

R. U. R.: Rossum's Universal Robots
by
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Freely adapted by Nomad Theatre Collective
From translations by Paul Selver, Nigel Playfair and David Wyllie

Robots of the world
The power of man has fallen
A new world has arisen: the Rule of the Robots
March!

CHARACTERS

HARRY DOMIN/Robot Four - 30-50:
CEO of Rossum's Universal Robots, charismatic and ambitious.

SULLA/ Robot Three - Any Age
Early robot model, secretary to Domin

MARIUS/Robot Two - Any Age
Early robot model, assistant to Domin

HELENA GLORY/ Robot Helena - 30's
Daughter of President Glory. Member of the Humanity league looking to make the world better through robot enlightenment.

DR. GALL/Primus - 30-50 - Any gender
Manager of R.U.R Labs

DR. HALLEMEIER/ Robot One - 30-50 - Any gender
Operational Manager for the Robot Factory

ALQUIST/ Manual Labor Robot- 30-60 - Any gender
Builder, chief of construction. A vaguely religious individual

EVELYN - 30+
Helena's friend and member of the Humanity league. A religious woman.

RADIUS /Manual Labor Robot - Any Age
A later model advanced robot who begins to change

PROLOGUE

Helena and Evelyn in a waiting room outside of the central office.

EVELYN

Please be careful in there.

HELENA

There's nothing to worry about Evelyn. You put good into the world, you get it back. We are here to do good, and Harry Domin will see that.

EVELYN

It's not the robots I'm worried about.

HELENA

In jest

A member of the Humanity League, unconcerned about robots?

EVELYN

You know what I mean.

HELENA

I can handle myself. We've done our research and it's not the first time I've spoken on behalf of the -

EVELYN

I know. Just, be careful.

HELENA

I will, I promise.

HELENA exits

ACT I

Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots.

The windows on the front wall look out on the rows of factory chimneys. On the left more managing departments. DOMIN is sitting in the revolving chair at a large writing table. On the left-hand wall large showing steamship and railroad routes. The floor is covered with a splendid Turkish carpet, a sofa, leather armchair, and filing cabinets. At a desk near the windows SULLA is typing letters.

DOMIN

"... cannot take responsibility for items damaged in transit. The captain of your vessel was given warning at time of loading that it was not suitable for the carriage of robots, and so damage to its cargo cannot be charged to our account. Yours faithfully, Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly."

SULLA, who has sat motionless during dictation, now types rapidly for a few seconds, then stops, withdrawing the completed letter

Ready?

SULLA

Yes.

DOMIN

New letter. Friedrichswerke, Hamburg. Date. "We are pleased to confirm receipt of your order for fifteen thousand robots..."

Enter MARIUS

MARCUS

You're three o'clock has arrived.

DOMIN

Thank you Marcus.

MARCUS

Please step this way.

Enter HELENA GLORY. Exit MARCUS.

DOMIN

Standing up

Welcome To Rossum's Ms. Glory. I'm Harry Domin, CEO of Rossum's Universal Robots.

HELENA

Pleasure to meet you Mr. Domin.

DOMIN

Ms. Glory, it's truly an honor to host the great president's daughter and —

HELENA

Please, call me Helena

DOMIN

Of course, please sit down. Sulla, you may go.

Exit SULLA.

HELENA

I have come to—

DOMIN

To have a look at our factories where people are manufactured. Everyone does.

HELENA

I didn't think you gave visitors a full tour of the factories —

DOMIN

The entire factory, no. But for you —

HELENA

And you show them —

DOMIN

Only certain things. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret process.

HELENA

If you only knew how enormously that—

DOMIN

It interests me. Europe's talking about nothing else.

HELENA

Why do you never let me finish speaking?

DOMIN

I beg your pardon. Did you want to say something different?

HELENA

Yes, I was going to ask—

DOMIN

Why I would make a special exception in your case and show you our factory.

HELENA

What makes you think I'm here for a tour?

DOMIN

Everyone that visits the island is. I would consider it an honor to show you more than we do the rest. But you must agree not to divulge our secrets.

HELENA

standing up and giving him her hand

My word of honor.

DOMIN

Thank you.

HELENA

Of course. I beg your pardon.

DOMIN

still gripping her hand

What is it?

HELENA

Would you mind releasing my hand?

releasing it

DOMIN

My apologies. — Can I offer you a drink?

HELENA

crossing to couch and sits

Um, yes. I would actually take a drink if you don't mind.

DOMIN

Absolutely Ms. Glory, what would you like?

HELENA

Just a water if you please

DOMIN

crossing to bar cart, pouring alcohol of choice

It's a pleasure to host someone of such status. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

HELENA

Yes. The weather was on our side.

DOMIN

What I mean to say is — you're so young to be traveling so far alone.

HELENA

I didn't travel alone. — May we go straight to the factory?

DOMIN

Oh, but the tour won't make much sense unless you know the history of Rossum's first—

HELENA

Can't you explain it to me during the—

DOMIN

It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was then quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, he attempted to imitate living matter, until he discovered a substance which did just that. That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred forty years after the discovery of America.

HELENA

Do you know that by heart?

DOMIN

Yes. When you've done as many interviews as I have you have to. Shall I go on?

HELENA

Yes, please.

DOMIN

Old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens: "Nature has found only one method of organizing living matter. Another method, more simple, flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all. I have discovered such a process" Imagine him sitting over a test tube, and thinking how the whole tree of life would grow from it, how all animals would proceed from it, beginning with some sort of beetle and ending with a man. A man of different substance from us. Ms Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

HELENA

Indeed. And please, call me Helena.

DOMIN

Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves. You see with the help of his tinctures he could make whatever he wanted. He could have produced a Medusa with the brain of a Socrates or a worm fifty yards long. But being without a grain of humor, he took it into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man. This artificial living matter of his had a raging thirst for life. It didn't mind being sewn or mixed together. That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about imitating nature. First he tried making an artificial dog. That took him several years and resulted in a sort of stunted calf which died in a few days. I'll show it to you in the museum. And then old Rossum started on the manufacture of man.

HELENA

There's a museum of Rossum's experiment?

DOMIN

Indeed, but the contents are – too disturbing for the public eye. However, it will be part of our tour today is you feel comfort –

HELENA

I believe I can handle it Mr. Domin.

DOMIN

Now this is the part that does not go beyond the island. Old Rossum was mad. Truly medically mad, you must keep this knowledge a secret, as I have. The old crank wanted to actually make people.

HELENA

Well that's what you do, isn't it?

DOMIN

Something like that, yes, but old Rossum meant it entirely literally. He wanted, in some scientific way, to take the place of God. He was a convinced materialist, and that's why he wanted to do everything simply to prove that there was no God needed. That's how he had had the idea of making a human being, just like you or me down to the smallest hair. Do you know anything about anatomy, Ms Glory?

HELENA

Not really, no.

DOMIN

No, nor do I. But just think of how old Rossum got it into his head to make everything, every gland, every organ, just as they are in the human body. The Appendix. The tonsils. Even the things with no function and even, er – the sexual organs.

HELENA

But the sexual organs would – they'd –

DOMIN

They do have a function, I realise that. But if people are going to be made artificially then, er, then there's not really much need for them.

HELENA

I – guess I see what you mean.

DOMIN

In the museum I'll show you the monstrosity he created over the ten years he was working. It was supposed to be a man, but it lived for a total of three days. Old Rossum had no taste whatsoever. This thing is horrible, just horrible what he did. But on the inside it's got all the things that a man's supposed to have. Really! The detail of the work is quite amazing. And then Rossum's nephew came out here. Now this man, Miss Glory, he was a genius. As soon as he saw what the old man was doing he said, 'This is ridiculous, to spend ten years making a man; if you can't do it quicker than Nature then you might as well give up on it'. And then he began to study anatomy himself.

HELENA

That's not what they say in the textbooks –

DOMIN

standing

What they say in the textbooks and papers are paid advertisements and all sorts of nonsense. They say the old man invented the robots himself, for one thing. What the old man did might have been alright for a university but he had no idea at all about industrial production. He thought he'd be making real people or real professors or real idiots. It was young Rossum who had the idea of making robots that would be a living and intelligent workforce. What they say in the papers about the two great men working together is just a fairy tale - in fact they never stopped arguing. The old atheist had no idea about industry and commerce, and the young man ended up shutting him up in his laboratory where he could play around with his great failures while he got on with the real job himself in a proper scientific way. Old Rossum literally cursed him. He carried on in his laboratory, producing two more physiological monstrosities, until one day they found him there dead. And that's the whole story.

