



*love,
death,
and robots*

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The Sea Remembers

The vengeful sea was not always so. Once it was a gentle abyss. Alluring as the stars to a person on their back in the grass, so the sea was to its sailors. Breaths of wind their guide and spinning cosmos their map. The sea gave fish and sustenance. It blew that sweet sea breeze which calls a child to the waves.

The ocean was a new home and they did give thanks for it.

But then one day the tide turned red. Hundreds of ships ramming and stabbing, screaming wood. Bodies more numerous than driftwood in the sea fell that day. And that blood sunk deep. The ocean remembers, it knows the hunt of dolphins, the orca and whale. But war dwarfs their sport. Its gifts to the land were spent, and for so so little. For that it could not forgive.

Waves rose up, mountains blew, and islands were devoured. Those who could not remember would be forgotten. By all save one. Now we find their remnants and we wonder. From where we came and the great distance we've gone. And soon we go on another journey into another void. Remember it's not the first abyss we've known. Let us chart it a kinder fate than blood.

We Forget

She turned from us. Lured us off the land with gentle winds. Chortling birds and living geysers. We followed, spears joining the hungry eel and otter. Our greatest ships breaching alongside whales and orca. We carved island refuges and traveled by song. For many, many nights our songs hung upon the waves. Each crest drumming beside our hands. We looked to the rhythm of tides. Our minds questing up into the sky and stars.

And the Sea grew afraid of our prowess. Jealous of our songs of stars, her distant cousins by moon and sun. As eyes turned up and hands missed beats, the waves began to froth. No more gentle voyages. Blood goaded the water as beasts from the depths came upon us. Their teeth claiming our songs and their blood our kin.

One fisherman sat safe above the shore and on bluff he watched. He saw the breach of levitans and heard the screams of men. His ears captured each song as they were extinguished. Now nations lie in her belly, and the tide comes in with blood on its lips. Those who reached lie dead.

—
Each year he returns, beard white as spray and more tangled than the oldest net. Feet cut so many times they scratch the stone. Clothes bleached like the oldest driftwood. In his eyes drift the wisdom of an age, beset by cataracts and crusted with salt. His voice like creaking timber as flagging lungs whisper out the songs. With every catch and cough of his we forget.

We forget the trust stolen from us. We gave ourselves to the sea and it claimed us. Not again. Now we plunge it encased in great suits and tanks of air. It is on our terms now. We chart every inch and our vessels mock the tiny waves. Let her subjects follow us.

And above we finally touch the stars. She can't hide them any longer. I ask you remember the fisherman. Remember what is lost by trust. Stay in your suit, your station, your green dome. Till we force this new place to our ways be vigilant. Treachery lurks in the dark.

the turquoise cat and the little robot

The robot blinked. Or it would have blinked if it had eyes. But instead the yogurt lid caps that acted as eyes crinkled up and down, sadly. It was all alone in the dark spacecraft. *Oh where is my family?*, it wondered.

The robot remembered, or more so scanned through its database. It had twenty siblings. What had happened? Everything past today went dark – a blur of mysteries that it just couldn't remember. The robot brought its little metal clamps, which acted as hands, and rubbed his yogurt lid caps.

Let's gather the facts, the robot decided. From its database, it knew that today was Jungust 24.5, XVIII I.T.. It knew that it was on the spacecraft, *Noosa*. But ... everything else was drawing a blank. The robot sighed internally. Usually, it took about more than 3 hours for its systems to completely regenerate after a blackout – *a blackout!* That must have been why its memory was blanking.

But why was there a blackout? Why couldn't it remember anything? The robot groaned and flailed around his little clamps. *Oh fuck*, he hummed. Along with a couple other *^&*@#\$\$* and *@*^*%\$^* in robot language.

"Language," a voice called out. "Little kid robots shouldn't go around swearing."

Ahh, who's there!

"Don't you remember me?" the voice continued. "Not even your best friend?"

