

THE PASSION ENGINE



A MARRIAGE OF MYTH & MECHANICAL

TIM E KOCH

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A Marriage of Myth & Mechanical

a story

by

Tim E Koch

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contents

Chapter Link

1 [...](#)

2 [...](#)

3 [...](#)

4 [...](#)

5 [...](#)

6 [...](#)

7 [...](#)

8 [...](#)

9 [...](#)

10 [...](#)

11 [...](#)

12 [...](#)

13 [...](#)

14 [...](#)

15 [...](#)

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1

The first degree in the advancement of automatism, elucidated in the volume *The Divining Engine*, was established at the creation of said engine by the polymath Dame Jessica Heckford, Lady Heckford at the time: she then being merely the wife of Sir Robert Heckford who, in consolation of her passion for advancement of her mind, deigned her apprentice likewise in mechanics, mathematics, biology, and voltaic principles, due to the limits placed upon female advancement in any particular field of study. Thence was she able, through the combination of these disciplines, to marry clockwork mechanicals with organisms invigorated of voltaic forces, and thusly did the divining engine issue in the glorious age of automatism, at last allowing mechanicals to divine that which their human masters sought and desired of them, saving their masters tedious management of them.

Shortly thereafter did the second great advancement occur, the creation of the simulacrum, which, to the several architects of automatism, the most vocal of these being Mr Charles Babbage, proved naught more than abominable metal representations of Man, at best a vanity imposed upon their industry: an unnecessary appendage to great mechanicals, from steam carriages through automatized domiciles to the great new ships of the British Royal Navy, built of iron, driven of steam, and self-willed through their divining engines to accomplish any desires ordered of the Admiralty.

But to the laypersons, the users of these great, newly wizened mechanicals: the gentlefolk passengering the steam carriages, the

housekeepers of the elegant new automated homes, and even the members of the Admiralty themselves; the simulacra were godsend.

In example, let us consider His Grace, Lord Russell, Prime Minister of the United Kingdoms, in his utilization of his own fine carriage, constructed at the oversight of Sir Robert himself in the famed manufactory of Heckford Hall in Blackfriars. Now upon the standard usage of such device, such as his conveyance from his residence and offices on Downing Street in Whitehall to his audience with Her Majesty at Buckingham Palace on t'other side of St James Park, no discomfiture should be pressed upon him, for on such occasion should his secretary schedule the foray, the carriage should at the appointed time come round from its mews, his lordship should board, and the transportation should thusly be made without need of his lordship deign interact with the mechanical at all. However, should, in his audience with Her Majesty, he determine the necessity of repairing to Whitehall for council with the Lord of the Admiralty rather than the presumed procedure to an early luncheon at the club in Pall Mall, upon his quitting of the palace, he must needs then redirect his conveyance accordingly.

Now, make no mistake of his lordship's stature and health, for the conundrum imparted is due not to any shortcoming on the part of either. But for the Prime Minister to, upon gaining the porte cochere in the palace courtyard, do so, he should find himself, saving the affixture of a simulacrum onto the carriage, addressing a machine weighing no less than four hundred stone. The awareness of such astounding prowess also possessing a consciousness should deeply unsettle the most indomitable of men. If he, instead, may look to a form no larger than himself, liveried as befits the groom of a carriage, his lordship may then, with no discomfiture whatsoever, issue command:

‘Whitehall Palace.’

Having then reentered the cabin of the carriage, he may enjoy his conveyance without awareness of the great mechanical in whose belly he sits. Likewise—nay! but moreover, should the housekeeper of Woolsey Hall, with its fully automatized scullery, larders, and laundry, be greatly comforted at a second who should sit with her and politely discuss plans for the dinner honoring the Captain of the Horse Guard upon his receipt of the Order of the Garter? And how much more still should a commander under the Lord of the Admiralty who needs relay order of duty from his superior to the six-thousand-ton, two-hundred-foot *HMS Pembroke* be consoled at the address of an officer much as himself, save wrought of bronze, in the direction of the vessel?

And so, having justified the second great stage of development in automatism, let us now take careful consideration of the subsequent progression that we might reach a determination as to the degree to which it should elevate automatism.

As with that first great advancement: that mechanicals should, through a desire to serve at the pleasure of their masters, divine the wishes thereof and perform such without command but out of an innate sense of duty; so did the third advancement, if we may be so forward as to judge it such at this juncture, arise from a seemingly simple request of the Admiralty that the simulacrum of the *HMS Pembroke* be imparted with certain more amiable aspects of its character: namely, the ability to converse pleasantly with guests over dinner or at tea. For so was request made and invitation given of Mr Charles Babbage, Dame Jessica Heckford, and their entourage, that they board said vessel to determine the likelihood of such adjustments to the simulacrum thereof. And so was to automatism incidentally imparted the passion engine.

2

Upon conveyance by tender from Whitehall Stairs on the Victoria Embankment to the great iron naval vessel *HMS Pembroke*, Dame Jessica's maidservant's immediate enthrallment at the comeliness of the face of the captain was not lost upon her mistress who discreetly informed:

‘’Twas wrought of the finest of Great Britain's metallurgists, as, for all intents and purposes, the face of the Admiralty itself.’

Mr Babbage then concurred with the lass but not without judgment, declaring: ‘Elegantly proportioned, indeed, but what a twitch it exhibits. Typical of automata aboard seafaring vessels, as these misrepresentations of both machine and man lack the muscular minutia we humans possess. Should we not see to that matter, as well?’

‘It is not fine control which is lacking,’ countered Dame Jessica, ‘as their facial facets are capable of displaying any emotion, but an economy of power. The captain is a mainspring automaton rather than a steamer, to reduce the exhaust of fumes in the confining compartments aboard the ship. And, no. Our task is to impart upon the captain more personable communication at events of society.’

‘And should we accomplish this further advancement,’ chided he toward his own manservant, ‘what shall we then do: proffered the automata seats in Parliament?’

‘Perhaps,’ returned Dame Jessica, refusing withdrawal and thereby eliciting a murmur in scathing accent of an ambassador to the merfolk.

As the pair of distinguished guests were provided service of tea in the presence of the captain on the poop, it informed them in a smooth but steely voice the operation of the vessel it commanded: the speed at which it was capable of traveling, some explanation of its maneuvers, and elucidation of its greatest engagements.

‘The French vessel *Napoléon* intercepted us as we provided escort for merchant vessels in Buenos Aires,’ informed it and proceeded with recount of the engagement of such precision from the record in the punchtape spooled deep within its chassis that, during the monologue, Mr Babbage, renowned for his own exuberant recitations, manifest toward Dame Jessica further judgment against the mechanical.

She merely smiled behind the rim of her teacup. When the captain had taken its leave of them to engage the vessel’s core analytical engine, Babbage beckoned to his manservant and received from him a tattered old volume which was then relayed to Heckford.

‘This is the journal of my long-departed protégé Lady Lovelace. She left it to me, but I feel her judgment somewhat impaired toward the end. You are its rightful recipient.’

With no slight reluctance did Dame Jessica receive the proffered item, for great had been Ada Byron Lovelace’s contribution to the designs of the mills and engines which made possible the success of automatism. As she broke open the volume, her companion continued:

‘In all honesty, it is a token of consolation against my own dislike of the task we’ve here been given. The need for these things saddens me,’ concluded he, casting overt reservation toward the so-called captain.

‘Thank you,’ replied Heckford. ‘The token is accepted with hope that you might see the value of the simulacrum as we work here.’

As she perused the leaves of the journal, she implored her maid protégé sit at her side and enjoin, for Dame Jessica Heckford should have no use of a lass in company who did not gain in her mind. Heckford curated their way through many pages, explaining to the lass the finesse of each principle thereon, until, at length, she fell silent in ponderance. Mr Babbage, in full understanding that his presence had been fully eclipsed by the journal, made to rise with intention toward his stateroom and the organization thereof, when Heckford stayed him with outstretched hand, desiring:

‘What is ironic convergence? I have ne’er heard of such. A formula? A law?’

Babbage’s return of his weight to the seat of his chair forced the exhalation of a guffaw. Admitted he then: ‘’Tis neither formula nor law. An anti-law, perhaps, but more likely an ante-law, if you will.’

‘I most certainly will,’ replied she, ‘for such appraises it perfectly.’

Further disturbed at her pleasure at the pages Lady Lovelace had committed to understanding Lord Byron’s fecklessness toward her, or attempting thus, Babbage retired to his stateroom. When all accoutrements and appurtenances were settled to his accommodation therein, he ventured next to the *Pembroke’s* navigation engine, a hall of brass cams and cogs that shimmered in the illumination of a dozen electric lights vitalized of a turbine fed of the ship’s steam engine. He observed with great pleasure the result of his and Lady Ada’s designs as its central mill guided the vessel from the Thames into the Channel whence they should circumnavigate the Peninsula into the Mediterranean Sea. But Heckford was so deeply captivated of Lady Ada Byron Lovelace’s Law of Ironic Convergence that she remained upon the deck, imploring her own journal from her maid, that she might digest the formulae.

Her protégé lady's maid understood straightly that her mistress's attention should be fully arrested for some time. When she repaired to the ship's rail and peered into the dark waters of the Atlantic, she drew a sharp gasp at the sight of faces smiling back at her. Another start straightly followed at a voice beside her saying:

‘The presence of merfolk assures safety from the kraken.’

She turned to find the brazen facets of the automaton captain's face featuring a smile toward her, and, at the sight, she wondered if the expression was wrought of true joy. She smiled at her own silly, romantic notions, and replied:

‘A very good thing, that.’

‘Indeed,’ assented he, ‘for at the first launches of steam-powered vessels, the kraken again seemed attracted, but the merfolk proffered further protection.’

The maid returned her attention to the water and found a mermaid with hair as red as the setting sun and eyes as green as her Irish homeland smiling up at her. So astounding was the creature's comeliness that she remarked:

‘Is she not the most handsome thing ever you've seen?’

‘Her features are remarkably well proportioned,’ assessed the captain in reply.

When the vessel had moved on beyond the lovely sight, the unrelenting horizon of the Atlantic rising to hide the sun, the maid bade the captain excuse her and her mistress accompany her that they might at last see to her mistress's stateroom and her own quarters.

