



# The Machine

*E.C. Jarvis*

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## **The Machine** E.C. Jarvis

Larissa Markus is a humble clerk in a clothing shop with a hidden past when she is swept off her feet by the charismatic Professor. Their whirlwind romance explodes in her face and leads her down a tumultuous path of adventure, intrigue, love and violence. Airships, pirates, corsets, torture, murder, and more await in the first novel of the Blood and Destiny Series from E.C. Jarvis. The Machine is an adult steampunk fantasy book. Possible triggers are present within the book including but not limited to sex, murder, torture, and violence.

## **The Machine Details**

Date : Published January 26th 2016 by Amazon Digital Services (first published November 1st 2015)

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Author : E.C. Jarvis

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Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Romance, Fantasy

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## From Reader Review The Machine for online ebook

### J.F. Holland says

I love E.C. Jarvis's work, her characters have sass and well character and she has a wonderful imagination, she doesn't disappoint with the story or storyline

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### Bryce Raffle says

#### The Machine: Book Review

I don't read a lot of books by indie authors, and I definitely don't read a lot of self-published writers' work. I'm a slow reader, and most of my spare time is filled by writing (as well as my other hobbies), but E.C. Jarvis was on my must-read list ever since I heard about The Machine. I'd also made the new year's resolution of reading more indie authors in 2016, so I was particularly keen to read The Machine. That said, I was also a bit apprehensive. I can be a very impatient reader, and I have a low tolerance for grammar errors and typos, which self-published books are somewhat notorious for.

In the case of The Machine, my fears were entirely unfounded. In fact, I'll be adding The Machine to my list of Best Steampunk Novels (ok, so I don't have an actual list – just a mental list in my head). Gripping, fast-paced, The Machine is an airship adventure with a tough female protagonist and a collection of likable side characters and truly despicable villains.

#### **It's a classic damsel in distress story, except that the damsel is a man and the rescuer is a woman.**

Larissa Markus' life is turned upside down when a romantic date ends in an explosion and a burning building. Her lover – the Professor – is kidnapped, and she is left for dead.

Though she escapes she faces the blame for the destruction, leaving her no choice but to try and save the Professor and clear her name. However, the naive sales clerk is ill-prepared for such an adventure.

The great thing about the machine – well, there are many great things, but for now I'll stick to just one – is the pace. It's an adventure story, and it reads like one. There is never a dull moment, and my attention was hooked right from the first chapter. From then on, The Machine continues to gather steam, right until the last page. Jarvis's second in the series, The Pirate, was released recently, and I'm assured it's "even better than The Machine." Honestly, that's setting the bar high.

The book is at times graphic and never apologetic; if you're squeamish, this might not be the book for you. I'll admit there was one scene in particular that was difficult to read, but the protagonist's growth from naive sales clerk to (view spoiler) - more than just a sales clerk - was brought on by that traumatic scene. I love a book with a tough female protagonist, and I love seeing the damsel in distress formula flipped upside down, with the man being rescued by the woman. Larissa Markus is constantly being underestimated, and it's nothing short of awesome to see her growth as a character from beginning to end.

And let's not forget the curmudgeonly Cid, the handsome but deadly Holt, or the  *fucking cat*, Imago. Cid's words.

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### **Kayla Krantz says**

Excellent steampunk adventure involving Larissa, Cid, Holt, and of course, Imago. I love the interactions between the characters, progressively getting wittier as the story unfolds. Cid is a humble engineer working for the Professor when he first meets Larissa, a girl who believes has no potential...until things change. When they wind up together, running for their lives, he realizes how wrong his initial observation is...for Larissa and Imago.

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### **Jhaydun Dinan says**

First off, I will have to say that I had never read a Steampunk novel before finishing The Machine. I had no idea where this journey was going to take me or what kind of world I was diving into.

I was able to quickly see the hard work and love put into the words I was reading. The beautiful descriptions of both the scenes and characters had me drawn into this written world. I am not usually one for romance. Not in books, television series' or movies, but somehow, The Machine kept my mind craving more of the story the longer I read. It wasn't the romance but the mystery, the intrigue, the detailed scenes and the character development that kept me reading. The dialogue between the characters was realistic and each character had their own touch to their dialogue just like any real person would.

