

LIFE AND DEATH OF MEGAFEM 9000

By Alan Haehnel

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CAST: one female

(We see a woman frozen in a pose, eyes closed. SHE looks like a mannequin in a storefront window. Her eyes click open. Her smile is wide, fake. SHE blinks twice. The way she blinks, a bit slowly and mechanically; the predictable modulation of her voice; her slightly stilted movements—all reveal that we are watching and listening to a machine made to look like a woman.)

Warning. I may be dangerous.

(SHE moves smoothly to another pose, then to another. The transition to a third pose, however, catches slightly. SHE jerks into position and then says hello in five languages—English, German, Afrikaans, Korean, and Swahili)

Hello. I can also greet you in other languages. *Guten Tag. Hallo. An-yong Ha-se-yo. Jambo, Hujambo.* **(Break)** That was German, Afrikaans, Korean, and Swahili. End, end, endless possibilities. **(Break)** Warning: I have not been serviced since **(names month, day and year nine months in the past)**. I am currently 122 days overdue. Please alert a SimTech specialist. SimTech, your Just Imagine Headquarters.

(Goes back to the initial greeting in various languages, only this time SHE starts to recite very quickly, as if malfunctioning in a new way.)

Hello. *Guten Tag. Hallo. An-yong Ha-se-yo. Jambo, Hujambo.* I am a Megafem 9000, 300 series programmable mannequin, though I come with over 1200 pre-set movements and monologues, my capabilities for mimicry allow for virtually endless possibilities. Imagine, if you would, the impact of allowing me to greet your international convention attendees in their own languages. I will demonstrate by answering questions in four different languages—English, Armenian, Japanese, and Swedish. Do you accept credit cards? *Credit Card gentounik? Kurejiti to kahdo doe kaemasuka. Tar ni kredicort?* I can I can I can I can I can I can...

(SHE jerks violently. The next words are a normal speed)

This unit has performed an illegal operation. Self diagnostic required. Initiating self-diagnostic now.

(SHE begins Hamlet's famous soliloquy. During each section, SHE moves various parts of her body to test their functioning. SHE begins with her eyes.)

To be or not to be: that is the question:/ Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer/...Ocular mobility and clarity within acceptable parameters. ***(Moving neck)*** The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,/ Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,/ And by opposing end them. Flexibility in quadrants one and two acceptable. ***(Moving shoulders and torso)*** To die: to sleep;/ No more; and by a sleep to say we end/ The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks/ That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation/ Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;/ To sleep:....Flexibility and mobility in quadrants three and four acceptable; quadrant five exhibiting wear, requires attention. ***(Moving hips and legs)*** Perchance to dream: aye, there's the rub;/ For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,/ When we have shuffled off

this mortal coil,/ Must give us pause: there's the respect/ That makes calamity of so long life....Flexibility in quadrants six through ten acceptable.

(Now SHE tests her vocal flexibility, taking her voice high, low, fast, slow, loud, soft.)

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,/ Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,/ The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,/ The insolence of office, and the spurns....Vocal range, pace, and volume controls all within accept....

(SHE suddenly begins to say the next section of the soliloquy frantically fast while her body convulses in a parody of the moves SHE has made during the previous test segments.)

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,/ When he himself might his quietus make/ With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,/ To grunt and sweat...

(Her voice skips slightly, then says the next four words very slowly, like a tape recorder devouring the tape it is playing.)

Under a weary life,....

(Normal speed, high voice, repeating an action along with the repeated words)

But that the dread, but that the dread, but that the dread, dread, dread....

(Suddenly standing stock still and straight, speaking loudly)

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