

Lunch with Jason King



Short stories & bedtime tales from the past, present & future of the Digital Age

by Nick Wray

"Dark & creepy, sexy and funny - a cult classic in the making..."

'Machines for Singing' by Nick Wray

[More free stories here at www.lunchwithjasonking.com](http://www.lunchwithjasonking.com)

Machines for Singing

By Nick Wray



A free short sample story from
“**Lunch with Jason**” – Nick Wray’s short stories from where people and politics
meet digital...

[More free stories here at www.lunchwithjasonking.com](http://www.lunchwithjasonking.com)

This file may be shared with other users for non-commercial use subject to the following conditions 1). This document remains unchanged in any way; 2). The Author, Nick Wray, is attributed at all times as the creator of this work, and 3). it’s source – ‘**Lunch with Jason King**’ by **Nick Wray** and the web address above – is fully and clearly attributed in any use.

Machines for Singing

"Mr Turing? Dead? Dead! What on earth are you talking about, Inspector? He can't be – I was only just talking to him!"

"Come and have a look for yourself, Mrs...?"

"Mrs Clayton. I'm Mr T – Mr Turing's – housekeeper." A sickly sweetness hung in the air then the policeman threw back the bedroom curtains. Mrs Clayton stifled her gasp.

"If you ask me he's done it to himself. Good riddance, too, I say. Bloody poofdah." A drop of spittle flew from the policeman's mouth and landed on the face of the corpse seated in a chair. It was all she could do not to hit the brute.

"You should be ashamed of yourself!"

"As should he! And what's all this, I see? A sausage, too? How the other half lives, eh? One rule for them, Mrs Clayton? He'll not be wanting that now, though, will he? Don't mind if I do?" The policeman grabbed a bite from the sausage on the plate, pointing his chin exaggeratedly at the housekeeper as he chewed.

"Leave that alone. Have you no shame?"

"Shame? Shame? Don't talk to me about shame! What did conchies like Turing, pansies like him, do in the War? While we was fighting tooth and nail for our country? Eh? Answer me that? Mrs Clayton?"

"I'm sure he did his bit, whatever that was. We all did, I dare say, didn't we, Inspector?"

"It's *Sergeant*. Sergeant Burrell. Risked body and soul I did." He knew by the way Mrs Clayton was averting her stare that she had already spotted his false leg. For a moment, he was back at the nick, where the young coppers sniggered at his limp behind his back.

Then the soothing balm of music swelled from the gramophone. The same record, it seemed to Mrs Clayton, that had been playing from within the bedroom for days now.

"And I would have been an Inspector by now. If it hadn't been for the war." The phantom pain of the Sergeant's missing limb surged, as it often did, as though angrily agreeing with him.

"Mr Turing was a lovely man, just a bit, a bit different, I suppose. Like boffins are, God rest his soul. Could I... could I at least cover him up? It's awful. Not forty-two, I ask you? *Forty-two*. Such beautiful blue eyes, too. Still looks like he's smiling. Perhaps I might just brush his hair...?"

"No need to worry about that now, Mrs Clayton. Dead as a door nail. Been like that for days, too. No question."

"What are you talking about? I told you. I was only just talking to him!"

"Talking to yourself, more like?"

"How dare you! I tell you, I was talking to him just before you arrived."

"See them black marks round his lips?: *cyanide*. Saw it in Germany. Towards the end. And whatever his poison," the sergeant poked a finger towards the body in the chair, "he's been dead for days!"

"I told you, I was talking to him just before you arrived, you horrible, stupid man!"

"In which case, Mrs Clayton, perhaps you'd better tell me all about that, then? From the beginning...?"

*

"Tea for Two, it's just me and you..."

Mrs Clayton, was singing to herself as, for the third time, she knocked on Mr Turing's bedroom door.

"... I don't know, milk left to spoil on the steps, newspapers crammed into the front door." Again, she knocked on the bedroom door. Mr T was often distracted. And anyway, he probably couldn't hear her above the soaring music coming from the room.

