The machine had been invented a few years ago: a machine that could tell, from just a sample of your blood, how you were going to die. It didn't give you the date and it didn't give you specifics. It just spat out a sliver of paper upon which were printed, in careful block letters, the words "DROWNED" or "CANCER" or "OLD AGE" or "CHOKED ON A HANDFUL OF POPCORN." It let people know how they were going to die.
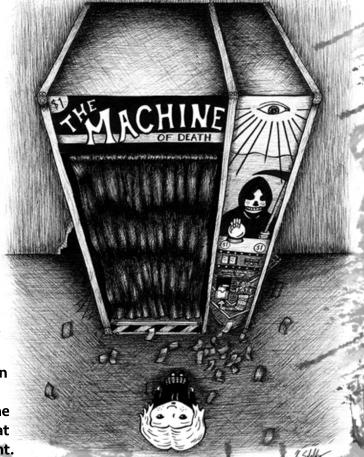
The problem with the machine is that nobody really knew how it worked, which wouldn't actually have been that much of a prob- lem if the machine worked as well as we wished it would. But the machine was frustratingly vague in its predictions: dark, and seem- ingly delighting in the ambiguities of language. "OLD AGE," it had already turned out, could mean either dying of natural causes, or being shot by a bedridden man in a botched home invasion. The machine captured that old-world sense of irony in death: you can know how it's going to happen, but you'll still be surprised when it does.

The realization that we could now know how we were going to die had changed the world: people became at once less fearful and more afraid. There's no reason not to go skydiving if you know your sliver of paper says "BURIED ALIVE." But the realization that these predictions seemed to revel in turnabout and surprise put a damper on things. It made the predictions more sinister: yes, skydiving should be safe if you were going to be

buried alive, but what if you landed in a gravel pit? What if you were buried alive not in dirt but in some- thing else? And would being caught in a collapsing building count as being buried alive? For every possibility the machine closed, it seemed to open several more, with varying degrees of plausibility.

By that time, of course, the machine had been reverse-engineered and duplicated, its internal workings being rather simple to construct. And yes, we found out that its predictions weren't as straightforward as they seemed upon initial discovery at about the same time as everyone else did. We tested it before announcing it to the world, but testing took time—too much, since we had to wait for people to die. After four years had gone by and three people died as the machine predicted, we shipped it out the door. There were now machines in every doctor's office and in booths at the mall. You could pay someone or you could probably get it done for free, but the result was the same no matter what machine you went to. They were, at least, consistent.

- *Machine of Death,* **Introduction**

# The Assignment

## Preparing the machine of death

1) Write a noun or verb on the machine of death slip of paper in front of you. Try to be creative. Don't be afraid to throw in an advective or adverb to make things more interesting. This will be somebody's prompt. Give them something fun/radom.

2) Put the slip of paper in the machine (bowl).

3) Once all the slips are in the machine, pull out a new slip. This is the slip that the character in your story will get from the machine.

## So now you know how you're going to die...
There are two ways to approach this assignment:

1) Write a 1.5-2 page story about your experience using the machine of death. Be sure to focus on the emotions your character feels in the moments up to using the machine, the experience of waiting for the slip of paper to come out, and your responce as the paper comes out.

2) Write the 1.5-2 page story of the death of your character by the method shown on your slip of paper. Be sure to focus one the mood and tone of your story and build up to the event. Is this a tragedy or something else? Is your character accepting of their fate once they know what is coming or do they fight? What is the emotion when the end finally comes? is it fear, excitement, acceptance?

## Be sure to...

1) Show. Don't tell.
   Example:
       Telling: I was nervous as I approached the machine.
       Showing: My skin itched as a warm sweat
           built up beneath my slieves forcing the scatchy
           cotton to rub back and forth on my clammy
           wrists.

2) Engage the 5 senese.
   Be sure to focus on what your character
           - sees          - hears
           - smells        - touches
           - tastes
   These are emotional situations. All the senses should be
   in overdrive.

# RUBRIC

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Story does not take advantage of any techniques to draw the reader in right away. The excitement begins after the 3-4th sentence. | The beginning straws the reader in within the first 3-4 sentences. | A strong introduction that draws the reader in right away. *Could include:*<br>*- Begin in medias res*<br>*- Engage one of the 5 senses*<br>*- Use an eye catching statement*<br>*- Us strong figurative language.* |
| **Tone/Mood** | Tone and mood seem inconsistent throughout the story. No clear direction is present. | Tone is clear with minor inconsistencies here and there. | There is a clear tone/mood in the story, which is enhanced by the descriptions, writing style and behavior/thoughts of the character. |
| **Descriptive/ Figurative Language/** | Story is telling not showing with minimal figurative language. | Some figurative language is present. | Writing engages the 5 senses and uses figurative language: *metaphors, similes, etc.* consistently throughout the story. |
| **Originality and Creativity** | Story shows minimal problem solving and creativity within the prompt. Clichés are present. | Story shows some problem solving and unique choices by the author. Some cliché's are present. | Story avoids cliché's and takes the prompt in a unique direction that shows thought and problem solving. |
| **Story Structure** | Story neglects to set up the characters and conflict. It does not follow any story arc. | Story sets up the characters and conflict early. The story arc is mostly clear with maybe one-two missing parts. | Story sets up the characters and conflict early. It has a clear beginning, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion. |
| **Grammar and Spelling** | Errors distract from the reading of the story. Paragraphs may be missing or dialogue may not be divided when a new speaker joins in. | Some errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation. Errors do not distract from reading the story. | Few or no errors in grammar and spelling. *Paragraphs are in place and dialogue (if there is any) is separated properly.* |

**Comments:**                                                                          **/18**