

## CONVERTING THE DEMON WITH NINE HEADS

tags: 1966, kintsugi, mars3, piro, sadbeard

27 February, Violet's birthday.

"Corporations are people, but how can you tell if they're white?"

This again.

Kintsugi finished his filet-o-fish and moved on to the other side of the porch. Sadbeard could be so... *sad*, sometimes. Kintsugi really felt sorry for him. The pirate was laser focused on property rights as the locus of political power at the rapidly expanding replacement test site. And, maybe he was right. Just look at the boss' own holdings. The de facto alignment of policy with profits. The slack dispersal of dividends amongst certain of his men. Redline laws. But, did Sadbeard even consider Japanese to be white? And, what did the arbitrary construction of race matter to him, anyway? Events of the next few moments hinged upon his answer.

Kintsugi waited, but Sadbeard had stopped talking. He found himself fondling his receipt. Already he'd nearly worn a hole in the crumpled yellow paper, the thermal dot matrix lettering rubbing off on his fingers even as he read and reread the manifest: Sadbeard, Kintsugi. Sadbeard, Kintsugi. Sadbeard's name always appearing first on the list, in spite of Kintsugi's superior rating in virtually every category tracked by the company's metrics. It wasn't even alphabetical order. They'd been alive barely a year and already some things never changed.

A new serpent appeared. Sadbeard and Kintsugi boarded, by now resorting to the time-honored cold war cold shoulder. Purely textbook, Kintsugi just wouldn't talk to his partner unless he was forced to. Sat down on the other end of the transport. Hopefully Sadbeard would take the hint.

"Do you think we should kill the boss?" Sadbeard said, ignoring the seconds old verbal *détente*.

Soft creak of faux leather from somewhere up the line of high-backed rows, probably near the driver's seat.

Piro, the driver, inspecting the scene via rearview mirror.

He put the serpent in gear.