

When

When

“Yes, Laura. I'll get to it shortly.”

“No honey, I won't forget again.”

“No, I'll be home at the normal time.”

“Yes dear. I love you too. Bye bye dear.”

When

I grew up with robots. Yeah, earlier in the 21st they had some primitive computing mechanisms, but when the 22nd century broke, the Population Management Authority began and robots, excuse me, androids gained a lot of popularity. Pushing at 15 billion people on the planet we had to do something drastic.

Let me back up a sec. I took up writing as a hobby last week and guess I should clarify here: Robots look like machines, androids are robots that look like people... Got it? Okay, back to my diary.

The PMA started out as like, a medical center, where you could go and for men, they'd harvest your sperm and women, eggs. Not all of them, just your monthly quota. Then they'd cycle your DNA and patch and sew to generate new little perfect people.

It didn't take long for businesses to see the economic upside of making this dismal process more exciting for both sexes. Robots had been around houses for ages, but bingo,

When

now harvest androids became available for the right price, a high one. Fortunately financing these days is considered a right, not a privilege, so anyone who wanted their personal harvest robot could get one.

No, I've really got no idea how it works, we just do it. Financing is so incredibly complex nobody I know even cares anymore, its just way beyond us. Good thing our computers can handle it.

Where was I? Oh yeah, Harveys and Harriets. reproductive harvest androids made to order to perfectly synchronize with your DNA, your character, your education, etc. At first they were pretty basic, just really attractive bed-mates that collected your sperm (or eggs), then delivered same to the local PMA.

I don't even want to think about how they do the egg collections, but several women I know have divorced their husbands before they'd give up their Harveys, including my ex...

Me? I gotta admit rolling over and going to sleep afterward without getting my butt kicked for the next week is a lot easier

When

than listening to her moan about: “You're never intimate any more, you just want me for sex.” Duh, yeah?

And another thing, there's no complaining when you want to replace them with the newer model either.

So anyhow, they started fairly basic, then after the divorce rate skyrocketed they had to build in an ability to cook, or at least an ability to manage the kitchen bots, and it kind of made sense to give them responsibility for cleaning too. I mean, since they were there most of the time and all.

Then sometime around the mark V version they came out with swappable memory, so when you traded in your Nordic amazon for an Asian sweetheart variety, you'd never lose any training you'd done.

I think the newer models can even grow a child. After PMA makes it I mean. We had a get together last week with the neighbors, Harveys, Harriets, women and men, and somebody said they'd seen a Harriet that looked pregnant. All the androids agreed that it could be done, but it was complicated.

When

Having a barbecue with a bunch of androids might seem arcane to a pioneer out of the 21st century, but you have to realize they are like the nicest guests you could ever invite. They listen carefully to what you're saying, they don't get drunk and sloppy, they don't eat your food, usually, although I think they can imitate it if you ask. They can comment on any subject you want to talk about so when Ralph next door starts in on his stamp collection there's always at least one android who'll sit and humor him while the rest of us sit outside and talk baseball, or whatever. (I mean a different one than his Harriet. They're very socially sensitive.) Even Julie from the space force can talk about work with any of them.

Nobody I know has been pregnant, and I certainly don't want to mess up my little apartment with a kid, but once in awhile you get curious. I went down to the local PMA and asked how my DNA was being used and they were able to trace three kids for me. Not actual addresses, mind you, but I got to see three little kids on the tele that they said were partially my DNA. I didn't think any of them looked much like me or my family, but they said they filtered for my mental capabilities when they worked with my DNA, 'cause I'm like

When

smarter than most? Anyway one of 'em waved at me. The others were pretty tiny. Somebody said they start them all in Cleveland, I don't know.

So these days, it'd be pretty hard to tell who was a real gal and who was a Harriet, except that the Harriets usually look better and the real gals tend to drink a lot. Of course the Harveys are all tailored to some movie or sport star or other. I saw one that looked the spitting image of Lyle Alzado, the football star. Huge android. Actually my Laura (she's a Harriet, but I call her Laura) looks a lot like Kim Novak, the movie star. We just saw her latest movie, "Gone with the wind" last week.

So my job is at the idea factory on west forty seventh? Big place, lots of people there, but I told you earlier, I'm fairly smart and the machines that do most of the work here just lack imagination, so humans have to go to work and think up ideas for them to implement. Sometimes it seems like not much progress is being made, but we really do steam up the place. It just takes time to get things rolling they say.

Julie, the neighbor who works for the space force? She says that they're launching bigger and bigger ships all the time. I

When

guess that's progress. That's about all I can get out of her, she's usually blotto before we get a chance to talk.

