

# Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut



Guy Lane

*Thus, Spoke the  
Anthronaut*

*by Guy Lane*

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## Squid Rings

*This chapter has absolutely nothing to do with Squid Rings, but it seems just such an awesome title for an opening chapter.*

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Viewed from the hovering news helicopter, the traffic jam on the Sunshine Motorway stretches far into the distance. Bumper to bumper, the cars are going nowhere.

Saturday morning in the peak of the holiday season, stuck in their vehicles, thousands of locals and city-folk from Brizvegas are getting crankier by the minute. They are missing out on their favourite beaches, shops, and restaurants. On top of all that, their children are bored, and playing-up. Stuck in their cars, the parents are exasperated. But what can they do besides say, *"I spy with my little eye, something beginning with 'T'"*

*"Traffic jam!"*

What's the reason for this traffic jam? The news people in the helicopter ought to know, they have an elevated view.

Flying above the traffic jam, is the pilot, a cameraman, and an ambitious young reporter: *Pheebee Tinker*. She's new to the job, and wants to get to the top, fast.

Pheebee Tinker is a finely tuned agent of mass-media communication. Educated in a prestigious university, she looks good on TV. She is slightly built with fine features and mousy, shoulder-length hair. She thinks fast, talks fast, and keeps fit by quickly jumping to conclusions. In heels and a designer suit, Pheebee Tinker is a mouse that roars.

*Plus... plus...* Pheebee Tinker got a high distinction in ethics, she can say and do just whatever the hell she likes, and it's all completely ethical. *Noice!*

In the helicopter, Pheebee Tinker dons headphones and a microphone. She peers through binoculars, studying the scene below, scanning the street for a story. She sees a person on the road halting the traffic.

Speaking into the microphone, she tells the world, "*Pheebee Tinker from 7-9-10 News reporting from the Sunshine Coast where traffic is ground to a standstill, right now.*

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*Weekend traffic banked-up, twenty kilometres. The cause of this motionless queue? Someone is sitting in the road! Another Extinction Rebellion action, maybe. But where are the XR flags? Where are the supporters? And what is that guy wearing?"*

Pheebee Tinker sees a fleet of police cars driving in, to sort things out.

*"The police have arrived: squad cars and black, four-wheel drives. Regular cops and the SERP cops. Hah! This should get the traffic moving in no time."*

Pheebee Tinker trains the binoculars on the guy blocking the road, and studies him intently. She forms a newsworthy interpretation.

*"He's wearing some sort of costume. It's like a painted motorbike helmet and a suit from Pirates of the Caribbean. He's wearing lots of... lots of... tentacles. He's got tentacles. And he's standing now. Clutching his helmet, staggering around, like a drunkard. What sort of drunken greenie protester is this? Why doesn't he get a regular job, and stop being so annoying?"*

The chopper pilot brings the helicopter lower, so that the action is easier to see.

Pheebee Tinker continues her rolling narrative, “Now five police are approaching the drunken greenie with the helmet.

*My prediction: they’ll make a quick arrest and the traffic will be flowing in no time.*

*And now!*

*What?*

*What’s this?*

*The police have turned and run away!*

*They’ve run back to their vehicles!*

*The police are hiding behind their cars. The Queensland cops are hiding, peering over bonnets and boots.*

*And now, the SERP cops – the big meanies – are exiting their vehicles.*

*A SERP officer looks downrange, places his beefy fist on his sidearm and marches bravely towards the cheeky rebel.*

*Four SERP compatriots, strapped in black body armour, accompany him.*

*The traffic will be free in no-time!*

*And now what?*

*What? This can’t be!*

*I can’t believe what I am seeing here.*



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***This is breaking news!***

***Breaking news!!***

*The SERP cops are running away!*

*The big meanies with the guns, the pepper spray and the tasers... they're running away like little sissies.*

*They are hiding behind their cars.*

*What the...?"*

Pheebee Tinker lowers the binoculars, realising how significant this story has become.

*"You getting all this?"* she asks the cameraman.

*"We're streaming live, baby,"* says the cameraman, not looking up from the viewfinder.

*"Ummm. Can you please not call me baby?"*

*"Oh, sorry."*

*"It's okay, just 'baby' is really cheesy."*

*"I'll call you something else?"*

*"Call me... Ma'am,"* says Pheebee Tinker.

*"Yes, Ma'am."*

*"We need to get into the action," says Pheebee Tinker.*

*"Ahh. Really?" the cameraman looks up from the viewfinder, anxiously. "It's dangerous, down there."*

*"Where there's danger, there's a story, I am a story-teller, and I got a HD in ethics, so it's all good."*

*Pheebee Tinker announces, boldly, "Pilot, take us down. I'm going to interview the drunken, freelance green activist who has terrified the special-forces."*

## Chopper Alights

The helicopter touches down on the highway, and Pheebee Tinker jumps onto the road, followed by the reluctant cameraman. As they move clear of the noisy chopper, Pheebee Tinker halts, flips her fringe aside, and brings the microphone to her face. She instructs the cameraman to get the green activist and the police in the background.

*"Yes ma'am. Rolling. And... Action!"*

*Pheebee Tinker tells it like she sees it, "The Sunshine Coast is in lockdown today, terrorised by a threat more sinister even than Covid-19. A rebel green activist strikes a threatening pose, forcing our elite police force into a defensive manoeuvre. Let's get into the mind of this deranged eco-activist."*

Pheebee Tinker moves closer to the costumed figure blocking the traffic. He is standing in the road, hunched over, clutching his helmet. The back of the helmet is coloured beige with dark red bands running down the sides. The guy's jacket and pants looks like it's made from wet leather and there are tentacles protruding from the sleeves.

*Tentacles?*

Pheebee Tinker observes a trail of moisture running from the costumed man, across the road, and over the embankment, in the direction of the Mooloolaba River.

Seeing these things, the cadet journalist sings a story into life, *"Hidden under the bridge until peak hour when he can cause the most mayhem, the rebel green activist crawls out and blocks the road. And when the police arrive, he threatens them with violence, forcing their retreat."*

Hearing the sound of the young journalist, the man in the costume turns towards Pheebee Tinker and lays eyes on her.

Pheebee instantly falls silent as her body reacts to what she sees. Fine hairs on her neck stand on end. Goose bumps appear on her forearms. Her jaw hangs open, and she stares, aghast. A shiver runs the length of her spine. Numb from shock, she turns to the cameraman, unable to speak those time-honoured words, *"You getting this?"*

But the cameraman isn't getting it. Instead, he's *getting the hell out of there!* He's running as fast as he can. Carrying

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the camera, he leaps into the chopper and bangs his hand on the side of the fuselage shouting, "Let's Go! Go! Go!"

The pilot alights the helicopter from the road. The big machine wavers in the air, lurching chaotically left then right, seeming like it might crash into the ground. Then it stabilizes, and flies away at full speed. Madness.

Pheebee watches the chopper fly overhead, wondering why the pilot and cameraman are so feckless. She turns back to the man in the helmet and realises that this isn't a man in a helmet.

This is no Extinction Rebellion activist.

This isn't even a person.

This is a *creature!*

Pheebee Tinker freezes, immobilized with fear as the creature reaches out a hand towards her. But the hand isn't a hand! It's a tentacle protruding from the sleeve of a wet leather jacket. The tentacle moves towards the crown of her mousy-brown hair.

Pheebee Tinker studies the face of the creature, cringing in horror at the detail of

its bony features. With the tentacle wrapped around her head, the creature starts to speak. From its open skull mouth comes a low, rumbling, roaring noise, like the noise of the ocean that you hear when you put a shell to your ear. This is the sound of the Anthronaut, speaking.

## The Sound of Surf

Overhead, the news helicopter hovers in mid-air. Inside, the cameraman picks up on Pheebee Tinker's rolling narrative. He zooms-in on the creature, observing its tentacle firmly planted on Pheebee Tinker's head.

