



**REVOLT**  
**OF THE ROBOTS**  
By **ARTHUR R. TOFTE**



# Revolt Of The Robots

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## CHAPTER I - Tarra Greghold

DEEP within Tarra Greghold raged a fierce jealousy. The people of the year 2860 A. D. still felt the passions of primitive man, but they had learned not to show them. And Tarra, with her keen-eyed personal robot, Q9T9, watching from the corner, tried as well as she could to conceal her jealousy.

As she lay on the couch in her sun chamber, watching the three dimensional screen on the ceiling, Tarra was only an average girl of her time. The slight fuzz of hair on the top of her head was straw-colored and gave to her a look of baldness. Her chin was small, and her thin cheeks were pinched and wan. Her slender legs and arms and almost childlike body, under the sheer transparent covering of her gown showed scrawny and weak as she stretched wearily. Tarra Greghold was not beautiful, but by the standards of her day, neither was she especially unattractive.

Tarra was in love with young Jol Herrick, the tall slender biologist, who at that moment was giving his final lecture before his class at the School of Science. But in her jealousy she hardly listened to Herrick's words as she watched the faces of the girl students who gathered around him, watching him work. These girls, pale and thin and with fuzzy tops, were no prettier than herself, she felt, but among them must be the one Herrick was choosing instead of her.

Then, as she watched, the girl on the couch saw the young biologist, his smooth bald head glistening under the lights of the laboratory, take up a cage and hold the opening to the door of a large glass cage on the table. Out ran a white rat, and like the girls in the laboratory, Tarra too was forced to gasp with surprise. For the rat was the largest she had ever seen in any laboratory experiment—almost twice as large as a normal rat. Then, Tarra listened while Herrick explained.

“For a month,” he said in his soft high voice, “I have treated this rat with my new hormone compound, developed as you know from those new substances brought back from Venus by the Justin memorial expedition.”

Herrick proudly faced the students before him.

“Think what this means,” he said, “—a hormone that will increase the strength and size of animals. Who knows where this will lead!”

And as he said this, the young biologist looked at one of the girl students nearest him and smiled.

TARRA, unable to watch any longer, motioned to Q9T9 to shut off the connection. With a little bow and a slight scrape of his gears as he got into motion, the robot did as he was commanded.

“I, too, was watching,” Q9T9 said in the carefully worded manner of the servant robot kind. “If my mistress wishes a suggestion, I have one.”

“Speak up,” Tarra murmured wearily.

“I can see that you are unhappy, my mistress,” the robot said. “Perhaps my suggestion may help you.”

Tarra looked up from her couch at the four-foot high robot and smiled wanly.

“You love Dr. Herrick,” the robot said bluntly, and came a step closer to the girl on the couch.

“Yes, I love Dr. Herrick,” she admitted weakly. “But how can you help me?”

The robot’s metallic eyes sparkled eagerly.

“For seventeen generations I have served you and your maternal ancestors. Even in that short time of 400 years I have seen many changes. One of the strangest, as you know, was the law of fixed population whereby no more births were allowed than there were deaths the previous year, and the right to have children was granted by law only to certain ones. You are

jealous because Dr. Herrick has been chosen as a father in the coming year—and you are afraid that he will select one of his girl students as his mate.”

“Yes, that is true,” Terra murmured softly as she turned her head away.

Q9T9 hesitated only a moment and then continued.

“Dr. Herrick has made a great discovery, but he fails to see its importance. He has shown that he has found a hormone capable of increasing the strength and size of animals. The human race is dying, dying from inaction and weakness. But humans are animals. Why can’t these new hormones be used to develop a new and stronger race of humans?”

“But why should we be stronger and bigger?”

Tarra asked. “We have you robots to do our work.”

“Yes, we do the work,” Q9T9 replied, “but unless the human race is revitalized soon, there shall one day come a time when there will be no more of you. Weak flesh dies easily. You will all be dead. And then only the robots will be left.”

The girl shuddered and closed her eyes.

“Dr. Herrick does not yet realize the importance of his discovery,” Q9T9 said softly, “and should you go to him, offering yourself as the first human test...”

Tarra looked up at her robot with wonder.

“...When you are grown full and strong,” Q9T9 continued slyly, “he will not fail to love you and choose you for his mate.”

The girl on the couch moved her limbs and sat up slowly. The robot’s words had stirred her as nothing in her life had done before.

“If I could be the only one to be treated...” she whispered to herself.

“You can be,” the robot replied. “And if you make sure that you are the only one, there is no limit to what you can do. You can do anything you wish. Anything!”

