

Marcus came home shortly after that. He saw the look on his dad's face and knew right away that something very bad had happened. He too started crying when he heard the news. His tears made Jessica sob more, and Brad felt a couple more searing hot tears burn down his face. Pam watched and recorded, and maintained an appearance that had earlier been programmed into her.

Brad brought his son out to the back yard to say goodbye to Charlie. Pam went about making some snacks for the kids, and turned the TV on to cartoons. Her actions added to the surreal, not-right quality of the moment.

Brad felt himself getting angry. From time to time, his mind flashed back to the email from Colin that he knew was waiting for him. His foul mood made him overly pessimistic about what would be found.

For now though, he had to drive to the animal shelter to have Charlie's body cremated. He said a sombre goodbye to Pam and the kids and brought the cardboard box to his car. Charlie would ride in the front seat one last time.

Brad had also brought his laptop. It was driving him up the wall now to see what Pam had really been up to. The benefit of the doubt was no longer available from him to her. He found himself now hoping there would be enough evidence to act soon. He put the computer behind the cardboard box on the seat and drove off.

With a head full of hurt turning into rage, he drove down the road until he got to the animal shelter. He walked in with the box. The people there knew exactly what to do. They made it as painless for him as possible. He handed over the last final remnant of his former wife Gloria and paid them the going rate. He slouched as he left the building and got back to the car.

Now in the parking lot, he checked his email finally. The amount of time that it took to download told him that there were pictures. He hesitated in order to take a much needed deep breath before he clicked the message open. He swallowed and clenched his mouth shut as he read what the PI had seen. Pam hadn't gone to the mall. Instead, she had gotten her hair done at someone's house.

"Why lie about it?" Brad asked himself. He looked at the pictures. Nothing much could be seen. A vague image of Pam and some blonde woman by the door was all there really was to see.

Brad closed the thing up and sat back in the drivers seat. "What am I doing?" he thought. He felt like phoning Colin. He thought about that for a while, then realised that the man had given all the information he could have in the email. Brad just needed to talk to someone right now. He looked at his watch. It would be evening soon.

He started up the vehicle and drove back home. He really couldn't wait to get back to work tomorrow. Pam could take care of the kids and their crying, and their questions. He wished he knew how to be a better father. He wished Gloria hadn't died.

When he got back, the house was still under that quiet but surreal pall. Pam had done all she could under the circumstances - all that she had been programmed to do. Her operators had added a few more functions to her usual repertoire in order to deal with the aftermath of her actions.

Unfortunately, the supercomputer had not correctly anticipated the outcome. It had calculated that the removal of Charlie from the situation would relieve Brad of some worry. It had computed that its fembot agent would have more of his time now. That machine was quite wrong.

Pam couldn't figure it out of course. She could only notice that the expected increase in access to the human hadn't materialised. Brad got home and immediately went to go lay down in the darkened bedroom. Pam had analysed and computed his reason, and had come to the conclusion that she had best keep her distance for the next few hours. This wasn't what her creators had intended at all.

Supper came that night with reduced appetites for the humans. The robot among them watched and scrutinised their actions as always, and swallowed less of the leftovers herself. She began a new log in her memory banks - more things for the Master Computing Device to try to figure out.

She could already tell that Brad was getting farther out of her grip. Only that supercomputer in Marcia's house could attempt to figure out why that was. In the meantime, she gave him the space she computed he needed. All the extra calculations were making her processors run hot, and she started appearing languid and lazy because of it.

Darkness came over the neighborhood like a changing scene in a dream. Everyone went to bed a little earlier that night. While Pam waited for Brad in the bedroom, she tried to work through some of those complex calculations. In this way, she wondered if she should even try to seduce him tonight. After several minutes of shuttling digital bits between her advanced processors, she eventually decided against it. Her mission appeared to be in danger of failing, but she could not feel alarm or despair. She could not feel anything.

Brad came into the room more than ready for sleep. He hardly looked at Pam. She had dressed in a lovely cream coloured satin teddy, but he wouldn't be getting near her for sensual love tonight. He had already gotten off in the washroom to thoughts of Gloria. He was done for the night.

He made small talk with the robot though - the kind of idle chatter that always came along with life-changing events. He looked into her eyes as they talked about bills and groceries and wondered if she loved him like he thought he loved her. He really doubted that now.

As he layed beside her on the mattress, he wondered what Colin would find in the next few days. With the mood he was in right now, he thought that maybe Pam wasn't the one for him after all. He had to admit there wasn't a whole lot of depth to their relationship. The sex was amazing, but they didn't connect like he had with Gloria.

"G'night." he said as he rolled over on to his side to go to sleep. Those feelings of longing for the departed had come back to him again.

"Night dear." Pam said as she scanned him with her lifeless eyes. She couldn't begin to know what kind of woman she needed to be for him now.