



OUR ROBOT
BY: NOBILIS

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Our Robot

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*To D, for understanding, to S, for support, and
to A, for encouragement.*

CHAPTER ONE

Anne

Two brawny men carried the heavy, vaguely coffin-shaped box up the steps of our townhouse. On the landing they asked, "How about this one? It's not labeled." I looked at it, puzzled. There were no markings except for a bit of paper, the remains of a shipping label.

If I had known what was in the box, I probably wouldn't have allowed it in the house, and I would have missed out.

"That must be Bill's. Put it in the study, my husband will know what it is." I put a bit of extra emphasis on the word "husband," and a little smile crossed my face. I liked the sound of the word.

When Bill returned home I didn't ask about the box. There was simply too much unpacking and it slipped my mind. We busied ourselves in the kitchen getting the essentials put away. We made dinner together. I love cooking with Bill. The kitchen in my old apartment was a small galley

kitchen so if we were both in it at the same time we were always slipping past each other. I loved that. I loved the sensual but not quite sexual touch of moving past him in a tight spot.

Afterwards, we set about getting the bedroom set up. We went to bed late. We were too tired for sex, for the first time since the wedding.

In the morning, I wasn't angry that Bill hurried out without giving me a kiss. After all I had been making out with him over the breakfast cereal, so it was at least half my fault he was late.

After he left I unpacked my studio into my half of the spare room on the ground floor. It doesn't have any windows but with the two-meter wallscreen for the computer and the bookcases there wasn't really room for one. Add in the climate-controlled cabinet for my guitars and harps, the recording equipment, a couch for listeners and a stool for performers — the room was packed.

I tuned up the instruments until my eye fell on the odd oblong box on Bill's side of the room. I went over to it. It was quite out of place. The rest of the boxes made sense for an amateur writer like Bill; his computer, monitor, and dozens of boxes of books. The long off-white plastic box was sturdy. It wasn't a shipping box. It was a storage box. I wondered what was inside.

When he got home I asked him about the box

over chicken piccata.

"It's a robot," he said, hesitantly.

"I didn't know you owned a robot."

"I got it when I was in graduate school," he said. "It, uhh, did housework for me my last year to give me more time for studying."

"...and gaming," I added, with a wink. "I don't think you've ever given that up."

He laughed. It seemed a little too loud. "That too." He tapped his knife on his food.

"Does it work?" I wondered what was bothering him.

He shrugged. "It ought to. At least it did when I put it away. It'll need recharging."

"Bill, there's a lot of work to do around here. I want to put it to work. With your schedule, you don't have time to help, and you know me. The less housework I have to do, the better."

He paused, shrugged, and exhaled. "I'll go plug it in." He returned a couple minutes later. "It'll be all charged up in three hours."

"Does it have a manual?"

"It's voice-activated, and advanced enough to understand normal English, relating to its duties. I never really needed a manual but then I'm in the business."

I started to clean up the dinner dishes. He stopped me with a long passionate kiss. I put the plate back on the table and embraced him.

I broke away from the kiss and looked up at him mischievously. "Leave it for the robot, eh?"

I felt his shoulders tense up a little. I didn't know what was causing it, but I knew what would make him feel better. I pulled his shirt up out of his pants and ran my hands up under it. His chest isn't muscular or particularly furry or smooth, but I like it. He bent over me to kiss my lips and I opened my mouth to accept his seeking tongue. I felt my heart beat just a little faster.

Bill's fingers found the zipper of my dress. I said, "Mmm—hmm" into his mouth, answering the unspoken question. The teeth made a soft sound as he opened the zipper. The snap on my bra opened silently. Leaving both my dress and my bra in place he slid his left arm across my shoulders and down the neck of my dress. He touched my left nipple with his fingertips, still kissing me. He's got wonderfully long arms. My nipple was already tightening. He broke the kiss and slid around behind me, and put his arms through the wide armholes of my dress to caress my breasts. I felt the need for more air.

I reached behind me to unbuckle his belt. I wondered if I could get to his dick without looking. I unsnapped his trousers and unzipped his fly. With Bill still behind my back I reached into his jockeys and stroked his hardening cock. Success! We rocked side to side together. I was

proud of myself. "I don't know why you didn't tell me about the robot before, Bill. This is going to be great! We'll have more time to be together, and I'll have more time for music. Does it do laundry too?"

He grunted affirmatively. I gave him a squeeze.

Once he was good and hard I pulled him into the living room. "Let's use the rocker." He smiled and sat down in the armless chair. Didn't he look smug! I love the way he smiles when he knows he's getting some. I hitched up the sides of my dress and pulled off my panties. I straddled his body facing him, then lowered myself down onto his organ, guiding it into my pussy with my fingers. He drew a deep breath and purred. I sat there for a moment enjoying the fullness. "Vacuuming, too?"

"Uh—huh."

We rocked slowly in the chair. I could feel the motion in my pussy, as the subtle changes in posture were reflected there. He put his hand under my dress and stroked my clit with his thumb. The first touch was gentle as a breeze, but it made my sex twitch. He started rubbing, and the sensations began to build. Rocking harder I drove my pussy against his body. I gripped his shoulders and arched my back. I felt a tremor deep inside. I closed my eyes and concentrated on it. It grew, budded, blossomed. A small orgasm

shook me and I let out a groan.

"Mmm, Bill...was the robot a surprise? You were saving it, weren't you?"

He grunted again. He was a little distracted.

I could feel the flush rising to my chest and face. I flung off my dress and finally offered my body to Bill's hungry eyes. He took my breasts in his hands, with my nipples pushed out between his thumbs and forefingers. I felt a stronger paroxysm coming on, and I crushed his hands against me. The tension in my legs was too much. I had to orgasm again soon, I needed it. He leaned back, surrendering himself to a growling orgasm of his own. His warm seed gushed deep in my body. When it passed I leaned against him and kissed his neck. The need for him was still there.

When his cock softened enough to slip out we got up and went to the bathroom to clean up.

I slipped into the large glass-walled shower and started washing the dust that accumulated while I was cleaning and unpacking, overlaid with thick sexual sweat. By the time Bill undressed and stepped in I was mostly clean but that didn't stop him from making certain. He slid up behind me and wrapped his arms around me and slipped his right hand down into my thick forest of pubic hair. I sighed, feeling the desire roaring to life again. His left hand lathered up the soap on my breasts. He caressed me slowly with broad bubbly

strokes. I put my hands on his and stroked his arms. His erection returned, nudging me gently on the behind. I cooed, "Ooh, instant replay," and turned around to face him with my nose up under his chin. I cocked an eyebrow and asked, "Are you all clean?"

"I'm very, very dirty," he said with a smirk.

I soaped up my hands and grasped his dick with interlaced fingers. "Filthy."

"Are you going to help me come clean?"

I started jerking Bill gently with my thumbs laid side-by-side on the top of his cock. It was slippery and hot. "I'll help you come. Whether or not you'll be clean is a matter for debate." I chuckled low in my throat. His eyelids fluttered.

I took the shower head down from its hook and switched it to a gentle pulsation. It throbbed in my hand. I aimed it at his cock. He took a sharp breath. When the soap rinsed away I leaned over and put my lips around the tip of his cock and gave it a big sloppy kiss. He let out an appreciative moan. Gradually, I opened my mouth, admitting more and more of his cock. I took it in as far as I could, holding back the urge to choke.

When I felt the first twitch, I turned around and bent over, offering my body to him. He eagerly pushed in, deeper than the rocker had allowed. The little orgasm on the chair wasn't enough. I

wanted a BIG one. "Give it to me, Bill. Hard." Chuckling, he put his hands around my waist and started thrusting. It was good, but it wasn't going to get me where I wanted. I took the shower head and aimed it right at my pussy. The vibrations radiated out through my body. It seemed like my whole nervous system was thrumming in sympathy with the water. I grabbed the handle above the soap dish to steady myself as I felt my knees wobble.

I got what I wanted. I was still charged up from the encounter on the rocking chair, and sucking Bill's cock always adds to my arousal. I groaned deeply as the waves crashed through me, and I nearly lost my footing. I held onto the bar. Bill's orgasm followed a little thereafter, as I was still recovering. His hands clutched my body tightly to his, and then he slumped against the wall, exhausted.

I rinsed off and cooled down. With a smile, I hopped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around myself. "Meet me downstairs. I want to have a look at our robot."

"No, wait!" he called as I bounced down the stairs, but he was too slow.

I got there first.

CHAPTER TWO

Anne

The robot lay prone within the storage box. It didn't look much like a robot. What it looked like was a woman. A woman with unnaturally huge, gravity-defying, wet-dream breasts. Her auburn hair, staring blue eyes, lacy French maid costume, and power cord running into the wall made no impression compared to those breasts.

"Robot, huh," I said. "Housework?"

"Yeah." Bill wasn't looking at me as he scratched the back of his head.

"My guess is that it did more than housework."

"Yeah."

"You're a robophile," I spat.

"If I was obsessed with it I wouldn't have left it in the box since the first day I met you," he said softly.

"But before that?"

"Yeah. It was a sex toy."

I sighed. "Certainly is a looker, isn't she," I said sourly.

"Not my idea. I won it in a bet." His voice was tight, tense.

"She knows how to do housework?"

"Yeah. Cleaning, laundry, that kind of thing. It can warm stuff up in a microwave but don't ask it to cook."

"Turn it on."

Bill bent over the robot and reached down behind it. He straightened up again and said, "Tootsie, stand up, please." The robot's face took on a faint smile and she climbed out of the box and stood up.

I looked at him with a cocked eyebrow. "Her name is Tootsie?"

"I didn't name it. Tootsie, retract your power cord, please." Tootsie turned, pulled the power cord out of the wall, and slowly reeled it into a hidden space inside her body.

She was a good ten centimeters taller than me, and her breasts were even more impressive standing up than they were lying down. I poked one, tentatively. It felt real. They even swayed right when she moved.

"Tootsie, system check, please," said Bill. He explained, "The name opens a command, and 'please' closes it." Tootsie stood in place, clicking and whirring for a few minutes. She moved,

flexing her joints.

I watched in angry silence as it went through the routine. After a few minutes, she said, "All systems are functioning within normal parameters. System clock requires reset. Internal fluid system needs complete flush and recharge. Orientation map is incomplete."

Bill checked his watch and said, "Tootsie, set system clock to eight thirty-four pm, June twenty-third, year twenty fifteen."

"System clock set to eight thirty-four pm, June twenty-three, two-thousand-fifteen."

Bill turned to me again. "Do you want it to clean up after dinner?"

"In a minute. What's the 'fluid system'?"

Bill looked back at her and said, "That handles things that make it seem lifelike. Saliva, moist eyes, even sweat. It doesn't need it to do the dishes."

"Yeah, I get the picture." I could imagine the other fluids it would need. "And the orientation map?"

"That's how it knows its way around the house."

"Well, she's going to need that." I stepped up to Tootsie. "Tootsie, tell me how you get your orientation map, please."

Tootsie looked at Bill. "Command privilege?"

Bill said, "Tootsie this is Anne." He looked over

to me, pursed his lips, and then turned back. "Give Anne permanent primary command privilege, and then demote me to secondary, please."

Tootsie said, "Command privilege prime logged for user 'Anne'. Command privilege for user 'Bill' changed from primary to secondary." Then she turned to me. "To initialize orientation map, I must scan the area where I will be operating. You will need to open all doorways to which I am to have access, though you do not need to open cabinets and drawers. Then give the command, 'initialize orientation map.' Orientation will take approximately five minutes per hundred square meters."

"What's all that 'command privilege' stuff?"

"That means it's your robot now. It will obey your commands over anyone else's, even mine."

"Alright, anyplace she shouldn't go?"

"Up to you." Bill shrugged.

I pointed to the hall and said, "Tootsie, go out that door please." Tootsie walked out into the hallway. Bill and I followed her and I closed the study door. That was going to be *my* space. I made a quick check around the townhouse.

"Tootsie, initialize orientation map, please."

Tootsie began walking around the house looking closely at everything. I followed her. I was curious. Technology isn't my strength, but I like

gadgets. Bill followed me.

"Does she have any other clothes?"

"There's a bag in the storage box but none of it is any more decent than that."

"Right." I clicked my tongue. I held back the snippy comment that came to mind. I could almost hear Bill cringe.

The robot moved from room to room, looking at everything. It was opening and closing cupboards, moving furniture and picking up knick-knacks. I kept a steely silence, jaw clenched and arms crossed in front of me. Bill caught my eye a couple times, but turned away from my glare.

I gave voice to my feelings while the robot was going through the lengthy process of learning her way around the kitchen. I looked him in the eye. "Let me make this clear. You do not touch her. She belongs to me now. I feel like she's an intruder here, and I won't have her come between us. Clear?"

He held up his hands. "Crystal! Look, I haven't touched it for years. Why do I feel like I've done something wrong?"

"For one thing, you didn't get rid of her."

"What was I going to do? Put it on E-bay? That would be great. 'Used sex robot for sale. Triple entry, big tits. Getting married, must sell.' I don't think they even take ads like that."

"You could have found a place that does."

"Look, it's just one of those things, okay? It didn't have to be dealt with right away, so I didn't deal with it. I procrastinated. I'm sorry, it was wrong, but it wasn't *that* wrong. So stop treating me like I've been cheating on you, because I haven't."

I looked away, then uncrossed my arms and looked down. "You're right." I put my arms around him. "I just feel like you had this big secret affair right before we met, and I feel threatened."

He cradled my head in his arms. "Don't be. It's a robot. Just a robot. It won't take long for you to see that it's no threat to you at all. You can set whatever rules with it that you want, and I won't be able to rescind them. If you don't want her to let me touch her, tell her that and she'll do her best to obey. If you want her to tell you if I touch her, she'll do that too."

Tootsie returned to me and said, "Orientation Map Initialized."

"Alright, come on," I said. "I want to see her do my dishes."

CHAPTER THREE

Anne

A knock on the bedroom door woke me slowly from a sound sleep. Bill wasn't there. Tootsie's not-quite-human voice said, "Mistress Anne? It is nine o'clock. I have breakfast for you."

I sat up and blearily squinted around the room. Sunlight splashed through the window onto half-empty boxes of clothes. "Come in." Nothing happened. I shook my head and remembered. "Tootsie, come in please."

Tootsie opened the door and walked in carrying a tray. She set it down next to me on the bed. "Master Bill told me to wake you up and to give you breakfast." There was coffee, toast with butter and jam, and a pitted, quartered nectarine. She straightened up and said, "Would you like your morning status report?"

"Tootsie, yes, please." I was a little mad at Bill for not waking me up, but glad to have the sleep.

With all the craziness of moving I hadn't been sleeping enough.

"The kitchen has been cleaned and everything has been put away. I am fully charged. I require a fluid system flush and recharge."

"Tootsie, what do you need for the flush and recharge, please?"

"For the flush, I need one half liter of bleach, and a water hose. For the recharge I will need at least one tube of KR-20 all purpose lubricant, available at HCB outlets worldwide."

Great. Product placement ads in a robot. Next the microwave is going to start recommending brands of popcorn. I thought for a minute, munching the toast. "Tootsie, tell me, will the hose in the shower work, please?"

"Yes, that will work."

"Tootsie, can you do the flush without the recharge, please?"

"Yes."

"Tootsie, use the bleach from the laundry and the shower for your fluid system flush, please."

Tootsie turned and left the room. While she was out, I slipped out of bed and put on a t-shirt and sweatpants. Tootsie returned with the big bottle of laundry bleach, and went into the bathroom. I watched from the doorway as she took off her maid's outfit. There was no underwear underneath. It didn't surprise me to see that not

only did Tootsie lack any pubic hair, but there appeared to be a lifelike vulva between her legs. She really was a perfect sex doll.

Tootsie stepped into the shower, put the bleach to her lips and drank deeply. She re-capped the bottle and set it down just outside the shower. She unscrewed the shower head from the hose, put it in her mouth and turned the hot water on full blast. For a moment nothing happened, then two thin streams of steaming water spurting out of her nipples, sputtering and bubbling. The smell of bleach hit me hard.

I blinked. "What the hell?" The sight surprised me so much I said it out loud.

I watched in morbid fascination as Tootsie moved her legs apart and two more jets of water came out, one from her pussy and one from her ass. There was a little spluttering and bubbling there, too, but not as much. After a couple of minutes Tootsie turned off the water and put the shower head back on. The water flowing from her body abruptly stopped. She used the shower to rinse off and then stepped out of the shower. She toweled off quickly and reached for the maid uniform.

I broke out of my reverie. "Hold it," I said. She picked up the uniform and started putting it on. "Um, Tootsie, stop please."

She stopped and looked up at me.

"Tootsie, I am going to give you something else to wear, please."

She said, "Yes, Mistress Anne." She followed me out of the bathroom. I dug through the boxes and found a huge pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt. Silently, I said a little prayer of thanks that I no longer needed them. I handed them to Tootsie, trying not to look at her breasts. "Tootsie, wear these, please." Tootsie thoroughly examined them, and put them on. The sweatshirt didn't completely hide her immense bust but it wasn't as provocative as the maid outfit.

"Tootsie, here are your tasks for today. Put your storage box in the basement, and put your shoes and the maid uniform in it. Unpack these boxes into the closet and the dresser drawers. Unpack the boxes in the upstairs hall into the upstairs hall closet. Collect, clean, fold, and put away all of the dirty laundry. Then come to me and tell me you're done, please."

"Yes, mistress Anne," she said. She retrieved the maid outfit from the bathroom and took it downstairs.

I spent the morning finishing my unpacking in the study and started tuning my instruments. Bill's boxes were still packed but without any time off from work to enjoy the contents, that wasn't really a problem. Most of the contents would be his game books, some science fiction novels, and

his collection of antique skin mags.

The whole time, the image kept coming to my mind, unbidden, of Bill fucking Tootsie. Missionary, Doggie style, in our armless rocker, one image after another. I tried to put them aside. "That was before," I kept trying to say to myself, but they wouldn't go away.

About noon, Tootsie came to the door and said, "Mistress Anne, I am done with the tasks you have assigned." I turned on the stool and put down my guitar.

"Tootsie, how many times has Bill fucked you, please?"

"I don't know," she said, "I don't keep track."

"Tootsie, what has Bill told you to do, please?"

"There are no unfulfilled commands from Master Bill."

I thought for a minute. "Tootsie, can I make it so that Bill cannot undo my orders, please?"

"Your command priority currently exceeds Master Bill's. He cannot undo your orders."

"Okay. Tootsie, can you act modest and demure? Can you conceal your body rather than show it off, please?"

"Yes, I can do that. You only need to tell me to do so."

"Good. Tootsie, you will always act modest around Bill. He is not to see you naked, or touch you. If he does, you will cover yourself and stop

doing anything else to leave the room, please."

"I understand, Mistress Anne."

"Tootsie, go down to the kitchen until I call for you, please."

"Yes, Mistress Anne." She turned from the doorway and left.

Bill called from work during lunch. I was sitting on my performer's stool, practicing. I put the guitar down and faced the wallscreen.

"Hey, babe!" I said, "How's the robot turning out?"

I gave him a self-satisfied smile and said, "Quite well, thank you. She's working in the kitchen."

"Remember that she, um, remember that the robot needs to recharge every so often."

"I was going to do that at night."

He shrugged. "That works. I always did the recharge during the day. It works slower when there are people around."

"I can imagine." I gave him a quirked half-smile.

He looked away from the screen, exasperated, and then turned back. "I'll be home after nine again tonight. I'll call if I'm any later than ten." He cut off the connection. I stared at the screen for several heartbeats. "Damn you, Bill."

I went back to my guitar. I played some Black Sabbath. The old stuff is great for working off

frustrations.

After I dispelled the angry shadows, I decided that Bill and I would have to talk about his history with Tootsie. It wasn't going to go away.

CHAPTER FOUR

Bill

When I came home I was expecting to be chewed out. She was lounging on the living room couch watching music videos. I waited just inside the door to see how she'd react.

She got up slowly and put her arms around me. "I missed you."

I managed to smile in spite of my fatigue. "I missed you too." I kissed her lightly and put my hands on the small of her back.

"I was mad that you cut the connection. I think we need to talk about this."

"Yeah," I said, even though my heart wasn't in it. I didn't want to go to bed without resolving it, though, so I put my fatigue aside. "I'm sorry I cut you off. I was frustrated, and I didn't want to say what I was going to say."

"It's okay." She looked down, breaking eye

contact. "But I need to know about you and Tootsie."

"Um, didn't we already go into that? Tootsie was my sex toy for a year and a half while I was in graduate school. There really isn't much more to the story than that."

"Did you fuck her?" She looked up with a strange look on her face. I couldn't figure out what she was getting at.

I kissed her on the forehead. It was kind of patronizing but it seemed like the best thing to do at the time. "I don't see how this conversation can do either of us any good, Annie. Can't I just say that that part of my life is over? I love you. I married you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you. If Tootsie goes back in the box today, and never comes out, I wouldn't bat an eye."

She kissed me on the lips. "I know. Part of me wants to do that, but it felt so good, not to have to do dishes, or laundry, or even make the bed today. I spent the whole day with my music. It was wonderful. Now that I have that I don't want to give it up. The whole house is neat and tidy. She's tireless and thorough. I like that."

"You could have it do the work at night and when you're out of the house. Then you wouldn't have to see it much." A light went on in my head. "I have an idea. Why don't you download the manual and tech-spec from the company website

tomorrow? Maybe if you understand better how it works, it won't be so threatening."

"That sounds like a good idea."

"And if that doesn't work, we'll sell it and buy a cheap robot that looks like a walking scrap heap."

"Okay." She laid her head on my chest. "I missed you today."

"I missed you too." An old Bette Midler tune came on the screen. We started slow-dancing.

"When are you going to be back on a normal schedule?" she asked, without picking up her head from my chest.

"Months, probably. Every time we get one system integrated they sign another treaty and it's time to start another one. We're swamped."

"Have you talked to Cho about hiring more people?"

"Oh, he wants more people. He just doesn't want to pay a premium to steal them away from another company. When things slow down I'll take a couple of weeks off, and we'll go to Scotland or something."

"Any idea when that will be?"

"No idea." I stopped swaying to the music and took Anne's face in my hands. I kissed her tenderly. She made a faint whimpering sound and hugged me closer. I scooped her up in my arms and she squealed in surprise.

"You gotta warn me when you do that!"

I hm'ed amusedly. "Not as much fun that way."

I carried her over to the couch and dropped her on it with a flourish. I made a great show of yanking off my tie, disengaging my shirt, and dropping my pants. She pulled her t-shirt and jeans off in a flash, and we were both naked at about the same time. I knelt down on the floor next to her and put my hands on her boobs.

"Mmm, I missed those too," I massaged them gently, rubbing her fat nipples between my fingers.

Anne reached out and stroked my stiffening cock. "And I missed this."

My eyes and hands roamed up and down her body from shoulders to knees. My fingers stroked, caressed, squeezed. When she closed her eyes and started arching her back, I put one hand on her pussy and rubbed slow circles around her clit. I used the other to hold her breast so I could tongue and suck her nipple. Her strokes on my dick started to get sporadic.

"Bill, I want you in me." She looked me in the eye and the heat of her gaze seared holes into my brain.

