

# 'CYBORG WITH ROSIE'

BY TROY BANYAN

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**'Cyborg With Rosie'**

by

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**Characters**

Rosie Comstock.....middle-aged, reclusive cybernetics genius

Proto/Ken.....middle-aged, man who lives as a dog

Elle/Gabby Vernon.....woman in her 20s

Stu Vernon.....man in his 20s

Queenie.....woman in her 60s-70s

Louise.....woman in her 20s

**(Proto – dressed as a dog, in a canine onesie with ears - is standing at the desk, the drawer of which is open. He is reading papers, the top page of which has a photo attached to it, which he holds to his heart.)**

**ROSIE:** (Off.) Proto, where are you boy?

**(Proto quickly stuffs the papers in the drawer and shuts it then panics as the key isn't in the lock. He looks quickly on the floor for it but can't see it. He then runs to the sofa, bounces on it and up onto the window ledge behind it just as the stage left door opens and Rosie walks in.)**

**ROSIE:** No sign yet? You keep looking. **(Walking over to couch.)** Good boy. **(Rubbing Proto's head.)** What am I going to say to her? I mean, am I ready to open up to the public yet, especially after what happened?

**(Proto nods approvingly then nuzzles his head into Rosie's hand and when she stops he buries his head under her arm for her to continue petting him. Rosie smiles and starts a bit of rough and tumble with Proto which he loves, and before long they are rolling around on the couch, with Rosie laughing and Proto getting excitable. She then stops and stands up seriously.)**

**ROSIE:** Oh, who am I kidding? How can I let an interloper into our world? It will ruin everything. I mean how am I going to explain you to her?

**(Proto stops and looks panicky. He then starts making doubting noises and sits staring up at Rosie. She looks down at him and gives him a re-assuring smile.)**

**ROSIE:** Of course you're right, you always are. I need to set the record straight about so many things. So why, then, am I so knotted up inside?

**(Proto turns and looks at her and sort of shrugs, with a grunt. Rosie smiles.)**

**ROSIE:** Look at you, so wise. I'm wondering if we should've met on neutral ground. She might be intimidated and I'm going to be worried about what she thinks about things going on in here rather than me. Oh God Proto, **(resting head on hands.)** what if it all goes wrong? I don't think I could bear another setback.

**(Proto suddenly stops trying to nuzzle back into Rosie then darts back up into the window sill where he stares intently outwards. Rosie also turns to look.)**

**ROSIE:** Can you sense someone coming boy?

**(Proto gets excitable, as if composing himself to speak, but only strained barking noises come out. He tries to mouth it into words but cannot. Rosie gives him a hug then tickles him under the chin, which he excitedly enjoys.)**

**ROSIE:** It's okay boy, I know there's a million things you want to say, and who knows... perhaps one day you will.

**(The distant sound of a car approaching is heard off. Proto pricks up then jumps back up on the top of the sofa, excitedly staring out the window. Rosie kneels on the sofa and also looks out. The distant sound of the car stopping is then heard following the buzz of the intercom. Rosie walks to the intercom and pushes the answer buzzer on the box.)**

**ROSIE:** Hello. Yes, okay, just drive up to the house and park in the carport.

**(Rosie presses the intercom entry button on the box. She then takes a deep breath and starts wringing her hands.)**

**ROSIE:** Don't panic Rosie, go to your special place **(closing eyes.)** and now... sing your special song.

**(Proto looks over at her askance and almost reluctantly jumps back down by Rosie's side, as she breaks into a made-up song.)**

**ROSIE:** The hands of the clock will keep on turning.

**(Proto's looks upwards and he starts gradually howling along with the song. A distant car door slamming is heard off.)**

**ROSIE:** The flame on the candle will keep on burning.

**(Proto's howling gets more intense.)**

**ROSIE:** My heart, for sure, will keep on yearning.

**(Proto's howling almost turns into singing.)**

**ROSIE:** Until such time I'm at one with myself.

**(Proto is almost going apoplectic with his howling.)**

**ROSIE: (Realising and stopping.)** Sorry boy, I know you're excitable enough as it is. In fact **(walking to the left door.)** I think you'd be one revelation too many today.