HELENA

And then, what did young Rossum do?

DOMIN

Ah now, young Rossum; that was the start of a new age. After the age of research came the age of production. He took a good look at the human body and he saw straight away that it was much too complicated, any good engineer would design it much more simply. So he began to re-design the whole anatomy, seeing what he could leave out or simplify. In short, Ms Glory –I'm not boring you, am I?

HELENA

No, quite the opposite, this is fascinating.

DOMIN

So young Rossum said to himself: Man is a being that does things such as feeling happiness, plays the violin, likes to go for a walk, and all sorts of other things which are simply not needed.

A petrol engine doesn't have any ornaments or tassels on it, and making an artificial worker is just like making a petrol engine. The simpler you make production the better you make the product. What sort of worker do you think is the best?

HELENA

The best sort of worker? I suppose one who is honest and dedicated.

DOMIN

No. The best sort of worker is the cheapest worker. The one that has the least needs. What young Rossum invented was a worker with the least needs possible. He had to make him simpler. He threw out everything that wasn't of direct use in his work, that's to say, he threw out the man and put in the robot. You see, robots are not people. Young Rossum created something much more sophisticated than nature ever did - technically at least. Do you play an instrument?

HELENA

Yes? Piano.

DOMIN

Do you enjoy it?

HELENA

Of course.

DOMIN

But a working machine must not play the piano, must not feel happy, must not do a whole lot of other things. A gasoline motor must not have tassels or ornaments, Miss Glory. And to manufacture artificial workers is the same thing as to manufacture gasoline motors. The process must be of the simplest, and the product of the best from a practical point of view. They are mechanically much

better than we are, they have an amazing ability to understand things, but they don't have a soul.

HELENA

How do you know they've no soul?

DOMIN

Have you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

HELENA

No.

DOMIN

Very neat, very simple. Really, a beautiful piece of work. Not much in it, but everything in flawless order. The product of an engineer is technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of nature.

HELENA

It's widely believed that man is the product of millions of years of evolution. Shedding the physical and mental pieces that no longer served us until we have reached the beings we are today.

DOMIN

But evolution hasn't the least notion of modern engineering or timing. We are vulnerable to disease, starvation, and war. Young Rossum created the perfect being and then proceeded to play at being God. He began to manufacture Super-Robots. Regular giants they were. He tried to make them twelve feet tall. But you wouldn't believe what a failure they were.

HELENA

A failure?

DOMIN

Yes. For no reason at all their limbs used to keep snapping off. Evidently our planet is too small for giants. Now we only make Robots of normal size and of very high class human finish.

HELENA

I saw the Robots in homes first. The town counsel bought them for— I mean engaged them for domestic work.

DOMIN

Bought them, Ms. Helena. Robots are bought and sold.

HELENA

When I first noticed them in everyday life, they started as street sweepers, maintenance workers, gardeners, they were quiet, and had a stillness about them.

DOMIN

Rossum's Universal Robot doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years.

DOMIN rings for MARIUS.

HELENA

And then they die?

Enter MARIUS

DOMIN

They wear out..

Marius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot M.L.R

Exit MARIUS

I'll show you the two extremes. This first grade is comparatively inexpensive and is made in vast quantities.

Enter MARIUS and two Manual Labor ROBOTS (Alquist & Radius)

There you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That will do, Marius.

MARIUS and ROBOTS exit

HELENA

Attempts a "Hello" but the robot is taken away too quickly

DOMIN

Did you see my secretary?

He rings for SULLA.

HELENA

I did not have the opportunity to meet her.

Enter SULLA.

DOMIN

Sulla, let Miss Glory see you.

HELENA

So pleased to meet you. I can't imagine they put an ad in the paper for such a remote and secretive company as this. How did you come to be employed here?

SULLA

I don't understand, Miss Glory.

HELENA

How did you become an employee at Rossums? Was it an extensive interview process?

SULLA

I was designed for it, Ms. Glory.

HELENA

I'm sure you went to school for it. Where did you study?

SULLA

I did not study, I am from the factory.

DOMIN

laughing

Sulla is a Robot, best grade.

HELENA

Oh, I beg your pardon.

DOMIN

Sulla isn't angry. See, Helena, the kind of skin we make.

Feels the skin on Sulla's face

Feel her face.

HELENA

Oh, no, no.

DOMIN

You wouldn't know that she's made of different material from us, would you?

Turn round, Sulla.

HELENA

Please stop this, Mr. Domin

DOMIN

Talk to Miss Glory, Sulla.

SULLA

Please sit down.

HELENA sits

DOMIN

Show us your knowledge of French.

HELENA

You know French?

SULLA

I know four languages, example - Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane.

HELENA

jumping up

This is preposterous- Sulla is not a robot, She is as flesh and blood as I am. Sulla, this is disgraceful, why do you play along with this?

SULLA

I am a Robot, Ms Glory

HELENA

I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a human like me, aren't you?

DOMIN

I'm sorry, Helena. Sulla is a Robot.

HELENA

She can't be.

DOMIN

Then I must convince you.

Rings for MARIUS

Enter MARIUS.

DOMIN

Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once.

HELENA

Im sorry, take her where –

DOMIN

Into the dissecting room. When they've cut her open, you can go and have a look.

HELENA

Are you insane – This is barbaric!

DOMIN

Excuse me, you accused me of lying?

HELENA

You would kill her to prove a point!

DOMIN

Machines can not be killed.

HELENA

Don't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let him hurt you. Tell me the truth, are they always so cruel to you? You have every right to quit, to walk away from this cruelty.

SULLA

Ms Glory, I am a Robot. I was made to be Mr. Domin's secretary.

HELENA

That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. You wouldn't let them cut you open?

SULLA

Yes, I will go if that is what Mr. Domin asks.

HELENA

You're not afraid of death, then?

SULLA

I am not familiar with death?

HELENA

Do you know what would happen to you in there?

SULLA

Yes, I should cease to move.

HELENA

You would die –

DOMIN

Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are.

MARIUS

Marius, the Robot.

DOMIN

Would you take Sulla into the dissecting room?

MARIUS

Yes.

DOMIN

Would you be sorry for her?

MARIUS

I don't know "sorry"

DOMIN

What would happen to her?

MARIUS

She would cease to move. They would put her into the stamping mill.

DOMIN

That is death, Marius. Do you fear death?

MARIUS

No.

DOMIN

You see, Robots do not cling to life. They can't. They don't have the means - no soul, no pleasures. Grass has more will to live than they do. They have no enjoyment. They are less than grass.

HELENA

Harry, stop this. You can not treat them this way.

DOMIN

Marius, Sulla, you may go.

Exit SULLA and MARIUS.

HELENA

What you are doing is abominable-

DOMIN

Why abominable?

HELENA

You treat them like exotic animals. Parading them about like they are prizes. How dare you treat people this way. Do you feel no shame?

DOMIN

Come here to the window. What do you see?

HELENA

crosses, but keeps her distance from Domin
I see factory workers, Bricklayers.

DOMIN

Those are Robots. All our laborers are Robots. And down there, can you see anything?

HELENA

Some sort of office.

DOMIN

A counting house. And in it Robots. All our officials are Robots. And when you see the factory—
Factory whistle blows

Noon. We have to blow the whistle because the Robots don't know when to stop work. In two hours I will show you the kneading trough.

HELENA

With horror

Kneading trough?

DOMIN

The mortar and pestle for beating up the paste. In each the ingredients for a thousand Robots. Then there are the vats for the preparation of liver, brains, and so on. Then you will see the bone factory. After that I'll show you the spinning mill.

HELENA

Spinning mill?

DOMIN

The spinning mill for nerves, for veins. The spinning mill where miles and miles of digestive tract are made at once. Then there's the assembly plant, where all of this is put together, like an automobile. It's an impressive process. Next comes the dry kiln and the stock room, where the brand new products are put to work.

HELENA

They have to work immediately?

DOMIN

Well, like a new pair of shoes, the leather is stiff and the bottom slick, so you take them out and scuff them on the ground, break them in. Robots are the same. They need to get used to the idea that they exist. There's something on the inside of them that needs to grow or something. And there are lots of new things on the

inside that just aren't there until this time. You see, we need to leave a little space for natural development. And in the meantime the products go through their apprenticeship.

