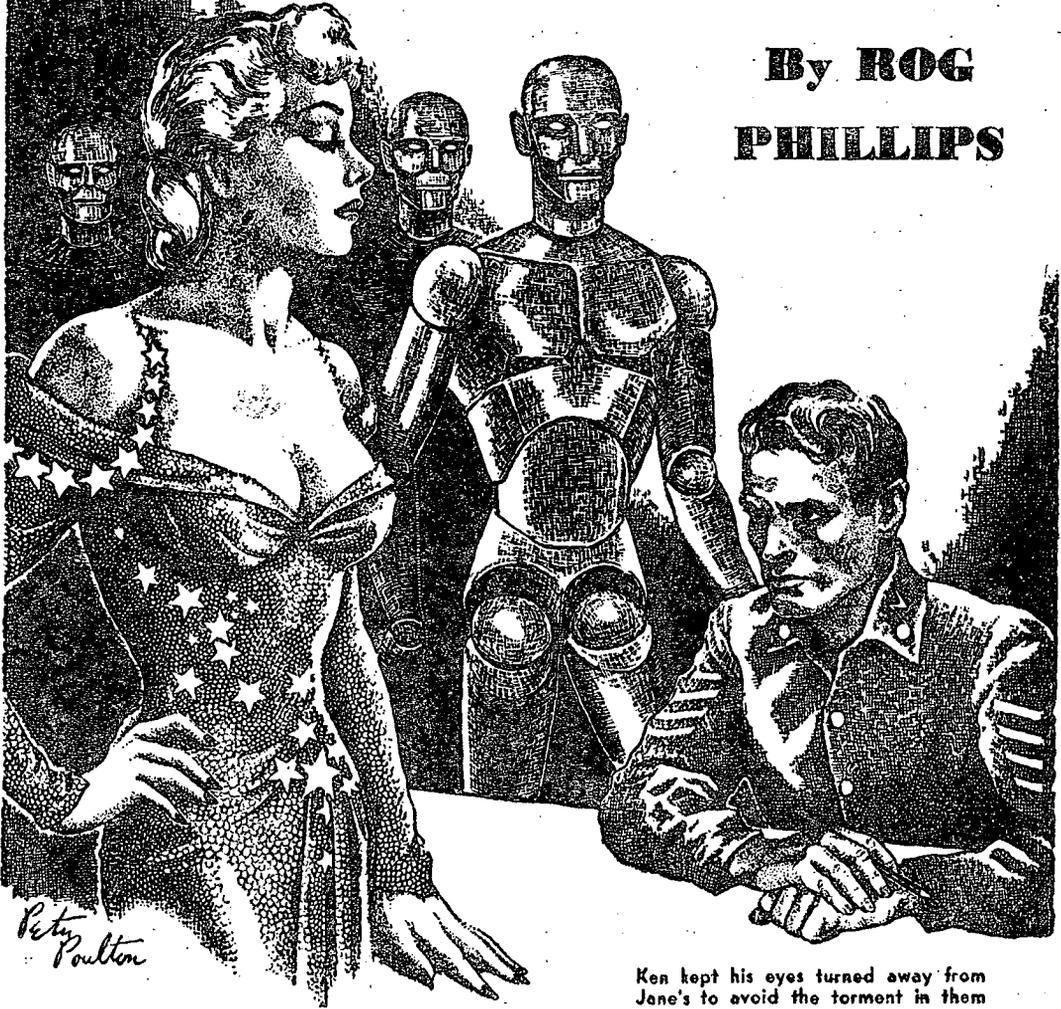


# Love My Robot

By **ROG  
PHILLIPS**



Ken kept his eyes turned away from Jane's to avoid the torment in them

*Getting both the super-automaton and the girl was a big problem—but behavior specialist Ken Ranard never did let the impossible stop him!*

**S**O somewhere among a thousand humanoid robots with an I.Q. of seventy-five is one with an I.Q. of six hundred," Ken Ranard, D.Ps., said. "And my job is to find it."

"If you can't," Chadwick Wright said, "we'll be forced to destroy the whole thousand."

