



Helper
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He pulled at the control stick too hard. The machine was set to go far into the future... .

"Those people are stupid! They're crazy!" shouted Jacob Clark at his assistant. "Everyone in that crowd outside is mad," said Clark. His young assistant, Bill Towney, listened. He was worried and a little bit afraid as he waited with Dr. Clark in his university office.

"They will start hitting the door very soon, sir," Bill said to Dr. Clark.

"But why? Why are they doing it?" Dr. Clark asked. "My inventions have pushed the world forward a hundred years. I've always been a helper. I help mankind. I'm not a killer!"

"It's the robots, sir," Bill said. "People are so angry because they say the robots take people's jobs. They think the robots are replacing them and the people won't have any work to do, or any money."

"That's totally wrong," Dr. Clark said quickly. "Why can't they see that my intelligent, self-controlled robots are the greatest gift to human? And just one man gave it to them, me!"

"I don't know, sir, but they don't understand." answered the assistant.

Bill waited quietly for moment as the noise outside became stronger. The people were shouting louder and hitting the door harder. "They want you to stop making robots. And they don't want the robots to have jobs anymore. They are attacking because you said 'No'."

"STOP CLARK! NO MORE METAL MEN! KILL THE ROBOT LOVERS!" shouted the angry crowd of people. The group was even angrier now and was trying to break the door open.

"Really, sir," Bill said, "you should leave. They'll kill you if you don't run away!"

"Run away? I can't do that. I'll fight against these stupid people. I'll tell them all of the good things I have done. I'll show them how I've helped them. I'll make them understand that I am their helper," said Dr. Clark. But he was afraid as he looked at the door and said, "Besides there's only one door. I can't get away now."

"There's the time machine, sir," suggested Bill.

"But isn't there another way out? Maybe you can go outside and talk to them" begged Clark.

Bill answered, "You know there's no other way out. Those people believe you've brought disaster to the human race. They think you've caused so much trouble. They want to kill you. And, if you don't hurry they will."

Bill was very worried and really wanted Dr. Clark to escape. "I have set the time machine for twenty years into the future. Please hurry, sir!" Dr. Clark's office door was beginning to break. He was very sad as he looked around and then walked to the time machine. "All right, I'll go. In the future people will be thankful for my help and my gifts. I know the results of my work will be appreciated. They will want to thank me for everything that I have made. I'll be a hero and all mankind will think of me as their helper."

Bill heard the door crash. He roughly pushed his employer into the time machine just as the angry crowd burst through. "Push the start button, push the start button. Quick!" bill shouted as the first attacker reached him.

Dr. Clark's hand jumped to the control stick just as someone threw a brick at his head. His hand pulled the stick very hard. He fell to the floor. He was unconscious and the machine was set for a thousand years in the future instead of twenty.

The year three thousand had been a wonderful year for the robots. In fact, it was the best year since the last human being had died. That was about five hundred years before. The robots had travelled through space to other planets: Venus and Mars. Now they were planning a longer trip to Jupiter. And today was a very important day. The robots had built a giant statue of Dr. Jacob Clark. Dr. Clark was their Creator and their Helper. The statue was built in the same place where Dr. Clark's university office had been. Unfortunately there had been many great wars to kill all of the humans. So the history of Dr. Clark and his time was lost. The statue of Dr. Clark was definitely a good one though. He looked just like a powerful robot. The robots had very few human books, but one book described the creator. It said that the Creator had made the robots to look just like himself.

The robots had special guards for the Place of the University Office. The robot guards found Jacob Clark right there at the base of his statue. They picked up his unconscious, bleeding body and put it careful on a nearby table. They stood over him and bent down. Even since the very first robots, they were programmed to be gentle and caring. Every model of robot handed down this program from generation to generation. They wanted to help, but they didn't know what to do. What was this creature?

"Maybe it came from a far part of the earth," one of the robots said.

"Or maybe a mistake was made at one of the robot birth factories," said another. "See, it is losing a lot of oil very quickly."

"Perhaps," said the older as he stood there thinking, "it is a new model. Anyway, it is a robot and has been damaged. Our great Creator taught us to be helpers. We will take it to the central repair factory in the city."

"But," the first robot complained, "it's very big. I think it is too big to carry so far."

Robots are creatures of logic. They thought about it for a moment and then the older robot made a decision. His idea was both good and simple.

"Since he is so big, we will take him apart for transportation. Several small pieces will be easier to carry," he said as he leaned over and gently pulled off Jacob Clark's right arm.

"This robot wasn't built very well," said the second robot as he carefully turned Jacob Clark's head until it came off his body.

Author

Ted O'Neill began teaching English in rural Japan in 1990 as part of the JET Program. He has taught all kinds of learners: from kindergarten kids to policemen. He currently teaches English language skills and courses in literature at a private university in Tokyo, Japan. He has a life-long love for books of all kinds, but especially for science fiction.

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