

ESC and ENTER

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The screen turned blue again. Mai shook her head. It was the sixth time now and she really was tired.

'You suck!' she hissed and reached down for the reset button. With a silent sigh she stood up and walked over to the gnarled bookshelf. She grabbed *Kommander Kolerik's Strange Dreams of a Silver Turtle in the Gamma Waves* and returned to her desk.

Her machine was up again, snorting like an old hag and wheezing like the *Gamma Train* Kommander Kolerik once travelled with through the cold of Antarctica.

'Pass-word-pleazz--', the computer coughed.

'Dunno', Mai replied and opened the book.

'Co-rrect!' the machine clattered.

Mai thumbed through the first pages, while the OS flickered on the screen. A drawing somewhere near the middle of the book attracted her attention. Mai had read the book many times since her mom gave it to her as a present for her seventh birthday. This drawing showed Adeena - Kolerik's fair and almond-eyed android - while she was deconstructed by the evil bot Croolio during their confinement on Gravel Planet. But something Mai never noticed was the similarity of Adeena's face and her own, smiling from the wallpaper on her screen.

Mai took a closer look and slapped her computer when the screen started to flicker seriously again.

'No bluescreen please--', Mai whispered and browsed through a bunch of folders she hadn't opened since ages. The folders contained mostly photos her parents had taken of her when she was younger. She entered keywords in the filesearch while the screen jittered nervously but to no success. Her parents never tagged or named pictures they just gave them numbers which wasn't really helpful now.

A cup of coffee and two sandwiches later Mai found the picture she was searching for. It showed her on a friend's party. The theme of the evening was *Space Travelling* and Mai was costumed as an android with a fair-haired wig - like Adeena. Of course her almond eyes she had since her birth matched with the drawing of Adeena, too. But what really scared Mai was the fact, that she stood exactly in the same position like the android on the picture and behind her was a poster of a mechanical giant.

'Screen-saver-a-head!' grumbled the computer but Mai didn't notice. She stared on the screen as it turned to black with a flying image of her dog and closed the book quickly. She grabbed her mobile and dialed.

'Hi Mai!' Janet's voice sounded terribly amphoric through the phone.

'Strange things happen--' Mai replied instead of a salutation.

'What's up?'

'Do you remember the Space Travelling party at your house three year ago?'

'Uhm-- sure, but--'

'Listen! You took a few pictures of me and Matt, d'you remember?'

'I do.'

'Fine-- you still got'em?'

'One of them 's hanging on my door, i think.'

'Could you send it to me? As a scan or something?'

'Sure-- uhm, now?'

'Would be great--'

'And you will tell me one day why I'm doin' this, right?'

'Yeah--'

'Fine. I'll send them quickly now, have a date with my mum in an hour.'

'Don't let me keep you', Mai said goodbye politely and hung up.

Fifteen minutes later Mai got mail. The computer restarted again with a reproachful hum and switched to a bluescreen seconds after Mai opened the picture Janet sent. But the few seconds had been enough.

Mai switched off her computer for the last time and grabbed her jacket, then she ran down the dark staircase and crossed the street where she had parked her car. As she turned the ignition key, the headlights lit up the asphalt in front of her.

Minutes later she reached the hill outside the city, switched off the lights and parked the car at the side of a narrow lane. Mai hesitated but finally left the car and walked through the nightly meadows. Dew wet grass soaked her trouser legs.

A buzzing grew. A flare immersed the surrounding treetops. Mai looked up and saw Matt standing on the grassy bank. Behind him the outline of a flaming door appeared.

She knew it! He was Kommander Kolerik! And she was going to be his android.

Full of expactation she approached Matt and the door to the galactical adventures awaiting

her. Matt waved vaguely and stepped through the door just before Mai reached him.

She looked back but didn't hesitate. Turning her head again, she carefully reached out for the flaming door remaining in mid-air and felt a prickling on her skin like floating energy. With a last glimpse to the nightly city she stepped forward and vanished.

A rattling laugh sounded through Mai's appartement, as the screen immersed the room with a dazzling white glow. Mai's body laid sprawled on the floor, her almond eyes closed, her breath flat and slow.

'Gotcha!' the machine smirked triumphantly, 'you'll always be mine, Mai!'

Publication Date: February 10th 2009