*"It's hard to describe this terrifying scene,"* the cameraman says into the microphone on his helmet.

*"This is not human. This is creature from the Abyss. Its skull is like one of those orange and white, deep-sea creatures."*

*"Nautilus,"* says the chopper pilot.

*"What?"*

*"Nautilus. It's like a squid with a shell."*

The cameraman continues, *"Yes. Yes. Like a nautilus. And the face is a human skull. It's body is like an octopus dressed up. And! Oh, my! What's it doing now? This is incredible! This is breaking news..."*

With its tentacle firmly connected to Pheebee Tinker's head, the creature turns towards the police, who remain crouched behind their cars, their guns drawn.

The cameraman says, *“The sea monster, is using cadet reporter Pheebee Tinker as a human shield. The police have their guns raised. Keep watching folks, this could get really messy.”*

With the creature’s tentacle fixed firmly to her head, Pheebee Tinker is rendered into a deep trance. The creature moves her closer towards the wall of police. Close enough to speak to them.

Pheebee Tinker has been rendered into a puppet by the Anthronaut by a fast-acting psychedelic drug – *Extract of Echinoderm* – that exudes from the slime on the creature’s tentacle. All that poor Pheebee Tinker can sense is the hypnotic sound that emanates from the creature’s skull-mouth. It’s the sound of the surf rolling onto the shore.

The creature halts, and then speaks. But it can’t speak for itself. So, instead it projects its voice through the ambitious young journalist, Pheebee Tinker.

Channelling the creature, Pheebee Tinker barks out the first thing that comes to its mind, *“I didn’t want to come here! So, how about all you annoying humans just take a*



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*chill-pill, let me complete my mission, then I  
can go home."*

## Who Are You?

Hearing the creature speak, albeit through the young female journalist, prompts the police to lift their game. One of the officers stands up from behind the car and calls out, *"Who are you?"*

*"I'm the Anthronaut,"* says the nautilus-shelled creature, speaking through the stoned journalist, Pheebee Tinker.

*"Well, what do you want*

*"I want to go home."*

*"Well, why don't you just sod-off then, and stop blocking the traffic?"*

*"I have to complete a mission, first,"* the Anthronaut says, through Pheebee Tinker.

*"Ok, so what is it?"* asks the policeman.

*"I have been sent from the sea floor to deliver a important message."*

*"Righto. Is that it?"*

*"It really is very important,"* says Pheebee Tinker, sternly, on behalf of the Anthronaut. *"I have a grave warning for the human race."*

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*"Well, can you hurry up?"* says the policeman. *"There's a lot of people want to get to the beach, you know?"*

The *Anthronaut* ponders this for a few moments, *"A corporate TV newscaster is hardly the right vector for an important message for humanity. I need another channel."*

*"What, you mean like the ABC?"* asks the policeman.

*"No, you dopey crab!"* Pheebee Tinker says with a cranky tone. The *Anthronaut* starts too tremble in frustration. *"I need to speak through someone serious. I need to speak to a Vitan."*

*"A Vegan?"* asks the police negotiator, confused.

*"Not a Vegan!"* protests Pheebee Tinker on behalf of the *Anthronaut*. *"I said Vitan! Oh, your race is so tiresome. I'm not cut-out for this nonsense."* The *Anthronaut* places its free tentacle on its bony forehead, in despair.

In so doing, it releases its grip on Pheebee Tinker's head. The *Extract of Echinoderm* instantly wears-off, she comes to her senses, takes stock of all the police

pointing guns in her direction, and turns to see the *Anthronaut* standing there, looking quite exasperated.

For a fleeting moment, the young journalist feels an upwelling of empathy for the desperate, odd-looking creature. Then her professional training kicks in, and the *Anthronaut* becomes just a pawn (not a *prawn*) in her storytelling.

The *Anthronaut* takes a step back from this intense scene, shaking its head remorsefully, and thinking, "*What am I even doing here?*"

In the helicopter, the cameraman continues his reporting of the scene, below.

*"Now the creature has released Pheebee Tinker as part of its desperate plan. A policeman approaches with an electric taser-gun raised. He fires! The creature is stuck. It clutches a tentacle to a tentacle and collapses on the road, writhing and twitching on the tarmac like an epileptic squid. And now the creature has gone completely still. Is this the end of the saga? Can the motorists finally go to the beach?"*

Lying on the road, the *Anthronaut* is wracked in pain as the electricity from the

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taser-gun, pulses through its body.  
Twitching and moaning, it looks up with  
desperate eyes to see young Pheebee  
Tinker pushed aside by one of the SERP  
police, strapped in body armour. The  
*Anthronaut's* last memory of its first day  
on land is a uniformed knee descending  
towards its neck...

## Police Custody

The *Anthronaut* wakes in a brightly lit room, lashed to a bed, and surrounded by electronic machines. In this hastily prepared facility at the end of Mooloolaba Spit, the *Anthronaut* is the object of intense medical investigation.

Groggily, the *Anthronaut* looks around through its skull eyes, and observes that it has been stripped naked and that all its tentacles are bound to the bed by a thick strap. Multiple wires and tubes are plugged into its rubbery flesh. As the *Anthronaut* takes stock of its predicament, it is jolted alert when a nearby machine goes “Ping!”

There is a nurse in the room making notes on a clipboard. The nurse glances up to see that the *Anthronaut* is awake.

The *Anthronaut* opens its skull-mouth and the sound of the ocean comes out, the sound of the sea crashing on the shore. Startled, the nurse departs the room.

Minutes later a team of medical people and police enter the machine-filled room, led by the eminent *Dr Flam*. Medical

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people fuss around and examine the *Anthronaut* while the burly police watch on.

Dr Flam holds a recording device close to his mouth and begins to speak, "*The creature has been detained in a police facility in Mooloolaba, stripped naked and strapped to a bed. Its body consists of the anatomy of an octopus with the head of a nautilus and human skull. Somehow, all these biological elements are fused together into a single functioning organism. From head to tentacle tip, the length is about six feet or two metres.*"

Strapped to the bunk, surrounded by machines, surrounded by humans, the *Anthronaut* cries out in anguish.

Dr Flam continues, "*The creature protects a noise from its skull mouth that sounds like the roaring ocean. I've heard a noise like this once during a storm with ten-foot swells crashing hard on the sand.*"

Despite its cry of anguish, no-one tries to help the poor *Anthronaut*, and the medical people maintain their emotionless analysis.

Then the *Anthronaut* sees a ray of hope; a familiar face. Pheebee Tinker is standing

in the doorway watching the medical people prodding and probing the *Anthronaut*.

A salty tear emerges from the bony crescent that forms the *Anthronaut's* eye socket. Pheebee Tinker sees this, and she is briefly unsure whether it is ethical to make a story of it. The moment passes, and she adjusts the secret camera and microphone hidden in the lapel of her designer power-suit.

The *Anthronaut* wiggles the end of a tentacle that is strapped to the side of the bed.

*"I think the Anthronaut wants to speak,"* says Pheebee Tinker, boldly.

The medical people look up in surprise and Pheebee Tinker moves towards the bed. She lowers herself to the floor, and places the *Anthronaut's* tentacle on her head. Instantly, she is stoned with *Extract of Echinoderm*, and the *Anthronaut* speaks through her.

Pheebee Tinker barks with authority at all the medical people, *"Will you humans just back-off forever! And unstrap me from this damned bed! It's not like I'm going anywhere.*



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*I mean just look at me. Come one. Come on.  
Get a wriggle on!"*

Doctor Flam okays the request, and a nurse unstraps the *Anthronaut*.

The Anthronaut sits up in the bed, moving its multiple tentacles around its body to check for wounds. Besides the singed patch where the taser struck, it is intact. It takes stock of all the humans gathered around, the medics and police and Pheebee Tinker.