**(Rosie starts walking over towards the stage left door, pulling a reluctant Proto by the collar with her. The intercom on the right door buzzes and Proto looks anxiously over.)**

**ROSIE:** Come on boy **(opening the stage left door.)** it won't be for too long, I'm going to have to make this as quick as possible.

**(Rosie almost thrusts Proto out of the stage left door and closes it behind him. She then composes herself and walks across to the stage right door. She takes a deep breath and presses the intercom answer buzzer.)**

**ROSIE:** **(Into the intercom box.)** Hello. Yes, okay, push the door then follow the winding stairs up. Once on the landing it's the second door on the right. Okay, see you in a bit.

**(Rosie pushes the entry button on the box for several seconds then walks away wringing her hands. Scratching is then heard off behind the stage left door.)**

**ROSIE:** No boy. Let me at least get through the preamble and we'll see how things go.

**(There is a triple-knock at the stage right door. Rosie stops wringing her hands and wipes them in her sides.)**

**ROSIE:** Come in.

**(Elle pokes her head in first, smiles then walks in. She is smartly dressed, with her hair up in a bun and wearing studious glasses. She also has a handbag.)**

**ELLE:** Ms Comstock I presume.

**ROSIE:** Please, call me Rosie.

**ELLE:** **(Holding out hand.)** And I'm Elle.

**(They shake hands then Stu appears in the doorway behind her, with a camera in a case with a strap around his shoulder.)**

**ROSIE:** Who's this?

**ELLE:** Oh, he's my photographer, Stu.

**ROSIE:** Oh, I didn't consent to having my photograph taken. I just thought it was a story you were after.

**ELLE:** **(Putting hands to face.)** I'm so sorry Rosie, he can go back and sit in the car while we talk **(turning.)** Stu, sorry, can you go down and wait in.

**ROSIE:** Wait. Look, it's freezing out, he can come in but just not take any photos. Okay?

**ELLE:** That's very kind Rosie. Again, I'm so sorry for being so presumptive.

**(Elle and Stu walk in and Rosie closes the door behind them.)**

**ROSIE:** Actually, it's not much warmer up here. What say I get us some tea, or coffee?

**ELLE:** Oh, a cup of tea would be great. Thanks.

**(There is an awkward silence then Elle prods Stu in his side.)**

**STU:** Oh, I'll have a coffee as well please.

**ELLE:** **(Laughing awkwardly.)** He means tea, **(pointedly.)** don't you?

**STU:** Yes. Yes I do ma'am.

**(Both Elle and Rosie look oddly at Stu.)**

**ROSIE:** Why don't you two sit down while I get it?

**ELLE:** **(Quietly to Stu.)** Ma'am.

**(Elle and Stu go and sit on the sofa while Rosie walks towards the intercom box.)**

**ELLE:** Oh, do you not live alone? I... I mean when doing my research I... well, I thought you were, were...

**ROSIE:** A total recluse? A hermit?

**ELLE:** I... I didn't mean to, oh dear, this isn't going at all well, is it?

**(Rosie smiles, walks to Elle and puts her hand on her shoulder.)**

**ROSIE:** It's okay dear. In a way I'm pleased you're not a hard-nosed hack, I don't think I could have handled that. It's good that we're as nervous as each other, that might relax us both.

**ELLE:** No, like I said, we're just a couple of technology buffs looking to launch our magazine... and an exclusive from you would just be... be **(choking up.)** sorry, it's just...

**(Elle wipes away tears from her eyes. Rosie gives her shoulder a reassuring grip.)**

**ROSIE:** Everything will be okay **(walking away towards intercom.)** I'll get that tea.

**(Elle gives a wicked smile and a thumbs-up to Stu. Stu grits his teeth and gives her an 'over the top' sign. Rosie presses the intercom answer buzzer.)**

**ROSIE:** **(Into the intercom box.)** Hello Queenie. Yes, can you bring a tray of tea and biscuits for three to Sector One please? Thank you.

**ELLE:** Oh, this is so exciting. Your home isn't even divided up into rooms but sectors. **(Pointedly.)** Isn't that great Stu?

