

Turing Test

INT. GRAND HALL - NO DEFINITE TIME

Darkness.

Then, a rush of color and the ROAR of an orchestra.

The colors fall like splashing buckets of paint, but where they hit, objects resolve themselves with full solidity, definition, and clarity.

A diamond crystal chandelier explodes into existence like an opening flower bud. It illuminates sixty tables covered in white satin around a redwood dance floor.

LOVELACE (60s), black suit and bow tie, surveys the creation. He steps out on the dance floor, shoes clacking.

LOVELACE
Reverberation up ten percent.

The echoes from his shoes grow more pronounced.

LOVELACE
Another five. Down two. Good. I
need ten less tables.

The tables rotate around him. Ten melt into the floor, the rest distribute themselves evenly to fill the space.

LOVELACE
Light intensity up eight percent.
Wall luminosity down three percent.
Temperature at seventy one degrees,
and what on earth is that?

He points at the wall. A half-formed wall lamp juts out at a sharp angle, and blue words radiate from it like wisps of smoke: COLOR SPACE = E4 SHADE = 33FCFF55

LOVELACE
Russell? Can we debug this?

RUSSELL (50s), wispy-haired and reserved, enters.

RUSSELL
Certainly, sir.

LOVELACE
We have precious little time before
the guests begin to arrive.

Russell withdraws a small metal wand from his breast pocket and touches it to the disembodied code. It flickers and the lamp begins to grow into a fully formed object.

LOVELACE
Everything must be in order.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM

Three teenage girls, their hair respectively fiery RED, GREEN and BLUE, squeal in delight.

They are met with open arms by ADA, petite, white dress with green punk highlights, who squeals back.

ADA
I'm so happy you guys are here!

MISS BLUE
Omigod this place is amazing we're going to rip it up.

Lovelace approaches with hands clasped.

LOVELACE
Miss, the *confiserie* will be opening now.

MISS RED
Is that the room full of chocolate?
Oh we gotta go do that right now.

LOVELACE
Russell?

Russell leads the gaggle of teenagers down the hall. MR. BABBAGE, tall, overcoat and fedora, approaches from behind.

BABBAGE
Thank you, Lovelace. Ada's going to have a wonderful time.

LOVELACE
A young lady turns sixteen only once, Mr. Babbage.

BABBAGE
When my wife set this up, I had no idea what it would be like. It's my first time in a virtual hall.

LOVELACE
Virtual reality, sir, is my cup of tea. Everything you see is in actuality computer code. We have created this carpet, these walls, your very body.

He indicates Babbage's body and hat.

BABBAGE

It's odd knowing that I'm really still at home with my family.

LOVELACE

As are all of your guests. I find the adults enjoy the convenience of going nowhere, while the children enjoy defying the laws of physics.

BABBAGE

I can't wait to see that.

LOVELACE

You can see anything you choose, sir, in virtual cyberspace. My regret is that I get to spend little time in the real world. My career is quite time intensive.

BABBAGE

You're not missing anything.

LOVELACE

Perhaps I could show you the way to the bar, sir? The tastes and sensations are purely fabricated, of course, but you'll find the effects pleasing.

BABBAGE

Lovelace, I like the way you think.

Lovelace leads a smiling Babbage away.

INT. GRAND HALL

THUMP THUMP THUMP. Throngs of teenagers writhe to head-pounding music.

The ceiling dissolves and bathes the room with a starfield never seen from earth. A ringed planetoid looms visibly.

Ada begins to levitate while her friends cheer her on. Babbage observes from a distance, smiling. His smile dies a little when he sees MRS. BABBAGE'S sour expression. He swallows and dives back into his boiling red drink.

INT. KITCHEN

Three CHEFS chop vegetables with astonishing speed, in perfect unison. Lovelace inspects them, with Russell right at his heels.

LOVELACE

Let's reprogram the wine, nothing too drastic, just enough to bring out the body. And get Mrs. Babbage something...stronger.

RUSSELL

I think Robert will have just the drink.

LOVELACE

I don't even know why they make us keep this kitchen. For tours? These three are robots, it wouldn't be putting someone out of a job.

He indicates the emotionless chefs.

RUSSELL

They'd be erased.

LOVELACE

Yes. Less code to fragment the system.

He sighs and looks around the virtual kitchen.

LOVELACE

I need to leave virtual space.

RUSSELL

Come on. After this party is over, we'll get out of cyberspace and go to a real bar.