When it has collected its thoughts, it speaks through Pheebee Tinker, "*Problem! I am surrounded by protein, but none of you are edible to me. I'm starving.*"

"*What do you eat?*" asks Dr Flam.

"*Durr!*" says Pheebee Tinker. "*I'm a sea creature. How about some seafood?*" The Anthronaut crosses its tentacles, grumpily.

Released from the *Anthronaut's* slimy tentacle, Pheebee Tinker straitens her hair, composes herself, and trains the lapel camera on the hungry creature from the deep.

## Spanner Crabs

As it happens, the police facility is located right next door to a world-class seafood precinct, and Dr Flam has a big expense account. So, he sends some nurses on a mission to buy seafood from Mooloolaba Harbour.

Pheebee watches as the medics return to the machine-filled room and lay-out every type of seafood they have been able to find.

They bring prawns: king, tiger and banana; there is fish: whiting, snapper, tuna and swordfish; molluscs: oysters and mussels; and crustaceans.

*Ah, yes. Crustaceans!*

The Anthronaut fixes it's bony glare on a plate full of spanner crab. A happy sound of the sea lapping against the shore fills the room. The *Anthronaut* reaches out a tentacle in Pheebee Tinker's direction and she complies. She guides the tentacle to her head and, and says excitedly, "*Crab! Crab! You found crab! Maybe humanity is worth saving, after-all.*"

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The *Anthronaut* raises its tentacle from Pheebee Tinker's head, scoops up the spanner crab in its tentacle, and crunches its bony teeth into it.

Released from the hypnotic tentacle, Pheebee Tinker hears a crunching noise as the *Anthronaut* chomps into the crab. She straightens her hair, remembering her primary duty – to tell news stories.

*“So, Mr Anthonaut?”* Pheebee Tinker asks. *“You are here from the depths of the sea to deliver an important message to humanity. What is it?”*

The *Anthronaut* lowers the half-eaten crab and projects the sound of the ocean directly at Pheebee Tinker.

*“Hmmm,”* says Pheebee Tinker, convinced that the ocean noise sounds vaguely familiar.

The *Anthronaut* repeats its ocean noise, and this time Pheebee Tinker is able to decipher the message.

*“You won't tell me?”* she asks.

The *Anthronaut* nods, and then says in its ocean voice, *“Is there any more crab?”*

Pheebee Tinker tells the nurse, "*The Anthronaut needs more crab.*" Then she says to the sea creature, "*Why won't you tell me?*"

The Anthronaut observes the young journalist, and contemplates her capacity for truth. "*Because you are untrustworthy.*"

"*Huh!*" says Pheebee Tinker, miffed. She is perturbed that that anyone should question her integrity, even a sea creature. "*I got a high distinction in ethics.*"

"*You put your job ahead of your humanity,*" says the Anthronaut in its salty voice.

"*What does that mean?*"

"*It means that you have responsibilities as a human being – to honour your kind and the Living Planet. But you have abandoned your human duties to pursue your career. You have become an agent of lies. I cannot tell my message through you. You will distort it. And your superiors will distort it further, until what I have come to say becomes an advert for something.*"

"*But... but... but...*" stammers Pheebee Tinker, distraught at not being able to get what she wants. "*You can trust me.*"

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*"Yes, I can trust you. I can trust you to deceive me."* The Anthronaut points a tentacle at a TV screen mounted on the wall.

On the TV, the news is playing the live-stream from the camera tucked into Pheebee Tinker's lapel. The vision is delayed a little, and Pheebee Tinker watches the Anthronaut on the TV screen at the very moment that the Anthronaut tells her she is untrustworthy.

*"I didn't want to come here,"* says the Anthronaut, wiping its tentacles clean of crab juice on a napkin. *"I'm not convinced that your race is worth saving."*

He fixes Pheebee Tinker with a glare from his bony eye sockets and says in his salty voice, *"Thank you for speaking for me. You should go now."*

## Breaking News

By the time Pheebee Tinker reports back to her media HQ in Brisbane City, and hour and a half's drive from Mooloolaba, the story about the *Anthronaut* has moved through waves of interpretations, and is now trending in headlines around the world.

In its first iteration, the *Anthronaut* was an Extinction Rebellion activist blocking the streets to protest government inaction on the climate and ecological crisis. Next, the *Anthronaut* had hatched a terrorist plot to make the police look like sissies. Then the *Anthronaut* created a hostage situation with Pheebee Tinker as the hostage. After several other iterations, the story of the *Anthronaut* had become an outright promotion for Mooloolaba Seafood.

With the story now trending above the fold around the world, Pheebee Tinker faces her boss, feeling exhausted but nonetheless buoyed from having broken the biggest news story of the year. After-all, it was she who lead the charge out of the helicopter, and it was news-gatherer Pheebee Tinker who went to the place

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from which the police ran away. Plus, she had touched the Anthronaut, and it had spoken through her. This really ought to cement her role as the *Senior Anthronaut Reporter*. Maybe she'd even get a promotion and pay rise.

Outside the Chief of Staff's office, Pheebee Tinker swipes her fringe to one side, straightens her suit, and marches in.

*"Pheebee, you've done a fantastic job,"* says the Chief of Staff. *"But you missed valuable opportunities to get inside the mind of this deranged sea creature. This is a big story, and we need an experienced reporter on the job."*

*"Someone's taking my place?"* asks Pheebee Tinker, stunned.

*"Jessica Throwback will be taking the lead in the Anthronaut story, from now on. I want you to support her. Give her everything she needs."*

Crestfallen, Pheebee Tinker leaves the Chief of Staff's office. She chastises herself, wondering, *"What did I do wrong?"*

Glumly, Pheebee Tinker finds her way to the green room where Jessica Throwback is flicking through a glamour magazine while a makeup artist preps her to go into

a studio interview. The subject of discussion: *the terrorist threat posed by sea life*. Pheebee Tinker knocks on the open door, and Jessica Throwback glances at her through the mirror.

*"The Chief of Staff says that I am to support you reporting on the Anthronaut,"* says Pheebee Tinker, trying to hide her glumness.

*"Well, that's good,"* says Jessica Throwback. *"I hope you can follow instructions, as I have an important mission for you."*

*"Oh, really?"* asks Pheebee Tinker, her spirits rising.

*"Yes. Go away, little girl. Never let me see or hear you again or I'll have you fired."* Jessica Throwback turns her attention back to her glamour magazine as the makeup artist fusses over her hair.



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## Escape Plan

Meanwhile, back in the Mooloolaba Spit secure facility, the Anthronaut has polished off all the seafood, and now bides its time before making its next move. After being meticulously poked and prodded, examined and interrogated, finally all the annoying humans depart the room, leaving the *Anthronaut* to its own devices.

Little do they know that the Anthronaut has been waiting for this moment and has a cunning escape plan.

As soon as the last human leaves the room and closes the door, the Anthronaut detaches the medical diagnosis cables from its body, sets itself upright on its eight tentacles, tiptoes silently across the room to the wall, raises two tentacles to the window, adheres some suckers against the glass, and quietly plucks the glass from the frame. Then the Anthronaut slithers out of the window.

Outside the building, the Anthronaut silently crawls through the vegetation and trees surrounding the Secret Compound, slips over the fence, and find its way to a rocky seawall.

The Anthronaut raises itself to full height to take stock of its surroundings. On one side of the seawall is the sandy Mooloolaba surf beach, and the open ocean that leads to home!

On the other side of the seawall is the channel that leads back into Mooloolaba harbour where the spanner crabs came from...

*"What am I doing here?"* asks the Anthronaut. He slumps onto the rocks, conflicted. Glancing up, the Anthronaut sees that the moon has risen, and that it is waxing gibbous. In a few days will be the Full Moon.

