

The Runaway Robot

A DJ Benson Adventure

JA Davies



Strategic Book Group

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2011
All rights reserved – JA Davies

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, from the publisher.

Strategic Book Group
P. O. Box 333
Durham, CT 06422
www.StrategicBookClub.com

ISBN: 978-1-62212-939-3

Chapter 1



A New Technology

Who would have thought that a battery-pack could change my whole world? But, yes, that's exactly what happened.

I can still remember the day I first saw our new farm robot. Dad and I were standing in the research and development section of the robotics factory we had inherited from Uncle Clive. Most people are lucky if they get left some old-fashioned jewellery, or even furniture. But, we got a factory that makes robots! That's kind of cool!

The engineer, who was showing us the new technology, was exceptionally proud of the company's achievements. He was raving accordingly.

'This newly developed power-pack will be essential. Without it, your new robot will only run for a few minutes. With this cutting-edge technology, you'll only have to plug it into a standard power point once every twenty-four hours.'

‘Doesn’t look like it could power anything, let alone a working robot,’ muttered Dad, as he examined the half-brick sized black box in his hands.

‘You’re a lucky man, Mr. Benson. That power pack has been a real breakthrough. This company has invested more than five years of research and development into it. Now that we have hard-wired it into your new machine, we can really test it out.’

‘What do you think, DJ?’ asked Dad, handing me the black box. ‘Do you think this thing will be any use back on the farm?’

I took the battery-pack and looked at the human-like machine standing in the centre of the research laboratory. It was a little shorter than me with big blue eyes that stared out from a white, oval-shaped face. I reached out and touched its head. It felt smooth and cool under my hand. I walked around it and looked at it from behind. It reminded me of the *Michelin Man* I’d seen in one of my brother’s motoring magazines. I looked for the switch to turn it on. There was a small grey screen mounted on the robot’s chest. It was similar to my iPod touch-screen, so I tapped it gently. The screen changed colour and began to glow with a soft green light. A tinkling chime, like the start-up sound a computer makes when you turn it on, echoed across the room.

‘Don’t touch anything, young man,’ barked the engineer. ‘That is an extremely valuable piece of equipment.’

‘Sorry,’ I muttered, and I stepped back.

The engineer tapped the screen again and the light faded. A different tinkling chime rang out as the little machine powered down. The engineer glared at me and snatched the power pack from my grasp. I put my hands in my pockets, no doubt, my face reddening.

‘DJ!’ urged Dad, smiling at my embarrassment. ‘Have you suddenly gone deaf? I asked if you think that thing will be any good back on the farm.’

‘It’s a little beauty, Dad,’ I enthused, glad to change the subject. ‘When can we take it back home?’

‘Right away, I expect,’ answered Dad. ‘We’ve already been down here too long.’

Dad and I both stood in silence. We stared at the machine that would likely soon change our lives back on the farm. I still couldn’t believe it. Only six months ago, we had been ordinary dairy farmers from the out-of-the-way community of Bandabura Junction. Now, we were the wealthy owners of a mansion in Sydney, several businesses, including the robotics factory, and a rather large fortune. For those of you who have not yet met me, my name is Daniel James Benson. You can call me DJ, just like everyone at school does.

For those of you who do know me, you may recall my adventure at Markwell Manor, the old, rambling mansion in Sydney my dad inherited. The whole family became tangled up with a bunch of crooks, some ghosts, and an uncle who died, but didn’t. It was Dad’s very rich Uncle Clive, who had faked his own death, so he could drop out of existence, and then retire to the farm next to ours back in Bandabura Junction. Sad old Uncle Clive had become tired of his fast-paced and dodgy life in the big city, and he had planned his “demise” so he could escape it all. Everyone in Bandabura Junction knew our new neighbour as Claude, a retired gardener from Sydney. If they knew about his colourful past, maybe he would not have been welcomed quite so warmly!

Part of Uncle Clive’s estate was a small company that specialised in manufacturing computer-controlled

robot workers for factory assembly lines. Once Dad got wind of the tasks these robot workers could undertake, he began to think of how we could use a robot on the farm. Dad spent three weeks in the company's research department, supplying the developers with some suggestions, which helped them design our new farm robot. After a month, the designers had created a mock-up that seemed to satisfy all of Dad's requirements.

'I'm sorry, Mr. Benson,' offered the engineer, interrupting my daydreams. 'We still have many weeks of field-testing before we can release the robot into your care.'

'Impossible!' grumbled Dad. 'You can't run a dairy farm, unless you're there every day. This time, we've been down here in the city for three weeks already. I can't leave young Tony looking after the place too much longer; he's got his own work to do.'

'Nevertheless, Mr. Benson, we can't afford to let an untried product out of our lab until we are sure it's safe. We owe that much to our customers.'

'Do you mean it could be dangerous?' Dad queried, with a note of alarm in his voice.

'This machine is an extremely sophisticated piece of equipment,' began the engineer. 'It has the capabilities of performing complicated tasks with remarkable ease. Even now, we are still developing the software to control its ability to network with other robots, should you want to add extra units. At this stage, we are unsure of its full potential. We are hoping that each unit will be able to learn from others around it.'

'Hmmm,' Dad sighed. 'Maybe we should rethink this robot idea. The whole thing sounds a bit too complicated.'

Dad is an old-fashioned farmer through and through. Even so, he is not afraid of progress, and anything that can make life a little easier on the farm quickly captures his interest. In the past, we couldn't afford most things, so poor, old Dad had to keep dreaming about modernising the place. That is, until we came into our unexpected prosperity. Even though we were suddenly quite wealthy, and despite the urging of my elder brother, Dave, Dad refused to sell the farm.

'My grandfather carved this farm out of the bush with his bare hands!' Dad would bellow. That ended any discussion about moving out.

'So, when will this thing be ready to take home?' asked Dad.

'I would really like another month of trials before I could let you have it,' replied the engineer.

'Great!' I interjected. 'We get another trip to Sydney to pick it up.'

'DJ!' snapped Dad. 'We can't afford another trip down here.'

'Aw, come on, Dad. We're rich now. Or, have you forgotten? You can hire someone to look after the farm.'

'Oh, great idea, Son. I'd probably have to undo all the damage some stranger would do to the place.'

'No need to worry, Mr. Benson,' interrupted the engineer. 'Once the trials are finished, I'll arrange for the robot to be shipped to you. We'll pack it into wooden crates to ensure that it can't be started up accidentally while in transit.'

'And how will we get it together?' Dad asked after much thought.

'We'll include a full set of instructions. You don't have to worry; even a child could assemble it.'

The Runaway Robot

‘Great, Dad!’ I exclaimed. ‘That can be my job.’

‘Yes, DJ,’ answered Dad, a glum look on his face. He turned back to the engineer. ‘Will the crates be delivered straight to the farm?’

‘We’ll dispatch the crates by express courier. I believe you get a daily service into Waycope. That should be your closest depot to pick it up.’

‘Hmm,’ answered Dad absently. ‘So we’ll get our robot in about a month?’

‘That’s right, Mr. Benson. By then, we should have ironed out any bugs.’

No one could have imagined, then, that bugs with the robot would be the least of our problems.

Buy the B&N ePub version at:-

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-runaway-robot-jadavies/1113247393?ean=2940015579789>

Buy the Kindle version at:-

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Runaway-Robot-Adventure-e-book/dp/B009O74KM4/>