No, the robot sighed grumpily. *There's been a black out – I can't remember anything!*

Suddenly a thud landed, and the robot whirled around in panic, only to see the voice present itself as a voluminous turquoise cat, decked completely in space gear, floating around the spacecraft. The cat purred. "You don't remember anything? *Again?!*"

The robot waved its hands again. (At this rate, the poor wee fella was going to burst a circuit). *I just said I don't remember anything! Who are you, where am I, and where is my family?*

The cat weaved gracefully through the air, until he overshot his distance and smacked into the wall. The said cat spun around as he tried to maintain a dignified air of purpose.

“You didn’t see me do that, I am the definition of grace. Also that explains why you look like the before version of an actor in an antidepressant commercial.”

Excuse me? #\$\$%\$#@!\$!

“So you don’t remember anything? Well this could be fun.”

Fun?? I’m lost and confused and I don’t know what my role in the Universe is or what to do with my life.

“Yeah, I hate to burst your bubble buddy, but even when you get your memories back ... you’re still like this.”

Oh shit!

“Anyways, since your memory’s gone now – I figured it’s as good a time as any to remind you that you *promised* me a fancy red sports car. The most expensive one in the catalogue.”

I did not!

“Uh-huh you so did.”

Nuh-huhhh.

“Uh-huhhh.”

Ahh. This is going nowhere. Can you at least help me find my family?

“You’re looking at him.”

Oh good lord. Wait till Salamander hears about this! – Wait Salamander! I’m starting to remember!

“Oh good. So do you also remember that you own Salamander money?”

No, I don’t recall that.

“How convenient.”

Hey!

“Don’t shoot the messenger, just saying.” The cat arched his back before swishing his turquoise tail. “Well, don’t just stand there. Follow me, I’ll take you to where the rest of your family is.”

How do I know if I can trust you?

“First of all, I’m your brother. And second of all, who else is around here for you to ask for directions?”

Oh bother ... brother ... alright let’s go.

“Well let’s go, slow-poke!” The cat bounced into the air once more, and twisted in loops of concentric circles. Together, the turquoise cat and the tiny robot slowly walked in the obsidian-black hallway of the spacecraft. After a comfortable lapse of silence, the cat slowed down in his not-so-grateful bobs through the air and he turned to the robot. “You got anything new?”

The tiny arms flailed again. *Just bits and pieces coming back, Names like Fauna, Gerald, Kevin, Bottle, I dunno. – Ahh this is just so frustrating!*

“Don’t worry kiddo, all your memories usually come back at the two hour mark.”

Really?

The cat gently fluffed his tail on the robot’s head. “Really. – I mean, of course I would know, we had this same thing going on three quinti-months ago, and the month before that.”

So this ... has happened before? – I mean, me waking up lost and running into you?

“Yeah, it’s just cause you robots depend so much on your battery life and electricity ... but,” the cat trailed off. “... sometimes, it does feel a bit hurtful and lonely when no one remembers you.”

A tiny clamped hand reached up gently to brush against the turquoise fur. *I’m sorry ... I’m proud to be your brother.*

The cat gruffly beamed. “Oh sweet kiddo, you always say that. Don’t worry about me, in two hours, you’ll remember that you own me a shiny new race car.”

I do NOT! There hasn’t been any race car categories coming to our spacecraft since the quarter-mark of the dectury. ... Wait, how do I even know that?!

“Your database must be firing up! Your internet web search is starting to work again.”

The robot sighed in relief. *Huzzah!*

“And perfect timing,” the cat sashayed. “Because that means you can order my lunch.”

Lunch? It’s in the middle of the night!

“It’s always night time on the spacecraft! Plus, why don’t you have any concern for my nutritional needs? A cat has got to be healthy! It takes work, *real work*, to maintain my luxurious locks.”

Fine, fine. What do you want?

“A 20-inch pizza in diameter.”

Holy –

“No judging. Also with extra catnip on the side.”

Fine. Gimme a second. The little robot scrunched its yogurt lidded eyes and its internal circuit began to shine a bright lime green. *There, happy? One pizza coming up from Chef Tizer on the second base.*

“Hurrah! – Wait, look! Your memory is coming back. You remember Chef Tizer!”

I do! – And I also remember how I had to clean up all that milk you spilt on his floor last week.

“Pshh, don’t sound like your older sister. Let’s only focus on the good parts. Like that human, Marie Kondo, says, ‘does it spark joy?’”

Fauna? And the Netflix TV show?

