

Kim and Rochelle worked in relative silence for a couple of hours. Every so often a phone rang, or a fax or an email came in, but there was nothing to urgent to distract them. Rochelle had her electronic ears trained on the sounds that came from Mr. King's office. He wasn't drinking as much as he usually did, and certainly not as much as on Friday. In fact he had cut down drastically. One shot was all he had given himself after Rochelle had exited his office.

She could also hear him taking discs out of his briefcase, and using the drive in his computer. Unprofessional words of frustration soon came from his mouth. Rochelle recorded all as she typed away at the days work and sipped on a lightly sweetened and whitened coffee. Without having to glance over at Kim, she could see in her field of vision that she was occupied by work of her own, and certainly unaware of the hardware and software capabilities that allowed Rochelle to hear what went on behind the heavy oak door to Mr. King's office.

The more she listened, the more Thomas grew annoyed. The three discs that Rochelle had scanned were just as useless to him. He picked up the phone and hit a speed-dial button to connect him with his boss. Jerry Sepeske was busy getting fatter with a client in the most exclusive restaurant in town, compliments of every tax payer in the country. His mood was jovial, but when he felt his phone vibrate he knew it had to be important. Only a few people had this number. He excused himself from the table and took the call in a hallway just outside.

"Jerry Sepeske." he said to answer the call.

"Jerry, It's Thomas."

"This better be good."

"Yeah, I know, sorry about disturbing you but I've got a huge problem. Those discs didn't copy properly."

"What?"

"They're filled with garbage. All three of them. I've got to get them transferred again."

"Jesus Christ Thomas! It's FUCKING MONDAY! You've had since last Thursday to find this out, and you call me with this NOW? What the HELL have you been doing?"

"I've had other things to deal with. Family problems."

"Don't give me that CRAP!" Jerry barked. He was turning red.

Thomas put his hand on his forehead and held on to his temples. Rochelle sorted out and recorded every sound he made. She couldn't hear Mr. Sepeske, but the main computer could use its sophisticated AI to fill in most of what he had probably said later.

"Ok." Jerry said. "I have to finish here." He looked at his Rolex. "Meet me at my house in two hours. We'll talk about all this when your review comes up."

Jerry hung up the call and returned to his power lunch. Thomas gulped and poured himself another shot.

The confirmation that those discs were in fact nothing but junk data was a good thing for Robot Control. It meant that the androids and more importantly the main computer were functioning

properly. Rochelle kept on recording while appearing to work. It wasn't in her programming to make plans or extrapolate data from events and circumstances to formulate probability factors. The main computer would do that later tonight after Rochelle had downloaded her information into it.

After about an hour, Thomas abruptly left the office, saying only "Hold my calls please." as he swiftly walked by. Kim and Rochelle engaged in some harmless guessing and gossip after he was gone, and continued to peck away at their work until noon.

At lunch time, Kim got dressed to go out and invited Rochelle to spend the hour with her.

"Not today, " Rochelle responded while her processors sent signals to her facial mechanisms to make her appear disappointed. "I've got to fix the Walsh account."

"Sucks to be you. I'll bring you back a spring roll." she said as she flexed her fingers in a spritely wave goodbye and walked out the door.

"Thanks Kim!" Rochelle said as she listened for her footsteps to disappear down the hall and into the elevator.

It now appeared likely that the discs had been erroneously copied in the first place, and that Mr. King would return soon enough with the real "Project H", but that didn't stop the android from carrying out her pre-programmed duties. She kept her auditory sensors on high sensitivity to detect the sounds of approaching humans as she began a methodic and traceless search of all of the office to which she had access.

Drawers were opened, papers lifted, and files sorted through in the robot's search for anything that could be of use. Thomas had locked his office, so the search had to be limited to the work areas of the two secretaries. At 12:59, after a very thorough search, Rochelle sat back down and resumed her busy look. She had found and scanned a few DVD-Rs, but it was doubtful that any of them had anything to do with what she was looking for. The results of the search were duly written to her physical memory as the anticipated sounds of Kim's footsteps came from the hallway outside.

The rest of the day was uneventful. Rochelle thanked Kim for the roll and consumed it in a ladylike and completely human-looking way. Mr. King didn't return to the office at all. If he had returned, Rochelle would have been after him again to get to those three discs. But there was something that her limited AI software couldn't deal with. Thomas had tactfully yet firmly ended their affair. She had lost that critical private access to him and his things. She was after all only a machine, and couldn't begin to know how to get into his pants again, let alone his briefcase. The way things stood, Rochelle's electronic processors could sift through the available data for millions of years and not find a solution to that problem.

In the end though, that was not for her but for the main computer to figure out. All Rochelle Prantov version 2.0 could do now was to continue the day as usual. She joked and chatted with Kim while they did the little work that remained. When the clock struck 5 PM, they got their things and left the building like the rest of the temporarily freed workers.

Rochelle got into her car and made her way out of the parkade. The lifeless electronic cameras in her head stared out to the icy roads in front of her as her plastic and metal body drove the vehicle into the suburbs, back to Maria and the main computer at Robot Control.