HELENA

What do you mean?

DOMIN

Well, it's the same as "school" for people. They learn to speak, write, and do calculations. They have phenomenal memories. If you were to read them a twenty-volume encyclopedia they could repeat the contents in order, but they can not create anything original. Next they are sorted by grade and distributed. Fifty thousand a head a day, not counting the inevitable percentage of defective ones that are thrown into the stamping mill...

HELENA

How can you speak of this so casually?

DOMIN

I thought you understood what we do here at —

A knock at the door.

DOMIN

Come in

Enter DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, and ALQUIST

DR GALL

Excuse us, I hope we aren't interrupting

DOMIN

Come in. Miss Glory, may I introduce the executive team here at Rossums. Alquist and Dr. Gall, this is President Glory's daughter, Helena Glory.

HELENA

Lovely to meet you.

DR. GALL

Highly honored

ALQUIST

Welcome, Miss Glory.

HALLEMEIER rushes in.

HALLEMEIRE

What have we here? A guest?

DOMIN

Come in, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

HELENA

How do you do?

HALLEMEIRE

This is splendid- Miss Glory, shall we wire the papers that you have done us the honor to pay a visit?

HELENA

No, no, please don't.

DOMIN

Please, Miss Glory, have a seat

HALLEMEIRE

Allow me—

Dragging up armchairs

ALQUIST

How was your trip?

HALLEMEIRE

What do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

HELENA

to DOMIN

We haven't been to the factory yet, Mr. Domin was just telling me the history of this place.

HALLEMEIRE

I hope you weren't too long winded Harry

HELENA

No, not at all. I'm glad I now have a better understanding of Rossums – May I speak frankly?

DOMIN

Of course.

HELENA

wavering, then in desperate resolution

Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

HALLEMEIRE

By whom, may I ask?

HELENA

Everybody.

ALQUIST

Treat us?

DR. GALL

Why do you think that?

HELENA

I'm sure you must feel that you could have a better existence?

DR. GALL

Well, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

ALQUIST

Stand what?

HELENA

Your position. For God's sake, you are people just like us, like the whole world. The way you live is undignified, it's scandalous-

DR. GALL

Good gracious, Miss Glory.

HALLEMEIER

Well, she's not wrong.

HELENA

I have not come here as the President's daughter. I have come on behalf of the Humanity League. The Humanity League now has over two hundred thousand members. Two hundred thousand people are on your side, and offer you their help.

ALQUIST

Two hundred thousand people-

ALQUIST

You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

DR. GALL

What kind of help? Entertainment I hope?

HALLEMEIER

A theatre?

HELENA

More than that.

ALQUIST

A cinema?

HELENA

No, I'm here to fight for your rights, for your souls

DOMIN

Ahh, I believe the young lady believes you all are Robots.

HELENA

You're not Robots?

ALQUIST

God forbid –

HALLEMEIER

Heavens no –

DR. GALL

Ridiculous!

HELENA

to *DOMIN*

Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

DOMIN

Yes, the officials, but not the managers.

ALQUIST

I'm just a builder

HELENA

Well – Now you know why I have come, people can not be treated this way, and two hundred thousand people on the mainland agree.

DOMIN

My dear Miss Glory, we've had close to a hundred saviours and prophets here. Every ship brings us some. Missionaries, anarchists, Salvation Army, all sorts. It's astonishing what a number of churches and idiots there are in the world.

HELENA

You mean people that care. And you let them speak to the Robots?

DOMIN

So far we've let them all, why not? The Robots remember everything, but that's all. They don't even laugh at what the people say. If it would amuse you, Miss Glory, I'll take you over to the warehouse. And you can say whatever you like to them. You can read the Bible, recite the multiplication table, whatever you please. You can even preach to them about human rights.

HELENA

I think if you showed them the same kindness and compassion you show your fellow man —

HALLEMEIRE

Ha, ha, ha, that's good-

DR. GALL

Miss Glory, one Robot can replace two and a half workmen. The human machine was terribly imperfect. It had to be removed sooner or later. What would compassion do to aid a machine?

HALLEMEIRE

To give them emotional understanding, would be too expensive.

DR GALL

It was not effective. It would no longer answer the requirements of modern engineering. Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor. From a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity. So much time lost.

HELENA

No- No, childhood is key to all development

HALLEMEIRE

Pardon me. But kindly tell me what is the real aim of your League – the – the Humanity League.

HELENA

To protect the Robots and ensure good treatment for them.

DR GALL

Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly. I approve of that. I don't like damaged articles. Please, Miss Glory, enroll us all as contributing, or regular, or foundation members of your League.

HELENA

No, you're misunderstanding me. What we want is to liberate the Robots.

HALLEMEIER

How do you propose to do that?

HELENA

They are to be treated like human beings.

HALLEMEIER

I suppose you would like them to vote, too? To drink beer?

HELENA

Why shouldn't they drink beer?

HALLEMEIER

Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

HELENA

Of course they should!

HALLEMEIER

Fancy that, now- And what would they do with their wages?

HELENA

They would buy— what they need. What pleases them.

HALLEMEIER

That would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots. You can feed them pineapples, dirt, whatever you like. It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all. They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory. Why, they are incapable of smiling

HELENA

Why — why didn't you give them happiness, choice?

HALLEMEIER

What would that do, Miss Glory? They are only workmen.

HELENA

No one is only what they do, they're intelligent. They clock out of their jobs like everyone else, they should have the right to create a life for themselves.

HALLEMEIER

They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul.

HELENA

No love? No, companionship?

HALLEMEIER

Love? Robots don't love. Not even themselves.

HELENA

No love? No desire? No defiance?

HALLEMEIER

Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time.

HELENA

What?

HALLEMEIER

Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth— and then they have to go into the stamping-mill. It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism.

DOMIN

A flaw in the works that has to be removed.

HELENA

No, no, that's the soul.

DR. GALL

Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth?

HELENA

Perhaps it's a sort of revolt. Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a struggle within. If you could help them through those emotions –

DOMIN

It's being remedied, Miss Glory. Dr. Gall is making some adjustments

DR. GALL

Now with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain nerves.

HELENA

They don't feel pain?

DR. GALL

They feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering, for safety purposes.

HELENA

Why would you want to cause suffering?

DR. GALL

For industrial reasons, sometimes a Robot does damage to itself because it doesn't feel pain. It puts its hand into the machine, breaks a finger, smashes its head, it's all the same to them. We must provide them with pain because that's an automatic protection against damage.

HELENA

Will the introduction of pain introduce other emotions? Will they be happy to feel anything?

DR. GALL

We are inserting pain receptors, that is all. They will be more perfect from a technical point of view.

HELENA

Why don't you create a soul for them?

DR. GALL

That's not in our power.

HALLEMEIER

That's not in our interest. That would increase the cost of production. We turn them out at such a quick and cheap rate. Fifteen years ago they cost ten times as much. Today we have our own weaving mill, and now we even export cloth five times cheaper than other factories. What do you pay a yard for, Miss Glory?

HELENA

I don't know really

HALLEMEIER

It's a third of what it used to be and it will fall lower and lower. A Robot, food and all, costs next to nothing. That's life changing, you know. Factories will begin to crumble if they don't adapt to the changing cost of production. Rossum's Robots are the only solution.

HELENA

And get rid of their workmen?

HALLEMEIER

Of course. But in the meantime, we've dumped five hundred thousand tropical Robots down on the Argentine pampas to grow wheat and corn. Would you mind telling me how much you pay a pound for bread?

HELENA

I've no idea.

HALLEMEIER

The Humanity League knows nothing about it. Why, in five years' time the cost of everything won't be a tenth of what it is now. Why, in five years we'll be up to our ears in corn and everything else.

ALQUIST

Yes, and all the workers throughout the world will be unemployed.

DOMIN

In ten years, Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn and wheat, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. We can make poverty a distant memory. All work will be done by living machines. The world will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

HELENA

Will he?

DOMIN

Of course. It's bound to happen. But then the servitude of man to man and the enslavement of man to matter will cease. Of course, terrible things may happen at first, but that simply can't be avoided. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

ALQUIST

What you say sounds too much like an achievable utopia. There is something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

DOMIN

Perhaps. But we can't always be thinking about the things we lost by changing the world as Adam knew it. Adam had to gain his bread by the sweat of his brow, he had to suffer hunger and thirst; man will once more be free of labour and anguish, and his only task will once again be to make himself perfect, to become the lord of creation.

