

"You will return to Fembot Command Station 21." said the blonde with the gun. Her voice was loud, artificial and machine-like, and sent an icy chill into the four humans present.

Byron stared straight into the barrel of that gun. All clichés aside, it was a terrifying sight.

He was ready to give up. He was so shaken by seeing Heather get shot that he wasn't sure exactly what to say.

But Tammy sprang into action quickly. Within a slim fraction of a second, she loaded the data she had stored on martial arts, filtered through a host of possible styles and techniques and decided on the best strategy and plan of action to disable the unwelcome fembot.

Her moves were unpracticed, but due to her complete and exact control over every last part of her electromechanical body, she came off looking like an expert fighter. Her first powerful kick landed at the enforcer droid's wrist, and separated the hand from the arm.

The gun, with the robot's finger still on the trigger, spun around as it arced forward and over behind a display of candy bars.

Byron was again shocked, but relieved as he watched Tammy proceed to deal the other automaton a sound beating. Using primarily Kyokushin Karate techniques, she delivered blow after blow to the disarmed fembot. Tammy used the inertia of her body to add strength and speed to the punches her strong metal fists drove into the enforcer's frame.

Outside the store, another identical blonde pony-tailed robot had gotten out of Melanie's car. Anya knew exactly what these machines were and what they were there for, because many days before, through a connecting cable, Tammy had shown Anya the form their most likely threat would take.

As soon as Anya saw the nameless and well-dressed fembot outside her vehicle, she got out of Tammy's car and got ready for a fight of her own. The blonde reached for her gun, but Anya sent such powerful hits to this unsuspecting second robot that it soon fell to its knees in a state of malfunction. Anya first jerked the blonde's head away from its connectors, then ripped open her jacket and blouse to deactivate her.

Tammy's opponent wasn't so easily stopped. The cramped conditions of the convenience store limited Tammy's movement so that she couldn't get into position to quickly shut the other robot off. The blonde she fought soon figured out that she should hit back, and landed a sharp blow with her remaining hand to Tammy's head. Her facemask went flying off as they traded hits.

Anya rushed in and just in time came to Tammy's aid. With one well-placed and powerful kick, she caused the stubborn blonde to jerk and convulse about and lose her bearings. Tammy grabbed her hair, pulled her down, and with her arm gripping the enforcer's head like a vice, pulled her head off just like the other one.

With sparks coming from the exposed metal and plastic in its neck, the blonde fell to her knees and forward on to the floor. This one too was deactivated after its chest panel had been uncovered and exposed.

The humans looked around, stunned. The two behind the counter were even more shocked than Mike and Byron, and still held their arms high in the air.

"Let's get out of here." Mike said. He went to grab Tammy's facemask and hurriedly put it back on her head.

The couple behind the counter were amazed to speak or move it seemed. All the better for the five travelers. They needed no interference now.

Byron too was in a state of shock. His love was lying dormant on the cold floor, with a foul and acrid smelling bullet hole in her chest. She had lost power completely when she was hit, and her eyes pointed up at nothing as tears rolled down Byron's cheeks.

"Byron, we have to go, now." Mike said urgently as Tammy held her facemask on and rushed back to the car.

"Anya, pick Heather up and put her in the car." Mike ordered.

The inhuman brunette wasted no time in stooping down and hoisting the damaged robot over her shoulder.

Byron stood up as Anya carried Heather out the door. Mike had to grab Byron's hand to get him to move fast. On his way out he glanced back at the headless and handless fembot that had been forcefully deactivated.

He and Mike stepped over the body of the other dormant enforcer outside and quickly got back into the vehicle. Tammy still held her facemask on as she sped out of the parking lot and down the road.

"Double back." Mike called out.

"What?" Tammy said. Her lips didn't move when she talked.

"We'll go back the way we came." he said, his heart racing. "Fembot Command won't expect that."

Without a word, Tammy turned the wheel and tore off down the highway going back the way they had come.

"What's wrong with your facemask?"

"It's not working right. It won't connect." she said, again her face stayed static.

"Shit." Mike said.

He looked back at Byron. He was leaning forward in his seat, crying silently with his hands clutching his head.

"We can fix her. I know we can." Mike said, even though he had no clue if they could.

"What if you can't?" Byron said while hiding his head. His voice was saturated with anguish.

"We will." Mike assured him. "She only took one shot." he said, even though he knew that one shot in the right place could wreck a fembot permanently.

Mike looked over to Anya. "Are you damaged?"

Anya turned her head stiffly. "No." she said.

"Anya, trade facemasks with Tammy." he said. From experiments performed during happier times he knew that they could be swapped like that.

Anya removed her facemask and held it out. Mike grabbed it and took the one from Tammy. He handed Anya the damaged one and fitted hers on Tammy's head.

"How's that?" he asked Tammy.

She looked at him with Anya's slightly darker face. "Better." she said. It worked properly, and the mouth moved when she talked, but it was obviously not the right face on that head.

"Slow down to the speed limit." Mike ordered. "The last thing we need is to be stopped by the cops."

Tammy complied with the order.

"Anya," Mike said, "scan the damage to Heather. Then scan that facemask."

"Yes Mike." she said as she held Tammy's damaged face to her head and aimed her optical sensors at Heather's chest.

Mike sat back in his seat and tried to calm down.

"Byron," he said, "we were lucky to escape with our lives." he said.

Byron didn't say anything. Neither did anyone else.