Makers

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Chapter 1: At the Faire

A grim, quiet man of mottled complexion sits down the hall twenty feet distant. He is not very tall or muscular, and looks like he's approaching his forties, with his thinning hair and his reddened eyes. This doesn't change the fact that he looks incredibly intimidating. His hair is a little blonde at the tips in the way of today's modern punks, and he wears a tight black t-shirt, silkscreened with some faded art from the last two centuries. You can easily read the aura coming off of him, not just saying "Watch out, buddy!" but something more than that, something saying that he doesn't want you to talk to him, the preternatural sense of antisocial aggression.

He is sitting at a table with something called a Marimbot and its partner, Conductron. If you waved your hand over the tube-and-cube contraption, Conductron, it produces an array of sounds from Marimbot, as robotic mallets swoosh down to play little jerky chunks of Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Mozart. Most of the visitors to his setup walk away shaking their heads, smiling benightedly, expressing to each other a sentiment that is becoming commonplace at the Faire.

"I don't get it."

When I work up the courage to look past his scary face an hour later, I walk down the hallway to visit his boot, seeking more clues to the workings of the mechanic duo. Conductron is a heavy iron stand with a silvery, open-topped box on top, reaching up to roughly chest height. Marimbot takes up most of the table, a complex setup of a marimba's metal plates in two rows, affixed by mechanical hammers. Wires lead from both creations in fat, clumped-together droves, to a pair of Apple computers. The proprietor is mercifully gone, along with his gruff demeanor and scary stature. In the corridor where his machines are housed, there is sufficient space between myself and others to allow for an intimate examination and exploration of the technology behind Marimbot and Conductron. For the time

being, I am alone with another man's creation, awakening in me the mischief of the inner child, age eight.

Gazing within Conductron's exposed top, I am surprised to see a little bit of circuitry staring back at me from the bottom of the box. I knew from the wires and computers that there was some electronic influence in the design, but it sort of ruins the illusion of magical music, to throw off the veil without any ceremony. When you don't understand how something does what it does, it can be confusing, but it can also be wonderful. With no immediate explanation at hand, you can come up with your own, of course, but in that moment of not knowing, you are presented with an opportunity to learn about it. Having everything laid out for you at once takes that chance away from you. Exposure is really only appreciated in the moment of teaching, not in the experience itself.

There's a yellow sticky note next the circuitry informing me that it is an infrared distance sensor, replacing the ruined magic with the new wonder of circuitry. And indeed, as my face is washed by the invisible beams of infrared light, three hammers on Marimbot strike a clear note. Moving back a step, I place my hand over the Conductron and wiggle it a little. Only one hammer plinks away this time, either as part of the sequence in the song, or just the miniscule motion my hand made. When I shake my hand again, I do it faster, with a greater span of distance as well. This time, Marimbot spits out larger chunks of music, but with huge spaces of quiet in between. Noticing that my hand was going past the maximum read distance of the IR sensor, I restricted my movement to within a foot of the silver box. This time, the music began to flow uninterrupted, but at an unrecognizable speed, like a slowed-down record. Flipping my hand over made no noticeable difference. Classical pieces were playing, of that there was no doubt, but the issue now was figuring out how to make them sound the way they should. With the high variance in the user's tempo, Marimbot can't play in any fashion other than irregular, off-beat, or just plain disjointed. It's well and fine to be listening to Mozart, as long as you can tell it's actually Mozart you're listening to, and not disconnected clumps of notes, coming and going like an aural tide. This is the problem I have to solve.

Somewhere in the odd minutes I spend between this awkward musical arrangement and the rest of the Faire, I figure out the perfect rate of wobbly hand gestures that will produce clear, beautiful music. It comes after much sheer frustration, mingled with excited progress, occasionally integrated into numb staring. But at the end of the process, I tell myself that I understand Conductron and Marimbot, and can control them by making my hand flop like a fish out of water. With the knowledge that no one else has come close to achieving the rhythm I have, I am immersed in elation. The masterpieces of the dead are at my fingertips, easily pulled up and performed. I am creating music through indirect movement, without any exact method or knowledge of my own process. I feel like I am getting closer to understanding what it means to be blissfully ignorant, as I get through a beautiful Moonlight Sonata, switching back and forth between hands. Even without understanding the mechanics, the processing that occurs behind the scenes, I can still make Conductron and Marimbot do what I want. My small amount of skill exerts astonishing influence on the machines, enough to make it look like more knowledgeable than I actually am. A few passerby stop to watch me play into the next song in preestablished setlist, and when I finish they ask how I'd been inspired to create something like this.

