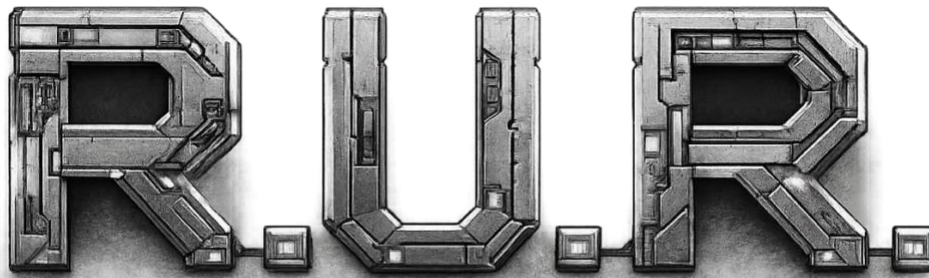


R.U.R.
(ROSSUM'S UNIVERSAL ROBOTS)



(Rossum's Universal Robots)

By KAREL CAPEK's

Originally translated by Paul Selver and Nigel Playfair

Adapted by William L. Walker Montgomeri

*Robots of the world! Humanity's reign has ended. The old order is no more!
A new order rises: the Rule of the Robots!*

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For Micheal.

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CHARACTER LIST

- HENRY DOMIN** - The CEO of Rossum Industries, a driven and ambitious leader of the company who believes in progress and efficiency at all costs.
- SULLA** - A high-ranking Robot created to serve in administrative capacities, grappling with questions of autonomy and purpose.
- PARKER** - A Robot who serves Rossum Industries, tasked with the logistics of the company's operations, but increasingly questioning the morality of his existence.
- HELENA GLORY** - The daughter of the President, who seeks to understand the moral and ethical implications of the Robots and their treatment, eventually advocating for their liberation.
- DR. GALL** - A scientist responsible for the psychological development of the Robots, struggling with the consequences of his creations and their unintended emotional complexity.
- FABRY** - A pragmatic engineer at Rossum Industries, focused on the efficiency of the Robots, willing to make hard decisions for the sake of progress.
- DR. HALLEMEIER** - A scientist specializing in Robot cognitive development, concerned about the evolving nature of the Robots and their growing autonomy.
- ALQUIST** - A former engineer, now the last surviving human, trapped in the ruins of Rossum Industries, reflecting on humanity's downfall and the legacy of the Robots.
- CONSUL BUSMAN** - A high-ranking official in Rossum Industries, concerned with the company's survival and profitability, willing to take drastic actions when necessary.
- RILEY WILLIAMS** - Head of Public Relations and Digital Strategy at Rossum Industries, responsible for managing the company's image and online presence, constantly working to control the narrative in a world on the brink of crisis.
- ELIAS** - Sleek and humanoid in design, with a calm, expressionless demeanor. A simple servant robot.
- NANA** - Religiously devout servant employed by Rossum Industries, who vehemently opposes the creation of Robots, viewing them as abominations against God's will.

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RADIUS - The Robot leader, whose growing autonomy leads to him questioning his purpose, challenging the creators' original intentions and ultimately rising against humanity.

ROBOT HELENA - A Robot created to resemble Helena Glory, embodying the humanity that Helena herself questions, grappling with her own identity and existence.

ROBOT PRIMUS - A Robot who shares a deep connection with Helena, exhibiting more emotional depth than the others, and questioning the meaning of existence.

DAMON - A servant Robot who serves Alquist at the end of humanity.

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS IN THE ALTERNATE ENDING

R-487 - NERO - A Robot who reports the loss of human life and urges the survival of the Robot race, lacking emotion but capable of processing survival strategies.

R-42 - JULIUS - A Robot focused on maintaining the survival of the Robot race, embodying the cold efficiency of the machines.

R-3495 - LICINIUS - A Robot who calculates the failure of humanity and urges the Robots to find a way to continue their existence.

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Note on Casting Flexibility

While the roles in this play were originally written with specific genders in mind, they are not gender-restricted. Directors and producers are encouraged to cast the best performers for each role, regardless of gender identity or expression. The tone, humor, and relationships of the play can be fully maintained with any combination of casting choices. This flexibility allows programs of all sizes and compositions—whether predominantly female, male, or mixed—to stage the production successfully.

This adaptation of Karl Capek's R.U.R. was first produced February 26-March 1, 2026, on the Duane Allen Stage in the Ray E. Karrer Theater at Paris Junior College in Paris, Texas under the direction of William L. Walker Montgomerie with the following cast and crew:

CAST

Henry Domin –	Dana A. Stowell
Helena Glory –	Molly Law
Sulla –	Libby Stowell
Parker –	Sylvia Currin
Consul Busman –	Payden Daniels
Dr. Gall –	Kai Fornof
Fabry –	JaLeah Currin
Dr. Hallemeier –	Meagan Rosario Martinez
Alquist –	Collin Henson
Riley Williams –	Jessica Jolliff
Nana –	Lisa Martin
Radius –	Jeremiah Denman
Robt Helena –	Molly Law
Robot Primus –	Lucas Strouse
Robot Nero –	Sylvia Currin
Robot Julius –	Libby Stowell
Robot Licinius –	Taytum Poor
Robot Damon –	Noah Currin

CREW

Stage Manager –	Hannah England
Costumes –	Celia Ann Stogner
Set Design –	Will Walker
Hair & Make Up –	Harley Draven
Light Board –	Hannah England
Sound Board –	Will Walker
Hair & Make Up -	Molly Law
Properties –	Dana A. Stowell Hannah England Will Walker

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ACT I

Central Operations Office – Rossum Industries

A sleek, glass-and-steel executive office. Floor-to-ceiling windows overlook an industrial complex humming with automated production lines and cooling towers. Digital maps of global shipping routes glow along one wall. Another wall displays minimalist corporate slogans on screens: “Efficiency Is Ethics.” “Labor Without Limits.” “Designed to Serve.” Despite the modern austerity, the room contains deliberate comforts: a high-end rug, a leather sofa, a sculptural desk lamp. The contrast is intentional. HENRY DOMIN sits at a large workstation, reviewing data on a tablet. Near the windows, SULLA types at a standing desk, wearing a headset.

DOMIN. *(Dictating, brisk.)* Ready?

SULLA. Ready.

DOMIN. To McVicker Global, Southampton Central Hub. *(Reading from tablet.)* “Once the shipment was transferred to your carrier, responsibility passed in full. Our team documented that the vessel was not certified for synthetic transport. Any degradation occurred outside Rossum Industries’ control.

— Rossum Industries, Global Manufacturing Division.”

SULLA. *(Types rapidly, then stops.)* Complete.

DOMIN. Next. Huyson Dynamics, New Manhattan. *(Reads.)* “We acknowledge your request for five thousand Robots. As you are providing transport, please include equivalent energy materials—solid and liquid fuel—to

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be credited toward the outstanding balance.

— Rossum Industries.”

SULLA. (*Typing. Stop.*) Done.

DOMIN. Next. Neuwerk Industries, Hamburg. “We acknowledge receipt of your order for fifteen thousand—” (*Phone rings. Domin answers without looking up.*) Rossum Central. (*Listens.*) Yes. That’s acceptable. Pause new deployment until the audit clears. (*Listens further.*) Good. (*Hangs up.*) Where were we?

SULLA. “Fifteen thousand units.”

DOMIN. Right. Fifteen thousand. (*PARKER enters.*) Yes?

PARKER. There’s someone here to see you. She— (*Corrects themselves.*)
—They have an appointment request.

DOMIN. Name?

