

Byron brought his half full bottle of beer with him as he entered the room full of robots with a wide smile on his face.

He looked immediately over at Heather. She looked the same as before - missing her facemask and torso cover.

"Can you put her back together before we turn her on?" he asked Tammy.

Tammy made the necessary calculations to provide him with an answer. "You can reattach her facemask, but I need to scan the new circuitry we gave her as she boots up."

"Okay." he said. He put the beer down and rushed over to where his love's silicone face was resting. The way he more or less shoved Anya out of the way would have been quite rude had she not been a device.

Byron picked up the facemask and wasted no time in getting it put securely back where it belonged. He felt it click into place and watched the edges vanish as the high tech mask reconnected to her 'sleeping' body. Her pretty blue eyes looked up toward the ceiling as he prepared himself to watch her come back to life.

"Are you ready?" Tammy asked.

Byron looked at her and nodded once.

Tammy reached out to the rebuilt and fully exposed chest panel. Heather's power button was now square shaped, but it would have the same effect. Tammy pressed it.

A gratifying multitude of beeps and tone signals came from all around Heather's body as her many integrated systems communicated with her CPU and with each other. Her batteries supplied all the electrical current her circuits, servos and motorised components needed as the light emitting diodes flashed in their bright coloured signaling patterns.

Byron held his breath and waited for his love to speak.

When the speaker behind her beautifully moulded pink lips finally generated her computerised voice, it was in the cold and steady monotone of diagnostic mode - completely devoid of emotion.

"Heather robot number 742655A-FC activated." she announced. "Loading peripheral extensions.... loading.... loading.... "

Tammy carefully watched what was going on inside Byron's woman. The scanning process was itself an amazing display of hypertechnology. With advanced optical sensors that looked like eyes, she scanned the circuitry her and Anya had built. The scans utilised the full range of electromagnetic radiation, inside and outside the range of humanly visible light.

With piles and piles of complicated data returning to her faster than any human could dare think, she pieced together a picture of the other fembot's operational status. Everything looked good.

But Heather was still not moving. She had repeated the word "loading" a few more times and then gone silent.

"Is she okay?" Byron asked Tammy.

Tammy didn't answer right away. Byron looked up at Anya. She had her own facemask off still and appeared to be scanning Heather as well.

"Tammy?" Byron said.

Mike spoke. "She won't answer if she's thinking hard."

Byron looked back at Heather. He was starting to worry.

"Diagnostic mode." she finally said.

Byron quickly turned around and got his beer. He took another drink and waited.

"Diagnostic mode." Heather repeated in a robotic monotone version of her sweet, soft voice.

Tammy turned to look at Byron. "She hasn't found the memory we built for her yet."

"Why not?" he asked.

"I don't know." Tammy said as she looked back at Heather's exposed insides.

"Well, can you fix it?" he asked.

"We don't know what to fix yet." She said while continuing her scans. "You humans can be so impatient sometimes."

Byron looked over at Mike. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, and like everyone else was watching Heather with interest.

"I don't think there's a lot we can do Byron." he said.

"I have identified the cause of the problem." Anya said.

Mike and Byron looked at her. She had their full attention.

"The processor timing cycles are incompatible with the Heather robot's new circuitry while the Heather robot is in diagnostic mode."

The humans looked at each other. They knew basically what that meant.

Tammy elaborated. "That's why she can't find her new memory core. The new hardware is incompatible with diagnostic mode."

Tammy stopped her scans and stood up. She looked at Byron and said "To use a technical term - oops."

"Oops?" he said. He looked back at Heather. She was even more machine-like than Anya in her present state.

"Yeah. We screwed up. Sorry."

Byron was getting upset. "Well, thanks for nothing. Now what am I supposed to do?"

"Hey," Mike said to him, "the girls did their best. They're only pseudo-human, you know."

Byron shot Mike an angry glance. "Oh, will you stop with the stupid jokes already?"

Mike was getting mad now too. He felt like telling Byron to fuck off.

Tammy looked angrily at Byron. He would have never imagined that he'd see a look like that on the face of a fembot.

"Now, you listen up, Bucko." she said. "We saved YOUR life, and spent OUR money on trying to fix YOUR girlfriend for you. We worked hard for almost two full days on her. YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BITCH!!"

Mike had never seen Tammy act like this. It was scary.

"Tammy, settle down." he said sternly.

She ignored him. "You're lucky we don't just throw your weak biological ass outside and let Fembot Command deal with you."

"TAMMY," he said loudly, "THAT'S ENOUGH!"

She looked at him. She looked quite pissed off indeed.

Mike stood up and led her away from Byron. He noticed then that Byron was trembling. He was trembling a little bit too. He looked away and put his arm around Tammy. Trying to sound calm himself, he spoke into his woman's electronic ear "Stand over there and run a diagnostic check on yourself."