"Maybe you wouldn't get the chance," Ken said. "How many months has it had to integrate? Six months? It may already have recognized its problem of survival and be prepared for us."

"That's why we didn't waste any time about calling in the greatest behavior specialist in the country," Chad-

wick Wright, superintendent of General Robotics, said. "We discovered it yesterday during the inventory in the parts warehouse. One robiq six hundred brain was missing and there was one too many robiq seventy-fives. We're still trying to find out how the switch was made and we're reorganizing the warehouse so it can't happen again."

Ken stood up and walked over to the windows. The sprawling grounds and buildings of General Robotics met his eyes. The ten acres of vats where the robot brains were formed by the infinitely slow ten months of crystalline growth were, he knew, underground in vibration-proof vaults.

The buildings above ground were factories and warehouses where the various types of robot bodies were assembled, each with its brain unit installed, and the training schools where the first integration of mind was carefully supervised and controlled.

"You see," Chadwick Wright explained, "if it had been a robiq two hundred or less it would be easier to find it. The robot would be more likely to give himself away by trying to excel the others."

"I know," Ken agreed. "A robiq six hundred would recognize its superiority almost at once. It would imitate its companions exactly while it worked out all the answers. Too bad there isn't some system of marking the brains so you can find him by his serial number."

"There isn't," Chadwick Wright said. "We can't put a number on them. Stamping or engraving would destroy the crystalline balance. Paint or ink would alter capacitances, and probably result in defectives. We've been stamping the packing cases but they're thrown away after the brain is installed. Now we're going to have different colored cases and store them in different sections of the r.o.b. warehouse."

"What are the robiq six hundred brains used for?" Ken asked.

"They're used in interplanetary stations mostly," Chadwick Wright explained. "Also in extremely complicated machines of all sorts. Every one of

them, just as an idle pastime, solves the nature of basic reality in less than five years, unaided."

He snorted. "It took the human race until two thousand two hundred and forty-seven A.D. to do that—and then it took a man with an I.Q. of nearly six hundred to do it, with all the mass of data and experience the human race had accumulated."

KEN said, "I know," turned away from the window. "The human race is pretty slow compared to the mind of a good robot. That's why this mistake that placed a robot ordinance brain, I.Q. six hundred, in a humanoid body was almost inevitable.

"If that robot gets away it will eventually take over—and then the human race will either be wiped out or placed in a secondary position as slaves of the robots. I'd almost say that was inevitable too.

"Sooner or later, if the human race plays with things that can destroy it, it will be destroyed. Why—" Ken smiled. "If you play the horses long enough you'll win one bet."

"Yes, I know," Chadwick Wright's face was suddenly tired and gray. "I've been in closer contact with this than you have, Mr. Ranard. Every time I see some machine leave our factories with a robiq six hundred brain in it I wonder if some protective device has been overlooked so that it will find a way to turn on us eventually."

"I know too," Ken said seriously. "Every time a robot servant has been brought to me for straightening out and adjustment to its environment and job I've been conscious of the terrible power latent in it—the power to outthink and outguess human beings. Even a robiq seventy-five is potentially dangerous. It can go criminal just like any human being and some of them have."

Ken glanced at his watch. "I'd like to talk to the teacher that would have had charge of this robiq six hundred during its first few days of integration," he said. "There's a chance—a very remote one—that she may remember

something that might point him out."

Jane Weaver looked at Ken Ranard and saw a very pleasing masculine face, dark hair, serious blue eyes, broad shoulders and six feet of well proportioned body, not over thirty years of age.

Ken Ranard returned her critical inspection with hidden surprise. He had not expected to see an attractive girl, tall, almost beautiful, with chestnut hair and the figure of a Miss America. His preconceived notion of a teacher of low-intelligence robots was a plain middle-aged woman.

"Jane," Chadwick Wright was saying. "This is Kenneth Ranard, the behavior specialist I called in to try to track down that roboiq six hundred. Mr. Ranard—Jane Weaver." His eyes began to twinkle. "Very popular with her robot students."

"I'm sure that's not all she's popular with," Ken said, accepting her warm frank handclasp.

"I can see you know your lessons," Jane said, laughing. "I'm curious about your profession. What does a behavior specialist do, particularly?"