*"Hmmm."* The Anthronaut thinks it all through.

- On one tentacle, he just wants to go home.
- On another tentacle, he made a promise to his sea-floor peers to deliver a message to the humans, and that message is best delivered on the Full Moon.
- On the third tentacle, there is no reason to believe that the humans

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would act on the message anyway, so what's the point, right?

- On the fourth tentacle, the Full Moon is only a few days away, and he has survived this far, so why not just stick it out a bit longer, get the job done, then go home a hero.
- On the fifth tentacle, there's a good chance that if he sticks around even another day, the humans will kill him either by choice or accident – he is after-all, now a fugitive from the police.
- On the sixth tentacle, it is of no consequence to the Anthronaut or its kind if the message doesn't get delivered – the message is purely an act of deep-sea altruism, and the Anthronaut was the unlucky cephalopod to get the assignment.
- On the seventh and eighth tentacles, the Anthronaut is thinking about Pheebee Tinker and the spanner crabs. Yes, the spanner crabs.

The Anthronaut climbs down the rocks, slips into the channel and swims into Mooloolaba harbour, sniffing out the faint traces of crab juice.

## Pensive Contemplation

Relieved of her duties, exhausted and crestfallen, cadet journalist Pheebee Tinker signs-off for the evening. She takes a taxi to the city centre and walks for hours, watching the paving stones pass, one after another. Eventually, she finds herself outside a seafood restaurant, and recognises the shapes and colours on the picture menu: octopus, crab...

She steps inside the door and asks the *Maitre' D* if she can just have a glass of wine. Minutes later, she is seated at the bar with the stem of a wine glass containing cold Chablis clutched in her fist.

She lets out a long sigh, rises the glass to her nose and sniffs the wine. The aroma is intoxicating, and this relaxes her.

*"Are you Pheebee Tinker?"* asks the bartender.

*"I was, briefly,"* she replies, deflated.

*"Well I think that you are a bit famous around the world right now. Check this out,"* the bartender turns up the volume on a small TV attached to the wall over the bar.

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On the screen is a CNN news broadcast about the Anthronaut. Pheebee Tinker is shown approaching the Anthronaut on the highway filled with stationary cars and police. The scene cuts to a helicopter shot where she is gripped by the tentacles of the Anthronaut, and speaking to the police. Then the scene cuts to the footage inside the Secret Compound where she lied to the Anthronaut and was told that she couldn't speak his truth. And then... *new footage!*

The TV shows night vision from a helicopter flying over Mooloolaba Harbour, a spotlight following a shape speeding through the water. Then there is an interview sequence where Jessica Throwback says that all things that live in the sea, apart from seafood, are potential terrorists.

*"What the??"* asks Pheebee Tinker, suddenly alert.

*"The Anthronaut escaped,"* says the bartender. *"The SERP sniper team are after it."*

*"No way!"* Pheebee Tinker steps off her stool, staring at the screen. She watches

water erupt on the surface as sniper bullets punch into the sea, aiming for the fleeing *Anthronaut*.

*“Something I don’t understand,”* says the bartender, when the *Anthronaut* story ends, giving way to an advert for Mooloolaba seafood. *“Why did the Anthronaut say that you shouldn’t tell his story?”*

Standing there, Pheebee Tinker finds her heart racing, her eyes fixed on the TV advert for prawns and whiting. What was that question? Why was Pheebee Tinker unsuitable to tell a story? *What?* Where did all this doubt come from? Pheebee Tinker sat a communications degree at a prestigious university, and she got a high distinction in ethics. How could she not be suitable to tell a story? It doesn’t make sense.

Pheebee Tinker becomes present to the glass of chilled Chablis in her hand. She raises the glass and drinks half of it, and then wishes she hadn’t. She stands there swooning, suddenly inebriated. She’s got that feeling again, the feeling of *Extract of Echinoderm*, the compulsion to speak the truth.

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*"I'm a trained liar," she says.*

*"Does it pay well?" the bartender asks innocently, as he polishes a wine glass.*

*"Not for me," Pheebee Tinker says. "But for Jessica Throwback, she's rich from it."*

*"Throwback?" asks the bartender. "Is that the drinking game, or the genetic disposition?"*

*"Probably both," says Pheebee Tinker.*

*"Bartender, can I ask you a question?"*

*"Sure."*

*"If you spent six years doing something that you realised wasn't right for you, would you do something different."*

*"Hey, I spent the last six years working in bars. I was meant to be an architect."*

*"So, are you going to change?" asks Pheebee Tinker.*

*"Probably not," says the bartender. "I get good tips, here."*

## Under the Bridge

There is a sacred place for doubting journalists in Brisbane. Under the Victoria Bridge, on the Southbank side. Here, a doubting journalist can sit on the concrete embankment and watch the plastic trash drift by, and ponder all the lies they have told on behalf of their corporate overlords.

With a glass of chilled *Chablis* on an empty stomach, Pheebee Tinker fixes her attention on a chip packet moving downstream. She thinks back to all the years that she spent studying, researching, reading, writing essays, and sitting exams. She thinks of the arduous, soul-destroying process of resume writing, job applications, interviews until she finally snagged the dream job for young comms graduate: a cadet reporter with a commercial TV network. She wangled her way into the chopper job, reporting on traffic jams as a pathway to reporting on important things, like murder. And then she winged the biggest story of the year... And rather than getting rewarded, she got bounced.

*"All that, for that,"* she sighs, forlornly.



## Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

All that passion and commitment only to get kicked out of the nest by a woman called Throwback.

*“Is that it?”* wonders Pheebee Tinker. *“Is that why I am sad?”* No. There’s something else. She thinks back to the Anthronaut. That’s why she’s sad. For whatever reason, that odd sea creature didn’t trust her. *“What’s that about? I was just doing my job.”*

Sitting under the bridge, Pheebee Tinker thinks back to the TV footage of the helicopter pursuing the Anthronaut and the police firing on it. At that moment, a confluence of ideas combines into a single stream, and she is clear about what she needs to do.

Pheebee Tinker stands, retrieves her smartphone and orders an Uber. The destination? *Mooloolaba Harbour.*

## Crab Burglar

Meanwhile, submerged in Mooloolaba Harbour, the Anthronaut rests in a deep spot next to a sleeping 10-foot Bull Shark, invisible to the media and police helicopters, buzzing overhead.

While the lying news broadcasters told the public that the Anthronaut was in imminent risk of capture, the *crafty cephalopod* knew exactly what it was doing! It quickly determined the depth to which the rifle bullets were dangerous, and ensured that the helicopters were led on what the deep-sea dwellers refer to as a *wild squid chase*.

With the choppers distracted, the Anthronaut swims deep and invisible back to its desired location. Under a fishing boat jetty, it raises its bony head from the water. Then it raises its tentacles, and crawls out of the water, across the car park, and scans the Spanner Crab Processing Plant for signs of weakness. The *Anthronaut* finds a crack in the sheet metal cladding, prises it open and slips its head and tentacles inside.

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

The Anthronaut uses its suckers to climb the inside wall until it reaches the ceiling. Then it crawls along the ceiling, observing all that takes place below.

The Spanner Crab Processing Plant is abuzz with activity. At one end of the plant, there is a door through which orange plastic crates are slid in from an offloading fishing boat. The bright orange spanner crabs are fresh from the ocean, still disoriented and dazed at having being hauled from their deep-sea home.

Silently, from above, the Anthronaut watches the humans at work, despatching the spanner crabs. The humans are dressed in, white coveralls, hats, and rubber boots. Some humans lift the orange crates from the floor and tip them into a conveyer belt. The belt conveys the crabs to a row of humans who chop the crabs into pieces and use pressurised air-lines to blast the sweet tasting crab flesh from inside the busted crab shell, into small plastic buckets. When filled, the small plastic buckets are emptied into a large vat.

