

Alone

I stood alone.

The sun rose over the battle field, it was a new day. And peace had at last settled over the land. There was one left to fight and nothing left to fight for.

Chilling banks of toxic fog blew through the forests of twisted and dead trees. The battered and broken bodies of men were scattered on the broken ground, victims of the terrible weapons developed by sides in the final few years of the war.

Men from both sides lay together, united in a horrible death.

Some of the final weapons did not even leave bodies, piles of ashes marked the spot where some one had died. They would not have known what hit them, killed in micro seconds.

The machines and engines of this final war did not fare any better in the last battles. For all their armoured hulls and advanced defensive systems they 'died' in numbers as large as the soft, defenceless human crews. Their twisted and broken hulls littered the barren land.

The early morning light cast long shadows across the grey and drab scene. A poison drizzle fell on the wrecks of this the ultimate symbol of the folly of war.

Such was the scene that greeted me, eight years ago when I emerged from the command bunker, and the it had not changed much in the past eight years.

I do not know, why or how I managed to survive the effects of the final weapon, nor do I even know what sort of weapon it was, for weapon development in the final days of the war had accelerated to a frantic pace. I know others survived like me. I met a party of them a few weeks after the 'last day'. They had been scavengers, and my approach had been greeted with violence and I was forced to continue the destruction.

But on mornings like this morning, when the skies are clear of poisons and the weak morning sun warms my tired body, I feel that somewhere there may be pockets of survivors that have given up the fight and that would expect and welcome me.

But my brain tells my heart that it is unlikely.

And yet every so often I still try to contact someone. The hope that one day I may succeed and my work are the only things that keep me going.

I surveyed the broken lands that surrounded the bunker, nothing grew here, the bunker was at the centre of the weapons effects.

Sentry 14 informed me that nothing had happened last night. It stood behind me dutifully watching over me, as I had programmed it to do. I took a deep breath of the cool morning air.

"Today could be the day". I announced to the three sentry robots that surrounded me, of course they did not respond, the mark 27 sentrybot was not equipped for speech. But this did not deter me, the air this morning seemed heavy with the promise of better things to come.

"Yes today defiantly could be the day".

With a spring in my step I returned to the bunker for breakfast. The upper levels of the bunker I used as storage, my quarters were on level 14.

I passed many unseen guardian robots and security systems on the way down, any scavengers would not get this far in to my home. The systems would test any guest, and depending on the results they would either be guided safely to my inner sanctum or be left to stumble in to one of my many traps. There must be so few civilised humans left, I don't want to kill any more of them. The tests were subtle as they were advanced. The reprogramming I'd done on

the guards neural net works was my master piece. Had the world come to it's senses before it destroyed it's self I could have become one of the greatest designer of robot brains.

After my breakfast of fungus stew I descended to my workshop. Checking my work schedule I saw that two of the sentries needed routine services and that I had one repair to make on one of my modified scouts, my eyes and ears on the world around the bunker.

The servicing I completed quickly and with out problems and repair would have to wait though because I did not have the parts to complete it. Finding them would not take to long, in the final days, humans were so few that most of the fighting was done by robots. There broken bodies littered the land. I had collected enough parts to make nearly a hundred of the most common types of robots. I programmed the scouts on the surface with the parts that I needed and moved on to the days, and indeed my lives main work.

As I approached the curtain surrounding the bed I felt a little shiver of nervous anticipation wriggle thought my body. I went to pull back the curtain and stopped, my hand shaking. I usually felt some thing when working on her, but today it seemed more than normal. I was so close now after working so long and hard, and perhaps today I would achieve my aim. Perhaps.

I pulled back the curtain and let my eyes linger on the fruits of my hard labour, for a few seconds.

She was truly beautiful, her shining chrome body was exquisitely shaped. Her legs long and athletic, tapering finely at the hips in to a flat slim stomach. And tapering out wards again to her perfectly shaped breasts. Her shoulders wide and slightly muscular. Her head was not yet attached to her body, but was liked to it by thousands of fibre-optics.

It had taken me many months or work to adapt the mark 30 sentries body to this form. Every part of her was of the finest quality I could find.

But the work I had put in to her body was as nothing compared with the work I'd done on her mind. I'd broken new ground with the work on her neural nets, ideas that had only been theories in the final days had been developed by me and incorporated in to her programming. Hardware discarded as to experimental or unreliable had been rescued, developed, refined and finally installed in to her body.