"What you need is an hourly, Mr Turing, not a daily," she said, raising her voice to be heard through the heavy wooden door.

"Mr Turing? Mr Turing? Are you in? I've got something rather special for you." Mrs Clayton balanced the heavy tray with one hand as she grasped the cold brass door handle.

"Ohhh!" As she jumped, the plate of precious food started to slide from the tray she was carrying.

"It's only static, Mrs T", a voice from inside the room called out.

"Static indeed", she muttered. 'Static': from the 'ether', her carpets, even, he said. *Her carpets?* Nothing wrong with her cleaning, she always told him! More likely from all the infernal machines, wires, chemicals and whatnots in Mr T's bedroom she said. 'Static, I ask you?' Nearly cost Mr T his egg! She re-balanced the tray, carefully opened the bedroom door.

"Mr T! It's like the Black Hole of Calcutta, in here. I don't know; hiding in the dark. Why haven't you opened the curtains? I can barely see one foot in front of the other."

"Mrs Clayton. I'm s-s-sorry. I got distracted."

"As per usual, Mr T. What would you do without me? First things first; where shall I put your tea?"

"Over on the sideboard for now, Mrs Clayton, please. Thank you."

"Sideboard? Sideboard, you say? I can barely see the nose in front of my face. Someone will do themselves an injury. Honestly, it's worse than the Black Out, it is, what

with all your electricals and what-not all over the shop. Please, Mr T, let me open the curtains and do a quick tidy?"

"Not just now, Mrs Clayton."

"Are you not feeling yourself, Mr T? Is that it? I've a nice egg for you."

"C-c-can eggs be 'nice', Mrs Clayton?"

"You and your questions Mr T! It's enough to give me one of my migraines. More to the point. Not only an egg, Mr T. You've got a whole sausage to yourself, too. How about that? The butcher let me have one, under the counter, like. Nine years, *nine!* I ask you, since the end of war. And we've still got rationing. What was it all for, Mr Turing? Though I wouldn't be surprised if it passed you by unnoticed, at the time?"

"Sorry, Mrs Clayton? Did you say something. My hearing's playing up."

"I'm not surprised with you playing that record again and again all day, not that it's any business of mine. You'll end up borrowing my hearing aid, if you're not careful. The war did that for me, too."

"Did you post those papers for me, Mrs Clayton? I've left them in the usual place. Under the paperweight."

"That thing, that gives me the screaming habdabs, Mr T."

"It's not real, Mrs Clayton."

"It's a human skull."

"*Human*, Mrs Clayton? It's made of ivory. It's called a *memento mori*."

"That's as maybe, but first things first, Mr T. Your tea?"

"Leave it by the window, Mrs Clayton."

"By your thingamabob?"

"It's called a computer, Mrs Clayton."

"Must cost a fortune in electricity, that thing!" The housekeeper stared at the humming box, glowing eerily in the corner, then began to carefully pick her way between the gadgets and goodness knows what else strewn everywhere.

"Ouch, oh Mr T. I've trodden on something, sharp! Please, can't we open the curtains? It's stifling, in here, too. And, if you don't mind me saying, it's getting a bit pongy. Let me open the windows, Mr T?"

"All in good time, Mrs Clayton. All in good time. I-I-I'd just like to listen to my music, for a little while longer."

"All right for some, Mr T! Some of us have work to do! Still, I must admit it, this one's got a very pretty voice I must say."

"Mezzo-soprano."

"Come again?"

"Half-soprano. A bit of one thing, a bit of another."

"Who is she, Mr T?"

"Mrs Clayton?"

"The woman singing?" The voice from the gramophone soared again.

"Why are you giggling, Mr Turing?"

"I-I-I'm sorry Mrs Clayton. It's not a woman. It's a man. *He's* singing a piece called 'L-L-Lascia Ch'io Pianga'. By Handel. It was written for Castrati."

