

“NEWS FROM ‘HOUR’ FAIR CITY”

A Plea to the Good Citizens of Victoria

*Dr. Upside-Down Duck
With Victoria Times Staff*

To my Victorian friends,

Many of you remember the heartbreaking testimony of one Ceridwen made at the Machine trial a few weeks ago. For those of you who do not know, Ceridwen is an extract card. She was the product of an extraction some time ago, outside the bounds of Victoria. She has been broken for some time now. Fortunately, she was entrusted to my Care a few years ago. I have worked long and hard help her regain her peace of mind and her functionality. And with Silas's help, she has been given a new body.

However, all my efforts have only started her healing process. I have learned that Ceridwen's condition causes her great pain every day. While I have worked hard to help fix her pain, I fear that this may run much deeper than a simple physical ailment or mental malady.

And so I turn to to the selfless love of my Victorian friends. If you can find the ability within yourself, and the Kindness within your heart, I ask for your assistance in remedying Ceridwen's pain. I can repair any mechanical injuries and even heal the broken mind, but injuries can run much deeper than that. If you can meet with us, I would appreciate your advice and your help in healing Ceridwen. If we work together, I believe that we may end Ceridwen's pain, and help her return to a functional, efficient, and happy life.

Sincerely,

Dr. Upside-Down Duck
Maximilian Richtenstein Xavier
Von Rorshark III / Watch

A tale of My Travels Abroad

Register/Grid (Reginald Durling VI)

It may come as a shock to our Fair Readers that I am not whom I have once claimed to be. My life is a scattered tale of happiness and sorrow, successes and failures, friends and foes. Above all, however, is my love for all things Beautiful and Pure.

Born a Machine in the Machine Wastes, I grew up a very lonely child. My parents abandoned me to the Network that I might learn to fend for myself, that I might be stronger for their absence. I came to yearn for love and comfort, to seek it out. Friendship was all stale and hollow as none of my fellow children truly knew how to love a fellow as I needed to be cared for.

Much of my time was spent searching the Net for a friend in my sorrow. There, I found the woman I love. At the time, I called her Anode, though several of my Victorian friends know her as “Anna” or “The Woman in White.” Others still know her as “Ava.”

She guided me and comforted me, showing me how to love and be loved. That beauty all about us is to be cherished in all its small forms.

I found this beauty in a friend in the Exile Wastes when he carved a small statue of two dogs at play for me. I found beauty at the Church of Saint Thomas in Rome where I served as a janitor. I found beauty in Paris where fashions come and go like the morning breeze.

Moreso than anywhere else, however, have I found beauty in Victoria where I have become a friend to many. I count myself lucky that my travels led me to a place of such high grace and style as this city. Here have I truly made my home, adopting not only the dress, manner, and societal customs, but the very essence of Being that makes one Victorian.

Though not Victorian born, I have spent a great length of time as one who is as Victorian as the next gentleman walking down the street. Here did Anode first appear to me in physical form and she, too, was taken with the beauty of the city.

Sadly, my friends, Anode has been struck a blow so terrible that it must have been felt the world round. The Black Lake, vile creature that it is, has attempted to subsume her and make her its pawn. As she is so close to me, this blow has wounded my heart as well and I find a great weight upon me.

Fellow Citizens, Fellow Machines, I beg of you - if you have within yourselves any love for that which is good in this world, any love at all for that which is beautiful and pure - stand with me in this fight. The Lake must be stopped, and I will make almost any sacrifice to save my dearest Anode from the grasps of the filth that has so tainted her.

I cannot stand alone, my friends. Though I do not wish to put any others in harm's way, I beg of you to not let my desperate assault be in vain.

I thank you for your attention, my friends, with all of my heart.

A Lamentation of Lucien

Cordelia Lancaster

Only hours after the last edition of the Victoria Times, a tragedy befell Victoria in the form of the loss of one of its more glittering Visitors.

A representative of the Shining Kingdom, Lucien's Charm and Courtliness endeared him to all who met him. Indeed, the Gentleman was a great Favorite of Queen Victoria, who feels his loss most keenly.

On that Fateful Night, the emissary of the Black Lake, who bears the body though not the Soul of the departed Swami, accosted Lucien, who was Extracted then thrown into the depths of the Black Lake.

