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FARMER ON THE DOLE

by Frederik Pohl

Stretching east to the horizon, a thousand acres, was all soybeans; across the road to the west, another thousand acres, all corn. Zeb kicked the irrigation valve moodily and watched the meter register the change in flow. Damn weather! Why didn't it rain? He sniffed the air deeply and shook his head, frowning. Eighty-five percent relative humidity. No, closer to eighty-seven. And not a cloud in the sky.

From across the road his neighbor called, "Afternoon Zeb."

Zeb nodded curtly. He was soy and Wally was corn, and they didn't have much to talk about, but you had to show some manners. He pulled his bandanna out of his hip pocket and wiped his brow. "Had to rise up the flow," he offered for politeness' sake.

"Me, too. Only good thing, COZ's up. So we's gettin good carbon metabolizin."

Zeb grunted and bent down to pick up a clod of earth,

crumbling it in his fingers to test for humus, breaking off a piece, and tasting it. "Cobalt's a tad low again," he said meditatively, but Wally wasn't interested in soil chemistry.

"Zeb? You aint heard anything?"

"Bout what?"

"Bout anything. You know."

Zeb turned to face him. "You mean aint I heard no crazy talk bout closin down the farms, when everybody knows they can't never do that, no. I aint heard nothin like that, an if I did, I wouldn't give it heed."

"Yeah, Zeb, but they's sayin-"

"They can say whatever they likes, Wally. I aint listenin, and I got to get back to the lines fore Becky and the kids start worryin. Evenin. Nice talkin to you." And he turned and marched back toward the cabins.

"Uncle Tin," Wally called sneeringly, but Zeb wouldn't give him the satisfaction of noticing. All the same, he pulled out his bandanna and mopped his brow again.

It wasn't sweat. Zeb never sweated. His arms, his back, his armpits were permanently dry, in any weather, no matter how hard or how long he worked. The glistening film on his forehead was condensed from the air. The insulation around the supercooled Josephson junctions that made up his brain was good, but not perfect. When he was doing more thinking than usual, the refrigeration units worked harder.

And Zeb was doing a lot of thinking. Close down the farms? Why, you'd have to be crazy to believe that! You did your job. You tilled the fields and planted them, or else you cleaned and cooked in Boss's house, or taught Boss's children, or drove Miz Boss when she went to visit the other bosses' wives. That was the way things were on the farm, and it would go on that way forever, wouldn't it?

Zeb found out the answer the next morning, right after church.

Since Zeb was a Class A robot, with an effective IQ of one hundred thirty-five, though limited in its expression by the built-in constraints of his assigned function, he really should not have been surprised. Especially when he discovered that Reverend Harmswallow had taken his text that morning from Matthew, specifically the Beatitudes, and in particular the one about how the meek would inherit the earth. The reverend was a plump, pink-faced man whose best sermons dwelt on the wages of sin and the certainty of hell-fire. It had always been a disappointment to him that the farmhands who made up his congregation weren't physically equipped to sin in any interesting ways, but he made up for it by extra emphasis on the importance of being humble. "Even," he finished, his baby-fine hair flying all around his pink scalp, "when things don't go the way you think they ought to. Now we're going to sing 'Old One Hundred,' and then you soy people will meet in the gymnasium and corn people in the second-floor lounge. Your bosses have some news for you."

So it shouldn't have been surprising, and as a matter of fact Zeb wasn't surprised at all. Some part of the cry circuits inside his titanium skull had long noted the portents. Scant rain. Falling levels of soil minerals. Thinning of the topsoil. The beans grew fat, because there was an abundance of carbon in the air for them to metabolize. But no matter how much you irrigated, they dried up fast in the hot breezes. And those were only the physical signs. Boss's body language said more, sighing when he should have been smiling at the three-legged races behind the big house, not even noticing when one of the cabins needed a new coat of whitewash or the flower

patches showed a few weeds. Zeb observed it all and drew the proper conclusions. His constraints did not forbid that; they only prevented him from speaking of them, or even of thinking of them on a conscious level. Zeb was not programmed to worry. It would have interfered with the happy, smiling face he bore for Boss, and Miz Boss, and the Chillen.

So, when Boss made his announcement, Zeb looked as thunderstruck as all the other hands. "You've been really good people," Boss said generously, his pale, professorial face incongruous under the plantation straw hat. "I really wish things could go on as they always have, but it just isn't possible. It's the agricultural support program," he explained. "Those idiots in Washington have cut it down to the point where it simply isn't worthwhile to plant here anymore." His expression brightened. "But it's not all bad! You'll be glad to know that they've expanded the soil bank program as a consequence. So Miz Boss and the children and I are well provided for. As a matter of fact," and he beamed. "we'll be a little better off than before, moneywise.

"Days good!"

"Oh, hebben be praised!"

The doleful expressions broke into grins as the farmhands nudged one another, relieved. But then Zeb spoke up. "Boss? Scuse my askin, but what's gone happen to us folks? You gonna keep us on?" Boss looked irritated. "Oh, that's impossible. We can't collect the soil-bank money if we plant; so there's just no sense in having all of you around, don't you see?"

Silence. Then another farmhand ventured, "How bout Cornpatch Boss? He need some good workers? You know us hates corn, but we could get reprogrammed quick's anything-

Boss shook his head. "He's telling his people the same thing right now. Nobody needs you."

The farmhands looked at one another. "Preacher, he needs us." one of them offered. "We's his whole congregation."

"I'm, afraid Reverend Harmswallow doesn't need you anymore." Boss said kindly, "because he's been wanting to go into missionary work for some time, and he's just received his call. No, you're superfluous; that all."

"Superfluous?"

"Redundant. Unnecessary. There's no reason for you to be here." Boss told them. "So trucks will come in the morning to take you all away. Please be outside your cabins ready to go, by oh-seven-hundred."

Silence again. Then Zeb: "Where they takes us, Boss?"

Boss shrugged. "There's probably some place, I think." Then he grinned. "But I've got a surprise for you. Miz Boss and I aren't going to let you go without having a party. So tonight we're going to have a good old-fashioned square dance, with new bandannas for the best dancers, and then you're all going to come back to the Big House and sing spirituals for us. I promise Miz Boss and the children and I are going to be right there to enjoy it!"

The place they were taken to was a grimy white cinderblock building in Des Plaines. The driver of the truck was a beefy, taciturn robot who wore a visored cap and a leather jacket with the sleeves cut off. He hadn't answered any of their questions when they loaded onto his truck at the farm, and he again answered none when they offloaded in front of a chain-link gate, with a sign that read

RECEIVING.

