



Dani and the Machine Wars

“Dani, can you hear me? This is FIRE-bird 1. Over.”

The awful sound of engine thrusters roared somewhere above where Dani was hiding and she quickly cut the radio link. She held her breath, praying that the machines hadn't heard Devlin's voice. The roar of the engines changed to a low hum. That wasn't a good sign. It meant that the machines were hovering – searching the wreckage for signs of life. If they had heard the radio message, it would all be over; they wouldn't stop until they had found her. And, once they'd found her... well, Dani didn't want to think about that. Either way, it was a crummy way to spend a birthday.

Brp, brp brp, brp...

The sound of a scanner-bot came echoing along the corridor. Dani squeezed her legs in tightly and peered through the grill of the air vent that she was hiding in. It was cramped and hot and not designed to hold humans. Then again, Dani wasn't entirely human now anyway. It was funny, really. She was becoming more like the machines every day.

Brp, brp, brp, brp... vvvvwwrrrrr...

The scanner-bot stopped right outside the air vent and began to slowly turn. Dani shivered. She could never get used to the way the bots looked. Small, maybe the size of a football from that game people played in the last century, scanner-bots were half-metallic, half-organic, with leathery-looking skin that hung loosely from their body. They were designed to scout out an area and were always the first droids to enter a battle scene. This one hovered about a metre from the ground; its three needle-like feelers scanned the air as it moved. Its sensors lit the corridor in a flickering sea of crimson and edged closer to where Dani was hiding. If it picked up her life signs, she was in trouble. Dani closed her eyes and accessed her X-Brain. It was a new app that her father had installed into her mind just before he'd left for the Machine Wars. With it, she could access her central nervous system which gave her power over pretty much all of her body's functions. Dani missed her father. It just wasn't the same without any of the adults.

In a matter of milliseconds, Dani had programmed her breathing and heart rate to fall below what the droid's scanners would consider 'alive'. She immediately slumped against the curved flooring of the vent. She felt sick and she couldn't move but she had no choice. It was as if a switch inside her body had been turned to 'off'.

Vrrrrrrrrrrrrr...

Red, chequered light shone into Dani's unblinking eyes as the scanner-bot identified her lifeless body. "Human female located," it stated, dryly. "Downloading files... accessing... Colonel Danielle Hutchens of First Infantry Rebellion Elite... highly sought after by Machine-Command..."

"Status," a different voice crackled over the droid's com-system.

"Deceased," the scanner-bot confirmed.

"Initiate retrieval process," the other voice commanded. Dani's eyes widened. 'Retrieval' was basically a machine way of saying 'bring it back, chop it up and feed it to our organic engines' – not exactly number one on Dani's birthday list this year, and not what she was expecting, either. She had assumed that the bot was going to continue scanning the battered space cruiser.

Time for Plan B, Dani thought to herself, as the droid began burning through the metal grill with a laser.

Using her X-Brain, Dani instantly brought her heart rate and breathing back to normal and sprang forward, kicking hard at the metal grill.

"Error," the scanner bot announced as it went crashing into the opposite wall. Before it had time to react, Dani jumped down and grabbed the droid, sending an electrical pulse into its mainframe with her robotic arm. "Err... orrrrrrr..." the machine babbled as it crashed lifelessly to the floor.

"Now would be a really good time to teleport me out of here!" Dani whispered as she flicked the radio back online.

"Ah, Hutchens, nice of you to call back. Having fun on your birthday, are we?" the voice on the radio replied.

"I mean it, Devlin!" Dani hissed, as the machines' engines roared into to life somewhere above her. "There's not much time!"

"With you in ten seconds," the voice said calmly.

"I don't think I have 10 seconds!" Dani screamed.

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6..."

The walls began to rattle and vibrate and the roar of the engines became almost unbearable. Whatever the machines were doing out there, it wasn't good.

"Quick!" Dani cried.

"5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0."

Nothing happened. The teleport hadn't worked. Dani was still on board the doomed space cruiser.

A huge explosion thundered along the corridor and wave of heat crashed into her side. Dani stumbled backwards, closing her eyes as she fell to the floor.

Suddenly, the noise disappeared, and Dani felt cool again. She opened her eyes. She was lying on the familiar deck of FIRE-bird 1 with her crew around her.

“Sorry,” Devlin smiled. “I went with eleven seconds in the end.”

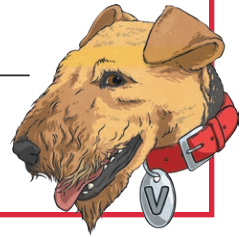
“What?” Dani spat, breathing hard and still lying on the floor.

“Eleven... you know, because you’re eleven today? It seemed special,” Devlin replied, like it was the obvious thing to have done. “Happy birthday, Colonel!”