“Duhh, your sister — Oh happy days, you’re remembering even more now!”

As the robot and the cat walked further down the hallway, the spacecraft’s lights turned a soft pink hue as the spacecraft heated up and began to recover from the power shock. Memories of times past, present, and future began to ignite as the little robot began to remember ... and it remembered everything now. It remembered its first day on the spacecraft and how the technicians had deliberately made it small, so it could fit into tiny cracks and help with plant collections. It remembered its family of robots, who were all kind and played their own little role. Some were good at mathematics and others at engineering. Salamander was excellent at cleaning, and perhaps a little too good at gambling. (Drat, now he remembered that he was in fact in debt to Salamander). He remembered the journeys the spacecraft had taken as they traveled across galaxies, journeyed across time, and raced past triple arched moonbeams. The robot remembered blazing balls of brightening gas and cotton-candy comets.

But mostly, the little robot remembered the cat. It remembered the day the technicians found an abandoned basket on a purple-candy moon. And how the basket, which was first still, had then shifted and moved, and then the robot remembered seeing the most brilliant turquoise tail stick out. A vibrant turquoise like the green of the deepest lagoons in frozen meteors. A bright and swirling blue that could light ablaze an entire galaxy and penetrate the darkest of dark holes. A turquoise that transformed the universe into a world of art. And out spilled a cat. A tiny, quiet cat with large golden eyes. Golden like the lamps of a moon. In the first month the cat was quiet, curling up only with the little robot and ignoring the others. And then as time progressed, the cat became boisterous, funny, and confident. Loud, sometimes annoying, but always lovely and endearing.

The robot remembered that prior to meeting the cat, the technicians said that robots could not feel or love. Robots were objects, the technicians said. They did the maths and the programmings and got the job done. End of story. But feel and love? No, robots couldn’t feel. They couldn’t love. But the cat proved the technicians wrong. The cat became the robot’s friend and the robot became the cat’s friend. The robot didn’t know much besides plant detection and its calculations, but it did know with absolute certainty that it loved the cat. And the cat loved the robot.

The little robot blinked his yogurt lidded eyes. “Hello, Henry!” The cat gleamed back, its fur brightening steadily. And stars from outside, if they could see, would have eagerly looked into spacecraft windows to gaze upon the beautiful sight of the turquoise cat and the little robot dancing up and down, together, underneath a gleaming purple sky with studded stars that shone like diamonds.

David

David was left lying on the ground. It was soft from the rain that had fallen the previous night, and now David was covered in mud. But he didn't care. What use is there in caring? The mud would go away eventually. Birds sang in the trees around him, a melancholy song. Even if they were birds, you could feel a certain sadness that welled within their breast, even if it was for no reason. There wasn't a reason to be sad at all. Quite a silly flock.

Wind blew through the upper branches of the oak trees that surrounded David. The gentle breeze knocked a leaf from its station, causing it to fall gently down and crash land onto David's face. Well, it was no matter. He was already starting to be covered by them. The leaves must have been covering him for a while now.

The green of the leaves mixed well with the bright red hue that stained his shirt the night before. Splotches of crimson behind youthful viridian petals. It was a beautiful sight to behold, for sure, yet no one had come to see it. Well, except for the birds perhaps. But they only saw the finished product, not the creation of it. The birds would have been asleep, after all.

And so David lies there, in the mud of the forest. Who knew he'd have laid there for so long? Surely, someone would find him at some point, but it was more fitting for him to lay in that mud. Cold and alone—well, except for the birds, of course. And, it seems, the insects that have begun to crawl over him. The ants, the flies, the maggots beginning to fester within his chest and stomach, eating their way through to grow large enough to burst their way out. But no matter. This is the fate he was given.

Nothing

“Sweetheart, what did you bury in the garden?” The child was covered in dirt from head to toe, holding a trowel in his hand.

“Nothing, mother.”

“You know you can’t lie to me young man.”

“But I buried nothing, mother.”

“Why are you covered in dirt then? And what’s that in your hand?”

“I dug a hole.”

“Just a hole? Really?”

“No, I buried nothing.”

“Come now, show me what you really buried.”

“But moth—”

“Now.”