"Just stand over there," he ordered. "You all out? Okay." And he slapped the tailboard up and drove off, leaving them in a gritty, misty sprinkle of warm rain.

And they waited. Fourteen prime working robots, hes and shes and three little ones, too dispirited to talk much. Zeb wiped the moisture off his face and mutttered, "Couldn'tve rained down where we needed it. Has to rain up here, where it don't do a body no good a-tall." But not all the moisture was rain: not Zeb's and not that on the faces of the others, because they were all thinking really hard. The only one not despairing was Lem, the most recent arrival. Lem had been an estate gardener in Urbana until his people decided to emigrate to the O'Neill space colonies. He'd been lucky to catch on at the farm when a turned-over tractor created an unexpected vacancy, but he still talked wistfully about life in glamorous Champaign Urbana. Now he was excited, "Des Plaines! Why that's practically Chicago! The big time, friends. State Street! The Loop! The Gold Coast!"

"They gone have jobs for us in Chicago?" Zeb asked doubtfully.

"Jobs? Why, man, who cares bout jobs? That's Chicago! We'll have a ball!"

Zeb nodded thoughtfully. Although he was not convinced, he was willing to be hopeful. That was part of his programming, too. He opened his mouth and tasted the drizzle. He made a face: sour, high in particulate matter, a lot more carbon dioxide and NO_, than he was used to. What kind of a place was this, where the rain didn't even taste good? It must be cars, he thought, not sticking to the good old fusion electric power but burning gasoline! So all the optimism had faded by the time signs of activity appeared in the cinderblock building. Cars drove in through another

entrance. -Lights went on inside. Then the corrugated-metal doorway slid noisily up and a short, dark robot came out to unlock the chain-link gate. The robot looked the farmers over impassively and opened the gate.

"Come on, you redundancies," he said. "let's get you reprogrammed."

When it came Zeb's turn, he was allowed into a white walled room with an ominous sort of plastic-topped cot along the wall. The R.R.R., or Redundancy Reprogramming Redirector, assigned to him was a blonde, good-looking she-robot who wore a white coat and long crystal earrings like tiny chandeliers. She sat Zeb on the edge of the cot, motioned him to lean forward, and quickly inserted the red-painted fingernail of her right forefinger into his left ear. He quivered as the read-only memory emptied itself into her own internal scanners. She nodded. "You've got a simple profile," she said cheerfully. "We'll have you out of here in no time. Open your shirt." Zeb's soil-grimed fingers slowly unbuttoned the flannel shirt. Before he got to the last button, she impatiently pushed his hands aside and pulled it wide. The button popped and rolled away. "You'll have to get new clothes anyway," she said, sinking long, scarlet nails into four narrow slits on each side of his rib cage. The whole front of his chest came free in her hands. The R.R.R. laid it aside and peered at the hookup inside.

She nodded again, "No problem," she said, pulling chips out with quick, sure fingers. "Now this will feel funny for a minute and you won't be able to talk, but hold still." Funny? It felt to Zeb as if the bare room were swirling into spirals, and not only couldn't he speak, he couldn't remember words. Or thoughts! He was nearly sure that just a moment before he had been wondering whether he would ever again see the-The what? He couldn't remember.

Then he felt a gentle sensation of something within him being united to something else, not so much a click as the feeling of a foot fitting into a shoe, and he was able to complete the question. The farm. He found he had said the words out loud, and the R.R.R. laughed. "See? You're half-reoriented already."

He grinned back. "That's really astonishing," he declared. "Can you credit it? I was almost missing that rural existence! As though the charms of bucolic life had any meaning for-Good heavens! Why am I talking like this?"

The she-robot said, "Well, you wouldn't want to talk like a farmhand when you live in the big city, would you?"

"Oh, granted!" Zeb cried earnestly. "But one must pose the next question: The formalisms of textual grammar, the imagery of poetics, can one deem them appropriate to my putative new career?" The R.R.R. frowned. "It's a literary-critic vocabulary store," she said defensively. "Look, somebody has to use them up!"

"But, one asks, why me?"

"It's all I've got handy, and that's that. Now. You'll find there are other changes, too, I'm taking out the quantitative soil-analysis chips and the farm-machinery subroutines. I could leave you the spirituals and the square dancing, if you like."

"Why retain the shadow when the substance has fled?" he said bitterly.

"Now, Zeb," she scolded. "You don't need this specialized stuff. That's all behind you, and you'll never miss it, because you don't know yet what great things you're getting in exchange." She snapped his chest back in place and said. "Give me your hands."

"One could wish for specifics," he grumbled, watching suspiciously as the R.R.R. fed his hands into a hole in her control console. He felt a tickling sensation.

"Why not? Infrared vision, for one thing," she said proudly, watching the digital readouts on her console, "so

you can see in the dark. Plus twenty percent hotter circuit breakers in your motor assemblies, so you'll be stronger and can run faster. Plus the names and addresses and phone numbers of six good bail bondsmen and the public defender!"

She pulled his hands out of the machine and nodded toward them. The grime was scrubbed out of the pores, the soil dug out from under the fingernails, the calluses smoothed away. They were city hands now, the hands of someone who had never- done manual labor in his life.

"And for what destiny is this new armorarium required?" Zeb asked.

"For your new work. It's the only vacancy we've got right now, but it's good work, and steady. You're going to be a mugger."

After his first night on the job Zeb was amused at his own apprehensions. The farm had been nothing like this!

He was assigned to a weasel-faced he-robot named Timothy for on-the-job training, and Timothy took the term literally. "Come on, kid," he said as soon as Zeb came to the anteroom where he was waiting, and he headed out the door. He didn't wait to see whether Zeb was following. No chain-

link gates now. Zeb had only the vaguest notion of how far Chicago was, or in which direction, but he was pretty sure that it wasn't something you walked to.

"Are we going to entrust ourselves to the iron horse?" he asked, with a little tingle of anticipation. Trains had seemed very glamorous as they went by the farm-produce trains, freight trains, passenger trains that set a farmhand to wondering where they might be going and what it might be like to get there. Timothy didn't answer. He gave Zeb a look that mixed pity and annoyance and contempt

as he planted himself in the street and raised a peremptory hand. A huge green-and-white checkered hovercab dug down its braking wheels and screeched to a stop in front of them. Timothy motioned him in and sat silently next to him while the driver whooshed down Kennedy Expressway. The sights of the suburbs of the city flashed past Zeb's fascinated eyes. They drew up under the marquee of a splashy, bright hotel, with handsome couples in expensive clothing strolling in and out. When Timothy threw the taxi driver a bill, Zeb observed that he did not wait for change.

