**Fate and Folly**

**By Austin Baker**

Haran looked into the machine. Lines and patterns of circuitry spun and swirled over each other in an impossible geometry of complexity. Haran tried to follow one of the subtle lines as it wove its way along and through the others. He lost the strand when it went simultaneously over and under another strand without splitting.

The whole assemblage was completely and utterly impossible. It was an impossibility used to fulfill an impossible task. If the mass of circuitry was laid out in plain unaltered three dimensional space it would be so immense that the speed of light and would cause minutes of delay for data traveling from one end of the hundred million mile assemblage to the other.

The filaments that made up each circuit were so thin that the hundreds of millions of miles of material weighed no more than a human brain.

Haran swing the machine's faceplate shut, “the circuitry appears to be working… as far as I can tell.” He had no idea how the whole thing worked, but nothing was obviously broken. The Oracle's blank metal face stared at him. Behind the face was the impossible. It had been created for the task of seeing the future as it would occur with no possibility of error.

“Then why hasn't it said anything.”

“Must be processing… or something. Hell if I know….”

Haran was cut off by a synthesized sounding voice. “Death”

“What did it say?”

“You will die,” continued the oracle, its voice oddly conversational, “There is no way out. No way to fake it or escape it. 100% certainty; you both are going to die.”

“What?” Haran said, looking at the vaguely human shaped machine, “oracle; repeat last entry”

“You will die, there is no way...”

Haran interrupted, “When?” He asked.

“5….”

“What?” Haran asked.

“4….”

“What’s it saying?”

“3….”

“Orical, possible exit strategies”

“2, There are no possible exit strategies. 100% certainty. 1.”

There was a sharp crack, like a moment of thunder... then nothing