I panic. "Oh, sorry, this isn't my booth, I..." In my head, I'm begging not to be mistaken as a Maker, as someone of authority who understands what Conductron and Marimbot are, down even to the silicon in their veins. That man was intimidating, frightening enough to ward off questions by the thousands, and I'm naive enough to try and field the few that come my way. This Faire is full of nothing but people who can and will call me out on things I have no understanding of. There are countless authorities on music and technology here, who could show up and demand I explain why Marimbot uses these servos or those mallets, or why Conductron looks the way it is. Against those questions, I cannot stall, I cannot fake my way through it; I can only give the wrong answer and await the harshest judgment that comes with being proven wrong. In the space between seconds, I am reduced back to the rank of amateur. I am pushed back to the faceless void of periphery, where I can only function as

someone who does not understand. In this moment, I move from being the answerer to just another passerby, who happened to pick up something more than the rest of the crowd.

The questioners grin, expressing mild amusement at my feverish response, before they head off to the cafeteria for lunch. Relief fills me that they do not understand better than I do how the robots work, but so does apprehension. The fear that the grim proprietor of the machines will return to see me mastering them begins to gnaw at my heart with fierceness. Worse still, is the fear that somebody will come and ask me why I'm using equipment that clearly does not belong to me. The exposure before the crowd will pale in comparison to an exposure in front of the people who actually are running things here at the Faire. The grim-faced man or a Faire volunteer will come and demand to know what I am doing, and I can't just say I was fooling around with Conductron and Marimbot, even if they were clearly left and meant for anyone to walk up and use. They will see me and the control I have achieved over the music and wonder what I did to this expensive-looking piece of equipment. As afraid I was of being mistaken for understanding the machines, I fear even more their misinterpretation of my purpose in being there. With my eyes on the ground, I shuffle back to my booth, a look of sheepish wrongdoing on my face, an unsure sense of accomplishment in my mind.

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The Doomsday Platform was built on the keyboard box that came with my mom's first desktop computer. The twelve-year-old me found it while looking for cardboard to toss in the recycling, resting by my old Nerf bow. It was so smooth and broad, it felt more like a piece of wood than something we'd just throw out of our house. It wasn't too deep, not more than four inches, but it felt strong, like it could withstand scissors, tape, or any other household devilry I could wrangle at age twelve. I left it by the garage door, separate and special from the rest of the motor oil-stained boxes we'd keep on the floor when the car sprung a leak. This one was mine, something I had claimed from the ruins of our garage, and it would serve as the prototyping board for a grander scheme.

I don't know how I came up with the fantasy that it was the beginnings of a device meant to

bring upon apocalyptic ruin, but I do remember keeping a log of my progress. A green Harry Potter journal, hidden beneath a long-neglected karate uniform in my closet, still holds my entries from what must have been a grand enterprise. Each page was home to an incomprehensible paragraph or two about various motors and weapons that were inserted along the edges and the main surface, into squares cut exactly just for them. Sometimes it was the spark for play, acting as a battleship for my action figures to board, or a weird, new kind of terrain for alien lifeforms to explore. But when it was a Doomsday Platform, it was propped up on empty Play-Doh canisters and it became my first real workbench. I had six different kinds of tape and two sizes of scissors, and an endless supply of random bits and pieces from every toy in the house. It was OK that I was still playing with toys, I reasoned, because I was making something big happen, something beyond Cowboys and Indians.

When children play with toys, they suffer none of the pretensions older people concerning the nature of what 'play' is. There is no awareness of the object as a toy, per se, aside from the label we assign it, which, for a child, means nothing. Adults become more self-conscious, more embarrassed that someone might see them behaving foolishly, but children manage that sort of fear differently. They gleefully engage in fantasy-building, on levels personal and external, world-encompassing and neighborly. Their brains are responsible for the bogeymen, the magical worlds inside of closets, all of the imaginary friends that come and go in a single instance of childhood. Their ability to create, to envision objects, devices, or even worlds, is limitless, and it gives them an opportunity to enact control, something children rarely are given.