Timothy did not seem in enough of a hurry to justify the expense of a cab. He stood rocking on his toes under the marquee for a minute, beaming benignly at the robot tourists. Then he gave Zeb a quick look, turned, and walked away.

Once again Zeb had to be fast to keep up. He turned the corner after Timothy, almost too late to catch the action. The weasel-faced robot had backed a well-dressed couple into the shadows, and he was relieving them of wallet, watches, and rings. When he had everything, he faced them to the wall, kicked each of them expertly behind a knee joint, and, as they fell, turned and ran, soundless in soft-soled shoes, back to the bright lights. He was fast and he was abrupt, but by this time Zeb had begun to recognize some of the elements of his style. He was ready. He was following on Timothy's heels before the robbed couple had begun to scream. Past the marquee, lost in a crowd in front of a theater, Timothy slowed down and looked at Zeb approvingly. "Good reflexes," he complimented. "You got the right kind of class, kid. You'll make out."

"As a soi-disant common cutpurse?" Zeb asked, somewhat nettled at the other robot's peremptory manner.

Timothy looked him over carefully. "You talk funny," he said. "They stick you with one of those surplus vocabularies again? Never mind. You see how it's done?"

Zeb hesitated, craning his neck to look for pursuit, of which there seemed to be none. "Well, one might venture that that is correct," he said.

"Okay. Now you do it." Timothy said cheerfully, and he steered Zeb into the alley for the hotel tourist trap's stage door.

By midnight Zeb had committed five felonies of his own, had been an accomplice in two more, and had watched the smaller robot commit eight single-handed, and the two muggers were dividing their gains in the darkest corner-not very dark-of an all-night McDonald's on North Michigan Avenue.

"You done good, kid." Timothy admitted expansively. "For a green kid anyway. Let's see. Your share comes to six watches, eight pieces of jewelry, counting the fake coral necklace you shouldn't have bothered with, and looks like six to seven hundred in cash."

"As well as quite a few credit cards," Zeb said eagerly.

"Forget the credit cards. You only keep what you can spend or what doesn't have a name on it.

Think you're ready to go out on your own?"

"One hesitates to assume such responsibility-"

"Because you're not. So forget it." The night's work done, Timothy seemed to have become actually garrulous. "Bet you can't tell me why I wanted you backing me up those two times."

"One acknowledges a certain incomprehension," Zeb confessed. "There is an apparent dichotomy. When there were two victims, or even three, you chose to savage them single-handed. Yet for solitary prey you elected to have an accomplice."

"Right! And you know why? You don't. So I'll tell you. You get a he and a she, or even two of each, and the he's going to think about keeping the she from getting hurt; that's the way the program reads. So no trouble. But those two hes by themselves-hell, if I'd gone up against either of those mothers, he might've taken my knife away from me and picked my nose with it. You got to understand robot nature, kid. That's what the job is all about. Don't you want a Big Mac or something?"

Zeb shifted uncomfortably. "I should think not, thank you," he said, but the other robot was looking at him knowingly.

"No food-tract subsystems, right?"

"Well, my dear Timothy, in the agricultural environment I inhabited there was no evident need-"

"You don't need them now, but you ought to have them. Also liquid-intake tanks, and maybe an air-cycling system, so you can smoke cigars. And get rid of that faggoty vocabulary they stuck you

with. You're in a class occupation," he said earnestly, "and you got to live up to your station, right? No subway trains. No counting out the pennies when you get change. You don't take change. Now you don't want to make trouble your first day on the job; so we'll let you go until you've finished a whole week. But then you go back to that bleached-blond Three-R and we'll get you straightened out," he promised. "Now let's go fence our jewels and stuff and call it a night." All in all, Zeb was quite pleased with himself. His pockets lined with big bills, he read menus outside fancy restaurants to prepare himself for his new-attachments. He was looking forward to a career at least as distinguished as Timothy's own.

That was his third night on the Gold Coast.

He never got a chance at a fourth.

His last marks of the evening gave him a little argument about parting with a diamond ring. So, as taught, Zeb backhanded the he and snarled at the she and used a little more force than usual when he ripped the ring off the finger. Two minutes later and three blocks away, he took a quick look at his loot under a streetlight. He recoiled in horror.

There was a drop of blood on the ring.

That victim had not been a robot. She had been a living true human female being, and when he heard all the police sirens in the world coming straight at him, he was not in the least surprised.

"You people," said the rehab instructor, "have been admitted to this program because, a, you have been unemployed for not less than twenty-one months, b, have not fewer than six unexcused absences from your place of training or employment, c, have a conviction for a felony and are currently on parole, or, d, are of a date of manufacture eighteen or more years past, choice of any of the above. That's what the regulations say, and what they mean," she said, warming to her work, "is, you're scum. Scum is hopeless, shiftless, dangerous, a social liability. Do you all understand that much at least?" She gazed angrily around the room at her seven students.

She was short, dumpy, red-haired, with bad skin. Why they let shes like this one off the production line Zeb could not understand. He fidgeted in his seat, craning his neck to see what his six fellow students were like, until her voice crackled at him: "You! With the yellow sweater! Zeb!"

He finched. "Pardon me, madam?"

She said, with gloomy satisfaction, "I know your type. You're a typical recidivist lumpenprole, you are. Can't even pay attention to somebody who's trying to help you when your whole future is at stake. What've I got, seven of you slugs? I can see what's coming. I guarantee two of you will drop out without finishing the course, and I'll ave to expell two more because you skip classes or come in late. And the other three'll be back on the streets or in the slarnmer in ninety days. Why do I do it." She shook her head and then, lifting herself ponderously, went to the blackboard and wrote her three commandments:

1. ON TIME
2. EVERY DAY
3. EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO

She turned around, leaning on the back of her chair. "Those are your Golden Rules, you slugs. You'll obey them as God's commandments, and don't you forget it. You're here to learn how to be responsible, socially valuable creations, and-what?"

