

THE PROLIFIC FIFTIES

The 1950s were a boom period for science fiction in Great Britain as well as in the United States. Some fifty different magazines were published in the U.S. in the early 1950s, and about forty at one time. Books not only were being published again, the number of titles published was reaching seventy or more a year. Anthologies were reprinting stories and even, in a couple of instances, calling for original stories.

In Britain the number of new magazines was limited by the success of *New Worlds*, which became a monthly in 1954 and remained so until 1964, but the book market, until its decline beginning in 1955, was producing as many titles as in the U.S.

The burgeoning magazine market in the U.S., however, meant even greater opportunities for new writers to get published and for more established writers to find a market for not only their new work but often for work that previous editors had not found to their liking. And two major new magazines, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, beginning in 1949, and *Galaxy*, in 1950, were providing not only a new monthly opportunity but viable alternatives to John Campbell's science-oriented stories in *Astounding*. *Fantasy and Science Fiction* wanted literary fiction and *Galaxy*, slick social fiction. They attracted new writers and broadened the scope of the fiction being published.

One of the writers attracted was James Murdock MacGregor, who published his science fiction under the name of J. T. McIntosh (spelled M'Intosh in a number of its earlier appearances). A Scottish writer and journalist born in 1925, McIntosh commented that when he was ready to publish in the late 1940s "paper was in short supply and publishers tended to use it for books by established

authors. America was the obvious market, but I had no accurate knowledge of the U.S. scene. So I wrote SF, in which accurate knowledge of the U.S. scene is not necessary.”

His success at that is indicated by the fact that between 1950 and 1965 he published almost a hundred stories in magazines that ran the gamut from *Astounding* (which published his first story in 1950) to *Galaxy*, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and half a dozen other magazines, including the British magazines *New Worlds*, *Authentic*, and *Nebula*. He also wrote novels, many of which were serialized in the magazines before being published as books, both in Britain and the U.S. As he pointed out, “Later, when I tried non-SF, the international nature of SF became clear to me. There was little interest in my mainstream fiction outside Britain, while the SF books often had editions in many other countries.” Eventually, by the late 1970s, he had published nearly twenty SF novels, as well as a couple of detective novels, and three non-SF novels as James MacGregor.

His best-known novels were his early ones: *World Out of Mind* (1953), *Born Leader* (1954), *One in Three Hundred* (1954), and *The Fittest* (1955). Perhaps his best work, however, was in his short fiction, none of it collected. His unfamiliarity with the American scene is not evidenced by his 1953 *Galaxy* novelette “Made in U.S.A.,” which took a comic look at marriage, androids, and the U.S. court system. It was the kind of *Saturday Evening Post* slick, romantic vision that *Galaxy* editor H. L. Gold wanted.

By the end of the 1950s the science-fiction boom in both the U.S. and Britain was over. Harry Harrison called the decade the false spring of SF, and Barry Malzberg, in his anthology *The End of Summer: Science Fiction of the Fifties*, attributed the U.S. decline to the breakup of the American News Service distribution system, the shrinking audience (which never had been large enough to support the vast expansion in magazines), and the exhaustion of writers and editors. The number of magazines dropped back to their prewar total, Anthony Boucher of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* and Horace Gold of *Galaxy* left the magazines they had founded, and, among significant book publishers, only Ace and Doubleday (and Ballantine, irregularly) were left.

Britain never had the magazine decline, because it never had the boom, but the book market dropped precipitously, and British writers who had gotten much of their income and readership from the American market must have been as discouraged as their U.S. counterparts. Many writing careers were disrupted. But, had the SF family only possessed the prescience about which they wrote, they would have been less discouraged. Great things were ahead.

BY**J. T.****MCINTOSH**

Not a soul watched as Roderick Liffcom carried his bride across the threshold. They were just a couple of nice, good-looking kids—Roderick a psychologist and Alison an ex-copywriter. They weren't news yet. There was nothing to hint that in a few days the name of Liffcom would be known to almost everyone in the world, the tag on a case which interested everybody. Not everyone would follow a murder case, a graft case, or an espionage case. But everyone would follow the Liffcom case.

Let's have a good look at them while we have the chance, before the mobs surround them. Roderick was big and strong enough to treat his wife's 115 pounds with contempt, but there was no contempt in the way he held her. He carried her as if she were a million dollars in small bills and there was a strong wind blowing. He looked down at her with his heart in his eyes. He had black hair and brown eyes and one could see at a glance that he could have carried any girl he liked over the threshold.

Alison nestled in his arms like a kitten, eyes half-closed with rapture, arms about his neck. She was blonde and had fantastically beautiful eyes, not to mention the considerable claims to notice of her other features. But even at first glance one would know that there was more to Alison than beauty. It might be brains, or courage, or hard, bitter experience that had tempered her keen as steel. One could see at a glance that she could have been carried over the threshold by any man she liked.

As they went in, it was the end of a story. But let's be different and call it the beginning.

In the morning, when they were at breakfast on the terrace, the picture hadn't changed radically. That is, Roderick was rather different, blue-chinned and sleepy-eyed and in a brown flannel bathrobe, and Alison was more spectacularly different in a pale green negligée that wasn't so much worn as wafted about. But the way they looked at each other hadn't changed remotely—then.

"There's something," remarked Alison casually, tracing patterns on the damask tablecloth with one slim finger, "that perhaps I ought to tell you."

Two minutes later they were fighting for the phone.

"I want to call my lawyer," Roderick bellowed.

"I want to call my lawyer," Alison retorted.

He paused, the number half dialed. "You can't," he told her roughly. "It's the same lawyer."

She recovered herself first, as she always had. She smiled sunnily. "Shall we toss a coin for him?" she suggested.

"No," said Roderick brutally. Where, oh, where was his great blinding love? "He's mine. I pay him more than you ever could."

"Right," agreed Alison. "I'll fight the case myself."

"So will I," Roderick exclaimed, and slammed the receiver down. Instantly he picked it up again. "No, we'll need him to get things moving."

"Collusion?" asked Alison sweetly.

"It was a low, mean, stinking, dirty, cattish, obscene, disgusting, filthy-minded thing to wait until..."

"Until what?" Alison asked with more innocence than one would have thought there was in the world.

"Android!" he spat viciously at her.

Despite herself, her eyes flashed with anger.

II

The newspapers not only mentioned it, they said it at the top of their voices: HUMAN SUES ANDROID FOR DIVORCE. It wasn't much of a headline, for one naturally wondered why a human suing an android for divorce should rate a front-page story. After all, half the population of the world was android. Every day humans divorced humans, humans androids, androids humans, and androids androids. The natural reaction to a headline like that was: "So what? Who cares?"

But it didn't need particular intelligence to realize that there must be something rather special about this case.

The report ran: "Everton, Tuesday. History is made today in the first human vs. android divorce case since the recent grant of full legal equality to androids. It is also the first case of a divorce sought on the grounds that one contracting party did not know the other was an android. This became possible only because the equality law made it no longer obligatory to disclose android origin in any contract.

"Recognizing the importance of this test case, certain to affect millions in the future, *Twenty-four Hours* will cover the case, which opens on Friday, in meticulous detail. Ace reporters Anona Grier and Walter Hallsmith will bring to our readers the whole story of this historic trial. Grier is human and Hallsmith android...."