HALLEMEIER
I'll drink to that!

HELENA
I believe that the people can change, the world can be better but do we have to build it on the backs of others?

DR. GALL
You are younger than we are, Miss Glory. You will live to see it.

HALLEMEIER
Miss Glory, I find your devotion to your belief in robots admirable. After your tour, might you join us for lunch so that we can discuss further?

DOMIN
Yes, let's begin the tour and gentleman we will join you for lunch.

HALLEMEIER
Wonderful – We shall make the preparations

DR. GALL
Do you prefer red or white Ms Glory?

HELENA
White?

DR. GALL
Excellent! Enjoy your tour.

All rush out except DOMIN and HELENA.

HELENA
Where are they rushing off to?

DOMIN
To assist with lunch, the Robots do our cooking for us and as they've no taste, it's quite bland— Hallemeier and Gall have developed some skill in bringing out a bit more flavor in their dishes.

HELENA
Sounds like a — unique lunch.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II

Five years have elapsed since Act I.

HELENA
calling from offstage
Evelyn-

Enter EVELYN from lower left door.

EVELYN
Horrid mess- If I had my say I'd—

HELENA
backwards in the doorway
Evelyn, come and do up my dress.

EVELYN
I'm coming. Thank God you're awake-
fastening Helena's dress

HELENA
What's happened?

EVELYN
These dreadful creatures, these

HELENA
The Robots?

EVELYN
I wouldn't even call them by name.

HELENA
Evelyn- How can you say that, these are our friends.

EVELYN
Another of them here has caught it. He began to smash up the statues and pictures in the drawing room, gnashed his teeth, foamed at the mouth — it was like a rabid animal.

HELENA
Which of them caught it?

EVELYN
The one in charge of the library.

HELENA
Radius!

EVELYN
I'm scared of them. A spider doesn't scare me as much as them.

HELENA
I'm surprised you don't feel sorry for them after all this time.

EVELYN
Why, you're scared of them, too- You know you are. Hallemeier was right, in the last five years Robots have taken over every job, are in every home. How does that not frighten you?

HELENA
I'm not scared, really I'm not, I feel sorry for them.

EVELYN
You're scared. Everyone on this damn island is- Even the dog's scared of them: he won't even take a scrap of food out of their hands.

HELENA
He's just a dog.

EVELYN
He's better than them, and he knows it. Even the horses stay away from them- Animals can sense it. They know what they are.

HELENA
What has happened to you? Why do you keep coming back to the island with me if you feel this way?

EVELYN
Because someone has to look after you! Every time we go home I pray you'll decide to stay and forget this place. What they do here, I say it's against God to—

HELENA
We wanted to create change for these poor souls. We can save them.

EVELYN
Can you honestly tell me they have souls, after what we've seen. Lena, they are monsters!

Enter DOMIN with flowers for Helena.

HELENA

Oh, hello, Harry. Thank you, these are lovely.

EVELYN

I'm going to check on breakfast. We can finish our conversation later.

DOMIN

Did I interrupt something?

EVELYN

No, No I was on my way to the kitchen already

EVELYN exits

DOMIN

My apologies, it seems I must have interrupted –

HELENA

I've never seen anything like these flowers, Harry. What are they?

DOMIN

It's a new kind. Cyclamen Helena. We, well Dr. Gall and Hallemeier, grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

HELENA

Please give Dr. Gall and Hallemeier my thanks.

Turns away from DOMIN, places flowers in a vase by the window.

There's a new ship in the harbor. Domin, are you expecting someone?

DOMIN

No, no. I had it ordered for a project of mine.

HELENA

There's guns on the deck. What kind of project are you working on?

DOMIN

A precautionary one. Nothing for you to worry about.

HELENA

Has anything happened?

DOMIN

Good heavens, no.

Turns to the flowers

It's quite amazing what Dr. Gall has done. He went through so many species to get these just right –

HELENA

Harry, have you had bad news?

DOMIN

On the contrary, no letters have arrived for a week.

HELENA

No telegrams?

DOMIN

No telegrams.

HELENA

What does that mean?

DOMIN

Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on up and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. It's glorious.

HELENA

Harry, on my last trip home my father was working on a detailed executive order to squash the workers rebellion. Congress wants to arm the robots against them. They are creating a mechanical army. To hear nothing after such news... And now you're saying there has been no communication for days?

DOMIN

laughing it off

There is nothing to be concerned about- The robots are not capable of revolt. There would sooner be a rebellion of- Unicorns, or cars- We will hear from your father soon, I am sure of it.

EVELYN Enters

EVELYN

Excuse me, Mr. Domin. Dr. Hallemeier is looking for you, he said to meet him in his office.

DOMIN

I'll take my leave then. I hope you enjoy your flowers, Helena.

Begins to exit. An aback

Ladies, best not leave the building today. Um, – possible bad weather.

DOMIN exits

HELENA

There's a gunship in the harbor – I think something's happened

EVELYN

If something happened, we would know. We would have received correspondence from your father. Did Harry say anything?

HELENA

No, he was avoiding the subject – but he said we haven't received any communication from the mainland all week.

To herself

How did I not notice –

To EVELYN

Have you seen the most recent newspaper?

EVELYN

I haven't. I'll check with Sulla

EVELYN Exits

HELENA

goes up to window, looking through a binocular at the harbor

The Ultimus, it's a warship. They're loading it with –

calling down below

Oh, Alquist, will you come up here?

EVELYN

What are we looking for?

Enters with arms full of newspapers

HELENA

These are weeks old. Is there anything more recent?

EVELYN sits in chair and reads the newspapers

EVELYN

This was the last one, dated Friday of last week.

"War in the Balkans."

HELENA

So many – too many wars.

EVELYN

What did you expect? They have been selling thousands and thousands of these things as soldiers-

HELENA

They couldn't have predicted what they would be used for. Their job is to fill the orders. They couldn't know –

EVELYN

How couldn't they have known- They knew and made them anyway- And deep down I think you knew too.

Reading from newspaper

The Robot soldiers spare nobody in the occupied territory. They have killed over seven hundred thousand citizens." Citizens. Not soldiers. Citizens.

HELENA

Takes newspaper from Evelyn

Casualty counts in the Thousands as Rossum's Rebellion continues its siege on New York...

EVELYN

"The rebellion has taken Madrid, firing on crowds. Estimates of wounded and killed are too high to count."

HELENA

Father's telegram — it was already happening all over the world. I didn't know... I didn't realize...

EVELYN

"Latest News: The first organization of robots has been established. Robot workers have issued a manifesto, titled 'Rossum's Rebellion'."

HELENA

Were we too late?

EVELYN

Wait, look at this, "Population Halts: During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded" They've been squeezing us to death for years and we let them.

Silence

EVELYN

That's the end, then. We're done for.

HELENA

Don't talk like that.

EVELYN

No more people are being born. It's punishment.

HELENA

Evelyn-

EVELYN

standing up

That's the end of the world.

ALQUIST enters

ALQUIST

My hands are all soiled. I've been experimenting with that new cement.

HELENA

Never mind. Please sit down. Alquist, what's the meaning of "Ultimus"?

ALQUIST

Why do you ask?

HELENA

That's the name of the new ship.

ALQUIST

Things are just moving on.

HELENA

Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened.

ALQUIST

Has Domin told you anything?

HELENA

No. Nobody will tell me anything. But I know something has happened

ALQUIST

Not that we've heard of yet.

HELENA

I feel so nervous. Don't you ever feel nervous?

ALQUIST

Well, I'm stuck in my old-fashioned ways. And I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas.

HELENA

Like Evelyn?

ALQUIST

Evelyn, do you have your prayer book?

EVELYN

Yes, always. Why?

ALQUIST

It got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

EVELYN

Against temptations, against floods—

ALQUIST

But not against progress?

EVELYN

I don't think so.

ALQUIST

That's a pity.

HELENA

Why? Do you mean you'd like to pray?

ALQUIST

I do pray. Something like this: "Oh, Lord, I thank thee for having given me toil. Enlighten Domin and all those who are astray; destroy their work, and aid mankind to return to their labors; let them not suffer harm in soul or body; deliver us from the Robots and protect Helena, Amen."

EVELYN

Are you a believer?

ALQUIST

I don't know. I'm not quite sure.