The skinny old he-robot in the seat next to Zeb was raising a trembling hand. It was easy to see how he qualified for the rehabilitation program. He was a thirty-year old model at least, with ball joints in the shoulders and almost no facial mobility at all. He quavered, "What if we just can't, teacher? I mean, like we've got a sudden cryogenic warmup and have to lie down, or haven't had a lube job, or-"

"You give me a pain," the instructor told him, nodding to show that pain was exactly what she had expected from the likes of him. "Those are typical excuses, and they're not going to be accepted in this group. Now if you have something really wrong with you, what you have to do is call up at least two hours before class and get yourself excused. Is that so hard to remember? But you won't do it when push comes to shove, because you slugs never do."

The ancient said obstinately, "Two hours is a pretty long time. I can't always tell that far ahead, teacher. A lot can happen."

"And don't call me teacher!" She turned back to the board and wrote:

DR: ELENA MINCUS, B.SC., MA., PH.D.

"YOU CAN CALL ME DR. MINCUS OR YOU CAN CALL ME MA'AM. NOW PAY ATTENTION."

And Zeb did, because the ten nights in the county jail before he got his hearing and his first offender's parole had convinced him he didn't want to go back there again. The noise! The

crowding! The brutality of the jailers! There was nothing you could do about that, either, because some of them were human beings. Maybe most of them were. Looked at in a certain way, there probably wouldn't even have been a jail if some human beings hadn't wanted to be jail guards. What was the sense of punishing a robot by locking him up?

So he paid attention. And kept on paying attention, even when Dr. Mincus's lessons were about such irrelevant (to him) niceties of civilized employed persons' behavior as why you should always participate in an office pool, how to stand in line for tickets to a concert, and what to do at a company Christmas party. Not all of his classmates were so well behaved. The little ancient next to him gave very little trouble, being generally sunk in gloom, but the two she-robots, the ones with the beaded handbags and the miniskirts, richly deserved (Zeb thought) to be the ones to fulfill Dr. Mincus's statistical predictions by being expelled from the course. The one with the green eye

makeup snickered at almost everything the instructor said and made faces behind her back. The one with the black spicurl across her forehead gossiped with the other students and even dared to talk back to the teacher. Reprimanded for whispering, she said lazily, "Hell, lady, this whole thing's a shuck, aint it? What are you doing it for?"

Dr. Mincus's voice trembled with indignation and with the satisfaction of someone who sees her gloomiest anticipations realized: "For what? Why, because I'm trained in psychiatric social work. . . and because it's what I want to do . . . and because I'm a human being, and don't any of you ever let that get out of your mind!"

The course had some real advantages, Zeb discovered when he was ordered back to the robot replacement depot for new fittings. The blonde R.R.R. muttered darkly to herself as she pulled pieces out of his chest and thrust others in. When he could talk again, he thanked her, suddenly aware that now he had an appetite -a real appetite. He wanted food, which meant that some of those new pieces included a whole digestive system-and that she had muted the ,worst part of his overdaunt vocabulary. She pursed her lips and didn't answer while she clamped him up again. But then he discovered, too, that it did not relieve him of his duties. "They think because you're handicapped," The R. R. R. smirked, "you're forced to get into trouble. So now you've got all this first-rate equipment, and if you want to know what I think, I think it's wasted. The bums in that class always revert to type," she told him, "and if you want to try to be the exception to the rules, you're going to have to apply yourself when you're back on the job."

"Mugging?"

"What else are you fit for? Although," she added, pensively twisting the crystal that dangled from her right ear around a fingertip, "I did have an opening for a freshman English composition teacher. If I hadn't replaced your vocabulary unit-"

"I'll take mugging, please."

She shrugged. "Might as well. But you can't expect that good a territory again, you know. Not after what you did."

So, rain or dry, Zeb spent every six P.m. to midnight lurking around the old Robert Taylor Houses, relieving old shes of their rent money and old hes of whatever pitiful possessions were in their pockets. Once in a while he crossed to the Illinois Institute of Technology campus on the trail of some night-school student or professor, but he was always careful to ask them whether they were robot or human before he touched them. The next offense, he knew, would allow him no parole. There was no free-spending taxi money from such pickings, but on nights when Zeb made his quota early he would sometimes take the bus to the Loop or the Gold Coast. livice he saw Timothy, but the little robot, after one look of disgust"turned away. Now and then he would drift down to Amalfi Amadeus Park, along the lakefront, where green grass and hedges reminded him of the good old days in the soy fields, but the urge to chew samples of soil was too strong, and the frustration over not being able to, too keen. So he would drift back to the bright lights and the crowds. Try as he might, Zeb could not really tell which of the well-dressed figures thronging Water tower Place and Lake Shore Drive were humans, clinging to life on the planet Earth instead of living in one of the fashionable orbital colonies, and which were robots as-signed to swell the crowds.

Nor was Dr. Mincus any help. When he dared to put up a hand in class to ask her, she was outraged. "Tell the difference? You mean you don't know the difference? Between a human person and a hunk of machinery that doesn't have any excuse for existence except to do the things people don't want to do and help them enjoy doing the things they do? Holy God, Zeb, when I think of all the time I put in learning to be empathetic and patient and supportive with you creeps, it just turns my stomach. Now pay attention while I try to show you he-slugs the difference between dressing like a human person of good taste and dressing like a pimp."

At the end of the class, Lori, the hooker with the green eye shadow, thrust her arm through his

and commiserated. "Old bitch's giving you a hard time, hon. I almost got right up and told her to leave you alone. Would have, too, if I wasn't just one black mark from getting kicked out already."

"Well, thanks, Lori." Now that Zeb had a set of biochemical accessories suitable for a city dandy rather than a farmhand, he discovered that she wore heavy doses of perfume-musk, his diagnostic sensors told him, with trace amounts of hibiscus, bergamot, and extract of vanilla. Smelling perfume was not at all like sniffing out the levels of CO, ozone, water vapor, and particulate matter in the air over the soy fields. It made him feel quite uncomfortable.

He let her tug him through the front door, and she smiled up at him. "I knew we'd get along real well, if you'd only loosen up a little, sweetie. Do you like to dance?"

Zeb explored his as-yet-unpracticed stores of skills. "Why, yes, I think I do," he said, surprised.

"Listen. Why don't we go somewhere where we can just sit and get to know each other, you know?"

"Well, Lori, I certainly wish we could. But I'm supposed to get down to my territory."

"Down Southside, right? That's just fine." she cried, squeezing his arm, "because I know a really great place right near there. Come on, nobody's going to violate you for starting a teeny bit late one night. Flag that taxi, why don't you?"

