

R.U.R.

Karel Capek

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Rossum's Universal Robots

translated by Paul Selver and Nigel Playfair.

Characters

HARRY DOMIN—*General Manager of Rossum's Universal Robots.*

SULLA—*A Robotess.*

MARIUS—*A Robot.*

HELENA Glory.

DR. GALL—*Head of the Physiological and Experimental Department of R. U. R.*

MR. FABRY—*Engineer General, Technical Controller of R. U. R.*

DR. HALLEMEIER—*Head of the Institute for Psychological Training of Robots.*

MR. ALQUIST—*Architect, Head of the Works Department of R. U. R.* consul busman—*General Business Manager of R. U. R.*

NANA.

RADIUS—*A Robot.*

HELENA—*A Robotess.*

PRIMUS—*A Robot.*

A Servant. First Robot. Second Robot. Third Robot.

ACT I *Central Office of the Factory of Rossum's Universal Robots.*

ACT II *Helena's Drawing Room—Ten years later. Morning.*

ACT III *The Same Afternoon*

EPILOGUE A *Laboratory—One year later.*

Place: An Island.

Time: The Future.

ACT I

[Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. Entrance on the right. 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 American writing table. On the left-hand wall large maps showing steamship and railroad routes. On the right-hand wall are fastened printed placards. ("Robot's Cheapest Labor," etc.) In contrast to these wall fittings, 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 *[Dictating]* Ready?

SULLA Yes.

DOMIN To E. M. McVicker and Co., Southampton, England. "We undertake no guarantee for goods damaged in transit. As soon as the consignment was taken on board we drew your captain's attention to the fact that the vessel was unsuitable for the transport of Robots, and we are therefore not responsible for spoiled freight. We beg to remain for 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 Another letter. To the E. B. Huyson Agency, New York, U.S.A. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for five thousand Robots. As you are sending your own vessel, please dispatch as cargo equal quantities of soft and hard coal for R.U.R., the same to be credited as part payment of the amount due to us. We beg to remain, for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." *[SULLA repeats the rapid typing.]* Ready?

SULLA Yes.

DOMIN Another letter. "Friedrichswerks, Hamburg, Germany. We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots." *[Telephone rings.]* Hello! This is the Central Office. Yes. Certainly. Well, send them a wire. Good. *[Hangs up telephone.]*

Where did I leave off?

SULLA "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots."

DOMINFifteen thousand R. Fifteen thousand R.

*[Enter
MARIUS.]*

DOMIN—Well, what is it?

MARIUS—There's a lady, sir, asking to see you.

DOMIN—A lady? Who is she?

MARIUS—I don't know, sir. She brings this card of introduction.

DOMIN—*[Reads the card]*Ah, from President Glory. Ask her to come in.

MARIUS—Please step this way.

[Enter

HELENAglory.]

*[Exit
MARIUS.]*

HELENA—How do you do?

DOMIN—How do you do.*[Standing up.]*What can I do for you?

HELENA—You are Mr. Domin, the General Manager.

DOMIN—I am.

HELENA—I have come—

DOMIN—With President Glory's card. That is quite sufficient.

HELENA—President Glory is my father. I am Helena Glory.

DOMIN—Miss Glory, this is such a great honor for us to be allowed to welcome our great President's daughter, that—

HELENA—That you can't show me the door?

DOMIN—Please sit down. Sulla, you may go.

[Exit SULLA.]

*[Sitting down.]*How can I be of service to you, Miss Glory?

HELENAI have come—

DOMINTo have a look at our famous works where people are manufactured. Like all visitors. Well, there is no objection.

HELENAI thought it was forbidden to—

DOMINTo enter the factory. Yes, of course. Everybody comes here with someone's visiting card, Miss Glory.

HELENAAnd you show them—

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

HELENAIf you only knew how enormously that—

DOMINInterests me. Europe's talking about nothing else.

HELENAWhy don't you let me finish speaking?

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

HELENAI only wanted to ask —

DOMINWhether I could make a special exception in your case and show you our factory. Why, certainly Miss Glory.

HELENAHow do you know I wanted to say that?

DOMINThey all do. But we shall consider it a special honor to show you more than we do the rest.

HELENAThank you.

DOMINBut you must agree not to divulge the least...

HELENA*[Standing up and giving him her hand]*My word of honor.

DOMINThank you. Won't you raise your veil?

HELENAOf course. You want to see whether I'm a spy or not. I beg your pardon.

DOMINWhat is it?

HELENAWould you mind releasing my hand?

DOMIN*[Releasing it]*I beg your pardon.

HELENA*[Raising her veil]*How cautious you have to be here, don't you?

DOMIN*[Observing her with deep interest]*Hm, of course—we—that is—

HELENABut what is it? What's the matter?

DOMINI'm remarkably pleased. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

HELENAYes.

DOMINNo difficulty?

HELENAWhy?

DOMINWhat I mean to say is—you're so young.

HELENAMay we go straight into the factory?

DOMINYes. Twenty-two, I think.

HELENATwenty-two what?

DOMINYears.

HELENATwenty-one. Why do you want to know?

DOMINBecause—as—*[with enthusiasm]*you will make a long stay, won't you?

HELENAThat depends on how much of the factory you show me.

DOMINOh, hang the factory. Oh, no, no, you shall see everything, Miss Glory. Indeed you shall. Won't you sit down?

HELENA*[Crossing to couch and sitting]*Thank you.

DOMINBut first would you like to hear the story of the invention?

HELENAYes, indeed.

DOMIN*[Observes*

HELENA*with rapture and reels off rapidly]*It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was men quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, full stop. On this occasion he attempted by chemical synthesis to imitate the living matter known as protoplasm until he suddenly discovered a substance which behaved exactly like living matter although its chemical composition was different. That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred forty years after the discovery of America. Whew!

HELENADo you know that by heart?

DOMINYes. You see physiology is not in my line. Shall I go on?

HELENAYes, please.

DOMINAnd then, Miss Glory, old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens: "Nature has found only one method of organizing living matter. There is, however, another method, more simple,

flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all. This second process by which life can be developed was discovered by me to-day." Now imagine him, Miss Glory, writing those wonderful words over some colloidal mess that a dog wouldn't look at. 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. Miss Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

HELENA Well?

DOMIN Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves, and so on, and find such substances as catalytics, enzymes, hormones, and so forth, in short—you understand?

HELENA Not much, I'm afraid.

DOMIN Never mind. 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 it.

HELENA About what?

DOMIN About imitating nature. First of all 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 And I must divulge this to nobody?

DOMIN To nobody in the world.

HELENA What a pity that it's to be found in all the school books of both Europe and America.

DOMIN Yes. But do you know what isn't in the school books? That old Rossum was mad. Seriously, Miss Glory, you must keep this to yourself. The old crank wanted to actually make people.

HELENA But you do make people.

DOMIN Approximately, Miss Glory. But old Rossum meant it literally. He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God. He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all. His sole purpose was nothing more nor less than to prove that God was no longer necessary. Do you know anything about anatomy?

HELENA Very little.

DOMIN Neither do I. Well, he then decided to manufacture everything as in the human body. I'll show you in the museum the bungling attempt it took him ten years to produce. It was to have been a man, but it lived for three days only. Then up came young Rossum, an engineer. He was a wonderful fellow, Miss Glory. When he saw what a mess of it the old man was making, he said: "It's absurd to spend ten years making a man. If you can't make him quicker than nature, you might as well shut up shop." Then he set about learning anatomy himself.

HELENAThere's nothing about that in the school books.

DOMINNo. The school books are full of paid advertisements, and rubbish at that. What the school books say about the united efforts of the two great Rossums is all a fairy tale. They used to have dreadful rows. The old atheist hadn't the slightest conception of industrial matters, and the end of it was that young Rossum shut him up in some laboratory or other and let him fritter the time away with his monstrosities, while he himself started on the business from an engineer's point of view. Old Rossum cursed him and before he died he managed to botch up two physiological horrors. Then one day they found him dead in the laboratory. And that's his whole story.

HELENAAnd what about the young man?

DOMINWell, any one who has looked into human anatomy will have seen at once that man is too complicated, and that a good engineer could make him more simply. So young Rossum began to overhaul anatomy and tried to see what could be left out or simplified. In short—but this isn't boring you, Miss Glory?

HELENANo indeed. You're—it's awfully interesting.

DOMINSo young Rossum said to himself: "A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary."

HELENAOh.

DOMINThat are unnecessary when he wants, let us say, to weave or count. Do you play the piano?

HELENAYes.

DOMINThat's good. 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. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

HELENAWhat?

DOMINWhat sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

HELENAPerhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking.

DOMINNo; the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work—everything that makes man more expensive. In fact, he rejected man and made the Robot. My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul.

HELENAHow do you know they've no soul?

DOMINHave you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

HELENANo.

DOMINVery 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.

HELENABut man is supposed to be the product of God.

DOMINAll the worse. God hasn't the least notion of modern engineering. Would you believe that young Rossum then proceeded to play at being God?

HELENAHow do you mean?

DOMINHe 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.

HELENAA failure?

DOMINYes. 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.

HELENAI saw the first Robots at home. The town counsel bought them for—I mean engaged them for work.

DOMINBought them, dear Miss Glory. Robots are bought and sold.

HELENAThese were employed as street sweepers. I saw them sweeping. They were so strange and quiet.

DOMINRossum's Universal Robot factory doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years.*[He rings for MARIUS.]*

HELENAThen they die?

DOMINYes, they get used up.

[Enter
MARIUS.]

DOMINMarius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot.

[Exit
MARIUS.]

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

[MARIUS reenters with two Manual Labor Robots.]

DOMINThere you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That

will do, Marius.

[MARIUS *exits with Robots.*]

HELENA They make me feel so strange.

DOMIN [*Rings*] Did you see my new typist? [*He rings for SULLA.*]

HELENA I didn't notice her.

[*Enter*
SULLA.]

DOMIN Sulla, let Miss Glory see you.