"Castrati? What's a Castrati when it's at home, Mr T?"

"*Castrati* is the plural. The singular is *a* 'castrato', Mrs Clayton."

"You say Tomato, I say 'To-mate-oh?"

The housekeeper sang above the soaring tones of the gramophone for a moment.

" 'Castrati-Castrato, Castrati-Castrato, let's call the whole thing off?"

All the same to me, Mr T, I'm sure. By the way, are you expecting anyone? Visitors? I saw someone lurking outside in a big car when I arrived. I hope you haven't been getting into trouble, again?"

"I think I'm free of all that, now, Mrs Clayton. I've changed." The music playing from the gramophone seemed to rise and fill the room.

"I wish I could sing like that, Mr T."

"'Machines for singing'."

"Come again, Mr Turing?"

"*Castrati*. They were described, in their time, as 'machines for singing'?"

"Were they indeed?"

"Young men had their testicles removed before puberty..."

"Mr T!"

"...purely to retain their youthful tone. Their 'true' voice? That was their purpose; 'machines for singing'".

"I don't know about that, Mr T, but I know we need to shed some light on the situation?"

"N-n-no, please don't open the curtain, not yet, M-M-Mrs Clayton."

"Please yourself, but your tea's over here getting cold. A sausage, too, in case you didn't hear me the first time."

"I had an apple earlier."

"An apple? That's not enough to keep body and soul together. "Are you laughing, Mr T?"

"No, Mrs Clayton."

"When my son was your age he'd have been tucking away at his suet pudding and spotted dick. God rest his soul. Go on. Have something to eat, Mr T. Please? Might make you feel like going for a run, again? An apple's not enough to fill a grown man. You are laughing!"

"I'm sorry, Mrs Clayton. A *man*, you say? Can a man have breasts?"

"Sorry, Mr T?"

"*Gynecomastia*?"

"You what?"

"Gynecomastia – artificially induced breast growth. The chemicals, the hormones, I had to take – my punishment – 'chemical castration' it's called – have resulted in me growing breasts. You must have noticed?" A guilty pause followed before Mrs Clayton spoke.

"Don't know if I have Mr Turing! Not that it bothers me. Even if I had. I don't know what the world's coming to! Live and let live, my husband used to say. It's wicked if you ask me."

"It was that or prison. And this way at least I can continue my work." There was a break in the music from the gramophone filled only by the background thrumming of Mr T's machine.

"It's a crime what they've done to you, Mr T." Then the gramophone started playing again.

"Mrs Clayton?"

"Yes, Mr Turing?"

"What would you say is the difference, between a recording of someone singing on say a g-g-gramophone and the real thing?"

"The questions you ask, Mr Turing!"

"Tell me, please. It's important. What do you think?"

"Well... I suppose a gramophone only plays the same thing, again-and-again, for one?"

"True. So, your thesis is that a gramophone can only encode and replay data Mrs C?"

"Mr T, I've no idea what you're talking about!"

"H-h-how about this then: you call me 'Mr T', yes?"

"It's your name, isn't it, Mr Turing?"

"Is it? Which one?"

"Why are you laughing, again? Oh, I see what you mean, 'Mr T' – or should I say, '*Mr Turing*'?"

"Exactly! 'T' can represent me – refer to 'me' – in symbolic form. 'Mr T' and 'Mr Turing' are equivalent, are they not? One represents and encodes the other. What if we could create a machine that could do that?" For a moment, the only sound in the room was the scratching of the gramophone needle followed by white noise as the stylus came to the end of the shellac track. Then, automatically, the arm lifted back to the beginning, of the LP and the Castrato started to sing once again.

"Mr T, I've cleaning to do – not least the mess in here and..."

"Take a player piano, for example, Mrs Clayton?". A machine that creates music from the code that it is given? A programme, in this c-c-case, in the form of perforated sheet music.