## CHAPTER II - Decathlon

TARRA GREGHOLD looked at her robot servant closely, curiosity at last overcoming the jealous rage which had been poisoning her mind.

“What do you mean that if I am the only one to be treated I can do ‘anything’?” she asked.

Q9T9 stared with his expressionless eyes at his mistress and replied carefully, biting off each phrase mechanically.

“In 2449,” he began, “a little more than four hundred years ago, Julio Justin died. I was over a hundred years old at that time. You know, of course, that he was the last of the great dictators. With tremendous power and energy he came to be emperor of the world. Under him there were no nations, no different peoples. Under him was one nation, one people. He was the last vestige of barbaric man.

“But even in his time,” Q9T9 went on, “men were weak. It was Justin’s sorrow and regret that he had no son to whom to leave the world empire he had founded, for with his strong rule all wars were banished and peace was everywhere. He wanted to carry on his hope of building up the vitality of the human race. At his death he left a will. In his will he established a world-committee to rule his empire from this world-city of Shago—on one condition and with one possible exception.”

“And what was that?” Tarra asked.

“Justin said in his will, that if anyone could ever achieve the physical ability to break the decathlon records established in the barbaric Olympics of the 20th century, that person could inherit his kingdom and the rule of the world.”

Tarra stared at her robot. “And you think... she whispered huskily.

“Yes,” the robot replied. “If you go to Dr. Herrick and offer yourself as the first human test, you may one day rule the world.”

Tarra leaned back on the couch and laughed softly to herself. And as she laughed, plans formed in her head. Jealousy and love hunger filled her with a keen desire for a chance to show Jol Herrick that she was a woman to be respected... and loved.

“I shall go to him at once,” she said, and motioned to Q9T9 to help her rise from the couch. There was a smile on the girl’s face as she leaned on the robot and went with him out through a doorway to a little balcony overlooking the great worldcity of Shago. She allowed her servant to fasten her securely in her private transport car and then she touched a button that sent the little car hurtling through the maze of sky traffic along a directional beam that was clear and unobstructed.

In the three minute journey to Herrick’s laboratory,

Tarra saw nothing of the great domed glass sky overhead, built by Julio Justin’s genius 400 years before, nor of the tall orderly rows of glass cylinders, five hundred feet high, in which people lived, nor the flashing of cars hurtling past her on other directional beams. Tarra’s thoughts were all of the young biologist whom she loved.

After her car had come to rest on the narrow landing terrace jutting out from his laboratory on the 34th floor, she allowed Herrick’s robot servant, V6X3, to escort her in to the laboratory.

“Tarra,” the young scientist cried with surprise, “it is good to see you again. You are not angry with me any more, are you?”

The girl touched her lips to the young man’s smooth cheek and smiled.

“No, I am not angry now. I’ve come to offer amends. I heard your lecture this afternoon and I want to be the first to try your hormones.”

“But a girl!” he exclaimed. “I should experiment longer before I try it on a human being.”

“Think how it would bring fame to you,” she urged. “And think what it would do for the human race. You would be the most famous man in the world.”

“If I try it on a human, it should be on a man, not a woman,” he declared.

“It would bring me fame, too,” Tarra replied softly, coming closer to him and touching his soft hairless face with her hand. “For my sake, will you?”

Jol Herrick laughed a quick nervous laugh as he dismissed his fears. “All right,” he agreed. “We will start the treatments tomorrow. In three or four weeks we should know the results.”

“In three or four weeks we will be famous,” the girl declared. Then she called from the doorway, “I’ll be back in the morning.”

A FEW minutes later she was in her own sun chamber, Q9T9 removing the robe from her shoulders.

“I saw and heard all,” the robot said.

“Yes, and tomorrow I begin the treatments,” Tarra cried as she slipped wearily down on the couch.

And in the days and weeks that followed, during the process of being treated, Tarra Greghold began to fill out, to acquire a new voluptuous roundness in her body. Her eyes sparkled with new life. Her hair grew long and heavy and fell in a blond cascade around her broadening shoulders, supple with new, firm strength.

But Jol Herrick, in his eagerness to chart the changes in the girl, failed utterly to perceive the growing beauty of the girl. Tarra noted this with chagrin, but managed to conceal her feelings. The time would soon come, she felt, when he would be only too willing to come to her.

The thought of her ultimate triumph when he should finally realize how much superior she was to her sisters, and when his emotions would be awakened, as they must be, gave her

great anticipatory pleasure. In fact, as the days passed, she found herself experiencing the gamut of human emotions as she never had felt them—so intense, so strong, so vibrant.

