

Ministry of Health.

WHA' THE BLOOMIN' HELL IS GOIN' ON HERE?!

OUR MINDS HAVE MECHANISMS DESIGNED TO PROTECT US FROM THOSE UNBEARABLE REALITIES THAT LIFE MAY AT TIMES LAY UPON US.



WHEN FACED WITH HORRORS THAT THREATEN TO SHRED OUR SANITY, OUR MINDS DEFEND US.

TRANSPORTING US TO A SANCTUARY DEEP WITHIN.



HEY! HOLD ON THERE! WHERE YOU THINK YOU GOING?

A SAFE HAVEN WHERE NOTHING AND NO ONE CAN EVER TOUCH US.



SIR!

HUNGGG!!



I AM NO FELLOW.

I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE YOU KEEPING YOUR HANDS OFF ME.

AND WHEN WE WAKE,
TORN FROM THAT REFUGE,
THE MIND CONTINUES
TO PROTECT.

BLOCKING THOSE
MEMORIES WE HAVE
NOT THE STRENGTH
TO ENDURE.



SORRY,
MUM...

...NGH... I... I...
I'LL BE GOIN'
NOW.



KLAT
KLAT
KLAT
KLAT

MEMORIES OF A
DARK TIME IMPRISONED
IN A MADMAN'S CELLAR,
SUBJECT TO UNTHINKABLE
TORMENTS.

BUT THERE ARE
MEMORIES STILL.

HUH...
WHAT HAVE
WE HERE?

NNGH...
BLOODY
NECK...

MEMORIES THAT ARE PERHAPS NOT
AS APPALLING, BUT WHICH CAN BE
EXCRUCIATINGLY PAINFUL NONETHELESS.

MEMORIES WE
WOULD CHOOSE
TO FORGET
WERE WE GIVEN
THE CHOICE.

HM...
CIRQUE DU
ROMANI?

MEMORIES THAT COULD
DESTROY US...

LADY
MECHANIKA...

"...IF WE LET THEM."

DON'T BOTHER TRYING FOR YOUR WEAPON. MY MEN ARE EXPERT SHOTS AND WILL SHOOT YOU DEAD WITHOUT HESITATION IF YOU MAKE ANY SUCH ATTEMPTS.

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.

BESIDES, I WOULD HATE TO BE ROBBED OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONVERSE WITH MY OLD ASSOCIATE, ONE LAST TIME.

I HAD A FEELING I WOULD RUN INTO YOU THIS NIGHT.

THE MOMENT I SAW THE STORY OF THE HALF-MACHINE GIRL IN THE PAPERS, I WAS CERTAIN YOU WOULD COME CALLING. YOU ARE VERY PREDICTABLE.

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME MECHANIKA. YOU LOOK WELL.



AS DO YOU.

I'M AFRAID I CANNOT SAY THE SAME FOR YOUR TASTE IN ATTIRE. I SEE IT'S AS ATROCIOUS AS EVER.

YOU ARE FORTUNATE TO SEE AT ALL, IF MEMORY SERVES.

CHARMING, AS ALWAYS.

YOU KNOW, MECHANIKA, I NEVER IMAGINED YOU WOULD MAKE MUCH OF YOURSELF SINCE WE PARTED WAYS.

I HALF EXPECTED TO SOMEDAY FIND YOU WORKING AS SOME FREAK SIDE ATTRACTION IN ONE OF THOSE DREADFUL TRAVELING CIRCUSES. AN ODDITY FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO GAWK AT IN AMUSEMENT. IT WOULD NOT HAVE SHOCKED ME IN THE LEAST IF YOU HAD.

SORRY TO DISAPPOINT.

YES WELL, THAT BEING SAID, I AM OBVIOUSLY VERY SURPRISED AND EXTREMELY IMPRESSED BY ALL YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED. WORD IS SOME OF YOUR EXPLOITS HAVE EVEN BECOME LEGEND, WELL DONE.

THANK YOU.

A FAR CRY FROM THAT FRIGHTENED LITTLE BRAT I REMEMBER, ALWAYS NIPPING AT MY HEELS.

NEVERTHELESS, YOU HAVE MANAGED TO MAKE QUITE A RESPECTABLE NAME FOR YOURSELF.

THE RENOWNED LADY MECHANIKA, ENGLAND'S ELEGANT AND VIRTUOUS HEROINE, "GIVING A TOUCH OF BRITISH CLASS TO THE OTHERWISE UNCIVILIZED MASSES." IS THAT NOT WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU?

OF COURSE, YOU AND I BOTH KNOW WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH THAT IS, DON'T WE?