The report went on to give such details as the names of the people in this important test case, and remarked incidentally that although the Liffcom marriage had lasted only ten hours and thirteen minutes before the divorce plea was entered, there had been even briefer marriages recorded.

Twenty-four Hours thus adroitly obviated thousands of letters asking breathlessly: "Is this a record?"

III

Alison, back at her bachelor flat, stretched herself on a divan, focused her eyes past the ceiling on infinity, and thought and thought and thought.

She wasn't particularly unhappy. Not for Alison were misery and resentment and wild, impossible hope. She met the tragedy of her life with placid resignation and even humor.

"Let's face it," she told herself firmly, "I'm hurt. I hoped he'd say, 'It doesn't matter. What difference could that make? It's you I love'—the sort of thing men say in love stories. But what did he say? *Dirty android.*"

Oh, well. Life wasn't like love stories or they wouldn't just be stories.

She might as well admit for a start that she still loved him. That would clarify her feelings.

She should have told him earlier that she was an android. Perhaps he had some excuse for believing she merely waited until non-consummation was no longer grounds for divorce, and then triumphantly threw the fact that she was an android in his lap. (But what good was that supposed to do her?)

It wasn't like that at all, of course. She hadn't told him because they had to get to know each other before the question arose. One didn't say the moment one was introduced to a person: "I'm married," or "I once served five years for theft," or "I'm an android. Are you?"

If in the first few weeks she had known Roderick, some remark had been made about androids, she'd have remarked that she was one herself. But it never had.

When he asked her to marry him, she honestly didn't think of saying she was an android. There were times when it mattered and times when it didn't; this seemed to be one of the latter. Roderick was so intelligent, so liberal-minded, and so easygoing (except when he lost his temper) that she didn't think he would care.

It never did occur to her that he might care. She just mentioned it, as one might say: "I hope you don't mind my drinking iced coffee every morning." Well, almost. She just mentioned it...

And happiness was over.

Now an idea was growing in the sad ripple of her thoughts. Did Roderick really want this divorce case, after all, or was he only trying to prove something? Because if he was, she was ready to admit cheerfully that it was proved.

She wanted Roderick. She didn't quite understand what had happened—perhaps he would take her back on condition that he could trample on her face first. If so, that was all right. She was prepared to let him swear at her and rage at androids and work off any prejudice and hate he might have accumulated somehow, somewhere—as long as he took her back.

She reached behind her, picked up the telephone and dialed Roderick's number.

"Hello, Roderick," she said cheerfully. "This is Alison. No, don't hang up. Tell me, why do you hate androids?"

There was such a long silence that she knew he was considering everything, including the advisability of hanging up without a word. It could be said of Roderick that he thought things through very carefully before going off half-cocked.

"I don't hate androids," he barked at last.

"You've got something against android girls, then?"

"No!" he shouted. "I'm a psychologist. I think comparatively straight. I'm not fouled up with race hatred and prejudice and megalomania and—"

"Then," said Alison very quietly, "it's just one particular android girl you hate."

Roderick's voice was suddenly quiet, too. "No, Alison. It has nothing to do with that. It's just...children."

So that was it. Alison's eyes filled with tears. That was the one thing she could do nothing about, the thing she had refused even to consider.

"You really mean it?" she asked. "That's not just the case you're going to make out?"

"It's the case I'm going to make out," he replied, "and I mean it. Trouble is, Alison, you hit something you couldn't have figured on. Most people want children, but are resigned to the fact that they're not likely to get them. I was one of a family of eight. The youngest. You'd have thought, wouldn't you, that that line was pretty safe?"

"Well, all the others are married. Some have been for a long time. One brother and two sisters have been married twice. That makes a total of seventeen human beings, not counting me. And their net achievement in the way of reproduction is zero.

"It's a question of family continuity, don't you see? I don't think we'd mind if there was *one* child among the lot of us—one extension into the future. But there isn't, and there's only this chance left."

Alison dropped as close to misery as she ever did. She understood every word Roderick said and what was behind every word. If she ever had a chance of having children, she wouldn't give it up for one individual or love of one individual, either.

But then, of course, she never had it.

In the silence, Roderick hung up. Alison looked down at her own beautiful body and for once couldn't draw a shadow of complacency or content from looking at it. Instead, it irritated her, for it would never produce a child. What was the use of all the appearance, all the mechanism of sex, without its one real function?

But it never occurred to her to give up, to let the suit go undefended. There must something she could do, some line she could take. Winning the case was nothing, except that that might be a tiny, unimportant part of winning back Roderick.

IV

The judge was a little pompous, and it was obvious from the start that under the very considerable power he had under the contract-court system, he meant to run this case in his own way and enjoy it.

He clasped his hands on the bench and looked around the packed courtroom happily. He made his introductory remarks with obvious intense satisfaction that at least fifty reporters were writing down every word.

"This has been called an important case," he said, "and it is. I could tell you why it is important, but that would not be justice. Our starting point must be this." He wagged his head in solemn glee at the jury. "We know nothing."

He liked that. He said it again. "*We know nothing*. We don't know the factors involved. We have never heard of androids. All this and more, we have to be told. We can call on anyone anywhere for evidence. And we must make up our minds *here and now*, on what we are told *here and now*, on the rights and wrongs of this case—and on nothing else."

He had stated his theme and he developed it. He swooped and soared; he shot away out of sight and returned like a swift raven to cast pearls before swine. For, of course, his audience was composed of swine. He didn't say so or drop the smallest hint to that effect, but it wasn't necessary. Only on Roderick and Alison did he cast a fatherly, friendly eye. They had given him his hour of glory. They weren't swine.

But Judge Collier was no fool. Before he had lost the interest he had created, he was back in the courtroom, getting things moving.

"I understand," he said, glancing from Alison to Roderick and then back at Alison, which was understandable, "that you are conducting your own cases. That will be a factor tending toward informality, which is all to the good. First of all, will you look at the jury?"

Everyone in court looked at the jury. The jury looked at each other. In accordance with contract-court procedure, Roderick and Alison faced each other across the room, with the jury behind Alison so that they could see Roderick full-face and Alison in profile, and would know when they were lying.

"Alison Liffcom," said the judge, "have you any objection to any member of the jury?"

Alison studied them. They were people, no more, no less. Careful police surveys produced juries that were as near genuine random groups as could reasonably be found.

"No," she said.

"Roderick Liffcom. Have you any objection—"

"Yes," said Roderick belligerently. "I want to know how many of them are androids."

There was a stir of interest in the court.

So it was really to be a human-android battle.

Judge Collier's expression did not change. "Out of order," he said. "Humans and androids are equal at law, and you cannot object to any juror because he is an android."

"But this case concerns the rights of humans and androids," Roderick protested.

"It concerns nothing of the kind," replied the judge sternly, "and if your plea is along those lines, we may as well forget the whole thing and go home. You cannot divorce your wife because she is an android."

"But she didn't tell me—"

"Nor because she didn't tell you. No android now is obliged, ever, to disclose—"

"I know all that," said Roderick, exasperated. "Must I state the obvious? I never had much to do with the law, but I do know this—the fact that A equals B may cut no ice, while the fact that B equals A may sew the whole case up. Okay, I'll state the obvious. I seek divorce on the grounds that Alison concealed from me until after our marriage her inability to have a child."

