

[In the darkness, we hear soft music as Dryskoll's voice starts talking over it.]

Dryskoll I knew there was something wrong when my head hurt. It wasn't supposed to do that. At first, I didn't even recognise the sensation – like this pressure behind my eyes. I hadn't even opened them yet, but I knew... there had been a colossal screw-up.

I opened my eyes.

[Lights go on and we see Dryskoll sitting on the floor.]

I was on the ground. Outside. A smell in my nose that I couldn't recognise.

Cold.

Next to me: a trail of ants focused into vision.

The light made me dizzy. A little argument was triggered off in the pit of my stomach: to puke or not to puke.

I watched the ants do their thing for a while. These... microscopic turds with legs.

One of them stopped and looked at me. I mean, he *really* checked me out – for what seemed like quite a long time. And I thought... this little guy right here... he *sees* me. I mean, it's not like I'm an expert on ants or anything – for all I knew this guy might have the ant-equivalent of narcolepsy or something – but for a minute it was like this... single ant interrupted his day to look at me.

And I thought to myself: What if this ant is not like all the other ants? What if this one particular ant can see past the colony and the queen and whatever bullshit controls his day-to-day life? What if this one ant can observe the world beyond him and understand... more?

This thought depressed the hell out of me. Because I know, and we all know, that no matter how enlightened and advanced my ant was... (by this point I felt comfortable referring to him as my ant) no matter how desperately curious, creative and keen he was, he will never understand such concepts as... the water cycle, plate tectonics – or birthday presents even.

There are some things that are just impossible for his tiny ant brain to ever comprehend. Such is the tragedy of the enterprising ant.

[He looks back down at the ground.]

And he's fucked off. Mingled with the others and disappeared.

The pain in my head however, was still raging.

I had no idea where I was. Clearly not where I'm supposed to be. And apart from my head, I realised then that there was also something wrong with my body.

Namely: it wasn't my body.

Right... time to find out what the hell is going on.

Hey Zimi, you there?

[A burst of static is heard.]

Zimi?

[A second burst of static while a distant feminine voice is heard talking in Russian underneath.]

What's happening Zimi? Why does my brain feel like it fell out of orbit and landed on a spike?

And what's with this freaky body? What is this – like six feet? I'm a fuckin' dwarf.

[Zimi is heard speaking. A pleasant female voice. Whenever she talks, Dryskoll winces in pain.]

Zimi An error has been detected.

Dryskoll Yeah, no shit: an error has been detected. What's the error? What's with the surprise host? Is this some kind of joke?

Zimi Apologies for the inconvenience my love, it seems like there was an unexpected issue with the USTC.

Dryskoll The USTC? Shit.

Zimi Yes. I'll fix the situation as soon as I can. Promise.

Dryskoll Zimi, every time you talk, the pain in my head gets worse.

Zimi That makes sense. The host brain is 100% organic.

Dryskoll Are you... are you shitting me? A full organic brain? Is that... is that even possible?

Zimi Unlikely but yes. The margin of error that can generate a USTC mis-projection is at 0.0031%. *[point double-zero, three-one percent]*