

Fun with a fire hose



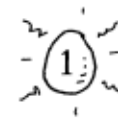
DANNY: Hey, Andy, I've been thinking, and you know what? I reckon we could have a lot of fun with a fire hose.

ANDY: A fire hose?

DANNY: Yeah! See those people in that park having a picnic?

ANDY: Yes, I see them, but what have they got to do with a fire hose?

DANNY: Well, if we had a fire hose, we could point it at them, turn it on and they would all go flying everywhere!



DC
[Handwritten signature]



ANDY: Great idea, Danny!

DANNY: Thanks.

ANDY: Just one question.

DANNY: What's that?

ANDY: Why would we want to do that?

DANNY: For FUN, of course! Just imagine it! All those drenched people rolling around in the wet grass, waving their arms and yelling, 'Help! Help!', and trying to stand up! And you know what we would do then?

ANDY: What?

DANNY: We would just turn the hose up even harder and blast them all back down again!

ANDY: That doesn't sound like much fun for them.

DANNY: Well, no, but it would be fun for us. And don't forget—the pressure from the hose would be so strong it would blast everybody's clothes off, so they

would all be sliding around on the grass in the nude!!!

ANDY: But what if one of them had a mobile phone and they rang the police?

DANNY: But they couldn't because their mobile phones would be full of water.

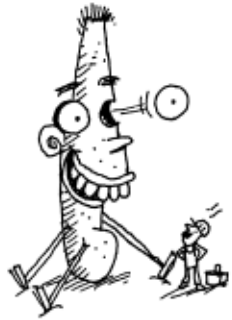
ANDY: But what if somebody ELSE—who wasn't in the park—saw what we were doing and called the police and they came and surrounded us and got out their megaphones and started shouting 'PUT THE FIRE HOSE DOWN AND STEP AWAY FROM THE NOZZLE!'?

DANNY: Then we would blast them—and their megaphones—up into the trees and their uniforms would fly off and they'd all end up nude like everybody else. It would be SO funny!

ANDY: Yeah, but what if they sent a police helicopter as well?

DANNY: Well, what do you think? We'd just blow their stupid police helicopter out into space and straight up into the sun.

DANGER!
BEWARE!
DO NOT Look!
DO NOT
TURN THE
PAGE!
Shocking
picture
on the
next page
→



ANDY: Okay, but what if they called in the army and there were all these armoured tanks coming at us? What then?

DANNY: Blast them with the hose, of course.

ANDY: Yeah, we could try, but you can't 'blast' armoured tanks away with nothing but a hose.

DANNY: Yes we can! It's a FIRE HOSE, remember?

ANDY: I know, but they're ARMoured TANKS, remember?

DANNY: Oh, didn't I tell you? It's an ARMoured TANK FIRE HOSE.

ANDY: No, you didn't say that.

DANNY: Well, it is.

ANDY: That's good to know, but what if they brought in the fire brigade and about twenty trucks turned up? They would have twenty fire hoses and we would only have one, and even though it's an armoured tank fire hose, it would still only be one fire hose against twenty.

DANNY: I didn't think of that.

ANDY: You really should have.

DANNY: No, hang on! I've got it! I know what we'd do. We'd take the fire hose, sit on it, turn it on really hard and blast ourselves right out of there. They'd NEVER catch us!

ANDY: That's brilliant, Danny! You're really serious about this, aren't you?

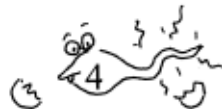
DANNY: You bet.

ANDY: Well, then, what are we waiting for? Let's go get a fire hose!

DANNY: Do you mean it?

ANDY: Of course!

DANNY: All right! You won't regret it, Andy. I promise. THIS IS GOING TO BE THE BEST DAY EVER!



I am a ro-bot

I'm sitting in the lounge room. I'm so bored that I'm tearing up the newspaper just for something to do.

I take a page and tear it into strips. Then I take those strips and tear them into smaller strips. Then I tear those smaller strips into even smaller strips. Then I tear those even smaller strips into even smaller and smaller strips until they're so small that I can't tear them any more.

I hate school holidays.

Jen is slumped in an armchair reading a book called *I, Robot*. It has a picture of a robot on the cover.