It was the obvious plea, but it was still a surprise to some people. There was a murmur of interest. Now things could move. There was something to argue about.

Alison watched Roderick and smiled at the thought that she knew him much better than anyone else in the courtroom did. Calm, he was dangerous, and he was fighting to be calm. And as she looked steadily at him, part of her was wondering how she could upset him and put him off stroke, while the other part was praying that he would be able to control himself and show up well.

She was asked to take the stand and she did it absently, still thinking about Roderick. Yes, she contested the divorce. No, she didn't deny that the facts were as stated. On what grounds did she contest the case, then?

She brought her attention back to the matter in hand. "Oh, that's very simple. I can put it in—" she counted on her fingers—"nine words. How do we know I can't have a child?"

Reporters wrote down the word "sensation." It wouldn't have lasted, but Alison knew that. She piled on more fuel.

"I'm not stating my whole case," she said. "All I'm saying at the moment is..." She blushed. She felt it on her face and was pleased with herself. She hadn't been sure she could do it. "I don't like to speak of such things, but I suppose I must. When I married Roderick, I was a virgin. How could I possibly know then that I couldn't have a baby?"



It took a long time to get things back to normal after that. The judge had to exhaust himself hammering with his gavel and threatening to clear the court. But Alison caught Roderick's eye, and he grinned and shook his head slowly. Roderick was two people, at least. He was the hothead, quick to anger, impulsive, emotional. But he was also, though it was hard to believe sometimes, a psychologist, able to sift and weigh and classify things and decide what they meant.

She knew what he meant as he shook his head at her. She had made a purely artificial point, effective only for the moment. She knew she was an android and that androids didn't have children. The rest was irrelevant.

"We have now established," the judge was saying, breathless from shouting and banging with his gavel, "what the case is about and some of the facts. Alison Liffcom admits that she concealed the fact that she was an android, as she was perfectly entitled to do—" He frowned down at Roderick, who had risen. "Well?"

Roderick, at the moment, was the psychologist. "You mentioned the word 'android,' Judge. Have you forgotten that none of us knows what an android is? You said, I believe: 'We have never heard of androids.'"

Judge Collier clearly preferred the other Roderick, whom he could squash when he liked. "Precisely," he said without enthusiasm. "Do you propose to tell us?"

"I propose to have you told," said Roderick.

Dr. Geller took the stand. Roderick faced him, looking calm and competent. Most of the audience were women. He knew how to make the most of himself, and he did. Dr. Geller, silver-haired, dignified, was as impassive as a statue.

"Who are you, Doctor?" asked Roderick coolly.

"I am director of the Everton Crèche, where the androids for the entire state are made."

"You know quite a bit about androids?"

"I do."

"Just incidentally, in case anyone would like to know, do you mind telling us whether you are human or android?"

"Not at all. I am an android."

"I see. Now perhaps you'll tell us what androids are, when they were first made, and why?"

"Androids are just people. No different from human, except that they're made instead of born. I take it you don't want me to tell you the full details of the process. Basically, one starts with a few living cells—that's always necessary—and gradually forms a complete human body. There is no difference. I must stress that. An android is a man or a woman, not in any sense a robot or automaton."

There was a stir again, and the judge smiled faintly. Roderick's witness looked like something of a burden to Roderick. But Roderick merely nodded. Everything, apparently, was under control.

"About two hundred years ago," the doctor went on, "it was shown beyond reasonable doubt that the human race was headed for extinction fairly soon. The population was halving itself every generation. Even if human life continued, civilization could not be maintained...."

It was dull for everybody. Even Dr. Geller didn't seem very interested in what he was saying. This was the part that everyone knew already. But the judge didn't interfere. It was all strictly relevant.

At first the androids had only been an experiment, interesting because they were from the first an astonishingly successful experiment. There was little failure, and a lot of startling success. Once the secret was discovered, one could, by artificial means, manufacture creatures who were men and women to the last decimal point. There was only one tiny flaw. They couldn't reproduce, either among themselves or with human partners. Everything was normal except that conception never took place.

But as the human population dropped, and as the public services slowed, became inefficient, or closed down, it was natural that the bright idea should occur to someone: Why shouldn't the androids do it?

So androids were made and trained as public servants. At first they were lower than the beasts. But that, to do humanity justice, lasted only until it became clear that androids were people. Then androids ascended the social scale to the exalted level of slaves. The curious thing, however, was that there was only one way to make androids, and that was to make them as babies and let them grow up. It wasn't possible to make only stupid, imperfect, adult androids. They turned out like humans, good, bad and indifferent.

And then came the transformation. Human births took an upsurge. It was renaissance. There was even unemployment for a while again. It would have been inhuman, of course, to kill off the androids, but on the other hand, if anyone was going to starve, they might as well.

They did.

No more androids were made. Human births subsided. Androids were manufactured again. Human births rose.

It became obvious at last. The human race had not so much been extinguishing itself with birth control as actually failing to reproduce. Most people, men and women, were barren these days. But a certain proportion of this barrenness was psychological. The androids were a challenge. They stimulated a stubborn strain deep in humans.

So a balance was reached. Androids were made for two reasons only—to have that challenging effect that kept the human race holding its ground, almost replacing its losses, and to do all the dirty work of keeping a juggernaut of an economic system functioning smoothly for a decimated population.

Even in the early days, the androids had champions. Curiously enough, it wasn't a matter of the androids fighting for and winning equality, but of humans fighting among each other and gradually giving the androids equality.

The humans who fought most were those who couldn't have children. All these people could do if they were to have a family was adopt baby androids. Naturally they lavished on them all the affection and care that their own children would have had. They came to look on them as their own children. They therefore were very strongly in favor of any move to remove restrictions on androids. One's own son or daughter shouldn't be treated as an inferior being.

That was some of the story, as Dr. Geller sketched it. The court was restive, the judge looked at the ceiling, the jury looked at Alison. Only Roderick was politely attentive to Dr. Geller.

Everyone knew at once when the lull was over. If anyone missed Roderick's question, no one missed the doctor's answer: "—reasonably established that androids cannot reproduce. At first there was actually some fear that they might. It was thought that the offspring of android and human would be some kind of monster. But reproduction did not occur."

"Just one more point, Doctor," said Roderick easily. "There is, I understand, some method of identification—some means of telling human from android, and vice versa?"

"There are two," replied the doctor. Some of the people in court looked up, interested. Others made their indifference obvious to show that they knew what was coming. "The first is the fingerprint system. It is just as applicable to androids as to humans, and every android at every crèche is fingerprinted. If for any reason it becomes necessary to identify a person who may or may not be android, prints are taken. Once these have been sent to every main android center in the world—a process which takes only two weeks—the person is either positively identified as android or by elimination is known to be human."

"There is no possibility of error?"

"There is always the possibility of error. The system is perfect, but to err is human—and, if I may be permitted the pleasantry, android as well."

"Quite," said Roderick. "But may we take it that the possibility of error in this case is small?"

"You may. As for the other method of identification: this is a relic of the early days of android manufacture and many of us feel—but that is not germane."

For the first time, however, he looked somewhat uncomfortable as he went on: "Androids, of course, are not born. There is no umbilical cord. The navel is small, even and symmetrical, and faintly but quite clearly marked inside it are the words—in this country, at any rate—'Made in U.S.A.'"