On his website, finkbuilt.com, techie virtuoso Steve Lodefink describes creating a toy similar in concept, but wildly different in form, for his son to play with. The World Control Panel is made out of some beautiful scraps of wood, aluminum, and whatever else Steve happened to have at hand. The electronics come from the same place he found the framing material, with a few pieces scrounged from miscellaneous electronics kits. Steve could have just settled for whatever LEDs and components were cluttering up his workspace, and built the thing in a few hours, but with the inclusion of the electronics

kits, he turned it into a three-week learning project for his son. The final product looks incredible: perforated holes in the aluminum make a pixelated set of rather accurate continents. A row of toggles triggers random LEDs at random brightnesses, without pattern or any sense of set order. The whole point of the thing is to have fun with the world, not to make sense of it. Steve did it all so his son could play "agents" with his friend, but he raises a good point about the World Control Panel: it's universally fun. "Superheros, Evil Mad Scientists, Supervillains, Trilateralists, Bilderbergers, Meteorologists, Oligarchs, Generals, Demographers, Spymasters, Epidemiologists, and well, who *couldn't* use a retro sci-fi command console to monitor and control their worldwide concerns?" The fact that the World Control Panel has no point beyond a lesson in soldering is the best part of it all; it functions as an exercise in whimsy just as effectively as it does in teaching the little Lodefink how to alter and control his little light-up world.

The Doomsday Platform eventually became home to more devices than I'd initially planned for, and as my journal reads, I apparently tried to start thinking about what happens after the apocalypse. I, of course, would be in control, since it was my invention that had brought the world to its knees. Little by little, machines began taking on more complex forms, to manage a population that survived the horror I had wrought. I created computers to measure brains, so I'd know what everyone was thinking all the time. It sounds like a stretch for a twelve-year-old to be concerned with the well-being of people on that level of magnitude, and when I was rereading the journal I felt skeptical of my own account. But I remember creating pills in fifth grade that could cure any disease, so humans could devote their lives to pursuits that didn't concern mortality. I made the pills as big as baseballs, to hold all of the cures they'd need to perfect human health. When we made spaceships, my friends always built huge missiles and lasers to cut down anyone that got in our way, without giving a thought to the senselessness of their violence. I still have the drawing of a ship that when faced by hordes of morally-uncertain aliens would transfer all power from these weapons to create an invulnerable barrier, protecting the men and women who so valiantly took it upon themselves to adventure in space.

My mother has no recollection of me being so committed to the greater welfare of humanity at that age, and truthfully, neither do I. But when I see these things, the drawings of benevolent spacecraft and the plans to create a doomsday machine to *control*, not destroy, the world, I have to wonder. The Harry Potter journal never explicitly stated what kind of monstrous deed I'd be committing, and that makes me question if I really intended to cause an apocalypse in the first place. Part of me must have been so interested in the act of creation, that the Doomsday Platform never had a fully-fledged idea of destruction. Death lasers got integrated into the power assembly of a bigger scheme, which in turn gave rise to the source of unlimited energy that would be free for all. There are enough elements, enough hints at a larger issue to make me think that it was never about destruction at all.

A part of my development may have always been control, the pursuit to find dominance over the problems in my life. My parents were divorced when I was young, young enough to not accurately remember the circumstances of the occasion or any of the events leading up to their separation. I do remember feeling incredibly chaotic in the early years of living with my mother, though. All of the jobs she was working, the apartments, cars, and friends we burned through pale my memories slightly, turning them opaque in places where there should have been solid scenes. Even a memory as foundational as learning to ride a bicycle was so thoroughly made vague, I can no longer distinguish which parent, grandparent, or relative did the teaching and bandaging of skinned knees. With so much happening constantly beyond my grasp, past my growing mind's ability to deal with, all of these artifacts from adolescence lean towards some key developmental aspect of youth. It makes sense that the cure-all pills, the merciful adventures in space, and the Doomsday Platform are attempts at securing something for myself. Authority, management, domination, control; I had a clear picture of the power I wanted and how I wanted to use it, through these little acts of genius, the moments of inspired making. I can believe, rereading my chicken-scratch handwriting, that some inherent sense of the essence of goodness definitely peers through from my childhood, that I never knew existed before, and I find myself asking how much of that I owe to the holy act of creation.

