

Robot Museum

by Aaron S.

The museum was like a white palace built for technology. I walked with the class, but straggled behind everyone else most of the time. I wanted to read everything.

“We don't have time,” said the teacher Ms. Prigg, stern and stout with iron hair.

We walked into a room with a glass wall along one side. Behind it were bipedal robots, from old models like Awesome-O to convincing human doubles, a few of them powered up and moving slowly around the room. Even a few of the rare monkeybots with their loping carbon fiber-covered arms climbing on a PVC jungle gym.

Along the glass wall were posted signs like:

DO NOT FEED ROBOTS! And a little picture of a robot eating a battery.

DO NOT TAP ON GLASS, and all manner of other zoo-like warnings. Above them all was a larger sign with red letters:

ABSOLUTELY DO NOT TAKE PICTURES OF ROBOTS!

THEY HATE IT!

I grinned, laughing inside. *They hate it? A machine that hates...* I knew that I had to take a picture of that sign. How could they expect a kid with a decent sense of humor to take a sign like that seriously? We were always taught that robots are harmless creatures that do what humans tell them. *Apparently not in this museum.* I took out my phone, glancing around at the handful of classmates that stood further down the room staring at the display.

I raised the phone, readying the camera for action, and focusing on the red-letter display. Done. Then for good measure I snapped a few of the display itself, focusing on one particular synthetic who'd caught my eye. He resembled Data from Star Trek a little; pale skin, light, unnatural eyes that reflected the flash from the camera. *Damn it, how'd that come on?* A few of my classmates looked over.

But the real reaction was inside the display.

“Invasion of privacy!” yelled the android, closing his eyes then blinking rapidly. It started to walk swiftly forward, but hit the thick glass wall. I stepped back and couldn't help but laugh. Other people were noticing and pointing now.

“No con-sent!” yelled the robot in its monotone drawl. Then I noticed one of the larger, squarish industrial types begin to move forward towards the glass. I took another few steps back, too afraid to look around at where anyone else was. “Shit. That sign wasn't lying,” I muttered.

“Robot attack!” yelled some smart-ass from the class. By now Ms. Prigg was yelling too.

“Where the devil are you kids!”

Then square-bot put an industrial claw through the glass pane, sending large shards everywhere, bouncing off my rubber-soled shoes as they slid across the marble floor. The whole class screamed, except me. I was too terrified as I watched the behemoth raise the arm to deliver another hammerclaw. Then there was a flash like lightning. When I opened my eyes, the bots stood still and smoking.

“God damn it kid!” I looked to my left where we'd entered the room. Two guys in blue jumpsuits popped out from behind a wall.

“Knew this would happen again,” said the first guy's partner, some kind of remote in his hand. The other just looked at me with exasperation.

“This is going to take forever to clean up!”

“Sorry,” I said.

