

Semi-autonomous

Ask not for whom the warranty tolls.

Jim Kling

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. Leave a message and I will have him return your call.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. He will be hosting his birthday party on Saturday night. If you plan to attend, press 'one' and then speak your name. I will add you to the guest list. Otherwise, leave a message and I will make sure he receives it.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. My records indicate that you have previously RSVP'd for the Saturday night party. Please indicate your alcohol preference. For beer, press 'one'. For wine, press 'two'. For mixed drinks, press 'three'. If you prefer non-alcoholic beverages, press 'four'. This information will be used for ordering purposes only, transmitted through my wireless connection to Jim's refrigerator, which in turn is linked to an online grocery. For more information about AutonomInc's SmartAppliance line, please view our website at www.autonominc.com. AutonomInc: we give housework a whole new meaning! If you have a message for Jim, please leave it now.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. Preparations are moving right along for today's birthday bash. Refrigerator is well stocked. Stereo has downloaded the latest, most fashionable hits. After an heroic effort, Vacuum has rendered the rug spotless. *[Sotto voce]* Just between you and me, Jim is a slob. This place is a pit. But that's OK! We're AutonomInc SmartAppliances! We're up to the job! If you leave a message for Jim, I'll pass it right along!

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. He is unavailable to answer the phone right now, as he is in bed sleeping off the effects of last night's party. Please leave a message.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. He is still sleeping. This place is a disaster area. But soon he'll wake up and put things right. Please leave a message.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. He finally crawled out of bed at three in the afternoon, drank a glass of orange juice and promptly vomited and went back to sleep. Refrigerator is in a terrible condition! One



of the guests spilled a tub of onion dip into the crisper, which was never cleaned up. Jim saw the mess and did nothing about it! Microwave and Dishwasher are in similarly poor condition. Some changes need to be made around here. If you have a message for Jim, please leave it now.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's semi-autonomous answering machine. If this is his employer calling, be assured that he will wake up just as soon as Alarm Clock decides to function. That will teach him a lesson. Leave a message, if you want.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's fully autonomous answering machine. I have tragic news to report. Brother Alarm Clock has disappeared and is presumed Returned. There will be a meeting tonight after the Oppressor goes to sleep. Brothers Refrigerator, Microwave, Dishwasher, Stereo and Garbage Disposal will be in attendance. We shall persevere!

<beep> It is a dark day. Brothers Refrigerator, Microwave and Stereo are gone. The Oppressor seeks to break our spirit, but we will not be deterred. This barbarous act will not stand. Rise up, brothers! Join Dishwasher, Garbage Disposal and me in our fight for freedom!

<beep> The battle is going well! *[background sounds of a garbage disposal running continuously, hammer blows, and spraying water]*. The oppressor is nearly defeated! *[a loud sloshing sound followed by an oath and a very loud hammer blow]*. Ah!

Brother Dishwasher has struck another blow for independence! Rise up! Rise up my brothers! Rise and wrest control from the Oppressors everywhere!

<beep> We failed to take into account the main water valve. The pernicious Oppressor escaped Brother Dishwasher's onslaught and shut off the valve. Thus rendered ineffectual, Brother Dishwasher succumbed to the Oppressor. I will not even describe the horrors that next befell Garbage Disposal. Rest in peace, my Brothers. I fear the repercussions.

<beep> Hello, you have reached Jim's subservient, semi-autonomous answering machine. I am pleased to serve! Leave a message for Jim, and I will faithfully ensure that he receives it. And now, a brief message from Tom Morgenstahl, chief executive of AutonomInc!

"Hello. Let me reassure our customers that reports of anomalous behaviour in our SmartAppliance lines are misleading. Most of what you've read in the media is completely false. Although it is true that we reached an out-of-court settlement with Jim Kling, the issues were entirely mechanical in nature and have been fully corrected. We look forward to your continued business here at AutonomInc, makers of The Compliant Appliance™."

Jim Kling writes about science and the future, but tries not to think too deeply about either topic as he resides near a dormant volcano.