We're at the Pittsburgh Children's Museum on a gorgeous Sunday in October. To the sprawling museum's left is an excavated construction site, littered with lumber, steel, and machinery. Chain-link fences and scrap piles are everywhere, but they quickly transition into the more artfully arranged exhibits that make up the city's first Mini Maker Faire, an exhibition of what happens when do-it-yourself attitudes meet engineers, artists, and scientists from a variety of backgrounds. Across from us is a closed shopping mall, a park, and some college apartments. The narrow streets are quiet and still, and the only real noises that abound outside are the slow, smooth whine of robots, the mercifully-infrequent-but-still-piercing bleat of massive whistles, and dull, low roar of electrified go-karts. On my way back from the ATM outside the mall, I see one of the low-riding safety hazards zoom out of the big tent where the robots and more mobile exhibits are, pull a 360 in the parking lot, and fly back inside. Making a mental note to check *that* place out before I leave, I push open the heavy doors of the museum.

A security guard looks at the badge I got from the Scientist. Unlike the ordinary visitors' badge, it reads "Maker" underneath "Pittsburgh Mini Maker Faire," identifying me as one of the contributing figures to an exposition of handmade creations that delight, educate, and motivate all at once. Makers are the authorities here, more than the guards, the front desk attendants, the volunteer coordinators and assistants. They are the people on display, managing their displays, and the displays of others. When one person's light-up sign fails, Makers show up by the dozens with electrical repair tools. If someone's booth is too big to be carried or managed by one person, Makers turn themselves into pack mules, hauling equipment and material every which way. They are artist, gallery, and art piece all in one, creating the show and optimizing it for maximum attention efficiency.

 Right past the people providing kids with laser-cut kits for huge model dinosaurs, is the foyer of the museum, with ramps leading to the cafeteria, gift shop, and a world of rather vast possibility. The ceiling is high, with the pipes and girders exposed, the common habit of modern urban builders and

architects. Unlike the case of Conductron's open-air wiring, here the exposure does not ruin the effect, but rather reveals an unique architectural mode of education. The housing of the spectacle becomes a spectacle itself, and even without the Maker Faire in town, this place feels more like a playground than a place of learning. A massive vertical climbing maze takes up one entire wall of the museum, full of children pressing their faces against the plexiglass to get a better view of their shrinking parents below, examining their foundations, the people who literally *made* them. Just around the corner is a projector dropping letters onto a parallel surface. As people walk through the projection area, interfering with the image, the falling letters bounce off their heads and shoulders. Those who pause to experiment with the setup find that they can catch letters with their limbs and move them around, creating an interaction with language through light.

More populous than the main features of the children's museum are the exciting Maker projects that take up whatever space they can. Some are set up in two-by-two-foot corners, the creators standing next to their creations to conserve space. The bigger, more important hubs of the local do-it-yourself community take up the larger table spaces, or just brazenly occupy their neighbors'. A teenager and his homemade Segway buzz around the Faire, carrying the laptop with the "how I did it" video in his backpack. Several of the Makers, in fact, seemed to shun the notion of tables entirely, like the man who made his own reclining workspace by suspending a large LCD screen over his *La-Z Boy*. Standing in the threshold of this flux of projects half-finished, half-professional, and assuredly half-baked, I feel like I found, beneath the stuffed animals and video games, beneath even the excitement of the museum, a toy store for the inner child, the one who loves tinkering with everything within reach. Everything has a feeling of bigness within it, from the dinosaurs to the robots to the massively intelligent people behind it all. But nothing is bigger here than the pervasive sense of possibility. The whole Faire is diffuse with it, a clear, odorless haze of *happening*, of creation coming into play right in front of us. It's as if the entire cult of the Muse had a regional board meeting open to the public; the idea of what is possible becomes the gateway to heavenly inspiration.

The only place devoid of any sort of magical energy is the table I have to return to, the table of the Scientist. Little microprocessors, Arduinos, occupy the table in various forms, spinning servos and blinking lights. Together they represent the modern open source computing movement. All of the documentation, the code for tens of thousands of different processes and circuits, resides online, free for anyone to access. The Arduinos themselves are massively less expensive when compared to other electronics kits, and simpler, too. Variations like Cardboarduinos, Paperduinos, even Foamduinos have been popping up all over the Internet, proving that circuits and programming aren't limited by conventional materials. Still, the boards here are light-years over my head.

