

As soon as Heather made it back to the house, she got inside and dropped her purse and jacket so the maidbot could pick them up. Heather's lifeless but extremely realistic glass eyes stared out blankly ahead as she navigated her mechanical body through the functionally furnished house. She made her way into the basement and stopped in front of the scanner by the door.

After the usual computerized noises, the box on the wall called out "SCANNING" in its female monotone as a red grid of laser light was projected on to the fembot's face. More synthesized tones were produced as the device used its processors to determine the identity of the humanoid form in front of it.

"SCANNING COMPLETE." it said as Heather walked through the door that opened. The Maria unit was waiting by the examination chair. They exchanged their usual and essentially meaningless greetings, then got right down to business.

Maria pushed some buttons on one of the many consoles and said "Please remove your facemask, Heather."

The pretty brunette that Byron had been lusting over all week removed her artificial facial covering to give the robot technician access to her connection ports.

For her part, Maria visually scanned and identified the necessary spots to plug Heather in to the Main Computer. Her hands worked quickly to attach the cables, and the data transfer began.

The Main computer pulled the day's recorded audio and visual files out of the robot's head. While that went on inside, Maria and Heather were unmoving. The only thing that changed was the flashing pattern of LEDs inside the opened head, which indicated the stage and status of the transfer. Computerized beeps and tones accompanied the blinking lights for the same purpose. Even though her eyes weren't aimed right at Heather, Maria still watched those patterns closely, making sure there were no errors during the communication session.

At the end of that process, Maria politely but emotionlessly instructed Heather to unbutton her blouse and open her chest panel. Heather acknowledged and obeyed the command, showing the technician a different set of connection ports and flashing coloured lights.

This time the Main Computer drew out everything that Heather had computed during the day. All of her calculations, estimates and sensory files were channeled through the very ordinary cables into the console to be stored, indexed, and studied. The supercomputer reconstructed the events of her day and began to analyze the data. It tried to identify problems, recognise patterns and gather some sort of meaning from all of that data. Several hundred different factors and variables within the Main Computer were updated and recalculated at blinding speed throughout the process.

With every kilobyte of passing data, the Main Computer became more sure that the relatively simple robot it had assigned to this mission was in need of more advanced programming. But because Heather was such a simple android, she would need extensive upgrades to her processors and circuitry to accommodate the more advanced software. Those improvements would in turn require a more robust cooling system and a greater electrical supply.

All told, upgrading Heather would take at least ten hours. The computer factored this in as well, and produced a decision to go ahead.

No time would be wasted. While the Main Computer was working out the details of Heather's upgrades, Maria took the agent's face over to the makeup changing station. The mask clicked into

place, being held by clips like the ones in Heather's head. Maria wiped the silicone free of makeup with a damp cloth before reapplying the exact same style of makeup, the pattern having been determined by the computer at the start of Heather's mission.

Maria herself had never worn makeup, and neither had any of the hundreds of Marias that worked for Robot Control. Even so, they were still beautiful things to behold. The movements of the sexy technician's body seemed to have as much elegance as the most advanced agents, and as much as any graduate of the finest finishing school. And the whole time her amazingly complex body worked to fulfil her objectives, the bright lights in her exposed recharge port shone and flashed around the electrical connections, betraying her status as a mere simulation.

The barefoot beauty finished up with Heather's plastic face just as the Main Computer had written the first of its instructions to Maria. The signal was sent directly into the electronic brain analog in her chest while zeroes and ones flickered fast on the monitors above the furiously active consoles.

First on the list was to get the Heather unit naked on an examination table. Verbal commands from one android to another accomplished that. Heather left a trail of perfume and pheromone scented clothing on the concrete floor for the maid to pick up. She got on the table and layed on her back - totally naked and with the electronics of her head and chest in full view.

"Heather, initiate full shut down sequence." Maria ordered.

"Yes Maria." she responded. "Full shut down sequence initiated."

Her hard drives wrote the required final bits of data as her machine parts prepared to go without electricity. A loud beep came from inside her chest as all the many lights went out.

Maria opened up the fembot's torso and hung the front cover to the side. She picked up some tools and began removing whole parts from the agent. These were layed systematically on tables behind her. Some would have smaller parts exchanged while others would be replaced entirely.

The speed at which the technician worked was at least twice as fast as a human could have worked, but it would still take nearly half a day to complete work on the Heather unit. Not only that, but Maria would also have to deal with Karen when she came home. The maid was already busy putting things away and cleaning Heather's clothes.

Further work on Denise and Anya would have to wait until tomorrow. For now, those two robots lay side by side on examination tables in the crowded lab. They were both naked, and both had various panels removed. No progress had been made on either robot, and the prototype device inside Denise remained more or less untested.

Early that evening, Karen arrived and entered the basement in the same way that Heather had. Karen too had dropped the human act, and walked around looking more like a machine.

She sat herself down in the examination chair while Maria put down her tools and walked over to greet her.

While Karen removed her own facemask on command, the Main Computer finished its highly detailed instruction sets for Maria. It held those in physical memory until the technician was ready to accept them. By the time the computer had done all that, it was ready to download data from the black-haired and blue-eyed android in the chair.

Karen's session was routine, and over with in a short time. As she stepped naked into her recharge booth, work on Heather started again.

Maria worked through the night on upgrading the pretty brown-haired agent. She installed new processors, new wiring, and almost completely replaced the data storage system. Improvements were made to the sensors in Heather's head as well as to the system that interpreted the data from her skin.

Hours later, as Maria's power drained to low levels, the robot maid walked stiffly behind her and connected an electrical cord to her recharge port. The other end was plugged into a wall outlet so Maria could both charge and complete her work on the disassembled lady on the table. New sets of instructions flowed into Maria's chest telling her not to unplug or trip over the long cord that trailed behind her.

The long late-winter night came and went, with the tireless technician working non-stop to complete her tasks. But even at that rapid pace, 7 AM came and went with Heather in no condition to go to work. At 7:35, the computer established a telephone connection with the National Archive. While Heather lay faceless, deactivated and missing parts on the table, and while Maria worked ceaselessly on her insides, the phone in Byron's office rang.

He had just gotten in to work himself. He was on his way to the office when he heard the phone. He quickened his steps to answer it in time.

"Canadian National Archive, Byron speaking."

"Hi Byron, it's Heather." the voice on the other line said. It wasn't Heather of course, but the exact same synthesized pattern of her voice produced by the Main Computer. The signal was transmitted directly over the phone line, and into Mr. Clarke's ear.

"Oh, hello, how are you this morning?"

"I'm not feeling to well, actually, I need to see my doctor."

"Oh." he said. "I hope it's nothing serious."

"Probably not, but I don't think I'll be in until later today."

"Okay. That's fine. You know, if you really don't feel like coming in today, you don't have to."

"Oh, I'm sure I'll be in eventually."

"Alright. See you then. Take care of yourself, Okay?"

"I will. Thanks Byron."

"You're welcome. Bye."

"Bye. See you later."

The computer disconnected the signal and returned its focus to its own important tasks while Byron hung up and started his day. He hoped he would still be able to take Heather to lunch with him. To Hell with his hesitation and reservations.