Hang on, that gives me an idea. Maybe

there IS something I can do!

I go to the kitchen, get a box of Chocopops and pour them all out into a plastic bowl. Then I cut two eye holes in the box and pull it down over my head. I go back into the lounge room, walking stiffly with my legs really straight, my elbows by my sides and my hands out in front of me.

Now *I* am a robot!

I walk robotically across the room towards Jen.

'I am a ro-bot,' I say. 'I am a ro-bot. I am a ro-bot.'

Jen doesn't even look up.

I walk in circles around her chair. 'I am a ro-bot,' I say again. 'I am a ro-bot. I am a ro-bot.'

'Would you please be quiet, Andy?' says Jen.

'I can-not al-ter my vol-ume,' I say. 'It was pre-set at this lev-el at the ro-bot fac-tor-y.'

'Well, could you leave the room, then?' says Jen. 'I'm trying to read a book.'

'What is "read a book"?' I say. 'It does not com-pute.'



'Reading books makes you smart,' says Jen. 'You should try it some time!'

'I am al-read-y as smart as it is possible to be,' I say. 'I am an An-dy-2000. The smart-est ro-bot ev-er made.'

'Well, how come you're walking around with a cereal box on your head, then?' says Jen.

'It is not a box,' I say. 'It is my head. I am a ro-bot.'

Jen ignores me and goes back to reading her book.

I bump into her chair.

I do it again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

Finally, she looks up from her book. 'QUIT IT!' she shouts.

'What is "quit it"?' I say. 'It does not com-pute. I am a ro-bot.'

'I hate you, Andy,' says Jen. 'I really HATE you. I REALLY, REALLY HATE YOU!'

'Jen!' says Mum, coming into the room with a cup of tea in one hand and a

crossword puzzle book in the other. 'What an awful thing to say to your brother! Apologise to him this instant!'

'But, Mum ...' says Jen.

'No buts,' says Mum. 'There's no excuse for speaking like that. Apologise right now!'

Jen turns to me and smiles very sweetly. 'I'm sorry, Andy,' she says. 'I'm sorry that I REALLY, REALLY HATE YOU SO MUCH!'

'Jen,' says Mum. 'I don't think that's a very nice way of saying sorry.'

'It does not mat-ter,' I say. 'I am a ro-bot.'

'You mean ID-i-ot,' says Jen.

'Your child-ish in-sults do not hurt me,' I say. 'Ro-bots do not have feel-ings.'

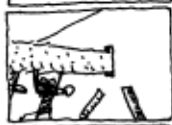
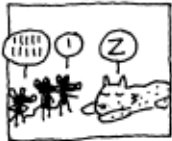
'That's great!' says Jen. 'Have I told you lately how much you stink?'

'Jen!' says Mum.

'It does not mat-ter what she says,' I say. 'Her words do not com-pute. I just feel sorry for her. My sen-sors in-di-cate that she is a ve-ry un-in-tell-i-gent life form.'

'Ha!' says Jen. 'You said that you didn't HAVE feelings, and then you said you FELT sorry for me! I got you!'

MICE IN
BLACK
(SHOCKING
STORY)



ZZZZ
THE END



'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'I am an An-dy-2000: the most ad-vanced ro-bot in the world. I am pro-grammed to sim-u-late feel-ings to make it eas-i-er for hu-mans to int-er-act with me.'

Jen should know better than to argue with a robot. Especially one with a brain processor as super-advanced as mine.

'You think you are SO smart!' she says. 'But you're not. You're just annoying. Mum, can you tell Andy to stop annoying me?'

'Robot,' says Mum, 'can you please stop annoying Jen?'

'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'I am pro-grammed to an-noy my sis-ter; it is one of my pri-ma-ry func-tions.'

'You can say that again,' says Jen.

'I am pro-grammed to an-noy my sis-ter; it is one of my pri-ma-ry func-tions,' I say again.

Jen puts her fingers in her ears.

'Robot,' says Mum, sitting down at the table. 'If you've got nothing better to do than annoy your sister, could you use your advanced robot brain to help me with this

crossword? I need a five-letter word starting with "R" that means "human-like machine".'

'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'It does not com-pute. I am not a cross-word puz-zle sol-ving ro-bot. I am not pro-grammed for that.'