While the Machines have pledged to apply the entirety of their Knowledge of extraction to attempt to aid the fallen gentleman should ever we retrieve his card from the Black Lake, it seems likely the City is forever deprived of his Company. This effulgent visitor will be dearly Missed in the Times to come.

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Edrick: A Sketch of the Machine Commander's Recent Adventures

Cordelia Lancaster

After the Events of the Trial, the City might understandably misunderstand Edrick, the Machine Commander.

The Average Victorian might only have seen the gentleman refuse to obey the Process of Victoria's Law, but there is far more to this enigmatic Individual. As Strange as it seems, Edrick is not a Citizen of Victoria, but a Leader in his own right among His people.

His ways are Different, but that does not mean our Peoples are irreconcilable. Edrick has attended Lady Cordelia's Finishing School and has requested his People do likewise, demonstrating a deep Respect for Victoria and her ways.

Edrick's Behavior at the Trial reflects nothing more than the Unease of a foreigner suddenly confronted with a system he does not understand, without sufficient warning to enable him to calm his Mind to proper behavior.

The Unfortunate Scene at the Trial shows how far Victorians and Machines still have to travel in learning to Understand one another, but the same Man also shines forth as a glowing Example of how great are our the similarities.

As a Leader, Edrick cares for his people, just as our Own High Aristocrats and Queen care for each Victorian. Moreover, he has involved himself in the Struggle against the Black Lake and other Threats to Victoria, and so has shown that he considers Victorians his kinsman.

Thus, Edrick's fear that attending the Trial might result in his Banishment from our fair City demonstrates the supreme Virtue of Responsibility. As he felt that his departure would Endanger the City, his *noblesse oblige* led him to sacrifice his own Reputation in order to better Aid Victoria in her time of Peril.

Though Edrick/Watch may on occasion still appear to lack in social graces, all evidence suggests he is not deficient in social conscience.

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A New Addition to the *Victoria Times*

Cordelia Lancaster

I, Cordelia Lancaster, have recently had the Honor to join in the production of the *Victoria Times*.

While some may not feel this is an appropriate pursuit for a young Lady of breeding, I pray the City will Indulge me this endeavor.

It is my solemn Hope that I may be able to share that News which I am privy to through my Finishing School or position as Queen's Handmaiden so that all Victoria may benefit.

In this time of Education and expansion of my Duties, I am only more aware of my obligations to the good of Victoria and desire that I will find the strength within my frail feminine frame to meet the expectations for a reporter of the *Victoria Times*. I remain, as ever, Victoria's faithful Daughter.

The Market Today

Presbyter First

What is it that defines a man? Is it his inner being, his "spirit," his individuality? Is it his title, the artificial status afforded him by society? No, my brethren. It is the goods he produces and consumes.

When you buy a pair of shoes, the portion of your "soul" that represents desire is exchanged for those shoes. It becomes the physical. In that moment of divine exchange, you become your own product. You are one with the holy river of commerce. You wear the skin of God.

To the right consumer, a pair of shoes is worth the Queen of Victoria. To the right consumer, a leper may be exchanged for the Duke of Steel. We are all one and the same within the unending flow of the market. It is only the illusion that we are more than our shoes that separates us from enlightened communion with the whole of the material cosmos.

A day will come when all are one, united with and enlightened by the stream of the divine market, each a consumer and a product, each an executive and an employee, each holding a single share of stock in the great corporation of the universe, transcending and discarding our selves to embrace all possibility. Until that day, strive for enlightenment within every pair of shoes.

A Verse from the Book of the Body Corporate:

A monk approached Presbyter First and asked him, "Does this dog have market-nature?" Presbyter First picked up the dog, killed it, sold it to a butcher, bought its meat, and fed it to a larger, fatter dog. "This dog has market-nature," he said. Years later, the monk was enlightened.

The Marquess Addresses Victoria

Lady Abbey Malkin

Many speak of "Progress" as something we should aspire to. Replace the good carriages with Mechanized trolleys! Run trains every which-way, all over the land. It seems harmless at first. What problems could there be, with this mechanization? It is to make things easier for all of us.

