

robot desires -- Jonas tells a joke

The Urth list — 6 messages, 4 voices, 15 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3485>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 15 Oct 2002, 17:06

Lest anyone suppose I was joking when I wrote of proud Jonas wanting to awe Jolenta with his repaired shine, the "These Are the Jokes" section of CASTLE OF DAYS offers some suggestive material.

In the joke that Jonas tells, a woman interviews three sailors to find out what each one wants the most. The first says power, the second says (social) polish, and the third says love.

The woman laughs and says that they are all robots. The first sailor says that is true, and he can see how she figured it out from the first two answers, since power and polish are things all robots look for, but he couldn't figure out how she detected a robot in the third answer.

She says it is because she began life by looking for power and polish and wound up just like the third sailor. Then the woman and the third sailor go off for a drink and neither of them ever came back to the ship.

Now this joke does a number of things. It establishes a hierarchy, almost like Mazlow's [sp?] hierarchy (which starts with food, then shelter, etc.), but for robots: "power" becomes "food" in addition to "recognized authority" (because robots run on energy); "polish" becomes "physical appearance" in addition to "social graces" (because the robots have skins that shine -- the Tin Woodman becomes nickle-plated on his elevation, and he is always getting polished, getting new accessories, etc.); but what is "love" in robot terms?

Well, in addition to that answer, love is also love, and something which some (perhaps not all) robots can desire.

Next, there is the linkage of women to robots, which might be equal to a linkage of humans to robots, or it might be a more gender specific link (see Disch's notes on "the robot as housewife" in THE DREAMS OUR STUFF IS MADE OF). The woman's reported life experience reinforces the hierarchy of power, polish, love (whether this is an ascent or a descent is left open).

Finally there is an impression of a human/robot couple.

All of which is being told by Jonas.

=mantis=

Alice K. Turner — 16 Oct 2002, 01:55 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mused mantis:

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[snip]

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Well, in addition to that answer, love is also love, and something which some (perhaps not all) robots can desire.

But aren't you forgetting that the TW desired love too, as well as polish--his first desire was a heart, to love but also to be loved. And he became Emperor of the Winkies, so he got power too.

Mark, Edward !IV was 6'3" and "broad-breasted," a giant of his time. Richard III at probably about the norm, 5'7" or so, would have been dwarfed.

Also, just curious, does Smart own a cat?

-alga

Mark Millman — 16 Oct 2002, 01:46 · follows Alice K. Turner

On Tue, 15 Oct 2002, Alice K. Turner wrote:
Mark, Edward !IV was 6'3" and "broad-breasted," a giant of his time. Richard III at probably about the norm, 5'7" or so, would have been dwarfed.

-alga

Sorry if I wasn't clear, alga. I meant primarily to suggest that Richard may have looked, and perhaps felt, like a child next to Edward. As it happens, I couldn't remember whether or not he was below average height for his time; thanks for providing the information.

Mark

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Oct 2002, 03:45 · follows Mark Millman

alga asks:

Also, just curious, does Smart own a cat?

No, he doesn't. At least there is no mention of one in the text. Why?

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Oct 2002, 16:47 · follows Roy C. Lackey

mantis wrote:

In the joke that Jonas tells, a woman interviews three sailors to find out what each one wants the most. The first says power, the second says (social) polish, and the third says love.

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She says it is because she began life by looking for power and polish and wound up just like the third sailor. Then the woman and the third sailor go off for a drink and neither of them ever came back to the ship.

So what is the joke? We know that Wolfe has a warped sense of humor, and that Jonas is telling the joke. It only dawned on me today that the woman's last line is also the punch line. We've heard this joke before, in PEACE. The one Weer told Lois: "I knew we were mechanical engineers, but I didn't think we'd wind up like this."

She's a robot, too.

-Roy

Alice K. Turner — 17 Oct 2002, 01:20 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy asks:

alga asks:

Also, just curious, does Smart own a cat?

No, he doesn't. At least there is no mention of one in the text. Why?

Oh, nothing really:

For I will consider my cat Jeoffry

For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving him...

Christopher Smart

-alga