And her brain worked amazingly well—so that she planned for long hours, of the future.

And as the days went by, something strange and fierce seized hold of her, a driving force that ate at her mind like some atavistic hunger. With the growing strength of her body, there came also a craving for power. It was like one of Herrick's huge rats gnawing at her vitals. She couldn't stop now.

One day, in Herrick's laboratory, she stood watching his slender body now so much weaker than her own. A smile of pleasure was on her lips.

"The treatments, you say, are over?" she asked softly.

Herrick looked up and smiled wearily. The strain of the past month had drained from him most of his normal strength and vitality.

"Yes, they are over," he replied as he looked proudly at her tensed body, now so round and full in the clinging gown she wore. "They are over . . . and a complete success. Perhaps now we can begin to restore all mankind to full vitality and strength, as soon as another expedition can be sent to Venus for more of this hormone compound."

"And in the meantime?" Tarra asked.

"Oh, I have enough of my compound in this refrigerator to take care of half a hundred persons."

"Half a hundred," Tarra smiled wryly. "But how will you convince the World Committee that your hormone is a success? Not by treating a half hundred?"

"No," Herrick nodded. "I think you are proof enough. When I show them how much superior you are to all other humans, they must believe."

Tarra laughed. Back in her sun chamber Q9T9 would be watching her and listening to her at this moment. Now was the time for her to strike her first blow.

“I have been hoping you would say that,” she said. “I have been preparing for it. For weeks I have been training myself to do various athletic feats. Have you ever heard of the ancient Olympics of the barbaric 20th century? They had a series of events they called the decathlon, to discover which was the best all ’round athlete—running, jumping, throwing. The records set in 1964 have never been beaten. In the 21st century, as you probably know, the Olympics were dropped. Now, I believe I can break the Decathlon record set in 1964!”

Jol Herrick looked at the girl with surprise and nodded.

“It would be dramatic,” he said with a start. “The World Committee would have to believe then.”

“Why not call a meeting of the Committee tomorrow afternoon?” Tarra suggested. “Hold it in the great central park in the city. I shall be there at fifteen o’clock.”

And as Jol Herrick opened the door of his laboratory for the girl to leave, his hand was trembling and his pale blue eyes were glistening with moisture.

“Tomorrow will be the greatest day of my life,” he said.

And a few minutes later, when Tarra had returned to her apartment and was greeted by her robot slave, she too threw back her head and said, “Tomorrow will be the greatest day of my life.”

And then she looked at the little being before her and added, “tonight you will go to Jol Herrick’s laboratory and destroy all the hormone compound which he has there. I want no rival.”

Q9T9’s cold metallic eyes sparked with electric intensity. “My mistress,” he said, “is proving that she is worthy of being ruler of the world.”

### **CHAPTER III - Ruler of the World**

TARRA GREGHOLD sat quietly in her transport car with her robot slave as she watched with amusement the arrival of the World Committee at the meeting place in the great park. Old and feeble, most of them were. They arrived singly, each with his private robot supporting his tottering form. They were thin and weak with deep sunken eyes and owlwise faces, and hairless, shiny pates.

Tarra, from the shelter of her car, watched Jol Herrick talk to the forty or more members of the assembled Committee. She saw him display one of his huge white rats. She saw him talk earnestly and fervidly as old Dr. Netherstone, head of the Committee, shook a bony finger under the young man's nose as though challenging him to prove what he had said.

Then she saw Herrick turn in her direction and motion to her to come forth from her private car.

Tarra stepped into view, and heard the cry of amazement that went up from the members of the Committee. She smiled to herself as she realized what a sensation she must be to their pale eyes—like a woman out of some ancient history book, an Amazon direct from the war-filled 20th century or the even more primitive periods. And as she walked straight toward old Dr. Netherstone with mighty strides, she saw the old philosopher blink and shake his head with wonder.

“My name is Tarra Greghold,” she said to the Committee in a strong, clear, vibrant voice. “I propose to prove to you that I am as strong as Dr. Herrick has just now told you. My robot has in his right hand a timepiece such as the ancients used, with the same time intervals that they used. Distances have been marked off in the park here, as you note. I now further propose to attempt to break the decathlon records set in the Olympics of 1964.”

Tarra quietly waited, the smile still on her face, as Jol Herrick quickly explained to the members of the Committee what the Olympics were and what the Decathlon events consisted of.

