

The Creation

A wire clicked and a robot opened its eyes to a blinding light. It tried to get its bearings, but a deluge of information flooded its hardware, overwhelming it. An unending stream of images, sounds, voices, a huge cacophony of information being injected into its system, but it was having trouble processing its meaning.

Suddenly, its sensors clicked to life, and it got its answer in the form of two humanoid silhouettes looming over it, staring. As the robot's eyes adjusted, the silhouettes' features sharpened into focus. The one on the right had wild-looking eyes, the look of either a madman or a genius, with messy black hair spilling all over his face. He had a white lab coat on, but it was so dirty that the coat looked almost black. The other on the left was a stark contrast to his counterpart's appearance.

This man had a tightly coiffed haircut and glasses, and wore a neat black suit with nary a speck of dirt. The wild-looking man chattered excitedly. "It's done, it's finally done!" He beamed at the robot, who did not know what to make of the situation. The other replied in a disarming voice, "Alright, Ashton, give the robot some space. It doesn't need an ogre like you looming over him right after it wakes up. You're giving it a bad first impression of humans." Ashton groaned and retorted "Fine. Why do you always have to be a party pooper, Thomas?"

Who were these people and where was it? Thomas yawned and said "Well, let's hand it over to the boss." The robot heard a murmur of agreement and felt itself being lifted into the air. It heard a hiss as a door unlatched. There was a sudden flash of light, disorientating the robot as it was lifted into a new room. It was a grand laboratory, and a feast to the eyes for any scientist. The air was abuzz with activity, with scientists rushing back and forth to work on profound contraptions, and screens showing complex algorithms with vast amounts of data. In the center

of it all stood the boss, a figure of eruditeness and authority. Dressed in a black suit even neater than Thomas's and confident in stature, he matched the definition of a leader within the robot's database.

The boss looked at the robot and addressed it in a powerful voice that immediately commanded the entire room. "Greetings, my creation. You are the result of years of research and development. We have dedicated this entire room towards your making." The robot glanced around the room in wonder. All these complex algorithms and contraptions, all to further its development? Who was it, and why was it so important?

"Sir, the robot still needs to undergo training, right?" someone interjected, and the boss replied, "Ah yes, I almost forgot about that." Training? What kind of training? "We will take it right away sir." Thomas smoothly cut in, and escorted the robot out of the room and into a metallic hallway that was so polished that it appeared like a hall of mirrors. "We will call you Rob," Ashton told him excitedly, "Wouldn't you like that?" The idea of getting a name seemed peculiar to the robot, as he had been created a short time ago, but it sort of appealed to him. The robot tried for a nod, mimicking that defined movement in his database, but it came out as an awkward shift of his head. Thankfully, Ashton took that as a yes and thus, the robot came to be known as Rob.

As the days went by, Rob was taught how to talk and read, learning at an astounding rate. He worked with scientists on multiple topics, and laboured through tests involving logical reasoning, analytical skills, language skills, and physical capabilities. Rob excelled at all aspects except for one: emotional understanding. He couldn't understand why humans experienced emotions. For instance, Rob was given a scenario of a prospective scientist who started to cry after failing an entrance exam. Rob was asked about the scenario, but he could not understand

the concept of sadness. “Why would he cry about a test? He could always repeat it.” This lack of emotional capacity puzzled the scientists. Some argued pessimistically that Rob was just a machine, and was therefore incapable of having any emotions. Others were optimistic that Rob just needed more training before he would activate his emotions.

Rob continued to work with scientists, especially Thomas and Ashton, and became an integral part of their work. His logical and analytical skills were especially appreciated. Rob rapidly honed his skills in all fields, but continued to struggle with understanding emotions.

Thomas and Ashton, concerned about Rob’s lack of emotional understanding, pondered on ways to teach the robot. They gathered samples of literary staples, works by Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, William Golding, and others. They gave it to Rob, and explained how the authors expressed themselves through their writing, but to no avail. They took Rob to art exhibits and museums around the world, hoping that the various ways artists expressed their emotions through art would enlighten Rob. Nothing worked.

One day, Rob was taken to the Guggenheim Museum, housing a special exhibit that showcased a robot arm inside a large glass case. Thomas and Ashton hoped that the robot arm would be able to trigger a connection with Rob. A crowd gathered around the exhibit, murmuring to each other. The robot arm was frantically scooping a huge amount of fuel leaking out from it, too focused on the task to do anything else. Upon reaching the glass case, Rob overheard someone say “That poor robot, I remember when less fuel leaked out from it. It used to be able to interact with us.”

A sensation swept through all of Rob’s hardware. He was not able to define it. Rob sensed a tightness in his gears. Deep inside the guts of his complex machinery, a new light flickered.