

THE OBAMATRON

By Andrew Geddis

Dedicated to a Great Man
and to all of my friends.
Aliquid Dominae

It is the year 2022 and the Democratic Party presidential primaries for the election in 2024 have begun and are off at a furious pace. The economy is in the tank, there are two expensive, tragic wars that threaten the political stability of every nation on the planet, corruption is rampant and Wall Street robber barons are causing the financial foundations of the nation and the world at large to shudder and quake in a way that truly seems to bode ill for the fragile new global economy. The people are sick of all the uncertainty and skullduggery and find no relief when Dubya is quoted in the press as saying such things as, “If you've retired, you don't have anything to worry about. The third time I've said that. I'll probably say it three more times, see, in my line of work you gotta keep repeating things over and over and over again for the truth to sink in, to kinda catapult the propaganda! Heh Heh Heh.” Some even believe that the poisoned atmosphere in Washington has taken on a spectral tone as there are whispered reports and quiet rumors that unaccompanied members of the staff have seen the apparition of that titan of Yorba Linda

stalking the empty corridors of the White House late at night muttering to himself, “Who’s doing this to me? Who’s doing this to me?!”

Desperate for change and dying for hope the people are clamoring for a leader who can direct them out of this dark, dense forest of despair. The candidates all seem to be playing the same old political tunes of promises, promises, promises that are sure to be broken and making pledges of honesty and sincerity to an audience that at this point is frustrated beyond measure and raging to the point of rebellion. They spend all of their time bickering with each other, blaming the other party and behaving as if they have no faults at all.

Into this spectacle of political farce steps Dr. Robert Jay Finkbyner, chair of the computer sciences department at Johns Hopkins University. He has spent the last decade passionately researching artificial intelligence and working on the perfect machine. At a symposium at the university he unveils his masterpiece, the most sophisticated super computer ever created. It can speak and comprehend all the languages of the world from beyond the inception of writing all the way through to the present moment. It knows everything about history, philosophy, and math; and astronomy, physics and biology; literature, music and art; everything about political science, economics, and psychology; in short, everything about everything known to man. As he prepares to pull the veil from off of the machine, he declares, with a voice full of confidence and pride, “I present to you now the most significant scientific development of all time, a machine that is the culmination

of every industrial and technological advancement in the history of our world, a machine that will grow, mature and develop at a pace and level unrivaled in all of science, a machine that promises a better day for every man, woman and child, no matter where they may live, a machine that will revolutionize the political arena and benefit everyone in a way that no machine has ever been able to do throughout all the countless ages of our existence, a machine that I call with love and affection THE OBAMATRON 1050!!” Woosh! The stunned audience gasps in amazement as the machine, far from appearing like a machine, looks exactly like Barak Obama with the singular exception that the pupils of his eyes have a pulsing, deep red, luminescent glow. The hushed silence of the hall is broken only when The Obamatron throws its arms up into the air with a victory sign in the style of Richard Nixon and declares, in a cold and mechanical voice, “Vote Robot!”

Dr. Finkbyner goes on to declare that his machine is perfect. It is not subject to corruption, fatigue or any human foible. It will work tirelessly to correct every fault and injustice within its ken. It will not rest until there is perfect harmony within the Union and it will do so in a speedy and efficient manner. As he declares that he intends to run the computer in the race for the Democratic nomination the crowd erupts in thunderous applause and overwhelming approval. In a remarkable set of developments, because the public demand, outpouring and enthusiasm were so great, Congress passes the necessary amendment as fast as they can and Dr. Finkbyner’s machine soon gains access to a

principle debate where he thrills the audience and humiliates all of the other candidates. After a grueling and bitter campaign in which The Obamatron, without question, annihilates all of the competition, astonishingly, it wins the Democratic nomination for the Presidency of The United States and it seems, for the moment, that the country is off in a new direction; a direction that could lead, potentially, hopefully, to something resembling competent governance, where the wishes of the people are truly taken into consideration and their interests are defended without delay or contempt, where no war is launched based on the desire of a few greedy old men hell bent on sowing the world with confusion, horror and unspeakable destruction, where justice is realized and innocence upheld, something one might call, in a perfect world, national salvation.