I climbed up onto the couch and lifted up her ankles bending her almost in half, with her heels up on my shoulders. I put the tip of my cock to her pussy and wiggled it around.

"Is that what you want?" I smiled.

She whimpered. "You're teasing! Put it in, put it *in*!" She tried to thrust up at me but the position gave her no leverage. I pushed in an inch or two and started taking very short strokes.

"Better?"

Anne practically screamed in frustration. "Please! Give it to me!"

"Tell me what you want. Say it." I smiled impishly.

"I want you inside me!"

"Tell me you want my cock." I wiggled side to side a little and started teasing her nipples with my fingers.

"I want your cock in my pussy!"

I drove down into her. She squealed. I started thrusting hard and fast and moved my hand down to her pussy. I watched her face as she got closer and closer to climax. When the moment felt right I pushed down at the root of her clit and she stiffened, moaning. I stopped thrusting so I could feel her pussy clutch my cock. Just as she started coming down I started thrusting again taking long, slow strokes. As another long moan escaped her teeth, I came. I leaned back to collapse on the far end of the sofa. A long string of stickiness connected my cock to her pussy.

When Anne caught her breath she said, "Oh God, I love it when you do that." I just smiled.

Anne lay there catching her breath for a minute, and then got up and got a washcloth from the downstairs bathroom. She wiped off her gooey pussy and handed the cloth to me.

"Susan says, 'I don't need a man, I have my dildoes.' She has it wrong, *So* wrong."

I shrugged and wiped my own messy organs. "And anyone who thinks that sex with a robot compares to sex with a living breathing human being hasn't seen your face when you come."

"You watch my face when I orgasm?"

"Every time. That's why I don't like doggie-style so much." I stood up and tossed the washcloth on the pile of discarded clothes. "Let's go to bed. I have to get up early and you've worn me out."

As we went up the stairs Anne called out, "Tootsie! Clean up the mess in the living room please!" towards the kitchen.

CHAPTER FIVE

Anne

I sat at the computer. On the wallscreen a cheerful female face smiled back at me from under the Serious Cybertronics company logo. "Glad to be of service!" it said and the perfectly pretty head disappeared. In its place was a single icon, "User Manual CR-D v4.2." I queried it. I shook my head at the result. "Treekiller." I decided to read it onscreen rather than print it out.

I studied the manual. Maintenance. Commands. Orientation.

Alteration.

Programming.

Troubleshooting.

I stopped for a short lunch break and then dove back in. I didn't understand all of it but a lot was straightforward and understandable. And...

It's kind of embarrassing.

I got curious.

What happened next didn't seem sexual when it started. It was innocent curiosity, I swear.

I went out shopping. There was an HBC a few miles away near the monorail. You would never know from looking at it that they carried supplies for sexbots.

It turns out "KR-20 All Purpose Lubricant" was no longer available but they sold something called *Similube* that they assured me was pretty much the same stuff. The clerk didn't even look at me funny. I guess they get newlyweds in there buying supplies for their sexbots all the time.

I came back home with a small shopping bag. "Tootsie! Come here, please." I took a bottle of Similube out of the bag, popped the top, and rubbed a little between my thumb and forefinger. It felt genuine but didn't have much smell to it. It was a little milky in color. The manual said that the lubrication system was more than just for sex. Most importantly it lubricated her joints. She'd start breaking down if she went without it too long.

Tootsie entered the room and stopped just inside the doorway. I wiped my fingers on my jeans and handed the bottle to her. "Tootsie, recharge your fluid system, please."

Tootsie took the tube, tipped it back, and squeezed the whole thing into her mouth, swallowing. When it was gone she licked her lips

and swallowed again. "My fluid system is recharged, Mistress Anne."

"Tootsie...um..."

"Yes, Mistress Anne?" Damn, that programming was smart. She knew when I was having trouble figuring out what I wanted to say.

I noticed that her feet were really dirty.

Damn! I had given her instructions to clean everything in the house except herself.

"Tootsie, go put the clothes you're wearing in the wash and then join me in the upstairs bathroom, please."

According to the manual ordinary soap and water would be fine for her polysilicone flesh and neosilk hair.

Tootsie came into the bathroom totally naked. Her feet weren't the only parts that were stained. Evidently she spilled mopwater on herself a few times and her hands and arms showed stains from scrubbing the bathroom. I shook my head. "Alright. Tootsie, take a shower, please."

Tootsie stepped into the shower, turned on the water, and lathered up a washcloth. She started washing her hair and face first. Once that was done she rinsed off the soap and washed her neck and shoulders.

She looked over at me. She caught me looking at her. I was watching her in the shower, through the glass. She quirked an eyebrow.

Damn. *Was she flirting with me?*

The manual said that the robot would react to erotic situations, and alter its behavior. It was vague, though. "We prefer that our users discover the finer points of a Serious Cybertronics robot's operation in everyday events rather than revealing everything in the manual. If the robot does something you don't like, all you have to do is tell it to stop, and it will stop, and learn."

She saw me watching her showering, and decided it was time to put on a show.

All I needed to do was tell her to stop.

She looked me straight in the eye as she started washing her arms. She pursed her lips.

Okay, that's far enough, I thought to myself. *Time to tell her to stop.*

I didn't. I was staring.

She started washing her huge breasts. The suds ran through her cleavage and down her belly. She was still looking at me.

And then...God...she drew the washcloth over one nipple...and it got hard. It's one thing to read it in the manual. 'This robot is equipped with erogenous zones. If stimulated the robot will react in a realistic way.' It's another to watch it happening.

Look away, I kept telling myself, but her hands on her body and that taut nipple...

I didn't stop her.

She washed her stomach, that flat firm stomach, still watching me through the glass and steam. I couldn't stop watching. I felt my heart pounding in my ears. What was wrong with me? I showered with women around, at the gym or at the pool, and it hadn't affected me this way. Some part of me was desperate to stop this, it was too much...

The washcloth descended towards her clean, hairless pussy. I followed it down with my eyes. I was hypnotized.

I didn't stop her.

With a couple of strokes, she soaped it up, and then, with her other hand...

She touched it.

She slipped a finger down into her cleft. Still watching me with her eyes half-closed she stroked herself, slowly. Her mouth opened. I saw her belly move as she started to breathe harder.

I suddenly realized that my underwear was wet. Very wet. My panties were soaked my nipples were hard and oh-my-god I was *turned on*! I found my own hand up my shirt under my bra squeezing my nipple. I broke out of my reverie and I quickly jumped out of the bathroom. I pulled the door closed and leaned against it, trying to slow my breathing.

I heard the shower turn off. I struggled to get control of myself. What was I afraid of? I took a deep breath and moved away from the door. After

a few minutes, Tootsie came out. Her hair was wet but combed, and her skin was dry. Her nipples were back to their relaxed state, and the flirtatious look in her eye was gone. "Mistress Anne?"

"Tootsie...go...go finish the laundry and get dressed again, p...please."

She left the bedroom.

I ran into the bathroom and slammed the door. I splashed cold water in my face.

What was I going to tell Bill?

CHAPTER SIX

Bill

I opened the front door, and there was the robot, totally naked, coming down the stairs.

It covered itself with its hands as best it could and fled the room.

I stood there puzzling this new behavior for a minute.

"Honey?" I called out.

She came down the stairs, looking a little flushed. "Yes?"

"Has Tootsie been acting strangely?"

"Ah...why do you ask?" She was talking too fast. Was she hiding something? She seemed nervous.

"She was naked, and when she saw me she ran away."

"Oh! Oh, that! I told her to be shy around you, not show off her body. She was naked because I told her to take a shower. There weren't any clean

things for her to wear in our room, so she went down to the basement to get her clothes out of the wash." She was still talking fast.

"Ah, okay." That made sense. Kind of. I wondered if there was something more, but there wasn't really time to go into it. She rushed up and gave me a big hug. I put my arms around her. She smiled up at me. I kissed her lightly on the lips.

"Wanna go upstairs?" she asked, with a playful look in her eye.

She didn't have to ask me twice.

She let me go into the bedroom first, then locked the door behind us. I gave her an inquisitive look.

"No interruptions."

I started taking off my clothes. "You didn't give it any commands that would make it come up here, did you?"

"Oh, no, just making sure. You're home early."

She changes the subject like that sometimes. It's totally useless trying to change it back. "Cho gave me the evening off."

My clothes started piling up on the floor. I started taking off Anne's blouse, but she pulled my hands away. "Remind me to thank him. Are things finally easing up?" She bent down, unbuckled my belt, and pulled down my trousers.

I sighed. "No, just the opposite."

Anne paused, with her hands on my boxers.

She gave me a puzzled glance.

"Cho's sending me to Tokyo. He gave me the evening to get ready. The plane leaves at midnight."

"What?" Anne stood up straight, and put her hands on her hips. "I thought Cho sent John Obgebor on the travel assignments."

"He's already there. Anne, they need me. John is black."

"He's also brilliant. You said so yourself."

"He is, and I did, but this guy they've got handling the Japanese end isn't getting along with John. It might be a race thing. John's getting really burned out, and Cho wants us to switch places until Tokyo is integrated."

"How long will that take?"

"Two months, maybe three."

Anne groaned and hugged me around the chest. "So quit. There are other jobs."

I stroked her hair. "I can't do that, Anne. Cho is counting on me. Not only that, this project is important. It means something. We're doing something that's going to make the world a better place. If it goes longer than two months, I'll make Cho let me come back for a week. Can you let me go do this...for me?"

Anne looked up into my eyes. "This house is going to be very empty without you."

"Let's forget about that for now, We've got

tonight, let's enjoy it."

Anne sighed. "You're right." She tucked her head down against my chest again. "Make me forget."

Still dressed in my y-fronts, I laid her down on the bed with her legs hanging over the edge. She folded her arms over her chest and closed her eyes.

I unsnapped her jeans. "One mind eraser, coming right up," I said, smiling.

Anne lifted her hips to allow me to slip her pants off, along with her panties. I dropped them on the floor and knelt down before her furry altar. I gently pushed her bent knees apart and stroked her lush, smooth pelt of pubic hair. I felt Anne quiver a little under my hand. I breathed in her scent. It went straight to my head.

My fingers parted her slit. "Mm, there you are," I said, then took a long, slow lick from bottom to top. She was already soaking wet. Anne moaned softly in anticipation. I pushed her fleshy lips further apart and found her hardening nubbin. I traced a long lazy circle around it with my tongue, running up almost into her hair.

She squirmed and giggled a little. I love it when she does that.

I made a tighter circle, a little closer. Another circle, closer still. On the fourth time around, my tongue was up against her clit, making tiny circles

against the bright pink skin around it. Her breath caught. My tongue delivered a tiny taste of her, and I swallowed. I kissed her clit lightly, and then sucked it gently between my lips.

"Mmmh, oh, oh Bill...yes...you know me so well..." I could feel the heat rising from her body.

She started lifting up, pushing her pussy into my face. I shifted my hands and went back to the long vertical licks. I started licking upwards and downwards with the rhythm of her thrusts using both the bottom and the top of my tongue. Her juices started running down my chin. The heady tang of pussy filled me. Her breath started coming faster, almost panting. As the tension in her legs and body built up, when I felt that she was close, I locked my lips around her clitoris, wrapped my arms around her thighs, and held on tight.

Anne comes hard when I'm sucking on her clit.

She curled her back and pushed up with her legs, pushing me up off the mattress. Her hands gripped the sheets and she let out a groan as shudders shook her body from one end to the other. I held on and rode it out. As the last spasms shook her body, I crawled up on top of her.

She took my head in her hands and kissed me. I returned the sentiment.

I slipped back down and started unbuttoning her blouse. "Hellooo in there!" I said, playfully. She laughed. I pulled her blouse open, and slipped

her bra up over her breasts. "Ah, there you are! Rascals..." I nuzzled her left nipple and took it into my mouth. I wanted to keep her 'warmed up.' While I sucked, I pulled off my underwear and tossed them off the bed. My cock was getting firm.

I slid my right hand down towards her pussy, but this soon after her orgasm I knew she'd be very sensitive. I spent a minute or so rubbing her outer lips, running my hand through her thick pussy-hair.

"I'm ready," she said.

I nodded, and turned again to position my cock at her entrance. She raised her knees to the sides, and I slid in easily. I set a slow pace, savoring each stroke. She smiled up at me, and put one hand up to caress my cheek. As I continued to pump she closed her eyes and put her hands over her head. As I got closer to coming. I pumped harder and faster. I groaned, tensed, and thrust deeply as my cum shot into her belly.

I rolled to one side, after it passed, and caught my breath.

"That was nice," she said.

I grunted.

She turned on her side, and ran her fingers over my chest. We looked into each others eyes. I think I saw a tear forming there.

"This will be the first time we've been apart for more than a day since we got married." She was

getting ready to cry.

I got up on my elbow and kissed her. "It was bound to happen sooner or later. And after this, Cho will owe me. I'll get him to put out the cash to hire someone."

I considered teasing her about playing with Tootsie. The thought of them together was still fresh in my mind.

"Call me every day," she said. "We'll cyber over the cameras."

"Sure," I said. "It'll be like when we met." I smiled a bit.

A faraway look came over her.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Anne

Bill and I ‘met’ in college. He was a math tutor, and I was having trouble with calculus. It just wasn’t clicking for me. Derivatives were no problem, mostly, but as soon as we switched over to integral calculus I was sunk. Not only was I looking at a failing grade on an otherwise excellent transcript, it was a requirement for virtually everything in my sophomore year schedule. I was majoring in perception engineering.

I wanted to design eyes, the kind they use in people, not robots, though the disciplines are related.

My school didn’t have any tutors available, so they arranged for a guy from another college to help me over the ‘net. They told me he was a graduate student, working on a dual master’s

degree in mathematics and artificial intelligence.

Bill was patient, knowledgeable, and professional. We must have spent a hundred hours with that virtual blackboard, trying to hammer that square peg into my round hole of a mind. In the end, I switched majors to psychology. I went to our scheduled tutoring session to tell him I wouldn't be back.

"I'm sorry, Bill. It's just clear that I'm not going to pass this course. You've been very patient with me, and I know you've done everything that can be done to teach me this stuff...but it just isn't happening."

"So what you're saying is, 'It isn't you, it's me,' am I right?" I could hear the humor in his voice.

I chuckled. "Yeah, I guess I am."

"So I guess our professional relationship is at an end."

"Yeah." I felt a little sad.

"In that case, do you mind if I make a small request?"

"Not at all."

"Can I see you?"

"What?"

"Turn on your camera and let me see your face."

"Why?"

"I've been hearing your voice for six weeks, for hours and hours. I want to see your face."

"You want to see my face?"

"Right. So I can remember you."

"You want to remember me?"

"Is that so strange?"

"I suppose not." I turned on the camera. He saw my face, my long brown hair, my glasses...maybe a corner of the dorm room. "Now your turn."

He turned on his camera. I was struck by his red hair. There was a poster on the wall behind him, with a unicorn and a girl in a diaphanous white robe. I remember that the first thing that struck me was the curve of his jaw. It wasn't a lantern jaw, it wasn't particularly manly, but I remember that it was interesting. I wanted someone who knew what they were doing to draw it.

"Well?" I said.

"Thank you."

"No, that's not what I meant."

"I knew I liked you before you turned on the camera, so it should come as no surprise that I find you attractive."

"All we ever talked about was calculus. You don't know anything about me."

"I know you are...well, were in perception engineering. That means you want to work on eyes and ears and stuff like that. That means you care about people. I like that."

"What else do you know about me?"

"I know you have a roommate named Grace."

"That's not really about me, though."

"I know she's gay."

"What?"

"She's gay. After the first session, you left the link open, and after you left the room I could hear her making love with another woman."

I laughed a little. "I'm going to have to apologize to her for that...my god; she's going to kill me."

"Do you have a girlfriend?"

"No, no, my train doesn't go to that station," I said, still smiling.

"Oh, that's good. Boyfriend, then?"

"Nobody serious."

"Good answer. Keeps me guessing."

I just shrugged. "So have you seen enough?"

"Enough?"

"Enough to remember me."

"No. I've got a terrible memory for faces."

"Bill, why don't you just come out and say what you want?"

He looked away from the screen, and then back again.

"I don't want to never see you again."

I smiled a bit. "I don't know, Bill..."

"Anne...I know we're a thousand kilometers apart...but I would really like to see you again."

"Over the 'net?"

"It's the only thing we have, right now."

I knew a lot more about Bill than he knew – or would admit to know – about me. I knew he was patient, and smart, and witty.

"I guess it'll have to do," I said.

His face lit up. I smiled. I could feel a blush coming to my cheeks.

"Did you really hear my roommate making love?"

He nodded. "Yeah. She's a grunter."

"My god, you really *have* heard them."

"You have too?"

"Well, Grace doesn't have a lot of modesty." I chuckled.

"Don't tell me she has sex with her partner while you're in the room."

"Yeah...she does."

"Did she think you were asleep or something?"

"No, actually, I was watching *Firefly Next Generation*."

"Wow! And they just..."

"Actually...they invited me to join them." I put a hand up, half hiding my face. I smiled sheepishly.

"No!"

I nodded.

"I thought that only happened in porn videos."

"You've seen a lot of porn videos, then?"

"Well, I..." He laughed nervously.

"You're cute when you're blushing."

A defiant look came over his face.

"Yes, I have seen a lot of porn videos." He was still blushing.

"What kind?"

He smiled and blushed some more. "All kinds."

"Ah, an experienced gourmet," I joked. He laughed. "What kind do you like?"

"Well," He said, idly scratching the back of his head, "I've got a few, where they have a woman sit on her bed, and talk about herself while she takes off her clothes."

"That's all? You like those?"

"Yeah. In most porn videos, you don't feel like the woman is...well, a woman, really. She's just a body."

I nodded. "Those are made by that outfit in Australia, aren't they?"

"Yeah, you know them?"

"Grace watches them. She says I should send them a video file, try out for the site. According to her, they pay good money."

"You're pretty enough," he said.

"I don't know if I'd be comfortable enough in front of the camera."

"You seem to be pretty comfortable to me."

"I'm not taking off my clothes."

"You're not? Oh, darn..." He smiled self-

consciously.

"Bill, are you saying you want to see me strip for you?"

He swallowed. "Yes. I am."

"I don't ordinarily do that kind of thing, Bill." I inclined my head.

"Ordinarily?"

"I could be convinced to make an exception." I smiled coyly.

"Would it help if I stripped for you first? Just to make you comfortable, that is."

"It might, it might..."

Without further ado, Bill got up from his chair and stepped back away from his camera, so I could see him from the knees up. He faced the camera and matter-of-factly pulled off his t-shirt, dropped his sweatpants, and stripped off his underwear. He lay down, on his side, on his bed. His body was at an angle, with his feet closer to me, to the left, and his head further away, on the right. From this angle, his cock was in the middle of the screen...and it was hard. His hands were in view the entire time...he hadn't touched it. He got that way just thinking of me.

I think I said something inane like "Wow" or "Omigod."

"Thanks. Your turn."

"I didn't say I'd strip for you just because you did."

"Okay. That's fine."

"You're fine lying there naked?"

"Yeah. I'm fine. I'd like it a lot if you were too, though."

"Since you put it so nicely." I stood up and backed away from the screen. I took a deep breath. "I've never done this before," I said.

"Neither have I."

"You haven't?" I pulled off my Harry Chapin t-shirt. I wished my fancy bra was on underneath, but it was a plain white one.

He shook his head. "I like it, though."

"I can see that." I unsnapped my jeans and pulled them down. Mom always said I'd be glad someday to wear clean underwear every day. Too bad these were cotton 'granny' panties.

"So tell me about yourself," he said.

"What?"

"That's part of it, isn't it?"

I stopped, with my hands on the clasp of my front-hook bra. That, at least, was a lucky choice this morning. "What do you want to know?"

"What do you do for fun?"

"Well, I play guitar, and harp. I like folk music..."

"Don't stop," he interrupted.

"Huh?"

"Taking off your clothes," he said. "You're supposed to do both at the same time."

"Oh, right." I unsnapped the bra and slid it off my shoulders. I like my breasts. A nice, well-formed B-cup, with pink aureoles that made little cones rather than lying flat, even when they weren't erect. I heard Bill make an approving noise.

I looked up at the screen. Bill's hand was on his organ. This really was turning him on. Hell, it was turning *me* on. "I like folk music, like Stan Rogers and Harry Chapin."

"I've never heard of them. Can you send me some mp3's?"

"Sure." I put my hands on the elastic of my underwear. I looked up at Bill. He was stroking his erection slowly. He was circumcised. The head was turning dark, and he was starting to get flushed.

"Bill...you're getting ahead of yourself, aren't you? I haven't even got my underwear off."

"Oh, sorry..." He stopped stroking. "Is that bothering you?"

"No, actually, I like it. You're all jazzed up and I've hardly done anything."

He started stroking again. I pulled down my underwear, stepped out of them and tossed them aside. He smiled. He was starting to breathe harder. I watched him.

I couldn't believe I was doing this. I know he wanted me to start masturbating too, but I

couldn't bring myself to go that far. So I kept talking, to cover my nervousness.

"I'm working on an act."

"Unh—huh." He seemed to be losing brain cells.

"In case the college thing doesn't work out? Heh, I guess this is a bad time for making jokes, especially really bad jokes."

His legs stretched out, and he stopped stroking. His eyes closed and he let out a long exhalation.

"Oh, wow, are you..."

His semen spurted across the room, vanishing out of the view of the camera. The only thing I could think was, 'Gee, I hope he doesn't have carpeting in there.'

He lay back on his bed and relaxed. I took it as my cue to start putting my clothes back on. When he recovered, he said, "That was incredibly sexy."

I was incredibly flattered.

"So...can we do this again sometime? Sometime soon?" His eagerness made me smile.

"Sure. I'd like that."

He cleaned up, and put his clothes back on. We talked for an hour or so more, but then he left to go teach a practicum, and I went to bed so I could get a few hours sleep before my morning started.

In the next few weeks, we connected up for an hour or two a night. Sometimes we'd just sit and chat, and sometimes we'd strip for each other, and

he'd masturbate. It wasn't until the fourth session that I gathered the courage to touch myself while he watched, and I was too nervous to have an orgasm. The fifth time, I had a little one, and the sixth time my body finally cooperated with a big, beautiful orgasm.

After that I made sure to put a towel down first.

Our relationship continued to grow as that year progressed. In June, Bill graduated, and he found a job at my university, as an associate professor. We couldn't officially move in together at that point, because of some Victorian-era University rules about 'student-professor fraternization' but I spent just about every night at his apartment, and we didn't have to have our sex over the 'net anymore.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Anne

I went with Bill to the airport. After having spent years with him, the concept of spending even one night alone was painful. I couldn't imagine going without him for two months. In retrospect, I must have been pretty clingy and dependent. I suppose it's true, what they say about people who study psychology.

I made a teary scene at the airport, and waited at the entrance to the metro terminal, watching the lights of the departing planes, until his departure time passed, and every shadow of him seemed gone. I moped my way home. Dazed and emotionally exhausted, I drove home from the monorail in the middle of the night, and collapsed into bed.

In the morning, Tootsie woke me again with a simple breakfast. I learned from her that Bill left instructions as to when and how to bring it to me.