"My husband certainly used to love a good sing-song, in the pubs, round New Street, by the Bull Ring? When City won."

"Exactly! Phil – your husband – could, could be viewed as a biological machine for synthesising songs, from some instruction, or 'code' he'd been fed, could he not?" Mrs Clayton bit her lip.

"Mrs Clayton?"

"My husband was a bit more than that Mr Turing. And miss him, I do. Singing and all. Shame them U-Boats didn't see it that way That bloody war. A husband and a son."

"My point, Mrs Clayton, is that you can re-represent something – encode it, if you will – in any other machine."

"It's all gobbledegook to me, Mr T. Black Magic, if you ask me."

"P-p-perhaps that's all Black Magic is? 'Code' that we don't understand? Take all the gadgets we have from the war? Just a hundred years ago wouldn't, say, a television set have been something 'magical'?"

"It was marvellous watching the Coronation round my sister's. Sixty Guineas Six Shillings and Sixpence – they spent on that set! Six months wages. On the never-never of course. Typical! But it was spellbinding, Mr T!"

"'Magical', then? Even though you knew it wasn't the real thing?"

"But it was real. It was 'live' from Westminster Abbey."

"So, what's the difference? What is the difference between what's 'real' – what's 'live', as you say – and what isn't, Mrs Clayton?"

"Well... Well, for one, it was black and white."

"Black and white, indeed. I fear limited bandwidth is always going to be a problem."

"If you say so, Mr T."

"Anything else, Mrs Clayton?" For a moment, the needle on the record player stuck in a groove, repeating a refrain, before the needle jumped clear and continued its journey.

"So, Mrs Clayton. My question is this: If I have breasts; if my outer form changes, am I still 'me'?"

"Mr T!"

"W-w-well, am I?"

"Of course you are. You just, you're just not quite yourself, are you?"

"And my voice? You must have noticed that's changed, too."

"It's a little bit higher, perhaps. But then that's just them hormones, too, is it? That and all the fug in here. Now if you'll let me open the curtains and air this room and..."

"Please. Mrs Clayton. It's i-i-important to me. In your opinion, am I still me?" For almost the first time, Mrs Clayton heard something sad breaking into his voice.

"Of course you are, Alan! Sorry, I mean, Mr T..."

"Thank you, Mrs Clayton. You've helped me with a very important experiment."

"I don't know about that Mr T, but what I do know is that your tea is stone cold."

*

"And that, Sergeant whoever you are, wasn't ten minutes ago, before you started your hammering on the door. Sticking your nose into other people's business. Ten minutes, I tell you. So he can't have been 'dead for days', can he? So put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

*

"Ten minutes...? Really, Mrs Clayton? Why not be a luv' and make us some tea?"

"Tea! Tea?"

"Yes, tea, Mrs Clayton."

"Tea? At a time like this?"

"No point crying over spilt milk, is there, Mrs C?"

"I'm Mrs Clayton to you, if you don't mind."

"You run off, now. I need to have a proper look around here, *Mrs Clayton*. Might be a bit upsetting, for you, dearie?"

"Don't 'dearie me'. And don't be expecting any sugar, either."

"Sweet enough as I am, Mrs Clayton. Sweet enough as I am. By the way was he expecting anyone?"

"Let me think? Oh, my memory..."

"Think, Mrs Clayton. Did he have any visitors at all this week that you know of? Anyone with a foreign accent say. Anyone at all? It's important."

"Let me think. Well... we had our normal chit-chat, yesterday..."

"Wednesday morning?"

"That's the ticket. I remember, because I brought him up his breakfast and I said, 'You haven't drunk your coffee, Mr T'. It might be ersatz, but waste not want not', I said to him."

"And were the curtains drawn, then?"

"Yes. Yes, I suppose they were, Sergeant."

"What about Wednesday afternoon?"