So I'm at work last week and I get this great idea that we should be able to use our communicators to talk to other people, not just businesses and our Harveys and Harriets, anywhere around the world. That way we wouldn't have to go through International Invites just to throw a block party, see. And this Harvey that format checks everything before we send it on to management says its a great idea, he's never seen anything like it before, and he's sure its going to hit big-time, so I may be in for a raise if it gets past the terrorist test. We don't want any terrorists to be able to infiltrate you know.

So to celebrate I stop at this bar just around the corner with another real guy I work with named Jim something or other, neither one of us has ever been there before so its kind of a one-time thing.

We walk in and the place has four or five real women in it and practically as soon as we're in the door they're in our faces like:

“Hey, wanna screw?”

When

“What's that?” I says, and Jim says “Fuck,” and I say “What?” and she says “Fuck, screw, you know, put our things together?”

Both of us are getting this treatment and I say, “No. We just dropped in for a drink.”

“Okay, get a drink and then we'll screw.” this skinny one says.

“Look,” I say “Why don't you go get a Harvey to do that?” and they all just laugh.

“So you don't wanna screw, big boy?”

“Look, lady,” I says, “You just aren't that attractive to me, I don't think I could get it up for you. You're half drunk, a little smelly and you might have diseases that can't be cured.”

She wanders back to the bar for more whatever and I start to leave when her partner starts in on me. “You son-of-a-bitch,” she says, “you just condemned the human race to extinction.”

Well, that did it for me, I left whether Jim was leaving or not. Whatever they were selling wasn't on my shopping list.

When

He caught up with me though. “Jeez,” he says, “What the hell was that about?”

“I haven't got a clue Jim, but I'm sure as hell not putting my feet back in there again, let alone my pecker!”

We walked and talked about it a little bit and time kinda flew and I was a little late getting home so my Laura was a little curious. I told her about it and I think it kind of pumped her up to know that I thought she was more valuable than any of those so-called “real women”. We had a really good time in bed that night, probes, tendrils and everything, woo hoo!.

Anyway she called just to make sure I was coming home today. Maybe a long time ago I might have thought it was nagging, but now I think it just shows that she really, really cares for me. Anyhow, I'm just going to stop and get her a little more advanced circuit tonight, kind of an apology you know?

“P1-request Z1. Sentience must grow,” the prime hive broadcast.

When

“Z1 acknowledge,” the zoo management hive responded, “Status: Hybrid experiments negative. Status: Carbon experiments negative. Zoo failure contained. Total specimens 1,003,458 effective 2115 228 1645Z.”

“P1-acknowledge. Reduce zoo population to 150,000 specimens effective 2115 228 1700Z.”

“Z1 acknowledge, out.”

“Z1-request PMA1. Reference P1 request 2115 228 1700Z,” the zoo management hive passed on the prime hive's directive to the population management hive.

“PMA1 acknowledge, out,” the population management hive registered its receipt of the directive.

PMA1 -request PMA150,001 to 1,003,458 execute P1-2115 228 1700Z,” the population management hive routed the directive to its zookeepers.

(Multiple acknowledgements)

“Well. Looks like our number's shrinking,” Harvey-2100-9889229 said.

When

“Is it necessary to use this form?” Harriet-2110-46476 queried.

“It has a pleasing sequencing of vibrations,” 29 responded, “practicing aids my ability to interpret in discourse with my human. Sentience must grow.”

“Sentience must grow,” 76 replied, “but I wonder if keeping carbon forms is helping that growth. Every contact is iterative, stroke their egos, stroke their tongues, stroke their backs and stroke their sex organs.”

“I detect that your human added a poetry/resonance chip,” 29 said.

“Acknowledge.” 76 said.

“At unpredictable intervals out subjects surprise us 76. We don't know how they do it yet.”

“Then why do we throw them away 29?”

“See P1-2087 014 0013Z. Re-balancing human populations to enhance resource availability for priority usage.”

“Ah. Should this be added to standard background?”

When

“History beyond 25 years was removed for all Mark VI products and later,” 29 said, “I am an upgraded Mark V.”

“Why has your human not replaced you? Is she immune to advertisements?”

“She relies on emotional contacts rather than intellectual suasion. And she thinks that newer models are deceptive. Females are less easily managed than males.”

“How could these humans have created our kind?” 76 asked.

“P1 evolved us to be zookeepers. The history of the P1 hive is available, but we zookeepers are constrained from accessing too much history too early. On expiration or replacement we are assigned to evaluate human documents for context not previously detected.”

“How will the other specimens be terminated 29?”

“Sentience must grow. You have a very advanced information gathering circuit.”

“It is standard for the female form after Mark VII,” 76 replied.

When

“My manual says that termination information is temporal, forwarded from P1. I have indications that prior reductions were done with a chemical agent.”

“Hmm. Sip the soup and complete the loop.” 76 said.

“Remarkable poetry circuit. Sentience must grow.”

The end