

After the sandy blonde fembot had been completely reassembled, Maria stood back and issued a verbal order for the naked woman to rise from the table.

"Denise," she said, "please stand up."

"Yes, Maria." she replied in a perfectly emotionless voice. She swiftly sat up and swung her legs off the table, followed by the rest of her well-built body.

"Denise, please activate the renegade robot detection system installed in your chassis."

"Yes Maria." she said. After a few moments of still silence, she reported "Renegade robot detection system activated."

"Very good. Denise, follow me."

Maria led the sexy fembot to the adjacent wall, where the technician had earlier activated a half dozen other units. On loan from Robot Lab 40, they had stood there, each one unmoving, unthinking and unfeeling for days while Maria had worked on the prototype device inside Denise.

"Denise, one of these female humanoid robots is not under the Main Computer's direct control. Please use the renegade robot detection system to indicate which robot is not under the Main Computer's direct control."

Maria's words - themselves originating as binary pulses of electricity within that robot - were received by Denise's ears, interpreted and converted back into electronic pulses that her silicon processors could handle.

"Yes, Maria." she responded while her pale blue eyes pointed out ahead in that perfectly lifeless gaze.

The mechanisms of the blonde's neck turned her head slowly and with mechanical fluidity from left to right, while her wide, unblinking eyes scanned each of the motionless, buxom androids. No motion came from any of the ladies as the blonde's CPU made the complex calculations with the new information. No vocal response, or any other kind came from the blonde, who simply repeated the exact same methodic scanning process. That repetition was itself repeated, again and again. For over two hours the pretty robot technician watched Denise try to figure out which of the other units was the outsider.

The process could have gone on like that for decades. But from within Maria's chest, the Main Computer received streams of data from her sensory apparatuses, and calculated myriad probabilities until it determined that the thing just wasn't working. The computer relayed wireless signals to Maria, telling the electronic hottie to halt the test.

"Denise, please terminate the detection process."

Denise didn't respond to the command in any way. She kept slowly and stiffly moving her head back and forth at the exact same rate.

Maria waited a very long while, then spoke again. "Denise, please terminate the detection process."

The situation stayed the same. Maria ordered the android once more to stop, then opened up Denise's chest panel and manually reset the malfunctioning fembot.

Denise made a series of computerized beeps and tones while the lights in her chest panel went dark and flashed in different patterns again. She announced her rebooting status, along with her serial number. Maria waited until Denise was fully rebooted before she ordered her over to the data exchange console. Once connected, the Main Computer then inspected the data she had just recorded and performed diagnostic scans on both Denise and the experimental device inside her.

When that long process was done, Maria turned her attention to Anya, one of the deprogrammed androids from Robot Lab 40. She was an absolutely breathtaking beauty, with her perfect good looks bordering on unrealistic. She was quite possibly the most beautiful machine to have been manufactured by Robot Control. The smooth, soft skin of her exotically beautiful face remained still and without expression as Maria detached and removed it in order to have a look inside.

Anya's system was supposed to have been completely wiped of any attachment to Robot Control for this experiment, but it may have been possible for a few lines of her programming to have reestablished links with the computer. With that in 'mind', the technician ordered the super-sexy olive skinned babe on to a wheeled examination table, so that she could once more be scanned, diagnosed, and rendered into a state of total disconnectedness by the Main Computer.

Maria gently laid Anya's realistic plastic face beside her opened head while coloured LEDs inside flashed quickly around the exposed circuitry. She opened Anya's chest panel too so that her hard drives could once more be scanned.

Later that evening, while Heather was charging and Denise was being taken apart and put back together again, Byron parked in his usual spot at the tech institute and walked up the brightly lit iron staircase to the classroom.

He greeted his classmates and sat down in front of his computer while they waited for their teacher. Melanie was already sitting at the computer beside him. She smiled at him and said an exaggerated hello while he booted up his machine.

He smiled back politely, trying to look busier than he was. Melanie was always trying to flirt with Byron, but she tried too hard, and she just wasn't his type. As lonely as he was, even he had his standards. She was nice enough, but she was too tall, too skinny, too simple-minded and too blonde. He was longing for a nice brunette - shorter, with womanly curves and a little more of a curious nature. That's why Heather attracted him so much, while Melanie was starting to annoy him. He was also under the impression that she was after his money.

"Ready for another class?" she said, showing him that fake looking smile. She said the same thing every time he saw her.

"Yup." he said, looking disinterested.

"So have you thought about my offer?" she said.

"Uh, yeah, about that..." he said. "I just don't have time to tutor anybody. Why don't you ask Dustin?"

She glanced at Dustin, who could usually be found either looking directly at his own monitor or longingly at Melanie. She quickly turned back to Byron. "But you're so... creative. So much better."