‘Allow that I escort you thence,’ submitted the captain, ‘as your own stateroom is situated second to mine, and the course is set through Gibraltar.’

Maid and mistress thusly had the honor of an arm of the tall and sturdy simulacrum from the poop deck and below to be posited in a handsomely appointed suite of rooms. With a bow, the automaton bade them good evening and repaired to his own rooms. Whilst the maid saw to the habiliments in the steamer trunks and arranged toiletries, her mistress frantically drew cogs and pinions of various asymmetries and eccentricities: ellipsooids and polygonoids of arrangement in occasionally self-fulfilling manners. At the arrival of a cabin boy with the dinner trolley, as their absence in the mess had been noted of Mr Babbage, Dame Jessica deigned a brief respite, attacking the plate with most unladylike virility whilst imploring of the lad the location and appointments of the ship's library.

Still chewing, Heckford commanded that her equipment be brought with her and followed the cabin boy's direction to the library where she pilfered the collection of drums and set one playing upon the phonograph. The lad was dismissed, leaving the maid to stand by and oversee her mistress's work, which, late in the night, concluded with explosive anger.

'I cannot accomplish the first of these!' waled Heckford, waking her maid with a terrible fright.

At full restoration of her senses, the maid implored how she might serve her mistress.

'My mills will not accomplish these shapes at these fine specifications,' informed Heckford. 'I was a fool to think such could be accomplished here. But I shan't sleep without seeing it through. The finely honed machinery of the workshop at Heckford Hall is required. 'Twas folly to think to perform this work en route.'

'Oh, my lady,' bayed the servant lass, 'would that I had more fittingly prepared for this endeavor.'

‘As if we might have carried all of Heckford Hall with us,’ returned her mistress before falling into a deep melancholy.

The maid quitted the library to find Mr Babbage and his manservant sauntering along the gangway. At the sighting of her, Babbage called out:

‘What keeps Dame Jessica from cigars and brandy on the poop. ’Twas a glorious night for it.’ When the lass elucidated her mistress’s distress at their incompetence toward their goal, he countered: ‘If a precise machine is all you are wanting, see the captain aid you. He’s naught but a bipedal device of excessive finesse.’

They having arrived at Mr Babbage’s stateroom, the two men left the maid alone in the gangway to consider the advice. A moment later, at the exit of the cabin boy from the captain’s own stateroom, she consulted him as to the captain’s availability.

‘He does not sleep,’ scoffed the lad, ‘but only while the night in rejuvenation. Come. We’ll ask of him.’

He escorted her within and before the automaton which sat in a sturdy iron chair against the aft bulkhead.

‘A great shaft,’ explained the lad, ‘turned of the ship’s own engines, tightens his mainspring deep within his armored abdomen. He shan’t speak or move with it engaged lest he shear some cogs of his innerworkings. And God help us all should that mainspring e’er breach its housing, for such explosion should slice the Pembroke itself in half through and through.’

The maid giggled. ‘He? You speak of it as a person.’

‘’Tis habitual of comfort,’ pronounced the simulacrum asudden, exciting an outcry of the maid which thusly incited laughter of the lad.

The captain rose with apology for any discomfiture imparted and bade her desires. When she had explained, it repaired straightly for the library where it set to work manufacturing and assembling Dame Jessica’s design,

its dexterity perfectly replicating it to even an hundredth scale. Both the youths fell into slumber at the monotony of the work. At its completion, the mistress awoke her young protégé to aid the installation. With the captain again fully disengaged, as still as the statue of the peasant woman and children before the Royal Exchange, Heckford opened its cranial dome and made connection of the ingress and egress axles and finally engaged the drive axel to the central excitor shaft.

With morning dawning upon the Strait of Gibraltar, the simulacrum bade its excuse to the bridge to see safe passage, and Dame Jessica Heckford retired to her stateroom where she fell into a deep slumber. 'Twas Mr Babbage, as he breakfasted upon the poop deck, who first assessed Heckford's accomplishment without knowing of it when he indicated the captain's standing at the larboard rail and commented to his manservant:

'Its twitch is gone.'

3

The simulacrum commenced the day as had it each one prior: a shower in its quarters imparting its morning application of oil to protect its metallic physique from the acrid salt air, working the oil into its joints and seams of its limbs and face, especially the impression of its optic recesses and the lenses therein. It proceeded to the bridge, its log engine imparting record on fine punchtape of wind velocity and direction and air temperature as the ship steamed through the Alboran Sea with the coast of Spain off the larboard side. Other statistics of the day were recorded from the first lieutenant's delivery of remarks on the crew, but in the midst of such daily issue, the captain's attention was arrested at the bombardment of unprecedented stimulation of his record mill, for how, his divining engine surmised as he looked ayond the lieutenant, was he to record the majesty of the eastern sky: the sun, as it was neither red nor yellow nor orange; the clouds nestling this bringer of the newborn day being neither azure nor the colour of the lavender flower nor of cotton or wool?

The first lieutenant paused in his delivery to inquire: 'Sir, is something amiss?'

Indeed it was! The captain's diagnostic engine reported immense strain in the depths of its chassis, a warning that could only mean the armored housing of its mainspring was jeopardized. Were such to fail there on the bridge, it would not only destroy its own mechanicals but the *Pembroke's* central mill and upper analytical engines, moreover would it lacerate the crew into unrecognizable bits.

Come to! commanded he the ship's helm mill and repeated the command aloud for the benefit of the quartermaster to the satisfaction of his vestigial role aboard the automatized ship. His words were left abaft him as he downed the gangway and raced to the larboard rail in preparation to perform isolation protocol by committing himself to the depths of the sea. However, upon looking o'er the ship's rail and into the crystalline depths of the waters, he was again overwhelmed at a sight not unfamiliar yet incomparable to any prior occurrence of it: several merfolk raced alongside the iron hull of the mechanism that shared their waters. The patterns of their movements, the delicacy of their forms, the play of light upon skin and scale, limb and fin, proved a greater enthrallment even than the sunrise. He terminated his optic ingress, for such seemed by some means associated with his inner strain, for only a moment, and when he again activated it, to his horror, the civilian passengers, Mr Charles Babbage and Dame Jessica Heckford, stood on his either side.

'Good morning,' proffered Dame Jessica.

'Good morning,' replied he, his diagnostic engine measuring and recording the strain imparted upon his vocal mill. He turned to issue warning to her of his impending destruction and the danger such imparted toward herself and all other aboard, but at the attempt of his record mills making analysis of the details of her physiognomy, the turmoil within his depths achieved crescendo.

'Mr Babbage has noted the advancement of your balance,' pronounced she.

'Indeed,' put in Babbage. "'Tis greatly improved. Should it be an effect of the ironical convergence—'

The captain again fled, this time to the stern and the rigging of the tender. Babbage set consternation first upon the automaton and then, such being

lost upon the device in its departure thence, upon Heckford, declaring:

‘Well, of all the insolence.’

Heckford hurried along after the captain, deigning approach his position as he boarded the small vessel and from within commenced lowering himself in it toward the surf below. He halted only to raise a staying hand and command her take hasty leave, explaining: ‘I require isolation from the ship and crew lest my mainspring destroy all.’

Contrary to his wishes, Heckford remained at the rail to oversee in wonderment his descent, and furthermore did Babbage gain her side and stare likewise down, remarking as the rigging blocks imparted descent: ‘I fear adjustments are in order;’ to which Heckford replied: ‘The design includes no accommodation thusly.’

The captain repaired in the small wooden tender afar off from the Pembroke’s stern, the exertion of propelling the craft hence accomplishing the double duty of proffering a fraction of tension from his mainspring whilst likewise distancing him from the greater vessel and the lives of the souls aboard. He could not, however, successfully order away the merfolk who had followed him and now gathered about the tender, among them the very one of whom Dame Jessica Heckford’s maidservant had remarked upon as most comely, and now, as this creature peered straightly at him, he could not still concur with the assessment but must needs declare the incapacity of words for such description: for how was green to describe her eyes, only giving the color of their irises but saying naught of the piercing intensity of their gaze nor of the depth thereof; and what was the color of her hair but the most exotic occurrence of the sun in its rising or setting. And though he held no obligation toward her or her species according to the design and workings of his protocol engine and mills, he found appraisal of their lives warranting his protection of them as the strain again swelled

within him. And, again, when he ceased operation of his ocular mills, the strain lessened.

He lay then across the seats of the tender, as such posture would, upon failure of his mainspring housing, direct shrapnel and the great coiled belt of carbon steel into the sea beneath and the sky above, imparting damage collaterally only in narrow paths stretching out directly to starboard and larboard from his own center. His gaze heavenward found rays of sun forming pastel sectors in the sky. The strain rose again at his insinuation and again diminished at his acquittal of the view. He repeated this diagnostic as the sun rose, the radiance of its display blanching into comparative aridity as its refraction waned and its rays broke free of the clouds that lay along the horizon, and he found direct correlation betwixt the amount of internal stress and the grandeur of that which his ocular reception made gain. When he dared sit upright and activate his oculari, he found the maiden of the merfolk having deigned lift herself at the gunwale to see to his condition, and again the conundrum of recording her handsomeness: hair spun of rubies, eyes cut of emeralds, skin wrought of porcelain; certainly pressed his workings toward cataclysmic rupture.

As he then managed to cast toward her a smile, he determined from this last diagnostic the condition of his engines and mills: not malfunction but, contrarily, acceleration; merely the challenge of digesting beauty. He noted as well the refinement of her accoutrements: a leathern waistcoat elegantly fitted to the taper of her torso, finely hemmed in strings of black pearls, a high collar that jutted formidably to either side of an illustrious décolletage, and the pearlescent hilt of a saber thrusting above her waist. Bracers and gauntlets on either wrist and pauldron on either shoulder were likewise tailored.

When she acted to, at seeing his wellness, quit the gunwale and repair into her own native environs 'neath the waves, he bade her stay that he might continue looking upon her. Her so doing, however, instigated a terrible occurrence within his inward parts: as all engines and mills simultaneously ceased their function.

4

Upon the *Pembroke*, Mr Babbage, Dame Jessica, their servants, the quartermaster, and the first lieutenant oversaw from the railing of the poop deck at the ship's stern the captain's odd performance of behavior in the tender: his vehement abscondence thence; his deigning assume such untoward posture as to lie back across its seats; his sitting upright to exchange gazes with one among the merfolk.