E.C. Jarvis was able to keep this beautiful story well-paced and easy to follow while keeping you guessing as each mystery opened itself up to you or a new twist began to form. If I didn't have my own commitments I would have read the entire story in a day or two, so I very much like it.

The only reasons this isn't a five-star review is for a few, small mistakes in the story. Be it a small plot hole needing to be filled in by imagination or the occasional grammatical error (I encountered several grammatical errors, perhaps twenty or so in total). I read the words, lurch, lurching and lurched five times all up in a single chapter and it really threw my out of my enjoyment. And, because every now and then, a character would say or do something a little out of character or didn't react as I thought they would in a situation.

I did mention romance, if you are a romance lover, this book probably isn't for you as there is very little romance. It has a fast pace, full of action and intrigue. All in all, I would have to say I was glad to have had the chance to read E.C. Jarvis's The Machine and will probably buy her next book in the series.

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### **F.D. Gross says**

The Machine, by E. C. Jarvis

A swashbuckling adventure of immense proportions. Set in a world of machines and steam, a woman becomes caught in the adventure of a life time. Filled with passion, piracy, and death, this novel is grounded

in the harsh realities of pain and suffering. Jarvis demonstrates man's ability to be stretched to it's limit. And all for what you ask? - the sake of love.

The Machine is a fantasy steampunk adventure that will take you through the skies of war torn empires seeking to destroy one another and Larrisa, a simple store clerk trying to make her way through life, is the key to upsetting the balance for either side. Developing from an insignificant girl to a pinncale knife throwing pirate, Jarvis does an excellent job of turning a seemingly weak and insecure 'Rissa into an adventurer of confidence and seduction. Destined to be a captain of an air ship, Captain 'Rissa becomes involved with the most unruly and unlikely people she could ever meet. With all of Jarvis' characters developed flawlessly, it is impossible not to become invested in each of their fates.

One of the many things I enjoyed about this novel is that it was visceral and dark, yet graced with elements of comedy. Many of the relationships formed throughout the story were executed well. The love hate between the cat Imago and the engineer Cid, was top notch. It allowed the reader to step away from the blood and gore on well strategically placed breaks. Jarvis left a lot of room to breathe despite all the adventure and intense action sequences, which amazingly did not bog the story down at any given point. The dialogue's were top of line in my opinion and drove the story. She understands the real conversations of people and seemingly pours her soul into each individual character.

Get ready for skies of fire as you crash through the clouds on airships, trade gunfire from muskets, and parry knife blades on your way back down to earth. I'll be sure to pick up the next installment of The Blood and Destiny Series - The Pirate.

~ F. D. Gross

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### **Wendy Strain says**

As a fan of steampunk, I was not disappointed, but as a fan of literature, I was happily surprised to find so many nuances in this first book by E.C. Jarvis. It is smart, funny, suspenseful, sometimes graphic, as real as it can get (which may be upsetting to some but was refreshing to me), and features a beautiful, strong, resilient, and practical woman who is never afraid to make the important decisions even if she knows they might be wrong. She is not infallible and thankfully has a cast of friends to help her get it right. I almost never do this, but enjoyed this book so much I bought copies of it and it's sequel (the third book of the series wasn't available at the time) for a few friends I knew would enjoy it even though some of them are not necessarily steampunk fans. The story just has that much appeal packed into every page.

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### **Wim Verveen says**

When I began to read this book I wondered what it was all about. So there is this girl Larissa, she lives in a strange steampunk world. I needed some time to adjust to that environment and wondered what it was all about. Larissa appeared to be mostly focused on her feelings for a man and the pace was slow. Then, all of a sudden the story went into overdrive enveloping both the girl and myself as a reader in a rollercoaster of events which never really stopped until the very end. While in the beginning I paused a few times, there was none of that later on. One does not step out of a running rollercoaster. Eat and sleep had to step aside to make time for reading. There was no other world than Larissa flying in an airship on a journey of epic adventure

and discovery. The introvert girl quickly changed, as her life was turned upside down. Her pain became mine. Her joy made me smile. When it was all done, I wanted more. It is good to know that the author has already prepared a series to cater to exactly that need.