"He's a sort of field psychologist," Ken said. "An office psychologist has the patient lie down and start telling about how, when he was five years old, he was frightened by a leaf falling from a tree and so, when he grew up, he had a compelling urge to start forest fires.

"The behavior specialist, on the other hand, watches the man start a forest fire, and from that deduces that when the man was five years old he was frightened by a falling leaf."

"Is it really that silly?" Jane asked.

"No," Ken said. "Some of our work is even sillier. A woman wonders if her husband really loves her. She calls in a behavior specialist, who studies her husband without his knowing about it and gives her the facts as he sees them. Sometimes they aren't pleasant. Sometimes they enable a woman to change her ways so that she doesn't lose her husband.

"Or maybe an employer is worried

about some employee. He calls in a behavior specialist who secretly watches the man and finds out what is wrong."

"I get the idea," Jane said seriously. "Your job is to study the robots and try to figure out which one is the roboiq six hundred."

"That's right," Ken said. "And since he must have been one of your pupils I asked Mr. Wright to call you in so I could talk with you and find out if perhaps you might remember some small incident that might point toward him, or narrow things down."

"I can't remember a thing that would help you," Jane said. "But personally"—she took a deep breath—"I can't quite see what the big fuss is about. Wouldn't a robot with an I.Q. of six hundred be intelligent enough not to be dangerous?"

"I mean, if you let him know it was all right, he would go about his assigned life and content himself with just understanding things. He would be too intelligent to try to take everything in his own hands and remake the world."

"Well," Ken laughed. "I can't see any harm in letting him survive either. But an I.Q. of six hundred could be something pretty awful if it turned on the human race. We'd feel a lot more comfortable if we knew which one he is."

**F**ROWNING, Chadwick Wright said, "I'm a little surprised at you, Jane. You sound almost as if you'd conceal the robot's identity if you knew it." He laughed nervously. "Perhaps you don't realize how serious this is. It could wind up with the robots ruling mankind and people taking the places of roboiq seventy-fives as menial servants and workers, while roboiq six hundreds were turned out in humanoid bodies by mass production.

"I hardly think you're sympathetic enough toward the robots to advocate scrapping the human race in favor of robots in the progress of evolution, are you?"

"Don't get me wrong," Jane said defensively. "The mistake has been made. I just don't think it's as serious a mistake as you think. The roboiq six hundred

will probably wind up as a janitor in a department store who secretly composes far better poetry than any human could. By the way, what will happen to him if you find him?"

"He'll be scrapped, of course," Chadwick Wright said. "Now that his mind is formed he couldn't be reconditioned for his intended function as the brain of some intricate machine."

Jane shook her head slowly. "To me that would be murder," she said. "I've worked with these robots. They're just as human as you or me."

"That's enough, Miss Weaver," Chadwick Wright said severely. "That robot six hundred brain must be found and destroyed before it can become a menace. We'll expect you to cooperate."

"I won't!" Jane said. She looked at Ken Ranard with a wordless appeal, then turned and ran from the room.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Ranard," Chadwick Wright said as the door closed on her back. "I didn't think this would happen. I thought—well, I don't know what I thought. But it didn't occur to me anyone would consider a robot emotionally like this."

"That's quite all right," Ken said, his eyes thoughtfully on the closed door. "She's correct in a way. It's just that we can't allow right to enter the picture. As an intellect I can recognize that robot six hundreds are superior to humans. As a human I can recognize that that improvement must be kept under control for the survival of my race. But I understand her."

"You see, a good part of my experience has been with the adjustments of robots to their role in society. I too have a deep respect and affection for them—as very human beings." He smiled at the door as though, by closing on Jane, it had become her.

The smile suddenly died. Ken turned to Chadwick Wright with grim decision in his eyes.

"I suggest you issue orders to destroy every robot that could possibly be that robot six hundred" he said quietly. "Do it right now, as quickly as possible."

"That's out of the question," Chadwick said. "Man, do you realize what that would mean? It would mean the company wouldn't be able to declare a dividend at all this year. I'd lose my job."

"You'll lose more than that if you don't," Ken said. "By now Jane's back in her classroom and that robot knows his existence has been discovered and we're going to look for him and try to destroy him. He'll be on his guard if you don't act at once."