A wave of sniggers ran round the court. The doctor flushed faintly. There were jokes about the little stamp that all androids carried. Once there had been political cartoons with the label as the motif. The point of one allegedly funny story came when it was discovered that a legend which was expected to be 'Made in U.S.A.' turned out to be 'Fabriqué en France' instead.

It had always been something humans could jibe about, the stamp that every android would carry on his body to his grave. Twenty years ago, all persecution of androids was over, supposedly, and androids were free and accepted and had

all but the same rights as humans. Yet twenty years ago, women's evening dress invariably revealed the navel, whatever else was chastely concealed. Human girls flaunted the fact that they were human. Android girls either meekly showed the proof or, by hiding it, admitted they were android.

"There is under review," said the doctor, "a proposal to discontinue what some people feel must always be a badge of subservience—"

"That is *sub judice*," interrupted the judge, "and no part of the matter in question. We are concerned with things as they are." He looked inquiringly at Roderick. "Have you finished with the witness?"

"Not only the witness," said Roderick, "but my case." He looked so pleased with himself that Alison, who was difficult to anger, wanted to hit him. "You have heard Dr. Geller's evidence. I demand that Alison submit herself to the two tests he mentioned. When it is established that she is an android, it will also be established that she cannot have a child. And that she therefore, by concealing her android status from me, also concealed the fact that she could not have a child."

The judge nodded somewhat reluctantly. He looked over his glasses at Alison without much hope. It would be a pity if such a promising case were allowed to fizzle out so soon and so trivially. But he personally could see nothing significant that Alison could offer in rebuttal.

"Your witness," said Roderick, with a gesture that called for a kick in the teeth, or so Alison thought.

"Thank you," she said sweetly. She rose from her seat and crossed the floor. She wore a plain gray suit with a vivid yellow blouse, only a little of it visible, supplying the necessary touch of color. She had never looked better in her life and she knew it.

Roderick looked as though he were losing the iron control which he had held for so long against all her expectations, and she did what she could to help by wriggling her skirt straight in the way he had always found so attractive.

"Stop that!" he hissed at her. "This is serious."

She merely showed him twenty-eight of her perfect teeth, and then turned to Dr. Geller.

VII

"I was most interested in a phrase you used, Doctor," said Alison. "You said it was 'reasonably established' that androids could not reproduce. Now I take it I have the facts correct. You are director of the Everton Crèche?"

"Yes."

"And your professional experience is therefore confined to androids up to the age of ten?"

"Yes."

"Is it usual for even humans," asked Alison, "to reproduce before the age of ten?"

There was stunned silence, then a laugh, then applause. "This is not a radio show," shouted the judge. "Proceed, if you please, Mrs. Liffcom."

Alison did. Dr. Geller was the right man to come to for all matters relating to *young* androids, she said apologetically, but for matters relating to adult androids (no offense to Dr. Geller intended, of course), she proposed to call Dr. Smith.

Roderick interrupted. He was perfectly prepared to hear Alison's case, but hadn't they better conclude his, first? Was Alison prepared to submit herself to the two tests mentioned?

"It's unnecessary," said Alison. "I am an android. I am not denying it."

"Nevertheless—" said Roderick.

"I don't quite understand, Mr. Liffcom," the judge put in. "If there were any doubt, yes. But Mrs. Liffcom is not claiming that she is not an android."

"I want to *know*."

"Do you think there is any doubt?"

"I only wish there were."

It was "sensation" again.

"And yet it's all perfectly natural, when you consider it," said Roderick, when he could be heard. "I want a divorce because Alison is an android and can't have a child. If she's been mistaken, or has been playing some game, or whatever it might be, I don't want a divorce. I want Alison, the girl I married. Surely that's easy enough to understand?"

"All right," said Alison emotionlessly. "It'll take some time to check my fingerprints, but the other test can be made now. What do I do, Judge, peel here in front of everybody?"

"Great Scott, no!"

Five minutes later, in the jury room, the judge, the jury and Roderick examined the proof. Alison surrendered none of her dignity or self-possession while showing it to them.

There was no doubt. The mark of the android was perfectly clear.

Roderick was last to look. When he had examined the brand, his eyes met Alison's, and she had to fight back the tears. For he wasn't satisfied or angry, only sorry.

Back in court, Roderick said he waived the fingerprint test. And Alison called Dr. Smith. He was older than Dr. Geller, but bright-eyed and alert. There was something about him—people leaned forward as he took the stand, knowing somehow that what he had to say was going to be worth hearing.

"Following the precedent of my learned friend," said Alison, "may I ask you if you are human or android, Dr. Smith?"

"You may. I am human. However, most of my patients have been android."

"Why is that?"

"Because I realized long ago that androids represented the future. Humans are losing the fight. That being so, I wanted to find out what the differences between humans and androids were, or if there were any at all. If there were none, so much the better—the human race wasn't going to die out, after all."

"But of course," said Alison casually, yet somehow everyone hung on her words, "there was one essential difference. Humanity was becoming sterile, but androids couldn't reproduce."

"There was no difference," said Dr. Smith.

Sometimes an unexpected statement produces silence, sometimes bedlam. Dr. Smith got both in turn. There was the stillness of shock as he elaborated and put his meaning beyond doubt.

"Androids can have and have had children."

Then the rest was drowned in a wave of gasps, whispers and exclamations that swelled in a few seconds to a roar. The judge hammered and shouted in vain.

There was anger in the shouts. There was excitement, anxiety, incredulity, fear. Either the doctor was lying or he wasn't. If he was lying, he would suffer for it. People tricked by such a hoax are angry, vengeful people.

If he wasn't lying, everyone must re-evaluate his whole view of life. Everyone—human and android. The old religious questions would come up again. The question would be decided of whether Man, himself becoming extinct, had actually conquered life, instead of merely reaching a compromise with it. It would cease to matter whether any person was born or made.

There would be no more androids, only human beings. And Man would be master of creation.

VIII

The court sat again after a brief adjournment. The judge peered at Alison and at Dr. Smith, who was again on the stand.

"Mrs. Liffcom," he said, "would you care to take up your examination at the same point?"

"Certainly," said Alison. She addressed herself to Dr. Smith. "You say that androids can have children?"

This time there was silence except for the doctor's quiet voice. "Yes. There is, as may well be imagined, conflicting evidence on this. The evidence I propose to bring forward has frequently been discredited. The reaction when I first made this statement shows why. It is an important question on which everyone must have reached some conclusion. Possibly one merely believes what one is told."

As he went on, Alison cast a glance at Roderick. At first he was indifferent. He didn't believe it. Then he showed mild interest in what the doctor was saying. Eventually he became so excited that he could hardly sit still.

And Alison began to hope again.

"There is a psychologist in court," remarked the doctor mildly, "who may soon be asking me questions. I am not a psychologist any more than any other general practitioner, but before I mention particular cases, I must make this point. Every android grows up knowing he or she cannot have children. That is accepted in our civilization.

"I don't think it should be accepted. I'll tell you why."

No one interrupted him. He wasn't spectacular, but he wasted no time.

He mentioned the case of Betty Gordon Holbein, 178 years before. No one had heard of Betty Gordon Holbein. She was human, said the doctor. Prostrate with shock, she testified she had been raped by an android. The android concerned was lynched. In due course, Betty Holbein had a normal child.