I MEAN, WHAT WOULD YOUR ADORING PUBLIC THINK OF THEIR BELOVED, MECHANICAL DARLING IF THEY KNEW YOU LIKE I DO, THE REAL YOU?

WOULD THEY STILL HOLD YOU IN SUCH HIGH REVERENCE IF THEY DID? I THINK NOT.

WHAT OF YOUR TIME SPENT BEHIND THESE WALLS? I AM CERTAIN THEY WOULD BE APPALLED KNOWING EVEN THAT MINOR TIDBIT OF YOUR UNSAVORY PAST, LET ALONE THE ENTIRE LOT OF YOUR SECRETS THAT I AM PRIVY TO.

RATHER FITTING, DON'T YOU THINK? THAT WE SHOULD MEET HERE AGAIN, OF ALL PLACES. HERE, IN THE VERY INSTITUTION WHERE OUR LONG ASSOCIATION FIRST BEGAN ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

DO YOU REMEMBER, MECHANIKA?

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR CELL?

DO YOU REMEMBER BEING LOCKED AWAY IN HERE, YOUR UNHEEDED CRIES ECHOING THROUGH THE HALLS NIGHT AFTER NIGHT?

AND DO YOU REMEMBER HOW IT WAS I THAT SAVED YOU FROM AN ETERNITY OF TORMENT? HOW I STOLE YOU AWAY FROM THIS MISERABLE PLACE?

HOW I TOOK YOU UNDER MY WING AND TAUGHT YOU THE WAYS OF THE WORLD?

ANY SEMBLANCE OF RESPECTABILITY YOU CURRENTLY ENJOY WAS UNQUESTIONABLY DUE TO MY HAND.

I MADE YOU MECHANIKA.

IT MUST TROUBLE YOU DEEPLY TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE FOREVER *BEHOLDEN* TO ME.

OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN IT ALL, FORGOTTEN YOUR PAST...

...FORGOTTEN THESE HALLS...

...FORGOTTEN ME AND ALL THAT I EVER DID FOR YOU?

OH, I REMEMBER.

I REMEMBER IT ALL. THAT AND A GOOD MANY OTHER THINGS, KATHERINE.

IT'S *COMMANDER!*

PARDON?



IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO ME FURTHER, YOU WILL ADDRESS ME AS COMMANDER WINTER. DO NOT USE THE FAMILIAR, *EVER!* YOU HAVE LONG SINCE LOST THAT PRIVILEGE.

AS YOU WISH.

I NOTICE YOU SPORT BLACKPOOL'S BRAND NOW.

INDEED.

TELL ME, *COMMANDER WINTER*, HAVE YOU COME TO FETCH AND HEEL AT YOUR NEW LORD AND MASTER'S COMMAND?

WATCH YOUR TONGUE, MECHANIKA.

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT I HAVE NEVER, NOR WILL I EVER, SERVE ANY MASTER.

LORD BLACKPOOL AND I SHARE A COMMON INTEREST. ONE WHICH I AM MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT.

AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE?

WHY, YOU, OF COURSE.

SO, BLACKPOOL HAS INTENTIONS ON ME STILL. PERHAPS I DID NOT MAKE MY FEELINGS APPARENT ENOUGH WHEN HE AND I LAST MET. I SHALL HAVE TO BE MORE *INSISTENT* WHEN I SPEAK TO HIM NEXT.



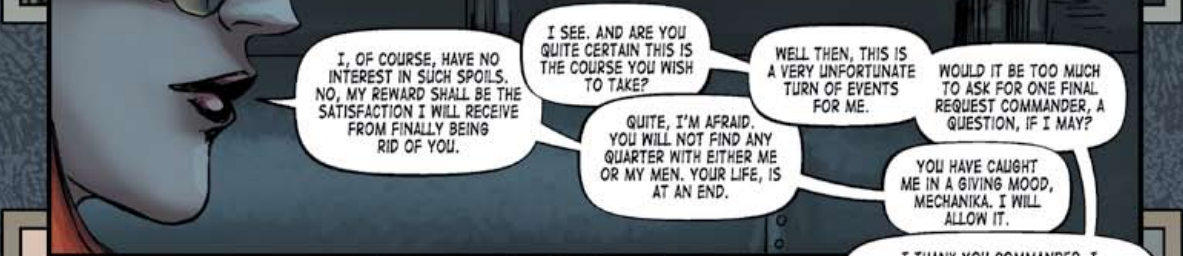
SURELY COMMANDER, YOU MUST REALIZE IT WILL BE QUITE THE TASK IF YOU HAVE ANY INTENT ON MY CAPTURE?

LORD BLACKPOOL IS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN YOUR *CAPTURE*, AT LEAST, NOT ALIVE.

