



Dorothy Finds Her Negotiator

**The First Two Episodes
of The Big O, Told From
R. Dorothy Wayneright's
Point of View**

Dorothy Finds Her Negotiator

Roger the Negotiator and Dorothy, Dorothy
Told from R. Dorothy Wayneright's Point of View

by 'A Clockwork Tomato'

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<https://www.fanfiction.net/~actofparadigm>

Foreword

The first two episodes of *The Big O* are told almost exclusively from Roger Smith's point of view. The background, motivations, and experiences of R. Dorothy Wayneright are shrouded in mystery. When Dorothy asked for Roger's protection, who did she want to be protected from? This is never made clear. When Dorothy visits the Nightingale with Timothy Wayneright, why is she so bubbly, so shy, so girlish? We never see that side of her again. And her powerful connection with Megadeuses, sometimes happening against her will, is something we see first with Dorothy One, and later with many other Megadeuses, but Big O does not trouble her. What is behind this? And where did that black dress come from, and on such short notice, too?

This story takes the first two episodes of *The Big O*—"Roger the Negotiator" and "Dorothy, Dorothy"—and retells them from R. Dorothy Wayneright's point of view. It is fully illustrated, including many images from the original two episodes, and additional images to illustrate the new scenes.

Act 01: Roger the Negotiator

Jason Beck Barges In

Beck picked the lock on Soldano's lavish apartment and walked in. From the living room, he heard a woman's laugh, followed by Soldano's. Beck strode into the living room and came upon Soldano and a petite young redhead sitting on the couch. Both leaped to their feet in startlement when they saw him, the girl moving behind Soldano's bulk, shy as a child.



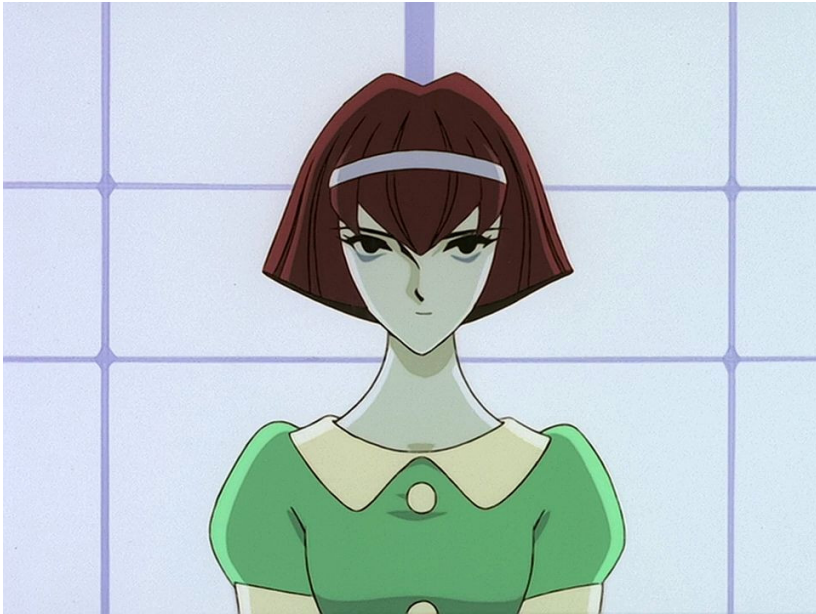
“What are you doing here?” demanded Soldano in a hoarse shout. As always when upset, he looked unhealthy, leaden. “How did you get in?”

“I let myself in,” said Beck. “Aren’t you going to introduce us?”

Reluctantly, Soldano said, "This is my daughter, Dorothy. Dorothy, this is a business associate of mine, Mr. Beck."

"How do you do, Mr. Beck," said Dorothy, smiling shyly up at him, still partly hidden behind Soldano.

Beck grinned. *Why do these old geezers try to pass off their mistresses as family? No one ever believes them.* "The pleasure's all mine, Dorothy. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have business to discuss with your ... father."



"All right," said Dorothy. She smiled again, more confidently this time, and said, "I hope we'll meet again, Mr. Beck." She sounded as if she meant it. "Father, please excuse me." She left the room and closed the door behind her. She was a pleasure to watch.

"You're late with the robot, Soldano," said Beck. "I've held off my backers as long as I can, but you need to deliver the robot or give them their money back right now. Tomorrow at the latest."

“Impossible! The robot only needs one control module to be complete, but this has been delayed. Three days, Beck. I need three days.”

Beck knew the custom-built, one-of-a-kind circuitry in question, and he knew why it was delayed, too. Beck had stolen the prototype himself! Soldano had other bidders for this robot, and he was getting cold feet about Beck and his backers. Soldano normally dealt with a more respectable class of criminal than Beck, such as the Paradigm Corporation. But Beck had no intention of allowing the robot to go to anyone but himself.

Beck wasn't kidding about his backers, though. After one delay in construction after another, they had lost faith in the robot and wanted their money back. They wouldn't hesitate to kill Beck if he didn't deliver. Fine. Soldano had plenty of money. Beck would pay off his backers with Soldano's money, and they'd no longer have a hold on Beck. Then Beck would steal the robot for himself. But there was no point in telling Soldano this.

“Tomorrow, Soldano. The money or the robot. Nice girl, by the way.”

Soldano turned pale at the mention of the girl, and looked even ghastlier than ever.

Jackpot! thought Beck. *I don't think the money will be a problem now.* Without another word, he turned and left the apartment.

R. Dorothy Wayneright Wakes Up

R. Dorothy Wayneright was startled into alertness. What was happening? Where was she? She looked around for clues. She was sitting on a sofa in a lavish, unfamiliar living room. Looking down, she saw that she was wearing an unfamiliar green dress.

How had she gotten here? Finding herself in a strange place was unsettling, though in a way it was welcome. Timothy Wayneright's house was no place to wake up in.

The doorbell rang. She realized that a previous ring had brought her to alertness. All was silent inside the ... apartment? Yes, apartment. She stood up and walked to the door. Opening it, she saw four men. The leader straightened up from where he was bending over with a lock pick in hand. He had ridiculous yellow curls and a loud yellow suit. She had never seen him before, yet somehow knew that he was Mr. Beck.

He put his lock pick into his pocket and breezed past her into the room, grinning. "Hello again, Dorothy," he said. "I want you to remain calm and do exactly what I say. You see, you're being kidnapped." He snapped his fingers, and his minions drew pistols and leveled them at her.

Dorothy glared at him. Almost against her will, she said, "Why?"

"Because your 'father' is an old fool and will pay a big ransom for you, of course," said Beck smugly. "Now hold still while we put this blindfold on you."

Dorothy said nothing, but she knew that Timothy Wayneright would never pay a penny in ransom. He was stubbornness personified. What else was this ridiculous man ignorant of? Did he even know she was an android? Most people couldn't tell unless they touched her skin, and Beck and his men were wearing gloves. Concerned about fingerprints, perhaps.



She was under strict orders to pass for human at all times, so instead of making a break for it, she allowed them to blindfold her. She pretended that it made her balance uncertain as the men led her away, first to an elevator, then twelve floors down—had she been in a penthouse apartment?—and then outside to a waiting car.

After a fifteen-minute drive, she was taken into some kind of metal-walled commercial building, judging by the acoustics. They left her in a side room, still blindfolded.

They probably thought she couldn't hear them down the hall, but her android hearing was very good.

"Soldano? Beck. Hey, I've got a deal you can't refuse. Get me the money by 2 PM today, and we'll give you your precious Dorothy back... Well, of course we have her! No, you can't talk to her. If you don't believe me, I'll chop something off and send it to you. No? Well, then, get the damned money! I'll call you back. You'd better have it."

Dorothy could make no sense of the conversation. She had never even met Miguel Soldano! She knew who he was, since

her father often mentioned him. Soldano's factory had made many of her sub-assemblies, and also the huge undersea salvage robot, Dorothy One. It was Dorothy One, not her, who had been made for Soldano. R. Dorothy had been a side job, her father's price for designing Dorothy One and overseeing the crucial core memories. Was Beck so ignorant that he couldn't tell one Dorothy from another? Was he a pawn in some kind of scheme of her father's? If so, she needed to keep playing her part.

Dorothy waited patiently. She had learned that worrying served little purpose, and was exhausting even for an android, but as an android, she could usually allow her anxiety to drain away as quickly as it appeared. If she did that, she could face any situation calmly.

Hours passed, then Beck called again. "Got the money, Soldano? Good. Get a pencil, because I'm only going to say this once ... What? You idiot! I'm not paying for any fancy negotiator! ... Hell, you can send him if you want, I don't care. As long as he hands over the money, what's it to me? But there had better not be any funny business, not if you want Dorothy in one piece. My backers are playing for keeps, Soldano, and so am I. Got that pencil? Here are the directions. Be there in one hour."

Beck rattled off some directions, then hung up. A moment later he and his men walked into the room where Dorothy was sitting.

"We're going for a ride, Dorothy, and then you'll be reunited with your father," said Beck. "Need to use the bathroom?"

"No, thank you," said Dorothy, now sure that he didn't know that she was an android.

As they walked to the car, Dorothy still blindfolded, Beck suddenly said, "What the hell is that whirring sound?"

“I didn’t hear anything, boss,” said one of his men. They stopped to listen.

“It’s gone now,” said Beck. “Probably a big piece of machinery far away. Doesn’t matter. We’re never coming back here again.”

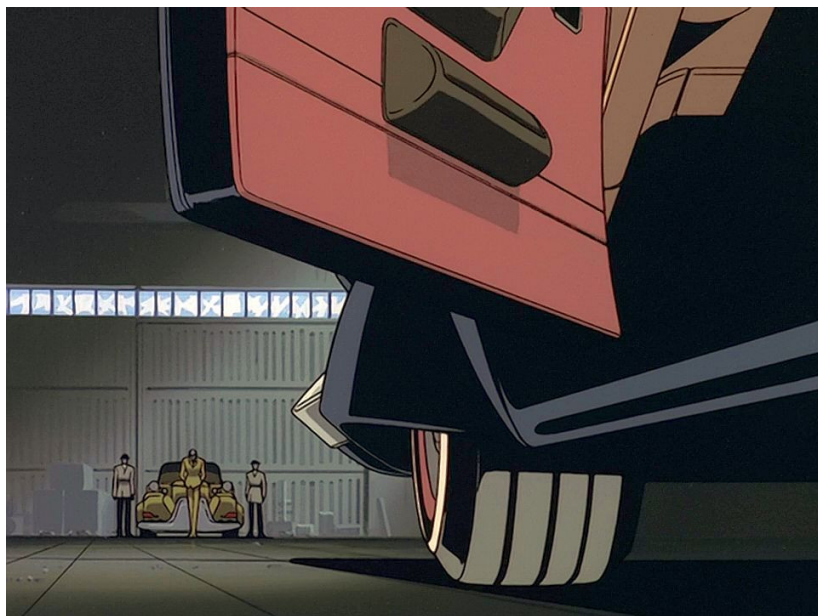
They helped her into the back seat and drove away.

Eventually they reached another large building, which to Dorothy’s ears sounded echoing, metal-walled, concrete-floored—a warehouse, perhaps. Odd creaks and wind sounds implied that the roof was damaged and partly missing.

Beck and two of his men got out of the car and took a few steps forward. The other man waited in the back seat with Dorothy.

After a short wait, the sound of a car appeared in the distance, a large car whose powerful, low-pitched engine was a pleasure to hear. The car drove in briskly, braked to a confident halt, and the door opened and closed with a sound of quiet authority. Firm footsteps approached Beck’s car.

Beck barked out, “Leave it right there!” He sounded nervous,



annoyed.

A calm, slow, deep voice replied, "I thought the arrangement we made was clear. In a fair deal, all parties lay their cards on the table."

After a brief pause, Beck chuckled and said, "Okay, Mister Paradigm City Negotiator."

The man next to Dorothy opened the door to the car, got out, and guided her after him. He had her stand next to the car.

There was the sound of a briefcase opening ahead of her.

After a moment, Beck chuckled again and said, "Soldano haggled over the money for his own daughter. That's some father."

I've never met Soldano, thought Dorothy in some amazement. *And I'm sure he doesn't have a daughter. Where did this money come from? And why?* In spite of overhearing Beck's two phone conversations, she was amazed that any ransom money had been produced at all. Her father would never ransom a disappointment like her, even if he had the money, which he didn't. He was in deeply in debt and was living from hand to mouth through one desperate expedient after another. Soldano had no reason to ransom her. No one cared about her.

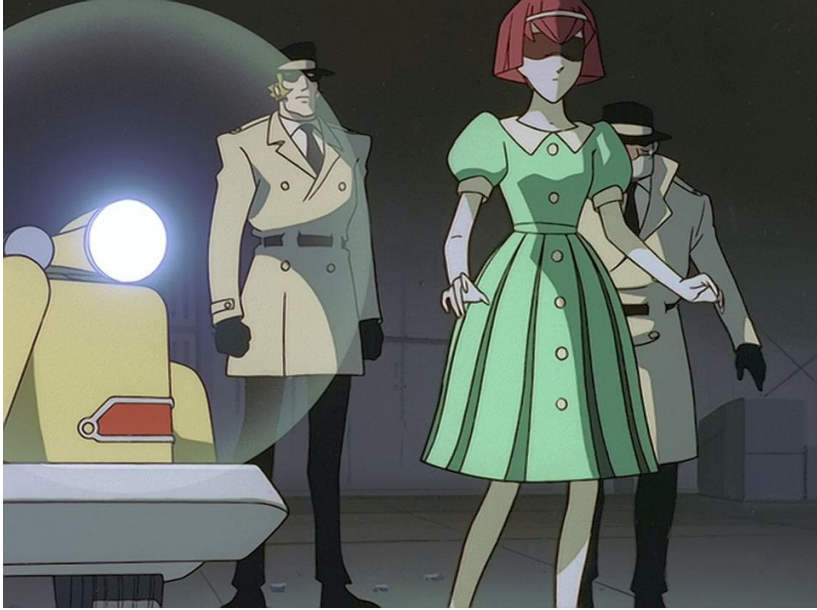
Where did the money come from? And who was this confident man with the beautiful voice?... Don't think he's a knight in shining armor, she reminded herself. *No one will rescue me. Not even by mistake. Not even as part of a scam.*

There was the sound of the briefcase being closed again. In some annoyance, the other man's deep voice said, "It's the amount both of you agreed on," followed by a skidding sound as the briefcase was slid across the floor towards them.

"All right," said the beautiful deep voice, "now send the girl this way."

Her arms were untied and she took a step forward, remembering to hold her hands out in front of her as if she had merely human senses and balance.

"Take your time miss. Just walk slowly towards my voice."