"The records are available to everyone," said the doctor. "There was a lot of interest and indignation when the girl was raped, very little when she had her child. The suggestion that she had conceived after the incident was denied, without much publicity, or belief, for even then it was *known* that androids were barren."

Roderick was on his feet. He looked at the judge, who nodded.

"Look, are you twisting this to make a legal case," he demanded, "or did this girl—"

"You cannot ask the witness if he is perjuring himself," remarked the judge reprovingly.

"I don't give a damn about perjury!" Roderick exclaimed. "I just want to know if this is true!"

It was all very irregular; but Alison knew he might explode any moment and swear at the doctor and the judge. She didn't want that. So her eyes met his and she said levelly: "It's true, Roderick."

Roderick sat down.

"Now to get a true picture," the doctor continued, "we must remember that millions of androids were being tested, and mating among themselves, and even having irregular liaisons with humans—and no conception took place. Or did it?"

A little over a century ago, an android girl had been found in a wood, alive, but only just. Around her there were marks of many feet. She had been mutilated. Though she lived, she was never quite sane after that.

But she also had a child.

Roderick rose again, frowning. "I don't understand," he said. "If this is true, why is it not known?"

The judge was going to intervene, but Roderick went on quickly, "The doctor and I are professional men. I can ask him for a professional opinion, surely? Well, Doctor?"

"Because it has always been possible to disbelieve what one has decided to disbelieve. In this case, that nameless woman was mutilated so that the navel mark would be removed. There was a record of her fingerprints as those of an android. But it was authoritatively stated that there must have been a mistake and that, by having a child, the woman had thus been proved to be human."

A century and a half ago, Winnie—androids had begun to have at least a first name by this time—had a child and it was again decided that this girl, who had been a laundry maid, must have been mixed up with an android while a baby and was in fact human.

A little dead baby was found buried in a garden and an android couple was actually in court over the matter. But since they were androids, it could obviously not be their child, and they were discharged.

Roderick jumped up again. "If you knew this," he asked Dr. Smith, "why keep it secret until now?"

"Five years ago," said the doctor, "I wrote an article on the subject. I sent it to all the medical journals. Eventually one of the smaller publications printed

it. I had half a dozen letters from people who were interested. Then nothing more.

"One must admit," he added, "that not one of the cases I have mentioned—as reported at the time—would be accepted as positive scientific proof that androids can reproduce. The facts were recorded for posterity by people who didn't believe them. But..."

"But," said Alison, a few minutes later, when the doctor had finished giving his evidence, "in view of this, it can hardly be stated that I *know* I cannot have a child. It may be unlikely; shall I call more medical evidence to show how unlikely conception is for the average human woman?"

Judge Collier said nothing, so she continued: "The present position, as anyone concerned with childbirth would tell you, is that few marriages produce children, but those that do produce a lot. People who *can* have children go on doing it, these days.

"Now I want to introduce a new point. It is not grounds for divorce among humans if the woman is barren and is not aware of it. It is, on the other hand, if she has had an operation which makes it impossible for her to have children and she conceals the fact."

"I see what you are getting at," said the judge, "and it is most ingenious. Finish it, please."

"Having had no such operation," said Alison, "and being able to prove it, I understand that I can't be held, legally, to have known that I could never have children."

"To save reference to case histories," said the judge contentedly, "I can say here and now that the lady is right. It is for the jury to decide on the merits of the case, but Mrs. Liffcom may be said to have established—"

"I demand an adjournment," said Roderick.

There was a low murmur that gradually died out. Roderick and Alison were both on their feet, staring at each other across ten yards of space. The intensity of their feeling could be felt by everyone in the courtroom.

"Court adjourned until tomorrow," said the judge hastily.

IX

Almost every newspaper which mentioned the Liffcom case committed contempt of court. Perhaps the feeling was that no action could be taken against so many. All the newspapers went into the rights and wrongs of the affair as if

they were giving evidence, too. Very little of the material was pro- or anti-android. It was, rather, for or against the evidence brought up.

Anyone could see, remarked one newspaper bluntly, that Alison Liffcom was nobody's fool. If a woman like that went to the trouble of defending a suit of any kind, she would dig up something good and play it to the limit. This was no aspersion on the morals or integrity of Mrs. Liffcom, for whom the newspaper had the keenest admiration. All she had to do was cast the faintest doubt on the truism that androids could not reproduce. She had done that.

But that, of course, said the paper decisively, didn't mean that androids *could*.

Another newspaper took it from there. Just as good a case, it remarked, could have been made out for spiritualism, telepathy, possession, the existence of werewolves.... Dr. Smith, who was undoubtedly sincere, had been misled by a few mistakes. Obviously, when androids were human in all respects save one, *some* humans would be passed off or mistaken for androids and vice versa. Equally obviously, the mistake would only be discovered if and when conception occurred, as in the cases quoted by Dr. Smith.

A third paper even offered Alison a point to make in court if she liked. True, enough, Dr. Smith had shown that such mistakes could occur. It was only necessary for Alison then to quote these cases and stress the possibility that the same thing might have happened to her. If the proof of android origin was not proof, the case would collapse.

Other papers, however, took the view that there might be something in the possibility that androids could reproduce. Why not? asked one. Androids weren't bloodless, inferior beings. One could keep things warm by holding them against the human body or by building a fire. In the same way, children could be nurtured in a human body or in culture tanks. The results were identical. They must be identical if one could take them forty years later, give them rigorous tests, and tell one from the other only because the android was stamped "Made in U.S.A." and because his fingerprints were on file.

People had believed androids could not have children because they had been told androids never had. Now they were told androids *had* reproduced. Where was the difficulty? You believed you had finished your cigarettes until you took out the pack and saw there was one left. What did you do then—say you had finished them, therefore that what looked like a cigarette wasn't, and throw it away?

And almost all the newspapers, whatever their general view, asked the real, fundamental question as well.

That artificially made humans could conceive was credible, in theory. That they could not was also credible, in theory.

But why one in a million, one in five million, one in ten million? Even present-day humans could average one fertile marriage in six.



"If you have no objections," said Roderick politely—determined to be on his best behavior, thought Alison—"let's turn this into a court of inquiry. Let's say, if you like, that Alison has successfully defended the case on the grounds that she can't legally be said to have known she couldn't have a child. Forget the divorce. That's not the point."

"I thought it was," the judge objected, dazed.

"Anyone can see that what matters now," said Roderick impatiently, "is what Dr. Smith brought up. Let's get down to the question of whether there's any prospect of Alison having a baby."

"A courtroom is hardly the place to settle that," murmured Alison. But she felt the first warm breath of a glow of happiness she had thought she would never be able to experience again.

"Women always go from the general to the particular," Roderick retorted. "I don't mean the question of whether you *will* have children. I mean the question of whether it's really possible that you might."

The judge rapped decisively. "I have been too lenient. I insist on having a certain amount of order in my own court. Roderick Liffcom, do you withdraw your suit?"

"What does it matter? Anyway, if you must follow that line, we'd have to have a few straight questions and answers like whether Alison still loves me."

The judge gasped.

"Do you?" demanded Roderick, glaring at Alison.

Alison felt as if her heart were going to explode. "If you want a straight answer," she said, "yes."

"Good," said Roderick with satisfaction. "Now we can go on from there."

He turned to glower at Judge Collier, who was trying to interrupt.

"Look here," Roderick demanded, "are you interested in getting at the truth?"