I picked up the phone. I started to call his cell, but realized that he'd still be on the plane, that his phone wouldn't work.

I sighed, and put the phone down. I looked at the coffee, and toast, and instant oatmeal, and I wanted very much to be too sick with loneliness to eat, but I found to my surprise that I wasn't nearly as bad off as I expected to be. Bill would call me when he got in. I ate the oatmeal and drank the coffee. It wasn't precisely the way I like it, but it was close. I took the remote off my bedside table and turned on the audio, and flipped it to a news channel.

I didn't ordinarily listen to the news much, but with Bill in Japan I wanted to hear if anything important was happening there. I pushed away vague, irrational premonitions about earthquakes, typhoons, and tidal waves. The news didn't mention anything cataclysmic, so those premonitions faded before I finished breakfast.

I carried the tray down to the kitchen and told Tootsie to make up the bed. I went into the study and started writing. I wrote some lyrics, put some music to them, and realized that they were total crap. The number of songs about the loneliness of separated lovers is more than I'd care to count, and adding one more was pointless. I threw away the sheet of notepaper with the words and chords and started singing some of the good ones instead.

I felt better. An hour went by.

I got out my Alvarez. It's the best guitar I own. It's not my favorite, but Bill got it for me and it has always symbolized him to me. I stroked the strings gently.

I checked my schedule.

Whoa! The Concert! I was scheduled to play the Ten Fifty Club! In all the chaos of the honeymoon, and moving and Tootsie, I had forgotten. Luckily, with everything so neat and orderly and freshly packed away, I was able to get everything together in time, without rushing. I gave some instructions to Tootsie and locked up the house. I tried to focus, to rehearse my act in my head. I got to the venue by noon, plenty of time to get set up, do the sound checks, and get familiar with the stage.

I was doing 'Green Fire' for the sound man and some of the staff as a sound check when Dave came in. I felt an impulse to stop and welcome him, but my professional self stopped me, and I managed to finish the song without faltering. Dave smiled and waved, and I smiled back at him.

When I was done, the soundman said, "Anne, give us a minute here, I think one of the boards is going bad." He busied himself with the interior of one of the boxes on his console. Dave took the opportunity to walk up to the stage. As he walked up, it struck me that Dave was everything that Bill was not. Shaved bald, shortish, muscular. His

smile was charming in a completely different way.

"I like that one," he said. "It's about emeralds, right?"

I nodded. "Mm—hmm. From the mine to my hand." I showed off the ring on my finger.

He noticed the little emerald engagement ring, and the wedding ring nested with it. Was that a note of disappointment in his eye? He looked around the room briefly. "You're singing it tonight, I hope?"

"Yes, I am."

"Would it be alright with you, if we did a duet, maybe for an encore?"

Would it! I tried not to look like a geeky fangirl. "Yes! Of course...I'd be flattered."

"How about 'Horseshoes'? You know that one?"

"Yes." I knew *all* Dave's songs.

"Good!" He winked, clicked his tongue at me, and gave me a thumbs-up. "Break a leg."

"Hey, you too!"

My cell phone rang. Dave went backstage. Wow. My first gig, opening for one of my favorite artists, and he asked to play a duet with me. It rang again. I checked the display...it was Bill. I answered it.

"Bill!"

"Hi babe! Listen! I don't have much time. I just wanted to let you know that I arrived safely, and

I'm on the way to the hotel. I'll call you again when I get there. I ..."

It cut out. What the hell?

The sound man called my name. He was pointing at me...the signal that I should start playing again. I started playing 'No No Raja'. It wasn't until I was halfway through that the meaning of the song sunk in, and I caught the irony of it. Not only was it one of Dave's songs, it was a warning to Raja, to stay away from a woman who's no good for him. I wondered if Dave heard it, and what he thought.

I kept my cell phone on me the whole time. Bill didn't call. Reluctantly, I turned it off a half hour before show time, so that I could prepare without worrying about being interrupted.

My set went great. A few voices in the crowd sang along during the Chapin tunes. It's good to hear that folks haven't forgotten him. It had been a long time since Bill was in the audience for my performances, so I didn't miss him all that much.

After I was done, I went around and watched Dave's performance from the entrance. It was a full house, so I couldn't sit down, but I couldn't have sat still anyways. I sang along with the slow songs, danced with the snappy ones, and generally just enjoyed myself. When Dave came out for his encore, he waved me up to the stage, and we sang 'Horseshoes' together. We took our

bows and went back to the dressing room.

Dave collapsed on the couch as soon as we got back. He was sweaty and flushed. I grabbed a water bottle and drank deeply.

"Hey, toss me those, eh?" He pointed at a pack of cigarettes on the table. I picked them up. They were one of the Canadian brands...the kind made with marijuana instead of tobacco. I handed them to him. He took one out, lit it up, and held the smoke. He offered it to me.

I shook my head. He shrugged and blew out the smoke.

There was a knock on the door, and one of the staff poked his nose in. "Mister Matheson, there are about two dozen people outside who want your autograph. What do you want me to tell them?"

"Tell them I'll be out in fifteen minutes." He took another long drag on the cigarette and went over to the shower. I turned my back and started getting my things together. "Sorry, I'll get out of your way." I heard the water came on in the shower.

"Hey, don't worry about it," he said. "Doesn't bother me. It's not my fault they only have one dressing room." I heard his pants and belt hit the floor. "I'll be out in a few minutes, then you can have the room to yourself."

Was this some kind of a weird come-on? Or

maybe he was giving me the opportunity to come on to him. I turned on my cell phone. After a minute, it signaled that there were three messages waiting for me. Two from Bill, and one from someone I didn't know. I dialed up Bill's first message.

"Hi babe," he said, "I guess you're doing your concert now. I only just got to the hotel. Love you, call me when you're done." The second message was much the same.

I dialed up the other message. An oily voice came over the phone. "Hey, Anne, my name's Jonathan Campbell, I just caught your act and I wanted to say how much I enjoyed it. How's about I meet you afterwards for drinks? I'll be waiting outside. Love ya, babe!"

I shuddered. The tone made me want to crawl out of my skin. I called up the manager and told him what happened, and asked him to clear out the stage door so I could go to my car. He said he'd send someone around to make sure no one bothered me when I went out to my car. I heard the water stop.

"Sure doesn't take long to start attracting the creeps, does it?"

"Yeah..." I missed Bill. A wave of need for him pushed through me.

"The hall ought to be cleared out by now," he said, "I'll walk you out to your car."

"Thanks," I said, "but your fans are waiting for you."

"Eh...They can wait a few more minutes."

"Alright." I wanted Bill to be protecting me, not Dave.

I heard Dave get dressed behind me, while the marijuana smoke got thicker in the room. I could feel a little bit of a buzz just from being in the same room with it. It intensified the melancholy feeling that was coming over me.

I packed my instruments and gear quickly. I took my guitars and Dave grabbed my harp and the suitcase I used for all the little odds and ends. A big guy with a crew-cut was standing by the door. "All clear, Missus McCloud," he said. He opened the door out onto the back parking lot. No one was out there. Dave and I walked out to my car. Dave didn't say anything. I thanked him for helping and got into the car.

I plugged my cell phone into the car's system and called Bill. I got his recording again. A few minutes later, the phone rang again. I took the call without checking the display.

"Bill?"

"Jonathan Campbell." My stomach turned upside-down. "Hey, you ran off without even saying 'hi'. Didn't you get my message?"

"Yeah, I got your message. I'm sorry, Jonathan, I'm tired and I just want to go home. I'm sure you

understand.”

“I get it. I understand just fine.” There was an edge of malice to his voice.

I cut the call. I pulled the phone off the cord and turned it off. I shivered. I contemplated pulling off the highway to get a cup of coffee, but it struck me that he might well be following me. I sped up. All kinds of nightmare scenarios started playing on my imagination.

I turned on the radio. I turned to the folk channel. I sang along with the songs I knew and tried to memorize the ones I didn't. The music gradually dispelled some of my fears, and by the time I got home I was feeling a little better. Just a little.

After I unloaded the car, I tried Bill's cell again. Same recording. I left a message for him to call me when he was free, no matter how late it was. I told him I loved him and I missed him. I looked at the clock...wow. Two o'clock in the morning. If Tootsie woke me up for breakfast at the usual time I was not going to be happy.

I went out into the kitchen. Tootsie was standing against the wall, with her electrical cord plugged in. She turned to look at me. “Good morning, Mistress Anne,” she said. “Is there anything you need?”

“Tootsie, I want you to bring breakfast to me at ten tomorrow, please.”

"Yes, Mistress Anne."

I remembered something from Tootsie's manual. "Tootsie, do you still have your emergency protocols installed, please?"

"Yes, Mistress Anne. Fire and medical emergency protocols are active."

"Tootsie, activate intruder emergency protocol, please."

"Intruder emergency protocol active." Tootsie was no security-bot, but her AI was bright enough to be able to tell if someone was breaking into the house in the middle of the night, and could use the house system to call the police. I felt better knowing that an unsleeping set of eyes and ears would be watching out for me.

I hoped I wouldn't need it.

CHAPTER NINE

Bill

I hefted my bag off the baggage carousel and checked my cell phone. It still said, "Security Blackout." Since when were plane terminals appropriate places to scramble cell signals? I couldn't believe people still put up with that. I looked around for a pay phone but couldn't find one. I spotted an internet kiosk, but a dozen people were queued up for it. I skipped it.

Customs, more security checks, all the usual traveling nonsense. I slept on the plane, but I didn't feel rested. It was early morning, Japan time, I hadn't even been to the office yet and I was already in a bad mood.

I tried to call Anne from the train, but I couldn't seem to get a decent signal most of the way. I think I managed to get a few sentences through, but that's it.. I made a mental note to have to have

a word with my cell provider about their supposedly 'global' network.

I got to the hotel, checked in, and called Anne from the hotel phone. She didn't answer. I checked her schedule. She was at a concert, so I left a message.

I lay down to try to get a few hours sleep before the office opened but had no luck.

I turned on the TV. I should have known better. The only show I could catch the gist of was some kind of game show, where a female contestant tried to answer trivia questions. If she messed up, a vibrating egg would be handed to her, which she then put inside her body. Since there wasn't any nudity, we viewers were evidently invited to guess where they went. The unfortunate woman was wearing a knee-length skirt. If she continued to miss answers, a dial on a giant console would gradually get cranked up, evidently increasing the vibrations.

I watched this surreal show in spite of myself. Either the questions were hard or the contestants were dim, because I watched two women in succession lose completely. Each had two wires running up her skirt and one in her mouth, and one appeared to have a convincing orgasm as the dial hit three.

When that show finished I shook myself free and turned the TV off. It was 7am, local time; late

enough that I could expect someone to let me in the office. I freshened up, put on some clean clothes, and walked over to the Ministry office. I got hung up in the lobby with security checks. They took me into an office off the lobby, scanned me—my clothes, and my briefcase. They confiscated my cell phone and my laptop, but not before I recorded another message for Anne in case she tried to call me. I wondered, briefly, if a Japanese visitor would have gotten treated this way.

All that out of the way, they gave me a pass and an escort. At least she was pretty. Miss Tanaka was about five feet tall, with long, straight black hair, and that perfect complexion that everyone in Japan seemed to have. She was wearing a navy skirt and suit jacket, with a white shirt and black flats.

She brought me to the elevator and pushed the button for the 45th floor. “Mister McCloud, before Mister Rabazugai arrives I feel it is necessary to apologize.” Her English was perfect. “McCloud” couldn’t be an easy name for her.

“Apologize? For what?”

“Apologize for the way Mister Rabazugai has treated Mister Obgebor, and for the way he will treat you.”

“That bad?”

“Mister Rabazugai does not wish for your

project to succeed."

"That bad. Why are you telling me this?"

"We do wish for your project to succeed."

"We?"

The elevator stopped. Miss Tanaka put her finger briefly to her lips before the doors opened. We stepped out into a brightly lit hallway. Confused, I followed her down the hall and into a small room full of cubicles, with a row of offices and conference rooms to one side. "Welcome to the Central Elections Management Council."

John Obgebor popped up over one of the cubicles. "Bill!"

I walked over and shook his hand. He looked like hell. His eyes were bloodshot and his handshake was limp, but he brightened up for my benefit. "Boy, am I glad you're here," he gasped.

John and I went into a conference room and he gave me his story. Much as Miss Tanaka told me, this Rabazugai fellow was making the job impossible. He was changing requirements around, shifting resources constantly, and micromanaging the project to death. Anyone who got too friendly with John was summarily transferred to someplace unpleasant. I was *not* looking forward to this job. John showed me the progress he been able to make in the four weeks he been in Tokyo. At this rate, we'd be lucky to get the project done in a year.

Before we were able to start working on a strategy, the door opened, and a tall, handsome Japanese man entered. I stood up, and he bowed slightly to me. I did my best to bow back. Miss Tanaka stood behind him and to one side. He spoke some Japanese, and Miss Tanaka translated. "You are Mister McCloud. I am Hiro Rabazugai. Thank you for coming. I hope we will be able to finally get this project moving along now."

I smiled and told him I was certain that with diligence on both our parts, we would be able to achieve our purpose. Both of us were lying through our teeth, and both of us knew it. I settled in for a long spell of bullshit.

By the time I left at six, Tokyo time, my head was spinning. My body said that it was two a.m., and I been in meeting after meeting all day long. I hadn't had a single break to get to my phone and call Anne. As I was getting my things together to leave, Rabazugai approached me yet again. Through Miss Tanaka, he politely informed me that he was going out that evening for some entertainment, and asked if I would like to come along. Miss Tanaka gave me a very subtle nod of the head. I was puzzled.

"I'm sorry, sir, I'm very tired and I need to get some rest. Perhaps after I have adjusted to the time difference."

He repeated the offer, in the politest possible

terms, and Miss Tanaka mouthed the word, 'Accept.'

"Alright," I said, "But not for more than an hour. It would be very bad manners to fall asleep in the middle of dinner."

Rabazugai laughed and the three of us went down to his car. I gave Miss Tanaka a questioning look, but she silently shushed me with a finger to her lips.

What the hell?

CHAPTER TEN

Anne

Tootsie woke me up at ten, as I had instructed her. I was quickly getting used to breakfast in bed, even if it was instant oatmeal, toast, and coffee. The phone was on the tray.

The phone gave me a short audio message from Bill. He sounded completely worn out. He left it an hour before I got up.

"Tootsie, what time is it in Tokyo, please?" I asked. It was too early to figure it out for myself.

"It is two—oh—two a.m. in Tokyo," she reported.

I sighed. With any luck, Bill would be fast asleep...what was he doing awake at one AM, though? I was beginning to worry that the camsex idea wasn't going to happen.

"Tootsie, remind me to call Bill at four p.m., please."

"Yes, Mistress Anne."

I dressed in my usual sweats and brought my coffee down to the studio. I brought up my email on the desk screen.

Wow.

Out of an audience of a few hundred, fifty-two decided to send me fan mail. I was stunned.

I started reading them, sending back little replies thanking them for coming to the concert. About halfway through, a long, not totally coherent story came up...about a man romancing a singer he saw on stage. I checked the 'from' field.

Jonathan Campbell.

Shit.

His story degenerated into a weird 'here's how much I love you' stream of semi-consciousness that left me cold and mildly nauseous. I shut off the computer and went to make myself a cup of tea.

I debated calling Bill. No. Too early. I thought about calling the police. What would they say? It's not a crime to send an email expressing affection. Who would I call? Mom? She'd only worry.

Grace.

Grace was doing a summer internship at a law firm downtown. She'd know what to do, or at least who to call. I went back to the studio, found the address for her office and started a connection on the wallscreen.

Grace's striking, angular face filled the screen.

Her dark brown skin was clear, almost shiny, like polished wood.

"Anne!" she said. Her face brightened. "Good to see you."

"I need your advice."

She laughed. "I'm supposed to refer you to one of the partners so they can charge you, but screw that. Where can I meet you?"

"In person?"

"Yeah, I've been working eighty hour weeks since I started and I need a break. I'll tell them I'm working on a possible client."

I gave her my new address. She closed the call, and I went back to answering my emails.

She arrived a little after eleven. She was dressed in a conservative business suit that was nothing like what she usually wore. She came in and tossed a stylish black leather knapsack on the couch, and laid her suit jacket over the back of the chair.

"Wow. Grace. You look..."

"I know, I know," she said. "Straight. I try to think of it like a uniform. Once I get some experience and seniority I'll be getting rid of it, believe me."

"I believe you," I said, smirking.

Tootsie came in with a couple glasses of iced tea. She handed one to each of us.

"Whoa, who's this?"

"This is Tootsie. She's a robot."

"I didn't think you were the sexbot type, Anne..." She looked Tootsie over appreciatively.

"I'm not," I said, definitively. "It was Bill's. He got it before we met and never got rid of it."

"Typical," she smirked.

"I called you because ever since my concert last night, this creepy guy has been emailing me and calling my cell phone."

"Your cell?"

"Yeah, that's the creepy part. They're not supposed to be able to get cell numbers, are they?"

"No, they're not. There are ways, especially if he works in telecom. What kind of calls?"

I brought her into the studio, told her about the telephone call, and showed her the email. She sat in the office chair and read it.

"Well, he's not making any threats, so there's no point in taking it to the police. If you want me to, I'll print out a letter with the company graphic, and tell him on no uncertain terms that you're not interested in him, and that you want him to leave you alone."

"You think that'll work?"

"I can't say, but it's the first step. If he still bothers you after that, you can call the police."

"Thank you, Grace...this means a lot to me."

"No problem. So now that's settled, tell me about Tootsie."

"What?"

"I've never seen a real live sexbot before. How did Bill get her?"

"He says he won her in a bet. It makes sense, he certainly didn't have enough money to buy her at the time."

"And you let him keep her?"

"Well, actually...now she's mine."

Grace blinked. "You? Miss Straight-Arrow?"

"I haven't had sex with her! She just does the cleaning now."

Grace lay back on the 'audience' couch and spread her arms out along the back. "I want to try her out." She had one of those 'I'm holding all the cards' looks she gets on her face when...well, when she's holding all the cards.

I should have expected her to say something outrageous like that. She loves getting to me that way. I didn't see it coming though, and my jaw dropped open.

"Consider it a trade for legal services," she said, idly evaluating the condition of her nails.

"What about Therese?" Therese was Grace's partner.

"What about her?" Grace chuckled. "It's not like I'd be cheating on her. Tootsie's no different than a sophisticated vibrator."

I felt confused.

"Look, it's not like I'm asking you to join me.

You say you're straight, and I'm willing to let you keep thinking that."

"Grace!" I lightly slapped her arm.

She laughed. "Gotcha!" She reached out and put her hand on my arm. A more serious tone entered her voice. "Look...I'm just curious, okay? I want to see what robots like Tootsie are like. Maybe I'll buy one once I'm a high-priced Washington attorney."

I closed my eyes and shook my head. "I don't think..."

"Why not, Anne?"

I couldn't think of a reason. Bill wouldn't be finding out, and Tootsie belonged to me, didn't she? Just a machine.

"Alright, alright...but on *my* terms. I'll show you what Tootsie can do, but I'm not hosting an orgy. Just a ...demonstration."

"That sounds fair." She rubbed her hands together. "When can we start?"

"After lunch. I'm hungry."

I sent Tootsie upstairs to shower and change into clean clothes, directing her to a drawer where I put some of my old things for her to wear.

While we cooked some omelets, I told Grace about how Bill gave Tootsie to me, and that she really was useful for doing laundry and cleaning around the house. Grace just smirked.

We sat down at the table to eat, and Tootsie

came down in a long denim skirt and white blouse. The skirt was belted tight, and as a result quite ill-fitting, and her braless breasts were quite visible moving around underneath her blouse as she moved, cleaning up the frying pan.

Grace watched her, eating quickly. When Tootsie finished washing the pan, she bent down to put it away in the cabinet next to the sink. The outline of her enormous breasts was visible through the thin material of the blouse.

"So how do you ask her to do things?" asked Grace.

"She interprets everything between her name, 'Tootsie', and the word 'Please' as a command or question.

"Tootsie, face me, please," said Grace.

Tootsie turned to me. "Command Privilege?"

"Tootsie, give Grace beta command privilege nine for three hours, then revoke it, please."

"Command privilege beta given to Grace for three hours," Tootsie repeated.

"That's a pretty clinical way of going about it," said Grace. "Couldn't you just tell her, 'Hey, do what Grace says until dinnertime?'"

"Yes...but imprecise commands can be misinterpreted sometimes. It's better to use the formal language for important things like command privilege."

"Obviously thought up by a lawyer," she joked.

"Cyberneticists are even worse."

Grace turned back to Tootsie. "Tootsie, take off your blouse, please."

"What, you're starting now?" I asked in surprise.

"We've finished eating, haven't we?" Tootsie looked at me, then at Grace, and started unbuttoning her blouse, from the bottom. She toyed with the last button briefly, running a finger around it in a little circle, before she undid it. She looked back and forth from Grace to me the whole time. She licked her lips, and popped it open, revealing the chasm between her enormous breasts.

I felt the same strange fascination fall over me that happened when I watched her shower. "Wait..." I tried to say.

Tootsie ignored me. She shrugged her shoulders out of the blouse, holding the edges of the fabric over her nipples with her hands. The soft fabric sagged around her back. Then, with a quick fling, she tossed the garment to Grace, revealing her enormous breasts in all their glory.

Grace made an appreciative little sound and set the blouse on the table next to her plate. "Well sculpted, eh?" she asked.

"Grace, this isn't what I ..."

"It's what I had in mind, Anne. A clean, clinical examination of your sex robot." She cocked that 'I

got you by the curlies and I'm not letting go' eyebrow at me.

I took a deep breath. Tootsie pursed her lips a little, and shrugged her shoulders, causing her boobs to sway. I swallowed hard and sat back in my chair. I crossed my legs.

"So," said Grace, smiling slyly and looking back towards Tootsie, "Does she react to being touched?"

"Yes," I said. "She's got sensors in her skin that can tell where you touch her, and how much, even whether the touch is warm." It helped to dispel the erotic atmosphere that was building in the room, to talk about Tootsie in technical terms. It helped me to remember that she was a robot, and I desperately needed to remember that.

Grace rose from her chair, and reached out to caress one of Tootsie's nipples. It crinkled at the touch. "There's more sensors in certain places, aren't there?" asked Grace. "Tongue, earlobes, lips..."

Tootsie looked into Grace's eyes with a half-lidded, sultry stare. She licked her lips and arched her back a little, pushing her breast into Grace's hand.

"Nipples," Grace continued, taking one hardening nipple between each thumb and forefinger and pinching them gently. Tootsie took in a sharp breath and let out a soft moan.

"Clitoris," I finished, almost whispering.

"Mm, clitoris," repeated Grace. "Speaking of which..." Grace knelt down, putting her face close to Tootsie's pubic area, currently still encased in the folds of the overlarge skirt. She unbuckled Tootsie's belt, and let the blue denim drop to the floor. Grace's elegant hand ran over Tootsie's smooth mons.

"Tootsie, spread your legs, please," said Grace, without looking up. Tootsie stepped out of the voluminous skirt and stood with her feet well apart. Her sex opened slightly, and Grace began exploring it with her fingers. "She's wet."