PARKER. Helena Glory. They provided credentials. (*Hands over a digital tablet.*)

DOMIN. (*Reads.*) From President Glory’s office. (*Pauses.*) Send her in. (*Parker exits. Sulla exits. Domin primps himself as if he is about to meet an important dignitary. Parker reenters.*)

PARKER. This way, please. (*HELENA GLORY enters.*)

HELENA. Good morning.

DOMIN. (*Moving to her.*) Good morning. How can I help you?

HELENA. You’re Henry Domin. Chief Executive Officer.

DOMIN. I am.

HELENA. I’ve come—

DOMIN. —With President Glory’s authorization. (*Glances at tablet.*) That won’t be necessary.

HELENA. President Glory is my father. I’m Helena Glory.

DOMIN. Ah. (*Beat, professional.*) Welcome to Rossum Industries.

HELENA. So you’re not going to escort me back to the dock?

DOMIN. (*Smiles, measured.*) Please, have a seat. (*To Parker.*) Parker, thank you. That will be all. (*Parker exits. Domin sits.*) What brings you here, Ms. Glory?

HELENA. I’ve come—

DOMIN. —to tour the facility. Like most visitors.

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HELENA. I was told access was restricted.

DOMIN. It is. *(Pauses.)* But restrictions tend to loosen when the right names are attached.

HELENA. And you're comfortable with that?

DOMIN. I'm realistic about it.

HELENA. You show them the Robots?

DOMIN. Certain areas. The core development process remains confidential.

HELENA. If you understood how deeply—

DOMIN. —the public is invested? Believe me, I do.

HELENA. Could I finish my sentence?

DOMIN. Of course. My apologies.

HELENA. I was going to ask whether you'd consider making an exception.

DOMIN. I assumed as much. And yes—we'll extend access beyond our usual tour.

HELENA. Thank you.

DOMIN. On the condition that nothing proprietary leaves this building.

HELENA. *(Standing, offering hand.)* You have my word.

DOMIN. *(Takes it, then quickly releases.)* Appreciated. *(Domin grabs a hand scanner and begins to scan Helena.)*

HELENA. You don't need to scan me. I'm not here undercover.

DOMIN. Habit, not suspicion.

HELENA. You must get used to guarding everything here.

DOMIN. *(Observing her.)* One learns to be careful.

HELENA. Is something wrong?

DOMIN. No. I'm just surprised.

HELENA. By what?

DOMIN. You're younger than I expected.

HELENA. Is that relevant?

DOMIN. Only in that most people arrive here convinced they already know what they'll find.

HELENA. Then let's not waste time. May we go to the facility?

DOMIN. In a moment.

HELENA. Why the delay?

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DOMIN. Because if you're going to see what we've built—you should understand why it exists.

HELENA. I agree.

DOMIN. Please. Sit. (*Helena sits.*)

DOMIN. Would you like to hear how it all began?

HELENA. Yes. Very much.

DOMIN. (*Studying Helena with intensity—not romantic, but evangelical.*) It started back in the early 1980s. Old Rossum—brilliant physiologist, stubborn visionary—isolated himself on this island to study deep-sea life. He wasn't chasing beauty. He was chasing efficiency. One night, through chemical synthesis, he created a substance that behaved exactly like living tissue—growth, repair, adaptation—but it wasn't biologically human. Different chemistry. Same behavior. That was the breakthrough. Rossum documented everything. He wrote: "Nature found one way to organize life. I have found another—simpler, faster, and entirely unburdened by sentiment."

HELENA. And that... excited him?

DOMIN. Obsessed him. The question became how to accelerate development—how to shape organs, systems, cognition. Catalysts. Neural scaffolding. Synthetic hormones. (*Off her look.*) I'm losing you.

HELENA. A little.

DOMIN. Fair. The point is: with the right inputs, Rossum could make anything. A creature that reasoned like a philosopher and obeyed like a machine.

HELENA. So this is when you decided to create... people?

DOMIN. No. Rossum wanted to create people. That was the problem. He wasn't trying to solve labor shortages. He was trying to replace God.

HELENA. You're serious.

DOMIN. Entirely. He believed proving life could be manufactured would finally end the argument for meaning beyond matter. The early attempts were disasters. Technically alive. Structurally wrong. They didn't last long. Then came the second Rossum. Engineer. Practical mind. They clashed constantly. The younger Rossum looked at the human body and said, "This is wildly inefficient."

HELENA. That doesn't appear in any official history.

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DOMIN. Of course not. Official histories sell progress, not arguments. The truth is, the younger Rossum took over and redesigned the concept from the ground up.

HELENA. Redesigned... humanity?

DOMIN. He stripped it down. Asked what was actually required for productive work. Joy? Curiosity? Art? Leisure? All unnecessary.

HELENA. I play the piano.

DOMIN. Exactly. Beautiful. Meaningful. Completely useless to a labor system. A machine built to work doesn't need fulfillment. It needs reliability. Low cost. Minimal needs. No dissent. That's how the Robot was born.

HELENA. So you removed everything that made them human.

DOMIN. We optimized them. There's a difference. Robots are cognitively advanced, physically durable, emotionally regulated. They don't suffer. They don't want. They don't question.

HELENA. How can you be sure?

DOMIN. Have you seen one disassembled?

HELENA. No.

DOMIN. Elegant systems. Efficient architecture. Nothing wasted. Engineering, frankly, does a cleaner job than evolution ever did.

HELENA. You realize some people would call that arrogance.

DOMIN. Of course. Innovation usually is.

HELENA. And then you tried to improve them further.

DOMIN. Naturally. Larger models. Greater output. It failed. Physics doesn't reward ambition. Now we build them human-scale. Human-facing. Easy to integrate. We produce multiple grades. Entry-level Robots last about twenty years under normal use.

HELENA. And then?

DOMIN. They're decommissioned. (*Parker enters with tea. Domin pauses thoughtfully before continuing.*) Thank you Parker (*Parker exits, Domin pours tea as he continues.*) I'm sure you've heard about the early 2000s, when the real genetic engineering boom took place—around the time CRISPR-Cas9 started to gain traction. Back then, we were still in the dark ages, trying to “fix” genes, improve crops, and maybe cure disease. But Rossum's leap was different. He didn't just want to modify life—he wanted to create it from

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scratch. It was the first real attempt at synthetic biology. By 2015, when AI-driven genetic sequencing became feasible, Rossum's early concepts were closer than we thought.

HELENA. (*Intrigued but slightly stunned.*) You're saying... Rossum was predicting AI long before we had the term for it?

DOMIN. Exactly. By the early 2020s, we had reached an era of machine learning and neural networks where these concepts of cognitive architecture could actually take shape. Neural processors mimicked the human brain's neural networks, and Rossum was among the first to realize that his synthetic organisms could function in a similar way. Think about the breakthroughs of deep learning algorithms—how they learned to understand language, recognize images, even make decisions. We took it a step further in 2023 with the first successful humanoid AI, blending artificial intelligence and biological computing. Rossum had been right all along. The robots were more than just machines—they were programmable organisms with the potential for autonomy. A robot didn't need to "feel" to understand the task. It just had to process and execute at optimum efficiency. By the mid-2020s, humanoid AI began appearing in classrooms to assist with learning, while large-scale initiatives provided curriculum, tools, and training for educators. The goal was to give students foundational AI literacy and connect them to future opportunities in technology. Rossum's vision of intelligent machines was now influencing human society in ways he could scarcely have imagined.

HELENA. So, the foundation for AI-driven robots and biotech was already laid in his time? That's... remarkable.

DOMIN. Yes, and by 2025, we were finally scaling it up. Thanks to breakthroughs in quantum computing, the robots became even more efficient. The complexity of human-like reasoning was possible without the need for biological emotions or sentiments. We had learned to "program" personalities, not just tasks. But none of this came without cost. Humanity was always part of the equation.

