

Rochelle spent the rest of the day talking to Kim, chatting with other coworkers, and even doing some work. That was no problem at all for her advanced AI systems. Every now and then, she even went to the washroom to release the coffee and pastries she had consumed. The reality was that she had been hired to look good, and this task she passed with flying colours.

Thomas King spent the rest of the day in his office. He had work to do for a change. He wasn't doing it, but he had it. He had made it a point to stay in his office so that he would look busy. For hours upon hours he putted a customized golf ball around the office carpet. He kept score and even bettered his swing by all the practice, so at least the day wasn't a total waste for him.

Rochelle could hear the putter striking the ball. Her already hyper-sensitive hearing, coupled with digital sound extraction methods and advanced acoustic analyzing techniques enabled her to focus in and hear many things to which the humans around her were oblivious. That was how she learned about "Project H". Thomas only spoke of it by that name to his boss, and he hadn't said much about it. It was three DVD-Rs full of unreleased and valuable proprietary software that he was supposed to check. His resume had been explicit in stating his qualifications to do this, but those qualifications were as false as Rochelle's displays of affection. His dad got him the job.

Thomas didn't like to think about the fact that he couldn't actually do what he was hired to do. Good thing for him he had scotch to make him feel better. By the time 5 o'clock rolled around, he knew he was in no shape to drive home. He clumsily put on his suit jacket and sat back down. He leaned heavily on the desk and more or less fell onto his arms by the phone.

"Miss Prantov," he said after finding and hitting the right button, "Can you come in here?"

Kim, who was busy getting her coat on, looked back to Rochelle. They shared a knowing look at the pathetic slurred voice that had come over her phone. He was an obvious and sloppy drunk.

"Hope he doesn't keep you long. See you Monday Rochelle!" Kim said as she waved goodbye.

"Have a good weekend!" said the artificial woman as she watched Kim exit. Rochelle searched for and retrieved a file from her memory banks. The last time Mr. King was drunk like this at 5 o'clock, he had just asked the robot to drive him home. For a fraction of a second, Rochelle's electronic brain computed the possible scenarios that might arise. She was like a supercomputer playing chess this way. She methodically went through the most likely permutations and combinations of events that might occur. She then indexed those according to which would be likely to get those 3 DVD-Rs into her hands.

With no appreciable time lost, she entered Mr. King's office. While she made eye contact with him, she was able to visually scan her entire field of vision for any sign of those 3 discs. The few discs she saw lying around were placed in such away as to make them unlikely candidates for top secret and highly protected material. "You look relaxed, Tommy." she said. Her facemask smiled.

Thomas flashed a dopey grin back at her. "Can you drive me home?"

This request initiated a new round of lightning fast computing within Rochelle's chest. With luck, more opportunities to get access to the discs would present themselves. "Of course." she said.

"Thanks babe." he said. He stood up and picked up his briefcase. Rochelle had already computed that there was a high probability that the discs were in there.

She got her things and they walked together out of the office and made their way to the parkade. They made small talk along the way. Rochelle certainly resembled a sober human being more than Mr. King at this point. One of the security guards let them into the parkade. He didn't look at all surprised to see the big boss of the big firm drunk again. Mr. King could try to walk as straight as he could, and talk as clear as he could, but he couldn't hide his flushed face or the smell on his breath.

The robot started walking to her car.

"Where you goin'?" asked Thomas. "We'll take my car. Then you can take a cab back and get yours."

Thomas couldn't see the abject rudeness of this request, but it didn't matter anyway. This was all part of Rochelle's mission. It would be pretty hard to inconvenience a machine.

Rochelle's face made an expression of resignation for a moment. "Okay." she said.

He led the way to his expensive car. Some dents and scratches betrayed the times when he thought he was sober enough to drive himself home. He fumbled the keys out of his pocket and clicked the button to unlock the doors. Rochelle walked over to the driver's side as Thomas opened the door and dumped his briefcase behind the seat. He sat down as Rochelle gracefully got in and sat down too.

"You remember where my house is?" he said, trying to stay awake.

"I think so." she said as she took the keys from him and started the engine. Of course, she could find his house with her eyes closed, or with her whole head removed for that matter. She pulled another file out of her memory and plotted an exact route from the office to Mr. King's home. She instantly computed additional routes too in case a problem arose.

With nothing further said between them, they were out of the parkade and on the streets. The long ride was uneventful. It took a full hour to get to Mr. King's home on the edge of town. It would take at least two hours before Rochelle made it back to Robot Control to have the day's data downloaded into the main computer. After that, Rochelle would be plugged in to recharge, and she wouldn't have to move at all until Monday.

But for now, she was stuck on the roads in her boss's car while he snored next to her. She wasn't programmed to get pissed off, but she could act like she was if the situation demanded it. For a time, her processors computed the idea for her to look for the discs in his briefcase while he slept. The danger of being caught was too great for that however. She would simply have to wait for another opportunity to get to them.

At long last, she pulled the car into Mr. King's driveway. Thankfully, his wife wasn't home yet. It wouldn't help things for her to see her husband drunk and being driven by a striking young beauty like Rochelle.

The robot stopped the engine and turned over to her boss. "Tommy..." she said as she gently shook his shoulder. "Tommy." she said louder.

He took a sharp breath and opened his bleary, drunk eyes. He covered his mouth as he yawned and stretched.

"Thanks." he said. He was uncharacteristically sincere. "Oh, I forgot to ask you. Can you pick me up here tomorrow at nine so we can go to my cabin and work on something?"

Rochelle acted like she was put-off by the request.

"You're not doing anything tomorrow, are you?" he asked, looking a little embarrassed. "Sorry, I was going to ask you earlier. If you do, I'll get you something nice, I promise."

The chance to get access to that precious data and complete her mission was exactly what Rochelle wanted, but she had to appear to agree to it grudgingly. "Well, I'll have to cancel some things... but I'll do it." She gave him a half-hearted smile.

"Ah, thanks babe. I'll make sure you get rewarded for this. Just, one more thing, take a cab here. My wife gets back tomorrow afternoon, and I don't want her to see your car."

Rochelle nodded. "Okay." she said.

Thomas leaned over and kissed her, leaving the stink of his booze breath momentarily on her plastic lips.

"See you tomorrow." he said.

He got his briefcase and took the keys from her. Silently, they got out of the car. He locked the doors behind them as he navigated his way up the steps to his door. Rochelle pulled the phone out of her purse and called for a cab.