

# Automatons for Peace (The Amazi Chronicles Book #1) Abridged

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## Chapter 1: Arriving in Divided America

*“America’s story has been just as much about her divisions as well as her times of national unity. The 1890s was one such time. A historian would be vexed in deciding what to focus on – the wonder of new inventions such as the automobile, airplanes, and motion pictures, the proliferation of violence within and outside the county, hatred of the ‘dirty’ immigrant, hatred of the ‘savages’ killed mercilessly at Wounded Knee, or the emergence of a mighty political, industrial, and cultural giant.” Thomas Chelsea, America’s Emergence on the World Stage (p. 22).*

I read those very words many years later as an old man and thought they were written by someone who perfectly captured the era of my early adulthood. It was a time of high expectations, unrelenting terror, and painful transition. I was soon caught between two strong currents while never at home in either one.

On one side were the rich industrial owners creating the materials that served as part of America’s rising buildings and infrastructure. Unchecked, they consolidated and expanded their power at every opportunity. They loved displaying signs of their endless wealth in their homes, with their purchased paintings and other possessions. They were also merciless when threatened. They had no hesitation in using the law to immediately deal with any perceived threat from workers. Anyone was expendable as long as the money kept flowing in. The owners always needed more money for their next big purchase.

Challenging the owners were the workers – male and female, old, and very young children. They had left their places of birth which had been places of oppression and stagnancy with high expectations. They hoped that America would be different – more relaxed, more open, less fearful. Instead, they encountered a gray world where they worked long hours under substandard conditions earning next to nothing. There was a wide set of reactions to this – weary acceptance, participation in organized strikes and protests at great risk, and anger cumulating in espousing Anarchist ideals and enacting ongoing violent deeds such as bombings and assassinations in large public settings.

One could never forget living in such a time with so few remaining neutral. In many ways it seemed like a dream – I did so many things without really thinking of it. The stakes all seemed so high and everything was so important and urgent back then – as if every action might lead to a New Eden.

In those days, I was called Joseph Kraflenko. Later my name became Americanized to Joe Kraff. I grew up in Russia, in Saint Petersburg, the capital city of that time. It was a time of much construction – homes, monuments to our Czars and poets, bridges, theaters, and palaces for our growing royalty. People were proud that Saint Petersburg was becoming a modern capital city.

I was growing up as well but not necessarily in a good way. While I was blessed with loving and wise parents, I disobeyed them at every turn. I thought that I knew better so there was no need to listen to them. I did well in my studies but was not satisfied with my education. I thirsted to know more about philosophy, art, beauty, and science. This dissatisfaction led to my hanging around older unsavory revolutionaries. They were unemployed, talked big and full of passion, and did little else. Through them, I was exposed to anarchism and the works of Mikhail Bakunin. I greatly enjoyed my companions and their wild analyses of each assassination or bomb attempt that took place. I liked their talk but wanted some action to bring about real change (or so I thought). Then at 18, I joined some real revolutionaries that schooled me in the art of kidnapping, making bombs, and the best way to kill someone. Anything was justified to overthrow the repressive regime of the Czar.

Within three months of joining, I received my first task. To stand and watch for anyone that might stop my companions in deploying three bombs that would blow up a military barracks beyond recognition. I looked at the barracks grounds and saw the faces of the men there. The words from an old text clearly appeared to me: “Hatred doesn’t end with hate.” I ran home without looking back

Even though I wasn’t there, I imagined how the scene took place. My former companions overjoyed as each bomb went off analyzing the impact of their work, checking out the last moments of the two hundred brave men in and around the barracks, and finally, the senseless array of bodies and blood intertwined in grotesque fashion across the thick snow. I cried while

running home and felt so ashamed. I saw how wrong was the path that I had taken and felt horrified in what I had participated in. I also saw how much such an evil deed would hurt my parents and others.

From that day forward, I decided to follow a new road leading to a better world. At that time the vision was still emerging. In my spare time, I enjoyed inventing things. However, little came of it. But at this time, I set myself a new high goal – to somehow create an automaton with human will. Why? I was not certain other than it might help mankind. But this raw ambition seemed a distant dream. I did not have the knowledge or the resources to bring it to fruition.

Besides, I had bigger and more immediate worries -- the secret police was attempting to round up the perpetrators of the Nevsky Massacre. My former companions had gotten the word out of my betrayal and were looking to kill me to serve as an example. It couldn't be any hotter. I had to hide and I made it home and quickly explained the circumstances to Momma. (Poppa had died a few years earlier after losing hope that things would change during the reign of Czar Alexander III.) I told her that I felt great remorse over my actions. Momma knew right away what I had to do – I had to leave. She gave up some hard-earned savings and made some arrangements. I left with some friends that were heading to Ukraine. From there, I found rides through Poland and eventually stumbled into Hamburg, Germany. Once there, I went to the port office and bought passage to New York City, United States of America.