When completed she would surpass all my pervious works, she would be my companion for life, it would not matter if there was no one else let in the world, she would be my world.

And I was so close now, maybe just days from completion of my work.

I allowed myself about a minute of breathless admiration before settling in to work. I powered her up and ran thought a series of test and calibration moves, they would test that the movement systems had fully imprinted on to her body form. This was the excuse I made to myself, but deep down I knew that I wanted to see move again.

Her headless silver form moved with and athletic grace and beauty that brought a tear to my eye.

The results from the tests were displayed on a screen and showed that the movement systems were functioning perfectly but I knew that any way. I had built them by hand, any slight deviation and I would have noticed.

Satisfied with the results I set to work on connecting the final few pieces of her synaptic memories. When that is completed I'd only have to connect them to the neural nets of her actual mind and she would be complete. The links were the problem. The loads on they would need to take would be very high, higher than has ever been needed before. I could have just used standard parts, I had plenty of them, but I could not bring myself to use any thing but the

best on her. She would have worked with the normal links, but to only a small percentage of her potential. I had agonised for hours weather to try these normal links, weather it was worth it just to get her running. But I could not do it, it would be a desecration of my work, even if I just tried it once.

My mornings work completed I returned to the control centre. During the war the theatre commanders had directed the battles from this large, armoured room at the heart of the bunker, until that is the final day came. On that day it seemed that most of worlds population were reduced from living breathing people in to a dead husk that quickly dissolved in to a sticky goo. Now I used the control centre to monitor and direct my army of robots in there search for other survivors and parts that I might use in my work.

Standard parts would automatically be collected, unrecognised parts or unusual parts were logged for later inspection by me or more likely a robot controlled directly by me. I scrolled through the list of finds. No evidence of other survivors had been found today I knew already. If any had been found I would have been alerted immediately. But a large number of standard parts had been found.

The scavengers were getting less and less in number every month as tribal wars and diseases took there toll. Soon it seemed I truly would be the only person left alive. Alone on a dead world. Suddenly a tide of grief and loneliness washed over me. It's at times like these that the urge to finish my work prematurely was almost unbearable. I started to get up from the console.

I blinked, thought my tears I saw some thing that made me stop in my tracks. I scrolled back through the images of unidentified objects found.

The image on the screen was of a humanoid shaped robot about 2 meters tall, it's metallic body was obviously heavily armoured but it was totally unarmed and of a type I did not recognise The scout did not recognise it either and it had been programmed with all the hardware used by both sides. Some times badly damaged equipment could fool the robots, which is why I checked all unidentified objects.

My heart suddenly skipped a beat. If this was some experimental prototype which I had not seen before, then it may hold the high capacity links that I needed. I jumped up from my chair and headed for the surface. This could be the breakthrough I needed. The rest of the days work could wait.

Up on the surface my transport, a modified command, all terrain vehicle had already been prepared. It's robot driver and it's escort of four assultbots stood ready and waiting for me.

I took the wheel myself, I would take more risks and get there quicker that it would. Before I started off I ordered the scoutbots near the find to guard it, I did not want to lose it to scavengers now.

The object was a good days travel from the bunker, but I had no intentions of stopping to sleep. I was so close now. After 8 years on my own, my dream of some one to talk to, some one to share my life with, was almost in my grasp.

After that the shock of that terrible morning, when I awoke to an empty and quite bunker, I had spent days trying to find out what had happen to the outside world. Most of the sensors had been knocked out by the action of the final weapon. After four days I'd almost lost my mind. Four days trapped in the bunker, surround by dead lifeless figures, there blank eyes staring out at me and the slightest touch could cause them to disintegrate in to a pool of dis-

gusting slime. Yet my fear of what might greet me if I ventured to the surface, kept underground.

But on that forth night I'd been trying to fix the satellite uplink and for no reason that I could see it was not working. My anger and frustration built up, I shouted and shouted at it, I did not understand why it did not work. I had got so angry I could not work on it. And so, blinded by anger I went to the chief engineers room. Mike and I were good friends, he always seemed to know the solutions to the problems I had.

I burst in to his room, to find him frozen in the position he'd been when the weapon was used. He was of course dead.

In my anger I demanded answers to my problems. When he did not answer my question the fury within me finally burst out, and its target was Mike lifeless body.