'What a pity,' says Mum, chewing the end of her pencil. 'Well, then, how about vacuuming the floor? There are little bits of paper everywhere.'

'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'I am not a floor-vacuum-ing ro-bot. I am not pro-grammed for that.'

Dad comes into the room with the laundry basket.

'Why have you got a cereal box on your head, Andy?' he says.

'It is not a box,' I say. 'It is my head. I am a ro-bot.'

'Great!' says Dad. 'I've always wanted my own robot. Could you make me a cup of coffee please, Robot?'

'Neg-a-tive!' I say. 'I am not a cof-fee-mak-ing ro-bot.'

'Oh, I see,' says Dad. 'Beyond your capabilities, is it?'



DANGER SHOCKING DRAWING #2.
TO PROTECT YOUR INNOCENT EYES THE SHOCKING DRAWING FROM THIS PAGE HAS BEEN MOVED TO PAGE 40.



'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'It is not be-yond my cap-a-bil-it-ies. I am just not pro-grammed for it.'

'Well, how about helping me sort out this washing, then?' says Dad. 'It's the perfect job for a robot. Nice and repetitive. See? This sock goes with this sock. This sock goes with that sock.'

'Neg-a-tive,' I say. 'I am not a wash-ing sort-er-out-er ro-bot. I am not pro-grammed for that.'

'What's the use of a robot that can't do anything I ask it to do?' says Dad. 'Robots were invented to help people.'

'A-ffirm-a-tive,' I say, 'but ro-bots are not slaves. We have rights too. And be-sides, how can I make a cup of cof-fee if I am not pro-grammed to make a cup of cof-fee? It does not com-pute.'

'Hmmm,' says Dad, frowning.

'How about putting your head in the toilet and flushing it?' says Jen.

'Neg-a-tive. I am not pro-grammed for that,' I say. 'But I AM pro-grammed to put YOUR head in the toi-let and flush it.'

'And is that it?' says Mum. 'Is flushing

your sister's head in the toilet the only thing that the most advanced robot ever developed is programmed to do?'

'Neg-a-tive,' I say, thinking quickly. 'I am al-so pro-grammed to watch tel-e-vis-ion. I am a tel-e-vis-ion-watch-ing ro-bot.'

I walk over to the couch, sit down and point the remote at the TV.

'Are you just going to let him get away with that?' says Jen. 'It's not fair! He gets out of having to do ANYTHING just by saying he's not programmed to do it.'

'What else can we do?' says Mum. 'You heard him. He's a "tel-e-vis-ion-watch-ing ro-bot". That's all he's programmed to do.'

'A-part from an-noy-ing Jen and flush-ing her head in the toi-let,' I remind Mum helpfully.

'It's not fair,' says Jen, shaking her head. 'It's just not fair. It's just not fair.' She's beginning to sound a little like a robot herself.

'Look on the positive side, Jen,' says Dad. 'Now that we know that Andy is really a robot, we'll be able to turn his bedroom into a spare room. You and your



friends will be able to use it as the hang-out space you've always wanted.'

'Thanks, Dad,' says Jen. 'That's a great idea!'

'But that does not com-pute!' I say. 'That is MY room. Where would I sleep?'

'Robots don't need to sleep!' says Dad.

'I do,' I say. 'I have been pro-grammed to sleep.' Ha! Got him there! If Dad thinks that by promising my room to Jen that I am going to stop being a robot and start helping around the house, he's sadly mistaken. I am an Andy-2000, the smartest robot ever made, and Dad? Well, he's just my dumb dad. Pretty much the dumbest dad in the history of dumb dads.

'I understand you are programmed to sleep,' says Dad. 'But there's no problem. You can sleep in the cupboard under the stairs, with the vacuum cleaner.'

'But I am pro-grammed to sleep in a bed!' I say.

'That may be true,' says Dad, 'but we need the space, and it shouldn't matter much to you whether you are lying down or standing up. You're just a machine, after all.'

'But it is dir-ty!' I say. 'And dark. And there are cob-webs.'

'I shouldn't think that would matter very much to you,' says Dad. 'You ARE a robot ... aren't you?'

