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# Nine

By Michael Tolkin

We had such, potential. Such promise  
But we squandered our gifts,  
our intelligence.  
Our blind pursuit of technology  
only sped us quicker to our doom.  
Our world is ending  
but life must go on.  
Wait, I'm a friend.  
Yes. I always hoped...  
so much thought...  
The details, carved wood.  
Built in copper.  
You can't speak?  
Come with me.  
Here. Stop!  
Some things in this world...  
Are better left where they lie.  
but if you know where to look...  
these ruins are full of risks.  
Wait, wait.  
Almost there.  
Friend... friend?  
- Friend.  
- Friend.  
What's this?  
You've found it.  
He's... He's always drawing this.  
Are... are we alone?  
No, no...  
Go.  
Get in the can, go on.  
Why don't you finish, what you started...  
with me.  
It's alright.  
I'm not going to hurt you.  
You're safe now.  
Where am I?  
With us. I never expected  
to see another one.  
There, that should hold.  
If two were here, he would  
have done a better job.  
- I wonder where he has gone to?  
- I was with him.

Two? Where, out there?  
- What did he ...?  
- Keeping secrets from me, I see?  
I was coming to tell you.  
What's this?  
I found him, in the emptiness.  
What were you doing out there?  
You know the beast.  
How many times have I told you?  
The Beast? That's what took, two.  
If we hurry, we can save him.  
- The beast took him? That's the end of it.  
- But he was still alive.  
No! We have rules!  
Our new guest seems confused.  
Perhaps I can help  
teach you some clarity.  
- It didn't kill him?  
- Quiet.  
Hold on.  
When we woke in this world...  
it was chaos.  
Man and machine, attacked  
each other, with fire and metal.  
I found others.  
There's a gap ahead.  
Follow me.  
The gas killed, everything.  
I led us here...  
to sanctuary.  
and here we waited  
for the war to end.  
Slowly the world, became silent.  
The only thing that remains now...  
Is the, beast.  
So, we stay hidden and  
we wait for it to, sleep.  
But where did it come  
from? Why is it hunting us?  
Questions like that are, pointless.  
We need to protect ourselves.  
Keep ourselves out of danger.  
Too many of us  
have already been lost.

But he isn't lost.

- Why aren't you listening to me?

- Two, chose his own path!

I suggest you avoid  
making the same mistake.

Go to the, watch tower  
and take our guest, with you.

This was the first  
thing we built together.

- We can still go after him?

- Us?

But he could be anywhere out there.

That's where it took him. Down  
towards those three tall shapes.

Oh no! We can't! Not there.

We have rules.

- Why do you listen to, one?

- A group must have a leader.

But what if he's wrong?

Come with me.

I can't do it alone.

I...

I... I can't.

But...

Wouldn't he have come for you?

Wait.

We're going to need a map.

Actually, I don't mind having one eye.

It's easier for me. I can concentrate  
on one thing at a time. You know?

Why was he out here alone?

- Where's this tunnel?

- I don't know.

Wait!

We should go back.

We can't.

The, beast.

It's too dark.

We can use that.

Wait.

Two, would be impressed.

We'll find him.

You know, you're just like him. You  
forget to remember, to be scared.

Can I wait here?  
Why would he bring him here?  
Two!  
Two!  
I knew you would come.  
I thought...?  
Dirty thing.  
- Seven?  
- I don't believe it.  
- You've come back.  
- I never left.  
You've finally decided  
to join the fight.  
You dropped this.  
Where have you been hiding?  
Rusty, hack tic, gathered,  
shiny pile of scrap.  
Wait. What are you doing?  
You don't even know what it is.  
No! Two!  
Jump!  
Hurry, quick.  
What are you waiting for?  
Keep running.  
Come on.  
I knew we shouldn't have come.  
Why? Why did you do that?  
I didn't know. I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.  
What were you thinking?  
What's it going to do?  
I know where we can find answers.  
Is this, what it was like?  
Keep up.  
Oh, they've been here, the whole time?  
Twins.  
They've been hiding  
here, lost in the past.  
Looking for answers.  
They're cataloguing.  
We need your help.  
- We awakened, something.  
- No, I awakened, something.  
Something terrible.

That's it!  
Today, the, chancellor presented  
the latest advancement...  
of technological wizardry to the public.  
Comrades!  
Today begins a new era.  
Let us praise this new technology.  
Welcome to, the age of the machine.  
It will make new machines,  
in it's own image.  
Machines of peace. Let us  
know a glorious new era...  
of wealth and prosperity for the state.  
Governors are advised to  
pause, for a public address.  
Science has turned it's  
sinister eyes against us.  
People of our mighty state.  
Join me in repelling  
the iron fist of the machine.  
But the thing that woke  
it, it was round and  
engraved with strange shapes.  
The shapes corresponded.  
It fit perfectly, into the machine.  
I think it was made for it.  
That's what, six always draws.  
Six?  
Two, collected his drawings.  
He was always studying them.  
- I have to see them.  
- What?  
Go back to, one?  
So he can lock us away,  
while this nightmare awakens?  
Never.  
Alright... alright where  
did he put them?  
Here somewhere.  
Here. Here.  
There they are.  
Right?  
You awakened, what?  
You fools.

