

METROPOLIS – The Story

In the futuristic mega-city Metropolis, the "managers" live in luxurious skyscrapers while the workers live and toil underground. One day, Freder, the son of Metropolis founder Joh Fredersen, sees a beautiful girl and follows her down to the workers' underworld. There, he sees the horrors of the workers' lives. He is appalled. Freder persuades his father's former clerk, Josaphat, to help with his quest to help the workers. But, Freder is unaware that his father has ordered a spy (credited as the "Thin Man") to tail his son.

Meanwhile, Joh Fredersen consults the scientist Rotwang, his old collaborator, about a worker's plot that has been uncovered. Rotwang introduces Fredersen to a Machine-Man, a robot he has constructed, to which he intends to give the image of Joh Fredersen's dead wife, named Hel, for whose love the two had been rivals. Rotwang explains to Fredersen that there are catacombs below that reach the workers' city. The two secretly enter the catacombs from Rotwang's house and reach the workers' meeting-place to find the beautiful Maria preaching to the workers about a coming Mediator.

At the end of the sermon, Freder reveals himself to Maria and tells her that he must be the Mediator she has been waiting for, then Freder returns to the surface to continue his quest to help the workers. Meanwhile Fredersen instructs Rotwang to give the machine-man the image of Maria in order to sow discord between her and the workers. Rotwang captures Maria and transforms the machine-man into a double of Maria and then commands it to destroy Fredersen, his city, and his son. When Freder arrives at his father's office, he sees the machine-Maria embracing his father and collapses in shock.

When Freder recovers, Josaphat tells Freder what has happened during Freder's recovery: the fake Maria is creating chaos up top, and is also preaching rebellion to the workers. Freder travels to the workers' city and confronts the duplicate, but the workers instead recognize him as Fredersen's son and attack. Meanwhile, Rotwang explains to the real Maria that Fredersen wants the workers to revolt to justify using force to stop them, but that the Machine-Man follows his will, not Fredersen's. Joh Fredersen happens to be eavesdropping and subdues Rotwang, allowing Maria to escape. The workers storm the city's power generator. Fredersen gives orders to open the gates. The destruction of the power generator causes the city's reservoirs to overflow and inundate the workers' city to the brim, but Maria, Freder, and Josaphat successfully lead the worker's children to safety.

The workers, realizing what they have done, blame Maria for the disaster. They encounter the real Maria, who flees from the mob. While in pursuit, the mob runs into a throng led by the machine Maria. In the ensuing confusion, Maria escapes and the machine-man is tied to a stake and burned, revealing the machine-man's true form to the crowd. Meanwhile, Rotwang, who has had a mental breakdown and believes the machine-man to really be Hel, corners Maria in a cathedral. Freder climbs up to the roof and battles Rotwang as Fredersen watches in horror. Rotwang falls to his death, and Freder takes his first steps as Mediator, thus beginning a period of unity and reform.