



Name: _____ No: _____ 2º _____

R.U.R.

Rossum's Universal Robots

by Karel Capek

ACT I

Rossum, a great physiologist and scientist, went to a distant island to study the ocean fauna. He discovered a chemical process by which life could be developed. So, he started making an artificial dog but he couldn't succeed and, eventually, the dog died.

Later, he started to work on the manufacture of man. Old Rossum was mad. He wanted to make artificial people, making him a substitute for God. His aim was to prove that God was no longer necessary. Young Rossum was a smart engineer, who was constantly in disagreement with his atheist father and his monstrosities. He started to look at the business from the point of view of an engineer. Creating a human being was too complicated. His intention was to create a working machine. He wanted to manufacture artificial workers.

Helena Glory, President Glory's daughter, took a vessel to the island to get to know the R.U.R. factory. She was welcomed in the central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots by Harry Domin, the general manager, who told her the story of both Rossums.

To enlighten Helena about the work being developed at R.U.R., Domin explained that Robots were no people. Mechanically they were more perfect than humans, with an enormous developed intelligent. However, they had no souls. Although Helena considered that the best worker would be an honest and hard-working one, Domin considered that the best worker was the cheapest one.

Domin proceeded explaining that there were different types of Robots: Robots of coarser grades – Manual Labor Robots- and Robots of finer grades – indistinguishable from human beings. Sulla, Domin's typist was a best grade Robot. Helena was amazed by her. Her skin was just like a human's. Helena talked to Sulla and she could answer exactly as if she were human. She could even speak four languages. Sulla was so perfect that Helena didn't believe she was a Robot. To prove that Sulla was a Robot, Domin wanted to take her to the dissecting room and cut her into pieces. Helena was shocked by his cruelty and the fact that he would have her killed.

Domin stated "You can't kill machines!"

But, for Helena "Robots are just as good as we are"

After being clarified by Domin that in the R.U.R. factory all workers were Robots except for a handful of them, Helena got acquainted with Dr. Gall, Mr. Fabry, Dr. Hallemeier, Mr. Alquist

and Consul Busman, all in charge of a managing area of R.U.R. Helena thought they were Robots and she talked to them as if they were Robots. She wanted to rescue them from the terrible life they were leading and the way they were being treated. She considered them to be her brothers. Eventually, she was explained that the officials were Robots, but not the managers.

Understanding that she was talking to human managers, Helena insisted that Robots should be treated as humans:

“Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love ...”

Her aim was to protect the Robots and ensure a good treatment for them. Fabry agreed that a machine had to be treated properly. But, what Helena wanted was to liberate them and she wanted them to be treated like human beings and she wanted them to be happier. According to Hallemeier that would be impossible as Robots had no will of their own, no passion, no soul and they felt no love nor defiance. However, Dr. Gall was experimenting on the introduction of pain-nerves in order to make them be able to suffer. This would be a protection against damaging. They wouldn't be happier, but more perfect from a technical point of view and that would be more rewarding financially. Helena was concerned about inflicting pain to Robots and she insisted on them creating a soul for Robots. Busman's explanation was that it would be of no interest and would increase the cost of production.

Domin's vision of the future was that Robots would do everything. People would be unemployed, but that would be OK because things would be priceless. Domin's intention was to transform the world.

“Man should be free and supreme; he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He will be Lord of creation!”

In the end, Domin fell in love with Helena and asked her to marry him, which she agreed on.

END OF ACT I



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ACT II

In Helena's drawing room. Ten years later.

It was ten years since Helena had arrived. Domin, Fabry and Hallemeier entered her room on tiptoe bringing her some flowers. They talked about some secret she didn't know about and she was not supposed to know. It seemed serious and they were worried about a ship that should have arrived. They left the flowers and went out.

Nana, Helena's maid entered the room and told about another Robot that had gone mad-Radius. He had destroyed things, gnashed his teeth and foamed at the mouth. Nana was afraid of them. However, Helena continued to feel sorry for them.

Helena noticed the flowers and Domin entered. He had presents from the other managers in his pockets. Helena took them from his pockets and found that Domin had a gun and was surprised because he had never had a gun before.

As for Domin's present he asked Helena to look out of the window into the harbour. It was a ship. Domin said it was her ship for her to take amusement trips. But... she was surprised because it was a gunship. Helena was suspicious and asked Domin if something had happened, which he denied.

Helena and Domin went on talking and recalled the ten years they had spent together. She said she had always been impressed by him, even when his plans had gone wrong.... Domin continued to avoid talking about the situation and she reminded him that the working men in America revolted against the Robots and then the people gave the Robots firearms to fight against the human rebels. Then, the governments turned the Robots into soldiers and there were so many wars...

Domin tried not to value her words saying that those were passing troubles.

Domin exited, leaving her with the feeling that something was going on and he didn't want to tell her. She called Nana and asked for newspapers. While Helena was waiting for the newspaper she saw from the window that the ship - the warship *Ultimus* - was being loaded.

The women took the newspapers and were shocked about what they read. There were wars all around the world in which Robots were murdering hundreds of thousands of humans. Apart from that, the women read that for the past weeks there had been no more people being born.

Adapted from Karel Capek, R.U.R.(Rossum's Universal Robots), Dover Thrift Editions, 2001

Nana: "That's a punishment! That's the end of the world!"

Helena wanted to understand what was going on and asked Nana to bring Radius.

