

After a half hour wait, the cab finally showed up. It took her back downtown to the office building so she could drive her own car back to Robot Control. By now, any human would be in quite a foul mood, but moods were something Rochelle just didn't have. She was running low on power, but she wasn't in any danger of shutting off. Still, to be on the safe side, she had plugged a cord into the car's cigarette lighter outlet so she could rest her own power supply on the way home. The cord was unnoticeable as it ran from the outlet, between the seats and up the back of her coat and jacket. It was connected securely into the recharge port at the base of her spine. Enough current flowed through it to run her basic cognitive systems, but the movements she made while driving still had to be powered by her own batteries.

The car at last rounded the final turn on the street where her house was. The nice looking bungalow had a finely manicured lawn, an attached garage, and a high-tech electronic laboratory and command center in the basement.

The sun had set by the time Rochelle pulled up to the house and parked the car on the street. Her internal settings made her leave the driveway clear for other missions. She unplugged the cord at both ends and closed up the panel. She coiled up the cord and put it in her purse. She exited the car and locked it, and walked toward the front door.

The house's lights and appliances were set to go on by themselves at more or less random times to give it a lived-in look. Some of the lights were already on. Rochelle walked past a movie showing on the TV as she went to the basement door. She walked down the stairs and stopped in front of the scanner. The scanner beeped a few times and the voice called out in its inhuman but feminine monotone "SCANNING." The red laser grid illuminated Rochelle's face for a while until the box called out "SCANNING COMPLETE." Rochelle waited for the door to open then walked into the lab.

Maria was busy working on the original Rochelle robot. She had it mostly disassembled in an attempt to find out what had caused the circuitry in its head to overheat. Upon the other Rochelle's entrance, Maria put down her tools and turned around. "Hello, Rochelle. How was your day?" she said with the exact same inflection and voice that was there every time she said it.

"My day was fine. Thank you." said Rochelle as she walked toward the empty examination chair. She was no longer making any effort to appear real. Her voice and mannerisms were distinctly non-human.

"Did you function properly today?" Maria asked. She was now busy at the computer console, making adjustments and entering in data.

"Yes. All programs were executed as expected." said Rochelle 2 as she sat in the chair.

Maria finished her work at the console and turned back to the seated robot. "Please remove your facemask, Rochelle."

Rochelle's face had no expression on it at all as it was detached from the rest of her head. She held the facemask on her lap as Maria readied some cables to plug into the connection ports now exposed amid all the fast blinking lights and electronic parts.

"I am going to download data from your visual and auditory memory banks into the main computer for processing and evaluation." Maria said, repeating the same thing she said every day.

The data transfer began. The day's events flowed in the form of 1s and 0s through the insulated copper wires. The main computer received and simultaneously sorted the data, showing its progress on the monitors. Maria's eyes collected that data and looked for anything out of the ordinary. In the 42 minutes it took to download Rochelle's memory, not a single flaw or bug had come up.

"Data transfer complete." Maria announced. She unplugged Rochelle's head from the terminal and packed the cables away. Maria turned to the console and set its controls for the next stage.

For the next several minutes, the main computer analyzed the sights and sounds that the robot secretary had recorded. The computer's task was to figure out what special instructions, if any, should be programmed into her for the next day's activities.

The unexpected invitation to Mr. King's cabin was a welcome development. All signs indicated that Rochelle would be alone with him. There was a high probability that they would work on those three discs that were so valuable. Also high was the probability that the robot's sexual functions would be called upon to perform with great frequency.

The computer scheduled testing and maintenance on Rochelle's sexual parts. It also formulated a plan to make sure that Mr. King wouldn't interfere with the robot's mission. A canister containing pure carbon monoxide gas would be installed inside Rochelle. The gas would be released through her mouth when she "exhaled". She would release enough gas to knock him out, but not to kill him. Mr. King would simply go to sleep while Rochelle did what she had to do.

Secondary preparations devised by the main computer were for the robot to wear lingerie under her sexier than usual clothes. A slightly different makeup job was in order for her facemask as well.

The computer's consoles flashed, clicked and beeped all around Maria and Rochelle while the details were being worked out. When the plan had been written and compressed into a single file, it was ready to be downloaded into Rochelle.

Maria sprang into action. "Rochelle," she said. "Please unbutton your blouse and open your chest panel."

Rochelle reached up and did as she had been instructed. Her delicate looking hands unfastened the buttons one by one until there was enough room for the panel cover to flip open. Rochelle's fingers found the edge of the cover and exposed the required connection ports to Maria.

The cables were plugged in and the computer established a connection with the robot again.

"Rochelle, begin download of program MU531.T85." Maria said.

"Yes Maria." Rochelle said as the coloured LEDs flashed both in her head and in her chest.

The computer fed its new instructions into Rochelle in the same way that the information from her cameras and microphones had been transferred into it. The electronic pulses of binary code lasted just over six minutes.

As the final bit was written and verified on one of her hard drives, Rochelle announced "Download of programming complete." The lights in her chest flashed a different pattern to signify this.

Maria reached over and unplugged the connection cables. She packed them away too and turned to work at the console behind her. After that was done she again turned to Rochelle and said "Please install and execute program MU531.T85."

"Yes Maria." said the seated fembot. After some more flashing lights and loud computerized beeps she said "program MU531.T85 installed and executed successfully."

"How do you feel Rochelle?" Maria asked.

"I feel fine." Rochelle said.