

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
English 30B

## **Science/Fiction**

by Thomas Hunt

"Why yes sir, it is a fine day."

"Not just the weather is fine today, Doctor. I understand you've finished your project." The doctor nodded slowly. "And ahead of schedule too. It truly is a fine day."

"Commissioner, if you'll come with me, I can show you what we've accomplished."

"What a sense of organization you have Doctor. Business Business Business, it's no wonder you're done ahead of schedule."

The doctor smiled sharply. "I do think of myself as a sort of a workaholic, sir."

"Don't be modest now Doctor. I checked your file before I came over here. You haven't had a vacation in over three years."

The doctor stopped walking down the corridor. "Has it really been that long?"

"It has, and don't act so surprised. We all know how you've been itching for the head job since you left the

academy. And just between you and me, if this project works like I've heard, you'll get it. By George, you'll get that job, and you'll deserve it too."

The doctor smiled and continued walking down the corridor. "Thank you sir, you are too kind."

They reached a door marked "RESTRICTED ACCESS". The doctor punched in his 20-digit access code and the entrance light flashed: green green green.

They entered the laboratory. There was a long counter in the back, a few desks and in the front, a huge computer that took up more than half of the room. The computer was covered with thousands of blinking and flashing lights and hundreds of switches and dials.

"My God, Doctor. You really know how to work this machine? The complexity. I don't even know where I would start."

"Certainly sir, I know how to control it because I invented it." He smiled with pride. "And as for where to start, I would start by turning it on." The doctor walked to the far left and flipped a solitary red switch.

Shvooom. The room was filled with the sound of fans spinning up. The lights which danced playfully before, became brighter and accelerated to an almost feverish pace.

The commissioner was taken aback and shrank back against the lab counter and almost knocked over a lone beaker. "Doctor," he said glancing around "do you perhaps have a chair? The extent of your machine, it's, truly stupendous!"

The doctor kicked a rolling chair to where the commissioner stood. He collapsed in the chair, still staring at the machine, gripping the armrests, his body alert and erect.

"Well, Commissioner, you've seen the flashing lights. Are you ready for the finished product?"

"Certainly Doctor, whenever you're ready."

The flurrying lights seemed to slow as the doctor flew from left to right, turning dials, flipping switches and monitoring the results. The doctor's athleticism, hidden under his lab coat was now totally apparent as he seemed to move at a speed that even the computer could not match. Soon every light was blinking in time. The hum of the fans had become like a hurricane and the temperature of the room was rising. The commissioner was now watching with his mouth agape. He removed his jacket and loosened his tie as the heat became unbearable. The Doctor however, just continued to move. The sweat was simply absorbed by his lab coat.

Suddenly the noise increased and the overhead lighting dimmed and blinked. The doctor stopped, wiped his brow and turned back to the commissioner. The lights went out completely and all the commissioner could see was the reflection of the doctor's spectacles and his smile, illuminated by only the flashing and blinking lights.

The growing din rose to a loud humming and then stopped. The blinkers zapped off from left to right like the flourish of a piano player. For a moment there was darkness and the sound of steam being released as the room filled with mist. The emergency floodlights clicked on and the doctor strode to the middle of the room and opened part of the computer.

"Forward three steps." The doctor said. "This, my dear commissioner, is my invention."

A small child around the age of eight steps three steps forward from inside the machine. He is wearing a red sweater and blue jeans. His brown hair is cut in a bowl cut and his eyes are glazed over as if he is sleepwalking.

"My God! It's glorious! Pure flesh and blood, a real child. I'd never believed you'd be able to do it, but seeing it. Truly amazing. How does it work?"

"As I promised in my report, the project is a success in every sense of the word. It follows every command and

learns in a fashion that can only be described as automatic." The doctor turns to the boy, "Billy, sit." Billy takes a seat in a desk facing the commissioner. "It never plays, dallies, dances or sings. It is a pure student and is truly dedicated to its work."

"Allow me to demonstrate further. Billy read." Billy picks up a heavy textbook labeled *Applied Mathematics* and begins reading. The doctor moved to the back of the room and opened a drawer, pulling out a paper airplane and throwing it at Billy. It hit Billy square in the nose, but he continued studying. The doctor then pulled out a straw and several wads of paper. He began shooting spitwads at Billy. Billy continued to study. He doesn't even wipe away the spitwads that have hit his face and book. He simply turns the page and continues studying.

"As you can see, we have cured the child of the disease of distraction. It is now an excellent student. The only drawback is that at the beginning of every day you must give the child one shot of Attention-All or it may revert to his former, inattentive self."

The normal lights switched back on and the emergency lights clicked out. The computer resumes its slow blinking and flashing.

The commissioner rose and began shaking the Doctor's hand enthusiastically. "This experiment is truly amazing Doctor. You will go all the way to the top for this." They begin heading out the door. The Doctor switches out the lights. The commissioner just continues his speech of praise, "... you truly are an incredible man, a great worker, I'll see to it that you will most certainly..."

The door swings closed and Billy is left alone in the dark. His eyes seem to have a slight fluorescent glow. All we hear is the sound of pages turning slowly. In the distance, we can hear the commissioner, still praising the doctor, "...by Jove, you will certainly, most definitely, become the head, of Child Development."