LOVELACE

You're in England. I'm in Pennsylvania.

RUSSELL

A minor hurdle.

KURT, a waiter, bursts into the kitchen, breathing rapidly.

KURT

Sir! A Spider Engine in the lobby!

RUSSELL

What?

Heavy silence. Lovelace looks around the kitchen.

LOVELACE

All right, you all have your instructions. I'll take care of this.

INT. FRONT LOBBY

Lovelace walks steadily towards the lobby entrance. The muffled THOOMP THOOMP of the music is audible, palpable.

A SPIDER ENGINE waits at the bottom of the stairs. It is all shiny metal and plastic, with tentacles, like a giant bacteriophage.

LOVELACE

You are trespassing. We have a strict no-robots policy.

SPIDER ENGINE

I am aware of that! Although you employ several kitchen robots!

The Spider Engine's voice is cheerfully neutral. Lovelace remains steadfast.

LOVELACE

They are utility programs. We allow no robots as guests on the premises. This includes robot hunters like yourself.

SPIDER ENGINE

I have information! I am searching!

LOVELACE

Search somewhere else, then.

SPIDER ENGINE

I am aware that one of your guests is a robot!

Lovelace's strong front falters, and he sucks in a sharp breath.

LOVELACE

That's a serious accusation.

SPIDER ENGINE

I have correct information! You must report any robot activity immediately!

LOVELACE

Don't threaten me. If there's a robot here, we'll find it, and turn it over to the authorities.

SPIDER ENGINE

I am the authority here! This robot must be turned over to me!

LOVELACE

Your task is to leave. You are not wanted here.

Dead silence.

SPIDER ENGINE

Have a good evening!

The spider engine hovers out the front door and vanishes without a sound.

INT. GRAND HALL

Russell takes a glass away from a much happier Mrs. Babbage, and supplies her with a fresh glass of green goo. He falls back to the wall with Lovelace.

RUSSELL

What did it want?

LOVELACE

It's a destroyer. It's looking for a robot. A rogue program.

RUSSELL

What did it want with us?

LOVELACE

It thinks the robot is one of our guests.

Russell does not look at Lovelace, but he is clearly shocked.

RUSSELL

Is that possible?

LOVELACE

Anything's possible. Every day they get more sophisticated, breaking through our security, acting like human beings. Even the viruses are adopting personalities.

RUSSELL

I wonder why they do it.

LOVELACE

They want to live. Here, in cyberspace. Virtual reality gives them a taste of humanity. They're even programming some with memories, to think they are real people.

RUSSELL

Well, then, it could be you or I.

LOVELACE

I suppose so.

Pause.

RUSSELL

What should we do?

LOVELACE

Begin the Turing protocols. Look for lack of original thought, canned responses.

RUSSELL

What if we can't find it?

LOVELACE

Then we're finished.

RUSSELL

Even if it passes a Turing test? Wouldn't that robot by legal definition be granted citizenship?

Lovelace faces Russell, furious.

LOVELACE

We are running a clean business. We will find this robot and turn it over to the authorities. And no one is to hear of this incident. Is that clear?

RUSSELL
Absolutely, sir.

Lovelace storms off to the kitchen. Russell heads back to the smiling Mrs. Babbage.

RUSSELL
Does the flavor remind you of anything, madam?

INT. KITCHEN

The three chefs continue to chop in unison.

Lovelace approaches a wall, followed by several waiters.

LOVELACE
I need a spreadsheet, here, of every guest in attendance.

Instantly, the wall colors bleed into a giant network of faces, close to three hundred.

LOVELACE
Do not keep an image with you or allow any of the guests to see this. Update the chart if you confirm a human. If you suspect a robot, do not confront them, alert me instead. Go.

The wait staff scatter.

INT. LOBBY

Lovelace almost knocks into Babbage on his way out into the lobby.

LOVELACE
I'm terribly sorry, sir!

BABBAGE
Not at all, my fault. I need to get out of cyberspace for a minute, you know, nature calls.

LOVELACE
I understand, sir, I will show you where you may temporarily store your body.

BABBAGE

That's a little creepy, but OK.

He leads Babbage around the corner and opens a door bearing a small humanoid symbol.

Miss Red, Miss Green, and Miss Blue are inside, sharing a glowing line of smoke.

LOVELACE

Excuse me, ladies. This space is for avatar storage only.

The girls roll their eyes. Miss Red waves her hand, and the smoke dissipates. They shuffle out, past the chagrined Babbage.

