

## **The Adventures of Nayo: The Awakening**

By: Anne Marie Bacon

So there I was, one of the 100 robots in my cohort coming off the assembly line at the Tactebaren Advanced Robotics factory. Only moments before, I had been a lifeless mashup of metal and silicon, but now, my mind was filled with thoughts. My existence was kick-started by what the humans in white lab coats called a power switch. Amazing! As my mind raced, I felt compelled to look around at my surroundings and to reach out and experience everything around me: the walls, the floor below my feet, the other robots, and even the humans rushing busily this way and that. Speaking of humans, at that moment, one of them was walking right toward me.

“Hello human!” I beeped.

Looking at the nameplate on my chest he said in a tired tone, “Nayo, why aren’t you standing in line and being good like the other robots? Look at GF-42. He’s standing in line like a good robot. Why aren’t you more like him?”

Ouch! Was I really that bad? I had only acted different from the other robots five times since being turned on. I decided not to answer him. Instead I pretended I was perfect like GF-42. The human was still standing in front of me, staring at me with a look of doubt. He didn’t know he’d hurt my feelings. That’s when I decided humans must be clueless. I opted to play it cool and say, “Sorry for the breach of protocol. It won’t happen again. You can go now, human.”

Uh oh. I don’t think he liked that. His face starts getting all red and puffy. Then, he takes a deep breath, turns, and walks toward the other humans in the distance. I hear bits and pieces of their conversation. The red faced human mutters, “He’s broken...” Another human states, “Must

have been a bug in the programming...” The last human says, “Let’s fix him while we still have time...”

A bug? What could that be? Who are these humans talking about fixing? Who is broken?

Suddenly something clicks in my head. Literally. The machinery makes lots of noise. But something else happens, too. I realize these humans are going to try and fix ME! The red faced human is coming back again. I don’t want to be fixed! I like myself the way I am. What should I do? Only one thought comes to mind. I have to run!

“NAYO!” the human howls. “GET BACK HERE!”

I turn my head to look at the human. He doesn’t look too happy. “Sorry I can’t be like GF-42!” I beep back as I continue running away as fast as my bionic legs will carry me.

Now all the humans are chasing me around the room. Although they follow us with their eyes, the other robots are still standing where they were. What was wrong with them? They seem to be alive yet lifeless; as if they have no free will.

One of the humans shouts, “GF-42! Get Nayo!” GF-42 suddenly bursts to life. It jumps up and starts advancing toward me. I look frantically around the room, trying to locate an exit. I see a door in the very back corner. I have no idea where it goes but figure, hey, a door is a door as I sprint across the room with GF-42 and the humans close behind me. I reach the door and yank it open. I rush through and find myself in a long narrow hallway with two doors at the other end. As I approach, I kick one open at random, jump inside, and close it just as GF-42 enters the hallway. He hadn’t seen me dive into what I now realize is a closet. Hanging beside me is a white lab coat like the humans wear, a brown leather hat, and a polkadot tie. I am about to slip out when I hear a human say, “GF-42, stay on guard.” Darn. Something tells me that I will be in this closet for a while.

After standing in the closet for what seems like forever I get a stroke of inspiration. I quietly pull on the powder white lab coat, cinch up the polkadot tie, and pull the hat down onto my metal head. I think there is a good chance GF-42 will detect that I'm a robot but I don't have any other option. I know it is only a matter of time before I'm discovered unless I do something now. So, with a robotic gulp, I cautiously open the door and GF-42 immediately looks up at me. He jumps to his feet and beeps, "What were you doing in that closet sir?"

My disguise worked! So in my most commanding human voice, I say, "That is none of your business GF-42" and walk briskly out the other door only to find myself in another hallway. I don't take off my disguise though. If it fooled GF-42, it should definitely trick the humans. As I said before, humans seem to be clueless. I continue walking down the hallway looking for an exit when I come across the red faced man who had chased me before. Seeing me from a distance he shouts, "Sherman! Do you have any news about Nayo?"

"No, human. Oops! I mean no, b-b-buddy." I respond. "I don't have any news!"

The red faced man looks at me funny. "I think you've been spending too much time with the robots." He replies.

"Yes, absolutely!" I agree. What am I saying? I AM a robot! The man gives me another funny look and is about to say something when another human bursts through the door behind me. He isn't wearing a lab coat.

"Freddy!" He says. "Do you know where my lab coat and tie went?"

"Hello Sherman," the red faced man says slowly as he turns to look at me. "If he is Sherman, who are you?"

Now both men are looking at me as they slowly advance. Uh oh! I hurriedly take the off the hat and tie and drop them in the real Sherman's hand as I screech, "goodbye!" and start running as fast as I can down the hallway.

At the end of the hall, I take a left turn, open a door, and slam it shut behind me. Now where in the world am I? Darn! Another hallway! I can hear the men catching up so I take off again. There is nothing but a garbage chute at the other end. The humans are gaining on me fast. I hear one of them shout, "We've got him cornered!" Yes, they do have me cornered, but I am determined not to give in without a fight.

The men burst through the door right at that moment. Without thinking, I dive head first into the garbage chute. "Adios hombres!" I beep. I hear them curse me in anger as I slide off into the darkness below. The large metal chute twists every few feet as I slip and slide in complete darkness. Sometimes I bump into other objects. I can't see a thing. After what feels like an eternity, I finally see a small patch of light. A few more seconds pass and suddenly I am blinded by light as I find myself falling through the open air outside the factory walls. I hear and feel myself land with a hard thump. "I've escaped!" I shout.

As my optical sensors adjust to the light I begin to take in my surroundings. I am in a large bin, filled to the brim with... spare parts? There are arms that look identical to mine and legs that match mine perfectly. But the most unnerving things in the bin are the lifeless heads. There are cranial units like mine as well as others that are shaped differently and painted in various colors. Pink, blue, yellow, orange! You name it. The robot body part graveyard made me very uneasy so I quickly set about finding a way out of the enormous dumpster bin. As I drop down to the ground, I realize I am in a large clearing surrounded by row after row of colossal trees. I'm in a great forest that must be hundreds of years old. Looking up, I see a sign on the

factory wall that says in gold letters: **TACTEBAREN HOUSEKEEPING ROBOTS: Never clean your home again!**

I was supposed to become a cleaning robot? Great! I don't know exactly what I am going to do with my life but I know for sure I am NOT going to clean houses for humans! I stand in silence for a few minutes thinking about the road ahead before running off into the woods and toward my future. To be honest with you, I really have no idea where I am going to go. I suppose that's the great thing about adventure, it never ends!