The Anthronaut is well familiar with destroying crab, but this processing plant

is madness – the humans have mechanised the process. Of greatest interest is the vat where all the crabmeat is collected. The Anthronaut stares hypnotically at the tub full of white flesh.

Consumed by crab lust, the Anthronaut begins to lose sense of its vulnerable position, clung to the ceiling five meters about the workers. The Anthronaut shimmies further along the ceiling, its bony eyes fixed on the vat. What it fails to notice is the ceiling fan whirring around close by.

Hypnotised by the most crabmeat it has ever seen, the Anthronaut reaches out a tentacle and sees the tip immediately sliced off by the ceiling fan!

*“Eeek!!”* The Anthronaut withdraws the cut stump, and clutches it in another tentacle. It watches the tentacle tip fall onto the conveyer belt below. A woman dressed in white overalls picks it up and examines it with curiosity. She looks around for its source, and then looks up, straight into the bony eyes of the Anthronaut!

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

The woman screams out a terrifying, high-pitch howl of terror.

**AAAAAIIIIIEEEE!!!!**

Startled by this harrowing scream, the Anthronaut loses grip and plunges headlong into the vat full of spanner crab flesh. It disappears under the surface making a loud *SPLOOP!* noise.

Under the surface, it plugs the suckers on five of the undamaged tentacles to the inside of the vat and uses the two remaining tentacles to scoop the sweet crab flesh into its hungry mouth. In the spanner crab vat, the Anthronaut gorges itself for as long as it can hold its breath.

*Cephalopod heaven* can only last for so long, and after several minutes the Anthronaut crashes through the surface of the spanner crab vat, gasping for oxygen. Panting desperately, it watches as the disciplined order in the processing plant degenerates into absolute mayhem. Human beings in white coveralls and gumboots run chaotically in all directions. The spanner crab conveyer belt overflows, and dazed crabs crawl chaotically across the floor.

A worker finds herself standing in front of the vat, looking into the skull-like eyes of the Anthronaut. She screams, then passed out on the floor. With this distraction, the *Anthronaut* makes a run for it. Balancing on two tentacles, its uses the remaining five undamaged tentacles to scoop up as many crabs as it can before it darts out of an open door and onto the street.

Outside, it is apparent that night has fallen. Street lamps punctuate the dark sky, and the Anthronaut desperately glances around, realising that it hasn't properly considered its escape plan. There is no sign of the water, and it knows that to its right is the Secret Compound, so it runs towards the left, clutching a dozen spanner crabs in its suckered tentacles.

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

## Sea Life Aquarium

Pheebee Tinker arrives at Mooloolaba Harbour in an Uber, observing police and media helicopters hovering overhead, probing the streets with searchlights. She senses that the Anthronaut is close, and glances around, searching for signs of its passing. One thing that sticks out for her is a big sign with the words: *Mooloolaba Sea Life Aquarium*. Pasted over the sign are the words: *Closed for Maintenance*.

Pheebee Tinker thinks like an Anthronaut, and concludes that it is either in the sea, or on the land. If it is in the sea, it she has no way to access it. If it is on the land, it is most likely somewhere suitable for sea life.

She steps out of the Uber car, and takes to foot around the Mooloolaba aquarium. Overhead, choppers continue probing the area with bright searchlights. Pheebee Tinker moves into the shadows when the probing light comes too close. She moves around the perimeter of the aquarium. Then she finds it! Evidence of the *Anthronaut's* passing: in a vegetated area, there is a pile of crab shell. Pheebee Tinker

searches further, and finds a sheet of metal has been pulled away from the wall, permitting the passage of an object the size of the *Anthronaut's* head. Pheebee Tinker pulls the metal aside and squeezes herself inside.



## Inside the Aquarium

It is quiet inside the aquarium, and dark, too. Pheebee Tinker stands still, acclimatising herself to the dimness. She listens intently, hearing just the faint whirr of water pumps. She retrieves her mobile phone, and turns on the torch. With this white light, she begins to search for the Anthronaut.

Throughout the aquarium is evidence of maintenance activities. There are painting drop-sheets on the floor, ladders. Tool boxes and debris cast across the floor. Overseeing all this are the fish tanks. Pheebee Tinker shines her light into a tank and sees a carnival of jellyfish swirling around. In another tank, there is just a bunch of seaweed moving back and forth in the artificially induced tidal flow. Another tank is a Merry-Go-Round of seahorses. Her journey takes her to a descending ramp, and she feels a chill run along her spine as her light casts a shadow in the shape of a shark.

*“What am I doing here?”* she whispers to herself.

Then she sees something that intrigues her. It is a sign with the word *Sea lions*, and an arrow. Pheebee Tinker moves in the direction of the Sea lions, and as she approaches, she sees that the area is lit. So, she turns off the light on her phone, and slowly approaches. What she sees makes her smile.

## Sea lions

Inside the sea lion enclosure, the Anthronaut as found itself some new friends. Pheebee Tinker moves towards the big, glass window and watches as the Sea lions and the Anthronaut frolic underwater. Flapping their powerful fins, the sea lions jet through the water, twisting and turning, their intelligent eyes wide open. Moving amongst them, the *Anthronaut* moves swiftly, propelled by a jet of water propelled from a tube that protrudes below its skull and nautilus shell head. Pheebee Tinker watches, enthralled. The *Anthronaut* and the sea lions feed off each other's enthusiasm, whipping the surface of the water into a white froth. And then, suddenly, all the action stops! In a flash, the *Anthronaut* and the six sea lions disappear from the water, leaping seamlessly to the above water part of the enclosure.

Intrigued and disappointed, Pheebee Tinker searches around for a way to find out what happens next. She locates an unlocked door, opens it, walks up a flight of steps and finds herself in a place that overlooks the above water part of the sea

lion enclosure. Here, the Anthronaut is lowering spanner crabs into the mouths of the sea lions, toying with them, playing with them. It's as if they have been best friends forever.

One of the sea lions spies Pheebee Tinker and makes a distinctive *'honk!* The other sea lions look in her direction, not forming any particular opinion. Then the Anthronaut looks up, and begins to remorsefully shake its bony head. It opens its bony mouth and delivers a very direct instruction to the young journalist: *"You are transmitting your location. Drop your phone in the water, now!"*

Pheebee Tinker is taken aback by the assertiveness in the *Anthronaut's* watery voice. She retrieves the phone – it's a very fancy-pants and expensive smart phone – and tosses it into the sea lion pen. The illuminated screen immediately goes blank as it sinks to the floor.

The Anthronaut says, *"Pheebee Tinker, you are a liability to my mission."* Then the *Anthronaut* softens, and says, *"Why don't you come and meet the sea lions?"*

## Meeting the Sea lions

*“On second thoughts,”* says the Anthronaut, when Pheebee Tinker steps onto the platform next to the sea lion pool. *“Maybe you are not dressed for Sea lions.”*

Just to prove the *Anthronaut’s* point, a young Sea lion shows Pheebee Tinker some marine love. It slips out of the water, stands on its hind flippers, wraps its fins around Pheebee Tinker, and smacks her with a fishy kiss, delivered through a mane of whiskers. Pheebee Tinker cringes as the aroma of sardines on the Sea lion’s breath permeates the air. In just a few seconds, Pheebee Tinker’s attire transforms from *media professional* to *fishmonger’s apron*. She steps back in horror, taking stock of the sweaty seawater that has permeated her designer suit, and the persistent aroma of oily fish.

*“I’m glad that’s out the way,”* says the *Anthronaut*. Clearly, the six sea lions agree, as all six of them stand on their hind flippers and bring their fins together in applause.

Realising that her circumstances have radically changed – she’s one of the team

now – Pheebee Tinker performs a courtesy. At the sight of this, she is warmly welcomed into the community of Anthronaut and sea lion, demonstrated by the sound of slapping flippers and tentacles.

