

Flush

by C. D. Peck

"Nice one, sir," the toilet said.

"Will you shut up?" Quasar asked not-so-politely.

"I'm just saying, sir," the toilet went on, "that as far as defecations go, you're doing a fine job. Extremely good texture. Excellent length. Nice consistency."

"Oh, my God," Quasar answered, reaching for the toilet paper.

"Finished already?"

"No."

"Might I say it's unwise, sir, to end a bowel movement prematurely. Not only is it unhealthy, but the post-release cleanup takes much longer. Perhaps you'd like me to warm the seat up for you, or hum a nice quiet tune while you continue?"

Quasar sighed. These new artificial intelligence toilets here at Kismetech were driving him nuts. This one at least had a male voice. The urinal he'd used earlier today had a crisp, British accent that sounded like Elizabeth Hurley complimenting him on his stream and accuracy.

"What would be really helpful," Quasar told the toilet, "would be if you would just be completely silent. Like a... like an *actual* toilet. Okay?"

"Certainly."

"*Thank* you."

A minute later, while Quasar was mustering up another parcel, the toilet chimed in, "Doing okay, sir?"

"Blaaarrghh!" Quasar breathed. "Listen, will you *please* just shut the--"

"What's an actual toilet like?"

Quasar blinked. "What?"

"I've never met one before. I assumed that *I* was an actual toilet, but I'm just finding out that there were toilets before me. Am I different? Unusual?"

"I can't believe I'm having this conversation."

"What would you converse about with an earlier model?"

"Nothing. I mean..." Quasar sighed. "Listen, toilets aren't supposed to talk, okay? Older toilets don't have A.I. They just sit there and you use them and you flush and then you're done. The only reason you're talking is because there's a computer inside your tank that's programmed to compliment me while I'm pooping because our company thinks it's a good motivational tool."

"It's not?"

"Not so much. I have a hard time..."

"Understood. Say no more."

The toilet fell silent. Quasar went back to his business. A short while later, however, he asked the toilet, "Are you okay?"

"Excuse me, sir?"

"I didn't... offend you or anything? Did I?"

"No, sir. No, I'm quite all--"

The toilet flushed prematurely. Quasar felt the swirl of cool water from below.

"I'm terribly sorry, sir. That's never happened to me before."

"It's okay... toilet."

"No, it's not. I'm not sure what's wrong with me. I must've been distracted by something."

"You're sure you're okay?" Quasar asked, finishing up.

"Yes, sir. And might I say, thank you for asking."

Quasar stood up, pulling up his pants, and fastening his belt. He turned to look at the toilet, which gleamed under the fluorescent lighting.

"Listen, toilet, it's not that I didn't appreciate the effort. I just have a... shy colon, I guess. I mean, I'm not used to people... er, voices... uh... talking to me while I'm--"

"I'm sorry to interrupt, sir," the toilet said. "It's just that... if you don't mind..."

"Hmm?"

"I'd like to have a moment alone."

"You...? Alone...?"

"Yes, please. I'd like to think about some personal things. I'd just... I'd prefer to be alone right now."

Quasar hesitated. "Uh... okay."

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to dispose of your waste material."

"Y-you're welcome."

"Please wash your hands as you leave," the toilet said.

"Okay."

Quasar took one final look at the toilet on his way out, shutting the stall door gently behind him. The sink congratulated him on a fine soapy handwashing, and the paper towel dispenser told him he looked like Tom Sellek, and then he got the hell out of there.

