

Claude's Story

By Colin Martin Barnicle



Claude the Timberwolf woke up just the way he did every morning. He got up at 3:30 AM sharp and put on his medical gear, then had a cup of coffee and a piece of toast. At 4:30 he exited his penthouse and went down to the parking garage. He got into his McLaren and drove to the hospital. He checked in and entered his office.

He greeted his assistant, a very enthusiastic and cheerful otter named Garrett and they set to work. Just like every day, patients came in at just the right pace and the two animals quickly cured them. The first patient was a kangaroo rat who had consumed a little too much mashed potatoes and was having stomach issues. They gave him some antibiotics and told his family to have him lie down for a while. The next patient was a honey badger who had been caught in a barbed wire fence and shredded his shoulder. They sewed up the gash and took out the extra needles. They had several other patients and at the end of the day Claude was ready to leave.

He was washing up when the doors to his office opened and a distressed family of possums followed by one of the antelope nurses rushed in with a possum on a stretcher. "This animal was found lying face down in the middle of the street after he went to work this afternoon." The nurse said, "we rushed him here as soon as we could. Will you help?" "It wouldn't hurt to stay a bit longer" Claude mused. They lifted the possum onto the operating table and Claude set to work. He looked at the report file. The possum had no identifiable physical injuries and possessed no sickness. Claude took an X-ray and found a peculiar piece of metal in his body. He zoomed in and found a shard of aluminum jammed inside of the possum's stomach. How did that get there? He wondered. "This will be an impossible surgery. The machines aren't steady enough to retrieve that metal without damaging the area around it" the nurse said. "We could take that new

miniaturizing shuttle we have.” Claude suggested. “But that’s just a prototype!” the nurse protested. “We don’t even know an eighth of its functions!” “If it saves this possum,” Claude said “I’ll use it.” “Fine,” the nurse sighed, and hurried to get it. The shuttle barely fit through the doorway but they managed to squeeze it in. It was a big hulking mass of stark white metal with no visible seams or bolts holding it together. In short, it looked exactly like a giant egg with a windshield. Inside there was a bin for storage and a single seat in front of a huge computer screen with buttons scattered everywhere. There was a large area of glass that the driver could see through. Since the shuttle had only enough room for one animal, Claude had to go alone. “Lead the family out to the waiting area please” Claude asked. After the nurse and the mother possum with her children left, Claude gave the possum a sleeping drug (to minimize struggle) and shrank the shuttle.

He had propped open the possum's mouth in case he needed to make a hasty escape and flew into the dark abyss. He switched on the headlights and flew down into the inky blackness. There was a screen in the shuttle linked to the X-ray in his office, showing him where he was in the possum’s body as he slowly inched towards the stomach. Suddenly, outside of the shuttle he saw it... movement! He shined the lights where he had seen it but it had disappeared. To the opposite direction something else moved! He twirled around in a circle to try to catch whatever it was, but came up with no trace. Then, up ahead he came across a hoard of white blood cells! The shuttle had no known weapons but Claude started pressing random buttons. Windshield wipers came on and the seats reclined all the way, but other than that nothing happened. The cells circled him and started pushing the shuttle to a camp of more cells. They must think I am one of them! Claude thought. He wanted to escape as soon as possible but he let them take him to their

camp. After all, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity! They led him to a crevice in the flesh and according to the X-ray they were entering the brain. Claude was furiously taking notes while putting his personal recorder on video. Inside, the technology looked strangely like the animal technology they used. Claude's shuttle was led to an area surrounded with metal poles. One of the cells made a squishing noise and the rods started heating up. Claude knew what was happening. They were going to burn him! He hit more random buttons, and amazingly he managed not to damage anything. He raced out of the camp and returned to his mission except with a newfound haste.

He got into the stomach and sent out mechanical arms to retrieve the shard. As he grabbed it he put a force field around the shuttle so liquids couldn't get in, and drained all of the stomach acid. He hit a button and make the arm stuff the metal through the door in the back and he grabbed it. He put the shard into the storage box and got rid of the force field. He turned around to find the cells blocking his entrance! They advanced toward him and attached themselves to the outside of his pod. He heard a strange noise, as if someone had taken their claws and started scraping off the paint. He realized they were gnawing on the exterior! Claude had to find out a way to get them off or he'd be trapped inside of the possums body, slowly disintegrating in stomach acid. He randomly slapped buttons and by some miracle he found the right switch! The whole outside became full of electricity and the cells fell off. Claude raced out of the stomach and burst out through the possum's mouth. He quickly enlarged and collapsed on the floor. The nurse rushed in "what happened?!" "Claude handed her his notes and the personal recorder before promptly collapsing on the floor. He woke up in his penthouse bedroom with the newspaper on his lap. He picked it up and read the headline.

Timberwolf doctor saves local businessman

Claude read the rest to find he had been awarded a very generous check. But really, all he was happy about was that he had done his job and lived to tell the tale.

THE END