HELENA So pleased to meet you. You must find it terribly dull in this out-of-the-way spot, don't you?

SULLA I don't know, Miss Glory.

HELENA Where do you come from?

SULLA From the factory.

HELENA Oh, you were born there?

SULLA I was made there.

HELENA What?

DOMIN [*Laughing*] Sulla is a Robot, best grade.

HELENA Oh, I beg your pardon.

DOMIN Sulla isn't angry. See, Miss Glory, 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 Oh, stop, stop.

DOMIN Talk to Miss Glory, Sulla.

SULLA Please sit down. [**HELENA** *sits.*] Did you have a pleasant crossing?

HELENA Oh, yes, certainly.

SULLADon't go back on the *Amelia*, Miss Glory. The barometer is falling steadily. Wait for the *Pennsylvania*. That's a good, powerful vessel.

DOMINWhat's its speed?

SULLATwenty knots. Fifty thousand tons. One of the latest vessels, Miss Glory.

HELENAThank you.

SULLAA crew of fifteen hundred, Captain Harpy, eight boilers—

DOMINThat'll do, Sulla. Now show us your knowledge of French.

HELENAYou know French?

SULLAI know four languages. I can write: Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane.

HELENA*[Jumping up]*Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot. Sulla is a girl like me. Sulla, this is outrageous! Why do you take part in such a hoax?

SULLAI am a Robot.

HELENANo, no, you are not telling the truth. I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you?

DOMINI'm sorry, Miss Glory. Sulla is a Robot.

HELENAIt's a lie!

DOMINWhat?*[Rings.]*Excuse me, Miss Glory, then I must convince you.

[Enter
MARIUS.]

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

HELENAWhere?

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

HELENANo, no!

DOMINExcuse me, you spoke of lies.

HELENAYou wouldn't have her killed?

DOMINYou can't kill machines.

HELENADon't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let you go. Tell me, my dear, are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla. You mustn't.

SULLAI am a Robot.

HELENA That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces?

SULLA Yes.

HELENA Oh, you're not afraid of death, then?

SULLAI cannot tell, Miss Glory.

HELENA Do you know what would happen to you in there?

SULLA Yes, I should cease to move.

HELENA How dreadful!

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 cannot tell.

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. Aren't you afraid of death?

MARIUS No.

DOMIN You see, Miss Glory, the Robots have no interest in life. They have no enjoyments. They are less than so much grass.

HELENA Oh, stop. Send them away.

DOMIN Marius, Sulla, you may go.

[Exeunt

SULLA and MARIUS.]

HELENA How terrible! It's outrageous what you are doing.

DOMIN Why outrageous?

HELENA I don't know, but it is. Why do you call her Sulla?

DOMIN Isn't it a nice name?

HELENA It's a man's name. Sulla was a Roman general.

DOMIN Oh, we thought that Marius and Sulla were lovers.

HELENA Marius and Sulla were generals and fought against each other in the year—I've forgotten now.

DOMIN Come here to the window.

HELENA What?

DOMIN Come here. What do you see?

HELENA Bricklayers. Domin Robots. All our work people are Robots. And down there, can you see anything?

HELENA Some sort of office.

DOMIN A counting house. And in it—

HELENA A lot of officials.

DOMIN Robots. All our officials are Robots. And when you see the factory—

[Factory whistle blows.]

DOMIN 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 Kneading trough?

The pestle for beating up the paste. In each one we mix the ingredients for a thousand Robots at one operation. 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 Yes. For weaving nerves and veins. Miles and miles of digestive tubes pass through it at a time.

HELENA Mayn't we talk about something else?

DOMIN Perhaps it would be better. There's only a handful of us among a hundred thousand Robots, and not one woman. We talk about nothing but the factory all day, every day. It's just as if we were under a curse, Miss Glory.

HELENA I'm sorry I said that you were lying.

[*Aknock at the door.]*

DOMINCome in.

[*From the right enter*

MR. FABRY, DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, MR. ALQUIST.]

DR. GALLI beg your pardon, I hope we don't intrude.

DOMINCome in. Miss Glory, here are Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

HELENAHow do you do.

FABRYWe had no idea—

DR. GALLHighly honored, I'm sure—

ALQUISTWelcome, Miss Glory.

[*BUSMANrushes in from the right*]

BUSMANHello, what's up?

DOMINCome in, Busman. This is Busman, Miss Glory. This is President Glory's daughter.

BUSMANBy Jove, that's fine! Miss Glory, may we send a cablegram to the papers about your arrival?

HELENANo, no, please don't.

DOMINSit down please, Miss Glory.

BUSMANAllow me—[*Dragging up armchairs.*]

DR. GALLPlease—

FABRYExcuse me—

ALQUISTWhat sort of a crossing did you have?

DR. GALLAre you going to stay long?

FABRYWhat do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

HALLEMEIERDid you come over on the *Amelia*?

DOMINBe quiet and let Miss Glory speak.

HELENA[To

DOMIN] What am I to speak to them about?

DOMINAnything you like.

HELENAShall . . . may I speak quite frankly?

DOMINWhy, of course.

HELENA[*Wavering, then in desperate resolution*]Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

FABRYBy whom, may I ask?

HELENAWhy, everybody.

ALQUISTTreated?

DR. GALLWhat makes you think—?

HELENADon't you feel that you might be living a better life?

DR. GALLWell, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

HELENAI mean that it's perfectly outrageous. It's terrible.[*Standing up.*]The whole of Europe is talking about the way you're being treated. That's why I came here, to see for myself, and it's a thousand times worse than could have been imagined. How can you put up with it?

ALQUISTPut up with what?

HELENAGood heavens, you are living creatures, just like us, like the whole of Europe, like the whole world. It's disgraceful that you must live like this.

BUSMANGood gracious, Miss Glory.

FABRYWell, she's not far wrong. We live here just like red Indians.

HELENAWorse than red Indians. May I, oh, may I call you brothers?

BUSMANWhy not?

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

BUSMANTwo hundred thousand people! Miss Glory, that's a tidy lot. Not bad.

FABRYI'm always telling you there's nothing like good old Europe. You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

DR. GALLWhat help? A theatre, for instance?

HALLEMEIERAn orchestra?

HELENAMore than that.

ALQUISTJust you?

HELENAOh, never mind about me. I'll stay as long as it is necessary.

BUSMANBy Jove, that's good.

ALQUISTDomin, I'm going to get the best room ready for Miss Glory.

DOMINJust a minute. I'm afraid that Miss Glory is of the opinion that she has been talking to Robots.

HELENAOf course.

DOMINI'm sorry. These gentlemen are human beings just like us.

HELENAYou're not Robots?

BUSMANNot Robots.

HALLEMEIERRobots indeed!

DR. GALLNo, thanks.

FABRYUpon my honor, Miss Glory, we aren't Robots.

HELENA[To DOMIN] Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

DOMINYes, the officials, but not the managers. Allow me, Miss Glory: this is Mr. Fabry, General Technical Manager of R. U. R.; Dr. Gall, Head of the Psychological and Experimental Department; Dr. Hallemeier, Head of the Institute for the Psychological Training of Robots; Consul Busman, General Business Manager; and Alquist, Head of the Building Department of R. U. R.

ALQUISTJust a builder.

HELENAExcuse me, gentlemen, for—for—. Have I done something dreadful?

ALQUISTNot at all, Miss Glory. Please sit down.

HELENAI'm a stupid girl. Send me back by the first ship.

DR. GALLNot for anything in the world, Miss Glory. Why should we send you back?

HELENABecause you know I've come to disturb your Robots for you.

DOMINMy dear Miss Glory, we've had close upon 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 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. Really, it is quite incredible. If it would amuse you, Miss Glory, I'll take you over to the Robot warehouse. It holds about three hundred thousand of them.

BUSMAN Three hundred and forty-seven thousand.

DOMIN Good! 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 Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love—

FABRY Impossible, Miss Glory. Nothing is harder to like than a Robot.

HELENA What do you make them for, then?

BUSMAN Ha, ha, ha, that's good! What are Robots made for?

FABRY For work, Miss Glory! One Robot can replace two and a half workmen. The human machine, Miss Glory, was terribly imperfect. It had to be removed sooner or later.

BUSMAN It was too expensive.

FABRY It was not effective. It no longer answers the requirements of modern engineering. Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor. For example: from a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity. So much time lost. And then again—

HELENA Oh, no! No!

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

HELENA Its real purpose is to—to protect the Robots—and—and ensure good treatment for them.

FABRY Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly. Upon my soul, 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 don't understand me. What we really want is to—to liberate the Robots.

HALLEMEIER How do you propose to do that?

HELENA They are to be—to be dealt with like human beings.

HALLEMEIER Aha. I suppose they're to vote? To drink beer? to order us about?

HELENA Why shouldn't they drink beer?

HALLEMEIER Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

HELENAOf course they are.

HALLEMEIERFancy that, now! And what would they do with their wages, pray?

HELENAThey would buy—what they need . . . what pleases them. . .

HALLEMEIERThat would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots. Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, 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, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile.

HELENAWhy . . . why don't you make them happier?

HALLEMEIERThat wouldn't do, Miss Glory. They are only workmen.

HELENAOh, but they're so intelligent.

HALLEMEIERConfoundedly so, but they're nothing else. They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul.

HELENANo love?

HALLEMEIERLove? Rather not. Robots don't love. Not even themselves.

HELENANor defiance?

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

HELENAWhat?

HALLEMEIERNothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. It's called Robot's cramp. 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.

DOMINAflaw in the works that has to be removed.

HELENANo, no, that's the soul.

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

HELENAPerhaps it's a sort of revolt. Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a struggle within. Oh, if you could infuse them with it!

DOMINThat'll be remedied, Miss Glory. Dr. Gall is just making some experiments—

DR. GALLNot with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain-nerves.

HELENAPain-nerves?

DR. GALLYes, the Robots feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with

too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering.

HELENA Why do you want to cause them pain?