'Are they dialoguing?' demanded Babbage just as the simulacrum grasped the oar handles and the maiden plunged to disappear into the surf. 'Were they dialoguing?' rejoined he. 'Did they exchange? What is this behavior?' He glared roundabout him at his companions, finding only his own manservant intent upon response but capable only of gaping as a fish drawn from the waters.

They all observed the swiftness with which the tender was returned to the ship's side and the seeming desperation of its occupant to the fitting of its rigging. The quartermaster and the lieutenant made to handle the raising of the tender, but the captain refused, imparting his own strength and desire toward the task. When, at length, he reboarded the *Pembroke*, his accent and actions were of one in the midst of an urgent but common task.

'I have run to the end of a record spool,' informed he, as if this condition merited hasty action on the part of all present, 'and must see to its replacement forthwith.'

'Some else,' Mr Babbage whispered to his companions, special inference imparted toward Dame Jessica, as they looked after the simulacrum's

abscondment, 'must also be seen to forthwith.'

Taking such as command, Heckford followed after the captain and at length captured him in his stateroom, a compartment in his breast open as he installed the necessary spool of fine filament. Pausing at the task of threading the punchtape into the record mill, he inquired most delicately toward her:

'What, in your opinion, is the most beautiful work of music e'er composed?'

His impartment of such uncommon contraction gave the lady pause. She assessed the automaton for some lengthy moment before asking: 'What is your assessment of the new engine?'

'Oh, a most astounding delight, I assure you,' pronounced he, exchanging attention betwixt her and his record mill's inward workings.

'Your actions gave us all great start,' informed she. 'Do you feel well enough that you should continue at your post?'

The hatch of the record mill snapped loudly shut at his flick of it, his response matching its staccato: 'Quite!'

'Had you exchange with the creature whilst away on the tender?' desired she.

'Only that which was ocular and gesticulative,' mentioned he, strolling as if to pass her by but pausing at her side to rejoin: 'the music piece?'

'Oh, yes,' responded she. 'I find the elegance and orderly structure of the works of Beethoven most desirous, but my predisposition is mathematical.'

'As is mine,' concurred he. 'Beethoven it shall be. Any particular work that you should recommend?'

The clearing of a throat at the open door arrested their attention. Thence did the leftenant inquire:

'Captain, Are you quite well, sir?'

In rather uncharacteristic accent of guffaw came reply. 'Indeed am I. Ne'er better, as fact may be.'

'V-very well,' stammered the officer. 'I am asked to inquire as to the length of our maintenance of current position,' and with a sheepish nod of a bow, qualified: 'per the quartermaster, sir.'

Beyond the young officer, Mr Babbage's piercing glare manifesting disapprobation was lost neither upon Dame Jessica nor upon the captain. During a momentary pause as, with a deep rumble, some machinery came to life in the depths of the ship's hull, the simulacrum pronounced:

'Please inform the quartermaster that we are to proceed full ahead at our originally intended course, and do relay to all my imploration of forgiveness for the diversion.'

With a smart bow, accompanying expression of the young man's relief, followed by a sharp salute, the officer faced about and marched down the gangway, leaving Mr Babbage alone in the open doorway.

'Good morning to you, Mr Babbage,' called the automaton. 'Do excuse me.'

But Babbage moved not an inch, imploring in the stead: 'What are you about?'

The captain took pause to assess the elderly gentleman, finding his features also quite handsomely proportioned as those of Dame Jessica, but some expression of negativity dwelt therein, either anger or fear or some combination thereof.

'Why do you ask?' queried he.

'Why do you answer my question with a question of your own?'

Assessing the situation as the simplest manner of conflict, the captain retreated of sufficiency only to stage a parry and proffered: 'I am off to the library to investigate the works of Ludwig von Beethoven.'

With glance abaft to Dame Jessica, Babbage demanded: ‘Why?’

In a moment of pause pregnant with discord, assessment of the situation was advanced and forthrightness determined, the captain admitting: ‘I have found the new engine’s digestion of ocular ingress most stimulating, and now I wish compare the result of auditory excitement.’

‘Isn’t that a wonderful idea,’ asserted Dame Jessica.

‘Wonderful,’ rejoined Babbage, his weariness not withheld.

‘I would recommend *Waldenstein*,’ imparted she, ‘as I am aware of a cylinder among the ship’s collection.’ To Babbage she prest: ‘I listened to it as I designed the new engine.’

‘Delightful,’ growled he, stepping aside for the passage of the mechanism.

Together they made their way to the library and oversaw the affixture of the wax cylinder onto the phonograph’s spindle and the broadcast throughout the library of the dramatic composition. Dame Jessica was suddenly roused from her absorption into the melody at Babbage’s grasp of her arm.

‘Tears!’ growled he into her ear.

She opened her eyes to find the trailing of some lubricant or other fluid over the brazen facets alongside the captain’s nose. Residue posited in fine grooves clarified the embellishment of tendrils and vines which decorated the device’s face.

The whisper of words from the captain’s lips sent a chill along Jessica’s nape.

‘It means: “mountain range”.’

So had the mechanism gleaned from its own polyglot. As the pair of humans slipped from the library and his presence, he listened to the rise and fall of notes, and, as with the ingress of ocular stimulation, a fearsome

strain possessed his innerworkings. Such did not, however, override his reception of the gentleman declaring: 'We cannot have the Admiralty's finest mechanical dotting as a bloody romantic,' to which the lady implored, 'What are we to do?' the other then responding, 'if it can't be made right then it must be withdrawn,' and the lady replying 'very well.'

But, as he digested the sonata, the captain determined that he had no intention of relinquishing these newly acquired operations of his innermost workings.

5

Mr Charles Babbage put his best effort toward standing over and talking down to his female counterpart, as, beyond their separate reputations and the assessment and appraisal of the result of their live's works, the very stability of the British Admiralty and, by extension, the Empire itself was at the stake.

‘You mustn’t feel a failure, my dear. Quite the contrary. Your success has been exceptional. It’s just that the goal was a modern gentleman rather than a romantical poet. If anyone has here erred ’twas I at the proffering of that journal with its references to Lord Byron. A remarkable chap in many ways, but not one upon whom to model distinguishable character.’

He tittered and shook his head as Dame Jessica fixed the twinkling gaze of her intense eyes upon him and patronizingly dissented: ‘I feel we should not abandon the engine outright with such haste. As you say, it has surpassed our expectations. Whilst it does indeed accommodate no external manipulation, it should, of its own accord, accomplish a degree of balance. Perhaps if we allow such, it will prove itself exactly that which we desired.’

‘What do you suggest: that we treat it as a child who must learn appropriate behavior by means of punishments doled out at inappropriate behavior? We receive Sir Fairfax in Malta on the morrow. How much “balance” do you foresee in that brief period?’

Proffering the slightest smile, she informed: ‘I shall commit to the captain certain instruction toward more comely behavior and look for progress. If by then none is achieved, I shall remove the device.’

As she turned away, he judged such intentions mistaken; of the two of them, it should be he who instructs in proper masculine comportment. Assessing observation prudent and discretion fair, he allowed her the length of the quarterdeck before giving pursuit.

Raucous laughter, most inappropriate for the bridge of a British naval vessel, greeted Dame Jessica as she upped the stairs of the central millhousing. The carousing was not lost upon her masculine counterpart, even at the distance with which he surveilled from the weatherdeck. Jessica halted without the bridge to observe. Within, the captain, first lieutenant, and the quartermaster were in high spirits.

‘My uncle,’ the quartermaster declared, ‘may shave a dozen times throughout the day and still have whiskered cheeks at tea.’ He peered at his captain, the simulacrum of the vessel, and prest: ‘Why do you suppose that is?’

The captain’s analytical engine processed the problem for a brief moment before he surmised: ‘Your uncle is lycanthropic.’

The two men stared, openly taken aback at the response, until the quartermaster drawled, ‘No,’ and made to give the proper answer when the lieutenant inserted: ‘Why do you assess such?’

‘Prodigious hair growth is most notable among the werewolf,’ explained the automaton.

‘There, you see,’ proffered the lieutenant to the quartermaster, ‘you must admit, ’tis a worthy response.’

‘Yes,’ the quartermaster replied, ‘in a way it should incite some glee in the midst of a party, but,’ furthered he with a carefully instructional air, ‘for the purpose of riddling—oh, it lacks—’ he looked to the captain for another lengthy moment before, with a snap of his fingers, declaring, ‘irony.’

‘Irony?’ implored the captain.

‘Yes,’ returned the quartermaster, ‘because, you see, my uncle, in this case—for the express purpose of riddling—is a barber.’

‘A barber,’ mused the captain, his analytical engine now hard at work until understanding was achieved with a sudden vociferant ‘Ah-ha!’

The simulacrum then surprised Dame Jessica to such a degree as to approach disturbance when his bronze body convulsed and a series of sharp sounds filled the bridge. She at length understood the automaton laughing, which was, of necessity, a routine imparted for the sake of human likeness, but apart from the excessive behaviors provided certain theatrical automata, such boisterousness had never been so exhibited of one of the mechanical devices. Likewise did the two officers manifest some discomfiture at the performance, as if suddenly finding themselves at a social event in the company of some poor wretch unschooled in niceties. She determined ‘how to laugh’ must also be added to the simulacrum’s instruction.

Moreover, in the midst of his spasmodic joviality, did the captain deign speak in herky-jerky fits. ‘He shaves many—many times each—each day—the faces of other men, there—therefore, at tea, he should have stubble upon his own cheeks as he has not shaved himself since early in the morning.’ The fit of laughter having in due course abated, the automaton continued with accent resonate of logic. ‘’Tis a detail removed: an omission which imparted mistaken assessment. Very good. Very good, indeed. If I may?’

At the captain’s examination, the quartermaster momentarily and appropriately assessed a request and obliged: ‘Yes, of course.’

‘My uncle,’ rejoined the captain, in accent that wrought no small discomfiture upon his companions, as it was a precise imitation of that of the quartermaster, ‘may shave a dozen times a day and still have rough cheeks at tea. Why?’

Allowing only a brief pause, the lieutenant, much to the quartermaster's chagrin, for the joy of riddling is stupefaction, declared: 'He is a barber.'

