

Android Tears by James Bacon.

There is a girl standing in front of me. She is crying, quite a lot, really, uncontrollably I suppose, and her hands are shaking. She is distraught.

Later I wonder if she was at the end cycle.

Meanwhile two streams of tears are flowing down her pretty cheeks, her short hair is stylish, she has a nice nose ring, it's small, discreet and very cute, although as the tears glisten off her face in this darkness illuminated by lights, the ring is unimportant, just the tears, her mechanism that demonstrates distress.

Bright lights shine everywhere, passing us. Our cars had collided; we had suddenly stopped a massive mobile movement of machinery, but the traffic will not allow such a small thing as a young lady's crying to cause any delay, and so the machines snake their merry way around the problem, more in apathetic nuisance than care.

I smile. It doesn't seem to do any good. It's not forced, she is cute after all. "Everything's OK," I say in the warmest and clearest voice that I can muster.

Maybe she is an Android.

The poor thing is very upset. Must be the old Andy clock. In between sobs and gasps of air, she manages to blurt out, "I'm pregnant and had a row with my fiancé." This makes sense. To me.

"Everything's OK," I repeat, and continue clearly, "Are you hurt?" The head shakes.

"There are no problems, you've just had a shock and an upset, that's all." I continue to smile. She is still cute but not as eligible, and now I am protective. An unexplainable, involuntary mode change, there.

"Everythings OK," I say once again, with a voice of reassurance and calm. "I'm OK, the car is OK, your car is OK, there is only one thing *not* OK, and guess what that is?" I say with a smile.

Her head shakes, no doubt confusion from my accent, lack of concentration, wonderment about what's been asked, why the questions, who is this man, what is he about, what'd he say?

"You," I smile, and now touch her forearm, as I continue, turning the focus and hopefully her concentration inward, "You are not OK, but that's alright."

She is still upset, but I think a little less so now. I look for a slide rule that calculates tears multiplied by shakes multiplied by hurt to equal an upset value.

I have seen crashes you wouldn't believe, radiators burst in the front of Opels, side beams crushed in on Hondas, been in crashes where the road glitters with the shine of smashed glass, and I know the sounds. The sickening yet exhilarating sounds, they happen in slow motion after the initial surprise and then soon disappear into silence. A near deathly silence, and I swear I can hear it.

This time it was the dull thump of a low-speed impact. No crunch of glass so the plastic lenses are fine, there is the lack of that sharpness of metal suddenly meeting metal in a minute explosion, it's just plastic bumpers and the foam behind them. Just bumpers. This girl was out of her car fast enough, and I think there isn't a problem. After all, she lost concentration just for a moment, and hit the anchors just a bit too late.

I smile again. "Lets get our cars off the road," I say, and so I do.

She is still upset. I explain that I am not for letting her leave, in fact I explain that she is unfit to drive, hope that she agrees and then politely ask who is nearby. The fiancé.

Typical.

I worry for a moment and ponder if, by calling him, she will admit some sort of unfair and dishonourable relationship defeat, or will he assume in his vainglorious triumph that in the row they had he is proven right, that the situation is an extension of his righteousness and her wrongness. I hope he doesn't.

"Call him, then," I say, and I continue to smile. Tears are less now, shining in between other involuntary movements, and the focussed action of making a phone call helps. I can hear the conversation. It's going OK. It pauses, and she asks me a question.

"He wants to know how much money you want."

I narrow my eyes, look stern and without a word extend my arm. The device is placed in my hand. Calmness. I adjust the accent: strength, yet pleasant.

"Hi. Listen, I am fine, the cars are fine, everything's fine, but this lady is unfit to drive. We don't want a worse accident, do we?" I labour the point, using the authoritative voice of someone who is certain about a situation.

I get a stream of "Thank you, thanks, thank you."

I continue, the situation agreed. 'Very good, now, we are on the main bypass, just past the old garage. Sure you know it? Great.'

So I hand back the device. More tears, but they soon cease. Deep controlled breathing, thinking for two now, and then gratitude.

It's understandable why the cost of my insurance went up fifty percent thirteen months ago, after sliding slowly downward over four years. It's the Claim Culture. Me? I'd like to claim Pluto back as a real planet. The world is full of people fucking each other over, all under the guise of professionalism.

Her gratitude is nice, but I need to ensure she is OK. I tell her what to say to the Police, vehicles on pavements are not actually *de rigueur*, and I explain that when all's said and done she will be fine. She smiles, still disbelieving, in a way. I want to leave, so I do, before there is more of the same or I end up asking her on a date.

Android, definitely an Android.

What sort of monster was she expecting? Are we all so base now, that the default mode is to be prepared for inhuman nastiness?

I select a gear, it's been a crazy time, her tears make me think of a recent conversation, with someone who was indeed quite unpleasant in reality, just as this car crash Android had imagined and expected me to be.

In the world of makeupia.

A Replicant. "Families are dys-functional," says the man, he is in a way superior to me, of course, a better-paid human, more senior in the structure, the system, the process.