"Wednesday afternoon's my day off, so I don't know about that. I suppose he might have had one of his chin-wags with Mr Flowers?"

"*Flowers?* Sounds like a right pansy?"

"Mr Flowers works for the GPO, I'll have you know! Very particular, the Post Office, is, too. And what does it matter, anyway? Live and let live, I say. I'll go and make that tea. Sans sucre? Ohne zucker?"

"You what?"

“Without sweetener, Sergeant.” And I thought I was the deaf one around here.” It always surprised her, some of the words she’d picked up during the War.

“If you’ll excuse me, Sergeant.” And then, as she started down the stairs – telling herself that it must be the dust in Mr T’s room – the tears came streaming.

*

The Sergeant jumped as the high-pitched voice started to intone from the gramophone, once more. He walked over to the machine and snatched at the stylus, deliberately scratching the record.

That was better. At last. A bit of peace and quiet. Time to think. Without all that poncey music. He looked at the LP.

“‘His Master’s Voice?’” He said out loud, glancing over at the corpse with a sneer. He threw the record down carelessly and started walking round the room.

Amongst all the jumble in the untidy room there only seemed to be two small picture frames. Both next to Turing’s chair. The first, a photograph of Turing’s mother perhaps? The second a small picture of a young boy, a teenager, a bit like his son. He turned the frame round: ‘Morcom?’ Yes ‘Christopher Morcom’ it looked like? With his good leg, he hacked out viciously at the dead man’s feet.

“Poof!” He said, talking to the lifeless body. He checked over his shoulder to make sure that the bedroom door was closed then smoothed his Brylcreemed hair back into place. He was sweating in the stifling room. He’d have to call the station soon. Then Uncle Tom Cobby and all would get involved. But it was still his watch. And if he could just find some evidence that would explain what had happened. A nice juicy suicide? No loose ends? Who knew, he might still just make Inspector one day?

He looked around the room. Cables, electrical components. It was a proper madhouse. Even the housekeeper, clearly, was mad.

'What a mess some people live in', he thought, looking round the room. There were microphones, a loudspeaker, too. And some kind of what – weird binoculars? For spying on young men; on boys, even, no doubt? And wires, wires everywhere. Wires trailing to – or was it from – the heavy-looking machine sitting over on the bench by the window.

A machine made up of dozens and dozens of glowing bulbs; valves – electrical switches, amplifiers – he knew that. Hundreds and hundreds of them connected, humming in a frame, a skeleton rig, made from... No, it couldn't be? It was! It was Meccano. Talk about Heath Robinson, he thought. Meccano! More Meccano than he'd ever been able to buy for his son. Not that the boy, the young man, he had to admit, played with it these days. Where on earth had all this kit come from? Nicked from the University? Though he knew Turing hadn't been working there since his conviction. The sodomite.

So what *had* been going on? Blackmail? The *Russians*, even? This really could be his chance to get some kudos. To sing. To get the recognition of the man he really was. The Sergeant began to inspect the strange humming device on the table more closely.

Then he froze. Could it be a booby trapped? That was how it had happened. A piano, At Arnhem. A *piano* of all things. That's what made them laugh down the nick. After all the fighting in the desert and Normandy! He'd just wanted to hear some music. To remind him of home. He'd wound up the pianola they'd found in the café, then 'boom'. A grenade inside. He'd lost part of his body to a fucking player piano. Whilst Turing and his ilk were doing 'what' precisely during war? —apart from young sailors no doubt!

Cautiously, he looked more closely at the device, its glowing centre seeming to pulse in time with his quickening heartbeat. What sort of a weirdo had a thing like this in their bedroom?

"Infernal contraption." He realised he'd spoken to the machine. The heat, the smell was impossible. When was the last time the room had been aired? He turned and fiddled with the window catch, lifting hard on the heavy wooden frame.

