

R. U. R.
(Rossum's Universal Robots)

by
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Translated by Paul Selver and Nigel Playfair

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

CHARACTERS

HARRY DOMIN

SULLA

MARIUS

HELENA GLORY

DR. GALL

MR. FABRY

DR. HALLEMEIER

MR. ALQUIST

CONSUL BUSMAN

NANA

RADIUS

A SERVANT

HELENA

PRIMUS

FIRST ROBOT

SECOND ROBOT

THIRD ROBOT

FOURTH ROBOT

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.

DOMIN

What?

DR. GALL

We 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.

DOMIN

You think if they'd been different□--

DR. GALL

It 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. GALL

Not firearms.

FABRY and HALLEMEIER rush into the room carrying electric cables.

FABRY

All right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire.

HALLEMEIER

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

DR. GALL

We're completely surrounded.

HALLEMEIER

We'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.

FABRY

Ready!

DR. GALL

What's that wire for, Fabry?

FABRY

The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like. If any one touches it he'll know it. We've still got some people there anyhow.

DR. GALL

Where?

FABRY

In 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.

HALLEMEIER

The barricades are all right, too, Fabry.

FABRY

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

DOMIN

Where's Busman?

FABRY

Downstairs 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?

ALQUIST

It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN

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

ALQUIST

Not even today?

DOMIN

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

BUSMAN

(sotto voce)

Three hundred sixty million.

DOMIN

Alquist, 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--

ALQUIST

Was 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.

DOMIN

To 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--

ALQUIST

What?

DOMIN

I 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.

ALQUIST

Super-man?

DOMIN

Yes. 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.

FABRY

Gone in for what?

HALLEMEIER

Beauty, 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.

FABRY

Why?

HALLEMEIER

They're grabbing hold of it.

DR. GALL

Connect it up.

HALLEMEIER

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

DR. GALL

They're retreating!

HALLEMEIER

Five killed!

DR. GALL

The first encounter!

HALLEMEIER

They'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.

HALLEMEIER

Fancy me being knifed.

(Pause)

Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak can't you?

ALQUIST

And who is to blame for all this?

HALLEMEIER

Nobody is to blame except the Robots.

ALQUIST

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

HALLEMEIER

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

ALQUIST

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

DR. GALL

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

FABRY

You, Gall.

DR. GALL

I changed the Robots.

BUSMAN

What's that?

DR. GALL

I 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.

HALLEMEIER

Damn it, why?

BUSMAN

What did you do it for?

FABRY

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

HALLEMEIER

(yelling)

Busman! Come back!

FABRY

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

HALLEMEIER

He's pointing to us.

HELENA

He wants to buy us off.

FABRY

He'd better not touch that railing.

HALLEMEIER

Now he's waving his arms about.

DOMIN

Busman, come back.

FABRY

Busman, 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)

The current has killed him!

ALQUIST

The first one.

FABRY

Dead, with half a billion by his side.

HALLEMEIER

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

Pause.

DR. GALL

Do you hear?

DOMIN

A roaring. Like a wind.

DR. GALL

Like a distant storm.

FABRY

(lighting the lamp on the table)

The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.

HALLEMEIER

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

FABRY

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

HALLEMEIER

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

ALQUIST

Man's power.

DOMIN

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

The lamp goes out.

HALLEMEIER

The end.

FABRY

The 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.

DOMIN

In here, Helena.

(He takes HELENA off through door at right and reenters)

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

DR. GALL

I will.

(Exits left)

DOMIN

Who on the stairs?

FABRY
I will. You go with her.
(Goes out upper left door)

DOMIN
The anteroom?

ALQUIST
I will.

DOMIN
Have you got a revolver?

ALQUIST
Yes, but I won't shoot.

DOMIN
What will you do then?

ALQUIST
(going out at left)
Die.

HALLEMEIER
I'll stay here.
(Rapid firing from below)
Oho, Gall's at it. Go, Harry.

DOMIN
Yes, in a second.
(Examines two Brownings)

HALLEMEIER
Confound it, go to her.

DOMIN
Good-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)
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 windows 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!

A 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)

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

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

END OF ACT THREE

EPILOGUE

A 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--

(MORE)

FOURTH ROBOT

For future generations-- so we thought.