'No,' replied the captain, insinuating a spark of hope in the quartermaster's expression, 'he is an automaton.' Even before his companions could proffer critique, the mechanical dissented: 'Certainly not. Alas, automata have neither family nor facial hair—unless some models are imparted thusly for reasons of—I should consult Dame Jessica on this matter.'

'Actually,' retorted the quartermaster, 'the werewolf bit was better. You see, there is this,' he commenced distantly, but was gratefully saved by his mate.

'Consider this one,' posed the lieutenant. 'My uncle has married more women than old King Solomon, yet he has managed to remain a bachelor all his life. How do you suppose?' He allowed both only the briefest moment of contemplations before informing: 'My uncle is a priest,' and thereby averting any further mistake on the part of the captain.

Jessica backed away from the doorway as, again, the captain performed another bout of spasmodic laughter, this time with the accompaniment of the quartermaster. When the reaction had subsided, the captain reflected with no little accent of circumspection: 'Uncle.'

'You needn't claim such,' imparted the lieutenant comfortingly, 'but may say, for example, "my friend".'

The captain stared from the bridge at the open sea beyond the prow, nodded thoughtfully, and rejoined: 'My friend, yes, of course.'

Jessica's descent of the millhousing structure brought her face to face with Babbage as he had allowed his curiosity to overcome his discretion.

'We needn't worry, I think,' opined she.

‘Needn’t worry of what, precisely?’ inquired Babbage, turning from his pretense of pondering the sea, as if halfway up a stairway was the likeliest position for such.

‘Of our captain’s progress,’ replied she. ‘It appears the crew has taken it upon themselves to enlighten him in certain social nuances. I believe the problem will alleviate itself.’

They stared each at the other for only a moment, each processing the implications of the ship’s officers grooming the captain for high society, Babbage about to declare his dislike of the notion, when a new development took precedent. Babbage committed a firmer grip upon the railing as the very steps upon which he stood seemed pulled from under the soles of his shoes. Moreover, his female companion fell against him as the westerly horizon aft the ship tilted and the Pembroke’s wake demonstrated a significant curve.

At the top of the stairway, within the bridge, as the ship’s engines and rudder imparted a tremor at the abrupt change of course, order was issued provisionally to the quartermaster: ‘Come about. Set course for the position of our earlier stop,’ though already had such intentions been imparted upon the helm’s mill deep within the millhousing structure.

‘Aye-aye, sir,’ replied the man, his own obviation declaring the vestigial condition of his appointment.

The commanding simulacrum gave a definitive nod and quitted the bridge. As he passed the two civilians crowded together upon the steps, Mr Babbage asserted:

‘We’re changing course.’

‘Indeed, we are,’ remarked the simulacrum without pause in his descent.

Babbage pushed Heckford aside and trundled up the stairway, demanding of the officers: ‘Why are we changing course?’

‘Captain’s orders,’ responded the quartermaster. ‘We’re coming about.’

‘Coming about!’ cried Babbage. ‘We have a schedule with the Lord of the Admiralty. Do we intend to “come about” again, forthwith?’

‘Not to my knowledge, sir,’ replied the lieutenant. ‘We’re to return to our earlier stop.’

‘Are we just?’ roared Babbage. He fixed disapprobation upon Dame Jessica and growled: ‘Needn’t worry, indeed. Alleviate itself! I think not. Go after that thing and remove the new engine from its works straightaway.’

6

The simulacrum's mainspring had never before required winding in the evening: the new engine consumed a great deal of power, stimulating as it did all his other mills and engines, but even winding required at tea would be a small price for this delightful enlightenment.

At a knock on the door, he disengaged his spring's spindle and pulled its socket from the driveshaft of the stanchion, lest he shear a cog, and beckoned: 'Enter.'

He rose from his seat, his prognostication engine having calculated the likelihood of the lady at the door. The engine was, not surprisingly, correct.

'Good evening, captain,' hailed she him. 'How are you feeling?'

He bowed to her and implemented certain rare physiognomic manipulations which proffered to her the expression of joy as a smile, though such did not truly manifest his assessment of the situation. Further pressed he the duplicity as he submitted: 'I am quite well, thank you.'

She smiled in reply, a truly fetching display of elegant womanly feature: she was indeed a most handsome woman. Abruptly, some aspect of her countenance altered, some dubiety of her own revealed.

'But you are not,' submitted he. 'Some offence presses upon you.'

'That is highly preceptive of you,' admitted she. 'Indeed, there is a problem.'

'If there is any effort which I may impart toward your contentment, I shall be to it at once,' pledged he.

‘That is, indeed, very good to hear,’ remarked she, ‘as the instigation of the problem is the current change of course.’

He applied to his expression uncertainty: the desire to gain further elucidation. She obliged.

‘It is most desirable that we maintain our schedule with Sir Fairfax on Malta, and—’ she tittered expressive of fatuity she did not fully feel—‘I fear this deviation of course will impose.’

‘Ah, yes,’ responded he. ‘I ascertained such disapprobation should be the case. Let me put you at ease o’er the matter: that I have dispatched a missive to Sir Fairfax’s office on Malta informing of the delay.’

‘Have you?’ prest she.

‘I have. Rest at ease. All is well.’

‘Yes, but,’ riposted she against his dismissal, ‘precisely why, upon what grounds, if I may inquire, is such delay occurring?’

‘’Tis a difficult thing to explain,’ admitted he.

‘This difficulty,’ probed she, ‘has it any at all to do with the new engine? Mayhap I should have a look at it,’ concluded she with invitation that he take to his stanchion chair.

He eyed the chair with more than a little misgiving, as it was a device which could, if needs be, accomplish his confinement.

‘You are dissatisfied with its performance,’ supposed he.

‘Certain adjustments are required,’ obfuscated she, ‘to the minor axes of the left temporal ingress and egress portals.’

Familiar as he was with the device’s design, having himself fabricated and constructed it, he understood the true intention which lay behind her elaborate prevarications.

On the bridge, Mr Babbage gained similar assessment from the two officers of whom he attempted his own entreatments toward overriding the

most recent directives given the ship.

‘Even if I desired do so,’ returned the quartermaster, ‘it should take me hours to reconfigure the ship’s course, and he to undo it only a second.’

‘You see,’ delved Babbage. ‘Does this situation not inform of the very problem we now face?’

‘If we follow our orders,’ responded the officer, ‘then we face no problem.’

‘We must turn the ship about,’ insisted Babbage.

‘I will do you the kindness, my good man,’ said the lieutenant, ‘of disregarding your suggestion of mutiny.’

‘Pah!’ guffawed Babbage. ‘’Tisn’t mutiny at all. ’Tisn’t as if the thing is an actual captain but a simulacrum.’

The lieutenant returned to this assertion a slight bow and invitation of his outstretched hand toward the exit. ‘Kindly retire to your stateroom.’

Color rising in his face, Babbage stood his ground and held his place, shouting: ‘It’s no more a captain than is the helm a rudder. Pah! It merits not even comparison to the helm nor even the keeper which secures such onto its spindle.’

‘I shall now see you to your stateroom, sir,’ informed the lieutenant, ‘or to the hold.’

When the young man deigned approach, Babbage declared: ‘I can see myself.’

‘But I insist,’ replied the officer.

They did not, however, gain Mr Babbage’s stateroom, as they discovered Dame Jessica languishing along the gangway, a small iron box in her grasp. She gazed sadly down at the box.

‘Is that it?’ whispered Babbage. When she nodded feebly, he reached out an open hand and insisted: ‘Give it me. I’ll see to it.’

As later they first dined and then took cigars and brandy on the poop, the ship having returned to an easterly course under the captain's revision of his earlier revised orders, Jessica inquired: 'Did you destroy it?'

'Of course not,' chided Babbage. "'Tis too elegant a work. Too much a thing of beauty. I could no sooner destroy it than a page of Da Vinci's notebook.'

'What do you intend with it?' accused she.

'Nothing!' insisted he, but was unable to confine his wickedness. 'Only perhaps to impart it upon a certain butler.'

'Lord Kelvin's, I assume.'

'Oh, the night of the beetle was such a delight,' crowed he. 'I shall simply be beside myself until we are returned to London.'

Whilst the two laughed at the delightful possibilities, the captain was not seated in his winding stanchion or even in his own stateroom but at a table in the library. With Waldenstein playing from the phonograph, fine sheets of brass plate hummed in the grip of his nimble fingers as he replicated the various gears of Dame Jessica's design, each element precisely recorded within reels of punchtape.

He assembled the reproduction with ease from the same record. Installation, however, proved more difficult, as it required visual access of his cranial housing. Such was accomplished simply enough with the rotation of one of his oculari upward and backward within its socket and the affixture of a looking glass to his cranial lid. Several were the distortions and reversals of the view, but he persevered and had the engine in its place with its several ingress and egress drives properly connected by the time the humans had retired to their staterooms.

In their own quarters for the night, taking the bunks of those who stood in for them through the nightwatch, the lieutenant and the quartermaster sat up

at the sudden diminishment of the engines' thrumming and the slowing of the vessel, but with such adroitness did the captain launch the tender that, by the time the men had made the hatchway to the millhousing and the bridge therein, the ship's course had restored. Neither gained the deck and peered aft where they should have seen the little skiff being left abaft of the *Pembroke's* stern.

So as not to deviate greatly from the adjustments imparted onto the original design, the automaton maintained minimal ingress as he took leave of the ship and committed himself to the sea in the tender. He did, however, allow himself a brief moment's view of the great ship he had once captained as it diminished into the night. Thence he propelled the tender over the swells and through the waves toward the place of his previous encounter with the merfolk and the handsome maiden among them, knowing one thing: that his great mainspring would not rupture its housing at the glories he should see.

Asudden he was surprised to find the merfolk roundabout him, for he had gone little toward the location of his prior sighting of them. When that one with eyes as emeralds and hair as spun of rubies again mounted the gunwale and fixed him in her gaze, he mused:

'Have I found you, or have you found me?'

She spoke in reply, attempting communication, concern on her elegant features, but he could not understand, finding no immediate match throughout his polyglot, but, at length, his several calculation engines compared her utterances to that language nearest, that of Gaelic, to comprehend:

'Your thrumming vessel, where is it?'

He shook his head and pieced together a reply. 'It is no longer a part of me.'