It upsets a few. Fucking Replicant, I think. No, maybe it was Reptile. Fucking Reptile.

"How do you feel about your tax increases paying for civil servants' pensions? Who has a problem with that?" He is appealing to the crowd, and I realise it's all a reptilian ploy to get people to agree that they should get value for money, and in turn *he* wants value for money, or more work for money while we work harder.

I fail to sit quiet. "I think it's fine, they've worked for it," and soon the slithery-tongued bastard is back faux-arguing that I am wrong, but not really, not able to really argue as his argument has no substance, it's just a ploy, a way to find a lever, and anyhow, I am quick when he puts it to me. "Nah, my taxes pay for nuclear weapons or other such stuff I disagree with. You can't categorise

taxes I pay like that.”

The Replicant is not defeated, but it is unsure. *Take that, you fucking reptilian*, and it slides onward.

Maybe I am not human.

I change gear, it's been a crazy time and the Android's tears make me think of my most recent convention. Tears flowing down the cheeks of women, girls, ladies, whatever. Maybe human tears.

Tears, of anger and frustration, distraught.

I'm lying on a couch, it's spacious, private, in Faroffwesternlandia, and so a lady is about to orgasm, maybe in a moment, maybe a few, maybe a few minutes, probably not, she is close, and I have found what is needed and that is good, she was quick to be naked, excited and aroused, and it's been good fun so far. I know I have it.

Then she crashes, freezes, solid-ifies almost, goes cold.

The noises of exhilaration have stopped, and like the aftermath of a car crash there is only stillness and quiet.

And then tears. Did she come to her senses suddenly?

Computer failure, I ponder. I wait and it is explained. I don't deserve an explanation, but then in the naked-ness all that we possess is an honesty, all is laid bare, one can be honest when you are like this, if you want. Slowly the story, and it is a foul one, comes out.

Only humans could be so horrible to another human, for she has been violated, as only men can, and so that ceased one of her favourite functions. Reptiles. Not only once, and not in similar circumstances. *Human* reptiles.

What type of rape is worse? My sliderule cannot compute. I don't care. It's all too horrible.

There is more than enough here to burn the harddrive from the board of any console, to short-circuit anyone, to fuck up functions that are natural. It's OK, no need for a rush to the fannish pitchforks, it was the land of real-world horror.

I am a Solution-Focussed Useless Man Bastard. So I try not to be. Much. She holds me. Warm. Pressed against me, entwined. She holds me tightly now, warmly.

With calmness I take the lead, I have found her tears; well, her softness and desire to be held is in some way very arousing, and she is not altering the plan, attempting to delete what's occurred, and she feels in control and willing to persevere, and so her concentration is drawn to me, and we find a route out of the dilemma through distraction. And good distraction it is too, satisfyingly good, very good indeed.

Then I assume, that now she is feeling somewhat whole again, and quite honestly desired and wanted and with the ability to make the most human of functions work in such a raw way, my focus swings again back to her, and so she achieves that which had eluded her. For so long. Too long.

Later she is humming, like a newly serviced and polished machine, as if surrounded by light, and she even admits something has happened, an unseen enhancement, she exudes more of what I had seen before, a sexuality, desirability, beauty and, yes, intelligence. So after we objectify one another we can also engage the brain circuitry. Well, for a little. I've already changed a gear and am holding someone else.

Just an Android, needing a top up. Look at that smile across an atrium. It's so cheeky.

They were not the only tears that were shed that weekend that I felt running down my cheeks, to drop onto bed linen or my shirt, tears that were lost in loneliness or upset.

Yet there are so many with no tears, just tasting pleasure and sweetness. I have not enough time, I have much real work to do. It's my own kill-switch, in a way.

It is at specifically scheduled free moments, unleashed, that I allow myself to indulge, aware that I roll a dice as I smile. I know its fate, then, as it can be an immediate turn-down, a chase, an arranged frolick or something in between. All human activity, all socialisation in a fleeting few seconds. I frequently fail to roll a six. But often I do.

They look good. They taste better. They don't hate my love of the imagination and artistic stories.

Objects of desire, of beauty, and of course they can show consideration and appreciation for my attempts at artistry, which can vary from raw and brutal to gentle and refined. Sometimes. Art is in the eye of the beholder, and to discriminate in art perhaps makes them human. No two ever exactly alike in their intimate desires, human desires.

I trust I am not a reptilian Replicant. I don't feel it. Sometimes I do. Where's my slide rule?

I sometimes wish people were less human, or more human, or Androids nicer.

I am human, I will go out and meet friends, and drink a beer and dance and jump and laugh and admire, and in a moment I will ask a girl to photograph us all, a mixed bag from four countries and three continents, and then this unknown girl who takes the photo, I will end up kissing her. She likes it. She is cute. To me.

She never calls. That's OK, electronic mail turns up from far away, but close to my hydraulic heart. Fuck you, Reptiles.