**STU:** **(Stilted.)** Yes, that is very... um... good.

**(Elle glares at Stu who shifts on the sofa and visibly sits on something. He reaches behind himself and digs out from the sofa a dog's toy with bell inside, which jingles when he produces it. Rosie goes to explain but scratching is then heard against it.)**

**STU:** Ooh, you have a dog.

**ROSIE:** Um, sort of.

**(Elle and Stu look at each other in bemusement. Rosie quickly walks to Stu, takes the toy and sits in the armchair. The scratching outside the door continues.)**

**ROSIE: (Loudly, to drown out the scratching.)** So, why don't we start the interview now? **(Louder still.)** That would be a good idea I think. **(Shouting.)** Don't you?

**ELLE:** Um... yes, I guess **(grimacing at the scratching.)** where to start?

**ROSIE: (Loudly.)** I know, to completely break the ice, why don't we all sing a song... loudly? I'll start and you two join in. **(Singing almost operatically.)** All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small.

**(Proto starts howling along: off.)**

**ROSIE:** Come on, join in. All things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all.

**(Rosie tries to orchestrate the other two to sing along.)**

**ROSIE:** Each little flow'r that opens. Each little bird that sings.

**(Elle and Stu look at each other then start mumbling along to the hymn, while Proto's howling outside gets more frenetic.)**

**ALL:** He made their glowing colours, He made their tiny wings.

**ROSIE:** All together now.

**ELLE: (Jumping up.)** Aagh, I'm sorry but I can't concentrate **(walking to the left door.)** and if you want to give us the interview quickly **(standing by door and holding knob.)** then we need to get this over with now.

**(Elle turns the knob then as she opens it she walks behind the door swing to allow Proto clear access and he hurtles straight across the room on all fours, looking frantically all around him. There is a long pause as Elle and Stu just look wide-eyed at Proto. Rosie looks at them, goes to speak but doesn't, but eventually she does.)**

**ROSIE:** Ah, there he is. Good boy. You don't like missing out on anything, do you?

**(Proto is looking all around then Elle walks out from behind the door. He then stops and watches her walk past him back onto the sofa with no reaction. His eyes narrow and he lets out a low growl. Stu smiles, reaches down and rubs Proto's head playfully.)**

**STU:** Hey, she has that effect on a lot of peo-... animals... um... human being type things... um... um **(rubbing Proto's head again.)** who's a good boy then?

**ELLE: (Pointedly.)** This is why *I* do the talking and *you* do the snapping.

**(Stu stops playing with Proto, who then just sits staring at Elle. Queenie then arrives in the stage left doorway carrying a tray with three mugs – with a stringed**

**teabag in each – a milk jug and two bowls, spoons and a plateful of biscuits on it. Rosie moves towards the sofa and makes room on the coffee table for the tray.)**

**ROSIE:** Ah, Queenie, not a moment too soon.

**(Queenie lowers the tray onto the table.)**

**ROSIE:** Mugs? Teabags? Queenie?

**QUEENIE:** I'm sorry, I didn't know we were expecting royalty.

**ROSIE:** Well, um... okay. Also - as he's now in the room - could you fill Proto's bowl for him, and perhaps bring him a few treats?

**QUEENIE:** Will you want me to feed them to him as well?

**ROSIE:** **(Smiling uneasily.)** Oh, you...

**(Queenie exits through the stage left doorway.)**

**ELLE:** Excuse me for asking... but wasn't she a bit... ?

**ROSIE:** **(Sitting on end of sofa.)** Insolent ? Sarcastic ? Yes, she's always been like that, she's the faithful, old retainer from when I was growing up... and when she had nowhere else to go I just had to take her in.

**(Rosie starts dunking the teabags in and out of the mugs.)**

**ROSIE:** I'll be mother.

**(Proto growls.)**

**ROSIE:** What *is* wrong with you today boy?

**STU:** I know what it is... he's got guests and he wants to play, is that right boy?

**(Dropping to knees.)** You're like any other dog I expect, aren't you? **(Rubbing Proto's head.)** Do you like a bit of rough and tumble?