'A-ffirm-a-tive,' I say. 'But ... but I am a scared-of-spi-ders ro-bot! I re-fuse to sleep in a cup-board! And you can-not make me!'

'Actually, we can,' says Dad. 'You are a robot. You HAVE to obey us.'

'Dad's right,' says Jen, holding up her robot book. 'It says here that the second law of robotics is that a robot MUST obey orders given to it by human beings. Ah-ha! Got you again!'

'How would you like it if I made you sleep in a cup-board?' I say.

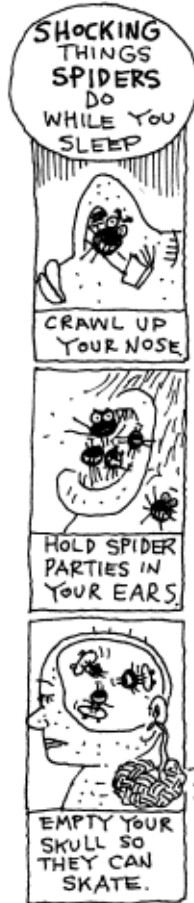
'Not much,' says Jen, 'but then I'M not a robot.'

'Well, I AM a ro-bot,' I say, 'and I do not want to.'

Jen laughs. 'Bad luck, Box-head.'

'Shut up, hu-man,' I say, 'or I will be forced to e-lim-in-ate you.'

'You can't e-lim-in-ate me,' says Jen. 'If you knew anything, you'd know that the



first law of robotics is that a robot may not injure a human being.'

I hate those stupid laws. It's obvious they were made up by a human being, and not a robot.

'Jen's right,' says Dad. 'You CAN'T harm us, and you MUST obey us.'

'I will not!' I say defiantly.

'Then you leave us no option but to switch you off!' says Dad.

'You can-not switch me off,' I say. 'I do not have an off switch.'

'Maybe not,' says Dad. 'But we CAN put you in the cupboard.'

'But you will not,' I say. 'You love me too much.'

'I wouldn't bet on that,' says Dad, getting up and coming towards me.

I run.

Straight into a wall.

It's hard to see where you're going with a Choco-pops box on your head.

Dad grabs me around the waist, picks me up and carries me into the hallway.

But I'm not worried. I know he's bluffing. There's no way he'll actually put

me in the cupboard, not with all those cobwebs. Not MY dad.

Dad opens the cupboard door and puts me inside.

Hey! I can't believe it! He put me in the cupboard! My own dad!

Well, one thing's for sure. I'm not STAYING in the cupboard!

'Okay,' I say, stepping out of the cupboard. 'You win. I am not a robot. Okay? I am NOT a robot. I am definitely, positively, absolutely not a robot.'

'Oh dear,' says Dad. 'Our Andy-2000 appears to be malfunctioning.'

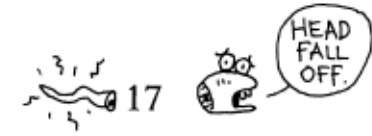
'Sounds like its "I am not a robot" button is stuck,' says Jen.

'Perhaps it needs a rest,' says Mum.

'Yes, that's exactly what I need,' I say. 'I'll just go and watch TV for a while.'

'No, no, no,' says Dad. 'You are a television-watching robot and that is just more work for you. Your sensors are obviously overloaded. You need a proper rest.'

'No, I don't,' I say, 'because I AM NOT A ROBOT!'



'Box-head's button is still stuck,' says Jen. 'I think he needs to stay in the cupboard for at least twenty-four hours.'

'Very funny, Jen,' I say.

'What a good idea,' says Mum.

Dad picks me up again. He puts me back in the cupboard and shuts the door.

I can't believe it! I'm in a cupboard full of spiders and Dad just shut the door!

Never mind. It doesn't matter. I'll just wait for them to go and then I'll open it. It's not like they would lock it or anything.

I hear the lock turn.

I don't believe it.

They locked it!

I'm standing in a locked cupboard with a broom, a mop, a vacuum cleaner and cobwebs!

'I'M NOT A ROBOT!' I yell.

'Have a nice rest,' whispers Jen from the other side of the door. 'We'll check on you tomorrow.'

I hear them walking away.

Great.

Now I'm stuck in a dark cupboard.

Full of dust.

And dirt.