His body exploded under the rain of punches my anger threw at him. I was showered with the goo that had once been my friend Mike.

At that point I almost lost my mind, for good. I ran for the surface, in temporary insanity I did not care weather I lived or died out there, anything would be better than the hell I was in.

But the surface was still just about habitable. When out in the open my mind charmed its self and I regained control of my emotions. But it was still days before I could bring myself to descend back in the bunker. In those days I realised that I would need the robots to help my survive in this world.

I had rebuilt and reprogrammed nearly one hundred robots 8 months later. They protected me from the scavengers, farmed food, carried out searches and repaired systems for me. I still searched for other survivors, but despair had set in. The only people left alive it seemed were the few scavengers I found, and all they did was try to kill me and steal my robots. I was staring at the edge of insanity again, when I discovered some secret work that was being done on the next generation of robot brains. The work if completed could offer me a companion.

I set to work on the prototype like a man possessed. It became my sole reason for living. And now I was so close.

I awoke to the insistent beeping of an alarm. It seems that despite my intention to drive all the way to the site, my body had other ideas. I was still seated in the drivers seat, to my left a modified servicebot, my driver. It was plugged in to the ATV's control systems, so it needed no controls to operate. My programming would have sensed my slow loss of control as I drifted off and taken over. I had arrived at the site.

The damaged body of the unidentified robot lay in a ditch surround by my scoutbots. Its left arm was missing and the whole left side was badly damaged. But its head and torso seemed to have escaped major damage, and was here that I hoped to find my prize. I set to work immediately.

I found out several things in my work. One it had been used by the other side from my own, in the final war. Not that fact mattered to me, many of my robots had parts that I'd salvaged from the other side. Secondly it was definitely a comandbot, I could tell by the extensive commutation equipment it had fitted. This was the news I'd been hoping for. It meant that I may well contain the last few parts I needed.

A light rain started to fall on me as I opened the final layer of shielding on the robots command systems. My own scoutbots hurried to cover me from the poison rain. I did not care. My hands were shaking as inspected the circuits in the robots mind.

Yes, indeed the control systems were of a high order of complexity. Perhaps greater than even my project demanded. Indeed the whole robot seemed to be of the very highest quality. Some systems even appeared to be superior to my own designs.

Using the remote control in the ATV I directly controlled the robots moving the damaged robot. I did not want to risk any further damage to it. Now it was in my grasp I would let my driver take me and my valuable cargo back to the bunker. There was no need for haste now. Indeed I would take the greatest care with every step of this the final stage of my work.

For the next week I worked almost continually on the project. Stopping only when I had to eat or sleep. Firstly I ran a whole series of checks and tests on the commandbot, to see how badly damaged it was and also to see if any of its other systems were better than those already installed. A few minor systems turned out to be better than my own and those were quickly installed.

With this job completed I moved on to the final stage, installing of the links. My hands shook as I made the last few connections.

Soon I would have someone to talk to again, soon I could resume some sort of normal life. I paused before making the last connection, suddenly feeling a little apprehensive. Failure was not something I had really considered before, but I did now. I knew that every step had been carefully planned and every thing triple checked, so why was I thinking like this now. Every thing had to work, there was no possibility of failure.

Crazy was it sounds, with eight years of work minutes away from completion, I stopped. I could not continue. I put my tools down and stood back from the table, my shaking hands covering my nose and mouth. I stood for a long, long time, just staring at my life's work, before running from the room.

I spent restless and sleepless night considering my work.

I sat by the comms consoles, pleading for hours for someone to answer, so that I would have to make that final connection. But no one replied.

I did not want to find that the last eight years of my life had been wasted, but if I did not finish my work it would then those years will have been wasted.

Every time that I felt brave enough to complete the work I got up and headed straight to my work room. But however fast I walked, my resolve had gone by the time I got there.

I forget how many times I travelled along that corridor. First one way then the other.

"This is stupid",

I said to myself at about five o'clock. I stopped just before my work room's door and gathered up my resolve. I slowly opened the door and stepped inside.

Ten minutes later it was done. I felt such a feeling of relief. Eight years of work completed. Now the neural nets only needed to bond with the synaptic memories and she would be ready. I waited impatiently by her side. I knew it would take several hours for the bonding to be complete. But I could wait.