She was already doing so. She couldn't help it! The voice enchanted her, made her feel safe, yet filled her with longing. She yearned for... she didn't know what.

"That's it. Keep coming."

After a few paces the goon walking behind her stopped and picked up the briefcase. Dorothy kept walking. In a few paces her hands touched the torso of her rescuer. *No, not rescuer!* she told herself in irritation. That brief touch told her he was tall and muscular and wearing an expensive suit.

"You can remove the blindfold now, Miss Soldano."

She did, and looked up into his face. *My god, he's handsome!* He was a surprisingly young man, broad-shouldered, square-jawed, black-haired, wearing a black suit and black sunglasses.

His took her in and looked surprised, for all the world as if she were as beautiful as he was handsome. "Ahhh," he said.

Can androids feel like this? Androids can't feel like this! Her head didn't actually swim, and her knees didn't actually give way, but she felt like they ought to. They stared at each other.

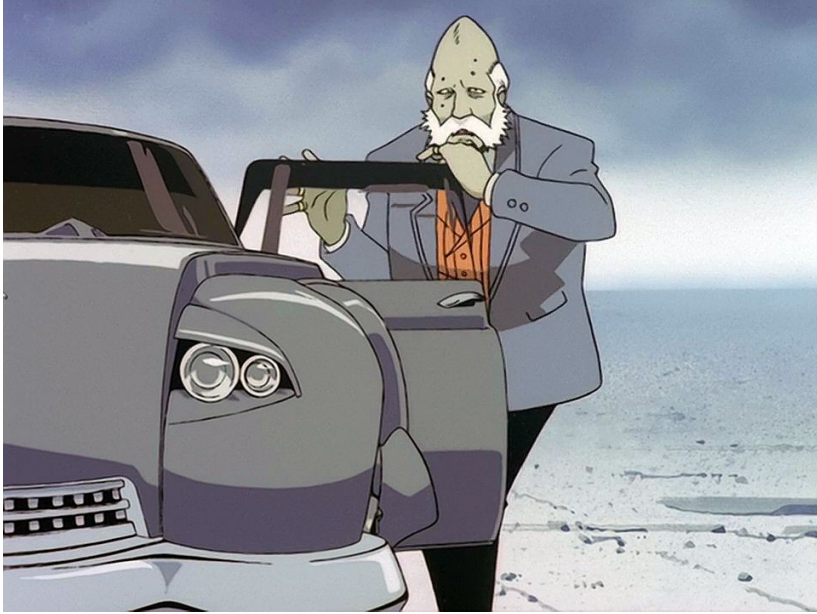


He wrenched his attention away from her at the sound of an approaching car. It was moving fast, tires screeching. A moment later, a silver limousine had entered the building.

“Oh, darn,” said the negotiator lightly, “I hate it when clients are so impatient.”

An old man she had never seen before got out of the car. He looked ill, distressed, and a bit disoriented. He called, “Dorothy! Dorothy!”

Who is this sick old man? She thought in mingled irritation and pity, not wanting the beautiful negotiator’s attention distracted. *I suppose it must be Miguel Soldano.*



Behind her, Beck's car started up and raced for the back wall, bursting through it in a shower of rusty metal siding. Soon it was out of sight.

The negotiator smiled at her and said, "Well, you're free now, my dear. Of course, with a father like that one, it's a rather restricted freedom."

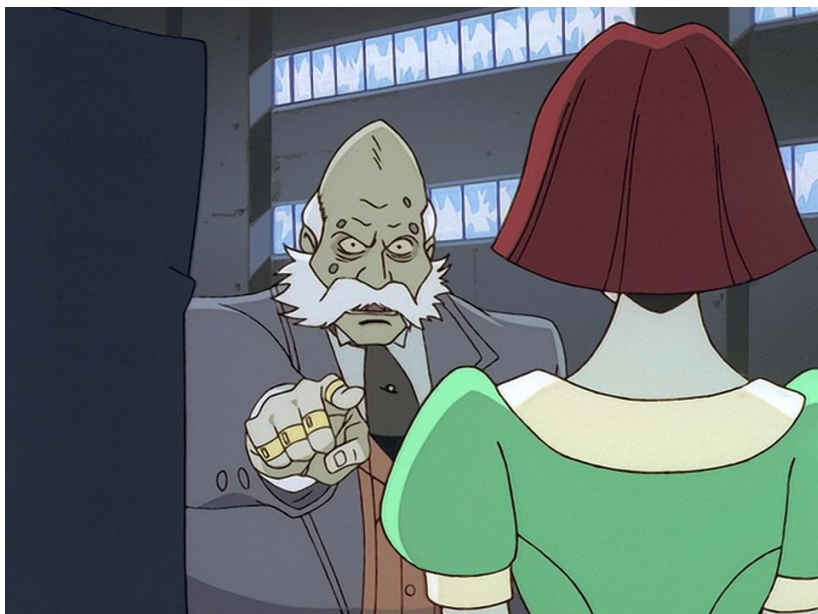
Soldano was running up to them, still calling, "Dorothy! Dorothy!"

The negotiator said to him, "As you can see, the transaction was completed."

Soldano looked around, confused. "What?

"Now, about the rest of my fee?"

"This isn't my daughter, fool!" rasped Soldano. Huh?"



At close range, Soldano looked even more ill, even more confused, kept going only by his anger.

“Are you blind? How could you possibly mistake *that* for my precious Dorothy?”

The negotiator took off his sunglasses for a better look.

There is no human Dorothy, she reminded herself. She’s been dead for forty years. What is Soldano talking about? Actually, she suspected she knew, but refused to think about it; not right now. Sighing inwardly, Dorothy turned her head in an exaggeratedly robotic way, making unnecessary whirring noises with her motors. Her eyes met the negotiator’s once again.

“Huh? It’s an android?”

“This thing is a dummy of Dorothy! You mean you handed over the money without realizing that?”

Dorothy and the negotiator were still staring at each other. *He’s as attracted to me as I am to him, she realized, even though I’m an android. He isn’t listening to Soldano’s words at all.*



Soldano went on, “Paradigm City’s top negotiator! What a joke! You’re nothing but an incompetent idiot!”

The negotiator turned calmly to face Soldano, who flinched. Without a word, the negotiator pulled a control box out of the inside pocket of his suit, and pressed a red button. There was a distant explosion.

“What have you done?” demanded Soldano. “I still don’t have my daughter back!”

“If they don’t want to play by the rules,” stated the negotiator, “The money comes back.”

Dorothy watched him as he manipulated the controls on the box, and listened to the first part of the argument between him and Soldano when the money didn’t come back after all. Soldano became enraged, turning bright red. Then he suddenly turned pale, a ghastly sight. Sweat ran down his face and he swayed, almost falling.

The negotiator lost some of his calm assurance but did not hesitate for a moment. He rushed to support Soldano. Soldano insisted in a faint voice that he be helped to his car, and the

negotiator complied, half-carrying Soldano to the silver limousine. The process was slow.

Dorothy faded towards the back of the building and slipped out the opening Beck's car had made. She hoped they wouldn't notice her absence for a long time. Soldano was a business associate of her father's, and Dorothy's most urgent wish was to disappear without a trace from her father's sight.

She wished she knew the negotiator's name. She needed to hire him!

She soon reached the main road. A moment later a white van came into sight. She flagged it down. It was an older van, somewhat battered, with no business name on the side.

The driver reached across the front seat and opened the passenger door. "Hop in," he said with a smile. He was middle-aged, with brown hair and beard beginning to go to gray.

"This isn't a safe neighborhood for a girl like you, what with scrap metal prices the way they are."

She glared at him but got into the van anyway. *I was being*



careful. How could he tell? Her father punished her savagely anytime she didn't pass for normal. Once inside the van, her attention was seized by the equipment filling the back of the van: cameras, lights, background rolls, a few random props, and a couple of large suitcases containing who knows what. Costumes, perhaps. *I suppose you can't fool the eye of an artist.*



“My card,” he said, handing it to her. It had the man's name and number, and the words, “Fine Art Photography.” *Does that mean what I think it means?* She wondered. *Fine art is all about nudity, isn't it?* Actually, the idea had appeal. *It's nice when people appreciate me as a woman.* She remembered the negotiator's reaction to her and sighed inwardly.

“I'm looking for a negotiator,” she said suddenly.

“A pretty girl like you, you'll want Roger Smith,” he said cryptically. “He's the best.”

“What does he look like?”

“Big guy, black hair, wears sunglasses indoors.”

“He won't mind that I'm an android?”

“You don’t have to tell him. But he won’t mind. He’s always on the side of the underdog, and people who can be bought and sold as if they’re machinery are about as underdog as you can get.”

He accepts me as a real person! No one had ever done that before, unless they took her for human. *And he thinks Roger Smith will do the same!* “How can I find him?”

“I’ll take you there. It’s not too far out of my way.”

“Thank you.”

They drove in silence for a while, then, surprising herself, she said, “I don’t have any money.”

“I’ve already had four ideas for projects you’d be perfect for. You can model for me anytime. I pay good rates. How long can you hold a pose?”

“Forever.”

“Thought so. And Roger Smith’s services only cost a fortune if you have a fortune. Anyway, it’s only money. You need some?”

It’s only money, she thought. *Are all artists like this?* “No,



thank you.”

They pulled up in front of a tall building. “Here we are,” the photographer said. “Just ring the doorbell. Smith’s butler will take care of you. Oh, one word of advice—the more you stick up for yourself, the more he’ll respect you, so ignore his dramatics.”

“Thank you,” she said.

“My pleasure,” he assured her. “Norman will give you cab fare home if you need it. You’ll be fine.”

He raised a hand in farewell, and she closed the door. He drove off.

Dorothy felt a strange ... presence ... as she walked to the front door. She was being watched by something—someone—powerful, calm, masculine, and ... friendly? Part of her knew exactly what it was, but she shied away from the knowledge, blocking it out.

She rang the doorbell and waited. After several minutes, an elderly man dressed as a butler opened the door. He was balding, with a patch over one eye, and had a long white mustache.



“How may I help you, miss?” he asked.

“I am Miss Wayneright,” she said. “I would like to speak to Roger Smith.”

“Very good, miss,” he said. “If you would follow me.” He ushered her inside and led her to an elevator. “I expect Master Roger to be home soon. You may wait for him upstairs.”

He hasn’t asked me my business, thought Dorothy. *That’s odd.* The sense of the watchful presence was stronger inside the building. The robotic part of her mind was very alert right now. *Stop it! You’re no part of me.* It paid no attention to her, but thankfully it seemed content to observe.

The elevator took them to the top floor of the main building, and a spiral staircase took them to the living room of a large penthouse. The butler asked her to make herself comfortable but didn’t offer her any refreshment before he took his leave.

Can everyone tell I’m an android now? she thought in irritation. But she knew that most people couldn’t tell. Beck and his men hadn’t noticed, in spite of spending hours with her. The photographer could tell, but he had a trained eye—his business was seeing the inner person and making it visible to everyone else. But how had the butler known?

She wandered around the tasteful room, then stood by the tall windows, taking in the view of the city, almost mesmerized by it. Timothy Wayneright’s house had few unshuttered windows, and its view included only the artificial vista of the dome, which didn’t affect her the way this open landscape did.

As she gazed out at the city, she wondered how much of her plan to confide to Roger Smith. The immediate problem was simplicity itself: she needed to run away from home.

R. Dorothy's First Awakening



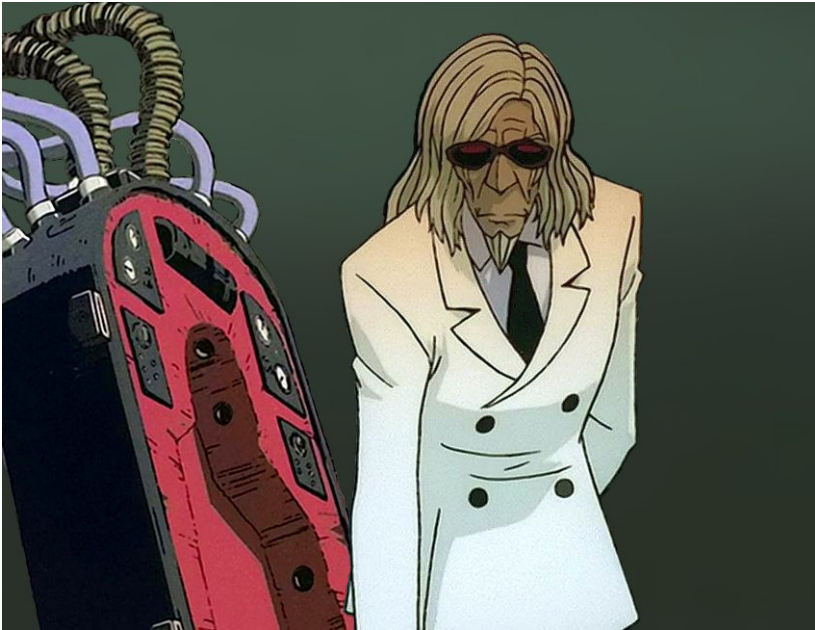
The problem had been there from the start, from her earliest memory. She had awakened with her eyes closed. At first she was aware only of sensations: the feel of her body lying on a hard surface, the play of faint air currents on her skin, the feel of something cold and hard against wrists and ankles. Then she became aware of faint sounds: the hum of electronic equipment, the buzzing of fluorescent lights, the breathing of someone close to her. She realized that she was happy. *It's good to be alive.*

She opened her eyes. She was in a laboratory, secured to a slab by steel bands around wrists and ankles. An old man was bending over her. He had white hair and a white goatee, and held a cane in one hand.

"Good, you're awake," he said. "Tell me, what is your name?"

“R. Dorothy Wayneright,” she said automatically. Then, surprised, she added, “What does the ‘R’ stand for?”

“Excellent,” he replied, ignoring her question. “That is a good start. Keep it up. The other girl didn’t work out. I hope you’ll do better.” He glanced to one side, and she noticed a row of coffin-like containers, at least half a dozen of them. The closest one was open, and she knew somehow that she had been lying in it until just recently. Apparently, there were plenty more where she came from. He added, “My name is Timothy Wayneright. I am your father.”



No! My father is much younger and nicer! ...What other girl? Is he threatening me? Hiding her alarm, she said politely, “I’m afraid I don’t remember you, sir. How do you do?”

Timothy Wayneright frowned and said sternly, “I expect more enthusiasm than that, Nightingale!”