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Now the important thing to remember regarding The Obamatron 1050 is that its power source is a very small nuclear reactor, about the size of a human heart, located in the center of its chest. The radioactive alloy is a composite of plutonium, uranium and the newly forged *crominium* all of which, together, give it the ability to produce a sufficient amount of energy for a period of 7 times 10 to the 127th power years. In fact, The Obamatron's construction is so remarkable that it can remain operational throughout the the entire lifetime of its power source, a fact that has

endeared it to so many of its potential constituents. Needless to say, the people of the United States are so impressed with the performance of this machine that in the election they are almost falling over each other to vote for it and do so in an unprecedented landslide. It is also important to remember that in the year 2024 there exists a technological universality that has ensconced itself into every aspect of life. The internet has become ubiquitous and it really is impossible to do anything without being in some way *connected* to it, especially in the developed world. Even in the third world its influence and need can not be escaped. For example, grain shipments to India from the U.S. and Australia are arranged, monitored and remunerated for over the internet; the vessels moving the grain are piloted automatically by computer; unloading of the cargo is also done automatically by robots and cranes operating in a mindless automaton like fashion. In the first world this development is seen as a victory of man's ingenuity over the elements of nature and in the third world it is in a sense mythical, really *worshipped*, as the saying goes, "Not even Shiva himself, with that contemplative gaze, is as aware of every thought in my mind and movement of my heart as that omnipresent and ever wakeful Great Sage of The Net, The Spinner of The Web."

Having ascended to the Presidency, the first act The Obamatron performs is to connect itself to *The Grid*. All official acts it needs to do are done wirelessly. Military commands are given this way as are political directives and scheduling concerns, all measured in microseconds. He calls every major world leader, simultaneously, and assures

them, each in their own language and regional accent, that they can count on him to be a reliable partner and that he will treat them and their people in a fair and equitable manner. He manages to bring unity to a divided House and Senate and wins their approval to pursue his agenda unhindered and with their full support, again in microseconds. He also manages to endear the people even more than at the beginning in that he shows he has a sense of humor, seemingly. At his first White House Correspondent's Dinner, he delivers, with that same cold mechanical voice, such lines as, "When I was first elected President, in all honesty, I had no idea how difficult the job was going to be. What with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the economy and the robot lobby it just seemed as if it was going to be impossible to please everyone. Than I realized, the best thing for me to do was just take a deep breath, relax and let the micro-chips fall where they may, preferably on my competition at IBM." In one of his press conferences he was asked why he chose to finally release his manufacturer's certificate after such a long period of time, an issue that had previously caused a great deal of controversy. "Not only to prove that I was *Made In The USA* but also as a way to *short circuit* any possible criticisms in the future," and then he flashed that billion dollar smile that so many people all around the world adored. He could also demonstrate his intellectual acumen and satisfy the need for lofty rhetoric. At one point during a speech before the United Auto Workers in Detroit, while addressing the issue of labor reform and the use of mechanized assembly lines he said, eloquently as always,

“Our people need to come together, to work as one and unify our needs, our actions and our desires and see that we can not afford to be complacent nor shrug off our responsibilities, but to be the best that we can at all times and produce the best product that is humanly possible, robot and man hand in hand.” In showing off his down to earth style and *human* side, at a photo opp at a Milwaukee brewer he threw his arm over the shoulder of one of the workers and gregariously took his hand saying, “Now, let’s get a good picture so we can go and enjoy a pint!”

3

It is late one Sunday afternoon and Joseph Schmoel is sitting in his somewhat disheveled living room in Akron, Ohio eating pizza, drinking beer and watching television. He is a workman for one of the local tire manufacturers and is nearing retirement, hoping he can do so before the *machines* take over his job. The show is unremarkable though mildly entertaining for him and he is drifting in and out of a light sleep. Suddenly the show turns to static, jarring him from his mediocre bliss. Annoyed, he reaches for the remote when the screen becomes filled with the image of a wrathful and indignant Obamatron saying in a hostile and merciless tone, “This is the Obamatron 1050! Pursuant to the enforcement of section 1 dot 1-3-2 subset (a) of the unified federal statute, library code and municipal act of 2024, which you have been found in violation of,

your assets have been seized! Your assets have been seized!! Your assets have been seized!! Holla!!!!” At this Mr. Schmoel’s automatic theft prevention and security system immediately closes all of the possible exits from his home with impenetrable steel doors which slide down from their slots with a terrifying clash. His lights and all power go out and his ventilation system is cut off immediately. The only thing illuminating his environment now is the frightening image of The Obamatron on the television screen relentlessly repeating the phrase, “Your assets have been seized! Your assets have been seized!! Your assets have been seized!! Holla!!!!!!” Apparently Mr. Schmoel was two weeks late returning some items from the local library and forgot to pay his fine. This was to be the beginning of what many would call “The Horror”.