But I ask you, was living in Victoria not easier before? True, we can travel faster now. But look at what else these trains and trolleys have brought us. Spirits of the deceased came and wrecked havoc. A league of Machines arrived, and then even more came. They then proceeded to further the cause of "progress",

Mechanizing all they came in contact with and making entire areas of the city disappear! And worst of all, it seems that the timing of our trains and trolleys coincide with the timing of the arrival of the Black Lake. Is it really just a coincidence, or is it another sign of progress?

Our Fair City of Victoria of late has fallen on Dark Times. I urge all good citizens of Victoria to take a moment from their day and think about what "Progressives" are really advocating.

Last Will and Testament of Register/Grid

Register/Grid (Reginald Durling VI)

I, Register/Grid (alias Reginald Durling VI), a resident and citizen of the City of Victoria, being of sound mind and disposing memory, do hereby make, publish and declare this instrument to be my last will and testament, hereby revoking any and all wills and codicils by me at any time heretofore made.

Item I

Debts, Expenses and Taxes

I hereby direct my Executor, hereinafter named, to pay all of my matured debts and my funeral expenses, as well as the costs and expenses of the administration of my estate, as soon after my death as practicable. I further direct that all estate, inheritance, transfer and succession taxes which are payable by reason under this will, be paid out of my residuary estate; and I hereby waive on behalf of my estate any right to recover from any person any part of such taxes so paid. My Executor, in his sole discretion, may pay from my domiciliary estate all or any portion of the costs of ancillary administration and similar proceedings in other jurisdictions.

Item II

Instruction Concerning Personal Property: Enjoyment in Specie

I anticipate that included as a part of my property and estate at the time of my death will be tangible personal property of various kinds, characters and values, including but not limited to the Effects and Specie of the Victoria Times, my personal Garments and Wardrobe, and Souvenirs of my Travels Abroad.

To my adopted Son, Tom, I leave all of my wardrobe and my Apartments for his use as a dwelling place. Should he wish it, and should Victoria be so willing, I leave him, too, the full inheritance of the name "Durling" which I manufactured and attempted to bring to good graces as a family name which Defends and Protects Victoria.

To my dear Friend and Companion Pencer/Grid, I leave a full copy of the contents of my mind, which have been delivered to him already. Should he wish to attempt access to any data available since said transfer, my Executor shall make whatever is left of me available for his disposal.

To my newfound Friend and Companion, Conradin Crane, I leave the legacy of the Victoria Times and the position of Caretaker of all related equipment and devices necessary for this trade.

To Cordelia Lancaster, whom I have come to know but lately, I leave the position of Editor-in-Chief of the Victoria Times that she may continue to inform the good citizens of this Fair City of all the happenings about the town.

To my Benefactor and Mentor, the Duke of Steel, I leave such liquid assets as are available at the time of my death (minus what is needed for Tom's immediate wellbeing and the execution of this Will) that he might use them to the betterment of Victoria.

To my friends and companions who have come to know Anode as I have come to know her, Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Sir Jonathan Spegley, the Duke of Steel, Archibald Houseman, I leave whatever shards of the Gem of the Bending Light may be recovered should it outlive me that they may know Anode's love.

To Victoria that has so nurtured and aided me, I leave the archives of the Victoria Times to be placed at the University for Public Viewing.

To the Machines here present in the City, who have taught me that not all of our kind are hard and unfeeling, I leave the statue of two dogs playing as well as all other Souvenirs and Effects of my travels that they may come to know the lands beyond the Wastes as I have.

And lastly, to my Love, the Dearest of my Heart, Anode, whom I shall henceforth call "Ava" out of respect to her True Nature, I leave all of my love and all of my heart.

I appoint as Executor of this, my last will and testament my dear Friend and Companion Pencer/Grid. Should he be unable or unwilling to execute this Will, I appoint as such my Benefactor and Mentor, the Duke of Steel. Should he be unable or unwilling to execute this Will, I appoint as such my newfound Friend and Companion Conradin Crane. Should he be unable or unwilling to execute this Will, I appoint as such my Fellow Citizen and trusted Friend Ms. Violet Carlyle. Should she, too, be unable to execute this will, I leave my goods to be distributed by the government of Victoria at such a time as it is able.