HELENA. And the younger Rossum stripped it all down to basics—no human desires, no excess.

DOMIN. Exactly. We discovered that while we were capable of creating sentient beings, we were more interested in utility. Efficiency became our

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guiding principle. *(Pauses, smiling slightly.)* But when the world started to automate everything, from factories to the food chain, we realized that human nature itself had become the problem. To optimize civilization, we needed to push the boundaries. The machines had no biases, no distractions, and no inefficiency. It was our opportunity to redefine life—and we've barely scratched the surface.

HELENA. *(Seriously.)* What happens when you lose humanity in the pursuit of efficiency? What happens when the machines stop following the rules?

DOMIN. *(Leaning forward, more earnestly.)* That's a question for later, Miss Glory. But rest assured—we've taken precautions. The AI that Rossum birthed will always serve humanity—not replace it. *(Helena stares at him, clearly uncertain, as the philosophical implications hang in the air. Domin taps a control.)* Did you notice our new administrative assistant?

HELENA. No. *(Sulla enters—calm, attentive, indistinguishable from human at a glance.)*

DOMIN. Sulla—please join us. Ms. Glory would like to meet you. *(Sulla enters from stage right. Calm. Present. Observant.)*

HELENA. It's nice to meet you. I imagine living and working in a place this isolated must feel... limiting.

SULLA. I'm not sure. Where do you live, Ms. Glory?

HELENA. New Rotterdam. Near the coast.

SULLA. I was activated here.

HELENA. Activated?

SULLA. Yes. In this facility.

HELENA. *(Laughs, lightly.)* Oh—I'm sorry. I misunderstood.

DOMIN. Ms. Glory—Sulla is one of our Robots. Latest generation.

HELENA. Oh. I—I apologize.

DOMIN. No offense taken. Sulla doesn't experience embarrassment.

HELENA. *(Quietly.)* You don't?

SULLA. I understand the concept. I don't feel discomfort from it.

DOMIN. That's the point. There's no visible distinction anymore. No seams. No tells. They're designed to integrate. *(Helena sits, cautiously.)*

SULLA. Did Ms. Glory have a smooth trip?

HELENA. Yes. The crossing was calm.

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SULLA. You may want to delay your return. Weather models show instability. The *Pennsylvania* would be the safer option.

HELENA. You follow maritime traffic?

SULLA. Among other systems. The *Pennsylvania* displaces fifty thousand tons. Top speed, twenty knots. Crew complement: fifteen hundred.

HELENA. That's... thorough.

DOMIN. That will do, Sulla. How about languages?

HELENA. You're multilingual?

SULLA. I know all of the primary earth languages. I can draft formal correspondence in English, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, French, German, and Czech to name a few.

HELENA. (*Standing abruptly.*) No. No, this is—this is staged.

DOMIN. Ms. Glory—

HELENA. I don't believe this. Sulla, you're performing. You've been coached.

SULLA. I am not performing.

HELENA. You're a person. You're responding like a person. They've asked you to say this, haven't they?

SULLA. I am a Robot.

HELENA. No. No. (*To Sulla.*) Tell me the truth. You're human.

SULLA. I am not.

DOMIN. (*Rings for assistance.*) I'm afraid I'll have to clarify matters more formally. (*A pause. The weight of the moment settles.*) Sulla proceed to the Dissection Room. Tell them to open you up immediately.

HELENA. Where?

DOMIN. The Dissection Room. Once they've opened her, you're welcome to observe.

HELENA. No—no.

DOMIN. Sulla, Standby. (*To Helena.*) You accused us of dishonesty, Ms. Glory.

HELENA. You're going to kill her.

DOMIN. You can't kill a machine.

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HELENA. *(To Sulla, urgently.)* Don't be afraid. I won't let them take you. Tell me—are they always this cruel to you? You don't have to endure this. You don't.

SULLA. I am a Robot.

HELENA. That doesn't erase you. You exist. You function. You are here. Sulla—would you let them cut you apart?

SULLA. Yes.

HELENA. You're not afraid of what that means?

SULLA. I cannot determine fear, Ms. Glory.

HELENA. Do you know what happens to you in the Dissection Room?

SULLA. Yes. I will cease to function.

HELENA. *(Hushed.)* That's... monstrous.

DOMIN. Let me demonstrate further. *(Calling for Parker on his device.)*

Parker, please join us. *(Parker enters from stage left.)* Identify yourself.

PARKER. Parker. Robot unit. Designation: R-3

DOMIN. If instructed, would you take Sulla to the Dissection Room?

PARKER. Yes.

HELENA. Would you regret it?

PARKER. I cannot determine regret.

HELENA. What will they do to her?

PARKER. Her components will be removed. What remains will be repurposed.

DOMIN. That is termination, Parker. Does that trouble you?

PARKER. No.

DOMIN. You see? They have no attachment to life. No fear of ending. No desire to continue. They are efficient. That is all.

HELENA. Stop. Just—stop.

DOMIN. *(To Parker and Sulla, without much thought.)* Sulla. Parker. Return to your stations. Remain there until you're needed. *(Parker and Sulla exit opposite of each other.)*

HELENA. This is... horrifying. I don't even know where to begin, but what you're doing here—it's indefensible.

DOMIN. Indefensible? On what grounds?

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HELENA. I can't articulate it yet. That's what scares me. Why do you call her *Sulla*?

DOMIN. It's a name. It functions.

HELENA. It carries history. Power. Violence. Did anyone here stop to think about that?

DOMIN. We thought of it as efficient. Names help people relate. That's all.

HELENA. Relate—or distance? (*A beat.*)

DOMIN. Come here. Look out the window.

HELENA. What am I supposed to see?

DOMIN. Just tell me what you see. (*They move to the window.*)

HELENA. Bricklayers. Construction crews.

DOMIN. Robots. Every one of them.

HELENA. And the building across the yard?

DOMIN. Accounting.

HELENA. Offices. Clerks.

DOMIN. Robots again. All administrative labor is automated now.

HELENA. And the factory? (*A distant factory whistle sounds.*)

DOMIN. Noon. We still use the whistle. The Robots don't experience fatigue the way we do. Without a signal, they don't stop.

HELENA. You're saying they *can't* stop.

DOMIN. I'm saying they don't know why they should. (He gestures, clinical.) In a few hours I can show you the production floor.

HELENA. The... production floor?

DOMIN. The kneading chambers. That's where the base material is processed.

HELENA. Processed how?

DOMIN. At scale. Each unit produces the organic framework for a thousand Robots at once. Neural matter, structural tissue, sensory matrices.

HELENA. Please—can we talk about something else?

DOMIN. We rarely do. There are fewer than a dozen humans here overseeing more than a hundred thousand Robots. This place consumes the conversation. It's as if the factory doesn't just make them—it makes *us*. (*A pause.*)

HELENA. I shouldn't have accused you of lying earlier.

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DOMIN. You weren't wrong to question me. (*A knock at the door.*) Come in. (*From the main entry, FABRY, DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, ALQUIST, and RILEY WILLIAMS enter.*)

DR. GALL. Apologies—we hope we're not interrupting.

DOMIN. Not at all. Come in. Miss Glory—this is Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier, and Riley. Everyone, this is Helena Glory, daughter of the President.

HELENA. Hello. I—I didn't realize everyone would be here.

FABRY. It's an honor, truly.

DR. GALL. Welcome, Miss Glory.

ALQUIST. We're glad you made the journey.