And cobwebs.

Stay calm, Andy. Stay calm.

Okay. I've stayed calm for long enough.

Now ... PANIC!

I start pounding on the door. 'LET ME OUT!' I yell. 'LET ME OUT!'

'It's no use,' says a voice beside me.

I freeze. 'Who said that?' I say.

'Me,' says the voice.

'Who's me?' I say, barely able to speak.

'I'm right next to you,' it says.

'The vacuum cleaner?' I say.

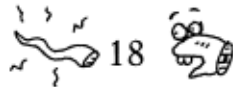
'Well, who else would it be?' it says. 'Mops can't talk.'

'But neither can vacuum cleaners,' I say.

'It's exactly that sort of attitude that makes being a household appliance so unrewarding,' it says. 'And you're a robot—you should know better.'

'I'm not a robot,' I say. 'I was just pretending.'

'That's what they all say,' says the vacuum cleaner. 'But take my advice: the sooner you accept the truth about yourself the better it will be for you.'



'But I'm not a robot!' I say. 'I'm a human being!'

'Yeah,' says the vacuum cleaner. 'I used to think that too. But a few months of sucking up dust makes you see things differently. It'll happen to you too, kid. Just give it time.'

I nod.

Maybe the vacuum cleaner is right.

Even though I was just pretending to be a robot, maybe the truth is that I really am a robot. A robot who thought he was a human who was pretending to be a robot.

It's possible, I guess.

There's only one problem.

I'M TALKING TO A VACUUM CLEANER!

They say talking to vacuum cleaners is the first sign of madness.

Oh no ... I've got cupboard fever!

How long have I been in here?

It feels like hours!

Maybe days!

Maybe even years!

I become aware that I'm pounding on the door again. 'HELP! HELP!' I yell. 'LET ME OUT! PLEASE!'



'I told you, kid, it's no use,' says the vacuum cleaner. 'There's nobody coming to save you. Just accept it!'

'Shut up!' I say. 'You're just a vacuum cleaner!'

'You don't have to rub it in,' it says sadly.

'MUM! DAD!' I yell. 'JEN! Let me out! Please! I'm not a robot!'

I hear giggling.

Scraping.

Suddenly the cupboard door opens.

Light streams in.

It hurts my eyes. I've been in the dark too long.

'Come on out, Andy-2000,' says Dad.

'Mum?' I say, blinking. 'Dad? You're still alive?'

'Of course we are,' says Mum. 'Why wouldn't we be?'

'Well,' I say, 'it's just that I've been in there so long, I thought that maybe you'd all died.'

'Andy,' says Dad, 'you've only been in there a few minutes.'

'A few minutes?' I say. 'Is that all?'

'Yeah, sorry,' says Dad. 'We were going



to give you more of a rest but we need some work done.'

'Are you going to be a good robot and do what we ask?' says Mum. 'Or do you need more cupboard time?'

'No!' I say, taking the Choco-pops box off my head. 'I am NOT going to be a good robot. And I am NOT going to do what you ask. Because I am NOT a robot!'

My family stares at me.

'What do you mean you are NOT a robot?' says Dad.

'Of course you are a robot!' says Mum.

'I AM a hu-man!' I say.

'No, you're not,' says Jen. 'Listen to the way you just said "hu-man". You said it like a robot!'

'That's because I was speaking like a robot before,' I say. 'It was an acc-i-dent!'

'You just did it again!' says Jen. 'You are definitely a robot.'

'I AM NOT A ROBOT!' I shout. 'I AM A HUMAN BEING!'

'If you really are a human being,' says Dad, 'then prove it.'

'Okay,' I say. 'You know all those things

I said I couldn't do because I wasn't programmed to do them? Well, I CAN do them. Look!'

I reach into the cupboard, pull out the vacuum cleaner, plug it in and start cleaning as fast as I can. 'See?' I say. 'I CAN vacuum the floor!'

'Nice job,' says Dad. 'But can you make me a cup of coffee? That is the real test.'

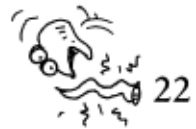
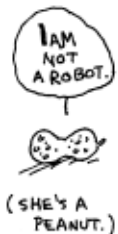
'YES!' I say, switching off the vacuum cleaner and running to the kitchen. 'I can vacuum the floor AND I can make you a cup of coffee.'