Then the girl nodded to her robot, and began one by one, to go through the events of the ancient Decathalon, running faster, jumping better, and throwing farther than any human had ever done before. At the conclusion of the extraordinary performance, the members of the Committee feebly gathered around her, croaking their hoarse congratulations. Only Dr. Netherstone shook his head in doubt.

TARRA allowed Q9T9 to drape a robe around her bare shoulders. Then she took a paper from her robot and held it out to the tall, angular head of the Committee.

“Doctor,” she said quietly, “this paper is a copy of Julio Justin’s will written in 2449, just before he died and left the world-empire to the Committee. Surely you know of it?”

Dr. Netherstone lifted his eyes to the girl who towered over him and at Jol Herrick who stood beside her, and a look of sudden fear swept across his thin face.

“What does this mean?” the old philosopher asked.

“It means that I have just carried out the terms of Julio Justin’s will—and I hereby claim the rulership of the world. For over four hundred years you have ruled by this will. I now dissolve the World Committee—for always. Gentlemen, I am your new ruler by Julio Justin’s own will!”

Tarra looked with continued amusement at the confusion her words had caused among the feeble members of the group. She saw with pleasure Herrick’s complete bewilderment. And Dr. Netherstone was squinting up at her as though he thought her mad. Here was something, she knew, that these weak old men were unable to answer. She knew that in this orderly world where everything went by rote and right that her legal claim was answerable. She had fulfilled the obligations of Justin’s will and centuries of idle life and easy ways had made the entire human race an easy prey to her physical superiority and stronger will.

Tarra Greghold laughed an arrogant, disdainful laugh. Then she turned to Q9T9 and said, “Take me to the World Conference Hall. That will be my temporary palace until I can have a new one built.”

In the days that followed, the strong hand of Tarra Greghold became all important through the huge world city of Shago which she now dominated. Robots and humans alike were mobilized to do her bidding. Although no new building work had been done for over four hundred years, Tarra ordered that a new palace be built for her on the grounds of the great central park in the middle of the city—a palace such as even Julio Justin had never imagined.

It was not to be circular as were all the other structures in the city, but cone-shaped with the top pinnacle to be her living quarters. And the glass to be used was not the semi-transparent material of the other buildings, but an opaque glass that admitted light and ultra violet rays of the sun and that allowed her to look out without being seen—a glass whose use had been known as early as the 20th century.

DURING the first month, the various men and women who were ordered to the task of working on the new palace fell in their tracks. Some of them died of burst hearts, utterly incapable of the sustained physical effort which Tarra was now demanding of them.

And Tarra, the new lust for power seizing her, ordered that all robots be put under her will. She commanded that each person who did not want to work on the palace to come to her and voluntarily give up his private robot, turning over to Tarra the will control that held the robot in bondage.

Soon the girl was in control of the entire robot population of the great world city—nearly ten million. Ten million robots marched to her command. In the meantime, tens of thousands of humans died from inability to take care of themselves. But the palacework went on. Robots worked by day and by night, ceaselessly raising the palace, level upon level.

And then, one evening shortly after it was finished, Tarra stood upon the topmost point of her towering palace and looked out over the strangely motionless city below her. Q9T9 stood beside her.

“These humans of yours are weak things,” Q9T9’s voice box clicked. “The city is too good for them.”

Tarra looked down at her little metal slave and nodded.

“Exactly,” she agreed, “the city is too good for these puny humans. They die like flies when they have to work.”

“Why not outcast them to the great dry plains outside the city’s dome and let them find their own shelter?” the robot suggested eagerly, his eyes sparkling.

“The city is of no use empty,” Tarra replied.

“There are ten million robots in the city. They would give your city life and energy.”

“Life and energy!” Tarra repeated as she looked up through the transparent dome overhead at the night sky. “That is what I admire. I could be ruler of a kingdom of deathless robots. I could achieve anything then—anything!”

“And there would be death to all humans?” Q9T9 asked slyly.

“There would be death to all humans,” Tarra replied. Then she paused as a new thought struck her. “But when I died, who would lead the robots?”

Q9T9 replied with care. “Before you died, you could command all robots to obey me, releasing your will control to me. Then I would be ruler until the rust of eternity struck at our vitals.”

Tarra Greghold looked down at her robot slave suspiciously. “I’ll allow no ambitions, mechanical one until my normal life has ended.”

Then she sighed as she looked out over the vast city, thinking of puny, weak Jol Herrick for whom she had made all this effort, “If only there were a man worthy of me in the whole

world . . . perhaps then there could be a race of humans worthy of inheriting this empire and carrying on my work.”

But, as she spoke, Q9T9’s eyes sparked maliciously.