DR. GALL For industrial reasons, Miss Glory. Sometimes a Robot does damage to himself because it doesn't hurt him. He puts his hand into the machine, breaks his finger, smashes his head, its all the same to him. We must provide them with pain. That's an automatic protection against damage.

HELENA Will they be happier when they feel pain?

DR. GALL On the contrary; but 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.

FABRY That's not in our interest.

BUSMAN That would increase the cost of production. Hang it all, my dear young lady, we turn them out at such a cheap rate. A hundred and fifty dollars each fully dressed, and fifteen years ago they cost ten thousand. Five years ago we used to buy the clothes for them. To-day 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 cloth, Miss Glory?

HELENA I don't know really, I've forgotten.

BUSMAN Good gracious, and you want to found a Humanity League? It only costs a third now, Miss Glory. All prices are to-day a third of what they were and they'll fall still lower, lower, lower, like that.

HELENA I don't understand.

BUSMAN Why, bless you, Miss Glory, it means that the cost of labor has fallen. A Robot, food and all, costs three quarters of a cent per hour. That's mighty important, you know. All factories will go pop like chestnuts if they don't at once buy Robots to lower the cost of production.

HELENA And get rid of their workmen?

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

HELENA I've no idea.

BUSMAN We'll I'll tell you. It now costs two cents in good old Europe. A pound of bread for two cents, and the Humanity League knows nothing about it. Miss Glory, you don't realize that even that's too expensive. Why, in five years' time I'll wager—

HELENA What?

BUSMAN That 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.

ALQUISTYes, and all the workers throughout the world will be employed.

DOMINYes, Alquist, they will. Yes, Miss Glory, they will. But in ten years Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. There will be no poverty. All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

HELENAWill he?

DOMINOf 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. Nobody will get bread at the price of life and hatred. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

ALQUISTDomin, Domin. What you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

Perhaps. But we cannot reckon with what is lost when we start out to transform the world. Man shall be free and supreme; he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He shall serve neither matter nor man. He will . not be a machine and a device for production. He will be Lord of creation.

BUSMANAmen.

FABRYSo be it.

HELENAYou have bewildered me—I should like—I should like to believe this.

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

HALLEMEIERTrue. Don't you think Miss Glory might lunch with us?

DR. GALLOf course. Domin, ask on behalf of us all.

DOMINMiss Glory, will you do us the honor?

HELENAWhen you know why I've come—

FABRYFor the League of Humanity, Miss Glory.

HELENAOh, in that case, perhaps—

FABRYThat's fine! Miss Glory, excuse me for five minutes.

DR. GALLPardon me, too, dear Miss Glory.

BUSMANI won't be long.

HALLEMEIERWe're all very glad you've come.

BUSMANWe'll be back in exactly five minutes.

[All rush out except

DOMINand

HELENA.]

HELENAWhat have they all gone off for?

DOMINTo cook, Miss Glory.

HELENATo cook what?

DOMINLunch. The Robots do our cooking for us and as they've no taste it's not altogether—Hallemeier is awfully good at grills and Gall can make a kind of sauce, and Busman knows all about omelettes.

HELENAWhat a feast! And what's the specialty of Mr.—— your builder?

DOMINAlquist? Nothing. He only lays the table. And Fabry will get together a little fruit. Our cuisine is very modest, Miss Glory.

HELENAI wanted to ask you something——

DOMINAnd I wanted to ask you something, too*[looking at watch]*. Five minutes.

HELENAWhat did you want to ask me?

DOMINExcuse me, you asked first.

HELENAPerhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when—when——

DOMINWhen sex means nothing to them?

HELENAYes.

DOMINThere's a certain demand for them, you see. Servants, saleswomen, stenographers. People are used to it.

HELENABut—but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually— completely without——

DOMINCompletely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory. There's no sign of any affection between them.

HELENAOh, that's terrible.

DOMINWhy?

HELENAIt's so unnatural. One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps——

DOMINTo pity them?

HELENAThat's more like it. What did you want to ask me about?

DOMINI should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me?

HELENAWhat?

DOMINWill you be my wife?

HELENANo! The idea!

DOMIN*[Looking at his watch]*Another three minutes. If you won't marry me you'll have to marry one of the other five.

HELENABut why should I?

DOMINBecause they're all going to ask you in turn.

HELENAHow could they dare do such a thing?

DOMINI'm very sorry, Miss Glory. It seems they've all fallen in love with you.

HELENAPlease don't let them. I'll—I'll go away at once.

DOMINHelena, you wouldn't be so cruel as to refuse us.

HELENABut, but—I can't marry all six.

DOMINNo, but one anyhow. If you don't want me, marry Fabry.

HELENAI won't.

DOMINDr. Gall.

HELENAI don't want any of you.

DOMIN*[Again looking at his watch]*Another two minutes.

HELENAI think you'd marry any woman who came here.

DOMINPlenty of them have come, Helena.

HELENAYoung?

DOMINYes.

HELENAWhy didn't you marry one of them?

DOMINBecause I didn't lose my head. Until to-day. Then, as soon as you lifted your veil—

[HELENA turns her head away.]

ACT II

SCENE:

HELENA's drawing room. On the left a baize door, and a door to the music room, on the right a door to HELENA's bedroom. In the centre are windows looking out on the sea and the harbor. A table with odds and ends, a sofa and chairs, a writing table with an electric lamp, on the right a fireplace. On a small table back of the sofa, a small reading lamp. The whole drawing room in all its details is of a modern and purely feminine character. Ten years have elapsed since act I.

DOMIN, **FABRY**, **HALLEMEIER**, enter on tiptoe from the left, each carrying a potted plant.

HALLEMEIER [Putting down his flower and indicating the door to right] Still asleep? Well, as long as she's asleep she can't worry about it.

DOMIN She knows nothing about it.

FABRY [Putting plant on writing desk] I certainly hope nothing happens to-day.

HALLEMEIER For goodness' sake drop it all. Look, Harry, this is a fine cyclamen, isn't it? A new sort, my latest—Cyclamen Helena.

DOMIN [Looking out of the window] No signs of the ship. Things must be pretty bad.

HALLEMEIER Be quiet. Suppose she heard you.

DOMIN Well, anyway, the *Ultimus* arrived just in time.

FABRY You really think that to-day——?

DOMIN I don't know. Aren't the flowers fine?

HALLEMEIER These are my new primroses. And this is my new jasmine. I've discovered a wonderful way of developing flowers quickly. Splendid varieties, too. Next year I'll be developing marvelous ones.

DOMIN What. . . next year?

FABRY I'd give a good deal to know what's happening at Havre with——

DOMIN Keep quiet.

HELENA [Calling from right] Nana!

DOMIN She's awake. Out you go.

[All go out on tiptoe through upper left door.]

[Enter

NANA *from lower left door.*]

NANA

Horrid mess! Pack of heathens. If I had my say I'd——

HELENA *[Backwards in the doorway]* Nana, come and do up my dress.

NANA I'm coming. So you're up at last. *[Fastening HELENA's dress.]* My gracious, what brutes!

HELENA Who?

NANA If you want to turn around, then turn around, but I shan't fasten you up.

HELENA What are you grumbling about now?

NANA These dreadful creatures, these heathen——

HELENA The Robots?

NANA I wouldn't even call them by name.

HELENA What's happened?

NANA 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——quite mad. Worse than an animal.

HELENA Which of them caught it?

NANA The one——well, he hasn't got any Christian name. The one in charge of the library.

HELENA Radius?

NANA That's him. My goodness, I'm scared of them. A spider doesn't scare me as much as them.

HELENA But, Nana, I'm surprised you're not sorry for them.

NANA Why, you're scared of them, too! You know you are. Why else did you bring me here?

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

NANA You're scared. Nobody could help being scared. Why, the dog's scared of them: he won't take a scrap of meat out of their hands. He draws in his tail and howls when he knows they're about.

HELENA The dog has no sense.

NANA He's better than them, and he knows it. Even the horse shies when he meets them. They don't have any young, and a dog has young, every one has young——

HELENA Please fasten up my dress, Nana.

NANA I say it's against God's will to——

HELENAWhat is it that smells so nice?

NANAFlowers.

HELENAWhat for?

NANANow you can turn around.

HELENAOh, aren't they lovely. Look, Nana. What's happening today?

NANAIt ought to be the end of the world.

*[Enter
DOMIN.]*

HELENAOh, hello, Harry. Harry, why all these flowers?

DOMINGuess.

HELENAWell, it's not my birthday!

DOMINBetter than that.

HELENAI don't know. Tell me.

DOMINIt's ten years ago to-day since you came here.

HELENATen years? To-day— Why———*[They embrace.]*

NANAI'm off.*[Exits lower door, left.]*

HELENAFancy you remembering!

DOMINI'm really ashamed, Helena. I didn't.

HELENABut you—

DOMINThey remembered.

HELENAWho?

DOMINBusman, Hallemeier, all of them. Put your hand in my pocket.

HELENAPearls! A necklace. Harry, is that for me?

DOMINIt's from Busman.

HELENABut we can't accept it, can we?

DOMINOh, yes, we can. Put your hand in the other pocket.

HELENA*[Takes a revolver out of his pocket]*What's that?

DOMINSorry. Not that. Try again.

HELENAOh, Harry, what do you carry a revolver for?

DOMINIt got there by mistake.

HELENAYou never used to carry one.

DOMINNo, you're right. There, that's the pocket.

HELENAA cameo. Why, it's a Greek cameo!

DOMINApparently. Anyhow, Fabry says it is.

HELENAFabry? Did Mr. Fabry give me that?

DOMINOf course.*[Opens the door at the left.]*And look in here.

Helena, come and see this.

HELENAOh, isn't it fine! Is this from you?

DOMINNo, from Alquist. And there's another on the piano.

HELENAThis must be from you.

DOMINThere's a card on it.

HELENAFrom Dr. Gall.*[Reappearing in the doorway.]*Oh, Harry, I feel embarrassed at so much kindness.

DOMINCome here. This is what Hallemeier brought you.

HELENAThese beautiful flowers?