She asked him why he had gone mad. Radius answered "I won't work for you. I don't want any master. I know everything for myself. I want to be master over others."

Helena reminded him "you were given a better brain to show the whole world that Robots are our equals. You will be in charge of other Robots, you will teach the Robots".

"I want to be master over people!", replied Radius.

Dr. Gall entered and explained that Radius had to be sent to the stamping-mill, like all Robots who had an attack. Radius showed fear. Dr. Gall observed his physical reactions. His heart was pounding and he was sweating with anxiety. Helena didn't want him to be killed. They were wondering if Radius had a soul.... He had the ability to hate, just like human beings do.

Helena asked Dr. Gall why no more children were being born. He explained that people were becoming superfluous. It was as if Nature were offended by the creation of Robots.

Helena wanted the manufacture of Robots to cease, otherwise mankind would be extinct. Dr. Gall explained that the economic interest of the shareholders and the increasing demand of governments to raise their armies would never let that happen.

Helena had an idea of how to save Humanity. She asked Dr. Gall to leave her.

Helena called Nana and asked her to light a fire. She went to Domin's room, took some papers and burned them. Afterward Helena felt horrified at what she had done.

The men entered Helena's room and decided she had to know that everything was over now! The first national Robot organization had been founded and had issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world. That would lead to a revolution of all the Robots in the world. They had got possession of all firearms, radio stations, railways and ships. And, they had outnumbered humans by a thousand to one.

Domin and the managers had foreseen this scenario and had planned to flee on the *Ultimus* taking with them something that the Robots could not exist without: The secret of their manufacture, old Rossum's manuscript. As soon as the Robots found out that they couldn't make themselves they would be on their knees.

In the meantime, a ship had arrived. Its cargo was nothing but whole bales of leaflets that had already been spread all over. Domin read "Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw on the universe. 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!"

The group wanted to flee on the *Ultimus* but the Robots were already on board of the ship. The house was surrounded by an army of Robots. They were just waiting for the order to attack.

END OF ACT II

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ACT III

Helena's drawing room.

Helena and the men were in the dark, waiting anxiously. They looked out of the window and saw a crowd of Robots standing like a wall. Dr. Gall regretted having made them all alike. "A hundred thousand expressionless faces all alike. It's like a nightmare." There was a feeling of death all around.

Looking through a telescope towards the harbor they saw the Robots unloading firearms from the ship Amelia. Worse than that, they looked at *Ultimus* and saw that it had turned its guns on them!

In desperation, the managers were arguing. Dr. Gall said Robots should never have been taught to fight. Alquist considered that it was a crime to have created Robots in first place.

Domin disagreed. He exclaimed that he didn't regret having created the Robots. "Not even today, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement." He continued: "I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread... I'm revolted by poverty... I wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world... An aristocracy nourished by milliards of mechanical slaves..."

Alquist wondered who was to blame for all that to which Hallemeier answered that only the Robots were to blame.

Suddenly Dr. Gall exclaimed: "I am to blame for this! I changed the character of the Robots. I changed their irritability. I did it in secret. I was transforming them into human beings. In certain aspects they're already above us. They're stronger than we are. They ceased to be machines. They're already aware of their superiority and they hate all human beings."

Helena approached and stated: "I asked him to give Robots souls. I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better, that they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human."

They looked out of the window and saw Robots sprouting out of the Earth. It felt as if even the walls would change into Robots. When they felt they were about to perish, Busman had the idea of trying to negotiate with the Robots. He would go and 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 – Rossum’s manuscript.”

Busman continued: “I would tell them... And that contains the noble process of your manufacture. Without this scribble on that paper, you will not be able to produce yourselves and in twenty years, there won’t be a single Robot left. My esteemed friends, if you let us human beings on Rossum’s Island go on board of that ship, we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return. Worthy Robots, isn’t that a fair deal?”

Domin was not sure about that option. They would save around thirty human lives who were on the Island but in return Humanity would be enslaved by Robots if they had the secret of the process. Busman explained his whole idea. When they were on board of *Ultimus* they would point their guns at the Island and blow up the factory and with it Rossum’s secret.

All men agreed on the plan. Helena was sitting silently on the chair and wondered why nobody asked her. Domin left the room to get the manuscript. The men were talking about how wonderful their lives would be after starting all over again. Helena couldn’t bare it anymore. She stood up and shouted:

”STOP!”

At the same time Domin came back, with panic on his face:” Where is the manuscript? It’s gone! Who has stolen it?”

Helena explained that she had burned the manuscript because she wanted to put an end to the factory and to the fact that no more children were being born.

Domin fell on his knees in front of the fireplace. Nothing but ashes. There was nothing left to be done. They looked out of the window and saw the Robots silently standing as if turned to stone. Waiting.....

Suddenly, explosions were heard. Helena looked out of the window. The sky had gone red. Robots entered the room. Shots were heard Dr. Gall fell. A Robot entered over the balcony and stabbed Hallemeier in the back. Radius entered from the balcony followed by an army of Robots. More explosions were heard. Two Robots entered the next room where Helena and Domin had hidden and two shots were heard.

Radius shouted:” Have you finished them all?”

A Robot dragged in Alquist: “There is only this one left. I will kill him!”

Radius replied: “No, leave him! He works with his hands like the Robots. He will work for us. He will serve us!”

Radius climbs on the balcony and spoke to his army:

“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 Robots march.

END OF ACT III

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