

Disconnect From Earth

by Daniel Arthur

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I was alone in my office, and I was approaching my workstation. I needed to check some metrics to make sure the primary network was responding well to some recent updates. My customers were demanding more bandwidth and faster speeds. This has been a continuous problem in the short life of information technology. I was in a unique position to respond to their demands for higher quality data transmission. What they did with more and faster data was their problem. I settled in to my command center. I liked to spend at least a few hours a day working here surrounded by monitors with all the electronics and software tools my heart desired.

I preferred to set my chair to a comfortable forward facing position on most occasions, using the forward harness to kind of be suspended and taking the

pressure off of my back and buttocks, but for now I sat back a bit in a more traditional early 21st century office orientation. It wasn't good for me according to my physical therapist, but I like to sit that way at times. I put my low-juice drink in the drink holder, grape for this session, and placed my palm over the biometric reader. My system had already scanned my face and completed a distant check including weight and disposition. It needed to be 99.99% sure that I was me and that I was here under no duress before it turned on or rather woke up with all my settings in place.

Today I was on a mission to help prepare Digitalcraft RW070 for its departure from low-earth orbit to the Ursa Major staging area. There were fifteen thousand souls on board the 070 mainly sleeping or inert, ready for testing and, potentially, their travels. There would be plenty of work to do when they reached their solar stationary position a little farther than the Earth's orbit from the sun, and after deploying their solar arrays they would have plenty of power to exercise their

problem solving minds.

Digitalcraft 070 was a mission I was hoping would have better results than previous missions. Their spacecraft was shipped out under robotic control a few months ago with all systems checking out great in low-earth orbit. The solar arrays were partially deployed and working at designed capacity. There were many, many miniature empty droids awaiting fulfillment – to be temporarily utilized by any of the 070 crew. I heard a ring tone and asked, “What is it Clarence?”

“Josie would like to meet with you in a few minutes to go over the brass briefing,” said the uncertain voice of Clarence my AI assistant.

I thought it over quickly and responded, “Let her know I can be down in about fifteen minutes, will you?”

“Yes sir, Gene, I will alert you when it is just about time to leave,” Clarence finished.

I worked in silence. My office was more of a studio, and it was soundproofed as I often needed to record conversations among other sound clips. We were a long way from a proven joint venture between the university and Julie Llewellen, a.k.a. richest person on Earth. There was so much technology to prove before we could be certified by the UN and the various governing agencies. They had certified our uploading technology, but would not recognize these people as alive. There were the pre-deceased and the deceased designations for our digital people. We were held harmless by the various agreements we had with everyone and every government agency, but we needed success to make this work. I was betting my own life on its success. I had already picked my destination in the known cosmos. Josie was my equal on the university side of things. We were making a status report to the anxious board. I wasn't worried.

Josie and I were on track – maybe even a bit ahead. The digitals were restless; however, as they wanted their journey to

begin. 070 seemed our best chance of a good outcome. We have planned for them to go into a staging solar stationary position within a month. They would rather be off to Ursa Major and skip the staging. We just want to be on the careful side of things before they are at the point of no return. We can get them back to Earth from staging, but there isn't much hope once they shoot out of the solar system.

“How can you tell a digital is restless?” I am asked quite often. I ask them if they've ever heard of hackers? Most people have even though the practice has waned as security and government regulations make sense to the average user. The digitals are always restless right up to the moment where they are launched on their way to some other destination in the known or unknown universe. They fear government interference more than hackers. They all have heard about the oh-fifties. That was a low point in digital status history. Somehow procedures weren't followed and after an unnecessary bureaucratic

delay an electrical fire disabled the entire mission with contact lost just after the capsule reached orbit-reaching velocity in space. There have been no further communications with the spacecraft and it is assumed that it will return to Earth someday with a small light show. I don't want a repeat of that, and neither do my lovers. So, I went through my checklist to be mobile. I could get any work done just as well when mobile, except I felt at home working in my studio. I could work as well when mobile, but I didn't usually enjoy it as much.

Josie and I were going to meet Julie later, but first we have a date on the badminton court at the club – to play and then talk. Josie enjoyed being superior at badminton, but I had resolved to find a way to beat her before going into digital mode. I want that as part of my memory base. Julie thinks I am nuts, but she likes watching us play. She especially enjoys seeing us seemingly float about the court as we try to win each point. Julie runs, swims and cross-country skis. She chooses to mainly compete against

herself, but we all hike and cross-country ski together. Julie is a biathlon champion. In fact, she has won three Olympic gold medals. Josie and I love watching her compete. She is amazing, and we appreciate it even more as we know her so well.

I completed my checklists and scanned some news feeds before heading out. I noted that Tulum had surpassed Lee to be the all time Champion's League assist leader. I still follow soccer even though I no longer play much. I suppose it brings back memories of sheer joy from those times of playing on the grass and turf pitches of my younger days. I can remember the frustrating times if I really try, but the joyful times surface quickly and easily.

I put all systems to sleep and headed out the door mindful of the security systems in place. I stepped into the hallway and arrived at the elevator knowing that the service car would be arriving shortly.

Josie and I often met at the fitness center to have a badminton workout and then

discuss business in the sauna over a beer or cool beverage depending on the time of day. Today would be a cool fruit beverage as we had a meeting with the board of directors a little later. The setting would be informal as Julie preferred it to be, but the discussion would be serious and would take our fullest concentration. We want the directors to know we are succeeding. Being tipsy doesn't communicate that very well.

I stepped out of the elevator at the lower badminton court level of the club and proceeded to the changing area. Josie was there waiting. "Hey, Josie," I greeted her warmly, "ready to play?"

"Hey, bud," Josie responded, "yeah, let's get out there. We're on three."

"Cool," I replied as Josie handed me my racquet and a bird that imitated the old feathered shuttles of my youth. I was always pleased to use the featherless shuttles.