

Hearts and Flowers

A short story by [Trevor Hopkins](#)

Trace finally moved her glorious eyes from the microscope.

“They’re perfect,” she gushed, “Sooo much nicer than the huge ones you gave me last time.”

I was rather proud of those giant rosebushes, with their pink and white blooms like wedding headdresses for goddesses. I said nothing.

“How long did they take this time?” she demanded.

I mimed a modest shrug, clearly visible – I hoped – on the screen.

“About two hundred and sixty years,” I admitted self-effacingly, “I had a bit of trouble getting them just the right colour – they kept going green on me.”

Trace peered again at the microscopic roses I had made for her, obviously drinking in the colours – orange and pink and yellow.

“How did you manage the dewdrops?” she asked, spinning around to look directly at my image on the screen.

“It’s a secret,” I replied. A full answer would have required a lengthy technical explanation about the use of a concentrated solution of complex sugars, produced by the secretions of a micro-organism I had designed especially for the purpose.

Her attention returned to the microscope, once again enthralled, to my entire delight, by the sub-miniature but perfect roses I had crafted for her.

“It’s time, my love,” I said eventually.

“Yes, I suppose it must be,” Trace replied sadly, tossing back her blonde hair.

One of my drones led her back towards the suspended-animation chamber, the shining metal of the manipulators gently pressing against the softness of her skin. Through the remote, I carefully prepared the couch inside the chamber, then gestured for her to enter.

Our little habitat, our sanctuary, spun on around the distant star once known in the catalogues of ancient Earth as Bygones. In the exodus, the diaspora from the civilisational collapse that seemed to engulf everything we held dear, we managed to get away, we thought, intact. But, in a last gasp of senseless violence, I was severely injured, irreparably damaged beyond even the habitat's capability for healing. Now, I am only able to exist in simulation, my mental patterns executing on the processing array which infuses every part of the structure – part building, part spacecraft – in which we live.

Once, long ago, Trace declared she wanted to be young always and, perhaps rashly, I promised to love her forever. Now, her heart was not so strong after all these millennia, and we had agreed that she would slept dreamlessly down the years. I would awaken her for Valentine's Day, with an unspoken accord that these would not quite be every year.

Recently, the interval has been approaching the millennium mark. I had not quite been entirely honest earlier – I had spent five or six hundred years trying to make the dewdrops sparkle with suspended gold flecks, but without success. Maybe next time – after all, I had all the time in the world.

As long as the stars shine, this little habitat can sustain itself, its self-repairing mechanisms as near-perfect as our old technology could make then, and guided and – when necessary – patched-up by the drones that I have at my command.

“I love you,” I whispered softly, as the chamber once again stilled her heart and chilled her perfect body, “I'll love you until the end of time.”

555 words

2 pages

14/02/2008 08:46