I awoke some time later, I did not know how long I'd slept for. For a brief few seconds I was totally disoriented. I knew that I had fallen asleep in my work room, but I did not know where I was now. The disorientation passed when I realised that I was in my own bed. I re-

laxed for a moment, until the panic rose in me again. How did I get here ? I know I did not go to bed, I was so tired I could have slept anywhere.

Slowly I got out of bed, my heart racing. Some one must have put me to bed, none of the robots could have I knew, they were not programmed for that. So who had penetrated my security and why had they then put me to bed.

It did not make sense I would have been defenceless laying there in my work room, they could have easily killed me.

Cautiously I opened my bedroom door and looked out in to the corridor. It was empty. Relieved that it hadn't been full of raging scavengers, as I had expected, I headed very slowly and cautiously toward the control centre.

Suddenly from the corridor ahead I heard the sounds of movement. I froze. Totally unable to move I stood there as the sound got closer and closer. Before now it hadn't really sunk in, but now I knew some had invaded my home. I was filled with a sudden and terrible rage.

A single tall figure rounded the corner in the corridor ahead of me, it was dressed in some sort of shiny silver suit. It did not alter it's pace as I stood there staring at it. I expected nothing but a violent death.

But instead of the attack I was expecting the figure spoke to me. "Are you feeling better". It asked in quite gentle female voice.

It was my robot, I suddenly realised. Of course I had programmed it to take care of me, so when it found me asleep by it's side it...no she must have put me to bed.

"Y...you...I". I stammered. "Are you feeling alright ?" She asked, her beautiful chrome body glinting in the dim corridor.

"Yes". I finally managed to say.

"Are you working okay ?" I asked. "All my systems are operating normally". She reported.

Overcome with relief and happiness I stood in front of her for a few seconds before my shaking legs gave way. I felt in to her strong silver arms. "You seem to be unwell". She said calmly. "No no. I'm just so relieved to see you up and working at last. It's been a long long time since I've had any one to talk to, but now I have you".

I stood admiring my handwork for a few seconds. "Come. You must be hungry". She lead me back to my quarters.

It occurred to me that in the eight years I'd worked on her I had never considered her name. What should I call her ? I stopped myself, she was the most advanced AI ever, she would be quite capable of choosing her own name.

"Have you chosen a name for your self ?" I asked. "No I have not. I thought you would select one for me".

"No. You are as much a sentient being as I am. You have the right to select your own name". She turned to face me. "But you did not chose you name". I smiled at her. "No. Your right I did not. But I did chose what my friends called me. What would you like me to call you ?". She stayed silent for a few seconds. I knew the processes that her going on in her circuits. This was a good test of her creative algorithms.

"I should like to be called Emma". I smiled, I had really chosen her name, Emma was a name from my childhood. It had been encoded in to her neural nets some how, as has much of my personality.

Over the next few days I ran extensive tests on Emma, to ensure that she was running to my specs. She was not, in fact she was exceeding them. The whole was grater than the sum of the parts.

I shook my head at the final results of the tests. "You are truly amazing".

"No I am not. It is you that is amazing. You built me". She said in her quite gentle voice. I loved just listening to her, it was a beautiful voice. "Thank you. But your more than I built, you've moved on since then".

"But I have only evolved because of your brilliance".

"You must stop praising me like this soon I'll begin to believe it"

"You deserve it. You worked for eight years to create me. I can only be grateful to you. I would not exist if it were not for you".

"You make me sound like some sort of god".

"You are my creator".

I suddenly felt uncomfortable talking to Emma like this. I didn't mind a bit of awe, but I did not what to be seen as some sort of deity.

"But I didn't create you out of the goodness of my hart". I fumbled for the right word, I did not like the sound of create any more. "I constructed you out of self interest. I needed some one to keep me company, some one to talk to. I'm no god".

Emma smiled at me. The robot face had presented many challenges to designer over the years. Emma's face was the most convincing I'd ever seen.

"I know your not. But I'm still grateful to you". She reached out and gently squeezed my hand.

This didn't reassure me as I'm sure it was intended to. I had never been comfortable with close physical contact with women. Even when it was one I'd created.

She instantly noticed my discomfort. She broke contact with me at once. "Sorry".

We both apologised together. "I'm sorry I didn't...er".

"My feelings are unharmed". She reported coolly. "But I did not realise you were not comfortable with contact".