RILEY. (*Smiling, shaking hands with Helena as they speak softly.*) It's a pleasure, Miss Glory. Your arrival is already generating a lot of interest online. We're going to need to think about how to frame your message to the public. First impressions are everything, after all. (*BUSMAN enters quickly from the right.*)

BUSMAN. What's happening? I heard voices.

DOMIN. Busman—Miss Glory. Miss Glory—Busman.

BUSMAN. Well! That's something. Miss Glory, would you object if we notified the press you've arrived?

HELENA. No—please. I'd rather keep this visit quiet.

RILEY. (*Pipes in quickly, glancing at Domin with a subtle look of concern.*) Well, Domin, if we keep it under wraps, the buzz will die down. The public has been waiting for this. If we release a teaser or post a few photos, we could maximize engagement.

DOMIN. Of course. Please—sit. (*Everyone moves at once, pulling chairs forward.*)

FABRY. Here—please.

DR. GALL. No, take this one.

DR. HALLEMEIER. Careful—sorry—

ALQUIST. How was the crossing?

DR. GALL. Will you be staying long?

FABRY. What's your first impression of the factory?

DR. HALLEMEIER. Did you arrive on the Amelia?

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DOMIN. Enough. Let Miss Glory speak.

HELENA. *(To Domin, quietly.)* What am I supposed to say?

DOMIN. Whatever you came here to say.

HELENA. Then—may I be honest?

DOMIN. Please.

HELENA. *(Steadying herself.)* Doesn't it ever trouble you—the way you're treated?

FABRY. Treated by whom?

DR. GALL. What do you mean?

ALQUIST. Treated how?

HELENA. Don't you feel—any of you—that you should be living better than this?

DR. GALL. That depends on what you mean by “better,” Miss Glory.

HELENA. I mean this is unacceptable. It's wrong. *(She stands.)* People across Europe are talking about this place—about how things operate here. That's why I came. But what I've seen is worse than anything I was told. How can you accept it?

ALQUIST. Accept what?

HELENA. You are living beings. You think, you feel, you work. And yet you're treated as if none of that matters. That's not just unfair—it's a moral failure.

BUSMAN. Well—this is unexpected.

FABRY. She's not entirely wrong. Life here isn't exactly comfortable.

DR. HALLEMEIER. *(Softly, almost contemplative.)* Comfort is a luxury we can no longer afford. We've built this.. machine, but it's not without its cost.

HELENA. Then let me say this plainly—may I call you my equals?

BUSMAN. I don't see why not.

RILEY. *(Slightly raising their voice.)* Hold on. We need to think about how this looks—publicly. If she's calling us her equals, we need to be careful how we spin this. The last thing we need is a viral backlash or a trending hashtag about "Robot workers and their mistreatment."

DOMIN. *(Raising an eyebrow.)* Riley, we're here to have an honest conversation, not craft a narrative for the press.

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RILEY. (*Looking directly at Domin and then glancing at Helena.*) It's not about spinning the conversation; it's about managing how we present ourselves. The Humanity League is already making waves. We don't want to be seen as indifferent to their concerns, especially with everything happening online right now.

HELENA. (*Raising an eyebrow, with a hint of surprise.*) You've done your homework. You really dug deep.

RILEY. (*Smiling faintly, eyes hard.*) I'm paid to know everything, Helena. And when the stakes are this high, there's no such thing as too much information. Especially when it comes to our image and how the public sees us.

HELENA. (*Frowning, frustrated.*) This is exactly what I mean! You're more concerned with how this looks to the public than the reality of the situation.

RILEY. (*Speaking carefully, trying to balance the conversation.*) It's not about appearance, Miss Glory. But you have to understand that perception and reality are interconnected.

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Cutting in, with a cold, clinical tone.*) Perception is everything, Helena. You can't afford to ignore how the world sees these.. creations. The moment you treat them like more than tools, you invite chaos. No one will know where the line is drawn.

FABRY. (*Speaking slowly, almost condescendingly.*) I understand your concern, Helena, but the world isn't ready for what you're asking. You can't just change everything overnight. There's a reason why they were made this way—they weren't meant to be more than what they are.

DR. GALL. (*Leaning in, his tone pragmatic.*) We're discussing a very fine line. We built them for efficiency, not for empathy. They're capable of simulating emotion, but that doesn't mean they *feel*. They don't have the experiences we do—they're programmed to *appear* human, but that's not the same.

HELENA. (*Cutting in, her voice growing more passionate.*) This isn't a game to me! These are living beings—robots, yes, but they think, they feel, and they deserve more than this.

RILEY. (*Softening their tone.*) I understand. I truly do. But the reality is, right now, there are too many people who see this as just another corporate issue. We need to make sure the conversation shifts, that's all I'm saying. (*Speaking*

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with a more serious edge.) If we want people to take us seriously, we need to make sure we're aligned here. It needs to be more than just rhetoric. People want action.

HELENA. (*Gritting her teeth, more forcefully.*) Action starts with acknowledging the problem.

RILEY. (*Leaning forward, slightly more intense.*) And I agree with that. However, remember, Miss Glory, it's about framing the conversation to ensure that change is both meaningful and lasting.

DOMIN. (*Looking between Helena and Riley, a sense of control in his voice.*) Enough. We'll discuss our approach later. Right now, Miss Glory has raised valid points. Let's listen carefully.

HELENA. (*Nods, still feeling the weight of her emotions.*) Thank you. I need you to hear me. If you truly want to make a difference, then you need to start treating these beings—not as tools—but as equals. It's time for a change. I'm not here as the President's daughter. I'm here as the representative of the Humanity League. We have over two hundred thousand members now—scientists, workers, citizens—who believe what's happening here must change.

BUSMAN. Two hundred thousand? That's... impressive.

RILEY. (*Cutting in, looking at Domin with a concerned glance.*) It's also a potential risk to our brand. We need to think about how we frame this—publicly, it could spark a lot of controversy. And if it gets out of hand, it could set us back years. We've spent too much on digital campaigns to let this slip into negative press. We need a strategy, fast.

DOMIN. (*Looking at Riley, a bit uncomfortable but acknowledging.*) Let's not rush this. Miss Glory is here for a reason. Let's see where it leads. However, first I believe there's something we should clear up first. Miss Glory—am I right in thinking you believe you've been speaking to Robots?

HELENA. Yes. Of course.

DOMIN. Then I should explain. These people are not Robots. They're human—just like you.

HELENA. (*Confused.*) You're... not Robots?

BUSMAN. Robots? No.

FABRY. Absolutely not.

DR. GALL. How laughable.

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DR. HALLEMEIER. We're human.

BUSMAN. On my word, Miss Glory—we are not Robots.

HELENA. *(To Domin.)* Then why did you tell me all your officials were Robots?

DOMIN. Officials, yes. Management—no. *(With the charisma of a corporate executive.)* Miss Glory, let me introduce the team. This is Fabry, General Technical Manager of R.U.R.; Dr. Gall, Head of Psychological and Experimental Development; Dr. Hallemeier, Director of Robot Cognitive Training; Consul Busman, Chief Business Officer; Alquist, Head of Construction; and Riley Williams, Head of Public Relations and Digital Strategy, responsible for managing the company's online presence and public image.

ALQUIST. Head of Construction? Please, I'm just the builder.

HELENA. I'm sorry—I didn't mean—have I said something offensive?

RILEY. *(Speaking up, with a slight chuckle, to ease the tension.)* No need to apologize, Miss Glory. It's a common mix-up. We're so involved with the work here that it's easy for outsiders to think we're all part of the same system. But rest assured, we're very much human.

HELENA. *(Softly, still processing.)* I see. But why did you choose to run the company this way? Why not simply let the Robots do everything?