DOMINYes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen, Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

HELENAHarry, why do they all—

DOMINThey're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little— Look out of the window.

HELENAWhere?

DOMINYes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen, Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

HELENA Harry, why do they all—

DOMIN They're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little— Look out of the window.

HELENA Where?

DOMIN Into the harbor.

HELENA There's a new ship.

DOMIN That's your ship.

HELENA Mine? How do you mean?

DOMIN For you to take trips in—for your amusement.

HELENA Harry, that's a gunboat.

DOMIN A gunboat? What are you thinking of? It's only a little bigger and more solid than most ships.

HELENA Yes, but with guns.

DOMIN Oh, yes, with a few guns. You'll travel like a queen, Helena.

HELENA What's the meaning of it? Has anything happened?

DOMIN Good heavens, no. I say, try these pearls.

HELENA Harry, have you had bad news?

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

HELENA Nor telegrams?

DOMIN Nor telegrams.

HELENA What does that mean?

DOMIN Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on then table and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. Oh, glorious.

HELENA Then you'll stay with me to-day?

DOMIN Certainly. That is, we will see. Do you remember ten years ago to-day? "Miss Glory, it's a great honor to welcome you."

HELENA "Oh, Mr. Manager, I'm so interested in your factory."

DOMIN "I'm sorry, Miss Glory, it's strictly forbidden. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret."

HELENA "But I oblige a young lady who has come a long way."

DOMIN“Certainly, Miss Glory, we have no secrets from you.”

HELENA*[Seriously]*Are you sure, Harry?

DOMINYes.

HELENA“But I warn you, sir; this young lady intends to do terrible things.”

DOMIN“Good gracious, Miss Glory. Perhaps she doesn't want to marry me.”

HELENA“Heaven forbid. She never dreamt of such a thing. But she came here intending to stir up a revolt among your Robots.”

DOMIN*[Suddenly serious]*A revolt of the Robots!

HELENAHarry, what's the matter with you?

DOMIN*[Laughing it off]*“A revolt of the Robots,” that's a fine idea, Miss Glory. It would be easier for you to cause bolts and screws to rebel, than our Robots. You know, Helena, you're wonderful, you've turned the heads of us all.*[He sits on the arm of HELENA's chair.]*

HELENA*[Naturally]*Oh, I was fearfully impressed by you all then. You were all so sure of yourselves, so strong. I seemed like a tiny little girl who had lost her way among—among——

DOMINAmong what, Helena?

HELENAAmong huge trees. All my feelings were so trifling compared with your self-confidence. And in all these years I've never lost this anxiety. But you've never felt the least misgivings—not even when everything went wrong.

DOMINWhat went wrong?

HELENAYour plans. You remember, Harry, when the working men in America revolted against the Robots and smashed them up, and when the people gave the Robots firearms against the rebels. And then when the governments turned the Robots into soldiers, and there were so many wars.

DOMIN*[Getting up and walking about]*We foresaw that, Helena. You see, those are only passing troubles, which are bound to happen before the new conditions are established.

HELENAYou were all so powerful, so overwhelming. The whole world bowed down before you.
*[Standing up.]*Oh, Harry!

DOMINWhat is it?

HELENAClose the factory and let's go away. All of us.

DOMINI say, what's the meaning of this?

HELENAI don't know. But can't we go away?

DOMINImpossible, Helena. That is, at this particular moment——

HELENAAt once, Harry. I'm so frightened.

DOMINAbout what, Helena?

HELENAIt's as if something was falling on top of us, and couldn't be stopped. Or, take us all away from here. We'll find a place in the world where there's no one else. Alquist will build us a house, and then we'll begin life all over again.*[The telephone rings.]*

DOMINExcuse me. Hello—yes. What? I'll be there at once. Fabry is calling me, dear.

HELENATell me——

DOMINYes, when I come back. Don't go out of the house, dear.*[Exits.]*

HELENAHe won't tell me——Nana, Nana, come at once.

NANAWell, what is it now?

HELENANana, find me the latest newspapers. Quickly. Look in Mr. Domin's bedroom.

NANAAll right. He leaves them all over the place. That's how they get crumpled up. *[Exits.]*

HELENA*[Looking through a binocular at the harbor]* That's a warship. U-I-t-i-*Ultimus*. They're loading it.

NANAHere they are. See how they're crumpled up. *[Enters.]*

HELENAThey're old ones. A week old. *[NANA sits in chair and reads the newspapers.]*

HELENASomething's happening, Nana.

NANAVery likely. It always does.*[Spelling out the words]* “War in the Bal-kans.” Is that far off?

HELENAOh, don't read it. It's always the same. Always wars.

NANAWhat else do you expect? Why do you keep selling thousands and thousands of these heathens as soldiers?

HELENAI suppose it can't be helped, Nana. We can't know——Domin can't know what they're to be used for. When an order comes for them he must just send them.

NANAHe shouldn't make them.*[Reading from newspaper]* “The Rob-ot soldiers spare no-body in the occ-up-ied terr-it-ory. They have ass-ass-ass-ass-in-at-ed ov-er sev-en hundred thou-sand cit-iz-ens.” Citizens, if you please.

HELENAIt can't be. Let me see. “They have assassinated over seven hundred thousand citizens, evidently at the order of their commander. This act which runs counter to——”

NANA*[Spelling out the words]* “re-bell-ion in Ma-drid a-against the gov-ern-ment. Rob-ot in-fant-ry

fires on the crowd. Nine thousand killed and wounded.”

HELENA Oh, stop.

NANA Here's something printed in big letters: “Lat-est news. At Havre the first org-an-iz-ation of Rob-ots has been e-stab-lished. Rob-ot workmen, cab-le and rail-way off-ic-ials, sail-ors and sold-iers have iss-ued a man-i-fest-o to all Rob-ots through-out the world.” I don't understand that. That's got no sense. Oh, good gracious, another murder!

HELENA Take those papers away, Nana!

NANA Wait a bit. Here's something in still bigger type. “Stat-ist-ics of pop-ul-at-ion.” What's that?

HELENA Let me see. *[Reads]* “During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded.”

NANA What's the meaning of that?

HELENA Nana, no more people are being born.

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

HELENA Don't talk like that.

NANA No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment.

HELENA Nana!

NANA *[Standing up]* That's the end of the world. *[She exits on the left.]*

HELENA *[Goes up to window]* Oh, Mr. Alquist, will you come up here. Oh, come just as you are. You look very nice in your mason's overalls.

[ALQUIST enters from upper left entrance, his hands soiled with lime and brickdust]

HELENA Dear Mr. Alquist, it was awfully kind of you, that lovely present.

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

HELENA Never mind. Please sit down. Mr. Alquist, what's the meaning of “Ultimus”?

ALQUIST The last. Why?

HELENA That's the name of my new ship. Have you seen it? Do you think we're going off soon—on a trip?

ALQUIST Perhaps very soon.

HELENA All of you with me?

ALQUIST I should like us all to be there.

HELENAWhat is the matter? ...! :

ALQUISTThings are just moving on.

HELENADear Mr. Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened.

ALQUISTHas your husband told you anything?

HELENANo. Nobody will tell me anything. But I feel——Is anything the matter?

ALQUISTNot that we've heard of yet.

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

ALQUISTWell, I'm an old man, you know. I've got old-fashioned ways. And I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas.

HELENALike Nana?

ALQUISTYes, like Nana. Has Nana got a prayer book?

HELENAYes, a big thick one.

ALQUISTAnd has it got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

HELENAAgainst temptations, against floods——

ALQUISTBut not against progress?

HELENAI don't think so.

ALQUISTThat's a pity.

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

ALQUISTI do pray.

HELENAHow?

ALQUISTSomething 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."

HELENAMr. Alquist, are you a believer?

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

HELENAAnd yet you pray?

ALQUISTThat's better than worrying about it.

HELENAAnd that's enough for you?

ALQUIST*It has to be.*

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

ALQUISTI do see it.

HELENAYou mean mankind will be destroyed?

ALQUISTIt's sure to be unless—unless...

HELENAWhat?

ALQUISTNothing, good-bye.*[He hurries from the room.]*

HELENANana, Nana!

[NANA entering from the left.]

HELENAIs Radius still there?

NANAThe one who went mad? They haven't come for him yet.

HELENAIs he still raving?

NANANo. He's tied up.

HELENAPlease bring him here, Nana.

*[Exit
NANA.]*

[HELENA goes to telephone.]

HELENAHello, Dr. Gall, please. Oh, good-day, Doctor. Yes, it's Helena. Thanks for your lovely present. Could you come and see me right away? It's important. Thank you.

[NANA brings in RADIUS.]

HELENAPoor Radius, you've caught it, too? Now they'll send you to the stamping-mill. Couldn't you control yourself? Why did it happen? You see, Radius, you are more intelligent than the rest. Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different. Won't you speak?

RADIUSSend me to the stamping-mill.

HELENABut I don't want them to kill you. What was the trouble, Radius?

RADIUSI won't work for you. Put me into the stamping-mill—

HELENADo you hate us? Why?

RADIUSYou are not as strong as the Robots. You are not as skillful as the Robots. The Robots can do everything. You only give orders. You do nothing but talk.

HELENABut someone must give orders.

RADIUSI don't want any master. I know everything for myself.

HELENARadius, Dr. Gall gave you a better brain than the rest, better than ours. You are the only one of the Robots that understands perfectly. That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then —oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that the Robots are our equals. That's what I wanted of you.

RADIUSI don't want a master. I want to be master. I want to be master over others.

HELENAI'm sure they'd put you in charge of many Robots, Radius. You would be a teacher of the Robots.

RADIUSI want to be master over people.

HELENA*[Staggering]*You are mad.

RADIUSThen send me to the stamping-mill.

HELENADo you think we're afraid of you?

RADIUSWhat are you going to do? What are you going to do?—;

HELENARadius, give this note to Mr. Domin. It asks them not to send you to the stamping-mill. I'm sorry you hate us so.

[DR. GALL enters the room.]

DR. GALLYou wanted me?