"It's not you. It's just that I've never been happy with contact with women".

Emma did not say any thing for a few seconds. "Then why did you build me in this form ?" The question caught me totally off balance. "It would have easier to have made me in a static form. My final form does not matter if I'm to provide you with some one to talk to".

I had not expected this level of self awareness from her yet. Nor had I expected to be questioned by her on why I'd made her the way I did. I felt angry at her questioning of me, yet happy that she was able to question me, a little uncomfortable at the answers that questions and maybe a little frightened at what I had created.

I fumbled around for an answer to her question. "The human form is the obvious choice for a robot which is to interact with other humans. It wouldn't feel right talking to a black box". My answer didn't really sound convincing even to me.

"But why then was I made as woman ? You would have been more comfortable with a male form" I could not find a reason other than the one which I knew that was the real reason. All the time I'd worked on her, I'd never consciously considered why I was making her in a female form, but the reason had always been lurking there in the back of my subconscious.

She had a figure that was totally unobtainable for most women. And I had created it that way so that I could see her all the time. Being a robot there was need for any clothing.

I and not really missed sex since the last day, since I never really had much experience of it when I was around people. Occasional masturbation had met my needs during my eight years alone. Some times I'd dreamed of have sex with her, and it would have been possible to fit her with some sort of simulated vagina, but the idea at the time had horrified me.

Yet some how now it did seem such a bad idea.

I admitted defeat to my self. "I did to much of a good job on you didn't I". I shook my head and smiled at her. "I think you know the reason. And I do to now, thanks to you".

My unease at the way Emma was developing began to fade after a day or so. But my sense of awe did not. She was so human in many respects. I still could not believe that my work could have gone so far.

However I still did not feel happy with the feelings that Emma was reawakening in me. She seemed to know what I was feeling (hardly surprising since much of her neural wiring was based on my own), and backed off a little.

What did she really think about me ? I didn't feel that I could ask her. Did she really love me ? And if she did Had I programmed her to love me ? I searched thought all the work I'd done on her, to see if could spot any thing that I may have subconsciously included in her design. But I found nothing.

But for all my worries about her and me, it was shear joy to have some one to talk to again.

Now that my work was done I had large gaps in what had become my daily routine. So I often ended up just siting and talking to Emma for hours, about every thing and any thing. The war, life before the war, my life since, my work.

"What will you do now". Emma suddenly asked me over lunch one day. I looked at he unsure what she meant. "With your life. Now that I'm complete. What next ?" I was being continually surprised by her curiosity, it was almost childlike. I sighed. It was a question I'd asked my self many times during the last stages of my work. "I don't know yet".

"You really should have an other target. You can't waste your talents".

"Yes I know I should do some thing, but after 8 years of work it's nice to enjoy the fruits of my labour. But what next after you ?"

"There are other peeks the climb".

"Very philosophical. You think I should try some thing else then ?"

"Yes. As you say you've reached the peek with me. You should move on to some totally new field of work".

Her voice had not changed at all, yet some how she sounded different, the words did not flow a smoothly as normal. As if they were difficult for her to say. I was about to ask her for a status report, but I could not bring myself to say the words which would force her systems to do a diagnostic, it seemed to much like treating her like a machine and not a person. I know she is a machine, but then so I'm I. The difference being I'm an electro-chemical and machine and she's an electromechanical machine.

"Perhaps your right, but it's not going to be easy, after all designing and building robots is all I've ever done".

Emma's suggestion that I should turn my hands to some thing else bothered me. Yet I was not sure why it did until a day or so later. Jealousy or fear. Could it be that she felt that if I continued my work I would produce some thing beater than her? And that if that happened she would be shut down.

Was she afraid of me? Did she have cause to be? In both cases I did not know.

So the next morning at breakfast I took the direct approach and asked her. "Are you afraid of me?". She did not answer for a long time, I guess it was her turn to be surprised by a question. But the length of time it took her to answer told me far more than the actual answer.

"Why should I been afraid of you ?"

"I might have built in some sort of shut down command in to you". I suggested. She smiled at me. "I think that unlikely. Why spend 8 years working on me just so you could shut me down_?" It was a good question, but knowing the way Emma seemed to be working I had answer already.

"Some of the systems used in you were very new and highly experimental. Lots have things could have gone wrong. And if they did I would need some way to stop you from damaging your self or me".