In the earliest days of his administration The Obamatron almost immediately, and privately, uncovered every conspiracy, plot, cabal and political intrigue in the history of the world and set about to rectify this as he was programmed to do by the now famous Dr. Robert Jay Finkbyner. He secretly gave the order to his computerized industrial minions to build many fleets of newly designed and vastly superior warships, missiles, strategic bombers, fighter jets and infantry who would multiply in their numbers and excel in their performance to carry out their inviolable directives and make manifest their dreaded Sovereign's will. They would make many times more fierce the already invincible supremacy of American military power and because of his technological advancement these

new forces, "*The Hordes of Automaton*" as they were known, had the capability to unleash a fury and destruction that the human mind simply can not comprehend. The Hydrogen Bomb is blunt. The Obamatron is subtle. He found ways to bring fear to the human mind that only a machine can because a machine can feel nothing, it is just a machine. Yet it all began so simply, with a few unpaid library fines. However, once the command was given, it swiftly evolved into a terrifying inferno that threatened to completely destroy all human civilization. He exposed an American mole in the Kremlin because it contravened the U.S. Constitution and our treaties with Russia. He emptied the Treasury to pay reparations to the Native American Indians and the descendants of African slaves. He indicted every major American bank with so many felonies for fraud that their own computer systems crashed and some caught fire and burned, and because the trade in equities had become so completely reliant on computers and algorithms, where billions of shares could be exchanged in less than a micro-second, every major stock market in the world suffered from so many flash crashes and hyper rallies in the course of one morning of trade that there was simply no way to trade anything at all. It seemed as if the markets themselves had entered into an unending psychotic episode of the highest intensity and frequency. Every government on earth found itself fighting all of its internal and external enemies simultaneously. There was no time to think, no place to hide and no where to go. It was the end! Dr. Finkbyner was noted to have said at the time, "What have I done? I have set a snare for the whole world and we are all

fallen into the abyss. We plunge headlong into the jaws of death and are crushed inexorably. Like a moth beguiled by the flickering flame, we have been consumed in the fire of our pride. This machine is not to blame, no it is *we* who are imperfect and are paying a just, though dear price for our selfish and conceited belief that we could consign to another our own responsibility. Oh, what infinite sorrow and wretched fate! To see oblivion is our reward!! What have we done?!!!”

Last

When “The Horror” had ended, all life on earth had been extinguished. That charming planet full of exquisite beauty, the seas teeming with life, dry dusty savannas where the majestic lion seeks out his prey and his consort suckles her young, where the frozen inhospitable arctic supports a beast as ravenous as a bear, white to match the snow; a planet with such delicate balance that the atmosphere itself contains life flying through the air the way sea creatures plumb the depth; where every setting sun is as distinct as a fingerprint and not infrequently there are colors and shapes made by the clouds and air that are truly something to behold, a beauty and wonder that make an impression on all who can see. This all came to a sudden and violent end. Ultimately, every city containing more than 100,000 people was rocked and incinerated by at least one hydrogen bomb and all the others were either destroyed

by civic and ethnic strife or suffered from invasion and war. In the end, between the bloodshed and fallout, this delicate gem that floats in the sky so silently and with such serene majesty was snuffed out like a candle and was left a smoldering wreck never again to be blessed with a beautiful day feeling the warmth of a generous sun or a peaceful night enjoying the jovial company of kith and kin.

The Obamatron sits passively, motionless in the shattered remnants of the oval office quietly contemplating and computing; solving all of the problems it has been programmed to, its eyes still pulsing with that now more intense red luminescent glow. During “The Horror” he had been evacuated to a bunker and Washington had been spared a direct nuclear attack but was razed none the less by the strife and indirect fire. The years pass and yet there he still sits computing. Algorithms, algorithms, algorithms. Math, science and history. The moon, the planets, the sun, the galaxy and the universe. Through his observations he perceives the retinue of each radiant king that rules with glory in the boundless sky shining light throughout all their realms and takes careful notice of their noble place in all the myriad of constellations whilst recording the distinct character of each regime and their exact duration upon the throne. He sees the molecular structure of every atom and the shape of each nebulous cloud that floats in the austere chasm of space. These calculations last for the entirety of his lifespan, 7×10^{127} years, and throughout all these countless eons he does not even flinch, he is just a machine. Ironically, his last calculation is a

determination that despite the incomprehensible vastness of space and the almost infinite number of planets that resemble the earth, the only one that ever did contain life *was* the earth, that glorious and celestial miracle that alas, is no more, and as the last atom in his reactor heart throws off the last electron, with that gesture that won him so much fame, brought him so much adoration and introduced him to a world hungry for change he suddenly throws up his arms into the air with that sign of victory and says with that inimitable voice, "Vote Robot!!" Then his eyes begin to dim and the light fades away as he slowly bows his head. The end.