**(Stu does quick arm movements around Proto which makes him try to snap at his hands. Stu then grabs him and they roll around playfully on the floor. Elle tries to ignore them, gets her notebook and pen from her bag and faces Rosie.)**

**ELLE:** Perhaps we could start with a few questions about Proto.

**ROSIE:** What about him?

**ELLE:** Well, he... um... his... I mean he's a... a...

**ROSIE:** He's a dog. To all intents and purposes he's a dog. Some might call him a mandog, others a dogman.

**ELLE:** So, he's common knowledge then?

**(Queenie appears back in the stage left doorway and surveys the grappling Stu and Proto on the floor. In her hands are a bowl of water and a bowl of biscuits.)**

**QUEENIE:** Luncheon is served Master Proto.

**(Queenie walks downstage left and places the bowls on Proto's matting area, next to his bed, which has toys all around it. Proto sees this and bounds away from Stu and immediately starts chomping from the biscuit bowl. Queenie exits through the left door.)**

**STU: (Standing up.)** Well, that's something I never thought I'd be doing today **(sitting back on the sofa.)**

**ELLE:** Or ever again I hope. Look, we can't waste any more of Rosie's time so let me get this interview on the road. Why don't you check for messages on your phone, see if any of those potential advertisers have got back yet?

**STU:** Good idea **(feeling around his jacket pockets.)**

**ELLE: (Forced.)** Oh, wait a minute, you had it in the car, you must have left it in there.

**STU: (Finding phone in inside pocket.)** No. Here it is.

**ELLE: (Through gritted teeth.)** Oh, that's good then.

**STU: (Realising.)** Ah, yes... yes it is **(looking at phone.)** yes, yes there are some messages... and I shall probably need to speak to someone **(standing up.)** I'll pop out and do it so that I don't disturb you **(starting to walk stage right.)**

**ROSIE:** It's okay, go through into the study **(pointing to stage left door.)** it's very peaceful... and warm.

**STU:** Actually I think I need to visit the little boy's room.

**ROSIE:** That's out there as well, kill two birds with one stone. I'll get Queenie to show you where they are.

**STU:** No, it's all right, I'm sure I'll be able to-

**ROSIE: (Calling out.)** Queenie.

**QUEENIE: (Appearing in stage left doorway.)** You bellowed?

**ROSIE:** Can you show our young guest here where he can point Percy at the porcelain?

**QUEENIE:** Ooh, you spoil me **(sighing heavily.)** *This* way.

**(Stu shrugs at Elle then follows Queenie out of the left door.)**

**ELLE:** Right, now where was I? All these interruptions are disturbing my train of-

**(Proto stops feasting and sits up bolt upright. He then looks all around then runs to the stage right door and sits by it. Rosie tries to ignore this.)**

**ROSIE:** I know, why not tell me what area of cybernetics your magazine will be focussing on... then that might lead you into the questions you want to ask me?

**(Proto starts getting agitated as if going to bark and reaches up towards the door handle.)**

**ELLE:** He's very excitable, isn't he? What breed is he?

**(Proto stops and turns to look at Elle.)**

**ROSIE:** Oh, he's unique, a one-off. So, what area of cybernetics is it you'll be focussing on first? You never answered my question.

**ELLE:** Oh, you know, the first edition will be a... a sort of umbrella edition... and with your name on the front - 'Rosie Comstock... Queen of the Cyber Frontier' - it is sure to attract readers who will then, hopefully, stay with us every quarter.

**ROSIE:** Mmm. What worries me is people looking at it and asking, Rosie Comstock? Wasn't she a scientific geek who became a reclusive hermit?.

**ELLE: (Opening notebook.)** Well, why don't we start with you telling me why that happened? People will want to read that, it will help them understand.

**ROSIE:** Oh, I don't know...

**ELLE:** Go on, then you can lead into how the magazine's interest in you made you realise the time was right for you to rejoin the *human* race.

**(Proto turns quickly as if hearing something off right. He then starts scratching at the foot of the door.)**

**ELLE:** Oh, isn't there something we can do about him **(defensively.)** or we'll never get anything done at this rate?

**ROSIE: (Getting up.)** Something's clearly agitating him **(walking to Proto.)** what is it boy? Is something bothering you?