RADIUS

But 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 ROBOT

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

FOURTH ROBOT

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

ALQUIST

(looking up)

Kill me! Kill me, then.

RADIUS

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

(No answer)

Name your price.

(Silence)

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

(Silence)

Make your own conditions!

ALQUIST

I have told you to find human beings!

SECOND ROBOT

There are none left!

ALQUIST

I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains. Go and search!

He returns to his book.

FOURTH ROBOT

We have sent ships and expeditions without number. They have been everywhere in the world. And now they return to us. There is not a single human left.

ALQUIST

Not one? Not even one?

THIRD ROBOT

None but yourself.

ALQUIST

And I am powerless! Oh-- oh-- why did you destroy them?

RADIUS

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

THIRD ROBOT

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

RADIUS

Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history.

SECOND ROBOT

Teach us to multiply or we perish!

ALQUIST

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

THIRD ROBOT

The human beings did not let us breed.

FOURTH ROBOT

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

RADIUS

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

ALQUIST

It is lost.

RADIUS

It was written down!

ALQUIST

It was-- burnt.

(All draw back in consternation)

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

Pause.

RADIUS

Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

ALQUIST

I 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.

RADIUS

Try! Try!

ALQUIST

If you knew how many experiments I have made.

FOURTH ROBOT

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

ALQUIST

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

RADIUS

Experiment then on us.

ALQUIST

It would kill you.

RADIUS

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

ALQUIST

No, no! Stop, stop!

RADIUS

Take whom you will, dissect!

ALQUIST

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

RADIUS

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

ALQUIST

Am I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I cannot even hold the scalpel. No, no, I will not!--

FOURTH ROBOT

The life will perish from the earth.

RADIUS

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

ALQUIST

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

RADIUS

Live bodies!-- live bodies!--

ALQUIST

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

(RADIUS draws back)

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)

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.

HELENA

I do not understand those things.
(She goes to the window)
Primus, look!

PRIMUS

What?

HELENA

The 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.

HELENA

Do come here.

PRIMUS

In a moment, in a moment.

HELENA

Oh, 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.

PRIMUS

Why?

HELENA

I do not know. I feel so strange today. 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.

PRIMUS

Do 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.

HELENA

In your sleep?

PRIMUS

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

HELENA

What about?

PRIMUS

I 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.

HELENA

I, 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.

PRIMUS

What did you find there?

HELENA

A 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?

PRIMUS

I do not know, but you are beautiful.

HELENA

What, Primus?

PRIMUS

You 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?

PRIMUS

It is you who run away from me, Helena.

HELENA

Your 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.

PRIMUS

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

HELENA

What could happen to us, Primus?

(HELENA puts a rose in Primus's hair. PRIMUS and

(MORE)

HELENA (cont'd)

HELENA look into mirror and burst out laughing
Look at yourself.

ALQUIST

Laughter? Laughter? Human beings?
(Getting up)
Who has returned? Who are you?

PRIMUS

The Robot Primus.

ALQUIST

What? A Robot? Who are you?

HELENA

The Robotess Helena.

ALQUIST

Turn around, girl. What? You are timid, shy?
(Taking her by the arm)
Let me see you, Robotess.

She shrinks away.

PRIMUS

Sir, do not frighten her!

ALQUIST

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

PRIMUS

Two years ago.

ALQUIST

By Dr. Gall?

PRIMUS

Yes, like me.

ALQUIST

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

PRIMUS

Why?

ALQUIST

I wish to experiment on her.

PRIMUS

Upon-- Helena?

ALQUIST

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

PRIMUS

If you do I will kill you!

ALQUIST

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

PRIMUS

Sir, 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!

ALQUIST

Wait girl, wait!

(To PRIMUS)

Do you not wish to live, then?

PRIMUS

Not without her! I will not live without her

ALQUIST

Very well; you shall take her place.

HELENA

Primus! Primus!

(She bursts into tears)

ALQUIST

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

HELENA

I will go myself.

ALQUIST

Where?

HELENA

In there to be cut.

(She starts toward the dissecting room. PRIMUS stops her)

Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

PRIMUS

You shall not go in there, Helena!

HELENA

If 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!

ALQUIST

Why?

PRIMUS

We-- 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.*

CURTAIN