

WHAT MAKES A PERSON

By Megumi Mandish

CHARACTERS:

- *PEREGRIN* (automaton, early teens– resembles a human-looking metal doll with ball joints, with a human left hand)
- *LAMPWICK* (half-fae that passes as human, mid teens)
- *FOXGLOVE* (fae girl, early teens)
- *CLOUD* (fae boy, early teens)
- *WARDEN* (automaton, male, middle-aged– same base design as *PEREGRIN*, but with more armor and large stature)

(SETTING: Western medieval bakery. Curtained door on STAGE LEFT goes to an unseen bakery area. Door on STAGE RIGHT leads to an unseen street, with a small window covered by a curtain. Table and chairs CENTER STAGE, with a counter and baked goods rack STAGE LEFT.)

(LIGHTS UP)

(LAMPWICK and PEREGRIN enter through door STAGE RIGHT, both somewhat scuffed up and LAMPWICK out of breath. PEREGRIN shuts the door and leans against it while LAMPWICK tries to catch his breath.)

LAMPWICK: He didn't follow us, right?

PEREGRIN: I don't know.

LAMPWICK: There's no way he could've. We must have lost him in the southwest alleys. That place is a maze.

(PEREGRIN locks the door and peeks through the window. LAMPWICK glances around the dark bakery.)

LAMPWICK (cont'd): Is Miss Pea not opening up shop today?

PEREGRIN: I don't know. I haven't seen her all week. *(PAUSE.)* Maybe we should hide somewhere else, Lampwick.

LAMPWICK: Why?

PEREGRIN: Because I already got Cloud in trouble last month when I ran into the patrol, and I don't want to get him in trouble again because I did something stupid.

(PEREGRIN peeks through the window again. LAMPWICK sits down at the table, facing PEREGRIN while he talks.)

LAMPWICK: We didn't do anything stupid. All you did was help me get more information on the new patrol routes. That's a dangerous job, and we pulled it off. You should be proud of yourself.

PEREGRIN: I'll be proud of myself when he doesn't show up here after chasing us.

LAMPWICK: Don't worry. We can just say we didn't hear about the new curfew, and that we're real sorry and it won't happen again. They're usually nicer to kids our age.

PEREGRIN: Not him. Look at the cut he gave me. *(Lifting his bleeding left hand)* He's captain of the Automaton Patrol for a reason, Lampwick.

FOXGLOVE (offstage): Lampwick?

(FOXGLOVE storms through curtains STAGE LEFT. LAMPWICK and PEREGRIN are startled by her sudden entrance.)

FOXGLOVE (cont'd): Where the Fell have you been? Do you know what time it is?

LAMPWICK: ...No?

PEREGRIN: It's three-thirty.

LAMPWICK: Three-thirty—

FOXGLOVE: Three-thirty! Time for me to sleep! But no, you have to go spy on Geppeto for the almighty Starlight Court. You work here too, don't you? Do your job!

PEREGRIN and LAMPWICK (simultaneously): Sorry, Foxglove.

FOXGLOVE: You should be, making me stay up this late. *(PAUSE)* They're back, Cloud.

(CLOUD enters through curtains STAGE LEFT, with flour on his hands and apron, holding a rolling pin.)

CLOUD: Good. We're three batches behind.

LAMPWICK: Ugh, can we just not open today? I'm already exhausted.

CLOUD: No. Mom's not coming back for another week. We need all the money we can get.

(CLOUD notices LAMPWICK and PEREGRIN'S dirty clothes and PEREGRIN peeking through the window again.)

CLOUD: ...Did something happen?

LAMPWICK: Uh... we may have run into our good friend, Warden.

FOXGLOVE: Warden? You mean Captain of the Automaton Patrol, Warden?

CLOUD: You're joking.

LAMPWICK: I really wish I was.

FOXGLOVE: Did he follow you? Tell me he didn't follow you.

LAMPWICK: It's fine, don't worry. We lost him in those back alleys southwest—

PEREGRIN: Ssh!

(ALL fall silent. LAMPWICK goes to the WINDOW and peeks out above PEREGRIN.)

LAMPWICK: ...What's he doing?

PEREGRIN: He's just standing there.

LAMPWICK: Why isn't he moving? There's nothing out there.

CLOUD: You led him right to us? What were you thinking?

LAMPWICK: It's not our fault! He's never this fast. Usually he doesn't care enough to bother me.

PEREGRIN: ...He looks different.

FOXGLOVE (*frowning*): What's that weird light?

LAMPWICK: What light?

(FOXGLOVE and CLOUD look at STAGE RIGHT DOOR.)

CLOUD: I see it too.

FOXGLOVE: That's not his normal aura. Why does it look like that?