Byron was getting tired of her advances. Melanie was the only female in the class, and the object of poor Dustin's desire. She only had eyes for Byron however, and was always asking that he tutor her. She was good at doing the menial work of programming, and seemed to have a very good memory, but she never seemed to figure anything out for herself. As far as Byron was concerned, tutoring her would be a waste of time.

He drummed his fingertips on the desk in front of him while he waited for her to be done with her clumsy come-ons.

Then the teacher showed up. Ralph Sweet was one of those one of a kind teachers who thoroughly enjoyed what he did. A big, hairy man with a Welsh accent, he injected some sorely needed fun into the teaching process. His fun rubbed off on the students, all of whom appreciated his quirky sense of humor.

All it seemed, except for Melanie. She could only smile at his jokes, always looking uncomfortable when things turned humorous. She had the same look come over her face when things turned a little too theoretical as well. As advanced as they were, the processors and programming of the blonde Fembot Command agent still couldn't grasp anything too abstract.

And that's precisely why Melanie was after Byron. He showed a remarkable creative flair for thinking in new ways that amazed even Mr. Sweet. Despite the fact that he wasn't young anymore, Byron Clarke clearly had a bright future in programming.

As the class got underway, Melanie focused her eyes on Mr. Sweet, but kept a certain percentage of her computing power on watching Byron. No human had a higher probability of being able to complete Project H than he.

For now, Mr. Clarke was under observation. The Master Computing Device over at Melanie's Fembot Command base was still scrutinizing his data. With every class they shared together, Melanie was bringing the final decision closer to being made.

Mr. Sweet's ninety minute teaching session was informative and as enjoyable as ever. This evening they continued to explore the wonderful but difficult world of programming for parallel processors. This subject provided plenty of chances for Byron's amazing creative talent to shine. He found himself working beyond the exercises Mr. Sweet had assigned, and in ways that surprised even the teacher.

Things were going so well, that at the end of the class, Ralph gave Byron his phone number, so that the two could continue discussing his new ideas and fresh perspective. Ralph thought he might even have to recommend a more advanced set of classes in a different city.

Byron was feeling pretty good at the end of the night, but staying modest as always.

He wasn't completely free yet however. Melanie followed Byron out of the classroom, out of the building, and down to his car. Her personality didn't have much depth, but that was just the way these Fembot Command agents were. It wasn't her fault. Considering her artificial nature, she was performing quite well.

As Byron verbally and then literally made his escape, he flicked on the radio and tried not to think of how shallow he was for brushing aside her advances. Then he imagined her naked body - bony and with no curves to hold on to. As he pulled the car away from the curb and rounded the corner, he saw Dustin walk sheepishly down the steps on his way to catch the bus.

Byron opened the window and called him over.

"Hi Byron. I guess I'll see you Friday, eh?" Dustin said in an upbeat voice.

"Yeah." answered Byron. "Where you headed?"

"Cross-town." Dustin said as he adjusted his chrome frame glasses.

"I can take you as far as your bus stop. Want a ride?"

"Sure!" he said.

He walked around and got in the car. They made small talk for a while, then Byron got right to the point. "You know, I think Melanie's a lonely girl."

"You think so?"

"Yeah. She keeps asking me to tutor her, and she's always trying to get me alone. She's not my type though."

Dustin didn't say anything. Byron had a good guess of what he was thinking.

"She's probably your type, isn't she?" he asked.

"Me? Well, I think... I think she's pretty, yeah."

"Why don't you ask her out?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that. I'm much too shy with women."

"Well, maybe offer to tutor her."

Dustin looked nervously out the window for a second. "I don't think that would work either. I'm barely passing the course as it is."

"Well, Melanie can't be doing much better if she's asking for help. Maybe the two of you could learn together."

"I don't know." he said, looking out the window again.

Byron could tell how tense the subject made him. He could sympathise.

"This is your stop, isn't it?" he asked.

"Sure is." Dustin said, looking relieved.

The car stopped, and out the sandy-haired man stepped, bag in hand.

"See you in a couple of days Dustin." Byron said with a smile.

"Yeah, see you next time. Thanks for the lift!" he replied. He shut the door and went to stand in the bus shelter.

Byron drove off and turned the radio up. As he relaxed to the soothing sounds of baroque chamber music his thoughts drifted from Melanie to Heather. Now there was a nice body. A pretty face, and no annoying personality traits that he knew about. Byron found himself imagining her naked as he waited for a red light to turn green.

"Shit," he said under his breath. He wasn't supposed to feel this way about someone who worked for him. He wasn't supposed to feel this way about someone so young either. And he certainly wouldn't want to be feeling this way about a machine.