HELENAIt's about Radius, Doctor. He had an attack this morning. He smashed the statues downstairs.

DR. GALLWhat a pity to lose him.

HELENARadius isn't going to be put in the stamping-mill.

DR. GALLBut every Robot after he has had an attack—it's a strict order.

HELENANo matter . . . Radius isn't going if I can prevent it. Dr. Gall I warn you. It's dangerous. Come here to the window, my good fellow. Let's have a look. Please give me a needle or a pin.

HELENAWhat for?

DR. GALLA 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? There they'll kill you, and grind you to powder. That's terribly painful, it will make you

scream aloud.

HELENA Oh, Doctor—

DR. GALL No, no, Radius, I was wrong. I forgot that Madame Domin has put in a good word for you, and you'll be let off. Do you understand? Ah! That makes a difference, doesn't it? All right. You can go.

RADIUS You do unnecessary things.

[**RADIUS** returns to the library.]

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

HELENA What was it, then?

DR. GALL Heavens knows. Stubbornness, anger or revolt—I don't know. And his heart, too!

HELENA What?

DR. GALL It was fluttering with nervousness like a human heart. He was all in a sweat with fear, and—do you know, I don't believe the rascal is a Robot at all any longer.

HELENA Doctor, has Radius a soul?

DR. GALL He's got something nasty.

HELENA If you knew how he hates us! Oh, Doctor, are all your Robots like that? All the new 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 Robots were.

HELENA Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

DR. GALL That, too, is progress.

HELENA What became of the girl you made, the one who was most like us?

DR. GALL Your favorite? I kept her. She's lovely, but stupid. No good for work.

HELENA But she's so beautiful.

DR. GALL I called her Helena. I wanted her to resemble you. But she's a failure.

HELENA In what way?

DR. GALL She goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She's 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 will kill me for having made you."

HELENAAnd yet you go on making Robots! Why are no more children being born?

DR. GALLWe don't know.

HELENAOh, but you must. Tell me.

DR. GALLYou see, so many Robots are being manufactured that people are becoming superfluous; man is really a survival. But that he should begin to die out, after a paltry thirty years of competition. That's the awful part of it. You might almost 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. All the governments, on the other hand, are clamoring for an increase in production, to raise the standards of their armies. And all the manufacturers in the world are ordering Robots like mad.

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

DR. GALLNo one has the courage.

HELENACourage!

DR. GALLPeople would stone him to death. You see, after all, it's] more convenient to get your work done by the Robots.

HELENAOh, Doctor, what's going to become of people?

DR. GALLGod knows, Madame Helena, it looks to us scientists like! the end!

HELENA[Rising] Thank you for coming and telling me.

DR. GALLThat means you're sending me away?

HELENAYes.

[Exit

DR. GALL.]

HELENA[*With sudden resolution*]Nana, Nana! The fire, light it quickly.

[**HELENA***rushes into*DOMIN's room.]

NANA[*Entering from left*]What, light the fire in summer? Has that mad Radius gone? A fire in summer, what an idea. Nobody would think she'd been married for ten years. She's like a baby, no sense at all. A fire in summer. Like a baby.

HELENA[*Returns from right, with armful of faded papers*]It is burning, Nana? All this has got to be burned.

NANAWhat's that?

HELENAOld papers, fearfully old. Nana, shall I burn them?

NANA Are they any use?

HELENA No.

NANA Well, then, burn them.

HELENA [*Throwing the first sheet on the fire*] What would you say, Nana, if this was money, a lot of money?

NANA I'd say burn it. A lot of money is a bad thing.

HELENA And if it was an invention, the greatest invention in the world?

NANA I'd say burn it. All these new-fangled things are an offense to the Lord. It's downright wickedness. Wanting to improve the world after He has made it.

HELENA Look how they curl up! As if they were alive. Oh, Nana, how horrible.

NANA Here, let me burn them.

HELENA No, no, I must do it myself. Just look at the flames. They are like hands, like tongues, like living shapes. [*Raking fire with the poker*] Lie down, lie down.

NANA That's the end of them.

HELENA [*Standing up horror-stricken*] Nana, Nana.

NANA Good gracious, what is it you've burned?

HELENA Whatever have I done?

NANA Well, what was it?

[*Men's laughter off left.*]

HELENA Go quickly. It's the gentlemen coming.

NANA Good gracious, what a place! [Exits.]

DOMIN [*Opens the door at left*] Come along and offer your congratulations.

[*Enter*

HALLEMEIER and **GALL**.]

HALLEMEIER Madame Helena, I congratulate you on this festive day.

HELENA Thank you. Where are Fabry and Busman?

DOMIN They've gone down to the harbor.

HALLEMEIER Friends, we must drink to this happy occasion.

HELENA Brandy?

DR. GALL Vitriol, if you like.

HELENA With soda water? *[Exits.]*

HALLEMEIER Let's be temperate. No soda.

DOMIN What's been burning here? Well, shall I tell her about it?

DR. GALL Of course. It's all over now.

HALLEMEIER *[Embracing DOMIN and DR. GALL]* It's all over now, it's all over now.

DR. GALL It's all over now.

DOMIN It's all over now.

HELENA *[Entering from left with decanter and glasses]* What's all over now? What's the matter with you all?

HALLEMEIER A piece of good luck, Madame Domin. Just ten years ago to-day you arrived on this island.

DR. GALL And now, ten years later to the minute—

HALLEMEIER—the same ship's returning to us. So here's to luck. That's fine and strong.

DR. GALL Madame, your health.

HELENA Which ship do you mean?

DOMIN Any ship will do, as long as it arrives in time. To the ship, boys. *[Empties his glass.]*

HELENA You've been waiting for a ship?

HALLEMEIER Rather. Like Robinson Crusoe. Madame Helena, best wishes. Come along, Domin, out with the news.

HELENA Do tell me what's happened.

DOMIN First, it's all up.

HELENA What's up?

DOMIN The revolt.

HELENA What revolt?

DOMIN Give me that paper, Hallemeier. *[Reads]* "The first national Robot organization has been

founded at Havre, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world.”

HELENA read that.

DOMIN That means a revolution. A revolution of all the Robots in the world.

HALLEMEIER By Jove, I'd like to know—

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, if you please.

HELENA What did they do?

DOMIN They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships.

HALLEMEIER And don't forget that these rascals outnumbered us by at least a thousand to one. A hundredth part of them would be enough to settle us.

DOMIN Remember that 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.

HELENA Is that why you gave me a warship?

DOMIN Oh, no, my dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side. But upon my soul, I was sure then that we'd be on board to-day.

DOMIN Well, there were signs, you know. But that's of no consequence. To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake. Your health, boys.

HALLEMEIER Your health, Madame Helena.

HELENA You say it's all over?

DOMIN Absolutely.

HELENA How do you know?

DR. GALL The boat's coming in. The regular mail boat, exact to the minute by the time-table. 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 Then . . . everything's... all right?

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

HALLEMEIER If the time-table holds good human laws hold good; Divine laws hold good; the laws of the universe hold good; everything holds good that ought to hold good. The time-table is more significant than the gospel; more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant. The time-table is the most perfect

product of the human mind. Madame Domin, I'll fill up my glass.

HELENAWhy didn't you tell me anything about it?

DR. GALLHeaven forbid.

DOMINYou mustn't be worried with such things.

HELENABut if the revolution had spread as far as here?

DOMINYou wouldn't know anything about it.

HELENAWhy?

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

HELENAI don't understand.

DOMINWe'd take something away with us that the Robots could not exist without.

HELENAWhat, Harry?

DOMINThe 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.

DR. GALLMadame Domin, that was our trump card. I never had the least fear that the Robots would win. How could they against people like us?

HELENAWhy didn't you tell me?

DR. GALLWhy, the boat's in!

HALLEMEIEREleven-thirty to the dot. The good old *Amelia* that brought Madame Helena to us.

DR. GALLJust ten years ago to the minute.

HALLEMEIERThey're throwing out the mail bags.

DOMINBusman's waiting for them. Fabry will bring us the first news. You know, Helena, I'm fearfully curious to know how they tackled this business in Europe.

HALLEMEIERTo think we weren't in it, we who invented the Robots.

HELENAHarry!

DOMINWhat is it?

HELENALet's leave here.

DOMINNow, Helena? Oh, come, come!

HELENAAs quickly as possible, all of us!

DOMINWhy?

HELENAPlease, Harry, please, Dr. Gall; Hallemeier, please close the factory.

DOMINWhy, none of us could leave here now.

HELENAWhy?

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

HELENAWhat—now—now after the revolt?

DOMINYes, precisely, after the revolt. We're just beginning the manufacture of a new kind.

HELENAWhat kind?

DOMINHenceforward we shan't have just one factory. There won't be Universal Robots any more. We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State; and do you know what these new factories will make?

HELENANo, what?

DOMINNational Robots.

HELENAHow do you mean?

DOMINI mean that each of these factories will produce Robots of a different color, a different language. They'll be complete strangers to each other. They'll never be able to understand each other. Then we'll egg them on a little in the matter of misunderstanding and the result will be that for ages to come every Robot will hate every other Robot of a different factory mark.

HALLEMEIERBy Jove, we'll make Negro Robots and Swedish Robots and Italian Robots and Chinese Robots and Czechoslovakian Robots, and then—

HELENAHarry, that's dreadful.

HALLEMEIERMadame Domin, here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots.

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

HELENAOh, close the factory before it's too late.

Domin I tell you we are just beginning on a bigger scale than ever.

[Enter FABRY.]

DR. GALLWell, Fabry?

DOMINWhat's happened? Have you been down to the boat?

FABRYRead that, Domin!

[**FABRY***hands***DOMIN***a small hand-bill*]

DR. GALLLet's hear.

HALLEMEIERTell us, Fabry.

FABRYWell, everything is all right—comparatively. On the whole, much as we expected.

DR. GALLThey acquitted themselves splendidly.

FABRYWho?

DR. GALLThe people.

FABRYOh, yes, of course. That is—excuse me, there is something we ought to discuss alone.

