On the way back to the cabin, through the ever falling snow and the unstirred January air, Byron thought hard about what he needed to do. He worked out details as his plan gathered shape, making good use of his excellent organisational skills.

The two of them walked in snowshoes back up to the front door, and Heather used her key to let them in once again. They took off their winter clothes and gear, and this time Byron rushed a bit so he could get to work a little faster.

"Shall I make us some hot chocolate?" Heather said with sweet cheeriness as she unlocked and unfastened Byron's end of the nylon and steel harness.

"Yeah." he said, still concentrating on what needed to be done first.

He sat down at his workstation in front of the computer terminals and started to reluctantly delete some of his previous work. He shook his head and sighed as he thought of all that wasted time.

When that was out of the way, he opened up versions of some of Heather's programs that had been copied to his computers. He glanced through them quickly and tried to decide which would be the right one to alter for his purposes.

He decided on her core AI file as Heather returned to the room with two elegant looking, steaming cups on a chrome tray. Byron took one of the cups and said "Thank you Dear." as he looked into the artificial lady's eyes.

She smiled back at him and said "Your welcome." as she put the tray down on an end table next to the sofa. For no other reason than to appear more real for him, she began to slowly sip the hot drink while he wrote out the code that he had tentatively structured in his mind on the way back from the scenic ravine.

Hours passed by as he typed and checked his work. More firewood went into the fireplace while the stereo cycled through some of the CDs that Melanie had brought back for him.

And despite the fact that he didn't like to have her around, the robotic maid was summoned to make the night's dinner while Byron was busy typing out long strings of programming. Soup and sandwiches would do tonight, and he continued working even as he ate.

Late in the evening, with his neck stiff and his back sore, he sat back and folded his arms. He looked at the screen and nodded slightly.

"Heather?" He called as he turned to see her sitting casually on the couch.

"Yes Byron?"

"Come sit in the chair." he said as he stood up and stretched his tired limbs.

The fembot walked over to where he had been working for so long and sat down. Byron reached behind the computer and pulled forward a USB cord that was already connected to the back.

"Open your chest panel please, Heather." he said.

She looked up at him and smiled, then unbuttoned her blouse enough to swing the panel cover down. Once the proper connection ports had been exposed, Byron plugged the cord into his beautiful assistant and clicked the mouse to start a data transfer.

He watched a progress meter on the monitor as it went from 0% to 100% in about three minutes. Heather sat still and smiled through the process.

Byron clicked the window away and said "Did you get it all?"

Heather nodded and said "Yes."

"Open the program." he said with eager anticipation.

Heather sat still and silent for a moment than said "I can't."

Byron's face grimaced. This wasn't good. "Why not?" he asked.

"You aren't authorised to alter my programming." she stated.

Byron paced around on the floor for a while. He should have known that would happen. "Now what?" he asked himself out loud.

Heather sat looking at him, still connected by the black cable to his computer.

"I gotta pee." he said, and left the room.

Heather watched him walk away, and remained unmoving while he tended to his biological needs. Not a single original computation ran through her processors while he was doing that. Her position sitting on his chair and plugged in to his terminal could remain unchanged for a very long time. The sensitive microphones behind her realistically formed silicone ears recorded the sounds of running water as her stereo cameras recorded the scene in front of her. She was effectively 'on pause' until he returned a couple of minutes later.

"I have an idea." he said to her as he passed the living room on his way to the kitchen. He walked with urgency through the door and down the cold stairs to the basement lab.

He submitted again to the laser scan, following the instructions projected out of the box on the wall in its synthesised female monotone.

When the thick metal doors parted and opened for him, he walked through and looked for the naked brunette robot that acted as the eyes and ears of the Master Computing Device. She was standing completely motionless beside an empty examination chair, her naked backside facing him with it's exposed recharge port showing a single bright green light.

"Natasha," he said as he approached.

The technician stood still for another moment, then pivoted swiftly around to aim her digital video cameras at the human. From behind her pretty pale blue eyes they recorded thousands of sequential images of the man, while processors within her chest interpreted their significance.

Her speaker generated the sound of her voice while her complex mouth moved its plastic lips in flawless synchronisation. "Yes Byron."

Byron hesitated, hoping he wouldn't have to explain his plan in too much detail to the attractive but emotionless machine. "I need a laptop computer."

Natasha stood motionless and unresponsive while her processors exchanged streams of data with the Master Computing Device. "Why?" she said after that unseen flurry of activity.

"I need it to finish Project H." he said, not wanting to say much more.

He watched and waited as the Master Computing Device took data from the electromechanical technician and formulated its response. He again found himself staring at Natasha's beautiful tits. He wondered if the naked android would let him touch them.

"That does not compute." Natasha said. "Three computers have already been assigned to you."

"I know that Natasha," he said, "I need a portable one so I can run some experiments on Heather."

Natasha was silent for a long time as Byron got distracted again by the sight of her sexy synthetic body. He wondered if she could get wet like Heather could.

"Please define the experiments." she said after a long while.

Byron thought for a while how to put it, then said "The source of human intelligence... or sentience... I think, is individuality. I need the laptop to be like Heather's individuality."

The blank stare that Natasha returned to him was as vacant as he had ever seen. "That does not compute." she said.

Her statement said it all to him. *"Stupid fucking robots."* he thought as he felt his frustration level growing uncomfortably strong.

He took a deep breath and explained again. "Since I can't change Heather's programming, I need the laptop so I can create a virtual portion of her... um... self. A virtual portion of her AI."

Natasha gave him another stony silence for over a minute. He glanced from her pointlessly sexy naked body to the flashing lights of the massive console beside them. He knew that this device was part of what would make the decision. He almost wanted to talk directly to it instead.

When he grew tired of all the waiting, he looked back to the robot technician and said "Well? Can I have the laptop?"

Compared to her previous delayed responses, Natasha's answer to this question came almost instantly. "The Master Computing Device is calculating the variables pertaining to your request. The current task will take approximately four hours and thirty-two minutes."

"Four hours to decide?" he said incredulously. He looked over to the supply cabinet where the spare computers were housed. He knew from being shown that there were four laptops in there. This reminded him of the governmental bureaucracy he used to have to deal with.

Byron pointed to the cabinet at the other end of the room. "What if I just went over there and took one?" he asked the stubborn android.

Natasha computed and answered "We will not allow you to do that."

Byron looked at her pale blue glass eyes and her soft-looking thin red lips, and knew that even this slender girl could quickly overpower him. And she could do it completely absent of mercy.

He closed his eyes and shook his head. "I guess I'll talk to you about this tomorrow. I realise you're only doing your job."

Natasha stared back at him as vacant as ever and made no response that he could detect. He lingered in front of the woman-shaped interface for a while, still admiring the way she looked. He had to admit to himself that he would like very much to share his bed with her too. It wasn't easy for him to look at a beautiful naked woman and not get aroused.

He turned quickly and walked back upstairs. As he emerged from the basement and then the kitchen, he saw Heather sitting in the exact same place and in the exact same way as she was before.

"Let's go to bed." he said as he unplugged her and gently closed her open chest panel. He took her by the hand as she stood up. He looked at her pretty face and kissed her a loving kiss. She responded in the way that she had been programmed.

"I wish you were human." he said quietly as they left the room together.

The short-haired blonde maidbot would come by on her rounds later to put out the fire and turn off the stereo and the lights.