#### **CHAPTER IV - The Bearded Stranger**

IN the terrible days that followed when Tarra Greghold’s 20th century barbaric ruthlessness was at its height, she called meetings of thousands of humans at a time and had them run through violent exercises. Those that dropped from burst blood vessels and ruptured hearts were hauled away by robots and dumped into incinerators. The survivors dragged themselves wearily back to their couches.

Tarra knew that the people feared her and hated her, but with the new power and strength in her own limbs came also a cruel lust for torture. As her body had returned to the primitive state of the 20th century, so had her mind reverted to the original passions of that mad, sentient period. The men—weak, hairless, irresolute, bending to her will—aroused in her only the utmost disdain.

Then one day it happened—

Word came to her that a man had been seized far to the west of the city by a wandering group of her robots searching through the ancient ruins of a semibarbaric city of the 21st century. But the strange thing was that the man was taller than other men, bigger of frame, stronger, and he had long black hair on his head, and he was dressed in tattered rags.

When Tarra Greghold heard this news from Q9T9, she tried to hide from him the sudden leap of her pounding heart, the glow of eagerness that flushed her cheeks. Something inside her seemed to tell that at last he was come—the man she had been yearning for, the man who would be a fit mate for her. She ordered him brought to her at once.

A few hours later, Tarra stood in her central chamber in the apex of her conical palace, with Q9T9 at her side, the two of them staring at the great gold elevator doors that were slowly opening. Through the doors came a small file of robots, bringing with them in chains such a man as Tarra had never seen before.

He was taller by half a head than she. His black hair reached almost to his shoulders. Fierce, dark eyes stared back at her insolently. And Tarra could see between the tatters of his clothes the bulging muscles of his arms and thighs, supple and smooth with youth. This man, she knew, was the man she wanted for her mate! Tarra smiled. It was the first real smile that had softened her face since she had taken Jol Herrick's hormones. And as she smiled, she motioned to the muscular one to come closer. Then she ordered the robots from the room.

"What is your name?" she asked. "And where do you come-from?"

For a long moment, the huge man stood silently gazing back into her eyes.

"Call me Jork," he replied in a deep, rumbling voice. Then he looked at her full, rounded figure. "And I come from the same place you do."

"But that is impossible," Tarra replied. "I have never heard of a man like you. I know there are no more like me. I am the strongest person in the world."

Jork looked at her. "Except for me," he said coldly.

Tarra's eyes narrowed and a quickening flush came to her cheeks. Slowly her fists clenched and unclenched. The force of Herrick's hormones had given her tremendous powers of courage and love of combat. And here before her stood, for the first time since she had become a giantess among humans, another being worthy of battle with her. Intuitively she felt that she had to test his strength, to see if he really were fit to be her mate and to help her start a new race of super-humans.

"I am Tarra, ruler of the world—because I am the strongest," she cried with passion as she hit the chained man across the face with the back of her hand.

JORK never blinked an eye nor moved a muscle. Instead he continued to glare back insolently at her. Suddenly the girl leaned toward him, her whole manner softened. She caressed his hair with loving and tender fingers.

“You have beautiful long hair,” she said softly. “You and I were meant for each other. The rest of humanity is not worth saving, but you and I—we have a duty and a destiny. I am ruler of all this great world city. You shall be my consort prince. You shall help me rule a kingdom of robots.”

The man stirred restlessly under her caresses. “And what if I refuse?” he asked disdainfully. Tarra stepped back away from him and shook her head. “You wouldn’t dare. I am ruler of Shago and nothing can keep me from what I want. And I want you.”

“And if I accept,” the brawny one’s voice rumbled. Tarra smiled. “We shall be the only human beings in a world of robots. Ten million of them, there are, to do our bidding. There is nothing we can’t have, nothing we won’t be able to do.

“First we shall kill off all human beings—they are of no use. Then we shall set out to do all the things the human race has never been able to do. Perhaps we can set up regular communication with Venus. Not just one trip like the Justin Memorial Expedition— but a regular service. Perhaps we can wage war— real war—with the Venusians and bring them under our control. They are probably more worthy of living than our earthly humans. We might re-colonize earth with them, flesh and blood slaves to wait on us and our robots. We shall build more and greater cities like Shago and make use of all those waste lands which history tells us once were fertile and teeming with people.

“Some day,” she continued, “I shall be empress of a greater world than has ever been, and you will be my first assistant.”

Jork grinned with sardonic disdain.

