

THE
LOVE
MACHINE

JACQUELINE SUSANN

SCHUSTER
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To Carol Bjorkman

PROLOGUE:

THE
LOVE
MACHINE



MAN CREATED THE MACHINE.

A Machine does not feel love, hate or fear; it does not suffer from ulcers, heart attacks or emotional disturbances.

Perhaps man's only chance of survival is to *become* a machine.

Some men have succeeded.

A machine who passes for a man often rules societies—a dictator is a power machine in his country. A dedicated artist can turn into a talent machine.

Sometimes this evolution occurs without the man realizing it.

Perhaps it happens the first time he says, "I am hurt," and his subconscious replies, "If I cut all feeling from my life—I *cannot be hurt!*"

Amanda would have laughed if you had told her this about Robin Stone—because Amanda was in love with him.

Robin Stone was a handsome man.

He could smile with his lips.

He could think without emotion.

He could make love to her with his body.

Robin Stone was The Love Machine.

I

AMANDA



ONE

Monday, March 1960

AT NINE IN THE MORNING, she was standing on the steps in front of the Plaza Hotel, shivering in a linen dress. One of the clothespins that held the back of the dress together clattered to the ground. A dresser hurried to replace it, and the photographer used the time to reload his camera. The hairdresser quickly re-touched a few stray hairs with a can of hair spray and the session resumed. The curious crowd that had gathered was delighted with this glimpse of one of the Beautiful People—a top fashion model, facing the blasting cold winds of March, in a lightweight summer dress. To add to the strangeness of the scene, there were cold-looking snowbanks on the hills of Central Park, reminders of a recent snowstorm. The crowd, comfortably bundled in winter coats, suddenly felt no envy for the shimmering creature they were watching who earned more money in a morning than they earned in a week.

Amanda was freezing, but she was impervious to the crowd. She was thinking of Robin Stone. Sometimes thinking of Robin Stone helped, especially when they had spent a wonderful night together.

This morning her thoughts were not comforting. She had not spent a wonderful night with Robin. She had not even heard from him. He had two lecture dates, one in Baltimore on Saturday, and one at some dinner in Philadelphia on Sunday. "I'll shoot my

speech to them at seven and be back at New York by ten," he had promised. "Then we'll go to the Lancer Bar and grab a hamburger." She had sat around in full makeup until two in the morning. Not even a phone call.

The photographer finished. The fashion coordinator rushed to her with a coat and a container of coffee. She went into the hotel and sank into a massive armchair in the lobby and sipped the coffee. The icicles in her veins began to thaw. She would survive. Thank God the rest of the shots were indoors.

She finished the coffee and went up to the suite that had been engaged for the session. The clothes were hanging in a neat row. With the help of the dresser, she slipped out of the linen dress and changed into a pair of summer "at home" slacks. She adjusted the falsies in her bra, then checked her makeup. The electricity crackled as her comb went through the thickness of the soft honey-colored hair. She had washed it herself yesterday and set it the way Robin liked it, long and loose. This afternoon she had a three-hour session scheduled with Alwayso Cosmetics—they would probably reset it. Jerry Moss liked her in an upsweep; he claimed it gave the product more class.

At eleven o'clock she was closeted in the bathroom, changing into her own clothes. She opened her large bag and took out the container with toothbrush and tooth paste. She brushed her teeth in up and down strokes. She was doing the summer shades of lipstick for Alwayso today. Thank God for her teeth, thank God for her hair. And her face. Her legs were good, her hips were slim, she was tall. God had been very good; He had only been forgetful in one spot. She stared ruefully at the falsies in her bra. She thought of all the women who had watched her pose: working girls, housewives, heavy women, thick-ankled women—they all had bosoms. Bosoms which they took for granted. And she was flat as a boy.

Oddly enough this was an asset for the perfect model. But it certainly was no asset in one's personal life. She recalled the dismay she had felt when she was twelve and most of the girls at school began to sprout small "bumps" on top. She had run to Aunt Rose, Aunt Rose who had laughed: "They'll come, honey, only let's hope they don't get too big like your Aunt Rose's!"

But they *hadn't* come. When she was fourteen Aunt Rose had said, "Now, honey, the good Lord gave you a beautiful face and a good mind. Besides, it's more important for a man to love you for yourself, not your face or your body."

This simple logic was all very fine when she sat in the kitchen listening to Aunt Rose, when neither of them thought she would ever go to New York and meet the kind of people she knew now.

Like the singer—she never thought of Billy in any other way. She had been eighteen, just starting to model, when they met. She had played his records in high school. When she was twelve, she had stood in line for two hours when he was making a personal appearance at a local movie house. Seeing him in person at a party was like a dream. And it was even more unbelievable when he singled her out. As Billy put it to some of the columnists, "It was instant romance!" From that night on, she was part of his entourage. She had never seen this way of life—the nightclub openings, the round-the-clock chauffeur, the large groups he took everywhere, songwriters, agents, song pluggers, press agents. And although they had never laid eyes on her before, they just accepted her as part of the family. She was amazed at the whirlwind courtship and all the attending newspaper publicity. He held her hand and kissed her cheek as the camera snapped, and on the fifth night they finally wound up alone—in his hotel suite.

She had never been in a suite at the Waldorf Towers—at the time she was still living at the Barbizon Hotel for Women. She stood in the center of the room staring at all the flowers and the bottles of liquor. He kissed her, loosened his tie and beckoned her toward the bedroom. She meekly followed him. He took off his shirt and casually unzipped his pants. "Okay, angel, unwrap," he said.

She had felt panic as she slowly undressed down to her pants and bra. He walked over and kissed her lips, her neck, her shoulders, while his fingers fumbled with the bra. It fell to the floor. He stood back, his disappointment evident.

"Jesus, baby, put the bra back." He looked down at himself and laughed. "Charlie here has already folded from shock."

She put the bra back on. She put on all her clothes and rushed out of the hotel. The following day he sent her flowers, besieged

her with calls, pursued her. She relented and they had three wonderful weeks together. She went to bed with him, but she kept her bra on.

The singer returned to the Coast after three weeks. He never called her again. He salved his conscience by giving her a mink coat as a going-away present. She could still recall the amazement on his face when he found he had taken a virgin.

The newspaper publicity brought a call from the Nick Longworth agency. She signed with them and her career as a model was launched. He started her at twenty-five dollars an hour, and now, five years later, she was one of the top ten models in the country, booked solid at sixty dollars an hour. Nick Longworth made her study the fashion magazines, learn how to dress, practice her walk. She had moved from the Barbizon to a nice apartment on the East Side where she spent most of her evenings alone. She bought a television set and a Siamese cat. She concentrated on her work and studied the magazines. . . .

Robin Stone had exploded into her life at a charity ball. She had been chosen along with five other top models to appear in a fashion show for a charity ball at the Waldorf. Seats cost one hundred dollars. There was the usual dancing and entertainment in the Grand Ballroom; all the best people came. But there was one factor that set this ball apart from all the other similar glittering charity events: Mrs. Gregory Austin was head of the committee. Mrs. Gregory Austin's ball not only made all the newspapers, it also received television coverage on the local IBC station. And why not? Mr. Austin owned the IBC network.

The Grand Ballroom at the Waldorf was packed. Amanda and the other models were accorded the courtesy of "paying guests," since they were donating their time. Along with the five other girls, she sat at a table and nibbled at the dinner. IBC had placed six minor executives at the table as escorts for the girls. The men were attractive and bland. In the beginning, they made stabs at small talk, but gradually they fell into discussions of ratings and cancelations among themselves. Amanda barely listened. She covertly studied the table where Mrs. Gregory Austin sat with her