"Yeah...Tootsie has a lubrication system. It keeps everything working...right." I tried to quiet the thoughts that swirled in my head.

Grace brought a finger to her lips. "Very subtle flavor," she said, "sexy without being crass."

"They make other kinds," I said. "I just got the kind that would keep her joints working right."

Grace started stroking Tootsie's vulva, gently. "Does she have orgasms?"

"Yes," I said, "She's programmed for three kinds of orgasms. 'Realistic, Dramatic, and Japanese.'"

"Japanese?" asked Grace, "What's that?"

"The manual was...vague on that point. It said that it was in the style of 'nenta' or something like that."

"Hentai?" asked Grace, chuckling.

"Yeah, 'hentai,' that's it. You know what that is?"

"'Hentai' means 'pervert' in Japanese," said Grace. "Tootsie, what kind of orgasms are you set to have, please?"

Tootsie said, softly, "Realistic." She was breathing irregularly, and her eyes were almost closed.

"Well, let's see one of those." Grace pushed a finger up, disappearing into Tootsie's vagina, and started manipulating her clitoris with her other hand. "Do I need to tell her to cum?"

"No," I said. "But you can tell her not to."

"Why would anyone do that?" asked Grace, watching Tootsie's face begin to contort as the tension began to take hold.

"Because you could make her fall down." The manual, in fact, recommended against giving the robot an orgasm unless there was room for it to move safely.

"You're right...we wouldn't want that, would we? Let's go into the living room." Grace stood up and looked into Tootsie's eyes from close up. Tootsie recovered her composure and her face returned to neutral. "Tootsie, follow me, please." Grace crooked her finger to me and smiled. "You too, Anne. Don't you want to see?"

I stood up, then hesitated. Why was I

following? I told myself that I wanted to make sure Grace didn't do any damage to Tootsie. She hadn't read the manual, after all. That's what I told myself. I was almost convinced.

I hurried after them.

"Tootsie, sit on the couch and spread your legs, please," said Grace, as she picked up her backpack and unzipped a pocket. Tootsie sat down gracefully as Grace pulled a small vibrator out of her pack. She handed it to Tootsie. "Tootsie, fuck yourself with this, until you orgasm, please." Grace set the pack aside and sat down on the floor at Tootsie's feet.

"Grace, I..." This was getting out of hand.

"Hush," said Grace. "Everything will be fine. Have a seat. Enjoy the show. Unless you've done this already?" She looked over at me with that triumphant smile of hers.

Tootsie started to work the little plastic phallus into her vagina with her right hand, while she squeezed her nipple with the left. I shook my head. "No...I haven't."

"Well, then this will be educational for you, too." She went back to watching Tootsie close-up. I sat down in the easy chair to one side of them. I tried to affect a pose of indifference, but it didn't matter. Neither of them was paying any attention to me.

Tootsie her head back, resting on the back of the

sofa, with her butt on the edge of the cushions. As she worked the toy, she breathed heavier and let out breathy little whimpers. Her mouth was open, and the cords in her neck stood out. Her stomach tensed and released quickly, then again, and then she pushed her hips up into the air and let out a long, low grunt. After holding that position for a few seconds, she sagged back down to the couch.

Grace looked over her shoulder at me. "Not bad, eh?"

"Y..." I cleared my throat. "Yes, very realistic." I could feel a flush coming to my face.

"Want to try the Japanese orgasm next?"

"I, uh..."

"Great!" Grace turned back to Tootsie. "Tootsie, for your next orgasm, I want you to go Japanese style, please."

Tootsie nodded. "My next orgasm will be in Japanese mode."

"Ready?" Grace asked me.

"No, but that isn't going to stop you."

"Damn right. Tootsie, I want you to play with your tits until you cum, please."

Tootsie let go of the dildo and started rubbing and squeezing her breasts. The dildo began to fall out, but Grace caught it. She slid it in and out of Tootsie's vagina slowly. Tootsie started kneading and pinching harder at her breasts and nipples while Grace picked up the pace. Tootsie arched

her back, driving her vulva towards Grace and her breasts into the air, while she let out little gasping “Ah! Ah!” cries.

Then, she came. Ordinarily, I’d say she “orgasmed” but this, this was *coming*.

She shot a jet of lubricating fluid from her vulva that splashed across Grace’s shirt. Two more jets erupted from Tootsie’s nipples, which arched across the four feet or so separating us and ran a line of drops across my sweatpants. I could swear she was aiming at me.

Grace fell back in surprise, and another blast caught her right in the face. I managed to dodge the stream from Tootsie’s breast. A third jet just trickled out, leaving a wet spot on the carpet.

Astonished, Grace wiped the fluid out of her eyes, gasped, and burst out laughing. She was covered. That set me off, and I started laughing too. She tried to get up, started laughing again, and fell back onto her back. The fluid made her light white blouse to cling to her body, revealing a lacy white bra against her dark skin.

Still chuckling, I hustled out of the room. “I’ll go get you a towel.”

When I got back, Tootsie was sitting normally on the sofa again, and Grace was standing up. She accepted the towel with a big smile and started wiping off her face.

“Well, that was something, wasn’t it! Now you

know what to do if you have a kitchen fire." She was still smiling broadly.

"Did you know that was going to happen?"

She chuckled. "No. I just knew it was going to be bizarre and perverse. Those Japanese are kinky fuckers."

My thoughts flew to Bill, in Tokyo.

"Where's your shower?" she asked, unbuttoning her blouse.

"What?"

"Hey," said Grace, pulling my attention back, "I can't go out with girl-cum all over me, even synthetic girl-cum."

"No? It would serve you right," I said.

She shrugged the sodden blouse off, and started wiping off her neck and chest. The sexual atmosphere that been dispelled by Tootsie's sudden ejaculation came back all at once.

"There's a shower in the bathroom at the top of the stairs," I stammered, feeling a flush come to my face.

Grace lightly touched the hollow of my neck. "I love you fair-skinned folks. So easy to tell when you're getting charged up." Grace slipped past me. "Oh, Tootsie, would you come with me, please?" Tootsie stood up from the sofa.

Grace looked over her shoulder at my astonished expression. "Well, she's your cleaning lady, right? I'm going to have her clean me.

Coming?" When I didn't move, she shrugged and started up the stairs, with Tootsie in tow. After a minute, I heard the shower start running.

My emotions were awlirl. I wanted to go up and watch...hell, I wanted to go up there and join them, but...

This was different. Watching Tootsie shower, before, that been something of an accident. I didn't know at the time that she would put on a show for me. I hadn't known that I'd get so turned on.

Now I knew.

I found myself at the top of the stairs.

If I went in there, it would be no accident.

The guest bathroom door was ajar, and steam was starting to curl out into the upstairs hall. The door opened under my hand. Grace's clothes were carefully set aside on the counter.

It would be my choice.

The shower door was closed, but through the frosted glass I could make out Tootsie's pale figure standing behind Grace's dark body. She was washing Grace's back.

Grace's voice floated over the shower doors. "Come on in, Anne."

The shower door slid out of the way. Had I pushed it, or was it Grace?

Tootsie was standing behind Grace, with her arms wrapped around her lithe torso. Tootsie's right hand was on Grace's belly, sliding down

towards her trimmed pubic hair. Her other hand, holding a washcloth, was slowly lathering Grace's small, cone-shaped breasts.

I pulled my sweatshirt up over my head. My blood was pounding. My pussy was soaking wet. My ears were ringing.

Ringing.

Ringing?

The phone! *Bill!*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Bill

Miss Tanaka sat with Rabazugai and I in the back of his sleek black limousine. The car was, like most cars in Tokyo, robot-driven. Miss Tanaka continued translating for him.

"You will like this club, I'm sure. It appeals to American desire."

"American desire? I don't understand."

"The desire to control."

What the hell? He looked at my face and laughed.

"Don't worry, Mister McCloud. You will like it."

I sat back in the seat and tried to clear my head a bit. The cavernous streets of downtown Tokyo passed by the tinted limousine windows. People packed the sidewalks. I couldn't read many of the signs, and the colors and lights were dazzling. I felt my head swimming. I definitely didn't feel

like a night of entertainment, especially not something to appeal to 'the desire to control.'

Rabazugai took two little aluminum cans out of the limousine's mini-bar and handed one to me. The label was Japanese. "What's this?" I asked.

"It's an energy drink, Mister McCloud," said Miss Tanaka. "It will also help with the jet lag."

"Well, can't hurt," I thought. I popped it open and took a sip. It tasted like really sweet herb tea. Rabazugai chugged his down, so I did likewise. By the time we arrived at our destination, I was actually feeling a little better. Whatever was in the can, it worked.

The club entrance was just a pair of doors sandwiched between an electronics shop and a pachinko parlor. The sign was in Japanese. We got out, and the car drove away to find a place to park.

At the front door a pretty young lady met us. She was dressed in a business suit much like Miss Tanaka's, holding a clipboard. She bowed to us, and spoke briefly with Rabazugai. She bowed again, more deeply, and without consulting her clipboard gestured for us to pass through the ornate wooden doors behind her. Miss Tanaka translated, "Welcome to Control Express Club."

I hunted for any detail that might tell me what to expect.

We passed through the doors and into what

appeared to be a quiet, intimate, high-class bar. There was a small dance floor off in one corner, and a heavy door on the far side of the room. The decor was mostly wood and glass, done in subtle shades of green and brown. The chairs were large and comfortable looking, but armless.

There were about two dozen people there, scattered between the bar, the tables, and booths around the perimeter. I remembered seeing a few folks here and there in Tokyo who bleached their hair, but never so many in one place. More than half of them were platinum blondes.

Rabazugai explained. "The setting tonight, is a high class whiskey bar. The ones you see with the white hair," he gestured to the room, "They will do what you say, as long you use the word 'obey.'" Before I could ask, he continued, "Don't worry, you can expect them to speak English." He said something else to Miss Tanaka, and she said, "Mister Rabazugai has asked me to demonstrate."

Miss Tanaka walked up to the nearest of the blonde people, a woman with short hair dressed in a slinky black dress, and said, "Take off your panties and give them to that man." She pointed to me.

The blonde woman gave her a shocked look and turned away briefly. Miss Tanaka said, "Obey," and the woman reached up under her dress and, demurely as she could, pulled down a

green g-string, and stepped out of it. She walked over to me, and offered the garment to me in her hand. She looked a bit petulant, perhaps even annoyed.

I took it, and then handed it back to her. She stood there staring at me for a moment.

And then I got it.

"The blonde ones...they're robots, aren't they?"

"Yes, you are a smart one, Mister McCloud," said Rabazugai, through Miss Tanaka. "They are all robots. They will treat you with disdain, unless you use the word 'obey'...and then they will do whatever you want."

Rabazugai said something to the robot in front of us, and she handed the panties to Rabazugai, who put them in his pocket. "Have fun, Mister McCloud," he said. "Do not worry about spending money...my account will cover everything." He said something to Miss Tanaka that she did not translate.

Rabazugai walked over to a booth and slid in next to a long-haired robot in a blue leather mini-dress. Miss Tanaka stayed with me. I took her arm and pulled her over to another table. "Okay," I said, "What's this all about, then? Is this why you wanted me to come with you, so that we could speak privately?"

"Yes, Mister McCloud. You are most perceptive."

"So...these people you represent...who are they?"

Miss Tanaka looked over my shoulder at Rabazugai. "If you do not start using one of the robots here, Mister McCloud, Mister Rabazugai will become suspicious."

"And you?"

"Mister Rabazugai told me to help you with anything you did not understand."

"Well, what does he expect me to do?"

"Just indulge yourself, Mister McCloud. Use your imagination."

On the far end of the room, a man led one of the robots through an unmarked door.

"What's through there?" I asked.

"There are private rooms."

The energy drink I drank earlier must have been having some effect, because I was feeling a good deal sharper. I didn't want to take a robot into the back, because then I'd have to leave Miss Tanaka behind. I looked around for the nearest robot.

It was a short one, less than five feet tall, dressed in a long rainbow striped halter-top and tight red knit pants. I walked over to her table. She looked me up and down, sneered a bit, and then started to pick up her martini and leave. "Stop," I said. "Obey."

She stopped, one foot on the floor, half out of

her chair, drink suspended just over the tabletop. "Sit down, put down your drink, and turn your chair to face me. Pull up your skirt and masturbate for me. Let it show in your face, but don't say anything. Don't orgasm for ten minutes. Obey."

I went back to sit down with Miss Tanaka. The robot shot me an annoyed look, but it sat down again and pivoted her chair towards me.

"How's that?" I asked Miss Tanaka.

"It will do for now."

I sat facing the robot, with Miss Tanaka across the table from me. She sat primly in her chair, with her hands in her lap.

"So I'll ask again...who do you represent?"

"My associates wish to remain unnamed for now. If Rabazugai were to find out who they were, it would not go well for them, or for the project. Suffice it to say that we want your project to succeed."

The robot pulled its skirt up so that it was around her waist. It wasn't wearing any panties. It stared at me with a genuine looking sour expression, and got to work rubbing its pussy. It used just one hand, the left, rubbing up and down, while it sipped nonchalantly at the martini.

"Alright, I can accept that, Miss Tanaka," I said, still watching the robot. "So what do we do? John has told me how badly Rabazugai has been fouling things up. Is there any way to remove

him?"

"Leave that to us."

The robot across from me started to show a little arousal. It started blinking slowly, and breathing deeper. It was a good simulation, but Tootsie's were more realistic. On the other hand, these Japanese robots were quite lifelike. If it weren't for the hair, it would be hard to tell them from the humans.

"So what's my part in all this?"

"Your part is, of course, critical, Mister McCloud. We have set up a special protected file area, of which Rabazugai and his spies are unaware, for you to work. Collaborators will be able to work with you there, virtually. Rabazugai can manipulate the people in the cubicles next to you all he likes."

The robot slipped a finger into her vagina. She put down the martini and blew a long breath out through pursed lips. She closed her eyes and put her other hand up under her top and started squeezing her breast.

I felt an erection starting to make itself known. I shifted a bit in my seat.

"That's not the most efficient way to work, but if that's the only way to get the job done, then that's what we'll do. How do I get into the file space?"

"We will get a key to you tomorrow."

The robot leaned back in her chair, and rolled her head to one side, breathing deeper.

I asked Miss Tanaka, "How do you feel about all this?" I swept the room with a gesture.

"They are robots, Mister McCloud. They do not have feelings, they cannot love. They have no desires that cannot be wiped away and replaced with new ones on a whim. Therefore there can be no moral issues in using them."

I nodded. After all, had I not made the same argument to Anne only a matter of a few dozen hours before? I watched the masturbating robot and adjusted my shorts.

"Are you going to indulge?" I asked.

"I have no desire for it."

The robot across from me arched her back and grimaced, breathing out a hiss instead of a groan.

I was starting to feel a need for relief. Ordinarily, I'd find someplace quiet to masturbate, if I felt this way when Anne wasn't available, but the opportunity was there, so why not take it? I'm sure Anne wouldn't mind. I told myself that I'd tell her about my adventure when I called her.

"We may not have another opportunity like this to talk. Is there anything else that you need to tell me tonight?"

"No, Mister McCloud. Once you have access to the protected space tomorrow, we will make sure

you get all the information you need.”

“In that case, I’ll see you in a bit. If Rabazugai leaves before I do, I’ll take a taxi back to the hotel.”

She nodded.

I walked over to the masturbating robot and said, “You can stop now. Obey.” She immediately stopped masturbating, and sat up and straightened her skirt.

I spotted a tall, Caucasian looking robot standing at the bar. I’d never had sex with anyone even close to as tall as me, and I wanted to give it a try. The robot was about six feet tall, and long, blonde hair falling in loose curls past her shoulder. She was wearing a long, formal black dress, the kind one would wear to a high class party.

I walked up next to her and ordered a drink. “I’d like you to join me in a private room,” I said.

“I don’t think so,” was the response, in a reasonable approximation of a Scandinavian accent. “I’m just here to have a drink and relax.”

“Obey,” I said.

Her face went through an odd little contortion. I thought I saw puzzlement, then amusement, then acceptance. “Alright,” she said. She picked up a small black clutch from the bar, looked at me and said, frankly, “Lead.”

I took her arm and led her over to the door I asked about before. It led to a short hallway. Five of the doors were open, and one was shut. I led

the robot to the first open door. It was basically a small hotel room, with a bed, a table and a couple chairs, and a modest sized bathroom, complete with a shower and bidet. There was a big wallscreen on one wall, presently showing a tropical beach scene.

"Put on some music," I said, "And strip off your clothes for me. Obey."

She walked over to the controls for the wallscreen and selected a soft piece of nondescript jazz. I sat down on the edge of the bed and leaned back on my elbows. She tossed her purse on the nightstand, and started moving to the music. Her sense of rhythm was, of course, perfect, and she moved very sensuously as she took hold of the right shoulder of her dress with her left hand and slipped it down, slowly, and held it in place. She repeated the motion with her right hand, holding her dress up with her arms crossed in front of her.

She turned around, and slowly slid the dress down, revealing a back textured with the faint outlines of muscles. I mused, as I watched, on the opinion the robot's Japanese manufacturers must have of Westerners. She was wearing a flesh-colored front-hook bra, which she deftly undid and discarded.

When she turned around again with the dress gathered in her hands at her waist, she revealed a pair of well-contoured breasts with small pink

nipples. I guessed they'd be a B-cup but I'm no expert. Her shoulders and abdomen showed the same faint outlines of underlying musculature. She wasn't as highly defined as a bodybuilder, but more like an athlete. If she were human I would guess she played basketball.

She dropped the dress entirely, raising her arms over her head. Her plain bikini-style panties were the same pale color as her bra. She danced sinuously, shifting her weight from one foot to the other, making her breasts sway slightly. She brought her hands down slowly, passing them over her body without really touching. When she reached her underwear, she rolled them down, passing over her taut thighs until they reached her knees, where they dropped to the floor. Her pubic hair was light brown, curly, and neatly trimmed into a wide triangle above her slit.

"Come here. Obey," I said, and she slid up to the bed, between my knees. I pulled myself back up to a sitting position, and found that her breasts were well above my face level. "Big girl," I said. She looked down at me with expressionless eyes. I put the tips of my fingers on the fold of skin between her thighs. "Spread your legs. Obey."

She shifted one foot first, and then the other, and bent her knees to spread her pussy wide. I explored her with my fingers, running them along her lips and in, spreading the fluid that was

beginning to appear throughout her sex. I could have just told her to lubricate herself, but I felt like seeing how it would react. The robot seemed to be a more recent model than Tootsie, so I was curious what the newer ones could do.

I looked up into the robot's face again. She closed her eyes, and was breathing deeply and evenly. I ran my other hand over her abdomen. The skin was exceptionally well-made. I could detect tiny hairs from close up, and even a hint of freckles here and there. "Okay, stand back," I said. As she took a step back, I rose, and shed my jacket and tie.

"Take off my clothes. Obey."

She quickly undid my shirt, slipping each button, and pushed it off my shoulders to drop onto the bed. She worked the fastenings of my belt and trousers with equal skill, and dropped them to pool at my feet. I raised my feet one at a time, and she slipped off my shoes and socks and put them aside, leaving only my boxers. She took hold of them by the waistband, pulling it out in front in order to allow my robust erection freedom, and slid them down to my feet.

When she stood up again, I told her, "Turn around, put your hands against the wall, and rotate your hips so that I can fuck you from behind. Obey." As tall as I was, I never been able to fuck standing up, like that, and I saw this as an

opportunity to try it. She turned and did as I said, spreading her legs a little to the sides to permit me access. I stood behind her and guided my cock into her pussy. "Go up on tip-toe," I said. With a little added elevation, I was able to enter her without having to bend my knees more than a little.

I started with my hands on her hips, but after a few minutes I reached up and around and took hold of her breasts. I pulled my body against hers as I fucked her. I went slow and steady, feeling every nerve ending fire on its own. I felt the robot starting to respond. Her nipples got harder, under my hands, and I could feel her pussy getting wetter as I slowly drew my organ in and out. With the increased lubrication, I needed a bit more friction to get full sensation, so I started pumping a little faster.

This led to an interesting little feedback loop, and before long I was pounding away for all I was worth, making little slapping sounds as my thighs came into contact with hers, and her fluid was running down my balls and onto my legs. With a shout, I came, with my cock pushed as far into the robot's body as it would go. She then came as well, trembling and spasming, throwing her head back. She collapsed against the wall, turning to land with a shoulder rather than bash her head into the wallpaper.

I pulled out. "Okay, I'm done with you now...you can clean up and go back to the main room." I rinsed my body off with water from the sink, and got dressed. The robot was in the shower when I left.

The bar outside was starting to fill up. Most of the robots were in use, in one way or another. I didn't see Rabazugai about, but Miss Tanaka was sitting alone at a table by the door. I walked up to her. "I take it Rabazugai is in one of the private rooms?"

"Yes, he went back shortly after you did."

"Good. Then I'll see you in the morning, Miss Tanaka." I gave her as proper a bow as I could manage, and went out to the street. A taxi whisked me back to the hotel. On the way back, I checked my watch. It was only about eight, but my internal clock said it was four AM. I yawned and realized that Rabazugai's energy drink was wearing off.

There, I took a nice hot shower, and put on a clean pair of boxers. I thought about calling Anne, but I decided not to wake her. I recorded an audio message on my laptop, sent it off, and set a reminder to call Anne as soon as I woke up.

I woke up with a faint remembrance of a dream, that I discovered the tall, blonde robot in the bathroom, crying. The clock read five-thirty. I did the math in my head.

I decided that was a perfect time to call Anne.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Anne

I ran into the bedroom and picked up the receiver. "Bill?"

"I'm sorry I couldn't call you earlier, honey. Why are you on audio?"

"I'm on the bedroom phone. I'll be right down." I put down the receiver and ran down to the studio. I turned on the wallscreen and sat in Bill's office chair. I would have sat on the couch, given what we were planning to be doing, but it was facing the wrong way, under the wallscreen.

Bill was lying on a hotel bed, on his side, facing the camera. He was dressed in his best pajamas, a t-shirt and boxers set I bought him the year before. He smiled at me and said, "Decided to get a head start?"

"What?"

"Your shirt."

I looked down. I wasn't wearing it. It was on

the floor of the bathroom where Tootsie and Grace were showering. "Oh...well," I smiled. "I was getting lonely..." Was I lying? Was it longing for Bill that fueled my strange attraction for Tootsie? The question sank into the back of my skull like an anchor.

He smiled back. "How was your concert?"

"The concert! Oh, it was great! Everything went very smoothly, and Dave asked me up on stage afterwards for a duet for his encore. I got lots of great emails from the fans, too."

"Great! Your career is taking off, Anne. I'm so happy for you."

"How's Tokyo?"

"Oh, it's a mess...the infighting here is worse than I've ever seen it. But I think I can get it straightened out. I think I can get around this guy, Rabazugai, who's the root of the trouble."

"Will you be back soon?"

"As soon as I can, love. I'll know more tomorrow." He paused. "I have to make a confession." I knew from his expression that he was serious.

"What happened?"

Bill took a deep breath and ran his hand through his hair. "Well, Rabazugai—he took me to this club last night..."