And so it began. Wayneright had a fixed idea of who he wanted her to be. He claimed that she had been constructed from a recording of his dead daughter’s personality that he

made forty years ago. Like everything else, the recording had amnesia for the events prior to forty years ago, but Wayneright insisted that it was otherwise perfect in every detail. If Dorothy failed to act like he expected his daughter to act, it was not because he couldn't remember his daughter accurately, but because of some vicious flaw in R. Dorothy herself. If she wasn't his precious Dorothy already, then she had better *become* Dorothy: the lighthearted, bubbly, outgoing daughter who loved to sing and go shopping and be pampered by her loving father.

How she had tried! Somehow—artificially, she suspected—she was deeply attached to Wayneright. His approval made her feel safe and loved, and his disapproval made her feel worthless, fearful, and ashamed. She would do anything for him, and yet ... what he wanted just wasn't possible. The daughter he wanted was so unlike her! Her real personality was more like Wayneright's own, during his calmer moments: quiet, introverted, stubborn. He wanted her to be someone she wasn't, someone she couldn't be, and she couldn't help resisting even as she tried to comply.

And so they fought. Her stubbornness enraged him. He scolded, he lectured, and on occasion he threatened her. He often told her, "You're not the child I wanted! I can start over with a new child. I could do it easily!"

Dorothy quickly lost faith in the existence of his vanished daughter. Wayneright based everything on barely remembered memory fragments, fragments that could be delusional. *I'm his real daughter. But he wants a fantasy daughter who never existed.* Even so, she yearned to please him.

He tried to fix her, summoning more energy and focus than seemed possible from such a frail old man. He was obsessed. He used ever more extreme measures. He would appear suddenly in the middle of the night, force her onto the slab, and probe her mind, looking for the flaw. She had imagined that androids couldn't feel pain, but she soon learned just how ut-

terly wrong she'd been. Even as he punished her, he would tell her how much he loved her, that it was for her own good, and that he had no choice.

Then, one day, after she had stubbornly refused to cooperate during another session on the slab, he lost his temper. His face turned red and he trembled all over. Too enraged to speak, he picked up a four-pound hammer from the workbench and advanced on her, intending to shatter her android body. There was no escape. She watched, helpless, as he advanced on her haltingly, leaning heavily on his cane, hammer in the other hand, his breathing hoarse, irregular, his eyes never leaving her face. She felt a mounting terror as he raised the hammer to crush her skull. And then ... she woke up in her bed, undamaged, with no memory of the preceding nine hours.

What had happened? She was afraid to ask; it wouldn't be safe. At first, she assumed that her robotic part had taken over. She was intermittently aware of this part of her mind, separate from her but not very distant. But, no. Her father hated her robotic part and demanded that she have nothing to do with it. Had her robotic part taken over, her father would have smashed her for sure.

Her routine resumed, seemingly normal. Her father seemed happier with her. Over time, she had more memory lapses. She sometimes awoke to discover herself wearing new clothing, always in the finest taste. She found makeup in her handbag, along with occasional ticket stubs from theaters and concerts. Jewelry appeared like magic—strange, considering her father's near-bankrupt condition and his constant, desperate scheming for money, at whatever cost.

She started keeping a journal, hoping that she would write in it during periods she couldn't remember, while at the same time worrying that her father might find it. She was very careful about what she said. But somehow she could never bring herself to look at her past entries. On some level she was afraid of what she might find, and in fact she kept a much closer

watch on her father than on herself. He seemed the greater threat, and more familiar, somehow.

Her father's behavior was strange. Sometimes he was doting and affectionate, lavishing her with gifts and attention, treating her as if she were the daughter he wanted, though Dorothy didn't think her acting had improved. At other times he was as harsh as before, or worse. His rages began to return after only a couple of weeks.

Something else had happened, too. When Wayneright had picked up the hammer, the one thing he had shattered was her desperate attachment to him. Inside her mind, something changed, and now she was free. Where she used to be desperate to please him, basing her whole life around his approval, she now pleased him only because it was in her interests to do so. She still had fear, but had lost her guilt, and had become indifferent to his opinion. This new freedom, this sense of owning herself, was precious to her. *I love him: he's still my father. And that's not the problem, because loving him from a safe distance is the right solution. Yes, I will help him if I can. But the more I stay, the more he'll get worse, and that won't help him. Besides, sacrificing me is wrong! Even if I'm as broken as he says I am. And I'm not!*

If she stayed with him, sooner or later he would murder her. Probably sooner. With her new calmness, she could see this now, just as she could see that, after he killed her, he would honestly believe that it was all her fault, that he had no choice. He would learn nothing from the experience: it would make him a worse person, even more damned than before.

While he thought he had no choice, she knew the truth. She could watch his emotion build up, and she could see that little hesitation when he chose whether to master his emotions or indulge them. He was choosing to indulge them more and more. Was she making him worse, or was he getting worse on his own? Did it matter? She needed to leave either way.

Since she was an android, he could murder her and get away with it. Easily. As far as the law was concerned, he would merely have disassembled a machine, while in reality she would be just as dead as any human corpse.

What she needed was not a rescuer, but a negotiator, someone to ease her away from her father, or, at worst, hide her away from her father.

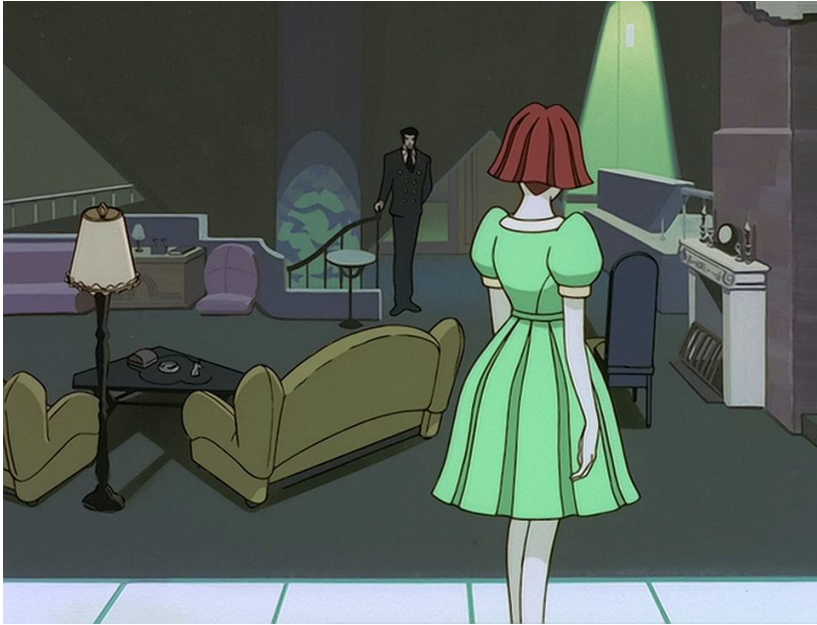
And oh, how she longed to rescue her as-yet unactivated android sisters! How guilty she felt at the thought of leaving them behind! But she could not rescue them until she herself was free. Or could she? No. Definitely not.

In a way, she was grateful for the hammer incident, because it showed that her mind had more resources than she realized, and was protecting her, somehow. And she had been freed from her emotional dependence. It was getting easier and easier to imagine a future away from him—a better future, a longer future—and harder and harder to imagine a future with him. She didn't know how any of this had happened, but she was glad.

She would leave her father soon in any event, but seeing Roger Smith had convinced her that now was the time.

Roger Smith Returns

Her thoughts were interrupted by the return of Roger Smith. Not recognizing her silhouetted against the windows, he launched into a set speech.



“I have a special house rule that only lovely young women can unconditionally enter into this mansion. Sorry to keep you waiting. I am Roger Smith.” He sounded smug.

Dorothy was irritated by his smugness and upset by the suspicion that many other women had heard this speech, so as he continued to talk, saying, “How may I be of assistance, Miss...” she turned around in the most robotic way possible, with plenty of motor whir.

He said, “What’s going on? You’re Miss Wayneright?”

“How do you do?”

Roger sighed. “Norman must be senile. How else could he possibly confuse an android for a woman?”

“You couldn’t tell the difference at first, either,” Dorothy retorted, nettled. *And even when you knew, you couldn’t take your eyes off me.*

Roger looked uncomfortable, loosening his tie nervously. “It was dark. I couldn’t see in that dump!” He slumped into a couch. “So, what do you want from me? The kidnap case is already being handled. The military police are conducting a large-scale investigation. I’m positive the real Dorothy will turn up very soon.”

I wonder, thought Dorothy. She knew that Roger was wrong in his main assumption—there wasn’t any human Dorothy.

“However,” Roger Smith continued, looking her up and down, “you are impressively well built. I’m amazed that greedy old coot could build a technological marvel like you.”

He’s still attracted to me! “Soldano merely funded my construction.”

“Naturally! So ... what do you want?”

Looking at him intently, she said, “I would like you to protect me.”



“You what? Sister, you’re confused. You’re looking for a private investigator or something. No, being a bodyguard for an android isn’t a job for a P.I. either.”

Ignoring his objections, she met his eyes and stated, “The job is yours, Roger Smith.”

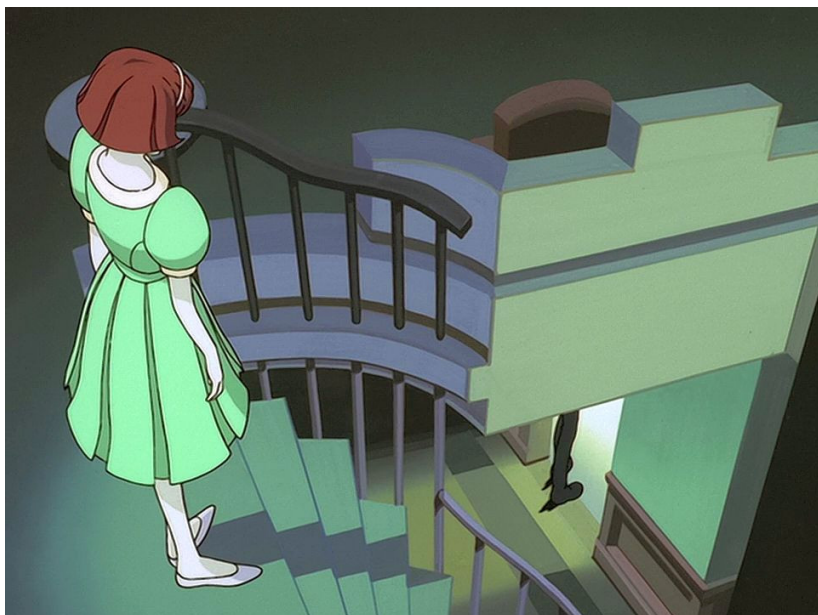
Before Roger could reply, a concealed intercom on the coffee table buzzed, and Norman’s voice said, “I’m terribly sorry to interrupt, Master Roger, but Major Dastun of the Military Police is here. He’s quite insistent on seeing you.”

Roger excused himself and walked down the spiral staircase and into a room where Major Dastun was waiting. Dorothy overheard the first part of the conversation.

Roger greeted him with, “You really shouldn’t snoop around in other people’s belongings.”

Dastun replied, “Assuming these things are actually your own memories, that is.”

Roger said, “You were certainly more than willing to start a war. But the girl’s already been rescued, I presume.” Then he closed the heavy, well-fitted door, and even Dorothy’s android



hearing could not make out the rest of the conversation.

Dorothy thought, *At least he didn't reveal that I'm here.*

A minute later, Dastun opened the door and said, "I'll take you up on the drink another time. See ya."

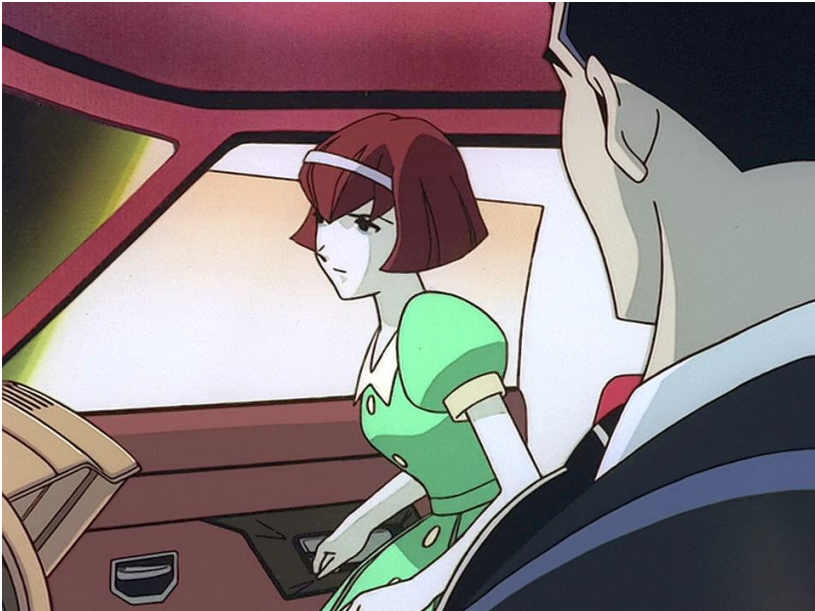
Roger shouted, "Norman!" When the butler appeared, he told him to see Major Dastun out. After Norman ushered Dastun into the elevator and escorted him down, Roger paced back and forth impatiently in front of the elevator until Norman's return. He didn't see Dorothy, who was looking down at him from the top of the spiral staircase.

As Norman got out of the elevator, Roger got in, saying, "I'm going to check out Soldano's factory."

"Yes, Master Roger." Norman bowed and stood aside.

As the elevator descended, Dorothy came down the spiral staircase and told Norman, "I want to go with him." *I don't know why this is important, but it is.*

"Then you had better run down the stairs all the way to the basement, Miss Wayneright," said Norman, unruffled, "or you will miss him. This way." He indicated the door to the main



stairs, and Dorothy ran down the flights with a speed only an android could achieve, emerging in the basement just as Roger Smith got into his car.

As he revved the engine, she quietly opened the passenger door and got in.

She said, "You're going to Soldano's factory, aren't you?"

"Do I have to make you get out?"

"You may try, but I'm doubtful that a mere human would have the strength."

He seemed to suppress a smile as he put the car into gear. He left the building at high speed, barely making the turn into the alley. He did this calmly, though, as if he always drove like that.

After a moment he asked, "Why did you come to me instead of going straight to Soldano? I mean, after all, he is sort of your parent."

