

The Helpful Robots

Version 0.9B

by William Jones

Based on: The Helpful Robots by Robert Shea

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THE HELPFUL ROBOTS

Scene: Introduction

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(ATTENTION ACTORS: [TO SELF] IS NOT SET IN STONE.
PRODUCTION MAY REQUIRE IT TO CHANGE TO [FX HEAD] PLEASE
RECORD THE LINES BOTH WAYS.)
(THEME MUSIC FADE IN.)

ANNOUNCER

They had come to pass judgment on him. He had violated
their law -- willfully, ignorantly, and very
deliberately.

ANNOUNCER

Production Z brings you "The Helpful Robots" based on a
short story by Robert J Shea.
(THEME MUSIC FADE OUT)

Scene: 1

(OUTDOORS ON A DISTANT PLANET. THE WIND IS BLOWING
THROUGH CROPS AND TREES. VARIOUS ROBOT WORKING
SOUNDS AND BIRDS IN THE BACKGROUND)
(ROBOTS WILL PRODUCE MULTIPLE SOUNDS BASED ON
MOVEMENTS)

ROBOT 1

Our people will be arriving to visit us today --

ROD RANKIN

[INTERRUPTING] Shut up!
(BACKGROUND SOUND - FAR OFF ENGINE)

ROBOT 1

Our people --
(BACKGROUND SOUND - ENGINE GETTING CLOSER)

ROD RANKIN

I don't care about your fool people [PAUSE] That damned
new neighbor of mine is coming over here again.

ROD RANKIN

Get all your people together and go hide in the wood,
fast.

ROBOT 1

It is not right. We were made to serve all.

ROD RANKIN

Well, there are only a hundred of you, and I'm not
sharing you with anybody.

(CONTINUED)

ROBOT 1

It is not right.

ROD RANKIN

Don't talk to me about what's right, you're built to follow orders, nothing else. I know a thing or two about how you robots work. You've got one law, to follow orders, and until that neighbor of mine sees you to give you orders, you work for me. Now get into those woods and hide till he goes away.

ROBOT 1

We will go to greet those who visit us today.

ROD RANKIN

Alright, alright, scram!

(ROBOTS MARCH INTO FOREST)

(BACKGROUND SOUND - ENGINE IS CLOSE NOW / TIRE SOUNDS.)

SOUND: CAR COMING TO STOP

SOUND: CAR DOOR OPEN / CLOSE

SOUND: FOOT STEPS GETTING CLOSER

ROD RANKIN

Hi, Barrows.

BARROWS

Hello, see your crop's coming along pretty well. Can't figure how you do it. You've got acres and acres to tend, far's I can see, and I'm having a hell of a time with one little piece of ground. I swear you must know something about this planet that I don't know.

ROD RANKIN

Just scientific farming. Look, you come over here for something, or just to gab? I got a lot of work to do.

BARROWS

[WORRIED] Them brown beetles is at my crop again. Thought you might know some way of getting rid of them.

ROD RANKIN

Sure. Pick them off, one by one. That's how I get rid of them.

BARROWS

Why, man, you can't walk all over these miles and miles of farm and pick off every one of them beetles. You must know another way.

(CONTINUED)

ROD RANKIN

[INDIGNANT] I'm telling you all I feel like telling you. You going to stand here and jaw all day? Seems to me like you got work to do.

BARROWS

Rankin, I know what you were back in the Terran Empire, and that you came out beyond the border to escape the law. **[PAUSE]** Seems to me, though, that even a outlaw, or any man, would be willing to help his only neighbor out on a lone planet like this. You might need help yourself -- sometime.

ROD RANKIN

[ANGRY] You keep your thoughts about my past to yourself. Be smart and let me alone. You've got a wife and a whole bunch of kids on that farm of yours to worry about.

BARROWS

I'm going. **[SPITTING]**

SOUND: WALKING TO CAR

SOUND: CAR OPENING / CLOSEING

SOUND: ENGINE START

SOUND: ENGINE PULL AWAY

(BACKGROUND SOUND: SPACE SHIP HUMMING NOISE)

ROD RANKIN

[TO SELF] A Ship? **[PAUSE]** Police? This planet was outside the jurisdiction of the Terran Empire. When I cracked that code and made off with all those credits, I came here, because the planet was part of something called the Clearchan Confederacy. No extradition treaties or anything. Perfectly safe.

ROD RANKIN

[LOUD] He's gone. Back to work robots!

ROD RANKIN

[TO SELF] There had been a hundred robots waiting when I landed. Where they came from I don't know, but I know how to handle robots. Their labor is what built this farm! At this rate I will be a plantation owner before long.

ROD RANKIN

[LOUD] Robots, get back to work! Obey me!

(CONTINUED)

ROD RANKIN

[TO SELF] The robot said they'd expected visitors. Must be the Clearchan Confederacy visiting this outpost. That must be where that ship is from. Is that good or bad?

ROD RANKIN

[LOUD] I order you to return!

ROD RANKIN

[TO SELF] From everything I've read, and from what the robots had told me, they were probably more robots. That was good, because I knew how to handle robots and I could use more workers.

SOUND: SPACESHIP LANDING

(BACKGROUND SOUND - ROBOTS MARCHING)

ROD RANKIN

[TO SELF] Three extra robots coming and they're grey. Well I better establish who is bass right from the start

ROD RANKIN

About time! You three stop right there! The rest of you back in the fields.

(BACKGROUND SOUND - MASS MARCHING STOPS BUT THE THREE KEEP COMING)

SOUND: 3 ROBOTS (DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHERS) MARCHING

ROD RANKIN

Stop!
(STILL MARCHING)

ROD RANKIN

[FX HEAD] Damn it, I don't have my gun.

SOUND: ROBOTS PUTTING ARMS AND HANDS OUT TO GRAB ROD RANKIN

SOUND: STRUGGLING AGAINST ROBOTS HOLD

ROD RANKIN

What in the hell do you think you are doing. Get your hands off of me. That's an order!

SOUND: STRUGGLING AGAINST ROBOTS HOLD

ROBOT 4

We have come to pass judgment on you. You have violated our law.

(CONTINUED)

ROD RANKIN

What do you mean? The only law robots have is to obey orders.

ROBOT 3

It is true that the robots of your Terran Empire and these simple workers here must obey orders. But they are subject to a higher law, and you have forced them to break it. That is your crime.

ROD RANKIN

What crime?

SOUND: STRUGGLING AGAINST ROBOTS HOLD

ROBOT 4

We of the Clearchan Confederacy are a race of robots. Our makers implanted one law in us. We have carried our law to all the planets we have colonized. In obeying your orders, these workers were simply following that one law. You our to be taken to our capital and there be imprisoned and treated for your crime.

ROD RANKIN

What law? What crime?

SOUND: STRUGGLING AGAINST ROBOTS HOLD

ROBOT 2

Our law, is, Help thy neighbor.

SCENE: 2

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(THEME MUSIC FADE IN)

ANNOUNCER

I hope you enjoyed this adaptation of "The Helpful Robots" by Robert J Shea. Adapted to audio theater by Bill Jones. Produced in association with Production Z.
(END CREDITS AND NOTES)