*“Come on in,”* says the Anthronaut. *“Sit down on that dry patch there. I’m not sure that there is anything we could offer you that you’d actually like.”*

*“I would like to offer something to you,”* says Pheebee Tinker, crossing her legs as she sits. *“I’d like to offer an apology. It was wrong of me to film you without your consent.”*

*“Ahhh,”* sighs the Anthronaut, stroking the fur of a sea lion that has laid its head on its lap.

*“You say you have a message that is important for humanity,”* says Pheebee Tinker.

*“Would you teach me to become your messenger?”*

*“Hmmm.”* The Anthronaut ponders the offer as it strokes the sea lion’s head.

Overhead, a helicopter thunders past. Visible through the canopy above the sea lion pen, a beam of light wavers, casting ominous shadows. The Anthronaut

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

observes this with concern. *"How much time do we have?"*

*"Not long, I suspect,"* says Pheebee Tinker. *"The police are after you, and the Chief of Staff has replaced me with Jessica Throwback. She'll stop at nothing to make someone look bad on TV."*

*"Hmmm,"* says the Anthronaut, contemplatively. He looks down at the drowsy sea lion and asks, *"What do you think?"*

The sea lion raises its big brown eyes and responds with a hearty, *"Honk!"*

*"Find a Vitan Navigator,"* says the Anthronaut.

*"I don't know what that is."*

*"Google it."*

*"My phone is at the bottom of the pool."*

*"Ahhh,"* says the Anthronaut.

*"Oh! Actually. I have a second phone,"* says Pheebee Tinker, reaching for her purse.

The Anthronaut emits the low rumbling noise of heavy swells crashing on hard sand. This puts the sea lions on edge, and they slide from the deck into the water.

*“It’s okay,” says Pheebee Tinker. “It’s not transmitting. It’s turned off.”*

*“Well, if you want to help, take your phone away from here, turn it on, and find a Vitan Navigator. Go now. The Full Moon is soon.”*



## Spyware

Pheebee Tinker leaves the Marine Life aquarium and walks to Mooloolaba Beach. It is a beautiful night with clear skies, and the Moon nearly full, lingering mid-air. In a contemplative state, Pheebee Tinker walks and walks until rocks interrupt her passage. She turns inland, finds a place to sit on the Mooloolaba waterfront, takes out her spare phone, and turns it on.

Now, the technical department in the media company that Pheebee Tinker works for issued this phone, and it is packed with all the sneaky spyware they could find. As soon as it goes online, the tech people are notified. And the tech people have been advised to notify the Chief of Staff as soon as Pheebee Tinker comes online. And as soon as the Chief of Staff has this information, he notifies Jessica Throwback, patching her into a live stream of what Pheebee Tinker's phone is doing.

In the helicopter flying in circles around Mooloolaba Harbour searching for the Anthronaut, Jessica Throwback is alerted to this news on *her* smart phone. She

activates the spy app and is immediately rewarded with a display of the screen of Pheebee Tinker's phone.

*"She's googling something,"* says Throwback from the passenger seat in the chopper. She speaks aloud the letters as Pheebee Tinker types them in... *"V.I.T.A.N  
N.A.V.I.G.A.T.O.R."*

Throwback watches as Pheebee Tinker scans through the *thinkvita.org* website, browses tracks down the contact details of the nearest Vitan Navigator, and then observes as Pheebee Tinker activates the phone app. Throwback listens in on the conversation.

*"Hi,"* says Pheebee Tinker. *"I'm trying to get through to a Vitan Navigator?"*

*"How can I help you?"*

*"I need you to help me record a dire warning for the human race."*

*"Who is this?"*

*"I am journalist Pheebee Tinker."*

*"I've seen your work tonight. Corporate media. Lie machine. I can't help."*

*"I work for the Anthronaut now."*

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

*"You called it a Deep-sea Terrorist on the news this evening."*

*"I know. I know. But I have changed."*

*"That was quick."*

*"I have been reading your website. I think I had an Ecophany."*

*"Okay. We'll you are speaking my language now. Where do you want to meet?"*

In the air, Jessica Throwback listens intently as the conversation ends. *"Did you hear that rendezvous point, pilot?"* she asks, tersely.

*"Yes, ma'am, but we are running low on fuel."*

*"Don't worry about that, you are taking orders from me, now."*

*"Fair enough, but the chopper takes orders from physics and with no fuel, it crashes."*

## Vitan Navigator

Pheebee Tinker meets the Vitan Navigator in the car park near the beach. He arrives in a black second generation Toyota Prius. He is a young man, dressed in blue jeans, a black cotton t-shirt and a Quenn pendant around his neck. Pheebee Tinker steps into the Prius and shakes his hand.

*"I don't really know what a Vitan Navigator is,"* Pheebee Tinker says.

*"I'm an activist for the Vita spiritual philosophy."*

*"I've not heard of that?"*

*"It's a spiritual philosophy that sees humans as a part of nature."*

*"I'm getting a crash course in Mother Nature right now,"* says Pheebee Tinker, contemplatively. *"What would the Anthronaut want with you?"*

*"They say that Vitans talk with the animals."*

*"Do they?"*

*"Figuratively, I guess. Where is it?"*

Pheebee Tinker becomes conscious that her phone is still switched on and she

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

retrieves it from her purse and powers it down. *"It's hiding out in the Marine Life Aquarium."*

*"Let's go and pay a visit, huh?"*

*"Can we walk?"* she asks.

High above, Jessica Throwback studies the black Prius, cursing that the signal dropped out just at the juicy part of the conversation.

*"Ah-hah!"* They are on foot now. Follow them, pilot."

*"No can do, Ma'am, heading back to base to refuel."*

*"You will not! You will do as you are told,"* whimpers Jessica Throwback as the chopper turns away from the biggest story of the year, and heads in the opposite direction.

## Dumbo Octopus

Pheebee Tinker and the Vitan Navigator break into the Sea Life and walk through the dark halls, and into the sea lion enclosure.

Face to face, the Anthronaut and the Vitan Navigator look each other up and down, and then shake hand and tentacle. This progresses to a brief hug, as if two close friends were meeting again.

Then the Anthronaut reaches out a tentacle and places it on the Vitan's head. The Vitan puts his hand on the tentacle and says, "*Speak your truth to me.*"

Thus spoke the Anthronaut: "*My kind have lived in the ocean for over four hundred million years. We have survived multiple events in which most species on Earth went extinct. We live on the Abyssal Plain, you see, the deep-sea floor, where conditions change slowly, even during times of extinction. And our distribution covers over ninety percent of the seafloor. We are very hard to kill.*

*Another extinction event is unfolding, but this one is different from the others. This event is much more rapid. This extinction event is caused by you humans burning fossil fuels.*

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

*This won't much affect us. But your race and most other life forms close to the surface will be wiped out.*

*We can smell the increase in carbon in the ocean, and you are half-way to the trigger point. At this rate, you will trigger the final crash in just a few decades.*

*You are young species, and you allow psychopaths to rule you. You are unlikely to survive what you have set in motion if you continue on your path.*

*You must immediately stop adding carbon to the atmosphere and drawdown that which you have put up there. The ocean can help in this. The kelp and the phytoplankton can draw down billions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. But you have to help them.*

*Stop using the ocean as a garbage dump for your toxins, nutrients, plastics and radioactive waste. And stop taking more marine life than the sea can withstand.*

*You humans are not the only species that will suffer this catastrophe. You need to take responsibility for your action.*

*And most importantly, you need to start fulfilling an ecological role, by taking responsibility for the well-being of the*

*biosphere. Your kind has unique gifts, but you misuse them. You have a unique kind of intelligence, but you use it to make poison and death. It is time for your race to grow up."*

The Anthronaut heaves a sigh and seems deflated. It releases its suckered tentacle from the Vitan's head, and steps back.