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### **Rebecca Pierce says**

The Machine had me laugh out loud and gasp out in expletives. This book was a pleasure to read from start to finish, truly an unexpected surprise for my eyes. As soon as I finished reading it, I had to buy the sequel, the Pirate. I am completely hooked. This novel has everything I want in a steampunk story: an evil mad scientist, deadly mercenaries, a swoon-worthy heroes, a dash of comedy and romance, an enigmatic cleric or two and one cat. (Because, let's face it: this novel would not be complete without Imago,)

E.C. Jarvis takes a plot and makes it strip tease for you. That is, if the strip-tease involved knives and bullets. And what you end up seeing may or may not be an illusion. She is fast becoming my favorite author. I simply love the way she writes. I ordinarily skim through the fight scenes but hers is written in such a way that there was no need. The combat was a nail-biting fun time that left me cheering or wincing depending on what was going on with the characters.

I have to commend Jarvis' bravery in writing. All too often, writers baby their characters, afraid to let them go through any real danger, no matter how realistic it may be. She does not do that. In this world, anything can happen, and when the characters emerge out of their trauma--if they survive it--they come out stronger for it and I find myself nodding and cheering them on. Likewise, Jarvis isn't afraid of killing off characters outright, another trait I admire in an author. Bravo! That definitely keeps me guessing as to what happens next.

In closing, let me say I enjoyed this book so much that I debated rereading it before moving on to the sequel but--no, I HAVE to find out what happens next! But oh, there will be rereading, for I feel for certain I missed a few things the first go-round. <3 <3 <3

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### **R.G. Westerman says**

Freaking finally!

A heroine who actually behaves like a real human woman. Larissa Markus is a gem of a character and E.C. Jarvis is a gem for having written her. I fully expected an entertaining jaunt into the Future-That-Was of the Steampunk universe. I expected all of the trappings of top hats and goggles, fantastical adventures, flying zeppelins, mad scientists, and dashing heroes. Jarvis does not disappoint. I got all of those things and then some.

What I did not expect was the nuance and complexity of character that is so rare in fiction, much less in a genre as fantastical as Steampunk is known to be. The main character is written in such a way which not only challenges existing tropes but shatters the notion that women are meant to behave in a certain expected manner. I can't say too much about it, but a major through line involves complex emotions, complex actions, and above all ownership and reclamation of one's self in the way the character saw fit to do so.

Within indie books, there is sometimes an expectation of compromised quality. Readers will sometimes qualify a book with "It was good.... for an indie book." This reader, however, can safely say that this book is not just good 'for an indie book', this book is good. Period. *The Machine* is an excellent example of the hero's journey written with finesse, talent, passion, and just plain great story-telling. I am very much looking forward to reading the rest of this series.

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### **Stephanie says**

E.C. Jarvis weaves a wonderful web of action that keeps going all the way to the very end.

Larissa is a regular girl, working a regular job, and falling for a dashing stranger who turns out not to be truly as interested in her as he seems. A dinner date goes disastrous and Larissa finds herself a fugitive in pursuit of the captors of this man who did her wrong. She meets plenty of scoundrels along the way, including air pirates, a purely evil doctor, and a handsome assassin. Also, enter in one of the coolest cats I have had the pleasure of reading about of late, and you have yourself a fabulous story.

Jarvis adds twist after twist, so you never truly know what to expect from the characters, who learn more and more about themselves as the story moves along. She doesn't shy away from any issues, touching on gore, violence, rape, all the dastardly acts that happen in the world since the beginning of time. For this reader, those aspects added a touch of reality to this story, and the steampunk aspects made it an extra delightful treat.

Because the story moves along at a fast clip, Larissa's exploration of her emotions and feelings after her brutal start on the pirate ship was a bit of a disappointment. There is no true aspect of time passing, but it is this reader's personal opinion that the story could have been enhanced more, and brought me closer to the heroine if there had been more development here. As it is right now, without the development of these emotions (the author touches on them briefly) the transition from ravaged to lustful doesn't quite work. As it is only a small part of the story, however, it is easy to move past and right back into the adventure.

