

R.U.R. A Graphic Novel Adaptation of the Karel Čapek Sci-Fi Classic

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Rosarium Publishing (Dec 10, 2024)

Hardcover \$32.99 (264pp)

979-898661468-7

Humanity's experiments with artificial life backfire in the science fiction graphic novel *R.U.R.*

In search of a low-cost workforce, an island factory creates an AI that looks and acts like a human being and is capable of completing a variety of tasks. These robots don't have the desire or will of humans, making them happy to serve their masters while asking little in return. The company's director, Domin, guides Helena on a tour, sharing secrets of the robots' origin and manufacture. As the robots become more like people, the humans face ethical quandaries and even their own extinction.

Expanding the scope of Karel Čapek's original play, written over one hundred years ago, the book shows glimpses of the world outside the factory while maintaining the intimacy of the stage. The artwork enhances the drama: One scene portrays the humans on a stage, being watched by an audience of robots. It's a figurative nod to the story's origins, but also an important moment in Domin's characterization. Impressionistic colors, including the robots' distinctive yellow eyes, highlight the expert line work throughout.

R.U.R. is a thoughtful, satisfying graphic novel—a cautionary tale about humans who fail to see the complications of careless scientific advancement. The story earned a place in history by introducing the word *robot*, but more interesting are the relevant and thought-provoking ethical dilemmas its characters face regarding creation, freedom, and class structures.

PETER DABBENE (January / February 2025)

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