

# Notes on the Androids on the Starship Warden

by James M. Ward (Dragon #4)

In the far future, there exists a colonization starship called Warden. The ship now roams the universe, uncontrolled by human hands, only its main ships computer stops it from running into any large planetary bodies. The ship is randomly infested with radiation, which has caused the life within to mutate in many ways. The medical section of the ship was given over in part to the formulation of synthetic life, in the form of humanoid androids. When the radiation cloud that affected the ship killed the crew, it also destroyed the controlling link the main ships computer had with the formulation vats.

A set of androids was produced with programmed medical knowledge, but no programmed instructions. The radiation in the medical area affected the fibrous brain cells of the androids and provided the creatures with a sort of animal cunning. These androids with medical knowledge made others, and soon a colony of them existed in the medical section of the ship. They were able to make themselves resistant to all forms of radiation, and plans were soon launched to consolidate the whole ship section they were on. Two factors stopped this scheme. The androids had a built-in obsolescence factor that killed them off in two years, and nothing they could do changed this. The other factor was the existence of mutations that continually invaded the area and were fearless, even when slaughtered to the last being.

These variables led the chemical creations to change their entire setup on the ship. The medical area that dealt with the creation of androids was blocked off from the rest of the level and all the efforts of these creatures went into the exploration and classification of all life on the ship and the study of increasing the life span of the race of androids as a whole. The exploration studies spanned many human lifetimes and cost untold numbers of androids but developed a rather complete picture of the ship. The study revealed many pockets of human habitation, and these pockets were infiltrated by human-appearing androids. While it was necessary to replace them every two years, exact doubles were easily formed because they were simply grown from vats. Quite soon, androids, with their superior knowledge and inhuman physical powers, started assuming positions of command, in the form of tribal leaders or more often as shamans.

These androids usually sought to place their human tribes in conflict with the many mutated species on the ship. This constant war stopped all beings from becoming too powerful and left the androids alone to continue their efforts in increasing their life span — a study that has gotten them nothing but if completed would allow them to take over the ship, their world!

Their plans did not always go smoothly, however. Mutations of several different types were able to sense the inhuman nature of the android. Sometimes an android died and revealed to other human tribesmen that their leader was alien. Animals that were domesticated by many human tribes often refused to be near androids, forcing the chemical men to be very careful around them. Lastly, the androids all feared that sometime, somewhere a mutation would be created that had powers unstoppable by human and android alike. Then, when an android was in every human tribe and most were in positions of power, their worst fears were realized in the form of a little pink ball-like creature called the "fuzzy."

This small, almost helpless, mutation required only affection to thrive and multiply. It was quickly adopted and used by a race of lizard men, who discovered the fuzzies weren't so helpless after all. It seemed the little mutation could transmit any emotion the holder of the creature wished. It also attacked androids on sight and in many cases, was able to hasten the chemical obsolescence process. Attacks were made on this race by the human group on that level, but were negated by the strange power of the fuzzy and the android leaders of that group were killed. The lizard men, while terrible in battle, were essentially pacifistic in nature. This factor and their fuzzies allowed them to make peace with the human tribe, which in turn made the whole level dangerous for the androids. The search by the chemical men then went on for a mutation to combat the fuzzy menace. None was found during the course of the first long year thereafter — half an android lifetime.

*The above is from the journal of Emaj the fat mutant philosopher, as translated by Yra, the Wise.*