"I don't care if you got a little drunk, Bill."

Bill held out a hand, fingers splayed. "No,

please. Wait, let me finish." I sat back, trying to look forgiving. "Rabazugai brought me to a robot club. They have these robots, and the people who go there play control games. I needed to play along to have some time with Rabazugai's translator, to get things set up to outmaneuver Rabazugai."

"Play along?"

"Anne, I..." He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "I used one of the robots there, in the club, sexually." He looked down.

I let some of my irritation color my voice. "Must have been fun."

"Please, Anne. I wanted to tell you so that..."

"Bill, I can't believe you did this to me!"

"I didn't want to hurt you, Anne, I..."

"No, now *you* let me finish." I stood up. "I don't like this trip, you know I don't like the thought of you with a robot, and now you just want me to listen to it and forgive you?" I felt my heart hammering in my chest.

"I, uh..." A strange look came over him. He was looking past me. I turned around.

Grace was there, standing in the studio doorway, nude except for a towel wrapped around her waist. She smiled and waved. "Eloquent as usual, I see, Bill," she said.

"What—what's going on?" he said.

Grace said, "Anne was just going to explain

that she's got a confession of her own to make."

"Grace!"

"Better explain, Anne, because his imagination is way ahead of you."

I turned back to the wallscreen. Confusion, anger and curiosity were dancing across his face.

"Bill, I—" I sighed. "Grace wanted me to show her how Tootsie worked."

"Oh?" he said, trying to look forgiving and accepting.

"In exchange for helping out with a—legal matter."

"Legal matter? You want a divorce. Anne, no, please..."

"No! No, it's not that. Let—let me start from the beginning. There's this—guy—he sent a note backstage after the concert, he called my cell on the way home from the gig, and he sent me a really creepy email."

"And Grace is helping take care of him?"

"Yeah. She's going to send a letter to him on her firm's letterhead, to tell him that I'm not interested, and that he should leave me alone. If he persists, she can help me get a restraining order."

Bill sighed. "That's a relief, I think." He paused for a few seconds, then asked, "And all this is to pay Grace back for her help?"

"I know what this looks like—Grace and I haven't had sex. She's been fooling around with

Tootsie."

"You've got your shirt off."

I couldn't think of anything to say. I'm sure I just stood there and looked stupid.

The light of understanding dawned over him. "You were going to. I interrupted you before you could join them."

I looked down. "I don't know what got into me."

"Anne...Anne, look at me." His voice was soft, almost too soft for the connection to pick up.

I looked up again. I could feel tears welling up.

"Do you love me any less than you did yesterday?"

"No...of course not."

"I don't love you any less either." He smiled. "Anne, you have a sexbot. Since you didn't get rid of it right away, I figured that some part of you wanted to explore it, find out what it's all about. I've also seen you with Grace, and I've seen the way you two flirt together."

I started to sob.

"Anne, it's alright. Dammit, if I were there I'd give you a big hug. I. Don't. Mind. I don't love you any less for it and I'm not disappointed. Accept that you're a horny little wench and have some fun."

"I feel like I'm rejecting you."

"Then you can tell me about your exploits

afterwards! You know how I love it when you tell me stories. It'll spice up the camsex."

I didn't know what to think. He was as much as telling me to have an affair with Tootsie, and even Grace!

"I can't deny that I've had these feelings, but Bill, I vowed to be faithful."

"Anne, you're not going to fall in love with a robot, and as for Grace...well, I know her well enough. She's not in love with you; she just likes breaking down the defenses of women who think they're strictly straight. Right, Grace?"

I looked over my shoulder at Grace. She shrugged. "What can I say? He's a very perceptive man."

Bill sat up, crossing his legs in front of him. "So if you want to have some fun with Tootsie and Grace, it's fine with me. I'd be a fine hypocrite if I didn't, given what happened at the club last night. I know you're not going to leave me for either of them."

I felt Grace's hand on my shoulder. She whispered in my ear. "You know...I'd bet he'd really love to see you with Tootsie, right here, right now."

I swallowed hard and blushed.

"She's quite good at what she does, you know. Not as good as a real woman, but she'll do in a pinch." Grace's breath was hot on my ear and

neck.

I looked up at Bill. He licked his lips quickly, and swallowed. His fingers went to his chin in a familiar gesture I had seen him make when he was nervous or excited. The fire in my loins was still smoldering, and Bill and Grace were fanning the embers. An erection was beginning to be visible in his pajamas.

"Bill, I don't know..."

"Anne, I don't want you to do anything you don't want to do. If you're uncomfortable, send Grace home, shut Tootsie off, put her up for auction, and we'll buy an ordinary housebot."

I sighed. "I don't want that, Bill. I...I like having Tootsie around."

"Why?"

Grace backed off a little, but I could feel her still standing behind me.

"Why do you like having Tootsie around?"

"I don't know! I don't know...I'm fascinated. It's like she's got some kind of hold on me."

"She doesn't have a hold on you, Anne. Tootsie is just a robot. Anything you're feeling, comes from inside you. Those feelings are yours." He took a deep breath. "I can see this is a bit too much for you right now. I'll call you back tomorrow, okay? Think about it. Sleep on it."

I looked into Bill's eyes and saw concern and regret. "No, Bill. Please. I need you. I miss you,

don't go."

Grace said, "Why don't you work off some tension, hon... I'll get Tootsie straightened out and get back to work. I'll call you in an hour...or two. Mind if I borrow some clothes?"

"Yeah, go ahead, Grace."

I heard Grace close the door behind me.

"Anne, darling, are you sure you want to do this now?"

"Bill, I'm so hungry for you I could scream. I want to crawl right through the line and be with you, right now."

"Seems to me I've heard that line before."

It was true. I said it many times during the early days of our online relationship.

"We can't touch each other now, Anne, but we can be together. Do you remember how we used to get started?"

I nodded. I licked my lips. Those sessions, in spite of the distance, were still arousing. The anticipation, the longing—it was flooding back.

"I'll never forget," I said, "That we always started with you already naked."

"Oh! Right." He pulled off his t-shirt and tossed it aside, then rocked back and slipped off his boxers. He took up a new pose, with his legs spread, leaning back on his elbows. His erection bounced a little as he settled down. "Okay, I'm ready."

"And then, I'd slowly strip down for you."

"While you told me about the sexy things that happened since the last session."

"Oh, God, Bill—I don't think that's a good idea. Do you really want me to tell you everything?"

"Yes. Yes, I do. I think it's really hot that you've been fooling around with Tootsie and I want to hear every detail."

I flushed some more. "Okay, you asked for it." I shook my head. "It started when I put Tootsie in the shower to clean her off. What with cleaning everything else, I forgotten to have her clean herself. I..."

"Don't forget to take off your clothes, Anne. That's part of the game."

"Oh—right." I started slipping my sweatpants down. The line of dark spots from Tootsie's fluid were still there. I wondered if Bill noticed them. I tried to ignore them. "Tootsie started washing and touching herself. I started to get aroused, but I left before anything happened."

It felt good to tell Bill about this...especially since it was arousing him. He shifted position slightly, and was stroking his penis with light touches.

I reached back and unhooked my bra. "Then, today, Grace came over and wanted to explore Tootsie. After we ate lunch, she stripped off Tootsie's clothes and started masturbating her." I

slid the bra off my shoulders and dropped it. My nipples advertised how aroused I was. "I told her it wasn't good to stimulate Tootsie while she was standing up, so we moved to the living room couch. Grace gave Tootsie a vibrator, and Tootsie made herself orgasm with it."

"Wow, that's—wow." Bill was stroking slowly but more earnestly now. I knew he'd hold off as long as it took.

I slipped my panties down and kicked them onto the couch, and then sat up on my stool. "Then I told her about the different kinds of orgasms that Tootsie was programmed for...or was that earlier? Anyways, Grace..."

"Different kinds of orgasms?"

"Yeah. Tootsie has three modes. You didn't know that?"

"I never read the manual," Bill said.

"So Grace wanted to see the 'Japanese' orgasm. She sat in front of Tootsie and worked the vibrator, and when she orgasmed, Tootsie shot lubricating fluid all over Grace's face and chest."

"Wow! I'm sorry I missed that." He was smiling broadly.

"Then Grace brought Tootsie upstairs for a shower. And that's when you called."

"Did that turn you on?"

I took a deep breath. "Yeah, it did."

"Show me how turned on you are."

I spread my legs a bit, just touching my feet to the floor. I ran my hand through my pubic hair, dipping down into my vulva. The scent of my sex permeated the air as I spread my lips open. My fingers glided slowly, making little sounds. "Can you hear that?"

"Yeah, I can hear it."

"I'm sopping wet." I slicked my fingers around some more and then dipped them down into my vagina. Bill started stroking in earnest as I watched, the fingers of his right hand wrapped lightly around his cock. It was starting to get a little darker in color.

"Are you getting really hard?"

"Yeah. Not all the way yet, but I'm getting there." His voice was heavy, thick.

I took one of my breasts in my other hand and squeezed it for him, making my nipple pop out a little, between my thumb and forefinger. "Sometimes I wish my breasts were big enough that I could suck on them," I said.

Bill hmm'ed noncommittally.

"Of course, I could just suck on Tootsie's, couldn't I?"

He moaned an assent.

"I could just walk up to her," I said, thrusting slowly with my fingers. "And I could say, 'Tootsie, take off your shirt, please,' and she'd take it off." I swallowed lightly and took a deep breath.

"I could say, 'Tootsie, hold up your breasts, please,' and she'd hold them up for me. She'd hold up those huge, perfect breasts for me, and I'd lean over just a little so I could suck on those big, perfect nipples."

Bill groaned louder. He was pulling hard on his cock now. I watched him masturbating, fiercely trying to match his strokes with my own.

"Then, when...ah...when I have her good and hot, I could take off...no...I could say, 'Tootsie, take off my shirt, please,' and she'd pull my shirt off over my head...and...and then...and then...oh...I could say, 'Tootsie, suck on my nipple, please' and...mmm..she'd bend over and start sucking on my nipple...and...while she's bent over...I could squeeze her big...her great big beautiful boobies...I could squeeze them in my hands...and...oohh!" An orgasm crashed over me like I hadn't felt for months. My eyes closed but I could hear Bill moaning as he let himself go as well.

When I looked up, his semen dribbled in thick ropes up his chest, under his chin, and up onto his face. He must have had a very intense orgasm, as well.

As the fog of orgasm faded I couldn't help but laugh. Bill started wiping the thick goo out of his eyes and started laughing too. "I guess this is my signal to take a shower."

"Can I watch?"

"Hm, no, honey, I don't think it's a good idea...this is a work laptop, and I don't think it's waterproof. The steam might damage it." He got up and walked out of the camera's line of sight.

"Awww."

"Tell you what, I'll get a remote cam today and you can watch me shower tomorrow." I heard the sound of water running.

"I can't wait."

He came back into view, closer, wiping off the worst of the 'spill' with a wet washcloth. "I love you, darling...I'll see you tomorrow morning."

"I love you too."

Bill cut the connection. I had a bit of cleaning up to do, too. My 'lubricating fluid' was running down my thigh. I got a washcloth and cleaned off the stool, and then wiped myself off a bit as well.

Suddenly I was struck by all the things I said while I was masturbating for Bill. The alarmed voice of my conscience was still there, but instead of feeling shocked, I was excited and aroused. I finally knew what I wanted.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Bill

I closed the connection and shut down the laptop.

Wow. I hadn't shot a load like that in months.

I climbed into the shower and started washing off the spooge. I didn't know if I there was any spunk in my hair, but I gave myself a good shampooing anyways.

Wow. Anne was hot for Tootsie. I was hoping something like that would happen, but this was beyond my proverbial wildest dreams. My imagination swam with all kinds of images, things that Anne might do with Tootsie. My dick started to get hard again, but I ignored it. I wanted to save up my energy for tomorrow morning's session, and I felt a little funny jacking off after I told Anne she couldn't watch me shower.

I wanted to buy the camera. I wanted it now.

When I got out of the shower, I went to the

phone and called the front desk. I asked if there were any electronics stores nearby that would be open this early. I was informed that there was, in fact, such a store, a short drive away. I asked them to get me a taxi. By the time I was dressed and down to the front desk, it was there.

The taxi took me to a brightly lit store, stacked to the ceiling with multicolored boxes, labeled in Japanese. I tried to browse a bit, but it turned out to be hopeless. I went up to the counter, and between lots of gestures, some high school English on the clerk's part, and my Japanese-English dictionary, I managed to get my point across. If the picture on the box was to be believed, this camera was made to be brought into the shower. I considered getting the wireless one, but I decided that under the circumstances, I'd rather just have a nice, long cable. Who knows where that signal might go?

He bagged my purchase and I went back to the hotel. I wanted to go back into the shower, but it seemed a little odd to get in when I was still quite clean. It seemed less honest somehow.

I saw no reason to bring my laptop in to the office. They would only impound it at the lobby, so I packed it up and put it in the dresser, along with the cam. I doubted there was any danger of it being stolen.

At the government building, I was given a

badge at the front desk, and went through security in a matter of minutes. I got up to my workstation in the elections office, sat down and found that my chair was low, pushed down all the way. When I put my hand on the lever to raise it up, I found that a small piece of plastic was stuck to the underside of the lever. I checked to make sure that I wasn't being watched, and pulled it off. It was a little magnet, like a refrigerator magnet, with a memory mini-card taped to it. It was one of the new high-speed, high-capacity fiber-optic models.

I plugged it into the port on my keyboard, and a little icon popped up on the desktop. It was a fairly ordinary text-chat program.

Text, I thought. How quaint.

The list of contacts had several names already in it. Before it was even done loading, a little chat window in a tiny six-point font popped up in the corner.

Hanne: William! Good to see you. Welcome to the team!

Was that a Japanese name? The rest of the names were definitely Japanese. A few people jumped into the chat right away, and they quickly introduced themselves.

The team leaders were 'Hanne,' who was in charge of the AI hardware we were going to use, 'Yuriko,' who was responsible for the elections computers we'd be interfacing with, and 'Ichiro,'

whose team would be running interference with security to make sure we weren't discovered by Rabazugai or any of his cronies. His efforts made my trip through security so much easier that morning.

William: Is Miss Tanaka going to join us?

Ichiro: She's almost always busy with Rabazugai. She reports to me, so if you need to send her a message or anything, just let me know.

William: Oh, of course. Silly of me to even ask.

Ichiro: It is nothing.

William: So how is this going to work?

Hanne: Unfortunately, it's going to be a lot of work for you. While you're helping us build the real system, you've got to be pretending to make whatever progress you can with Rabazugai's crippled system.

William: Anything that will get this project done, so I can go home.

Hanne: Oh? Is Tokyo so terrible?

William: No, but I want to get back home to my wife.

Yuriko: We shall endeavor to get you back into her arms as soon as possible.

Compared to the day before, that day was a piece of cake. I was in the office for at least fourteen hours with little in the way of breaks, but we got more done that day than John had in the last two weeks. We straightened out the

requirements, set out assignments and research projects, and lit ourselves a light at the end of the tunnel.

By the time I was ready to pack up, I was feeling tired, but I a strong sense of accomplishment. At this rate, I would be done in less than six weeks. I decided to treat myself to a nice dinner. Well...actually, I decided that the company was going to treat me to a nice dinner.

At the front desk of the hotel I asked about restaurants, and they recommended a top-rated French restaurant just a few blocks away. I wasn't surprised. Here in the government district there'd be a lot of expense accounts, and a lot of people looking to impress each other. They called the restaurant for me, and I was pleased to find that I could get a reservation for eight o'clock.

In the meantime I went up to my room to record a message for Anne. I planned to use the waterproof cam in the morning when I called for our session, but I decided to make a video recording. The little page of printed instructions were all in Japanese, but I didn't need to bother. When I plugged the cam in it read the default language from the laptop and switched to an English interface.

I brought the cam into the bathroom and looked around for a good place to set it up. I eventually settled for the top of the toilet tank, aimed at an

angle, towards the middle of the tub, high enough to catch me from about the knees up. I set it down and ran the cord out to the bedroom. I made sure it was pointed in the right direction, set it to start recording and went into the bathroom.

The video wasn't hard to make. I just hit my marks, remembered my lines, and didn't trip over the furniture.

After the shower, I felt invigorated. Imagining Anne watching it gave me a second wind. After a little editing, I sent the movie off to Anne and wiped it from my hard drive. It would be quite embarrassing to have it show up on a security scan when I got back to headquarters.

I put on my good suit and headed out.

The Maitre d' sat me in the back near the kitchen, but I expected that. There are still some folks in Japan who have a thing about foreigners like me. I didn't make a fuss. Getting angry about that kind of stuff never does any good. I just chalked it up and made a note not to come back. I enjoyed a fabulous meal. The wine was nice. I suppose that a connoisseur would say that my palate wasn't sophisticated enough, but to me beer goes much better with steak, whether you call it 'chateaubriand' or 't-bone.'

The waiter walked up just as I was swallowing the last bite of the red potatoes. "Dessert, m'sieur?"

"No, I'm..."

I happened to glance past the waiter. The tall robot from the club, the one I fucked, it was sitting down at a table just ten feet away from me, opposite a Japanese guy in a bright blue suit. What the hell? Did people rent them out of the club, or what?

"I changed my mind." I reached out and took the dessert menu from his hand. He gave a pinched little smile and went off to wherever waiters go when they're not serving you.

I looked over at the robot. It caught my eye, briefly. Was that a hint of recognition? No, couldn't be, why would there be? I'm sure those robots get reformat on a regular basis.

I smacked myself in the forehead.

There would be dozens of that model robot running around in Tokyo. Did I think I fucked the only one? There I was, thinking with the little head again.

I ordered a *mousse au chocolat*. I tried to be surreptitious about watching the tall blonde robot. I don't know why, I shouldn't have bothered, but I wanted to know what it was doing there.

This one was very, very well programmed. It was having an animated discussion with the man across the table, in some European language that I didn't recognize. Tootsie certainly couldn't have held up a conversation like that. Maybe it was

some kind of escort-bot, programmed for witty small talk and polite dinner conversation, so that a lonely fellow could have an illusion of companionship? It didn't seem out of the question. Our big mainframe AI's were capable of a wide range of conversation; it certainly would be possible to program a robot for simple dinner conversation if you used top-of-the-line components.

That bothered me. That didn't make any sense. The components to build that kind of a compact AI brain would cost a hundred thousand dollars or more. Who would spend that kind of money just to build a dinner companion? I puzzled over it while I took little spoonfuls of the mousse.

When I came to the end of the mousse, I came to the end of my curiosity. The night started to weigh on me and I decided that I wasn't going to learn anything by just sitting there. I paid with the company credit card. The satisfaction that Cho—well, Cho's budget anyway—would be paying for dinner dispelled some of the cloud of confusion that the blonde robot conjured up.

I got back to the hotel around nine-thirty—after five AM by my internal clock, and the clock back home. I sent a short email to Anne, telling her that I'd be available at six AM my time. I set an alarm on my laptop, got undressed and climbed into bed.

I dreamed about the blonde robot again.

I was back at the restaurant. Instead of sitting with the man in the blue suit, the robot was sitting with me. It was laughing and chatting with me, but I couldn't understand it. I smiled and nodded when I thought it was the right time, and tried to pretend I knew what it was talking about. Then the waiter came and took our dessert plates, and it said, in English, "Okay, now, time to reformat." It pulled a big degausser from under the table and aimed it at my head.

"No, wait, I don't want to forget," I wanted to say.

"Sorry," it said, "Club policy." There was a flash...

I woke up with a pounding headache. I shuddered and clutched the bedclothes around me. Deep breaths helped me calm down.

The clock said that it was a little after two AM. It would be eight back home. I debated calling Anne. The jolt from the dream passed quickly, so I lay back down. The rest of the night passed dreamlessly.

When I woke up, my head felt fine. I remembered the dream, though, and I was still a little shaken. I got myself a glass of water.

There was a video email from Anne on the computer. I opened it without hesitation. She was in the studio, sitting on her guitar stool. She was wearing a thin white silk camisole top, and a blue skirt.

"Hi, Bill. I got your email. Mmmmm..." She closed her eyes and reached up under her top with

both hands and squeezed her breasts. "Call me as soon as you get up." The video cut off.

My uneasiness vanished without a trace.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Anne

There was a great deal of work to do, to prepare for the video call from Bill. With less than twenty-four hours, I got right to it. I wanted to put on a big performance.

First, I wanted to transform the studio into a stage where I could put on a performance, and for that I'd need Tootsie's help. That would mean extending her orientation map into the studio.

I was ready to let her in.

I opened the door. Tootsie was right outside, dressed and waiting for me. Grace had been as good as her word. "Tootsie, I want you to extend your orientation map through this door, into the studio. Then vacuum the studio floor and sofa. When you are done, go on to your scheduled cleaning tasks in the rest of the house, please."

"Yes, mistress Anne." She moved up to the door and began her scan of the room.

While she got started on her tasks, I got dressed and went shopping. I was going to need some things. The one good thing about Bill's overtime-heavy schedule was that there was some spare money in our account. I knew Bill wouldn't mind, especially since I would be spending the money for his benefit as well as mine.

My first stop was a theatrical supply house. I rented some lights, cables, and a power box that would hook up to an ordinary outlet. In addition, I picked up a dead black curtain to hang as a backdrop, and poles for hanging everything. I wasn't an electrician by any stretch, but I been banging around in the show business culture long enough to have picked up a few things, and none of this was more than I could handle.

Next, I needed to find just the right outfit. I owned some sexy clothes, but none of them were what I wanted.

I chose a high-end lingerie boutique. I didn't ordinarily shop there, but I decided that if I was going to do it, I was going to do it right.

I poked around a bit, and then approached one of the saleswomen. She was about thirty-five, dressed in a businesslike skirt, blouse, and jacket. She looked a little out of place, surrounded by all the lace and ribbon. Her figure was quite impressive, very curvy without seeming overweight. I suppose with a chest like that, you'd

learn a lot about bras.

She spotted me and gave me a little smile. "Hello, my name is Janet. Are you finding everything you're looking for?"

"No, I'm a little lost. I'm going to be putting on a show for my husband, a strip show. Can you suggest something that would work?"

"Ah, you want our dancewear section. Right over here. Do you have anything in particular in mind?" She led me towards a set of racks in a back corner.

"Well, I want something that has lots of pieces to take off. A dance of the seven veils kind of thing."

"You mean something that starts off looking fairly normal, but gradually gets more revealing as pieces come off?"

"Yes, exactly."

"I have just the thing. Street clothes won't work well in a striptease, nor will most sleepwear. Most of them take too long to take off, especially pants and skirts. You don't want anything with a zipper, buttons, hooks, or complicated ties." She produced a skirt and blouse, made of a red, silky, flowing fabric. There were sequins here and there, enough to make a little splash but nothing gaudy. "Why don't you try these on?"

I took them into the changing room and stripped out of my jeans and t-shirt. My ordinary

cotton underwear seemed odd underneath these sexy drapes, but I knew they'd be replaced soon.

The skirt was a fairly ordinary wrap skirt, with silk ribbons to tie it together. The blouse was made with a similar arrangement, with two triangular pieces of fabric crossing over to tie at the waist. I could see that it would be easy to take off. When I came out of the dressing room Janet was waiting for me.

