

5 Mike Donovan looked at his empty beer mug, felt bored, and decided he had listened long enough. He said, loudly, "If we're going to talk about unusual robots, I once knew one that disobeyed the First Law."

And since that was completely impossible, everyone stopped talking and turned to look at Donovan.

10 Donovan regretted his big mouth at once and changed the subject. "I heard a good one yesterday," he said, conversationally, "about..."

MacFarlane in the chair next to Donovan's said, "You mean you knew a robot that harmed a human being?" That was what disobedience to First Law meant, of course.

"In a way," said Donovan. "I say I heard one about..."

15 "Tell us about it," ordered MacFarlane. Some of the others banged their beer mugs on the table.

Donovan made the best of it. "It happened on Titan about ten years ago," he said, thinking rapidly. "Yes, it was in twenty-five. We had just recently received a shipment of three new-model robots, specially designed for Titan. They were the first of the MA models. We called them Emma One, Two and Three." He snapped his
20 fingers for another beer and stared earnestly after the waiter. Let's see, what came next?

MacFarlane said, "I've been in robotics half my life, Mike. I never heard of an MA serial order."

25 "That's because they took the MA's off the assembly lines immediately after... after what I'm going to tell you. Don't you remember?"

"No."

Donovan continued hastily. "We put the robots to work at once. You see, until then, the Base had been entirely useless during the stormy season, which lasts eighty percent of Titan's revolution about Saturn. During the terrific snows, you couldn't

find the Base if it were only a hundred yards away. Compasses aren't any use, because Titan hasn't any magnetic field.

The virtue of these MA robots, however, was that they were equipped with vibro-detectors of a new design so that they could make a beeline for the Base through anything, and that meant mining could become a through-the-revolution affair. And don't say a word, Mac. The vibro-detectors were taken off the market also, and that's why you haven't heard of them." Donovan coughed. "Military secret, you understand."

He went on. "The robots worked fine during the first stormy season, then at the start of the calm season, Emma Two began acting up. She kept wandering off into corners and under bales and had to be coaxed out. Finally she wandered off Base altogether and didn't come back. We decided there had been a flaw in her manufacture and got along with the other two. Still, it meant we were short-handed, or short-roboted anyway, so when toward the end of the calm season, someone had to go to Kornsk, I volunteered to chance it without a robot. It seemed safe enough; the storms weren't due for two days and I'd be back in twenty hours at the outside.

I was on the way back-a good ten miles from Base-when the wind started blowing and the air thickening. I landed my air car immediately before the wind could smash it, pointed myself toward the Base and started running. I could run the distance in the low gravity all right, but could I run a straight line? That was the question. My air supply was ample and my suit heat coils were satisfactory, but ten miles in a Titanian storm is infinity.

Then, when the snow streams changed everything to a dark, gooey twilight, with even Saturn dimmed out and the sun only a pale pimple, I stopped short and leaned against the wind. There was a little dark object right ahead of me. I could barely make it out but I knew what it was. It was a storm pup; the only living thing that could stand a Titanian storm, and the most vicious living thing anywhere. I knew my space suit wouldn't protect me, once it made for me, and in the bad light, I had to wait for a point-blank aim or I didn't dare shoot. One miss and he would be at me.

I backed away slowly and the shadow followed. It closed in and I was raising my blaster, with a prayer, when a bigger shadow loomed over me suddenly, and I yodeled with relief. It was Emma Two, the missing MA robot. I never stopped to wonder what had happened to it or worry why it had. I just howled, 'Emma, baby, get that storm pup; and then get me back to Base.'

It just looked at me as if it hadn't heard and called out, 'Master, don't shoot. Don't shoot.'

It made for that storm pup at a dead run.

‘Get that damned pup, Emma,’ I shouted. It got the pup, all right. It scooped it right up and kept on going. I yelled myself hoarse but it never came back. It left me to die in the storm.”

- 5 Donovan paused dramatically, “Of course, you know the First Law: A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm! Well, Emma Two just ran off with that storm pup and left me to die. It broke First Law.

- 10 Luckily, I pulled through safely. Half an hour later, the storm died down. It had been a premature gust, and a temporary one. That happens sometimes. I hot-footed it for Base and the storms really broke next day. Emma Two returned two hours after I did, and, of course, the mystery was then explained and the MA models were taken off the market immediately.”

- 15 “And just what,” demanded MacFarlane, “was the explanation?” Donovan regarded him seriously. “It’s true I was a human being in danger of death, Mac, but to that robot there was something else that came first, even before me, before the First Law. Don’t forget these robots were of the MA series and this particular MA robot had been searching out private nooks for some time before disappearing. It was as though it expected something special-and private-to happen to it. Apparently, something
20 special had.”

Donovan’s eyes turned upward reverently and his voice trembled. “That storm pup was no storm pup. We named it Emma Junior when Emma Two brought it back. Emma Two had to protect it from my gun. What is even the First Law compared with the holy ties of mother love?”