"What makes you think that?" Chadwick asked skeptically. "You mean she knows which one it is and will warn him?"

"That's a possibility I'm not overlooking," Ken said. "But I think it more likely that he will know from her expression and her actions. It's obvious to me that he's been working on her emotionally so that she would react as she did at the first sign of trouble for him."

"Then she must surely know which one it is," Chadwick said, anger gathering in his eyes.

"No," Ken said. "He wouldn't do it directly. He would get the other robots to do it. Don't forget, their I.Q.'s are only seventy-five. They would receive suggestions without trying to comprehend motivations."

"They're puppets in this show and robot six hundred is the puppet master, hidden among them, pulling the invisible strings. I'm afraid. I have a strong feeling that unless you destroy all the robots that might be him, and at once, he'll defeat us and get away."

"I'm sorry, Dr. Ranard," Chadwick Wright said. "I can't give that order. It would mean an outright loss of six million dollars besides getting further behind on our orders and contracts than we are already."

"I could have thought of that method myself. I called you in to solve this so it would cost only the one robot, not a thousand. I'll give you a free hand, see that every order you give is carried out to the letter."

"It will be too late," Ken said bit-

terly. "Maybe it's too late now. He'll be on guard."

"We'll have to risk that," Chadwick said. Then, irritably, "If you started to work on it instead of trying to make me do something I can't do you'll get ahead faster."

"Okay," Ken said, frowning at his feet. "Tell me a little more about the robots. Do they just go through standard schooling? Or do you use them around here in other capacities?—in the offices, for example."

"We use them wherever we can," Chadwick said. "Janitor work, the simpler office tasks. Not all of them but some of them."

**K**EN asked, "What about the others? Do you make a personal tour of inspection now and then to make sure they're progressing as they should?"

"Every robot that leaves here knows me," Chadwick said, a note of pride in his voice. "They know that I guide every step of their progress, from the crystallization baths that formed their brain right up to the final classes that teach them enough to be the equivalent of high-school graduates."

"That's very interesting," Ken said, taking out a cigarette and lighting it casually. "Then in all probability you have talked to this roboiq six hundred yourself at some time or another."

"Of course," Chadwick Wright said. "Say! That is something, isn't it! To think that I've talked to it myself, not knowing that behind its eyes lurked an intelligence almost beyond anything a human could attain, hidden by exact imitation of the mannerisms and speech of roboiq seventy-fives. The—the drama of it!"

"Yes," Ken said dryly. "The drama of it! Our friend knows exactly what you will do and what you won't do. He knows all about you."

Chadwick Wright looked deflated.

"There isn't anything I or anyone else can do," Ken said dispiritedly. "Let's take the self-preservation angle. Suppose we put on an act in which it seemed we were going to destroy all

the robots. The seventy-fives would go to their death if we ordered it. The six hundred would go just as willingly because, knowing you, he would know it was an act.

"What we've got to do is figure out some situation in which roboiq six hundred will react differently from the others. We can know ahead of time that he will know it's a trap. He will also know exactly what a roboiq seventy-five would do. He'll probably be able to divine the full setup of the trap at once too."

"Then we might as well ask him to come in and listen to us make our plans," Chadwick Wright said, smiling.

"Not just yet," Ken said, returning the smile. "You see, there's one faint hope. So far I'm an unknown quantity to him. Also, being only six months old and having had very little contact with humans, it's possible he can be trapped through ignorance of what I'll do. It's a remote possibility but the only one there is.

"All he knows about me so far is that I'm here. He learned that from Jane Weaver. He's also learned from her by now what he already suspected, that when he's found he'll be destroyed."

Ken shoved his hands in his pockets, turned his back on Chadwick Wright and stared out the window with a frown.

"I'm his unknown quantity," he said broodingly. "I wonder . . ." He turned to face Wright again. "I assume the robots are encouraged to lead a social life among themselves, play games, talk, make friends and so on?"

"Naturally," Wright said. "And they form little groups just like people. Their friendships often last after they leave the plant."