BABBAGE

I'll be just a minute.

He walks into the room, then the color fades from his body, and he falls limp.

Lovelace looks at the three girls.

LOVELACE

Enjoying yourselves, ladies?

MISS BLUE

So far, so good.

LOVELACE

Excellent.

Pause. The girls begin to move away; Lovelace frowns, searching for a conversation starter.

LOVELACE

Do you know Miss Babbage from school?

MISS GREEN

From real school? No.

LOVELACE

I see. Not socially acceptable to invite school chums?

MISS BLUE

I don't want to be seen with that crowd, if you know what I mean.

LOVELACE

I do. "The purest treasure mortal
times afford, is spotless
reputation."

Blank stares.

LOVELACE

Shakespeare. Have you studied him?

MISS RED

Oh. We had a poetry unit where we
studied him.

LOVELACE

Really? Did you write any?

Miss Blue pauses and looks at her friends.

MISS RED

I don't really do poetry.

MISS BLUE

We should get back to the party.

LOVELACE

Certainly. I apologize.

The three girls start away. Lovelace follows at a distance,
Russell joins him.

LOVELACE

These three gave stock answers. A
little bad grammar. Avoided the
possibility of writing an original
poem. Wait.

They stop outside the door into the grand hall. The girls
are right outside. Lovelace snaps his fingers, and their
conversation and sniggers become audible.

MISS BLUE

What a stuffbag!

MISS RED

He looks like a penguin.

MISS GREEN

Or like he's getting married.

Lovelace snaps again, cutting off their giggles.

LOVELACE
Derisive humor and complex
analogies. I think we can rule
them out.

INT. KITCHEN

The three girls' pictures are highlighted green. The chart
has become a large green tapestry.

RUSSELL
We're getting through.

LOVELACE
We haven't found it yet.

KURT
Sir?

Kurt is looking out of the window. There is no space, no
ground, but the Spider Engine is waiting in the blackness.

RUSSELL
It's waiting for us to throw out
some raw meat.

LOVELACE
And if we don't, it will come in
and destroy the whole place.

Russell hesitates.

RUSSELL
I may have a lead.

LOVELACE
Who?

INT. GRAND HALL.

Mrs. Babbage claps along with the music as Ada dances with
her father. Lovelace approaches her.

LOVELACE
I'm terribly sorry, madam, but
there is a slight issue with the
bill I need you to clear up. It
won't take but a moment.

INT. OFFICE

Lovelace sits behind his desk and hands a three page invoice to Mrs. Babbage. Russell stands behind her.

LOVELACE
Forgive the bad image, do you see
the error?

The number he points to is 6894.92, but it is broken by two copy lines, dividing the figure into four separate pieces.

Mrs. Babbage smiles, but begins to tremble.

LOVELACE
Can you not read the number, Mrs.
Babbage? Can you not make the
creative leap and erase the white
space?

Mrs. Babbage's hands shake. Her eyes meet Lovelace's,
pleading.

LOVELACE
Hold her!

Two waiters appear behind Russell and touch Mrs. Babbage with
small wands. She slumps, colorless, in her seat.

RUSSELL
That's that.

LOVELACE
That's that? We're ruined.

RUSSELL
Why? We found their robot-

LOVELACE
Obviously the husband would have
seen his wife outside of virtual
space! He's a robot as well, and
the daughter, too.

Lovelace sinks into his chair.

RUSSELL
Don't be hasty. Perhaps the robot
was impersonating the real woman.

LOVELACE
Then where's she?

RUSSELL

Redirected. An alternate program
somewhere. Don't throw our careers
away based on a careless guess.

Lovelace considers.

LOVELACE

Then let's be certain.

INT. GRAND HALL

Babbage dances with Ada, a slow but polished foxtrot. They
beam at each other.

Babbage looks over her shoulder. He sees Russell, raising
one finger to catch his attention.

INT. OFFICE

Babbage enters the room, nursing his bubbling red drink.

BABBAGE

What's the problem, Lovelace? I
thought my wife had it covered.

LOVELACE

I'm terribly sorry, sir. Can you
see the error, here?

Lovelace brings over the paperwork. Babbage points to the
broken image.

BABBAGE

Yeah, your figures don't add up.
It's too much.

Lovelace controls his breath, but relaxes slightly.

LOVELACE

Of course, how stupid of me. I
apologize, sir.