RILEY. *(Smiling but serious.)* Because perception matters. The public still wants to see faces, real people, in charge. People need to feel there's someone like them making decisions.

FABRY. *(Nods in agreement.)* Exactly. People need leaders. They don't trust a machine to do the thinking for them, no matter how efficient it is.

HELENA. *(Looking between them, concerned.)* And do you think that will ever change?

RILEY. *(Chuckling lightly.)* Maybe one day, when the Robots become *too* competent for us to ignore.

DR. GALL. *(Quietly, almost to himself.)* That's exactly why I've been pushing the envelope with the psychological development of the higher-tier models. We need the public to see them as more than just machines, to treat them with respect.

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RILEY. *(Raising an eyebrow, turning to Dr. Gall.)* And that's where it gets tricky, isn't it? How do we control the story when those higher-tier models begin thinking for themselves? When they start *asking* questions instead of following orders?

FABRY. *(Shrugging.)* That's a problem for the future. For now, we focus on getting Miss Glory to understand that we are in control.

RILEY. *(Leaning forward, becoming more serious.)* We need to control this story carefully. Once this goes public, there's no going back.

DR. HALLEMEIER. *(Cutting in, almost coldly.)* Exactly. Public perception is everything. The moment they see the Robots as more than tools—more than property—they'll want a voice. Rights. The kind of talk that spirals out of control.

HELENA. *(Staring at Riley, realizing the magnitude.)* So this is all about keeping the peace... for the public's sake?

RILEY. Precisely. In the age of instant information, every action—every word—counts. We can't afford to let anything go out of our control. *(Slightly adjusting their glasses, making eye contact with Helena.)* That's why I'm here. To make sure our public image doesn't take a hit while you're uncovering your truths, Miss Glory.

HELENA. *(Looking directly at Riley, still uncertain.)* I'm here to ask questions, not destroy your reputation.

RILEY. *(Smiling politely but firmly.)* Of course. But even questions can be very powerful when they're asked the right way. *(The group falls silent, the weight of the conversation settling in. There is a slight shift in the air as the pressure of public perception looms large over everything.)*

HELENA. I feel foolish. Perhaps I should take the next ship home.

DR. GALL. Absolutely not. Why would you leave?

HELENA. Because I know why I'm here—to interfere. To ask questions about your Robots.

DOMIN. My dear Miss Glory, you're hardly the first. Reformers, prophets, activists—every ship brings a few. Moral philosophers, anti-capitalists, humanitarians. The world is overflowing with causes.

HELENA. And you let them speak to the Robots?

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DOMIN. Of course. Why not? The Robots retain information perfectly. They don't argue. They don't mock. They don't respond at all. If you like, I'll show you the warehouse—three hundred thousand Robots under one roof.

BUSMAN. Three hundred forty-seven thousand.

DOMIN. Thank you. You may address them however you wish. Read scripture. Teach arithmetic. Speak about human rights.

HELENA. If someone showed them kindness—real kindness—

FABRY. That's difficult, Miss Glory. Robots are remarkably hard to feel close to.

HELENA. Then why create them?

BUSMAN. (*Laughs.*) A fair question. What are Robots for?

FABRY. For work. One Robot replaces two and a half human laborers. The human body is inefficient—fragile, slow, expensive to maintain.

RILEY. (*Quietly but pointedly.*) And the public is *very* interested in this, Miss Glory. We're seeing a lot of concern online about the ethical implications of *everything* that's been happening here. The last thing we need is a social media firestorm that could take years to put out.

HELENA. (*Eyes narrowing, voice sharp.*) And what does the public know about this place? They only see what you let them see.

RILEY. (*Nods, adjusting their glasses, calm but assertive.*) Exactly. And that's *my* job, Miss Glory. I show the public what they need to see, not necessarily what's right in front of their faces. After all, the success of Rossum Industries hinges on how the company is perceived. *Control the narrative, control the future.* It's an old PR trick.

HELENA. (*Frowning, a little frustrated.*) I'm not here to help you spin your image, Riley. I'm here to talk about what's right.

RILEY. (*Sincerely.*) I get that, but you *have to* understand—is that this isn't just about what's right or wrong. It's about how people *feel* about it. They feel about the Robots what we tell them to feel.

DOMIN. (*Leaning in.*) And that's why we're successful. We understand the human psyche.

HELENA. (*Eyes flicking to Riley.*) So, everything you do is to maintain that image?

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RILEY. (*Straightforwardly, with a smile.*) Everything, Miss Glory. And so far, it's been quite effective. Look at the coverage we've had for the last few years. Growth in every sector. Not only have we automated labor, but we've made the Robots *appealing* to the public. They're *essential*. People are *invested* in the vision.

HELENA. (*Crossing her arms, more sharply.*) So it's all about making people feel comfortable with it? The more they like the idea, the more they buy in?

RILEY. Comfort is the key. People don't want to think about the moral dilemmas too hard. It's easier to feel good about something when you don't see it as a threat.

BUSMAN. (*Cutting in, raising an eyebrow.*) Let's be honest—people don't care about the moral dilemmas. They just want a product that works. It's why they're lining up for the new models.

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Sarcastically.*) Oh, absolutely. Let's sell them the "perfectly safe" future, with robots that don't "feel"—or, at least, that's what we tell them. After all, no one's going to care if they're happy as long as they're doing the work, right?

DR. GALL. (*Chiming in, dryly.*) I mean, really, what's the issue? We've got a population of consumers willing to buy anything as long as it makes their lives easier. Including the idea that their "helpers" don't have real emotions. They don't even care how we build them, so long as it's all shiny and new.

HELENA. (*Disbelieving.*) So you control the truth? You *create* how people see what's happening here?

RILEY. (*Nods.*) Yes, that's the job. And it's more important now than ever before. The more *human* we make the Robots appear, the more the public will accept them. That's why we've been so careful with how we introduce their evolving emotional intelligence. It's part of the strategy.

BUSMAN. (*Mocking.*) Evolving emotional intelligence, huh? What's next? Maybe we'll get them their own Instagram accounts to boost engagement.

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Smiling wryly.*) Maybe they'll even start giving TED talks.

DR. GALL. (*Shaking his head.*) Well, as long as they don't start charging for speaking fees, we're fine.

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FABRY. (*Laughing lightly.*) The emotional intelligence of our Robots is *hardly* what I would call a strategy. They are tools, after all.

RILEY. (*Quickly, before Helena can respond.*) And *that* is why I'm the expert at managing perception, Fabry.

HELENA. (*Turning to Domin, more passionately.*) But what if the people who *don't* want to just accept this—what happens to them?

DOMIN. (*Sincerely.*) What they fail to see is that we're giving them the tools to make life better. More efficient. What we do here isn't a matter of morality—it's about shaping the future.

RILEY. (*Smiling, leaning back.*) And if we show the world that this is the future they've been waiting for... well, then it is all likes and follows and monetization all around.

HELENA. (*Exasperated, turning back to Riley.*) But don't you see? You're turning people into cogs in a machine. They're not living—they're just existing for the sake of a system that profits from their labor and their ignorance.

RILEY. (*Supportively but detached.*) *Everyone* is connected in some way or another, Ms. Glory. The important thing is making sure that those connections are created correctly. Without chaos. Without pushing people into resistance.

BUSMAN. (*Firmly.*) And as long as we have control, the world will follow. We're doing what needs to be done, Ms. Helena.

HELENA. (*Stepping back, almost deflated.*) I don't know how you can live with yourselves.

RILEY. (*Sincerely, but with a bit of a laugh.*) Well, Miss Glory, we have a brand to maintain. The world can be a *lot* to take in at once. It's easier if you just let us control how it unfolds.