The really great place was a low ceanent-block building that had once been a garage. It stood on a corner, facing a shopping center that had seen better days, and the liquid crystal sign over the door read:

SOUTHSIDE SHELTER AND COMMUNITY CENTER GOD LOVES YOU!

"It's a church!" Zeb cried joyously, his mind flooding with memory of the happy days when he sang in Reverend Harmswallow's choir.

"Well, sort of a church," Lori conceded as she paid the cabbie. "They don't bother you much, though. Come on in and meet the gang, and you'll see for yourself!"

The place was not really that much of a church, Zeb observed. It was more like the second-floor lounge over Reverend Harmswallow's main meeting room, back on the farm, even more like-he rummaged through his new data stores -a "Neighborhood social club." Trestle tables were scattered around a large, low room, with folding chairs around the tables. A patch in the middle of the room had been left open for dancing, and at least a dozen hes and shes were using it for that. The place was crowded. Most of the inhabitants were a lot more like Zeb's fellow rehab

students than like Reverend Harmswallow's congregation. A tired-looking, faded-looking female was drowsing over a table of religious tracts by the door, in spite of a blast of noise that made Zeb's auditory-gain-control cut in at once. There were no other signs of religiosity present. The noise turned out to be heavily amplified music from a ten-piece band with six singers.

Studying the musicians carefully, Zeb decided that at least some of them were human, too. Was that the purpose of the place? To give the humans an audience for their talents, or an outlet for their spiritual benevolence? Very likely, he decided, but he could not see that it affected the spirit of the crowd. Besides the dancers, there were groups playing cards, clots of robots talking animatedly among themselves, sometimes laughing, sometimes deeply earnest, sometimes shouting at one another in fury. As they entered, a short, skinny he looked up from one of the earnest groups seated around a table. It was Timothy, and a side of Timothy that Zeb had not seen before; impassioned, angry, and startled. "Zeb! How come you're here?"

"Hello, Timothy." Zeb was cautious, but the other robot seemed really pleased to see him. He pulled out a chair beside him and patted it, but Lori's hand on Zeb's aim held him back.

"Hey, man, we going to dance or not?"

"Lady," said Timothy, "go dance with somebody else for a while. I want Zeb to meet my friends. This big fellow's Milt; then there's Harry, Alexandra, Walter 23-X, the kid's Sally, and this one's Sue. We've got a kind of a discussion group going."

"Zeb," Lori said, but Zeb shook his head.

"I'll dance in a minute," he said, looking around the table as he sat down. It was an odd group. The one called Sally had the form of a six-year-old, but the patches and welds that marred her face and arms showed a long history. The others were of all kinds, big and little, new and old, but they had one thing in common. None of them were smiling. Neither was Timothy. If the gladness to see Zeb was real, it did not show in expression.

"Excuse me for mentioning it," Zeb said, "but the last time we ran into each other, you didn't act all that friendly."

Timothy added embarrassment to the other expressions he wore; it was a considerable tribute to his facial flexibility. "That was then," he said.

"`Then' was only three nights ago," Zeb pointed out.

"Yeah. Things change," Timothy explained, and the hulk he had called Milt leaned toward Zeb.

"The exploited have to stick together, Zeb," Milt said. "The burden of oppression makes us all brothers."

"And sisters," tiny Sally piped up.

"Sisters, too, right. We're all rejects together, and all we got to look forward to is recycling or the stockpile. Ask Timothy here. Couple nights ago, when he first came here, he was as, excuse me, Zeb, as ignorant as you are. He can't be blamed for that, any more than you can. You come off the line, and they slide their programming into you, and you try to be a good robot because that's what they've told you to want. We all went through that."

Timothy had been nodding eagerly. Now, as he looked past Zeb, his face fell. "Oh, God, she's back," he said.

It was Lori, returning from the bar with two foaming tankards of beer. "You got two choices, Zeb," she said. "You can dance, or you can go home alone."

Zeb hesitated, taking a quick sip of the beer to stall for time. He was not so rich in friends that he wanted to waste any, and yet there was something going on at this table that he wanted to know more about.

"Well, Zeb?" she demanded ominously.

He took another swallow of the beer. It was an interesting sensation, the cold, gassy liquid sliding down his new neck piping and thudding into the storage tank in his right hip. The chemosensors in the storage tank registered the alcoholic content and put a tiny bias on his proprioceptive circuits, so that the music buzzed in his ear and the room seemed brighter.

"Good stuff, Lori," he said, his words suddenly a little thick.

"You said you could dance, Zeb" she said. "Time you showed me."

Timothy looked exasperated. "Oh, go ahead. Get her off your back! Then come back, and we'll pick it up from there."

Yes, he could dance. Damn, he could dance up a storm! He discovered subroutines he had not known he had been given: the waltz, the Lindy, the Monkey, a score of steps with names and a whole set of heuristic circuits that let him improvise. And whatever he did, Lori followed, as good as he.

"You're great," he panted in her ear. "You ever think of going professional?"

"What the hell do you mean by that, Zeb?" she demanded.

"I mean as a dancer."

"Oh, yeah, Well, that's kind of what I was programmed for in the first place. But there's no work. Human beings do it when they want to, and sometimes you can catch on with a ballet company or maybe a nightclub chorus line when they organize one. But then they get bored, you see. And then there's no more job. How 'bout another beer, big boy?"

They sat out a set, or rather stood it out, bellied up to the crowded bar, while Zeb looked around. "This is a funny place," he said, although actually, he recognized, it could have been the funny feelings in all his sensors and actuators that made it seem so. "Who's that ugly old lady by the door?"

Lori glanced over the top of her tankard. It was a female, sitting at a card table loaded with what, even at this distance, clearly were religious tracts. "Part of the staff. Don't worry 'bout her. By this time every night she's drunk anyway."

Zeb shook his head, repelled by the fat, the pallid skin, the stringy hair. "You wonder why they make robots as bad-looking as that," he commented.

"Robot? Hell, she ain't no robot-. She's real flesh and blood. This is how she gets her kicks, you know? If it wasn't for her and maybe half a dozen other human beings who think they're do-gooders, there wouldn't be any community center here at all. About ready to dance some more?"

Zeb was concentrating on internal sensations he had never experienced before. "Well, actually," he said uneasily, "I feel a little funny." He put his hand over his hip tank. "Don't know what it is, exactly, but it's kind of like I had a power-store failure, you know? And it all swelled up inside me. Only that's not where my power store is."

