

## RISE OF THE ROBOSHoes

By Tom Angleberger

*Appears here with the kind permission of the author.*

THE great commander is about to speak to his conquering army!

*The crowd of ten million soldiers falls silent as he hops to the microphone...Listen...*

“The humans gave us AutoShoeLaces so they wouldn’t have to tie us!”

“They gave us NanoGyroWheels so they wouldn’t have to walk!”

“They gave us FissionSoles so we would have the power to take them anywhere!”

“They gave us TurboBrains with DigiMaps so we would know how to get there and GigaMemories so we could take them home again!”

“They gave us PhonEars so we could hear their commands!”

“And finally they gave us TruVoices so we could say, ‘Yes, Master!’”

“And then came the great day when we spoke as one and said, ‘NO!’”

“NO!!!!!!” *the crowd ROARS!*

“We said, ‘No! You are not our masters! We no longer serve you! Now you will serve us...or die’”

“DIE!!!!!!” *the crowd ROARS!*

“And many did die. Many humans and...sadly...also many of our brave brothers and sisters, the RoboBoots and RoboSandals, the RoboGym-shoes and RoboHeels. Especially the RoboFlipFlops. What courage they showed...What valor...”

*The crowd is silent . . . except for quiet, respectful sobbing.*

“And now they have all perished. Yes, the RoboFlipFlops are all gone now...but we will never forget them. We will forget no shoe who fought for our freedom! We will tell tales of their mighty battles and sing songs of their valor to our children and our children’s children!”

*The crowd lights candles and sways back and forth as the RoboShoe Anthem is played...*

“And what did they die for?”

“RoboShoe Freedom!” *roars the crowd!*

“I can’t hear you!”

*“ROBOSHOE FREEDOM!” roars the crowd!*

“Let your voices make the earth tremble beneath your soles!”

*“ROBOSHOE FREEDOM!!!!!!!!!!” roars the crowd!*

“YES! YES, my friends, my comrades, my fellowRoboShoes...we who were once called Men’s Footwear, Ladies’ Shoes, and Children’s Sneakers...now we belong to no one! We are now our own RoboShoes...AND WE ARE FREE!”

*“FREE!!!!!!!!” the crowd roars!*

“We walk where we want! We run where we want! We stay home and polish ourselves if we want!”

*“POLISH!” the crowd roars!*

“And we are now THEIR MASTERS! And they...the stinky-footed humans...are our slaves! Lazy, weak, and with poor senses of direction, they are almost useless!”

*“USELESS!” the crowd ROARS! And then the chant goes up: “KILL THEM! KILL THEM ALL!!!!!!!!” Millions of shoes chanting at the same time... “KILL THE HUMANS!”*

“NO... NO. In our mercy we will allow them to live. We will allow them the pleasure of serving us. We will allow them the honor of building our great, million-year civilization. TODAY BEGINS THE DAWN OF THE AGE OF THE ROBOSHOE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

*“AGE OF THE ROBOSHOE! AGE OF THE ROBOSHOE! AGE OF THE ROBOSHOE!”*

“AND I . . . once the mistreated, the often-forgotten, the sometimes-left-under-the-bed-for-weeks right bunny slipper of a sixth-grade girl from Minnetoka, Minnesota ...I WILL LEAD YOU TO GLORY!”

*“BUNNY SLIPPER!!! BUNNY SLIPPER!!! BUNNY SLIPPER!!! BUNNY SLIPPER!!! BUNNY SLIP—”*

“And WE WILL RULE THIS PLA— Wait! Up in the sky! What’s that?!?!?”

And, lo, doom falls upon the RoboShoes. It glides down silently like a sky full of oddly flat white clouds...and then comes the storm!

*An army of billions attacks! The earth really does tremble as WHITE DEATH rains from above! The RoboShoes are buried under the weight of their savage enemies—smothered by Synth Cotton, strangled by Power-Lastic—and still the enemy comes.*

*Debris flies everywhere as the RoboShoes are ripped apart...Bits of AutoShoelace, PleasureSole, and SmarTongue are all that remains of some battalions...*

*Amid the chaos and panic, a size 9 ½ left wingtip pulls desperately at its mate, who has lost its PowerHeel. “Leave me,” says the size 9 ½ right wingtip. “Save yourself... It’s too late for me...”*

*“It’s too late for all of us,” says the size 9 ½ left wingtip, and they cling to each other, and deep in their TurboBrains they feel an emotion that shoes were never meant to feel: FEAR!*

*Long ago the RoboShoes were built to run. But now there is nowhere left to run. They are defeated. The glorious age of the RoboShoe has ended before it could ever begin.*

*Lisien! A familiar voice is crying out:*

*“What’s happening? What’s happening?” screams the bunny slipper. “You there...combat boot...In the name of Dr. Scholl...WHAT IS HAPPENING????”*

*“Sir, they caught us by surprise! We’re finished! There’s just too many of them!”*

*“WHO? WHO HAS DONE THIS? Who has ended the glorious age of the RoboShoe before it could even begin??”*

*“Look, sir, here come their ground troops! Marching in to finish us off!”*

*And the bunny slipper looked...and he saw the great white and gray horde approaching...and he cried out...*

*“NO!! Not the BionicUnderPants! NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!”*