

The outside air got no colder, but Byron was losing body warmth fast. His feet were especially cold, and his toes were starting to go numb. Even if he and his android lady friend were picked up at all, he feared he might lose some of those toes to frostbite.

He kept moving, however slightly. He was tired, but still nervous and agitated. He glanced over to Heather, who kept watch over her master. She generated her own heat, and was in fact still trying to dissipate it from her more sensitive electronic components. He wished there was a way he could take the heat she discarded.

"How are you doing?" he asked her.

"I'm doing good." she said. "How are you doing?"

He let a smile creep on to his face at her concern, however contrived and counterfeit it was. "I'm cold." he said. "I hope someone comes along soon. I hope they stop."

He turned around and looked back from where they had come. He dreaded the thought that any minute some unwelcome fembots could march through the snow and the trees. He dreaded the thought of what they might do to him and his new found love.

He began to pace faster, walking past Heather again and again as she followed his movement with the stereo cameras perched above her mechanical neck.

"How's the connection to the laptop?" he asked.

"It's plugged in securely." she assured him.

He nodded and went back to pacing. He was also keenly aware that Heather could instantly go from being his best friend to his worst enemy with the slip of less than an inch of cable. It was only his programming and her temporary but all encompassing 'sense' of loyalty and obedience to him that kept her from dragging him back to the cabin herself.

Then he heard an engine. He stopped in his tracks and silently listened.

He wasn't hearing things. There really was another vehicle. The sound of tires and a gasoline powered motor had never sounded better to him.

Adrenalin surged through his blood as he looked at Heather. She heard the car approaching too, and signified her understanding of the situation by showing Byron a smile.

"Stand at the side of the road." he said while he stood in the middle of the lane. He wasn't sure if the android could get out of the way in time if the car didn't stop.

Byron looked down at his snowshoes as his feet chose and held a stance. "Please..." he thought.

Inside the approaching car, Mike had just woken up, and was coming back to full consciousness to the tune of The Guess Who's "American Woman". Tammy was at the wheel, Anya was in the seat behind her. Mike looked over to Tammy after the line "coloured lights can hypnotise". That had a different meaning for him now.

It had been an uneventful but enjoyable day for this human and his two fembot friends. The danger to Mike from Fembot Command had been only hypothetical so far. Not once had he or Tammy

even seen anyone try to come after them. Even Anya, with her built-in robot detection capabilities, had not found any other robots around during her stay with Mike and Tammy.

They had gotten into a more or less polygamous relationship, with each individual partaking freely of the other two's sexual and sensual services. There was no jealousy at all, as the robots weren't capable of it and Mike enjoyed it immensely when Anya and Tammy let him watch.

Without the ability to directly program the Anya robot, Mike and Tammy had opted to give her a mission that was identical to Tammy's - to let Mike teach her how to love. The rest of Anya's undefined behaviour fell into place much like Tammy's had. The only noticeable difference was that because Anya still lacked the human emulation software that Tammy had taken, she appeared to act at best strange and at worst mechanical.

For that reason, Mike strictly limited her interaction with people. The arrangement had worked well for the trio so far, and their extended road trip through Canada had been most pleasurable - especially since the arrival of the unnaturally beautiful Anya robot.

This happy state of being faded somewhat when the car crested the hill to see two lone figures standing on the highway.

Mike could see one of them waving his arms frantically, and he knew that signaled desperation.

"Slow down." he ordered Tammy.

She did so without verbal acknowledgment. None of them said a word until they got close enough to stop. Mike knew that his protective and vigilant fembots were even now computing ways of defending him.

Tammy slowed right down to a crawl as the car came within a few feet of Byron. He stopped his frenetic waving and walked over to the side, signaling Tammy to roll the window down.

"Roll down the window about three inches." Mike said, rightly suspecting that the fembot behind the wheel wouldn't correctly read the arm motions of the human on the road.

Tammy glanced at Mike then held down the switch on the door long enough for the window to come down exactly three inches.

"Can you give us a ride?" Byron said, obviously anxious.

While Tammy calculated variables that were hard for a robot to compute, Mike leaned forward and said "Where you headed?"

"Ottawa." Byron said, even though he knew the car was traveling away from there.

"We were just there." Mike said while Tammy finished up her calculations. She looked to him, then back to Byron.

"Sorry." she said, showing him a comforting look that was eerily close to one that Heather would have shown him.

But before he would have had time to ponder that similarity, Mike interjected and said "We can give you a lift to the next big town up to the Northeast. You look like you need to get off the road."

"Yes, that would be wonderful." Byron said, looking relieved.

Mike motioned the two of them to walk around and sit behind him. He unlocked the right rear door and looked back at Anya, hoping she would keep her overly logical fembot mouth shut for the time being. He leaned back and put his index finger across his lips, hoping she would register the sign for "Shhhh."

Anya looked at him, then right back at Heather, and tracked her every move with her high-resolution cameras.

At the same time, Byron quietly warned Heather not to lean back all the way lest she put too much pressure on the laptop.

Then Byron and Heather bent down and unstrapped their snowshoes. Mike popped the trunk and pointed back with his thumb. Byron nodded and put both pairs on top of the luggage inside. He made a point to shake off as much snow as he could before he did.

The aluminum case went in as well. He closed the trunk and opened the door. Anya kept watching as Byron ushered Heather into the warm vehicle, then got in himself.

Tammy started up down the road as Byron relaxed in the seat and let out a deep breath.

Just behind them, close enough to make detailed scans of the car, but too far away to stop it with bullets were the two blonde fembots. The foot chase came to an abrupt end as they turned around and rushed back to the cabin.

"My name is Mike, by the way." he said as he leaned around and offered his hand for the two to shake.

"I'm Byron." he said, taking off his glove and giving Mike as firm a handshake as his frigid fingers could manage.

"My name is Heather." the just as cold fembot said as she shook Mike's hand.

Mike pointed to his companions and said in turn "This is Tammy and this is Anya."

"Hi" Tammy said, looking at the two through the rearview.

Anya still only looked at Heather.

Heather made a small series of calculations and said "Hi Anya." She turned slightly to the left and offered the silent fembot her hand.

Anya stared back with an expression as cold as Heather's silicone-covered appendage. Loud and clear she announced "Mike, this woman is a robot."