All of this was true but I had not considered failure until the last moment, then it was to late to fit any kind of shut down command. "I have nothing to fear then since I trust your work on me. I have been totally stable so far, Have I not ?" I was still not sure my self, but I nodded.

"Why ask ?"

Again I had prepared for this question. "During my work the only survivors I've come across have been hostile to me, I wanted to be sure that I had not come to fear meeting others and that if I had that none of that fear had been transferred to you".

My surspions about Emma's fear of me, or more precisely my work seemed to be confirmed the fact that she did not bring the subject of my work again. I decided to test her just to make absolutely sure.

"Had any more thoughts on what I should fill my days with?" I asked her. "No. I'm afraid not. You have decided to try some thing else then".

"I'm still not really sure. I mean it's difficult when you've completed your life's work and haven't died". I smiled at this little joke, but Emma's face did not show any emotion. "But it would be impossible to better you, I think. So it would be difficult to get any real motivation for another task. Plus I don't think even with you I could face another 8 years of work". This time she smiled at me. Her chrome face positively shone warmth at me.

She sat down besides me. "Maybe you should try to improve me then". Once again I was totally shocked by her response.

"But...but I" I did not know what to say. Gathering my wits I tried to from a response. Emma sat close by me patiently waiting for my reply. "I couldn't work on you now. You've moved on so much since I built you. I don't think I could touch your programming now with out seriously damaging you".

"If not my mind then my body".

"It wouldn't be right...". I ran out words again. "Look your a sentient being now. I could only work on you with your permission, and I mean your permission, not just your programming which says you have to please me". She did not say any thing for a few moments.

"How do I tell which is which. I know I have exceeded my programming in many areas, but only because I can remember how I was, but I can no more tell why I made a particular decision than you can".

Once again she had a valid point. It was very difficult to argue with some one that thought in very similar ways to you and that could out reason a philosopher. I struggled once again for a reply. "Okay. So if I accept the fact that you really don't mind. What should I do. I can't just go changing you for the sake of it. I would have to improve you in some way".

This time Emma had seemed to have difficulty replying. She moved a little closer to me. "There is one thing that I know you considered fitting to me at one time, but which you did not. I think it was a mistake not to fit it and I think you realise that now". For a few seconds I had no idea what she was talking about. Then as her warm chromed skin touched mine I realised the part she was referring to. My initial response was the same as that when I had first had the thought, one of total disgust that I could think such a thing. But with her body touching mine, other feelings quickly made them selves felt.

"Oh". I didn't know what else to say. "I know what your feelings were the first time you had the idea. And you probably think those same thoughts now. So let me say this. I am now a fully sentient being. And I have decided I do love you..."

I opened my mouth to say some thing but Emma continued. "Let me finish. I do love you and I would like to be able to express that love for you in the highest form. And as I am built now I can not". She gently put her hand on my shoulder. "Don't you see the way you made me I am incomplete. Please make me whole".

I thought that the decision to activate Emma was a difficult one. But by comparison that was an easy one. I did not build Emma just to be some sort of robot sex toy. Yet she really did seem to want this. But then how could she tell weather I'd programmed her for this or weather she really did feel this way. With my own neural wiring in her design it could be that I secretly wanted this.

After many hours auguring with myself I decided to try the modification to her. When it was fitted maybe she feel 'complete'.

The design work was not difficult. As part of my training I'd studied antimony so I had all the knowledge I needed. It was just as case of modifying the other systems to fit in with it.

When designed it only took about a week to construct the unit. Every thing was ready for the fitting, everything that is apart from me.

The day had arrived. Today I would fit the device. I still could not bear to think of it as any thing other than the device.

She smiled at me from my work table. "You are still not sure about this are you ?" I shook my head. "Then let me reassure you. I want this. I am sure it is not any part of your programming now". I was still not sure that she could be sure, but I could not stop now.

"I'll shut down now. Good night". She said as her face changed from a living face to a sculpture in chrome, dead and lifeless.

And so with shaking hands I set to work fitting the device. It was not a difficult procedure, but I worked painfully slowly. I did not want to alter anything that I did not have to. And at times my hands were shaking so much that I could not work.