CLOUD: It feels... sick.

LAMPWICK: But he's an automaton, he can't get sick—

PEREGRIN: Get down!

(PEREGRIN ducks down and drags LAMPWICK with him, shushing everyone. Low, metallic footsteps grow louder. Then a knock sounds on the door. ALL scramble to hide; PEREGRIN under the table, LAMPWICK in the STAGE RIGHT corner by the door, and FOXGLOVE and CLOUD behind the counter STAGE LEFT.)

PEREGRIN (*cont'd*): ...Maybe he'll leave—

(Glass shatters. WARDEN'S arm reaches through the window and rips the door handle off. He pushes it open and steps inside.)

WARDEN: There's no use hiding.

(WARDEN slowly walks towards the table. LAMPWICK starts to stand.)

WARDEN: I know you're in here.

(WARDEN pushes a chair aside and begins to lift one end of the table, and PEREGRIN gets ready to run. CLOUD stands from his hiding spot despite FOXGLOVE'S attempts to stop him.)

CLOUD: W-We don't have any money.

(WARDEN sets the table back down. He studies CLOUD, who holds up his rolling pin in defense. LONG PAUSE.)

WARDEN: I am not here to rob you.

CLOUD: You broke my door.

WARDEN: Why are you awake? Children like you should be sleeping right now.

CLOUD: I-I'm a baker. I bake bread.

WARDEN: That is a job for adults.

CLOUD: My mom is, um, out of the house right now. Caring for a sick family friend.

WARDEN: Where is your mother?

CLOUD: I don't- I don't know what you mean. I just told you she's caring for a family friend. We need to make money somehow, so... could you fix my door and let me go back to work?

WARDEN: I'm looking for two criminals. They were last seen in front of this bakery. I need to find and arrest them.

(PEREGRIN crawls out from under the table and starts sneaking towards the open door.)

CLOUD *(glancing at PEREGRIN)*: Criminals? What did they do?

WARDEN: They were caught breaking curfew and ran from the scene when being brought in for questioning. Have you seen them? One is a tall human with red hair. The other is an automaton.

(LAMPWICK starts to follow PEREGRIN out the door.)

CLOUD: Uh, no, I don't know if I've seen anyone pass by.

WARDEN: Are you certain? You haven't seen anyone matching that description in the past hour?

(PEREGRIN reaches the threshold.)

CLOUD: I haven't seen any criminals, sir.

WARDEN: What a shame.

(WARDEN draws his sword and levels it at CLOUD. PEREGRIN and LAMPWICK freeze.)

WARDEN (cont'd): Place the rolling pin down and step around the counter.

(CLOUD sets the rolling pin on the ground next to the hidden FOXGLOVE, who takes it. He puts his hands up and goes around the counter. WARDEN pulls out a pair of metal cuffs.)

CLOUD: W-What are those for? I didn't do anything.

WARDEN: You are under arrest for aiding criminals. *(PAUSE)* Do you really think I don't know what you are, fae?

CLOUD: What?

WARDEN: Master Geppeto has given me the strength to see through your trickery and magic. How many people have you poisoned at this bakery? How many have you lied to?

CLOUD: N-No one's been poisoned— ow! Let me go!

(CLOUD struggles as WARDEN puts the handcuffs on him. LAMPWICK and FOXGLOVE motion urgently to each other and PEREGRIN. Lights dim on the scene to focus just on PEREGRIN'S panic as he looks back and forth between the safety of the open door and CLOUD.)

FOXGLOVE: Let him go, you monster!

(FOXGLOVE charges out from behind the counter and attacks WARDEN with her rolling pin. WARDEN bats her aside and raises his sword.)

WARDEN: Master Geppeto will be most pleased to know two of your kind are dealt with. Be good and stay still, and I will show mercy and make your deaths quick.

(WARDEN swings at FOXGLOVE and misses due to the cramped space. CLOUD ducks under another swing and grabs a candlestick, deflecting a third swing, but WARDEN'S strength knocks it out of his hand. LAMPWICK joins the fight, leaving PEREGRIN alone by the door. WARDEN overpowers the three fae and grabs CLOUD to cut him down.)

WARDEN: A trophy for my master—

PEREGRIN: Leave them alone!

(PEREGRIN tackles WARDEN, knocking the sword from his hand. They struggle briefly before PEREGRIN scrambles to grab the sword, and stabs WARDEN.)

WARDEN: Traitor— Why are you siding with them—

PEREGRIN: I don't betray my friends.

(WARDEN dies. LONG PAUSE.)

LAMPWICK: You... You killed him.

PEREGRIN *(staring at WARDEN'S body)*: ...Yeah.

FOXGLOVE: Thank you for saving us.