"Certainly, but—"

"So am I. Be quiet, then. I meant to keep my temper with you, but you're constantly getting in my hair. Alison, would you mind taking the stand?"

There was no doubt that Roderick had personality.

With Alison on the stand, he turned to the jury. "I'll tell you what I have in mind," he told them in friendly fashion. "We all wonder why, if this thing's possible, it's happened so seldom. Unfortunately, to date there hasn't been any real admission that it is possible, so I didn't know. I never had a chance to work on it. Now I have. What I want to know is, if androids can have children, what prevents them from doing so."

He reached out absently, without looking around, and squeezed Alison's shoulder. "We've got Alison here," Roderick went on. "Let's find out if we can, shall we, what would stop her from having children?"

Alison was glad she was sitting down. Her knees felt so weak that she knew they wouldn't support her. Did she have Roderick back or didn't she? Could she really have a baby? *Roderick's* baby? The court swam dizzily in front of her eyes.

Only gradually did she become aware of Roderick's voice asking anxiously if she was all right, Roderick bending over her, Roderick's arm behind her back, supporting her.

"Yes," she said faintly. "I'm sorry. Roderick, I'll help you all I can, but do you think there's really very much chance?"

"I'm a psychologist," he reminded her quietly, "and since you've never seen me at work, there's no harm in telling you I'm pretty good. Maybe we won't work this out here in half an hour, but we'll get through it in the next sixty years."

Alison didn't forget where she was, but everything was so crazy that a little more wouldn't hurt. She reached up and drew his lips down to hers.

XI

"What I'm looking for must be in the life of every android, male and female," said Roderick. "I don't expect to find it right away. Just tell us, Alison, about any times when you were aware of distinction—when you were made aware that you were an android, not a human. Start as early as you like.

"And," he added with a sudden, unexpected grin, "please address your remarks to the judge. Let's keep this as impersonal as we can."

Alison composed her mind for the job. She didn't really want to look back. She wanted to look into the new, marvelous future. But she forced herself to begin.

"I grew up in the New York Android Crèche," she said. "There was no distinction there. Some of the children thought there was. Sometimes I heard older children talking about how much better off they would be if they were humans. But twice when there was overcrowding in the crèche and plenty of room at the orphanage for human children, I was moved to the orphanage. And there was absolutely no difference.

"In a crèche, it's far more important to be able to sell yourself than it ever can be later. If you're attractive or appealing enough, someone looking for a child to adopt will notice you and you'll have a home and security and affection. I wasn't attractive or appealing. I stayed in the crèche until I was nine. I saw so many couples looking for children, always taking away some child but never me, that I was sure I would stay there until I was too old to be adopted and then have to earn my living, always on my own.

"Then, one day, one of the sisters at the crèche found me crying—I forget what I was crying about—and told me there was no need for me to cry about anything because I had brains and I was going to be a beauty, and what more could any girl want? I looked in the mirror, but I still seemed the same as ever. She must have known what she was talking about, though, for just a week later, a couple came and looked around the crèche and picked me."

Alison took a deep breath, and there was no acting about the tears in her eyes.

"Nobody who's never experienced it can appreciate what it is to have a home for the first time at the age of nine," she said. "To say I'd have died for my new parents doesn't tell half of it. Maybe this is something that misled Roderick. He knew that twice a month, at least, I go and see my folks. He must have thought they were my real parents, so he didn't ask if I was android."

She looked at Roderick for the first time since she started the story. He nodded.

"Go on, Alison," he said quietly. "You're doing fine."

"This isn't a hard world for androids," Alison insisted. "It's only very occasionally..."

She stopped, and Roderick had to prompt her, "Only very occasionally that what?"

But Alison wasn't with him. She was eleven years back in the past.

Alison had known all about that awkward period when she would cease to be a child and become a woman. But she had never quite realized how rapid it would be, and how it would seem even more rapid, so that it was over before she was ready for it to start.

She wasn't sleeping well, but she was so healthy and had such reserves of strength that it didn't show, and for once her adopted parents failed her. Though Alison would never admit that, it would have been so much easier if Susan had talked with her, and Roger, without saying a word, had indicated in his manner that he knew what was going on.

One day she was out walking, trying to tire herself for sleep later, and ran into a group of youths of her own age in the woods. She knew one of them slightly, Bob Thomson, and she knew that their apparent leader, as tall as a man at fifteen, was Harry Hewitt. She didn't know whether any of them were androids or not—the question had never occurred to her. And it didn't seem of any immediate interest or importance that she was an android, either, as she passed through them and some of them whistled, and involuntarily, completely aware of their eyes on her, she reddened.

She saw Bob Thomson whisper to Harry Hewitt and Hewitt burst out: "Android, eh? *Android!* That's fine!" He stepped in front of her and barred her path. "What a pretty android," he said loudly, playing to his gallery. "I've seen you before, but I thought you were just a girl. Take off your blouse, android."

There was a startled movement in the group, and someone nudged Hewitt.

"It's all right," he said. "She's an android. No real parents, only people who have taken her in to pretend they can have kids."

Alison looked from side to side like a cornered animal.

"Humans can do anything they like with androids," Hewitt told his more timorous companions. "Don't you know that?" He turned back to Alison. "But we must be sure she is an android. Hold her, Butch."

Alison was grasped firmly by the hips, which had so recently stopped being boyish and swelled alarmingly. She kicked and struggled, her heart threatening to burst, but Butch, whoever he was, was strong. Two other boys held her arms. Carefully, to a chorus of nervous, excited sniggers, Hewitt parted her blouse and skirt a narrow slit and peered at her navel.

"Made in U.S.A.," he said with satisfaction. "It's all right, then."

In contrast to his previous cautious, decorous manner, he tore the blouse out of her waistband and ripped it off. Alison's knees sagged as someone behind her began to fumble with her brassiere.

"No, no!" Hewitt exclaimed in mock horror. "Mustn't do that until she says you can. Even androids have rights. Or at least, if they haven't, we should be polite and pretend they have. Android, say we can do whatever we like with you."

"No!" cried Alison.

"That's too bad. Shift your grip a bit, Butch."

The rough hands went up around her ribs, rasping her soft skin.

Alison struggled and twisted wildly.

"Keep still," said Hewitt. He spoke very quietly, but there was savage joy in his face. Slowly and carefully, he loosened Alison's belt and eased her skirt and the white trunks under it down to the pit of her stomach. Then he took out a heavy clasp knife, opened it and set the point neatly in the center of her belly. Alison drew in her stomach; the knife point followed, indenting the flesh.

"Say we can do whatever we like with you, android."

The knife pricked deeper. A tiny drop of crimson came from under it and ran slowly down to Alison's skirt. Her nerve broke.

"You can do whatever you like with me!" she screamed.

Her brassiere came loose and fluttered to the ground. Hewitt's knife cut her belt and her skirt began to slip over her hips. Butch's hands went down to her waist again, biting into it cruelly. From behind, a hand tentatively touched her breast and another clutched her shoulder. One at a time, her feet were raised and the shoes taken off them and thrown in the bushes.

But someone else had heard Alison's scream. Long after she had thought no one would come, someone did.

"Hell," said Hewitt as one of his companions shouted and pointed, "something always spoils everything. Beat it, boys."