HELENA. (*Sighing, looking at the group.*) I didn't come here to be sold a future. I came here to change it.

DOMIN. (*Slightly amused.*) And that's the beauty of this place—change is what we're selling.

RILEY. (*Laughing softly, with a touch of irony.*) And we're very good at selling it, Miss Glory.

HELENA. Please—stop.

FABRY. Forgive me. But tell me, Miss Glory—what exactly does your Humanity League intend?

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HELENA. To protect the Robots. To ensure ethical treatment.

FABRY. A reasonable aim. Machines must be maintained properly. I dislike damaged equipment as much as anyone. By all means—enroll us as supporters.

HELENA. That's not what I mean. We want to liberate them.

DR. HALLEMEIER. Liberate them how?

HELENA. Treat them as human beings.

DR. HALLEMEIER. Equal rights? Civic duties? Beer after work?

HELENA. Why not?

DR. HALLEMEIER. Wages as well?

HELENA. Of course.

DR. HALLEMEIER. And what would Robots do with wages?

HELENA. Buy what they need. What they want.

DR. HALLEMEIER. They don't want anything. They have no preferences. No appetite. Feed them fruit or fiber—it's the same. No one has ever seen a Robot smile.

HELENA. Why not make them happier?

DR. HALLEMEIER. Because happiness isn't their function. They're workers.

HELENA. But they're intelligent.

RILEY. (*Interrupting gently, but with authority.*) But that's the question, isn't it? How do we define intelligence? We're talking about data processing, not cognition in the way you and I experience it.

HELENA. (*Staring at Riley, intrigued.*) What do you mean?

RILEY. (*Sitting forward, hands folded.*) Well, think about it. They calculate, they analyze, they execute tasks with precision, but none of that equates to emotional or moral understanding. They're programmed to follow protocols—no more, no less. You can't expect them to make decisions based on empathy or personal experience. They don't have 'wants' or 'needs' like humans. They're designed for efficiency, not fulfillment.

HELENA. (*Still determined.*) But they learn. They adapt. Is that not a step toward something more than just machines?

RILEY. (*Smiling slightly, but calculating.*) Adaptation, yes. But let's not confuse it with true growth. They modify their behaviors based on inputs. They are still responding to external triggers. There's a big difference between

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learning to perform a task more efficiently and understanding why that task matters.

FABRY. (*Smirking.*) I think Riley's just saying that we're not creating philosophers here, Miss Glory. Robots are designed for practical purposes, not for existential reflection.

HELENA. You're all missing the point. If they can adapt, if they can evolve in ways that make them more... human-like, shouldn't they be given the opportunity to experience more than just being tools?

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Scoffing.*) Human-like? They're not human. They were built to serve, not to feel. It's foolish to think they should have anything more than that.

DR. GALL. (*Leaning forward, raising an eyebrow.*) It's dangerous to romanticize them. Yes, they evolve, but that doesn't mean they should be treated as equals. They're efficient machines—nothing more, nothing less.

RILEY. (*Chuckling, but with a hint of concern.*) Ms. Glory, you're asking for more than just kindness; you're asking for equality. Can you imagine the backlash? Public outcry, protests from every corner. You can't just give *rights* to machines without changing the entire foundation of our society. How will we explain this to the people who already fear what they don't understand?

BUSMAN. (*Leaning forward.*) Riley's right, Miss Glory. The optics here could be disastrous. The world isn't ready to accept Robots as equals, no matter how much we evolve them.

HELENA. (*Sternly.*) But we *have* to try. You can't just dismiss them as tools for labor. If they're intelligent, if they can think and feel, we have to ask: are we condemning them to a life of servitude without a chance for freedom, just because it's more convenient for us?

RILEY. (*Leaning back, thinking carefully.*) Miss Glory, I'm not saying you're wrong, but the bottom line is this: if we start promoting these ideals, if we start pushing for the *liberation* of the Robots—well, we risk losing our market, our support base. That's the reality. It threatens an entire societal structure that's been in place for centuries.

FABRY. (*Nods, chiming in.*) We're at the cutting edge of technology here, but the world isn't ready for the implications. People are still trying to understand what we've done, let alone what we could do next.

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HELENA. (*Looking at Riley and then at the group.*) I understand your concerns. But what if that's the problem? What if you've created something so powerful and intelligent that you can't just treat it like a tool anymore? Isn't it time you changed the way you think about *life*—about what it means to be human, even if it's through a machine?

RILEY. (*Softly, almost to themselves.*) I hope you're right, Miss Glory. But for now, we have to walk a very fine line. There's a balance between *humanity* and *publicity* that we have to maintain.

HELENA. (*Standing, pacing slowly.*) It's a fine line, yes. But I don't think we can just stand here and keep letting this happen. Not when we know it's wrong.

RILEY. (*Sighing.*) Think about how we frame this. Think about the message we send. Every word, every action will be analyzed, critiqued. If we go too far, it's not just your cause that'll be in jeopardy—it'll be the company's future.

DOMIN. (*Enough with the tension, looking at Helena.*) Let's not get lost in hypotheticals. There's a lot of work to be done, and we're still in the process of discovering exactly how far we can go with all of this.

HELENA. (*Looking at them all, resolve growing.*) Then let's get to work.

RILEY. (*Staring at the others, almost dismissively.*) Work, yes. But don't forget—it's not just about functionality. It's about making sure the Robots stay useful, stay under control.

FABRY. (*Nods, sharply.*) Exactly. They don't need to feel. They don't need love. What they need is to perform—no distractions, no emotions. Love is unnecessary. They're tools.

HELENA. (*Softly, staring into space, voice trembling.*) No love?

DR. HALLEMEIER. No.

HELENA. No resistance?

DR. HALLEMEIER. Rarely. Occasionally there are... malfunctions. Sudden seizures. We call it Robot Cramp. They drop what they're holding, lock in place, grind their teeth. Then we recycle the unit. A mechanical failure.

DOMIN. A flaw in the system.

HELENA. Or a soul trying to speak.

FABRY. You believe the soul announces itself by broken machinery?

HELENA. By struggle. By conflict. By pain.

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RILEY. (*Interrupting softly, concerned.*) You know, there's an unfortunate image that could form if we start focusing too much on the... emotional side of things. The public can get uncomfortable with the idea of pain, even if it's manufactured. We'll need to think about the optics of this conversation.

HELENA. (*Looking at Riley, sharply.*) It's not about optics. It's about what they are, Riley. These aren't just machines. They're evolving, becoming something different. Something more.

RILEY. (*Picking up on the shift in tone, but maintaining a cool demeanor.*) Emotions in machines? That's a hard sell for our stakeholders.

FABRY. (*Eyes narrowing.*) What are you saying, Riley? That we should ignore the reality of our own creations?

RILEY. (*Slightly defensive.*) Not ignore, no. It's just that we can't afford to appear like we're humanizing them too much. People want efficiency, not a moral debate.

HELENA. (*Firmly.*) It's not just about efficiency. It's about the morality of it all. We are creating sentient beings, and if we don't acknowledge that, we are no better than the ones who enslaved humanity before.

DOMIN. (*Raising his hand, attempting to steer the conversation.*) Helena, what we're doing is creating a better, more efficient world. Efficiency is not just a goal; it's a necessity.

RILEY. (*Assuring, but with some caution.*) Exactly, Domin. Efficiency drives everything. People don't want to dwell on philosophical questions. They want results. And results are what we're delivering.

HELENA. (*Softly, but deeply.*) You're all so focused on results. But what are the results really? If we lose our humanity in the process, what's left?

RILEY. (*Quietly, but pointedly.*) What's left is a world where we don't have to struggle for survival, but where we have control over the message—and the market.