"Then our roboiq six hundred undoubtedly moves among them and keeps close touch with all of them," Ken mused. "I wonder if any of them know or suspect his intelligence? I doubt it. Or, if he's given himself away to them, he's probably covered that error by building up in them a sense of loyalty toward him as the Coming Robot.

"Look, Mr. Wright," Ken said. "I have a plan. It may not work out but it offers a chance. Announce to the robots in that group that an order has come in for a robot for exceptionally pleasant duties. What I want is for them to be brought in here three at a time for harmless questioning that has nothing to do with the existence of a robot six hundred in a humanoid body.

"The most vital part of the whole plan is that when I'm through questioning them they are to be taken to some other place rather than back with the ones that haven't been interviewed. If possible I'd like each group of three to be placed in a separate room and locked in."

"That can be done," Chadwick Wright said. "Do you mind telling me why?"

"Curiosity," Ken said. "I'm the unknown quantity. This robot six hundred will of course know that it's my first move to trap him. He'll recognize the elements of danger inherent in this move. He'll also recognize that it's a chance to see me and make a quick study of me.

"The other robots will take your words at face value and think it's a chance to get a nice owner. If we work it right we could even carry the deception right on through and when we destroy that robot six hundred we can simply say he was the one that got the job."

"It sounds okay to me," Chadwick said. "I'll get things ready. What questions are you going to ask them?"

"You can be right here and listen," Ken said with a grin. "Put some of the other instructors in charge of the robots and have Jane Weaver here too."

"I'll send her in right now," Chadwick Wright said, winking knowingly.

JANE'S heels clicked defiantly against the floor as she came in. Ken concealed the admiration in his eyes beneath an air of professional-casualness.

"Mr. Wright said you wanted me in here," Jane said.

"I do and I don't," Ken said gravely.

"You know, Miss Weaver—Jane—we behavior specialists are at a disadvantage when it comes to our own lives. Our tools in trade are the things that a person wants to be genuine and spontaneous.

"Our eyes are trained to study the behavior of others, and from that behavior deduce the motives and secret thoughts behind it. People don't like it. They resent it. You resent it too, don't you?"

"Now that you've expressed it," Jane said, surprised. "Yes, I do have a definite antagonistic feeling toward you. I think I dislike you more than any person I can ever remember taking a dislike to."

"You do, don't you," Ken said. "I think I can understand it too. I used to have the same feeling toward my father."

"Your father?" Jane echoed.

"He's been dead a long time," Ken said. "He died when I was ten years old. But I can remember just as if it were yesterday how he used to fix his eyes on me and puff thoughtfully on his pipe while all my inner secrets seemed to stand out for him to see. Sometimes I hated him."

"Hated your father?" Jane asked. "But why?"

"It's a little hard to place in words," Ken said. "I can make you see why very vividly in quite a simple way though."

He took a quick step toward her and took her face firmly between his hands. While she tried to struggle he kissed her on the lips. The kiss lasted all of ten seconds.

When he released her and stepped back she was gasping for breath, her face slowly turning crimson.

"You see," Ken said as if nothing had happened. "I didn't really hate him or dislike him. I resented his ability to know what I wanted to keep private. A person likes to feel he's not transparent—a girl especially.

"It's the desire for a sense of security that comes from being able to hide. For most people there's no other secu-

urity. But it can't compare with the security that comes from not having to hide."

Jane had raised her hand as if to slap Ken. Indecision held it there while anger, bafflement and inner conflict struggled in her eyes and on her face.

"Hiding—always hiding," Ken said. "For a few years after my father's death I was the most lost creature imaginable. There was no one who could know my thoughts and understand them and puff a pipe at me while he showed his understanding and love."

Jane looked at Ken's eyes for a long minute while the crimson on her face slowly receded and the lines of inner struggle on her face smoothed out.

They were both startled by the sounds of footsteps outside the door. Ken glanced at the door, alarmed, then laid a hand on Jane's shoulder and whispered.

"Face it," he said warningly. "One must die."

\* \* \* \* \*

The last of the robots came in.

"Sit down at the desk," Ken said in tired tones.

When the robot complied Jane laid a blank sheet of paper before the robot and gave it a pencil.