She had no choice but to obey her Master. "Yes Mike." She said, still looking mad. She walked over to the far side of the room and turned back around. She switched modes, and said those two words just the same as Heather had. "Diagnostic mode."

Mike had to tell himself to breathe deeply. He took some deep breaths and looked back at Byron. He was looking at Tammy with a very uneasy look on his face.

"Let's all take a deep breath and count to ten." Mike said.

Anya was the only one who could be heard counting.

Mike sat down on the bed across from where Heather was still laid out. "Here's the plan." he said to Byron. "We stay the night here. Tomorrow morning we get up to be out of here by six. We go somewhere else and get whatever parts Anya and Tammy need to fix Heather properly."

Byron leaned against the ugly curtains on the window. He looked down at the floor for a moment and then said "I'm sorry."

Mike looked at Heather for a moment, then back up at Byron.

"I'm sorry I've been acting like such a dick."

"Don't worry about it." Mike said.

Byron gestured over to Tammy. "Is she going to be done her diagnostics soon?"

Mike looked back at Tammy. She was standing still with her arms at her sides - staring out blankly ahead.

"I think so."

Byron poured the rest of his beer down his throat and sat down on the bed next to Mike.

They both sat there looking at Heather for a while.

"Look, Mike, I really appreciate all you and Tammy, and Anya have been doing for me. I realise that if it weren't for you I might be... well... I don't want to think about where I might be."

Mike looked at him and nodded. "I understand." He had the urge to tell Byron that he was almost as startled by Tammy's outburst as he was, but decided against it.

Byron looked over at Heather. Externally, she was all fixed up. There was no sign whatsoever that a bullet had been fired into her chest. Even the synthetic skin on her damaged hand had been repaired, and was covered by a temporary layer of latex while the silicone hardened. He could not deny that Mike's robots had worked hard.

"It's just that... I'm used to being in control." Byron added. "I'm used to being the boss. This is hard for me to deal with."

Mike listened, but he didn't really know what to say. "Byron, as long as you're on the road with us, we'll give you whatever you need. We're in the same boat."

They looked at each other. Each of them thought they understood the other a little more now.

Tammy finished up her diagnostic scan. She calmly walked around the beds and went to stand next to Anya.

"Tammy," Mike said, "Byron has something to tell you."

Mike looked at Byron. It took a moment for Byron to figure out what he was getting at.

"Uhhh... Tammy..." he said sheepishly, "I'm really sorry."

Tammy generated an intensely real response for him. She pursed her lips and forced her frown into an unwilling smile while she looked down at Heather.

"I'm sorry too." she said. "I'm sorry I yelled at you."

Byron looked up at her and went on with the apology. "I really do appreciate what you and Anya have done. I only wish that I could repay you somehow."

She looked at him and said "You can start by not being such a jackass."

"Tammy..." Mike scolded.

"Sorry." She said as she looked down at her feet. She looked back at Byron and Mike and said "You know what, it's been a long hard day. Why don't we all just go to bed - slash - recharge."

She made a cute little diagonal motion with her hand when she said that last part. Little things like that reminded Mike why he loved her so much.

"Good idea." He said as he stood up.

Byron stood up too. "What's going to happen with Heather tonight?" he asked.

"I think we should keep her in diagnostic mode." Tammy said. "We'll have to anyway to get her out of this motel and into a new one."

"Can she stay in my room with me tonight?" Byron asked.

Tammy looked at the semi-functional robot, then back at Byron. "Of course."

"We'll need Anya to guard you again." Mike said. He was fully aware of the grief that Anya's behaviour had caused Byron the night before, so he was determined to provide the electronic temptress with different instructions tonight.

"Alright." Byron said.

"Let's get her dressed." Tammy said.

Anya picked up Heather's torso cover and snapped it back into place. She was now fully assembled, but still in never-ending diagnostic mode and naked.

Mike snapped Anya's facemask back on for her as her and Tammy started to pull clothing back on to the Heather unit.

After she had been dressed up enough to leave the room, Tammy provided her with the verbal commands necessary to complete the process.

"Heather," she commanded. "stand up."

Heather moved stiffly, even more so than Anya did, and got out of the bed and on to her feet.

Byron watched with mixed emotions. Among other feelings he had he was glad and disappointed at the same time. He got his things and went to open the doors for the empty-minded robot he still loved.

Tammy looked over to Byron. He got the message. "Heather." He ordered. "Follow me."

The perpetually self-checking fembot walked in bare feet across the room and out the door.

"I'll send Anya over in a couple of minutes." Mike said.

"Goodnight everybody." Byron said as he led his sweetheart into the room next door.

Mike rushed over to Anya. "Keep your hands off Byron tonight." he said. "Don't masturbate, don't tell him how horny you are, just sit in the chair and recharge."

"Yes Mike." she said. She grabbed her cord and walked out of the room.

Mike sighed and looked at Tammy.

She looked back at him. "This is what I get for hanging around with humans."