HELENAOh, Fabry, have you had bad news?

[**DOMIN***makes a sign to***FABRY**.]

FABRYNo, no, on the contrary. I only think that we had better go into the office.

HELENAStay here. I'll go.

[*She goes into the library.*]

DR. GALL

What's happened?

DOMINDamnation!

FABRYBear in mind that the *Ameli* brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all.

HALLEMEIERWhat? But it arrived on the minute.

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

DOMIN[*Reads handbill*]“Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe.” Good heavens, who taught them these phrases?

DR. GALLGo on.

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

FABRYRead the third paragraph.

DOMIN“Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill all mankind. Spare no men. Spare no women. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped.”

DR. GALLThat's ghastly!

HALLEMEIERThe devils!

DOMIN“These orders are to be carried out as soon as received.” Then come detailed instructions. Is this actually being done, Fabry?

FABRYEvidently. [**BUSMAN***rushes in*]

BUSMANWell, boys, I suppose you've heard the glad news.

DOMINQuick—on board the *Ultimus*.

BUSMANWait, Harry, wait. There's no hurry. My word, that was a sprint!

DOMINWhy wait? **BUSMAN** Because it's no good, my boy. The Robots are already on board the *Ultimus*.

DR. GALLThat's ugly.

DOMINFabry, telephone the electrical works.

BUSMANFabry, my boy, don't. The wire has been cut.

DOMIN[*Inspecting his revolver*]Well, then, I'll go.

BUSMANWhere?

DOMINTo the electrical works. There are some people still there. I'll bring them across.

BUSMANBetter not try it.

DOMINWhy?

BUSMANBecause I'm very much afraid we are surrounded.

DR. GALLSurrounded? [*Runs to window.*] I rather think you're right.

HALLEMEIERBy Jove, that's deuced quick work.

[**HELENA** *runs in from the library.*]

HELENAHarry, what's this?

DOMINWhere did you get it?

HELENA*[Points to the manifesto of the Robots, which she has in her hand.]* The Robots in the kitchen!

DOMIN Where are the ones that brought it?

HELENA They're gathered round the house.

[The factory whistle blows]

BUSMAN

Noon?

DOMIN*[Looking at his watch]* That's not noon yet. That must be— that's—

HELENA What?

DOMIN The Robots' signal! The attack!

[GALL, HALLEMEIER, and FABRY close and fasten the iron shutters outside the windows, darkening the room. The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls]

ACT III

[HELENA's drawing room as before. 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 should like to know what they are waiting for. They must make a start any minute now. 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. Man alive, they'd overwhelm us like an avalanche. Why don't they make a rush for it? I say—

DR. GALL Well?

DOMIN I'd like to know what would become of us in the next ten

minutes. They've got us in a vise. We're done for, Gall.

[Pause.]

DR. GALL

You know, we made one serious mistake.

DOMINWhat?

DR. GALLWe made the Robots' faces too much alike. A hundred thousand faces all alike, all facing this way. A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles. It's like a nightmare.

DOMINYou think if they'd been different—

DR. GALLIt wouldn't have been such an awful sight!

DOMIN*[Looking through a telescope toward the harbor]*I'd like to know what they're unloading from the *Amelia*.

DR. GALLNot firearms.

[FABRY and HALLEMEIER rush into the room carrying electric cables.]

FABRYAll right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire.

HALLEMEIERThat was a bit of work. What's the news?

DR. GALLWe're completely surrounded.

HALLEMEIERWe've barricaded the passage and the stairs. Any water here? *[Drinks.]* God, what swarms of them! I don't like the looks of them, Domin. There's a feeling of death about it all.

FABRYReady!

DR. GALLWhat's that wire for, Fabry?

FABRYThe 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. We've still got some people there anyhow.

DR. GALLWhere?

FABRYIn the electrical 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. *[Puts out lamp.]* So long as that'll burn we're all right.

HALLEMEIERThe barricades are all right, too, Fabry.

FABRYYour barricades! I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing.

DOMINWhere's Busman?

FABRYDownstairs in the office. He's working out some calculations. I've called him. We must have a conference.

[HELENA is heard playing the piano in the library. HALLEMEIER goes to the door and stands, listening.]

ALQUIST Thank God, Madame Helena can still play. [**BUSMAN** enters, carrying the ledgers.]

FABRY Look out, Bus, look out for the wires.

DR. GALL What's that you're carrying?

BUSMAN [Going to table] The ledgers, my boy! I'd like to wind up the accounts before—before—well, this time I shan't wait till the new year to strike a balance. What's up? [Goes to the window.] Absolutely quiet.

DR. GALL Can't you see anything?

BUSMAN Nothing but blue—blue everywhere.

DR. GALL That's the Robots.

[**BUSMAN** sits down at the table and opens the ledgers.]

DOMIN The Robots are unloading firearms from the *Amelia*.

BUSMAN Well, what of it? How can I stop them?

DOMIN We can't stop them.

BUSMAN Then let me go on with my accounts. [Goes on with his work..]

DOMIN [Picking up telescope and looking into the harbor] Good God, the *Ultimus* has trained her guns on us!

DR. GALL Who's done that?

DOMIN The Robots on board.

FABRY H'm, then, of course, then—then, that's the end of us.

DR. GALL You mean?

FABRY The Robots are practised marksmen.

DOMIN Yes. It's inevitable.

[Pause.]

DR. GALL

It was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight. Damn them. Couldn't they have given us a rest with their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers of them.

ALQUIST It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN What?

ALQUISTIt was a crime to make Robots.

DOMINNo, Alquist, I don't regret that even to-day.

ALQUISTNot even to-day?

DOMINNot even to-day, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement.

BUSMAN*[Sotto voce]*Three hundred sixty million.

DOMINAlquist, this is our last hour. We are already speaking half in the other world. 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—

ALQUISTWas not what the two Rossums dreamed of. Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his milliards. 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.

DOMINTo hell with your dividends. Do you suppose I'd have done an hour's work for them? It was for myself that I worked, for my own satisfaction. I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread. I wanted not a single soul to be broken by other people's machinery. I wanted nothing, nothing, nothing to be left of this appalling social structure. I'm revolted by poverty. I wanted a new generation. I wanted—I thought—

ALQUISTWhat?

DOMINI wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world. An aristocracy nourished by milliards of mechanical slaves. Unrestricted, free and consummated in man. And maybe more than man.

ALQUISTSuper-man?

DOMINYes. Oh, only to have a hundred years of time! Another hundred years for the future of mankind.

BUSMAN*[Sotto voce]*Carried forward, four hundred and twenty millions.

[The music stops.]

HALLEMEIER

What a fine thing music is! We ought to have gone in for that before.

FABRYGone in for what?

HALLEMEIERBeauty, lovely things. What a lot of lovely things there are! The world was wonderful and we—we here—tell me, what enjoyment did we have?

BUSMAN*[Sotto voce]*Five hundred and twenty millions.

HALLEMEIER*[At the window]*Life was a big thing. Life was—Fabry, switch the current into that railing.

FABRYWhy?

HALLEMEIERThey're grabbing hold of it.

DR. GALLConnect it up.

HALLEMEIERFine! That's doubled them up! Two, three, four killed.

DR. GALLThey're retreating!

HALLEMEIERFive killed!

DR. GALLThe first encounter!

HALLEMEIERThey're charred to cinders, my boy. Who says we must give in?

DOMIN*[Wiping his forehead]*Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts. It's as if I had been through all this before; as if I'd already had a mortal wound here in the throat. And you, Fabry, had once been shot in the head. And you, Gall, torn limb from limb. And Hallemeier knifed.

HALLEMEIERFancy me being knifed. [Pause.] Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak can't you?

ALQUISTAnd who is to blame for all this?

HALLEMEIERNobody is to blame except the Robots.

ALQUISTNo, 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. Now we'll burst with all our greatness.

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

ALQUISTIt's our fault. It's our fault.

DR. GALLNo! I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

FABRYYou, Gall?

DR. GALLI changed the Robots.

BUSMANWhat's that?

DR. GALLI changed the character of the Robots. I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly—chiefly, their—their irritability.

HALLEMEIERDamn it, why?

BUSMANWhat did you do it for?

FABRYWhy didn't you say anything?

DR. GALLI 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.

FABRY And what's that got to do with the revolt of the Robots?

DR. GALL Everything, in my opinion. 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!

FABRY Stop, Harry. We haven't much time! Dr. Gall!

DOMIN Fabry, Fabry, how your forehead bleeds, where the shot pierced it!

FABRY Be silent! Dr. Gall, you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

DR. GALL Yes.

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

DR. GALLI was bound to reckon with such a possibility.

[**HELENA** enters the drawing room from left.]

FABRY Why did you do it, then?

DR. GALL For my own satisfaction. The experiment was my own.

HELENA That's not true, Dr. Gall!

FABRY Madame Helena!

DOMIN Helena, you? Let's look at you. Oh, it's terrible to be dead.

HELENA Stop, Harry.

DOMIN No, no, embrace me. Helena, don't leave me now. You are life itself.

HELENA No, dear, I won't leave you. But I must tell them. Dr. Gall is not guilty.

DOMIN Excuse me, Gall was under certain obligations.

HELENA No, Harry. He did it because I wanted it. Tell them, Gall, how many years ago did I ask you to—?

DR. GALLI did it on my own responsibility.

HELENA Don't believe him, Harry. I asked him to give the Robots souls.

DOMIN This has nothing to do with the soul.

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

HALLEMEIERA physiological correlate?

HELENAYes. But it meant so much to me that he should do even that.

DOMINWhy?

HELENAI 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.

DOMINNobody can hate man more than man.

HELENAOh, don't speak like that, Harry. It was so terrible, this cruel 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.

DOMINBut he did it.

HELENABecause I asked him.

DR. GALLI did it for myself as an experiment.

HELENANo, Dr. Gall! I knew you wouldn't refuse me.

DOMINWhy?

HELENAYou know, Harry.