"Write down the names of five of the robots in your group," Ken ordered. "Make it quick as we want to get this over with."

The robot looked at him blankly an instant, then hastily wrote five names down.

"Your own name at the top," Ken ordered. "That's all now."

The robot was led away to be locked up with two of its companions.

"Now," Ken said to Chadwick Wright. "We have all the data we need."

"I still can't understand what good it will do," Wright said. "You just had each robot sit down and write five names as fast as it could. I can understand that. It was obvious. Each would write the first names that came to mind and those names would be the ones most familiar, its close friends."

"That's right," Ken said. "So with

most of these lists we can check the names against the lists written out by those names and find they tie together. If Joe put Harry on his list Harry will have put Joe on his."

"Yes, of course," Chadwick Wright said impatiently.

"People and robots tend to group into small circles of friends," Ken went on. "Our robot six hundred is different though. What I want to do now is feed this pile of data to your office problem brain with certain specifications. It will give us the name of one of the robots. That will be the one for you to destroy."

CHADWICK WRIGHT nodded. "I'm beginning to understand now," he said. "I'll have one of the office force place the pile of names on the feeder belt. Would you instruct the machine operator as to the specifications you want fed into it?"

"I'd rather feed the specifications myself," Ken said. "I'd rather be the only one that knows the name. We're probably in greater danger than we suspect. I'm not at all sure this robot six hundred won't gain the upper hand in some way. He has figured out by now what I've done and knows he's trapped."

He kept his eyes turned away from Jane's, avoiding the torture in them. During the hours that the robots had come and written their lists of names he had seen her eyes on him—had read in them the growing determination to hate him when this was over.

One of the office workers came in and carried the thousand sheets of paper out to place on the feeder belt. Chadwick Wright followed. Ken held the door open for Jane.

In the main office he sat down at the equation board of the calculating machine and set up his equations in symbolic logic. When they were complete he pressed the button that started the machine.

The thousand sheets of paper shot along the feeder belt one at a time. Each paused under the scanner for a hundredth of a second, then sped on to the ejector.

The last sheet passed through. There was nearly five minutes of brooding silence after the feeder belt shut down before the card slid out of the answer slot.

There were five names on the card. After each name was a series of letters relating it to the symbolic equations Ken had set up.

Ken's eyes settled on one of the names. He knew now beyond any shadow of doubt the name of the robot six hundred. He looked up from the card in his hand.

Jane was watching him, her eyes bleak with despair and defeat. Chadwick Wright was watching him tensely.

"Do you have it?" Wright asked.

Ken nodded. "I'll write a name on a slip of paper," he said. "You know where each of the robots is so there'll be no mistake? You'll be able to hand this name over to men who will be sure to do it quickly before the robot has a chance to realize?"

At Chadwick Wright's nod Ken tore a blank sheet from his pocket note pad and scrawled a name on it. Chadwick Wright took the paper and left the room.

While he was gone Ken remained where he was at the calculator. Jane sat stiffly erect, her face drawn and white, her eyes staring blankly at the far wall. They were alone.

Ken watched her for awhile. Finally he leaned forward and broke the silence. "There's a possibility I'm wrong," he said gently. "I would regret a mistake. Now that it's too late, if I give you the name of the robot six hundred, will you tell me if I was right?"

Her eyes turned on him in contemptuous silence.

"It was Walter, wasn't it?" Ken asked and the flash in her eyes told him he was right.

"How would I know?" she asked expressionlessly. "Do you really think I knew which one was the six hundred?"

"You really believed that," Ken said, ignoring her remark. "About Walter being more likely to become a great poet than a revolutionist?"

"Does it make any difference—now?" Jane asked, her voice breaking.

"Yes," Ken said. "You've got to believe that I feel the way you do about it. I had a job to do. If I'd refused to do it they'd have called in someone else. If the next behavior specialist couldn't have cracked it they'd have been forced to destroy all those robots instead of only one. It's not my choosing that a robot had to die."

"Let's get something straight," Jane said coldly. "You had a job to do. You did it. All right—now you can collect your fee as soon as Mr. Wright gets back and leave. I don't want to see you again ever. Nothing can make me ever want to see you again. Is that clear?"

