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Opening extract from

The Heartless Robots

Written by

Simon Bartram

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BOB & BARRY'S LUNAR ADVENTURES



THE HEARTLESS ROBOTS

SIMON BARTRAM



templar publishing
www.templarco.co.uk



IDENTITY CARD

Name: **Bob**

Occupation: **Man on the Moon**

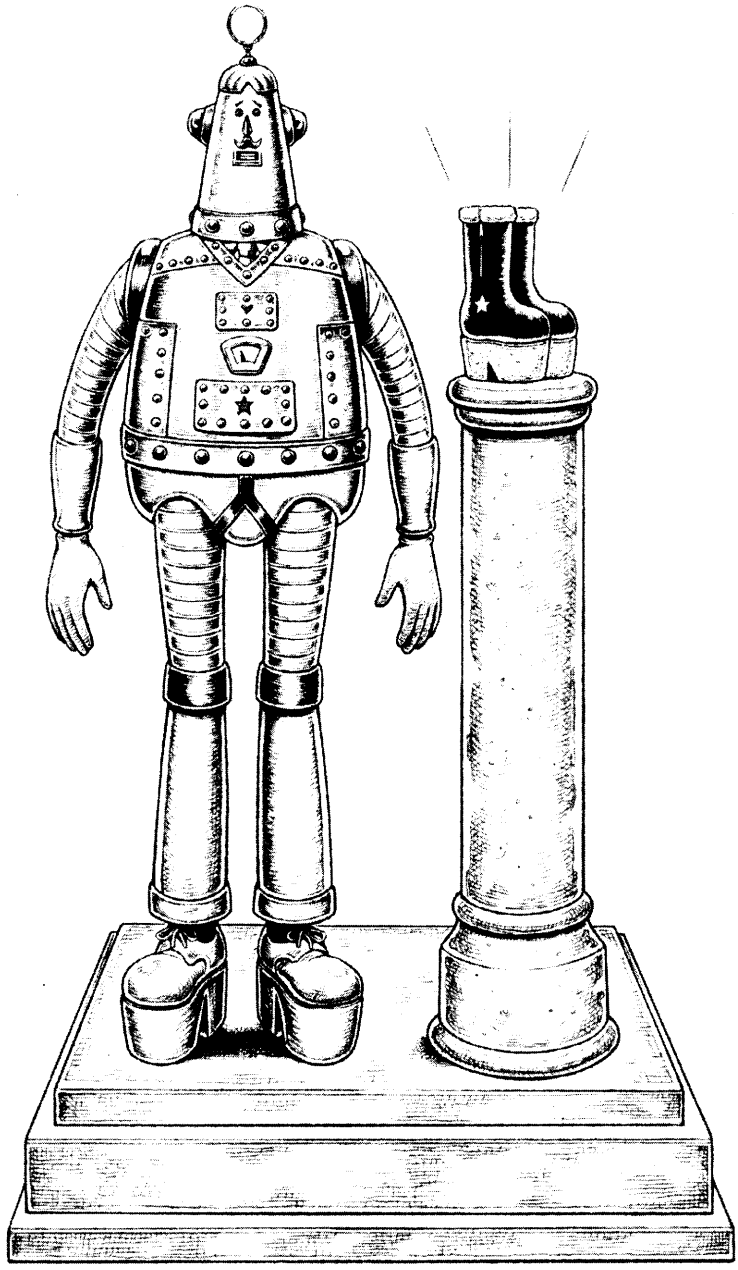
Licence to Drive: **Space rocket**

Planet of residence: **Earth**

Alien activity: **unaware**

W.A.A.

