

## Inbots

(first page only displayed here – has been published in German by ECON in 1984).

The "17 and 1/2th" planet of the blazing sun Beteigeuze was about the size of Phobos or Deimos, the small moons of Mars. It was a flowerful paradise for both insects and inbots, the modern combination of INsects and roBOTs. Decently scented sceneries, golden honeycombs full of fruitful tastes, well programmed robots to fight off any enemies, well fed sexy partners in abundance, what else was there left to desire?

Already as a young Inbot, Tika knew there could be more to life and advanced robotism, at least there should be a chance of an adventure of some kind. She had chosen the elegance of a grasshopper-shaped body in metallic ultraviolet colours, combined with very light silicon chips and extra microstructural sensors and actors. While Tika was two thirds insect, and one third robot, her programmer Tuctac was just a quarter insect, and three quarters robot, but also often intimately linked to the central emotionalizer. Tuctac looked much like a cockchafer with her broad emotional storage tanks under the golden tarnished wings.

For this mornings lesson, Tika and Tuctac got their terabit cables plugged onto each other for fast data flow exchange. Tika had a question right away:

"Why is our planet called the "17 and 1/2th" planet?"

The answer came so quickly through the cable from Tuctac, that it seemed, as if it was Tika's own idea:

"It is an artificial planet. The Inbots built it by themselves to have a proper home and feel safe. But the 18th planet was against any renumbering of the planets, so..."

"But there isn't anyone on the 18th planet." Tika interrupted.

"Well" Tuctac replied: "True enough, but until the year 1 444 269 (about 3 million years earth time ago), many creatures had been living there. That was just a few decades before the crossbreeding of insects and robots to create our inbot race."

"What had happened?"

"There had been an accident at a chemical weapons depot."

"But this happens only in games, doesn't it?" Tika asked.

"Oh no, no." Tuctac allowed a ten thousandth of a second for confounding a trace of surprise, and continued: "In those days they were serious. It was the pre - ecological age, when beings were destroying each other's bodies in the ongoing struggle for resources."

When hearing this, Tika burst into laughter, so that her eight tentacles vibrated like crazy. Tuctac, experienced in dealing with emotional reactions, waited five millionths of a second until the laughter reached its peak, and then answered:

"In those days people didn't have everything they needed in abundance. There wasn't any cybernetic ecology which would guarantee the stability of ecosystems starting from design over production all the way to the use of goods. Actually it was quite a primitive society." Tuctac summed up, thus ending the session of instructional thought exchange.

Forty planetary circulations around the Beteigeuze sun later, Tika had become a specialist in ecological cybernetics. She was particularly excelling in extrasensory perception and transmitting of thoughts. Telekinetics, or the ability of moving matter by pinpointed emotions alone, was Tika's weak point. She had quite some power to shove things around without touching them, but she never reached a level of good control. In fact she made quite a mess of her exam, first shoving the examiner out of his chair and then, in her panic, almost causing the entire building to collapse. Since then, however, Tika had exercised secretly in an old quarry on the dead moon Robinhoota. But that forbidden exercise had been detected by the authorities in the end.

Therefore, as a reparation for her illegal practice, Tika was ordered to join a special task force going to the planet "Earth". She reacted with excitement rather than with fear. "Maybe this will provide, at last, a real adventure." she thought. Indeed there were some unanswered questions facing the task force, most of all: Would the telepathic communication work over such a huge distance ? There was also the rather disturbing fate of Tshac to consider. Tshac, the only survivor of the last Earth mission, was still

in the hospital, and his recovery was uncertain. Apparently, planet Earth was a hell for insects. Soon after arrival the emotional communication with the Earth expedition had broken down to inefficient numbness. All the other messages, without an emotional carrier wave, of course were weak. But after a week at least a few confusing transmissions from the task force had been received. They were confirming the suspected adverse conditions on that exotic planet:

oTransmission No. 12 from Tshac:

"Here on Earth there are no inbots. The local insects have only tiny, biochemically-structured head computers and only a few reflex actions. There are also very clumsy, slow, two-legged animals which call themselves 'human beings.' These beings monitor many machines and poisons which are used to fight against other living creatures, even against their own kind. Oh, it's horrible ! Even as an embryo I felt sick constantly. Honorable and elegant insects are poured with disgusting mixtures of mud and poison. And it is getting worse - the oceans are becoming black cesspools of dirt and despair..."

End of transmission.

It did not take much longer, until Tshak himself started to suffer from the disturbance of the very ecological system, he tried to observe. The impact became increasingly evident in the chaotic way of his later transmissions ...