PEREGRIN: Yeah.

CLOUD: Are you.. Are you okay?

PEREGRIN: No.

CLOUD: Did he hurt you?

PEREGRIN: No. No, I just— I'm... I'm a monster like him. He was right.

CLOUD: Warden wasn't a monster.

PEREGRIN: Not like Warden. Like him.

CLOUD: Oh.

(LAMPWICK and FOXGLOVE back off behind the counter to talk, leaving CLOUD and PEREGRIN sitting in front of the table CENTER STAGE.)

CLOUD (cont'd): I don't think you're like him at all.

PEREGRIN: We're sitting next to proof.

CLOUD: You defended us. You rescued us. It was awful you had to do that to keep us safe, but that doesn't make you a monster.

PEREGRIN (frustrated): Why are you so calm about this? Look what I just did. What if I do that to you? Or Lampwick, or Foxglove? That's what I was built for: to hunt down the fae. You know that.

CLOUD: That's true, but you're Geppeto's creation, not Geppeto himself. So unless you really decide that you want to kill all the fae, I think you'll be okay. *(STANDS)* And even if Mom or the Starlight Court think you're a danger, I'll... I'll stick by you no matter what.

PEREGRIN: But you said getting into the Court was your dream. You can't just give up on that.

CLOUD: Peregrin, you're my best friend. I'm not giving you up just for a chance to get in the Court.

PEREGRIN: ...Thanks.

(CLOUD helps PEREGRIN stand.)

CLOUD: *(To FOXGLOVE)* Glo, do we have extra room in the back?

FOXGLOVE (pointing at WARDEN): You mean for him? I just told Lampwick we should try to put him in a different neighborhood.

LAMPWICK: And I agree, but none of us can carry him that far. We'd get caught within the hour.

CLOUD: Then what do we do? We'll expose the network if they find him here.

PEREGRIN: ...We could disassemble him.

FOXGLOVE: What? That's awful! Why would we do that?

PEREGRIN: They'll be looking for him in one piece. If we disassemble him, he'll be easier to carry and harder to find.

CLOUD: It's... cruel, but I don't see any other way to hide him. *(To PEREGRIN)* Are you sure you can do that? It's okay if you don't want to watch.

PEREGRIN: Geppeto's done it to us hundreds of times. I'm used to it.

LAMPWICK: Great. Tacking that onto the list of 'Reasons Geppeto Should Die'. Well, I guess we can't just stand here. Glo, give me a hand with his legs. Peregrin, Cloud; get his arms.

(ALL grab WARDEN and try lifting him towards STAGE LEFT DOOR, clearly struggling.)

LAMPWICK (cont'd): Stars, what did he eat for dinner? A three course meal of solid gold?

PEREGRIN: Automatons don't eat.

LAMPWICK (*sarcastically*): Yeah, I know, thanks, Peregrin.

(They half-carry, half-drag WARDEN through STAGE RIGHT DOOR, talking while OFFSTAGE.)

FOXGLOVE: So how do we, you know....

LAMPWICK: I can sneak into the welder's place down the road. Grab a few tools.

PEREGRIN: Don't bother. I'll handle it.

FOXGLOVE: What do you mean by—

(PAUSE. The sound of screeching metal. FOXGLOVE and LAMPWICK stumble back through STAGE LEFT DOOR, looking physically ill.)

LAMPWICK: I think I'm gonna throw up.

FOXGLOVE: Since when was Peregrin that strong? What the Fell, that was awful!

(Metal screeches again. LAMPWICK and FOXGLOVE cover their ears. After another screech and crash, PEREGRIN and CLOUD enter STAGE LEFT DOOR, carrying metal limbs.)

PEREGRIN: Here. *(He dumps the limbs on the table.)* Lampwick, take this arm and go hide it in the south district. Foxglove, you take this leg and hide it in the north district. I'll take the rest to the east district.

CLOUD: What about me?

PEREGRIN: You stay here and guard his head and torso until we get back.

CLOUD: That's it?

PEREGRIN: Yeah, why?

CLOUD: I can help more.

PEREGRIN: Then... you can help me hide his torso pieces after I take it apart.

CLOUD: Okay. I guess someone has to stay here and pretend we're still a normal bakery too. Be careful.

FOXGLOVE: We'll try. Save me a muffin. I really need one after this.

CLOUD: I will. Peregrin?

PEREGRIN: Yeah?

CLOUD: We need to talk about Warden when you get back.

PEREGRIN: Okay. Stay safe.

(CLOUD EXITS STAGE LEFT DOOR. FOXGLOVE, LAMPWICK, and PEREGRIN pick up WARDEN'S limbs and EXIT STAGE RIGHT DOOR.)

(BLACKOUT.)