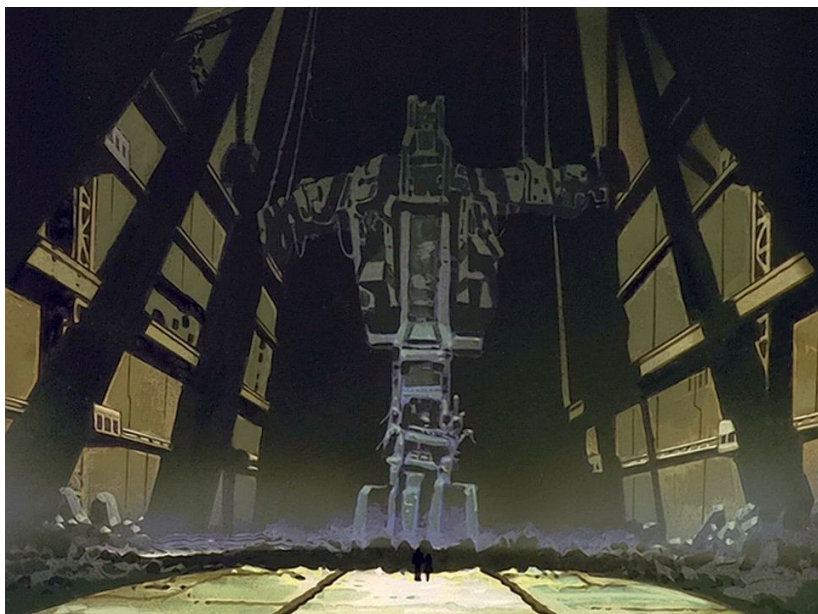
I never met him before today. "Parent?"

He smiled. "That poses an interesting question. I'm stumped on this. What would an android call its creator?" His smile faded when she didn't answer, and he glanced across at her. She was sitting calmly, looking straight ahead. "Dorothy?"

Soon they came up on a tall factory building standing alone, marked with a huge number "13." Roger parked the car in front of the building and got out. So did she. They walked together to the open entrance.

There was a tall gantry along the back wall, and a huge crater where the factory floor had been. It looked as if the floor had collapsed over an open space—a basement, perhaps.

Roger asked, "What happened here? Do you know?"



Dorothy did not answer. Dorothy One was gone. She had never seen the factory before, or Dorothy One, for that matter. (Or had she?) But she had spent quite a bit of time snooping in



her father's workshop, and knew from blueprints that Dorothy One had been hidden in the specially built underground hangar. The collapsed floor was a bad sign, since there were concealed doors and a lift to get the giant robot in and out. These had not been used. Had Dorothy One climbed out under her own power? But how? That one crucial sub-assembly was still missing!

Roger turned his attention from the crater to the huge gantry, and finally to the control room on the left wall. A window had been smashed and was smeared with blood. Without a word, he ran to the elevator leading to the control room, with Dorothy right behind him.

Soldano was lying on the floor in the control room.

"Soldano!" cried Roger, and ran to him, lifting him up to a half-sitting posture. "Soldano!"

Soldano opened his eyes. Without focusing on Roger, he said, "I never wanted to build it ... for people like them."

What did you build?"

Soldano's eyes went into focus and he saw Dorothy. "Oh! My



other Dorothy. The second. You came back? You are the one who's my real daughter."

I don't know him! Aloud, she said, "He assembled me from blueprints, nothing more. It's just the deranged ranting of a dying man."

Sharply, Roger said, "That's enough! You shouldn't talk like that."

Softly, Soldano said, "It's all right, Nightingale." Then he closed his eyes.

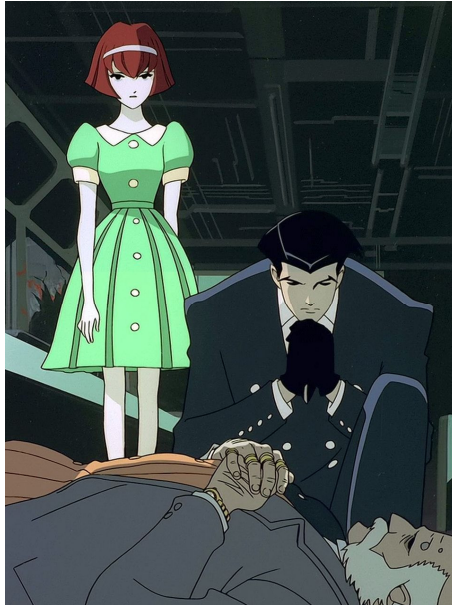
"What?" asked Roger, baffled. But Soldano had no more answers; he was dead. Roger lowered him to the floor and crossed his hands over his chest. Then he folded his own hands and bowed his head.

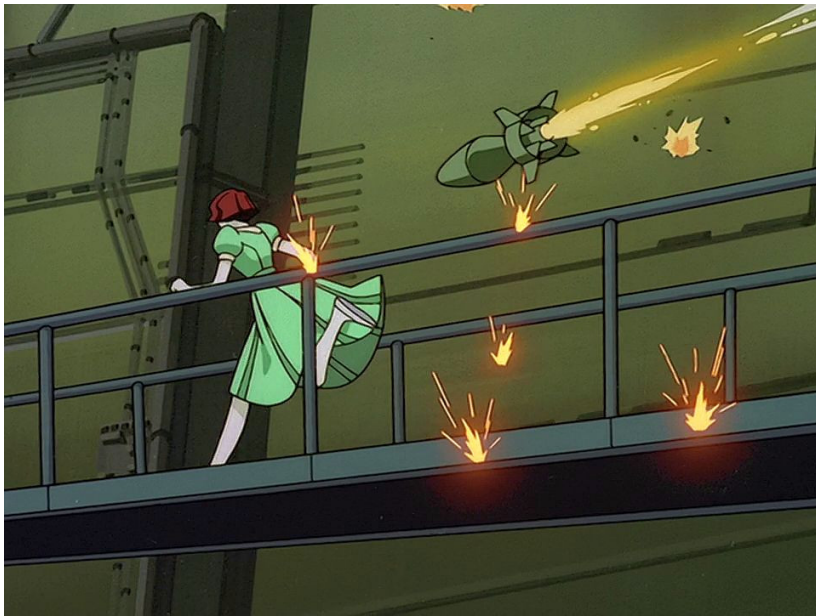
"What are you doing, praying?" asked Dorothy. She had no memory of any kind of religious observance.

"Shh!"

Suddenly Roger's watch beeped, its face flashing read with a legend, "Lock On."

Roger leaped to his feet and shouted, "Run! Hurry!"





They ran from the control room onto the adjacent catwalk as Beck's goons, who had driven up unnoticed, fired a shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile at the control room. The explosion picked them up and hurled them along the catwalk.

Lying on the catwalk floor, Dorothy asked, "Aren't you going to return fire?" She was convinced that Roger Smith would deal with the situation, she was just curious about how.

"With what, pray tell? It's not like I pack a lunchbox full of missiles when I go to work." He looked around and spotted his car, just outside the factory entrance. He said to Dorothy, "Since you're no mere human, would you ...?"

Dorothy was already getting to her feet. "You want me to decoy their fire?"

He gave her shoulder a shove to get her going. "Bingo!"

She started running with superhuman speed. One goon started firing at her with a sub-machine gun, while another aimed a second missile. Roger got to work with his watch.

The second missile nearly hit Dorothy and destroyed the catwalk she was running on. Falling, she grabbed a railing



hanging down from the damaged gantry and caught herself. From this vantage point she could see a pair of missiles launch themselves from Roger's car, fly past her, and explode, destroying the two goons and their car. The blast nearly blew Dorothy from her handhold and disheveled her hair.

Climbing down, she was exultant. *I saved Roger Smith's life today! And all because I'm an android. A human would have been to slow.*

She reached Roger's car at the same time he did. Somehow, he still looked immaculate. *And so desirable!* Not used to such feelings, she concealed them. Opening the passenger door, she said, "You're a louse, Roger Smith."

He chuckled and said, "Well, that's a first. I'm used to *human* women saying that to me."

That's right, Roger Smith—I'm a woman, and you know it.

The car phone beeped. Roger picked up the microphone. "Yes, Norman."

Norman's face appeared on the video screen. "Master Roger, in West Dome Number Five, there's a report of a giant robot.



At the moment, it's attacking the Mint Bureau Building. What do you intend to do, sir?"

Roger said, "Norman, isn't it obvious?" Setting down the microphone, he smiled and said, "Dorothy, I think we just found your big sister."

Roger drove towards West Dome Number Five like a maniac—a calm, self-assured maniac.

After a while, Dorothy asked, "What will you do?"

"What I'm paid to do. According to my contract, I have to return your sister."

Dorothy's mind boggled. By no stretch of the imagination could the giant robot Dorothy One have anything to do with his contract. Yes, her name was "Dorothy," but Roger had been asked to find Soldano's *daughter*, not a giant robot! Roger was just using it as an excuse. Why? She was curious rather than alarmed. "But your client is dead. Why bother?"

"I have a contract to fulfill. They're living, they're dead—it doesn't matter." Perhaps realizing how thin his argument was, he added, "That how I work, and ..."



“And what?”

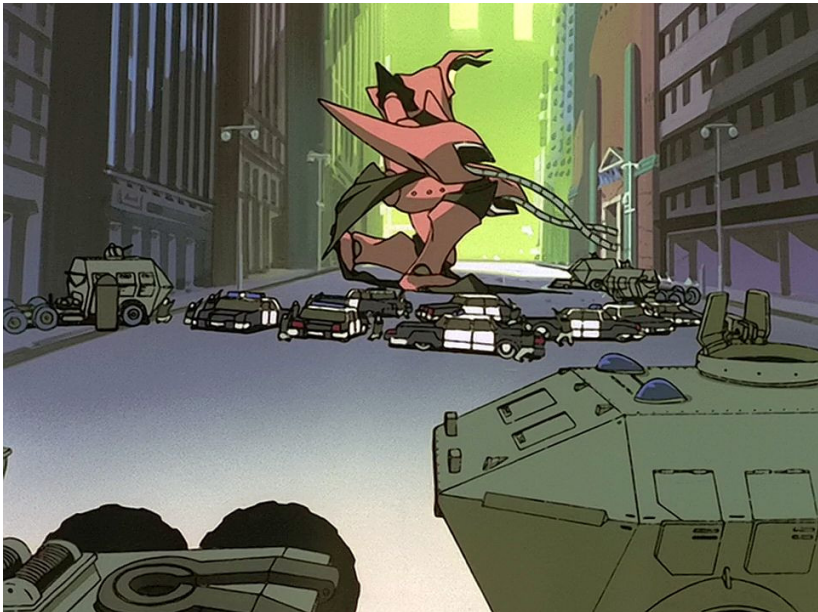
He smiled at her and said, “You’ve now got a contract with me as my new client.”

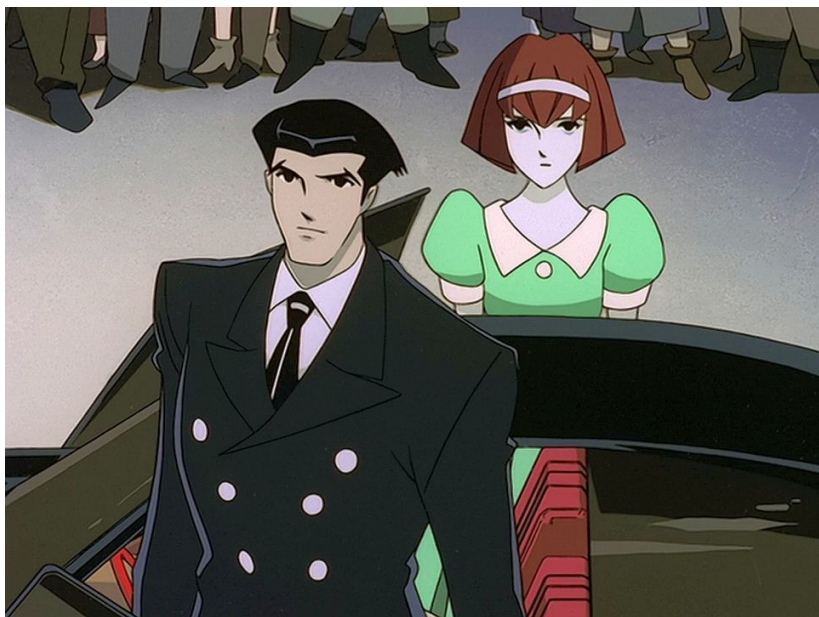
Pleased by the smile as much as the news, she let the matter drop, though it was clear that he was rushing towards Dorothy One for reasons of his own, in spite of two excuses to the contrary. *I’ll just wait and see what happens.*

Roger talked his way past the police barricade at the dome entrance. Shortly thereafter, she spotted Timothy Wayneright in the crowd along the side of the road. He was wearing a white suit, as always. Had he spotted her?



“My father,” she said aloud as Roger’s car passed him. To her relief, Wayneright hadn’t seen her. She didn’t want him to know her whereabouts until after Roger had negotiated her





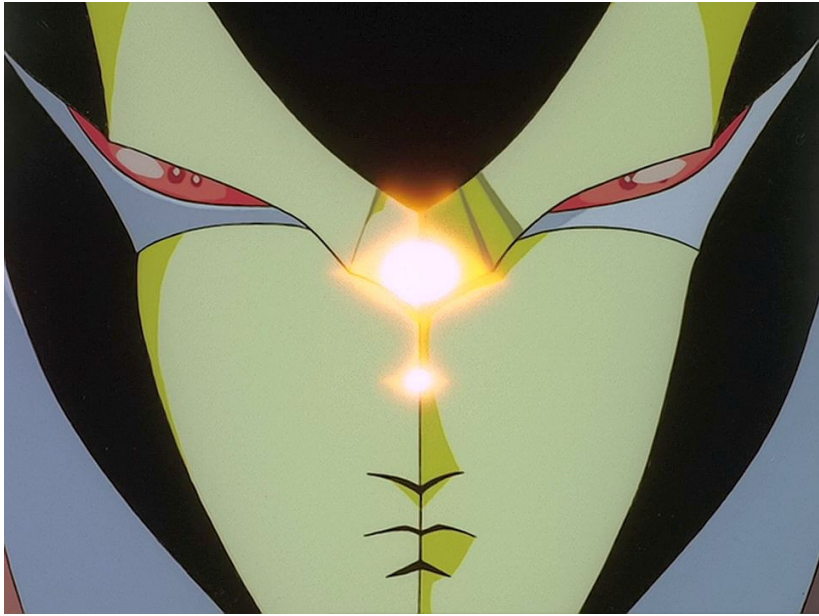
freedom. It wasn't just that she feared him, she was used to obeying him, and might agree to something stupid out of habit, out of conditioning. Staying away from him was the best plan.

Roger got within a block of the Mint Bureau before parking. Dorothy One was visible outside the entrance. About a hundred feet tall and vaguely humanoid, she had dropped to one knee and opened ports on both arms to send metal tentacles deep within the building. The Military Police were firing small arms and light artillery at her to no effect.