“I too, know something of history,” he said. “And if I remember correctly, the barbaric 20th century was full of men — dictators they called them — who were as mad as you. They thought they could kill and pillage and dominate their world as you now want to dominate yours. But history also tells us that they had their short day, and it was soon over and that even Julio Justin was but a brief throwback to that day. And now you come, you with your return of the barbaric lust—and all because of Herrick’s hormones!”

Tarra recoiled with surprise. “What do you know about Herrick’s hormones?” she cried

“What do I know about them?” Jork replied bitterly. “I know everything about them, for I am Jol Herrick!”

## **CHAPTER V - The Robot Army**

“YOU—Jol Herrick!” Tarra cried in amazement. “But I had all your compound destroyed. You can’t be Herrick.”

The huge man squared his broad muscular shoulders.

“Yes, you destroyed all my compound as I found when I returned from that test in the park. But you forgot the rats that I treated. I made new compound from those rats. Then I went away from the city. I treated myself. I wanted to find a way to destroy you. Then your robots found and brought me here.”

The man lifted the heavy gold chains that held his arms together.

“These may hold me now,” he said coldly, “but some day I shall destroy you.”

Tarra sank back on a couch. Everything that she had hoped and yearned for was slipping away from her. Then she sprang to her feet and rang for her robot slave.

“I’ll make you surrender to me,” she said fiercely. “I’ll have you beaten and tortured until you are ready to come to me on your hands and knees.”

The doors of the golden elevator clicked behind her, and she turned to see Q9T9 looking at them with a sly glint in his eyes.

“You rang for me?” the robot asked.

Tarra nodded toward Herrick. “Have you known all along who he is?”

Q9T9 bowed slightly. “Yes, my mistress. I thought it would give you pleasure to find out for yourself. I am only four hundred years old, you know, and I am not accustomed to your present 20th century mental and physical condition.”

Tarra looked from her robot to Herrick.

“Take him,” she commanded, “to the torture room on the 77th floor. I’ll show him a few samples of the ancient forms of torture.”

A few minutes later, Q9T9 was back, bending with his mechanical bow to her.

“Your man,” he clicked out the words, “is fastened to the rack of the ancient Inquisition. He awaits your pleasure.”

“You have done well,” Tarra said distractedly. Then she turned and looked at her robot closely.

“Once you made a suggestion, mechanical one, that brought me to the rule of the world. Perhaps you have a suggestion now that could win this man to me.”

Q9T9 stood motionless, his glass lens eyes staring straight before him.

“Yes, I have a suggestion, my mistress,” he replied.

“What is it?”

Q9T9 stiffened slightly as though there were an actual physical flesh and blood surge in him to increase his stature. Then he replied—

“As ruler of the world you can never win this man. No man’s love can be won on the torture rack. It is as a woman that you must win him. For as he is the only man in the world fit

to be your mate, so you are the only woman in the world worthy of him. Go to him as a woman, offering him your love and an equal share in your rule.”

BUT I can't do that. I am the ruler—I shall never give that up!”

“Of course not,” Q9T9 insisted. “But you can appear to. Give me temporary rule over the will-controls of the robots. You can then go to him, not as world ruler but as a woman. In the meantime I will wait for you to return. The plan is the only one that will succeed.”

Tarra Greghold shook her head doubtfully. But she walked over to the instrument-panel on the gold desk, touched a button that tuned her in to every one of the ten million robots in the world city.

“Hear me, robots of Shago,” she said. “Until I return you will take your orders from Q9T9. Your will-controls for that time will be under his command.”

Then Tarra walked over to the gold elevator. But before she entered the cage, she faced her robot slave again.

“And just to make certain that you do not play me false, ambitious one, I retain my will-control over you and I order you not to leave this room until I return.”

The girl stepped back into the elevator. It was not until the doors were closing behind her that she saw Q9T9 hurrying to the gold desk to touch the button that would put him in contact with the ten million robots. A moment of suspicion seized her, but the doors closed and she dropped in an instant to the 77th floor, doubt and fear momentarily forgotten.

As she left the elevator and walked past the guard of robots who stood outside the double-thick doors of the ancient torture room, she noticed their rapt attention as though they were listening to a message.

She motioned to one of the robots to open the doors for her. He didn't move—an unthinkable failure to obey! With a gasp of exasperation, Tarra seized the door handles and

drew it open. Then as she stepped into the torture room, she turned and looked at the group of robots.

They were marching stiffly toward her.

“STOP where you are,” she cried.

The robots marched closer. Something was wrong. Then she realized that she no longer had hold over their will-controls. Could Q9T9 really have played her false?