**(Proto grunts in agreement then puts his right paw to his right ear.)**

**ROSIE:** Have you got an earache?

**(Proto grunts in disagreement. He then holds out his left paw and starts prodding it with the fingers of his right paw.)**

**ROSIE:** Is it foot pad, pillow foot... ?

**ELLE:** **(Under breath.)** Mange?

**(Proto gives a deep sigh and holds out his left paw in front of him. He then indicates signals flying out of it into the air, using his right paw.)**

**ROSIE:** Is it an abscess that you think might burst? Quick, let me look at it.

**(Proto gives out an exasperated grunt and collapses into a heap on the floor. Stu then re-enters through the stage left doorway – with his mobile phone to his ear – and with Queenie behind, ushering him into the room.)**

**ROSIE:** What is it Queenie?

**QUEENIE:** This one was just standing in the corridor, not pointing Percy at all.

**ROSIE:** Well, he did say he wanted to check his messages as well.

**QUEENIE:** Right. Sorry for not being a clairvoyant and knowing that.

**ROSIE:** And our guest?

**QUEENIE:** **(Sighing.)** Apologies to you as well sir... I suppose **(turning.)** I shall be back at my station if I'm required again.

**ROSIE:** Sorry about that Stu, she is a bit set in her ways.

**STU:** It's okay **(tapping mobile phone off.)** there's no answer anyway.

**(Proto sits up abruptly again and goes to the stage right door, straining to hear. He then turns and looks suspiciously at Stu as he pockets his phone then goes to his area where he lies flat on his bed but watches everything intently.)**

**ELLE:** Hope that wasn't a backer pulling out, although at this rate I can't see us ever getting our cover story **(putting head to hand.)** I'm sorry Rosie, I didn't mean to come over all ungrateful.

**ROSIE:** No, you're right, I'm not handling this at all well. I guess I'm just not in the right frame of mind when I should be the one grateful to you for wanting to tell people about me and my work.

**ELLE:** Great, then how about that photo after all? Your face will be on the front page and it will make 'Cyber Insider' jump out of the magazine rack ahead of all the others. It will be great for us and for you.

**(Rosie smiles and her eyes light up.)**

**ROSIE:** Okay, I'll do it.

**ELLE:** Um... you might want to run a comb through **(gesturing hair.)** and perhaps apply a little **(gesturing face.)** hope I'm not being too...

**ROSIE:** No, you're right, I have let myself go of late. I'll do it.

**(ROSIE walks towards the stage left doorway, stops then looks back at them.)**

**ROSIE:** Start drinking your tea while I'm gone. Waste not want not.

**(ROSIE exits excitedly through the stage left doorway.)**

**ELLE:** Huh, waste not want not. All that money she made when she was famous and now look at it **(sipping tea and grimacing.)** ugh teabags and UHT milk.

**STU:** You snob **(sipping tea.)** mmm, not bad.

**(Proto turns and growls at Elle. She goes to respond but instead leads Stu downstage right to try and get out Proto's earshot. Proto stays stretched out flat but watches them.)**

**ELLE: (Dismissively.)** Not bad. Humff. Mugs as well, at least the spoons aren't plastic.

**STU:** She probably spent everything she had fortifying this place... thanks to our dear dad.

**ELLE: (Angrily grabbing Stu's lapel.)** Heh, blood is thicker than water... and remember why we're here.

**STU: (Pulling Elle's hand off.)** Don't overegg your part. I've already let you play the lead role in this charade when we both know I'm the one with the factual knowledge.

**ELLE: (Dismissively.)** Let me play? You had no choice. It was **my** plan and I'm the one with the savvy knowhow of how to execute it, and it'll work if you stick to it and don't make any more mistakes.

**STU:** The only mistake I've made is forgetting to forget my phone.

**ELLE:** Hence having no reason to go back downstairs and look for the one thing we are here to find **(playfully slapping Stu's face.)** am I right, my sidekick older brother?