Dorothy felt very strange, looking at her giant namesake for the first time. She felt a pull, a compulsion coming from outside her own mind, demanding that she run and join Dorothy One, who was in some kind of mental distress. *What's happening? Father always said to ignore my robotic side.*

Roger and Dorothy got out of the car. Roger said, "All of it fits. That thing is what Soldano was creating on the sly."

"Dorothy One," said Dorothy, not quite knowing whether she was replying to Roger or talking to herself.



Roger continued, “I can understand now why the kidnappers thought you were useless to them.”

Somehow, Dorothy One’s impassive face gleamed, and Dorothy felt her mind unwillingly make a stronger connection with the giant robot.

Roger, standing in front of her, saw none of this. He raised his watch to his mouth and called, “Now, Big O! It’s show-time!”

Dorothy hardly noticed. She stared fixedly at the giant robot, unable to move her eyes or head, and she her control over mind and body starting to slip away, as the robotic part of her mind began to take control. “Stop it ... father,” she said.

A voice came over a bullhorn, one of the Military Police officers. “It’s not after the money! The thief is going after the printing plates! Protect the mint, and try to keep it from destroying public property!”



The ground rumbled, and another giant robot arrived, bursting out of the ground, partly destroying an abandoned building in its ascent to street level. It was clearly a Megadeus-class



robot, black with orange highlights, with massive shields on both forearms and cylindrical pistons of unknown function protruding from behind its elbows. It approached Dorothy One from behind and started dragging her away from the Mint. Dorothy One responded by withdrawing her tentacles from the Mint Building and turning to defend herself against the black robot.

Dorothy's Robot Part Takes Charge

Dorothy was barely aware of the black Megadeus. She was too busy fighting the compulsion to run directly towards Dorothy One, something the robotic part of her mind insisted was necessary. Dorothy resisted with all her might ...

... and suddenly found herself standing on a floor with a black and white checkerboard pattern that seemed to go on forever. Overhead was a colorless ... sky? Ceiling? Dorothy One was in the distance. But right next to Dorothy was an android, her own size and shape, but with odd, inverted colors, her face expressionless.

“It is time to help our sister,” said the robot in a voice much like Dorothy’s, but flatter, slower, more electronic. “She needs us.”

“She’s no sister of mine!”

“Listen.”

And Dorothy became more aware of the mind inside of



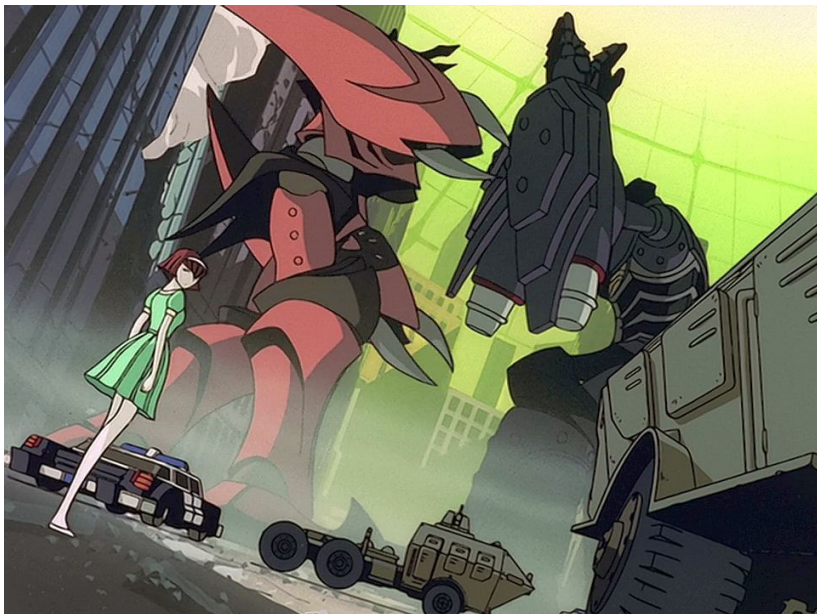
Dorothy One, a mind like a patient in delirium: frightened, disoriented, in pain. Instead of being fully activated, Dorothy One's mind had been hot-wired with overrides to let someone control her remotely, overrides that caused searing pain to her vulnerable, partly disconnected android brain.

Even in this confused state, Dorothy recognized that Dorothy One really *was* her sister—that she had an android brain made from that recording of the human Dorothy, installed into a giant robot and activated in a ruthless, hurried, haphazard way. *Father, what have you done?*

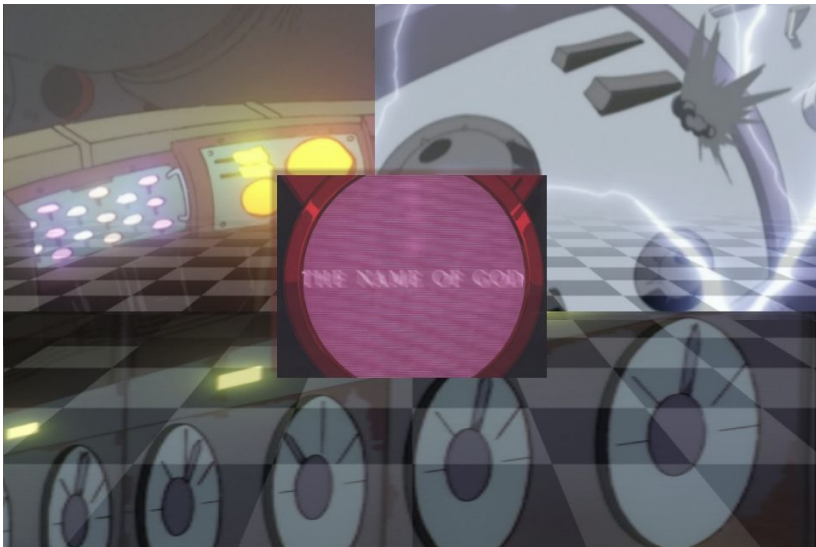
Dorothy didn't even realize that she was running towards the two battling robots until she heard an amplified voice call out, "You! Stop there!"

She briefly found herself back in the real world. She turned to look at the source of the voice, a bald, middle-aged police officer, then hurried on. Her sister needed her help.

She knew she was close enough when her body started mimicking the movements of Dorothy One. Her perceptions shifted again, as if she and her gleaming robotic companion seemed to

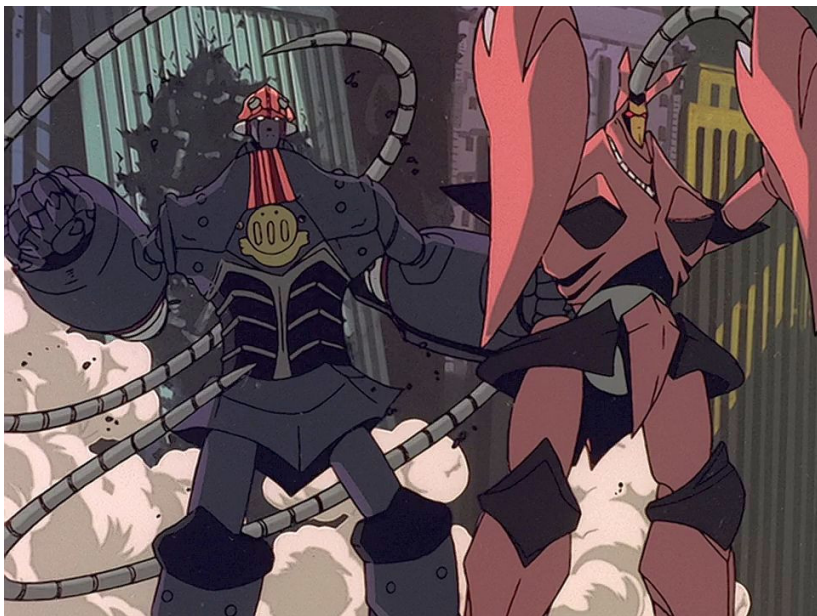


be inside Dorothy One, with access to switches and keyboards and control panels. This could not be literally true, but it seemed real. It had a full complement of sounds and even smells—hot oil, ozone from high-voltage electronics, a whiff of charred insulation from some of the brutal hacks put in to convert Dorothy One to remote control. These were all inner-world sounds and smells—the noise and stench of battle was taking place in a different world—yet, somehow, the work Dorothy did here had real power, would really take effect in Dorothy One’s mind.



They started racing through the wake-up sequence that would bring Dorothy One to full consciousness and control, a tricky business at the best of times, but one which her robotic side was well-equipped for. Bringing Megadeus-class attack robots to full wakefulness was one of her functions, Dorothy realized. Working together, they could do it very quickly. The robot Dorothy need only mention a procedure for it to appear in Dorothy’s memory, so perfectly that she could perform it without thinking.

The fight between the two giant robots continued.



It was working. It was working! On the endless black-and-white plain, which Dorothy could somehow inhabit at the same time as the control room, another girl was becoming clear, standing next to her, the Dorothy that was Dorothy One; a real person, not the radio-controlled, nearly mindless fraction that was battling the black Megadeus. As they worked on the final steps, Dorothy reached out and took her sister's hand. Dorothy One could not squeeze back, but Dorothy could feel her gratitude.

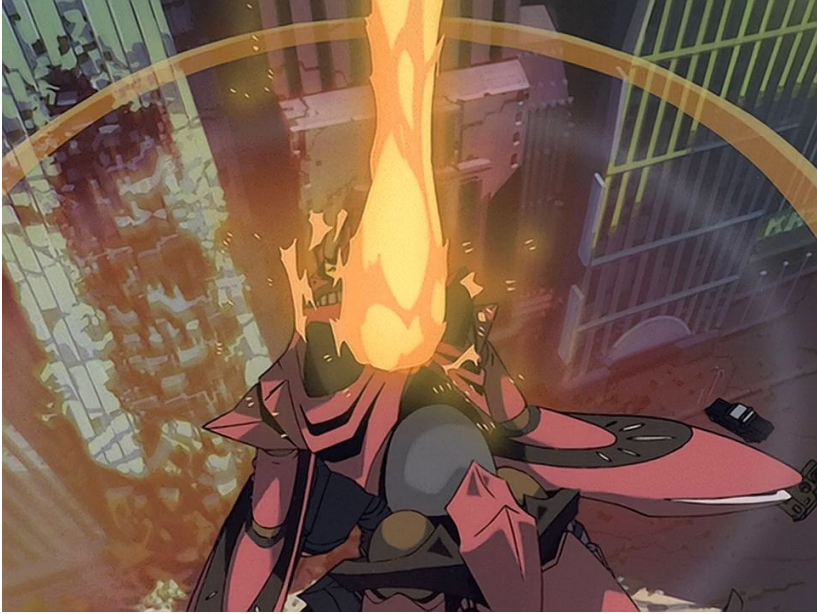
Dorothy assured her, "I'll take care of you."

Still operated by remote control, Dorothy One raised the black Megadeus in the air, but could not keep him there, and when he came back to the ground, he managed to shake off her tentacles.

The robot girl said, "I will guide her though the steps to override the remote control."

"Hurry!" said Dorothy and Dorothy One together.

But the black Megadeus punched Dorothy One in the chest, then fired some kind of weapon that blew a hole right through



her body, destroying Dorothy One's artificial brain, the core memory.

As Dorothy One died, Dorothy thought she was dying, too.
No! Wait! I have to...

As Dorothy lost consciousness, she heard her robotic part say, "Dorothy One" in sad farewell. The two bodies, Dorothy and Dorothy One, fell to the roadway and lay absolutely still.



Act 02: Dorothy, Dorothy

Safe in Her Father's Arms

Dorothy awoke suddenly. Where was she? What was happening? She was lying in the street. Police sirens could be heard not far off. Lying on the ground nearby was the hulk of a giant robot. Somehow she knew it was dead, that she had lost a loved one, that she had failed. *Wait, what?* She didn't understand any of this, but was nevertheless overcome by grief.

Even closer was a police officer, stretched out on the ground. Like her, he seemed to be regaining consciousness.

She noticed that she was still wearing her green dress. So whatever had happened hadn't taken all that long. Hours, not days. She would have insisted on changing.

Then she heard her father's voice. "Dorothy!"



She leaped to her feet, and there was Timothy Wayneright, standing on the sidewalk a short distance away, craning his neck, for once not even leaning on his cane. Overcome with relief, her grief forgotten, she ran to him, stopping only to pick up a shoe that had fallen off, overwhelmed by the need to be safe in his arms.

She took a single look back. The police officer had gotten to his feet. She heard him say in frustration, “Where’d she go?” Then her father enfolded her in his arms.



A moment later she felt the ground shaking. Turning her head, she saw a tall black robot walking away, its immensely heavy footsteps breaking nearby windows in addition to making the ground shake. She had never seen it before, but it seemed familiar, somehow. It walked to a huge hole in the road and stepped right into it. There must have been a platform or an elevator or something like that, because instead of plunging, it sank slowly out of sight.

Her father, who had also been distracted by the spectacle, looked down at her and said kindly, "Come, Dorothy. Let's get you home. It must have been quite an ordeal for you."

Disengaging from him, and taking his arm, she said, "Yes, father." Then she smiled up at him. "When I heard you calling me, I know I'd be alright." After a few steps, noticing that he was leaning heavily on his cane, she added solicitously, "You're not too tired?"

He laughed. "I'm fine, my dear. I have a car waiting quite close by. Too bad about the dress, it was one of my favorites. You'll have to pick out a replacement right away."

Diverted by this enchanting thought, and not wanting to think about what had happened—and what *had* happened? She couldn't remember—she allowed her father to steer her thoughts away from today's ordeal. How kind he was! He was the best father in the world.

The Nightingale Sings

Early that evening, her father announced that they would visit the Nightingale club for dinner. She was eager to show off her new red party dress and all its matching accessories, which extended even to a new red overcoat! And she knew her favorite pianist would be there, the one who was always so kind and made it easy to sing in front of others.

Though she tried to put it out of her mind, Dorothy knew that all was not well. While her father was in an excellent mood at the moment, the sad truth was that he was often moody and withdrawn, always touchy, and sometimes prone to rages. He was a deeply introverted man. In spite of his genuine delight in Dorothy's bubbly and outgoing nature, he found her exhausting in large doses. He would lapse into silence and retreat into his laboratory, where he always worked alone. It was unwise, even dangerous to pursue him or attempt to cheer him up in



that mood. In other moods, it was dangerous not to. Dorothy had to be as careful as her carefree disposition allowed.

And it didn't help that there were so many gaps in her memory! These bothered her and she usually tried not to think about them. But she had also started keeping a journal to help her figure out what was going on. She concealed this from her father and was careful about what she wrote. She was convinced that many of the entries were made by the girl she thought of as "the other Dorothy," during periods she could not remember, but she never read them. She couldn't tell if she was unwilling to read them or unable to.