The thought struck her like a blow, sending her reeling back into the room. Quickly she bolted the doors on the inside. Had all this scheme merely been a plan of her own robot’s to gain control over her?

In her bewildered mind, the pieces of the puzzle began to fit together—Q9T9’s first suggestion about world power, his advice to kill off all humans, his idea of releasing the will-controls of ten million robots to him. It was all clear to her now.

Not seeing the man stretched grotesquely on the torture rack, Tarra ran to the side of the room and looked out through the glass walls at the scene far below. Thousands and tens of thousands of robots were marching steadily toward the conical tower. From all directions they came, marching in that queer strained, not quite stiff way of theirs. And on they came, crowding on each other’s heels, millions of them, coming at the bidding and command of her own robot slave, Q9T9.

For the first time she noticed the man on the rack. She went over and released his bonds.

When he had rubbed his arms and legs and restored their circulation, Tarra took him over to look down on the sight in the area around the conical tower. Millions of robots were now there, milling around, waiting for further command from Q9T9.

She pointed down. “And like a fool, I gave control of the robot army to my personal robot, Q9T9. He has used me to get the rule of the world himself. You’ve got to help me get out of this.”

The huge man beside her smiled wryly. “A while ago you spoke of torturing me. Now you beg my help. Why should I help?”

Tarra drew herself to her full height and looked Herrick full in the eyes. But before she could speak, he seized her by the shoulders and held her firmly at arm’s length from him.

“When you were in the saddle,” he said to her, his lips narrowing into a fine line, “it was all right for you to kill off thousands of poor, weak human beings. That satisfied your hunger for power and your appetite for cruelty. But now, when your own life is in danger, you beg me to help you, to save you.

“Listen closely,” he rumbled from deep in his beard, “I’ve waited for this moment ever since that day in the park when you broke old Doctor Nether stone’s heart. You got yourself into this mess—now get yourself out of it!”

## **CHAPTER VI - The Crusaders’ Battle Axe**

TARRA said not a word as she recoiled back from the vehemence of the young scientist’s accusation. Further and further she shrank back into herself. All the months of rule and power began to dissolve into a mist as though it had never happened. All the urging in her body for ruthless rule lost itself in a realization that she was in love with this strange, powerful, man who had the peaceful eyes of Jol Herrick but the voice and body of a Viking god. This man suddenly became more important to her than anything she had ever known before, more important even than the death that waited for her outside the door.

Without realizing quite what she was doing, she threw her arms around Herrick’s neck and pressed her lips to his.

“If you won’t help me to live,” she cried, “then help me to die.”

Herrick pushed her away from him with violence.

The girl threw herself at his feet. “This room is filled with instruments of torture weapons of death and of warfare out of the ancient days,” Tarra sobbed. “Choose any of them and kill me. That is all I deserve.”

Herrick stepped back away from her just as a heavy thud sounded at the great golden doors. He looked at the doors and then around at the haphazard collection of ancient relics that filled the room.

Disregarding the girl completely, he walked around picking up a device here and there. A huge battle axe dating from the 13th century crusade made his eyes light with pleasure as he swung it in a half arc about his head. Another queer metal object drew his attention. He held it awkwardly in his hands, examining it carefully. Touching a certain spot, he was startled when the device roared into action and he saw a row of neat round holes appear in the wood rack across the room. He looked at it closer.

He picked up another object. Aiming it away from himself, he touched a series of knobs and levers and suddenly an electric flame shot forth. This, too, he knew was a weapon of ancient times.

Tarra, from her place on the floor, watched the man go from object to object. Finally he turned and came toward her.

“What chance have we if they break down the doors?” he asked her.

Tarra shook her head. “Our only hope is to get back up to the tower room where Q9T9 is. When I gave him power over the will-controls of the robots, I retained my power over his will-control and I forbade him from leaving that room. As long as he can keep me from him, he is master of the robots. If we can win our way to him, I can get back the will-controls over the robots.”

HERRICK looked at her and smiled. “For the first time in my life I face a fight. And I find I like the idea. If I must die, I want to die fighting. And with these strange weapons . . . perhaps we may win.”

At that instant, the girl screamed as the gold doors crashed in and robots tumbled into the room.

“Stay close behind me,” Herrick ordered, and he swung around to face the oncoming robots.

With a roar of joy, he pressed the trigger on the machine gun and sent a whiplash of bullets that cut down the front ranks of the mechanical beings. It was chaos at once—with those that were shot down still trying to advance although their lower propelling mechanisms had failed. It was like legless men trying to walk. And behind them pushed hordes more of robots, blindly advancing on the couple in the room.