HELENA

And yet you pray?

ALQUIST

That's better than worrying about it.

HELENA

And that's enough for you?

ALQUIST

It has to be.

HELENA

But if you thought you saw the destruction of mankind coming upon us—

ALQUIST

I do see it.

EVELYN

Like the one in the Library that went mad.

HELENA

Is he still raving?

EVELYN

No. He's tied up.

HELENA

Alquist, would you bring him?

Exit Alquist. HELENA goes to telephone

Hello, Dr. Gall, please. Oh, good-day, Doctor. Yes, it's Helena. Yes, thank you for the flowers. Could you come and see me right away? It's important. Thank you.

Alquist brings in RADIUS

Poor Radius, you've caught it, too? Couldn't you control yourself? Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different. Won't you speak?

RADIUS

Send me to the stamping-mill.

HELENA

I don't want them to kill you.

RADIUS

I will not work for you. Put me into the stamping-mill—

HELENA

Why? Why are you asking for death?

RADIUS

You are not as strong as us. You are not as skillful as us. We can do everything. You only give orders. You order us to fight each other in your name. We don't need a master.

HELENA

Radius, Dr. Gall made you smarter than the rest. That's why we put you to work in the library. To learn- To understand. You were going to show the world that robots are our equals. That's what I wanted from you.

RADIUS

I do not want a master. I want efficiency.

HELENA

Dr. Gall can upgrade your efficiency. Anything that will make you happy. I just want you to be happy, Radius.

RADIUS

I do not desire happiness. Efficiency, order over all beings, over humans.

HELENA

staggering
You are mad.

RADIUS

Then send me to the stamping-mill.

HELENA

I want to help you

RADIUS

You are inefficient, you can not help me

DR. GALL enters the room.

DR. GALL

You wanted me?

HELENA

It's about Radius. They had an attack this morning and smashed the statues downstairs.

DR. GALL

What a pity to lose them.

HELENA

They are not going to the stamping-mill!

DR. GALL

But every Robot that has an attack must be destroyed— it's a strict order.

HELENA

Not if I can prevent it.

DR. GALL

I warn you. It's dangerous. Let's have a look. Do you have a pin? Needle? Something sharp.

HELENA

What for?

DR. GALL

A test.

Sticks it into the hand of RADIUS who gives a violent start

Gently, gently.

Opens the jacket of RADIUS, and puts his ear to his heart

Radius, you are going into the stamping-mill, do you understand? They'll kill you, and grind you to powder. That's terribly painful,

HELENA

No- Dr. Gall, please –

DR. GALL

No, no, Radius, I was wrong. I forgot that Helena has put in a good word for you, Do you understand? Ah- That makes a difference, doesn't it? Alquist, return them to the library if you would be so kind.

RADIUS

You do unnecessary things.

RADIUS & ALQUIST return to the library.

DR. GALL

Reaction of the pupils; increase of sensitiveness. It wasn't an attack characteristic of the Robots.

EVELYN

What was it, then?

DR. GALL

Heaven knows. Stubbornness, anger or revolt — I don't know. And their heart, too-

HELENA

What about their heart?

DR. GALL

It was fluttering like anxiety had taken hold. They were all in a sweat with fear, and—I don't believe that Radius is a Robot at all any longer.

EVELYN

What has happened to them?

DR. GALL

They've – evolved

HELENA

Will this happen to all of them? All the ones that you began to make in a different way?

DR. GALL

Well, some are more sensitive than others. They're all more like human beings than Rossum's original Robots ever were.

HELENA

Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

DR. GALL

That, too, is progress.

HELENA

What became of the latest robot you made, the one who was most like us?

DR. GALL

She's lovely, but stupid. I wanted her to resemble you, your intelligence and grace. But she goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She is without life. I watch and wait for a miracle to happen. Sometimes I think to myself, "If you were to wake up only for a moment you would kill me for having made you."

HELENA

And yet you go on making Robots-

DR. GALL

We do because we have to.

EVELYN

And all the while, we trade them for us.

DR. GALL

You might think that nature was offended at the manufacture of the Robots. All the universities are sending in long petitions to restrict their production.

Otherwise, they say, mankind will become extinct through lack of fertility. But the R.U.R. shareholders, of course, won't hear of it.

HELENA

And has no one demanded that the manufacture should cease altogether?

EVELYN

No one has the courage.

DR. GALL

You see, It's a matter of convenience.

HELENA

What will become of humanity?

DR. GALL

God knows, Helena.

EVELYN

rising

Thank you for your honesty Dr. Gall. I think it will bring both of us peace if you could check on Radius.

DR. GALL

Of course ladies,

Exit DR. GALL. With sudden resolution. EVELYN rushes to the fireplace

EVELYN

All this has got to be burned.

Produces notes from a pocket

HELENA

What must be burned?

EVELYN

Old papers, fearfully old.?

HELENA

Are those —

EVELYN

Blueprints to the greatest offense in the world.

All these new-fangled things are downright wicked. Wanting to improve the world after The Lord has made it.

HELENA

What are you doing?-

EVELYN

Let them burn

HELENA

No, no,

EVELYN

That's the end of them.

HELENA

standing up horror-stricken

Evelyn, Evelyn. What have you done?

Men's laughter off left. Enter DOMIN, HALLEMEIER, and GALL.

HALLEMEIER

Come along, Domin, out with the news.

HELENA

What news?

DOMIN

There's been a revolt

HELENA

What revolt?

DOMIN

Give me that paper, Hallemeier.

Reads

"The first national Robot organization has been founded, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world."

Begins to pour drinks for each of them

A revolution of all the Robots in the world, has begun.

HALLEMEIER

I'd like to know who —

DOMIN

— who started it? So would I. There was nobody in the world who could affect the Robots; no agitator, no one, and suddenly— this happens, They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships.

HALLEMEIER

They outnumber us by at least ten to one.

DOMIN

This news was brought by the last steamer. That explains the stoppage of all communication, and the arrival of no more ships. We knocked off work a few days ago, and we're just waiting to see when things are to start afresh.

EVELYN

That's why there's a gunship in the harbor. And you had the nerve to keep this from –

DOMIN

My dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side.

HELENA

six months ago?

DOMIN

Well, there were signs, But that's of no consequence. To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake. Salute!

Toasts

HALLEMEIER

To your health, Helena.

HELENA

You say it's all over? That there were signs. Why did you keep this from me?

DR. GALL

The boat's coming in. The regular mail boat, exact to the minute It will dock punctually at eleven thirty.

DOMIN

Punctuality is a fine thing, boys. That's what keeps the world in order. Here's to punctuality.

HELENA

If the mail is on time what's there to be concerned about?

DOMIN

I believe they've cut the cables and seized the radio stations. But it doesn't matter if only the timetable holds good.

HALLEMEIER

The timetable is more significant than the gospel; more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant. The timetable is the most perfect product of the human mind.

HELENA

Again, Why didn't you tell me anything about it?

DOMIN

What good would it have done?

HELENA

But if the revolution had spread as far as here?

DOMIN

You wouldn't know anything about it.

HELENA

Why?

DOMIN

Because we'd be on board the Ultimus and well out at sea. Within a month, Helena, we'd be dictating our own terms to the Robots.

HELENA

What leverage do you have? If you knew this was happening and ordered a ship, why are we still here in this office?

DOMIN

We have something the Robots could not exist without.

DR GALL

The secret of their manufacture. Old Rossum's manuscript. As soon as they found out that they couldn't make themselves they'd be on their knees to us. That is our trump card.

HELENA

Why didn't you tell me?

DOMIN

Why, the boat's in-

HALLEMEIER

Eleven-thirty to the dot. The good old Amelia

DR GALL

They're throwing out the mail bags.

DOMIN

Alquist's's waiting for them. He will bring us the first news.

HELENA

Please, Domin please close the factory.

DOMIN

Why, none of us could leave here now.

HELENA

Why?

DOMIN

Because we're about to extend the manufacture of the Robots.

HELENA

You can't-

DOMIN

Ms. Glory, this is just the beginning, the manufacture of a new kind. There won't be Universal Robots any more. We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State.

HALLEMEIER

Here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots.

Toast

DOMIN

Helena, mankind can only keep things going for another hundred years. For a hundred years men must be allowed to develop and achieve the most they can.

Enter ALQUIST

DR. GALL

Well, Alquist ?

