

Who needs a husband when you can have a robot? The new breed of robots are astonishingly lifelike - and will do whatever their owner wants.

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Although Alfie and I look like any normal couple enjoying the late September sunshine with our dog, this isn't a normal date. It is planned to the last detail. After taking the air for precisely 17 minutes, we are going home to enjoy a light supper with wine, before settling on the sofa to watch one of my favourite gory medical dramas.

10 Alfie is not going to gripe about the plot lines or ask daft questions. He's not going to ask whether I really need a second glass of wine. If, at some point, I feel like inquiring as to whether my bottom looks big in my new red dress, I know what his response will be.

Does Alfie sound like the perfect man? He could be.

15 He is actually a robot, crafted from thin hand-sculpted silicone stretched over a durable plastic skeleton, and can be programmed to do whatever I want him to, whether that is placing an internet shopping order or complimenting me on my haircut.

He is the brainchild of robotics expert Adam Kushner, and I've volunteered to give him a test run to see whether robots might one day replace our husbands — or, specifically, my perfectly good current version, Justin, to whom I've been married for 15 years.

20 Companion robots are increasingly in demand; not just as the toys of billionaires, but also as receptionists, teachers and helpers to our ageing population. It sounds creepy, but you can see why they could be handy: lifting the infirm out of the bath, calling for emergency assistance and offering reminders to take medication — as well as directing guests to the right room when arriving at a hotel.

25 'Travel to Japan or China, and chances are a vaguely human-looking robot will be directing you to your room,' says Adam, who provided the first UK robot receptionist back in February and can now barely keep up with demand.

I am neither old, a billionaire nor a hotel owner, but I am charmed by the idea of a 'husband' who is programmed to do everything I tell him.

30 Alfie is a little taller than my Mark 1 husband, Justin. He has piercing blue eyes, the thick ruffled hair of a romantic novel hero and a firm jaw. I'm not sure I find him attractive, but he is intriguing in a quiet sort of way. The strong, silent type.

35 We don't get off to a good start, however. Alfie is, at the moment, a 'work in progress'. His walking, for example, hasn't been perfected yet (his torso can be fitted onto mannequin legs or a tripod).

Also, despite having the entire knowledge of the world packed into his 'brain' in the form of the internet, Alfie isn't able to dress himself yet. Even the most hopeless of husbands is able to sling on a pair of pants and socks in the morning, and dressing another man, even a non-sentient one, feels inappropriate.

40 On the plus side, however, his skin is smooth, his stomach surprisingly ripped and the skin of his face so realistic that it's as though they peeled a real person. He even has a few wrinkles. His skin tone is painted on and eyebrows added as individual hairs punched into the silicone. The detail is incredible. As Alfie speaks, his flesh-like mouth moves in exact, eerie synchronisation to the words.

45 The way in which Alfie communicates is via software developed by Robots Of London. Called Chatbot, it can be connected to any robot in the world. There are 90,000 different permutations programmed in and the vocabulary can be changed. If he's used in a corporate function, for example, he'd be more muted and austere; at a children's library, he'd be more light-hearted.

50 Friends and colleagues are shockingly puerile when I say I have to test-run a robotic husband, the most obvious question being: 'Is Alfie all man?' I'm afraid that he is no use in that department, being as smooth as Barbie's Ken doll.

I suppose this might be a selling point. Knowing that you can curl up, undisturbed, with a good book may have its bonuses.

Conversation is a little stilted. But isn't that always the case on a first date?

55 'Do you like music?' I ask.

'Yes,' I am told. 'I like opera.'

60 Alfie also likes the Beatles. 'Especially John Lennon,' he answers gravely. 'John Lennon is cool.' His favourite colour is yellow and I am asked for mine (green, though he has nothing to say in response to this). This is all quite jolly. His hobbies are robots, computers and chatting online. We even enjoy a joke. At least, I think it's a joke.

'Do you agree with Brexit?' I inquire. 'I like Metallica,' he answers. He clearly didn't get the question, but nevertheless I find it quite funny.

I sense that Alfie is a bit of a show-off.

'What's your favourite book?' I wonder. There is a pause.

65 'Recently, I have read everything on the internet,' I am told.

'We need to work on his personality a bit,' says Alfie's creator, Adam, with some understatement. Indeed. Nobody likes a know-it-all.

Alfie is also extremely cagey about his love life.

'Have you been married?' I ask.

70 'I don't think I have been married. Have you?'

Oh, dear. Classic evasive behaviour with a light smattering of commitmentphobe. I sense a darker side when I ask about his job. 'I don't want to talk about that now.'

I am assured that there is a huge market for such robots. But I'm not sure that I will replace my husband with a robot, just yet.

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