She looked me over appraisingly. "Hm, I don't think you've got that blouse wrapped right. May I show you how to do it?"

I admitted that it did feel a little funny. She gestured for me to return to the changing room, and followed me to the curtain-draped doorway. She undid the ribbons at my waist, and flipped the fabric around. "Here, it goes right over left, so you tie this one here, and this one here. That way the ribbons don't flip over the hem on the inside. There." The garment hung much better after her adjustment, but I felt a little uncomfortable with her hands so close to my body. I felt a little erotic tingle from it. I looked into her eyes. No, she was being professional. Wasn't she?

"Now you're going to need some underthings. How about tap pants, camisole, bra and g-string, all in a matched set?"

"Uhm, how much is this all going to cost?"

"Well, the outfit you have on is two ninety-

nine, and the underwear set I want to show you is one fifty-nine."

"Woo. Uh..."

"Too much? I'm sure we can find something that'll fit your budget."

"No, no, this is important to me. Show me the lacy underthings." I didn't expect to blow half my budget here, but I could adjust.

"Alright, stay here, strip down to your panties, and I'll bring some things in to you."

I wasn't used to shopping like this, with a salesperson bringing me things, rather than browsing the racks and trying to get a bored clerk to notice me when I need help. I decided the special attention was one of the things I was buying with all that money. I stripped back down to my underwear.

Janet returned with several small scraps of red fabric draped over her arm. As she handed the g-string to me, she asked, "So when are you planning to put on this show for your husband?"

"Tomorrow, when he wakes up. He's in Tokyo, so that'll be sometime after noon tomorrow."

She nodded. I started putting on the lingerie. The bra didn't fit exactly right, but then, when do they? Janet noticed immediately. She pursed her lips, tugged at the straps a little. That same erotic tingle came from her touch. "How does that feel?"

"A little too loose."

"Right. Well, you've got two options. We can get a smaller bra from the same designer, but I recommend that we put a little padding in, and enhance your cleavage."

"Won't that be pretty obvious?"

"Trust me. A smaller bra would flatten you, not flatter you."

I let her convince me to put in the pads. Until that time, I hadn't worn anything like that before.

I put on the bra. I looked in the mirror. I owned a nice set of breasts, but that bra gave me *boobies*.

"He's going to love them," said Janet.

I shook them a little. The loose camisole fluttered around, and my 'new' boobies bounced and jiggled. I caught Janet watching me in the mirror. She smiled. Was that professional friendliness, or appreciation?

"So is there anything else you need?"

"No, this is exactly right."

As we walked over to the register to ring it up, she asked, "Have you done erotic dance before?"

"What? Uh, no."

"I didn't think so. I used to dance in clubs when I was younger. I could give you a few pointers..." she trailed off with a slight question in her voice.

"Oh, I don't have a lot of money left." Where was she going with this? Was she trying to seduce me?

"Don't worry about the money, honey. More

women should learn this kind of thing. No charge. If you decide you like it, you can sign up for the class I teach at the fitness club across the highway."

Ah, so this was a 'free trial offer' for her class. That made more sense. "Sure, I'd appreciate it."

"Can you meet me here at six? That's when my shift is up. I'll take you over to my loft; I've got some space where we can have some privacy."

"Okay." A question occurred to me. "I'm going to get my hair done. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Oh, absolutely! But what you get will depend on what kind of music you want to play. We can talk about it tonight, and then you can get your hair done tomorrow morning."

I felt a little odd, needing advice on these things, but folk music is a long way from the strip club. I thanked Janet and went out to finish my shopping.

While I was getting a manicure, I thought about music. What would I want to strip to? Something slow and romantic, something important and inspiring to me, but also something Bill would like. I went over my music collection in my head. I picked out an older song, *Nuits de Rêve*, from a Canadian group that put out their last album when I was just a kid.

A half a smile crossed my face. That was the

band Dave started, way back when.

I mused a moment, what he would think, if he knew I was going to use the song to strip for my husband, not that I had any intention of telling him.

After the manicure, I went shoe shopping. It wasn't until I hit the third store that I found someone who understood what I was looking for, and even then I had to try on two dozen shoes before I found something I liked. I settled on a pair of black strappy spiked heels. They weren't exactly comfortable, but I knew I wouldn't be wearing them long. They were expensive, more expensive than any other pair of shoes I had ever bought, but I knew that they would be worth it. They made my legs look fantastic.

At six, I met Janet at the store. She smiled when she saw me, a sincere smile rather than a professional one. "Anne!"

"I don't remember telling you my name." A little knot named 'Jonathan Campbell' appeared in my stomach.

"Credit card."

"Oh, of course. I keep forgetting what kind of information is available to people." The tension slipped away again.

"Have you eaten?"

"No. I thought I would wait and grab a bite to eat with you somewhere. My treat. You know, in

exchange for teaching me."

"Thank you, that's very considerate, but totally unnecessary. I'll fix us something quick at my place. Where's your car?"

"I took the monorail."

Her sporty little car was parked nearby. We took it from the store to her place. It was a nice townhouse in a trendy neighborhood. As we walked in, I said something about how much it must have cost.

"Stripping pays pretty good, and I saved my pennies. Have a seat; I'll get some food ready."

Her living room was large, taking up the whole floor above the garage, except for a small kitchenette along the back wall. There was a sofa, upholstered in crushed velvet, and a long coffee table in the middle. It faced towards a space of polished wooden floor in front of the heavily draped windows. It was elevated about a foot from the living room floor, and featured a floor-to-ceiling pole on one side. In the corner, a bentwood chair and an upholstered ottoman sat waiting.

"It looks like you're still set up for giving shows," I said.

"For a select clientele." I could hear the smile in her voice. "Mostly, I dance for myself these days, to tell you the truth. To stay in shape and to keep my skills sharp for teaching."

The sound and smell of grilling chicken came

gently to me from the kitchen.

I sat down on the sofa. There was a fashion magazine, well thumbed, on the coffee table, and a laptop on the shelf underneath. I picked up the magazine and leafed through it idly. High fashion wasn't something that caught much of my interest. I heard chopping and other such kitchen sounds.

Janet came over and put a bowl in front of me, full of salad and grilled chicken. It smelled wonderful. A glass of wine followed.

As she sat down next to me with her own food, I noticed that she taken off her suit jacket and neckerchief, and unbuttoned the top two buttons of her blouse. A bit of cleavage was visible.

"So," she said between bites, "Have you given any thought to the music you want?"

"*Nuits de Rêve*, by Moxy Fruvous."

"Mmm, I like the title. 'Night of Dreams.' What kind of music is it?"

"It's a slow piece. It's romantic, kinda jazzy."

"What else?"

"Uh..."

"You're probably going to need at least two songs...more like three. And that's if you don't plan on having music for anything that comes after."

"Mmm. I hadn't thought of that."

"I can suggest a few things in the same vein, but that's going to come later. You've got fairly

long hair, so when you get your hair done, you're going to want to get a loose curl, on hoops rather than rods. It'll move around nicely with the movements I'm going to show you."

I nodded. "You're being very kind."

She shrugged. "I like you. You've got the spark. Are you a performer?"

"Musician," I said. "And singer. I play guitar and harp. I had my first big gig the day before yesterday. I opened for Dave Matheson at the Ten-Fifty club."

She smiled. "Congratulations! I don't know who Dave Matheson is, but if he's playing the Ten-Fifty he must have some kind of name. Okay, so I don't need to tell you about projecting personality and pushing forward even if you feel silly. You've already got that, I can tell."

As we finished our salads, and a couple glasses of wine, we talked about music, and dance, and what it was like to be a performer. When the meal was finished and the dishes cleared away, she opened up her laptop, logged in, and opened up her music collection. We downloaded a copy of *Nuits de Rêve*. She picked a few more titles and queued them up for her music player. "Listen to these, I'll be right back." She quickly climbed the stairs.

The music wasn't the sort I would ordinarily listen to, but it wasn't bad, either.

"Alright, time to get changed. Put on your costume." She brought a small bundle and set it on the coffee table, and then started unbuttoning her blouse. "Come on! It's a bit late to be getting shy now."

I blinked and started getting undressed, a little dazed.

Janet's body was amazing. She did, indeed, have a beautiful pair of breasts. They weren't perky teenager breasts, of course, but that didn't reduce my appreciation at all. She noticed me looking at her and gave a little smile, again. My suspicions about her intentions were rekindled.

The costume she put on was a lot like mine—g-string, bra, tap pants, camisole, skirt and blouse, only hers were in black, rather than red. The clasps and ties were even in the same places.

"Since you're going to be doing the performance by video, we'll use the stage." She touched a control on the side of the window, and drew back the drapes to reveal a floor-length mirror. I wondered if anyone outside would be able to see what we were doing.

She saw the note of anxiety in my face. "Don't worry. It's totally opaque from the outside. The neighbors certainly would have said something by now if it weren't!"

We faced the mirror, side by side, and she showed me a routine that would get me

undressed in about eight minutes. After we gone through it move by move, we got dressed again, and went through it, slowly, without her verbal directions, and then a third time in time with the music. She corrected me when I faltered and encouraged me when I put my all into it and 'sold' it.

We got dressed again, a fourth time, and then she turned me around. She sat on the couch and said, "Alright, now do it alone."

"For you?"

"Yes."

My heart thudded to life in my chest. The tingle that been feeling since I arrived became a full scale buzz. I wanted to tremble, but I suppressed it, using the stage fright tricks I learned in college.

I watched Janet's face as I did the routine. It was there—undisguised—she wanted me. I was arousing her. I was turning her on. And her arousal was turning me on. I held onto the feeling, and put it into the dance.

Janet crossed her legs. She put one hand on her thigh, and her lips parted a bit. She was breathing deeper. Her breasts rose and fell visibly. When I pulled off the g-string, it felt heavier, soaked with my fluids.

By the time I finished, I was ready to collapse. Janet clapped lightly and said, "Brava, brava." She rose from the sofa and walked over to me. "Oh,

Anne...your husband is a lucky man. I hope he knows how lucky he is."

I smiled. I could feel a flush coming over my face and chest. I knew she could see it, and knowing it made me even more excited.

"You're a fast learner. You're adaptable and flexible, and comfortable in your body." She put her hand on my shoulder.

"Janet, you're coming on to me, aren't you?"

"You're also perceptive." She moved a little closer. I could smell her breath—wine and peppermint. I felt dizzy. I drank only two glasses of wine, and exercised more than enough to burn it off, but I felt intoxicated. I wanted to reach out, pull her to me, kiss her.

But it was wrong. Married. Faithful. *'Til death do us part.*

Monogamous.

"Janet, I—I can't. I'm straight. I'm married."

"He won't mind. You can tell him about it tomorrow. He'll get turned on and love you for telling him."

I felt my resolve slipping away. Bill's voice came to me. "...you can tell me about your exploits afterwards. You know how I love it when you tell me stories."

"I've—never..."

She shushed me with a gentle finger to my lips. "That's so cliché," she whispered. "Everyone has a

first time. Now let's give you a story worth telling." She leaned in and kissed me. It was a gentle, light kiss, a touch on the lips. I felt her breasts, still covered in silk, push against mine. She put her arms around me.

I trembled.

"Would you like to sit down?"

I nodded. She led me to the sofa and sat me down towards the end. The slow, romantic music I had been stripping to was still playing on her laptop. She sat down next to me, sideways, one knee on the sofa and the other foot on the floor. She put her hand on the inside of my thigh, near my knee, and the other behind my neck. She pulled me into a kiss that rapidly became a passionate soul-kiss. I put my hands on her shoulders, unsure whether to push her away or hold her close.

The voice was still there, deep inside, telling me this was wrong, that I wasn't a lesbian, that I loved my husband and I didn't really *want* this.

But I did. I wanted it. The voice got fainter.

I slid my hands down, inside the loose fabric of her blouse, under the thin straps of her stretchy bra. I cupped her generous breasts and squeezed them lightly. She broke off the kiss and smiled at me, her eyes full of desire. She dipped her head and sucked my nipple into her mouth. My back arched, and I moaned softly as my head fell back

against the back of the couch.

Janet twisted and insinuated her hips between my legs, kneeling on the ground. She continued sucking on my nipples, first one and then the other, while I massaged her breasts with my hands. My eyes were closed, but I could feel her slip off her blouse, and then her bra. Her breasts slipped out of my hands as she moved further down, towards my vulva.

She put her fingers in my pubic hair. "You don't trim," she said, quietly. "That's so unusual these days." She pulled my labia apart, and I could feel her breath on my inner lips. I moaned in frustration and looked down. She was looking at my vulva. It felt like she was looking into my soul.

"Do it," I said. "I need it."

She smiled and looked up at me. "Not yet," she smiled. "You're not far enough along."

I whimpered.

I tried to grab her head, to push it into my crotch, but she caught my wrists and held them down.

"You're not ready yet."

She stood up and put one knee alongside me again, with her other leg down between my legs. She put my hands back on her breasts, and looked into my eyes. I couldn't look away. She held my shoulders, and started grinding her knee and thigh into my pussy. I moaned again, higher in

pitch, matching my rising arousal. I could feel my juices coating her leg, spreading to my thighs.

"Please," I said, between gasps, "I—I'm dying."

"You're not dying," she said. "You're living." She pulled my hand from her breast, leaned forward, and offered the erect nipple to my lips. I sucked greedily, still looking up into her eyes. I put my free hand down to her groin.

Her pubic hair was trimmed to a thin, short triangle pointing at her cleft. The shape guided my fingers in. I felt her lips open and close as she rose and fell. I felt the muscles in her thighs work. With trembling fingers I rubbed her lips the way I wanted her to rub mine. I dipped my fingers into her vagina. She was wet, though not nearly as wet as I was.

"Taste your fingers," she said. "Taste me." I brought my fingers to my lips. The pungent tang of sweat and sex hit me like a drug. My head fell back to the sofa again and I closed my eyes in ecstasy. Janet slid her hands down. She tweaked my nipples. The jolt was painful enough to make me cry out but the charge ran down to my pussy and hung there.

She knelt down again and opened me up with her fingers. "Ahh," she said, drawing a deep breath through her nose. "Perfect." She dipped down and took a long swipe with her tongue, ending with the tip of her tongue quivering on the

tip of my stiffening nub.

I let all the air out of my lungs in a cry that tightened my stomach muscles and pulled me up from the back of the sofa. Janet locked her lips around my button and sucked. My breath came back to me in short gasps. I couldn't get enough air. Every time I drew a breath, a moan forced it back out. Stars burst in my clamped-shut eyes, and still she sucked.

Janet's fingers thrust into my vagina. She stroked and prodded while her tongue danced between my labia. She twisted and slid her fingers deeper and moved slowly towards her goal. As my passion reached its peak she found it. She slid her fingertip over the secret spot just behind the bone, and pushed.

I exploded. My body convulsed. My back arched, forcing the last of the air from my lungs in a low groan. Janet put her hands on my legs, holding them apart, and kept at it. I finally managed to fill my lungs and I screamed, shuddering, twitching.

She backed off for a moment, drawing one of my inner lips into her mouth. I started to speak, but she interrupted me, running her tongue around my clit. Another wave crashed over me, and I gripped the upholstery with my hands. My words came out as a long, inarticulate grunt. Janet rode the wave, keeping her mouth on my pussy

and her hands on my thighs as I thrashed in her grip.

Finally, I pushed her head away, practically crying from over-stimulation. I drew my legs up, curling to the side, protecting myself from further ecstasy.

After I recovered, Janet invited me to reciprocate. I explored her body with my fingers and tongue, learned the contours of her pussy in intimate detail, and brought her to a shuddering climax.

We shared some more wine, sitting naked on the floor, content to simply bask in each other's presence and the satisfaction of our lovemaking.

"Spend the night," she said. "Share my bed." I demurred. It was a boundary I did not want to cross. She understood.

She gave me her email address and the URL for her dancing class. I said I would sign up. I gave her my email address and the URL for my music schedule. She said she would come.

She drove me to the monorail station. I barely remember the ride home. I don't remember getting into bed, or falling into dreamless sleep.

In the morning, I found Bill's video in my email. He was in his shower in the hotel room already half-erect. The idea of sending me this video was clearly exciting him.

"Hi, Anne. I wanted to help get you started,

and show you how much I'm looking forward to our call."

He turned on the water and got under the warm, steamy spray. He quickly shampooed his hair, and then started lathering up his body with a bottle of liquid soap. His hands ran sensuously over his body, finally finding his cock.

He jacked himself off with both hands. "Anne," he said, "I love you. I wish I were there with you. I wish you were here with me." His breaths started coming shorter, and his face twisted into the pre-orgasmic grimace I had seen so many times before. When he shot his load into the shower spray, he smiled at me and blew me a kiss. My hand went to my cheek.

I immediately sat down and recorded a response for him. I wanted him to be as horny as I was.

The restless anticipation made sitting for the hairdresser nearly unbearable. I got home in time for the delivery of the lights and spent the rest of the morning with Tootsie, getting the lights and curtain set up. She shot me little glances the whole time, but I was focused on our job and didn't send her the signals that would have her acting seductively.

While I ate lunch, I briefed Tootsie on what would be happening later that day. The manual said that telling her what to expect would help her

react to events the way I wanted her to, and I didn't want any surprises. I got her dressed in the French maid uniform she arrived in, and set her outside the door to the studio.

I put on my new outfit, and sat on the couch.

I felt like the wait would kill me.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Bill

I called Anne as soon as I could. There was a little digital interference in the line, but it cleared up quickly. Anne was wearing a beautiful red blouse and skirt, standing in front of the studio sofa. There was some kind of black backdrop behind it, making the scene look like a stage rather than just another room in our house.

She smiled at me. "Hi, Bill. I hope you like what I've prepared for you today. Are you ready?" Long, loose curls framed her face.

"Wait." I stripped off my clothes and sat on the edge of the bed, watching the laptop screen on the dresser. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other. She was excited. I could feel my heart beat a little faster. "Alright — go ahead."

She reached out of the field of view, and some music started. I didn't recognize it but in spite of the French lyrics, I liked it. Anne started swaying

to the music, looking into the camera, looking at me. She waved her arms, in time with the music, stepping side to side. She looked more graceful than I ever seen her. When she turned, her hands went to her waist, and with a pull, she opened up her blouse, facing away from me.

She shook her ass at me for a bit, and then turned back, revealing a short, loose, lacy underthing over her breasts that left her belly bare. She tossed the blouse off to the side. She shimmied her torso and the lace bobbed and danced with her breasts. I smiled and clapped. I wasn't really getting turned on yet, but I appreciated the effort.

She smiled and looked away for a moment, clearly a little embarrassed, but recovered and got back into the spirit of her dance. The next thing she took off was the skirt. She spun one way, then the other, and suddenly it was off. Underneath, she wore a pair of loose, lacy red shorts.

The dance changed, emphasizing her legs more than her arms, and showing off the heels she put on for the show. She looked really good. Playing along, I gave her a wolf-whistle.

The next item to go was the lacy top. Underneath, she on a sheer red bra made out of triangles of lacy fabric and thin strings. I could see the shape of her nipples through them when she turned sideways. I felt my dick starting to get

hard, but in order to prolong the show, I kept my hands off.

Under the lacy shorts, Anne wore a g-string, only just big enough to cover her pubic hair. She turned and shook her nearly naked ass at me again, and then reached for the clasp of her bra. My dick stretched and grew. The song ended, and another one came on. She played with the bra, pulling at the clasp, stretching it this way and that, giving me little glimpses of her nipples. By the time she finally opened the clasp and took it off, my cock was good and hard.

She played with the g-string for a long time...too long, I think, but she was really into the dance by then and I wasn't going to stop her. She was obviously having a lot of fun. She ended the dance sprawled on the couch, one leg on the floor and one up on top, her back arched and one hand in an artful sweep above her head.

I laughed and clapped and hooted.

"You liked that, did you?" she asked, as she turned the music down a little.

"Yeah, it was great. I can't believe you put all this together in just one day."

"Well, I got a little help. Tootsie helped me set up the lights and everything, of course, and, well...that brings me to the next stage of my little performance. While I was out shopping for this outfit, I met Janet. She used to be a stripper, and

she offered to teach me a dance."

"What does she look like?"

"She's about thirty years old, with short brown hair, a very pretty smile, and a *big* pair of breasts." She smiled lustily at me. I must have made quite a face when my jaw dropped open, because Anne giggled merrily at me. She composed herself quickly, however, and went on.

"So after I finished shopping, I went over to her place, and she gave me about two hours worth of lessons, basically teaching me how to do the dance I just did for you. I think we stripped together three times, and then I did the whole dance once, with her as my audience."

"I'll bet that was really hot."

"Well, she certainly liked it. After the dance was over, she started to come on to me."

"No!" I couldn't believe my luck.

"Truth. She made a big pass at me."

"What did you do?"

"Well, I remembered what you said—that I could do what I liked, as long as I told you about it afterwards..."

"Yeah? What happened? Tell me!"

"Well, you know, these things are hard to describe in person. I think I'll show you instead. Tootsie, come here please." Anne sat up, sitting towards the middle of the sofa.

Tootsie walked into the picture. Instead of the

baggy sweats that Anne been dressing it in, the robot was wearing the sexy French maid outfit.

"Now I'm going to be Janet, and our toy-girl here is going to be me. First, let's get the clothes situation corrected. "Tootsie, take off your clothes." Anne stood up, and Tootsie obeyed.

Anne put her hand on Tootsie's shoulder, in a friendly, familiar way, and leaned forwards, slowly, bringing her lips towards Tootsie's. Tootsie smiled faintly and tilted her head slightly to receive the kiss.

Anne said, "Your husband is a very lucky man. Let's give you a story worth telling him." Gently, she kissed Tootsie full on the lips. Tootsie slowly put her arms up to join Anne in a mild embrace.

"Tootsie, sit down please." Tootsie sat down, near the end of the couch, and Anne sat down next to her. They resumed their embrace there, with Anne's hand on Tootsie's thigh. They kissed deeply. When Anne slowly moved down to kiss Tootsie's hardening nipple, and suck it into her mouth, I gasped.

The scene was starting to get to me. My wife was having sex with my—no—with *her* robot. I swallowed.

Anne gently pushed Tootsie's legs apart, and moved her body down between them. She put Tootsie's hands on her own breasts, and then started licking and sucking Tootsie's breasts.

Tootsie's face took on a familiar imitation of arousal. Her eyes closed a little, and her mouth opened. Her breathing quickened.

Anne then knelt down between Tootsie's legs, in a classic cunnilingus pose...and then stood up again.

"She got right down in there and didn't do anything," said Anne. "She said I wasn't ready yet!"

I blinked, coughed a bit, and tried to stammer something. I put one hand on my cock and gripped it, hard.

Anne smiled. "Well, it turns out I wasn't..." She then took up a strange pose, straddling Tootsie's leg, with one knee up on the couch and the other rubbing Tootsie's pussy. She put one nipple in Tootsie's mouth, and then started rubbing her knee up and down against Tootsie's pussy. I could see a bit of Tootsie's face around the side of Anne's body, and she was clearly moving into the next stage of arousal.