They were gone. Alison clutched her skirt and looked behind her thankfully. A man and a woman were only a few yards from her. The woman was young and heavy with child. Humans, both of them. She opened her mouth to thank them, to explain, to weep.

But they were looking at her as if she were a crushed beetle of some kind.

"Android, of course," said the man disgustedly. "Dirty little beast."

"Hardly more than child," the woman said, "and already at this."

"I think I'll give her a good hiding," the man went on. "Won't do any good, I suppose, but..."

Alison burst into tears and darted among the bushes. She didn't wait to see whether the man started after her. Branches and thorns tore her skin. Her skirt dropped and tripped her. She flew headlong, flinched away from a thorny bush, slammed hard into a tree-trunk, and waited on the ground, sick and breathless, for the man to beat her.

Her legs and arms and shoulders were covered with long scratches and a wiry branch had lashed her ribs like a whip, leaving a long weal. But that didn't matter. A twisted root was digging into her side—that, too, didn't matter. Nothing mattered. Why had no one told her she was an inferior being? Somehow she had known; she had always known. But no one had ever *shown* her before.

She realized afterward why the man and the woman, who must have seen or guessed what had really happened, had spoken as they did. They had, or were going to have, children. They hated all androids. Androids were unnecessary, their enemies, and the enemies of their children.

But at the time she merely waited helpless, incapable of thought. The man would come and beat her, Susan and Roger would turn her away, and she would never know happiness again.

XIII

"My parents never knew about that," said Alison. "I hid in the bushes until it was dark, and then went straight home. I climbed into my bedroom from the outhouse and pretended later I'd been there for hours."

"Why didn't you tell anyone?" Roderick asked.

Alison shrugged. "It was a small incident that concerned me alone. I knew, once I'd had time to think, that my adopted parents would be upset and angry, but not at me. I thought I'd better keep it to myself. I wasn't hurt and none of it matters when you look back on it, does it?"

"How about the man who was going to give you a good hiding?"

"I never saw him again. It was two years later when I got my first punishment."

"Just a minute," said Roderick. "You said that even then you knew you were an inferior being—you had always known, but this was the first time anyone showed you. How had you known? Who or what had told you? When? Where?"

Alison tried. They could see her try. But she had to say: "I don't know."

"All right," said Roderick, as if it weren't important. "What was this that happened two years later?"

"Perhaps I am giving too much significance to these incidents," Alison remarked apologetically. "Certainly they happened. But when I say two years passed, perhaps I'm not making it clear that in those two years hardly anything happened, hardly anything was said or done, to remind me I was an android and not a human being.

"When I was about sixteen or seventeen, I suddenly developed a talent for tennis. I had played since I was quite young, but just as front-rank players run in and out of form, I improved quite unexpectedly. I joined a new club. I was picked for an important match. I was in singles, mixed and women's doubles. I did well, but that's not the point.

"After the match, my doubles partner told me I was wanted in the locker room. There was something strange about the way she told me, but I couldn't place it. I wondered if I'd broken some rule, failed to check with someone, played in the wrong match, or forgotten to bow three times to the east—you know what these clubs are like."

"No, we don't," said Judge Collier. "We know nothing, remember? Tell us."

Unexpectedly, he got an approving nod from the unpredictable Roderick.

XIV

Alison smiled uncertainly as she followed Veronica. She wasn't nervous or sensitive as a rule; she seldom felt apprehension. She was curious, naturally, and even wilder possibilities suggested themselves. Had she been mistaken for someone else? Had someone stolen something and they thought she'd done it? Had someone inspected her racket and found it was an inch too wide?

The whole team was waiting in the locker room. It looked serious, especially when she saw their expressions. It still didn't occur to her that the fact that she was an android could have anything to do with it. Only once in her life had there been any real indication that in some way androids were inferior beings.

But that was what it was. Bob Walton, the captain of the team, said gravely that their opponents, well beaten, had accused them of recruiting star androids to help them.

Alison laughed. "That's a new one. I've heard some peculiar excuses. Made them myself, too—the light was bad, the umpire was crazy, I had a stone in my

shoe, people were moving about, the net was too high. But never 'You fielded androids against us.' Androids are just ordinary people—good and bad tennis players. The open singles champion is an android, but the number one woman is human. You know that as well as I do. Might as well complain because you're beaten by tall people, or short people, or people with long arms."

Everyone had relaxed.

"Sorry, Alison," said Walton. "It's just that none of us knew you *weren't* an android."

Alison frowned. "What's all this? I'm an android, sure. I didn't say so only because nobody asked me."

"We took it for granted," said Walton stiffly, "that you would know...as, of course, you did. There are no androids competing in the Athenian League. We try to keep one group, at least, clean."

He looked at the other two men in the team and inclined his head. Without a word they left the room, all three of them.

Alison, left with the other three girls, one of whom she had kept out of the team, looked exasperated.

"This is nonsense," she said. "If you like to run an all-human league, that's all right as far as I'm concerned, but you should put up notices to avoid misunderstanding. I didn't know you were—"

"Whether you knew or not is beside the point," said Veronica coldly—the same Veronica who had laughed and talked and won a match with Alison only a few minutes before. "We're going to make sure you never forget."

They closed in on her. It was to be a fight, apparently. Alison didn't mind. She jabbed Veronica in the ribs and sent her gasping across the room. She expected them to tear her clothes, thinking it would be conventional in dealing with android girls. But it was quite different from the scene in the bushes. This was clean and sporting. The men had left, very properly, and instead of half a dozen youths with a knife against a terrified child, it was only three girls to one.

Alison fought hard, but fair. She guessed that, if she didn't fight clean, it would be ammunition for the android-haters. To do them justice, the other girls were clean, too. They didn't mind hurting her, but they didn't go for her face, use their nails or yank her hair.

Alison gave a good account of herself, but other things being equal, three will always overcome one. She was turned on her face on the floor. One of the

girls sat on her legs and one on her shoulders while the third beat the seat of her shorts with a firmly swung racket.

It was no joke. Alison wouldn't have made a sound if it had been far worse, but when they let her go, she was feeling sorry for herself. They left her alone in the room.

She picked herself up and dusted herself off. The floor was clean and the mirror in one corner showed that she looked all right. In fact, she looked considerably better than the three girls who had beaten her.

Still angry, she was able to grin philosophically at the thought that she could beat them all in a beauty contest and at tennis. She could tell herself, if she liked, that they were jealous of her. It was probably at least partly true.

Her feelings were hurt, but there was no other damage. She could even see their point of view.

XV

"What *was* their point of view?" asked Roderick.

"Well, they were human and they were snobs. They'd even have admitted they were snobs, if you put the question the right way. It was a private club—"

"And it was quite reasonable," suggested Roderick softly, "that they should exclude androids, who are inferior beings."

"No, not quite that," Alison protested, laughing. "I don't really believe..."

She stopped.

"Just sometimes?" Roderick persisted. "Or just one part of you, while the other knows quite well an android is as good as a human?"

Alison shivered suddenly. "You know, I have a curious feeling, as if I were being trapped into something."

"That's how people always feel," said Roderick, "just before they decide they needn't be terrified anymore of spiders or whatever it was they feared."

The court was very quiet. There was something about Roderick's professional competence and Alison's determination to cooperate that made any kind of interruption out of the question.

