

Byron and his android companion entered the sub shop again, and were immediately put under the surveillance of Phet's electronic ears and eyes. They were blissfully unaware of being watched as Phet recorded and recognised new heat patterns coming from the Robot Control agent. For now, she wouldn't calculate their importance, but the Master Computing Device would know what they meant.

While they waited to order, Byron began to flirt with Heather again, as best as he remembered how. Although her AI software was now more sophisticated, she still wasn't programmed to flirt. She stayed friendly enough to maintain his interest though, and he thought he was getting somewhere.

This time Heather paid for the meals once they had been prepared. Byron would be sure to do that next time, he thought. They sat at their usual seat, arriving to the popular restaurant just after the lunch rush.

Byron kept eye contact with Heather longer and with more intensity than usual. Heather looked right back at him, her cameras recording thousands of high-resolution frames per second and feeding each one through dozens of different algorithms and processes to keep her CPU updated as to what he was saying - and what he meant.

She could do this now with so much more depth than before. She caught subtle jokes and puns, and laughed and smiled accordingly. Byron was encouraged by her responses, and layed the charm on thick.

He wasn't a bad looking guy. Always slim, he was now more muscular than he had been before, and still not fat by any means. And he was always dressed sharply in finely tailored clothes. His hair was regularly trimmed, short and neat. No lines or wrinkles had yet invaded his still boyish face. He looked to be around thirty, which helped to make his romantic advances to Heather a little more acceptable.

The more they talked, the more ease of style he saw in her movements, and the more relaxed they both looked. He watched her lips as she ate and as she talked. Her mouth was sexy, with full, dark lips that kept their attractive shape even -or maybe especially - as they stretched over her sandwich. Eating was a comparatively simple task, and she could do it even better now. The fembot was also able to maintain the required pace and level of conversation to keep his interest hot.

Soon, they had finished eating, and again Heather grabbed her purse and excused herself to go to the washroom. This time she navigated her mechanical body partly from memory, while Byron stole a glance at her sexy wiggle.

She repeated her usual procedure of entering the stall, pulling down her slacks and panties, and sitting on the bowl. The food disposal systems inside her quietly worked to get the just swallowed meal out of her rubber stomach. She finished up in there and came out to wash her hands. She smiled and said hello to another customer who entered the room at that time. When the android's hands were dry, she emerged from the washroom and walked back down to the seating area.

She smiled at Byron, who smiled right back. "Shall we go?" she said as she started to put on her coat.

"I guess so." he said as he stood up and put his own coat back on. They walked out of there and back through the freshly shoveled downtown sidewalks to the Archive.

Byron wanted to ask her to dinner that night, but he would be getting out of his classes late. He would wait until Tuesday.

They were apart for the rest of the work day. Byron had his own work to do, and Heather returned to her interim job of recording index numbers on reels of magnetic tape. Byron felt bad about having to give her that crummy job, but that couldn't be gotten around. That was the whole reason she was there in the first place.

She got right down and did what he had asked, without so much as a whisper of complaint. Of course, this data was almost useless to Robot Control, but in good time she would have access to those interesting paper records again.

The remainder of the work day eventually ran out. Agnes left early on Fridays, so the robot and the lonely man closed the place up and left together.

After activating the alarm system and locking the doors, Byron turned to Heather and looked longingly into her beautiful eyes. "Well, that's it for another week." he said.

"Yeah, I'm glad the weekend is here."

"I'd offer you a lift, but I have a class tonight."

"Oh, really? What are you taking?"

"It's a computer programming course. It's quite fun. Plus I'm learning a lot. Soon I'll take over the world!"

They laughed at his silly joke and looked at each other for a while. He thought of all the things he would like to do to her body, while she monitored his actions and computed possible and appropriate responses.

When Byron thought the silence had lasted too long, he excused himself, saying "Well, I'm off then. See you on Monday."

"Bye Byron." said the fembot with a wave. "Have a good weekend."

They walked away from each other and went about the rest of their days. Mr Clarke went to school while robot number 742625A returned to Robot Control Station 17 so she could be stored for the next two days.

As he drove out to the tech institute, Byron felt really good about himself. He hadn't felt like this for years. He had to admit, he was in love, and he didn't care what people might think about the age difference. They were after all both adults.

Byron was in such a good mood that he was even nice to Melanie, treating this other robot with more cheerfulness and friendliness than he ever had. She made her usual advances on him, which he deflected, as usual, to Dustin.

Things went extremely well in the classroom again. Mr Sweet made things fun, at least for the humans in the class. It was easy to learn even the most frustratingly abstract concepts from Ralph, who was as smart as he was funny.

Throughout the whole 90 minute session, Melanie's software tried to keep up with the more esoteric aspects of human interaction. For the most part, she failed. Humor did not compute, especially not Ralph's wacky style. Her exceptional performance in anything that required memory or calculation kept her doing well in the class though.

The lecture on parallel processors that had begun on Wednesday was continued today. This time, Ralph mentioned the problems of writing software for an indefinite number of processors working in sync. This just fascinated Byron. Although Mr. Sweet didn't go into it much further during the class, Byron could almost think of nothing else.

After the class was over, as the other students were leaving, Mr. Clarke and Mr. Sweet had a long talk. Ralph had brought some pamphlets from another tech institute a few hundred miles away that offered courses far more advanced than what he could teach. They talked about what Ralph thought were the best courses. They also talked about parallel processors. On a whim, Ralph gave Byron a special homework assignment to challenge him. Byron barely understood the concept behind it, let alone what kind of solution it would require. He accepted it anyway, and the two parted with a handshake.

The sun had long since set by the time Byron got down to his car. Melanie was waiting for him there.

Her electronic ears picked up the sound of his footsteps, and her processors computed that it was probably him long before she turned her mechanical neck to point her artificial eyes his way. "Hi Byron." she said.

"What are you still doing here, Melanie?" he said, getting a little worried about her interest in him.

"I'd like to offer you a ride home." she said, showing him the most cordial smile her facemask could manage.

Byron didn't know what to say. "I... don't need a ride Melanie, I have a car."

"Oh." she said. Her face remained stuck while her AI tried to deal with the situation. "So you don't want a ride from me?"

"No. Why would I leave my car here?" he said, visibly annoyed.

Melanie stood still, running her chips hot with excessive computations. "I don't know." she said.

Byron made a beeline for his car door and got in. "Stalker." he thought to himself. He started the engine and drove off fast, waving to the unmoving android as he passed her.

Melanie's software systems eventually sorted themselves out after he had turned the corner. "Ride. See you Monday!" she said to no one. She walked to her own car and started the trip to her Fembot Command base.