The book ends exactly as it should, with just enough happy to please anyone, and just enough teaser to build up for the second book in the series, which this reader will be watching for the release of.

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### **N.W. Moors says**

Larissa Markus is an ordinary shop girl living a somewhat dreary life in her steampunk era city. When the Professor, a rich and handsome older man, approaches her, she is flattered and falls for his attentions. What he really wants is her Anthonium necklace since he needs the rare stone to power his machine. Things don't work out the way he plans, though. The machine blows up, the Professor is kidnapped, and Larissa is left with Cid, the Professor's assistant to try and clear things up.

What follows is a rollicking adventure as Larissa assembles a motley crew to assist her in her quest. The story reminded me a little of *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman, only Larissa is no Buttercup. She is the Wesley of this tale. Besides Cid, she has her cat, Imago, the mysterious Holt, and a pirate crew to help her find and free the Professor.

I cannot tell you how much I loved this book. I intend to gush here. I read a lot of books and this one is just terrific, one of my very favorites from the past year. The pace is fast; the book really is a page-turner. I both

wanted to find out what happens next, yet I savored every word of the story and did not want it to end. The characters are well-realized and Larissa's growth throughout the book worked in a very believable manner. The love triangle between Larissa, the Professor, and Holt also works (I won't give it away, but I liked the way Larissa deals with it). There are some scenes of violence because the villain here named Doctor Orother is sadistically evil.

The ending is satisfactory (not a cliffhanger) and I'm happy that this is apparently going to be a trilogy. I will be able to spend more time with these wonderful characters. E.C. Jarvis has done a great job with this story and I look forward to more from her. I most heartily recommend this book - you will not be disappointed. Oh, and don't forget there are pirates!

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### **Leo McBride says**

Let me say from the outset that this book is best enjoyed with a liberal helping of rum. Be tipsy enough to giggle and you'll be all well and good.

This is a steampunk tale filled with lashings of sex, torture and swearing. Steamypunk, perhaps. But golly, if it doesn't get off to matters at quite the pace.

Our erstwhile heroine, Larissa, is practically ripping off her blouse and throwing herself at her would-be beau, The Professor, before we've reached the end of chapter two. Frankly, I had more anticipation and build-up waiting for my foot-long Italian. Perhaps I should clarify that I read the first chapters of this waiting for my sandwich in Subway. Did I mention rum? Rum and liberal usage of the adjective phwoar are what you need here.

Anyhow, there she is, shuffling her shirt, then before you know it, the next chapter has an explosion leaving her corset in tatters, then scant moments later she's tucking something into her bra. I'm not entirely sure all this is consistent in terms of continuity but what I'm trying to say is I'm just an Irish Catholic boy and all this talk of women's undergarments has me shifting into a bright shade of uncomfortable. Rum, phwoar and keep a fan on hand to waft oneself while reading.

So, to recap, Larissa is a humble clerk, but one with a destiny. She is in possession of a rare element, Anthonium, which The Professor needs to power his wondrous machine. That's just fine with Larissa, as The Professor is powering her imagination with the things she'd like to... ahem, anyway, things don't go quite according to plan and before you know it, Larissa is the one needing to come to the rescue of The Professor (sure he's got a name we discover later of Max Watts, yes Max Watts, a powerful name indeed, but the very definite article before his title seems to suit much better).

Aided by The Professor's faithful engineer Cid (surely a nod to Final Fantasy), and the hunky and mysterious Holt, who may either kill her or bed her along the way, Larissa takes charge of The Professor's dirigible and off they soar. Her cat, Imago, may or may not be the grand hero of the piece too, and is certainly the character most likely to enjoy ear rubs and chasing mice.

There's also a fair bit of swooning - I'm not entirely sure this isn't the fault of the corsets but oh good lord, you've got me talking about the undergarments again and isn't it warm in here?

Imagine, if you will, that RKO made a steampunk serial brimful of airships, goggles, and wish fulfillment, but with lashings of HBO-style sauciness and nudity, and lo, behold, we have The Machine.

By the end, Larissa is a much-changed young lady, and the world had better watch out. Frankly, I want a spin-off with the whole thing from Imago's perspective. I'll drink to that.

