

Mistaken Identity

Not actually bothering to pause in the hoovering up of small snacks, Svathlan speaks.

"I have heard, on rumour from a very good authority, that you were temporarily in charge of the project to create, and the progenitor of, the A-12 'Lictor' droid series. And that further, you were almost single-handedly responsible for shutting down the threat of these combat droids to the twelve Ring-worlds of Arctor, and by extension the very Empire itself, when the original twelve exceeded their programming and began a warlord-esque attempt to control the entire kik-dust production cycle."

A case of mistaken identity

"Oh my - that was all a mistake!", Bobo seems a little flustered.

"Really - I've never understood how the bureaucrats on Arctor Prime could take one MitSony chrome humaniform model XLVMCCi9200b, for another - but that's how it all started."

"I don't know how you heard about that little incident". Bobo frowns and exhales heavily. "I was really quite embarassed at being caught up in it all."

"I'd been sent to Empire (Records (TM)) Central to investigate some recent research on vinyl pressing techniques allegedly used by the ancients. The trade in antique vinyl had - until now - been a minor, but extremely lucrative sideline for the evil Empire. Rediscovery of these techniques, however, presaged a boom in this area; sociological analysis indicated it would again be an up and coming 'new' (yet somehow recurring) consumer trend, and of course, the Empire was planning to expand this branch of their business."

"In any case, after engrossing myself in the work aspects of my trip, I was fortunate in that it was a long weekend for the Freen's Personality Integration Day - a big thing in the Empire, now that he's a vice-co-chairman in the 'Terran Bleeps and Bloops' division. Well I took the long weekend off, and decided to get out of the office and do a bit of sightseeing - the Capital and stuff, you know how it is."

"As part of my general touring, I took a tour of the central aerospace prototype manufacturer, Bo-Wing, and it was there, just as I was exiting a hygiene stall after a short break, that I was accosted by a babel of bureaucrats and whisked into the adjoining defence contractors offices and the middle of a political furore. I soon gathered from the babbling masses in the central control room that the Empire's latest defence initiative had been built in this very place. The latest model of wardroids had caused a debacle during their initial field test - although unsurpassed killing machines, their aggressive tendencies went somewhat overboard, and ultimately resulted in a cannibalistic massacre amongst themselves."

"Yes, the A-11 'Lector' droid series was just not up to vigorous warfare."

"So," says Pia, "You didn't feel under any pressure to 'reintegrate' your own personality? I hear they can be quite fanatical out there, especially on the holy days. If fact, I'll wager that you *were* caught up in something of the sort - how could you escape it, being in Empire Central on Freen's Day?"

Pia flips a Janninian credit into the air, where it hovers, blinking in confusion.

Brro draws his wave-pistol and aims it at the credit, before realising that it has been neutered and isn't going to destabilise the economy of the sector through a rampant breeding frenzy.

“Sorry, Pia. Those things make me nervous. My apologies to you, also, Bobo. Please continue.”

The A-12 and Reintegration Day

Bobo frowns a little at Pia, “Well, yes, I *did* get caught up in a reintegration rite - but that's jumping ahead just a little, I'll get to that in due course.”

“The bureaucrats appeared to be at a loss. Several levels of their hierarchy had been lost via direct wardroid berserkness as well as indignant retrenchment by Bo-Wing investors. I knew I shouldn't, but the urge to impose order on this rabble was just too strong. I soon had information coalescing around me, and orders streaming away.

Amongst the office memo's and information which I'd set an avatar to analysing, I noticed that the only MitSony chrome humanoid model XLVMCCi9200b on staff had taken the long weekend off. I suppose that there being only one such model within the rather extensive office may have been a partial reason (although hardly an excuse) for the case of mistaken identity.”

“Meanwhile, droid engineering and software design routines surfaced from my longterm memory storage, and I began to see how the unfortunate tendencies of the 'Lector' might be mitigated. After giving orders for implementation of these modifications - which downgraded the A-11's overly voracious cannibalism to a mere introductory licking formality - the office took a break for lunch. Little did I know that *that* was when the Freen's Day Personality Reintegration Rite was to occur! En masse, right there in the cafeteria, we were all personality integrated - it seemed a little sordid at the time, but as you can see now, I'm a whole and fulfilled person, and I would urge you all to consider such a procedure to improve your own sadly fragmented little selves.”

A slot opens in Bobo's chest and begins extruding pamphlets, which he then hands out.

“Please take these and read and consider them carefully, I'll be more than happy to answer any of your questions after I detail the rest of the little 'Lictor' incident.”

Arial looks non-plussed as she reads through Bobo's pamphlet.

“Very... interesting”, she murmurs before looking up at him.

“I once had an A-11 'Lector'. Got it half price in the sales. It made an excellent training partner for a while. Until it tried to eat my K-9 cyberpup, that is. I got a little angry after that...”

“But the Lector's desire to destroy other droids *is* pretty strong. Surely you would have had to dramatically alter it's Darwinian subroutine to stop it. And I can't believe that *that* didn't alter it's personality in other ways. In fact, I'll bet that you found that the A-12 devised an even more subtle and subversive strategy to ensure it's survival.”

