

While the new Fembot Command agent was stepping through the door of the National Archive that morning, the Main Computer over at Robot Control Station 17 was in deep panic mode. The disappearance or capture of one of its expensive units topped the list of the probable explanations for robot number 742625A's absence. In between bouts of desperately trying to extrapolate the most likely explanation, the supercomputer began to work out possible courses of action.

One option would be to have Robot Lab 40 modify one of its dormant fembots to look like Heather and send the duplicate over with haste to Robot Lab 17 so it could be programmed and dispatched to the Archive building. Body shape and height modifications were relatively simple to make, compared to the construction of a new identical facemask and alterations to the unit's head. If that plan was chosen, the Laurie robot technician over there would have to work non stop for almost a whole day to make another Heather.

Another option was to send Heather's robotic roommate Karen down to inquire about her friend. But the Karen unit was only programmed to be a cashier. If she were to be sent on a reconnaissance mission like that, she would need considerable upgrades to both her hardware and her software. That would take at least half a day.

The other option the Main Computer considered was to do nothing. For all it knew, Heather could walk through the door at any minute. Or she might have been captured. If Fembot Command had gotten a hold of her and sent her back to the Archive, the sudden appearance of a second Heather would only cause more problems.

All consoles in the basement lab lit up and stayed that way while the Main Computer's complicated circuitry shuffled more ones and zeroes around than it ever had before. It couldn't decide what to do. It first sent instructions to Maria to call Laurie and order a new Heather.

The naked half-Asian technician walked over to the communications console and pressed a button down. She projected her synthetic voice into the microphone. "Attention Robot Lab 40. Attention Robot Lab 40."

The signal traveled under heavy encryption until it reached the artificial ears of the cute and naked Laurie fembot. "This is Robot Lab 40. Laurie reporting."

Maria said "Laurie, please...", then stopped while she received updated instructions from the supercomputer. The new instructions were simply to stop and await new orders.

Several long seconds went by as both fembots waited motionless in front of their respective communications consoles. Then the Main computer decided again to have another Heather built.

Maria spoke into the microphone again. "Attention Robot Lab 40. Attention Robot Lab 40."

Laurie again responded in her predetermined way. "This is Robot Lab 40. Laurie reporting."

"Laurie, please disassemble..."

Maria suddenly stopped. The computer had changed its mind again. But then it went back to its original decision.

Maria spoke again. ""Laurie, please..."

Then she stopped again. The computer decided to abandon the duplicate Heather option. For now, anyway.

Maria stood still for several minutes. She had been ordered to wait for more instructions, and would not move on her own.

The Dark-haired Laurie fembot spoke into her microphone at intervals of exactly 30 seconds "This is Robot Lab 40. Laurie reporting."

The Maria robot continued to smile her standard blank smile as the Main Computer continued to overheat. Karen kept on recharging naked in her own booth, next to the empty one that had held Heather. The maidbot was doing her morning tasks with her usual mechanical efficacy.

None of that changed for almost half an hour, until Maria was ordered to prepare Karen for extensive system upgrades. She walked over to the booth while the charging arm in the back of Karen's booth retracted from the electrical socket in the fembot's back. The doors of the booth separated and slid apart and Karen stepped out.

"Karen..." was all Maria managed to say until the computer halted her again. Then she was ordered to walk again to the communications console. Karen stared out without expression while the sexy naked technician started walking away.

But then she stopped and stood still for several minutes. She turned around once more and went over to the naked black-haired cashier.

"Karen, " she said, "please lie down on the examination table and..."

Maria stopped yet again, now having Karen's attention, but having been ordered to await further instructions.

Then the Main Computer crashed. It had never crashed before. The sudden absence of direct instruction left Maria without any kind of initiative of her own. She stood in place, looking at Karen, who looked right back at her. Karen waited in vain for her attendant to finish the order while twice a minute Laurie's static voice was heard over the communications console. The brunette maidbot finished her cleaning routine upstairs and returned to the basement so she could stand perfectly still off to the side.

Everything had come to a grinding halt in the cold basement lab. No further work was done on the important project still installed and untested inside Denise's abdomen. That short-haired, sandy blonde robot was lying right where Maria had left her - on an examination table, with her face-mask off and her chest and stomach panels open. Anya - the enchanting electronic lady that had served as the experimentally disconnected robot - lay on a table beside her, with only her chest panel open and her amazingly sexy olive-skinned face and body on full display.

The lights all over all the console units were now blinking slowly, one by one. The constant clicks and beeps that had accompanied them were just as sparse as the Main Computer rebooted itself.

The process was incredibly slow. Rebooting after a crash had never been foreseen by Robot Control, let alone tested for. The supercomputer was forced to reconstruct its operational status bit by bit, checking after each chunk of binary data that it was actually working.

All told, that would take long enough to make Karen miss her next shift completely. It would also effectively rule out the options of modifying Karen or making a copy of Heather.

All of the attractive robot women simply stood or layed exactly the way they were at the time of the crash while the Main Computer reconstructed its system. And with nothing else to do, Laurie kept right on saying "This is Robot Lab 40. Laurie reporting."

With the local Robot Control station in disarray, the newly reprogrammed Heather unit was making good progress on her own mission. Her new hardware, much of it exclusive to Fembot Command, gave her an edge which Maria and the Main Computer couldn't provide.

The custom software that had been downloaded into her improved devices gave her artificial cognitive systems an even better grasp over the decidedly human situations in which she would be immersed. The morning's events so far were proof of that.

Fembot Command's brand of AI seemed to have a disarming effect on Agnes for one thing. She softened her harshness to the young girl, and even broke her almost permanent frown into a smile while they talked. Almost. She was still jealous and just plain crabby.

If Heather's synthetic charms worked wonders on Agnes, they cast a magic spell on Byron. Early on, the two of them had gone downstairs together. Byron's excuse to himself was that he needed to refresh her memory on what she was to do for the day.

Once they were alone down there, she innocently put her arm around his back while he was talking to her. That grew into an embrace, which grew with passion from him and calculation from her. Their lips - one set real, one set silicone - met again and kissed. They kept their tongues inside their own mouths for this second kiss. He had his hesitance, after all, and she had her mission.

They pulled apart slowly, the only sound was the constant rumble of the old furnace.

"Heather." he said as if to caress her ears.

"Byron." she replied. The sound emanating from her high-definition speaker had been computed and modulated to resemble his loving tone of voice.

"I wonder if we can be responsible adults and wait until later today." he said softly.

Heather measured and calculated his meaning. "It's going to be hard, but I think we can."

Byron smiled and laughed a little at the double entendre in her statement. The robot didn't have a clue that it was there, but she made a similar laugh too.

They ended their embrace and looked into each other's eyes for a while. He was already hopelessly in love. It would break his heart if he knew that she was just a simulation, copying the feeling for nefarious ends.

He walked back to his office with his head high in the clouds while the android lady in the basement plotted and calculated her way through the morning.