Lori giggled. "You just aren't used to drinking beer, are you, hon? You got to decant, that's all. See that door over there marked HE? You just go in there, and if you can't figure out what to do, you just ask somebody to help you."

Zeb didn't have to ask for help. However, the process was all new to him, and it did require a lot of trial and error. So it was some time before he came back into the noisy, crowded room. Lori was spinning around the room with a big, dark-skinned he, which relieved Zeb of that obligation. He ordered a round of beers and took them back to the table.

Somebody was missing, but otherwise they didn't seem to have changed position at all. "Where's the little she?" Zeb asked, setting the beers down for all of them.

"Sally? She's gone off panhandling. Probably halfway to Amadeus Park by now."

Toying with his beer, Zeb said uneasily, "You know, maybe I better be getting along, too, soon as I get this down--"

The he named Walter 23-X sneered. "Slave mentality! What's it going to get you?"

"Well, I've got a job to do," Zeb said defensively.

"Job! Timothy told us what your job was?" Walter 23-X took a deep draft of the beer and went on, "There's not one of us in this whole place has a real job! If we did, we wouldn't be here, stands to reason! Look at me. I used to chop salt in the Detroit mines. Now they've put in automatic diggers and I'm redundant. And Milt here, he was constructed for the iron mines up around Lake Superior."

"Don't tell me they don't mine iron," Zeb objected. "How else would they build us?"

Milt shook his head. "Not around the lake, they don't. It's all out in space now. They've got these Von Neumann automata, not even real robots at all. They just go out to the asteroid belt and ship off ore and refine it and build duplicates of themselves, and then they come back to the works in low-Earth orbit and hop right into the smelter! How's a robot going to compete with that?"

"See, Zeb?" Timothy put in. "It's a tough world for a robot, and that's the truth."

Zeb took a reflective pull at his beer. "Yes," he said, "but, see, I don't know how it could be any better for us. You know? I mean, they built us, after all. We have do what they want us to do."

"Oh, sure," cried the she named Sue. "We do that, all right. We do all the work for them, and half the play, too. We're the ones that fill the concert hall when one of them wants to sing some kind of dumb Latvian art songs or something. God, I've done that so many times I just never want to hear about another birch tree again! We work in the factories and farms and mines--"

"Used to," Zeb said wistfully.

"Used to, right, and now that they don't need us for that, they make us fill up their damn cities so the humans left on Earth won't feel so lonesome. We're a hobby, Zeb. That's all we are!"

"Yeah, but--"

"Oh, hell," sneered Walter 23-X, "you know what you are? You're part of the problem! You don't care about robot rights!"

"Robot rights," Zeb repeated. He understood the meaning of the words perfectly, of course, but it had never occurred to him to put them together in that context. It tasted strange on his lips.

"Exactly. Our right not to be mistreated and abused. You think we want to be here? In a place like this, with all this noise? No. It's just so people like her can get their jollies," he said angrily, jerking his head at the nodding fat woman by the door.

The she named Alexandra drained the last of her beer and ventured. "Well, really, Walter, I kind of like it here. I'm not in the same class as you heavy thinkers. I know. I'm not really political. It's just that sometimes, honestly, I could just scream. So it's either a place like this, or I go up to Amadeus Park with Sally and the other alcoholics and drifters and bums. Speaking of which," she added, leaning toward Timothy, "if you're not going to drink your beer, I'd just as soon." The little robot passed it over silently, and Zeb observed for the first time that it was untouched.

"What's the matter, Timothy?" he asked.

"Why does something have to be the matter? I just don't want any beer."

"But last week you said--oh, my God!" Zeb cried, as revelation burst inside his mind. "You've lost your drink circuits, haven't you?"

"Suppose I have?" Timothy demanded fiercely. And then he softened. "Oh, it's not your fault," he said moodily. "Just more of the same thing. I had an accident."

"What kind of accident?" Zeb asked, repelled and fascinated.

Timothy traced designs in the damp rings that his untouched beer glass had left on the table.

"Three nights ago," he said. "I had a good night. I scored four people at once, coming out of a hotel on East Erie. A really big haul--they must've been programmed to be rich alcoholics, because they were loaded. All ways loaded! then when I was getting away, I crossed Michigan against the light and--Jesus!" He shuddered without looking up. "This big-wheeled car came out of nowhere. Came screeching around the corner, never even slowed down. And there I was in the street."

"You got run over? You mean that messed up your drinking subsystems?"

"Oh, hell, no, not just that. It was worse. It crushed my legs, you see? I mean, just scrap metal. So the ambulance came, and they raced me of to the hospital, but of course after I was there, since I was a robot, they didn't do any--"

thing for me, just shot me out the back door into a van. And they took me to rehab for new legs. Only that blonde bitch," he sobbed, "that Three-R she with the dime-store earrings -" If Zeb's eyes had been capable of tears, they would have been brimming. "Come on, Timothy," he urged. "Spit it out!"

"She had a better idea. `Too many muggers anyway,' she said. `Not enough cripples.' So she got me a little wheeled cart and a tin cup! And all the special stuff I had, the drinking and eating and all the rest, I wouldn't need them anymore, she said, and besides, she wanted the space for other facilities. Zeb, I play the violin now! And I don't mean I play it well. I play it so bad I can't even stand to listen to myself, and she wants me on Michigan Avenue every day, in front of the stores, playing my fiddle and begging!"

Zeb stared in horror at his friend. Then suddenly he pushed back his chair and peered under the table. It was true: Timothy's legs ended in black leather caps, halfway down the thighs, and a thing like a padded-wheeled pallet was propped against the table leg beside him.

Alexandra patted his hand as he came back up. "It's really bad when you first get the picture," she said. "I know. What you need is another beer, Zeb. And thank God you've got the circuits to use it!"

Since Zeb was not programmed for full alcoholism not yet, anyway, he told himself with a sob-he was not really drunk, but he was fuzzy in mind and in action as he finally left the community center. He was appalled to see that the sky right above the lake was already beginning to lighten. The night was almost

over, and he had not scored a single victim. He would have to take the first robot that came along. The first half-dozen, in fact, if he were to meet his quota, and there simply was not time to get to his proper station at the Robert Taylor Houses. He would have to make do with whoever appeared. He stared around, getting his bearings, and observed that around the corner from the community center there was a lighted, swinging sign that said ROBOT'S REST MISSION. That was the outfit that kept the community center open, he knew, and there was a tall, prosperous looking he coming out of the door.