WORLDWIDE ASTRONAUTS' ASSOCIATION



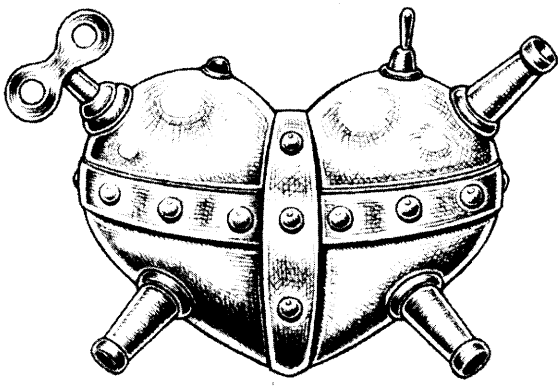
CHAPTER ONE



The TV studio was mouse quiet. The tension was almost unbearable. The moment had come.

The final two astronauts in the *Spacemen Who Are Also Inventors' Inventions Competition* stood side by side, each desperately hoping to hear the host of the evening, Dermot Pilkington-Fizz, read out his name, declaring him the competition winner.

Bob, the Man on the Moon, accompanied by his unusual six-legged dog, Barry, had everything, including his eyes, firmly crossed. His invention, The Galaxobot 3000, was a triumph of brain-thinking. Bob had built the state-of-the-art robot



to be a super-servant for the overworked modern spaceman. It would be a caretaker, a butler, a chauffeur, a chef and more besides. Its motto was "HAPPY TO HELP". In fact, helping was all it was programmed to do. Deep inside its metal chest was its crowning glory, a breathtaking gold mechanical heart. Constructed from an orchestra of nuts, bolts, screws and cogs, the heart buzzed and ticked and tocked and clicked, sending waves of kindness to every nook and cranny of its mighty frame. The Galaxobot 3000 would be a blessing to all astronauts.

Only the other finalist, Stan the Man on Gas Mark 5, disagreed about that. His invention, a pair of Incredible Edible Spaceboots was also a work of genius. The stylish boots, made mainly of cake, were designed for cosmic hikers who were lost in space and low on sandwiches. A quick nibble here and there would keep their hunger at bay until a rescue rocket arrived. There was even a special hidden compartment in each platform sole in which dry-roasted peanuts and smallish pickled onions could be stashed. It was a simple but brilliant idea and, having been runner-up for the previous five years, Stan was convinced that it was his turn to win.

Dermot Pilkington-Fizz took a deep breath. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls," he announced, "your votes have been counted and we have a result!" The audience went completely silent. "The winner of this year's *Spacemen Who Are Also Inventors' Inventions Competition* is…

BOB, THE MAN ON THE MOON, AND HIS GALAXOBOT 3000!!!"

The studio erupted with noise and colour as confetti and streamers danced down from above. Bob was stunned. His now un-crossed eyes glazed over with happy tears that plip-plopped onto Barry who had excitedly leaped into his master's arms. Victory celebrations were new to Bob – his sideboard showed a definite lack of any kind of twinkly trophy or medal. For Bob, this was a dream come true.

The audience cheered as Dermot Pilkington-Fizz presented Bob with his grand prize. As well as a most terrific silver egg cup he was awarded two tickets for an amazing round-the-world super trip. Even better than that, though, was the promise that thousands of Galaxobots would be made. It was predicted that just about every astronaut in the universe would want one. Bob could not stop smiling.



As the jubilant scenes continued, only one sad soul stood motionless. Yet again, Stan the Man on Gas Mark 5 had been pipped at the post and was second best. His tears didn't glisten under the spotlights. They were dark tears of red-raw fury. This was one defeat too many. *Someone* would have to pay.

But for now the night belonged to Bob. As he posed for photographs with his egg cup, all was right with the world. Or at least, that was what he thought. However, when the studio lights dimmed and the celebrations moved backstage, nobody noticed a shadowy figure lingering behind in the darkness. No one heard the clink-clanking as he tampered with Bob's Galaxobot 3000. And not a single pair of eyes witnessed the dastardly fiend slip away into the night, leaving behind a trail of cake-crumb footprints and a universe that was destined for BIG, BIG TROUBLE!