- I warned you.  
- He warned you.  
Now you've awoke  
unimaginable, terror.  
And may I ask, did you manage  
to save, two. Of course not.  
By following this wickless fool, you've  
endangered everything we've worked for.  
- Why was, two sent out to begin with?  
- I sent him. To scout.  
That doesn't make any sense.  
You don't send the oldest down to...  
Look...  
we need to figure out, what's going on.  
The source... The source...  
Go back, to the source...  
This is it! This is what  
wakened the machine.  
What do you know about this?  
Now you can't be trusted.  
I wont allow you, to endanger us further.  
Subjugate them.  
- Sub... What?  
- You illiterate crimp...  
Take their belongings.  
- Hey...  
- Wait!  
You're nothing but a coward.  
How dare you challenge me? I, who  
kept everyone safe all these years.  
Ever since you got here,  
everything has been unravelling.  
You're a curse! A fool.  
- Guided by pointless queries .  
- And you... are a blind man.  
Guided by fear.  
Sometimes fear... is the  
appropriate response.  
Nooo!  
- Nine!  
- Go!  
- Nine!  
- Keep going, I'll find a way down.  
Come on.

Let me try that again.  
The cable! Pull it!  
Grab on.  
Grab the wire.  
Your cape... let it go.  
I can't.  
Do it now!  
It's only a cape.  
There will be more, wont there?  
Yes.  
It's not safe here.  
Stand look out.  
I'll search out a safer retreat.  
- What, hat is it?  
- The source.  
That thing that woke the machine.  
- Go back, go back.  
- Back to where?  
Dark science.  
What good does this  
useless rubbish do us? Forget it!  
You know something.  
What do you know?  
I know enough, to leave  
ancient evil to moulder.  
Look what they've left us with.  
Leave it be I say. But you...  
always asking questions.  
So many pointless  
questions... Probing, pushing.  
Like, two, he always  
had to know, so much.  
I was right, you did  
send him out to die.  
He was old, he was weak.  
Sometimes one must be sacrificed  
for the good of many.  
You, coward!  
Seven.  
Your path takes us to catastrophe.  
- We have to go back.  
- Back, where?  
To the first room, where I woke.  
Can't he see, he's way



only brings trouble...

I mean what good

comes from all of this?

I know what we need.

I know what's right.

No, no, you can't be.

No, no!

Find them.

Don't look in the eyes.

Five!

- Seven!

- Nine!

- We have to go after them.

- What?

- Eight. Where's, eight?

- That thing has them.

It's taking them back to the machine.

Then it's too late.

Wait, wait we have to get out of here.

We must try to find another safe place.

No more hiding.

We're going after them! All of us.

Need I remind you, of the outcome  
of your last heroic adventure?

I can't let this happen to them.

- I'm going in.

- I'm coming with you.

No, I need you here.

If I don't make it back...

destroy it.

Wait, How?

Come on, then. Let's hear it,  
what's your brilliant scheme?

We'll need a full barrel.

Hey, over here!

- Where are they?

- It's taking too long.

- We have to do it now!

- No, they need more time.

Help me pull it down.

- They're coming. They're coming!

- Help.

Help.

No! Not yet.

- Let go, you fool.  
- Five!  
We're coming!  
Now!  
Good riddance.  
It's done.  
Thank you.  
The machine, everybody!  
The machine! It's still alive!  
No!  
There's nothing we can do.  
Help!  
Please! No, no!  
No!  
It's not.  
To the bridge!  
No! They're trapped! They're trapped inside.  
Six, come on! Get on the bridge.  
No, stop! You  
mustn't destroy it.  
- Get away, Six!  
- You mustn't destroy it. Don't destroy it.  
They're trapped, they're  
trapped! They're inside!  
Come on.  
Go back, to the first room!  
He'll show you. The source.  
- It must be destroyed.  
- No, no we can't.  
Didn't you hear him?  
They're trapped inside.  
- We can still save them.  
- What?  
- How?  
- We have to find the source.  
It holds the answers.  
- We need to destroy it.  
- But there's still a chance.  
We're out of time.  
Nine...  
they're gone.  
You are wrong.  
- Nine...  
- Let him go.

Greetings, Nine.  
It had such promise, my great machine.  
It was meant to be  
an instrument of progress.  
of creation...  
that was the agreement our,  
chancellor failed to honour.  
But the fault is hardly  
his alone to bear.  
The machine was born  
purely of my intellect.  
Which I now know, was not enough.  
My creation was hopelessly  
flawed and indeed dangerous.  
It lacked a human soul.  
and could easily be corrupted  
by those who controlled it.  
That is why, I'm making each of you.  
You're all that's left, of humanity.  
You are all of the pieces of my soul.  
Together, you and this device,  
shall protect the future.  
Look closely, and remember what you see.  
Fire!  
No!  
I now know the truth!  
The scientist.  
It's the scientist.  
He's the source.  
He gave us his soul.  
We are him.  
Load the cannon.  
Stop! You'll destroy the talisman.  
It's too late.  
Quick, quick get in.  
We need to take the talisman  
above the machine.  
It can be used against it.  
lower it to me.  
- Then you'll have a chance.  
- Enough, Nine, don't do this.  
- What if you're wrong?  
- I'll show you how to use it.  
It'll be okay.

This is the sequence.

No!

Please, we can't do this without you.

They all died because of me.

I started this, and now

I need to finish it.

They left us nothing.

Nothing.

Why do we have to right their wrongs?

Sometimes, one must be sacrificed.

No!

You did it.

No, I didn't.

Not yet.

They're free now.

What happens next?

I'm not sure, exactly.

But this world is ours now.

It's what we make of it.