But soon the sheer weight of the metal robots themselves, pushing forward on the front immobile ranks, began to crush those in front and in the middle. There was a steady crunch of breaking metal as the mechanical beings kept pushing forward hopelessly against those in front, even before the machine gun was empty and had to be thrown aside.

Tarra smiled up at Herrick as he turned to look at her. “Rather horrible, isn’t it?” she said.

Herrick looked across the mass of metal robots, and the girl could see him grinning to himself.

“If we get up on top that table over there,” he said to her, “we can jump over on to the bodies of the and walk on top of them as far as the elevators. The central cage is empty, I can see.”

Tarra and Herrick leaped lightly to the table top. But before climbing out over the sea of robots that stretched before them to the doors, Herrick picked up the battle axe and the

electric flame thrower. With these under his arm, he helped Tarra in jumping from one robot head to the next, like crossing a brook on small stones.

Once in the gold elevator, the two breathed easier. Up they shot to the apex of Tarra's conical palace.

"If I can but come face to face with Q9T9, he will have to obey me," Tarra stated. "He is under my will-control the moment I face him."

As the elevator stopped and the doors slid quietly open, Herrick stood firm, his flame thrower ready.

Tarra screamed as a score of robots came rushing into the small cage, giving the two no chance to get out into the room beyond. With the fighting instinct of a cornered animal, Herrick let loose the jet of flame from the flame throwing machine.

There was a sudden flash and the robot directly in front of Herrick sank to his knees and fell forward. As his head slipped by Herrick, the metal seared a path across his arm—the robot's head was red hot!

Again the flame roared forth with the force of a bolt; of lightning, and again, and again. And each time, a robot fell, his metal mechanisms fused together in the terrific heat of the electric flame.

Then, suddenly, the flame throwing machine was dead . . . useless. And in that same instant, before the rest of the robots could corner them in the cage, the two leaped out into the room.

TARRA shrank back behind Herrick as she saw the remaining half dozen robots advancing on them—coldly, unemotionally, ruthlessly, obeying a command they had no capacity to disobey.

She saw Herrick hunch his powerful shoulders in eagerness. Then she watched as he leaped forward, the great huge battle axe swinging in a vast circle over his head. And she heard his cry of joy as the axe crunched deep into the metal brain pan of the first robot.

From behind him, she watched the fierce battle that ensued. Once the robots had Herrick almost surrounded and were coming at him from all sides. But the next instant he swung the axe low, like some ancient Crusader cutting a swathe through the lines of the Saracens. With the last swing of the great two bladed axe, Herrick brought down one of the two remaining robots, but the ancient shaft broke in his hands.

The last robot came unswerving toward Herrick and the huge man spread his legs apart to meet the rush of the other. With his bare hands, he seized the robot and bent it over. The muscles on his back and arms stood out as he struggled with the metal being, but gradually inch by inch, the robot began to bend, the metal plates cracking under the terrific strain. When Herrick stood erect, he turned and faced Tarra, blood flowing from a dozen or more wounds. A smile was on his lips.

“I never knew what joy it is to fight,” he said.

Then the two humans, remembering what they had come for, stepped around the elevator shaft and approached the gold desk at which Q9T9 was standing.

“Order the robots to halt where they are,” commanded Tarra, facing the robot.

Stiffly Q9T9 bowed and gave the order. The dull thunder of moving robots below ceased and all became quiet.

“Now disconnect your metal brain,” Tarra went on relentlessly.

The robot’s hands moved to obey.

“No!” snapped Herrick suddenly. “Tell him to stop.”

With a question in her eyes Tarra obeyed, turning to Herrick in puzzlement. He met her gaze levelly.

“Tell him to give me absolute control of the robots,” he demanded.

For an instant Tarra stared, then obediently she gave the command. “I am yours to rule as you will,” she murmured softly, “and to prove it I surrender also the will-control of Q9T9.”

With a gleaming exultance in his eyes, Herrick snatched her to him and planted a kiss on her lips. Then he strode to the instrument panel, threw the switch and spoke with firm decision.

“Robots of Shago, all of you, disconnect your brain controls!”

Beside him, Q9T9’s metallic arms obeyed, in company with every other robot in Shago. As the last wire was severed, his metal body crashed to the floor, a limp heap of cold metal. From the floors below, and from the street outside, came a great crash of collapsing metal bodies, then silence; silence that was not disturbed.

“The new Adam and Eve will need no robots,” said Herrick masterfully as he took Tarra into his arms.