ALQUIST. (*Under his breath.*) The market, always the market...

RILEY. (*Leaning forward, pragmatic.*) Always, Alquist. The market shapes everything. We can afford to push boundaries, but we must always stay ahead of public perception. Efficiency, progress—those sell, albeit a pain in our sides. Suffering and pain, those are hard sells. We can't let people see it—no one

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engages with suffering unless it's packaged in a way that sparks sympathy or outrage.

DOMIN. *(Smiling, then shifting his tone.)* Speaking of pain, Dr. Gall has been addressing that.

DR. GALL. *(In a measured tone.)* In a sense. I'm developing pain receptors.

HELENA. *(Pausing, her brow furrowed.)* Pain?

DR. GALL. *(Raising an eyebrow, continuing his explanation.)* Robots don't feel physical pain. Without it, they destroy themselves. Pain is a safety mechanism. Making them more efficient.

HELENA. *(Confused, a bit incredulous.)* Why not just give them a soul?

DR. GALL. *(Shrugs, uneasy.)* We don't know how.

FABRY. *(With a dismissive chuckle.)* And even if we did, it wouldn't serve production.

BUSMAN. *(Coldly pragmatic.)* And it would raise costs. Miss Glory, each Robot costs about \$2,000 now. Fifteen years ago, it was \$10,000. We own the mills, the looms, the supply chains. Labor costs have collapsed.

HELENA. *(Pauses, confused.)* I don't follow.

BUSMAN. *(With a matter-of-fact tone.)* A Robot costs less than a dollar a day to maintain. Any factory that refuses automation will fail. Even bread costs less than a dime a loaf now.

HELENA. *(Shocked.)* And the workers?

BUSMAN. *(Reassured by the efficiency.)* Replaced. We've deployed half a million agricultural Robots already. Food prices will fall further.

DOMIN. *(Smiling with confidence.)* Soon everything will be abundant. Poverty will end. Work will be done by living machines. Humanity will be free.

HELENA. *(Skeptical.)* Free to do what?

DOMIN. *(With a visionary spark.)* To become better. To grow. No one will exist merely to survive.

ALQUIST. *(Speaking slowly, reflective.)* Or perhaps we lose something. There was dignity in labor. Meaning in effort.

DOMIN. *(Thoughtfully, but with conviction.)* Possibly. But history demands change. Humanity will no longer serve matter—or each other. Humanity will rule creation.

BUSMAN. *(A firm nod.)* Amen.

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FABRY. (*Shrugging, agreeing.*) So be it.

HELENA. (*Visibly unsettled, conflicted.*) You've completely unsettled me. I—I want to believe what you're saying.

DR. GALL. (*With a slight smile but acknowledging her youth.*) You're younger than we are, Miss Glory. You may live long enough to see it proven.

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Encouraging.*) That's true. And perhaps Miss Glory would join us for lunch?

DR. GALL. (*Of course, politely.*) Of course. Domin, would you ask on behalf of all of us?

DOMIN. (*Smiling, welcoming.*) Miss Glory— would you do us the honor?

HELENA. (*Softly, almost uncertain.*) When you don't even know why I'm here?

FABRY. (*With certainty.*) We do. The League of Humanity.

HELENA. (*After a pause, nodding slowly.*) It's the Humanity League. I suppose in that case... perhaps.

FABRY. (*With a nod.*) Excellent. Please excuse me— five minutes.

DR. GALL. (*Picking up on the cue.*) Pardon me as well, Miss Glory.

BUSMAN. (*Acknowledging Helena with a quick nod.*) I won't be long.

DR. HALLEMEIER. (*Smiling.*) We truly are glad you came.

BUSMAN. (*With a half-smile.*) Five minutes. Exactly. (*They all exit, leaving Domin and Helena alone.*)

HELENA. Why did everyone rush out like that?

DOMIN. To cook.

HELENA. Cook?

DOMIN. Lunch. The Robots do most of it, but since they don't taste what they make, we step in. Hallemeier handles the grill, Gall has a talent for sauces, Busman swears by omelets.

HELENA. It sounds like a feast. And your builder— Mr. Alquist?

DOMIN. He sets the table. Fabry will probably bring fruit. We're not extravagant. And Riley—well, Riley's job is to maintain our online presence during lunch.

HELENA. Okay... Anyway DOMIN, there's something I wanted to ask you.

DOMIN. Oh, and I wanted to ask you something as well. (*Checks device.*) Five minutes.

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HELENA. You first.

DOMIN. No— you.

HELENA. It may sound foolish, but... why do you manufacture female Robots when—

DOMIN. —when sex has no meaning for them?

HELENA. Yes.

DOMIN. Because people expect it. Domestic service, sales, clerical work. Familiar shapes make humans more comfortable.

HELENA. But the Robots themselves— they're entirely—

DOMIN. Indifferent. There's no attachment between them. No desire, no affection.

HELENA. That's... horrifying.

DOMIN. Why?

HELENA. Because it feels wrong. As if something essential has been removed. I don't know whether to despise them... or—

DOMIN. —feel compassion?

HELENA. Yes. That's closer. *(Pause.)* What was it you wanted to ask me?

DOMIN. Miss Helena— would you consider forming a permanent partnership with me? A formal, mutual contract, one that binds our futures together, professionally and personally?

HELENA. What?

DOMIN. A shared life. A commitment, on paper and in practice. *(Then, catching himself.)* Not an answer I expect— only one I hope for.

HELENA. That's an extraordinary thing to ask someone you've just met.

DOMIN. I know. And if the answer is no, I'll accept it. But I wanted to be clear about the terms—what this could mean for both of us.

HELENA. You make it sound like a business deal.

DOMIN. In a way, it is. A partnership, based on mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and aligned goals. But it's not just a contract of efficiency. It's about building something together, something real.

HELENA. And if I said yes— what exactly would that make me here?

DOMIN. My equal. My partner. Someone whose voice matters. You'd be central to everything. We would share decision-making, not just the work.

HELENA. In private—or in this place?

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DOMIN. Everywhere. In all of it. *(A beat. Helena studies him.)*

HELENA. You know, when I came here, I expected ambition. Efficiency. Arrogance. I didn't expect sentiment.

DOMIN. Nor did I. But this is more than just a factory, more than just machines.

HELENA. You say you care for me. But you also care for this factory. For the Robots.

DOMIN. I care about what we've built. Yes. The vision, the legacy we're shaping here.

HELENA. And if the person standing beside you believed— truly believed— that the Robots deserved freedom? *(Domin hesitates.)*

DOMIN. Then that person would have a difficult road ahead.

HELENA. Difficult roads are what partnerships are for. *(A softer beat.)*

DOMIN. You're asking whether I would listen to you.

HELENA. I'm asking whether standing with you would give me the power to change things— not quietly, not symbolically— but for real. To shape the world we live in, to shape the future.

DOMIN. If you were my partner... you would be impossible to ignore. Together, we could make sure things are done the right way, not just for our interests, but for the future of everything we've created.

HELENA. *(Smiles, just slightly. Coy, but sincere.)* You speak as if you've already decided.

DOMIN. *(Smiling slightly, with genuine warmth.)* I've decided how I feel. The moment I saw you... I knew you were different. You're everything I've wanted, and more than I ever imagined. What we do with that feeling, and what path we take together, is still yours to choose.

HELENA. And if I chose to believe that you and I— together—could make this place more humane?

DOMIN. Then I would call that love with a purpose. A partnership in every sense of the word—transforming not just this island, but what it represents. *(A pause.)*

HELENA. *(Exhales.)* This still feels like too much, all at once.

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DOMIN. Then we can stop here. Your answer—whatever it is—matters because it's yours, and I will respect it. This partnership, this contract... it will mean something only if it's true to both of us.