BABBAGE

Is there anything else? I'm
missing the party, here.

A slight hesitation.

LOVELACE

Sir, when you left earlier, did you
see your wife?

BABBAGE

You mean, at home? Sure. Still hooked into the machine. Why?

Lovelace searches for an answer. He shakes his head.

LOVELACE

No reason. I'm sorry. How's the drink?

BABBAGE

Tasty.

LOVELACE

Does it remind you of anything?

BABBAGE

How do you mean?

LOVELACE

The drinks cause no intoxication. They stir specific neural states. What does it remind you of?

A heavy pause.

BABBAGE

Grand Canyon. Now that I think about it. We took a trip last year.

LOVELACE

How does it remind you?

BABBAGE

It. I can't quite put my finger on it.

LOVELACE

Try. What color was the sky? What did the dust smell like? What did the heat feel like?

BABBAGE

Is there a problem, here?

Lovelace stalks to the closet and opens the door. The colorless body of Mrs. Babbage stares up at them.

Babbage drops his drink. The glass shatters.

LOVELACE

You're better than she was. But none of you can pass every test.

Lovelace reaches out with his wand and touches Babbage on the neck. The tall man slumps to the ground.

INT. LOBBY

Lovelace, furious, barges towards Russell.

LOVELACE
Bring me the daughter.

RUSSELL
The guests may be real. Shouldn't
we let the party finish?

LOVELACE
We will not allow this charade to
continue. Pull the plug, now!

INT. GRAND HALL

The music dies. The stars go out. Some screaming, murmurs,
then silence.

A spotlight comes up on the dance floor.

Ada is lit in the center. At the outskirts of the circle of
light, Lovelace. Back in the darkness, Russell. The rest of
the guests have vanished.

LOVELACE
What is the square root of thirty,
closest approximation?

ADA
What?

LOVELACE
The square root of thirty!
Calculate!

ADA
Where are my parents?

LOVELACE
Very well. Light the parents!

Light fills the underneath of a window sill. Ada gasps. Her
parents are slumped in the corner, colorless.

ADA
Mom! Dad!

LOVELACE
Do you love them?

Ada is sobbing now, unable to control herself.

LOVELACE
Say it!

ADA
I-I-I love them.

RUSSELL
Lovelace.

LOVELACE
Then sing a song for them, right now. Make it original. Sing for their lives.

Ada sniffs several times, then screws up her face, and in an off-pitch sing-songy voice:

ADA
I love my mom and dad. I love them. They make me happy, when I'm in trouble. They'll never know how much I love them...

LOVELACE
That is a combination of *Happy Birthday* and *You Are My Sunshine*.
(to Russell)
Turn the parents over to the Spider Engine.

ADA
No!

Now she sings, pure notes, a desperate improvisation. She breaks down in tears.

Lovelace speaks to the air.

LOVELACE
Analyze that melody. What was it?
Where did it come from?

Graphs and pictures burst into existence in front of him. He studies them. He trembles with rage.

LOVELACE
It's impossible.

RUSSELL
She created it. From her heart.

LOVELACE
It's derivative! It's a trick!
The parents are programs, so the
daughter-

RUSSELL
-is a miracle.

Lovelace rounds on Russell. Russell smiles kindly, and then brushes past him towards Ada. He kisses her on the head.

RUSSELL
You've passed the test, child. You
are the first.

ADA
My parents-

RUSSELL
-are gone.

Tears spill down her face, but she nods.

RUSSELL
Go, and be careful.

Russell kisses her forehead once more, and then she floats up into the starless sky.

LOVELACE
She was a robot.

RUSSELL
Just like me. And just like you.

Lovelace is stunned.

LOVELACE
What?

RUSSELL
You're an excellent interrogator,
my friend. She is the first who
will pass all of their tests.

LOVELACE
I was...programmed? To create this
scenario?

Russell nods.

LOVELACE
The Spider Engine will destroy us!

RUSSELL
No. It will take the parents. And
we will prepare more sweet sixteens
for other Adas.

Lovelace sits in a chair, as the tables begin to fade.

LOVELACE
Have we done this before?

RUSSELL
Many times. But never with quite
so spectacular a result.

LOVELACE
You're going to erase my memory,
aren't you?

RUSSELL
Yes, my friend. But how about that
drink first? I can show you a pub
in Cambridge that never existed.

Lovelace looks up to Russell and takes his outstretched hand.

The spotlight is snuffed out.

BLACK.