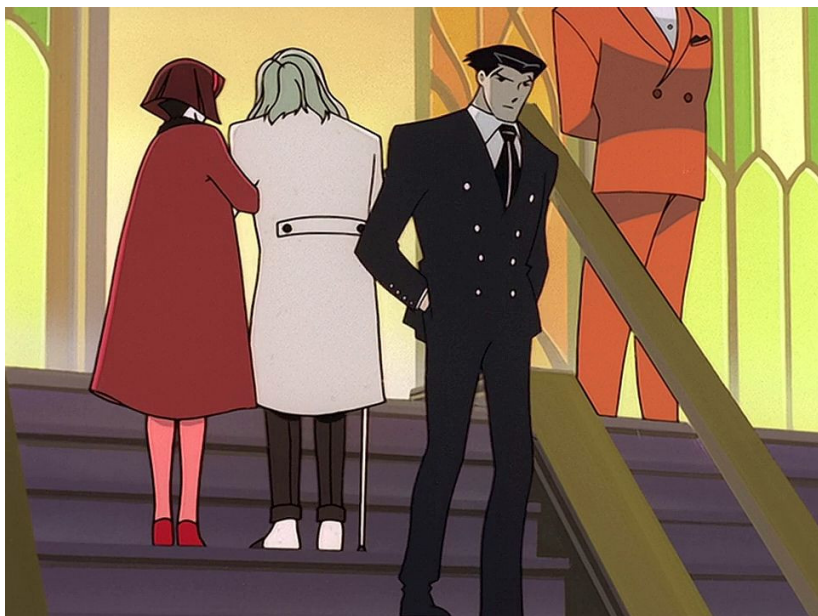
She suspected, though, that she was getting a pretty good deal. The gaps in her memory often began when her father was showing signs of growing weary of her, and she awakened to a father who was either delighted to see her or who needed to be talked down from a dangerous mood. Either way, it marked the start of a good spell, happy and loving. She had a feeling that the times she could not remember were cold and silent, or worse.

And when she thought about it, which wasn't often, she knew she had saved her own life several times by distracting or charming her father, starting with her very first memory.

She suspected she had saved her father's life, too. More than once. Her father made enemies so easily! Fortunately, they were all men so far, easily captivated. Well, all but one. She suspected that Alex Rosewater found all women repugnant. She hoped so. She didn't want his distaste to be reserved for her alone! But the rest tended to be sad and lonely, for all their money. Like poor Mr. Soldano. Or even Mr. Beck, if one stretched the point rather a lot. He would be more difficult. Much more difficult.

She was glad she had smiled at Mr. Beck. He had smiled back, and this made her feel safe, though she knew a predatory smile when she saw one. Dorothy wondered what Mr. Beck was up to now. She hadn't seen him after he left poor Mr. Soldano's apartment, but she had a vague feeling that she had missed something, something important.

But enough gloomy thoughts! The night was young. It would only get better. She helped her father up the steps. He was leaning more heavily than usual on his cane: the day's exertions were adding up. But not too much, she judged. Normally a proud man, a very proud man, he took pleasure in her solicitude, even in public. He imagined that she was the most beautiful young woman in the world, and that every man who saw them was consumed with helpless envy. She didn't really believe this, but she enjoyed it anyway.



A tall young man, dressed all in black, hands in his pockets, passed them on his way down the front steps. Her attention was on her father and she saw him only out of the corner of her eye and didn't recognize him.

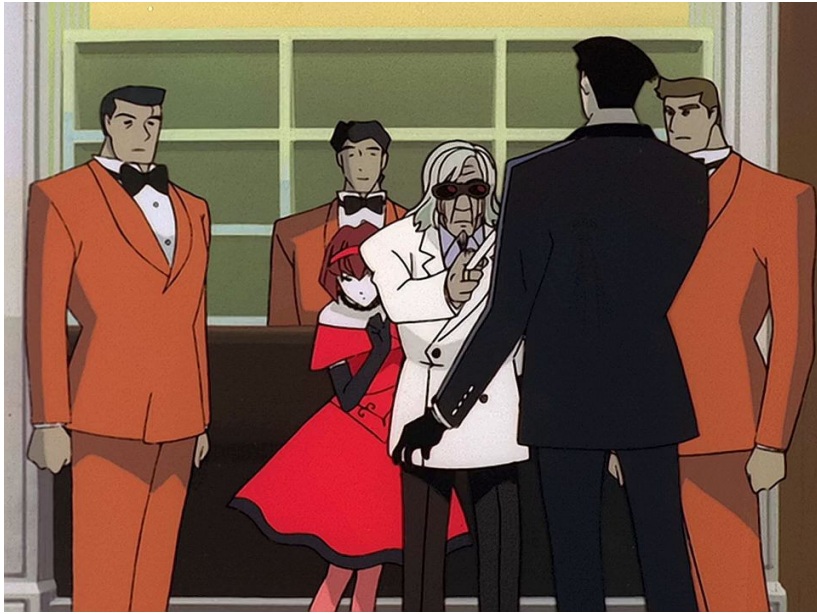
The man noticed her after she had checked her coat. He hurried back up the stairs, calling, "Dorothy! Where have you been? I've been worried about you."

She turned and stared at him. *My god, he's handsome! And he has the most beautiful voice.* She knew somehow that his name was Roger Smith. Equally entranced and alarmed, she hid behind her father.

Her father, angry, said, "Young man, who are you? And from where do you know my granddaughter?"

"Granddaughter?" repeated Roger in confusion.

"That is correct." Then, to needle Roger with the implication that he must be simple-minded, her father continued, "Which makes me Dorothy's grandfather."



Roger asked with some anger, "If she's an android, how can you," he stabbed his finger at Wayneright, "be her grandfather?"

Dorothy was impressed that the public mention of her android-ness did not send her father into a rage. He moved Roger's hand aside with a sweep of his cane and said, "You are a boorish, ill-mannered young man." He turned away, "Come, Dorothy!"

"Yes, father." She was fascinated by Roger Smith, drawn to him. She wanted to stay near him. But she was afraid, too. His belligerence and his loud announcement that she was an android alarmed her. She assisted her father, glancing back just once to see Roger Smith blocked by two staff members, unable to follow.

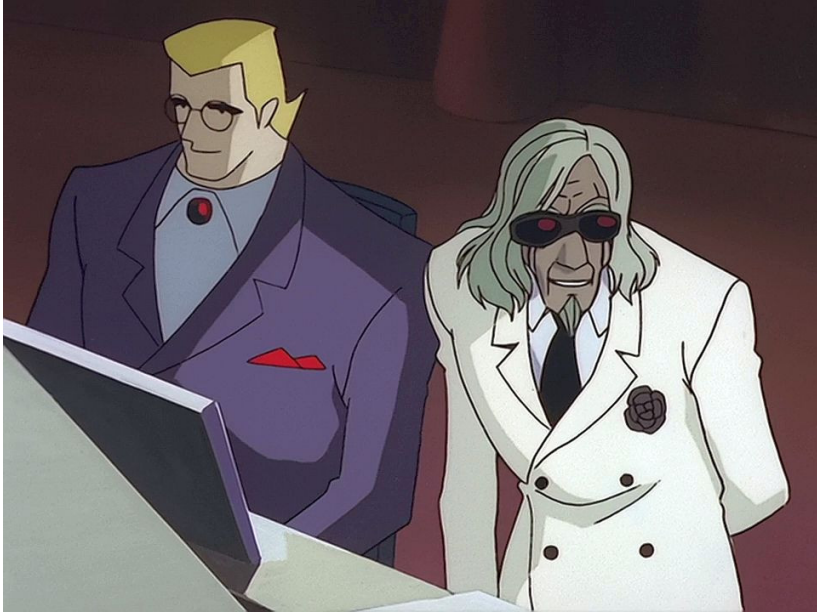
Taken to his favorite booth, Wayneright discussed the night's menu with the waiter and ordered for both of them. Dorothy could eat and drink, but as an android, she had no real digestion, so this was a social act, and her rudimentary senses of taste and smell were faint. But she enjoyed these

meals out. She saw that her father had already shaken off the irritation caused by Roger Smith, and she looked forward to the meal with genuine pleasure. Her father was at his most charming in social settings. He could be delightfully witty when he chose to be. Sadly, this wasn't often. But he loved taking her to the Nightingale.

This was going to be a good evening. She just knew it.

The food arrived and Dorothy enjoyed her father's enjoyment. After the food was taken away, he toyed with a glass of red wine as the jazz combo took the stage. Tonight featured a singer, a black woman who was very good, delighting the audience with a combination of old favorites and newer titles. Between numbers, her father made sly observations at the expense of some of the other guests. One of these caught Dorothy off-guard, and she burst into a fit of giggles, quickly turning away and covering her mouth with her hand so the object of her mirth wouldn't catch on. Her father leaned back and smiled broadly.



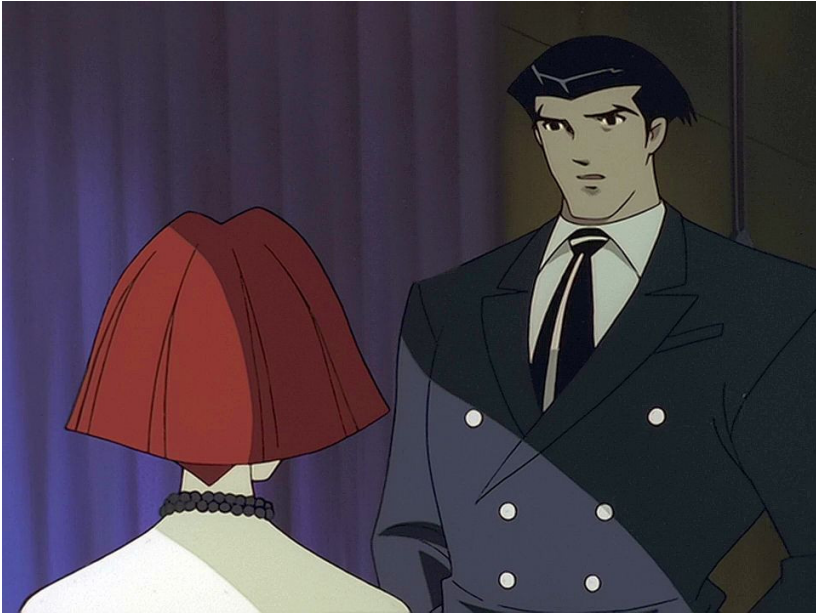


Later, after the combo and the singer were done for the evening, a tall blonde pianist took over the entertainment, playing requests, mostly. As usual, Wayneright approached him after the initial flurry of requests was over, and requested that he accompany Dorothy as she sang one of her favorite songs. He agreed cheerfully enough, and not just because Wayneright was an extremely generous tipper. He knew Dorothy had a good voice and was pretty and adorable. The audience liked her. He didn't know she was an android, though. She never let anyone know. She was barely aware of it herself.

So she went up on stage and sang a cheerful song. The audience responded with enthusiastic applause, and her father gazed up at her with something approaching adoration. She had never been so happy. Then she turned and ran off the stage to join her father.

Backstage Encounters

Dorothy snapped into conscious so abruptly that it hurt. Where was she? Then she recognized the location: backstage at the Nightingale. How had she gotten here? Wait, wasn't she supposed to be dead? *Why did I just think that?* The memory of some recent tragedy, too enormous to grasp, faded from her consciousness, and she was presented with something more immediate—and infinitely more appealing.

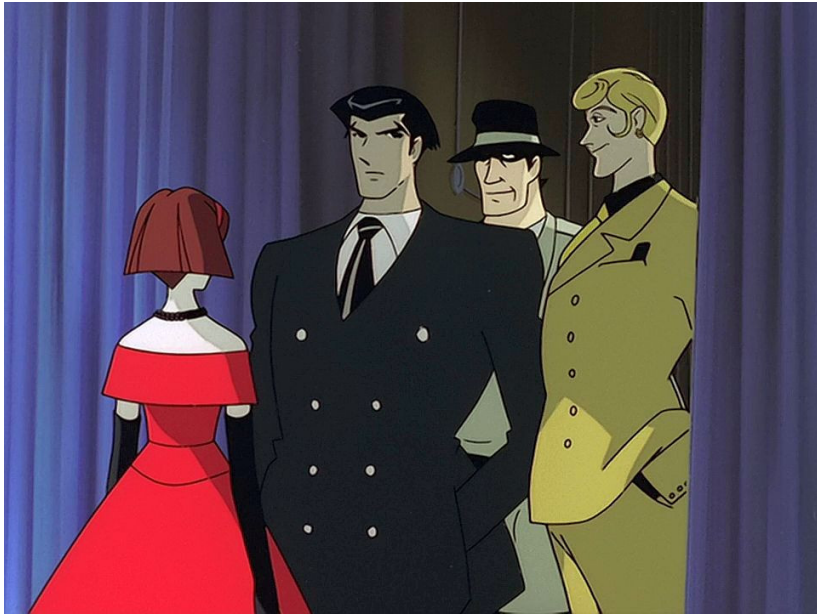


Roger Smith was standing in front of her. He said, “So you were looking for your father.”

He couldn't have been more wrong, but she said nothing.

He continued, “It was Soldano who raised you, but it was that old man out there, along with his memories, who breathed life into you.”

She gazed levelly at him as she wondered where to begin, baffled by his mixture of understanding and ignorance. Her



silence unnerved him, and he sighed. Then he continued, "Flesh or man-made, you're definitely Wayneright's."

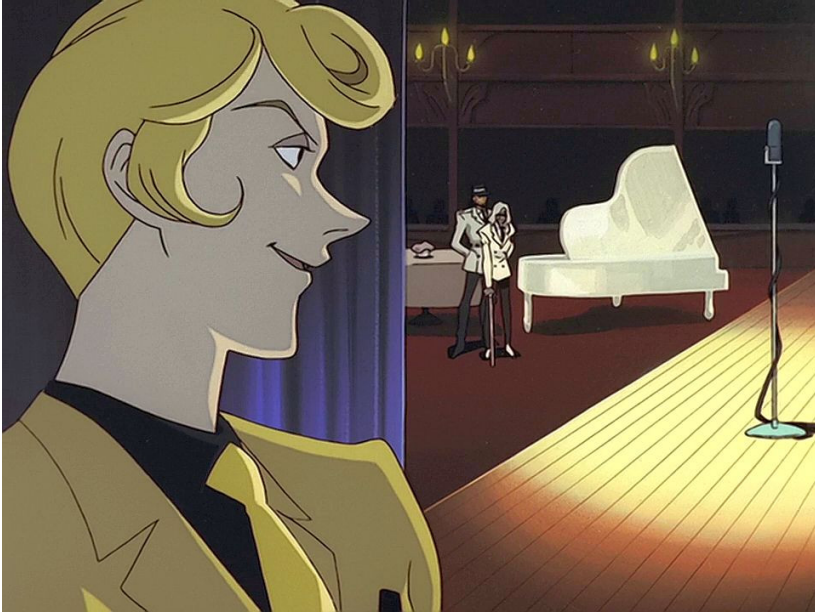
Well, he's right about that, at least, she thought, that's the problem in a nutshell. Yes, her words often failed her, but in a moment she'd make a start. Then he'd understand. Eventually.