The Arduinos themselves are not the point of the booth, though. The Scientist teaches a different programming language with Arduinos, Occam-Pi, that taps into their ability to process multiple functions. The standard language for the Arduino, Processing, sets up infinite loops to run parallel functions. But in Occam-Pi, those loops are all part of the plan, and the result is something much cleaner in terms of code. Beyond that, its all a lot of computer science jargon that a lot of really boring people find interesting. I suppose it's not so bad to owe the Scientist for bringing the Boy and me here, but acting as his advocate was something I didn't bargain for. Not only do I have to help him present his work to a crowds and crowds of people I've never met before, I don't even know what or how half of the gizmos on the table do. The student in me is awake and receptive to that ancient terror known as presentation stage fright. Even if this isn't for a grade, a lot of it looks awfully important, and I don't want my confusion or misunderstanding to give the right person the wrong idea about what it is the Scientist is doing.

The Boy doesn't seem to mind, but that's because the Boy is one of those people who is very much OK with whatever happens around him. He's come to the Mini Maker Faire dressed to the nines, looking exactly like a smaller, fleshier, browner James Dean. There's a massive Nikon slung around his neck, akin to the way a Western gunslinger carries his six-gun. He used to live on my hall, a little wide-eyed freshman with a guitar and plenty of snack food. Now, he's got my old room and my old job,

steadily climbing his way up the collegiate ladder of success with the most cheerful face ever. The Boy and I are stuck in the same booth at the Faire, but any hint of a bad attitude in him is shrouded by his curious eyes, a questioning wrinkle in his lips and almost total silence. You could put him to work in a coal mine or a computer lab, and he'd show up on time with a smile, a tie, and a healthy snack for everyone, but not a word beyond that.

It's not that I'm mad about being put here, but rather, I'm beginning to understand that this is part of the nature of the Scientist's mentality. His understanding of an event or an object is very clear to him, but understated and simplified to someone in casual conversation. He'll describe something very generously, and isn't high-minded about his speech, but when you walk away, you end up wondering what the hell he was talking about. In the past, when I expressed interest in a project he was talking about, he readily took me on, casually describing the setup as "easy." When you put together a 3D-printer from scratch, or try to load a CAD image of a model aircraft into a foam cutter, you learn that nothing in the Scientist's business is really easy. The end result may seem so basic in its construction, with a vast grace accompanying that build, but getting to the end is a long, hard road. Even the beautiful origami flowers with fiber optic filaments that are part of our booth's display took painstaking effort to wire, shape, and mount in their cardboard boxes. Making computer science work is something that doesn't come easily to my mind, if it comes at all. I need to pull it apart until I see how it works from the bottommost level, to *understand* the fundamental truth behind silicon and solder, not just *do* it. Maybe part of this stems from American culture and education, how we are bred to expect the basics first before we learn anything else. This is harder in programming, where basic knowledge and skills have to be applied rapidly and memorized for necessary use, the way the Scientist whipped up a couple of pages of code to get a spinning-dinosaur-servo running in the minutes before the doors opened.

One group, our table's left-hand neighbors, rent out a traveling lightshow from their van for anyone who can pay. When we first arrived, I overheard them telling the Scientist about the thirteen-hour long drive they took to get here, and how happy they are their next gig's in Philadelphia. This

same story was repeated again and again to almost everyone who stopped by their booth for more than a few minutes, in the same tone and with the same enthusiasm. They are one of those couples that are so obviously married, to the point where their mannerisms and bad jokes make it impossible to tell them apart. They wear black polos with the company logo just above the left breast – the typical attire of the traveling amateur professional, right alongside pressed khakis and slick hair from a stolen mini-bottle of hotel shampoo. Their booth is painstakingly decorated with rope lights, strobes, and masses of every kind of LEDs currently known to the lighting community. It flashes, burns, and speaks nothing so much but sheer power output. Several electrical engineers wince as they walk past, heads full and fearful of the ohms, watts, and volts coursing through the copper in the walls. We wince from a shared fear of the unseen, of things just unknown enough to be dangerous.

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What makes the event immensely insane is that this isn't even the *big* Maker Faire. There isn't a life-sized game of Mousetrap being played, ending with the meteoric descent of a two-ton safe from a crane. No stage exists for hundreds of cigar box guitarists, circuit-bending MIDI-men, or other DIY musicians, to captivate concert-scale crowds. It isn't hosted at a venue in places like New York City or San Francisco, and it isn't held just once a year. These Mini Maker Faires are for the people of the commonwealth, the people between seaboards who make up what we can safely call the American majority. Forget all the pretensions and illusions of urbania, this is where the purest level of DIY excitement can happen. In cities with buildings so big they help lower the temperature with the wind tunnels they create, there is a market for creative energy on every street corner. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: these are the places where the American Dream is believed to reside, along with everything else worth having about this country. But its wrong to assume that ideas and creativity mean something only in spaces where we assume *real* American ingenuity exists. The people who've brought the Mini Maker Faire to the rest of this country are making a fundamental difference in the way we live, and when they show up in numbers like what we have at the Pittsburgh Children's Museum, both

exhibitor and exhibit-ee make it mean a lot more.

