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As Only A Robot Can

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Abstract

"What do you do while I'm asleep?" "Well, last night I sat by your bed and looked at some of your paintings."...

come down the stairs for a long while and no one will come up, either."

"I suppose you have a woman in the linen closet and you're going to seduce her on the stairs after everyone is gone."

"Yes."

"D'Albiac, you're an ass."

"You have a stunted vocabulary; call me something else."

"That is the only word that fits you."

"Go away."

"You're going to stay on the stairs drinking beer?"

"Until this can is empty."

"Then where'll you go?"

"For more beer."

"You're going to get drunk drinking so much beer."

"Maybe, it will take much more beer, though."

"Will you come back to the stairs after you have more beer?"

"No. I'm going to sit on the fire escape with my next can of beer."

"You're a raving, simpering, blithering idiot."

"And I also like to sit on stairs."

To be near you is good, Bob D'Albiac. Now you are on a stairway with a can of beer; later you'll be on a fire escape with more beer; alone in the Spring night in a stairway or on a fire escape, alone with a can of beer

"Good night, D'Albiac."

"Good night." Thick, slow, warm, bewildering.

—Richard Carroll, *Eng. Sr.*



AS ONLY A ROBOT CAN

"WHAT do you do while I'm asleep?"

"Well, last night I sat by your bed and looked at some of your paintings."

"But there were no lights on," Fred Jauncey said to his new robot; combination bodyguard, servant, and assistant.

"I can see by this infra-red bulb on my left shoulder,

but to get good color definition I have to use another sense that I have. It's something like radar, and my brain circuits are capable of giving color interpretation to the rebounding waves."

"Hummm. What do you think of my paintings?"

"They were lousy."

"What? Why, I'll have you know that I am the highest priced artist in this country. Besides, what would an ambulatory radar set know about art anyway?"

"You forget that one of your specifications that was adhered to in my construction was that I know everything possible about art. I have built into my memory circuits everything that is known about technique, and my criticisms are based on extrapolations of all the criticisms made by the great art critics of past and present."

"Extrapolations huh? Say!" the painter leaped to his feet, "What do you mean by WERE lousy? If you've done anything to those paintings I'll use a hack saw on your prehensile digits." He ran around the room examining each canvas carefully and found nothing wrong. "Those are worth a lot of money. It's a good thing you didn't change anything."

"Oh, but I did. I painted over them, correcting your mistakes."

"The hell you did. I can't tell any difference, and I painted them."

"If you had a powerful microscope you would find a very thin layer over your paint that would appear transparent to you."

"Oh, well, a little clear lacquer won't hurt just so you don't do anything else. Guess I'll go to bed. Now you be good tonight."

The robot took one last look at the pictures under normal light and grimaced as only a robot can. As Fred turned out the light, the robot turned on his radar-like, extra sense, and immediately, to him, the pictures changed in appearance. The paint that was transparent to Fred under normal light was very colorful to the robot's extra sense. He sat in the chair by the bed and admired his handiwork as he sang Fred a super-sonic lullaby.

—Tom Vernon, *Sci. Jr.*