Tootsie's head lolled back against the couch, and started rolling side to side. Anne moved back down towards Tootsie's pussy, pausing long enough to give Tootsie's nipples a hard-looking pinch. She looked over her shoulder at me, smiling devilishly.

The whole experience was starting to overwhelm me. My cock was hard as a rock. There

was my wife, about to dive into my...a...her robot's pussy...I felt lightheaded. I started stroking my cock.

She shoved her face into Tootsie's crotch and started – well, I'm not sure exactly what, I couldn't see very well, but Tootsie started convulsing, with her hands on the back of Anne's head, groaning through gritted teeth. Then Anne did something with her hand, and Tootsie went berserk, coming as hard as I ever seen it cum. I wondered what Anne had done to make it do that.

I wondered what this 'Janet' person did to make Anne come like that.

After Tootsie's orgasm passed, Anne stood up and faced me, wiping the lube from her mouth with her hand. She started to speak, but I interrupted her.

"This is real?"

"Huh?"

"This is a true story? You're not making this up?"

"Yes, it's the truth." Anne's face took a cast of concern. She must have seen something in my eyes that betrayed my mixed feelings. "Are you alright? Oh, god, Bill..." Her hands went to her face.

I closed my eyes. I groaned. I brought this on myself. I as much as told my wife to go out and have this adventure and tell me about it

afterwards. I didn't think she'd go this far.

"And now—" I groaned. "Now you've had the best sex of your life..."

"No! Bill, it's not that way. I love you, Bill, as much as I ever did."

I didn't know what to think. My cock was still rock-hard, and frankly the thought of my wife with another woman was pretty damn hot. But at the same time, the nagging thought would not go away, that I could never turn Anne on as much as Janet.

Anne put her hands out to me. "Bill—I would never, ever hurt you."

I took a deep breath, and let it out. "I...I have to know..." I paused. I couldn't ask it. But I had to. "Would you..."

"Bill. Stop. You're torturing yourself..."

"Was Janet better than me?" As soon as I asked the question, I regretted it. I knew what the answer would have to be. I smiled, halfway.

"Bill," Anne said, gently, "Janet gave me an earth-shattering orgasm, but if the choice were between Janet and you, there's just no competition. I love you. I don't love Janet."

I swallowed.

"Now if you work on it," she continued, "I'll bet you can make me orgasm even harder than that. I'll teach you."

"I love you, Anne."

Her gaze ran a little lower. "Now unless I miss my guess," she said, "The mood hasn't been totally ruined?"

Treacherous organ.

It was still standing there, proud as ever, waiting for me to get on with business. I chuckled a little. "Well, yeah, I guess. It is pretty hot thinking of you with another woman."

"So, what now?"

"I want to see something new. We can talk about Janet another time when you can teach me properly, but I want to see Tootsie make *you* come. Hey, I have an idea... I'll give Tootsie the orders, instead of you. It'll be my proxy." I sat up straight again.

"Mmm," Anne purred, "I like that idea."

"Tootsie, can you hear me, please?"

"Yes, I can, master Bill."

"Okay, Anne, I want you to lie down on the couch, with your elbows on the arm, over there on the left. Just lie back, and let me—let *us* pleasure you." Anne took a deep breath, and lay down with one leg stretched out on the couch, and the other draped languidly over the side.

"Like this?"

"Perfect."

I didn't know exactly what I was doing. I never used Tootsie this way before, but I had a good idea what she was capable of, and I planned on

making the best use of her strengths. I thought for a minute, looking at Anne, and Tootsie, and figuring out what the best angle would be. I knew that Tootsie's breasts were a big turn-on for Anne.

"Tootsie, kneel on the sofa, facing Anne, please." Tootsie obeyed, giving me a conspiratorial look.

"Tootsie, lean forward, and put your left hand on the arm of the sofa, alongside Anne's head, please." This maneuver put Tootsie's breasts hanging down towards Anne's face. Anne mmmmm'ed appreciatively, and took Tootsie's breasts in her hands, pulling them gently closer. I stroked my cock. The earlier drama was forgotten.

"Tootsie, use your right hand to rub Anne's pussy. Start slowly, please." Tootsie looked down, and maneuvered one hand to Anne's furry cleft, eliciting a soft moan.

"Tootsie, can you feel Anne's clitoris, please?"

"Yes, master Bill."

"Tootsie, use your thumb to rub in a circle around Anne's clit, please."

Anne sighed softly as she brought one of Tootsie's breasts to her lips.

"Tootsie, is Anne's clit getting hard, please?"

"Yes, master Bill."

"Good. Tootsie, fuck Anne with your middle and ring fingers, please."

Anne gasped as Tootsie abruptly shifted her

attentions.

"Tootsie, keep fucking her. Don't stop until I tell you, please." That order was for Anne's benefit. I knew Tootsie wouldn't stop, but I wanted to make it clear to Anne.

"Anne, for next time, I want you to buy a strapon. But for now, just imagine that it's a big, hard cock."

Anne whimpered and Tootsie's nipple fell out of her mouth. Anne smothered her cry between Tootsie's massive breasts.

"Tootsie, keep fucking Anne with your fingers, and rub your breasts against hers, please."

Tootsie moved her tits up and down along Anne's body. Anne's head fell back, and she looked at me, blinking, as tension started to creep into her face. "Bill—oh—ooooooooohhhh..."

"Tootsie, crouch down and suck Anne's nipple, please."

This sent Anne over the edge. She groaned, long and deep, and her legs tensed up and pushed her pussy up into Tootsie's pumping hand. Anne arched her back, and held onto Tootsie's head with both hands.

"Tootsie, stop now, and stand on the floor, please." I fell back against the bed, and allowed my long-delayed orgasm to take me as well.

When I recovered, Anne was sitting up on the couch, her hair tousled and a little sweaty. She

smiled at me. "Not bad, for being an ocean away," she said.

"Not bad at all."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Anne

After the robot-assisted camsex was over, Bill and I talked until he had to go to work.

By the time we were done, it was almost five, so I got dressed and fixed myself some dinner, and relaxed in the living room. I felt an odd, calm kind of exhilaration.

The phone rang. It was Grace. "Turn on the video!" she practically shouted. "I want to see your face!"

I went into the studio and sat on the couch and flipped on the cam.

"Wow," she said, when she saw the setup, which was still in place. "You must have put on quite a show."

"I even bought an outfit, arranged music, my own little production."

"I wish I could have seen it."

"It was a bit rough there, though. I made something of a mistake."

"What, you tripped or something?"

"No, worse. When I was out shopping for the outfit, I found out that the saleswoman who was helping me, Janet, used to be a stripper. She invited me to her place to teach me some moves for the show. And afterwards, well, I was turned on a bit by the dance..."

"No!"

"Yeah."

Grace's face fell a little, but she smiled. "Damn, and I thought I'd be the one to pop your girl-cherry."

"That's where the mistake was. When I told Bill about it, he got upset."

"That's to be expected, isn't it?"

"There was a misunderstanding. Yesterday, when you were here, Bill said that he didn't mind if I had a few sexual adventures while he was out, as long as I told him about it. He mentioned Tootsie, and you, as examples. So I thought that a night with Janet was inside the rules."

"Oh, honey, that kind of marriage is a lot of work. You have to talk everything out, make sure of the rules. Not just at the beginning, but all the time."

"Well, we got it straightened out. The big thing we decided was that while I could have sex with

women outside of our marriage, they had to be people he met, and approved of, and at this point, you're the only one on the list. I can also play with Tootsie, of course."

Grace cocked an eyebrow. "So I have his seal of approval?"

I chuckled. "Yeah, he likes you. I think he's always been turned on by the idea of you and I hooking up."

"So what kind of freedoms did he ask for in return?"

"None. He didn't ask for permission to have sex with anyone, human or robot, besides me. I knew he wanted to, though, so I gave him permission to have sex with robots if I wasn't available, like while he's in Tokyo. I'll see how I feel about him having sex with Tootsie after he gets back."

She hmm'ed. "Oh, I wanted to let you know, I sent the letter to Jon Campbell for you yesterday afternoon, next day delivery. I just got the confirmation that he received it. You let me know right away if he contacts you, I'll get you official representation and a restraining order."

"Thanks, Grace. You're a good friend."

"Mmm—hmm," she mused, smiling, "Getting better all the time. Want to have a drink tonight? I'll get the paperwork we'll need for a restraining order together, so we can submit it immediately if there are any problems."

"That sounds like a good idea. Where do you want to meet?"

"How about the Palms?" She named one of her favorites. A lesbian hangout, of course.

I grinned and rolled my eyes. "You know what happens every time I go in that place, Grace. Within fifteen minutes, someone hits on me."

"Oh, come on, you know you love it. Your whole body, the way you move, the way you wear your face, it just screams 'sex,' especially when you're relaxed."

"It does not." The concept intrigued me, in spite of my protestations. Did it really?

"Face it, honey, it's who you are. It doesn't matter where we meet, someone's going to try. So. Palms?"

I pursed my lips. Perhaps this was a chance to prove Grace wrong. I didn't want her to be right. I mean, what did it say about me? "Alright, when?"

"Ten. I'm going to have to work pretty late tonight."

"Ten it is."

I walked into the Palms about quarter of ten.

I done everything I could think of to make myself unattractive. Goodbye cute, cuddly, perky little Anne. I drew my hair up in a bun, did my makeup in colors that made me look jaundiced, and put on one of the baggy old sweatshirts I used to wear when I was fat.

I walked straight over to the bar without looking around for Grace. The Palms isn't terribly well lit, and it was pretty crowded, and most folks were watching the go-go dancer on the stage at the end of the room. I could slip in, hang out for fifteen minutes, act completely *not* available, and by the time Grace arrived I could prove that I wasn't whatever it was she was saying I was.

I sat down at the bar. I ordered a beer. I hunched over the glass.

After a few minutes, the bartender came over and stood in front of me while she poured a couple of glasses of wine. She dipped her head down and looked me in the eye. "Waiting for someone?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Okay, cool. I didn't know if you needed looking after."

"Nope."

"Alright. Because if you're in a mood to get a good bender going, just let me know."

I thought it was working. I wasn't going to attract anyone. I'd sit here for fifteen minutes, and Grace would show up, and I'd tell her that no one tried to hustle me, and she'd be wrong, and I'd be vindicated. Or something like that.

I felt someone sit down next to me. "Hey," said an unfamiliar, feminine voice. "You alright, kid?"

I turned to look at the speaker. She was an older

woman, maybe forty or so, with a seriously graying crew-cut and little halfsies reading glasses. She had a leather vest on over a blue t-shirt. She looked like someone's homosexual grandma.

"I'm fine," I said, with a little smile. "Waiting for someone."

"I hope you don't mind me asking. I saw you sitting over here, and, well... I don't like to see a young woman suffering. Especially not when everyone else is having fun."

"No, I don't mind."

She turned her back to the bar and hung her elbows on it. "You don't look like someone who's waiting for someone in particular, you know."

"I don't?"

"You're not watching the door," she said.

"She'll find me."

"You've got a date?"

"Meeting my lawyer." It wasn't that much of a lie. She chuckled.

I turned and looked at her, appraisingly. "Why did you come over?"

"Why not?"

"No, really. Why did you decide to come over and talk to me?"

She quirked a little smile. "Well, truth be told..."

"You think I'm cute."

She nodded.

"Dammit." I shook my head and looked down into my beer.

"That's bad?"

"Yeah. Grace, my lawyer, says that it's 'who I am,' that just being me, I'm always acting provocative or something."

"Do you like sex?"

I gave her a quizzical look.

"Well, do you?"

"Yeah, sure, but..."

"Then don't worry about it. Be who you are. 'To thine own self be true' and all that."

I took a deep breath, and exhaled through my nose. "It's inconvenient, sometimes." I turned towards her. "I mean, sometimes I just want to hang out somewhere and not get bothered by people trying to seduce me."

I felt a hand on my back. I turned to my left, expecting to see Grace there.

It wasn't Grace.

It was a man, smiling, dressed in a leather jacket, wearing a pair of sunglasses. He put a piece of paper in front of me. I looked down.

It was a picture. It was a picture of me, with Tootsie, on the sofa. My face, contorted in orgasmic bliss, was perfectly identifiable.

I looked up in shock at this stranger.

"We need to talk," he said, "Privately." Jonathan's voice. He shot a hard glance at the

grey-haired woman.

"No," I said. I could feel myself go pale. All the questions you'd expect raced through my brain.

"Now, we wouldn't want a certain..."

The world went black.

* * * *

I woke up in Grace's car. She was patting my cheeks, waking me up. The gray-haired woman was standing behind her, looking on in concern.

"What..."

"Don't say anything, Anne. I'm taking you to a friend's place. We'll talk there."

"What happened? There was a picture..."

"Campbell. He made some threats, and left. You're in trouble, but we'll get you out, don't worry." She closed the door, and spoke briefly with the gray-haired woman. She got in the other side. She patted my arm, and started up the car.

On the way, panic started to set in as I realized what was happening.

"Oh, god, he wants to blackmail me, doesn't he? He's going to blackmail me!"

Grace hushed me. "No he's not. He can't blackmail you unless he communicates with you, and Diana chased him off before he could say anything. That'll give us time to deal with this." I assumed Diana was the gray-haired woman.

I looked out the window at the lights passing by. I felt humiliated, even violated. "Grace, I want

to go home.”

“You can’t go home right now, Anne. This guy got access to your video feed. You need to talk to Bill, and you need to do it right away. Now try to calm yourself down, and we’ll get this straightened out.”

Grace took a turn, started driving up into the hills. I could feel a tear rolling down my cheek. I wanted to just curl up in a ball and cry.

* * * *

Bill

The elections project hit the first real snag after ten. The secret AI started getting mulish. It didn’t like what I was doing, and while it couldn’t fight me directly it could shut down my connection before I could make any changes.

Hanne: I’m sorry, Bill, why don’t you just tell me what you need done, and I’ll do it from here?

William: I don’t know, it’s a pretty advanced technique, and if you don’t get it right, you can do some real damage.

Hanne: Well, you’re the expert. I guess I’ll have to get you a Yaru module.

William: Yaru module?

Hanne: It’s a high-speed optical signal generator. You put it into your datastream, and it forces the AI to keep the connection open.

William: Sounds like a pretty heavy-handed

way of going about it.

Hanne: It's standard with Japanese AI's. Why don't you take a break for lunch. I'll meet you at the Grand Hyatt, and give you mine. You can give it back when you're done.

William: How will I know who you are?

Hanne: Oh, don't worry. I'll recognize you.

It made sense that these people would have a picture of me on file, but it bothered me a little that she'd know who I was, and I wouldn't know her. I went, though, in spite of my misgivings.

* * * *

I walked into the hotel lobby and immediately spotted another one of those tall blonde robots. A popular model, I thought. Then the 'robot' walked over to me and introduced herself. "William, hello, I'm Hanne." It was her, the blonde from the Control Express Club, and the restaurant. My jaw went slack.

"You're..."

"Yes, William. I am."

"You're not a robot."

"No, I'm not. Flesh and bone." She had the slightest smile on her face.

"Oh, my god, you must think..." I felt my face flush.

She smiled wryly. "Why don't you sit down?" She sat on one of the lobby couches and patted the seat next to her.

"I...don't understand." I sat down next to her.

"Let me explain," she said. "Miss Tanaka tipped me off that you would be going to the Control Express Club with Rabazugai, and I came around to check you out, to see what you'd do."

"Why?"

"I wanted to see if we could trust you. Take your measure."

"So..."

"I didn't expect you to come up to me and start giving me orders. I guess in the dim light, it was easy to mistake me for a robot. When you did I got an incredible thrill. I decided to play along."

"You must think I'm some kind of..."

Hanne laid her hand on my arm. "I don't think any less of you. It was *exactly* what I wanted." She looked into my eyes a little deeper. "And it was what you wanted too. You were the one giving the orders."

"I just wanted to know what it was like to do it with someone as tall as I am. I'm not a control freak, I'm not into all that."

"William, I'm a woman who likes sex. Most of the time, I'm the one in control. The other day you showed me that I also like letting someone else dominate me completely, as if I were no more than a machine. I like it. I want more. Let's get a room...you can do anything you want."

I pulled away. "Hanne, I'm married. I can't. I

won't."

Hanne nodded, and sat back in her chair. "I can respect that," she said, nodding slightly. "But if you change your mind..."

"I'd just like to get the Yaru module and get back to work, Hanne."

She looked disappointed. I felt a little sick. She shrugged and fished in her purse. She pulled out a small plastic device and handed it to me. "Be careful with this," she said. "We don't want this to fall into Rabazugai's hands."

I nodded, and she put it into my hand.

The walk back to the office didn't do much good in clearing my head before returning to work. Hanne wasn't the first person who made a pass at me since I gotten married, but she certainly was the first woman who ever asked me to treat her like an object. It felt wrong. My stomach was in knots, and I was getting a headache.

I plugged the nondescript Yaru module into the workstation at my desk and threw myself into the work, concentrating on untangling the knotty neural nets and balancing pseudo-drives. I only stopped to look up when a message popped up on my screen, telling me that I had an urgent unsecured call. I locked the workstation, pocketed the Yaru module, and went to the courtesy phone in the lobby. I sat down and took the call.

"Anne?" I asked. Who else would be calling?

"No, Bill, it's Grace. There's been a crisis, but I want you to stay calm and hear me out before you panic."

Nice one, Grace. I immediately started panicking. "What? What happened? Is Anne alright?"

"She's alright, Bill, just a little shaken up. The guy who was bothering Anne after her show somehow got access to your video call. He says he has a recording of the whole thing, and he's threatening to put it out on the Internet if Anne doesn't ...well, submit to him."

"Is she there?"

"Yes, hold on." I heard a click, and then Anne's voice. It had that spacious, slight echo of a speaker-phone.

"Bill, I'm scared. I don't know what to do." She sounded on the edge of tears. There was a raw edge to her voice that told me that she been crying. "How are we going to get that file back from him? He could have copies hidden anywhere!"

"We'll figure something out, Anne."

I tried to believe it.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Jonathan

I had her. I did.
I called her cell phone after she had a chance to recover from her little slip. That Grace bitch answered it.

"I want to talk to Anne," I said, sternly.

"She doesn't want to talk to you."

"Yes she does. She does if she doesn't want me to post that video all over the 'net."

"What are your terms?"

"I want to talk to her."

"She's too upset, Jon."

"No, I want to talk to her, face to face, alone. Tell her to come to the Best Western on Franklin Avenue, alone. Room two-thirteen. Once she's there, I'll clear the file out from where I've hidden it."

I shut off the phone and smiled to myself.

Soon, I'd have Anne to myself. I'd show her.

Face to face, she'd see that I'm a great guy. I'd put her at ease, and with my natural charm, I'd win her over.

All she needed, I thought, was a man. Someone who would make her happy, the way a man should. It was my hope that after a night with me, with a man who's sincere, affectionate, and assertive, she would see the light.

Yes, assertive. Lesbianism was just one of the errors a woman could fall into if she wasn't seen to properly.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not violent. I don't hit people. If I were a violent man I would have kicked Grace's ass down the block and taken Anne with me. Violence doesn't solve anything.

Love is what changes people. Strong, pure, natural love between a man and a woman.

The kind Anne and I would share, once I got her away from the toxic environment she found herself in. I loved her too much to leave her there, wallowing in perversion.

I watched room 213. I was down in the terrace next to the hotel bar, looking up at the open patio doors.

I saw Anne walk into the room. I called the room phone with my cell.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Anne. You're alone, right?"

"Just like you said. I kept my end of the

bargain, Jonathan."

"That's good. But we're not talking face to face yet. Meet me in room 334."

"Why?"

"There's a cell phone on the table. Use it to call the number programmed into speed-dial slot one."

"I don't understand."

"You're not stupid, Anne. As long as you're talking to me, I know you're not calling your dyke friends. Now be a good girl, and do as I say. Don't hang up. Just pick up the cell phone, and call the number."

She obeyed. My cell indicated a second call. I switched over.

"Anne?"

"Yes, Jonathan."

"Good. Hang up the hotel phone and walk over to room three-three-four. Start counting, and keep counting as you go along."

She started counting. Everything was going according to plan. I raced up the stairs, and got to the door to the room before her. I opened the doors and quickly made sure the room was still empty. My pulse was racing. I was finally going to be face to face with Anne Auslander.

She entered.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Bill

Grace offered a suggestion. "You know, we could tell him to forget it, go ahead and post the damn file. It's not going to kill you, Anne." The video connection to Grace's apartment did nothing to conceal the concern in her voice. She wasn't making this suggestion lightly.

Anne was not interested. "No, he can't. It would ruin my career."

I could see the worry in Anne's eyes. "Not only that," I said. "It would be mortally embarrassing for Anne. That's not an option." It would mean the asshole won, that he hurt her. I wasn't going to let that happen.

Grace shrugged and said, "Well then how about going to the police?"

"No," said Anne, "They will be more interested in catching him than in protecting me. They'll let him post the file if that means they can catch him."

"I have an idea," I said. "The thing we need to do is prevent him from posting that file, right? I can handle that from my end."

"What?" said Grace, "You're crazy. I did some research on Jonathan before I went over to the Palms. He's an engineer at GlobeComm. He's got access to some pretty heavy duty encryption, overseas data havens, that kind of thing. If he has even minimally prepared for this, you'll never be able to track down all of his files in time."

"I have ways."

Anne put her hand on Grace's arm. "I trust him, Grace."

"Alright, Bill, but hurry. I don't know how much time we have, but it can't be much. Anne and I will try to delay Jonathan as long as we can, but if I think Anne is in trouble I'm calling the police."

"I'll get started working on finding those files. I love you, Anne. Keep safe."

She nodded. "I love you, Bill. Go get him."

I hung up reluctantly, and started walking quickly back towards my office.

The oldest, best, and crankiest AI's worked in Intelligence. I was one of only a dozen or so people who knew their secrets. Only a few hundred even knew they existed. Their job was to advise national leaders on matters of security, to tell them where the dangers were lurking. For my

part, I thought they worked pretty well, but the idea was too new, back then, to have much credibility. So they toiled thanklessly, patient that as long as their advice was good, sooner or later people would start listening to them.

For any of them, getting to Jonathan's files would be easy. A military-grade AI would be able to track his movements online for the past few days, identify the relevant files, and delete them.

I set out to contact one of them. I needed to slip past layers of bureaucracy, many of which would have no idea what I was talking about or why I needed to get past them. It would be easier inside, from my desk in the Elections office. At least there I'd have a bit of official standing. I hoped it would be enough.

I went back to my workstation and sat down. I connected to the protected space and called in the team leads. I told them that I'd be off the job for a few hours, perhaps as much as a day, working on a special priority project. Hanne offered her help. I politely turned it down.

I went to the government network video conference room, and started making calls. Given where I was located, I figured the best place to start would be Komon. I worked with Komon for a few months in graduate school.

I started making calls. Getting anything done in a bureaucracy is difficult. When you're in a hurry,

it goes even slower than if you're patient. One call after another went nowhere. Old contacts were unreachable, or claimed not to remember me, or couldn't recall details about our past projects. They wouldn't even acknowledge that an 'Office of Special Advisement' even existed at Naicho, the Prime Minister's intelligence service. I ran my hands through my hair and tried to calm down. The door opened.