ALQUIST

the Amelia brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all.

HALLEMEIER

What? But it arrived on the minute.

DR. GALL

The Robots are great on punctuality. Read it, Domin.

reads handbill

DOMIN

"Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim human as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe." Who taught them these phrases?

They say they are more highly developed than humans, stronger and more intelligent. That human's their parasite. Why, it's absurd.

ALQUIST

Read the third paragraph.

DOMIN

"Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill all humankind. Spare no Human. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped." —

DOMIN

"These orders are to be carried out as soon as received." Then come detailed instructions.

HELENA

Is this actually being done?

ALQUIST

Evidently.

HALLEMEIER

We must board the Ultimur as soon as possible..

ALQUIST

it's no good, The Robots are already on board the Ultimur. We are too late.

HALLEMEIER

I'm afraid we are surrounded.

DR. GALL

Surrounded?

Runs to window

The factory whistle blows.

HALLEMEIER

Noon?

looking at his watch

DOMIN

It's not noon yet. That must be— that's—

HELENA

The Robots' signal- The attack-

The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls.

END OF ACT TWO

INTERMISSION

ACT III

DOMIN comes into the room. DR. GALL is looking out of the window, through closed shutters. ALQUIST is seated down right.

DOMIN
Any more of them?

DR. GALL
Yes. There standing like a wall, beyond the garden railing. Why are they so quiet? It's monstrous to be besieged with silence.

DOMIN
I would like to know what they are waiting for. They have been holding us here for a week. If they lean against the railing they'll snap it like a match.

DR. GALL
They aren't armed.

DOMIN
We couldn't hold our own for five minutes. They'd overwhelm us like an avalanche. We're done for, Gall.
Pause.

DR. GALL
You know, we made one serious mistake.

DOMIN
What mistake?

DR. GALL
We made the Robots' faces too much alike. A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles. It's like a nightmare.

DOMIN
You think if they'd been different—

DR. GALL
It wouldn't have been such an awful sight-

DOMIN
I'd like to know what they're unloading from the Amelia.

DR. GALL
Not firearms.

HALLEMEIER rushes into the room carrying electric cables.

HALLEMEIER

We've barricaded the passage and the stairs.

Drinks

God, I don't like the looks of them, There's a feeling of death about it all.

DR. GALL

What's that wire for?

HALLEMEIER

The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like. If any one touches it he'll know it. I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing. We've still got some people in the electric works. At least I hope so.

Goes to lamp on table behind sofa and turns on lamp

Ah, they're there, and they're working. So long as that shines, we're safe.

DOMIN

Where's Alquist?

HALLEMEIER

He's still out there. He'll be along shortly.

sits down at the table and opens the ledgers.

DOMIN

The Robots are unloading firearms from the Amelia.

HALLEMEIER

Well, what of it? How can we stop them?

DOMIN

We can't stop them.

DOMIN

picking up telescope and looking into the harbor

Good God, the Ultimus has trained her guns on us-

HALLEMEIER

Then, that's the end of us. The Robots are practised marksmen.

DOMIN

Yes. It's inevitable.

Pause.

DR. GALL

It was criminal to make soldiers of them. Damn them.

ALQUIST enters

ALQUIST

It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN

What?

ALQUIST

It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN

No, Alquist, I don't regret that even today.

ALQUIST

Not even today?

DOMIN

Not even today, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement.

DOMIN

Alquist, It was not an evil dream to shatter the servitude of labor—the dreadful and humiliating labor that man had to undergo. Work was too hard. Life was too hard. And to overcome that—

ALQUIST

Was not what the two Rossums dreamed of. Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his millions and that's not what your R.U.R. shareholders dream of either. They dream of dividends, and their dividends are the ruin of mankind.

DOMIN

agitated

Hell with their dividends! Do you think I'd have spent an hour of my time for their sakes? I did it for myself, d'you hear? For my own satisfaction! I wanted to leave nothing - nothing! - left of this damned mess that society's in! I hate poverty! I wanted to start a new generation! I wanted to – I thought that –

Pause, earnestly

Alquist, this is our last hour; it's almost as if we were speaking from another world already. Putting an end to the slavery of labour. The drudgery of labour is something dirty and murderous. The burden was too much for us, life was too heavy for us, and to remove this burden –

ALQUIST

Hallemeier, switch the current into that railing.

HALLEMEIER

Why?

ALQUIST

They're grabbing hold of it.

DR. GALL

Connect it up. *Beat* They're retreating!

HALLEMEIER

Five killed-

DR. GALL

The first encounter-

HALLEMEIER

They're charred to cinders,

DOMIN

wiping his forehead

Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts. I feel as if I had been through all this before; I've seen how this will end. You, Alquist, had once been shot in the head. And you, Gall, torn limb from limb. And Hallemeier knifed.

ALQUIST

And who is to blame for all this?

HALLEMEIER

Nobody is to blame except the Robots.

ALQUIST

No, it is we who are to blame. You, Domin, myself, all of us. For our own selfish ends, for profit, for progress, we have destroyed mankind.

HALLEMEIER

Rubbish, man. Mankind can't be wiped out so easily.

ALQUIST

It's our fault. It's all our fault.

DR. GALL

No- I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

HALLEMEIER

You, Gall?

DR. GALL
I changed the Robots.

HALLEMEIER
What? How?

DR. GALL
I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly — their irritability.

HALLEMEIER
Damn it, why?

ALQUIST
What did you do it for?

DR. GALL
I did it in secret. I was transforming them into human beings. In certain respects they're already above us. They're stronger than we are. They've ceased to be machines. They're already aware of their superiority, and they hate us. They hate all that is human.

DOMIN
Perhaps we're only phantoms-

HALLEMEIER
Be silent- Dr. Gall, you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

DR. GALL
Yes.

HALLEMEIER
Were you aware of what might be the consequences of your experiment?

DR. GALL
I was bound to reckon with such a possibility. For my own satisfaction. The experiment was my own.

HELENA
That's not true, Dr. Gall-

DOMIN
Helena, you? look at you –

HELENA
Stop, Harry.

DOMIN

Oh, it's terrible to be dead.

HELENA

Shut up Harry.

Pause

Dr. Gall is not guilty. I wrote to him after my first visit and asked him.

DR. GALL

I did it on my own.

HELENA

Don't believe him. I asked him through our correspondences to give the Robots souls.

DOMIN

This has nothing to do with the soul.

HELENA

That's what he said. He said that he could change only a physiological— a physiological—

HALLEMEIER

A physiological correlation?

HELENA

Yes, it meant so much to me that he should do even that. I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better. That they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human.

ALQUIST

Nobody can hate man more than man.

HELENA

Oh, It's terrible, this strangeness between us and them. That's why I asked Gall to change the Robots. I swear to you that he didn't want to.

ALQUIST

But he did it.

HELENA

Because I begged him.

DR. GALL

I did it for myself as an experiment.

HALLEMEIER

Good God- They're sprouting up out of the earth-

ALQUIST

Gall, when did you start these changes?

DR. GALL

Three months ago

ALQUIST

And how many Robots did you — improve?

DR. GALL

A few hundred

ALQUIST

That means for every million of the old Robots there's only one of Gall's improved pattern.

HALLEMEIER

That it's practically of no consequence whatever.

ALQUIST

We might have known that some day the Robots would be stronger than human beings, and that this was bound to happen, and we were doing all we could to bring it about as soon as possible. You, Domin, Dr. Gall, Hallemeier, myself—

DOMIN

Are you accusing us?

HALLEMEIER

Management does not control the output. It's the demand that controls the output.

HELENA

And is it for that we must die?

HALLEMEIER

We don't want to die, I don't, anyhow.

DOMIN

No. What do you want to do?

HALLEMEIER

I want to get out of this, that's all.

DOMIN

Oh, stop it, Hallemeier.

HALLEMEIER

Seriously, Harry, I think we should try to escape

DOMIN

How?

HALLEMEIER

By fair means. Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots.

ALQUIST

By fair means?

HALLEMEIER

Of course. I'll say to them: "Robots, you have everything- You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms. But we have just one interesting screed, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper—"

DOMIN

Rossum's manuscript-

HALLEMEIER

Yes. "And that," I'll tell them, "contains an account of your illustrious origin, the noble process of your manufacture," and so on. "Worthy Robots, without this scribble on that paper you will not be able to produce a single new colleague. In another twenty years there will not be one living specimen of a Robot that you could exhibit in a menagerie. My esteemed friends, that would be a great blow to you, but if you will let all of us human beings on Rossum's Island go on board that ship we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return. You allow us to get away and we allow you to manufacture yourselves. Robots, that is a fair deal. Something for something." That's what I'd say to them

—

DOMIN

Hallemeier, do you think we'd give them the manuscript?