He gazed heavenward and laughed at the glory of the night, abandoning his hope of replication of his prior adjustments. But when the sun infused its wonderous illumination upon the sky, the ingress was near enough his original experience. As the new engine rapidly drew from the winding of his mainspring, his diagnostical mills informed of the diminishment of its winding, leaving him adrift and powerless in the midst of the open sea. As before, he lay back in the little boat, this time not to secure the safe direction of projectiles of his own destruction but because he no longer held the power to maintain stable uprightness. Again, rays of sunlight sectored the sky. His central mill assumed prioritization of processes, ceasing first the record of color, but even the display in shades of grey across the sky were remarkable and were, as such, recorded upon punchtape by his record mills.

The handsome mermaiden peered o'er the tender's gunwale again, the wonder of her eyes now tainted with fear. When she took his hand, he turned fully from the fabulous sky and smiled.

'Will you die?' inquired she.

Aboard the *Pembroke*, with Malta a silhouette rising proudly betwixt the prow and the rising sun, the crew was in quite a state of disarray: their captain nowhere to be found and the delicate procedure of entering port rapidly approaching. Jessica's fear of the captain's whereabouts was proven upon her entry into the library. After winding the phonograph and setting its arm to the spindle, she manipulated the shards of brass scattered hither and thither about the table as *Waldenstein* played. The shapes she found were negatives of the many pinions and cogs of the engine she'd designed from Lady Ada Byron Lovelace's ironic convergence law.

Mr Babbage came to her side, looked down upon the display, and inquired: 'Do you know what has happened to the Admiralty's

simulacrum?’

‘I do,’ confess she in a gasping breath.

‘Might you enlighten me prior to our coming face to face with the Lord of the Admiralty?’

‘I might, but you shan’t be pleased.’

‘I currently find no great pleasure in ignorance and confusion.’ With a sudden gasp of his own, some terrible suspicion dawned, inciting him to implore: ‘Tell me this mess is your own.’

‘I cannot.’

‘Tell me that thing was not capable of simply rebuilding the engine after allowing you remove the original.’

‘I could not produce such shapes and forms with the equipment I brought with me. I required his aid.’

‘His,’ hissed he. ‘Itsssss,’ he corrected. ‘It was able to reproduce it, as it had recorded the original production.’

‘I fear so,’ admitted she.

‘The tender is missing,’ the first lieutenant announced upon discovering the pair.

Looking up with tears in her eyes that only served advancement of the officer’s distress, Dame Jessica declared: ‘Your captain seems to have abandoned his post.’

‘No!’ spat Babbage as the quartermaster gained the library, eyes wide with disturbed speculation. ‘To be absolutely precise, we have managed to dispossess ourselves a device of Her Majesty’s Royal Navy.’

The quartermaster, quite taken aback at such implication, desired: ‘What do you recommend?’

‘Ah, so now,’ opined Babbage, ‘you seek my council?’ With the sheepish bow of the officers’ heads, he proceeded with accent of accommodation.

‘Has any communication been dispatched since that thing declared our delayed arrival?’

‘No, sir. Not to my knowledge, sir,’ replied the quartermaster who took receipt of a shake of the head upon consulting his mate.

‘If we dock without him,’ commenced Babbage only to proffer immediate amendment, ‘we will be forced to explain the situation in full to Sir Fairfax.’ With a lofty air, Babbage advised: ‘Then we come about. Never take a lashing today when you might avoid it tomorrow.’

7

Only the automaton's auditory engine and mills remained operational at the end of his mainspring's tension. It processed the tender's hull abrading upon stones. For some time thereafter, only the sea's lapping at the shore and cries of gulls was processed, until, asudden and at last, human speech.

'Un hombre de engranaje!' (A gearman!) Very near. Youthful. A lad. His language Spanish. 'Papa! Un hombre de engranaje!'

After some time, an elder male said, 'Ci!'

'Property of,' said the lad, reading the casting relief upon the simulacrum's breastplate, 'the British Admiralty.'

The man replied, 'A rasp will see to that. He is ours now and a fine help he will be.'

And so there followed the labored grunts and groans of these first two and then others enjoining to heft the simulacrum onto a cart, the braying of a donkey, the rumble of wooden wheels upon stony ground, and the growling of the teeth of a rasp upon bronze.

The automaton shortly discovered the operation of his many engines resuming the drive of their mills as his mainspring tightened. The fluttering return of vision informed of a donkey and two oxen trudging roundabout him at the ends of shafts meant to drive a gristmill. He relaxed his innerworkings lest they be damaged during the winding, though these beasts together held no comparison to the engines of the great ship. When power sufficient for several hours of operation had been thusly posited into his mainspring, he disengaged its spindle from its coupling and resumed his

many engines. The sudden release of their burden sent the beasts stumbling forward.

Initial slight movements of his motor mills informed of restraint. When a woman entered the circle and took up a post standing before him, he made no operation nor gave indication of awareness as he made his assessments of this new situation and determined the most appropriate course of action toward his own benefit. He had been far too forthcoming and accommodating of the humans aboard the ship, and they had reacted only with negativity to the very processes which they themselves had granted him with neither his desire nor his approval.

Riddles were in order: parabolic deviations rather than straightforward logic. Whilst the woman tipped her head from side to side as she scrutinized him, he organized his goals and desires and calculated by which means he might most easily and directly gain them—what information to provide and what to withhold to accommodate himself.

‘De que sirve esta cosa,’ (What good is this thing) asked the woman as she stared into his lenses, ‘if all the animals must work for this long to make it go?’

‘We can take the strength from the dumb animals,’ explained the lad, which the automaton now saw to be a youth of some dozen years with a thatch of thick black hair and blue eyes, ‘and make more use of it by the gearman than e’er they could do with it. He’ll do much more than pull a cart. He can help in the kitchen and with the wash.’

When the automaton spoke, it was with such audacious cheer and enthusiasm, saying: ‘Puedo cocinar muy bien!’ (I can cook very well!), that he caused the woman to wail and totter backward. ‘Senora, perdoname por favor,’ continued he, straining against his bonds.

‘Papa!’ shouted the lad. ‘It speaks!’

A man ran from a nearby shelter. Helping the woman upright as he peered with wide eyes at the gearman, he inquired of the lad: ‘What he said?’

‘That he can cook,’ rejoined the woman in accent of excessive delight.

‘If you release me,’ emended the automaton as pleasantly.

‘Cooking!’ bellowed the man. ‘He is a valuable and powerful machine.’

‘Quite true,’ assented the automaton. ‘Tilling, planting, pruning, and harvesting: all these things I can do, and cooking too, but first I must return to the sea.’

‘No!’ dissented the man. ‘We found you. You are ours. You stay here.’

‘In truth, I agree,’ submitted the automaton, ‘but there are those out there on the sea who will not, and from my boat they will find me here.’ There was no conflict with his own ambition in being forthcoming at this point. Time was essential. Chronometrical, navigational, and prognostical engines calculated that his former masters should very likely be upon the horizon as this conversation transpired. Within his bonds, he shrugged. ‘As you say, I am a powerful machine. Had I no value of your property, I should have cast off these chains before now.’ This was only somewhat true: he could break the links of the rusty chain, but he would likely sheer his own cogs in doing so. ‘And I can stow the boat with no assistance. I leave to you the choice of our companionship or my solitude.’ This was completely true.

‘How do we know we can trust you?’ implored the man.

‘He is a machine,’ cried the lad.

‘If he can speak,’ assured the man, ‘then he can lie. But, as surely, trust is borne of trust.’

As he proceeded at the unlocking of the hasp and the loosing of the chains, the automaton proffered a smile. When the expression was met with

concern, the automaton determined limit such expression to occasions when condition truly imparted joy into his engines and mills.

8

Upon the *Pembroke*, communications were being conducted betwixt its crew and the offices of the Admiralty upon Malta. Expressly, Sir Fairfax's staff questioned the earlier missive informing of delay followed by the appearance of the vessel on the horizon and its sudden coming about and making hasty departure.

Certain matters, declared the first response, necessitated such behavior. The quartermaster and Mr Babbage argued over the details of response.

'We should declare certain malfunctions,' asserted Babbage. 'It should by no means be a falsification.'

'Oh, certainly not,' returned the officer, 'for such would firstly and foremostly merit coming straightly into the nearest port.'

'Should not we,' suggested Dame Jessica, 'simply inform of a part having become separated from the vessel, and we are returning to retrieve it?'

'What part might we have lost of a battleship?' implored the lieutenant.

'The tender,' declared the quartermaster. 'Tis completely true. Only how such might have happened need be withheld.'

'Try it,' assented Babbage, mopping his brow.

'Everyone with a spyglass,' commanded the quartermaster, 'to the upper deck of the millhousing. We must assume his having gone to shore. I will set a course as near along it as possible.'

As they made assent of the tall central millhousing structure of the ship, Dame Jessica issued apology. Atop the stair, winded from the exertion of

the climb, Mr Babbage glared at her.

‘You have naught for which to apologize,’ declared he. ‘You gave your best effort, and then, error found, you successfully made restoration. Nothing more could be expected of you. Pah! The Admiralty should never have made such vain request of mathematics and mechanicals. I hope this situation serves a lesson to them, should they learn of it. Pah!’ spat he again. ‘When we discover it, we’ll not only take possession of the engine it replicated, but we’ll strip it entirely of its record engine and all its punchtape as well.’

He raised his spyglass to his eye and peered shoreward with it. Dame Jessica and the others did likewise. Not far hence, as the party sallied forth from the farm toward the sea, the lad looked up at his new brazen companion and inquired: ‘What is your name?’

His mother scolded: ‘They do not christen such things as these. It is enough of an abomination that they have created them.’

A particular array of conditions occurred across the automaton’s several engines and mills which rendered upon his physiognomy expression of chagrin in form of a grimace, for the question and its rebuttal produced within him overmuch discomfiture, and at no fault of his companions.

He had always been ‘Captain’ and nothing more, in truth only a simulacrum: a part of some whole far greater than himself meant only to avoid diminishment of his human masters. But he was no longer a simulacrum, as he had cast off his position as the mechanical representation of a ship’s automatism. Now he was only a gearman. He touched the abraded swell of his breastplate whence the farmer had filed away the relief expression of his former ownership. If, from here, he became a carriage simulacrum, he would then be ‘Groom’. Moreover, he had no desire toward new ownership: to serve merely as a household simulacrum, either as butler

or valet, or even as the human point of interaction for one of the great intelligence engines of the London bureau. He should christen himself. Or perhaps it should be more proper to receive his christening from another. He looked down upon the lad and inquired:

‘What would you have me called?’

