

Lost And Alone

Beep. Beep. Beep.

In one corner of a dark room, a pair of green LEDs subtly brightened. A gentle hum in the background rose slightly in volume, something was happening somewhere close by.

Beep. Beep-beep. Beep-beep.

The pair of LEDs blinked and brightened even more. Then, a crease appeared in the metal tin that housed them. It looked like a smile. Rusty metal grated against itself as a small robot eased itself to its feet and stretched its arms and legs. Dust cascaded from its head like dandruff and spiders were firmly but gently shaken from its rivets. Whatever it had been waiting for, the robot had been waiting a long time.

Beep-beep-beep. Beep-beep-beep.

A series of red lights were blinking on and off along the edge of a glass tube. A faint crack in the mirrored surface was the only sign that the top half of the tube would lift up like a lid.

The small robot started to hop from one metallic foot to the other. Its eyes flashed brightly, and there was definitely a smile on its face now. Suddenly, a thought seemed to occur to it, and it hustled off towards a metal locker on the far side of the room. It threw open the doors, and its head disappeared inside momentarily. When it emerged, a pair of underpants was hanging from the antenna on its head, and it was wearing a red sock as a glove. An old pair of jeans, with both knees worn through, and a black t-shirt were balled up under one of its arms. The other one was being used to grab a pair of battered trainers. Even without a nose, the robot was trying to hold them as far away from its face as it could. They were covered in mud, and neither lace matched the other.

Without warning, the beeping sound intensified and soon a siren filled the small room. The row of red lights was now glowing so brightly it looked like one continuous line, and cold smoke was starting to hiss from the crack in the glass tube. The robot clasped its hands together and twiddled

its fingers. Its feet danced on the steel floor like a ballerina. It had waited so long for this moment and, suddenly, it felt like the wait would never end.

Then, it ended.

Wispy smoke filled the chamber and drifted eerily as something emerged from the glass tube and moved the air. There was a loud clang as the metal grating on the floor shifted under its weight. And then the smoke coughed loudly.

“What the devil is all this smoke, Delta?” An old man staggered through the mist, waving away the last shreds with his wrinkled hands. Other than a long, white beard, he was completely naked. “And where are my clothes?”

The robot raced towards the man and wordlessly handed him the jeans and t-shirt. It took a while to untangle the pants and socks, but soon enough the man was fully dressed and looking more cheerful.

“How long was I asleep this time?” he asked. His voice was filled with excitement.

The robot’s voice was robotic but still human, almost. “Two hundred and fifty years, sir. The longest yet!”

“Excellent. Soon we’ll be able to travel into deepest space and see what’s out there.” The old man flicked a switch, and a shutter rolled up revealing a window that looked out onto a barren red landscape. “It’s getting a bit lonely up here alone.”

PREDICTION FOCUS

Write the next paragraph in the story. Think about what the man might see out of the window, or what might happen next.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

E

Explain which clues in the text show you that the robot has been there a long time.

V

Draw a picture that explains what the word **subtly** means.

R

What sign is there that the tube opens?

I

How does the robot feel about the man waking up? What clues tell you this?

V

Find the definition of the word “bustled”.

Answers:

E: Rusty, stretching, covered in dust and spiders

R: A crack in the glass

I: Happy and excited. Any of the clues in the text such as hopping from one foot to the other, fiddling or rushing to the man

V: To move in an energetic and busy manner