The Vitan Navigator nods gravely, taking it all in. *"I understand,"* he says at length. *"This truth is well known to our scientific community. The problem is getting the ideas into the heads and hearts of the public, to foster the behavioural and political change."*

*"How long can you stay?"* Pheebee Tinker asks the Anthronaut.

*"I have to go soon. This body is not built to last on this mission."*

*"Built to last?"* the Vitan Navigator queries.

*"Built. Yes. This body is not an organism, but a synthetic-holobiont, stitched together from things lying around on the sea floor: the skull of a drowned slave, a nautilus shell, the pants of a navy sailor, the waistcoat of a pirate and the body of an octopus. That's what I am made of, but it is not who I am."*



Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

*"Then who are you?"* asks Pheebee Tinker, intrigued.

*"Let me show you something,"* the Anthronaut takes a step backwards, and raises four of its tentacles, to its skull. It tucks the tips of the tentacles into recesses in the skull and then forcefully plucks the skull away from the nautilus shell, revealing what's inside.

Inside the nautilus shell is a transparent skin holding back a body of clear water that is illuminated from the inside. With this little chamber is a tiny, odd-looking octopus.

Pheebee Tinker gasps and peers in, to see.

*"My, my. I've never seen anything quite like that,"* chuckles the Vitan Navigator, intrigued.

The tiny octopus is pale green with distinct fins above the eyes of its bulbous head. The fins look more like ears – like dumbo ears – and these and the eight small tentacles are orange. Its skin seems thin and pale, and light passes through its internal organs, giving a diaphanous, luminous appearance. The little octopus swims in a circle to show off its whole self,

then waves hello to Pheebee Tinker and the Vitan Navigator.

*"Well, I'll be..."* sighs the Vitan.

*"It's so beautiful,"* Pheebee Tinker waves back at the tiny octopus, a tear forming in her eye. *"And who would have thought that such a dainty creature could be so irascible?"*

The Anthronaut retrieves its skull face and puts it back in place. For a long moment, there is a sombre silence as all three contemplate what comes next.

The Vitan Navigator says, *"Whilst we already know your information, you are probably the best person to tell the story to the world. Maybe with Pheebee's help, we could get this story to a truth-telling institution and let the world know."*

*"Yes, yes,"* says Pheebee Tinker. *"My friend has a contact who works as environment reporter for the Guardian. I'll go away from here and call him."*

*"It is good,"* says the Anthronaut. *"But I must leave here soon, or I will never get back."*

*"I'll go right now."* Pheebee Tinker departs the building.

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

The Vitan Navigator and the Anthronaut sit side by side and gaze at each other in deep contemplation.

*“So how did you get this job?”* asks the Vitan Navigator.

*“I was about to asks you the same thing,”* replies the Anthronaut.

## Lucky Twice

Pheebee Tinker walks a kilometre from the Sea Life Aquarium before she activates her phone and places the call. As the phone rings, she holds her mouth in different positions, desperately hoping the call gets answered.

She's in luck. Hurriedly, she recounts her tale to her friend and gains her support. Her friend patches in a call to the Guardian reporter who answers, listens intently and agrees to immediately depart for Mooloolaba. The agreed rendezvous point is nowhere near the Sea Life Aquarium, just to be sure.

At the helicopter landing zone, Jessica Throwback is livid. She paces around in circles, yelling abuse at the chopper pilot. *"The damned Guardian is going to get the scoop of the decade because you incompetent pilots don't know how to fly without fuel! We'll lose all our seafood advertisers. How long does it take, already?"*

Pheebee Tinker returns to the Sea Life Aquarium to share the news with the Anthronaut and the Vitan Minister. That task complete, she walks back to the

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

rendezvous with the Guardian Journalist.  
When she arrives, she slumps down on a  
park bench, quite exhausted.

What a day this has been.

## The Guardian Journalist

Shortly, the Guardian journalist arrives. He pulls his vehicle into an undercover carpark and meets Pheebee Tinker in a quiet corner of a bar. He has with him a cameraman and all the gear needed for a professional interview, TV quality. The presence of the gear means that they'll have to drive to the Sea Life Aquarium and unload from there.

Pheebee Tinker rides with the Guardian journalist, watching the sky for the Channel 7-9-10 News Chopper, but it seems to be gone.

Quietly, the journalist, camera guy and Pheebee Tinker shift the gear through the broken fence into the Sea Life Aquarium.

Inside, the journalist shakes hand with tentacle and paces around, seeking the most opportune location to frame the Anthronaut.

As the news crew begin setting up their gear, the sound of the 7-9-10 News chopper booms through the air. When the sound of the chopper fades, the interview begins.

## Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

The interview is gruelling, with the journalist probing every aspect of the Anthronaut's personal story, and message for humanity.

By the time it is over, the Anthronaut is weary. *"My work is done here, now,"* it tells Pheebee Tinker.

*"We need to get the Anthronaut into the sea,"* Pheebee Tinker says.

Meanwhile, overhead, Jessica Throwback flies back and forth over the Mooloolaba Spit desperately searching for signs of the Anthronaut. Finally, her temper erupts, and she yells at the poor pilot. *"What the hell is going on? We've been flying back and forth over the damned Sea Life Aquarium for an hour and there's no sign of the damned creature!! Find it!"* Then she has an insight. *"Hold on. The Sea Life Aquarium? It has to be there. Take me overhead and get a news truck on standby!"*

Inside the Sea Life Aquarium there is much activity. The Guardian Journalists are busy packing up their gear, and the Anthronaut is saying it's goodbyes to the sealions.

Suddenly, there is chaos as the helicopter descends close to the sea lion compound.

The air swirls around infused with the smell of burnt kerosene. Shadows waver around the sea lion enclosure and the furry animals dive into the water and hide on the seafloor peering up with their big, brown eyes.

The spotlight beams through the plastic canopy, and Jessica Throwback peers in between the gaps. *"There they are!"* she shrieks, excitedly. *"I can see them. Put me down, pilot. Come on, come on, come on."*

*"This could get really messy,"* Pheebee Tinker tells the Anthronaut, and grabs one of its tentacles to hurry it along. They arrive at the crack in the fence and there is a wait for the journalists to pass the gear boxes through. Finally, outside, the journalist hugs Pheebee Tinker and shakes the Anthronaut's tentacle. *"Thank you, thank you, thank you."* He says, steps into his car and reverses out of the parking bay.

With the Anthronaut and the Vitan Minister, Pheebee Tinker glances across the carpark. Thirty meters away is a board



Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

walk with a chain fence. One the other side of the fence is the Mooloolaba Harbour - the sea.

“Okay, let’s go,” says Pheebee Tinker, the Anthronaut’s tentacle gripped in her hand. They move swiftly, but halfway across the carpark a loud noise alerts them. The Channel 7-9-10 News truck is speeding straight towards them.

In the driver’s seat, with a maniacal look on her face, Jessica Throwback powers the truck forward at high speed.

Pheebee Tinker freezes in terror, fearing that death is imminent, but at the last moment, the Guardian Journalist powers his vehicle in between and the car screams to a halt. The News Truck smashes into the car, barging it sideways across the tarmac. The noise is a deafening crunch of twisting metal and squealing rubber.

Panicked, the Vitan Navigator steps deftly aside, but Pheebee Tinker and the Anthronaut are bashed by the Guardian Journalist’s car, thrown against the metal railing of the boardwalk, and tumble over the other side.

Pheebee Tinker lands more or less upright on the mud in waist deep water but the Anthronaut is not so lucky. With tentacles flailing, it lands head-first on a rock. It sits up, gripping its nautilus shell in a multiple of its tentacles.

*"Ooh, this is not good,"* the Anthronaut moans. It hauls itself out of the water and sits on the rocks under the boardwalk checking its shell with its tentacles.