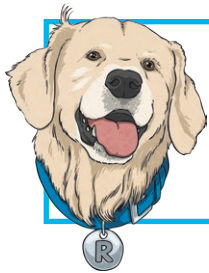
Q1: What do you think ‘FIRE-bird 1’ is? Explain your answer.



Q2: ‘Either way, it was a crummy way to spend a birthday...’ How else could the author have written this line?



Q3: Where was Dani hiding?



Q4: ‘Dani wasn’t entirely human now anyway.’ Explain why this sentence is true, using evidence from the text.



Q5: *'The scanner-bot stopped right outside the air vent and began to slowly turn. Dani shivered.'* Why do you think that happened to Dani?



Q6: *'It just wasn't the same without any of the adults.'* Where do you think the adults have gone?

Q7: Find and copy a phrase which the author uses to show that Dani changed her body's functions incredibly quickly.



Q8: Red, chequered light shone into Dani's unblinking eyes...'

Why weren't Dani's eyes blinking?



Q9: What was so special about the day that the events in this text happened?



Q10: When do you think that this text is set? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.



Q11: Once back on board FIRE-bird 1, what do you think Dani and the crew will do next?



Q12: Summarise the key points of this text in 30 words or fewer.





Dani and the Machine Wars **Answers**

Q1: What do you think FIRE-bird 1 is? Explain your answer.

Accept any reasonable answer which infers that FIRE-bird 1 is a spaceship, plane or flying vehicle, providing that relevant evidence from the text is given in support of the answer, e.g.

- **I think that FIRE-bird 1 is a spaceship because the enemy vehicle is called a 'space cruiser' in the text, so FIRE-bird 1 must also be some sort of space vehicle.**

Q2: 'Either way, it was a crummy way to spend a birthday...' How else could the author have written this line?

Accept any reasonable use of language which conveys the same message, such as:

- **Either option was a terrible choice, especially on her birthday.**
- **Both options were ways that she would rather not spend her birthday.**
- **She didn't want either of those things to happen on her birthday.**

Q3: Where was Dani hiding?

Accept the answer 'inside an air vent' only.

Q4: 'Dani wasn't entirely human now anyway.' Explain why this sentence is true using evidence from the text.

Accept answers which incorporate any of the following pieces of evidence:

- **Dani has the X-Brain app installed in her mind.**
- **Dani hits the scanner bot with 'her robotic arm'.**

Q5: 'The scanner-bot stopped right outside the air vent and began to slowly turn. Dani shivered.' Why do you think that happened to Dani?

Accept answers which infer that Dani shivered because she was frightened or scared of being detected by the scanner-bot, e.g.

- **I think that Dani shivered because she was scared that the scanner-bot might detect her.**

Q6: 'It just wasn't the same without any of the adults.' Where do you think the adults have gone?

Accept answers which infer that the adults were away fighting in the Machine Wars, such as:

- **The text says that Dani's father left because of the Machine Wars so I think that the other adults might be fighting there with him.**

Q7: Find and copy a phrase which the author uses to show that Dani changed her body's functions incredibly quickly.

Accept the answer 'in a matter of milliseconds' only.

Q8: 'Red, grill-patterned light shone into Dani's unblinking eyes...' Why weren't Dani's eyes blinking?

Accept answers which state that Dani's eyes were not blinking because she had managed to turn off her bodily functions in order to remain undetected by the scanner-bot, e.g.

- **Dani was not blinking because she had used her X-Brain to turn off parts of her body so that she would not be caught by the scanner-bot.**

Q9: What was special about the day that the events in this text happened?

Accept answers which state that the events happened on Dani's eleventh birthday.

Q10: When do you think that this text is set? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Accept answers which infer that the text is set in the future, providing that evidence from the text is used, such as:

- **I think that this text is set one hundred years from now because it says that football was 'that game that people played in the last century.'**
- **I think it is set in the future because Dani has a digital implant, the X-Brain, which would be impossible today.**
- **It is set in the future because the adults are all at the Machine Wars and that is futuristic.**

Q11: Once back on board FIRE-bird 1, what do you think Dani and the crew will do next?

Accept any reasonable prediction which fits with the premise of the story, such as:

- **Dani and the crew may return to their home planet.**
- **Dani and her crew could go to bring the adults back from the Machine Wars.**
- **They could go to help fight in the Machine Wars.**

Q12: Summarise the key points of this text in 30 words or fewer.

Accept any summary of the text that covers the key points of Dani's near miss with the scanner-bot and teleportation, such as:

- **On her eleventh birthday, Dani is almost detected by a rival scanner-bot but she hides in a vent and is teleported back to FIRE-bird 1 just in time.**