HE WANTS YOU DEAD, AN OBJECTIVE WITH WHICH I AM IN FULL ACCORD.

IN FACT, HE HAS PLACED A VERY HEFTY SUM ON YOUR HEAD. SO MUCH SO THAT BY MORNING THESE MEN WILL ALL BE INCREDIBLY WEALTHY.

I'M AFRAID I MAY HAVE GIVEN YOU THE WRONG IMPRESSION, MECHANIKA.



I, OF COURSE, HAVE NO INTEREST IN SUCH SPOILS. NO, MY REWARD SHALL BE THE SATISFACTION I WILL RECEIVE FROM FINALLY BEING RID OF YOU.

I SEE. AND ARE YOU QUITE CERTAIN THIS IS THE COURSE YOU WISH TO TAKE?

WELL THEN, THIS IS A VERY UNFORTUNATE TURN OF EVENTS FOR ME.

WOULD IT BE TOO MUCH TO ASK FOR ONE FINAL REQUEST COMMANDER, A QUESTION, IF I MAY?

QUITE, I'M AFRAID YOU WILL NOT FIND ANY QUARTER WITH EITHER ME OR MY MEN. YOUR LIFE, IS AT AN END.

YOU HAVE CAUGHT ME IN A GIVING MOOD, MECHANIKA. I WILL ALLOW IT.



HOW ARE LORD AND LADY WINTER DOING?

I THANK YOU COMMANDER. I WAS CURIOUS AND WOULD APPRECIATE IT IMMENSELY IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO ANSWER ONE SIMPLE QUESTION.

WHAT?!

YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER, KATHERINE, HOW ARE THEY? FOR THAT MATTER, HOW IS YOUR SISTER MARGARET?

HOW DARE YOU, YOU MISERABLE SERF!

YOU SPEAK OF MY UNSAVORY PAST, PERHAPS YOUR MEN WOULD BE INTERESTED IN A BIT OF YOURS.



I WILL PERSONALLY RIP THAT INSOLENT TONGUE RIGHT OUT OF YOUR BLOODY HEA--

**BLAM
BLAM BLAM
BLAM**



NONONO...
HUH?!

SHINK
SHINK
SHINK



...NOOO!

BLAM

AAAW!

SHIT



THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD ARGUE YOU DESERVE THE SAME FATE AS YOUR MEN.



KATHERINE, A WORD?

HUNGH!

BLAM

SHIPT



I DISAGREE.

CHLKT



FOR ALL YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS.

PNG
KENG



FOR ALL YOUR BETRAYALS.

TLAK

FOR DALLAS.

YOU DESERVE A FATE FAR WORSE THAN DEATH.

OH SHUT UP SHUT UP! JUST SHOOT ME... ~~SHN&C~~ BE DONE WITH IT! RID ME OF YOUR INCESSANT DRONE.

I WOULD LOVE NOTHING MORE THAN TO OBLIGE YOU, KATHERINE. HOWEVER...

...I DO REMEMBER MY TIME IN THE MINISTRY. I WAS TRAPPED HERE, TORTURED DAILY, NO CHANCE OF ESCAPE. BUT THEN YOU CAME, RELEASED ME FROM THAT HELL.

YOU WERE MY SAVIOR. MY ONLY FRIEND, MY SISTER, THE CLOSEST THING TO FAMILY I HAD EVER KNOWN.

YES, YES... NGH... AND YOU WERE NOTHING MORE THAN A WRETCHED URCHIN I REGRET EVER TAKING PITY ON.

I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU TO ROT IN YOUR HOLE!

I WAS BLIND TO THE PERSON YOU REALLY ARE, KATHERINE. I BELIEVED YOUR LIES. BUT YOU ARE RIGHT, I AM INDEBTED TO YOU. YOU DID SAVE ME FROM THESE HALLS.

YOU GAVE ME A LIFE. NOW IN RETURN I SPARE YOU YOURS. A LIFE FOR A LIFE. I AM INDEBTED TO YOU NO MORE. MY DEBT IS PAID IN FULL.

YOU, HOWEVER--

DEAD!

THEY'RE ALL DEAD! ALL OF THEM, THE ENTIRE SQUADRON...

WHAT THE DEVIL ~~SHN&C~~ ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?

DEVIL! IT WAS THE DEVIL, LUCIFER HIMSELF! IT MUST HAVE BEEN! NO MAN COULD HAVE DONE WHAT HE DID... HE... HE KILLED... HE KILLED THEM ALL!

TROOPER! CONTROL YOURSELF! ~~SHN&C~~ WHAT ARE YOU BLABBERING ABOUT?