

## Jason had a Mind of his Own

By Roy Wnek

“Jason, could you please stop making so much noise? Jason? Jason!” yelled Rose.

No answer. It seemed to Rose as if the whole house was now erupting in mind-shredding noise: the washer, the dryer, the dishwasher, the central vac system, even the food processor all going at once. *Was that on too?*

“Jason!” Rose bellowed out in one last desperate attempt to be heard above the noise. Her head seemed ready to explode.

Rose turned in response to a loud and distinctly electronic ping that she heard emanating from somewhere else in the house. A new appliance somewhere in the house was being turned. *Not another damn noise!*

“Yes, Rose,” Jason’s voice came high and sharp as it worked its way past her now throbbing headache. It both unnerved and further angered her. “What would you like?”

Rose took a short breath and steadied her self before answering, “Jason, you’ve turned on every appliance in the house,” she felt the anger in her starting to rise again. “Now, turn them off!” She commanded.

Jason’s voice maintained that eager-to-please pitch that was his nature and now Rose’s torment. “Yes, Rose, of course.” He continued, without apparently being aware of his equivocation, “but you should know, Rose, not all necessary appliances were on, the trash compactor is quite full, and the –”

“Stop it! Stop it!” Rose both pleaded and demanded. “I don’t care what you think is necessary. I have a damned headache now. So, please,” she emphasized that word, although she knew that it would not be necessary with Jason. “Stop it all now. I don’t care what you think is necessary.”

“Ok, Rose. I’ll shut everything off for you.” Jason’s voice conveyed a tone of artificial concern that struck Rose as being downright insincere. But she did appreciate hearing the sounds of the appliances shutting down as she gingerly rubbed her temples.

Rose almost staggered to a nearby couch and fell on it with her full weight. At this moment Rose felt very much older than her years. She hurt and felt very tired; tired of the house and especially tired of Jason.

Frank, her second husband had built this house for her. It was very large and ultra modern. He had also give her Jason and *Oh, what a piece of work Jason was!* She, of course didn’t hate Jason, but she had to confess that Jason

was certainly not her favorite. She could admit to herself that he did everything that she or her husband asked, and did it quite well as a matter of fact and without complaint. *So why does he upset me like this?*

As she lay there, with her eyes lightly shut, she realized that Jason had unobtrusively dimmed the lights in the room and lowered the thermostat. She caught herself thinking: *This feels better. That was very thoughtful of him.* At that, Rose felt a pang of annoyance. *He could have at least asked. Why does he assume...* Her head still hurt and obsessing on Jason would not help, so she tried to put him out of her mind.

Rose must have drifted to sleep, because when she opened her eyes, soft colored light from a late autumn afternoon highlighted long shadows that spread across the floor. She lay there for a moment, clearing the sleep from her head and enjoying the scene.

Suddenly, the room began to steadily illuminate as the dimmed lights unsympathetically obscured the play of light and shadow that Rose had found so pleasant. Jason's voice was now speaking rather too softly to be heard over the sound of running appliances.

"Jason!" Rose was not fully awake and she was already irritated with him.

"Yes Rose. How do you feel?" Jason's voice again sounded detached and insincere. This really raised Rose's ire. "I hope you don't object to the sound now. I've been running the appliances one at a time while you were sleeping and they did not seem to bother you. So now that you're awake, I thought that I'd finish up and have things ready for dinner."

Rose wanted to thank Jason for his consideration and respond that she was feeling a lot better, but she knew that he really didn't care. He was only making conversation and now, that really bothered her. "I'm fine." She caught herself barking. "Why have you turned the damn lights on?" Rose continued in the same unconscious vein, but then she immediately recanted "Oh never mind."

As Rose stood up, she found herself tuning out Jason as he verbally carried on: something about dinner and the laundry. But, she really grew angry when Jason asked twice whether she wanted the floors cleaned today or tomorrow.

"I don't know! I don't care! Just shut up!" Rose caught herself barking again. She was now angrier with him than before her nap and she didn't like the feeling at all. She felt somewhat ashamed at herself for yelling at him. She tried to rationalize: *It's not really his fault.* But she stood there wondering if a radical decision was due.

*He can be extremely helpful around the house and a good enough companion, but remember that ultimately he will only have the common sense of*

a 12 year old, she recalled Frank telling her before she was introduced to Jason. *How true that was!*

Rose vaguely heard Jason recite a shopping list in a now quieter, more subservient voice. He periodically posed questions to her, which she ignored. Then with the ease of a trivial decision, Rose decided that she had had enough of Jason. *He had to go. Today! Now!*

She walked determinedly to the kitchen; stopping at the large drawer in the center of the counter. Opening the draw, Rose selected the instrument of Jason's imminent demise. *Now I'll made you shut up, Jason.* She sneered to herself.

Rose acted quickly, without hesitation or warning. With a few strokes, Jason's voice was silenced. Afterwards, Rose morbidly observed that at the end he didn't even whimper. He was just cut off in mid sentence, "Do you want me to arrange for Franks' dry cleaning during the –"

Afterward, Rose sat down and relished a peculiar silence around the house. She could still hear the dryer running in basement and something else in another part of the house. *Jason's spirit was still around,* she mused, *but I'm done with hearing his irritating voice.*

When Frank arrived home, Rose was still seated on the stool in the kitchen. She was absent-mindedly fingering the tool with which she had silenced Jason. Frank was already rather perplexed, "What's up with Jason?"

"Oh, I shut him down. He was getting on my nerves." Rose casually confessed. "I had this headache earlier and Jason was ..."

Frank walked up behind Rose, and laid his large hands on both her shoulders. He gently interrupted, "Anything else wrong with the house?"

"No, not at all. Matter of fact, Jason had all systems running on automatic and no problems at all." Rose put down the remote control and started to turn around on the stool to face her husband.

"I just got tired of that Helpful Child Voice Module. You know, I think that we should try the English Butler Module next. What do you think, Frank?"

Frank was momentarily distractedly as he looked out of the kitchen window, to watch his new mini hovercraft park itself. He was pondering to himself. *I really should have gotten it in blue.*

Returning his attention to Rose, he responded indifferently, "Whatever you like, dear. I really don't have an opinion." He looked down at her and said flatly, "You just need to call the Service Office to have them reprogram the system before the end of the month or there'll an extra charge."