On The Stairs

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Abstract

Why are you sitting in the stairway, Bob D’Albiac?...
ON THE STAIRS

WHY are you sitting in the stairway, Bob D'Albiac? I see your checkered shirt, black stiff-standing hair, brown eyes and your smooth, sausage lips smiling like Mona Lisa's; you're there, Bob, sitting in the stairway holding a can of beer and looking at the wall. I will talk to you, then you won't be alone for a while at least . . . .

"D'Albiac, you're sitting in the stairway."

"I know I'm sitting in the stairway."

Don't widen your smile and half turn your head and not lift your eyes all the way to mine. You're too strange that way Bob D'Albiac. You make me smile from the bottom of my stomach when you look like that and I'll never leave you sitting on the stairs because it feels so good to smile from the bottom of my stomach . . . .

"Why are you sitting on the stairs, you ass?"

"I like it here." Thick, slow, warm, bewildering. So strange an answer. So strange a boy.

"It's drafty here and the stairs are hard. Are you drunk, D'Albiac?"

"No, I'm not drunk." Thick, slow, bewildering.

"You look like an alcoholic, sitting in a stairway waiting to get high."

"Nobody asked you."

"People are always going up and down the stairs, you are in the way here."

"There aren't many people now, just you."

"There'll be more; D'Albiac, you're an ass."

"You're abnormal, too."

"I don't sit on stairs and drink beer. Stairways are crowded and uncomfortable."

"You're an introvert, you don't like people and you hate inconvenience."

"You're a manic depressive; you persecute yourself by sitting on stairs and having people walk over you while you stare at the wall."

"Nobody has stepped on me. After you leave no one will
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**

"**W**hat 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,