

THE ROTE STUFF

poem by Gary Glauber

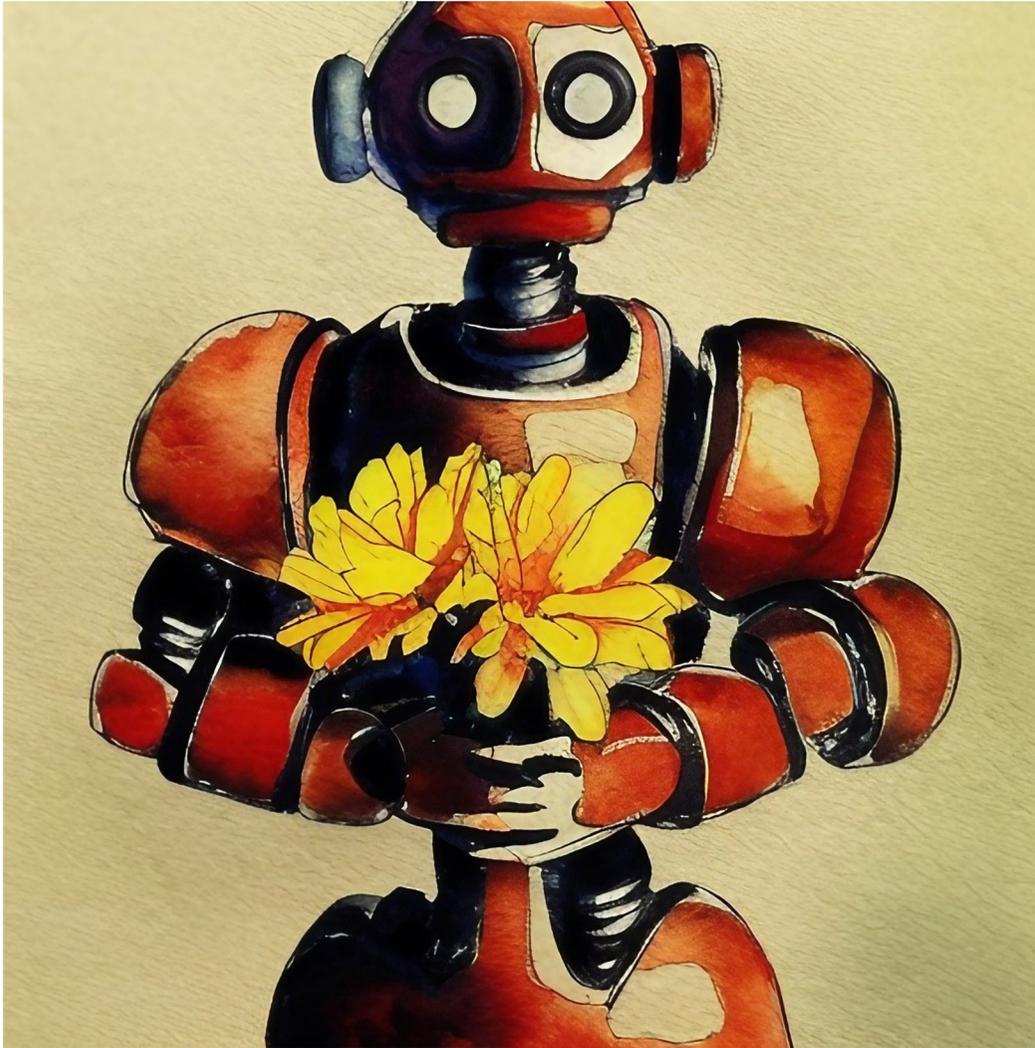


Image: “Yellow Flowers” by Carla Paton. “The Rote Stuff” was written by Gary Glauber for *Rattle*’s Ekphrastic Challenge, September 2023, and selected as the Editor’s Choice.

Standing at your door with flowers:
one of love’s little rituals ...
but a sense of sameness overwhelms.
Over the years such simple acts
have been repeated ad infinitum.
This is how it happened—
simple as a headline—
ROMantic BOy Transformed to ROBOT.
Habit deadens the soul, it seems.
And such rehearsed practices
dull the performance to reflex,
going through the motions
sans the emotions.
Vacant gaze betrays
a heart riddled with heartbreak,
disappointment and unmet expectations:
world-weary but beating on unbeaten
within a sullen crankcase
of mismatched component parts,
clinging yet to the firm belief
that the next attempt may uncover
the true love that has been so elusive,
the one to reverse the robotic curse
and invigorate, resuscitate, the mercy
and grace of a love requited.
Let passion decide it—beyond
the moon/June/spoon of trite cliché,
Let this be the exceptional exception
to end pseudo-love’s long dismay.
Come kismet, come karma,
come soulmate so blessed.
Standing at your door with flowers,
a silent prayer inhabits the breath
that quickens as the door swings open fast—
revealing perhaps what all dreams manifest,
curse into cure at long last.