Also, how we need to battle the forces of decay, by seeing them clearly.

The last novel of the trilogy is “*The Traveller*”. It is a prequel to “*Letter to the World*”, and explores civilisation; its great power, and how we mere mortals may wield that power in our own neighbourhoods; no matter what our own ignorance, or the social norm seeks to put in our way. It also seeks to portray how the great dark force of self is our enemy, and that we are all friends; a human family now finally being united in one river, and one future.

THE KNOWLEDGE TRILOGY

James D Connolly’s third trilogy completes a series of nine books, whose characters and storylines intertwine. These stories are again, like all the author’s books, wild, untamed, and

joyous adventures. They attend to big themes in enjoyable and symbolic stories, leaving readers spellbound and reflective.

The first novel of this trilogy is “*Knowledge*”. It asks us to talk honestly, yet with respect, about what ails us as a society, as we are responsible. It asks us to open our minds to more exploration, to more open communication, in a more and more ideologically tribal world. It challenges the clichés of apathy, and shows how a small group of people can take part in community building; no matter their age or outlook; no matter how seemingly ordinary. It has a good hard look at the world, through common, day to day eyes, as well as spiritual ones. It seeks to show how we have the power of initiative, and how we can utilise growth engines to transform lives and communities.

The second novel of the trilogy is “*Volition*”. It attends to human will and its nature, and looks at different stages in life; finding our vocation, relationships, family life, and child rearing. It looks at three core times in life, and how the knowledge we use underpins how we will act. It also seeks to create more understanding of the power of consultation in all parts of our lives, and free ourselves from the rising noise around us.

The final book of the trilogy, “*Justice*”, looks at the boundaries of human life, and how the ego can seek to subsume the greatest within us and threaten take people away from their high destiny. It talks to the inevitability of a mature, just, and unified humanity; and explores the power, and nature, of our link to the Creator as humankind.

UNITY

“I don’t know what turn of fate brought these two together. A woman of beauty and dreams, and a killer born in the belly of hatred itself. I don’t even know where they were headin’. But the day I saw their path’s cross was somthin’ I wouldn’t soon forget.

I’ve prospected all over this planet in my one hundred and twenty years, and life was hard out here back then. Much harder than it is now, and most folks were just lost in the grip of desperation. Well...it was that way beyond all the walled cities, and away from the high planets.

Those places weren’t caught in the grip of desperation and loss, or bein’ chewed up in the violent chaos on some other rocks, but they were livin’ in their own kind’a hell, and growing a chaos of their own makin’.”

CLOWN TOWN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Duncan Connolly is an Australian writer and artist/ painter of Irish descent. He grew up in a Christian family, but as a young man his quest for knowledge and understanding of the meaning of life and the spirit, led him towards the Bahá'í Faith and has been a member of the Bahá'í community since then.

His driving interest is the nature of the human creature, and this life. It has led him to many sources from psychology to history to religious texts. He also believes in the spiritual wisdom written into nature, and in human inner vision, as great sources of joy and understanding; but believes that only by living life can anyone really hold knowledge. His writing and art are greatly influenced by his Faith and life experiences, and those of humanity.

He has been writing philosophical realisations and poetry, under the acronym JDC for a number of years, and has now written upwards of nine novels; which will be published, when edited and developed.

QUOTES

“The sweetest flowers of man's spirit have most often been watered by tears. To struggle gives strength, to endure breeds a greater capacity for endurance. We must not run away from our heartbreaks in life; we must go through them, however fiery they may be, and bring with us out of the fire a stronger character, a deeper reliance on ourselves and on the Creator Who, like a good Parent, chastises us because He loves us and because He knows what can be made out of us and that the pain is worth the prize that can be won.

Love, hate, passion, fear, sorrow, pain -they act on us and spur us on, they develop our qualities and give us colour and individuality. We are not expected to like suffering; we should not foolishly think of it as some ascetics do, as a virtue in itself and cultivate it through self-mortification and torture; but we should when the cup is at our lips and we have no choice but to drink it, drink it down strongly and courageously, knowing it will hurt but strengthen, wound but eventually heal.

Beauty can give joy, pain can give strength, sorrow can deepen the whole nature of a person. We must try to get out of every experience in life the very best it can offer.....”¹

Ruhiyyih Khanum

“You must learn to distinguish the sun of truth from whichever point of the horizon it is shining! People think religion is confined in an edifice, to be worshipped at an altar. In reality it is an attitude toward divinity which is reflected through life.”²

‘Abdu'l-Baha

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