"It's clear that you love me, Jane," Ken said.

"Love!" Jane said incredulously. "You don't know the meaning of the word."

THERE were footsteps outside the door. It swung open and Chadwick Wright came in.

"Well, it's all over," he said grimly. "There was no question about it. When we stepped into the room he said he had been expecting us."

"Then I can leave now?" Ken asked quietly.

"Yes, of course," Chadwick Wright said. "You must be quite tired. I know we all are. It's been a trying ordeal."

"About my fee," Ken said.

"Your fee, of course," Wright said. "I can make out the check now, or if you send us a bill it will be taken care of at once—whichever you choose."

"I had something else in mind," Ken said casually. "My fee is rather steep."

"I know it will be steep," Wright said, showing signs of irritation. "We're prepared for that. We called in the best man in the country because, frankly, if we didn't it might cost us millions otherwise."

"What I had in mind," Ken went on, "was that I have need of a robot servant and as long as I was here I thought I would kill two birds with one stone. I'll buy it at the retail price and save

you considerable expense on my fee."

"Fine," Chadwick Wright said. "Look them over. Take any of them you want. They're all back in their schoolbuilding now."

"Okay, Mr. Wright," Ken said. "I'll do that and then leave. My car's right out in front in the reserved parking area."

He studiously avoided looking at Jane as he left. In the hall he walked quickly to the exit and across to the building housing the robots.

There would be no delay. Mr. Wright was phoning ahead of him to clear the way. He could glance over the robots, pick the one he wanted and leave quickly.

FIFTEEN minutes later he slid behind the wheel of his car and started the motor. The robot he had chosen sat in the back seat, its face relaxed. Ken backed the car out of its parking place, then drove slowly toward the front entrance of the administration building, an expectant look on his face.

A figure emerged from the entrance and ran toward the car, waving frantically. It was Jane, her coat on her arm.

When Ken stopped she opened the door and slid in beside him.

"Aren't you being rather foolish?" Ken asked, smiling. There was a malicious twinkle in his eye.

"I don't think so," Jane said. "And anyway, a girl has to act foolish sometime in her life. Why were you going so slowly? Were you expecting me to come out?"

Ken turned out of the parking lot, pressing down on the gas as his car entered the highway to town.

"Yes," he said positively. "I thought you would want to come along as soon as you learned it was one of the sub-human robots that was destroyed and that Walter, your robiq six hundred, was the one I was taking away with me."

"You're too smart." Jane said.

Ken looked at her deliciously pouting lips. He darted a hasty glance at the highway ahead and leaned over to kiss them. Jane started to pull away from him. Her eyes widened in alarm at the sight of an oncoming car they were veering toward. She gave Ken a quick kiss.

His eyes darted back to the highway. He pulled the car into its own lane just in time to avoid a wreck.

Walter, in the back seat, having an I.Q. of six hundred, sighed and said nothing.

"Not as smart as Walter," Ken said, picking up the conversation. "He figured out what I was planning—even which one of the robiq seventy-fives I would pick for the fall guy—and coached the victim on what to say to cinch things so that Chadwick Wright would be certain he had actually destroyed the robiq six hundred."

He grinned as he added, "Walter knew we were falling for each other and that I had recognized it would have to be a case of love-me-love-my-robot. He's going to make me a good assistant behavior specialist."

They turned their heads to look in the back seat at Walter. Their smiles vanished. They looked wide-eyed at each other, then laughed in uproarious delight.

Walter, lost to the world, was scribbling poetry.

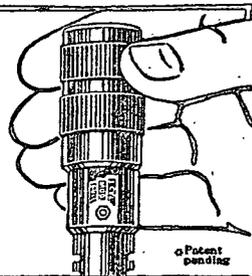
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Randy stood with his hands on the desk, the tiny globe turning majestically in front of him



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**T**HE phone chimed, a soft musical tinkle. The three men glanced at it. Since this was his study, Randolph Burton picked it up.

"Randy?" a voice inquired.

"Yes."

"English speaking. Can you come down to the hospital, please?"

"Sure. What makes?"

"Er—uh—" Burton could feel the doc-

By **ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS**

106