A-12s on Arctor

Bobo rolls his eyes and sighs with exasperation, "Yes, yes - who's telling the story here?!"

"The droids aren't equipped to breed, of course (that would be an accident waiting to happen), so their mode of reproduction is via Bo-Wing manufacture. Thus their Darwinian routines are routed through the manufacture, demand, and supply process. In order for the droid model to survive and multiply, their designers hope they will be successful within their design parameters. Sometimes, however, the wonders of complex and emergent systems allow unexpected factors to interfere in what should be an orderly process."

With a slight grimace, Bobo looks toward Arial.

"However, you ascribe the A-12s a little too much self-awareness this early in their creation, their survival was instead more mysterious luck than a subtle strategy. The jazz on the net indicated that my planned 'licking formality' modification of the 'Lictor', with attendant structuratanatomical attributes had somehow provided a rather large boost to investor interest and consumer demand in this series. A stockholders and potential investors meeting was thus called on Arctor Ringworld 0, which then happened to be the home of the Kaballah for Investment Kin - a majority shareholder and one of the richest groups in the Empire - as well as the most central and convenient meeting point for the largest proportion of Bo-Wing stockholders. So by the second day of the long weekend, I, my staff, and the prototypical squad of 12 A-12 droids were fronting a large meeting on Ringo for investor groups from far and wide."

"Wasn't Ring 0 the one the Kabbalah 'accidentally' vaporised?" inquires Nick Nitrous(GR!).

"Rumor is the place was taking a loss, so they decided to recover their investment"

A holocredit appears in front of Nitrous.

"I'd wager the shareholder meeting was interrupted as a result of the KiK's apocalyptic insurance scam"

Insurance scam not quite a plan, plus Market chaos

"Well the Kin *do* enjoy their image as ruthless business mavens, so they may well have promulgated Ringo's destruction as part of one of their nefarious schemes - and I suppose it may even be a valid interpretation of events. However, you might note that with the value of kik-dust as it is, it would be extremely difficult for any of the kik-dust producing Arctor Ring-worlds to actually take a loss."

"The actual course of events was more as I shall describe."

"Firstly, there was intense interest from many different species wanting to own their own personal A-12. The wealthy Kin harems in particular were well represented. Little did I know that in addition to their military prowess, the A-12's were now cognizant of their potential economic - and thus political and social - power, and were now amongst the players on the net. Under our very noses (or equivalent sensory apparatus), the Lictors were conducting secret negotiations with Arctor's 12 most major Kin Harem's."

“Although production of the mysteriously spiritual and insight-inducing kik-dust via the genengineered Kin's quite narrowly proscribed sexual cycle was ostensibly a secret at the time, somehow, rumours on the potential for our product to disrupt kik-dust production began to filter through to the net - and there was soon an uproar in the stockmarket as the value of kik-dust increased exponentially.”

“In an attempt to control the rumours, I was obliged to add some of my own jazz to the net, with judicious support from avatar (sub)players, along with incidental planted background evidence, and cleverly constructed yet fallacious opposing arguments from yet other (sub)player-facets. Wild fluctuations occurred and destabilization threatened.”

The vaporisation of Ringo

“Rogue apostrophes notwithstanding, and despite my best efforts at manipulation of the infowflow, the conflicting rumours eventually got out of control, and stockmarket chaos resulted. With the wild fluctuations spreading to related markets, the very basis of the Empire's economy was threatened. The Incident Control Kin Yakuza (ICKY) were called in by the worried KIK corporates, they vaporised the planet to control feedback effects on the galactic kik-dust markets, and incidentally obtained their insurance payout.”

“So Ringo's vaporisation *did* interrupt our meeting - after all, the first time a planet dissolves beneath your feet (or other ambulatory apparatus) can be a little disconcerting.”

The Empire saved and my weekend over...

Bobo nods at the Ranger, “Yes, the vaporisation saved the Empire's economy, as well as enhancing the ICKY reputation.”

“Although inconvenient, the meeting ushers soon had our attendees rounded up. The Lictors were voted to be too volatile a product to be released unmodified. Unfortunately, the prototypes seemed to have disappeared. Fortunately, I'd installed a last safeguard - the A-12's were constructed entirely of Tooze Icecream.” Bobo glances at Ariel with a slight smile, “Yes, I was the innovator responsible for the edible android concept; the A-12's are where the engineer-chefs of Michelin first got the idea for their EdAM series, and this is how I come to be appraised of the latest developments in this area - the patents are quite lucrative.”

“Yes, although harbouring hegemonic aspirations, if the Lictors were left on for any period of time, they'd soon be licking each other - or themselves - to oblivion; not to mention the risk of hungry harems or peckish passers-by.”

“The A-13 'Lictor' series had their mouths wired shut - of course that didn't prevent a disaster of 'Lictor' proportions - but my long weekend being at an end, I was well out of Arctor by that time, and anyway, that's another story...”

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