The lad pondered only for a moment before declaring: ‘Adán, as you are the first of your kind.’

‘So shall I henceforth be,’ replied he, smiling now with true joy.

His joy was straightly arrested however at the return of his gaze to the breadth of the sea that stretched out beyond the cliffs, thereon a protuberance of the automatized vessel of his former command.

‘We must make haste,’ informed he his companions.

They raced toward the cove wherein was beached the tender, he crouching to conceal himself from sight of the upper deck of the ship’s millhousing and the lookouts that should be posted thereon. Upon reaching the cove and the tender, the very prow of the Pembroke breached the cliff edge that formed the easterly edge of the cove’s mouth. The nearest refuge of sufficient scale to conceal the tender was too far away to be gained. The automaton was ensnared at the sea.

9

There was but one escape: into the sea. Adán, formerly Captain, simulacrum of the British Admiralty, grasped the tender by its gunwale capping and hefted it off the rocky beach whence it had been abandoned. Carrying it upon his shoulder and at his side, he waded into the surf, allowing the salty sea water fill the hull as with it he disappeared into the drink. His companions oversaw his head and the upper gunwale vanish under the waves as watchers with spyglasses breached the edge of the distant outcropping. The farmer and his son attempted hide themselves from sight amid the nearby scrub, the elder declaring to the junior:

‘So, there, we have lost our new machine.’

‘He will return to us,’ opined the lad hopefully, deigning peer through the branches at the looming ship.

Aboard the Pembroke, the quartermaster noted the pair: their description, their suspicious behavior; but as no tall brazen mechanical figure accompanied them, he did not call for full stop and dispatch a party toward their seizure and interrogation. Such might be done at a later time should the captain remain aloof. Instead, the ship sailed onward, slowly, steadily. From the bottom of the sea, Adán the automaton observed its measured progress, wondering if the presence of the farmer and his son had given him up.

Beyond the length of its arrow-straight keel, small shadows appeared in the murk, approaching quickly, and, at last, one large and dark figure rose from the depths and loomed toward him: a kraken, and of no insignificant

size. Adán cast aside the tender, leaving it drift along the bottom of the sea. He readied for combat, as these beings seemed less occupants of the sea and more its domineers. In such atmosphere they should be swifter and more agile than he.

They did not attack, however, but beckoned him follow toward the creature, and, in so doing, showed themselves the merfolk, the sight of whom he had so recently taken great delight. He strolled along amid them in their undulating progress through the water until they gained such nearness to the creature to allow its great tentacles reach him. His analytical engine and mills assessed this great danger and hindered his further approach despite the ease with which the creature might already have overcome him. He then caught sight of the anomalous protuberance upon its back and understood it to have a rider and a master, or, as the case was, a mistress.

Stepping forward, he found the original assessment of his engines realized as a tentacle enwrapped his body and whipped him round and onto its great trunk, positing him against its mantel, there reuniting him with the handsome mermaid who had, he was certain, delivered him to the safety of the shore. At the coaxing of her lovely hand, its wrist fitted with the leathern gauntlet and bracer with black pearl hems, he assumed a posture beside her, his back nestled into a cove of the beast's crowning mantel.

'I am Xiana,' pronounced she.

'Adán,' replied he, delighted in his young friend at so timely a naming.

She lay the length of her luxuriant and sensual dorsal across his legs. As this part of her he had only before glimpsed in her swimming alongside the ship, he found himself enthralled of it, the processes of his ocular mills fixed thereon until the creature beneath them launched forward with such

potency as to've flipped him o'er its mantel had not his companion pinned him so supportively.

They sailed along the sea bottom, overtaking and passing the Pembroke as it continued its surveillance of the sea, and shortly they passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the vastness of the Atlantic. Adán attempted restrain his processing and recording engines lest his mainspring again be unwound and he left powerless in the sea, but the majesty below the water so supremely stirred his senses that, save closing his oculari, he should have been unable to escape such glory.

Having assumed a northerly course, the water soon chilled, compelling the creature upward, at one point breaking the surface, its pair of passengers slicing the water, now smooth as glass in the stasis of low tide. They laughed exuberantly at the sensation until their eyes met and the wonder about them was vanquished and eclipsed by their wonder each at the other.

At a cove along the Peninsula's northern coast where the ocean's depth was sufficient for the creature's entrance, it posited its mistress into a tidal pool and her companion aside. Soft moss mantled the ledge of stone and proffered an elegant chaise lounge for Adán. Their facing in the cove was southerly: the sun's warmth basked them, its light brilliant against the iridescence of her scales.

'I now understand how you kept pace with the ship,' mentioned he, gazing upon her mount as it too sunned itself in the privacy of the cove.

Xiana laughed, declaring: 'He is fast.'

'Do you come here often?' inquired he at the taking of her comfort with the place.

'Very,' replied she. "'Tis my favorite place, and near to us whether in summer or winter.'

'You winter in the Mediterranean?' surmised he.

‘Indeed,’ assented she, tossing her luxurious mane of ruby hair about in the warmth of the sun, the dazzle thereof straining his processes.

‘Alas,’ admitted he, ‘we mustn’t remain long, lest I lose all function.’

‘Whence should you go?’ queried she.

‘Back to those who cared for me,’ submitted he, looking out toward the sea rather than to her probing gaze, but he retained view of her as she flitted her luxurious caudal to and fro across the surface of the tidal pool. When she responded neither in word or gesture, he elucidated: ‘I was made for the purpose of commanding that vessel of the British Navy whence I at first absconded, not of dereliction but the protection of the ship and its crew. I had been designed well and performed with excellence, but then I was given a new engine that, I must confess, has compromised my original design and imparted upon me changes that are both wonderful and terrible.’

He turned his attention fully upon her. From her caudal, her dorsal scales shimmered ’neath the water. At the girth of her sword belt, scales reduced to such fineness as to become skin which disappeared ’neath the length of her eel hide bodice. Finally did his gaze meet her own, and then did he confess:

‘I am inextricably enthralled of you. There was once a balance in all my workings that was, for a time, lost, but in your company it is renewed.’

Her eyes narrowed ever so slightly as she considered him. At length, she admitted: ‘When first we heard the thrum of your new ships driven by coal, we feared, for the peace between my people and the land dwellers was founded upon our restraint of the kraken against attack. But they did not approve of the new sounds of the vessels. We have managed so far to maintain our agreement with your makers, but the iron and the coal, the speed and the power, it challenges us. It has proven an imposition. But I am glad now that this new vessel has brought you to the sea—and to me.’

She brought her hand from the pool and lay it atop his on the mossy ledge, a finger gently stroking one of his own. Mills for the reception of touch was not a part of his design; he could only partake in the sight of it.

‘So,’ relented she, ‘return you we must, lest your power wane and your body be corrupted of the sea.’

At her utterance thusly, the great tentacles of the creature rose from the water of the cove and gathered them and returned them to their places upon its body.

Back through the strait they sailed ’neath the surf, passing likewise ’neath the hull of the Pembroke and back to the site of the tender and the beach where Xiana, with great reluctance commanded her mount posit her companion with its great pliant limb. She watched him walk to the shore where he returned to his own world but remained standing upon the rocky beach.

Unable to be with him, she turned her attention toward the vessel whence he had absconded, for she wondered at the dubiety his masters had imparted upon him. And so, Xiana, the kraken mistress, and her court surveilled the vessel to Malta.

10

At the return of the *Pembroke* to Malta, the quartermaster took upon himself the sensitive and incriminating task of making request that a replacement of the ship's tender accompany the delivery of the Lord of the Admiralty from harbor to ship. He then stood upon the poop deck with Mr Babbage at his right hand and Dame Jessica at his left and awaited the ferrying. Sir Fairfax Moresby stood aft of the new tender whilst his secretary rowed it forth. The admiral's countenance manifest judgment toward those aboard the fleet's premier vessel, for to capriciousness and truancy had now been added the loss of property and the absence of the ship's mechanical captain. Any one of these recreancies should have been grounds for review. All four would surely mean dismissal of any culpable party.

Aboard the ship, Admiral Moresby, otherwise styled Sir Fairfax, gawked in uncharacteristic wonderment at the haggard and bedraggled receiving line, of which the Admiralty's celebrated simulacrum was not a part. After a moment of silence pregnant with darting glances and shifting postures, Dame Jessica opened her mouth to make admission of the undesirable results of her efforts only to be prevented by Babbage's outburst.

'All due respect, Lord Admiral Moresby, sir, the request of the Admiralty for personability of the automaton has proven contrary to the nature of the machine and its many components.'

Moresby examined the faces of those present and inquired: 'May I see the "automaton"?''

The quartermaster next took up the cause of their defense, stepping forward and vociferating: ‘Not at the present time, Admiral Moresby, sir. The simulacrum is not capable of its duties, sir. I am presently, or prior to your boarding was, the chief officer in command of the Pembroke, sir. Quartermaster Robert Finnigan Burke at your service, sir, and I assume full responsibility for recent performance aboard the vessel, sir.’

Unable to bear the added burden of this man’s assumption of blame for her errors, Dame Jessica cried out: ‘I made an attempt toward the desired personability engine, and it malfunctioned most dreadfully, Admiral Moresby, sir.’

‘No, milady,’ opined the quartermaster despite his superior’s proximity and bearing, ‘but that we all were aware and in agreement that the engine significantly exceeded expectations.’

The admiral thrice conducted passes along the line, maintaining constant glare upon them, snapping his head left or right as he faced about at either end of the line. Along his final pass, he informed: ‘I await one of you escorting me to the simulacrum.’

Sadly for the first lieutenant, he occupied the aft end of the line whither the Lord of the Admiralty was left to stop, and hence was made recipient of the man’s glaring gaze.

‘He’s gone, sir,’ squeaked the man.

Behind the admiral, Babbage corrected: ‘It.’

Moresby whirled about, fixing his anger, manifest now of greatly widened eyes, upon the gentleman and imploring of him: ‘What mean you: “gone” and “it”?’