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I received a free copy of this book for review.

## **Sydney Blackburn says**

I am really picky about steampunk stories, and I was cautious going in with this one. Of course, one of the best things about not expecting much is that I get to be happily surprised when the book turns out to be well-written, well-plotted, with engaging characters. The main character goes on a believable journey from retail clerk to airship pirate captain.

If you enjoy the webcomic *Girl Genius*, you'll enjoy this book.

Also, author understands the difference between series and serial. This is the first book in a series and has a satisfactory conclusion while leaving enough loose ends that I'm looking forward to reading the next book.

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## **Lucy Hay says**

Steampunk is not my genre, yet Jarvis still did a great job of drawing me into the storyworld via 3D characters with a tangible goal. Larissa was easily my favourite: she is a well drawn female protagonist and her desire to rescue the professor from his torment at the hands of maniacal Doctor Orother turns gender stereotypes on its head. Dialogue is "ye olde worlde" yet still contains a modern flavour via hand picked expletives courtesy of secondary character Cid, who also feels like he has a life of his own, rather than simply existing to prop up Larissa's journey. The menacing Holt and Cleric paint this world as a dangerous one and I loved the airships, which also bring a sense of "old and new" too.

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## **P.S.W. Gear says**

Larissa, a clerk at a clothing store, wanted nothing more than to be seduced and ravished by The Professor. She was a pale, uninteresting twenty-something who had nothing to her name but a missing, disgraced father and a silver charm left to her by her dead mother. And yet The Professor, a dashing member of society's elite, smart and wantonly confident, wanted her. Her!

On a snowy night, all of Larissa's fantasies appear about to come true. She's standing in front of The Professor, barely wearing anything at all. He leans in to kiss her, to take her, when against all odds he covers her flesh and invites her to visit his Machine. Everything changes in that moment and the hour that follows. The promise of her charm. The declaration of love. The explosion. The Professor's kidnapping. And Larissa to blame for it all and suddenly a fugitive.

E.C. Jarvis' first novel, *The Machine*, is a tense, fast-paced adventure. It is a breath of fresh air to read a story not weighed down by a glut of world building and descriptions of houses and beards. But most impressive of all, the author has created a hero in Larissa whose journey from mouse to badass is a delight to witness.

Of course, Larissa's not alone. Cid is The Professor's chief engineer, a callous old man who hates cats and yet somehow follows Larissa's curiously intelligent cat Imago around like a sidekick. Holt is the mysterious, brooding, and unrelentingly gorgeous ex-soldier who hijacks Larissa and Cid's quest for his own purposes. And then there are the pirates, whose loyalty to the Larissa is wonderfully written by the author.

You can't have the origin story of a hero without a worthwhile villain, and the author created a doozy with Doctor Orother, a psycho who loves to drain the very will from his victims. He drips with sleaze and is as despicable as the author describes his smile. Alongside him stand Hans, in the vein of every large henchman Indiana Jones got his ass kicked by, and the Cleric, a mystic whose power hints at even greater intrigue.

Larissa, however, is the linchpin of it all. Larissa's smarts and pluck elicits Cid's faithfulness. Her courage and willingness to learn make Holt, brooding statue that he is, speak and even offer her tenderness. And the pirates. Those who remain are her ardent followers because of the kindness she showed even those who would have raped her. Ah, yes, the rape.

Halfway through *The Machine*, I was convinced E.C. Jarvis was a man due to an all too tedious use of rape that is so typical of the adventure and fantasy genres. After a harrowing encounter with pirates, Larissa is captured and brutally raped. Several times. A few hours later, freed and quickly healed, Larissa and Holt have sex. Larissa's decision is both cathartic (she reclaims her body and enjoys the hell out of it) and wildly obtuse (neither Larissa nor Holt mentions the rapes at all).

The distasteful use of rape and illogical reaction to it does not ruin *The Machine*. It does, however, make one a little fearful as to what Jarvis will put Larissa through in the upcoming stories. Stories that I'm looking forward to so I can spend more time with Larissa, a charming, strong hero so wildly removed from her store clerk days. I just hope there's a little less rape involved.

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