I took a ship called the Alena. We encountered stormy seas and had to spend most of the voyage below deck in the dank, crowded, smelly steerage section. I didn't like the lack of privacy and sunlight. Soon I had a fever and had lost the urge to eat. I was now 102 pounds having been 151 when I got on the ship. Emaciated, weak, and barely conscious, I took my first steps on Ellis Island and fainted. It is little hazy what happened next. But I was told that I was in the hospital for three weeks. The first real memory of America was being looked at by a doctor. He said I was good enough to go to processing. Once there, I had to declare that I had 15 American dollars in my pocket and that I was neither an anarchist nor a polygamist. After several more minor obstacles, a week later I was cleared to enter the country. I took the last short ride to New York City. My mother's brother Isaac was at the entrance as I made my way

off the gangplank. He had been faithfully checking each day for all these weeks. We embraced and I headed to my new home in my new land.

## **Chapter 2: First Days in New York City**

After an uneventful twenty minute ride, we made it to my new home in New York, right off of A Avenue. This new home consisted of a building of six levels, which later I learned it was called a tenement building. Many large extended families lived together in these dark, unappealing buildings. My host Isaac and his family lived on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. The bathrooms were outdoors, lighting was based on gas lamps, and as I would learn that winter – a coal stove was used for heating.

Isaac's living quarters consisted of four rooms. There was a Front Room for socializing during the day and sleeping for the men at night. It had some beds that converted to chairs during the day, some pictures of Saint Petersburg, and a small closet overstuffed with clothes. At one end of this room there was an entrance to the kitchen. The kitchen had a small stove, shelves for a few pots, pans, and dishes, a sink, an icemaker which Tomas the iceman kept filled, and a small table for eating. Through the kitchen there were two backrooms: one for Isaac and his wife Annie, and the other room for the girls. It was crowded but manageable. Isaac and Annie had two girls Jennie and Fanny. They also had a boarder named Matilda, nicknamed Tilly. Tilly with her green eyes, flowing red hair, and deep voice immediately caught my attention. In Russia, I had no time for women since I was too busy spending hours with my current or would-be friends. Isaac and Annie also had three boys – Morris, Louis, and Herman. I would be sharing a bed next to Herman. Exhausted I fell asleep. The next day, Annie woke me up from sound asleep. I had breakfast which was some sort of stew and was then sent to work.

I was expected to work at a clothing factory as a sewing machine operator for five dollars a week. Out of these meager wages, I would give one dollar a week to Isaac and Annie to pay for my rent, food, and clothes washing. Herman and Tilly also worked in the same factory. We worked from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a forty minute break for lunch. This went on every day, Monday through Saturday.

From the start, the factory was an unwelcomed and unpleasant work environment for me. One walked into a room where two hundred people – male and female, healthy or sick, sat in close proximity to each other, squished like sardines. The room had little light coming from multiple broken windows high above the ground. The factory floor had an overpowering ever-present musty smell. The little ventilation allowed temperatures to soar and the unrelenting heat felt muggy and oppressive.

When at the point of exhaustion, the lunch bell rang. I bought an apple for five cents at the pushcart outside the factory. I then started looking for someone to eat with. I tried to find Herman but he had disappeared. So I just listened. I overheard some men talking about “sweatshop conditions “ and “the need to form a union.” I stopped listening -- I didn’t need any new trouble in my life.

Someone tapped gently on my shoulder and said: “So your first day here and already oppressed -- such a sad fate for someone so young, tall, and handsome.” I turned around and saw Tilly in a friendly mood. She then started to tell me the story of her life. She had been here for two years and stayed with the Taroffs (Isaac and Annie) because they had been friends with her mother in Saint Petersburg. “I never knew much about my father other than he wasn’t Russian and had been visiting for a few days. Momma had forgotten his name and had no way to contact him.” We talked a little bit more and then went back in. Before she headed back to work, she told me that she was 21.

At closing time, Herman was already gone but Tilly was waiting for me. “Do you want to walk back together? It isn’t always safe walking around here alone especially for single women. You look like a strong, well-built young man and I would feel safer with you. Herman is always rushing somewhere so I rarely walk back with him.” I said yes and we walked together. She continued her story about how Russia was pressuring woman to marry early to make more soldiers. Tilly would have nothing to do with that. “I choose those I wish to love – not the State. I do not wish to bring children in the world only to see them injured or killed. I had read Tolstoy and the American named Thoreau’s thoughts on how to resist the state’s attempt at war. I do not want to see any more unnecessary deaths. Have you read Thoreau?” I said no and had read Bakunin and others preaching violent resistance instead. She gave an understanding look and

pulled out of her bag a copy of Thoreau in Russian. "I'm always re-reading it. Please read it and let me know what you think." I said that I would. Tillie also said that she would teach me English. I gathered that she didn't make friends easily for some reason and was kind of lonely. Maybe it was because she looked physically different from the other ladies. She also seemed unbeaten by the circumstances of life.

