

Anya stared into Heather's now fully exposed and damaged chest as she held Tammy's facemask up to her head. Infrared scans showed where certain types of damage and hardware failures had occurred. The colour of the affected area gave her clues as to how much machinery had been damaged by the single bullet. Ultraviolet and x-ray scans showed Anya things that only a computer mind like hers could comprehend.

The very thorough series of scans took over 50 minutes. At their conclusion, Anya announced a short summary of their results. Still holding Tammy's chin, she turned her head to look at Mike and said "The damage to this robot's components is repairable."

Byron lifted his head and looked at Anya with red eyes. "She can be fixed?"

"Yes." Anya said as she turned to look at him. She explained further. "The electronic components within the Heather robot's chest are not configured in a manner similar to standard Robot Control units such as myself and Tammy. The damage sustained by the Heather robot is concentrated mainly in her main random access memory core. Replacement components are commercially available. Methods of repair using commercially available tools can be devised."

While Byron pondered that, Tammy added some comments generated by her human-like AI. "We need to stop at a town big enough to have a well-stocked computer parts store. Don't worry Byron. If Anya says Heather can be fixed, we can think of a way of doing it."

She looked at him with Anya's face through the rearview. Byron understood. This fellow man and his fembots were his only hope of seeing Heather active again.

"Anya, scan that facemask and see what you can do." Mike said.

"Yes Mike." the robot said. She took off her friend's face and looked at the inside of it with her high-tech optical sensors.

"That wasn't luck that saved her from being damaged beyond repair, Byron." Tammy said. "Fembots like that have perfect aim, and that one must have known how Heather was built."

Mike was impressed by the reasoning skills of his synthetic companion. "You mean they only wanted to disable her?"

"That's right." she said, now looking at him and still watching the road ahead in her peripheral vision. "They probably would have brought you both back and fixed her themselves. If they wanted to destroy her, that fembot would have aimed lower."

Byron looked at Tammy, then at Mike, then over at Anya, who hadn't spoken or moved. "Are you sure we can get the right parts to fix her?" he asked. "Those chips and all that machinery, those are pretty advanced."

"We'll find a way." Tammy said. "Anya and I will put our combined computing power on it."

Byron's fears weren't wholly allayed. "What if we go back and take the parts we need out of those fembots?"

"It's too late." Mike said. "By now that place will be swarming with cops." He turned around in his seat to look at Byron. "I thought about that too, but too late. I wish I'd thought of it sooner."

"She's all I got Mike." he said. "She told me she loved me."

Mike knew exactly what that meant as he looked into the other human's eyes. For him, the love of a female robot was just as good as the love of a woman. Maybe it was for Byron too.

For all intents and purposes, Heather's was a life to save.

A weary and sad silence fell over the occupants of the vehicle. Byron looked now and then at Heather's beautiful eyes, hoping desperately to see them animate once more. Mike watched the lines on the highway zoom forward and then get swallowed by the front of the car as Tammy drove wearing Anya's face.

Anya was finishing up her scans, and in a while relayed another damage report to her master. "Several electrical contact points within the sealing mechanism have been damaged. The facemask will not integrate itself into the Tammy robot's system without full electronic response signals from all contact points. Repairs to the Tammy robot's facemask will be more simple and less time consuming than repairs to the Heather robot's chest."

"Can you repair it on the way to our next stop?" Mike asked.

"No. We will need to obtain some tools." she said.

"Okay." Mike said. "Hold that facemask back against your head." He turned to Tammy. "How far is the nearest town big enough for our needs?" he asked.

Tammy computed for a moment. "373 kilometres." she said.

"Over three hours." he said.

He leaned back and looked at the ceiling. He thought about their predicament. With Tammy's face in no condition to be seen by anyone, Anya would have to stop in at the next motel to get them a room. But even speaking in French, Anya sounded like a computer.

Mike looked back over his shoulder at her. He then looked at the man sitting heartbroken behind him. "Byron," he said, "You speak French?"

"Of course." he said. "I work for the government. I have to."

"Thank god." Mike said. The image of Anya mechanically fumbling her way through a complicated series of social interactions faded out of his mind. "Tammy usually gets us a motel room. You'll have to do it this time."

"No problem." he said. "Do you have money for two rooms?" he asked. "I only have as much cash as I had when I was kidnapped."

"Yeah," he answered, "we have enough."

Byron nodded lightly and tried to smile. He took a deep breath and leaned back in his seat. He put his hand over Heather's unmoving, cold hand. The damage to that part that once seemed such a problem was now the least of his worries.

"We'll fix you." he thought to himself. "If it's the last thing I'll do, I'll have you back."