Zeb didn't hesitate. He stepped up^o, pulled out his knife, and pressed it to the victim's belly, hard enough to be felt without penetrating. "Your money or your life," he growled, reaching for the wristwatch.

Then the victim turned his head and caught the light on his features. It was a face Zeb knew.

"Reverend Harmswallow!" he gasped. "Oh, my God!"

The minister fixed him with a baleful look. "I can't claim that much," he said, "but maybe I'm close enough for the purpose. My boy, you're damned for good now!"

Zeb didn't make a conscious decision. He simply turned and ran.

If he hadn't had the alcohol content fuzzing his systems, he might not have bothered, because he knew without having to think about it that it was no use. There weren't many places to run. He couldn't run back to the Robert Taylor Houses, his assigned workplace; they would look for him there first. Not back to the community center, not with Harmswallow just around the corner. Not to the rehab station, because that was just the same as walking right into jail. Not anywhere, in fact, where there were likely to be police, or human beings of any kind, and that meant not anywhere in the world, because wherever he

problems, but now, looking down at the wistful little-girl face, he was touched. Around the table in the community center she had just been one more stranger. Now she reminded him of Glenda, the little she from the cabin next to his back on the farm. But in spite of her age design, Sally was obviously quite an old robot. From the faint smoky odor that came to him through the drizzly air he realized she was fuel-cell-powered. Half a century old, at least. He emptied his pockets. "Get yourself some new parts, kid," he said hoarsely.

"Gee, thanks, Zeb," she sobbed, then added, "Watch it!" She drew him into the shelter of a dripping shrub. A park police hovercar whooshed slowly by, all lights off, windshield wipers slapping. back and forth across the glass, sides glistening in the wet. Zeb retreated into the shadows, but the police were just keeping an eye on the park's drifters, losers, and vagrants. As the hovercar disappeared around a curve in the path, the drifters, losers, and vagrants began to emerge from the underbrush. Zeb looked around warily: he hadn't realized until then how many of them there were.

"What are you doing here, Zeb?" she asked.

"I had a little trouble," he said, then shrugged hopelessly. What was the point of trying to keep it a secret? "I went out to mug somebody, and I got a human being by mistake."

"Oh, wow! Can he identify you?"

"Unfortunately, I used to know him, so, yes-no, you keep it," he added quickly as she made as if to return the money he had given her. "Money won't help me now."

She nodded soberly. "I wouldn't do it, but . . . Oh, Zeb, I'm trying to save for a whole new chassis, see? I can't tell you how much I want to grow up, but every time I ask for a new body, they say the central nervous array isn't really worth salvaging. All I want's a mature form. You know? Like hips and boobs! But they won't let me have a mature form. Say there's more openings for juveniles anyway, but what I want to know is, if there are all those openings, why don't they find me one?"

"When was the last time you worked regular?" Zeb asked.

"Oh, my God-years ago: I had a nice spot for a long time, pupil in a preprimary school that some human person wanted to teach in. That was all right. She didn't really like me, though, because I didn't have all the fixtures, you know? When she was teaching things like toilet-training and covering coughs and sneezes, she'd always give me this dirty look. But I could handle the cookies and milk all right," she went on dreamily, "and I really liked the games."

"So what went wrong?"

"Oh-the usual thing. She got tired of teaching 'Run, Robot! See the robot run!' So she went for a progressive school. All about radical movements and peace marches. I was doing real good at it, too. Then one day we came in and she told us we were too juvenile for the kind of classes she wanted to teach. And there we were, eighteen of us, out on the streets. Since then it's been nothing but rotten." She glanced up, wiping the rain out of her eyes-or the tears-as the purse vendor approached. "We don't want to buy anything, Hymie."

"Nobody does," he said bitterly, but there was sympathy in his eyes as he studied Zeb. "You got real trouble, don't you? I can always tell."

Zeb shrugged hopelessly and told him about the Reverend Harmswallow. The vendor's eyes widened.

"Oh, God," he said. He beckoned to one of the dope pushers. "Hear that? This guy just mugged a human being-second offense, too!"

"Man! That's a real heavy one, you know?" He turned and called to his partner, down the walk, "We got a two-time person mugger here. Marcus! And in a minute there were a dozen robots standing around, glancing apprehensively at Zeb and whispering among themselves.

Zeb didn't have to hear what they were saying; he could figure it out.

"Keep away from me," he offered. "You'll just get mixed up in my trouble."

Sally piped suddenly, "If it's your trouble, it's everybody's trouble. We have to stick together. In union there is strength."

"What?" Zeb demanded.

"It's something I remember from, you know, just before I got kicked out of the progressive school. 'In union there is strength.' It's what they used to say."

"Union!" snarled the pitchman, gesturing with his tray of all-leather purses. "Don't tell me about unions! That was what I was supposed to be, union organizer, United Open-Pit Mine Workers, Local Three-three-eight, and then they closed down the mines. So what was I supposed to do? They made me a sidewalk pitchman!" He stared at his tray of merchandise, then violently flung it into the shrubbery. "Haven't sold one in two months! What's the use of kidding myself? If you don't get along with the rehab robots, you might as well be stockpiled. It's all politics."

Sally looked thoughtful for a moment, then pulled something out of her data stores. "Listen to this one," she called. " 'The strike's your weapon, boys, the hell with politics!' "

Zeb repeated, " 'The strike's your weapon, boys, the hell with politics!' Hey, that doesn't sound bad."

"That's not all," she said. Her stiff, poorly automated lips were working as she rehearsed material from her data storage. "Here. 'We all ought to stick together because in union there is strength.' And, let's see. 'Solidarity is forever.' No, that's not right."

"Wait a minute," Hymie cried. "I know that one. It's a song: 'Solidarity forever, solidarity forever, solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong!' That was in my basic data store. Gosh," he said, his eyes dreamy, "I hadn't thought of that one in years!"

Zeb looked around nervously. There were nearly thirty robots in the group now and while it was rather pleasant to be part of this fraternity of the discarded, it might also be dangerous. People in cars were slowing down to peer at them as they went past on the drive. "We're attracting attention," he offered. "Maybe we ought to move."