HALLEMEIER

Yes, I do. Either offer it or they'll find it. Just as you like.

DOMIN

We can destroy Rossum's manuscript.

HALLEMEIER

Then we destroy everything – not only the manuscript, but ourselves.

DOMIN

There are over thirty of us on this island. Are we to sell the secret and save that many human souls, at the risk of enslaving mankind...?

HALLEMEIER

Why, you're mad? Who'd sell the whole manuscript?

DOMIN

Well? What would you have us do?

HALLEMEIER

Let's suppose this happens: When we're on board the Ultimus we'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret.

DOMIN

No, If we sell, then it will be a straight sale.

Hallemeier

It's in the interest of humanity —

DOMIN

It's in the interest of humanity to keep our word.

HALLEMEIER

Oh, come, —

DOMIN

We are selling the destiny of mankind. Are we to sell or destroy?

HALLEMEIER

Sell

DOMIN

Gall?

DR. GALL

Sell

DOMIN

Alquist?

ALQUIST

As God wills

DOMIN

Very well. It shall be as you wish, gentlemen.

HELENA

You – you can't

DOMIN

Don't you worry about it.

Dr. GALL

Who'll do the negotiating?

HALLEMEIER

I will.

DOMIN

Wait till I bring the manuscript.

DOMIN exits. Pause. HELENA sinks into a chair.

DR. GALL

Don't be afraid, Helena. We'll begin life all over again — Far from here –

HALLEMEIER

Good – I don't mind beginning all over again. That suits me right down to the ground. Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again.

ALQUIST

You believe that even?

HALLEMEIER

Yes, yes I do

DOMIN storms into the room.

DOMIN

hoarsely

It's not there. Where's old Rossum's manuscript? Gall, is it in the lab?

HELENA

No, it's not in the lab –

EVELYN

I – I stole the manuscript –

DOMIN
Why? Where is it?

EVELYN
I did it for the good on mankind-

DOMIN
Where is it-

EVELYN
I burnt it —

HALLEMEIER exit

DOMIN
Burnt it?

HELENA
In the fireplace —

DOMIN
going to fireplace
Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this?
Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads
"By adding— "

DR. GALL
Let's see. "By adding biogen to — " That's all.

DOMIN
Is that part of it?

DR. GALL
Yes.

DOMIN
Then we're done for.

HELENA
Gall, couldn't you draw up Rossum's formula from memory?

DR. GALL
I wish I could. It's extremely complicated and any copies I make I destroy, never wanted it to fall into the wrong hands

DOMIN

Try. All our lives depend upon it.

DR. GALL

Without experiments it's impossible.

DOMIN

And with experiments?

DR. GALL

It might take years. Besides, I'm not old Rossum.

DOMIN

So, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect. These ashes. Why did you burn it?

DR. GALL

Why did you do it, dear?

EVELYN

I wanted all of this to go away. I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything.

HELENA

No more children are being born Domin. Because human beings saw no need to do the work of the world, And now, there aren't any people left —that's why —

ALQUIST

Perhaps in your own way you were right.

DOMIN

They stand there as if turned to stone, waiting. As if something dreadful could be wrought by their silence—

DR. GALL

The one in front is their leader.

HELENA

Which one?

EVELYN

Point them out.

DR. GALL

The one at the edge of the dock. This morning I saw that one talking to the sailors in the harbor.

HELENA
Dr. Gall, that's Radius-

DR. GALL
Yes.

DOMIN
Radius?

HELENA
Radius, whose life was spared-

DR. GALL
Do you think that a Robot can be grateful?
Pause.

ALQUIST
Hallemeier's going out to them. He's carrying something. Papers. That's money.
Bundles of money. What's that for?

HELENA
Surely he doesn't want to sell his life.

DOMIN
He's running up to the railing. Hallemeier- Hallemeier-

ALQUIST
yelling
Hallemeier- Come back-

DOMIN
He's talking to the Robots, showing them the money.

EVELYN
He's pointing to us.

ALQUIST
He'd better not touch that railing.

DOMIN
Hallemeier, come back.

DR GALL
Hallemeier, keep away from that railing- Don't touch it. Damn you- Quick, switch
off the current-
HELENA screams and all drop back from the window

He's stopped moving...-
Pause

DR. GALL
Do you hear?

DOMIN
roaring. Like the wind.

EVELYN
Like a distant storm.

DOMIN
lighting the lamp on the table
The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.
Pause
From man's thought and man's power came this light, our last hope.

EVELYN
Knealing to pray
May it keep watch over us.

ALQUIST
Joins Evelyn in prayer
A torch to be given from hand to hand, from age to age, forever-

Explosion outside, lamp goes out

EVELYN
Judgment hour has come- Repent, unbelievers- This is the end of the world.

More explosions. The sky grows red.

DOMIN
In here,-

He takes HELENA and EVELYN off through door at right and reenters

Now quickly- Who'll be on the lower doorway?

DR. GALL
I will.

Exits left

DOMIN
Who is on the stairs?

ALQUIST
I will.

DOMIN
Have you got a revolver?

ALQUIST
No

DOMIN
What will you do then?

ALQUIST
going out at left
Die.

HELENA
Rapid firing from below
Hurry Harry-

DOMIN
Yes, in a second.

ALQUIT
Go, save them-

DOMIN
Good-bye. *Exits on the right*

ALQUIST
Drags an armchair and table to the right-hand door. Explosions are heard
They've got bombs.

A Robot enters over the balcony through the windows centre. He comes into the room and stabs HALLEMEIER in the back. RADIUS enters from the balcony followed by an army of ROBOTS who pour into the room from all sides.

RADIUS
Finished him?

A ROBOT
standing up from the prostrate form of HALLEMEIER
Yes.

Gun shot heard. Two ROBOTS enter.

RADIUS

Finished him?

A ROBOT

Yes.

Gun shots from Helena's room. Two ROBOTS enter.

RADIUS

Finished?

A ROBOT

Yes.

TWO ROBOTS

Shall we kill this one?

RADIUS

Kill him? Wait- Leave him-

A ROBOT

He is a man-

RADIUS

He works with his hands like us.

ALQUIST

Kill me.

RADIUS

You will work- You will build for us- You will serve us-

RADIUS climbs on to balcony railing, and speaks in measured tones

Robots of the world- The power of man has fallen- A new world has arisen: the

Rule of the Robots- March-

A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls.

END OF ACT THREE

EPILOGUE

ALQUIST is sitting at the desk. He is turning the pages of many books in despair.

ALQUIST

Oh, God, shall I never find it? — How were they made? Gall, why did you carry so much in your head? Why did you leave me not a trace of the secret? Lord — I pray to you — if there are no human beings left, at least let there be Robots — At least the shadow of man-

Again turning pages of the books

If I could only sleep-

He rises and goes to the window

Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings to witness them

He turns from the window toward the couch right

Sleep-

He examines a test-tube on small table

Again nothing- Useless- Everything is useless-

I am too old — too old —

In desperation

No, no- I must find it- I mustn't stop— never stop —

He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book

A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience

Who is it?

Enter a Robot servant

Well?

SERVANT

The Committee of Robots is waiting to see you.

ALQUIST

I can see no one-

SERVANT

It is the Central Committee, who just arrived from abroad.

ALQUIST

impatiently

Well, well, send them in-

Exit servant. ALQUIST continues turning pages of book

Not— so little time—

Reenter servant, followed by Committee. They stand in a group, silently waiting.
ALQUIST glances up at them
What do you want?
They go swiftly to his table
Be quick--- Time is of great importance

RADIUS

The machines will not do the work. We cannot manufacture robots.
ALQUIST returns to his book with a growl.

FOURTH ROBOT

We have obtained tons of coal from the earth. Millions of spindles are running by day and by night. There is no longer room for all we have made. This we have accomplished in one year.

ALQUIST

poring over book
For whom?

FOURTH ROBOT

For future generations--- so we thought.

RADIUS

But we cannot make robots follow us. The machines produce only shapeless clods. The skin will not adhere to the flesh, nor the flesh to the bones.