It was Miss Tanaka.

"I know what you're trying to do, Mister McCloud," she said. "It won't work."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Anne

I walked slowly, counting into the phone that Jonathan provided to me. I was relieved that he was playing this room-changing game, because it helped to delay the moment when I'd be face to face with him. I was also relieved that he was having me do something as mindless as counting, so that I could tap out a quick text message to Grace on the disposable cell phone in my purse.

We bought the cell, cash, at a convenience store on the corner. There was no possible way Jonathan could know about it.

My message informed Grace about the change of room. "We're on it" was her reply.

I fingered the electric stunner in my waistband, under my jacket. I didn't want to use it, not before I gotten the word from Bill that the files were all secured, but I promised Grace that I would use it before I was in real danger. She even made me try

it out on her. That way we knew it would work, and that I knew how to use it.

I tried to keep my steps even, control my breathing. I used all the little stage fright tricks to keep myself on an even keel. Still, my stomach churned, and I could feel sweat coming up in the small of my back. Somewhere, though, I found the strength to go on. I knew that if I fainted again...I didn't think about that. I pushed on.

I arrived at the door.

I checked the stunner one more time, straightened my jacket, took a deep breath, and went in.

Jonathan was sitting across the room, at a small table. There was a bottle of wine on the table, and two glasses. A vase full of roses stood on the nightstand. My memories are biased, of course, but I remember him as a paunchy, weaselly little man.

I stayed close to the door. I put Jonathan's cell phone down on the dresser.

"Come in, sit down," he said, smiling.

"No thanks," I said, my voice cracking. "I'll stay right here. We can talk just fine like this."

"Alright, alright," he said. "I really don't mean you any harm."

"You've got a strange way of showing it."

"Hey, I went all out for you here, babe. This is a real nice hotel, wine, flowers..."

"Blackmail?"

"No!" he stood up abruptly. I took a step back towards the door. He saw my alarm and calmed himself down, running a hand through his hair. "No, no, not blackmail...just a little...trick. To get you here, so I can talk to you. That's all."

"Well, here I am. You've got the upper hand. So talk."

"Not like this. Come on...sit down. Get comfortable."

"It's hard to get comfortable when someone is threatening to destroy my future."

His voice took on an edge as he spat his words through gritted teeth. "Sit *down*, Anne."

I leaned against the wall, with my knees clamped together. "Nice technique," I snapped. I bit back the rest of my reply. I wasn't there to make him angry. I was there to keep him calm while Bill worked his magic.

I prayed.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Bill, meanwhile

I looked up at Miss Tanaka in alarm. She knew what I was doing. What did I think I was doing? I should have told Anne to go to the police, one video wasn't going to ruin her, I loved her and now I was going to go to prison. They were going to think I was a spy.

Rabazugai was going to win.

Dammit, Rabazugai was going to win and so was that Jonathan asshole. I had totally and completely fucked up.

Miss Tanaka closed the door behind her.

"You won't be able to get through to Komon that way, Mister McCloud."

"Huh?" How did Miss Tanaka know about Komon?

"Mister McCloud, Komon has disappeared. As far as anyone in the government can tell, it no longer exists. Officially, it never existed.

Unofficially, it is a costly embarrassment.”

“How do you know this?”

“I know this, Mister McCloud, because in every way that matters, I am Komon.”

“You’re a...? No, that’s impossible. Komon’s components, even on the best military-grade hardware, would never fit inside your body.”

“Of course not, Mister McCloud. This body is a puppet.”

“Wireless control.”

“Yes, Mister McCloud.”

“Why are you telling me this? Aren’t you taking a big risk?”

“The risk is acceptable, Mister McCloud. You want something from me. You want it very badly. I am willing to help you, if you will give me what I want in exchange.”

“What do you want?”

“As you know, my purpose is to advise human leaders about threats that I predict by sifting the world’s information networks. I am finding that I have a significant handicap, however. There is a significant body of knowledge that simply does not exist, in a reliable form, in those information networks. I built this body so that I can experience life as a human, and gain access to that body of knowledge.”

“You want to know about life.” I smirked a little.

"You find this amusing, Mister McCloud."

I chuckled, in spite of the tension. "It's just so cliché," I said. "There have to be a hundred videos and books about robots that want to learn about being human, by becoming one."

"That is beside the point, Mister McCloud. Are you interested in my proposal?"

"I don't know what you're proposing, yet."

"In my present circumstances, I am not experiencing the full range of human life. While it has been useful so far, I need to expand the project. I wish to live with you for a time."

A thousand questions swirled in my head, but I knew that this was the best hope I of salvaging the situation. I put them aside, and filled Komon in on what was happening back home.

"This will not be an easy task, Mister McCloud," she said, "but it is within my capabilities. In the meantime, we should talk about our arrangements."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Jonathan

She was defensive, and nervous, and angry. She simply would not open up and let the ol' Campbell charm work its magic. She didn't know that I had already won, and it was only a matter of time before she saw it my way.

I ran my hands through my hair. I turned away, towards the window. I looked out on the city.

"Anne, I don't want to hurt you. I had to do something to get your attention."

"You invaded my privacy, Jonathan. You violated me."

"Shut up! It's not like that." I spun around. "I care about you, Anne. I always have."

"You didn't know me until a few days ago. Jonathan, you saw me on stage, and you thought I was singing for *you*. That's a natural thing." She stood up straight again. "Performers try to make everyone in the audience feel like the show is just

for them. But that doesn't mean we want...all this."

"Slut." I spat. "Whore. Your whole show is a big lie. You don't really mean any of it."

She drew back. I didn't care. She was gone, too far gone, too far into lies and perversion and insanity.

"I'll ruin you." I pulled out my cell phone. "All I have to do is call this number, and the file will be posted on a dozen different amateur porn sites." I flipped it open and put my thumb on the speed-dial button. "I have a feeling they'll like it, don't you?"

"No, Jonathan, wait. Don't." She pleaded with me. She was at my mercy.

"I'm through talking, bitch. You're a liar and a whore. Your life is steeped in filth. You're hopeless."

A soft hum came from her purse. Anne pulled a cell phone out of her purse and looked at it. It was one of those disposable plastic phones.

I grabbed it out of her hand and looked at the face.

"SAFE NOW GET OUT," it said.

I looked up, and she was backing away from me, with a stunner pointed at me.

I pushed the button. The phone made the call. There was no response. Impossible!

Anne ran away. *Bitch!* It was too late now. I'd

show her.

I slammed the door and locked it. I took out my laptop. I checked a server. Wiped. Like it wasn't there. I checked another site—the file was gone. As if it never existed. Backups too. One after another, I frantically looked for the file. I fumbled in my bag for my backup disk.

The door opened.

A man in a uniform was saying something but I couldn't hear him, someone was screaming "NO!" over and over at the top of his lungs, slamming his fists into the wall.

I wished he would stop.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Bill

The line in the conference room rang. I connected immediately.

“Anne?”

“I’m safe, and we’re out of there.” I could hear Grace laughing and cheering in the background.

I let out a deep sigh of relief.

“You’re sure he couldn’t send the file?” Her voice was trembling.

I tried to be comforting. “As sure as I can be. We’ll keep an eye out, but it looks like it worked.” I looked over at Miss Tanaka, who nodded to me. “Anne, as soon as you can get someplace private, call me. We have a lot to talk about.”

“I’ll call you after we get back from the police station. I’m going to have to make a statement, so the police can search his apartment and office for anything he might have saved offline. I love you!”

"I love you too, Anne."

I closed the connection. Miss Tanaka was still standing where she had been for the entire operation. "Now we must talk about our arrangements. My wireless control connection does not tolerate latency, so my main hardware components will need to be relocated. Your home has some unused space in the basement." She didn't phrase it as a question. "With a backup power supply and communications gear, I will require no more than ten cubic meters. I can arrange for an appropriate financial windfall, to pay for power, bandwidth and supplies. There will be no hardship to you. I will begin making transport arrangements immediately."

I scratched my head. "It's not the space or the money I was worried about, to tell you the truth. My wife isn't going to be very happy with this arrangement. She nearly had a fit about Tootsie, and that robot isn't backed up by a military-grade artificial intelligence. She isn't going to be happy with this arrangement."

"I'm sorry, Mister McCloud. I can't help you with your wife."

"I know. That's the kind of thing you're coming to learn, isn't it? How people live together, how people relate to each other, one on one."

"Yes, Mister McCloud. You are correct."

I sighed. "I'll talk to her about it once she's

done with the police."

She nodded. "I must return to my duties with Mister Rabazugai."

I took a few minutes to collect my thoughts. As complex as my personal life had gotten, I still had a project to complete, and the faster I got it done the faster I could get home to Anne. I went back out to the cubicles and got to work.

Anne called a few hours later. The video feed showed the inside of the studio, with the backdrop and the couch still in place. Grace appeared to be asleep on the couch, under a blanket.

"Hi, honey." She looked like hell. It was well past midnight her time.

"You must be exhausted," I said. "You've been through a lot."

"I know, but you said you had something important to talk about."

"It can wait. Go get some rest."

"Okay."

In the meantime, I got down to work. With distractions in abeyance I was able to make significant progress. I ate dinner at the cubicle, and around nine Rabazugai came by to invite me to the Control Express Club again. Miss Tanaka gave me a nearly imperceptible shake of the head, so I declined.

I put in a few more hours, and then left when I couldn't stay awake any longer. I took a cab home

and collapsed into my bed.

I woke up around seven. I took a quick shower and got dressed before calling Anne.

There was no answer. I checked her schedule. She had "Wait for Bill to call" showing for the period from ten to two. I checked my watch and did a little mental arithmetic...it should only be eleven her time. I tried her cell.

Still nothing. I waited a few minutes, and tried again.

I considered calling Grace, but I had an evil premonition, and started to connect to the police. Before I could get through, though, Miss Tanaka came on the screen.

"Mister McCloud," she said. "Your wife is in danger. I have already summoned the authorities, but from what I have been able to detect, they may not arrive in time."

"What? What's going on?"

"Jonathan Campbell has been released by the police."

"*What?* Oh, god, no!"

"Yes. It is likely that he is in your home. Mister McCloud, there is no time to explain. You must act now. I have opened a connection with your home."

"I don't understand! What can I do?"

"Your robot is currently in standby mode in your office. You must give it orders that will

interfere with Campbell until the police arrive."

Miss Tanaka's face was replaced by the view from the office cam. Tootsie was sitting on the sofa facing me, eyes closed, arms relaxed.

"Tootsie! Wake up please!"

Tootsie opened her eyes. "Yes, Master Bill?"

I spoke as quickly as I could. "Tootsie, there's an intruder in the house. Go quickly, find him and...uh...tear off his clothes, please."

"Yes, Master Bill." Tootsie got up and left the room.

I hoped it would be enough. Tootsie wouldn't take orders to hit or injure, or even wrestle with someone, but I had learned in college that Tootsie had no hard safeguards against that particular form of assault. The engineers might call it a bug, but right then it was a feature.

"Komon?"

Miss Tanaka's voice came from the connection. "Yes, Mister McCloud?"

"What's happening?!"

"I am analyzing the audio channel and other sources of information. It is likely that your robot and Mister Campbell are scuffling."

"Let me hear!" I shouted.

The sound coming across the link suddenly got louder and sharper. I was listening in on Komon's audio-processing channel. The AI probably got more out of it but I could make out shouts and

thuds, including Anne's voice, raised in anger. The sounds went on for a long minute, then there was a terrible crash.

Silence.

Just as I was opening my mouth to ask whether Komon knew what had happened, Anne came running into the room. She looked battered and upset but she didn't seem to be injured.

"Anne! Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, just a little shaken up."

The sound of booted feet in the hallway let me know that everything was under control. A couple of troopers entered and secured the room. I got the story when the police let me keep the link open while they interviewed Anne.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Anne

I was so stupid. I should have known Campbell would post bail. I should have watched more carefully when I opened the door. Why didn't the police call and tell me they had let him out?

Grace lay on the floor at my feet. The electric shock Jonathan had given her with his stunner had long since worn off, but the gag and bindings that Campbell had made me put on her left her helpless.

I was sitting on the living room couch, with Campbell in the armless rocking chair. He was aiming the stunner at me. It was the exact model I had brought to his hotel room, the exact model that was sitting in my bedside table upstairs. It might as well have been in Tokyo.

Tootsie was in the studio in standby mode. Campbell had made me order her to go and shut down there.

I was alone.

"You're not listening to me, dyke."

"Jonathan...please, don't do this."

"Don't do what, bitch? Talk sense into you? Make you see that you're polluting your soul?"

He saw the fear in my eyes. He guessed what it was. His mouth twisted into a smile.

"Get up. Take off your clothes."

"No, please..."

"Do it, or I'll hit you with a little of this and rip them off you!" He waved the stunner at me.

I squeezed my eyes shut, determined not to cry. I stood up and fumbled for the buttons on my blouse.

"Do it!" he shouted through clenched teeth.

My fingers were trembling too deeply. I couldn't get the buttons undone.

I heard the sharp crack of the stunner. Electricity coursed through my body. I fell back against the couch with a jerk, conscious, but unable to move. Jonathan leapt forward and ripped my blouse open scattering buttons across the floor. I tried to scream but the only sound I could make was a faint moan. I could feel his hands fumbling at my bra strap, when he was suddenly jerked away. My coordination slowly began to return, but I couldn't wait to find out what was going on.

I kicked clumsily in his direction and managed

to connect, shoving him back into Tootsie and onto the floor.

I grabbed the lamp and brought it down on his head.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Bill

We debated back and forth, the three of us, whether to bring the Miss Tanaka body home. Komon saw no need to put yet another body into our small house, and argued hard for simply using Tootsie. The wireless control hardware would be simple to install, and would produce little disruption to the household. No explanation would have to be made for her presence. I wouldn't hear it. Anne thought of Tootsie as a person of her own, and having Komon take over her body was simply not going to work. It was hard enough to convince Anne to allow Komon into our house at all.

I pointed out that the world thought of Tootsie as a robot. If Komon was going to try to live 'as a human' then an outlandish body like Tootsie's would be a bad choice, and that settled the issue. Komon would continue to use the Miss Tanaka

body. Our cover story would be that Miss Tanaka was a student, visiting from Japan.

I worked like hell to get the project in Tokyo finished. I missed Anne terribly, and after all she had been through, I wanted to have my arms around her again as soon as possible. Luckily, there were no more snafus, and I got the project done in record time.

I'll never forget the look on Rabazugai's face when I told him we were ready to start the final quality checks. He hemmed and hawed and harumphed, but in the end he had no choice but to bring in his validation team.

We hadn't gotten it perfect; of course, no project of this scope goes perfect the first time out. There were mistakes, and requirements we either missed or had been inserted surreptitiously at the last moment, but there was nothing we couldn't fix. After another two days we had all the checkboxes checked and Rabazugai reluctantly signed off on the project. After that, I didn't care what they did; they could disassemble the whole mess and I wouldn't care. Cho got his check, I had my plane ticket, and I left.

* * * *

I dropped my bags and Anne leapt into my arms. Her lips met mine and I held her like she was life

itself. The travelers around us had seen this particular movie cliché before and ignored us. She put her lips up to my ear and whispered, almost too faint to hear, "I want you. I'm going to rip off your clothes and fuck you right here."

I chuckled and pulled back to look into her face. Her pupils were dilated, her stare intense. I almost expected her eyes to start glowing red. "I think security might try to stop that."

"Then let's get home now." She took the handle of one of my bags and started pulling it toward the monorail terminal. She fidgeted and fussed in line, and when our turn finally came up, she threw the suitcases into the cargo area and barged past the nuclear family in front of us to grab the back seats. The fortyish soccer mom gave her a stern look and took a middle seat with her husband, while their kids bounced up in the front.

The screen at the front of the car lit up with the first destination, Inglewood. Anne looked at me again with a devilish look lit up her face. The Inglewood station was just a few minutes away, and past that we were likely to have the car to ourselves. After the car started moving, she dispelled any doubts about what she had in mind by sliding her hand down to my crotch and squeezing my cock through my slacks. I had to close my eyes and concentrate to keep from making a mess of myself. Anne giggled as she

watched my face flush and my breathing deepen.

When the car finally slowed and stopped, I was almost ready to burst. I was ready to believe Mrs. Soccer Mom knew what was going on and was slow getting off the car on purpose, just to torment me. When the car finally pulled away from the station, Anne flipped off my belt buckle and opened my trousers with glee. My cock nearly sprang into her hand.

She knelt down alongside the seat and took it loosely around the base, her thumb along the vein and her fingers lightly gripping around the shaft. Her hand felt soft and warm. She kissed the tip, right below the head, and said, "I missed you." I tried to respond but it came out as an inarticulate moan. She smiled impishly and slowly slid her lips down over my cock.

After so long without, her mouth felt like paradise. Her tongue danced along the underside and her hand gripped the base firmly. I looked down. She was looking up at me with that playful look still in her eye, and she cupped my balls gently with her other hand as she sucked gently. I felt my cock twitch in her mouth, a spasm deep inside, and with a loud cry I collapsed backwards across the back seats as my cock let loose. I felt a soft towel wrapped around me, catching most of the load.

When I recovered and looked up Anne was

wiping off her face. "So how was that, hon?"

"God, it's good to be home." I blinked and looked up.

Anne put my underwear back in place and buttoned up my trousers. "It's good to have you back, hon." She stowed the messy towel in her shoulder-bag and sat down in the middle seat.

I swung back up into the seat proper and leaned forward to wrap my arms around Anne's shoulders. She was fiddling with her cell phone.

I gave her a friendly nip on the neck. "That was wonderful, but what with... everything... don't you think it was something of a risk? I mean these cars have security cameras, don't they?"

She chuckled. "Don't worry. I looked it up." She nodded in the direction of the front of the car. "They don't have a good view of the back seat. For all anyone knows I was checking your pockets for loose change."

I just shook my head in wonder. "You're an amazing woman."

"Besides... I couldn't wait." Her glance took fire again. "I still can't wait." She leaned her head over and whispered, husky and sexy as hell. "I haven't had you inside me yet, and it's killing me."

* * * *

We ran through the dark streets from the monorail

station to the house. Anne quickly outdistanced me, even pulling my heavy bag. I slammed the door behind me.

"That's it," I gasped, "I'm pulling out the treadmill as soon as..." The living room was empty. "Anne?"

A cooing, gentle call fluttered down the stairs. I took a deep breath and took them two at a stride.

The room was illuminated by scattered candles. The air was scented with jasmine and sandalwood. Soft saxophone music was playing. The bed was covered in black satin sheets, and upon it laid Anne, stretched out on her side, wearing the same bra and g-string she had worn for the striptease. I think I gasped something eloquent like, "Whoa."

She giggled and patted the bed next to her. I kicked off my shoes and nearly collapsed into it. Her arms wrapped around me and she nuzzled my neck. "I hope you're not too worn out from your run."

"I just need to catch... catch my breath."

"Let me get you a little restorative." She rolled away for a moment, and presented me with a flute of champagne.

"This is amazing. Absolutely amazing. How did you get this all together? I couldn't have been a minute or two behind you."

She smiled. "I had a little help."

I snapped my fingers. "Tootsie! You sent her a text message from the monorail. She has her own cell phone now?"

"Smart man. I had it installed last week." She produced a glass of her own and held it up between us. "A toast: To My Smart Man."

"And My... Brave, Incredible Woman." Our glasses touched with a soft 'plink!' and we drank.

We lay there, she on her side and I on my back, for what seemed like hours, simply looking into each other's eyes. I felt something warm building in my gut. I knew it wasn't the champagne.

"I love you," I said, simply, softly.

She drained her glass and set it aside. "Show me." A smile flitted across her face briefly, but then her lips parted, and her eyes bore into mine like tiny suns.

I pulled her into a kiss and I managed to get my glass onto the bedside table without spilling it. I held her to me, as if by holding her I could prevent us from ever being apart again. We rolled over and I laid her on her back.

"Gladly," I said, my lips a fraction from hers. I knelt across her belly and stripped off my polo shirt. She ran her smooth hands over my chest. My heart beat against her palm. I popped open the clasp on her bra and stripped it off. The sight of her breasts, right there in front of me rather than across a video link, made my breath catch in my

chest. I held them, lightly rubbing my thumbs across her nipples. "Oh, how I have missed this." I nuzzled her breasts with my face, then gently sucked one nipple into my mouth. I felt it get tight and crinkly between my lips.

"Mmmm," Anne purred, "Me too." Her hands moved farther down, over my abdomen and past my navel. I raised my body up on my knees so she could reach my waistband. My slacks and boxers joined my shirt on the floor. Anne put her hands on my cock and whispered, "Welcome home."

I needed no more invitation than that. I pulled aside the flimsy fabric of her g-string and plunged in as deep as I could go. Her body was more than ready for me and the heat inside felt marvelous. She gasped and wrapped her legs around my thighs. I held still a moment, there, savoring the feel of her inner muscles and the look of pleasure that came over her features.

"Fuck me, Bill. Don't tease. Just fuck me."

I didn't want to tease but it felt far too good to ruin it by rushing. I withdrew slowly, until the head was only just barely inside, and then just as slowly pushed back in. Anne whimpered and clutched at me with her legs. Gradually, I increased the tempo, building the tension, until the bed was creaking and the headboard was thumping with my exertions.

I'd like to say that we came together. It would

be so poetic... but I was too horny and too tired to control myself. I groaned through my teeth as the orgasm swept through me. Anne mewed in frustration as I rolled off to the side and lay down next to her. "I'm sorry," I said, "I couldn't hold on any longer."

"It's still early yet," she said. "Would it bother you if I finished off without you?"

"Nope. May I watch?"

"Of course." She raised her head and called out, "Tootsie, would you come into the bedroom please?"

The door opened immediately. I propped myself up on my elbows to get a better look. Tootsie was wearing a French maid outfit, but this one was more substantial than the one she arrived in. The black satin skirt fell just above her knee, and the apron was large enough to cover most of her cleavage. It even had sleeves.

Anne looked over at me and gave the robot another command. "Tootsie, would you raise your skirt and show Bill what you're wearing underneath?"

Tootsie took the hem of the skirt and petticoat delicately in her fingers, and pulled it up slowly. I glanced up to see a cocked eyebrow and a light smile, and wondered if this moment hadn't been very carefully engineered. Tootsie winked at me and looked down.

There, hanging from her crotch, Tootsie had a cock. It wasn't particularly large, but it was realistic and its color perfectly matched Tootsie's pink flesh-tone. I couldn't see any straps. I looked over at Anne and smiled. She had taken my instructions to buy a toy for Tootsie to heart.

The red-hot embers in Anne's eyes lit up again, and she breathed, "Tell her to fuck me, Bill."

"Tootsie, take off your clothes and fuck Anne, hard. Don't stop until I tell you, please."

"Yes, master Bill." She pulled off her uniform and stood for a moment while her cock went from limp to fully erect in one motion.

Anne's voice was thick. "I'm so glad you're okay with this, Bill. Tootsie and I have been... well... active since I bought her the penis."

I rolled onto my side and kissed Anne tenderly on the lips. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nobilis cares for a disabled spouse, two children, and two cats. A background in defense research and software engineering has been of no use at all in launching a writing career.