"There's very little more I can say about this," said Alison. "I took a job, not because I had to, but because I wanted to. It was with an advertising agency. They knew I was an android. They paid me exactly what they paid anyone else. When I did well, they gave me a raise.

"But then I noticed something—I never got any credit for anything. When I had an idea, somehow it was always possible to give the credit to someone else. Soon there was a very curious situation. I held a very junior position, I had little or no standing, but I did responsible work and I was paid well for it.

"I went to another agency and it was quite different. Again, they knew I was an android, but no one seemed remotely interested. When I did well, I was promoted. When I did badly on any job, my chief swore at me and called me a fool and an incompetent and an empty-headed glamour girl and a lot of things I'd rather not repeat here.

"But it never seemed to occur to him to call me a dirty android. I don't think he was an android himself, either.

"I joined a dramatic society, but again I chose the wrong club. They didn't mind at all that I was an android. They didn't keep me in small parts. But it was perfectly natural that the three human girls in the cast shouldn't want to use the same dressing room as another android girl in the show and I did. When we were at small places, she and I had to change in the wings.

"There were scores of other little incidents of the same kind. They multiplied as I grew older—not because differentiation was getting worse, but because I was moving in higher society. In places where it's held against you that you didn't go to Harvard or Yale, naturally it's a disadvantage if you're an android, besides.

"Then a law was passed and it was no longer necessary to admit being an android. I don't know what the Athenian Tennis League did about that. I'd come to Everton then and hardly anyone knew I was an android. And the plain fact, despite everything I've said, is that hardly anyone cared. There are so many androids, so many humans. You may find yourself the only android in a group—or the only human.

"Then I met Roderick."

"There," said Roderick, "I think we can stop." He turned to the judge. "I'm withdrawing my suit, of course. I think I made that clear quite a while ago."

He gave Alison his arm. "Come on, sweetheart, let's go."

The roar burst out again. It must have been both one of the noisiest and one of the quietest trials on record. The judge, dignity forgotten, was standing up, hopping from one foot to the other in impatience and vexation.

"You can't go like that!" he shrieked. "We haven't finished...we don't know...."

"I've gone as far as I can here," said Roderick. He hesitated as the roar grew. "All right," he went on, raising his voice. "But you don't explain people to themselves. Any little quirks that make them do funny things, or not do normal things, you get them gradually to explain to you, and to themselves."

He searched in his pockets and pulled out a key ring. "Go and wait in the car, honey," he said, and told Alison where it was. She went, dazed.

"I'll have to keep the papers from her for a day or two," Roderick went on, almost to himself. "After that, it won't matter." He turned his attention to the court. "All right, then, listen. If I'm right, I've found something that's been under everyone's nose for two hundred years and has never been seen before. I don't say I found it in five minutes. I've been working it out for the last twenty-four hours, with the help of quite a few records of android patients.

"Will you listen?" he yelled as the excited chatter increased. "I don't want to tell you this. I want to go home with Alison. You've seen her. Wouldn't you want to?"

The court gradually settled.

"Let's consider human sterility for a moment," said Roderick. "As you might imagine, some of it's medical and some psychological. As a psychologist, I've cured people of so-called barrenness—and when I did, of course, it wasn't sterility at all, but a neurosis. These people didn't and don't have children because, owing to some unconscious conclusion they've reached, they don't want them, feel they shouldn't have them, or are certain they can't have them.

"But that's only some. Others come to me and, in consultation with a specialist in that line, I find there's nothing psychological about it whatever.

"I have an idea, now, that *all* androids are psychologically sterile. Sterility has eaten into the cycle of human reproduction, but how should it touch the androids? If one android can reproduce, they all can. Unless they, like these humans I've cured, have reached unconscious conclusions to the effect that androids can't or shouldn't or mustn't have children.

"And we know they nearly all have."

His voice suddenly dropped, and when Roderick spoke quietly, he was emphasizing points and people listened. There was no murmuring now.

"I think if you were to run a survey and find who now is continuing to deny—passionately, honestly, sincerely—that androids can reproduce, you'd find the most passionate, honest and sincere are androids. If you looked into the past I think you'd find the same thing. Wasn't it significant that it had to be a *human* doctor who declared publicly that androids weren't sterile?"

"Into every android is built the psychological axiom that an android must be inferior to a human to survive. That's the answer. Androids don't come to me to be cured of this because they don't *want* to be cured of it. They know it's essential to them. With the more aware part of their brains, they may know exactly the opposite, but that doesn't count when it comes to things like this.

"And long ago, without knowing it, androids picked on this. Androids could not be a menace if they couldn't reproduce. Androids would be duly inferior if they couldn't reproduce. Androids would be allowed to exist if they couldn't reproduce. Androids could compete with humans in other things if they couldn't reproduce."

He knew he was right as he looked around the court. For once, almost at a glance, it was possible to tell humans from androids. Half the people in court were interested, bored, amused, indifferent; thoughtful—the humans. The other half were angry, frightened, ashamed, apathetic, resentful, wildly excited, or in tears...for Roderick was tearing at the very foundation of their world.

"I have real hopes for Alison," he remarked mildly, "because she brought in Dr. Smith. See what that means? Not one android in a thousand could have done it. She must love me a lot...but that's none of your business."

He went the way Alison had gone. No one tried to stop him this time. At the door, he paused.

"When the first acknowledged android children are born," he observed, "it'll mean that regardless of the trials or disasters mankind still has to face, the *human* race won't die out. Because...I think we might all chew a little on this point...the children of androids can't be android, can they?"

XVI

Roderick drove. Alison usually did when they were out in a car together, but there was an unspoken agreement that Roderick would have to take charge of almost everything for a while.

"We both won," she said happily. "At least, we will have when little Roderick arrives."

"Do you believe he will?" asked Roderick, in his professional, neutral tone.

"Not quite. I wonder what you said in the court. I suppose I'm not to try to find out?"

"Find out if you like. But do it from yourself. From what's in you. I'll help."

"I think," Alison mused, "it must be something to do with Dr. Smith."

“Oh? Why?”

“Because I had the most peculiar feeling when I remembered hearing about him and the idea that androids could have children. Like when Hewitt had his knife in my stomach, only as if...”

She laughed nervously, uncomfortably. “As if I were holding it myself, and had to cut something out, but couldn’t do it without killing myself. Yet I had a sort of idea I could cut it out, if I tried hard enough and long enough, and *not* kill myself.”

Roderick turned the corner into their street. “This is a little unprofessional,” he said, the exhilaration in his voice ill-concealed, “but I don’t think it’ll do any harm with you, Alison. There is going to be a little Roderick. I didn’t decide it. *You* decided it. And it won’t kill you. And—God, look at that!”

Cameras clicked like grasshoppers as Roderick Liffcom carried his bride across the threshold. The photographers hadn’t had to follow them, for they knew where the Liffcoms were going. Scores of plates were exposed. The Liffcoms were news. The name of Liffcom was known to almost everyone.

Roderick was big and strong enough to treat his wife’s 115 pounds with contempt, but there was no contempt in the way he held her. He carried her as if she were made of crystal which the faintest jar would shatter. One could see at a glance that he could have carried any girl he liked over the threshold.

Alison nestled in his arms like a kitten, eyes half-closed with rapture, arms about Roderick’s neck. One could see at a glance she could have been carried over the threshold by any man she liked.

As they went in, it was the beginning of a story. But let’s be different and call it the end.