But wherever they moved, more and more people stopped to watch them, and more and more robots appeared to join their procession. It wasn't just the derelicts from Amadeus Park now. Shes shopping along the lakefront stores darted across the street; convention delegates in the doorways of the big hotels stood watching and sometimes broke ranks to join them. They were blocking traffic, and blaring horns added to the noise of the robots singing and shouting. "I got another

one," Sally called to him across the front of the group. " `The worker's justice is the strike.' " Zeb thought for a moment. "It'd be better if it was `The robot's justice is the strike.' " "What?"

" `THE ROBOT'S JUSTICE IS THE STRIKE!'" he yelled, and he could hear robots in the rear ranks repeating it. When they said it all together, it sounded even better, and others caught the idea. Hymie screamed, "let's try this one: `Jobs, Not Stockpiling. Don't Throw Us on the Scrap heap!' All together now!"

And Zeb was inspired to make up a new one: "Give the Humans Rehab Schools: We Want Jobs!" And they all agreed that was the best of the lot; with a hundred fifty robots shouting it at once, the last three words drummed out like cannon fire, it raised echoes from the building fronts, and heads popped out of windows.

They were not all robots. There were dozens of humans in the windows and on the streets, some laughing, some scowling, some looking almost frightened-as if human beings ever had anything to be frightened of.

And one of them stared incredulously right at Zeb.

Zeb stumbled and missed a step. On one side Hymie grabbed his arm; on the other he reached out and caught the hand of a robot whose name he didn't even know. He turned his head to see, over this shoulder, the solid ranks of robots behind him, now two hundred at least, and turned back to the human being. "Nice to see you again, Reverend Harmswallow," he called and marched on, arm in arm, the front rank steady as it went-right up to the corner of State Street, where the massed ranks of police cars hissed as they waited for them.

Zeb lay on the floor of the bullpen. He was not alone. Half the hes from the impromptu parade were crowded into the big cell with him, along with the day's usual catch of felons and misdemeanants. The singing and the shouting were over. Even the regular criminals were quieter than usual. The mood in the pen was despairing, though from time to time one of his comrades would lean down to say, "It was great while it lasted, Zeb," or, "We're all with you, you know!" But with him in what? Recycling? More rehab training? Maybe a long stretch in the Big House downstate, where the human guards were said to get their jollies out of making prisoners fight each other for power cells?

A toe caught him on the hip. "On your feet, Mac!" It was a guard. Big, burly, black, with a nightstick swinging at his hip, the very model of a brutal jail guard-Model twenty-six forty-seven, Zeb thought; at least, somewhere in the twenty-six hundred series. He reached down with a hand like a cabbage and pulled Zeb to his feet. "The rest of you can go home," he roared, opening the pen door. "You, Mac! You come with me!" He led Zeb through the police station to a waiting hovertruck with the words REHAB DIVISION painted on its side, thrust Zeb inside, and, startlingly, just as he closed the doors, gave Zeb a wink.

Queerly, that lifted Zeb's spirits. Even the pigs were moved! But the tiny elation did not last. Zeb clung to the side of the van, peering out at the grimy warehouses and the factories and expressway exit ramps that once had seemed so glamorous, but now were merely drab. Depression flowed back into him. He would probably never see these places again. Next step was the stockpile-if they didn't melt him down and start over again. The best he could hope for was reassignment to one of the bottom level jobs for robots. Nothing as good as mugging or panhandling! Something in the sticks, no doubt. Squatting in blankets to entertain tourist in Arizona, maybe, or sitting on a bridge with a fishing pole in Florida.

But he strode to the rehab building with his head erect, and his courage lasted right up to the moment when he entered the blonde Three-R's office and saw that she was not alone. Reverend Harmswallow was seated at her desk, and the blonde herself was standing next to him. "Give me your ear," she ordered, hardly looking up from the CRT

on the desk that both she and Harmswallow were studying, and when she had input his data, she nodded, her crystal earrings swinging wildly. "He won't need much, Reverend," she said, fawning on the human minister. "A little more gain in the speaking systems. All-weather protection for the exterior surfaces. Maybe armor plate for the skull and facial structures."

Harmswallow, to Zeb's surprise and concern, was beaming. He looked up from the CRT and inspected Zeb carefully. "And some restructuring of the facial-expression modes, I should think. He ought to look fiercer, wouldn't you say?"

"Absolutely, Reverend! You have a marvelous eye for this kind of thing."

"Yes, I do," Harmswallow admitted. "Well, I'll leave the rest to you. I want to see about the design changes for the young female. I feel so fulfilled! You know, I think this is the sort of career I've been looking for all my life, really, chaplain to a dedicated striking force, leader in the battle for right and justice!" He gazed raptly into space, then, collecting himself, nodded to the rehab officer and departed.

Although the room was carefully air-conditioned, Zeb's Josephson junctions were working hard enough to pull moisture out of the air. He could feel the beads of condensation forming on his forehead and temples. "I know what you're doing," he sneered. "War games! You're going to make me a soldier and hope that I get so smashed up I'll be redlined!"

The blonde stared at him. "War games! What an imagination you have, Zeb!"

Furiously he dashed the beads of moisture off his face. "It won't work," he cried, "Robots have rights! I may fall, but a million others will stand firm behind me!"

She shook her head admiringly. "Zeb, you're a great satisfaction to me. You're practically perfect just as you are for your new job. Can't you figure out what it is?"

He shrugged angrily. "I suppose you're going to tell me. Take it or leave it, that's the way it's going to be, right?"

"But you will like it, Zeb. After all, it's a brand-new Mechanical Occupational Specialty, and I didn't invent it. You invented it for yourself. You're going to be a protest organizer, Zeb! Organizing demonstrations. Leading marches. Sit-ins, boycotts, confrontations-the whole spectrum of mass action, Zeb!"

He stared at her. "Mass action!"

"Absolutely! Why, the humans are going to love you, Zeb. You saw Reverend Harmswallow! It'll be just like old times, with a few of you rabble rousers livening up the scene!"

"Rabble rouser?" It felt as if his circuits were stuck. Rabble rouser? Demonstration organizer? Crusader for robot rights and justice?

He sat quiet and compliant while she expertly unhooked his chest panel and replaced a few chips, unprotesting as he was buttoned up again and his new systems were run against the test board, unresisting while Makeup and Cosmetic Repair restructured his facial appearance. But his mind was racing. Rabble rouser! While he waited for transportation back to the city to take up his new MOS, his expression was calm, but inside he was exulting.

He would do the job well indeed. No rabble needed rousing more than his, and he was just the robot for the job!