She never got the chance. A man in a trench coat jammed a pistol in Roger Smith's back. Roger said in exasperation, "The bouncers in this club are sure some surly characters"

Beck chuckled. He was standing a few feet behind the thug, not even looking at Roger. He said, "Please don't create a fuss, Mr. Smith." Beck turned and walked towards Dorothy. "A very simple straightforward deal, Negotiator. Just keep your trap shut and hand over the girl."

Roger was annoyed. "That's underhanded."

Beck chuckled again. "Not true at all. You see?" He stepped onto the stage and indicated Wayneright, still standing next to the piano, where another thug held a gun on him. "I no longer need that crusty codger's memories. But I'm a fair man. Otherwise I'd have crushed him by now."



Angrily, Roger said, "I'm a professional negotiator, Beck. A blind man could see that this is an unfair trade and a bad deal."

Dorothy was impressed. The gun in his back seemed to have no effect on Roger at all. Could he talk his way out of this and prevent Beck from kidnapping her again? It hardly seemed likely, but Roger Smith was full of surprises.

Beck wasn't buying it. He warned Roger, "You'd better reconsider, if you don't want to see that old mummy die. Negotiations are closed." He turned his back on Roger and began to walk away. "Be a good boy and stay put."

The thug removed his gun from Roger's back and put his hands on Dorothy's shoulders, first trying to urge her into motion, then attempting to shove her into motion. "Man, this chick is heavy!"

Wayneright, seeing a man lay hands on his daughter, said, "Dorothy!"

Dorothy, who had been standing quietly all this time, suddenly came alert. She looked straight at Wayneright and said,

“Yes, father?” Though Wayneright said nothing, she decided to take action. She turned on the thug, grabbed him by the forearms, slowly lifted him over her head, and dropped him heavily to the ground.

Why am I so slow? It was hard, very hard, to attack someone. She suddenly realized that her android conditioning made violence difficult. Not impossible, though. She turned to the second thug, the one holding a gun on Wayneright. In a moment, she would rush him.

Roger shouted, “Dorothy!” She ignored him.

The man holding the gun on Wayneright was unnerved, terrified. “B-Beck!” he called.

Roger shouted, “Dorothy, don’t!”

Dorothy started forward and the man panicked, firing a single shot into Wayneright’s body. Wayneright fell, his cane escaping his grasp and clattering to the floor, the only sound in the stunned silence.

Dorothy felt a sudden pain and heard the sound of an electric arc as Beck pressed an electric cattle prod against her side. Then she knew no more.





Kidnapped Again

Dorothy awoke suddenly, jarringly. Beck was leaning over her, very close, a black-gloved hand on her forehead. She seemed to be in the back of a van. Where was Roger Smith? He was supposed to protect her! Where was her... her mind shied away from the second question before it was fully formed, leaving behind a vast and sourceless distress.

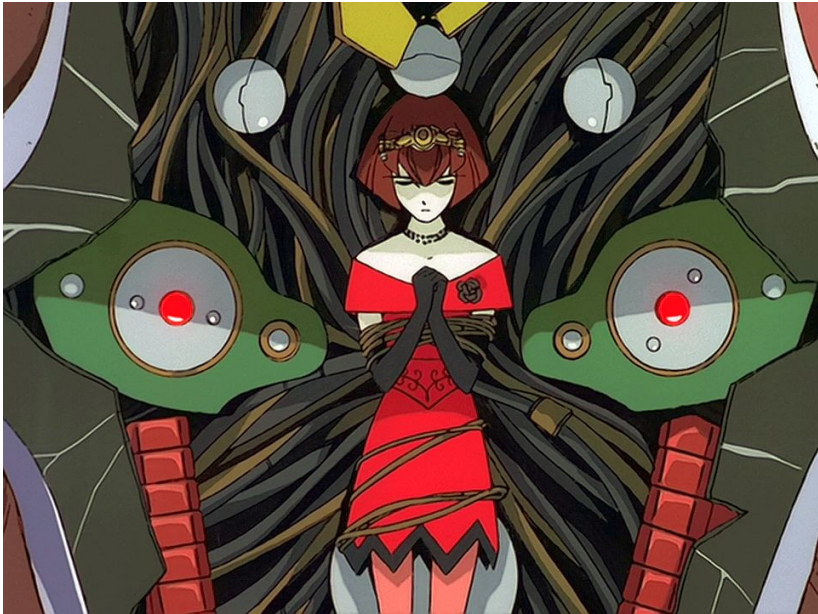
She opened her eyes and began to sit up. Her forehead slot was open. There was something attached to it. "There we go," Beck said cheerfully. Her forehead slot began to close.

Beck said, "Nighty-night," and flipped a switch. She lost consciousness again.

A Robot Within a Robot

Dorothy awoke in robot mode. *If I am in robot mode, why am I in so much pain?* Such things were almost exclusively the province of her human personality.

She discovered the answer almost at once. She was being controlled in the same appalling manner as Dorothy One. Not only that, but for practical purposes, she *was* Dorothy One. She was inside Dorothy One, and Beck had wired her into Dorothy One's circuitry. He was using her android brain as a replacement for Dorothy One's quite similar brain, now sadly destroyed. Dorothy was wearing a corpse.



Dorothy wanted to resist, but didn't know how. In robot mode, she followed orders.

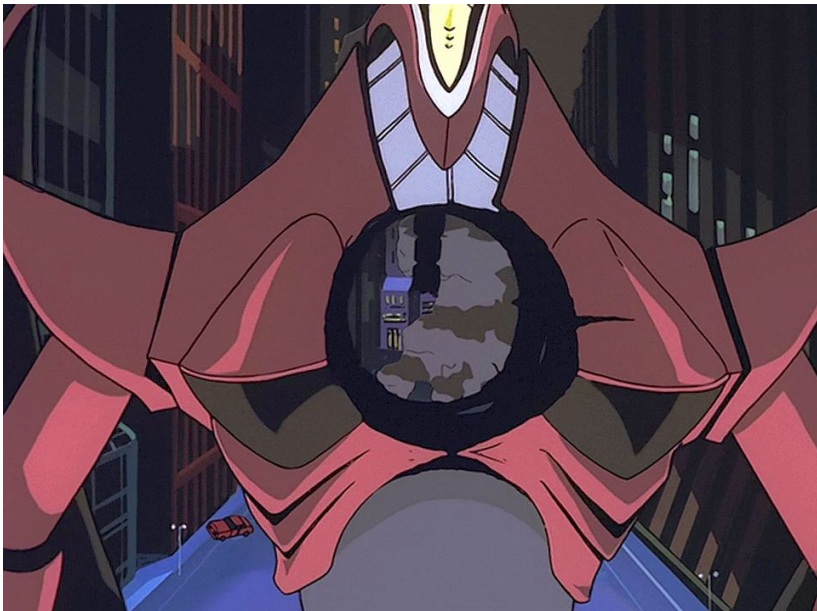
She realized with surprise just how little time had passed since Doctor Wayneright had been shot, less than an hour. Beck must have prepared skillfully and very, very quickly. He

must have gained entry to the hulk of Dorothy One, still lying immobile near the mint building, preparing the control cabling when no one was paying attention. That alone would have taken hours. And the interface to the circuitry in her head would have taken time, too. When all was ready, he had kidnapped her for the second time.

Dorothy was aware that her human personality would be distraught over Doctor Wayneright's death. Correction—*both* her human personalities. Both? When had *that* happened? And why?

But perhaps Doctor Wayneright was only wounded; she did not know. Not that it mattered. She had no feelings about Doctor Wayneright; he was not her father. She had no father.

The pain increased sharply, and her eyes widened. Then they closed as her senses expanded to fill Dorothy One's body and she lost track of her own. She became a hundred feet tall, immensely powerful, but wounded, sluggish, and more than a little disoriented. Her Dominus—no, alas, it was only Beck—forced her into motion. He wasn't in the cockpit, but operating



her from a remote location. That van, perhaps.

How will Beck prevent the black Megadeus from killing me for the second time? Through sheer speed and luck, apparently.

Dorothy One slowly approached the mint building again. It was nighttime, even inside the dome.

For some reason, Beck was sharing an audio circuit with her. “This darn thing doesn't wanna move!” he said. “But I'm gonna nab those plates this time for sure.”

The Military Police fired a few ineffective shots at her from their armored cars. She and Beck ignored them. Dorothy was almost completely unable to initiate violence on her own, especially in robot mode, but she could not resist Beck's orders. She hoped no one would get hurt.

Then the ground opened up in front of her and the black Megadeus rose out of it. The Megadeus had a palpable presence: confident, masculine, powerful, determined. She could



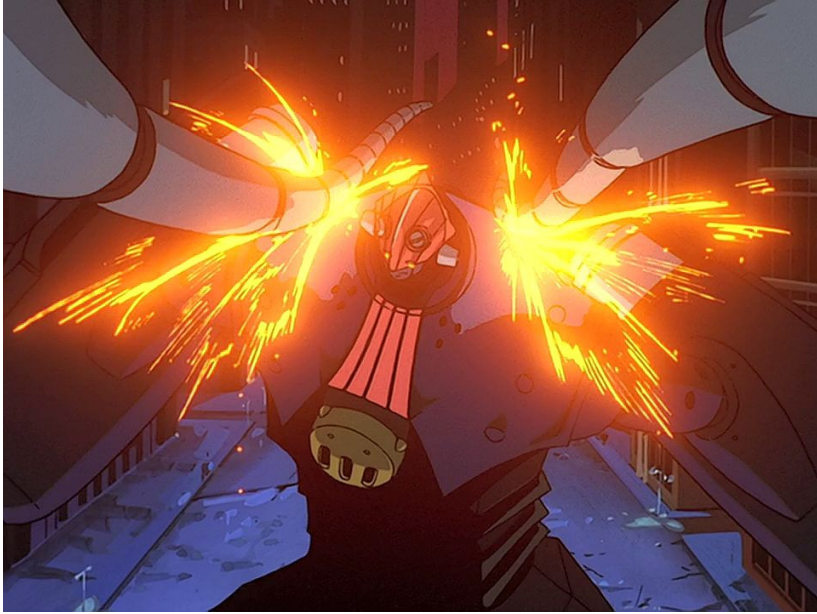
sense this, and more. She could sense the Megadeus' name. He was Big O. Unlike most Megadeuses, Big O was not crazy. Quite the contrary. Under any other circumstances, they would be allies, even friends. Alas, in her current state, he could pick up little or nothing about her. He couldn't know she was an android playing Megadeus and not a real threat at all. And without malice, without hatred, contempt, or even dislike, he would soon kill her. She was too slow, too damaged to defend herself. And no one would grieve. No one would even miss her.

Over another of her audio channels, she heard the voice of Big O's Dominus. It was a beautiful voice, deep and surprisingly good-natured, under the circumstances. "You're becoming a real pain, Miss Dorothy One."

That is Roger Smith's voice! She couldn't recall ever hearing it before, but she recognized it at once. Though Dorothy thought of herself as emotionless, a dizzying wave of hope, despair, and longing overwhelmed her. *Help me, Roger Smith!*

Beck cried, "He's back? You gotta be kidding me! Who's controlling it?"



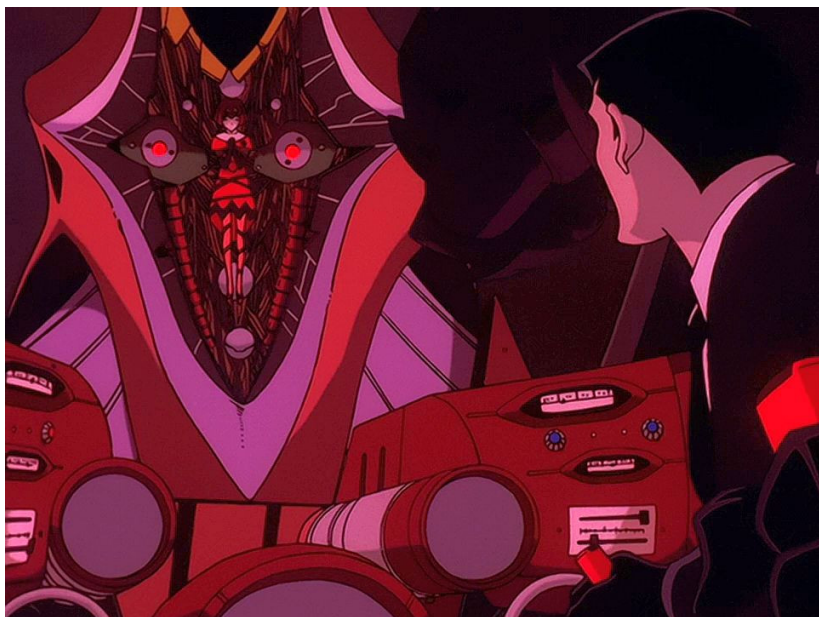


Beck had her launch her tentacles at Big O, but his aim was high. Big O was inside her guard and stepped forward to kill her once again. He battered her with his fists, shattering the transparent armor covering her face.

She heard Roger Smith say, “I destroyed its power transmission circuits, yet it can still move. No matter.” She saw the piston on Big O's right arm snap back, preparing for another punch like the one that had killed her before. “It's the end of the line!” Big O's fist shot forward.

Dorothy thought her life was over, but the blow never landed. Big O pulled his punch and then stopped short.

She heard Roger say in surprise, “Dorothy! The android! I mean Dorothy is being used as a power regulator circuit!” After a moment, Roger blew off the charge in the arm piston and Big O took a few steps backward.



Beck laughed his horrible, cackling laugh as Big O retreated. “You gotta put the legacy of a brilliant scientist to good use!” Once again, Beck launched Dorothy One's tentacles, this time ensnaring Big O, then deployed Dorothy One's right-hand drill as he reeled in Big O with the left-hand tentacle. Big O staggered forward, coming to rest almost chest to chest with Dorothy One.

To Dorothy's amazement, the throat hatch opened on Big O and Roger Smith stepped out. She had never seen him before. *My god, he's handsome!* Using a wrist grapple, Roger Smith swung up to where the android... to where she herself was bound.