The child obliged reluctantly, as if not knowing what he did wrong. He stepped towards a patch of uneven dirt in the garden a shade lighter than the surrounding earth.

“Nothing’s here mother.”

“Dig it up son.”

“But—”

“If there really isn’t anything there, then what is there to be afraid of?”

“But nothing’s there.”

“Stop giving me attitude.”

“But—”

“Now.”

The child took up his small shovel and got to work. Dirt was excavated from the garden under the careful watch of the mother. Eventually metal struck metal, with a loud *tang!* ringing out in the garden.

“It certainly sounds like something.”

“It’s nothing, mother,” the boy scooped the last pieces of the loamy dirt from the hole.

“Why are you spouting such nonsense?”

“It’s really nothing, mother. I’ve been telling you.”

The mother peered into the hole from above her son, casting a long shadow across it. There was a small metal lunchbox, simply decorated in red with yellow stripes. The boy pulled it out with both hands with a careful touch, then stood to face his mother.

“Nothing’s in here mother.”

“Son, is everything all right?” The mother got on her knees, now eye level with her son.

The son’s lip began to quiver, until tears began to stream down his face. He clutched the lunchbox and wailed. The mother gingerly placed her hands on her son’s shoulders, trying to console him.

“Hey, it’s okay. There’s nothing to be worried about.”

“But I am worried about nothing!”

The mother looked at her son with a newfound realization. “Let me see the box.” The son clutched the box tighter. “Come on, son. It’s okay. It’ll be alright.”

The son loosened his grip on the box and with shaky hands offered it to his mother. The mother took it with open arms, careful not to get her shirt dirty. She carefully opened the latch.

Inside was a small finch, lifeless and stiff. Its head and legs were stuck in a crooked position. The mother looked up at her weeping son.

“I thought... I thought Nothing would grow from the ground all better...”

“Oh, honey...” The mother put the lunchbox to the side and embraced her son. “It’s okay. It’s okay.”

They stayed there for a few minutes, sobs ringing throughout the garden until they shrunk to an occasional tear. The two separated for a moment, the son’s eyes red from crying.

“I’ll take care of Nothing now, okay? Are you listening?”

The boy gave her a woeful nod.

“You may not see Nothing again. But that’s okay, Alright? You’ll always have him up here”—she said, tapping her son’s forehead—“Okay? I’ll take care of him. Go on inside.”

The son nodded and walked away. Once the mother heard the door to the garden close she tried to keep her composure; but in the brief privacy of her own company tears fell silently onto the grounds of the garden. After a few moments she got her wits about her and took up the lunchbox in her hands once more. Grabbing the trowel, she began to dig deeper into the hole her son had made until it was just shy of two feet deep. She placed Nothing’s body deep within the garden bed, piled the dirt back into the hole, and with a silent prayer got up from the ground and walked back inside.

The Cave, The Sun

The villain is always fighting for eternal life because the villain
has to lose.

Well, I want to be the hero and I want to live forever. I don't think it's fair
to make me pick.

The hero lives in memory, sure. The villain dies in battle, sure. The loved ones die
as collateral, you risk it all to get this power,
you're fighting an impossible war
and the land is fallow

and the bombs make your ears ring, I know,
I know.

But you still have to pick which character you want to be.

Choose once. Choose wisely.

The hero makes it look easy, never is asked if they need help, is always doing the saving and
never being saved,

the villain always keeps their cool, never needs help, never gets saved because they don't
want to be, goddamnit.

Sure, the choosing doesn't make the loneliness better
but nothing really does.

So you're the villain, so you're the hero, so you'll die alone either way.

You can't stop fighting because you don't know how else to use your hands
so you're climbing up the hill again, so the bombs are dropped,
so the nuclear winter settles over your heart,
so you've won and you have nobody to tell.

Your movie is over and you want someone to tell
but the cinema is empty, it's cleared out,
you get no more wishes and the screen turns black
but at least you don't have to fight anymore.

I want to be the hero and I want to live forever and
I don't want to be so alone.

The movies tell you this is impossible, so pick which one goes, pick how you go,
pick how you lose because

you know you're losing anyway.

Be the villain and
the credits start to roll.

Be the hero and
the credits still roll.

Be the winner of forever and
watch how it isn't enough for you.