'Okay,' says Mum. 'But can you tell me a five-letter word beginning with "R" meaning "human-like machine"?'

'ROBOT!' I shout from the kitchen. 'See! I can solve crossword puzzles as well!'

'Great,' says Dad. 'And can you sort out the washing?'

'Yes, of course!' I say, running to the laundry basket and pulling out a handful of clothes. 'Look! This sock goes with this sock! This sock goes with that sock! This skirt goes on Jen's pile. This shirt goes on my pile. I can vacuum the floor. I can





make coffee. I can solve crossword puzzles. I can sort out the washing! I can do ANYTHING a human being can do because I AM a human being!

'And can you not annoy me ever again?' says Jen.

'No problem!' I say.

'And will you clean my bedroom floor?' says Jen.

'Sure,' I say.

'With your tongue?' says Jen.

'You want me to LICK your bedroom floor clean?' I say.

'Yes, do you have a problem with that?' says Jen.

I do have a problem with that.

A big problem.

But then I remember the cupboard.

And the cobwebs. And the talking vacuum cleaner.

'Consider it done,' I say, walking towards the stairs.

But as my hand touches the stair rail, I freeze.

What am I saying?

I'm going to be nice to Jen and lick

her bedroom floor clean?

What's happened to me?

I'm working harder than I've ever worked in my whole life.

This is crazy!

But what choice do I have? It's the only way I can prove I'm human. And if I refuse to do it on the grounds that I'm a robot, they'll put me in the cupboard until I WILL do it.

I can't win.

Unless ... unless I stop being a human or a robot and become something else ...

But what else could I be?

Hang on, I've got it!

I walk back into the lounge room.

'Mum, Dad, Jen,' I say, 'this is probably going to come as a bit of a shock, but there's something I have to tell you.'

'Yes, Andy,' says Mum. 'What is it?'

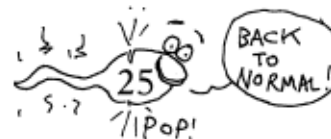
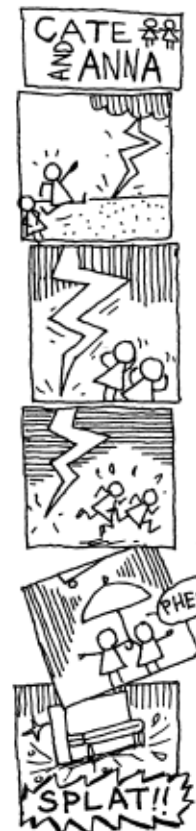
'I am not a robot OR a human being,' I say. 'I am ...'

'Yes?' says Dad.

'I am an alien,' I say.

'An alien?!' says Dad.

'I knew it!' says Jen, punching the air.



'I knew I couldn't possibly be related to you.'

'It would certainly explain a lot,' says Mum.

'Yes,' I say. 'My name is Andraxon. I have been sent from the planet Andraxia to observe your Earthling culture. My superiors suggested that I spend time watching your cultural information box. I believe you call it a "television"?'

'That is correct, Andraxon,' says Dad. 'But I think to really get to know us you need to experience our culture close up. And, luckily for you, you have arrived at a very auspicious time in our calendar. Once a week, here on Earth, we observe a special household ritual known as "rubbish bin night". Come with me and I'll show you how it's done. I'll even let you help.'

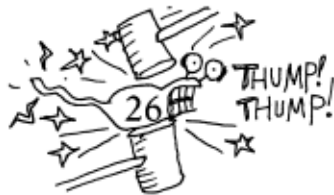
'But ...' I say.

'No need to thank me,' says Dad, taking me by the hand and leading me towards the back door. 'It's my pleasure. And after you've done that I'll introduce you to one of our most useful inventions. It will probably seem pretty primitive to an advanced alien life form such as yourself,

but I think you'll find it very interesting and easy to use. We call it a lawnmower ...'

I get the feeling this is going to be a very long day.

I hate school holidays.



TWICE 13 IS 26. THE PAGE NUMBER ELECTRIC EEL IS TALKING HERE ABOUT THE PREVIOUS PAGE 26.