Walking back home with Tilly made the trip more bearable. We walked in the door together. Annie saw this and gave us a disapproving look. I wasn't sure why. We all had dinner followed by a little conversation by the men speaking in English and Russian. I then went to sleep against a backdrop of horse carts, cursing, and someone singing loudly and out of tune. This place feels so alien. I am not sure if I will ever succeed here or feel at home.

The next few days followed the same pattern. I was awoken up by Annie, worked most of the day, and spent as much time as I could with Tilly. I don't know if I was attracted to her because she was smart and pretty or if I just needed someone to bond with to help overcome the alienation and loneliness of this new life. In any case, she was helping me learn some English and know more about the USA.

Annie seemed upset with my time spent with Tilly. One evening, about three months later, when Tilly had gone to see a play at an amateur theater, she told me why. Annie had been friends with Tilly's mom Molly but had always disapproved how friendly she was with the opposite sex. "One night she had relations with a non-Russian man that was passing through town. She never saw him again and had to raise a child by herself. Molly went to another village far away because no one knew her there. Once there, she met and married another man who promised to raise Tilly and hopefully some new children with Molly as well. Molly reluctantly agreed. Tilly was ignored by the other children because she looked so physically different. She made few friends and retreated into the world of books with dangerous ideas. When Tilly was old enough, she was sent to America and unwillingly, I agreed to give her a place to stay. Please do not talk to her. I see now that that it is time for her to leave so she doesn't corrupt you. I know a place where she can stay with proper unmarried ladies so she can perhaps learn better ways and make herself less of a threat. If you are lonely and need someone to talk to, my daughters, sons, Isaac or myself are glad to do that. Do you agree?"



I was upset that in this land of equality, where so many tried to escape discrimination, I had my first of many brushes with prejudice and ignorance. I unwillingly agreed with her on the condition that I could talk to Tilly one last time to say goodbye. Annie reluctantly consented.

During the factory's lunch break, I told Tilly what had happened. "I'm really torn. You are the only non-relative friend that I have here. Everyone else here is into their own lives or causes. They don't have time for me and I feel very alone. But I do not want to lose my lodging nor upset my cousins. I am always getting into trouble. I want a fresh start here."

Tilly smiled "I understand Annie. And I understand Momma as well. Momma said to me that one true moment of connecting with someone was worth more than a lifetime of security. She never had any regrets about what she did. She saw me as a happy reminder of that night and loved me the best she could. When we moved to a small village near the Black Sea, we were shunned by all but my step-father. He saw my mother's plight and offered to marry her. He was kind and loved me as he did my half-sisters that soon arrived. He encouraged me to read, learn, and think for myself. I loved the life with Momma and my new Poppa and sisters. When I was 19, Annie had written to Momma that now was a good time to come to America. And so I came. Annie and Isaac found a job for me in the factory and I used my extra time to read, learn, and attend the theater. Let's talk some more on the way back – one last time."

That evening we walked together until stopping in a nearby park. Tilly said what I was thinking: "There is some unseen force that keeps pulling me to you and you to me. I felt it the moment you came in the door that first night. I know you feel the same way. I see four options for us:

- 1) To never see each other again. But I don't think that is possible for either of us.
- 2) To send letters to each other and meet in secret. But then you have the fear of always being found out. (Annie will always be suspicious even if we never see each other again.)
- 3) We both move out and find housing near each other so we can continue meeting. We will have some freedom that way.
- 4) We get married move in together, save on expenses, and have our maximum freedom.

I am asking you to consider option 4 and get married. You do not have to give me an answer right away. "

There was no hesitation in my answer. "Of course I will marry you. This is the only one real option. You know me well – I am attracted to you. You are very smart and beautiful and I'm

thrilled you like me so much. However, I don't have a ring or lots of money. I will do what I can however to make you happy."

Years later I learned that women in America didn't ask men to get married. But I did not know this and many other things.

One week later, we moved out, and lived across town in a neighborhood that I hadn't heard of before called Greenwich Village.

**[To read the rest of the book, purchase online.]**

**Can the Amazi team invent the real-time translator in time? Will Claire grow up to be an Inventor? Will Tilly and Lorraine complete law school? Please be on the lookout for Translators for Peace (Amazi Chronicles Book #2) or the Amazi Chronicle prequel story ("How I overcame My Inventor's Block") on this site.**

### ***About the Author***

Hallett German is a fiction and technical subject author on various aspects of IT and business. His works of fiction cross multiple genres including children, young adult, dysfunctional corporate mysteries/fantasies, historical fiction, and steampunk. His books offer a unique and original ride into other worlds and lives. He is the author of series (Olivia Plymouth Amazi, Chronicles, In Small Doses, and Corporate Intent) and single books (Combustible Networks, Ghosts vs. Robots, Saving Eddie, Killing Thoreau, Missed Landing, and Command and Control).

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