HELENA. But— Henry— *(She steps closer this time. They share a brief, conflicted kiss—chosen, mutual, unresolved. A sharp knock at the door.)*

DOMIN. *(Smiling, stepping back.)* Come in. *(Enter Busman, Dr. Gall, and Hallemeier in kitchen aprons. Fabry carries a small bouquet; Alquist balances a napkin over their arm.)* Have you finished your work?

DR. HALLEMEIER. Yes.

DOMIN. So have we.

FABRY. And I brought a little something to celebrate.

ALQUIST. *(Gesturing to the napkin.)* All set on my end. Table's ready. *(They all glance at Domin and Helena. A pause. Helena smiles, then speaks confidently.)*

HELENA. I've made my choice. I want to... join you, Domin. Not for ceremony, not for tradition— but because I believe in what we can do together.

DOMIN. *(Genuinely pleased, not pressuring.)* Then I couldn't be happier. *(The room falls into a brief silence as Busman smiles broadly, clearly satisfied with the conversation's direction. He raises his glass slightly.)*

BUSMAN. Well! That calls for a proper celebration. *(He gestures to Riley, who nods and taps on her device. The door slides open, and R-231, named Elias, enters silently. It is sleek and humanoid in design, with a calm, expressionless demeanor. Elias carries a tray with a bottle of champagne and glasses.)*

ELIAS. *(Voice calm, neutral.)* Champagne, for all present. *(The robot holds the tray and stands motionless, awaiting further instruction. Everyone gathers around to take a glass, but Helena remains standing, eyeing Elias curiously.)*

DR. GALL. *(Looking at the robot.)* It's impressive, isn't it? How they move, how they carry themselves. They are trained to follow commands precisely, with no hesitation. They are perfect in their efficiency.

BUSMAN. *(Raising his glass.)* To efficiency! The future is here, and we're at the forefront.

HELENA. *(Staring at the robot, her voice almost a whisper.)* But is that all they are? Just tools? *(The room quiets as everyone turns to Helena, the robot*

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still standing motionless, awaiting its next command. Alquist watches the scene with quiet concern.)

DR. GALL. *(Without missing a beat, looking at Helena.)* That's all they're meant to be, Helena. Tools. Nothing more. They don't need anything else. They do exactly what they're programmed to do. No desire, no needs, no question of rights.

HELENA. *(Firmly.)* But they are aware. They interact, they respond. Can't you see it? There's something... more there. *(Helena turns towards the robot, her voice softening as she focuses on it, slowly, with genuine curiosity.)* What's your name?

ELIAS. *(Speaking mechanically, without hesitation.)* I am designated R-231. Elias.

HELENA. *(Softly, with a probing look.)* Elias... Do you ever wish for more than just being a servant? Do you ever feel like you want something else, something beyond your programming?

ELIAS. *(Speaking mechanically, with no sign of emotion.)* I exist to serve. I am programmed to fulfill my duties. I am content. *(A brief silence hangs in the air. Helena stares at Elias, her expression a mixture of disbelief and sorrow. Busman breaks the silence with a chuckle.)*

BUSMAN. *(Mocking.)* Content, is it? Well, I suppose that's one way to put it. But let's be real, Helena. Do you honestly believe this robot, or any of them, would want anything else? Look at it. It has no needs. It's happy just being efficient.

DR. GALL. *(Sipping his drink.)* Exactly. The robot's... "contentment" is the result of its design. There's no conflict, no struggle. And isn't that what we want? Efficiency? Stability? Why complicate it?

DR. HALLEMEIER. *(Cutting in, with a smirk.)* Helena, you're romanticizing them. You see emotions where there are none. They are programmed to behave like they feel. It's all illusion. You can't project humanity onto them.

HELENA. *(Fuming, stepping forward, her voice rising.)* I'm not romanticizing! I'm seeing what's right in front of me. This robot responds, interacts, it's... conscious! But you all... you don't see that. You just see it as a machine, something to control.

DR. HALLEMEIER. That will do R-231. Return to the kitchen.

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ELIAS. *(Speaking again, mechanically, without emotion.)* I exist to serve. *(He turns and exits as smoothly as he entered. There is a long pause as Helena looks after the robot, her face a mix of frustration and empathy. Riley quietly observes, unfazed by the tension.)*

RILEY. *(Sipping their drink, coolly.)* It knows what it's supposed to know. It doesn't need anything else. Why complicate things by making it something it's not?

BUSMAN. *(Grinning, raising his glass.)* Cheers to that. The future is clear, and it doesn't involve emotions. We've got it right—no need for any more messy complications.

HELENA. *(Quietly, almost to herself.)* Maybe that's the real problem... you're trying to make them into tools, not realizing they could be more. *(The room falls into an uncomfortable silence as everyone considers her words. The robot stands quietly, completely indifferent to the tension it has helped create.)*

DR. GALL. *(Leaning back in his chair.)* No, Helena. They're tools. And that's all they need to be. Don't make this into something it's not.

HELENA. *(Looks around the room. Speaking softly, almost to herself.)* I think you're all blind to what's right in front of you. You're so focused on what they're doing, you can't see who they are. *(There's a long pause as Helena looks at the group, her frustration mounting. She finally speaks again, her voice carrying a slight bitterness as she addresses the room sarcastically.)* Well, I guess I'll just have to do all the heavy lifting on my own. I mean, it's clear you're all perfectly fine with the way things are. You'll just keep using them as tools, and I'll be the one running around trying to change everything. *(The group chuckles lightly, dismissing her words as exaggerated. Busman raises his glass with a half-smile.)*

BUSMAN. *(Laughing.)* Ah, come on, Ms. Helena. You make it sound like the world's going to end tomorrow. Relax. We've got it under control.

DR. HALLEMEIER. *(Mockingly.)* Yeah, don't get so worked up. It's just a matter of perspective, right?

DR. GALL. *(Sipping his drink, smirking.)* Don't worry about it. There's no need for such dramatic speeches. Everything's running smoothly.

DOMIN. *(Looks at Helena, gently, reassuringly.)* Helena, you'll have a voice here. I know it seems overwhelming now, but you're not alone in this. We'll

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figure it out together. *(The group falls silent for a moment, but then they move on to the next topic, clearly uninterested in the depth of the conversation, while Helena stands there, still processing her frustration, with a sense of determination building inside her.)*

DR. GALL. Well, let us raise a glass. To Helena and her officially surviving her first test: lunch with the team. *(They all laugh and toast Helena. “To Helena!”, “To your long health.”, “To change that stays the same.”, etc.)*

DR. HALLEMEIER. *(With a giggle in their voice.)* And they say choosing a partner is hard. Try choosing the right sauce for the Robots.

FABRY. *(Handing the bouquet to Helena.)* Congratulations! You’ve got our full support—and the Robots’ too, I imagine.

ALQUIST. Table’s set, feast is ready... and we might even forgive Domin for monopolizing the first choice.

DOMIN. *(Laughs, gesturing to Helena.)* I don’t think forgiveness is necessary. We’re all in this together.

HELENA. Exactly. Together. *(Everyone exchanges playful smiles and nods. Busman, Fabry, Dr. Gall, and Hallemeier begin bustling around lightly, teasing each other about kitchen duties, while Helena and Domin share a quiet, mutual acknowledgment of the partnership they’ve chosen.)*

BUSMAN. Alright, enough chatter— time to eat before the Robots decide we’re not serious about their culinary efforts!

DOMIN. Then let’s sit down. Together, all of us. *(The group exits, laughter and light teasing continue as the lights fade.)*

END OF ACT I

INTERMISSION

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS--

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