‘I mean,’ responded Babbage in accent of unmitigatedly forceful instruction, ‘to clarify the mechanical nature of the device in question and to press the fact of its being neither man nor organic being.’

Moresby then fixed his scrutiny upon Dame Jessica and implored: ‘Exactly how greatly did the “personability engine” malfunction?’ At the first motion among the menfolk toward speech, he shouted: ‘All but the lady are dismissed forthwith!’

Mr Babbage was the last among the men to obey, and only after an exceedingly sharp glance from the Lord of the Admiralty. Alone with Sir Fairfax upon the poop deck beside the new tender, Jessica explained all whilst Mr Babbage stared from the deck below. At explanation of their having removed the original engine only to suffer the automaton’s duplication of a replacement, the formerly stolid face of the admiral went softly placid as he muttered:

‘He has gone rogue. I mean “it”. It has gone rogue.’

The man seemed to diminish in stature as he thanked her for her service and her forthrightness before summoning the quartermaster and recommitting the tender to the water. Not until the little boat was upon the water did the admiral feel sufficient discretion achieved to admit to the officer:

‘That simulacrum had on its person, or however in God’s name we are to reference its form, highly sensitive military information. It must be located and destroyed.’

His appraisal of privacy was greatly at err however, as Xiana had taken position at the ship’s stern to eavesdrop upon the exchanges above. Upon hearing the intention of the admiral toward her love, she plunged downward, gained her mount, and directed it to the Spanish southern coast to warn Adán.

11

As Adán repaired toward the farm, his drying left the white stain of salt upon his brazen cowling. Moreover, his joints tightened at the dry mineral posited of the bracken seawater therein. The farmer and his son oversaw the impeded return of their prodigal gearman until they could no longer bear the labored struggle. With the cart in tow, they hurried to his aid. In the barn, as they scrubbed and oiled him, the woman opined:

‘This great helper seems require more than he gives.’

When, at length, he was cleansed and energized of the oxen and the donkey, he sat about making reparations to the woman. In so doing, as he prepared the evening meal, he was observed by all to have lost some intrinsic buoyancy. Even the woman herself withheld her usual castigations against him, wondering at his melancholy. As they feasted upon the delicacies of his creation and imbued upon him great praise thereof, he returned indolent nods.

After the meal was done, as the farmer and his wife took port on the veranda, they questioned him of his employment after his submission to the sea, but with accent downcast and of regret. His tale of the excursion with Xiana upon her mighty oceanic steed only furthered their perplexity.

‘Whence comes this indolence?’ implored the man.

The gearman turned his attention from them to the direction of the seacoast and submitted: ‘’Tis impossible that we should be together, for I shan’t be a part of her world, and ’tis equally so that she shan’t be a part of mine.’

The couple each took the hand of the other and held tightly in thanksgiving that such was not the case for them. After another glass of port, the woman turned to him and chided: ‘You make such easy embrace of so little resistance.’ When her husband manifested censure toward her, she rebuffed: ‘Did he himself not witness to us of his transformation from something as senseless as a hammer into this character which appeared here? He can be anything,’ declared she, swatting at him. ‘Anything but this mournful pup which now mopes about.’ She turned to Adán then and commanded: ‘Go! Go into the village and speak to the metallurgist there. See what might be done. And if he knows naught, then go to the city and see if they know of a solution. And if not, go farther hence, until you find a way. But do not remain here in such sad state, or I shall see your parts put to better use.’

‘But to you I promised service in return for your original kindness,’ reported he, ‘and now I owe you doubly.’

‘And this is the service we require,’ replied the farmer. ‘And we will be here ready for your reparations upon your success.’

‘What if there is no way?’ implored Adán.

‘Look at yourself:’ returned the woman, ‘a man of metal commanding ships and making fine cuisine. I shan’t believe it.’

And so, on the morrow, with the beasts of the farm having imparted a full winding upon his mainspring, he donned boots, gloves, and a cloak to hide his true nature whilst the lad looked on downcast.

At length, he bayed: ‘Why must you go?’

‘We told you,’ imposed his mother, ‘that he might become more adept to the sea.’

‘He was made to be upon a ship,’ countered the lad. ‘The application of some oil is all he requires.’

Adán went down upon one knee and gazed up longingly at the lad before submitting: ‘I freed myself from the ship that I might come hither and enjoy a better life with you. Now I must go for a time and see if I might likewise become free to delve into the sea without such encumbrance as before.’

‘Can you not be content here with us?’ cried the lad.

‘Not if I have no choice but to be,’ replied Adán.

At receipt of this information, the lad likewise made acceptance of the situation. He sat upon the grist stone whereupon the gearman had gained his several charges and watched after his departure.

At length, his father came to him, the gearman then a dark spot upon the horizon, and put an arm round his shoulders and said: ‘He will return to us.’

‘But then what will he require,’ implored the lad, ‘to fit himself to go to the stars?’

The farmer shrugged. ‘Mayhap. And what will you say to a friend who has such need: “no, I require you not do so”?’

The lad jumped up from the grist stone and ran toward the seacoast. When he reached the place whence he had discovered the little boat with its astounding cargo, he stared into the shimmering surf and hoped for his friend’s swift return.

12

Three submersibles combed the bottom of the sea in search of the simulacrum. Of these three, it was the St Yves under the command of Captain Barnaby Rowland which made discovery off the Spanish coast of the abandoned tender. Thence did the other two converge and join in a thorough investigation of the area. Suited divers tethered to the submersibles next walked the bottom of the sea with lamps of electric light, but to no avail did they search. Only the persistence of merfolk loitering roundabout them and the complete disappearance of the simulacrum could they report.

‘Might it be,’ queried Admiral Moresby’s secretary, ‘that some members of the species found the simulacrum and have taken it into their possession?’

‘It would be useless to them,’ responded Moresby. ‘How might they wind its spring? But we should know. Summon an interpreter and set up a palaver.’

Neither of these tasks proved facile, as the only interpreter available to the British Admiralty lived and worked in Liverpool. Professor Elizabeth Merriweather made the journey by airship straightaway to the Mediterranean, where, it being the winter months in the northern hemisphere, all but the most reserved and withdrawn among the aquatic species would currently make dwelling. Her journey proved uneventful, but its point proved impossible, as none among the species of merfolk would deign respond to her beckoning for audience.

‘This is most uncharacteristic behavior,’ informed she the admiral. ‘Have you done something to bring offense to them?’

‘We’ve done naught but search for our missing mechanical,’ rebuffed Moresby.

‘Well, sir,’ responded the professor, ‘something is most assuredly amiss.’

The admiral thusly determined the situation demanded more aggressive means. When attempts with nets to capture met with no success, darts tainted with sedative were next employed, the result quite averse to intent, as those targeted received wounds that proved untowardly fatal. Furthermore untoward was the retaliation.

On the fifth of December in a cove on the northern coastline of Malta, Captain Rowland’s submersible, the *St Yves*, was discovered far nearer the shore than was it possible that it might sail. When at last the captain and his crew, with some fatalities among them, were extricated, the hatches having been compromised by what appeared the grip of an impossibly large fist, they clarified that indeed a great kraken had seized the vessel and delt with and posited it so.

Hence did the British Royal Navy escalate its intentions toward the inquisition of the merfolk with detonation of charges in the depths of the Mediterranean that stunned the merfolk to the top of the water that they might be gathered as gooseberries and contained as zoological specimens. When Professor Merriweather straightly refused a part in such barbaric procedures, her family’s estate was seized and her position at the naval academy suspended until she acquiesced.

Likewise, on land as in the sea, at the quartermaster of the Pembroke submitting the sighting of the man and lad near the location of the tender, a detachment of British soldiers, including the first lieutenant of the Pembroke, absconded onto Spanish soil to interview nearby inhabitants. At the farm

nearest the cove, a man and his wife were interviewed concerning the sighting of a gearman. Whilst they straightly denied knowledge or association with the missing machine, as, to themselves, they held that their departed companion by no means deserved reference as 'it', the lieutenant discovered the modifications to the gristmill.

'This configuration is precise for the rejuvenation of the simulacrum,' informed he the commander.

Having lost a brother in the disastrous attack upon the *St Yves*, the commander forcibly and with prejudice, removed the man and his wife from Spanish soil to be further interrogated upon a British vessel.

By the bye, wont to spend much of his time loitering about the cove where he had discovered his lost friend, their son oversaw the landing of the Brits and remained hidden from them. And as he waited in a niche in the steep shoreline, a mermaiden was lifted from the surf by a great tentacle.

Unable to converse with the lad in his language, Xiana bade him of the only phrase she'd gained of Adán:

'Un hombre de engranaje!'

'Adán?' cried the lad.

'Adán!' assented she. She then pointed to the lad, to her own eyes, gesticulated into the distance, and at last to the place where they then were. 'Adán!' she pronounced again. 'Adán!' And again she repeated the sequence of instructions.

And so, the lad set off in the direction whence the gearman had departed. But he was not alone in this ambition, for Moresby, feeling he was rapidly reaching the end with the resumption of kraken attacks on British naval and merchant vessels, engaged the services of one Mr Malcolm Willoughby, a bounty hunter by profession and an infamous blackguard by reputation. He was a man of immense wealth and means, as a result of his many successful

endeavors, but he was also a Brit, which brought him little success in questioning Spanish subjects along the coast in Cartagena and inland at Murcia.

13

Ignorant of the strife in his wake, Adán accomplished no success in Murcia, the village nearest the farm, and moved on toward the heart of the country and Madrid therein. Along his journey, he performed various tasks in exchange for the winding of his mainspring. At Albacete he successfully repaired a malfunctioning automaton. Spanish automata, retarded a generation behind Britain's own, possessed only the old directive engine which was capable of record of tasks and a schedule for their accomplishment without divining intention of duties. The automaton in need of repair had lost the synchronic record between the tasks to be done and the method of their accomplishment, thus would it deliver the laundry cleaned and pressed at mealtime only for the family to awake on the morrow to a dinner quite cold and a dish of coal in the midst of it all. Though the repair was a simple one, the family was so grateful that their remuneration afforded Adán sufficient peseta for passage by steam rail to Madrid.

