

Rochelle came to a stop beside the doorway, with her face inches away from the scanner.

The scanner made a few beeps, then said in an electronic female sounding monotone "SCANNING."

A grid of red laser light fell upon Rochelle's unmoving face while the scanner made some more computerized noises.

"SCANNING COMPLETE." said the box on the wall. The door opened and Rochelle walked through to a room filled with massive computer terminals and consoles. She walked toward an examination chair with a pretty brunette standing next to it. She smiled blankly with a clipboard in her hand as Rochelle climbed into the chair and came to rest.

"Hello, Rochelle. How was your day?" said the brunette as she turned away to press some buttons and make some settings on the console behind them.

"My day was fine. Thank you." came her emotionless reply.

"Did you have any trouble getting to work?"

Rochelle paused and blinked. "The roads were icy, but I managed to navigate them without error."

"No problems with any social interactions today?"

"No. All social interactions were executed as expected."

"Please remove your facemask, Rochelle." said Maria as she turned her attention back to her.

Rochelle moved her hands up to her head and placed them on the sides of her face. She then pulled it right off her head to reveal a complex array of flashing lights, microchips, transistors and wires over a series of circuit boards that held two big round glass eyeballs and a speaker. She put the realistic plastic mask on her lap as Maria readied some connecting cables.

"I am going to download data from your visual and auditory memory banks into the main computer for processing and evaluation." Maria said.

Rochelle said nothing and remained still as Maria plugged a few cables into connection ports built into her head. The flashing multicoloured LEDs made some synchronous flashes, then began making regular patterns. Computerized beeps emanated from the same high-definition speaker that generated her voice and the sounds of her breathing.

Maria carefully analyzed the data on the monitors as it flashed by at an inhumanly fast speed. "There seems to be an anomaly within your visual and auditory memory banks." she said. "Rochelle, interrupt data transfer."

Rochelle's lights went dark, then flashed simultaneously again. "Data transfer interrupted." she said.

Maria pressed some more buttons on the console behind them. "Rochelle, please unbutton your blouse and open your chest panel." she said as she unplugged the cable's from Rochelle's opened head.

Rochelle did as she was instructed. With the removal of the connecting cables from her head, the LEDs again flashed in a seemingly random way. Maria made another set of connection cables ready to plug into Rochelle's chest. Once the panel was open, she plugged them in and turned back to the console to press some more buttons.

"Rochelle," she said, "enter diagnostic mode."

All the flashing lights in Rochelle's openings came on solid and stayed that way. Her speaker emitted a monotone, electronic sounding version of her voice, saying simply "DIAGNOSTIC MODE."

Maria turned her attention to the data on the monitors. For several minutes, neither of them moved as the main computer investigated Rochelle's inner workings. Then, a long string of code flowed past on one monitor.

Maria turned to Rochelle and said "It appears that your optical system has suffered a critical malfunction. There is no checksum data stored from 14:38 to now." She turned back to the console and pushed more buttons. She unplugged the cables from Rochelle's chest and packed them neatly away. "Rochelle," she said "Please detach your head."

After a few beeps, Rochelle put her hands on the sides of her head and lifted it away from her body. The flashing lights were still going, powered by the head's own power supply. Her long reddish-brown hair draped over the metal connectors in her neck as her arms held out the faulty device to Maria.

She took it and walked in her built-in sexy way to an examination table. She gently laid the head on the table facing down. Then she grabbed the hair on the back and lifted a rectangular patch of skin away to reveal the cavity containing the cylinder-shaped power supply. Her finger deftly pressed a button inside the cavity and the flashing lights went off. She gave the cylinder a twist and removed it from the head to lay it down on the table beside her. Then she picked up a long slender screwdriver and with mechanical speed loosened four screws in the corners of the opening. The head split front to back as it was opened up, hinged at the top.

Maria looked down and performed a full spectrum scan of the inside. She soon spotted the damage. Some circuitry had been rendered inoperable by excess heat. She stood up straight and still for a moment then walked over to the communications console. She pressed one of the buttons down and called "Attention Robot Lab Six. Attention Robot Lab Six."

After a few seconds, a voice came back "This is Robot Lab Six. Laurie reporting."

"Laurie, please prepare a replacement Rochelle robot, series 558, for tomorrow's experiments. Activate the robot as soon as possible."

"Yes, Maria." said Laurie.

Maria walked back to the table and began dismantling the head. The rest of Rochelle sat unmoving in the examination chair, a few lights still blinking in her chest, her facemask still in her lap.

Over at Robot Lab Six, Laurie strutted sexily over to the curved glass booths that stored the replacement robots. She quickly identified the unit to activate and walked over to the console to do

so. Moving in the exact same manner as Maria, she pressed a sequence of buttons on the console. The front panel of glass split and separated on the tube containing the backup Rochelle.

With the standard blank smile on her face, Laurie walked over to the robot and opened her chest panel. She pressed the power button and waited as the spare Rochelle booted up.

"Rochelle robot number 729011B activated." she said emotionlessly, standing still and staring ahead.

Laurie Closed the chest panel and said "Rochelle, please sit down in the chair beside the data exchange console.

The robot stared out blankly and said "Yes, Laurie." She walked stiffly toward another examination chair and sat down.

Laurie walked over to the console beside it and spent a few minutes making settings and pressing various buttons. She then turned to the recently activated robot and said "Rochelle, please open your chest panel.

Rochelle's fingers opened up the panel as Laurie led the connecting cables from the console to her chest. She sat still with a couple of lights flashing in the panel as Laurie inserted the cables.

"Rochelle, begin download of program SHBP2-7b.T83." Laurie commanded.

"Yes Laurie." the robot responded. The pattern of the blinking LEDs in her chest changed from time to time while the computer fed her new programming into her. This stream of data was the standard human behaviour program, version 2.7b. it would enable her to appear passably human in most circumstances.

For several minutes, neither Laurie or Rochelle moved, the only thing that changed were the lights all around the room and in Rochelle's chest that blinked on and off.