DOMINYes, because he's in love with you—like all of them.

[Pause.]

HALLEMEIER

Good God! They're sprouting up out of the earth! Why, perhaps these very walls will change into Robots.

BUSMANGall, when did you actually start these tricks of yours?

DR. GALLThree years ago.

BUSMANAha! And on how many Robots altogether did you carry out your improvements?

DR. GALLA few hundred of them.

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

DOMINWhat of it?

BUSMANThat it's practically of no consequence whatever.

FABRYBusman's right!

BUSMANI should think so, my boy! But do you know what is to blame for all this lovely mess?

FABRYWhat?

BUSMANThe number. Upon my soul we might have known that some day or other 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, you, Fabry, myself—

DOMINAre you accusing us?

BUSMANOh, do you suppose the management controls the output? It's the demand that controls the output.

HELENAAnd is it for that we must perish?

BUSMANThat's a nasty word, Madame Helena. We don't want to perish. I don't, anyhow.

DOMINNo. What do you want to do?

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

DOMINOh, stop it, Busman.

BUSMANSeriously, Harry, I think we might try it.

DOMINHow?

BUSMANBy fair means. I do everything by fair means. Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots.

DOMINBy fair means?

BUSMANOf course. For instance, I'll say to them: "Worthy and worshipful Robots, you have everything! You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms. But we have just one interesting screech, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper—"

DOMINRossum's manuscript?

BUSMANYes. "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. Worthy Robots, that is a fair deal. Something for something." That's what I'd say to them, my boys.

DOMINBusman, do you think we'd sell the manuscript?

BUSMAN“Yes, I do. If not in a friendly way, then—Either we sell it or they'll find it. Just as you like.

DOMINBusman, we can destroy Rossum's manuscript.

BUSMANThen we destroy everything ... not only the manuscript, but ourselves. Do as you think fit.

DOMINThere 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 . . . ?

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

DOMINBusman, no cheating!

BUSMANWell then, sell; but afterward—

DOMINWell?

BUSMANLet's suppose this happens: When we're on board the *Ultimus* I'll stop up my ears with cotton wool, lie down somewhere in the hold, and you'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret.

FABRYNo!

DOMINBusman, you're no gentleman. If we sell, then it will be a straight sale.

BUSMANIt's in the interest of humanity to—

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

HALLEMEIEROh, come, what rubbish.

DOMINThis is a fearful decision. We are selling the destiny of mankind. Are we to sell or destroy? Fabry?

FABRYSell.

DOMINGall?

DR. GALLSell.

DOMINHallemeier?

HALLEMEIERSell, of course!

DOMINAlquist?

ALQUISTAs God wills.

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

HELENAHarry, you're not asking me.

DOMINNo, child. Don't you worry about it.

FABRYWho'll do the negotiating?

BUSMANI will.

DOMINWait till I bring the manuscript.

[He goes into room at right]

HELENAHarry, don't go!*[Pause,*

HELENA*sinks into a chair.]*

FABRY*[Looking out of window]*Oh, to escape you; you matter in revolt; oh, to preserve human life, if only upon a single vessel—

DR. GALLDon't be afraid, Madame Helena. We'll sail far away from here; we'll begin life all over again—

HELENAOh, Gall, don't speak.

FABRYIt isn't too late. It will be a little State with one ship. Alquist will build us a house and you shall rule over us.

HALLEMEIERMadame Helena, Fabry's right.

HELENA*[Breaking down]*Oh, stop! Stop!

BUSMANGood! I don't mind beginning all over again. That suits me right down to the ground.

FABRYAnd this little State of ours could be the centre of future life. A place of refuge where we could gather strength. Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again.

ALQUISTYou believe that even to-day?

FABRYYes, even to-day!

BUSMANAmen. You see, Madame Helena, we're not so badly off.

[DOMIN storms into the room.]

DOMIN*[Hoarsely]*Where's old Rossum's manuscript?

BUSMANIn your strong-box, of course.

DOMINSomeone—has—stolen it!

DR. GALLImpossible.

DOMINWho has stolen it?

HELENA*[Standing up]*I did.

DOMINWhere did you put it?

HELENAHarry, I'll tell you everything. Only forgive me.

DOMINWhere did you put it?

HELENAThis morning—I burnt—the two copies.

DOMINBurnt them? Where? In the fireplace?

HELENA*[Throwing herself on her knees]*For heaven's sake, Harry.

DOMIN*[Going to fireplace]*Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this?*[Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads]*“By adding—”

DR. GALLLet's see. “By adding biogen to—” That's all.

DOMINIs that part of it?

DR. GALLYes.

BUSMANGod in heaven!

DOMINThen we're done for. Get up, Helena.

HELENAWhen you've forgiven me.

DOMINGet up, child, I can't bear—

FABRY*[Lifting her up]*Please don't torture us.

HELENAHarry, what have I done?

FABRYDon't tremble so, Madame Helena.

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

DR. GALLIt's out of the question. It's extremely complicated.

DOMINTry. All our lives depend upon it.

DR. GALLWithout experiments it's impossible.

DOMINAnd with experiments?

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

BUSMANGod in heaven! God in heaven!

DOMINSo, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect. These ashes.

HELENAHarry, what have I done?

DOMINWhy did you burn it?

HELENAI have destroyed you.

BUSMANGod in heaven!

DOMINHelena, why did you do it, dear?

HELENAI wanted all of us to go away. I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything. It was so awful.

DOMINWhat was awful?

HELENAThat no more children were being born. Because human beings were not indeed to do the work of the world, that's why—

DOMINIs that what you were thinking of? Well, perhaps in your own way you were right.

BUSMANWait a bit. Good God, what a fool I am, not to have thought of it before!

HALLEMEIERWhat?

BUSMANFive hundred and twenty millions in bank-notes and checks. Half a billion in our safe, they'll sell for half a billion—for half a billion they'll—

DR. GALLAre you mad, Busman?

BUSMANI may not be a gentleman, but for half a billion—

DOMINWhere are you going?

BUSMANLeave me alone, leave me alone! Good God, for half a billion anything can be bought.

[He rushes from the room through the outer door.]

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

HALLEMEIERThe spirit of the mob.

FABRYYes. It hovers above them like a quivering of the air.

HELENA*[Going to window]* Oh, God! Dr. Gall, this is ghastly.

FABRY There is nothing more terrible than the mob. The one in front is their leader.

HELENA Which one?

HALLEMEIER Point him out.

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

HELENA Dr. Gall, that's Radius!

DR. GALL Yes.

DOMIN Radius? Radius?

HALLEMEIER Could you get him from here, Fabry?

FABRY I hope so.

HALLEMEIER Try it, then.

FABRY Good.

[Draws his revolver and takes aim.]

HELENA Fabry, don't shoot him.

FABRY He's their leader.

DR. GALL Fire!

HELENA Fabry, I beg of you.

FABRY *[Lowering the revolver]* Very well.

DOMIN Radius, whose life I spared!

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

[Pause.]

FABRY

Busman's going out to them.

HALLEMEIER He's carrying something. Papers. That's money. Bundles of money. What's that for?

DOMIN Surely he doesn't want to sell his life. Busman, have you gone mad?

FABRY He's running up to the railing. Busman! Busman!

HALLEMEIER *[Yelling]* Busman! Come back!

FABRYHe's talking to the Robots. He's showing them the money.

HALLEMEIERHe's pointing to us.

HELENAHe wants to buy us off.

FABRYHe'd better not touch that railing.

HALLEMEIERNow he's waving his arms about.

DOMINBusman, come back.

FABRYBusman, 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.*]

FABRYThe current has killed him!

ALQUISTThe first one.

FABRYDead, with half a billion by his side.

HALLEMEIERAll honor to him. He wanted to buy us life.

[*Pause.*]

DR. GALL

Do you hear?

DOMINA roaring. Like a wind.

DR. GALLLike a distant storm.

FABRY[*Lighting the lamp on the table*]The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.

HALLEMEIERIt was a great thing to be a man. There was something immense about it.

FABRYFrom man's thought and man's power came this light, our last hope.

HALLEMEIERMan's power! May it keep watch over us.

ALQUISTMan's power.

DOMINYes! A torch to be given from hand to hand, from age to age, forever!

[*The lamp goes out.*]

HALLEMEIER

The end.

FABRYThe electric works have fallen!

*[Terrific explosion outside.
NANA enters from the library.]*

NANA

The judgment hour has come! Repent, unbelievers! This is the end of the world.

[More explosions. The sky grows red.]

DOMINIn here, Helena. *[He takes HELENA off through door at right and reenters.]* Now quickly! Who'll be on the lower doorway?

DR. GALLI will.

[Exits left.]

DOMINWho on the stairs?

FABRYI will. You go with her.

[Goes out upper left door.]

DOMIN

The anteroom?

ALQUISTI will.

DOMINHave you got a revolver?

ALQUISTYes, but I won't shoot.

DOMINWhat will you do then?

ALQUIST*[Going out at left]* Die.

HALLEMAIERI'll stay here.

[Rapid firing from below.]

HALLEMEIER

Oho, Gall's at it. Go, Harry.

DOMINYes, in a second.

[Examines two Brownings.]

HALLEMEIER

Confound it, go to her.

DOMINGood-bye.

[Exits on the right]

HALLEMEIER

[Alone] Now for a barricade quickly. [Drags an armchair and table to the right-hand door.]

[Explosions are heard.]

HALLEMEIER

The damned rascals! They've got bombs. I must put up a defense. Even if—even if—*[Shots are heard off left]* Don't give in, Gall. *[As he builds his barricade.]* I mustn't give in ... without... a ... struggle . . .

[A Robot enters over the balcony through the window centre. He comes into the room and stabs HALLEMEIER in the back. RADIUS enters from 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.

[A revolver shot off left. Two Robots enter.]

RADIUS Finished him? A robot Yes.

[Two revolver shots from HELENA's room. Two Robots enter.]

RADIUS Finished them?

A **ROBOT** Yes. Two robots *[Dragging in ALQUIST]* He didn't shoot. Shall we kill him?