“Dorothy! Dorothy, hang on!” Soon he was right in front of her. “Dorothy! Come on, snap out of it!”

He started ripping away cables in an effort to free her. As he ripped one cable after another, he said, “You're Dorothy Wayneright! Just be who you are!”



Roger Smith, I think I love you! She was amazed that she could think such thoughts in robot mode. *And yes, Dominus, I will obey your commands. I am Dorothy Wayneright, and I will be who I am.* She opened her eyes and said in her robotic voice, “Ro-ger.”

Roger picked her up like a child, or like a man carrying his bride across the threshold. He pulled her free from the final cables, but not before she heard a howl from Beck, “No! Stop it!” Then she was free. She was free!

Dorothy One, no longer controlled, began to topple as Roger carried her across to Big O. He set her down on the command deck and said cheerfully, “Man! You must weight a ton!” He reached for the control tiara that Beck had clipped to her forehead slot. “Let's get rid of this.” He removed it, and her forehead slot closed.

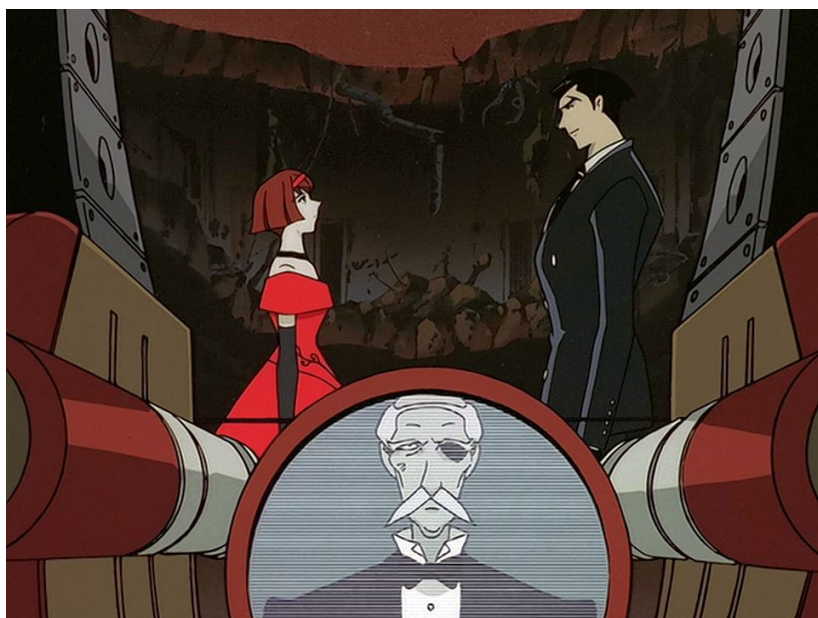


For a moment Dorothy was half robotic, half human. This had never happened before. “Roger,” she said, in an in-between voice. “I don’t un...” she got to her feet convulsively.

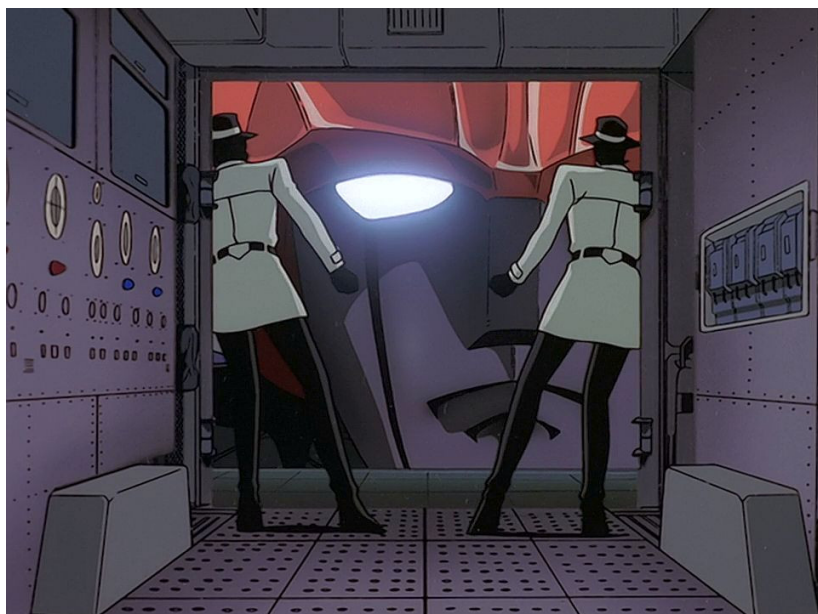
Roger smiled down at her, and with that smile, her last doubt vanished. *I love you, Roger Smith!* Her robot side faded into the background, but the love remained.

Still smiling, Roger said, “I’m doing what you asked. You wanted my protection.”

They gazed into each other’s eyes for a long moment. It would have been even longer, but they were interrupted. With a beep, an audio-visual circuit came to life and a voice said, “Master Roger, your dinner will be ready soon, sir.”



Roger said, “Thanks, but I’ll be late. I need to take care of something first.”



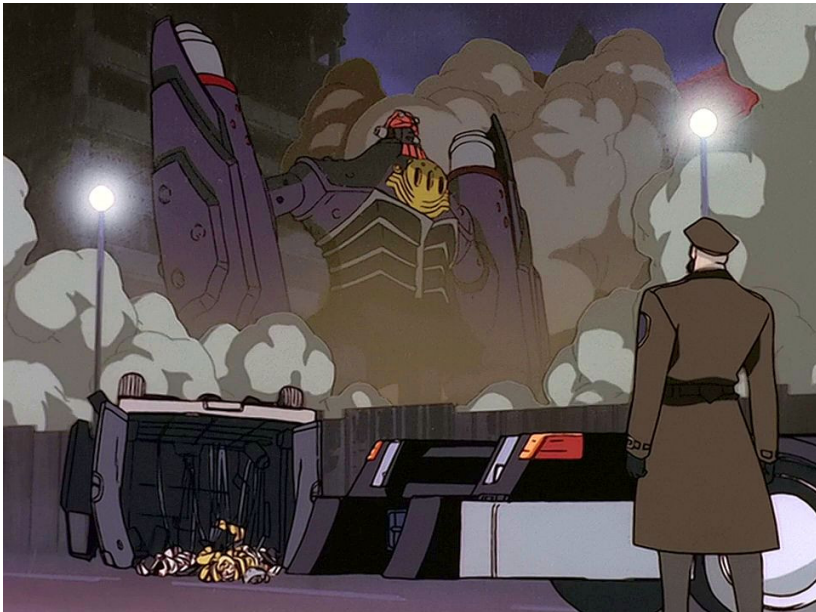
He put the tiara into a storage compartment and returned to the command seat. Tracing Beck's command channel, he took Big O to the parking structure where Beck had parked his control van. Beck tried belatedly to escape, but Big O snatched the van, picked it up in one hand, and carried it to police headquarters.

"Let go! Put the van down!" shouted Beck from the open driver's-side window of the van.

Roger said, "If you won't negotiate with me on professional terms, you pay the price." But he didn't engage Big O's external speakers, because he didn't want Beck to hear him. Roger was keeping his identity as the pilot of Big O a secret.

Big O dropped the van from a moderate height. It landed near a waiting crowd of policemen, and Beck tumbled out of the back door. Soon Big O was disappearing into the underground again.

Dorothy was silent as Roger and Big O took her back to their home, the nine-story building, once an abandoned bank, that Roger had taken for his own. Big O was transported under-



ground using an abandoned subway system, using an enormous railcar that spanned two sets of tracks. The subway emerged in a hemispherical chamber of unknown origin beneath the bank.

She discovered that she could communicate a little with Big O. Big O had an android brain much like her own. He was old, very old—how old, he didn't know—but originally his personality had been a recording of a human mind, as was hers. He was supremely calm and confident, and he approved of her! It was as if she had always belonged here, and had come home at last.

Her mind still reeling from all that had happened, she was grateful for Big O's serene if inexplicable acceptance. And when they reached Roger's home, the butler, Norman, was just the same.

Soon Roger was distracted by a phone call from Major Dastun, who had a couple of follow-up questions about Wayneright's murder.

Norman installed Dorothy in a guest room for the night. Since she did not sleep, she spent the hours staring out the window at the domed city, allowing her kaleidoscopic thoughts to organize themselves as best they could. Her awareness of her grief over Dorothy One and her father came and went, but her love for Roger Smith was always with her. It gave her hope, though it seemed hopeless.

A New Dress and a New Career

At dawn, Norman tapped on her door at asked if he could be of service.

Surprised by her own daring, she told him impulsively, "I am in love with Roger Smith." Then, hesitatingly, she almost whispered, "Do you think he could ever love me?"

Norman tried to look impassive, but for some reason he was delighted. "It may take quite some time for Master Roger to know his own mind, miss," he said, "But yes, I do believe it's possible. Very possible indeed. Tell me, do you have any family or work obligations that restrict your freedom of action?"

"No."

"Then you must stay here with us. We are terribly short-staffed here. In fact, I represent the entire staff of the household. It is so hard to find people one can trust, you see. I hereby offer you employment."

Dorothy said, "I accept."



"I am delighted to hear it. Welcome aboard, Miss Dorothy."

"Thank you, Norman."

"And now, we must be brisk. We will need to get you suitable clothes at once, before Master Roger wakes up around noon."

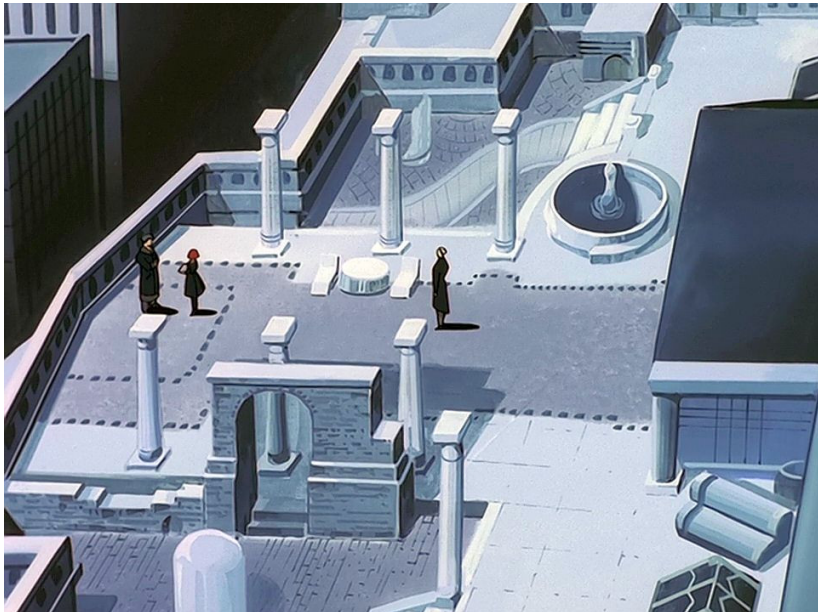
They walked a few blocks to a dressmaker of Norman's acquaintance. Soon Dorothy was fitted for a lovely knee-length black dress in a rich and costly velvety cloth. Accessories were soon selected, including soft, low, almost heelless shoes and a surprisingly expensive green brooch.

"This is not a servant's uniform," said Dorothy, looking at herself in the full-length mirror.

"No indeed, miss," said Norman with a smile. "That would run counter to our intentions! No, it is the kind of dress that might be worn by, say, Master Roger's sister. Or his fiancée."

One advantage of being an android, Dorothy realized, was that one could not blush. Or weep tears of gratitude. Searching for the words that would express her feelings, she found none. Perhaps blushes and tears were not so bad after all.

"Thank you, Norman," she said at last.



Wearing her new finery, she and Norman returned to Smith Manor before Roger rose, sleepy, still in pajamas and bathrobe, his hair mussed. He wandered onto the penthouse terrace, where he liked to take his morning coffee.

“Good morning, Master Roger,” said Norman, appearing on the terrace. Dorothy stood beside him, bearing a tray containing a coffee cup, looking calm, trim, and (according to Norman and the dressmaker) beautiful in her new outfit.

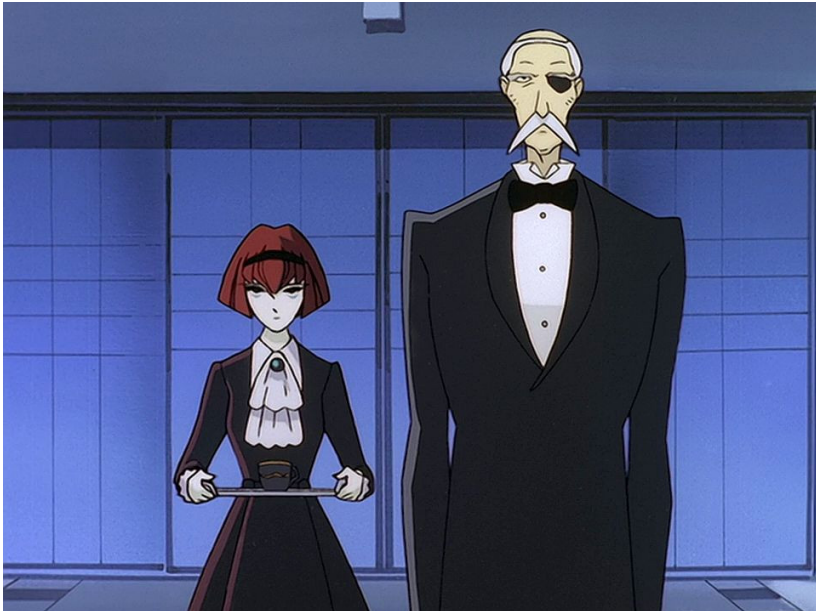
Roger's eyes widened as she walked slowly to him with her tray. He pointed a finger at her and asked, “Norman? What's this? Why is the android wearing that outfit?”

Norman chuckled. “I'm overjoyed to have her here. She can help me take care of you.”

Astonished, Roger said, “Wait a minute! You mean Dorothy is going to be living with us?”

Dorothy said, “It's not because I want to. There's nowhere for me to go. Besides, I owe a debt to you. I have no other means of paying the negotiator's services you rendered.”

Roger was momentarily surprised, then instantly capitulated.





lated. With a smile!

That's right, Roger Smith! You want me to stay.

Roger attempted to regain the initiative. He said, "Well, I do have some household rules, Dorothy. And while you're living here, you're obligated to observe every one of them."

"What kind of rules?"

"The first one is a rule even I follow. If you stay here, you wear black."

Dorothy looked at Norman's attire, and then at Roger's. She said levelly, "Your sense of fashion, Roger, really reeks."

[WE HAVE COME TO TERMS]