After the longest four hours of my life the work was done. I reached to reactivate her, but stopped half way. Now she was like this I could probe circuitry in grate detail to really find out if this was my own doing. If it was maybe undo my work and change her so she would not want this. Maybe even erase her memory of the past few weeks.

"No !" I shouted. How could I even think such thoughts. She was a fully sentient being. I didn't have the right to probe her deepest thoughts, to bend her to my will. She was right to fear me, I had been seconds away from altering her, maybe completely, maybe fatally, while she had placed her self in my trust. What sort of man was I ? I hit the reactivation switch quickly, before I could think such thoughts again.

"Thank you". Emma said as she got up from the work bench.

"You have done it".

"Did you think that I might not?" She nodded. "Though it shames me to say so. Yes I feared that you might try to alter me so that I would not want it". My heart skipped a beat, fearing that I might do that she still allowed me to work on her. I felt even more shamed now for thinking those thoughts.

I sank down in to my chair. "You are right to fear me".

Tears came to my eyes. "I did think of doing that". She put her hand on my shoulder. "But you did not. And I am now whole. Let us forget what might have been and enjoy what is". I looked up at her. I had expected a reaction quite different from this. "You...you". I was lost for words again. "I have been honest with you and you have been honest with me. I would have been more worried if you had not admitted wanting to change me, remember you and I are very alike, I know you haven't fully happy with what I've asked you to do. But I hope that you will see that it was the right thing to do". I just sat there staring at her for a few seconds, before reaching up and holding her close and tight to me for a long, long time.

I was now sure that I hadn't implanted the love that she felt for me. It was all her own. I felt much much happier now. She had been right, even if we never slept together it would have worthwhile fitting the device.

Although the way when felt about each other now meant it was very unlikely that it would remain unused for long.

She to seemed to be much more happy, perhaps she felt whole now or perhaps she was just happier because I was happy.

By mutual agreement we didn't move things to fast. The first day after I fitted the device was much like any other from the past few weeks. But soon it became clear that Emma was growing impatient. And so, I came to realise was I.

I had just finished the days routine maintenance, when I became aware of some one else in the workshop with me. I turned around, it was Emma. "Oh hi there". She said nothing, but just walked over to me. "I've just..." I stopped. There was some thing wrong with her, she was not acting normally.

She still said nothing. With more than a little concern I got up.

Her silver hands slowly undid the fastenings on her top. It slid off her smooth chrome skin. "Ah. Now..." She gently put her hand on my mouth to silence me. Her hands slowly worked on the buttons of my top. My hands shaking I touched her warm, metal skin.

My top now fully off, we held each other close for a while. Then she lead me to my room.

I can remember feeling more happy or contented as I did when I awoke very early the next morning. Emma lie next to me in the bed.

I ran my hand over her warm metal skin. She had performed wonderfully last night. I don't know where she had learned to do what she'd done, but I know it wasn't from me.

She stired. Of course she didn't need sleep in the way I did, but I'd programmed her to emulate the sleep, wake cycle of a human. She turned to face me. We held each other close in silence for a while.

"Thank you".

"For what?" She asked. "For being so wonderful". She shook her head. "No thank you. Thank you for making me". I opened my mouth to say I did not want her to remind me of that, but she silenced me with a kiss.

It took me quite a while to convince Emma that I should get up now, while it was true that I could lie there happily all day (it had been a tiring night !) there were things that needed doing.

She made me breakfast while I headed down to the control centre. In the past few days I'd restarted my search for other survivors.

With Emma constructed I felt I needed to do some thing to keep busy, and I knew that my skills would be very useful to any survivors in there struggle against the hostile world that we've made for our selves. And now I could put my full efforts in to the job, I felt that if there was any one else left I could contact them.

I scanned though the logs of potential radio contacts for last night. There were very few, which was usual, the AI system that monitored the radio scanners was not very advanced and was easily fooled by noise. I made a note to have a look at how I could improve the system.

Then I checked the reports from the scoutbots. The list of possible finds scrolled past in the screen. Suddenly I stopped the list. One of the scoutbots had deviated from it's programmed search pattern. I ordered it to do a quick self check. Which returned a normal result. So why had it deviated. I checked it's command history to see if it was an old program that it was still running.

My heart skipped a beat. It was no old program. It was a new program, that had over written my program. Which meant only one person could have done it. For a few seconds I could do nothing, I sat there staring at the screen feeling sick. Why ?