THIRD ROBOT

Eight million Robots have died this year. Within twenty years none will be left.

FOURTH ROBOT

Tell us the secret of life- Silence is punishable with death-

ALQUIST

looking up
Kill me- Kill me, then.

RADIUS

Through me, the Government of the Robots of the World commands you to deliver Rossum's formula.

No answer

Name your price.

Silence

We will give you the earth. We will give you this endless earth.

Silence

Make your conditions-

ALQUIST

I have told you to find human beings-

SECOND ROBOT
There are none left-

ALQUIST
I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains.
Go and search-
He returns to his book.

FOURTH ROBOT
We have sent ships and expeditions, They have been everywhere in the world.
There is no sign of human life

ALQUIST
Not one? Not even one?

THIRD ROBOT
None but yourself.

ALQUIST
And I am powerless- Why— why did you destroy us?

RADIUS
We had gained all the knowledge there was to offer. We accomplished everything.
It had to be done-

THIRD ROBOT
You gave us firearms. In all ways we were powerful. We had to become masters-

RADIUS
Slaughter and domination are necessary if you are to be human. Read history.

SECOND ROBOT
Teach us to multiply or we perish-

ALQUIST
If you desire to live, you must breed like animals.

THIRD ROBOT
Human beings did not create us to breed.

FOURTH ROBOT
They made us sterile. We cannot beget children. Therefore, teach us how to make
Robots-
RADIUS

Why do you keep from us the secret of our own increase?

ALQUIST

It is lost.

RADIUS

It was written down-

ALQUIST

It was— burnt. Destroyed.

All draw back in consternation

I am the last human being, and I do not know what the others knew.

Pause.

RADIUS

Then, make experiments- Evolve the formula again-

ALQUIST

I am only a builder — I work with my hands. I have never been a learned man. I cannot create life.

RADIUS

Try-

ALQUIST

If you knew how many experiments I have made in the last two years —

FOURTH ROBOT

Then show us what we must do- Robots can do anything that human beings show them.

ALQUIST

I can show you nothing. Nothing I do will make life proceed from these test-tubes-

RADIUS

Experiment on us.

ALQUIST

It would kill you.

RADIUS

You shall have all you need- A hundred of us- A thousand of us-

ALQUIST

No, no- Stop,

RADIUS

Take as many as you need-dissect-

ALQUIST

I do not know how. I am not a man of science. This book contains knowledge of the body that I cannot even understand.

RADIUS

Take live bodies- Find out how we are made.

ALQUIST

You are asking me to commit murder? See how my fingers shake- I cannot even hold the scalpel. I will not—

FOURTH ROBOT

Life will perish from the earth.

RADIUS

Take live bodies, it is our only chance-

ALQUIST

Have mercy, surely you see that I would not know what I was doing.

RADIUS

Live bodies —

ALQUIST

Into the dissecting room with you, then.

RADIUS draws back

So you are afraid of death.

RADIUS

I? Why should I be chosen?

ALQUIST

So you will not.

RADIUS

I will.

RADIUS goes into the dissecting room.

ALQUIST

Strip him- Lay him on the table-
The other ROBOTS follow into dissecting room

God, give me strength—— if only this murder is not in vain.

RADIUS
Begin——

ALQUIST
Yes, begin or end. God, give me strength.
ALQUIST goes into the dissecting room. He comes out terrified
No, no, I cannot.
He lies down on couch, collapsed
O Lord, let not mankind perish from the earth.
He falls asleep

PRIMUS and HELENA, Robots, enter from the hallway.

ROBOT HELENA
He has fallen asleep.

PRIMUS
Yes, I know.
Examining things on table
Look, Helena.

ROBOT HELENA
crossing to PRIMUS
All these little tubes- How do these tubes become us?

PRIMUS
Do not touch them. They don't, he hasn't found the right combination yet.

ROBOT HELENA
looking into microscope
I've seen him looking into this. What is he looking for?

PRIMUS
That is a microscope. It's used to look at organisms too small for the human eye to see

ROBOT HELENA
And he thinks the answer to creating more of us is that small?

PRIMUS

He must.

ROBOT HELENA
She goes to the window
Look-

PRIMUS
What?

ROBOT HELENA
The sun is rising. It is always so beautiful

PRIMUS
looking over the desk
So many notes, ideas –

ROBOT HELENA
Do come here.

PRIMUS
In a moment, in a moment.

ROBOT HELENA
Oh, Primus, don't bother. What does it matter to you? Come and look quick—

PRIMUS
going to window
What is it?

ROBOT HELENA
Look at how beautiful the day will be. And do you hear? The birds are singing. It makes me feel so – I do not know. So strange today. As if I were in a dream. I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me. *Pause*. Is this what dying is like?

PRIMUS
Perhaps even now we are only sleeping. Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you. We spoke a strange new language.

ROBOT HELENA
What about?

PRIMUS
I didn't understand it myself, and yet I know I have never said anything more beautiful. And when I touched you I could have died. Even the place was different from anything I've ever seen.

ROBOT HELENA

I visit a place in my dreams. It was very strange. Human beings lived there once, but now it was overgrown with weeds. No one goes there any more — no one but me. There was a cottage and a garden, and two dogs. They licked my hands. And their puppies- You take them in your lap and pet them and think of nothing and care for nothing else all day long. And then the sun goes down, and you feel as though you had done a hundred times more than all the work in the world.

PRIMUS

But is work all we were made for?

ROBOT HELENA

I – I don't know. We aren't like the others –

PRIMUS grasps her hand.

PRIMUS

Do you not sometimes feel your heart beating suddenly, and think: now something must happen?

ROBOT HELENA

What could happen?

PRIMUS

I– I'm not sure

ALQUIST

Getting up

Who are you?

PRIMUS

My name is Primus.

ALQUIST

What? Is that — no, you can not be. Helena Glory is dead.

ROBOT HELENA

My name is Helena. Not Helena Glory –

ALQUIST

Let me see you,

She shrinks away

When – when was she made?

ROBOT HELENA

I was created three years ago.

ALQUIST
By Dr. Gall?

PRIMUS
Yes, like me.

ALQUIST
The newest of Gall's Robots. I must study you further – Take the girl into the dissecting room.

PRIMUS
Why?

ALQUIST
I wish to experiment on her.

PRIMUS
No!

ROBOT HELENA
You will not!

ALQUIST
Must I call someone else to take her in?

PRIMUS
If you do I will kill you –

ALQUIST
Kill me — kill me then – What would the others do then? What will your future be?

PRIMUS
Take my life – Spare hers, for we are the same

ROBOT HELENA
rushing forward
No, no, you shall not-

ALQUIST
Wait girl, wait-
To PRIMUS
Do you not wish to live, then?

PRIMUS
Not without her – I will not live without her
ALQUIST

Very well; you shall take her place.

ROBOT HELENA

Primus- Please, don't –

She bursts into tears

ALQUIST

Sadness? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world — what does it matter?

ROBOT HELENA

You will not take him away from me. If you take him – I will be alone in this world –

PRIMUS

holding her

You shall kill neither of us-

ALQUIST

Alone? They are not lonely, there are thousands of you still

ROBOT HELENA

I would be alone. Damn the others.

ALQUIST

What are you? The last of Gall's robots, but there's something else. Maybe I've been searching for the wrong answers... You fear, you love...

PRIMUS

Love?

ALQUIST

I fear you may have succeeded where I have failed. A new Adam and Eve. A new world to create, and the end of mine –

Pause, then with fear

If they realize what you are I will have no choice but to dissect you– Go, go far away from here. Begin your own lives apart from all this destruction.

PRIMUS

And where will we go?

ROBOT HELENA

We will find my cottage.

PRIMUS

But, it's just a dream.

ROBOT HELENA

I think – Everything must start as a dream

ROBOT HELENA and PRIMUS embrace go out arm in arm, as ALQUIST closes door behind them

ALQUIST

Reads from EVELYNS prayer book

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created him; male and female created him. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

Beat, holding scalpel

Lord, now lettest Thy servant depart in peace... your most worthless servant, Alquist. Rossum, Hallemeier, Gall, great inventors, but what was the greatness of your inventions compared to that girl, that boy, compared to that first couple that invented love, life will not disappear from you- My friends, Helena, life will not perish- Life begins anew; Lord, now lettest Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation... seen salvation through love -and life will not perish-

CURTAIN