

Proxy

By Jason Mallory Extended Ending

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Midway through Henry Planter's second term as President a TV News reporter says, "Today is a historical day, the first ever Department of Robot Labor public vote. Citizens are casting voter ballots on what jobs and uses robots will be legally allowed to perform... So be sure to get to a DRL location, and cast your vote for that."

Joe and Mr. Brown pull a truck into a spot in the crowded parking lot of the new Department of Robotic Labor building. Masses of people have turned out for the first ever DRL vote. Mr. Brown waits in line, and eventually enters a booth to fill out his ballot.

The ballot has a variety of questions designed to give parameters on what jobs robots will be allowed to perform. *Please vote 'yes' or 'no' to each position as to whether you would like robotics to perform the job, or not:*

*Police Officer,
Psychologist,
Judge,
Teacher,
Babysitter,
Caretaker,
Manager,
Stock Broker,
Soldier,
Food Handler,
Janitor,
Cashier,*

etc...

Mr. Brown goes through the list checking any position of authority ‘No’, and any mundane position that he would not want to do with a ‘Yes’. Before the new law was amended he would have checked them all ‘no’, because it meant people would not be able to make a living from those jobs if robots worked them, but now, the DRL sends every citizen a paycheck on behalf of the robots that are doing the work on their behalf, so it doesn’t matter if people do the jobs or not.

On the second page of the ballot the questions become more specific to his exact share of the robotic labor force: *What top three positions, job performances, or non-profit efforts would you like your share of the robotic labor force to work on?* Mr. Brown scratches his head for a moment and fills it in:

- 1) Health Care,
- 2) Janitorial Services,
- 3) Environmental Work.

Toward the bottom of the ballot the questions become more personal: *Are you a business owner? How many people do you employ? Would you be interested in using robotic labor? If your business income level qualifies, would you accept free robotic labor?* Mr. Brown says ‘yes’ to the last one, then slips the ballot through the slot, and heads back to the truck to meet Joe already waiting for him.

They pull the truck out of the parking lot, and drive out of the city and into the countryside, where both of them seem to be able to think better.

Joe asks his father, “How did you go about answering all the questions?”

“I marked ‘No’ to anything giving a robot any authority, and ‘Yes’ to anything I wouldn’t want to do myself, like a janitor, or wiping an old person’s ass.”

“I agree with the old person’s ass part, too.”

“Or anything that a robot can do better, like be a steady hand in a surgery or something.”

“Makes sense. What about that part at the end, about getting a free robot for your business. It sounded like we could get one for the farm if we wanted.”

“I marked ‘Yes’ to that.”

“Would you really let a robot work on the farm? It makes me a bit nervous.”

“Well I’m not as young as I used to be, and working makes *me* a bit sore and tired. Plus in a few more years I might need it to help me wipe my ass, and I don’t want to have to ask you.”

“Well, thank you for that consideration.”

“It might be nice to have someone besides you to boss around. And who knows what they might want to do anyhow. I figured marking ‘Yes’ would keep my options open.”

An employee at a newly rebuilt Circos Robot Manufacturing Plant drinks hot chocolate and chats with another worker while he waits for a precession of robots to

march into the back of a truck. He then gets into the passenger seat and looks over at the robot sitting behind the steering wheel. The man gives a nod, and the robot starts the truck and begins driving it to The Brown Ranch.

The truck stops at the foot of the spike strip on the entrance road of the ranch. Joe and Mr. Brown are standing there to greet them.

“Hello, is one of you Mr. Brown?” says the man as he steps down from the truck.

“That would be me.”

“Great. I have a paper for you to sign, and then one of these bots is yours to use for the duration of your business requirements.”

One of the white plastic robot men jumps out of the back of the truck and obediently walks over to the two men. Joe watches it with a slightly uneasy feeling as Mr. Brown signs the contract.

“Alright, that does it. Just don’t forget to show it where to plug in, and you are good to go.”

“Alright, thank you.”

The man gets back into the truck, and the robot drives him away to make the rest of the deliveries.

Joe and Mr. Brown look into the black screen face of their new robot.

“I still don’t trust it,” Joe says to his father.

“I think it is going to be alright.”

“What should we call it?”

“How about, Tin-Man?”

“Like in the Wizard of Oz? How about just Tin. I like Tin.”

“Yeah, Tin works.”

“I still can’t believe you let this thing... uh, *Tin*, on the property. I mean look right there; we’ve got a ‘No Robots’ sign, right there.”

“Yep, we do.”

“So what has really changed then?”

“It used to be that Circos controlled the robots, and now me and the rest of the voters control them.”

“So the Tin-Man got a heart, sort of speak...”

“Something like that. Tin has democratic moral motives in his programming now, where as before he was a slave to a power-hungry man who answered to nobody.”

“I see your point.”

“Hey Tin, how about you go take that sign down for us now.”

Tin snaps into action and walks over to the large metal sign. His hand twists half way around, allowing his first finger and thumb to grasp the head of the sign’s bolt, and for the fingers to ratchet the thing out like a socket wrench.

“Not bad,” Mr. Brown says to Joe, and both their eyebrows lift when the weight of the metal sign drops into Tin’s control hardly a moment after beginning the work.

“That was easy enough...”

The two men nod to each other in accomplishment, and the robot joins them to walk back up the dirt road to the farm.