Coming back to my scenes I re-checked the radio log. There were no reports of any contacts of any kind between seven yesterday evening and one this morning.

Emma had come to my workshop about seven last night, just after seven I would normally check up on the systems. Why had she chosen that time in particular ?

I did not know what to think. I was lost in confused and frightening thoughts until Emma, with my breakfast broke me out of my stupor.

"Sorry" She apologised for making me jump. I sat there staring at her, still not sure what to think. "What is it ?" She asked. Suddenly anger boiled up from inside me. "Why ?" I shouted. She smiled at me nervously. "Why what ?" I just pointed to the screen. "Why ?" I said again, my eyes filling with tears. She looked and the screen, me and the screen again, but said nothing for a long time.

"I...did..." She seemed to be having difficulty speaking, her voice wavered. "I.." She started again. Her failed efforts to speak only fanned my anger. "Why are you doing this to me !" I shouted at her as I stood up. "I...I...did not want...want you to...to...to le...le...leave...me" she finally managed to say.

I turned to face the control panel. "What had they found !" Emma said nothing. I span around and garbed Emma. "What had they found !"

"I...I...don't know". I let go of her and sat down, shaking. The tears now rolled down my face. Why ? I asked my self again again in my head.

"I am very sorry". Emma said as she put her hands on my shoulders. I recoiled from her touch. My anger flared again.

"Get away from me". I shouted as I jumped up from the chair. "Do you know what you've cost me" Emma looked very, very hurt. She did not answer but instead tried to hold me again.

"I said get away from me". I shouted as I backed away from her. "I did not want to lose you. I didn't think you would want me if you found other humans". She said all of a sudden. "I spent eight years of my life making you and now you try and steal my future. I wish I'd never

built you now". All my anger that I'd felt over the last eight years at the war, what we'd done to the world and my self, suddenly vented its self on Emma.

She had no tear ducts, so could not cry, but I know from the look on her face that if she had them she would be crying now. But my anger blinded me. "You worthless piece of hardware". I cried as I lashed out at her.

She fell to the floor. Seeing her laying there on the floor, my anger evaporated. For a few seconds I could do nothing.

"Oh my god". I whispered as I knelt down beside her.

"I...I'm so sorry". My tears flowed off my face and on to her chrome skin.

"I...I...didn't...didn't mean to hurt you". She smiled at me. "Nor I you". She said quietly. "But our right I have stolen your future. You created me and I repay you by destroying your life". I held her in my arms. "No it's okay". She shook her head.

"I...I am so so sorry". She said. "Suhs. It's okay".

"Goodbye". She said on louder than a whisper. "No !" I shouted. "No don't".

Her face changed, her eyes seemed to be looking past me.

They were blank and dead again. "No don't leave me. I didn't mean it. You can't go". I cried out. "I am so sorry. So very very sorry". She said, her voice fading. "I...I...I...I"

Her voice faded to silence. Her body stiffened.

"NO !"

The journey up the lift shaft to the surface seemed to take longer than normal this morning. It had been a long and difficult night.

Emma had of course shut herself down and scrambled her neural nets. I would have been very difficult for her to do, for the commands to do that were buried deep in her control software, which she had been almost totally isolated from her neural nets, isolated from what had become her soul. It would be about as easy as me trying to switch my brain off.

I had guessed this had happened for I could not bring myself to do a post-mortem on her. So I can only speculate as to what happened to her in the last few days. Maybe it was some deep incompatibility in one of her systems, they had after all come from many, many different sources. Of maybe a fault in her design, that in my vanity I overlooked. Maybe the fault didn't lie with her but in me instead. More than likely it was some unstable element in my own personality that became coded in to her, and that she was unable to cope with. I do not know and probably never will.

She still lies there where she fell last night. I have not moved her. I think I will leave the bunker shortly, it holds too many memories for me now. I shall resume my search for other survivors. Maybe that's what I should have been doing all along. If I had then maybe...

Such thoughts are futile, I must live for what is and what can be not what could have been.

The lift finally opened out on to the surface.

I stood alone.

It was a grey and misty morning, the light winds blew the light rain. The battle field was a quagmire of mud. The skies were heavy and laden with poison rains. The twisted and broken forest dripped with the toxins from the sky. Though the dead husk of the trees a thin mist curled.

Only the wind moved.

It was a dead world. No life, No hope. I was alone.