An insect attracted by the smell flew in through the open window and entered the curious machine. Immediately its panicked wings beat from inside. It was trying to escape, tapping out an SOS from deep within the hot artificial entrails. A sound of sizzling. Then the fly's body fell blackened and dead onto the table top. The paperweight skull nearby seemed to be laughing.

It was just above the fly's body, he saw it; A PQ17. A *Philips PQ17!* The last valve his boy needed to complete the wireless set. A hobby, a project to keep his boy away from the company he was keeping.

All he needed – all they needed – was one last amplifier valve to complete the shortwave set. Then his boy could listen to all the jazz music he wanted. From the air, from the ether, without ever having to go to those dirty clubs with all the Manchester low-lives and God knows what else that hung out there. Just one last valve was all he needed to bring the whole machine to life. But could you get them? Not for blood nor money. Not even on the Black Market. Bloody rationing. Not that they were cheap, at the best of times either. Not on a *Sergeant's* salary. But someone like Turing managed to get all this lot. His tongue found a piece of gristle between his teeth and he could taste the sausage again.

"...Tea for two..."

It was Mrs Clayton coming back up the staircase.

Then the thought struck him like lightning. Who'd know if he 'borrowed' a valve? Just one. 'Liberated it' they used to say in his regiment.

He grabbed some of the sheets under the paperweight and, using them like a glove, gently grasped the hot, precious, valve in his fingers. He carefully twisted the delicate tube. Nothing happened. The paper was already smouldering and he could feel the heat burning through the sheets to his skin. He tried again, twisting harder, but still the precious component wouldn't budge. He had to let go as the burning heat grew too intense.

"...Tea for two..."

It's just me and you..."

Mrs Clayton was returning.

He didn't have long. He grabbed more sheets of paper to better protect his fingers and again took hold of the hot glass bulb, remembering first to push, then twist the valve. The machine seemed to be getting brighter. The valve was getting hotter, scorching his fingers, as though fighting back. But still it wouldn't move. Once again, he had to take his hand away. He spat his reddened fingers and waved his hand to cool in the air of through the open window.

Then he remembered. When his boy worked on his motorbike, that funny smile would play across his face as he unscrewed the bolts saying '...lefty loosey, righty tighty.'"

For the third time, he tried: snatching the last few sheets from under the paperweight he grasped it, this time pushing and twisting the valve hard *anti-clockwise*, in the opposite direction. The same way he wrung the neck of a bird for the family dinner each Christmas. It worked. As it came free the remaining components flickered for a moment,

their lightening followed by a thunderous rumble as the machine, despite its massive weight, shook on the heavy table. Then a bang then...nothing. The glow, the heat, was fading. The machine was dead. But in the smouldering bed of burnt paper in his hands he had it.

He held the prize up to the light, inspecting it. Checking for damage, making sure that the filament was still intact. Through the delicate glass lens, he noticed Turing's body, once more. Sitting in his chair, as though he'd been watching all the time. The Sergeant turned the valve first one way, then the other. Playing with the image of the dead figure. Smiling as with one turn, first, he elongated the corpse then, with another, he squashed it; left then right, Sinister then Dexter...

*

A car pulled up outside. He recognised the dangerous purr of a Jaguar. The machine favoured by senior Special Branch officers. 'No problem getting petrol coupons for *them*', he thought, wrapping the cooling valve with the last of the burnt paper and hiding it away inside his jacket pocket with a friendly pat. Special Branch? What were they doing here, he wondered? Mrs Clayton entered the room singing.

"...Tea for two...

And me and you...alone?"

"I think some of your colleagues have just arrived, *Sergeant*. Hope you don't mind... I phoned the station. Just to make sure everything was in order..."

"Don't you worry Mrs Clayton. I've done what I had to do."

"They were ever so nice when I phoned. They said you might need some help. I've left the front door open for them, I have. Oh, silly me. I forgot your tea, didn't I?"

The Sergeant turned towards Turing's body, tilting his head to one side, before turning back and grinning at the housekeeper.

