

Chapter One

Sir Henry

Axion gasped and grabbed his twin brother Zentin's arm. The mist in the transporter dome slowly cleared and the form of someone or something appeared.

Zentin glared at Axion, then whispered hoarsely into his ear, "I told you we shouldn't have messed around with the transporter. Dad will go ballistic if he finds out!"

"Oh, he'll find out," Axion replied gloomily. "He always does."

Their father, Admiral Trebor Ecurb, was the commander of the space ship SS Ventura in which they were travelling. Admiral Trebor was also in charge of the 1,500 people recruited from Earth, who now lived at the Space Station Explorer, in the galaxy of Starlet, with their families.

Axion tapped his brother's arm. "Hey, Zentin, it looks like a man in some sort of weird spacesuit! What will happen when the transporter dome lifts and releases him? We can't stop it from lifting, you know."

"Him? It looks more like an old-fashioned Roto! Although I must say, our Roto looks like a robot. But this thing looks sort of like a person. Maybe you're right, Axion. Maybe it's a man. But what if it's an alien?"

The twins clung to each other as the dome enclosing the transporter's large platform slowly rose and the thing inside started to move.

"Ooooh - My head aches!" The creature moaned and then raised its strange arm to touch what appeared to be a helmet. "Thank God, my head is still there! King Robert the Bruce actually hit me! I cannot move my helmet. It is firmly stuck. *Humph!* Ah, that is better." The metal helmet finally slipped off, revealing a human head with pale face, long wispy red hair around the sides and a large bald patch on the top. The twins were instantly intrigued by the big scar that ran from between the bushy red eyebrows over the top of the head. "Now where is that rogue Bruce? Where is my horse? Oh, God! Am I in Heaven?"

Clank! Clomp! Squeak! He moved and staggered off the platform onto the main floor of the spaceship.

"Hello, sir," croaked Axion raising his right hand in the universal sign of salutation.

Zentin mumbled, "Welcome to the SS Ventura, sir."

"My correct name is Sir Henry de Bohun, with allegiance to King Edward the Second of England."

"King Edward the second?" replied Axion. "Sir -- err, Sir Henry, there's no King of England. Or Queen, for that matter. Not for over five hundred years. They have a president. What year are you talking about?"

Sir Henry regarded them thoughtfully, then puffed out his chest. "Impudent young man, are ye not! *Humph!* I speak of King Edward II of England and the year of our Lord, 1314 AD. And what, may I ask, is a president? And pray, what is this SS Ventura that ye mentioned, lad?"

Zentin politely moved forward and held out his hand. "Welcome, Sir Henry. A president is like a king, but is elected by the people of the land. He doesn't inherit the title. You are on board the SS Ventura. This is one of the spaceships attached to the Space Station Explorer in the galaxy of Starlet."

"A space ship? Now ye are talking in riddles," replied Sir Henry.

The automatic door at the entrance of the transporter room opened silently and in hovered Roto, the spaceship robot. His staccato voice echoed around the room. "I knew I'd find you two rascals down here. Oh my, what have you done! A knight in armour?"

Sir Henry gasped, his eyes wide open. "My God, who are ye? What are ye? How did ye open that door?"

Axion interrupted. "Roto, this is Sir Henry de Bohun. I think we sort of accidentally beamed him up from the past."

Axion's face flushed red.

Roto raised his right mechanical arm. "Hello, Sir Henry." He then turned and faced the boys. "The Admiral will be furious. You should not be playing with the transporter. It isn't a toy!" Roto turned back to Sir Henry. "My apologies, Sir. Welcome to the year 3000 AD, Sir Henry. My name is Roto. I fear these naughty boys have transported you up here from the past. Let me check my history data. *Hmm!* Yes! Your armour seems to be that used in the 14th century. Let me check. Helmet with *aventail* or mail skirt - breastplate - arm defenses - gauntlets - mid sleeve chain mail - yes, all in order -- made of steel with brass trim. *Hmmm*. Nice workmanship!" Roto circled around the knight, his metallic body cushioned by air jets, hovering above the ship's floor.

Sir Henry stood staring at the image of the micron-metal robot in front of him. He shook his head. "Which army do ye come from, sir? I have not seen such a suit before. It extends over thy legs right to near the floor." Sir Henry scowled. "Show thy face from under thy helmet! Where are my soldiers? What has happened to my horse? Ooh, my head aches!" He took one more step, and then collapsed in a loud *clang, boing and clatter* onto the floor.

Roto turned to the twins, his arms propped against his sides. It was the stance their mother took when she stood, hands on her hips, after they had done something wrong.

"What a mess, boys! Let's try and get this poor man to a bed to rest. My data bank tells me that he's in some sort of shock." Roto reached out to help the apparently unconscious man. His antennae lights flashed in alarm. "Wha- I can't touch him!"

Axion and Zentin rushed forward to touch the form on the floor and gasped. They felt nothing but empty air. "Roto, what's happening?"