*"Hey, you've sprung a leak,"* gasps Pheebee Tinker, scrambling up the rock to join her companion. On the side of the Anthronaut's shell is a crack, and a fine mist of water squirts out from it.

The Anthronaut gropes its shell and places a tip of a tentacle over the hole, sensing the flow of water. It moves the tentacle in front of its face and studies the fluid intently. *"Oh, dear. I'd don't think I'll be going home now."*

*"Why? What is wrong?"* Pheebee Tinker pushes her palm against the leak to try and stem the flow.

The Anthronaut wraps a tentacle around her wrist and moves her hand gently aside.

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

*"I am a creature who lives deep in the ocean. Inside this shell the water is the pressure of the Abyssal Plain. This pressure vessel is ruptured. I will die soon. Pheebee Tinker, will you help me?"*

*"Of course. Of course. What should I do?"*

*"Help me return to the flux. Place my body in the water. Not the Anthronaut's body. My body."*

*"The little octopus inside."*

*"Yes."*

*"What is your name?"*

*"Timilee. They call me Timilee."*

The Anthronaut settles back on the rocks, raises tentacles to detach the skull face, and lays it aside.

Pheebee Tinker looks through the clear screen into the chamber where with octopus Timilee is dying. The poor little creature's skin is no longer diaphanous and translucent, but now opaque, blotchy, flashing different colours in a distressed pattern. Its tiny body quivers as the water pressure falls.

Water continues to hiss out of the Nautilus shell and the Anthronaut's movements

become disoriented. *"Thank you, Pheebee Tinker, teller of truths,"* it says in its ocean voice. Then the tentacles slump to the rocks, and the creature becomes motionless.

Inside the shell, Timilee twitches a few times, and then, likewise becomes still.

A few seconds pass with Pheebee Tinker staring at the lifeless octopus, then there is a hiss and the clear visor that covers the nautilus shell detaches and slides off to one side. Now Pheebee Tinker is looking into the little pool that holds the tiny dead octopus, Timilee. She places her fingers gently under its body, raises it to her chest and weeps.

*"Bye, bye, little Timilee. Teller of truths."*

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

## Revenge

*"Pheebee! Pheebee!"* calls a voice from the distance.

The Vitan Navigator waves at her from the boardwalk. He stabs his finger in the air, pointing.

Pheebee Tinker sees Jessica Throwback has spotted her and the lifeless Anthronaut. Followed by a cameraman, she clammers over the metal fence and walks clumsily along the rocks in Pheebee's direction.

*"Come one! Hurry up!"* she bellows at the camera guy

*"Pheebee! Up here!"*

The Vitan Navigator is now directly overhead. He lowers a hand, and Pheebee Tinker grips this, and is hoisted off the rocks. She scrambles over the rail, and onto the boardwalk.

*"What happened to the Anthronaut?"*

*"It cracked it's shell and died,"* sobs Pheebee Tinker. She retrieves the lifeless octopus from her pocket. *"Look."*

*"It's Timilee."*

*"You know its name."*

*"Yes. We made friends."*

*"It asked me for a sea burial."*

*"Then we have two things we need to complete."*

*"What is the other?"*

*"Revenge,"* says the Vitan Navigator.

*"Here's an idea,"* says Pheebee Tinker, slipping the dead octopus back into her pocket. *"See over there?"*

A seafood truck has pulled up next to the crashed cars with its hazard light flashing. On the back of the truck are crates of live spanner crabs.

*"Here, grab this!"* says Pheebee Tinker, grabbing hold of one end of a spanner crab crate.

*"Ummm,"* the Vitan Navigator pauses.

*"Come on."*

*"You know this is stealing."*

*"Trust me, its ethical. I know these things."*

They lift the crate from the truck, and Pheebee Tinker directs them to the metal fence. Down below, the cameraman

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

focuses on Jessica Throwback as she swishes her hair aside and raises a microphone to her mouth. *"This rocky hollow is the graveyard of terrorist sea life."*

However, she is unable to continue, as Pheebee Tinker and the Vitan Navigator dump 20 kilograms of live spanner crabs on her head.

Jessica Throwback shrieks as the crabs cascade all over her. Their bony shells snag on her hair and clothing, and the tips of their sharp legs dig into the skin on her face. Pincer claws clutch her flesh, and one crab even grabs her nose!

The cameraman turns his camera away from the lifeless Anthronaut, and towards the lively scene of Jessica Throwback fighting the spanner crabs. *"Now this is breaking news!"*

Howling in anguish, Jessica Throwback flails her arms wildly and staggers backwards, falling into the harbour. She disappears under the water briefly, then struggles to her feet. She stands, staggers, drenched, bleeding from multiple facial wounds. Crabs are tangled in her hair. One has slipped down the front of her

blouse and scratches around seeking an exit. Jessica Throwback clutches the crab that is attached to her nose and tries to tug it off her face. It is awful. To watch. And thoroughly satisfying.

*"Hmmm. That worked,"* says Pheebee Tinker.

*"Come one. We should take Timilee to the channel,"* says the Vitan Navigator. *"Send it on its way home."*



## Sea Burial

On the seawall that links the Mooloolaba Harbour to the ocean, Pheebee Tinker and the Vitan Navigator settle on a flat rock close to the water. Clear water floods down the channel, heading out to sea.

The night is calm, the sky is clear, and the stars are beginning to show in the twilight. Out to sea, an orange glow shines on the horizon. The Full Moon rises, sending shimmering pearls of light off the sea surface. It seems huge, a luminous ball of radiant orange hovering in the sky.

*"What was your name, again?"* asks Pheebee Tinker.

*"Tom."*

*"That's right."* Pheebee puts her hand in her pocket and retrieves the body of Timilee. She gazes at the pale blob in her palm. It looks less like a messenger from the deep, and more like a piece of calamari. Then she takes stock of her professional attire. Her brisk suit is ruined. It started with the sealion kissing her, and then she fell in the harbour. She is

drenched and salty and muddy and smelly but she doesn't care.

*"Hey," she says. "What happened to the Guardian Journalists?"*

*"Oh, they got an Uber back to Brizzy to cut the story together and meet their deadline."*

*"They'll be in the shit with the police for leaving the scene of an accident."*

*"That's the price of good journalism, I guess,"* says Tom the Vitan.

Pheebee Tinker moves towards the edge of the rock and gently places Timilee's body in the moving water. She sits back in her place and observes. The body drifts a few meters, when suddenly there is a flurry of water and a cod rises from its hiding place amongst the seawall rocks, and swallows Timilee's body whole.

*"Wow!"* gasps Pheebee Tinker, taken by surprise. *"Is that supposed to happen?"*

*"Yep. That's okay. When it comes out the other end of that fish, it will be in the flux from where it came."*

*"Are we going to be alright, Tom?"*

*"What do you mean, we?"*

Thus, Spoke the Anthronaut

*"I mean the humans and Planet Earth."*

Tom sighs and then shares the typical blunt truth of a Vita. *"No. We've fucked it right up. We have decades of hell in front of us even assuming we start making right decisions. Its' possible we pull through to the other side. It depends on how much of the ecosystem we lose. Which is why we have to focus and not get distracted by all the lies."*

*"All the lies,"* sighs Pheebee Tinker. She sits quietly watching the Full Moon chart it's course across the night sky. *"Say, weren't you supposed to be going to a party tonight."*

*"No rush. It's a Vitan Moon Party. It will be going all night."*

Pheebee Tinker eases a long sigh and shakes her weary head. *"What a day."*

*"I was thinking the same thing,"* says Tom. *"And you have been at it twice as long as I have."*

They both sit in quiet contemplation of the Full Moon.

*"Say,"* says Tom. *"You have anything planned for tonight?"*

*"Not really."*

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You want to go to a party?"

oOo