From where I sit at my booth, I know that I am not seeing everyone who has come to the Faire today. There are plenty of people who have just come to listen to one person give a talk or teach a class, intentionally excluding every other presentation of ingenuity. Plenty more have come to the museum and left it after five minutes, hoping to have a nice Sunday outing with the family, only to find it overrun with sweaty engineering students and tattooed artists. Despite these numerous withdrawals, it's still hard to navigate any of the hallways in the museum. I bump into shoulders, baby carriages, and the infirm repeatedly, on my way to the bathroom or a particularly intriguing booth. The Scientist's setup is placed in the back of the building, closer to the loading bay and outdoor exhibitions, where fewer people tend to mingle. The result is that the people who come through are people we've seen ten, twenty times already. They're friends of the Makers on display, Faire volunteers, or just lost and unwilling to admit it. The rest of the visitors, the ones we don't see unless we go out looking for them, stick to the entrance, the cafeteria, and the gift shop, almost like they're uncertain where to go next.

Looking at them, I am learning how little they know. They wander from place to place, looking for something they can understand, converse with, or at least relate to, and not finding it. After a while, they give up speaking to the exhibitors, afraid of techno-babble they'll inevitably drown under. They are appreciative of the fields explored here, of the possibility of it all, but something gets in the way of their fully realizing the work. The cutting edge, after all, is an *edge*, and people are afraid of falling. I find myself sneering at a few of them, so easily scared by what they see, like hyper-anxious fainting goats. The Luddites will always be there, rejecting any idea they deem too newfangled, too dangerous, for the honest, God-fearing Americans to stomach, in favor of preserving their self-interest.

But this vindictive reflection loses its sweetness halfway through the day. Whenever the Scientist gets up for a break, its up to me and the Boy to cover the booth, to hazard our best explanations to whoever show up. Sometimes, one of us will leave, too, for the bathroom or to take a picture of something miraculous or funny at the Faire. In those moments, with no one else to shift the

blame onto when something goes wrong, when he or I are alone at the table full of humming Arduinos, a little doubt takes hold in my mind. It is a doubt that grows quickly, with only the barest amount of nourishment to sustain it, and it tells me that maybe I'm not such an authority on Maker stuff as I think I am. It happens when someone walks up, reads the sign above our booth, and asks, "What's this do?"

The Boy is usually pretty quiet. I am usually loud. Both of us average out to a half-spoken mumble about code, LEDs, projects, and random tidbits we happen to know about when someone comes up and asks that question. It doesn't really matter, though, what we say. If we tell them that the Scientist is programming an open-source platform to function in a new, radical, never-before-seen way, it's the same as saying we have no idea what it's all about, would you please wait for him to come back and explain it better. It becomes so easy to prove us stupid, in fact, that after two hours of sitting at the Scientist's booth, I begin wishing no one would come over and talk.

That's when I get it. I'm no better than any of the people I've unfairly called sheep who come to this Faire. In the same ways that they don't get the whimsical alarm clocks, the nerdy t-shirts, or musical tastes of the Makers, I don't understand the pieces that move the Marimbot, the LED-festooned displays, or even the booth I am supposed to be representing. The whole time I've been sitting here, judging them for not comprehending, for not seeing the world of possibility that flies all around them, I've been ignoring the fact that I don't even understand *why* the Faire is a world of possibility. The Luddites themselves aren't the embodiment of anti-technology; they resisted the advance of automated looms to protect the people of crafts industry. The Renaissance men at this Faire have more in common with them than they do with advancing human engineering. My vilification of that term doesn't elevate me as an authority on technologies. If anything, it proves that what I've been saying about them is truer about me. I've been so ignorant about much more than just the people at the Faire, I've completely missed what the whole event was trying to do. At the end of the day, when all the projects are packed and the cars are heading home, it hits me that maybe I've spent more time on the people visiting the museum than the Faire it housed. My revelation is unsettling, upsetting, so much that I forget to visit

the electric go-karts before the Scientist pulls out of the parking lot.