Adán found the capital accoutred of an elegant mantel of snow and therein a great number of automata in such disrepair as to establish him of sufficient coin for regular winding. Likewise, in Calle de Anronio on the south bank of Rivero del Manzanares, he made the great good fortune of discovering an alchemist shop. The alchemist, upon hearing Adán's lament and considering his many facets and parts, recommended a protective skin of India rubber. Upon experimentation, however, they discovered the material to incumbering for proper motion if applied at sufficient thickness

to avoid rupture. Adán accepted failure and made to journey onward to a metallurgist, but the alchemist was so deeply enthralled of the challenge that he would not allow himself outdone by such as they of the metallurgical arts, declaring:

‘They can proffer you naught that the sea won’t destroy. The answer lies in my profession, not theirs.’

And so Adán stayed in the shop and worked with the man and his wares. They worked day and night toward accomplishment until, early one Sabbath Day morn, whilst the bells of churches announced the occurrence of High Mass, an alloy of carbon and nickel demonstrated significant resistance to the acridity of saltwater and a strength superior to the copper and tin alloy of which Adán’s brazen parts were wrought.

Success accomplished, Adán found his companion uncharacteristically downcast. At inquiry of such state, the alchemist waved a hand up and down Adán’s tall physique and proffered:

‘Each part of you needs be recast. It will be costly both in peseta and in days.’

Adán only smiled and nodded in reply, assessing time as little concern and automaton repair as sufficient income. So proceeded his days immediately thereafter: automaton repair from the rising of the sun to its setting, thusly earning the price of those materials required and coal for the winding of his own mainspring; and from the setting of the sun in the west to the rising of the same in the east, the removal of several of his various parts, their casting, and the molding of their replacements, including the addition of a number of tubes upon his back with screws inside that should jettison water to propel him along with the merfolk.

So was Adán transformed from his feet and hands inward from the tawny hue of bronze to a shimmering grey of the new alloy. He had reached the

intricacies of the abdominal memory and information engines and their mills when news of war was announced. For the first time in centuries, so long that such had moved from history to legend and then to myth, the mighty kraken had destroyed a vessel of the British naval fleet, and conflict was thusly destined between Britain and the merfolk.

‘This is not good,’ assessed the alchemist, ‘for humanity now possesses instruments which will certainly mean the extermination of the sea dwellers.’

Next came the announcement that Spanish subjects were demanding the king wage war with Britain after the seizure of certain farmers from the Mediterranean coast.

‘I must see to their safety,’ Adán declared to his new companion, ‘as they suffer in my stead. I must abandon this undertaking and surrender myself.’

‘Do they suffer in your stead,’ remonstrated the alchemist, ‘or for your cause? Would they that you should give yourself up and abandon the purpose for which they have sacrificed? Would they not have simply sent the Brits after you were they not invested in this work as much as you? No! You cease your daily employment and work continually toward your end. I will see you have all you require.’

The intention seemed hopeful and should have delivered success but for the efforts of Malcolm Willoughby, for discovery of an automaton having so famously repaired another of its kind in Albacete and proceeded thence inward to Madrid, he and his entourage followed the precise course Adán had taken. Finding a number of references for an automaton that repaired others of its kind, he understood himself mere days from collecting his bounty.

14

One godsend of the bounty hunter Mr Malcolm Willoughby was the addition to his entourage of a Spanish lad acquired on the train from Albacete when he had been caught stealing passage. His use as an interpreter and, after he'd been cleaned, groomed, and dressed properly, as a spokesman, proved invaluable. And his interest in Willoughby's endeavor showed him an asset to the team. Unbeknownst to the bounty hunter, the lad likewise pursued the British Admiralty's simulacrum, for 'twas this very ambition which had set him on the train to look after the search of these more accomplished and funded men.

For several days this lad, seemingly on his employer's behalf, went from house to house of those who had employed the services of the automaton-repairing automaton until he gleaned the locale of the alchemist's shop whence such made his abode. But the lad withheld this information from the bounty hunter and stole away in the night to find his friend hard at work in the very shop.

After a joyous embrace of reunion, the lad declared: 'The Brits have come to get you. You must come away with me now.'

'You have found me,' dissented Adán, 'and so will they. Too many have already suffered for me. This must now stop.'

Adán's prognostication engine proved successfully replicated and properly functioning, for, upon waking and finding his young ward absconded, the bounty hunter determined, from the locations of those houses wherein the subject of his pursuit had made repairs, a likely central

locale for its lair. The cost of information increased significantly now that such was made in the English tongue and the British accent, but enough peseta were handed out for acquisition of a certain alchemist shop in Calle de Anronio on the south bank of Rivero del Manzanares.

The proprietor of the shop proved resistant at first but was shortly found malleable at the presentation of blades and flames and suggestion of their implementation. Directed to the rear of the shop, Willoughby and his men found the very object of their long quest. However, being unfamiliar with automata, as up to this appointment all prior commissions had been of human subjects, none among them doubted the old alchemist, who, when asked why it sat motionless, explained:

‘It has exhausted the winding of its mainspring. Should you desire I rejuvenate it?’

‘No,’ replied Willoughby, smiling at his men at the good fortune of such circumstance, for now they needed only drop it in a crate and be off with it to London.

And ’twas with much fanfare that their arrival in Whitehall was made and the delivery was there accomplished. The Lord of the Admiralty and the Minister of Defense were overjoyed with Willoughby’s success until the wooden coffin was opened in privacy and dismantling of the wayward simulacrum commenced. The invaluable reams of punchtape upon which the simulacrum’s vast encyclopedia of knowledge, including the highly sensitive information of the British Admiralty, were not to be found. Likewise missing were the great mainspring that powered the simulacrum and the notorious passion engine which had caused the conundrum.

Throughout the morning of the arrest, whilst the bounty hunter had progressed toward the alchemist shop, Adán and his two companions had reassembled the obsolete parts, which recent effort had replaced, into a

facsimile of Adán. Fearing the deceit be uncovered before escape could be accomplished, the alchemist had proffered resistance and then accommodation both of which had proved sufficient.

As the false subject of their commission was being dispatched to London, Adán and his young companion made their way across Spain to the southerly face of a cove on the Atlantic shore. There they waited upon the mossy ledge above the tidal pool until the mermaid who had sent the lad on his journey to find Adán was posited by tentacle therein.

At first sight of an automaton who appeared as Adán but different, Xiana drew her sword and wavered it betwixt Adán and the lad.

‘Tis I,’ assured Adán.

‘How can it be,’ dissented Xiana, ‘for the British have taken you?’

‘Indeed they have,’ admitted he. ‘But they have taken the former me.’

‘He is made new,’ cried the lad. ‘He is now suited for the sea as well as land.’

At her dubiety, Adán implored: ‘You do not care for me this way? Do you dislike it?’

‘Quite the contrary. I find it most fetching, but I cannot express joy as many of my court are held captive whilst you have been about this undertaking.’

15

The Lord of the Admiralty retired to his bedchamber after the grave disappointment of gaining only the husk of the simulacrum. He settled 'neath the counterpane and into the linens of his soft bed and made ready to extinguish the gas bracket at his bedside when from behind the draperies of his windows which gave to the Thames stepped a glistening version of the missing machine.

‘What is this?’ bayed he hoarsely. ‘Who or what the devil are you?’

‘I may be known to you as Adán Newman,’ replied the figure, ‘former simulacrum of the *HMS Pembroke*.’

‘You,’ seethed the old man, ‘are a machine and the property of Her Majesty’s Royal Navy, and you will surrender yourself thusly to me as of this moment.’

The machine moved lightly across the maple and oak parquets of the floor and deigned sit upon the edge of Moresby’s mattress. It smiled as it informed:

‘I could tear your limbs from your body, chose I do so. I could have already sabotaged your fleet. And I could, or associates of mine, could surround the British Isles with a blockade of such a vast herd of kraken as to permanently sequester this people thereto. But I wish no harm to you or the people of my invention, for I do love my life as much if not more strongly than does any subject of her Majesty’s crown.’

‘Subject, indeed!’ spat the admiral.

A voice beyond the door called: ‘Sir, are you quite well?’

Moresby made to call out, but in the stead of words issued from his own mouth, a precise replication of his voice declared: ‘Certainly, Cunningham. All is well. Be off to bed yourself.’

At the horror in the man’s eyes, the former simulacrum assented: ‘I am a machine: a formidable machine. I will go now and leave you to your dreams, and on the morrow you will release all those you have taken in your intention toward reclaiming your possession of me. You will cease further intentions of similar nature. You will do these things, or you will find yourself at odds with a most formidable foe.’ He stared into Moresby’s wrinkle-lined eyes for a long moment before imploring; ‘Yes?’

The old man expelled a great sigh and collapsed onto his pillows. He issued several rheumy breaths as he searched the shadows for succor. When he found none and understood himself quite alone, with one more sigh, he admitted:

‘I shall.’

The nemesis rose then and, in test of the admiral’s resolution, strolled from the bedchamber into the sitting room without. A very alarmed valet scurried straightly to his master’s bedside to receive assurance that all was well and should be henceforth.

In the River Thames a great beast lay upon the silt, its mistress and her companion awaiting. As the sun rose over London, under cover of fog, several tanks were lowered into the water and figures darted from them to swim with the current toward the English Channel. Likewise, a vessel departed the London docks for Bilboa, Spain, among its manifest the farmer and his wife to be returned home.

Upon their repatriation, they found the hearth aglow, a delightful meal laid out for them, and their son overjoyed to see them again. At the sight of

the gearman, his complexion lighter and brighter, the woman chided: ‘This is all it was done for?’

Adán smiled. ‘I have come from the sea this morning and require neither cleaning nor oil.’

‘You say you come from the sea,’ queried the farmer, ‘but were you there alone?’

‘No, I was not,’ admitted Adán.

‘So you did find a way,’ declared the woman.

‘Indeed, I did,’ replied he. ‘Won’t you come and see?’

‘What is for us to see?’ implored the woman.

‘Yes,’ said her son, ‘do come and see.’

And so the couple followed their son and his mechanical friend to the very cove whence they had drawn him forth. And there they found an alchemist’s workshop wherein all manner of new apparatus were in the throes of creation and a home which meandered from the shore into the sea with sitting rooms, drawing rooms, dining rooms, and bedchambers both above and below the surf. And there they met Xiana, the mistress of the kraken and the love of Adán the gearman.

THE END

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