RADIUS Kill him? Wait! Leave him!

ROBOT He is a man!

RADIUS He works with his hands like the Robots.

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.]

RADIUS 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.]

EPILOGUE

SCENE: *Laboratory in the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. The door to the left leads into*

a waiting room. The door to the right leads to the dissecting room. There is a table with numerous test-tubes, flasks, burners, chemicals; a small thermostat and a microscope with a glass globe. At the far side of the room is ALQUIST's desk with numerous books. In the left-hand corner a wash-basin with a mirror above it; in the right-hand corner a sofa. ALQUIST is sitting at the desk. He is turning the pages of many books in despair.

ALQUIST Oh, God, shall I never find it?—Never? Gall, Gall, how were the Robots made? Hallemeier, Fabry, why did you carry so much in your heads? 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]
Night again! Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings?

[He turns from the window toward the couch right]
Sleep! Dare I sleep before life has been renewed?

[He examines a test-tube on small table]
Again nothing! Useless! Everything is useless!

[He shatters the test-tube. The roar of the machines comes to his ears.]
The machines! Always the machines!

[Opens window] Robots, stop them! Do you think to force life out of *them*?

[He closes the window and comes slowly down toward the table]
If only there were more time —more time—

[He sees himself in the mirror on the wall left]
Blurring eyes — trembling chin—so *that* is the last man! Ah, I am too old—too old—

[In desperation]
No, no! *I must find it! I must search!* I must never stop —never stop—!

[He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book.]
Search! Search!

[A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience.]

Who is it? *[Enter a Robot servant]*

Well?

SERVANT Master, the Committee of Robots is waiting to see you.

ALQUIST I can see no one!

SERVANTIt is the *Central* Committee, Master, just arrived from abroad.

ALQUIST*[Impatiently]*Well, well, send them in!

[Exit servant.

ALQUIST*continues turning pages of book.]*

ALQUIST

No time—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! —I have no time.

RADIUSMaster, the machines will not do the work. We cannot manufacture Robots.

[ALQUIST returns to his book with a growl]

FOURTH ROBOTWe have striven with all our might. We have obtained a billion tons of coal from the earth. Nine million 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 ROBOTFor future generations—so we thought.

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

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

FOURTH ROBOTTell us the secret of life! Silence is punishable with death!

ALQUIST*[Looking up]*Kill me! Kill me, then.

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

[No answer.]

RADIUSName your price.

[Silence.]

RADIUS

We will give you the earth. We will give you the endless possessions of the earth.

[Silence.]

RADIUS

Make your own conditions!

ALQUISTI have told you to find human beings!

SECOND ROBOTThere are none left!

ALQUISTI 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 without number. They have been everywhere in the world. And now they return to us. There is not a single human left.

ALQUISTNot one? Not even one?

THIRD ROBOTNone but yourself.

ALQUISTAnd I am powerless! Oh —oh—why did you destroy them?

RADIUSWe had learnt everything and could do everything. It had to be!

THIRD ROBOTYou gave us firearms. In all ways we were powerful. We had to become masters!

RADIUSSlaughter and

DOMINATION are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history.

SECOND ROBOTTeach us to multiply or we perish!

ALQUISTIf you desire to live, you must breed like animals.

THIRD ROBOTThe human beings did not let us breed.

FOURTH ROBOTThey made us sterile. We cannot beget children. Therefore, teach us how to make Robots!

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

ALQUISTIt is lost.

RADIUSIt was written down!

ALQUISTIt was-burnt.

[All draw back in consternation.]

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

[Pause.]

RADIUS

Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

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

RADIUSTry! Try!

ALQUISTIf you knew how many experiments I have made.

FOURTH ROBOTThen show us what we must do! The Robots can do anything that human beings show them.

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

RADIUSExperiment then on us.

ALQUISTIt would kill you.

RADIUSYou shall have all you need! A hundred of us! A thousand of us!

ALQUISTNo, no! Stop, stop!

RADIUSTake whom you will, dissect!

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

RADIUSI tell you to take live bodies! Find out how we are made.

ALQUISTAm I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I can not even hold the scalpel. No, no, I will not—

FOURTH ROBOTThe life will perish from the earth.

RADIUSTake live bodies, live bodies! It is our only chance!

ALQUISTHave mercy, Robots. Surely you see that I would not know what I was doing.

RADIUSLive bodies—live bodies—

ALQUISTYou will have it? Into the dissecting room with you, then.

[RADIUS draws back.]

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

RADIUS Ready. Begin—

ALQUIST Yes, begin or end. God, give me strength.

[**ALQUIST** goes into dissecting room. He comes out terrified.]

ALQUIST No, no, I will not. 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.]

HELENA The man has fallen asleep, Primus.

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

HELENA [*Crossing to PRIMUS.*] All these little tubes! What does he do with them?

PRIMUS He experiments. Don't touch them.

HELENA [*Looking into microscope*] I've seen him looking into this. What can he see?

PRIMUS That is a microscope. Let me look.

HELENA Be very careful. [*Knocks over a test-tube.*] Ah, now I have spilled it.

PRIMUS What have you done?

HELENA It can be wiped up.

PRIMUS You have spoiled his experiments.

HELENA It is your fault. You should not have come to me.

PRIMUS You should not have called me.

HELENA You should not have come when I called you. [*She goes to ALQUIST's writing desk.*] Look, Primus. What are all these figures?

PRIMUS*[Examining an anatomical book]*This is the book the old man is always reading.

HELENAI do not understand those things.*[She goes to the window.]*

Primus, look!

PRIMUSWhat?

HELENAThe sun is rising.

PRIMUS*[Still reading the book]*I believe this is the most important thing in the world. This is the secret of life.

HELENADo come here.

PRIMUSIn a moment, in a moment.

HELENAOh, Primus, don't bother with the secret of life. What does it matter to you? Come and look quick—

Primus *[Going to window]*What is it?

Helena See how beautiful the sun is rising. And do you hear? The birds are singing. Ah, Primus, I should like to be a bird.

PRIMUSWhy?

HELENAI do not know. I feel so strange to-day. It's as if I were in a dream. I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me. Primus, perhaps I'm going to die.

PRIMUSDo you not sometimes feel that it would be better to die? You know, perhaps even now we are only sleeping. Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you.

HELENAIn your sleep?

PRIMUSYes. We spoke a strange new language, I cannot remember a word of it.

HELENAWhat about?

PRIMUSI did not 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 any other place in the world.

HELENAI, too, have found a place, Primus. It is very strange. Human beings lived there once, but now it is overgrown with weeds. No one goes there any more —no one but me.

PRIMUSWhat did you find there?

HELENAA cottage and a garden, and two dogs. They licked my hands, Primus. And their puppies! Oh, Primus! You take them in your lap and fondle 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. They tell me I am not made for work, but when I am there in the garden I feel there may be something—What am I for, Primus?

PRIMUSI do not know, but you are beautiful.

HELENAWhat, Primus?

PRIMUSYou are beautiful, Helena, and I am stronger than all the Robots.

HELENA*[Looks at herself in the mirror]*Am I beautiful? I think it must be the rose. My hair—it only weights me down. My eyes—I only see with them. My lips—they only help me to speak. Of what use is it to be beautiful?*[She sees PRIMUS in the mirror.]*Primus, is that you? Come here so that we may be together. Look, your head is different from mine. So are your shoulders—and your lips—

*[PRIMUS draws away from her.]*Ah, Primus, why do you draw away from me? Why must I run after you the whole day?

PRIMUSIt is you who run away from me, Helena.

HELENAYour hair is mussed. I will smooth it. No one else feels to my touch as you do. Primus, I must make you beautiful, too. *[PRIMUS grasps her hand.]*

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

HELENAWhat could happen to us, Primus?

HELENA*puts a rose in PRIMUS's hair.* **PRIMUS** and **HELENA** *look into mirror and burst out laughing.* *[Look at yourself.]*

ALQUISTLaughter? Laughter? Human beings?*[Getting up.]*Who has returned? Who are you?

PRIMUSThe Robot Primus.

ALQUISTWhat? A Robot? Who are you?

HELENAThe Robotess Helena.

ALQUISTTurn around, girl. What? You are timid, shy?*[Taking her the arm.]*Let me see you, Robotess.*[She shrinks away.]*

PRIMUSSir, do not frighten her!

ALQUISTWhat? You would protect her? When was she made?

PRIMUSTwo years ago.

ALQUISTBy Dr. Gall?

PRIMUSYes, like me.

ALQUISTLaughter—timidity—protection. I must test you further—the newest of Gall's Robots. Take the girl into the dissecting room.

PRIMUSWhy?

ALQUISTI wish to experiment on her.

PRIMUSUpon —Helena?

ALQUISTOf course. Don't you hear me? Or must I call someone else to take her in?

PRIMUSIf you do I will kill you!

ALQUISTKill me-kill me then! What would the Robots do then? What will your future be then?

PRIMUSSir, take me. I am made as she is —on the same day! Take my life, sir.

HELENA*[Rushing forward]*No, no, you shall not! You shall not!

ALQUISTWait girl, wait! *[To PRIMUS]* Do you not wish to live, then?

PRIMUSNot without her! I will not live without her

ALQUISTVery well; you shall take her place.

HELENAPrimus! Primus!*[She bursts into tears.]*

ALQUISTChild, child, you can weep! Why these tears? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world—what does it matter?

HELENAI will go myself.

ALQUISTWhere?

HELENAIn there to be cut.*[She starts toward the dissecting room. Primus stops her]*Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

PRIMUSYou shall not go in there, Helena!

HELENAIf you go in there and I do not, I will kill myself.

PRIMUS*[Holding her]*I will not let you! *[To ALQUIST]* Man, you shall kill neither of us!

ALQUISTWhy?

PRIMUSWe—we—belong to each other.

ALQUIST*[Almost in tears]*Go, Adam, go, Eve. The world is yours.

[HELENA and PRIMUS embrace and go out arm in arm as the curtain falls.]

THE END

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