**(Proto jumps out of bed and growls at Elle again.)**

**ELLE:** Huh, he's off again.

**(Proto then goes to the stage right door and starts scratching at the bottom of it.)**

**STU:** Perhaps he wants to go out.

**ELLE:** Heh, you seem to have a rapport with him... why don't you take him down then while you're there you can...

**(Queenie then enters through the stage left door, with a rolling-pin in her hand.)**

**QUEENIE:** What have you been saying to the mistress, she's like an excited schoolgirl out there?

**ELLE:** Well? Isn't that a good thing? From what I've heard and read she needs to recapture her youth.

**QUEENIE:** Oh, you think you're so clever don't you? Been promising her the Earth have you?

**ELLE:** Queenie, can I ask you a question? Aren't hired helps meant to be low profile, and not have more to say than the person who hires them?

**(Stu shudders and tries to shush Elle.)**

**QUEENIE:** Why you cheeky madam, I ought to...

**(Proto starts scratching and howling at the door.)**

**QUEENIE:** Now look what you've done.

**ELLE:** I think you'll find you're the one who raised her voice.

**(Queenie gives Elle an evil look then walks over towards Proto. Stu gives Elle a derisive slow handclap which she shrugs at.)**

**QUEENIE:** What is it boy? Is the nasty woman upsetting you?

**(Proto shakes his head and points to the door.)**

**QUEENIE:** You can hear something outside, can you?

**STU: (Defensively.)** Oh, I thought he might want to go out to... to...

**QUEENIE:** Oh no, he does his business in the same place you were meant to... sir.

**(Queenie turns the stage right door knob.)**

**QUEENIE:** Come on boy, let's go and have a look.

**(Queenie opens the door and Proto hurtles out through it. She follows, still with the rolling-pin, and closes the door behind her.)**

**STU: (Nervously.)** I wonder if they'll find anyone **(quickly.)** or thing?

**ELLE:** What, an asinine canine and a stropky old maid with a rolling pin? I don't think so. Right, that's enough of the small talk, I now need to visit the ladies' room. I'd ask you where it was but you didn't point Percy at the porcelain after all, did you? I'm sure I'll find it anyway. Now, did you check everywhere out there? Never mind, I'll do it.

**(Elle exits through the stage left door and Stu runs to the stage right door and opens it. As he does Louise enters. Stu holds her but she is preoccupied.)**

**LOUISE:** Where is she?

**STU:** My precious sister's gone to the loo.

**LOUISE:** Not her, my precious mother.

**STU:** Oh, she's getting ready for her photoshoot.

**LOUISE:** So, the plan's working then?

**STU:** Certain bits of it are.

**LOUISE:** One bit that *isn't* is me being stuck in the boot all this time.

**STU:** I did hire a car that let you get out into the back seat.

**LOUISE:** Yes, but without you coming down to let me out the car I had to climb out through the sun roof.

**STU:** Yes, that's one of the bits that didn't quite work. Sorry. Forgive me?

**(Stu puckers his lips for a kiss but Louise ignores him.)**

**LOUISE:** Who, or what, was that just walked along the hallway and down the stairs?

**STU:** There isn't time to explain now. Hang on, how come they didn't see you?

**LOUISE:** I backed into a dark recess and they went straight by.

**STU:** That's what I love about you, ever-resourceful.

**(Stu again puckers his lips for a kiss but Louise again ignores him.)**

**LOUISE:** So, have you found it yet?

**STU:** No.

**LOUISE:** Well, I've checked everywhere downstairs and it isn't there.

**STU:** Look, the plan is coming together, slowly. My sister is playing her part, and playing right into our hands.

**LOUISE:** So, what's the delay?

**STU:** We've just not managed to engage your mum enough yet for her to tell us about the cyborg, but we're getting there, promise **(holding her hand.)**

**LOUISE:** Well **(shaking his hand off.)** make it quick because I'm ready for my big reveal.

**STU:** Okay. Look, anyone - or anything - could return at any minute.

**LOUISE:** So, what do you suggest I do?

**(The distant sound of Proto barking off stage is heard. Stu goes to usher Louise out of the stage left door but the sound of Elle humming is heard. Stu looks around in a panic then sees the sofa and almost pushes Louise towards it.)**

**STU:** You'll have to hide behind here.

**LOUISE:** What?

**STU:** Just until the moment's right, which won't be too long my sweet, I promise.