"I'm not sure, but I think that you may have beamed up Sir Henry's spirit."

"Spirit? Cool, you mean his ghost? Wow!" gasped Zentin.

"H-he's dead?" added Axion. "Did we kill him?"

"Of course not, Axion!" snapped Roto. He then searched his data. He was a robot who had been programmed with every possible fact from the beginning of time up until the present. Roto was daily updated from the central space station in the nearby galaxy of Starlet. He was the spaceship's source of ultimate knowledge. "My data bank tells me that Sir Henry last fought in the Battle of Bannockburn in Scotland on the 23rd June 1314 AD. Sir Henry was in the vanguard, or in modern language, the advance party of soldiers."

"Who was he fighting?" asked Zentin.

"Where's Bannockburn?" asked Axion.

"Shush! If you both keep quiet, I'll tell you. Don't make such a noise or we may lose Sir Henry's spirit -- or if you prefer, ghost. Yes, Sir Henry must be a ghost. That explains the fading in and out, and why we can't feel him. His spirit is in shock. Wait a few moments until he regains alertness. Fan him with your cloak, Zentin. Yes, that's it. Look, Sir Henry's form is becoming clear again. Good, we haven't lost the spirit."

"You mean we actually beamed up a spirit from the past and not a live person?" asked Axion as he helped to fan the prostrate image on the floor. "Ace!"

"Roto, what happened next in the battle of Ban-whatever?" added Zentin.

"The correct name of the battle was Bannockburn, Zentin," replied Roto. "I will go back to the part where I was interrupted. My data bank has all the information in the history section, 14th Century England."

Axion prompted, "Sir Henry was in the English vanguard."

"I said quiet, Axion!" snapped Roto. "The group came down across the meadow, their lines moved into a column to cross the burn."

"A burn?" asked Zentin.

"A burn is the Scottish word for a creek or stream. Now, stop interrupting!"

"Sorry, Roto. Carry on." Axion winked at Zentin.

The robot's voice echoed around the room as he continued the tale. "In the lead were Hereford and Gloucester. Fifty yards ahead of them, rode Sir Henry de Bohun, clad in full armour on a powerful horse with a spear in his hand. As he came through the trees on the north bank of the burn, he saw a lone rider inspecting the Scottish troops. This rider was half hidden in the woodland, atop a light saddle horse. He had an axe in his hand and a golden crown around his helmet."

"A crown? Which king, Roto?" whispered Axion as he anxiously fanned the vision lying on the floor.

"May I continue?" The twins nodded. "Good!" Roto's navigation lights were beginning to flash red in anger. "Sir Henry, here, recognized the King of Scots. He galloped towards the King. The King turned his horse and cantered towards him. As Sir Henry came near, Robert the Bruce swerved and rose up in his stirrups. He brought down his axe with such force on de Bohun's head that he cut through the helmet, breaking his axe handle in the process."

"Hey, Axion, that must be the scar on his spirit's head!" remarked Zentin.

"Erk, what a way to die!" Axion grimaced.

As Axion spoke, there was a soft groan from the knight. Roto's mechanism hissed as he moved closer and said, "Keep fanning him with your cloaks. Yes, his image is getting stronger. Good! We now have one complete ghost on board the spaceship. We must tell the Admiral."

"Dad? No! Please, Roto, don't tell him! Not for a while anyway. Please!" winced Axion. "Besides, Dad may not be able to see Sir Henry."

"Well, maybe he won't, maybe he will. My data bank agrees with your last comment, Axion. I note that Sir Henry's ghost is visible to all three of us. Usually, ghosts choose whom they want to show themselves to. Aha! Perhaps Sir Henry doesn't know he's dead!"

"Dead? I am not dead, Sir Roto!" grumbled Sir Henry who sat up. Then, with lots of *creaks*, *clunks* and *clangs*, he turned over onto his knees and bellowed, "Well, help me up, please!"

"I'm sorry, Sir Henry, but we can't. We can't feel or touch you!" giggled Axion.

"Nonsense, lad! Stand still and I will elevate myself by using ye as a support."

Axion stood still. Sir Henry stood up in front of him, also looking puzzled.

"Strange! I cannot feel thy hand or thy shoulder. *Ugh!* My hand can go straight through thy body!" Sir Henry gasped. "Are ye ghosts? Is this so-called place that ye call SS Ventura, a type of Heaven?"

Roto's staccato voice echoed around the transporter room. "No, Sir Henry, we are real. *You* are the ghost! King Robert the Bruce killed you when you charged at him at the Battle of Bannockburn. Try to remember. He hit you on the head with his axe."

"Ooooooh, my head! Bruce killed me? I'm dead? Oh, no! I am dead!" Sir Henry walked around in a circle. He touched his head. Finally, he stopped, took his sword from its sheath, then knelt down onto one knee, laying the sword on the floor in front of Roto. "Ye speak with strange accents, similar to the Scots. I am, therefore, thy humble prisoner!"