"Like I say, Mrs C, love. No use crying over spilt milk – is there?" For an instant, a noise, like a hiss, seemed to come from the gramophone. But it was only the crackle of static from the speakers.

"Whatever you may think, Sergeant. He was a lovely man."

Shaking his head, the Sergeant, left the room and – clud-clud-clud – started down the stairs. He could hear the others bounding up the stairs, two at a time.

"We'll take it from here, shall we, Inspector...?"

"Sergeant. It's Sergeant Burrell."

"All very hush, hush, this is, Sergeant. Not a word to a soul, eh?"

"It's all yours. But good luck with the housekeeper, lads. You're going to need it."

The Sergeant rolled his eyes, pointed his fingers to the side of his head and pulled the imaginary trigger.

"And by the way. Whatever she says, Turing's dead. Dead as a Dodo. And he's been dead for days."

*

"T for two

And two for T

You and me

And me and you...alone?"

Mrs Clayton was in the gloaming singing quietly to herself sitting opposite Mr T's now empty chair. Rain was beating on the windows. Its rhythm reminded her of something.

It was a bit like Morse Code, she realised. What *would* Mr T, have said if he'd known, she thought smiling to herself? She a cypher clerk, and all, back then?

The body had finally been removed late that afternoon. But what on earth were they talking about? How could Mr T, Mr Turing, Alan, have been 'dead for days?' It was ridiculous! She'd been so looking forward to his birthday, too. Saving her egg ration to make a cake. Forty-two he'd have been. '15,330 days, 367,920, hours, twenty-two-million...' and goodness knows how many minutes. On and on he'd joke! But that was still *forty-two*, wasn't it? No age at all.

She rose, stiffly, and went over to the gramophone. Someone had scratched Mr T's record. It was ruined. But anyhow, it just didn't seem right to play it now.

She noticed that the bin needed emptying. Typical. Where on earth had all that scorched paper come from, though, she thought? But she was tired. She'd do it tomorrow. Something else was bothering her, too. She looked around the room her eyes resting on Mr T's paperweight. That funny skull – his *memento mori*, he called it – sitting on the naked wooden bench. Smiling at her where the thingamabob had been, before the policemen or whoever they were took it away.

But what was it Mr T had wanted her to do? Post some 'notes', some plans, or blue prints, was it, of another gadget? To Mr Flowers?: 'Just in case'...? But there was nothing under the paperweight. Had she imagined it all, like the voices?

Perhaps it was war's fault? Hour after hour, day after day, month after month for nearly six years she served as a WAAF at the 'Y' station – 'Signals to you, lassie,' they said when she joined. Day-in-day-out. One shift on, two shifts off. Listening on those horrible, heavy, noisy headphones. So loud they hurt when they burst into life. Listening for coded messages hidden in all the noise and screeches and static in the air. In a freezing cold Nissan

Hut, shivering as she remembered, as she had back then. Cold, in the middle of nowhere. Listening. Writing. Hour after hour. Not knowing where all the endless strings of numbers and letters they jotted down went. What they meant? Just a small cog in the machine. Still, she'd done her bit. She smiled to herself.

She'd sometimes wondered what Mr T must have done. Probably teaching in some school for the duration? Still, he'd probably done his bit, too – poor, unworldly, lovely man – she thought, stifling the tears as she listened to the tap-tap-tapping of the rain drumming out its secret pattern on the windows. What was it he'd said?: 'Machines for singing'! 'Whatever next!', she thought, as she began to sing again:

"T for two..."

"The Turing test, developed by Alan Turing in 1950, is a test of a machine's ability to exhibit intelligent behaviour equivalent to, or indistinguishable from, that of a human."

Wikipedia at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turing_machine

*

'Machines for Singing' by Nick Wray

[More free stories here at www.lunchwithjasonking.com](http://www.lunchwithjasonking.com)

Contact: nick@nickwray.com

Version 1.0